

**HOUSEHOLD ACCESS TO FARMLAND AND SOCIO-
ECONOMIC STATUS: THE CASE OF WONQA *KÄBÄLE*,
GOZAMIN *WÄRÄDA* (EAST GOJJAM),
AMHARA REGION**

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THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS
IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

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**BY
GETACHEW SENISHAW**

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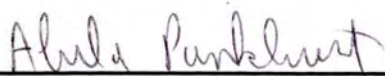
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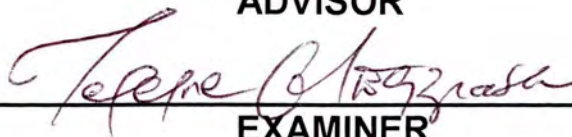
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GETACHEW SENISHAW
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

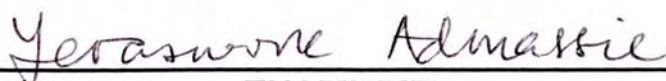
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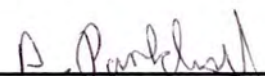
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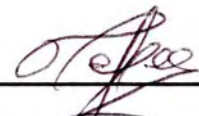


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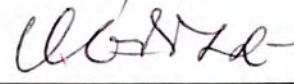


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ABBREVIATIONS

AMC	Agricultural Market Corporation
ASL	Above Sea Level
CSA	Central Statistics Authority
DA	Development Agent
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
KA	<i>Käbäle</i> Administration
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MT	Maria Theresa
PA	Peasant Association
RDO	Rural Development Office

GLOSSARY

Abälij	fictive kinship which establish by having godchild and being godparent.
Amba Zur	(lit. around the hill or the village) a category of land which is found in the vicinity of the village.
Asrat	(lit. one-tenth) a kind of pre-revolution tax at one-tenth of the product. Later it was paid in cash.
At'ibia Dagna	an office at the neighborhood which was established since 1947 to take judicial responsibility from the <i>gultä gäž</i> .
Balabat	(lit. who has father) a person who is descended from the founding ancestor (Amh. <i>wana abbat</i>) and had a right to get access to <i>rist</i> land in pre-1975 Wonqa; it means nobleman in the southern parts of the country.
Bälg	short rainy season from March to May.
Bonda	a category of less fertile land.
Chan	a unit of measurement for grain , which counts 6 <i>quna</i> (one <i>quna</i> is about 10 k.g) as one for 30 times. Thus 1 <i>chan</i> is equal to 6 <i>quna</i> x 1 x 30 = 180 <i>quna</i> or 180 x 10 = 1800 k.g (18 quintals).
Chäwa	non-clergy peasant except ex-slaves and artisans.
Chika Shum	the lowest administrative official before the 1975 Land Reform which bridged the <i>gultä gäž</i> with the people; the office was held by election for an agricultural cycle.
Däbay	black soil.
Däbo	festive work group; mutual assistance in which labour-short households call relatives and friends to assist in the peak seasons by preparing food and drink.
Däga	highland.
Däjjazmach	(lit. commander of gate) a title, during the Imperial period, next to <i>Ras</i> .
Diräba	(lit. putting on top) incorporating additional land to the former holdings.

Edir	communal self-help organization specially at the time of death.
Erbo	(lit. one-fourth) a kind of sharecropping agreement in which the value of land is one-fourth of its produce.
Fird Shāngo	judicial tribunal which was established since 1975 at the <i>kābāle</i> level to replace <i>at'ibia dagna</i> .
Fitawrari	(commander of the vanguard) the title next to <i>Däjjazmach</i> .
Gäbar	tax payer (in the southern parts of the country it means tenant).
Gämäd	(lit. rope) a unit of land measurement. One <i>gämäd</i> is 100 <i>kind</i> x 100 <i>kind</i> or 50m x 50m = 0.25 hectare.
Got'	a portion of a parish or a sub-division under the <i>kābāle</i> .
Guagn	the lowest minor office under the <i>chika shum</i> during the Imperial period. Currently it is the office under <i>yä-wiha abat</i> or other committee, like <i>edir</i> .
Gult	land held as a fief or taxation right over land.
Gwaro	(lit. backyard) a land which used for homestead and cultivation of some crops and vegetables mostly for household consumption.
Hulät lä Sosit	(lit. two to three) a kind of sharecropping agreement in which the value of land is two-fifths of its produce.
Kābāle	the lowest administrative unit which was established since 1975.
Kind	(lit. arm) a unit of measurement about 50 cm.
Kolla	lowland.
Mähär	main rainy season from June to September or the harvest and threshing season.
Mahibär	a kind of association which has religious ground; St. Georgis is a common <i>mahibär</i> in Wonqa.
Mäkwanint	nobility who has official title and taxation rights over land.
Mäsq'äl	(lit. cross) It is a religious holiday to commemorate the Finding of the True Cross.

Mofär Zämät	(lit. campaigned plough beam) a land under the cultivation of a person who lives outside the <i>kābāle</i> .
Näch Lābash	pre-1975 militia at the local level.
Ras	(lit. head) the title, during the Imperial period, immediately below the king.
Rist	a land as well as land use right through inheritance in pre-1975 Wonqa.
Shäha	a kind of working party to look after cattle.
Siso	(lit. one-third) a kind of sharecropping agreement in which the value of land is one-third of its produce.
Tälla	local beer.
Tät'ämaj	sharecropper, landless or land-short peasant who gets access to farmland through local agreements.
T'imad	(lit. pair) a unit of land measurement, which a person could plough within a day with a pair of oxen. Currently the peasants alternatively used <i>t'imad</i> with <i>gāmäd</i> , which is 0.25 hectare.
T'imado	(lit. engagement) local sharecropping agreements.
Wäräda	an administrative level above the <i>kābāle</i> below the zone.
Wäyna Däga	medium altitude.
Wirch	alpine.
Wonfäl	reciprocal working group.
Yä-ekul	(lit. half each) a kind of sharecropping agreement in which the value of land is half of its produce.
Yämotä Kāda	the land of <i>yämotä</i> (lit. deceased) and <i>yākāda</i> (lit. who left the area without notification).
Zämänä Mäsafint	(lit. the Era of the Princes) in the history of Ethiopia a period from 1769 to 1855, in which regional governors were more powerful than the central government.
Zone	an administrative unit above the <i>wäräda</i> and below the region.

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the changing role of access to farmland on household socio-economic status overtime and regimes in Wonqa, East Gojjam, where land was an index for socio-economic status in pre-1975. The research identified local level dynamics in relation with household access to farmland and socio-economic status since the 1975 Land Reform.

The study attempted to show the processes of land distributions, redistributions and household heads' strategies to maximize their access in such processes since 1975. Politico-economic status and kinship has been persistent means to get access to more farmland. Inheritance, which was weakened as a major means of access to land in the *Därg* period, has been re-instituted as a major means of land access.

The role of capital and labour is also important to get access to farmland through local agreements in which their values vary with the varying value of land over time. Moreover, local agreements developed a market nature in which everybody tried to maximize their share and the involvement of money has increased.

The research also analyzed the socio-economic implications of the 1975 Land Reform and subsequent distributions on inter and intra-household relations, as well as relations among the kinsmen and so on. Above all, the thesis argues that political position has continued as a primary factor to get access to more

farmland. Furthermore, land has continued as an important factor for household livelihood and a major component together with capital for economic stratification. However, land is no longer a symbol of social status. Thus, the study shows continuity as well as change in the socio-economic status of the farming households in relation to access to farmland across the time period under discussion.

PREFACE

This thesis, which deals with the Wonqa community in Gozamin *Wäräda* of East Gojjam, is based on data collected during three months' of fieldwork (from 26 August 2002 to 18 November 2002 and one week in February 2003).

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is an introduction, which mainly deals with the statement of the problem, literature and methodology.

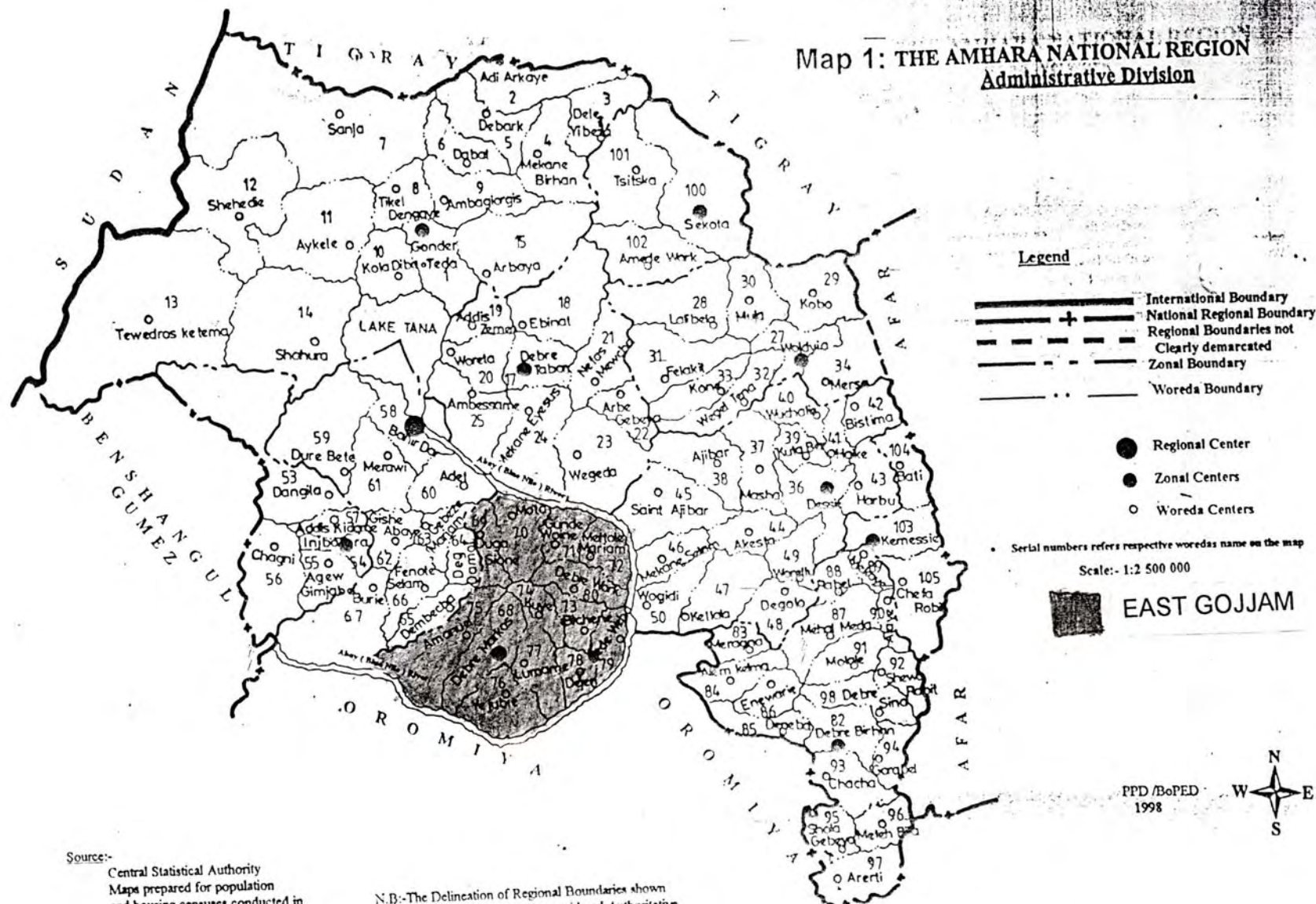
Chapter II provides a description of the setting. In this section, an attempt has been made to describe the context of the study area. The first part of this chapter is about the history of the East Gojjam people. The second part deals with the tradition, the pre-1975 land tenure system and the socio-economic situation of Gozamin *Wäräda*. The last section is devoted to the traditions and socio-economic conditions of Wonqa.

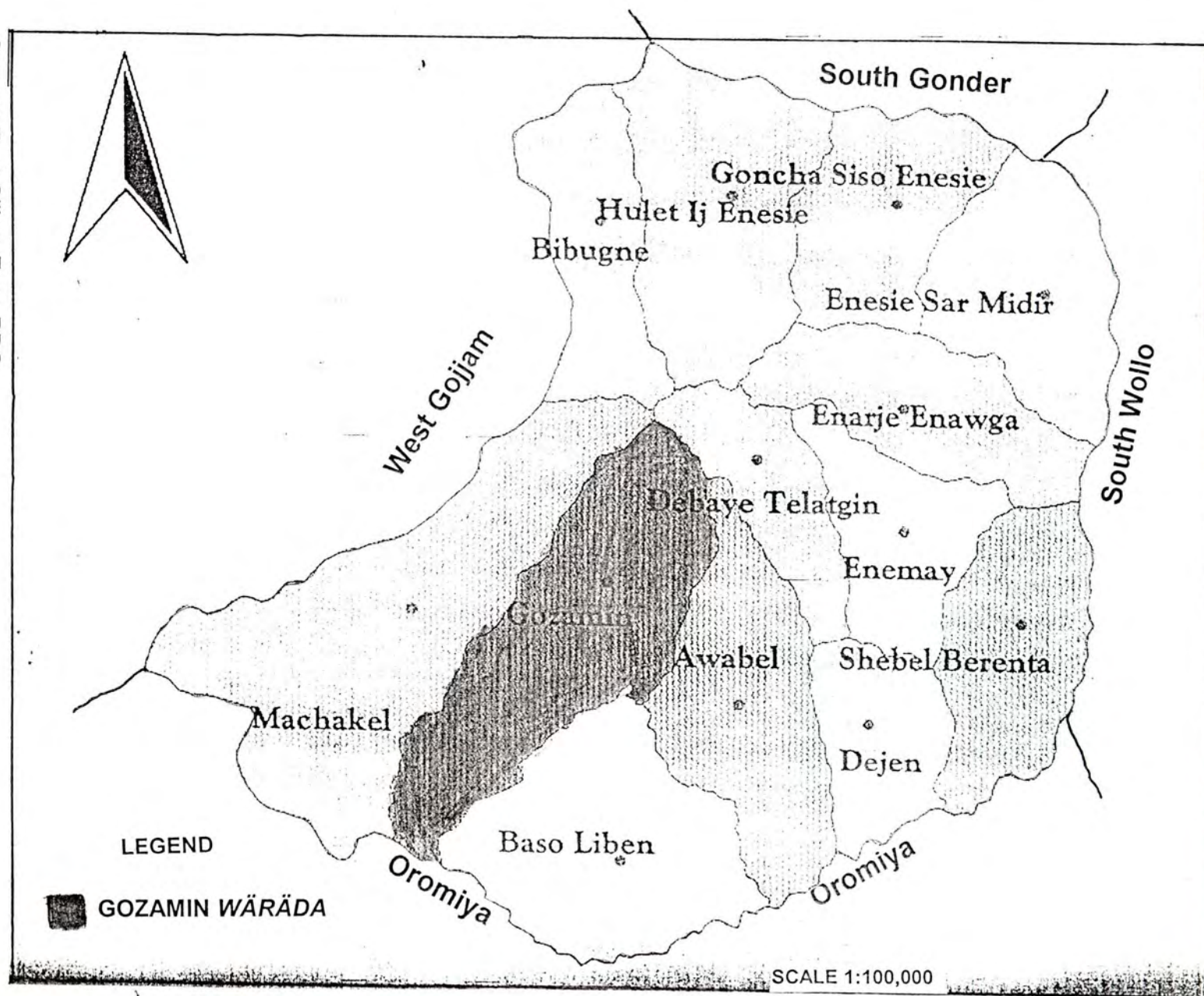
Chapter III is a description of household access to farmland through distributions, which were conducted under the two regimes from 1978 - 1997. Women's access to farmland and different strategies, which were used by household heads to maximize their access to farmland, have also been discussed. In addition, the re-division of the farmland at the household level through inheritance and endowments are described.

Chapter IV shows the nature and development of local agreements in which labour and capital plays a significant role to get access to farmland. In this section, an attempt has been made to show the changing value of factors of production, land, labour and capital, under the three regimes.

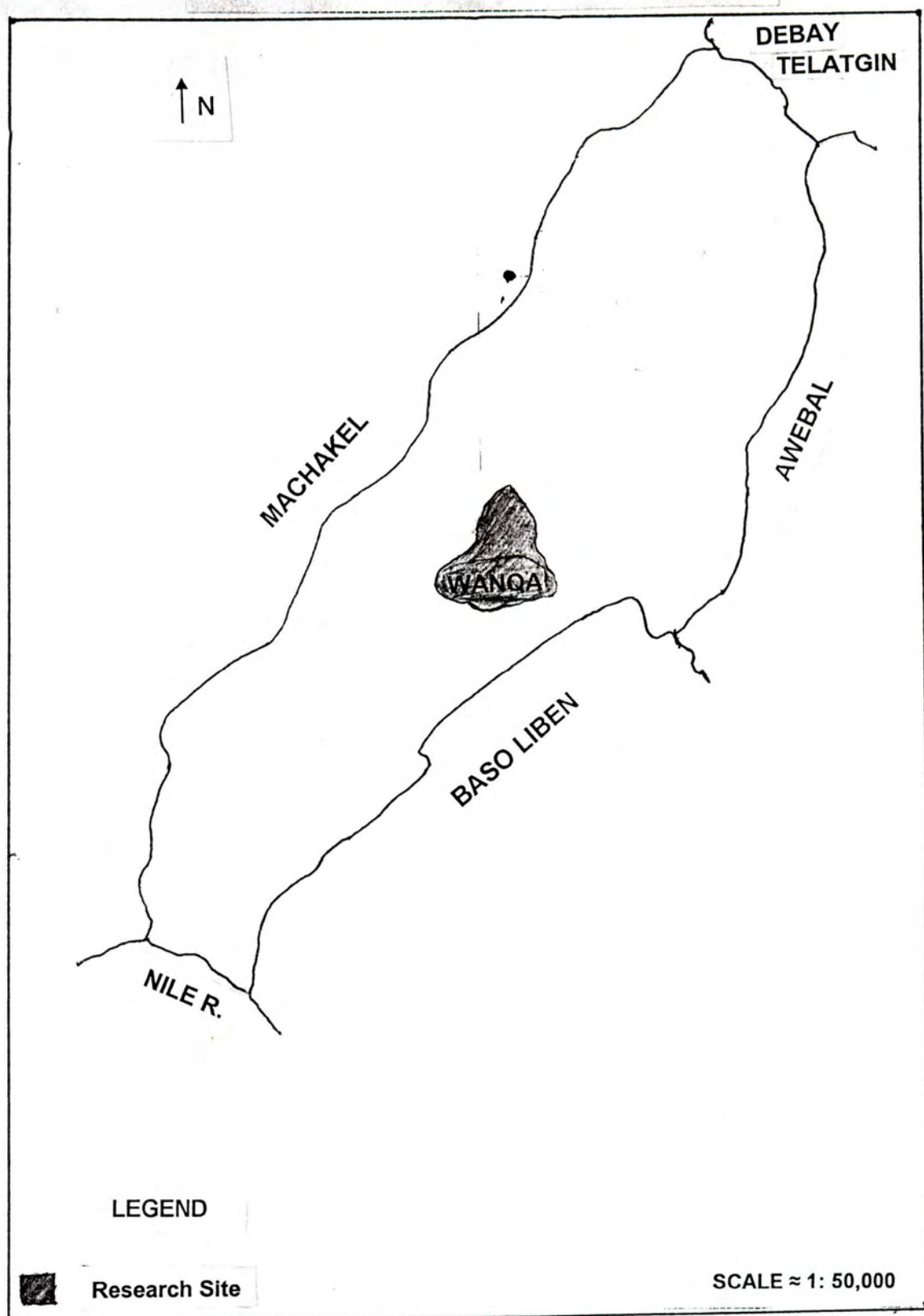
Chapter V is an analysis of socio-economic implications of the 1975 Land Reform and the subsequent distributions on socio-economic status, land use, household developmental cycle, landlessness, disputes over land and so on. In this section, an attempt is made to analyze the general socio-economic implications of the land reform since 1975. The last section of the thesis is devoted to summarize the findings and present the major conclusions of the thesis.

Map 1: THE AMHARA NATIONAL REGION
Administrative Division



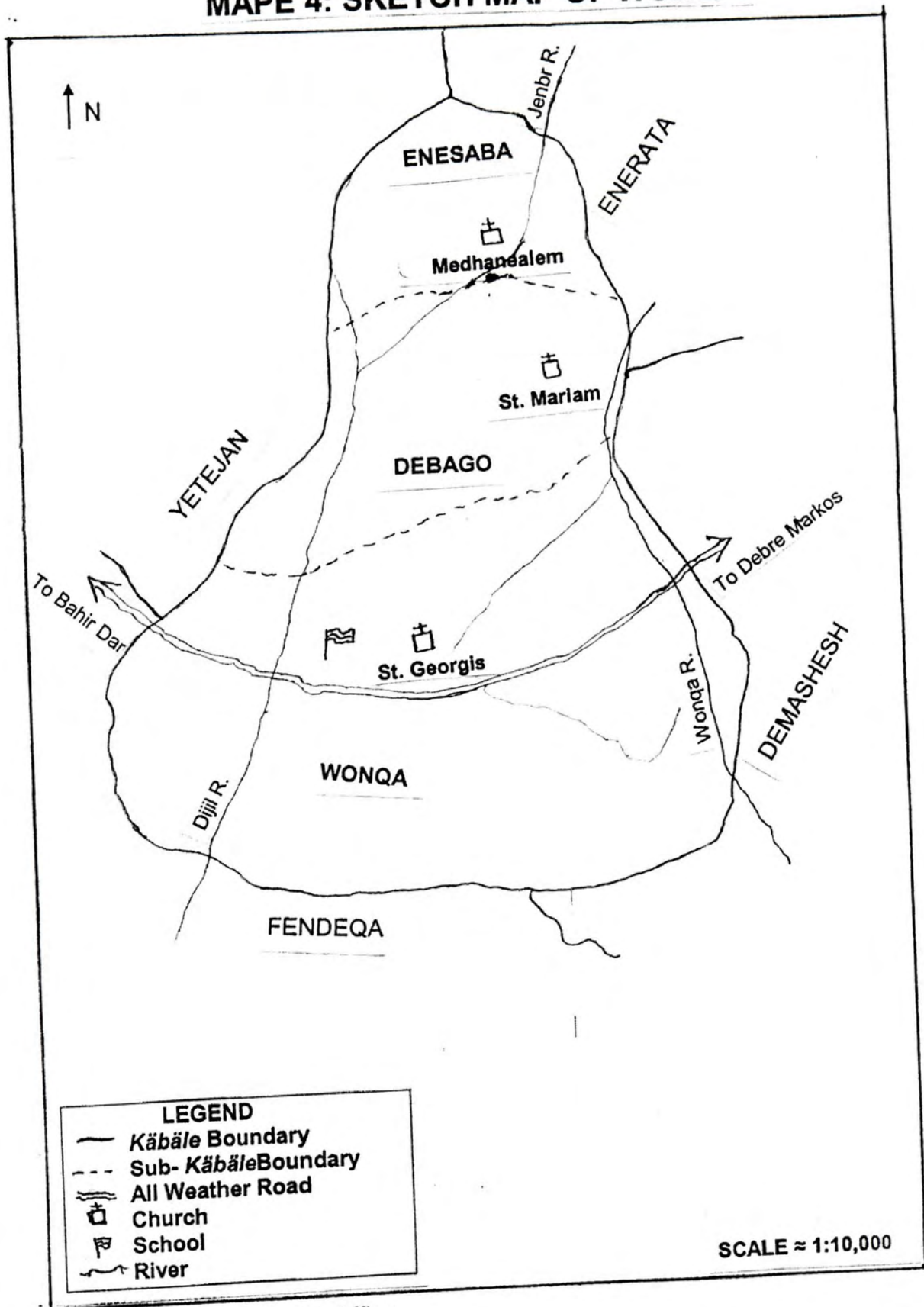


MAP 3: MAP OF GOZAMIN WÄRÄDA



Source: Gozamin Wärdä RDO

MAPE 4: SKETCH MAP OF WONQA



Source: Wonqa Kābāle DA Office

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study deals with access to farmland and socio-economic status since the 1975 Land Reform in Wonqa, East Gojjam. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to provide a clear statement of the problem, a brief literature review, and significance and objectives of the study. In addition, the chapter explains how the research site was selected, methods which were employed and limitations of the study.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Allen Hoben (1973), in his comprehensive description of land tenure among the Amhara, clearly points out the relationship between socio-economic status and access to *rist* and *gult* land. He shows how social, economic and political statuses are used by powerful individuals to increase holdings through litigation and by winning court cases. Hoben also discussed how the change in land holding resulted in change in social status in Dega Damot, West Gojjam, in the early 1970s (Hoben, 1970; 1973; 1975).

To get access to *rist* and *gult* land, first one needed to be a member of the descent group. In addition, the ability to press successful claims to get access to *rist* was determined by the socio-economic and political status of the individual. If the person had a higher socio-economic and political status, he could easily get

access to additional land and could easily defend his holdings. To press successful claims in division by father, which refers to the first division by father and affects a lot of people, one has to be politically powerful, for instance provincial governor (Hoben, 1970; 1973; 1976).

Those individuals who obtained more access to land had higher socio-economic status. They had land in different ecological zones, which helped them to diversify their products and to have a variety of diet, and were secure from total crop failure. In addition, social stratification was based on the control over land and people. Hoben further claims that "...difference in degree of honor corresponded quite closely to degree of control over land and people" (Hoben, 1970). The section of the society that was at the bottom of the socio-economic stratification (handicraft workers and ex-slaves) had no control over land and people (Hoben, 1970; 1973; 1976). This relation between land access and socio-economic status continued up to 1975.

This thesis attempts to seek an answer to what has happened concerning the above stated relation since the 1975 Land Reform. Thus, an attempt has been made in this research to explain the relation between access to farmland and socio-economic status of the farming households.

1.2. Literature Review

Cancian (1976) shows the relations between socio-economic stratification and control over important resources. Different researchers, who worked on Ethiopia,

recognized the importance of the three factors of production, i.e., land, labour and capital (oxen), for household livelihood. However, they emphasized single resources, from among the three factors of household economic bases, as a key for household livelihood and socio-economic stratification. For instance, Hoben (1970; 1973; 1976) identified land as a key factor of household livelihood and a basis for stratification in pre-1975 Dega Damot, West Gojjam. Access to *rist* and *gult* land was related with socio-economic status. Thus, difference in rights over land were closely related with differences in socio-economic status.

On the other hand, Bauer (1975; 1977) argued that oxen were more important than land and labour in pre-1975 Tigray. According to Bauer, land was not a basis of stratification. Labour was abundant. However, oxen were important to plough more land. Thus, the poor were landlords of oxen rich households. Having a pair of oxen was taken as an indicator of attainment of an independent and household self-reliance, which was a most important component of gaining status-honour (*kibr*). In addition, the work of McCann (1984) shows that capital in the form of oxen was a basis of household livelihood and social stratification in pre-revolution Lasta. He argued that " Without the oxen obtained from the influx of cattle and the movement of trade in the southwest to northeast direction, northeast Ethiopia's household could not have successfully reproduced themselves..." (McCann, 1984:8).

Following the 1974 Revolution, the *Därg* government declared the Public Ownership of Rural Land in March 1975. According to Art. 3 of this proclamation,

land became the "property of the Ethiopian people"; and it gave equal access to all peasants. The Peasant Association (PA) was established at the lowest level to replace the former administrative structure and carried out the provision of the proclamation (Proclamation No 31/1975). In accordance with the proclamation, land was distributed in different parts of the country in the 1970s and 1980s (Dessalegn, 1984; Pausewang, 1990; Teferi, 1993; Yared, 1995; 1999).

Although the principle of access to land was changed due to the 1975 Land Reform, post-revolution researchers like Mesfin (1991) and Yared (1994; 1995; 1999) supported Hoben's view. Mesfin (1991) puts both farming and grazing land as "the most basic resource for peasant life." Yared (1999) also argued that, in the plough-based and land-scarce agricultural system, like that of North Shewa, access to farmland plays an important role in explaining differentiation in rural societies. His field data confirm that socio-economic differentiation depends on the availability of land holding. He further shows that, this view conforms to Goody's thesis that in such society control of land is the basis of stratification. Yared stated that "Adequacy of draft power and labor does have an impact on the productivity but it is overshadowed by the more critical constraints imposed by land resource" (Yared, 1995:18). Thus, those households that hold greater amounts of land tend to be well to do and secure to feed their household members (Yared, 1995; 1999).

Yared further argued that there is a sort of continuity of economic stratification. Land continued as a basis of socio-economic stratification. Those who had higher socio-economic status in the pre-1975 Land Reform continued to occupy their

socio-economic status (Yared, 1995; 1999). Asmelash (1995) also argues that, though the land policy has changed since 1975, there is a sort of continuity of economic stratification. This is clearly shown in Tigray where some former large plot holders continued to hold up to 20 *t'imads* (Asmelash, 1995).

Hoben further strengthened his pre-1975 argument regarding conditions more recently. He stated that "Factor scarcities vary regionally and locally, with land and/or oxen, rather than labor, usually being the binding constraint on household production. In areas of higher and more reliable rainfall, such as highland Gojjam, access to land tends to be more critical" (Hoben, 2002:9). He also argues there are significant continuities since the 1975 Land Reform (Ibid).

Contrary to the above directions of arguments, Teferi (1993) shows the importance of labour rather than land and capital (oxen) for household production in post-revolution Southwest Wollo. He further argued that land has lost its social value since the 1975 Land Reform. This situation made labour critical for household production and a basis for social differentiation. Thus, Teferi shows local level dynamics since the 1975 Land Reform in which land lost its social value.

In the writer's view, different researchers have given emphasis to one key factor of production, from the three factors of production, as a basis for household livelihood and socio-economic stratification. Thus, scant attention has been given to the complementary and dynamic nature of factors of production, especially land

and capital, for household livelihood and socio-economic status. An attempt has been made in this thesis to fill this gap. Thus, the research focused on various means of household access to farmland to show how access to land is important for household livelihood; and how land is a major component, together with capital, for economic stratification, rather than as a symbol of social status. The socio-economic implications of the land reform and subsequent distributions since 1975 is also analyzed to show continuity as well as change within the farming household socio-economic status.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Generally, it is hoped that this research will have the following significance:

1. Due to the variation in the implementation of the land reform, this study will have scholarly significance towards the understanding of the complex land issue by providing an additional case study.
2. The result of the study may be used as reference material for policy makers as well as for future development activities in the study area.

1.4. General Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to describe and analyze the relationship between household access to farmland and socio-economic status in Wonqa *käbäle* of Gozamin *Wäräda*, East Gojjam, since 1975. To achieve this general objective, the research focused on different means of access to farmland, household strategies to get access to farmland and the socio-economic implications of the land reform on the farming households' socio-economic status.

1.5. Specific Objectives

The study has the following four specific objectives:

1. To investigate different means of household access to farmland since 1975:

Since 1975, land came under the control of the state. Theoretically, every person had "equal" access to farmland. However, practically, there is variation on the size and quality of the plot with in the country (Dessalegn, 1984; Yared, 1994; 995; 1999). An attempt has been made in this research to investigate various strategies that household heads used to maximize their access to farmland. Besides, the roles of economic, social and political status to create this inequality are also assessed in this study.

2. To study the nature and development of local agreements:

There were local agreements in pre-1975. However, except in a few cases, the 1975 Land Reform made land transaction illegal (Proclamation No 31/1975). Though it was illegal, local agreements continued at the local level (Dessalegn, 1990). Then, this became legal in early 1990s and continued up to now. Thus, by looking the local agreements it is possible to understand the role of capital and labour to get access to farmland in the study area.

3. To understand the role of land access for socio-economic differentiation:

In pre-1975 Land Reform, access to *rist* and *gult* land had close relation with socio-economic differentiation (Hoben, 1970; 1973; 1976). In this research, an attempt has been made to show the role of access to land in economic and social

differentiation. This could be helpful to understand whether land continued as a symbol of socio-economic status or not.

4. To assess the general socio-economic implications of the land reform and subsequent distribution and redistribution of farmland since 1975:

General socio-economic implications of the land distribution and redistribution especially in relation with socio-economic status, land use, household developmental cycle, landlessness, and disputes over land have been assessed.

1.6. Site Selection

Gozamin *Wäräda* is a *wäräda*, which I know very well. Its capital, Debre Markos, is my birthplace as well as a place where I attended elementary and high schools.

Wonqa *Käbäle* was selected as a research site due to the following reasons:

1. Accessibility: Wonqa is located along the Debre Markos - Bahir Dar highway, which is seven kilometers northwest of Debre Markos, that is one and half hours walk from Debre Markos.
2. Compared to other *Käbäles*, the 1997 land reallocation was conducted in Wonqa with the day-to-day follow up of the *wäräda* and zone political cadres. Thus, the political perspective of the 1997 land distribution is clearly reflected in this *käbäle*.

1.7. Methodology

The study is based on three months of fieldwork. To meet the objectives of the study, the following data collection methods were employed:

1. *Archival data:*

Policies and other related documents were used to understand how households get access to farmland. The *wäräda* and *käbäle* officials gave me a permit to get access to some documents of the Gozamin *Wäräda* and Wonqa *Käbäle* archives, which were very important to collect general data about the study area and particularly important about the 1997 land distribution. Documents at the Development Station of Wonqa, Gozamin *Wäräda* MoA and East Gojjam Zone MoA were used for the study. In addition, books, theses, dissertations, periodicals, etc were used as sources of information to understand the existing information about the subject.

2. *Quantitative research method:*

A full survey of eighty-four households was conducted at Deber *got'* (a subdivision under the *käbäle*) to collect data about household size, average plot size and other basic data which show the socio-economic condition of the study area. Besides, relatively more specific questions were included in a survey conducted on randomly selected twenty household heads in the *käbäle*.

3. *Qualitative research method:*

In-depth interview, focus group discussion, life histories of selected household heads and observation were conducted to collect qualitative data.

In-depth interviews were conducted with knowledgeable elders about the history of the research area, pre-1975 land tenure system, etc. The *wäräda* and the

käbäle officials of the previous regime as well as the current ones were interviewed about various means of obtaining farmland in the period of *Därg* and EPRDF. The officials at Bahir Dar were also interviewed about the current land administration and the 1997 reallocation. Moreover, in-depth interviews were held with different categories of household heads about different means to get access to farmland and strategies to maximize their holding.

Focus group discussions were held with different categories of household heads about general information of the study areas, and how land distributions were carried out in the period of *Därg* and EPRDF. Especially it was helpful to get group views about the meaning of land, economic stratification, and social status within the community. Sensitive issues were avoided in these discussions and such issues were discussed during the individual interviews.

Fourteen selected life histories from different categories of household heads were studied to understand different strategies to get access to farmland, their socio-economic status and household developmental cycle. Given the sensitive nature of some of the data on controversial issues, pseudonyms are used to keep the identity of informants secret.

During the field season, I got the opportunity to observe *Däbo* (festive work group) on the mowing of barley and weeding of *teff*, and the celebration of *Mäskäl* (the Finding of the True Cross) on September 27. I also attended the three days' conference of the peasants of the *käbäle*, which was held from 31 October to 2

November 2002 to discuss about rural development policy of the EPRDF government. At this conference, members of the community discussed about the issue of land access, land use, labour, water utilization, etc.

1.8. Limitations of the Study

The study has certain limitations especially during the fieldwork. The first major limitation of the fieldwork was the fact that the peasants were busy during the field season. The month of *Nähase* up to mid *Mäskäräm* (August and September) is the weeding (Amha. *arām*) period for *teff*. Then *Tik'imt* (October to mid November) is the mowing (Amha. *achāda*) period for barley. To overcome this limitation discussions were sometimes held in the evening. Usually weekends and days of the month that are used to commemorate different Saints were exhaustively used to interview informants.

The second limitation was the difficulty to remember the dates of events. Usually peasants could not remember the exact time of different events. This limitation was overcome by focus group discussions, during which participants helped each other to refresh their memory.

To conclude this chapter, available literature has been reviewed to show the gap in explaining the relations between access to farmland and socio-economic status in the study area. In spite of some limitations during the fieldwork, a variety of methods were employed to collect valuable data that is used in the succeeding chapters of the thesis.

CHAPTER II

THE STUDY AREA

The description of the study area, Gojjam, Gozamin and Wonqa, is important to understand the context of the thesis. The topography and climatic conditions of the study area provide information regarding the agro-ecology of the area. A brief summary of the traditions and history of the people is also important to understand the justification regarding how the land tenure system was established. The socio-economic conditions of Wonqa are described at length to show the setting of the research site. An attempt has been made in this chapter to give a general context of the study area to provide a better understanding of the relations between household access to farmland and socio-economic status.

2.1. East Gojjam Administrative Zone

2.1.1. Geographical Location, Topography and Climate

East Gojjam, which is found in the northwest part of Ethiopia, is one of eleven zones of the Amhara Regional State. It is bordered by South Gonder in the north, South Wollo in the east, North Shewa in the southeast, East Wollega in the southwest and West Gojjam in the west. The Abbay River is the border of East Gojjam from the northeast through to the east, up to southwest. The Zone is divided into thirteen rural and one urban administrative *wärädas*. The data at the Zone Rural Development Office (RDO) shows that the Zone has a total area of 1,380,903 hectares.

According to the 1994 census, the population of East Gojjam Zone was 1,700,331 (CSA, 1995). The statistical data at the Zone RDO shows that, the population of the Zone was 2,140,093 (of these 89.96 percent were rural and 10.04 percent urban) in 2000. The same source shows that, there were 344,460 households in the rural parts of the Zone, which cultivate 584,884 hectares of land (42.36 percent of the total area). The average land holding is 1.70 hectares per household, which is much greater compared to the region at 1 hectare and the national average of 0.98 hectare per household (CSA, 1998).

Table 1: Agro-ecological Category of East Gojjam

Climatic Category	Area		Altitude in m. A.S.L.	Rainfall in mm.	Temperature in Degree Centigrade
	Hectares	Percent			
<i>Wirch</i>	36,630	2.65	> 3,200	> 1600	< 10
<i>Däga</i>	594,553	43.06	2,500–3,200	1200 – 1600	10 – 15
<i>Wäyna Däga</i>	520,152	37.67	1,500 – 2,500	800 – 1200	15 – 20
<i>Kolla</i>	229,568	16.62	500 – 1,500	< 800	20 – 30
Total	1,380,903	100			

Source: East Gojjam Zone Rural Development Office (2002).

The topography of most of East Gojjam is characterized by mountainous and plain lands, constituting forty-eight and forty percent of the total area respectively. The altitude of the Zone ranges from 800 to 4,100 meters above sea level (ASL). Mountain Choke, which is 4,100 m. ASL, is the highest point in the Zone. Of the

total area of the Zone, 80.73 percent is categorized under *däga* (high land) and *wäyna däga* (medium land).

Economically, peasants in East Gojjam depend on plough-based, labour intensive agriculture. *Mähär* rain season (June – September) and *bälg* rainy season (March– May) are the two rainy seasons for crop production. 94.2 percent of crop production in 2000 – 2001 was produced in the *mähär* (the main rainy season) season, while the remaining 5.8 percent was produced during the *bälg* (short rainy season) and through small-scale irrigation systems. Average productivity of the area is 3.98 quintals per hectare (Zone RDO). In addition to plough based agricultural production, livestock raising plays the second most important role in the economy of the Zone. According to the above source, the Zone has 2,485,472 livestock, of which 57 percent are cattle and 27 percent are goats and sheep. Others constitute the remaining 21 percent. Generally, the economy of the Zone is based on plough-based agriculture, which depends mainly on *mähär* rain.

2.1.2. Historical Background

The people of Gojjam believe that they are a part of the ancient and medieval history of Ethiopia in which their ancestors played a significant role. A nobleman called *Däjjazmach* Yosedeq is considered as the founder of the Gojjam ruling house in the early eighteenth century. He married the daughter of *Itege* Mentewab and the half-sister of Emperor Iyasu II (1730-1755), *Wäyzäro* Wollete Israel and begot *Talaqu* (the great) Ras Hailu. *Talaqu* Ras Hailu (1777–1795)

ruled the whole of Gojjam. His death in 1795 was a watershed in the political history of Gojjam. There ensued a period of fragmentation during which Gojjam was divided into Damote, Agaw Midir and Gojjam proper. This fragmentation continued during the whole period of the *Zämänä Mäsafint* (the Era of the Princes) (1769-1855). Gojjam was reunited in 1855, when Emperor Tewodros confirmed *Däjjazmach* Tedla's position as ruler of the whole of Gojjam.

Emperor Tekele Georgis (1868-1871) made *Ras* Adal governor of Gojjam in 1870. Emperor Yohannes IV who took power from Emperor Tekle Georgis also confirmed the position of Adal when he submitted to him in 1873. Then Yohannes IV made him *Nigus* (king) of Gojjam and Keffa in 1881 with the coronation name of Tekle Haymanot. This led Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam into confrontation with Menilik II of Shewa, which culminated at the battle of Embabo (1882) where Menilik II defeated Tekle Haymanot.

Tekle Haymanot made his capital at Menqorer (now Debre Markos) in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The administrative system of the Gojjam ruling house followed the pattern of Gonder, which was characterized by personal loyalty and multiplication of function (military, judicial and administrative) (Fantahun, 1973).

Nigus Tekle Haymanot continued to rule the whole of Gojjam in such a way up to 1901. Then his son *Ras* Hailu succeeded him. *Ras* Hailu was notorious due to his taxation system. He introduced various types of tax. Of these the most

unpopular was *Yä-chis* (smoke or hut) tax, to be paid by all adults who established a household. The rate was varied based on the economic status of the household head; the peasant was labeled to pay two Maria Theresa (MT) dollars. To avoid this tax the peasants started to live with relatives to share the tax burden. In addition, newly married couples continued to live with the groom's parents for more than the usual two years' time. Thus, *Ras Hailu* responded to the strategies of the peasant by changing his hut tax into a head tax (the people called it *yä-kula* [penis] tax), to be paid by all male adults. All the newly introduced taxes were abolished in 1932, when he was deposed by Emperor Haile Selassie I and subsequently replaced by *Ras Emeru* from Shewa. This event brought an end to two centuries' long (1730s – 1930s) rule of Gojjam by local princes (Fantahun, 1973; Gizachew, 1971).

During the period of the Italian occupation (1936-1941), Gojjam was renowned for its patriotic movement. It was divided into three patriotic movement zones: Menigesha Djmbere controlled Western Gojjam, *Ras Hailu Belew* led the central part of Gojjam and the notorious patriot Belay Zeleke controlled most of East Gojjam (Bahru, 1991). Though the Italians introduced a minimal land tax, the people refused to pay because it was closely associated with the recognition of the Italian rule.

From liberation to the revolution (1941 – 1974), the province was known for its peasant rebellions. The Imperial government introduced a new land tax system in 1944, which was paid per *gasha* (a unit of land measurement, one *gasha* is equal

to forty hectares) based on the fertility of the land. However, the peasants resisted accepting the new tax system, and continued to pay tax based on the 1935 rate till 1967. Then, in 1967 the central government introduced a new agricultural income tax to replace the *asrat* (lit. one-tenth) tax system. Like the previous reform the peasants of Gojjam rejected and rebelled against the newly introduced tax, by assuming the land assessment to be a pretext to abolish the traditional land tenure system. This armed rebellion was a serious challenge to the Imperial government's attempts to centralize the tax system. In addition, the movement, together with other peasant uprisings like the peasant uprising in Bale, becomes a reference as one of the causes for the 1974 Revolution (Bahru, 1991).

During the *Dārg* period, Gojjam continued to be administered as one of the 14 provinces of Ethiopia. Then in 1989, it was divided into East and West Gojjam Administrative Zones. With the 1991 coming to power of the EPRDF government and its new federal system East Gojjam, still an administrative zone became part of the Amhara Regional State. Generally, Gojjam has had a significant place in the political history of the country until recent time.

2.2. Gozamin Wārāda

2.2.1. Geographical Location, Topography and Climate

Gozamin is located in the southwest part of East Gojjam Administrative Zone. It is bordered by Debaye Telatgin *Wārāda* in the north, the Abbay River in the south, the Baso Liben and Awebal *Wārādas* in the east, and the Machakel *Wārāda* in the west. According to the *Wārāda* Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) source, the total area

of the *wäräda* is 169,305 hectares of which 43.46 percent is under cultivation. Most of the areas of Gozamin are mountainous and flat, which constitute forty-eight and forty-five percents respectively. The altitude, like the altitude of the Zone, ranges from 800 to 4100 m. A.S.L. Mountain Choke is the highest point.

There are a number of rivers such as Abbay, Shegeza, Chemoga, Kullech, Degelle, Atemena and Wutren. There are also a number of small streams in the *wäräda*. The mean annual rainfall is 1511.3 mm. The main rainy season (*mähär*) is considered adequate for rain-fed cropping. However, for the last three years the main rainy season is lacking its uniformity. Moreover, the *bälg* rain was insufficient in the last year and it is becoming less reliable. Hence, there is a threat of drought due to erratic rainfall pattern.

Similar to the whole of East Gojjam Zone, there are four agro-ecological categories in Gozamin *Wäräda*. Of the total area of the *wäräda wirch* (alpine) covers 2 percent, *däga* (highland) covers 47 percent, *wäyna däga* (medium altitude) covers 38 percent, and *kolla* (lowland) covers 13 percent. Different varieties of grains, like *teff*, barley and wheat, are cultivated in these different ecological zones (Gozamin *Wäräda* MoA).

According to the 1994 census, the population of the *wäräda* was 190,631 (CSA, 1995). The statistical data of the *Wäräda* MoA shows that the *wäräda* had a population of 247,257 people in 2001. According to this source, the average household size is 5 person per household. The average land holding is 1.5

hectare per household, which is lower than the Zone average of 1.70 hectare and higher than the region and the national averages that is 1 and 0.98 hectare per household respectively (CSA, 1998).

2.2.2. Tradition and History of the *Wäräda*

The history of Gozamin *Wäräda* is part of the history of Gojjam. Since the capital of the province is in this *wäräda*, it has an important place in the history of the province. In addition, Jebela and Motera, the most strategic place which king Tekle Haymanot used as fortress when he confronted with Emperor Yohannes IV, is found in the southern parts of the *wäräda*.

According to the tradition, the people of Gozamin are descended from the Amhara father called Gafat. Gafat begot Emellello - Emellello begot Sellollo, Sellollo begot Tiref – Tiref begot Zenifnef – Zenifnef begot Gunifnef – Gunifnef begot *Qägn* (lit. right) Derebe and *Gira* (lit. left) Serebe. These two, *Qägn* Derebe and *Gira* Serebe, settled in the East and West parts of Gojjam respectively.

The first son of *Qägn* Derebe is Gozamin and he got the territory, which was named after him. The word Gozamin is also associated with the word *guzam* meaning strong farmer. Gozamin had two children, Tegoze and Tesheshgem. They divided the *wäräda* into two using Wonqa River as a boundary. West of the river was given to Tegoze and East of the river given to Tesheshgem. These two areas served as secondary *wärädas* during the Imperial period. According to my informants, this was how the traditional land tenure system was established.

Thus, all the descendents of Gozamin had the right to obtain *rist* land within the *wäräda* up to the 1975 Land Reform.

2.2.3. Socio-economic Conditions since 1975

Like the economy of the Zone, the economy of Gozamin *Wäräda* is predominantly plough-based agriculture. The peasants of the *wäräda* depend on *mähär* production, which provides more than 95 percent of the total agricultural production. The *bälg* rain has become unreliable. The first three major products of the *wäräda* are *teff*, barley and wheat. Gozamin is self-sufficient in food production. In the last quarter of a century, it was only in 1984 that the *wäräda* was hit by a drought; which the people refer to as *trgät'e* (lit. kicker).

Besides grain production, the peasants of the *wäräda* rear livestock. According to *wäräda* MoA data, the *wäräda* has 371,567 livestock. They use oxen for draft power to plough their field. Besides, they use livestock for household consumption as well as for sale to pay for their immediate needs. In addition, the dung is used as fuel and fertilizer.

Usually peasants of the *wäräda* use household labour to cultivate their plots. Sometimes they use *däbo* (festive work group) and/or *wänfäl* (reciprocal work group) for sowing, weeding and harvesting. Only a few peasants could hire temporary labourers during the peak seasons.

Markets are available in different parts of the *wäräda*. The biggest daily market is found at Debre Markos, which is the capital of the *wäräda* as well as the Zone. There are also weekly markets, usually on Saturday, in different parts of the *wäräda* like in Rebu Gebeya (Sinan), Yeboqila and Chertekel.

The *wäräda* has an all-weather road, which connects the *wäräda* capital, Debre Markos to Addis Ababa (300 kilometers asphalt), Bahir Dar, Rebu Gebeya, Yeboqila and Lebanos. In addition, there is an all-weather road, which connects the *wäräda* with other *wärädas* of the Zone.

Modern education started in the *wäräda* since 1934. Modern health services also began in the 1930s. Both these social services expanded especially in the last quarter of this century. However, the economy of the *wäräda* is still predominantly based on plough agriculture.

2.3. Wonqa Kābāle

2.3.1. Geographical Location, Topography and Climate

Wonqa Kābāle is one of the forty *kābāles* of Gozamin Wārāda, which is located at the center of the *wäräda*. According to the data in the *kābāle* Development Agent (DA), the topography of the *kābāle* is characterized by flat and mountainous areas, which constitute fifty-six and forty-one percents of the total area respectively. The altitude of the *kābāle* ranged from 2,300 to 2,600 m. ASL. Of the total area of the *kābāle*, which is 2,626 hectares, 4.3 percent is categorized under *dāga* and the remaining 95.7 percent under *wāyna dāga* agro-ecology. The

kābāle has three rivers: Wonqa, Dijil and Jenbr, which flow from the highland parts of the *kābāle*.

Like the *wārāda* and the zone, the *kābāle* also has two rainy seasons, *māhār* (main rainy season) and *bālg* (short rainy season). The peasants of Wonqa produce more than 95 percent of their products by using the *māhār* rainy season, the rest produced by using *bālg* rain and irrigation water. The annual average rainfall is 1341 mm. The mean monthly maximum temperature is 25 degrees centigrade in March and the minimum is 6.7 degrees centigrade in December. The annual average temperature is 15.8 degrees centigrade and the mean range is 6.9 – 22 degrees centigrade.

Of the total area of Wonqa 48.66 percent is covered by annual crop, 24.74 percent is used for grazing and 7.65 percent is covered with forest, which is a lot compared to other adjacent *kābāles*. This is due to the existence of 144 hectares of community forest. The forest was under government control up to 1997. Since 1997, it became community forest.

According to the *kābāle* statistics, there were 2,929 males and 2,313 females out of a total population of 5,242 in 1087 households in Wonqa Administrative *kābāle* in 2002. Female headed households constituted 302 (27.78%). The average household size is 4.82 person per household, and the average plot size is 1.21 hectare per household.

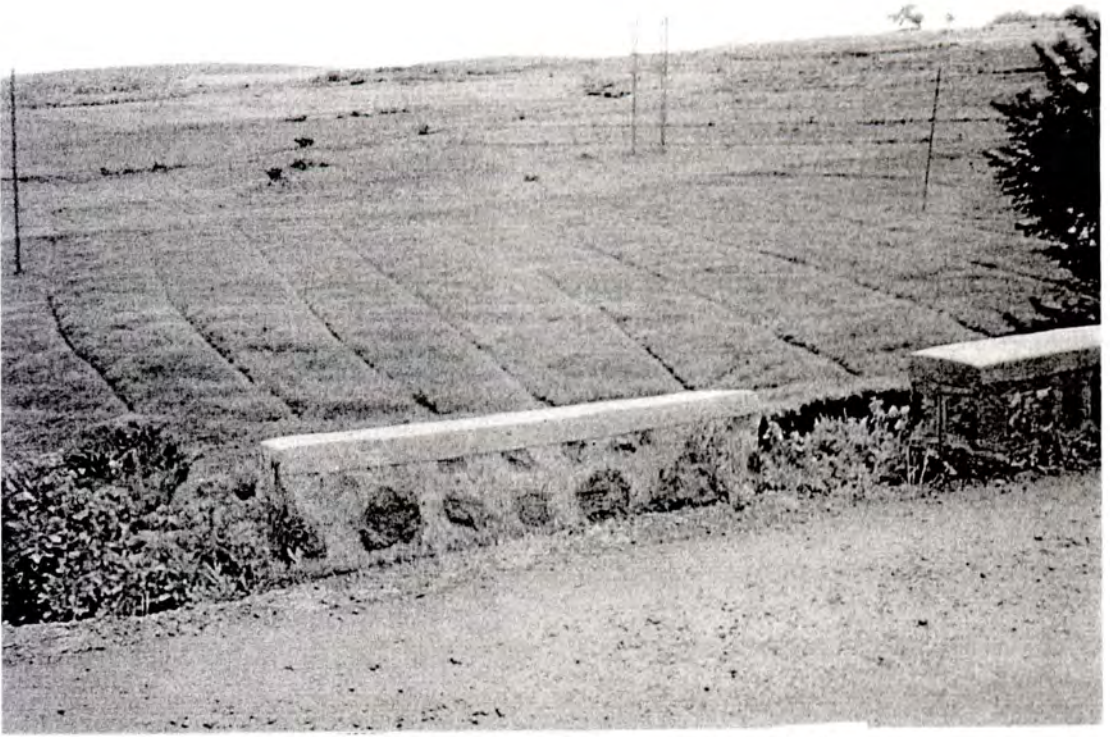


Plate 1: Farmland in Wonqa (*Teff* Plot)



Plate 2: Part of the Forest Competing with Farmland

2.3.2. Tradition and History of Wonqa

According to tradition, the people of Wonqa are descendants of Gozamin. As we have seen earlier, Gozamin had two children: Tegozem and Tesheshgem. These two children divided the land of Gozamin by using Wonqa River as a boundary. Tegozem took West of Wonqa River. Tegozem had twelve children; Jirremin was one of them. According to the tradition, Jirremin was the founding father of Wonqa. Jirremin had three children: Arken, Janatre and Kedin. These were the three fathers of Wonqa people. Those who were descended from these fathers had the right to get *rist* in Wonqa. Tax was also paid till the late 1960s in the names of these fathers.

For instance, the tax of Arken was about 300 *Birr*. Then, all the descendents of Arken came together and 300 beans were counted before the descendents. First, the 300 beans were divided equally among the four children of Arken. Then the share of the first child of Arken, Berhan, which was 75 *Birr*, was equally divided among his four children. In such a way, the beans were further divided up to the surviving descendents. Thus, the surviving children had to pay the *Birr* equivalent to the divided beans. Then the tax was collected by the *chika shum* and *at'ibia dagna* from the descendents.

According to my informants, during the Ahmed Gagn War (1527 – 1543), Emperor Lebne Dengel came to the area and settled at Wonqa at a place now called *yä-at'e majjät* (lit. Emperor's kitchen). At this time there was a Muslim group, which was led by a person called Abide, near Wonqa, at a place now

known as Abide Garo (lit. Abide's homestead). When Abide heard the news of the coming of the Emperor to Wonqa, he attempted to kill the Emperor. However, Abide was defeated and killed by the force of the Emperor. Therefore, Emperor Lebne Dengel established St. Georgis Church at Wonqa as a monastery, and granted the area of Wonqa as a *gult* of the monastery.

However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, King Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam brought the Ark of St. Markos from Egypt to Menqorer, the capital of Gojjam. Then the church of St. Markos got the status of *risanä adbarat*, (head of *adbars* or churches) thus the *gult* of St. Georgis was taken and given to the church of St. Markos. Only the *märegeta* and the *mälakä gänät* (chant leader and the head of the monastery) of Wonqa St. Georgis Church were salaried in kind under the church of St. Markos. The *at'ibia dagna* was responsible to collect tax and to resolve administrative problems within the parish.

The 1975 Land Reform abolished the structure of *at'ibia dagna* and replaced it by the *käbäle* peasant association (PA). Thus, in 1976 the *käbäle* peasant association was established by the election of fifteen individuals as first committee members. At the beginning, Wonqa was organized under two *käbäle* PAs, however, in 1979 it became one *käbäle*. In 1999, when the *käbäles* of the *wäräda* were reduced from seventy-eight to forty, Enesabe and Debago sub-*käbäles* joined Wonqa. Moreover, Wonqa became a *käbäle* administration (KA) rather than peasant association.

The *kābāle* has seven committee members of which the chairman has a salary (200 *Birr* per month). The *kābāle* is further divided into Enesaba, Debago and Wonqa sub-*kābāles*, each having five, four and nine *got*'s respectively. Structurally each sub-*kābāle* is supervised by a sub-committee in which the chairman of the sub-committee is a member of the main KA committee. Under each sub-committee, there are committees, which are known as *māngistawi budn* (lit. government group) that has three members. Most of the members of the committee are core members (party members). Each *māngistawi budn* is responsible to follow up the political, administrative and security issues in the *got*' or if the *got*' is wider to supervise fifty households. Thus, there are twenty-one *māngistawi budns* (seven in each sub-*kābāles*) within Wonqa. This shows that the government structure goes down to the *got*' or fifty households level.

2.3.3. Economic Conditions

According to the data obtained from the *kābāle* DA, the average annual income is 1,700 *Birr* per household. The community depends on rain-fed crop production of which *teff*, barley and wheat are the top three cereals which cover 45.95, 16.50 and 13.70 percents of cultivated land respectively in 2000. To produce different types of annual crops, the peasant of Wonqa have to perform different activities by adjusting with the agricultural cycle to prepare the plot, sow, weed, mow and harvest. The following table shows the agricultural activities of different kinds of crops.

Table 2: Agricultural Activities in Different Months for Various Types of Crops

Crop Type	Activities in Different Months of the Year				
	Preparing the Plot	Sowing	Weeding	Mowing	Harvesting
<i>Teff</i>	March-July	July-August	August-Oct.	Nov.-Jan	Jan.-Feb.
Barley & Wheat	Dec.-June	June-July	August-Sept.	Nov.– Dec.	Jan.-Feb.
Maize	Jan.-April	April	July-August	Oct.-Nov.	Dec.-Jan.
Beans & Peas	March	June	–	Nov.- Dec.	Jan.-Feb.
Linseed	March	May	June-July	Oct.-Nov.	Nov.-Dec.

Source: Compiled from field data (2002).

Besides this annual cultivation of crops, the community uses irrigation system to produce vegetables (carrots, cabbages, tomatoes, etc.), fruits (bananas, oranges, lemons etc.), and cereals like barley. *Chat* plantation started about ten years ago and flourished in the last five years due to increasing demand at Debre Markos. The community uses three rivers (Digil, Wonqa and Jimber) and three springs (Yideya, Shate and Shema Mateb) for irrigation. According to the data at the *kābāle* DA, these water resources have the potential to irrigate 108 hectares. However, the peasants use the water to irrigate 87 hectares of land (80.56 percent).

The method of irrigation is practiced by flooding and the water is distributed to the scheme beneficiaries on a rotation basis. The beneficiaries are responsible to maintain the dam and the main channel usually in the first week of October.



Plate: 3 The Peasants of Wonqa Maintaining the Main Channel of Irrigation System at Wonqa River



Plate: 4 The Maintained Channel

For fair distribution and administration of the water resource the beneficiaries elect a leader, yearly, called *yäwiha abat* (lit. water's father). Under the *yäwiha abat* there are a number of *guagn* (the lowest minor official) who assist him and control the distribution of water. This water resource management was started in the 1940s when the irrigation system was started. It developed during the *Därg* period especially in the 1980s when water accessed areas were chosen as village sites.

Since the farming system in Wonqa is mixed farming, the peasants rear cattle besides crop production. They use cattle for draft power, for household consumption, and their dung for fertilizer and fuel. They also use cattle products like butter and milk for sale at Debre Markos. According to data obtained from the *käbäle* DA station, the total livestock population in the *käbäle*, in 2001, was 6,807; of these 1186 were oxen. That means the average livestock population was 6.26 per household and the average oxen number was 1.09 per household. Survey result shows that the average oxen size per household is 1.08. The range for owning oxen varies from zero to six per household and 58.33 percent of the households own no ox.

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Size of Oxen Holding

Oxen Size→	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Frequency	49	6	15	5	6	2	1	84
Percentage	58.33	7.14	17.86	5.95	7.14	2.38	1.19	100

In addition to agricultural activities, the survey result shows that 33.19 percent of household heads subsidize their household economy by engaging in non-

agricultural activities, like selling *tälla* (local beer) and *katikala* (local liquor), cattle dung, and firewood. Some youth also work as daily labourers at Debre Markos. Some travel more than a thousand km, as far as Tepi, Gedolle and other coffee growing areas to generate income for their households. In addition, handicraft workers in the community make iron products, cloth and pottery. According to my informants, non-agricultural activities have increased due to the shortage of land in the *käbäle*.

2.3.4. Social Conditions

The social conditions of Wonqa are interrelated with the economic situation. For instance, different feasts and ceremonies depend on agricultural products. In terms of time, most social events are harmonized with the agricultural activities. On the other hand, there are social events and organizations, which complement the economic activities. *Shäha* (working party) and *mahibär* (religious associations) are some such kinds of organizations. Thus, the economic and social conditions complement each other. Moreover, both are bases for intra and inter-household relations. Therefore, in this section an attempt has been made to describe briefly the social conditions of Wonqa.

2.3.4.1. Religion

Levine argued that the Orthodox Church is one of the links "...between the home culture and the 'high culture' of Abyssinia" (Levine, 1965:58). According to the *käbäle* statistics, the people of Wonqa are a hundred percent Orthodox Christians. Wonqa has the oldest church of St. Georgis, which was built, according to my

informants, in the sixteenth century during the period of Emperor Lebne Dengel. In addition, Medhanealem and St. Mariam churches were joined the *kābāle* when Enesaba and Debago sub- *kābāles* are incorporated within Wonqa *kābāle*.

The parish, as Hoben put it, "...is the most important social grouping in the lives of the peasants above the household" (Hoben, 1970b:71). Besides its religious importance, it is in the compound of the church that the community discusses socio-economic as well as political issues. Being a parishioner is also an important social tie and social identity.

As mentioned above, Wonqa was the *gult* of St. Georgis Church until the second half of the nineteenth century. Then it became the *gult* of St. Markos until the 1975 Land Reform. Now, St. Georgis Church is serving the 730 households. Every household is expected to pay seven *Birr* per year to the church. Of these 20 percent is given to the *Wārāda* Orthodox Church Office. The church has twelve priests and seven deacons who are paid 10 *Birr* and 5 *Birr* per month respectively.

The community has a strong attachment to the Orthodox Church. People strongly believe that God protects them from every harm. God is also the rainmaker and the only one who blesses their products. There are six days in every month, which are assigned for the observance of Saints, on which most peasants exempt themselves from agricultural activities even during the peak seasons. Because they believe that if they work on these days, God may punish them by destroying their crop by hailstorm or drought.

One of the topics at the peasant conference, which was held from 31 October to 2 November 2002, was to reduce these religious days from six to one. Thus, the only holiday to be observed being that of the parish church's Saint, in the case of Wonqa every 23rd day of the month, which is St. Georgis' day. However, the peasants argued that it should be up to the individual whether to work on other holidays or not. Further, some asked the chairman if the *käbäle* is ready to allot extra land to cultivate on these cancelled holidays.

Besides these monthly religious days, there are annual holidays such as New Year, *Mäsqäl* (the Finding of the True Cross), Christmas, Epiphany, the annual St. Georgis' day and Easter. Of these, New Year and Easter are more or less celebrated in every household. However, the rest are celebrated at the *got'* or *däbir* (parish) level. For instance, *Mäsqäl* is celebrated at the *got'* or *shäha* level. Whereas Epiphany and St. Georgis' day are celebrated at the parish level in which all members of the community take part. Especially on January 26 when the annual commemorative ceremony of St. Georgis is observed, guests may come from Debre Markos and the surrounding *käbäles*. After the end of celebrations at the church compound, there is feast in every household, to which relatives and friends will be invited.

Thus, religious festivals are social events in which intra and inter-household relations are reinforced. It is also true that social networks are established and strengthened through such social gatherings.

2.3.4.2. Kinship and Marriage

As Levine put it, the Amharic term *zāmäd* (lit. relative) "...refers in the first instance to consanguineal kin..." (Levine, 1965:76). In Wonqa the term *zāmäd* sometimes refers also to fictive kinship and marriage relations. Thus, they used a prefix *yä-siga* (lit. flesh) to refer to kinship relations. During the period of Haile Selassie I, kinship relations were sometimes hostile due to disputes over land. However, since the 1975 Land Reform, kinsmen are often entitled to warm hospitality and favouritism.

Usually, there is a close relation among the descendants of ego's grandparents from the eldest, and grandchildren's of ego, his sister(s) and his brother(s) to the youngest. The rest are referred to as *yä-ruq' zāmäd* (lit. distant relatives). This goes upward up to the seventh generation. Thus, intermarriage is possible between the descendants after the seventh generations. Therefore, marriage was/is usually arranged outside the parish. This promotes inter parish relation.

Marriage is usually arranged by parents of both sides. The major issues, which have to be taken into consideration at marriage, are descent and wealth. During the Imperial period, marriage was arranged among the *balabats* (those who have a right to get access *rist* land). Normally there was no marriage arrangement between the *balabat* and artisans. Thus, behind the arrangement, the right or the potential to inherit *rist* land was a central point. Since the 1975 Land Reform, everybody has 'equal' right to get access to farmland; however, the inter-marriage

between handicraft workers and other peasants is still very rare. This is perhaps due to the long-established tradition.

In the period of Haile Selassie I, there was exchange marriage, i.e.; the groom could marry the sister of his sister's husband. This was important to exploit *rist* land and to avoid unnecessary fragmentation by exchanging the land, if both inherited land from their parents. The groom may plough the *rist* of his sister by exchanging with his wife's *rist*. This was common, especially, if the exchanged land was more or less equal in terms of quality and size. However, this kind of marriage became rare since the 1975 Land Reform, perhaps because of the prohibition of *mofär zāmāt* (ploughing the land outside the resident *kābāle*), since most marriages were arranged with the neighboring *kābāles*.

The ideal marriageable age has been reduced gradually through time. Most of my informants agreed that the marriageable age in the 1960s and before that was 20 - 22 for males and 15 - 16 for females. However, since the early 1970s the marriageable age was gradually reduced and now is reaching 15 -18 for males and 9 - 13 for females. The major reason for this, according to my informants, is people having started preparing wedding feast for more than one child to reduce wedding costs due to poverty. Some also argued that such practice increased when land started to be allotted for households in the *Dārg* period. Thus, to control such practice *gāmgami* (evaluation) committee was setup during the *Dārg* period to evaluate and approve the marriage, due to this early marriage practice, the first marriage does not usually last long. Therefore, property arrangement is

taken as a serious matter in the second marriage in which they expect the marriage to last long.

The amount of gift in any marriage, first or second, is determined by the bride's parents. The measurement is the bride's parents' wealth as well as willingness to give. The groom's parents have to offer equal to the offer of the bride's parents plus one more. For example, if the bride's parents give an ox and a cow, the groom's parents have to give an ox, a cow and either a bull, a calf or a sheep, to the newly established household.

The newly married couple could stay from two to four years in the groom's parents' homestead, depending on the hospitality. At this period, the couple have to cultivate the plots of the groom's parents and get a share from the product. However, nowadays it is usual to stay only two years with groom's parents, although it is hard to get farmland for the newly established households.

2.3.4.3. Household

Netting (1968) defined the household as a major co-operating group for subsistence production and consumption that occupies a single homestead and is structured along kinship line. He also explained household as a group that is engaged in some combination of production, distribution (including consumption), reproduction, transmission and co-residence (Netting, 1993). Goody (1969) conceptualizes the household as a unit of production, consumption and dwelling. Barlett (1980) also argues that most research on the peasant agricultural strategy

takes the household as a main unit of production and consumption within which agricultural choices are made. In addition, it is a unit where resources are accessed and exploited.

As Hoben puts it "The Amhara word *béteseb*, which I am translating as household or domestic group, literally means 'house of people'. In Dega Damot it refers to any group of people who live together in a single homestead and who depend on a common source of food" (Hoben, 1973). This definition fits households in Wonqa. Though the household varies in composition and size, it is where resources (land, labour and capital) are accessed and exploited.

Traditionally the ideal rich person's household had three sections:

1. *Elfign* – which is a small hut, used as reception room for respected guests and sleeping house of the household head.
2. *Adarash* (lit. hall): It is a double walled circular hut. The first circle is used for the livestock's quarter (sheep, horses, mules, donkeys), grains storage, and kitchen. The second circle, the internal part, is used as a living-room. There are two stages of sleeping *mädäb* (bed made of mud): the biggest one, which is found on the right side of the hut, is called *Sägno* (Monday) *mädäb*, which is used by the parents and respected guests and the lower one is for children.
3. *Bärät*: It is made of wood, and used for cattle. The width of the *bärät* depends on the number of cattle.

However, by now most of the traditional houses are replaced by tin-roofed houses, which usually have three rooms: living room, bedroom and store. Besides, they build a small hut as a kitchen and for sheep, horses, mules etc. Cows and oxen have started to spend the night in the field tended by working party called *shāha*. Thus, the land space that was being used to build *bārāt* is freed and utilized for cultivation.

Tin-roofed houses were a symbol of status in 1970s and 1980s; however, those have become common now. It is said, if one is not able to construct a tin-roofed house, his wife would scorn him. Thus, some peasants are forced to sell their oxen to build a tin-roofed house. Therefore, by now most of the peasants have a tin-roofed house; it is no longer a symbol of status.

Divisions of labour between household members are very important to utilize household resources. The household head is the manager of the household. Men are responsible for ploughing, selecting seeds, sowing, weeding, harvesting, looking after cattle on his turn of *shāha*, house construction and so on. Women are responsible to prepare food for members of the household, weeding, harvesting and so on. Boys start to look after cattle at the age of eight. Then at eleven and twelve they could start to plough and assist their father. Girls could begin to fetch water at ten, weed at eleven and twelve, and assist their mother with the chores at twelve.

Access to farmland could determine household composition. If the holding is beyond the labour resources of the household, the head may hire a labourer to exploit the land resource. Access to farmland could also determine whether the household head uses household labour resources exhaustively or not; as well as whether he/she engages in a working party or not. Thus, access to land not only determines household composition, but also inter- and intra-household relations.

2.3.4.4. Social Organizations

There are different social organizations like *Edir* and *Mahibär* in the community of Wonqa. These social organizations have economic importance besides their social value. In this section, attempts have been made to describe briefly some of the major social organizations in Wonqa.

Edir

Edir, which was established in Wonqa in the late 1960s, is a communal self-help organization especially at the time of death. Before that *sänbäte* (monthly religious association) was the most common local institution. *Edir* is organized in Wonqa at the *got'* level. Every *got'* has one or two *edirs* depending on the area and number of households in the *got'*. Usually there is one *edir* in each *got'*. Though membership is on a voluntary basis by paying 0.15 *Birr* per month, every household head is a member of *edir* due to its social value. If some one is not a member of *edir*, he/she will be socially outcaste and not respected within the community.

The main purpose of *edir* is to conduct funeral ceremonies and help members with labour when they need to prepare wedding feasts for their children. Funeral rites are held at the *got'* level. Every member of the *got'* is obliged to attend funeral ceremonies when some one dies in the *got'*. Members of other *got's* have no social obligation to attend funeral rites of the members of other *got'*. They could attend if they had good relations with the deceased person or his family, or if the deceased person is an important figure in the *käbäle*.

Each *edir* has an elected committee, which include a chairman, secretary, and treasurer. The committee is elected on a yearly base. The chairman is elected from the members who are expected to treat members equally and supposed to work hard for the development of the *edir*. Under the committee, there are two *guagn*, who usually are poor, and whose duty is mainly to announce death. As a reward for their service, they are exempted from any kind of contribution. Generally, *edir* is one of the social organizations, which strengthened social ties at the *got'* level.

Mahibär

Mahibär (lit. association) is one of the social organizations in Wonqa. All *mahibärs* have a religious ground. There are a number of St. Georgis *Mahibärs*, held on the 23rd day of every month, in which most male household heads are members. Members in each *mahibär* vary from five to thirty; the most common is twelve. Membership is mainly based on friendship.

Every *mahibär* has a meeting at the church compound. At this meeting, members discuss about their social as well as economic problems. Besides, they have to contribute from two to four *Birr* based on the regulation of the *mahibär* for their social problems. Then, they go to the house of the person where the *mahibär* feast is prepared. Each member prepares the feast monthly by turn.

They also help each other when problems occur to members. Members are responsible to prepare a feast and invite the priests if the member of the *mahibär* died. This feast of remembrance is offered on the 3rd, 12th and 40th day of the member's death. In addition, if there is a shortage of labour and oxen in the household of the deceased person, the members of the *mahibär* are responsible to plough, weed, and harvest the plots of the deceased member at least for a year, depending on the need of the deceased relatives. If one of the members of the *mahibär* becomes ill, other members of the *mahibär* have to plough, weed and harvest his plot to feed his household members. Besides, if one of the members of the *mahibär* has no ox and is not able to cultivate his plot, those members of the *mahibär* who have enough oxen could lend ox(en) for certain days to plough and harvest his plot for a year or two. Therefore, besides the religious purpose and social ties, *mahibär* is also used to help each other for household livelihood. Thus, it has an economic function too.

Most women have Mariam (St. Mary) *mahibär* on every 21st day of the month. The basic principle of women's *mahibär* is the same as the males' one. The only difference is females' *mahibär* do not involve economic cooperation especially in

regard to agricultural activity. This is mainly because women are not the main decision-makers at the household level due to the patriarchal nature of the society.

Generally, *mahibār* has not only religious purpose; rather its socio-economic importance is far reaching. It strengthens social ties among the members and promotes economic cooperation at the time of crises in the members' household.

Labour Organization

Besides the above social organizations, there are also labour organizations like *Wānfāl* and *Shāha*.

Wonfāl

Wonfāl is an exchange of labour among the households especially at the peak season. The labour is used in rotation. The sizes of the working parties vary from two to ten. The arrangement is based on neighborhood and the strength of the person, i.e., stronger with the stronger, and weaker with the weaker. *Wonfāl* is common at the time of ploughing, weeding and harvesting. The person who calls the *wonfāl* has to provide lunch to the working party in the fields and dinner at his home at night.

Most of my informants argued that the importance of *wonfāl* has reduced due to the shortage of land, as the work could be covered by the household members. In addition, the number of household heads who take part in one working party is

reduced due to the scarcity of land in the *kābāle*. Thus, the shortage of land has undermined the importance of *wānfāl*, as the importance of *wānfāl* depends on the size of the plot to which each household get access. Moreover, *dābo* (festive working group), which is a mutual assistance of friends and relatives without expecting equal exchange has become very rare.

Shäha

Shäha is another type of labour organization, which is setup to look after cattle. Membership, which varies from ten to thirty, is based on *got'*. Those who have cattle could organize this working party. All the cattle of the members are herded together. Thus, every member is responsible to look after the cattle on his turn at day or night. This labour organization is very important to use the cattle dung as fertilizer. Everybody has a right to keep the cattle on his field at night. Therefore, *shäha* has dual-purpose i.e. to herd cattle by turn and keep the fertility of the soil.

2.3.4.5. Social Services

The *kābāle* has one elementary school, which was established in 1949 by the initiative of the *märegeta* (chant leader) of the church. Therefore, a considerable number of children have got the opportunity to attend modern education. By now, many educated individuals are helping their parents economically. Besides the school, there is an adult training center of the *wäräda*, which provides training in pottery, weaving, ironwork and other skills for the peasants of the *wäräda*.

There is no health center in Wonqa. The community has to go to Debre Markos to get health services. The *käbäle* has four developed and a number of other springs for the water supply of the community. In addition, there are six mills at the *käbäle* to serve the 1,087 households.

A service co-operative was established in 1978, to distribute consumer goods and collect the grain quota during the *Därg* period. Currently the service co-operative is engaged in distributing commodities and fertilizer for the community of four *käbäles*. Besides, there is a credit facility for the community provided by the Amhara Credit and Saving Association. However, the association uses a group loan system, which is not preferred by the peasants. Moreover, the interest rate is extremely high (12.5 percent) which is five percent higher than the current commercial banks' interest rate.

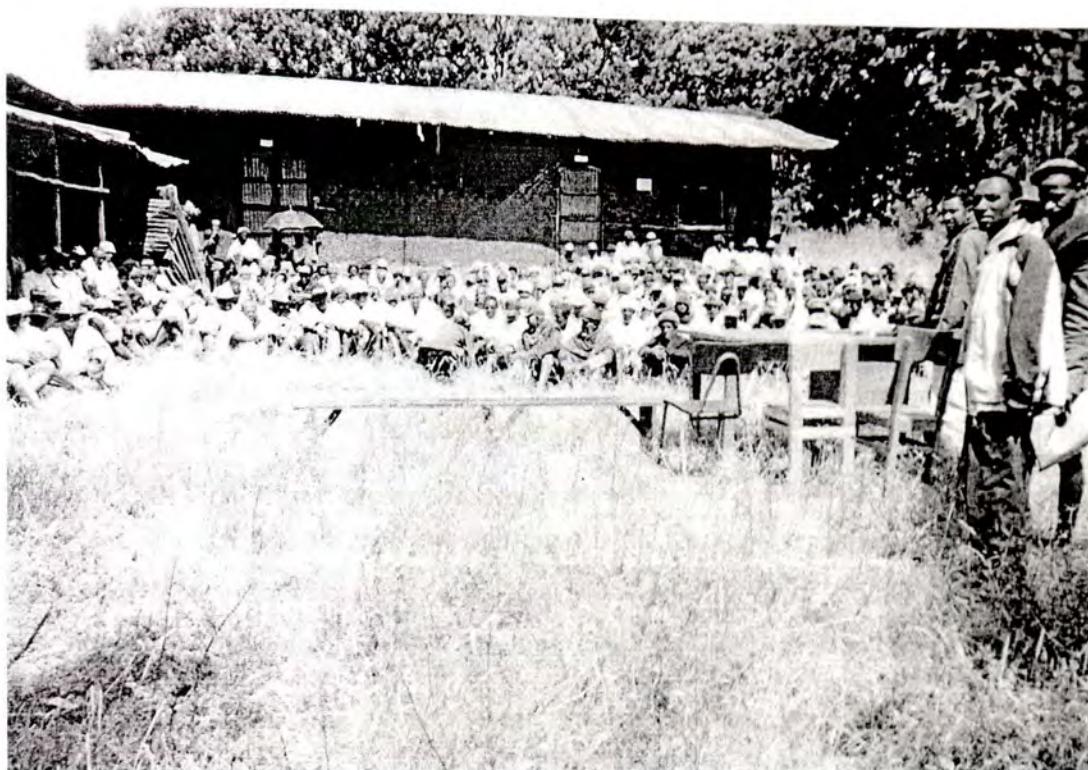
Conclusion

The agro-ecology of the study area is favourable for agriculture. The altitude of the Zone ranges from 800 to 4,100 m. ASL, however the altitude of the *käbäle* ranges from 2,300 to 2,600 m. ASL. Thus, 80.73 percent of the Zone is categorized under *däga* (highland) and *wäyna däga* (medium altitude) agro-ecology, while 95.7 percent of the *käbäle* is categorized under *wäyna däga* agro-ecology. The average plot size per household in the study area is higher than the region and the national averages. However, the average plot size of the research site, Wonqa, (1.2 hectares) is less than the *Wäräda* average (1.5 hectares) and the Zone averages (1.7 hectares) per household.

The history of the region, Gojjam, is part of the history of the country in which the people of the region played a significant role. The history of the study area is also related with the land tenure system. Especially the rebellion in the 1960s was in defiance of the traditional land tenure system. Moreover, the tradition of Gozamin as well as Wonqa explain how the traditional land tenure system was established and justified the rights to get access to *rist* land in pre-1975.

The economy of the study area is predominately characterized by plough-based labour intensive agriculture, which depend mainly on *māhār* rain. In addition, livestock rearing plays the secondary most important role. Besides, 33.19 percent of the households in Wonqa subsidize their household livelihood by engaging in non-agricultural activities, like selling *tälla* (local beer), firewood and so on.

The social conditions of the study area are interrelated with the economic situation. The social organizations like *edir* and *mahibär*, and labour organizations (like *wonfāl*, *däbo* and *shäha*) have a great importance for household economy and inter-household relations. The household is the most important social grouping where resources are accessed and exploited. The parish is also another important social grouping above the household. Likewise, kinship and marriage play important roles in intra- and inter-parish relations. Generally, the socio-economic conditions of the study area are closely related with access to farmland, because socio-economic status was important for land access, which is the subject of the next chapter.



**Plate: 5 The Peasants of Wonqa Attending the Three Days
Conference on Rural Development Policy of EPRDF**

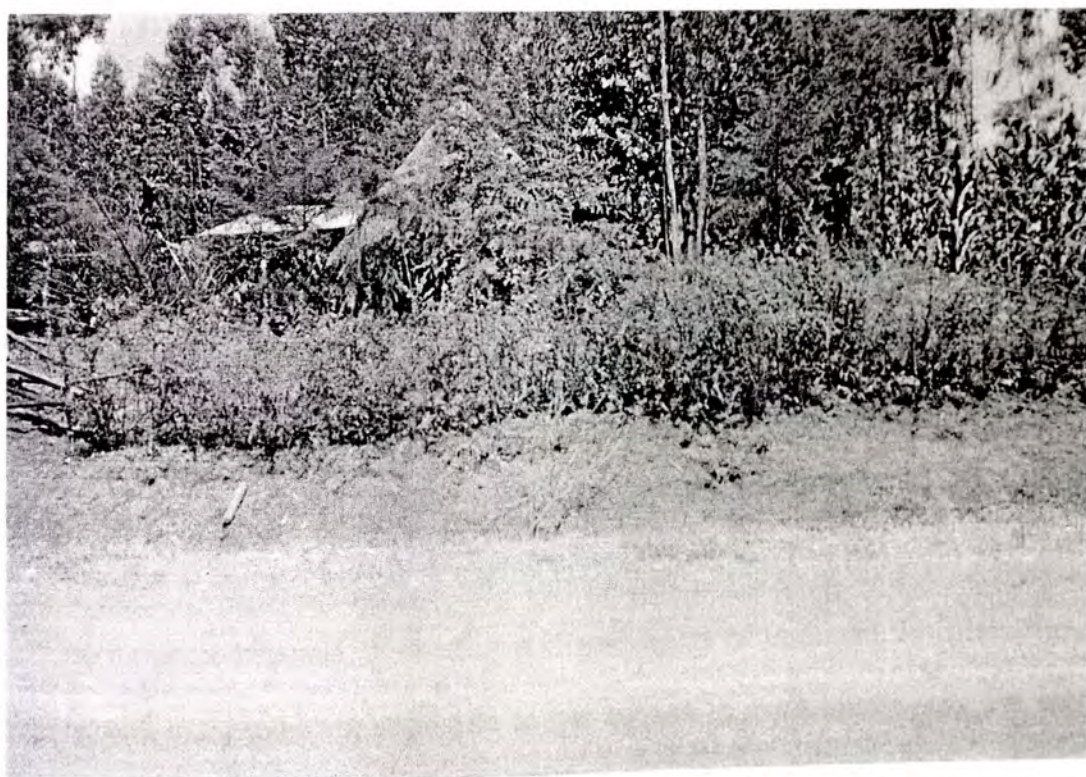


Plate: 6 Traditional and Tin-roofed Houses

CHAPTER III

LAND DISTRIBUTION AND REDISTRIBUTION

Land is continuously divided, though the way division takes place varies. During the Imperial period, land was divided among the descendants of the *wana abat* (lit. chief father). In the case of Wonqa Jirremen was the *wana abat*, and his children: Arken, Janatere and Kedin were *minzir abats* (divisional fathers) of the people of Wonqa. Thus, all the descendants of these *abats* had a right to get *rist* land. Handicraft workers, according to my informants, are latecomers to the area. Therefore, they had no right to get access to *rist* land. Moreover, they are considered as fatherless and referred to as "*tanash säw*" (lit. younger human). This system, relaying access through decent, continued up to the 1975 Land Reform.

Then distribution continued after the 1975 Land Reform but the way distribution took place was changed. The distribution further continued after the coming to power of the EPRDF government. Thus, due to this continuous process and the demographic factor, the size of the plot per household was gradually diminished (Aklilu, 1994; Danial, 1990; Markos, 1990; Tegegne, 1994). The purpose of this chapter is to look at how households obtained access to farmland through such a continuous process of division and re-division of farmland, and how household heads used different strategies to get access to more land within the process in the last a quarter of this century.

3.1. Background to the 1975 Land Reform

Allen Hoben (1970; 2002) clearly identifies the difference between *rist* and *gult*. *Rist* and *gult* are different rights over the same land. *Rist* was a usufructory right over a land based on the cognatic decent system, while *gult* was an administrative right over the same land. Such a system also existed in Tigray (Bruce, 1976). Pankhurst (1968) explains that the Emperor could create *gult* by transfer of his taxation right to a third party. Thus, *gult* was granted to individuals as a reward for their services and to churches and monasteries as endowments. Though the size of the plot varies, all the descendants of the *wana abat* or *minzir abats* had *rist* in Wonqa. One of the means of getting more *rist* was family background. Those who are born into land rich families could inherit relatively more land. Asnake [case 1], Leku [case 2] and Dagne [case 6] inherited more than 20 *t'imads* of land from their parents.

Besides inheritance, there were different mechanisms, such as knowledge of genealogy, litigation, winning court cases and marriage, by which the household head could maximize his holdings. Knowledge of genealogy and socio-political as well as economic status were important to press successful claims. Political position was one of the means to get access to more *rist* land with the knowledge of genealogy. Asnake [case 1] and Dagne [case 6] increased their holding when they became *misilāne* (*wārāda* governor) and *at'bia dagna* of Machakel *Wārāda* and Wonqa *kābāle* respectively.

Asnake [case 1] is an 85 year old household head. He had enough land and capital to run his newly established household. He inherited more than 30 *t'imads* of land, when his father died about 12 years after the establishment of his new household. Asnake became *nāch lābash*

(militia) in Wonqa. Due to his behaviour and effort he was promoted to captain and then in the early 1970s, he became the vice-*mislāne* (governor) of Machekel *Wārāda*; with this Asnake increased his land holding to up to 40 *t'imads* through successful claims.

Dagne [case 6] inherited 10 *et'a* (lot) land in Wonqa and more than 10 in Yebirage and Demashesh (neighboring *kābāles* of Wonqa) when his father and mother died. In addition, he won the additional 3 *t'imads* of *rist* land in different areas, when he worked as *chik'a shum* for 6 years and *at'bia dagna* for 4 years. He used his knowledge of genealogy and law as well as his position as *at'bia dagna* to press a successful claim.

Socio-economic status is also important to increase holdings by pressing successful claim. Leku [case 2] and Worku [case 12] are good examples:

Leku [case 2] was/is the *mārigeta* (chant leader) at the St. Georgis Church. His knowledge of genealogy and socio-economic status was very high. He claimed more *rist* in the surrounding *kābāle* that was not his father's holding but his grand father's holding. As a result of his successful claim, he doubled his holdings in the early 1970s.

Worku [case 12] is one of the rich peasants in the *kābāle* who did not have political power as well as a high social status. Thus, he was not able to press successful claims, although he knows the genealogy. Therefore, he brought the cases to the regular court because he could afford to handle the court cases. Thus, he won court cases and increased his holdings by using his economic potential.

Hence, access to more *rist* land is determined by socio-economic as well as political statuses of the individual. Access to more *rist* land was also related with socio-economic status; and usually, land rich peasants had higher socio-economic status. Thus, land meant everything for the peasants at that time. It was the basis of their livelihood, socio-economic status, identity and so on. The person who defended his parents' *rist* and successfully claimed his grand father's *rist* was highly respected within the community. This is well expressed by the Amharic saying "*yä-abbatin motun aywāddu ristun aysāddu*" (lit. No one likes the death of his father and the loss of his father's *rist*).

Rist was not subjected to sale in Wonqa, because it was considered as *dām ena at'nt* (lit. the blood and bone) of one's great grand parents. The sell of *rist* was considered as selling the *dām ena at'nt* of his great grand parents. Therefore, no case is known in the community of anyone who sold his *rist* before the 1975 Land Reform.

3.2. Land Distribution during the Därg Period

3.2.1. The Feeling of the People about the Land Reform

During the eruption of the February 1974 Revolution, there was a student movement at Debre Markos. The community in Wonqa was well aware of the movement, which they learned when they went to Debre Markos and from their sons and daughters who attended high school at Debre Markos. One of the slogans of the student movement was directed against the Orthodox Church Bishop. Thus, the peasants had a negative attitude towards the student movement because they considered it as an opposition to the age-long religion.

When the men-in-uniforms deposed the Emperor in September 1974, the peasants of Wonqa did not expect the *Därg* in power too last long. This was due to the long established tradition of monarchical rule as well as the resistance movement against the revolution in the region. The feeling of the peasants was more or less the same until March 1975.

In March 1975 the Provisional Military Government (*Därg*) proclaimed "Public Ownership of Rural Land". According to Art. 3 of this proclamation, land became the "property of the Ethiopian people." At this moment, the feeling was mixed among the peasants of Wonqa. Those land rich peasants continued to believe that all the changes were a temporary situation. They even believed that God may take revenge on the revolutionaries for their sins of destroying the age long tradition of the country.

On the other hand, those handicraft workers and tenants who were engaged in sharecropping agreements with the land rich peasants welcomed the proclamation, because it gave them "equal" access to land with the *balabats*. Moreover, they hoped that their socio-economic status would improve in relation with their "equal" access to land with the *balabats*. Soon landless tenants obtained possessor rights over the land they tilled. Besides, those tenants who had been using the oxen of the land rich to plough the land of the land rich refused to return the oxen.

However, most of the peasant who cultivated their own *rist* felt that the reform did not bring a radical change in their holding. Those who had unresolved land cases in the regular court had mixed feelings depending on their advantage and disadvantage due to the freezing of all land cases.

Hence, the feeling of the people between the proclamation and the implementation of the 1975 Land Reform was so mixed depending on the

individual interests of household heads. Most of the peasants who cultivate their *rist* were neither in favour nor against, they wanted to see the implementation.

3.2.2. The First Distribution

According to proclamation, No. 31/1975 the Peasant Association (PA) was formed to implement the proclamation. At Wonqa the peasant association was established in July 1976 to replace the former Imperial structure when the first seven committee members were elected under the chairmanship of workers from the Ministry of Land Reform and the *Därg* political cadres. Meanwhile the student *zämach* (campaigners) were preoccupied in organizing the lowest structure at Debre Markos.

The newly elected PA committee approved the land holdings, which had already been under the control of the tenants and gave free land that were under the cultivation of non-residents of the *käbäle* (Amh. *mofär zämät*) to the landless and land short tenants. Furthermore, they were preoccupied with assessing to know the amount and type of land as well as the size of each household within the *käbäle*. In 1978 the PA committee presented the result of the study which shows the amount and type of land as well as the size of four hundreds households. Then, they proposed the amount of land to be allocated for each household and its members. Household heads approved the proposal at a daylong meeting.

To implement the proposal, committee members (most of them, including the chairman, were land rich) started to take extra land from the land rich peasants

and handed it to the landless and land-short peasants. However, the land rich peasants had the right to select the best land of the proposed amount. According to my informants, the first committee members were highly corrupted. They gave more than the proposed amount of land to the rich peasants. Furthermore, they reserved more and best land for each member of the committee.

Therefore, the people of the *kābāle* appealed to the *wäräda* PA. As a result the first committee was dissolved in July 1978 and a new committee of fifteen members (with a similar background with the first committee members) was set up. The first duty of the new committee was to hear all the complaints and adjust all the mess by reshuffling. Therefore, they re-measured the holdings of the former committee members and took back the illegally appropriated land. Thus, the distribution continued up to early 1979.

It is difficult to say there was equal access to all kinds of land for each household in this distribution. Still the distribution was in favour of the land rich. The former tenants and handicraft workers got less fertile land. Moreover, most of the peasants continued to cultivate their *rist*. This situation continued for the following four years.

3.2.3. *Sir Nāqāl Distribution*

In 1983, a new directive came out to distribute land equally based on the size of the household. At Tawa of Southeast Wollo and Wayu of North Shewa 1 *t'imad* (0.25 hectare) of land was allocated to each household member in the 1976-77

distribution (Teferi, 1995). However, the way of implementation was different in the case of Wonqa. The second committee revised the 1976-78 survey and classified the types of land based on its fertility. In addition, they limited the amount of land each household should acquire, based on the following proposal (see table 4). The proposal was approved by the general assembly of PA in Wonqa after two days lengthy discussion.

Table 4: Distribution of Land among Households by Type and Size in the 1983 Distribution

Types of Land	Amount Per Household			Remark
	In <i>Kind</i> *	In <i>Gämäds</i> **	Hectares	
<i>Gwaro</i> (homestead)	100 x 200	2	0.50	Fertile
<i>Bonda</i> (category of less fertile land)	100 x 300	3	0.75	Less fertile
<i>Ambazure</i> (around the village)	50 x 200	1	0.25	Fertile
<i>Däbay</i> (black soil)	50 x 300	1.5	0.375	Fertile
<i>Betäsäb</i> ***	n**** x10x200			Medium

Source: Compiled from field data (2002).

- * *Kind* (arm) is usually about 50 centimeters. They could select one individual whose arm is longer or measure in meters.
- ** *Gämäd* (rope) is 100 *kind* x 100 *kind* or 50m x 50m = 0.25 hectare. *Gämäd* also refer as *t'imad*. *T'imad* is also a unite of land measurement, which could be ploughed by an individual within a day, with a pair of oxen.
- *** The peasants refer this category of land, which allotted for household members as *betäsäb*, does not show the category of land in terms of fertility.
- **** n = Number of household members.

Based on the proposal every household could get access from all categories of land. The only difference was on the land assigned for each *betäsäb*. For instance, if a household had five members (which is the average household size) it could obtain $5 \times 10 \times 200 \text{ kind} = 50 \times 200 \text{ kind}$ or 1 *t'imad* (0.25 hectare) from the land which was reserved for household members. Therefore, the average household could obtain 8.5 *t'imads* (2.125 hectares) of land from the five categories. This gave more land to the household rather than household members unlike the two cases mentioned above (Tawa and Wayu) (Teferi, 1995).

Besides, the community also agreed on the distribution of farm and grazing lands based on *got's* since the type of land is the same. This could help to avoid unnecessary labour wastage. The distribution started from the extreme east then the extreme west and finally the central part of the *kābāle*.

Land measurement was started from the homestead to incorporate extra land into the farmland. This gave a chance for the continuity of the homestead on the *rist* land. However, the remaining categories were distributed based on lots. That is why they called it *et'a māret* (lit. lot land). The lots were pieces of paper on which was written the name(s) of the former holder(s). In such process, everybody lost his *rist*. That is why they called the 1983 distribution *sir nāqāle* (lit. uprooted; at that time the word was popular to refer basic, fundamental or revolutionary changes) distribution, which uprooted everybody from age-long holdings of his ancestors. This was a challenge to the *rist* system eight years after the land reform.

This distribution was not free from limitations. The first limitation was the survey, which was based on the 1976-78 survey. Population growth and the established new households were not properly considered in the revised survey. Thus, the committee faced a shortage of land. To overcome this limitation the committee decided to allot grazing areas as farmland for the newly established households. The second limitation was the absence of clear directives and guidelines as well as appropriate training to implement the proclamation. To overcome this limitation, committee members used their experience about how *rist* land was divided among the children when parents died.

However, compared to the first distribution the 1983 distribution was fair and equitable, which attempted to allow every household to have equal access (except for the difference in size of the *betäsäb* plot) to all categories of land. My informants expressed the view that this distribution was real implementation of "land to the tiller" in which every household had 'equal' access.

Nevertheless, this equitability was challenged later by various events. The first phenomenon was that the government needed more than 140 hectares of land, which was under cultivation of Qechen Weniz and Deber *got's*, for afforestation programme. As a result, those households in the above two *got's* lost 100 x 300 *kind* *bonda* land. To balance the loss the committee redistributed the *bonda* lands of other *got's* to compensate for the loss in the above to *got's*. Thus, the size of *bonda* land was reduced from 100 x 300 *kind* to 50 x 300 *kind*. Every household lost 1.5 *t'imads* of *bonda* land and the average plot size became 7 *t'imads* per

household. However, some argued that the reduction was not applicable to all households.

Villagization, which was conducted in 1984-5, was the second factor to disturb the 1983 distribution. Village sites were selected by taking into consideration the area where a relatively dense cluster of houses were found and areas which were accessible to water and the main road. Generally, favourable areas for future infra-structural development were selected as village sites. Then 50 x 80 *kind* (0.10 hectare) land was given to each household. The households that possessed land in the area selected for village site could get the equivalent amount of land from the homestead of a person who settled on the plot. Though the household head obtained the equivalent amount and better quality of land from the homesteads, his land became highly fragmented due to the division of his plot among a number of households.

The villagization programme was implemented without the will of the community. This was mainly due to traditional attachment in which his and/or his children's *etibt* (umbilical cord) was buried. This was also the last *rist*, which was not affected by the previous distribution. Moreover, it was a challenge to the traditional patrilocal settlement pattern in which usually patriarchal kin settled together. Economically, it was costly in terms of labour and capital to demolish the old house and establish the new one. Besides, considerable households lost permeable plants. At that time, most of the peasants were not convinced about the

socio-economic importance of the programme. Rather the security and political reasons were emphasized.

When the mixed economy was proclaimed, in March 1990, the peasants applied to the government to return to their original homesteads. The government gave permission for those households who needed to return to their former homestead. However, this was possible only with the agreement of the household head that ploughed the former homestead. Most of them agreed to re-exchange plots. Some refused to exchange the homestead due to its fertility. Thus, the former owners of the homestead had to add some money to re-exchange the land. Those who liked the new village due to various reasons, especially most of the peasants who get access to irrigated water in Deber *got'*, continued to live there.

The third challenge to the 1983 equitable distribution was the establishment of producers' cooperative. Producers' cooperative was a very slow process in Wonqa, and was established in 1986 with twelve members. Maseret [case 10] was the first chairman. Most of the members were poor, and did not have even a pair of oxen. After a year or two, all PA committee members were forced to join the producers' cooperative to strengthen the cooperative especially with capital. If a member had pairs of oxen, he had to contribute a pair of oxen to the cooperative and all the oxen were herded together. If he had more than a pair of oxen, he could rent out the rest. Besides, every member was obliged to contribute his and his wife's labour. According to their regulation, child labour was excluded from production.

In terms of land access, members of the producers' cooperative had exclusive rights to select a site, which was favourable to their farm. They obtained more and best land compared to other peasants. Hence, considerable number of households lost their plot in favour of the government-backed producer cooperative members. The losers obtained a lesser amount and quality of land, from the cooperative members and *yāmotā kāda* (land of deceased and those individuals who left the area). Unlike villagization, this exchange was unbalanced, and favoured the members of producers' co-operative. Some former PA officials tried to justify this inequitable access as a strategy to motivate non-members to join the producers' cooperative. However, it was not a successful strategy.

Due to the extraordinary access to land, shortage of capital (oxen) and inappropriate utilization of household labour resources of the members, producers' cooperative members were not able to cultivate the whole plots. Thus, since all PA committee members were members of the producers' cooperative, they forced other household heads along with their oxen to work a day or two on the plots of the producers' cooperative in times of ploughing, sowing, weeding and harvesting.

This situation continued up to the end of 1990. At this time, government officials summoned members of producers' cooperatives at Debre Markos and told them that as it is a time of mixed economy, every farmer could cultivate individually or cooperatively. "You could continue your producers' cooperative but not at the expense of others' land, labour and capital. It is possible only on your individual

plots." Thus, producers' cooperatives practically failed at this meeting because they could not continue without any advantage and government support. Thus, every member agreed to dissolve the producers' cooperative after the division of the annual production.

When the result of the meeting at Debre Markos was heard, those who lost their land in favour of producers' cooperatives rushed and started to plough their farmland before the produce of the producers' cooperative members were properly harvested. Elders were elected to settle the matter peacefully. Finally, producers' cooperative members apologized to the community and the land was re-exchanged based on the 1983 distribution. The oxen of the producers' cooperative members started to be herded together with those of the other peasants. They also started to join *wonfāl* and other working parties. Subsequently the EPRDF force controlled the area, in March 1991.

3.3. Land Distribution under the EPRDF

One of the first challenges to the new EPRDF government was the rehabilitation of the ex-soldiers. When the EPRDF demobilized soldiers of the *Därg* army, more than twenty ex-soldiers returned to Wonqa and they applied to obtain access to farmland. However, there was no land to be allotted. Thus, with the decision of the EPRDF officials, the landholdings of the so-called party and security members of the *Därg* regime were reduced by half. Besides, the lands of *yāmotä kāda* were incorporated. Still the land was not enough to allot two *t'imads* (0.5 hectare) for each of the ex-soldiers, so the *kābāle* committee finally decided to take one *t'imad*

from each maximum holder of the close relatives of ex-soldiers. This was mainly to avoid conflict. As a result ex-soldiers started to cultivate their small plot for their household livelihood.

Like the feelings of the people when the 1975 Land Reform was proclaimed, there were mixed feelings in the early years of the EPRDF administration. Newly established households since the mid-1980s did not obtained land. The newly-elected *kābāle* committee, who were young and poor, soon bought oxen due to credit facilities provided by the ruling party, and needed more land. Generally, these sections of the society wanted the redistribution of land.

On the other hand, those maximum holders were against any kind of land redistribution. Even most peasants, who obtained access in the normal 1983 distribution, did not want further re-division because they expected reduction of their holdings due to population growth and the newly established households. Thus, the feelings of the people were mixed depending on the interests of each household head.

The council of the Amhara Regional State passed a reallocation proclamation (Proclamation No. 16/1996) in November 1996 at its first special session. The proclamation was amended (Proclamation No. 17/1997) in February 1997. The provision of the proclamation was applied to the areas 'freed' from the *Därg* regime after 1991. Land was distributed in areas like Tigray, which was under the control of the EPRDF even during the period of the armed struggle. The TPLF-

EPRDF used land distribution in Tigray as a political instrument to gain support and to continue the armed struggle (Tsegay, 2002).

The second part of the proclamation No. 16/1996 stated reasons regarding the implementation of the reallocation. By the end of 1996, loyal political cadres were selected from the *wärādas* and *kābāles* of the zone and trained for five days at Debre Markos. Similar kinds of training sessions were held in Wollo (Teferi, 2000) and North Shewa (Ege, 1997). In this training, the guidelines to implement the proclamation were discussed; criteria were set-up for the election of different committee members at the *kābāle* level to implement the reallocation. Besides, committees were set up at the *wärāda* and zonal level to follow up the implementation of the proclamation. All necessary preparations, including disarmament of the so-called "bureaucrats" and "*k'irit feudals*" (feudal remnants), were conducted to implement the proclamation. The regional state also notified all political cadres to keep an eye on the activities of the so-called "bureaucrats" and "*k'irit feudals*" during the implementation of the proclamation (*Mahitot*, No. 101, 1997).

Then committee members were elected at the *kābāle* level at the beginning of January 1997. The major criterion, which is not stated at the proclamation, to be a member of the committee was non-participation in any committee during the *Därg* period (Amha. *yaltänäkaka*). This is mainly to exclude the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants". Although the proclamation stated the land possession verifying committee and family size verifying committee as two different

committees, twenty-one committee members who represented all *got's* were elected as a verifying committee. After the election, the committee stood before the community to take an oath. First, they crossed over firearms, and then in the presence of religious leaders, promised not to favour any one and to implement the proclamation 'fairly'.

On the following day, they held a meeting at the compound of the service co-operative where they oriented by political cadres from the *wäräda* how to implement the proclamation. Moreover, like the case of West Gojjam (Yigremew, 1997), the committee members were excluded from the public starting from that day. They were ordered to spend the day and night at the service cooperative compound, which was guarded by militia. The community grouped based on *got's* to feed the committee members. However, in the case of Aba Sälama of Wollo there was a possibility for household heads to influence the committee in the process of classification (Teferi, 2000).

The committee members were divided into three sub-committees according to their *got'*. Every sub-committee had a chairperson and secretary. The major duty of the committee was to register the landholdings and the family size of every household. The land holdings of each household was estimated with the consensus of the sub-committee and approved by the main committee. The major reason why the committee did not measure land was to avoid unnecessary conflict. However, some argued that it was simply to favour some and take revenge on others. In this process, some members of the committee tried to

defend their relatives' possessions and underestimated specially the holdings of those peasants who possess more than 12 *t'imads*. In the case of Aba Sälama of Wollo, 24 farmers were selected to work in "household's registration" and "land holding verification" committees. The "land holding verification" committee was able to measure the size of each household plots (Teferi, 2000).

In Wonqa, every sub-committee was pre-occupied with registration of landholdings and the size of every household during the day. Then the results of sub-committee were evaluated at night by the main committee. Committee members were also evaluated and criticized. Besides, political cadres gave political orientation at night. Moreover, the committee was supervised by party officials from the *wäräda* as well as the zone.

This condition continued for three weeks, and by the end of the third week, the committee had registered all the landholdings as well as the size of every household within Wonqa. Then the results of the committee were reported to the household heads in Wonqa. At a day long meeting the household heads discussed about the report, evaluated the activities of each member of the committee and deposed those members who tried to underestimate their relatives' holdings and tried to take plots for themselves. On the same day, a *dälday* (reallotting) committee was elected, with the pervious criteria. Most of them were the former verifying committee members. Like the previous committee members, they took an oath before the public. They were also oriented and isolated.

The first task of the reallothing committee was to screen the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants" as well as those rich peasants who had more than 12 *t'imads* of land. The screening was first proposed by the sub-committee and approved by the main committee. The committee, based on the guideline, categorized all individuals who worked in any committee during the *Därg* period regardless of the duration and the 'crime' they committed as "bureaucrats". The case of Alemu [case 13], Leku [case 2] and the husband of Enatalem [case 3] are examples of household heads categorized as "bureaucrats".

Alemu [case 13] is about 65 and resident of Galloch *got'*. He attends church education; he finished *dawit* (read psalms of David). He married at the age of 20. When the PA was established in Wonqa his father was elected as the first chairman of the PA. Alemu's father worked during the first land distribution in 1978 however the first committee was deposed by accusation of corruption. In the second PA election, Alemu was elected as vice-chairman. Alemu was involved in the 1979 distribution and re-adjustment. He was also actively involved in the 1983 distribution. He obtained 12 *t'imads*, from the five categories, which was higher compared to others. According to Alemu, this was done by the committee.

Alemu was forced by the political cadres to join the producers' co-operative in 1989 though he needed to continue to plough his land with his oxen, since he was strong to plough his land effectively. When he joined the cooperative, he contributed a pair of oxen. However, his income was reduced dramatically compared to his income when he was an individual farmer. He needed to withdraw but he might lose all his land and his pair of oxen. Thus, he continued for two harvests. When the producers' co-operative failed in 1991, Alemu got his former 12 *t'imads* of land through the negotiation of the local elders. Then after a month, there was a general election for PA and he was deposed from his post that he held since 1979. Then the EPRDF controlled the area in March 1991.

In the 1997 reallocation Alemu was categorized as a "bureaucrat" and lost 8 *t'imads* of land and his holdings were reduced to 4 *t'imads*, though he has 10 household members. Alemu argued that he served the community for more than 12 years honestly and loyally. Moreover, he is proud of the 1983 fair distribution of land. Furthermore, one of his sons, although he has married and established a household, did not obtain land in the 1997 reallocation because he was also labeled as the son of

a "bureaucrat". Thus, the land is not enough to feed Alemu's household members. So he engaged in sharecropping agreements in which he has 6 *t'imads* with different individuals and he paid about 10 quintals of grain annually as payment for the sharecropped land.

The second example is Leku [case 2]. Leku is a 92 year old household head who resides in Deber *got'*. He got married at the age of 34. In 1951 he joined the Ministry of Education as a teacher with his church education. He taught *fidäl* (Amharic alphabets) for a monthly salary of 30 *Birr*. In 1952 when a school was opened in Wonqa, he was transferred to Wonqa to run the new elementary school. Then he retired in 1975 with 63 *Birr* pension allowance. In the same year, due to the 1975 Land Reform, Leku lost all his land outside Wonqa. When the PA was established in Wonqa Leku became a member of the *fird shängo* (judicial tribunal) of the *käbäle* and subsequently elected as chairman of Gozamin *Wäräda* Peasant Association, in which he worked for about two years. According to Leku, he did not get any additional land when he was a chairman of the *Wäräda* PA. However, some argued that he obtained 11 *t'imads* for 11 household members while most of his children left home and became government employee. Other retired individuals in Wonqa did not obtain farmland; thus, he used his political position to get more farmland.

During the 1997 reallocation Leku was categorized as a "bureaucrat" and lost more than half of his holdings. The committee gave him a chance to select the best land up to 4 *t'imads*. Leku argued that it is unfair to give 12 *t'imads* to other and limit him to 4 *t'imads*. Even if they did wrong, the case could to be handled in a regular court. So he concluded that this is purely revenge.

The third example is Enatalem [case 3]. Enatalem is 45 and a resident of Aboyen *got'*. When Enatalem establish a new household in 1981 with her fourth husband, they had a pair of oxen. They cultivate her parents' plot and got 1/2 of the produce. When land was distributed in 1983, they obtain 3 *t'imads* of land because the household was newly established but later got an additional five *t'imads* from *yämotä käda*. During the *Därg* period, Enatalem's husband was one of the announcers in the *käbäle* for the contribution of *enjära* (bread) for 'the call of mother land' at the time of the war. Thus in the 1997 reallocation Enatalem's husband was categorized as a "bureaucrat" and his landholdings were reduced to 4 *t'imads* including his homestead. This made him extremely angry. Subsequently he became ill and died in September 2001.

In such ways, 105 (9.66% of the total) household heads were categorized as "bureaucrats".

On the other hand those individuals, who worked as *at'biya dagna*, *chika shum* and *näch läbash* (militia) during the period of Haile Sellassie I, were categorized as "*k'irit feudals*" (feudal remnants). Dagne [case 6] and Asnake [case 1] are examples of household heads categorized as "*k'irit feudals*".

Dagne is a 92 year old household head and resident of Daber *got'*. Dagne worked as *chik'a shum* for 6 years and *at'ibia dagna* for 4 years. He was the last *at'ibia dagna* in Wonqa before the establishment of the Peasant Association. When the land reform was introduced, first he lost more than 10 *t'imads* of his *rist* in other *käbäles* because the proclamation prohibited *mofär zämät*. Second, Dagne lost about 2 *t'imads* of land during the 1978-9 distribution from the remaining 13 *t'imads* in Wonqa. In the 1983 distribution, he lost his *rist* and got about 8 *t'imads*.

Then in the 1997 reallocation Dagne was classified as 'feudal remnant' and his holding was reduced by half and limited to 4 *t'imads* including his homestead. Dagne accepted the loss during the *Därg* period; however, he felt that the loss in 1997 was unacceptable, unfair and illogical for him because he already lost most of his holdings due to the 1975 proclamation.

The second example is Asnake [case 1]. Asnake is an 85 year old household head who resides in Deber *got'*. Asnake was a *näch läbash* (militia) in Wonqa. Due to his behaviour and effort he was promoted up to captain, and then he became the vice-*misläne* (governor) of Machekel *Wäräda* with this he increased his landholdings from 30 *t'imads* to 40 *t'imads* through successful claims.

When the *Därg* government came to power in 1974, Asnake was not confident about his position. However, due to his hard work and 'diplomatic' approach he continued to work with the *Därg* government as vice-*wäräda* administrator in Machakel and Gozamin *Wärädas*. When land to the tiller was proclaimed in 1975, Asnake had 40 *t'imads* of land in various areas. He lost more than half of his holdings specially, that was found in other *Käbäles* and only 11 *t'imads* had left in Wonqa. In Wonqa his tenant took the land as well as two pairs of oxen based on the proclamation. However, through the negotiation of the elders the tenant returned two oxen and paid the price of the other two within three years.

Nevertheless, Asnake's 11 *t'imads rist* in Wonqa remain under his holding. Moreover, in the 1983 distribution he obtained 11 *t'imads* of

land, as a farming household head though he was a government employee. Asnake retired from government service in 1987 with 80 *Birr* pension allowance per month. In the 1997 reallocation, Asnake was classified as "*k'irit feudal*" (feudal remnant) and "bureaucrat". Because he worked in the period of Haile Selassie I and the *Därg* as vice-*wäräda* administrator as well he held more than 40 *t'imads rist*. Therefore, his holdings were reduced from 11 *t'imads* to 4 *t'imads*.

Asnake's son, who was married at the time of the 1997 reallocation, applied for farmland like other newly established household heads. However, Asnake's son was classified as the son of a "feudal remnant", so he got nothing. Besides, Asnake's daughter married a landless man whose father has not enough plots to give for his son even for a homestead. Therefore, Asnake gave one *t'imad* to his son and daughter to construct their houses. The remaining two *t'imads* (0.5 hectare) of land is cultivated by his son. Besides, Asnake was forced to engage in a sharecrop agreement.

By now, Asnake is in his old age with poverty in relation to the golden days of his youth and middle age. His access to land was reduced gradually from 40 *t'imads* to 4 *t'imads* in 1997. Now Asnake the former land rich became *tätämaj* (sharecropper). Asnake conclude the interview by saying, "*gizew yä-setägna adari ena yä-shämane nāw*" (lit: now it is the time of female household heads and weavers).

In general, 12 (1.10% of the total) household heads were categorized as "*kirit feudals*".

The third category, to which the committee and political cadres gave less attention, was rich peasants who possess more than 12 *t'imads* of land. Although some argue that there are individuals who hold 14 and 16 *t'imads* of land, the committee was able to identify only two individuals who possesses 12.5 and 13 *t'imads*. This suggests that there was under estimation of holdings by the verifying committee. This was also the case in Aba Sälama of Wollo (Teferi, 2000). The same was true in North Shewa (Ege, 1997).

After the screening and categorizations of the so-called "bureaucrats", "*kirit feudals*" and rich peasants, the committee reduced the holdings of the "bureaucrats" and "*kirit feudals*" to 4 *t'imads* (1 hectare) and the rich peasants to 12 *t'imads* (3 hectares). This was done with the guidance of political cadres. The calculation to know how many *t'imads* of land should be taken from these two main categories had taken about two weeks.

Then, after they finished all the paper work, measuring the plots was started with the militia guards. Those who were categorized as "bureaucrats" and "*kirit feudals*" were allowed to select 4 *t'imads* of the best land (including homestead) from their holdings. Generally they lost more than half of their holdings (their average holding was 8.5 *t'imads*). Those who had more than 12 *t'imads* lost 2/3 of their holdings, which was a great loss for a farming household. A total of 531.5 *t'imads* of land were confiscated from these categories. The land that was taken from the rich peasants was less than 2 *t'imads*, which was insignificant and the loss for the households was minimal.

The next step was how to reallocate the confiscated land. The guideline outlines seven categories in terms of priority based on economic status and household size. However, the reallocation committee, with the guidance of the political cadres, categorized household heads into three in terms of priority.

1. Female household heads, who did not get access to farmland.

2. Newly established household heads that did not get access to land (non-"bureaucrats" and "k'irit feudals" children). However, the president of the regional state argued that the children of the so-called "bureaucrats" and "k'irit feudals" had equal access with others (Mahtot, No. 115, 1997).
3. Newly established household heads of "bureaucrats" and "k'irit feudals" children, who did not get access to land. The category and order of priority had a political perspective.

Table 5: Reallotted Land in the 1997 Distribution by Size of Land and Sex

Sex	Reallotted Land in <i>T'imad</i>									Total
	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	
Male	6	13	26	38	21	19	5	4	1	133
Female	8	27	53	51	4	5	1	3	-	152
Total	14	40	59	89	25	24	6	7	1	285

Source: Gozamin *Wārāda* Administration Office (2002).

As Yared put it, in the case of Talak Amba of North Shewa "... a single claimant received up to 2 *gemed*, a couple up to 4 *gemed*, households who had 3 to 4 members received only up to 5 *gemed*, and households who had 5 or more members received upto 8 *gemed*" (Yared, 2002). According to the guideline, two *t'imads* (0.5 hectare) should be the minimum size in the reallotment. The reallotting committee in Wonqa also planned to allot four *t'imads* of land to the female headed and newly established households which had more than four household members. The rest, who had less than four household members, are expected to get two *t'imads*. However, practically the committee allotted from 0.5 *t'imad* to 4.5 *t'imads*. This was, according to the committee, due to inconvenience

of the size and quality of the land confiscated from different individuals. In the end, 152 (53.33%) female-headed and 133 (46.67%) newly established household heads (a total of 285 household heads) got access to land at an average of 1.89 *t'imads*. However, most of them complain about the fertility and the size of the plots. In the case of West Gojjam from 306 female-headed household applicants only 199 (65%) and from 469 newly established household heads applicants 325 (69%) got access to land in the 1997 reallocation (Yigremew, 1997).

On the other hand, thirty-five newly established household heads, most of them children of the so-called, "bureaucrats" and "*k'irit feudals*", got nothing due to the shortage of land. The committee argued that the shortage was due to the existence of government forests in the *kābāle*. Thus, the *kābāle* administrative committee appealed to the zone administration to give farmland to the thirty-five household heads from the forest area. However, the zone administration handed over the forest to the community. Nevertheless, no single plot has been given to the landless households. Those thirty-five household heads remained landless. That is why some, like Asnake [case 1] and Alemu [case 13], expressed the situation as a double loss for the "bureaucrats" and "*k'irit feudals*".

The whole process of the reallocation took more than a month. According to the proclamation, a grievance hearing committee was set up to render its decision within a period of three weeks on those cases which appeal to the committee within a week right after the completion of the reallocation activity (Proclamation No. 17/1997). However, political cadres ordered the committee not to reverse the

decision of the reallothing committee in any case. As a result, the grievance hearing committee dissolved soon without considering a single case. Ege (1997) observed a similar case in North Shewa.

Therefore, those people who were negatively affected in the process of the 1997 reallothing appealed to the *wäräda* and zone administration. However, the *wäräda* and zone officials failed to respond to their appeal. As a result they went to Bahir Dar to seek justice. Nevertheless, according to my informants the regional state did not respond to the appeal properly. Finally, they came to Addis Ababa to appeal to the federal government. The federal government responded to the case simply by saying it is a regional state issue, and that the federal government should respect the decision of the regional state. One of my informants expresses this situation as "*kä and amlak bästäkär hullu and honäbin*" (lit. except God all of them are united against us i.e. the victims). On March 21, 1997, Addis Ababa University students went on demonstration against the 1997 reallocation; as a result 250 of them were imprisoned (*Tobia*, No. 12; 13, 1997). The Regional State President described the actions of student movement as "amazing and shameful" (*Bekur*, No. 18, 1997).

After the end of the 1997 reallocation, the federal government passed a proclamation of Rural Land Administration in 1997. In this proclamation, "Land is a communal property of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia and shall not be subjected to sale or other means of exchange" (Proclamation No 89/1997). It is also stated in the 1995 constitution (Yigremew, 2001). There are some

elements, which tried to justify the 1997 reallocation; for instance, the proclamation stated that the regional council should decide further distribution.

In general the 1997 reallocation process had the following limitations:-

1. Unlike the case of Aba Salsma of Wollo (Teferi, 2000), the land of households was not measured rather estimated, which was a loophole to underestimate the holdings of some household heads.
2. Like the case of North Shewa, Wollo and West Gojjam (Ege, 1997; Teferi, 2000; Yigremew, 1997), the categorization of "bureaucrats" was too general. It did not identify those who committed crimes and took extra land by misusing their political position. The duration as well as the type of the committee in which an individual served was not considered.
3. The reallocation did not consider the reality at the local levels. For instance, the so-called 'bureaucrats' and "*k'irit feudals*" obtained less than the average holding, regardless of their family size. The regional state president argued that, it is more than the national average; according on his data the national average was 0.6 hectare (*Mahatut*, No. 115, 1997). However, the CSA data shows the national average is 0.98 hectare per household (CSA, 1998).
4. As Yigremew (1997) observed in West Gojjam, the so-called "*k'irit feudals*" had already lost their large holdings especially in the 1983 *sir näqel* distribution. Thus, it was unfair and illogical to reduce their holdings, which they obtained in the 1983 distribution.
5. The categorization has implications beyond the generation of "bureaucrats" and "*k'irit feudals*" to their children who were categorized at the bottom in the

list of priority of the reallocation. Teferi (2000) observed a similar list of priority in Wollo.

Generally, the 1996 proclamation and the 1997 reallocation were used more for political purposes rather than economic ones (Ege, 1997; Teferi, 2000; Yigremew, 1997), though it reduced the extent of landlessness. It was used to weaken potential enemies. Therefore, the current land holding looks as follow:

Table 6: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Households by Size of Land Obtained after the 1997 Land Redistribution

Land Size		Households		
In <i>T'imad</i>	In Hectares	Frequency	Percent	Commulative Percentage
None	—	72	6.62	6.62
0.5 - 2	0.12 - 0.5	172	15.82	22.44
3 - 4	0.75 - 1.0	376	34.59	57.03
5 - 6	1.25 - 1.5	154	14.17	71.20
7 - 8	1.75 - 2.0	159	14.63	85.83
9 - 10	2.25 - 2.5	119	10.95	96.78
11 - 12	2.75 - 3.0	35	3.22	100
Total		1087	100	

Source: Compiled from *kābāle* records (2002).

According to this data, the average plot size is 4.68 *t'imads* (1.17 hectares) per household. In addition, 50.41 percent of the households possess 4 or less than 4 *t'imads* (1 hectare) of land.

Recently, the regional state has planned to implement a new land use policy issued in 2000. According to Art. 7:2, of proclamation No 49/2000, one could lose

his holding if the land is not properly conserved. The peasants argued that the government officials could interpret this article as they like, thus it could make the peasant insecure. The regional state is also planning to give land certificates to every household head. The policy document shows that the next land redistribution could be after 15 or 20 years with the consent of the people (*Zikre Hig*, No. 49/2000; *Yä-gät'är Limat Policy*, 2001).

Those household heads that had lost land in the 1997 reallocation argued that before the implementation of the new policy there must be redivision of land to correct the unfair allotment of 1997. If not, the implication of the 1997 reallocation will be far reaching beyond the victims' households to their children's households.

3.4. Women's Access to Farmland

Before the 1975 Land Reform, women had equal rights with men to inherit *rist* land. Hence, children could inherit land from their mothers and their fathers. If divorce occurred, the wife could get her *rist* (provided that she had already inherited *rist* from her parents and if it was cultivated by her husband) from her husband without any problem, since her relatives backed her to defend their *rist*. However, practically women's ability to press a successful claim to maximize their *rist* was very low mainly due to their socio-economic status.

According to Art. 4.1, the 1975 proclamation gave equal access to all rural community with no differentiation between the sexes. Furthermore, it protected the interests of women on Art. 22.1 in the following way: "Landless tenants in

rist...areas shall have possessor right over the land they till, provided that the foregoing shall not apply to tenants who have rented the land from a woman with no other adequate means of livelihood..." (Proclamation No. 31/1975).

However, in practice women were at a disadvantage in access to land as well as in decision-making within the household (Dessalegn, 1994; Hanna, 1990; Yared, 1994; 1995). In Wonqa female-headed households did not lose their *rist* in the 1975 Land Reform. The first distribution of 1978-9 did not negatively affect female-headed households. Moreover, in the 1983 *sir nāqāl* distribution female-headed households obtained equal access with male-headed households to all categories of land based on their household size.

Then, after the 1983 distribution every household head that got access to farmland was obliged to pay twenty *Birr* tax and to sell grain to the government owned Agricultural Market Corporation (AMC) at a price fixed by the corporation itself. Most of them were able to pay the tax but not to meet the AMC obligation. Because most female-headed households gave their plots to sharecroppers, their income was relatively low. The *kābāle* committee complained about female household heads' failure to meet the obligation to the AMC. Finally, the *wārāda* and zone officials decided to take all the *bonda* land (1.5 *t'imads*) from all female-headed households including those who meet their obligation. The land was given to the 'strongest' peasants who could meet the obligation of the female-headed households to the AMC. This was the beginning of unequal access to farmland, which related with failure to meet the obligation.

The proclamation did not state about women's access to household farmland in the case of divorce. However, practically women's access to household farmland was determined by the reasons for the divorce. If divorce occurred by the will of the husband, because of illness or if the husband committed adultery that is well known by the community, a woman had the right to get equal access to household farmland. Local elders usually handled the case and the division. In most cases the homestead was reserved for the husband; however, the equivalent size of land from *amba zur* or water-accessed land would be given to the wife as compensation. All the rights to get access in such a way were also secured after a long negotiation. Moreover, a woman could only use the land as long as she continued to live in the *kābāle*. If she left the *kābāle* or remarried outside the *kābāle* the land could be taken by the committee as *yāmotā kāda* land. The land could be given to her ex-husband if he had not already obtained another land. On the other hand, if divorce occurred by the will of the wife or by a reason other than those mentioned above, a woman had no right to get access to the household farmland.

When a husband dies, if the couple had offspring(s), a woman had the right to possess all the plots of the household. If the husband died without offspring, half of the land of the household would be taken by the committee a year after the death of the household head. The widow had the right to use the other half as long as she lived in the *kābāle*. On the other hand, if the wife died with or without having offspring, a husband had the right to possess the entire plots of the household. All these issues, the rights of a woman when divorce or a husband's

death occurred, are not mentioned in the proclamation. This gap was filled by the local community based on their attitude towards women.

Under the EPRDF, especially in the 1997 land reallocation, landless female household heads got top priority. These female household heads are those who came to the *käbäle* after the 1983 distribution due to various reasons mainly by divorce, and started to live with their relatives on their relatives' land. Thus, all the 152 (53.33% of household heads who got access to land in 1997) landless female household heads, who lived five years in the *käbäle*, obtained from 0.5 – 4 *t'imads* of land according to their household size. These female-headed households obtained a total of 253 *t'imads* (47.6%) of the allotted land and an average of 1.66 *t'imads*, which was very low compared to the average of the newly established household heads (2.09 *t'imads*). Based on the data on table 5 above; 57.90% of female-headed households obtained less than two *t'imads*, 33.55% got two *t'imads* and only 8.55% obtained more than two *t'imads*. On the other hand, of the newly established household heads that obtained land in 1997, 33.83% of them got less than two *t'imads*, 28.57% obtained two *t'imads*, and 37.59 % got more than two *t'imads*. Though female household heads got top priority to get access to farmland, in practice they got lesser sizes than the newly established household heads.

Most of the female household heads like Enatalem [case 3] and Bezabish [case 4] gave their land to sharecroppers on the basis of *siso* (one-third) agreements because the land they got is less fertile.

Bezabish is 68 and resident of Deber *got'*. She was married at the age of 14 and went to Dabre Markos, because her husband was working with sewing machine. After a year, the marriage ended in divorce, because she came to Wonqa to defend her mother's *rist* she got around 15 *t'imads* of land. Bezabish has two children from different fathers without a formal marriage.

When land was distributed during the *Därg* period Bezabish was at Debre Markos to start a small-scale business, therefore she lost all the 15 *t'imads* of land. Only the homestead land left because the committee considered her as a merchant not as a farmer. Therefore, she depended on the homestead land by cultivating different plants and vegetables. In addition, she engaged in non-agricultural activities. She was started a small-scale business. Unfortunately, Bezabish's homestead land is near to the Wonqa River, every year the river took part of the homestead soil, and the area became a gorge. In this process, she lost more than 1,000 eucalyptus trees, vegetables and finally her house. So she moved to the house of her daughter.

In the 1997 reallocation, Bezabish obtained 2 *t'imads* of land. The land of Bezabish is infertile and the crops are continually affected by insects. Thus, last year the value of the land was extremely reduced and she was forced to give to a sharecropper at the basis of *erbo* (one-fourth). Thus, she gets only 50 k.g of grain per year. Bezabish complained that the only thing she got from this land is that she became a *gäbar* (taxpayer). During the fieldwork, in 2002, she was selling *tälla*.

This shows that the land, which was allotted to female-headed households, is not enough for household livelihood. Survey results show that of the 29 female household heads 13 (about 45 percent) of them subsidized their household livelihood by engaging in non-agricultural activities like selling *tälla* (local beer), *katikala* (local liquor), cattle dung, firewood etc.

The slight improvement by the EPRDF government is that women could get equal access with men to the household farmland when divorce occurred for any reason. That is why, some argue that, this regulation encourages divorce. On the contrary some women counterargue that divorce is not occurring simply to get

access to land rather it occurs usually due to the men's misbehaviour. In addition, unlike during the *Därg* period, if a husband died without having offspring the land could continue under the control of his wife even if she left the *käbäle*.

Generally, women's access to land was relatively better in the period of Haile Selassie I when they had equal access to inherit *rist* land. During the *Därg* period too, their access was 'equal' at the beginning. Their equal access was challenged after the 1983 *sir näqäl* distribution. Under the period of the EPRDF, things have slightly changed specially concerning women's access to homestead farmland at the time of divorce or a husband's death. It is difficult to conclude that all female household heads are at disadvantage; there are maximum (12 *t'imads*) holder female household heads who continue to possess the entire land of the household after the death of their husband. However, it is safe to say that almost all get access to farmland and yet they are at disadvantage to get equal access in terms of size and quality of land.

3.5. Different Strategies to Get Access to More Farmland

We have seen above the official distribution in which every household heads were involved. Besides, these distributions, there were different mechanisms to get extra land at different time from different sources. The major sources of land after the 1983 distribution were female-headed households and *yämotä käda*.

The first major source of land, after the 1983 distribution, was female-headed households. As mentioned above, female-headed households were not able to

meet the obligation of the AMC; that is to sell *teff* or oil seeds at a lower price, usually to sell *teff* for forty *Birr* per quintal. That was less than half the market price. As a result they lost the whole *bonda* land, equivalent to 1.5 *t'imads*. The confiscated land was given to the 'strong peasants'. The word 'strong' was not defined. The former PA committee members argued that 'strong' peasants meant not only those who have the potential to work but also those who have enough and strong oxen to cultivate the additional land. However, people argued that the selection of 'strong' peasants was not free from biases. It was determined by a person's relation with the committee and/or the way an individual treats the committee.

The second source was *yāmotā kāda* land. *Yāmotā kāda* land is the land of *yāmotā* (lit. deceased) and *yākāda* (lit. who left the area without notice). There are different conditions how *yāmotā kāda* land was confiscated. As we have seen above, if the husband has died without having offspring, the committee would take half of the holding one year after his death when the annual commemorative feast of the deceased person is completed. Moreover, if both parents had died and all the children have already established their own households and obtained land, the land of the deceased person would be taken by the PA committee after a year. In addition, the PA committee would take the land of a person who left the *kābāle* for various reasons. The only exception was the land of those peasants who joined the army to defend the country, since most of them were forced to join the army.

There are different means to get access to these farmlands. The major ones are:

1. Political Position

Political position was/is one of the means to get access to more farmland. In the first distribution of 1978, the committee members took more land than the others. Besides, they gave more land to those peasants like Leku [case 2] and Asnake [case 1] who worked at the *wäräda* PA and the Machakel *Wäräda* administration respectively. In accordance to the proclamation, all government employees lost their *rist* while Asnake did not due to his political position.

Furthermore some committee members since 1978 had better access to get more land from *yämotä kāda* under the name of 'strong peasant', but not all committee members got access to more land. There were genuine committee members who had equal access as other peasants. As it is mentioned above, the average holding in the 1983 distribution was 8.5 *t'imads*. Then it became 7 *t'imads* after each household lost 1.5 *t'imads* due to the afforestation programme. However, the average plot size of the so-called "bureaucrats" in 1997 was 8.53 *t'imads*, which is 1.5 *t'imads* above the average. Likewise, political position has been used to get more land under the EPRDF. Addis [case 11] increased his holding by means of *diräba* (incorporating additional land to the former holdings) when he was a chairman of the *käbäle* from 1991-2001.

2. To be a Member of the Producers' Cooperative

As we have seen above, to be a member of the producers' cooperative entitled extra privilege to obtain more and best land because it was backed by the

government. Most of my informants agreed that the size of the land, which was allotted for producers' cooperative was almost double that of the other farmers.

3. Capital (in terms of money)

Some rich peasants used their money to acquire more land. In the 1978 distribution, some peasants gave money to committee members so as not to have their land reduced. Thus, when extra land was taken away, the committee did not take all the extra land belonging to those rich peasants 'who have paid for it'. Therefore, only a small piece was taken to show the public that the committee had taken land from the rich peasants. As a result, most land rich peasants retained access more land than the others in the 1978 distribution.

Capital did not matter at the 1983 *sir nāqāl* distribution because it was conducted in a lottery system and it was transparent. However, capital played a significant part after the distribution to get access to the land that was taken away from female-headed households and *yāmotā kāda*. Because there was a loophole to select 'strong' peasants, simply genuine strength did not work, rather strength with bribing worked best to get access to more land. One of the problems of some household heads was how to bribe the committee members, though they could afford to pay.

Some household heads also used their capital to bribe the committee members to possess the land of their deceased parents. The peasant called this practice as *mādārāb* (to add on the former holdings). If a peasant could influence the

committee members with in a year, he could possess his parents' land by categorizing himself as a 'strong' peasant. Even Zelalem [case 14], one of the maximum holders in the *käbäle*, was able to possess the land of a female-headed household, with whom he was engaged in a sharecropping agreement, when she died in the late 1980s.

Zelalem is a 42 year old household head and resident of Aboyen *got'*. He left school at grade 6 and married in 1976 at the age of 16. He lived with the first wife only six months and he stayed with his father for three years. Then he remarried a second wife and established a new household after 4 years with the initial capital of a pair of oxen, two cows and a calf, which he got from his father and his father-in-law.

During the 1983 distribution, Zelalem got only 2 *t'imads* of land. Zelalem strictly followed up the activities of the PA committee. Then he knew that they gave land to his age mates whom married at the same time as him. His age mates had kinsmen within the committee members. Zelalem asked the committee members about the criteria, which differentiate him from his age mates. Thus they gave him 3 *t'imads* of land from *yämotä käda* and his holding became 5 *t'imads*.

Moreover, Zelalem accessed 7 *t'imads* of land through sharecropping with an old nun based on a *siso* agreement. When she died the land was under his control. There was no child to inherit, so the land was considered as *yämotä käda*. However, Zelalem bribed the PA committee members and was categorized as a 'strong' peasant, so they gave all the 7 *t'imads* to Zelalem and his holding became 12 *t'imads*. Soon the EPRDF controlled the area, thus no one asked him about the land. When land was reallocated in 1997, his holding was not exceeding 12 *t'imads*, so the committee verified it as Zelalem's legal holdings and he started to pay 45 *Birr* tax.

There are a number of sayings, which express the relation between access to land and the corresponding amount of money to be paid as bribe. Some of them are:

ባለ መቶ ድበል መሬት ሞልቶ	For a man with hundred (<i>Birr</i>) there is enough fertile land
----------------------	--

ባለ ሃምሳ እንደመረጥክ አንሳ	For a man with fifty take as per your fate
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ባለ መሶብ /10/ ኮሚቴው ይሰብሰብ	For a man with ten let the committee gather
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ባለ ሁሉ /5/
ከሌሎችም ና

For a man with five
come some other day

ባለ ወፍ /1/
እለፍ

For a man with one
just pass by

Capital still works, especially, when the peasants plough pasture land adjacent to his plot.

4. Kinship

Kinship was a means to obtain *rist* through the descent system. When the 1975 Land Reform was introduced, kinship was used as a means to get more access to farmland. In the 1978 distribution, those who had close kinsmen in the committee got more access. In the 1983 distribution, there was no possibility of favouring kinsmen. However, since 1983 kinship was used to get access more land. Some household heads used the combined strategy of bribing other committee members and being backed by his kinsman. Furthermore, people argued that the 1997 allotting committee members clearly favoured their kinsmen. Besides, fictitious kinship (like *abälj* i.e. a relation which establish by being godparent) and friendship were also employed to some extent to get access to more land.

5. Social Status

Using social status as a means to get access to more land is conditioned, since the 1975 Land Reform, by the individual's attitude towards the committee. Social status was used as a means to obtain more land when it is complemented with the individual's pro-committee attitude. If he has a positive attitude towards the committee members, he could get more access, because he is expected to

support committee members in public meetings to influence the community. This was the case of Dagne [case 6] in the 1978 distribution.

Compared to the above four means, social status is conditioned as well as the least important factor to get access to more land since the 1975 Land Reform. Political position, capital and kinship are the top three persistent means to get access to more land within the community of Wonqa.

3.6. *Redivision Within the Household Farmland*

Besides the distribution of land at the community level in which each household could get access based on proclamations and guidelines, there was/is a possibility to get access to farmland through redivision within the household level. These could be done in two ways: inheritance and endowment.

3.6.1. *Inheritance*

Prior to the 1975 Land Reform, inheritance was a major means to get access to *rist*. All children, regardless of sex had equal right to inherit the *rist* of their parents, unless the deceased person favours (Amh. *yāliqina*), one of his son. If he favours one of his children, usually the eldest, the favoured son could get additional land if his father specified the plot. If not, he could get double what the others got. In addition, he could inherit his father's homestead and mule, if there was any. If there was a war, he had to take part by replacing his father. Usually children could inherit their parents' *rist* based on lot, after the 40th day or first year commemorative feast for the deceased person.

When the 1978 Land Reform was proclaimed, those children who lived outside the *kābāle* lost their inheritance right due to the prohibition of *mofār zāmāt*. Then after the 1978-9 distribution, inheritance continued with modified rules. During the *Dārg* period only those children who had not established a household or had not got land, had the right to inherit their parents' holding. The inheritance was possible in-group rather than dividing the plot individually. If all the children of the deceased person had already established a household and got land, the land of the deceased person could be taken after a year as *yāmotā kāda* land. Even in the last case, if one of the children of the deceased could influence the committee members by different mechanisms, he could continue to possess his parents' land. Alternatively, he could at least change his plot with his parents' plot, if the land of his parents was better than his. Therefore, his land could be taken as *yāmotā kāda*.

Proclamation No 49/2000 of the regional state allowed children to inherit the land of their parents whether they obtained land or not. However, the *kābāle* administration took *yāmotā kāda* land and rented it out to the landless household heads in 2000-01. Therefore, the children of deceased persons went to Bahir Dar to appeal to the regional state. The regional state confirmed the right of the children to inherit their parents' land, so the *kābāle* administration returned the land to the children of the deceased persons.

The right to allow children to inherit land is given to the parent. A person even has the right to allow a non-kin individual to inherit his land, if that person supported him at the time of old age or illness. If this situation continues, inheritance will be one of the major means to get access to farmland.

Some peasants argue that this rule is unfair because it gives an opportunity to those landed households to acquire additional land, rather than giving the land to the landless household heads. Moreover, it has negative implications for the children of the so-called "bureaucrats" and "*kirit feudals*", whose parents have lost more than half of their holdings in the 1997 reallocation.

Generally, before the 1975 Land Reform, inheritance was one of a major means of access to *rist*. However, when the 1975 Land Reform was implemented, land inheritance right was limited to those children who did not get land in the normal distribution. Since 2000, any children have the right to inherit their parents' land. Thus, inheritance is being re-instituted as one of a major means to get access to farmland. Compared to the pre-land reform inheritance rule, the only difference since 1975 is that there is no access by claiming descent. Access to land through inheritance is limited at the household level. This has increased competition among siblings to be favoured by their parents to inherit land because the new policy does not allow further fragmentation due to inheritance. This tendency developed patron-client relationship in North Shewa (Teferi, 1995).

3.6.2. Endowment (*Gulima*)

Before the 1975 Land Reform, newly established households of marrying couples usually got cattle and land as endowments from their parents. Usually after two years of marriage, couples could establish their new household on the plot that is given to them by the groom's parent. Besides the land for the homestead, a groom's father is expected to give small plots of farmland as endowments. Small plots of farmland are commonly called as *gulima*. They usually refer the endowment as *māret yikorsilātal* (lit. slicing his land to his son). The size of the endowment land depended on the size of the *rist* as well as the willingness of groom's father.

This tradition has continued to be practiced during the *Dārg* period, because newly established households did not get access to farmland through the *kābāle*. In North Shewa, a boy could obtain his share, from the land allotted to the households at the time of distribution, when he is fifteen as an endowment. The same is true for females who marry within the same *kābāle* (Yared, 1995). The case is slightly different in Wonqa, where land is distributed mainly to households. The parents are expected to give land only to males, as it was before the land reform. However, the nature of endowment is a little bit altered. Prior to the 1975 Land Reform, once the father gave land to his son as endowment he does not want it back. In the *Dārg* period, endowment was and still is temporary. If the son obtains a reasonable sized land from the *kābāle* administration, he has to return the endowment land to his father.

Nowadays endowment is not common due to scarcity of land. Only those household heads that had relatively larger sized plots could give land to the newly established households. Most parents give land only for homestead, and not a farmland. Rather, parents prefer to give oxen to their sons, which enable them to engage in sharecropping agreements. Generally, the nature and the size of the endowment land have changed within a quarter of a century due to land pressure and diminishing plot size per household.

Conclusion

All land distributions since 1975 aimed to establish "equitability". The 1978-9 distribution reduced the gap between the maximum holders and the landless. The 1983 *sir näqäl* distribution almost established equal access to farmland in terms of quality as well as size. Land distributions under the EPRDF were not full scale, rather it targeted against certain sections of the society. In 1992, the holdings of the so-called party and security members of the *Därg* regime were reduced by half and given to the ex-soldiers. Then in the 1997 reallocation, the holdings of the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants" were reduced by more than half and allotted to the female-headed and newly established households.

Thereafter the 1983 equitable distribution, different household heads used different strategies to maximize their landholdings. Of these strategies political position, capital, and kinship are the top three persistent means to get access to more farmland. Thus, equitability started to be challenged. On the other hand, female household heads who got relatively equal access in the first and the 1983

sir nāqāl distributions started to lose part of their holdings in relation with the failure to meet the AMC obligation. Then, all landless female household heads obtained an average of 1.66 *t'imads*, which was less than the average of the newly established household heads (2.09 *t'imads*), in the 1997 reallocation.

Moreover, the change in access to farmland also affected inter- and intra-household relations. The 1978-9 distribution changed the relations between land rich peasants and tenants. Then, the right to get access to more land for the members of the producers' cooperative at the expense of non-members also negatively affected the relations between the members and non-members. The 1997 land reallocation also affected the relations between maximum holders and the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants" by considering the former as government supporters and the latter as opponents. On the other hand, inheritance, which weakened in the *Dārg* period, re-instituted with modified rules as a major means of land access. The re-institution of inheritance also started to affect intra-household relation. Children started to compete with each other to influence their parents in land inheritance. Besides, the nature and size of endowments have changed due to land scarcity.

In general, equitability of land access was implemented gradually 8 years after the 1975 proclamation, in the 1983 *sir nāqāl* distribution, and started to erode since 1983, when household heads used different strategies to maximize their holdings. Access to farmland could affect inter- and intra-household relations positively or negatively depending on its equitability.

CHAPTER IV

LOCAL AGREEMENTS TO GET ACCESS TO FARMLAND

Besides the institutionalized means of getting access to farmland that we have seen in the previous chapter, local agreements are other means to get access to farmland. It is a very important breathing space for the landless and land-short households. The two factors of production (labour and capital) were/are very important to get access to farmland through local agreements. The role and the value of these factors of production vary from time to time along with the varying value of land across time. Thus, an attempt has been made in this chapter to show the nature and development of local agreements in the study area during a quarter of a century.

4.1. Pre-1975 Local Agreements

Prior to the 1975 Land Reform, handicraft workers, land-short *balabats* as well as wealthy peasants who had labour and capital were engaged on tenancy arrangements based on local agreement (Hoben, 1973). In the study area, handicraft workers who were not descended from Jirremin, the *wanna abat* of Wonqa people, did not have access to *rist* land even for a homestead. However, they could get access to homestead land with the agreement of a land rich *balabat* as a reward for their service to make cloth, iron or pottery that was used for the consumption of land rich's household. Other peasants had to pay either in cash or in kind for their service. Besides, they could conclude sharecropping agreements with land rich peasants to produce for subsistence.

The 'land rich' peasants, who gave their land to the sharecroppers, were usually those who held more land, female, aged, ill and unfortunate household heads. Therefore, those household heads who needed farmland could obtain it easily through local agreements, which was locally known as *t'imado* (lit. paired or engagement). In North Shewa it is called *māgazo* (Ege, 1994; Teferi, 1994; Yared, 1999). The agreement was usually verbal in Wonqa. Thus, the two major types of sharecropping agreements, before 1975, were *erbo* and *siso*.

1. *Erbo* (one-fourth): This meant the value of the land is one-fourth of its produce. If the 'land rich' peasant said, "I gave my land to *erbo arash*," it meant that he gave his land to a farmer who agreed to pay one-fourth of the produce of the land as a value of the land. The remaining three-fourths of the produce could be the value of labour and capital (oxen and seed).

2. *Siso* (one-third): This means the 'land rich' could get one-third of the produce of the land as a value of the land and oxen. On the other hand, the *tātāmaj* (sharecropper) could get two-thirds of the produce as a value of his labour. In this case, usually, the 'land rich' contributes land and capital especially oxen and sometime seed, depending on the agreements. The *tātāmaj* could only get access to farmland through his labour. Usually local agreements were *siso* since most of the 'land rich' could afford to provide capital; only a few unfortunate 'land rich' could not afford capital. On the other hand, only few *tātāmajs* those who had enough wealth could afford to provide capital.

Most of my informants agreed that land was not scarce during the period of Haile Selassie I, rather labour was the constraint, thus the value of labour was two-thirds of the produce of the land. Therefore, there was no problem to the *tātāmajs* to get access to farmland through local agreements. On the contrary, it was somewhat hard for the 'land rich' to get strong *tātāmajs*. Thus, some plots were left fallow for a year or two. Generally, this was the nature of the pre-1975 local agreements.

4.2. Local Agreements during the Därg Period

Proclamation No. 31/1975 gave good opportunity to the sharecroppers. According to Art. 22.1 of the proclamation "Landless tenants in *Rist*...areas should have possessor right over the land they till..." Besides, Art. 6.4 stated that, "The tenants shall have the right to retain agricultural implements and a pair of oxen belonging to the land owners for which a reasonable compensation shall be paid to the land owner with a period not exceeding three years..." (Proclamation No. 31/1975).

The tenants in Wonqa were very happy because they got access to land as well as capital. As stated above, in most cases the 'land rich' also provided capital (oxen) for sharecroppers. Thus, some sharecroppers agreed with the efforts of elders to return half of the oxen and to pay the price of the other half within three years. Even some *tātāmajs*, according to my informants, those who 'did not have faith' (*matāb yälāshoch*) refused to give the share of the land rich from lately

harvested products of that year. However, most sharecroppers gave the agreed amount of produce.

Those sharecroppers who had ploughed the lands of female-headed, aged and ill household heads were relatively unfortunate, because the proclamation makes exceptions on the above sections of the society to continue possession over their land. Therefore, those landless, who did plough the lands of the above-mentioned household heads, got land from the lands of *mofār zāmāts*.

This condition had a relatively negative impact on local agreements in two ways: First, former sharecroppers had land due to the implementation of the 1975 Land Reform. Second, the proclamation forbade land transactions except for few. Only female-headed, ill and aged household heads were allowed officially to conclude sharecrop agreements. Therefore, everybody was afraid the loss of land. Thus, considerable pieces of land were left fallow for a year or two. Then, as in the case of North Shewa (Yared, 1999), local agreements started to be concluded underground with close kinsman.

The first development in the *Därg* period was that access to sharecropped land was possible only through capital (oxen). When land was distributed, some household heads had enough plots. They had labour too; however, they faced serious capital constraint. In addition, they were afraid to give their land for sharecroppers. Therefore, those who had capital could get access to farmland through sharecropping. In this case, those who contributed capital did not only

provide oxen but also it included the costs of fertilizer, seed and feasts at the field, if necessary. The final products of the land, which were ploughed with oxen of the rich peasant, were usually divided four to five (four-ninths of the produce to those who contributed capital and the remaining five-ninths for the contributor of land and labour). Those members of the producers' cooperative, who had more than a pair of oxen, were engaged in such kinds of agreement. Alemu [case 13] is a good example who was a member of the producers' cooperative that engaged in such kinds of agreement and got four-ninths of the produce of the land, which ploughed by the landed peasant with Alemu's extra pairs of oxen. Those former tenants, who did not get access to capital, got nothing except becoming taxpayers through such access. Because they could earn $\frac{2}{3}$ (66.66%) of the produce as a value of their labour before the reform. Then after the land reform, they got $\frac{5}{9}$ (55.55%) of the produce as a value of their labour and land. Moreover, those peasants who were allowed to give their land to sharecroppers could get only one-fourth of the produce as the value of the land.

At the end of the *Därg* regime, especially after the proclamation of the mixed economy in March 1990, not only officially allowed household heads but also those who faced labour and capital limitations began to give their plots officially to sharecroppers. The value of land varies from *siso* (one-third) to *hulät lä sosit* (two-fifths) of the produce of the land depending on the fertility of the plot. Still most people preferred to conclude the agreement with their kinsmen. Especially elders wanted to give their land to the newly married sons or grandsons, because

at the end of the *Därg* period the *käbäle* committee was not able to allot land to the newly established households due to land scarcity.

4.3. Local Agreements since 1991

In addition to the above stated sources, the lands of those who live outside the *käbäle* are also becoming a source of land for local agreements under the EPRDF, because the government allowed non-residents of the *käbäle* to possess farmland. Since 1991, landless, land-short, and wealthy household heads have been engaged in local agreements to get access to farmland. Land transactions are possible under the EPRDF government, through different local agreements like sharecropping, land rent and 'land sale'.

4.3.1. Sharecrop Agreements

In the mid 1990s, land became scarce even compared to the second half of 1980s and early 1990s because the numbers of newly established households kept growing. In addition, the 1997 reallocation also increased sharecroppers. The so-called "bureaucrats" and "*kirit feudals*" have lost more than half of their holdings and were limited to one hectare, though most of them have a larger household size (labour) and enough capital. Therefore, to feed their household members, most of them have engaged in sharecropping agreements to compensate for their loss at the expense of their labour and capital. Alemu [case 13] and Asnake [case 1] are cases who lost their land in the 1997 reallocation and engaged in sharecropping agreements. Due to increasing demand of land, the value of

sharecropped land increased relatively from one-fourth and one-third to one-third and two-thirds and even half of the produce of the land based on its fertility.

The fertility of the land determines the value of the land when two parties are concluding sharecrop agreements. If the land is fertile, the cost of fertilizer will be low and the productivity per hectare is high. On the other hand, if the fertility of the land is low, it needs a high cost of fertilizer and labour to produce more, thus the value of such kinds of land is relatively low because most of the *tātāmajs* are contributing labour as well as capital since early 1990s. Having this in mind, there are different types of sharecropping agreements in Wonqa based on the value of land. The major ones are:

1. *Yä-ekul* (fifty-fifty or half each): In this kind of agreement, the value of land is half of its produce. For instance, *wihagāb* (water accessed or irrigated) land could cost half of its produce, due to its fertility. That means the cost of fertilizer is minimum or nil and the productivity of the land is high. In addition, the agreement is either annual or seasonal because one can produce on such kinds of land twice a year, by using irrigation water. Likewise, *ambazur* (lit. around the *amba* (hill) or village) land, on which cattle's dung manure is used to keep the fertility of land, is the other type valued at half of its produce.
2. *Hulāt lā sosit* (two to three): In such an agreement, the value of the land is two-fifths of its produce. In this case, the fertility of the land is medium. For instance, *dābay* and *betāsāb* lands are of medium fertility and need more

fertilizer and labour cost compared to the above stated categories of land. Therefore, the value of the land is two-fifths of its produce. The remaining three-fifths is for the value of labour and capital.

3. *Siso* (one-third): This means, the value of the land is one-third of its produce. Such type of land, like that of *bonda* i.e. a category of less fertile land, compared to the above stated types, needs more fertilizer and labour. And yet, its productivity is relatively low per hectare. Therefore, the value of the land is relatively low, which is one-third of its produce.

4. *Erbo* (one-fourth): In this case, the value of the land is one-fourth of its produce. Very few *bonda* lands, which are affected by insects, are categorized under this agreement, because it needs insecticide, which means additional cost. Therefore, the value of such land comes down up to one-fourth of its produce. However, it is a very rare case and only the land of Bezabesh [case 4] is known under this category.

However, the share of the 'land rich' may increase if he/she contributes capital. For instance, if they share the price of fertilizer based on their agreed share, the share of the 'land rich' could increase from one-third to two-fifths or from two-fifths to half, depending on the agreement. But basically the value of the land depends on its fertility.

Besides the higher value of land, scarcity makes the competition very keen to obtain farmland through sharecropping agreements. Thus, priority tends to be given for those sharecroppers who have strong labour and capital. The 'land rich' refer to this kind of *tātāmajs* as *tāt'āqimo yāmit'āqmāgn* (that who benefits himself and me). The 'land rich' argue that if the sharecropper is a hard worker, has enough capital to use an appropriate amount of fertilizer (some used less amount due to shortage of capital) and strong oxen, the productivity of the land will be higher unless there is a natural disaster. For instance, if someone that is weak in terms of labour and capital needs to give half of the produce of the land to the 'land rich', on the other hand, if one stronger *tātāmaj* in terms of labour and capital needs to give two-fifths of the produce, most 'land rich' prefer to conclude an agreement with the stronger one. Because they argued that, the final two-fifths product of the stronger *tātāmaj* could be higher than the half product of the weak *tātāmaj* per unit of land. Thus, the combination of strong arm and capital get priority to conclude sharecrop agreements.

The second priority, next to strong *tātāmaj*, to conclude local agreements is given to kinsmen. If a kinsman has strong capital and labour, no doubt he could get top priority. If the kinsman lacks one of the two or is an average in both cases, and if the 'land rich' could not get strong *tātāmaj*, he prefers to give the contract to his kinsman by saying *lela kāmibālaw* (lit. rather than others get the benefit). Sometimes this has a negative effect on the 'land rich', especially, as grandsons do not give the agreed amount of share to grandparents, due to their close

relation. Generally, the second preference of the 'land rich' to conclude share agreements is with kinsman.

Social networks and good behaviour, especially honesty, to give the agreed amount and to plough the sharecropped land on time, side by side with his plot, are taken into consideration during the selection of sharecroppers. Because most of the sharecroppers give priority for their fields, if they have any, they give the sharecropped land secondary attention.

Nowadays, it is hard to get access to farmland only through labour. Even if they get a sharecropping agreement, the value of labour is usually one-fifth or one-sixth of the produce of the land depending on the strength of the person as well as the agreement. The remaining four-fifths or five-sixths of the produce could be the share of the land and the capital. Therefore, some of the newly established household heads have to go to other areas for money to buy oxen by which they hope to improve their access to farmland through local agreements. The case of Belete [case 7] is a good example. He went into southern parts of the country to earn money and then he bought oxen and was able to conclude sharecropping agreements.

Belete is a 26 year old household head who is resident in Deber *got'*. He started to attend school at the age of 10 and continued his education up to grade 5. Belete's father is poor and not interested to support Belete by working after school. Therefore, he dropped out from the school and engaged fully in ploughing his father's plots and doing other agricultural activities. Belete married at the age of 17 and stayed with his wife only for six months. Then he continued to live with his father for two and a half years. Then he remarried in 1996, started to work with his father, and got 1/3 of the produce. During the 1997 reallocation, Belete got

nothing because the committee argued that he married only a year earlier. However, most of his age mates who had married their first wife three or four years earlier got land. Belete complained that, he was forgotten because he did not have *wägän* (relative) within the committee.

Belete established his household after 2 years in 1998 on the land he was given by the committee for house construction (25 x 40 *kind* or 0.025 hectare). And he continued to cultivate his fathers' land for a year. Since his father has not got enough land, his father told him to find a sharecrop agreement. However, he did not get sharecropped land because most 'land rich' peasants do not like to give their land to a farmer who has no ox.

Thus, Belete started to work as a daily labourer in Wonqa and Debre Markos. Then in October 1999, he came to Addis, leaving his wife back with her family, to seek a job. Then, he went to Mojo. At Mojo he found a job on a contract basis i.e. to mow 50m x 50m area of grain for 35 *Birr*, his food and shelter was covered by his employer. Usually he could finish the work within 5 days. Then he started to work together with his three friends four of them could always finish a 50m x 50m area within a day. In November, the price became 40 *Birr* for the above units of land then it became 50 *Birr* in December; the price increased at the peak harvest season. Belete started the work from Mojo and ended at Akaki. Finally, he saved 630 *Birr* when he returned to Wonqa so he bought an ox for the price of 580 *Birr*. In the same year, he got 3 *t'imads* of land in different places based on *siso* agreements. He cultivated the land with his wife by using his ox as *māqānajo* (a system of pairing an ox with a household which has single ox in return). He did not engage in any off-farm activity in 2000. However in 2001, he worked with the Chinese Constriction Company, as a daily labourer for a wage of 8 *Birr* per day, when Debre Markos - Bahir Dar road was asphalted. Then he earned about 450 *Birr* with an additional 150 *Birr* he bought another ox at the cost of 600 *Birr* and concluded an agreement for an additional 2 *t'imads* of land from *Amba Zur* in *yä-ekul* terms.

By now Belete is relatively better off and is food self-sufficient but he still complains that his oxen are not strong enough to conclude additional sharecrop agreements. He hoped that his life would improve especially by strengthening his capital by doing off-farming activity.

Some of those household heads who lack land and capital are also forced to dissolve the household temporarily by sending the wife to her parents' house and the husband has to work for rich peasants on an annual contract basis. The contract is usually from February to February (for a year) at the cost of 250 to 300

Birr depending on the employee's strength. In addition, he has to feed himself and reside at the house of his employer.

Those newly established household heads, whose father have enough capital, could use their father to conclude local agreements on behalf of them. In this case, the father could give the land and capital to his son, under strict supervision, and then pay the agreed amount to the 'land rich'. In some cases like Asnake [case 1], the father concludes the agreement and provides the capital (oxen and the price of fertilizer and selected seeds). His son contributes labour. Finally, after they have paid the value of the land, which is one-third, the remaining two-thirds will be divided equally, one-third each, between the father and his son as a value of capital and labour respectively. In this case, the value of labour became one-third of the produce, which is very high compared to the market value of labour, which is one-fifth of the produce. However, this is a common way in which parents' assist their children's newly established households.

After the selection of the *tātāmaj*, the agreement will be concluded usually in writing. Both sides can select three elders who witness the agreement. In this agreement, issues like who covers the cost of fertilizer and seed, the amount of share for both parties, and the period of the agreement, which is usually one year, should be stated and ratified by the signatories, and witnesses. Usually the amount of money to be paid as penalty will be stated if one of them abrogates the agreement before the stated period of time. If they need to renew the agreement for the next year, they call it *malāmlām* (lit. become green), it could be done

verbally without the involvement of witnesses. Unlike Wonqa, in some parts of the zone, like Bechena, the sharecroppers have to pay 20 to 100 *Birr* to renew the agreement. On the other hand, if the 'land rich' person is dissatisfied with the *tātāmaj* or needs to replace him with another *tātāmaj*, he/she has the right not to renew the agreement. Though it is rare, there are conditions in which a *tātāmaj* does not need to continue the agreement for extra years in cases when he has lost his oxen or if he gets another plot better than the former.

In general, before the 1975 Land Reform, the value of the land was 1/4 (25%) of the produce and the value of labour was 2/3 (66.67%) of the produce. Therefore, the value of capital was 8.33%. Then in the *Därg* period when sharecropping agreements were officially forbidden, the value of capital became 4/9 (44.55%) of the produce. The value of land was 1/4 (25%) of the produce. Thus, the value of labour should be 30.45% of the total produce. In 2002, the value of medium land is 2/5 (40%) of its produce. The value of labour is 1/5 (20%) of the produce of the land. Therefore, the value of capital is 40% of the produce of the land. This data could be drawn in the following table:

Table 7: The Share of the Three Factors of Production during the Three Periods

Factors of Production	Percent in Periods		
	Pre-1975	<i>Därg</i>	EPRDF
Land	25	25	40
Labour	66.7	30.6	20
Capital	8.3	44.4	40
Total	100	100	100

Source: Compiled from field data (2002)

This data shows that the value of land increased from 25% to 40%. The value of capital increased even more from 8.33% to 40%. On the contrary, the value of labour declined from 66.67% to 20%.

4.3.2. Land Rent

Though it is not common, land rent also exists as one means to get access to farmland through capital in terms of money. This kind of local agreement preferred by those household heads who live outside the *käbäle* and those who need the money before the harvest, because the money will be paid on the spot, when the agreement is concluded. Those who had nothing to live on during the rainy season are also forced to rent their land. However, most of the 'land rich' argued that, the price of the land in rent agreement is extremely low; thus, they prefer sharecrop agreements. Sharecroppers also argued that the payment for rented land could be a total loss if there is crop failure. Thus, the price of land rent has to consider such kinds of risks.

Land rent started in the last six years. At the time, a *t'imad* (0.25 hectare) of land was rented for 70 *Birr* per year. Then after two years, it became 90 *Birr*, and then 100 to 125 *Birr* per year. By 2002, fertile land could cost up to 200 *Birr* per *t'imad* for a year, and the medium land is 150 *Birr* per *t'imad* for a period of one year. This shows that the price is continually increasing. In Wogda North Shewa, a *t'imad* of land could be mortgaged from 50 to 200 *Birr* depending on the productivity of the land (Yared, 1999).

Besides individual farmers, the KA also started to rent *yämotä kāda* land in the last three years, a *t'imad* of land for 40 *Birr* per year, to the newly established households. However, it did not last long because the children of the deceased persons appealed to the regional state based on proclamation No. 49/2000 of the regional state, which allows inheritance. Though land rent is rare compared to sharecropping, and the price of rented land has continuously increased in Wonqa.

4.3.3. 'Land Sale'

'Land sale' started in the *kābāle* especially at Deber *got'* two years ago, though it is limited to homesteads especially water-accessed homesteads. The price of land varies from 800 – 4,000 *Birr* depending on the size of plot and its accessibility to irrigated water. For instance, one female household head sold her 50 x 80 *kinds* (0.10 hectare) homestead land at the price of 4,000 *Birr*. Others have sold half of the above size for 800 *Birr*. A chairman of the *kābāle* also bought a small piece of homestead land at the cost of 900 *Birr*. 'Land sale' is conducted under the cover of house selling and still limited to homesteads because, from experience, homestead land is relatively secure compared to farmland. In general, land sale is a recent phenomenon in Wonqa.

Conclusion

Local agreements are used as a means of access to farmland for those who have insufficient or no plot for household livelihood during the last a quarter of a century. During the periods of Haile Selassie I and the *Därg*, the value of land was uniform; however since the early 1990s the value of land has been dependent on

its fertility or whether it needs more capital and labour or not, because almost all peasants started to use fertilizer in the late 1980s. Similar cases are observed in North Shewa, in the late 1980s and the early 1990s in which the value of land was determined by its fertility (Ege, 1994; Teferi, 1994; Yared, 1999; 2002). Moreover, the value of land has become high compared with the period of Haile Selassie I. During the Imperial era, the value of land was one-fourth of its produce, while in 2002, its value varied from one-fourth to half of its produce depend on its fertility.

Furthermore, during the Imperial period, those who had labour and needed to conclude sharecropping agreements in Wonqa were able to get access to sharecropped land. Then in the *Dārg* period, like the case in North Shewa (Yared, 1999), kinship got priority. However, since 1991 a person who could produce more (who has strong capital and labour) gets priority.

In general, sharecropping agreements show the changing value of factors of production over time under the three regimes. In addition to the sharecropping agreements, which existed during the Imperial period, land rent and 'land sell' developed in Wonqa. The value of land, which was uniform during the Imperial era, started to be determined by its fertility. The selection of sharecroppers is became primarily based on capital and labour strength. Besides, the role of capital, in the form of money, became important in getting access to rented land as well as to buy homestead land. Therefore, currently, local agreements developed a market nature in which everybody needs to maximize their share depending on the value of the factors of production, land, labour and capital.

CHAPTER V

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF HOUSEHOLD

ACCESS TO FARMLAND

For any agrarian society like Ethiopia, socio-economic conditions are highly related to access to land. The socio-economic conditions of the research area are also related with land access. Prior to the 1975 Land Reform, socio-economic status, marriage, land use, conflicts etc. were directly related with the right to get access to *rist* land. Thus, any change in the principles of access to farmland may have implications for the socio-economic conditions of the community. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this chapter to consider the socio-economic implications of the 1975 Land Reform and subsequent land distribution on the farming households of the study area over the last quarter of a century.

5.1. Land Access and Social Status

Control over important economic resources is related with social stratification (Cancian, 1976). In the case of Northern Ethiopia, access to land and social status were highly inter-related before the 1975 Land Reform (Hoben, 1970; 1973). Social stratification depended on rights over land. The traditional Amhara society was basically divided into three: the nobility (*mäkwantint*), the peasants (*gäbar*), and the artisans and the slaves. The nobility included the ruling classes and higher ecclesiastical officials, who had *gult* as well as *rist* rights. Thus, they could control wide areas and a lot of people. The peasants (*gäbar*) consist of both

clergy and non-clergy peasants (*chäwa*) who had *rist* rights, based on their descent and were referred to as *balabat* (lit. those who have father). The third category constitutes the artisans, slaves and non-Amharas, who did not have *rist* rights and were endogamous. Thus, they were found at the bottom of the social spectrum (Hoben, 1970; 1973; 1976; Pausewang, 1983). Military achievement was a means of upward mobility for the *balabats*. However, there was no mobility from the lowest, the handicraft workers, to the upper strata of the *balabats* and *mäkwanints*; in this case birth matters a lot rather than achievement. Therefore, social mobility was basically dependent on descent (Hoben, 1970; 1973; 1976). Hoben further argues that in traditional Amhara society "... difference in degree of honor corresponded quite closely to the degree of control over land and people" (Hoben, 1970).

The same was true in Wonqa where those who were descended from Jirramin were referred to as *balabat* and had access to *rist* land. Those household heads that defended their *rist* and pressed a successful claim were highly respected, because it was considered as protection of ancestral *rist*. On the other hand the handicraft workers and slaves, who were not descended from Jirramin, the *wana abate* of Wonqa had no right to get access to *rist* land and they were referred to as 'fatherless' or '*tanash säw*' (lit. young-human). They could not intermarry with the *balabats*. Moreover, they were not allowed to have political positions or to serve the church as priests or deacons. There was a saying, "*zämboläl sinde ena ejjäsäri* (local term for handicraft workers) *betä kiristian ayyäbam*" [lit. *zämboläl* wheat (newly introduced type of wheat) and the handicraft workers are not allowed

to enter (serve) the church]. Generally, the marginalization of these sections of the society had a wider perspective, and Pankhurst (2001) put these kinds of marginalization in spatial, economic, political, and social dimensions.

However, the 1975 Land Reform gave 'equal' access to farmland to all residents of the rural community. The handicraft workers began to have access to land like other peasants. They were elected as a committee member of the PA's (get access to political position), like the case of Tebebu [case no 9] and one of the seven KA committee members was of an artisan background in 2002. In addition, they started to become deacons and subsequently priests. By the time of the fieldwork, there were a number of priests and deacons at St. Georgis Church with artisan backgrounds. Institutionally they have equal access to farmland, political position and sacred places to serve the church.

However, at the individual level, the handicraft workers still do not intermarry with the *balabats*. In rare cases, the poor *balabats* may marry with the rich handicraft workers. Though the handicraft workers became priests, they were not as revered as priests with *balabat* background. According to my informants, if they meet two priests, one from the handicraft background and the other from the *balabat* background, they preferred to be blessed by the priest from the *balabat* background. This is common among the elders. This shows that though the handicraft workers obtained institutional equality, this is not fully accepted by the majority of former *balabats*. Thus, the handicraft workers still believe that they are not treated fairly by the members of the community. Tebebu [case 9] is a well-

known ironworker, who has considerable wealth. His land is cultivated by the members of the community as a reward for his service provided to each household.

Tebebu, 68, is a resident of Addis *goṛ*. Tebebu started ironwork under the supervision of his father when he was about 12; by the age of 15 he could make all kinds of iron tools. He married at the age of 18, however the marriage did not last long; it ended in less than a year. Then he remarried three times between the ages of 18 to 25.

When Tebebu established his household, his father gave him a pair of oxen and a cow. However, his father did not have land to give to Tebebu as an endowment because he was a handicraft worker; thus he did not have access to *rist* land. When Tebebu's father died in 1968, he took all the responsibility to run both households. His household was established on the lands of the land rich; as a reward he had to make all iron tools for free and sometimes he had to assist the land rich household during the peak agricultural season. He makes all kinds of iron tools for household consumption as well as for market. He subsidized his household by rearing livestock and sometimes engaging in sharecrop agreements.

In terms of socio-economic status, the period of Haile Selassie I were not good for Tebebu. The price of iron tools was very low and the income from sharecropping was not satisfactory. So his economic status was low compared to others. In terms of social status, he was considered as "sub-human". He could not intermarry with the *balabats*, did not have the same *mahibār* with the *balabats*, never ate with the *balabats* in public ceremonies and feasts, was not allowed to serve the church as deacon or priest. In addition, there was no room for him to have political position.

The 1975 Land Reform gave Tebebu equal access to farmland with the *balabats*. He got about 5 *t'imads* of land in the 1978-9 distribution, and then he obtained 8.5 *t'imads* of land in the 1983 distribution. Because of this, his relations with the former land rich have changed. Instead of being a tenant, he had his own land; instead of making iron tools for the land rich household for free, he started to obtain the price of his labour. In addition, he agreed with a number of household heads to make iron tools for free, and the peasant also agreed to cultivate his plots. Until 2001, more than 100 household heads agreed to cultivate his plots. Then by 2001 the peasant considered the agreement as *hudad* (free labour) that worked for the *gulte gaṛe* in pre-1975. In addition, they complained that he was not doing their iron tools very well and the food he provided them during the working days was not good. Therefore, they

terminated the agreement and started to pay in cash for his service. He also started to plough his own plots.

During the *Därg* period, Tebebu was elected as a committee member for the service cooperative, so he was categorized as a "bureaucrat" in the 1997 reallocation and his holding was reduced to 4 *t'imads*. He argued that his position during the *Därg* period was not enough to classify him as a "bureaucrat" but due to his handicraft background the *däliday* committee did not like to see his holding as equal to them (the former *balabats*). At the time of the 1997 reallocation Tebebu was in Addis Ababa for training, which was provided by the Finnish government to promote rural technology. In this training he stood first and was chosen in the following year to train the next batch, for six months, and earned 3,000 *Birr* with which he bought different instruments for ironwork and a heifer. Due to the reduction of his holdings, Tebebu was engaged in local agreements by renting 1.5 *t'imads* of land at a cost of 200 *Birr* per year.

In 2002, Tebebu has 10 household members. His access to land increased in the *Därg* period but he lost more than half of his holdings in the 1997 reallocation under the EPRDF. His economic situation is relatively better compared to the period of Haile Selassie I. His social statuses improved institutionally since the coming to power of the *Därg*. He has a *mahibär* with the former *balabats*; he could eat with the former *balabats* equally in public ceremonies and feasts. However, his children could not intermarry with the children of former *balabats*, he could not slaughter cattle for public ceremonies and would not be invited to speak at public ceremonies. On the other hand, he could participate in local politics.

In general although his economic position has improved and his socio-political status has improved institutionally since the *Därg* period, his social status within the community has not improved as he expected it. Tebebu is one of the most important persons in the *käbäle* who makes the agricultural equipment for the community. Nevertheless, his *kibir* (lit. honour) was not as high as his importance. He himself believed that there is social inequality, within the community, which had its base on the pre-1975 social structure. Pankhurst (2000) clearly points out the paradox between role and status of the minority handicraft workers.

On the other hand, before 1975, most 'land rich' peasants were in general socially more respected than the *tātāmajs* (sharecroppers), because most 'land rich' had more access to farmland, since social status was closely related with access to land. These kinds of relationships gradually changed after the 1975 Land Reform, when more *balabats* and then the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants" became *tātāmajs* with relatively better socio-economic position due to shortage of land since 1997. In this case, the 'land rich' are those female, ill and elderly household heads that usually lack labour and capital. Unlike in the Imperial period, the *tātāmajs* are capital (oxen, seed and fertilizer) providers. In addition during the Imperial era, the 'land rich' had a right to choose the type of crop, but now the right to decide the types of crop sown shifted to the *tātāmajs*.

The same is true for maximum holders, who were socially respected, before the 1975 Land Reform, due to their higher social status. Nowadays, some of the maximum holders are not esteemed highly because the community considered them as persons who expropriate land illegally by misusing political position, bribing the committee members or by other illegal means. Only those households heads who get maximum land based on their household size, without using illegal means are proud of their holdings.

Moreover, the 1975 Land Reform challenged the social stratification, which was based on access to land. Subsequently, government interference became very high with the establishment of PAs and the implementation of the 1975 Land Reform. Political cadres started to require the members of the community to sell

grain to the AMC, to join the producers' co-operative, the villagization, to contribute money for the war etc. without their consent. Therefore, those who defended the interests of the community started to be honoured by the community. Currently, according to my informants, socially honourable individuals are those:

- Elders who serve the community as a mouthpiece.
- Who stood for the interest of the community rather than their own.
- Who are honest and do not need money of others.
- Who worked hard and manage their household very well.
- Who does not enter into conflicts with anybody, but are rather engaged in reconciliation and contribute for the peace of the community.

If a person fulfills most of the above stated criteria, his respect in the community could run high. This condition worked well for the former *balabats*. However, the former handicraft workers' social respect is still affected by their background.

Generally, land is no longer a symbol as well as a basis of social status, as rights over land as a basis of social stratification was disrupted since the 1975 Land Reform. However, the basic principle, defending the interest, is continued with slight modification. Before the 1975 Land Reform, those who defended their *rist* and pressed successful claims were honoured. Now those who stood to defend the interests of the community are honoured.

5.2. Land Access and Economic Stratification

Land access and economic stratification were highly interrelated during the period of Haile Sellassie I. The land rich peasants had land in different ecological zones to produce different varieties of crops for household consumption as well as for market, so they had considerable capital. Thus, their economic status was very high. On the other hand, those landless and land-short household heads were engaged in sharecropping agreements. In these agreements, capital was provided usually by the 'land rich' rather than the *tātāmajs*. Handicraft workers and ex-slaves, who did not have access to *rist* land, could get access to land only through tenancy. The price of handicraft products was very low to feed their household members. Therefore, they engaged in sharecropping agreements for their household livelihood. Their capital was very limited or non-existent, thus their economic status was at the bottom of the stratum.

During the *Därg* period, land was distributed for all members of the community regardless of their descent. Those landless and land-short household heads obtained access to more farmland. On the contrary, those 'land rich' peasants have lost some of their holdings. Therefore, every household had more or less 'equal' access to farmland at least enough for household livelihood. However, capital became a serious constraint. Hence, its role became important for economic stratification. Those who have enough capital in the form of oxen could cultivate their plot properly and those who have extra oxen could engage in sharecropping agreement by providing capital. Therefore, those 'land rich' peasants who had considerable capital could maintain their economic status.

Those former *tātāmajs* who obtained land, became free to pay the 'land rich' and they started to use their products fully for their household consumption as well as for market. However, most of them, especially those who did not get capital from their former 'land rich' peasants, faced serious capital constraints. The same was true for the handicraft workers. Thus, they engaged in sharecropping agreements to get access to capital. As a result, only a few of them improved their economic status through time. For instance, Tebebu [case 9] was engaged in ironwork, cultivation, and rearing livestock. His off-farm activity was very important to strengthen his capital. In addition, the produce from his plots became more than enough for household consumption. Thus his economic status changed gradually and by now, he is one of the wealthiest person in the *kābāle*.

On the other hand, the former land rich peasants have lost considerable amounts of land in different ecological zones due to the 1975 Land Reform. Yet, they had relatively better capital compared with others. Their income was definitely reduced due to land distribution, but their economic status was more or less the same especially for those who engaged sharecropping through their capital. Only a few of them lost their economic status gradually. In addition, the 1997 reallocation under the EPRDF affects the income of those households who lost more than half of their holdings and were forced to engage in sharecropping agreements to secure their economic status by using their labour and capital exhaustively. However those, like Asnake [case 1], Leku [case 2] and Dagne

[case 6], who lost their land in the 1975 Land Reform and the 1997 reallocation have gradually lost their economic status.

Although defining each stratum of the economic stratification is not defined in Wonqa, the combination of land and capital is clearly observed in each stratum. For instance, there is no clear-cut boundary between the rich and the medium because one could not fulfill all the criteria of the stratum. However, most of my informants agreed on the following definition of the three general strata, which determines economic status of the household.

1. Rich Peasants

According to my informants, rich peasants are those who have reasonable size (about 7-12 *t'imads*) of farmland to produce a variety of grain for their household consumption as well as for the markets. In addition, they can be defined as those who have three pairs of oxen, six cows, a mule, a horse, sheep, goats and at least four beehives. Generally, rich peasants are those who are self-sufficient in food production: who do not buy grain in July and August, sheep for the holidays, livestock for weddings, and those who have surplus grain and livestock for market to pay for their immediate needs. If a rich peasant buys grain in July and August, which is a critical time of food shortage, he will lose his economic status. Thus, people refer to rich peasant as *betu muluyāhonā* (lit. whose house is full i.e. sufficient in everything). That means those peasants who diversified their products as well as their income could have a chance to move upward in economic stratification.

According to my informants, there are two factors to be a rich peasant, if all peasants have 'equal access' to farmland: The first is hard work; to produce more grain in different varieties; and the second is good luck for livestock rearing. If the peasant is fortunate, a few cattle that are given as a gift at the establishment of household could multiply. If the peasant is unlucky, even though he gets a considerable amount of livestock at the establishment of the household, they may die within a short period. Above all, they have a saying that God may help those honest hard workers, so they rely on hard work.

2. Medium Peasants

Medium peasants are those who have a reasonable amount (about 5 - 8 *t'imads*) of land to produce medium size production, mainly that is enough to feed household members with basic foodstuffs, such as *teff*. Besides, they have to have 2 – 5 oxen, 2- 5 cows, donkey, sheep, goats etc. Those who have sufficient oxen to plough their plots and medium size livestock for household consumption as well as for sale to pay their immediate expenses are under this category. Generally medium peasants are those who have no problem to feed their household members.

3. Poor Peasants

Poor peasants are those landless and land-short peasants who do not have sufficient land (4 or less *t'imads*) to feed household members and are forced to do non-agricultural activities to subsidize the household livelihood. In addition, they

have limited capital (one or no ox, a cow, and a limited number of sheep) which is not sufficient to plough their plot. Poor peasants are those who could not feed their household members properly with 'basic' foods, like *teff enjāra* (bread made from *teff*); they usually eat *enjāra* made from low priced cereals.

Thus, mobility depends on the above conditions. To achieve most of the stated conditions of a rich peasant is usually a lifetime process. For instance, Worku [case 12] became rich through his lifetime by accumulating capital through saving.

Worku is 72 and a resident of Deber *got'*. Since his father was a *dābitāra* (ordained but highly trained clergyman), he attended church education. He married at the age of 20 and stayed 3 years with his father. Then he established his household with the initial capital of two oxen, which were contributed by his father and his father-in-law. He started to plough his father's land up to his capacity without giving anything because his father had more than enough. In the period of Haile Selassie I he inherited 6 *t'imads* of land in Sentera and other 12 *t'imads* in different areas from his parents. In addition, he got 6 *t'imads* by winning court cases through his capital.

Worku is known for his economizing. He even controlled how his wife used butter for cooking, which is not common within the community. However, this strategy affected his social relations and honour within the community. He does not even have any kind of *mahibār*. Worku accumulated his capital through higher economizing. On the other hand, he criticized the extravagance of the members of the community due to different feasts.

Worku's access to land has been reduced by half from the Imperial period to the *Dārg* and was further reduced by half from the *Dārg* period to under the EPRDF. Thus, Worku used intensive system by using fertilizer and selected seeds to maximize his product per hectare of land. According to Worku, his income has not been reduced that much but his labour increased per unit of land. He told me that the produce is dependent on the oxen and his household labour. This one hectare of land is not enough for Worku's household. So, he engaged in sharecropping agreements to prevent buying grain for his household consumption and to keep his economic status.

By now he has diversified his products and is inclined to cultivate vegetables by using irrigated water to get more income from limited

space. He planted *chat*, coffee, and other vegetables. Worku said he is lucky in livestock and has 7 oxen, 3 bull, 8 cows, 4 heifer, 7 calves. In addition, he has 6 beehives, so he is one of the richest men in the *käbäle*. This is due to diversification, using intensive system, timely sowing, weeding, harvesting, his luck in livestock, and economizing. Thus, his house is full i.e. 'self-sufficient' and he can be considered rich.

This makes it rare to see a young rich household head. Every household head struggles to maintain or move upward into these economic strata. Those losers in the land distributions are struggling to maintain their economic status by using different strategies.

In general, the relations between land access and economic stratification has partly changed since the 1975 Land Reform. Land is not the only factor for economic stratification, capital also became important for economic stratification. Thus, land has to be complemented with capital and labour to achieve higher economic status. The economic status of a household is determined by the amount and composition of the above three factors of production in general and that of land and capital in particular. Therefore, land is the basis for household livelihood and a major component together with capital in economic stratification.

5.3. Land Access and Land Use

Land access and land use are closely related (Netting, 1968; 1974). Usually the amount of land determines the way land could be used and the kind of crop that should be cultivated. During the period of Haile Selassie I land was relatively abundant compared to the *Därg* and the EPRDF periods. At that time, the peasants used different mechanisms to keep the fertility of land. The three major ways are:

1. Fallow period: Every four years every plot is left fallow for a year to regain its fertility.
2. Crop rotation: Most household heads alternate crops to regain the fertility of the soil. If they cultivate *teff*, the next year will be barley or oil seeds, followed by wheat, then fallow and again *teff*.
3. *Kirat* (spent a night to look after cattle). In this case, the peasants used animal manure to keep soil fertility by keeping cattle on their plots.

The land policy since 1975 was generally criticized from the perspective of environmental degradation and land fragmentation (Daniel, 1990; Markos, 1990; Mesfin, 1991; Sing, 1999; Wood, 1990; Yeraswork, 2000). Teferi (1995) explained that repeated redistribution in accommodating new applicants in North Wollo had negative implication on crop rotation. Because due to tenure insecurity, the peasants need to produce high valued crops, like *teff* and wheat, so they found it hard to practice crop rotation. Yared (1994; 1995) argued that land use has been changed in North Shewa, since 1975 towards a more intensive system by cultivating fallow land. In addition, marginal and grazing lands are being cultivated. This has negative implications on livestock production. Dessalegn (1995) also points out that traditional conservation practices are becoming unviable due to diminution of plots, tenure insecurity and competition for land.

In Wonqa, most household heads gradually stopped leaving plots fallow. Some argued that land became scarce since the 1975 Land Reform due to increasing number of newly established households. Others argued that because of

occasional distribution and reallocation of land, everybody needs to over exploit the land rather than leaving it fallow. In both cases fallow period ceased to be practiced in the area after the implementation of the 1975 Land Reform. Sometimes when the land is exhausted, which is locally refereed to as *märetu simot* (lit. when the land dies), the only alternative is to sow *gibto* (*lupinus albus*) to regain its fertility. *Gibto* is leguminous crop, which could help the soil to regain its fertility by increasing the nitrogen content of the soil.

The tradition of crop rotation has been more or less continued in the study area even since the 1975 Land Reform as a means of maintaining soil fertility. However, the 1997 reallocation was a challenge to this tradition. This was because the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants", due to the size of the plot, were forced to cultivate for the last 5 or 6 years only *teff* on the same plots to meet the household demand. Besides, local agreements have negative implications on land use. The sharecroppers are insecure about the continuity of the agreement. In addition, they have crop choice right, so they prefer to cultivate high priced crops like *teff* and wheat without taking into consideration the pattern of crop rotation.

The tradition to use animal manure has also continued. The category of land under the *ambazure* is manured in such a way. Therefore, the fertility of such land is very high; consequently, its value in sharecropping agreement is half of its produce.

In addition, there is close relationship between land scarcity and agricultural intensification (Netting, 1968; 1974; 1993). In the study area, land access determines land use. Compared to the Imperial's period large holders, the small holders during the fieldwork (2002) use more intensive systems. For instance, the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants" had relatively larger plots before the 1997 reallocation. Now, some of them could produce almost equivalent to the pre-1997 production. This is due to the use of selected seeds and fertilizer. Above all, they increased the productivity of the land per hectare by spending intensive labour per unit of land.

The 1997 reallocation coincided with the period when extension package started to be implemented. Thus, the so-called "bureaucrats" are the first to use extension packages because they were exposed to new ideas, due to their experience, compared with other peasants. The Development Agent Worker at Wonqa told me that the so-called "bureaucrats" are active and perfect to implement extension programme by using selected seeds and other modern inputs. They are strict to follow instructions of the expert and to do every thing in a timely manner. Thus, their productivity is higher per unit or hectare compared to others. This does not mean they did not lose anything by the 1997 reallocation.

One of the problems for smallholders is limited alternatives for crop choice. Cultivating a variety of crops is associated with large plots. It is customary in Wonqa to give priority to a crop that is used for household consumption. Thus, due to shortage of land smallholders always sow, particularly *teff*, barley and

wheat, for household consumption. Though the peasant knows that oil seeds are more expensive than *teff*, they give priority to *teff* for household consumption rather than oil seeds. They do not like to buy *teff* by selling oil seeds. This clearly shows that the peasant gives priority for household consumption rather than to produce crops only to the market. Producing only for market is secondary which depends on the size of the plots. Thus, the influence of the market is very limited on crop choice.

The only exception in this respect is *chat* (a plant whose leaves are chewed for inducing mood enhancement), which started to be planted in Wonqa since the last ten years, and the demand for which grew very rapidly in the last five years. Those who have irrigated land started to expand *chat* plantation instead of *gesho* (*rhamnus prinoides* i.e., a plant, the leaves of which are used in preparing *tälla* and other local beverage). There are household heads that sell *chat* for up to 200 *Birr* per month. Though some peasants obtain benefits from *chat* plantation, the community is afraid of their children's addiction to it. The land policy of the regional state also prohibited the cultivation of drugs; and *chat* is considered as a drug by members of the community.

Generally, access to land determines land use, intensification and crop choice. Crop rotation and using animal manure were more or less continued since the 1975 Land Reform. However, land scarcity and the distribution forced the peasant to abandon fallow methods and rather almost all started to rely on using fertilizers. Besides, nowadays smallholders used more intensive system than large holders

during the Imperial period. In addition, the peasant always gives priority to feed the household members. Although most peasants sell part of their harvest, to produce only for market is usually dictated by access to land; so, it is secondary.

5.4. Landlessness

The existence of landless peasants was considered as a social problem of the pre-1975 Ethiopia. Hoben (1973) estimated landless artisans at less than 10 percent in Dega Damot. Although there is no statistical data, there were landless peasants in pre-1975 Wonqa.

The 1975 Land Reform abolished tenancy by giving 'equal' access to land to all members of the rural community. Landless peasants got land during the implementation of the land reform. However, this did not continue for long in the study area. Landlessness reemerged when the PA was not able to allot land to the newly established households since the end of the 1980s, due to shortage of land. Ege (1994) and Teferi (1994) also show the increment of landlessness and tenancy in North Shewa especially after the mid 1980s, due to land scarcity.

In the 1997 reallocation, 531 *t'imads* of land, which were taken from the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants", were allotted in Wonqa to 152 female-headed and 133 newly established households. A total of 285 landless household heads obtained an average of 1.86 *t'imads* (0.47 hectare) of land. However 35 household heads, most of them the sons of the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants", got nothing and continued as landless. By the time of the

fieldwork, according to the *kābāle* records, landless household heads have reached 72, which is 6.62% of the total households.

The government policy, which was discussed at the three-days peasant conference held in the *kābāle* from 31 October to 2 November 2002, shows that the solution to landlessness is not allotting *yāmotā kāda* land or further re-division of land, but resettling landless youth in the less populated *kolla* (lowland) areas. However, this solution was strongly objected by the members of the community because they do not want to send their sons and daughters outside the *kābāle* where malaria is widespread. Moreover, they proposed another solution i.e. to design and implement different projects (such as hybrid livestock rearing, agro-industry and other small-scale enterprises) within the *kābāle*, which could absorb the labour forces of the landless.

In addition to the landless, there are several households that have insufficient plot size to feed household members. Thus, they are forced to engage in sharecropping arrangements. Hoben (1973) stated that; one in every four households (25%) was involved in tenancy arrangement in pre-1973 Dega Damot, West Gojjam, though Dessalegn (1984) estimates the extent of tenancy at 13% in pre-1975 Gojjam. In 2002, survey result shows that 22.61 percent of the household heads in Wonqa have got access to land through tenancy arrangements. Thus, based on Dessalegn's figures, tenancy has increased compared to the pre-1975 conditions. Anyway, it is safe to say that tenancy has increased in the study area since the mid 1980s.

5.5. Disputes Over Land

At the end of the Imperial period, disputes over land had increased considerably in Wonqa due to the scarcity of land. Those people who lived outside Wonqa, especially those who lived at Debre Markos, claimed *rist* rights. According to my informants, in the 1950s and to some extent in the 1960s almost all claims were resolved at the local level by local elders and *at'ibia dagnas*. However, when claims increased from time to time and land became scarce due to demographic factors, *rist* holders started to reject claims over *rist*. Therefore, most cases started to be handled by regular courts. This development cost the peasants in terms of time, labour and capital.

Proclamation No 31/1975 annulled all rural land cases in the ordinary courts. In addition Art. 20 stated that, " As of the effective date of this proclamation no person may put claims to land in *Rist* ... areas" (Proclamation No 31/1975). Except minor cases that were solved by the *kābāle* PA committee, disputes over land had dramatically reduced during the *Dārg* period.

However, most people agreed that disputes over land increased since 1991. Some argues that this is due to administrative inefficiency of the current government at the grass-roots level. Others argued that, the increment is due to land scarcity. It is clear that both have contributed to increase disputes over land. According to the *kābāle* chairman, disputes over land is the second most frequent

conflicting issue within the *kābāle*, next to access to irrigated water. The two major reasons for the disputes are:

1. Ploughing the pastureland:

Those household heads that obtained plots adjacent to grazing areas may plough part of the pastureland of the *got'*. Such cases are usually handled first by local elders and then by the *kābāle* administration. Sometimes the case may pass to the police and the regular court; however, the decision making process of the regular court is usually very slow.

2. Boundary conflict:

This is usually between household heads that have adjacent plots. These kinds of cases are becoming common perhaps due to the scarcity of land. Such cases are also first handled by elders. Then if the two parties do not agree with the decision of the elders, the matter could be handled by the *kābāle* administration. The administration could solve the case by referring to the land registration book and re-measuring the plots of both parties. As a lasting solution to this problem, the regional state has planned to certify each holding by registering and giving site plans of the plots.

Besides the above-mentioned causes of disputes over land, there are conflicts between two parties who conclude sharecropping agreements due to inappropriate utilization of the land (such as late ploughing, sowing, weeding, harvesting, using insufficient amount of fertilizer) and over the payment of the

agreed amount. Such cases could be handled first by elders and then by the *kābāle* administration, especially by the social court.

Generally, most of the cases of disputes over land are handled by local elders. Most people agreed that the decisions of local elders are fair and quick compared to the regular court. However, disputes over land, which had declined during the *Dārg* period due to the implementation of the 1975 Land Reform, had started to increase since 1991, and accelerated especially in the last five years due to land scarcity and the inefficiency of the *kābāle* administration.

5.6. Household Developmental Cycle and Access to Farmland

Chayenov's theory of dependency ratio explains that the amount of production is determined by household composition in the household developmental cycle. New households, which are established at the time of marriage, need minimum products. When children are born, the work force of the household must work longer hours and cultivate more land to feed household members. Therefore, the cultivable land has to be increased when household size increases. Then, when the first child marries and leaves the house, the size of cultivable land will be reduced (Donham, 1977; Netting, 1993).

In pre-1975 Wonqa when a couple established a new household they could get access to land through endowment and sharecropping, which is relatively limited. Their access could increase when the parents of either of the two, wife or husband, pass away and they inherit the land. And if the household head had a

good socio-economic as well as political status he could get access to more *rist* land by pressing successful claim. This is not directly related with the number of children in the household rather it is generally related with the age of the household head. This is because usually when the household head became older his chances to get access to his parents' land through inheritance and his grandparents' *rist* by pressing successful claim could be higher.

The basic principle of the 1975 Land Reform was to provide equal access to all households based on its size. Thus in the 1983 distribution the lands of the *käbäle* were categorized in to five. Of these in one category, *yäbetäsäb*, 10 x 200 *kind* were assigned for each household member. For instance, if there were five household members, which is the average household size, the household could access $5 \times 10 \times 200 \text{ kind} = 50 \times 200 \text{ kind}$ (one *t'imad*) of land.

This consideration for household members was not the same as the concept of Chayenov's theory for the following reasons: First, compared to the land allocated to a household without a child, about 8 *t'imads*, 0.2 *t'imad* for a member of a household was not large. The difference on the household economy was insignificant. Second, the allocation, which considered household members as criteria, was used only in the 1983 distribution. The newly born, within the household, did not get land after the 1983 distribution. In addition, unlike North Shewa (Yared, 1994; 1995), the share of a daughter was not taken from the household when she left the house by establishing a new household. Thus, it is

hard to say that access to land was mainly based on household size during the whole the *Därg* period in the study area.

However, there is a general trend of relation between the time when the household was established and the size of the farmland accessed. Generally maximum holders are those households, which were established before 1983, and obtained 8.5 *t'imads* of land in the 1983 distribution. These were followed by those households, which were established between 1983 – 1988, which were allocated 4.5 and above *t'imads* of land by the *käbäle* committee, from the land that was incorporated as *yämotä käda*. From 1988 to 1997, for about a decade, the *käbäle* did not allot land to the newly established households. Then, most of these households obtained from 0.5 – 4.5 *t'imads* of land in the 1997 reallocation, from the land which was taken from the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants". Yet, 35 newly established households got nothing in this reallocation. In addition, those households which have been established since 1997, are also landless. Some argued that this made competition and conflict inter-generational. For instance, Dessalegn (1995) argued that: " ...the increasing competition for land...has engendered social tensions and cleavages between the 'haves' and the 'have nots', but unlike the pre-Revolution period, the conflict is not along class but along generational lines" (Dessalegn, 1995:11).

This general trend only shows access to land through the *käbäle* administration, which does not include local agreements. In addition, the general trend may be affected by individual strategies to maximize their holdings. Moreover, the 1997

reallocation was an attempt to affect this general trend because all the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants" households, such as Alemu [case 13], Asnake [case 2] and Dagne [case 6], were established before 1983. However, they became smallholders due to the highly politicized reallocation. In addition, the general trend may also be affected at the critical moment of household, when divorce occurs or the household head died.

5.7. Political Significance of Access to Land

Land is one of the major factors of production for any agrarian society. Scott (1976) argued that control over land is the basis of rural power, because access to land has socio-economic importance. As Yared puts the idea of Wolfgang Weissleder "Social status and political power in pre-Revolutionary Amhara society was based on the control over land" (Yared, 1999).

During the period of Haile Selassie I, land was used as a means to administer and control the people. The office of *gult gaṣe* was used as instrument to administer and control the peasant. The political structure at the local level was also based on *gult* right. Besides, by giving access to *gult* land, emperors tried to win the loyalty of their followers to the crown. Pankhurst (1967) expresses *gult* as an emperor's gift of his taxation right to his followers.

Access to this scarce resource was one of the slogans of the student movement and one of the causes for the 1974 Revolution. Thus, the 1975 Land Reform was the response to this demand (Bahru, 1991). The 1975 Land Reform brought

political support for the *Därg* regime. Dessalegn (1992) also argued that land was a significant factor in 1974-1978 for state power consolidation. In Wonqa, land was used as an instrument to implement government policies: to establish producers' cooperatives, implement villagisation programmes, contribute to the war, work at Bir Sheleqo state farm at least a week per year, cultivate the plots of producers' cooperatives and so on. Moreover, some of those who had political position and those members of the producer's cooperative who were supported by the government had relatively better access to farmland.

This trend has continued since 1991. Some of those who had political position in the *käbäle* for the last ten years are now large holders. For instance Addis [case 11], who was a chairman of the *käbäle* for ten years (1991-2001), has increased his access to farmland by means of *diräba* by using his political position. The same is true about the head of the militia. Both, the chairman and head of the militia, were deposed due to corruption. Thus, some of the household heads that had/have positions at the *käbäle* have had more access to farmland.

On the other hand, access to land could be used to weaken political opponents. During the *Därg* period, the land reform targeted against the large holders, former *mäkwänints* (nobility). Under the EPRDF in 1992, the holdings of the so-called party and security members of the *Därg* government were reduced by half, and half of it was given to the ex-soldiers. Moreover, the 1997 reallocation was targeted against the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants". These categories of the societies have lost more than half of their holdings. Most of my

informants argued that it was targeted not for equitable and just distribution, rather it was purely political revenge and aimed at weakening the potential enemies economically. This had dual importance for the ruling party, according to some of my informants; first, these potential enemies were forced to focus on their economic problems rather than to discuss political issues i.e. diverting their attention. Second, it weakened the economic potential to buy firearms. Generally, it targeted them to weaken their political viability by weakening their economic viability.

Generally, during the three governments, those who had a position in the government structure had/have relatively better access to farmland compared to other members of the community. Moreover, in all the three governments, due to its socio-economic importance, land has political significance. It has been used as an instrument to control the people, to strengthen political supporters and weaken political opponents. Thus, it was/is a very important instrument for the sustainability of political power.

Conclusion

Household access to farmland had a close relation with socio-economic status in the pre-1975 Wonqa. When the principles of getting access to farmland changed due to the 1975 Land Reform, it had implications on socio-economic status of farming households. Land is no longer a symbol as well as a basis of social status due to the disruption of different rights over land. The relation between land access and economic stratification has also partly changed since the 1975 Land

Reform. Land continued as an important factor for household livelihood and became a major component together with capital in economic stratification.

There is a general relation between the time when the household was established and the size of farmland accessed. Those households, which obtained land in the 1983 distribution, are relatively maximum holders. Plot size has implications on land use, especially on intensification, crop choice and soil conservation.

Besides, the 1975 Land Reform had implications on landlessness and disputes over land. Landlessness was reduced when the 1975 Land Reform was implemented; however, it reemerged since the late 1980s when the PAs could not able to allot land to the newly established households. The figure reduced in the 1997 reallocation and increased, since 1997, then reached 6.62 percent in 2002. The same is true for tenancy. The extent of tenancy was at 22.61 percent in 2002. Likewise, disputes over land froze when the 1975 Land Reform was implemented, however it increased since the early 1990s and it became the second conflicting issues in 2002.

On the other hand, land has not lost its political significance. It used to favour political supporters. It also used, especially since 1991, to weaken potential political opponents (like the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants") by reducing their holdings by more than half. Land used as instrument for the stability and sustainability of political power. Thus, in all the three regimes land access was/is the central issue in the politics of the country. Still today, the question of land access is more of a political issue than an economic one.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The economy of the study area, East Gojjam, is basically agrarian with about 90 percent of its population living in rural areas. Thus, access to land is important for every household. The tradition and history of the study area has close relations with access to land. Traditions are important to understand the justification of the majority *balabats'* *rist* rights and the marginalization of the craftworkers. Moreover, history shows the peasant opposition to the tax reform of the central government in the 1940s. Furthermore, the peasants rebelled in the 1960s assuming that the tax reform was a pretext to abolish the traditional land tenure system.

6.1. Access to Farmland

During the Imperial period, access to *rist* land was determined by descent. Moreover, socio-economic as well as political status determined ability to press for successful claims. Thus, there was a close relationship between access to land and socio-economic status. Land was a symbol of social status because the social stratification was structured by the control of the land and people. Those who had taxation rights over the land were *mākwānints*, usufructory rights were held by *balabats* and the landless were usually craftworkers and ex-slaves.

The 1975 Land Reform abolished these different kind of rights and provided 'equal' access to farmland for all members of the rural community regardless of their descent. PAs were established to implement the proclamation and to replace

the old political structure at the local level. The first distribution was conducted three years after the proclamation in 1978-9. This distribution was considered not an equitable and a full-scale distribution; land was only taken from the maximum holders and distributed to the landless and land-short households. In this distribution, the former landless and land-short households got the poorest quality land. However, the second distribution, referred to as the *sir nāqāl* distribution of 1983, was considered equitable in terms of quality as well as size. That is why the peasants argued that "the real land to the tiller was implemented in the 1983 distribution." Thereafter, the equitability began to be challenged by different strategies of household members to maximize their holdings. Political position, being a member of the producers' co-operative, economic status and kinship were the major means to get more access to farmland. Yigremew (1999) also argued that land eviction in the country was common in the names of villagization and producers' cooperatives during the *Därg* period.

Under the EPRDF, different kinds of reshuffling were conducted. In 1992 plots were taken from party and security members of the *Därg* government and allotted to the ex-soldiers. Then, in the 1997 reallocation, the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants" lost more than half of their holdings and were limited to one hectare, which is less than the average plot size of the study area. The confiscated land was distributed to landless female-headed and newly established households. The 1997 reallocation has been criticized as more of a politically motivated than a fair and equitable distribution (Ege, 2000; Teferi, 2000;

Yigremew, 1997) because from the very categorization of the peasants to the grievance hearing system, the whole process was secretive and highly politicized.

During the periods of the three governments, women have had access to farmland. During the Imperial period, women had equal rights to men in inheriting their parents' *rist*. When divorce occurred, a woman could take her *rist* land without any problem because her kinsmen stood on her side to defend her *rist*. Like the men, the women had no right to inherit their spouse's *rist*. The 1975 Land Reform gave protection to female household heads especially to those who gave their *rist* to sharecroppers. In practice, female-headed households had equal access in the 1978 and 1983 distributions. However, they lost one category of plots after the 1983 distribution due to the failure to meet the AMC obligations. Moreover, women's access to household land when divorce occurred was conditioned by the reason of the divorce. Unlike the men, women's access to household farmland at the time of the death of her husband was dependent on the existence of an offspring. Under the EPRDF, women have equal access, as men, to household farmland at times of divorce as well as when a husband dies. In addition, during the 1997 distribution, from the total of 285 households that have got land, 152 (53.33%) were female-headed households. However, they obtained an average of 1.66 *t'imads* (0.41 hectare), which is less than the average of the newly established households' (2.09 *t'imads* or 0.52 hectare). Though the proclamation gave rights for women to have equal access to farmland, there were some limitations in the implementation.

Endowment and inheritance were also means of getting access to farmland in the Imperial era. Endowments have continued, as one means of access to land for newly established households; however, this is becoming rare and temporary due to land scarcity. On the other hand, inheritance was conditional as a means of access to farmland in the *Därg* period; only those children who did not get land from the *käbäle* had the right to inherit land. Recently, land inheritance was re-instituted as a means of access to land under the EPRDF, especially since 2000 (Proclamation No. 49/2000).

Besides the above means of access to farmland, local agreements are important to get access to farmland for the landless and land-short households. It is also important to use scarce resources through such transactions. In these transactions, labour and capital played an important role. Their value had varied over time with the varying value of land. For instance, the value of land increased through the three regimes from 25% to 40% of the total produce. Compared to the Imperial period the increment is 100 percent in the case of fertile land, whereas the value of labour has declined from 66.67 % to 20% of the total produce. The value of capital increased even further from 8.33 % to 40 % of the total produce. Thus, capital and land became important factors of production. In the reign of Haile Selassie I, the value of labour was relatively high (66.67%) however, it has been reduced to 20% of the total produce currently. Labour was also important to get access to sharecropped land during the time of the reign of Haile Selassie I. Then, during the *Därg* period, capital became important, because everybody had

'equal access' to farmland and capital constraint was critical. Finally, since 1991 the combination of the two (land and capital) has become very important.

In addition, in the period of Haile Selassie I the value of land was uniform. However, since the end of 1980s, the value of land has been dependent on its fertility or whether it needs more capital and labour, because almost all the peasants started to use fertilizer since the late 1980s. Prior to the late 1980s only a few peasants used fertilizer, though peasants started to use fertilizer at the end of the Imperial regime.

Getting access to sharecropped land has also varied over time depending on the value of factors of production. During the Imperial period, it was possible to give land through sharecropping agreements to any one that wanted to conclude such an agreement because land was relatively abundant. Then, during the period of the *Dārg*, kinship attained priority in relation to legality. However, since 1990, a person who has strong capital and labour, and who could produce more got priority. Besides, the role of capital, in the form of money, became important in getting access to rented land as well as to buy homestead land. Therefore, currently, local agreements have developed a market nature in which the involvement of money has increased and everybody needs to maximize their share depending on the value of the factors of production.

In general, farming households could access to farmland through distribution, inheritance, endowments, and/or local agreements. Thus, household heads used

different strategies to maximize their access to farmland for their household livelihood and economic stratification.

6.2. Socio-economic Implicates of the 1975 Land Reform

The 1975 Land Reform has socio-economic implications on land use, landlessness, disputes over land, inter- and intra-household relations, and on the socio-economic status of the farming households.

Land access determines land use in the study area. The fallow system was abandoned after the 1975 Land Reform and peasants relied on fertilizer. Compared with the Imperial's period large holders, the smallholders during the fieldwork (2002) used a more intensive system by spending more labour per unit of hectare as well as by using fertilizer and selected seeds. Plot size also determines crop choice and whether to produce for household consumption or for the market. Most peasants in Wonqa give priority to household consumption rather than producing only for the market. On the other hand, sharecropping and smallholdings have negative implications on the traditional crop rotation system of soil conservation, because the peasants need to cultivate crops like *teff* and wheat for household consumption.

Land scarcity re-instituted landlessness and disputes over land. Landlessness was a pre-1975 social problem. Landless artisans were about 10 percent in pre-revolution Gojjam (Hoben, 1973). The figure was reduced and landlessness was initially abolished due to the implementation of the 1975 Land Reform. However,

the PA was not able to allot land to the newly established households since the end of 1980s, due to the scarcity of land. Therefore, landlessness reemerged in the study area and at the time of the fieldwork reached 6.62% of the total households. Likewise, disputes over land, which were common in pre-1975 Wonqa, were abolished by Proclamation No 31/1975. However, disputes over land increased and became the second most frequent type of conflict in the last five years due to land pressure and inefficiency of the *kābāle* administration in handling cases.

Land access has an effect on inter- and intra-household relations. Variation in access to farmland has implications for inter-household relations within the community. For instance, access to land has implications for the relations between the 'land rich' and the *tāt'āmajs* in pre-1975 Wonqa; between the members of producers' cooperative and the non-members during the *Dārg* period. The same is true between those who lost and those who gained land in the 1997 distribution. Maximum holders and those who gained land in the 1997 reallocation were considered as government supporters while the so-called "bureaucrats" and "feudal remnants" were considered as government opponents. In general, if there is no equitability in access to farmland, it has negative implications on inter-household relation.

In addition, the relationship between the 'land rich' and the *tātāmaj* has altered. Before the 1975 Land Reform, the 'land rich' were dominant. This situation gradually changed during the *Dārg* period, and now sharecroppers who have

capital and labour are dominant rather than the 'land rich' in issues like crop choice.

The 1975 Land Reform has implications for kinsmen's relationships. Before 1975, kinsmen, who were descended from common ancestors, competed for access to *rist* land. Disputes over land were obviously disputes among kinsmen. When land became scarce, disputes over land, among the kinsmen, increased and made the relationship hostile. However, the 1975 Land Reform froze disputes over land. Moreover, kinship became one of the persistent means, still to this day, to favour someone to get more access to land at the time of distribution. Besides, it is also important to get access to farmland through local agreements. Generally, kinship relations have changed since 1975 from rivalry for access to *rist* land to a means of getting more access to land, which strengthened their importance.

Access to land could also affect intra-household relations. The size of the plot could have implications on household composition, economy, and labour utilization. If the household had access to more land, the size of the household was also larger by hiring labourers who reside in the employers' houses or giving shelter for the unfortunate kinsmen. In this case, the economy of the household could be in a good condition and the household labour could be used exhaustively. On the other hand, the re-institution of inheritance also started to affect intra-household relations. Children started to treat their parents very well and became more submissive in the hope of being favoured by their parents and

subsequently to inherit land. Thus, siblings started to compete with each other to influence their parents for land inheritance.

Before the 1975 Land Reform, household access to farmland had a close relationship with socio-economic status. When the principles of getting access to farmland were changed due to the 1975 Land Reform, this had socio-economic implications particularly on the socio-economic status of farming households. Maximum landholders had a higher economic status before 1975. The 'land rich' were also capital providers at that time. When the 1975 Land Reform was implemented, maximum holders lost most of their plots in various ecological zones. Subsequently, capital became a serious constraint. Thus, the former land rich who had enough capital were able to continue to maintain their economic status. In addition, not only land but rather land together with capital became important for economic stratification. Those households, which have both factors of production in sufficient amounts, could achieve a higher economic status. In addition, a household, which has either of the two to a sufficient extent, could produce enough for the household livelihood. Households which lack both factors of production, have less chance for securing an independent household livelihood. Therefore, land has continued as an important factor for household livelihood and became a major component together with capital for economic stratification.

The pre-1975 social stratification was structured based on rights over land: *mākwānints* had taxation rights, *balabats* had usufructory rights, and artisans and slaves were landless. The structure which was abolished by the 1975 Land

Reform due to 'equal' access to farmland for all rural members of the community, resulted in land no longer being a symbol of social status. Teferi (1993) also observed a similar situation in Wollo. However, the change to the age long established status through such a structure was very gradual. Still, artisans are marginalized. In addition, one of the criteria to be honoured was slightly changed; those who defend their *rist* were honoured before 1975. After the reform, those who defended the interest of the community have been honoured due to the increasing government interference in local affairs.

Nevertheless, land has not lost its political significance. During all the three regimes, land was used to strengthen political supporters and weaken political opponents. In the case of the Haile Sellassie regime, the *mäkwani* had extraordinary access to *rist* and *gult* land. In the case of the *Därg* regime, members of producers' cooperatives had rights to get more and best land. During the EPRDF regime, the 1997 reallocation was targeted to weaken political opponents. In the first two regimes, the focus was mainly on providing more land access to government supporters, while in the third government the intention was mainly to weaken potential enemies by taking more than half of their holdings. Moreover, during all the three governments those who had political positions have had better access to land than others. In all regimes, access to land was/is the central issue in the politics of the county. Still today, a question of land access is more of a political issue than an economic one. Thus, land continues to be used as a political instrument to stabilize and sustain political power.

In general, there has been continuity as well as change in the last quarter of the century concerning household farmland access and socio-economic status. Land has continued to be used as political instrument. As Yared (1995; 1999) and Hoben (2002) argued, land has continued as an important factor for household economic livelihood and the same holds true in Wonqa. Nevertheless, neither only land, as in the findings of Yared (1995; 1999) and Hoben (2002), nor primarily capital, as in the findings of Bauer (1975; 1977) and McCann (1984) grant higher economic status in Wonqa; rather the combination of the two enable attaining higher economic status. Thus, land becomes a major component together with capital for economic stratification. However, land lost its social value as an index of social status due to the disruption of the social structure on which social stratification was based, since the 1975 Land Reform. Thus, land is no longer a symbol of social status.

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ANNEX I: LIFE HISTORIES OF SELECTED HOUSEHOLD HEADS

CASE HISTORY 1: ASNAKE

Asnake is an 85 year old household head who resides in Deber *got'*. He attended church education at Wonque, under the supervision of his father. He married when he was 22. Asnake established his household after two years. At that time, he got about 10 *t'imads* of land, 2 oxen, 3 cows and 2 calves from his father as endowment. The bride's parents also contributed 2 oxen, 3 cows, and 1 she-sheep for the newly established household. So they started the newly established household with the initial capital of two pairs of oxen, which were high, 6 cows, 2 calves and 1 she-sheep, because the parents of the couples were wealthy.

Asnake has enough land and capital to run his newly established household. He inherited more than 30 *timads* of land, which is more than enough to cultivate with his household members' labour when his father died about 12 years after the establishment of the new household. Therefore, he gave some of the land with a pair of oxen for the *tātāmajes* (sharecroppers) based on the *siso* agreement as a value of the land and capital.

Asnake becomes *nāch lābash* (militia) in Wonqa. Because of his behaviour and effort he was promoted to captain, with this he increased his holding to up to 40 *t'imads* through successful claims. In the early 1970s, he becomes the vice *mislāne* (governor) of Machekel *Wārāda*.

When the *Dārg* government came to power in 1974, Asnake was not confident about his position but because of his hard work and diplomatic approach he continued to work with the *Dārg* government as vice-*wārāda* administrator in Machakel and Gozamin *Wārādas*. When land to the tiller was proclaimed in 1975, Asnake had 40 *t'imads* of land in various areas. He lost more than half of the land, especially that was found in other *Kābāles* and only 11 *t'imads* had left in Wonqa. In Wonqa his tenant took the land as well as two pairs of oxen based on the proclamation. However, through negotiation of the elders the tenant returned two oxen and paid the price of the two oxen within three years.

Nevertheless, Asnake's 11 *t'imads* *rist* in Wonqa remain under his holding, because he was vice-administrator of the Machikell *Wārāda*. Still he was influential so the committee in Wonqa (though they took the farmland of the government employees) did not take Asnake's holdings. Moreover, during the 1983 distribution he got 11 *t'imads* of land, as a farming household head though he was a government employee.

In 1987, Asnake retired from government service at the age of 69 (because he reduced almost 10 years of his age when he first became government employee) with 80 *Birr* pension per month. At that time, he had 5 children; of these 3 of them joined police forces in different areas. The rest two live in Wonqa by running their own households.

In the 1997 reallocation under the EPRDF government, Asnake was classified as bureaucrat and *k'irit feudal* (feudal remnant) because he worked in the period of Haile Selassie I and the *Därg* as vice-*wäräda* administrator and held more than 40 *t'imads rist*. So his holdings were reduced to 4 *t'imads* including his homestead (which is 1 *t'imad*). So in this reallocation he lost more than 7 *t'imads*.

Asnake's son, who got married at the time of the 1997 allocation, applied for farmland like other newly established household heads. However, Asnake's son was classified as the son of a "bureaucrat," so he got nothing. Asnake's daughter married a landless man whose father had not enough plots to give to his son even for a homestead. Therefore, Asnake gave one *t'imad* to his son and daughter to construct their houses. The remaining, the two *t'imads* (0.5 hectare), of the land is cultivated by his son. Asnake contributes fertilizer, seed and oxen, his son contributed his labour, and the product was divided equally.

In addition, Asnake had access to 3 *t'imads* of farmland for the last 4 years through sharecrop with *siso* agreement. Asnake's son cultivated the land, and Asnake contributed a pair of oxen and 507 *Birr* for fertilizer. Then the final product including the straw is divided into two 1/3 for the 'land rich' and 2/3 of the production for him. Then the 2/3 is also further re-divided into two equally between Asnake and his son as value of capital and labour respectively. However, the product was not enough to feed his household members. Therefore, he has to buy additional food for him and his son.

Now Asnake is in an old man and poor in relation to the golden days of his youth and middle age. His access to land, which increased when he held office in the period of Haile Selassie I, was reduced gradually from 40 *t'imads* to 4 *t'imads* in 1997. Now Asnake the former land rich has been *tätämäj* (sharecropper). His economic status reduced gradually. Asnake concluded the interview saying, "*gizew yä-setäгна adari ena yä-shämane näw*" (lit: now it is the time of female household heads and weavers).

CASE HISTORY 2: LEKU

Leku is a 92 year old household head who resides in Deber *got'*. His father was a known *märegeta* (chant leader) at St. Georgis Church of Wonqa. Leku attended church education and got married at the age of 34 when his wife was 15. He established the new household with a pair of oxen and a cow. His wife did not contribute oxen. He got about 15 *t'imads* of land from his father. His father was a successful man to press *rist* land by using his position at the church and his knowledge of genealogy.

Leku's father gave lists of genealogy for Leku. Leku was also successful to win court cases because he knew the regulations, his position at the church and his education helped him to press successful claim and maximize his *rist* land. Thus, he got more than 30 *t'imads* in Yetijan and more than 10 *t'imads* in Deber, Yessaba and Yemeqa (neighboring Wonqa) and he gave most of the land to sharecroppers.

In 1945, he had his first child the same year his father died. Thus, he took his father's position at the church. His father earned 6 *q'una* (*q'una* is a unit of grain measurement, 1 *q'una* is about 10 k.g) grain per *got'*, and 5 Maria Theresa Dollars grain when he was a teacher at the church. Then in 1951 he joined the Ministry of Education as a teacher with his church education. He taught *fidäl* (Amharic alphabets) for a monthly salary of 30 *Birr*. In 1952 when a school was opened in Wonqa, he was transferred to Wonqa to run the new elementary school. Leku continued his education up to grade 8 in summer course and his salary became 150 *Birr* per month. Then he was retired in 1975 with 63 *Birr* pension allowance and returned to his farm.

In the same year, "land to the tiller" was proclaimed. Then Leku had lost all his land outside Wonqa. One of the *tätāmaj* who used Leku's pair of oxen to cultivate the land, took the oxen based on the proclamation. However, the *tätāmaj* later returned an ox with negotiation and paid the price of the other (based on the estimation of elders) with in 3 years. In the 1978-9 distribution he had about 11 *t'imads* of land. Then in the 1983 distribution, he got about 10 *t'imads* of land for 11 household members.

When PA was established in Wonqa Leku became a member of the *fird shāngo* (judicial tribunal) of the *kābāle* and subsequently was elected as chairman of Gozamin *Wārāda* Peasant Association, in which he worked for about two years. According to Leku, he did not get any additional land when he was a chairman of the *Wārāda* PA. However, some argued that his household members were not 11 at that time as most of his children left home when they became government employees. In addition, there were other retired individuals at Wonqa who did not obtain farmland; thus, he used his political position to get more farmland.

During the 1997 reallocation Leku was categorized as a "bureaucrat" and lost more than half of his holdings. The committee gave him a chance to choose up to 4 *t'imads* best land. So he chose the best land but lost 6 *t'imads* of land. He argued that it was unfair to give 12 *t'imads* to others and limit him 4 *t'imads*. Even if they did wrong, the case could be seen in a regular court. So he argued that this is purely revenge.

Currently Leku lives with his wife and his grand son. His holding has been reduced since 1975 and reached 4 *t'imads*. He gave his 3 *t'imads* of land to sharecropper with *ya-ekul* (equal) agreement. The remaining 1 *t'imad* is given to his nephew in *ya-ekul* basis though Leku contributes land, oxen, half of the price of fertilizer and seed due to their kinship ties. This is how he has led his life. He is still serving the church as *mälakä gänāt* (lit: the angel of haven, an administrator of the church); some of his children have good positions. They helped him in different ways. His social status is still very high due to his position at the church, though he lost most of his land.

CASE 3: ENATALEM

Enatalem, 45, is female household head and the resident of Aboyen *got'*. She was born at a place called Gabechea and she got married there at the age of 10. However the marriage did not last long, she divorced within a year. Then she went in to her parents' household and stayed for two years.

After two years, Enatalem married her second husband in the same *kābāle*; nevertheless, he was not a good man then the marriage ended within two years. So she returned and stayed for a certain period in her parents' house. Then she married her third husband at Addis *got'* i.e. near Wonqa. This marriage also did not last long and ended with divorce. She returned again for the third time to her parents' house. Finally she married her fourth husband and came to Wonqa at Aboyn *got'*. She had six children from the fourth husband, of these two of them died.

When Enatalem established a new household with the last husband, they had a pair of oxen. They cultivated her parents' plot and got 1/2 of the product. When land was distributed in 1983, they got 3 *t'imads* of land because the household was newly established but later got an additional five *t'imads* from *yāmotā kāda*. During the *Dārg* period, Enatalem's husband was one of the announcers in the *kābāle* for the contribution of *enjāra* (bread) for 'the call of mother land' at the time of the war. Thus when land was reallocated in 1997 her husband was categorized as a 'bureaucrat' and his holdings were reduced to 4 *t'imads* of land including his homestead. He was extremely angry. He became ill and died after three years in September 2001. Then the land is under her control. Her son ploughed it. Unfortunately he died last June 2002 and the field was cultivated by the help of the relatives and *mahibärtāgnas* (members of a religious association).

By now, Enatalem has 5 household members. In the coming season, she does not have any choice except giving the land to a sharecropper. Thus, her income may be reduced at least by half.

CASE 4: BEZABISH

Bezabish is 68 and resident of Deber *got'*. She was married at the age of 14 and went to Dabre Markos, because her husband was working with sewing machine. After a year, the marriage ended in divorce. Thus she went to Wonqa to defend her mother's *rist*, she obtained around 15 *t'imads* of land. Bezabish has two children from different fathers without a formal marriage.

When land was distributed during the *Dārg* period Bezabish was at Debre Markos to start small-scale business, therefore she lost all her 15 *t'imads* of land. Only the homestead land was left because the committee considered her as a merchant not as a farmer. Therefore, she depended on the homestead land by cultivating different plants and vegetables. In addition, she was engaged in non-agricultural activities. She started a small-scale business i.e. buying grain from the rural area and selling in Debre Markos; in addition, she bought soap and other commodities from Debre Markos to sell in rural areas. Unfortunately, Bezabish's homestead

land is near Wonqa River, every year the river took part of the homestead soil, and the area became a gorge. In this process, she lost more than 1,000 eucalyptus trees, vegetables and finally her house. So she moved to her daughter's place.

In the 1997 reallocation, Bezabish got 2 *t'imads* of land. However, its productivity is very low because they did not cultivate the land properly and shortage of fertilizer, so the product also became small. According to Bezabish, she does not have good relatives. If it is given to a good relative its productivity might be good and she said "*mani alägn bilähinäw kalä gewärges*" (I do not have any one except St. George). The first sharecropper paid 1/4 of the product, next year he agreed to pay 1/3. However, during harvest he gave her 1/4 because the land was infested with insects. Hence, she abrogated the agreement. This year crops of a *t'imad* failed, so she will be in trouble for the coming harvest. Still she is expected to pay 20.50 *Birr* land tax. Now she is selling *tälla*, she has a child and two grand children and an orphan in her house to be fed.

CASE 05: GELAW

Gelaw, 46, is a resident of Aboyen *got'*. He married his first wife at 20, and divorced her within a year. Then he lived with his father for a year. Gelaw married his second wife after a year. In the first two years, he cultivated with his parents and got 1/3 of the produce.

After two years Gelaw established his new household and started to plough his father's land with a pair of oxen contributed each from the parents' of the groom and the bride. After a year land was distributed and Gelaw got 4 *t'imads* from *Bonda*, 2 *t'imads* from *amba zur*, 2 *t'imads* of *däbay* and one *t'imad* for homestead; in total 9 *t'imads* of land, which is beyond the limit. He might have a relative or bribed the committee, because he did not have a large household size. However, he said the land was allotted based on lot. After a year, there was villagization. His land was chosen to be the village site and was taken by different households, and he got the replacement from the people who constructed their house on his plots. All the land which he got in the 1983 distribution, is still under his control. This is because, according to him, he had no *nikiki* (lit. was not contaminated i.e. not a member of the *Därg* Committee). For this, he paid 45 *Birr* tax.

Gelaw has two pairs of oxen, he has also engaged in different sharecrop agreements. Gelaw obtained 4 *t'imads* of land from the school based on *siso* agreement, 1 *t'imad* from the newly established household head who lacks capital based on *siso* agreement, and 1 *t'imad* from *amba zur* at the costs of 1/2. In addition, in 1997 he rented a *t'imad* from a female household head at a price of 70 *Birr*, then after two years it became 90 and now it is 100 *Birr*. However, the woman died last year, and since there is no person to inherit the land, it was taken by the *käbäle* as *yämotä käda* and given to the ex-soldiers who took part in the Ethiopia-Eritrea war. Besides his 9 *t'imads* of land, which he obtained in the 1983 distribution, Gelaw has had access to 7 *t'imads* of land through sharecropping agreements.

Gelaw maximized his access to farmland due to his labour and capital and his good networks. Thus, his strength in capital and labour, as well as networks increased his access to sharecropped land. His wife and his children are also strong in supporting the household head in labour for the household livelihood.

CASE 6: DAGNE

Dagne is a 92 year old household head and resident of Daber *got'*. He married his first wife at the age of 22 and he lived with her for a year, then the marriage ended with divorce and he continued to live with his parents. After a year and half, Dagne married his second wife and continued to live with his parents for two years.

After two years, he established his own household. At this time, he got a pair of oxen from his father and another from his father-in-law. And his father-in-law brought 1 *chan* (a unit of measurement for grain i.e. about 18 quintals) of grain. His father also gave him 3 *e'ta* (lot), about 10 *t'imads*, land. At that time *rist* was divided among the children at the death of their parents based on lot so they call it *et'a* (lot) land. He had 4 children from his second wife and the marriage ended with divorce after ten years. Then he married and divorced frequently, 13 times.

When Dagne's father and mother died, he inherited 10 *et'a* (lot) land in Wonqa and more than 10 in Yebirage and Demashesh (neighboring *kābāles* of Wonqa). Generally, he had more than 20 *et'a* land inherited from his parents. In addition, he won the additional 3 *t'imads* of *rist* land in different areas, because he worked as *chiq'a shum* for 6 years and *at'ibia dagna* for 4 years. So he used his knowledge of genealogy and law as well as his position as *at'ibia dagna* to press a successful claim. He was the last *at'ibia dagna* before the establishment of the Peasant Association. When land reform was introduced, first he lost his *rist* in other *kābāles* because the proclamation prohibited *mofār zāmāt*. Second, he lost part of his *rist* in 1978-9, his land was given to the landless weavers. At this time, Dagne lost about 2 *t'imads* of land in Wonqa. During the 1983 distribution, he lost his *rist* and obtained about 8 *t'imads*.

In the 1997 reallocation Dagne was classified as a 'feudal remnant' and his holding was reduced by half and limited to 4 *t'imads* including his homestead. So his holding increased when he had political position and his holding reduced since 1975 when he lost his political position. Dagne accepted the loss during the *Dārg* period. However, he felt that the loss in 1997 was unacceptable, unfair and illogical for him because he already lost most of his holdings due to the 1975 proclamation.

By now, Dagne has 3 household members and his land is ploughed by his son. His social status is still more or less the same; the community respects him, not only for his age but also due to his former socio-economic status. Even when he attended the peasant conference in October 2002 at the *kābāle*, he sat in all the three days beside the committee members. While, his age mates sat in the first row. The *kābāle* officials have also respect for him, due to his social status, to tell Dagne to sit with other members of the community.

CASE 7: BELETE

Belete is a 26 year old household head who resides in Deber got'. He started to attend school at the age of 10 and continued his education up to grade 5. Belete's father is poor and not interested to support Belete. Therefore, he dropout from the school and was fully engaged in ploughing his father's plots and doing other agricultural activities. Belete married at the age of 17 and stayed with his wife only for six months. Then he continued to live with his father for two and a half years. Then he remarried in 1996 and started to work with his father and got one-third of the produce. During the 1997 reallocation, Belete got nothing because the committee argued he married only a year earlier. However, most of his age mates who had married their first wife three or four years earlier got land. Belete complained that, he was forgotten because he did not have *wägān* (relative) within the committee.

Belete established his household after 2 years in 1998 on the land he was given by the committee for house construction (25 x 40 *kind* or 0.025 hectare). And he continued to cultivate his fathers' land for a year. Then since his father did not have enough land, he told him to find a sharecrop agreement. However, he did not get sharecropped land because most 'land rich' do not like to give their land to a farmer who does not have an ox/oxen.

As a result, Belete started to work as a daily labourer in Wonqa and Dabre Markos. Then in October 1999, he came to Addis, leaving his wife with her family, in search of job. Therefore, he went to Mojo. At Mojo he found a job on a contract basis i.e. to mow 50 x 50m area for 35 *Birr*, his food and shelter was covered by the employer. Usually he could finish the work within 5 days. Then he started to work together with his three friends four of them could always finish a 50 x 50m area with in a day. In November, the pay increased 40 *Birr* for the above units of land then it became 50 *Birr* in December; the price increased at the peak of harvest season. Belete started the work from Mojo and ended at Akaki. Finally he saved 630 *Birr* when he returned to Wonqa. So he bought an ox for the price of 580 *Birr*. In the same year he got 3 *t'imads* of land in different places based on *siso* agreements. He cultivated the land with his wife using his ox as *māqānajo* (a system of pairing an ox with a household which has an ox in return). He did not engage in any off-farm activity in 2000. However in 2001, he worked with the Chines Construction Company, as a daily labourer for a wage of 8 *Birr* per day, when the Dabre Markos - Bahir Dar road was asphalted. Then he earned about 450 *Birr* and adding 150 *Birr* he than bought an additional ox at the cost of 600 *Birr* and concluded an agreement for an additional 2 *t'imads* of land from *Amba Zur* in *yä-ekul* terms.

By now Belete is relatively better off and is food self-sufficient but he still complains that his oxen are not strong enough to conclude additional sharecrop agreements. This year (2002) he cultivated oil seeds, *teff*, wheat, and maize, but the maize is not good due to the shortage of *Bālg* rain. Belete had a baby last year, the household member is growing and his access to land through his capital

and labour has also increased. Belete hopes that his life would improve especially by strengthening his capital by doing off-frame activity.

CASE 8: TEGEGN

Tegegn is a 37 year old household head who resides in Deber *goʼ*. He attended school up to grade 12. In 1983, he joined the army. He married at the age of 25 at Holeta, near Addis Ababa. However, the marriage ended within a year when he was transferred to Asmara in 1990. He continued to live in Asmara up to 1991. By May 1991, the EPLF (Ertirian Peoples Liberation Front) controlled Asmara and he returned to his birthplace. At this time he was wounded on his right hand, so he has got 178 *Birr* as a pension allowance. When other ex-soldiers got land in 1992, he did not get land because of his pension allowance. Furthermore, he appealed for farmland when land was reallocated in 1997; however, his application did not get consideration because the guidelines did not accommodate the demands of those who have a pension allowance.

However Tegegn married a woman who had 4 *t'imads* of land, which she got in the 1997 reallocation. He had an ox but he could not plough due to his health problem. Thus, the land was given to a sharecropper based on a *siso* agreement. He managed his household by combining the income from agriculture and his pension allowance. He has a child. Unfortunately, his wife died two years ago. Thus he inherited her land and he gave the land to his father based on a *siso* agreement. His father was categorized as a "bureaucrat" in 1997 because he worked in a committee, which follows up the selling of grain to the AMC.

Tegegn subsidized his household by working in seedling eucalyptus trees. However, he did not work longer because the price of plastic bags, which is used for seedling eucalyptus became very expensive. He tried to get irrigated land to cultivate vegetable but it is hard to get even in *yä-ekul* terms. He also tried to rear livestock; however, he was not successful due to capital constraints and the absence of appropriate credit facility with low interest rate to alleviate his capital constraint. The current credit facility according to Tegegn is bureaucratic and the interest rate is 12.5%, which is very high. Moreover, the credit is given on a group basis. Usually he gets 2 quintals of *teff* or 3 quintals of barley or 1/2 quintal of oily seed every year and paid 30 *Birr* land tax. He still continued the agreement with his father. Currently he is thinking of other means of additional income but faces capital constraint.

CASE 9: TEBEBU

Tebebu, 68, is a resident of Addis *goʼ*. Tebebu started ironwork under the supervision of his father when he was about 12, by the age of 15 he could make all kinds of iron tools. He married at the age of 18, however the marriage did not last long; it ended in less than a year. Then he remarried three times between the ages of 18 to 25.

When Tebebu established his household, his father gave him a pair of oxen and a cow. However, his father did not have land to give to Tebebu as an endowment because he was a handicraft worker; thus he did not have access to *rist* land.

When Tebebu's father died in 1968, he took all the responsibilities to run both households. His household was established on the lands of the land rich; as a reward he had to make all iron tools for free and sometimes he had to assist the land rich's household during the peak agricultural season. He made all kinds of iron tools for household consumption as well as for market. He subsidized his household by rearing livestock and sometimes by engaging in a sharecrop agreements.

In terms of socio-economic status the period of Haile Selassie I were not good for Tebebu. The prices of iron tools were very low and the income from sharecropping was not satisfactory. So his economic status was low compared to the majority *balabats*. In terms of social status, he was considered as 'sub-human'. He could not intermarry with the *balabats*, did not have the same *mahibär* with the *balabats*, and never ate with the *balabats* in public ceremonies and feasts, was not allowed to serve the church as deacon or priest. In addition, there was no room for him to have political position.

The 1975 Land Reform gave Tebebu equal access to farmland with the *balabats*. He got about 5 *t'imads* of land in the 1978-9 distribution, and then he obtained 8.5 *t'imads* of land in the 1983 distribution. Because of this, his relations with the former land rich have changed. Instead of being a tenant, he had his own land; instead of making iron tools for the land rich's household for free, he started to obtain the price of his labour. In addition, he agreed with a number of household heads to make iron tools for free, the peasant also agreed to cultivate his plots. Until 2001, more than 100 household heads agreed to cultivate his plots. Then by 2001 the peasant considered the agreement as *hudad* (free labour which was given to the household of the *gult gāz* in pre-1975). In addition, they complained that he was not doing their iron tools very well and the food he provided them during the working days was not good. Therefore, they terminated the agreement and started to pay in cash for his service. He also started to plough his own plots.

During the *Därg* period, Tebebu was elected as a committee member for the service cooperative, so he was categorized as a "bureaucrat" in the 1997 reallocation and his holdings were reduced to 4 *t'imads*. He argued that his position during the *Därg* period was not enough to classify him as a "bureaucrat" but due to his handicraft background the *dälday* committee did not like to see his holdings as equal to them.

At the time of the 1997 reallocation Tebebu was in Addis Ababa for training, which was provided by the Finnish government to promote rural technology. In this training he stood first and was chosen in the following year to train the next batch, for six months and earned 3,000 *Birr* with which he bought different instruments for ironwork and a heifer. Due to the reduction of his holdings, Tebebu was engaged in a local agreement renting 1.5 *t'imads* of land at a cost of 200 *Birr* per year.

In 2002, Tebebu has 10 household members. His access to land increased in the *Därg* period but he lost more than half of his holdings in the 1997 reallocation. His

economic situation is relatively better compared to the period of Haile Selassie I. His social status, improved institutionally since 1975. He has a *mahibär* with the former *balabats*; he could eat with the former *balabats* equally in public ceremonies and feasts. However, his children could not intermarry with the children of former *balabats*, he could not slaughter cattle for public ceremonies and would not be invited to speak at public ceremonies. On the other hand, he could participate in local politics.

In general although his economic position has improved and his socio-political status has improved institutionally since the *Därg* period, his social status within the community has not improved as he expected it.

CASE 10: MESERET

Meseret is a 62 year old household head who resides in Deber *goṭ*. He was born in Debago, near Wonqa. When his father died, he came to Wonqa with his mother because she had *rist* in Wonqa. He did not inherit his father's *rist* because his father had not inherited *rist* because he died before his father. Therefore, Meseret started to plough his mother's limited *rist*. Due to her limited knowledge of genealogy as well as her socio-economic status, his mother could not obtain her appropriate *rist*. Meseret married at the age of 17 but the marriage ended in less than a year, he remarried two wives within three years. He established his household at the age of 22 when he married his fourth (current) wife with whom he has 4 children.

Meseret established his new household with the initial capital of 2 oxen, which he obtained from his mother and his father-in-law. He continued to plough his mother's 2 *t'imads* of land by giving some amount to his mother. When he was in his early 40s, he got the *rist* of his mother and his father outside Wonqa, about 15 *t'imads*, by pressing successful claims. Then he continued to plough these plots with three oxen.

However, due to the 1975 Land Reform Meseret lost the 15 *t'imads* of land outside Wonqa and was limited to the 2 *t'imads* of his mother's *rist*, which is found in Wonqa. He continued to plough this land up to the 1978-9 distribution. He asked his relatives to give him some plots. However, they responded to his demand saying "It is a time of land to the tiller not the time of *rist*." When land was distributed in 1978-9, he got an additional 3 *t'imads* and when it was re-distributed in 1983 he got a total of 8.5 *t'imads* of land, which is relatively better compared to the period between 1975-1983. During the *Därg* period, he was elected as a member of *fird shāngo* (judicial tribunal) of the PA.

In 1986, Meseret with 11 other individuals established a producers' co-operative due to government propaganda, especially to get more land under the name of producers' co-operative. He became a chairman of the co-operative. Then most of the members of the PA committee joined the co-operative. It was true that the members of producers' cooperative took the best and more land. Those who lost their land to the producers' cooperative obtained the replacement lately in smaller amounts from the land of *yāmotä kāda*.

When the EPRDF controlled the area in 1991, the producers' cooperative failed to continue. When the land was re-exchanged with the former holders through the local elders, Meseret got his former holdings i.e. 8.5 *t'imads*. During the 1997 reallocation, Meseret was classified as a "bureaucrat" and lost more than half of his plot and was limited to 4 *t'imads* of land. Therefore, he engaged in sharecropping for household livelihood on the bases of *siso* or *yä-ekul* agreements. According to Meseret, the 1997 reallocation was not fair because he did not obtain any land during the *Därg* period by misusing his political position. He further argued that the reallocation made him poorer and reduced his pride, because he became a tenant of weavers and female household heads.

Currently, he has 4 children and 4 oxen. In addition to his 4 *t'imads* of land he ploughed 7 *t'imads* of sharecropped land in Wonqa and Yabera (neighboring PAs of Wonqa where some of his relatives are found). Generally, his holding has been reduced since 1997 due to the political position, which he held at the time of the *Därg* period. Thus, he is engaged in a sharecropping agreement to feed his household members.

CASE 11: ADDIS

Addis, 59, is a household head who resides in Deber *got'*. He was born at Gult, just near to Wonqa. Addis married at the age of 16; in the same year his mother died. After a year he came to Wonqa to work with his uncle and married his second wife with whom he has lived and has 9 children. He worked with his uncle for two years based on *yä-ekul* agreement. Then, he established his new household and engaged in sharecropping agreement on *siso* terms for 5 years with a land rich peasant. Then the land rich peasant terminated the agreement. So Addis started to plough his mother-in-laws land with his brother-in-law based on a *siso* agreement. In this agreement, the oxen were his mother-in-law. At this time he was able to plough more than 8 *t'imads* of land. After 5 years his mother-in-law died, thus his brother-in-law refused to plough with him; however, his wife inherited 2 oxen and 2 *t'imads* of land.

Addis got 8 *t'imads* of land in the 1983 distribution. In addition to this, Addis accessed a further other 8 *t'imads* of land from the school based on a *siso* agreement since the last 15 years. Thus, Addis cultivated a total of 16 *t'imads* of land with 5 oxen. These 16 *t'imads* of land are not cultivated only with his household labour but he hired a labourer annually, from February to February, based on 1/5 or 1/6 agreements, according to the strength of the person.

When the EPRDF came to power, Addis became a party member and was elected as a member of the *Wäräda* council and he was the chairman of the *käbäle* administration from 1991 to 2001. When he was at the *käbäle* office he accessed an additional 4 *t'imads* of land by means of *diräba*. By now, he has 12 *t'imads* of land, 5 oxen, 4 cows, 3 calves, and 3 beehives. He has 8 children.

CASE 12: WORKU

Worku is 72 and a resident of Deber got'. Since his father was a *däbtära* (unordained but highly trained clergyman), he attended church education. He married at the age of 20 and stayed 3 years with his father. Then he established his household with the initial capital of two oxen, which were contributed by his father and his father-in-law. He started to plough his father's land up to his capacity without giving anything because his father had more than enough land. In the period of Haile Selassie I he inherited 6 *t'imads* of land in Sentera and other 12 *t'imads* in different areas from his parents. In addition, he obtained 6 *t'imads* by wining court cases through his capital.

Worku is known for his economizing, but his social network was very low; he does not have any kind of *mahibär*. He even controlled how his wife used butter for cooking, which is not common within the community. Worku accumulated his capital through higher economizing. However, this strategy affected his social relations and honour within the community. On the other hand, he criticized the extravagancy of the members of the community due to different feasts.

During the 1975 Land Reform Worku lost 6 *t'imads* of land that he held by wining court cases, due to the prohibition of *mofär zämänt*. In the 1978-9 distribution, he lost some plots choosing the best ones. Then in the 1983 distribution he obtained 8.5 *t'imads* of land for 8 household members. At this time, his holding was reduced by more than half.

When the EPRDF came to power and land was reallocated in 1997, Worku was categorized as "feudal remnant" as a result he lost 4.5 *t'imads* of land and limited to 4 *t'imads* including his homestead. His category as "feudal remnant" was unfair according to many people. However, due to his less social interaction and economizing the committee disliked him and categorized him as "feudal remnants", though he did not hold any position during the Imperial period. He applied the case to the grievances hearing committee however the committee did not respond positively to his appeal. Worku strongly argued that the 1997 reallocation was unfair and unjust, which transferred land not to the tillers rather made the real tillers tenants of those who could not plough the land.

To maximize his product per hectare of land Worku used intensive system by using fertilizer and selected seeds. According to Worku, his income has not been reduced that much but his labour increased per unit of land. He told me that the produce is mainly dependent on the oxen and his household labour. This one hectare of land is not enough for Worku's household members so he has been engaged in sharecropping agreements to prevent buying grain for the household and to keep his economic status.

Worku's access to land has been reduced by half from the Imperial period to the *Därg* and was further reduced by half from the *Därg* period to under the EPRDF. By now he diversified his products and is inclined to cultivate vegetables by using irrigated water to get more income from limited space. He planted *chat*, coffee, and other vegetables. Worku said he is lucky for livestock and has 7 oxen, 3 bull,

8 cows, 4 heifer, and 7 calves. In addition, he has 6 beehives, so he is one of the richest men in the *kābāle*. This is due to diversification, using intensive system, timely sowing, weeding, harvesting, his luck in livestock, and economizing. Thus, his house is full so he is 'self-sufficient'.

CASE 13: ALEMU

Alemu is about 65 and resident of Galloch *got'*. He attended church education; he finished *dawit* (read psalms of David). He married at the age of 20 and lived with his father for 20 years with in the homestead of his father. Since Alemu is the last son, he did not want to leave his father alone, though he has more than 6 oxen and could establish his own homestead. Alemu was responsible to feed the two households by ploughing his fathers' *rist*, which was more than 30 *t'imads*. Of which only 20 *t'imads* could be ploughed by Alemu's household members the rest 10 *t'imads* with a pair of oxen had been given to the sharecropper on the basis of *siso* agreement as a value of the land and the oxen. At the time, the value of land was less compare to the value of labour. According to Alemu, the soil was hard because it was not ploughed continuously thus it needs more labour.

When land reform was introduced in 1975, Alemu and his father lost the land in the neighboring *kābāles*. Then, when PA was established in Wonqa his father was elected as the first chairman of the PA. Alemu's father worked during the first distribution in 1978 but the first committee was deposed by accusation of corruption. In the second PA election, Alemu was elected as vice-chairman. Alemu was actively involved in the 1979 distribution and re-adjustment, so his father's holding was unchanged. Alemu also obtained land from his father's and others *rist*. He was also actively involved in the 1983 distribution. He got 12 *t'imads*, from the 5 categories, which was higher compared to others. According to Alemu, this was done by the committee.

Alemu was forced by the political cadres to join the producers' cooperative, to promote the cooperative, in 1989 though he wanted to continue to plough his land with his oxen, because he was strong to plough his land effectively. When he joined producers' cooperative he contributed a pair of oxen. Then he sent 4 oxen for sharecrop agreement through his capital at the cost of 4 to 5 (4/5) of the product including the share of the price of fertilizer and feast. His wife also worked for the cooperative. His income was reduced dramatically compared to his income when he was an individual farmer. He wanted to withdraw but he may lose all his land and his pair of oxen. Thus, he continued for two harvests.

At the end of 1990, the zone party officials called all members of the producers' cooperatives at Debre Markos and told them, "from now on wards there is no government backing the cooperatives. The country follows mixed economy in which you have equal access to farmland with the other peasants. If you want to continue your cooperative, you can but on your plots, not on others." The officials further told them all the land incorporated in the name of the producers cooperatives should be returned to the former holders. It was good for Alemu to get his former 12 *t'imads* of land, he obtained it through the negotiation of the local elders. Then after a month, there was a general election of PA and he was

deposed from his post that he held since 1979. Then the EPRDF controlled the area in March 1991.

Alemu continued to cultivate his plots up to 1997, in the 1997 reallocation he was categorized as a "bureaucrat" and lost 8 *t'imads* of land and his holdings were reduced to 4 *t'imads*. Alemu argued that he has served the community for more than 12 years honestly and loyally. In addition, he is proud of the 1983 fair distribution of land. However, 2/3 of his holding has been taken, though he has 10 household members. In addition, one of his sons who has married and established a household does not have land because he is also categorized as the son of a "bureaucrat". Thus, the land is not enough to feed Alemu's household members. So, he engaged in sharecropping agreements in which he has 6 *t'imads* with different individuals and he also cultivated 2 *t'imads* of his son who left to Bahir Dar to seek job. He has used his oxen to cultivate the land with his son and paid about 10 quintals of grain annually as payment for the sharecropped land.

Alemu has changed his land use system, into more intensive kind, to get maximum product per unit of land. Thus he could produce 10 quintals of *teff* from 3 *t'imads* of land. Thus, he changed his strategy after the 1997 reallocation to wards relying mainly on his capital and labour to feed his household members and keep his economic status. By now, Alemu has 7 oxen, 6 cows and 19 sheep.

CASE 14: ZELALEM

Zelalem is a 42 year old household head and resident of Aboyen *got'*. He left school at grade 6 and married in 1976 at the age of 16. He lived with the first wife only six months and he stayed with his father for three years. Then he remarried a second wife and established a new household after 4 years, with the initial capital of a pair of oxen, two cows and a calf, which he got from his father and his father-in-law.

During the 1983 distribution, though he was married he still lived with his parents, so he obtained only 2 *t'imads* of land. Zelalem strictly followed up the activity of the PA committee. Then he knew that they gave land to his age mates who married at about the same time as him. However, his age mate had kinsman within the committee members. Zelalem asked the committee members about the criteria, which differentiated him from his age mate. Thus, they gave him 3 *t'imads* of land from *yämotä käda* and his holdings became 5 *t'imads*.

In addition, Zelalem accessed 7 *t'imads* of land through sharecrop with an old nun based on a *siso* agreement. Then she died when the land was under his control. There was no child to inherit, so the land was considered as *yämotä käda*. However, Zelalem bribed the PA committee members not to take the land, so they gave all the 7 *t'imads* to Zelalem and his holding became 12 *t'imads*. Soon the EPRDF controlled the area, thus no one asked him about the land because he had good relation with the newly elected committee members. When land was reallocated in 1997, his holdings were not more than 12 *t'imads* and the government allowed up to 12 *t'imads*. So the committee verified it as Zelalem's legal holdings and he started to pay 45 *Birr* tax. Then after, he stopped to engage

in sharecrop agreement because his holdings are enough to feed his household members. He argued that maximum holders have not good relation with the bureaucrats because the bureaucrats considered maximum holders betrayed them and supported this government. Currently, Zelalem has two pair of oxen to plough his holdings.

ANNEX II: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GRAGUAT STUDIES SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESEARCH ON HOUSEHOLD ACCESS TO FARMLAND AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS: THE CASE OF WONQA KÄBÄLE, GOZAMIN WÄRÄDA, EAST GOJJAM

Introduction: The objective of this survey questioner is to collect data, like household size, plot size etc, which show basic socio-economic conditions of the research area.

Instruction: Chose your answer and circle your choice. For open-ended questions, write your answer clearly on the spaces provide.

1. Code no (for researcher's use) _____
2. Name of the household head _____ Age _____ Sex _____
3. Religion: A. Orthodox C. Protestant
B. Muslim D. Other specify _____
4. Education: _____
5. Household size _____ Male _____ Female _____
6. Plot size _____ *t'imads* _____ for farmland _____ for homestead
7. Plot size before the 1997 distribution _____ household size _____
8. Plot size before the 1978 distribution _____ household size _____
9. No of ox (en) _____
10. How you get the plots: A. Throug distribution C. Endowments
B. Inheritance D. Local agreements
11. If the response of question no.10 is 'D'.
A. What types of local agreements? _____
B. For how long? _____
C. How much *t'imads* _____
12. Do you have a plot, which was your *rist* before the land reform?

- A. Yes B. No
13. Is your plot enough for your household labour? A. Yes B. No
14. Is your plot enough to feed your household members? A. Yes B. No
15. If the response of question no. 14 is 'No'. What other strategies to feed your household members? _____
16. Which of the following is your first chose for your household livelihood?
 A. Land B. Labour C. Capital (oxen)
17. Which of the following is your second chose for your household livelihood?
 A. Land B. Labour C. Capital (oxen)
18. Do you believe that economic status is important to get access to land?
 A. Yes B. No
19. Do you believe that land access is important for economic stratification?
 A. Yes B. No
20. Do you believe that land access is important for economic stratification?
 A. Yes B. No
21. Do you believe that land access is important for social status?
 A. Yes B. No
22. Do you believe that political status is important for land access?
 A. Yes B. No
23. Do you belive that land access is important for political status.
 A. Yes B. No
24. Which of the following is very important to get access to local agreements.
 A. Social network B. Capital (oxen or money) C. Labour
 D. Kinship E. Other, specify _____

Thank you

14. አሁን የያዙት መሬት ቤተሰቡን ለመመገብ

ሀ. በቂ ነው ለ. በቂ አይደለም ሐ. ከበቂ በላይ ነው

15. የ14ኛ ጥያቄ መልስ «በቂ አይደለም» ከሆነ ቤተሰቡን ለመመገብ የሚጠቀሙበት ሌላ ዘዴ ምንድን ነው _____

16. የቤተሰቡን ሕይወት አስተማማኝ ለማድረግ የመጀመሪያ ምርጫዎ

ሀ. መሬት ለ. ጉልበት ሐ. በሬ

17. ሁለተኛ ምርጫዎ

ሀ. መሬት ለ. ጉልበት ሐ. በሬ

18. የኢኮኖሚ አቅም መሬት ለማግኘት ይረዳል ብለው ያምናሉ

ሀ. አዎ ለ. አይረዳም ሐ. በከፊል ይረዳል

19. የማህበራዊ ደረጃ መሬትን ለማግኘት ይረዳል ብለው ያምናሉ

ሀ. አዎ ለ. አይረዳም ሐ. በከፊል ይረዳል

20. የመሬት ይዞታ የኢኮኖሚ ደረጃን ይወስናል ብለው ያምናሉ

ሀ. አዎ ለ. አይረዳም ሐ. በከፊል ይረዳል

21. የመሬት ይዞታ የማህበራዊ ደረጃን ይወስናል ብለው ያምናሉ

ሀ. አዎ ለ. አይወስንም ሐ. በከፊል ይወስናል

22. የፖለቲካ ስለጣን መሬት ለማግኘት ይረዳል ብለው ያምናሉ

ሀ. አዎ ለ. አይረዳም ሐ. በከፊል ይረዳል

23. የመሬት ይዞታ የፖለቲካ ደረጃን ይወስናል ብለው ያምናሉ

ሀ. አዎ ለ. አይወስንም ሐ. በከፊል ይወስናል

24. የእርሻ መሬትን ከግለሰቦች ለማግኘት ዋናው መንገድ ምንድን ነው

ሀ. ማህበራዊ ግንኙነት ለ. በሬ ሐ. ጉልበት መዝምድና

ሠ. ሌላ /በአጭሩ ይገለፅ/ _____

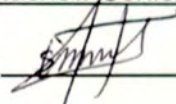
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DECLARATION

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

Name: Getachew Senishaw

Signature: _____



Date: June 2003