

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**STATE, LOCAL SOCIETY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN NORTH
ŠÄWA: THE CASE OF MÄNZ *ENA* GEŠÉ, AND YEFAT *ENA* TEMUGA
AWRAJJAS, 1888-1991**

BY
EMISHAW WORKIE

ADVISOR
TEKALIGN WOLDEMARIAM(PhD)

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THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS

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Acronyms

AEPA	All-Ethiopia Peasant Association
AMC	Agricultural Marketing Corporation
CFSCDD	Community Forest and Soil Conservation Development Department
DDT	Dichloro-diphenyl-trichloro ethane
DLCO-EA	Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa
EGWAOA	Efrata and Gedem <i>Wäräda</i> Administrative Office Archive
EHRS	Ethiopian Highland Reclamation Study
EPID	The Extension and Project Implementation Department
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FaWLA	Forest and Wildlife Development Authority
FFW	Food-for-Work
FWLFD	Forest and Wild Life and Fish Directorate
NALA	National Archive and Library Agency
PAs	Peasant Associations
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SCRp	Soil Conservation Research Project
SFCDD	State Forest and Soil Conservation Development Department
UNEP	The United Nations Environment Program
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WTMRC	Woldemesqel Tariku Memorial Research Center

Glossary

<i>Afersata</i>	Traditional way of searching for truth and identifying a criminal
<i>Aläqa</i>	Head of a parish Church
<i>Amba</i>	Flat-topped massif
<i>Amesaaläqa</i>	Commander of fifty
<i>Aqeñi-abat</i>	The founder/first occupier of a land
<i>Aşé</i>	Royal title reserved for a king
<i>Asrat</i>	Tax paid to the Church, equivalent to one-tenth of harvest
<i>Asrat asäfariwoč</i>	Tax assessors and collectors
<i>Awuraja</i>	Sub-province
<i>Bäjerond</i>	Treasurer
<i>Balabat</i>	Nobility/elite
<i>Balambaras</i>	Lower military title
<i>Baläwuläta</i>	Patriot
<i>Baldras</i>	Land reserved for raising government horse and mule
<i>Bandas</i>	Betrayers/traitors
<i>Bétä-rist</i>	Land of a royal family including the Emperor
<i>Bitwädäd</i>	Highest military title, advisor of a king
<i>Çeqaşume</i>	Village administrator
<i>Çesäña</i>	Tenant that paid tax to <i>gult</i> owner
<i>Däjjazmač</i>	Military title which means commander of the gate
<i>Endärasé</i>	Representative, a person working in place of governorate general
<i>Feré-geber</i>	Land tax
<i>Filla</i>	Long grass used for animal forage and for building house

<i>Fitawurari</i>	Commander of the vanguard
<i>Gäbbar Gäži</i> <i>/Gultšum</i> <i>/Balägult /Gult-Gäži</i>	State official appointed over a piece of land to collect tribute from the residences
<i>Gäbbar</i>	Tax paying tenant/ peasant
<i>Gaša</i>	Traditional land measurement unit equivalent to 40 hectares
<i>GeberṬäll</i>	Peasant , who fails to pay regular land tax
<i>Geber</i>	Tax/tribute
<i>Gendäbäl</i>	Land given to peasant soldier
<i>Grazmač</i>	Military title, leader of the left-wing
<i>Läm märét</i>	Fertile land
<i>Läm-ṭäf</i>	Semi-fertile land
<i>Lij</i>	Child', a title reserved for members of the royal family
<i>Madäria</i>	State's land given to individuals, mainly to soldiers in place of salary
<i>Madbét</i>	Kitchen, land of the royal family
<i>Mälkäña</i>	State official authorized to administer the land of the royal family or absentee lord
<i>Menezer-abat</i>	Minor-father
<i>Meridazmač</i>	Royal title of Šäwan dynasty
<i>Meseläne</i>	District governor
<i>Näçläbaš</i>	Militia (of the imperial regime)
<i>Nägadras</i>	Head of merchant, tax collector
<i>Negus</i>	King
<i>Qäbällé</i>	Lowest administrative unit
<i>Qäläd</i>	Traditional unit of land measurement made of animal skin

<i>Qäñazmač</i>	Military title, leader of the right wind,
<i>Ras</i>	The highest military title
<i>Rist</i>	Hereditary land ownership
<i>Rim</i>	Land given with usufructuary rights to Church
<i>Šähafi Tezaz</i>	Head of royal scribes
<i>Šaläqa</i>	Commander of a thousand
<i>Šayk</i>	Muslim religious cleric
<i>Siso</i>	One-third
<i>Ṭäf</i>	Infertile/barren land
<i>Teqelay-gezat</i>	Province
<i>Wäläd-aged</i>	Exchange of land with money for some time until the funds paid back
<i>Wäräda</i>	District
<i>Wärrägänu</i>	Land reserved for raising government livestock
<i>Zufan čelot</i>	Order of the court presided by the Emperor

Key to the Translation System

For writing Ethiopian names, the following transliteration has been used

- I. The Seven sounds of the Ethiopic alphabets are represented as follows:

በ---	Bä	ቤ---	Bé
ቡ---	Bu	ብ---	Be
ቢ---	Bi	ቦ---	Bo
ባ---	Ba		

- II. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows:

ሸ---	Š	ዝ---	ZH
ኘ---	Ñ	ገ---	G
ቸ---	Č		
ጅ---	J		

- III. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows:

ጸ--	Ṣ	ቀ---	Q
ጠ---	Ṭ	ጸ---	P
ጨ---	Ç		

- IV. Gemination should always be indicated by doubling as follows:

ቀበሌ.....	Qäbällé
ተሰማ.....	Tässäma
ደጃዝማች.....	Däjjazmač
ቆላ.....	Qolla

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Preface

This dissertation examines the political, economic and social context in which human relationship with the natural environment took place in the region of North Šäwa, since the late 19th century. Different factors (both man-made and natural forces) have shaped and reshaped society-environment interactions, leading to environmental deterioration and ecological disorder. These alterations to the natural environment have had a profound impact on the livelihoods of local society. The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the major factors that have affected state, local society-environment relations over an extended period of time. The study focuses on Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjas*, while providing the broader setting of North Šäwa. The selection of these two *awrajjas* is based on three factors: first, they are the most environmentally degraded regions of North Šäwa, and of Šäwa province in general, having been the chief centers of politics and government and thus of intense interaction between demographic, economic, political, and social forces and of these and the environment. Second, these localities are essential for understanding the highland-lowland dynamics that constitute a key element in the history of human adaptation to nature as well as of human impact on it. Thirdly, I am personally fairly familiar with the localities, enabling me to have easy access and collection of essential data.

Because it deals with a subject that has many dimensions and multiple actors, this study uses a broad range of sources, both primary and secondary. Secondary sources were consulted to identify gaps in existing studies and to delimit the study's focus, concepts, and approaches. Major secondary sources comprised of published and unpublished materials, including books, articles, proceedings, magazines, and newspapers, as well as dissertations, theses, and other related documents. Primary sources utilized in the study consisted of reports, minutes, letters, aerial photographs, official administrative documents, statistical data, and maps. Archival materials and

documents pertaining to various aspects of the subject were collected from institutions such as the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, National Archive and Library Agency, Woldāmäsqäl Tariku Memorial Research Center, Ministry of Agriculture, Central Statistical Authority, and other relevant institutions at federal, regional, and local levels. At the local level, archival documents were obtained from Efrata *ena* Gedem district administrative office.

Furthermore, I collected oral information to supplement and fill in gaps left by archival sources and existing literature. However, in the process, I have faced different challenges. One of the major challenges was the scarcity or absence of local archival sources. In both the former *awrajjas* of Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, there were very limited or no local archival sources available except for records of court proceedings. Many of these sources were in many cases deliberately destroyed during state transitions in 1974, 1990-1991, and more recently. The archival centers in Däbräberhan, Däbrässina, Mähalméda, Atayé, Gešé, and Molalé towns had suffered such destruction. When I arrived in Däbräsina in early October 2018, I was informed that the archives of the former Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajjja*, which were previously housed in the town's communication office, had been intentionally burnt. The documents in the Qäwot district had also been strewn around and badly damaged by termites, making them difficult to handle or read.

The second issue was the limited focus of the available archival sources, which primarily addressed socio-economic and political matters and gave little attention to environmental matters *per se*. These sources treated the state, society, and environment as distinct entities, and there was a lack of time series data or supporting documents, such as satellite images and aerial photographs, for the period under investigation.

The third challenge was related to security, as ongoing conflicts over resources in Yefat *ena* Temuga *awrajja* and the political instability in the country made it difficult to conduct field work and collect data. In some places many of my informants suspected me of spying and were reluctant to share information. In those places where Amharic is not widely spoken, language barriers further complicated the situation. To address these issues, I reached out elders, local government officials, and individuals who were familiar with Afan Oromo and Afar languages.

There was also a lack of road access and transportation services, as the roads from Anşokia to Rabél and from Rabél to Mähalméda and their surrounding areas were in poor condition. There was also only one round trip transport service from Rabél to Mähalméda per week. This made it rather hard to go back and forth to collect information and/or follow up on leads obtained from previous trips. In spite of these difficulties, however, I was able to collect information that I believe was quite sufficient to document events and processes and substantiate the arguments that I make.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the history of interaction between the state and local society in central Ethiopia that had consequences for the natural environment. It also examines the impact of changes in the environment back on the conditions of life of local people and their interactions with the agents and institutions of the state. It is thus essentially a reconstruction of the political economic history a region as it manifested itself in the form of actions and counter actions that had both immediate and cumulative impact on the environment, and ultimately on the lives and livelihoods of people. It is a story of a fairly large chunk of central Ethiopia now called North Šäwa with a focus on Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjas* (sub-provinces). In terms of temporal coverage it extends over a period of nearly a century, from the late 1880s to the 1990s.

It investigates how political, economic, and socio-cultural events and processes affected the natural environment and how the altered environment structured and shaped the livelihood of people.

The key argument of this work is that unlike the conventional approach to environmental history in which change is abstracted from generic or impersonal dynamics such as demographic expansion, poor technology or poor management of resources, environmental change is as much about human interactions and decisions in specific geographical, social, cultural and political settings. Even though many of the arguments that I will make in this work share quite a lot with what has been said about other parts of the country, there is equally quite a lot that is premised only on what a closer examination of the local scene can offer. Perhaps the most important of this arguments is that behind an obvious story of environmental degradation and deepening poverty, there was quite a lot of conscious effort to limit, contain or mitigate these phenomena. The dissertation is premised on my conviction that a closer examination of the local scene should reveal

not only what happened to the environment due to the mistakes, abuses or reckless actions of people or of the "impersonal" outfit that we call the state, but also what people did to curb, contain, overcome or avert threats to the environment and to their own livelihoods. The dissertation documents both of these two components of the human-environment dialectic. It does so at times independently of each other in the interest of continuity of narrative, but seeks to encourage an understanding that balances elements of both escalation and mitigation, or between factors and forces that contributed to the story of decline and demise and those that sought to check and contain adverse forces and rehabilitate and empower people in the wake of those adversities.

As an attempt to document and tell a local history human-environment interaction without losing sight of its regional and national context, the work is grounded on a vast amount of information gathered from a diverse array of sources, both primary and secondary, written and oral. Oral sources were collected extensively in the two districts of Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Temuga on which the study focuses and have been immensely useful in bringing out ideas and perspectives that otherwise would have been masked or glossed over.

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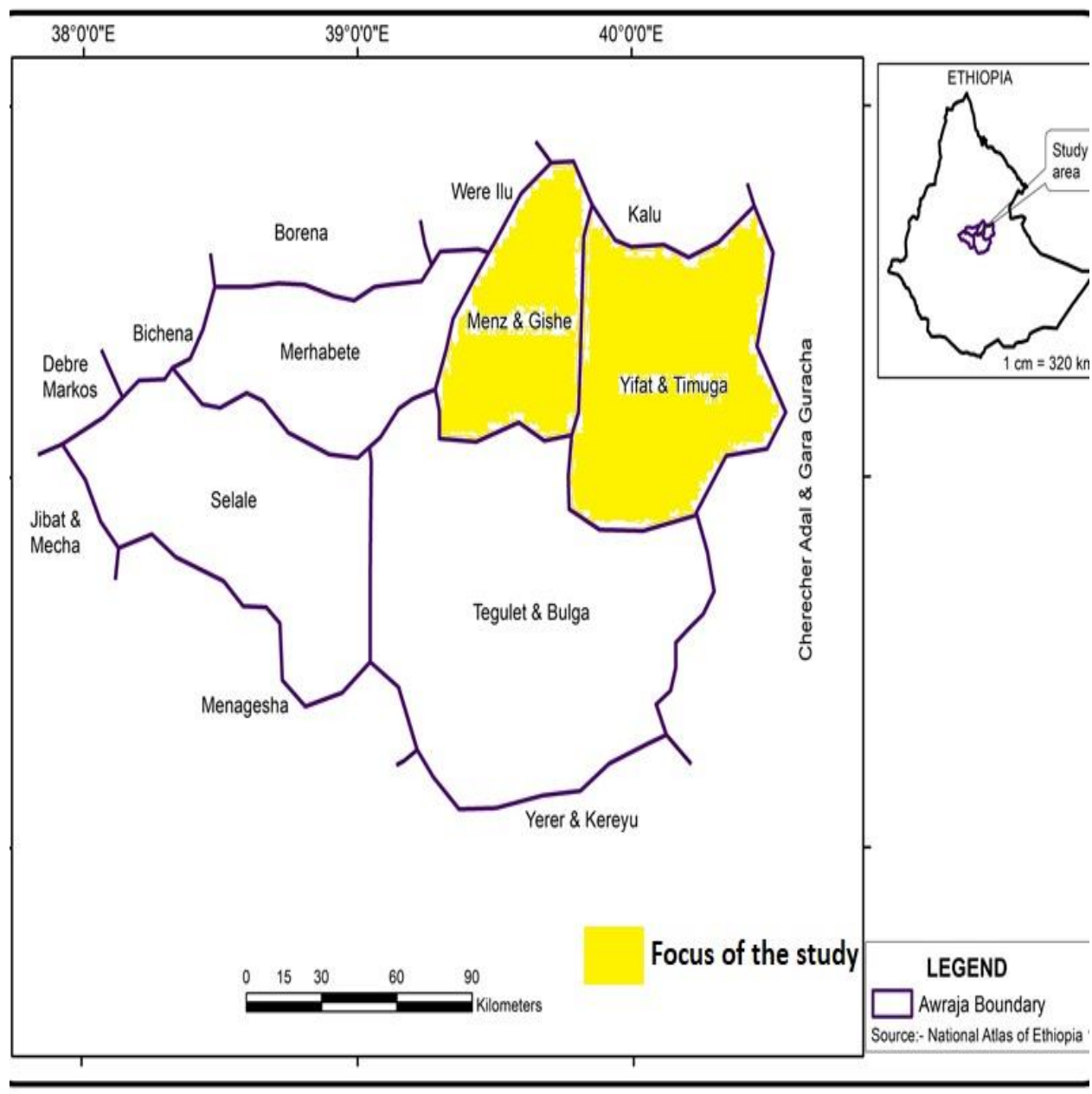


Figure 1: Administrative Map of North Šäwa

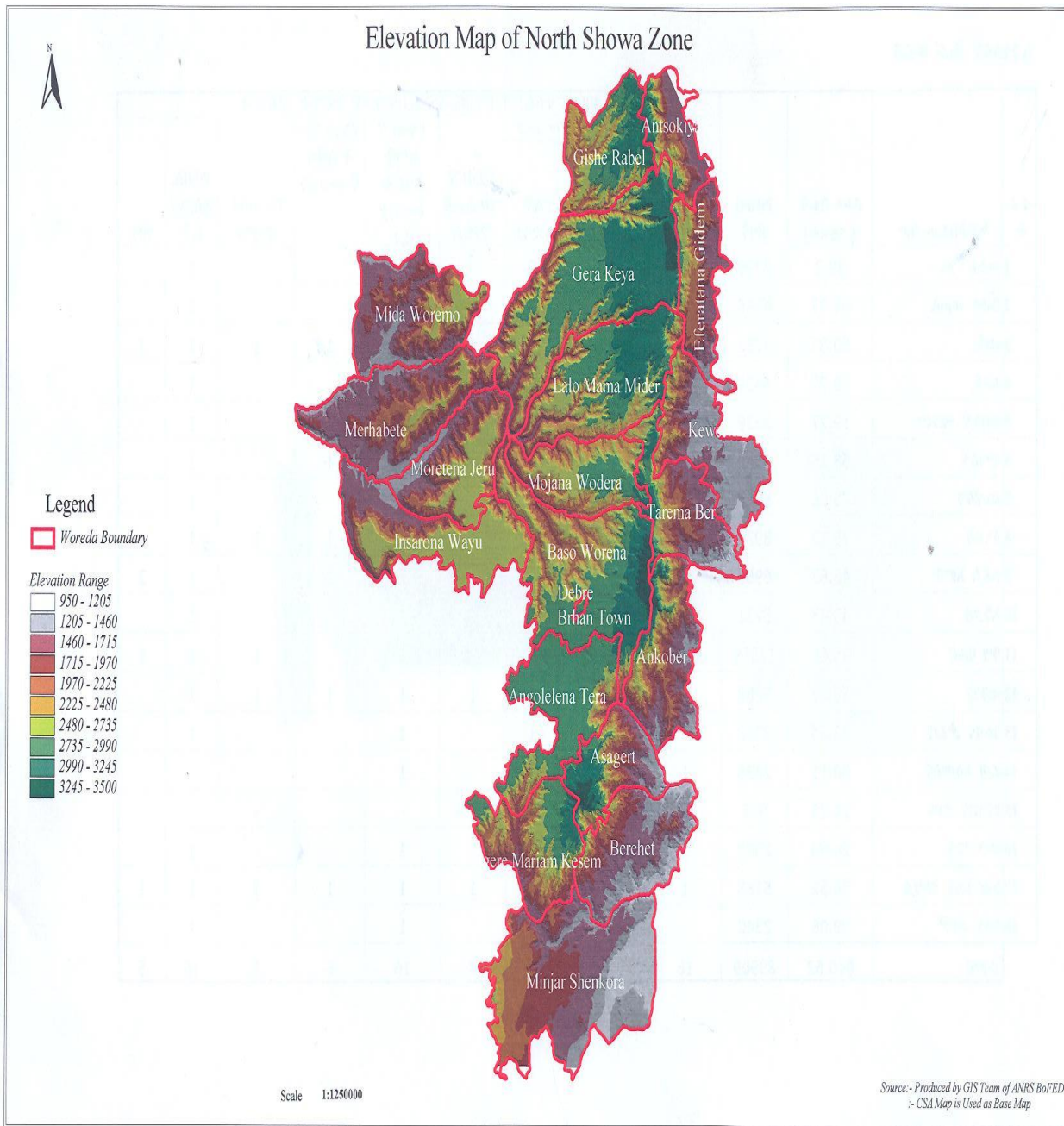


Figure 2: Topography Map of North Šäwa

Source: North Šäwa Administrative Zone Agricultural Office

CHAPTER ONE

Geographical Setting and Historical Background

Human beings interact with the natural environment to sustain life in one way or the other.¹Georg Marsh, one of the pioneers in the study of environmental history, argues that man's attempt to control and utilize nature affected the structure and composition of the natural ecosystem.² Reciprocally, the altered environment became a threat to all species. It impacted, shaped, and reshaped the way of life of human society. The impact of human-induced environmental change was not limited to particular species and territories but to all living things globally. The interdependence and the effects on each other of humans and nature reveal that they are inseparable entities, and it is difficult to tell a comprehensive story of the one without considering the other.³

Environmental issues have become a growing concern for the global community, particularly for Africa which appears to suffer disproportionately from environmental change. Although the driving forces behind the change varied across time and space, most scholars agree that they were predominantly a result of human activity. In his study of the history of the African landscape from 1800 to the last decade of the 20th century, J. McCann argues that Africa's environmental landscape has passed through long and complicated historical processes and patterns. Along the way, socio-cultural, economic, political, and demographic forces as well as overall global developments have each played a role in the changes that were brought about on the environment at different

¹Donald J. Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World: Humankind's Changing Role in the Community of Life, Second Edition*(London: Tylor and Franco Group, 2001),p.1; Georg Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature: the Physical Geography Modified by Human Action* (Cambridge, 1965),pp.XVII.

²Marsh, *Man and Nature*...,p.XVII:XX.

³ Hughes, *An Environmental History*...,p.1; see also Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East Africa: The Case of Tanganyika, 1850-1950 Second Edition* (London: James Currey,1996),p.3.

levels.⁴Referring to the case of Tanganyika, H. Kjekushus, contends that, in relative terms, the country's ecology was stable and the land was covered with abundant vegetation in the early 19th century and before. However, from that point on the relationship between society and nature tended to take on different features, with the uncontrolled interventions of the former on the latter. The intervention caused the deterioration of the natural ecosystem, which eventually caused unpredictable weather conditions and frequent outbreaks of drought, famine, diseases, and other catastrophes.⁵According to Tallegen and Wolsink, the overall effects of man's interventions can be seen in three ways. The first is the loss in the content and volume of resources. The second is the pollution of land, water and air. The third is the disturbance of the ecosystem due to the addition of inputs like fertilizer, pesticides, and others.⁶

Studies show that carbon emissions from Africa are minimal. But the Continent is one of the worst victims. Worldwide climate change, coupled with the local depletion and pollution of resources, has seriously endangered life on the Continent. The Continent's natural resources (land, water, and atmosphere) have been losing their qualities.⁷A recent survey by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) confirms that the change in the physical environment was a function of human activity and that these consisted of socio-cultural, economic, political and demographic nature. Currently, the Continent faces a high rate of deforestation, overgrazing, pollution of land, water, and atmosphere, locust invasion, frequent outbreaks of famine, prevalence of diseases, and

⁴James McCann, *Greenland, Brown land and Black land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd,1999),pp.1-3.

⁵Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and....*,p.3.

⁶Tallegen and Wolsink as cited in Mohamed M.A. Salih, *Local Environmental Change and Society in Africa*(The Hague: Kulwer Academic Publisher,2000),pp.3-4.

⁷The United Nations Environment Program(UNEP), *African Environmental Outlook 2: Our Environment, Our Health* (Nairobi,2006),p. XIX; Mohamed M.A. Salih, *Local Environmental Change....*,pp.1-2; Taddesse Kidanemariam, "Changes and Continuities in Africa's Post independent Environment and Habitat Management Paradigms and Policies: The Case of Ethiopia and Ghana,"(PhD Dissertation in Geography, Iowa University, 2001).,pp.59-79.

expansion of desertification. This situation is connected to and exacerbated by political instability. Alternatively, though to a lesser degree, natural phenomena such as earthquakes, landslides, active volcanoes, and flooding have also played a role in altering the natural environment.⁸

Ethiopia was not an exception in this regard. The central and northern highlands, which sustained settlements for a long time, have suffered from land degradation and the associated problems. Sources indicate that the interaction between society and the environment in the region has gotten worse since the late 19th century, even though the natural environment's degradation started much earlier.⁹ Here too, as elsewhere, it is the interaction of demographic, political, cultural, and socio-economic factors that caused the deterioration of the environment. The factors were complex and varied across time and space.¹⁰ The steady process of deforestation and land degradation in the highlands gradually triggered a deterioration of productivity, a decline in biodiversity, and the breakdown of the ecosystem.¹¹ But the nature and pace of degradation and deforestation were not uniform throughout the highlands, let alone across the lowlands and highlands. The reason behind

⁸ UNEP, *African Environmental Outlook...*,p.XIX; Emeka Polycarp Amechi, "Poverty, Socio-Political Factors and Degradation of The Environment in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Need for a Holistic Approach to The Protection of The Environment and Realization of The Right to Environment", *Law, Environment and Development Journal*, Vol.V, No. II (2009),p.110.

⁹ James McCann, *People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia, 1800-1900* (Maidson: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1995),pp.39-68; Zewdu Eshetu and Peter Hogberg, "Reconstruction of Forest Site History in Ethiopian Highlands Based on Natural Abundance of Soils," *Ambio*, Vol. XXIX, No. II (2000),p.83.

¹⁰Richard Pankhurst, "The History of Deforestation and Afforestation in Ethiopia Prior to World War I", *Northeast African Studies*, Vol.II, No.I (1995),pp.119-121; Mesfin Wolde Mariam, *Rural Vulnerability to Famine in Ethiopia, 1958-1977*(New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1984),pp.11-23; Dessalegn Rahmato, *Environmental Change and State Policy in Ethiopia: Lessons from Past Experiences*, *Monograph Series 2*(Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2001),pp.73-77; Tewoldeberhan Gebreegziabher, "The Environmental Variables which Led to the Ecological crisis in Ethiopia," *Akadémiakiadó* Vol. IV, No. II (1989),pp.61-67; UNEP, *African Environmental Outlook...*,pp.64-45;James McCann, "The Plow and the Forest: Narratives of Deforestation in Ethiopia, 1840-1992" *Environmental History*, Vol.2,No.2(1997)p.156.; Tasachew Abebe, "The Twentieth Century Agricultural History of Huletju Enase Wära" (M.A Thesis in History, Bahir Dar University, 2016),p.12.

¹¹*Ibid.*

this, as Dessalegn Rahmato rightly argues, is that the practices of deforestation and tree planting varied across different altitudes and communities.¹²

Environmental issues have recently become a growing concern for governments, academics, and the public in Ethiopia. Scholars, particularly in the fields of History, Geography, Development Studies, Anthropology, Economics, and Ecology, have dealt with aspects of environmental change at different levels with varying degrees of detail. However, with a few exceptions, the majority of researchers on the subject do not link ecological change to historical socio-economic and political developments at the local level. Furthermore many have exhibited a tendency to regard society and the environment as distinct entities in their analysis, paying little or no attention to the ways in which society and the environment interacted or how those interactions have been created and altered by historical processes and events. They have shown a rather disproportionate tendency to focus on the current global and partly national developments and patterns in their analysis, giving little or no space to the experiences of local society over a long period of time.¹³ It appears that their views are dictated by the assumption that the environment is external to human society and thus it is the environment that reduces man's role in shaping and affecting it.¹⁴ It was only recently that this view of nature has started to change, leading to the notion that the environment is and should be considered an integral part of human life. What this means is a change from “abstraction about nature (celestial ideas of nature) towards studies of human-influenced environments (terrestrial ideas of nature)”.¹⁵

¹² Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, p.468.

¹³ Donald Crummey, “Deforestation in Wällo: Process or Illusion?”, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (1998), p.25; see also Ari Aukusti Lehtinen, “Modernization the Concept of Nature: On the Reproduction of Environmental Stereotypes” in Timo Millyntaus and Mikko Saikku (eds.), *Encouraging the Past in Nature: Essays in Environmental History*, Revised Edition (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001), pp.30-31.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.30-31.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.31-32.

In this work, I examine two aspects of the environment and society problematic in North Šäwa, an historically significant part of north-central Ethiopia: one is the interplay between the often conflicting interests of the state and local society on the one hand and changes in the physical environment on the other; the other is the direct and dynamic relationship between humans and nature in which they had mutual impact on each other. In other words, the study examines not only how what people did to each other affected nature but also what humans did to nature and what nature, in turn, did to humans.

However, because the variables in the study of environmental issues are too broad to manage easily, I have focused on a few elements that appear to have been salient and relatively easily lend themselves to narrative reconstruction. I thus try to investigate the issue in relation to patterns of production and consumption of food and other materials, as well as in relation to socio-cultural, economic, and political developments over a period of time stretching slightly over a century. In all cases, I try to explore the issues with an inside-out perspective, namely to foreground local views, interests and understandings of the issues even as I point out the external or wider set of issues and interests that might have contributed to their formation. This perspective is informed by my belief that understanding the local dimensions of the relationship between society and the environment and the associated changes over time is vital for understanding and tackling current environmental concerns as a society or country.

The study takes 1888 and 1991 as the beginning and end of investigation, respectively. The former refers to the outbreak of the Great Ethiopian Famine (*Kefu-Qän*, 1888–1892), a time in which a severe famine followed by an epidemic struck Central and Northern Ethiopia; the latter date saw

the collapse of the military-socialist regime and the coming to power of a new one with yet another socio-economic and political orientation with consequences for the environment.

Geographically, the study focuses on North Šäwa, with particular emphasis on Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Temuga *awrajjas*. I selected this region for three reasons. One was that this area encompasses some of the highly degraded parts of the Šäwan province, with varied manifestations and levels of intensity in the highland and lowland areas. Secondly, the region had been the chief center of politics and government for the greater part of the period covered by the study, as a result of which there had been intense interaction among political, economic, social and demographic forces. Finally, I am personally fairly familiar with the region, which is an advantage particularly in terms of access to both informants and information.

North Šäwa is presently one of the eleven administrative sub-divisions (zones) of the Amhara Regional State. It consists of twenty-eight districts, with a total area of 15,900.97km². The zone is bordered by the South Wällo and Oromia zones to the north, the Afar region (*kill*) to the northeast, and the Oromia region to the west and south.¹⁶ Administratively, the region had been organized and re-organized at different points in time, sometimes by enlarging its territories and sometimes by diminishing it. According to the 1941 administrative re-arrangement by the Imperial regime, Šäwa *jakelaygezat* (province) was subdivided into eleven *awrajjas* of which three were located in what is today the North Šäwa zone; they were Märhabété *ena* Sälalé, Mänz *ena* Yefat, and Tägulat *ena* Bulga *awrajjas*. Later on, in 1964/65, Märhabété *ena* Sälalé *awrajjas* was further divided and became two independent *awrajjas* called Märhabété, and Sälalé.¹⁷ Similarly, in

¹⁶Amhara Culture, Tourism, and Park Development Office, *Discover Amhara: A Tourist Guide* (Peacock Printers, 2011),p.105.

¹⁷ Institute of Ethiopian studies(here after IES), MS, Folder no. 4078, Institute of Ethiopian Nationalities, “የመስከ ስራ ንዑስ ቡድን 2:በሰሜን ምዕራብ ሸዋ እና በጎጃም ክፍለ ሀገር ከሚያዝያ 22–29 1976ዓም ያደረገው

1967/68, Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajja* was subdivided into two, and named Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga.¹⁸The newly established administrative unit of Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja* was re-organized into seven districts which persisted all the way to the late 1980s. These were Mamamedir, Lalomedir, Géramedir, Qäya-Gäbreal, Gešé, Anṭokia, and Mäzäzo.¹⁹Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* was in turn organized into six districts, namely Mafud, Qäwot, Burémodaytu, Efrata and Jillé, Fursi, and Gämza.²⁰

Later on, in 1987, the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia came up with a new administrative scheme and divided the province (*keflä-hagär*) of Šäwa into four *awrajjas*. Under this arrangement, North Šäwa was the largest district of Šäwa *keflä hagär*. In 1991, yet another scheme was introduced by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. This scheme re-organized former administrative regions into *kellels* (regional states) along ethno-linguistic lines, thus making North Šäwa one of the many *zones* of the Amhara regional state.²¹

North Šäwa has had a very diverse topography, as a result of serious geological activities. Its landscape as a result consists of mountain ranges and hill tops, vast plateaus, gorges and lowlands of which 38.86% is plateau, 23.4% is rugged terrain, and 11.85% is valley. The remaining 25.89% is made up of mountains and hills. It has different agro-climatic zones ranging from hot lowlands

ጉብኝት ዘገባ ጥራዝ 2, "(Field Work Group 2, A Field Visit Report on Northwest Šäwa and Gojjam Provinces, Part Two, from April 30-May 8, 1984) ; "ሰላሌ እና መራቤቴ አውራጃዎች ግንቦት 1976ዓ.ም." (Sälalé and Märabété *Awrajjas*, May 1984), p.11.;Gebrehewot Woldehawariat(*Fitawurari*), አረዳ(1990E.C.),p.14.

¹⁸ Berhanu Tesfaye, "A Historical Study of Land Tenure and Agriculture in Géramidir, Mänz to 1974"(MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, 1996), p.2. Since the time of *Negus* Sahläselassé(1813-1847) to the 1930s, the historic territory of Mänz was organized in three sub districts such as Lalomedir, Mamamedir and Géramedir. Yefat was, subordinate to the Šäwan dynasty, consisted of the districts of Yefat proper, Gedem and Efrata. For more refer R.H. Kofi Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and the Ethiopian Empire* (London: Heinemann, 1975),p.15.).

¹⁹ Berhanu, "A Historical Study of Land Tenure.....", p. 3.

²⁰ Demisew Gizaw, "A Socio-economic History of Yefat and Ṭemuga *Awrajja*, 1941-1991"(MA Thesis in History Wällo University, 2019),p.1.

²¹Alain Gascon, "Shewa, Ethiopia's Prussia: Its Expansion, Disappearance and Partition," in Svein Ege et al (eds.), *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Trondheim, 2009),p.85.

(*qola*) to cold and frosty highlands (*wurç*). *Wurç* (above 3500m) represents 0.46%, *däga* (highland, 2300–3200 m) 32.02%, *woina däga* (middle latitude, 1500–2300 m) 45.58%, and *qolla* (lowland, 500-1500m) 21.95%.²²The diversified landscape makes the weather conditions in the region highly varied. The rainfall ranges from 900 to 1600mm, and its distribution declines from west to east. The highland is cool and windy, while much of the lowland has a dry and hot tropical climate.²³The vast plateau, which are locally called *ambas* (elevated landmass), constitute a significant part of the highlands. The area's rugged terrain and steep slopes have helped protect local people against inroads by potential enemies, while the plains and gentle slopes were used extensively for cultivation and grazing. The landscape is very highly scenic. The elevated lands around Mount Mägäzäz and Ṭarmabär overlook the vast stretch of lowland plains to the east. The highland is the source of many annual and seasonal rivers that have washed away the top soils in many places to leave behind only bare and sharp cliffs. The plateau itself is many rocky and degraded. The eastern escarpment that extends from around Addis Abäba to the north in a continuous chain separates the highlands from the lowlands. This escarpment also becomes a dividing line between the highlands of Mänz *ena* Gešé, and the lowlands of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjas*.²⁴The highest peak of the Šäwan province, Abuye- méda (4000mts) is found among the chain of mountains along the eastern escarpment. On average, the highlands of North Šäwa are 1000 meters above sea level, and half of them are above 2000mts. The altitude declines slowly to the east, heading to the Awash

²² North Šäwa Agricultural Office, “በሰሜን ሸዋ ዞን የተፈጥሮ ሀብት ልማት ጥበቃ እና አጠቃቀም የስራ ሒደት የ4ኛ ሩብ ዓመት ሪፖርት ሰኔ 30 2009 ዓ.ም” (North Šäwa’s Natural Resource Development, Conservation and Utilization 4th Quarter Report 8 May, 2017), pp.3-4.; North Šäwa Agricultural Office, “የሰሜን ሸዋ ዞን የ 2009ዓ.ም ተፈጥሮ ሀብት ማጠቃለያ ሰኔ 2009ዓ.ም.” (North Šäwa Agricultural Office, North Shewa’s Natural Resource Final Report June 2017); See also Mesfin Woldemariam, *Suffering Under God’s Environment: A Vertical Study of The Predicaments of Peasants in North Central Ethiopia* (Berne: African Mountain Association, 1991), pp.21,27.

²³ Chandra P. Singh, “Land Utilization in the Shewa Province of Ethiopia” (PhD Dissertation in Geography, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1970), pp. 41,46-48.

²⁴ Singh, “Land Utilization in the Shewa ...”, pp. 23-27.; Informants: Ato Tässäma Kābädä; Ato Ešātu Wodajénäh, Ato Hailé Habtāmariam. Abuyé Méda, which is 4000mts high and the second largest mountains in the country is also located in the region.

Valley.²⁵The eastern and northeastern parts of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*, adjoin and form part of the Great East African Rift Valley.²⁶

The soils of Central Highland Ethiopia are a result of decomposition over a period of several millennia. Broadly scholars divide the soils of Šäwa province into two, namely *vertisols* (of the plateau) and alluvial soils (of the lowlands and swampy areas). But local varieties exist, and both the color and composition of the soils vary accordingly.²⁷So far, there is no comprehensive study of the structure of soils in each of the localities I study in this work. Our general knowledge is primarily based on the work of North American soil scientist. H.P. Murphey which appears to be the best of its kind. Murphey has conducted a survey of the status and fertility of soils along the main highway radiating out of Addis Abäba to different parts of the country. This includes the Addis Abäba-Asmara highway. His study is based on samples he took from selected fields within a short radius of the highway in both directions. The study, however, does not show local variation. Nonetheless, his work reveals that except for some areas where erosion is minimal, much of the soils in the central highlands are stony and rather poor in nutrients. This, according to him, was mainly due to erosion. The soils have a clayish texture and have a rather poor water-holding capacity. In terms of color, they range from brown to dark or very dark clay. In contrast to the highlands, the soils in the lowlands of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, which receive deposits from the highlands, are rich in organic content and well-drained. However, in some parts of this zone, the poor sediments cover the alluvial soils, thus undermining their fertility. The colour of the soil is not much different from that of the highlands.²⁸ Generally, the soils range from reddish brown to

²⁵*Ibid*, pp. 27-28.

²⁶*Ibid*,p. 29; D. R. Buxton, "The Shoan Plateau and Its People: An Essay in Local Geography," *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 114, No. 4/6, (1949), p. 157.

²⁷ Singh, "Land Utilization in the Shewa...",pp.50-51.

²⁸*Ibid*, pp. 7-8, 67-69, and 73.

dark brown and are good for farming activities.²⁹ They are rich in mineral resources like iron ore, gemstones, limestone, and silica.³⁰

North Šäwa has two drainage basins and has many perennial and seasonal rivers and springs.³¹ The mountain range along the eastern escarpment forms the watershed between the tributaries of Abay to the west and Awash to the east. Some of the tributaries of the Abay River include the Jämma, Wançit, Kässäm, Šayé, Gadowa, Mofär-Wuha, Lägambo, Waka, and Rätēmät rivers. On the other hand, Jarra, Wadiyyo, Mächaro, Aṭayé, Sänbäté (Qabi), Allala, Garbi Jawuha (Nägéssso), Robi, and other small streams flow to the east and join the Awash River.³² Most of the region's great rivers form boundaries between or among different districts or sub-districts of the *awrajjja* or between two or more *awrajjjas*. For example, Mofär Wuha River serves as a boundary between Mänz *ena* Gešé and, Tägulät *ena* Bulga *awrajjjas* in the south, while Jämma River separates Märabété from Sälalé. The Borkäna River separates Yefat *ena* Temuga *awrajjja* from Qallu *awrajjja* of South Wällo in the north.³³ The other rivers dissect districts or sub-districts within an *awrajjja*. In Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajjja*, the Gädämba River divides Géra and Gešé districts, while Rätēmät River separates Lalomedir from Mamamedir. The administrative unit, known as Mänz, is separated from Gešé by Qäçäné (Wänçet) river.³⁴

The vegetation cover in the region also varies due to variations in landscape and climatic conditions.³⁵ In the plateau, indigenous trees such as *Woirra* (*Acacia Abyssinia*), *Ṭid* (*Juniperus*

²⁹ Singh, "Land Utilization in the Shewa...", pp.50-51.

³⁰ Amhara National Regional State Planning and Economic Development Bureau, "Basic Data of Region Three" (1994), p.43.

³¹ Mesfin, *Suffering Under God's...*, p.21.

³² *Ibid*, pp.27-28; Ahmad Hassen, "A Historical Survey of Ethnic Relations in Yefat and Temuga, Northeastern Šäwa, 1889-1974" (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, 1994), p.5).

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ Berhanu, "A Historical Study of ...", p.1.

³⁵ Singh, "Land Utilization in...", p.60.

Procera), *Zegba* (Podocappus), and others existed abundantly. However, nowadays, the natural vegetation has declined significantly and is confined largely to the compounds of historic churches and mosques. Some vegetation exists also in pockets of land, mostly along river valleys.³⁶ The main factor for the decline, is of course, human activity that takes the form of deforestation, unwise use of trees in the highlands, and overgrazing, and the burning of trees and bushes in the lowlands. Nowadays, in most places one sees eucalyptus trees only, which due to their capacity to quickly adapt to different climatic conditions have replaced indigenous trees.³⁷

In spite of the fact of deforestation and decline of indigenous trees, Northern Šäwa is one of a few areas in the country where there is still some indigenous forest reserves. Among this, the most important include Wäff-Waša Forest and Guassa Community Conservation Area. Wäff-Waša, which literally means a ‘cave of birds’ is known for its vast and dense Juniper forest and, hosts different wild animals. It is home to four endemic bird species, including the Ankobär Seren. It is located between the borders of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, and Tägulät *ena* Bulga *awrajjas* and occupies a total area of 16,925.5 hectares. It has been well protected for centuries.³⁸ Similarly, Guassa Community Conservation Area, which is located in Géramidir warada in Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja*, is home to different wild animals, including the red fox, chilada baboon, and a variety of species of rodents. It is also known for its long grass, locally called *guassa* (festuca Abyssinia), alpine, and juniper trees. To date it hosts 23% of indigenous mammals of Ethiopia and is home to one hundred fourteen bird species that represent 12% of the 861 bird species of the country.³⁹

³⁶*Ibid*, pp.66-68.

³⁷*Ibid*, p.60.

³⁸Amhara Culture, Tourism and Park Development Burue, *Discover Amhara...*”, pp.111-112.

³⁹ Biniam Admassu and Zelalem Tefera, *Manz-Guassa Community Conservation Area: Travel Guide Book* (Frankfurt Zoological Society, 2011.), pp.6-7, 11-12. In the past, animals like lion, elephant and gosh lived in North Šäwa. This was evident by the existence of places named after these animals particularly in Tägulät and Bulga *awrajja* such as *Zehon Ajenet Mariam* (Elephant bone Marian), *Goš Wuha* (gosh water) and others. For more refer Berhanu Abäbä,

Economically, the people in the region suffer from poverty and are vulnerable to frequent droughts and epidemics. The unpredictable weather conditions coupled with the subsistence economy in the highlands and lowlands have contributed to this state of affairs. Sometimes things are made worse by extravagant habits (such as preparing several feasts), particularly among the lowlanders. The highlanders engage in plough agriculture and the rearing of animals, notably sheep, whereas the lowlanders, particularly the sedentary population, involve in mixed farming. The pastoralists entirely practice animal husbandry. In the highlands, including Mänz *ena* Gešé, cultivable and grazing lands are fragmented and scarce. Agricultural output remains minimal due to soil erosion and infertility caused by excessive cultivation, over-grazing, and deforestation. The livestock population has steadily declined due to a shortage of grazing land.

In this region, peasant productivity is further threatened by extreme cold (*wurç*), crop diseases, and damage done by wild animals such as monkeys, apes, and varieties of birds.⁴⁰ The vegetation problem in particular, is of long-standing nature. Donald Levine, an American sociologist who studied the socio-cultural history and practices of the people of Mänz in the 1950s, indicates that the highlands of North Šäwa, including Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja*, are devoid of woods. According to him, the shortage of wood coupled with the availability of stone windy climatic condition forced the local people to build their houses out of stone. The local people have also been accustomed to dressing *gabb*i and a local cloth made of wool called *banna*, even during the day.⁴¹

“ቡልጋጋ፡የኢትዮጵያ ባህል ጥናት”(Bulga፡Ethiopian Cultural Study), *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol VI, No. I(1968),p.92.

⁴⁰ IES,MS.4840, Institute of Ethiopian Nationalities, “የመስክ ስራ ንዑስ ቡድን 3 በሰሜን ሸዋ እና በወሎ ክፍለ ሀገር ከሚያዝያ 22-30 1976ዓ.ም.”(Institute of Ethiopian Nationalities, Field Work Sub group 3 in North Shewa and Wällo Provinces from April 30-May 8, 1984),pp. 19-22.

⁴¹ Donald Levine, “On the History and Culture of Menz,” *Journal of Semetic Studies*, Vol IX, No.I (1964),pp.204-205. Donald Levine who used to live in Mänz for more than six months in 1965, comes up with a detailed sociological survey of the people of the region. He produces a book and an article on the history and culture of Mänz.

The lowlands of Yafat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*, on the other hand, are, in relative terms, better endowed with conditions that favor agricultural activity. The soil is relatively more fertile and well-drained. According to the 1984 survey conducted by the Institute of Ethiopian Nationalities, out of the total area of this *awrajja*, 40% was used for agriculture, 10% for grazing while 6% was covered with forests, and the rest 30%, was rugged.⁴² In this area, small-scale irrigation agriculture is common along river valleys. It is mainly found in *woina-däga* areas adjacent to Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja*. There are also two large-scale farming centers, namely the Šäwarobit National Prison Administration Center and the Šäwarobit National Tobacco Monopoly.

The two major rainy seasons, both in the highlands and lowlands, are *Mäher* (from May to September) and *Bälg* (from January to March). In the highlands, significant crops include beans, legumes, lentils, and wheat while in the lowlands, maize, sorghum, legumes, teff, and cotton are the predominant crops. Fruits and vegetables are also extensively produced in the lowlands. Livestock is also important in both cases.⁴³

North Šäwa is one of the most densely populated regions of the country.⁴⁴ The region hosts diverse ethnic and religious communities. The major ethnic groups include Amhara, Oromo, Afar, and Argobba. Stitz, in his work entitled “Amhara Resettlement of North Šäwa,” provides us with a geo-historical explanation of the settlement patterns of the region, with particular emphasis on the dominant Oromo-Amhara ethnic groups. According to him, the Oromo-Amhara settlements in the

⁴²IES,MS.4840, Institute of Ethiopian Nationalities, “የመስክ ስራ ንዑስ ቡድን 3 በሰሜን ሸዋ እና...” (Field Work Sub group 3 in North Šäwa and...), pp. 22-23.

⁴³*Ibid*, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁴ Central Statistical Authority, *Statistical Bulletin*, No.49, 1986; Central Statistical Authority, “Population Estimates of Regions, *Awrajjas*, *Waradas* and Towns”, *Statistical Bulletin*, No.101, 1992; Aklilu Kidanu and Tadesse Alemu, “Rapid Population Growth and Access to Farm Land : Coping Strategies in Two Peasant Associations in North Shewa”, in Dessalegn Rahmato(ed.), *Land Tenure and Land Policy in Ethiopia After the Dergue, Proceedings of the Second Workshop on the Land Tenure Projects, Working Paper No.8* (Addis Ababa University: Land Tenure Project, Institute of Development Research, 1994), pp.37, 40.

region tend to have different forms with marked spatial differentiation. He categorizes the settlement patterns in the region of Šäwa as a whole into three: the highlands except Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja*, Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja* itself, and territories below the eastern escarpment. He states that in the former case, in territories such as Märabété, Sälalé, Tägulät, and Bulga, the Oromo have settled on the plateaus and highlands while the Amhara occupy the valleys.⁴⁵ Stitz traces the patterns of settlement to the events of the remarkable 16th century, particularly to the wars between the Christian kingdom and the Sultanate of Adal under Ahmad Ibn Ibrahim and the subsequent population movement of the Oromo. During this time, the Amhara of the central highlands took refuge in inaccessible areas of deep valleys, whereas the plateau became open for the advancing Oromo. At the beginning, as the Oromo were pastoralists, they occupied the plain plateau to get easy access to water and pasture for their cattle. Unlike other areas, the Oromo did not settle in Mänz permanently; as a result, the Amhara here settled on elevated lands. The lowlands beneath the eastern escarpment, particularly in the districts of Anṭokia, Efrata, and Gedom are occupied by the Amhara while the Oromo occupy the lowlands to the east and southeast.⁴⁶ The Amhara in these three districts have close ties with the people of Mänz *ena* Gešé. These districts are densely populated because they have moderate climatic conditions and fertile soils.⁴⁷

Unlike Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja*, where one ethnic group (the Amhara) and form of Christianity (Orthodox) dominates, the lowlands of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga are heterogeneous both religiously and ethnically. The majority of the people are either Christians or Muslims, whereas the dominant

⁴⁵Stitz, “The Amhara Resettlement...”, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁶*Ibid*, pp. 3-5. Referring the works of Aṭemé Geyorgis, Ahmad states that the history of the Oromo resettlement in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* was closely associated with Aṭé Susänyos (1608-1632) who was grown within an Oromo family in Šäwa. Aṭé Susänyos encouraged Oromo resettlement in North Šäwa and assigned local Oromo governors. For more refer Ahmed Hassen, “የይፋት እና ጥሙጋ ታሪክ” (A History of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga), A magazine prepared for the 50th year anniversary of Abuye Primary School of Däbräsenä Town (1998E.C.), p.17.

⁴⁷ Stitz, “The Amhara Resettlement of...”, pp. 5-6.

ethnic groups are the Amhara, Oromo, Argobba and Afar. The Oromo, Afar, and Argobba are predominantly Muslim, while the Amhara are Christians. Besides ethnicity and religion there were also further differentiations that take the form of clans that had their own traditional systems of governance. The major clans of the Oromo's in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga are the Wäraabu, Wärra-kärräyu, Degguguru, and Ṭemuga while the Afar clans include Dukie-Modayetu, Abamélla, Haraméla, Asburi, and Bärhät.⁴⁸

The settlement pattern in the lowlands was somewhat mixed. There the Amhara, the Oromo, and the Argobba lived in proximity with each other to the extent that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. Of course, the close social and economic interaction was more evident in the towns and market places rather than in the rural areas; but nonetheless it was significant in rural settings too. The ruling elites of Wälasma dynasty intermarried with the sultans of Adal, whose rule extended from Awash to Lake Abbe.⁴⁹ By and large, however, geographically, the Oromo predominantly settled between Sänbäté and Čäffa-Robbit, bordering with the Amhara in the south and west and the Afar in the south east. The Afar border the Amhara around Rassa and its environs and have also settled east of the highway that runs from Addis Abäba to Dessé. The competition over resources is evident among the three ethnic groups, and the phenomenon has a direct effect on the natural environment.⁵⁰ The conflicts had not only an economic but also a cultural dimension which will be discussed in some length in this work.

⁴⁸ Informants: Ato Ṭerusäw Mäkonen, Ato Damṭäw Abäbe and Ato Mohammäd Hassän.

⁴⁹ Svein Ege, *Class, State and Power in Africa: A Case Study of the Kingdom of Shewa, Ethiopia about 1840* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996), pp.40-41; Merid Wolde-Aregay, "Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom, 1508-1708, With Special Reference to the Galla Migrations and their Consequences," Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1971., p.40.

⁵⁰ Informants: Ato Šäwayé Yeferu and Ato Anägagräñ Bezunäh, and Ato Ṭerusäw Mäkonen.

The Argobba, who claimed kinship with South Arabian immigrants of the 7th century A.D., were said to have been the earlier inhabitants of Yefat *ena Ṭemuga awrajja*. They are noted in the medieval history of the country, particularly following the establishment of Ifat (or Wifat/Awfat) sultanate in 1285. It was from here that the Argobba dispersed to other areas of the country, notably South Wällo and Harar.⁵¹ In some parts of the *awrajja*, the Argobba have intermingled with the Amhara and the Oromo, while at places like Gozé, Däwé, and Šonké, they live in compact settlements on the highlands.⁵²

Historically, the highlands of North Šäwa constituted the core of the Christian kingdom from the 13th to the 19th centuries. Likewise, the lowlands below the eastern escarpment were the center of the Medieval Islamic state commonly known as the Sultanate of Ifat which was an autonomous sultanate until it was reduced to a tributary status by the Christian kingdom under Amdä Šeyon (r. 1314-1344).⁵³ The Šäwan rulers strove to sustain their domination over the sultanate of Ifat due to its strategic position vis-a-vis the major trade routes of the region. Once subdued, Ifat also served as a launching pad for action against the people of the lowlands.⁵⁴ It is only after the reign of *Negus* Sahläselassé (1813-1847) that the region of Ifat would cease to be the focal point of attention or activity for the rulers of the Christian State.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Aklilu Asfaw, "A Short History of the Argobba," In: *Annales d'Ethiopie*. Volume XVI (2000), pp. 179;182-183. The place known as Yefat refers the lowland area below the eastern escarpment. The altitude declines to the Awash Valley in North Šäwa. For more refer Ernico Cerulli, *Islam: Yesterday and Today*, translated into English by Emran M. Waber (No place and Publisher, 2013), pp.345-347.

⁵² Amhara Culture, Tourism and Park Development Bureau, *Discover Amhara...*, p. 124.

⁵³ Cerulli, *Islam: Yesterday and ...*, pp.243-245, 345-347; 367.; Gascon, "Šäwa, Ethiopia's...", pp.86-87; Ahmad, "A Historical Survey of..." , p.1. The region is also a center of ancient churches and monasteries, mosques, teaching centers, sanctuaries and other historical sites. Some of the rulers of Solomonic dynasty from Abéto Yacob in the 16th to Emperor Menelik II in the 20th c traced their origin to different districts of Mänz. For more refer Gäbrähiwot Woldähawariat (*Fitawurari*), *አራዳ* (The Wise), (Addis Ababa, 1990 E.C.), p. 15.

⁵⁴ Ahmed, *የይፋት እና ጥሙጋ...* (A History of Yefat *ena Ṭemuga...*), p.18; Merid, "Southern Ethiopia and..." , pp.39-40.; see also Cerulli, *Islam: Yesterday and ...*, p. 367.

⁵⁵ Ahmed, *የይፋት እና ጥሙጋ...* (A History of Yefat *ena Ṭemuga...*), p.18.

In the meantime, however, the place of the former Sultanet of Ifat had already been taken by another Muslim entity called Adal which in first half of the 16th century managed to overwhelm the Christian Kingdom under the leadership of Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim Al-Gazi. The wars between his forces and the Christian state, as well as the subsequent movement of the Oromo into what is now eastern, central and southern Ethiopia, that weakened the Christian kingdom and forced it to move its political center to the region northwest of Lake Ṭana.⁵⁶ For several centuries afterwards, political instability and banditry prevailed as a result of growing conflict and political struggle in the central and northern parts of Ethiopia in subsequent years. The province of Šäwa, for instance, was a competing ground for different lords who often fought each other for domination all the way to the late 19th century.⁵⁷ Unlike rulers of other contemporary provinces, the rulers of Šäwa built a dynasty that continued to sustain itself in power and dominate a fairly extensive territory due to its strategic location vis-à-vis the trade routes running from the center to the coast in the east and its easy access to the resourceful areas of the south and southwest.⁵⁸

As a community or administrative unit, the origins of Mänz go back to the remotest past, probably to the times prior to the fourteenth century.⁵⁹ It was a core province of Šäwa and served as a political and administrative center as well as royal residence for some of the medieval rulers of the Christian state. The isolated *ambas* (the elevated flat-topped terrain) and the steep slopes of the region served

⁵⁶ Gascon, "Shewa: Ethiopia's Prussia...", pp.86-87; Volker Stitz. "The Amhara Resettlement of Northern Shewa during the 18th and 19th centuries," *Rural Africana*, 11, 1970), pp. 3-4; Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and...*, pp.1 and 4-5; Ahmed, "የይፋት ነፍሰ ጥሙጋ..." (A History of Yefat ena Ṭemuga...) , p.17.

⁵⁷ Heruy Woldeselassie, *የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ* (A History of Ethiopia) (1928), p.16.

⁵⁸ Donald Crummey, "The Violence of Tewodros," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. IX, No. II (1971), p. 108; Stitz. "The Amhara Resettlement of...", p.7. The dynasty consolidated its economy by controlling trade routes and collected revenues through local agents. Some of the major market centers of the region were Aleyu Amba, Abd-er-Rassul, Roghé, and Ambälaisiré. These market centers gradually evolved into towns and began to host permanent settlers and merchants, a fact had environmental implications. This was because demographic increase in these urban areas resulted in the rise demand for wood and other provisions. Trees were cleared for settlement, cultivation, construction and fuel.).

⁵⁹ Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo and the Christian Kingdom, 1300-1700* (London: James Curry, 2015), p.74.

as natural fortresses as well as refuge for both the peoples and political elites in times of crisis. A case in point was Ambässa Wedem, the last Aksumite king, who is said to have retreated to the highlands of Mänz and saved his life after his unsuccessful involvement in a court intrigue in the 10th century.⁶⁰ The *amba* of Afeqära, in what is known as Lalomedir, served as royal prison for centuries, all the way to the time of the Italian occupation in the 1930s.⁶¹

The environmental history of North Šäwa was partly associated with the military conquest and re-conquest of territories and associated developments going well into the ancient and medieval periods.⁶² *Ašé* Susänyos (r. 1608-1632), who grew up under the Boräna Oromo family of Wälläqa, for instance, devastated North Šäwa, particularly Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajjas*.⁶³ He attacked the

⁶⁰ Levine, “On the History and...”, pp.206-210; Levine, *Wax and Gold: Traditions and Innovations in Ethiopian Culture* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965), p. 30; Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and...*, pp.4-5; Ronald A. Reminick, “Manz” in Siegbert Uhlig(ed.) *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, Vol.III- He-N(Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz,2007),pp. 752-53.

⁶¹ Levine, “On the History and...”, pp.206-210; Levine, *Wax and Gold...*, p. 30; Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and...*, pp.4-5; Reminick, “Manz” in...”, pp. 752-53.

⁶² Shiha ad Din Ahmad bin Abdu al-Qader bin Salem, *Futuh Al-Habesha: The Conquest of Abyssinia in the 16th century*, Translated and edited by Paul Lester (Tsehay Publisher, 2003), pp.39-40, 47.; Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና የዱር አራዊት ሃብት ታሪክ” (A History of Forest and Wild Animals Resource in Ethiopian), 1976E.C.), pp.18-21 and 327-328.; Gebremarkos Woldeselassie, “The Forest Resources of Ethiopia: Past and Present,” *Journal of the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society: Walia*, Vol. 19(1998),pp.13-14; Ahmad, “A Historical Survey of...”,p.15; Merid, “ Southern Ethiopia and...” , pp.2-3; Assefa Kuru, “The Conquest and Environmental Degradation of Oromia” in *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol II, No. I and II (1995),pp.32-33, 38-39 and 42.; Taddese Tamrat, *Church and State, 1270-1527*(Oxford: Clarendon University Press,1972),p. 301.; see also Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (London: University of California Press, 1994),pp.32-34.; J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952),p.90.; Merid Woldearegay, “A Reappraisal of the Impact of Firearms in the History of Warfare in Ethiopia, 1500-1800” in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 14 (1980), pp. 116.; Heruy, “የኢትዮጵያ...” (A History of...), p.16 ; Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and...*,pp.4-5.; Siegfried Pausewang, *Peasants, Land and Society: A Social History of Land Reform in Ethiopia*(London: Weltforum Verlag, 1933),p.17. Parallel with the steady process of environmental degradation, the period witnessed efforts of Wild life and forest protection and development. Some of the medieval rulers of the country brought significant achievement in the protection of natural resources. King Dawit I(1375-1404E.C) was credited with the protection of forest reserves and wildlife by employing guards in different forest reserve areas of the country. The role of Emperor Zära Yacob was also great. He was the one that made the protection of forests as one of the priorities of the state. He demarcated dense forest areas such as Wäffwaša in North Šäwa, Jebat and Mänagäša in West Šäwa, and Yärar and then made them royal reserves with strict control. Oral tradition attributed that Wäff Waša forest was planted during his reign. For more see- Ministry of Agriculture, , “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና...” (A History of Forest and...), pp.18 -21; Gebremarkos, “The Forest Resources of...”,p.13.

⁶³ Ahmed, “የይፋት እና ጥሙጋ...” (A History of Yefat *ena* Temuga...), p.17..; Taddesse Zewolde, *የአቤትሁን ያዕቆብ ትውልድ እና አዋር ታሪክ*(A Genealogy and A Short History of Abethun Yacob)(Addis Ababa, 1948E.C.),p.11.

people of Mänz and Argobba, who resisted his authority and his Catholic religious zeal. In the early days of his reign, as revenge for their resistance, he ravaged the region in a series of military raids, attended by burning of villages, crops in the field, and forested areas where the rebels were believed to have lived and sheltered.⁶⁴ He also ruined and plundered the Orthodox Church and its holdings in many places. This happened mainly in Šäwa, Lasta, and parts of Gojjam. His reign was remembered for the destruction of some of the richest parts of the Šäwan region and the prevalence of instability, particularly in the Amhara-inhabited areas of the region.⁶⁵ Ašemä describes the ravages caused by the Emperor, in one of the major incidents in the history of Šäwa as follows, “...አገራቸውን አጠፋው። 40 የሚያህል ኮረፍታቸውን [ምሽጋቸውን] ሰበረው። ቤታቸውን ሁሉ በእሳት አቃጠለው።...ከቀወት ቆላ ጀምሮ ከጀውሃ ጀምሮ ይፋትን አጥፍቶ እስከ ከሰም ድረስ ሰርማት ወጣ...መዝዝ ከሚባል ስፍራ ከረመ።”⁶⁶ (trans: [He] destroyed their country, broke about forty of their fortresses and burnt houses. [He] ruined Yefat starting from Qäwot Qolla, Jäwuha as far as Kässäm and proceeded on Sermat. [He] stayed in a place called Mägäzäz [for some time]). Märüd points out that Susänyos destroyed the defensive of the Amhara and thereby facilitated the advance of the Oromo to what is to day Central and Northern Ethiopia.⁶⁷

After having been destroyed by the military forces of the lowlanders in the 16th century and the subsequent turmoil and instability, the region known as Mänz is said to have been rebuilt by three notable individuals whose names have permanently been etched in the local memory namely Lalo,

⁶⁴ Bairu Tafla (ed. And trans). *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work: History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Shewa* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1987), p.460. see also Taddesse, *የአቤትሁን ያዕቆብ ...*, (A Genealogy and A Short History of Abethun...) p.11.; see also Merid, “A Reappraisal of the Impact...”, pp. 116-117.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp., 230, 261-262, 470-71).

⁶⁶ Bairu (ed. And trans). *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work...*, p.247.

⁶⁷ Merid, “Southern Ethiopia and...”, p.230.

Mama and Géra. These historical personages after whom the territories of Lalomidir, Mamamidir and Géramidir are named respectively lived in the 17th century. There are two different versions as to where these personages came from and what they had set out to do. The first version says that they came from Gondär appointed by the king of Gondär to administer the region of Mänz subsequent to the war of Imam Ahmed and the Oromo population movement. The other says they were native to the region but had left for Gondär to shelter during the conquest of the Imam Ahmed and came back after the end of the war.⁶⁸ The tradition further states that one king of Gondär, not identified by name had a horse racing competition among the three individuals so as to determine the ruler of Mänz. One full day of racing competition is said to have taken place from Adabay. Géra proved to be powerful, finishing first, and thus controlled larger areas than the other two.⁶⁹

Practically, the former political status of the region of Mänz, however, was restored with the rise of another strong individual, called Nägassi Keristos Wäräda Qal (1696-1703). Nägassi emerged from a district called Angaça, in Géramidir in Northwest Mänz. He united different territories in the region and made Mänz champion of Šäwa politics in subsequent years. Taking the title of a prince of the newly established Šäwa dynasty, he expanded his domain to the south and southeast through mobilizing the people of Mänz *ena* Gešé. To advance his expansionist policy, Nägassi established a friendly relationship with the rulers of Wällasma dynasty of Ifat, who were themselves threatened by the Oromo.⁷⁰ The power of Nägassi grew from time to time, attracted the attention of Ašé Iyasu I (r.1682-1706) and became his loyal partner. He settled disputes among different units in the region. The success of Nägassi and the recognition he obtained from the

⁶⁸ Berhanu, “A Historical Study of land...”,p.16.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*,pp.16-17; see also Levine, “On the History and...”,pp.206-210.

⁷⁰ Levine, “On the History and...”,pp.206-210; see also Berhanu, A Historical Study of land...”,pp.16-17; Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and...*,pp.6-8.; Denis Nosnitsm, “Kingdom of Shewa” in Siegbert Uhlig(ed.) *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, Vol.IV- O-X(Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz,2010),p.556.

Gondärian royalty enabled him and his dynasty to have a firm position and made it possible for them to rule the kingdom of Šäwa all the way to the reign of Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913).⁷¹

The rulers of the Šäwan dynasty from the time of Nägassi (1696-1703) to Asfawässän (1774-1808) ruled the kingdom with the title of *Meridazmač* while Wässänsägäd(1808-1812) took the title of *Ras*. Sahläselassé (1813-1847) assumed the title of *negus* and introduced a new administrative structure that would continue to operate to the late 19th century. The latter also established strong diplomatic relations with the contemporary rulers of Britain and France. He boosted the glory of the Šäwan dynasty in the country. Nevertheless, it was Emperor Menelik II who is believed to have finalized the formation of modern Ethiopia with its territorial limits as an empire ran from various locations of Šäwa such as Ankobär, Angoläla, Enṭoṭo, and Addis Abäba.⁷²

Sources indicate that the rise of the Šäwan dynasty in the late 17th century and its subsequent expansion brought about significant changes on the natural environment both in the Šäwa kingdom itself and the southern parts of the country in general.⁷³ This was due to the fact that territorial expansion was accompanied by the establishment of new settlements, the emergence of garrison towns and the expansion of agriculture, and the introduction of a new land holding system and administration.⁷⁴ These events gradually led to the reduction of vacant lands, the decline of fallowing, the clearing of vegetation cover for cultivation and for settlement. The problem was further exacerbated by the inefficient utilization of wood. The decline in vegetation cover meant a decline in biodiversity and environmental degradation, which ultimately brought a decline in

⁷¹ Levine, “On the History and...”, pp.206-210; Berhanu, “A Historical Study of land...”, p.18; Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and...*, pp.6-9.

⁷² Heruy, *የኢትዮጵያ* (The Eve...)(1921E.C.), pp.58-59.

⁷³ Assefa, “The Conquest and...”, p. 32. Ege, *Class, State and...*, p.66.

⁷⁴ Tekalign Woldemariam, “A City and Its Hinterlands: The Political Economy Land Tenure, Agriculture and Food Supply for Addis Ababa, 1887-1974”(PhD Dissertation in History, Boston, 1995), pp.47-55; Stitz. “The Amhara Resettlement of...”, p.6. See also Assefa, “The Conquest and...”, p.38.

productivity. Below, I will try to discuss how the territorial expansion of Nāgassi and his successors to the lowlands of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga and its environs in the south and southwest affected the natural environment.

Establishing his power base at Ayené, Nāgassi drove out Käräyu Oromo that had settled between the Amhara and the Argobba settlements to the Awash valley.⁷⁵ Within a short period of time, facing little or no resistance from local people, he controlled Kobo, Māngest, and Robi in the north and pushing in the south as far as the Awadi River and Ṭarmabär.⁷⁶ At the beginning, Nāgassi's campaign was ostensibly to rescue Wāllasma Mohamād of Yefat from attacks by the Oromo. But later, its economic significance for his principality became apparent. The conquered land was fertile and attractive to potential settlers from among his followers, specifically from Mānz. Shortly after the campaign, Nagassi provided extensive forested, bush, and grazing lands as well as lands in deal for grain production. He also constructed churches and installed the replica of the Ark of Covenant that were kept in different areas of Mānz during the war with Imam Ahmād, including a church dedicated to St. Mary at Ayené.⁷⁷ Moreover, Nāgassi introduced a new landholding and administration system different from the *rist* system of Mānz that made the local people of the area landless and marginal. He gave huge tracts of land called *rims* to the clergy and what came to be known as *gaša* land to his warriors, servants, and followers under different rubrics (such as

⁷⁵ Stitz, "The Amhara Resettlement of..." , pp.6-7.

⁷⁶ Bairu (ed. And trans). *Aṣemä Giyorgis and His Work...*, p. 504.

⁷⁷ Stitz, "The Amhara Resettlement of..." , p.6.

gendäbäl) by pushing away local people.⁷⁸With this, his followers from Mänz became owners of *rist* land in their homelands and of *gaša* lands in the newly conquered areas simultaneously.⁷⁹

As I have discussed above, the pacification of new lands, the establishment of new settlements, the building of houses, and the expansion of cultivation depleted the vegetation cover. Forests, bushes, and grasslands were converted to cultivated fields; there was also the increasing demand for firewood. On the other hand, the building of churches relocated burial places from around villages, hill sides, and agricultural fields to church cemeteries. Thus, former burial places and ritual sites that had been protected from intervention gradually lost their sacred significance, exposing them to destruction.⁸⁰

The successor of Nägassi, Sebesté or Sebestianos (1705-1720), continued the expansionist policy of his father. It is said that in his will, Nägassi entrusted him to occupy new lands in order to sustain his followers. He did not grant him a piece of land.⁸¹Soon having assumed the title of *Meredazmač*, Sebesté established his capital at Doqaqit, he pushed the Käräyu Oromo of Yefat *ena* Temuga further to the east and southeast. He began to cultivate the virgin lands as far as the Awadi River. Side by side with territorial and agricultural expansion, in the period of Sebeseté, new settlements and towns were established.⁸²

⁷⁸Bairu (ed. And trans). *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work...*,pp. 500-502; Tekalign, “ A City and Its Hinterlands...”,pp.47-55. *Rist* is a hereditary ownership of land with an enaliENable right attached to the land. *Gaša mārēt* is a kind of ‘free holding’ which is subject to alienation when the person is found guilty of crime.It does not include collecting and administrating taxes. These rights were rather reserved for a *melkegna*.

⁷⁹ Stitz. “The Amhara Resettlement of...”, p.7; Bairu (ed. And trans). *Aseme Giyorgis and His Work...*,pp. 500-502.

⁸⁰ Dechassa Abebe, “A Socio-Economic History of North Shewa, Ethiopia, 1880s-1935,” (University of South Africa, PhD Dissertation in History,2015),p. 51; Informants: Ato Aṭelaw Assamnāw andAto Awuraris Aragaw interviewed on 16 and 18/02/11 respectively.

⁸¹Heruy, *ወላይ* (The Eve),p.56.

⁸²Bairu (ed. And trans). *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work...*,p. 506; Heruy, *ወላይ* (The Eve),p.56.

Abbiyé (1718-1743), the third ruler of the Šäwa dynasty, consolidated the economic and political power of the dynasty by incorporating new and resourceful areas to the south and southeast of Šäwa. Abbiyé shifted the seat of the dynasty to Hara Amba and began to extend the territory of his predecessors further by arranging the cultivation for the lands as far as the Ayrara River in the southeast of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga. He also gave areas such as Gäfegäf as *rim* to the clergymen coming from Mänz. He provided the lowlands as far as Bärähät and Kässäm to his ally Amadé, the then leader of Wallasma dynasty.⁸³

The time of Abbiyé was also remembered for the influx of a large number of people from the northern parts of Ethiopia, particularly from Bégémedir and Amhara-Saint to Northern Šäwa, including Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*.⁸⁴ Tradition attests that at one point, Ašé Iyassu II, (1730-1755) the son of Bakaffa (nicknamed Agaldäm), launched a campaign against Abbiyé because he had become insubordinate to the king. In the course of his military expedition, the forces of Iyassu II got the support of the people of Gešé, Anşokia, Efrata, and Gedem, and some from Mänz. The Emperor battled with the forces of Abbiyé at Ayené, the capital of Nägassi, in 1737/38. Eventually, Abbiyé was victorious, and most of the soldiers and servants were captured. He also captured lots of arms and other resources. This famous victory against the Gondärian Emperor was heard in different parts of the country and thus attracted a large number of people to the region.⁸⁵ The immigrants were attracted by the presence of a vast amount of good land with high potential for agricultural activity and partly by the sympathy of king and his encouragement of crafts production. The rise of demography gradually created environmental pressure because the settlers

⁸³Bairu (ed. And trans). *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work*...,p. 506.

⁸⁴ Stitz. "The Amhara Resettlement of..."p.7.

⁸⁵ Bairu (ed. and trans). *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work*...,p. 512; see also Tekletsadik Mekuria, **አጼ ቴዎድሮስ እና የኢትዮጵያ አፕሮፕሪዎች** (Addis Ababa: Kuraz printing Press, 1981),pp.163-64.).

cleared grass and woodlands for settlement, for cultivation, construction, and energy supply. The craftsmen who undertook the production of different agricultural tools like axes and scythes facilitated the process of deforestation.⁸⁶ In describing the situation, Aṣemä Giyorgis says that

“...የተማረኩትንም አማሮች እንደ ዘመድ አደረጋቸው፡፡...የግንደበል መሬት እና መልከኝነትን...ሰጡ፡፡...የእነዚህን ምርኮኞች መከበር አማራ ሁሉ በሰማ ጊዜ ብዙ አማሮች በአቡዬ ጊዜ መጡ፡፡ በመልካም ተቀበላቸው፡፡ በዘመኑም ብዙ ፈላሾች አይሁዶች ገቡለት፡፡...መጥረቢያ፣ ምሳር፣ ማጭድ ሰሩለት፡፡ የይፋትን ደን በዚህ መንጥሮ አቀናው፡፡ ማረሻ፣ ዶማ፣ ወገል ሰሩለት በዚያ ያርስ ነበር፡፡”⁸⁷

[He] treated the Amhara captives just like [his] relatives. [He] provided them with *Gendäbäl* land and *Mälkäñenät*. When the respect given to the Amhara captives was heard, many Amharas came [to Šäwa] during the reign of Abbiyé. He welcomed them. In his time, many Fälaša Jews entered his service. ...No one served [him] like them. They made him axes, mattocks and scythe with which [he] cleared and pacified the land of Yefat. They made him ploughshares, pickaxe, and *wagäl*. He had land cultivated with these tools.

Amhayäsus (1743-1744), the successor of Abbiyé, continued the legacy of his predecessors and consolidated the Šäwan dynasty. He established the towns of Sälälehula and Astiti, and made his capital at Ankobär. He defeated the Käräyu in Yefat, established an extended territory as far as Menjar, and began fighting with the surrounding Tuléma, the Boräna branch of Oromo, for the rest of his life. The whole of Mänz, Tägulat, Abiču, Gälan, Wayu, and Jerru paid tribute to *Märedazmač* Amhayäsus. It is remembered that Amhayäsus struggled against the Abiču and the Gälan in the south and southwest and the Käräyu in the east. He granted land to his followers, particularly from Mänz and Tägulat as *gendäbäl*, *mälkäña*, and *gäbbar* from Qundi to the Çaçä River.⁸⁸

⁸⁶Bairu (ed. And trans). *Aṣemä Giyorgis and His Work...*,p. 512.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸*Ibid.*,pp. 514-520. Çaçä was a border of the Amhara settlements from the Oromo during the time of Amhayäsus.

The following princes of Šäwa, Asfawossän (1774-1808), Wossänsägäd (1808-1812) and Sahläselassé (1813-1947) further stretched the domain of the Šäwan dynasty. They fought and, to some extent, integrated the Käräyu in the northeast and the Boräna in the southwestern directions. From his court at Ankobär, Asfawossän turned his face in the northeasterly direction and pushed into Anşokia, Efrata, and Gedom. After three years of fighting, he moved to the west and the southwest and subjugated Märabété, Morät, and Abiču. In all these areas, Asfawossän encouraged settlement and agriculture.⁸⁹Wossänsägäd claimed the title of *Ras* for the first time and shifted his court to Qundi, a strategic position vis-à-vis the surrounding Oromo from all directions. Though his period was short-lived and challenged by severe famine, he tried to strengthen the administrative organization of Šäwa.⁹⁰

It was, however, during the reign of *Negus* Sahläselassé (1813-1847) that the Šäwa dynasty started to have a firm ground, having established a well-organized administrative structure that continued to the late 19th century. Our sources indicate that he organized the territory into four units namely Yefat, Mänz, Ankobär and Märabété. Each had a number of sub-districts.⁹¹He also established marriage alliances with the Tuläma Oromo, and benefited from exploiting the internal conflicts among the Oromo themselves, particularly between the Abiču and the Gälan. Though *Negus* Sahläselassé was able to subjugate Oromo of Gälan, Gidda, Aga, Wara Ilamu, Gäru, Wayyu and Sälalé by siding with Abiču, he could not permanently put down their resistance. For instance, Meteko, his appointee over the Tuläma Oromo, rebelled and mobilized the Oromo against the king. Meteko launched expeditions against the Amhara settlements and devastated areas as far as Qundi. In the campaigns, the people of Mänz and Tägulät were killed, their villages were burnt, and

⁸⁹*Ibid*, pp.520-524.

⁹⁰*Ibid*,pp. 528-540.

⁹¹ Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and...*,p. 15.

properties looted. The attacks and counter attacks devastated the area.⁹²Krapf, who accompanied the king's army, provided an eyewitness account of the devastating military expeditions of *Negus* Sahläselassé of Šäwa to the south. In one instance Krapf remarked that the king did not care "... to know the names of [Oromo] villages [along his way], as they are destroyed almost in every expedition".⁹³

The reign of *Negus* Sahläselassé was also marked by the influx of a large number of craftsmen from Northern Ethiopia to Šäwa, another development that brought about ecological stress. The king encouraged and sponsored crafts production and provided craftsmen with land for their upkeep. The high iron-ore deposits around Čača and Mänz helped craftsmen make agricultural tools in large quantities, thus facilitating deforestation. This was due to the fact that first, iron smelting was done using charcoal. Second, demographic increases and the production of agricultural tools caused the expansion of agriculture at the cost of the natural vegetation cover.⁹⁴

Before the rise and expansion of the Šäwan state, the lowlands of Yefat *ena* Temuga *awrajja* were sparsely populated. They had rich soil and water resources and moderate climatic conditions. Much of the land was unsettled and covered by forests and bushes. Farming was confined to middle altitudes areas adjacent to Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja*, namely Anşokia, Efrata *ena* Gedem districts.⁹⁵ Däčassa attributes the stable ecological condition of the area to the eco-friendly socio-cultural practices of the earlier settlers (the pastoralists). He argues that the Oromo pastoralists in particular

⁹²Bairu (ed. And trans). *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work...*,pp. 528-540.

⁹³C.W.Isenberg and J.L.Krapf, *Detailing Their proceedings in the Kingdom of Shewa and Journeys in Other Parts of Abyssinia in the Years 1839, 1840, 1841 and 1842*(London, 1843),p.197. Krapf together with Isenberg visited the kingdom of Šäwa in 1939 and the former stayed until 1942 traveling to different areas of the country. Both Isenberg and Krapf are members of a church missionary society. In his stay, Krapf learnt Amharic and wrote dictionary and later they published their observation in a journal.

⁹⁴ Dechassa, A Socio-economic....", p.55.

⁹⁵*Ibid*,pp.52-53.

lived in harmony with nature. They believed in the sacredness of nature and thus protected forests and rivers. They planted and protected trees particularly in and around religious and burial centers.⁹⁶This practice of the local people, however, gradually changed because most of them soon settled down and adopted farming from the highlands. The conversion of the land into cultivation obviously meant a decline in vegetation.⁹⁷ Besides, increasing demographic pressure meant increasing demand for land and for water resources. However, it was the re-conquest of this area by the Šāwan highland Amhara starting in the late 17th century that led to a significant transformation in the environmental condition of the area.⁹⁸This was due to the fact that, as I have mentioned before, military conquest was followed by settlement and exploitation of the land, which soon led not only to the exhaustion of wood but also to general environmental degradation.⁹⁹

Unlike the lowlands, the highlands of North Šāwa, including Mānz ena Gešé awrajja, were already degraded due to long-standing and dense settlement. Population pressure, the fragility of the soil and the vulnerability of the topography of the area to erosion, as well as the lack of political instability contributed to that outcome.¹⁰⁰Additional contributing factors included overgrazing, inappropriate and inadequate agricultural tools, the practices of slash and burn, and flooding in the lowlands.¹⁰¹Demographic rise and the decline in resources manifested itself in the form of conflict over resources among sedentary farmers and pastoralists. The sedentary agriculturalists pushed the agricultural frontier zone down to the pastoral inhabited areas, and reciprocally, the pastoralists

⁹⁶*Ibid*,pp.50-53.

⁹⁷ Stanislaw Chojnacki, "Forests and Forestry Problems as seen by Some Travellers in Ethiopia," in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. I, No. I (1963), pp. 32-33.

⁹⁸ Dechassa, "A Socio-Economic..." ,pp.50-53; Ege, *Class, State and...* ,p.66.

⁹⁹*Ibid*,pp.50-53; For more understanding of the indigenous knowledge of the Oromo about the natural environment refer Assefa, "The Conquest and..." ,p.31; Mohammed, *The Oromo of...* ,p.53.

¹⁰⁰ Singh, "Land Utilization in..." ,pp. 60,79

¹⁰¹*Ibid*.,p. 60.

came into areas of sedentary agriculturalists with their cattle in search of water and pasture, mainly from March to May every year and during times of drought.¹⁰²

The geopolitical importance of Šäwa in general and North Šäwa in particular meant that the area was a major center of politics and government. Scholars argue that the shift of the capital from the north to the center of Šäwa was induced partly by ecological stress and foreign invasions in the north. Šäwa was both resourceful and strategic due to its location vis-à-vis the resourceful areas of the south on the one hand and the coast on the other. As a result, the region saw intense interaction between demographic, political, and social forces for centuries. Territorial competition and expansion, banditry, inter- and intra-communal conflict, foreign aggression, and demographic pressure worsened the conditions in the area and speeded up environmental deterioration.¹⁰³

Elite types in the region engaged in prolonged military confrontations against external invasion as well as so against each other to enlarge territory and defend their domains. The overall effect of these inter- and intra-state conflicts and military engagements were not limited to their cost to human life and material property. It also caused population displacement and the burning of wood, grass, villages, and crops, as well as the disappearance of wildlife. War also engendered food security, and thus resulted in malnutrition and even famine. It exacerbated material insecurity, which even in normal times, was always there. In some cases, the incidence of crop failures due to drought or other factors triggered competition and conflicts over resources that ultimately ended up with even more exhaustion of resources, and thereby further impoverishment of the

¹⁰² Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsufekad, Ato Šäwayé and Ato Yeṭena Masrāša.

¹⁰³ Mikael Stahil, "Environmental Degradation and Political Constraints in Ethiopia" in Andres Hjørt et al (eds.), *Ecology and Politics : Environmental Stress and Security in Africa* (Motala: Scandenvian Institute of African studies, 1989), pp.181-182; Sven Robinson, "Environmental Stress and Conflict in Ethiopian History: Looking for Correlations" in *Ambio*. Vol.XX, No.V (1991), pp.180-182.

environment.¹⁰⁴ In more recent times, the effect of conflict would go to the extent of hindering development projects, reorienting much of state revenue to military activities, endangering business activities, and sometimes blocking aid interventions at times of crisis.¹⁰⁵ The Šäwan province as a whole was not an exception in this regard. Though the kingdom of Šäwa was far from the Imperial politics of Gondär in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was not politically as stable as it is often assumed to have been.¹⁰⁶ During the *Zämäna Mäsafent* (1769-1855) and before, the kingdom of Šäwa was ruled by a number of lords who fought each other for domination. Of course, theoretically, and at times in reality, these lords were tributaries to the kings at Gondär.¹⁰⁷

As it is very well known, the rise of Emperor Téwodros II (1855-1868) brought an end to the independent kingdom of Šäwa in 1855. The Emperor launched a military campaign in the region in a bid to create a unified and centralized state.¹⁰⁸ In October 1855, he crossed the border of Šäwa in the north at a place called Qéṭéma, in Gešé district, and marched to Ankobär, the then seat of the Šäwa ruling dynasty. As it marched into Šäwa, the army cut down trees to make temporary camps and for supply of firewood. Besides, the pack animals which carried supplies are said to have destroyed crops in peasant fields and turned grasslands into wastelands. The soldiers looted

¹⁰⁴ Robinson, "Environmental Stress and...", pp.180-182; W.P. Ezaza and Haroub Othman, "Political Instability and Ecological Stress in Eastern Africa" in Andres Hijort et al(eds.), *Ecology and Politics: Environmental Stress and Security in Africa* (Motala: Scandnavian Institute of African Studies, 1989), pp.131-133) see also Gascon, "Shawa, Ethiopia's...", pp.89-90; Mesfin, *Suffering Under God's...*, p.19; David Chapple, "Protestant Missionaries in Ethiopia: Gobat, Isenberg and Krapf", A Paper prepared for the Third Annual Seminar of the Department of History (Bahirdar, 1985), p.81.

¹⁰⁵ Beletech Deresse, "Agricultural Production and Food Crisis in the Horn of Africa," *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol.II, No. I and II, (1995), p.51.

¹⁰⁶ Chapple, "Protestant Missionary...", pp.32-33.

¹⁰⁷ Heruy, *የኢትዮጵያ... (A History of...)*, p.16; Mesfin, *Suffering Under God's...*, p.19.; Dechassa, *The Socio-economic...*, p.49. The king at Gondär collected different tributes mainly of cattle by assigning a local tax collector called *Šähafé-lam from the region*. Local tradition recounts other types of taxes that were also collected from different parts of the region. According to the tradition, from Aganča they collected 50 saddles, from Huludäha 50 poor, from Aftänät 50 rugs and from Gädänbo 50 jars of drink.

¹⁰⁸ Crummey, "The Violence of...", pp. 108, 111; Tekletsadik, *አጼ ቴዎድሮስ እና...* (Addis Ababa: Kuraz printing Press, 1981), p.163.

whatever they wanted from the peasants and burnt villages believed to have been home to rebels.¹⁰⁹As he did during his campaign to Wällo earlier, the Emperor meted out serious punishment against his soldiers who were found guilty of maltreating and plundering local peasants in Šäwa, even to the extent of amputating arms and legs.¹¹⁰

Following the defeat of Šäwa the Emperor returned to Mäqedäla after appointing *Märe'edazmač* Hailé Hailämäläkot on the Šäwa throne and taking the young boy, Menelik, the later King of Kings, as captive. Soon after that, however, a rebellion broke out again, and the Emperor was forced to come back and undertake another campaign against the rebels. His force destroyed villages and settlements in North Šäwa all over again. This happened during 1859-1860. During this time, internally, Šäwa was weakened by a veritable civil war between two members of the Šäwan ruling class, Säifu and Bāzabeh. However, the Emperor carried out what is remembered as an indiscriminate attack against the Šäwans. His troops also did what they had done earlier, like burning villages and crops, looting peasant households, and cutting trees on their way back and forth. Though the people of Mänz and Yefat did not join the resistance, the army of the Emperor engaged in the killing of people and destruction of the environment, both to meet its daily needs as well as to frighten the people.¹¹¹A protracted fight took place between the Emperor and Säifu, the latter taking refuge in different places in Märabété, Tägulat, and Yefat. All the engagements

¹⁰⁹ Bairu(ed.). *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work...*, pp. 548-574; Informants: Ato Tässäma Kābādä, Ato Ešātu Wodajénäh and Ato Hailé Habtāmariam.

¹¹⁰ Crummey, "The Violence of...", pp. 110-112.

¹¹¹ Bairu(ed.). *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work...*, pp. 548-574; see also Tekletsadik, **አጼ ቴዎድሮስ እና...** (Ašé Tewodros and Ethiopian...), pp.171-172.

and chases had environmental implications.¹¹² The Emperor's forces, for instance, are reported to have cut down almost half of the trees at Ankobär before the burning of the town.¹¹³

What happened in Šäwa during the 18th and 19th centuries was very much in keeping with what happened in Imperial Ethiopia in previous times. The army itself was not only a burden on society but also spearheaded the misuse of resources. Throughout the Medieval period and after, even in peacetime, the army depended on free provisions called *dergo* supplied by the peasants. During military movements, they did a lot of damage to the environment in the areas they marched through. Around their temporary camps, the soldiers would cut down trees (regardless of age) for firewood. A kind of insecurity prevailed among the civilians and warriors alike about the rampaging acts of the soldiery. Peasants were not sure whether they would enjoy the fruit of their labor or their investments. Those who resisted the heavy hands of the soldiery were exposed to harassment, mistreatment, and looting of their property or the despoliation of their houses and crops. At times of war, almost always, the routes through which the soldiers would pass as well as places where they would be quartered would be ruined. Thus, the frequent expeditions to crush rebellions or incorporate new areas, as well as counterattack by resisting forces caused significant changes to the landscape through the burning of forests and bush as well as of villages.¹¹⁴

So far, I have discussed how socio-economic and political forces affected the natural environment. As environmental change is the ultimate result of the above factors, it took a long time to be felt. This makes the documentation of the process somewhat difficult. However, traveller reports and

¹¹²Bairu(ed.). *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work...*, pp. 574-576.

¹¹³ James McCann, "The Plow and the Forest: Narratives of Deforestation in Ethiopia, 1840-1992" *Environmental History*, Vol.2, No.2, (1997), p.146.

¹¹⁴Richard. A. Caulk, "Armies as Predators: Soldiers and Peasants in Ethiopia c. 1850-1935", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1978), pp. 463-467; Richard Caulk, "The Army and Society in Ethiopia" in *Ethiopianist Notes*, Vol.II, No.III (1978), pp.17-23.

contemporary records of chroniclers provide some clues. These sources range in coverage over several centuries of time, at least from 16th to 20th centuries. At various points during this period, European travelers who came to Ethiopia for the purpose of missionary work, exploration, colonial enterprise, or scientific work have reported on the livelihoods and cultures of the people and the conditions of the natural environment they had witnessed. They recorded their observations as well as oral information they collected in the field, mainly from court and provincial elites.¹¹⁵

The Portuguese priest Francisco Alvarez, the earliest Portuguese traveller to Ethiopia, was one of them. He led the delegation to the court of Atsé Libnedengel in 1520 and stayed in the country for about five years. He documented the livelihoods of the people and the conditions of the natural environment based on his observations during his travells from the coast to the interior, from Massawa through Tegray, Angot, Amhara, and finally to Šäwa. According to him, all along his path right and left, as well as in Šäwa, there were dense forests and thorny bushes that hosted varieties of wild animals, including elephants, lions, and leopards. He says that the density of the forests was such that it was difficult to see through them and locate villages and settlers around. It was also somewhat scary to travel on the route for fear of attack by wild animals, even during the day.¹¹⁶ Only half a century later, however, Manoel D. Almeida, another Portuguese envoy who came to Ethiopia in 1620s, witnessed the scarcity of trees in the highlands.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Deresse Ayenachew, "Environmental Descriptions of European Travellers in Ethiopia, 16th-19thCenturies," *Climatic and Environmental Challenges: Learning from the Horn of Africa*. Addis Ababa: Center Français Des Etudes Ethiopiennes (2016), p.1.

¹¹⁶ Francisco Alvares, *Narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Abyssinia during the years 1520-1527*, London: The Hakluyt Society (1881), p.111. See also Deresse, "Environmental Descriptions of...", pp.2-4.

¹¹⁷ Manoel de Almeida, *Some Records of Ethiopia, 1593-1646*, Translated and edited by C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford (London: Hakluyt Society, 1954), p.48. The Original document is in Portuguese and I use the English version translated by C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford.

Later on, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, other European travelers, mainly British and French, visited the kingdom of Šäwa. Most of them passed through different districts of the kingdom and left important notes about the landscape, settlement patterns, people's livelihoods, and ecological conditions. Almost all of the travelers unanimously describe the highlands of the kingdom of Šäwa as treeless and attest that there was little land left uncultivated.¹¹⁸ For instance, two French travelers, Lefebvre and Soleillet, who visited the kingdom of Šäwa in 1843 and 1883, respectively, describe the highlands of Central Ethiopia as barren, with a few trees mostly confined on isolated pockets of land. Four decades after, Lefebvre and Soleillet confirmed that information stating that the Šäwa plateau looked like desert, with no vegetation cover.¹¹⁹ C. Johnson, on his way to Ankobär through Angoläla and Aliyuamba, also observed degraded terrain in the highlands, particularly around royal residences and market places.¹²⁰

Traveling through different parts of Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja*, from 1839-1842, Johann Ludwig Krapf observed the absence of big trees in the highlands. According to him, trees were rare and confined to church compounds, and river valleys.¹²¹ Harris, in the early 1840s, explains the shortage of timber in the highlands of Šäwa, while the lowlands were covered with various indigenous trees. The forests hosted different big wild animals and birds. He continues to state that much of the lowlands were uncultivated and sparsely populated. Sedentary agriculturalists in the

¹¹⁸ Stanislaw Chojnacki, "Forests and Forestry Problems as seen by Some Travellers in Ethiopia," in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, (Vol. 1, No. 1, 1963), p. 33).

¹¹⁹ Cited in Chojnacki, "Forests and Forestry...", p. 33.

¹²⁰ Charles Johnson, *Travels in the Southern Abyssinia Through The Country of Adal to the Kingdom of Shewa* (London, 1844), pp. 56, 63-64 and 352.

¹²¹ C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf, *Detailing Their...*, pp. 298-300, 304-313. Isenberg left for Egypt soon while Krapf stayed in the country from 1839-1942. Both Isenberg and Krapf are members of a church missionary society. In his stay, Krapf learnt Amharic and wrote dictionary and later they published their observation in a journal. For more information about the role of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in preserving forests and forests resources in its long history refer Alemayehu Wassie, "የደን እና ብዝሃ ሂወት ጥበቃ በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን" (Forest and Biodiversity Conservation in Ethiopian Orthodox Twahedo Church), *Journal of Ethiopian Church Studies*, No.3(2013), 43.).

lowlands of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*, settled on elevated areas adjacent to Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja*.¹²²In the same year, Beke, who visited the lowlands of Northeast Šäwa, such as Gedem, and Efrata, observed the existence of fertile soils and small-scale irrigation agriculture and thick acacia trees along the valley.¹²³In the 1950s, Mooney, a British forest expert who reconstructed the past vegetation cover of the highlands of Ethiopia using primary documents, remarks that sadly there was progressive decline of forest resources in the country.¹²⁴

Most of the travelers agree that although vegetation cover started to decline from long time ago, changes in the environment with consequences for the climate was felt only gradually. In relative terms, even in the 18th and early 19th centuries, rainfall was abundant, and there was no critical shortage of wood supply in much of the central highlands of Ethiopia.¹²⁵Similarly, in the lowlands, significant change came about only since the late 1930s with the building of the highway from Addis Abäba to Asmara and the increased in-migration to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga. This development triggered the expansion of agriculture.¹²⁶

McCann argues that European travelers reached “alleged conclusions” about vegetation cover of the whole of the country in general and the kingdom of Šäwa in particular on the basis of unrepresentative or rough data. He says that they observed and collected data only as far as they could see from where they stood somewhere along the routes of travel, or from royal residences and their surroundings. Remote areas which were often out of their observation were either

¹²² Cornwallis Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia*. Vol III(London: Longman, Brown,1844), pp.270-273.

¹²³ C. Beke, *Diary of Journey in Abyssinia, 1840-43*, Vol I(London,)-also available at IES , MS.18/A/1.),pp.228-29.

¹²⁴ H.F. Mooney, *The Need for Forestry in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: University college,1959),p.15. H.F. Mooney was the senior forestry advisor in the Ministry of Agriculture in the country.

¹²⁵ Chapple, “Protestant Missionary...”,pp.30-31. See also H. Hurni, “Land Degradation, Famine and Land Resource Semarios in Ethiopia” in David Pimentel(ed.), *World Soil Erosion and Conservation*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) ,p.35.

¹²⁶ Ahmad, “A Historical Survey of...”, p.7.

overlooked or misrepresented. The season during which travellers visited the kingdom might also have mislead them into making unwarranted observations. Their observations, in other words, had spatial and temporal limitations. They also hardly considered the dynamics at play that affected the ecology of plants, animals, and human settlements.¹²⁷ There were only a few travelers, like Beke and Rochet d'Héricourt, who tried to collect precise data on such things like rainfall and temperature using scientific methods.¹²⁸ However, despite limitations of one or another kind, the accounts of all travelers provide insight into the ways in which humans induced environmental change.¹²⁹

McCann argues that research that depend on traveler accounts and oral testimonies come up with a conventional assumption about “the past state of Ethiopian forest”,¹³⁰ an assumption derived from the broad notion about “a lost African Eden”. These assumptions posit a friendly relationship between man and nature in the remote past and its decline in recent times, apparently due to one or another “modern” factor at play. The environmental history of Ethiopia according to this approach is based on a degradation narrative that states with 40% forest cover of the country around the beginning of the 20th century, and its dramatic decline down to 16% in the 1950s and around 4% more recently. The above statistical data was widely accepted by the elites and was taken for granted to serve as a starting point for national development programs with specifics about the environment, agriculture and land policy.¹³¹

¹²⁷ McCann, “The Plough and the ...”, p.138.

¹²⁸ Deresse, “Environmental Descriptions of...”, pp.1-2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ McCann, “The Plough and the...”, pp.138-139.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*; see also Christopher Clapham, *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge, 1988), xi-xiii.

It is only in recent times that a more dependable empirical research had started to appear. This research works with precise data on vegetation cover in the past using satellite imagery, aerial photographs, and field surveys, particularly since the mid-20th century. But this new research does not give any precise information on the period before the middle of the 20th century. For instance, at the national level, only two aerial photographs were available, one from the period between 1957 and 1965 and the other for 1986. Similarly, satellite images came into existence only since 1972.¹³² Thus, as McCann contends, the data before the mid-20th century were mere estimates and thus very likely to have been misinformed and inaccurate.¹³³ Elaborating this point, McCann states:

...for Africa as a whole and for Ethiopia in particular, the degradation narrative tend to be poorly informed about the African environmental past and to use ill-founded constructions of the past to foresee Malthusian futures. The story of Ethiopia's diminishing forest is not just a pearl of didactic wisdom for policy makers but also politically visible judgment about Ethiopia's past and how its people have mismanaged resources.¹³⁴

For McCann, the conventional assumption is deficient because it lacks accuracy and is not place, time, as well as context specific. It is also characterized by a linear narrative of the past that emphasizes only deforestation and degradation.¹³⁵ Indeed, the author recognizes the steady process of deforestation in the country but questions the conventional assumption of the magnitude of deforestation, the amount of forest lost over time, and the singular interpretation of the

¹³² Donald Crummey, "Exploring Landscape Change in Ethiopia: Evidence From Imaging Its Interpretation" in Svein Ege et al(eds), *Proceedings of the 16th International conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.I (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2009), p.175; McCann, "The Plough and the...", pp.139-141.

¹³³ McCann, "The Plough and the...", pp.139-141.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p.139.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p.144. The conventional assumption of land degradation and deforestation in Ethiopia did not consider local dynamics such as variations along different landscapes, social practices and agro-climatic and environmental conditions. Thus it seems difficult if not impossible to give a generalized picture of environmental changes focusing on a specific geographical area and period. For more refer Halvor Woen, "Deforestation and Citations: A Comment on Environmental Degradation in Highland Ethiopia" in *JeoJournal*, Vol.37, No.4(1995), pp.501-502.

environmental history of the country as a whole.¹³⁶ For him, the past forest coverage of the country does not appear to have been as it was assumed. Even in the distant past, the highlands of Ethiopia were not covered by forests in the amount or degree that had been assumed. For this, he attributes credit to the high water-retaining nature of the vertisols that prevailed in most parts of the highlands of Šäwa. Vertisols inhibited plants growth because it prevented infiltration of water into the ground. Thus, trees appeared to have mostly been confined to the lowlands and valleys which were rich in nutrients and well-drained soils.¹³⁷ Pankhurst shares the idea of McCann and argues that the environmental history of Ethiopia is characterized by many kinds of local dynamics and has multifaceted dimensions. To support this with evidence, Pankhurst makes a comparative analysis of forest cover in urban and rural areas of the highlands in the 19th century. Most highland towns, as compared to rural areas, had moderate vegetation cover, with the planting of trees being high due to the high demand for wood in the towns.¹³⁸ Along the same lines, Dessalegn argues that the story of environmental decline did not apply equally in all districts of central and northern Ethiopia, particularly between the lowlands and highlands. He attributes this phenomenon to the variations in the practices of deforestation and tree planting across different altitudes and socio-cultural communities.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, pp.140-141 see also Richard Pankhurst, “The History of Deforestation and Afforestation Prior to WWI,” *Northeast African Studies*, Vol.2, No.1 (1995), p.119; Woien, “Deforestation and Citations: ...”, pp.502 and 504-505.

¹³⁷ McCann, “The Plough and the...”, p.144.

¹³⁸ Pankhurst, “The History of Deforestation and...”, p.122.

¹³⁹ Dessalegn Rahmato, *Environmental Change and State Policy in Ethiopia: Lessons from Past Experiences*, Monograph Series 2 (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2001), p.468. There is difference among scholars on the rate of deforestation and amount of forest cover in the country at different times. The available evidence show that the problem might arise from the vague definition of what forest mean, the existence of confusing terminologies like forest, woodland, dense forest, high forest, closed/open forest and others, and the lack of precise statistical data that show vegetation cover of the whole of the country particularly in the earlier periods. But all scholars agreed that vegetation cover of the country progressively decline, with some degree of variations, in the 20th century. For more, refer Halvor Woien, “Deforestation and Citations: A Comment on Environmental Degradation in Highland Ethiopia” in *JeoJournal*, Vol.37, No.4 (1995), pp.503-504.

From the foregoing discussion, we can understand that the amount of forest cover in the 19th century and before can only be explained in relative terms due to a lack of precise statistical data covering the whole of the country in general and the province of Šäwa in particular. Scholars, however, agree that even if the amount of wood coverage was controversial, the available trees in the highland of Šäwa declined over time to the extent that the inhabitants faced acute shortages of wood supply, particularly from the early 19th century onwards.¹⁴⁰ The process of deforestation worsened with time. The hillsides and marginal lands, which once were covered with dense forests under royal protection, started to be converted into cultivation since the second half of 19th century. Agriculture expanded rapidly, even to the lowlands, which earlier were sparsely settled and were infested with malaria.¹⁴¹ The region lost its quality soils and water resources, leading to climatic variability.¹⁴² The rate of deforestation, as scholars assert, was high around settlements, cultivated areas, royal enclosures, and military camps that sustained large populations.¹⁴³ For instance, the increasing attraction of the royal center at Ankobär in the 19th century meant the shrinkage of vacant lands and the decline of the practice of fallowing. The expansion of urban centers and the associated rise in demand for wood aggravated the rate of deforestation and forest exploitation.¹⁴⁴ Land scarcity paved the way for the conversion of steep slopes into cultivated fields. The decline of wood not only meant scarcity of wood for construction and fuel; it also had implication on land and ecological degradation etc.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ McCann, “The Plough and the Forest...”, p.144.

¹⁴¹ Chojnacki, “Forests and Forestry...”, pp. 33-34.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁴³ Pankhurst, “The History of Deforestation and...”, pp.119-120.

¹⁴⁴ McCann, *The Political Economy of Rural Rebellion in Ethiopia: Northern Resistance to Imperial Expansion, 1928-1935* (Boston: African Study Center, 1984), pp.5-6.

¹⁴⁵ John Clarke, *Ethiopian Campaign against Famine: Resettlement and Rehabilitation* (London: Harney and Jones, 1986), p.23.

For McCann even if the factors behind the decline of the natural environment are complex and interdependent, the case for 19th century Šäwa was mainly a function of population pressure due to the influx of people to the kingdom from other areas. He explains that a large number of people, mostly from northern Ethiopia, came to the vicinity of the royal court in Šäwa to sell different services to the state as soldiers, courtiers, clergymen, traders, household servants, and retainers.¹⁴⁶ But population estimates for the 19th and early 20th centuries of the country as a whole were rough speculations and thus had spatial limitations.¹⁴⁷ Thus, the rate of demographic increase and the extent of damage that it had brought about to the environment are still controversial for lack of factual data. Chapple argues that even if there was immigration to the province of Šäwa, the rate of increase was minimal. It was kept checked by the high death rate due to civil war, political instability, and the absence of modern health facilities. For him, the impact of population pressure on the environment has been more pronounced in recent times, probably since the mid-20th century.¹⁴⁸

Nonetheless, demographic increases led to the expansion of agriculture and the rise of demand for wood and other provisions. This in turn led to the cutting and burning of trees, including from the hillsides, to meet immediate needs without considering long-term impact. The way of cultivation exposed the top soil to erosion and subsequently led to decline of soil fertility to the extent that the land would no longer support crops. People tended to abandon the land when it was exhausted and

¹⁴⁶ McCann, "The Plow and the Forest...", p.156; see also Clarke, *Ethiopians Campaign Against...*, pp.21-23; see also Richard Caulk, "Territorial Competition and the Battle of Embabo, 1882", in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vo.XIII, No.I(1975), p.88.

¹⁴⁷ Richard Pankhurst, "Nineteenth and Early 20th Centuries Population Guesses" *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol. V, No.II(1961), pp.147-149; Mesfin Woldemariam, "An Estimate of the Population of Ethiopia", *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol.V, No.II(1961), pp.135-136.

¹⁴⁸ David Chapple, "Protestant Missionary Attitudes in Ethiopia: Gobat, Isenberg and Kraft" A Paper Prepared for the Third Annual Seminars of the Department of History (Bahir Dar, 1985), pp.32-33.; see also Mikael Stahl in his work, "Environmental Degradation and Political Constraints in Ethiopia" in Andres Hijort et al(eds.), *Ecology and Politics: Environmental Stress and Security in Africa* (Motala: Scandenvian Institute of African Studies, 1989), p.182.

move to newly opened areas. The wasteful use of resources and traditional method of cultivation aggravated environmental degradation and the decline of biodiversity.¹⁴⁹ Socio-economic forces,¹⁵⁰ the political economy, settlement patterns, forms of labor as well as production also had a lot to do with man-nature interface in the province. Likewise, the general awareness of environmental matters, as well as notions that affected official decisions had considerable contributions to environmental change.¹⁵¹ In other words, human settlement might not necessarily cause environmental degradation. The latter is associated more with the perceptions and practices of both the state and society in relation to management and utilization of resources.¹⁵² Dessalegn clarifies the relationship between population growth and environmental degradation, saying that it is not as linear as is often assumed to be; it is very complex and influenced largely by the socio-economic and political orientations and practices of the state.¹⁵³

With regards to Šäwa specifically, the question thus becomes how the kings of Šäwa and the people met their needs for both fuel and food. Our sources indicate that at the beginning of the 19th century, firewood was getting increasingly hard to get. *Negus* Sahläselassé is said to have assigned nearly 300 slaves to work on wood supply for royal residences at Ankobär, Däbräberhan, and Angoläla and for other nearby towns, and to the army at times of military campaigns. They brought timber

¹⁴⁹ Woldeeslassie, “The Forest Resources of...”,p.14;Clarke, “Famine: the Curse of...”,pp.21-23; Stahl, “Environmental Degradation and...”,p.184.

¹⁵⁰ McCann, “The Plough and the Forest...”,p.156.; see also Dessalegn Rahmato, “Conditions of Ethiopian Peasantry,” in *Challenge*, X,II(1970),pp.25-35;Clarke, *Resettlement and...*,p.23.

¹⁵¹Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Here after FAO), “Ethiopian Highland Reclamation Study Final Report”, Volume II (1986), pp.202-204, 238.During the imperial period, much of the land in Ethiopia was in the possession of the ruling elite, local *balabats* (lords), military servants, and the clergy. The peasant’s holding in most cases was too small and fragmented, not enough to sustain family. Thus, the peasant farmer looked for other alternatives to support life including renting land from those who had surplus. The terms of rent, however, were entirely subject to the whim of the landlord. The peasant farmer had no power at all to negotiate. Thus, the peasant farmer was neither interested in improving the land nor in conserving the resources on it like through building terraces etc.

¹⁵²*Ibid* ,pp.21-22.; See also Dessalegn Rahmato, “Land, Population and Environment: What is an Issue?” A Paper Prepared for the Panel Discussion on Population and Environment in Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, 1996),p.1.

¹⁵³ Dessalegn, “Land, Population and...”,p.1.

and firewood for the palace from forest reserves, traveling two to three days on foot by crossing deep gorges, valleys, and hills. One of the major sources of timber and firewood for the palace was the forest reserve at Feqré Gemb, in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* to the north of Ankobär. In this area, dense forests were carefully preserved until very recent times, as in Church compounds and some other areas. This was probably due to its marginal location, royal protection, and the existence of a church in the nearby area. In view of growing shortages, local community, including to some extent the army, adopted new ways of obtaining fuel, including by shifting to animal droppings and the residuals of crops. They used animal droppings for fuel, partly because of a lack of labor to collect firewood from distant areas.¹⁵⁴

There is agreement among scholars that the scarcity of firewood was one of the factors behind the absence of permanent capitals throughout the Medieval Period of Ethiopian history. Of course, there were also many other reasons behind the lack of fixed capitals. One of them was that by constantly relocating their residential and administrative centers the rulers sought to control strategic areas both in terms of discouraging rebellions and being within reach of trade routes and other resourceful areas.¹⁵⁵ When Emperor Menelik shifted his seat from Ankobär to Enṭoṭo in the late 1870s and early 1880s, the surrounding area quickly lost its trees and could not sustain the royal settlement. Enṭoṭo at that time was covered with forests but would, in turn, lose it soon. It was after Enṭoṭo encountered the same fate as its predecessors that the Emperor moved down to Addis Abäba, which, in addition to its strategic location and moderate climate had big trees such as junipers, olives, and a variety of other trees. The problem of deforestation, however, persisted, and hence Addis Abäba soon became barren land, and its residents, including those of the palace,

¹⁵⁴ McCann, "The Plough and the Forest...", p.146.

¹⁵⁵ Chojnacki, "Forests and Forestry...", pp. 33-34, 36.

faced acute shortage of firewood. Thus, the Emperor turned his face to still other forested areas to the west of the town, like Waçaça, Mānagāša, and Addisālām. What eventually brought and end of the era of mobile capitals and saved the new capital, Addis Abāba, was the introduction of the eucalyptus tree in the late 19th century.¹⁵⁶

For elites as well as for the population at large, getting firewood had always been laborious. It required traveling long distances to areas not accessible by means of transportation, including areas partly infested with disease-causing agents. In the towns of North Šāwa and even in the capital, Addis Abāba, which had relatively better access to resources from the rural hinterlands, the price of firewood had been very high. In the early twentieth century, for instance, the Georgian observer Marab provided an eyewitness account of the high price of firewood in Addis Abāba. He says that one donkey-load of firewood was equal to sixty kilograms of grain or a small sheep. So it was not uncommon to see the use of animal droppings and crop residues as fuel among urban dwellers and rural people alike.¹⁵⁷ It is clear that this change in energy consumption from wood to animal droppings directly affected peasants' productivity because organic inputs that could have been used for agricultural work were diverted. This is to mean that when the land gets constantly cultivated without rest and no organic fertilizer like dung could be applied to it, the land would quickly run out of phosphate and nitrogen supplies. It eventually would not support crop growth.¹⁵⁸

In spite of the fact that the resultant effect of the decline of vegetation cover was felt as early as the mid-19th century, or probably before, deforestation never ceased. State intervention was limited until the time of Emperor Menelik II who noticed the threat of deforestation early and declared a

¹⁵⁶*Ibid*, pp. 33-34; Māngestu Lāma, መጽሐፈ ትዝታ ዘአለቃ ለግ ሃይለ ወልዴ (A Remembrance Book of Alāqa Lāma Hailu Woldē) (Addis Ababa: BerhanENA Selam Printing Press, 1959 E.C.), p. 174.

¹⁵⁷Cited in Chojnacki, "Forests and Forestry...", p.36. See also FAO, "Ethiopian Highland Reclamation...", p.195.

¹⁵⁸FAO, "Ethiopian Highland Reclamation...", p.195. See also Stahil, "Environmental Degradation and...", p.182.

serious punishment against the illegal cutting of trees. He also encouraged reforestation. His efforts, however, did not bring significant change, because the Emperor was preoccupied political issues and suffered a stroke and thus became incapacitated. His successors did not follow up on his initiatives.¹⁵⁹

All said, however, the real cause behind the steady process of deforestation was inefficient utilization arising from competing claims of the state and society on the ownership and management of wood. Elaborating on this idea, Chojnacki contends that “it was not the making of products of wood that was the real cause of deforestation, but the way vegetation and forests were treated”.¹⁶⁰In support of this, Singh argues that in Amhara food culture, vegetables and fruits are secondary to grains. Hence, the people worked to get grains in all ways possible even at the expense of vegetation.¹⁶¹ People practiced traditional method of clearing fields by burning vegetation cover.¹⁶²They burnt even the roots of trees in a manner that would not allow the tree to regenerate. Burning of bush, woodlands, and grazing lands was purposely done to get space for settlement and also, ostensibly, to encourage the growth of new grass or chase away dangerous animals and disease-causing insects like mosquitoes, and partly with the aim of enriching the soil, particularly in the lowlands.¹⁶³The problem was further worsened by the lack of motivation and determination both by members of society and agents of the state to protect forests or to reforest the land.¹⁶⁴Most peasants seem to have been careless or indifferent about the impact of indiscriminate burning. They tended to look after their immediate needs of expanding cultivated

¹⁵⁹ Chojnacki, “Forests and Forestry...”, p.34.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 34.

¹⁶¹ Singh, “Land Utilization in...”, p. 79.

¹⁶² Chojnacki, “Forests and Forestry...”, p. 34.

¹⁶³ Informants: Ato Šäwayé Yeferu, Ato YeṭENA Masräša, Ato Awuraris Aragaw, and Ato Germa Wondafraš.

¹⁶⁴ Chojnacki, “Forests and Forestry...”, pp. 34; Informants: Ato Šäwayé Yeferu, Ato YeṭENA Masräša, Ato Awuraris Aragaw, and Ato Germa Wondafraš.

land. The negative impact of burning, however, is difficult to overestimate. It inhibits the natural process of soil enrichment from deposits of tree leaves and other residues. It disturbs the balance in the ecosystem by killing important bacteria and insects that regulate the balance in the ecosystem and pollutes the atmosphere and water bodies by diminishing the absorption of carbon dioxide.¹⁶⁵

In addition, local people tended to waste wood and wood products. The unwise use of wood was probably attributed to lack of technology or machinery. As a result, very thick wood was used for making a small equipment or products like doors or windows.¹⁶⁶In this regard, Harris provides an eyewitness account of the uneconomical use of wood in Šäwa in the 1840s. He reports that for making a single door or window, they used “...massive planks and beams, each of which in the absence of saws had involved the demolition of a whole tree”.¹⁶⁷Likewise, though we have little by way of empirical evidence, it is apparent that the amount of wood needed for the construction and making of agricultural tools and household utensils was also significant. Much of the available wood was thus lost as a result of expansion of cultivation and unwise use of wood. In the highlands of Šäwa, including my study area, wood was rarely used to build houses because of the shortage supply. People developed a culture of building houses out of stone cemented with ash mixed with straw.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Dechassa Lemessa, and Matthew Perault, “Forest Fires in Ethiopia: Reflections on Socio-Economic and Environmental Effects of the Fires in 2000” <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/forest-fires-ethiopia-reflections-socio-economic-and-environmental-effects-fires>, retrieved on 17 April 2019.

¹⁶⁶ Richard Pankhurst, “The History of Deforestation and...”, p.122.

¹⁶⁷ Harris, *The Highlands of ...*, p.10.

¹⁶⁸ Chojnacki, “Forests and Forestry...”, p. 35. This culture of building houses using stone was indeed a long tradition dated back to the Ancient Akumit period mainly due to scarcity of wood. Probably, it may also be associated with the cool climatic condition and psychological makeup of the people. In any case, wood was used mainly to support to the thatched roof and making of utensils. This was also true even in urban areas of 19th century where small huts were typical forms of houses. Timber was rather used to build palaces, churches and houses of higher elites.

The effect of the decline in vegetation cover was far beyond the problem of a shortage of wood supply and expansion of desert-like conditions on the landscape. It goes to the extent of disturbing the natural ecosystem of which all living things are an integral part. Chojnacki describes the complex and interdependent effect of unlimited human intervention on the environment. He says that deforestation was accompanied by land degradation.¹⁶⁹ The accelerated rate of soil erosion meant the loss of the top soil and thus the loss of cultivated land. It also reduced the water-holding capacity of the soil and made the soil and the environment unstable.¹⁷⁰ According to Ethiopian Highland Reclamation survey, the rate of soil formation as a result of rock weathering seems compatible with the rate of soil loss by leaching. But no natural process exists that balances off soil loss by water or wind or both.¹⁷¹ In fact, estimates of the amount of soil loss by erosion varied considerably across space in the highlands of Ethiopia due to the differences in the degree of human intervention and the topography involved. On average, the rate of soil loss which had been less than a billion per hectare in the 1960s had risen later to a billion in the mid-1970s. This amount increased from time to time and reached three billion tons per hectare recently.¹⁷²

Climate variability was another manifestation of environmental change. Environmental processes in the history of the country are as old as human history, changes in the environment, mostly, those

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁷⁰ FAO, "Ethiopian Highland Reclamation...", p.218.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, p.195.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, pp.206-208 see also Clarck, "Resettlement and Rehabilitation", pp. 20-21. Indeed, scholars agree that climate change is not caused only by human intervention. The moving of Inter Tropical Convergence Zone(ITCZ) either to the north or south, causes periodic variations of weather conditions through fluctuation of the rainy and dry seasons. The ITCZ is the place where the humid monsoon winds of the equatorial or marine time trade, and the dry wind of the Sahara desert meet. For more see Zewde Gebreselassie, " The Predicament of Africa in the Global Society Towards Measurement of Drought and Famine" in *Perspective on Drought and Famine in Africa*(Lusaka, 1986),pp.5-7.

that entailed climate variability were felt gradually. They have become popular agenda across the world community, including Africa, since the 1950s.¹⁷³

Environmental damages that came about as a result of human intervention, as well as partly due to natural phenomena (such as geological movements) impacted and shaped the livelihood and well-being of human communities. It made people vulnerable to severe poverty, unpredictable weather conditions, the decline of water and land resources, spread of diseases, crop failures, the decline of productivity, and other recurrent famines. From 1800 to 1929, there were about nineteen incidents of famine in the province of Šäwa, most of them accompanied by epidemic diseases.¹⁷⁴ Of these early nineteenth-century famines, the famine of 1828–1829 was the most severe in magnitude. This famine, which was caused by crop failure, was accompanied by epidemic diseases like cholera.¹⁷⁵ Some sixty decades later, another severe famine, known as *Kefu Qän* or the Bad Times, had emerged in central and northern Ethiopia, running between 1888 and 1892 it caused the deaths of almost all cattle and lots of people. On average, 500–1000 cattle are said to have died daily in the provinces of Bägémeder, Gojjam, and Šäwa. The problem of famine and associated developments persisted in the years to come. Drought which often led to famine, occurred almost

¹⁷³ Chapple, “Protestant Missionaries...”, p.83, see also Pankhurst, “The History of Deforestation and...”, pp.119-121; Mesfin Wolde Mariam, *Rural Vulnerability to Famine in Ethiopia, 1958-1977* (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1984), pp.11-23; Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, pp.73-77; Tewolde Birhan G. Egziabher, “The Environmental Variables which Led to the Ecological crisis in Ethiopia,” in *Akadémiai Kiadó*, IV, II (1989), pp.61-67.

¹⁷⁴ Richard Pankhurst, “Some Factors Influencing the Health of Traditional Ethiopia” in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. IV, No. I (1966), pp.36-37 see also Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, pp.8-9; and Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability to...*, 1984, pp.12-14; Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from 13th to 20th Centuries* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p.5; Zewde Gebreselassie, “The Predicament of Africa...”, p.7.

¹⁷⁵ Johnston, *Travels in Southern...*, p.91.; see

every ten years in Ethiopia in general and central and northern parts of the country in particular until recent times.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Richard Pankhurst, “The Great Famine of 1889-1892” in *University College Review*, Vol. I, No. I(1961),p.93.; see also Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability to...*,p.12-14; Zewde, “The Predicament of Africa in...”,p.7; Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...* , pp.8-9.

CHAPTER TWO

Environmental Vulnerability and Crises (1880s-1930s)

The Great Ethiopian Famine in North Šäwa, 1888-1892

Famine had been a recurrent phenomenon in the long history of Ethiopia. A number of famines, of different degrees of severity or temporal and spatial coverage, have been recorded since the 9th century.¹ Available sources, however, give relatively detailed information on those since the 16th century only. As noted by many commentators, the recurrence of famines in Ethiopia is somewhat of a paradox given the fact that the country is endowed with rich resources. It is quite enigmatic that in a country where, particularly in the highlands, up to two or three harvests are possible in a year lived a perpetual state of poverty and starvation. The fact is that despite all the bounties of nature so much as loss of a single harvest often meant a serious upset leading to starvation or outright famine.²

European travelers and missionaries have documented incidences of famine in the country in general and the province of Šäwa in particular at various points in the 18th and 19th centuries. The worst of these, both in terms of devastation and spatial and temporal coverage was what is known as the Great Ethiopian Famine, locally called *Kefu-Qän* (Bad Days). It still persists in the collective

¹ Bahru Zewde, “A Historical Outline of Famine in Ethiopia” in Abdul Mejid Hussein(ed.), *Drought and Famine in Ethiopia-African Environment Special Report 2* (London: International African Institute in Collaboration with Environment Training Program-SIDA, No Year),p. 52.; Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia from Early Times to 1800*(London: Staples Printers, 1961), pp. 175-177; Alula Pankhurst, “ Social Dimensions of Famine in Ethiopia: Exchange, Migration and Integration”, *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*(Moscow, Nauka Publisher, 1988), p.69.; Johnston, *Travels in Southern...*,p.91; James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile in the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 and 1773*, Vol.III (London, 1790),pp. 235-236.; Hailegebrel Danel, “**ርሃብ ድርቅ እና መንስኤዎቹ**”(Hunger, Drought and Causes) in Abiy Ford etal(eds.) **ድርቅ እና ጠኔ በኢትዮጵያ ሰሜን ወርቅ ልዩ እትም**(Drought and Starvation in Ethiopia: Wax and Gold Special Edition) Year 2nd, No.5/6(Yakatit 1981E.C.),pp.39, 44 and 46.;Shemels Adugna, “**ድርቅ እና ርሃብን ለመቋቋም የተደረጉ እንቅስቃሴዎች**”(Efforts to Tackle with Drought and Hunger) in Shiferaw Bekele(ed.),**ከድህነት ወደ ልማት እውቀትን ለትውልድ ማስተላለፍ** (From Poverty to Development: Efforts to Transfer Knowledge to Generation)(Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Sciences, 2006E.C),p.263.

² Bahru, “A Historical Outline of...”, p. 52; Richard Pankhurst, “The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888-1892: A New Assessment, Part One” in *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Vol XXI, No. II(1966),pp.95-96.

memory of people in central and northern Ethiopia because it had significant repercussions on the socio-economic and political history of the country in the subsequent decades.³

The Great Ethiopian famine lasted for about four years, from 1888-1892. The viral rinderpest was the cause. The famine started along the northern coastal areas of the country in 1888 and continued to 1892 with considerable severity.⁴ It spread from place to place and rapidly swept through the whole length of Ethiopia and beyond within a short time. No province or village was spared the scourge, in some places more than 90% of the cattle population and large number sheep, goats and even wild animals such as buffaloes, antelopes, etc. were wiped out.⁵ By February 1889, it swept through central and northern Ethiopia and caused huge damages. The governments call to control the spread of the disease by curbing the movement of livestock from one area to the other was not strictly implemented and thus was not effective.⁶ The situation was exacerbated with the political crisis the country faced internally with the death of Emperor Yohannes IV, and externally with the threat from the Mahadists in the west and the Italians in the north. The combined effect of all of this was unprecedented instability and crisis throughout the country.⁷

The disease caused the collapse of the subsistence economy, which relied heavily on livestock as the chief instrument of production.⁸ People who were accustomed to cultivation with ox-drawn

³ Bahru, "A Historical Outline of...", p. 52. See also Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine..." part One, p. 96.; Merid Woldaregay, "Land Tenure and Agricultural Productivity, 1500-1850" (A Paper Prepared for the Third Annual Conference of the Department of History, Bahirdar, 1985), p.2.; Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability to...*, p.12-14; Zewde, "The Predicament of Africa in...", p.7; Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, pp.8-9.

⁴ Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888-1892...", Part One", p.95.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp.102 and 106.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp.99-100.; Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability ...*, p.32.; Steven Kaplan, *The Bete Israel (Felasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the 20th Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p.145.

⁷ Sergaw Habeselasie, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ የአዲሱ ዘመን ስልጣን መስራች* (Emperor Menelik II: The Founder of Civilization of the New Era) (NP, ND), p.218.; see also Donald Crummey, *Farming and Famine: Landscape Vulnerability in Northeast Ethiopia, 1889-1991* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), p.12.

⁸ Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888-1892: A New Assessment, Part One", pp.99-100.; Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability ...*, p.32.; Steven Kaplan, *The Bete Israel (Felasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the 20th Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p.145.

plough were forced to shift to use simple hand tools like hoes to cultivate the land. These efforts, however, were ineffective for the produce was not adequate to feed the people.⁹

The impact of famine was worse among the pastoralists due to their movement and thus high level of contact of their animal populations. Here, the rate of disease transmission was high.¹⁰ Pastoralists and semi-pastoralists in the lowlands of Yefat *ena* Temuga, my study area, were no exception. They lost most of their cattle.¹¹ Cattle for pastoralists meant everything from source of food to insurance against manmade and natural disasters. The disappearance of cattle was highly disruptive because it brought about significant decline or total collapse of production.¹² On an average, a rich herder would have lost up to 10,000 heads of cattle. Similarly, Emperor Menelik II, who owned a large number of livestock in different parts of the country, including Northern Šäwa (mainly Bulga), was said to have lost some 250,000 heads of cattle.¹³ It was estimated, with probably some exaggeration, that in the province of Šäwa 500-1000 cattle were dying every day due to the plague.¹⁴

In my study area, the spread of the plague was soon followed by massive death of cattle and human epidemic starting from the later part of 1888. *Aläqa* Lämna Häilu, who traveled from Gojjam to Šäwa during the early phase of the disaster, observed that the plague eliminated almost all of the cattle. In his journey from Dimma to Sälallé and then to Däbrä Berhan, he noticed that only a few

⁹ Pankhurst, “The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888-1892: A New Assessment, Part One., pp.33-34.; Kaplan, *The Bete Israel*...p. 145.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp.32-33. See also Afework Gebreyesus, *ጳጳሳዊ ምኒልክ ንጉሥ ነገሥት ዘኢትዮጵያ* (Emperor Menelik King of Kings of Ethiopia)(Rome, 1901E.C.),pp.60-61 ;Bahru , “A Historical Outline of...”, p. 54.

¹¹ Informants: Ato Assäfa Woldämariam and Ato Aṭlaw Asamnäw.

¹²Zdenek Cervenka, “The Relationship Between Armed Conflict and Environmental Degradation in Africa” in Andres Hijort and M.A.Mohammed Salih(eds.), *Ecology and Politics :Environmental Stress and Security in Africa*(Motala: Scandenavian Institute of African Studies, 1989),pp.30-31.

¹³ Pankhurst, “The Great Ethiopian Famine...part one”,pp.103 and114.

¹⁴ Bahru, “A Historical Outline of...”,p.54.

cattle were to be seen here and there. His father, who owned 300 heads in Mäqét, North Wällo, lost almost all of them during the famine.¹⁵ However, the spread and ravages of the plague was not uniform in the country. It was a little less devastating in the highlands than in the lowlands. But even in the highlands including Šäwa, there was considerable variation: areas above 3000m above sea level were less affected. This was probably due to the isolated and elevated landmass that limited contact and mobility; its windy and cold weather conditions might also have had something to do with it.¹⁶

During the famine, there were virtually no oxen or cows to plow with and therefore often no food to eat. The land remained uncultivated and reverted to bush or grassland. The peasants were disoriented and found it hard to shift to work with hand tools like hoes. Thus, they were not only unable to pay taxes to the state or the church but actually unable to sustain their lives.¹⁷ Almost all of the people became victims because their stocks of grains were exhausted soon. Even the majority of the elite who might have had substantial amounts of grain on the eve of the famine soon joined the masses because they were obliged to sell or distribute the surplus to the masses: they had to support the weak with gifts of grain and make it available to the able-bodied by way of loans.¹⁸

¹⁵ Mengistu Lema, *መጽሐፈ ትዝታ ዘኣለቃ ለማ ሃይለ ወልዴ ታሪክ* (A Book of Reminiscence of Aläqa Läma Hailu Woldé) Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Pres, 1959, p. 100; Afework Gebreyesus, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ ንጉሥ...* (Emperor Menelik II: King of Kings of Ethiopia) (Rome, 1901E.C.), pp. 106-107 and 142.

¹⁶ Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine ... Part One", p.103.

¹⁷ Mengestu, *መጽሐፈ ትዝታ...* (The Book of Reminiscence of...), p.143; see also Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine... Part One", p.107.; Getachew Haile, "ርሃን እና ተስቦ በኢትዮጵያ" (Hunger and Epidemic in Ethiopia) in *ድርቅ እና ጠኔ በኢትዮጵያ ሰምና ወርቅ ልዩ እትም* (Drought and Starvation in Ethiopia, Wax and Gold, Special Edition), 2nd Year, No. 516(1981), pp.29-30; Kaplan, *The Bete Israe*... p. 145.

¹⁸ Sergaw, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ.....* (Emperor Menelik II...), p.222.

The disappearance of cattle and the associated scarcity of food caused a sharp rise in the prices of grains, particularly in central and northern Ethiopia.¹⁹ As witnessed by Antonelli, an Italian envoy to Ethiopia, and Mashkov, a Russian explorer, the price of grain rose sharply, as much as one-to-two-hundred fold during the famine period. Similarly, the cost of livestock also increased significantly, rising between fifteen to twenty fold. At the beginning, people survived by selling everything they had (sheep, goats, household materials, etc.) to purchase grains. But, it got harder and harder to find any livestock or grain on the market over time for any price.²⁰ One of my informants shared with me a couplet that remained in popular memory from those times:

በሬ በመቶ፣
 ያውስ የት ተገኝቶ፡፡²¹
 An ox for a hundred (Thalers)
 But, where is it to found?

A substantial proportion of both the human and animal population died, although we lack exact statistics on the death toll. The death toll was indeed higher among pastoral community. The outbreak of epidemic diseases like cholera, typhus, and dysentery, scaled up the death rate from food scarcity. Bacteria-causing organisms proliferated as a result of animal corpses being buried improperly.²² In some regions, human and cattle bodies were preyed upon by hyenas and vultures,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.219.; Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, *The Challenges of Drought: Ethiopia's Decades of Struggle in Relief and Rehabilitation* (Addis Ababa, 1985), p.59.; Kaplan, *The Bete Israel*... p. 145.

²⁰ Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine... Part One," pp.108-111; Sergaw, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ...* (Emperor Menelik II...), p.219. ; Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, *The Challenges of...*, p.59.

²¹ Informants: Ato Assäfa Woldämariam and Ato Aṭlaw Asamnäw.

²² Donald Crummey, *Farming and Famine: Landscape Vulnerability in Northeast Ethiopia, 1889-1991* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 2018), pp.23-27.

which further spread body parts around.²³ Afework describes the terrible condition of the period as follows:

ሰው ሁሉ በራብ እያለቀ በየመንገዱ በየዱሩ በየቤክርስቲያኑ እድሞ፤ በየመኳንቱ ቅጥር ዙሪያ ይወድቅ ይዘለስ ጀመረ። ጊዜው የጅብና ያሞራ ደስታ፤ የሰው ሀዘን ሆነ። እንኳን አንዱ ለአንዱ ይተዛዘን፤ እንኳን ወዳጅ ለወዳጅ እግዜር ያጥናህ ሊባባል፤ እናት ለልጅ ልጅ ለእናቱ ማልቀስ መላቀስ ቀረ። ለሞተው ሰው መቃብር ጌጥ ሆነበት። የዚያን ጊዜ መቃብር ያሞራና የጅብ ሆድ ሆነ።...የዚያን ጊዜ ተመስኩ እንድ ላም ውል አይልበት፤ ከበረቱ እንቦሳ አይጨመርም። ተገጠሩ እርሻ አይታረስበት [ነበር]።²⁴

People died in starvation and lay on the ground around roads, fields, church gates, and enclosures of the elite. It was a time of pleasure for hyenas and vultures and time of misery for humans. Let alone showing sympathy for each other, or friends consoling friends, even mothers would not cry for her dead child. Proper burial became a luxury. Grave were dug for those who were lucky. And for many, the place of burial was the stomach of vultures and hyenas....In those days, no cattle were to be seen in the field, no calves growing up in the pen; and no cultivation took place in the countryside.

According to sources, the Great Famine led to the disintegration of socio-cultural and religious values in addition to the breakdown of the economic foundations of both sedentary agriculturalists and pastoralists. The community's century-old way of life was in danger.²⁵ Social insecurity prevailed.²⁶

In Yefat *ena Temuga awrajja*, people were forced to eat wild fruits, roots, and grass such as the fig tree (*Fucus sycomorus*), *Šola*, *enkoy*, and weeds called *ančaria* and *amädmado*. In the highlands of Mänz, a local grass called *magät* (a long grass) was eaten. Besides, bones and hides of the dead

²³ Richard Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888-1892: A New Assessment, Part Two" in *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Vol XXI, No. II(1966),p.271.; see also Afework, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ...*(Emperor Menelik II...),pp.60-61.; Kaplan, *The Bete Israe*...p. 146.

²⁴ Afework, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ.....*(Emperor Menelik II...),pp.61-62.

²⁵ Sergaw, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ...*(Emperor Menelik II...),pp.220-221;Afework, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ...*(Emperor Menelik II...),pp.61-62.; Gebreselassie Woldearegay (*Šāhaḥi Tezaz*), *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ ንጉሥ ነገሥት ዘኢትዮጵያ*(Emperor Menelik King of Kings of Ethiopia)(Addis Ababa,No Publisher,2008E.C.),p.134.

²⁶ Ahmed, "Emperor Menelik's...",p.234.

animals, as well as the bark of trees were eaten after boiling. However, even these items were quickly depleted, and as a result, the starving people were compelled to migrate in search of food within and outside of the province.²⁷ Some returned with some resources after the end of the famine.²⁸ The fact that people used to move between the highlands and the lowlands even during normal times and that there was strong economic interdependence had helped in this famine-time movements.²⁹ Fearing that the migrants might not return at the end of the crisis, Emperor Menelik designated the area from Wayät to Awaš to be *rist* land, similar to the Mänz district of North Šäwa.³⁰ During the famine years, the Oromo and Afar migrated to the well-drained areas on the foothills of the eastern escarpment of the Šäwa plateau in the *awraja* and beyond.³¹ This, in turn, created further stress on the already degraded environment and led to conflict with the local inhabitants. On the other side, famine-induced migration promoted integration among different socio-linguistic groups.³²

State intervention to mitigate the disaster was poorly handled. It came too late and was limited in scope. In fact, it was mostly limited to the royal capital and its surroundings. The people in remote areas got virtually nothing by way of state support. On top of this, factors such as the lack of resources, difficult topography and poor transportation or communication, hindered any relief and

²⁷ Ahmed, “A Historical Survey of Ethnic...”, pp. 38-41.; See also Ahmed Hassen, “Emperor Menelik’s Attempts Towards Political Integration: Case Study from Northeastern Šäwa, Ethiopia, 1889-1906” in *Annales d’Ethiopie*, Vol. XVIII (2002), pp. 231-232; Dechassa, “A Socio-Economic History...”, pp. 221-225. According to Dechassa, migration from the central and northern parts of the country to Addis Ababa began before the foundation of the town.

²⁸ Gebrehiwot Baykedagn, *የኢጋድራስ ገብረህወት ባይከዳኝ ስራዎች* (The Works of Nāgadrās Gābrāhiwot Baykādañ) (Addis Ababa Addis Ababa University Press, 2002 E.C.), p. 64. See also Mengestu, *መጽሐፈ ትዝታ...* (A Book of Reminiscence...), p. 143; Sergaw, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ...* (Emperor Menelik II...), p. 219.

²⁹ Alula, “Social Dimensions of...”, pp. 65-66.

³⁰ Bairu (ed.), *Ašemä Giyorgis and His Work...*, p. 829.

³¹ Ahmed, “Emperor Menelik’s...”, p. 234; Informants: Ato Tässäma Kābādä and Ato Ešātu Wodajénäh.; see also “A Historical Survey of...”, pp. 42-43.; Alula, “Social Dimensions of...”, p. 67.

³² Alula, “Social Dimensions of...”, pp. 67, 72-74.

rehabilitation activities the state might have liked to undertake.³³ Since the last quarter of the 19th century, the state was preoccupied with handling internal political crises and foreign threats coming from Egyptians during the 1870s, the Mahdists (of the Sudan) in the 1880s, followed by the Italians in the early 1890s.³⁴

Recognizing the seriousness of the problem, however, Emperor Menelik embarked on some short and long-term relief activities. The intervention ranged from providing material and moral support to victims to restoration and rehabilitation of the natural environment, particularly in some parts of Central Ethiopia.³⁵ In the early days of the famine, the Emperor's first task was to order his subjects to pray for divine assistance. He distributed food and cereals to victims gathered around the Enṭoṭo palace.³⁶ He also offered grains to famine-affected areas as gift to the elders and as loan to productive workers. These came from his granaries located in different parts of the country. In my study area, a place called Fasil Amba, in Mafud district in Yefat, was where one of the personal grain stores of the Emperor was located; it served as a distribution point to famine victims from the entire *awrajjja* and its surroundings.³⁷ Besides, the Emperor ordered those individuals who had stored grain to bring it to the market, keeping for themselves only amounts that would be enough for one-year. To this end, he is said to have sent agents to every village for inspection. In this way, a great quantity of grain was collected. The Emperor warned that individuals who failed to bring surplus to the market or share what they have with the poor, faced confiscation. This last effort of the Emperor, as Bahru argues, was more effective and brought temporary relief to the peasants.³⁸ In

³³ Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine..., Part One", p.96; Bahru, "A Historical Outline of...", p.55.

³⁴ Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine..., Part One", p.96; Bahru, "A Historical Outline of...", p.55.

³⁵ Bahru, "A Historical Outline of ...", p.55; Mengestu, *መጽሐፈ ትዝታ...* (*The Book of Reminiscence of...*), pp. 143-144.

³⁶ Sergaw, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ.....* (*Emperor Menelik II...*), pp.221-223; Mengestu, *መጽሐፈ ትዝታ...* (*The Book of Reminiscence of...*), pp. 143-144.; Afework, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ...* (*Emperor Menelik II...*), p.62.

³⁷ Informants: Ato Šawayé Yeferu and Balambaras Bāyānā Adälāñ.

³⁸ Bahru, "A Historical Outline of...", p.56 see also Afäworq, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ...* (*Emperor Menelik II*), pp.63-64.

addition, the Emperor used pickaxes and hoes to clear land on the Entoto slopes in an effort to set an example for others, and he urged local governors to do the same.³⁹ In the province of Šäwa, some members of the ruling elite, who followed the example of the Emperor, participated in the relief campaign by providing grain and cattle to the famine-affected areas. These included *Däjjazmač* Germamé Woldähawariat, one of the *balabats* in Šäwa and *Ras* Dargé, governor of Sälallé, and *Ras* Mekonen of Harar. The contributions of the provinces of Harar and Balé, in particular, were fairly significant. *Ras* Mäkonen of Harar, for instance, distributed five thousand heads of cattle to the chiefs and some selected individuals in famine-stricken areas in North Šäwa around Ankobär and part of Yefat.⁴⁰ In some areas of North Šäwa, is said to have redistributed cattle to some farmers, having brought some from southern and eastern parts of the country.

According to informants, the intervention of the state in the highlands of Mänz, however, was non-existent, partly because of its difficult topography and partly because it was relatively in better condition. Most peasants in Mänz sustained themselves through the famine, at least for some time, reportedly due to their better saving habits.⁴¹

The Emperor encouraged small-scale irrigation both in the highlands and in the lowlands.⁴² People in Yefat, particularly in Mafud, Qäwot, Gedom, Efrata, and Čäffa river valleys, as well as in certain other well-drained places in Mänz highlands, lived by employing pack animals (horses, donkeys, and mules) for small-scale irrigation. People used to grow maize and sorghum in the lowlands and barley and wheat in the highlands. Seeing the rich irrigation potential at Robi, Jawuha (Nägéssö),

³⁹ Sergaw, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ...* (Emperor Menelik II...), pp.221-223; Afework, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ...* (Emperor Menelik II...), pp.64-66.; Crummey, *Farming and Famine...* pp.29-30.

⁴⁰ Bahru, “A Historical Outline of...”, pp.55-56; Mängestu, *መጽሐፈ ትዝታ...* (The Book of Reminiscence of...), pp. 143-144.; Informants: *Aläqa* Yemanä Berhan Negatu, *Ato* Gäbrähiwot Gezačäw and *Ato* Akalu Dänäqä.

⁴¹ Informants: *Aläqa* Yemanä Berhan Negatu, *Ato* Gäbrähiwot Gezačäw and *Ato* Akalu Dänäqä.

⁴² Sergaw, *ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ...* (Emperor Menelik II...), p.219.

Alla, and Aṭayé Rivers, the Emperor brought quick-growing fruits, vegetables, and grains including *adānguarre* or *don-gollo* (runner bean or sword bean) and *gomānzär*.⁴³ He encouraged the peasants to produce these fast growing food items.

The recovery from the Great famine began as early as late 1892. Both production and cattle breeding revived as a result of which prices of cattle and grains decreased.⁴⁴ But it never returned to or went below the price of the pre-famine period. The question of food still remained a major issue for the majority of people in the subsequent decades.⁴⁵ According to McCann, the state's failure to address issues that impacted "the efficiency of land and labor" was the primary reason of the peasants' perpetual poverty and the environment's degradation. For him, there was no significant progress or transformation in the agricultural industry.⁴⁶ The impoverishment of the peasants caused displacement of the people to relatively resource-abundant areas and urban centers. Most affected by this displacement were young people, the most productive group. This had direct impact on agricultural activity and food security in rural areas such as North Šäwa. In the late 19th century Emperor Menelik's territorial expansion to the south which was partly induced by socio-economic crisis, was accompanied by outmigration of people from central and northern Ethiopia as settlers, soldiers, laborers.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ahmed, "A Historical Survey of...", pp. 39-41.; see also Ahmed, "Emperor Menelik's ...", p.233.

⁴⁴ Richard Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800-1935* (Addis Ababa: Haileselassie I University Press, 1968), pp.191-192 and 210.; see also Crummey, *Farming and Famine...*, pp.15-16.

⁴⁵ Bahru, "A Historical Outline of...", p.58.; see also Teklehawariat Teklemariam (Fitawurari), *ትንሽ መፈተኛ ስለ እርሻ ትምህርት* (Minor Test: About Agricultural Education) (Addis Ababa: Teferi Mekonene Matemia Bet, 1916 E.C.), pp.2-4.

⁴⁶ McCann, "A Great Agrarian...", p.390.

⁴⁷ James McCann, "Household Economy, Demography and the Push Factor in Northern Ethiopia, 1916-1935", A Working Paper (Boston University of African Study Center, ND) in *Agriculture Miscellanea* 8, p.1.; McCann, "A Great Agrarian...", p.396; Bahru Zewde, "Economic Origin of the Absolute State in Ethiopia, 1916-1935", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.17(1984), pp.7-8.

The period of recovery was also delayed in part because the country faced other kinds of political crisis. These were the Battle of Sägalé in 1916, the influenza epidemic of 1917–1919, the second Ethio-Italian war of 1935–1941, the recurrent local and regional conflicts, and natural disasters. These historical events, in one way or another, undermined the livelihood of the people and the recuperation of the natural environment. They also diverted attention away from what needed to be done by way of rehabilitation.⁴⁸

Armed Conflict, Political Instability, and the Natural Environment

Military conflict and environmental degradation are directly related, one usually causing the other. This relationship of cause and effect is, however, is not sufficiently understood or appreciated in the history of Northeast Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular.⁴⁹ Much less understood and appreciated, at least until very recently, is the impact of environmental dynamics on political and social processes that lead to conflicts.⁵⁰

Armed conflict and associated developments caused ecological crises through the ruin and depletion of natural resources. The decline of vegetation cover, in turn, paved the way for land

⁴⁸ James McCann, “A Great Agrarian Cycle? Productivity in Highland Ethiopia, 1900-1987” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XX,III(1990),pp.390-391. ; See also James McCann, *From Poverty to Famine in Northeast Ethiopia, 1900-1935*(Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania, 1987),pp.31-32.

Mahtemaselassie Woldemeseqel, “The Land System in Ethiopia” in *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol,5,No.5(1957),p.283; Gebreegziabher Elias, *The Chronicle of Abeto Iyasu and Empress Zewditu of Ethiopia, 1909-1930*, translated into English and edited by Reidulf K. Molvaer(Rudiger Koppe Verlg Koln, 1994),p.395-396; Getachew Haile, “ርሃብ፣ተሰቦ...”(Hunger and Epidemic...),pp.27-32. Gebreegziabher shades light of the devastative impact of “የህዳር በሽታ”(The October Disease) particularly in Addis Ababa, and along the railway to the east. According to him, the disease took the lives of many. The author hardly or slightly touches the impact far from the royal capital.

⁴⁹W.P. Ezana and Haroub Othman, “Political Instability and Ecological Stress in Eastern Africa” in Andres Hijort and M.A.Mohammed Salih(eds.), *Ecology and Politics :Environmental Stress and Security in Africa*(Motala: Scandenavian Institute of African Studies, 1989),pp.131-133.

⁵⁰Redie Bereketab, *The Horn of Africa: Intra-State and Inter-State Conflicts and Security*(London: Pluto Press, 2013),p. XIII.; see also Seifudein H. Adam, “Systemic Factors and the Conflicts in the Horn of Africa, 1961-1991” , in Katsuyoshi Fuki etal (eds.), *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective, Papers of the 13th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vo.II(Tokyo,1997),pp.105-107.; Berket Habteselassie, *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa*(London: Monthly Review Press, 1980),pp. IX and 1-3.

degradation, flooding, droughts and famines, disease, and other natural hazards. It affected productivity and induced social insecurity.⁵¹ It also undermined or altogether prevented local conservation practices or development interventions.⁵²

In Ethiopia, the impact of armed conflicts on the environment was far-reaching, going beyond what actual fighting entails for human life. It created environmental stress in areas where the army stayed or passed through. Armies on movement would hunt wild animals, cut trees for fuel or for construction of temporary quarters. In some cases, they would carelessly burn bush and grass to clear roads or to provide for lighting at night. Up until the early 20th century, the army was mostly dependent on peasants for supplies, both during times of peace and conflict. During military campaigns, the lords moved about with the clergy, their servants, and a large number of pack animals, constituting large groups of people and animals living off the land. Areas through which the armies passed and stayed would almost always face destruction. Consequently military activities and movements left local societies impoverished, displaced, and their environments ruined.⁵³ Moreover, war diverted the attention of the state exhausted the resources of the country which otherwise could have been put to good use.⁵⁴ By so doing, it caused a stagnant economy

⁵¹Richard Pankhurst, "The Effects of War In Ethiopian History: An Essay in the Economic, Social and Demographic History of the 19th and Early 20th centuries" in *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol. VII, No.II (1963),pp.143 and 151. See also Gebremarkos Woldeselassie, "The Forest Resources of Ethiopia: Past and Present," *Journal of the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History People: Walia*, vol. 19(1998),p.14.; W.P. Ezana and Haroub Othman, " Political Instability and Ecological Stress in Eastern Africa" in Andres Hijort and M.A.Mohammed Salih(eds.), *Ecology and Politics :Environmental Stress and Security in Africa*(Motala: Scandenavian Institute of African Studies, 1989),pp.131-133.

⁵²Zdenek Cervenka, "The Relationship Between Armed Conflict and Environmental Degradation in Africa" in Andres Hijort and M.A.Mohammed Salih(eds.), *Ecology and Politics :Environmental Stress and Security in Africa*(Motala: Scandenavian Institute of African Studies, 1989),pp.30-31.

⁵³Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia from early Times to 1800*(London: Staples Printers Limited, 1961),pp.175-177.; Richard A. Caulk, " The Army and People", *Ethiopia" in Ethiopianist Notes*, Vol.I, No.III(1978), pp. 18-22.; Richard A. Caulk, "Armies as Predators: Soldiers and Peasants in Ethiopia C.1850-1935", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.XI, No. III(1978),pp.463-472.

⁵⁴Haileselassie I(Emperor), "Emperor Haileselassie's Speech From the Throne" in *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol.12, No.1, (1969),p.2. This was the speech delivered by the Emperor from the Imperial Throne in the Parliament dated on Nov 2, 1968.

and general ecological crisis.⁵⁵ Many observers and scholars have remarked on the massive impact of marauding armies on the natural environment. Referring to contemporary documents and eyewitness accounts, Teferi describes this phenomenon as follows:

The march [of the army] was extraordinary. It was not only an army moving; it was a whole population because when an Ethiopian feudal army sets out on a campaign, it was accompanied by a large number of animals and ...followers that numbered three to four times the number of actual combatants. The chiefs were accompanied by their domestic servants, and not infrequently by their wives. In addition, there were wood cutters, grass cutters, supply collectors, cooks, camp organizers and so on. Cattle, sheep, goats were taken wherever they were found and brought along to be slaughtered in rest camps. Thus, when an Ethiopian army started to move, it looked like an entire region being vacated in a hurry to escape an impending natural disaster.⁵⁶

Major conflicts such as the Battle of Adwa of 1896 are notable in this regard, as much for information that we have about them as the size of armies that they involved and thus for their impact on the environment.⁵⁷ No less striking than the casualties on the battle field was the damage done to the natural environment by movements of armies all the way to and from the battle field. The areas through which the army passed or was temporarily stationed were devastated.⁵⁸ The huge army coming from all over central and southern half of the country, including a force headed by the Emperor, traveled *via* Mänz and was stationed for some time at Gešé and then crossed to Wäraillu in Wällo. From there it marched to Northern Wällo (Yäjjū, Raya, and Azäbo corridors) from where it proceeded to Tigray. As it had always done during campaigns, not only was the army engaged in widespread looting but also ruined the natural environment through the cutting

⁵⁵Caulk, "The Army and...", p.22.

⁵⁶Teferi Teklehaimanot, "The Ethiopian Feudal Army and Its Wars, 1868-1936"(PhD Dissertation, Kansas State University, 1971),pp.17-18.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*,p.108.; Getachew, "ርሃብ እና ተስቦ..." (Hunger and Epidemic...),pp.12-13.; Informants: Ato Täsfayé Dässé, Ato Dämäqä Zäläläw and Aläqa Tässäma Woldägiorgis.

⁵⁸ Getachew, "ርሃብ እና ተስቦ..."(Hunger and Epidemic...), pp.12-13.; see also Asnake Ali, " The Environmental Impact of the Campaign" in Abdussamad H. Ahmad and Richard Pankhurst (eds.), *Adwa: Victory Centenary Conference*, 26 February-2 March 1996(Addis Ababa University, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1998),pp.266-267.

and burning of trees to build roads, cook food, and provide for lighting at night.⁵⁹ The damage caused by pack animals (horses, donkeys, and mules) was also great: the animals trampled upon or faced crops in the field, stripped trees of leaves, shaved fields off grass and exposed their top soil to erosion.⁶⁰

Equally important were the frequent conflicts between the central government and regional elites as well as among different regional elites. The conflicts endangered the livelihood of the local people and the natural environment.⁶¹ For instance, shortly after the Battle of Adwa, the Emperor declared a series of military campaigns to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga to pacify the region,⁶² and deal with disaffection on the part of local communities such as the Ṭemuga Oromo. There are some indications that the Emperor's call to arms against the Italians did not receive positive response from these communities.⁶³ The punitive expeditions by imperial forces are said to have led to the destruction of villages and dislocation of people, even pushing large numbers of people further east to the Afar lowlands. The campaign ended with the appointment of *Däjjazmač* Woldé Aṣagré, a loyal servant of the Emperor and member of the local ruling elite (*yäbézä, zär*) as governor of the regions of Gešé, Géra Medir, Gämza, Efrata, and Gedom.⁶⁴ He also provided local administrative posts to Oromo and Afar elites. Among others, the chiefs of the Hénna clan were

⁵⁹ Asnake, "The Environmental Impact of...", p. 271. Informants: *Ato* Täsfayé Dässé, *Ato* Dämäqä Zäläläw and *Ato* Laqäw Andargé.

⁶⁰ Asnake, "The Environmental Impact of...", pp. 278-281.; Teklehaimanot, "The Ethiopian Feudal..." p. 17.

⁶¹ Girma, *The State and Development...*, p. 68; Caulk, "Armies as Predators...", pp. 466-471.; Caulk, "The Army and...", pp. 18-19.

⁶² Ahmed, "Emperor Menelik's Attempt...", pp. 235-36.

⁶³ Ahmed, "Emperor Menelik's Attempts..." pp. 235-237.; Ahmad, "A Historical Survey of..." pp. 45-50.; Ahmad Hassen, "Some Notes on Harar and Local Trade Routes: A Report on the view of Ex-Merchants of Säwa, 1839-1935," *Annales d'Ethiopie*, Vo. XVII (2001), pp. 145-146. The Emperor also blamed the people of Čäffa, Fursi and Efrata-Jille for their allegiance to *Shayk* Tolha Ibn Jafar (r. 1853-1936), who came from Wällo and mobilized the local Muslim against the state and local Christian community.

⁶⁴ Ahmad, "A Historical Survey of..." pp. 45-50. The territory between Jawuha (Nägésso) and Aṭayé (Nazäro) rivers and in the southeast as far as Awash river was known as *Ras* Woldé's *Madbét* (*kičen*). His successors also ruled much of the areas until 1974.

appointed to govern areas between the Jarra and Aṭayé rivers, Deguguru to Efrata-Jillé, and Jillé Wārä Abbo to Efrata. In the same manner, the chiefs of the Addohiméra and Aseyhimera clans of the Afar were allowed to rule over Afar-inhabited areas of the south-east of the *Awrajjä*.⁶⁵ On top of this, the Emperor encouraged resettlement of the Afar in Mafud and Qäwot districts, particularly in the localities of Qorangogé and Wäsän Qorqur. The influx of the Afar to the above-mentioned areas, however, brought them into constant conflict with the Oromo and Amhara inhabitants of the area over resources.⁶⁶ Ras Woldé Ašagré exchanged a series of letters with Emperor Menelik on how to solve the unending conflicts among the Oromo and Afar in these and other places. In one of the letters dated August 21, 1906, he explained the material and environmental consequences of the conflicts between these two groups and the violation of the terms of reconciliation concluded between them at Dända. The lack of security, as stated in the letter, endangered the livelihood of the local people and the economic interests of the state by disturbing the long-distance trade routes across Šäwa and South Wällo. It also affected the regular tax collection activities.⁶⁷

Parallel with these developments, the constant conflict over resources and the struggle for domination made much of Yefat a battleground until very recently. The pastoralists needed land for grazing, while the sedentary agriculturalists wanted it for cultivation.⁶⁸ Banditry and political instability intensified. The political friction in the royal court of Emperor Menelik due to the stroke that the Emperor suffered in 1906, and the death of Ras Woldé Ašagré, the founding father of *Yäbé-Zar* (the descendant of the Baza ruling family) in Yefat in 1908, aggravated the problem.⁶⁹ In

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 54-59.

⁶⁶Ahmed, "Emperor Menelik's Attempts...", pp. 242-243.

⁶⁷Paulos Gnogno, *አጼ ምኒልክ በሃገር ውስጥ የተጻጻፉት ደብዳቤዎች* (Lists of Letters Exchanged by Emperor Menelik's in the Ethiopia) (Addis Ababa: Aster Nega Printing Press, 2003 E.C.), pp. 94, 128, and 383.

⁶⁸Ahmed, "Emperor Menelik's Attempts...", pp. 242-243.

⁶⁹Ahmed, "A Historical Survey of...", pp. 60-61; Gobeze Tafete, *አባ ጤና እያሱ* (Father Health Iyasu) (Addis Ababa: United printers, 1996), p. 54.

the meantime, *Däjjazmač* Mäšäša, the successor of *Ras* Woldé, was not in a position to handle the escalating problem in Yefat and thus requested the intervention of the central government. In 1911 and 1912, the central government sent military contingents led by *Ras* Habtämaria Bāyānā and attacked the Oromo of Fursi, Dugugguru, Jillé Wära-Abbo, and Wära-Kärräyu. In the course of the assault, the army burned villages, destroyed the property of the rebels, and ruined the natural environment.⁷⁰

Our sources affirm very strongly that the frequent military campaigns and resource-related conflicts in the *awraja* in the late 19th and early 20th centuries resulted in the impoverishment and displacement of people and the devastation of the natural environment, particularly from Rassa in Mafud to Aṭayé in Efrata. This corridor, until the present time, has been bone of contention among different groups. Neither the state nor the local people felt secure enough to engage in any form of nature rehabilitation program or development intervention. The area seemed like no man's land and was exposed to deforestation and severe soil erosion.⁷¹ The situation seemed a bit improved during the reign of *Lij* Iyasu (1913–1916) because he attempted to settle the problem with the Oromo and Afar people of the region by arranging political marriage alliances with the leading clans of the two ethnic groups.⁷²

⁷⁰Ahmed, “A Historical Survey of...”, pp.61-62 and 65.

⁷¹ Informants: *Māmre* Mamo Woldäab (*Abba* Hailāmariam), *Ato* Woldäarägay Dañé, *Ato* Jäfar Hussén and *Aläqa* Tässäma Woldägiorgis.

⁷²Ahmed, “A Historical Survey of...”, pp.61-62 and 65.; Gobeze, *አባጤ...* (Father Health...), p.70.; see also Bairu Tafla, “Marriage As a Political Device: An Appraisal of A Socio-Political Aspect of the Menelik Period, 1889-1916” in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1(1972), pp.14-21. Political marriage had been used as an instrument to get firm socio-economic and political bases. The state arranged marriage with influential elites and provided gifts to get their supports in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For more see Bairu, “Marriage As a Political...”, pp.14-21.

The Battle of Sägälé and Subsequent Environmental Crisis

The Battle of Sägälé was another historical episode that had considerable environmental impact in North Šäwa, particularly in Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Tägulät *ena* Bulga. The battle took place between forces of the Šäwan nobility and of *Negus* Mika’el of Wällo in 1916. The root cause of the war was the deposition of *Lij* Iyasu by the Šäwan elite and the coming into power of Empress Zewditu Menelik on July 27, 1916. *Lij* Iyasu’s marriage alliances with the Muslim Oromo, Somalis, Argobba, and Afar in the peripheries were not positively seen by the Šäwan elites internally and the colonialists externally. The Šäwans considered it a threat to the old establishment and Orthodox Christianity.⁷³ Gäbräegiziabhér, the chronicler of the young sovereign and Empress Zäwuditu, illustrates that the young prince openly disrespected the the Šäwans.⁷⁴

The colonial powers, especially Britain, considered *Lij* Iyasu’s foreign policy and his diplomatic relation with the Germans and Ottoman Turkey, as well as with the leader of the Somali national movement, Sayyid Muhammäd Abdillé Hassän, as a challenge to their colonial interest in Somalia.⁷⁵ They were also disappointed by his disdain for Protestant and Catholic missionaries.⁷⁶ Thus, they tried to ridicule his image among his people. In doing so, they put

⁷³Eliois Ficquet, “Understanding *Lij* Iyasu Through His Forefathers: The Mammedoch Imams of Wollo” in *The Life and Times of Lij Iyasu of Ethiopia: New Insights* (Berlin: Lit Verlag Fresnosstr, 2014), p.5; Zuzanna Augustynaik, “*Lij* Iyasu Marriage as a Reflection of His Domestic Policy” in *The Life and Times of Lij Iyasu of Ethiopia: New Insights* (Berlin: Lit Verlag Fresnosstr, 2014), pp.39-42.; See also Gobeze, **አባ ጤኖ...** (Father Health Iyasu...), pp. 65-66 and 93-94.; Ahmad , “ A Historical Survey of...” pp.68-69.; Elio Ficquet and Wolbert G.C. Smidt, “Forward” in *The Life and Times of Lij Iyasu of Ethiopia: New Insights* (Berlin: Lit Verlag Fresnosstr, 2014), p.2.

⁷⁴IES, MS. 2284., p.53. See also Gebreegziabhere Elias, *The Chronicle of Abeto Iyasu and Empres Zewditu of Ethiopia, 1909-1930*, translated into English and edited by Reidulf K. Molvaer (Rudiger Koppe Verlag Koln, 1994), 327.

⁷⁵Bahru, *A History of...*, pp.126-127; Zewde Reta, **ተፈሪ መኮንን ረጅሙ የስልጣን ጉዞ፡ በምኒሊክ፣ በእያሱ እና በዘውዲቱክ 1884-1922 ዓ.ም.** (Teferi Mekonen’s Long Journey of Power from the Time of Menelik, to Zewditu) (Addis Ababa: Shama Books, 2006 E.C.), pp. 174-176.

⁷⁶IES, MS. 2284. Gebreegziabher, **“የታሪክ...”** (A History...), pp.26-27.; Gobeze , **አባ ጤኖ...** (Father Health...), p.74). *Lij* Iyasu policy favored the Muslims and this was not positively seen by the missionaries. For more see also IES, MS. 2284. Gebreegziabher, **“የታሪክ...”** (A History...), pp.26-27.

together a photo of the young prince dressed in *hijab* (a traditional Muslim garment) as if he was praying with the Muslims.⁷⁷

In Yefat, *Lij* Iyasu concluded political marriage alliances with the leading clans of the Afar, the Oromo, and the Argobba, mainly to integrate the groups politically and thereby secure the long-distance trade route that passed through the region. He married the daughter of one of the chiefs of Afar, *Negadras* Abubäkär of Çano, and a daughter of Sualihi of the Oromo of Temuga. He frequently visited the region to closely follow up on the security of the region, and for this purpose, he established the town of Ténayé (now Sänbäté).⁷⁸ The harmonious relationship of the young prince with the Oromo, Afar, and Argobba in Yefat enabled him to get their support against the Šäwan establishment.⁷⁹

The confrontation between the Šäwan and Wällo forces led to the devastating Battles of Toramask, Ankobär, and finally Sägalé in North Šäwa in 1916. The war took the lives of many and destroyed the physical environment of mainly Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Tägulät *ena* Bulga *Awrajjas*.⁸⁰ The story began with the news of the deposition of the young prince in 1916. *Negus* Mika’el did not waste time and soon launched a military expedition against the central government.⁸¹ The army of *Negus* Mika’el crossed the Šäwan province via Qétema, in Gešé district in the north, where he faced strong resistance. It was at Gešé that *Negus* Mika’el announced to his army about the deposition

⁷⁷ Gobeze, *አባ ጤኖ...* (Father Health...), p.82.

⁷⁸ Ahmed, “A Historical Survey of...”, pp.65-67. See also Gobeze, *አባ ጤኖ...* (Father Health...), p.71.; Gebreegziabher, *The Chronicle of Abeto Iyasu...*, p. 348-349.). *Lij* Iyasu could establish a firm ground among the Afar and Oromo of Yefat. For more refer IES, MS. 2284. Gebreegziabher, “የታሪክ...” (A History...), pp.25-29.

⁷⁹ Ahmad, “A Historical Survey of...”, pp.68-69.; IES, MS. 2284. Gebreegziabher, “የታሪክ...” (A History...), p.54.

⁸⁰ Kebede Tessema, *የታሪክ ማስታወሻ* (A Reminder of History) (Addis Ababa, 1939E.C.), pp. 44-47.; see IES, MS. 2284. Gebreegziabher, “የታሪክ...” (A History...), pp.55-57.

⁸¹ Mersehazen Woldecherchos, *የሃያኛው ክፍለ ዘመን መግቢያ: የዘመን ታሪክ ትዝታዬ ካየሁት እና ከሰማሁት* (The Dawn of 20th Century: My Life History from What I See and Hear) 1896-1922E.C. Third Edition (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2008E.C.), pp.160-163..

of *Lij* Iyasu, allowing his soldiers to loot peasants to feed itself, and at the same time encouraged it to burn villages, crops, and woodlands all along the way to Ankobär.⁸² The forces of *Negus* Mika’el thus overwhelmed the territory of Mänz *ena* Gešé. Märsé Hazén describes the situation as: “የወሎ ጦር በመንዝ ላይ እንደ ወሃ መላት ሆኖ ፈሰሰበትና በየመንገዱ ላይ ያገኘውን ሁሉ ይዘርፍ ጀመር፡፡ የባላገሩን በሬና መካት ማረድና መብላት ቤቱን ማቃጠል የቤተ ክርስቲያኑን ንዋይ ቅድሳት ማበላሸት ጀመረ፡፡”⁸³ (The soldiers of Wällo overwhelmed the land of Mänz like a flood and plundered everything along the road. They slaughtered and fed on the oxen and fattened sheep, burnt houses of peasants, and demolished the property of churches). It was in this manner that the forces of *Negus* Mika’el passed through the center of Mänz *ena* Gešé, crossing Mofärwuha River and Säladengay, and finally quartered at Denbaro, near Däbrä Berhan.⁸⁴

The Šāwan forces, on their part, readied themselves to resist the forces of *Lij* Iyasu and his supporters. A contingent under the leadership of *Ras* Luelsägäd Aṭinafsägäd, moved from Addis Abäbä and camped at Däbrä Berhan on 7 October, 1916. The first military engagement between the two forces took place at Tora Mäsk on 25 October 1916, a mid-way between Däbrä Berhan and Ankobär, where the Wällo forces were victorious. The battle was so devastating that the victorious army of *Negus* Mika’el ruined the surrounding countryside, including Ankobär, by burning crops and villages, and looting peasants’ property all along the route. It also plundered the churches at Ankobär.⁸⁵

⁸²*Ibid.*, pp.160-163.

⁸³*Ibid.*, p.162.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p.170.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, pp.166-170.

Mobilizing the main army from the center and the provinces, *Fitawrari* Habtägiorgis camped at Korämaš, in Bulga on 16 October, 1916. Until the coming of forces from the center, he wisely communicated with *Negus* Mika'el as if they were already defeated and ready to settle the issue peacefully. On 27 October, 1916, the Šäwan forces defeated the forces of *Negus* Mika'el at the Battle of Sägälé, in which a large number of soldiers of the *Negus* were killed. Many others, including *Negus* Mika'el himself, were captured while others retreated. Most of the captives of the Battle were released and went to home safely. Soldiers who sought to return home through Mänz were subjected to attack from the local people as revenge for the damage they had caused on their way to Sägälé. Those who moved via Aheya Fäj in Märabété, however, arrived home safely. Some others came back to Wällo via Afar.⁸⁶Sometime after the Battle of Sägälé, *Ras* Täfäri declared compensation to the peasants whose property was burnt or looted, and their environment ruined. He issued the following declaration:

በዚህ በዛሬው ጦርነት ዘመን ወታደር በቤትህ ገብቶ ገንዘብህን የበዘበዘብህ አዝመራህን ሁሉ የጠፋብህ ለሊጋባ በየኑ አስታውቀህ ግምቱን እንድትቀበል አድርገናልና ገንዘቤ ተበዘበዘ አዝመራዬ ጠፋ በሬዬ ታረደ ብለህ አትዘን። አይዞህ ስራህን ትተህ ወዲያና ወዲህ አትበል። ነጋዴም ነግድ ገበሬም እረስ።⁸⁷

[Any of you] whose property was looted or houses and crops were burnt by the army may register with *Ligaba* Beyene and receive reparations. Don't be sad for the looting of [your] money, slaughtering of your oxen or damages done to your crops. Do not wander about in resignation [since support will come your way], [the] merchant shall trade and farmer plough.

Sometime after the Battle of Sägälé, Empress Zewditu traveled to Wällo to stabilize the region. It was on that occasion that she warned troops in the course of their movements not to mistreat the peasants and destroy the environment as in the earlier days. She condemned the former acts of

⁸⁶*Ibid.* pp. 166-175,177.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*,pp.178.

mistreatment and damage which the army inflicted on peasants and their habitats in the following words:

...ቀድሞ የምትመላለስበትን የምታውቀውን አገር የሌላ የባዕድ ሀገር አስመስለህ ከመንገድ እየወጣህ ከባላገር ቤት እየሄድህ ገንዘቡን እህሉን፣ከብቱን እየዘረፍህ ቤቱን እያቃጠልህ ሰውን እየገደልህ ከፍቃድ ወጥተህ የገዛ ሃገርህን አጠፋህ። አሁንም ከዚህ ቀደም ቤት ያቃጠልህ ከብት የዘረፍህ ጭፍራህን መርምረህ አውጣልኝ። ይህን ያደረገውን ያላወጣ ሰው ጥፋቱ በጭፍራ አለቃ ላይ ነው። እንግዲህ መንገዱን ይዘህ ተጓዝ እንጅ ከመንገድ አትወጣ። እንግዲህ ወዲህ ከመንገድ ወጥተህ እሽት በጥሰህ ከባላገር ቤት ገብተህ አንድ ነገር ነክተህ የተገኘህ ሰው መቀጣጫ ትሆናለህ። ስንቅህንም ከአስራቱ እህል ዳርጌሃለሁ። ባላገርም ከብትህንን ገንዘብህን የነካብህ ሰው ተከታትለህ መጥተህ በሰፈር አለቃ ተቆራጭ ውሰድ። የሰፈርም አለቃ ባላገር መጥቶ ጮሆልኝ ዳኝነት ብትነሳው እዳውና ቅጣቱ በአንተ ላይ ይሆናል እወቀው።⁸⁸

...previously, you destroyed the country through which you travelled, acting as if it is some other country; you went off the main road and entered the house of the peasant looting [his] money and cattle, burning his house, killing people, and thus destroyed your own country. Now, [the local *balabat*] will identify and handover those soldiers involved in looting of cattle and burning of houses. If you fail to do so, you [the local *balabat*] will be charged. Hereafter, travel along the road, don't go off the road. If you are found leaving the road feeding on peasant's crops and entering into the house of peasant and touch anything, you will be punished severely and be made an example of . I have allocated your food from *asrat*(*tithe*). Villagers too, should report those army members who looted your money and cattle to your respective village chief. The village chief on your part should not ignore the complaints that come to you. If you do so and refuse to provide justice to the peasant, you will be responsible and may face both punishment and the cost of restitution.

The Increasing Demand of Revenue and Ecological Crisis

The period from 1916 to 1935, the people and the environment felt the heavy hands of the state and the elites as a result of the rise of the demand for revenue. Taking the case of Lasta, a district in Northern Wollo, McCann argues that the competition for power and resources ended up with decline in productivity and of the ecosystem. He says that the competition between the state and

⁸⁸IES,MS. 2555. “ንግስት ዘውዲቱ ወደ ወሎ ለመሄድ ሲነሱ ወታደሩ እና መኪንቱ እንዲቀድም የተነገረ አዋጅ”, (A Decree Made on the Eve of Empress Zewditu Journey to Wallo Ordering the Nobility to Move Ahead) in ከ 1909 ዓም ጀምሮ የተጻፉ የመንግስት ዋጆች፣ ማስታወቂያዎች እና ትዛዞች ጥራዝ, ጥቅምት 28, 1909ዓ.ም.” (State Decrees, Notice and Orders made since 1909E.C.).

the local elites gained new momentum after 1916. This year witnessed the coming into power of *Ras Täfäri* (the later Emperor Hailäselassé) as a regent and the rise of the absolutist state.⁸⁹

The state devised new financial and administrative arrangements to centralize power and resources by changing the relationship between lords and peasants. In doing so, it replaced old local authorities with new, trusted individuals and reduced the intermediary role of these individuals.⁹⁰ The primary intention of the state was to demolish the economic and political power of regional lords and thereby maximizing state revenue.⁹¹ In fact, the endeavor started in 1892 when the state decided to transfer *asrat* (tithe), from the church to the state coffers.⁹²

As for *Lij Iyasu*, he emancipated the peasants from having to provide food and shelter to *asrat asäfariwoč* (tax collectors), a committee made up of one *mälkäña*, one *Çeqaşum*, two local elders, and one secretary. Instead, the peasants paid taxes to state agents directly. For the time being, this initiative was successful in raising revenue for the state, but it quickly collapsed as a result of tax collecting committees abusing their power. On October 15, 1921, *Ras Täfäri* announced a new rule for the collecting of *asrat*, citing the inadequacy of the previous structure. By this edict, the soldiery took over the job of the former tax assessors committee, whose members were chosen from the local community and government agents. The peasants were released from their previous responsibility of providing food and other supplies, as the government covered all costs of the soldiery. The soldiers only interacted with the peasants during harvesting, threshing, and gathering

⁸⁹ James McCann, "Household Economy, Demography and the 'Push' Factor in Northern Ethiopian History, 1916-1935" A Working Paper (Boston University of African Study Center, N.D) in Agriculture Miscellanea 8, pp.1-3; "A Great Agrarian..." ,p.412.

⁹⁰ McCann, "Household Economy..." , pp.2-3.; James McCann, "A Great Agrarian..." ,pp.412-14.; Mahtemeselassie Woldemesqel, *ነክረኅር* (Telling a History) (Addis Ababa, 1962E.C.), pp. 332-334.

⁹¹ Bahru, "Economic Origin of..." ,pp.14-16. ;Mahtemeselassie, *ነክረኅር* (Telling a...)(Addis Ababa, 1962E.C.), pp. 332-334.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 332.; McCann, "Household Economy..." , pp.2-3.

grain. This arrangement worked until the second Italian invasion in 1935. The new structure, however, was not without challenges as a result of the unending abuse of power. Peasants, who invested more time and resources to raise productivity, would ultimately not be beneficiaries.⁹³ Thus they were not in a position to raise productivity through improving the quality of the land through adding extra efforts.⁹⁴

The state also worked to be in control of the proceeds from judicial fees and fines, including from *afersata* (a traditional way of identifying criminals). Many "legal" institutions (both legal court and 'traditional') operated to generate income rather than deliver justice. This was particularly true of the 1920s.⁹⁵ According to my informants, the government paid particular attention in this regard to Yefat *ENA* *Ṭemuga Awrajja*, where crimes like arson, murder, and cattle robbery were rampant.⁹⁶

The state also made its presence felt increasingly in a number of arenas, including control over peasant labor for the cultivation of state land (*hudad*), and the building of infrastructure.⁹⁷

The centralization of power and control over resources by the state brought it into conflict both with local elites and the people. The state collected different forms of payments, such as land tax, *asrat*, judicial fees, and other payments and labor obligations. The heavy hand of the state increased burdens on the peasantry. The local elites, on their part, imposed multiple forms of payments and services on the poor people. The worst thing here was that the peasants got neither

⁹³ Mahtemeselassie, *፡፡፡* (Telling A...), pp. 332-334; Bahru, "Economic Origin of ...", pp. 14-16.

⁹⁴ Informants: Ato Ṭerusäw Mäkonen, Ato Mohammäd Hassän and Ato Tolässa Däbälla.

⁹⁵ McCann, "Household Economy...", p. 8. see also McCann, *From Poverty to ...*, pp. 130-140.

⁹⁶ Informants: Ato Ṭerusäw Mäkonen, Ato Mohammäd Hassän and Ato Tolässa Däbälla.

⁹⁷ McCann, "Household Economy...", p. 9.

the protection of the state nor of the local elite. They were insecure in all respects.⁹⁸ They continued to be mistreated by state, regional, and local government agents, particularly tax assessors and collectors. In most cases, the failure of tax assessors and collectors to estimate the peasant's harvest on time caused ruin on crop due to rain, wind, as well as rodents and pests. On top of this, tax abuses contributed to the reduction of productivity and increasing disregard for the environment, doing so by undermining motivation and hard work on the part of the peasantry. Bribing officials was part of the normal business of government, including the most basic or routine administrative and judicial services.⁹⁹ McCann summarizes the overall effects of how the heavy hand of the state and of local elites affected the subsistence economy and the natural environment as follows:

Fixed taxes, payable in cash, and unpredictable fines and levies now dominated the revenue transferred from peasant producers to administrative elite [new state appointed officials who took positions formerly occupied by local elites]. This shift in the type of tax /tribute, independent of overall increase of assessment, seriously affected the stability of the household economy as well as challenging the ideology of the subsistence and risk management, which dominated rural production.¹⁰⁰

The poor, who were sandwiched between the state and local elites on the one hand the increasingly unpredictable weather conditions on the other, engaged in a variety of activities and strategies to meet the increasing demands of their families and defray their tax obligations. They rented or exchanged land to make money (locally called *māgazo*), or borrowed from the wealthy. In the event of failure to pay back, people stood the risk of losing their lands. In this manner, the wealthy made the peasants their dependents and accumulated land and capital at their latter's expense. Some of the poor entered into the service of the wealthy, and others left their parish in search of a better

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, pp.4-8.

⁹⁹ Bahru, "Economic Origin of..." , pp.14-16; Gobeze, *አባጤኛ...* (Father Health...), p.69.; Mahtemeselassie, *ሕረ...* (Telling A...), p. 332.; See also Telahun Berhaneselassie, *የ፲፱ኛው ክፍለ ዘመን ኢትዮጵያ* (Twenty Century Ethiopia) *First Edition* (Addis Abäbä, 1996E.C.), pp.181-184.

¹⁰⁰ McCann, "Household Economy..." , p.10.

life.¹⁰¹ Those who preferred to stay in their birth place continued to sustain the heavy hands of the state, the nobility, and the clergy. Referring to the peasants in northern and central Ethiopia in the early 20th century, McCann describes the overall effect of the new pattern of production and arrangements on the rural economy as follows:

The long standing formulae within the rural household economy, which had sustained the social and economic fabric, proved unable to deal adequately with the new set of demands on it. Patterns of land holding, labor allocation, institutions of economic distribution changed and new economic strata emerged... The end result was a squeezing out of middle peasants, the growth of a new class of capital-rich administrators, the beginning of commoditization of land and labor, and the out-flow of a huge number of peasants who sought their future elsewhere in Ethiopia's emergent political economy.¹⁰²

In northern and central Ethiopia, at least theoretically, *rist* land was not subject to confiscation except in the event of the owners committing crimes, failing to pay land tax (*geber-tal*), or permanent abandonment of the area. These rights of the peasant had been given legal recognition earlier by the edict of October 1928¹⁰³ and later by the 1931 Constitution.¹⁰⁴ If individuals were found guilty of minor crimes, they would face physical or financial punishment. They would not get their *rist* lands confiscated. Even when crimes were committed against the state, maximal punishment was forcing the owner to transfer the land to his children or close relatives. This trend provided a kind of land tenure security to the peasants.¹⁰⁵ In spite of that, however, there were limitations on the right of the peasant. His rights, in other words, were not exclusive. He could

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, pp.12-15.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, p.1.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, pp.12-15.

¹⁰⁴The Imperial Government of Ethiopia, "The Constitution of 1931" in *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol.V, No.IV(1962),p.363.; Bahru, *A History of ...*,p.14.; Paolo Borruso, " Politics and Religion in Haileselassie's Ethiopia: Apogee and Crisis of a Confessional African State, 1916-1974", *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.7.,No.1 and 2(2013),pp.102-104.

¹⁰⁵Bahru, "Economic Origin of...",pp.12-13.

not sell the land to whomever he or she wanted; He or she was also under obligation to share the land and the resources on it whenever an extended family member or a relative demands a share.¹⁰⁶

There is general agreement among scholars that this increasingly constraining political economy was attended by an equally constraining and increasingly declining physical environment. Environmental degradation itself was, at least in part, induced by the increasingly extractive political economy. The peasants, burdened by the demands of state, and of their families, were forced to utilize all kinds of options. Grazing, bush and even marginal lands began to be cultivated by clearing the vegetation cover. Fallowing declined progressively.¹⁰⁷ The state, on its part, encouraged and sometimes provided incentives for the expansion of agriculture. It considered uncultivated government lands such as slopes, forested, bush, and grazing land as 'idle' land and thus worked to convert them into farming fields primarily to raise revenue by giving little or no concern about the nature and topography of the land.¹⁰⁸

The declaration of land measurement and registration of excess land on 16 September, 1930, was another burden with consequences for the natural environment. The intention of the state was to maximize state revenue by bringing untaxed land into the tax system or by selling extra lands. Accordingly, excess land that was already cultivated or covered with wood would remain in the

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.12-14.

¹⁰⁷ Hussein, "The Political Economy of...", pp.11-12.; Abdul Mejid Hussein, "The Political Economy of Famine in Ethiopia" in Abdul Mejid Hussein(ed.), *Drought and Famine in Ethiopia-African Environment Special Report 2* (London: International African Institute in Collaboration with Environment Training Program-SIDA, No Year), p.14.; See also Mahtemeselassie, *ibid.* (Telling A...) pp. 331-334.; Informants: Ato Aṭlaw Asamenāw, and Ato Awuraris Aragaw interviewed on 16 and 18/02/11 E.C. respectively.

¹⁰⁸ Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, pp.18, 93 and 107-108.; see also McCann, "A Great Agrarian...", pp.412-414.

hands of the owner as long as he paid additional tax on it. Unsettled and open lands were distributed to different individuals including, the local *balabat*, and *däjj-ṭāni* (petitioners for land).¹⁰⁹

In actual fact, the relationship between poverty and environmental degradation was too complex. A number of factors affected and, in some cases, determined their relationship, like land tenure, state policy (of natural resources, agriculture, settlement, etc.), class relationships, and others. As to whether it was the rich or the poor who actually was responsible for environmental degradation was a matter that needs close scrutiny. As opposed to the mainstream assumption that the poor are the major culprit for environmental decline, it is apparent that the latter were aware that they would be easily affected more than others by changes in the natural environment. They had practical knowledge and experience on how to use resources wisely. Of course this does not mean that they contributed nothing to the problem.¹¹⁰ One thing is sure, however: when taken together, it was the wealthy elite (officials of the state and the nobility) who predominantly regulated and dictated the relationship of the poor with the natural environment, doing so through their unlimited interventions on the rural economy both officially as policy formulators and decision makers as well as individually as landowners.¹¹¹

The state did not do enough to protect the peasants from complete devastation in the event of harvest shortfalls or one or another kind of crisis.¹¹² Nor was there any technological breakthrough in agriculture. Subsistence agriculture underwent no significant technological

¹⁰⁹Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopian History, Monograph in Ethiopian Land Tenure* (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies in collaboration with Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 197-202.; Informants: Ato Šawayé Yefru, Ato Yeṭena Masrāša and Ato Alāmayāhu Bäsufekad. The practice of land measurement, which had existed in Bägémedir long before, was first introduced into Šäwa in by Emperor Menelik in 1890s.

¹¹⁰ Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and ...*, pp. 101-105.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 103-105, 107; Informants: Ato Šawayé Yefru, Ato Yeṭena Masrāša and Ato Alāmayāhu Bäsufekad.

¹¹² McCann, "A Great Agrarian...", pp. 401-402

transformation over several millennia.¹¹³ Iron tools have replaced wooden ones, of course, but that was only a minor improvement. It was "more of a change in durability [of the instrument] than in concept". According to McCann, the industry's lack of technological change was caused in part by the availability of cheap labor, rugged terrain, land fragmentation, and shortage of rural financial institutions.¹¹⁴ Scholars like Merid and Dessalegn attributed the problem to the prevalence of oppressive social relationships and economic systems. Merid, in particular, points out that the peasants were not interested in adopting new innovations, not because they were conservative but due to rigid social relations and the absence of competitive economic system. The absence of land tenure security and the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few elites discouraged the peasants from making extra efforts to produce more by improving the quality of the land. The worry of the peasant rather was how to provide for his family's daily needs and meet tax obligations. He was not as such interested in making long-term investments. On top of this, as pointed out above, the frequent division and re-division of land was another discouraging factor for the peasants, preventing them from long-term investment, including land conservation activities.¹¹⁵

In contrast to the highlands, the lowlands, which include Yefat *ena Temuga Awrajja*, did not require much by way of technological advancement until the middle of the 20th century. McCann claims that the abundance of fertile soils allowed the peasantry to meet their needs. This condition, however, did not sustain for long. It began to change with the influx of people from the neighboring highlands and the subsequent expansion of settlement and cultivation. Bush, forests, and grasslands were converted into cultivation. Grazing and forested lands declined, subsequently

¹¹³*Ibid.*, pp.390-396.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp.401-402.

¹¹⁵ Merid, "Land Tenure and Agricultural...", pp.2, 9-11.; Dessalegn Rahmato, "The Conditions of Ethiopian Peasantry", in *Challenge*, Vol.X, No.II(1970), pp.37-39.

causing conflict over resources between sedentary agriculturalists and pastoralists on the one hand and among the pastoralists on the other.¹¹⁶ The road out of poverty was thus increasingly challenging and complicated.¹¹⁷

Deforestation and Rehabilitation Endeavors

Historical sources indicate that recognizing the threat from the declining environment and the associated shortage of firewood, Emperor Menelik (1889–1913) engaged in land conservation and long-term rehabilitation of nature since the early 1890s. In one of his conversations with Musse Mendon Vedaillet, a French advisor, Emperor Menelik stated his worry about the progressive decline of the vegetation cover in the country. The Emperor told him that he and his predecessors lacked permanent capital and used to move from place to place, partly due to the scarcity of firewood. He narrated the story of his life and future plan as follows:

...የእንጨት ችግር ነው እንጂ አባቶቼ አንኮበር ጫካ ነበረ ያንን በዘበኛ አስክልክለው ድሃ ...እንጨት አይሰብር፤ ቤት አይሰራ የነሱ ብቻ የቤተ መንግስት አድርገው ይኖሩ ነበር፡፡ እኔ ከአጼ ቴወድሮስ አምልጮ መጣሁ፤ አንኮበር ስገባ ያ የተከተለኝ ሁሉ ወታደሩ መኳንንቱ ብዙ ነው፡፡ በአንድ አመት ያሁሉ እንጨት አለቀ፡፡ ከዚያ ተነስቼ እንዋሪ ወረድኩ፡፡ የዚያን ሀገር እንጨት ጨረሰኩ፡፡ ከዚያ ተመልሼ ደቦ ጎጆ (ከአዳ ግርጌ) ድረስ ጨረሰኩ፡፡...አሁን ደግሞ ይህንን አዲስ ዓለም ሁለት ዓመት ቢችለኝ ቀጥሎ እሄዳለሁ፡፡ እስከ ከፋ ድረስ እሄዳለሁ እድሜ የሰጠኝ እንደሆነ፡፡¹¹⁸

...[It] was the problem of wood. My ancestors used to protect the forests in Ankobär using guards. The poor did not cut trees or construct wooden houses. They [the royal family] lived using it for the palace only. When I escaped from Emperor Tewodros [royal prison at Mäqədäla in 1865] and entered into Ankobär, a large number of nobility and soldiers had followed me there. Within one year, I finished the wood. Then I went to Däbbo Gojjo (the foot of Ada) and cleared the forest there. Now I will go to Addis Aläṃ if it sustains me for two years. I will go as far as Käffa if I am alive.

¹¹⁶ McCann, “A Great Agrarian...”, pp.396 and 404-405.; Informants: Ato Šäwayé Yefru, Ato YeṭENA Masräša and Ato Alämayähu Bäufekad interviewed on 28/01/11E.C.

¹¹⁷ McCann, “A Great Agrarian...”, pp.390-393.

¹¹⁸ Mängestu, *መጽሐፈትዝታ...* (The Book of Reminiscence of...), p.174.

The decline of vegetation cover in the highlands of central Ethiopia was also witnessed by Herbert Vivian, a British traveler who visited the court of Menelik immediately following the establishment of Addis Abäbä. He reported that there was no tree in or around the town. He observed expanding settlements around the town in 1880s.¹¹⁹ The problem of firewood in the highlands gradually extended to the lowlands due to the expansion of settlements and cultivation. Demographic rise in the highlands forced people to travel to the remote areas to settle, taking the risk of exposure to wild animal attacks or disease. As I have discussed in chapter one, the newcomers deliberately set fire to bushes and forested areas to prepare the land for cultivation and partly to drive out dangerous wild animals like snakes. The practice of slashing and burning to use the resultant ash for improving the quality of the land was also common in the lowlands.¹²⁰ The steady process of deforestation, which reached its peak in the second half of the 20th century, was far beyond the demand for firewood. It disturbed the balance in the ecosystem and caused land degradation and decline in productivity. It also caused flooding, drying up of water bodies, the disappearance of wildlife, scarcity or fluctuations of rainfall.¹²¹

Despite the increasing threat of a declining environment, the intervention of the state until the late 19th century was limited or non-existent. The state was preoccupied with handling domestic political instability and foreign threats. The peasants and urban dwellers, on their part, were reluctant to plant and protect trees due to the prevailing political instability and changing political economy of the country (particularly land and tree tenures). They were not sure whether they

¹¹⁹*Addis Zämän Newspaper*, Year 31, No. 566(1963E.C.),p.7.

¹²⁰Informants: Ato Mängäša Tačé, Ato Damṭäw Abäbä, Ato Mängäša Kebrät and Mämré Mamo Woldäab (Abba Hailämariam).

¹²¹Chojnacki, “Forests and Forest...”,p.36.

would enjoy the fruits of their extra investments in the future. So the gap between demand and supply of wood products increased, leading to the shrinkage of the available woodlands.¹²²

It was Emperor Menelik who attempted to curtail the rapid rate of deforestation. He was actively involved in awareness creation and developing rules that regulated illegal cutting of trees and hunting, as well as reforestation and afforestation programs. In fact the Emperor began to respond to the declining environment as early as when he was a king of Šäwa.¹²³ He provided tax incentives to those who planted trees and, at the same time, made cutting trees without the permission of the concerned officials illegal. The decree determined the number and types of trees that can be cut.¹²⁴ He gave special attention to the then endangered indigenous tree species such as *ted* (juniperous), *zegeba* (podocarpus), and *woira* (*acacia*) and declared that የእኔ ነውና በእርሻህም ውስጥ ቢሆን እንዳትቆርጣቸው፡፡”¹²⁵ (trans: you should not cut them down even inside of your farm because it belongs to me). He also demarcated and assigned guards to protect forest reserves in Šäwa and other parts of the country, such as Mänagäša-Suba (in Mänagäša), Woff-Waša (in Tägulät *ena* Bulga and Yefat *ena* Temuga), and Jibat (in Jibat *ena* Méča). Tree-cutting requests from these reserves were permitted only for selected churches, government institutions, and some of the higher elites with the consent of the Emperor himself.¹²⁶ Menelik also enacted a series of

¹²²Hailemariam Kassa and etal, “Reading the Landscape Past: Explaining the Lack of on Farm Tree Planting in Ethiopia” in *Environment and History*, Vol.17,No.3(2011),pp.464-466.

¹²³Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና...” (A History of Forest and...), pp.25-26. After defeating Mästäwat, the mother of Aba Waṭāw, who was one of the prominent lords of Wällo, Emperor Menelik mobilized the people in and around Mesqela, in Wällo to plant trees and control illegal hunting in 1871/72. He did the same at Wäraillu while moving back to his capital, Ankobär. Here, he prohibited cutting of naturally grown trees and hunting of wildlife except hyena. He allowed hunting of selected edible animals only to the poor with the consent of the local government authorities during the eve and the end of fasting season. Some people, however, violated his decree and hunted animals and cut tree at night. For more see pp. 25 and 347.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, p.26.; see also Richard Pankhurst, “ The History of Deforestation and Afforestation Prior to WWI, *Northeast African Studies*, Vol.2,No.1(1995),pp.128-129.; Ronald J. Horvath, “ Addis Ababa’s Eucalyptus Tree”, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. VI, No.I(1968),p.19.

¹²⁵Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና...” (A History of Forest and...), p.34.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, pp.34-35.

laws regulating the protection and development of wildlife on 25 October 1907, 15 October, 1908, and 25 August, 1913. In all cases, hunting of endemic animals was prohibited. Hunters were required to form associations and work only in accordance with the given law.¹²⁷

Our sources, however, emphasize that the decrees relating to both trees and wildlife were not strictly enforced.¹²⁸ Provincial governors and elites converted forested land into cultivation and allowed the expansion of settlements without the knowledge of the Emperor.¹²⁹ Thus, deforestation continued in the rural areas in the following decades. Similarly, although hunting was made illegal and declined significantly, it was difficult to break the practice which was considered a source of pride, respect, and even appointment (አሻሚ፣ አሸላሚ እና አስከባሪ) among the people.¹³⁰ This was much more evident in central and southern Ethiopia where some dense forests still existed.¹³¹

Nevertheless, the Emperor continued to promote tree planting and introduced new species of trees. He was credited with bringing eucalyptus (in Amharic called *baherzaf*) from Australia in 1892. At the time, the Emperor and the people were happy with the arrival of the new tree. It is widely believed to have saved Addis Abäbä from being abandoned like its forerunners. Vivian, who revisited some of the towns of North Šäwa, including the royal capital, a decade after the introduction of the tree, noticed the expansion of the tree and the improvement of firewood supply. He states that eucalyptus trees were planted around villages and hillsides even in the rural areas.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, pp.48, 337-338, 343-344.

¹²⁸Pankhurst, “The History of Deforestation...”, pp.128-129.; Horvath, “Addis Ababa’s Eucalyptus...”, p.19.

¹²⁹Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የፍጥነት እና...” (A History of Forest and...), p.34.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, p.337.

¹³¹Richard Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800-1935* (Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University Press, 1968), p.252.; Informants: Ato Mängäša Mängäša Tačé, Ato Damtāw Abäbä, Ato Mängäša Kebrät and Mämré Mamo Woldäab (Abba Hailämaria).

The rapid rate of tree planting in the royal capital even tempted him to refer to the town as *yäbahr zaf kätäma* (town of eucalyptus).¹³²

The Emperor authorized the Ministry of Agriculture to distribute seedlings to nearby areas of Addis Abäba free of charge.¹³³ Governors, particularly those in Šäwa, did the same by distributing seedlings in their domains and encouraged the planting of the new species. For the time being, the elites were reluctant to plant the tree because they feared that the Emperor would eventually Tekie the land from them. But later, the high economic value of the tree attracted their attentions. The peasants also followed suit.¹³⁴ They planted it around their homesteads. They, however, were reluctant to plant it on farmland due to lack of tenure security and uncertainty about a market for it.¹³⁵ Some others attribute the reluctance of the peasants to the lack of awareness and innovation.¹³⁶ Many Ethiopian scholars and expatriates, however, associate the problem to the prevailing insecurities of tenure.¹³⁷ Whatever the case might be, the first two decades of the 20th century witnessed rapid expansion of the tree to areas far from the royal capital including the study

¹³²*Addis Zämän Newspaper*, Year 31, No. 566(1963E.C.),p.7; Horvath, “ Addis Ababa’s Eucalyptus ...”,p.13-14 and 19.; Hailemariam and etal, “ Reading the Landscape...”, p.466. It is apparent that who imported eucalyptus tree for the first time was controversial. Some attributed to a French envoy, Casimir Mondon-Vidailhet while others to Captain O’Brian, a British captain worked in railway in Ethiopia. Still some others gave the credit to a German forest expert, George Escherich. This problem appeared, as Horvath argues, probably arise due to the existence of different species of the tree that were imported at different times. For more see Chojnacki, “ Forests and Forestry...”,p.36.) ; Pankhurst, “ The History of Deforestation...”,p.127.; Richard Pankhurst, “Menelik and the Foundation of Addis Ababa” *The Journal of African History* , Vol. 2, No. 1 (1961), pp. 112; Richard Pankhurst, “Wildlife and Forests in Ethiopia”, *Ethiopia Observer*, VII (1964), 251-252.; Horvath, “ Addis Ababa’s Eucalyptus...”,p.13.

¹³³Chojnacki, “Forests and Forestry...” ,pp.36-37.; Hailemariam and etal, “ Reading the Landscape...” ,p.466.

¹³⁴Horvath, “Addis Ababa’s Eucalyptus...”,pp.15-17 and 19.; Informants: *Ato Alämayähu Bäsu fekad*, *Ato Yeheyese Manyaheläwal*, *Ato Hailé Hailämaria*, and *Ato Tadässa Mamo*.

¹³⁵Hailemariam and etal, “Reading the Landscape...”,pp.461-462.

¹³⁶Informants: *Ato Yeṭena Maseräša*, *Ato Alämayähu Bäsu fekad* and *Emahoy Ehtäselassé Woldägiorgis*.

¹³⁷ Merid Woldaregay, “Land Tenure and Agricultural Productivity,1500-1850,” *A Paper Prepared for the Third Annual Conference of the Department of History*(Bahirdar, 1985), pp.2 and 9-11.

area. That is because it was highly productive. It became ready for use in a short time and regrew with multiple trunks once it was cut down. Besides, it grows both in the highlands and lowlands.¹³⁸

However, towards the end of Menelik's reign, the usefulness of the tree began to be questioned. In fact, its negative ecological impact became a point of discussion even though that was not supported with scientific evidence. The Emperor's foreign advisors and some people criticized the tree, claiming that it prohibited the growth of other plants in the nearby areas, and that it had high water consumption. They also blamed it for facilitating erosion by restricting the penetration of rain drops. The increasing public criticism obliged the Emperor to look for other alternatives.¹³⁹

Without wasting much time, the Emperor imported fruit-bearing plants, mulberry trees, and European conifers. Turpentine and Opuntia referred to as *Yäeyärusaläm qulqwal* (Jerusalem *euphorbia candelabrom*) in Šäwa, were two notable examples. These new species, however, were not as economical as the eucalyptus tree. Thus, the eucalyptus tree's strong economic value most likely protected the tree from being removed completely.¹⁴⁰

It was apparent that although tree planting increased from time to time in the early 20th century, the scarcity of wood continued to be acute problem both in rural and urban areas.¹⁴¹ Many European

¹³⁸Pankhurst, "The History of Deforestation...", pp.128-129.; Horvath, "Addis Ababa's Eucalyptus ...", p.19.

¹³⁹Horvath, "Addis Ababa's Eucalyptus...", p.19.; Richard Pankhurst, "Economic and Social Innovation During the Last Years of Emperor Menelik's Life and the Short Reign of Lij Iyasu", in Svein Ege et al(eds.), *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Trondheim, 2009), p.141. The Emperor's foreign advisors and travellers such as George Escherichia, Paez (Portugues), Lefebvre and Soleillet (French), Harris and Pease (British), Marab (Georgian), Montandom (Swiss and Rosen (German) described the ecological impact of the tree in different ways and urged immediate intervention. Recent study conducted at Näkämté disproves the assumption that eucalyptus tree has high water inTekie capacity as compared to other species. The tree is rather better in enriching soil fertility through decomposition of its leaves and with its strong roots, it protected soil erosion. For more see J. Davidson, "The Eucalypt Dilemma: Arguments for and Against Eucalyptus Planting in Ethiopia", *The Forestry Research Center, Semanar Notes Series*, No.1(1989), pp.3-7.

¹⁴⁰Pankhurst, "The History of Deforestation...", pp.129-130.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

travellers who visited the country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for different purposes documented deforestation and the subsequent scarcity of firewood on the highlands of Šäwa. Among others, Augustus Wylde, and the French traveller Emanuel Rey were worth citing.¹⁴² Wylde emphasizes the scarcity of firewood and peoples' dependence of animal droppings as source of energy.¹⁴³ Similarly, Rey as cited in Pankhurst, states that trees existed only on few pockets of land in the highlands of Šäwa.¹⁴⁴ The reason behind this was not due to absence of tree planting but because of the high rate of cutting trees. People planted trees in one place only to cut and burn trees in other places.¹⁴⁵

The state, which put more emphasis to expansion than intensification of agriculture, accelerated deforestation, particularly in the 1920s. It gave little attention to afforestation, reforestation or conservation of forest reserves. It seemed to have overlooked the threat that this posed to the environment. The attention of the state was rather on how to raise revenue in all ways possible, even at the expense of the natural environment. Under Directive 29 of November 1928, it provided tax incentives to peasants who would convert open grazing and forested lands, which it considered unused or 'idle' into cultivation.¹⁴⁶ Peasants too, went along with the initiative to in order to meet the growing needs of their families. The clearing of trees and the expansion of agriculture in turn, caused decline of the vegetation cover, exposing the top soil to erosion, and eventually inducing

¹⁴²Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና...” (A History of Ethiopian Forest and...), p.39; Pankhurst, “The History of Deforestation...”, p.125.

¹⁴³Augustus Wylde, *Modern Abyssinia* (1901), P.407.

¹⁴⁴Pankhurst, “The History of Deforestation ...”, p.125.

¹⁴⁵Chojnacki, “Forests and Forestry...”, pp.36-37. Empress Zewditu Menelik, though not developed rule that regulated the protection and development of natural resources, she was said to have strong stand. She used to advise provincial governors and the elite to protect and wisely used forests and wildlife to make life sustainable. She also had firm position to the expansion of modern education and infrastructure. In this regard, she declared that those parents who failed to register children should pay fifty Thallars. This was probably due to the influence of Ras Teferi, the reagent, who had modern education background. For more refer Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና...” (A History of Ethiopian Forest and...), p.39; Pankhurst, “The History of Deforestation...”, p.48.

¹⁴⁶Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, p.18. ; James McCann, “A Great Agrarian...”, pp.389-390.

shortage of rainfall, drought, and other natural disasters. All of this posed increased risks to the subsistence economy.¹⁴⁷

However, what, for lack of a better term, we might call environmentalism was not unknown in the country, involving both some servants of the state and the people at large in the 1920s and in the early 1930s.¹⁴⁸ *Fitawurari* Teklehawariat and *Nägadras* Gebrehewot, two early pioneers of change, played significant role in public awareness about nature and its management.¹⁴⁹ In their respective works, they showed the alarming threat of deforestation and its long term impact, offering what they thought were solutions.¹⁵⁰ Gebrehewot, for instance, explains how man established a harmonious relation with nature as follows: “...መሬት ማንቻውንም ነገር ብትሰጥ በብድር ነው። ብድሯን ካልመለሱ ላት እንደ ባንኮች ታስቸግራለች።...ለወደፊት ስጭኝ ቢሏት ከናካቴው በጭራሽ እንቢ ትላለች። ተብድሯት ብድሩንም ሳይመልስላት እንቢ ላለ ህዝብ በርሃብና በበሽታ ትፈጅዋለች።”¹⁵¹ Literally, the land [i.e nature] provides everything [to man] in the form of loans. ...If [man] fails to pay back, it would cause trouble just like banks do. It would also adamantly refuse future requests for loans and punish all those who defaulted on their loans with hunger and diseases]. The above quotation implies that human intervention with nature should not only be restrained but also should proceed with considerations of mutual benefit.

¹⁴⁷Informants: Ato Hailé Hailāmariam and Ato Tadässä Mamo.

¹⁴⁸Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, pp. 16-19.; see also *Berban ENA Selam* Newspaper, Year IV, No. V (*Tir* 24, 1920E.C.); Year IV, No.XIII (*Mägabit* 20, 1920E.C.); Year V, No.XXXII, (*Ṭekemet* 7, 1922E.C. *Berhanen ENA Sälām* Newspaper was a government owned newspaper which was established by the Crown Prince, Ras Täfäri in 1925.

¹⁴⁹Teklehawariat, *ትንሽ መፈተኛ...* (Minor Test...), pp. 1-4; Gebrehewot, *የኢጋድራስ ገብረሂወት ባይከዳኝ...* (The Works of *Negadras* Gebrehewot...), pp.92-93.

¹⁵⁰Teklehawariat, *ትንሽ መፈተኛ...* (Minor Test...), pp.1-4. Gebrehewot Baykedagn (*Nägadras*), *አጼ ምኒልክ እና ኢትዮጵያ* (Emperor Menelik and Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, 1897E.C.), pp.1-5; Gebrehewot Baykedagn, *መንግስት እና የህዝብ አስተዳደር* (State and Peoples' Administration) (Addis Abäbä: Täfäri Mäkonen Printing Press, 1916E.C.), pp. 18-27, 37-49 and 56-70.

¹⁵¹Gebrehewot, *የኢጋድራስ ገብረሂወት ባይከዳኝ...*, pp.92-93.

As an institution, however, the state paid little attention to the early warnings of concerned individuals or the public. It did not decisively embark upon the necessary counter-measures. It rather focused only the growing needs of the state in terms of revenue, with little or no concern about the future fate of the natural environment.¹⁵² This was evident in its series of enactments such as the decree of 29 November 1928 that encouraged the conversion of forested land and ‘wilderness’ into cultivation. Protecting or expanding vegetation cover seemed secondary to the state.¹⁵³ In fact the reluctance of the state, as McCann argues, was not due to lack of interest or awareness but because of the increasing demand for revenue.¹⁵⁴ According to Dessalegn, it was not really an issue that state officials or the rulers of the country knew or cared about nature. There was definitely awareness, not any less than the 1950s and 1960s. The difference was a lack of practical engagement in the former case.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵²Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, pp. 16-19.

¹⁵³*Berhane ena Sälam* Newspaper, Year IV, No. XXXXIX (Hedar 20, 1921E.); Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, pp. 16-19.

¹⁵⁴McCann, “A Great Agrarian...”, pp. 412-414.

¹⁵⁵Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, p. 28.

CHAPTER THREE

Italian Occupation and the Natural Environment (1935-1941)

Italy, a country that encountered a shameful defeat at the Battle of Adwa in 1896, looked for favorable time and condition to avenge its defeat. It prepared both diplomatically and militarily to invade Ethiopia for the second time. It opened consular offices at Dässé, Gondär, Däbrämarkos, Näqämet, Harar, and Adwa. Besides, it sent delegations to Ethiopia ostensibly to promote harmony and friendship including medical experts, diplomatic envoys, scientific missions, missionaries, and businessmen. It signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship on 2 August 1928 with Ethiopia. Parallel with this, the Italian government attempted to intrigue with local elites and some government officials against the state.¹

All along Italy was preparing for war of aggression against Ethiopia. It built military training centers and trained large number of youth since the early 1920s. It also built industries for the production of armaments including chemical weapons.² As a result, at the outbreak of the war, the

¹Pankhurst Sylvia. “The Genesis of the Italo-Ethiopian War Part II” in *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol.IV, No.I(1960), pp. 7 and 18; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991, Second Edition*(Oxford: James Currey, 2002), pp.151 and 153.; Telahun, *የሃያኛው ክፍለ ዘመን...*(*Twenty Century...*), pp.178-179; Shiferaw Bekele, “Some Notes On The Genesis and Interpretation of the Tripartite Treaty” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.XVIII(1985), pp. 68-69 and 74; Bahru, *A History of Modern...*, pp.150-151.

ለ ዘመን...(*Twenty Century...*), pp.178-179; Alemayehu, *የሸንቁጥ ልጆች የፀረ-ፋሽስት...*, pp.6 and 8.; Alemayehu Abebe, *የሸንቁጥ ልጆች የፀረ-ፋሽስት ኢጣሊያ ተጋድሎ በመራቤቴ እና አካባቢው, 1928-1933 E.C.* (Šänkut’s Children Anti-Fascist Italian Struggle in Märhabété and Its Surrounding, 1935-1941)(Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2008 E.C.), pp.6 and 8. The Italians tried to realize their colonial aspiration under the pretext of the alleged European agreements to ‘protect and develop’ Africa.

²Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ የመርዝ ጋዝ ጥቃት በኢትዮጵያ*(Italy’s Mustard Gas Attack Against Ethiopia)(Addis Ababa: Aster Nega Printing, 2008 EC), pp.41 and 44. The Fascist government of Italy endeavored to unite its citizens by promoting economic prospects through an invasion of Ethiopia. Initially, the common people of Italy disapproved of fascist aggression, predicting a war with Britain and a subsequent economic downturn in their nation. However, the oppressive and divisive policies of the Fascist regime ultimately won over the people. For more see Alberto Sebacchi, “The Italians and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1936,” *Trans African Journal of History*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1976), pp. 123-126.

Italians were well prepared both psychologically and militarily. They outnumbered the Ethiopian forces in terms of personnel, weapons, and logistics.³

On the Ethiopian side, things were different. Though the Ethiopian government had taken note of Italian's preparations earlier, it was not in a position to undertake any action that would deter the Italians.⁴ First, unlike in the days of Adwa, the Emperor was not in a position to create a unified front. Regional lords and the people at large were dissatisfied with the Emperor's centralization of power and resources, appointment and dismissal of officials, and imposition of heavy taxes to finance his government. Second, the Muslim Oromo, Afar, Somalis, and other people in the peripheries were also unhappy with him because he was responsible for the deposition of *Lij* Iyasu, a ruler they trusted, in 1916. Later after the invasion, some of the people in the Wällo region showed their displeasure by attacking and looting the forces of the Emperor returning from the Battle of Maičäw at Dälanta, Mäqedäla, Lägäheda, Wärahimänu and Raya Azäbo areas. The Emperor himself reportedly escaped narrowly. The local people would make it look like they were attacking the army because the Emperor had earlier declared that people should attack soldiers who retreat from the front without the consent of the authorities. The real reason, however, was that the people of South Wällo were disappointed with the deposition of *Lij* Iyasu from power, and the defeat of *Ras* Mika'el at Sägälé and the subsequent Šäwan domination of the region.⁵

It was in this kind of political climate that the Italians invaded Ethiopia on 3 October 1935 in the north.⁶ From the outset, they attacked people indiscriminately and bombarded towns, villages as

³Bahru, *A History of*...,pp.158-159.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Telahun, *የሃያኛው ክፍለ ዘመን...*(Twenty Century...).pp.176-177, 184 and 187.

⁶*Ibid.*pp.153.

well as places of worship all along the way starting in the province of Tegray. They did so even though at first they faced little or no resistance. They intentionally used heavy weapons including forbidden chemical weapons to discourage resistance and terrorize the defenders.⁷ The advance of the Italians was not, however, as smooth as they had expected due to the difficult terrain as well as the endurance of the patriotic forces.⁸

It was in early October 1935, after the Italians had crossed the frontier that the Emperor called upon the people of the country to organize themselves at *awrajjja* level under the leadership of local *balabats* (lord) and join the resistance.⁹ The Ethiopian forces took a long time to reach the northern front due to lack of transportation and difficulties of road access. The army was exhausted both physically and morally due to the tiresome travel on foot. It also faced shortage of food and other supplies¹⁰

Recognizing the seriousness of the problem, the Emperor had devised a new strategy of food supply for the army. He declared that every household should pay ten *quna* (a container holding five to six kilograms). Besides, the wealthy were requested to pay additional payments based on their capacity, some donating upto ten *quintal* (a sack that contains 100kg of grain) of produce. Each household was expected to take the responsibility of transporting and delivering the provisions to local government agents, sometimes travelling up to four days on foot.¹¹

⁷IES, MS.2555. “የቀዳማዊ ግርማዊ ሃይለስላሴ የከተት አዋጅ”(Emperor Haileselassie I’s War Decree) dated on *ፒፕ* 12, 1928E.C.

⁸Telahun, *የሃያኛው ክፍለ ዘመን...*(Twenty Century...)pp.208-209.

⁹IES, MS.2555“የቀዳማዊ ግርማዊ ሃይለስላሴ....” (Emperor Haileselassie I’s ...),p.1.

¹⁰Andarge Mesfin, *አርበኛና ባንዳ በእናት ቤት*(Patriot and Banda in the Mother’s house, No place and Publisher, 2009E.C.),pp.30-31.; Informants : *Aläqqa* Yemanä Berhan Negatu and *Balambaras* Abära Säifu.

¹¹IES, MS.2555“የቀዳማዊ ግርማዊ ሃይለስላሴ....” (Emperor Haileselassie I’s ...)p.1.

The shortage of food and other supplies for the army made life more challenging and brought it to the verge of war with the peasantry along the routes and in the destinations. The army caused heavy destruction on the natural environment.¹² The study area was not an exception in this regard. Oral sources indicate that a large number of soldiers/warriors who moved to the war front through North Šäwa had an impact on the natural environment significantly. They cut down trees indiscriminately to prepare food and temporary shelters, to light the night and sometimes to clear the road. Besides, the pack animals which carried supplies devastated grass on the land and crops in the field. The result was exposure of the top soil to wind and water erosion.¹³

The Emperor and his advisor, *Belata* Takel Woldehawariat, recognized the danger of staying for long in one area as much from the perspective of provisioning as from strategic considerations. In fact they soon realized that the victory would be in favor of the Italians due as much from logistical disadvantage as from the technical, psychological, and military superiority of the enemy.¹⁴ The Emperor understood that conventional warfare would no longer be effective for Ethiopia which had inadequate logistics and supplies. Thus, he decided to retreat to Šäwa, particularly after the defeat of his army at the Battle of Maičäw on 31 March 1936. He believed that Šäwa would be in a better position to conduct guerrilla warfare and harass the enemy.¹⁵ Thus on 13 April of the same year, he announced the army to move back to Šäwa and embark on the resistance out of different localities. He promised adequate supply food and other materials, particularly for those who were

¹²Andarge, *አርበኛና ባንዳ በእናት...*, (*Patriot and Banda in the Mother's ...*), pp.30-31.

¹³Informants :*Aläqa* Yemanä Berhan Negatu and *Balambaras* Abära Säifu.

¹⁴IES, MS.2555. “የኢትዮጵያ ጦር ከሰሜን ግንባር ወደ ሸዋ ማፈገፈግ እና የደፈጣ ውግያ አስፈላጊነትን በተመለከተ በንጉሥ ነገስቱ የተሰጠ ማሳሰቢያ”, (A Notice delivered by the Emperor about the Shifting the Army from the Northern Front to the Province of Šäwa and the Importance of Guerrilla Fighting), dated on *Miazia* 5, 1928E.C.

¹⁵*Ibid.*; Gebrewold Engdawork, *ማይጨው፡ማይጨው ዘመቻ እና የጉዞ ታሪክ*(Maičäw: A History of A Military Campaign to Maičäw)(Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University press,2000E.C.),pp.98-99.

not in a position to resist the enemy out of their own parishes.¹⁶ It was in this way that some of the returning forces left for their localities and subsequently began guerrilla warfare, taking refuge in river valleys, mountains, and forested areas.¹⁷ The intention of moving back was to consolidate and occupy strategic areas before the advance of the enemy.¹⁸ However, the enemy followed quickly on the heels of the returning army and occupied Addis Abäba on 5 May 1933.¹⁹

Military Activities and Environmental Costs

North Šäwa was one of the centers of fierce resistance of Ethiopian patriots against the occupation. The patriots showed unbroken resistance against the enemy moving from one district to the other searching for strategic areas for attack and defense following the footsteps of the enemy.²⁰ The patriotic resistance continued to strengthen from time to time in spite of the series of attacks against it by the enemy. According to Dechassa, for geographical and to some extent demographic reasons, the patriotic struggle in the region was sub-divided into four major fronts or sections namely; Northwestern (Sälalé-Märabété), Northern (Mänz-Tegulät), Eastern(Ankobär-Yefay) and Southeastern (Bulga-Šänkora). Yet, the movement of patriots was not strictly confined to the above mentioned fronts. They moved freely from one area to the other, sometimes even creating common fronts wherever that was possible, depending on the location and concentration of the enemy.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷National Archive and Library Agency (NALA), Folder No. 63.1.07., File No. 63.1.07.01., “ የኢጣልያ ወረራ በኢትዮጵያ፡የአርበኞች ትግል”, (Italian invasion to Ethiopia and the History of Patriots’ Struggle)1928E.C. to 1933E.C”., dated on *Nähassé*, 1930E.C.

¹⁸ Gebrewold, *ማይጨው...*,p.103.

¹⁹ Tekletsadik Mekuria, *ከአጼ ቴዎድሮስ እስከ ቀዳማዊ ሃይለስላሴ*(From Emperor Tewodros II to Emperor Haileselassie I)(Addis Ababa: Birhan and Selam Printing Press, 1936E.C.).p.298.

²⁰Dechasa Abebe, “Peasants and Resistances against Italian Occupation in North Šäwa, May 4, 1936- May 5, 1941” in *Ethiop.j.soc.lang.stud*,Vol.III, No.II(2016),p.23.Informants: Ato Tässäma Käbädä and Ato Täsfayé Andarge.

The patriotic resistance in Northern Šäwa not only intensified but also survived over the whole period of occupation because, as Dechassa says, of the proximity of the region to the Imperial capital, the social and historical ties of the people with the early residents of Addis Abäba, the difficult topography and strategic significance of the region, and the loyalty of the local people to the emperor and the imperial establishment in general. All of these points of fact about the period of Italian occupation are also applicable to the localities on which my study focuses, namely Mänz and Yefat.²¹

Historically, the territory of Mänz as served as a place of refuge and resistance not only for the native people but also for Ethiopian kings who faced rebellions or some kind of military crisis. Even political opponents of the ruler used to Tekie refuge in the region because of its impenetrable topography and convenience both for offensive and defensive warfare. The gorges and mountains of the region were hard to negotiate even for the natives let alone for outsiders who did not know the entry and exit points.²²

An additional factor making North Šäwa in general, and the four localities of Mänz, Yefat, Ṭagulat and Märabété in particular, a center of patriotic resistance is the warrior culture of the people, to which scholars and other observers have attested. The inaccessibility of the region limited contact with the neighboring regions and at the same time made the local people develop unique cultural values. Among these, as Donald Levine emphasizes, was the combative culture of the local people.

²¹Dechasa, “Peasants and...p.26. The role of religious leaders like *Abunä Pétros*, Bishop of Wällo should not be ignored. He became the spirit behind the patriotic struggle in Sälalé and its surrounding. For more refer Tekletsadik, *ከአጼ ቴወድሮስ እስከ...* (From Emperor Tewodros to...)(Addis Abäba: Berhan ENA Sälam Printing Press, 1936E.C.), p.300.

²²Tadesse Zewolde, *ቀሪን ገረመው: የአርበኞች ታሪክ* (Qarin Geremewu: A History of Patriots) *Second Edition* (Addis Ababa: Fareast Printing Press, 2010), p.154. The mountain top of Afeqära was also served as royal prison center like Amba Geśén of Wällo until 1936. For more see also Levin, “On the History and...pp.206-210.

In their culture, physical fitness and courage had special place and thus these values shaped people from childhood to old age. Being victorious over the enemy after a "real" fight was culturally very rewarding. Males, regardless of age always carried *dulla* (a thick stick) to defend themselves from enemies while moving from place to place. People also imbibed patriotic sentiment in their day-to-day lives including in traditional songs and the naming of children. Moreover, the people of Mänz had a strong attachment to their land and were also faithful to their religion. People would defend their *rist* lands with firm belief that it should not be taken by outsiders. That was why the local people preferred to die rather than lose their *rist* and freedom.²³

Patriotic Struggle in Mänz *ena* Gešé: Attacks and Counter Attacks

Sources indicate that the Italians made several abortive campaigns to subjugate Mänz from 1936 to 1937. For instance in early April 1937, when the enemy marched from Säladengay to Mänz crossing its southern limit of Mofärwuha, it encountered a series counter attacks from the patriots. In the battles, the enemy found it too difficult to move to the hinterlands of Mänz or to retreat because this route was rather narrow and covered with bush. A significant number of the enemy soldiers lost their lives in Mofärwuha valley where, according to tradition, human blood is said to have colored the river. It is said that the peasants who lived downstream from this fierce battlefield were prohibited to drink this water for some time.²⁴

²³Levin, *Wax and...* pp.38-40; "On the History..." pp.204-206. See also Ian Campbell, *The Massacre of Debre Libanos Ethiopia, 1937: The Story of One of Fascist Most Shocking Atrocities* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 2014), pp.93-95.; Simon D. Messing, "The Highland Plateau of Amhara of Ethiopia" (PhD. Dissertation in Anthropology, University of Pennyslulvania, 1957), pp. 73-76. Some of the common names of children that show warrior culture include Ṭasäw(smash him), Asägädäč(makes them bow), Keṭaw(punish him), Manyazäwal(who orders you?), Gäzačäw(govern them), Šänkuṭ(bit them), and others).

²⁴Taddesse, ቀረን ገረመው...(Qarine Geremew...), pp.166-169.

The Italians occupied the region of Mänz only a year after their arrival in Addis Abäbä.²⁵ In early May 1937, the enemy, under the leadership of General Ruggero Tracchia, invaded Mänz from different directions. The first was from the direction of Däbräberhan, going to Däbrässina and Säladengay and then across Mofärwuha. The second was from Wällo, via Wäräillu and Säfédméda. In the south and west, another force crossed Jerru-Adabay via Ṭamawonz, and Lalomedir to Mamamedir. The enemy overwhelmed the region of Mänz with the support of local collaborators and air force²⁶ by burning villages, churches, woodlands and crops everywhere. Establishing its forts at Säladengay and Molalé, it continued to rampage through the surrounding districts and villages, focusing on areas suspected of harboring the patriots. The attacks included air strikes aimed at disrupting supply lines for the patriots.²⁷

The people of Mänz did not submit easily. Recognizing the supremacy of the enemy and the inevitability of defeat, the patriots of Mänz decided to Tekie refuge to remote rural areas both inside and outside of the region. They continued fighting based on the thinking that **ዛሬ የሽሽ ነገ ይዋጋል የተማረክ ግን ጦርነቱን ፈጸመ።**²⁸ [trans: those who retreat today will fight tomorrow, but those who submitted will have stopped the fight]. They secretly communicated with patriots of neighboring *Awrajjas* and sometimes created joint fronts against the enemy. The leading patriots with whom they linked included *Balambaras* (later *Ras*) Abäbä Arägay in Jeru, *Däjjazemač* Abära

²⁵*Ibid.* pp.166-169. Other Generals like General Malenti participated in the campaign.

²⁶*Ibid.* pp.168-169; Campbell, *The Massacre of Debre Libanos...*, pp.93-95.

²⁷Taddesse, **ቀሪን ገረመው...** (*Qerin Geremew...*), pp.169 and 171; Campbell, *The Massacre of...*, pp. 93-95.; Informants : Ato Şegé Mamo , Ato Tägé Woldämedhen, Ato Akalu Dänäqä and Ato Şawantäsaw Yelma. .

²⁸*Ibid.* The number of patriots increased from time to time due to the atrocity of the enemy. Some of the leading male patriots of Mänz include *Lij* Gezačaw Hailé, *Amsaaläqä* Taddässä Bälaynäh, *Ato* Şefäraw Ergäté, *Qäñazemač* Woldägäbrä'el Ergäté, *Qäñazemač* Agonafär Kidané and his brother Abäbä, *Ato* Yeferu Däfé, *Däjjazemač* Käfälaw Woldäşadiq, *Däjjazemač* Mäšäša Woldé and others. The role of women was also significant through suppling information, food and other supplies to the patriots. Some of the leading female patriots in the region of Mänz include *W/ro* Mäčägiaš Hailé, *W/ro* Mulatworq Mäšäša, *W/ro* Zäwditu Gezaw, *W/ro* Şadalä Bälaynäh, *W/ro* Dästa Wodäselassé, *W/ro* Abäbäč and many others. For more see Taddesse, **ቀሪን ገረመው...** (*Qerin Geremew...*) pp.174-175.

Kassa and *Šaläqa* (later *Ras*) Mäsfin Seläši in Fečé, the five children of Šänkuṭ in Märhabété, and *Däjjazmač* Tässäma Ergäṭé of Yefat.²⁹

The attacks and counter attacks between the enemy and the patriots dislocated the peasants and ruined the natural environment. Villages, wood and grasslands were burnt. Alämayähu describes the damages that occurred in one of the battles at Kollaš on 22 October 1936 where the patriots of Mänz and Märhabété faced the full force of the Fascist army:

... ወራሪው ጦር ይጠቀምባቸው የነበሩት መሳሪያዎች ዘመናዊ ከመሆናቸውም ባሻገርቦም ጣይ አውሮፕላኖች ከላይ ሆነው ቦምብ ያዘንቡ ነበር። በዚህ ሁኔታ በተደረገው ውጊያ የሰው ህይወት ብቻ ሳይሆን ቤቶች፣ እህሎች፣ ከብቶችና የተለያዩ ንብረቶች ወድመዋል። ... ባላገሩ ምግብና መጠለያ አጥቶ ብዙ ተቸግሯል። ተዋጊው አርበኞችን ስንቅ የሚያቃብለው አጣ። የሞተውንም የሚቀብር አጣ።...የኢጣሊያ ጦር... ሲተኩስ ገደሎች ተናዱ ዛፎች ከስራቸው እየተመነገሉ እና ከወገባቸው እየተቀነጠሉ ይቅመዘመዙ ጀመር። የቤቶችም ጣሪያዎች እስከ አምስት ሜትር ርቀት እየተወረወሩ ወደቁ።³⁰

...the invading army [Italy] used modern weapons and the air force dropped bombs from the air. The fighting conducted in this situation, not only caused the death of human beings but also resulted in the devastation of houses, crops, cattle and other property. The peasants suffered a lot from lack of food and shelter. There was no one to supply the patriots with food. There was no one to bury the dead too. Italian arms were so powerful that fields were turned into rugged terrain; trees were uprooted, broken up and thrown away. The roofs of houses were detached and jettisoned up to five meter away.

The strength and fame of the patriots of Mänz and Märhabété, specifically the Šänkuṭ brothers, was widely known not only among Ethiopian patriots but also among Italian writers. Jusepi Marelio, the Italian writer, as quoted in Alämayähu, for instance, states that “በአውሮፕላን እና በመርዝ ጢስ ብንደበድባቸውም ሊጠፉ አልቻሉም።...የመንዝና የመራቤቴህዝብ ከንጉሱ በላይ ስለመነባቸው በየቀኑ ቁጥሩ የበረከተ ሰራዊት ስለሚከተላቸው በመሬት ላይ ያለ መከራ ሁሉ

²⁹ Informants: Ato Šegé Mamo, Ato Tägé Woldämädhen, Ato Akalu Dänäqä and Ato Šäwanṭasäw Yelma. The five children of Šänkuṭ were *Däjjazmač* Täšomä, *Lij* Hailé, *Lij* Abäbä, *Lij* Yenesu, and *Lij* Ṭelahun.

³⁰ Alemayehu, *የሸንቁጥ ልጆች...* (Šänkuṭ's Children...)pp.23-24.

ብናወርድባቸው ከመራቤቴ [እና ከመንዝ] መሬት ዳካቸውን ሊደመስስ አልቻለም፡፡....”³¹ [trans: [We] bombarded them with planes equipped with poison gas, but they did not disappear. As the people of Märhabété and Mänz believed in them more than they believed in the king, a large number of patriots joined them every day. It became impossible to erase their foot prints from the land of Märhabété [and of Mänz]].

Other devastating battles were held on 23 November, 1937 in Zärät and Qäya districts in Mänz. In these battles, the Italians under the leadership of Major Briskly, launched organized attacks against the patriots. The enemy, however, faced a strong counter attack from the patriots of the area who had already occupied strategic positions. By way of revenge, three weeks later, on 15 December, 1937, the Italians under Major Malate mobilized forces from Däbräberhan, Dässé and Wäraillu and marched to Zärät and Qäya where the patriots were quartered. The forces of the enemy, guided by a local *bandas* attacked the patriots following the footsteps of the retreating patriots, burnt the surrounding vegetation. Alämayähu describes the scene as follows:

...የጠላት ጦር...በገብረኤል ወርዶ ታቹን በጉየት ሜዳው ጠቦት ከገደል እስከ ገደል ያለውን መሬት መላውን ቀያን መንገድ አድርጎ ሲተም ከማስፈራቱም በላይ በሰማይ የጦር አውሮፕላን እያንገጠበ የሚያወርደው ቦምብ ቋጥኝን ሁሉ ይፈነቅለው ጀመር፡፡ ...የጠላት ጦር የሚተኩሰው መትረየስና ጠመንጃ የሚጥለው ቦምብ ዛፎችን እየቆራረጠ ድንጋዮችን እየፈላለጠ ሲያፈናጥር አካባቢውን ይለበልበው ነበር፡፡...በዚህ በኩል የተስፋፋው የጠላት ጦር ከደረቅ ወይራ አንስቶ እስከ ዘረት አፋፍ ያለውን ስፍራ በቁጥጥሩ ስር አደረገ፡፡ ባለፈው ጦርነት ጎሽ ላይ [ህዳር 13፣ 1930ዓ.ም] ድል በሆነ ጊዜ የሞቱበትን ሰራዊት አጽም እያፈላለገ አስነስቶ ከቀበረ በኋላ ከጎሽ ጀምሮ ግራና ቀኝ ያሉትን ስፍራዎች ዘረትን እና ቀያን በሙሉ አንድም ቤት ሳይቀር አመድ አድርጎ ተመለሰ፡፡³²

...the enemy ...marched down to Gäbrä’el via the Guyät plain, moving from one mountain top to the other and then to Qäya. It was not only terrorizing but the bombs dropped by war plane flying on the sky splintered and dispersed pieces of rock. Machine gun bullets, bombs as well as other ordinance cut down trees, and crushed of dispersed pieces of rock and thereby burnt the land all around. The enemy moved in this situation and controlled areas from Däräq-Woira to Zärät. After collecting

³¹*Ibid.*,p.14.

³²*Ibid.*,pp.43-44.

and burying of their dead in the previous battle of Goš [November 23, 1937], they left after burning the whole of Zärät and Qäya [in Mänz] starting from Goš district and the nearby areas to the right and left without leaving a single house standing.

Arya Selassé, one of the high-ranking government officials who visited the territory of Mänz sometime after liberation, witnessed the devastating effect of the war both on the local people and the natural environment. He witnessed the depopulation and total ruin of the villages. One could find only a few individuals or cattle after travelling long distances. Much of the cultivated land was covered with weeds. Farming was limited to pockets of land around a few villages. It became scary to travel alone on foot from Mamamedir to Gêramedir due to absence of settlements and the prevalence of banditry.³³ The author summarizes his observation as follows: **ጣሊያኖች ጥላሌ የሚባል አገር ሲቀራቸው መላውን መንዝ አጥፍተውታል። አብያተክርስቲያናትንም ጥቂት ሲቀራቸው አቃጥለዋቸዋል።**³⁴[The Italians devastated the whole of Mänz with the exception of Molalé town. [They] burnt churches, of which only a few remained].

Patriotic Struggle in Yefat *ena* Temuga: Attacks and Counter Attacks

Needless to say, there were places where the Italians faced little or no resistance at the beginning. Following the occupation of Yefat, the enemy started to establish military camps in different parts. It made an effort to impose its discriminatory and divisive racial, ethnic and religious policies. It promoted anti-Orthodox and anti-Amhara agendas³⁵through disseminating distorted accounts of

³³NALA. Folder No, 63.1.1.14. File No. 63.1.1.14. “መንዝን መጎብኘት፡ ከአርአያ ሰላሴ ወረታው መጋቢት እስከ ግንቦት 1936”(A Historical Visit to Mänz by Aryaselassie Wärätaw, from March to May 1936E.C.),pp.2-9.

³⁴*Ibid.*p.1.;see alsoGäbrähiwot Woldähawarit(*Fitawurari*), *አራጃ*(Arada)(1990E.C.),p.15.

³⁵Aklilu Asfaw, “ Italian Attitudes towards the Various Religious Groups, 1936-1941”, A Paper Prepared for The Historical Seminar, Department of History, Addis Ababa, March 21, 1973, p.1. It is found in IES.MS. 2350.;Telahun , *የሃያኛው ክፍለ ዘመን* ...pp.217-218; Wudu Tafete, “The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, The Ethiopian State and Alexanderian See: Indigenizing The Episcopacy and Forging National Identity, 1926-1991”(PhD Dissertation in History, University of Illinois, 2006),pp.88-89.; Borruso, “ Politics and Religion...”,pp.107-108.; Erqeyehun Belayneh, *አምስቱ የመከራ ዘመናት፡44 የተመዘበሩ፣የተቃጠሉ እና የጠፉ አንድ አንድ ክርስቲያናት ታሪክ*(The Five Years of Misery: A History of 44 Looted, Burnt and Destroyed Churches)(Addis Ababa, 2007E.C.),pp.244-245. Informants: Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh, Ato Atlaw Asamnäw and Ato Ermias Tässäma.

the past. It presented itself as liberator of the Oromo, Afar, Argobba and other Muslim communities from “Solomonic” rule and Amhara domination. To this end, they displaced the Amhara from the Oromo-inhabited areas and put them in camps. It armed the Muslim Oromo and gave them local government offices. Besides, the enemy pretended to be guardians of Muslims and considered Orthodox Christians as enemies of the new establishment. The hostile stance of the enemy towards the Orthodox Church, however, did not last long. It soon tried to "normalize" relations with it.³⁶

It is apparent that the lack of unity among the people of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga made it relatively easy for the enemy to penetrate the region. The enemy created friendly relations with the religious and ethnic leaders of the Argobba, Afar, and Oromo communities. Particularly notable among these leaders were *Fitawurari* Dingo Umar and his son *Grazmač* Umar, *Balambaras* Abbabba Issägallé, *Qäñazmač* Hassän Mohammäd of Čäffa, Dubno Märto in Qäwot, and Rohé Hundé in Duqo Modaytu. Furthermore, it established contact with prominent Muslim religious figures including *Šayk* Mohammad Sulṭan from Bätṭé, *Šayk* Abba Hadya from Jillé, and *Šayk* Said Russan from Efrata-Jillé.³⁷ It also divided the Béza family, which dominated the Amhara-inhabited provinces of Efrata *ena* Gedem, setting them against each other. One member of the family, Zäwudé Mäšäša took their side and worked against his younger brother Damṭäw Mäšäša. The conflict among the Mäšäša brothers eventually led to the devastating military confrontation at Dälleté on the Upper Aṭayé, and Sanqaber in Gämza in 1936.³⁸

³⁶Aklilu, “Italian Attitudes... p.1.; Wudu, “The Ethiopian Orthodox...”,pp.90-91.; Calvin E. Shenk, “ The Italian Attempt to Reconcile The Orthodox Church: The Use of Religious Celebration and Assistance to Churches and Monasteries,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.X, No. I(1972),pp.127-130.

³⁷Ahmed, “A Historical Survey of...”, pp.90-91.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp.86-90. Woldé Ašagré was the founder of the Béza family. He participated in the Battle of Adwa. The descendants of the family led the people of Efrata *ena* Gedem until the time of Emperor Häilässelassé.

By operating out of the gorges and valleys of Anşokia and Gešé, the patriots of Yefat under the leadership of *Däjjazmač* Damṭāw continued to create difficulties for the enemy. They attacked not only the enemy but also the *bandas* like *Fitawurari* Abäbä Nadäw and *Grazmač* Mulaté Bädälé of Anşokia, and *Qäñazmač* Asmamaw of Gešé. They slaughtered the Italians and took the enemy weapons at Amsabär, a border between Gešé and Anşokia district. As a counter balance, the Italians mobilized the Muslim Oromo (particularly the Ṭemuga Oromo) and then marched to the highlands, to the strongholds of *Däjjazmač* Damṭāw. Along the way, the enemy forces indiscriminately slaughtered the local people and burnt villages in the surrounding areas. Until now, the highlanders have painful memories of these attacks.³⁹

The ethnic and religious conflict in Yefat, particularly between Amhara and Oromo, was intensified by the Raya and Azäbo Oromo attack against the returning forces of Emperor Hailäselassé after the Battle of Maiçāw in 1936. There was a great deal of displeasure in Central and Northern Ethiopia over this incident. In some places this took the form of ethnic conflict. That was the case in Yefat where conflict began at Bäte and quickly extended throughout the *awrajja*. The Amhara of Qäwot, Gedom, Efrata, Gämza, and Anşokia took revenge against the Jillé Oromo at the Battle of Alalla, Sänbäté and Bäšo in Efrata. The Amhara-occupied areas in Yefat were targeted in a counterattack, resulting in numerous fatalities and displacements, as well as the destruction of crops, plants, and the burning of villages, particularly in central and northern parts of the *awrajja*. The conflict was intensified by the ongoing competition over resources and Islamic fundamentalism that was growing since the late 19th century.⁴⁰

³⁹Informants- Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh, Ato Aṭlaw Asamnäw and Ato Ermias Tässäma.

⁴⁰Ahmed, "A Historical Survey of... pp.83-84.

Our sources suggest that the absence of unity among the people of Yefat enabled the Italians to occupy the region without difficulty. They, however, faced strong resistance particularly in and around Däbräsina, along the road between Däbräsina and Däbrä Berhan from late April to May 1936. This resistance was organized under the leadership of famous patriots such as *Däjjazmač* Tässäma Ergäṭé, *Däjjazmač* Häilämariam Mamo and others. At the beginning, the Italians had the upper hand, because unlike the patriots, they had well trained and equipped army. As elsewhere in the country, they established military camps along the main road and urban areas of the region, and won the support of some of the leading families and famous individuals.⁴¹ However, the situation changed as time went on. The patriots of the region reorganized themselves and linked up with the patriots of Tägulät, Mänz and Ankobär. They were thus able to attack the enemy at Däbräsina, Šäwarobit and Karaqoré, frequently blocking its movements. On 10 May, 1936, they carried out a sudden attack on the enemy at Anšokia, inflicting heavy losses on it.⁴² The patriots focused along Däbräsina-Aṭayé route because the enemy used this route to transport soldiers and other supplies from the north to the center. The occupation of this route would have meant a total collapse of enemy activity in the province of Šäwa. To counter this, the enemy bombed patriot positions in Yefat and dropped poison gas all along the route from May 10 to 19, 1936. The attack was particularly intense around Robit. In the attack, the patriots and the people at large suffered a lot and the area was devastated. The bombing burnt villages as well as crops and cattle. In the words of Taddesse, the Italian objective was to clear the entire area of people. “አውሮፕላን ቦንብ እንደዝናብ ያወርድባቸው ነበር። አብዛኛውን ጊዜ ከእግር ቦር ይልቅ በእሳተ ጋሞራማጥቃት

⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp.85-86.

⁴²Taddesse Zeyohanes, *የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ኢጣሊያ በኢትዮጵያ ከወለወለው እስከ ጎንደር ግንቦት 1927 እስከ ህዳር 1930*. (A History of Ethiopia: Italian in Ethiopia from Wolwol to Gondar, May 1935-November 1940) (Addis Ababa: Mankusa Printing Press, 2004 E.C.), p.194.

ስለበረከተ ህዝቡ መጠጊያ እንዲያጣ ቤቱ ተቃጠለበት፡፡”⁴³(trans: war planes dropped bombs like rain. Since most of the time, the attack was from the sky, rather than on the ground. In order to deny the people any kind of shelter, houses were burnt down by the murderous hell of fire that came down from the air). .A week after, a contingent of the enemy marched from Addis Abäbä to Dässé and carried out another round of indiscriminate devastation of both people and nature along the route, by setting fire to villages and forests.

These devastations, however, did not succeed in destroying patriotic activity in the region. They rather strengthened it, giving a boost to forces under the famous *Baša* (later *Däjjazmač*) Tässäma Ergäṭé, who in collaboration with the patriots of Tägulät carried out successful attacks against the enemy at Gudobärät, a place mid-way between Däbrässina and Däbräberhan on 5 May, 1936. The enemy was also surrounded at Nečamba, Gädälgé and Däbrässina in the early September of the same year and suffered losses.⁴⁴

These series of attacks and counter attacks by the patriots and the enemy increased in magnitude from time to time. The enemy carried out harsh and indiscriminate attacks and used poison gas wherever it felt that the resistance was too strong to break. The impact of the use of poison gas went far beyond casualties to patriots or civilian populations. It ravaged animal populations too, destroyed and poisoned plants, and devastated the physical environment at large.⁴⁵ Parallel with the attack from the air, enemy forces from Dässé, Addis Abäbä and Däbrässina combined to launch simultaneous attacks on patriot positions at Senkeamba, Kärba, Woiraamba, Gefayät and Wojja

⁴³Taddesse, *ቀሪን ገረመው...* (*Qärin Gärämäwu...*), p.201.

⁴⁴*Ibid.* pp.201-202. See also Tädla, *የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ...*, (A History of Ethiopia...) pp.196-197.

⁴⁵Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäufekad and Emahoy Ehtäselassé.

from 26-27 September, 1936., a large stretch of land from Däbrässina to Aṭayé was devastated in the course of the fighting. The human cost was also considerable, with children and elders exposed to direct attack or to the effects of the enemy's scorched earth strategy. Many of them died along the route while on retreat from the line of fire. In some places people were simply locked up inside their homes and set on fire.⁴⁶ The worst thing was that the enemy made use of mustard gas that covered large geographical areas due to the fact that the gas was pushed and spread by wind.⁴⁷

The patriotic struggle in Yefat shifted to Bulga starting from the rainy season of 1937 with the increasing success of the patriots under *Balambaras* (the later *Ras*) Abäbä Arägay. In the meantime, the remaining patriots in Yefat got some breathing space to reorganize themselves for another showdown.⁴⁸ *Ras* Abäbä, together with the patriots of Mänz and Yefat, struck at the Italians at Haraamba in October 1938. Mobilizing its army from Wällo, Šäno and Sändafa, the enemy, on its part, carried out a counter attack against the patriots at Wädil in May 1939.⁴⁹

As I have discussed before, even though the enemy launched a series of attacks against people and the natural environment, it could not end patriotic resistance in all parts of North Šäwa. The patriots moved from one *awrajja* to another and put up determined resistance until the time of liberation. There is even evidence for the fact that the patriots of Šäwa were able to link up with those of Gojjam and formed a common front, taking an oath not to betray each other.⁵⁰ They went to the extent of forming an association called የጥንታዊ ኢትዮጵያ አርበኞች ማህበር (Ancient Ethiopia

⁴⁶Tadesse , *ቀሪን ገረመው...* (*Qärin Gärämäwu...*) pp.203-204.

⁴⁷*Ibid.* p.234.

⁴⁸Tedla, *የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ...*, (A History of Ethiopia...) p.198.

⁴⁹Tadesse, *ቀሪን ገረመው...* (*Qärin Gärämäwu...*) , p.219.

⁵⁰ NALA, Folder No. 62.1.18.36., File No. 62.1.18.36., “ስለ ኢትዮጵያ ነጻነት መውጣት እና ስለ ግርማዊ ቀዳማዊ ሃይለስላሴ ወደ ኢትዮጵያ መመለስ ልዩ ልዩ የአርበኝነት መሪዎች የተጻፉት ደብዳቤዎች ከ 1929-1933ዓ.ም.” (Letters Exchanged by Leaders of Patriot about the Liberation of Ethiopia and the Return of Emperor Haileselassie to Ethiopia, 1929E.C. to 1933E.C.).

Patriots Association) under the slogan of **አገርህን ውደድ፣ ንጉስህን አክብር፣ ወገንህን ጠብቅ** (love your country, respect your king and protect your people).⁵¹ This association and the commitment of the patriots to the cause was key for the strength of the patriots in the face of a cruel enemy.⁵² *Yäwest Arebäñoč* (underground patriots) contributed a great deal, primarily in the area of providing information and supplies to the patriots despite strict security control by the enemy. The fact that they operated underground made it difficult for the enemy to deal with them.⁵³ In general, the confrontation between the patriots and the enemy was all encompassing, making the occupation very costly for the Fascists. The following common saying gives some sense of the overall situation:

**የጋዝ መርዝ ረጨ ቦምብም ወረወረ፤
ያልሞከረው የለም ሁሉንም ሞከረ፤
በዚያም በዚህ ብሎ ሳይሆንላት ቀረ።**⁵⁴

It [the enemy] sprayed poison gas, threw bombs [everywhere]
It tried everything and left nothing undone
But nothing came of it, it did not work at all.

In view of the unbroken will of the patriots, the enemy under General Nazi, deputy viceroy and governor of Šäwa, began to negotiate with the leading patriots of North Šäwa including *Ras* Abäbä Arägay. The initiative is believed to have started around September 1939. ⁵⁵This new strategy, characterized by change from attack and consolidation to appeasement, was tried throughout the rest of the year.⁵⁶ It began earlier by issuing a series of decrees of clemency and a propaganda campaign on the enemy radio and *Yäroma Berhan* newspaper.⁵⁷ On 30 June, 1939, General Nazi

⁵¹ Tadesse Zewolde, *የአባላሽኝ ዘመን* (The Era of Crisis) (1955 E.C.), pp. 57-65.

⁵² Informant: *Balambras* Bāyānā Adälāñ, *Ato* Täsfayē Dässē *Ato* Dämāqä Zälälāw and *Balambras* Abära Säifu.

⁵³ Bahru, *A History of...*, p. 172.

⁵⁴ Informants: *Ato* Laqāw Andargé and *Lulé* Mälaku.

⁵⁵ Tadesse, *ቀሪን ገረመው...* (*Qarin Geremewu...*) p. 219.; *የአባላሽኝ...* (The Era of Crisis...) pp. 57-60.

⁵⁶ Tedla, *የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ...* (*A History of Ethiopia...*) p. 221.; Tadesse, *የአባላሽኝ ...* (The Era of Crisis...) pp. 57-60.

⁵⁷ Tedla, *የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ...* (*A History of Ethiopia...*) p. 221.

called upon the people of Ankobär, Bulga, Bäräkät and its surroundings in North Šäwa to come to peaceful submission. The call was primarily addressed to leaders of patriots and their followers whom he collectively referred to as ‘bandits’. It sent elderly and famous individuals like *Däjjazmač* Mätafäria to mediate with the patriots stating that bloodshed should end immediately so that the government of Italy would shift its attention to development projects. The government promised mercy and freedom and the restoration of their properties including their *rist* land to those who would submit peacefully. In addition, former government officials were also promised reemployment while soldiers were told they could join the Italian army. The clemency proclamation of the enemy was not the first of its kind. Although not implemented practically, it had also been made earlier in the province of Harargé, Balé and Arisi.⁵⁸ As part of its efforts to promote peace and rapprochement in North Šäwa, it deliberately abandoned areas under its control, including fortifications, to the patriots. Tädla describes this situation as follows:

በመንዝ እና ተጉለት በ1931ዓ.ም የተደረገው ትግል ... ተጠናቆ የ1932ዓ.ምቱ ተተካ። የጠላት ጦር ስልት ደግሞ ከመስፋፋት ይልቅ የያዙትን ወደ መልቀቅ ዞረ። ቀደም ብሎ ያደርግ እንደነበረው አዘውትሮ ከቦታ ወደ ቦታ መዘዋወሩ ተቀነሰ። ለባላገሩ እረፍት ሆነ። አርበኞችም በበኩላቸው ለመሰበሰብና እርስ በርሳቸው ለመወያየት አመቻቸው። በሌላ በኩል ደግሞ ስንቅና ትጥቅ የመመንተፍ እድላቸው ተቀነሰ። ይህንን ችግር ለማቃለል ምሽጎችን መተምተም ነበረባቸው። ጠላት ደግሞ ጠቡ እንዲባባስ አልፈለገም። ስለዚህ ሊከላከላቸው ያልቻለውን ምሽጎች፤ በእርቅ ስም እያደረገ ለቀቀ።⁵⁹

The 1931 struggle in Mänz and Tägulät... was ended, and continued in 1932E.c. The enemy shifted its strategy from expansion to abandoning [conquered areas]. As opposed to the previous practice, it limited its movements from area to area. This became a relief for the peasant and provided the patriots with opportunities to gather and discuss how to prevail in the war. However, it reduced their chances for raiding or snatching food and other supplies. To overcome these problems [the patriots] found it necessary to attack fortifications. The enemy did not want to escalate the

⁵⁸IES, MS. 5637, “በአንኮበር፤ በቡልጋ በበረከት ላለው ህዝብ ከኢጣሊያ ገዥ ጀነራል ናዚ የተሰጠ አዋጅ ሰኔ 22, 1931ዓ.ም ” (A Decree Written by General Nazi, Italian governor of Šäwa, to Patriots in Ankobär, Bulga and Bäräkät June 30, 1939).

⁵⁹Tedla, *የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ...* (A History of Ethiopia...), p.221.

conflict. Thus it left forts that it could not defend in the name of peace and reconciliation.

Parallel with this diplomatic effort, the enemy, however, continued to dispatch pamphlets to discourage the patriots. It propagated that the patriots' expectation of foreign support would fail because the Italian government had started negotiations with Britain and France.⁶⁰ Moreover, in Mänz and Yefat, the enemy attempted to deceive the patriots declaring that famous patriot Gäräsu Duki and his followers in West Šäwa as well as other leaders of patriots far from Šäwa had submitted to the Italians. This was done probably with the assumption that the patriots in Šäwa did not have information on each other. It, however, failed due to the determination of the patriots and because they had underground communications with other patriots far from the region.⁶¹

Thanks to the patriots in exile and “the Ancient Ethiopian Patriots Association”, which was established in November 1938, the patriots were not unaware of international developments including the political tension in Europe at the time. Patriots inside Ethiopia and in exile including the Emperor exchanged a series of letters about the position of Italy in the country and in Europe, particularly in the late 1930s. The latter updated the people at home regarding international developments and the diplomatic efforts of the Emperor to get support from the League of Nations and the inevitable war in Europe in which Italy would be a part.⁶² In one of the letters dated on 24 September, 1939, addressed to *Ato Dästa Yohannes*, *Ras Abäbä* and other patriot leaders, the patriots in exile had designed a new strategy and sought to provide guidance to the patriotic struggle in the country. The letter states that there is political tension among the Allied and Axis

⁶⁰IES, MS. 5637, “በአንክበር፣ በቡልጋ...” (A Decree Written by General...); Kābādä, *የታሪክ...*, (A Reminder of...)p. 336,360.

⁶¹Taddesse, *ቀሪን ገረመው...* (Qarin Geremewu...), p.173.

⁶²NALA, Folder 63.1.33.25., File No.63.1.33.25.1., “የአርበኞች ትግል ክፋሰስት ጋር፡ የታሪክ ረቂቅ”, (A History of Patriots Struggle with the Italians: Draft) No date and year.; Kebede, *የታሪክ...* (A Reminder of...)pp. 337-341.

powers in Europe and that the future is gloomy for the Italians if they joined the war. It advised the patriots in the country to be patient and superficially show interest in reconciliation with the enemy until Italy joined War. Such a development would benefit the patriots because it would divide and weaken the enemy and create the possibility of getting foreign support, mainly from Britain and France. These diplomatic efforts of the patriots were intended to deceive the Italians into thinking that they have finished their business in Ethiopia and can now turn to Europe and enter into the war on the side of Germany. For this reason, patriotic leaders of North Šäwa including *Ras Abäbä* began to communicate with the enemy as though they wanted to reconcile with them and stand on their side.⁶³ Of course, not all the patriots were on the same wave-length. Some of them negotiated and actually submitted to the Italians. The majority, however, deliberately extended the time of negotiation without reaching any kind of formal agreement. They kept exchanging letters and gifts from September 1939 to March 1940. The patriots later they terminated the process of peaceful negotiation under the pretext that the Italians did not refrain from attacking patriots in other parts of the country.⁶⁴ The success of the diplomatic efforts of the Emperor became a moral force for the continuity of the struggle.⁶⁵

Chemical Weapon Attack: Poison Gas (Mustard Gas)

The Italians used poison gas (mustard gas) and bombs in their campaigns against the patriots throughout the period of occupation.⁶⁶ They openly violated the Geneva protocol of 17 June, 1925

⁶³NALA, Folder No.63.1.07., File No. 63.1.07.1., “A Letter from Patriots in Exile addressed to Patriot Desta Yohannes”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 14, 1932E.C. The letter stresses that it should be communicated with other leading patriots of the country including *Ras Abäbä* of North Šäwa.

⁶⁴Tadesse, *ቀረን ገረመው...* (*Qärin Gärämäwu...*)p.219; Bahru, *A History of...*pp.172-173.

⁶⁵NALA, Folder No. 63.1.07., File No. 63.1.07.01., A Letter that states the advance of the liberating force of Great Britain to Ethiopia via the North, south and western fronts” dated on *Hedar* 7, 1933E.C. see also Kebede, *የታሪክ...*,pp. 345-349.

⁶⁶Lena Grip and John Hart, “The Use of Chemical Weapons in the 1935-1936 Italo-Ethiopian War”,*SIPRI Arms Control and Non Proliferation Program* (2009).p.2.; Zewde Reta, *የቀዳማዊ ኃይለስላሴ መንግስት* (The

that prevented the use of chemical and biological weapons for military activities in any situation. The League of Nations, in which both parties were members, neither condemned nor halted such acts of the enemy.⁶⁷ Interestingly, the Italians, though they had used a few quantities of chemical weapons during the First World War (WWI), used to condemn the use of such weapons afterwards.⁶⁸ In the 1920s and early 1930s, the government of Italy signed a series of international agreements that dealt with demilitarization and reduction of chemical and biological weapons. In reality, neither the Italians nor other imperialist powers abided by the law. The arms race had continued.⁶⁹

In late December 1935, Marshal P. Badoglio, the then commander in- chief of Italian East Africa, officially ordered his troops to use poison gas including mustard gas in all areas of the country. He continued to call upon Italian war planes to demolish everything in and out of the war fronts including villages, water bodies and pasturage.⁷⁰ During the five years of stay in the country, the Italian war planes deployed 2100 small and heavy bombs filled with dangerous chemicals and 500 tons of poison gas in different parts of the country.⁷¹ Sources indicate that the damages caused by

Government of Emperor Haileselassie I) *First Edition, 1923-1948 E.C* (Addis Ababa: Shama Book Printing Press, 2007), pp.277-278.

⁶⁷Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...* (Italian's Poison Gass...) p.7; Haddis Alemayehu, *ጎዝታ* (Memory) (Addis Ababa Kuraz Asatami, 1985 E.C.), p.65. Russia voted for sanction to Italian while Britain and France became reluctant. The sanction was not strictly implemented.

⁶⁸Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...* (Italian's Poison Gass...) pp.44 and 46.

⁶⁹*Ibid.* p.41.

⁷⁰*Ibid.* pp.48 and 77-78, and 94; Grip and Hart, "The Use of Chemical ...".p.3. The use of toxic chemicals for military purposes was common. Traditionally, it was used for hunting purposes by using poisoned spears. It was also used for war. Use of chemical for war, however, was reached its apex during the First World War, 1914-1918. During this time, huge of tons of chemical weapons were used in different fronts mainly in Europe. Although the international community condemned the use of chemical weapons for war and a series of treaties were signed in the post-World War II (second), it has continued to be a threat until the present time. (Vladimir Pitchman, "Overall View of Chemical and Biological Weapons", *Toxins*, Vol.6 (2014), pp.1761-1763, and 1781.; Sharon Reutter, "Hazards of Chemical Weapons Release During War: New Perspectives," *Environmental Health Perspective*, Vol.107, No.12(1999), p.986.

⁷¹*Ibid.* p.78.

chemical weapons attack from the air became three times more destructive than the fighting on the ground.⁷²

Ethiopia appealed to the international community about Italian atrocities immediately after the poison gas attack at Tākāzé valley on 30 December 1935. In this report, the Emperor stated that

sprayers were installed on board aircraft so that they could vaporize, over vast areas of territory. ...group of nine, fifteen, and eighteen air craft followed one another so that from the end of January, soldiers, women, children, cattle, rivers, lakes and fields were constantly drenched with this deadly rain.⁷³

Foreigners working as volunteers in Ethiopia (eg. Red Cross Society) and visitors disseminated information about gas use to the international community. No one, however, stood on the side of Ethiopia with the possible exception of Russia.⁷⁴ Encouraged by the carelessness and delay of decision by the League, the Italians continued the attack both in northern and southern fronts causing huge damages to the people, animals, and the environment.⁷⁵ Haddis Alāmayāhu, the prominent Ethiopian novelist who took part in the war, provides an eyewitness account of the damages of chemical weapons used along Tākāzé Valley in the late 1935. According to him, the damage was not geographically limited due to the fact that the blowing wind made the gas spread rapidly.⁷⁶ It caused considerable damage to the ecosystem through affecting all living things (humans, animals and plants). The soldiery, who walked on barefoot suffered a lot. It killed many of them and severely injured many others who ended up being handicapped. What was worse is that the death of humans and animals increased steadily because they were unknowingly eating

⁷²Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...* (Italian's Poison Gass...) p.7.

⁷³Grip and Hart, "The Use of Chemical..."p.5. See also Reutter, "Hazards of Chemical Weapons..."p.985.

⁷⁴Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...* (Italian's Poison Gass...) pp.53, 78, 96 and 135.; Grip and Hart, "The Use of Chemical..."p.5.

⁷⁵Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...* (Italian's Poison Gass...), p.96.

⁷⁶Haddis, *ጎዝታ (Memory)*,p.61. Haddis Alāmayāhu participated in the campaign against the enemy under Ras Emeru Häileselassé force of Gojjam in 1935.

and drinking poisoned food and water.⁷⁷ According to my informants, the causalities were so high that it became difficult to bury the dead due to lack of labor. Thus, the spread of the dead bodies on the surface led to the proliferation of disease causing bacteria that took the lives of many including the enemy itself.⁷⁸

The extent of the damages of chemical weapons was far beyond one's imagination. This was because the enemy targeted not only human beings but also animals, logistic and transport centers, crops, pastures and forested areas and water bodies.⁷⁹ It also bombarded humanitarian aid groups such as the Red Cross Society.⁸⁰ The damage was more aggravated, as pointed out above, because the wind made the chemical spread rapidly and reach distant areas destroying living things on air, land and water bodies. It destroyed vegetation as if it were burnt by fire and killed large numbers of domestic and wild animals.⁸¹ The soldiers and the local people had neither the knowledge nor the preventive tools to escape the attack. At least at the beginning, they even did not know whether the enemy used chemical weapons or not. On top of this, there were no experts in the field that gave first aid and other medical treatments.⁸²

Once the patriots discovered that the enemy used chemical weapons, the victims attempted to treat themselves by washing the infected body parts with urine. They also strove to escape from poison gas attack by reading and avoiding the directions of the wind. The above strategies of the patriots and the people were not much successful because the chemicals rapidly polluted the air and spread

⁷⁷Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...*(Italian's Poison Gass...), pp. 149-150.; Informants: *Balambaras* Băyănă Adäläñ, *Ato* Täsfayé Dässé *Ato* Dämäqä Zäläläw and *Balambras* Abära Säifu.

⁷⁸Informants: *Ato* Laqäw Andargé and *Lulé* Mälaku

⁷⁹Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ መርዝ ጋዝ...*(Italian's Poison Gass...),p.53. The Italians used chemical weapons in vapor and liquid forms. For more, see the same book, p.148.

⁸⁰*Ibid.* pp. 151-152.

⁸¹Haddis, *ትዝታ* (Memory),p.61.

⁸²Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...*(Italian's Poison Gass...),. p.94.

into large areas.⁸³ The use of mustard gas also created psychological stress on the people and the army.⁸⁴ According to Daniel, had it not been for the high evaporation rates of some gases, particularly phosgene and diphosgene, the damages might have gone to the extent of totally destroying all living things in and around the battle fields.⁸⁵

The government of Italy strongly believed that use of mustard gas facilitated the occupation and stabilization of the country, thereby accelerated fulfillment of Italian colonial aspirations in the country.⁸⁶ In the North Šäwa region, one of the primary targets of the Italian mustard gas assault was the Zärät Cave, which is commonly referred to as *Amäšñaw waša* (the rebellious cave). It is situated in the Géramedir district of Mänz⁸⁷ in a steep slope overlooking the Wonçit River and the highlands of Wällo to the east.⁸⁸ The Cave of Zärät was the stronghold of the patriots and served as a shelter and warehouse until early 1939. Guided and supported by local collaborators, the enemy planned to destroy the cave and its surroundings. Between 13 to 19 March, the enemy encircled the patriots in the cave in all directions, denying them any way of escape. The patriots concentrated at selected strategic locations for defense. Because they were aware of the impregnability of the cave the Italians decided to use chemical weapons (specifically poison gas)

⁸³Haddis, *ትዝታ*(Memory)....,p.61;Informants: Ato Laqāw Andargé and Lulé Mälaku interviewed on 20/10/10 and 21/10/12 respectively.

⁸⁴Harald Nystrom, *የተደበቀ ማስታወሻ የ1928-1929ዓ.ም የኢትዮጵያ እና የኢጣሊያ ጦርነት መዘከር*, (The Hidden Reminder, 1928-1929E.C.: Narrating the History of Ethio-Italian War) translated into Amharic by Gebeyehu Tefera and Dessalegn Alemu(Addis Ababa: Chibo light Printing Press, 2007E.C), pp.226-227. The original book was written in Dutch language and translated into English by Thomas P. Coleman in 2012. But, I could not find both the Dutch and English language versions. I used the Amharic version.

⁸⁵Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...*(Italian's Poison Gass...),pp.70 and 78.

⁸⁶Minister of Colonies, A telegram message from Mussolini to Marshal Rodolfo Graziani ordering the use of mustard gas, dated on April 27, 1936, Reference no. 7440; A telegram message from Mussolini to Marshal Rodolfo Graziani ordering to use mustard gas, dated on June 8, 1936, Reference no. 6595; A telegram message from Mussolini to Marshal Badoglio ordering to use of mustard gas, dated on May 3, 1936, Reference no. 5007; A telegram message from Mussolini to Marshal Badoglio ordering to use of mustard gas, dated on March 29, 1936, Reference no. 3652. Daniel translated these telegram messages from German and Italian to Amharic and attached in his book mentioned above as appendices. I used these translated appendixes.

⁸⁷Daniel, *የኢጣሊያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...*(Italian's Poison Gass...), p.136.

⁸⁸Alemayehu, *የሸንቁጥ ልጆች...* (Šänkut's Children...), p.72.

that could easily push out the patriots in and around the cave.⁸⁹ The first effort they made was to widen the gate of the cave by attacking it with heavy weapons. Then, on 11 April, 1939, the enemy suspended several cylinders filled with poison gas at the entry of the cave using electric wire stretched from a pole planted on the outer top of the cave. Then, the enemy hit the cylinders with heavy weapons firing from the hills in front of the cave. The cylinders soon ruptured and the gas they emitted caused injury and death (to both humans and animals) in and around the cave.⁹⁰ Even long after the event, people in the neighborhood did not enter the cave to bury the dead for fear that there still gas in the air; some believed that the cave was haunted by evil spirits. As a result, as local people recall, there was the stench of death in the area for a long period of time.⁹¹ It was some time after liberation that *Däjjazmač* Täšomä went to the cave and had the remains buried in the nearby St. George Orthodox Church at Zärät.⁹²

As I have discussed above, the impact of mustard gas attack was not limited to the cave but also affected the surrounding countryside. Pushed by the wind, the gas moved to distant areas polluting land, air and water bodies including the nearby Wonçit River. Polluting water bodies meant killing of humans and animals (both aquatic and terrestrial) mainly in the lower basin. Though there was no comprehensive study that shows the extent of the damages, it is evident that the attack caused a huge ecological crisis in Mänz in general and Zärät in particular.⁹³

⁸⁹Alemayehu, *የሸንኩጥ ልጆች...* (Šänkut's Children...), pp.69-71 and 73.; Daniel, *የኢጣልያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...* (Italian's Poison Gass...), pp.137-138. Informants: Ato Tägé Woldämädhen, Ato Akalu Dänäqä and Ato Şegé Mamo interviewed on 25/09/10. The first was interviewed on 24 while the last two on 25/09/10 respectively.

⁹⁰Alemayehu, *የሸንኩጥ ልጆች...* (Šänkut's Children...), pp.73-75. See also Daniel, *የኢጣልያ የመርዝ ጋዝ...* (Italian's Poison Gass...), p.140.

⁹¹Informants: Ato Tezazu Kefätäw, Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh, Ato Hailé Hailämariam.

⁹²Alemayehu, *የሸንኩጥ ልጆች...* (Šänkut's Children...) p.80.

⁹³Informants: Ato Tezazu Kefätäw, Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh, Ato Hailé Hailämariam.

The Socio-economic Crisis and Its Environmental Implications

Both written and oral sources indicate that the attacks and counter attacks during the five years of Italian occupation left the people of the country dislocated and impoverished, and the environment ruined. Though there is no accurate data, it is estimated that at national level the war caused the death of more than one million people and 14 million animals. More than 2000 churches and 525,000 homes were burnt. Considerable property was destroyed and looted. About 30,000 Ethiopians were massacred only within the short period from 19-21 February, 1937 at Addis Abäba and 2000 monks were killed at the monastery of Däbrälibanos in North Šäwa.⁹⁴ It is said that the Italians intentionally bombarded villages and forested areas and woodlands, and religious institutions (mainly Orthodox Church) since they considered them as shelters of the patriots. The devastation of the environment and disappearance of vegetation cover in turn exposed the land to erosion and at the same time, for lack of food and shelter, caused the death and displacement of wild animals.⁹⁵ My informants state that, in my study area, the woodlands around Däbrässina and Qäya Gäbrä'el, forests in Robi and Nazäro (Aṭayé) rivers were burnt during the war. Pockets of indigenous tree reserves around river valleys and inaccessible areas in North Šäwa particularly in Mamamedir, Lalomedir, Géramedir, and in the foothills of the eastern escarpment were also burnt.⁹⁶

⁹⁴Kidane Alemayehu, "Rudolfo Graziani: A War Criminal Who Escaped Justice" A Paper Prepared for and Presented at the International Conference on Justice for Ethiopia (Washington DC, September 26, 2015), pp.4-5.; Campbell, *The Massacre of...*, pp. XVIII-XX, 119-125. After the war, Ethiopia requested the Italian Government a reparation payment of 185 million pound or 326 Billion Lire for the damages incurred. Of which only 105 Billion Lire was allowed. For more see Erqeyehun, *አምስቱ ያመከሩ...* (The Five Years of Misery...), p.245.

⁹⁵Informants: *Hamsa Aläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudu Ato Anägagrāñ Bezunäh, and Ato Atlaw Asamenäw. The Italians made the Orthodox Church as one of targets of attack. They considered it as a spirit behind the patriotic resistance movement. The Massacre of Däbrä Libanos monastery was a good example. For more refer, Campbell, *The Massacre of...*, pp. 76-77 and, 119-125.

⁹⁶Informants: *Balambaras* Bäyänä Adäläñ, Ato Täsfayé Dässé Ato Dämäqä Zäläläw and *Balambras* Abära Säifu.

The war also caused huge economic and social crisis. It affected the agricultural sector and trade disrupting life and livelihood tremendously. A large number of able bodied young people in the rural areas felt obliged to join either the patriots or the enemy. Some others were displaced and moved to nearby urban areas for security reasons and in search of employment. Thus, cultivable land remained idle for lack of labor and security.⁹⁷ It is only in the wake of the February 1939 massacre in Addis Abäba that North Šäwa experienced a brief surge in population due to an influx of refugees from the city.

The fighting worsened the problem through the burning of grains in stock, crops and pastures in the field. It also led to the killing or looting of cattle. Production declined rapidly, eventually ending up with malnutrition and in some places even famine. Peasants were unable to sustain themselves let alone provide supplies to the patriots or to urban dwellers. Peasants seemed sandwiched between the patriots on the one hand and the enemy and its collaborators on the other. The patriots put pressure on the peasants for provisions while the enemy frequently attacked the peasantry precisely for providing support to the patriots. All of this in addition to natural hazards like pest and locust attacks as well as a variety of diseases.⁹⁸

In addition to launching frequent attacks on the peasantry and in the process destroying everything they had, the enemy worked dutifully to set one ethnic and religious group against the other.⁹⁹ There is some evidence that it mobilized and armed the Ṭemuga Oromo of Wärrä-Kärräyu, Wärrä-Guguru and Wärrä-Jelé under a certain *Shayk* Sulṭan, against the Christians of Yefat, Tägulät, Märhabété, Ankobär, Menjar and Mänz and other highland Christian communities of North

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁸Dechasa, “Peasants ...”, pp.23-24.

⁹⁹Alemayehu, የሽንፋን ልጆች... (Šänkut’s Children...) pp.26-27.; Informants: *Balambaras* Bāyänä Adäläñ, *Ato* Täsfayé Dässé *Ato* Dämäqä Zäläläw and *Balambras* Abära Säifu.

Šäwa.¹⁰⁰ According to Ahmäd, the attack was characterized by “burning whole villages and field crops,...killing everyone wearing the traditional pair of trousers or shorts in the Amhara fashion, confiscating all valuables from churches...”.¹⁰¹ *Däjjazmač* Täšomä, one of the famous patriots in Märhabété, provided an eyewitness account of the event in Märhabété and Mänz, and reported the case to the International Court of Justice after liberation in 1948.¹⁰² The Argobba of North Šäwa, particularly between Aliyu Amba and Ankobär, equally suffered from the attack. The attack was indiscriminate including those who lived in proximity with the Amhara, mainly the Argobba.¹⁰³

Side by side with the aforementioned attack, the enemy also worked a lot to create distrust and hostility between the peasants and the patriots. In February 1939, for instance, it forcefully mobilized the peasants of Mänz and Märhabété and launched a series of campaigns against the patriots. Most of the campaigns, however failed mainly because of the unbroken resistance of the patriots. The patriots of Mänz and Märhabété scored a significant victory against collaborators and their peasant militias at Yedämäqu in Märhabété in February of the same year. Many peasant militia members were killed and captured. News of the ruthlessness of the patriots disturbed the peasants of North Šäwa as a whole, gradually forcing a marked shift in favor of the patriots in the years to come.¹⁰⁴

In the meantime, the patriots too had devised new ways of dealing with the peasantry in order to reduce their resentment. At issue was the question of food supply. At the beginning, the peasants

¹⁰⁰NALA, Folder no.-17.1.3.46., File no- 17.1.3.46. 02, “A Letter from Mäkonen Mäšäša, Governor of Däbrässena Wäradä to *Šähafi Tezaz* Woldämäsqäl, Governor-General of Šäwa province”, dated on *Nähassé* 25, 1935E.C.; Germačäw, *Araya...*,p.241.The attack and counter attack among the Temuga Oromo and the Amhara in Yefat continued in the post liberation period, which I will discuss in detail in the next chapter.

¹⁰¹Ahmad, “A Historical Survey of...pp.96-97.

¹⁰²Alemayehu, *የሰንኳት ልጆች...*(Šänkut’s Children...)pp.34-35.

¹⁰³Ahmed, “A Historical Survey of ...p.97.

¹⁰⁴Alemayehu, *የሰንኳት ልጆች...*(Šänkut’s Children...),pp.66-67.

welcomed the patriots and provided food and other provisions wholeheartedly. This situation, however, did not continue due to the gradual increase in the number of patriots and shortage of supplies. Moreover, the enemy imposed increasingly harsh punishments on peasants who provided material and moral support to the patriots. It was on this ground that *Lij Gezačäw Hailé*, one of the leaders of the patriots of Mänz, gathered local elders and discussed how to sustain food supply for the patriots without affecting the peasants. He proposed to the elders that patriots should use grains collected and stored in the form of *asrat* in each *wäräda* and *Awrajja* instead of depending on the poor peasant. This idea was unanimously accepted. To make it practical, elders were nominated in each locality with the task of distributing the grains and other food items. One of the government granaries was located at Waka Giyorgis, in Mamamedir *wäräda* from which grain was distributed to the followers of *Lij Gezačäw Hailé*. Besides, grain or properties of *gult* owners collected from their *hudad* and kept in the possession of local representatives, were also distributed. In fact, the above idea was originally conceived by the government at the outbreak of the war. In some places, the amount of grain collected at each government granary was so substantial that the patriots sold the surplus to buy firearms. The supply of food for the patriots, however, did not continue in this manner for more than one year because the enemy overran the region in early May of the same year. It burnt supply lines, villages, granaries and crops in the fields in all districts of the region. As a result, the patriots faced critical shortage of food, and were forced to move from one locality to the other in North Šäwa and beyond, staying in one place only for a short period of time.¹⁰⁵ At times, the patriots had to survive on the gifts of nature by collecting wild fruits and leaves, or hunting wild animals still available in some remote areas.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵Taddesse ,*ቀሪገ ገረመው...* (*Qerin Geremewu...*),pp.153-154.; Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsufekad and Emahoy Ehtäselassé.

¹⁰⁶Alemayehu, *የሸንቁጥ ልጆች...* (*Šänkut's Children...*)p.39.; Informants: Ato Laqäw Andargé and Lulé Mälaku.

The problem of food supply for the patriots got worse as their numbers increased from time to time. Large numbers of fighters meant that peasant grain reserves were exhausted. The limited quantity of produce was insufficient to feed the peasants let alone the patriots. Conflicts became inevitable between the patriots and the peasants, for the latter imposed itself on and sometimes looted the former. As usual, the leading patriots of North Šäwa held a meeting under the leadership of *Balambaras* (later *Ras*) Abäbä Arägay to discuss how to tackle the problem of food supply. Two ideas were raised: Moving to some other place and staying in North Šäwa. Nearly half of the patriots accepted the first idea and proposed to move to Méça and Méta districts and finally to Wälläga where they believed there were sufficient resources. The other group of individuals opposed the idea of moving out of North Šäwa for two reasons. First, they feared that if they left the area, the enemy would devastate their home districts by way of revenge. They also believed that the patriots could be successful if they stayed and fought in the mountainous region of North Šäwa whose terrain they knew very well. After hearing these two opposing ideas, it was *Ras* Abäbä who proposed that the patriots should stop forcing the poor to supply them with food and focus instead on convincing the wealthy people to carry the burden with the occasional exactions on collaborators. The patriots agreed with this idea and moved to remote and unsettled areas and on the *rist* lands of the wealthy individuals. To be a role model, *Ras* Abäbä allowed access to the rich collection of grain and other resources of his father *Afänegus* Arägay. Consequently, the patriots also took away a huge collection of gold and money of *Däjjazmač* Mäšäša Täwondäbälay, one of the rich *balabats* in Tägülät *ena* Bulga forcefully. Most of it was collected as booty from the enemy after a fierce battle of 1February, 1937.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the patriots used resources on the *rist* lands of *Ras* Woldägiyorgis, *Le'elt* Mädefäriašworq Abäbä(in Mänz), Asfawwosän Häiläselassé (in

¹⁰⁷Taddesse, *ቀሪገ ገረመው...*(Qärin Gärämäwu...)pp.232-234.

Mänz and Yefat), and Emperor Häiläselassé (in Mänz and Yefat) and of other high and middle-level nobility in the subsequent years. Still, patriots did not manage to have secure food supply. It appears that attack and counter attacks of the patriots and the enemy on the one hand, and the heavy dependence of the patriots on the rural community resulted in the ruin of the natural environment and subsequent subsistence crisis.¹⁰⁸

It was in view of all these problems that the patriots of North Šäwa felt that it was necessary to regularize the relationship between the patriots and the peasants. In December 1938 this culminated in the formation of an association of patriots and adoption of a command structure and a code of conduct. *Ras Abäbä Arägay* was elected the commander-in chief of the patriots of North Šäwa. Patriots in each district were registered and put under the command of *Šäläqas* who were empowered to control not only operational matters but also the movements of anyone enlisted as a patriot, even for personal or private matters. Besides, the document formalized the patriots' relations with the peasantry and strictly prohibited looting and mistreating the latter. It provided that each peasant household would contribute *qäläb* (food) to the patriots through the *Šäläqa*, based on its capacity. Individuals accused of taking away cattle or other property of peasants would, if proven guilty, be punished and forced to repay double the amount. Another achievement of the document was the rule that banned slaughtering bulls and young oxen to prevent the depletion of farm oxen down the line.¹⁰⁹

Another effect of the war was a general state of instability and consequently of decline in the livelihood of the peasant families. The attacks and counter attacks destabilized families. They

¹⁰⁸Informants: *Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh*, *Ato Tezazu Kefätäw*, *Ato Tässäma Käbädä*, *Ato Täsfayé Andargé*, *Balanbaras Bäyänä Aläläñ* and *Emahoy Ehtäselassé Woldägiorgis*.

¹⁰⁹NALA, Folder No. 63.1.07., File No. 63.1.07.01., A document that shows patriots' inner governing rules, dated on *Tahesas* 1931E.C.

displaced people and forcing them to abandon their homes and property, including livestock such as cattle. The war also created psychological stress and instability, as a result of which people were unable to conduct their routine activities. There were massive migrations to urban areas where demographic concentration led to high rate of unemployment. A large number of people also died of diseases partly related to acute shortages of food.¹¹⁰

Insecurity was aggravated due to the recurrent conflicts among different ethnic groups with conflicting claims over resources.¹¹¹ Looting and kidnapping became the order of the day. Commercial activities declined rapidly. Long-distance traders who used to come to the region also changed their routes and destinations.¹¹² The patriots blocked the entry of food and other items to market places, urban areas and military camps; this was meant, apparently, to prevent food and other provisions from reaching the enemy. Due to mistreatment from both the enemy and the patriots, merchants were compelled to restrict their movements or give up on their commercial endeavors. Supply to market centers gradually declined, eventually almost disappearing. Due to the prevalence of robbery and general insecurity, people in the small urban areas were obliged to depend on what they can themselves produce, which inevitability led to critical shortages. Even for their everyday needs, it became very difficult to travel to far-off places in search of food and firewood. Obviously, the people suffered much more than the enemy because the latter had better

¹¹⁰Dechasa, “Peasants and Resistances...pp.24-25; Informants: *Ato Ešātu Wodajénäh*, *Ato Tezazu Kefätaw*, *Ato Tässäma Kābādä*, *Ato Täsfayé Andargé*, *Balanbaras Bāyānā Alälāñ* and *Emahoy Ehtäselassé Woldägiorgis*.

¹¹¹Informants: *Ato Laqāw Andargé* and *Lulé Mälaku*. Trade was in jeopardy. As is well known, North Šäwa’s closeness to the sea and its strategic location contributed to the growth of numerous market hubs and trading routes. Eastern Šäwa, in particular was a center of long-distance trade routes that led to Mässäwa in the north and the Gulf of Aden in the east. With the establishment of Addis Abābā and Emperor Menelik II’s southerly push, the role of market centers in the region diminished in the late 19th century. Nonetheless, a few North Šäwa market centers remained operational until the Occupation period. For more see Richard Pankhurst, “Trade of Central Ethiopia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.II, No. II(1964),pp.41-48.; Ahmed Hassen, “Some Notes on Harar and The Local Trade Routes: A Report on the View of Ex-Merchants of Šäwa, 1839-1935”, *Annales d’Ethiopie*, Vo. XVII(2001), pp.145-146.).

¹¹²Informants: *Balambaras Bāyānā Adälāñ*, *Ato Täsfayé Dässé* ;*Ato Dämäqä Zälälāw* and *Balambras Abära Säifu*.

access to packed food and other supplies. For the enemy, the problem of firewood was rather more acute than that of food because wood was brought from remote areas not under their control. This situation prevailed everywhere in North Šäwa, with particular acuteness in Mänz and Märhabété.¹¹³

For instance, in August 1938 the patriots of Mänz, in collaboration with those of the neighboring *Awrajjas*, applied the strategy of denying access to food and firewood to the enemy at Zomma camp in Märhabété. For several weeks the patriots encircled the camp and blocked any access to it as well as to the nearby markets. They also successfully blocked reinforcements coming from Fečé, Ensaro and Mida. In the middle of this process, the accumulated grain and firewood at the camp declined and subsequently led to a critical shortage of supplies. The enemy tried to crush the patriots but failed. The only option they had was thus to negotiate with the patriots on the issue of unimpeded trade and freedom of merchants, which had not existed before in the region as a whole. Major Briskly, the leader of Italian forces in the camp, informally agreed with the patriots that both would give freedom to merchants to conduct their routine activities. Even if the agreement was informal and conducted without the knowledge of the Italian viceroy in Addis Abäbä, it was advantageous for both groups. At least it made possible the free movement of merchants in the region in the years to come.¹¹⁴

In Yefat *ena Temuga awrajjä* also, the non-existence of government authority and the prevalence of insecurity made the people and their environment suffer considerably, particularly in the lowlands. Cattle raiding intensified carried out by organized raiding bands. The divisive ethnic

¹¹³*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴Alemayehu ,*የሽንኩፕ ልጆች...* (Šänkut's Children...),p.54.

and religious politics of the enemy polarized relationship among the communities, which on top of already existing competition over resources, increasingly came to take the form of religious and political extremism. The alliance of some of the lowland Muslim Oromo and Afar with the Italians against the highland Christians gave political cover for military expeditions attended by robberies carried out by one group against the other. The Amhara community of Yefat which lived mainly in the highlands of Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Tägülät *ena* Bulga launched frequent military expeditions into the lowlands of the same region, bringing back large numbers of cattle driving out the local people and burning their villages. To counter these attacks, the lowland Muslim Oromo and Afar carried out attacks against the highland Christian and Amhara communities at different times. All of these attacks entailed indiscriminate plunder and destruction of property as well as the burning of villages and crops.

General state of insecurity meant also that there was very little or no initiative to conserve or rehabilitate nature either by the people or the government. On top of this, particularly in the pastoralist inhabited areas, people deliberately set fire to bush or grasslands with the intention of encouraging the growth of new grass for their animals. Farmers in the uplands also did the same to some extent, in their case meant to free land for cultivation.¹¹⁵

Resource Extraction: Wood and Wood Products

Once Italy occupied Ethiopia, it embarked upon projects aimed at extracting the rich resources of the country. It built roads and other infrastructure primarily to extract and evacuate resources out

¹¹⁵Informants: Ato Atlaw Asamenäw, Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh and Ermias Tässäma. Banditry and robbery was not new in Ethiopia. The struggle for domination among the lords or between the central and provincial governments brought the country to a state of insecurity. They also took away the resources of peasants illegally through imposing different forms of taxes even without the knowledge of the central government. For more see Richard Caulk, “Bad Men of the Borders: Shum and Šifta in Northern Ethiopia in the 19th Century” in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1984), pp. 201, 203 and 216.

of the country. One area of concentration along these lines was related to wood and other forest products.¹¹⁶

From early on, the Italians planted wood processing machines in and around forested areas throughout the country. This was done ostensibly to introduce modern technologies but in reality to facilitate extraction. There were several such establishments in the north, around Addis Abäbä, as well as in many places in the southern half of the country. The occupiers also provided concessions to foreign individuals, mostly Italians, to produce charcoal, firewood and timber both for local and international markets.¹¹⁷ Haile says that the terms of agreement did not specify the amount of wood that can be extracted or the duration of the lease. There are indications however that these were fixed differently depending on whether the concession was given to expatriates or to natives. The duration of leases varied from a few years to a maximum of twenty years.¹¹⁸ Likewise, expatriates were allowed to extract up to 30,000 to 40,000 *quintals* of charcoal out of fresh wood cuttings, whereas the use of fresh wood was not allowed for Ethiopians. Besides, where license holders were Ethiopians, the amount of trees to be cut was determined by managers and guards, who were often Italian nationals. Supervision was strict when it comes to Ethiopians as against the whites both on paper and in practice. Punishment for violating the terms of these concessions, be it in the form of cutting extra trees or other related matters, was not uniform for the natives and expatriates.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Gebremarkos Woldeselassie, "The Forest Resources of Ethiopia: Past and Present," in *Journal of the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society: Walia*, vol. 19(1998) p.14.

¹¹⁷Ministry of Agriculture, "የኢትዮጵያ የፍጥነት እና..."(Ethiopian Forest and...), p.49. Some of the places where wood processing machines were established, included Asäbä Täfäri, Çärçär, Assäla, Gumbärdän(Wällo), Šašämäné and Käffa.

¹¹⁸Haile Laribo, *The Building of An Empire: Italian Land Policy and Practice in Ethiopia*(Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 2006),p. 182.

¹¹⁹Ministry of Agriculture, "የኢትዮጵያ የፍጥነት እና..."(Ethiopian Forest and...), pp.49-50.

Italian policy towards natural resource extraction affected the natural environment in two ways. First, it failed to regulate illegal cutting of trees by peasants primarily with the aim of getting the support of the masses. It implicitly encouraged the latter to make inroads into wooded lands previously held by elites. Secondly, it encouraged large-scale construction of Churches and Mosques in different regions, again meant to appease and win acceptance by the people. On top of this, tree planting was very limited.¹²⁰ As a result, there was a high rate of deforestation and land cover change. North Šäwa, particularly the lowlands below the eastern escarpment was a typical example.¹²¹ The Italians encouraged large scale commercial agriculture. They granted concessions for the cultivation of previously grazing and woodland areas to Italian companies. In addition to other benefits like free distribution of seeds, they offered tax incentives (like abandoning *tithe*). They also granted 250 *Lires* per hectare of land as a land reclamation fund.¹²²

Theoretically, commercial farms were supposed to be opened in unpopulated areas. In reality, they were not. They were situated in densely populated areas, most likely to have easy access to labor and facilities. This caused displacement of peasants as well as pastoralists.¹²³ Compensation was too small and was not given on time.¹²⁴ Although not as significant in Northern Šäwa as it was elsewhere, the resettlement of Italian nationals was another burden to the peasants due to additional competition over resources that it created.¹²⁵

¹²⁰Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, p.85.

¹²¹Informants: Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw ,Ato Ešātu Wodajénäh and Ermias Tässäma.

¹²²Haile, *The Building of An...*, pp. 177, 198-199, 201-203.

¹²³*Ibid.*, pp. 177, 181-186, 201-203; Informants: Ato Yeṭena Masräša, Ato Alämayähu Bäsu fekad and Emahoy Ehtäselassé Woldägiorgis.

¹²⁴Haile, *The Building of An...*, pp. 244-245.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, pp.65-69.

The Italians accepted and allowed the continuation of pre-war land tenure arrangements in Ethiopia which limited their capacity to intervene in the area of afforestation.¹²⁶ They gave much attention to extraction of forest resources in the country rather than to forest development. There are some indications that they sought to develop rules to regulate the utilization of forests. They also supposedly demarcated forest reserve areas in the country.¹²⁷ In Northern Šäwa, they issued a decree on 1 June 1939 that regulated the management and utilization of forests. This law states that cutting of trees including those on private holdings was possible only with the permission of local Italian government agents.¹²⁸ They also established monitoring stations around towns and highways as well as an office dedicated to the management of forests called *Offici di Forestale Italiana*. The intention, however, was to meet the immediate wood supply to urban areas, not to bring about sustainable use of resources.¹²⁹

General Nazi, the Italian governor of Šäwa, proclaimed the above law primarily due to the scarcity of wood in the region and the growing problem it posed for Italians in urban areas including Addis Abäbä and its surroundings. It attempted to maintain balance between tree cutting and planting. Article one of the proclamation states that individuals would be allowed to cut trees that were ready for harvest in a ratio of one out of ten provided that the process of cutting is done without damaging roots and substitutions are made for the trees that were cut. It also provided that an individual who wanted to cut trees even on his *rist* land was required to get the permission of local government authorities, known as *commissare*. After assuring whether the trees were private

¹²⁶ Fassil Gebrekiros, *The Subsistence Crisis in Africa: The Case of Ethiopia* (The Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa, 1993) p.).

¹²⁷ Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና...” (Ethiopian Forest and...), p.49.

¹²⁸ Hailemariam and etal, “Reading the Landscape ... p.466.; see also Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና...” (Ethiopian Forest and...) pp.49 and 50-51.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.49 and 50-51.

property by the *Dän tābaqiwoč* (forest guards) or *Milisia Nassionale Forestale*, the petition to cut would be passed to higher bodies for final approval. The proclamation emphasized that when an individual got the permission, he was expected to plant twenty seedlings for each wood cut down by asking seedling from government nurseries. In article three of the same proclamation, it states that an individual who failed to abide by the law would pay from fifty to five hundred *liras* as punishment. Besides, he/she would be punished by a reduction of the number of trees he/she would be allowed to cut in the future.¹³⁰

As stated above, the forest law of the Italians was intended not to sustain forest reserves of the country, but to sustain the supply of wood and timber demands of urban areas and the export market. Tree planting got some attention in urban areas, where the Italians settled. Trees were planted in the towns and settlement areas, and along the left and right sides of the highway leading to the north. In rural areas, where the authority of the enemy was challenged seriously, the government proclamation was not implemented in any degree of seriousness. Peasants felt too insecure to plant trees. The patriots and the peasants alike entirely depended on nature, including available forests to sustain themselves throughout the period of occupation.¹³¹ Tree planting was minimal and limited in scope. It did not therefore match the high rate of deforestation.¹³²

In Yefat, it was the 1937 construction of the highway that runs from Addis Abäbä to Asmara via the *awrajja* that brought a significant change in the vegetation cover and ecology of the area. One of my informants points out that until that time, the Italians were confined to the highland areas along the foot of the eastern escarpment because the lowlands were difficult to penetrate. He says

¹³⁰Yäroma Berhan Newspaper, Year XVII (June 12, 1939).

¹³¹ Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የፍጥነት ሥራ” (Ethiopian Forest and...), pp.50-51. See also Habtemariam Kassa and etal “Reading the Landscape...”, p. 466.

¹³²*Ibid.*; Informants: Ato Yeṭena Masräša, Ato Alämayähu Bäsu fekad and Emahoy Ehtäselassé Woldägiorgis.

that the existence of dense forests and dangerous wild animals were a challenge for those engaged in the construction of the highway. Even after the building of the road, no one would travel on foot through the canopy of dense forest on either side of it.¹³³ This situation began to change fairly quickly with the emergence of new urban centers along the high way, from Däbrässina to Çäffa-Robit. The establishment and growth of these towns created a high demand for wood and wood products both for house construction, the making of furniture, and fuel. Truckloads of wood were transported to distant areas to the north and south of the *awrajja*. The gradual expansion of urban centers converted cultivatable lands and woodlands into residential quarters and business centers. As a result, peasants who lived in the immediate vicinity of urban areas had to move to distant areas or to cultivate land in the hinterlands by cutting and burning the vegetation cover.¹³⁴

¹³³Informants: *Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw*, *Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh* and *Ermias Tässäma*

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

CHAPTER FOUR

Land Tenure, Agrarian Change and the Natural Environment, 1941-1974

Centralization of Power and Resources, and Local Resistance

The post-liberation period marked the growth of absolutism. The Emperor became the head of state as well as the legislative, executive and judicial organs of government. He embarked upon the centralization of government and taxation and consolidation of his power, processes which began in the pre-war period. He strived to make provincial administration directly dependent on the center by, among others, controlling and directing the military and financial sectors.¹

The ways in which processes of centralization affected the pre-existing structures of government and administration varied from place to place. In the *rist* holding regions, the core elements of the system were the *gäbbar* and the *gult-šum*. The power of the *gult-šum* over the *gäbbar*, also referred as *ristäña*, was so strong that the *šum* was virtually the government. Indeed, people in the remote rural areas were so subjected to the regional lords that they hardly know anything about higher government officials or the central government at large. To use Aleme's words, "...the feudal system presupposes in many respects the absence of a centralized form of government. That is also why it is said that in a feudal system the subject-master relationship replaces the citizen-state relationship....the *gäbbar* peasant ...has little or no contact with the central government".²For

¹V.S.Yagya, "Formation of Ethiopian Absolutism in the First Half of 20th Century" in *Proceeding of the 9th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. IV(Moscow, 1988),pp. 243-244.; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern...*, p.201.; Addis Hiwot, *Ethiopia: From Autocracy to Revolution, Review of African Political Economy*, Publication No.1(London, 1975),pp.88-90.;Christopher Clapham, "The Centralization of Power and Local Response in Southern Ethiopia" *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.74, No. 294(1975),p.75.; Christopher Clapham, "Centralization and Minorities in Modern Ethiopia", *Semenar on Minorities and Majority Problems in Africa*(London, University of London, School of Oriental Studies, 24Nov, 1970), p.5.; Messing, "The Highland Plateau of...",pp 296-298.

²Aleme Eshete, "Fuedalism in Ethiopia, Imperialism in Ethiopia" (Addis Ababa, 1978), *Miscelanea- I*, pp.1-2. ; see also Frederick C. Gamst, "Fuedalism in Abyssinia: Further Commentary on the On-Going Controversy" in *Proceeding of the 9th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. IV(Moscow, 1988),pp.70-72.

Aspen, the physical distance between the central and regional governments provided the latter the opportunity to abuse power. Their voice rarely reached the central government.³

It was to change this situation that the Emperor sought to do away with the intermediary role of the provincial governors and local elites. He reorganized administrative structure so as to limit the socio-economic and political powers of provincial elites and of the nobility at large. The 1931 Constitution and the Revised Constitution of 1955 provided legal grounds for the growing power of the Emperor.⁴ The Emperor, as Borruso argues, viewed “centralization as the most logical and realistic strategy to keep under control a country that was naturally driven to fragmentation; a country that was subjected to centrifugal pressures and depended upon ethnic balances, especially after Menelik’s border expansion.” The author further states that the new political and economic adjustment also aimed at bringing the peripheral regions into a unified system of “power and identity”.⁵ To achieve this, the Emperor used strategies that combined repression with assimilation”.⁶ To strengthen his hold in the regions, he settled sections of the regular army in selected provinces and frequently re-appointed provincial governors.⁷

³Harald Aspen, “Crisis and Management of Knowledge: A Tentative Approach to the Crisis of Ethiopian Peasantry” in Bahru Zewde et al(eds.), *Proceedings of the Eleven International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.II (Addis Ababa University, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1994),p.16.;see also Gamst, “Fuedalism in Abyssinia...”,pp.70-72.

⁴ Christopher Clapham, *Haileselassies’s Government* (Newyork: Frederik Apraeger Publishers, 1969), pp. 15-26.; Borruso, “Politics and Religion...”,pp.103-104. See also Bahru, “Economic Origins of...”,pp.20-22.; Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia Power and Protest: Peasant Revolts in the 20th century*(Lawrenceville: The RedSea Press, 1996),p.46.; Yagya, “Formation of Ethiopian...”, pp.242-243.

⁵Borruso, “Politics and Religion...”,p.104.; see also Addis Hiwot, *Ethiopia: From Autocracy*, ,pp.88-90.; Christopher Clapham, *Haileselassies’s Government* (Newyork: Frederik Apraeger Publishers, 1969), pp. 19-23. See also James McCann, *From Poverty to Famine in Northeast Ethiopia, 1900-1935* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania, 1987), pp.17-19.

⁶Clapham, “Centralization and Minorities...”, p.5.;Addis Hiwot, *Ethiopia: From Autocracy....*,pp.88-90.

⁷Clapham, “The Centralization and Local ...”,p.75.

According to Clapham,

The central government view of the periphery...has been basically administrative. The provinces must be pacified, controlled and with all luck developed; they provided payoffs to the central elite and to some extent must be mollified by concessions of one kind or another. In striving to create a strong central power, the government has liberated itself from dependence on regional support, and in so doing has largely cut itself from the political forces being generated in the periphery. There has been none of that close connection with the provinces which is automatic when the central government drives its support from one or another of them.⁸

The growing absolutism mixed up the role and even the identity of the state and the Emperor. For centuries, being head of the state, the Emperor had supreme power over the people. All the land of the country belonged to him at least theoretically. He had the right to decide on the use of state land (such as *madbét/ganägäb*, *wärrägänu*, and *baldras* lands) as if it were his personal property.⁹

In the course of time, the Emperor, however, attempted to separate the state's and his private properties, both theoretically and practically. Of central importance in this regard were the Revised Constitution of 1955 and the property law of 1960.¹⁰ In spite of these provisions, the mixing up of the power of the state and the Emperor continued throughout the imperial period. According to Markakis, the Emperor was “the repository and dispenser of such rights [as land right]. ...As the head of the state, the Emperor exercised political control over land and practically functioned as the source of politically derived landholding rights”.¹¹

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Wagaw Bogale, ቤተ ርስት፡ ስልጣን፣ መዕዋለንዋይ እና በጎ አድራጊነት በቀዳማዊ ሃለስላሴ ሂደት 1933ዓ.ም-1967ዓ.ም (House of Rist: Authority, Property and Voluntary Services During the Reign of Emperor Haileselassie) (2020), pp. 37-39.; Yagya, “Formation of Ethiopian...”, pp.240-242. See Messing, “The Highland Plateau...”, pp 296-298.

¹⁰Imperial Government of Ethiopia, የተሻሻለው የኢትዮጵያ ህገመንግስት, (1948) (The Revised Ethiopian Constitution).; Imperial Government of Ethiopia, የፍታብሄር ህግ (Criminal Code of Ethiopia) (Addis Ababa, 1952), pp. 243-320.

¹¹John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of A Traditional Polity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp.80-81. See also Yagya, “Formation of Ethiopian...”, pp.242-243.

The following description of the situation is both accurate and succinct:

ጃንሆይ በቀድሞው አሰራር መሰረት [ከጣሊያን ወረራ በፊት] ሁሉም ገቢ ለንጉሥ ነገስቱ በየግዛቱ ያለውም ለአገረ ገዥው መሆኑ ቀርቶ ለመንግስት እንደዲሆን በማድረግ የአገሪቱን አስተዳደር ቅርጽ ለውጠዋል። ይህን ካደረጉ በኋላ መልሰው የግል ንብረት እና የመንግስት ንብረትን በማደባለቅ በፍጹማዊ ስልጣናቸው በሚሰጡት ትዕዛዝ የተመሰቃቀለ ሁኔታ ተፈጥሮ ነበር። ሲፈልጋቸው የመንግስት ንብረት የሆነውን ለግለሰብ ይሰጣሉ። መልሰውም በመንግስት ወጭ እንዲገዛ ያደርጋሉ። ለግል ንብረታቸው አስተዳደር ቤተርስት የሚባል ቢሮ ከፍተው እንዲሁም እያንዳንዱ ንጉሳዊ ቤተሰብ የቤተርስት ሹም እየሾሙ የግል ንብረታቸውን ያስተዳድሩ ነበር። በመሆኑም ንጉሥ ነገስቱ በሚሰጡት ትዕዛዝ የግልንም የመንግስትንም ሃብት በአሰራር ያዙበት ስለነበር የተዘበራረቀ ሁኔታ ተፈጠረ። የቤተርስት ሹሞችም በእነሱ የስም ከለላ ብዙ ጭቆና በግለሰቦች ላይ ያደርጉ ነበር።...የግለሰብ ንብረቶችም በጫና ወደ ቤተርስትነት የገቡ ብዙ ናቸው።¹²

The Emperor changed the situation that existed previously, [before the Italian occupation], and arranged that all the income belonged to the Emperor, the income of every province was diverted to the state, away from provincial governors. With this, he changed the administrative structure. After doing this, he again mixed up the management of his private property and that of the state. Given his absolute power, this created confusion. At will, he granted state property to individuals. He ordered to buy it again with the expenditure of the state. For administering his private property, he opened an office called *bētā-rist*. Every member of the royal family had *bētā-rist* as his/her own and administered his/her private properties. As a result, as the Emperor had powers to intervene and decide on the disposition of both private and state property, there appeared disorder. Appointees of *bētā-rist* mistreated individuals in the name of the royal family....Private properties were transferred to *bētā-rist* by force.

As stated in a letter from the Ministry of Finance to Šäwa province dated 9 June 1955, even lands that did not formally become state property came under the domain of the state and thereby of the Emperor.¹³ Sources indicate that the prerogatives of the Emperor over natural resources resulted

¹²Telahun, *የሃያኛው ክፍለ ዘመን...* (Twenty Century Ethiopia...), pp.181-184.; see also Wagaw, *ቤተ-ርስት...* (House of Rist...), pp.37-38. ;Bahru, *A History of Modern...*, pp.293-294.

¹³WTMRC, Folder no. 8736/288, No File, “A letter from Ministry of Finance to Šäwan Province about State property”, Dated on *Säné* 1/1948E.C., Ref No. 8427/መ/ግ/48.

in ecological crisis. The poorly considered policy of the state about land and environment brought it into unending conflict with local society as well as elites, and eventually led to deforestation and environmental degradation, particularly in the post-liberation period. The state considered itself as the sole controller, manager and conservator of natural resources such as forests, water bodies, soil, pasture and others. It was a highly centralized system. It regulated and sometimes denied local people access and use of natural resources.¹⁴ Moreover, it aggressively sought to control resource use by individuals and communities. The focus of the state was on how to utilize the available potential lands mainly for agriculture. It was only after the mid-1960s that the government embarked on conservation and rehabilitation activities.¹⁵

For local people, however, controlling land and its resources was a question of survival. They sought to use such resources rather than preserve them, or in one way or the other put them beyond reach. According to Dessalegn, “these two approaches reveal two different perceptions, one [i.e. that of the state] regards nature as an object to be preserved while the other [regards it as] a value to be used and maintained.” These opposing views of nature in general and the question of its ownership, management and utilization in particular, brought the state into conflict with the local communities, both the ordinary people and elites.¹⁶

¹⁴Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and ...*, pp.10, 83-84, and 88.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p.41.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp.71, 83-84.

Dessalegn's description of the problem is worth quoting:

In Ethiopia, an environmental resource has often been considered a free good liable to be captured by individuals or groups that at the moment in question wield sufficient power. This frequently deprives the surrounding communities, which may depend heavily on the resource, rights of access and use. The Ethiopian peasant knows from experience that a natural resource is not a bounty of nature given equally to all; on the contrary, such a resource will sooner or later be claimed by the powerful and privileged even if his community has a prior, customary right over it. The natural landscape has thus been always pregnant with conflict and opposition by the peasant community against the state, the landed classes against the peasant community, and sometimes the state against the landed classes.¹⁷

The competition for power and resources between the state and provincial elites had far reaching social and environmental implications. As I have discussed before, the state sought to subjugate provincial elites by making use of military and fiscal instruments. Provincial governors, on their part, struggled to maintain their powers and status by all means at their disposal.¹⁸ In this competition, the worst victims were the defenseless poor and the natural environment. The poor would neither get protection from the state nor spared abuse in the hands of local rulers and elites.¹⁹ Gebrehewot Baykedagn eloquently describes the environmental and socio-economic effects of the conflict as follows:²⁰

....አንዱም የአንዱን ሀገር ሊጠቀልል ሲፈልግ በመካከላቸው እየተመላለሰ ጦርነት ይሆናል። የቀናው ሀገር ተመልሶ እንደገና ይጠፋል። ከአራሾች እኩሌቶች በጦርነቱ ይሞታሉ። እኩሌቶች ይሸሻሉ። በሸሹበትም ስፍራ ደግሞ ርሃብና በሽታ ይፈጃቸዋል። የአንዱን ትንሽ ንጉስ ሀገር ሌላው እየጠቀለለ ይሄዳል። በጊዜ ብዛትም ትልልቅ ነገስታት ይወጣሉ። በውስጣቸውም በግዳያና በዘረፋ የበለጠውን እያዩ ራስ፤ ደጃችጦች እያሉ ይሸማሉ። የነገሱበትንም ሀገር ለእነርሱ ያካፍላሉ። የቀረው ሁሉ የእነዚህን ማዕረግ እያዩ ስምና ሹመት አገኛለሁ እያለ በህዝቡ ውስጥ ያለው እያንዳንዱ ሰው በግዳይና በዘረፋ እንዲመሰገን ይጥራል። ጦርነቱም ከዱሮው የባለ ይሆናል።

¹⁷*Ibid*,p.74.

¹⁸Bahru, *A History of Modern...*, p.201.

¹⁹NALA, Folder Number 17.1.3.46, File Number- 17.1.3.46.02. ,“A Report of Governor of Sälalé about the People and the *Awrajja*”, dated on *Genbot* 1934E.C. No.Ref.

²⁰Gebrehewot Baykedagn (*Negadrass*), *የኢጋድራስ ገብረሂወት ባይከዳኝ ስራዎች*(The Works of Negadrass Gebrehewot Baykedagn)(Addis Ababa Addis Ababa University Press, 2007 E.C.), pp.53-57. He was a foreign educated economist.

ከዚህ በኋላ ብዙ ሀገሮች በአንድ ጊዜ ከልማት ወደ ጥፋ ይወድቃሉ። ከተሞቻቸውና መንደሮቻቸውም ይቃጠላሉ። በሁከትም ምክንያት ህዝቡ ደህይቶ ከሰራተኛው በላተኛው በዝቶ፤ ለንጉሱም ስለ ግብር የሚገባለት ገንዘብ ጥቂት ነውና በአገሩ ውስጥ ሽፍታ ቢነሳ ሰራዊቱ በፍጥነት የሚሄድበት የተበጀ መንገድና የምድር ባቡር ስለሌለው ሽፍታ ያለበትንና የተነሳበትን ሀገር በፍጥነት ሊረዳው አይችልም። ንጉሱ በገዛ እጁ በሾማቸው መኳንንት ሙሉ ስልጣን የለውምና ምንም እንኳን በአንድ ንጉስ ውስጥ ቢያድሩ ቢገዙም እርስ በርሳቸው መዋጋትን እይተውም። ይልቁንም ጉልበት ሲሰማቸው ንጉሱን አጥፍተው ራሳቸውን ለማንገስ ያስባሉ። በእንደዚህ ያለ ምክንያት ጦርነት ይነሳል። በጦርነቱም ብዙ ሰው ይሞታል። አገሩም ከልማት ወደ ጥፋት ይደርሳል። ሁከትና ቅሚያ ጦርነት ሲበዛ ህዝቡ ደክሞ ስርቶ ጥሮ የሰበሰበውን ሁሉ እንዲቀሙት ያውቃልና በእንደዚህ ያለ ሁከት ተስፋ ቆርጦ የጠፋውን መሬት እንደገና ለማቅናት አይጣጣርም። ስለዚህ ድህነትና ስደት፤ በሽታና ሞት በአገሩ ሁሉ ይበዛል። የሰውም ሀይልና ሀብት እየጎደለ ይሄድና ሰውም የምድሪቱ ጌታ መሆኑ ቀርቶ ችጋረኛና ተገዢ ይሆናል። ከእንደዚህ ያለ ባርነት ለመውጣትም ብዙ ድካም ያስፈልገዋል።²¹

...when one incorporates the other's territory, conflict will appear among them repeatedly. The cultivated land will be destroyed again. Half of the peasants die and half of them end up displaced. The displaced die of hunger and diseases where they have taken refuge. Always the powerful ruler seeks to annex the territory of the smaller ruler. As time goes on, powerful kings emerge. They [big kings] appoint *Rases, Däjjazmačs* on the bases of their successes in the number of [people] they have killed and the damages they have caused. Then they redistribute the land they controlled. Each of the remaining members of the community involves in killing and looting in order to get status and the position of those already promoted. So the war becomes worse than before.

As such, many regions would slide back from development to devastation. [Their] towns and villages end up burnt. Due to the prevalence of chaos, people starve and the number of consumers exceeds the workers. The income of the king becomes minimal so that if bandits appear in his country, he cannot come to help his people due to the absence of roads or means of transport. The king has no full authority on his appointees and though they are under his rule and domain, they do not cease to fight each other. Actually, if and when they feel energetic, they would think of how to destroy the king and crown themselves. For this reason, war breaks out again, and in the war, many die and the country moves from development to devastation. When chaos and looting prevails, people lose hope and do not make efforts to cultivate the devastated land again, thinking that they will lose what they have worked for. Thus, poverty, dislocation, disease and death prevail in the country. Human energy and wealth declines and humans no longer become rulers of nature. People starve and become subjects to it [nature]. It takes much effort to come out of such kind of slavery.

²¹Gebrenewot , *የኢጋድራስ ገብረ ሂውት...*(The Works of Negadras Gebrenewot...) pp.55-56.

Responding to the high-handedness of the state, local people put up acts of resistance, which were in Dessalegn's words acts of "environmental protest". These could be seen in two ways. One was deliberate harassing of the natural environment due to lack of tenure security, and at the same time to deny any access to outsiders (the state and elites). In doing so, they would engage in illegal logging, encroaching upon forested and grazing lands, and converting woodlands into cultivated fields. They also set fire on reserved areas and sanctuaries, discourage and damage rehabilitation and conservation works. The primary intention of local people, sources indicate, was not to attack nature, but to demonstrate their grievance and deny any access to the expanding state and its functionaries. They often resisted state's initiatives and directives including even development projects suspecting them of being designed against their interests.²² According to my informants, both forms of opposition were evident in my study area. As elsewhere in the northern parts of the country, the people of Mänz *ena* Yefat resisted the *qäläd* system (land measurement and registration) and did so also against a series of forest laws enacted at various points after liberation (1941, 1965 and others).²³

In 1941, the state nationalized forests in the country.²⁴ It also controlled grazing lands, and lands without owners.²⁵ On the surface, the intention of the state appears to have been to protect the resources from damage by local people. Practically, however, it was aimed at controlling resources and associated revenues.²⁶ There was thus massive transfer of individual and community forests to the state in the post-liberation period. The 1965 forest legislation was an attempt to nationalize

²²Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and ...*, pp. 74, 82-84.; see also Gebru, *Ethiopia Power and ...*, p.3.

²³Informants: Balambaras Bāyānā Adälāñ, *Amsaaläqa Gäbrägies Hailämika'el*, Ato Alämayähu Bäsufekad and Ato Bäläté Woldu.

²⁴Bahru, *A History of Forest...*, p.101.

²⁵Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and ...*, p.10.

²⁶WTRMRC, Folder no. 8736/288, No File no, "A letter from Ministry of Finance to Šäwan Province about State property", Dated on *Säné* 1/1948E.C., Ref No. 8427/መ/ግ/48.; Informants: Balambaras Bāyānā Adälāñ, *Amsaaläqa Gäbrägies Hailämika'el*, Ato Alämayähu Bäsufekad and Ato Bäläté Woldu.

the forest resources in the country. But, the state was not in a position to control forest reserves located in inaccessible and remote areas. So, local people encroached upon and converted these reserves in whole or in part, into cultivation, grazing and some other purposes.²⁷ This was observed in my study area as well. Oral sources indicate that it was in the 1950s and 1960s that much of the forest of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga was lost. This partly derived from the attempt to retain control of the land by the population by converting it into cultivation.²⁸

On the other hand, the government also facilitated deforestation through the series of land grants it made from government reserves of forested and grazing lands as *madāria* lands.²⁹ The grants were made to different individuals, from higher classes to the landless at various points in 1942, 1944, 1952 and 1958. Since land was given to cultivate it and sustain their lives,³⁰ beneficiaries proceeded to clean forests on the land, killed off wildlife on it, and otherwise assaulted nature.³¹ Similarly, in Yefat, huge amounts of *Madāria* land were given to officials and retainers. The lands over which these grants were made extended from Jāwuha to Čäffa valley and deep into the interior of the land occupied by both Oromo and Afar pastoralists. Having been granted, the newcomers converted the lands into cultivation and then pushed into the adjacent pastoralists' grazing land claiming that it was unsettled state's land.³² The local people also embarked upon the cultivation

²⁷Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, pp. 74-75 and 86.

²⁸Informants: *Balambaras Bāyānā Adälāñ*, *Amsaalāqa Gäbrägies Hailāmika'el*, *Ato Alāmayāhu Bäsufekad* and *Ato Bäläṭé Woldu*.

²⁹Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና ...” (A History of Forest and...), pp.53 and 296.

³⁰Tekalegn Woldemariam, “A City and Its Hinterlands: The Political Economy of Land tenure, Agriculture and Food Supply for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia”(Boston: PhD Dissertation in History, Boston University, 1995), pp. 239-241, see also Shiferaw Bekele, “The Evolution of Land Tenure in The Imperial Era”, in Shiferaw bekele(ed.), *An Economic History of Ethiopia: The Imperial Era, 1941-1974*, Vol.I(Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995),p.12.; John Cohen, “Ethiopia After Haileselassie: the Government land Factor”, *African Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 289(1973),pp.376-377.

³¹Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና ...” (A History of Forest and...) , pp.53 and 296; Informants: *Ato Anägagrāñ Bezunäh*, *Ato Ayečāw Adanä*, *Ato Däbälé Gämäču* and *Ato Damṭāw Abäbä*.

³²WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48, “የወሎ፣ የትግራይ፣ የቦጌምድር እና የጎጃም ጠቅላይ ግዛቶች መጀመሪያ ጉብኝት ራፖርት በ ዘገየ አበሩ.” (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Begemidir and Gojjam Provinces by Zägäyā Abäru), dated on 28/7/1956E.C.,p.1.

of grazing, bush and forested lands by way of pre-empting the advancing state. In this way, huge tracts of land were converted into cultivation often regardless of the landscape and ecological set up of the area.³³

An equally important, though somewhat indirect, factor for environmental decline was insecurity of tenure. It deepened the impoverishment of the people by, among other things, eroding their trust in the state. The existing land tenure system, as Haile argues, was “socially exploitive and economically prohibitive”.³⁴ As a result, people demonstrated their grievances by disobeying and resisting the state’s directives and orders in a variety of ways. Most peasants considered the state as oppressive and hence abused property and resources claimed by it in all ways possible.³⁵

In the immediate post-liberation period, the resentment of the ordinary people was aggravated by the disproportionate allocation of land and other resources to collaborators and individuals who were exiled during the occupation. It was felt that with the exception of a few, the restored government marginalized the patriots and favored the collaborators and exiles, ostensibly because the collaborators (generically known as *bandas*) and former exiles had experiences of the Western world either by living with the Italians in the country or abroad, mainly in Europe. Besides, the *bandas* and exiles benefited more than the patriots during redistributing of the enemy’s property. The Enemy’s Property Administration Office, which was organized under the Emperor’s *Bétärist*, is reported to have disfavored and even mistreated the patriots. It was accused of taking away individuals’ property for the simplest of alleged crimes. The majority of the patriots got the feeling

³³Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*,p.10.; Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of ...*,pp.82-83.Informants: Ato Anägräñ Bezunäh, Ato Ayeçäw Adanä, Ato Däbälé Gämäçu and Ato Damṭäw Abäbä.

³⁴Haile Menkerios, “The Present System of Land Tenure in Ethiopia: An Introduction”, in *Challenge*, Vol. X, No.II(1970),p.5.

³⁵Telahun, *የፕሮፌሰር ክፍለ ዘመን...*(Twenty Century Ethiopia...),pp.239-240, and 263.; Informants: Ato Anägräñ Bezunäh, Ato Ayeçäw Adanä, Ato Däbälé Gämäçu and Ato Damṭäw Abäbä.

that they had been dispersed with little or no reward. Only a few of them were given local government posts. Some others were given only medals. The problem was more serious among female patriots.³⁶

On top of this, local government authorities mistreated and displaced peasant farmers accusing them of being instruments of the enemy during the period of occupation, in violation of proclamation made by the Emperor on 24 July, 1943. In this proclamation, he declared that no one would be charged with that crime going forward and granted amnesty to those who had allied with the enemy one way or the other, with the exception of those whose cases had already been Tekien to court and ruled that no one should be accused of that crime henceforth.³⁷ In practice, however, the law was not entirely applied in practice. Individuals who had have *madäria* land for the service they rendered before period of occupation were accused participating in the struggle or of collaborating with the enemy simply to Tekie over the land from them. Local government officials favored the new claimants by taking advantage of the lack of details in the proclamation. The proclamation did not clearly define what to do with *madäria* landholders who had collaborated.³⁸

The lack of clarity and detail on imperial proclamations that dispensed land and other rewards created confusion both among government officials and people who expected rewards at the end of occupation. Litigation over *madäria* land proliferated in many places As I have mentioned above, the common charge against former *madäria* holders was that they had failed to join the war

³⁶Telahun, *የፕሮጀክት ክፍል ዘመን...*(*Twenty Century Ethiopia...*),pp.226-230., 241.

³⁷WTMRC, Folder No. 5760, File no. 2075, “A Letter from Ministry of Pen to Ministry of Defence about proclamation of July 24, 1943”, dated on *Mägabrit* 2/1940E.C., Ref. no. 2022/7.; WTMRC, Folder No. 5760, File no. 2075, “A Letter from Ministry of Defence to Šäwan Province about state proclamation of July 24, 1943”, dated on *Miazia* 7/1940E.C., Ref. no. 5739/40.

³⁸WTMRC, Folder No. 5760, File no. 2075, “A Letter from Ministry of Pen to Ministry of Defence”, dated on *Mägabrit* 2/1940E.C., Ref. no. 2022/7.; WTMRC, Folder No. 5760, File no. 2075, “A Letter from Ministry of Pen to Ministry of Defence about state proclamation of July 24/1943”, Dated on *Mägabrit* 21/1940E.C., Ref. no. 5477/40.

effort or that they were collaborators. The problem was that it was, in many cases difficult to show if and how former *madärya* holders had sided with the enemy during the period of occupation except by encouraging people to inform on each other. It was even harder to identify collaborators among the peasantry and penalize their behavior. Indeed, archival sources indicate that not an insignificant number of the peasantry stood on the side of the enemy, but often they did not do so of their own accord but under pressure from the *Çeqaşumes* and *meselänés*, as well as, of course, the enemy. Moreover, those who worked with the enemy did not entirely detach themselves from the patriots. They played a significant role in supporting the patriotic struggle, sometimes at great risk to themselves and their families. Thus in those places where people who were accused to have been active supporters of the Italians and made to forfeit property it was by ignoring these and other important facts on the ground. A letter from the Crown Prince Asfawwossän Hailäselassé addressed to the Emperor dated on 16 August 1947 showed the exiting reality as follows:

...መሬት[ማደሪያ መሬት] የተደለደለው ወታደር እና ሹማምንት ከተደለደለ በኋላ የጠላት መሳሪያ ነህ በመባል ስለሚቀርበው አቤቱታ ክርክሩ በየጊዜው የማያቋርጥ በመሆኑ ለስራው ቀና መንገድ አልሰጠውም። ...የጠላት መሳሪያነት የሚያሰኘው በፍቃዱ ለጠላት ወታደር ሆኖ ደግሞ እየበላ ከጠላት ጋር ሆኖ የዘመተ የጠላት መሳሪያ የሚያሰኘው ነው። ነገር ግን በጭቃ እና በምስላኔ እየተገደደ ከጠላት መሳሪያ ተቀብሎ የዘመተው እና እንዲሁም የጦር መሳሪያ ተቀብሎ ዘምቶ ጦርነት ሳያደርግ የተመለሰው ሁሉ እንደጠላት መሳሪያነት የሚቆጠር ለመሆኑ ወይም ላለመሆኑ ከደንቡ ላይ አልተዘረዘረም።

ስለዚህ...ለጠላት መሳሪያ ለሆነ ነጭ ለባሽ ውስጥ መተዳደሪያ ለመፍቀድ ደንቡ የማይፈቅድ በመሆኑ እና ይልቅንም አንዳንድ ሽማግሌዎች እድሜያቸው ለዘመቻ በማይፈቅድላቸው ጊዜ በጭቃ እና በምስላኔ እየተገደዱ ከጠላት የጦር መሳሪያ ተቀብለው የዘመቱ በመሆናቸው በዚህ አኳኋን የጠላት መሳሪያ አሰኝተው የሚተዳደሩበትን መሬት በመንቀል በሽምግልናቸው ወራት መተዳደሪያ አጥተው ከማዘናቸውም በላይ ላስተዳደሩም በጣም ቅር የሚያሰኝ ...ነው።³⁹

³⁹WTMRC, Folder No. 5760, File no. 2075, “A Letter from The Crown Prince, Asfawwossän Hailäselassé to Ministry of Defence”, dated on *Nähassé* 8/1939E.C., Ref. no. 10905/10.

... Lawsuits filed against former warriors who were holders of *madarya* lands prior to the War [as per the proclamation of July 24/1943] alleging that they had collaborated with the enemy are posing a serious problem for the administration. To say that one was an instrument of the enemy, it is important that the individual join the enemy of his own will and serve on the side of the enemy for pay. However, there was no detail in the law that provides whether those individuals who served on the side of the enemy or received firearms from the enemy under the orders of the *Çeqa* and *meselāné*, or those who had received weapons from the enemy but returned without fighting should be considered instruments of the enemy or not.

Since the proclamation was not explicit on such matters it is an open question if elderly members of the militia who were forced to serve the enemy by the *çeqa* and *meselāné* had to give up their *madarya* lands. [It is our belief that] confiscating the land of such individuals would be as disappointing to them as it would be unhelpful to the administration....

The perceived or real mistreatment of the patriots as well as members of the community for what they had alleged to have done during the occupation went a long way to undermine the people's trust in the state. In due course, of course, this would contribute to growing political opposition to the regime.⁴⁰ The Emperor, who promised freedom and socio-economic development to the people of Ethiopia at the time of liberation was unable to deliver on his promise. A near total neglect or inability to address basic issues of good governance meant that no reserve of support for the monarch among ordinary people.⁴¹

North Šäwa was not an exception in his regard. The failure of the state to fulfill its promises induced mass oppositions in the districts of Mänz, Yefat, Tägulät, Bulga, Märhabété, Jerru, Ginagär, Ankobär, Ṭära, Ensaro and Morät. For instance, the representatives of the people of these areas petitioned to *Fitawurari* Šähayu Enquselassé, the governor of the Šäwa province in the 1940s requesting the establishment of modern schools in these districts. The letter states that the people of these areas suffered a lot during the patriotic struggle, but benefited least, or not at all, after

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Bahru, *A History of Modern...*, p.209.

liberation. They alleged that fruits of liberation were rather being enjoyed by those who had made little or no contribution, and even by some collaborators.⁴²

Archival sources indicate that at the beginning (in the early 1940s), the resistance against centralization was organized by the *balabats*. They show that the *balabats* who were disappointed with the centralization efforts of the Emperor (of power and resources), mobilized the people against the state.⁴³ The restored government was too weak to handle the matter. To make matters worse, maladministration and the deep penetration of the state into the rural economy aggravated the situation over subsequent decades. As a result, a series of public oppositions appeared in Central and Northern Ethiopia against the centralizing state, decrying corrupt administration, improper application of tax reforms and other related socio-economic problem.⁴⁴

⁴²NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.39., File no.17.1.3.39.06., “A Petition of the people of Mänz, Yefat, Tägulät, Bulga, Märhabété, Jerru, Genagär, Ankobär, Ṭära, Ensaro and Morät addressed to *Fitawurary Şähayu Enquselassé* ”, dated on 1937E.C., No Ref.

⁴³NALA, Folder No.17.1.3.46, File Number- 17.1.3.46.02. , “A Report of Governor of Sälalé about the people and the *Awrajja* ”, dated on *Genbot* 1934E.C. No.Ref.; see also Gebru, *Ethiopia Power....*,p.48.

⁴⁴Timothy Fernythough, “Social Mobility and Dissident Elites in Northern Ethiopia: The Role of Banditry, 1900-1969”, in Donald Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London: James Currey,1986),pp.158-159. Donald Crummey, “Banditry and Resistance: Noble and Peasant in the 19th century Ethiopia” in Donald Crummy (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*(London: James Currey,1986),pp.133-135.

There was, for instance, a case in Sälalé, in which the governor of Sälalé in the early 1940s, (whose name unfortunately was not mentioned) describes the way in which the *balabats* mobilized the local people against the state: He says,

... መንግስት ለማስተዳደር ያወጣውን ደንብ መጀመሪያ በአድማ ለመቃወም ባላባት የተባሉ መከሩ። ዳሩ የማይሆንላቸው ቢሆን ራሱን በማይጎዳ፤ ሕዝብና መንግስትን የሚጎዳ ስራ ለመስራት መንገድ ፈለጉ። አልቀረም አገኙ። ይኸውም መንገድ በሀገር ውስጥ የሚገኘውን ወስላታ እና ጎረምሳ ስንቅ እና መሳሪያ በማቀበል እንረዳለን እያሉ ጉልበት የሌለውን መጉጃ መሳሪያ አደረጓቸው። ...ዛሬ በየሀገሩ የሚጠፋው ሰብል ብዙ ነው። የሚቃጠለውም ቤት የሚዘረፈውም ድሃ ልክ የለውም። በአፍርሳታ መቀጫ አውጡ ቢባሉ ባላባቶችን ፈርቶ እምቢ ባዩ በዛ። በሀገር ውስጥ የሚገኘው ባላባት ከዳር ዳር በሽርክና እና በአድማ የተሳሰረ ስለሆነ ድሃ ሲበደል እያዩ ጉዳታቸውን አይናገሩም። ድሃው ብንጮህ ቀላጤ ብናመጣ ቤታችን እና ከብታችን ይዘረፋል እኛም እንገደላለን እያለ በፍራቻ ይሞታል...⁴⁵

...at first, the [the nobility] conspired to oppose the new system of administration introduced by the state. But they failed in this effort, following which they looked for a way of undermining the state without exposing them to difficulty. They eventually found one. That was mobilizing vagabonds and youth to do the job, providing them with food and weapons. They used them attack the defenseless people. Today everywhere crops in the field are ruined, the number of houses burnt and individuals looted is quite considerable. When the people are asked to expose the criminals in *Afersata* they would be unwilling for fear of retribution by the *balabats*. As the *balabats* had some kind of connection and understanding from corner to corner, they ignored the poor who continue to be mistreated. The poor do not appeal to higher authority and seek intervention for fear that the consequences would be the burning of their houses and the looting of their cattle if not outright murder by the bandits. They would thus suffer quietly.

The *balabats* continued to resist a number of state's initiatives and strategies. One such initiative was the introduction of land measurement and registration in the 1940s and the 1950s, known as *qälad*. The state speeded up the process of land measurement and registration that had begun in the pre-war period with the intention of bringing untaxed land under the tax regime. In many places, land used for grazing by pastoralists was designated state land and targeted for

⁴⁵NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46, File Number- 17.1.3.46.02. ,“A Report of Governor of Sälalé about the people and the *Awrajja*”, dated on *Genbot* 1934E.C. No.Ref.; see also Gebru, *Ethiopia Power...*,p.48.

measurement. The people Šäwa province such those in Yärar *ena* Kärräyu, Tägulät *ena* Bulga and Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga Awrajjas, repeatedly appealed to government officials all the way to the *Endarasse* and the Emperor, in opposition to land measurement. But there was no concrete response to their petitions. In one of the petitions addressed to the Emperor dated 13 October 1958, the Afar *balabats* in the above mentioned *awrajjas* state that until that point in time they had used the extensive dry lowlands in Northeastern and Eastern parts of Šäwa province for pasture and that they have been paying taxes in cattle, butter, sheep, and goats to the state for generations. The government, they said, is expected to recognize and protect their lands from confiscation. They argued that the measurement of these lands and subsequent conversion into agricultural land would constitute a threat to their livelihood.⁴⁶

In Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajja*, the government embarked upon a project of measuring pastoralist occupied lands in 1952. In 16 August 1952, a letter from Šämbäl Awoqä Dämse, the then governor of Efrata district addressed to Land Demarcation Branch office of Karaqoré, provided a list of those districts that would and would not be measured. According to this letter, the pastoralists areas of Fursi, Deguguru, Wärräabu, Wärräkärräyu and Ṭemuga were to be covered by the program. Gilo and Qoré, which were *ristägulat* of Däjjazmač Mäšäša Woldé and ordinary people respectively, were to be left out of the program.⁴⁷

When the experts went to the selected fields, it was very challenging. In addition to the reluctance of some of the local elites to cooperate, there was a general sense of insecurity in the region,

⁴⁶WTMRC, No foldr no.; File no. 2108, “A Petition from Afar elites to Emperor Hailäselassé about the Qälad System”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 3, 1951E.C. No.Ref.; WTMRC, No Folder no.; File no. 2108, “A Petition from Fäntalé Wäräda Balabats Addressed to Emperor Hailäselassé about the Qälad System”, dated on *Hedar* 24, 1951E.C. No.Ref.; WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 2108, “A Petition from Fäntalé Wäräda Balabats Addressed to Emperor Haileselassie about the Qälad System”, dated on *Tahasas* 1, 1951E.C. No.Ref.

⁴⁷WTMRC, No Folder, No.File, “A letter from Šämbäl Awoqä Dämse, Governor of Efrata District to Land Demarcation, Karaqoré Branch Office about the Qälad System”, dated on *Nähassé* 8, 1944E.C., Ref. no. **Λ**/2/44/12.

making the implementation of the program very difficult. First, they could not find the pastoralists in place due to the fact that they often moved with their cattle in search of pasture and water. Second, the hot weather condition, the prevalence of diseases and the insecurity along the Šäwa and Wällo provinces, particularly at Fursi, added complication to the matter.⁴⁸ Third, the local elites under *Grazmač* Mohammäd Oumär Dingo of Woräabu, and Mohammäd Oumär Muhé of Woräkäräyu in the *qäbällés* of Efrata-Jillé district strongly resisted the *qälad* system. Both were not willing to permit the intervention of the state for fear that they might lose their lands to the state and to local tribal leaders. Even after the implementation of the land measurement with a series of negotiations with local elites, conflicts never stopped. Claims and counter claims between or among local elites over pieces of land continued within the same clan group or with pastoralists of other clan groups. For instance, on 27 December 1966, *Grazmač* Mohammäd Oumär Dingo accused *Ato* Dässaläñ Gäbrämädhen, a land demarcation expert, assigned to the Efrata-Jillé district of having unlawfully re-distributed more than 18 *gaša* of land from Wärräkäräyu to Wärräabu *qäbällés*.⁴⁹

Banditry

The absence or weak presence of the state in remote areas was attended by the prevalence of insecure conditions in every corner of Šäwa province. Bandits attacked defenseless people by looting, killing and burning property. The attack also targeted government institutions and officers,

⁴⁸WTMRC, No Folder, File no. 2142, “A letter from Experts of Land Demarcation, 1st Division to Land Demarcation, Karaqoré Branch Office about the Qälad system”, dated on *Mägabit* 16, 19445E.C., Ref. no. 1/3/ቅ/ሆ.

⁴⁹WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/አ338, File no. 9066, “A Minute about Land Demarcation and Disputes between Wärräabu and Wärräkäräyu Balabats in Efrata-Jillé District”, dated on *Tahesas* 18, 1959E.C. No Ref.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/አ338, File no. 9066, “A Letter From *Ato* Ačamyäläh Woldäamanuel, Head, Land Measurement and Demarcation Office of Jara *Awrajja* to Jara *Awrajja* Administration Office”, dated on *Säné* 3, 1958E.C., Ref no. 360/127.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/አ338, File no. 9066, “A letter from *Grazmač* Tässäma Habtämariam, Governor of Karaqoré Wäräda to Jara *awrajja* Administration Office”, dated on *Yäkatit* 13/1953E.C., Ref.no. 022/ሐ/760/2.

and passengers crossing the region both on foot and vehicles.⁵⁰ In my study area, bandits operated widely in what was known as *Mänz Wana Meseläné* from Qäyafär to the border of Gešé along the Guassa road; in Gešé and Anşokia *WanaMeseläné*, in Efrata *ena* Gedem among the Amhara and Oromo inhabited areas; in Ayabär Qäbällé, in Mafud around Waff Waša, and along the road between Däbrässina to Aṭayé. Regarding this, a report from *Mänz ena Yefat WanaMeselänés* stated that

...እነዚህም[ወስላቶች] በጥፋታቸው እንዳይያዙ እየፈሩ ለመሸሸግም ከመስሪያ ቤት በራቀ ስፍራ እየተቀመጡ ባላገሩን ያስጉታል። የመንግስት ደንበኛ ወታደር በሀገር ላይ ስለሌለ ያጠቁናል በማለት እየፈሩ ባላገሩ ወስላቶችን በፍጹም ሊቃወማቸው አይፈቅድም። ምስላኔዎችም የመንግስት መስሪያ ቤትን እና ስራን የሚያስተባብር ደንበኛ ወታደር ስለሌላቸው ወስላታን ለመያዝ ወይም ለማሲያዝ አልቻሉም።⁵¹

These [bandits] fearing not to be captured for their mischief, are quartered in areas far away from government offices and threaten the peasant farmer. Since there was no standing regular army of the government in the region, the peasant farmer never opposes such individuals fearing that they might attack. The *meslänés* would not try to capture or let others capture the bandits for lack of regular soldiers that ensure the security and activity of government offices.

There was no standing security force at all levels of administration in my study area. Provincial soldiers were stationed permanently only at Däbrässina. In the post-liberation period, soldiers were frequently sent to Molalé in Mänz, Rabél in Gešé, and Karaqoré in Efrata to deal with security issues. The soldiers, however, were small in number and less equipped to handle the ubiquitous problem of banditry. They had neither adequate food nor clothing nor shelter. They lived in rental

⁵⁰NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29., File no.17.1.3.29.01., “A Letter from Däjjazmač Sebsebé Šebru General Governor of Šäwan Province to Däjjazmač Keflé Edegätu, Minister, Minister of Interior”, dated on *Tahesas* 29/1959E.C., Ref.no. 5230/759/40.; “A Minute about security Issues of Mänagäša *Awrajja* administration”, dated on *Tahesas* 9/1965E.C.; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29., File no.17.1.3.29.01., “A Letter from *Ras* Mesfin Seläši, General Governor of Šäwan province to Ato Gétahun Tässäma, Minister of Ministry of Interior”, dated on 20/4/65E.C., Ref.no. 0/2656/1080/3.; NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46. File No.17.1.3.46.01, “A Report about the Security Condition of *Mänz ena Yefat*”, dated on *Nähassé* 1937E.C. No Ref no.

⁵¹NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46. File No.17.1.3.46.01, “A Report about the Security Condition of *Mänz ena Yefat*”, dated on *Nähassé*1937E.C., No.Ref.

houses in a scattered manner. They also had transportation problems and hence they could not control bandits operating in areas far from the *wārāda* capitals.⁵² The problem was further aggravated by the aggressive culture of the highlanders particularly of Mänz in which individuals killed each other with minor personal conflicts mostly connected to land.⁵³ The *Awraja* governors repeatedly appealed to higher government bodies about the prevalence of lawlessness and insecurity in Mänz *ena* Yefat. They reported that the limited number of police forces assigned to each *wārāda* and the provincial force stationed at Däbrässina were not in a position to pacify the region. The bandits moved from one area to another and used the difficult topography of the region as a bulwark against security forces. Later on, starting from August 1943 the state was able to raise a new militia force called *Gäbbar Gäzi* or *Madäria* land holders and managed to contain the bandit problem.⁵⁴

In Yefat, the problem was more acute due the existence of age-old conflicts among ethnic groups over resources. The mobile nature of the pastoralists, on top of the difficult weather condition, hampered peacekeeping activities very seriously. Killings and looting took place at market places and along the road from Däbrässina to Aṭayé. Police seeking to pursue and investigate criminals faced challenges from each group (Amhara, Oromo and Afar) who provided protection to the criminals. *Däjjazmač* Mängäša Wossäné repeatedly reported to the higher officials, including the Emperor, that increasing crime in the region had this ethnic competition behind it. In one of his letters addressed to the Emperor, he stated that the Oromo in particular attacked and wounded four

⁵²NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46.; File No. 17.1.3.46.01, “A Report of Security Issues and Crises in Mänz *ena* Yefat”, No-date and Ref.

⁵³NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46. File No.17.1.3.46.01, “A Report about the Security Condition of Mänz *ena* Yefat *awraja*”, dated on *Nähassé* 1937E.C., No.Ref.; see also Levine, “On the History and...”,p.205.

⁵⁴NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46. File No.17.1.3.46.02, “A Letter From Šäwa *Awraja* Gezat to Minister of Interior about Security Issue in the Region”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 13/1936E.C., Ref No. U/133.; NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46. File No.17.1.3.46.01, “A Report about the Security Condition of Mänz *ena* Yefat”, dated on *Nähassé*1937E.C., No.Ref.

servants of the Crown Prince and other individuals on 22 July 1943. Immediately following the event, *afersata* was called among the Amhara and Oromo in Efrata and Gedem under the leadership of *Fitawurari* Abäbä Awuraris, *Meseläné* of the area and took place from 24 July to 10 August 1943. No one, however, was willing to hand over the criminals. They deliberately provided protection to criminals. The Ṭemuga Oromo, in particular resisted the imperial order and attacked local government agents.⁵⁵ Previously, during the occupation, they were inspired, organized, and armed by the Italians to undertake a punitive expedition against the Amhara in Gedem *ena* Efrata. Attacks and counter attacks continued in the post-liberation period. They also targeted passengers crossing the region and local government authorities. The *awrajja* governor made a series of efforts to bring about peace through discussion with community leaders and influential individuals but in vain.⁵⁶ What started as small scale conflicts tended to grow into group conflicts. The problem in the above mentioned area was aggravated by the incompetence of some of the local *meselänés*. Some of them left for Addis Abäba and some other areas, abandoning their regular duty in pursuit of personal affairs. The *meseläné* of Karaqoré, in particular, was unable to work hand in hand with security forces sent from the *awrajja*.⁵⁷

Local governors and inhabitants of Mafud *awrajja* repeatedly requested the intervention of the government. They demanded government authorities disarm the Oromo of Ṭemuga and permanently settle soldiers in and around areas suspected as points of infiltration.⁵⁸ In response, the Ministry of Interior took administrative measures step by step in collaboration with the

⁵⁵NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46. File No.17.1.3.46.02, “A Letter From *Däjjaczmač* Mängäša Wosäné, General Secretary of Däbrässena and Mänz *Wäräda* to Emperor Hailäselassé”, dated on *Nähassé* 8/1935E.C., No. Ref.

⁵⁶NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46. File No.17.1.3.46.02, “A Letter From *Däjjaczmač* Mängäša Wosäné, General Secretary of Däbrässena and Mänz *Wäräda* to Emperor Hailäselassé”, dated on *Nähassé* 25/1935E.C. No. Ref.

⁵⁷NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46. File No.17.1.3.46.01, “A Report about the Security Condition of Mänz and Yefat”, dated on *Nähassé* 1937E.C., No. Ref.

⁵⁸NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46. File No.17.1.3.46.02, “A Letter From *Däjjaczmač* Mängäša Wosäné, General Secretary of Däbrässena and Mänz *Wäräda* to Emperor Hailäselassé”, dated on *Nähassé* 25/1935E.C. No. Ref.

Ministry of Justice and local police forces. Among other things, it sought to work on identifying troublemakers in each group and punish individuals. On 23 August 1943 it issued a regulation that sought to facilitate the apprehension of criminals by establishing a system of collective punishment for entire groups of people in the event failure to hand over culprits. Accordingly, if a group (Amhara, Oromo or Afar) failed to hand over criminals from that group, all it would be subject to a penalty of 15,000 Birr to be paid to the government.⁵⁹ The regulation was implemented and groups were collectively punished several times. However, neither this approach nor a series of military interventions that were made since the early 1940s succeeded in ending inter-group conflicts in the region.⁶⁰

Land Tenure Insecurity and Environmental Degradation

Land tenure refers to rights and obligations supposedly attached to a piece of land but actually to people by virtue of their occupation or settlement of the lands. The rights and obligations could be either customary or legal or both. Land tenure systems affect the livelihood of people and regulate people's relationship with the natural environment and the state.⁶¹

In Ethiopia, land has been by far the most important source of livelihood for rural society.⁶² More than 85% of the population relied upon agriculture and therefore on land for survival.⁶³ Access

⁵⁹NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.46. File No.17.1.3.46.02, "A Letter From Minister of Interior to *Däjjazmač* Mängäša Wosāné, General Secretary of Däbrässa and Mānz *Wäräda*", Dated on *Nähassé*15/1935E.C. No. Ref.

⁶⁰Informants: *Amsaaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Mohammäd Hassän and *Ato* Germa Wondafraš.

⁶¹Peter Dörner and William C. Thiesenhusen, *Land Tenure and Deforestation: Interactions and Environmental Implications*(United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1992),pp.1 and 3.; Temesgen Gebeyehu, "Land Tenure, Land Reform and the Qalad System in Ethiopia, 1941-1974", in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol.46, No.6(2011),p.567.; see also Svein Ege, "Land Tenure Insecurity in Post-Certification Amhara, Ethiopia", in *Land Use Policy Research Gate*, 2017,p.1.

⁶²Allan Hoben, *Land Tenure Among the Amhara of Ethiopia: The Dynamics of Cognatic Descent*(Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1973,p.7.; Temesgen, "Land Tenure, Land Reform..."p.567.; Sandra Fullerto Joireman, *Property Rights and Political Development in Ethiopia and Eritea. 1941-1974*(Oxford; James Currey,2000),p.1.

⁶³Gizachew Abegaz, "Rural Land Use Issues and Policy:Overview", in Dessalegn Rahmato(ed.), *Land Tenure and Land Policy in Ethiopia After the Därg, Proceedings of the Second Workshop on the Land Tenure Projects*,Working

and control over land determined not only livelihood but also the social and political relationships among people.⁶⁴ Accordingly, the role of land tenure in shaping state-society and society-environment relationships was significant.⁶⁵

It is evident, in particular that a direct link exists between land tenure insecurity and environmental degradation.⁶⁶ According to Tekle Alemu, peasant rights to a piece of land would be robust if they included “exclusivity, transferability, inalienability and enforceability”. These are various elements encompassed within the general idea of tenure security. These are important not just in relation to investment on the land or its improvement, but also in relation to properly taking care of it. Indeed, other factors such as market access and infrastructure,⁶⁷ the economic status of the peasant, the availability of agricultural inputs and the nature of the landscape have a lot to do with producers’ decisions and commitment to improve the land.⁶⁸ Land tenure security not only affects investment on the land but also household’s access to credit. A poor peasant, who has insecure land rights, could not present his land as a guarantee to the lender.⁶⁹

Paper No.8(Addis Ababa University: Land Tenure Project, Institute of Development Research, 1994),p.21.; see also “የሰራው ሀዝብ ተስፋ”(The Hope of the Majority People), *Addis Zāmān*, Year 34th , No. 644(*Yäkatit* 18, 1967E.C.

⁶⁴Tekle Alemu, “Insecure Land Tenure Regimes and Soil Conservation”, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228824812>. Retrieved on September 2014,p.2.; Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of...*,p.74.

⁶⁵Dorner and Thiesenhusen, *Land Tenure and Deforestation*,p.3.

⁶⁶Daniel Kwabena Twerefou, Eric Osei-Assibey and Frank Agyire-Tettey, “Land Tenure Security, Investments and the Environment in Ghana”, *Journal of Development and Agricultural Economics*, Vol. 3, no.6 (2011), pp. 261-262. See also Anantha K. Duraiappah, Gerishon Ikiara, Mutsembi Manundu, Wilfred Nyangina and Rueben Senange, *Land Tenure, Land Use, Environmental Degradation and Conflict Resolution A PASIR Analysis for Narok District, Kenya*, Working Paper no.33.(Amsterdam, Institute for Environmental Studies, 2000),p.1.; Leslie C. Gray and William G. Moseley, “ A Geographical Perspective on Poverty-Environment Interactions” in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 171, No. 1(2005), p. 12.

⁶⁷Tekie, “Insecure Land Tenure...”,p.3.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*,p.1; see also Habtemariam Kassa etal “Reading the Landscape...”, p. 465.; James McCann, *Plows, Oxen, and Household Managers: A Reconsideration of the Land Paradigm and Production Equation in Northeast Ethiopia Working Papers No. 95*(Boston University, African Studies Center, NY),pp.9-10.; Joireman, *Property Rights and....*,pp.5-8.

⁶⁹Gershon Feder and Tongroj Onchan, “Land Ownership Security and Farm Investment in Thailand”, in *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Vol. 69.No.2 (1987),p.311.

In what follows below, I will first provide an overview of the landholding system in my study area prior to the Revolution of 1974 and then show how land tenure insecurity affected the livelihood of the peasant and the well-being of the natural environment. For easy understanding, I will discuss two major sources of peasant land insecurity. The first has to do with the land tenure system itself (i.e. insecurities that were inherent in the system); the second has to do with and the conflicting and at times contradictory interventions by the state and its agents regarding land.

In northern Ethiopia, the land tenure system that evolved over the generations was complex in nature. Its specific features varied from place to place. This diversity had something to do with the existence of semi-independent entities, entities within which powerful elites sought to devise or develop their own local arrangements of control and exploitation of land as well as labor.⁷⁰

Despite these local dynamics and forms, the major building blocks of land tenure system in the northern half of the country were tenure forms known as *rist* and *gult*. The former referred to land use right acquired by kinship while *gult* was a right to collect tribute from the peasants on the land. Holders of *gult* right (*Balägult*, *Gult-Gäži* or *Gultšum*) collected tribute from the *rist* holders (*ristäñas*) in their domain. A *gult* holder would use part of the revenue collected for local administration and related purposes and hand over the remainder to the state. In this sense, *ristäñas* were tributary of the *balägult/gultšum*. The *gultäña* might obtain his *gult* rights only temporarily or in perpetuity, in which case the tenure would become *ristä-gult*. Generally, the *rist* holder had a full right to use the land independent of the *gultšum*. He/she would only be obliged to pay tribute to the *gult* holder in his/her name or in the name of the head of the descent group. The *gultšum* would not have a right to interfere with land rights of *rist* holders. In other words, *rist* and

⁷⁰Haile Menkerios, "The Present System of Land Tenure in Ethiopia: An Introduction", in *Challenge*, Vol.X. No.II(1970),p.4.

gult rights existed as rights in a piece of land held by the producer and tax collector simultaneously.⁷¹

The *rist* system is sometimes described as "communal ownership" of land. In my study area, however, each member of the descent group held land privately. *Rist*, therefore, referred to the "legitimate claim to a piece of land" vis-a-vis other members of a descent group. Of course, there were lands, particularly grazing lands that were held and administered collectively by the descent group. *Rist* land is also said to have been not saleable or transferrable to outsiders, but in practice there was a lot of exchange going on. Informally, *rist* holders mortgaged land for cash or in exchange for some other material. This is a practice among members of the same descent group called *wolläd-aged*. As per the agreement, the lender would have the right to use the land freely as far as and until the borrowed money is paid back. There was no written law that prohibited such practices.⁷²

As stated above, the other collective element in the *rist* system is that, every member of a descent group could claim a share of the land by tracing his/her relationship with the founding father or first holder (*Aqeñi-abat* or *wanna-abat*) through both his father's and mother's side. A member of the descent group can theoretically claim land in all areas where he/she could trace and claim genealogical connections. Presenting evidence of kinship ties with the founding father was the only precondition for claiming land.⁷³ The problem often was that of authenticating the kinship of the claimant with the founding father. The frequent movements and the associated admixture of

⁷¹Hoben, *Land Tenure Among...*, pp.5-8.; Pausewang, *Peasants, land...*, pp. 23-24, 48.

⁷²Svein Ege, "Land Sales and Similar Practices: Yefat 1974-1983" in Harold Marcus et al(eds.), *Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.II(the Red Sea Press, 1994),p.287.; see also McCann, *Plows, Oxen, and...*, pp.8-9.

⁷³Merid Wodearegay, " Land Tenure and Agricultural Productivity" *A Paper Prepared for the Third Annual Seminar of the Department of History*(Bahrdar, 1985),p.11.

people made this very difficult and complicated. As a result, in most cases, linkage to the founding father was asserted and claimed, sometime even invented, and accepted by current *rist* holders only after protracted litigation.⁷⁴

The *aqeñi-abat* was the original holder of the right to the land. He would divide the land among his children and the children did the same among their off springs. With this, many sub-descent groups emerged. Each family in a descent group would have a leader, often the oldest male, called *aläqa*, who would represent the family for legal and tax purposes. The *aläqa* would also preside over the allocation of land among his siblings and determine what amounts or portions of it should be kept in reserve for common use. Generally, no one could occupy and build houses on any part of the land without the knowledge and consent of the *aläqa*. The *aläqa* was autonomous and free from external intervention. For his services, he would be allowed two shares of land: one from the highlands and the other from the lowlands. The other members of the family were entitled to equal rights and privileges.

In all *rist* landholding areas of the country, every peasant farmer is believed to be holding or at least entitled to a piece of *rist* land. There were no tenants or landlords as is generally the case in the southern part of the country. In fact, here the word tenancy had a slightly different meaning and context. In Mänz, for instance, *çesäña* (tenant) referred to a peasant who occupied, lived and worked on the land of others. A person who cultivated the land of others under some kind of agreement was known as *tägaži* (hired hand). On the other hand, a person who lived on the land and house of others was called *açiaš*.⁷⁵ So tenancy here meant share cropping and a tenant was a

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵Gebrenewot Woldehawariat (*Fitawurari*), *ክራዳ*(1990E.C.),pp.10-12. Having *rist* land not only denotes one's legitimacy to the land, it is also determines one's social status and recognition among the community. For more refer, Pausewang, *Peasants, Land....*,p.21.

peasant farmer who either faced a shortage of land or did not have land at all for which reason he would enter into an agreement with a land holder to cultivate the land in return for a share of the harvest.⁷⁶

Theoretically, *rist* land was not subject to confiscation or alienation except in connection with crime, *geber-tal* (failure to pay regular tax) or abandonment.⁷⁷ In more recent times, the imperial state had established increasingly strict legal grounds for the confiscation of *rist* land. The most important landmarks in this process were the edicts of October 1928 and September 1930, and the Constitution of 1931.⁷⁸ According to Merid:

...the *rist* system...gave some vague feeling of security, a feeling that no matter how much he was exploited, no one could alienate his lands from his lineage group. Warriors could plunder his grain, burn his house and even molest him and his family, but they would not take the land from him. In addition, because the *rist* system created the need for inventing a founding father the peasant had the feeling of belongingness, in fact even belonging to some obscure...local lord. Throughout their war torn existence, peasants had at least the comfort that their rulers and exploiters did not have. For the most, insecure members of Ethiopian society were those classes that made the ruling establishment.⁷⁹

Strictly speaking, however, holders of *rist* land can not be said to have had exclusive rights over the land they held. They had only use rights and could not sell or transfer land to outsiders.⁸⁰ This was because, as Merid argues, the "owners" of the land were not only the ones who tilled the land but all members of the descent group of different generations including the dead and the unborn.⁸¹ Even if individuals left their parish and moved to other areas permanently, they or their

⁷⁶Haile, "The Present System of Land...,p.12.

⁷⁷McCann, "Household Economy,p.14.

⁷⁸Bahru, "Economic Origins of...",pp.12-14.

⁷⁹Merid, "Land Tenure and...,pp.16-17.

⁸⁰Bahru, "Economic origins of ...", p.12. ; see also Fred Halliday and MaxinMolyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (London: Verso, 1981),p.63.

⁸¹Merid, " Land Tenure and...,pp.10-11.

descendants would still have the right to reclaim the land at any time. That was why there was an established tradition in Mänz to the effect that “የመንዝ ርስት በሺ ዓመቱ ለባለቤቱ”.⁸² (trans: *Rist* in Mänz would restore to the rightful person [even] after a thousand years). Although a person may belong to many descent groups simultaneously,⁸³ the assertion of a right was restricted to the person's place of birth and area of upbringing. This was because it was cost effective for the claimant to legitimize and stabilize his/her claim by making effective use of his/her social connections.⁸⁴

One obvious outcome of a system of partible inheritance under the *rist* regime was land fragmentation, made worse by population growth due to the improvement of health facilities and the associated decline of the death rate. Thus, the size of individual holdings diminished progressively with the rise of new claimants and individuals who established new families. In many places, the division and re-division of land was made every seven years to accommodate new claimants.⁸⁵

The shrinking of land coupled with over cultivation inevitably led to decline in productivity and the impoverishment of the natural environment. It became an obstacle to any kind of economy of

⁸²Levine, “On the History and...”,p.205.; *Wax and Gold*, p. 38.

⁸³Hoben, *Land Tenure Among...*,p.15. Unlike other kinship group in Africa in *rist* land holding region of Ethiopia, the bond of relationship among members of the descent group was strong. There were also strong social-cultural institutions or practices that consolidated the interaction and mutual support. For more refer the same book, pp.15-16.

⁸⁴*Ibid...*,p.15.; Land Holding and Administration Minister, “የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት...(Ethiopian Land Tenure System...),pp.2-3.

⁸⁵Landholding Department, *የመሬት ይዞታ በሀብረተሰባዊ ኢትዮጵያ*(Land Holding During the Military Regime)(Addis Ababa, 1967E.C.),pp. 45-46.; Landholding and Development Department, “የሰሜን ኢትዮጵያ ክፍለ ሀገሮች ስራት ሰሚናር”(A Seminar on Land Tenure of Provinces in Northern Ethiopia)(Addis Ababa, 1967E.C.), pp.3-4.; see also Gebrehewot, *Arada ...*,pp.10-11.; Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of...*, p.80.

scale like large-scale agriculture.⁸⁶ It also negatively affected conservation and rehabilitation of the natural environment. This was not only because as the size of the land held by individuals was small, but also because people obtained lands in dispersed locations, often in different *qäbällés* or parishes. So in such a situation, it would become difficult for the peasant to cultivate all the lands that he holds. He would visit his land only rarely, often not more than two times a year, one at the time of plowing and the other for harvesting. The scattered and distant location inhibited proper management and conservation of the land. Under this condition, holders would often prefer to lease the lands to others and in turn rent land belonging to another peasant farmer nearby under some kind of agreement, mostly on a share-cropping basis. People who thus rented land on both sides showed little interest and effort to protect and improve the quality of the land for long term use. There is also lack of security that contributes to lack of incentive.⁸⁷

By its very nature, *rist* tenure thus discouraged the *ristäñä* from engaging in long term investment in his land or improving the quality of his land. Any claimant would have the right to a share of the land of the descent group at any time. The *ristäñä* did not know when the new claimant would come and share his land. As a result, he was reluctant to develop and protect the land that he tilled, particularly long-term investments like planting trees, digging canals and building terraces would

⁸⁶Dessalegn Rahmato, “Land Policy in Ethiopia at the Crossroad” in Dessalegn Rahmato(ed.), *Land Tenure and Land Policy After the Därg, Proceedings of the Second Workshop of the Land Tenure Project, Working Papers on Ethiopian Developmen, No.8*(Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, Institute of Development Research,1994),p.9.; Haile , “The Present System of Land...,p.21.;World Bank, *Ethiopia: A Development Challenge* (WashingtonDC, 1985),pp. 20-28.;Temesgen, “Land Tenure, Land...”p.574.; Fassil Gebre Kiros, *Enough with Famines in Ethiopia: A Clarion Call*(Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press, 2005),pp.187-188.; Landholding Department, *የመሬት ይዞታ በህብረተሰባዊ ኢትዮጵያ*(Land Holding During the Military Regime)(Addis Ababa, 1967E.C.),pp. 45-46.; Landholding and Development Department, “የሰሜን ኢትዮጵያ ክፍለ ሀገሮች ስራት ሰሚናር”(A Semanar on Land Tenure of Provinces in Northern Ethiopia)(Addis Ababa, 1967E.C.), pp.3-4.

⁸⁷Landholding Department, *የመሬት ይዞታ በህብረተሰባዊ ...*(Land Holding During the Military ...),pp. 45-46.; Landholding and Development Department, “የሰሜን ኢትዮጵያ ክፍለ ሀገሮች...”(A Semanar on Land Tenure of Provinces in...), pp.3-4.see also Dessalegn, “Land Policy in...,pp.9-10. Indeed, the peasant farmer to some extent, as Dessalegn argues, took the fragmentation of the land as an advantage to adjust him to changing climatic conditions by cultivating different crops.

not be worthwhile. This was because whenever a new claimant appeared, the *ristāña* was expected to share the land, including resources on the land like trees, fruits and vegetables. No compensation was made for the extra efforts made on the land.⁸⁸

That was why tree planting was very limited and often confined to settlement areas or along major roads or highways. The amount or rate of planting did not even meet the high demand for wood. The incompatibility of demand and supply of wood further created environmental stress.⁸⁹ Land tenure insecurity, however, was not the only factor that affected the household's decision not to plant trees. There were other factors such as the presence or absence of transport infrastructure and market accessibility and availability of inputs, and so on.⁹⁰ Scholars such as Tekie Alemu emphasize the economic or input limitations of the peasant. They argue, among other things that it was difficult for poor peasants to improve the quality of their lands mainly because they lacked money. They can only try a few and limited improvements every now and then by putting in this or that input or effort.⁹¹ Despite the creation of institutions such as Agricultural Bank of Ethiopia, dedicated to the transformation of the sector, the small holder peasant was not able to benefit from loan services in part because he could not present his land as collateral, again due to lack of tenure security. Thus the only source of loan available to him would be private individuals who would demand high interests. Borrowing from such sources encouraged short term investments to raise productivity towards paying off the debt. It would be unlikely for a poor peasant farmer to involve

⁸⁸Habtemariam Kassa and etal, "Reading the Landscape...., p. 466.; R. Lal, "Soil Erosion and Conservation in West Africa" in David Pimentel(ed.), *World Soil Erosion and Conservation*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993),p.11. ; Informants: Ato Gäbrähewot Gezačäw, Ato Däbäbä Gäbrähiwotand Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh.

⁸⁹Gizachew, "Rural Land Use Issues....,p.27. A study in West Africa revealed that nature conservation practices were relatively better in areas where there were private ownership of land than communal ownership. For more see Lal, "Soil Erosion and....,p.11.

⁹⁰Gizachew, "Rural Land Use....,p.27.; Informants: Ato Gäbrähiwot Gezačäw, Ato Däbäbä Gäbrähiwotand Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh.

⁹¹Tekie, "Insecure Land Tenure....,p.1.

in long term investments on the land where he was not sure to enjoy the fruits of his efforts for an extended period of time. Thus, the tendency to think in terms of short-term investments like adding manure, not in terms of improving or protecting the land for long.⁹²

Lack of investment and conservation meant gradual decline of productivity and vegetation cover. To cope with the increasing demand of the family, the peasant would be forced to over-exploit his plot and even bring slop and marginal lands under cultivation. This, in turn, would enhance erosion and leaching and general impoverishment of the soil and subsequently to greater vulnerability to ecological crisis, perpetual malnutrition and occasionally famine.⁹³

Land Litigation

Both written and oral sources indicate that the frequent claims and counter claims on land ended up with prolonged litigation and conflict.⁹⁴ Reports show that in the *rist* regions of Central and Northern Ethiopia, more than 45% of court cases were arose from land-related disputes. It was not uncommon to see a series of claims made on the same piece of land and engage the holders in litigation with a variety of people, both close relatives and other who may not be even distant relatives.⁹⁵ Court proceedings were often prolonged affairs running into several months or more. This was partly due to the difficulty to get evidence for checking and counter-checking the

⁹²Informants: Ato Mulugéta Tadässä, Ato Tadässä Gašabäzaw, Ato Tägé Woldämädhen, Ato Keflé Yetagäsu, Ato Şegé Mamo and Ato Şefäraw Ešäté.

⁹³ Girma, *The State and Development...*, pp.71-72.

⁹⁴Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of ...*, p.80. see also Temesgen, “Land Tenure, Land Reform...”, p.574.; Ege, “Land Tenure Insecurity in Post-certification...”, pp.1-2.

⁹⁵Landholding Department, *የመሬት ይዞታ በህብረተሰባዊ...* (Land Holding During the Military...), pp. 45-46, 51.; see also Ayele Behailu and Tahit Hussain, “Role of Rural Land Registration and Certification in Reducing Border Disputes: A Case Study of Mänz Geramedir District in Amhara State of Ethiopia”, *International Journal in Management and Social Sciences*, Vol. III, No.III(2015), p.59. Joireman, *Property Rights and...*, pp.107-112.

legitimacy of an individual's claim. Mainly, however, it was because litigants would do everything to make the outcome in their favor, including by influencing judges.⁹⁶

In those cases where the contestants were elites and ordinary peasants, the result, in most cases, was disappointing for the latter. Court decisions often favored the former, which might lead to the eviction of the peasant.⁹⁷ At times, the *balabats* compelled the peasant farmer to bequeath his land to the powerful. If the peasant farmers were unwilling, the *balabat* would push the boundary or cultivate the land forcefully. Fearing the power of the elite, and the limited probability of winning in court, poor peasants would prefer to "bequeath" at least part of the land to the former.⁹⁸

In my study area, it appears that there were additional factors that further complicated land related conflicts. One of them is the predominantly assertive and overly "masculine" traits in the culture of the people of the area. This appears to have lent a rather high-pitch and relentlessness of the conflicts, often leading to violence. Levin, who studied the socio-cultural history and traditions of the people of Mänz in depth, argues that an Amhara in general and the Mänzian in particular, had strong attachments to "the land of their fathers". He says that he would rather die for his father's land than relinquish control. Transferring or losing one's land to outsiders was a shame and entailed social stigma. Thus, by any standard, a Mänzé would not negotiate over his *rist* land.⁹⁹ It

⁹⁶Hoben, *Land Tenure Among...*, pp.11-12. See also Landholding Department, *የመሬት ይዞታ በህብረተሰባዊ* (Land Holding During the Military...), pp. 45-46, 51); Joireman, *Property Rights and...*, pp.107-112.; Informants: Ato Mulugéta Tadässä, Ato Tadässä Gašabāzaw, Ato Tägé Woldämädhen, Ato Keflé Yetagäsu, Ato Šegé Mamo and Ato Šefāraw Ešäté. Prolonged court litigation wasted much of the resources and time of the individuals in dispute. They travelled long distance on foot and stayed in towns for long to follow up the case that became an additional burden to the poor. For more refer Temesgen, "Land Tenure, Land...", p.571.

⁹⁷Land Holding and Administration Minister, "የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት..." (Ethiopian Land Tenure System...)(*Tekemet* 15. 1967E.C.), p.12., unpublished; see also Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of...*, p.15.

⁹⁸Land Holding and Administration Minister, "የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት ..." (Ethiopian Land Tenure...), p.12.

⁹⁹Levin, Wax and Gold..., pp.38-39.; Landholding and Development Department, "የሰሜን ኢትዮጵያ ክፍለ ሀገሮች ስራት..." (A Seminar on Land Tenure of Provinces in...) (Addis Ababa, 1967E.C.), pp.3-4, unpublished; see also Simon D. Messing, "The Highland Plateau of Amhara of Ethiopia" (PhD. Dissertation in Anthropology, University of Pennyslulvania, 1957), pp. 242-243.

is only elderly people, and those individuals who were not in a position to cultivate the land due to lack of capital and labor who would transfer the land to the elite who, in turn, were expected to provide them with security and protection.¹⁰⁰

The question of land tenure insecurity was not the feature of the imperial period only. It also continued during the post-imperial times in different ways. In general, even though the 1975 Revolution abolished landlordism and brought about a relatively fair distribution of land, it did not solve the question of security for the peasants. This was mainly for two reasons. First, it prohibited private ownership of any kind, making land public property under state control. As in earlier times, the peasant would have only use rights over the land. He could not transfer it to another individual by way of sale, lease, or mortgage. Practically, the state was the real owner of land.¹⁰¹ The military regime abolished all claims and counterclaims on land based on descent in *rist* areas of central and northern Ethiopia. While on the one hand this ensured some kind of security for the poor peasant, on the other hand the proclamation created another source of insecurity¹⁰², i.e. ruling out any kind of ownership right, be that at the level of individuals or putative groups.

¹⁰⁰Informants: *Ato* Mulugéta Tadässä, *Ato* Tadässä Gašabäzaw, *Ato* Tägé Woldämädhen, *Ato* Keflé Yetagäsu, *Ato* Šegé Mamo and *Ato* Šefäraw Ešäté.

¹⁰¹Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", pp.40-41.; Dessalegn, "Land Policy in Ethiopia...", pp.4 and 11.; Taddesse, "Agricultural and Riral...", pp.80-82.

¹⁰²Landholding and Administration, "የሰሜን ኢትዮጵያ ክፍለ ሀገሮች ስሪት..." (A Seminar on Land Tenure of Provinces in...), p.7.

Dessalegn distinguishes between the achievements and drawbacks of the Revolution on land tenure as follows:

...it [the 1975 Ethiopian Land Reform] failed where it succeeded. It transformed rural Ethiopia into a society of self-laboring peasants. [Yet], to promote social equity, it undermined peasants' confidence. It redefined the land system in a radical way, but in doing so made insecurity of holding an enduring element. It replaced the landlord with the state, providing the latter with direct and unencumbered access to the peasantry. It politicized land because access to it became increasingly dependent on a host of factors, including peasants' relation with the state –manipulated PAs [Peasant Associations], [and forced] compliance with government directives and the provision of *corvee* labor by peasants to the 'socialist' sector of agriculture which was actively promoted in the 1980s.¹⁰³

The unlimited intervention of the state in land matters, coupled with denial of private ownership of land, undermined peasant commitment and decision making to improve the quality of the land. Secondly, the periodic redistribution of land to bring new claimants into the system or balance the distribution of holdings, led to reshuffling of holdings. After dividing the land, pieces of land were distributed by lot. There was always a chance losing one's previous holding and get assigned to another area far from one's residence. The distant and fragmented location, in turn, undermined conservation activities.¹⁰⁴ Third, the fact that the state had the ultimate authority over the distribution of land meant that its local agents had the power to displace peasants and hand over land to the projects and undertakings of the state such as collectivization, resettlement and villagization.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", pp.40-41.

¹⁰⁴Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", pp.38-39.; see also Dessalegn, "Land Policy in Ethiopia...",pp.2-4.,11; Gizachew, "Rural Land Use Issues...",p.23.; Yaraswok Admassie, *Twenty Years to Nowhere: Property Rights, Land management and Conservation in Ethiopia*(Lawrenceville: The RedSea Press, 2000),p.210.; Pausewang, *Peasants, Land...*,p.116.

¹⁰⁵Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", pp.38-39.

Taddesse Berisso elaborates the impact of enhanced state intervention on land tenure and therefore on rural society as follows:

Insecurity of tenure was compounded by the government coercion of smallholders to join collective farms and forfeit their holdings to them. So too, the resettlement and villagization campaigns, as well as the gradual expansion of state farm land, make small holders further aware that their relationship to farmstead and land was neither fixed nor secure.¹⁰⁶

Inconsistent and Contradictory Land Policies (Land Grant and Land Measurement)

Another source of peasant insecurity was government land policy that manifested itself in the form of land grants and land measurement and registration (commonly called the *qäläd* system).¹⁰⁷

Below I try to discuss these aspects of imperial land policy with a focus on their impact or consequence for peasant condition and the environment.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Imperial government issued a series of land grant proclamation coming in quick succession. They were issued in 1942, 1944, 1952 and 1958. The proclamations announced land grants to people whom the nation was "indebted to" (the *baläwuläta*), consisting of patriots and exiles during the occupation; to soldiers and government workers. Land was to be given out from government land reserves particularly in the lowlands (grazing, bush and forested lands).¹⁰⁸ The amount of land given to each soldier varied with the position, performance and length of service of individuals concerned. A high military commander got up to 30 *gašas* of land while the ordinary soldier obtained from one to three *gašas*.¹⁰⁹ In this way, in Yefat, a huge amount

¹⁰⁶Taddesse Berisso, "Agricultural and Rural Development Policies in Ethiopia: A Case Study of Villagization Among the Gujji Oromo of Jam Jam Awrajja" (PhD. Dissertation in Anthropology, Michigan State University, 1995), p.82.

¹⁰⁷John Clarke, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation: Ethiopians Campaign Against Famine* (London: Harney and Jones Ltd, NY), pp.8-9.; Informants: *Amsaleqa* Mekonene Zewde, *Ato* Mohammed Hassen and *Ato* Girma Wondafrash.

¹⁰⁸Tekalegn, "A City and Its Hinterlands...", pp, 239-241, see also Shiferaw Bekele, "The Evolution of Land Tenure in The Imperial Era", in Shiferaw bekele(ed.), *An Economic History of Ethiopia: The Imperial Era, 1941-1974*, Vol.I(Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995), p.12.; John Cohen, "Ethiopia After Haileselassie: the Government land Factor", *African Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 289(1973), pp.376-377.; Wagaw, *Beta-rist...*, pp. 325-330.

¹⁰⁹Mahtemaselassie Woldemesqel, "The Land System in Ethiopia" in *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol,5,No.5(1957), p.285.

of *madäria* land from Jäwuha to Çäffa valley was given to favored individuals. This was land occupied by pastoralists. The beneficiaries converted the land into cultivation. They gradually expanded their holdings to the adjacent pastoralists' grazing land claiming that it was state land. Since pastoralists used to pay cattle tax, but not land tax, the state had implicitly assumed that it was the owner of such land.¹¹⁰

The irony here was that *madäria* land holders were not owners of the land in the strict sense. They had only use right for the service rendered. The land was subject to alienation at times of crime and termination of service. Moreover, these individuals had no permanent residences on their holdings. They moved from place to place to provide military service as per the call of the government. That was why such type of land was called *Yämätkeya ena Yämänkäya märét* (a land to be given and alienated). The beneficiaries were expected to pay *asrat*, education and health taxes and provided military service in place of land tax.¹¹¹ Even after the imperial order of November 2 of 1952 that allowed converting one-third of *madäria* land to *rist* holding, users did not feel secure. This was because the remaining two-thirds of the land was still at the disposal of the state despite the fact that it had been in the hands of the grantees for quite some time and some of it might have already been passed to heirs. It was by no means clear for how long tenure will continue on the remainder. The state of insecurity, in turn, made *madäria* land holders to be reluctant to engage in long term farm investments to improve and conserve the land. The frustration of *madäria* land holders increased when the state attempted to register *madäria* land since the early 1950s. The intention was to bring these lands into the system of taxation. But *madäria* landholders

¹¹⁰WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48; “የወሎ፣ የትግራይ፣ የቦሌምድር እና...” (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Begemidir and...) , dated on 28/7/1956 E.C., p.1. ; See also John M. Cohen and Peter H. Koehn, *Rural and Urban Land Reform in Ethiopia* (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1978), p.7. The revised constitution of Emperor Haileselassie of 1955 declared grazing land as state land.

¹¹¹Mahtemaselassie, “The Land System in...”, p.285.

resisted the move strongly. Those individuals whose tenure goes back to the pre-Italian period claimed that it was their *rist* land, having been passed down to them from their fathers. The claim and counter claim became a serious challenge for the proper administration of land and taxes on the side of the state. Needless to say, it also negatively affected peasants' determination and commitment to conserve the land.¹¹²

The state also incorporated pastoralists' grazing and open lands in mechanized farms that it established or granted to other large companies. In my study area, mechanized farms were established in different parts of Yefat, particularly since the late 1940s. Among large scale state owned mechanized farms were Šäwarobit National Prison farm,¹¹³ Šäwarobit National Tobacco Monopoly (the former Šäwarobit Tobacco Agricultural Development Center),¹¹⁴ and Čäffarobit Mechanized Farm.¹¹⁵ These farms expanded their holdings incorporating adjacent grazing and forested lands as well as lands that were still in occupation by subsistence farmers; it thus created some kind of land insecurity to surrounding people.¹¹⁶

Šäwarobit National Prison farm was established in 1955 and started work on 20 *gašas* of land displacing a large number of households. The objective was to train prisoners in modern agriculture. But the peasants who lost their land were not given land to substitute for their loss. For this reason, they considered the farm as well as local state officials as threats to their livelihood.

¹¹²WTMRC, Folder no. 8736/288. File no.8736, "A Letter from Ministry of Fenance to Šäwan Province *Bäjerond* Branch Office", dated on *Yäkatit* 19, 1946E.C., Ref.no. 2659/፳፱/7/46.; WTMRC, Folder no. 8736/288. File no.8736, "A Letter from Šäwan Province *Bäjerond* Branch Office to Ministry of Fenance to",dated on *Hedar* 27, 1946E.C., Ref.no. 2786/U//46.

¹¹³WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48 "የወለግ፣ የጎግራይ፣ የበጌምድር እና..." (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Begemedir and...), dated on 28/7/1956E.C.,p.1.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*,p.3.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*,pp.4-6.

¹¹⁶Informants: *Amsaaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Mohammäd Hassän and *Ato* Germa Wondafraš .; see also John Clarke, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation: Ethiopians Campaign Against Famine* (London: Harney and Jones Ltd, NY),pp.8-9.

Only some peasants from distant areas could be said to have benefitted from the farm because they were able to buy selected seeds and rent tractors for the price of 25 to 30 Ethiopian Birr per hectare. The displacement of peasants continued as the farm expanded its holding incorporating forests and private holdings over time.¹¹⁷ In the late 1960s, the size of the farm grew to 40 *gašas*. The forests in the uplands were protected only because the land was not conducive for cultivation.¹¹⁸ The farm continued to expand and by 1978/79, it covered 400 hectares of land.¹¹⁹

Similarly, Šāwarobit National Tobacco Monopoly began its work on one *gaša* of land in 1955/56. Side by side with its farming activities, it distributed tobacco seedlings to the surrounding communities and brought a variety of products from them.¹²⁰ The farm expanded to Jāwuha and Aṭayé encroaching upon adjacent private holdings and pastoral lands. This caused displacement and frequent conflict with local peasants and pastoralists.¹²¹

The displacement of the peasants and pastoralists, however, was more serious with the establishment of Čäffarobit mechanized farming enterprise by an Italian company in 1952/53. The company began its work by clearing and cultivating 107 *gašas* of land. It gradually expanded its holdings by at least ten *gašas* of land annually. Parallel with this, it cultivated 208 hectares (roughly

¹¹⁷WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48; “የወሎ፣ የትግራይ፣ የቦንጎምድር እና...” (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Bägémedir and...), dated on 28/7/1956E.C., pp.1-3.

¹¹⁸NALA, Folder no.62.1.14., File no. 62.1.14.01., “A Note about Šāwarobit National Prison Agricultural center addressed to Emperor Hailäselassé” by Engineer Dujuro Regan, dated on 6/3/53E.C., pp.1-4. See also “በርቢት የሚገኙ እስረኞች 40 ጋሻ መሬት በማልማት ላይ ናቸው” (Robit Prisoners’ Are Working to Cultivate 40 *Gaša* Land), *Addis Zāmān*, Year, 24th, No. 255(*Tekemet* 17, 1957E.C.).

¹¹⁹“የርቢት ወህኒ ቤት የእርሻ ልማት ጥሩ ውጤት ማስመዝገብ ተገለጠ” (Robit’s Prison Prisoners Brought Good Result in Development), *Addis Zāmān*, Year 38th, No. 40(*Tekemet* 19, 1972E.C.).

¹²⁰Efrata Gedem Wārāda Administrative Office Archive(EGWAOA), No Folder no. File no. 17.08.83, “A Letter from Ato Näga Abäbä, head of Robit Tobacco Farming Development to Yefat *ena Temuga awurajs* administrative office”, dated on 09/06/1981E.C., Ref.no. 1/4/2289/81.

¹²¹WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48; “የወሎ፣ የትግራይ፣ የቦንጎምድር እና...” (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Bägémedir and...), dated on 28/7/1956E.C., p.3.; EGWAOA, No Folder no. File no. 17.08.03, “A Letter from Yefat *ena Temuga* Administrator to Šāwan Province Land and People Settlement Office”, dated on *Ter* 17, 1968E.C., Ref.no. 430/623/68.

about 5 *gašas*) of land by entering into contract with local *rist*-holders. There were also absentee landowners who had huge farms in and around Čäffarobit. The Crown Prince, Asfawwosän Hailäselassé, for instance, operated a farm on 10 *gaša* of land. The company and the local *balabats* not only threatened the livelihood of the local community but also affected the natural environment by clearing and burning woodlands and bush for farming activities.¹²² Of course one cannot deny the positive contribution of these organizations in transferring knowledge, providing technical, material and financial support, and introducing new varieties of crops.¹²³

The expansion of agriculture into the lowlands ended up not only in the shrinking of forest and grazing lands, but also altered the mode of life of the pastoralists. It forced them to confine their grazing to increasingly narrowing space thus leading to the degradation of the land.¹²⁴ Younger pastoralists seeking to establish new families were constrained by the shortage of grazing land and water bodies. They often had only two options: one was to settle and adapt to partly agricultural way of life. The other was to move to other areas where there was adequate pasture and water for their animals. Some of them moved further to the hot lowlands both within and outside of the province. Wherever they went, they would set fire to clear bushes and forested areas to get the growth of new grasses for their cattle as well as kill or chase away dangerous insects and wild animals.¹²⁵

¹²²WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48; “የወሎ ፤ የትግራይ ፤ የበጌምድር አካል..” (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Begemedir and...), dated on 28/7/1956E.C., pp.4-6. Parallel with their negative impacts on the local society and environment, all of the farming centers had also huge positive contribution to the economic development of local society by providing technical, material and sometime financial support. They delivered training, improved seed, pesticides, fertilizer and tractor rent with moderate price.

¹²³ “የሮቢት ከተማ ዘመናዊነት” (The Modernity of Robit Town), *Addis Zämän*, Year 28, No. 137(*ፕረሜት* 7, 1961E.C.

¹²⁴Informants: *Amsaaläqa* Mäkonen Zewudé, *Ato* Mohammäd Hassän and *Ato* Germa Wondafraš.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

As much due to its improper implementation as from its intention, the *qälad* system also brought about increased insecurity on peasant farmers as well as pastoralists. The primary objective of the program was to standardize taxation on the basis of the size and quality of the land. It also aimed at bringing back extra lands into the state domain thereby maximizing its sources of revenue by land sale and other mechanisms.¹²⁶

Sources indicate that the pastoralists in Yefat, on which the *qälad* system focused, formerly used the land they occupied for grazing, paying tribute in cattle and butter. Since the late 1940s, they began to pay taxes in cash subsequent to the tax reforms made by the central government. Previously, pastoralist land was administered by tribal leaders, and there was no *gult*, *siso* or *mälkäña* lands in the area until the introduction of the *qälad* system. However, as soon as the *qälad* system was introduced in the late 1940s and 1950s, tribal leaders attempted to introduce *gult*, *siso* and *mälkäña* tenures in negotiation with local government agents and experts. In the process, they alienated fertile land from the poor, kept a portion of it for themselves and distributed the rest among their favorites.¹²⁷

It was apparent that internal and external forces made the implementation of the *qälad* system not to achieve the expected outcomes. From the very beginning, the criteria provided priority to the local *balabats* and agents of absentee lords. It allowed *siso* for the *balabats*, one *gaša* of land for

¹²⁶Temesgen, "Land Tenure, Land....", pp.569-570.; McCann, "Household Economy...", pp.2-3.; McCann, "A Great Agrarian...", pp.412-14. A *qälad*, is a rope made of hide. It used as a traditional measuring unit of land in the long history of Ethiopia. The rope has 133cubit, 66m and 75cm long. The arm size of a certain man called Baimot was said have been used as a unit of reference. Based on the the fertility of the land, the land of the country was divided into three group, namely: *läm* (cultivated), *läm-ṭäf* (semi-cultivated) and *ṭäf* (uncultivated). For more refer Gebrewold Engidawork, "Ethiopia's Traditional System of land Tenure and Taxation" translated into English by Mengesha Gessesse, in *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol. V, No. IV(1962),p.133.

¹²⁷WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/h338, File no. 9066, "Jillé-Ṭemuga People Complain Addressed to Emperor Hailäselassé" dated on 15/2/7E.C. Until the mid 1960s, the individuals involved in land measurement included *mälkäña*, *Çeqašum*, representative from the Ministry of Fenance (expert) and three elders recruited from the local society. For more refer Gebrewold, "Ethiopia's Traditional...",p.337.

representative of absentee lords and half *gaša* of land to each household and registered the remainder as government land. The proclamation states that local individuals would get their share from their previous *rist* lands. The reality, however, was different. Fertile lands were selected and allocated to the elites while displacing the poor. In most places, the poor lost their previous holdings in spite of what was envisaged in the proclamation, and were given land in another area, far from their residences. The long bureaucracy and the abuse of power of individuals involved in the process further complicated the misery of the poor. The program endangered tenure security of the poor peasants and pastoralists.¹²⁸ To discourage the abuse of power, the government had promised that experts and other individuals who participated in the process would be rewarded with land grants. This, however, did not happen.¹²⁹ The failure of the project also had something to do with absence of standardized measurement tool and the difficult landscape particularly in the highlands.¹³⁰

As in most parts of Central and Northern Ethiopia, in Yefat, the land measuring committees, in negotiation with local *balabats* and government agents, allocated fertile and accessible lands to the elites and their favorites while displacing the poor from their holdings. Moreover, local elites kept a portion of land that would have been registered as government land for themselves or friends

¹²⁸WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9066, “A Letter from *Fitawurary* Asfaw Gäbrämichael, Governor of Yefat *ena* Temuga Awrajja to *Balambaras* Kābādā Sahlé, Governor of Efrata-Jillé District About People’ Complain”, dated on *Pagumé* 5/1960E.C. , Ref.no. ħ390/4704/60.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9066, “Jarra People’s Complain Addressed to Ministry of Interior About Land Measurement”, dated on *Miazia* 14, 1958E.C., No Ref.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9066, “ A Letter From Ato Ačamyäläh Woldāamanuel, Head, Land Measurement and Demarcation Office of Jara Awrajja to Jara Awrajja Administration Office”, dated on *Sāné* 20, 1958E.C., Ref no. 369/127.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9066, “ A Letter from Ato Solomon Aberham, *Rist* and *Wul* Vice Minister to *Däjjazmač* Säbsebē Šeberu , Governor General of Šāwan Province”, dated on *Hamlé* 11/1958E.C., Ref.no. 217/12.

¹²⁹Temesgen, “Land Tenure, Land....pp.571-572.; Informants:Ato Tačebälé Yegeläṭu, Ato Šāwayé Yefru and Ato Tässāma Kābādā. The victims, however, were both the state and the society. It reduced the income of the state by diverting much of the revenues to individuals’ pockets.

¹³⁰Temesgen, “ Land Tenure, Land....p.571. A *gaša* is a measuring unit that represents 40ha/400,000m².

in the name of land reserved for urban development, etc.¹³¹ The problem was more pronounced in Efrata-Jillé district of the *awrajja*. For all these reasons the project faced serious challenge from the majority of the peasantry as well as from some elites who lost a portion of their previous holdings for one reason or another.¹³²

According to informants, the disposal of what were deemed "excess lands" after measurement varied from area to area. In some areas, it was transferred to the government land bank, and then redistributed or sold. In some other areas, it was given to the present holder of the land provided that he agreed to pay the extra taxes required and other administrative costs. Still in some other areas, the local elites kept the land for themselves without informing the state.¹³³ A case in point is what happened in the Karaqoré district and Ṭemuga *qābällé*. The people there appealed to the Emperor claiming that the governors of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga and Jara *awrajjas* dispossessed them

¹³¹WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ḥ338, File no. 9072, "A Report from Karaqoré *Wārāda* Gezat about Bāwāṭawu Awaj Māsārāt Mārēt Yātādālādālu Sewoḥ Sem Zerzer., dated on *Tahesas* 27, 1955E.C., No.Ref.; "A Letter from Jara Awrajja Administration Office to General Governorate of Šāwan province", dated on *Tahesas* 27, 1955E.C., No.Ref.; Informants: *Amsaalāqa* Mäkonen Zewudé, *Ato* Mohammād Hassān and *Ato* Germa Wondafraš. Sources indicate that *Grazmač* Mohammād Oumār Dingo, one of the famous *balabats* in the area selected forty-seven and half *gaša* of fertile land and kept for himself in the name of *siso* that should be registered as state land. Other small nobility did the same in their respective domains.

¹³²WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ḥ338, File no. 9066, "A Letter from *Fitawurary* Asfaw Gäbrāmichael, Governor of Yefat and Ṭemuga Awrajja to *Balambaras* Kābādā Sahlé, Governor of Efrata-Jillé district", dated on *Pagumé* 5/1960E.C., Ref.no. ḥ390/4704/60.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ḥ338, File no. 9066, "Jara Awrajja People's Complain Addressed to Ministry of Interior about Land Measurement", dated on *Miazia* 14, 1958E.C., No Ref.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ḥ338, File no. 9066, "A Letter From *Ato* Ačamyāläh Woldāamanuel, Head, Land Measurement and Demarcation Office of Jara Awrajja to Jara Awrajja Administration Office", dated on *Sāné* 20, 1958E.C., Ref no. 369/127. WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ḥ338, File no. 9066, "A Letter from *Ato* Solomon Aberham, *Rist* and *Wul* Vice Minister to *Däjjazmač* Säbsebé Šeberu, Governor General of Šāwan Province", dated on *Hamlé*11/1958E.C., Ref.no. 217/12.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ḥ338, File no. 9072, "A Letter from *Balambaras* Oumār Abuno, One of the *Balabats* in Jillé *Warada* in Wärräkäräyu *Qābälé* to Ministry of Land Reform and Administration", dated on *Ter* 7/1961E.C. Sources indicate that the the Šāwan province assigned experts to measure land to Fursi and Karaqoré districts in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awuraj* starting from the early March 1956. For more see- WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ḥ338, File no. 9066, "A Letter From Ministry of Land Reform and Administration to *Rist* and *Wul* Director about Land Measurement in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*", dated on *Mäskäräm* 15, 1960E.C., Ref.no. 1/123/5.

¹³³Informats: *Mämré* Zäwudé Hailämikael, *Alāqa* Tässäma Woldägiorgis and *Ato* Yeheyes Manyaheläwal.

of their *rist* land and gave it to others.¹³⁴ According to archival documents, local governors and elites did so in spite of the order of the Emperor that prohibited land grants to outsiders (soldiers and courtiers) before distribution to the local people. To make matters worse, two years later, a lady by the name of *W/ro* Wudenäš Woldähana, took over the grazing and cultivated lands and water bodies of the local people and denied them access. Through her agents and contacts, she attacked those who tried to resist her push. Following on her footsteps, other individuals coming from distant areas did the same.¹³⁵

According to a February 24, 1964 report by *Ato* Mohammäd Bäderu, a parliamentary representative of the people of Jara *awrajja*, land measurement was not properly administered in the region, particularly in Karaqoré and Fursi districts. He described the nature of the previous land tenure system and decried land redistribution and the associated grievances of the local people.¹³⁶ He stated that when the people began to resist, local elites and government agents responded with imposition of heavy and additional taxes by way of revenge. The people were forced to pay tax “arrears” of the previous eleven years as if they did not pay taxes all along. No one, however, heard the voice or the complaints of the poor whose claim that they had been paying taxes on their land was ignored or summarily dismissed. The officials exploited the loophole created by their own failure to give legal receipts to the payers. The people accused them that they

¹³⁴WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9066, “Karaqoré District and Ṭemuga *qābälé* People Petition Addressed to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Mägabät* 23/1957E.C.

¹³⁵WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9066, “Karaqoré District and Ṭemuga *Qābälé* People Petition Addressed to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Mägabät* 23/1957E.C.).

¹³⁶WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9066, A Diary of *Ato* Mohammäd Bäderu, Representative of the People of Karaqoré and Fursi *Wärädas*, 1958E.C. Sources indicate that the improper land measurement and abuse of power also caused unending conflicts among the local *balabats* including ethnic leaders in different parts of the country. For more refer Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia: From the Thirteen to the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2000.), pp. 237-238.

intentionally destroyed tax documents available in the district and sub-district offices.¹³⁷ Taking the petition of the local people into consideration, the Ministry of Interior passed an order to carry out land measurement and redistribution, particularly at Duguguru, Fursi and Ṭemuga, with the principle of one *gasha* of *siso* to go to the *balabats* per every ten *gaša*, one *gaša* to the 84 deputies of the *balabats*, half *gaša* for the *baläyezota* (i.e. the previous *rist* holder) and half *gaša* to each of the children of *balabats* who established new households in 1959/60. When experts went to the field, both the elites and the ordinary people put up a resistance against this vision for which reason the work was suspended for some time. The *balabats* claimed that the land allocated to them was very small as compared to other areas of the province, and requested also that extra lands be distributed to members of the descent group first, not to outsiders. Similarly, the people accused experts of allocating *rist* land to outsiders even to individuals from other *qäbällés*. The Ministry of Interior ordered the Šäwa province to investigate the case and requested that they propose a lasting solution that would accommodate the interests of both the state and the local people. Ras Mäsfīn Seläši, the then governor of Šäwa province, along with other local government authorities (both at *awrajja* and *wäräda* levels) came up with a solution that entailed only a minor modification of the earlier criteria. The new proposal recommended that the *siso* of the *balabats* should increase to a *gaša* per every four *gašas* as practiced in other parts of the province. The *balabats* should be able pick their choice out of their own previous holding not from the possessions of the ordinary people. It also stated that the newly married children of *balabats* should get their share from their parents as in other parts of the province. It endorsed the previous scheme regarding the share of traditional office holders below the *balabats* and ordinary citizens. Some of the extra lands after the measurement would be reserved for government offices and public

¹³⁷WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9066, “Jillé-Ṭemuga People’s Complain Addressed to Emperor Hailäselassé” dated on 15/2/7E.C.

institutions, and the remaining would be redistributed to the natives with the ratio of half *gaša* for each.¹³⁸

The new directives gave priority to the natives, not to the outsiders such as members of the army. In those cases where there was shortage of land, applicants would be given land by measuring the remote lowlands of the districts which had not been previously measured. On 27 December 1961, the Ministry of Interior accepted the new proposal of the province and passed an order to the Šäwa province to proceed with its implementation. The case, however, was suspended until 1964/65 due to failure to allocate budget and assign experts for the work.¹³⁹

Strictly speaking, the new proposal was not beneficial to the poor. Large numbers of people in different *qäbällés* of the district were displaced. According to the report of Karakore district administrations office, 489 individuals in Wareabu, 156 in Ṭemuga and 332 in Wärräkäräyu districts became landless due to the shortage of land. Similarly, in Fursi *wäräda* 360 individuals, 98 in Mätahora and 331 in Deguguru *qäbällés* appealed for land. The shortage of land in the district came about probably because much of the open land was already given to the *baläwuläta* and to the soldiery. The district administration asked higher government officials if grants of land could be made to those who had lost their possessions from other areas further away within the district.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9066, “A Diary of Ato Mohammäd Bäderu, Representatives of the People of Karaqoré and Fursi Wäradas, 1958E.C.” Siso land was a kind of special offering given to local *balabts* in which one-third of the land owned by the *balabat* was converted as his *rist* land.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9072, “A Report From Karaqoré *Wäräda* Gezat about A List of Individuals Who already Earned Land Based on the Proclamation and Those Who Appealed for Land”, No date.

The following table clearly attests to the highly unequal distribution of land in Karaqoré and Fursi districts of Jarra *awrajja* as a result of the *qälad* system.¹⁴¹

Table 1: .Distribution of Land in Karaqoré and Fursi districts in Yefat *ENA* Temuga *Awrajja*

District	Categories of people	Number of people	Total amount of land in <i>gaša</i>
Karaqoré	<i>Balabats</i>	3	117
	<i>Mälekäñas</i>	75	75
	<i>Baläyezotas</i>	848	424
	Total	926	616
Fursi	<i>Balabats</i>	2	41
	<i>Mälekäñas</i>	48	48
	<i>Baläyezotas</i>	284	142
	Total	334	231

Source: WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9072, “A Report From Karaqoré *Wäräda* Gezat about A List of Individuals Who already Earned Land Based on the Proclamation and Those Who Appealed for Land”, No date.

Specifically, the land distribution document from Temuga *qäbällé* in Karaqoré *wäräda* revealed that out of the total 185 *gaša* of measured land more than 160 *gaša* was distributed to local *balabats* and *melkäñas* while 12½ was given to ten households "with the goodwill of the Emperor". Only less than 7 *gašas* of land was allocated to the poor. Priority was given to state officials and *balabats*. Wherever a shortage of land was encountered, it was the poor who were obliged to move to other areas far from their place of residence to get share. The *balabats* were allowed to select their *siso* from their vast previous holdings. This meant that it was largely unproductive lands that were transferred to the poor.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9072, “A Report From Karaqoré *Wäräda* Gezat about A List of Individuals Who already Earned Land”, No date.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9072, “A letter from Jara *awrajja* Administration Office to Governorate General of Šāwan Province”, dated on *Tahesas* 27, 1955E.C., No Ref.

¹⁴²WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9072, “A Report From Karaqoré *Wäräda* Gezat about A List of Individuals Who already Earned Land”, No date.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ħ338, File no. 9072, “A letter from *Qäñazmač* Bäqälä Wodajénäh, Vice General Governor of Šāwan province to *Qäñazmač* Abäbayähu Admasu,

Besides, the amount of land previously owned by the *balabats* was not known, in part because they were scattered in different *qäbällés*. They continued to own and use the unmeasured land and demanded *siso* only from the measured land. As a result, there appeared an imbalance between the amount of measured land and number of applicants. According to the report of Jara *awrajja* administration office, in Karaqoré and Fursi districts 974 and 769 people respectively did not get land in their localities. They were forced to move to distant areas to get their share.¹⁴³ However, the distant location of the land from their residence, as informants confirm, was a challenge to management and improvement of the land properly. Farmers would visit the land only occasionally probably at the time of plowing and harvesting and a few times in between.

Maladministration of Taxes and Eco-violence

It is noteworthy that despite the fact that Mänz *ena* Gešé, was a *rist-hagär* in which every individual is believed to have a piece of land, the peasant farmer had no tenure security. The local elite did not directly evict the peasant farmer from his *rist* land but the former was subject not only to losing title to his land but also exposed to mistreatment by local government agents in different ways. Peasants paid heavy and multiple taxes, provided offerings and free labor services to a variety of government agents, local nobility, and the priesthood, in a manner that paralleled the

Governor of Yefat *ena* Temuga *Awrajja* governor”, dated on *Säné* 17, 1961E.C., Ref.no. h/18479/8642/40.; Informants: *Ato* Anägräñ Bezunäh, *Ato* Ayečäw Adanä, *Ato* Däbälé Gämäčuan and *Ato* Damṭäw Abäbä.

¹⁴³WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/h338, File no. 9072, “A Report From Karaqoré *Wäräda* Gezat about A List of Individuals Who already Earned Land”, No date.; WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/h338, File no. 9072, “A Letter from Jara *Awrajja* Administration Office to General Governorate of Šäwan Province”, dated on *Tahesas* 27, 1955E.C., No Ref. It was reported that Duguguru *balabat* did not take *siso* for he had already given to *Le'elet* Tänañäwoq Hailäselassé.

principle of “ሲሶ ለነጋሽ፤ ሲሶ ለአንጋሽ፤ ሲሶ ለአወዳሽ።”¹⁴⁴ (trans:one-third to the king, one-third to the *balabat* and one-third to the clergy).

Even though these landed gentry controlled almost half of the country's arable land, the poor peasants suffered either from the scarcity or local lack of land.¹⁴⁵ What was painful, however, was that very little if any of the resources so extracted from the underprivileged was directed to projects or undertakings that would improve their lot or encourage productive occupations. The elites and the ruling class used much of the resources to support their luxurious lifestyles.¹⁴⁶

Absentee lords

In Šäwa province, as in many parts of the country, absentee lords possessed a lot of land under a variety of headings such as *rist*, *ristä-gult* and *gult*.¹⁴⁷ Likewise, the state and the church¹⁴⁸ held considerable amounts of land. Only 31% of cultivated land was held by the cultivators themselves.¹⁴⁹ Of course, the percentage varied considerably from area to area within the province. Members of the royal family and the higher and lower nobility owned large tracts of land in different districts of the region. Some of the leading *ristä-gult* holders included Emperor

¹⁴⁴NALA, Folder. No 17.1.3.52, File No. 17.1.3.52.02, “A Letter from LieutENAnt Colonel Lägässä Woldämariam, Minster of Ministry of Interior to Minister of Defense”, dated on *Hedar* 8, 1968E.C. Ref. 7/9306.; See also John Clarke, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation: Ethiopian's Campaign Against Famine*(London: Harney and Jones Ltd, NY),p.7; Aleme, *Feudalism in ...*,pp.2-4.; Girma, *The State and Developemnt ...*,pp.11 and 69.; Fasil G. Kisros, *The Subsistence Crisis in Africa: The Case of Ethiopia*(Organization For Social Science Reasech in Eastern Africa,1993),pp.30-32.; “በቀደመው አብዮት ኢትዮጵያ የመሬት ስራት የገበሬው የስቃይ ኑሮ”(The Challenging Livelihood of Peasant Farmer during the Military Regime), *Addis Zämän*, Year 36th, No. 1208(*Nähassé* 30, 1970E.C.

¹⁴⁵ Girma, *The State and Development...*,p.11.

¹⁴⁶ Tadesse, “Agricultural and Rural...”,p.69.

¹⁴⁷“የቀደመው ንጉስ መሳፍንቱ እና መኳንቱ በሸዋ 929 ጋሽ መሬት ተከፋፍለው ይዘዋል”(The Previous King, Nobles and Nobilities owned 929 Gasha of land in Shewa), *Addis Zämän*, No. Year 34 No.554 (*Hedar* 4, 1967E.C.); Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያየደንክና...”(A History of Forest and...) , p.130. Sources indicate that out of the total 343,250 *gaša* of arable land, 32,346 *gaša* of it was occupied by 63 individuals including the royal family, higher and middle nobility and clergy. Children of Ras Berru Woldägabreel, for instance owned 22,721 *gaša* of land in Harar province only.

¹⁴⁸Haile, “The Present System of...”,p.12.

¹⁴⁹Land Holding and Administration Minister, “የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት ያስከተለው ችግር እና ...”(Ethiopian Land Tenure System: Challenge...) (*Tekemet* 15. 1967E.C.),pp.9-10.

Hailäselassé in Rasa and Mängest sub-district in Yefat, and in Géramedir and Gešé; *Le'elt* Tānañaworq and *Ras Adäfersäw* in Gädämbö, in Géramedir; *Le'elt* Mädfäriašworq Abäbä in Gešé; Asfawwosän Hailäselassé, the crown prince at Čäffa in Yefat, *Däjjazmač* Käfeyäläw Woldäšadiq and *Däjjazmač* Mäšäša Zäwoldé at Däwa and Gurmeñ, in Mänz, were worth citing.¹⁵⁰ The *ristägult* owners had only a few pieces of land as their inheritance, being born in the areas. But these individuals took over much of the arable land through "inheritance" (by which is meant a poorly disguised Tekieover), by purchase or by gift.¹⁵¹ In Mängest sub-district in Yefat, for instance, the Emperor had 300 *gašas* of *ristägult*. He obtained this land from the local *balabats* of Hamaguraty, mainly *Grazmač* Asgälé Enhaban, through inheritance. Formerly, these local *balabats* used the land by paying cattle tax to the *bétärist*. Later on, these *balabats* transferred the land to the *bétärist* and registered it in the name of the Emperor.¹⁵²

There were also huge plots of land allotted to the palace for the supply of food and firewood in different districts of North Šäwa. This land was called *ganägäb* (a land reserved for the palace). Peasants whose lands fell under this classification paid their taxes annually in the form of grains, cattle, and other produce as well as firewood. Besides, they were also expected to grind grain and transport it to the palace. Some of these lands were located in Ankobär, Yefat, Tägulät, Bakel, Dänäba, Gina, Gida, Méça, Bočo, Addisäläm, Méttäabbo, Géja, Ada, Dämbi and Menjar. Peasants in these areas were divided into twelve groups to forward resources to the palace, one group for

¹⁵⁰Gebrehewot, አረጋግ...,p. 15.; Informants: Ato Woldäarägay Dañé, Shayk Abdulqasim Oumär and Ato Tezazu Kefätäw. Géramedir was the origin of the founders of the Šäwan dynasty that extended to Emperor Hailäselassé in his mother line, *Emät* Tēnañéworq. For more, refer Gebrehewot, *Arada*,p. 15.

¹⁵¹Land Holding and Administration Minister, “የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት ያስከተለው ችግር እና ...”(Ethiopian Land Tenure System: Challenge...)pp.7-8,12.

¹⁵²WTMRC, Folder no. 574, File no. 1962, “A Minute of the decision of board of Bétärist”, *Nähassé* 19, 1962E.C., Ref.no. 12/294/62.

each month of the year.¹⁵³ A report from the Šäwa branch of the Ministry of Agriculture gives a summary of the number of absentee landowners in North Šäwa and the amount of land that they held as follows:

Table 2: Distribution of Absentee Lords in North Šäwa.

Name of District	No. of individuals	Amount of land owned in <i>gaša</i>
Tägulät	218	1,870
Märhabété	179	790
Yefat	128	1,200
Sälalé	175	400
Mänz	503	15,000
Bulga	412	11,213
Total	1,615	30,473

Source-Šäwa Province Agricultural Office report, *Yäkatit* 24, 1966E.C.

In fact, the lords, including members of the royal family, had *rist* lands like other people because they were, or were believed to have been, born in the area. The size of the land they owned by birth right was not different from the poor peasant.¹⁵⁴ But they accumulated wealth systematically. They forced the poor to "bequeath" their land to them in return for providing protection to the latter.¹⁵⁵ There were also cases in which the peasant farmer might willingly bequeath the land to the elite if he had shortage of capital or labor to cultivate the land; if he faced a security threat; or if he had no successor. The rich might also accumulate land through lending money, seeds, oxen or food to the poor. When the poor failed to pay the debt, he would lose his land in accordance with the given agreement.¹⁵⁶ Even if outright takeover does not take place, the poor peasant would

¹⁵³Gebrewold Engidawork, "Ethiopia's Traditional System of land Tenure and Taxation" translated into English by Mengesha Gessesse, in *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol. V, No. IV(1962),p.135.

¹⁵⁴Ahmed Hassen, "Close Yet Far: Northern Šäwa under Därg" in Wendy James and etal(eds.), *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism and After*(Oxford: James Currey Ltd,2002),pp.80-81.; Informants: Ato Gäbrähiwot Gezačäw, Ato Tadässä Gašabäzaw and Aläqa Yemanäberhan

¹⁵⁵Informants:Ato Woldäarägay Dañé; Šayk Abdulqasim Oumär and Ato Tezazu Kefätäw.

¹⁵⁶McCann, "Household Economy...,p.14.

be forced to be dependent on the wealthy. Progressive decline in his economic standing would ultimately force the poor to choose between leaving for a better life elsewhere or becoming a tenant worker on the wealthy individual's land.¹⁵⁷ This state of affairs was widespread throughout the preoccupation era and tended to be a common occurrence during the post-liberation era.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps one of the most powerful and poignant descriptions of this state of affairs was that of Gebrehewot Baykedagn. He writes:

...በዚህ አገር...ባላገሩ ከድህነት ጋር ሲታገል እናየዋለን። በአንድ ፊት በየከተማው ስራ ፈተው የሚኖሩትን ሰዎች እመግባለሁ ሲል ይደክማል። በአንድፊት የሚመጣበት ገበያ ሩቅ ስለሆነ በአገሩ ቢሰራ በአንድ ጊዜ ያለ ብዙ ድካም ሊያገኘው የነበረውን ጨርቅን የቤት መሳሪያ እገባለሁ ሲል...ይደክምበታል። በዚሁም ጉልበቱ ይባክናል። በመጨረሻ መሬቱ በዕዳ ተይዞ ወደ ሌላ እጅ ያልፋል። ወይም ደግሞ ለአንድ ትንሽ እርዳታ ሲል መሬቱን ለአንድ ሹም አውርሶ ይሞታል። ልጆቹም የሚቀመጡበት ቦታ አጥተው ቦታም ቢያገኙ የባላገሩን መከራ ጠልተው ወደ ከተማ ይሄዳሉ። ሳይሰሩ የሚበሉትን ሰዎች ቁጥር ማሳደጊያ ይሆናሉ።...እንግዲህ አራሹ እያነሰ በአራሹ የሚመገቡ እየበዙ ይሄዳሉ። በስርዓት ተከፋፍሎ የነበረውም መሬት በዕዳም በውርስም ሄዶ በጥቂቶች ሰዎች እጅ ይገባል። የመንግስትንም ስራ በእጃቸው የጨበጡ እነዚህ ጥቂቶች ሰዎች ስለሆኑ በግብር የሚጫናቸው ሰው የለም። መከራው ሁሉ መሬቱን ገና ባልሸጠ ባላገር ላይ ይወድቃል። ስለዚህም መከራውን ጠልቶ ባላገሩ ሁሉ መሬቱን እየሸጠ ወይም እያወረሰ የእነዚህ ጥቂት ሰዎች አራሽ መሆን ጀምሯል። መሬቱም ገንዘቡ እንዳልሆነ ያውቅና ሊያሳምረውና አጥብቆ ሊያርስው አይተጋም። ጥቂቶች ባለመሬቶችም የያዙት መሬት ብዙ ነውና ሰፊ ስለሆነ ከመሬቱ የሚመጣላቸው ጥቂት ትርፍ ተጠራቅሞ በከተማው ተቀምጠው በስንፍና ለሚያሳልፉት ኑሯቸው ይበቃቸዋል። ባይበቃቸውም መሬቱን ገና ያልሸጠውን ወይም ያላወረሰውን ባላገር እስጤንቀው ይዘው ያለ ደንቡ በጉቦና በማስፈራራት ብዙ ገንዘብ ይበሉበታል። በዚሁም ምክንያት ሌሎች ባላገሮች መሬታቸውን ለመልቀቅ የግድ ይሆንባቸዋል።”¹⁵⁹

...in this country...the peasant struggles with poverty. On the one hand, he strives desperately to feed the idle (jobless) urban dwellers. On the other hand, he would tire and waste a lot of energy in an effort to afford pieces of clothing or household materials that come from distant lands. He could get it easily if it was produced within the country. Finally, the land would be transferred to others due to debt, or he would handover his land to a certain official to get simple support. Then his children would not have a place to

¹⁵⁷Landholding Department, “የመሬት ይዞታ በህብረተሰባዊ...” (Land Holding During the Military...), pp. 45-46, 51.; Gebrehewot, ነጋድራስ ገብረሂዎት... (Nägadrass Gebrehewot...), pp.105-106.
¹⁵⁸McCann, “Household Economy,p.14.
¹⁵⁹Gebrehewot, ነጋድራስ ገብረሂዎት... (Nägadrass Gebrehewot...), pp.105-106.

settle. Even when they got space, they would leave for urban areas hating the misery of the peasant. In this way, they add to the number of city idlers. ...thus, the number of peasant cultivators would decline while the number of dependents [on the peasant cultivator] would increase..., the land which had previously been distributed fairly, would systematically be concentrated in the hands of a few via debt and "inheritance". As these individuals would be state officials, no one would compel them to pay taxes. All of the burden/misery would fall on the shoulders of peasants who have not as yet sold off their land. Thus, disliking the misery, the poor peasants sold or inherited his land and became servants of these individuals [the rich]. Knowing that he was not the owner of the land, he would not be committed to improving his land or intensively cultivating it. Since the landowners possessed vast amounts of land, even small amounts of things coming from each plot would be sufficient to sustain luxurious lives in urban areas. If they faced shortfalls, they would compel the peasantry still on the land that is peasantry who did not as yet sale or bequeath their land, to fill in, doing so through bribes or even brute force. In this way, an increasing number of peasants would be obliged to abandon their lands.

Land Renting and Tenancy

The fragmentation of land in the highlands of Northern and Central Ethiopia had made the life of the peasantry very difficult. The peasant farmer could not sustain the family only with his small plots. He had to exert extra effort to support the family by cultivating the land of other individuals, be it of those who lacked labor, oxen, seeds or other agricultural inputs or those who lived away areas from their lands (including absentee landowners). The agreement with landowners was mostly on sharecropping basis.¹⁶⁰ The peasant, however, would have the ability to negotiate neither the terms of sharecropping nor the duration of the agreement. He was not sure how long he would cultivate the land. The land owners could terminate contract and reclaim their land at any time. Agreements were always informal and had no legal form.¹⁶¹ The owner of the land would also not be obliged to compensate the peasant for the extra efforts or additions to the land (like adding manure, building terraces, planting trees and other related works) before termination. All of this

¹⁶⁰Haile," The Present System of..."p.12.

¹⁶¹Dessalegn Rahmato, "Conditions of the Ethiopian Peasantry" in *Challenge*, Vol. X, No.II(1970),pp.28-33.

discouraged peasants from working to raise productivity on the land. They were also reluctant to protect the land from erosion and other damages for lack of tenure security and sense of ownership. The peasant cultivator was further discouraged by abuse in the hands of agents of absentee lords. The agents demanded special payments and sometimes labor services from the cultivator as condition to get or retain control of the land with or without the knowledge of the owner. They evicted one peasant and gave it to the other for extra payments. They also demanded payments, though the amount varied from person to person, in the name of renewal of the agreements annually. Those who paid more in cash or in kind had a better chance to extend the agreement in the future.¹⁶²

What all of this amounts is that the peasant farmer worked for far too small a return on his investment of labour.¹⁶³ His share of the crop was almost always way below what was prescribed in the Ethiopian Civil Code. The code prescribed that the share of the landowner was up to 1/3 to ¾ of the produce. In practice, however, the ratio was not constant. As population increased from time to time, the value of land increased considerably. So did the ratio of sharecropping in favor of the owner. It became mostly on an equal basis even on state owned lands; on private holdings, payments might be even higher and often in cash.¹⁶⁴

In addition, in some areas, the peasant cultivator was forced to pay land tax and other related obligations attached to the land (*tithe*, labor services), violating article 2915 of the Civil Code. This article provides that these payments were the obligations of the owner of the land, not of the

¹⁶²Land Holding and Administration Minister, “የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት ያስከተለው ችግር እና ...”(Ethiopian Land Tenure System: Challenge...),pp.9-10.

¹⁶³Dessalegn, “Conditions of the Ethiopian...”,pp.28-33.

¹⁶⁴Haile, “The Present System of...”,p.12.;; see also Land Holding and Administration Minister, “የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት ያስከተለው ችግር እና ...”(Ethiopian Land Tenure System: Challenge...),pp.9-10.

cultivator.¹⁶⁵ The misery of the peasant was further aggravated by the abuse perpetrated by individuals involved in the process of tax assessment and collection.¹⁶⁶ The *gult* owner (*gultšum*) had the right to collect one-fifth from the *rist* holders, commonly called *Amešo* (one fifth of production). He kept part of the tribute collected for himself and transferred a certain amount to the state. He also got free labor services and a variety of ‘gifts’. In this sense, the *ristāñas* were *gabbars* of the *gultšum* and indirectly of the state. The size of the land and the number of *gäbbars* or *ristāña* assigned to a *gultšum* varied considerably based on the position of the individual and his position in the hierarchy. The *gultšum* enjoyed the privileges as far as he was in office, unlike the church *gult* which was exempted from taxation and free from alienation by the state. In return for the privileges, the *gultšum* was expected to handle administrative matters, principally of collecting taxes and keeping the peace.¹⁶⁷

The worst thing, however, was that although *gult* owners benefited much, they paid very little by way of taxes. First, this was because the amount of land they owned was not accurately known. Most of them owned huge tracts of unregistered land. Second, they abused taxes, negotiating with higher government officials. So the heaviest burden of taxes in one way or another fell on the shoulders of the poor peasantry.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵Dessalegn, “Conditions of the Ethiopian...”,pp.31-32.

¹⁶⁶Temesgen, “Land Tenure, Land...”,p.570.

¹⁶⁷Aleme, *Fuedalism in...*,pp.1-2.; see also Shiferaw Bekele, “The Evolution of Land Tenure...”,pp.73-75.;Dessalegn Rahmato, “Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia: A Brief Assessment” in Sven Rubenson(ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*(East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1984),pp588-589.

¹⁶⁸Land Holding and Administration Minister, “የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት ያስከተለው ችግር እና ...”(Ethiopian Land Tenure System: Challenge...),p.12.; Dessalegn, “The Conditions of Ethiopian...”,p.32.

The Implications for productivity and the Environment

The land rent regime not only affected the livelihood of the peasant cultivator, but also discouraged his commitment to improving the land.¹⁶⁹ The wealthy elites, who mostly lived luxurious life in urban areas, extracted resources from the peasant farmer even if they did have little or no knowledge about the land. Moreover, they had little or no interest to raise productivity and to ensure the sustainable use of the land because the income they earned was more than enough for their luxurious life. The peasant farmer also would not improve and protect the land.¹⁷⁰ If he were to do so, the value of the land would increase and subsequently the owner of the land would demand more rent. The owner might even evict the present cultivator and lease the land to the others who could pay more. Upon eviction, the peasant would not get compensation for his long-term investments, such as the construction of terraces, irrigation channels, trees, and other related conservation and restoration projects. This situation inevitably led to decline in productivity and by implication of the environment.¹⁷¹ The livelihood of the poor was further endangered by crop failures caused by natural forces.¹⁷²

On top of all this, the absence of technological innovation made poverty an enduring phenomenon. Subsistence agriculture underwent no fundamental structural change. It also showed no significant changes in the technique and practices of production. The change in the sector was simply a shift from farming tools made out of wood to those made out of metals. Little or no conceptual changes were introduced.¹⁷³ Different scholars have attributed different reasons for the unproductivity of

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*,p.33.

¹⁷⁰Land Holding and Administration Minister, “የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት ያስከተለው ችግር እና ...”(Ethiopian Land Tenure System: Challenge...),pp.7-8.; Dessalegn, “The Conditions of Ethiopian...”,pp.36-37.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*,pp.36-37.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*,p.33.

¹⁷³McCann, “A Great Agrarian...”,pp.390-396. See also Merid Woldearegay, “Society and Technology in Ethiopia, 1500-1800” in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. XVII(1984),p.139.

the agrarian sector. Some associate it with what they described as a poor working culture and illiteracy of the peasants.¹⁷⁴ For McCann, it was the cumulative effect of the lack of capital, credit services, difficult nature of the landscape, fragmentation of land (in the highlands), and availability of cheap labor to handle the production process.¹⁷⁵ Levine, on his part, related it to the ‘conservative’ culture of the people. Most of the people (Christians and Muslims) believed in “fate and predetermined destiny of life”.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, Dessalegn associates it not with the influence of religion or tradition but with the rigid and oppressive nature of socio-economic conditions in the country. According to him, little attention was given to innovators. The beneficiaries were the ruling classes. On top of this, there was no economic competition to encourage innovation.¹⁷⁷ Further elaborating this, he writes:

Competition for higher profits, which under capitalism provides the main impetus for technological change, plays no role in feudalist production. The aim here is to supply the necessities of the village community. As a result, the need for technical development becomes superfluous....In agrarian Ethiopia as far as the direct producer was concerned, innovation does not pay. Indeed, in a majority of cases, it [innovation] is harmful to the peasant. ...increased effort and yield will deprive the tenant of a greater share of his produce and at times of his hold as well. His primary concern will thus be to produce enough to meet his obligation.¹⁷⁸

In my study area back in the 1960s, specifically in Yefat *ena Temuga awrajja*, intensification of agriculture would have relatively limited outlay of resources. That was because most of the lands were only newly cultivated. But later on, the small scale and mechanized farms and expansion of over cultivation (including encroachments on forests) caused the decline of resources. Besides,

¹⁷⁴Dessalegn, “The Conditions of Ethiopian...”,p.37.; McCann, “A Great Agrarian...”,pp.390-396.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*,pp.401-402.

¹⁷⁶Donald Levine, *Wax and...*pp,3-4.,86-87.

¹⁷⁷Dessalegn, “The Conditions of Ethiopian...”,pp.37-39.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*,pp.38-39.

competition over resources among the cultivators and pastoralists caused insecurity and instability which in turn led to environmental degradation and decline of the ecosystem.¹⁷⁹

State Intervention and the Attempt to Standardize Taxation

The state made a series of tax decrees in the post-liberation period. It worked to raise the state's revenue through breaking the intermediary role of provincial elites and other middlemen. The first was the 1942 land tax proclamation that made the rate of taxes paid for measured and unmeasured lands uniform based only on the fertility of the land.¹⁸⁰ The new provision made the amount of taxes fixed at \$Eth 15 for cultivated (*läm*) land, \$Eth 10 for semi-cultivated (*läm-täff*) land \$Eth 5 for uncultivated (*täff*) land. It abolished all other taxes and services, except the *tithe*.¹⁸¹ Two years later, another land tax proclamation was issued; it abolished free labor services imposed on the peasants. The amount of tax to be paid varied from measured and unmeasured land and from region to region. The *rist* land holding regions of unmeasured lands in Šäwa province were treated differently. In these areas, land was divided into eight categories. In the first three categories, peasants were expected to pay \$Eth 20, 15 and 5 respectively for measured land, unlike the other *rist* land holding regions of Northern Ethiopia (Gojjam, Gondär and Tegräy) that sustained to pay at a rate established in 1934/35 plus *tithe*. The amount of tax in *rist* lands of Šäwa was fixed at 12 and 8 birr for *tithe* and tax for first category lands, and 10 and 7 for second category lands. For third category lands, the amount was reduced to 9 and 6 respectively. *Ristä-gult*, *siso-gult* and *sämon* landholders continued to pay the *tithes* described in this proclamation.¹⁸² Land classification was made on the bases of the quality, size and location of the land.¹⁸³ The following two tables

¹⁷⁹McCann, "A Great Agrarian...", pp.396 and 404-405.; Informants: Ato Anägräñ Bezunäh, Ato Däsalän Zägyé and Ato Mohammäd Hassän.

¹⁸⁰Bahru, A History of Modern..., pp.192-193.; Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power...*, pp.81-82.

¹⁸¹*Nägarit Gazéta*, Year 1, No.5(Hamlé21, 1934E.C.).

¹⁸²*Nägarit Gazéta*, Year 4, No.2(Tikemt 22, 1937E.C.).

¹⁸³Mahtemaselassie, "The Land System of..."p.299.

show the distribution of land and the amount of taxes fixed for each category of land in my study area.

Table 3: Land classification in Mänz ena Yefat Awrajja(1942E.C. Classification)

System of Land Tenure	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	Sp. fertile	Total
<i>Gäbbar</i>	1095.50	485	1412	1615	3229.25	1704	3832	1650	37	15023.75
<i>Sämon</i>	288	93	217	227	633	381	1703	729	41	4312
<i>Siso</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Ristä-gult</i>	428.25	103	316	295	1018	504	1494	590	51	4799.25
<i>Mängest</i>	42	13	49	9	21	7	275	32	-	448
<i>Madäria</i>	209.25	174	96.25	133	216.25	66	332	84.50	33	1344.25
<i>Yäkätäma Bota</i>	-	-	-	7	2	1	5	1	-	16
Total	2027	868	2090.25	2286	5119.50	2663	7641	3065.50	62	25943.25

Source: adapted from Mann, H.S. *Land Tenure in Chore, in Šäwa: A Pilot Study. Monograph in Ethiopian Land Tenure 2* (Addis Abäba: Artistic Printing Press, 1965), p.75.

Table 4: Tax reforms under legal notice 117 of 1951 for rist land

Categories	Assessment of the sum to pay		
	Land tax in \$Eth	Tithe \$Eth	Total
1	8	12	20
2	7	10	17
3	6	9	15
4	5	8	13
5	4	6	10
6	3	4	7
7	2	3	5
8	0.5	1.5	2

Source: Mahtemaselassie, “The Land System in...”, pp.299-300.

In spite of these relatively progressive changes, the tax burdens of the peasants were not reduced partly because the proclamation did not consider the quality of the land and partly due to its improper implementation. Strictly, the criteria used to classify the land into *läm*, *läm-ṭäf* and *Ṭäf* did not refer to the actual quality of the land; it referred to whether the land was cultivated fully, partially, or not at all.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, appropriation of taxes by local authorities and tax assessors

¹⁸⁴Haile, “The Present Sysem of...”, p.22; Bahru, *A History of Modern...*, pp. 192-194. Informants: Ato Anäagräñ Bezunäh, Ato Dässaläh Zägäyë and Ato Mohammäd Hassän.

and collectors continued to be a problem for the peasants. Of course, it also reduced the income of the state. Much of the taxes collected went into the pocket of individuals.¹⁸⁵ In connection with this, Hailu argues that

...even if the government could see to it that everybody paid his share under the present system of taxation, the system is basically so arbitrary and faulty-fertility of land categorized by people who are subject to intentional or unintentional biases, land changing its fertility because of overuse or idleness, ... in case of head tax the landless paying equal taxes with the “hacienda” owner, etc.-that it would neither be equitable nor socially advantageous.¹⁸⁶

In as much as possible, the state worked to diminish the intermediary role of provisional elites. It also introduced new forms of taxes such as education and health taxes in 1947 and 1959 respectively. The third land tax proclamation was made in 1966. Unlike the previous proclamations (of 1942 and 1944), the new decree was intended to avoid the intermediary roles of *ristä-gult* and *siso-gult* owners.¹⁸⁷ The state declared that land owners shall pay taxes directly to the state avoiding the intermediary roles of *gult* owners. It, however, was not effective due to the resistance of local elites.¹⁸⁸

The state, however, continued to work towards limiting the negative impact of the landlord-peasant system on its fiscal structure and revenue collection. Thus in 1962/3, it organized a committee dedicated to study the problems of land tenure and to come up with a proposal. In 1966, it established the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration. The Ministry prepared five draft laws in relation to land from 1971 to 1972. The first one was the law that sought to introduce reforms in the relationship between the *balärist* and the *Çesäña* (or the *balägult* and *gäbbar*) The draft initially got acceptance by the Council of Ministers and was forwarded to the Parliament for

¹⁸⁵Bahru, *A History of Modern...*, pp. 192-194. see also Gebru, *Ethiopia Power...*, p.81.

¹⁸⁶ Haile, “The Present Sysem of...”, p.22.

¹⁸⁷Bahru, *A History of Modern...*, p.193.

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*, pp.193, 201-207.

final approval. Most members of the Parliament, however, strongly resisted the draft law because they wanted to maintain the *status quo*. Most of them were elites who had accumulated land in different ways. After a prolonged debate, the parliament decided to revise some of the articles of the draft; but the revised version was not approved due to government preoccupation with security issues and political matters in the early 1970s.¹⁸⁹

The second initiative was a draft law intending to register immoveable assets of people in a bid to control illegal accumulation of wealth. It, however, remained a draft and did not even reach the Parliament. The third one was legislation that concentrated on how to effectively collect taxes from uncultivated lands, particularly from pastoral grazing lands. But the Ministry did not push for the approval of the draft law fearing resistance by local people. The fourth law dealt with improving the administration of government (i.e. state) lands. Even though this law was approved, it did not solve the question of the peasants because fertile lands owned by the state were by then already granted to individuals. Land still in the hands of the government was barren or marginal land and was not conducive for development. It was also predominantly located in remote lowlands, infested with diseases. So, neither the state nor local communities were in a position to use or exploit it. The above-mentioned drafts, however, were not fully implemented due to the complicated political problems in the last decade of the imperial regime.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹Land Holding and Administration Minister, “የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት ያስከተለው ችግር እና ...”(Ethiopian Land Tenure System: Challenge...),pp.15-16.; Land Holding and Administration Minister, “በ1964ዓ.ም የተከናወነ ዋና ዋና ተግባሮች ሰሚናር”(A Seminar on Major Activities of 1964E.C.)(Addis Ababa, 1967E.C.),pp. 1-4.; *Addis Zämän*, Year 30, No. 402, (*Miazia* 24, 1963E.C); Year 30 No. 385 (*Miazia* 2, 1963E.C.); Year 30 , No.388 (*Miazia* 6, 1963E.C); Year 31, No.408 (*Genbot* 2, 1963ec); Year 33 , No. 382(*Mägabit* 11, 1966E.C).

¹⁹⁰Land Holding and Administration Minister, “የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት ያስከተለው ችግር እና ...”(Ethiopian Land Tenure System: Challenge...),pp.15-16.; Land Holding and Administration Minister, “በ1964ዓ.ም የተከናወነ ዋና ዋና ተግባሮች...”(A Seminar on Major Activities of...),pp. 1-4.

The military government (1974-1991) decreed a radical land reform in 1975. It abolished landlordism and nationalized rural and urban lands. In some places, the ex-landlords, who lost their land and associated privileges took up arms to fight the regime. They accused the new regime of being irreligious and inhuman. They got much acceptance in North Šäwa, where local people were sympathetic to their cause precisely because of their appeal to religion and culture. One of the areas where there was a strong anti-Därg movement was Mänz. Some of the ex-*balabats* took refuge in the area since they traced their origin to it. A large number of people welcomed and sided with them. The inaccessible landscape of the area provided a natural defense for the rebels. The movement continued until the late 1970s.¹⁹¹

Peoples' Resistances

People complaining about excessive taxation and maladministration flooded government offices and courts at each level of Šäwa province throughout the imperial period. In fact, the local people demonstrated their resistance to different initiatives of the state not only by petitioning but also by such acts like disobedience and armed opposition.¹⁹² For instance, in my study area, much like some parts of Northern and Central Ethiopia, people were not comfortable with the new agricultural income tax of 1967. They suspected it of being a project meant to carry out land measurement like the *qäläd* system of the south. This perception of the local people, in addition to corrupt administration, encouraged peasant uprisings against the state.¹⁹³ Adding to people's grievances was the fact that local administrators, in most cases, overlooked or rejected peoples' requests for tax reduction and cancellation even at times of human and natural adversity. They

¹⁹¹Ahmad, "Close Yet Far...", pp.80-81.

¹⁹²Aleme, "Feudalism in...", p.4; Informants: *Mämré* Zäwudé Hailämikael, *Aläqa* Tässäma Woldägiorgis and *Ato* Yeheyese Manyaheläwal.

¹⁹³Bahru, *A History of Modern...*, p.194.

neither gave solution by themselves nor handed over the case to higher government authorities. In those cases where the poor directly appealed to the Ministry of Interior bypassing local authorities and brought directives of one kind or another, local government officials became reluctant to implement them. They rather schemed to punish the petitioners for exposing their mischief. They did so sometimes by imposing heavy and multiple dues even contrary to existing laws. Moreover, by using their connections with higher government officials, they sometimes presented peoples' complaints to higher officials as disobedience or as something against the state. This was, particularly common during tax assessment and collection.¹⁹⁴ In this regard, some of the people of Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajja* frequently appealed to the authorities against abuse by tax assessment and collection practices since the time of liberation.¹⁹⁵ In 1944/45, the people of Mänz particularly, Ṭäyat, Zäram, Emägua, Yäça, Däwa and Amora-Gädäl *qäbällés* complained about experts involved in the process of land measurement which they said favored some and hurt others. They claimed that experts roughly estimated the land only visually from some distant area that they did not differentiate fertile and infertile lands.¹⁹⁶ They further accused them of working in collaboration with local government agents to impose additional charges of payments without the knowledge of higher government offices.¹⁹⁷ For instance, on 18 November 1949, the people of Angaça in Mänz appealed to the Ministry of Interior that the local government forced them to pay

¹⁹⁴Informants: *Mämré* Zäwudé Hailämikael, *Aläqa* Tässäma Woldägiorgis and Ato Yeheyes Manyaheläwal.

¹⁹⁵WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Petition of the People of Mänz Addressed to the Ministry of Interior", dated on *Tahas* 4, 1945E.C.; WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Petition of The People of Zäram, Emägua, Yäça, Däwa in Mänz Addressed to Ministry of Interior", dated on *Säné* 28, 1945E.C.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*; WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Petition of the People of Ṭäyat in Lalomedir Wäräda in Mänz Addressed to Ministry of Interior", dated on *Hamlé* 11, 1945E.C.; WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Petition of the People of Mänz Addressed to the Ministry of Interior", dated on *Tahas* 4, 1945E.C.). In the above mentioned and some other places, tax assessors also did the same.

¹⁹⁷WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Petition of The People of Amora-Gädäl in Mänz Addressed to the Ministry of Interior", dated on *Säné* 20, 1945E.C.; WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Petition of the People of Zäram, Emägua, Yäça, Däwa qäbälés in Mänz Addressed to Ministry of Interior", dated on *Säné* 28, 1945E.C.

double land tax and *asrat* of 1944/45 and 1945/46 budget years, for failing to pay the required tax on time. They said that the officials arrested people and seized properties of individuals who did not pay the double tax. The people presented the case to the Emperor claiming that the failure to pay in 1945/46 was due to crop failure caused by climate variability. The Emperor, in turn, passed an order to the Ministry of Interior to lift penalties. The order reached the office of the then governor of Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajja* on 17 November 1946. But local governors did not respond soon.¹⁹⁸

On 5 June 1946, the people brought the case again to the Ministry itself stating that the local administrators were reluctant to implement the decision. They complained that the latter persecuted organizers of the petitions by way of revenge. Even if the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Finance wrote series of letters to the province and *awrajja* administration, no practical measure was undertaken on the ground. The petition of the local people remained unanswered for some time.¹⁹⁹ No one was asked for the failure to implement the imperial order on time. It was only in January 1948 that both the *awrajja* and the province began to reconsider the question of the people. The highest officials of the *awrajja* and the concerned *wäräda* governors in the presence of the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture summoned a meeting and exhaustively discussed and finally came up with a lasting solution. The participants of the meeting were *Grazmač* Mäkebeb Woldämikael (governor of Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajja*), *Ato* Habtägiyorgis Anägräñ (a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture), Captain Gäbäyähü Zäläqä (head of

¹⁹⁸WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, “A Petition of the People of Aganča in Mänz Addressed to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Hidar* 8, 1942E.C.; WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, File Name :YaMänz Balagäroč Abétuta, “ A Petition of The People of Aganča, Mäselä Mariam *qäbälé* in Mänz Addressed to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Miazia* 22, 1939E.C.

¹⁹⁹WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, “A Petition of The People of Aganča in Mänz addressed to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 7, 1942E.C.

security), *Qäñazmač* Mängestu Käfäläw(governor of Rasa *wäräda*), and *Ato* Tässäma Bäläčäw(governor of Yefat). The committee agreed that the *awrajja* administration would identify victims of crop failure in collaboration with local elders and governors and that the *awrajja* treasury office would release the budget and payback to the concerned individuals. There is no information in the archives as to what actually happened subsequently.²⁰⁰

On 25 February 1955, the people of Mänz *ena* Yefat petitioned the Ministry of Interior to be forgiven land tax for the 1950 and 1955 budget years. Their petition states that local government officials forced the people of these areas to pay tax arrears for the 1950 budget year in addition to the penalties, which they could not afford. The people also requested cancellation of the 1955 land tax and *asrat* because their crops were destroyed by locusts in the lowlands, and crop diseases and *wurč* in the highlands.²⁰¹ According to archival sources, district and sub-district governors flatly rejected the petition of the people. Upon being ordered to investigate the issue and report to higher officials, they said that the complaints arose out of the interests of a few individuals, not the masses.²⁰² The *awrajja* administration office, on its part, admitted the presence of the disaster, but was reluctant to undertake any practical measure. It stated that since the damage was not so serious, the *awrajja* was a *mäher* (autumn) and *bälg* (spring) seasons producing area. Their argument was

²⁰⁰WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, “A Letter From Šāwan Province to Ministry of Interior”, dated on Ter 1, 1940E.C., Ref.no.Λ/1281/19.

²⁰¹WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, “Mänz *ena* Yefat People Petition to Ministry of Interior”, dated on Yäkatit 16, 1947E.C.

²⁰²WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, “A Letter From Šambäl Dingu”, Governor of Qäwot *Wäräda* to Colonel Dästa Šäwarkab, Governor of Mänz *ena* Yefat *Awrajja*”, dated on *Mägabit* 28, 1947E.C., Ref no. 1070/47.; WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, “A Letter From Colonel Dästa Šäwarkab, Governor of Mänz *ena* Yefat *Awrajja* to *Däjjazmač* Däräjä Mäkonen, Governor General of Šāwan Province”, dated on *Miazia* 24, 1947E.C., Ref no. 5412/2. See also WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, “A Letter from Rist and Wul director to Šāwan province”, dated on *Miazia* 12, 1947E.C., Ref no.Λ/637.

that damage was done to the autumn crops and the people would get abundant produce in the other productive season. So it rejected peoples' request for reconsideration of taxes.²⁰³

Rist and *Wul* director of the Šäwa province, on its part, passed a decision that the 1950 tax arrears should be paid based on the new tax declaration of 1950/51. It proposed that it was possible to forgive *asrat* for the 1955 budget year based on the severity of the damages in each qäbällé.²⁰⁴ However, it suddenly changed its mind and insisted on the collection of all taxes (land tax, *asrat* and education tax) "as declared by law".²⁰⁵ While the concerned offices wasted time exchanging letters back and forth, the people spent whatever little money they had expecting tax forgiveness.²⁰⁶

A similar incident took place five years later. On 27 December 1959, *Ato Mängäša Woldämikael*, a parliamentary representative of the people of Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajja* appealed to the Chamber of Deputies on behalf of the people about crop failure and locust damages in the area. He reported that the people of Mamamedir, Mafud, Qäwot, Karaqoré, Gedem and Jillé suffered a lot due to infestation by destructive pests and diseases, and severe weather condition in the form of *wurç* in the highlands. According to Mengesha, the peasants lost almost all their crops in the field, only a few places escaping complete failure. He requested the cancellation of taxes and *asrats* owned by the people in the budget year. We also have information that the victims presented a series of

²⁰³WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Letter From Colonel Dästa Šäwarkab, Governor of Mänz *ena* Yefat *Awrajja* to Däjjazmač Däräjä Mäkonen, Gevornor General of Šäwan Province", dated on *Miazia* 24, 1947E.C., Ref no. 5412/2.

²⁰⁴WTMRC, Folder.no.h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Reminder of *Rist* and *Wul* director" dated on *Yäkatit* 7, 1947E.C.

²⁰⁵WTMRC, Folder.no.h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Letter from Land Revenue Director to Šäwan Province", dated on *Genbot* 13, 1948E.C. see also WTMRC, Folder.no. h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Notes of *Rist* and *Wul* director," dated on *Mäskäräm* 29, 1948E.C.

²⁰⁶WTMRC, Folder.no.h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Letter from Colonel Dästa Šäwayerga, Governor of Mänz and Yefat *Awrajja* to General Gevornor of Šäwan Province", dated on *Mäskäräm* 5, 1948E.C.; WTMRC, Folder.no.h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Letter from Mänz *ena* Yefat *Awrajja* Governor Office to General Gevornor of Šäwan Province" dated on *Hedar* 21, 1953E.C., Ref no. 1284/3.

petitions to local government offices without getting any response. Even worse, the authorities persecuted and arrested those who failed to pay the required taxes.²⁰⁷ A little later, the Chamber of Deputies handed over the issue to the ministries of Interior and Finance to look into the matter.²⁰⁸ On 22 March 1960, the Ministry of Finance, through its Land Income Directorate, responded that it was not possible to amend or cancel taxes established by law without a special order from higher authority or the promulgation of a new decree annulling the former tax decree.²⁰⁹

Sources abundantly indicate that very harsh and insensitive administration of taxes created mistrust between local society and the state that manifested itself in various kinds of public protest and disobedience. In some areas, it forced people to leave their residential areas and fields. The following popular couplet demonstrates the resentment of those disaffected:

ለምስለኔው መክት ለጭቃው ወጠጤ
እንዲህ ሆኜ ነው ወይ ከአገር መቀመጤ²¹⁰

A fatten sheep/goat for the *meslāné* and a lamb to the *Çeqašum*
How can I hope to continue to exist in this situation?

The other source of people's resentment was the agricultural income tax of 1967.²¹¹ On 23 November 1967, the state issued another tax called agricultural income tax under proclamation number 255/1967.²¹² The new proclamation was one step forward towards improving the tax system, because it changed the tax criteria from the fertility of the land to the amount of peasant's

²⁰⁷WTMRC, Folder.no.2h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Letter from Ato Mängäša Woldämikael, Representative of the People of Mänz *ena* Yefat Awrajja in Chamber of Deputies to President of the Chamber of Deputies", dated on *Tahesas* 18, 1952E.C.

²⁰⁸WTMRC, Folder.no.h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Letter from Ato Hailāmariam Kābādā, President of the Chamber of Deputies to Ras Andargačāw Māsāy, Minister, Ministry of Interior", dated on *Tahesas* 23, 1952E.C.

²⁰⁹WTMRC, Folder.no.h/2226, File no. 8946, "A Letter from Ato Bekurā Woldägiorgis, Director of Land Revenue to President of Chamber of Deputies ", dated on *Mägabit* 14, 1952E.C., Ref.no. 1872/7/52.

²¹⁰Informant: Ato Aṭlaw Asamenāw

²¹¹ Bahru, *A History of Modern...*, p.194.

²¹²*Nägarit Gazēṭa*, Year 27, No. 4, *Hedar* 3, 1960E.C.

produce. However, improper implementation, made worse by the corruption of local government officials, tax assessors and collectors, induced massive protest in different parts of the country.²¹³ Tax authorities sought to advance their own personal interests by interpreting the new tax proclamation out of context. The people of Mänz *ena* Gešé²¹⁴; Tägülät *ena* Bulga²¹⁵; and Märhabété²¹⁶ *awrajjas* protested not just the new proclamation but also its improper implementation. Specifically in Mänz, the people of Aradama sub-district in Géramedir,²¹⁷ Gešé²¹⁸ and Dangäzé subdistrict in Lalomedir and Mamamedir districts²¹⁹ in Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja* and the people of Qäwot district in Yefat *ena* Temuga²²⁰ did the same, opposing the corrupt tax assessment and collection practices. They manifested their unhappiness first to the *awrajja* governor and then to the Governor General of Šäwa province and the Ministry of Interior step by step.

In September 1968, taking the people of Aradama sub-district in Geramedir district as an example, Qegneazemach Azebeṭé Habtämariam, the then governor of Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja*, reported to

²¹³Bahru, *A History of Modern...*, pp.193-194.

²¹⁴NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.27.; File No. 17.1.3.27.03, “A Letter from Qäñazemač Azebeṭé Habtämariam, Governor of Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajja* to Ras Mäsfin Seläši, Governorate General of Šäwan Province”, Dated on *Mäskäräm* 19/1961E.C, Ref. 17/3/600.

²¹⁵NALA, Folder 17.1.3.27. File No. 17.1.3.27.03., “A Letter from Täsfayé Enquselassé, Governor of Tägülät *ena* Bulga *Awrajja* to Ras Mäsfin Seläši, Governorate General of Šäwan Province About People’ Complain of Taxation”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 25/1961E.C. Ref. No.312/1/U1/33.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.27. File No. 17.1.3.27.03., “A Petition from People of Jehur Sub district in Morät District, to *Däjjazmač* Kefelä Ergätu, Minister of Interior”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 14/ 1961E.C.). No.Ref.

²¹⁶NALA, Folder 17.1.3.27.File.No. 17.1.3.27.03., “Märhabété People’ Petition(Lay bét and Tač Bét sub districts) to Ato Solomon Aberham, Minister D’eta of Ministry of Interior, dated on 13/1/61E.c. No.Ref.

²¹⁷NALA, Folder 17.1.3.27.; File No. 17.1.3.27.03, “A Letter from Qäñazemač Azebeṭé Habtämariam, Governor of Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajja* to Ras Mäsfin Seläši, Governorate General of Šäwan Province about Unfair Taxation in the Region”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 19/1961E.C, Ref. 17/3/600.

²¹⁸NALA, Folder 17.1.3.26.; File No. 17.1.3.27.08, “Gešé *Wäräda* People’ Petitions (Gäbätabär, Bädel, Endaho and Dayär subdistricts) to Ministry of Interior about the Wrong Implementation of the New Agricultural Income Tax of 1967”, dated on *Genbot* 6 /1961E.C, No Ref.

²¹⁹NALA, Folder 17.1.3.26.; File No. 17.1.3.27.08, “Dängäzé Subdistrict People’s Petitions to the Ministry of Interior about the Wrong Implementation of the New Agricultural Income Tax of 1967”, dated on *Yäkatit* 22/1961E.C, No Ref.

²²⁰NALA, Folder 17.1.3.26.; File No. 17.1.3.27.08, “Qäwot *Wäräda*’s People Petitions to Ministry of Interior about the Improper Implementation of the New Agricultural Income Tax of 1967”, dated on *Miazia* 30/1961E.C, No Ref.

Ras Mäsfīn Seläši, governor general of Šäwa province regarding popular sentiment about the taxation. *Ras Mäsfīn*, in turn, passed the case to the Ministry of Interior. Sometime later, the Ministry responded by telling the *awrajja* to settle the matter by itself but that it had reported the matter to higher authority for final decision. Then a representative of the *awrajja* administration went to the area and discussed the matter with a committee of tax assessors and elders. In the discussion, the representative found proof that *Ato Täfära Mätafäria*, the representative of the Ministry of Finance that chaired the tax assessor committee did things in violation of the tax proclamation. First, the committee that he organized made tax assessment and evaluation without careful consideration of the harvest of the peasant farmer or the current price of grains. Secondly, the chairperson and the secretary recruited members of the committee without involving the people. Thirdly, fragments of land located in one *qäbällé* and in one *mälkäña* were not consolidated for the purpose of taxation. Fourthly, the committee did its assessment only by referring to the *rist* document, making decisions in the office without having observed the land or the produce. Moreover, the committee apparently reduced taxes for some individuals in some cases, even ‘overlooked’ those title holders who negotiated with them. Tefera was also accused of misguiding other members of the committee, particularly the elders, who were unfamiliar with the new tax proclamation.²²¹

On the basis of the violation discovered, the representative passed a decision that the tax assessment should be re-done in conformity to the proclamation. He also decided that a new

²²¹NALA, Folder 17.1.3.27.; File No. 17.1.3.27.03, “A Letter from Qäñazemač Azebeṭé Habtämarīam, Governor of Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajja* to *Ras Mäsfīn Seläši*, Governorate General of Šäwan Province about unfair Taxation in the Region”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 19/1961E.C, Ref. 17/3/600.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.27.; File No. 17.1.3.27.03, “A Minute of a Meeting of Higher Officials of Mänz and Gešé *Awrajja* to Settle Aradama Subdistrict People’ Petition about Unfair Tax Assessment”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 23,1961E.C.No Ref. The meeting was chaired by the *Awrajja* governor and the participants were *Ato Hailäselassé Estifanos*, Land Holding and Administration Head of Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajja*; *Ato Zägäyē Gäbrähiwot*, Executive Secretary of Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajja*, *Ato Altayé Jämanäh*, Judge of Géramedir District Court and; *Ato Täsfayé Horiso*, Head of Géramedir Treasury Office.

committee should be set up. *Ato Tafäsä Horiso*, head of *Géramedir* district treasury branch office became chairperson of the committee and *Ato Täšomä Habtägäbre’el* became secretary. Other members of the new tax assessor committee were elders recruited earlier by the people, not those chosen by the chairperson.²²²

The representative further reported that the problem of tax assessment and collection in *Mänz ena Gešé awrajja* was complicated by a variety of factors. It was partly associated with inefficiencies at local offices and authorities, and delays in responding to instructions and directions from higher government offices. The local offices, very often, neither solved problems by themselves nor reported them to higher offices on time. The *Bäjerond* office of the *awrajja*, in particular failed to closely follow up tax assessment and collection. The fact that there were no representatives of the Ministry of Finance familiar with the new tax proclamation also created confusion around the new tax proclamation both among the tax assessors themselves and the people. In some areas, tax assessors forced the people to pay *asrat* which was already voided by proclamation no. 70/1944. The failure to move the head office of *bäjerond* of the *awrajja* from its former capital, *Däbrässina*, to *Mähalméda* was another challenge. On top of this, as *Mänz ena Gešé* was a *rist-hagär*, the land was highly fragmented and subdivided among lineage members located in different *qäbällés*. This became an additional burden for tax administration because it took much time to visit the lands moving from one site to the other.²²³

Higher government officials of *Šäwa* province evaluated the performance of each *awrajja* of the province in the presence of all *awrajja* governors on 8 August 1968. Each *awrajja* governor

²²²NALA, Folder 17.1.3.27.; File No. 17.1.3.27.03, “A Letter from *Qäñeazemač Azebeṭé Habtämariam*, Governor of *Mänz ena Gešé Awrajja* to *Ras Mäsfīn Seläši*, Governorate General of *Šäwan* Province”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 19/1961E.C, Ref. 17/3/600.

²²³*Ibid.*

reported the opportunities and challenges faced in the process of tax assessment and collection. All *awrajja* governors of the province unanimously reported that delays in the judicial system, the failure to impose proper penalties on individuals found guilty of abusing their authority, the inefficiency of local government agents and experts, the lack of clarity of the new agricultural income tax proclamation, and the shortage of budget and incentives were major challenges. All of these challenges, the report emphasized, significantly undercut the income of the province and subsequently of the state. They also caused accumulations of tax arrears on the taxpayers. When taxpayers went to pay the basic land tax (*firé-geber*) of the budget year, they were requested to pay the previous *tithe* (*asrat*) first. Taxpayers would thus return even without paying the tax of the budget year. When the tax payers were requested to pay the accumulated tax, they would resort to disobedience or even violence towards government authorities, often matters getting beyond the capacity of local government authorities to handle. Some of the people would bring the case to higher government offices.²²⁴ Still some others would attempt to demonstrate their grievances, including by attacking local government officials and destroying natural resources including forests owned by the state.²²⁵

Tax Appeal Councils were organized at *wäräda* and *awrajja* levels to reconsider peoples' petitions. However, little came out of it because the councils failed to pass decisions fast enough. In addition, the *bäjerond* officers were, most of the time, in the field and hence, did not handle peoples' complaints on time.²²⁶ Delay in decision making by the concerned offices meant that the

²²⁴NALA, Folder 17.1.3.27.; File No. 17.1.3.27.03, "A Letter from *Däjjazmač* Säbsebé Šebru, Vice Governorate General of Šāwan Province to Ato Solomon Abrham, Minister Interior, About Tax Income, Tax Deficiencies and Associated Problems of the Šāwan Provinces", dated on *Mäskäräm* 8, 1961 E.C. Ref No. 8/403.; Informants: *Mämré* Zäwudé Hailämikael, *Aläqa* Tässäma Woldägiorgis and Ato Yeheyas Manyaheläwal.

²²⁵*Ibid.*

²²⁶NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.27, File no.17.1.3.27.03, "A Letter From Ato Solomon Abrham, Minister De'eta in Ministry of Finance to Ras Mäsfīn Seläši, Governor General of Šāwan Province about Tax Collection in the Province", dated on *Ter* 13/1961 E.C., Ref.No. 6791/23.

collection of taxes was suspended, leading in the process to peasants running out money. The result was accumulation of taxes which as the table below shows, was quite substantial:²²⁷

Table 5: Tax Arrears in Mänz ena Gešé, and Yefat ena Temuga Awrajjas, in1967

Administrative unit	Agricultural Income Tax assessment	Taxes collected in the budget year	Unpaid taxes of the budget year
Šäwa Province	4,720,240.00	2,577,698.00	2,142,533.00
Yefat ena Temuga awrajja	221,809.25	62,808.66	159,000.39
Mänz ena Gešé awrajja	91,543,50.00	51,199.50.00	40,341.00

Source: NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.27., File. No. 17.1.3.27.03 , “ A Letter From *Däjjazmač* Säbsebé Šeberu General Governor of Šäwa Province to *Bäjerond* Bāyānā Nägewo, Head, Šäwa Province *Bäjerond* Office dated on 16/5/1961E.C., Ref No. h/8802/8003/40.

The above table shows that in Yefat ena Temuga awrajja more than three-fourth of the taxes was unpaid while in Mänz ena Gešé nearly half of the taxes were postponed to the next budget year. Though the reasons as to why local government agents failed to collect taxes on time varied from place to place, all awrajja governors of the province identified a few points in common. The first was that absentee lords, who had *ristä-gult* in the province, intervened to push against the decision of local government authorities. These individuals urged the revision and sometime cancellation of taxes, and negotiated with higher government authorities about this without the knowledge or participation of local government offices. Second, the *wäräda* and awrajja government officials were not strong or bold enough to force people to pay taxes on time fearing that the latter might go to Addis Abäba and lodge complaints with the Ministry of Interior or the Emperor. They thus feared not only that they might make them busy with complaints, but also that they would create

²²⁷NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.27., File. No. 17.1.3.27.03 , “ A Letter From *Däjjazmač* Säbsebé Šeberu General Governor of Šäwan Province to *Bäjerond* Bāyānā Nägewo, Head, Šäwan Province *Bäjerond* Office dated on 16/5/1961E.C., Ref No. h/8802/8003/40.

negative impression with higher officials about local government authorities. Third, there was the high intervention on the part of parliamentary representatives. The representatives advised and sometimes mobilized local people against authorities who sought to compel them to pay taxes. They also made representations with higher government offices and the Imperial Court on behalf of the people. For all of these reasons, the task of collecting taxes would be delayed.²²⁸ The *bäjerond* office of the province emphasized that the repeated appeals lodged by people with high government officials bypassing several levels of government and the decisions that could have been made at those levels was the basic cause for the delay of decisions and accumulation of arrears. It states that higher government offices and officials operated in a manner that violated some of the provisions of the proclamation while dealing with peoples' tax complains. Article 17 sub-article 8 of the proclamation does provide that any individual who might have reservations in relation to tax assessment may directly appeal to what was known as *Yägeber qeréta sāmi kawunsel* (Tax Appeal Council), but if the issue is related to a violation or misinterpretation of provisions in the proclamations, it should be addressed to the courts. The practice however, was different.²²⁹ Advised by their parliamentary representatives, the local people appealed the case to higher levels of government. In most cases, they jumped several levels of government to appeal directly to the Ministry of Interior or the Emperor.²³⁰

²²⁸NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.27., File. No. 17.1.3.27.03 , “ A Letter from *Dajjazmach SäbsebéŠeberu*, General Governor of Šāwan Province to *Bajerond Beyene Negewo*, head, Šāwan Province *Bejorond* Office dated on 16/5/1961E.C., Ref No. *h/8802/8003/40*.

²²⁹NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.27., File. No. 17.1.3.27.03 , “ A Letter from *Ato Mängestu Luelsägäd*, Vice *Bäjerond* of Šāwan Province to *Ras Mäsfin Seläši*, Governor General of Šāwan Province about Aradama People Petition of Tax Abuse in *Géramedir Wārāda*”, dated on 11/2/1961E.C., Ref No. *U/2058/61*.

²³⁰NALA, Folder No.17.1.3.27, File No.17.1.3.27.01, “A Minute of *Mänz ena Gešē Awrajja* Dealing with Tax Complain of Aradama People in *Géramedir Wārāda*”, dated on *Nähassé 3/1960E.C.*

Ato Mängestu Luelsägäd, the Vice *Bäjerond* of Šäwa Province who addressed the issue to Ras Mäsfin Seläši, on 21 October 1968 stated the problem as follows:

...በተለይ እነዚህ በአድማ መልክ እየተቀሳቀሱ አቤቱታ የሚያቀርቡ ክፍሎች አብዛኞቹ በይግባኝ የማይጠቀሙ ሲሆኑ እና የይግባኝ ቀን እያለፈባቸው በይግባኝ ሰሚው ጉባኤ እና በፍርድ ቤትም በኩል አቤቱታቸው ዋጋ በማያገኝበት ጊዜ ሌላ አቤቱታ ተቀባይ ክፍል ከማግኘታቸው የተነሳ አፈጻጸሙን ምክንያት በማድረግ የህዝብ ወኪሎች ነን በሚሉ ሰዎች አነሳሽነት እና መገፋፋት ከወረዳ እስከ ጠቅላይ ግዛት እስከ አገር ግዛት ሚኒስቴር ድረስ እያመለከቱ ቀላጢ በማመላለስ የግብሩን አከፋፈል ስራ ወደ ጎሳ እንዳስቀሩት ሊታወቅ ተችሏል፡፡²³¹

...in particular those individuals who organized and brought petitions [to higher officials] do not make use of the tax appeals committee available locally. In some cases they would miss the deadline for appealing to local council and the court, they choose to bring the case to another office with the initiation and encouragement of peoples' representatives; these people moved from one office to another from *warada* to province and Ministry of Interior levels, and hence delayed the collection of taxes.

The delay of decision making in the Tax Appeal Council at *wäräda* and *awrajja* levels, in turn, was another challenge to tax administration. It not only affected tax collection, but also made peasant farmers waste much of their time and resources in pursuit of their cases, even during the times when they were supposed to attend to their fields. The problem was worse if cases were passed to higher offices for reconsideration. At this time, peasants had to travel long distances on foot and stay in urban centers for extended periods of time during which they are unable to attend to their regular work. If and when peasants fail to pay accumulated taxes including the penalties, they either would be forced to enter into credit or sell off assets including, land and oxen, or lose their lands in the name of *geber-täl* (default).²³²

²³¹NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.27., File. No. 17.1.3.27.03 , “A Letter from Ato Mängestu Luelsägäd, Vice *Bäjerond* of Šäwan Province to Ras Mäsfin Seläši, Governor General of Šäwan Province about Aradama People Petition of Tax Abuse in Géramedir *Wäräda*”, dated on 11/2/1961E.C., Ref No. *U*/2058/61.

²³²NALA, Folder No. 17.1.3.27, File Number-17.1.3.27.03, “A Letter From Ato Solomon Abrham, Minister De’eta in Ministry of Fenance to Ras Mäsfin Seläši, Governor General of Šäwan Province about Tax Collection in the

Evidently, maladministration of taxes had implications for the socio-economic conditions of the poor people and indirectly for the natural environment. It undermined the trust of local people on the state and hence widened the gap between them. People began to resist orders coming from above and gravitated towards sabotaging even state development initiatives in every way possible. They demonstrated their opposition by destroying property or resources (including land and forests) that belonged to the state or local elites. Secondly, people became reluctant to invest in land or to improve and maintain it, fearing that they would not enjoy the fruits of their extra efforts. They knew that they would not benefit much from increased productivity as would the *mālkāña*, the *balabat* or agents of the state.²³³ As a result of this, local people tended to consider every effort of the state as something meant to exploit or harass ordinary people. They manifested disobedience in very many ways. Banditry and other forms of criminal behavior became widespread.²³⁴

In relatively remote and marginal regions conditions were more difficult and complex. There the very presence of the state was hardly felt, giving room for the prevalence of generally unstable conditions. This was evident in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* of my study area, particularly among the the Oromo and Afar pastoralists.²³⁵ These people from the very beginning looked upon the restoration of the Emperor with disfavor.²³⁶ Government efforts to integrate the pastoralist

Province”, dated on *Ter* 13/1961E.C., Ref.No. 6791/23.; Informants: *Ato* Tačebälé Yegeläṭu, *Ato* Šāwayé Yefru and *Ato* Tässäma Kābädä.

²³³Informants: *Ato* Tačebälé Yegeläṭu, *Ato* Šāwayé Yefru and *Ato* Tässäma Kābädä.

²³⁴NALA, Folder 17.1.3.27.; File No. 17.1.3.27.03, “A Letter from Colonel Māngestu, Commander-in –Chief of Šāwan Province Police Force to Crime Protection and Investigation Department of Police Force”, Dated on *Māskārām* 9, 1961E.C., Ref No3/725/60.; Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest* ...,pp.3-4.; Informants: *Ato* Alāmyu Hailé, *Ato* Yeṭena Gerum, *Ato* Bälačāw Yelma and *Ato* Hailu Gezaw.

²³⁵Informants: *Amsaalāqa* Mäkonen Zāwudé, *Ato* Mohammäd Hassän and *Ato* Germa Wondafraš.

²³⁶Ṭelahun, *የፋሽዳላ ክፍለ ዘመን...*(Twenty Century Ethiopia...),p.243.; Informants: *Amsaalāqa* Mäkonen Zāwudé, *Ato* Mohammäd Hassän and *Ato* Germa Wondafraš.

inhabited areas with the intention of centralization of power and resources further aggravated their resentments. People thus engaged in resistance acts of one form or another.²³⁷

Competition over Resources and Ecological Crisis

Conflict over resources and environmental change are two interrelated phenomena. In fact, developments in one tend to directly affect the other. All over the African Continent, conflict at different levels and intensity was one of the root causes of environmental change, just as the latter tends to fuel conflict.²³⁸ The recurrent conflict over resources not only resulted in diminishing resources, but also induced ecological change that worsened the conditions of life for people. The problem would often become serious due to government intervention in the form of land grabbing in the name of development. The decline of pasture and water bodies pushed people either to adapt new mode of life or move to other areas with their cattle in search of resources. In the process, people would often confine themselves to smaller areas and/or adapt themselves to new forms of livelihood such as cultivation. But this would be generally difficult to achieve within a short period of time. In those cases where the movement is to already settled or occupied areas, chances are that they would enter into conflict with others in competition for scarce resources. This unstable situation would endanger not only social networks but also the environment.²³⁹ Lisk argues that the multifaceted forms of conflict (ethnic, religious, economic or political and others) made the livelihoods of people in Africa precarious and subject to climate-induced crisis such as drought.

²³⁷*Ibid.*

²³⁸Dennis G. Willms and Karolena Werner, "Climate Change and Conflict in Africa", in *Climate Change in Africa: Adaptation, Mitigation and Governance Challenges, The Center for International Governance Innovation(CIGI) Special Report*(2009),p.27.; see also Anantha K. Duraiappah, et al, *Land Tenure, Land Use, Environmental Degradation and Conflict Resolution A PASIR Analysis for Narok District, Kenya*, Working Paper no.33.(Amsterdam, Institute for Environmental Studies, 2000),p.1.

²³⁹Willms and Werner, "Climate Change and...",p.27.; Franklyn Lisk, "Overview: The Current Climate Change Situation in Africa" in *Climate Change in Africa: Adaptation, Mitigation and Governance Challenges, The Center for International Governance Innovation(CIGI) Special Report*(2009),pp.9-10.

As time passes, the problems would become increasingly challenging and intractable.²⁴⁰The history of North Šäwa in general and of my study area in particular illustrates this trajectory.

Historically, central, northeastern and southeastern parts of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* were an arena of contest among people who belonged to three ethnic groups: Amhara, Oromo and Afar. They also saw intense efforts by the state for control and by local people to maintain their independence. The Amhara competed for resources with the Afar around Rassa, and with the Oromo all the way from Jarra to Borkäna Rivers. The Oromo and the Afar often confronted each other around Sänbäté and Aṭayé.²⁴¹ The underlying causes of conflict were complex and had economic, political, socio-cultural and ecological dimensions. In this section, I try to give due emphasis to the economic and partly the political aspects of the conflict and its overall impact on local society and the natural environment.

The three ethnic groups competed over agricultural and grazing lands for generations. The conflicting conception of land among the sedentary Amhara and pastoralist Oromo and Afar was perhaps the most important element in the conflict. The pastoralists, as elsewhere in the country, exercised communal ownership of land, and as a result members of the tribe had the right to use resources communally. In contrast, among the Amhara, the cultivated and grazing lands were owned and administered privately. Each *rist* holder had the right to use the resources privately even though the land was assumed to be to property of the descent group as a whole. Members had no right to transfer or sell the land to outsiders.²⁴²

²⁴⁰*Ibid*, pp.9-10.

²⁴¹Informants: Ato Anäagagrāñ Bezunäh, Ato Dässalāñ Zägäyé and Ato Mohammäd Hassän.

²⁴²*Ibid*.

Inevitably, therefore, conflicts took place between sedentary agriculturalists and pastoralists every time when one pushed and entered into the territories of the other. The pastoralists, for instance, moved upward towards the territories of agricultural communities in search of pasture and water for their cattle in the dry season, mostly from April to June. The cattle herders let their cattle pasture beyond their boundaries, sometime causing damage to crops in the field or animal forage gathered around villages. Similarly, due to demographic pressure, agriculturalists pushed into the well-drained semi pastoralist areas, pushing them further away into corners.²⁴³ These small-scale individual back-and-forth gradually came to take the form of politically significant communal conflicts.

Both archival and written sources attest that the Italians, who manipulated the ethnic, religious and language differences of local people during the period of occupation, left an enduring legacy for the post-liberation period. They armed the Muslim Oromo and Afar and inspired a military campaign against the highland Christian communities. As a result, the highlanders looked for favorable time and condition to undertake revenge. That revenge began immediately after restoration. The first instance was *Däjjazmač* Damṭāw Mäšäša's campaign against the Oromo of Ṭemuga in August 1941. He was one of the leading patriots and had later become a governor of Gešé and Anṣokia in the immediate post-liberation period. He mobilized the highlanders specifically the people of Mänz *ena* Gešé, Efrata *ena* Gedom and embarked on a destructive campaign against the Ṭemuga Oromo. The 'warriors' returned with booty consisting of a large number of cattle. In February 1942, Mäšäša Zäwoldé, the then governor of Efrata, did the same conducting another military expedition against the Oromo between Sänbäté and Çäffarobit. Elders remember these events, as if they happened very recently. The raids caused heavy casualties in

²⁴³Informants: *Amsaaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Jafär Hussén, and *Ato* Germa Wondafräš

human, material and environmental terms. They destroyed settlements, killed and displaced large number of people, and looted large number of cattle.²⁴⁴

The intensity of the conflict, particularly between the Amhara and the Oromo, increased from time to time and got new momentum particularly in the late 1940s and 1950s.²⁴⁵ The government accused the Furisi Oromo who provided protection to rebel leaders like Muhammed Ibrahim (nicknamed *Ras Toboké*). Making their base in this area, the rebels and some members of the local community undertook sudden attacks against the neighboring Amhara and Afar communities at different times, pushing further inland as far as Qallu *awrajja* in Wällo. They also attacked government agents and passengers crossing through the region. On one occasion, Oromo individuals are reported to have made an unsuccessful attempt to kill the crown prince at Arbawayu while he was travelling from Addis Abäbä to Dässé. In the incident the crown prince apparently escaped narrowly. This situation is said to have alarmed the central government and necessitated intervention. Tension existed among the two ethnic groups and soon a conflict broke out around Gubba Annani, on the border of the Amhara and Oromo. *Qäñazmač* Kätäma Dämsé, the governor of the area, carried out an attack on the Oromo and destroyed their villages. Soon, the conflict swept the whole region and threatened to get out of control. The government sent security forces from Däbräberhan and managed to stabilize the situation.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴Ahmad Hassen, "Protracted Rural Protests in Northeastern Šäwa and Southern Wällo (Ethiopia): Towards A History of Social Movement, 1941-1974" in Elio Ficquent and etal(eds.), *Proceedings of the eighteenth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.1,(Addis Ababa, 2013), pp.360-361.

²⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p.360.

²⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p.363-65.; NALA, Folder.No.17.1.3.46.;File No.17.1.3.46.02., "A Letter from Mängäša Wossäné, Governor of Däbrässena *Wäräda* to Emperor Hailäselassé," dated on *Nähassé* 8, 1935E.C., No. Ref.No.; NALA, Folder.No.17.1.3.46.;File No.17.1.3.46.02., "A Letter from Mäkonnen Mäšäša, Governor of Däbrässena *Wäräda* to Šähafi Tezaz Woldämäsqäl Tariku, Governor General of Šäwan Province about Security Issue in the *Wäräda*," dated on *Nähassé* 15/1935E.c., No Ref.No.; NALA, Folder no. 2.2.77., File no.2.2.77.08., " A Letter From *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän Hailäselassé to Emperor Hailäselassé" dated on *Genbot* 9, 1941E.C., Ref no. 76/41.

Sometime afterwards, the central government sent a committee led by Generals Abiy Abäbä and Märed Mängäša to restore peace in the region and investigate the matter. The officials discussed the matter with representatives from both ethnic groups and local governors at Arbawayyu. They identified and punished individuals involved in the incident and removed local officials from office for their failure to control the conflict at its early stage. They received commitments from representatives of both ethnic groups not to initiate conflict in the future. It was also stipulated that a very strict regime of punishment would be applied if violations were to occur in the future. Accordingly, if an Oromo person or persons were to start a conflict, the whole clan of the offender(s) would pay 1000 heads of cattle and 50,000 birr. In the same manner, if the aggressor(s) were Amhara, the local community would pay a penalty of 50,000 birr. The Oromo, however, were disappointed with the decision and claimed that it was made in favor of the Amhara. Thus, the decision did not bring conflicts to an end.²⁴⁷ Ahmed argues that conflicts did not end because government intervention was perfunctory and non-methodical. He writes that conflict resolution

“...always functioned with the existing narrow structure of local government. They did not try to initiate...a broader framework in which highly respected local chiefs and religious leaders could be incorporated into the regular administrative process so that they could always positively contribute towards the effective prevention and resolution of inter-ethnic economic, politico-administrative and social conflicts”.²⁴⁸

Thus in early May 1949, still another serious conflict broke out between the Amhara of Gešé and Anşokia on the one hand, and the Oromo of Temuga at Čäffa. Soon the Amhara of Efrata *ena* Gedem penetrated deep into the Oromo occupied areas and inflicted heavy losses both in human life and animals.²⁴⁹ There were also damages to the environment. By way of revenge, on 14 May

²⁴⁷ Ahmed, “Protracted Rural Protests...”, p.365-67.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

²⁴⁹ NALA, Folder no. 2.2.77., File no.2.2.77.08., “A Letter From *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän Hailäselassé to Emperor Hailäselassé”, dated on *Genbot* 7, 1941E.C., Ref no. 72/41.

of the same year, the Ṭemuga Oromo attacked the *näçläbaš* (militia) at Jäwuha and caused heavy losses.²⁵⁰ Similarly, on 17 May 1949, at Sänbäté in Jillé an Oromo killed an Italian and a few Ethiopians crossing the region by car, triggering another round of punitive expedition by government militia and losses of life and property²⁵¹ In the stories that they tell about the causes and consequences of this conflict, my informants tend to present a picture in which the culprit was always this or that group, depending on which group they belonged to. Thus for my Amhara informants it was the Oromo who started the conflict and carried out an "indiscriminate attack" against the Amhara regardless of age. The stories from the Oromo side would be similarly be accusatory of the Amhara.²⁵² In any case, a telegram message from the Crown Prince to the Emperor dated on 17 May 1949 says that the Oromo continued to threaten neighboring ethnic groups and passengers crossing the region. He requested that the Oromo of Ṭemuga and Erké be disarmed "willingly or otherwise". The crown prince stated his frustration that some of the Oromo of the area showed willingness to negotiate for the time being only to buy time to move their families and cattle.²⁵³ The Emperor accepted the proposal, but warned the Crown Prince not to mistreat people in the name of disarming and restoring peace even if the Oromo showed aggressive posture. For facilitating the process, Brigadier General Abiy Abäbä was sent from the central

²⁵⁰NALA, Folder 2.2.77., File no.2.2.77.08, "A Letter from *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän Hailäselassé to Emperor Hailäselassé", dated on *Genbot* 8, 1941E.C., Ref.no. 73/44.; see also NALA, Folder 2.2.77., File no.2.2.77.08, "A Letter From Emperor Hailäselassé to *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän Hailäselassé", dated on *Genbot* 8, 1941E.C., Ref.no. 26/178.

²⁵¹NALA, Folder 2.2.77., File no.2.2.77.08, "A Letter from *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän Hailäselassé to Emperor Hailäselassé", dated on *Genbot* 9, 1941E.C., Ref.no. 76/44.

²⁵²Informants: *Ato* Ṭerusäw Mäkonen, *Ato* Tafässä Assalefäw and *Ato* Aṭlaw Asamenäw.

²⁵³NALA, Folder no. 2.2.77., File no.2.2.77.08., "A Letter from *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän Hailäselassé to Emperor Hailäselassé", dated on *Genbot* 9, 1941E.C., Ref no. 76/41.

government to the area. From the side of Wällo province, Colonel Dästa Šäwarkabh was assigned to collect the firearms in collaboration with the militia forces from Arṭuma and Erké.²⁵⁴

On 30 May 1949, the Crown Prince reported to the Emperor that local government officials had begun to disarm the Oromo from Erqé to Karakoré in Wällo and Šäwa provinces respectively, based on the imperial order given earlier. The Oromo southeast of Karaqoré, however, were unwilling to hand over their weapons probably fearing the possibility of attack from other ethnic groups from the surrounding areas. Even those who handed over their guns were able to quickly rearm themselves due to the wide circulation of weapons. With this, it became difficult to bring an end to conflicts and disturbances in the region.²⁵⁵

On 14 June 1949, the Emperor sent another telegram message to the Crown Prince providing instructions as to how to carry out stabilizing activities. The first was to give local elites the responsibility of keeping peace in their domain. Secondly, the local militia was assigned to patrol the highway, and follow up the disarmament of the local people. Thirdly, to settle the conflict and restore peace in the area, the Emperor sent *Fitawurari* Keflé Dadi, *Däjjazmač* Šähayé Woldätäklé, and *Qäñazmač* Käbädä Ali from the Šäwa side and ordered the Crown Prince to do the same nominating people from parts of his province bordering Šäwa. Fourthly, until the process of disarmament was over, the Oromo of Ṭemuga would be put under military administration. To this

²⁵⁴NALA, Folder no. 2.2.77., File no.2.2.77.08., “A Telegram Message From Emperor Hailäselassé to *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän Hailäselassé”, dated on *Genbot* 8, 1941E.C., Ref no. 26/178.

²⁵⁵NALA, Folder 2.2.77., File no.2.2.77.08, “A Letter from *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän Hailäselassé to Emperor Hailäselassé”, dated on *Genbot* 22, 1941E.C., No Ref. Illegal weapons were widely imported to Yefat from the Afar lowlands. The circulation of fire arms in the region aggravated the existing resource based and historic conflicts among different ethnic and economic groups.

end, Colonel Dästa Šäwarkabh was assigned as governor of the newly established Jara military administration.²⁵⁶

In response to this, in a letter addressed to the Emperor dated on 22 June 1949, *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän, stated that the Oromo of Arṭuma and Däwwéy did not stop their aggressive acts. On the same day, he said, they penetrated deep into the Amhara settlement of Gämza in Efrata and came back with looted cattle. Cattle raiding was taking place frequently and was sometimes accompanied by burning of villages and crops in the field. The Arṭuma Oromo, who had already handed over their weapons to the government, were able to smuggle in other weapons. This made peace keeping activities very challenging. Local government officials were not in a position to keep the security of the area for lack of a permanently stationed contingent of the army. The local militia had little by way of resources including food. The Crown prince proposed that a permanent military station should be established in the area. He requested the appointment of a neutral judge from Addis Abäba to look into the underlying issues and handle criminal cases.²⁵⁷ Delay in making decision and lack of determination on the part of the central government, however, made the problem continue for several decades afterwards.²⁵⁸ During the Military regime, prolonged and frequent famines aggravated and were at the same time exacerbated by conflicts over resources.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶NALA, Folder 2.2.77., File no.2.2.77.08, “A Telegram Message From Emperor Hailäselassé to *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän Hailäselassé”, dated on *Säné* 6, 1941E.C., No 394.

²⁵⁷NALA, Folder 2.2.77., File no.2.2.77.08, “A Letter from *Märedazmač* Asfawwossän Hailäselassé to Emperor Hailäselassé”, dated on *Säné* 14, 1941E.C., Ref.no. 92/44.

²⁵⁸Informants: *Ato* Ṭerusäw Mäkonen, *Ato* Tafässa Assalefäw and *Ato* Aṭlaw Asamenäw.

²⁵⁹EGWAO, No.Folder., File no. 997, “A Petition from Chairpersons of Peasants’ Association in Fursi District Addressed to Fursi District Administration Office”, dated on *Hämlé* 7, 1975, No Ref.; EGWAO, No.Folder., File no. 997, “A Petition from Wädoy Peasant Association in Fursi District to Yefat and Ṭemuga Awrajja Adiministration”, dated on *Miazia* 1, 1975, No Ref.; Informants:*Amsaaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Jafär Hussén, and *Ato* Germa Wondafras.

The Amhara vs the Afar

The other ethnic groups who came into conflict over resources in Yefat were the Afar and the Amhara, particularly those living southeast of Šāwarobit and Sānbäté, around the Awadi River. Burémodayto district in the southeast of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* was a case in point. According to archival sources, this district was established only in name having no government and social infrastructure including an administrative town, for a long period of time. The people there were truly marginalized and lived in poverty. The introduction of mechanized farming along the right and left banks of the Awaš River in the 1950s and 1960s created additional stress for them and indirectly to the settled agriculturalists of the neighboring areas.²⁶⁰ Archival sources indicate that these well-drained parts of the Awash valley were given to companies that pushed the cattle herders out.²⁶¹

The expansion of mechanized agriculture partly denied pasture and water access to the cattle herders, particularly during the dry seasons, from mid-September to June of every year. Even though the pastoralists in the lowlands occupied vast stretches of land, much of it was unused for lack of water. Some of it would get flooded during the rainy season and would take some time to dry; other parts of it would have no water and grass for most of the year. Thus, the pastoralists depended heavily on the well-drained areas around the right and the left banks of the Awash River. But the investors were allowed to take land away from the cattle herders and thus undermined their

²⁶⁰NALA, Folder No., 17.1.3.53., File No. 17.1.3.53.03., “A Letter from Colonel Nāgaš Woldāmikael, Vice Administrator of Šāwan Province to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Hedar* 29, 1974E.C., Ref. ፳1/11/ሺ.; See also Glynn Flood, “Nomadism and Its Future: The Afar” in Abdul Mejid Hussien(ed.), *Drought and Famine in Ethiopia, African Environmental Special Report 2*(International African Institute, 1976),p.64.); Ayalew Gebre, *Pastoralism Under Pressure: Land AliENation and Pastoral Transformations Among the Karrayu of Eastern Ethiopia, 1941 to the Present*(The Hague: Shaker Publishing, 2001),pp. 49-52.; Ayalew Gebre, “Conflict Over Land Use: Pastoralism. Commercial and State Agriculture: the Case of Afar” in Katsuyoshi Fukui etal(eds.), *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective in the 13th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. II(Kyoto, 1997),pp.360-364.

²⁶¹NALA, Folder No., 17.1.3.53., File No. 17.1.3.53.03., “A Letter from Colonel Nāgaš Woldāmikael, Vice Administrator of Šāwan Province to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Hedar* 29, 1974E.C., Ref. ፳1/11/ሺ.

livelihood.²⁶² The pressure meant that they would be forced either to change their mode of life and adopt semi-agricultural activity or move to still unoccupied marginal and infertile areas. In the first option meant that they would be obliged to reduce the size of their cattle and thus their income and social status. As I have mentioned before, cattle for pastoralists meant everything. They were a source of food and a kind of life insurance.²⁶³ Some of the displaced Afar moved upwards to the highland areas and some others went to the remote lowlands. Those who moved to the elevated lands came into conflict with the settled agriculturalists and the semi-pastoralist communities in Yefat *ena* Temuga and other neighboring *awrajjas*. Frequent conflicts appeared among the Afar with the Amhara and Oromo agriculturalists in the central, eastern, and southeastern parts of the *awrajjja* particularly since 1941.²⁶⁴

The state blamed the pastoralists as being the most destructive of the natural environment through overgrazing pasture lands. As opposed to this assumption, scholars in the field agree that cattle herders were familiar with their areas and knew how to use and manage resources, namely pasture and water. They moved from one area to another in order to save the land from total destruction. They kept the land out of the reach of animals until it regenerated and grew grass. Sources indicate that environment-friendly livelihood of most pastoralists was disturbed by the deep involvement of the state and companies in the name of development. The intervention not only put pastoralists' lives at risk but also created ecological stress. The companies cleared the vegetation cover in order

²⁶²Flood, "Nomadism and Its...",p.64. see also Ayalew, *Pastoralism Under...*,pp. 49-52.;Lars Bondestom," People and Capitalism in Northeastern Lowlands of Ethiopia", in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol.XII,No.III(1974),p.423.

²⁶³Ayalew Gebre, "Conflict Over Land...",pp.360-364.; See also Bondestom," People and Capitalism...",p. 423.

²⁶⁴NALA, Folder No., 17.1.3.53., File No. 17.1.3.53.03., "A Letter from Colonel Nāgaš Woldāmikael, Vice Administrator of Šāwan Province to Ministry of Interior", dated on *Hedar* 29, 1974E.C., Ref. ፱1/11/ሺ.

to prepare the land for cultivation. The absence of vegetation, in turn, accelerated soil erosion, leaching, and the release of carbon from the open cultivated fields.²⁶⁵

Thus cattle herders in my area of study came into conflict with agri-buisnesses (Däbol, Gäfegäf and Gäwané, and Dofan Bolhan) that were established in the Upper Awash River valley, particularly in and around Buremodaytu district. The pastoralists let their cattle to graze cotton plantation in the compounds of the above mentioned companies. They sometimes burnt and looted the cotton produced by way of revenge for the mistreatment they suffered under the organizations. As the area was far from the administrative center of the *awrajjja*, and because the cattle herders were continuously mobile, it became difficult for state intervention. The high circulation of illegal firearms also complicated the problem for the state.²⁶⁶

The companies and the cattle herders blamed each other. The Afar blamed them for not giving them compensation nor creating adequate job opportunities for them. They resented the fact that they employed laborers from the highland areas. The laborers themselves created additional stress on the local people by competing with them for land and firewood.²⁶⁷

In view of increasingly difficult situation in the area, the government attempted to settle the displaced Afar in Upper and Middle Awaš valleys at Amibara and there introduce them to agriculture. It also began to train the pastoralists in modern livestock farming, providing technical, material and financial support. The project commenced at Ali Dägé Méda by digging water pools. Both of the projects, however, failed. The former failed due to unwillingness of the pastoralists,

²⁶⁵ Girma, *The State and Development...*, pp.73-74.

²⁶⁶ Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäufekad, Ato Šäwayé Yefru and Ato Seid Abdulaziz.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

the latter due to the unsettled land litigation.²⁶⁸ Hence, the problem of political instability in the area continued with the increasing demand for pasturage and water in a state of declining environmental conditions. In 1977, the people of Burémodayeto requested the *awrajja* and the Šäwa province administrators to establish an administrative town in the district and settle their disputes with Gäwané state farm organization. The case reached the Ministry of Interior. Based on the order of the Ministry of Interior, the governor general of Šäwa sent experts of urban planning and representatives from concerned bodies to the area. The committee in consultation with local elders, proposed the establishment of the town at Däbäl. The process started soon enough. The administrative office of the district was built and branches of the ministries started work in 1978 and 1979, sharing the buildings of Gewane Agricultural Organization. In the middle of this process, the Gäwané agricultural organization opposed the establishment of the town and the building of government offices at Däbäl. It claimed that the area where the town was established was within the area envisaged for the farm extension program. It considered the establishment of the town in the nearby area as a threat to the organization.²⁶⁹ Thus, the building of the town was suspended due to the dispute. The case reached the Ministry of Interior again on 12 November 1981. The Ministry responded by ordering the governor general of Šäwa province to organize a committee that contained representatives from all concerned government bodies and the state farm development sector. The report of the committee clearly indicated that the area allocated to the town was not conducive for agricultural activity due to the saline nature of the soil. It also confirmed that no other place was like Däbäl for a town. In addition, the report indicated that out of the total 12,000 hectares of land held by the organization, only 970 hectares were cultivated.

²⁶⁸ Informants: Šayk Abdulqasim Oumär, Ato Ali Käräm and W/ro Märéma Hussén.

²⁶⁹ NALA, Folder No., 17.1.3.53., File No. 17.1.3.53.03., A Letter from Colonel Nägaš Woldämikael, Vice Administrator of Šäwan Province to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Hedar* 29, 1974E.C., Ref. 001/11/ሸ.

Still much of the land it occupied remained uncultivated. Thus, neither the company nor the local people used it. The organization also planned to include five to six *gašas* of land along the route from Burémodayto to Qäwot districts, which had already been demarcated for wild life conservation.²⁷⁰

My informants say that the increasing pressure of the companies on the local people created the conditions that led to instability and conflict. The company worked to maximize profit at the expense of local people. No balanced compensation was given to local people for the land and the associated privileges they lost. Poor infrastructure and weak state presence increased the vulnerability of the people to hazards such as famine and disease.²⁷¹

In conclusion, the pastoralists of North Šäwa, in general and the Awaš valley in general suffered from man-made and natural problems. The over concentration of large number of cattle population in a confined area caused not only scarcity of pasture and water resources, but also accelerated erosion due to overgrazing. The highlanders, who were in need of land for cultivation, pushed against the grazing lands of pastoralists and converted it into cultivation. In some areas, the agriculturalists burnt woodlands and bush for cultivation purposes. On the other hand, the state gave permission for companies to cultivate well-drained lands on the right and left sides of the Awash River. The flooding of much of pastoralist lands during the rainy season was another challenge for the cattle herders. As I have stated before, during the dry season, the pastoralists moved to the elevated or remote areas in search of water and pasture. The state also carved out and alienated land once used for grazing by the pastoralists and designated it as "protected" and granted

²⁷⁰*Ibid.*

²⁷¹ Informants: Šayk Abdulqasim Oumär, Ato Ali Käräm, W/ro Märéma Hussén, Ato Seid Abdulaziz, Ato Šäwayé Yefru and Ato Alämayähu Bäufekad.

some of it to favorites and investors. In Yefat, the area between Burémodaytu and Qāwot districts was demarcated as sanctuary for game and hence no one was allowed to graze animals there. Land grabbing was common throughout the Imperial period and after. As a result, the pastoralists suffered from the decline of grass and water bodies and the expansion of desertification.²⁷²

Border Disputes

Another zone of confrontation and conflict in Yefat was the borderland between Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga of Šāwa and the Qällu *awrajja* of Wällo province. This boundary was so fluid that people in both sides crossed it from both sides in search of agricultural and grazing land and water bodies. The reshuffling of border districts due to the enlargement or shrinking of both *awrajjas* over the course of time was the root cause of the existing border insecurity. It also had ethnic and cultural dimensions. The conflict particularly between Oromo and Amhara was more pronounced at Čäffarobit.²⁷³

In the post-liberation period, the vast plain of Čäffarobit was given to the local elite (mostly member of the Béza family), and some of the soldiers of *Ras* Abäbä Aregay as *madäria* land.²⁷⁴ The area became a point of conflict among the owners of the land and the Amhara residents as a whole on one hand and the Oromo pastoralists on the other.²⁷⁵ Conflicts appeared every time, mainly along the borders at Gämza district in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*, and Arṭuma district in Qällu *awrajja*, in Šāwa and Wällo provinces respectively. The two districts were adjacent and

²⁷²Šayk Abdulkasim Oumär, *Ato* Ali Kärīm, *W/ro* Märéma Hussén, *Ato* Seid Abdulaziz, *Ato* Šāwayé Yefru and *Ato* Alämayähu Bäsufekad.

²⁷³NALA, Folder 17.1.3.52., File no. 17.1.3.52.02., “Mänz *ena* Gešē *Awrajja* Administration about Security Report”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 27, 1968E.C; Informants: *Ato* Aṭlaw Asamenäw, *Ato* Tafässä Assalefäw, *Ato* Asäfa Woldämariam, and *Ato* Hassän Mohammäd.

²⁷⁴Informants: *Ato* Aṭlaw Asamenäw, *Ato* Tafässä Assalefäw, *Ato* Asäfa Woldämariam, *Ato* Hassän Mohammäd, and *Ato* Awuraris Aragaw.

²⁷⁵*Ibid.*

shared a long boundary, from Jara River in the south to the Borkena River in the north. They were separated by the highway from Addis Abāba to the north. The border people on both sides shared common market centers, cultivation and grazing lands, water bodies, social institutions like schools, health centers and other facilities. They, however, were administered in two separate provinces. This administrative inconvenience, my sources emphasize, contributed a lot to the prevalence of border conflicts and insecurities until the late 1950s.²⁷⁶ These recurrent conflicts endangered the day to day activities of local government officials as well as the natural environment. It became difficult to secure peace and order and at the same to implement government orders and directives. This was evident in the government's attempt to resettle people from distant areas to the region in 1968/69, and the failure to implement land measurement effectively.²⁷⁷

A letter from Colonel Lägässä Ešäté, Administrator of Yefat *ena Temuga awrajja* to Dr. Bantayāhu Gālaw, Administrator of the Šāwa province, dated on 13 October 1975, stated in great detail about the causes of border insecurity and the associated problems as follows:

...ለሁለቱ አስተዳደር ለተከፈሉት ከተሞች [ወሎ እና ሸዋ] ውስጥ የሚኖሩት ህዝቦች ራሳቸው በሚሰሩትም ወንጀል ሆነ ሌሎችም ፈጽመው እነርሱ ዘንድ ለመደበኛ ቢሞክሩ ከመኪና መንገድ በላይ ወሎ ከመኪና መንገድ በታች ሸዋ በሚለው የወሰን ገደብ እየተዘዋወሩ ስለሚጠቀሙ ለቁጥጥር አስቸጋሪ ሆኖ ይገኛል።
...በድንበር አካባቢ ጥቃት የሚፈጽሙ ሽፍቶች ጥቃቱን የሰነዘረው ከራሳቸው ጎሳ ውጭ ለማስመሰል የተቃራኒውን የጎሳ አባላት አለባበስ የሚመስል ልብስ በመልበስ ይፈጽሙታል። ይህም ሁኔታ በሁለቱም

²⁷⁶NALA, Folder No.17.1.3.52., File No. 17.1.3.52.02. , “A Letter from Colonel Lägässä Ešäté, Yefat *ena Temuga Awrajja* Administrator to Dr. Bantayāhu Gālaw, Administrator of Šāwan province”, dated on *Tekemet* 3, 1968E.C., Ref No. 3/1/587/68.

²⁷⁷WTMRC, Folder no. 9060/9072/ክ/338, File no. 9066, “ A Letter from *Fitawurary* Hailäselaasé Gezaw, Land Demarcation Director to Ato Egalä Zäwoldé, *Rist* and Concession Director about Resettlement”, dated on *Ter* 30/1961E.C., No Ref.; Informants: Ato Aṭlaw Asamenāw, Ato Tafässä Assalefāw, and Ato Asäfa Woldāmariam.

ጎሳዎች፡ በአማራ እና በኦሮሞ ጎልቶ ይታያል። ይህም የምርመራውን ሁኔታ አባብሶት ቆይቷል።²⁷⁸

...The people living in the towns were divided into two administrative provinces [Wällo and Šäwa]. When crimes are committed (by the residents themselves or by others who Tekie shelter with them) it became difficult to sort things out because the criminals moved to and out of the two administrative divisions separated by the highway one in Šäwa and the other in Wällo province.

...[Moreover]those bandits who committed attack along the border dressed the cultural cloth of the other ethnic group to make it to look like it was done outside of their ethnic group . This was evident in both the Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups. This situation made the process of investigation of crimes more challenging.

Besides, the local people, particularly the Oromo and the Afar would not cooperate in the process of criminal investigation for they considered the state as biased towards the Amhara.²⁷⁹ For this reason, they sometimes demonstrated their opposition by attacking local government facilities and officials including the security forces.²⁸⁰ The central and local government authorities resolved that the disarmament of the Oromo, who were armed by the Italians and partly by themselves, was a necessary condition for permanent stability in the area.²⁸¹ To this end, they planned to encircle the Oromo who gathered at Čäffaobit and take their weapons away from them. The plan was put into effect in late April 1949. On that occasion, the Amhara of Mafud, Qäwot, Gedem, Efrata, Gešé and the Borkena valley joined government forces with the intention of looting or recapturing cattle taken away from them previously. At first, Colonel Tässäma Azänä, a commander of the *Mägäzäz Tor* regiment ordered the Oromo to submit peacefully. Recognizing the siege, the Oromo systematically let their wives, children and cattle move to other areas smoothly. Then after, they

²⁷⁸EGDAOA, No Folder and File No. , “A Letter from Colonel Lägässä Ešäté, Yefat *ena* Temuga Awrajja Administrator to Dr. Bantayähu Gälaw, Administrator of Šäwan province”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 3, 1968E.C., Ref No. 3/1/587/68.

²⁷⁹Informants: Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw, Ato Tafässä Assalefäw, and Ato Asäfa Woldämariam.

²⁸⁰NALA, Folder No.17.1.3.52., File No. 17.1.3.52.02. , “A Letter from Colonel Lägässä Ešäté, Yefat *ena* Temuga Awrajja Administrator to Dr. Bantayähu Gälaw, Administrator of Šäwan province”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 3, 1968E.C., Ref No. 3/1/587/68.; Informants: Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw, Ato Tafässä Assalefäw, and Ato Asäfa Woldämariam.

²⁸¹Ahmed, “Protracted Rural...” p. 361.

attempted to break the siege forcefully. In the process, a fierce fighting took place between the two groups which soon spread throughout the region and beyond as far as Däwwéy Rahmado in Wällo. To settle the matter, an investigating delegation consisting of Generals Abiy Abäbä, Märed Mängäša, Däräsä Dubalä and Yelma Šebäši went to the area. As in the earlier time, the delegation could not bring a lasting solution. The tension continued into the following decades.²⁸²

In 1958, an expatriate was killed around Aṭayé while travelling to Asmara. Local government agents organized *afersata* (a traditional way of identifying criminals) but no one was willing to expose the criminal. The joint force of provincial and local police could not find the criminal/s. General state of political instability and frustration ensued. It was at this time that the central government sent another expeditionary force led by colonel (later Lieutenant General) Abäbä Gämäda, to the area to “restore peace”. As usual, Abäbä calmed down the situation for the time being through a combination of military threat and an extended discussion with local elders.²⁸³

To solve the problem once and for all, the new delegation proposed to the central government to declare a state of emergency and reorganize a special *awrajja* called *Yäjara awuraja Yäṭor ašetädadär* (Jara *Awrajja* Military Administration), merging together the conflicting corridors from both Šäwa(Efrata-Jillé, Gämza and Fursi) and Wällo(Erqä *wäräda*) provinces. The central government accepted the proposal and organized the new *awrajja* in 1958. It made Qişiço in Arṭumma its administrative center and the newly organized administrative unit directly communicated with the central government. Erqé *wäräda*, which was made to be part of the new administrative unit, was too vast, and thus was reorganized into three sub-districts namely

²⁸²*Ibid.*, pp. 368-70.

²⁸³*Ibid*, p. 371.

Arṭumma, Däwwéy and Rahemedo, and Essaygolla sub-districts.²⁸⁴ Colonel Abäbä Gämäda was appointed governor of Jara *awrajja*. He worked closely with local ethnic and religious leaders and systematically captured the criminals with a promise that he would seek and obtain clemency for them. But he executed them by hanging in the local market places such as Sänbäté, Karaqoré, Aṭayé and Kämssé. His harsh measures caused considerable disaffection among the local people.²⁸⁵

Our sources indicate that the new administrative re-arrangement brought a relatively peaceful atmosphere in the border areas until the mid-1960s. The situation, however, was reversed with the restoration of Erqé district to its previous administrative unit, Qällu *awrajja* of Wällo province, due to the appeal of the Crown Prince, Asfaw Wossän Hailäselassé, and other high ranking officials to the Emperor in 1972/73. These individuals insisted on the restoration of the district to Qällu *awrajja* due to the difficulty they faced in handling their vast *rist* lands in the district.²⁸⁶

The dissolution of Jarra military administration was soon accompanied by outbreak of conflict in the border between Gämza and Arṭuma *waradas* particularly at Čäffa. In September 1975, an Oromo killed three Amhara who were travelling from Essaygolla to Majäté and wounded ten. Following this incident, the Amhara of Efrata *ena* Gedem launched an attack against the Oromo of the *awrajja* in early October 1975. Within less than a week, the Oromo from Borkena to Jara Rivers mobilized and carried out a counter offensive against the Amhara in this vast stretch of land. The conflict extended for three days. According to the report of the peacekeeping force that

²⁸⁴NALA, Folder No.17.1.3.52., File No. 17.1.3.52.02. , “A Letter from Colonel Lägässä Ešäté, Yefat *ena* Temuga *Awrajja* Administrator to Dr. Bantayähu Gälaw, Administrator of Šäwan province”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 3, 1968E.C., Ref No. 3/1/587/68.

²⁸⁵Ahmad, “Protracted Rural...”, pp. 371-72.

²⁸⁶NALA, Folder No.17.1.3.52., File No. 17.1.3.52.02. , A Letter from Colonel Lägässä Ešäté, Yefat *ena* Temuga *Awrajja* Administrator to Dr. Bantayähu Gälaw, Administrator of Šäwan province”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 3, 1968E.C., Ref No. 3/1/587/68.

arrived in the area following the incident, a large number of the Oromo including the youth participated. It was estimated that in one front, ten to fifteen thousand Oromo took part in the fighting.²⁸⁷

The attack and counter attack caused heavy material and human loss, as well as environmental damage on both sides. A large number of people were displaced; many of course died and were wounded. The land between Jara and Borkäna rivers was devastated. Crops, villages, bush and grasslands were burnt. The land became virtually desolate. A huge number of cattle were looted and many killed. The local people felt continuously insecure. This insecurity partly manifested itself in misuse of resources (grass, forests, land and water) the thinking being that others might come and take it. Whenever conflicts arose, people laid waste of resources like grass and woodlands, cultivated fields and villages. Fearing the possibility of an attack from the other side, local people engaged in very little development activities, not even soil conservation practices such as building terraces.²⁸⁸

To handle the conflict, a joint peacekeeping force comprising 30 police forces from Yefat and Ṭemuga *awrajja* and 35 from national defense force moved to the area around mid-October 1975. It restored quiet to the area, but faced serious challenges in its effort at criminal investigation due to the administrative inconveniences mentioned before.²⁸⁹ The Šäwa and Wällo provinces joined the punitive missions of the government. The administrators and commanders of police forces of both provinces and other concerned government authorities directly participated in the process.

²⁸⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸⁸Informants: Ato Ṭerusäw Mäkonen, Ato Tafässä Assalefäw and Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw.

²⁸⁹NALA, Folder No.17.1.3.52., File No. 17.1.3.52.02. , A Letter from Colonel Lägässä Ešäté, Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Administrator to Dr. Bantayähu Gälaw, Administrator of Šäwan province”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 3, 1968E.C., Ref No. 3/1/587/68.; Informants: Ato Ṭerusäw Mäkonen, Ato Tafässä Assalefäw and Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw.

The delegation went to Čäffarobit and discussed with local people from 15-17 October 1975. It also visited the destruction by moving from place to place and identified potentially threatening areas. The higher officials of both provinces came back after ensuring peace and order in the area for the time being.²⁹⁰

Some weeks later, the higher officials, including commanders of the police forces of both provinces, along with the concerned district and sub-district administrators, held a meeting and came up with what they said was a “final solution” to the problem. The parties to the dispute agreed and decided, based on the declaration of the Military Government, that an individual can only claim both cultivated land and residential quarter only when it was registered in the peasant associations within a radius of twenty *gašas* of land. It made moving to distance places for cultivating and grazing the land along the border areas illegal. The decision did not end the historic problem, but it at least reduced the prevalent tension and border insecurity for some time.²⁹¹

Similarly, people in the border between Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjas*, particularly in Aradama and Anşokia entered into conflict due to competition over resources.²⁹² My informants on both sides confirm that the reorganization of border districts, particularly Anşokia, sometimes to Mänz *ena* Gešé, at other time s to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjas* was the

²⁹⁰NALA, Folder.No.17.1.3.52., File No.17.1.3.52.02., “A Letter from Colonel Yäšetela Gossa, Commander-in-Chief of Šāwan Province to Brigadel General Berhanu Täfära, Commander-in-Chief of Ethiopian Police Force”, dated on 10/2/68E.C., Ref.No. 2/34/2/37. Some of the members of the delegate were Colonel Gétahun Ejegu, Administrator of Wällo province; Colonel Täsfayé Abäbä, Commander-in-Chief of Wällo Province Police Force; *Šaläqa* Nägaš Täklämikael, Administrator of Qällu *Awrajja*; Dr.Bantihun Gälaw, Administrator of the Šāwan province; Colonel Yäšetela Gossa, Commander-in-Chief of Šāwan Province police Force; and Colonel Lägässä Ešäté, Administrator of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja*.

²⁹¹NALA, Folder 17.1.3.52., File no. 17.1.3.52.02. “Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajja*’s Report on Peace Condition of the area”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 27, 1968E.C; Informants: Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw, Ato Tafässä Assalefäw, and Ato Asäfa Woldämariam.

²⁹²NALA, Folder 17.1.3.52., File no. 17.1.3.52.02. “Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajja*’s Report on Peace Condition of the area”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 27, 1968E.C. see also Ayele Behailu and Tahit Hussain, “ Role of Rural Land Registration and Certification in Reducing Border Disputes: A Cese Study of Mänz Géramedir District in Amhara State of Ethiopia”, *International Journal in Management and Social Sciences*, Vol. III, No.III(2015), p.63-64.

basic cause of the problem. Local governors frequently reported the case to higher authorities in the 1960s and early 1970s.²⁹³ In response to the requests of local governors, on 7 November 1975 the representatives of the Ministry of Interior and higher officials of Šäwa province under Colonel Yäšetela Gossa, commander of the police force of the Šäwa province, went to Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja* to deal with security problems. The newly sent group recommended the local governor to adopt the mechanisms of dispute resolution undertaken earlier in border dispute between Šäwa and Wällo provinces. It was in this way that the problem was solved.²⁹⁴

Following the declaration of “Land to the tiller” proclamation in March 1975, the question of security in my study area, in particular and in the province of Šäwa in general came to have another dimension. It was dominated by the emergence of anti-*Därg* movements. The landed aristocrats, who lost their land due to the 1975 land proclamation, took refuge in Mänz, and Yefat and mobilized local people against the state.²⁹⁵ The government’s attempt to capture or destroy the leaders was in vain. Resistance continued to the late 1970s. Though there is no accurate empirical data, the attack and counterattack entailed heavy human, material and ecological costs.²⁹⁶

²⁹³Informants: *Amsaaläqä* Mäkonen Zäwudé and *Ato* Germa Wondafraš,

²⁹⁴NALA, Folder 17.1.3.52., File no. 17.1.3.52.02, “Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajja*’s Report on Peace Condition of the area”, dated on *Ṭekemet* 27, 1968E.C.

²⁹⁵NALA, Folder.No. 17.1.3.352, File No. 17.1.3.53.02; “A Letter from Administrator of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* to Dr. Bantayähu Gälaw, Administrator of the Šäwan province”, dated on *Säné* 5, 1967E.C., Ref No. 3/5665/67.; NALA, Folder.No. 17.1.3.352, File No. 17.1.3.53.02; “A Letter from Administrator of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* to Dr. Bantayähu Gälaw, Administrator of the Šäwan province”, dated on *Säné* 14, 1967E.C., Ref No. 3/5878/07.

²⁹⁶Informants: *Amsaaläqä* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Germa Wondafraš and *Ato* Tässäma Käbädä.

Agricultural Expansion and Environmental Degradation, 1941-74

Land Degradation: An overview

Land degradation refers to the loss or decline of the quality and amount of natural resources on land. It involves complicated biological, chemical and physical processes.²⁹⁷ It is one of the very serious problems that the world is currently facing. Demographic rise and the associated rise of demand for resources has come to threaten the natural environment. One manifestation of this has been the steady expansion of agriculture to even marginal lands at the expense of vegetation cover. Rehabilitation efforts could not balance the increasing threat. This is because once the soil is lost it takes a very long time to recover. Equally important with land degradation are water and air pollution.²⁹⁸

The effect of land degradation is far-reaching. It directly affects productivity and disturbs the balance in the ecosystem. It causes the decline of water and nutrients necessary for crop growth and soil fertility. It also reduces permeation of water into the ground and hence causes decline of ground water reserves.²⁹⁹ In degraded land, much of the rainwater would be lost.³⁰⁰ On top of this,

²⁹⁷Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Ethiopian Highland Reclamation Study* (Rome, 1986), pp.185-190-195.; Demel Teketay, "Deforestation, wood famine and environmental degradation in highland ecosystems of Ethiopia: urgent need for actions," in *International Conference on African Development Archives*, Paper 3(2001).p.5. Biological degradation refers the decline of organic matter in the soil while physical degradation meant washing away of top soil. On the other hand chemical degradation refers to breaking down of rock and lose of the stability of the land. For more the same work, pp. 190 and 195.

²⁹⁸David Pimentel, "Overview" in David Pimentel (ed.), *World Soil Erosion and Conservation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.1-2.

²⁹⁹Pimentel, " Overview" in..., pp.2-3. See also R. Lal, "Soil Erosion and Conservation in West Africa" in David Pimentel(ed.), *World Soil Erosion and Conservation*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993),p.13.; E.T. Craswell, "The Management of World Soil Resources for Sustainable Agricultural Production" in David Pimentel(ed.), *World Soil Erosion and Conservation*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993),pp.263-264.; David Pimentel, J.Allen,etal "Soil Erosion and Agricultural Productivity " in David Pimentel(ed.), *World Soil Erosion and Conservation*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) ,pp.277-282.; Demel, "Deforestation, wood famine...", p.1.; Daniel Gamachu, *Environment and Development in Ethiopia*,in *Beyond the Famine: An Examination of the Issues Behind Famine in Ethiopia*(Geneva: International Institute for Relief and Development Food for the Hungry International, 1988,pp.61-62.

³⁰⁰H. Hurni, "Land Degradation, Famine and Land Resource Scenarios in Ethiopia" in David Pimentel (ed.), *World Soil Erosion and Conservation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) ,pp.36-37.

the runoff would wash away important top soil components, exposing toxic chemicals to the surface. These dangerous chemicals in turn not only prohibit the growth of crops but also kill important microorganisms.³⁰¹ Flooding also has downstream effect in that it fills rivers and water bodies beyond limit causing damage to crops and death to animals and human beings.³⁰²

In the highlands of Ethiopia, as in most parts of the world, land degradation was closely linked to dense human settlements and the subsequent over cultivation and over grazing of land. The magnitude of the problem increased in time with the increasing demographic rise.³⁰³ The land has been subject to natural and man-made degradation for a long period of time. The mountainous topography and the instability of soil has complicated the problem. Other practices such as deforestation, mining and construction had also a lot to do with it.³⁰⁴ In this section, I will focus on land degradation, which was/is a serious problem in the Ethiopian highlands including the area of my focus.

Land degradation occurs when people use natural resources “beyond its capacity or suitability.”³⁰⁵ However, due to lack of statistical data, it becomes difficult to accurately quantify the degradation

³⁰¹Craswell, “The Management of World...”,p.258.

³⁰²Pimentel, “Overview” in...,pp.2-3. See also ...Lal, “Soil Erosion and...”,p.13.; Hurni, “Land Degradation, Famine...”,pp.36-37.; Pimrntel, ,etal “Soil Erosion and Agricultural...”,pp.283-284.; Daniel, “Environment and Development...”,pp.61-62.

³⁰³Hurni, “Land Degradation, Famine...” ,pp.34-35.; John Clarke, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation: Ethiopia's Campaign Against Famine*(London: Harney and Jones Ltd, NY),pp.20-21.; see also James McCann, *People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia, 1800-1990*(Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1995),p.35.).Assefa Engdawork and Hans-Rudolf Bork ,“Long-Term Indigenous Soil Conservation Technology in the Chencha Area, Southern Ethiopia: Origin, Characteristics, and Sustaena” in *Ambio*, Vol. 43, No. 7 (2014), p. 933.; Gebremarkos Woldeeslassie, “The Forest Resources of Ethiopia: Past and Present,” *Journal of the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society: Walia*, vol. 19(1998),p.14.; Girma, *The State and Development...*,pp.55-61.; Daniel, “Environment and Development...”,pp.61-62.

³⁰⁴Hurni, “Land Degradation, Famine...” ,pp.34-39.; see also McCann, *People of the Plow...*,pp.23-26.; Woien, “Deforestation and Citations...” ,pp.507-508.; Selome Bekele and Assefa Hailemariam, “Population Dynamics and Environment in Ethiopia”, in <https://www.researchgate.net/production/272174547>, retrieved in January 2010),pp.22-23.; Craswell, “The Management of World...” ,pp.257-258.

³⁰⁵FAO, *Ethiopian Highland ...*,pp.202.

process in the Ethiopian highlands. The available data, including FAO's reports, are rough estimations and hence vary considerably. The difference might be due to variations in the nature of the topography, stability of the soil and other related issues. But one thing is certain: that in spite of the differences in the rate of soil loss, it has become perhaps the most serious challenge in the country.³⁰⁶

According to the report of FAO, more than 27 million hectares of land were eroded of which 14 million hectares were seriously eroded by 1986. Besides, 2 million hectares of soil had totally lost their important minerals. If the process of deforestation continues unchecked, sooner or later the land would lose its components to the extent of not being able to support life.³⁰⁷

Scholars working on the problem agree that land degradation tends to be pronounced on cultivated lands. On average, the highlands lose 42 tons of soil per hectare every year.³⁰⁸ The rate of erosion of cultivated lands is 5 to 30 times the rate on uncultivated lands with vegetation cover and soil conservation practices being the same.³⁰⁹ According to Berry, the root cause(s) of this phenomenon were improper land use and management practices. In fact, these practices were dictated and influenced by the socio-economic and political forces. They had something to do with the prevailing land tenure insecurity, absence of agricultural technology, market access and infrastructural facilities and other related factors.³¹⁰

³⁰⁶*Ibid*, pp.185-186, 188.

³⁰⁷*Ibid*, p.190.

³⁰⁸Hurni, "Land Degradation, Famine...", p.37.

³⁰⁹Hans Hurni, Kebede Tato, and Gete Zeleke, "The Implications of Changes in Population, Land Use, and Land Management for Surface Runoff in the Upper Nile Basin Area of Ethiopia", *Mountain Research and Development*. Vol 25 No 2 (2005), p.147.; see also Tegegne Sishaw, "Population Dynamics and Its Impact on Land Use / Cover in Ethiopia: the Case of Mandura District of Metekel Zone, Benshangul-Gumuz Regional State" (PhD Dissertation in Geography, University of South Africa, 2014), p.129.

³¹⁰L.Berry, *Land Degradation in Ethiopia: Its Extent and Impact* (A Report of World Bank, No Year), pp.3 and 10.

Expansion of Agriculture and Decline of Vegetation Cover

It is evident that the period after the Second World War saw considerable expansion as well as intensification of agriculture worldwide. The rise of population meant that there was a need to invest more in the sector. There also emerged research centers and innovation of farming tools and inputs that transformed the sector.³¹¹

In Ethiopia too, the period saw the expansion and intensification of agriculture, if not as rapidly and thoroughly as elsewhere. The impact of global trends coupled with internal developments made the sector the priority of the state. Immediately following restoration, the imperial government of Ethiopia faced financial crisis and worked a lot to come out of the problem. It was not in a position to even pay the salary of civil servants and the military.³¹² The growing demand of revenue for sustaining the state apparatus became a pushing factor to look for alternative sources of income. Among others, attention was given to expansion of agriculture (small and large scale), production of cash crops, land sale, improving the tax system (payments in cash) and fiscal administration, and so on.³¹³

In doing so, the government granted extensive land to different individuals of different rank and status from higher class all the way to the ordinary person. It provided them with thousands of

³¹¹Marco Quinones, "Fertilizer Use and Soil Fertility Management" in *Crop and Livestock Research and Extension Training Workshop* (Addis Ababa, June 1996.), pp.5-6.

³¹²Habtemariam Kassa and etal "Reading the Landscape: Explaining the Lack of On Farm Tree Planting in Ethiopia", *Environment and History*, Vol.17, No.3, 2011., p. 467. See also Shiferaw, "The Evolution of Land Tenure...", p.12.; Temesgen, "Land Tenure, Land...", p.572-573.

³¹³Gebru, *Ethiopia Power...*, pp.46-47. In all situations, the burden laid on the shoulder of the peasants. The peasants were suffering from the heavy hands of the state, the clergy and the nobility. For more see John Clarke, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation: Ethiopia's Campaign Against Famine* (London: Harney and Jones Ltd, NY), pp.8-9.

hectares of open and forested land as *madäria* land in different parts of the country. In this way, large tracts of forested and grazing lands were cultivated within a short period of time.³¹⁴

The Emperor declared a series of land grants in the post-liberation period. The first one was the decree of 24 July 1942. Under this proclamation, land was given to patriots, exiles and unemployed urban dwellers. The first two categories of people were given a *gaša* of land each. A patriot, who had *madäria* land during the pre-war period, was allowed to convert it into *rist* land. Wives of patriots, who lost their husbands, were given up to a *gaša* of land each for use for the duration of their lifetimes. The grant also included adult children of patriots. That was a half *gaša* for each.³¹⁵

The second land grant was made on 24 July 1944. Here, the beneficiaries were soldiers and individuals who served the state in different capacities. Under this declaration, the former were given half *gaša* each while the latter got a *gaša* each.³¹⁶ For instance, some of the followers of the famous patriot, *Ras Abäbä Arägay*, were given large tracts of land around Šäwarobit, and some others from the so-called government lands in Arssi.³¹⁷

The Emperor also provided land to the Imperial bodyguard in Efrata and Karaqoré districts, and Fursi sub district in 1947/48. The grant was made from open grazing, bush and forested land that the government considered ‘idle’.³¹⁸ In the same manner, vast plain lands in Čäffarobit, Anšokia

³¹⁴Habtemariam Kassa and etal “Reading the Landscape...”, p. 467. See also Temesgen, “ Land Tenure, Land...”,p.572-573.

³¹⁵Tekalign, “A City and Its Hinterlands...”, pp.239-240.; See also John Cohen, “Ethiopia After Haileselassie: The Government Land factor”, *African Affairs*, Vol 72, No. 289(1973),pp.376-377.

³¹⁶Tekalign, “ A City and Its...”,pp. 240-241.

³¹⁷Telahun, *የሃያኛው ክፍለ ዘመን* ...,p.230.

³¹⁸WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/አ338, File no. 9066, “Efrata and Karaqoré People’s Petitions Addressed to Emperor Hailäselassé”, dated on *Yäkatit* 5, 1945E.C., No Ref. The government was implicitly assumed to be the owner of unsettled and forested lands in the country. Hence, the pastorals grazing lands were at the disposal of the state and hence, it handed over to its functionaries and loyalties. In the process, it endangered pastoral livelihood and caused massive displacement in the lowlands and the peripheries. The situation got new momentum with the introduction of large scale commercial farms into the lowlands of Northeast Šäwa particularly since the late 1950s and 1960s. For more refer Girma Kebede, *The State and Development*....p.13.

and Majäté were distributed to individuals of different rank (later they were redistributed to peasant associations after the 1974 revolution).³¹⁹

The third round of land grants was promulgated in November 1952. Under this decree, the targets were the jobless in the towns and landless people in the rural areas. They were promised a half *gaša* of land each. The fourth round was the land grant of November 1958. It provided land to members of the national army, police force, imperial bodyguard and air force. Individuals in each category were granted a *gaša* of land each as *rist*. Moreover, the Emperor gave land to his favorite people and some petitioners for his goodwill from government reserves at different times.³²⁰ In strict sense, the amount of land given to each individual was not accurately known. It was only an estimate.³²¹ When and if measured, it would often turn out to be considerably larger than 40 hectares that a *gasha* was supposed to be. In Efrata and Karaqoré districts, for instance, there was a case of a land that had been estimated to be 1 *gaša* turning out to be 12 *gašas* and more.³²² Statistical evidence shows that from 1941/42 to 1970/71 a total of 48, 270 *gašas* of land was given to different individuals at national level. Of this only 2702 *gašas* of land (5.6%) was given to the landless. Much was given to higher class and soldiers and to those who had some kind of affiliation with the state.³²³ The majority of the poor peasants, who were either in critical shortage of land or devoid of land, were neglected.³²⁴

³¹⁹Frehiwot Tesfaye “Food Security and Peasants Survival Strategy in Northern Šäwa, Ethiopia” (Phd Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, 1998), p. 98; Informants: Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw, Ato Germa Wondafraš and Ato Awuraris Aragaw.

³²⁰Tekalign, “A City and Its...”, pp. 240-241.

³²¹Temesgen, “Land Tenure, Land...”, p.573.; see also Pausewang, *Land, Society...*, p.41.

³²²WTRMC, Folder no. 9065/9072/ḥ338, File no. 9066, “Efrata and Karaqoré People’s Petition addressed to Emperor Hailäselassé”, dated on *Yäkatit* 5, 1945E.C., No Ref .

³²³Land Holding and Administration Minister, “የኢትዮጵያ መሬት ስራት ያስከተለው ...”, p.6.

³²⁴Haile, “The Present System of...”, p.21.

The government encouraged expansion of agriculture even at the cost of vegetation cover (grazing, bush and forested land). Little or no attempt was made to consider the suitability, ecological and topographical condition of the given land.³²⁵ *Madäria* landholders had the right to convert the land into cultivation by removing the vegetation cover and killing off animals on it. The expansion of cultivated fields without intensive soil conservation efforts not only accelerated degradation but also caused migration of wildlife due to lack of food and shelter.³²⁶ By the same token, conversion of land into cultivation accelerated the rate of the release of carbon to the atmosphere. What is remarkable is that the expansion of cultivation was neither accompanied by compensation nor by alternative initiatives to sustain the lives of the local people and maintain the balance in the ecosystem.³²⁷

Introduction of Large Scale Commercial Farming

Side by side with the expansion of small scale agriculture, the state also took the initiative to expand large-scale commercial agriculture (of private and state owned farms) in the 1950s and 1960s. To this end, it got financial and technical assistance from international organizations. The primary goal of expansion of large scale agriculture was to produce commercial crops in order to increase foreign currency earnings.³²⁸ North Šäwa was one of the centers of mechanized farming during both the Imperial and the *Därg* periods. These included the Šäwarobit National Prison

³²⁵Selome and Assefa, “Population Dynamics...”,p.23.; Informants: *Aläqa* Tässäma Woldägiorgis, *Ato Mängäša Tačéand Ato Mohammäd Hassän.* ; see also Peter Dorner and William C. Thiesenhusen, *Land Tenure and Deforestation: Interactions and Environmental Implications*(United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1992),p.3.

³²⁶Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና ...”(A History of Forest and...) , pp.53 and 296.

³²⁷WTMRC, Folder no. 9065/9072/h338, File no. 9066, “Efrata and Karaqoré People’ Petition Addressed to Emperor Hailäselassé”, dated on *Yäkatit* 5, 1945E.C., No Ref; Informants: *Aläqa* Tässäma Woldägiorgis, *Ato Mängäša Tačéand Ato Mohammäd Hassän.*

³²⁸Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant and the State: Studies in Agrarian Change in Ethiopia. 1950s-2000s*(Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 2009),p.48.

Administration Farm, Šāwarobit National Tobacco Monopoly Farm, and Čäffarobit Farm. The first two were state-owned farms while the last was a privately owned venture. All of the farms brought about significant change in land cover by converting huge forested lands, bush or grazing lands into cultivation.

The Šāwarobit National Prison Farm was established by National Prison Administration under the Ministry of Interior in 1955/56. It began its work on 20 *gašas* of land, displacing the local peasants and clearing vegetation in the outskirts of Šāwarobit town.³²⁹ The farm increased its holdings year to year, incorporating the nearby peasant and pastoralist holdings, particularly Wākefālē and Emāberay lowlands. It converted 16 *gašas* of land covered with bush and woods into cultivation in these two localities.³³⁰ Prisoners at the center did the farming activities.³³¹

According to the report of Ato Zägäyā Abāru, one of the high officers of East Africa Locust Control who visited the farming center on 6 August 1964, the organization did not have a smooth relationship with the nearby peasants. This was because the nearby peasants, who suffered the alienation of their *rist* lands, were not given a substitute or compensation in any form. As a result, local peasants considered both the prison and the farm as enemies and future threats. It was only some peasants from distant areas who benefited from the center by buying selected seeds, and renting tractors by paying 25 to 30 Ethiopian Birr per hectare.³³² According to my informants, the organization also introduced new varieties of crops (brought changes in the crop regime),

³²⁹WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48; “የወሎ፣ የትግራይ፣ የቦንጎድር እና...”, p.1.

³³⁰“ርቢ የአትክልት መዲና ልትሆን ነው”(Robi Would Become Hub of Fruits), *Addis Zāmān*, Year 28, No. 62 (*Hamle* 10, 1960E.C.); see also NALA, Folder 62.1.14., File no. 62.1.14.01., “A Note about Šāwarobit National Prison Agricultural Center Addressed to Emperor Hailäselassé by Engineer Dujuro Regan”, dated on 6/3/53E.C., pp.1-4. By the late 1960, the size of the farm grew to 40 *gaša*. The forests on elevated land kept as they were, for the land was not conducive for cultivation.

³³¹WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48; “የወሎ፣ የትግራይ፣ የቦንጎድር እና...” (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Begemidir and...), dated on 28/7/1956E.C., p.1.

³³²*Ibid.*

particularly pulses and fruits, vegetables and other cash crops to local people who formerly predominantly produced *teff* and corn.³³³

The other large-scale farming company was Šāwarobit National Tobacco Monopoly, formerly known as Robit Tobacco Experiment. It was established on one *gaša* of land in Šāwarobit town in 1955/56. At the beginning, the organization had no farmland. It began to work by distributing tobacco seedlings free of charge to selected local farmers. It also provided peasants technical and material support in the preparation of land and collection of products. The peasants sold products to the center with moderate price.³³⁴

At the beginning, the local people strongly resisted the production and expansion of tobacco assuming that it was against their religion and culture. This situation, however, gradually changed and the high market demand and prices of the leaf attracted peasants.³³⁵ Local people began to earn better income and hence converted a portion of their land, particularly well-drained and irrigated lands into the cultivation of tobacco. As time went on, the organization scaled up its production by cultivating huge tracts of land, clearing forest and bush lands by its own workers in addition to the peasants. It established plant nurseries in Šāwarobit all along the road to Aṭayé at different localities.³³⁶ The production capacity of the farm increased with the expansion of the farm. For

³³³Informants: W/ro AyENAlām Demru, Ato Anāgrāñ Bezunāh, and Ato Germa Wondafraš.

³³⁴WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48; “የወሎ፣ የትግራይ፣ የባሕሪ ደር እና...” (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Bägémedir and...), dated on 28/7/1956E.C., p.3.; Informants: W/ro Ayinalām Demru, Ato Anāgrāñ Bezunāh, and Ato Germa Wondafraš.

³³⁵EGWAA, No Folder no. File no. 17.08.83, “A Letter from Ato Näga Abäbä, Head of Robit Tobacco Farming Development to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga Awrajja Administrative Office”, dated on 09/06/1981E.C., Ref.no. 1/4/2289/81.

³³⁶WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48; “የወሎ፣ የትግራይ፣ የባሕሪ ደር እና...” (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Bägémedir and...), dated on 28/7/1956E.C., p.3.

instance, the production of the farm, which was 162,629 kgms of roasted tobacco in 1965 increased to 690,420 kgms in 1980.³³⁷

The organization started its work with two wooden tobacco roasting houses. In 1961/62, an additional twelve wooden tobacco roasting rooms were built.³³⁸ The center used wood collected from government owned forest (at Yälän-Serṭ- Wačo) for roasting tobacco leaves which has an environmental implication. The amount of wood consumption of the center increased parallel with the increasing amount of production from time to time. A letter from Šäwarobit Tobacco Monopoly farming center to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* Agricultural Development Office reveals that the intensive exploitation of the forest of Yälän-Serṭ-Wačo state forest in the *awrajja* by the organization, reduced the original coverage of the forest from 27 *gašas* in 1950s to about less than 5 *gašas* of land in 1985.³³⁹ The organization also collected firewood from local peasants. This contributed a lot to the decline of forest resources in the *awrajja* and beyond. For long, the organization did not engage in replacing the forests lost in the area. It was only since the early 1980s that it began to involve in reforestation activities in order to ensure sustainable wood supply.³⁴⁰

³³⁷EGWAO, “A Letter from Ato Näga Abäbä, Vice Chairperson of Robit Tobacco Farming Development to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awurajs* Administrative Office, dated on 09/06/1981E.C., Ref.no 1/4/2289/81.

³³⁸*Ibid.* In 1969E.C., 1972E.C., and 1973E.C., four, six and four electric tobacco roasting classes were constructed respectively. In 1978ec, at Jawuha eight tobacco roasting houses were built.

³³⁹EGWAOA, No Folder no. File no. 17.08.83, “A Letter from Ato Mogäs Asrat, Head of Šäwarobit Tobacco Agricultural Development Center to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Agricultural Development Office”, dated on 23/02/1978E.C., Ref.no. 13/5/459/78.

³⁴⁰EGWAOA, No Folder no. File no. 17.08.83, “A Letter from Ato Woldäkidan Nere’e, Head, State Forest Administration and Development, to Šäwan Province Forest and Wildlife Development Authority Branch Office”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 18/1976E.C., Ref.no. 3/፩፬፮46. ; EGWAOA, No Folder no. File no. 17.08.83, “A Letter from Ato Mogäs Asrat, Head, Šäwarobit Tobacco Agricultural Development Center, to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Agricultural Development Office”, dated on 23/02/1978E.C., Ref.no. 13/5/459/78.

The third large-scale farming venture was the Čäffarobit Mechanized Farm. It was a share company of two Italian companies and the Crown Prince Asfaw Wossän. It began its work in 1952/53 taking a concession from the government to clear and cultivate 107 *gašas* of land in the *Awrajjä*.³⁴¹ Of this 80 *gašas* was the share of the crown prince. The farm was established by displacing a large number of Oromo pastoralists and sedentary cultivators alike.³⁴² It expanded its holding through time, clearing at least ten *gašas* of land yearly, thus putting pressure on the surrounding communities and forested lands. It also rented 208 hectares/5 *gaša* of land from *rist*-holders. It, for instance, cultivated ten *gašas* of *rist* land of the Crown Prince.³⁴³

The introduction of large-scale farming that pushed into the lowlands gradually brought changes in vegetation cover and crop regime. The people of Yefat who used to produce food crops, mainly maize and *teff*, began to experiment with newly introduced cash crops such as *mašo*, tobacco leaves, and fruits (bananas, oranges and others) and vegetables (mainly onions). The increasing demand and high market value of these newly introduced items made the peasants to reserve fertile and well-drained lands for these varieties of crops. They sold products for better prices and they in turn purchased grains for consumption. It is difficult to identify when and by whom these cash crops were introduced to the area.³⁴⁴

³⁴¹WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48; “የወሎ፣ የትግራይ፣ የቦንጎድር እና..” (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Bägémedir and...), dated on 28/7/1956E.C., pp.4-6.

³⁴² Pausewang, *Peasants, Land...*, pp.96-97.

³⁴³WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 1/8/48; “የወሎ፣ የትግራይ፣ የቦንጎድር እና..” (A Report on the First Visit to Wallo, Bägémedir and...), dated on 28/7/1956E.C., pp.4-6.

³⁴⁴Informants: *W/ro* Ayinaläm Demru, *Ato* Anägagrāñ Bizuneh, and *Ato* Germa Wondafrash interviewed on 05,06 and 18/02/11 respectively.

Expansion into the Lowlands and the Natural Environment

Parallel with the expansion of agriculture, the post-liberation period also showed a rise of charcoal production, and settlement of marginal lands, chiefly in the lowlands of Yefat and Temuga awrajja.³⁴⁵ The limited available resources (in the form of cultivable land and pasture) in the highlands could not sustain the growing population. The absence of technological change in the subsistence sector and lack of other alternative sources of income for poor peasants made their livelihood insecure.³⁴⁶ The pressure reduced fallowing and shifting cultivation and thus indirectly affected soil enrichment mechanisms. It also led to the encroachment into steep slopes and grazing in forested lands. The cultivation of steep slopes, in turn, facilitated soil erosion, by wind and water. The loss of top soil meant that the land would no longer support crops and would reduce the income of peasants. The effect of flooding was also high in the lowlands.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵Selome and Assefa, "Population Dynamics and...",pp.15 and 22.; Paul Henz, *Ethiopian Journeys: Travels in Ethiopia 1969-72*(London: Ernest Ben Limited, 1977),p.42. There was no accurate population data of the country before the mid 1960s. The available datas in this period were rough estimation referring the recent population censuses in the country the 1984, 1994 and 2007 population census. The highlands of Ethiopia were densely polulated. Population number increased rapidly particularly in the post liberation period. The population estimates of Central Statistic Agency revealed that the rate of population growth, which was 2.2% in 1960, became to 3% in early 1990s. For more refer Selome and Assefa, "Population Dynamics and..."pp. 3, 7 and 11.

³⁴⁶*Ibid.*

³⁴⁷Aklilu Kidanu and Tadesse Alemu, "Rapid Population Growth and Access to Farm Land : Coping Strategies in Two Peasant Associations in North Šäwa", in Dessalegn Rahmato(ed.), *Land Tenure and Land Policy in Ethiopia After the Därg, Proceedings of the Second Workshop on the Land Tenure Projects, Working Paper No.8*(Addis Ababa University: Land Tenure Project, Institute of Development Research, 1994),pp.44-45.; Dessalegn Rahmato, " Land Policy in Ethiopia..."pp.2-3.;see also Gizachew Abegaz, "Rural Land Use Issues and Policy:Overview", in Dessalegn Rahmato(ed.), *Land Tenure and Land Policy in Ethiopia After the Därg, Proceedings of the Second Workshop on the Land Tenure Projects, Working Paper No.8*(Addis Ababa University: Land Tenure Project, Institute of Development Research, 1994),p.23.; Gebremarkos Woldeselassie, "The Forest Resources of Ethiopia: Past and Present," *Journal of the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society: Walia*, vol. 19(1998),p.14.; Fassil Gebrekirstos, *Enough with Famine in Ethiopia: The Clarion Call*(Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press, 2005), pp.186-188.

The entire process was attended by the denudation of the highlands. The description of the process of removal of the vegetation cover provided by McCann is quite expressive here. McCann writes:

Under the influence of the plow, virtually all the northern highlands' dry evergreen forests and grasslands and a large part of the moist evergreen forests have changed to open farmlands and pasture. The juniper forests of the central and northern highlands perhaps once covered as much as 15 percent of Ethiopia, but were the first lands converted to cereal agriculture; less than 1 percent of the original forest area there remains. Acacia woodlands along the eastern and western escarpments have more recently succumbed to short-fallow cultivation.³⁴⁸

This is widely attested to in local sources also. In the words of Addis Zāmān, “...አብሣኛው የኢትዮጵያ ደን የባከነው ተቆርጦ ጥቅም ላይ በማዋል ሳይሆን በሰደድ እሳት እና መሬቱን ለእርሻ ለማዋል ሲባል...[ነው]::”³⁴⁹ (much of Ethiopian forests were destroyed not due to extraction of wood products but due to forest fire and clearance for cultivation). People knowingly or unknowingly cleared or burnt land cover for different reasons. These included, among others, the need to expand cultivated fields, to increase the fertility of the soil through burning of crop residues, to ‘encourage’ the growth of new grass, to destroy anti crop and animal pests, to facilitate hunting wild animals and collect forest honey. Some people also burnt forests with the wrong assumption that it would bring rainfall.³⁵⁰ Chojnacki emphasizes that the amount of wood lost for building of houses and making of house equipment was very limited as compared to forests lost

³⁴⁸ McCann, *People of the Plow*...,p.36.

³⁴⁹“የደን ጥፋት ውጤት”(The Consequences of Deforestation), *Addis Zāmān*, Year 27, No. 788, (*Miazia* 5, 1959E.C.); see also Mäsfīn, *Rural Vulnerability*...,p.75.

³⁵⁰ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, “A letter from Province Coordination Head Office to Šāwan Province Administration Office about forest burning”, dated on *Yäkatit* 27, 1976E.C., Ref no. h/30/፳፱/5.; see also NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, “A letter from Province Coordination Head Office to Šāwan Province Administration Office about forest protection and development”, dated on *Genbot* 13, 1975E.C., Ref no. h/29/፳፱/15.

due to cultivation. But wastage was evident in construction and making of tools partly due to lack of technology. This was an additional stress on the available forest resources.³⁵¹

Deforestation was widely felt in the lowlands that attracted migrants from the neighboring highlands and beyond. Even though there was no statistical data on the rate of migration and its impact on their destinations, the general trend was that the migrants encroached on unsettled lands (forested, bush and grazing lands) including marginal lands which they converted into settlement quarters and cultivation fields.³⁵² In the highlands of Central and Northern Ethiopia, individuals who were in acute shortage or lack of land, moved to the lowland areas which were either sparsely populated or vacant lands, particularly to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, and further south to Balé, Arsi, Harar and other areas.³⁵³ The people of the highlands of Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Tägülät *ena* Bulga *awrajjas* and Wällo province moved, particularly to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*. The rate of settlement significantly increased, particularly following the building of the highway from Addis Abäbä to Asmara by the Italians that dissected the *awrajja* in 1937. The construction of this road was followed by an influx of people and high rate of deforestation.³⁵⁴ The settlers created a stress on the natural environment and on the local people one way or the other. Bromely associates the role of infrastructure with forest resource depletion. He says that “resource destruction follows a road access as surely as night follows day”.³⁵⁵

The pull factors for migrations included the high agricultural potential of the area, and better opportunities of work for laborers.³⁵⁶ The creative and recreational values of Robit hot spring,

³⁵¹ Chojnacki, “Forests and Forestry...”, p. 35.

³⁵² Dessalegn, “Land Policy in...”, pp.2-3.; see also Gizachew, “Rural Land Use...”, p.23.; Selome and Assefa, “Population Dynamics and...”, pp. 3, 7 and 15.

³⁵³ *Addis Zämän*, Year 1st, No. 27 (*Hedar* 27, 1934E.C.).

³⁵⁴ Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsu fekad, Ato Šäwayé Yefru, Ato Ṭerusäw Mäkonen and Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw.

³⁵⁵ As Quoted in Dornor and Thiesenhusen, *Land Tenure and Deforestation...*, p.3.

³⁵⁶ Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsu fekad, Ato Šäwayé Yefru, Ato Ṭerusäw Mäkonen and Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw.

which was established by the government in 1952, also attracted a large number of people to the area.³⁵⁷ Some Muslim Wälloyé migrants were attracted by religious affinity with the Muslim Oromo and Argobba of the area.³⁵⁸ According to my informants, the establishment of a malaria control station in Šäwarobit also contributed a lot in attracting the highlanders by reducing the threats of malaria since 1960s.³⁵⁹

In their destinations, the migrants put pressure upon local people by competing with them over resources.³⁶⁰ The newcomers cultivated lands on the basis of share-cropping or some kind of agreement with the local *balabats* or *rist* holders in the 1940s, 1950s and 1970s. Some of the laborers freely used marginal lands for cultivation. They often burnt vegetation cover on the land partly because of shortage of labor, absence of infrastructure, and to kill or chase away dangerous wild animals and insects to prepare the land for cultivation.³⁶¹

Singh argues that the highlanders, whom he describes as Amhara, preferred agriculture to forestation. He associates this with their food culture. The Amhara, he argues, are predominantly cereal consumers, with vegetables and fruits being rather secondary to them. That was why they preferred to cultivate grains rather than preserving the land for other purposes such as grazing or planting trees.³⁶² But this does not mean that the Amhara were careless about or destructive of nature, a point that Messing makes in another connection. The peasants in particular, he says, lived

³⁵⁷WTMRC, No Folder, File no. 2142, “A Letter from *Däjjazmač* Šefäraw Wondmagäñähu to *Fitawurari* Šähay Enquselassé, Governor General of Šäwa Province about Robit Hot Spring”, dated on *Miazia* 15, 1944E.C. , No Ref.; Informants: *Ato Lessanu Wondemu*, *Amsaaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Mämré* Mamo Woldäab and *Ato Jafär Hussén*.

³⁵⁸Frehiwot, “Food Security and Peasants’...”, pp.136-137.

³⁵⁹Informants: *Ato Lessanu Wondemu*, *Amsaaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Mämré* Mamo Woldäab and *Ato Jafär Hussén*.

³⁶⁰Dessalegn, “Land Policy in...”, pp.2-3.; Gizachew, “Rural Land Use...”, p.23.; Selome and Assefa, “Population Dynamics...”, p.22.

³⁶¹Informants: *Ato Lessanu Wondemu*, *Amsaaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Mämré* Mamo Woldäab and *Ato Jafär Hussén*

³⁶²Singh, “Land Utilization in...”, p. 79.

in harmony with nature. In his own words, “the Amhara culture is oriented towards a maximum use of what nature provides, not to the alteration of [it] ”.³⁶³ The unlimited intervention of people into nature was not due to their culture, but because of the pressure coming from scarcity of land, decline of productivity, and the socio-economic arrangements governing access to land and agriculture.³⁶⁴

Parallel with the expansion of agriculture, there emerged settlement quarters in and around the farms. This led to the rise of demand for firewood as well as wood for construction and manufacturing agricultural tools. As the size of the family increased and the youth established new households, they were increasingly forced to seek employment in non-farming activities to provide for the families. That included, among other things, supplying firewood or charcoal to the nearby markets. This situation led to shrinkage of trees and forests and disappearance of wildlife as well as to lack of food, water and shelter. The clearing of vegetation cover and the conversion of ever increasing amounts of land into cultivation regardless of its suitability and stability, accelerated environmental degradation that eventually endangered the livelihood of the people in the region as a whole.³⁶⁵ What would make matters worse is that, as elsewhere in Africa, the expansion of subsistence farming was not accompanied by efficient soil conservation practices. This was

³⁶³ Simon D. Messing, “The Highland Plateau of Amhara of Ethiopia”(PhD. Dissertation in Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 1957),p. 699.

³⁶⁴Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*,p.74.; Informants: *Amsaaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Anäagräñ Bezunäh and *Ato* Ayečäw Zäwudé. The first was interviewed on 05/02/11E.C. while the last two on 06/02/11E.C.

³⁶⁵Informants: *Alaqa* Tässäma Woldägiorgis, *Ato* Mängäša Tačéand *Ato* Mohammäd Hassän.; see also Paul Henz, *Ethiopian Journeys: Travels in Ethiopia 1969-72*(London: Ernest Ben Limited, 1977),p.42. The immigrants involved in charcoal production with some kind of agreement or product sharing basis with the local elites. The Sudanese who accompanied the British liberation force to Ethiopia were said to have introduced the techniques of charcoal production to the area. When the British force left the country after liberation, the Sudanese remained in pockets of land in Aṭayé and around the town in the *awrajja*. They involved in charcoal production to sustain life. The local society and the migrants learned the techniques and later fully engaged in the activity. As the resources in the *Awrajja* progressively decline, some of the charcoal producers turned to sedentary agriculturalists and some others moved to the remote lands within and outside the *awrajja*, mainly to Afar and continued charcoal production. Even if the *Därg* outlawed charcoal production, the practice never ceased.

mainly for lack of land tenure security, but also due to shortage of capital and labor, and partly due to lack of awareness. Indeed, this problem might also exist in large scale farming due to the difficulty to handle their vast land and other related problems.³⁶⁶

The traditional method of improving soil fertility, the “slash and burn” system, commonly called the *gay*, was also another cause of damage to the natural environment in my study area in particular.³⁶⁷ Peasants used this method to clear and prepare land for cultivation. They resorted to it partly due to shortage of labor and partly to enrich the soil through the deposition of ash (increased nitrogen and phosphorus contents, and PH value). They also cleared woodlands or forested areas to get space for settlement, to stimulate the growth of new grasses, and to chase away dangerous animals and disease causing insects like mosquitoes, particularly in the lowlands. In the process however, they burnt even the roots of trees, giving them no chance to regenerate. The practice also reduced plant and animal species, including important microorganisms, and thus disturbed the balance in the ecosystem.³⁶⁸ It also created a shortage of firewood or, in the words of Lisk, caused “energy insecurity” due to the absence of alternative sources of energy to meet the growing demand of the population.³⁶⁹

The state and the wider public gave little or no concern to the decline of biodiversity until recent times. But this did not mean that both the state and the population were ignorant of soil and nature conservation practices. Peasants used different traditional techniques such as soil burning, terracing, and mulching, contour plowing, etc to reduce runoff. They also attempted to improve

³⁶⁶Lal, “Soil Erosion and Conservation...”, P.11.

³⁶⁷ McCann, *People of the Plow*...pp.57-58.; Lisk, “Overview: The Current Climate...”,p.10.

³⁶⁸Informants: *Alaqa Tässäma Woldägiorgis, Ato Mängäša Tačéand Ato Mohammäd Hassän.* ; see also McCann, *People of the Plow*...pp.57-58.;GebremarkosWoldeselassie, “The Forest Resources of Ethiopia: Past and Present,” *Journal of the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society: Walia*, vol. 19(1998),p.14.

³⁶⁹Lisk, “Overview: The Current ...”,p.10.; see also Gebremarkos, “The Forest Resources...”,p.14.

the quality of the soil through cultivating different crops in rotation and adding organic manure such as animal droppings and crop residues.³⁷⁰ Fasil states that the peasants used different mitigating factors. He says that “...the type of crop production, within the various subsystems, the techniques and implements employed, the production calendar, etc, reflect the peculiarities of the basic controlling climatic and physical factors”.³⁷¹

Equally important were the farming tools and farming practices. Peasants often used ox-drawn ploughs to cultivate the land depending on the nature of the landscape and the soil. This practice broke down the soil and thus exposed it to erosion easily by wind and water. The peasantry could not be in a position to cover the land until the crops grew.³⁷² FAO’s study revealed that more than the erodeability of the soil, it is the way the peasant utilized and managed the land that determined the rate of soil erosion.³⁷³

It is evident that adding fertilizers and planting of perennial plants were important in maintaining and improving the quality of the land.³⁷⁴ Even if the peasants used to practice this around homesteads, it became difficult for them to implement it all over their scattered plots for a variety of reasons. In the former case, animal droppings, which were previously used as fertilizer, now became a source of energy due to scarcity of wood and absence of alternative energy supply.

³⁷⁰Dessalegn, *The Peasant and the State...*, p.35.

³⁷¹Fasil, *The Subsistence Crisis in...*, p.23.

³⁷²Lal, “Soil Erosion and Conservation...”, p.11; “ማጅቱ እድገት ጣቢያ” (Majete Development Center), *Addis Zāmān*, Year 23, No.25 (ፓፕ 20, 1956 E.C.); Hailu Woldeamanuel, “Prospects for Environmental Protection and Ecotourism in Semen Šāwa” in Siegbert Ulhi et al(eds.), *Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Hamburg, July 20-25, 2003), pp.2-3.; Jack Goody, *Technology, Tradition and The State in Africa*, Second Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp.25-27; Informants: Ato Alāmayāhu Bāsufekad, Ato Šāwayé Yefru, Ato ፐፕፕፕ Mäkonen and Ato Aṭlaw Asamenāw.

³⁷³FAO, *Ethiopian Highland...*, pp.201-202. see also “ማጅቱ እድገት...” (Majete Development...), *Addis Zāmān*, Year 23rd, No.25 (ፓፕ 20, 1956 E.C.); Hailu, “Prospects for Environmental...”, pp.2-3.; Goody, *Technology, Tradition...*, pp.25-27.

³⁷⁴Lal, “Soil Erosion and Conservation...”, pp.111-13.

Moreover, the accessibility of artificial fertilizers was very limited. It was limited only to a few large scale mechanized farms.³⁷⁵ In small scale farms, poor peasants were reluctant to plant trees partly due to tenure insecurity, as I have mentioned earlier.³⁷⁶

The other important factor for the decline of vegetation cover was the emergence and expansion of market centers, which later evolved into towns. Urban centers pressed the surrounding environment by clearing vegetation to make room for residential and business quarters and public buildings but also by boosting the demand for wood and fuel. Urban dwellers used charcoal intensively due to lack of alternative sources of energy. Others engaged in wood and charcoal trade. From Yefat *ena Tumuga* merchants transported charcoal all the way to Addis Abäbä in the south and Dässé in the north. Some passengers that crossed the region by vehicles also bought charcoal to take to distant areas.³⁷⁷ However, my informants point out that despite the high influx of people to the lowlands and increasing forest extraction, the abundant vegetation in the region was not exhausted quickly and continued until the 1950s and 1960s.³⁷⁸

The agricultural policy of the Imperial regime was somewhat contradictory and against the poor peasant as well as against nature. This was evident in the three five year plans of the imperial government from 1957 to 1974, (the First- 1958-1962, the Second-1963-1967 and the Third-1968-1973). From the vantage point of peasant agriculture, Dessalegn describes these plans as follows:

³⁷⁵Tinnassie Nichola, “The Agricultural Sector in Ethiopia: Organization, Policies and Prospects” in *Beyond the Famine: An Examination of the Issues Behind Famine in Ethiopia* (Geneva: International Institute for Relief and Development Food for the Hungry International, 1988),p.98.; Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsu fekad, Ato Šäwayé Yefru, Ato Ṭerusäw Mäkonen and Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw.

³⁷⁶Hailemariam etal, “Reading the Landscape...”,pp.261-262.

³⁷⁷WTMRC, No Folder no., File no. 2142, “A Letter from *Däjjazmač Šefäraw Wondmagäñähu* to *Fitawurari Šähay Enquselassé*, Governor General of Šäwa Province about Robit Hot Spring”, dated on *Miazia* 15, 1944E.C. , No Ref.; Informants: Ato Lesanu Wondemu, W/ro Ayinaläm Damänu, *Amsaaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé Ato Ayečäw Adanä and Ato Anägräñ Bezunäh.

³⁷⁸*Ibid.*

“the first may be described as benign neglect of peasant agriculture, the second as alienation from it and the active promotion of large scale commercial farms, and the third a swing in favor of small farms and peasant enterprise”.³⁷⁹ The first two five year plans, in particular gave little attention to improving subsistence agriculture. They rather focused on promoting commercial farming and expansion of industries. It was only the third that attempted to consider subsistence peasant agriculture. This was due to the pressure coming from donors and peasants. The uncritical nature of the policies, the prevalence of land insecurity and limited investment on subsistence sector made rural development stagnant.³⁸⁰ The government allocated small budget to the sector. In the last two five-year plans, for instance, it allocated only 4.2% of the government total budget, even much of it was used to support large-scale mechanized farms and defray administrative costs. No or little attention and practical effort was made to improve subsistence agriculture.³⁸¹ Peasant impoverishment was no longer on the agenda of the imperial state. Poverty reduction was an agenda left to non-governmental organizations and donors. The state was preoccupied with the consolidation of power and centralization of resources.³⁸²

By the same token, the issue of forests and forestry were of secondary importance for the state in all successive development plans. It encouraged the conversion of land into cultivation regardless of the nature of the land and the vegetation cover. It focused only on how to meet the immediate needs of the state. To this end, it provided tax incentives to those who converted forested land into cultivation. No incentive was given to those peasants who planted trees at least until the late 1950s.

³⁷⁹Dessalegn, *The peasant and the State*,p.50.; see also Taddesse Berisso, “Agricultural and Rural Development Policies in Ethiopia: A Case Study of Villagization Among the Gujji Oromo of Jam Jam Awraja”(PhD Dissertation in Anthropology, Michigan State University, 1995),p.61.

³⁸⁰Taddesse, “Agricultural and Rural...” ,pp.61-62, 72.

³⁸¹ Girma, *The State and Development*...,p.13.

³⁸²Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and*...,pp.92-94.

Peasants were unable to engage in planting trees on their farms for lack of security. So planting trees was restricted around villages with the intention of fulfilling fuel needs at the household level. Tree planting was relatively better in urban areas than rural areas in part because in the former case there was better tree tenure security.³⁸³

Thus, the above mentioned initiative of the state directly or indirectly caused the decline of vegetation cover and wasteful use of wood. The rapid rate of deforestation resulted in unpredictable weather condition, flooding, and consequently to famine and outbreak of diseases.³⁸⁴ Wild animals migrated to other areas in search of food and shelter. Local people in Yefat remembered that by the 1950s wild animals that once existed in large numbers and varieties came to be on the verge of extinction or totally disappeared.³⁸⁵ However, still now, there are some forest reserves such as Mägäzäz, Woffwaša, Qundi, Ṭarmabär and Guassa and in the compounds of ritual centers and religious institutions.³⁸⁶

In North Šäwa, the aggregate effect of deforestation and soil degradation that came as a result of over-cultivation, over-grazing, deforestation, and long settlement was far reaching. Through time, the region lost its rich wood and soil resources. The steady increase of population pushed the frontier of cultivation into marginal lands and steep slope areas. The decline of vegetation cover aggravated soil degradation and caused decline of productivity. It eventually caused climate

³⁸³Habtemariam et al, “Reading the Landscape...”, p. 467.

³⁸⁴Hailu, “Prospects for Environmental...”, pp.2-3.; “ማጀቱ እድገት...” (Majete Developemnt...), Year 23rd, No.25 (Ṭer 20, 1956E.C), ; Informants: *Aläqa* Tässäma Woldägiorgis and *Ato* Mängäša Tačé.

³⁸⁵*Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Hailu, “Prospects for Environmental...”,p.2

change, decline of ecosystem, and consequently poverty and starvation.³⁸⁷ Craswell summarizes the interdependence of the problems as follows:

The clearing and ploughing of soils for cropping expose them to loss through wind and water erosion, and accelerated organic matter decomposition and the leaching of nutrients. Loss of the surface soil through erosion removes the most fertile soil layer, at the same time exposing sub-soils, which often are acid or have some other major physical or chemical properties that limit plant growth. The removal of trees also alters the hydrology of the landscape, leading to secondary salinity and waterlogging. Leaching, acid rain, and fertilizers can acidify soils under some circumstances. Degradation of soils by salinization, waterlogging, acidification, and related problems of compaction and crusting limits plant growth and vegetative cover, thus exposing the soil to wind and water erosion.³⁸⁸

The loss of vegetation and subsequent degradation affected all living things. Due to decline of productivity and crop failure, there was decline in the livestock population (for lack of pasture and water), poverty, malnutrition, draught, unpredictable weather condition, shortage of rainfall, diseases, decline of ground water, and deposition of sediments on river valleys and dams.³⁸⁹ It is apparent that vegetation cover is important for the stability and composition of soil. Roots of trees anchored and protected soils from erosion. It also increased water infiltration and retention capacity of the soil. Crop residues and drops of leaves enrich the quality of the soil. The removal of vegetation brought the opposite result.³⁹⁰

It is obvious that most of the rivers in *Mānz ena Geśé*, and *Yefat ena Temuga awrajja* originated from the highlands of *Mānz ena Geśé* mainly from a specific locality called Guassa. The fast flowing rivers washed away the soils of the highlands, undermining the livelihood of the

³⁸⁷John Clarke, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation...*, pp.20-21; Hailu, “Prospects for Environmental...”, pp.2-3.

³⁸⁸Craswell, “The Management of World ...”, p.258.

³⁸⁹ L.Berry, *Land Degradation in Ethiopia: Its Extent and Impact* (A Report of World Bank, No Year, pp.5-6.); see also FAO, *Ethiopian Highland...*, p.218.

³⁹⁰*Ibid...*, pp.195, 200-202.

highlanders. The scarce vegetation cover and the steep terrain aggravated soil erosion. Moreover, flooding destroyed roads, crops and sometimes villages. The peasants at the foot of the eastern escarpment were also vulnerable to such hazards.³⁹¹ The road from Däbrässina to Karaqoré was one of the areas severely affected by flooding every year. It was for this reason that the Ethiopian Road Authority re-designed and covered the road with asphalt in 1973.³⁹² In connection with this, Murphy elaborates the downstream effects of erosion:

Some of the lowlands are subject to erosion directly or indirectly. Often some good alluvial soil may be buried by sediments of a poorer nature brought down from the eroded hillsides. Deep sand or coarser material may be deposited on the top of a better alluvial soil. The flooding of rivers over the valley plain may leave deposits of either poorer or better sediments. When a river overflows, the coarse particles are dropped near the river bank because the transporting power of water decreases rapidly as the velocity decreases. The finest particles are carried the greatest distance from the stream bed, and may remain in suspension in a long time. As this muddy water enters the soil, it fills the pore space of the soil with fine clay and may so clog the soil as to seriously interfere with internal drainage. The effect of erosion in this instance is not only detrimental to the uplands from which the sediments were derived, but it may adversely affect the value of some of the valley soils which receive the sediments. While many valley soils are exceptional soils from a fertility and productivity standpoint, there are some such soils, which are not so good because of the type of sediment deposited or the drainage conditions, which the deposition has produced.³⁹³

Trends of Deforestation and Institutionalization of Forest Protection

The concept of deforestation is vague and there is no standardized definition. Scholars view and define it differently. FAO, for instance, describes it as the entire demolishing of forests and the conversion of the land to other uses. It further states that the decline of vegetation cover by human intervention like logging, grazing, and others may not necessarily constitute deforestation.

³⁹¹NALA, Folder no. 12.1.8., File no. 12.1.8.4. , “በሸዋ ክፍለ ሀገር ስለተደረገ የሰፈራ ጥናቶች ጥቅላላ ሪፖርት ከ1/6/71E.C to 13/9/71E.C.”(A Studies on Settlement in Shewa Province from 1/6/71E.C to 13/9/71E.C),p.8.

³⁹²“የደብረሲና-ካራቆሬ መንገድ አስፋልት ሊሰጠው ነው”(Debresena-Karakore highway Would be Asphalt), *Addis Zämän*, 30th, No. 225 (*Mäskäräm* 16, 1966E.C.).

³⁹³Murphy, *A Report on the Fertility Status of...*,p.8.

Ecologists, biologists and other natural scientists define deforestation from the perspective of the upsetting of the balance in the ecosystem through the removal of both living and nonliving organisms. The lack of standardized definition thus possibly causes variations in the understanding of the processes and effects of deforestation.³⁹⁴ Moreover, there was no agreement on the amount of tree coverage to be considered a forest and the levels at which cutting of trees constitutes deforestation.

Until recent times, most studies on forests and forestry in Ethiopia lacked accuracy and at times contradicted each other. This was partly due to variations in the concept of deforestation as mentioned above and inconsistency in collection, organization and dissemination of data.³⁹⁵ Particularly before the mid-20th century, the available data about the amount and rate of tree loss were rough estimates and thus were not representative.³⁹⁶ The same was true about environmental and soil degradation.³⁹⁷ It is only since recent times that scientific studies began to appear on the table using satellite images and aerial photographs.³⁹⁸ In this work, I use the term deforestation to refer to the conversion of forest and woodlands partly or fully to other uses, mainly agriculture.

Organizational Weaknesses and the Evolution of Forest Laws

Until the early 1930s, *Ras Täfäri* (the latter Emperor Hailäselassé), the regent, underestimated or put aside the initiatives undertaken by his predecessors regarding the protection and development

³⁹⁴Dornor and Thiesenhusen, *Land Tenure and Deforestation...*,p.1.

³⁹⁵McCann, “The Plough and the...”,pp.139-144.;Wøien, “Deforestation, Information and...”,pp. 501-505.; Demel, “Deforestation, Wood famine...”,p.5.

³⁹⁶McCann, “The Plough and the...”,pp.139-144.

³⁹⁷Wøien, “Deforestation, Information and...”,p.501.

³⁹⁸Donald Crummey, “Exploring Landscape Change in Ethiopia: Evidence From Imaging Its Interpretation” in Svein Ege et al(eds), *Proceedings of the 16th International conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.I (Trondheim: Noregian University of Science and Technology,2009), p.175; see also McCann, “The Plough and the...”,pp.139-141.

of forest and wildlife resources. This was probably because the regent was preoccupied with political matters of power and diplomacy.³⁹⁹

On 17 July 1931, he issued the first law that regulated hunting practices. The law prohibited the hunting of wild animals deemed to be of high economic value such as elephants, rhinoceros, giraffes, zebras, nyalas, walia ibex, ostriches, pelicans and merabu even on one's *rist* land without license. The prohibition of hunting the above-mentioned animals was to apply only for the following five consecutive years. However, the proclamation was neither replaced nor consolidated by another law subsequently. Besides, the law says nothing about the protection and development of the forest that provided food and shelter to the animals.⁴⁰⁰

In the post-liberation period starting in the 1949/50, the Ministry of Agriculture, which was entrusted with the management of natural resources, began to take some initiatives. In that year, the Ministry developed a document dealing with what to do with the ownership, management and utilization of forests and passed it over to the Council of Ministers for approval. The draft declared all forest resources of the country as exclusive property of the state. It ruled that forests located on private land would be transferred to state ownership provided compensation was paid or given to the owner. The Council of Ministers rejected the proposal on the grounds that it violated private property rights. The second draft consisting of 14 articles was prepared soon after, along with recommendations and was resubmitted to the Council of Ministers and then to the parliament. In the new draft, the state was given administrative rights, not ownership rights, over the management and utilization of forests on private holdings. These included providing license and determining the amount of trees that can be cut, guiding the cutting technique and controlling the planting of

³⁹⁹Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያየፍጥነት...” (A History of Forest and...) , p.53.

⁴⁰⁰*Ibid.*

new seedlings as replacement for trees cut and other related administrative issues. Again the majority of members of the Parliament rejected the proposal, opposing the excessive regulatory power of the state over private holdings. They argued that the Ministry of Agriculture should administer only state forests not private holdings. The debate in both of the Parliaments (the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies) continued and the draft was not put into effect until the promulgation of the first forest law on 29 August 1965.⁴⁰¹

Practically, the conflicting interests of the state and private persons over the ownership, management and utilization of forests contributed to the suspension of the law. The state's effort to centralize resources was clearly observed in both of the drafts. The Ministry of Agriculture argued that as the state was the 'guardian of (the interests of later) generations', forest resources much like mineral resources, should be under its exclusive control. Keeping these resources in the hands of the state meant checking deforestation and ensuring proper management of forests. But the question is as to the extent to which the state worked to benefit the majority and the wellbeing of the natural environment. Moreover, as to which type of ownership (state, private or both) was best for the protection of forests needed further research.⁴⁰²

For long, the absence of a strong and independent forest and wildlife protection institution was one of the basic challenges regarding the protection of forests in Ethiopia. Before the occupation, a forest and wildlife protection office was organized as a unit under the Ministry of Agriculture. After liberation, from 1942/3 to 1952/53, it primarily functioned as a licensing office for bird hunting. In 1953, it was reorganized as the Forest and Wild Life and Fisheries Directorate (FWLFD) under the same Ministry. In all these periods, the department had financial constraints

⁴⁰¹*Ibid*, pp.54-55, 61.

⁴⁰²*Ibid.*, pp.54 and 60.

and lacked trained manpower. It focused on works that could be done with available resources, giving little or no attention to forest development. This trend began to change in 1958/59 with the establishment of the Forest and Wild Life and Fisheries Directorate as an independent institution separate from Ministry of Agriculture. The new institution, however, was challenged by the high nobility and royalty who felt that it was a threat to their privileges. So it came back to its previous form and level of organization in 1961/62. The perpetual opposition of the upper classes added to the internal weakness of the institution to render it almost totally ineffective.⁴⁰³

Thus, until the mid-1960s, there was very little by way of institutions or a legal framework for the regulation, management and utilization of forest resources in the country. The Ministry of Agriculture in its report to the Emperor on 11 January, 1965 stated that the delay of the promulgation of a forest law from liberation to the mid-1960s made it difficult to curb or control the alarming rate of deforestation. Although the Ministry exchanged a series of letters with provincial government authorities as well as with various units connected to it concerning the illegal cutting of trees, it could not control much less stop the steady process of deforestation. Forest guards were employed and worked in areas where there were forest reserves. The problem, however, was that they had no legal ground to accuse and punish individuals found guilty of illegal cutting of trees.

⁴⁰³*Ibid.*,p.101.

The guards rather worked on behalf or in the interest of upper classes including agents of the emperor on his personal estates. The paragraph below illustrates the challenges on the ground:

የዚህ አዋጅ አለመውጣት እና በየዓመቱ ጉዳዩ እየተጓተተ ፍጻሜ አለመድረስ ያስከተለው ችግር ከፍተኛ ሆኗል፡፡...ያለ ፍቃድ ከየደኑ ዛፍ እየቆረጡ የያዝናቸውን ሰዎች ወደ ፍርድ ቤት ባቀረብናቸው ቁጥር ዳኞች በነጋሪት ጋዜጣ የወጣ አዋጅ አለመኖሩን ምክንያት በማድረግ ነገራችንን አዳምጠው ሊፈሩን አልቻሉም፡፡ እንዲያውም አንዳንድ ሰዎች በምንገብርበት እርስታችን አላባ እንዳንጠቀምበት የእርሻ ሚኒስቴር ከለከለን እያሉ ክስ አቅርበው አስፈርደውብናል፡፡ እንዲሁም ሊያስፈርዱብን የሚጠባበቁ ብዙዎች ናቸው፡፡ የግርማዊነትዎን ትዕዛዝ ለማስከበርና ለማስጠበቅ የሚታደጉ አንዳንድ ሀገረ ገዢዎች ቢኖሩ በፍርድ ቤት እየተከሰሱ ነገሩን ለመግፋት ባለመቻላቸው ችግር ላይ ይገኛሉ፡፡⁴⁰⁴

The failure to enact this proclamation [on August 29, 1965] or its non-ending postponement has caused a great deal of problems....Every time we apprehend offenders and bring them before court, judges would dismiss the case on the grounds that there no law published on the *Nagarit Gazette* on this matter. Even worse is the fact that some individuals have accused the Ministry of Agriculture of prohibiting them to utilize resources on their *rist* lands. The courts had often found us at fault. [We speak] there are many individuals waiting for court decisions against us. Some regional governors who have attempted to implement Your Majesty's order [for the protection of forests] have not been able to make any headway.

In its effort to curb the rapid rate of deforestation, the government assigned forest guards and established checking posts in areas where there were forest reserves. The problem, however, was the absence of laws or adjudicatory bodies of any kind (except the *zufan čelot*-a court presided by the Emperor) that supported the guards. As a result, owners of forests or illegal users disregarded guards and cut off trees with impunity. It was not unheard of for guards who took offenders to court for themselves to face accusations instead and actually end up in prison.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴*Ibid.*, p.62.

⁴⁰⁵*Ibid.*, p.122. The state assigned its own agents that controlled the amount of trees cut (in meter cubic) and tax collected provided that the company would cover the salaries and other expenditures of the agents as long as the end of the duration of the agreement. Some of the agents negotiated with the company owner's and allowed them to cut trees off beyond the limit of the demarcated area.

It was in this situation that the first forest legislation of 29 August 1965 was issued following the longest parliamentary debate ever since the time of liberation.⁴⁰⁶ The intention of the law as a whole was to respect and maintain the interests and privileges of society, not individuals. In an interview with *Addis Zämān* newspaper, *Grazmač* Germačāw Täklāhawariat, Minister of Agriculture in the 1960s, provided a detailed explanation of the major provisions of the proclamation. According to him, the law differentiated forests into three categories namely: private, reserved and state forests. In the first category, the owner of the forest had freedom to use it based on the provision of the proclamation. Individuals could use trees on their private (*rist*) land after asking and getting permission from the Ministry of Agriculture. The experts in the Ministry gave permission after evaluating the number of trees proposed to be cut off, the maturity of the trees, and the landscape. Individuals who requested permission were supposed to plant new seedlings to replace trees that are cut. The law emphasized that cutting off trees should be strictly regulated.⁴⁰⁷ With regard to reserved forests, the concern was as to how to keep them out of the reach of human and livestock intervention. Demarcations were made on the recommendation and approval of forest experts in the Ministry of Agriculture. Such forests were deemed to be beneficial to society at large by preventing erosion and maintaining soil fertility. Such forests were considered property of the state.⁴⁰⁸ The third category of forest resources is state forests. These were located in different parts of the country and were controlled by the Ministry of Agriculture. They were put under the custody of big companies in contract form.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ *Nägarit Gazéfa*, Year 24th, No.17 (Nähassé 21, 1957E.C.

⁴⁰⁷ “የደን ሃብት መንግስት ብቻ የሚመለከተው እና የሚያስብበት መሆን አይገባም” (Forest Resources Should not only be the responsibility and Concern of the State), *Addis Zämān*, Year 26th, No. 689 (*Mägabit* 27, 1959E.C.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁹ “የደን ሃብት መንግስት ብቻ የሚመለከተው...” (Forest Resources Should not only be the responsibility and...), *Addis Zaman*, Year 26th, No. 690 (*Mägabit* 28, 1959E.C.

On the ground, the law was not fully implemented. The Ministry of Agriculture, which was empowered to enforce the law, faced different challenges. The first was resistance from people who feared that it would interfere with their property rights both as land holders and as owners of the trees. In the same areas particularly in the *rist* areas, people demonstrated their opposition by cutting trees illegally from reserved and state forests at night. The other challenge was the lack of commitment and abuse of power on the part of government workers, particularly local agents of the Ministry. The third was lack of knowledge and skills on how to convince people of the essence and importance of the law. As a result, in marginal areas, people engaged in the cutting of trees indiscriminately for charcoal production, fuel, and construction. Given the decline of productivity and acute shortage of land, some individuals embarked on the production of charcoal into the unsettled government lands of the lowland areas. Part of my study area, Yefat *ena* Temuga *awrajja* was the best example in this regard.⁴¹⁰

In spite of the proclamation of forest law, deforestation went on unchecked. It continued well into the post-revolution period. During time of transition, 1974/75, peasants engaged in illegal cutting and burning of trees owned by the state and former landowners. The land reform proclamation of 1975 empowered peasant associations to manage and utilize forest resources within a perimeter of 20 *gaša* of land per association. Taking this authority as license, peasants began to cut naturally grown or planted trees like eucalyptus indiscriminately converting forest lands into fields, with little or no consideration of the consequences. In some areas, people pushed settlements into forested corridors and built houses. On top of all these, peasant associations resisted the intervention of a state forest development agency that would have proscribed their use of such forest resources. Peasants' associations claimed strongly that "nationalized" forests should become

⁴¹⁰*Ibid.*

or be considered property of peasant associations in and around the forests and they should be under their disposal in every sense of the word.⁴¹¹

Seeing the alarming rate of deforestation and the existing confusion, the state provided clarification on the provision of the proclamation that dealt with the ownership and utilization of forests and trees. It did so on 20 June 1975. The clarification focuses on chapter three, sub-article 10 in which the obligation attached to associations was defined. Specifically, number three of the same sub-article states that peasant associations had the responsibility to manage land and resources on land (such as water, soil, forests, wildlife and minerals). The ownership of natural resources, however, was attached to the nation as a whole, not to people of a specific region or *qäbällé*. It stated that nationalized private holdings as well as game reserves would be under the strict control of the state. Peasant associations could use such forests provided that they could get written licenses from a state forest development agency. It further noted that eucalyptus trees should be viewed as forests not vegetables or fruits and should be protected like other indigenous trees.⁴¹²

In Yefat *ena* Temuga, this was done via a letter from Dr. Asmälaš Bāyānā, head of *awrajjas'* Interim Administrative Office, addressed to Šäwa Province Administration. It stated that eucalyptus trees should be considered as state forests. It also noted that *rist* holders should hand over trees on their respective lands to state forest development agency. But the delay in communication and the complicated bureaucracy exposed the trees to illegal cutting and burning.

⁴¹¹Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያየደንክና...”(A History of Forest and...) , pp.153-154.

⁴¹²“ብሔራዊ ደን ልማት”(National Forest Development),*Addis Zämān*, Year 35, no.736, (*Säné* 12,1967E.C).; Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያየደንክና...”(A History of Forest and...) , pp.153-154.; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, “A Letter from Kefelé Tägäñ, Täṭäbabaqi Head of Minister of Interior to all (fourteen)Provinces about Forest Development,” dated on *Hamlé* 7/1968, Ref no.አወ15/38922/ሺ.

It appears that many individuals set fire to lots of trees or otherwise wastefully used them before their transfer to the state.⁴¹³

Conservation and Land Rehabilitation Endeavors

All the same, the Imperial government had involved itself in one or another kind of afforestation program since the late 1950s. Forest development on modern lines as such, however, started in 1957. In that year, forest development projects developed by the state and donors began to be implemented. In this regard, the role of FAO was significant. The organization provided technical, research, and financial support to the development of forests, particularly through afforestation and opening up of forest nursery centers. It also worked hard to create awareness about the importance of forestry and preparation of “forest day”.⁴¹⁴

Afforestation efforts were begun to be implemented at different levels, primarily in eroded localities, throughout the country. At the beginning, the program concentrated in Šäwa province. The watershed of Qoqa Dam, Mänagäša, Mt. Yärär and Jämejäm centers were given priority. In doing so, in 1959, about 2 million seedlings were planted on government land. Private landowners were given free seedlings for planting. In this way, 2.5 million seedlings were planted in the budget year, including in my study area. For 1960, 3.5 million seedlings were prepared.⁴¹⁵

The Ministry recognized that the Qoqa Dam and people in the Awash Valley were under a big threat due to deforestation of the upper water basin. It was under this situation that the Ministry of

⁴¹³NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, “ A Letter from Dr. Asmälaš Bäyänä, Awrajjas Interior Administration Office Head, to Šäwan Province Administration Office about Eucalyptus Tree”, dated on *Ter* 19/1968.C., Ref.no.አ.አ/16863/፳-15.

⁴¹⁴WTMRC, Folder No.5259, No File no. “ A Letter From Prof.Dr. Ing Franz Heske, Director General of Forestry and Game to Mr. Pascal Woldämariam about Complementary Information concerning FAO Meeting”, dated on 31 September 1959, Ref. 775.

⁴¹⁵WTMRC, Folder No.5259, No File no. “Annual Report Concerning the Activities of Department of Forestry and Game for the Year, 1951E.C.” dated on 1 October 1959, Ref. 772., p.2.

Agriculture fully engaged in rehabilitation of the whole watershed of the Awash River of which *Mānz ena Gešé*, and *Yefat ena Ṭemuga awrajjas* were part.⁴¹⁶

In July 1957 The Imperial Government encouraged tree planting and declared a national day of tree planting. To be a role model, the Emperor himself participated in the planting campaign. In that year of the total 118,000 hectares of land allocated for tree planting, 45,000 hectares were planted. Yet, to reduce the amount of imports of lumber "and wastage of wood", more than 40 wood processing machines were planted in different parts of the country.⁴¹⁷

According to Bahru, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the imperial government deeply engaged in planting trees to substitute the trees that were lost and add more. He describes the efforts as marking a shift from "...defensive to the offensive, from protection of forests to a program of afforestation and reforestation".⁴¹⁸ The forces behind the movement were local and expatriate forest experts and advisors working in the forestry department in the Ministry of Agriculture. Among them was H.F.Mooney, a British forest expert who worked as a forestry advisor in the Ministry for a long period of time. He and others pushed the idea that the government should proceed by creating awareness among local people, the declaration of the national tree planting day, and the establishment of tree nurseries in different areas. The government accepted these proposals and worked towards their practical implementation. However, the existing insecurities both in land tenure and ownership of trees became an obstacle. As I have discussed in detail before, peasants were not certain if they get the return on their labor, and thus were reluctant to plant trees

⁴¹⁶WTMRC, Folder No.5259, No File no. "A Report on Hydro Electric Energy, Irrigation and Forestry." dated on 6 October 1959, Ref. 788., pp.1-2.

⁴¹⁷Ministry of Agriculture, "የኢትዮጵያየፀረንጅና..."(A History of Forest and...), p.125.

⁴¹⁸Bahru, "Forests and Forest Management...", p.102.

on their fields. Tree planting was consequently very limited, particularly around major settlements, although generally things were better in urban than in rural areas.⁴¹⁹

Officially, however, the government continued to urge the planting of trees particularly as a substitute for trees cut. It promoted the idea of planting five seedlings for every tree cut on private holdings and 1000 seedlings per hectare for large holdings of big companies. It also made taxation of wood and wood products uniform. It imposed service charge of 3-8 and 11 Ethiopian *birr* for shareholders and licensed individuals respectively. Licensed individuals paid 0.50 cents per cubic meter of firewood.⁴²⁰

Towards the end, trees did begin to be planted in fairly large numbers in selected areas and around individual homesteads. The government strictly monitored the cutting of trees through the branch offices of the Ministry of Agriculture. Licensed individuals were required to pay 300 Ethiopian Birr as a guarantee for the planting of seedlings in place of trees they cut. This money would be returned after experts verified the planting and of the seedlings and their viability.⁴²¹ Licenses were given to individuals on condition that the land requested was the *rist* land of the individuals concerned and that there were no other claimants who contest their tenure.⁴²²

In spite of the above mentioned efforts, the proportion of cutting and planting trees was not balanced. The exploitation of forest resources of the country continued to be wasteful and hence it progressively declined. Statistical evidence shows that exports of lumber declined while imports

⁴¹⁹Habtemariam et al, “Reading the Landscape Past...”, p. 467.

⁴²⁰Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የፍጥነት...” (A History of Forest and...) , p.123.

⁴²¹*Ibid.*, pp.123-124.

⁴²²NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, “A Letter from Vice Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Tahas* 11. 1962E.C, Ref no.4032/62/7/3/167.

increased increasingly, particularly between 1952 and 1962.⁴²³ Even if it is difficult to talk in percentage terms due to lack of data, wood used for construction, fuel and household materials in the highlands of Ethiopia, was estimated to be limited. Most of the time, members of the royal family, upper class types and a few wealthy farmers used wood for building houses. Many of the poor peasants built their houses out of stone and mud, mixed with straw. The roof was thatched with grass. This was mainly due to lack of wood. Similarly, wood was also rarely used for making household furniture among the peasants. In the houses of most peasants, tables, beds and chairs made of wood would not exist. Similarly, peasants used animal droppings for fuel and sometime residuals of crops, leaves and small branches of trees.⁴²⁴ According to the report of the Department of Forestry and Game in the Ministry of Agriculture in the 1940s and 1950s, timber brought to markets was prepared wastefully due to lack of sawmill. On average, only 10 to 20% of the total log was properly used, the remaining was being wasted.⁴²⁵ My study area, Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*, was not an exception in this regard.

Moreover, illegal cutting of trees and extensive charcoal production were common in the *Awrajja* in the post-liberation period. Local government agents reported the case to higher government offices several times, including to the Ministry of Agriculture. In rather purfunctory manner, the Ministry of Agriculture would order the Šäwa province to deal with the issue and report the case to it. At least once, in December 1968, a committee consisting representatives from the *Awrajja* and *wäräda* government offices was organized for the purpose. Sometime afterwards, the

⁴²³Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያየደንክና...”(A History of Forest and...),pp.123-124. Besides, the individual who entered into contract with the government to use cut and use trees, would cover up the per diem and transport costs of the experts assigned.

⁴²⁴Chojnacki, “Forests and Forestry...”, p. 35.

⁴²⁵WTMRC , Folder no.5259, No File no., “A Letter from Prof.Dr. Ing Franz Heske, Director General of Forestry and Game to H.E. Lij Michael Imeru Vice Ministry of Agriculture about Inefficient Sawing of Timber by Small Landowners”, dated on 6 Nov 1959 , Ref no.826.

delegation led by *Fitawurari* Hailämäsqał Zäamanuel went to the area to investigate the case. It, however, came back without actually observing the extent of the problem because of security concerns. Illegal users resisted the local police force largely by eluding them or hiding in the forests and bushes.⁴²⁶ The problem persisted, particularly in and around Karakoré, in the border between Šäwa and Wällo provinces. As mentioned before, this area was a bone of contention between different groups and was the same with regard to natural resources. The area was in effect a no man's land and hence people cut trees illegally and destroyed natural resources not just to exploit the resources, but also to deny access to the other group. The weak presence of the state in the area contributed to the prevalence of conflict and political tension.⁴²⁷ The problem in the region grew to the extent that it became difficult to execute the regular functions of courts and police offices. Recognizing the problem, the Ministry of Agriculture wrote a letter ordering the governor of Yefat *ena Temuga awrajja*, to work closely with different stakeholders. The letter criticized the court's 'light' decision against captured individuals, that it encouraged rather than discouraged others to do the same. The letter was written as a warning and emphasized the point that local government authorities should take responsibility in handling the problem of charcoal burning under the existing forest law of the country. But it was not that much successful.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, "A Letter from *Grazmač* Germačäw Täklähawariat, Minister of Ministry of Agriculture to *Däjjazmač* Keflé Ergätu, Minister of Ministry of Interior, about Deforestation in Yefat *ena Temuga Awrajja*", dated on *Ter* 30/1961E.C, Ref no.7882/61.

⁴²⁷NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, "A Letter From *Ato* Mäsfīn Redi, Director of Agricultural office of Šäwan Province, to *Ras* Mäsfīn Seläši, Governor General of Šäwan Province, about Deforestation in Yefat *ena Temuga Awrajja*", dated on *Hedar* 25/1961E.C, Ref no.784/61/327.; Informants: *Ato* Alämayähu Bäufekad, *Ato* Šäwayé Yefru, *Ato* Terusäw Mäkonen and *Ato* Aṭlaw Asamenäw. The firsts two were interviewed on 28/01/11 while the last two on 10 and 16/02/11 respectively.

⁴²⁸NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, "A Letter from Ministry of Agriculture to *Fitawurari* Mamo Bäšé, Governor of Yefat *ena Temuga Awrajja*, About Forest Protection and Development in the *Awrajja*", dated on *Nähassé* 25/1964E.C, Ref no.23/28.; See also NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, "A Letter from *Däjjazmač* Säbsebé Šebru, Governor General of Šäwan Province to *Qäñazmač* Abäbayähu Admasu, Governor General of Yefat *ena Temuga Awrajja*", dated on *Miazia* 21/1961E.C, Ref no.12558/250/39.

CHAPTER FIVE

Famine, Relief and Rehabilitation

Peasants' Impoverishment and Vulnerability to Famine

Famine had been a severe problem in twentieth-century Ethiopia, as it had, indeed been before. It affected much of the country particularly the central and northern parts.¹ Historically, a number of major famines appeared in the country with increasingly widening spatial coverage: 1916–1920, 1927–1928, 1930s–1940s, 1957–1958, 1972–1974, and 1984–1985.² Famine was the result of a combination factors, both man-made and natural.³ As discussed in the previous chapter, during the Imperial regime, the peasants suffered from the combined force and demands of the state, the the clergy and the landed aristocracy.⁴ They also suffered from unpredictable weather conditions, prevalent drought, outbreak of disease, flooding, landslides, locust and other kinds of pest invasions. All these forces made the peasants vulnerable to famine and made the efforts to come out of poverty very challenging.⁵

Scholars have associated the phenomenon with a variety of causal factors. According to Girma, peasants' impoverishment was closely linked to their limited access to or rights over land both

¹ Girma, *The State and Development*..., pp.55-61, 63-64.; See also Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability to ...*, p.82.; Ahmad Hassen, "Close Yet Far: Northern Shewa Under the Dergu" in Wendy James et al (eds.), *Remapping Ethiopia Socialism and After* (James Currey Ltd, 2002), p.75.

² Clarke, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation*..., p.25.

³ Girma, *The State and Development*..., p.55; Dessalegn Rahmato, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian Crisis: State and Peasantry in Post-Revolution Ethiopia," *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (1993), pp.36 and 38.; Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability and ...* pp.96-97.; Hailegebriel "ርሃብ፣ ድርቅ እና..." (Hunger, Drought and...), p.39.; Hurni, "Land Degradation, Famine..." , pp.27-29.; Crummey, *Farming and Famine*..., p.8.; Adhana Haile, "History of Selected Famines in Peasant Societies in Wällo and Tegray, 1941-1974" (PhD Dissertation in History, 1996), pp. 596-604.

⁴ Girma, *State and Development*..., pp.11, 67-85.; Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", pp.36 and 38.; Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability and ...* pp.96-97.; Bahru , "A Historical Outline of..." , pp. 53-54.; Sandra Fullerto Joireman, *Property Rights and Political Development in Ethiopia and Eritrea, 1941-1974* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), p.1.; Hurni, "Land Degradation, Famine..." , pp.28-33.; Abdul Mejid Hussein, "The Political Economy of the Famine in Ethiopia", in Abdul Mejid Hussein (ed.), *Drought and Famine in Ethiopia-African Environment Special Report 2* (London: International African Institute in Collaboration with Environment Training Program-SIDA, No Year), p.10. Ege, "The Potential for Development..." , pp. 488-489.

⁵ Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability to ...*, pp.96-97.

during the Imperial and *Därg* regimes.⁶ There were, of course, other contributing factors, such as the availability or absence of labor, infrastructure, and individual commitment.⁷ As the population increased through time, there was growing scarcity of resources, particularly of land, leading to decline in productivity. Under this condition, most peasant families, particularly those newly established, would face shortages or total lack of land and other assets. Unable to sustain themselves on their small and fragmented plots, people would be forced to work on other peoples' land through crop-sharing, rental or other forms of agreement. Even then, people experiencing poverty would not often be able to rent land or buy farm equipment for lack of money or capital.⁸ Even those who might have had some land would be unable to embark on its long term development for lack of tenure security. In general, this makes for a system of production geared towards fulfilment of immediate needs plus tax obligations.⁹

During the military regime, the insecurity of the peasants took another dimension, which persisted until the end of the regime. Although the Land Proclamation of 4 March 1975 abolished landlordism, it did not end peasant land and tree tenure insecurity. It instead brought about a new form of insecurity through the frequent redistribution of land and the state's extensive involvement in the rural economy. The state strictly controlled land, despite its being made "public" property. It discouraged private holdings and strove to fix market prices. In effect, the peasants had only use

⁶ Girma, *The State and Development*...,pp.71-72.

⁷ Yared Amare, "Socio-economic Dimensions of Rural Poverty in Ethiopia: A Qualitative Study of Two Highland Communities in North Shewa", in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.XXXV, No.II(2002),pp.118, 129.

⁸ Yared, "Socio-economic Dimensions...",pp.118-120,137. ; See also Shemels Adugna, “**ድርቅ እና ርህብን ለመቋቋም የተደረጉ እንቅስቃሴዎች**”(Efforts to Withstand Drought and Hunger) in Shiferaw Bekele(ed.), *ከድህነት ወደ ልማት: እውቀትን ለትውልድ ማስተላለፍ*(From Poverty to Development: Transferring Knowledge to Generation)(Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Sciences, 2006E.C),pp.270-271.

⁹ Girma, *The State and Development*...,pp.71-72.; See also Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability to*...,pp.11, 77-90, and 96-97.; Mesfin, *Suffering Under God's*..., pp.90-101.; Yared, "Socio-economic Dimensions...", ,pp.118, 129.

rights over land.¹⁰ Besides labor, what the latter had was, as Dessalegn states, "perishable" resources like animals. Even the relatively wealthy could experience overnight disappearance of assets in the event of unanticipated disasters, leading to destitution.¹¹

Scholars like Eshetu¹² and Dessalegn¹³ view peasant impoverishment and vulnerability from the perspective of land and agricultural policy of the state. The former argues that agricultural productivity declined progressively to such an extent that it could not meet the basic needs of the people and of the state apparatus. The reason behind this, he says, was the "archaic, inequitable and complex system of land tenure, technological backwardness, poor infrastructure and government policy that was at best lukewarm to agricultural development".¹⁴ The state gave little or no attention to the task of improving the sector particularly of subsistence agriculture. In the last two Five-Years Plans, for example, it allocated only 4.2% of the budget to the sector. Most of this budgetary allocation was dedicated to the funding of mechanized farms, with the remaining portion going toward administrative expenses.¹⁵ Decline of peasant production and productivity did not surface on the agenda of the state. Similarly, the issue of forests and forestry became secondary areas of concern for the state in the Three Five Years Development Plans, from 1957 to 1974.¹⁶

¹⁰ Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", pp.38-41.; Yeraswork Admassie, *Twenty Years to Nowhere: Property Rights, Land Management and Conservation in Ethiopia* (Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press, 2000), p.210.; see also *Nägarit Gazéta*, Proclamation no. 31/ 1975.

¹¹ Dessalegn Rahmato, *Famine and Survival Strategies: A Case Study From Northeast Ethiopia* (Uppsala: The Scandenavian Institute of African Studies, 1991), p.22.

¹² Eshetu Chole, "The Ethiopian Economy: An Overview", in *Beyond the Famine: An Examination of the Issues Behind Famine in Ethiopia* (Geneva: International Institute for Relief and Development Food For the Hungry International, 1988), p.27.

¹³ Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", pp.36 and 38.

¹⁴ Eshetu, "The Ethiopian Economy...", p.27.

¹⁵ Girma, *The State and Development...*, p.13.

¹⁶ Habtemariam et al, "Reading the Landscape...", p. 467.

The challenges of the sector continued under the new regime after the Revolution. According to Dessalegn, the inconsistent, sometimes contradictory, agricultural policy caused stagnant economic development. The 1975 Land Reform gave everybody a piece of land but denied them full rights over it. The agricultural policy aimed at promoting collectivization at the expense of individual holdings. Many rural development programs were poorly designed and were put into practice without considering the realities on the ground. More importantly they did not encourage or seek the participation and goodwill of the peasantry.¹⁷ Similarly, the July 1975 Proclamation of Urban Lands and Extra Houses also impacted urban dwellers. This proclamation discouraged private investment and created land and tree tenure insecurity among urban residents.¹⁸ In the early 1970s, the government imported elements of Vietnamese and Chinese agricultural programs without taking local conditions into account. Consequently, it compelled peasants to form at first service cooperatives and latter producer cooperatives. The latter put an end to the private holdings of the peasants, as well as farm equipment and livestock.¹⁹

The underlying premise of the military regime's agricultural policy was that peasants were silent recipients of decisions made at the top. They neither had complete control over the land they cultivate nor participate in the decision-making process at any level.²⁰ The government centralized power and resources through strict control of local organizations. It brought peasant associations

¹⁷Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", pp.36 and 38.; See also African Watch Report, *Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York, 1991),p.155.; Eshetu, "The Ethiopian Economy...",pp.33-34.

¹⁸*Nägarit Gazéta*, Proclamation no 47/ 1975.; Habtemariam and etal "Reading the Landscape...", pp. 468-69.

¹⁹ Girma, *The State and Development...*,pp.16-17.; Tinnassie Nichola, "The Agricultural Sector in Ethiopia: Organization, Policies and Prospects" in *Beyond the Famine: An Examination of the Issues Behind Famine in Ethiopia*(Geneva: International Institute for Relief and Development Food for the Hungry International, 1988),pp.108-109. The process of formation of producer cooperative was gradual and passed through three stage to reach to its final stage. In the first phase, a household was expected to hold only one-fifth of his land privately and transferred the rest to the cooperative. But he possessed farming tools and livestock. In the second phase, the size of household's land reduced to one tenth and to the opposite communal holding increased significantly and controlled farm animals and tools. In the last stage, there was no more private holding. For more see Girma, *The State and Development...*,pp.16-17.; Nichola, "The Agricultural Sector...",pp.108-109.

²⁰Tadesse, "Agricultural and Rural Development...",p.80.

under a national organization called All-Ethiopia Peasant Association (AEPA), fitted out to control and direct peasant associations in the country. The association was created to serve the state, not the peasants. Furthermore, the state appointed cadres as leaders of peasant associations recruited ostensibly from among those who had acceptance in the community.²¹

For Fasil, the problem of the peasantry was closely linked to the decline of the natural environment that had local, national and global dimensions. He argues that unwise and unlimited utilization of natural resources disturbed the ecosystem's balance and caused environmental decline.²² Increasing demographic pressure brought about shortage of land for cultivation and grazing. To cope with the problem, peasants had to expand cultivation at the expense of vegetation cover. They began to over utilize land or cultivate marginal lands regardless of the nature of the landscape. This intervention inevitably led to land degradation and eventually caused decline in productivity, environmental deterioration, and expansion of desertification. The ultimate victims in all weather-induced disasters were the poor peasants, who had no sufficient capital and alternative means of livelihood.²³ Fasil summarizes the vulnerability of the peasants as follows:

The social system of survival insurance by a community of subsistence producers may not always suffice to enable it to survive the hardships frequently brought about by natural or social causes. Famine and consequent starvation [sic] are therefore an ever present danger facing the producers who are thoroughly dependent on the rhythm of nature for subsistence production. As potential instability is a structural feature of subsistence production, so is the threat of famine. External forces can alter the basic character for the better, or for worse, as in the Ethiopian experience.²⁴

²¹ Girma, *The State and Development...*, p.15.

²² Fassil, *Enough with Famine ...*, pp. 186-187.; See also Hurni, "Land Degradation, Famine..." ,p.52.; Lisk, "Overview: The Current Weather..." ,p.11.

²³ Daniel Gamachu, Environment and Development in Ethiopia", in *Beyond the Famine: An Examination of the Issues Behind Famine in Ethiopia*(Geneva: International Institute for Relief and Development Food for the Hungry International, 1988,p.56.;²³ Hurni, " Land Degradation, Famine ...",p.52.

²⁴ Fasil, *The Subsistence Crisis...*,p.22.

The peasants of North Šäwa were not an exception in this regard. Like other peasants in the country, their livelihood was hand to mouth. The natural environment deteriorated due to the fact that the land was densely settled and over-cultivated over a long period of time. Productivity had declined progressively. In some areas, land degradation went to the extent of making further cultivation impossible. A report of the Land Tenure and Settlement Department of Šäwa province depicted the seriousness of land degradation and the degree of impoverishment of rural communities of the central highlands, including Mänz *ena* Gešé, as follows:

መሬቱ በትውልድ እየተሸነሸነ በማለቁ የዛፍ አይነት ፈጽሞ የለም፡፡ በዚህ ምክንያት አፈሩ እየሸሸ መሬቱ ድንጋይም እየሆነ...አብዛኛውም መሬት ጭንጫ በመሆኑ ለእርሻ ምቹ አይደለም፡፡ የመሬቱ አቀማመጥ ተራራማና ገደላማ በመሆኑ ህዝቡ በአንድ አካባቢ እንዳይኖር እና የህብረት ስራ እንዳይሰራ ምክንያት ሆኗል፡፡...መሬቱ ለእርሻ ምቹ ባለመሆኑ ገበሬው አመት ሙሉ ለፍቶ የዕለት ጉርሱን የአመት ልብሱን ለማግኘት ያዳግተዋል፡፡ በዚህ ላይ የደከመበት ሰብል ገደል አፋፍ ላይ በመሆኑ የዝንጀሮ መጫወቻ ሆኖ ይቀራል፡፡²⁵

Because cultivated land was divided and re-divided for generations, no trees would survive. As a result, the soils declines and lands became rocky....Since most of the land was bare, it was not suitable for agricultural activity. Since the topography of the land was mountainous and hilly, it became an obstacle for people to live in a particular area and work cooperatively. Since the land was not conducive for agriculture, the peasantry would strive throughout the year for something that would not even cover his basic necessities of food and clothing. On top of this, crops were grown on escarpments of hills would be decimated by the ravages of monkeys.

The livelihood of the people in the lowlands was not different. Even under normal circumstances, there was severe shortage of water in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*. Capricious weather conditions caused shortages of precipitation, unseasonable rainfall and at times torrential rainfall. It also caused an acute shortage of ground and surface water. From the 1950s onwards, the people of the *awrajja* repeatedly appealed to high government officials that they suffered from lack of drinking

²⁵ NALA, Folder. No 17.1.3.52, File No. 17.1.3.52.02, “A Letter from LieutENAnt Colonel Lägässä Woldämariam, Minster, Ministry of Interior to Minister of Defense”, dated on *Hedar* 8, 1968E.C. Ref. 7/9306.

water.²⁶ The Imperial government attempted to reduce the problem by digging and developing spring water wells for the people of Arṭuma and Karaqoré and their surroundings.²⁷ However, the intensity of the pain increased, along with expansion of drought. The situation was getting worse from time to time and reached a climax in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1985/86, the *awrajja* governor, in collaboration with Water Resource and Development Ministry, took practical measures. It had deep water wells dug in highly affected areas such as Mafud and Qāwot districts.²⁸ Nevertheless, the intervention did not solve problem in full. It persisted during the ensuing years. Parallel with this, the peasantry in central and northern Ethiopia also faced problems related to the prevalence of anti-crop animals, birds, pests, and diseases. The frequency and magnitude of damage caused by these was high.²⁹

Masfin shares the above idea and contends that most of the peasantry in northeast, central and northern Ethiopia lived under perpetual poverty. Rain-fed agriculture, which the peasants relied on, showed little or no change in concept and technique. The ox-drawn agriculture continued to be a major means of production. The peasants also had limited farm inputs, credit opportunities and market access. Productivity was meager both in amount and quality.³⁰ Most of the peasants could not secure their basic food needs even for a year. They suffered from shortage of food for most of

²⁶ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.17, “A Letter from Šalāqa Mamo Bāšé, administrator of Jara Awrajja to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Hedar* 2, 1952E.C., Ref.no. 669/1052/52; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.17, “A Letter from Dr. Häilägiorgis Worqenäh, Director of Water Development in the Ministry of Job and Communication to Ato Yelma Dārēssa, Minister, Ministry of Fenance” , dated on *Ṭer* 16, 1953E.C., Ref no. 1549/14/53.

²⁷ *Ibid.*; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.17, “A Letter from Šalāqa Mamo Bāšé, administrator of Jara Awrajja to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Hedar* 2, 1952E.C., Ref.no. 669/1052/52.

²⁸ Informants: Ato Šāwayé Yefru, *Amsaalāqa* Mākonen Zāwudé and Ato Mohammād Hassān.

²⁹ Fassil, *Enough with Famine ...*; Informants: Ato Šāwayé Yefru, *Amsaalāqa* Mākonen Zāwudé and Ato Mohammād Hassān.

³⁰ Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability*....pp.77-93.; see also Fasil, *The Subsistence Crisis*....,pp.20-22.; Girma, *The State and Development*....,pp. 69-71.; John Clarke, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation: Ethiopia's Campaign Against Famine*(London: Harney and Jones Ltd, NY),pp.8-9.; See also Hurni, “Land Degradation, Famine...”,pp.28-29.); Lisk, “Overview: The Current Weather...”,p.11.

the year.³¹ When particularly bad times struck, they would be forced to sell their assets like cows and oxen or even lease out their lands.³²

Survival Strategies

Various scholars have written that the Ethiopian peasantry used different survival strategies in the wake of famines and other kinds of adversities.³³ In normal times, it is argued, peasants sought to reduce risk by practicing both farming and non-farming pursuits, planting different crops in rotation at different locations.³⁴ They also engaged in soil and water conservation activities like building terraces to reduce soil erosion and associated problems.³⁵ Similarly, pastoralists attempted to increase the quantity and variety of cattle by breeding disease and drought resistant animals.³⁶ At times of crisis, they helped each other, sold or exchanged assets, and sought external support. When conditions got worse, some might revert to consuming unconventional food items such as roots and leaves.³⁷

Once the crisis ended, most peasants would try to rehabilitate themselves and get over the bad memories, but they would not get prepared to avert future threats.³⁸ The reluctance of peasants to do so, as Fekade argues, was linked to their perceptions of the origin and the end of the disasters. The majority of them considered natural disasters as punishment from God for wrong doings and

³¹ Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability*...,p.83-84.; Hurni, “Land Degradation, Famine....,pp.28-29.; see also Lisk, “Overview: The Current Weather ...”,p.11.

³² Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability and*...,pp.90-92; Fekade Azeze, *Unheard Voices: Drought, Famine, and God in Ethiopia Oral Poetry*(Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 1998),pp. 86-87.; Informants: Amsaaläqa Gäbrägies Habtämikael, Ato Bälačäw Yelma, Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh and Ato Hailé Häilämariam.

³³ Dessalegn, *Famine and Survival*...,p.16.

³⁴ Fasil, *The Subsistence Crisis in*...,pp.27-29; Dessalegn, *Famine and Survival*...,pp. 16-17.

³⁵ McCann, *People of the Plow*...,pp.60-61.

³⁶ Fasil, *The Subsistence Crisis in*...,pp.27-29; Dessalegn, *Famine and Survival*...,pp. 16-17.

³⁷ Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability and*...,pp.90-92; Fekade, *Unheard Voices*...,pp. 86-87.; Adhana Haile, “Peasant Response to Famine in Ethiopia, 1975-1985”, in *Ambio*, Vol. XX, No. V(1991),pp.186-188.

³⁸ Fekade, *Unheard Voices*...,pp. 86-87.; see also Dessalegn, *Famine and Survival*..., ,pp. 30-32.

thus expected solution from Him without having to carry out any responsibility.³⁹ Underscoring this point, the author contends that

People in this part of the world [Ethiopia in general and North Šäwa in particular] seems to be permanently expecting and waiting. But never knew what it was expecting, or what it is waiting for. There definitely is some lacunae in its thinking. Taking pre-famine initiatives communally or in small groups to prevent the recurrence of famine and other disasters, or to attempt at striking at the real roots of the problem seems to be an idea that has escaped peasant imagination. Despite the recurrence and cyclical nature of the harrowing experiences, they underwent, and despite the indelible memories of sufferance they inherited from their ancestors, there is no trace of self-inspired action to tackle the problem [of famine].⁴⁰

Whatever attempts were made to tackle the problem of recurrent subsistence crisis was top-down, initiated by elites and government officials. In my study area, for instance, *Däjjazmač* Mamo Seyoum, who was the administrator of Šäwa province in the late 1960s and early 1970s, came up with an initiative to avert the recurrence of famine in the province. He actively worked to help solve the socio-economic problems of the people of the province⁴¹. He had initiated the work of rehabilitating the degraded land by mobilizing local people to plant trees and build terraces.⁴² He also encouraged the collection of grains and cash for times of crisis. Having seen the impoverishment of the land, he convinced all *awrajjas*' governors of the region to mobilize local people to contribute grains for times of crisis such as 1974/75. The project was intended to reduce

³⁹ Fekade, *Unheard Voices*..., pp.87-88, 106-116; Mesfin, *Rural Vulnerability to...*, pp.141-143.; Adhana Haile, "History of Selected Famines in Peasant Societies in Wallo and Tegray, 1941-1974" (PhD Dissertation in History, 1996), pp. 603-604.

⁴⁰ Fekade, *Unheard Voices*..., pp. 87-88.

⁴¹ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47., File no.17.1.3.47.01., "A Letter from *Däjjazmač* Mamo Seyoum, Administrator of Šäwa Province to Eleven *Awrajjas* of the Province", dated on *Hedar* 20/1967E.C., Ref. no. *h*/1503/5591/2.; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47., File no.17.1.3.47.01., "A Letter from Colonel Woldé Habtägäbrä'el, Administrator of Haiq and Butajira *Awrajjas* to Ato Šemäls Aduña, Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission", dated on 26/03/1967E.C., Ref. no. 144/171. *Däjjazmač* Mamo began to engage in nature rehabilitation and rural development activities as soon as he was transferred from Wällo to Šäwa in 1970. He was the administrator of Wällo from 1964 to 1970. For more see Dessalegn, *Environmental Change*..., pp.20-25.

⁴² Dessalegn, *Environmental Change*..., pp.20-25.

the impact of famine by distributing emergency aid to victims.⁴³ As before, the governor general proposed the idea to higher government officials and got positive responses.⁴⁴ Then, he issued guidelines for local governors on how to collect, store and distribute grains. According to the guideline, peasants would transport their contribution to the warehouses; contributions would be made at the end of the production season; warehouses would be constructed in selected towns accessible to transportation using local resources and labor supported by students who were then on The Development through Cooperation Campaign. The local militia, the police force and the people at large would ensure the safety of grains so collected and oversee its transfer to the *awrajja* capital. Finally, the amount of contribution by individuals would be determined by local government agents based on the economic status of each person.⁴⁵

Our records show, however, that in most districts of the province, the project faced several difficulties, delaying its implementation for some time. Among these, the major problems were financial limitations to support the project (particularly the building of warehouses and employment of manpower),⁴⁶ plus security problems. The latter continued to be a challenge for following five years and more. Following takeover of power by the military regime, the former landed classes embarked upon acts of resistance. These individuals mobilized people against the

⁴³Informants: *Amsaaläqa* Gäbrägies Habtämikael, *Ato* Bälačaw Yelma, *Ato* Ešätu Wodajénäh and *Ato* Hailé Häilämariam. Däjjazmač Mamo Seyoum embarked upon such projects as soon as he was transferred from Wollo to Šäwa in 1967.

⁴⁴ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.01. “A Letter from Colonel Woldé Habtägäbrä’el, Administrator of Haiq and Butajira *Awrajja* to *Ato* Šemäls Aduña, Commissioner of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission”, dated on 26/03/1967E.C., Ref.no. 1442/171.

⁴⁵ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.01. “A Letter from Däjjazmač Mamo Seyoum, Administrator of Šäwa province to all *Awrajjas* of the Province”, dated on *Hedar* 20, 1967E.C., Ref.no. h/1503/5591/2.

⁴⁶ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.01. “A Letter From Colonel Woldé Habtägäbrä’el, Administrator of Haiq and Butajira *Awrajja* to *Ato* Šemäls Aduña, Commissioner of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission”, dated on 26/03/1967E.C., Ref.no. 1442/171.

new government acting as if they were protectors of the poor peasants.⁴⁷ The resistance was more pronounced in Mänz *ena* Gešé, Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, Märhabété, Tägulät *ena* Bulga *awrajjas*.⁴⁸ People in Mänz *ena* Gešé, in particular, were apparently unhappy about the downfall of the Emperor and the coming into power of the military regime, in part because it was believed that the Emperor had direct family ties to the area.⁴⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Lägässä Woldämariam, Minister of Interior, in his letter addressed to the Minister of Defense dated on 17 November, 1975 explained the support the rebels enjoyed in the region as follows:

በመንዝ እና ግሼ አውራጃ የመሬቱ ስራት የወል በመሆኑ [ለህዝቡ] ለህልውናው መሰረት የሆነው መሬት በቀጥታ ባለመነጠቁ እና ትንሽም ይሁን ትልቅ ጠፍም ይሁን ለም እኩል ከተወላጆች ጋር ተካፍሎ የማረስ መብት ስላለው የመሬት ላራሹን አዋጅ ቦታ አይሰጠውም፡፡ ከንጉሱ ጀምሮ መሣፍንት እና መኳንንት የዘር ግንዳቸውን ከዚህ ህዝብ ጋር ስለሚያገናኙ በደላቸው ሁሉ በደል መስሎ አይታየውም፡፡ በዚህ ምክንያት ንቅናቄውን በብርቱ ይፍራዋል፡፡⁵⁰

Since the land tenure system in Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja* was communal, the land, which was a base for survival, was not directly alienated; everybody had the right to share land with the descent group and cultivate it large or small, fertile or infertile. Thus, it did not give attention to the proclamation of land to the tiller.

Because the Emperor and higher nobility had affective ties to this area [Mänz *ena* Gešé]; the people did not take their abuse of power seriously. Because of this, they intensely disliked the Revolution.

⁴⁷ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.52., File no.17.1.3.52.02., “A Minute about the Security Conditions of Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajja*” dated on *Yäkatit* 20,1971E.C. ; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.52., File no.17.1.3.52.02., “A letter from LieutENAnt Colonel Lägässä Woldämariam, Minister, Ministry of Defense to Transitional Military Government of Ethiopia” dated on *Mäskäräm* 19/1968E.C., Ref.no. 7/2546; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.52., File no.17.1.3.52.02., “A Letter from Dr. Bantayehu Gelaw, Administrator of Šäwa Province to Colonel Berhanu Sahlägiorgis, Commander of Police Force”, dated on *Mägabit* 24, 1967, Ref.no. ፳፬/239/1913/67.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* ; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.52., File no.17.1.3.52.02., “A Letter from Qallu *Awrajja* Administration to Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front”, dated on *Miazia* 22, 1967E.C., Ref.no. 2601/67/01.

⁴⁹NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.52, File no. 17.1.3.52.03, “A Letter from *Däjjazmač* Mamo Seyoum, Administrator of Šäwa Province to Colonel Bälačäw Jämanäh, Minister, Ministry of Interior”, dated on 8/1/67E.C., Ref no. ፳፬/6/67.; NALA, Folder. No 17.1.3.52, File No. 17.1.3.52.02, “A Letter from LieutENAnt Colonel Lägässä Woldämariam, Minister of Ministry of Interior to Minister of Defense”, dated on *Hedar* 8, 1968E.C. Ref. 7/9306.

⁵⁰ NALA, Folder. No 17.1.3.52, File No. 17.1.3.52.02, “A Letter from LieutENAnt Colonel Lägässä Woldämariam, Minister of Ministry of Interior to Minister of Defense”, dated on *Hedar* 8, 1968E.C. Ref. 7/9306.

As early as 1974, some members of the royal family and members of the landed aristocracy took advantage of this local sentiment to seek asylum in these areas. They tried to mobilize local people against the new regime. They accused the regime that it was against local people, their cultural values and their religion. They did, indeed, get the support of most of the rural people to the extent that they made Géramedir and Gešé their strongholds. Mäsfin Berru and Märed Berru were the most prominent leaders of the resistance in the area.⁵¹ Many, including local administrators of Gešé such as Bruké Dämssie (who was a famous patriot of Gešé), joined the rebellion, and gradually, the rebellion spread to different *awrajjas* of North Šäwa. Re-establishing peace in the area became difficult for a long time in part because the rebels had extensive networks of support among the population.⁵²

On the other hand, the age-old competition for resources or struggle over resources among different communities in Yefat further aggravated political instability in the area. The problem in many ways has continued until very recent times. It contributed its own share in limiting the effectiveness of pre and post-famine development interventions by the state and non-governmental organizations. Even such individual productive initiatives as cultivation of fields far from homestead, were impossible due lack of physical security. There was fear that at one point or another, others might come and destroy what was produced or erected. Conflicts that might have

⁵¹ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.52, File no. 17.1.3.52.03, “A Report from Colonel Worqu Kābädä, Administrator of Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajjä* to Dr. Bantayähu Gälaw, Administrator of Šäwa Province”, dated on 6/7/67E.C., Ref no. 74/67.; EGWAOA, No Folder and File number, “A letter from Ato Fäntahun Molla, Administrator of Gämza District to Yefat *ena* Temega *Awrajjä* Administration Office”, dated on *Säné* 30, 1969E.C., Ref no. 1636/69.); see also Ahmad, “Close Yet Far...” ,pp. 80-81. Mäsfin and Märid were the sons of Ras Berru Woldägäbräel, who was one of the highest landowners in the country during the imperial regime. They entered into the region via Adabay carrying huge amount of weapons which was distributed to the local people.

⁵² NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.52, File no. 17.1.3.52.03, “A Report from Colonel Worqu Kābädä, Administrator of Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajjä* to Dr. Bantayähu Gälaw, Administrator of Šäwa Province”, dated on 6/7/67E.C., Ref no. 74/67.; NALA, Folder. no. 17.1.3.352, File No. 17.1.3.53.02; “A Letter from Yefat *ena* Temega *Awrajjä* Administration office to Dr. Bantayähu Gälaw, Administrator of the Šäwa province”, dated on *Säné* 5, 1967E.C., Ref No. 3/5665/67.

arisen among individuals tended to turn into group conflicts and overwhelm entire regions, causing massive damage to human and animal populations and property with consequences, of course, for the environment. The typical form that these conflicts took was the burning of villages, the killing of people and raiding of cattle.⁵³ For instance, on 29 January, 1976, the killing of an Amhara by certain Oromo individuals in Jawuha sub-district at Kalēš *qābällé* induced the Amhara of the region to undertake a counter offensive against the Oromo of Efrata-Jillé districts. Thus, shortly after the incident, they penetrated deep into the Oromo inhabited areas, burning villages, chasing away local people and coming back with looted cattle. A few days later, the Oromo, on their part, made a sudden counterattack against the Amhara aiming at restoring the stolen cattle. Theirs was as devastating a raid as that of their attackers. Attacks and counterattacks like this, sometimes under the pretext of settling personal scores was typical throughout the region.⁵⁴ The competition over resources, as sources indicate, increased from time to time due to the progressive demographic rise coupled with decline of resources, and unpredictable weather conditions, particularly since the 1960s.⁵⁵

In 1977, taking the earlier initiative of *Däjjazmač* Mamo as a model, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) was involved in strategic activities to avert the recurrent famine. Under proclamation 272/1977, the Commission was authorized to collect contributions in kind or cash from the peasants for times of crises. The amount of contribution was decided to be one-twelfth of the total annual income of each peasant.⁵⁶ The pastoralists living in the peripheries were also

⁵³ Informants: Ato Assäfa Woldämariam, Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw, Ato Awuraria Aragaw and Ato Alämu Hailé.

⁵⁴ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.52, File no. 17.1.3.52.03, “A Letter from Šaläqa Tadässä Lämna, head, Crimenal and Traffic Investigation Division to Ministry of Interior”, dated on 3/6/1968E.C., Ref no. Φ 3/Tጠ1/3/972.; Informants: Ato Tafäsä Assalefäw and Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw interviewed on 15 and 16/02/11 respectively.

⁵⁵ Informants: Ato Assäfa Woldämariam, Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw, Ato Awuraris Aragaw and Ato Alämu Hailé.

⁵⁶ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Letter from Ato Berhanu Bayäh, Minister, Ministry of Workers and Social Affairs and Chairperson of A National Committee of Special Contribution for Time of Disaster

included in the project. Each household would pay a minimum of 40 Birr in lieu of payment in kind. The Commission organized local branch committees with full authority to decide the amount of contribution per household on the basis of “local realities” but above the minimum.⁵⁷ Urban dwellers and government workers were also part of the program.⁵⁸ However, the rebirth of local bandits and insurgents in the north and the invasion of Somalia in the east in 1977/78 took attention away from this and other similar initiatives.⁵⁹

The 1984/85 Famine

The province of Šäwa was one of the worst victims of the famine of 1984/85.⁶⁰ Out of a total 105 districts, 60 of them were seriously affected.⁶¹ Though the magnitude of the ravages varied from area to area, it was particularly devastating in Mänz *ena* Gešé, Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, Sälalé, Känbata *ena* Hadya, and Tägulät *ena* Bulga *awrajjas*.⁶²

to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Šäwa Branch Office” , dated on *Mägabrit* 6/1977E.C., Ref.no. 0/ ሐ6/4/13; *Nägarit Gazéta*, No.272/1977E.C.

⁵⁷ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “ A Letter from Ato Gäbräwold Lämama, Head, Relief and Rehabilitation Special Contribution Proclamation Implementation Office to Relief and Rehabilitation Special Contribution Executive Office”, dated on *Miazia* 21/1977E.C., Ref.no. 0/ ሐ6/4/52.

⁵⁸ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “ A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh, Administrator of Šäwa Province to Minister of Interior”, dated on *Miazia* 14/1977E.C., Ref.no. ሸ222/ 60/፳3.

⁵⁹Informants: Ato Woldäarägay Dañé, Ato Germa Wondafras, Ato Tässäma Kābädä and Ato Tadässä Mamo.

⁶⁰ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Letter from Ato Zänäbä Berhanätensaé in Ethiopian Metrology Agency to Šäwa Province”, dated on *Mägabrit* 2, 1977E.C., Ref.no. ከ/151/፳11.; See also Hurni, “Land Degradation, Famine...”, pp. 28-29.; EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. ሐ/2040, “A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh, Administrator of Šäwa Province to Yefat *ena* Ṭemega *Awrajja* Administration”, dated on *Teqemet* 27, 1978E.C., Ref. no. ሸ12/152/፳3. ; Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, *The Challenges of Drought...*, p.43.

⁶¹ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. ሐ/2040, “A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh, Administrator of Šäwa Province to Yefat and Ṭemega *Awrajja* Administration”, dated on *Teqemet* 27, 1978E.C., Ref. no. ሸ12/152/፳3.

⁶²NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “ A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh, Administrator of Šäwa Province, to Minister of Interior”, dated on *Nähassé* 9, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ሸ12/60/፳3.; NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “ A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh, Administrator of Šäwa Province, to Minister of Interior”, dated on *Genbot* 1, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ሸ12/34/፳3. Other *Awrajjas* like Yarar *ena* Kärräyu, and Märhabété were also victims. A report from Šäwa province vice administration office to the Ministry of Interior dated on 20September, 1984, revealed that during the famine years, in Märhabété *Awrajja*, for instance, a total of 5099 livestock died. Out of which 1466 were cattle, 1615 sheep, 1420 goats and 420 pack animals. For more, refer NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Letter from Ato Gétačäw Abäbä, Vice Administrator of Šäwa province, to Minister of Interior”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 10, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ፳39/7/፳3. The Ethiopian Meteorological Agency identified the main

The prolonged drought caused the drying of rivers and, of course, the failure of crops. The loss of crops in the *Bälg* (from February to May) season of 1984, which was otherwise one of the most productive seasons for both the highlanders and lowlanders, caused serious food shortages and subsequent socio-economic crises. The lack of rain, which began earlier, also continued in the *Mäher* (June to September) of the rainy season of the same year. There also appeared acute shortage of animal forage.⁶³ Confused and fearful, those peasants who had some grain in stock were unwilling to bring it to the market. They instead wanted to buy and store more for the future. Consequently, an acute shortage of food occurred in the region's markets. Many others who had reserves soon exhausted what they had by supporting their relatives and the famished people coming from near and far. Within a short time, even previously well-to-do people joined the masses in starvation.⁶⁴

The Ravages of the Famine of 1984/85

The shortage of rain was accompanied by the emergence of anti-crop pests, particularly *tāmč* (army worm) that devastated the remaining crops. It was reported that a single crop carried about 80-90 insects on average. It destroyed crops in the field totally. Livestock also died *en mass* due to lack

cause of the 1984/85 famine as the increase in ocean temperatures surrounding the African continent and the shift in wind patterns from the Sahara desert and Siberia. It indicated that the rising temperature of the Pacific Ocean caused the drying of the African continent. Additionally, the increased pressure of the wind from the Sahara desert and Northwest Africa prevented the wet and cold winds from Siberia from reaching the interior of Ethiopia, specifically, and the southern hemisphere generally. Instead, these winds were diverted to the center of Europe. The combination of these factors resulted in a shortage of spring rainfall in 1984 and fluctuations in the start and end of the rainy season in the country. For more see NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., "A Letter from Ato Zänäbä Berhanätensaé in Ethiopian Metrology Agency to Šäwa Province", dated on *Mägabit* 2, 1977E.C., Ref.no. ከ/151/፳፻11.; Informants: Ato Dämäqä Zäläläw, Ato Alämayähu Bäufekad and Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh .

⁶³ Dawit Woldegiyorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1989), pp. 132-133.; Shemelse, “ጽርፉናፍርድ...” (Efforts to Withstand Drought and...), pp. 278-279. *Bälg* (February to May) and *Mäher* (from June to September) were two productive seasons both in the highlands and lowlands in Ethiopia. It was in these seasons that peasants grow different crops. The failure of crops in either of the two or both seasons had a remarkable impact on the livelihood of the peasants. For more see Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, *The Challenge of Drought...*, p. 143.

⁶⁴ Informants: Ato Dämäqä Zäläläw, Ato Bāyänä Dästa and Ato Berlē Hailu.

of water and pasture. Peasants could not sell the remaining cattle, for no one was ready to buy them. The scarcity of food supply in the market threatened urban dwellers who entirely depended on local markets. There was no organization like the Agricultural Marketing Corporation to facilitate the purchase of grain from elsewhere to make up for the deficit.⁶⁵

A report from Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* Agriculture branch office states that in the rainy season of 1984/85, most of the lands of producers' cooperatives as well as private holdings remained uncultivated. The problem was more serious in Qāwot, Efrata, Gāmza districts. In Qāwot, the *qābällés* of Karajāba, Wosānqurqur, Wačo, and Yälän were particularly seriously affected. In Efrata district, there was hardly any cultivation, particularly none in Gärbi, Mätahora, Šäräfa, and Ašekuay *qābällés*. In the same manner, in Gāmza district, the problem was serious in Anqar, Kab and Saramba, Getem, Hagärämariam, Čäqäčäq and Dingäta *qābällés*. This was not only due to the shortage of rain, but also labor and capital (oxen, seed and other related farming inputs). In fact, in many of these *qābällés*, most of the peasants had already left their parishes.⁶⁶ Though not comparable to the lowlands, the 1984/85 famine had also affected some areas in the highlands, particularly the Qäya Gäberä'el sub-district of Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajja*. In this area, people were forced to eat wild roots and leaves such as sisal.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., "A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh Administrator of Šäwa Province to Ministry of Interior", dated on *Nähassé* 9, 1977E.C., Ref.no. Ṣ12/60/፳3. See also EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. ፳/2175, "A letter from Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Security and Protection Office to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Administration office", dated on *Hamlé* 26 1977E.C., Ref.no. 203/143/77.). *Bälg* season was/is one of the most productive seasons for people in Central and Northern Ethiopia.

⁶⁶ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. ፳/2175, "A letter from Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Ministry of Agriculture Branch Office to all Five Districts in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja*", dated on *Hamlé* 15., 1977E.C., Ref.no. 2706/፳7/91/77.; EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. ፳/2175, "A letter from Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Ministry of Agriculture Branch Office to all Five Districts Agricultural Offices in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja*", dated on *Hamlé* 16, 1977E.C., Ref.no. 2707/፳7/91/77.

⁶⁷ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., "A Report from Ato Tayé Ṭelahun, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission", dated on *Genbot* 17, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ፻፳11/911/Ṣ1.

Archival sources indicate that people in the lowlands below the eastern escarpment soon exhausted the little reserves of food that they had. After that they tried to survive by foraging in the woods for the gifts of nature. They later began to consume otherwise inedible roots, wild fruits, tree barks, grass, stalks of sorghum, and wild plants.⁶⁸ For feeding their cattle, people pulled out the thatches of their huts. However, often times, when the cattle ate the grass, they suffered from the poison created by the smoke of firewood and, often died. At the high time of the disaster, children and old people died in large numbers. The shortage of food was soon followed by outbreak of cholera, malaria, dysentery and other communicable diseases. The number of deaths increased daily to the extent that there appeared shortage of labor to bury the dead. According to my informants, in Anṣokia, for instance, up to ten and even more individuals were buried in single grave. The period witnessed a breakdown of social norms of mutual support and relationships as the disaster increased.⁶⁹ The local people remember these bad days with the following couplet:

ባል እና ሚስት እንኳን ቀርቷል መጓረሱ
 አውጭኝ አውጭ ሆኗል ሁሉም በየነፍሱ፡፡⁷⁰
 [Even] husband and wife no longer feed each other
 Everybody is about saving their own lives

The problem was serious particularly among pastoral communities whose livelihood entirely depended on cattle. The disappearance of livestock for them meant losing everything, food as well as insurance for the future.⁷¹ Officials of Šäwa and Wällo provinces, who visited famine-affected

⁶⁸ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh Administrator of Šäwa Province to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Nähassé* 9, 1977E.C. see also Adhana, “Peasant Response to...”,p.187.

⁶⁹ Informants: : *W/ro* Yäšemäbét Bälačäw, *Ato* Däbäbä Gäbrähiwot and *Ato* Zäwdu Käbädä.

⁷⁰ Informant: *W/ro* Yäšemäbét Bälačäw interviewed on 24/09/10E.C

⁷¹ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “ A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh Administrator of Šäwa Province to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Nähassé* 9, 1977E.C., Ref.no. ሽ12/60/፱3.; NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “ A Report of Ato Habtämariam Ayänačäw , Vice Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission to Ministry of Interior about Relief Activities in Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Ṭemega *Awrajjas*”, dated on *Nähassé* 28, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ሽ22/1/14/1459.; EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. ኦ/2040, “A Letter from Yefatena Ṭemega *Awrajjä* Administration to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Branch Office of the *Awrajjä*”, dated

areas in North Šäwa, specifically Qallu, Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, and Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajjas* and Burémodaytu district from April 27, 1984 to May 2, 1984, the situation was desperate. According to them, starting in early September 1984, the Afar as far as Ambassal and Awussa *awrajjas* migrated with their cattle to the plains of Čäffa in search of water and pasture. The Oromo, both from Qallu and Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjas*, moved mainly to the same area from March 1984 onwards. Thus, in April of the same year, around 500, 000 cattle and 100,000 people had gathered at the Čäffa valley. The land was devastated due to an over-concentration of livestock. The lack of pasture, in turn, caused the death of many animals in the valley daily. The death of cattle meant shortage of milk, the major food item for cattle herders.⁷² The displaced could not even sustain life by selling the remaining livestock at a moderate price due to declining prices and even absence of buyers. The cost of animals declined sharply. An ox that was sold for anywhere from 100 to 500 birr in the pre-famine period was reduced to 20 to 30 *birr* during the crisis.⁷³

During the famine period, the dead body of cattle lay on the ground and on water bodies, causing the reproduction of insects and disease-causing organisms. When people drank the contaminated water from rivers and wells, including Borkäna River, they were easily exposed to water-borne diseases. In this regard the elderly and children became the worst victims. Moreover, pastoralists who were used to hot climatic conditions could not tolerate the middle and high altitudes. They did not have enough clothing or blankets. To make matters worse, the infected people were not getting sufficient treatment in the nearby clinics of Kämssé and Čäffa due to lack of medicine and

on *Miazia* 2, 1979E.C., Ref. no. h/556/2605/78.; Informants: W/ro Yäšemäbét Bälačäw, Ato Däbäbä Gäbrähiwot and Ato Zäwdu Kābädä.

⁷² NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Report from Ato Tayé Ṭelahun, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission”, dated on *Genbot* 17, 1976E.C., Ref.no. h፳11/911/ሸ1.; See also.; NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “ A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh, Administrator of Šäwa Province, to Minister of Interior”, dated on *Genbot* 1, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ሸ12/34/፳3.

⁷³ Dawit, *Red Tears...*,pp.133.

poor management. People, who had no money could not get services due in part to the complicated nature of the law governing free services.⁷⁴

Evidence shows that the outbreak of epidemic diseases that accompanied the famine exacerbated the situation.⁷⁵ Malnutrition caused a decline in people's immunity to diseases. The common diseases that emerged immediately following the famine were dysentery, typhus, skin infections, measles, cholera, malaria and coughing. Famine struck migrants who were not only affected by disease but also tended to disseminate it to other people along their routes of movement and destinations. Above all, displaced people suffered a lot in temporary shelters where people were overcrowded with little or no sanitation.⁷⁶ The absence of adequate health facilities and health professionals aggravated the sufferings of the people.⁷⁷

Cattle herders moved in large numbers to the well-drained elevated areas in the *awrajja* and beyond, mainly to Anşokia *ena* Gämza districts. They left the weakened cattle back in the fields and moved with the stronger ones. During their movement, they invaded villages and plundered

⁷⁴ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., "A Report from Ato Tayé Ṭelahun, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission", dated on *Genbot* 17, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ከ፱11/911/ሸ1.; Informants: Ato Germa Wondafras and Ato Awuraris Aragaw.

⁷⁵ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., "A Report from Ato Tayé Ṭelahun, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission", dated on *Genbot* 17, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ከ፱11/911/ሸ1.; Informants: Ato Germa Wondafras and Ato Awuraris Aragaw interviewed on 18/02/11E.C.

⁷⁶ Fekade, *Unheard Voices...* pp. 69-71.; Dawit, *Red Tears...*, p.133.; Informants: Ato Šefāraw Zānābā, Ato Tadässä Gašabāzahu, and Ato Akalu Dānāqā. The first two were interviewed on 24/09/10 while the last on 25/09/10.; see also Nelson K. Sewnkambo, "Weather Change and Health: An Issue with Great Potential for Exacerbating Health Inequalities in Africa", in *Weather Change in Africa: Adaptation, Mitigation and Governance Challenges*, The Center for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) Special Report (2009), p.16.; Adugna Getahun, "Aspects of Health and Famine in Rural Ethiopia", in *Beyond the Famine: An Examination of the Issues Behind Famine in Ethiopia* (Geneva: International Institute for Relief and Development, Food for the Hungry International, 1988), pp. 143-144, 149.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144, 149. 151.; NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., "A Report from Ato Tayé Ṭelahun, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission", dated on *Genbot* 17, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ከ፱11/911/ሸ1.; Informants: Ato Germa Wondafras and Ato Awuraris Aragaw.

⁷⁶ Fekade, *Unheard Voices...* pp. 69-71.; Dawit, *Red Tears...*, p.133.; Informants: Ato Šefāraw Zānābā, Ato Tadässä Gašabāzahu, and Ato Akalu Dānāqā. The first two were interviewed on 24/09/10 while the last on 25/09/10.

⁷⁷ Informants: Ato Šefāraw Zānābā, Ato Tadässä Gašabāzahu, and Ato Akalu Dānāqā.

stocks, destroying whatever was on their way. These acts of the cattle herders brought them into conflict with sedentary agriculturalists. In the same manner, the Afar coming from Wällo also quarreled with the Oromo of Yefat and Qallu over grazing lands at Čäffa, Efrata and Jillé, and neighboring districts.

Competition over the already scarce resources made relief operations challenging. In one incident, for instance, the killing of an Oromo by a member of the Afar community in the early March of 1984 quickly grew into a wider ethnic confrontation. A protracted war was conducted between Oromo and Afar from 26-27 March, 1984, resulting in the death of many individuals and the destruction of property on both sides. It is apparent that even if competition over resources was the root cause, there were also additional forces behind ethnic confrontations. A letter from the Ministry of Interior to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission reveals that some individuals sought to use the highly charged situation in the area to advance their own interests. Accordingly, some individuals from the Oromo ethnic group, for instance, moved to confront the Afar in order to Tekie away their modern weapons while the Amhara fought with the pastoralists to “secure their boundaries”.⁷⁸

The problem in the southeastern and northeastern parts of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, such as Mafud, Qäwot and Burémodaytu was not any less serious. Like the northern, central and eastern parts, the famine caused huge loses of human life and animals, and caused damage to the the natural

⁷⁸ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Report from Ato Tayé Ṭelahun, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission”, dated on *Genbot* 17, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ከ፱11/911/ሺ1.; see also EGWAOA, No Folder., File no. 997, “A Letter from Ato Lägässä Mulušäwa, Administrator of Fusri District to Efrata and Jillé District Administration Office”, dated on *Yäkatit* 7, 1976E.C., Ref no. 500/76.; EGWAOA, No.Folder., File no. 997, “A Letter from Ato Gäbrämichael Ejecha to Efrata and Jillé District Administration Office”, dated on *Ṭer* 16, 1976E.C., Ref no. 8/221/1787/76.; see also EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. ከ/2040, “A Letter from Yefat *ena* Ṭemega *Awrajja* Administration to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Branch Office of the *Awrajja*”, dated on *Miazia* 2, 1979E.C., Ref. no. ከ/556/2605/78.

environment. The decline in the volume of the Awaš and Robit Rivers, and the shortage of drinking water in Šāwarobit town and its surroundings became severe challenges for local people. The problem was aggravated by the migration of many pastoralists from Wällo and Southeastern Tegray to the region and the surrounding *awrajjas*. The newcomers added stress on local services as well as on the natural environment. Resources were exhausted soon. To sustain their lives, cattle herders ate the dried roots of a local grass that grows around rivers sides, called *filla*. They crushed it into finer parts to eat like porridge.⁷⁹

Government intervention was hampered by the inaccessibility of the localities as well as by security problems. There was also delay in reporting the situation. The mobile livelihood of the pastoralists was also a problem.⁸⁰

Table 6: The ravages of the 1984/85 famine in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjja*

Groups	Category	No. of deaths	Displaced
Humans	0-6	3816	More than 12,000
	6-15	3555	
	Above 15	5002	
	Total	12373	
Animals	Cattle	140,761	
	Pack animals	6219	
	Camel	1819	
	Sheep and goat	40,445	
	Total	189,244	

Source: EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A letter from Ato Mulatu Lāgässä, Coordinator, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajjja* Branch Office to Šāwa Province Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Branch Office”, dated *Genbot* 9, 1979E.C., Ref. no. ጀ፱/19/1093/78.

⁷⁹ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Report from Ato Tayé Ṭelahun, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission”, dated *Genbot* 17, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ከ፱11/911/ሸ1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Out-migration and Integration

During the crisis, a large number of people from Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga and the neighboring Wällo province migrated to the highlands of North Šäwa and further to the south in search of food and job opportunities.⁸¹ The people of Qäwot, Efrata and Jillé crowded the highway that dissected the region. They begged passengers for money to buy food as well as farm and house implements.⁸² But the majority migrated to the neighboring highlands, mainly to Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Tägulät *ena* Bulga *awrajjas*. Some others joined temporary camps. Many migrants sold farm equipment (such as ploughshares, winnowing shovels, etc), weapons, and jewelry or exchanged these with grain. It was said that a rifle was exchanged for two *gurzeñ* (a dish-like equipment that served as the traditional unit of measurement for grain).⁸³ One *layda* (winnowing shovel-a traditional farming tool used to separate the grain from the chaff) was exchanged for three kilograms of grain. Local people described the horrifying situation of the day as follows:

በሰባ ሰባት ያየንው መከራ
ጥሬ ገዛንበት ጠመንጃ ሸጥንና⁸⁴

[We] suffered a lot in 1977

We bought grain by selling our guns

After selling off or exchanging farming tools and jewelry for food, people tried to survive by begging in the towns and rural areas of the highlands. Sadly, the host population, who were also living in poverty, were unable to offer sustained support. Where possible, some migrants entered into the services of others as laborers and house servants. This unfortunate situation sometimes

⁸¹ Fekade, *Unheard Voices*...pp. 69-71.; Dawit, *Red Tears*...,p.133.; Informants: Ato Šefäraw Zänäbä, Ato Tadässä Gašabäzahu, and Ato Akalu Dänäqä.

⁸² NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47, File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “ A letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynä, Administrator of Šäwa Province to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Administration Office”, dated on *Hedar* 6, 1977E.C., Ref.no. ፱101/78/፳3.

⁸³ *Ibid.* One *gurzeñ* holds 6 to 8 kilograms of grain.

⁸⁴ *Aläqqa* Yemanä Berhan Negatu, interviewed on 24/09/10E.C.

resulted in family separations. The only thing for which there is no evidence about the 1985/85 famine is that unlike the great famine,⁸⁵ people did not eat taboo food items.⁸⁶

Our sources indicate that migrants from the low-lying regions created ecological stress as well as conflict due to competition over resources.⁸⁷ However, it is also true that time of stress promoted integration of different ethnic groups through close interaction and even intermarriage.⁸⁸ Writing about these kinds of situations, Alula argues that “while famine at the end of the last century [19th] led to the integration of migrants within the fluid regional ecological setting, more recent starvation induced migration has led to greater integration within the broader economic system”.⁸⁹ This was evident in Northeastern Šäwa, particularly among the highlanders and lowlanders in which people exchanged goods at peace time and supported each other during disasters. The highlanders, who depended on cultivation, got cattle from the lowlands, while the lowlanders obtained grain from the highlanders. Not only did these interactions become intense during times of stress, the previous interactions formed the basis of support and relief once disaster struck.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Fekade, *Unheard Voices*...pp. 69-71.; Informants: Ato Berlé Hailu, *Aläqa Yemanä Berhan Negatu*, Ato Tadässä Gašabäza, Ato Mulugéta Tadässä. The migration of people from rural areas to urban areas in North Šäwa, as well as in other parts of the country, was common both before and after the famine of 1984/85. The limited availability of land, the deteriorating environment and agricultural production, and the increasing population in the highlands all contributed to the push factor of migration. In addition, the burden of taxes may have forced peasants to leave their homelands, fearing that they would lose their land due to their inability to pay taxes on time. In this situation, they opted to sell their oxen, grain, and farm equipment or move to distant areas to start a new life. This was particularly evident in Northern Šäwa during the 1980s. For more, see James McCann, “A Great Agrarian Cycle...”,p.414.; Kefelegn Getahun et al, “Impacts of Resettlement Programs on Deforestation of Moist Evergreen Afromontane Forests in Southwest Ethiopia”, in *Mountain Research and Development* , Vol. 37, No. 4 (2017),pp.474-475.

⁸⁶ Informants: Ato Šefäraw Zänäbä, Ato Tadässä Gašabäzahu and Ato Akalu Dänäqä.

⁸⁷ Lisk, “Overview: The Current...”,p.9.; Pankhurst Alula, “ Social Dimensions of Famine in Ethiopia: Exchange, Migration and Integration”, *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*(Moscow, Nauka Publisher, 1988), pp.67, 72.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*,p.72.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*,p.74.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*,pp., pp.65-66.

The famine also caused decline in productivity. It did so in two ways. First, it caused the death and displacement of people and thus of productive labor. However, even the available labor power could not fully engage in agricultural activities due to lack of capital (such as oxen, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and farming tools). Peasants lost whatever cattle they had during the famine years due to shortage of pasture and diseases. They sold off the remainder of their cattle at low prices to be able to survive. When they sought to rebuild their lives after the end of the bad days, they could not afford to buy such assets due to increased prices. Extensive amounts of land were left uncultivated in the wake of the famine. This situation was broadly similar to what happened at the close of 1972-74 famine.⁹¹ In the same manner, restoration of livelihood for the pastoralists was also complicated by the fact that the famine caused massive deaths of livestock.⁹² It took even longer time to restore or build the social fabric of the rural community. Socially, the crisis caused the disintegration of families and social bonds. Fasil elaborates the challenges of post- crisis social restoration as follows:

Those, who survive a famine by having migrated elsewhere and choose to return home after the famine period, do so to what may remain of a derelict dwelling, themselves destitute, broken and often having suffered indignities and inhuman conditions....Often too, they would return without one or more of the closest members of their families who might have expired at any point during the period of the famine.... The network of neighbors, friends and relatives would be no more, for famine usually attacks entire communities. It would take time to restore the communal system of mutual support on which individual farm families depend for carrying out their production activities and meeting social obligations. Regrettably, however, famine or some other calamity may strike again, even while the people are still in the process of rebuilding their livelihoods. Such an unfortunate situation may spell disaster with more severe effects on already extremely vulnerable people.⁹³

⁹¹ Fasil, *Enough with Famine...*, pp. 34-39.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Relief Operations

The Šäwa province administration office undertook different activities to mitigate the crisis in the wake of the 1984/85 famine.⁹⁴ It worked to meet the acute shortage of grain supplies in collaboration with the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) at least for urban dwellers. The administration also took the initiative to reach the victims by collecting resources from surplus to scarce areas. In doing so, it ordered less affected *awrajjas* of the province to sell their *quotas* of grain, which they were supposed to sell to AMC, to specific famine-stricken areas with reasonable prices. For instance, it ordered Jebat *ena* Méča, and Tägulät *ena* Bulga *awrajjas* to sell 1000 quintals and 500 quintals of grain to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* respectively. The problem, however, was far greater than this and thus needed further intervention.

In collaboration with Ato Berhanu Endris, the head of the northern branch of the Ethiopian Agricultural Marketing Corporation at Efésson, the province also tried to distribute seeds to people in affected areas expecting and hoping that it would rain in the following autumn and spring. Accordingly, on 21 July 1984, different food crops such as *téff* (10,000), sorghum (30,000), maize (30,000), beans (3,000), barely (3,000), and wheat (3,000) *quintals* were distributed to peasants in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjas*. These endeavors of the province helped reduce the ravages of the problem.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh, Administrator of Šäwa Province to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Nähassé* 9, 1977E.C., Ref.no. Ṣ12/60/፳3. The Šäwa province administration office requested that a delegate should be sent to famine affected areas as soon as possible to assess the extent of the ravages and thereby providing immediate solutions. It also boldly asked the full intervention of the National Relief and Rehabilitation commission not in its branch but directly from the head office, and medical support from the Ministry of Health.

⁹⁵ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Letter from Ato Abäbä Bälaynäh, Administrator of Šäwa Province to Ato Abäbä Kābādä, Minister, Ministry of Domestic Trade”, dated on *Nähassé* 8, 1976E.C., Ref.no. 101/25/፳3.

With increasing pressure from the public and the international community, the government established a committee at the national level, having local branches called የብሔራዊ የተፈጥሮ ችግር የሰብተ ስርዓት ስራዎች ስራዎች ኮሚቴ (National Committee for Natural Disaster Emergency Aid Coordination). The Committee was accountable to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC). Members were recruited from RRC, the Ministry of Health, the Ethiopian Food Assessment Organization, and the Ethiopian Red Cross. The Committee was authorized to investigate the problem and conduct fundraising from national and international communities. It began its work fully in November 1984, visiting some of the temporary shelters established earlier in Yefat *ena* ፕሙጋ (one center i.e. Sänbäté), Wällo (nine centers) and Tegray (nine centers).⁹⁶

According to the Committee's report, 4756 people and 40,393 cattle had died up until 24 January, 1985 in Çäffa valley of Yefat *ena* ፕሙጋ *awrajja*. In this valley, as discussed before, cattle had gathered from Essay Golla, Däwéy, Arṭuma, Fursi and Gämza districts. At *awrajja* level, 188, 850 heads of cattle had died and 267, 408 people suffered from starvation. The number of people demanding immediate aid increased from time to time. Since the *awrajja* was a hot lowland area infested with malaria and other diseases, deaths increased daily. The report states that, on average, 12 people died of malaria in Efésso town and its surroundings every day. Later, with the active involvement of the Šäwarobit Malarial Prevention Center the problem of malaria declined significantly. It sprayed DDT at selected areas in the *awrajja* twice a year.⁹⁷

The RRC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, sent health professionals to different temporary shelters and settlement quarters in the *awrajja*. Expatriate health workers were also

⁹⁶ NALA, Folder no. 12.1.11., File no. 12.1.11.4., “A Short Study Report of Relief and Rehabilitation about Famine in North Šäwa, Wällo and Tegray”, dated on 18/10/77E.C.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

involved in the campaign with the help of NGOs working in the *awrajja*.⁹⁸ The Aṭayé health center was authorized to supervise the feeding stations and health centers located in Efrata *ena* Jillé, Fursi, Gämza, and Burémodaytu districts. These centers were primarily opened as temporary living and feeding sites; they also served as health centers.⁹⁹

Table 7: Expatriate health workers in Yefat *ena* Timuga *Awrajja*, 1984/85

S.No	Name of District	Feeding Center	Beginning of Service	Type of Profession	Number of individuals in each profession	Remark
1	Efrata-Jillé	Bäṭé	February 1985	Doctors	4	Canadian Health Team. Three of them were males, and the rest females
				Nurse	9	
		Jäwuha	November 1984	Doctor	1	CRDA GOAC Health Team groups. One male and others females
				Nurse	5	
		Sänbäté	October 1984	Doctors	-	CRDA GOAC Health Team groups. One male and the rest Females
				Nurse	8	
		Upper Aṭayé	February 1985	Doctor	1	CRDA Health Workers. One Male, and two of them were female.
				Nurse	2	
2	Gamza	Karikalo	December 1984	Doctor	-	CRDA GOAC Health Teams. All of them were females.
				Nurse	7	
		Majäté	February 1985	Doctor	1	CRDA GOAC Health Team groups. One was male, and the other were females
				Nurse	3	
3	Fursi	Fursi	March 1985	-		Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church(EOTC)

Source: EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. 435/77, “A Letter from Ato Gutäma Abeyu, head, Aṭayé Health Service Center to Šäwa Province Health Office”, dated on 10/8/1977ec, Ref.no. 730/435/77

⁹⁸ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. 435/77, “A Letter from Šäwa Province Health Office to Aṭayé Health Service Center”, dated on *Genbot* 25/7/1977ec, Ref.no. 75/16/77.

⁹⁹ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. 435/77, “A Letter from Ato Gutäma Abeyu, head, Aṭayé Health Service Center to Šäwa Province Health Office”, dated on 10/8/1977E.C, Ref.no. 730/435/77.

Once it began its operation fully, the RRC faced different challenges in its efforts to reach victims. Some problems included the absence of timely and adequate support from the international community, the lack of coordination among stakeholders including line Ministries, the absence of temporary feeding and distributing centers, lack of transport and road access and security problems. Thus, RRC was forced to focus only on people that gathered in the towns.¹⁰⁰ For instance, the relief operation in Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja* was very challenging due to the rugged terrain and the absence of roads. To cope up with the problem, the RRC, in collaboration with the people of Géramedir and Gešé, built a 98km road from Mähalméda to Gešé in 1984. Still, it was difficult to reach people living far from the highway or the district town. In Gešé district, the Baptist Mission transported aid by airplane. This way of transportation was ineffective for most parts of the *awrajja* for lack of plain lands suitable for landing airplanes. A small airplane landed on the outskirts of Rabél, and then local people transported the goods by pack animals and human labor.¹⁰¹

Despite these challenges, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission distributed 21, 854 *quintals* of grain in the *awrajja* until 24 January, 1985. But the aid was far too small in view of the high demand for support in different corners of the *awrajja*. In May 1985, for instance, about 267, 408 people badly needed help. The number of people who needed aid increased from time to time as new migrants fled to urban centers from rural areas in large numbers.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ NALA, Folder no. 12.1.11., File no. 12.1.11.4., “A Short Study Report of Relief and Rehabilitation about famine in North Šäwa, Wällo and Tegräy”, dated on 18/10/77E.C.

¹⁰¹ “ጽር ቢያብር” (a collection of string ties a lion), *Addis Zämän*, Year 44, No.90(*Tahesas* 18, 1977E.C.); “በመንዝና ግሼ አውራጃ 98ኪ.ሜ መንገድ ተሰራ” (98km road was built in Manz and Geshe Awrajja), *Addis Zämän*, Year 44, No.73(*Hedar* 28, 1977E.C.; Informants: Ato Gäbré Täçané, Ato Šäwayé Yefru and Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh.

¹⁰² NALA, Folder no. 12.1.11., File no. 12.1.11.4., “A Short Study Report of Relief and Rehabilitation about famine in North Šäwa, Wällo and Tegräy”, dated on 18/10/77E.C.

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

Several non-governmental organizations were involved in the relief and integrated rural development programs in North Šäwa in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Their involvement increased particularly in the course of relief operations during the 1984/85 famine. Some of these organizations that were active during the crisis were the Church of Christian Mission, Save the Children Federation (USA), Joint Relief Program (Catholic Relief Services, Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat, and Lutheran World Federation), Baptist General Conference, World Vision, Philadelphia Church Mission, Qalä Hiwot, Lutheran World Federation, and Feed the Children International. Save the Children Federation (USA), Church of Christ Mission, and Joint Relief Program were the most active in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* while in Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja*, it was World Vision and Joint Relief Program that played crucial role.¹⁰³

Table 8: Lists of Non-Governmental Organizations Working in North Šäwa in the 1980s and 1990s

S. N	Name of NGO	Target Areas	Activities
1	World Vision	Mänz, Anşokia, Géramedir, Yado Gäbräel	Integrated Rural Development
2	Baptist Mission	Mida, Bulga, Mänz	Food aid, partly Integrated Rural Development
3	Mansions to Mansions	Laybét and Tač Bét	Integrated Rural Development
4	Lutheran Federation	Tägulät and Ankobär	"
5	Medalen Demond	Mänz Géramedir	Health service
6	Redibar Norway	Basona Wäräna	Integrated Rural Development
7	Far Africa	Ankobär	Integrated Rural Development
8	Save(Britain)	Mandida	Training and technical assistance to farmers,
9	Save the Children (USA)	Efrata, Jillé, Fursi, Gämza, Mafud, Qäwot	Credit service, integrated basic rural Development
10	Zeday	Lalomedir	Soil conservation, forest and water development, and health service
11	SBIA	Morät, Way, Mojja, Wäräna, Angoläla and Ṭarra	Forest and water development

Source: Amhara National, Regional State Planning and Economic Development Bureau, “የክልሉ ስራ መረጃ ወረቀት” (Basic Evidence of Region Three), *Mägabit* 1986 E.C., pp.76-77.

¹⁰³ Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, “Emergency Relief Plan of Operation, 1986: Revised” (Addis Ababa, 1986), p.13 and 15-16; Informants: Ato Gäbré Täçané, Ato Šäwayé Yefru and Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh interviewed on 25/09/10, 28/01/11 and 25/02/11 respectively

To facilitate the support, the government established temporary residence, feeding and distributing centers in towns, both in the highlands and lowlands of North Šäwa. Some of these centers were located in the towns of Däbräberhan, Däbrässina, Šäwarobit, Sänbäté, Karaqoré, Aṭayé, Anṣokia, Majäté, Rabél, Mähalméda and Molalé.¹⁰⁴ In my study area, non-governmental organizations like Save the Children USA, and the Canadian Relief Assistance also participated in the campaign, particularly from May to October 1985. Save the Children (USA) was active in Šäwarobit and its surroundings while World Vision International worked in Aṭayé and its environs. They distributed food items (such as wheat, flour, oil, and milk), and medicine. The amount of aid depended on the size of one's family. In general, it provided 150kg of wheat and three liters of edible oil to households with five members. Save the Children distributed aid every fifteen days while the government did so every month.¹⁰⁵ Very many lives were saved due to these efforts. They also actively engaged in rehabilitation and improvement of famine-affected areas in collaboration with RRC. The state and local people recognized the contributions of NGOs in improving their lives and livelihoods. In the following, I will look a little more closely at the role of World Vision and Save the Children Federation (USA) in the relief and development activities in Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjas* respectively during the famine of 1984/85 and subsequently.¹⁰⁶

World Vision International

Having established itself at Mäkoy, the administrative town of Anṣokia district, World Vision actively engaged itself in relief activities during the crisis of 1984/85 and afterwards. It began its humanitarian activity in July/August 1984 by providing food, medicine and clothing to the famine-

¹⁰⁴ Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsufekad, Ato Germa Wondafraš and Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh.

¹⁰⁵ Fekade, *Unheard Voice*....pp. 72-74.; Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsufekad, Ato Germa Wondafraš and Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

stricken people of the district and its surroundings. The aid continued until November 1986. From 1984 to 1987, it distributed 31,529 metric tons of grains, 13,573 metric tons of food for children, and 36,370 pieces of clothing to the victims. In addition, it distributed 4,500 metric tons of food to children under the Food-for-Work project, and provided immunizations and medical attention to youngsters and pregnant mothers. The organization got most of its funding USAID, the Canadian and Australian governments. The number of people, who needed aid, increased over time and by 1985/86, more than 84,596 individuals benefited from the project.¹⁰⁷

Table 9: Activities done by World Vision International at Antsokia District, 1985-1986

Year	Seeds(in quintal)	Fertilizer(in quintal)	Agricultural tools(pieces)	Plowshare(pieces)	Oxen	Pesticides(Litre)
1985	175.4	67.6	779	-	-	-
1986	553	179.7	9949	834	894	1961

Source: EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A Report of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Pre-Warning Plan Service Division”, dated on *Hamlé* 1987E.C.,p.3

Once the crisis ended, World Vision International shifted from relief to rehabilitation and development programs. It distributed selected seeds, pairs of oxen, chicken, sheep, goats, farming tools, fertilizers and pesticides to peasants in Antsokia and the nearby areas. The organization worked in the district for over three decades until it withdrew from the area in May 2018.¹⁰⁸ In the meantime, however, it began rehabilitation activities in the area starting in July 1985 and soon developed two projects: Anşokial Relief and Rehabilitation, and Anşokia Valley Development projects. The rehabilitation program consisted of agricultural infrastructure (roads, bridges, health center, pure water supply, irrigation canal, and electricity) development, afforestation, and building of child nurseries. It established an agricultural demonstration center on the outskirts of

¹⁰⁷ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A Report of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Pre-Warning Plan Service Division”, dated on *Hamlé* 1987E.C.,pp.1-3.

¹⁰⁸ Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäufekad, Ato Germa Wondafraš and Ato Ešäto Wodajénäh.

the town in which 232 households participated. This last activity was intended to transfer technology to the surrounding peasants, and distribute seeds and fertilizers. It also provided training and technical support. One hundred thirty-nine hectares of land was set aside for a demonstration farm for cultivating different cereal crops, pulses, fruits, vegetables forage for animals, and bee farming, fishery and poultry development. Of the total land reserved for the center, 39 hectares were dedicated to irrigation, 60 hectares for rain-fed agriculture and 40 hectares for animal forage. To secure water supply, it diverted the Godabär and Sala Rivers by building 12 kms of major canal and 8kms of branch canal. Almost all the people of the district participated in the rehabilitation (conservation and afforestation) programs. Plant nurseries were established and seedlings were prepared through a Food-for-Work program. From 1985 to 1987, the local people planted more than 2,000,000 saplings. In addition, 4.9 km of terraces were constructed on mounds and hillsides of the district. The organization was also credited with constructing a 12 kms road that interconnected Mäköy town with the highway that passed to the north around Kämissé town. It also built and repaired 201.64 kms and 154 kms feeder roads respectively.¹⁰⁹ It brought significant changes in improving people's livelihood as well as the ecological conditions in the area. Nowadays, the area continues to benefit from irrigation agriculture and is not readily susceptible to subsistence crisis.¹¹⁰ Local people had good memories of the achievements of the organization.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A Report of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Pre-Warning Plan Service Division”, dated on *Hamlé* 1987E.C.,p.2.

¹¹⁰ Informants: *Ato* Alämayähu Bäufekad, *Ato* Germa Wondafraš and *Ato* Ešätu Wodajénäh.

¹¹¹EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A Recognition Letter from *Ato* Abäbä Bälaynäh, Šäwa Province Administrator to World Vision International Ethiopia”, dated on 22/4/1987E.C., Ref.no. ፳፭25/63/፳፮3.

Table 10: World Vision International Budget in Anşokia, 1985-1987

Year	Activities	Budget Allocated(in Birr)
1985	Bridge Construction	828,000
1986/87	Road ”	890,000
”	Agricultural Demonstration Center	117,990
”	Spring Water Development	72,450
”	Soil and Water Conservation	275,877
Total		2,184,417

Source: EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A Report of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Pre-Warning Plan Service Division”, dated on *Hamlé* 1987E.C.,p.2.

Save the Children Federation (USA)

Save the Children Federation (USA) was another non-governmental organization that actively engaged in relief and rehabilitation activities in all districts of Yefat *ena Ṭemuga awrajja*. It began its relief operation immediately following the outbreak of the famine by distributing emergency food aid. In the post-famine period, it distributed 4245 *quintals* of select seeds and 2082 tools for constructing roads and cultivating lands for 63, 123 peasants. The activities of the organization focused mainly on improving the nutrition of peasants, building soil and water conservation structures, and social institutions such as health services, primary education, and developing springs and construction of toilets through Food-for-Work projects. Until 1987, it supported the planting of many trees in selected degraded and elevated lands around farm fields, settlement areas, along roads and riversides.¹¹²

¹¹²EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “ A Report of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Pre-Warning Plan Service Division”, dated on *Hamlé* 1987E.C.,pp.8-10.

Table 11: Activities carried out by Save the Children Federation (USA) in Yefat *ena* Temuga awrajja, April to June 1987

S.no	Type of activity	Categories sites and details of work	Size or number or km	Remarks
1	Tree planting	On elevated and degraded lands, along roads and riversides	2,265,252	Accomplished 151% of its plan
2	Water Development	Water wells digging	22	For Humans
		Spring Water Development	33	For humans. 27 of them were located in Mafud district
		Digging <i>kuré</i> (water reservoir)	43	For animals and other purposes
3	Road Construction	Branch road construction	201.64km	
		Repairing of roads	154km	
4	Health Service	Vaccination	27,842	For children and pregnant women
		Basic health education	120 individuals	Recruited from 10 <i>qäbällés</i>
		Providing Training for Traditional healers	19	
		Building of Toilets	105	Besides, 117 were in the process of construction
5	Building social institutions	Warehouse construction	7	Each could contain 3500 <i>quintals</i> of grain
		Office	112 m ² size	
		Apartments	176 m ² size	

Source: EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A Report of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Pre-Warning Plan Service Division”, dated on *Hamlé* 1987E.C, pp.9-10.

While accomplishing the above activities, the organization was not free from challenges. The first was the disorganization on the part of the state that made it not utilize its total capacity (capital and human labor). The second was the problem created by local people: in some areas, people attempted to lengthen the period of the project by deliberately damaging at night what they had accomplished during the day. On top of this, some peasants, who worked some days in a month, demanded payment for a whole month as if they worked for all the 30 days. This situation, as the organization’s report emphasizes, inhibited integrated rural development activities and

contradicted the program's objectives.¹¹³ The projects intended to help victims recover from the famine and rehabilitate them through promoting rural development. Unlike the claim of some district officials and most people, it was not a gift or an offer. It targeted only victims of the previously famine-affected areas and would last only for short periods of time.¹¹⁴

The aid and rehabilitation activities in North Šäwa continued to the end of the regime due to the recurrence of drought and famine. On 17 January, 1990, the Šäwa Province Relief and Rehabilitation Commission branch office sent a letter to North Šäwa Natural Disaster Prevention Committee on how to reach famine-vulnerable people in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*. The letter states that the Commission was responsible for distributing aid to more than 88,000 people, who needed help, in the two *awrajjas*. As Save the Children Federation planned to withdraw from the *Awrajjas*, the RRC Šäwa branch office received food (wheat, oil, milk) already in the organization's stock and planned to distribute them through a Food-for-Work project. It did not distribute the aid freely as in earlier times except for children and the elderly. Individuals could only get payment for development work (land rehabilitation) they accomplished in their localities.¹¹⁵ The selected activities were building government and public offices, toilets, terraces and other land and water conservation activities. It called upon the government and public institutions to announce their future development plans.¹¹⁶ On 3 April 1990, the *awrajja* administration office organized a committee consisting higher officials of the *awrajja* and other

¹¹³ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, "A Report of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Pre-Warning Plan Service Division", dated on *Hamlé* 1987E.C., p.11.

¹¹⁴ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, "A Letter from Ato Mulatu Lägässa, Coordenator, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Branch Office to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga Administration", dated on *Nähassé* 26, 1977E.C., Ref. no. ፪፱/38/77.

¹¹⁵ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. p/2250, "A letter from Šäwa Province Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Branch Office to North Šäwa Natural Disaster Prevention Committee", dated on 8/5/82, Ref.no. ሸ፬2/8/62/73.

¹¹⁶ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. p/2250, "A Minute of Efrata *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Administration", dated on *Ṭer* 9/1982, Ref.no. 2018/፱.ሸ/ኣ.ሰ/81.

concerned offices. The committee was entrusted to evaluate the activities done under the Food-for-Work project. It visited the concerned *qäbällés* in Efrata *ena* Ṭemuga from May 12-13, 1990 and reported the higher offices. The report states the activities as well as number of people participated in the project in the first three and four months of the same year as follows:¹¹⁷

Table 12: Development works done in Efrata *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* from January to early May 1990

S.No	Name of Qäbällés	Works Accomplished	Quantity	No. of people who participated
1	Muté Feta	Water Well Digging	1	1800
		Hill side terrace Building	55km	
		Hill side terrace building and repairing	30km	
2	Alala Kubya	Fence building	1	881
		Water Well digging	2	
		Hill side terrace building	44	
3	Jäwuha	Fence Building	1	800
		Irrigation cannel building	12	
		Hill side terrace building	35	
4	Addis Abay Nägésó	Fence building	1	1500
		Irrigation cannel building	11	
		Hill side terrace building	28	
		Keter terraces building	5	
5	Gärbi guro Ada	School fence building	1	1200
		Hill side terrace building	26	
		On farm land terrace building	18	
6	Gärbi Qéléjälá	School fence building	1	1150
		Hill side terrace building	21	
		On farm land terrace building	16	
7	Fagnan Därbi	Hill side terrace building	22	1300
		On farm terrace building	11	
		School Fence building	1	
		Water well Digging	1	
8	Bäṭé	Hill side terrace building	19	1600
		Hill side terrace and repairing	15	
		Seed planting and nursery	-	
		Road construction	1	
		School Building	3	
9	Buda Çälé	Hill side terrace building	16	1650
10	Qodama and Qälé	Hill side terrace building	13	1600
		On farm terrace building	6	
		Yäkelät fence construction	1	
11	Dula Çärqa	Hill side terrace building	12	1500
		On farm terrace building	7	

¹¹⁷ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. P/2250, “ A Report from Efrata *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Administration Office to Efrata *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Workers Party Branch Office”, dated on Genbot 10/1982ec, Ref.no. P/2250/3226/82

12	Wärrä Lénča	Hill side terrace building	8	1550
		Water well digging building	1	
		Road construction	4	
13	Qoro Rukéssa	Hill side terrace and repairing	14	1630
		Road Construction	4	
14	Amso Amba	School Fence and Leveling	1	1200
		Hill side terrace building	11	
15	Zänbo Zone 1 and 2	School fence building	1	Zone 1-600 Zone 2-650
		Land leveling	-	
		Hill side terrace building	10	
16	M/Hadäre	Hill side terrace building	9	1200
		On farm terrace building	7	
		Vocational training center fence	1	
17	Arba Wayu	Hill side terrace building	30	1500
		River Cleaning building	8	
18	Lugo	Hill side terrace building	12	1600
		Road Construction	10	
19	Mätähara	Hill side terrace building	13	1550
20	Gangha	Hill side terrace building	15	1650
21	Muté Bor Bärdägé	Hill side terrace building	12	1300
22	Däränsa	Road construction	8	1350
23	Jara	Hill side terrace building	10	1200
		Road construction	5	

Source: EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. P/2250, “A Report from Efrata *ena* Temuga *awrajja* Administration Office to Efrata *ena* Temuga *awurja* Workers Party Branch Office”, dated on Genbot 10/1982 EC, Ref.no. P/2250/3226/82

The Challenges of Recovery

Despite the broad scale of relief and rehabilitation efforts undertaken by government and non-governmental organizations, the peasants in North Šäwa in particular and in Šäwa province in general, were not in a position to fully recover from the devastating famine of 1984/85 soon. The permanent impoverishment of the peasants, added to the continuation of weather variability, made recovery efforts very challenging. Sources indicate that crops were affected by locusts, diseases and inclement weather, even though the rainfall pattern came back to its normal cycle starting from March 1985. According to the report of Yefat *ena* Temuga *awrajja* addressed to Šäwa province, locusts devastated more than 50% of the crops grown mainly of *téff/erogrostis* in the district of Mafud in 1985. As a result, pastoralists, who enjoyed abundant grass for their cattle, now faced a crisis. To support local community, the *awrajja* administrator requested the Relief and Rehabilitation office of the province to make seeds available for 20,000 to 24,000 hectares of land,

if possible by gift if not on loan to the peasants, before the end of the rainy season of the same year.¹¹⁸

Weather variability continued to stress people of Šäwa province in particular and the country in general in the 1980s and 1990s. Unpredictable crop failure due to natural disasters like *wurç* (dew), torrential rain, hail, flooding, and diseases were some of the major challenges. The prolonged drought and outbreak of disease caused the death of many cattle, sheep, goats and pack animals.¹¹⁹ In Burémodayutu district of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja*, for instance, the heavy rain of 20 August, 1985 resulted in very serious damage to human and animal populations as well as to the natural environment. Particularly affected was the Hiltiti clan of the Afar who suffered due to the overflow of Awash River. According to a district report, 3910 houses were destroyed and a total of 19,550 people became homeless. Besides, 600 sheep and goats were taken away by flood, and many people were encircled by the flood for several days.¹²⁰

Sporadic rainfall during the rainy season of 1986 further worsened the problems of rural people. Peasants exhausted their reserves fairly early and were left with no oxen and seeds. Most of the land became fallow and later covered by weeds. The peasant struggled on with their reserves from September 1985 to April 1986. From this time onwards, however, some peasants were forced to leave their parishes and seek refuge elsewhere which some others engaged in activities such as charcoal production. Considering the problem of people in the area, the Relief and Rehabilitation office of the *awrajja* (in its meeting dated 6 November 1986) put in place a Food-for-Work

¹¹⁸ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A Letter from Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Branch Office to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga Administration to Šäwa Province”, dated on *Nähassé* 23, 1977E.C., Ref. no. h/556/4982/77.

¹¹⁹Informants: Ato Keflé Yetagäsu, Ato Woldäarägay Dañé, Ato Aṭlaw Asamenäw and Ato Tässäma Käbädä.

¹²⁰ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Letter from Ato Woldäamanuel Woldäşadiq, Head, Šäwa Province Administration Service to Minister of Interior”, dated on *Nähassé* 14, 1977E.C., Ref.no. ṽ32/91/፳3.

program in collaboration with Save the Children Federation (USA).¹²¹ The problem also became serious among the pastoralists, mainly of the Afar, in the region. Clan leaders repeatedly appealed to the *awrajja* administrators and the Relief and Rehabilitation coordinating office for immediate intervention. Some people moved to elevated lands where there were resources, and came into conflict with sedentary farmers.¹²²

In the late 1980s, unpredictable rainfall continued to be a major challenge to peasants and pastoralists, particularly of Tägulat *ena* Bulga, Mänz *ena* Gešé, Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, Mänagäša and Märhabété *Awrajjas*. Since Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* was located near or were crossed by the Great East African Rift Valley, they were also hit by land slides and intermittent earthquake causing heavy damage to humans, animals and properties.¹²³ According to the survey of RRC, the number of people needing help in Šäwa province in 1986 was estimated to be 708,810 demanding 110,951.05 metric tons of grain. Of all the *awrajjas* of the region, the majority of the affected people were found in Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjas*, the numbers being 130,000 and 105,040 peoples respectively.¹²⁴

Similar situation developed in 1987/88, when the lowlands of Sälalé, and Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajjas* faced crop failure. The peasants survived for some time on what they had harvested earlier during the *bälg* season. Once that was exhausted, the majority of the local people stood in need of support. Some of them began to migrate to neighboring *awrajjas* and distant areas such as Balé and, Çäbo

¹²¹ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A letter from Ato Mulatu Lägässä, Coordenator, Relief and Rehabilitation Comission Yefat *ena* Ṭemega *Awrajja* Branch Office to Šäwa Province Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Branch Office”, dated on *Genbot* 9, 1979E.C., Ref. no. ṢṢ/19/1093/78.

¹²² EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A Letter from Yefat *ena* Ṭemega *Awrajja* Administration to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Branch Office of the *Awrajja*”, dated on *Miazia* 2, 1979E.C., Ref. no. h/556/2605/78.; Informants: Šayk Abdulqasim Oumär, Ato Ali Kärüm and W/ro Märéma Hussén.

¹²³ Informants: Ato Gäbré Täçané, Ato Šäwayé Yefru and Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh.

¹²⁴ Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, “Emergency Relief Plan...”,p.13 and 14-16.

ena Guragé areas of Šäwa in search of food. Some others had to sell cattle, including oxen which later undermined their capacity for recovery. A delegation of Šäwa province visited the area and called for immediate intervention of the province's Relief and Rehabilitation Commission office. It recommended that food aid be redistributed to the people in need before December even if the regulations of the organization prohibited the distribution of aid before December due to critical short of food.¹²⁵

The other problem with relief management emanated from corrupt practices by people in charge of the collection and distribution of aid. In the middle of relief operations, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission found out that many local aid distributors abused their power in selecting and distributing aid. People, who needed support were not correctly identified. Moreover, there were individuals, who hide grain to sell it later for excellent prices, thereby creating an acute shortage of supplies, doing so in collaboration with local government agents.¹²⁶

To deal with this problem, the RRC developed a guidelines for the selection of individuals who needed assistance and the amount of assistance given to each household. The document stated that aid provided by volunteers should reach victims as per the guidelines. However, non-governmental organizations involved in relief activities had no mechanisms of strict internal control. Putting aside the guidelines of RRC, they provided each household more support (both in amount and kind). This situation, as the report of RRC confirms, made people “dependent and idle” always counting an aid. Many people apparently failed to engage in their regular agricultural activities

¹²⁵ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.07, File no. 17.1.03.07.01, “A letter from Comrade Abäbä Bälaynäh, Administrator of Šäwa Province to Šäwa Province Relief and Rehabilitation Office about the current drought in the region” dated on *Tekemet* 30/1980E.C., Ref no. ሽ32/408/003.

¹²⁶ NALA, Folder, 17.1.3.47., File no. 17.1.3.47.02., “A Report From Ato Habtämariam Ayänačäw, Vice Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission to Minister of Interior”, dated on *Nähassé* 28, 1976E.C., Ref.no. ሽ22/14/1459.

and lined up even during productive seasons for aid.¹²⁷ The report of the organization dated on 22 November 1985, revealed that

አስፈላጊው እርዳታ ለተረጋጃዎች ከተሠጠ በኋላ እርዳታውን ሳይሸጥና ሳይለውጥ በትክክል የሚጠቀምበት ወገን ከጠቅላላው እርዳታ ተቀባይ ጋር ሲወዳደር በጣም ዝቅተኛ ሲሆን፤ የሚበልጠው ወገን ግን እርዳታውን በጥቅል እና በነጠላ ለነጋዴዎች የሚሸጥ ነው። ነጋዴዎችም እርዳታውን በዚህ አኳኋን ከተረጅው እጅ ልቅም አድርገው እየወሰዱ በማጠራቀም ከገጠር መንደሮች ጀምሮ በየደረጃው ባሉት ከተሞች አዲስ አበባን ጭምር የተስፋፋ ንግድ አድርገዋል።

እንደዚህ ያለው አድራጎት ህይወትን ለማትረፍ የሚደረገውን በጎ እንቅስቃሴ ከማበላሸቱ አልፎ የተሰጠውን እርዳታ ለነጋዴዎች የሚያቃብል ተረጋጂ ከቀን ወደ ቀን እየጨመረ እንዲመጣ አድርጓል። በተለይ የገጠሩ ነዋሪ በዚህ ንግድ የተሻለ ገቢ እንደሚያገኝበት እያመነ የተለያዩ ድርጅቶችን የእርዳታ ካርድ በልዩ ልዩ ዘዴ በመሰብሰብና ብዙ እርዳታ አከማችቶ ለመሸጥ እንዲሯሯጥ፤ ከዚያም የተነሳ በምርት ስራ ላይ ያለውን ፍላጎት እየቀነሰ እንዲመጣ አድርጎታል።¹²⁸

Following the distribution of aid, it is rare to find individuals who use the support without selling or exchanging it. The majority simply sold what they have been given in whole or retail. The merchants collected aid from beneficiaries in this way, stored it, and then traded it from village to village or different towns, including Addis Abābā. This [illegal] activity not only undermined the operation to save lives, but also made the number of individuals who supplied the material to the merchants rise day by day. Believing that they earn better income from it [this trade], rural people secured aid cards from different organizations in different ways. They then ran to collect and sell the aid. As a result, this activity reduced [his] interest and commitment to productivity.

In response to the above-mentioned problem, the RRC began to follow up closely on the distribution of material aid and threatened severe punishment against those found abusing the system. Beneficiaries who were found exchanging aid items were threatened with arrest, and confiscation of property. This threat, however, was not effective because the exchange took place

¹²⁷ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. አ/2040, “A Letter from Ato Habtāmariam Ayānačāw Vice Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission to Šāwa Province Relief and Rehabilitation Branch Office”, dated on *Hedar* 12, 1978E.C., Ref. no. ወ/9/1/6/22455.); see also EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. አ/2040, “A Letter from Yefat enaṬemega Awrajja Administration Peace and Security Office to Yefat ena Ṭemega Awrajja Administration”, dated on *Ter* 7, 1978E.C., Ref. no. ይ/ጥ/ር/ጥ/ይ/179/4/78.

¹²⁸ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. አ/2040, “A Letter from Ato Habtāmariam Ayānačāw Vice Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission to Šāwa Province Relief and Rehabilitation Branch Office”, dated on *Hedar* 12, 1978E.C., Ref. no. ወ/9/1/6/22455.

secretly.¹²⁹ The RRC, however, continued to try and develop rules that regulate the relief process all the way from the recruitment of individuals to distribution. It also tried to adjust aid to need by reducing the number of branch offices and at the same time making adjustments of operation in the existing branches. It closed branches in areas with low risk, and gave additional responsibility to others so that they cover the coordinating work in two or more adjacent *awrajjas*. Accordingly, the branch office of Mänz *ena* Gešé was charged with coordination of the relief and rehabilitation activities of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*.¹³⁰

Villagization and Environmental threat

Not long after it came to power, the military government introduced different rural development initiatives. On the surface, the programs were intended to ensure equitable distribution of resources, improving the livelihood of the people and the wellbeing of the natural environment. However, a good deal of it actually aimed at controlling rural communities. The government took these programs as instruments to implement socialist programs of production and distribution, as witnessed in other parts of the world.¹³¹ The four major forms that the program took were collectivization, resettlement, villagization and afforestation.¹³²

In Šäwa, the government sought to implement resettlement and villagization initiatives following the 1984–1985 famine. Something it did earlier in other parts of the country. Sources indicate that

¹²⁹*Ibid.*

¹³⁰ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “A letter from Ato Berhanu Jämbäré, Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission to Šäwa province”, dated on *Mägabä* 22, 1979E.C., Ref. no. ፱/19/1/6/25172.

¹³¹ Dessalegn, “Agrarian Change and Agrarian...”, p.41.; see also Taddesse Berisso, “Modernist Dreams and Human Sufferings: Villagization Among The Gujji Oromo” in James, Wendy *etal*(eds.), *Remapping Ethiopia Socialism and After* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), pp.115-116.

¹³² Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, p.38. Tinnassie Nichola, “The Agricultural Sector in Ethiopia: Organization, Policies and Prospects” in *Beyond the Famine: An Examination of the Issues Behind Famine in Ethiopia* (Geneva: International Institute for Relief and Development Food for the Hungry International, 1988), pp.111-112.

out of the total famine affected people of the province, only 7.7% were resettled in the province and the remaining were relocated to other "resource-abundant" areas. The majority of them moved to Pawé settlement center of Gojjam. A few others went to Wälläga and Mättäma.¹³³ The government, however, was criticized for failing to do the cost-benefit analysis of moving people to other areas vs rehabilitating them in their home areas. Its major shortcomings was its assumption that people from Northern Ethiopia ought to be relocated to resource-rich regions elsewhere, with considering the potential for rehabilitation and development where they were.¹³⁴ Thus, the feasibility of rural development initiatives was questionable. According to Dessalegn, the programs had problems from site selection all way to settlement and development.¹³⁵ He further argues that the whole initiative was highly politicized:

[the state]... grew increasingly doctrinaire on one hand, and on the other left no room for testing and evaluation of individual programs to ascertain their viability and adaptability. The peasantry came to be regarded not as an active force of the revolution, but a passive recipient of "socialist" directives channeled from above. Rural programs were initiated and implemented without any serious discussions of their merits, not even within the line ministries responsible for their executions. Moreover, so many different programs, each nationwide in scope, were being run at one and the same time that the implementation was invariably poor and vast resources were wasted, mainly because there was not enough trained manpower to carry them out at the local level."¹³⁶

Consequently, the programs failed to bring the anticipated outcomes. They not only failed to improve the livelihood of the peasants but also brought about considerable socio-economic and psychological problems for a large number of people. They were also attended by environmental

¹³³ Shiferaw Bekele, "An Empirical Account of Resettlement in Ethiopia, 1975-1985" in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. II (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1988), p.139.; Admasu Debele, "Drought, Famine, and Resettlement program in Ethiopia" (BA Thesis in Political Science, Addis Ababa University, 1987), attached to the paper, , appendix no. III.

¹³⁴ Girma, *The State and Development*..., pp.83-84.; Kefelegn et al, "Impacts of Resettlement...", pp.475-475.

¹³⁵ Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", pp.38,41.; see also Girma, *The State and Development*..., pp.83-84.; Kefelegn et al, "Impacts of Resettlement...", , pp.475-475.

¹³⁶ Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", p.38.

crises.¹³⁷ The massive movement of people to new sites caused ecological pressure and disturbed the local balance.¹³⁸ Dessalegn, in another work, argues that

The worst enemy of environmentalism under the Därg was the state itself, many of whose rural policies worked against environmental objectives. Collectivization, villagization and resettlement which were carried out on a large scale in the 1980s, were accompanied by extensive deforestation and soil erosion.¹³⁹

Below, I will focus on villagization because it was perhaps the most consequential for North Šäwa. Not only did the program disturb the socio-economic wellbeing of people, but also caused significant environmental degradation. Its consequences continued even after the termination of the program in the late 1980s.¹⁴⁰ In 1987, it was put into practice in 98 districts of the province of Šäwa, in which 4,434 villages were built with the help of 304,720 households.¹⁴¹ In contrast to resettlement, it entailed congregation of scattered communities onto clustered units of land, not far from their original locations.¹⁴²

The program was implemented in the area of my study both in the highlands and lowlands. Local government agents executed the program without discussion with or reaching an agreement with the concerned people. They forcefully relocated people into selected clustered units. The agents manhandled people, threatening those who resisted with exile to distant areas for resettlement. The state claimed that the existing dispersed settlement was an obstacle to implementing rural social facilities and, at the same time, became difficult to reach the peasants at times of crisis.¹⁴³ In Yefat

¹³⁷ Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and...*, p.38.

¹³⁸ Girma, *The State and Development...*, pp.83-84; Kefelegn et al, "Impacts of Resettlement...", pp.475-475.

¹³⁹ Dessalegn, *Environmental Change and ...*, p.38.

¹⁴⁰ Tadesse, "Modernist Dreams and...", pp.116-117.; see also Paul Henz, *Ethiopia in Mengistu's Fateful Years: The Dergue in Decline, Vol I* (Addis Ababa: Shama Books, 2007), pp.131-132; Kefelegn et al, "Impacts of Resettlement..." , pp.475-475.; Nichola, "The Agricultural Sector..." , p. 115.

¹⁴¹ Nichola, "The Agricultural Sector..." , pp. 113-114.

¹⁴² Tadesse, "Agricultural and Rural..." , pp. 117-124.; Informants: Ato Tadässä Mamo, and Ato Hailé Häilämariam, Ato Mamo Wodajénäh interviewed on 26/02/11E.C.

¹⁴³ Informants: Ato Akalu Dänäqä, Ato Alämayähu Bäufekad and Ato Woldäarägay Dañé interviewed on 25/09/10, 28/01/11, and 11/02/11 respectively.

ena Temuga, according to my informants, the program was implemented among sedentary Amhara agriculturalists. The pastoralist Oromo and Afar populations were not included in the program for unknown reasons.¹⁴⁴

As was the case across the country, the new places were selected mostly because of their plain topography and accessibility (next to highways, bodies of water, market towns, and other points of interest). A great deal of labor and money was required to make them pleasant but the government did not have adequate budget. What made matters worse was that it finished it swiftly without making arrangements to prepare the land for settlement. In most places, there was no infrastructure or facilities. To put it another way, the peasants were not prepared financially or psychologically. They also had little resources at hand.¹⁴⁵

Despite the spontaneous nature of the program, it continued to be implemented in the late 1980s. People were forced to demolish old houses and build the new in selected sites. They built houses in the new destination points through ስራ ዘመቻ (work campaign) free of charge. Each member of the peasant association was forced to participate in the building of houses for other members, i.e. by taking turns. Wealthy peasants began to construct new huts without demolishing the old ones, the intention being that they would come back if the scheme failed.¹⁴⁶

Studies show that the peasants' response to rural development initiatives, including villagization, varied from place to place. They were accepted in some and resisted in some.¹⁴⁷ The response of

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Helen Pankhurst, "Villagization in A Peasant Association in Manz"(a paper commissioned by Canadian Embassy, Feb 1989, pp.42-44.; Informants: Ato Šefäraw Zänäbä, Ato Tadässä Gašabäzahu, Ato Keflé Yetagäsu and Ato Šefäraw Ešäté. The first two were interviewed on 24/09/10 while the last two on 25 and 26/09/10 respectively.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Harald Aspen, "Crisis and Management of Knowledge: A Tentative Approach to the Crisis of Ethiopian Peasantry" in Bahru Zewde, Richard Pankhurst and Tadesse Beyene(eds.), *Proceedings of the Eleven International Conference*

the majority of the people of Mänz *ena* Gešé, and Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajjas* was not positive. They made an effort to inhibit the initiative from the start by making agreements with or providing bribes to local government representatives, cultivating selected settlement sites, and in other ways showing reluctance to take part in the campaign.¹⁴⁸ The findings of Helen, who conducted field research in selected village communities in Mänz, shows why the people of the area opposed the project. First, because Mänz was a *rist-hagär* (*rist* country), people did not want to abandon their fathers' lands. They instead preferred to live even in starvation in the areas of their birth and growth. Secondly, the project created economic and social burdens on the peasants. It forced the peasants to expend much of their time and resources, including labor, in building huts for other members of the peasant association free of charge. They were also supposed to deliver building materials from far-off places, such as grass and timber. Furthermore, unlike in other places, the building of huts in Mänz required a lot of labor and time because the walls were made out of stone cemented with a mix of mud and ash. The absence of wood in the area forced peasants to travel on foot to distant areas on foot up to a day or more. As a result, they were too busy to partake in other revenue-generating activities.¹⁴⁹ Thirdly, the distance between the new sites from their fields, the lack of infrastructure, and the over crowdedness of huts at the new locations was discouraging. As I previously stated above, the government compelled the peasants to relocate to the new sites before putting in place social amenities like restrooms, health centers, schools, toilets etc.¹⁵⁰

of *Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.II (Addis Ababa University, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1994),p.17.; Dessalegn, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian...", p.38.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Helen, "Villagization in A Peasant...", pp.39-40, 49; Informants: Ato Germa Wondafraš, Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh and Ato Tässäma Käbädä.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*

The peasants faced an equally harsh financial strain. Though the UN paid for a large portion of the costs, the peasants were expected to supply building materials including nails, windows, doors and others. This was very challenging for the peasants in part because they would often fail to salvage these materials from the ruins of the old houses. Besides, households also expected to provide food for those who help them with the construction of their homes.¹⁵¹ Still another problem faced by the peasants was that the compound given to each family was small; hence raising several cattle and planting trees and vegetables was impossible. So he was obliged to reduce the number of livestock and involved in other alternative means of livelihood mainly non-farming activities.¹⁵²

From an environmental perspective, villagization aggravated deforestation due to the high demand for wood and wood products for construction of huts, making household furniture, and fuel. Since most of the ruins of old houses already spoiled, the demand for fresh wood increased. On the other hand, tree planting was limited due to the shortage of land and tenure security problems. There was also over-concentration of livestock on the new grazing lands. This was partly due to the fact that the grazing lands in the new place were very small and partly the old sites were far from the new residences. Peasants could not move their cattle to the old grazing field due to the absence of roads and the overflow of rivers particularly during the long rainy season. During this time, the land was protected due to the growth of crops and grass. Under this situation, they were compelled to either feed their animals at home or keep them on small pieces of land in the new villages.¹⁵³ The distant location of fields from the residence of the peasants was another problem, making the

¹⁵¹ Helen, "Villagization in A Peasant...", pp.39-40., 49; Informants: *Ato Germa Wondafras*, *Ato Ešātu Wodajénäh* and *Ato Tässäma Kābādä*.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Helen, "Villagization in A Peasant...", pp.40-41.; Nichola, "The Agricultural Sector...", p.115; Informants: *Ato Dāmāqä Zäläläw*, *Ato Keflé Yetagäsu*, *Ato Šäwayé Yefruand Ato Yeṭena Gerum*.

protection, conservation and improvement of the land difficult.¹⁵⁴ A peasant would not be able to visit his field as frequently as he might have wanted. He would attend to it during planting and harvesting only, and on rare occasions. Thus, he could not keep the soil fertile by adding ash and manure.¹⁵⁵

Socially, villagization caused the cohesiveness of family and of social bonds. In the old villages, when children came of age and married, parents would provide pieces of land nearby for settlement and cultivation. Construction of new huts around parental residences was impossible in the new sites due to shortage of land. The consequence was the dispersal of the extended family. In addition, the villagers were more vulnerable to both natural and man-made disasters like fires and diseases due to poor sanitation and congested settlement. This was evident right after the implementation of the program in different localities of Mänz.¹⁵⁶

Afforestation and Conservation endeavors

Deforestation in Ethiopia, which has been taking place over centuries, continued unabated during the Därg regime. The periods of change of government during 1974-75 and 1990-1992, saw a rapid rate of deforestation throughout the country.¹⁵⁷ Taking the experiences of Wällo, Dessalegn gives us a general description of the period in which “the eco-violence [of the period] was an expression of peasant grievance against years of environmental dictatorship and exploitation by the state. It [i.e. the state]... sacrificed peasant interests in favor those of the state, and ...ignored the needs

¹⁵⁴ Habtemariam et al “Reading the Landscape...”, p. 469.; Nichola, “ The Agricultural Sector...”,p.115.; Informants: Ato Dämäqä Zäläläw, Ato Keflé Yetagäsu, Ato Šäwayé Yefruand Ato Yeṭena Gerum.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Helen, “Villagization in A Peasant...”, pp.42-48, 51.

¹⁵⁷ Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን ጸና...”(A History of Forest and...), p.149.

and experiences of peasant communities”. The author argues that the state's environmental policy undervalued local knowledge and experience.¹⁵⁸

According to many scholars, the land proclamation of March 4, 1975, also aggravated deforestation. The declaration nationalized all forest resources of the country; it made forests public property but under the strict control of the state. It discouraged private tenure. The new regime of things thus created land and tree tenure insecurity by denying private ownership of both. The peasantry demonstrated their opposition by rather reckless use of resources and sometimes destructively so because they considered the state as an alien body that did not have their best interests at heart.¹⁵⁹

It was apparent that due to the shortage of alternative sources of energy, much of the country's population depended on wood and wood products. Trees were widely used for fuel, construction and charcoal production. Those involved in charcoal production cleared trees indiscriminately thus causing loss of much of wood. Much was also lost during consumption due to the lack of power conserving ovens.¹⁶⁰ Charcoal production was common in the lowlands of North Šäwa, including Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*. When the military regime introduced the policy of mixed economy which put an end to periodic division of land, people who established new families came to face critical shortage of land. They were consequently compelled to collect wood from distant areas and farm marginal fields regardless of the topography of the land leading to deforestation and land

¹⁵⁸ Dessalegn, *Environmental Change*...p.88.

¹⁵⁹ Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና...” (A History of Forest and...), p.149.; see also Aklilu Kidanu and Tadesse Alemu, “Rapid Population Growth and Access to Farm Land : Coping Strategies in Two Peasant Associations in North Shewa”, in Dessalegn Rahmato(ed.), *Land Tenure and Land Policy in Ethiopia After the Dergue, Proceedings of the Second Workshop on the Land Tenure Projects, Working Paper No.8* (Addis Ababa University: Land Tenure Project, Institute of Development Research, 1994),pp. 37 and 39 ; Woien, “Deforestation and Citations...”pp.505, 509.

¹⁶⁰ Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና...” (A History of Forest and...), pp.213-223.

degradation. Many others engaged in producing charcoal.¹⁶¹ In the rural areas, animal droppings, formerly used for improving the fertility of the land, came to be increasingly used as source of energy, affecting agricultural productivity. The shortage of manure meant, of course, increasing dependence on inorganic fertilizers.¹⁶²

It was in order to mitigate such environmental threats that shortly after it came to power, the government set up the Community Forest and Soil Conservation Development Department (CFSCDD), and the State Forests Conservation and Development Department (SFCDD).¹⁶³ The government's land rehabilitation program aimed at reducing the steady process of deforestation, meeting the increasing wood demand, and restoring the degraded lands of the country.¹⁶⁴ To this end, it developed laws prohibiting illegal charcoal production, and engaged in capacity building and soil and water conservation activities. In the legal arena, it enacted a law banning charcoal production and illegal cutting of trees. On 13 June 1981, it established an organization called Wood and Charcoal Production and Marketing to meet the demands of fuel urban dwellers. This organization was entrusted with the task of charcoal production and supply to urban areas. But it had limited impact due to lack of capacity. Taking this incapacity of the organization and the acute shortage of supply as an opportunity, charcoal traders were deeply involved in charcoal production, clearing extensive tracts of land, and in some areas even uprooting bushes and tree stumps.¹⁶⁵ The government worked on capacity building by reorganizing Forest and Wildlife Development Authority (FaWLA) and consolidating it with financial, material and human resources in 1977/78.

¹⁶¹ Aklilu and Tadesse, "Rapid Population...", pp.37, 39 and 44; Woien, "Deforestation and Citations..., p.505.; Informants: Ato Šāwayé Yefru, Amsaaläqa Mäkonen Zäwudé and Ato Mohammäd Hassän.

¹⁶² Ministry of Agriculture, "የኢትዮጵያ የፍጥነት ስፍራ" (A History of Forest and...), pp.213-223.

¹⁶³ Daniel, "Environment and Development...", p.82.

¹⁶⁴ Woien, "Deforestation, Information...", pp.505, 509. See also Habtemariam et al "Reading the Landscape...", p. 468.

¹⁶⁵ Ministry of Agriculture, "የኢትዮጵያ የፍጥነት ስፍራ" (A History of Forest and...), pp.223-226.

The authority had already been organized as a unit from 1971 to the end of 1979/80. By 1980, it was promoted to Authority level and was entrusted to manage the forest resources of the country. The Authority, in turn, organized different units under it, namely state and community forest administration, demarcation, and registration departments.¹⁶⁶

The government also reopened forest training center at the Wondogānāt Forestry College and provided short and long-term training to experts and selected farmers from peasant associations.¹⁶⁷ It also undertook land rehabilitation programs in selected areas with the financial support of the World Food Program (WFP), and NGOs under the Food-for-Work program. In this manner, out of the eleven NGOs working in different aspects of development in North Šäwa towards the end of 1980s, eight worked to cover degraded and selected lands by trees. FAO, in particular sponsored rehabilitation endeavors in North Šäwa, including the Robi Catchment Project in 1981. The Ministry of Agriculture was responsible for managing and supervising the rehabilitation activities.¹⁶⁸

Parallel with this, the government also attempted to meet the wood demand of urban areas through what is called የከፍተኛ ሙቀንት (the Green Belt) project. The absence of trees in urban areas and the rise in the price of firewood, and the associated transportation cost made the project necessary. In doing so, it embarked on tree planting, particularly eucalyptus trees in and around selected towns and densely populated areas, within a radius of 50 kms, particularly in central and northern parts

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷*Ibid*, pp.146-149, 155-163.; see also *Nägarit Gazéṭa*, Year 39 , No.17, Issue no 192/1972. The government also embarked on two comprehensive research projects namely: The Soil Conservation Research Project (SCRPP) in 1981, and The Ethiopian Highlands Reclamation Study in 1983. The first was financially supported by Swiss government while the last by FAO and World Bank. For more refer Crummey, *Farming and Famine...* ,p.57.

¹⁶⁸ Woien, “Deforestation, Information...” ,pp.505, 509. see also Habtemariam et al “Reading the Landscape...” , p. 468.

of the country. The State Forest Development Agency entrusted *Ato Lämna Gäbräselassé* to facilitate the selection of areas for planting trees in collaboration with local branch offices and peasant associations.¹⁶⁹

The World Bank, African Development Bank, FAO, and United Nations Sahel Countries Development Unit supported the project. Although it was confined to major towns of the country, it also planned to go down at local level step by step so as to establish community forests. It planted fast-growing and regenerating trees to save the land on the one hand and to meet the increasing demand for firewood by city dwellers on the other. The Green Project included nineteen towns in the country, including Däbräberhan town. The work was started by planting trees within a 100 km square radius around the city of Addis Abäbä in 1975/76, and others did the same. In addition, the government provided incentives to households to plant trees around villages, settlement centers, and on farms and grazing lands. It established plant nurseries in different parts of the country. In 1982/83, at the national level, there were 95 demonstration plant nurseries, 140 peasants' nurseries, 39 urban plant nurseries, and 39, school plant nurseries. Numbers in all categories increased considerably from time to time.¹⁷⁰

It was under this initiative, considerable forests of Ṭarmabär hills and Däbrässina and pockets of forests all along the route from Däbrässina to Aṭayé, and from Däbräberhan to Mähalméda and Molalé towns were planted. The trees planted were predominantly juniperous and eucalyptus. Initially, some of the trees were planted by the surrounding communities under **ሰራ ሰጦታ** (work campaign) free of charge. But later, leaders of peasant associations recruited laborers to involve in

¹⁶⁹ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, “A letter from *Ato Zäray Araya*, Executive Director of State Forest Development Agency to Dr. Mäkonen Joté, Administrator of Šäwa Province about Tree Planting”, dated on *Mägabit* 14, 1968E.C., Ref no. **መደገ/41/2**.

¹⁷⁰ Ministry of Agriculture, “**የኢትዮጵያ የደን ሕና...**” (A History of Forest and...), pp.165-187.

the project under the Food-for-Work program. The project was introduced in all districts of my study area since 1984. The government focused on this area because it was vulnerable to drought and famine. The land was degraded and the soil was very shallow and poor. Wind and water erosion was common.¹⁷¹ So the Food-for-Work program, as elsewhere in the country, was intended to restore the soils and vegetation, and rehabilitate the famine-affected people of the area. In collaboration with the World Food Program and NGOs working in the area (like World Vision International, Save the Children (USA) and others), the government selected peasants to be part of the project from all districts. The selection criterion was the relative poverty of the individual concerned. Once having joined the project, each individual was paid 3kgms of wheat and 120gm of edible oil per day for the work. The program included both on-farm and community forest development.¹⁷²



Figure 3: A Partial view of Tarmabär Fores (Photo by the reasercher, 2022)

¹⁷¹Informants: Ato Akalu Dänäqä, Ato Däbäbä Gäbrähiwot, Ato Alämayähu Bäsufekad, and Ato Bälätä Woldu. The first three were interviewed on 25/09/10, 26/09/10, 28/01/11 and the last on 30/01/11..

¹⁷²Girma, *The State and Development...*, pp.87-89; Informants: Ato Akalu Dänäqä, Ato Däbäbä Gäbrähiwot, Ato Alämayähu Bäsufekad, and Ato Bälätä Woldu. The first three were interviewed on 25/09/10, 26/09/10, 28/01/11 and the last on 30/01/11

Table 13: State's Forest Development in North Šäwa, 1994

State forest(planted in hectare)	Community forest(in hectare)	Fuel wood project(hectare) in	Total
9832	2995	3118	15944

Source: Amhara National Regional State Planning and Economic Development Bureau, “የክልሉ ስራ መረጃዎች” (Basic Evidence of Region Three), *Mägarbit* 1986E.C., p.35.

A letter from Šäwa province addressed to all eleven *awrajjas* of the administration dated 27 February 1975 called upon them to prepare tree seedlings for the coming rainy season near or around Development through Cooperative Campaign centers.¹⁷³ Plant nurseries were established in the late 1970s and early 1980s in different towns in the study area. Seedlings of eucalyptus and Junipers were widely distributed and planted. Experts in the plant nursery centers collected seeds from pockets of forested areas and church compounds. In return for the seeds, the centers provided seedlings to the institutions free of charge. Initially, the centers distributed seedlings to the surrounding peasant associations freely.¹⁷⁴

Table 14: Number of Plant Nursery Sites in North Šäwa March 1994

Seedling Center	State-owned	Food-for-Work	Community participation
44	1	40	3

Source: Amhara National, Regional State Planning and Economic Development Bureau, “የክልሉ ስራ መረጃዎች..” (Basic Evidence of Region...), *Mägarbit* 1986E.C.”, p.35.

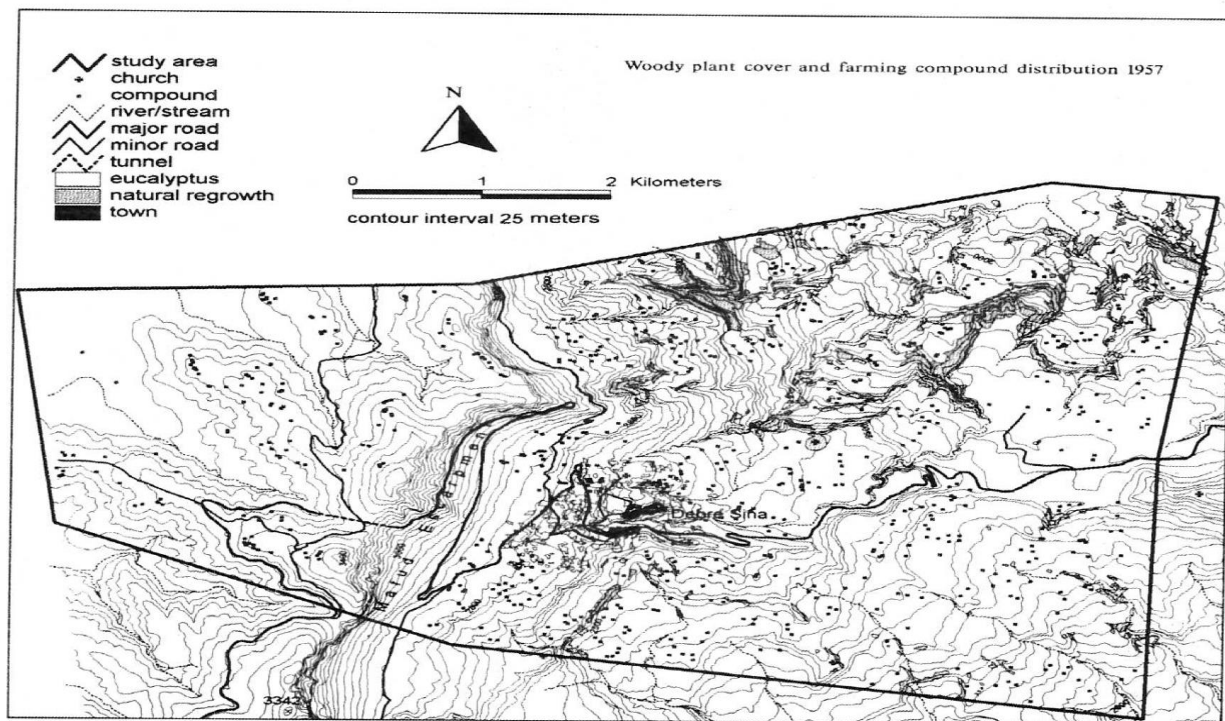
With this, a great improvement was observed in the highlands. It was estimated that about 7% of the highlands was planted with trees in the 1980s. Woien, in his comparative study of land cover change in Mafud escarpment in 1957 and 1986, shows progressive improvements in tree coverage

¹⁷³ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.03.10, File no.17.1.03.10.04, “A letter from Šäwa province to all eleven *Awrajjas* of the province about tree planting”, dated on 18/6/1967E.C, Ref no.አ/3059/544.

¹⁷⁴ Informants: *Ato Akalu Dänäqä*, *Ato Däbäbä Gäbrähiwot*, *Ato Alämayähu Bäufekad*, and *Ato Bälätä Woldu*.

in the region.¹⁷⁵ Woodland (of natural and imported species) increased from 4.4% in 1957 to 9.2% in 1986. The coverage of eucalyptus trees was also increased. The starting of the Robi Catchment project, which focused on the afforestation of the hillsides and worked towards re-growing of bushes and small trees in protected areas, had a great contribution. However, tree planting at the household level declined partly due to the prohibition of private holdings.¹⁷⁶ The findings of Woien disprove the conventional assumption of what was good in the past but bad recently or at present. As opposed to that narrative, there was deforestation at one point in the past but there has been recovery on the other. The study notes that human-nature interaction should be understood in the context of specific time and place.¹⁷⁷

Figure 4: Aerial Photograph of Land Cover change in Mafud Escarpment, 1957



Source: Woien, “Deforestation...”, p.506 and 507

¹⁷⁵ Woien, “Deforestation, Information...”, pp. 505-507.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp.509-510.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*., pp.504-510.

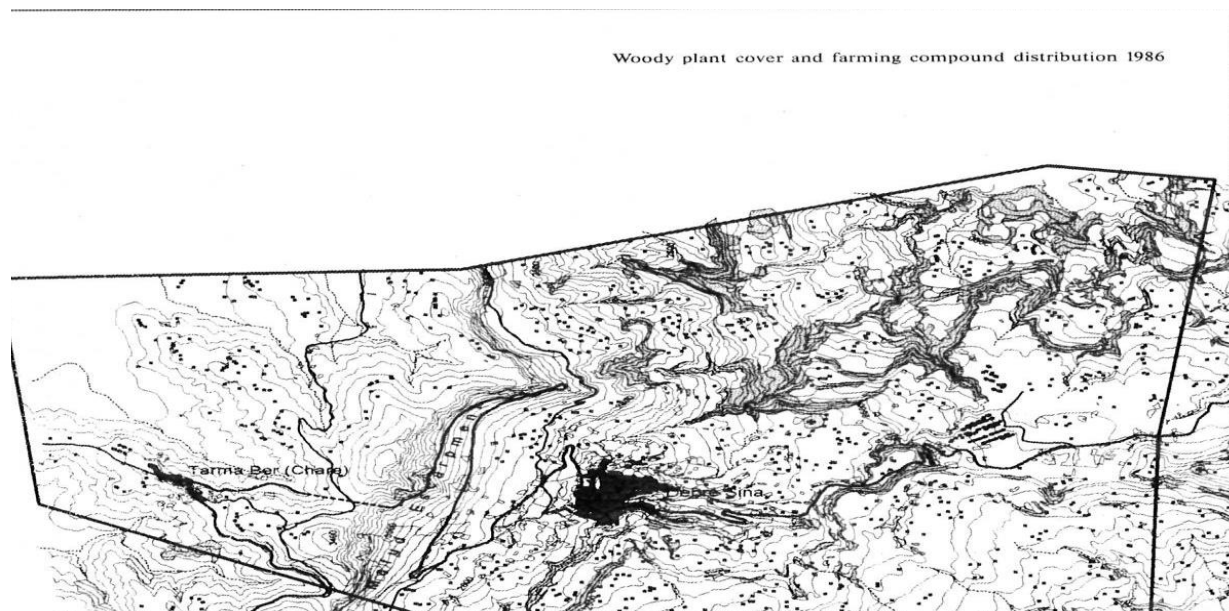


Figure 5: Land cover change in Mafud Escarpment, 1986

Source: Woien, "Deforestation...", p.506 and 507

However, as in the period of the Imperial Regime, the absence of tree tenure security demotivated peasants from planting trees. They appear to have deliberately destroyed community and state-owned forests because they did not have a sense of ownership. The nationalization of forests under the Därg made peasants lose trust. The motive behind their participation in afforestation and other rehabilitation activities was thus primarily to get payment in the form of wheat to meet their daily needs. They also made inroads into community forests for foraging and firewood whenever conditions were favorable to them.¹⁷⁸ Neither government agents nor people in the community checked the seedlings' well-being. For this reason, most of the seedlings dried up or were destroyed for one reason or another. Furthermore, natural rehabilitation techniques such as terracing were carried out haphazardly with little or no regard for quality. There was usually no technical expertise

¹⁷⁸ Informants: Ato Woldäarägay Dañé, Ato Germa Wondafras, Ato Tässäma Käbädä and Ato Tadässä Mamo.

in the field. Everybody rather worked instinctively.¹⁷⁹ The peasants in Mänz¹⁸⁰ ena Yefat¹⁸¹ were not particularly happy with the idea of terraces or bounds on the farm and grazing lands due to shortage of land. They feared that the building of bunds would decrease the amount of land that could be used for cultivation or grazing, notwithstanding their belief in the value of conserving soil. Thus, they focused on meeting their families' immediate needs—mostly food—rather than considering the program's long-term benefits. Certain individuals destroyed trees they had planted during the day and cultivated areas selected for tree planting.¹⁸²

Thus, despite the efforts undertaken, conservation and rehabilitation endeavors were not as effective as one would expect.¹⁸³ The program was criticized for lack of sustainability. It was also limited in terms of spatial coverage. Peasants had no voice in the decision made. It was planned from above and then was “cascaded” to the grass root level without the consent of the people. At the outset, the peasants showed little or no interest in the project and in other some areas, they openly resisted it.¹⁸⁴

According to Svein Ege the major shortcomings of government's rehabilitation and development efforts were three. The first was the government provided more weight to the natural environment than to the peasants with the assumption that the peasants were hostile to nature. Second, the government undervalued indigenous knowledge of the peasants. The third was that there was lack

¹⁷⁹ Girma, *The State and Development...*, pp.89-90.; see also Daniel, “Environment and Development...”, pp.83-84.

¹⁸⁰ Yaraswork, Admassie, *Twenty Years to No Where: Property Rights, Land Management and Conservation in Ethiopia* (Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press, 2000), p.214.; Informants: Ato Woldäarägay Dañé, Ato Germa Wondafraś, Ato Tässäma Kābādā and Ato Tadässā Mamo.

¹⁸¹ Woien, *Deforestation, Information...*, p.505.

¹⁸² Yaraswork, *Twenty Years to ...*, p.214.; Aspen, “Crisis and Management of...”, p.17.; Daniel, “Environment and Development...”, pp.83-84.

¹⁸³ Ege, “The Potential for Development...”, pp. 484-487.; see also Aspen, “Crisis and Management of...”, p.17.; Daniel, “Environment and Development...”, pp.83-84.

¹⁸⁴ Ege, “The Potential for Development...”, pp. 484-487.; Woien, “Deforestation, Information...”, p.505.; Dessalegn, “Agrarian Change and Agrarian...”, p.38.

of determination and financial constraint. The government got much of the funding from foreign sources, and in case when the sources suspended or terminated it would face the risk of collapse or abandonment. It could not be run sustainably and independently.¹⁸⁵ The other weakness of the project was that it had limited geographical coverage. It concentrated only on some degraded lands along roads and accessible places. Most remote cultivated and grazing lands, even were already degraded, were not included in the program.¹⁸⁶

Equally important was land and tree tenure insecurity. As discussed before, the land proclamation of 1975 did away with the ownership right of peasants. It only provided for use rights. Peasants were not confident whether they would enjoy the fruits of their extra labor due to the deep involvement of the state in the rural economy mainly of villagization, collectivization and resettlement programs. The government forced households to join cooperatives at the expense of individual holdings. So they had no interest in protecting the land and resources on it, let alone planting new ones.¹⁸⁷ The problem here was that even members of the cooperatives did not freely use trees in their villages not even trees around homesteads. The bureaucratic process of getting licenses for tree cutting, that of marketing process as well practice of price control tended to be long and discouraging. In the same manner, urban dwellers were not comfortable with the nationalization of urban lands that also included trees. They did not feel community forest was

¹⁸⁵ Ege, "The Potential for Development...",pp. 484-487.; see also Daniel, "Environment and Development...",pp.83-84.

¹⁸⁶ Girma, *The State and Development...*,pp.89-92.; Woien, " Deforestation, Information...", p.508; Ege, " The Potential for Development..." ,pp. 484-487.

¹⁸⁷ Girma, *The State and Development...*,pp.89-92.; Woien, "Deforestation, Information...", p.508; Ege, "The Potential for Development..." ,pp. 484-487.

their property. As a result, they looked for favorable times and conditions to demolish it. Tree planting did not match the high demand for wood.¹⁸⁸

This state of insecurity was partly mitigated with the introduction of a new economic initiative, called Mixed Economy, in 1990. The major element under the new system was that land redistribution was discouraged or prohibited. This tended to limit land and tree tenure insecurity problems. Although the new system increased peasant tenure security, it made many of them landless. It also gave up on peasant cooperatives without a mechanism for managing community forests, thus exposing them to destruction.¹⁸⁹

The Woff Waša Forest Protected Area and Guassa Community Conservation Area

The Woff Waša Forest Protected Area

The Woff Waša forest was one of the oldest state forest reserves in central highlands of Ethiopia. It is located to the east of the highway between Däbräberhan and Däbräsina towns in Ṭarmabär, Baso *ena* Warana, and Ankobär districts in North Šäwa administrative zone. It is about 24kms away from the zonal capital of Däbräberhan stretching to the east along the Ankobär road. It has diversified topography although generally the elevation declines from west to east overlooking the vast Afar valley and plains. It consists of 55% mountainous land, 35% rugged terrain, 5% plains and 5% plateau. It has predominantly *woinadega* and *dega* climatic conditions. It is the source of several spring waters forming small and medium-sized rivers flowing to the east joining the Awadi River that drains part of the Afar valley. It is bordered in the west, southwest and northwest by the

¹⁸⁸ Habtemariam et al “Reading the Landscape...”, pp. 462, 468-69. It evident that land tenure insecurity was not the only factor affecting peasants’ decision makings and commitments. There were also factors such as agro-weather condition, perceptions about forests, market opportunities and price, labor, land and fenancial access and others. For more refer the same author on page 462.

¹⁸⁹ Woien, “Deforestation, Information...”, p.505.; see also Habtemariam et al “Reading the Landscape...”, pp. 468-69.

Basso and Borana district, specifically by Däbäl, Goš Agär, Qäyet, Abba Moté, Gudobärät and Basso Dengora *qäbällés*; in the south, southeast and east by Ankobär specifically by Gorobéla, Mähalwonz, Emämerät, Zägo, Mäsça and Zänbo *qäbällés*; and in the north and northeast by Ṭarmabär (Woff Waša, Däbrä Mäaza and Wanza bärät *qäbällés*). The major part of the forest, however, is found in Ankobär district. It touches six *qäbällés* in Ankobär, and Baso *ena* Warana districts each, and by 3 *qäbällés* in Ṭarmabär district.¹⁹⁰



Figure 6: Partial view of Woff Waša Forest
(Photo by the reasercher,2020)

The Woff Waša forest is rich in biodiversity. The beautiful landscape, on top of its proximity to the historical sites like Ankobär, Aliyu Amba as well as of the Afar valley, made the area attractive

¹⁹⁰ Abeje Zewde and Abrham Marye, “በሰሜን ሸዋ ዞን የሚገኘውን የወፍ ዋሻ የተፈጥሮ ደን ጥበቅ ቦታ የመሆን አቅም ለመለየት የተካሄደ የመስክ ጥናት፡“ ባህርዳር፡ሜያዚያ 2002ዓ.ም(A Preliminary Study Intended to Identify the Potential of Woff Wäša Natural Forest, in North Šäwa Administrative Zone to be a Protected Area), Bahir Dar, *Miazia* 2002E.C.;pp.9-11.).

to tourists and researchers.¹⁹¹ The altitude of the forest ranges from 2900-3400m above sea level, consisting of different dry afromontane hot spot area of forest and shrubs. Varieties of *Kosso* (*Hagenia anthelminthica*) and *Wadadi* (*Erica Arborea*) trees were common between 2900-3400m above sea level. In the higher locations, the forest gives way to precipitous rocks and alpine grasslands with lobelias scattered around. Between 2500-2900m, it is made up of magnificent *Tid* (*Juniperous procera*) with the usual associates specially *Olea Chrysophylla*. The trees would commonly attain a height of 30-40m of length and diameters of 1-2m.¹⁹² Plant species of different size, shape and nature existed depending on specific locations and agro-weather conditions. A study done by Sustainable Resource Management Association (SUNARMA) in 2002 identifies a total of 252 plant species of which 73% were trees, 7% shrubs and 80% herbs.¹⁹³ Nearly a decade later in 2012, another study by Tilahun, raises the number of species discovered in the area to 394, of which 13% were trees, 18% shrubs, 64% herbs and 5% liana species. Some of the species were, of course, endemic to the country.¹⁹⁴ There were also a variety of endemic, non-endemic mammals and birds found in the Woff Waša. These include the spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*), Abyssinian genet (*Genetta Abyssinia*), Menelik's bushbuck (*Tragelophus Scriptus Meneliki*), and Chilada (*Theropithecus gelada*). Ankober Serine (*Serinus Ankoberensis*), Abyssinian long-claw (*Macrofagus flavicollis*), Ethiopian siskin (*Serinus nigriceps*), wattled ibis (*Bostrychia*

¹⁹¹ Abeje Zewde and Abraham Marye, “በሰሜን ሸዋ ዞን የሚገኘውን የወፍ ዋሻ...(A Preliminary Study Intended to Identify the Potential of Woff Washa...;pp.9-11.).

¹⁹² WTRMC, No Folder and File N0, A Report by Pro.Dr. Ing Franz Heske, Director General of The Department of Forestry and Game in the Ministry of Agriculture Concerning Development of Utilization of WoffWaša Forest., dated on 6 June, 1960, No Ref., p. 2.

¹⁹³ Sustainable Natural Resource Management Association (SUNARMA), “A Baseline Survey of Woff Waša Forest Project”, Addis Ababa, 2002, unpublished.

¹⁹⁴ As cited in Birhanu and et al, Birhan Ali and Solomon Ayele, “Potential and Opportunities of Community Tourism Venture in Wof Washa Dry Afromontane Hotspot Forest, North Shewa Administrative Zone”, *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*, 7,5(2018),p.3. The variations of the reports indicate the need to have further inventory.

carunculata), Spot-breasted lapwing (*Vanellus melanocephalus*), and Abyssinian catbird (*parophasma galinieri*) were among the various bird species found in the forest.¹⁹⁵

The size of the forest was estimated differently by different sources. For instance, a satellite map made by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1957 estimated that the forest coverage ranged from 2800-3000 hectares.¹⁹⁶ A study done by SUNARMA) indicates that it covered 9200 hectares in 1994 but it was reduced to 8200 hectares in 2002. In 2005, it became 8222 hectares. It appears that the existing difference probably owes itself to the incorporation or exclusion of pockets of trees that emerged as a result of the expansion of settlement quarters and cultivated fields in the reserved area.¹⁹⁷ In fact, the size of the forest declined from time to time due to increasing human pressure. The surrounding community pushed the boundary back by converting parts of the forest into cultivation, grazing, and settlement quarters. Illegal cutting of trees and hunting were also common, particularly during the Därg and the EPRDF regimes.¹⁹⁸

The history of Woff Waša forest dates back to the 15th century, to the time of Emperor Zära Yacob (1434-1468). When and how the trees were planted is still not clear.¹⁹⁹ The role of Emperor Zära Yacob was apparently big. It is believed that he was the one that made the protection of forests one of his priorities. He is said to have demarcated off dense forest areas such as WäffWaša in

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ WTRMC, No Folder and File No, A Report by Pro.Dr. Ing Franz Heske , Director General of The Department of Forestry and Game in the Ministry of Agriculture Concerning Development of Utilization of Woff Waša Forest., dated on 6 June, 1960, No Ref., p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Abeje and Abrham, “በሰሜን ሸዋ ህን የሚገኘውን የወፍ ዋሻ...(A Preliminary Study Intended to Identify the Potential of Woff Waša....;pp.9-10.; see also Birhan and Solomon , “ Potential and Opportunities of Community...”pp.1-2.

¹⁹⁸ Abeje and Abrham, “በሰሜን ሸዋ ህን የሚገኘውን የወፍ ዋሻ...(A Preliminary Study Intended to Identify the Potential of Woff Waša....;pp.9-10.

¹⁹⁹ Ministry of Agriculture, “የኢትዮጵያ የደን እና...”(A History of Forest and...), pp.18 -21. Indeed, his father, Emperor Dawit(1375-1404E.C) had a significant contribution in the protection forest and wild animals. He declared the protection of forest reserves and wildlife by employing guards in different forest reserve areas of the country.

North Šäwa, Jebat and Mänagäša in West Šäwa, and Yärar, making them royal reserves with strict control.²⁰⁰ It is oral tradition that attributes the Wäff Waša forest to his reign.²⁰¹ This planting of trees and demarcating of the forest area was accomplished simultaneously. His successors, particularly the rulers of the Christian kingdom since the 17th century are also said to have consolidated the protection of the forest. Sometime in the early 20th century, Woff Waša forest reserve was officially designated state forest and protected, the utilization of wood from this reserve requiring the permission of the highest authorities all the way up to the Emperor.²⁰²

Like his predecessors, Emperor Haileselassie gave due attention to the protection of selected forested lands in the country. The Woff Waša forest reserve was one of these. In the 1950s, the state set up an office to protect Woff Waša and Mugäré Zala forest (the latter located between Däbräberhan and Addis Abäba) at the Woff Waša *qäbällé*, in Ṭarmabär district. The Ministry of Agriculture began the construction of the premises in 1958 and completed it a year later. Parallel with this, the Emperor is said to have ordered the employment of guards recruited from local communities, initially by granting them *rim* lands and later by paying salaries. The local community was made responsible for the cultivation of the *rim* lands of the guards. The first guards so recruited in the late 1950s, were *Ato* Bägašaw Adäfris, *Ato* Bāyänä Woldägiorgis, *Ato* Čärnät W/Amanuel, *Ato* Hailemäsqäl Afru, *Ato* Adäge Gäbré, *Ato* Habtäwold Täfära, *Ato* Getačäw Bétāmariam, and *Ato* Sahlé Zäläkä. The imperial order was strictly enforced and those who failed to carry out their respective responsibilities in any form were brought before the court. No one was allowed even to collect firewood not even wood that laid on the ground. Hunting was also

²⁰⁰ Gebremarkos, “The Forest Resources of...”,p.13.

²⁰¹ Informants: *Ato* Yeṭena Masräša, Mämré Zäwudé Hailāmariam and *Ato* Yeheyese Manyahläwal.

²⁰² Abeje and Abraham, “በሰሜን ሸዋ ሆን የሚገኘውን የወፍ ዋሻ...” (A Preliminary Study Intended to Identify the Potential of Woff Waša....;pp.11-12.

strictly forbidden and highly punishable.²⁰³ On top of this, the government re-demarcated the forest boundaries and settled boundary disputes.²⁰⁴ Finally, it made the Woff Waša forest a state forest reserve under proclamation no.593/1959. In this proclamation, all claims concerning land ownership or rights of usage of whatever kind within the demarcated forest reserve of Woff Waša forest were to be investigated and settled by the Ministry of Interior in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. But the forest itself was administered by the Ministry of Agriculture. This arrangement was made intentionally with the purpose of regulating grazing in suitable parts of the forest by people in adjacent villages. It was also aimed at abolishing any unregulated usages that would endanger the protection of forest.²⁰⁵

The Imperial regime, which tended to give priority to raising revenue over vegetation by encouraging the expansion of agriculture and exploitation of forest, did not nevertheless commercialize the forest reserves of Woff Waša. This was probably due to the difficult topography of the area. The land was full of cliffs and rugged terrain.²⁰⁶ Ing Franz Heake, the Director General of the Forestry and Game Department of the Ministry of Agriculture in the 1950s and 1960s, indeed tried to attract international companies to the rich resources of Woff Waša. For instance, in June 1960, a big wood processing Italian company, Acienda Legnani Afini (ALA) and its Ethiopian branch, “Ethiopian Enterprise” showed interest and soon the government provided it a concession to produce timber for local and international markets. The company undertook a preliminary study of alternative routes of access to the forest and in principle, agreed to build an all-

²⁰³*Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ WTRMC, No folder and File nos, A Letter from Prof. Dr. Ing Franz Heske, Director General of the Department of Forestry and Game in the Ministry of Agriculture to Emperor Haile Selassie about Draft of Concession Project on the Development of Utilization of Woffwasha forest, No Ref, dated on 14 June 1960, p.4.

²⁰⁵ WTRMC, No Folder and File Nos, “A Proclamation to Establish a Forest Reserve in Woff Waša, Proc. No.593/1959.,pp.1-2.

²⁰⁶ Informants: Ato YeṭENA Masräša, Mämré Zäwudé Hailämaria and Ato Yeheyes Manyahläwal.

weather road from Däbrässina to the forest at its own expense. It also agreed to pay a royalty of nine Ethiopian *birr* per m³ to the state and comply with conditions of reforestation and working procedures of operation. The concession was granted for 30 years.²⁰⁷ The reforestation activity was planned to be carried out with fast growing pines and other conifers, suitable to the locality after every cut. Our sources, however, indicate that neither the Italian company nor any other foreign capital was able to overcome the challenges of accessibility to open Woff Waša for exploitation. The most that was done was only one gravel road from Däbrässina to the northern edge of the forest.²⁰⁸ The Italian project was later abandoned due to both the high cost of implementation and the political turmoil that engulfed the country in the last decade of the Imperial Regime.²⁰⁹

The Woff Waša forest, which thus survived the Imperial period, was severely affected during the Därg and the EPRDF regimes. Illegal cutting, hunting, grazing were intensified during the periods of transition, 1974-1976, and 1990-1991. There is no indication that the government or local community showed interest in the protection of the forest. The surrounding community quickly pushed back the boundary of the reserved area, by expanding areas of cultivation and settlement. Later on in the late 1970s, the military government appears to have come to recognition of the

²⁰⁷ WTRMC, No Folder and File numbers, A letter from Prof. Ing Franz Heske, Director General of The Forestry and Game Department in the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Agriculture, Ref no,223, dated on 15th June 1960; WTRMC, No Folder and File Numbers, A Report by Pro.Dr. Ing Franz Heske , Director General of The Department of Forestry and Game in the Ministry of Agriculture Concerning Development of Utilization of Woff Waša Forest., dated on 6 June, 1960, No Ref., pp.2-3. Behind the renowned Italian timber manufacturing company Azziend Legnani Affin (ALA), whose head office in Rome had an enterprises, registered in Ethiopia. The company also had branch offices located in Villach, Livorno Piacenza, and Arezzo. The company invested over 800,000 Ethiopian in constructing and machinery when it established a plywood factory near the airport at Akaki River. The business has a solid reputation in the business world and has long been an expert in the production and sale of timber.

²⁰⁸ WTRMC, No Folder and File Numbers, A Report by Pro.Dr. Ing Franz Heske , Director General of The Department of Forestry and Game in the Ministry of Agriculture Concerning Development of Utilization of Woff Waša Forest., dated on 6 June, 1960, No Ref., pp. 2-3.

²⁰⁹ Informants: Ato Yečena Masräša, Mämré Zäwudé Hailämaria and Ato Yeheyes Manyahläwal.

threat and began to take some measures including establishing nursery in Woff Waša *qäbällé* and employ forest guards. Seedlings were produced and distributed to the surrounding people. But the local people planted trees in day time and uprooted them at night so as not to lose land for cultivation and settlement and partly because they had no sense of ownership. At various points, peoples' protest to the dictates of regimes was demonstrated in part by acts of eco-violence in the form of forest destruction.²¹⁰

Mänz-Guassa Community Conservation Area

Mänz-Guassa Community Conservation Area is one of the oldest peoples' conservation areas in highlands of Ethiopia.²¹¹ The area is named after a local grass variety called *guassa*. It is located in North Šäwa administrative zone in Mänz-Géra and Efrata *ena* Gedim districts. It is about 265km to the North of Addis Abäbä and 153km from the capital of the North Šäwa administrative Zone, Däbräberhan. The area is bordered by Efrata district in the east, Mänz-Géra Medir in the west and north, Mänz-Mama Medir in the south. The size of the conservation area was sometimes squeezed and at other times expanded in the course of history. According to the 2013 report of the Amhara Regional State Culture, Tourism and Park Development Office, it was as big as 111km². The area lies in the *wurch* agro-weather zone. The highest and the lowest temperatures reached up to 20°C and -10°C respectively. The annual rainfall ranged from 1200 to 1600mm.²¹² Most of the land was above 3000m above sea level and was characterized by mountain ranges and, valleys. Abuyé

²¹⁰*Ibid.*

²¹¹ Gomeje Amessie, "Opportunities and Challenges of Community Based natural Resource Management in Mänz Guassa Community Conservation Area, Ethiopia, Ethiopia," (MA Thesis in Geography, Addis Ababa University, 2014), p.1.

²¹² Amhara regional State Culture, Tourism and Park Development Office, "የመንዝ ዓሳ ማህበረሰብ ጥብቅ ስፍራ አጭር ታሪክ" (A Short History of Manz-Guassa Conservation Area), *Meseb*, No. 4, Sene 2005E.C. pp.14-16. Some sources reduced the total area of Manz-Guassa Community Conservation area to 78km².

Méda, the second highest mountain in Ethiopia, is found in Mänz-Guassa. It has predominantly afro-alpine vegetation.²¹³

Ecologically, Mänz-Guassa was stable. The local people were friendly to nature. It had rich flora and fauna. Recent studies reveal that it was the home of 18 different species of birds, and mammals of which 7 birds and 14 mammals are endemic to the area. It hosts 22.6% of endemic mammals and 48.3% of endemic birds in Ethiopia.²¹⁴ Endemic birds such as the Ankobär serin and mammals such as gelada baboon and the Ethiopian wolf were found in the area. At national level, Guassa harbours 12% of mammals and 23% of the bird species.²¹⁵

The local community had strong attachment to the guassa grass. The most striking narrative in the area is that people take full responsibility for enacting and executing laws governing the protection and regulation of the Guassa area. The intervention of the state was limited.²¹⁶ Guassa was beyond providing shelter and forage for livestock. The people describe it as **ገሳ ልብሳችን፣ ጉርሳችን፣ ማሰሪያችን፣ ጉዝጓዛችን፣ መጥረጊያችን ነው።** (Guassa grass is our shelter, our forage for animals; our rope, our mat and our broom). It protected soil erosion and provided an important means of livelihood. Most of the houses built in the area were thatched with *guassa*. The availability of well-protected animal and plant species in the area was a living testimony of the possibility of restoration of the highly degraded highlands of Ethiopia due to over cultivation and settlement for centuries.²¹⁷

²¹³ Dr Zelalem Tefera interview with Maaza Birru, Šägär radio, Addis Ababa, *Tahssa* 1 and 11, 2009 E.C.

²¹⁴ Gomeje, “Opportunities and Challenges of...” p.2.).

²¹⁵ Biniam Admassu and Zelalem Tefera, *Manz-Guassa Community Conservation Area: Travel Guide Book* (Frankfurt Zoological People, 2011.), pp.6-7, 11-12.

²¹⁶ Gomeje, “Opportunities and Challenges of...” p.7.

²¹⁷ Informants: Ato Tämalädä Endälebu, Ato Wondimşegé Taläfä and Ato Alämu Bädlu.

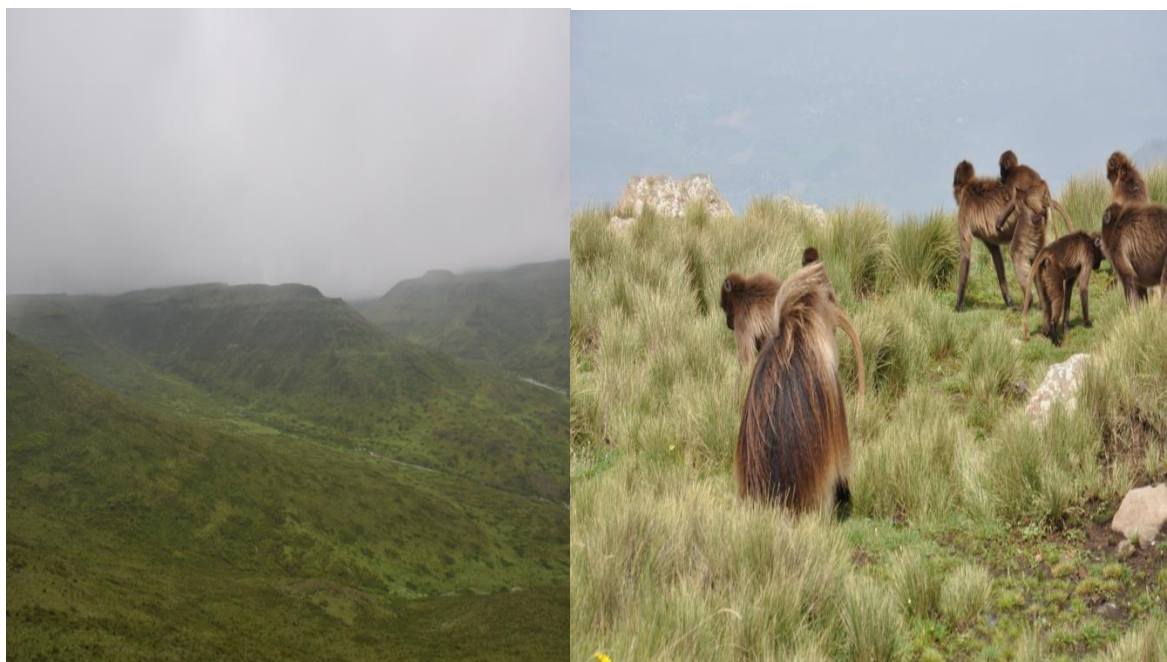


Figure 7: A Partial view of Mänz Guassa Community Conservation Area (photo by the researcher)

Administration

The local people used to practice an indigenous common property resource management, called *qéro* system, dating back to the 17th century. The *qéro* was at the top hierarchy of the Guassa conservation committee, which regulated the protection and utilization of Guassa. Chieftains called Asebo and Géra were believed to have been the founding fathers of Guassa area. They were said to have divided the land among themselves and administered it on behalf of their respective descent groups. The Asebo and Gera had one *qéro* each. The two *qéros* worked together, developed and enforced laws to manage the resources of Guassa. They also determined the opening and closing times of Guassa area to local people. Only members of the two descent groups had usufruct use right over the land. They used it for grazing, collecting firewood and building houses,

making rope, and other purposes.²¹⁸ *Qéro* was elected from the community and worked for life time based on his performance.²¹⁹

Each *qéro* had a number of local agents called *afäros* recruited from each parish and accountable to the former. The *afäros* would be responsible for the conservation of parts of Guassa in collaboration with local elders and other members of the community. They had authority to punish those individuals who violated the rules and regulations stipulated by the *qéro* such as involving in the cutting of grass or grazing of cattle during the "off limits" time or settling on or cultivating the reserved area. The punishment had different levels of severity. If an individual is found building houses by cutting the grass and woods from Guassa area illegally, his house would be taken down. If he let his cattle graze on "off limits" land, his cattle would be slaughtered and the meat would be divided among the nearby community and the skin would be given to the nearby Orthodox Church. If they were pack animals, the owner would pay an equivalent in kind or cash as determined by the local agents or *qéro*. If the individual violated the rule repeatedly, his case would be transferred to the highest authority, the *qéro*. At this stage, the punishments could go to the extent of denying his *rist* right to the land or isolation socially.²²⁰ According to folk stories, at the highest stage, some of the fines might include payment or submission of things that are nearly impossible to find or muster. One such list of fines included the following:

²¹⁸ Amhara regional State Culture, Tourism and Park Development Office, “የመንዝዳሰማህበረሰብ...” (A Short History of Manz-Guassa...), pp.14-16.

²¹⁹ Zelalem Tefera and N. Leader-Williams, “The Resilient Nature of Common Property Resource Management Systems: A Case from the Guassa Area of Manz, Ethiopia”, *Economics*, (1997), p.6.

²²⁰ Informants: Ato Tämalädä Endälebu, Ato Wondimsegé Taläfä and Ato Alämu Bädlu.

እርጥብየሴትአንበሳቆዳ

የቀጨዋመቀጫ,

የብርዝነዝና

መቶዳውላየጎመንዝር²²¹

a wet skin of a female lion

a mortar made from a bush plant, called *qäçämo* (a small shrub)

a pestle made from silver

Hundred sacks of cabbage seeds

When we see the fines in effect, they were hard to meet and some others required determined search to the extent of risking life. For instance, an individual who is required to pay the first fine in the above mentioned list had to travel long distances to hunt a lion. Even if he succeeds, he would not go back before the skin got dry because of the long distance he would have to travel on foot or on horseback. He might also face challenges from bandits en route. If we look at the second fine, it was difficult to produce a mortar from *qäçämo* because it is a shrub that never grows stem.²²²

In addition to the aforementioned severe penalties, the locals thought that the area was blessed and shielded by local *tabots* (Arc of the Covenant) and the patron Saint for which a church would be dedicated. Members of the community were very careful not to violate the rules of the *qéro*.²²³ One of my informants said that if an individual crossed the area with his ox, he took the risk of having the mouth of his ox tied so that he would not take a single cut of grass.²²⁴

The "closure time" of Guassa could be from 3-5 years, depending on the maturity of the grass. When the *qéros* thought the grass was suitable for harvest, they would announce the official opening of the area to the people at market places or social gatherings (mostly during funerals, and idir meetings, etc). In addition, it would be opened when there was drought and other difficulties.

²²¹*Ibid.*

²²²*Ibid.*

²²³ Zelalem and N. Leader-Williams, "The Resilient Nature of ...", p.1.

²²⁴ Informants: Ato Tämalädä Endälebu, Ato Wondimşegé Taläfä and Ato Alämu Bädlu.

The opening ceremony would take place in front of religious fathers and elders mostly from March to April. Once it was declared, members of the community were allowed to cut grass as much they wanted. They would store some for the coming rainy season, build new houses or strengthen the roofs of the existing thatched houses. They might also bring extra to the market. The *qéros* would declare 12 July of every year as the closing time.²²⁵

The system of *qéro* sustained itself for centuries, up until 1974. Up until the change of taxation from kind to cash in 1942, the local community paid taxes mainly in sheep. Each *rist* holder was required to pay one *birr* per year. The *qéro* collected the taxes from each household and handed it over to the state, keeping a portion of it for the service he provided. In this way, the *qéro* acted as *balä-gult* in the area.²²⁶

The system of *qéro* came to an end with the fall of the Imperial regime in 1974.²²⁷ The new regime came up with new socio-economic and political orientations. The 1975 “land to the tiller” declaration, in particular, brought about a radical reform in relation to land ownership, management and utilization in the country.²²⁸ The subsequent interventions of the state in the rural economy, particularly the frequent redistribution of land and the implementation of rural development programs such as villagization created pressure on Guassa conservation area.²²⁹ The government redistributed a portion of Guassa to Peasant Associations and allocated part of it to

²²⁵ Zelalem and N. Leader-Williams, “The Resilient Nature of...”, pp.6-7.; Dr Zelalem Tefera interview with Maaza Birru, Sheger radio, Addis Ababa, Tahassa 1 and 11, 2009 E.C.; Informants: Ato Temalede Endebebu, Ato Wondimtsege Talefe and Ato Alemu Bedlu. Dr. Zelalem is a country director to Frankfurt Zoologica People Country Director to Ethiopia and Coordinator of The Northern Ethiopian Highland Project.

²²⁶ Zelalem and N. Leader-Williams, “The Resilient Nature of...”, pp.1, 9); Informants: Ato Temalede Endebebu, Ato Wondimtsege Talefe and Ato Alemu Bedlu interviewed on 30/03/2010.

²²⁷ Zelalem and N. Leader-Williams, “The Resilient Nature of...”, p.1.

²²⁸ Zelalem Tefera and N. Leader-William, “Indigenous Common Property Resource Management in Central Highlands of Ethiopia”, *Human Ecology*, Vol.33, No.4 (2005), pp.541-543.

²²⁹ Zelalem and N. Leader-Williams, “The Resilient Nature of...”, pp.1, 9, 11, 14-15). ; see also Yaraswork, *Twenty Years to...*, pp.214-15.

settlement quarters in all directions. As a result, the area also was exposed to abuse particularly during the transition period. The vegetation cover was destroyed because no one was responsible for its conservation. Members of the community and individuals coming from distant areas made forays into the vegetation freely. Formerly underprivileged groups were provided equal rights to use the resources in the area. The new regime rejected the established *qéro* system and brought it to an end.²³⁰

Later on, the government set up Peasant Associations (PAs) at different levels to facilitate rural development initiatives. It authorized them to administer local resources under the supervision of the state. In the Guassa area, the government set up 8 peasants associations. It provided the former Asebo domain to Dargeñe and Géra to Qwange peasant associations respectively and allowed to use for settlement, grazing and partly for cultivation.²³¹ The role of *qéro* was overtaken by peasant associations, local militias and government agents.²³² But the new arrangement proved to be not as effective as the previous *qéro* system. The deep intervention of the state in the rural economy and the absence of land and tree tenure security discouraged peasants not to invest on or conserve the land they controlled. Besides, the new administration became loose and individuals coming from distance areas extracted resources without limitation. No one was accountable to it and thus the resources were exposed to destruction.²³³

Towards the end of the 1970s, the state allocated parts of Guassa as a site for villagization. It encouraged local people coming even from distant areas to extract resource mainly wood and grass

²³⁰ Zelealem and N. Leader-Williams,” The Resilient Nature of..., pp. 8-9; Dr Zelalem Tefera interview with Maaza Birru, Sheger radio, Addis Ababa, Tahssa 1 and 11,2009E.C.

²³¹*Ibid.*; Zelealem and N. Leader-Williams,” The Resilient Nature of..., pp. 8-9.

²³²*Ibid.*; Zelalem and N.Leader-William, “ Indigenous Common Property...” ,pp.547-549; Informants: *Ato Tāmalädä Endälebu, Ato Wondimşegé Taläfa and Ato Alämu Bädlu.*

²³³*Ibid.*

so as to build new houses. Individuals also cut and graze grasses irregularly without considering the future fate of the land. The government also planted trees in Guassa without consideration of the interests of the local community.²³⁴

According to my informants, the deep intervention of the state and the absence of tenure security endangered Guassa Community Conservation Area throughout the Därg period. The area lost its vegetation cover and was exposed to land degradation. Settlement and cultivated fields were expanded and the boundary of Guassa area reduced significantly. Illegal cutting and grazing also were expanded. Wild animals were killed and thus were forced to migrate for lack of shelter and security. Spring water began to decline causing significant downstream effects. The local community was the first to be victimized, facing drought and the subsequent shortage of animal forage. The problem continued into the first decade of the 21st century.²³⁵

Towards the end of the military regime, due to persistent pressure from the local community, the protection of Guassa was restored and was provided with legal support. It was at this time that the government transferred the role of conservation of the area from the Peasant Associations to Guassa Community Conservation Area.²³⁶ But it did not sustain for long due to the change of government. The arrival of Zälealām Täfära to the area in the late 2010s for his PhD study marked the restoration of the area and made the persistent pressure of the local community to bear fruit. He and his colleagues mobilized the local community and conducted research on how to restore the lost environment with the financial and technical support of Frankfurt Zoological people (FZS).

²³⁴ Zelalem and N. Leader-Williams, “The Resilient Nature of...”, pp.9, 15; Zelalem and N. Leader-Williams, “Indigenous Common Property...”, pp.547-549.; Informants: *Ato Tāmalädä Endälebu*, *Ato Wondimşegé Taläfä* and *Ato Alāmu Bädlu*.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Zelalem and N. Leader-Williams, “The Resilient Nature of...”, pp.11.; Informants: *Ato Tāmalädä Endälebu*, *Ato Wondimşegé Taläfä* and *Ato Alāmu Bädlu*.

The project began its rehabilitation and development activities at the end of 2014 and reestablished a modern administration of the previous *qéro* system with serious discussions with the local community, elders, religious fathers and government agents. They set up what they called Guassa Community Conservation Council having 48 members and then presented a proposal to the Amhara Regional State to acknowledge it.²³⁷ The regional state accredited and declared Guassa Community Conservation Area under proclamation number 97/2004.²³⁸

²³⁷ Interview of Dr. Zelalem with Maaza, Sheger radio,(Addis Ababa.*Tahssa* 1 and 11,2009E.C.).
; Informants: *Ato Tāmalädä Endälebu, Ato Wondimşegé Taläfä* and *Ato Alämu Bädlu*.

²³⁸*Zekre Hig News Paper*, year 17, No. 12, 2004E.C.

CHAPTER SIX

Natural Disasters

Ethiopian peasants and their livelihoods had suffered from different kinds of natural disasters caused by such adverse factors as anti-crop pests and diseases, animal plagues, wild animals' attacks on crops (monkeys, apes, porcupines, pigs, warthogs, rodents and others), invasions of flocks of birds, infestation by weeds, as well as unpredictable climatic conditions, tectonic movements and others.¹ These forces in addition to man-made factors had posed perpetual challenges to their principal mode of life, i.e. subsistence agriculture.² They not only made the livelihood of the peasants unstable, but frequently led to starvation and even famine.³ Bahru argues that occasionally these forces “transformed an endemic situation [peasants' impoverishment] into epidemics”.⁴ In this chapter, I will try to focus on selected issues such as major outbreaks of desert locusts, malaria infestations and earthquakes and their impact on the people of the study area.

Desert Locust Invasions

Desert locust (*schistocerca gregaria*) upsurges pose major threats to rural communities in many parts of the world. Studies estimate that they affect approximately up to one-fifth of the

¹ H.Hurni, “Land Degradation, Famine and Land Resource Scenarios in Ethiopia” in David Pimentel (ed.), *World Soil Erosion and Conservation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) ,pp.32-33.

² Pankhurst, *Economic History of...*, pp. 220-222. See also McCann, *People of the Plow...*, p.62.; Bekure Woldeesemait, “ Ecological Stress and Political Conflicts in Africa: The Case of Ethiopia” in Andres Hijort and M.A.Mohammed Salih(eds.), *Ecology and Politics :Environmental Stress and Security in Africa*(Motala: Scandenivian Institute of African Studies, 1989),pp.41-43.; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Ato Dañačaw Yergu, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ato Šemälse Aduña, Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission”, dated on 7/9/1967E.C., Ref.no. H3/5.

³Pankhurst, *Economic History of...*,pp.220-222.; Bahru, “ A Historical Outline of...” ,pp.52-54,57.; Hurni, “ Land Degradation, Famine...” ,pp. 30, 32.; Bekure, “ Ecological Stress and...” ,pp.41-43.

⁴ Bahru, “ A Historical Outline of...” ,p.57.

world.⁵ Locusts eat and destroy grass, grains, fruits, vegetables as well as barks and leaves of trees.⁶ The rate of damage, was in fact varied from place to place depending on factors like the nature and size of the swarm, and the duration in which the swarm stays in a particular area. It is also affected by the speed of human intervention to mitigate impact.⁷ According to the report of FAO, a typical locust swarm can range from 35 to 70 million insects on average. In addition, a single ton of locusts can consume the daily food intake of approximately 2500 people or ten elephants. In simpler terms, an adult grasshopper can consume its own body weight worth of food each day.⁸ In optimal circumstances, the insect completes its lifecycle from two weeks to a month. Each insect produces 30 to 100 eggs per week, which can result in the emergence of swarms within a brief period of time.⁹

In Ethiopia, the time required for breeding and the emergence of swarms are influenced by factors such as the type of species and local weather conditions (mainly the frequency and distribution of rainfall and temperature).¹⁰ The hatching places are inaccessible remote lowlands within and outside the country (mainly the Middle East).¹¹ It emerged mostly following the long and short

⁵ Nurein, M.O.M. and Musa, K.J. “Desert Locust Upsurges and Control in Ethiopia with Special Reference to the Current Insecticides Screening Research Work” in *Proceeding of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Committee of Ethiopian Entomologists, 14-15 April 1987* (Addis Ababa: Committee of Ethiopian Entomologists, 1987), pp. 1-3. ; see also R. Skaf and etal, “The Desert Locust: An International Challenge[and Discussion]”, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Community of London*, Vol. 328, no.125(1990), pp.525-526.; Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa(DLCO-EA), “A Short Introductory Report on the Current Status of the Organization” (Addis Ababa, April 28, 1994), pp.3-4.unpublished.

⁶ Nurein, and Musa, “Desert Locust Upsurges...”, pp. 1-4.; see also Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa(DLCO-EA), “A Short Introductory Report...”, pp.3-4.

⁷ Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsufoqad, Aläqa Tässäma Woldägiorgis, and Ato Ali Käräm.

⁸ Nurein and Musa, “Desert Locust Upsurges...”, pp. 1-4. ; see also Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa(DLCO-EA), “A Short Introductory Report...”, pp.3-4. ; *Addis Zäman* Newspaper, Year 34, No. 1707(*Nehassie* 28, 1970E.C.

⁹ Nurein and Musa, “Desert Locust Upsurges...”, pp. 2-6, 16.

¹⁰ McCann, *People of the Plow...*, p.62. ; see also Emily Kimathi and etal, “Prediction of Breeding Regions For Desert Locust *Schistocerca Gregaria* in East Africa” *Scientific Reports*, Vol 10, No. 11937(2020), pp.1-2.; E. Desplan and etal, “Small Scale Processes in Desert Locust Formation: How Vegetation Patterns Influence Gregarization”, *Oikos*, Vol. 88, No.3(2000), p. 652.

¹¹ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from *Grazmač* Germačew Täklähawariat, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ato Solomon Aberham, Minister De’eta, Ministry of Interior” , dated on *Hamlé* 13,

rainy seasons (autumn and spring seasons respectively).¹² The pests emerged both from inside and outside of the country. Externally, it mostly appeared in the Middle East and the Red Sea areas while internally it emerges in the northern and eastern parts of the country. The impact of the outbreak is largely determined by weather conditions. During extended periods of drought, there will be no significant outbreaks. At this time, the hoppers would disperse and wait for suitable conditions to gather again and form swarms.¹³ The convergence of low-level winds is a favorable condition because it brings together the scattered locusts and at the same time attracts rainfall. The presence of rainfall meant the growth of grass and green leaves, which sustain the pests.¹⁴ Once the hoppers come together and form a swarm, they begin to migrate to remote areas following the direction of the wind along the way damaging everything that has green leaves, including crops, grass, trees, and shrubs. Very often, the damage is beyond imagination. It exhausts resources within a short period of time and thus endangers the livelihood of peasants, disturbs the food web and the natural ecosystem.¹⁵ This is because the disappearance of green leaves and grasses entails

1960E.C., Ref.no.16806/60.; Nurein and Musa, “Desert Locust Upsurges...”,pp. 2-7.; Kimathi and etal, “Prediction of Breeding...”,pp.1-2.

¹² McCann, People of the Plow...p.62, Nurein and Musa, “Desert Locust Upsurges...”,pp. 2-7. At globally, desert locust mainly originated from Sānégāl in the west to Tanzania in the east, and India and Pakistan in the east to Turkey in the north. There were minor and periodic major outbreaks of desert locust out of this zone. For more see Kimathi and etal, “Prediction of Breeding...”,pp.1-2. ;Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), “Desert Locust Project Fenal Report”(Rome 1968),p. v.-unpublished document.

¹³ Nurein and Musa, “Desert Locust Upsurges...”,pp. 2-6, 16.; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Colonel Kātāma Yelma, Head, Crime Protection and Crimenal Investigation, Ethiopian Police Force to All Fourteen Provinces of the Country ”, dated on *Hamlé* 29, 1960E.C., Re.no.ወም1/52/10989.

¹⁴ Abubakr A. M. Salih and etal, “Weather Change and Locust Outbreaks in East Africa”, *Natural Weather Change*, Vol. 10(2020),pp.584-585.; C. F. Hemming and etal, “Characteristics of Desert Locust Plague Upsurges”, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Community of London*, Vol. 289. No.20(1979),p.375.; E. Desplan and etal, “Small Scale Processes in Desert Locust Formation: How Vegetation Patterns Influence Gregarization”, *Oikos*, Vol. 88, No.3(2000),p. 652.; FAO, “Desert Locust Project Fenal...”,pp.13, 15. –unpublished.; Desplan and etal, “Small Scale Processes...”,p. 652. Studies show that different factors contributed to the convergence of hoppers and gradually formation of swarms. First, the blowing wind may bring the hopper together (northeast trade and southwest monsoon winds). Second, Similar species show the same response to environmental change. Third, by nature similar species attracted eachother and converge in a particular area. For more, see East African Common Service Organization, “Report on Desert Locust Survey from 1st June to 31st May 1961”(1961),pp. 55-57.- unpublished document.

¹⁵ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Colonel Kātāma Yelma, Head, Crime Protection and Crimenal Investigation, Ethiopian Police Force to All Fourteen Provinces of the Country ”, dated on *Hamlé* 29, 1960E.C., Re.no.ወም1/52/10989.; Shemelse Adugna, “ድርቅ እና ርሃብን ለመቋቋም የተደረጉ እንቅስቃሴዎች”

a lack of sustenance for animals and insects that rely on plants, which subsequently impacts even the predators that feed on these herbivores.¹⁶

Major Outbreaks and Ravages

Sources indicate that major outbreaks of locust were evident indifferent parts of the country at different times in the past. Accordingly, from 1812-1930, frequent locust raids that had wider spatial coverage and ravages have been recorded for central and northern Ethiopia. James McCann argues that the people in central and northern Ethiopia suffered a lot as compared to other regions from frequent appearance of these and other anti-crop pests. In this part of the country, locust infestations appeared every time now and then with different degrees of impact and geographical coverage.¹⁷ Like other pests and plagues, the emergence of locust swarms was closely associated with weather variability such as rainfall, temperature, and moisture.¹⁸

Sources indicate that several major locust outbreaks were documented for central and northern Ethiopia in the 20th century.¹⁹ They are known to have appeared in 1901-02, 1905-07, and 1928-29. Of these incidents, the 1928-29 had far-reaching consequences and attracted the attention of

(Activities Done to resist Drought and Famine in Shiferaw Bekele(ed.), *ከድህነት ወደ ልማት፡ እውቀትን ለትውልድ ማስተላለፍ*(From Poverty to Development: Transferring Knowledge to Generation (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Sciences, 2006E.C),p.264.; Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsufeqad, Aläqa Tässäma Woldägiorgis, and Ato Ali Käräm.; see also Salih and etal, “Weather Change and...”,pp.584-585.; Hemming and etal, “Characteristics of Desert...”,p.375.; Michel Lecoq, “ Desert Locust Management: From Ecology to Anthropology”, *Journal of Orthoptera Research*, Vol. 14, No. 2(2005),p. 184.; Desplan and etal, “ Small Scale Processes...”,p. 652.

¹⁶ Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsufeqad, Aläqa Tässäma Woldägiorgis, and Ato Ali Käräm.

¹⁷ McCann, *People of the Plow*...,p.62.; see also Bekure, “ Ecological Stress and...” ,pp.41-43. In the 19th and 20th century, major outbreaks were recorded in 1812, 1816, 1831, 1838, 1864-68, 1876, 1891, 1892-93, 1901-02, 1905-07, and 1928-29. For more see Pankhurst, *Economic History of ...*,pp.220-222.

¹⁸ Pankhurst, *Economic History of...*,pp.220-222.; See also McCann, *People of the Plow*...,p.62.; Hurni, “ Land Degradation, Famine...” ,p.33.; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Ato Dañačaw Yergu, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ato Šemälse Aduña, Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission”, dated on *ፒፕ* 9/1967E.C., Ref.no. H3/5.

¹⁹ IES.MS. 2555, “IES.MS. 2555, “ስለ ሰብል መታጣት የወጣ አዋጅ, 1920ዓ.ም” in ከ 1909 ዓም ጀምሮ የተጻፉ የመንግስት አዋጆች፣ማስታወቂያዎች እና ትዛዞች ጥራዝ, ጥቅምት28, 1909ዓ.ም.” (State Decrees, Notice and Orders made since 1909E.C.); see also Pankhurst, *Economic History of...*, pp.220-222.; Bekure, “ Ecological Stress and...” ,pp.41-43.; Salih and etal, “ Weather Change and...”,pp.584-585.

the wider community and the government.²⁰ The pest destroyed crops, grasses and leaves and caused human starvation and scarcity of animal forage. In view of the misery of the poor on 11 September, 1928, Empress Zewditu declared tax reductions and even tax exemptions for the victims. My study area was part of the areas affected.²¹ The Empress declared that:

የማር ግብር የሚከፍል ሰው ማር ያገኘ እንደሆነ እንደቀድሞው ማሩን ይገብር፡፡ ማር የማያገኝ ድሃ ግን በእያንዳንዱ ዋንጫ ማር እንድ አንድ ብር ይክፈል፡፡ ሙክት የሚገብር ያለው ሙክቱን የሌለው ግን በአንድ ሙክት ስድስት ብር ይስጥ፡፡ የወፍጮ ግብር ያለበትም ጥንት እየፈጨ ከሚጭነው እኩሌታውን ዱቄት ይጫን፡፡ ቆላ ሀገር ግን በድርቅ በውርጭ በአንበጣም ችግር ምክንያት ሰብል ስቶብህ ከ1919ዓ.ም ከሶስት ዓመት ወዲህ ቤትህን ዘግተህ በጭራሽ ተሰደህ ቦታህን ለቀህ የሄድክ ሰው ከተሰደድክበት ሀገር ተመልሰህ ገብተህ እረስ፡፡ ያለፈውን የግብር እዳ ምረንሃል፡፡ ወደፊትም የሚጠፋብህን እርሻና ቤትህን የምታቀናበት ሁለት ዓመት ቀን ሰጥተንሃል፡፡²²

Those, who in the past, paid honey tax, pay honey if you can afford; if not pay one *birr* in place of each cup of honey. [Those] who in the past paid fattened sheep/goats can pay sheep/goats if you have, if not, six *birr* per sheep/goat [should be enough]. Those who paid taxes [in the form of] ground grains, pay half the amount of flour paid formerly. But the lowlander, who faced crop failure due to drought, frost, and locust [invasions] for three consecutive years since 1926/27 and had completely abandoned his/her parish and migrated to other areas by closing his/her home, please come back and cultivate your land. We have forgiven you the tax due for the previous period. Going forward, we have granted you two years of tax relief of to restore your farms and homes.

There was a scarcity of written sources on what happened in the 1930s and 1940s. This was probably because documents were actually destroyed during the war or were not produced at all. Abundant historical documents exist only for the post-liberation period. In North Šäwa, a major outbreak was observed in May 1954. It suffered from invasions that widely affect the eastern, southern and central parts of the country. The swarm that crossed the border of the country in the east migrated deep into the interior along the Awash Valley. In the meantime, the political instability that existed along the borders of Šäwa and Harar provinces made intervention very

²⁰ Pankhurst, *Economic History of...*, pp.220-222.

²¹ IES.MS. 2555, “ስለ ሰብል መታጣት የወጣ አዋጅ, 1920ዓ.ም” in ከ1909ዓ.ም ጀምሮ...”

²² Mersehasen, *የሃይማኖት ክፍለ ዘመን...*, p.376.

challenging. Neither workers of the Ministry of Agriculture, including the foreigners, nor the local community could control the pest by moving here and there freely. New generations also emerged along the route and thus the raids got out of control.²³

Two years later, specifically from May to September 1956, another swarm of locusts, worms and other pests emerged in different provinces of the country, including the province of Šäwa. As usual, the pest destroyed not only crops but also grasses and green leaves. It caused shortages of food for humans and animals. Moreover, when animals ate grass infested with worms, it caused serious illness that eventually led to the death of many cattle. State intervention came too late due to the long path and the bureaucratic flow of information between local authorities and the Ministry of Agriculture. Local government agents directly communicated with the Ministry of Interior not with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture got the information indirectly from the Ministry of Interior. This long procedure which sometimes took up to a month, delayed state intervention. In most cases, the government or other non-governmental organizations reached the affected area after the pest had already caused heavy damages.²⁴ The problem was more serious in remote areas, where there was no means of modern communication and transportation. People who settled in malaria and other disease-infested areas in the lowlands and those who lived in

²³ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Interior” , dated on *Genbot* 17, 1946E.C., Ref.no.4112/28/46.

²⁴ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Interior” , dated on *Säné5*, 1948E.C., Ref.no. አጦ/08/48.; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “ A Letter from Locust Control Division, Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Interior” , dated on *Mäskäräm* 22, 1949E.C., Ref.no.አጦ/55/49.Sources indicate that the delay of state response was evident in the widespread outbreak and ravages of worms in Central and southern Ethiopia in May 1956. It destroyed 15,000 hectare of grass land and the death of many cattle before the reach of the government in Wälayta *Awrajja* in Sidamo province and in Šäwa province. The Ministry of Agriculture responded after a long time despite of the frequent appeals of local government agents. For more see NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “ A Letter from Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Interior” , dated on *Säné5*, 1948E.C., Ref.no. አጦ/08/48.

mountainous and hilly parts of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, and Mänz *ena* Gešé *Awrajjas* respectively were the worst victims.²⁵

After a long period of respite, from November 1956 to February 1957,²⁶ another series of swarms of wider spatial coverage emerged. In October 1957 another swarms moved in inland from the coastal areas in the north, east and the central parts of the country. In the east, more than 77 swarms emerged in the Ogadén region and much more around Elekäre, some kilometers away to the southeast. There were also high reproductions of locusts in the lowlands of Eritrea, Tegray and Wällo and Šäwa provinces. According to the report of Locust Control Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, once the pest got matured and evolved into a swarm, it penetrated deep into the hinterlands of the country both from the north and east directions. The government started its preventive operations along the eastern coastal areas soon and in the process more than 2572 swarms were killed using 1033 packets of poison chemicals. It, however, could not cause the swarm to perish totally. The escaping locust converged in inaccessible areas and got multiplied at a faster rate, then reappeared sometime afterwards. In the meantime, the prevalence of sufficient rains during the long rainy season both in the highlands and lowlands created a suitable condition for the rapid hatching of the pest.²⁷

²⁵ Informants: *Amsaläqa* Tačebälé Yegeläṭu, *Ato* Ṭerusäw Mäkonen, *Ato* Woldäarägay Dañé and *Ato* Tolässa Däbälé.

²⁶ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “Monthly Reports of Locust Control Division, Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Hedar* 20, 1949E.C., Ref.no. ሐጭ/34/49.; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “Monthly Reports of Locust Control Division, Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Tahasas* 25, 1949E.C., Ref.no. ሐጭ/299/49.; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “Monthly Reports of Locust Control Division, Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Ṭer* 27, 1949E.C., Ref.no. ሐጭ/405/49.; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “Monthly Reports of Locust Control Division, Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Yäkatit* 26, 1949E.C., Ref.no. ሐጭ/457/49.

²⁷ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Locust Control Division, Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Hedar* 23, 1950E.C., Ref.no.ሐጭ/765/14/50.

The origin of much of the swarm of this period was West Africa. In the long rainy season of 1957, there appeared a large swarm of locusts in the region heading to the Mediterranean region and North Africa from March to June 1957. In July, it invaded the lowlands of Sudan and Western Eritrea. Several swarms of locust also infiltrated from Saudi Arabia to the eastern lowlands of Ethiopia and Somalia and then swept Central Ethiopia and the Ethiopia Rift Valley including Mänz and Yefat, from June to September 1958.²⁸ In the northwest, 35 swarms of migratory desert locust entered Ethiopian territory from the neighboring Sudan coming from North Africa. It was in the western lowlands of Eritrea that the locust finished its evolution and several new generations of swarms emerged along the route. Within a short period of time, 17 swarms of large size overwhelmed the coastal areas in the north and then moved to Wällo and Šäwa provinces in the south. The number of the swarms increased from time to time as new generations joined in the course of the movement. The size of a single swarm was different, on average, it covered territory from 1-8 kms long and 1-5kms width. The largest swarm covered some 18kms² of territory. New generation of locusts in Hararghé also migrated to the center and the south, bringing heavy damages to these regions. When people attempted to chase it away using traditional methods like by beating with bundles of sticks, shouting and others, it moved and rested in some inaccessible mountain ranges and lowlands only to drop eggs and explode again. Both written and oral sources unanimously indicate that the 1958 locust raids were more severe in impact and widespread geographically as compared to the outbreaks recorded a couple of years before.²⁹

²⁸ East African Common Service Organization, “Report on Desert Locust Survey from 1st June to 31st May 1961”(1962),p.4. unpublished document.

²⁹ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “ A Letter from Locust Control Division, Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Interior” , dated on 1/12/1949E.C., No Ref.; see also East African Common Service Organization, “ Report on Desert Locust Survey from 1st June to 31st May 1961”...,p.86.

North Šäwa, particularly Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*, was one of the worst victims of the 1958 locust raids. Here, as in other parts of Northern Ethiopia, the pest entirely devastated the crops in the field, thereby exposing the people, who had little or no reserves, to starvation. It also brought about critical shortage of animal forage among the pastoralists. Intervention was limited as compared to the massiveness and wider spatial coverage of the swarms. It was evident that the fragmented nature of land holdings in central and northern Ethiopia inhibited peasants to fight against locusts and other pests. When they protected one piece of land, it moved to another where there were little or no protections.³⁰ In the meantime, as reported by FAO, Ethiopia lost 176,000 tons of grain mainly maize and millet.³¹ The ravages of 1958 caused starvation and famine in northern, central and eastern parts of the country. The Ethiopian government with the support of the government of USA, distributed 20,000 tons of grain and declared tax exemption to the victims.³²

However, before recovering from the devastating locust damages of 1958, there appeared another serious invasion of the pest in Šäwa province from early June to early July 1959. It also affected other provinces in the north (Tegray, Wällo, Bägemedet), south (Sidama and Käffa) and east (Härärghe). In Šäwa province, six swarms of locusts emerged and attacked the lowlands in the south and northeast of the province, coming from the east along the Awash Valley. The pest devastated most parts of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*, and then moved to the highlands in the

³⁰ Informants: *Amsaläqa* Tačibälé Yegeläṭu, *Ato* Ṭerusäw Mäkonen, *Ato* Woldäarägay Dañé and *Ato* Tolässa Däbälé.

³¹ Nurein and Musa, "Desert Locust Upsurges ...", pp. 1-2.; The amount of destruction varied according to different sources. For more Adefris Belhu and etal, "The Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCOEA) and Its Background [and Discussion], *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Community of London*, Vol. 285, No.20(1979), p.267.

³² East African Common Service Organization, "Report on Desert Locust...", p.86. unpublished.; see also Adefris Belhu and etal, "The Desert Locust Control..." , pp.265-266.

westerly direction. Since it was already airborne, it was difficult to control it.³³ The government of England donated an aircraft to spray chemicals against the pest. Prevention activities started from July of the same year, along the railway and the rift valley from Dire Dawa to the highlands of Šäwa.³⁴ The coordinated effort brought relief for the time being. But, the massiveness of the pest and the continuous hatching of new generations in inaccessible areas, made prevention efforts challenging.³⁵

As a result, the newly hatched locust invaded different parts of Yefat *ena* Temuga *awrajja* throughout the long rainy season of 1959. It emerged in Jillé sub-district, and in the area under Jara *awrajja* military administration. The governor of Karaqoré district, and *Gerazmač* Sidäro Mälgeyé, one of the notables of the Afar community in the area, reported that the pest appeared in the Awash Valley as far as Awussa and in between Jara and Jewuha rivers. It soon invaded the neighboring areas, particularly since the late August 1959. By early September, it started to devastate the surrounding areas and then began to migrate to the higher ground. They reported that the infested land was inaccessible for motor transport. It took about 10 hours walk, and infested with different kinds of disease like malaria and dangerous wild animals like snakes. The weather condition was also so harsh and thus manual intervention would be ineffective.³⁶ Under this difficult situation, the Ministry of Agriculture, however, sent experts equipped with chemicals to

³³ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Crop Pest Control Director, Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Säné* 21, 1951E.C., Ref.no.አጋ/1023/164/51.

³⁴ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Vice Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to *Ras* Andargačäw Mässay, Minister, Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Säné* 29, 1951E.C., No.Ref.

³⁵ Informants: *Ato* Kassayé Worqu, *Ato* Jafar Hussén, and *Ato* Germa Wondafras.

³⁶ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.28., File no. 17.1.3.28.17, “A Letter from *Ato* Täsfayé Bälačäw, Governor of Efrata District in Mänz *ena* Yefat *Awrajja* to Ministry of Interior”, dated on 05/01/ 1952E.C., Ref.no.ቀ/6/34.; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.18. “A Letter from Karaqoré District Administration to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Mäskäräm* 05, 1952E.C., Ref no. 053/ለ/20/52.; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.18. “A Letter from *Šäläqa* Mamo Bäšé, Governor of Jara *Awrajja* Administration to Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 10, 1952E.C., No Ref.

fight the pest. The experts were *Ato Tayé Getačäw* and *Ato Ali Haruné*, who came from Addis Abäbä and Wällo provinces respectively.³⁷ The Ministry sent 100 *quintals* of anti-pest chemicals from Addis Abäbä and 60 *quintals* from Dässé, to the *awrajja*.³⁸ The experts reached the area after an exhaustive travel. Unfortunately, when they arrived in the area where the locust was reported, it had become airborne and thus out of control.³⁹ The local people and the experts tried a lot but could not control it. The governor of Jara *awrajja*, requested the Ministry of Agriculture to prevent further expansion of the pest by attacking it from the air using aircraft.⁴⁰ To emphasize the seriousness of the problem he stated that “**ሕዝቡም ወደፊት በሚደርሰው ከፍ ያለ ችግር በሐዘንና በትካሄ ከማዘኑም ሌላ ለማጥፋት በየበርሃው የተሰማሩት ሁሉ በአላቸው ሀይል ቢሞክሩት ሊያግዱት ባለመቻሉ በወባ ህመም ተጠቅቶ ተኝቷል፡፡**”⁴¹ (the people were in great problem and quite sad about the future threat [of the locust]. Those, who went to the lowlands [to fight it], though attempted to do their best, were unable to eliminate it. The people were affected by malaria and are bed-ridden). Thus, by late October and early November 1959, the escaping locust converged and grew into a huge swarm. It then destroyed everything on its way and began to migrate to neighboring districts of Jara *awrajja*, specifically Arṭuma, Däwéy, and Essay Gollla sub-districts. Here, the pest devastated crops such as maize, sorghum, and barely. Finally, from

³⁷ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.18. “A Letter from *Ato Qeṭaw Azänä*, General Secretary of *Mänz ena Yefat Awrajja* to *Ato Täsfayé Bälačäw* Governor of Efrata District”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 25, 1952E.C. , Ref no. 286/39.

³⁸ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.18. “A Letter from *Ato Adäferes Bälačäw*, Locust Prevention Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture to Minister, Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 27, 1952E.C. , Ref no. 733/28/12/157.

³⁹ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.18. “A Letter from *Ato Qeṭaw Azänä*, General Secretary of *Mänz ena Yefat Awrajja* to *Ato Täsfayé Bälačäw* Governor of Efrata District”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 25, 1952E.C. , Ref no. 286/39.

⁴⁰ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.18. “A Letter from *Šaläqa Mamo Bäšé*, Governor of Jara *Awrajja* Administration to Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 10, 1952E.C. , No Ref.

⁴¹ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.18. “A Letter from Jara Administration *Awrajja* to Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 25, 1952E.C. , No Ref.

the early November of the same year and onwards, it moved north to Wällo province causing similar damages.⁴²

At about the same time, large swarms of matured locusts also entered the country from the Sudan, and continued on to Šäwa and beyond to the south. In some areas it devastated crops, grasses and trees and exposed people and animals to shortage of food. Earlier on with the initiative of Ras Andargačäw Messay, the then Minister of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs obtained two chemical spraying aircraft from the British government that were already operating in Hararghé province. The local people were called upon to help in Šäwa. The Ministry also worked to get additional support from other countries such as France, the US, and others to control the locust, particularly in northern and central parts of the country. In spite of the restless efforts undertaken to control the pest, the rapid multiplication of the pest and its unpredictable movements became a serious challenge. Several new swarms would emerge in the back when they had destroyed those in front. In addition, the swarms that escaped from the attack, would harbor in inaccessible areas, accumulate and then reappear. On top of this, once the locust is airborne, traditional methods of prevention such as hitting by bundles of sticks or some other materials, setting fires, etc. were no longer effective.⁴³

After a few months of respite, the threat of locusts reappeared in Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajja* and the neighboring Tägulät *ena* Bulga *awrajja* in the spring of 1960. The spatial coverage of the pest increased from time to time as new generations emerged continuously. The Ministry of Agriculture mobilized local communities and other government offices in an effort to control the swarms,

⁴² NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.18. “ A Letter from Šäläqa Mamo Bäšé, Governor of Jarra *Awrajja* to Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Hedar* 17, 1952E.C. , Ref no. 1353/1362/52.

⁴³ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “ A Letter from Ato Mikaél Eyayu, Minister, Minister of Agriculture to Ministry of Foreign Affairs ”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 28, 1952E.C., Ref.no.512/28/52/157.

including the prisoners of Šäwarobit national prison. The joint prevention efforts eliminated much of the swarms and significantly reduced its impact in the region in particular and in the province in general.⁴⁴

The people of Yefat, in particular, did not get respite from the pest. Before they recovered from the previous ravages, new outbreaks of locust inflicted heavy damage on animal forage and irrigated fields in the Awaš Valley in 1959/1960. The victims went to neighboring districts in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga in the north and Harar province in the east. The leader of some of the famished people of Afar, *Balambaras* Hora Ayetälé reported the case to the government, which eventually reached the office of the Emperor. Considering the seriousness of the problem, the Emperor provided emergency food aid to the victims.⁴⁵ That, however, could not end of the story. The threat of the pest continued mainly in southeastern Šäwa in May 1961. Soon, the governor of Tägülät *ena* Bulga *awrajja* reported the case to the province and then to the Ministry of Agriculture requesting immediate intervention. The Ministry of Agriculture, however, did not respond soon for unknown reasons. When a staff of Locust Control Section of the Ministry, named, Mamo Bägaga, went to the area on 18 May of the same year to survey the condition, it had already gotten out of control. He communicated with his office by telephone and requested for chemicals as soon as possible. Waiting for the intervention of the Ministry, *Ato* Mamo, in collaboration with local people,

⁴⁴ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.28., File no. 17.1.3.28.17, “A Letter from *Ato* Adäfres Bälehu, Vice Director for Agricultural Activity, Ministry of Agriculture to *Ato* Mamo Dägaga, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on 30/08/ 1953E.C., Ref.no.1622/53/173.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.02, “A Letter from Tägülät *ena* Bulga *Awrajja* Administration to Ras Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa Province”, dated on 17/5/ 1952E.C., Ref.no.4252/10. ; Informants: *Ato* Kassayé Worqu, *Ato* Jafar Hussén, and *Ato* Germa Wondafraš.

⁴⁵ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.02, “A Letter from Tägülät *ena* Bulga *Awrajja* administration to Ras Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa Province”, dated on 17/5/ 1952E.C., Ref.no.4252/10. Parallel with the impacts of natural disasters, the pastoralist in the Awash Valley including Burémodaytu district in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja*, were also under big pressure of the states and big companies. The increasing expansion of mechanized agriculture at the expense of the pastoralists grazing lands made the livelihood of the local people precarious, particularly since the late 1950s. For more see Girma, *The State and Development...*,pp.73-74.; Flood, “Nomadism and Its...”,p.64.; Ayalew, *Pastoralism Under...*,pp. 49-52.;Lars Bondestom, “People and Capitalism in Northeastern Lowlands of Ethiopia”, in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol.XII,No.III(1974),p.423.

engaged in a fight against the newly emerged locust around Ankobär and Gorrobéla. But as usual, due to the delay of intervention, the pest damaged the area and then moved to neighboring territories, damaging ripening crops and grasses.⁴⁶ The higher and lower government officials blamed each other. Sources, however, indicate that though local governors reported the case as early as possible, with all problems of accuracy, the response of the higher officials came too late due to the long and complicated bureaucracy.⁴⁷

In subsequent years, particularly from 1963-1966, there was no major outbreak of locust in the region as well as in the country in general. At this time, outbreaks were scattered and insignificant worldwide. This was attributed to the absence of rainfall in potential locust breeding-areas within and outside the country, and partly with intensive prevention activities of FAO around the Red Sea region.⁴⁸ The absence of rain, as discussed before, meant no food (no growth of grass and tress) for the insect and hence no major reproduction in the region and beyond.⁴⁹

The next major outbreak that affected Šäwa province in particular and central and northern, and eastern Ethiopia in general took place from May to July 1968.⁵⁰ The government gave attention to this one and collected information for an organized intervention. An urgent meeting of the Council of Ministers was held on 20 July 1968, and allocated budget, upon the request of the Ministry of

⁴⁶ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.02, “ A Letter from Ato Tebäbu Tässäma, Secretatry of Tägulät *ena* Bulga *Awrajja* to Ras Mäsfen Seläši, Governor Genoral of Šäwa Province”, dated on Säné 7, 1953E.C., Ref.no.8176/37.

⁴⁷ Informants: Ato Kassayé Worqu, Ato Jafar Hussén, and Ato Germa Wondafraš.

⁴⁸ FAO, “Desert Locust Project Fenal...”,pp. 20-21, 25.-unpublished.

⁴⁹ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “ A Letter from Colonel Kätäma Yelma, Head, Crime Protection and Crimenal Investigation, Ethiopian Police Force to All Fourteen Provinces of the Country ”, dated on *Hamlé* 29, 1960E.C., Ref.no.፱፻1/52/10989.; See also NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “ A Letter from *Gerazmač* Germačäw Täklähawariat, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ato Solomon Aberham, Minister De’eta, Ministry of Interior” , dated on *Hamlé* 13, 1960E.C., Ref.no.16806/60.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “ A Letter from Colonel Kätäma Yelma, Head, Crime Protection and Crimenal Investigation, Ethiopian Police Force to All Fourteen Provinces of the Country ”, dated on *Hamlé* 29, 1960E.C., Ref.no.፱፻1/52/10989.

Agriculture, to avert the emerging threat of the pest throughout the country. The Council also organized a committee under the leadership of *Gerazmač* Germačäw Täklähawariat to look into seriously affected areas, and explore the direction of the movement of the swarm and its overall conditions. According to the report of the committee, northern and eastern Ethiopia were under serious threat. Some of the areas in these territories were already devastated and some others would soon be affected. The report further states that the swarm started to emerge in the lowlands of Northern Ethiopia starting from May 1968. In this month, it widely invaded Eritrea (Akordat, Tensäné, and Berkébet) and Tegray (Täkäzé Valley, Samré, Finarwa, and Šekut) provinces and gradually directed to Wällo and Šäwa to further east. Parallel to the penetration from the north, there was also massive infiltration of swarms from neighboring countries in the east and northwest such as Saudi Arabia, Yeman, Egypt and the Sudan. It was estimated that more than half of the swarms emerged in the Middle East, entering Ethiopia with and on wind currents. It eventually ruined crops and grass in eastern and central parts of the country.⁵¹

The Ethiopian government, in collaboration with the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa as well as the local community, started control operations as soon as they could. the Organization sprayed 2,223 gallons of liquid and 873kg of powder anti-pest chemicals in the provinces of Eritrea, Harar, Wällo, Tegray, Bägemedér and Šäwa provinces both manually and using aircraft. The lowlands along the Rift Valley of the eastern side of Šäwa province were also targets of the prevention activities. The campaign reduced the size of the swarm considerably and blocked the evolution of a new generation of swarms, and thus reduced the associated damages in

⁵¹ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from *Gerazmač* Germačäw Täklähawariat, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ato Solomon Abraham, Minister De’eta, Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Hamlé* 13, 1960E.C., Ref.no.16806/60.

the above mentioned territories. But the threat did not come to an end. The retreating locust, which sheltered in inaccessible areas exploded sometime later. Moreover, there was successive massive infiltration of swarms from neighboring countries. Taking this reality into consideration, the campaign was scheduled to extend for four consecutive months starting from May of the same year. However, neither the organization, nor the government of Ethiopia had adequate reserves of chemicals to control the present and future threats of the swarm. The organization also suffered from administrative inefficiency, critical shortage of budget, logistical problems including transport vehicles. It heavily depended on foreign aid. The failure to get the aid on time meant widespread damage by the pest. The political instability in the Ogaden and Eritrea in the late 1960s and 70s became another obstacle for the organization. Thus, the organization did not fully succeed in preventing and controlling locusts and other pests.⁵² Shemels describes the problems of the organization as follows:

በኢትዮጵያ ብዙ ጊዜ ከፍተኛ የአንበጣ መንጋና የተምች ወረርሽኝ ይመጣና የተዘራውን ሰብል እስከ ስሩ ስለሚላጩ ዛፍና ቁጥቋጦውንም መለመላውን ስሚያስቀረው ከባድ የረሃብ ቸነፈርና የከብት እልቂት ይከተል ነበር። በ1965 ዓ.ም. እና በተከተሉትም ዓመታትም ከባድ የአንበጣ፣ የተምችና የፌንጣ ወረርሽኝ ተከስቷል። ምንም እንኳን የምስራቅ አፍሪካ የአንበጣ መከላከያ ድርጅት ቢኖርም እንደልቡ ተዘዋውሮ መድሃኒቱን ለመርጨት በአንድ በኩል የአንበጣ መፈልፈያ በሆኑት አካባቢዎች (ማለትም በምስራቅ በኡጋዴን ፣ በሶሜን ኤርትራ) ይካሄዱ የነበሩት የእርስ በርስ ጦርነቶች እንቅፋት ሆነውበት ነበር፤ በሌላ በኩል አውሮፕላኖቹን ለመጠገንና ከአየር የሚረጨውን ጸረ አንበጣና ተምች መድሃኒት ለመግዛት የሚያስፈልገውን ውጭ መሸፈን ስላልቻለ ድርጅቱ የታለመለትን ተግባር መፈጸም አልቻለም። አባል አገሮችም የመዋጮ ድርሻቸውን ስለማይከፍሉ ችግሩን አባብሶት ነበር።⁵³

In Ethiopia, there were several outbreaks of swarms of locust, *temech* (deyri or army worm), that cut the crops off from their bottom, damage leaves of trees and bushes, and subsequently it was [always] followed by starvation, famine and death of cattle. In 1965E.C. (1972/73) and in the years to follow, there

⁵²*Ibid.*; Allan T. Showler, “The Importance of Armed Conflict to Desert Locust Control, 1986-2002”, *Journal of Orthoptera Research*, Vo. 12, No. 2(2003),pp. 127-129.; Informants: Ato Kassaye Worqu, Ato Jafar Hussien, and Ato Girma Wondafrash.

⁵³Shemels, “ድርቅ እና ርሃብን ለመቋቋም...” (Activities Done to resist Drought and Famine...), p.264.

were serious locust and *fenṭa* (hopper) invasions. Even though there was the East African Locust Control Organization, the organization could not spray chemicals by moving freely. For one thing, there was the civil war such as the ones in the Ogaden and Eritrea. On the other side, the organization could not accomplish what it planned because it was incapable of covering the costs required to repair the aircraft and buy anti-pest chemicals. The problem was aggravated by the fact that member states failed to pay their respective contributions.

As a result the above mentioned problems, the sufferings of the people increased from time to time. In May 1974, the people of North Šäwa came under major threat. In this year, locust invasion was accompanied by an outbreak of *temch* (army worm) that devastated crops left behind the locust raids. The problem was pronounced in Mänz *ena* Gešé, Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga, Känbata *ena* Hadya, and Yarar *ena* Karayu *awrajjas*. In Mänz *ena* Gešé, it swept the districts of Lalomed, Mamamed and Gešé while in Yefat it heavily devastated Qäwät, Efrata-Jellé, Mafud and Gämza districts.⁵⁴ The swarm of locusts, coupled with the army worm, brought heavy damages in the lowlands and ruined almost the entire maize crop in the field. The *awrajja* governor along with Ato Täkätäl Aba, Parliamentary Representative (MP) from the *awrajja*, appealed the case to the provincial administration requesting immediate intervention. The provincial administration, in turn, passed on the case to the Ministry of Agriculture, stating the magnitude of the problem. Referring the letter of the *awrajja* governor, Abäbä Ṭelahun, the vice head of development of Šäwa province, warned that unless immediate response was given, the people would soon be starved and

⁵⁴ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.28., File no. 17.1.3.28.17, “ A Letter from *Fitawurari* Yohannes Häiläyäsus, Country Administration Director to Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Pagumé* 4, 1966E.C., Ref.no.17378/51/28/40.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.28., File no. 17.1.3.28.17, “ A Letter from Dr. Dañačaw Yergu, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to *Däjjazmač* Mamo Seyoum, Administrator of Šäwa Province”, dated on *Genbot*, 1966E.C., Ref.no.H3/13/8.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.28., File no. 17.1.3.28.17, “ A Letter from Abäbä Ṭelahun, Vice Head for Development of Šäwa Province to Ato Awugečaw Kassa , Head of Agricultural Branch office of the province”, dated on 23/12/66E.C., Ref.no.h/5347;NALA, Folder no. 17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Ato Dañačaw Yergu, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 13/1967E.C., Ref.no. H3/5.It was evident that the highlands of North Šäwa affected mainly by army worms and other related pests and cold weather condition. Locust was rare in the highlands.

displaced. He demanded much resource for relief and rehabilitation activities.⁵⁵ But the response from the government came too late while the higher and lower government officials blamed each other for the delay.⁵⁶ Starting from late May 1974, the Ministry of Agriculture engaged in control activities by distributing DDT and melatonin to affected provinces. The Šäwa province got 29 tons of DDT, and 2000 liters of melatonin, and sprayed the chemicals in the affected districts manually. Like other areas, much of the chemical, however, was given to large scale commercial farmers.⁵⁷ The poor received little and some not at all. When local people asked for more, they got a response to the effect that they had no reserves of chemicals at the center. The only option the peasants had was to combat the pest by buying chemicals individually or using other traditional mechanisms.⁵⁸

In view of the repeated appeals of the people for help and the alarming threat of locust and other pest raids posed the Ministry of Agriculture through its Plant Production and Protection Division proposed to establish a “fire brigade” of pest control service in January 1975. The agenda was brought to the forefront in the last two years of the Imperial regime. It was made part of the Fourth Five Year Development Plan of the Imperial government. The increasing threat of the pests during and after the famine of 1972-74 made pest control one of the priorities of the Ministry. The

⁵⁵ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.29, File no.17.1.1.29.18, “A Letter from *Ato Tākätäl Abatä*, Parliamentary Representative of Yefat and Ṭemuga *Awrajja* to *Däjjazmač* Mamo Seyoum, Administrator of Šäwa Province” , dated on 29/10/66E.C., No Ref.). ; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.29, File no.17.1.1.29.18, “ A Letter from *Ato Abäbä Ṭelahun*, Vice head for Development of Šäwa province to Ministry of Agriculture” , dated on 10/10/66E.C., Ref.no.ḥ/2326/5361/2.

⁵⁶ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.28., File no. 17.1.3.28.17, “A Letter from *Ato Abäbä Ṭelahun*, Vice Head for Development of Šäwa province to Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on 07/12/1966E.C., Ref.no.ḥ/4932/53/51/-2.

⁵⁷ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.28., File no. 17.1.3.28.17, “ A Letter from Dr. *Dañačäw Yergu* to Ministry of Agriculture to *Däjjazmač* Mamo Seyoum, Administrator of Šäwa Province”, dated on *Genbot*, 1966E.C., Ref.no.H3/13/08 . NALA, Folder no. 17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, A Letter from Dr. *Dañačäw Yergu*, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 13/1967E.C., Ref.no. H3/5.

⁵⁸ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.29, File no.17.1.1.29.18, “ A Letter from *Ato Tākätäl Abatä*, Parliamentary Representative of Yefat and Ṭemuga *Awrajja* to *Däjjazmač* Mamo Seyoum, Administrator of Šäwa Province” , dated on 29/10/66E.C., No Ref.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.28., File no. 17.1.3.28.17, “ A Letter from *Ato Abäbä Ṭelahun*, Vice Head for Development of Šäwa province to Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on 07/12/ 1966E.C., Ref.no.ḥ/4932/53/51-2.; Informants: *Ato Yehäyes Manyaheläwal*, *Ato Mängäša Kebrät* and *Ato Seid Abdulaziz*.

organization worked to ensure adequate reserves of insecticides for times of crisis and provided material and technical support in the field. In reality, the shortage of insecticides, however, was not solved; so did the locust raids in the country continue to pose threats.⁵⁹

In late September and early October 1974, several swarms broke out in the pastoralist occupied areas of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*. Technical experts from the Ministry of Agriculture went to the *Awrajja*'s capital, Aṭayé, on 25 October 1974. The *awrajja* governor informed them that there was no road for vehicles to reach the breeding centers of the locust, particularly to Dugugguru, Bileyu, Hufe and Sodu *qābällés*. It took three days on foot to reach there. But, the technical experts were not willing to go to these places due to security problems. When the case reached the police, it, in turn, transferred it to the *atebi-dagna* (local chief or governor). In the middle of this, the experts left for Addis Abäbä on 26 October of the same year without doing anything.⁶⁰ Sometime later, the experts returned to the area with chemicals for the second time. They reached the reported area after an exhaustive trip on foot. As soon as they arrive at the place, no one was here to give information about when and where the pest appeared. The nearby pastoralists were unwilling to show the breeding places of the pest probably fearing that the chemicals might have a side effect on their cattle. Nor could the experts visit the area in full because of the hostile weather and security problem. They returned without even having sufficient information about hatching sites and the

⁵⁹NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, "A Letter from Dr. Dañačäw Yergu, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ato Šemälsä Aduña, Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission", dated on 7/9/1967E.C., Ref.no. H3/5.; Informants: Ato Yehäyes Manyaheläwal, Ato Mängäša Kebrät and Ato Seid Abdulaziz.

⁶⁰ NALA, Folder no.17.1.3.29, File no.17.1.3.29.18, "A Letter from Ato Abäbä Ṭelahun, Vice Administrator of Development (previously secretary) of Šäwa Province to Dr. Dañačäw Yergu, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture", dated on 25/02/67E.C., Re.no. ጥ/86/888/67.; NALA, Folder no.17.1.3.29, File no.17.1.3.29.18, "A Letter from Ato Abäbä Ṭelahun, Vice Administrator of Development of Šäwa Province to Dr. Dañačäw Yergu, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture", dated on 11/3/1967E.C., Re.no. ፩/1081/8108/2. ; NALA, Folder no.17.1.3.29, File no.17.1.3.29.18, "A Letter from Dr. Dañačäw Yergu, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Däjjazmač Mamo Seyoum, Administrator of Šäwa province", dated on 26/02/67E.C., Re.no. H3/13/28.

condition of the pest.⁶¹ Later, the *awrajja* ascertained that what was reported earlier was not the usual type of pest. It was rather less harmful, a tree locust common to the area.⁶² A similar type of harmless locust appeared at Rasa-Gubba two months before in August 1974.⁶³ My informants say that the problem in relation with reporting (either exaggerating or underestimating or fully disregarding) was not a problem observed only in this year. It had existed before and continued to prevail. It misguided the government and other stakeholders.⁶⁴

According to sources, the most serious challenge to intervention in the early years of the military regime was the question of security.⁶⁵ From the beginning, the military government was preoccupied dealing with internal (mainly from insurgents and ex-landed class) and external (the pressure of the imperialist powers of the West) challenges. In the former case, the ex-landed aristocrats and insurgents resisted the regime taking refugees with the rural villages in remote villages. These groups challenged not only the presence of the state, but also development initiatives undertaken at the grass root level. Local government agents and non-governmental organizations did not move freely from one locality to other due to security problem particularly in central and northern Ethiopia. The workers of the Ministry of Agriculture repeatedly appealed

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶² NALA, Folder no.17.1.3.29, File no.17.1.3.29.18, “A Letter from Yefat and Temuga *Awrajja* Administration Office to Šäwa Province Administration Office”, dated on 24/03/67E.C., Re.no. ጠ/86/1127/67.

⁶³ NALA, Folder no.17.1.3.29, File no.17.1.3.29.18, “A Letter from Dr. Dañačäw Yergu, Minister, the Ministry of Agriculture to *Däjjazmač* Mamo Seyoum, Administrator of Šäwa Province”, dated on 11/02/66E.C., Re.no. H3/13/22.

⁶⁴Informants: *Amsaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Mängäša Tačé, *Ato* Mohamäd Hassän and *W/ro* Märéma Hussén. The first three were interviewed in 06,10 and 14/02/11 respectively, while the last on 22/03/11.

⁶⁵NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from *Fitawurari* Mäharänä Menda, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Forest Development to All Fourteen Provinces and Ethiopian Police Force”, dated on *Genbot* 25, 1968E.C., Re.no. ደ.ደስ/32489/፱10.; Allan T. Showler and Michel Lecoq, “Incidents and Ramifications of Armed Conflict in Countries with Major Desert Locust Breeding Areas”, *Agronomy*, Vol.10, No. 114(2021),pp.1-7.; Allan T. Showler, “The Importance of Armed Conflict to Desert Locust Control, 1986-2002”, *Journal of Orthoptera Research*, Vo. 12, No. 2(2003),pp. 127-132.;Informants: *Amsaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Mängäša Tačé, *Ato* Mohamäd Hassän and *W/ro* Märéma Hussén.

that they encountered security problems while trying to fight crop pests, disease, and animal plagues particularly in Northern Ethiopia.⁶⁶ The case was not less serious in my study area. As discussed in the previous chapter, *Mänz ena Gešé*, *Yefat ena Temuga awrajjas* were strongholds of the rebels whose disobedience continued into the late 1970s. They mobilized local people against the state. The frequent military campaigns of the state against the rebels in the region victimized the peasantry. The peasants were not in a position to conduct their routine activities due to the existing political turmoil. Because the focus of the state was on restoring peace by destroying the rebels. Very little attention was given to the intermittent outbreaks of pests and other diseases. The problem was aggravated by the perpetual conflict over resources among different groups in *Yefat ena Temuga awrajja*.⁶⁷

Equally significant was the difficult topography in the highland of *Mänz ena Gešé awrajja*, in particular. The landscape was not suitable for landing and taking off for aircraft. The situation in the Awash Valley and part of *Yefat ena Temuga awrajja* was slightly different. Here, manual activities were partly accompanied by aircraft attacks from the air using toxic chemicals.⁶⁸ On top of this, the delay of responses of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Organization made it difficult to control the pest at its early stages. The organization did not send on time aircraft as per the request. It took long time to assure the magnitude of the damages and the existence of favorable

⁶⁶ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “ A Letter from *Fitawurari* Mäharänä Menda, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Forest Development to All Fourteen Provinces and Ethiopian Police Force”, dated on *Genbot* 25, 1968E.C., Re.no. ፩.፩፻/32489/፱10.

⁶⁷ Informants: *Ato* Anägagräñ Bezunäh, *Ato* Atlaw Asamenäw and *Ato* Awuraris Aragaw.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*; Showler and Lecoq, “Incidents and Ramifications...”, pp.1-7.; Allan T. Showler, “The Importance of Armed Conflict to Desert Locust Control, 1986-2002”, *Journal of Orthoptera Research*, Vo. 12, No. 2(2003), pp. 129-132.

landscape for landing and takeoff aircraft by its own experts. While exchanging of series of letters or telegrams took place, the peasants suffered a lot.⁶⁹

In its annual meeting held from 3-7 October 1977, Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA), which was more commonly known as ስንበሳ ሙከሳ (Locust Control) evaluated its performance and identified challenges that it faced as internal and external. Internally, administrative inefficiency to coordinate lines Ministries and other offices, the difficulty to move from one place to another freely, and the failure to respond to outbreaks on time. Externally, some of challenges were the difficulty of the topography and the harsh weather conditions to conduct surveys, and the failure of local government offices to report cases on time. The delay in communication it was stated might also have been due to the lack of communication resources as well as lack of transportation and roads.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Ato Asrat Fālāqā, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ato Mäbratē Māngestē, Minister, Ministry of National Resource Development”, dated on *Mägabīt* 30, 1967E.C., Ref.no. H3/5/30.; Informants: Ato Anāgrāñ Bezunāh, Ato Atlaw Asamenāw and Ato Awuraris Aragaw. In its circular letter addressed to all provinces, Crop Development and Protection Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest Development dated on 26May, 1976, informed them about the precondition for using aircrafts for controlling crop pests. It states that since the chemicals were expensive, it was only used after assuring the cost benefit analysis of the damages. Second, air planes would be used in condition when it was beyond the control and capacity of the workers of the Ministry and local community, Third, the area, to which the chemicals to be sprayed, should be conducive for flying of aircrafts. Fourth, there should be suitable and an open plain for landing of air planes. It also sets the criteria for preparing land for grounding air planes in condition where there was a possibility. It says that it should be at least 4km radius, free from vegetation cover. For more see NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.13., File no. 17.1.3.13.05., “A Letter from Ato Tadässä Qeşāla, Head, Crop Development and Protection Department, Ministry of Agriculture to Šāwa Province Branch Office”, dated on *Genbot* 18, 1968E.C. Ref.no. ጠ8/57.

⁷⁰ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Ato Alämayähu Säifu, Head for International Organizations and Independent Movement, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ministries of Agriculture and Settlement, Interior, and Defense”, dated on *Hedar* 20, 1977E.C. Ref.no. 4737/22-1፲; see also NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa to Dr. Germa Tolässa, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement”, dated on 15 June, 1977, Re.no. CO/1.1.; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Public Notice of Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement, *Genbot* 1972E.C. ; Desert Locust control Organization for Eastern Africa, “Sixteenth Annual Report, from 1 July 1977 to 30 June 1978” (Addis Ababa,1978.), p. 35.

On top of this, the Ethio-Somalia war of 1977-78 affected prevention activities of the Ethiopian government and the East African Desert Locust Control Organization significantly. At the time, the Organization could not move freely to potential locust breeding corridors in Eastern Ethiopia (Ogaden and Somalia) to attack the migratory locusts at its early stage. The Ethiopian government, on its part, allocated much of its resources to the war effort. The attention given to locust invasions was seemed very minimal or non-existent.⁷¹ The absence of intervention at the coastal areas meant the rapid multiplication and spread of the locust to the hinterlands causing huge damages in the Horn of Africa as a whole and beyond.⁷²

Following the closing of the war, the Ethiopian government organized a National Emergency Committee under the Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement in the late 1970s. The Committee worked closely with peasant associations, peasants, and investors at the low level. It was authorized to mobilize communities and other stakeholders to undertake an integrated counter attack against locusts in each locality. The Committee also was responsible for studying and reporting to the Ministry about the territorial coverage of the swarm, the crops affected, and the direction of the movement of the swarm as early as possible. In doing so, it in collaboration with the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa, undertook preventive activities around Jijiga, Deré Dawa and Wällo (Kombolča and around Čäffa). Side by side with an attack from the air, local people used customary practices.⁷³ In spite of the tireless efforts made at different levels, the spread and multiplication of swarms increased from time to time. In July and August 1978,

⁷¹ Informants: *Ato Anägagrāñ Bezunäh*, *Ato Atlaw Asamenäw* and *Ato Awuraris Aragaw*.

⁷² NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Public Notice of Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement, *Genbot* 1972E.C. ; See also Desert Locust control Organization for Eastern Africa, “ Sixteenth Annual Report, from 1 July 1977 to 30 June...”, p. 35.

⁷³ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Public Notice of Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement, *Genbot* 1972E.C.; *Addis Zämän Newspaper*, Year 34, No. 1628(*Genbot* 20, 1970E.C).

locusts emerged in eastern Ethiopia and then spread into the interior of the country following the highway. It engulfed much of central and northern parts of Šäwa province, namely Märabété (Tačebét and Laybét *qäbällés*), Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga (Burémodaytu, Fursi), and Sälalé (Morät, Jerru and Jämma *qolla*) *Awrajjas*. It also spread to Gojjam, Wällo, Gondar and Tegray provinces. On its way, the swarms devastated crops and grass. The East African Locust Control Organization had involved in prevention activities as early as possible and sprayed 19,165 liters liquid and 2000 kgms powder chemicals to areas suitable for flying helicopters and aircraft. The intervention of the Organization, however, was not that much effective. The first reason was that the swarms shifted to inaccessible areas. Second, some of the local people were not willing to report the appearance of pest in their localities in the belief that the chemicals might affect their livestock. Third, once the swarms are airborne, they would be a float for as long as seventeen hours without rest.⁷⁴

Two years later in 1980, another swarms of locust emerged in the Middle East, the Red Sea and around the Mediterranean Sea starting from April 1980. It entered the interior of Ethiopia in two directions: north and east. The swarms that originated in Saudi Arabia and Red Sea moved to Eritrea, Tegray and neighboring provinces while the swarms that came via Somalia and Djibouti invaded Hararghe, Šäwa and Wällo provinces one after another. It was the swarm that came from the east that affected largely Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* specifically Šäwarobit, Majäté, Čäfarobit, Efésson and their surroundings. Unlike the previous few years, in that year (April to May 1980), there was abundant rainfall in the lowlands bordering Sudan and Ethiopia, as well as those between Ethiopia and Somalia, starting from the mid-November 1979. Though, the East African Locust

⁷⁴Addis Zāmān, Year 34, No. 1707(*Nähassé* 28, 1970E.C.); see also Addis Zāmān, Year 34, No. 1628(*Genbot* 20, 1970E.C.); NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A letter from Ato Germa Tolässa, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement to Ministry of Defense”, dated on 22/1/71E.C. , Ref.no. 2/h^፱4/7-3.

Control Organization strove to eliminate at in its breeding sites, it could not control the pest due the large size of the swarm and the infiltration and evolution of successive generations of swarms. The size of the swarms that emerged from April to May 1980, the Organization claims, was more than the sum total of swarms of locusts that invaded Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia from 1974/75-1977/78.⁷⁵

After four years of respite, another major outbreak took place in North Šäwa following the famine of 1984/85. Sources indicate that the peasants of North Šäwa, who were severely affected by the famine of 1984/85, did not recover from it soon, even though weather conditions were normal again from March 1985. They encountered a series of natural disasters, locust invasions and other crop diseases. According the report of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* administration office, in Mafud district, locusts devastated more than 50 percent of the crops grown (mainly of *ṭéff*) in 1985. The report further states that following the end of the famine, the peasants were pleased with the coming of rain and started plowing their land by helping each other and sharing resources: ox, seed, and labor. They were grateful to God for the end of the bad days and expected a better future. But the sudden appearance of locusts in the area not only destroyed crops in the field, but also made recovery programs very challenging.⁷⁶ A few months later in June 1986, the swarm reappeared in the southeastern part of the *awrajja*. It heavily affected crops and grass in Burémodaytu district specifically at Abaamila, Deqiemudaytu, Dängäléta-Muro-Buré, Kudae and Feyaato *qäbällés*. Having destroyed the grass and crops in the area, it moved to the neighboring

⁷⁵Addis Zāmān Newspaper, Year 34, No. 1627(*Genbot* 19, 1972E.C.).

⁷⁶ EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. h/2040, “ A Letter from Relief and Rehabilitation office of Yefat and Ṭemuga *Awrajja* to Šäwa Province Branch Office”, dated on *Nähassé* 23, 1977E.C., Ref. no. h/556/4982/77.; Informants: *Ato Gäbrägies Habtāmika’el*, *Ato Ayečäw Adanä*, *Ato Dässalān Zägäyē* and *Ato Fesseha Negussé*. The *awrajja* governor requested Relief and Rehabilitation office of the province to offer chick pea seed to sow 20,000 to 24,000 hectares of land, if possible in gift if not in loan form to the peasants, before the end of the rainy season of the same year. The *Awrajja* governor put his frustration in that unless there was urgent intervention of the government, or benevolent organization, the people would suffer a lot in the near future. For more refer the same archive.

districts in the north and western directions of the *awrajja* and beyond.⁷⁷ The damage was so serious that it led to wide spread starvation.⁷⁸ Sporadic and periodic outbreaks continued to threaten the peoples of North Šäwa and do so, to a great extent, until the present time.⁷⁹

Prevention Activities

Realizing the difficulty of controlling the migratory desert locust on its own, the Ethiopian government created a joint front with international organizations that worked against this and other anti-crop pests and birds in the Horn of Africa. In a correspondence with the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture emphasized the initiatives that have taken place upto that point:

አንበሳ በበርሃ ውስጥ ስለሚፈለፈልና ሰብል ወዳለበት አካባቢ ከመምጣቱ በፊት ገበሬው በርሃ ሄዶ አንበሳን ለመከላከል ፈጽሞ የማይችል በመሆኑ መንግስት ሃላፊነቱን መቶ በመቶ በመውሰድ የምስራቅ አፍሪካ አንበሳ መከላከያ ድርጅትን በማቋቋምና አባል በመሆን ከፍተኛ ገንዘብ በየአመቱ በመክፈል ከዓመት ዓመት ያለማቋረጥ የሚከላከል ሲሆን በተለይ ኬላ ኬላ ተብሎ የሚጠራውም የወፍ መንጋ እንደ አንበሳ እጅግ ረጅም የሆነ ጉዞ እየተጓዙና ሰብልንም በብዛት ለማጥፋት የሚችል መሆኑ ስለታወቀ ይህ የወፍ መንጋ ዓይነት ዓለማቀፍ በሆነ ህብረትና ድርድር ሊጠፋ የሚችልበትን ዘዴ መስሪያቤታችን እያሰበበት ነው፡፡⁸⁰

⁷⁷ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.13., File no. 17.1.3.13.05., “A Letter from Ato Käfäyaläw, Province Coordination Office Head to RRC”, dated on *Säné* 24, 1978E.C. Ref.no. ከ፳፱10/7/ሸ1. Contemporary to the event, another anti-crop pest called የአሜሪካ ትል (American worm) emerged in different parts of Mänz *ena* Gešé and Yefat *ena* ፒጢጣ ለወጃጃ and damaged crops such as chickpeas, lentils and other grains. The worm also appeared at Efrata and Jellé, Qäwät and Gämza districts in Yefat *ena* ፒጢጣ ለወጃጃ in June 1986 and destroyed the remaining crops. The damage was so serious that it made the community starved. For more see NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.13., File no. 17.1.3.13.05., “A Letter from Ato Wäldäamanuel W/šadiq. Head, administrative Services of Šäwa Province, to Šäwa Central Agricultural Office”, dated on *Säné* 18, 1978E.C. Ref.no. ፳፱37/6/፳፱3.; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.13., File no. 17.1.3.13.05., “A Letter from Ato Wäldäamanuel Wäldäšadiq, Head, Administrative Services of Šäwa Province, to Workers Party of Ethiopia Šäwa Province Branch Office”, dated on *Säné* 11, 1978E.C. Ref.no. የ18/7/፳፱3.

⁷⁸ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.13., File no. 17.1.3.13.05., “A Letter from Ato Wäldäamanuel Wäldäšadiq, Head, Administrative Services of Šäwa Province, to Workers Party of Ethiopia Šäwa Province Branch Office”, dated on *Säné* 11, 1978E.C. Ref.no. የ18/7/፳፱3.

⁷⁹ Informants: Ato Gäbrägies Habtämika’el, Ato Ayečäw Adanä, Ato Dässaläñ Zägäyē and Ato Fesseha Negussé.

⁸⁰ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.1.52, File no. 17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Ato Dañäčäw Yergu, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ato Šemälse Aduña, Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 13/1967E.C., Ref.no. H3/4.

Since desert locust hatched in the lowlands, the peasants could never stop it at the remote lowlands before it came to the cultivated areas. Considering this, the governments took a 100% responsibility, and worked a lot towards the foundation of the East African Desert Locust Control Organization, and became a member. It paid much money and engaged in eradication and mitigation [activities] year after year without interruption. Especially, a swarm of birds called *kélla kélla* [quelea birds, *Geréssa*], like locusts, travelled long distances and could severely damage crops, and hence our office [the Ministry] is working toward the goal of how to eliminate such type of birds through international cooperation.

The Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA) was established in 1962.⁸¹

Before the establishment of DLCOEA, there had been many regional organizations in which Ethiopia was a member, working in the Middle East and the Red Sea regions. These included the Wartime Middle East Anti-Locust Unit, the East African Anti-Locust Directorate, the Desert Locust Control and the Desert Locust Survey. These regional organizations were active in the Middle East and East Africa. The Desert Locust Control Organization of East Africa provided material, financial and technical assistance to member states to control outbreaks by themselves. It also encouraged member states to organize national pest control institutions, at least to reduce the ravages of locust raids.⁸²

The founding members of the organization were Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Eritrea joined it recently. Because the issue was particularly severe in East Africa and the Middle East, FAO organized national and regional agencies in charge of locust prevention and control. The budget of the organization is funded by yearly contributions from its members as well as from foreign donors such the Overseas Development Administration

⁸¹ Nurein and Musa, “Desert Locust Upsurges...”, p. 1.; See also East African Common Services Organization, “Report on the Desert Locust Survey...” ,pp. 1, 7 and 10. ; NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Letter from Ato Dagnachew Yirgu , Minister, Ministry of Agriculture to Ato Šemälse Aduña, Commissioner, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission”, dated on *Ter* 9/1967E.C., Ref.no. H3/5.;

⁸²East African Common Service Organization, “Report on Desert Locust Survey...” ,pp.1, 7-8.; see also NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Public Notice of the Ministry of Interior” , dated on *Hamlé* 13, 1949E.C.; Adefris Belhu and etal, “The Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa(DLCOEA) and Its Background[and Discussion], *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Community of London*, Vol. 285, No.20(1979),pp.265-266.

(ECODA), FAO, USAID, SIDA, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and European Community.⁸³

Parallel with this, the Ethiopia peasantry made use of different traditional methods to prevent and control or mitigate the impact of locust raids for centuries. The prevention practices varied depending on the evolutionary stage of the locust. The first was during the early or larvae stage, and the other was at a time when the pest matured and is about to be airborne. In the first stage, the common mechanisms included burying the larvae or the immature hopper by digging wells, burning left over vegetation in areas swept by the hopper, hitting the larvae with bundles of sticks, and plowing the land where the locust might have laid eggs. Once the insect was airborne, the only alternative would be to make it restless and to force it remain in the air by using techniques such as chasing with bundles of sticks, creating high noise by banging metallic objects against each other or with other materials, by shouting, by waving pieces of cloth, and by making smoke. At night, when the pest would be at rest, people would try to decimate it by hitting it with bundles of sticks or by setting fire to its hideouts.⁸⁴

Whenever possible, the government attempted to help with delivery of chemicals (HCH, dieldrin and fenitrothion) to be sprayed manually or from the air using aircraft.⁸⁵ Even though there was no statistical data, the collateral damage and ecological impact of pesticides was far reaching. Studies show that pesticides like anti-malaria chemicals killed bees, birds, animals, and other

⁸³ Nurein and Musa, “Desert Locust Upsurges...”p. 1.; East African Common Services Organization, “Report on the Desert Locust Survey...” ,pp. 1, 7 and 10. ; see also Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa(DLCO-EA), “A Short Introductory Report on the Current Status of...”pp.1-3. unpublished.

⁸⁴ NALA, Folder no.17.1.1.52, File no.17.1.1.52.09, “A Public Notice of Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement”, *Genbot* 1972E.C.; Informants: W/ro Yäšemäbēt Bälačäw, Ato Yeṭena Masreša, Ato Gäbrägies Habtāmika’el, Ato Ayečäw Adanä, Ato Dässalāñ Zägäyē and Ato Fesseha Negussé. In some areas, people attempted to smoking smoke, spraying holy water, and praying to God.

⁸⁵ Nurein and Musa, “Desert Locust Upsurges...”pp. 8-10.

useful insects and organisms. It also polluted water bodies. During spraying, the chemicals might spread to distant areas due to wind. Spraying tended to be carried out on vast areas with little or no consideration of diverse ecologies and uses. This situation tended to disturb the food chain in particular and the balance in the ecosystem in general.⁸⁶

In general, locust invasions frequently disrupted the livelihoods of rural people in North Šäwa. It was one of the factors that aggravated susceptibility to starvation and famine in the region. The problem was serious because almost always the pest would appear during production seasons, autumn and spring; when plants in the field are about to mature. Due to institutional inefficiency and logistical limitations, government intervention often came too late and was limited in scope. Thus, not only did peasants suffer a lot but also lived under conditions of enduring crisis. Above all, locust devastations were a prime form of environmental adversity faced by peasants of North Šäwa.

The Ecology and Local History of Malaria

Malaria is one of a serious health problems in Africa mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. The Continent spends billions dollars for prevention and medical treatment of malaria sufferers each year.⁸⁷ In Ethiopia, malaria is endemic in more than more than 75% of the country⁸⁸ and hence most people

⁸⁶ Staffan Wikteli and etal, “Desert Locust Control in Ecologically Sensitive Areas: Need For Guidelines”, *Ambio*, Vol. 32, No. 7(2003),pp.465-467.; Sanchez-Zapata and etal, “Desert Locust Outbreaks...”, p. 327.; Adefris Belhu and etal, “The Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa(DLCOEA) and Its Background[and Discussion], *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Community of London*, Vol. 285, No.20(1979),pp.265-266.

⁸⁷ Tenana Abera, “በኢትዮጵያ የወሰን በሽታ ታሪካዊ ሂደት፣ ነባራዊ ሁኔታ እና የወደፊት ስጋት” (Malaria: Its History, Existing Reality and Future Threat)in Shiferaw Bekele(ed.), *ከድህነት ወደ ልማት፡ እውቀትን ለትውልድ ማስተላለፍ (From Poverty to Development: Transferring Knowledge to Generation)* (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Sciences, 2006E.C.),pp.299, 302.; see also James McCann, *The Historical Ecology of Malaria in Ethiopia: Deposing the Spirit*(Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014),p.1.); Malaria Eradication, Education and Advertisement Department, *የወሰን ማጥፊያ ድርጅት* (Malaria Eradication Organization)(Addis Ababa, Säné 1956E.C.),p.1.

⁸⁸ Tena, ““በኢትዮጵያ የወሰን በሽታ...””,p.311.; Some other sources reduced the percentage of spatial distribution of the disease to 74%. For more see Ministry of Public Health, *የወሰን በሽታ እና መቆጣጠሪያ ዘዴ*(Malaria Disease and Prevention Mechanism)(Addis Ababa, Säné 1973E.C.), pp.3,11.published

suffered from it in one way or the other.⁸⁹ The spatial distribution of the disease, emanating from the behavior of disease causing organism and transmitting vector, varied from place to place.⁹⁰ The progressive change in climate as well as other natural processes resulted in the evolution of different species of mosquitoes, and the parasite, plasmodium. The changes in the behavior of the insect and the parasite inevitably necessitate new modes of prevention and controlling endeavors.⁹¹ According to Sewnkambo the health effects of weather change in Africa can be seen into ways. i.e direct and indirect. The former refers to health problems that comes as a result of extreme and unpredictable weather conditions while the later refers to socio-economic crisis that indirectly affect the wellbeing of society. It might also cause the changing of patterns of disease and the proliferation of new species, crop failures and food insecurities, pollution of land and water bodies and others. Here, man-induced climate change brought about the spread the disease and expansion of desertification.⁹²

Both archival and oral sources unanimously indicate that as in many other parts of Ethiopia, malnutrition had a lot to with the vulnerability to diseases for the people of Northern Šäwa. Because they lived in poverty, the majority of the people were not in a position to afford nutritionally balanced diet both in quantity and quality. The question of food remains to be a serious problem till the present time.⁹³ Malnutrition reduced the immunity of individuals to disease causing agents and thereby exposed them to diseases. What makes the matter even worse is the

⁸⁹*Ibid*, pp.3,11.; see also, *Addis Zämän*, Year 25, No. 370(*Mägabit* 6, 1958E.C).

⁹⁰Tena, “በኢትዮጵያ የወባ በሽታ ታሪካዊ ሂደት...” (Malaria: Its History, Existing Reality...),p.311.

⁹¹McCann, *The Historical Ecology of...*,pp.2-3, 14.

⁹²Nelson K. Sewnkambo, “Weather Change and Health: An Issue with Great Potential for Exacerbating Health Inequalities in Africa”, in *Weather Change in Africa: Adaptation, Mitigation and Governance Challenges, The Center for International Governance Innovation(CIGI) Special Report*(2009),p.16.

⁹³ EGWAOA, No Folder , No File “ A letter from Ato Germa Dägäfa, Head, Šäwa Province Health Office to Aṭayé Health Center”, dated on 18/06/74E.C., Ref no. 5265/901/25.; Informants: Ato Kassayé Worqu, Ato Luelsägäd Gétačäw and Ato Dässalāñ Zägäyē, interviewed on 12/02/11E.C. All were malaria control experts during the imperial and Derg regimes at Aṭayé and now retired.

fact that people had limited or no access to health facilities and health professionals in their localities.⁹⁴

Different species of malaria existed in Ethiopia. These are *Plasmodium-falciparum*, *Plasmodium-vivax*, *Plasmodium-malariae* and *Plasmodium-ovale*. The first two were the dominant. These species were different in their nature and impact on human community.⁹⁵ Plasmodium is the parasite that causes malaria. The female mosquito, also known as anopheles, is the vector. Once the parasite enters the body, it multiplies and spreads swiftly, affecting various organs such as the liver. It also causes high fever and damage to the brain, and, if not treated, may lead to death.⁹⁶

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.; see also Fasil, *The Subsistence Crisis...*, pp.7-11.; Informants: Ato Kassayé Worqu, Ato Luelsägäd Gétačäw and Ato Däsalän Zägäyé, interviewed on 12/02/11E.C.

⁹⁵ T'ena , “በኢትዮጵያ የወባ በሽታ ታሪካዊ ሂደት...” (Malaria: Its History, Existing Reality...), pp.299, 301.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p.301.; see also Malaria Eradication Education and Advertisement Department, የወባ ማጥፊያ... (Malaria Eradication ...), p.6.; *Addis Zämän*, Year 25, No. 370(*Mägabit* 6, 1958E.C.).

The prevalence of malaria also affected settlement patterns, productivity and development interventions.⁹⁷ In the 1950s, Mr. Fontey, a specialist in malaria who served as a senior counselor to Point Four in Ethiopia in the 1950s, provided a comparative analysis of the nature and distribution of the disease in the highlands and lowlands as follows:

በከፍተኛ ቦታ የሚገኘው ወባ ተላላፊ ከመሆኑም በላይ አሰቃቂ በሽታ እና ብዙ ሞትን የሚያስከትል ነው። ወባም የሚነሳው በየአምስት ዓመቱ ነው። በዝቅተኛ ቦታ የሚገኘው ወባ ግን በማንኛውም ጊዜ የሚነሳ ቢሆንም በዚያ ስፍራ ለሚኖሩ ህዝቦች በሽታው ቀላል ነው። በዝቅተኛ ስፍራ የሚኖሩት ሰዎች ከህፃንነታቸው ጀምረው ከበሽታው ጋር ስለሚለማመዱ በሰውነታቸው ውስጥ የተፈጥሮ መከላከያ ይፈጥራል። ይህ የወባ በሽታ የሚብስበት ስፍራ ለምለምና ዋና የእርሻ ቦታ ስለሆነ በሽታው ኢትዮጵያን በኢኮኖሚ በኩል በጣም ይጎዳታል። የፖይንት ፎር አማካሪዎች አፈሩ ለም የሆነ እና ከወንዝ፣ ከሃይቅ ወይም ከረግረግ በቂ ስልት አግኝተው በእርሻ በኩል በጣም ሊስፋፉ የሚችሉ ሜዳዎች እና ሽለቆዎች በወባ ምክንያት ወደ ኋላ ቀርተዋል። ለእነዚህ ቦታዎች በቂ የወባ መከላከያ ካልተደረገላቸው የአገሪቱን ኢኮኖሚ እና የስልጣኔ እርምጃ ወደ ኋላ እንደሚያስቀሩት የተረጋገጠ ነው።...⁹⁸

The type of malaria that prevailed in the highlands was not only communicable but also dangerous disease that caused the death of many. It emerges every five years. Though the type of malaria that existed in the lowlands brakes out any time, it is not that much serious. People, who lived in the lowlands would experience it from their childhood and would thus, develop natural immunity to it. Since, this epidemic has been more serious in fertile and main agricultural areas; it is a major hindrance to cultivation and eventually to economic growth of Ethiopia. According to advisors of Point Four Program, fertile plains and valleys that could be systematically developed using water from river, lake and marshy lands were underutilized due to the prevalence of malaria. Unless an efficient malarial prevention mechanism was implemented in these areas, it was clear that it would pull the economy and the civilization of the country back.

Because malaria hits immediately after the rainy season (from September-December) and from March to May), it directly affects productivity. This is because these are the high times in which peasants are preoccupied with the tasks of cultivation, weeding, and harvesting of crops. People

⁹⁷Ministry of Public Health, *የወባ በሽታ እና መቆጣጠሪያ...*(Malaria and Its Control...)(Addis Ababa, Säné1973E.C.), p.11. published; see also McCann, *The Historical Ecology of ...*,pp.2-3, 14.; *Addis Zämän*, Year 25, No. 370(*Mägabit* 6, 1958E.C.); *Addis Zämän*, Year 26, No. 647(*ፕጥ*25, 1959E.C.).
⁹⁸*Addis Zämän*, Year 18, no. 46(*Yakatit*13, 1951E.C.)

who come down with the disease would not be in a position to cultivate their lands and harvest crops on time.⁹⁹ The disease also restricts the movement and settlement of people, thereby inhibiting resource utilization. Peasants would be reluctant to cultivate even fertile lands in malaria-infested areas for fear of attack by the disease.¹⁰⁰ There are some interesting sayings that illustrate the juxtaposition of potential wealth and disease environments in the lowland regions of Ethiopia. One such saying is “ሞጆ ሀገሩ ቆንጆ ፊሳ አይጠፋም ከጎጆ.” (Mojo is a beautiful country, but death is no stranger).¹⁰¹ Majo is located in the Rift Valley in Eastern Šäwa.

According to my informants, one of the factors, probably the most important, for limiting human settlement in the lowlands of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* was the prevalence of malaria. Most of the land in the *Awrajja* and partly in the lowland of Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajja* was infested with it and some other types of diseases. In Yefat, the vast stretch of land from Burémodaytu in the south east of the *awrajja* all the way to Kämssé, Mäjäté and Antsokia in the north and northwest was malaria infested. Until the mid-20th century, this and other remote lands in the *awrajja*, were uncultivated and unsettled. The land was covered by forest, bush and undergrowth of all kinds. Settlements and cultivation were scattered and concentrated to elevated lands near the foothills of the eastern escarpment where there was moderate climate. As time went on, due to the rise of population and the associated scarcity of land in the highlands, individuals began to migrate to the lowlands in search of land for settlement and cultivation. The immigrants pushed the frontier to the lowlands further through clearing vegetation cover and converting the land into cultivation.

⁹⁹EGWAOA, No folder and File, “A Reports of Karaqoré Health Center of 1958E.C. Budget Year”, 1958E.C.; Informants: Ato Ayečäw Adanä, Ato Dässaläñ Zägäyé and Ato Fesseha Negussé.

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Public Health, *የወባበሽታ እና መቆጣጠሪያ...* (Malaria and Its Control...), pp.3,11. ; *Addis Zämän*, Year 25, No. 370(*Mägabit* 6, 1958E.C.).

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Public Health, *የወባበሽታ እና መቆጣጠሪያ...* (Malaria and Its Control...), p.11

The expansion was partly made possible with the expansion of health centers and the establishment of malaria prevention stations at Šäwarobit in the early 1960s.¹⁰²

Major Outbreaks and Ravages

Though malaria was endemic, in many parts of Northern Šäwa, major outbreaks were few and far between. It emerged periodically.¹⁰³ The sources referring to the first half of the 20th century are scant and fragmented. Sources available to me (both written and oral) give detailed information about major outbreaks and the associated ravages in the post-liberation period.

According to the report of Aṭayé health center addressed to the Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*'s administration office, there was a major outbreak of malaria and other epidemic diseases like smallpox in the Burémodaytu district in the southeastern part of the *awrajja* in December 1973. The outbreak affected Gäfärom, Däbäl, Feayto, Kudäyo, Denelifaro *qäbällés* of the district. *Qäñazmač* Mohammäd Ali, the then governor of the district, reported the case to Aṭayé health center and to Malaria Eradication branch office of the *awrajja*. To address the problem, a joint health team was organized from these two institutions. The team visited the area in late December of the same year and provided medical treatment for 3150 individuals moving from one *qäbällés* to another for two weeks. Even though the team was able to control the epidemic, it could not bring to an end. The scarcity of food, poor sanitation and living style of the people as well as the generally hot and humid weather led to periodic outbreaks of the disease. Conditions were not much different in the decades before and after this period.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Informants: Ato Ayečäw Adanä, Ato Dässaläñ Zägäyē and Ato Fesseha Negussé.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ EGWAOA, No folder, No File, "A Letter from Ato Téwodros Ṭerunäh, Head, Aṭayé Health Center to Yefat and Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Administration Office", dated on 22/4/1966E.C., Ref no. 308/129/66. Earlier to this year, though sporadic in nature, malaria broke out around Jäwuha in Yefat and Ṭemuga *Awrajja* in October 1965. For more see

The efforts made by health centers of the *awrajja* and Aṭayé Malaria Eradication (later Aṭayé Malaria Control sector) were not always easy. Different internal and external forces challenged their prevention and emergency campaigns in the *awrajja*. In the first category, the most frequent problems were the shortage of manpower, medicine as well as logistical problems and the long bureaucracy for the release of necessary budget. In the latter case, some of the factors included the misleading information reported from local administrative units (*qäbällés* and *wärädas*), the lack of cooperation among local government agents and members of the community, as well as lack of road and transportation infrastructure. Besides, some of the local government agents did not cooperate with the health workers. They simply reported cases of epidemics, but showed little or no preparation to make the campaign effective. They sometime left the health workers alone without even a guide. Under this circumstance, health workers wasted much time in finding patients travelling up and down. The above problems were common in most of the districts of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*. This was evident when Ato Mäsfen Wodäamanuél, and Ato Gäbrämädehen Tekuyé, health workers were sent from Aṭayé to Jellé on 12 October and 2 November 1973 respectively.¹⁰⁵ Earlier a similar problem was faced by a health team that went to Jäwuaha in October 1965,¹⁰⁶ in Däwa Rahmedo on September 15/1966.¹⁰⁷ On top of this, even after the professionals got into action despite the above problems, they also faced other challenges from local people. First, since the pastoralists had a mobile style of life, it became difficult to detect cases and deliver medical treatment to them. Second, instability due to endemic resource-based

EGWAOA, No folder, No File, “A Letter from Ato Kefätäw Gäbrämädehen, Head, Karaqoré Clinic to Karaqoré District Administration Office”, dated on 18/02/1958E.C., Ref no. 162/58.

¹⁰⁵ EGWAOA, No folder, No File, “A Letter from Ato Təwodros Ṭerunäh, Head, Aṭayé Health Center to Yefat and Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Administration Office”, dated on 15/02/1966E.C., Ref no. 120/129/66.

¹⁰⁶ EGWAOA, No folder, No File, “A Letter from Ato Kefätäw Gäbrämädehen, Head, Karaqoré Clinic to Karaqoré District Administration Office”, dated on 18/02/1958E.C., Ref no. 162/58.

¹⁰⁷ EGWAOA, No folder, No File, “A Letter from Ato Kefätäw Gäbrämädehen, Head, Karaqoré Clinic to Jara *Awrajja* Administration Office”, dated on 05/01/1959E.C., Ref no. 10/59.

conflicts among different groups made it difficult for the team to move from place to place freely. Thirdly, the heavy reliance of the local people on traditional therapy meant that they were reluctant to seek modern medical treatment. Fourth, the hostile weather condition added to the scattered settlement in the vast stretch of land, making intervention difficult and time consuming. These factors continued to challenge interventions at times of crisis particularly in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.¹⁰⁸

The next major malaria outbreak was associated with the famine of 1984/85. From September to December 1984, there was an outbreak in the lowlands of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*, particularly at temporary shelters and residential quarters, affecting a large number of people.¹⁰⁹ Malnutrition and shortage of food made people to be easily affected by the epidemic. The magnitude of the problem increased as the famine-displaced people carried it to the host region of the elevated lands in the *awrajja* and beyond. The failure to report cases to concerned offices on time, and the shortage of medicine in the stock aggravated the ravages of the epidemic. Most of the available medicines were close to expiry and were at times not properly kept.¹¹⁰

In spite of these problems, the *awrajja* administration in collaboration with the health centers and Aṭayé Malaria Control Sector in the *awrajja* intervened, starting in late September 1984. The campaign targeted both affected and vulnerable areas. It provided medical treatment to the sick and awareness creation to the public particularly at temporary feeding and residential centers. It

¹⁰⁸ EGWAOA, No folder and File, “A Reports of Karaqoré Health Center of 1958E.C. Budget Year”, 1958E.C.; Informants: Ato Dässalān Zägäyē, Ato Fesseha Negussé.

¹⁰⁹ EGWAOA, No folder, File no.15/77, “A letter from Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Administration Office to Eféssoon Malaria Control Center”, dated on 8/4/77E.C., Ref no. ፱/314/1370/77.; See also EGWAOA, No folder, File no.15/77, “A Report from Ato Kätäma Asçänaqi, Environmental Science Expert addressed to Efesson Health Center”, dated on 26/1/77E.C., No Ref.

¹¹⁰ EGWAOA, No folder, File no.15/77, “A Letter from Ato Gutema Abdo, Head, Aṭayé Health Center to Šäwa Province”, dated on 26/1/77E.C., Ref no. 86/129/77.

taught people to keep personal and environmental hygiene, and to eliminate potential favorable conditions for the reproduction of the insect like polluted water bodies. Aṭayé Malaria Control Sector and Aṭayé health center played leading roles in the campaigns.¹¹¹

With some period of respite, another malaria epidemic emerged in Hulana-Tehuyé, Čäffa-Deré, Bédimotu and Gelanadebos *qäbällés*, and in Čäffa-Robit town in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* in June 1985. The disease was accompanied by dysentery and other kinds of diseases. Within a short period of time, it affected and killed many people and got beyond the control of the local clinic.¹¹² It gradually spread to neighboring districts such as Gämza in the *awrajja*.¹¹³ The problem continued even after the end of the famine, mainly in settlement quarters.¹¹⁴ Sources indicate that social facilities including health centers began to be constructed long after the transfer of famine affected-people to the new selected sites through villagization and resettlement programs. The government brought the people without making the land ready for settlement. Thus, the people in their destinations faced health problems due to congestion and poor sanitation.¹¹⁵ This, however, did not mean that there was no effort at all. In Karaqoré settlement quarters and some temporary shelters in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*, for instance, the local health centers provided awareness creation on how to keep personal and environmental health. Aṭayé health center, for instance, delivered basic health education to people in different districts from 26 March to 18 June, 1985 for two hours each day. The efforts of awareness creation continued side by side with practical

¹¹¹ EGWAOA, No folder, File no.15/77, “ A Letter from Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Administration Office to Šäwa Province”, dated on 28/01/77E.C., Ref no. 8/1445/367/77.; EGWAOA, No folder, File no.15/77, “ A Letter from Ato Gutema Abdo, Head, Aṭayé Health Center to Šäwa Province”, dated on 26/1/77E.C., Ref no. 86/129/77.

¹¹² EGWAOA, No folder, File no.15/77, “ A Letter from Ato Assäfa Yemär, Head , Jara Clinic to Aṭayé Health center”, dated on 19/10/77E.C., Ref no. 15/77.

¹¹³ EGWAOA, No folder, File no.15/77, “ A letter from Ato Waquma Bädäda, Head , Fursi Clinic to Aṭayé Health center”, dated on 15/10/77E.C., Ref no. 81/77.

¹¹⁴ Informants: Ato Gäbrägies Habtämiqael, Ato Jafar Hussén, and Ato Germa Wondafräš.

¹¹⁵ Helen, “Villagization in A Peasant Association...”, pp.42-44.; Informants: Ato Yeṭena Masräša, Ato Ṭerusäw Mäkonen, Ato Wäldäarägay Dañé and Ato Tolässa Däbälé.

engagement in preparing waste disposal centers, digging toilets and preparing spring water sources.¹¹⁶

According to my informants, the threat of malaria was reduced during the famine period as compared with the immediate years preceding the famine. Unlike the previous outbreaks, it was restricted to villages, feeding and settlement sites. The prolonged drought endangered the breeding of the insect in most parts of the *Awrajjja*. To show the reduced threat of the disease in the *awrajjja*, local sources claim that there was neither *zar* (bad spirit) nor malaria in 1977 “በ1977 ዓ.ም ዛሬ እና ወባ የለም፡፡” This was probably due to the fact that the people had nothing to eat let alone to deliver sacrifice to the bad spirit. On the other hand, the extended drought might have prohibited the breeding of mosquitoes and thereby the spread of the disease.¹¹⁷

Three years later, in March 1988, another outbreak was reported in Addis Alām Nāgésó, Jāwuha Arāfelebe settlement and large scale agricultural sites. The epidemic caused the death of many people and farm workers.¹¹⁸ It spread gradually, and by May 1988, it had affected a vast stretch of land from Qāwāt to Aṭayé in the *awrajjja*. It severely affected Efésón town, Wacho and Wārāntälé, Zānbo, Addisalām-Nāgésso, Mārewa-hadäre, Alala-kubya, Qoro-rukessa Ensärtu and Upper Aṭayé *qābällés*.¹¹⁹ According to the report of Efésón Malaria Control Sector, the immediate cause

¹¹⁶ EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A letter from Ato Tarāqāñ Wāldāšadiq, a Field Health Worker, Aṭayé Health Center to Aṭayé Health Center”, dated on 10/10/77E.C.

¹¹⁷ Informants: Ato Gābrāgies Hābtāmika’el, Ato Jafar Hussén, and Ato Germa Wondafrāš.

¹¹⁸ EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A Letter from Ato Mohammād Yesuf, Head of RRC Jāwuhha Branch Office to Yefat and Ṭemuga *Awrajjja* Health Office”, dated on 25/10/80E.C., Ref no. ፪፱11/14/28. In Šāwa province, there were 16 resettlement sites. Some of them located in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajjja* such as Nāgésó, Jāwuha, and Wāssān-qurqur. Each center consisted of one settlement sites having 299, 118 and 114 household settlers respectively. For more see Admasu Debele, “Drought, Famine, and Resettlement Program in Ethiopia”(Addis Abābā University, BA Thesis in Political Science1987), attached as appendix no. III.

¹¹⁹ EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A Letter from Dr Yetadāse Gābré, Head of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga Health Office to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajjja* WPE branch office”, dated on 23/10/80E.C., Ref no. 276/40/3/80.);EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A Letter from Ato Berhanu Dinsa, Head of Malaria Control Organization Šāwarobit sub-sector to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajjja* Health Office”, dated on 22/10/80E.C., Ref no. 227/80.

for the emergence of this epidemic was the failure of the Organization to spray DDT in all potentially dangerous areas during the previous months of January and February. The accumulation of water bodies during the spring season, and the creation of artificial water bodies in preparing mud for building houses around Aṭayé River nurtured the reproduction of the mosquitoes. The problem was more serious, for some infected individuals were unwilling to seek modern medical treatment. They insisted on a traditional therapy. Even some of those who went to clinics did not properly take drugs as per the orders of medical personnel.¹²⁰

Despite the above mentioned and related problems, Efésón Malaria Control Sector in collaboration with Aṭayé health center actively engaged in prevention and medical treatment activities. Within two months, it attempted to control the disease by treating more than 19, 1744 victims, of which 6.6% were diagnosed with malaria. Besides, experts treated more than 2,640 victims travelling door to door, and sprayed DDT to potential breeding areas of the insect both in rural and urban areas. The campaign, however, was not smooth. Some of the people were not willing to let their houses sprayed. Some others preferred traditional healers to modern medical services. The strong cultural practices of local community, that give priority to cultural therapy to modern treatment, challenged the effort to control the epidemic in the *awrajja*.¹²¹

Some three or four years later, another epidemic of widespread coverage broke out in Gämza, Efrata-Jellé, Mafud, Qäwät, and Fursi districts. The epidemic attacked the majority of the *qäbällés* in these districts and spread to other neighboring districts. It caused the deaths of many. The *awrajja*'s health office in collaboration with the Efésón Malaria Control Sector, organized a

¹²⁰ EGWAOA, No Folder and File, "A Letter from DR Yetadäse Gäbré, Head of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga Health Office to Šäwa Province Administration " dated on 25/11/80E.C., Ref no. 329/40/3/80.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

professional health team to combat the epidemic. Some of the members of the team included *Ato Gétačāw Gārāmāw* (laboratory expert), *Ato Aduña Tässāma* (entomologist), *Ato Tadegeñ Worku* (Laboratory technician) and *Ato Bäqälä Tekuyé* (laboratory technician). The team attempted to manage the epidemic by moving from village to village, but the problem continued to exist and in some areas it relapsed time and again.¹²² This campaign was not effective as it was expected. It faced a critical shortage of drugs and manpower.¹²³ The prevalence of insecurity in Loté and Ĉärqos *qäbällés* in Gämza district, probably due to competition over resources, was another challenge to the team. In this locality, the team could not move freely and hence the local people suffered a lot.¹²⁴

As a result, by November 1988, the geographical coverage of the disease increased rapidly and affected a large number of individuals in Qäwät (11 *qäbällés*), Fursi(1 *qäbällé*), Efrata and Jellé (5 *qäbällés*), Gämza(4 *qäbällés*), and Antsokia (7 *qäbällés*).¹²⁵ It also affected Doqaqit Dimétros, Agambär, Wässän-Qurqur, Qobo and Kahona-Muz Amba *qäbällés* in Mafud district. Neither the sector nor the health centers controlled the epidemic. According to the report of Däbrässina health center, the basic challenges that inhibited the effort of prevention included lack of coordination among concerned offices, the failure of victims to take drugs properly, the reluctance of some

¹²²EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A letter from Dr. Yetadäse Gäbré, Head of Yefat *ena* Temuga Health Office to Yefat and Temuga Awrajja Administration Office”, dated on 07/02/81E.C., Ref no. አጤጥ/53/40/03/81.

¹²³ EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “ A Letter from Dr. Yetadäse Gäbré, Head of Yefat *ena* Temuga Health Office to Šäwa Province Health Office”, dated on 07/02/81E.C., Ref no. አጤጥ/52/40/03/81.

¹²⁴ EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A Letter from Ato Däčassa Bäqälä, Head of Yefat *ena* Temuga Health Office to Yefat *ena* Temuga Awrajja Administration”, dated on 01/02/81E.C., Ref no. አጤጥ/26/40/03/81.

¹²⁵ EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A letter from Ato Berhanu Dinsa, Vice Head of Efésso Malaria Control Sector Office to Šäwa Province Malaria Control Office”, dated on 10/03/81E.C., Ref.no. 95/81.

individuals to come to health center and in some areas the absence of roads and means of transport to reach the victims on time.¹²⁶

The letter from Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* health office addressed to Efesson Malarial Control Sector dated on 12 November, 1988 revealed that the emergence of the disease in *qolla* and *wäynadäga* areas in the Gämza district in September of the same year affected the agricultural sector significantly. In some *qäbällés* such as Hulana-tekuyé, Čäffa-Deré, Golla, Däbas, Anqar, Saramba, Gojjowuha, Muatära, Kabna, and Agärämariam, more than 70% of the people got the disease. In some other *qäbällés*, the problem was more serious, at times all members of families becoming sick. As a result, there appeared critical shortage of labor to harvest the ripened crops in the fields and to look after animals. The *wäräda*'s agricultural office took the initiate to mobilize healthy people to collect crops in time to prevent wastage.¹²⁷ All this was, however, not very effective mainly because intervention of the state was delayed.¹²⁸

Evolution of Malaria Prevention and Control Endeavors

Prior to the time of the Italian occupation (1935–1941), the issue of malaria was either largely ignored or not addressed in Ethiopia. For the first time, the impetus to do a baseline study on the ecology of the disease came from the Italians.¹²⁹ Their intervention began immediately after they occupied major towns of Ethiopia in 1935 and 1936. Side by side with their struggle against the

¹²⁶ EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A Letter from Ato Adamu Waqoyé, Head of Däbräsena Health Center to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* administration”, dated on 19/03/81E.C., Ref no. ፪/205/39/81.

¹²⁷ EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A Letter from Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Administration Health Office to Efesson Malaria Control Program Sector Office”, dated on 02/03/81E.C., Ref no. አጤጥ/94/40/3/81.

¹²⁸ Informants: Ato Anägagrāñ Bezunäh, Ato Atlaw Asamenāw and Ato Awuraris Aragaw.

¹²⁹ McCann, *The Historical Ecology of...*, pp.39, 42. The Italians began to study the nature and transmission of malaria since the late 19th century. They invested much resource and build well equipped hospitals and diagnostics centers. They made malaria one of their priorities of researches with the belief that it would challenge their colonial missions in Africa and elsewhere. They started the work in advance and provided equal attention as building a modern military force. For more refer the same author on the same pages.

patriots, they conducted baseline research on how to extract resources of the country by dealing with the threat of diseases including malaria. They began to build medical treatment centers in selected vulnerable urban centers and at the same time tried to eliminate potential breeding areas of the insect through drying polluted and stagnant water bodies, and spraying toxic chemicals. Like the other colonial powers, the intervention was not to rescue the poor people, but to realize their resource extraction, resettlement and establishment of irrigated agricultural schemes primarily to supply Italy. They also planned to relocate some Italians to resource-abundant areas in Ethiopia. Penetration into the middle and low altitudes, however, was not an easy task due to malaria. Their advance in medical technology did not enable the Italians to penetrate deep into malaria infested areas. They could not control the disease probably due to the existence of different weather conditions that directly or indirectly affected the nature and pattern of evolution of the vector and the disease causing parasite. Realizing the problem, they shifted their resettlement project to elevated lands where there was little or no threat of malaria.¹³⁰ In North Šäwa, the prevalence of malaria and the absence of political instability due to the stiff patriotic resistance, and the age-old conflicts over resources among different groups, inhibited Italian resettlement schemes and large scale agricultural ventures. They were forced to produce fruits, particularly orange in well-drained and fertile lands around Däbrässina using irrigation. They did so mainly for local consumptions (for colonial administrators) but also some for export. They also settled colonial administrators and some ordinary citizens in this locality.¹³¹

Even though the Italians did not control malaria, the period of occupation laid a foundation in the effort to understand the ecology of the disease and the associated intervention in the post liberation

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 39, 42-44.

¹³¹ Informants: *Ato Anägagräñ Bezunäh*, *Ato Atlaw Asamenäw* and *Ato Awuraris Aragaw*.

period. The series of projects undertaken during the period provided an insight and framework for further investigation of the subject.¹³² But until the establishment of Malaria Eradication Organization (later Malaria Control Organization) center in 1959, the disease was not given that much attention. Before the foundation of the Organization, diagnostic and preventive tasks were handled by health centers. The absence or the limited number of the health centers and health workers, however, made the people suffer a lot. The available health centers were engaged mainly in treating victims coming to the centers rather than involving in prevention and treatment activities in the field. Thus in the 1940s and 1950s intervention against the disease was very minimal.¹³³

Intervention against malaria was radically transformed with the beginning of global initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s. Developed countries provided financial and technical assistance to developing countries who worked to that end. In this way, the Imperial government established Malaria Eradication Organization (later Malaria Control Organization) on 30 February, 1959 under the Ministry of Health, with the financial support of WHO and the United States of America. It also established laboratory technicians and field experts training center at Nazreth, in the same year. The government was not only inspired by the success of the earlier pilot projects,¹³⁴ but also worked a lot to realize its plan of expanding agricultural activities to well- drained areas in the lowlands. As a result, malaria was given space in the last two Five Year Development Plans. The

¹³² McCann, *The Historical Ecology of...*, pp. 42-44.

¹³³ Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsufoqad, Ato Ali Käräm and Ato Abäbä Ṭelahun.

¹³⁴ Tena , “በኢትዮጵያ የወባ በሽታ ታሪካዊ ሂደት...” (Malaria: Its History, Existing Reality...), pp.303-305.; see also Bahru , A History of *Modern...*, p. 184.; *Addis Zāmān*, Year 18, no.46(*Yäkatit* 13, 1951E.C. ; *Addis Zāmān*, Year 19, No. 193(*Nähassé* 5, 1951E.C. ; *Addis Zāmān*, Year 31, No. 74(*Mägabit* 17, 1964E.C.).

government tried to eliminate if it is possible or at least control it within two decades.¹³⁵ To this end, it began its activities by developing a strategic plan that had four phases. These were times of preparation (3years), attack (4years), consolidation (3years) and checking (7 years). In the first phase, preliminary activities such as identifying malaria prone areas were included while in the second stage it involved in spraying DDT to potentially malaria breeding sites. The third phase was all about evaluating the achievements and weakness of the activities undertaken in the first two phases. In the last stage, it planned to eliminate the disease completely.¹³⁶ The plan, however, was not strictly followed up because the government was preoccupied with other political problems that eventually ended up with the collapse of the regime in 1974.¹³⁷

The Organization gave priority to areas severely affected by the disease, then planned to reach other parts of the country turn by turn. For management purpose, it divided the country into four parts- “A”, “B”, “C” and “D”. The first division included the Awash Valley, central, northern, and parts of eastern Ethiopia while division “B” consisted of territories in southwestern parts of the country. Division “C” included areas in the southern and southwestern while division “D” comprised of the southeastern and eastern parts of the country.¹³⁸ The Organization established its structure at zonal, sectoral and subsectoral levels in each division. In the first division, six zones

¹³⁵ Ashenafi Shiferaw, “የኢትዮጵያ የኢኮኖሚ ፕላን መፎ እና እንዴት ተጀመረ”(When and How Economic Plan of Ethiopia was Started)in Shiferaw Bekele(ed.), *ከደህነት ወደ ልማት፡ እውቀትን ለትውልድ ማስተላለፍ*(From Poverty to Development: Transferring Knowledge to Generation (Addis Abābā: Forum for Social Sciences, 2006E.C),p.408.

¹³⁶Tena, “በኢትዮጵያ የወባ በሽታ ታሪካዊ ሂደት...” (Malaria: Its History, Existing Reality...),pp.305-306.

¹³⁷ Ashenafi, “የኢትዮጵያ የኢኮኖሚ ፕላን...”(When and How Economic Plan of Ethiopia was...),p.408.

¹³⁸*Addis Zāmān*, Year 27, No. 925(*Yakatit* 23, 1960E.C.); see also *Addis Zāmān*, Year 31,No. 74(*Māgabīt* 17, 1964E.C.); *Addis Zāmān*, Year 32,No. 128(*Genbot* 22, 1964E.C.); *Addis Zāmān*, Year 23, No. 797(*Nāhassé* 10, 1958E.C). ; *Addis Zāmān*, Year 24, No. 265(*Tekemet* 28, 1957E.C). ; *Addis Zāmān*, Year 29, No. 418(*Māsekārām* 10, 1962E.C.); *Addis Zāmān*, Year 30, No. 374(*Māgabīt* 19, 1963E.C.); *Addis Zāmān*, Year 26, No. 647(*Ṭer* 25, 1959E.C.). Division “A” consisted of territories such as the whole of Tegray, Šāwa, and Arsi provinces, and parts of Hararghé and Gojjam provinces while division “B” included the whole of Wallaga province, and parts of Arsi, Gojjam and Keffa provinces. Division “C” included territories such as the whole of Kaffa, Illubabor, Gamogoffa and Sidama provinces. The last division included Bale and part of Hararghe province. For more see *Addis Zāmān*, Year 27, No. 925 (*Yakatit* 23, 1960E.C.).

were established with a number of sectors and sub-sectors. These zones included Asmara, Mäqällé, Gondär, Dässé, Derédäwa, and Däbräzäit. My study area, Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awurjja* was grouped under Dässé zone with a sector established at Šäwarobit town, and later on the sector was transferred to Atayé, the capital of the *awrajja*.¹³⁹ The domain of Šäwarobit sector extended as far as Dulécha and Wätät-Agär to the southeast of Ankobär in the south. This arrangement continued all the way to the Därg period.¹⁴⁰

The Organization engaged in both preventive and emergency campaigns. According to my informants, it sprayed DDT twice a year in potentially malaria breeding areas and villages traveling door to door. It also actively worked with health centers of the *awrajja*, particularly with Aṭayé health center, and provided medical treatment and awareness creation to the local people. With this, it largely reduced the sufferings of the people and partly attracted immigrants, who were in acute shortage of cultivable land, from the neighboring highlands to the lowlands. The reduction of the threat in turn led to the expansion of agriculture and charcoal production in the *awrajja* since the 1960s.¹⁴¹

In Yefat, Efféson Malaria Control Sector branch office closely worked in collaboration with local health centers (Aṭayé and Däbrässina) and clinics such as Jäwuha, Sänbäté, Karaqoré, Armania and Šäwarobit. Health centers were given the task of organizing clinics under them. Whenever there was a case of malaria outbreak, it was first reported to Efféson Malaria Control Sector office.

¹³⁹Tena, “በኢትዮጵያ የወባ በሽታ ታሪካዊ ሂደት...” (Malaria: Its History, Existing Reality...), pp.307-308. ; see also *Addis Zämän*, Year 23, No. 797 (*Nähassé* 10, 1958E.C.); *Addis Zämän*, Year 29, No. 418(*Mäsekäräm* 10, 1962E.C.).

¹⁴⁰ Informants: Ato Alämayähu Bäsufeqad, Ato Ali Kärüm and Ato Abäbä Ṭelahun. Yefat and Ṭemuga *Awrajja* was placed initially at Addis Abäbä zone and later at Dässé zone. Under Dässé zone, six sector stations were opened at Šäwarobit, Kombolča, Woldia, Alamaṭa, Asayta and Bati. Latter, though closed soon, Boräna and Sayent sectors were opened.

¹⁴¹*Addis Zämän*, Year 31, No. 74(*Mägabit* 17, 1964E.C.); *Addis Zämän*, Year 26, No. 647(*Ṭer* 25, 1959E.C.). ; Informants: *Amsaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, Ato KassayéWorqu, Ato Mohamäd Hassän and W/ro Märéma Hussén.

The sector, in turn, undertook a campaign against the disease using its own experts and other health workers in the *awrajja*.¹⁴² In times of crisis, health teams would be organized from the Organization, and the health centers of the *awrajja*. A team would consist of professionals and supporting staff altogether from 20 to 40 members. Concerned offices also participated at different levels in the campaign from the province to *qäbällé* levels. The team travelled long distances, sometimes a whole day or more, on foot and partly on pack animals under difficult topography and weather conditions. It was not uncommon to see members of the team to be infected themselves. The treatment and diagnostic activities were mostly done by moving door to door and hence were very tiresome.¹⁴³

At the beginning, the Organization used DDT to kill mosquitoes. The experts sprayed this chemical on the inside and outside parts of houses twice a year. The chemical was powerful and could stay up to six months on walls of houses once sprayed. In malaria breeding areas of open field, the commonly used chemical was larvae chemical which was less toxic as compared to DDT. The side effects of DDT, though unnoticed and there was no comprehensive data on it, was great. In my study area, as my informants emphasized, it killed bees, insects and other useful micro-organisms. Recognizing these side effects of DDT, the government with the recommendation of WHO, substituted it by less toxic chemicals like melatonin starting from the early 1970s.¹⁴⁴ This period also witnessed the change of the name of the Organization as well as the whole effort emanating

¹⁴² EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A Letter from Dr Yetadäse Gäbré, Head, Yefat and Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Health Office to Aṭayé and Däbräsena Health Centers”, dated on 19/01/80E.C., Ref no.10/40/3/80.; Informants: *Amsaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Kassayé Worqu, *Ato* Mohamäd Hassän and *W/ro* Märéma Hussén.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Informants: *Amsaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Kassayé Worqu, *Ato* Mohamäd Hassän and *W/ro* Märéma Hussén.

from the understanding of the difficulty of eliminating malaria; it was renamed “Malaria Control” with the direction given by WHO.¹⁴⁵

In the early years of the military regime, the organization faced critical budgetary problems because it heavily depended on foreign aid. The Westerners particularly the government of USA suspended the pre-existing aid for ideological reasons given the fact that the military regime declared itself to be socialist. However, the organization continued its task with the resources already collected previously. The Ethiopian government, on its part, took the responsibility to ensure the survival of the organization by allocating budget to pay salaries and cover administrative costs. The situation, however, was changed some years later. UNICEF began to provide financial and technical support to the Organization.¹⁴⁶ Despite all kinds of internal and external challenges, the Organization did help improve the health condition of people in the region.¹⁴⁷

Malaria Control Organization was organized at a unit level under the Ministry of Health, from 1979/80-1986/87.¹⁴⁸ Around the mid-1980s, it was merged with other vector-borne disease control efforts like *bilharzia* control. The Ministry took the task of budget administration while professional activities were reserved for the experts of the organization. The workers of the organization were dispersed into health centers and clinics. They, however, worked together at the time of the outbreak of the epidemics. The merging of the organization with other vector-borne

¹⁴⁵ Tēna, “በኢትዮጵያ የወባ በሽታ ታሪካዊ ሂደት...” (Malaria: Its History, Existing Reality...), pp.309-310.

¹⁴⁶ Informants: Ato Ayečāw Adanā, Ato Dässalāñ Zägäyē and Ato Fesseha Negussé. By 1972, on average, Malaria Control Organization reduced the spatial distribution of malaria to 2% and in some areas below this in Ethiopia. For more see *Addis Zāmān*, Year 31, No. 74(*Mägabit* 17, 1964E.C.; see also *Addis Zāmān*, Year 32, No. 128(*Genbot* 22, 1964E.C.); *Addis Zāmān*, Year 30, No. 374(*Mägabit* 19, 1963E.C.).

¹⁴⁷ *Addis Zāmān*, Year 31, No. 74(*Mägabit* 17, 1964E.C.; see also *Addis Zāmān*, Year 32, No. 128(*Genbot* 22, 1964E.C.); *Addis Zāmān*, Year 30, No. 374(*Mägabit* 19, 1963E.C.).

¹⁴⁸ Tēna, “በኢትዮጵያ የወባ በሽታ ታሪካዊ ሂደት...” (Malaria: Its History, Existing Reality...) ,pp.309-310.

disease control efforts, as sources indicate, weakened the effort of controlling malaria because it divided the budget and human resources of the Organization.¹⁴⁹

Primary Health Care and Basic Education

According to McCann malaria is “...understood not only as a disease of the body, but as a belief that stems from the complex coevolution of human ecology and culture; it includes a vector (an anopheles mosquito), a parasite (Plasmodium- a protozoan), and belief about the nature of human illness.”¹⁵⁰ The understanding and perception of people about the disease varied from place to place and across cultural groups. Most people believed that it was a form of bad spirit and thus its treatment should be cultural and ritual rather than medical. Specifically, highlanders tended to view it an evil spirit coming from the lowlands. The disease being rare in the highlands above 2000mts. For the lowlanders, it was a spirit that lived elsewhere something they would experience in their daily lives.¹⁵¹

As a result, local people used different traditional prevention and treatment techniques against the epidemic. In the former case, some of the commonly used practices included smoking the insect out; keeping oneself far from infested areas at the high time of malaria; closing doors and windows before at dusk; keeping livestock around homes with the belief that as the insect comes into the house, it would attack the animals not humans; conducting cultural and religious ritual practices. Once the individual is infected, traditional healers used to treat him/her by administering locally prepared medicine made of plants and vegetables, like white onions and pepper; conducting cultural and religious ritual practices, and spraying holy water. This was evident until the present

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*; Informants: Ato Ayečäw Adanä, Ato Dässaläñ Zägäyé and Ato Fesseha Negussé.

¹⁵⁰ McCann, *The Historical Ecology of ...*, p. 9.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, pp. 2, 21-26.; Informants: Aläqa Tässäma Wäldägiorgis, Ato Mängäša Kebrät and Ato Seid Abdulaziz

time in rural communities of central and northern Ethiopia including North Šäwa, even if there has been a series of efforts of awareness creation about the disease.¹⁵²

Efforts of awareness creation got new momentum during the military regime. The government introduced primary health care services and basic education as an integrated part of rural development.¹⁵³ It prepared guidelines to realize primary health care services. The document states that it could be easy to reduce the frequency of diseases and their associated impacts by delivering basic health education to people. To this end, health centers and clinics were given the task of coordinating the campaign of basic education. In my study area, one among others was Aṭayé health Center. The center played a significant role in Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja* in coordinating other health centers and clinics and non-governmental organizations working to that end. The two non-governmental organizations that played significant role in the health related issues were Save the Children USA and the Christian Charity Development Organization. The former was active in all five districts of the *awrajja*, while the latter worked in Jäwuha, Sänbäté and Šäwarobit and its surroundings. There were also other NGOs which worked on integrated rural development like World Vision International at Antsokia and its surrounding. The campaign of basic education was conducted every time in all districts of the *awrajja* focusing on the causes, transmissions and ways of prevention of diseases, and emergency aids. To realize its mission, the government organized and trained a local health agent called የቀበሌ የጤና ተጠሪ (*qäbällé* heath worker, the present day

¹⁵²*Ibid.*

¹⁵³ EGWAOA, No folder and File, “A Guide Document to Primary Health Care”, no date.; see also EGWAOA, No Folder, File no. 435/77, “A Letter from Ato Gutäma Abdu, Head, Aṭayé Health Center to WPE Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* Branch Office”, dated on 06/01/78E.C., Ref no. 9/435/78.

extension health worker) and የሰለጠነች የሰው ልጅ (trained midwife). Both were recruited from among local people.¹⁵⁴

The other big challenge related to the form of livelihood and awareness of local people particularly among the pastoralist occupied areas in the lowlands. That was, since the majority of pastoralists moved from place to place in search of water and pasture, it was difficult to follow up cases.¹⁵⁵ On top of this, misleading information coming from local government authorities on one hand and long and complex bureaucracy on the other delayed intervention.¹⁵⁶ Some of the reports of local government agents were full of problems. For one thing, they had procedural problems. They reported directly to higher government offices for intervention bypassing the nearby health centers or clinics. Second, most of the reports were misleading, exaggerating or wrong for unknown reasons. They might not have details about the type of epidemic that had emerged, spatial distribution, the number of victims and the like. Most local government agents presented a case that affected a few people or villages as if it affected the majority or the whole of the people of a district. No preliminary assessment was made. When the health workers went to the area, most of the time, the situation might be different. Hence, resources (labor, capital and time) were wasted. Realizing the problem, Yefat *ena* Temuga *awrajja* administration office in its letter addressed to all district and sub-district governors, emphasized the need of reporting cases to the nearby health center first and to other concerned offices hierarchically. It also recommended that report should provide precise data about disease.¹⁵⁷ The reality was different it was often either exaggerated or

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*; EGWAOA, No folder and File, “A Guide Document to Primary...”.

¹⁵⁵ EGWAOA, No folder and File, “A Reports of Karaqoré Health Center of 1958E.C. Budget Year”, 1958E.C. ; see also *Addis Zäman*, Year 29, No. 418(*Mäsekäräm* 10, 1962E.C.).

¹⁵⁶ Informants: Ato Kassayé Worqu, Ato Luelsägäd Gétačaw and Ato Dässalān Zägäyē. All were malaria control experts during the imperial and Derg regimes at Atayé and now retired.

¹⁵⁷ EGWAOA, Folder 71129-129, No. File, “A Letter from Ato Häiläkiros Ambayé, Head of Aṭayé Health Center to Yefat *ena* Temuga Awrajja Administration Office”, dated on 11/7/76E.C., Ref. 589/129/76.

distorted for different reasons. In February 1988, for instance, the Burémodaytu district administration office reported to the *awrajja* administration office about the outbreak of malaria epidemic in Gäferam and Gäwané areas. The report claimed as if it had already attacked farm workers and entire members of village communities. When the health team from the *awrajja* arrived in the area on 19 February 1988, the reality on the ground was different from what was reported. They observed only small and sporadic cases. The report was made probably fearing that it might overwhelm the area. According to the report of the Malaria Control Organization, an outbreak of disease to be considered an epidemic has to affect at least 5% of the residents. In this regard, the case of Burémodaytu was insignificant. Neither the district administration office nor the Däbäl farm clinic had information about the number of victims, deaths, spatial coverage and the like. Thus, the health team wasted time and resources, moving here and there to find victims and making preliminary assessments. The *awrajja* health office criticized the district administration office about the misleading report and warned local authorities not to do so in the future. It also stated that this area belonged to Ma'ison Malaria Control Sector office under Deré Dawa zone in Hararghé province and, thus future cases should be reported accordingly.¹⁵⁸

The 1961 Karaqoré's Earthquake

The Great East African Rift Valley that crosses Ethiopia from north to south makes the country susceptible to different forms of volcanic phenomena such as earthquakes, landslides, rock falls and other forms land features.¹⁵⁹ There were evidences of land movements with different degrees

¹⁵⁸ EGWAOA, No Folder and File, “A Letter from Dr. Yetadäse Gäbré, Head of Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga Health Office to Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja* WPE Branch office “ dated on 18/06/80E.C., Ref no. 12/40/3/80.; Informants: *Aläqa* Tässäma Wäldägiorgis, Ato Mängäša Kebrätand Ato Seid Abdulaziz.

¹⁵⁹ Pierre Gouin, *Earthquake History of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa*(Ottawa: International Research Center, 1979),pp 7-24.; Pierre Gouin, “*Seismic Zoning in Ethiopia*” in *Geophysical Exploration for Ground Water in Ethiopia, Bulletin of the Geophysical Observatory*, No.16(Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University),pp.3-4.; see also NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47, File no. 17.1.3.47.01., A Report Disaster Preparedness, Planning, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, “A Report of the Survey of Landslides in Mafud Wäräda, Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *Awrajja*,

of intensity and consequence in different parts of the country since the Medieval Period. The first documented earthquake appeared in 1400 around Assäb.¹⁶⁰ European travelers, missionaries, and chronicles documented varying degrees of incidents involving land movement. However, these accounts were primarily rough estimates and lacked specificity regarding the intensity, spatial coverage, and degree of destruction caused by these movements. It was common for the impacts would be felt in distant areas away from the place where the land movement originated.¹⁶¹ In this section, I will focus on the 1961 seismic event, which is commonly referred to as the Karaqoré earthquake, and its long-lasting consequences on the local population and the natural environment.

The town of Karaqoré is situated along Addis Abäbä-Mäqälé highway at a distance of 290 kms North of Addis Abäbä. It is within the rift valley at an altitude of about 1670mts above sea level.¹⁶²

The town was divided into two administrative *awrajjas* namely Jara, and Mänz *ena* Yefat. The highway that dissects the town, passing to the north became a dividing line. The part of the town east of the highway was under Jara *awrajjja* administration while that to the west of the highway was under Mänz *ena* Gešé *awrajjja*. Most of the government institutions were located in the former administrative unit.¹⁶³ Later, the administrative center of Karaqoré *wäräda*, Karaqoré town, was moved to Aṭayé and renamed Yefat *ena* Jellé district administrating Gedem, Wogam, Karaqoré,

Šäwa Administrative Region”, July 1979., pp.13-16. In 1841-1942, for instance, earthquake emerged around North Central Ethiopia (Däbräberhan leading to Ankobär and its surroundings) and brought heavy damages on the town of Ankobär and its surroundings. It made the town of Ankobär to the verge of total destruction.

¹⁶⁰ Gouin, “*Seismic Zoning in...*”, p.5.

¹⁶¹ Gouin, *Earthquake History of ...*, pp.27-34. Some of the major events of earthquake in Central and Northern Ethiopia appeared in 1903, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1910, 1912, 1913, 1915, 1922, 1924, 1930, 1931, 1934, 1935, 1938, 1942, 1945, 1948, 1950, 1952, 1954, 1957, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1977. The frequency of earthquake increased from time to time and reached its apex in the 1960s. In this period, earth tremors of different intensity, emerged every year in different parts of the country. For more, the same book, pp.27-80.

¹⁶² EGWAOA, No folder, File.no. 54/1980, “A Report from Ato Fäqadä Yesuf, Head, Supervisory for Health Center, Ministry of Public Health to Karaqoré Health Center”, dated on 25/6/56E.C., Ref. 3/h6/15/56., p.1.

¹⁶³ EGWAOA, No folder, File.no. 54/1980, “A Report from Ato Fäqadä Yesuf, Head, Supervisory for Health Center, Ministry of Public Health to Karaqoré Health Center”, dated on 25/6/56E.C., Ref. 3/h6/15/56., p.5.

Sänbäté, Jäwuha and Robit. Gämza district, of whose administrative center formerly was situated at Karaqoré, was now shifted to Mäjäté.¹⁶⁴

The Impact of the Crisis

In late May 1961, a sudden and devastating earthquake struck the town of Karaqoré and its surroundings.¹⁶⁵ Addis Abäbä Geophysical Observatory Center, which conducted a field survey in the area from May to September 1961, indicates that more than three thousand earth tremors were recorded with different scale in the area. The maximum magnitude recorded was 6.6. The land between N10⁰ and N11⁰, and E39.7⁰ and E39.9⁰ is highly unstable.¹⁶⁶ It is situated at the juncture of the Robi Graben, Borkena Graben, and SSE-NNE faults stretching from Afar.¹⁶⁷

According to the report of a delegation from Ministry of Interior, who visited Karaqoré from 21-23 June, 1961, earthquake affected the towns of Karaqoré and Mäjäté and their surroundings. The effect was also felt in remote rural and urban areas within Mänz *ena* Yefat, and Jara *awrajjas* and beyond with different degrees of damage. The report further states that the first event appeared on 21 May, 1961, and lately in some other areas of the *awrajja*. It continued with various rates (ups and down) until 28 May of the same year. In 29 May, at 8:00 am, its intensity increased and destroyed masonry and caused the death of some people. A few minutes after, it slowed down and reappeared at 2:00pm on the same day and completely wiped out the already partly damaged and

¹⁶⁴ EGWAOA, No folder and File, “A Reports of Karaqoré Health Center of 1958E.C. Budget Year”, 1958E.C.

¹⁶⁵ EGWAOA, No folder, File.no. 54/1980, “A Report from Ato Fäqadä Yesuf, Head, Supervisory for Health Center, Ministry of Public Health to Karaqoré Health Center”, dated on 25/6/56E.C., Ref. 3/h6/15/56.,p.1.;Gouin, *Earthquake History of ...*,pp.57-63.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; Gouin, “Karaqoré and Serdo Epicenters...”,p.21.

¹⁶⁷ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47, File no. 17.1.3.47.01., A Report Disaster Preparedness, Planning, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, “A Report of the Survey of Landslides in Mafud Wäräda, Yefat *ena* Temuga Awrajja, Šäwa Administrative Region”, July 1979., pp.13-16. The Borkäna-Robi catchment extends from Kombolča in the north to Däbräsenä in the south. For more, see the same document, pp.13-15.

unstable buildings, hills and mountains. Land cracks appeared here and there. The rate of tremors rose and fell in the days to come.

Another incident of great damage was on record to have taken place at 11:30pm on 2 June, 1961. It was at this time that many parts of Mänz *ena* Yefat, and Jara *awrajjas* were affected. The problem continued to the next day and in some areas extended for more consecutive days. As a result, some individuals and animals were killed and some others were wounded. Masonries collapsed totally. The people of the highlands of Mänz, who were far from the place of active tectonic movement, did not escape the tremor. The damage of the earthquake in the highlands was partly associated with the customary ways of house building using stone, mud or ash. This practice, as I have discussed in chapter one, was partly due to lack of wood. Besides, hillsides and mountains were broken down. Heavy damages were recorded, particularly at Efrata, Qäwot, Mamameder, Gêrameder, Gešé, and Mafud districts. Settlements beneath or near hills and mountain ranges were highly affected by landslides, by huge rock falls. Rock falls, landslides and fissures appeared along the highway that led to the north, particularly on the stretch between Sänbäté and Karaqoré. The damage in Jara *awrajja* was serious too. It was high particularly at Karaqoré, Arṭuma and their surroundings. Long, wide and deep land fractures emerged in many areas that restricted the movement of humans and animals.¹⁶⁸

Both oral and archival sources indicate that the hot air that containing toxic gas came out of the fractures and polluted the surrounding environment. On the other hand, in some localities such as

¹⁶⁸ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Report from Ato Assäfa Gäbrämariam, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister *Şähañi Tezaz* Aklilu Habtäwold, ”, dated on *Säné* 13, 1953E.C., Ref. no.15896/53; see also NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from LeitENAt General Abiye Abäbä, Minister, the Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister *Şähañi Tezaz* Aklilu Habtäwold”, dated on *Genbot* 30, 1953E.C., Ref. no. 14895/4; Gouin, “Karaqoré and Serdo Epicenters...”,p.21.; *Addis Zämän*, Year 21, No,59(*Säné* 16, 1953E.C.); Ato Mängäša Tačé, Ato Mängäša Kebrät, and W/ro Säbläworq Hailé.

Sarmeder, Karaguma, Arséma Kuday, and Warka *qäbällés* in Wagama sub-district in Efrata district, and Mäjäté (Abbo holy water) and Mäkdär Ṭero (in Furisi) abundant spring water broke out of the fractures and later reduced the pre-existing acute shortage of drinking water for both the people and animals in the area. Fearing more damages in the future, local people left their villages and gathered under the shades of big trees on plain lands. But in this area, they could not stay for long due to the acute shortage of supplies including food, and partly because of the pollution of the environment. So they moved to the nearby areas of South Wällo in the north and to Šäwarobit, Sänbäté, Däbrässina and other areas in the south. Some others moved to distant areas on foot, crossing long and difficult land fractures.¹⁶⁹

Sources indicate that the overall impact of the crisis was not precisely known due to lack of precise data. Some local officials failed to report on time because they already left for other areas and, some others exaggerated or underestimated the damages for different reasons. But all sources unanimously state that the impact on humans, the environment and property was considerable. Although the disaster affected large areas in Mänz *ena* Yefat, and Jara *awrajjas*, it was more serious in Karaqoré and Mäjäté towns and their surroundings. In the former case, the gradual increase of the tremor meant that people can come out of buildings, including homes and thus reduce the risk of the disaster. Had it been otherwise, the damages would be high both in terms of humans and animals lives and materials.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Report from Ato Assäfa Gäbrämariam, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister *Šähafi Tezaz Aklilu Habtäwold*, ”, dated on *Säné* 13, 1953E.C., Ref. no.15896/53; see also NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from Lieuteunt General Abiyé Abäbä, Minister Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister *Šähafi Tezaz Aklilu Habtäwold*”, dated on *Genbot* 30, 1953E.C., Ref. no. 14895/4; Gouin, “Karaqoré and Serdo Epicenters...”,p.21.; *Addis Zāmān*, Year 21, No,59(*Säné* 16, 1953E.C.; Informants: Ato Mängäša Tačé, Ato Mängäša Kebrät, and W/ro Säbläworq Hailé.

¹⁷⁰ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from Jara *Awrajja* Administration Office to Šäwa Province Administration Office”, dated on *Säné* 20, 1953E.C., Ref no. 28/4719/53.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Report from Ato Assäfa Gäbrämariam, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to

In Karaqoré district, 166 houses were completely ruined within a day. Moreover, land fissures and rock falls appeared here and there. A long and wide land fissure emerged at top of the hill of Dengay Mäzigia and along its foot in the western direction. The fracture reached about 1 meter wide and high depth. The spring water near Qilitu was displaced and buried deep into the interior part of the earth. In the meantime, the people, who settled on the hillsides and beneath the hill, moved to elevated lands to save their lives. The hot weather that came out of the land fissures, however, forced the people to move to the lowlands. But, the situation in the lowlands was not different. Here, the air was also polluted and was difficult to stay in for long. Moreover, the land cracks, landslides and rock falls restricted the movement of people and animals. Thus, the majority of local people migrated to Sänbäté town to the southeast, leaving their properties including livestock behind. Indeed, in Karaqoré district, landslides and rock falls were not limited to the above mentioned *qäbällés*. In the west, the splitting of the land went in the direction of Ṭereagär *qäbällé* crossing the forested land in the nearby area. In the east, the crack emerged around Qiliṭu Mountain, and then crossed the *rist* land of *Däjjazmač* Damṭé Mäšäša, and finally directed to the south to Šašo *qäbällé*.¹⁷¹ As stated in archival sources, the fracturing and disintegration of the mountain in the foot of the town of [Karaqoré] in the east became a threat to people of Karaqoré and those who lived on the hillsides.¹⁷²

Prime Minister *Šāhaṭi Tezaz Aklilu Habtäwold*”, dated on *Säné* 13, 1953E.C., Ref. no.15896/53.; Informants:, *Ato Mängäša Tačé*, *Ato Mängäša Kebrät*, and *W/ro Säbläworq Hailé*.

¹⁷¹ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Lettter from Jara *Awrajja* Administration Office to Šäwa Province Administration Office”, dated on *Säné* 20, 1953E.C., Ref no. 28/4719/53. As stated in archival sources “...በከተማው [ካራቆሬ] ራሱን የሚገኘው በስተምስራቅ በኩል ያለው ተራራ መስነጣጠቁንና መቆራረስ...በጠቅላላው ለካራቆሬ ከተማ ህዝብም ሆነ በየዳገቱ ላይ የሚኖሩት ሰዎች በድንጋዩ መንጠባጠብ ጋራው እንደጨርቅ የተቀዳደደና የተስነጣጠቀ ስለሆነ አስጊነቱ የማይጠረጠር ነው፡፡ for more see the same document.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*

The other area which was highly affected by Karaqoré earthquake was the area along Gubané-Märma road. Here, the fracture in the land could be seen from considerable distances as far as Tursina hill. It formed in the direction of Horaméda and Kukulé in the west and Arbawayu in the east. In the former case, the fissure extended across a large areas starting from Gurdmedir at the confluence of Aṭayé River. In some areas, the width of the fissure was as big as 20 meters or more. Here, rocks falling from the surrounding hills and mountains crushed and devastated villages along with trees, crops, animals. They also killed people. The crack crossed the highway and went to the east in the direction of Gedem *qola*. In this stretch of land, it damaged Jellé Wärräabu, Arorsa and Gubawačo hilltops and their surroundings. In the same manner, in Jara *awrajja*, it left a huge impact in Arṭuma, Fursi, Essay Golla, and Däway Rahmado districts.¹⁷³

The people, particularly of Karaqoré and Mäjäté, were displaced and took refuge to Sänbäté, and Šäwarobit towns in the south, and to Kämssé, Woldi, Kombolča and Dässé towns of South Wällo in the north. The people, who settled on the hillsides and along mountain ranges, were not in a position to return to their villages immediately after the disaster. The cracking of the land exposed the soil to erosion in the coming rainy season and inhibited agricultural activities and the movement of people. People were reluctant to build houses and invest in the town for fear that another similar disaster may strike in the future. The disaster continued to affect the socio-economic and psychology of the people in the *awrajjas* of Mänz *ena* Yefat, as well as Jara.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴Informants: Ato Ewunätu Germa, Ato Atlaw Asamenäw, Ato Awuraris Aragaw and Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh.; see also NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., File Name: Yefat and Ṭemuga *AwrajjaGezat*, “A Letter from Ato Qeṭaw Azänä, Secretaty of Mänz and Yefat *Awrajja* to Ras Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa Province”, dated on *Genbot* 26, 1953E.C., Ref. no. ፱/467/53; EGWAOA, No folder, File.no. 54/1980, “A Report from Ato Fäqadä Yesuf, Head, Supervisory for Health Center, Ministry of Public Health to Karaqoré Health Center”, dated on 25/6/56E.C., Ref. 3/h6/15/56.,p.1.



Figure 8: The effects of Earthquake at Karaqoré from May to June 1961
Source: Gouin, *Earthquake History of Ethiopia*...,p.60.



Figure 9: Karaqoré's Earthquake at the Qäçen Dengay Mountain, May to June 1961
Source: *Addis Zämän* , Year 21, No. 135(*Genbot* 30, 1953E.C.).

In the highlands of Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajja*, it affected mainly Mamameder, Gérameder, and Gešé (Gäbätabär sub-district), and Efrata districts (Wägamma, Gedem, and Gämza sub-districts).¹⁷⁵ A report from Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajja* administration office revealed that the tremor that took place over nearly two weeks and in some areas beyond, made many people homeless. Those who were fortunate to escape from the damages also left their villages fearing the possibility of future

¹⁷⁵ NALA, File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from LieutENAnt General Abiye Abäbä, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Ethiopian Red Cross Community”, dated on *Hamlé* 13, 1953E.C., Ref no. 1736913.; see also NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from LieutENAnt General Abiye Abäbä, Minister Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister Šähafi Tezaz Aklilu Habtäwold”, dated on *Genbot* 30, 1953E.C., Ref. no. 14895/4.

disaster. Large numbers of people gathered on plain lands, all along suffering from shortages of food, clothing, and other supplies. The problem was pronounced due to the delay or absence of relief interventions, particularly in the remote rural areas.¹⁷⁶ A letter from *Ato Alämayähu Gäbrätäklé*, a parliamentary representative of the people of Yefat, addressed to the Ministry of Interior, calls attention to the disaster and the ravages it brought about in *Mänz ena Yefat* and *Jara awrajjas*. The MP states that the disaster affected most parts of both *awrajjas* with different degrees of severity. Heavy damage, he says occurred in *Mäjäté*, *Gedem*, *Wägama*, *Qäwät*, *Mafud*, *Mamameder*, *Gérameder* and *Gešé* districts. In *Jara awrajja*, *Karaqoré* and its surroundings were highly devastated. Large numbers of households became homeless. Religious and social institutions were also ruined. Though the number seemed exaggerated, it was reported that 15,000 houses and 70 churches were destroyed.¹⁷⁷ Some other sources reduce the number of houses destroyed down to 8,794. About 29,500 individuals became homeless, according to the MP. The inconsistency of the number was probably due the difference in spatial coverage of the reports and the lack of precision during data collection. Nonetheless, all of these sources agree that the damage was serious both in urban and rural areas.¹⁷⁸ According to the report of the Ministry of Interior nearly one-third of the houses, particularly those made of bricks, were partially or totally destroyed in the town of *Karaqoré*. The remaining were saved probably due to the way and the material out

¹⁷⁶ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from *Ato Qeṭaw Azänä*, Secretaty of *Mänz ena Yefat Awrajja* to *Ras Mäsfen Seläši*, Governor General of *Šäwa Province*”, dated on *Genbot* 26, 1953E.C., Ref. no. ፶/467/53.; Informants: *Ato Ewunätu Germa*, *Ato Atlaw Asamenäw*, *Ato Awuraris Aragaw* and *Ato Ešätu Wodajénäh*.

¹⁷⁷ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Reminder from *Ato Alämayähu Gäbrätäklé*, a Parliamentary Representative of the People of Yefat to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Säné* 12, 1953E.C., No Ref.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from *Ato Qeṭaw Azänä*, Secretaty of *Mänz and Yefat Awrajja* to *Ras Mäsfen Seläši*, Governor General of *Šäwa Province*”, dated on *Genbot* 26, 1953E.C., Ref. no. ፶/467/53.; see also *Addis Zämän*, Year 21, No,150 (*Säné* 16, 1953E.C.).

¹⁷⁸ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Report from *Ato Assäfa Gäbrämariam*, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister *Šähaḥi Tezaz Aklilu Habtäwold*, ”, dated on *Säné* 13, 1953E.C., Ref. no.15896/53., p.9.

of which the houses were built. Those houses that were built out of wood on both the wall and roof were less affected.¹⁷⁹ Large number of people were displaced and moved to other areas within and outside the *awrajja*. The majority of the people of Karaqoré and its surroundings concentrated at Qoré-Méda. The displaced could not prepare food because food preparing utensils were already ruined together with the houses. Thus, they depended on the supports of benevolent individuals, organizations and the government.¹⁸⁰

The crisis also had huge property damages on the villages, livestock and institutions. Religious centers (churches and mosques), schools, health centers, and other government offices and the equipment in them were partly or completely destroyed. In Karaqoré town, the famous school of *Meredazemač* Wossänsägäd Asfaw, Karaqoré's district administration office, the municipality and treasury offices were completely destroyed. In Mäjäté, public institutions such as government schools collapsed while Community Development Training Center was partly destroyed. The famous Gozé mosque in Qäwät and a large number of other mosques and churches were also affected.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., "A Letter from Ministry of Interior to *Ras* Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa province", No dated and Ref.; Informants: *Ato* Alämayähu Bäsufoqad, *Amsaläqa* Mäkonen Zäwudé, *Ato* Dässalän Zägäyé.

¹⁸⁰ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., "A Reminder from *Ato* Alämayähu Gäbrätäklé, a Parliamentary Representative of the People of Yefat to Ministry of Interior", dated on *Säné* 12, 1953E.C., No Ref.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., "A Letter from *Ato* Qeṭaw Azänä, Secretaty of Mänz *ena* Yefat *Awrajja* to *Ras* Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa Province", dated on *Genbot* 26, 1953E.C., Ref. no. ፱/467/53.

¹⁸¹ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., "A Report from *Ato* Assäfa Gäbrämariam, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister *Šähaḥfi Tezaz* Aklilu Habtäwold, ", dated on *Säné* 13, 1953E.C., Ref. no.15896/53., p.7. ; see also NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., "A Letter from *Ato* Qeṭaw Azänä, Secretary of Mänz *ena* Yefat *Awrajja* to *Ras* Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa province", dated on *Säné* 2, 1953E.C., Ref.no. ፱/፳91/53); NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., "A Letter from LieutENAnt General Abiye Abäbä, Minister Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister *Šähaḥfi Tezaz* Aklilu Habtäwold", dated on *Genbot* 30, 1953E.C., Ref. no. 14895/4.

Emergency Aid and Long Term Rehabilitation Efforts

Lieutenant General Abiye Abäbä, Minister of Interior and Governor General of Eritrea, visited the affected areas such as Karaqoré, Mäjäté, and the displaced people at Qoré-méda, Robit and Kämssé on 4 June, 1961. He observed the damages and discussed with the victims on how to make intervention and rehabilitation activities possible. He promised the coming of emergency aid such as food, clothes and medicine to the victims. Fundraising activities were already started both from domestic and international communities. *Gerazmač* Tafäsä Ṭäbäqä, a higher official in the Ministry who accompanied the Minister. He was assigned to distribute the aid coming from the government in collaboration with *Šäläqa* Mamo Bäšé, the governor of Jara *awrajja*. The aid, which was sent by the Emperor, arrived a day after at Karaqoré. It consisted of 20 *quintals* of wheat flour and 20 *quintals* of grinded *bärebäre* (pepper), two *bärmé l(jar)* of edible oil, bread, two *quintals* of *dabo-qollo*, and ten fattened oxen. The aid was distributed only to people of Karaqoré, Mäjäté, and the displaced people gathered at Qoré-méda and Robit. In this scheme, 6337 people were supported. The government also sent representatives from the Health Ministry led by Viwelf, a German medical doctor, to Qoré-méda, in Karaqoré. The Crown Prince Asfawossän Haileselassé, and some known individuals also supported the victims. What was interesting about this period of crisis, as reported by informants, was that there were individuals who stayed behind in their villages protecting properties and livestock of the displaced from theft.¹⁸²

Higher officials of Šäwa province such as *Ras* Mäsfin Seläši, Governor General, Lieutenant Colonel Abatä Béza, Commander of the Šäwa province police force, *Qägnazmač* Seläši Zäräfu,

¹⁸² NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Report from *Ato* Assäfa Gäbrämariam, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister *Šähaṭi Tezaz* Aklilu Habtäwold, ”, dated on *Säné* 13, 1953E.C., Ref. no.15896/53.,pp. 12-14.; see also *Addis Zämän* , Year 21, No,150 (*Säné* 16, 1953E.C.); *Addis Zämän* ,Year 21, No, 235 (*Mäsekäräm* 26, 1954E.C).

governor of Mänz *ena* Yefat *awrajja*, *Däjjazmač* Käfäläw Woldäşadiq, governor of Tägülät *ena* Bulga *awrajja* and other government officials visited the area on 15 June 1961. The delegation provided emergency aid to the victims and promised to rehabilitate the displaced in the near future in collaboration with the central government.¹⁸³ On 23 June 1961, the Emperor, along with other high state officials including the Crown Prince, visited the towns of Karaqoré and Mäjäté.¹⁸⁴ He promised additional emergency aids but to rehabilitate the people for a long period of time, he recommended the need to transfer the town of Karaqoré to some other place for two reasons. First, the location of the town was not conducive for urban development and expansion. It was situated in an extended valley with mountain ranges on both in the east and west sides. In addition, there was a severe scarcity of water. Second, the land was unstable and center of active volcanoes.¹⁸⁵ For the time being, the Emperor provided emergency aid (food, cloth and equipment). The Emperor also distributed 16, 000 corrugated iron sheets to the victims. The people of Karaqoré and Mäjäté and the affected churches in the area got 8000, 4000 and 4000 iron sheets respectively.¹⁸⁶ The Ministry of Agriculture, on its part, offered timber and eucalyptus wood confiscated from illegal traders at the Gulälé station of Addis Abäbä.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from *Amsaaläqa* Dässaläñ Mamo, Commander of Karaqoré Police force to Šäwa Province Police Branch Office”, dated on *Säné* 7, 1953E.C., No Ref.

¹⁸⁴ *Addis Zämän*, Year 21, No,150 (*Säné* 16, 1953E.C).

¹⁸⁵ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A Letter from *Ato* Assäfa Gäbrämariam, Administrative vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to *Ato* Abäbä Räta, Minister, Ministry of Public Health”, dated on *Säné* 23, 1953E.C., Ref.no. 14677/21.; see also NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.47, File no. 17.1.3.47.01., Disaster Preparedness, Planning, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, “A Report of the Survey of Landslides in Mafud *Wäräda*...”, pp.13-16.; *Addis Zämän*, Year 21, No,150 (*Säné* 16, 1953E.C).

¹⁸⁶ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20 “A letter from Karaqoré *Wäräda* Administration office to Šaläqa Asfaw Gäbrämanuel, governor of Jara *Awrajja* administration”, dated on *Mäsekäräm* 28, 1953E.C., Ref.no. 122/፳/153/57. The ratio was 20 sheets for 200 individuals each at Karaqoré, 10 sheet to 380 individuals at Mäjäté (which latter supplemented with another 10 sheets to each due to their further requests), and 100 sheets to 36 affected Orthodox Churches each.

¹⁸⁷ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A letter from *Ato* Woldämikael Qäléča, Forest Department Director Ministry of Agriculture to *Ato* Qäṭé Dargé, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture”, dated on *Tahasas* 16, 1954E.C., Ref.no. 1701/386.1/54.; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A letter from *Ras* Mäsfen

The Red Cross Society launched a relief and rehabilitation campaign to the people of Karaqoré and Mäjäté in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and Šäwa province administration. The organization sent its team to the area with a large shipment of food, clothing and medication to treat the wounded as well as feed and shelter the displaced.¹⁸⁸

The organization collected a total of ETH \$117,317.67 in cash and, material assistance which was estimated to have been nearly a million dollars worth (foodstuffs, clothing and building materials). The relief committee distributed the aid and provided health services to people in the two towns. It also built temporary shelters for the displaced. With these activities, all the materials collected and more than thirty thousand dollars were used throughout the rainy season of 1961. The remaining money was given to the Ministry of Public Health to construct a health station in the newly established town of Efëson, the present day Aṭayé.¹⁸⁹

Like the government aid, the emergency relief campaign of the Red Cross Society was confined to the towns of Mäjäté and Karaqoré and the surrounding people in spite of the fact that the effect of the 1961 earthquake extended far beyond these towns and affected the surrounding rural areas. The lack of information about the damages it brought and the absence of roads leading to the hinterlands made intervention in these areas difficult. The media also emphasized the problem of Karaqoré and Mäjäté as if it affected only these towns. As a result, the remote rural people complained and reported the case to different government offices of Šäwa province. Finally, the

Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa Province to Lieutenant General Abiy Abäbä, Minister, Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Hamle* 17, 1953E.C., Ref.no. ለ/ቁ3/161.

¹⁸⁸ NALA, Folder No. 1.2.4, File No. 1.2.4.10, “The Ethiopian Red Cross Community: A factual Report 1935-1947, 1947-1968 “, No date , p. 22. ; see also NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Report from Ato Assäfa Gäbrämariam, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister *Šähafti Tezaz Aklilu Habtäwold*, ”, dated on *Säné* 13, 1953E.C., Ref. no.15896/53.,pp. 12-14. ;*Addis Zämän*, Year 21, No,172 (*Hamle* 13, 1953E.C).

¹⁸⁹ NALA, Folder No. 1.2.4, File No. 1.2.4.10, “The Ethiopian Red Cross Community: A factual Report 1935-1947...”, pp. 22.

case was transferred to the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry, in turn, ordered the Šäwa province to organize a committee to assess the magnitude of damage and to identify the victims and distribute aid collected accordingly.¹⁹⁰ To this end, sub-committees were organized in each affected areas. But, the peasants in the remote rural areas, who equally suffered from the disaster, got little or nothing. The delegation of the Ministry of Interior justified the reason as to why the aid was largely confined to the towns of Karaqoré and Mäjäté as follows: Obviously, the people of Karaqoré depended on trade, the termination of this activity requires the necessity of food aid for some time because these people had no alternative to sustain themselves. But the people of Mäjäté, though lived in the town, clearly relied on agriculture and vegetable production. In addition to the available grain reserve in the stock, the crops in the field have ripened and ready for harvest. The people in the rural areas were not less affected. The main problem of these peoples was shortage of baking, roasting, floor mixing, fetching, drinking, and eating materials since much of the house utensils and clothes were destroyed during the crisis. Hence, the forthcoming aid should be not only food but also different types of house utensils, clothes and money. To realize this activity, it was decided that individuals from the affected areas should be recruited and a committee should be established at Karaqoré and Molalé.¹⁹¹

According to oral sources, the above explanation was full of contradictions and based on hasty generalizations for two reasons. First, it made a rough estimation without assessing the percentage

¹⁹⁰ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from LieutENAnt General Abiye Abäbä, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Ethiopian Red Cross Community”, dated on *Hamlé* 13, 1953E.C., Ref no. 1736913.; see also NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Reminder from Ato Alämayähu Gäbrätäklé, a Parliamentary Representative of the People of Yefat to Ministry of Interior”, dated on *Säné* 12, 1953E.C., No Ref.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from Ato Qeṭaw Azänä, Secretaty of Mänz *ena* Yefat *Awrajja* to Ras Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa Province”, dated on *Genbot* 26, 1953E.C., Ref. no. 9^p/467/53.

¹⁹¹ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Report from Ato Assäfa Gäbrämariam, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister *Šähafi Tezaz Aklilu Habtäwold*”, dated on *Säné* 13, 1953E.C., Ref. no.15896/53.,pp. 12-14.

of people engaged in one or another kind of economic activity in the above two towns. Though the people of Karaqoré lived in urban areas, a large number of households directly or indirectly depended on agricultural activities. Much of the cultivable land around the town was occupied by urban residents. Second, it was done without observing the reality on the ground, specifically in the rural areas. It concluded that food aid to the rural people in Mänz *ena* Yefat, and Jara *awrajja*, was not urgent claiming that they had grain reserves in their stock and ripening crops in the field. What it failed to observe was that the grain in the stock was also ruined. Kitchen equipment like grinding stones was also destroyed. On top of this, the majority of the people had also gone to distant areas fearing the possibility of another crisis with nothing at hand. The fracture of the land, rock falls and landslides blocked the Addis Abäbä-Asmara highway at some points, which in turn hindered the movement of the people. So, as opposed to the report, some people in the rural areas were badly in need of food aid.¹⁹² This was clearly evident in the petitions of the people of Mänz and Yefat addressed to higher government offices, including the Ministry of Interior, about the unfair distribution of aid (both by the government and the Red Cross), and at the same time described the seriousness of the problem in remote rural areas.¹⁹³

The Shift of the Town of Karaqoré to Aṭayé

To realize its long term rehabilitation efforts, the Ministry of Interior sent experts recruited from the Ministry of Interior and Addis Abäbä Municipality to study possible alternative places for transferring the town of Karaqoré, which was highly susceptible to seismic activity. The study was under Tekien from 21-23 June, 1961. Members of the delegation were Ato Zäwdé Bäqälä, Mr.

¹⁹² Informants: Ato Woldäarägay Dañé, Ato Mohamäd Hassén and Ato Seid Abdulaziz.

¹⁹³ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Letter from LieutENAnt General Abiye Abäbä, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Ethiopian Red Cross Community”, dated on *Hamlé* 13, 1953E.C., Ref no. 1736913.; Informants: Ato Woldäarägay Dañé, Ato Mohamäd Hassén and Ato Seid Abdulaziz.

Tomberg (architect), and Mr. Gawuchi (planner) from the Ministry of Interior, while Mr. Fransis Emos and Ato Kābādā Akalāwold were included from Addis Abābā Municipality. The delegation arrived on 21 June at Karaqoré and visited the town and its environs for three days. It discussed with local government authorities and victims and, finally proposed possible alternative places for moving the town of Karaqoré as per the order of the Emperor.¹⁹⁴ In the course of the field visit, the delegation proved that it was impossible to get a place safe from tectonic movement around Karaqoré. Thus, what the delegation focused on was finding a place conducive for urban development in the nearby area. In this regard, it proposed four sites not far from the old town. The first place was located 7 kms to the north of Karaqoré along the Addis Abābā-Māqālē highway. This place was surrounded by mountain ranges and hills and, hence not conducive for agricultural activity. The second was a place called Efēson (Aṭayé), which is about 11 kms to the south of Karaqoré along the Addis Abābā-Māqālē highway. It was relatively far from the cultivable land around Karaqoré and at the same time infested with malaria. The third one was a rural *qābällé* immediately to the east of Mājäté town. This area, however, was highly vulnerable to earthquake and volcanic eruption more than the town of Karaqoré. The fourth alternative was Qoré-méda, which was about 3 kms to the north of Karaqoré. The delegation chose the last option despite the widespread scarcity of clean drinking water.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A Letter from Ministry of Interior to *Ras Mäsfen Seläši*, Governor General of Šāwa province”, No dated and Ref.; see also NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A Letter from Ato Assāfa Gäbrāmariam, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to Ato Abābā Rāta, Minister, Ministry of Public Health”, dated on *Sāné* 23, 1953 E.C., Ref.no. 14677/21.; Informants: Ato Ewunātu Germa, W/ro Säblāworq Hailé, and Ato Germa Wondafraš.

¹⁹⁵ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A Letter from Ministry of Interior to *Ras Mäsfen Seleši*, Governor General of Šāwa province”, No dated and Ref.

On 27 July, 1961, after hearing the reports of the delegation, the Emperor approved Aṭayé to be the center of the new town.¹⁹⁶ The town was established on 8 *gašas* of land, to the south of Karaqoré.¹⁹⁷ Referring the order of the Emperor, Lieutenant General Abiye Abäbä instructed the Šäwa province to facilitate the transfer of the people and government institutions to the new site. The message went down to the local government authorities and other stakeholders.¹⁹⁸ The technical team, however, expressed their reservations due to the high cost involved for infrastructural development in the newly selected site. They stated their concern about the need to build two bridges that connected parts of the town to the highway. They also suggested that before moving the people of Karaqoré and government institutions to the new town, bridges and other infrastructural facilities should be built.¹⁹⁹ Overlooking the suggestion of the experts, government officials, however, urged the shift of the people and government offices to the newly selected town with little or no prior investment.²⁰⁰ Experts from the Ministry of Interior, namely Musse Brazafolisis, Ato Bälehu Tässäma, and Ato Abaynäḥ Alämu went to Aṭayé to allocate and distribute land to residential, business and other purposes on 8 July 1961. Land was distributed to victims from Karaqoré and called upon others to come and construct new houses in the new destination. Most government offices and some households were shifted to Aṭayé.²⁰¹ The transfer of the majority of the people

¹⁹⁶ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A Letter from *Bitwoded* Zäwudé Gäbrähiwot, Minister, Ministry of Interior to Municipality Head Office”, dated on *Tekemet* 4, 1962E.C., Ref.no. 18413/5.

¹⁹⁷ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., “A Petition of the People of Efësson, Gedem, Wägama and Jellé -Duguguru addressed to the Ministry of Transport”, dated on *Genbot* 10, 1966E.C.

¹⁹⁸ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A Letter from *Ras* Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa Province to *Lij* Häilämariam Kābädä, Municipality and Awrajja Administration Minister De’eta”, dated on *Miazia* 17, 1953E.C., Ref.no. ፳፱/4956/9/3878.

¹⁹⁹ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A Letter from Ato Assäfa Gäbrāmariam, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to Ato Abäbä Rāta, Minister, Ministry of Public Health”, dated on *Sāné* 23, 1953E.C., Ref.no. 14677/21.

²⁰⁰ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A Letter from *Ras* Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa Province to Häilāmariam Kābädä, Municipality *Awrajja* Administration Minister de’eta”, dated on *Miazia* 17, 1961E.C., Ref.no. ፳፱/ 4956/9/3878.

²⁰¹ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A Letter from Ato Ousman Muhammäd, Vice Minister, the Ministry of Interior to *Ras* Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa province”, dated on *Hamlé* 27, 1953E.C., Ref no. ፳፱/9526/5.

of Karaqoré, however, was delayed. What the government failed to understand was the interests and experiences of the people of Karaqoré. Since the people of Karaqoré experienced living on elevated land, they were not willing to live in the lowlands, which were infested with malaria. In terms of economic cost, households preferred to repair their old houses or construct new ones using available resources in the old villages to moving to distant areas where there was little nor resource and facilities.²⁰² The government neither created attractive conditions in the new site, nor provided incentives to the people. No pressure was applied through.²⁰³ The municipality, which had already left for Aṭayé, failed to stop illegal activities and land grabbing in the old town. Both archival and oral sources indicate that some old officials were not willing to shift to the new site and hence, they indirectly encouraged the people to remain in the old town. On 20 March, 1972, recalling the earlier Imperial order of July 1961, the Emperor reordered local government officials to move the people and the remaining government institutions to the new site. Still, the process was delayed for several years to come. This, in turn, posed a challenge to the people who had already left for the new town. A petition of *Ider* (a traditional mutual help association) leaders of the people of Aṭayé addressed to the Ministry of Transport, dated on 19 April, 1974, states that the failure of local government officials to transfer the bus station to Aṭayé became a challenge to the resettled people, government workers and non-governmental organizations. The letter also mentions that individuals at the new location were spending a significant amount of time and resources daily,

²⁰² NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., “A Letter from Ministry of Interior to Ras Mäsfen Seläši, Governor General of Šäwa province”, No dated and Ref.; Informants: *Ato Alämayähu Bäsuḥeqad*, *Amsaläqa Mäkonen Zäwudé*, *Ato Dässalän Zägäyé* and The first was interviewed on 28/01/11 while the last two on 06,11 and 13/02/11 respectively.

²⁰³ Informants: *Ato Mängäša Tačé*, *Ato Mängäša Kebrät*, and *W/ro Säbläwork Hailé*.

anticipating the arrival of a bus from Karaqoré's bus station. At times, some individuals travelled about 11-13 kilometers to reach Karaqoré on foot in order to obtain the required service.²⁰⁴

On the other hand, there was acute shortage of budget for constructing the town of Aṭayé quickly. There was contradictions between the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Public Health over how to allocate the funds collected by the Red Cross. While the Ministry of Interior prioritized the construction of bridges, the Ministry of Public Health argued for the establishment of a clinic.²⁰⁵ Referring the earlier warning of *Šaläqa* Mamo Bäšé, governor of Jara *Awrajja* that the area was infested with malaria and other waterborne disease, the Ministry of Public Health justified its claim. The exchange of letters took some time. Thus, it was only later that infrastructural development began to appear in the new site.²⁰⁶ At least to reduce the threat of malaria for the time being, the Ministry of Public Health worked closely with Malaria Eradication Organization Sector. The Organization sent professionals to undertake clinical treatment and prevention activities against the epidemic.²⁰⁷ The experts sprayed DDT to individuals' houses twice a year. The rehabilitation activities faced challenges due to the absence of coordination, preliminary

²⁰⁴ NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., "A Petition of *Idir* Leaders of Aṭayé town Addressed to the Ministry of Transport", dated on *Miazia* 11, 1966E.C.; NALA, Folder 17.1.3.29., File no. 17.1.3.29.19., "A Petition of the People of Efésson, Gedem, Wägama and Jellé -Duguguru addressed to the Ministry of Transport", dated on *Genbot* 10, 1966E.C.; NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., "A Letter from Ministry of Interior to *Ras Mäsfen Seläši*, Governor General of Šäwa province", No dated and Ref.; Informants: *Ato Mängäša Tačé*, *Ato Mängäša Kebrät*, *W/ro Yäšemäbét Bälačäw* and *W/ro Säbläwork Hailé*. The bus station stayed in Karaqoré nearly a decade after it was decided to transfer to Aṭayé for unknown reasons.

²⁰⁵ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., "A Letter from *Ato Assäfa Gäbrämariam*, Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of Interior to *Ato Abäbä Räta*, Minister, Ministry of Public Health", dated on *Säné* 23, 1953E.C., Ref.no. 14677/21.; Informants: *Ato Mängäša Tačé*, *Ato Mängäša Kebrät*, *W/ro Yäšemäbét Bälačäw* and *W/ro Säbläwork Hailé*. Sources indicate that the two Ministries quarreled over 82,608 Ethiopian birr collected by the Red Cross organization.

²⁰⁶ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., "A Letter from *Ras Mäsfen Seläši*, Governor General of Šäwa province to Ministry of Interior", dated on *Nähassé* 13, 1953E.C., Ref.no. 5589/53.; Informants: *Ato Mängäša Tačé*, *Ato Mängäša Kebrät*, *W/ro Yäšemäbét Bälačäw* and *W/ro Säbläwork Hailé*.

²⁰⁷ NALA, Folder no. 17.1.3.29, File no. 17.1.3.29.20., "A Letter from *Ato Abäbä Räta*, Minister, the Ministry of Public Health to LieutENant General *Abiye Abäbä*, Minister, Ministry of Interior", dated on *Hamlé* 29, 1953E.C. Ref.no. 24034/2015/44/52.; Informants: *Ato Kassayé Worqu*, *Ato Luelsägäd Gétačäw* and *Ato Dässaläñ Zägäyé*, All were malaria control experts during the imperial and Derg regimes at Aṭayé and now retired.

assessments, and financial resources. These made it difficult for them to avoid potential areas inhabited by the insect.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

The intricate relationship between society and the environment is an undeniably interwoven and complicated one in the long history of North Šäwa. The negative as well as positive effects of society on the environment and vice versa are often due to various factors and forces, ranging from political and socio-economic to cultural and even natural aspects. The heightened intervention of the state as well as of local society in the natural environment has led to adverse outcomes which in general can be described as decline and degradation of the environment. This happened in some places early on leading to situations in which the inhabitants can no longer sustain themselves adequately. The cumulative effects have manifested themselves in the form of unpredictable weather patterns, adverse climatic circumstances, and generally unstable ecosystems. Consequent with the degradation of the environment, there has been an enormous knock-on effect on the people's well-being, altering their manner of existence. A simplistic sequence of deforestation and environmental decline would not suffice to describe the area's lengthy history, as there were instances of development and rehabilitation. Nonetheless the overall progression was toward ecological deterioration, leaving the adjacent communities susceptible to considerable stress, instability, and dislocation.

North Šäwa experienced unparalleled state intervention in local affairs dating back to the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. This intervention was geared towards advancing the budding state machinery at the expense of local society if not directly of the natural environment. However, that was made inevitable by the rather aggressive expansion of agriculture as a means of generating increased revenue. The long history of conflict, war and generalized violence also portended a slow but steady degradation of the natural environment. In the second half of the 1930s, northern Šäwa was a major stronghold for the patriots for which reason the residential areas,

wooded areas, and other supposed hideaways suspected of sheltering the patriots were ravaged by the enemy. The attacks depleted crops, grain reserves, and grasslands thought to exist for the use of the patriots. Even after the end of the occupation the area continued to be a center of conflict and confrontation amongst different factions, groups and individuals for resources, often spilling over into major military activity. All of these exacerbated the situation, leaving people in the study area (particularly Yefat *ena Temuga awrajja*) vulnerable.

The rate of deforestation and environmental degradation varied over time and across different ecological zones. However, it was marked by increase during the post-liberation period primarily due to the land and agricultural policies implemented by the state. The insecurity surrounding land tenure discouraged peasants from making investments in their lands, which consequently led to “environmental protests” as a form of opposition to the state. The continuous division and redistribution of ancestral lands among members of descent groups instilled a sense of insecurity among peasants, as they were uncertain about when and how they would lose their land and resources. Consequently, their motivation to enhance and preserve their land diminished significantly.

The conflict of interest between the state and the elites on the one hand, and elites and local society on the other with regard to the ownership, management, and utilization of natural resources had much to do with the declining natural environment. The state has asserted its ownership rights over open and unsettled lands, and in 1941, it nationalized forest resources, positioning itself as the guardian of these valuable assets. It denied access to resources to cultivators in a bid to control it easily. Conversely, local people often advocated for the sustainable use of resources, employing various mechanisms to uphold ecological balance. These

conflicting assertions and counter-claims have eventually ended up in environmental degradation and ecological disorder.

In addition to this, the expansive agricultural endeavors of the Imperial regime, aimed at sustaining its modernizing state apparatus, came at the expense of the natural environment. The state allocated land, including grazing and forested areas, to its officials and civil servants as part of their remuneration, with the expectation that it would be immediately converted into cultivated land after restoration. Furthermore, the government granted grazing lands in river valleys to both domestic and foreign companies, enabling the establishment of mechanized agriculture during the late 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, pastoralists were forced to move to remote or neighboring highlands or adopt a new mode of life leaving their pastoral livelihood aside. Those who opted for the former often found themselves in conflict with sedentary peasants, as both groups competed for limited resources.

On the other hand, the scarcity and fragmentation of lands, coupled with the decline in productivity resulting from over-cultivation and degradation in the neighboring highlands, such as Mänz *ena* Gešé, Tägülät *ena* Bulga *awrajjas*, and the Wällo province, prompted a significant out-migration to the adjacent lowlands, including Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*. These migrants engaged in agricultural pursuits, while some ventured into charcoal production, often with the consent of local elites. Consequently, vast tracks of land formerly covered with trees and shrubs were converted into cultivated fields regardless of the natural landscape. This intervention was facilitated by the establishment of the Malaria Eradication (later Malarial Control) sector in Aṭayé during the 1960s. Prior to 1965, there existed no comprehensive legal framework and administration of justice to regulate deforestation, save for the *zufan čelot* (Imperial court order)

which proved ineffective in curbing the rapid pace of deforestation. Even after the proclamation of the First Forest Law in 1965, the problem never ceased due to its poor implementation.

The rural development initiatives of Military regime mainly collectivization, villagization, and resettlement, the abolishing of private property, had a destabilizing effect on the livelihoods of peasants and the natural environment. Despite declaring land public property, the regime denied peasants their basic ownership rights, leading to a negative impact on productivity and the well-being of the natural environment. The military government attempted to address these issues through short and long-term relief and rehabilitation programs, such as afforestation and terracing. However, the inconsistency and contradictions within these programs, coupled with their poor implementation and the eco-violence exhibited by certain local communities, resulted in precarious livelihoods for the people and environmental degradation.

Furthermore, the persistent occurrence of seismic activity, leading to rock avalanches, landslides, and earthquakes, specifically in the Yefat *ena* Ṭemuga *awrajja*, has continued to significantly impact the well-being of the local population. The devastating earthquake that struck Karaqoré and its neighboring territories in May 1961 had immense significance. Equally noteworthy are the recurrent outbreaks of epidemics, such as malaria, and the invasions of locusts. The cumulative consequences of these anthropogenic and natural adversities have resulted in the impoverishment of the local populace and the widespread prevalence of drought, starvation, and famine.

A local history of North Šäwa from the closing decades of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth could therefore be said to have been one of intense interaction between a state with steadily growing power and local society that sought to retain a certain degree of independence

from it. What both sides did in pursuit of their respective agendas had a generally deleterious effect on nature and the environment. This work has shown that this argument is supported by an overwhelming body of evidence. It has also shown, however, that this process was neither unchecked nor always linear. There were times when both the state and local society acted in a manner that sought to mitigate the degree or impact of human activity on the environment.

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(Ref.no.አ/4932/53/51-2., 07/12/ 1966E.C.; Ref.no.H3/13/08 .,Genbot, 1966E.C.; Ref.no.ቀ/6/34., 05/01/ 1952E.C.; Ref.no.17378/51/28/40., 4/13/1966E.C.; Ref.no.H3/13/8., Genbot,1966E.C.; Ref.no.1622/53/173.,30/08/ 1953E.C.; Ref.no.አ/5347., 23/12/66E.C.).

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- _____. **የቀዳማዊ ሃይለስላሴ መንግስት**(*The Government of Emperor Haileselassie I*) First Edition, 1923-1948E.C. Addis Abäba: Shama Book Printing Press, 2007.

B. Newspapers and Magazines

Magazines

- Ahmed Hassen. **“የይፋት እና ተሙጋ ታሪክ”** (A History of Yefat and Timuga) *A Magazine Prepared for the 50 years anniversary of Abuye Primary School in Däbrässina Town*. Debrešina, 1998E.C.

Addis Zämän Newspaper

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11, 1966E.C.; Year 28, No. 62, *Hamlé* 10, 1960E.C.; Year 27, No. 788, *Miazia* 5, 1959E.C.; Year 1st, No. 27, *Hedar* 27, 1934E.C.; Year 23, No.25, *Ter* 20, 1956E.C.; 30th, No. 225, *Mäskäräm* 16, 1966E.C.; Year 26th, No. 689, *Mägabit* 27, 1959E.C.; Year 26th, No. 690, *Mägabit* 28, 1959E.C.; Year 35, no.736, *Säné* 12,1967E.C.; Year 44, No.90, *Tahesas* 18, 1977E.C.; Year 44, No.73, *Hedar* 28, 1977E.C.; Year 34, No. 1707, *Nehassie* 28, 1970E.C.;Year 34, No. 1628, *Genbot* 20, 1970E.C.; Year 34, No. 1707, *Nähassé* 28, 1970E.C.; Year 34, No. 1628, *Genbot* 20, 1970E.C.; Year 34, No. 1627, *Genbot* 19, 1972E.C.; Year 25, No. 370, *Mägabit* 6, 1958E.C.; Year 26, No. 647, *Ter* 25, 1959E.C.;Year 18, No. 46, *Yakatit* 13, 1951E.C.; Year 18, No.46, *Yäkatit* 13, 1951E.C.; Year 19, No. 193, *Nähassé* 5, 1951E.C.; Year 31, No. 74, *Mägabit* 17, 1964E.C.; Year 27, No. 925, *Yäkatit* 23, 1960E.C.; Year 31, No. 74, *Mägabit* 17, 1964E.C.; Year 32, No. 128, *Genbot* 22, 1964E.C.; Year 23, No. 797, *Nähassé* 10, 1958E.C.; Year 24, No. 265, *Tekemet* 28, 1957E.C.; Year 29, No. 418, *Mäsekäräm* 10, 1962E.C.; Year 30, No. 374, *Mägabit* 19, 1963E.C.; Year 26, No. 647, *Ter* 25, 1959E.C.; Year 23, No. 797, *Nähassé* 10, 1958E.C.; Year 31, No. 74, *Mägabit* 17, 1964E.C.; Year 32, No. 128, *Genbot* 22, 1964E.C.; Year 30, No. 374, *Mägabit* 19, 1963E.C.; Year 21, No.59, *Säné* 16, 1953E.C.; Year 21, No. 135, *Genbot* 30, 1953E.C.; Year 21, No.150, *Säné* 16, 1953E.C.; Year 21, No. 235, *Mäsekäräm* 26, 1954E.C.; Year 21, No.150, *Säné* 16, 1953E.C.; Year 21, No.172, *Hamle* 13, 1953E.C.

Berhan ena Selam Newspaper

Year IV, No. 5, *Tir* 24, 1920E.C.; Year IV, No.13, *Mägabit* 20, 1920E.C.; Year V, No.42, *Tekemet* 7,1922E.C.; Year IV, No. 49, *Hedar* 20, 1921E.

Nägarit Gazéta

No.5, *Hamlé*21, 1934E.C.;No.2, *Tikemt* 22,1937E.C.; No. 4, *Hedar* 3, 1960E.C.; No.17, *Nähassé* 21, 1957E.C.; No. 31/ 1975E.C.; No 47/ 1975E.C.; No.272/1977E.C.;Year 39, No.17/1973.

Yäroma Berhan(The Light of Rome) Newspaper-Year 17, June 12, 1939.

LIST OF INFORMANTS

S. N o	Name of Informant	Sex	Age	Place of interview	Date of Interview	Remark
1	Abdulqasim Oumar (<i>Šaykh</i>)	M	69	Burémodayto	22/03/11	Belonged to one of the leading families of the Afar in Burémodaytu district. He shared with me how conflict over resource broke out in the <i>awrajja</i>
2	Abäbä Ṭelahun (<i>Ato</i>)	M	82	Addis Abäbä	17/05/11	A worker of the Malaria Control Head Office in Northeast Ethiopia. He knew well about malarial control endeavors and challenges
3	Abära Säifu (<i>Balambaras</i>)	M	105	Däbräberhan	19/10/10	A patriot in North Šäwa who fought with the Italians at Mäyçäw. He told me about the environmental impacts of local and regional as well as national conflicts
4	Akalu Dänäqä (<i>Ato</i>)	M	82	Molalé	25/09/10	A militia during the <i>Därg</i> . He actively participated in fighting the rebels against the <i>Därg</i> in the 1970s in Mänz. He knew well about the development policy of the military regime and its failures.
5	Alämayähu Bäsufekad (<i>Ato</i>)	M	78	Däbrässina	28/01/11	A history teacher who shared with me about the history of Šäwan province. He had good memories of historical events in his lifetime.
6	Alämu Hailé (<i>Ato</i>)	M	79	Rabel	22/02/11	One of the participants of anti <i>Därg</i> movement (ex-lords) in the 1970s. He remembered well about the major developments of the Imperial and <i>Därg</i> regimes in the study area.
7	Ali Abdu (<i>Ato</i>)	M	65	Sänbäté	08/02/11	An Oromo who knew about struggle over resources and deforestation and land degradation in Yefat.
8	Ali Käräm (<i>Ato</i>)	M	65	Burémodayto	22/03/11	One of the early settlers of the town of Däbäl. He and his family were one of the victims of

						mechanized agriculture in the district. He remembered well about problem faced by local pastoralist communities and over all impacts of mechanized farmings.
9	Anägräñ Bezunäh (Ato)	M	69	Šäwarobit	06/02/11	A teacher at Šäwarobit government elementary school. He had a good memory of the history of Mänz <i>ena</i> Yefat <i>awrajja</i> .
10	Assäfa Woldämariam (Ato)	M	75	Majäté	15/02/11	Served as a mediator of resource-based conflict in Yefat since the Imperial period and active participant in peasant association. He shared with me the cuases and over all impacts of local conflicts and rural development initiatives of the military regime.
11	Aṭlaw Asamenäw (Ato)	M	83	Majäté	16/02/11	He had good memory about the overall history of the region and the country as a whole.
12	Awuraris Aragaw (Ato)	M	63	Anşokia	18/02/11	A teacher at Anşokia high school. He shared with me important notes about the history of Šäwan province in general and the history of Yefat <i>ena</i> Ṭemuga in particular.
13	Ayečäw Adanä (Ato)	M	65	Šäwarobit	06/02/11	A worker at Šäwarobit National Prison Administration Center. He shared with me about the socio-economic ans well as environmental history of Mänz <i>ena</i> Gešé Yefat <i>ena</i> Ṭemuga <i>Awrajjas</i> .
14	Ayinaläm Damänu (W/ro)	F	69	Šäwarobit	05/02/11	Wife of Ato Lesanu Wondemu, the known entrepreneur at Šäwarobit. She knew well about the development of the town , ecological changes in Yefat, outbreaks of locusts, malaria and other natural disasters
15	Bälačäw Yelma (Ato)	M	67	Rabél	22/02/11	One of the participants of anti- <i>Därg</i> movement (ex-lords) in the 1970s and later

						joined the <i>Därg</i> . He knew well about the land tenure insecurity and the overall impacts of rural development initiatives of both the Imperial and Derge regimes.
16	Bäläṭṭa Woldu (Ato)	M	75	Ṭarmabär	30/01/11	He was a chairperson of Däbrässina town. Therefore, he had good knowledge about North Šäwa.
17	Berlé Hailu (Ato)	M	65	Däbräberhan	22/10/10	One of the 1984/85 famine displaced individuals who lived in Däbräberhan. He shared with me the overall impacts of natural disasters particularly the 1984/85 famine
18	Bäyänä Adäläñ (Balambaras)	M	88	Däbrässina	29 and 30/01/11	He served the state at different levels <i>Çeqaşum</i> , <i>Meselené</i> and fought with the Italians. Now chairperson of patriots at Däbräberhan town. He knew well about how land and tre tenure appeared and their impacts on the people and the well being of the natural environment.
19	Bäyänä Dästa (Ato)	M	68	Šäwarobit	19/10/10	A peasant, who was an eye witness to the famine of 1984/85, and the <i>Därg's</i> government development projects
20	Damṭāw Abäbä (Ato)	M	70	Aṭayé	11/02/11	An elder who had an immense memory and collection about the history of North Šäwa. He told me about the socio-economic and political history of the region.
21	Däbäbä Gäbrähiwot (Ato)	M	85	Molalé	26/09/10	An elder who told me major development Imperial period and <i>Därg's</i> development projects in Mänz and Tägulät
22	Däbälé Gämäču (Ato)	M	63	Sänbäté	08/02/11	An Oromo who had good memory about people interactions in the region and intermetent conflicts over resources.
23	Dämäqä Zäläläw (Ato)	M	90	Däbräberhan	19/10/10	A son of a patriot who collected rich history about the patriotic struggle in North Šäwa

						and its environmental impacts. He shared with me about what happened in the period of occupation.
24	Dässalāñ Zägäyē (Ato)	M	72	Aṭayē	13/02/11	Worked as a mediator of resource-based conflict at different times and served as a local government official to varying levels during the <i>Därg</i> regime. He knew well about the cause and effect of resource based conflicts, relation of the study area with the central government and related issues.
25	Ehtäselassé Woldägies (Emahoy)	F	86	Däbrässina	29/01/11	A daughter of a known patriot in Yefat and belonged to a rich peasant. She remembered well about the land tenure and the livelihood of peasants and land cover changes over time in Mänz ena Yefat.
26	Ermias Tässäma (Ato)	M	65	Addis Abäbä	15/03/13	The son of the famous patriot of Yefat, Tässäma Ergäṭé. He shared with me Italian occupation and environmental damages and resource extraction during period of occupation and after.
27	Eṣātu Wodajénäh (Ato)	M	75	Mähalméda	25/02/11	An elder who collected and documented oral and written sources about Mänz and Geṣé. He worked at the Transport Center. He told me important socio-economic and political developments of North Šäwa.
28	Ewunātu Germa (Ato)	M	95	Karaqoré	11/02/11	An eyewitness about the 1961 earthquake. He shared with me the over all impact of the crisis.
29	Fesseha Negussé (Ato)	M	79	Woldya	15/04/11	Supervisor of Aṭayē Malaria Control sector. He knew well about efforts to control the epidemic, and challenges.
30	Gäbré Täčané (Ato)	M	65	Molalé	25/09/10	A coordinator of a relief campaign to famine displaced people from Wallo and Yefat at

						Molalé town. He was an active participant in implementing villagization and afforestation programs in Mänz. He remembered the famine of 1984/5 and the over all impacts and problems in relation to the rural development initiatives of the military regime.
31	Gäbrägies Habtämikael (<i>Amsaaläqa</i>)	M	87	Däbrässina	29/01/11	His son was the higher government officer in Mafud district during the Imperial regime. He served the government as coordinator of the peasant association. He remembered well the over all environmental impacts of the agricultural and land policy of the Imperial and Därg regimes and their impacts on the natural environment
32	Gäbrähiwot Gezachew (<i>Ato</i>)	M	86	Molalé	24/09/10	He had good memory about the history of Mänz <i>ena</i> Gešé <i>Awrajja</i> , and trends of people-environment interactions in the <i>awrajja</i> .
33	Germa Wondafraš (<i>Ato</i>)	M	92	Anşokia	18/02/11	He served as administrator of Anşokia district in all three regimes. In addition, he played an active role in the relief campaign of the 1984/85 famine. He shared with me the political history of the region and the over all impacts of famine-induced crisis in the region
34	Hailé Hailämaria (<i>Ato</i>)	M	89	Mähalméda	26/02/11	An elder who collected oral sources from forefathers. He told me important issues on <i>Därg's</i> development projects and their environmental implications.
35	Hailu Gezaw (<i>Ato</i>)	M	89	Rabél	22/02/11	One of the participants of anti- <i>Därg</i> movement (ex-lords) in the 1970s and later joined the <i>Därg</i> in Mänz <i>ena</i> Yefat. He knew

						the political history of the region well and how the recurrent conflicts affected the livelihood of the people and the natural environment in the region.
36	Jafar Hassén (Ato)	M	71	Aṭayé	12/10/11	A member of one of the ruling elites of the Oromo around Aṭayé. He worked as a member of the negotiating team during resource-based conflicts among different ethnic groups in the region. He remembered well about conflict over resources and its impact on the livelihood and natural environment
37	Kassayé Worqu (Ato)	M	74	Aṭayé	12/02/11	An expert in the Malarial Control sector at Šāwarobit and later at Aṭayé during the imperial and <i>Dārg</i> regime. He knew efforts undertaken at different levels to control malaria in Yefat <i>ena</i> Ṭemuga
38	Keflé Yetagäsu (Ato)	M	76	Molalé	25/09/10	A peasant farmer, who remembered absentee lords and lord-peasant relationship, the burdens of the latter, and other historical developments in Mänz <i>ena</i> Yefat
39	Laqāw Andargé (Ato)	M	76	Däbräberhan	20/10/10	He had good memory about the patriotic struggle in North Šāwa and the over all impacts of war on local people and natural environment
40	Lessanu Wondemu (Ato)	M	77	Šāwarobit	05/02/11	One of the early settlers of Šāwarobit. He was an eyewitness to the decline of vegetation in Yefat <i>ena</i> Ṭemuga. Now entrepreneur at the town
41	Luelsägäd Gétačāw (Ato)	M	77	Aṭayé	13/02/11	An expert and coordinator of the Malarial Control sector in Yefat <i>ena</i> Ṭemuga <i>awrajja</i> . He knew every corner of the <i>awrajja</i> through his frequent fieldwork

42	Lulé Mälaku (Ato)	M	68	Bäräkät	21/10/12	The son of a patriot of North Šäwa. He had good memory about the patriotic struggle in North Šäwa
43	Mamité Hailé (W/ro)	F	71	Ankobär	13/03/11	An elder who shared with me about the history of Šäwan province in general and the study area in particular
44	Mamo Wodajénäh (Ato)	M	50	Mähalméda	26/02/11	A history teacher at Mähalméda preparatory school. He knew the history of the Mänz <i>ena</i> Yefat very well.
45	Mamo Woldäab(<i>Mämré</i>) (now <i>Abba</i> Hailämariam)	M	83	Aṭayé	11/02/11	He had good memory about the history of Šäwan province and the country
46	Mäkonen Zäwudé (<i>Amsaaläqa</i>)	M	75	Šäwarobit	06/02/11	Served as mediators of resource-based conflicts among different groups in Yefat and coordinator of Därg's rural development projects (villagization, resettlement, collectivization of agriculture and others) in the region. He shared with me the overall environmental impacts of the rural development projects of both the Imperial and Därg regimes.
47	Mängäša Kebrät (Ato)	M	69	Aṭayé	10/02/11	Served as chairperson of Aṭayé. He participated as a mediator of resource-based conflict in Yefat <i>ena</i> Ṭemuga. He knew the political history of the <i>Awrajjä</i> and had good understading of society-environment interactions in the <i>awrajjä</i>
48	Mängäša Tačé (Ato)	M	76	Aṭayé	10/02/11	One of the early settlers of Aṭayé. He knew about ethnic relations and other historical development in the region.
49	Märema Hussén (W/ro)	F	62	Burémodayto	22/03/11	One of the early settlers of the town of Däbäl. She and her family were one of the victims

						of mechanized agriculture in the Awaš Valley. He shared with me how mechanized farmings made the livelihood of the local people precarious and the environment ruined.
50	Mohammäd Hassän (Ato)	M	94	Aṭayé	14/02/11	Served as an administrator of Temuga Oromo during the Imperial and <i>Därg</i> regimes. He told me the general history of the region and beyond.
51	Mulugéta Tadässä (Ato)	M	71	Molalé	24/09/10	A son of a local elite who was familiar with the livelihood of the peasants and the land tenure system both during the Imperial and <i>Därg</i> regimes
52	Säbläworq Hailé (W/ro)	F	84	Karaqoré	11/02/11	An eyewitness about the 1961 earthquake later who lived at Aṭayé. He shared with me the overall impacts of the crisis.
53	Seid Abdulaziz (Ato)	M	72	Burémodaytu	22/03/11	One of the early settlers of Däbäl. He and his family were one of the victims of mechanized agriculture in the district.
54	Šäwanṭasäw Yelma (Ato)	M	102	Addis Abäbä	10/04/13	A patriot in North Šäwa during the period of occupation. He knew the period of occupation and the over all impacts of the war.
55	Šäwayé Yefru (Ato)	M	72	DäbrässENA	28/01/11	He had a fresh memory of the peasants' livelihood and <i>Därg</i> 's development projects and nature rehabilitation programs. A government worker is now retired.
56	Šefäraw Ešaté (Ato)	M	81	Molalé	26/09/10	A peasant who had good memory of the history of Mänz ena Gešé.
57	Šefäraw Zänäbä (Ato)	M	83	Molalé	24/09/10	He was displaced from Yefat due to the 1984/84. Now lives in Qäwariat in Mamamedir district. He shared with me the impact of the famine.

58	Tačebälé Yegeläṭu (Amsaaläqa)	M	92	Däbräberhan	19/10/10	He was a <i>Çeqašum</i> during the Imperial regime. He told me how land tenure insecurity appeared and its overall impacts on local people and natural environment.
59	Tadässä Gašabäzahu (Ato)	M	83	Molalé	24/09/10	An elder who knew the history of Mänz well. He was a chaire of the peasant association and a coordinator of famine-displaced people from Wällo and Yefat in 1984/85 in Molalé town.
60	Tadässä Mamo (Ato)	M	79	Mähalméda	26/02/11	An elder who collected oral sources from forefathers. He was an active participant in implementing <i>Därg</i> 's development projects. He had good understanding of how the rural development initiatives impacted the wellbeing of the natural environment.
61	Tafässä Assalefäw (Ato)	M	87	Majäté	15/02/11	Served as a mediator of local conflicts, particularly between Amhara and Oromo in the region during the Imperial and <i>Därg</i> regime. He shared with me how conflict of interests among different groups shaped society-environment relationship in the region.
62	Tägé Woldämdehen (Ato)	M	91	Molalé	24/09/10	Served as <i>Çeqašum</i> and sub-district governor. He knew well about land tenure taxation and agricultural practices and their over all impacts on the natural environment.
63	Täsfayé Andargé (Ato)	M	75	Mähalméda	25/02/11	An elder who had good memory about the history of Mänz <i>ena</i> Gešé.
64	Täsfayé Dässé (Ato)	M	92	Däbräberhan	19/10/10	Son of a patriot. He remembered what happened during the period of occupation and impacts of the war on the people and environment.

65	Tässäma Kăbădă (Ato)	M	92	Măhalméda	25/02/11	One of the founders of Măhalméda town and the first head of Măhalméda Municipality office. He knew well about land tenure, taxation and other development in the <i>awrajja</i>
66	Tässäma Woldăgiyogis (Alaqa)	M	98	Dăbrăssina	30/01/11	An elder at Dăbrăssina who was an eyewitness about the ecological condition of North Šăwa since 1930s and the changes over time
67	Țerusăw Măkonen (Ato)	M	90	Aȥayé	10/02/11	An elder who collected and documented rich oral and written sources about the history of Yefat <i>ena</i> Țemuga. He shared with me how local and regional conflicts affected the social and environmental history of Yefat <i>ena</i> Țemuga <i>awrajja</i>
68	Tezazu Kefătăw (Ato)	M	79	Măhalméda	25 and 26/02/11	An elder who collected and documented rich oral and written documents about Mănz <i>ena</i> Yefat. He became an eyewitness to development during the Imperial and <i>Dărg</i> regimes. A government worker is now retired. He told me how the rural development initiatives of the military regime affected the livelihood of the people and the natural environment.
69	Tolăssa Dăbălé (Ato)	M	86	Aȥayé	15/02/11	Belonging to the ruling elite of Țemuga Oromo. He knew well about the region's insecurity challenges and the struggle for competition with the central government.
70	Șegé Mamo (Ato)	M	87	Molalé	25/09/10	A patriot and later servant of the known patriot of Mănz, <i>Dăjjazmač</i> Kăfeyălăw Woldășadiq. He remembered well about patriotic struggle, peasant-lord relationship, land tenure, taxation and overall impacts of

						land and agricultural policy of the Imperial regime on the natural environment.
71	Woldäarägeay Dañé (Ato)	M	88	Aṭayé	11 and 12/02/11	An elder who collected rich oral sources from forefathers. He had good memory about the history of Yefat <i>ena</i> Ṭemuga <i>awrajja</i> .
72	Yeheyes Manyaheläwal (Ato)	M	83	Däbrässina	30/01/11	He served at treasury and land <i>serit</i> branch offices at Däbrässina. He knew how land and tree tenures insecurity appreaed and their over all impacts on local people and natural environment
73	Yemanäberhan Negatu (Aläqa)	M	89	Molalé	24/09/10	A cattle trader from Wällo to Addis Abäbä during the Imperial and <i>Därg</i> regime. He knew about the ecological conditions of North Šäwa and the changes over time.
74	Yäšemäbét Bälačäw (W/ro)	F	75	Molalé	24/09/10	An eyewitness and victim of the 1984/85 famine in Yefat <i>ena</i> Ṭemuga <i>awrajja</i> . She had good memory about land cover changes, the prevalence of malaria and locusts invasion in the <i>Awrajja</i>
75	Yeṭena Girum (Ato)	M	68	Rabél	22/02/11	One of the participants of anti- <i>Därg</i> movement (ex-lords) in the 1970s. He remembered how land and agricultural policies of Both the Imperial and <i>Därg</i> regimes affected the livelihood of the local people and the natural environment
76	Yeṭena Masräša (Ato)	M	70	Däbrässina	28/01/11	Chairperson of Däbrässina town 1973-1976, 1978-1983. He served at Šäwarobit Malaria Control Sector. He was now retired. He told me efforts undertaken at local, regional and national levels to combat the malaria
77	Zäwudé Hailämikael (Mämré)	M	81	Däbrässina	29/01/11	Served as the head of <i>rist</i> department at Däbrässina, the former capital of Mänz <i>ena</i> Yefat <i>awrajja</i> , during the Imperial regime.

						He shared with the over all impacts of land tenure and tree tenure insecurities.
78	Zäwudu Kābādā (Ato)	M	64	Däbräberhan	20/10/10	One of the 1984/85 famine-displaced individuals who lived in Däbräberhan town. He had good memory about the overall socio-economic of the famine.