ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

TRADITION DENIED: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & CHANGE AMONG THE GIBO OROMO PEASANTS OF ILLUBABOR

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Tradition Denied: Economic Development And Change Among The Gibo Oromo Peasants of Illubabor

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TRANSLITERATION

Oromo Alphabets

a	:	ala as in add
b	:	bara as in able
c	:	caba
d	:	daka as in duck
e	:	eda as in etch
f	:	fala as in firm
g	:	gala as in gala
h	:	hara as in hut
i	:	ija as in inn
j	:	jila as in jot
k	:	kora as in kin
l	:	lafa as in little
m	:	mana as in man
n	:	nama as in noon
o	:	ona as in old
q	:	qara
r	:	raga as in rat
s	:	sa'a as in sit
t	:	tola as in table
u	:	bulo as in pull
w	:	waca as in water
x	:	xaba
y	:	yaraa as in yore
ch	:	bacho as in chair
dh	:	dhara
ny	:	nyanyee
ph	:	phaale
sh	:	shanee as in shabby

Note:

c*	:	voiceless, palatal, ejective- as in coraa (skirt its inner part)
q*	:	voiceless, velar, ejective, stop - as in 'qara' meaning 'sharp"
x*	:	voiceless, dental, implosive, stop - as in 'xaba' meaning 'play'
dh*	:	voiceless, dental, implosive, stop - as in 'dhama'
ny*	:	voiceless, palatal, nasal - as in 'nyata' meaning 'meal'
ph*	:	voiceless, bilobial, ejective, stop - as in 'kophee' - 'shoe'

ABSTRACT

In an attempt to uncover some factors that have been constraints to agricultural productivity, this paper concentrates on the investigation of the specific historical conditions and the contemporary situation of the Gibo peasants. Most of the studies hitherto made in different parts of the country try to single out factors such as system of land tenure, low level of technology, government policy, tradition, etc., as bottlenecks to productivity. Such works are characterized by lack of thorough treatment of the issues. I maintain that although productivity can be determined by a number of complex factors, some among several play a primary role in hampering productivity. The other factors in fact can be explained in terms of consequences of the dominant ones.

Tradition is often conceived as something opposed to development and change. Hence all possible measures are taken by policy makers to do away with tradition. In contrast this paper argues that while "tradition" and "modernity" are not in conflict with one another, the deteriorating living conditions of the Gibo peasants can be attributed to external factors. In spite of the serious challenges that nature exerts on them (drought, diseases, pests, rodents, wild animals, etc.), that can be beyond the control of peasants, most of the time the people's problems are deeply rooted in human relations and actions. Environmental degradation, fragmentation of land, and other constraints are the results of such relations and actions. Thus low agricultural productivity prevalent in the community understudy could largely be attributed to ineffective government policies and their consequences rather than to tradition.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Tradition and development

Whenever they come to power, in one way or another, leaders of the "Third World" countries promise their people to develop the economy of their nation and later on failures in development plans are most of the time attributed to tradition. As it has been properly observed by Mathur:

> For a long time tradition, which still remains a dominant factor in the lives of rural poor in the Third World, has been seen as something totally opposed to development and change (1989:10).

He further argues:

> Among planners a widely held belief is that peasants do not like to change and that they offer resistance to whatever plans are made for their development. ...According to a common stereotype, "farmers are ultra-conservative individuals, steeped in tradition, hemmed in by custom, lacking in motivation and incentive, captive of age-old methods, and lacking in ability to make decision" (Mathur 1989:6).

This attitude is probably rooted in a wrong view of tradition. It is identified with the past rather than something projecting into the future, considered conservative and static rather than something on a constant move, regarded as the cause of maintaining old behaviours as opposed to the positive changes brought about by the modernization process. The result is a dichotomic cognitive model which sees tradition itself in opposition to modernity and development.

1.1.1. The perceived incompatibility between tradition and development

There might be several reasons why development planners and policy makers tend to regard tradition as an opposite to modernization and development. The first element can be identified in a perceived incompatibility between traditional economic modes and organizations of production, on one hand, and the western or market economy, on the other. Simply, some scholars and development planners do not believe that traditional economies can actually develop into more integrated mode of productions. The implication of that is that in order to promote modernization it is necessary to replace the old, hence 'eradicate' all of tradition or at least part of it.

There are, of course several ways by which this attitude is expressed. It is, for instance, the case with McCann (1988:113), who attributes economic development failures in Ethiopia to the "traditional" and "backward looking" nature of the Ethiopian peasants and their failure to accept innovations.

The "community-culture approach" in the study of community development, as defined by Schwartz (1975:235), exemplifies a more elaborated position. This approach is concerned with changes in the attitude, values, beliefs, and motives of the community. The "ethos" of the villagers is basically regarded as acting as a conservative force in the face of planned effort of outside changes (Shwartz 1971:129). Thus the goal of this approach is to change the attitudes, values, motives, and belief systems of the community so that they behave or act in ways which will improve their living conditions. For example, through education it is possible to change their attitude and make them accept innovations. Or, if peasants are exposed to new knowledge, this will change their attitudes about farming and facilitates their acceptance of new practices (Shwartz 1978:240). It is also said that the rise of a peasant's income is not enough to teach him new skills and provide him with new tools, for new technology requires different attitudes on the part of the peasants (Shwartz 1978:240). Howlet argues that, even though individual mobility and community development require such things as economic opportunity, capital and credit, they basically depend on changes, often profound, in attitudes, motives and life styles (quoted in Shwartz 1978:240). Therefore, the underlying assumption is still that values and tradition are major obstacles to the development efforts. Their point is how to change them efficiently.

1.1.2 Universal and local economic models

The critical aspect of our analysis lies on the reasons why it is not believed that traditional economies can develop into more integrated mode of production and exchange. To what extent is this judgement based on objective elements and to what extent on some ethnocentric ideological assumptions?. Gudeman's (1986) contribution to the knowledge of economic models helps us to disclose this second aspect. According to him "...economics and economic theories are social constructions. The central process of making a livelihood are culturally modeled" (Gudeman 1986:vii). He differentiates between "universal model", those used by economists for economical analysis and planning, and "local model", basically those of non-western societies based on specific cultural constructions. Gudeman's main point is

that even the so-called universal model are basically local models assumed to be universal. More specifically, they are a cultural construct which is the outcome of the western specific economical context. Gudeman specifies that to employ Western conceptual tools, the so-called universal models, for the analysis of the economic patterns of non-Western societies is not appropriate. However, this is exactly what is done by many development planners and policy makers. They analyze and judge local models, which are partly identified with tradition, on the background of what they consider universal or objective truth. What they are actually doing is simply a comparison between different ways with regard to the economical processes. No wonder that they find an incompatibility between them, which, in their view, is basically taken as an incompatibility between tradition and development.

1.1.3 A positive attitude towards tradition

Luckily enough there is also a tradition of study which laid much emphasis on understanding other societies and cultures from the people's own perspectives. Particularly, many anthropologists have been preoccupied with formulating appropriate conceptual tools for the analysis of the economies of non-western societies. More recently it became clear, often with the critical contribution of applied anthropologists, that in spite of the theoretical and practical, or applied, efforts to develop the economies of the so called "Third World" countries no significant positive change was achieved. Though it is true that some scholars tend to blame tradition (Foster 1973; McCann 1988; see also Shwartz 1971) for such a failure, there are other who realized that external models seem ineffective for development, conceding that tradition is not only compatible with development but also its legitimizer. (Escobar 1995, Cohen 1982, Mizzau 1988). For instance Gudeman, on the basis of his analytical premises, claims that the evaluation of a development process should be based on the examination of local models, otherwise any attempt to evaluate local cultural constructs from a western perspective is a futile exercise. He adds that local models are not bottlenecks to development:

> These are not, as it is sometimes said, 'externalities', 'constraints', 'cause for failure or political and social blockages' to technological change. The use of such terms implies a valuation based upon Western model. Local models are simply the conditions of and for 'development.' They can hardly be evaluated, unless the observer claims to have privileged knowledge (Gudeman 1986:260).

1.1.4 Widening the field of analysis

Schwartz opposes the 'community-culture' approach to what he defines as the 'ecology-society' in the study of community development (1975:235). This second approach present the advantage to take into account the interrelationship between the community and the wider systems of which it is part at various level - such as the regional, national and international system - in terms of economic, political and cultural linkages:

> If anthropologists must be innovative in their research methods, most anthropologists will continue to work and live in particular locales. Even as we place those locales in larger contexts, we will want to know how these larger contexts affected real people in real places: what was done to those people, What they thought about it, what they said about it, what they did about it (Roseberry 1989:126).

According to this approach economic, social and other decisions are not primarily matters of ideational rules or tradition but rather are rational or necessary, given the available economic resources and environmental constraints (Shwartz 1978:246). The argument is that environment plays a significant role, while culturally constituted symbols are secondary. McEwen argues that when a coalescence of power, wealth, and prestige within a community fall apart, latent cleavages become overt conflicts and community development fails (quoted in Shwartz 1978:249). He further adds that a lack of national level resources, administrative confusion at all levels and inadequate local expedients (e.g. lack of bursary control, skilled personnel, etc.) also accounts for community development failures (quoted in Shwartz:249). The second variant of the ecology-society approach is the intra-community diversity approach, emphasising social differentiation within the community. On this issue Cancian argues that the focus on large system abandons the local emphasis of anthropology and retains the view of peasant communities as homogeneous. Therefore according to Cancian we should give emphasis to the internal dynamism (e.g. the relationship between the rich and the poor) (1976:236).

A great limitation of the ecology-society approach lies in the fact that it regards ideational rules as simply adaptive. The stress on external factors implies that culturally constituted symbols are passive. In other words it assumes that unless external forces (like demographic, environmental material forces, etc) are induced upon them, people don't change their behaviour, which is basically another way of regarding tradition as a static entity. On the other hand the same approach shows that the researcher has to put his attention on both

internal and external factors, because both are key element for the success or failure of any development plan.

1.1.5 The case of the Gibo-Oromo

The study here presented concerns the Gibo peasant community. They are part of the Oromo people in the Oromiya Federal State of Ethiopia (see map 1). This community exactly corresponds with the Gibo Peasant Association (see map 3) of the Bunno Bedelle warada (see map 2), situated in Illubabor administrative zone (see map 1). It is an attempt to address the factors that are constraints to economic development of the study community. I will try to show how the history of economic change of the Gibo area, far from being a process rooted in the interpretation of the Oromo society and their cultural tradition, has constantly been the outcome of the imposition from outside of alien models. I have basically identified different phases. The first phase is due to some specific historical circumstances which led to the imposition of the exploitative abyssinian imperial system. The second one, imposed by the Derg regime after the 1974 revolution, is based on command economy, based on the socialist economic model. Although there was an explicit and planned attempt to increase production and to develop the peasant economy by introducing new technology and by creating the associative condition to sustain the innovation, the result was not less destructive than the previous one. The current situation characterized by the tenure 'policy vacuum' and development activity by some government agencies is also analyzed.

Far from promoting economic development, all historical circumstances and external interventions forced the Gibo peasants to enhance coping mechanisms for the sake of their own survival. Thus the process of economic change in the area can better be qualified in terms of 'defensive response' rather than of a true development of their economic system into a modern one. The result was, of course, a constant and progressive deterioration of the condition of life of Gibo-Oromo peasants.

I will continue chapter I by introducing the Gibo-Oromo, their area, and some element of their social organization. I will also be giving more details on the circumstances and the methodology of the research.

In chapter II I will analyze the change in the land tenure system, from the pre-imperial one, which can also be classified as the 'traditional' Oromo land tenure system, into the imperial one, described as feudal by some authors to stress its exploitative character, into the

socialist system. I will conclude the chapter by discussing the current land use practices. Detailed discussions are also made about the impact of tenure policies on agricultural production.

In Chapter III I describe the agricultural environment and activities of the area, presenting case studies on how peasants cope with a dramatic reality.

Chapter IV specifically deals with government interventions and its impacts in terms of the provision of agricultural services.

Chapter V introduces the labour organizations found in the Gibo community;

In chapter VI the belief system and the ritual practices of the Gibo-Oromo are taken into consideration. An attempt is made to investigate how the people's cosmology and religious practices fit into and influence their production system.

I conclude this study by trying to contribute something to the current debate on land tenure policy in Ethiopia; thereby checking various propositions on the background of the data presented here. Particularly, I try to outline an alternative approach to land policy and development planning, which are the direct outcome of the Oromo peasant tradition as it has emerged during my field-work.

1.2 The research

1.2.1 The research site

Illubabor Administrative Zone is among those parts of the country which have so far been neglected both in anthropological and development studies as well as in economic development terms. Referring to this area, Wood argues:

> "Socio-economic development and modernization have occurred slowly in Ethiopia in comparison to other African countries. In Illubabor such change has been particularly slow and neglected. This province was traditionally regarded as one of the most remote, least developed and difficult to live in; a place suitable for exiling political enemies or the appointing of disgraced officials" (Wood 1977:130).

Since my interest is to study the social and economic life of the peasants, in selecting the specific site, I took into account the following criteria:

(1) relatively strong interdependence of the rural and the urban areas and the impacts of urban centres on agricultural production (e.g. consumers' demand),

(2) diversity of crops grown (cereals and cash crops),

(3) diversity of environmental zones (climate which incorporates both low and highland) and

(4) avoiding roadside and town proximity, in order to find people fully engaged in agricultural production.

I considered Bedelle *waradaa* and particularly the Gibo peasants because they meet the criteria of my research. Gibo is located in Illubabor Administrative Zone. Illubabor Administrative Zone is one of the smallest Administrative Zones of Oromiya. It is bordered on the north and south respectively by the Administrative Zones of Wollaga and Kafa respectively, and in the west by Gambella Administrative Region. The topography of Illubabor Administrative Zone can be divided into nearly equal halves, the eastern zone and the western zone. The eastern zone comprises the vast area of dense tall forest which is a continuation of the great forest area of the northern and western part of Kafa Administrative Zone. The northern part of the western zone from Gore/Dambi to the border of Wollega and Kafa is the most accessible and agriculturally active area (Ethiopian Government 1972:1). According to CSO (Central Statistical Office) [1970] data, this part of the zone comprises about 87 percent of the total population of Illubabor and more than 90 percent of the Administrative livestock. About 80 percent of the cultivated land in the Administrative Zone (estimated at 95,000 hectares) is located in the zone of which 65 percent is in the Buuno District.

Gibo village is located about 10 km north of Bedelle the former capital of Buuno District. Bedelle is accessible both by air and vehicle. It is linked by an all-weather road to Jimmaa, Gambella, Masha and Naqamte. Gibo is bordered by Kusha in the north, Digaja in the west, Ida in the south and Medalle in the east.

Due to lack of recent statistical data it is difficult to indicate the current size of the population. According to Bedelle Agricultural Development Office (BADO) (1995), the size of population in Bedelle subdistrict is 57,678. Out of these 13,175 (6,337 male, 6, 838 female) are urban dwellers, while 44,503 (20,948 male, 23,555 female) live in the rural areas. The majority of the settlers in the urban centre are the Amhara, while the rural areas are predominantly occupied by the Oromo.

1.2.2 Time and organization of the research

After completing the first year courses, in July 1994, I went to Ilubabor for a preliminary survey in order to select the study community and identify the main problems to be analyzed. The main research was conducted after completion of the second year courses, starting from July 1995. I stayed in the study community until December 1995 (for three months).

By starting the actual research in summer, I can say, I have benefited a lot, because I could follow the agricultural cycle from its beginnings. The research time coincided with the peak labour period where households were involved in agricultural activities. This gave me the opportunity not only to observe the activities I was interested in directly, but also to raise questions and discuss issues which were relevant to my research objectives. On the other hand, since people were very busy, it was not always easy to engage in long discussions.

When I arrived at the Gibo village I kept on visiting households, introducing myself and looking for a house to be rented. In the meantime I also told the PA (Peasant Association) leaders to introduce me to the people. I was advised to attend work parties. The first one I have attended was organized by a farmer called Terefe Muleta. Since that occasion we spent a lot of the field-work time together. Terefe was one of my key informants and he provided me with lots of invaluable information. Through him and the rest of my key informants, I managed to know the daily routine of the people, such as agricultural schedule, dispute settlements, religious occasions, etc. Terefe has also made lots of contributions to my research in the process of identifying key informants, religious leaders, wealth categories etc. In reality Terefe was a mediator between me and the community. In order to have also a different perspective I also used to spend my time with other people, spending the night at their place.

Once the village people knew me, they continuously asked me the purpose of my staying there, whether I am a government employee or not, the amount of salary I earn, policy issues related to land, whether they would benefit from my study or not, who sponsored the research, and so on. Since they repeatedly asked me these questions, I had to be consistent in my answers.

Through this experience the more the anthropologist stays with the study community the more he will be acquainted with the culture. It is also true that a researcher should not be in a hurry to know about a given issue like, for example, a private case, particularly

during the early stages of the research, before he gets to know the people well. I came across several cases and at the beginning I found it very difficult to ask about the personal affairs of the people.

I am an Oromo myself and I grew up in another Illubabor locality. The language command gave me a good opportunity to start the research immediately without any communication problems. Especially, I could understand folk terms and other issues that I could have probably missed If I were working through an interpreter.

1.2.3 Research methods

While conducting the research the following data collection methods were used:-

(i) *Participant observation:* The researcher's Personal observation of agricultural practices, division and organization of labour, and inter-household relations in order to understand the dynamics of production in the community.

(ii) *Formal and informal interviews:* informants were selected from different age, sex and occupational groups. Thorough personal interviews, both structured and non structured, were held with selected household heads, elders, PA (Peasant Association) leaders, government officials, development agents and others who directly or indirectly are believed to be influential. Such interviews helped to gather classified information and gain a clearer picture of the community. It was also a good means to reconstruct the past and recent history of the community.

(iii) *Extended case method:* This was applied to study the economic strategies of selected "poor" and "rich" (in terms of socio-economic differentiation), male and female household heads. Here an attempt was made to understand the allocation of resources such as land, labour, and capital. Emphasis was also given to understanding the indigenous knowledge systems and household strategies for example, in times of crisis, drought, flood, etc.

(iv) *Household surveys:* a survey was made in the second phase of the study of the community. 100 % (149) households were covered by the survey. The survey focused on obtaining information on the total number of households in the community, the household composition, labour availability, land ownership and size, number of cattle owned by each household, ownership of farm implements and other relevant matters.

(v) *Secondary sources:* all possible and necessary information were gathered from periodicals and books.

(vi) Mapping and Photography was carried out to locate environmental zones of human habitation and related agricultural activities.

1.3 The environment of Gibo

1.3.1 Temperature and rainfall

Illubabor is found in the Administrative Zones of Oromiya which get the highest amount of rainfall. "The highlands of Illubabor in the southwest face the humid equatorial westerlies in summer and are the wettest part of the country with an average annual rainfall exceeding 2200 m." (Daniel Gemachu 1977:10). Daniel further points out that all the highlands surrounding Illubabor above the elevation of about 1000 m. above sea level receive an annual rainfall of between 1,400 and 2,200 mm. (Daniel 1977:10). Gibo falls under the latter category. According to Bedelle Metrological Station report (1995), from 1990-94 the minimum average annual rainfall recorded was 1546 mm, while the maximum was 1896 mm. The report also indicates that the temperature is moderate and good for human habitation.

1.3.2 Seasons

The are four seasons, locally called arfassa or facassa, ganna, birra and bonna.

(i) *Arfassa* or *Facaasaa* is from February to May. It is a period when the major annual cultivation cycle begins. Starting from this period, preparation of land, ploughing and the sowing of crops such as maize, sorghum and millet takes place. The amount of rainfall rises from 33 mm. to over 80 mm.

(ii) *Ganna* is the period from June to September. The rainfall rises from 200 mm. to 357 mm. The highest record is in July and August. It is a peak season where almost all the households are involved in agricultural activities. The weeding of millet, sorghum and maize, and the ploughing and sowing of *tef* take place during this time. Despite the work load it is also the time when most of the households are short of food supply.

(ii) *Birra* is from September to December. The amount of rainfall decreases from 230 mm in September to 25 mm at the end of December. It is the time during which the flowers bloom and bees collect nectars. The weeding of coffee and the harvesting of crops is carried out during this season.

(iv) *Bona* is from December to February. It is a dry season. The rainfall decreases up to 15 mm. The herders go to distant places in order to look for pasture. Trading, construction of houses and hunting expeditions are carried out during this season.

1.3.3 Flora and Fauna

Despite the intensive clearing of forest under the pressure of increase in population density, particularly in the neighbouring areas, the growing of coffee seems to have contributed to the maintenance of a large number of plant species in Gibo. In fact Since coffee is grown under the shade of trees, people prefer to go to distant areas to collect wood. Today the plant species not only shelter different kinds of wild animals but also play a significant role in reducing soil degradation. The highlands are covered with tropical rain forests, while the lowlands are covered with bushes and tall grasses. Different kinds of plants such as *premna resinosa* (*urgeessaa*), *clematis longicauda* (*lolchissa*), *mesa lanceolata* (*abbayie*) are used for ritual practices, while others are used for the construction of houses, beehives, granaries, tools and traditional medicine.

The prevalence of different kinds of wild animals, pests and birds in the area makes the task of the community twofold. Crops should be protected against wild animals such as fox, ape, monkey, porcupine, pig, antelope, dik dik, rodents pests such as shootfly, armyworm, ladybird beetles and stalk borer. Domestic animals and human beings also need protection against lions, leopards, pythons, hyenas, foxes and even monkeys.

1.3.4 An emic classification of the environmental zones

The research area, despite being relatively small, is characterized by a great environmental diversity. The people identify three different zones of human habitation, with different implications from the point of view of their utilization. They broadly correspond to the temperate climatic zone (*baddaa*), the sub-tropical one (*baddaa darree*) and the tropical one (*gammoojjii*).

(i) *Baddaa*

Baddaa is located between 2300 and 3000 m. above sea level. People prefer to settle in this area since it is cool and good for health and longevity of life. Initially when the different clans (*qomoo*) settled in the Buuno area, there was a strong tendency for the senior clan (*angafa*) to control the *baddaa* environmental zone. In the *baddaa* area heights or peaks

demarcate the territory of one *qomoo* from the ones belonging to others. It is also a place where rituals are performed and different *qomoo* leaders used to gather, including both members of the junior (*quxusu*) *qomoo* or the late-comers that settled in the low lands. Even within the lowlands heights might be selected for ritual performance and territorial demarcation.

(ii) *Baddaa Daree*

Baddaa Darree is located between 1500 and 2300 m. above sea level. In addition to the amount of rainfall it annually receives, the high rainfall in the *baddaa* and the high volumes of run-off water that pass through it have contributed to availability of a number of springs and rivers in the *baddaa darree*. This area is conducive both for pasture and cultivation. During the dry season people cultivate maize using irrigation (*Jal'isii*). Rivers also serve for watering of animals and the collection of *caffee* (tall grass) used for thatching of roof.

Different types of crops and vegetables cultivated in this area include sorghum, millet, *tef*, barely, peas, bean, maize, wheat, potato, onion, garlic, taro, coffee, and cat.

(iii) *Gammoojjii*

Gammojjii is found between 800-1500 m. above sea level. Out of the 149 households in Gibo 109 live in the *baddaa darree*, while 40 households live in the *gammoojjii*. Human and livestock diseases are widespread in this zone. Starting from the *gammoojjii* part of Gibo the amount of rainfall decreases, temperature rises and the *gammoojjii* part extends up to Dhidhesa river. In this area not only big games such as lions, leopards and pythons attack the lowland people but also they move to the highland to attack those peasants living there. Around the river also live the *Waata* who are said to be hunter-gatherers. As the major source of food the *Waata* still seem to depend on hippo (*goldi*). Among the different kinds of crops cultivated in the *gammoojjii* area are millet, maize, cotton, haricot bean, vetch, and *tef*.

1.4 Historical background

1.4.1 The Oromo

The Gibo peasants are part of the great Oromo nation. They are indeed one of the most populous peoples of Africa, spread over an area of some one thousand and six hundred kilometres north to south and one thousand kilometres east to west. They stretch from the

province (now Administrative Region) of Tigray in northern Ethiopia to Isiolo and the Tana river in Kenya, from the Ogaden to the boundary of the Sudan (Hultin 1987:2). The issue of their number is highly politicized and has been controversial. Baxter in 1986 estimates them to be around twenty million out of the Ethiopian population of thirty-five million; as such, the Oromo seems to constitute over fifty percent of the Ethiopian population. In Kenya they occupy a relatively large territory, but scarcely populated, making up a few hundred thousands people. Other Oromo live in Somalia (Baxter 1986; Abagaz 1984; Hultin 1987).

Due to lack of script it is difficult to reconstruct the real history of the Oromo. History of the Oromo was mostly based on the account of missionaries, historiographers and contemporary foreign and Ethiopian non-Oromo scholars. It must also be recalled that, due to economic, political or ideological reasons, the history of a given society could intentionally be overlooked, exaggerated or distorted. In spite of its derogatory name "Galla" (Haberland 1963; Markakis 1974) and of a strong implicit desire to distort their real history, it is now clear that the Oromo are a distinct people with their own culture, living in a geographical setting (Mirgissa 1990). According to Karl Marx a better knowledge of the world help human beings to change it: "The emphasis on the past is not based on altering it, but, from the desire to change the present and the future since the past and present interpenetrate and commingle" (Marx quoted in Byres 1985). In spite of the fact that the Abyssinian[1] (semitic speaking people of northern Ethiopia) have applied the 'divide and rule' policy and successive governments, have tried to change the identity and conceal the history, of the Oromo but they have still maintained their own culture and identity. Ethnographic studies also reveal that the Oromo share "a core of common cultural values and modes of thought" (Baxter 1985, Hultin 1984, Megerssa 1994). As Mirgissa correctly observes (1990), it is common to hear that the Oromo, including the Gibo-Oromo, often use expressions as "Ilman Oromo" (the sons of Oromo), "Affan Oromo" (the Oromo language) and "Biyya Oromo" (the oromo country), stressing common ancestry, common language and common country.

Our better knowledge of the Oromo tradition helps us to grasp the Oromo culture. Berker defines tradition as

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1. Abyssinia refers to a cluster of small kingdoms in northeast Africa, expanded in the mid-1800s by conquering independent nations in the region using firearms provided by European powers (Holcomb and Ibssa 1990:1). Xuxe refers both to a person below the tulla who mobilizes people for funeral ceremonies, and a group of people. One xuxe consists thirty people.

> "... cultural continuity transmitted in the form of social attitudes, beliefs, principles and conventions of behaviour and practice derived from historical experience" (quoted in Johnson 1992:4).

According to Megerssa Oromo tradition is defined as that:

> "which is experienced by the common Oromo known as the knowledge of adda or "custom." And its narrower definition is "the knowledge of the experts, the *hayyuu* ("legal experts") and the *wayyuu* ("expert of the religious and moral values") (1994:238).

Thus Oromo tradition could be conceived as a rich reservoir, the source of their norms, values and belief systems, the symbol of their unity and identity. It is not only a mere representation of their past, but also "the vehicle of their hopes and aspirations" (Megerssa 1994:238).

As I will try to show, far from being static, the Oromo tradition is undergoing changes not only as a result of internal dynamism, but also in response to external factors.

Scholars such as Murdock and Haberland argue that the Oromo were originally sedentary agriculturalists, while Trimingham and Kolhamer assert that they were originally pastoralists.

> "Many elements of primordial culture of the Oromo indicate that they were at first primarily an agricultural community" (Haberland cited in Tesema Ta'a 1980:4). "Although the Oromo were believed to be pastoral nomads before their migration, latter they have adopted agriculture in addition to cattle rearing influenced either by the new way of life they came across climatic conditions of these new settlements" (Trimingham 1952).

According to Haberland some of the contemporary scholars followed the footsteps of their predecessors in characterizing the mode of livelihood originally followed by the Oromo.

> "Ever since the statement of Ethiopian and Portuguese historiographer it has been considered an established fact when the Galla invaded Ethiopia they were "savage" herdsmen living only on their cattle and having no knowledge of agriculture." (1970:2)

I am in doubt that the so-called Ethiopian historiographers and the Portuguese missionaries that came with their own political ends wrote the real history of the Oromo. It is also not clear what they meant by "savage", perhaps it simply meant that they were not christians. According to Marcus the northerners considered the southern people as "... primitives, without cultures and effective government, and as lazy, dirty and warlike heathen who needed the word of God" (Marcus quoted in Donham 1986:40-41). What is striking is that some of the contemporary scholars who followed their footsteps also echo the same thinking. There is no doubt that human societies find themselves under different situations at a given moment in a given historical epoch. What really matters is when there is historical fallacy, when colonialists label a given society as "primitive" and "civilized," when they claim that their mission is a "civilizing" one. In fact this is what the Abyssinians actually did. The appropriate term for this could be what Nietchmann calls "internal colonialism."

> Since many First, Second and Third World states have Fourth World peoples and nations within their claimed territories, it is in the interests of each state to ignore "internal colonialism" against indigenous peoples perpetrated by any other state (Nietchmann 1988:272).

According to Nietchmann there are between 3000 to 5000 nations in the globe, and out of 50 wars 60 % were between states and nations. Referring to the Third World countries he maintains that "Third World colonialism has replaced European colonialism as the principal global force that tries to subjugate indigenous people and their ancient nations" (Nietchmann 1988:272).

"Greater Ethiopia" is an artificial composite Empire that came into being at the end of the 19th century after absorbing developing nations in the area.

> Ethiopia is an imperialist invention consisting of Abyssinian with its colonies held together by institutions that were fashioned by the superpowers in competition for each other for control of the area (Holcomb and Ibsa 1990:11).

After incorporating the Oromo into the Ethiopian Empire, the method adopted by the Abyssinians has been the institutionalization of a "colonial superstructure" (Holcomb and Ibsa 1990, Megerssa 1994). The fall of the Oromo under the colonial rule was a turning point in their history and it was a crisis for the society. With the loss of their autonomy, their economic and social organization, authority and belief systems were also threatened.

> In the Oromo case, the superstructure of the society, the traditional overarching organizing and integrating mechanism *Gadaa*, was overthrown together with the language, the religion and the legal and administrative systems. The territory wide conventions and long-range exchanges among agricultural and pastoral producers were forcefully eliminated. These were replaced by the superstructure of colonial state which implemented a new economic base embodied in the new production relation (Holcomb and Ibsa 1990:116).

Even though some efforts have hitherto been made by some scholars to present the real history of the Oromo, still lots of things remain uncovered, particularly in the social, political, and economic spheres.

1.4.2 The Gibo

The lack of scripts makes difficult to precisely say when the first Oromo settlement in Ilubabor and particularly in Gibo village took place. The fact that different persons in the research area have different views regarding their past history also reveals this fact. My informant Caalaa Hordofaa argues that the area was originally inhabited by the Shekacho. On the other hand, my informant Qano Buli claims that the Shekacho were preceded by the Sheko, which are today referred to as the Omotic people. Lastly Bekele Qabata argues that the place had formerly been "qabiyyee qoraan arba", meaning it is the sanctuary for elephants. The fact that the Shekacho and the Sheko are still found in the same area and that they also are the immediate neighbours of the Oromo show that all the people involved have had strong ties with one another for a long time.

In spite of the slight differences in oral traditions, it seems that the area was probably initially inhabited by the Omotic people. Oral traditions also reveals that before the advent of the Oromo the Shekacho had a strong kingdom in the area. It also seems that without a strong challenge the Shekacho could not have surrendered. Based on genealogical reckoning, Yasin Mohammed (1990) estimates the time of Oromo settlement in Illubabor to be between 1780 and 1800. The first clans who settled in Illubabor were the sons of Tummee. They are Buuno, Bidiruu, Cooraa, Huruumuu, Daarimu, Iluu and Allee. They were said to have come from Wollega (Yasin Mohammed 1990:22). This is also confirmed by my own informants Tullu Dagabaasa and Joote Olqaba.

1.5 Elements of the social organization of the Gibo-Oromo

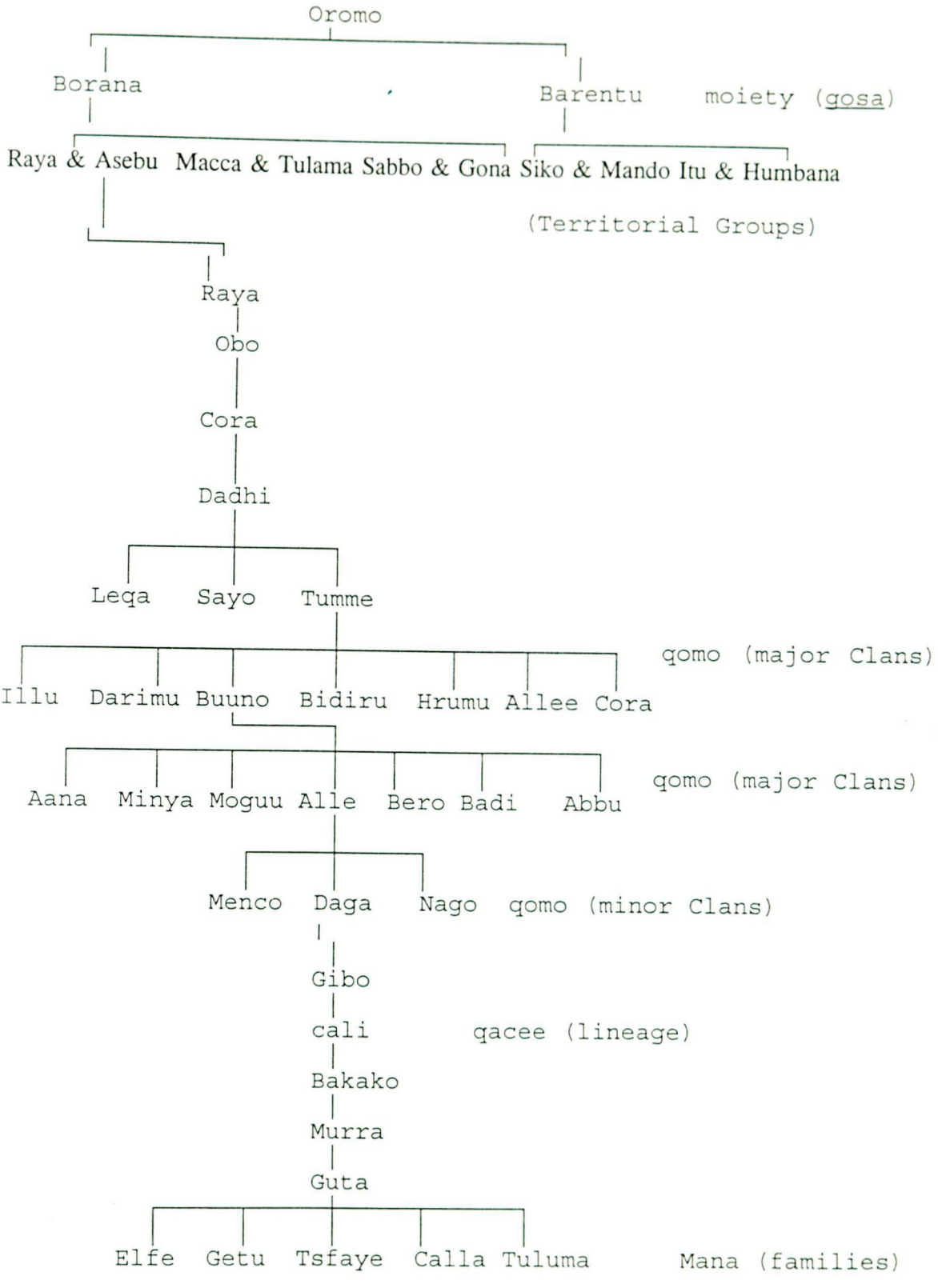
1.5.1 The clan system

The Gibo village is inhabited by the Buuno Oromo. There are five major Oromo territorial groups. These are (1) Macca & Tulama, (2) Rayaa & Asebuu, (3) Saboo and Gonaa, (4) Sikko & Mandoo and (5) Ittu & Huumbana. The Buuno Oromo belongs to the Macca territorial group. (see figure 1). As Hultin correctly observes, the Maccaa Oromo comprises a territorial group which is further divided into a number of named territorial groups.

> "The Maccaa settlement pattern is a bewildering maize of dispersed 'clans' and yet territorial agnatic groups" (Hultin 1984:29).

Most of the time while large territories are named after the pioneering clan, villages tend to have the name of the founding fathers, "the family name". However, the fact that the different groups are spread over a large area and their names tend to overlap, and that most of the people also fail to exactly locate their position in the kinship system make it difficult to distinguish between clans or lineages. "The same names of what anthropologists call "lineage", "clans" and "tribe" tend to appear again and again all over Maccaaland and, all over Oromoland" (Hultin 1984:17).

Figure 1: Subdivision of Oromo Society and Clan and Lineage in Gibo Village



The Gibo community is composed of members of different clans (*qomoo*). They are Ale, Guduru, Nono, Jimma, Ganji, Darimu, Lalo, Talko, Dagoye, Buya and Badi. In Boorana Badi is a lineage (balbala) a division of the Karayyu clan. It is believed that some clans have special power. The Dagoye and Badi are considered *caamsituu*, literally "rain stoppers." The blessings of Dagoye, Badi and Ganji are considered very important, while their curse is feared. Members of these clans play a significant role in marriage, agricultural cooperation and dispute settlement processes. Most of the time when the Dagoye and the Badi mediate disputes, people do not refuse to agree.

It is difficult to obtain precise information about the history of the *qomoo* (clans). Those clans that originally controlled the Buuno Bedelle area are said to be the sons of Buuno called "Arfan Buuno" ("the four Buuno"). These are the Aana, Minya, Mogu and Bero clans. Currently the Buuno are called "torban Buuno" ("the seven Buno"). They are, Aana, Minya, Mogu, Bero, Ale, Badi and Abu clans. There are a number of clans that are considered late-comers. The late-comers are those clans which do not belong to the Aana clans. They are late-comers because they are said to have come into the area after the region had already been controlled by the Arfan Buno. At that time the Arfan Buno established the *tumaa* (the law of the land). Those people who made the *tumaa* were called *guula* (elders/ seniors) and *luba* (juniors). Some informants stress that members of the Badi and Dagoye clans were important in the making of the *tumaa*. They are considered Boorana, senior clans who are still important today, in marriage, hunting expeditions, economic activities, belief systems, dispute settlements and many other contexts. If people are asked about a given issue, for example, as to why they practice a given ritual, even if they fail to provide an explanation they refer to the *tumaa*. "Tumaa Oromo duriti", it has to do with tradition. When the Arfan Buno controlled the area, the late-comers had to abide by the *tumaa* (law), as a condition for settling there. According to Dagabassa Core the Aana clan leader used to annually gather all the other clan leaders and they used to discuss various issues and review the *tumaa*. The *Abbaa Boku*, the leader of the generation-set of the Buno Oromo put the *tumaa* into effect. For example, if there is a murder case it is the *Abbaa Boku*, who settles the dispute. Payment of money to the deceased was followed by rituals, preventing the clans from seeking revenge. This is done through sanction called *guma* (feud price). However according to Bulcha Dabale such a system used to operate during the *gadaa* period. Perhaps among the Gibo peasants,

there used to be a trend similar i.e., the gada system playing an "integrating" role by regulating inter-clan relations and joint exploitation of natural resources.

> "The *gadaa* system plays a key role in integrating those units. The officers in service at any given time at the yaa'a are basically representatives of the major clan divisions. The hayyu's common action and their common residence at the yaa'a *gadaa* symbolize inter-clan unity and cooperation (Bassi 1996:157).

Today the situation under which the clans act as a whole would seem to be revealed during some ritual ceremonies (at *qolloo*, place of worship) or during hunting expeditions. The *tuullaa* (village head) at a village level administer the people on the bases of the *tumaa*. The *tuullaa* were originally clan leaders that were also at the same time founding fathers of the village. For example Gibo Caala the founding father of Gibo village had been the *tuullaa* of the village. The task of the *tuullaa* today is to settle disputes whenever they arise and to carry out funeral ceremonies. He also has the authority to punish wrongdoers. If for example an individual commits theft he could be whipped but before he makes a decision the *tuullaa* gathers the people and present the case. It is only with the consent of the people that the punishment is carried out. The *tuullaa* and the *xuxee* a person who mobilizes people for funeral ceremony, are the ones that carry out funeral ceremonies.

Before the *tuullaa* dies he is expected to announce his successor; in case he does not, the people select the *tuullaa* immediately after the death, at the burial place. Persons with lower status like the T*umtuu* (blacksmith), D*duugduu* (tanner), *Shammaanee* (weaver) and Waata (people that break food taboos) will not be chosen as *tuullaa*. Currently Daggafaa Alabee is the *tuullaa* of the Gibo community. Since the PAs (Peasant Associations) play his role, the *tulla*'s traditional authority is now restricted to the running of funeral ceremonies and to the collection of money from the people for different rituals to be performed.

1.5.2 Marriage

Marriage is an institution which allows a young man to live independently. In order to live independently a young man has to have a wife. The independent life also helps him to control labour. The different clans in the Gibo community are bonded through marriage relationships. A person never marries from his own clan and the clan is exogamous. The people practice polygyny. The residence rule is patrilocal.

There are four forms of marriage among the Gibo peasants. They are *keyata*, *naqii*, *aseennaa* and *buti*. The type of marriage depends on several factors such as social status and economic strength. Lower status persons - such as the blacksmith (*Tumtuu*), the tanners (*Duugduu*), the food taboo breakers (*Waata*) and weaver (*Shammaanee*) - find it difficult to marry those with higher social status. Nevertheless there are some men that have married the *tumtuu* during the Derg.

During the engagement process of the *keyata* marriage the ascendants (*qaccee*) of the couple is reckoned both through the mother's and father's line going back to 7 generations. If a common ancestor is traced marriage is not allowed. However, very recently some violation of this norm has occurred in the Gibo community. Since it is assumed that youngsters could break the taboo, a strong emphasis is placed on reckoning of *qaccee*.

In the process of mate selection, the groom's father selects a mate and informs his son. If the son does not agree, the father cannot force him. But the father could refuse to pay bridewealth. If father and son fail to agree, they may take the case to elders. The elders usually insist that the son should obey his father. After agreement is reached, the father sends a letter to the family of the prospective bride through a go-between. With them he sends the paternal uncle (*wasiila*). Marriage usually takes place between the age of 18 and 20 for both boys and girls respectively. Delay in marriage takes place either because the boy's father is short of money or because the boy may be attending school. Under such circumstances the boy could remain unmarried up to the age of 25. According to my informant Banti Sima, the forefathers used to marry at the age of 40:

> "Now we want our sons to be married as early as possible. If they are to stay in the village they should establish their own family before they become deviants."

Unless a person is in school or is a government employee, he is expected to marry and involve himself in production, otherwise, he will not be trusted and respected in the community. The newly married couple usually stay with the groom's father for a period of at least one year. During this period the couple learn about household management from the groom's father and mother. It is also the period during which the groom's parents provide land which the couple cultivate for themselves. The parents also assist the couple in building their own house and securing household items.

Though the above form of marriage, *Keyata*, is the type of proper and conventional marriage, due to economic, social or other reasons, young men may also resort to other forms of marriage. A *Naqii* marriage occurs when a young man goes with his friends and elders from the Badi and Dagoye clans to the girl's parents and ask them for their daughter's hand in marriage. Those people who practice such a marriage belong to low social status and are those who think either the girl or her parents may not accept the marriage or fear that there is another man interested in the girl.

Asena is a form of marriage arrangement that takes place through the consensus of the boy and the girl. Usually it takes place when a boy is in short of money or wants to marry another wife.

Butii is a marriage by kidnapping, mostly due to lack of money. Such marriage may have serious consequences and is seldom practised. In the process of the kidnapping the groom's relatives and that of the bride could fight and even death may follow.

The most difficult problem a young man faces in marriage is covering the marriage expenses such as the payment of bridewealth, the presentation of gifts and the sponsorship of wedding feast. Since there are no other means of generating income, a young man depends on his father for marriage. For instance Fedhiisaa Mangasha had to incur the following costs for his marriage in 1994:

(a) earrings, fingerings and cloth: 400 *birr*;

(b) bride-wealth: 600 *birr* (a pregnant cow);

(c) gift to brides parents: 500 *birr* (200 coffee trees);

(d) wedding party: 250 *birr*;

(e) gift for brides parents and relatives: 400 *birr*.

Fedhiisaa's total marriage expense was 2,150 *birr*. without any exaggeration a significant amount of money is spent on marriage. "In much of Africa, expenditures on bridewealth, marriage and funerals make heavy demands on resources" (Chambers 1983:116). Chambers further asserts "Indeed, of these social expenditures bridewealth, is the least impoverishing, and can be seen in one sense as an investment for the groom and his family." Once the social bond is established, even though several factors intervene, the groom is not only investing on the additional labour he gains but also for the potential resource that may flow from the bride's family in the future.

1.5.3 Inheritance

Except for land, whose property is reserved to males, both male and female can inherit the property (e.g. coffee plantation, cattle, and so on) of their fathers. For example, reasons for not bequeathing land to females are related to what is called "gadaantuun nu hin dhaltu" meaning "an outsider can not inherit property." Since marriage is patrilocal she is basically viewed as belonging to her husband's kin group. To pass land to her would mean to lose the land.

If a man dies before his sons and daughters are married, the eldest son takes the responsibility of looking after them and after his mother. Because of this, he inherits the father's property. When his sisters and brothers marry, hence when they start living independently, he passes over a share of their father's property to each.

If the father loses confidence in his eldest son, he may distribute his property to his sons, daughters and wife before his death.

Referring to the rights and obligations that link father and son, Hill maintains that

> "Although such factors as family pride, duty and sentiment are often responsible for maintaining the relationship, the matterement of economic security is always important to both parties unless the father is very poor" (Hill 1975:126).

Sons after marriage are expected to help their father in production, especially in sickness and at an old age. However, the elders say it depends on the willingness of the couple to assist the husband's parents. However, this in turn depends on the relationship between father and son. By the time the father dies actual inheritance depends upon the relationship that persisted between father and son. If the relationships had been bad the son may not inherit his fathers property.

There is also a flow of resources from the wife's father to the couple. In this case the actual inheritance depends upon the relationship between the couple and their respective kin groups. The couple has heavy obligations of work for the husband's father-in-law. The latter expects the couple to assist him in production activities like clearing of forest, weeding, harvesting etc. For example the son-in-law is expected to organize *daboo soddaa* (work party of the father-in-law) on behalf of the father-in-law.

The following is a case of inheritance:

Guuta Murra has twelve children. They are Tesfaye, Birqe, Abera, Ilfe, Banti, Ligdi, Asefa, Zanabu, Gete, Worqitu, Ittafaa and Dhugumee. Except Itafa and Ilfe all his sons and daughters are married. Out of the twelve children, Guta bequeathed his property only to five of them. They are Abara, Tasfaye, Birqe and Ilfe. Tesfaye is the youngest son. He inherited 2 pair of oxen, a cow, six *sangaa* (0.75 hectare) of coffee field, and twenty *sangaa* (2.5 hectare of land). Birqe inherited 3 cows, 3 *sangaa* (0.38 hectare) of coffee field. Abara is the eldest son. He inherited a pair of oxen, 4 cows, 6 *sangaa* (o.75 hectare) of land and 10 sangaa (1.25 hectare) of coffee field. Elfe inherited 2 cows, 2 calves, 2 sangaa (0.25 hectare) of coffee. Itafa inherited 2 *sangaa* (0.25 hectare) of coffee.

Tesfaye explained how he managed to get the bulk of the property in the following way: "I organize work parties and help my father in constructing his house, cultivating his crops, and taking him to the health centre whenever he is sick".

CHAPTER TWO

CHANGES IN THE LAND TENURE SYSTEM

2.1 The Pre-imperial land tenure system

According to Beka Wordofa, pre-imperial land tenure system was based on *qabiyyee* (land-holding). Once a given territory is controlled by a given clan, it is the *qabiyyee* of that clan. The other clans or late-comers are expected to look for other *qabiyyee* or they had to ask permission and had to agree to abide by the *tumaa* (law) of that clan controlling the area. The pioneering clans used to distribute land both to their clan members and to others. Except for paying tribute in kind (grains and honey), once settled all the people had the right over land. Therefore, it seems that while in actual fact land belonged to the pioneering clan, *Abbaa lafaa* (possessor of land), it was also collective property. Every member had the right to use and/or inherit land to his children. Oral tradition also confirms that, usually after settlement there had been continuous conflict among the different clans to expand territories. Rivers and hills were serving as a demarcation line between the territory of one and the other. When one of the clans controlled a given area, they made *qotaa* (trenches) around their territory to prevent the enemy from crossing. Fighting used to take place around the *qotaa*. They used horses in fighting armed with spears and shield. The *qotaa* was to stop the horses. When an enemy comes people were mobilized by the sound of *gonoo*, a kind of bell made of wood. Individuals were assigned at an interval distance and operate the *gonoo*, so that all the people in the region can hear the call and be mobilized for war. Probably the emergence of regional rulers such as Abbaa Boraa of Ilubabor, Abbaa Diggaa Abbaa Duulaa of Guma, Abbaa Bogiboo of Limu and Tuuchoo Beeraa of Leeqaa in Wollega could be attributed to the success of one rival over the other. No doubt that the emergence of such regional rulers might have also contributed to the weakening of the traditional political system, the *Gadaa*. After they have controlled large territories, the regional rulers institutionalized a form of administrative hierarchy. According to Dagabassa Tullu below the regional ruler, example, Abbaa Boor, there had been the *Abbaa Qoroo* (local leader) and the *Abbaa Dagaa* (village head). *Abbaa Qoroo* was in charge of collecting tribute and maintenance of law and order. *Abbaa Dagaa* was directly accountable to the *Abbaa Qoroo*. Among the Oromo to be defeated and ruled by the powerful did not mean loss of property or subjugation to slavery by the loser. Nor did it imply tenant-landlord relationship, but rather one of mutual interdependence.

> ...relatives, friends, kinsmen, (Allies), come to settle on these lands as farmers, (colons), as clients, of whom the *abbaa lafaa* (possessor of land), as client patron, and to whom they pay rent. Out of this flows a reciprocity of services, a permanent and shared bond, a tight solidarity which creates a social institution of the greatest vigour. Prosperity and misfortune are shared. The *abbaa lafaa* treats his colones as brothers and protects them as children (de Salviac quoted in Wood 1972:196).

Such type of patron-client relationship is deeply rooted in the Oromo notion of property (land) and the human element. "The principle that land belongs to the one who through his labour has created it was...valid within the Oromo society, but not in relation to non-Oromo group" [Hultin 1984:455].

Among the Oromo referring to land means talking about the history of the people, their social organization, and their belief system. Megersa contends:

> When thinking of the Oromo, we are dealing with a culture in which the people, the language, the land and their belief systems can not be divorced with out doing injustice to the fact that bind them together in the ethnic, communal and socio-traditional dimensions of their existence (1994:234).

Hultin argues that among the Oromo, kinship and the notion of land are closely related. Denial of the father to handover land to his son meant to deny him membership in the decent. "Decent is thus a way of talking about time land and people. A persons identity are defined not only in reference to descent, but also to land....Not only talking about land but, more importantly, the very use of land may be seen as a statement of kinship" (Hultin 1984:454).

The Abyssinians not only failed to take into account this reality, but also introduced an exploitative type of relationship which the Oromo had never encountered in their history.

2.2 The imperial land tenure system

Radical change in the land tenure system took place during the reign of Emperor Menelik. The people that used to fight with horses, spears and shields failed to resist Menelik's army that was equipped with modern arms. As a result of the fight, villages were destroyed and people massacred. A foreigner who visited Illubabor immediately after the colonization records the sight of between 80 and 100 destroyed villages within a distance of 50 km (Michael cited in Wood 1972).

> This was the beginning of economic exploitation by an "imported" feudalist class, superimposed upon indigenous population -- It had a far reaching effect on the latter. They had to perform labour services and to provide slaves or other tributes in goods; their economic organization, even their subsistence base was threatened. Their settlement pattern disrupted (Abbink 1990:4).

According to Hultin the unique feature of the imperial tenure system was its non reciprocal nature.

> In contrast with what is the case in feudal systems, there was no attempt to present the relationship as reciprocal. The peasant paid a large share of his crop not to a patron who in return would offer some material or imaginary service, e.g. protection, but to a war-lord settler, or his descendent or *protege*, who was in control of coercive force (Hultin 1984:451).

Slavery also took shape. "The area was ruined and its vast agricultural potential temporarily destroyed" (Gebre Selassie and Michael cited in Wood 1977). In fact the destruction was so severe that some Oromo left their farms in the highlands and moved into the lowlands where with the help of the lowland people they were able to survive the seven years of famine to which this destruction led (Michael cited in Wood 1977). The occupation army killed Abbaa Diggaa Abbaa Duulaa and took control over the region. Later on, the Emperor's appointee Ras Gobena came and he ordered the people to pay taxes to the government and the people started giving honey in the form of tax. Gradually people were ordered to send their traditional chiefs to the Emperor. The *Abbaa Dagaa* from each clan were sent. For example, Worjii Booqaa, Dungee Abdii and Shuramoo Guutaa were sent from Nagoo, Moguu and Miinyaa clans respectively. Menelik gave them cloth made of wool, a status symbol and a gun called sinadir. Menelik also gave the *Abbaa Dagaa* the title of *balabat* (local chief) and made them administrators of the people and under them he assigned other people by giving them the title of *lagaa* (persons who are directly accountable to the balabat). The task of the *lagaa* was to collect taxes, mobilize people in the construction of roads, bridges, etc. For their service the *balabat* were given 3 up to 5 *qalad* (measured land, i.e. one *qalad* is equivalent to 40 hectares). The *balabat* had direct contact with the government and rules and regulations were put into effect through them. Menelik also issued a land proclamation and sent his army, called *malkanyaa* (soldier settlers). Depending on their rank the *malkanyaa* were assigned land as follows:-

- A lieutenant *malknya* 10 *qalad*
- A sergeant *malkanyaa* 5 *qalad*
- A corporal *malkanyaa* 2 *qalad*
- A solder *malkanyaa* 1 *qalad*

The land to which the *malknya* were assigned was called *lafa dammaa* (the land of honey). The *balabat* supported the *malkanyaa*. The *balabat* ordered the tenants to work for themselves and the *malkanyaa*. For example, the wife of a tenant fetched water, collected wood, ground grains, prepared local beer for the *malkanyaa*, while her husband built houses, took care of gardens, fed mule, ploughed, wed and harvested for the *malkanyaa*. In addition to these, the tenants also had to give money to the *malkanyaa*. Those that failed to do these were sent to prison. The fall of the people under the Abyssinian rulers at the beginning of the 20th century, have seriously affected their lives. Based on his study in the southwestern Ethiopia (Geeraa) MacCann puts the view of his informants in the following way:

> As a result of Menelik's invasion the people faced a shortage of food; they had to feed the army of Amhara's and their officials. The population decreased. People could not exchange their produce in the market.... Those who submitted to the Amhara's pounded the stalk of the bush used for market beer. People had nothing to eat and lost their will and energy (Abbaa Dura Abbaa Bor, Yukro cited in McCann 1995:170).

McCann's study also indicates how the people of Geeraa had at least been self-sufficient in earning their livelihood previously. "The country was not as '*xaf*' (barren, impoverished) as it is now, it was '*lam*' (productive, wealthy) in those days. It was the *malkanyaa* who impoverished it and then left it for Jimmaa, Gommaa, and other places" (Abbaa Bor Abbaa Magal, Chala cited in McCann 1995:170).

During the reign of Emperor Haile selassie except for the changes in *malkanyaa*-tenant relationship, there was no significant change in the land tenure system. Land measurement took place. According to Jalata a man called Tassie was assigned by the government to partition the entire territory by using rope. During the partition out of three *qalad* (unit to measure land) of the land the *balabat* got one. This is known as *sisso*. The remaining two went to the government, known as *yemengist meret* (government land). Tassie himself got one *qalad* out of every ten *qalad* he registered for the government. The 10th he

got was known as *lafa qoraattii*. Government also used to allot land to the army members as a reward for their service, and the land was known as *maderia* meret and to the church (*semon meret*). After the government controlled land in such a way it started to sell land and the priority to buy was given to the *balabat* or their relatives. People that could not afford to buy land became tenants. The *balabat*, holders of the *sisso,* simply paid tax. The tenants paid *irbo* and *asraata*. *Irboo* was 1/4th of the agricultural product of the tenant, collected by the landlords while the *asraata* was 1/10 of the agricultural product of the tenant that went to the government. Gradually the government paid much attention to the centralization of the country. Development processes were directly linked to "Amharaization." According to Messing the method adopted in "modernizing" the country was:

> "Amharization" of Ethiopia, the attempt to convert most of the linguistic and tribal groups to the Amhara pattern. This "Amharization" was linked to a program of "modernization", but has far to go before achieving its end. The portion of the population which identifies itself as Amhara probably does not yet constitute a majority (Messing 1955:166).

In spite of the government's claim to "modernize" the country, tenant-landlord relationship continued and even further hindered agricultural development.

> There is a large class of tenant farmers (about 45 percent of the farmers in highlands are tenants) many of whom receive only a small share of their produce while the majority goes to the landlords. Besides, as the tenants have no protection by law against arbitrary eviction, there is a general lack of security of occupancy by the tenants" (Wetterhall 1968:2).

Wetterhall further argues that, "under the present system of share tenancy (which means that the tenant pays a certain share of his gross yield) the shares vary from 1/4 upwards, and shares of 2/3 are not uncommon. The civil code permits a maximum share of 75 percent" (Wetterhall 1968:2). Referring to the Arsi peasants Cohen (1974:582), argues "The Colonizers built a feudal tenure system and integrated the area into the Empire of Ethiopia with a highly deconcentrated local government system which emphasized extraction, law and order." This clearly indicates that the aim of the government was the extraction of surplus rather than promoting agricultural development. Studies conducted by government appointees in Illubabor in 1974, clearly indicate the distribution of land in the following way.

Table 1: Distribution of land in 1974

	Percentage	Holdings
Gebar	49.3	Mostly soldiers, clergy, and settlers from the north, some indigenous people
Mengist	22.3	Government owned land
Siso	15.6	Balabats and indigenous elites
Maderia	6.4	Soldiers, in return for services to the state
Semon	5.3	Ethiopian Orthodox church
Rist Gult	1.0	conquest army officials, administrative officials
Urban	0.2	Traders and officials

Source: Adapted from Wood, 1977

As depicted in the table, the bulk of the land (49.3 percent) was controlled by the northerners and few indigenous people. Government controlled (22.2 percent). The Orthodox church that came to promote the interest of the ruling class owned 5.3 percent. The annexing armies had 6.4 percent. while the occupation army commanders and the urban elites controlled 1 and o.2 percent respectively. The majority of the indigenous people were under the *balabat* who owned 15.6 percent of the total land. These figures clearly indicate the degree of alienation of the indigenous people from their own land.

The exploitative nature of the landlord-tenant relationship had an effect on agricultural production. Insecurity (eviction of the tenants from the land), lack of motivation on the part of the peasants, in the sense that the more they produced the more they pay to the land lords, the obligation for the tenants to contribute labour to the *malkanyaa* and landlords, etc. were some of the bottlenecks to agricultural productivity.

2.3 The Derg land tenure system

The land proclamation of 1975 brought about radical changes in land tenure system. Under the slogan of "land to the tiller" the regime introduced land use right for the rural people and abolished the tenant-landlord relationship. The measure taken by the Derg government was expected to improve the living condition of the rural masses by increasing agricultural production, ultimately leading to economic development. However the policies issued and their implementation produced negative results. The following sections will try to

indicate some aspects of the policy measures in connection to land and their immediate consequences, particularly their effect on the rural people.

2.3.1 Cooperativization and villagization

Villagization is the process by which households were moved from a scattered homestead to clustered dwellings. The motive behind it was "modernization" of the rural people through the provision of services. After the land proclamation of 1975, government policy was based on the establishment of cooperatives (A process by which people mobilize their resources and cultivate collectively and share the produce) Both in the rural and urban areas. Gibo was among those villages where cooperativization was implemented. Producers' cooperatives were established in 1980. The cooperative members were 28 households. They started cultivating with 11.5 pair of oxen on 11 hectares of land. They cultivated *tef*, maize, millet, sorghum, coffee, peas and bean. The income this producers' cooperative used to generate was as follows:-

Table 2: Cooperatives income from the produce of crops

	Year					
	1973/74			1975/76		
Types of crops	Out Put in Quintal	Unit Price	Total Price	Out put in Quintal	Unit Price	Total Price
Maize	3	21	63	41	24	984
Sorghum	26	25	650	17	43	731
Tef	24	45	1, 080	19	27	513
Coffee	109	27	2, 943	76	27	2,052
Total			4, 756			4,280

Source: Bedelle Agricultural Development Office, 1995

As depicted in the table above, in 1973/74 the income generated by the cooperatives was worth a total capital of 4, 756.35 birr of which 43.78 % of the total capital was spent on the purchase of productive inputs. The expense for social service and bonus was 3.56

percent. 12.40 % and 33.27 % was spent on government tax and the share of members. Only 6.97 % was saved.

In 1975/76 production period the cooperative members earned a total capital of 4, 280 birr. The expense for production inputs was 40.36 % of the total capital. 13.55 % went to the government. 8.26 % was spent on social services, bonus and allowance. The share of members was 37.8 percent. Even though the share of members was based on the proportion of labour contribution, the average annual income of the members during both years was 43.96 and 44.90 birr respectively. According to the report of the MOA member the highest annual income was 58.6.

Table 3: Expenditure of the cooperatives in *Birr*

	Year			
	1973/74		1975/76	
Expenditure	Amount in Birr	%	Amount in Birr	%
Fertilizer	146	3.29	-	-
Equipment	406.50	9.18	1, 727.79	40.36
Oxen	1, 530	34.57	-	-
Government tax	590	13.33	580	13.55
Bonus	10.55	0.2	52	1.21
Social Service	158.90	3.59	87	2.03
Share of members	1,582.88	35.77	1618.41	37.81
Allowance	-	-	214.80	5.0
Total	4,424.83	100	4, 280	100

Source: Bedelle Agricultural Development Office, 1995

In 1990 the government established cooperatives assessment committee from Bedelle Agricultural Development Office and the committee reported the following:-

> During the early years of the establishment of the cooperatives their agricultural production activity had been good. However, since a few years members preferred to work independently rather than in cooperatives. Even though the size of the fertile land they cultivate increased from 11 hectare to 22, there is no improvement in agricultural production. Therefore we have proved that the agricultural performance of individual farmers is better than the cooperatives.

Given the low annual income, the question one could raise is how the cooperative members managed to subsist. I will present the case of Mezgebu Dureso who was a cooperative member.

> Mezgebu is 70 and is married. Two of his wife's brothers used to live with him while he was in the cooperative. When he joined the cooperative in 1980 he had 16 *sangaa* (2 hectare) of land out of which 3 *sangaa* had been coffee plantation, 3 oxen, 4 cows, a bullock, 2 heifers and 1,200 Birr. He gave a pair of oxen and joined the cooperative. Due to cooperativization and villagization the government confiscated his land and the coffee plantation. However, the income he used to earn from the cooperatives failed to support the household. As a result he sold one of his ox and the cows. Due to livestock disease he lost the bullock, heifers and the pair of oxen he gave to the cooperative and became poor. When he left the cooperative in 1991 he got only 60 birr from the cooperative. The government issued a proclamation and the cooperative members gained the right to either continue or leave the cooperatives. In 1990 when a member of the cooperatives applied to leave, the cooperative had 14 pairs of oxen and farm equipment that was the total capital estimated at 4, 454 Birr.

During my field research I tried to consult both ex-cooperative members and non-members. The problems they encountered during the process of cooperativization and villagization were as follows:

People were forced to join cooperatives and if they refused they were not allowed to benefit from any kind of government assistance. For example, access to improved seed varieties, new technologies, weed killers, fertilizer and assistance from agricultural experts were denied. The non-cooperative members were confiscated fertile and flat land and were forced to move to the periphery. As a result, the non cooperative members had to cultivate non-productive areas. The non cooperative members and their family were made to work for the cooperative members, youth associations, and women's associations. They were made to plough, weed, harvest, construct house, etc. Engaging in cooperative activities created problems of household management, like looking after children, cooking, herding, etc. The

share a household gets from the cooperatives depended upon the labour contribution of the household members. Therefore it became difficult for a family to schedule work as they wished. In actual fact the share of the members of the cooperatives was not according to their labour contribution. Office workers who did not participate in agricultural production activities got more. Time-keepers did not properly register the labour contribution of each family and they even gave more points to their relatives. The cooperative scheme also contributed to the disintegration of families. Family heads who had been dissatisfied with the cooperative scheme and faced hardships were forced to migrate leaving their families behind. Due to lack of management families that faced shortage of food did not get their share from cooperatives in time. If an individual wanted to leave the cooperatives he/she was not allowed to claim his/her oxen back. The cooperatives controlled large grazing area and as a result, non members faced problem of grazing land. The non-cooperative members were confiscated their cash crops (coffee and chat). In the construction of houses during villagization, the door which had traditionally been facing the east was made to face the north and this created problems for rituals. Government promised to provide water supply, electricity, grinding machine and clinic but failed to do so. Due to poor sanitation they were exposed to diseases. Their garden was very small, thus, they faced problems in keeping livestock and gardening activities. After the abolition of villagization the ex-cooperative members returned to their original place. As a result the construction of houses consumed their limited resources and labour. Even though they all wanted to return to their original place, the poor, the old and those who could not afford are still at the villagization site.

The case of villagization and cooperativization, in Gibo shows how irresponsible government policy that does not take the existing situation, the values and belief systems of the people into account fails. A forceful implementation of government policy without the consent of the people not only affected the agricultural sector but also the total life of the poor in a significant way. The cooperativization and villagization scheme made families to disintegrate and migrate, and exposed rich and middle peasants to poverty.

Even though the Derg claimed it was promoting egalitarian ideology, the paradox was that after abolishing tenant-landlord relationships it soon institutionalized "centralized exploitation" of the peasants is best described in Margaret Murray's appropriate word quoted in Cameron (1973), "state feudalism." The peasant was just "a serf under the state." Drawing a strong parallelism between ancient Egyptian economy and contemporary societies

(e.g. India), Cameron (1973:60-61) asserts that Egyptian economy "... was neither primarily a slave society nor an individual-estate feudal society but was based on centralized exploitation of the peasants as taxed peasants on the land and as forced labourers."

Apart from forcing the people to join the co-operatives and mobilizing the agricultural work force to the war front, the emphasis laid on the control of the fruit of their labour was also responsible for the "food crisis" in the village. The government acting through the AMC (Agricultural Marketing Corporation) put into effect its price policy based on the grain quota system. Regardless of the topography, cropping pattern, cost of production, etc., people were forced to deliver certain types and amount of grain at a fixed price. Failure on the side of the peasants to deliver the quota levied on them were penalized or forced to sell their productive capital such as their ox. According to Alemayehu Lirenso (1987), the effect of the grain quota system was that in order to meet both their consumption needs and quota delivery, people were forced to sell their livestock or borrow money. Referring to the poor peasants he argues, "The economic loss of poor peasants were greater because of decapitalization of assets i.e., cattle sales." He further argues that, "...both quota requisition and quota delivery, between 1983/84 and 1985/86, were above the estimated marketable surplus of grain from peasant farmers particularly in Arsi and Gojjam, and hence adversely affected peasant consumption requirements and reserves" (1987:132). Thus the *Derg* strategy of capital accumulation was at the expense of peasants' subsistence needs. Under such circumstances peasants not only lost their productive inputs for the next productive season but also became more vulnerable to vagaries of climate.

As is already indicated above, in implementing its policy the Derg followed the footsteps of its predecessors in a new economic context. Even though the Derg promised to equally promote the culture of all nationalities, it still maintained the interest of the few. For example, Article 33 of the constitution quoted in Abbink says "... equal development of all nationalities shall be guaranteed in accordance with the teaching of Marxisism-Leninism." The fact that literacy and schooling was made in Amharic indicates how dubious the constitution was. Based on his study among Dezi of southern Ethiopia, Abbink (1990), puts the view of the northerners on the indigenous people in the following way: "They have a fairly uniform view of the local populations as groups in need of development, civilization, and education." Therefore in order to attain these ends, the Derg waged war against tradition. "Agricultural programs stimulated the abandonment of traditional production systems, mode of social

cooperation and technology" (Abbink 1990 :12-13). The *Derg* policy was directed towards dissolving the "kinship mode of production" (Wolf cited in Abbink 1990:12-13).

In short, as Abbink aptly puts, the Derg policy could be viewed from three perspectives: the economic, political, and cultural. From the economic point of view, it meant "giving up of pastoralism and hoe and digging stick agriculture and adopting plough agriculture, settling in villages, market integration." Its political implication is "the abdication of traditional chiefs as ritual authorities, reorganization in *kebeles* and peasant associations, and further disarmament of the people." Culturally it is "the abandoning of 'wasteful' ritual customs and traditional religious notions; literacy and schooling in Amharic; less polygamy and discouraging 'excessive' bridewealth exchanges, etc.,."

Consequences of villagization and cooperativization are among the major factors that have caused the disaster the people are in today.

2.4 Land contract

It seems that people's expectation of change in the land tenure system led not only to insecurity over land but also made them to treat land as a commodity. Some of the people contracted land to urbanites. People that most of the time entered contractual relations with the peasants were elementary school teachers, agricultural workers and soldiers from the area. It seems that job insecurity forced such people to engage in such contractual relations. Such people had low income. It was easy to get land with a small amount of money through their relatives. Relatives process the contractual agreements with the land owner during critical period, when the man runs short of money. Peasants that contract their land are those with larger plots of land but without oxen. There were also old people who were poor and retired. The contractual agreements were made for 3 years. The person who gives his land in contracts receives 100 birr for 8 *sangaa* (1 hectare) of land. The type of land that is usually contracted is a land on which coffee is grown. The contract is renewable. A contractor could add some money and take over the ownership of the land. Since the government employees live in the urban centres, their relatives arrange work parties and cultivate the land on their behalf. The contractual arrangements are most of the time done underground and officially it is said share-cropping arrangement. Shortage of grazing land and fragmentation of land are also among some of the problems that the people face.

2.5 Land disputes

During "policy vacuum" of the EPRDF, people's expectation for change in the land tenure system and their feeling of insecurity about ownership of land led people to compete for resources and enter into conflicts. Even though poor documentation makes it difficult to get accurate data, by examining some of the existing documents, through consulting elders and PA leaders and attending legal cases for two months, I have tried to come up with some of the sources of disputes. The causes of conflict were:-

(a) Border conflict within the village. (b) Former landlords claiming back the land they used to cultivate during Emperor Haile Selassie. (C) control over plots of land which belonged to landlords, and those which were reserved for forest and grazing by cooperative members. During the disintegration of villagization and cooperativization the cooperative members agreed to return to their former land but some of them still wanted to simultaneously secure their former land and the one they got through cooperativization and villagization. Some individuals contracted their land while others complained about shortage of grazing land. (e) Based on the information they obtained from government agents females claimed the transfer of land-use right. (f) Those who migrated to different villages during villagization and cooperativization came back and started to claim the land they used to cultivate. (g) Those who claimed for the removal of the cash crops (chat and coffee) from the land they owned confiscated and given to others as a result of villagization and cooperativization scheme. (h) When land is left fallow by individual owners some other people planted cash crops (coffee and chat) without the knowledge of the land owner, hence the owners claimed back ownership of the land. (I) Claiming for the return of land which was given to ex-soldiers. (J) Conflict over grazing land. (k) Conflict between father and sons. Sons cultivating their father's land without permission.

Table 4: Cases of dispute at the PA court

	Year		
Dispute Cases	1993	1994	1995
Land	2	4	30
Crop Destruction	--	2	3
assault	--	1	1
Theft	--	--	3
Total	2	7	37

Source: Compiled from PA file, 1995

Out of the legal cases presented to the PA legal section between 1993 and 1995, thirty six cases were land disputes, three theft, two assault and five crop destruction either by cattle or human beings. In 1993 only two cases were related to land dispute. In 1994 only four cases were land dispute and one case was assault. In 1995 thirty cases were land disputes, one assault, three theft and three crop destruction. Covert conflicts changed to overt ones particularly during the Transitional Period and most of the cases of conflict were land related issues. It seems that there was relatively relaxation of agrarian tension around the fall of the Derg regime. This could probably be attributed to the Policy declaration of the Derg (1990) that recognized transfer and use right of land. Some of the arguments of persons claiming fallow lands they cultivated without the knowledge of the former owner runs as: "There is no government policy that says destroy the cash crop grown and return the land to the owner." When female claim land they too argue that the Transitional Government treats male and female equally and say that they have use right over their father's land. Basing themselves on information they obtained from government agents some argue that, "The Transitional government stipulates that if a man has cultivated land from 3 to 4 years during the Derg, the land belongs to him." Similarly others argue that "The Transitional Government did not say leave your land." Thus, these and other types of arguments make the decisions of the PA leaders very difficult.

2.5.1 Settlement of disputes

There are three ways by which disputes are settled. These are through (1) elders, (2) PA legal committee members and, (3) the court. The PA legal committee members gather every Sunday. In addition to the PA legal committee members there are two men that are elected by the people and are called *Jaarsa biyyaa* (elders of the land). When individuals present their cases the first step taken by the PA legal committee members is to direct the case to the *jaarsa biyyaa* to settle the dispute. If the opponents agree in the idea of presenting the case to be settled by *jaarsa biyya*, both parties add other elders who know the details of the matter to help in the arbitration process. If the opponents do not agree with the idea of mediation by *jaarsa biyyaa*, the PA legal committee members consider the case. There are no clear rules and regulations as to how to settle the disputes. In the case of the court, the man that presents the case brings three witnesses, the witnesses take an oath in the name of God. However, some individuals also ask the witnesses to take an oath according to tradition, in the name of the *Boorana* and finally the PA legal committee members consider the case. It is only when individuals do not agree with the decision of PA legal leaders that they appeal to the court.

With problems such as theft, crop destruction, etc. if it is not possible to identify the culprit they appeal to PA legal committee members to organize an *afarsaataa*. *Afarsaataa* is the Abyssinian means of identifying persons that commit crime without being recognized. In organizing *afarsaataa* authorities gather people and undertake the investigation. Individuals are cross questioned in an effort to solicit confessions. If the *afarsaataa* fails to identify the person that committed the act, the Daggooyyee, Badii or Ganjaa clan members will curse the unknown person. It is believed that such a curse will punish the unknown criminal. It is difficult to obtain accurate data due to poor documentation. However, most of the cases, like border conflicts, insult, assault, theft and crop destruction are settled by elders. Cases relating to villagization and cooperativization are either settled or pended by PA legal committee members. Out of 37 cases, two appealed to the court. One was connected to villagization and the other was concerned with a woman claiming her father's land. Even if some individuals do not agree with the PA legal committee members decision, the time and resource hinders them from appealing to the court.

Among the factors that influence the decisions of PA legal committee members are:- (1) Government, (2) The status of an individual in the community and, (3) Individuals exposure to urban life and their legal knowledge. In making decisions PA legal committee members are afraid of the state machineries like the court and the police. According to Dagabaasaa if a person does not agree with the decisions of PA legal committee members and appeals to court, the court can call the PA legal committee members and ask them on what ground they made decisions and even can imprison them. Individuals that have more relatives or are rich could influence the decisions of PA legal committee members. The relatives of the individual informally approach the PA leaders and can influence them to decide in favour of the party they favour. Failure on the part of the PA committee members to decide in favour of such party could lead to revenge. For example, rich people may find faults with PA leaders and mobilize people against them, and can even go as far as destroying their crops. Rich people can also approach the PA leaders asking to convince their opponent to receive money and drop the case. Particularly the poor peasants are victims of such a practice. With the help of urban elite, especially those with some sort of legal knowledge and through association with local political leaders, an individual could influence the decisions of PA leaders. The PA leaders are afraid to go against the interests of such persons.

2.6 Fragmentation of land

According to Shukla, fragmentation of land occurs when "land held by an individual comes to be scattered throughout a village in small plots or fields and does not constitute a contiguous block" (Shukla cited in Kaiwar 1992:282). Some scholars may regard fragmentation of land as a positive process. But such a view does not go with views of the peasants I have been working with.

Dessalgn Rahamato attributes fragmentation of land in Ethiopia to what he calls "fragmentation consciously undertaken by peasants, and that was imposed on them by circumstances, custom or other factors" (1994:10). According to him the former took place during the Derg in favour of equitable distribution and choice of peasants while the latter took place as a result of inheritance and increase in population size. "The redistribution measures during the Derg which allowed scattered plots was consciously chosen by peasants, the justification behind it being greater equity and fairness." However my finding indicates that it was not by their own choice that the Gibo peasants have left the flat and fertile land for the

periphery, thereby greatly contributing to the fragmentation of land. Dessalgn explains the view of Ethiopian peasants in the following way "Some of the reasons why Ethiopian peasants prefer dispersed plots" include minimization of crop failure, exploitation of different micro ecologies, a source of flow of crops from different locations, provision of the opportunity for multiple cropping (1994:10). While Dessalegn's argument has an element of truth the generalization on behalf of the Ethiopian peasants is misleading. For example, according to my survey out of 149 households only twenty percent were in favour of fragmentation.

The causes of fragmentation of land in the village of study are (1) tenancy, (2) Cooperativization and, (3) kinship relationship. During Emperor Haile Selassie, as a result of tenant-landlord relationship, the landlords used to compete with each other. The aim of the competition was *maaqnat* (to make land conducive for cultivation at the expense of the tenants). The tenants clear forests, plant different cash (coffee) and food crops. If peasants are able to pay irbo and *asraata*, they could reach agreements and cultivate the land of different landlords. Either landlords provide land to tenant at different places or the peasants could cultivate the land of different landlords. Tenants are not the ultimate beneficiaries in the process of *maaqnat*. But it gives them access to fertile land, increase the size of their plot, and allows them access to trees for honey production, construction of fences and houses, etc. On the other hand it also helps the landlords to have more land ready for agricultural production and creates a chance for them to earn more money through *irbo*. During the *maaqnat* peasants were not only expected to cultivate food crops but also cash crops like coffee. The consequences of forcing peasants to plant coffee will be discussed under the next chapter.

During the Derg, as a result of land proclamation of 1975, people started to cultivate the already fragmented land they had. Causes of fragmentation of land were (1) the distribution of land (both irrigable and non-irrigable) to the peasants, that has formerly been used by landlords. (2) During cooperativization and villagization government confiscated land from the non-cooperative members and sent them to the periphery, and this is currently the source of conflicts among the people. Although fragmentation of land as a result of kinship relationship is not significant, there are some individuals that have plots of land they secured through the transfer of land-use right at different places. For example, a man secures land from his father and his maternal or paternal uncle if there are no other persons that claim the land. Others could also secure land through marrying widows. According to some of my

informants the advantages of fragmentation are: (1) diversification of crops. Since the type of the soil varies, it gives good opportunity to grow different kinds of crops and reduces risk. For example, if one type of crop on a given plot is damaged by wild animals or natural calamity, there is a chance for other crops that are grown on other plots to thrive, (2) helps land to regenerate and, (3) helps in having access to fertile land.

On the average the distance of farmers plots from their homestead is 20 minutes. The time an individual starts on-farm activities depends upon the proximity of his plot. A man whose plot is too far from his homestead starts on-farm activities at about 9:30 AM or later, while a man whose plot is near his homestead starts working at about 8:30 AM. The former has to eat his breakfast since he doesn't expect to have lunch, while the latter could be served any time. The former is obliged to carry his farm equipment and drive his oxen to a distant place, and should take care for other people's crops that they might not be damaged by his oxen on his way to the distant farm. After the completion of on-farm activities he also has to take back the farm equipment and dispatch the draught animals. During *daadoo* and *daboo* females carry the food and drink prepared to such distant plots. Crops are guarded both during the day and night. Therefore, families have to allocate labour to different plots. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine the problems that families without working age children face. Had it not been for the fragmentation of land even families with working age children would have used the available labour for other production activities. The lack of community grazing land and the fragmentation of land also create problems in herding. The presence of a number of plots that belong to other people near the homestead of an individual not only makes it difficult to graze cattle around the homestead, but also makes it difficult for the farmer to get a way through which he drives his livestock to other areas where he could graze them. One has to take much care not to damage other people's crops. Fragmentation also makes evaluation difficult regarding performance of crops on different plots. Since crops are vulnerable to wild animals, pests, rodents, natural calamity, etc. work load and other factors hinder the follow up of the condition of crops on different plots. Some of my informants who are in favour of consolidation of land express their fear that consolidation of land in the form of cooperativization and villagization would lead to the confiscation of their cash crops like coffee and chat.

Table 5: Arable Land Holding / Family, 1995

Land Holding / Sangaa	Total No. of Households	% of Total
Nil	16	10.73
under 8.0	26	17.44
8.0 to 15.9	55	36.91
16.0 to 23.9	24	16.10
24.0 to 31.9	15	10.06
32.o and over	13	8.72
Mean	14.5	

Source: Compiled from field data, 1996

As represented in the table above, the finding indicates that 10.73% of the households had no land. These include ex-soldiers, who were not tenants and those whose land was confiscated for the establishment of school. 54.35 % had less than 2 hectares of land against 34.80 % who had 2 or more hectares. The statistical finding also indicates that there was unequal distribution of land. In spite of the disparity in the size of land, it does not seem that land is a limiting productive factor.

In a country where the urban economic sectors are at a low level of development, urban "pull" factors are less significant. The chance of the rural people to be attached to land in order to earn their livelihood is greater thus creating pressure on land. Land is the main productive factor and this is also an indicator of socio-economic differentiation. According to Hill (1982), while rural inequality in the "relative living standard" of households, any attempt to estimate the income of the households under the "dry grain mode" is a futile exercise for rural households have no time to conceive in such terms. "To the extent that cultures differ, ideas of what is "wealth" will also differ, all such theories find their sole justification in their own systems of values, and cannot appeal to any "economic fact of life" (Hill 1982:67). Therefore in an attempt to understand rural income, emphasis should be laid on the native's perspective, "the village standard."

In the village, in terms of wealth households are labelled as "rich", "middle", and "poor" with respect to landholding. However, the possession of land is also associated with productive factors such as draft ox and coffee plantations. The statistical finding indicates that households that were considered as rich (8.72 %) had 4 hectare or more. 26.16 % and 65.12 % that were considered as "middle" and "poor" had less than 4 and 2 hectares respectively. The fact that a small proportion of the households had a substantial size of land as compared to those who do not have land or with less than 2 hectare shows the relative advantage of the former over the latter. While the rich are in a good position in the faces of stress, more than half of the households in the village were vulnerable to vagaries of Climate. This also indicates the structural dependence of the poor (particularly the landless) on the rich. "... effective landlessness amounts almost to a condition of economic disenfranchisement in the village" (Hill 1982:67).

In spite of the uneven distribution of land, the fact that large proportion of the households had less than 2 hectare also indicates that land was becoming a scarce resource. While it was not difficult for young men who left school to establish themselves as farmers, the lack of full-time non-farm employment opportunity led them to totally depend on their fathers. Thus contributing to the diminishing size of land.

CHAPTER THREE

AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

The Gibo community are sedentary agriculturalists who depend almost entirely on the production of food crops. Livestock rearing and coffee production are other means of income supplementation. They play a significant role in economic transactions, belief systems, interpersonal and intergroup relations. Hunting and bee-keeping are of minimal significance.

3.1 Types of land

People identify three types of land. They are, (1) *Borqii*, (2) *gadoo* and (3) *hossoo/xaaoo*. The fallow cycle is *borqii-gadoo-hossoo-borqii*. Land is left fallow due to a decrease in productivity. This is called *borqii* (infertile). The length of the years a given land is left fallow depends on the size of productive land area that household has. In *Gammoojjii* (tropical) where land is relatively abundant, land is left fallow from 7 to 10 years. In *Badda darree* (sub-tropical) it is left fallow for four years. The land which is left fallow from seven years up to ten is called *hossoo* (fertile) while, the land left fallow for four years is called *gadoo* (medium-fertile). People identify *hossoo* by looking at the types of trees and grasses growing on it. When plants like (*acacia verrugerasondii*) and *lantana trifolia* (*kusaie*) grow and grasses disappear the land is said to be *hossoo*. It is said to be *gadoo* when types of grass like *kosorruu* grow on it. They are also aware that if cattle graze the land which is left fallow, it never becomes fertile. Crops first cultivated on a *hossoo* land are either maize or millet. If they initially sow *tef* it becomes tall and is affected by wind. The yield will also be very small. The number of years a land is cultivated depends upon the number of years it is left fallow. A land left fallow for seven years could be cultivated for seven years using crop rotation. In crop rotation system, the first crop cultivated is *tef*, followed by millet, sorghum, and maize. The fact that, *tef*, sorghum, millet and maize are cultivated in rotation indicates that the people are not using leguminous plants (nitrogen fixation) that has effect on the fertility of the soil.

3.2 Soil and soil conservation practices

People identify three types of soil: mixture of red and black soil (*boralee*) black soil (*biyyoo gurraacha*) and red soil (*biyyoo diimessaa*). According to them *biyyo gurraacha*,

which is found on flat land is good for cultivation. *Biyyoo diimessaa* is found on sloppy areas and is a poor soil and needs fertilizer and the land has to be ploughed more than three times before a given crop is sowed.

People are aware of soil degradation. In order to conserve soil they make cut-off drain on the on-farm. Regasa described their conservation system in the following words:

> It is said that our forefathers used to ask people wether they have cultivated their land or not. Some People told him that they have cultivated large plots of land, while the others told that they have cultivated small plots. Again the forefather asked them wether they have cut branches of trees and made cut-off drains on their on-farm. The former replied that they did not, while the latter told him that they have done. The forefather appreciated the latter and told them that they have done well. Therefore, in soil conservation we are now following the footsteps of our forefather.

Even though, such practices are very interesting and is something to be encouraged, the method should be improved since they simply put the cut-off drains on the on-farm and not on the water catchment.

Beqelle argued how agricultural productivity is determined by several factors in the following way:

Qotee hinjajin!	Do not admire ploughing!
Lolaa baasee jaji!	Admire conservation!
Lolaa baasee hinjajin!	Do not appreciate conservation!
Aramee Jaji!	Admire weeding!
Aramee hinjajin!	Do not appreciate weeding!
Makaree jaji!	Appreciate harvesting!
Makaree hinjajin!	Do not appreciate harvesting
Qusatee jaji!	Appreciate saving!

The lack of resource management policy particularly with respect to land has brought about soil degradation. Either in search of fertile land or to make charcoal (particularly ex-soldiers) and to sell fire wood, forests are continuously cleared. Government forest that has been reserved by the *Derg* was intensively cleared particularly during the fall of the regime. Households that lack oxen and cultivate with hoe prefer to cultivate on sloppy areas than on flat lands because it is easier to cultivate. Therefore the cumulative effect of such factors has led to the infertility of soil and unpredictability of weather. Thus in order to cope with such environment, people have devised different strategies in cultivating crops.

3.3 Unpredictability of the weather

Due to the unpredictability of weather crops are identified and planted on the basis of their stay on the field. The following crops stay on the field as follows: a type of maize called *boshee* (6 months), millet (7 up to 8 months) and sorghum (7 months). These are cropped early, since they could be affected by drought if they do not get ample rain. Early cropping is determined by the availability of oxen, labour and the types of soil. Households that have oxen and sufficient labour can cultivate earlier than households that lack these things. Households that lack oxen either should enter share-cropping or have to wait to be assisted by those that have oxen. They should wait until those who have oxen have cultivated their land. Poor people cultivate *tef* called *daphii* which is cultivated after all other types of *tef* are sown. *Daphii* stays on the field for three months. Consumption wise it does not sustain the household long and cannot resist drought. Most of the households do not want to take risk in cultivating it, however, the poor have no choice. Households that have *borqii* (infertile) land are expected to cultivate early than those that have *hooso/xaaoo* (fertile) land. The infertile land has to be tilled a number of times before crops are sown. Based on experience over the years (since 1948) some of the elders mentioned how unpredictability of the weather brought about changes in their cropping pattern. Changes in the cropping pattern are as follows:-

Table 6: Cropping patterns before and after 1948

Types of crops cultivated	Time of planting before 1948	Time of planting now
Maize	Bitootessa (March)	Adoolessa (April)
Sorghum	Adoolessa (April)	Caamsaa (May)
Millet	May (Caamsaa)	Waxabajii (June)
tef	June (Waxabajii)	Ebila (July)

Source: Compiled from field data

As I have mentioned earlier, in the face of stress households that lack oxen, labour and land are forced to devise different survival strategies. Share-cropping is among those mechanisms.

3.4 Share-cropping arrangement

Households that enter share cropping are, those that have land but no ox, seed or fertilizer. Some have neither land nor oxen. Others have an ox or a pair of oxen.
(i) Households that have an ox each join their oxen called *qindeessuu/qaroo* and cultivate either of their land and share the produce equally and is called *qixxee*. Most of the time such kind of dealing takes place from within the village. (ii) when some households are short of seed or fertilizer they take from the urban dwellers. Oxen, and land being from them they cultivate and share on *qixxee* basis. (iii) households that are either short of or lack land cultivate for those people that have land and oxen and share the produce equally.

3.5 Major crops grown

Major types of crops grown are maize, millet, *tef* and sorghum. Supplementary crops grown are peas, beans, barely, taro, Cassava, potato, onion, garlic, *qoccoo* (false banana), banana, cabbage, flax, tomato, pepper and coffee.

3.5.1 Maize/*boqolloo*

To cultivate maize, land preparation and tilling takes place in the month of February. Depending on the availability of rain, maize is sown from March to May. There are three types of Maize. They are *boshee*, *awaasaa* and *oromee*. *Boshee* is tall and indigenous. It is harvested within 6 months. It has to be cropped early in March. The longer the delay the less the yield will be. *Boshee* could be grown anywhere. It grows in all types of soil. The second type of maize, *awaasaa* (probably a variety from Awaasaa region), is short, sown in May. It ripens within five and half months. This could also be grown on any type of soil. *Oromee*, is sown in the month of May, and is harvested within five and half months. Even though, it resists drought, it does not last long like *awaasaa*. It requires fertile land or manure. Maize is the staple food of the people. It plays a significant role in supporting the households particularly from June up to December. These periods are critical moments for most households. It is a period when households are both short of money or grain supply. It is a time when most households sell their livestock, borrow money on interest called *araaxaa* (usury). Maize cultivated through the use of irrigation supports the households particularly in the months of June and July. Starting from the end of July they start using the maize they have grown around their homestead and later on use the ones they have grown on different

plots. In such a way they reach December when most of the crops like *tef*, millet, sorghum and coffee are cultivated. Maize has also high market demand since it is used to prepare *araqee* (local alcohol) which is highly consumed both by the urban and rural people.

3.5.2 Sorghum/*mishinga*

There are three types of sorghum. They are *anciroo* (white sorghum), *gophee* and *gabaabee*. *Anciroo* is sown in March and is harvested within seven to nine months. It could be grown on medium fertile soil. It is good for consumption and marketing. *Gophee* (red sorghum) is sown in March and is harvested within seven months. It could be grown on medium fertile soil. It is used both for consumption and marketing. *Gabaaabee* is sown in May and is also harvested in seven months. It needs fertile soil.

3.5.3 Finger millet/*daagujjaa*

The cultivation of millet is labour intensive. Before sowing, the land has to be cleared and tilled three or four times and has to be left for fifteen days. This is known as *gofoo*. During sowing it is tilled and cut-off drain is made on the on-farm. Then it is weeded after fifteen days and again cut-off drain is made. After another fifteen days it is weeded and finally harvested. Millet also needs fertile land. Since it is labour intensive and the yield is low, they do not cultivate on a large scale. Millet could be kept in granary for a long period of time.

3.5.4 Tef

Just like millet *tef* is also labour intensive. Land is prepared in June and is tilled 3 or four times and is left for fifteen days to make it *gofoo*. To sow the land has to be again tilled and the weeds removed. This is called *meesaa*. It is during the *meesaa* that more labour is needed. Unless the weeds are thoroughly removed the yield will be very low. Due to shortage of labour the weeds are piled on the already tilled land. This land could have been used to grow *extra tef*. *Tef* is sown from July to the middle of August and harvested in November. There are 5 types of *tef*. They are *qocee*, *daraar diimessaa*, gomojoor, daaphi and *daalacho*. Despite its labour intensive nature, *tef* is cultivated by every household. Its less vulnerability to wild animals, pests and rodents, its capacity of staying long duration in

storage, tolerance to the unpredictability of weather, makes it important to the farmers. Households pay government taxes by selling *tef*.

Table 7: Agricultural production cycle

Types of crops	Time of Ploughing Crops	No.of Times Ploughed	Time of Planting	Seeding Rate Kg/ha.	Time of Weeding	No. of Times Weeded
Tef	May-August	4	July-August	40	August-Sept.	2
Maize	February-April	3	March-April	40	May-August	3
Sorghum		4	April	20	June-July	1
Millet	May-June	3	May	50	August	1

Source: Bedelle Agricultural Development Office 1995

Just like the unpredictability of weather, shortage of land, labour, oxen, etc. affect agricultural productivity. The yield a household gets from a given land depends upon the degree to which crops are protected from wild animals, pests and rodents.

3.6 Crop Protection

Crops are vulnerable to a number of wild animals. Therefore children and adults play significant role in guarding crops. Particularly households whose farms are in the periphery face serious problems. To overcome this, households whose plots are close to each other have established a group which consists of seven to eleven people called *adaree*. They also have a group leader called *abbaa ulee*, who is nominated by the group to control the activity. If a member's crop is damaged during the turn of an individual the group leader takes the case to the elders and the individual whose turn it is pays money to compensate for the crop damaged. The task of women in the allocation of available labour is also very important. When the husband goes to on-farm activities, in addition to household activities, wives are expected to send the children to different plots to guard crops and supervise them. Unless attention is given to the guarding of crops, it could be damaged within a few hours. Therefore, it would seem that, the nature of the work load makes child labour important, and limits most of the households from sending their children to school. Types of crops and the kinds of wild animals, rodents and pests to which crops are vulnerable are as follows:-

Table 8: Types of diseases, pests, rodents, animals and weeds that attack crops and vegetables

Types of crops & vegetables	vulnerable to					
	wild animals	rodents	pests	diseases	weeds	others
maize	fox, tirign ape, bird porcupine, monkey, pig	rat	stalk borer & army worm	rust & smut	tufo, kelo & muja	dog, cattle,
tef	monkey, tarapisa	rat	shootfly army worm & ladybird beetles	damping	tufo & kelo	cattle
millet	pig, ape, monkey, porcupine, antelope, dik dik	rat	shootfly ladybird beetles & army worm	damping	tufo & coqorsa	
Sorghum	bird, pig, ape, monkey, fox, antelope, porcupine	rat	ladybird beetles, stalk borer & army worm	rust & smut	tufo, maxaxo & sidisa	
barely	bird	rat	army worm			
peas	antelope, porcupine, bird, ape monkey	rat	army worm			
qoccoo	porcupine	tuqa				
taro			cholera[2]			
tomato	porcupine		cholera			
haricot bean	porcupine		cholera			
pumpkin	porcupine, ape		cholera			

Source: compiled from field data and BADO 1995

2 Locally cholera refers to kinds of diseases that dry and rotten crops and vegetables

Just like the guarding on the fields, after harvest, grains should also be protected from moisture and rodents.

3.7 Storage

After harvest grains are put in granaries that are locally constructed. Depending on the yield either the old ones are used or new granaries are constructed. Granaries are constructed by the households themselves. Pieces of wood are placed at the bottom and are tied together, then it is constructed upwards from the base. In constructing the wall they use wood materials that are tied with rope. The granaries used for *tef* are washed with a cow dung. Those of millet, sorghum and maize have air outlets. Since millet and *tef* are not vulnerable to weevils they could be stored for a long period of time. Maize and sorghum are vulnerable to weevils and are stored for a shorter period of time. During the first round of my field work, most households were short of food and they themselves were forced to buy grains from traders in Bedelle. It was the time when the price of grain was very high. At the end of June the price of a quintal of maize was 140 birr. In the month of October after the harvest, the market price of a quintal of maize fell to 60 birr. My interest was to know why most of the peasants sell their maize produce when the price is low. Some peasants sell because they are short of money. The majority sell because maize is vulnerable to weevils and rodents. There is also the danger of losing all the grain if it is stored for a long time.

Since the yield of crops households get from their land is determined by availability of land, oxen, labour and the degree of crop protection, etc. some households face food shortage. In order to meet their subsistence needs some households devise different survival strategies.

3.8 Agricultural production and coping mechanisms

Some households run out of grain before harvest, therefore, they devise different coping mechanisms. I present the cases of Yanfaa and Terefe as follows:-

> Yanfa is 30. He was brought up by his father's sister. He left school from 5th grade. He is married and has two sons and three daughters. The sons are 13 and 9, while, the daughters are three, five and seven. He married because he needed help and because people don't trust the bachelors. Both Yanfaa and his

wife participate in *daadoo*. He has no oxen, as a result, he got into share-cropping arrangement. He also practices hoe agriculture. During the 1994/95 cultivation period, his father's sister, Degefa and Regasa helped him in providing oxen and lending him money. He also assists them in weeding and harvesting. During the same production year the crops failed. He couldn't support his family. He attributed this to his lack of ox because if he had had ox he would have cropped early. Yanfa therefore, had been forced to buy grains. He managed to survive by selling goat which he rears on *qixxee* (to keep somebody's goat and to share her offsprings), borrowing money in cash other things in kind and by renting out his turn during the *daadoo*.

According to Yanfaa the rich grows richer while the poor grows poorer. According to him the situations which do not allow the poor people to become rich are their background. For example, according to him poor people are;

(a) those individuals whose fathers do not grow coffee.

(b) those whose fathers did not control flat lands and that cultivate on hill sides or that were short of land. Terefe is also considered a poor person among the community.

Terefe is 30. He left school from grade ten. He was brought up by his father's sister. He is married and has two daughters and a son. His daughters are five and nine. While his son is seven. Terefe has 10 *sangaa* of land. He has neither oxen nor cow. One of my informant said, "Terefe has nothing except chicken." He is the poorest. During the 1994/95 production period he cultivated maize on three *sangaa*. *Tef* on five *sangaa* of land. The yield he got was four quintals. He got low yield due to the shortage of rain and lack of fertilizer. Let alone paying government tax, he failed to support his family. He managed to get some money by picking coffee on *irboo* basis. He borrowed money, and started to buy and sell oxen. He shares the profit with the man who lent him the money.

Like Terefe some households trade in sheep, in farm implements, coffee and so on, while others sell their oxen after cultivation period, and buy them before cultivation starts. There is also a situation when a needy person simply goes to individual households, harvest crops and takes a sack of grain for himself, and this is known as *dufana/dufachu*. The word *dufana* drives from *dufu* "campaign, that is act or working together in hearty cooperation and determination to help somebody or achieve a goal" (Tilahun Gamta 1989:185). Therefore *dufana* in this context refers to help the poor before he/she is victimized. In fact, while individual's lack of oxen is a limiting productive factor in the village, on the other hand, the

maintenance of reciprocity with individuals economic interdependence and cooperation among the community makes individual problems less severe in the face of stress.

3.9 Coffee production

Coffee plays a significant role among members of the community in generating income, in marriage transactions and ritual ceremonies. Coffee has been introduced to the village during the reign of Haile Selassie. A proclamation was issued to contract land from the government with a precondition to grow coffee on it. The landlords contracted land, encouraged the tenants to plant coffee. Later on the landlords told the tenants that they were not the ones that grew the coffee, and maintained that it was a wild plant. Then evicting the tenants by confiscating the coffee plantation started. Finally, tenants refused to plant coffee unless agreement was reached. Since the government had been encouraging the landlords to plant coffee, they agreed with the tenants and promised not to evict them and thus for a certain period of time the tenants continued growing coffee. Once agreement was made, even if the landlords wanted to evict the tenants, they had to compensate them. The tenants started to grow coffee on large plots of land and at times the money the tenants earned from the yield outweighed the cost of the land. Landlords failed to afford to compensate them. They began to forbid them not to grow coffee.

During the *Derg* regime, as a result of co-operativization and villagization, people were confiscated off their coffee plantations. This resulted in the mismanagement of coffee. Those individuals who were given coffee plantations either cleared the coffee and used it for other crops or only picked the coffee without properly managing the plantations. Due to drought government also ordered the cooperatives to clear the coffee plantation and grow food crops that are cultivated within a short period of time. The MOA (Ministry of Agriculture) attempted to introduce new techniques of growing coffee to the cooperative members. The majority of the people, however, continued following the traditional way of growing coffee. Currently in the village about fifty percent of the people grow coffee.

People that grow coffee are labelled as rich. However, the yield they get from coffee production is very low. Among those factors responsible for low coffee production are: Lack of care for the coffee plantation, for example, not to weed the coffee plants in time. Most people weed coffee plant only to make picking easy. Due to shortage of money some pick coffee before it matures, hence, large quantity as well as quality is lost. Because of failure

to prune it, and giving emphasis to short term benefit than long term ones, the coffee plants get very tall, and they need more labour power to bend the plant and pick the coffee beans. In the process of bending the coffee plant the beans are wasted. When the beans are stripped the coffee plants are damaged.

Since the village did not get service from the Coffee Improvement Project (CIP), people lost access to disease resistant coffee varieties. Thus coffee was affected by diseases. There were only very few people that had close relationship with MOA members and access to coffee medicine. According to Shewangizaw representative of MOA, it has been ten years since they received the medicine. According to him they had reported about the medicine to higher officials and they were told to increase the dosage of the medicine. However, Shewangizaw also attributed the problem to lack of storage facilities. Those people who have access to the coffee medicine lack the know-how of applying it. MOA provided only two spray guns to the village and shortage of spray guns and peoples' failure to afford the cost further aggravated the problem. The unit price of CP20 (spray gun) was 290 birr in 1994 and it rose to 350 birr in 1995. The people also did not have the technical know- how of operating and maintaining the spray guns.

3.9.1 The impact of government price policy on coffee production

As a result of the policy of the Transitional Government, the attitude of people was changing. While those people that were already growing coffee wanted to diversify crops, those that never grew started growing coffee. A number of households wanted to gradually increase their coffee plantation. Due to an increment in the price of coffee the relationship between borrower and lender also changed. According to the information I obtained from the people, while most of the people did not want to get into usury, a few people who faced a serious shortage of money got into usuary. Formerly a man used to borrow 20 birr and paid back a '*farasullaa*' (17kgs) of coffee. The market price of 17 kgs of coffee was 120 *birr*. while currently he borrowed 40 birr for the same amount of coffee.

The relationship between traders and the coffee producers changed in terms of usury. The focus of traders was not to lend money on interest basis, but to get more customers that brought their coffee produce in exchange for grains. For example, Gamachu Firisa was short of food and he borrowed a quintal of maize and paid back in coffee of proportional price with a quintal of maize.

Some people also leased their coffee plantations in contract to urban dwellers or other villagers (rich and middle peasants). At times people also got into conflicts due to breaching of contractual agreements. Thus the competition of the haves to control resources (land, coffee, etc.) in the rural has created opportunities to make the few rich quickly at the expense of the poor.

4.10 Livestock

According to Wordofa traditionally cattle were considered as the sign of wealth and status symbol. A person with hundred head of cattle used to perform ritual ceremonies by slaughtering a cow and wore the abdomen of the animal during a feast organized for the occasion. Similarly, a person who possessed two hundred cattle used to put on two abdomen of the animals. The prevalence of a number of diseases made the raising of animals difficult. Though cattle still played significant role in marriage arrangements, ritual ceremonies, household consumption etc. due to livestock diseases they are no more status symbol. In Bedelle *Waradaa* Twenty four percent of the household income comes from livestock and livestock products (Bedelle Agricultural Development Office 1995).

People identify four types of livestock diseases. These are: trypanosomiasis (*soqee/qooqsaa*), blackleg (*keessa fiigaa*), mastitis (*simbira*) and anthrax (*abbaa sangaa*). According to the regional MOA office, in addition to these there are also diseases internal and external parasites and partuerolosis. Out of the fifty eight villages in Beddle *waradaa*, 18 villages including Gibo are vulnerable to livestock diseases. In 1992 fifty five percent of the livestock were infected with diseases, while in 1995 it infected 70 percent of the livestock. According to the regional MOA office, some of the problems they encountered in treating livestock were shortage of medicine and the resistance of the diseases to medicines. Since there is no government control system, people either buy expired medicine from traders or unauthorized persons treat their livestock and as a result the diseases develop resistance to the medicines. Lack of facilities like refrigerator and needle, shortage of manpower, lack of vehicles and inaccessibility are also some of the problems.

Shortage of pasture land is also a serious problem among the community. The fact that attention was not given to the area by the past regimes, except for grazing, almost no households grow fodder plants. Due to the fear of wild animals like hyena, domestic animals

such as calves, sheep, and goats are kept in the houses and this also creates problems of sanitation.

Table 9: Number of oxen owned by households

Number of Oxen	Number of Households	Percent of Total
No ox	58	38.26
One ox for two	10	6.71
One ox	42	28.18
One pair of oxen	31	20.81
More than two pair of oxen	8	5.37
Total	149	100

Source: compiled from field data 1995

38 % of the households have no ox. 6 % share one ox, while 28 % against 20 % have one and a pair of oxen respectively. Only 5.7 % of the total households have more than two pairs of oxen. The fact that 73 % of the total households have no or only one ox indicates that ox is a limiting productive factor among the community.

3.11 Apiculture

Some households in the area are involved in honey production. Terfa Gamtesa is among those people who produce honey. According to him lack of materials to construct beehive, the low yield of honey, ants feeding on honey, and chemicals that attack bees discourage people from bee-keeping. According to Terfa, bees are attacked by chemicals when medicines are sprayed against coffee disease and weed particularly in the months of July and August. This happens when bees collect nectar from coffee trees and a plant called *qurxubbii*. Terfa also informed me how he managed to survive by selling his honey produce and buying grains when his crops failed in 1994. Annually on an average Terfa earns 1,190 *birr* from the sale of honey. Finally, Terfa, emphasized the need for government assistance especially by providing modern bee-hives.

3.12 Hunting expeditions

According to the people, to get good harvest guarding of crops alone is not enough besides, wild animals must be checked through hunting expeditions. Due to shortage of time, I didn't get an opportunity to participate in the hunting expedition. Thus this information is based on the account of Regassa, Tesfaye and Terefe (group discussion). Regarding to guarding of crops against wild animals, the people say that the wild animals like hyena, antelope, porcupine, etc. must be checked through hunting expeditions. Hunting expedition takes place every year after harvest in March and April. More than 9 villages and over 2,000 people participate in the hunting expeditions. Hunting takes place both in the high and low lands. In the low land areas like the Dhidhessa river, people hunt lions, leopards, pythons, etc. According to Regassa they go to distant places (3 hours) for hunting, and on the average about 50 different kinds of animals are hunted. The hunting expedition takes place on Wednesdays, Fridays and sundays.

As I have indicated in chapter I, it is during such hunting expeditions that the whole clans around the Gibo village gather. It is where the founding father of the Buno Bedelle, the senior (*angafa*) member, descendant of the Aana clan leads the hunting expedition based on the *tumaa* of the Oromo. Success in hunting depends on the leadership, blessing and order of the senior clan members of the Aana. Once the hunting expedition is ordered and blessed by the senior clan (*angafa qomo*) member, even if people kill each other in the process of hunting nobody appeals to the court or there will be no *guma* (feud price). On the other hand, if the hunting expedition is carried out by other clan leaders other than the Aana, if people kill each other, individuals could appeal to the court or there could be *guma* (feud price). In the hunting expedition both muslims and christians participate. If a muslim first attacks the animal the christians never claim for the share and the muslims share among themselves depending upon the contribution of individuals (e.g. the first who stirs the animal from its den, the first who speared it, slaughtered, etc.). As tradition prescribes two men from Minya and Badi clans organize the hunting expedition by calling people from every village. And they are called *wolwaamii*. When people gather, one of the *wolwaamii* sits facing east, and the other *wolwaamii* sits facing west, turning their faces towards each other. The hunting expedition leader called *abbaa adamoo* sits under the shed of a big tree that has no thorn. The people put down their spears turning its sharp edge towards the direction of the hunting ground and putting grass on the *abbaa adamoo* and is called *irreeffachuu* (to pay

respect). The *wolwaamii* that sits in the direction of the west then utters, "Kottu dhufe" literally "Come! I have come" and the *wolwaamiii* who sits facing east responds four times,

Ani dhufeera! Akka ati dhufte nagaan biyya ha dhufu!
Boolla dachee duudaa siif ha godhu!
Orfi bineensatti ha goru malee namatti hingorin!
Ulfina qolloo Ambiraatiif! Ulfina Booqaf! ulfina Muxeef!
Dargaggeessaaf ulfina! Jaarsaaf ulfina!
Ulfinni kuni barabaraan gadaatti darba!
Hinjigu hindhhanglau tumaan tumaadha!
Inikase mirga hinjdhu kase mirga hinfalmu!
Ini dombo worane mirga hinfalmu!
Ini qurxa dombootti hindarbu!
Kiristani kan islaamaa hinfalmu!

I have come! As you came let peace come to the country
let the hole be like flat land to you!
let the spear swing towards the wild animals but not human beings!
respect to the *qolloo* of Aambirat, Qanyemuxe and Boqa, respect to youngsters and elders!
this respect every time passes to the *gadaa*!
it does not fall and pour *tumaa* is *tumaa* (law is law)!
If I stir the animal from its den I never claim to share another (my share depends upon my contribution)!
the christians should not claim that of the muslims!

If people violate these they will be punished by the *abbaa adamoo*. Then the *abbaa adamoo* blesses the people in the following way:

Ambiratti siif ha tolu!
Muxeen siif ha tolu!
Dacheen siif ha tolu!
Orfikee kuni bineensatti ha goru malee namatti hin gorini!
Bineensi madif uume!
Rabbi siif haatolu!
hindarbatin tumataan qabi!

Let the *qolloo* of Ambirat, Qanyimuxe, Boqa, be favourable to you!
Let the spear turn towards the wild animals not human beings!
Wild animals are created for food!
Let God be favourable to you!
Do not throw spears, hold them firmly and stab!

After the blessing is over the *abbaa adamoo* leads the people towards the directions the wild animals are expected to be found and says "afootu" "good luck." As I have already said, during hunting the people share the meat of the animals according to their contribution in the chase, the killing and stirring etc. However, In spite of their contribution (in stirring, spearing, etc.) of the animal the *abbaa adamoo* and the *wolwaamii* always get their share. In hunting people never use nets but simply hold spear and surround the area where the animals are expected to be found. Once the hunting expedition starts, it is the *abbaa adamoo*, who sets the plan for the next expedition. Types of animals hunted are antelopes, pigs, dik dik, leopard, porcupine, python and lion. Referring to the significance of hunting Regassa said that, "Had it not been for hunting, it would have been difficult to subsist (crops would have been destroyed by wild animals)." In spite of Regassa's claim, the growing demand for the meat of wild animals like porcupine, antelope and pork by the urban dwellers makes hunting more important. According to Tesfaye pork meat costs up to 300 *birr* in Bedelle town.

During the hunting ritual the fact that people refer to their traditional social and political organization, the *gada*, and stress its *tuma* (law) indicates the role the *gada* system used to play among the Oromo society in the past. The hunting ritual symbolizes structural relationship between different clans, inter-clan unity and solidarity in the joint exploitation of resources.

3.13 Crafts

Except for *zapa* (hoe with wider edge) which has been introduced during the *Derg*, almost all of the tools are locally produced. There are two blacksmiths (*tumtuu*) in the Gibo village. The iron-tools locally produced are, machetes with sharp edge on both sides, locally known as *gajaraa*, hoe, an axe, different types of knives, ploughshares, spear-head, sickle and a small hoe, known as *cakii*. The *tumtuu* buy iron-sheets from Jimmaa and Bedellee towns. In repairing the tools some *tumtuu* provide free service and the people give them seeds. Currently they help the *tumtuu* by providing them with oxen. Since the income the *tumtuu* earns from forging iron tools is not big enough to support the household, the *tumtuu* also cultivate land.

CHAPTER FOUR

GOVERNMENT PROVISION OF AGRICULTURAL SERVICES

Bedelle Agricultural Development Office is a branch of MOA whose task is to assist the peasants in agriculture. There are seven development agents (DAs) for 58 villages in Bedelle *Waradaa*. One DA for eight villages and one demonstration site (currently not functioning). There are villages that are not even served by the DAs.

Traditionally people used cow dung as a manure. The application of cow dung is restricted to homestead. By using cow dung as a manure the people continuously cultivate maize, *qoccoo*, taro and vegetables around their homesteads. Fertilizer has been introduced to the village during the *Derg* and these days people use fertilizer for *tef* only.

Except for the application of pesticides by MOA representatives, the utilization of Weed-killer in the village is also a recent phenomenon. People exclusively use weed- killer for *tef* crop only.

4.1 Limitations of the agricultural services

Some of the problems people currently face are: (a) lack of access to weed-killers. Only very few individuals that have close relationship with MOA representatives have access to weed killer. Even those individuals that have access do not know how to apply it. During my field work I encountered people who bought and applied weed-killer but found it ineffective and were forced to weed again. Terefe puts his experience in the following way: "On my *tef* farm first I applied weed-killer when the weeds were about to blossom. I again applied the weed-killer after the weeds blossomed but it failed to kill them. I expected to get 2 *daawullaa* (200 kilo-grams) of *tef* but I got only one." According to the information I obtained from the Regional MOA office, the cost of weed-killer is also increasing as that of the fertilizer. The price of a litre of weed killer was 31.20, 34.65 and 46.60 birr in 1993, 1994 and 1995 respectively. Shortage of spray guns (2 spray guns for the village), and lack of know-how in maintaining the spray guns is coupled with lack of access to improved seed are some of the problems. The people have strong demand for improved seed varieties of potato, beetroot, redroot, onion, etc. but couldn't find either from MOA or the market. (b) When pests damage their crops people report to the MOA, no follow up is made by the

MOA and the people were even ordered to take the damaged crops to Bedelle Agricultural Development Office. (c) There are also problems in the utilization of fertilizers. People complain that by using fertilizer they did not see significant changes in the yield of *tef*. Referring to the yield of *tef* Terefe explained the following: "In the 1993 production year, I obtained 2 quintals of *tef* from my two *sangaa* (0.25 hectare) of land without the application of fertilizer. The following year, on the same land, with the application of fertilizer, I obtained 3 quintals of *tef*." Regarding the use of fertilizer some of the problems are: (i) that some households use 100 kgs for three or more years which should have been used for one production season on a hectare of land. (ii) Since most of the people get fertilizer from the government on credit and are expected to settle their debt before the next production season, either due to shortage of money or other reasons some can not pay back the credit in time. According to the regulations of the MOA the whole farmers' cooperative associations (in my case 9 villages) are expected to settle their debt before the individuals are eligible for fertilizer credit. In (July 1995) almost all the people in the village sowed *tef* but did not get fertilizer. (iii) Some people take fertilizer on credit and immediately sell it to traders withe low price. They take credit for 89 birr and sell in cash for 70 *birr*. Some households run out of food supply and sell the fertilizer they received on credit at reduced price.

Some individuals like, for example, Banti Sima do not want to use fertilizer. Referring to the use of fertilizer Banti argued "Lafa najelaa baddala" "It will affect my land" that is, if I apply fertilizer the soil will adapt itself to the fertilizer and may require it every time. Therefore, it is better not to use it. (iv) Since the cost of fertilizer is continuously increasing failure to afford the cost of fertilizer is also a serious problem among the Peasants.

Table 10: Price of a quintal of fertilizer from 1991-96

Year	Price in Birr	Increase in %
1991	88.80	0.00
1992	95.00	106.00
1993	149.77	168.65
1994	143.35	161.43
1995	178.00	200.00
1996	200.00	225.22

Source: Bedelle Agricultural Development Office 1995

Given the sky-rocketing costs of fertilizers and the fact that it is not locally produced, makes the problem even more serious. It is a situation where we probably should think of other alternatives.

The village has some potential for irrigation. Urgeessaa and other small rivers can serve such a purpose. Since the failure of the potato plantation people have abandoned planting it. It was during the *Derg* regime when potato plantations of a number of households failed. The people reported to BADO (Bedelle Agricultural Development Office) and they were told that the soil would have been treated before they had planted potato. Since BADO did not take any measure in alleviating the problem, people lost hope and currently they cultivate only maize through the use of irrigation. The relationship between the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the people manifests that much attention was not given to the area by the past regimes.

I have also contacted MOA representatives in order to know what problems they face in assisting the peasants. Some of the problems they mentioned were:-

(a) inaccessibility and lack of vehicles

(b) shortage of manpower.

(c) Lack of incentive (low payment).

(d) Lack of know-how. The DAs completed 12th grade and only took six month's course and therefore do not have adequate training

(e) improved seed varieties, chemicals, fertilizer and weed-killer are not available. Peasants also do not pay back credit in time.

Recently MOA has attempted to introduce SG-2000 (Sasakawa Global Two Thousand) project to the village. I will present the way the project has been implemented, peoples attitude in accepting it and its impacts.

4.4 The introduction of SG-2000 and its impacts

According to Marco Quinones, country director, (1996), SG-2000 (SaSa kawa Global Two Thousand) is an agricultural project run by the Ethiopian Government in collaboration with the Carter Centre. Its objectives are to enhance agricultural productivity by identifying factors that are constraints to agricultural productivity and providing the peasants with "aggressive technology" through extension services. Through the implementation of such a project it is hoped that there will be food self-sufficiency in the country by the year two thousand.

State sponsored SG-2000 model has been implemented in the village in 1995. According to MOA (Ministry of Agriculture) those people that had access to the project are, those who have: (1) a pair of oxen, (2) half hectare of flat land, (3) can afford to initially pay 25 percent (61 birr) of the total credit, and (4) have enough labour power or can organize work parties (*daboo*). Out of 149 households only three accepted the project. Reasons for not accepting were: (a) some households couldn't afford to immediately pay the amount of money they were asked. (b) shortage of labour, because some households couldn't afford to organize *daboo* and cultivate their land within a day. (c) they were told not to use the crop before harvest and therefore, some households suspected the government will take the produce after harvest. (d) Some people suspected that, government will cheat them because, they considered the aim of the government is to reintroduce cooperativization.

Out of the three people that accepted the project I will present the case of Tesfaye.

> Tesfaye left school at 10th grade. The reason for his acceptance of the project was that he has close relationship with MOA representatives. They advised him to accept the project so that he could benefit. He heard about SG-2000 through the mass media and he hoped he will benefit from the project. After the implementation of the project Tesfaye's worry was the unpredictability of

market situations. He was not sure whether the output or the produce could cover the amount of cost incurred. The MOA representatives promised to assist in following up the performance of the crop. But there was no follow up. They also told him each maize plant will produce three stalk of maize. But, according to Tesfaye let alone having three they were only few that had produced even two stalk of maize.

During the second round of my field work November two 1995 up to December two 1995, since it was the time of harvest I paid much attention to evaluating the performances (outputs) of BH-660 and DZ- 01354 maize and *tef* varieties respectively. The yield of maize has been 62 quintals per hectare. As compared to the local ones which is sixteen quintals, the output of the new variety was about four fold. The *tef* (DZ-01354) failed compared to the indigenous *tef*. Ragassa was among those people who accepted the *tef* variety. He was advised by the BADO (Bedelle Agricultural Development Office) to take the sample of the harvest. Since it was a good opportunity to follow up the case, I assisted Ragassa. According to the sample the yield was 3 quintals from a hectare. Since Ragassa wanted to compare the new variety with the local variety of *tef*, we took the sample and the out-put of the local variety was 4 quintals. I asked Ragassa, why he insisted on taking the sample of the indigenous *tef*, and he argued that "Their new variety has already failed, but we can apply same method to our own variety." According to BADO representatives neither of the crop varieties had been demonstrated in the village. Taking into account criteria like altitude and rainfall they were ordered by higher officials to introduce the new varieties. According to BADO failure of the new *tef* variety could be attributed to environmental factors. Before commenting on the limitations of State sponsored SG-2000 Model, I would like to present the case of Regassa from the point of view of the amount of cost he incurred. Regassa incurred the following costs in cultivating the new *tef* variety:

Table 11: The amount of costs incurred in producing tef variety DZ-01354

Input	Cost in birr	Percent of total
Food & coffee	36	3.00
ploughing: 6 pairs of oxen, labour 6 x 5 x 4	120	9.60
Meesaa: labour (20) people	100	8.00
Weed killer	58	4.60
Fertilizer & seed variety	244	19.50
harvesting (contract)	50	4.00
Transporting & piling: 20 people	100	8.00
Turning up soil 4 x 6 pairs of oxen x10	240	19.30
Guarding	200	16.00
Threshing	100	8.00
Total	1, 248	100

Source: Compiled from field data

From half a hectare of land Regassa got 1.5 quintals of *tef* (DZ-01354). In Bedelle the minimum market price of a quintal of *tef* is 180 birr, while, the maximum is 210 birr. Given the amount of cost incurred it is not difficult to understand the loss Regassa encountered. In spite of the government officials' and concerned individuals' attempt to avoid responsibility and/or attributing failures to different things, the case of Gibo peasants indicates that the client/ change agent relationship is poor. From my own observations there is no mutual understanding between the DAs (Development Agents) and the people. Once the new variety was introduced no follow up was made on the part of the BADO. Based on their experience people know what type of soil is conducive to what type of crop. It seems that among several factors, the following are the reasons given for the failure of the *tef* variety (DZ-01354) in the Gibo village:

(1) Lack of demonstration, (2) Fertilizer application, and (3) Seeding rate.

(a) *Demonstration*

As I have mentioned in chapter 5, people identify three types of land, *hossoo*, *gadoo* and *borqii*, fertile, moderate and poor soil respectively. Above all, the root cause of the problem seems to lie in the identification of the type of soil. Demonstration also helps to know about the performance of crops before introducing them to the people.

(B) *Fertilizer*

Once again I would like to raise the case of Regassa. The type of land used by Regassa to grow the new variety of *tef* was *gadoo* (semi-fertile land). On his *gadoo* land, Regassa was advised by the BADO workers to apply the exact amount of fertilizer prescribed by the institution that released DZ-01354. After being sown the *tef* grew fast (early matured). The *tef* started falling and drying, and again started to regenerate. The lack of mutual understanding between the people and BADO representatives manifested itself during this period. BADO representatives told the people to harvest the dried *tef*. The people refused to do so. The people argued that harvesting while certain portions of the crop are immature and others dried is not proper. BADO representatives themselves did not know the actual performance of the crop.

(C) *Seeding rate*

The seeding rate prescribed by BADO representatives also indicates the existence of a problem. The BADO advised Regassa to sow 15 kgs of *tef* on half a hectare of land. Regassa sowed only 8 kgs. Regassa said "we know from our experience that if we do what we are told the crop will be congested." Even after Regassa's reduction of the amount to be sown, one could see that the *tef* was congested. This indicates that there was a knowledge and/or experience gap between the peasants and BADO. During my stay on the field all the people I consulted told me that they never accepted other alternatives to *tef* other than maize. The success of the maize variety (BH-660) was just a matter of chance; as to the BADO representatives, they followed the same procedure in implementing it. Given the above problems, one could also raise questions like, do large proportion of people have access to the project? Who benefits from the project and what are the criteria to get access to the

project if we are after all to talk in terms of benefit? And the objective of the project is to introduce peasants to innovations and thereby increase productivity. In actual fact, while there could have been a fertile ground to make a large proportion of the people beneficiaries of the project, the concentration on certain segments of the community, the haves, created a serious problem.

CHAPTER FIVE

LABOUR ORGANIZATIONS

Even though anthropologists use the terms family and household loosely, for analytical purposes they also draw a distinction between the two. According to Bender (1967:493) "...families, as kinship units, must be defined strictly in terms of kinship relationships and not in terms of co-residence". Cohen (1970) contends that "... the family as jurally defined, corporate kin group is distinguished from the household as a collection of kin and some times non kin who share a common residence." Among the Gibo peasants the basic productive unit is the family, but a substantial amount of work is also done communally. Clearing of fields, weeding, harvesting of crops and construction of house are collective domain. Age and gender determine the types of activities people engage in.

5.1 Division of labour

In the village women play a significant role in agricultural production. Except for the construction of houses, ploughing, harvesting and threshing of *tef*, herding, and making of tools which are exclusively the tasks of men, women participate both in the household management and agricultural production. Women carry out activities like fetching of water, harvesting, weeding, clearing of forest, collection of fire wood, cooking, upbringing of children, gardening, trading, cleaning, etc. Clearing of forest is a recent phenomenon among females. Mobilization of the youth to the war front, collectivization and villagization, youth and women's associations were among those factors which made females to play additional roles. Clearing of forest has exclusively been the task of males, however, as a result of the youths' mobilization to the war front and the lack of enough male children of working right age forced some families to involve their daughters in agricultural production, such as clearing of the forest. Irrespective of membership, the government forced households to contribute labour force to the cooperatives; youth and women association members, in activities such as the construction of houses, clearing of forest, weeding, harvesting, etc. Therefore, families that lacked male working age were still forced to send females for these kind of activities. Children also play a significant role in the raising of animals, guarding of crops, fetching of water and collection of fire wood.

Table 12: Family size and composition

Age Group	No	%
0-14	370	46.54
15-59	363	45.66
60+	62	
Total	795	100

Source: Adapted from field data 1995

The survey undertaken on the age composition of the population indicates that 46.54% are below the age of fifteen and 45.66 % under the age of sixty. Only 7.79 % are above sixty. The ratio of the economically dependent to active labour forces is approximately 1:2. However, among the study community the fact that children start contributing to agricultural production (e.g. crop protection, livestock herding, etc.,) at the age of seven and production is not carried out only by the households but also through collective labour implies that labour is not a constraint to agricultural productivity. On the other hand, the fact that the family size is 5.33 calls for family planning measures among the community.

Most of the households' labour requirement is met through work parties.

5.2 Work parties

Traditional work parties are well known among the rural societies of Ethiopia. Even though their nature of organization vary from region to region, the purpose they serve is basically the same, i.e. to improve agricultural productivity (Kebebew Daka 1978). There are four types of "work parties" in the village: (1) *daadoo*, (2) *torbii*, (3) *daakkuu butee* and (4) *daboo*. The first three are "labour exchanges" based on strict reciprocity, while *daboo* is a kind of "festive labour" which is not necessarily reciprocal. Moore (1975:271) defines co-operative labour as

> the joint performance of a task, or a series of sequentially-related tasks, by a group of persons practising a minimal division of labour whose relationship to the beneficiary, or beneficiaries, of their work is other than that of employer to employee.

The two main categories of cooperative labour according to Erasmus (1956) are 'exchange labour' and 'festive labour.' The difference between 'exchange labour' and 'festive labour' is based on the nature of remuneration for participating in the work party.

> In the case of exchange labour, the reward is simply reciprocal amount of labour, and the reciprocity is precise; the immediate rewards for festive labour are food, drink and entertainment; social ties may be an important medium of recruitment, and reciprocity is weak or absent (Moore 1975:273).

5.2.1 Daadoo

Daadoo is a work party based on *Dugdaa* (reciprocity). *Dugda* is derived from the noun back. In this context it has a meaning of the English saying "If you scratch my back I will scratch yours." Almost all households participate in *daadoo*. Both males and females participate in *daadoo* and it composes friends, neighbours or relatives. Before the cultivation period interested persons form a group which consists of 8 up to 11 persons. Most of the activities performed through *daadoo* are the clearing of forest, ploughing, weeding, harvesting and transporting crops. In any production activity, once the group is formed, they work on the field of each person in rotation. On daily basis the group works on the field of two persons and is called *ganamee* (in the morning from 8:30 am up to 3 pm) and *galgalee* (from 3:30 pm up to 6:30 pm). Uniformity of work is not needed. Households could schedule the type of activity they have, be it the clearing of forest, ploughing or weeding. In *daadoo* either the group members have their breakfast in their respective home or the host could serve breakfast. [coffee and toasted grain] at 10 am. After the completion of the work, food, *buddeena* with sauce, is served and finally the man blesses the *daadoo* members. During evening people are served dinner.

In a household, when the husband goes to plough his field, usually his wife and children of working age participate in *ganamee*. In the afternoon when his wife carries out household activities he participates in *galgalee*. If one misses other members' *daadoo* he is expected to make up for it on some other day or he and his wife are expected to work on the second round. Once agreement is reached to work in *daadoo* everybody works to the best of his ability. For example, old people participate in *daadoo* but even if their labour contribution is less their presence is enough and nobody complains. However, when children from the age of 12 up to 14 participate in *daadoo* their relatives who are working with them help them in

completing their work. During weeding and harvesting they divide the plots among the members. During the preparation of land called *meesaa* in order to sow *tef* the *daadoo* members bring their oxen to those who do not have oxen. This is called *birqabaa*. During *meesaa* a pair of oxen require 10 people. When two persons plough 8 persons remove weed from the ploughed field. Once *daadoo* begins, unless individuals have problems which are beyond their control, all members stay in it up to the end. During my field work the compositions of the *daadoo* participants I encountered were:-

- 6 males and 3 females
- 4 male and 3 females
- 7 males and 4 females
- 3 males and 6 females
- 9 males and 2 females

In addition to *daadoo* people also work in *torbii*.

5.2.2 Torbii

Torbi is "labour exchange" based on strict reciprocity. It is a work party that consists of male members. The exclusion of female from *torbii* is dictated by the type of activities. Activities like harvesting and threshing of *tef* collecting of thatching grass and house construction are performed by male. People claim that the *torbii* group consist of up to 20 people. According to Jemaneh Tulu the composition of the group is reduced due to the abstinence from work on Sundays and the days of saints. If the size of the *torbii* group increases, it makes it difficult to work for all the members. An individual could be both a member of a *daadoo* and *torbii* at the same time. The *torbii* group work for each other twice a week. Depending on the work load some times it could be three days a week. Members of *torbii* work for each other on average for six hours a day.

Torbii members have regulations. According to Jemaneh the torbii members are nine. If a member is absent for the first time, he will be charged 2 *birr*, the second time 5 *birr*, on the third time, the group will not work for him and he will be forced to leave the group. Individuals could be exempted from work only if they have court cases, sick, if there is mourning and if they have to herd livestock. According to Jemaneh the likelihood of individuals withdrawing from one group to join another is less. This is because the other

groups never allow them to join without checking why they left the group they had been working with.

5.2.3 Dakku butee

People also form a work group based on strict reciprocity known as *dakkuu butee*. Such work is performed early in the morning. It is done before the time for *daadoo* and/or *torbii*. *Dakku butee* is meant for jobs that require urgent response. These includes transporting harvested crops from the farm to storage sites.

5.2.4 Daboo

Daboo is a "festive" work party that is not necessarily reciprocal. Although it is the rich people that organize *daboo* most of the time, poor people also sometimes organize it. Since poor people most of the time lack oxen, it is to their advantage to organize *daboo*. It provides them with an opportunity to mobilize a number of people that come with their oxen. According to Tadessie Guta, If a poor man is to organize *daboo*, he should plan a year in advance. He has to save money for the occasion by working as a hired labourer. The number of people that participate in *daboo* depends upon the ability of the *abbaa daboo*. The more the number of people who participate, the more is the expense. A poor man may mobilize 20 to 30 people, while a rich can mobilize up to 60 to 100 people. Depending upon the size of people mobilized, the amount of cost incurred in preparing a feast is from 80 to 200 *birr*. For example, during my field work, in order to harvest their *tef* crop, Amantee and Tesfaye mobilized 64 and 75 people respectively. Depending on the size of the farm land, the poor could use up to 15 pair of oxen while the rich uses 20 to 30 pair of oxen. When a person organizes *daboo* they are not only the *daboo* participants that are invited to food and drink but also neighbours and relatives. When neighbours and relatives are invited they bring flour, *buddeena* or *araqee* (local alcohol). Most of the time they are the male who participate in *daboo*. Females may also participate if they are delegated by their husbands or if they are widows. Male members may also delegate their wives when they are sick or when they face some other problems. In *daboo* the types of food and drink prepared are *buddeena*, sauce, *akaayii* and *farsoo*. On the day of the *daboo* people start gathering between 8:30 AM. and 9 AM. and work up to 2:30 or 3 pm. When people start working it is the *abbaa daboo* who coordinates the people's actions. He divides the people into groups and allocates areas of

work. When the *abbaa daboo* feels that there is a problem in work performance, he would politely tell the group that there is a problem. Most of the time food and drink is served at 1 PM., and it is the time when 75 percent of the work is already performed. The serving of food and drink does not take more than 30 minutes. People are not served more than 2 calabashes of *farsoo*. After the service the relatives take the initiative in restarting work. After the completion of the work they are served *farsoo* and *akayii*. After people have drunk about 3 calabashes of *farsoo*, one of the elders holds full calabashes of *farsoo* and blesses the *daboo* participants. This is called *daboo eebbisuu*. Then the man who organizes the *daboo* and his family hold together four calabashes full of farsoo and the *daboo* participants bless them so that he gets good harvest. Finally, the *abbaa daboo* blesses the people for their participation. After the blessing has taken place the *abbaa daboo* invites people to drink more. Usually the *abbaa daboo* takes much care not to displease the participants. If he quarrels or displeases some one there is the likelihood of people not participating in his *daboo* in the future. The participation of people in *daboo* also depends on the social status of the *abbaa daboo*. His social standing in the society is important. There is a possibility that people may not turn out or the number of people turning out for the *daboo* be lower. Females play important role in the preparation of food and drink for the *daboo*. If the *farsoo* and the food is good people will enthusiastically participate in the *daboo*. The performance of women is evaluated not only by their housekeeping activities but also, by their participation in agricultural activities. The failure is attributed to the woman if she fails to deliver what is expected. Therefore, high participation of women particularly in *daboo* is crucial.

5.3 Work parties as a survival strategy

Daadoo and *torbii* serve some households as a survival strategy. Household members that are working through *daadoo* and *torbii* rent out their turn under certain situations either when they have completed their agricultural production activities (mostly when the households have small size of land), or when they are short of food supply. On his turn, if an individual wants to rent out his turn, he makes arrangement with the man who wants to make use of the *daadoo* or *torbii*. The man that wants to rent out his turn receives money in cash or in kind. If it is *ganamee* (8:30 AM. to 3 PM.) for each *daadoo* member he receives 1 *birr* and if it is *galgalee* (3:30 PM. to 6:30 PM.) he receives 0.75 *birr*. It is also the host who serves either

lunch or dinner depending on the time when the activity is carried out. I will present the case of a household that used *daadoo* as a survival strategy during critical moments as follows:-

> Zenebech Guta is a widower and she is 45. She has 4 daughters and three sons. her daughters are 14, 12, 10, and 21. Her sons are 20, 17 and 9. Her husband died in 1985. After the death of her husband she left the village called Cooraa where she had been living and she came to Gibo village where her brother Tadessie Guta is living. Since Tadessie is poor, the only alternate he had in helping her was, to share the land he has. Tadessie gave her 3 *sangaa* (0.38 hectare) of his land. When Zenebech stared living in the village she had only a goat that she had brought from Cooraa. Later on she entered share-cropping arrangements. With four of the household members she joined *daadoo* and stared to earn her living by renting out her turn and purchasing food items. By continuing to rent out her turn, she prepared *arakkee* (local alcohol) with the money she raised from the sale. She was also engaged in *irboo /kotee*. In this form of labour, she engaged in picking coffee and took a share of 25 percent of the coffee she picked. With this she managed to buy a young bull. After a year through this process and saving money the bull is sold and she bought an ox. Currently the household cultivates its land by teaming oxen with other households and this is called *qaroo*.

Through mutual help associations the community also solves individual problems. When someone dies, the *tuullaa* orders the *xuxee* to inform the people about the death, so that they may attend the funeral ceremony. Individuals that don't attend funeral ceremony are punished by the *tuullaa*. The *tuullaa* also organizes the people within fifteen days after the death of the person and makes them cultivate the land for the deceased's family. This is called *jigi*. *Jigi* is a traditional group work by which people help members of the deceased family through the provision of food and labour. Under a *tuullaa* there could be four *xuxee* and under each *xuxee* there are thirty people. Whenever a member of a family dies there is a mourning ceremony of nine days if the deceased is a child and fourteen days if the deceased is an adult. Up to the end of the mourning ceremony, the *xuxee* orders two persons each to provide dinner to the family of deceased on daily basis. Just after the end of the mourning ceremony, depending on the type of activities (ploughing, weeding, harvesting, etc.) the *tuullaa* can order up to two *xuxee* (sixty people) to provide the required labour. The family of the deceased will slaughter an ox and prepare *farsoo* (local beer). Those people that participate in the work bring five *buddeena* (local bread) each from their respective homes. If the family of the deceased could not afford to slaughter an ox, then the number of people that participate in the work could be reduced to one *xuxee* (30 people). Once ordered by the

tuullaa individuals that fail to participate in the work will be ostracized. However, if he admits his mistake and appeals to the *tuullaa*, he will be charged with money and may be forgiven. Since the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie a new institution called *idiri* has been introduced. *Idiri* is a mutual assistance mechanism that unlike *jigi* is restricted to assisting members of the family of the deceased. It also engages in helping members during sickness, fire accident (reconstructing burned house), in lending money, etc. What also makes *idiri* distinct from *Jigi* is the fact that members contribute money monthly and provide the family of the deceased with a limited amount of money depending on the capital they have raised. During my field work a two and a half year old daughter of Fiqadu Dureso died and on November 11, 1995. Twenty seven people brought five *buddeena* each from their respective homes and harvested Feqadu's 4 *sangaa* (0.5 hectare) of *tef* (indigenous Ethiopian crop).

5.4 Similarities and differences between work parties

While *daadoo* and *torbii* are more or less restricted to the intra-village, *daboo* is based on urban and inter-village linkage. Urban residents and affinal kins (e.g. father-in-laws) in distant villages make use of *daboo*. Compared to *daboo* the disadvantage of *daadoo* is that *daadoo* takes more days. *Daboo* allows the performance of agricultural activities within a short period of time. During harvest, *daboo* enables one to harvest his crop within a short period of time before it is damaged by excess rain, wind or hail. Despite this fact, almost all households benefit from *daadoo*. Households that have more land and enough number of children of working age can pool labour together and cultivate more land. Households that have small area of land but not oxen can also benefit from *daadoo* by entering share cropping arrangements.

The difference between *daadoo* and *torbii* is that, the latter excludes female and is also based on written regulations. What also makes *torbii* different from *daadoo* is that it is formal and members sign agreements and elect formal committee to co-ordinate the activities and put sanctions on individuals that violate the regulations. *Daadoo* groups are formed when people start cultivating in February. *Torbii* is established usually in September. The type of meal prepared for *torbii* is better both in quality and quantity than that of *daadoo*. Just like in *daadoo* the *torbii* members can rent out their turn. An individual who rents out his turn receives in cash (1.50 birr on each member) and/or in kind (coffee or grain). The host provides meal after completion of work. People that rent out their turn are those that are short

of money or lack oxen. For example, Sisa Bekele is a member of both *daadoo* and *torbii*. He received from Regassa 30 birr on contract basis and harvested half hectare of *tef* by using *daadoo* and *torbii* on his turn.

The various operations, ploughing, weeding, harvesting, and so on succeed each other with rhythmic regularity and most households find that work is spasmodic. From March to April households are busy in cultivating different kinds of crops. The fact that the crops are cultivated simultaneously creates work loads. For example, crops that stay for a long period on the field are cultivated early while other crops are cultivated later on. When households start cultivating *tef*, they have to also weed sorghum, maize, and millet that are grown before *tef*. The excess or shortage of rain could destroy crops, therefore, households should carry out their activity in time. Under such circumstances households engage themselves in different work parties rather than carry out agricultural activities independently. People also consider that they are more efficient when they work in groups than otherwise. Even if the size of a household is large and have more children of working age, it is usually difficult to simultaneously carry out all activities. The *dugdaa* (reciprocal) nature of *daadoo* forces individuals to carry out all activities properly and timely. For example, a household which has children of working age has to motivate his son to participate in *daadoo* and pool labour by promising to buy him cloth, sheep, etc.

Work parties have broader socio-economic significance. It seems that exchange labour serves as "insurance." To participate in exchange labour particularly in a *daadoo* meant, to be assisted during sickness and nourished when there is a failure to meet current consumption requirements. The fact that most of the households are short of food supply during peak production seasons and production is carried out on exchange labour basis seems to help the households to share and/or alleviate their economic problems (current consumption requirements) collectively. The occurrence or disappearance of work parties in a given community could be caused by several factors. According to Moore [1995] the disappearance of work parties could be attributed to: (1) increased man-land ratios, (2) emergence of rural proletariat, (3) greater availability of cash, and (4) a full-time non-farm employment. While the penetration of money economy in the village took place quite long ago, however the small amount of money in circulation and the low availability of non-farm employment could probably be responsible for the survival of work parties among the study community.

The renting out of *daadoo* is a recent phenomenon. The fact that some households started to use *daadoo* as a means to generate income in the future would make *daadoo* more important. The fact that Recently females have started participating in agricultural activities such as, clearing of forest that had been exclusively the task of male can probably be attributed not only to the shortage of labour but also to the income-generating nature of *daadoo*.

Low agricultural production over years, as a result of the prevalence of drought, Livestock diseases, the cost incurred in preparing *daboo* and the introduction of new belief system (Protestantism) has restricted most of the households from organizing and/ or participating in *daboo*.

Even though Work parties serve as survival strategy for the poor, it is also clear that they are sources of inequality. Swindel quoted in Geshire (1995) argues that,

> The institution of festive labour often functions to the advantage of the richer farmers, who are more often in a position to invite people to come and work for them. Thus festive work groups can easily be transformed into "hired labour exchanges" or even "collective wage labour."

Based on his study of the Maka of (Cameroon) Geschire (1995) identifies the form of wage labour that persisted among the work groups. The "renting out of labour" based on reciprocity Geshire calls "disguised" form of wage labour." Geshire draws distinction between wage labour and the "disguised" form of wage labour in the following way:

> An important difference with wage labour is, of course, that this practice of renting out one's turn did not lead to a structural dependence on the part of the poor villagers; they often used the money thus earned to expand their own cash-crop farms. It was precisely this continuing independence of poor villagers - who could still maintain their own farms which restricted the access of the richer farmers to additional labour, and thus limited their possibilities for further extending their farmers.

As Moore and Swindel cited in Geschire (1995) assert among the Gibo peasants, the "renting out of labour" based on reciprocity could neither be attributed to the development of the market economy nor be considered as a preliminary stage in the development of wage labour. It could rather be viewed as a leeway created in response to the economic problems that prevailed locally. "... the work group among the Maka cannot be seen as a simple transitional forms in a development dictated by economic necessity from more 'traditional'

or communal to more 'modern' or individualistic labour relations" (Geschire 1995:506).

As the study of Geschire reveals the distinction one could probably draw between the Maka and Gibo peasants is that While both are characterised by "renting out of labour", unlike the former the latter was based on every day standard meal rather than "lavish reception." Referring to the Maka Geschire argues "... in principle they belong to the 'labour exchange' type of group, but in practice a 'festive' element creeps into their operation with the emphasis on a lavish reception."

As I have indicated above the participation of people in work parties is determined by several factors. Work parties play a significant role in increasing agricultural productivity. Work parties serve people not only in meeting household labour requirements but also, in generating income, giving access to oxen, farm implements, and provision of protection as "insurance." The rich people benefit from "festive labour" (*daboo*) and "exchange labour" (*daadoo* and *torbii*). Thus while, *daboo*, *daadoo* and *torbii* reinforce inequality, as Geshire aptly puts, the fact that the poor people cultivate their own land and rent out their turn only when they are in need of money limits structural dependence on the rich.

CHAPTER SIX

BELIEF SYSTEMS AND RITUAL PRACTICES

The study of religion is here conceived as a system of belief and action. In order to understand the instrumentality of ritual in agricultural success, attempt was made to examine the symbolic and conceptual association between agriculture and religion. Geertz defines "religion as a cultural system".

> A religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing them with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (quoted in MacGaffey 1986:2).

In the process of the study of social action to dissociate one category from another is a futile exercise. As MacGaffey aptly puts it, economics, politics and religion are not mutually exclusive.

> "...to attach religion to social action is to relate it to politics and economics, any social action is simultaneously economic, political, and religious although not necessarily to an interesting extent (MacGaffey 1986:2).

On the other hand, rather than trying to understand the total social and cultural context and uncovering the underlying philosophy, many writers view "tradition" especially African religion as a bottleneck to economic development. On the contrary since "constructions of livelihood are enacted through a symbolic scheme drawn from the known feature of the social world" (Gudeman 1986) this chapter draws attention to examining how religion is related to economic activities.

6.1. Religious and scientific attitude

The question one could probably like to raise is that "does the belief system have any impact on agricultural productivity?" Referring to the non-western societies, Foster asserts that "drought and flood is looked upon as a visitation from gods or evil spirits whom man can propitiate but not control" (Foster 1973:83). Foster further maintains that "a fatalistic outlook, the assumption that whatever happens is the will of God or Alaah, is the best adjustment the individual can make to an apparently hopeless situation (Foster 1973:85). "For a social scientist the very notion of a false folk model is a contradiction in terms, because it means

legislating on social life and not studying it. If he does this, he is creating something which does not exist independently of him and his enterprise should not be presented as the study of the actors' reality" (Holy and Stuchlik 1983:42). Onwuejeogwu (1975) critically examines the view that African religion is a barrier to scientific and technological development. It was argued that failure to distinguish religion and science among the African physicists, hindered the development of science and technology. Onwuejeogwu contends that in the cradle of mankind religious thought was preceded by technological thought. "Technological thought is probably a more 'primitive' form in terms of the development of human thought". According to him even though they developed along similar lines, they explain the cosmos at different levels. To substantiate his argument, he compares western religious thought to that of non-western. In the case of the former, he presents the case of virgin Mary. How she conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost and delivered Jesus, without committing sex. Onwuegeogwu argues that, even though the western know the natural process of conception, as a result of the belief system, it is accepted as an established fact. "the thinking process involved, showing a leap of thought which is not to be proved but to be believed". In a similar manner referring to the Murngins (Australian Aborigines), he argues, the conception of the wife among the Murngins is effected on when the husband dreams of a fish entering his wife's womb from a totem well. After birth the child belongs to the totem. While the Murngins are aware of the natural process of conceptions like the Europeans they simply believe such a thing. Then Onwuegeogwu concludes that since the religious thought of both cultures are characterized by the "leap of thought" there is no basic difference. Therefore according to him just like the western, Africans have no problem in distinguishing between religion and science. It seems that this western notion of other cultures is deeply-rooted in the view that tradition is an impediment to development. However, it is a pure speculation and does not take into account the actual situation these societies encounter. Onwuejeogwu clearly puts some of the factors that are responsible for low level of scientific and technological development. He attributes this to environmental and historical factors, but not religion. Referring to environment, he refers to sea and mountains as a barrier to the diffusion of technology. Lack of scripts was also a constraint to transform abstract forms of ideas to concrete ones. According to him with the coming of the colonizers, not only were their technological achievements degraded, but also their religious system threatened.

> At present, emphasis should be on technological and scientific thought but efforts should be made to keep the ritual process alive because, they are rich reservoirs from which other processes of thinking such as philosophy, ethics even science are fed. The foundation of African science, art, technology, music, architecture drama, poetry, etc., are in her cosmology [Onwuejeogwu 1975 :225].

Therefore, while our focus is on the advancement of science and technology, we should also give attention to preserving the religious system.

6.2 The foreign religious forces

This religious study which was done on Gibo peasants was primarily concerned with aspects of their traditional religion. Since traditional Oromo religion is assumed to exhibit syncrtistic ingredients, attempt was also made to examine the relationship between foreign religious forces particularly Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism and traditional religion.

Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Protestantism are foreign religious forces that are co-existing with the traditional Oromo religion in the area. Orthodox Christianity whose mission was "de-oromonization" of the indigenous people penetrated the area (Maccaa land) during the process of the incorporation of Oromiya into the Ethiopian Empire, i.e. approximately from 1880s to 1890s (Negaso and Crummey 1972). The colonial expansion of the Abyssinians in the southern part of the country would not have been so successful as it was without the active support of the Orthodox church. In the process of its expansion Orthodox christianity played an important role in undermining the traditional culture of the people and legitimizing the power of the colonial rulers. The church created "social inferiority complex" amongst the Oromo. Since christianity was the religion of the masters, the overlords used phrases such as "Galla Degmo Men Haymanot allaw" (Galla has no religion) in converting the people into the Amhara way of life (Negaso and Crummey 1972). "Very strong pressure existed towards conversion, for only adherence to christianity could give access to 'civilized' status and an equal footing with other christians who were in fact, the overlords" (Negaso and Crummey 1972:111).

"Christianity in Ethiopia is the state religion, and imperial history and politics are intricately involved in church history" (Mbiti 1988:230). In the process of the colonial expansion the church also legitimized the social, economic and political structure of the state

by revering the rulers as elects of God who have the right to rule their subjects. This was put into effect through a document designed by monks and incorporated in the constitution, known as "Kebre Nagaest," "the Glory of kings" (see Haberland 1972). The document served as a "*Magna Charta*" of the Ethiopian Empire since Menelik II up to the 1974 revolution (Haberland 1972). The strong connection between state and religion was also manifested in their mutual interests in the exploitation of the resources of the southern people.

> "The church is as much political actor as the state...because it is itself a body subject to internal... rivalry and the struggle over resources and policies (Ramet cited in Wolf).

Referring to the impact of the introduction of Orthodox christianity in the southern part of the country Bartels asserts that:

> "Pressure was exerted on the people to build churches, to have themselves baptized and to bury their dead on the christian cemeteries. Land was taken from them and given to the church and in addition people were forced yearly taxes on behalf of the priests (Bartels 1983:25).

Bartels further maintains that "all these Amharic governmental policies were clearly aimed at a gradual de-oromonization of the country" (1983:25).

The survey undertaken in the village attest that eightynine percent of the villagers are followers of Orthodox christianity while five and eight percent are adherents of Islam and Protestant religions respectively. Near Gibo village at a place called Digaja, there is a church of St. Mary. People from Digaja, Kegne Mute and Gibo villages have organized *sanbatee* and mabaraa, religious associations that are dedicated to the Ethiopian Orthodox church. In the case of the former each family prepares *farsoo*, bread/grain every 15 days and take them to the church and serve the members. In the case of m*abara* people form an association in the name of saints, such as St. Michael, St. George and so on. They contribute money and prepare feast every month. The purpose of the *sanbatee* and *mabara* is that when members face problem like sickness and death, members help each other and solve individual problems. It is also believed that to organize *mabara* and *sanbatee* in the name of the saints helps them in solving their problems. They believe that the saints will help them. They also vow to the saints and present different offerings. The *mabara* consists of 32 people that is 17 from the village of Gibo, 11 from Digaja and 4 from Qanyi Muxe. During my attendance of the *mabara* in one of the families, I had the opportunity to look at how the traditional and Orthodox belief systems co-exist as compared to the protestant belief system. Members of the

m*abara* waited for the priest to come. The priest came prayed. Bread and *farsoo* was served. Just like in *daboo* and marriage ceremony, they selected 4 elders and gave them 4 calabashes full of *farsoo* and one of the elders delivered a blessing. After the blessing the family head delegated one of his sons to kiss the knee of all *mabara* members. It was to receive the blessing. Usually the blessing of elders refers to what the household lacks. For example, if the couple lack children the elder blesses them to get children. Therefore the blessing of elders is important. There are elders that are called j*aarsa eebbaa* (elders of blessing). Even though seniority by age is stressed, juniors could also be elders of blessing. The people distinguish men they call *beekaa* (knowledgable) on the basis of knowledge of the tradition, in terms of settling disputes, hard-work and respect in the community.

The village people abstain from work on the 12th and 29th days of every month. These days are the days of saint Michael and saint Bale Egziabher. It is believed that if they perform agricultural activities on these days their crops will be destroyed by wind and hail. Followers of Islam and Protestantism are also forbidden to work on these days. For example, Protestants who violated the norm were warned by elders and were forced not to work on these days. Some clans also abstain from work on some of the days of the week. The Darimu, and Nono clans abstain from work on Wednesday. The Buya (*qaalluu*), Badi and Talko clans never work on Wednesday and Saturday, while, the Ale clan abstains from work on Friday. According to my informants the days on which some clans abstain from work were initially due to the fight between clans. The days coincide either with the days on which the clans were defeated or destroyed their enemy. It is believed that if they work on these days the plough will be broken, crops will not last long or even could be destroyed by natural calamities like wind and hail.

Protestantism has been introduced to the area since 1975. Later on the Derg regime forbade the members from preaching officially and they continued underground. After the fall of the *Derg* they again started to preach officially and currently 12 households in the village are followers of Protestantism. According to one of my informants membership is constant since 1984. Due to this new religion believers have stopped participating in work parties like *daboo* (work party not necessarily based on reciprocity) and *daadoo* (work party based on strict reciprocity) They are thought to despise the offerings presented to the spirits, blessing of the elders and the alcoholic drink served at the work parties. Even if they organize *daadoo*, members who are allowed to participate are only followers of Protestantism.

Followers of Protestant religion have also refused to contribute money for offerings to the different spirits. They have separate burial place. Currently some of the elders attribute all mishaps to followers of the Protestant religion. A villager argued "It is since the coming of Protestantism that drought prevailed, we lacked good harvest, crops failed to last long. It is because they left the tradition of their forefathers."

Despite the fact that the village is subject to the influence of Orthodox christianity, Islam and Protestantism, and particularly certain elements of Orthodox christianity are fused with the indigenous system of beliefs, the people strongly adhere to the traditional religion.

6.3 The traditional beliefs and rituals

Since the interest of the researcher is to focus on the religious aspects of agricultural activities in a certain setting, this study cannot provide an extensive study of Oromo religion. (for Oromo religion refer to Knutson 1967, Bartels 1984, Megerssa 1994). The community believes in *Waqa* (God) and other natural forces which are considered as mediators between God and human beings. In his study of the Maca Oromo, Knutsson [1967] argues that the distinction made by the Maca Oromo between the supernatural and natural is different from the Western notion. According to him, in the West, the former refers to something "real" or "not real" while the latter is "a faint reflection of the 'real' reality." Referring to the Maca Oromo, he further argues that "None of these meanings coincide with the distinction made by the Macha. Contact with divine powers does not constitute any incomprehensible miracle. Possessions are numerous, every individual and every family has its ancestral guardian spirit, under the floor of the house live the *ekeraa*, the dead" (Knutsson 1967:45).

Regarding the belief system, a number of rituals are performed. The success in life, particularly health, fertility, prosperity depends on the careful observation of the belief system and the practice of rituals. Rituals are performed at family, village and clan level. Therefore, since Gibo peasant's religion gives much emphasis to fertility rituals, in these pages I try to show how ritual is important in agricultural activities. Geertz quoted in Kertzer (1988:8-9) defines ritual as "culturally standardized, repetitive activity, primarily symbolic in character, aimed at influencing human affairs (or at least allowing human to understand better their place in the universe), and involving the supernatural realm." However Kertzer is critical about restricting the definition of ritual only to religious realm, according to him just as much as ritual is religious it is also political. "Ritual helps give meaning to our world in part by

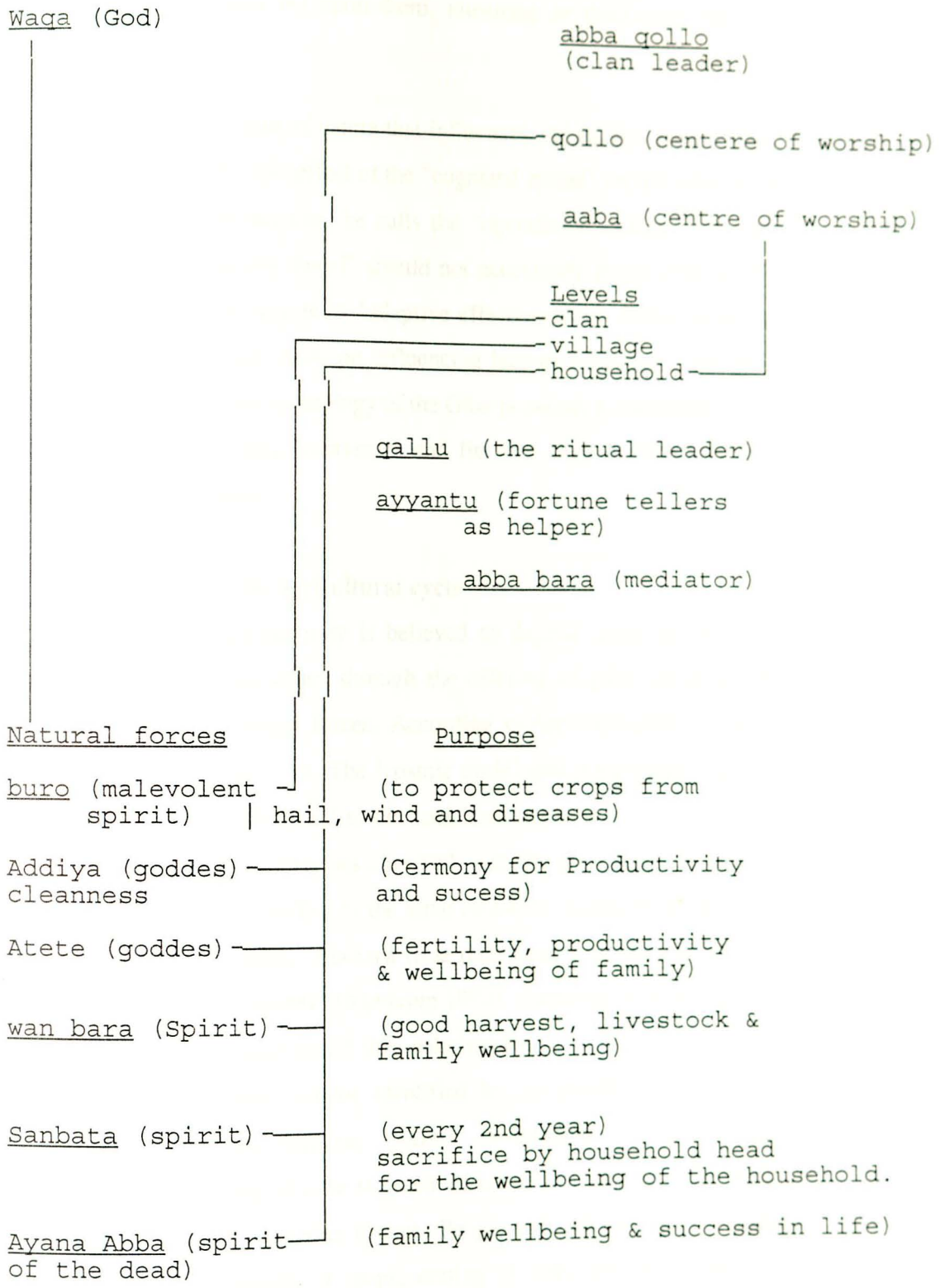
linking the past to the present and the present to the future" (Kertzer 1986:9-10). As Kertzer correctly observed in due course we will see that ritual not only serves people to manipulate the relationship between the supernatural and themselves to meet their immediate needs (rain, good harvest etc.), but also conveys message about their history, hopes and aspirations.

In the belief system of the community elders play a significant role than youngsters. By virtue of their belonging to a certain clan, individuals posses power (e.g. the rain makers and or stoppers, *caamsituu*). Family heads have power over their families. Similarly senior (*angafa*) clan members, over their people. Ritual leaders (*qaalluu*), over the community and *waqa* is above all. They are such relationships which play a regulating role in the socio-economic lives of the community. Referring to the Boraanaa Dahl (1996:167) maintain's that "The Boraan view of cosmology, ecology and human ontology is one of a flow of life emanating from divinity".

Success of individuals, households, clan members and ultimately the entire community depends upon the harmonious relationships between the people, the mediators (different spirits) and the supernatural (*waqa*), and this could be realized through the performance of series of ritual ceremonies.

> "a constant flow of ceremonies and rituals (Boorana society sometimes appear to float on a river of prayers and blessings) which celebrated the values which are central to Boorana culture...." (Baxter 1978a:155).

Figure 2: Schematic Diagram of the Belief System



> Nature is seen by humans through a screen of beliefs, knowledge, and purposes, and it is in terms of their images of nature, rather than of the actual structure, that they act. Yet, it is upon nature itself that they do act, and it is nature itself that act upon them, nurturing or destroying them (Rappaport 1997:97).

The human images of nature that influences and guides their action, Rappaport calls, the "cognized model". The effect of the "cognized model" on the actor and/or the eco-system the analyst takes into account, he calls the "operational model." Therefore, according to Rappaport, the "cognized model" should not necessarily fit the criteria of the analyst. What must be taken into account is its "adaptive effectiveness." Belief systems being component of the "cognized model" keep on influencing human behaviours and guiding their actions. Therefore examining the cosmology of the Gibo peasants, particularly how their belief system influences their economic behaviours and fits into their economic activities, would be of fundamental importance.

6.4 Religion and the agricultural cycle

Agricultural productivity is believed to depend upon the periodic performance of rituals. This is put into effect through the offering of gifts, including the sacrification of animals to the supernatural forces. According to Onwuejeogwu (1975), the occasions for sacrifice are divided into two. The "cosmic cycle" that correspond to production season, and the "life cycle "that correspond to the socialization process.

As Asmarom Legessie has observed, just like their fellow Boorana Oromo, the Gibo peasants reckon time according to the lunar calendar. Agricultural seasons have ritual cycles which correspond to them. "Boorana time reckoning is unlike in East Africa and has been reckoned in very few cultures" (Asmarom 1973). Asmarom further argues that "The Boorana calendar is based on lunar rather than solar cycles."

The twelve lunar months identified by the people are: Furma, Maajjii, Baaruu, Woxabajjii, Adoolessa, Agayya, Yaaroo, Onkololessa, Cuulq, Sadaasaa, Arfassa and Muddee. The reckoning of time is based on *cagginoo*, the last three days before the moon sets and the first five days after it rises. People will not be engaged in certain activities on these days. The harvesting of crops, cutting of trees for the construction of houses and granaries, castrating of animals and circumcising of children are considered a taboo during

cagginoo. It is believed that, crops in the granary will be destroyed by weevil. If trees are cut for the construction of houses and granaries, they will be harmed by termites. The wound of animals and children circumcised will not recover.

In connection with agricultural seasons, people start reckoning of time starting from the end of July (*Agayyaa*) to the first of August (*Yaaroo*). These periods are considered as the *cagginoo* of the calliyaa, Jimmaa, and Guduruu clans. Members of these clans sacrifice animals and subsequently invite people within every five days interval. During these period if it fails to rain for five consecutive days, it is the sign of imminent drought. The misfortune will be attributed to these clans. The above mentioned rite is preceded by eight moons and falls within the rainy season. Adding up eight moons to this rite, the first of April (*Baaruu*) is considered as a period of *cagginoo*. This season is called *arfaasaa* and it is the period of starting cultivation. During this period animal is sacrificed and contact with divinity is made.

Once the cultivation season starts series of rites take place. The series of rites serve in initiating, coordinating of agricultural activities and rainy season. The purpose such rituals serve also by far transcends its economic aim. The ritual leader (*qaalluu*), the clan head, village head, elders, the rain maker, certain members of the family, etc. play a significant role in maintaining law and order hence contributing to social cohesion. According to Forde (1964:235), the role of the ritual leaders in the community is "to integrate and adjust them to one another on occasions when the value of harmony and solidarity within the village is emotionally inculcated."

The various rituals practised in the belief systems of the community, the purpose they serve and the role played by the ritual leaders will be discussed in the following sections.

6.5 The cult practices

"Cults" are "forms of organization of religious doctrines and activities "(Haris 1991). Anthony Wallace cited in Haris (1991:290-91), identifies four categories of religious cults. These are (1) individualistic cults, (2) shamanistic cults, (3) communal cults, and (4) ecclesiastical. The "do it yourself" religion which is based on individual belief and performance of ritual is called individualistic religion. Persons who serve their community as diviners, spirit mediums, magicians, etc are called shamans. Communal cults are periodic

gathering of members of a society for their own welfare. In communal cults the performance of rituals are most of the time associated with rites of passage and agricultural seasons. Cults which involve fulltime professionals such as clergy or priests and bureaucratic in nature and related to the state are called ecclesiastical cults.

6.5.1 Qolloo

Qolloo is a "ritual topography" where contact between people and *Waqa* is made. Historically *qolloo* were marks which separated the *qabiye*, (clan territory or holding) from each other. In their competition to control resources like land and water, the different clans used to fight with each other. During the fighting, the clan which occupied a given area used to demarcate it by using hills and rivers as border lines. After success in battle, the leaders of the clan used to sacrifice a bull on the hill, anoint their heads with butter and offer *farsoo*. The hill was then named after the clan leader. Some of the *qolloo* identified in different villages named after clan leaders are: *qolloo* Ambirat Wara Waqo, *qolloo* Muxe, *qolloo* Siri, Qolloo Boqa, *qolloo* Ganja, and they belong to Minya, Maraco Alga, Nago, Moguu, and Aale clans respectively. To date, every year, *busi* (contributions) are made by the clan members, and bulls are sacrificed at the site of different *qolloo*. Individuals take vow in the *qolloo* and offer salt bars, cocks, bulls, milk, coffee, incense and crops from their first harvest. The man who sacrifices the bull and receives the vows is *abbaa qolloo*, (father of the *qolloo*), the clan leader. After sacrificing the bull the *abbaa qolloo* roams around his home for five days and never crosses a river. During the ceremony of the *qolloo*, household members eat and drink local bread (*buddeena*) and local drink (*farsoo*) and dance. The ceremony usually takes place in March or April, after harvest. If the community faces problems before harvest, especially drought, the community will also gather around the *qolloo* and pray to the *Waqa* to bring rain and promise the *Waqa* an offering of a bull. Some of my informants claim that the *qolloo* did bring rain. People believe that without such periodical performances, children will not grow, diseases and drought may occur, crops will fail, livestock will not reproduce. One of the elders suggested that "people, like the followers of protestantism, started to question the validity of our *qolloo*. Consequently, God became angry." This was given as an explanation for the decrease in yield and recurrence of drought.

6.5.2 Aabba/adbaarii

Adbarii is a place of worship. The difference between *qolloo* and *adbarii* is that unlike the former in the latter not the whole clan participates. Households or certain group of people, usually neighbours can gather and participate in the ceremony. Every year in October the village people contribute money and buy a sheep. They select a big tree like *acacia verrugera* (sondii) and *albizia gummifera* (*ambabbessa*) and fence the tree. Make *dhaabbata* (staff used for ritual ceremonies). They perform a ritual by offering animals, boiled grain, local bread, coffee, '*farsoo*' and pray. The function of such belief is to protect crops from hail, so as to get good harvest. During this occasion elders of the village also curse those wrong doers in the community, like for example, thieves occasionally by pulling out the *premna resionosa* (*urgeessaa*), a plant used for making the *dhaabbata* symbolically throwing out the wrong doer out of the community.

6.5.3 Buro

Buro is a malevolent spirit which resides in rivers.[3] Referring to evil spirits, Knutsson argues that "They are evil in the sense that they are harmful to men. They frighten and hurt, but they can be persuaded and calmed with appropriate respect... but they are not really needed as an explanation of the existence of evil itself" (Knutsson 1967:55). Every year on the 11th of September, the *tuullaa* urge the village people to contribute money and buy a sheep. The sheep is brought to a household at the corner and that household passes it to the next household until all the households of the village have done the same. This practice is called *hoolaa dabarfachu* (passing over the sheep). Finally the sheep is slaughtered by the *Qaalluu* and is buried under *caffee* (plant) in a swampy area. Such practice is believed to protect crops from hail and wind and both from human and livestock disease. It is also believed that, the calamity the village people underwent during the year will pass like *hoola dabarfachu* and will allow good to replace it.

6.5.4 Waanbaraa

Baraa refers to a time of a year or more. *Waanbaraa* is conceived as the spirit which possesses the power of determining the harvest of the coming season. Offerings are made to

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3 Buro (evil spirit) cannot be directly translated in terms of Christian conceptions of the devil [Knutsson 1967].

waanbaraa for good years to come. At family level, different kinds of rituals connected with this belief system are performed. Had wealth not been a limiting factor, every family would have offered a sacrifice to the spirit the tradition prescribes. The types of animals sacrificed to the spirits and the number of people invited by a household depend upon wealth. Some households invite the whole village while others limit it either to their neighbourhood, or their family. During my field research, I had the opportunity, on 10th July 1995, to see a villager making *dhaabbata*[2] for *waan- baraa*. The *dhaabbata* is made of *urgeessaa* and *abbayii* (plants), and offered boiled grain, coffee beans toasted with butter (*buna-qalaa*), '*farsoo*', grass and bread. The *dhaabbata* was placed on the right side of the front door of the house. Both husband and wife sat down near the *dhaabbata*, held grass, immersed the grass in a small jar full of *farsoo* and placed it under the *dhaabbata*. They also placed offerings from the boild grain, *buna-qalaa* and bread. This is known as *dhibaafachu*. Then the husband uttered the following blessing four times:

Biqilli kunis Kumni kunis kan bara kanaati!
Yaa baraa an siifin kennee sooradhu!
Mulluun kunis buddeen kunis kan bara kanaati!
Barri saaa namaa nu tola?
Ormaata nu tola?

This malt (*farsoo*), this thousand (*buna-qalma*)[4], belongs to *baraa*!
This '*buddeena*', this '*mulluu*' belongs to *baraa*!
Will '*baraa*' be favourable to people and livestock?
will it be favourable for livestock breeding?
we will not harm others, will it prevent us from harmful things?

Neighbours and relatives who were invited repeat four times.

Barri sa'aa namaa isinii haatolu!
Naga nu haakennu biyyaa wojin!
Hamaa nurraa adebisu!

Let '*baraa*' be favourable to you and your livestock.
Let him make us and our people healthy!
Let it protect us from harmful things!

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4 Some of the terms spelled out during offering do not directly refer to the items to be offered. In this context, while he is actually offering **farso** and **buna-qalma**, he calls them malt and thousand.

In such a ceremony, nobody is allowed to taste the food and drink prepared on the occasion before the *dhaabbata* takes place. The organizer was poor, otherwise he would have offered either a bull, a sheep or a goat. I asked him why he performs this ritual and he explained to me that the ritual leader (*qaalluu*) had told him that his wife should offer to *waanbaraa* a sacrifice as both had been ill before, and are now recovered.

It would seem that while greeneries among the Oromo symbolize success, certain plant species deserve special quality than others. In this context *premna resionosa* (urgeesaa) which is used during wedding ceremonies and in every ritual practices has a good odour, is evergreen, vigorous, durable and termite-resistant. Therefore, to use *urgeessaa* as a staff in ritual practice, symbolically means to deserve a special quality among the human species and become successful in life. The ritual ingredient "buna qala" helps people to pray for agricultural productivity and fertility of both human and livestock. The word "buna" refers to "coffee" while "qala" means to "slaughter." According to Bartels apart from serving in prayers, "buna qalaa" also symbolizes blood- shed, motherhood and female fertility (Bartels 1983).

6.5.5 Addiyyaa

Addiyyaa is a goddess worshipped by women. Before performing the *ateetee* ritual women are expected to provide offerings to *addiyaa*. Depending on their wealth, they may offer a cow or a goat. The colour of the animal to be offered should be either white, red-brown or black. They should also be mature and normal. Since *addiyyaa* expects neatness, one has to go to a *horaa* (mineral water) and take bath. A person who usually eats chicken is not allowed to eat the meat of the animal sacrificed for *addiyaa*. Millet is also a taboo. It is believed that the seed of millet originally was found in the excrements of pigs. Traditionally, pigs were also tabooed due to the belief that they cause tooth decay. *Addiyaa* is said to be greedy (*doqna*), because only the family members are served food and drink prepared for her. While offering, *haadha facaasaa* (the woman who offers) sits in the hut and utters:

> Ayyaana amaatiikoo! Ayyaana abbiyyuuko! Ayyaana abbaakooti! ayyaana haadhakooti!
> Addiyyaa wonbe naa sooradhu!
> Ormaata naa qajeelchi!
> Arfii biqilaa naa qajeelchi!

Hundumaa naa qajeelchi!
Haadhaaf ilmoo naa qusadhu!

The spirit of my mother-in-law, father in-law, the spirit of my father, the spirit of my mother!
Adiya wonbe accept my offerings!
help my livestock to reproduce!
My field bear a good harvest!
And give me success in every field of life!
protect mother and her offsprings!

Sometimes *addiyaa* refuse to accept the offering and the family may face problems. According to Banti Sima, around the 1950's, there were people called *ayyaantuu*, (time experts and fortune tellers) who would tell why *addiyaa* declined to accept the offering. The *ayyaantuu* used to advise people as to the type of animal to be offered and the procedures to be followed. The *ayyaantuu* were also fortune-tellers. They would tell what type of woman a man would marry, the sex of the first child to be born, what type of career a man would engage in. *Ayyaantuu* no longer exist in the community. Some elders, however express the hope that they may reappear sometime in the future.

6.3.6 Ateetee

Ateetee is a goddess that women worship. The *Ateetee* ritual is performed by women alone. After marriage, the bride is considered a part of the groom's lineage. She presents offerings to the spirit of her mother-in-law, but only after the latter's death. When a woman plans to perform the *Ateetee* ritual, she brews *farsoo* either on Tuesday or Thursday, holds urgeessaa and utters the following:

Giiftii boroo haadha baar naatoli!
Alaa naa toli manaa naa toli!
Fuula sitti debiee naa toli!
Ilmoodhaa naa toli!
Gejaba naatoli!
Dhalatti hokoleetti naa toli!

Lady of the backyard, be favourable to me!
Be favourable to me in all aspects!
I have turned my face towards you, be favourable to me!
I have given you respect, be favourable to me!
Be favourable to offsprings!
Be favourable to bullocks!
Be favourable to cows!

A week before the presentation, the woman holds 'urgeessaa' and visits the homes of her neighbours to invite them to come to drink *farsoo*. On the day of the celebration, neighbours will come and anoint her with butter. She selects five women that are not widows and have never shaved their hair (*shanacha*). The *shanacha* may be relatives or friends. Then the woman prepares *farsoo*, porridge, and *buddeena* and get ready for the *facaasaa* (performance of the ritual). Usually, families cooperate in agricultural activities on the day of the *facaasaa*. They organize work parties, like *daboo*. It is believed that agricultural activities organized on such occasions result in a good harvest. On the day of the *facaasaa*, the *shanacha* bring food and drinks and, before they enter the house, led by the *haadha ateetee* (women that hosts the *ateetee*) and *abbaa ateetee* (husband of the woman that presents the offering), look for the leaves of *imbalta* (a kind of plant) for *irreeffachuu*, the performing of the ritual. Depending on the wealth of the household, either a cow or a goat, red-white in colour, not too young but healthy is presented for the offering. Before slaughtering the animal, both husband and wife anoint the animal with butter, starting from the nose up to the tail and utter, "Be favourable to us, let us hear good things!" After slaughtering the animal, the *abbaa ateetee* gives the right leg of the animal to the *Shanacaha* sitting inside the house and utters "Women, I have given you normal leg." The *shanacha* utter "we have received; let it be favourable to you", and then give back the leg of the animal to *abbaa ateetee*. Then the *abbaa ateetee* chooses a young woman who is on good terms with the family, to help roast a part of the animal's meat called *luumee* while the *abbaa ateetee* sits on a stool dressed in his *bullukkoo* (blanket made of cotton). Then the young woman picks up the roasted *luumee* from the fire with her teeth and puts it on the *bullukkoo* of the *abbaa ateetee*. If the woman succeeds in doing so, the participants say o*ofkalte* (succeeded), meaning that the *ateetee* has accepted the offering. If the woman fails, i.e. if the *luumee* falls to the ground before it reaches the *abbaa ateetee*'s garment it is considered *raajii*, understood as the sign of *ateetee*'s refusal to accept the offering, and the whole process has to be started all over again. When it is considered that *ateetee* has accepted the offering, the *shanacha* and their husbands eat, drink and pass the night in the house. The next morning, the *haadha ateetee* gives garlic to the women, while the abbaa *ateetee* gives them a *killa* (a small wooden container) of coffee and 2 salt bars or 20 birr. Then the *shanacha* rest and stay there while the other women go back to their homes. Now the *abbaa ateetee* invites men. The number of the people invited depends on the economic strength of the host. Before the *shanacha*

return, they invite the people to share the food and drink they brought and the *abbaa ateetee* gives them meat that they take home. Before the *shanacha* leaves, the *haadha ateetee* and the *abbaa ateetee* and their children hold together four calabashes full of *farsoo* brewed by the daughter-in-law, and elders bless them. The feast continues for 5 days during which people enjoy themselves singing and dancing. On the fifth day they cook the head and tongue of the animal which has been offered to the *ateetee* and invite the *shanacha*. On the 6th day, butter which had been put in a separate container during the day of *facaasaa*, called *oldabarfata*, will be checked: if the container is not full, it means that somebody has touched it and this is considered *tolcha*. After the final ceremony, the *abbaa ateetee* stays at home and will not cross any river for 9 days, and the *haadha ateetee* must wait for 15 days before crossing any river. It is believed that *ateetee* is responsible for fertility, agricultural productivity, and the wellbeing of the family. When people face problems they make vows to *ateetee* and present offerings.

6.5.7 Sanbata

Sanbata is a spirit that possesses the power to determine the success of people in their walks of life. The offering to *sanbata* may be made any time. Most of the families offer in April. As in *dhaabbata*, they use urgeessaa and *abayyii* (plants) and offer *farsoo*, *buna-qalaa*, roasted grain (*akaayii*), a bull or a goat. After presenting the offering, the family head repeats the following four times:

> Kormi kunis! kumi kunis! akayiin kunis! biqilli kunis! kan sanbataati!
> Sanbatni! sa'aa nama biqiltuu nitolla?
>
> This goat (or bull), these thousand (*buna-qalaa*), this *akayi*, this *biqila* (*farsoo*) belongs to *sanbata*! Will sanbata be amiable to human beings, animals and crops grown?

The chorus neighbours and relatives or village people, repeat the following four times:

> Sanbatni sa'aa nama isini haatolu!
> Hamaa isin irraa ha qabu!
>
> Let *sanbata* be favourable to you and your livestock!
> Let it protect you from any harm!

Before the family head slaughters the bull/goat, he holds grass, *hiddi* (a certain plant), and *urgeessaa*. He immerses them in butter and anoints the animal from nose up to tail four times. His wife also does the ritual five times. After slaughtering the animal both of them spray its blood outside, roast the meat and taste it before serving it to others. They also present offerings from all types of crops from the new harvest before their own consumption. It is believed that unless this is done, the crops harvested will not support the family for long.

6.5.8 Ayyaana Abbaa

"Much of the contact between man and the superhuman takes place through the cult of special divine 'agents' the general name of this is *ayyaana*" [Knutsson 1967:53]. According to Megersa the term *ayyaana* has broader meaning than Knutson gives it, "*Ayyaana* is the principle that underlies the reckoning of time and the passage of history, the social structure, the authority and power structure, the system of the law; the kinship system; and the religious and economic institutions..." [Megersa 1994]. Megersa further argues that *ayyaanaa* "constitutes one of the major organizing principles of the Oromo cosmology." Thus the concept *ayyaanaa* provides a partial explanation to Oromo world view.

Ayyaana abbaa is the spirit of the dead (father). Every two years after the death of the father, a son is expected to present offerings to his spirit. As in a *dhaabbata*, he uses *urgeessaa* and offers *biqila*, *buna-qalaa*, *buddeena*, and a cow or a goat, and early harvested crops. The presentation of the offering takes place near the sleeping place. The man who offers them utters:

> This belongs to the spirit of my father! *soradhu* (accept my offerings). Make me get a good harvest and make my crops last long, protect my livestock from any harm!

It is believed that, if this offering is not performed, human beings (adults and children), as well as animals could die, and there may not be a good harvest. One of my informants was convinced that in his village, a man who had refused to offer to *ayyaana abbaa* lost about 100 cattle. It is believed that the *ekeraa*, spirit of the dead father, comes to visit his sons to receive the offerings. If an offering is not presented he may complain to God and this will harm the sons. A particular *ayaana*, being an immaterial principle, can be materialized in different realities. "An ancestor's *ayaana* can be reincarnated in a descendants

personality and fate" (Dahl 1996:167). Therefore, to be successful in life, *ayyaana abbaa* has to be in close contact with the sons.

6.6. The Ritual Leaders

6.6.1 Qaalluu

"Qaalluu means a ritual expert who has a special relationship to one or several *ayyaana*, which possesses him at regular interval" (Knutsson 1967:63). According to the myth of origin, the *qaalluu* had come from a place called Limu. His father ordered him to go till he reached a place where he could find a white buffalo on the verge of about to giving birth to a calf. On his way he passed through the land of the Minya clans and asked them to let him settle there, the Minya refused and told him that the land is not enough even for them. The *qaalluu* cursed them saying "let your land not accommodate more people." According to some of the elders, the current shortage of land among the Minya is due to this curse. Then he passed through the land of the Maraco Alga and he asked them to let him settle they accepted his request, consequently he blessed them. According to my informants the land is currently accommodating a good number of people. Finally the *qaalluu* met the buffalo in the Gibo village and settled there. In the village people are afraid of the curse of *qaalluu*. The *qaalluu* is hereditary. Tesfaye Buli the 7th descendant of the original *qaalluu* is the current *qaalluu* in the area. Whenever a member of the *qaalluu* lineage dies the property of the man, such as his trousers, stool and mule will be given to the *qaalluu*. The *qaalluu* never attends funeral ceremonies. Every two years people make a *buusi* (contribution) in the form of money and the *qaalluu* presents offering to the spirit of the ancestors at their burial place. People make vows and come with different kinds of offerings during the ceremony. Individuals with problems also visit the *qaalluu* on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. During my second round fieldwork in November 1995, I went to the neighbouring village Ida to attend the *balii* ritual ceremony, that was performed in the Ida village. It was by Legessie Suppa the 11th descendant of the *qaalluu*. Legessie is 85. He is married with 4 daughters and 2 sons. According to Legessie *balii* ritual ceremony is performed for the well-being of children and livestock, good harvest and peace of the village. The *balii* ritual took place on the 13th of November 1995. On this day people came from Mantamiro and Gibo villages. They brought gifts such as *buddeena*, *farsoo*, *buna-qalaa*, and the first fruit of the harvest (maize 8) called *dararoo*. *Qaalluu* sat in a ritual house (*galma*) built for the ceremony and only his wife and

qaalluu's children were allowed to enter the ritual house built for the *qaalluu*. Neighbours and people that came with gift drank *farsoo* and danced near the compound of the *qaalluu*.

A woman called Workitu wanted her son's, ten year old daughter, to be blessed by the *qaalluu*. This is known as *ulmaa-baasuu*. Workitu brought *dararoo* (the first fruit of the harvest), malt and coffee which she later on toasted with butter to make it into *buna-qalaa*. She first offered the *buna-qalaa* to the trees, different small ritual houses (*galma*) of the *qaalluu* and finally offered it to the *qaalluu*. The *qaalluu* then blessed it in the following words: "Let production be favourable to you, let the born grow, let the country be peaceful." Thus, the *qaalluu* is considered as an elect of God and a mediator between God, different spirits and people. After the blessing of the *qaalluu* we were invited to the *buna-qalaa*. I asked Workitu Why she did all that and she argued "Aka mucaankoo naa gudattu rabiif sagadun dhufe" "I came here to pray to God so that my child grows." According to Tesfaye Buli, the *qaalluu* of the Gibo village, Every three years during the month of April a ritual is performed. Currently since he can not afford to buy a bull, people contribute money to buy a bull for the offer. According to Tesfaye the significance of performing the ritual is for the young to grow, the harvest to be good, oxen plough well, etc. The ritual performed is called *ulaa*. During the *ulaa* ritual, the people fix a tree called *lolchiisaa* into two different places and set fire on the tree. People bring livestock, milk container, yoke, and pass through the burning fire to wish the good reproduction of livestock and a good yield of the crop. Referring to those events that may take place in the village, Tesfaye told the following: "I know when the crop yield is good, I know what is to happen to me, I know what is going to happen in the village, I know who is going to die. The skill is of our forefathers. Our forefathers used to tell *ooda* (fortune). I also do the same." As a taboo, Tesfaye never eats eggs, chicken, goat and millet. Tesfaye also told me that the curse of the *qaalluu* is dangerous. The *qaalluu* curses those people that violate the norms of the community (e.g. theft). He told me the case of Tefera Korsa who died in the village as a result of the curse of the *qaalluu*. In 1980 a cow was stolen from the Gibo village and since people failed to identify the person who had stolen, they made vow to offer a goat to the *qaalluu* to curse the thief. Tefera died in 1980 after confessing that he stole the cow.

Tesfaye Buli is the *qaalluu* of the Gibo village. He is 35. He left school at 7th grade. He has two sons and a daughter. The sons are three and seven year old.

While, his daughter is a six months baby. Tesfaye told me about his experience in the following way: "I became sick and left school at 7th grade. Later on I recovered and joined the army and again I became sick. I asked the fortune tellers (*wabeka*) the reason for my illness. I was told to follow my forefathers footsteps and become a *qaalluu*. Still I refused and became follower of Protestantism in 1979. However, I still had a problem. I used to quarrel with my wife and as a result she committed suicide. Finally it became clear to me that all the mishaps were due to my failure to follow what my forefathers used to do. I left Protestantism and became a *qaalluu* in 1983.

6.6.2. Abbaa Baraa

Abbaa Baraa is a mediator between God, different spirits and human beings. There are about three *abbaa baraa* in the villages of Badiro, Kombo, and Wota Sidisa. During my field work I had the opportunity to visit the *abbaa baraa* of the Badiro village. Badiro is about 6 km from Gibo village and people from the Gibo village visit *abbaa baraa*. The *abbaa baraa* is 22 and he has two wives. He left school from 6th grade. After he was paralysed for 12 years he recovered and was possessed in October 1994. People consider him as a mediator between God and themselves. On Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays people with different kinds of problems visit him. Each individual with a problem offers one Birr. The time during which the *abbaa baraa* is possessed is from 9 AM to 3 PM. After being possessed he advises people not to steal, to avoid border conflicts, to help the poor and to cooperate. Then he starts to look at individual cases. People from rural and urban areas visit him. These include the sick, businessmen, peasants, the unemployed, women, etc. People also vow and offer incense, cocks, goats, bulls, heifers, crops, milk, salt bar, and the like. On one occasion one of my informant Terefe who took me to visit his maize farm told me how he vowed to *abbaa baraa*. Terefe's maize farm is about 2 km from his homestead. Due to the fear of thieves he did not want to use the maize before the harvest because if he starts using it thieves will follow his footsteps and steal the maize. Then he made a vow to *abbaa baraa* by tying three stands of maize crop so that *abbaa baraa* would protect his maize farm from thieves. After the harvest Terefe promised to offer some of the crop (8 stalks) to *abbaa baraa*. Those people who believe in abbaa baraa give him different kinds of services like, ploughing, weeding, harvesting, building house etc. *Abbaa baraa* has 3 servants who receive offerings and pass messages to the villagers. During my visit I saw 117 people on 3 different plots (about 1 hectare) of the *abbaa baraa*. They were preparing land in order to sow *tef*. To plough they used 21 pairs of oxen, and the people involved were young and old men and

women. They came from the villages of Medalle, Digaja, Badiro and Gibo. At 1 PM people were served coffee and *buddeena* and *abbaa baraa* and one of the elders blessed the people. Then, one of *abbaa baraa*'s servants asked the people to make a schedule and to build a house. The people agreed and fixed the date.

6.6.3 Caamsituu (rain-stopper)

The Nago and Badi clans are considered *caamsituu*. A woman called Ragatu Supha belongs to the Nago clan. She lives in Haro village. She is 48. She is married and has 4 daughters and 3 sons. The excess or shortage of rain and the prevalence of drought is attributed to her. During my stay in the field some of the issues I encountered about *caamsituu* through formal and informal discussions were:

(a) some people wanted to weed millet while others wanted to prepare land in order to sow *tef* and blamed the Caamsituu for the failure of rain. (b) Some people were spraying medicine against coffee disease and some households were carrying out *ateetee*. Other people that were not involved in such activities wanted to plough their land blamed *caamsituu*, according to them, those people who were spraying medicine and carrying out *ateetee* have given money to *caamsituu* to stop rain. (c) In Bedelle town the market days are Tuesday and Saturday. If it rains on these days traders, bar owners, consumers and rural people blame *caamsituu* for making rain. Therefore, particularly petty commodity traders contribute money and give to *caamsituu* to stop rain on market days. The first day I met *caamsituu* she asked me what my problem was. After introducing my-self and inviting her drink, I tried to get some information. She told me how her village people destroyed her crops and how she had been sent to prison. Later on she had to stay in the house of a Police sergeant for 4 months. Her village people later built her a house, contributing money for her, they took her back to the village. She told me that she never stops rain even if her life is threatened. She said that she uses 9 different kinds of leaves, to bring rain. On a different day we took an appointment and as soon as she came she asked me what I wanted to know. It was a market day and fortunately it was raining. I asked her why she made rain on a market day? She said, it is because she has not been paid. In the 1994/95 cultivation season 9 PAs (peasant associations) contributed 50 Birr each and gave her to make rain in the right amount for their crop. During weeding or harvesting when some families organize *daboo* they give *caamsituu* 10 Birr to stop rain. People believe that, when *caamsituu* dies her daughter will succeed her. It is

claimed that, in order to know who will succeed her, the *caamsituu* gathered all her sons and daughters and made them look towards the sky and asked them to tell her what they saw. Some told her that they saw a lion while others told her that they saw a white cow. One of her daughters told her that she saw a black cow with a calf. The *caamsituu* told her that she is the one who will succeed her.

People in the village also believe that persons outside the Badi and Dagoye clans could become *caamsituu* if they by chance find the horn of a phyton. They believed that, there is a phyton that lives in the sky. If a person kills it and take out the horn when it comes to the ground, he/she could become a *caamsituu*. If the individual who finds the horn wants to make rain, he simply inserts the horn in a bamboo tree and puts it under a granary. If he/she wants to stop rain he/she hangs it and there will be no rain.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 The development of the Gibo-Oromo

Before their incorporation into the Ethiopian Empire, the Gibo-Oromo peasants had at least been self-sufficient in earning their livelihood. Even though the successive governments of the Ethiopian Empire and state claimed they have been making development efforts, either in the name of the "nation building" or of "economic development", as a result of the intervention of alien powers, the Gibo peasants lost their autonomy and got impoverished.

> What is called "economic development" is the annexation at gun point of other people's economies. What is called "nation building" is actually state expansion by nation destroying. Territorial consolidation, national integration, the imperatives of population growth, and economic are phrases used by Third World states to cover up the killing of indigenous peoples (Nietschmann 1988:192).

As I have already discussed, the role of the state in economic development efforts can better be understood if one takes into account the economic, social and political aspects of its action. These are expressed through government policies and their implementations. The studies so far made, the historical accounts, and the oral traditions reveal that the Gibo peasants have been victims of the imperial system rather than its beneficiaries. Traditionally, land was subject to corporate control by the clan as well as to individual rights of use. Land was a source of livelihood, symbol of identity and unity. With the incorporative derive of the colonial force the Oromo feel under the Abyssinian rule. This resulted in the replacement of local power structure with the colonial structure. The institutionalization of the new land tenure system based on the tenant-landlord relationship took effect. The imperial policy included both the direct alienation of the indigenous people from their holdings and the use of the traditional authorities to facilitate the extraction of surplus, through a kind of indirect rule. Clan heads and other leaders who served as intermediaries were given the title of *balabat* and *lagaa*. The most striking and unique feature of the imperial system was its non-reciprocal, hence exploitative nature. The flow of resource was in one direction. The government neither provided protection nor other services. It was not aimed at improving the socioeconomic conditions of the people. It is interesting to note that different land tenure

policies were introduced in to the country. In Ilubabor, unlike in Northern Ethiopia, the policy failed to recognize the family and/or the sibling property. In Oromoland the process of modernization actually took the shape of a process of "Amharization", basically consisting in the conversion of the local people to the Amhara pattern of life. The question of why the regime implemented different land tenure policies in a single country it claimed to have unified is a critical one. And also why Amharization? Does this really indicate the social, economic and cultural ties the different societies of the country have had over centuries, as the Abyssinians and some foreign scholars claim? (Levine 1974). Or is it the contrary? In my opinion, the north-south dichotomy clearly indicates that before their fall under the colonial rule these societies were autonomous units with their own defined cultures. In short, while powerlessness, tenancy, landlessness and poverty were the legacy of the imperial system, the emphasis it laid on the extraction of surplus, its non-reciprocal nature, its lack of confidence in the people it ruled and the concentration on the Amharization policy made economic development efforts inconceivable.

Later on the *Derg's* development policy was based on the abolishing of traditional values, norms and beliefs, undermining ritual leaders and confiscating the symbols of their cultural heritage. It dispatched its cadres to agitate the people to abandon their "tradition-bounded" outlook for it viewed tradition as an impediment to development.

> Traditional institutions such as the extended family, kinship-based organizations, and communal control over natural resources are viewed as stifling individual initiative, experimentation and accumulation through their collective orientation. Traditional behaviour is thought to be governed by custom and tradition (see Hoben 1982:352-353).

Therefore, rather than taking the socio-cultural aspect of the community into account as a basis for development the importation of other societies values and technologies was considered as a solution, exactly corresponding to Escobar's following picture:

> Instead of seeing change as a process rooted in the interpretation of each societies's history and cultural tradition.... Professionals sought to devise mechanisms and procedures to make societies fit a pre existing model that embodied the structures and functions of modernity (Escobar 1995:52).

According to Escobar the very term development which was based on western discourse must be contested.

> As a discourse, development is a very real historical formation, albeit articulated around an artificial construct (underdevelopment) and upon a certain materiality (the conditions baptized as underdevelopment), which must be conceptualized in different ways if the power of development discourse is to be challenged or displaced (Escobar 1995:53).

Without going so far, I would argue that the concept of development can still be useful, provided that the associated assumptions and practises are reshaped in line with the models and expectations of the community involved, or, putting it in different terms, in accordance with the local traditions. Even if we are in a position to argue that peasants resist change, our analysis shows that this is a consequence of government policies, the effect of the cumulative negative perceptions the peasants have built against the government over years. The study of SG-2000 clearly reveals this fact. Among the reasons for the majority of the people to refuse to embrace the project is their suspicion that the government will take their product and/or reintroduce co-operativization and villagization. Bailey describes this common attitude in the following way: they [the government officials and development agents] are, "unpredictable, unsympathetic, ignorant and immeasurably powerful. 'They' do not understand 'our' problems" (Bailey cited in Mathur 1989:8).

Thus, if development has to take place, we should be able to take into account the local social reality, looking into tradition. Development intervention per se does not do injustice. What really matters is whether it enhances people's welfare or not. Development intervention should not jeopardise the very survival of the community. This can easily be achieved if the development efforts are seen as a smooth transference rather than a clash between "tradition" and "modernity."

7.2 About the debate on agricultural policy in Ethiopia

7.2.1 Three alternative land tenure systems

After the fall of the *Derg* the major question was the type of agrarian policy the Transitional Government would have followed. Regarding land tenure policy so far three approaches are proposed. They consist in state ownership, private ownership and "associative ownership". Even though there are still no clear-cut rules and regulations or policy, it seems that land is likely to remain under the control of the state with peasants given land-use right. This solution has been criticized by international consultants, donor agencies and scholars,

on the basis that state ownership entails tenure insecurity, preventing investment on the land, concentration of power in the hands of government officials, and additional administrative costs which the peasants could not afford (Dessalgn Rahmato 1994). As an alternative most international agencies propose the introduction of private ownership. However, this solution may lead to the concentration of land property into the hands of a restricted elite or of outsiders, a process which may force the peasants to displacement, unemployment or under-employment.

Both approaches are criticized by Dessalgn Rahmato, who proposes a land policy based on what he calls "associative ownership", as a third alternative. This alternative helps in promoting free holdings, tenure security and land transaction (Dessalgn 1994:8). According to him "associative ownership" could be put into effect when land belongs to the community with use-right guaranteed to the individual. Free-holding meant the right to transfer the use-right to relatives or other peasants within or outside the community. The transfer could be realized through renting, mortgaging, selling or other means. Disputes settlement and administration of land is to be entrusted to the Peasant Associations and to the community in particular.

To control the falling of land into the hands of urban elites he proposes the significance of restricting transfer of land to fellow peasants who are actively involved in agricultural production:

> Land belonging to small holders will remain with small holders and in the community, but at the same time it will freely move from those who, for a variety of reasons, cannot use it efficiently to those in the community who have the ability to do so (Dessalgn 1994:15).

In his view such a policy could assure tenure security and would encourage peasants to invest on land by promoting development and avoiding unnecessary state intervention. According to Dassalegn this policy could be successfully implemented if the following requirements are taken into account: (1) uniformity of tenure system throughout the country; (2) resolution of the problem of landlessness through development of the urban economy to put into effect a "pull" factor, rather than through tenure reform; (3) reorganization of existing holding must be recognized by law (Dessalgn 1994: 3).

7.2.2 A critique to the "associative ownership" model

Although the associative ownership model of land tenure seems to safeguard the interests of the peasant community while at the same time offering most of the advantages of private ownership, I would argue that in many respects this theoretical proposition does not cope with the actual reality which I have tried to disclose with reference to the Gibo-Oromo case.

Firstly, Dessalgn's position that the problem of landlessness is the quest of development but not one of a tenure reform is not convincing. Particularly, it is hard to see how and when the "revitalization of the modern sector" will be able to act as a "pull" factor. Although Dessalgn realises that development is something of the remote future he fails to tell us what the fate of those he calls the landless "surplus rural labour force" is going to be under the existing condition or in the near future. Let alone solving rural unemployment, I am in doubt, even if what he calls modern economic sector could fully absorb the urban unemployed. While development efforts could be made, tenure reform, particularly redistribution of land, can at least favour some of the landless peasants. This last statement makes sense in consideration of the fact that scarcity of land is not the same throughout Ethiopia, just as in the past the implementation of the land tenure policy was not uniform in the country. Although it is true that population pressure does not allow further redistribution of land in certain areas, in the Gibo Peasant Association there is still some room for land re-allocation. Among the study community land was not distributed on equitable basis. Some of the peasants lost certain proportion of their plots because of villagization and co-operativization, just as tenants that used to cultivate large plots managed to keep them even after 1975. These considerations lead to two further arguments of critique towards Dassalegn's proposal. The first is that the uniformity of land tenure throughout the country may not respond to the needs posed by the different situations found in different regions. In this sense the present federal model of the Ethiopian state may better respond to the peasants' needs. The second is that legally recognizing the existing land holding may mean to legitimize an unequal situation, aggravating the already existing problem of landlessness.

A second major element of critique regards the role the rural institutions such as the Peasant Association and the Service Cooperatives should take in administering the land and settling disputes. However, it should be noted that these institutions do not necessarily represent the community genuinely. Dessalgn himself reminds as that "we should remember

that in the past corruption in rural institutions was actively encouraged by state and party agents" (1994:12). There is no reason to believe that corruption will not take place any more.

Dassalegn's proposition has it strongest limitation in the fact that given the actual reality of the urban - countryside relations the "associative ownership" as described by him would not in practice safeguard the peasant community. Dassalegn suggests that land should be transferred to co-residents or to peasants within and outside the community through mortgaging, selling or other means. My study shows that be it under the cover of share-cropping arrangements or through relatives there is a chance for land to fall under the control of the urban elite. Therefore to allow freehold may mean to legalize the back door dealing and favouring the formation of monopoly over land. Dessalgn's view that "land belonging to small holders will remain with small holders and in the community" (1994), therefore, cannot be shared. As I have pointed out in Chapter II, they were the relatives of the urban employees who process contractual agreements, organize work parties, cultivate land and provide the agricultural produce to their relatives residing in the urban centres. Dessalgn's argument says:

> "to safeguard against land speculation or land grabbing by urban elites or their rural surrogates, a restriction will be necessary; this should stipulate that land may be transferred to those who will work it and who themselves are working farmers" (1994:14).

Such an opinion is not convincing in light of the findings discussed above. It is true that there could be peasants that generate surplus as Desalegn maintains, but this will probably be not only through their own efforts but also with the help of the urban elites. Thus under the conditions suggested by Dassalegn the concentration of land in the hands of few urban dwellers would probably be inevitable.

In this sense - although I share some of Dassalegn's points of departure, such as avoiding unnecessary state intervention, - I do not think there are major differences between the options of the proponents of privatization of land and his own proposition. While the former propose the legal recognition of the involvement of urban elites in land transaction, Dessalgn's associative ownership implies the possibility of putting it into effect in the name of the community. Thus it is very difficult to know where what Dessalgn calls "popular participation" of the community or "associative ownership" lies.

As I have tried to show a lesson that could probably be drawn from the *Derg* experience is that land use-right was not the root cause of tenure insecurity and of the inherent peasants' lack of interest in investing in natural resource management. The problems that people encountered could rather be attributed to unnecessary interventions in agrarian matters, "centralized exploitation" of the peasants, forceful implementation of cooperativization and villagization and eviction of peasants from their plots of land.

The policy declaration of the Derg (1990) that recognized transfer and inheritance rights would seem to have reduced land related problems and relatively enhanced tenure security. On the other hand, my findings reveal that the "policy vacuum" during the Transitional Period and peoples expectation of change in the tenure system not only aggravated the already existing problem, but also made people to enter into conflicts for control of resources.

7.2.3 An alternative proposition

In spite of the different tenure policies proposed in the earlier discussions, the Gibo peasants neither conceive land as a private property in the capitalist sense of the term, nor as a collective property in the socialist perspective, but rather they consider land as a common property in which land is controlled by corporate group which is also held by individuals in the form of rights of use. Traditional African land tenure system is characterized by "ownership of rights on land" where individual and collective rights overlaps, rather than by "ownership of land" (Gluckman 1945). Moreover, the notion of property of land among the Gibo peasants is more than economic. It is intertwined with their belief systems. Land has a symbolic value. It is a sacred site which links the living with the "living dead", the ancestor, in the form of genealogical continuity. The *qolloo* (ritual topography) described in the chapter on religion is not only a sacred site where the *abba qolloo* (literally "father of the site", the senior clan member) gather with his people and contact with divinity occurs, but it is also a legitimizer of the collective rights that the entire kinship group can claim over the land, stressing their intimate relationship with the territory. The mystical bond between land and the people is still fresh in the collective perception of the people. Therefore, among the study community, religion is part of their wider cognitive system, conveying relevant normative statements. It is not only a means through which people fulfil their mystical or existential needs and aspirations such as peace, health, wealth, fertility and productivity, but

it is also a legitimizer of "ownership rights on land." The alienation of people from their land, as it was done by regimes of the past, not only involved relinquishing the site which was source of their livelihood and cultural heritage but also loosing touch with their dead.

Among the traditional societies:

> "land is regarded as a common good, to which individuals have rights of use, but which cannot be alienated. The tenure is in the nature of trust in which all members-dead, living and unborn-are co-shares" (Goodland 1988:395).

According to Richards Among the Bemba of Zambia property is a "metaphor" of the ancestors and is closely related to social organization.

> The 'history' of the metaphor provides, in the first place, a rationale for the present distribution of resources. Each ancestor is buried where he first worked, and there also live his maternal successors. In theory an alignment exists between where an ancestor toiled, where his descendants live, and where the limits of his chiefdom lie (Richards cited in Gudeman 1986:95).

Richards further argues that

> "This part of the origin story justifies the current allocation of land, the distributive principle being temporal priority among the ancestors: first come, first served is the rule where families are located, and why they command different natural resources" (Richards cited in Gudeman 1986:95).

Studies hitherto carried out in different part of the world reveal that there are societies that have maintained their traditional productive structures in spite of their integration in the market economy. This in turn disproves the notion that commoditization of land is a precondition to development (See Mizzau 1989:30-41, Goodland 1989). I have tried to show that tradition is not only compatible with development, but it also provides a pragmatic means to plan it by clearly indicating the mystical bond between the spiritual dimension of land and the people. On the other hand, as we have seen from the earlier discussions, the subsequent changes that were made in the land tenure system by the past regimes proved themselves to be ineffective in the face of development and still "the land is crying" (Hultin 1994).

Unless their living condition is reversed the Gibo peasants will face even more serious problems. To enhance the welfare of the community their traditional land tenure system should be recognized and any development scheme should be entertained within the

framework of the traditional tenure system. Within this framework many improvements can be introduced. They include the reduction of environmental degradation through afforestation programs and through the improvement of the existing soil conservation methods, wildlife conservation with the consent of the people, increased livestock reproduction by tackling diseases and introducing fodder crops, irrigation and expansion of bee-keeping and cash crop (coffee) production. The existence of strong solidarity among the community and the fact that people are accustomed to sharing their problems is also vital in the development efforts. Mutual self-help associations and traditional work parties can serve such purposes.

Rather than talking about changing the legal framework it would perhaps be better to start introducing technological innovations and other improvements for the productivity efficiency and market facilities directly into the existing peasant community. Their own way of life should be taken as "hard fact" on which development planning and the introduction of innovations should be modeled. Change within the community, hence the evolution of tradition, will follow by itself, without any need to force it. This is what is required if we really want to "develop" the peasants rather than replacing their land-rights with somebody else's land-rights.

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APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY

Aabba/Adbariii	A place of worship
Abbaa Adamoo	A person who leads hunting expedition
Abbaa Ateetee	The husband of the woman that performs the ateetee ritual
Abbaa Baraa	A person that is possessed by a spirit
Abbaa Qolloo	A person that offers animals to a spirit on behalf of his clan
Abbaa Dagaa	Clan leader and village administrator
Abbaa Daboo	A person that organizes "festive" work party
Adaree	A group of people who protect crops in turn
Addiyaa	A goddess worshipped by women
Ateetee	A divinity worshipped by women
Ayyantuu	A person that tells why spirits declined to accept offerings, and is also fortune teller
Ayyaana Abbaa	The spirit of the dead (father)
Araaxaa	Usury
Aseennaa	Marriage that takes place through the consensus of the bride and the groom.
Asraata	1/10 of the agricultural produce of the tenant that goes to the government in the form of tax
Afaarsataa	A Means used by government officials to identify unknown criminals
Awaasaa	A type of maize
Baddaa	Temperate
Baddaa Daree	Sub-tropical
Buddeena	Local bread
Buuroo	A malevolent spirit
Borqii	Infertile land
Biyyo diimessaa	Red soil
Biyyo Gurraacha	Black soil
Buraalee	mixture of red and black soil
Boorana	Clans that are considered as senior
Boshee	A type of maize
Butii	Marriage by abduction
Balii	Ritual ceremony
Buna-qala	Beans of coffee toasted with butter used for ritual purpose
Cagginoo	The last three days before the moon sets and the first five days after it rises
Caffee	Tall grass
Caamsituu	Literally "rain stopper" but also maker
Cholera	kind of disease that rotten and damages crops
Daboo Eeebbisuu	Blessing of Work party members
Darar Diimessa	A type of local crop
Derg	Military Government
Daawullaa	Unit of measurement (100 kilo-grams)

Dhaabbata	Wand or staff used during ritual performance
Daboo	"Festive" work party
Daadoo	Work party based on "labour exchange"
Daakku Butee	Work party based on strict reciprocity
Daphii	A type of local crop
Dugda	Reciprocity
Duugduu	Tanner
Ekeraa	The spirit of the dead
Facaasaa	(1) Unit of measurement (equivalent to hectare)
Farasullaa	Unit of measurement (17 kilo-grams)
Farsoo	Local Beer
Gabaabe	A type of millet
Gadaa	Traditional socio-political organization
Galgalee	Afternoon session where members of work parties start working
Gammoojjii	Tropical
Ganamee	Morning session where members of work parties start and accomplish work
Gofoo	After ploughing to let land stay for fifteen days before sowing
Hooso/Xaoo	Fertile land
Hambifata	A group of family that provide labour service to the village administrators
Hadha Addoye	A group of women that accompany the woman who practices the **ateetee** ritual
Hadha Ateetee	A woman that performs the **ateetee** ritual
Idiri	A mutual-help association
Irbo	One-fourth of the agricultural produce which the tenant used to give to the landlords
Jaarsa Eebbaa	Elders for blessing
Jaarsa biyya	Elders of the village
Jigii	An association for the provision of food and labour service to the deceased family
Jari Bada	A goddess worshipped by women
Jatani	A spirit which resides in the house and have the power to determine the wellbeing of the family
kotee	The amount of coffee a person receives from the owner after picking coffee
Luumee	Part of the animal meat used during ritual performance
Laga	A person assigned under the village administrator and who is in charge of putting government rules and regulations into effect
Lagachuu	Equivalent to taboo
Lafa Dammaa	Literally the "land of honey" on which government armies were assigned
Lafa Qoraattii	The land a person receives after he has partitioned and registered for the government
Mulluu	Boiled grain
Mabra	An association organized in the name of saints

Malkanyaa Army members that were assigned land and used to rely on the tenants for food and labour service

Meesaa Removing of herbs from a land before sowing crop

Naqii Marriage that takes place through the consensus of the couple

Oromee A type of maize

Qabiyyee Land holding

Qindessuu/Qaroo Teaming up oxen

Qixxee Share-cropping arrangements under which members share their produce equally

Qaalluu Ritual leader

Qolloo A place of worship

Qaccee descent

Qocee A type of local crop

Qoccoo False Banana

Qotaa Trenches made by people to protect the enemy from crossing the clan territory

Qoroo Title given by the government to village administrators

Qomoo Clan

Qurxubbii A kind of plant

Shammanee Weaver

Sanbata A spirit

Soruu To make libation

Sanbatee An association formed in the name of Saints

Sangaa (1) the amount of land covered in a day with two oxen (2) ox

Siisoo One-third of the agricultural produce of the tenant that went to the landlords

Tef Indigenous Ethiopian crop

Tumaa Law

Tuullaa Village administrator

Tumtuu Blacksmith

Torbii Work party based on strict reciprocity

Ulmaa Ritual ceremony that takes place every three year

Waradaa Sub-district (Nowadays referred to as *anaa*)

Wasiila Paternal uncle

Waata A low status group of people who break food taboo

Waanbaraa A spirit

Waabeekaa Fortune teller

Wolwaamii Persons who mobilize people for hunting expedition

Xuxee (1) A person who mobilizes people for funeral ceremony, and labour service (2) A group which consists of thirty people

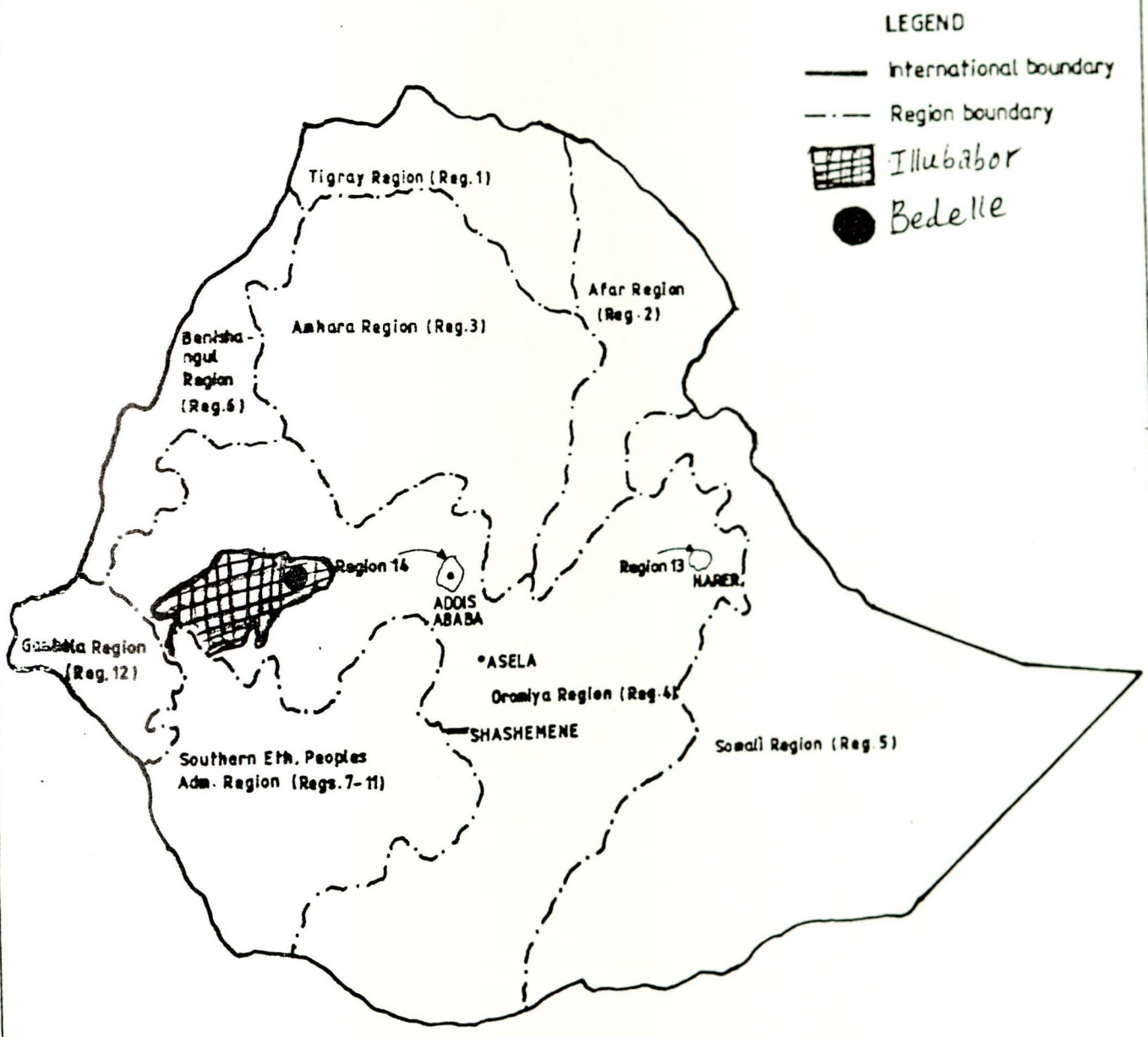
Xiloosha Marriage gift

Vernacular Names	Botanical Names
Ambabbessa	Albizia Gummifera
Arbuu	Ficus Sur
Abayyii	Maesa Lanceolata
Bosoqa	Linociera Latipetala
Ceekaa	Calpurnia Subdecandra
Coqorsa	Eleusine Jaegeri
Garii	Barbeya Oleoides
Hiddii	Girardinia Heterophyla
Keelloo	Coreopsis Boraniana
Kusayee	Lantana Trifolia
Lolchisaa	Clematis Longicauda
Muujjaa	Snowdenia Polystipetala
Rigaa Arbbaa	Bridelia Micrantha
Siddisa	Trifolium Campestre
Sondii	Acacia Verrugera
Tuufoo	Piper Capense
Reejjii	Myrica Salicifolia
Ulmaii	Clausena Anisata
Urgeessaa	Premna Resionosa

APPINDIX 2: ACRONYMS

AMC	Agricultural Marketing Corporation
BADO	Bedelle Agricultural Development Office
CIP	Coffee Improvement Project
DA	Development Agent
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
PA	Peasant Associations
SC	Service Co-operatives
SG-2000	Sasa Kawa Global Two Thousand

MaP 1: The Study Area



Scale :- 1: 8,000,000

SOURCE :- NUPI

NOTE : - Regional boundaries are approximate

DECLARATION

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

Name: Zergaw Lemessa

Signature: 

Date: June, 1997