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RURAL INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN
POST-REVOLUTION ETHIOPIA

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Preface

In submitting this thesis, I declare that:

- i. it is the outcome of my own work and no part of it is done in collaboration;
- ii. no part of it has been or is being submitted for any other degree;
- iii. it does not exceed the prescribed limit of 20,000 words inclusive of notes, but exclusive of bibliography; and
- iv. the materials used are listed in the bibliography.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to Dr. A.D. Lehmann for his comments on an earlier draft and with whom working together is a pleasure. The responsibility for all matters in the thesis remains mine alone.

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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Preface	
Introduction	1
I. Pre-Revolution Rural Institutions	3
1. The Origin and Development of State Institutions	3
2. The Rural Structure, Institutions and Tenure Systems	9
A. The "Communal" Tenure System	14
B. The Private Holdings Tenure System	17
C. The Pastoral-Nomadic Tenure System	20
3. The Church and Rural Institutions	22
II. Post-Revolution Rural Institutions	25
1. Land Reform and the Rural Structure	26
2. The New Rural Institutions	30
A. The Rural Bureaucratic State Institutions	31
B. The Popular or the Mass Organisation Structure	33
i. The Forms of existence of PAs	35
ii. The Village Peasant Association	38
3. The Bureaucratic State Structure and the Popular Institutions	46
III. The Revolution, the State and Rural Institutions	55
Conclusions	64
Bibliography	

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia lies in North-east Africa, commonly referred to as the Horn of Africa. The country has a population of about 30 million out of which more than 80 per cent live in the rural areas. There are three big languages spoken by three major nationalities but there could be as many as 70 or more dialects spoken in the country. The official (state) language is "Amarigna". To have some comparison in size, it is bigger than West Germany, France, The Netherlands, and The U.k. combined, or approximately 3.3 and 10.6 times as big as Japan and Cuba, respectively.

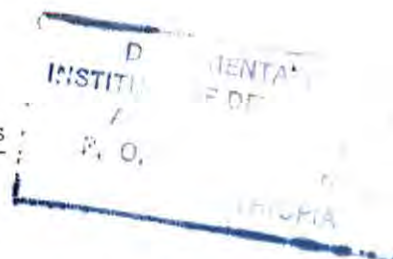
Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in Africa and least touched by colonialism, except Eritrea. For centuries the country has been ruled by kings and Emperors so much so that some observers reached at this type of a conclusion a couple of years before the revolution: " with the possible exceptions of nations such as Saudi Arabia and the Vatican, in no other country in the world is there more oneness between a leader and the people than in Ethiopia." [1] To their surprise, a popular revolution which began in 1974, culminated in a military government that overthrew the monarchy of Haile Selasse, who used to refer to himself as: 'King of Kings, Elect of God, Conquering Lion of Judah', and abolished the rule of the crown once and for all.

Since the Revolution, there have been major economic and social changes though not accompanied by the democratisation of the society. Economic changes range from the radical land reform to the nationalisation of industries and urban lands and extra houses, etc. Socially, feudal relations: servitude, tenancy, debt bondage, and other obligations have been abolished together with private property. Political power lies in the Provisional Military Government. Since 1974, there has not been a constitution and a popular election. Nevertheless, we have seen considerable social and economic reforms in the society at large. Whether

[1] Redden, K. The legal systems of Ethiopia, p. 1.

this would result to a deep going social transformation, rooted in the masses of the people or not; and how the question of the state vis-a-vis the civil society be resolved in future are very important and fundamental questions yet to be addressed.

In this thesis I will take a single aspect of the post-revolution reforms, viz. rural institutions at the grass-roots level. By grass-roots I mean institutions at the lowest-level of a state or a mass organisation structure that deal directly with the broader section of the population either in the rural or urban areas. What I would attempt to show are: one, institutional developments in the pre-revolution period in general, and the place of rural institutions and their relations with the pre-capitalist state and the ruling classes, in particular. The emphasis being on the degree of control of the state and grass-roots officials on the rural institutions and, very briefly, the position of the different classes in production and production relations. Two, taking this as a background, I have tried to show some aspects of the rural institutional reforms in the post-revolution period. And finally, I have put my observations as to why rural institutional reforms have the present form and content.

Pre-Revolution Rural Institutions1. The Origin and Development of State Institutions.

In the political history of Ethiopia, the period between the middle of 18th and middle of the 19th centuries is marked by the rule of different autonomous chieftains who in no way had any allegiance or obedience to central rule. The country was fragmented; local power, local rule reigned. They were indeed small kingdoms. "Thus every local chief exercised public functions in his province in his full autonomy without any connection, coordination with or subordination to another superior organ. ... the administration of justice, the military command, and financial affairs [were carried out] on the ground of customary laws and the Fetha Negest * ." [2] But we could not at the same time say that the local chiefs had forgotten the idea of the Emperor or that of the 'centre' because there was at least in "...theory the right of appeal to the Emperor." Apart from this, the local chief commanded a number of soldiers under his authority and leadership which he himself had to look after. He used these soldiers for different purposes: in times of war, for fighting against other chiefs and in times of peace to keep 'social order' and to collect taxes.

It was these kind of centrifugal forces that Emperor Twedros came up against in the mid-19th century. He himself coming from a humble family, first as a local chief and a rebel, crowned himself Emperor and started the long and difficult project of centralisation. His move towards centralisation was not at all smooth. Obviously, he had to use force and

[2] Paulos Tzadua, Organization of the Central Administration in Ethiopia, p.124. * The Fetha Negest is a free translation, plus an adaptation of an Egyptian coptic text which appeared in the 'Geez' language during the fifteenth century. It contains sections on canon, property, family, and criminal law, as well as a section on kings. (J.Markakis, p. 35, footnoted). Paulos Tzadua translated this text into English.

implement harsh measures to bring these feudal principalities under central rule. He was indeed draconian in the centralisation process but he achieved his goal, i.e. the existence of a certain form of central government. He also used direct and indirect methods of rule to make his centralisation work. He introduced "...the constitution of a provincial hierarchy in perfect sub-ordination to the central power." [Paulos, p. 127] This was the first introduction, at least in a form of a constitution, and the creation of a government with hierarchial relations.

It was during this time that institutions of a vertical structural nature that tended to look towards the centre first appeared. He further tried to establish a regular army which was a sign of a centralised state. Generally, he made some reforms that would break the power of 'feudal principalities' in military, administrative and financial matters and took these powers to the central government. These should be understood as being attempts towards the creation of an empire-state. What I want to stress here is that state institutions were created by force and compulsion in an attempt to bring feudal kingdoms under centralised control. It was to these institutions that the present state structures trace their roots.

Grass-roots institutions reflect the purposes they were created for and the stages they have gone through, i.e. giving allegiance to the centre, keeping 'order', and the security of the central government etc. Hence, rural institutions that tended to emphasise these elements began in Twedronian times and one could trace them up to the periods of Haile Selasse as Addis Hiwet commented, "the essence of the Twedorian state still persisted." Twedros tried to pull the disintegrated kingdoms together and to raise them to some form of a politico-economic entity. The motto, "...turn the swords and the spears into ploughs.." could suggest his interest to develop the forces of production. Because of these, some refer to him as the first Ethiopian social reformer.

I think this period could be used as a watershed for the emergence of state institutions in general, and rural institutions in particular. If this is the farthest one could go to locate the origins of state institutions one can consider them to be the roots of the present central government. But one has to bear in mind that all these happened in the Northern part of present Ethiopia which most commonly is known as Abyssinia.

The strengthening, consolidation and expansion of the state institutions was followed by Emperor Menelik II. Beginning in the second half of the 19th century Menelik expanded the Abyssinian state to the East, South, and South-west. A different mode and form of state, i.e. an empire-state was created. More territories were incorporated to his empire and this meant vast population with new cultures, traditions, languages, etc. Moreover, it also meant new revenue, tax, tribute, etc. and new forms of control and supervision were also necessary. Later on, Menelik found out that "...effective administration was the most formidable task the "Ghibbi" [Palace] officials had to face. [This problem] ...inescapably imposed the need for the modification, and renovation of the "Ghibbi's" institutions and the introductions of administrative innovations." [3] The need for better administrative institutions was mainly for increased supervision and control of the peripheries. "...the character of the administrative structure in the conquered provinces was primarily politico-military. The officials functioned as governors and military commanders, and their instrument for ruling was the large numbers of northern soldiery who were stationed and eventually settled in the conquered territories." [4] - these became the land owning class in the newly incorporated territories.

We now see a formal government structure in the making. "The ancient administrative division of the empire, crystallised by time during the

[3] Addis Hiwot, p. 79.

[4] Markakis, Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity, p. 106.

rule of the autonomous chiefs was changed by a new division, and the Empire was divided into "Awraja Ghizat" (Provinces) and these in turn were subdivided into "wereda Ghizat" (sub-provinces).. [5]

The more contact Menelik's empire-state had with the Western world, the more differentiated his state institutions became. The beginning of an infrastructural network such as roads, railway, telephone and telegraph (1889),etc. on the one hand, and the establishment of small industries such as soap (1884), mechanical mills, etc. and the need to have wider and larger revenue, and of course, effective control of the subjected territories ,etc. demanded new structures that could copeup with the new developments that arose from within and from without. So, at the start of the 20th century he "..created the first ministerial framework in the history of Ethiopia. ...[Ministries like] Justice, Interior, Commerece and Foreign Affairs, Finance, Agriculture and Industry, Public Works, War, Pen, and the Palace [were created]. Postal, Telephone and Telegraph and Education* were organized at the General Director level." [6]

This generally shows that the change and the transformation of the state and its institutions was mainly the result of two reasons: first, the dynamics of the expansion and centralisation of the empire-state. Second, external political and economic influences,i.e. the introduction of new technology and new administrative skills and techniques.

Among the newly created institutions of the state, our main focus with regard to rural institutions, is the Ministry of Interior. This was the organ of the state that supervised the administration of provincial and sub-provincial activities- rural and urban up to the level of the grass-roots.

[5] Paulos Tzadua, p. 127.

[6] * Apparently Education was to be a ministry by itself but since the "Mathoes" (the head of the Orthodox Church)claimed that education-teaching - was of his competence, the state had to leave it to the church (Paulos Tzadua, p. 130).

This is not to say that Menelik had effectively reached the grass-roots through his newly created ministerial structures. Most of the ministries were not as strong as they appear on paper. Quite a few had done so in a very loose and unorganised way. Only the ministries of Interior, Finance and Justice were the ones that were the most important to the continuity and survival of the state and some effort was made by these institutions to reach the lowest structures of the peripheries as far as possible. "...in most cases conquest eliminated the highest levels of the ruling hierarchies in the south [incorporated areas], but the middle and lower levels of indigenous traditional authorities were not disturbed." [7] This gave the state a link with the lowest levels of traditional institutions. In areas where the central authority could not reach the "Wereda" (District) level, the traditional leaders - hereditary, cultural and spiritual- were very important. Although we see the existence of rural institutions during the period of Menelik's empire-state they were not organically integrated with the central government. They were centres of centrifugal forces harbouring dissidents and local chieftains that did not accept the central polity. A polity that did not have legitimacy, that still was draconian in its measures with regard to its citizens. Clearly a polity that did not reach the level of a nation-state.

The development of the state and state institutions was continued by Haile Selasse. After he was crowned as an Emperor in 1930, he tried to bring the separation of powers in government by promulgating the first written constitution in 1931. The legislative, executive and the judicial branches of government were instituted. Markakis remarks that, " A key motivation was undoubtedly the Emperor's progressive inclination and his statement in the speech proclaiming the Constitution that it was voluntarily granted ('unwanted and of our own free will') was close to the truth." [8] I find this comment to be a bit more generous and to have

[7] Markakis, p. 106.

[8] Markakis, p. 271.

overlooked some of the real issues and the purposes the Constitution was meant to serve, i.e. the key factor was to continue the centralisation process and to liquidate those forces that were against the central rule and to bring an end to the palace intrigues and rivalries.

The idea of making the emperor the pivot of political development and making the constitution appear like a 'divine gift' is tantamount to attributing historical developments to an individual. The key factor, I think, once again in Markakis's words, was that it was "...designed as a legal weapon in the process of centralisation of governmental power and the struggle against the nobility." The emperor himself said, "the country must be subjected to a common rule by a constitution and governed by an Emperor [himself]." Secondly, for reasons that were external, i.e. because of his contacts with the Western countries he was much more concerned about the legitimacy of his state. [9]

Some political analyses on Ethiopia tend to focus on individual kings or emperors than existing socio-economic formations. More often it is also the case that no differentiation is made between the state, the government and the class in power. I hope Markakis is not doing the same thing here. It is one thing to consider the role of the individual in a given political development but it is a different matter to ascribe changes in society to the deeds of an individual.

The empire-state that passed to Haile Selasse and the aristocracy did not try to expand nor to make any major changes in the society that will necessitate a change in the mechanism of control and supervision of the peripheries. Nearly everything continued as it was in the period of Menelik until the coming of the Italian colonialism in 1935. Although the colonial period was brief, we cannot ignore the impacts it had made on institutional developments in Ethiopia. "...Italian Colonial patterns directly shaped the developments of local institutions in the North

[9] Ibid.

[mostly true of Eritrea]" [10] We further see the influence of the Italian pattern of local institutions in the rest of Ethiopia. This is a pattern called "unintegrated prefectoral system".* [11]

The effect of this new social force has been felt in the years after Liberation, 1941, in the overall state machinery including the rural institutions. This weakness in the structural co-ordination made rural institutions ambivalent in decision making at the local level and made them look more towards the centre. In other words it was a strong tool of control in that it assured the state, the central government, that institutions in urban or rural areas were not in harmony and could not come unitedly against the centre. Since it limits co-ordination between the different units of government, it also breeds inefficiency in the system.

This was the general pattern and development of the state and state institutions in the period before the Revolution, 1974. But what was the place and role of rural institutions vis-a-vis the ruling class and that of the rural masses? I will try to consider these relations next.

2. The Rural Structure, Institutions and Tenure Systems.

In the structure of the Ethiopian state, rural focus begins at the provincial level and goes down hierarchially to the grass-roots until it reaches the rural population. The "Awraja" (sub-province) is a structure lower than the province and serves as a liaison between the Provincial and the "Wereda" (District) structures. The two most important structures in understanding rural institutions are the province and the "Wereda". And even between the two the Province looks after the urban and rural

[10] Cohen and Koehn Ethiopian Provincial and municipal Government p. 9.

[11] * A system that has a tendency to impair coordination among government units. .. continuous conflict... whether ..decisions were technical or administrative. Nobody in the government structure has the ultimate power and authority to resolve such issues.(Ibid., p. 9)

institutions, and therefore, the "wereda" becomes more important when one wants to look into rural institutional structures.

It was through the "Wereda" (District) structure that nearly all the functions and the interests of the state were realised at the rural level. Matters such as financial (revenue and tax collection), security (maintaining 'order'), etc. on the one hand, and of course 'development', etc. on the other hand were transmitted to the rural population through this structure. There exist institutions between the "Wereda" structure and the masses of the peasantry that we could refer to as the "grass-roots" which became very important in the control of authority and to further sustain political and economic domination of the state over the masses of the rural population. They were also important in the appropriation and distribution of production in the agrarian sector. In addition to the state bureaucrats, the same functions were performed by grass-roots officials composed of people whose authorities were based on hereditary lines or from being warriors and heroes or spiritual leaders. These people, in fact, were landed and shared the same economic and ideological interests as those of the ruling royal house and the aristocracy and more or less reflected similar world-outlook.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, different imperial houses had used land in the form of a grant as a substitute for salary to rural institutional officials. With the control of the southern regions of present Ethiopia by the northerners, land became private and had a market value, furthermore, with increased contact between the pre-capitalist state and western capital, and the introduction of new methods of state administration, the salaried class emerged. But this should not be taken to have been applied to all bureaucrats. The attempt to gradually introduce professionalism was limited to the centre and no office holder was without land. It was a combination of a small salary and land. Hence, the bureaucrats were landed bureaucrats. This started to change roughly in the 1950s when Western educated elites, of course of purely aristocratic

backgrounds, started to take positions in the bureaucracy - incomes were 'restricted' to monthly salaries. But this form of bureaucratic recruitment was not dominant, and to cite in passing " In the early 1960s [the Ministry of Interior] employed three college graduates, but did not hire any more educated persons until 1968, when two more college graduates were added to its headquarters." [12]

In Ethiopia, before the Revolution, there were approximately 505 "Weredas" * [13] in the 14 provinces and different types of grass-roots depending on the tenure system of the region and the social and political history of every particular people in the country. It is indeed very difficult to bring the various types of grass-roots in this short piece of work. Only the predominant forms in which they exist would be explained. To mention some of the most common ones: the "chika-shum", "balabat", "Atbiya-Dagna", "Yegobez-Aleka", etc. Let us give a brief explanation for each one of them and at the same time try to relate each with the overall production process and the functioning of the state as a whole.

"Chika-Shum" - in "Amharigna" (the official language of Ethiopia) means a certain delineated territory where authority and administration at the grass-roots level could be exercised. There is no uniformity to the size of the area covered. "Shum", is an individual who exercises authority or administers in this jurisdiction. So, there was the institution of the "chika-shum", an individual responsible for the administration of the "chika". He was in charge of the enforcement of laws and keeping 'order', he was also responsible for the timely collection of taxes and revenues to the state and was accountable to the state structure of the "wereda". He also appeared in local ceremonials such as marriages and funerals.

[12] Markakis, p. 301.

[13] * This figure can not be exact because numbers have been seen to increase or decrease, for example, in 1964 it was 444 and in 1968 it was found to be 505 but no major change was taken to restructure rural institutions and could only be lack of accurate data (Cohen and koehn).

"Balabat" - is one who could trace his descent in the area where he lives and owns land. Unlike a peasant who does not have a history to trace backwards because he does not have land, the "balabat" could do so. This means that at some time in the past his forefathers were chiefs or leaders in the community, and because of this, he would be recognised as a traditional chief or a head man in that particular area. He recognised central rule, and the state in return recognised him as an important person in the area. He was allowed to keep his land and his tenants. Quite frequently the state used this person as a regulatory and control organ as he commanded substantial recognition among his community people.

"Atbiya-Dagna" - "atbiya" is a segment of an administrative district. "Dagna" is a judge. These combined mean the village judge. This individual resolves conflicts in the village either by mediating or putting fines on the accused. He also enforces the payment of taxes, could detain those who do not conform to the law and those who defy central rule- even a slander against the emperor was an offense and could put someone in jail at the grass-roots level.

"Ye-Gobez-Aleka" - "Gobez" is a person who has shown some bravery, or some one who has the potential to rebel. "Aleka", is the head of rebellions, in the context used here. Most of the times the people in charge were however rebels themselves. This is a force that suppresses opposition at the grass- roots level. Mostly common in the northern part of Ethiopia.

All these grass-roots institutions and officials lived on the peasants. No salary or any form of payment was made to them by the state. They made the peasants till their lands and accepted tribute of all kinds: in cash and/or in kind. In pre-Revolutionary Ethiopia, rural areas were not effectively supervised by the police force. For instance, in a "wereda", with an average population of 50 - 75,000, one would find five or seven policemen. This I think is just to symbolise the existence of the central rule than to control these many people. But control was done in co-

operation with and by grass-roots institutions. The same was true in tax and revenue collection. Though the state was not in full force to make its strength felt (in peacetime) in the rural areas, it effectively and efficiently used these rural institutions to perform its functions. They were indeed the strong arms of the state.

It is to these structures, i.e. the "wereda" and the grass-roots, that I want to address myself in the periods before the Revolution (1974) and after. To me, these were the institutions that were rural based, that created linkages between the rural masses and the centre of power and had been used as mechanisms of control and exploitation of the rural masses and one of the factors contributing to the worsening conditions of the rural population. Not much is said about these important control organs of the state at the rural levels. They deserve further study. Nevertheless, Cohen and Koehn mention them as "informal local Officials." But, I prefer to call them "grass-roots officials", not because they were popularly elected, which they were not, but because they were at the very lowest level and did not fall under the bureaucratic structure. Secondly, because they performed state functions and represented and acted in place of the central government official and because some of the positions needed the approval of the central government, they could not be informal. Moreover, the term "informal" is a bit vague to apply to them in the manner they existed.

In Ethiopia, prior to the land reform, we find three major tenure systems. They were: the "communal" in the North, the "private holdings" in the South, and the "pastoral-nomadic" mainly in the East. These tenure systems could lead to different types of rural institutional controls particularly at the level of the grass-roots. Before we start to look at the rural institutions in these three tenure systems we must bear in mind that there was not a major difference in the formal structures and relations of these institutions to the central government. To the state at the centre they were all expected to behave in the same manner. But, there

were differences in the actual functioning, power relations - economic and political- between the rural institutional officials and the rural masses in the different tenure systems. The understanding of these will later help us when we try to see the changes and reforms brought about by the Revolution on rural institutions.

Since the state had its representatives, ideological and political at the level of rural institutions in each of the tenure systems, it is worth seeing how these institutions worked, which class controlled them, how they advanced their class interests together with that of the state. The state continuously made sure that these structures were under control. This was done among other things by the Emperor's appointment of officials to important rural institutional positions. In a pre-capitalist society like Ethiopia, one could not find class dominations in its clear and neat form but mixed with national or ethnic domination. As the Amhara were the dominant nationality, at least politically, they controlled most of the political and state institutions.

In pre-Revolution Ethiopia, domination even at the rural institutional levels were of class and nation. And that was why most of the times members of the aristocracy, the landed gentry, or anyone with some form of class or blood affinity or either one of these, would be in a position to run rural institutions. Nonetheless the ruling class was not closed to its class members only, it tried to be open to those who proved to be loyal, competent and ready to serve the system. It also co-opted the capable ones; the western educated elites: civilian and military. Although the 'class origin' was predominant in the control of rural institutions, the 'class function' was of prominent importance too.

A. The "Communal" Tenure System.

In the "Communal" tenure system, it was not how much land an individual owned that would qualify him to take rural institutional offices but his loyalty to the system, his family's experience in state administration,

judicial matters, etc. "In the traditional northern highlands, peasants enlarged their holdings (or had them diminished) through litigation and their success (or lack of it) at building up patron-client relations. Governors and judges had no 'gults' [land given by government], but are [were] still 'honorary' members of descent corporations because they had the power to legitimate claims for land, rent, and the like.* [14]

There existed, especially in the northern part of Ethiopia, the tradition of office holding but it was not necessarily a hereditary system. In some cases, the son (not the daughter) of a certain rural institutional official could ask the state, at the centre, or the representative at the provincial level that his father's position be given to him, if the father was dead or could not continue for some reasons. The state considered this on its merits. "The Ethiopian aristocracy was never hereditary. Titles and offices are [were] granted for life, or for a period depending upon the pleasure of the Crown. .. land, or control over an area of land, which forms the basis of aristocratic status, was traditionally attached to the offices in the service of the Crown, and was distributed by the Emperor, as were the offices." [15] I do not think we can explain the positions the aristocracy or the landlord took at the rural institutional levels by saying that "depending on the pleasure of the emperor". His pleasure could not be separate from the interest he shared with the class in power, the interest of the state, i.e. the continuity of the status quo. This was an economic and political decision. Other factors could play a part, e.g. religion - as the 'good man' for the state would be the one who sticks to his religion (Orthodox Christian) and respects the Crown. This could be the most likely candidate. This, among others, was one of the methods whereby the state maintained its class dominance.

[14] * A detailed discussion of this is found in Allan Hoben's book, *Land tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia: the dynamics of cognative descent*, 1973. G.Ellis, "Feudal Paradigm in Ethiopia", *JMAS*, 1976.

[15] Markakis and Asmelash, Representative Institutions in Ethiopia, p. 46.

In most of the rural areas the control of political power at the level of rural institutions led to the control of land and other forms of property. In the 'communal' land tenure system where land is not a commodity, the local official could secure more land by creating a case and justifying it through his office that he had the right to a certain land by falsely putting himself in the lineage line. Since the right to the share of land depended on proving to be within a lineage system he will get a piece of land. If this was continued for some time, the local bureaucrat would end up in hiring tenants *. [16] "Though theoretically land was accessible to the Northern peasantry, there were certain groups of peasants who were deprived of the rights to land on account of their occupation and/or religion. The genealogically-based land distribution system also favoured those peasants who had close association with the local rulers, or elders who were sanctioned to adjudicate such claims. ...about 10 per cent of the peasants in northern Ethiopia had no land of their own." [17] Apart from this, other forms of property sources were cattle, etc. acquired through corrupt practices.

Here, rural institutions became a means of accumulating wealth. This could be either because the state did not care to stop it or the local bureaucrats did not have enough to live on so they used corrupt methods. Both could be true. Those who were corrupt officials would not be able to develop good relations with the rural population. The less strong their linkages, the less likely for the periphery to go against the centre. This, if not openly encouraged was passed 'unseen'. Secondly, the amount rural institutional officials received per month as a salary at the "Wereda" (District) level was very low - e.g. "Wereda" governors used to get not

[16] *The tenants here were themselves landowners. Because of the fragmentation of land, they did not have enough to farm and enough to live-on so, they sell out their labour. This is why one will hesitate to call the tenure system as 'communal' since there existed the hiring-in and hiring-out of labour. But not the sale of land.

[17] Alula Abate and Tesfaye Teklu, Land Reform and Peasant Associations, IDR, p. 8, 1978.

more than 120 Birr (U.S. 60). The grass-roots officials did not at all have fixed incomes from the central government. They lived on the land given to them by the government for the service they were rendering. Or sometimes they got a very insignificant amount as 'bonus' for the money they collected on land tax, agricultural tax, etc. This was more of an incentive to make them collect the revenue to the state than to be of any form of regular income . But the grass-roots officials made use of these situations (revenue collections) to collect money from the peasantry with different excuses.

So, it was obvious that rural institutional officials made their living out of the mass of the peasantry. But in the 'Communal' tenure system, one could find grass-roots officials living a life style not different from the masse. It was also true that one could find a local official who in economic terms was not better than the average peasant. "Landlords included poor farmers who did not have the oxen to till their entire holdings, as well as the sick, the elderly, and the widowed." [18] So, caution must be taken, when one tries to characterise the "communal" tenure system not to exaggerate its "communal" character. Despite these, rural institutions have helped in the formation of a distinct class from that of the peasant masses, the longer one stayed in the rural institutions, the more wealth he would accumulate and the more pronounced the class differentiation in the rural areas would become.

B. The Private Holdings Tenure System.

In the southern part of Ethiopia, even though the tenure system was of private holdings, we find no distinct difference in the overall formal structure and organisation of rural institutions and in their relations with the state from that of the 'communal' tenure system of the north. But the roles these institutions played between the local officials and the masses of the peasantry in property ownership and in the methods of

[18] G. Ellis, Ibid., p. 290.

surplus appropriation was different in degree if not in kind.

Rural conditions in the south had some historical differences from the north. In the first place, the south was an incorporated territory. "Before the Second World War, northerners came to the south mainly as soldiers, governors, administrators of state properties, representatives and agents of the nobility on its southern estates, judges, tax-collectors, clergymen, and plain landowners. ...they have come to this area also as officials and employees of the new regulatory institutions of the state (police, prison, customs, municipalities, land administration)..." [19] All of these became landowners. These were the ones that filled rural institutional structures - first, it was a landed class and second it was not indigenous. The process of controlling rural institutions and of the land happened simultaneously. Obviously those who got into positions in the rural bureaucracies had better opportunities to expand their wealth by acquiring more land and other forms of property either through corruption or through the use of sheer force and the state institutions: the court, the police, etc. "This process of removing the basic means of production from the peasantry resulted in uneven distribution of lands... The state, a major beneficiary of the expansion, owned about 14.1 per cent of the nation's agricultural land. The crown's land grant policy was used mainly as an instrument of winning the loyalty of the provincial nobility, local ruling classes (Balabat, chika-shum, etc.) and the emerging rural elite." [20]

In the south, the rural officials could do anything to the masses of the tenants. They could evict, take the land and imprison the tenant, create a false case to acquire new land, force the peasant to sell his land, etc. There was no force to check them. They were the police, the judge and the prison authorities. They reigned as they wished and the southern peasants

[19] Markakis, p. 134.

[20] Alula and Tesfaye, Ibid., p. 6.

and tenants were nothing but objects with which the landed class - indigenous and non-indigenous- could play around with. " By and large, the aristocracy derived its material as well as social status from appointment to office in the central and provincial administration. Control over considerable areas of land was attached to such offices....Thus the emperor performed the role of allocating scarce resources to the only politically active group in the population". [21] It was true that the emperor made alliances with the different factions of the ruling class, the landed class or the rural elite by granting land and bureaucratic offices and therefore quietened his potential opposition. But land was also granted for those who were not political rivals and politically active.

Local officials were most of the times left to act at their discretion in the rural areas. There were defined objectives and a minimum expected by the central government of a local official, i.e. to keep order, maintain and accept central rule and pay annual taxes and revenues to the central treasury. This allowed individual grass-roots officials to rule over the masses. The official, at the same time, was watched by the centre so that his excessive behaviour and corrupt practices should not lead to 'disorder' and disrupt the 'peace of the loyal citizens'. But so long as it did not lead to such conditions the local official was left to rule his subjects. This should not at all leave the impression that the control of the state was weak, anybody who starts to read about the apparatus of the pre-Revolution state would soon discover that the state had its checks and balances at the different levels of the state structure. The whole rural structure resembles a security network where continuous and uninterrupted control and supervision was carried out.

Rural institutions in the south were not only mechanisms of economic exploitation but were carriers of national oppression. These structures transmitted the values, beliefs, culture, language and psychology of the

[21] Markakis and Asmelash, p. 47.

dominant nations, the Amhara and Tigray culture and the Amhara language of the north. These sustained the notion that the north was the ruler and the south was the ruled among the masses of the rural population which were easily reflected in rural institutions too.

The surplus extraction from the rural masses by the state on the one hand and the local officials on the other was savage and unbearable. The state, the central government, demanded taxes of various forms: land tax, agricultural tax, educational tax, health tax, etc. - even one was too much for the peasant let alone all these combined. The district and the grass-roots officials for their part demanded corvee labour in the form of services: fencing their residences, tilling the back garden, escorting on long distances, etc. They also took bribery in kind: sheep, goat, calf, or cereals, etc. and in cash. Moreover, according to the existing production relations tenants were forced to pay 33 - 66 per cent or in some places 75 per cent of what they produced to the landlord, depending on the region and the relations they had with individual landlords. Rural institutions including the grass-roots had to enforce these obligations.

C. The Pastoral-Nomadic Tenure System.

Another variant of a rural institution that existed in a different tenure system was the one in the pastoral areas. Here, rural institutions had the same structural layout as in the other two tenure systems but with different social and economic relations. The grass-roots officials were different too but the intentions and interests of the state vis-a-vis these institutions remained the same as in the other two, i.e. the collection of revenue and the maintenance of 'order', etc.

The pastoral area was and is predominantly occupied by the Afars. These people lived in clans and the majority of them were nomads (I do not think their situation has changed a lot since the land reform). In the land of the Afar, one's individual identity, rights, privileges in economic and

political affairs and the leadership structure were determined by the clan. There was a hereditary leadership and a particular ruling family.

When the modern state structure extended its influence to this area, it did not or it could not root out the traditional clan-type leadership structure. What it did was, it allowed the traditional structure to continue and it established the bureaucratic rural institutional framework along side the nomadic leadership structure. The chief or the sultan of the Afar had an 'autonomy' within the state to tax his people and rule them under the umbrella of the Crown. But he in turn was responsible to pay tribute to the central government. Traditional grass-roots leaders were not accountable to the central government agent at the "Wereda" level but to their clan chief. Most of the central government's representatives stopped at the "wereda" (the District) level. The pastoral traditional structures and the 'modern' institutional structures co-existed with each other. Although the nomads were exploited by their Sultan they were not exploited by the local officials as happened in the other two tenure systems, which was worse in the south than in the north. But this area could not escape the hands of big commercial and state farms, which the state in collaboration with the sultan gave as concessions to capitalist firms. These dislocated the pastoralists and deprived them of grazing lands for their cattle which was the basis of their livelihood and the sign of their wealth.

Rural institutions created by the state in these areas were more supervisory and regulatory institutions than instruments of strict control of a master-servant kind as in the southern part of Ethiopia. Moreover, institutions here mediated the economic and political interests of the central government and the Sultan and conflicts were resolved through them.

3. The Church and Rural Institutions.

In the pre-Revolution period religion had a role to play at the level of rural institutions in the stabilisation and legitimation of the state. Although there are two main religions in Ethiopia- Islam and Orthodox Christian- the latter was taken to be the religion of the state. I will try to show the role the church played in the political, ideological and economic relations between the Christian state and the peasantry.

Besides the secular hierarchy, the church structure (Orthodox) was no less developed in the rural areas. In fact, it could be the most effective and efficient means to reach the peasant, especially the Amhara-Tigray peasant of the north. The society, Markakis wrote "...represents the classic trinity of noble, priest and peasant. ..the tribute exacted from the peasantry in the form of taxes, fees and labour was appropriated by the various levels of the ruling hierarchy, both secular and ecclesiastical. Each level retained a share and passed on a fixed amount to the higher level." [22] Furthermore, the Orthodox church was the second largest landowner next to the crown. In fact, before 1974, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, owned not less than 1.5 to 2.6 million hectares [or] not less than 20 per cent of the arable land in ten non-communal regions [south, south-east and south-west]. [23]

The pre-Revolution state did not always legitimise itself by force. "Traditional ideology justifies authority of officialdom, and the 'Fetha Negest' declares: 'God has appointed all these magistrates and given them authority. One who opposes the magistrate and rebels against him, he rebels against the ordinance of God, his creator.'" [24] Moreover, "...the legitimacy of authority is [was] grounded in religion. [once again from the same document - Fitha Negest] 'God has provided that the appointment

[22] Markakis, p. 80.

[23] Alula and Tesfaye, Ibid.,p. 6.

[24] Ibid. quoted in p. 87.

of chiefs and the judges take place so that the world may be orderly. ...and for that reason He established the magistrate, since the equality of forces causes many wars.'" [25] Hence, we could see that existing state institutions were strongly defended, their purposes and functions elaborated and explained, and rationalised by 'the master of the soul', i.e. the church.

The Church had continuously diffused among the peasant masses the idea of containing misery, that it was God-granted, and in doing so it pacified the discontents. From the same church document the Fetha Negest, "'...Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour' and tribute, custom, fear and honour belong to the church as much as to the state." [26]

The Orthodox church and the state had been in close alliance for they had common interests. To put one last remark on this issue, Emperor Haile Selasse in 1945 said, " 'The church is like a sword, and the government is like an arm; therefore the sword cannot cut by itself without the use of the arm' ..of course, the arm can not cut anything without the sword." [27] When one talks about rural institutions and the peasantry in Ethiopia, and more particularly in the northern part, one has to seriously give a place to Orthodox religion because it is through this ideology that the peasant's outlook is shaped.

To sum up, rural institutions in the pre-Revolution period of Ethiopia either in the south or in the north whether it was in the 'communal', private or pastoral tenure system, influenced by religion or not, remained organs that did not have interests different from the state or the ruling feudal classes. For the central government, these were points of law enforcement, keeping order, revenue generating, etc. They were also organs of economic and political economic domination by the Crown, nobility, the

[25] Ibid. quoted in pp. 101-102.

[26] Gilkes, The Dying Lion, p.61.

[27] Schwab, Decision Making in Ethiopia, p. 35.

church, the aristocracy, the landlord, the rural elite over the masses of the rural population.

Hence, rural institutions were points of convergence of different forms exploitation such as, economic and political and ideological in general and ethnic, cultural and linguistic particularly in the southern part of Ethiopia. They were institutions of control and exploitation by the ruling social group at the centre and the periphery. were more security conscious than participatory and development oriented. It is to these types of rural institutions that the 1974 Revolution tried to bring changes. In the next chapter, with the change in the production relations in the rural areas and with the abolition of the different tenure systems and with the uniformity in the structure of rural institutions,etc. We shall try to see whether there have actually been substantial changes and reforms in rural institutions and in the conditions of the peasantry.

CHAPTER II

Post-Revolution Rural Institutions

In the last chapter, I tried to show that the different classes, viz. the crown, the aristocracy, the church, the landlord, the rural elite worked in alliance to control rural institutions and thereby advanced their economic, political, cultural, national and religious interests through these institutions. Rural institutions were mechanisms of control and exploitation in the period before the revolution (1974).

In Ethiopia, prior to 1974, it is true to say that those who controlled the economy controlled the state power and vice-versa. Control extended to the state apparatus including the rural institutions and the grass-roots. In feudal Ethiopia, the economy was (even now) based on land and the position of an individual, in most cases in the rural areas, could be defined by his relation to land (refer to the preceding chapter). And therefore one would expect that if there is a change in the rights of ownership of land there will be a change in the relations of classes in production and in political power and in the decision-making process in general. Though this sentence is very general and comprehensive it has some truth in the post-revolutionary Ethiopian conditions.

As our focus, in this chapter, is on rural institutional reforms, we will start by asking a few leading questions. Which class is the post revolutionary state going to serve? To what objectives and aims does the state apparatus exist? How do state institutions and more particularly rural institutions including the grass-roots respond to a change in property relations in the post revolutionary society? If there are reforms, what type of institutional reforms are they and how did they evolve and how do they affect the rural population? These questions are difficult and complex, and very little research has been done on them. Nevertheless, I will attempt to give some answers.

An urban popular and military opposition began in February 1974 against Emperor Haile Selassie's regime, which led to his overthrow from power in September of the same year and to the takeover of state power by the Provisional Military Administrative Council (which hereafter I will refer to as the PMAC or the "Derg" *). Since the "Derg" [1] informally presided over state power in June 1974 and formally came to power in September 1974, many political and economic changes have taken place. The changes range from the abolition of the crown to the nationalisation of rural lands, the industry, the financial institutions, urban lands and extra houses, etc. (we will come back to these issues in the next chapter). But for our purpose now, we will pick those matters that deal with the rural structure and the rural institutional frameworks.

1. Land Reform and the Rural Structure.

The change in the rural class structure, and therefore on rural institutions, was made possible by the rural land reform proclamation: "A Proclamation to Provide for the Public Ownership of Rural Lands" - Proclamation No. 31 of 1975".* [2] The reform was economic and political. In a very limited sense, it was economic, in that, it transferred property rights of land from the few ruling class: the crown, the aristocracy, the landed gentry, the church, etc. to the landless peasants. Political, in that it allowed the peasants to organise themselves and to take part in the execution of the rural land reform. This also led to a change in the structure and organisation of rural institutions which resulted in the elimination of the landed grass-roots officials: traditional as well as state appointed. "The "Derg" had removed approximately 300 of the 550 "Wereda" administrators by 1975, and replaced them with graduates of

[1] * "Derg" in Amharic means a committee. Here it refers to the committee that was created on June, 1974 by the representatives of the different military units that mutinied against Haile Selassie's government.

[2] Declared on 29th of April 1975 and became effective in retrospect, 4th March 1975. I would hereafter refer to it as Procl. No. 31 of 1975.

secondary school or above." [3] In a small study I conducted in three "weredas" in Ethiopia (two in the South and one in the North) in 1980, I found that in the period before the revolution (1974), the average age of "wereda" administrators was 53 and the average years of experience in office was 17 and only one person had completed grade 3, while in the post-revolution period (1974-80) the average age was 38, the average years of experience in office was 6, the average grade completed was 10 (2 years in high school) and 3 people had college diplomas. We can see that there is a clear replacement of the old traditional land-based bureaucrats by members of the educated petit bourgeoisie.

Generally, this proclamation brought a defeat to the feudal class in the rural areas along with their mechanisms of control and exploitation and replaced it with new rural institutional frameworks. It is to these structures that I will address myself next. But before going to that, it is important that we have an idea about the land reform and its effects on the rural structural relations.

Of the many reforms brought about by the Ethiopian Revolution, the Rural Land Reform (RLR) stands out as the most fundamental reform measure taken to change a socio-economic formation that articulated feudalism and capitalism; but which was predominantly feudal. The land reform is indeed a progressive move in that it was carried out to change the life style of the rural population, which comprises more than 80 per cent of the Ethiopian population. The RLR clearly stated its objectives by saying, "....in countries like Ethiopia where the economy is agricultural a person's right, honour, status and standard of living is determined by his relation to land;" it went on to state, "it is essential to fundamentally alter the existing agrarian relations so that the Ethiopian peasant masses....may be liberated from age-old feudal oppression, injustice, poverty, and disease, and in order to lay the basis upon which all Ethiopians may hence

[3] Cohen, M. and P.Koehn, Ethiopian Provincial and Municipal Government, p.278.

forth live in equality, freedom and fraternity;" it further 'opted to "...increase agricultural production and to make the tiller the owner of the fruits of his labour..." [4] To this effect, it made "...all rural lands ...the collective property of the Ethiopian people; ...no person or business organisation [can] hold rural land in private ownership; ..any person who is willing to personally cultivate land [will] ...be allotted rural land sufficient for his maintenance and that of his family." It also abolished serfdom, broke the relationship between the landlord and the tenant and stopped any form of payments, such as debts, rents, etc. to the former landowner." [5] These by no means exhaust what the proclamation says, but are some of the important points which, I thought, would be relevant to our area of concern.

As one may recall from the preceding chapter, we have tried to see the different tenure systems and the relations different social groups had to land in each of the three major tenure systems. The next question to ask would be, how did the land reform approach and deal with these tenure systems? What did the reform actually do to the rural lands and to the rural political power vis-a-vis the "communal", "private" and the "pastoral-nomadic" tenure systems?

The reform addressed each of the tenure systems separately. * [6] In the Private holdings (the South), it broke servitude; in the "communal" areas (the North), it broke the lineage system; in the Pastoral-nomadic (the East), it broke pastoral nomadism, i.e. a move towards sedentary life was promised. In the final analysis, it brought all of them under a uniform land ownership system; at least in theory. In doing so, it recognised only possessory or usufruct rights over the lands they (peasants) till or over

[4] Procl. No. 31 of 1975, p. 93.

[5] Ibid., pp. 94-96.

[6] * Refer to Proclamation No. 31 of 1975, pp.94-5 with regard to "private" holdings and p.99 for the "communal" and "nomadic" land systems.

the lands they will be allotted later during land distribution. But in actual practice the reform came into effect nearly 3 years after in the "communal" areas and at about the same time in the nomadic regions. Contrary to these, the reform was very effective and quickly put into effect in the private landholding system. Apart from the tenure system which carried national oppression with it, e.g. the private holdings of the south, the land reform did not register a lot of violence. There were indeed some pockets of feudal resistance, but they died fast. In this regard, the land reform was relatively peaceful.

Although economic reforms reached the "communal" and nomadic tenure systems late (around '77/'78), political changes affected them earlier in 1975. Traditional authorities were annulled, the agents of the old state apparatus (those in the first tier) were deposed and replaced by new political appointees of the new regime, the PMAC. The political reforms, control and centralisation of peripheral activities, were faster than the economic reforms. The state bureaucracy came under the control of "Derg" so easily and so soon.

There are wider implications to the rural structural reform. Firstly, in a predominantly feudal society, the right to the ownership of land is a political question too. It democratises the society, frees the peasant from feudal bondage and servitude. Whether this will lead to the participation of the peasantry in the political decision-making process or not is another question, but of course a related one. For instance, the organisation of peasants at the grass-roots which allowed them to decide their own affairs, such as the settling of land disputes, is an aspect of political participation. But this can not be generalised to mean that there exists grass-roots democracy at the rural institutional level. It is absolutely true to say that, "Democratization remains impossible while the conjunction of land and power remains the fundamental basis of control in the country, and while the system is geared to perpetuating the rights of

landowners", [7] but it does not always follow that where there is a change in property relations, e.g. in land, there will be the actual exercise of democracy, i.e. the participation and the say people have in their day-to-day affairs, to say the least, and in the overall running of the state machinery. Secondly, when the feudal hierarchy of economic and political relations were changed, the vertical social relations started to break. Generally, there will be a change in the psychology of the peasant. In addition to these, land is no more a basis of political power. In fact, rural institutional officials can not own land. The use of office to acquire more land was something of the past. Rural institutions were run either by appointed petty-bourgeois bureaucrats or by elected peasants.

2. The New Rural Institutions.

The old feudal class structure that based its authority on land has been overthrown. As with the classes, many of the old institutions were not useful for the new objectives and social transformation. There is a complete change at the "grass-roots" level. The Peasant Associations and the Urban Dwellers Association* were created. [8] The creation of a completely new institutions, in form and content, only happened at the rural and urban grass-roots level. All others were either restructured or left as they were.

The focus on the rural institutional framework will not be complete if we treat the Peasant Associations (PAs) by themselves, we have to look at the rural structure which at the moment, I have defined (in chap. 2) to be the "wereda" -District- (state structure) and below. This includes the

[7] Gilkes, P. The Dying Lion, p. 84.

[8] * The Urban Dwellers Association is the grass-roots institution in the urban area. It was created by "The Proclamation to Nationalise Urban Lands and Extra Houses", July, 1977. In the big towns and cities they fall under the supervision of The Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, but at the "wereda" level they come under the "Wereda" structure of the Ministry of Interior.

village PAs, i.e. the grass-roots. But the task of treating both is enormous, and therefore, I will focus most of the time on rural institutions at the grass-roots level with due consideration of the relation with and the influence of the rural bureaucratic state structure on the grass-roots.

In the post-revolution period of Ethiopia, we find two types of rural institutional structures, viz. the bureaucratic state structure and the mass organisation or the popular structure. The former is the lowest level of the state structure, the "wereda" (district) which is similar to the pre-revolutionary structural set-up (as explained in chap. 2) and the latter is the "Peasant Association" which is created by the rural Land Reform Proclamation.

A. The Rural Bureaucratic State Institution.

The bureaucratic state structure is of two types, and for lack of better terms we call them "administrative " and "technical".* [9] The "administrative structure" could best be represented by the Ministry of Interior and the "technical" by, for example, the ministries of Health, Education, Farming, etc. While the administrative structures reach the grass-roots rural institutions, not all technical state institutions do the same. Both state structures control and supervise the rural institutions through their agents placed at the "wereda" levels. As a stress on this matter has repeatedly been made, the "wereda" is a very important level of state structure where nearly all policies concerning rural institutions pass through. Though both the administrative and the technical organs of the state could have their representatives at the "wereda" level, it is the representative of the Ministry of Interior that is the most important. This is so, because it is supposed to co-ordinate, give leadership, and even control and supervise the different administrative, technical state structures and mass organisations at the

[9] *These terms are taken from M. Cohen and P. Koehn.

rural level. This would mean structures like, the ministry of finance, Justice, Agriculture, etc. and of course the Peasant Associations. In fact, this is a continuation of the old style of bureaucratic control, i.e. the way rural bureaucratic institutions were structured and supervised in the periods of Haile Sellasse.

Contrary to the regime before it, the Provisional Military Government has decentralised power to the rural areas but in a controlled and supervised manner. Decentralisation was done to achieve certain goals, e.g. the land reform, but it did not involve the rural population in wider political activities. The legitimacy of the state is taken for granted. There is no representation of the civil society at the level of the state power. This type of decentralisation has enabled the Military Government to have more control of the peripheries. The state has also been able to push some of the routine bureaucratic tasks to the rural institutions, the peasant associations.

There are other institutions at the rural level that are either temporary or permanent, and yet arose out of the economic, social and political situations of the nation at large and the interests of the military government in particular. To mention some of them, The Office of Political and Ideological and Production Cadres which is directly controlled by the political and ideological section of the "Derg", but at the same time is bound to respect orders from the "wereda" bureaucratic structure - this has been permanent. Others include: the Grain Purchasing Task Force, when there was a shortage of food in the urban areas; Coffee Purchasing Task Force when foreign exchange was badly needed; the Illiteracy Campaign Committee, which could be permanent for some years to come. All these and others come under the supervision of the "wereda" administrative structure and chaired by the "wereda" administrator. In addition to these, the small committees and societies that are found in the urban centres of the "wereda" but organised under the Urban Dwellers Association are also supervised by the "wereda" structure. Associations

like Womens', Youth, and co-operative societies whose members include: petty-traders, government employees (teachers, technicians, members of the police, etc.)

The point to note is that even after the revolution, there has continued that tendency of the centre not to allow the periphery to organise and run its local affairs without the close supervision of the centre. Rural powers and controls gravitate around the "wereda" (District) administrative structure. This is true for nearly all rural institutional reforms and significantly clear in almost all the proclamations that address the rural sector. This has made the periphery to come nearer to the centre and certainly made the Military government more centralised and is enjoying more effective control of the rural institutions than Haile Sellasse's government. In the latter, control was made possible by landed bureaucrats and in the former by petty bourgeois civilian and military bureaucrats with some form of 'popular participation' at the grass-roots level. The distribution of land to the peasants, has in my opinion, helped to strengthen the link between the centre and the periphery.

B. The Popular or the Mass Organisation Structure.

By popular structure, I mean those organs that are elected by the masses of the rural population and are revokable by the same body. These are the Peasant associations (PAs), which I earlier referred to as mass organisations. The PAs were first created by the Rural Land Reform Proclamation, Proc. No. 31 of 1975. They clearly signify an institutional reform in the rural areas. And it is only at this level of the rural structure that we witness a complete institutional change. PAs have become very important for different reasons. Firstly, they replaced all those parasitic grass-roots structures that existed in pre-revolution period. Institutions and grass-roots officials like, the "Atbiya Dagna" (the village judge), the "chika-Shum" (in charge of 'order', collection of taxes, etc.), the "balabat" (the local chief), etc. Secondly, they have given an opportunity for the peasants to assemble and and discuss local

issues, however limited it may be, and elect their representatives, despite all the imperfections. And so, they carry some elements of democracy. Thirdly, the takeover of juridical, administrative and police matters by the peasants themselves. They have bodies like, the Executive, the Peasant Court and the Peasant Police. I am aware that these organs could serve an interest outside of the peasants, which is true and I will come back to this later in the discussion, but for the time being I am trying to look at them in their own terms. Fourthly, they were used as bodies that were to stand and fight for the interest of the peasants against the aristocracy, the landlords, etc. The PAs could be considered as a politico-economic and military unit, in a very broad and loose sense of the term.

The peasant associations were necessary because the state did not have the structure or the mechanism by which it could carry out the land reform. Since the land reform was done from above by a proclamation, and since the military government did not exist in any organised form, e.g. a party, prior to the revolution, it did not have the structure by which its objectives and interests could be made practical. Hence, it created an organ that could co-operate to carry out the reforms and at the same time could serve as a 'base' for political power. So, implementation of the land reform was a practical problem and PAs addressed to this call. Though the survival of the "Derg" depended, to a great extent, on carrying out the land reform, the reform was more to the benefit of the peasants than the military government. Furthermore, the creation of the PAs, following the land reform, was not detrimental or hostile to peasant economic interests. Nevertheless, we can say one thing, i.e. they (PAs) did not evolve by themselves, they were made by the state and therefore, the character and behaviour of the state could easily be detected in PAs. "Wishing to maintain some degree of institutional order in implementing the decree, and faced with the Ministry of Land Reform's lack of field staff, the government used the proclamation to establish peasant associations. ...the apparent thrust of the proclamation is to place control of the reform

movement at the grass-roots level." [10] This sentence reduces the reform proclamation to the control of the grass-roots. I do not think this was the case, but, it was true that in the process of making the proclamation effective control of the grass-roots was achieved. The two are different. The comment suggests that the grass-roots were out of control before the proclamation and this made the land reform necessary. This was not at all the case. The land reform was the call of the 1974 popular movement and the turmoil was greater in the urban than in the rural areas.

i. The Forms of Existence of PAs.

Let us now try to understand the organic nature of the peasant association and later try to see its institutional link with the lowest level of the state structure of the Provisional Military Government (PMG).

To begin with, the structure of a PA respects hierarchy. It is a five tiered structure with a clearly defined and strictly observed chain of command from the centre to the lowest level of the rural grass-roots institutions. It exactly follows and resembles the bureaucratic state structure in form and layout. If we were to trace the hierarchy of the PAs, we will find: a) The All Ethiopian Peasant Association, based in the capital - Addis Abeba. b) The Provincial Peasant association, based at the provincial capital. c) The "Awraja" (sub-province) Peasant Association, based at the "Awraja" capital. d) The "Wereda" (District) PAs, based at the "wereda" capital and finally, e) The "Kebelle" (village) PAs, based at the grass-roots. There exists a horizontal structural relations and a-one-to-one correspondence between the state and the PA structures at each and every level in the hierarchy. The chain of command and the vertical relations are clearly worked out. The mass organisation structure becomes the mirror image of the bureaucratic state structure except at the level of the "Kebelle" (village) peasant association. The bureaucratic state structure does not go below the "wereda" structure. It is from here that

[10] Cohen, M. etal. Revolution and Land Reform in Ethiopia, p.46.

the agent of the state supervises and controls the "kebelle" PA and through it, the rural masses. No PA structures, except the "kebelle" PA, have ^{direct} links with the masses of the rural population. The central, provincial, "awraja", and "wereda" PA structures are offices that focus on paper work, appeals from lower structures and facilitate and smoothen contacts with the state and invariably enforce government decisions. The "wereda", because it is nearer to the peasants, is occasionally engaged in practical matters. Otherwise, it is the "kebelle" (village) PA that becomes the convergence of all the tasks of organising, land distribution, settling of disputes, etc. and the base to all other bureaucratic state functions.

The village peasant association occupies a definite area of land. It is formed within a maximum area of 800 hectares. This delination follows the old (pre-1974) grass-roots jurisdiction of the "chika-shum", the village market, church boundries or "parishs". The members of a PA include "... a tenant, a landless person, a hired agricultural worker or a landowner with less than 10 hectares of land". [11] 10 hectares is the maximum land size that could be allotted to a farming household, as stated in the proclamation. 10 hectares is also the dividing line as to who is a landlord or not, and all those who used to own more than 10 hectares will not become members of the peasant association. But they can become farmers by having not more than the maximum farm size and could become members of the association a year after land distribution has been carried out. This was more said on paper than put into practice. The landlords fled to the urban areas and they became neither farmers nor members of the association. Firstly, the resistance the landlords faced was immense, and secondly, their contempt of the peasant was so deep that neither one of them wanted each other and thus the landlords, even after six years remain unrehabilitated.

[11] Procl. No. 31 of 1975, p. 96.

The number of people living in a PA varies according to the density of the population of different regions. But one can not take the 10 hectares limit and say that $(800/10)$ there are 80 farming households in a PA. This can not be adequate because, hardly any peasant household owns 10 hectares of land. Average land holding is more or less 2.3 hectares. And is bound to be smaller where there is land fragmentation as in the northern part of the country. The number of PAs in a "wereda" varies according to the size and the density of the population. In two "weredas" (districts) in the southern part of the country, in "Boloso" in Sidamo Province, and in "Manna", Keffa Province, I found 43 and 48 Peasant Associations with a population of 51,715 and 54,076 respectively, while in the north, in the Province of "Gojjam" in the "wereda" of "Adet" there are 52 PAs with a population of 147,464. Anyway, with a conservative estimate a PA could accomodate between 200-400 households. This is to give a rough idea of the size and the extent of authority of the PA.

The present Peasant Association is not the creation of one Proclamation. It is rather the synthesis of at least seven major proclamations. These Proclamations (refer to bibliography) will, at least, show the evolutionary and revolutionary transformations these rural institutions had gone through since they were created in April 1975. Revolutionary, because they replaced and rooted-out the old feudal rural structure and traditional authorities in a period so brief but so deep. Evolutionary, because they developed in a gradual, controlled and supervised manner by the military goverment. It is also important to bear in mind that these proclamations encompass much wider and deeper economic, political, social, military, ideological, etc. issues. They were used, at one time to suppress the opposition of the state and protect the land reform from the landlords, and at another time, to distribute land and settle local disputes, and the reorganisation and politicisation of the rural masses, etc. For our purpose, these proclamations become very important because they have been the factors for the changing roles of rural institutional transformations and the instruments by which the

state got better access to the grass-roots institutions, the peasant associations.

ii. The Village Peasant Association.

The "Kebelle" (village) Peasant Association is the lowest-level grass-roots institution that has direct contact with the peasants. As the name clearly implies it is the organisation of the peasants and by the peasants at the village level. It is composed of The General Assembly, The Executive Committee, The Judicial Tribunal (The Peasant Court), The Defence Squad (The Peasant Police), and other special associations within it, like the Womens' Association, the Youth Association (peasant youth). There are production institutions as: service co-operatives, agricultural producers' co-operatives and artisan co-operatives, which in fact are societies of the peasants but not necessarily controlled by the village PA.

The General Assembly: is composed of all peasant household heads who own less than 10 hectares of land and who live within the 800 hectares limit of a peasant association. Only the spouse, with no discrimination to sex, could be a member of the association. It is only these registered members who have the right to elect and be elected. This body assembles to elect village officials, to discuss important community issues, e.g. the building of roads, the construction of schools, or for the decimation of central government orders, discussions on the need to pay taxes, etc.

The Executive Committee: This is the administrative organ of the village peasant association. it is elected by the General Assembly in a one man one vote system by show-of -hands. It is composed of the Chairman, vice-Chairman, the Secretary, the treasurer and the leader of the defence squad, a total of five members. * [12] It is in this committee where nearly all the activities of the peasant associations are carried out. The

[12] * The composition and the election procedures of this body are not explained in any one of the proclamations, so I am using my personal experience of the early periods of village peasant organisations.

contact with the "wereda" Peasant Association and through it with the central organ of the All peasants Association, contact with the "wereda" bureaucratic state apparatus - administrative or technical is made through this body. It also commands the Defence Squad and the only body that could call the General Assembly. It does a lot of paper work and for this reason there arose the need for a permanent office clerk with some bureaucratic experience. This organ replaced the grass-roots traditional authorities like the "balabats", the "chika-shum" and the landed bureaucrats, etc.

The Judicial Tribunal: This is a village peasant court. It is elected directly by the General Assembly and the members could vary between three and five. In most cases it is three, probably influenced by the state court system, where there are the left, centre and right judges. The period of stay in the office is one year, according to the proclamation, but this has not been the case and some have been in office for two or more years. Peasants elected to the court are members of the association considered to have unbiased opinions and would pass balanced judgements. Most of them seem to be senior members of the community who are articulate and, if possible, have some experience of public debate. Since most of the time, they are involved in mediation than imposing sanctions or fines, peasants who command community respect are favoured to fill the positions.

The peasant court was first created with the intent " ...to hear land disputes arising within the area [of 800 hectares, a peasant association]" [13] Later the powers of this judicial tribunal were more carefully defined and become more elaborate. Its civil and criminal jurisdictions were clearly spelled out. The civil jurisdictional powers included disputes involving cases up to Eth. Birr 100 (approx. U.S. 50) when it is between [14] individual peasants and up to Birr 500 (approx. U.S.

[13] Proclamation No. 31 of 1975, p. 97.

[14] * Birr is the Ethiopian currency. At the present currency exchange rates, 1 U.S. = 2.07 Birr.

250) when it involves the individual peasant and the peasant association. It adjudicates on disputes involving garden plots; inheritance cases concerning private properties; common property of spouses within the locality; payment of loans advanced through the peasant association as could be the case in co-operative societies. [15] The criminal jurisdictional powers include offences such as intimidation, the violation of private domicile, contempt of the judicial tribunal or refusal to carry out orders and violation of internal regulations issued by the Executive of the peasant association concerning the property, security and welfare of the locality. [16] This same PA judicial tribunal can impose penalty. Fines could range from 1 Birr (U.S. 0.50) up to three months of imprisonment (in the state's prisons). It could also warn, order the offender to give public apology or make him confess that his act was shameful or impose compulsory labour up to 15 days. [17]

This peasant court is comparable to the old district court in the actual responsibilities entrusted in it. Apart from this, it is a new institution and is different in its form and content from the old "Atbiya-Dagna" (the village judge) who was landed and lived on the labour of the peasants. Contrary to this, the basis of power in the village judicial tribunal are the peasants and it is meant to serve this very class. This in its broad sense, is an attempt of self-rule. It also helped to avoid the bureaucratic hustle the peasant had to face in a world which he knows very little. It minimises corruption very much if not all together.

These are all positive steps toward popular participation and a good beginning of democratic exercise; but we must not forget that all is not the judicial tribunal at the grass-roots level. In fact, to see the role they play in the rural areas we should at least have a look at the frequency of cases they handle and how crucial are their decisions or

[15] Proclamation No. 71 of 1975, p. 112.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid. pp. 112-113.

verdicts to present rural conditions, i.e. within the peasants themselves and in their relations with the state that created these institutions. At the moment there is not much I could say, except that their involvement in production and in the politics of the state is not strong enough to determine state/peasant relations, but is quite adequate to influence it.

There are two tiers in the judicial hierarchy. These are the "wereda" (district) and the "awraja" (sub-province) Judicial Tribunals (JTs). The latter is the upper most in the JT structures. The "wereda" JT is elected by the "wereda" peasant representatives. This body acts as an appellate court. Peasants not satisfied with the verdicts of their court could take their cases to the "wereda" and the decision passed by the local tribunal could be reversed or approved. But decisions taken here are final. There are disputes that could for the first time start, at the "wereda", and if there is an appeal, it could go to the "awraja" JT. But cases that begin at the village PA JT could not reach the "awraja" level. This is a drastic change from the old court system where a case once began at the grass-roots level could go as far as the capital, even up to the Emperor, 'the royal court.' Leaving aside the problems faced by the peasant in walking a maximum of 7 to 10 days (sometimes more) or paying the cost in transport, in the end he might lose the case. There was a high percentage of litigation in the pre-1974 period mainly because of the tenure systems. Those who could win their cases were the ones who had the political and economic dominance in the society. This was completely avoided in the post-revolutionary period in the rural areas by the introduction of the Land Reform and the creation of peasant courts.

The Defence Squad: This is similar to what I have been referring to as "the peasant police" or could be called "the peasant guard". This is the body that enforces the law, keeps 'order' and looks after security matters in the 800 hectares, the territorial limits of the PA. It is the only armed body in the rural areas; and the law of the state demands that no other person could carry arms except members of the PA and particularly the members of the defence squads. Restricting the carrying of arms has not

come into force in the Amhara-Tigray regions of the North (Communal Tenure) and in the "Afar" regions of the east (pastoral-nomadic) of the country where carrying arms begins at the age of around 15 and is seen as the sign of man-hood. But it has been effective in the Southern (private holding tenure) of the country. Its comparison to pre-revolutionary grass-roots institution could be "Ye-Gobez-Aleka", the person in charge of 'order' (refer to chap. 2), but the two are completely different in form and content.

The idea of having a defence squad did not at all arise in the first land reform proclamation but it came nine months later in the Proclamation to Organise and Consolidate PAs. Among the functions assigned to it are: "...to produce wanted persons upon order in accordance with the law of the executive committee or judicial tribunal of a peasant association; ... to safeguard forests, mines bridges, crops and other such properties which need safeguarding from time to time; ... to carry out the necessary security and defence activities according to the decision of the government; etc. [18] The leader of the defence squad is elected by the General Assembly who then automatically becomes a member of the executive committee of the PA. The other members, the rank and file, are elected by the executive committee which will decide its size and screen who is eligible and who is not by applying the criteria of membership to the defence squad as has been stated in the proclamation. [19] Basically, this organ is supposed to have some military training. Training is provided by the state police in the locality. The discipline they observe is like a regular army and they have gradually been changed into a peasant militia.

These are the types of grass-roots rural institutions that we find in the post-revolution period in Ethiopia. Generally, I have tried to explain what the peasant associations are, together with their functions and the

[18] Procl. No. 71 of 1970, p.110.

[19] Ibid., p. 111.

people who run them. In the process, my aim was to show the transformation these institutions have gone through. It is true that authority relations at the grass-roots institutions have changed radically. The relations of those who occupy grass-roots offices and the peasant masses are no longer based on property. A new system of peasant administration has replaced the old feudal oligarchy. This is what I would refer to as one of the institutional reforms in the post- revolutionary period.

Production Institutions in the Rural Areas: The Land Reform not only changed the production relations, but has also tried to restructure the production process in the agrarian or the rural sector. To this effect, it was necessary to create new institutions for the organisation of labour.

Production in the post-revolution period in the rural areas is carried out by the small peasant cultivators, the peasant co-operatives and the state farms. The state farms include those private local and foreign owned mechanised and semi-mechanised large scale farms nationalised by the land reform proclamation in 1975. This was administered, first, by a corporation which later was raised to a ministerial level as the Ministry of State Farms. Control of different state farms out in the periphery is direct from the Ministry which is based at the centre, Addis Abeba. Apart from saying that state farms do exist in the rural areas and that they function independently of the rural institutions, I will not dwell much on them because I feel that they need a separate study and do not come under my subject directly. Thus I will pass on to the co-operatives.

The idea of co-operatives was originally thought of with the creation of the peasant associations, 1975. In fact, it was stated that "...the development of Ethiopia ... can be assured ... by instituting basic changes in agrarian relations which would lay the basis upon which, through work by co-operation, the development of one becomes the development of all." And because of this, it became one of the functions of the Peasant Associations, "... to establish marketing and credit co-operatives and

other associations like the debo * [20] which would help farmers to co-operate in manual and other works". [21] Later in the move to consolidate peasant associations the role given to co-operatives as institutions of production was immensely increased. It was stated that "... it is necessary to organize and develop co-operatives in all places at all levels in order to lay ... the foundation for socialist agriculture so that the peasantry may benefit from the joint labour." [22] Here we see, for the first time, a relation being made between co-operatives and socialist agriculture, though the latter is not defined. Co-operatives at this level included only the Service Co-operative and the Agricultural Producers' Co-operative Societies.

Nearly three years after, in 1978, a new decree: "A Proclamation to Provide for the Establishment of Co-operative Societies" came out. This, in a way, summarised what the state wanted the co-operatives to be. The new law added "Artisan Co-operatives; Thrift and Credit Co-operative societies and Housing Co-operative Societies" to the preceding proclamation which contained the Service and Producers' Co-operatives. [23] Among these, I will only consider the Agricultural Service Co-operative and the Agricultural Producers' Co-operative which I think are very active and important in the production process in the rural areas. It is through these institutions that we see the linkage and the influences of the state in agricultural production, surplus generation and appropriation. Even here, I do not intend to go to details but just to show that co-operatives do exist.

The Agricultural Service Co-operative: This is established by "two or more "Kebelle" (village) peasant associations and will be supervised by

[20] * A traditional system where a group of people in a community or a village combine their labour for a specific purpose, e.g. harvesting, weeding, etc.

[21] Procl. No. 31 of 1975, pp. 93&97.

[22] Procl. No. 71 of 1975, p.107.

[23] Procl. No. 138 of 1978, p. 43.

the "wereda" (district) peasant association. Its functions are economic and political. Economically: marketing the produce of the members, giving preferential loans at lower interest rates, supplying consumer goods, providing storage and improved agricultural implements to the members, etc. Politically, it was expected to educate its members in socialist philosophy and co-operative work with the aim of enhancing the political consciousness of the peasantry and forming Agricultural Co-operatives. [24] The need to increase production, and the use of co-operatives as channels of achieving this objective has been spelt out vividly in the 1978 co-operatives proclamation. The stress of accumulation and mobilisation of human resources for economic development and the creation of collective farms, though mentioned in the 1975 proclamation, has been elaborated and was given an allout encouragement from the state.

Agricultural Producers' Co-operative: Farmers in a peasant association may 'voluntarily' form this co-operative. Its main objectives are "... to put the main instruments of production under the control of, and when necessary to gradually transfer their ownership to society," and "to divide members into working groups to enable them to work collectively..." [25]

Though from the outset these co-operatives appear to be quite attractive there are some problems, as is commonly the case with other countries. One, the interests of the state and the peasants sometimes agree and at other times conflict on the aims and objectives of these production institutions. The move towards collectivisation after nearly eight months of the land reform is bound to meet some resistance from the small peasant cultivators that were tenants and who still want to hold to their private holdings. Two, administrative, leadership and financial problems are prevalent.

[24] Procl. No. 71 of 1975, p. 109.

[25] Procl. No.71 of 1975, p. 109.

The co-operatives and particularly the producers' co-operatives (collectives), could explain what the state wants to see in the peasant sector. The aims of the state from a national economic planning and from the surplus extraction point of views, were the reorganisation of labour and production in the peasant sector, which will allow the state to control production and surplus extraction and the alignment of future economic development policies. Basically, this is not a bad idea from the strategic point of view. But what really happens is that the 'voluntary' nature of the co-operatives gives way to state and bureaucratic pressures and therefore the interest of the peasants would be overlooked and most of the times overridden by the interest of the state. Nevertheless, it seems that peasants have responded favourably more to the Service than the Producers' Co-operatives (collectives), at the moment.

Up to now, I have been looking at these grass-roots institutions from within, i.e. the peasant association in itself and more particularly the village PA. Next, I will try to see their (PAs) relations with the state, the military government.

3. The Bureaucratic State Structure and the Popular Institutions.

Before going further to look into these relations, let us ask some questions. What is the degree of influence of the state on these village PAs? Does the state control them? To what extent do these village PAs respond to the interests of the state? Does the State have an interest different from the peasants or vice-versa.

These questions are indeed broad and complicated. What I will do is to try to show where the interests of the peasants and the state diverge and converge and at the same time try to see where the state dominates and thereby uses the rural institutions, popular and bureaucratic, to the fulfilment of its interests. To do so, we have to look at some of the policies and guide-lines that the state issued regarding these matters.

From the preceding pages, one could have come to the conclusion that peasant organisation, the new institutional formations and consolidations, etc. at the rural level were directed and staffed by peasants alone, but this was not the case. In fact, most of the engineering, the guidance and the supervision was done by the state and its bureaucratic institutions. Generally, the military government had great influence and control on the rural institutions through the agents of the administrative and the technical state structures, viz. the Ministry of Land Reform officials, the district administrators of the Ministry of Interior, extension agents of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ideology and Production Cadres. We can not be strangers as to how rural institutions were tied up with the bureaucratic state structures, because we have earlier mentioned and shown how the state created these rural institutions and how it also assigned people that were hand picked.

Besides these, there was a big programme launched by the military government which was to work along with these state institutions in the implementation of the land reform, and the creation and organisation of the peasant association. This was commonly referred to as the "Zemecha". "Zemecha" in the Amharic language literally means going to war. It could mean different things in different contexts, but in the context it is used here, it means a campaign. Participants in the "Zemecha" included: high school and university students and teachers and soldiers. They were going to 'war' against illiteracy, disease, etc. It officially was referred to as "The National Work Campaign for Development Through Co-operation". It was launched on 23rd December 1974 and was said to have involved 45-60,000 participants. These people have contributed a lot to the early organisation of the peasant association in collaboration with the officials of the Ministry of Land Reform.

The students and the teachers took their petit-bourgeois radicalism to the rural areas, to the peasants. Had the campaign participants not been to the rural areas and helped in the organisation of peasant associations, it

is difficult to imagine that the PAs will have the present size, organisational level, and dynamism found in them now, considering the limited material and manpower resources the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration had at that time. The degree of politicisation was not discouraging though uncoordinated and dominated by student-type politics. Some of the students had a relatively high level of class consciousness, others narrow nationalist, and still others were adventurist, and quite a few took it as a vacation in the rural areas. But the Campaign was carried out with full vigour and enthusiasm from all the participants: students, teachers and soldiers. The "Zemecha" participants went to the extent of disarming the landlords and arming the peasants without the permission of the government. Moreover, the participants learned the peasant way of life and the peasant learned the words socialism, exploitation, feudalism, imperialism, etc., at least at the level of slogans.

The "zemecha" participants have helped to hasten the revolutionary development in the rural areas. Yet, the Zemecha was bureaucratic, in that it was controlled by a gigantic organisation in Addis Abeba, "The Zemecha Headquarters", headed by a member of the "Derg". At times there were some misunderstandings between campaign participants, particularly the students, and the "Headquarter" military and civilian officials. The issues were generally, (i) Students complaints were that Headquarter Officials were moving too slowly; and (ii) Headquarter complaints were that Students were moving too fast.

The "Zemecha", apart from its weaknesses and strengths, has provoked a debate, at least for the academics now. Would the overall political conditions of the country been different if the intellectual core of opposition, first against Haile Selassie, and later against the "Derg" had not gone to the rural areas? Was it intentional that the Military Government sent the students and teachers to the rural areas away from the centre of politics? These are complex questions to answer, time and research might have something to say in the future.

If one goes back to the land reform proclamation that first defined the peasant association, one would clearly see the fatherly role played by the bureaucratic state structure on the roles and functions of PAs. Though it said that, "...to carry out the provisions of this proclamation [the land reform] a peasant association is formed", [26] The land reform was mainly carried out by the state apparatus. "In February 1975 the military [government] hosted a three-week seminar at the National University [now Addis Abeba Univ.] on problems and issues of land reform administration. More than 900 civilians and 400 military personnel participated. ...Thus, in the end the reform was promulgated by some 40,000 students and 1,300 quickly and poorly trained land reform officers with limited knowledge in the complexities of land administration. [27] The two bureaucratic structures most involved were the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration * [28] and the Ministry of Interior. And when the reform was put into effect, it is the representatives of these institutions that were responsible for organising and mobilising the peasants. And obviously it was the "wereda"(district) structure of both state institutions that had the closest link and the direct reach to the peasants.

[26] Procl. No. 31 of 1975, p. 96.

[27] Cohen, M. et al., p 36.

[28] * This bureaucratic state apparatus existed for a long time during Haile Selasse's government with the same name. Just after the revolution of 1974, except for the top echelon which was removed, the middle and the lower strata stayed in their positions. The latter two were considered to be progressives and were in support of a land reform.

The Ministry has been restructured and renamed again and again between 1974-80 according to the felt need of the state in its reform measures of the agrarian sector. In 1974/75, it kept its pre-revolutionary name, i.e. the Ministry of Land Reform And Administration. In December 1975, it became the Ministry of Lands and Settlement. In May 1977, it was changed to the ministry of Agriculture and Settlement. And in 1979/80, it was restructured and called the Ministry of Farming, probably not the last, which presently has got the direct links with the peasant associations structures - from the central to the grass-roots levels.

In the April 1975 Rural Land Reform Proclamation (RLRP), the Minister of Land Reform and Administration (MLRA) took all the responsibilities of the reform. Powers were not given to the Ministry as an institution but to the Minister, probably it could mean a one man accountability and through him the Ministry, MLRA. Chapter 4 of the RLRP speaks of the role of the Minister in the establishment of PAs, " The Minister shall, with the co-operation of the Ministry of Interior, help in the formation of Peasant Associations at every level.The Minister shall assign at least one Land Reform Officer to every "wereda". The functions of the officer shall be to give advice to peasant associations and help them in any other manner, [and] in the formation of peasant association with the purposes and intentions of this proclamation." [29] In theory they are all written as "help", "advise", explain", etc. but when they actually were put into practice, "help" became doing it, "advise" became order or command and "explain" became more of stamping one's own idea without too much feedback. It further states that the Land Reform Officer shall act as chairman of the judicial tribunal of the peasant association established at "wereda" (district) and "awraja" (sub-province) levels [and]...shall establish the office of the judicial tribunal and shall in particular be in charge of keeping records of the office". [30]

From these what we can understand is that after forming it (the PA), telling it what to do and which way to go, one should not have any doubt as to the influence the state would have in PAs. Since the state had these accesses to PA, it made the PA respond to its different interests. At one time for the call in National Development, at another time the call for war against external aggression, to liquidate internal reactionaries and 'subversive' elements - 'anti-revolutionaries'.

[29] Procl. No. 31 of 1975, p. 98.

[30] Ibid.

For all these and other purposes the rural institutional framework has been used and proved to be the most effective mechanism of control and mass mobilisation. For example, just after the land reform, power and authority in the rural areas were dispersed (the "Zemecha participants account for part of this situation, since they repeatedly defied central government directions) and there arose the need to have at least some form of central command and control. To this effect, the "The Revolutionary Administrative and Development Committees" were set up. The rationale being, "...to see that the various government organizations ... serve the people in a co-ordinated manner. [and] ..to enable peasants to participate in the political social and economic movement through peasant associations with a view to help the broad masses administer their own affairs." [31] The committee was composed of 11 people, out of which 4 were state functionaries at the "wereda", level (includes the police chief of the area) chaired by the "wereda" administrator, 4 "Zemecha participants, and only 3 PA members. Decisions will be reached by majority vote only if it is not a directive or a circular from the central government. And all activities in the "wereda" including PA activities must be reported to this committee which in turn will report to the central government through the existing state apparatus.

Two years later, in 1977, the state came up with two new ideas: "The National Democratic Revolutionary Programme", designed to "completely eradicate feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism from the country, and to safe guard and consolidate the gains of the revolution...." and hence declared "A Proclamation to provide for the Consolidation of Revolution and Development Committee."(Procl. No. 115 of 1977). This was followed by the creation of "Revolutionary Development Committees" at all levels, i.e. at the level of the central government chaired by a member of the military government and at the level of the rural institution chaired by the "wereda" administrator. This committee is different from the former

[31] Proclamation No. 75 of 1975, p. 115.

created by Procl. No. 75/1975. The chain of command between the centre and the periphery was clear and the existence of a rural institutional framework allowed smooth and easier accessibility to the state. The same was also true when the state went to war with the invading army of Somalia- "A National Operations Command" was created by Proclamation No. 129/1977 which militarised the whole civil society and the peasant sector contributed more than 200,000 (approx.) peasant militia.

Once the war was over, another objective came, and it was again directed to the PA also, "...the broad masses, having vanquished their external and internal enemies..., have declared their readiness through their mass organisations [PAs] to carry out a revolutionary campaign in the field of Development." This was production and development oriented and was a result of a new proclamation: "A Proclamation to Provide for the Establishment of the National Revolutionary Development Campaign and Central Planning." (Procl. No. 156/1978.) This was directed by the central government and chaired by the head of the state. As usual, through the state bureaucratic apparatus, and the Peasant Association structures, directives, orders, etc. will reach the "Kebelle" or the village PAs and finally the peasants.

The state has also used the rural institutional framework to liquidate its opponents. Peasant Associations were ordered to make road blocks and searches to look for those anti-state elements who tried to escape to the rural areas. The peasants defence squad had controlled movements in the rural areas. It could detain suspects and those with no identity cards and pass slips. As the oppositions to the state varied from the landed gentry to the petit-bourgeois left, the state and the peasants had interests in common. The state to defend the political power from the contending forces, mainly the petit bourgeois left, and the peasantry to maintain their rights to land and never wanting to see the landlords back.

As we earlier tried to show, the structural hierarchical relations within the mass organisation: peasant structures (from the All Ethiopian

Peasant Association, at the centre to the "Kebelle" PA); and within the formal state structure (from the central state or the minister to its lowest agent, the "wereda" level); all facilitate the reach of the state to the peasant sector and deepen its penetration to the grass-roots level. The grass-roots, especially the PAs, become a convergence of all the objectives and ideas of the state. The state is the only organ capable of initiating and putting new ideas and objectives into effect. But, to recall our questions, whose interest do these ideas and objectives serve, i.e. the peasant or the state? Does the state have an interest different from the peasantry? These are difficult and complex questions and need further study. Nevertheless, I would say that each matter or activity should be seen in its own terms. Not all policies came to the disadvantage of the peasants and certainly none were against the interest of the state. And yet, the Peasant Associations were execution points. Many of the tasks involve paper work and continuous follow-ups and assessment. For this reason, the grass-roots tend to assume the role of a bureaucratic institution. PAs created as a mass organisation, structurally suited to carry out popular tasks, but function as a bureaucratic institution. A visit to any one of the PAs will clearly show the heaps of files arising out of these situations. From the state apparatus point of view, to reach the peasant is to communicate to the PA by letters loaded with a mixture of rhetoric, orders/commands, sympathies, slogans, etc.

Finally, if by bureaucratic control we mean the control of the state institutions by a group of people, or a class at the centre of state power and making them respect its orders, commands where the line of authority are strictly observed and the chain of command clearly worked out, then PAs are bureaucratic institutions. Nonetheless, as I have tried to show, at the end of the day, we find peasant associations to be both popular and bureaucratic. Popular because they contain popular will and involve the election of the representatives in PA offices by the peasants. They also handle local matters by themselves and try to pass decisions at the grass-roots level. Bureaucratic, because they are serving as the extended arm of

the state. They have in some, if not in all, circumstances become appendages of the state apparatus. The upper level of the PA structures, in particular, convey more of a bureaucratic behaviour than the grass-roots. They rarely have/can have initiatives of their own. They wait for decisions to come from the centre and respond fast to calls from the state apparatus. They devote no time for studying the matter before them, whether it will be for or against the interests of the masses of the peasantry. They act like any other branches of the state apparatus. For this reason, it could be possible to say that they have become/are made to be part and parcel of the state apparatus.

All in all, the military bureaucratic behaviour of the state dominates and over-rides the organisation and functioning of rural institutions. Not every sector of the state apparatus and, certainly not the grass-roots institutions were run by military personnel. But the civil society and the civil bureaucracy observed military discipline. This, I think, has historical explanation in the nature and character of the Ethiopian Revolution, the dominant role played by the military and the position of social forces in the final overthrow of the ancien regime and the way social reforms were made in the society. This is what I will try to outline in the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER III

The Revolution, the State and Rural Institutions.

In this concluding chapter, I will attempt to show very briefly, the character of the Ethiopian Revolution, the nature of the state and its relations with rural institutions.

In Ethiopia, in the period after 1974, there certainly has taken place a social revolution, if by this, we roughly mean "...rapid, basic transformation of a society's state and class structures, accompanied and in part carried through by class based revolts from below." * [1] But, 'revolts from below', in Ethiopia, could not carry over the mass/popular character, which they started with, to the final seizure of political power. Nevertheless, in the area on which I have been focusing, it is true that new rural institutions with a different form and content and objectives, compared to the old feudal rural institutions, have emerged. Why is it then that, having undergone through a revolutionary transformation and changing the class structure and the production relations, rural institutions and the grass-roots do not enjoy far greater autonomy? Why is it that local initiative and participation in important political and economic decisions at the local or rural institutional levels and at the level of the state did not follow and Peasant Association structures have to be appendages of the state apparatus? Pushing this a bit further, does it not inhibit mass participation and in the same way affect development from below? Does the present rural institution, in the present state it is now, guarantee continued change and

[1] Skocpol, T. States & Social Revolutions., p. 287. * For further discussion on Ethiopia, refer to Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux, The Ethiopian Revolution, chapter 1.

development? These questions are fundamental and yet at the same time complex and difficult too. In an attempt to answer some of them, I will try to point out some of the important and general developments and outcomes of the revolution and then place rural institutions and the grass-roots, in this broad perspective. In places where a comparison and contrast of external experience is necessary, I will present the Egyptian case (Egypt since 1952). This is because of the similarities rural institutions show in the two countries, at least, in their historical emergence, in their relations with the state, and in their functioning under the strict control of the state apparatus.

Yet, there are obvious differences between the "Naserite" State and the "Derg" in, for example, their ascents to political power. Mohammed Hussien has this to say about the 'Free Officers' of Egypt, "...petit-bourgeois officials whose class origins and class outlook differed from those of the ruling class. These officers, however, represented themselves not as enemies of the ruling class, but as a replacement within the established structure in order to instill a new vigor in the class itself and reestablish the efficacy which the Egyptian state had lost." [2] On this issue, the "Derg" was completely the opposite. It was clearly and openly against the ruling class. Differences also lie in the substance of the land reform and in the extent of authority entrusted to rural institutions, the Co-operatives in Egypt and the Peasant Associations in Ethiopia, both of which were creation of the land reform. Both Egypt and Ethiopia declared the land reform with the objective of improving the economic conditions of 80 per cent of their population. Both tried to achieve it from above by decrees, Land Reform Law of No. 178 of 1952 as in the case of Egypt; and Proclamation No. 31 of 1975 as in the case of Ethiopia. Even though both have used these rural institutions to control the rural areas by treating them as bureaucratic institutions, the Egyptian land Reform "rested on a firm belief in the virtues of private ownership. Doreen

[2] Mohammed Hussien, Class Conflict in Egypt 1945-1970., p. 95.

Warriner wrote, "...the Egyptian Land Reform was, in principle and practice, more akin to the liberal ideal of a 'regime of small peasant properties' rather than any collectivist or socialist ideals", [3] while the Ethiopian land reform abolished private ownership and is socialist oriented. And the state power, in both, is under the control of military government. Probably, more Egyptian instances might be necessary to highlight the Ethiopian rural institutions as we proceed with the discussion. But, the Ethiopian Revolution had more popular content than the Egyptian revolt, which was a coup d' etat.

I think it is important to briefly and schematically look at the Ethiopian Revolution and the rise of the "Derg" to state power with the understanding that this could tell something about the character of the revolution and the nature of the state.

To begin with, the Ethiopian Revolution is one of those social revolutions that has brought fundamental changes to the very fabric of the pre-capitalist social formation, i.e. in the relations different classes have in production. F. Halliday and M. Molyneux wrote, "...a socio-political transformation of a depth rare in the contemporary Third World" and M. & D. Ottaway in their book, *Empire in Revolution*, said, "...a profound social and political revolution." The Ethiopian Revolution could probably be one of the big revolutions in the world and definitely the only fundamental revolution in Africa seen up to now.

Not to go into the details of the coming of the revolution and the takeover of the state power by the "Derg", I will say the following: One, the Ethiopian Revolution is the outcome of deep economic, political and social contradictions between the pre-capitalist state of Haile Selasse and the civil society. Two, the core of opposition came from the urban areas, and different social groups gradually joined the mass movement: the

[3] Quoted in Mohamoud Abdel-Fadil, Development, Income Distribution and Social Change in Rural Egypt (1952-1970), p. 38.

students, teachers, intellectuals, taxi-drivers, soldiers (middle and lower ranks), workers, the middle and lower section of the bureaucracy and financial institutions, the peasantry joined late. All of these demanded a better economic life: an increase in wages, land reform, etc. Politically, the demand was the democratisation of the society: freedom of assembly, speech, press, etc. Socially, equality of religions, and nationalities, etc. Three, the immediate causes could vary from the shortage of food and drinking water in military barracks to the Great Famine of Wollo and Tigray provinces (which took the lives of more than 200,000 peasants) locally, and the general inflationary situation of the world market and more particularly, the 1974 increase in the price of oil (locally, price of petrol went up by 50 per cent). Fourth, it was a spontaneous mass movement and mass upsurge against an existing status quo, and yet, it was uncoordinated and unguided by any underground or overground parties or political groups.

On the causes of the Ethiopian Revolution, we might summarise by saying that "...a variety of individual cases, on different time-scales and with extremely divergent particular courses, combined to produce a situation in which the ancien regime was overthrown. No single factor, or revolutionary agent produced this end result." [4] It is a combination of different social forces that led to the fall of the pre-capitalist social formation. Mention should also be made in that, despite the strong opposition of the mass movement against the old regime not even one social group from the civil society made a claim to state power in an organised form. The movement called for a democratic state, in a very broad usage of the term. Nobody defined this state or proposed the future form and content of the state that is to replace the state of Haile selasse. This, I think, was mainly due to the lack of political organisation among the people, e.g. parties or political oriented institutions. But this does not justify that any group could come to power by excluding those social forces which took

[4] Halliday, F. & M. Molyneux, The Ethiopian Revolution, p. 13.

part in the mass movement. Nevertheless, the lack of political organisation not only constrained the social classes in the mass movement to actualize themselves in state power but also made it clear that the strength and organisation of the ruling class (the crown, the aristocracy, the landlords, the civilian and military bureaucrats) only lied in the state apparatus, the bureaucracy: civilian and military. When, finally, the spontaneous movement swept these repressive institutions and they became part of the mass movement, the ancien regime had no alternative but to relinquish state power. Hence, the ruling class could not defend its interests and it collapsed. This lack of bourgeois democracy affected both the ruling class and civil society.

Although the objective condtions in the 1974 Ethiopian revolutionary situations were mature or conducive to social transformations the subjective conditions were lacking. Organisational confrontation against Haile Selasse's regime was made by the "Derg" just after it was formed on June 28, 1974. The "Derg", " confronted a regime already weakned by revolutionary upheaval and mass upsurge". Between the end of June to beginning of September, 1974, the "Derg" was part of the mass movement, it took measures that were in the interest of the civil society. It had the support of the civil society for its anti-state measures. To me, the "Derg" between June and September was the result of a mass movement, which, helped by a conjuncture, took the initiative to physically attack the state, whose apparatus and members were weakened by the mass movement. This was possible only because of the organisational standing of the military relative to other social classes in the mass movement. Hence, " ..it was not the military alone that overthrew the ancien regime, nor were the transformations accompanying military rule mere adjustments of the social order. This was a coup in the context of a social revolution." [5]

[5] Ibid.

A reader of the Ethiopian Revolution must take caution when, as usually the case is, an association is made between a military government and a coup d'etat. "The understanding of the internal and external structural characteristics of the political organization of violence is logically prior to the study of that organization's political behaviour." [6] If this is the case, then one has to agree that the "Derg" is not the same as some Latin American military governments, e.g. Bolivia, nor is it similar to some African military governments of Nasser/Naguib of Egypt or that of General Sied Barre of Somalia and in no way near to General Idi Amin Dadah of Uganda. Let us probe this point a little bit further because it will be helpful in our effort to identify the character of the revolution and the nature of the state.

In the first place, what is a coup d'etat? Though concepts like this are very difficult to define, it might be a better way to start by saying "History offers only a few techniques of seizure of power - only two and a combination of both; one from below - through the masses, the other from above - by an armed group of men who seize the power at the the pinnacle." [7] The revolution from above or from the top is what is usually referred to as a coup d'etat. It ends in "...the seizure of the means of violence, ...by a small, well organized group (in the Spanish and Latin American pattern, usually a military group); ...the elite of the army of the existing social structure remains largely unaffected. Even the government machinery undergoes very limited changes." [8] If this more or less satisfies what a coup d'etat could mean, then we have to rethink where to place the "Derg". Labels given to it, as "the creeping-coup" (Ottaway, Cohen, etal.), or referring to it just as a "coup" will be of little help in the conceptualisation of the nature of the state in Ethiopia.

[6] Lehmann, D. "Military Organization and the State in Latin America", p. 167.

[7] Gross, F. The Seizure of Political Power, p. 39.

[8] Ibid., pp. 39,47,48.

F.Halliday and M.Molyneux recognising the fact that it is not a coup of the conventional type, I think, have referred to the takeover of the state as a "progressive coup", what ever the term implies. But they also say that, "...the very category of the 'progressive coup' can itself be disaggregated, ...on the basis of the varying social and political factors surrounding such coups." [9] The call for a further disaggregation of the concept is justified. The concept, I think, is elusive and the different forms in which it exists and the historical conditions in which it emerges are continuously getting different. Thus, lumping different historical occurrences where the military takes part in social movements and state power as coup d' etats have limitations and do not serve much purpose from the analytic point of view.

Now, beginning September 1974, we have a group of soldiers, the "Derg", (with a rank of major and below) in the state power that was once part of the mass movement, that knew the demands of the civil society, at least in the form of slogans. Slogans included, "Land to the Tiller", "Free and Democratic Ethiopia", etc. But before the "Derg" came to power, it had adopted a slogan and a political platform called "Ethiopia Tikdem"("Ethiopia First") which later on was equated with "hibretesebawinet" or "Ethiopian Socialism". "As defined by the Council ["Derg"] it meant 'equality, self-reliance, the dignity of labour, the supremacy of the common good and the indivisibility of Ethiopian Unity.'" [10] In fact, the "Derg" took the slogan of the mass movement and gradually the slogans of the left. The rhetoric of "Socialism", the attack on Feudalism, Imperialism, etc. were clearly heard on the mass media.

The Provisional Military Government (PMG) came to power as one could see, with no party structure except the military and civilian bureaucracy. "... the occurrence of the revolutionary situation in the first place and

[9] Halliday, F. & M. Molyneux, p. 33.

[10] Ottaway, M. Empire in Revolution., p. 8.

the nature of the New Regime that emerged from revolutionary conflicts depended fundamentally upon the structures of state organisations and their partially autonomous and dynamic relationships to domestic class and political forces, as well as their positions in relation to other states abroad." [11] In the same way, the PMG in order to secure legitimacy and to materialise reforms in the society, had only one alternative, that is the state apparatus: its own military structure and the civilian bureaucracy.

The revolution, in actual fact, improved and strengthened the state apparatus. It was made to suit the reason of the new state. Existing state institutions were reorganised, as in the Ministry of Land Reform, and new ones were created, as those of the peasant associations. Thus, economic and social reforms were made practical or were meant to materialise through the military and civilian bureaucracy. Due to this, policies, actions and the overall orientations of the state institutions in the post-revolution period tend to be bureaucratic. This is true of the land reform and the rural institutions as we have tried to argue in the preceding chapter.

If one takes the Nasserite State of Egypt, it in the same way used the military and civilian bureaucracy to put the land reform into effect. It used the civilian bureaucracy in the organisation and consolidation of the Egyptian rural institutions, the co-operatives. "The Agrarian Reform Authority concentrated its effects on the requisition and distribution of land and the organization of co-operatives. ...supervised co-operatives were created from the outset. They are managed by a board under the direction of an official appointed by the Authority, the "mushrif" (supervisor), who is often an agronomist... The Ministry of Agrarian Reform in Cairo exerted the final control." [12] This is similar to the Ethiopian Land Reform where the Ministry's Official is parallel to "Mushrif" at the

[11] Skocpol, T. p, 284.

[12] Mabro, R. The Egyptian Economy, 1952-1972. pp. 67&69.

wereda or the peasant association level.

As I have tried to explain in the Ethiopian peasant association of being a mirror image of the bureaucratic state structures, one witnesses the same thing in the Egyptian rural institutions. "The Organisational structures of these Co-operatives is pyramid shaped with the local or village society at its base, the co-operative union at the top and three middle strata corresponding to the country's administrative hierarchy: the District (Markaz), the Governorate (muhfaza), and the country as a whole. The local co-operative ...is created in each village... It is run by a supervisor (mushrif). In many co-operatives the Government will also provide a clerk and an accountant." [13] Both states control the rural institutions through their state apparatuses and reach the rural population through them. For example, in Egypt as in Ethiopia " The wide network of co-operatives has enabled the government, perhaps for the first time, to reach the remotest areas of rural Egypt and to influence in a direct way the control of rural development." [14] Skocpol summarises these similarities as: "Strengthened states - more centralised, bureaucratic, and autonomously powerful at home and abroad - emerged from all three revolutions [France, Russia and China]." [15] Although I am not too sure that the present Ethiopian state has come out "autonomously powerful abroad", I do not have any doubt that the rest of what Skocpol says is true.

At this point one would be tempted to make a big generalisation, that is, whatever the character of the revolution, and the nature of the state, as: revolutions from the bottom like the French and the Chinese or from above like the Egyptian or like the combination of the two, the Ethiopian; all have come out to be dependent on the bureaucracy or the state apparatus. Lenin observes this very well when he says, "All revolutions

[13] Radwan, S. Agrarian Reform and Rural Poverty, Egypt 1952-1975, p. 58.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Skocpol, p. 285.

which have taken place up to the present have helped to perfect the state machinery", but he has also suggested what should have been made as, "whereas it must be shattered, broken to pieces." [16] If Lenin was to see the outcomes of these big revolutions, would he still maintain the same premise of shattering or breaking the state machinery to pieces?

To conclude, heavy reliance on the state apparatus does not guarantee the deepness and continuity of a social revolution. It curtails the initiative at the grass-roots levels, there will be created a situation where the civil society looks at social change from a distance. In Ethiopia, there certainly is a change in the nature of the development process, but not deeply rooted in the society. Such conditions reinforce 'development from above', and the undesirable attitude of 'the centre decides for us'. Moreover, history has now left a lesson that states that depend on the state apparatus are prone to danger particularly in periods of social crises, as was the case with Haile Selasse, Poland, etc. That is why political power need to be rooted in the masses.

The greater the participation of the civil society in the political decision-making process the better. In fact, in Ethiopia, if this path had been adopted, it could have avoided the bitter showdown between the "Derg" and the petit bourgeois left on the one hand, and between the different factions of the petit bourgeois on the other. As there do not seem to be many differences in the economic strategy (land reform, nationalisation of industries, etc.) and in some international political stands of most the contending political groups (left-wing) for power, conflicts boil down to the question of the 'hegemony of the state', a problem which the popular upsurge culminated in and still has not come out. Hence, the destiny of rural institutions in Ethiopia is tied up with this indispensable, and yet at the same time, undetermined resolution of the problem of political power.

[16] Lenin, V.I. State and Revolution, p. 24.

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