

LAND TENURE REFORM AND SOCIOECONOMIC STRUCTURES
IN DÄBRÄ MARQOS (GOJJAM), ETHIOPIA: c.1901-1974

BY
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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor
of Philosophy

In the Subject
History

At the
University of South Africa (UNISA)

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February 2020

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Transliteration used in the Text and Footnotes

Below is a list of the speech sounds of Ethiopian letters that are usually translated into English as a recognized model of writing systems in the History Department of the Addis Ababa University (AAU)—also referring to the authoritative Amharic dictionary of *Kédänä-Wäld Keflé* (1948 Eth. Cal: 34) who adapted to the Geez alphabets—and which I used in my study. On the whole, it is prudent to indicate these speech sounds briefly on the six/five set of letters for their relevance and close-fitting features with the distinctive mark of the land system and the socioeconomic relations derived from it what prevailed in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the past, as presented below.

Firstly, there will be

- five *glottal* constrictions adapted to a moderate tone as
/ḥ or ṯ=ä/ and /Ṱ or ḥ or Ṱ=hä/
- five *palatal* sounds as
/Ṱ=gä/ /Ṱ=yä/ /ḥ=rä/ /Ṱ=qä/ and /ḥ=shä
- five *tongue* touching sounds as
/ḥ=dä/ /Ṱ=tä/ /ḥ=lä/ /Ṱ=nä/ and /Ṱ=tä/
- six *lips* articulated sounds as:
/ḥ=bä/ /Ṱ=wä/ /Ṱ=mä/ /ḥ=fä/ /ḥ=pä/ and /Ṱ=pä/
- eight *tooth* constrictions as
/ḥ=zä/ /Ṱ=žä/ /Ṱ or ḥ=sä/ /ḥ=čä/ /ḥ or Ṱ=š/ and /ḥ=rä/
- three *geminate* speech sounds as
/ḥ=jjä/ /Ṱ=chä/ and /Ṱ=ññä/.

Secondly, the expansions of this set of letters are represented by the following seven speech sounds:

/Ṱ=hä/ /Ṱ=hu/ /Ṱ=hi/ /Ṱ=ha/ /Ṱ=hé/ /Ṱ=he/ and /Ṱ=ho/.

Last, but not least, there will be a sound exception to this rule as

/ḥ=u^wa/.

In conclusion, the above transliteration system have presented a reassuring sound to hear and produce a clear speech as cautiously used in this study. Giving allowance to these forms of sounds I employed to fulfill my objective, other forms of sounds existed in the Amharic-Geez alphabets of Ethiopia. The data obtained from lexical sources clearly show that Amharic-Geez alphabets' anticipation of additional speech sounds in connection to the transliteration system of Ethiopia produce by Geez-Amharic alphabets—which the remarkable dictionary works of *Kédänä-Wäld* (1948: 5-189) and Dästa Täklä-Wäld (1962: 8-67) fixed—were proven. Thus, though the dictionaries promised fair system of transliteration in the aforementioned speech sounds what happened in this study is the selective use of them, as large section of the tenure system of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam was arranged under those sound speeches. The following are general examples.

ሸዋ	=Shewa,
ቋሪት	=Q ^w arit,
ንጉሥ	= <i>negus</i> ,
አሞሌ ጨው	= <i>amolé čäw</i> ,
አዉራጃ	= <i>awrajja</i> ,
አዛኝ	= <i>azaži</i> ,
ከበደ ተሰማ	=Käbbäda Täsämma,
ደብረ ማርቆስ	=Däbrä Marqos,
ደጃዝማች	= <i>däjjazmach</i> ,
ጎጃም	=Gojjam,
ጠቅላይ ግዛት	= <i>täqlay-gezat</i> , and,
ፀሐዩ እንቁሰላሴ	=Šähäyu Enqu-Sellasé.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviations and Acronyms used in the text and footnotes of the thesis are as follow.

AAU	-Addis Ababa University
AAUP	-Addis Ababa University Press
Agäw	-contraction of Agew Meder
Agew Meder	-expansion of Agew
<i>Birr</i>	-contraction of <i>ṭägära birr</i> , also referring to the existing Ethiopian currency
<i>Däjjach</i>	-contraction of <i>Däjjazmach</i>
EGAZHCA	-East Gojjam Administrative Zone High-Court Archive
Emperor, the	-refers to Emperor Haile Sellassie I
Eth. Cal.	-Ethiopian Calendar
Haylu I, <i>Ras</i>	-also Haylu the great (formerly <i>Abéto Häylä-Iyäsus</i>) as 'lord' of Gojjam in the last quarter of the eighteenth century
Haylu II, <i>Ras</i>	-['lord'] governor of Gojjam from 1901-1932, formerly <i>Däjjazmach</i> Seyum Täklä-Häymanot
Haylu III, <i>Ras</i>	- <i>Ras</i> Haylu Bäläw, governor of Gojjam from 1942-1946 and 1950-1957
IES	-Institute of Ethiopian Studies of the AAU
Maccaa	-the same as the district of Méča
Méča	-the same as Maccaa mentioned above
MLRA	-Ministry of Land Reform and Administration
MoF	-Ministry of Finance
MoI	-Ministry of Interior
MS	-Manuscript (pl. MSS mentioned below)
MSS	-Manuscripts (sing. MS mentioned above)
MSNLAA	-Manuscript Collection of the National Library and Archive Agency
<i>Ṭäqlay-Gezat</i> , the	-also a phrase used to express the governorate general or province of Gojjam during the post-liberation period (1941-1974)
UNISA	-University of South Africa
WMA	-Wäldä-Mäsqäl Archive
<i>Yä</i> or <i>yä-</i>	-a term used to express possession

Defining Key Property Terminologies and Other Related Issues

A

<i>Abba</i>	-honorary title for a priest, elder and social notable
<i>Abéto</i>	-analogous to 'lord' (Dästa 1962 [Eth. Cal.]: 78)
<i>Aläqa</i>	-'subject of a legal ecclesiastical appointee notable (Dästa 1962 [Eth. Cal.]: 105)
<i>Agär Azmach, Yä-Amolé [Čäw]</i>	-'country war leader' -used for payment of tribute, commonly in the form of bar, termed as 'salt bar'
<i>Asrat</i> or Tithe	-a fixed tax with a tenth of the land production that started to be paid in cash since 1892/93
<i>Ato</i>	-a title, comparable with Mr., still used in front of the name of a man when speaking to him politely, also to write to a male sex in an official position
<i>Ašé</i>	-a royal title comparable with emperor
<i>Aqññi</i>	-'pioneer'
<i>Aqññi-Abbat</i> or <i>Wanna-Abbat</i>	-pioneer settler or founding father
<i>Awrajja</i>	-'sub-province'
<i>Azaži</i>	-title of high-ranking official, literally means commander in charge of the emperor or empress

B

<i>Balabbat</i>	-holders of land through ancestral descent
<i>Balä Rist</i>	-'rist-holder'
<i>Banda</i>	-Ethiopians who <i>collaborated</i> with the enemy forces and fought against their people
<i>Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit</i>	-Territorial Army, formerly <i>Näč Läbash Ṭor-Särawit</i> (White-Wearing Army)
<i>Bétä Mängest Gult Märét</i>	-'gult house of government'
<i>Balambaras</i>	-title given to a civilian leader
<i>Bäjäron</i>	-title bestowed to state treasurer
<i>Bälg</i>	-the season between the months of March and May

<i>Bitäwädäd</i>	-entrusted to put the authority of kings and/or queens, as principal courtier under the latter's dominion.
<i>Birr</i>	-'silver coin' as of the historic <i>Maria Theresa Thaler/Taläri</i> or Dollar, <i>Yä-[Aše] Minilek Birr</i> and the Italian <i>shelleng</i> , all are silver coins, as <i>ṭägära-birr</i> . Now the term <i>Birr</i> is used to explain the Ethiopian national currency, both for its metal and paper shape
<i>Birr, [ṭägära]</i>	-'silver coin', also refers to the existing national currency
C	
<i>Čäw</i>	-salt: used for payment of tribute, commonly in the form of bar, as ' <i>amolé čäw</i> ': salt bar.
Central Gojjam	-one of the three provinces of Gojjam in nineteenth century and before, virtually the later Däbrä Markos <i>Awrajja</i>
<i>Česänña</i> or <i>ṭisänña</i>	-a tenant with scarce or land, as subject farmer or as sharecropper
<i>Česänñanät</i> or <i>ṭisänñanät</i>	-'sharecropping arrangement', also referring to the condition of being <i>česänña</i> or <i>ṭisänña</i>
<i>Čeqa Mägaräfiya,</i>	-a technical term that signifies the size of land and its tributary payments
<i>Čeqa-Shum</i>	-village headman who levied land tax on yearly basis
<i>Čera Geber</i>	-'cattle head tax'
Church Tenure	-' <i>sämon</i> tenure'
D	
Däbrä Marqos	-contemporary Debre Markos <i>Awrajja</i> , formerly the province of Central Gojjam or the town of Mänqorär (Däbrä Marqos), also referring to Saint Mark Church
Debre Markos	-the same as Däbrä Marqos (see above)
<i>Däber</i> (pl. <i>Däbers</i>)	-'great church'
<i>Däber Gult Märét</i>	-special possession of the <i>däbers</i> of Gojjam
<i>Däbtära</i>	-the most learned ecclesiastical elite or clergy
<i>Däbtära Märét</i>	-land given to church administrator, as <i>debtrena-märét, yä-</i>

<i>Däbtära Wärq, Yä-</i>	-ecclesiastic gold', a tribute or tax paid to <i>däbers</i> of Gojjam from their special <i>gult</i> possession called <i>däber-gult-märét</i>
<i>Däga</i>	-highland area with cold temperature
<i>Däjjach</i>	-comparable with <i>däjjazmach</i> , as defined below
<i>Däjjazmach</i>	-literally means commander of the gate and title of high-ranking state official, also comparable with <i>däjjach</i>
<i>Däsdäs Alash Geber, Yä-</i>	-'winner trial tax'
<i>Debtrena Märét, Yä-</i>	-land given to church's administrator, as <i>däbtära-märét, yä</i>
<i>Dequna Märét, Yä-</i>	-'deacon's land'. It was also held by individuals who paid for the services of the deacon
E	
<i>Emahoy</i>	-honorary title for a female monk in the Ethiopian church
<i>Eqa-Bét/Ganä-Gäb/Ma'ed Bét Märét</i>	- <i>hudad</i> type of government <i>gult</i> land. In the post-1941, however, <i>eqa-bét</i> and other forms of <i>hudad</i> lands were leased to private individuals
<i>Eyuwoch</i>	-land [tax] committee[s]
F	
<i>FDRE</i>	- <i>Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia</i>
<i>Ferd Mäčohiya Geber, Yä-</i>	-a tax payable by every individual to stand trial for impeached on the court of laws
<i>Fitawrari</i>	-title of commander of the vanguard forces and a high-ranking state official
<i>Fukära, Qärärto and Shelälla</i>	-boast war songs
G	
<i>Gäbbar</i>	-landless [<i>česännas</i> or] tenant found, for the most part, in southern Ethiopia prior to the revolution in 1974
<i>Gäbbäz</i>	-'church administrator'
<i>Gobäz Aläqqa, Yä-</i>	-'leader of the brave'
<i>Gädel</i>	-hagiography

<i>Gämäd, Aned</i> (one rope)	-a customary unit of land measurement, 'extended agricultural land' [which could be tilled in a day by using a pair of ploughing cattle) as <i>aned gämäd</i> (one rope) that is approximately equals a quarter hectare (2,500 square meters) of land
<i>Ganä-Gäb/Ma'ed Bét/Eqa-Bét Märét</i>	- <i>hudad</i> type of government <i>gult</i> land. In the post-1941, however, <i>ganä-gäb</i> and other forms of <i>hudad</i> lands were leased to private individuals
<i>Gasha</i>	-a customary unit of land measurement, in the post-liberation period, a <i>gasha/qäläd</i> of land is standardized as comparable with 40 hectares or sixty-six meter-square of land
<i>Gäzem, Aned</i> (one rope)	-a customary unit of land measurement, 'extended agricultural land' [which could be tilled in a day by using a pair of ploughing cattle) or <i>aned gämäd</i> (one rope) that is all approximately equals a quarter hectare (2,500 square meters) of land
<i>Geber</i>	-tribute or tax, also refers to state banquet
<i>Geber Färash Märét</i>	-comparable with <i>gebrä-ṭäl-märét</i> , a <i>rist</i> land that became under the state domain owing to holders failure to pay land tribute or tax
<i>Gebrä Ṭäl Märét</i>	-just comparable with <i>geber-färash-märét</i> indicated above
<i>Gebzena Märét, Yä-Gerazmach</i>	-land given to a <i>gäbäz</i> -literally means commander of the left, also a title of an intermediate high-ranking state official
<i>Gésho Geber</i> <i>Gojjam Army</i> <i>Gojjamé Army</i>	-'Rhamnus Prinioides Tax' -also referring to Gojjame army -also referring to Gojjam army, as indicated above
Governorate-General <i>Gult Märét</i>	-just meant for <i>ṭäqlay-gezat</i> or province -government land given to soldiers and civil servants in return for rendering various services to the former
<i>Gult Gäzi</i>	- <i>gult-märét</i> governor

H

Hudad

-estate or government land

I

Ikul Arash

-a half of sharecropping tenancy

Indärasé

-personal administrative deputy or governorship through agency

Irbo

-a quarter

Irbo Arash

-a quarter of sharecropping tenancy

Imperial Period, the

-the post-liberation or the postwar period (1941-74)

K

Käntiba

-mayor

Kerämt

-rainfall season between June and August

L

Läm [Märét]

-'fertile land tenure'

Läm Ṭäf [Märét]

-'semi-fertile land tenure'

Lej

-literally means son. It was an honorary title given for son of noble birth in 'feudal' Ethiopia generally prior to the end of the imperial era in 1974

M

Mababiya Geber, Yä-

-the tribute/tax payment that a *česännä* had to pay for the 'lord' on yearly basis before ploughing the land just for security of tenure

Madäriya

-land given to individual soldiers and government officials

Ma'ed-Bét/Eqa-Bét/Ganä-Gäb Märét

-*gult* type of government *hudad* land, however leased to private individuals in the post-liberation period (1941-74)

Mägäzzo Märét

-'leased land' given to farmers on a sharecropping or cash-contract basis, as a sharecropping tenancy where peasants pay a fixed amount of money for the state for tilling the land, as *mätäbéya märét*

Mofär Mägadämiya Geber, Yä-

-comparable with *mababiya-geber*

Mofär-zämät-arash, yä-

-peasants farmed the land of their neighbors in return for that they gave their own plots of lands found at a distant place

Mänqorär

-presently the town of Däbrä Marqos

<i>Märiǧétta</i>	-church choir leader or chant leader
<i>Märét</i>	-property in land tenure system
<i>Maria Theresia Thaler/Taläri</i>	-silver coin
<i>Maryam</i>	-St. Mary (the Virgin Mary)
<i>Mäsǧäl Märét, Yä-</i>	-'land of the Cross', a heritable and had the character of <i>rist-märét</i> , under the church/ <i>sämon</i> tenure
<i>Mätäbéya Märét</i>	-land granted in the form of pension, also termed as <i>ṭur-märét</i> , <i>yä-</i>
<i>Mätaya Geber</i>	-'scene tax'
<i>Mekettel-wäräda</i>	-sub-district
<i>Mesläné</i>	-sub-district ruler, also refers to the sub-district itself
<i>Menzer Abbat</i>	-sub-pioneer settler
<i>Minilek Birr, Yä [Ašé]</i>	-silver coin of Emperor Minilek II
<i>Mofär Zämät Märét</i>	-a piece of peasant's land to be found far at a distance
<i>Mofär Zämät Tenancy</i>	-a form of share-cropping arrangements between a 'lord' and a <i>česäñña</i> as a result of the location of the peasant's <i>mofär-zämät-märét</i> far away from his/her residence
N	
<i>Näč Lābāsh Märét, Yä</i>	-land given to members of 'White Wearing Army', latter <i>Behérawi Ṭor-Sārawit, Yä</i> for rendering military services
<i>Näč Lābāsh Ṭor-Sārawit</i>	-'White-Wearing Army', later the 'Territorial Army'
<i>Näṫšāñña</i>	-literally means 'he carried weapon', 'the army of the historic Province of Shewa
<i>Nägādras</i>	-'merchant chief' or in charge of merchants
<i>Negarit Gazeta</i>	-the imperial government's official reporter of legislation and administrative regulations
<i>Negus</i>	-king
P	
<i>Peasant-Česäñña</i>	-peasant-tenant with scarce landowner, subject farmer as well
<i>Peasant-Ṭisäñña</i>	-comparable with peasant- <i>česäñña</i> indicated above
<i>Post-Liberation Period, the</i>	-the imperial or the Postwar Period (1941-74)

Postwar Government, the

-the restored Ethiopian Imperial Government or the post-Liberation Government

Postwar Period, the

-the imperial or the post-Liberation period (1941-74)

Province

-refers to *ṭäqlay-gezat* or governorate general

Q

Qäläb Tämälash Märét

-the land given for individuals in lieu of salary

Qälad

-a customary unit of land measurement comparable with *gasha* indicated earlier

Qänjja Märét Arash, yä-

'land sharecropper' in which a peasant [landless] tenants involved in various terms of the production

Qäññazmach

-a high-ranking state official and commander of the right forces

Qärärto, Fukära and Shelälla

-boast war songs

Qesena Märét, Yä-

'land of the priest', a heritable and had the character of *rist-märét* under the church *sämon* land tenure

Qola

-low land area with very hot temperature

R

Ras

-title bestowed to top state officials below the king

Rim, Ecclesiastical, Märét

-heritable *sämon* tenure and had the character of *rist* often given to clergies over the people who worked and resided on the land

Rim, Secular, Märét

-had the character of *gult* land under the government tenure and granted to officials in lieu of salary as *madäriya*

Rist

-hereditary land owned by tribute and taxpaying peasants

Rist Gult

-hereditary administrative *gult* land

Rist Märét

-hereditary land owned by tribute and taxpaying peasants

Rist Qoṭari

-descent enumerator

S

Sämon Tenure

'church tenure' or *märét*

Sämon Ṭisäñña

-*česäñña* working on *sämon-märét*

Siso

-a third

Siso Arash

-a third of sharecropping tenancy

<i>Shefta</i>	-ill-treated and disappointed noble who went into jungle or any of isolated pocket for political advancement
<i>Sheftanät</i>	-being and becoming <i>shefta</i>
<i>Shelälla, Qärärto and Fukära</i>	-courageous war songs indicated above
<i>Shelleng</i>	-silver coin introduced into Ethiopia by the Italians during the occupation period (1935-41)
<i>Šom Adär Märét</i>	-'uncultivated land'
<i>Shum</i>	-government appointee
T	
<i>Ṭäf [Märét]</i>	-infertile land, also had no inhabitants
<i>Ṭägära [Birr]</i>	-something resembling a coin made of silver, as of <i>Maria Theresa Thaler</i> , <i>Yä-[Aše] Minilek Birr</i> and also the Italian <i>shelleng</i>
<i>Ṭäj</i>	-a sparkling yellow fermented alcoholic beverage of produced by <i>African</i> bees, just akin to European variant of wine
<i>Ṭäj-Mabräjja</i>	-a silver or copper of vessel, comparable in purpose to 'wine cooler'
<i>Taläri [ṬʰʌḶ]</i>	-the age-old Austrian silver coin called <i>Maria Theresa</i> , as <i>Thaler</i> , and comparable with <i>birr</i>
<i>Tanash Säw</i>	-'sub-human'
<i>Ṭäqlay-Gezat</i>	-governorate-general, also refers to province
<i>Ṭisännña or Česännña</i>	-scarce landowning peasant-tenant and/or landless tenant in sharecropper tenancy and comparable with <i>ṭisännña</i> or <i>česännña</i>
<i>Tätäri or Wäkkil</i>	-'one who is called', as agent/representative of a big landholder
<i>Taṭäriwoch or Wäkkiloch</i>	-sing. <i>tätäri/wäkkil</i> indicated above
<i>Ṭebäbännña</i>	-craftsman or artisan who were considered as <i>tanash-säw</i> mentioned above
<i>Tegri Zämach Märét, Yä-</i>	-land granted to local peasant-soldiers for their military services into Tegray Province and its vicinity, under the category of <i>zämach</i> or <i>zämächa-märét</i> , <i>yä-</i>

<i>Ṭemad, Aned</i> ('a pair of cattle for ploughing')	-a customary unit of land measurement, as 'extended agricultural land' [which could be tilled in a day by using a pair of ploughing cattle) or <i>aned gämäd</i> (one rope) that is approximately equals a quarter hectare (2,500 square meters) of land
Territorial Army	- <i>Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit</i> , the former <i>Näč Läbasha Ṭor-Särawit</i> (White-Wearing Army) indicated earlier
Thaler	-refers to the age-old Austrian silver coin called <i>Maria Theresa Taläri</i> [ṬṬṬ]
<i>Ṭis Geber</i> Tithe or <i>Asrat</i>	-'hut/head tax' -a fixed tax with a tenth of the land production but it started to be paid in cash ever since 1892/3
<i>Ṭur Märét, Yä-</i>	-just comparable with <i>mätäbéya-märét</i>
W	
<i>Wäkkil</i> or <i>Tätäri</i>	-'one who is called', as agent/representative of big landholder
<i>Wäkkiloch</i> or <i>Taṭäriwoch</i>	-sing. <i>tätäri/wäkkil</i> or <i>wäkkil/ tätäri</i> indicated above
<i>Wällo Zämach Märét, Yä-</i>	-land granted by <i>Ras Haylu II</i> to his hundreds of peasant-soldiers for their travel companion to Wello Province in March 1920, under the category of <i>zämach</i> or <i>zämächa-märét, yä-</i>
<i>Wanna</i>	-pioneer
<i>Wanna</i> or <i>Aqññi Abbat</i>	-pioneer settler
<i>Wäräda</i>	-district
<i>Wäyané</i>	-'rebellion'
<i>Wäyena Däga</i>	-region with temperate climate
<i>Wäyzäro</i>	-lady, also refers to a married woman
White-Wearing Army	- <i>Näč Läbasha Ṭor-Särawit</i> , later <i>Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit</i>
<i>Wine</i>	-a particular type of such an Ethiopian alcoholic drink as <i>ṭäg</i> made from honey of bees
<i>Wuha Geber</i>	-'water tax'
<i>Wurč</i>	-frost
Y	
<i>Qés-märét, Yä-</i>	-a variety of <i>sämon</i> land, also recognized by <i>mäsqäl-märét, yä-</i>
<i>Yetégé</i>	-Empress

Z

Zämach

Zämächa

Zämächa Märét, Yä-

-‘campaigner’

-‘campaign’

-hereditary military land, recognized by a variety of terms and granted chiefly to peasant soldiers, also as *zämach-märét* indicated below

Zämach Märét, Yä-

-comparable with *zämächa-märét, yä-*, indicated above

Abstract

In this doctoral thesis I advance a new interpretation of the social and economic history of Ethiopia beginning with the turn of the twentieth century and ending with the third decade of that century. One of my achievements in this study is the careful utilization of property documents in the reconstruction of the modern social history of Ethiopia, more precisely Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in northwestern Ethiopia. Besides original use of property documents in my study, I have used new and less conventional genre of sources, viz., courtroom observation, images, biblical references, private documents, and old sayings. Combining these genre of sources and oral data helped me to provide a plausible story and advance a new interpretation of the property system and the socioeconomic and power relations arising from modern Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). I emphasize the continued relevance of tax appropriation in contemporary Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). This is to counter an adverse claim to tribute in kind and services as well as the resilience of old practices relating to land use, political power, exploitation, social domination, landholding and violence. All these served as the background to impede changes, in the course of progress of the imperial policy, mostly, between liberation in 1941 and revolution in 1974. As the main argument embedded in my study is that despite the attempt of the imperial state to figure out what the content of land tenure and surplus appropriation in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was like, in actual fact what the effort produced was the people's multiple reaction. New measures relating to property reform which the imperial state tried to codify and fix failed to achieve stability and order, precipitated a revolution leading to the end of the imperial rule with broadly similar historical trajectory to what many scholars viewed on the subject.

Acknowledgements

It was combining primary and secondary sources that I carried out a comprehensive investigation of my doctoral study within the defined time framework and geographical scope. This doctoral study is being at variance with my previous MA Dissertation not only in geographical sweep but in its time framework of the subject under consideration, as indicated in the preceding section and later. As a whole, my thesis is due to my increasing obsession towards land studies that I came to know for more than eleven years since I joined graduate school in the Department of History at the Addis Ababa University (AAU) and now at the University of South Africa (UNISA)—with a highly advanced postgraduate program—in the same field of study. Through the efforts of the two same field of study in history—but in different host Universities—on my interest and obsession that took me to expect a realistic academic discourse in terms of research. In that case, many individuals deserve gratitude for the realization of my doctoral study. First and foremost, I express thanks to the almighty God, with special reference to St. Arsema or Santa Barbara who saved me from death in the process of doing my research.

Secondly, I am extremely grateful to my supervisor Professor Tesema Ta'a who has been kind and helpful—with great scholarly commitment and easily available in both e-mail (electronic mail), and in person in his office at the Department of History at the Addis Ababa University (AAU). He encouraged me for my study as a reassuring and widening my interest in that field of study, after I selected the field and began to work on the topic. He also went far beyond the call of his duty. Among other things, in the process of doing my research, he

helped me to be a fulltime researcher. He communicated by mail, e-mail and telephone with the Regional Centre of the UNISA at Addis Ababa and then, by mail—on behalf of the former—and communicated with my host university, i.e., Däbrä Marqos University (in Ethiopia). With this, my supervisor helped me to be a full time researcher that enabled me to join an academic circle that groomed my intellectual stimulus and tenure in a way that I could never have imagined before. Furthermore, he generously assisted me with guides to subject literature and encouragements. He was supervising me and pays out his precious time and energy—with consultation—often by reading and rereading my study regularly and chapter by chapter. His proactive suggestions for facilitating my research and for improving its composition and analytical quality and I finally found the strength to do and shaped by it. I am equally indebted to my former professor, Dr. Tekalign Wolde-Mariam, for mentoring me through his dynamic and formative lectures that he gave with a great scholarly commitment while teaching the MA graduate course 'Hist. 771: Issues in African Economic History' in 2007. Taking that course with him had introduced me with new perspectives on land studies in the Ethiopian as well as African context which broadened my horizon of knowledge in historical research and the prevailing academic discourse on land studies—is very full in my memory.

While my supervisor provides me significant conversation and invaluable advice in many respects about identifying subject literature pertinent to my research topic, the UNISA Library and the History Subject Reference Librarian—Ms Mary-Lynn Suttie—provided me with excellent bibliography on local agrarian historiography available by e-mail also deserves to be thanked. I also record my sincere gratitude to the History Department of

Dissertation and Doctoral Study and College of Humanities at the UNISA—at Pretoria—and the Research and Community Service Directorate at Däbrä Marqos University—at Däbrä Marqos—for financial support they extended to me, covering my fieldwork in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) and at Addis Ababa (in Ethiopia). Likewise, my special thanks goes to my informants during my field research in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Four prominent informants deserve special mentioning for their unreserved contribution to my research by way of providing oral information. My gratitude is also to the local Däbrä Zäyet Mahfud Maryam church administrator—*Märiqéttä* Aymärä—the Däbrä Marqos branch of the commercial Bank of Ethiopia Manager—*Ato* Argachäw Zäréhun—and the Däbrä Marqos town library manager—*Weyzero* Mässäläch Mänbäru—for helping me to obtain the necessary photographs of the subject of my study from within. I need also to express my thanks to Shemelis Kassa Welde-Eyesus—who is now a field technician in the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation in the Northwest Region centered at the town of Däbrä Marqos—allowed me to access electronic sources by way of private collection in his personal computer. In addition, I need to express my deepest gratitude to my colleague Shimelis Mulugeta—who is a PhD student in the field of statistics at UNISA—for his technical assistance, Sewale Mekonnen—who allowed me to access a piece of information presented as objective reality from his private collection—and Yihun Shiferaw and Ghion Hailu who helped me in the preparation of the maps used in this thesis.

Last, but not least, I thanked to my father and mother—the late *Shaläqa* (Major) Dejene Checkol and *Wäyzäro* Yäshaläm Melesse, respectively—for their model of courtesy and lots of patience that remain fixed in my memory. In the context of my thesis: that it enabled me to

finish the writing with enormous patience. Fully aware of that *Märiḡetta* Neway Kelem Warq—who was taken care of me for the realization of my study—he decided that my doctoral journey that he be paid what he was worth just deserves my gratitude. I also owe special gratitude to my constant companions, *Märiḡetta* Solomon, Demess Akaza, and Alemu Andualem for their moral support and encouragement and much offering significant services—when needed—during my field research work in rural Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Leaving aside names of the panel of doctoral examiners or readers, I am grateful to them for their constructive comments to make improvements to the final version of my thesis. In addition, I want also to record my gratitude to all people—whose names I did not mention in this list of acknowledgements—I met throughout my doctoral study within and outside Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).

Preface

This thesis is the logical extension of my dissertation on land development and its multiple consequences on political and socioeconomic issues in post-liberation Wadla Dälanta *Awrajja*, a northwestern sub-province of Wello (Ethiopia). However, the two works differed in their time span and geographical scope of the subject under consideration. It has been established that the historiography of Ethiopia is dominated by political history, with little or no attention given to the socioeconomic and cultural issues of the past. Thus, the desire for research on political history transcends social history. Scholars and academics usually forward the scarcity of sources as a key factor for distancing themselves from that field of studies. Compared to the availability of sources on political history this claim holds true, impeding research in the field of Ethiopian social history. However, I strongly believe that this is not a possible justification in the presence of property documents in different parts of the country. To mention but three instances, we have the Wäldä-Mäsqäl Archive and Wä-Mäzäker National Archive—both in the country's capital Addis Ababa—and the East Gojjam Administrative Zone High-Court Archive (EGAZHCA)—in the town of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)—that are pertinent collections to the period by way of administrative and legal documents, respectively. Accordingly, the archives hold primary sources produced in Amharic, while the imperial regime was still busy to extend modern bureaucracy at several levels of the administration, mostly between 1941 and 1974. Overall, these archival collections are easily accessible to researchers interested in the history of land tenure and socioeconomic relations that are derived from it.

Equally important is the treasury house of local churches and monasteries which held trustworthy property documents and other related issues—as the church was the main centers of text production often in both Geez and Amharic—spanning from the medieval to modern times. As a whole, both government and church archives uncovered the presence of such property documents as a huge treasure trove that sounds a tremendous progress for land studies and other related issues in my native land of modern Ethiopia encompassing Däbrä Markos (Gojjam). Accordingly, good students of Ethiopian history in the Department of History at the Addis Ababa University wrote their dissertations, theses, seminar papers/articles and the like based on these archival sources, not to mention I myself in the light of my MA dissertation that I did in 2009. While these genre of sources served as representing a definitive break in the field of Ethiopian social history relating to land—many of these studies lack detailed and exhaustive analysis and interpretation on the issue. This problem seems to have emanated partly from lack of a focused approach, which is defined in time and/or geographical scope on any small administrative unit that has a homogeneous tenure entity. In addition, the whole land studies are not solely historical. They also included studies done within other related disciplines such as social anthropology. The problem with social anthropological studies is that they do not treat issues through time. In any case, the above-mentioned archival sources are not exhaustively studied and further investigations needs to be undertaken by way of the social history of Ethiopia.

Hence, it was my strong belief and desire to study such a source within a manageable time span that constituted the core part of modern Ethiopia for its immense historical importance. For intensive investigation, I focused on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) due to the presence of

property documents in those archives; for which the History Department at the University Of South Africa (UNISA) also approved the proposal for my thesis in 2014. Initially, I proposed to take cautious and pragmatic source exploitation over three and a half decades—in the years between 1941 and 1974—as approved in doing my doctoral research project on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) for my thesis. However, since I have also used new genre of sources—as pointed out earlier—with clerical records and paintings and other private documents that helped me to provide a juicy story and advance a new interpretation of the property system and the social and power relations arising out of modern Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)—I extended my research time framework beyond the scope of the approved project—earlier than 1941, from the turn of the twentieth century to 1974.

That the changing condition of the pre-existing surplus appropriation of Ethiopia, including Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in earnest around 1902 during the 'lordship' of *Ras* Haylu II (r.1902-1932)—formerly *Däjjazmach* Seyum Täklä-Häymanot—could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, my contention is that while the period witnessed significant break in all aspects of the practice of surplus appropriation, the later imperial government's decisions and actions should be discussed in its historical context. This is to understand the issue under consideration clearly and the historical drama derived from it which is hardly acceptable. Owing to this and other developments, therefore, I extended the time framework of my doctoral study that yielded a significant amount of unearthed source materials—which I discussed with their basic features in the subsequent chapter—and changed the geographical area of my previous study accordingly. In any case, leaving aside some significant level of

treatment, I have extensively relied on primary sources—generated from Addis Ababa and Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)—in the *making* of history for my thesis.

Not surprisingly, oral sources by way of oral history and oral tradition—an informant's lived experience and learnt through hearsay, respectively—are other evidence that I used for my doctoral study. Elders including prominent informants—with photographs of them incorporated in the methodology section of the chapter that follow—are well acquainted with land and land related issues of the subject of my study, Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). I interviewed them individually in different parts of Gojjam mostly in Däbrä Marqos. Owing to their lived experience with much of the time framework, most of informants were direct participants and witnesses of the various historical events and occurrence described in the thesis. Thus, written evidence was corroborated by most of my informants' testimony on several issues of the subject. Secondary sources that were generated from the libraries of Addis Ababa University, the National Library under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture at Addis Ababa as well as from my own personal library, in Däbrä Marqos, have also greatly enriched my study.

Having accomplished this much, I dare not say that I have exhaustively used all the sources. It is a known fact that conducting a research on land tenure creates several difficulties particularly in terms of gathering sources. In this respect I faced three major problems. Firstly, and most importantly, with the exception of the Wä-Mäzäker National Archive, other collections have never been systematically catalogued—for which source discovery is dreadfully laborious—which needs to be put under the capable hand of professionals who

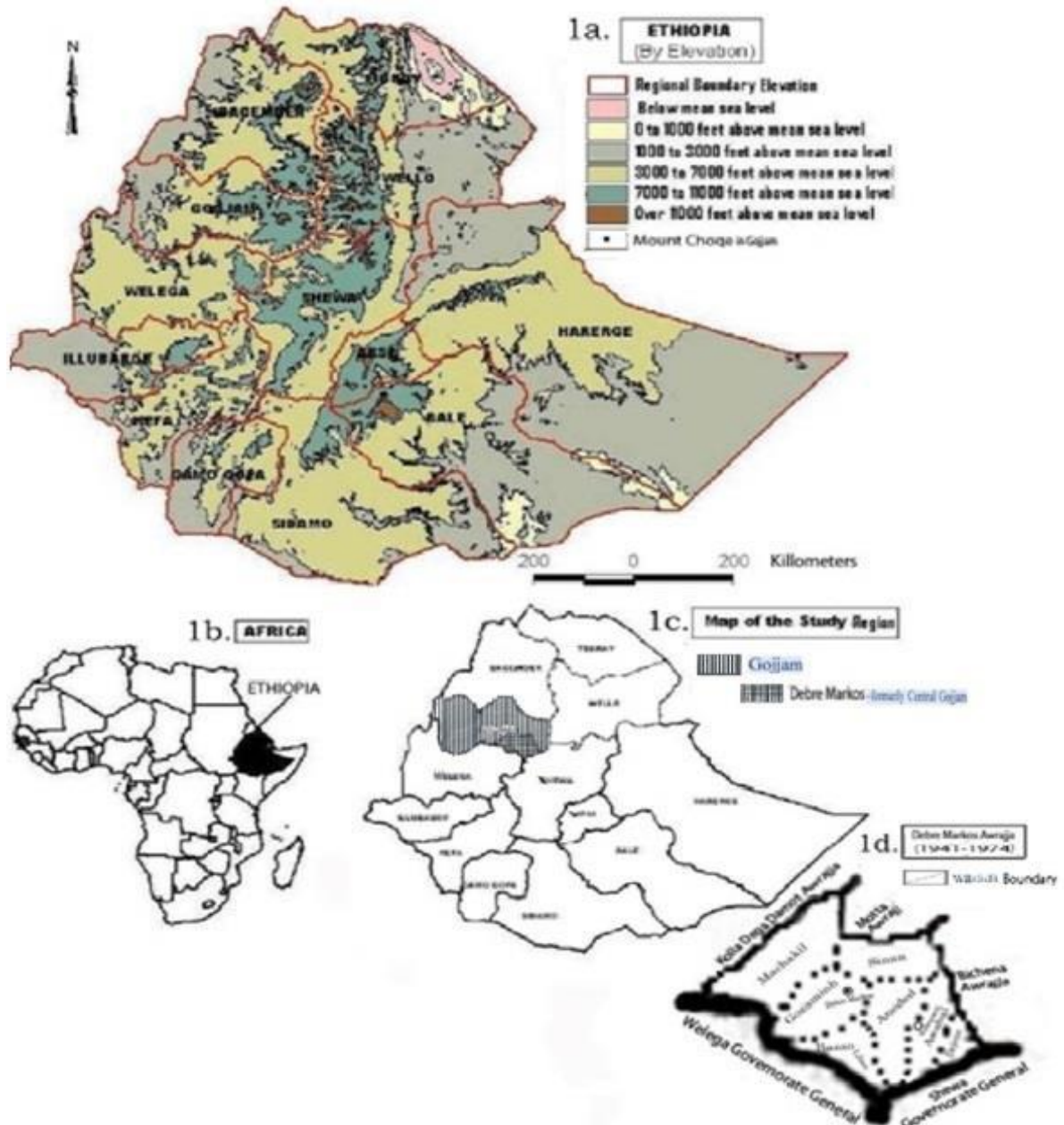
have acquired a lot of expertise in identifying and digitalizing them and kept in safe hands. Owing to this, I was forced to spend a great deal of time in exploring the collections, pointing to specific file and documents as well as contents. In spite of that, I have identified the files and documents referring to Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, while the exploration that I made cannot be absolutely exhaustive. Secondly, but worse, in the course of my field research from 2012-17, in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) and at Addis Ababa, I was not capable to get any archival document from the administrative offices of the locality. This was so because of the chaotic social conditions following the demise of the imperial government, in 1974, and the succeeding one, *Därg* in 1991; as archives of the local administration were almost entirely destroyed. This ill-fated development, therefore, is not only one of its kind which took place in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) but very common to all territories of northern Ethiopia; thereby disappointingly worsened the situation in search of valuable historical sources in rural Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in particular.

Last, but not least, unlike other archival collections, the church archives of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), which is the subject of this study, contained considerable number of property documents and other related sources—of which Christian art is one—beginning usually from the fourteenth century to twentieth century are not easily accessible to work in their archives from within. It needs to spend an indefinite number of successive days for the authorization of the church administration before I started doing archival research within. The administration of church institutions of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) is heavily bureaucratized. The heads of religious centers felt quite independent from higher church authorities. They are suspicious to provide documents and information, which is also observed among some

individuals I interviewed to obtain information and used in my thesis. Nevertheless, the local church archives helped me with the necessary historical records—a great deal of property documents on land and other related issues—pertinent to the period that witnessed a significant change in land tenure and the socioeconomic relations derived from it. To be precise, an attempt has been made to consult such genre of sources in order to present a clear picture of my study on the subject under consideration. It should be noted here from the outset that the name of Däbrä Marqos—used in this study—is referring to a town, a sub-province, a church as well as a district.

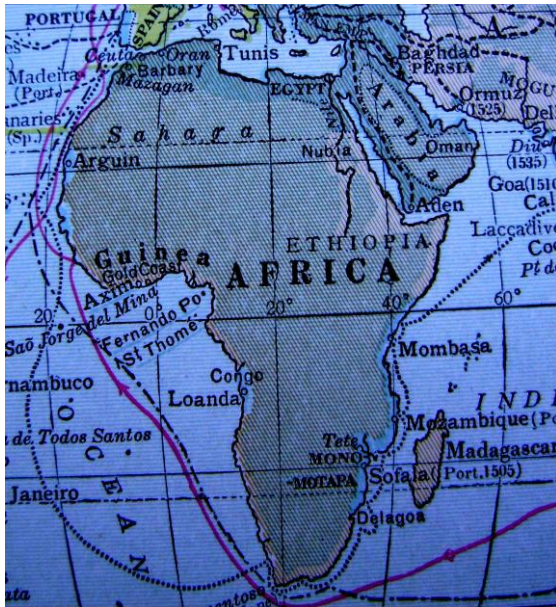
Maps (1-3)

Map 1. The Study Area



Sources: A. H. M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia* (1965: at the end of the publication); Habtamu, 'Land Tenure and Agrarian Social Structure' (2011: 1); Mesfin Welde-Mariam, *An Atlas of Ethiopia* (1970: 3); and EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **አ17**, File **መ/አ. 17**, Letter 38009/47, [Territorial] Boundaries [of Gojjam Ṭāqlay-Gezat] Delimited [at All Levels of the Administration], 15 August 1955 (9/12/47 Eth. Cal).

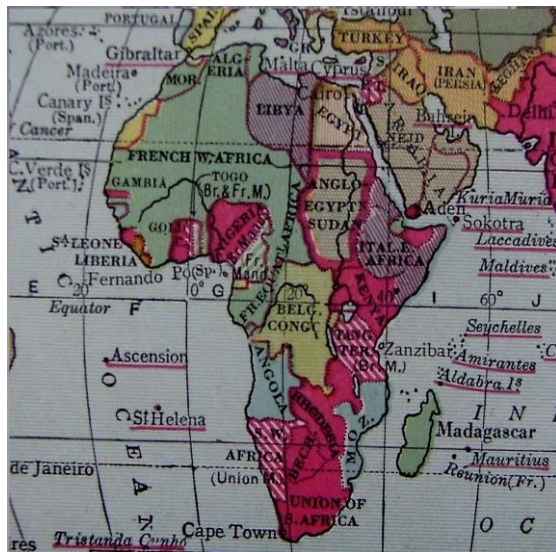
Map 2. Africa encompassing Ethiopia, in this way, Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) at various times, in the course of Modern Period well into the First Half of Twentieth Century



2a. Africa (Ethiopia) in 1604 1:150,000,000,000



2b. Africa (Ethiopia) in 1914 1:50,000,000,000



2c. Africa (Ethiopia) in 1939 1:200,000,000,000

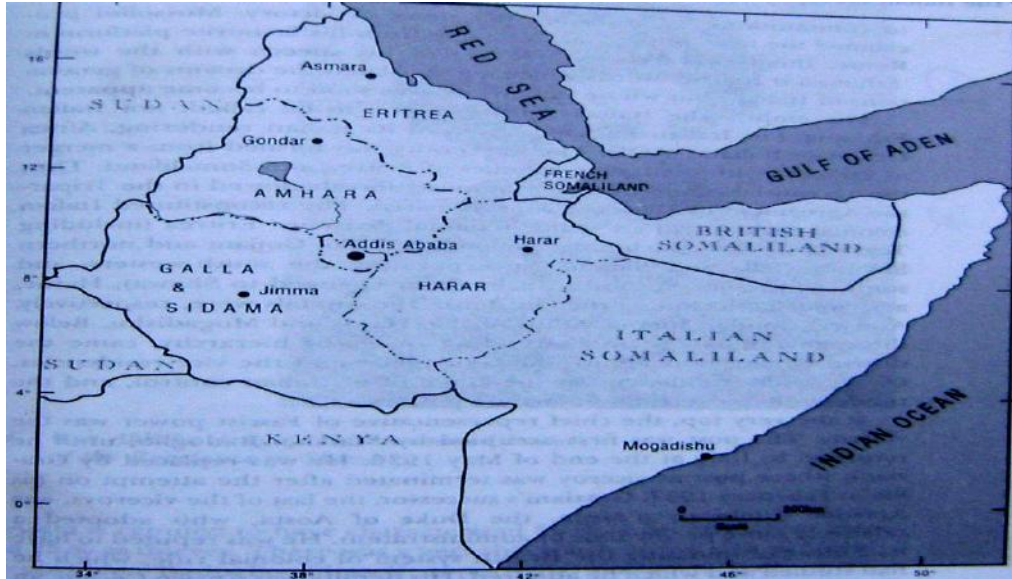


2d. Africa (Ethiopia) in 1957 1:200,000,000,000

Source: *Philips' Intermediate Historical Atlas* (1957: 20, 38, 40-41).

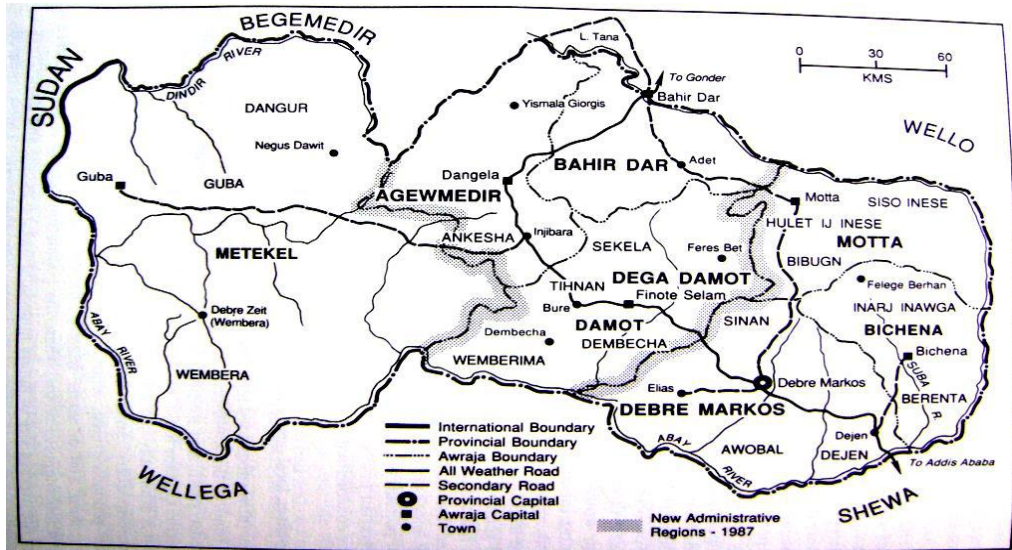
Map 3. Administrative organizations of Ethiopia encompassing Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) all the way through the Italian Occupation and the post liberation period (1935-1974)

3a. Ethiopia encompassing Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) under the 'Italian East Africa' administration (1935/6-41)



Source: Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia* (2002: 161).

3b. The eight *awrajjawoch* of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos during the post-liberation period (1941-74)



Source: Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest* (1996: 162); and Main Library Collection, IES of the AAU Archives, Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration (1971: ii).

Chapter One

Introduction Historical/Theoretical Overview

Francisco Alvarez, chaplain of the Portuguese diplomatic mission to Ethiopia, who arrived in 1520, describes that a certain king and/or queen governed the Amharic speaking population of Gojjam.¹ If so, the governors of this province with the population they ruled over would have inescapable sociopolitical and cultural contacts with any of such frontier communities as the Oromo. This, in turn, appears to indicate what Tesema Ta'a, a specialist on the history of the Oromo, claims the presence of the Oromo long before their premeditated mass-movement from the south towards the north, in the sixteenth-century.² However, the sixteenth century conflict from 1529-1543 between the Ethiopian Christian kingdom and the Muslim Sultanate of Adal, led by Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim or 'Graññ' (in what is now Somali region), expedited the decline of the kingdom pretty much quickly, thereby an easy success of the Oromo for their premeditated mass-movement towards the northern part of Ethiopia. That is to say, the Oromo, who came on the heels of the Muslims, repeatedly settled in the much larger part of medieval Amharic speaking provinces of northern Ethiopia, including Gojjam. *Aläqqa Aṭmé* (Ašmé), who is a self-taught historian who wrote the social history of the Oromo in the lifetimes of *Ašé Menelik II* (r.1889-1913) writes that the Oromo were able to transform the ethnic composition and the religious picture of the region, when

¹ Francisco Alvarez, *The Prester John of the Indies* (trans. Lord Stanley of Alderley, and rev. and ed. C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford) (Vol. II, London, the Hakluyt Society, 1961), p. 425.

² Tesema Ta'a, " "Bribing the Land": An Appraisal of the Farming Systems of the Macca Oromo in Wallaga" *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Michigan State University, 2002, pp. 99-100; see also Alemayehu Haile *et al*, *History of the Oromo to the Sixteenth Century* (ed. Tesema Ta'a *et al*, Second Edition) (Finfinne [Addis Ababa], Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2006), p. 42.

they expanded and settled into a good part of the northern Ethiopian provinces such as Gojjam.³

The Oromo owed their 16th and 17th centuries success in Gojjam to the activity of their increasingly powerful cavalry and infantry forces, who carried their repeated settlement scheme to largely Christian inhabited territories of the region by the sword.⁴ According to the self-taught local historian *Aläqa* Täklä-Iyäsus Waaq-Jiraa who documented a pioneering work on the ethno-history of Gojjam the local Gojjam population intensely defied the Oromo at Säntära Méda and Aṭaṭamét, in what is now Gozamenh, when they expanded and settled into a good part of that province in the lifetimes of *Ašé* Säršä Dengel (r.1563-1596).⁵ Thus, in the course of their premeditated movement and repeated settlement into the much larger parts of Gojjam, the Oromo clans called Yelmana, Dénsa, Goncha, Inarge, Gozamenh and Enämay gave their name to the different districts of that province which continued to exist as a distinctive geographic unit well into the present time.⁶

However, the relation between the Oromo and the Amharic speaking population in Gojjam was not adversarial all the time. From the middle of the 18th through to the 20th centuries, there seems to have existed between the local people and the Oromo peaceful interaction. The Oromo later adopted the local culture as the custom of their new homeland and vice

³ Aṭmé/Ašmé (*Aläqa*), Ya-Galla [Oromo] Tarik Kefel 1 (in Amharic) (lit. means 'History of the Oromo Part 1') (IES 173), p. 27. (The library of IES of the AAU owns the author's original but photocopied Manuscript).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Täklä-Iyäsus Waaq-Jiraa (*Aläqa*), Yä-Zämän Tarik Maṭāraqāméya ['Collection of Chronicles'] (National Library Manuscript Collection in MSNLAA Archives, Addis Ababa, Call N°. 382/63/now 009.45 ፳፻፲፱), folio 12 recto.

⁶ Ibid; Interviews with Märiḡétta Libanos Yätämähñ Kokäbu, and *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé; and *Aläqa* Aṭmé (Ašmé), Ya-Galla [Oromo] Tarik Kefel 1, pp. 27-33.

versa, adopted Christianity as well and during which the former were ruled by a dynasty of powerful princes who descended from the Gudru Oromo.⁷ Dealing with this monumental sociopolitical and cultural change that the region was going through, informants often relate that 'Gojjam is originally Oromo'. Most of all, the local people are still proud to saying that [ከአሮሞ ያልተወለደ ቡዳ ነጩ] 'whoever does not have the Oromo ancestor is a *buda* [a person with evil eyes]'.⁸ It should be noted here from the outset that from the mid eighteenth-century onwards Gojjam was ruled by a dynasty of 'lords' who descended from Oromo clan and adopted Christianity.⁹

Multiple sources reveal that the foundation of the ruling dynasty of Gojjam was laid down by *Däjjach* Yosédéq Wäldä-Ayb (Häbéb) later *Däjjazmach* and governor of Gojjam in the 1750s. It should be noted that Yosédéq established closer familial ties with the ruling family of the neighboring Gondar, now including the formerly Bagemder, in the early years of the latter's political career. Multiple sources revealed that marriage ties between the ruler of the Gojjam prince *Däjjazmach* Yosédéq and the Christian noble family of Gondar, Wälätä-Isra'el, daughter of *yetégé* Mentewab (r.1730-1769), bore the notable *Abéto* Häylä-Iyäsus (later *Ras* Haylu I or *Ras* Haylu the Great), who ruled Gojjam in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ Hence, in due course the violent and acrimonious relations between the

⁷ Ibid; see also Täklä-Šadéq Mäkuréya, *Ašé Téwodros Ena Yä-Ethiopia Andenät* (in Amharic) (lit. *Emperor Téwodros II [r.1855-1868] and the Unity of Ethiopia*) (Addis Ababa, Kuraz Printing Press, 1981 Eth. Cal.), pp. 250-251; and Teshale Tibebe, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974* (Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1995), p. 38.

⁸ Ibid; and Interviews with *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Märiyéta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, and *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé.

⁹ Ibid; and *Aläqa* Aṭmé (Ašmé), Ya-Galla [Oromo] *Tarik* Kefel 1, p. 26.

¹⁰ Ibid; History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 129 recto; Ya-Gojjam *Kebrä Nägäst* (lit. *Glory of the Kings of Gojjam*), MS Kédanä Mehrät Church in Mängesto, in what is now Enämay *Wäräda*, formerly Bichena *Awrajja*, folio 17 recto; Täklä-Šadéq, *Ašé Téwodros Ena Yä-Ethiopia*

Amharic speaking population of the region and the Oromo gave way to amicable relationship. Most of all, the powerful princes of that Oromo clan as rulers of Gojjam were *Ras*¹¹ Adal Täsämma, the later *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot of Gojjam (r.1881-1901) who was succeeded by his son Prince *Ras* Haylu II, formerly *Däjjazmach* Seyum, from 1901 to 1932.¹² As a whole, *Aläqa* Aṭmé (Ašmé) describes that from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, the position of the princes of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos had become hereditary rulers with Oromo predominance.¹³ This dynastic continuity provided a measure of political stability to Gojjam during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries well into the end of the 'lordship' of *Ras* Haylu II in 1932. Indeed, the medieval Gojjam province was never the same again.

It should be noted here from the outset that in the process of this general political development, in what is now Gojjam, during the middle of the sixteenth century and after, there had some terminological consequences in the field of land tenure and its related issues, such as *čeqa shum*, *abba*, *abéto*, and *ṭis*. That period creates a formative stage in the development of 'feudal' relations of production and appropriation in Gojjam. It was in this

Andenät, p. 38; see also Fantahun Birhane, 'Gojjam 1800-1855' (BA Thesis in History, Haile Sellassie I University, 1973), pp. 1-2; Habtamu Mengistie Tegegne, 'Land Tenure and Agrarian Social Structure in Ethiopia, 1636-1900' (PhD Thesis in History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2011), p. 145; and Emeru Haylä Sellasé, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw* (in Amharic) (lit. *What I have seen and Remembered*) (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Printing Press, 2002 Eth. Cal.), pp. 206-208.

¹¹ The old Ethiopian nobleman's title—resembling to Duke/Lord—and the rank just normally below *Negus* and above *däjjazmach* (military title—lit. commander of the gate or threshold): Dästa Täklä-Wäld, *Addés Yä-Amareñña Mäzgäbä-Qalat* (in Amharic) (lit. *A New Amharic Dictionary*) (Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal.), p. 1151; and Täklä-Šadéq, *Ašé Təwodros Ena Yä-Ethiopia Andenät*, pp. 250-251.

¹² Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, 'Ché Bäläw' (in Amharic) (lit. 'He has Ridden a Horse since He was a Soldier'), *Ya-Belatén Géta Mahtämä-Sellasé Wä/Mäsqäl Sebeseb Serawoch* (lit. *The Works of Belatén Géta Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl*) (Second Edition, Addis Ababa, n.p, 2007 Eth. Cal), p. 47; and Täklä-Šadéq, *Ašé Təwodros Ena Yä-Ethiopia Andenät*, pp. 250-251.

¹³ *Aläqa* Aṭmé (Ašmé), Ya-Galla [Oromo] Tarik Kefel 1, p. 26; see also Täklä-Šadéq, *Ašé Təwodros Ena Yä-Ethiopia Andenät*, pp. 250-251; see also Teshale, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 38.

way that, the age-old land tenure arrangement of Gojjam began to change under the 'lordship' of *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot. It was also subject to change radically when his son and successor Prince *Ras* Haylu II took the Office and instituted a new system of land right attached to such tenures as *rist-märét* and *gult-märét* by which many peasants were reduced into the status of *ṫisäñña* or *česäñña*, as will be discussed in the chapters that follow. Below are photographs of the two most powerful hereditary rulers of Gojjam Täklä-Häymanot and his son and successor Haylu II from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century and continuing well into the turn of the fourth decade of that same century.



Illustration 1A. *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot (r.1881-1901)¹⁴ **Illustration 1B.** *Ras* Haylu II (r.1901-1932)¹⁵

So much so that, the local church archives testifies the importance of Gojjam in the political development of the modern Ethiopian empire started with the coronation of Täklä-Häymanot

¹⁴ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991* (Second Edition, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press, 2002), p. 44: here Bahru found and reproduced the photograph from the Manuscript Collection of the IES to suit for his work.

¹⁵ www.royalark.net/Ethiopia/gojjam.htm, accessed on 30, August 2016.

since 1881, as *negus* of that province and Kaffa Provinces¹⁶, now in the region of *Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia* (SNNPE). Primarily, Tädlä Gu^alu, who ruled Gojjam in the middle of the nineteenth century is said to have been the founder of the town of Mänqorär, later Däbrä Marqos, in 1852/3 as his political centre. After the coronation of *Nigus Täklä-Häymanot* in 1974, however, he changed the nomenclature for Mänqorär to Däbrä Marqos, derived from the newly established church of Saint Mark, one of Jesus Christ's DISCIPLES as an institution and became very popular in the town as well as the province, as his political centre. Eventually, according to the available government document, the town of Däbrä Marqos formerly Mänqorär was bounded by the Endemaṭa Eyasus diocese in the east, the Wutren River in the west, the Abema Maryam diocese in the north and the Gemjja Bet diocese in the south.¹⁷

Therefore, despite some significant changes, the name of the town of Däbrä Marqos used in this study is equivalent to the old town of Mänqorär as an administrative centre of Gojjam province since then until 1991. Although Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) has been an abode to Muslim minorities for a long time, these and other churches and monasteries became active centers of Christian life and learning for centuries and Christianity remains an integral part of the cultural identity of the region. This is a logical outcome of the centuries of evangelical work and the total political integration of the region into the Ethiopian state. Testimonies, such as church records that I collected regarding the date of foundation of the churches in the region closely corresponds to the historical process described in this study.

¹⁶ Kebrä Mäzgäb (Glorious Register), MS. Däbrä Marqos, folio 9 recto.

¹⁷ East Gojjam Administrative Region of the Provisional WPE [Workers Party of Ethiopia] Committee, Socioeconomic Study of the Town of Däbrä Marqos (in Amharic) (Prepared by East Gojjam Administrative Region, Däbrä Marqos, December 1982/1990), p. 4.

According to Täklä-Iyäsus' record, local tradition designated the Gojjam province into three geographical regions: 'Central Gojjam', 'Gojjam Proper' and 'Diocese of Gojjam'. Firstly, the old sub-province of 'Central Gojjam' began somewhere at the top of mount Čoqé and extended eastwards, in what is now East Gojjam administrative Zone, more or less formerly Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*. Secondly, and most importantly, 'Gojjam Proper' was bounded by Blue Nile River, known in local parlance as Abay, in the direction of the flow that river stream. Thirdly, but not least, 'Diocese of Gojjam' is bounded by the nearby regions of Dänqäz, Däbrä Tabor, Guna (in what is now Gondar), Lasta, [Beta-] Amhara (in present-day Wello) Mänz, A^efrata, Angolälla, Enfoto, Mänagäsha, Méča (in what is now Shewa) with their rivers that flow into the larger river termed as Abay (Blue Nile).¹⁸

Nevertheless, Central Gojjam was more or less erased and began to loose its influence mainly on the administrative reorganization of the region in the course of the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era. Central Gojjam had no more continued by itself to play a significant role in the local political development. The sub-province could not recover completely from the administrative reshufflings created and, through that, erased by the government's centralization process in the period under stated. Owing to this and other developments, therefore, the contemporary Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* only came to replace Central Gojjam, which is a sober reflection to its diminishing importance in local politics. Gradually but steadily, Central Gojjam disappeared from the political map of the region and the name Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* (a big portion of what is now East Gojjam Administrative Zone of the Amhara National Regional State) came to

¹⁸ Täklä-Iyäsus, Yä-Zämän Tarik Maṭäraqäméya, folio 9 recto 26 verso, 76 verso.

replace it as a geographic designation of much of the area. Hence, Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* seems to have been the old sub-province of Central Gojjam and virtually symbolizes it.

Gojjam—encompassing Däbrä Marqos formed one of the oldest Christian provinces of northwestern Ethiopia. The medievalist historian Taddesse Tamrat writes that Gojjam and Bagemder was incorporated into the old Christian kingdom after the shift in the geopolitical center of the Ethiopian state from Lasta into Shewa—subsequent to the restoration of the 'Solomon' dynasty in 1270. It began in earnest in the fourteenth century and the first quarter of the fifteenth century A.D in the reigns of Amdä Šeyon (r.1314-1344) and Yeshaq (r.1413-1430). Especially, following the completion of the process of its incorporation into the mainstream national life, Gojjam was transformed into a heavily Christian province so much so that already by the subsequent period the major centre of Christian activities of the Ethiopian state were located there.¹⁹ Although information on the property system of Gojjam prior to its incorporation into the Ethiopian kingdom is lacking, it is apparent that the traditions and systems of land tenure and the social relations derived from it that had existed in the older Christian provinces of the kingdom might have introduced into the area from early on. This could be evident from the commencement of inescapable socioeconomic as well as cultural contacts between the old Christian kingdom of Ethiopia and Gojjam prior to the fourteenth century A.D. In any case, Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos played a significant role in the national political development subsequent to its incorporation.

¹⁹ Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527* (London, Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 20, 297.

As will be discussed thoroughly in the last paragraphs of this chapter and the subsequent one, the province of Gojjam, which therefore included Däbrä Marqos, was incorporated into the Ethiopian empire from quite early on, going as far back as the fourteenth century A.D. With the efflorescence of modern Ethiopia, the province became an integral part of the much larger Ethiopian empire, virtually as a single administrative unit from within. The centralization of the province was the outcome of organized administrative reorganization created by the last of Ethiopian emperors, particularly Emperor Haile Sellassie I (r.1930-1974). The general reorganization of the Ethiopian state that followed the decline of local autonomy of Gojjam, with the proximity of provinces to the political center, accelerated the process of absolute centralization of power during the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era, as will be discussed later in this chapter and extendedly in subsequent chapters.

Hence, the boundaries of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* encompassing Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*, capital Däbrä Marqos (formerly Mänqorär) took its present shape during the government of Emperor Haile Sellassie, most actively in post-1941. Although After 1974, *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* changed the nomenclature for province to *keflä-hägär*, the new regime *Därg* retained the term *Awrajja*—thereby the boundaries of Däbrä Marqos remained as it was. Today, the geographic unit of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* is much of *East Gojjam Administrative Zone* of the Amhara National Regional State under the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The *Awrajja* was and still is one of the richest agricultural provinces of the Ethiopian state. Thus, prosperity and glory are constant features in the recent history of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam, even if affected by acute land and environmental degradations in its some localities.

The province of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos is characterized by different agro-climatic zones with certain water towering called Mount Čoqé (4070 meter above sea level), what is now Sinan. The province somewhat contains three distinct agro-climatic zones of the Ethiopian plateau; *däga*, *wäyena-däga* and *qola*. The *wäyena-däga* agro-climatic zone covers a significant proportion of the *Awrajja*, roughly constituting 91 percent of the total area of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos. The *däga* and *qola* agro-climatic zones cover the remaining eight percent and one percent of the total area of the region, respectively. However, the upper parts of Mount Čoqé (the source of more than 86 percent of the Blue Nile water) are specifically identified as *wurč* which is the coldest parts of the *däga* zone in the area.²⁰ This division of agro-climatic zones in Gojjam is based mainly on altitude and temperature distribution. (See Map 1 displayed in preceding this chapter). The people mainly dwell in the rural section of the area and still busy in traditional farming methods depending often on *kerämt* rainfall between *säné* (June) and *nähasé* (August).

As will be discussed thoroughly in the subsequent chapter, ownership of agricultural land in Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam is based on the tenure system called *rist*,²¹ derived from the Amharic term [ወረሰ] *wärräsä* (literary means 'he inherited').²² Although other forms of tenure existed in the area in the past, a large section of the population of this region was organized under this system of holding. The *rist* system of tenure is too well known to warrant extended discussion here. Suffices to write here that in this system of tenure,

²⁰ Ibid; Mesfin Weldemariam, *An Atlas of Ethiopia* (Asmara, Il Poligrafico, Priv. Ltd. Co., 1970), p. 3.

²¹ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province [Ethiopia] Prepared by the Department of Land Tenure (Addis Ababa, January 1971, in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) Archive in the Main Library Collections, Call N°. 333LAN or in 333ETH), p. 4.

²² Dästa, *Addés Yä-Amareñña Mäzgäbä-Qalat*, p. 1153.

individuals of opposite sexes claim hereditary right to land by virtue of their descent from a common, though often putative, ancestor. In Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), local tradition and documentary sources acknowledge Däräbé, Gozamen, Mänkorär, Aneded, Machakel, Wudmét and several others as *Aqññi-abbatoch* or *wannä-abbatoch* (pioneer/first settlers or founding fathers) into the area. Most informants I talked to the issue trace their descent from the aforementioned founding ancestors. As the first landholders, these alleged founding ancestors of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) are said to have divided the land among themselves. With the passage of time, the number of people born into the family of the pioneer settlers multiplied, which brought a lot of demographic pressure on the land. Gradually, the pioneer settlers were divided into hundreds of other pioneers known in local parlance as *menzer-abbatoch* (sub-pioneer settlers), as the subsequent founding fathers.²³

Succinctly put, individuals in the area justified their ownership of *rist* land and could place a land claim at any time by referring to their descent to the first-pioneer and/or sub-pioneer settlers. By the lapse of time, however, individuals tend to forget the true line of their family genealogy. When this happened, they draw on *rist-qoṭariwoch* (descent enumerators) or start to invent founding ancestors in the attempt to justify their claim to *rist* land. Because of this inherent problem in the *rist* system, informants testify that there had been tremendous insecurity of property and chaos, in Däbrä Marqos, in the past well into the postwar era. For

²³ Interviews with *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, and *Märiḡetta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu; and Täklä-Iyäsus, Yä-Zämän Tarik Maṭaraqäméya, folio 83 recto and 84 verso; Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp. 4-5; and EGAZHCA Archives, Courtroom Ruling No. 5, File 2/39, 2/42, 2/44, 2/46, 2/49, 2/50/2/51, No Letter N°, *Rist* Land Litigation, 1944/45 (1937 Eth. Cal); No. 6, File 6/38, 7/38, 18/38, 26/38 and 27/38, No Letter N°, 1945/46 (1938 Eth. Cal).

some of the informants I talked to this problem is a lived experience,²⁴ that is beside to legal and administrative documents discovered and found from Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* verify it. It is interesting to note that the long-standing *rist* system of tenure and the land dispute that it bred and encouraged continued in its vitality well into the imperial era in 1974,²⁵ as shall be discussed in chapter that follow this and the next one. However, an important caution that should be noted here is that far from being static, the tenure system that applied in the area was dynamic and constantly changing. Hence, it is in the context of this historical and geographical background described above that I will reconstruct the land tenure system of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) during the first three quarters of the twentieth century (c.1902-1974). Before doing that, however, it is fitting to briefly discuss the process of the making of this study, and the local administration as a distinctive mark to the land system that prevailed in the area.

Historiographical Justification of the Study

Scholarly research on the history of Ethiopian land tenure as well as the socioeconomic relation derived from it started to be studied about a hundred year earlier by R. Perini and C. Conti Rossini, who are considered pioneers in that field of study.²⁶ However, unlike other fields that showed remarkable progress in scholarly research and literary thickness, the history of Ethiopian land tenure studies showed slow but steady progress. One of the basic

²⁴ Interviews with *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Märiqetta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, and *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé; and EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ዞገ/አሰ/0082**, File **ጸ 164**, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, Letter 11883/9139, February 1975 (13/6/67 Eth. Cal.).

²⁵ Interviews with *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Märiqetta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé.

²⁶ Shiferaw Bekele, 'A Historical Outline of Land Tenure Studies' Alessandro Bausi *et al* (eds.) *Materiale Antropologico E Storico Sul "Rim" in Etiopia Ed Eritrea Anthropological and Historical Documents on "rim" in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Torino: Editrice L'Harmattan Italia, 2001), p. 24.

reasons for this condition is the fact that many students of Ethiopian history were often inspired by political history. Some scholars who studied the Ethiopian land tenure did not even explain properly and reveal their investigation on the issue. While few exceptions who devoted their entire career and lifetime to study the subject, were only interested in giving us brief discussions on the subject and ended up in producing a single or a couple of articles. Thus, still studies on land tenure need exhaustive research, analysis and interpretation to be undertaken. This problem seems to have emanated partly from the training of the scholars who studied and attempted to study the history of Ethiopian land system in other related disciplines like anthropology,²⁷ political science,²⁸ and development studies²⁹ as well as public historians.³⁰ The limitation of these scholars is that they do not treat issues over a reasonable time scale. Hence, all these drawbacks were considered in my study on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) covering the first three quarters of the twentieth century.

Looking at the existing literature in the field of land studies, the approaches used by many scholars can be categorized into two groups. While one group of scholars used the history of

²⁷ The works Allan Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia: The Dynamics of Cognatic Descent* (London, Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1973); Joanna Mantel-Niećko, *The Role of Land Tenure in the System of Ethiopian Imperial Government in Modern Times* (Krzysztof Adam Bobinsky, (trans.)) (Warsaw, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1980); and J. Cohen and D. Weintraub, *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia: The Social Background to a Revolution* (Assen, Van Gorcum & Comp. B.V., 1975).

²⁸ The works Christopher Clapham, *Haile Selassie's Government* (London and Harlow, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1969); John Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (Second Edition, Addis Ababa, Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1975); *idem* and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, Shama Plc., 2006).

²⁹ The works Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant and the State Studies in Agrarian Change in Ethiopia 1950s-2000s* (Addis Ababa, AAUP, 2009); 'From Heterogeneity to Homogeneity: Agrarian Class Structure in Ethiopia since 1950s' Dessalegn Rahmato and Taye Assefa (eds) *Land and the Challenge of Sustainable Development in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies, 2006); and *idem*, *Land to Investors: Large-Scale Land Transfers in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies, 2011).

³⁰ The work Margery Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia* (Evaston, Northwestern University Press, 1969).

land tenure as a point of departure for their major historical reconstruction,³¹ others tended to deal exclusively with land tenure and confer its development in wide-ranging geographical and/or time settings.³² Hence, the works of all these scholars certainly have in need of exhaustive description and interpretation on the issue. Although most scholars have tried to use *rist* and *gult* as important analytical or conceptual units to find out systematically and characterize the form of agrarian institutions and societies in Ethiopia in the past, when looked at very closely such terms were very complex, as of differentiated in light of this study within a the specified time and geographical scope.

³¹ The works Tadesse, *Church and State*; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*; Teshale, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*; and Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1996).

³² Such as Ottaway, 'Land Reform in Ethiopia'; Crummey, *Land and Society*; *idem* 'Gondärine Rim Land Sales: an Introductory Description and Analysis' Robert Hess (ed.) *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Chicago, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1979); *idem* 'Family and Property amongst the Amhara Nobility' *the Journal of African History*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1983; and *idem* 'The Term Rim in Ethiopian Land Documents of the 18th and the 19th Centuries' Alessandro Bausi *et al* (eds.) *Materiale Antropologico E Storico Sul "Rim" in Etiopia Ed Eritrea Anthropological and Historical Documents on "rim" in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Torino: Editrice L'Harmattan Italia, 2001); Donald Crummey and Shumet Sishagne, 'Land Tenure and the Social Accumulation of Wealth in the Eighteenth Century of Ethiopia: Evidence from the Qwesquam Land Register' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1991; and *et al*, 'A Gondärine Land Grant in Gojjam: The Case of Qeranyo Medhane Alem' Bahru Zewde, Richard Pankhurst and Tadesse Beyene (eds.) *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Vol. I, Addis Ababa, 1994); Tesema Ta'a, 'The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From the Mid 16th to the Early 20th Centuries' (Unpublished PHD Thesis in History, Michigan State University, 1986); Tekalign Wolde-Mariam, 'A City and its Hinterlands: The Political Economy of Land Tenure, Agriculture and Food Supply for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 1887-1974' (Unpublished PhD Thesis in History, University of Boston, 1995); Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopian History* (Vol. 3, Addis Ababa, Haile Sellassie I University Press, 1966); Merid Wolde-Aregay, 'Land Tenure and Agricultural Productivity, 1500-1855' *Proceedings of the Third Annual Seminar of the Department of History [of] the Addis Ababa University* (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press, 1986); Bairu Tafla, 'The Notion of Rim in Traditional Christian Ethiopia' Alessandro Bausi *et al* (eds.) *Materiale Antropologico E Storico Sul "Rim" in Etiopia Ed Eritrea Anthropological and Historical Documents on "rim" in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Torino: Editrice L'Harmattan Italia, 2001); Joseph Tubiana, 'Nature and Function of the Ethiopian Rim: A Short Note' Alessandro Bausi *et al*. (eds.) *Materiale Antropologico E Storico Sul "Rim" in Etiopia Ed Eritrea Anthropological and Historical Documents on "rim" in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Torino: Editrice L'Harmattan Italia, 2001); Shiferaw Bekele, 'The Evolution of Land Tenure in the Imperial Era' Shiferaw Bekele (ed.), *An Economic History of Modern Ethiopia 1941-74* (Dakar, Codesria, 1995); 'A Historical Outline of Land Tenure'; *Idem*, 'Some Notes on Secular Rim'; James McCann, *People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia 1800-1990* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); and Habtamu Mengistie, *Lord, Zéga and Peasant: A Study of Property and Agrarian Relations in Rural Eastern Gojjam* (Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies, 2004); *Idem*, 'Land Tenure and Agrarian Social Structure in Ethiopia'.

In light of the above-mentioned limitations was lack of description of culturally constructed understandings of the society with respect to land. Although land system is an important part of history and culture, most of scholars on Ethiopian studies unnoticed or least understood for its customary rules and regulations from which it evolved and flourished. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that most of the scholars did not exhaustively investigate how the custom of the society in a well defined locality deeply infiltrated and determined the course of individual's claim and access to land and whether it significantly influenced the dynamic and fluid tenure configuration of its vicinity and the country at large. Since land litigation was, and still is, a lived experience at the legal court levels, courtroom observation is not also the trend in Ethiopian land studies. Therefore, convincing description and interpretation of such genre of sources enabled me to explore, among other things, the manner in which under varying historical conditions how cultural and social values and norms are expressed in specific land issues, which has not been studied in any detail until now. Thus, my study has to reconsider the customary property law. In any case, this focused study certainly responded to all of these problems.

The institutions of land tenure in general must be studied within the socio-cultural, economic and political contexts of the period and the area specified. This would lead to an in-depth and comprehensive investigation of the subject. Besides, one can also come up with clear characteristics of the tenure system and the socioeconomic relations derivative from it of the given period to be studied. Studies on Ethiopian land system were largely conducted in the twentieth century. But still land tenure history of Ethiopia prior to the revolution is not studied comprehensively. The literary materials on land tenure of the period so far exist in the

form of add-on government sponsored writings counting official reports³³ and memoirs,³⁴ as well as compilations/collections³⁵ and dictionary sources,³⁶ unpublished PhD theses,³⁷ unpublished dissertations,³⁸ as well as published articles focusing on land,³⁹ or often in the form of exploratory articles⁴⁰ and books.⁴¹ This problem seems to have emanated partly from lack of a focused approach defined in time and geographical scope on a small administrative unit. Hence, a study at least in a local context that has homogeneous tenure entity certainly made to fill all these shortcomings—while they provide significant improvement about the subject under discussion. In any case, Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* land tenure system—and the socioeconomic relations derived from it has never been

³³ The works Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province; and Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Interior, *Yagär-Gezat Minstér Shumamentochena Säratägñnoch Selṭanena Yä-wuṣṭ Däneb* (in Amharic) (lit. *Duties and Authorities of [the Official] Appointees and Civil Servants of the Ministry of Interior*) (Addis Ababa, Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1934 Eth. Cal.).

³⁴ The works Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*; Käbbädä Täsämma, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha* (in Amharic) (lit. *A Historical Memoir*) (Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal.); and Kä-Bétä Mängest Dossé Yä-Blatta Wäldä-Maryam Mäzäker (in Amharic) (lit. *A Chronicle of Blatta Wäldä-Maryam in Office of Tenure*) (com. and ed., Mäkuréya Mäkasha) (Addis Ababa, Alpha Printing Press, 2006 Eth. Cal.).

³⁵ The works Gäbrä-Wäld Engeda-Wärq, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét Ena Geber Sem* (in Amharic) (*The Ethiopia's [Customary] Land [Tenure] and Tribute Name*) (Addis Ababa, Tinsa'e Ze-guba'e Printing Press, 1948 Eth. Cal.); Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, *Selä-Ethiopia Yä-Märét Serét Astädadär-Inna Geber Ṭäqlala Astäyayät* (in Amharic) (lit. 'A Brief Statement to the Ethiopian Land Tenure and the Tribute Administration Derived from it'), (n.d, in MSNLAA Call N°. 333.73 MCp) and *idem*, *Zekrä Nägär* (in Amharic) (lit. *Oral and Written Legacies [of Historic Ethiopia]*) (Addis Ababa, Näšanät Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal.).

³⁶ The works government-sponsored Amharic and/or Geez publications of Kédänä-Wäld Keflé, *Säwasäw Wä-Ges Wä-Mäzgäbä Qalat Häddés* (in Amharic) (lit. *New Dictionary of Grammar and Verb [Agreements in Amharic]*) (Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Press, 1948 Eth. Cal.); and Dästa, *Addés Yä-Amareñña Mäzgäbä-Qalat*.

³⁷ The works Tekalign, 'A City and its Hinterlands', pp. 236-323; Tesema, 'The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia', pp. 194-210.

³⁸ Including Daniel Dejene [Checkol], 'Land Tenure Reform and its Impact on Tenancy in Wadla-Dalanta Awrajja (Wallo) [Ethiopia]: 1941-1974' (Unpublished MA Dissertation in History, AAU, 2009).

³⁹ The work Crummey, 'Family and Property'.

⁴⁰ The works Shiferaw, 'A Historical Outline of Land Tenure Studies'; *idem* 'The Evolution of Land Tenure'; and also 'Some Notes on Secular Rim'; Bairu, 'The Notion of Rim'; and Tubiana, 'Nature and Function of the Ethiopian Rim'.

⁴¹ The works Crummey, *Land and Society*; Teshale, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*; Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*; and Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*; and the work of political scientist Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*; and Clapham, *Haile Sellassie's Government*; and also the development studies' specialist Dessalegn, *The Peasant and the State*; and the publicist Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*.

studied before and my study, therefore, sheds some light on its distinctive characteristics.

That period three and a half decades following Emperor Haile Sellassie's restoration in 1941 was highly eventful for the country. It indicated how the Emperor intended to use state power with regard to land: with the 1942 and 1944 tax decrees, backed by a variety of other measures, have been acts of political reform and as acts designed to raise revenue, against the long-standing and complex land tenure arrangements of the country, in the interests of the autocracy. The decrees issued from 1942-1967 converted land taxes from kind to cash, regularized their payment—except for the Ethiopian church land—and began to stripped away the social intermediaries between the government and the primary producers. The most widespread and violent resistance—for its deeply obliterating scar—has been observed notably in the Governorate Generals of Tegray, Bale, and Gojjam, respectively. However, the impact of the whole reform package entailed regional difference mainly to the violent reaction of the society in different parts of the country,⁴² which needs to be studied within a limited time and geographical scope, as will be observed in the light of this study.

In any case, the study of the history of Ethiopian land tenure still has not showed much progress. Hence, my study certainly brought a significant progress in the social historiography of Ethiopia in general. In examining the above reality however, it does not mean to suggest that the Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) which is the subject of this study was entirely an exception to the mainstream of the historical experience of the people of Ethiopia

⁴² Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 1, 5, 20, 161-168; Crummey, *Land and Society*, pp. 234-238, 240, 242, 244; Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, pp. 219-226, 231; and also the political scientist Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 376-387.

understandably in its entirety. In *making* this study, therefore, I looked at it very closely for very complex and differentiated from the experiences of the rest of the country. In examining this reality, however, it does not mean to suggest that the Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)—once the subject of this study was entirely an exception to the mainstream of the historical experience of the people of Ethiopia understandably in its entirety. In materializing the study, therefore, the emergence of a new land system was not entirely detached from the social and cultural contexts from which it was made. Nevertheless, the whole land reform package of the imperial regime favored the conversion of agricultural land away from multiple and overlapping tenures toward private ones. Private ownership rights to land above all entailed unrestricted freedom to dispose of it most significantly through sale and/or dispossession—as observed in my study on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).

Key Research Questions

In general, I contend to find out how did the series of land reform measures of the imperial era affect the long-standing land system and its socioeconomic consequences in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).

Specifically, my study answered all the following questions, as it should be.

- What are the basic features of the customary land tenure that prevailed in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)? How did it evolve and flourish overtime which was measured in terms of the degree of rights and duties exercised, by way of fluid and dynamic configuration? To what extent did the general reality of land prove to be in sharp contradiction to and/or in harmony with the rest of the country at large? Since its values and norms are

expressed in varying historical conditions, to what extent did the particular custom of the area infiltrate and determine the kingdom's land arrangement at large, and in this way, how was the local custom different in meaning over land? As well, was there agreement on how much the feudal paradigm could beset with any analytical utility for the general reality of land? If so, to what extent the local tenure system was a contribution to the debate on whether pre-modern and modern Ethiopian (African) history could be considered feudal with gain and safety or not?

- What led to the transformation of the old land tenure system into the new one, especially in post-1941?
- To what extent were cadastral land survey and land measurement executed as a basis for the succeeding task of the imperial reform measures in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*?
- How was the application of the granting of land executed in the *Awrajja* and all at once in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*?
- To what extent did the concept of 'title deed' succeed in the Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)?
- How did the transition from tribute to cash succeed in the area?
- How did the new reform measures influence the extent and characteristics of agricultural tenancy? While acknowledging this unfortunate development fermented social friction and tension between the peasantry on the one hand and current government on the other, how one could seek to draw from this evidence that the relations of production, which prevailed in the existing Ethiopia, more precisely Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), could be considered by and large as fair and appropriate?

- How did the local people perceive the whole agricultural land reform package, and react accordingly? At what point did passive acceptance of wrongs transform into active rejection or under what conditions, with their military organization and leadership, did peasants move from passive protest to active resistance? What were the factors that deterred the revolt regardless of unequal access to land? What certainly differentiated the local revolt from its neighbors living under more or less similar conditions? Above and beyond, what seems to be the nature of the army in its organization and leadership experience at considerable distance in time even far into the past in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)?

In view of wide variations of the land tenure reform measures of the postwar regime and its socioeconomic values, therefore, such questions are answered and reached to a comprehensive understanding of the history of Ethiopian land tenure and the socioeconomic structure derived from it—compliant with the specified historical setting all the way through the twentieth century before the revolution.

Conceptual Framework: Issues and Debates on Ethiopian Landed Property Studies

Here, intellectual considerations on Ethiopian land tenure and African property system at large are reviewed, one after the other. Nonetheless, in both cases, most scholars employed the key conceptual category of the subject, property, referring mainly to agricultural land as well as labor power and the diverse rights derived from it for the presence of layers of rights on a particular type of property. That property was used in this study in examining the rights

and relations between individuals or society to land and labor within the specified place and time setting.

As discussed earlier, the whole land studies that are produced are not solely historical; they also include studies done with other related disciplines like social anthropology. The problem with social anthropological studies is that they do not treat issues through time. In general, in the studies of land tenure, the predominant contribution comes from historians and students of history with their limitation especially in terms of time and space. Here, we can categorize the already produced scholarly debate into two. Firstly, and most importantly, are the works of scholars focusing on Ethiopian land studies. Secondly, are the works of scholars focusing on African property configuration at large, but in light of Ethiopia. Below is a brief discussion of these two groups, in their own great insight, respectively. In that way, prominent scholars on Ethiopian land studies include Merid Wolde-Aregay, Donald Crummey, Allan Hoben, Taddesse Tamrat, Bahru Zewde, Tesema Ta'a, Tekalign Welde-Mariam, Gebru Tareke, Shiferaw Bekele, Habtamu Mengistie, J. Cohen and D. Wintraub, Dessalegn Rahmato, Berhanuo Abbebe, and John Markakis and Nega Ayele, and James McCann.

They used the key analytical or conceptual categories of *rist* and *gult* and the social category of tenancy derived from it in their studies. Primarily and most importantly, in his remarkable study in the 1960s, Hoben writes that *rist* right entails land use right of peasants with supposedly inalienable and heritable character held through ancestry group and *gult* land

refers to 'fief holding' right that would be on the same tract of land,⁴³ as layer of rights by many individuals. Here, 'fief holding' right refers to the condition by which a 'lord' granted property, usually in land, to someone to hold in 'fief' from him as vassal, which was a social reality in medieval Europe. In dealing with the European feudal institution, 'fief' was the condition when someone surrendered to a lord property that he/she had formerly held as what is called an *alod* by way of his/her own independent property and received it back again as a 'fief' by way of estate or fee.⁴⁴

The late Professor Crummey who is one of a few specialists on medieval Ethiopian history also defines *rist*, *gult*, and the nature of their relationship as neither exclusive nor absolute property in a similar breath to Hoben. Crummey argued that most often the land tenure was characterized by layer of rights, linking immediate holders and social elites, in groups and/or individually. He defined *gult*, in its generic sense, to refer all rights by groups/individuals to collect tribute—'tribute appropriation'—and the upholding of tributary right gives *gult* a property character. That Crummey is a pioneer scholar to describe the tenure *gult* in property system, with a proprietary right.⁴⁵ However, for the late Professor Merid who is also a specialist on medieval Ethiopian history *gult* was mentions in all sense bizarre to the system of landholding that had no proprietary right in character. This is because *balä-gult* (*gult* holders), having no real property right that needed protection—did not have laws that set them clearly apart from their subjects merely being allowed to collect and use tribute/tax for varying lengths of time. Thus, for Merid, unlike it has done so on *rist* with descent group,

⁴³ Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, pp. 5-6, 13.

⁴⁴ One of the standard works on European feudalism is Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals the Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (New York, Oxford University Press Inc., 2001).

⁴⁵ Crummey, *Land and Society*, pp. 9-12, 241.

gult rights only conferred partial usufruct rights for the fact that *rist* right did not allow exclusive right or full ownership to on the individual.⁴⁶ This is in a similar breath to what the medievalist Tadesse claims *gult* holders as simply officials and administrators.⁴⁷

For Professor Shiferaw, however, *gult* right implies more than a factor of administrative control over land. He points out that while significant differences in some unusual details from locality to locality, primarily *gult* was granted as 'full ownership' to its holders rather than to the original cultivator (*ristäñña*) until in the early twentieth-century Ethiopia. *Gult* land, thus, entails what Crummey once claims a proprietary right. However, Shiferaw claims for no concurrent right of a diverse character over land since it was individually owned and the rights of *gult* holder and the *ristäñña* were markedly different.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Tekalign a specialist on Ethiopian history of the political economy of land tenure writes that the existence of the form of 'lordship' called *mälkäññenät*, entitled to full manorial rights of all unoccupied land and the exercise full administrative and judicial authority. Above and beyond, he added that *mälkäññenät* was the retention of all tributes and legal fees from the land owners under his authority. Thus, Tekalign describes *gult* land as 'fief right', a practice of 'landlordism' ownership of land vested in a 'lord' who leases it to cultivators analogous to feudal Europe as an important descriptor of the Ethiopian social reality in parts of Shewa.⁴⁹

In short, leaving aside some minor differences, the above discussion is clearly a contribution to look at whether *gult* holders could be considered 'landlords' (property-owners) with gain

⁴⁶ Merid, 'Land Tenure and Agricultural Productivity', p. 122.

⁴⁷ Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp. 100-101.

⁴⁸ Shiferaw, 'The Evolution of Land Tenure', pp. 72-139.

⁴⁹ Tekalign, 'A City and its Hinterlands', pp. 50, 113-115.

and safety or not, or whether the Ethiopian past could be feudal or not. Dealing with this point I also observe on several occasions in light of this study that the institutions of *gult* and *rist* were the foundation for the existence of the social category of militaristic 'lords' (*balabbat*) and *ṭisāñña* (tenant or subject farmers) equivalent to 'landlord' and 'tenancy', respectively. This points to the important conclusion that land was more than a factor of production for exploitative form of 'feudal relationship' in historic Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), as long as *gult* holder did extend to the land, which is simply the analysis of 'tributary rights' attached to *gult*. Hence, scholars found that say that continued existence of 'landlordism' and tenancy would almost naturally follow from individual strong stake or ownership rights on land to be fundamentally incorrect. Communal holding, *rist*, was not more complete and exclusively held than traditional *gult* holding acceptable in its entirety that could be used to see the case of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), in close-fitting features with those scholars who employed the feudal lens for the local Ethiopian social reality analogous to medieval Europe.⁵⁰

While acknowledging for the existence of tenancy, there is also a point of vibrant debate among scholars who viewed the whole land system and its social consequences on the basis of north-south dichotomy in the Ethiopian past. That the existence of tenancy—contractual land and labor arrangements in the Ethiopian past could hardly be denied, however. Nevertheless, scholars' discussion rests on how they understood the extent of aspects of tenancy in the north and south parts of the country. It was contested only for the existence of

⁵⁰ Two of the standard works on the north-south dichotomy are Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 63-68, 73-78; and Cohen and Wintraub, *Land and Peasants*, pp. 50-51: here the latter authors noted that over a half of peasants in south Ethiopia were peasant-*ṭisāñña s*, some sixty percent of them, as *gäbbar* or landless producers at that big moment.

rist tenure in the north. In that way, many scholars write that unlike in the south, tenancy was not a major problem in the north because there the peasantry had been associated with 'communal' *rist* tenure that allowed nearly all peasants access to land, prevented their alienation and, through that, no conspicuous development of 'landless class' in the region. Thus, tenancy was a widespread phenomenon evermore in the south of the country.⁵¹

In defying to the north-south dichotomy, however, other scholars also write that for scholars have a propensity to conduct their investigation with old concepts and categories, 'intentionally or unintentionally' with the north-south dichotomy, it masks some of the complex aspects of the Ethiopian land system. This is attributable, they added, to the general land grant orders in the north favored the Ethiopian Church and the sociopolitical elites that led to the concentration of land in a few hands that eventually witnessed greater land alienation and the spread of landlessness in the north just similar to the south. If so, it could be it could be a hindrance for new discovery as well as a thorough understanding of the subject for long.⁵² In cognizance of this, the recent discovery of the existence of a social structure through the categories of *rim* land basically the church tenure by the pioneering work of Habtamu Mengistie (2004) recognized as *zéga* (pl. *zégoch*) resembling to the European feudal social category of serfs,⁵³ seems to urge for rethinking of the social history of Ethiopia in its entirety.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Scholarly works that contested for on the north-south dichotomy includes Dessalegn, *The Peasant and the State*, pp. 73-83, 287-288.

⁵³ Habtamu, *Lord, Zéga and Peasant*, pp. 7, 15.

Be that as it may, there is still distinction among scholars on the level of government commitment in light of cadastral land survey and/or measurement that aimed at systematizing the land tenure system of Ethiopia during the post liberation period. In that instance, some scholars recognized the much more commitment of the government, while others understood it with some promises for the subsequent task of reform plans to landholding and taxation in a systematic way. In that way, we have four best-celebrated professors: Cohen and Wintraub, Tesema Ta'a (on the one hand) and Gebru and Mergery Perham (on the other hand). In that case, the first three scholars understood that although the occasion of land measurement was an old concern noticeable since the reign of Emperor Minilek II in the last decade of the nineteenth century A.D the whole efforts of the government on it could not be distinguished from the old practice during the postwar liberation period.⁵⁴

For Gebru and Perham, however, in keeping with and nurturing the old tradition, unlike in the north, the tenure survey and/or land measurement has been relatively universal in the south,⁵⁵ with energy and commitment shown by the imperial government, Perham added, to move it forward,⁵⁶ which needs to be reconsidered in light of my study discussed soon. Cognizant of this, with close-fitting features to the different levels and effects of tenure survey and/or measurement, many scholars also furnished extended discussions to the post-1941 practices of agricultural land reform and the occasions of active resistance that it bred and continued in its vitality until the revolution in 1974.

⁵⁴ Cohen and Wintraub, *Land and Peasants*, p. 75; and Tesema, 'The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia', pp. 196-202, 209-210: here from Professor Tesema's discussion of the issue that I have profited greatly.

⁵⁵ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 168; and Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*, p. 287.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Succinctly put, in keeping with and nurturing the old tradition, land grant was one of the key marks of the post-war regime, which is the subject to scholarly interpretations profoundly influenced by the Liberal and Marxist insights. The discussion of these scholars rests on the meaning to privatization and/or commercialization of land and its socioeconomic consequences that it brought in different parts of the country, which therefore included Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), for the specified period. Accordingly, such scholars of the Liberal persuasions as Shiferaw, Dessalegn and Berhanuo viewed that the postwar Ethiopian government was capable of acting as a neutral agency of change able to function impartially or rationally for significant social change or for the common good. That is at the conceptual level, they claimed a number of consequences witnessed by way of the process of privatization of land. Among other things, they mentioned *rist* that was prevalent in the north and primarily signifying the usufructory rights enjoyed under the descent group ultimately denoted 'absolute' private property, which led to unrestricted freedom to dispose of it mainly through sale,⁵⁷ and dispossession. In fact, one observed that this condition mostly occurs in parts of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) at the twilight of the imperial era, as shall be discussed briefly in the final paragraphs of the chapter that follow.

Thus, the long-standing concurrent and diverse rights to *rist* land were eventually turned out to be obsolete. In due course, therefore, the imperial regime no more recognized the *gult* land tenure in its entirety. Not surprisingly, the term *gäbbar* and/or landless *ṭisännä/česännä* (as tenant)—who exercised land use right over a piece of *gäbbar/rist-märét*—lost its exploitative

⁵⁷ The much more scholarship with the liberal affiliations are Shiferaw, 'The Evolution of Land Tenure', pp. 100, 102-139; Dessalegn, *The Peasant and the State*, pp. 27-71; *idem*, 'Agrarian Class Structure', pp. 4-13; and Berhanuo Abbebe, *Evolution de la propriete fonciere au Choa (Ethiopie) du regne de Menelik a la constitution de 1931* (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1971), cited in Tekalign, 'A City and its Hinterlands', p. 11.

associations and assumed the more respectable connotation of tax payer. Cognizant of this, it is close-fitting, scholars of the Liberal connections assumed, that change in land tenure laws sponsored by the state has to promote social justice and/or agricultural production.⁵⁸ However, most of the thoughts that scholars of the Liberal connections assumed remained to be theoretical in light of my actual investigation on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) within the specified time framework. Hence, my study has to prove so much the deductions of such scholars of the Marxist associations as Gebru, Crummey, McCann, Markakis and Nega, Cohen and Wintraub, and Tesema assumed herewith.⁵⁹

Succinctly put, scholars of the Marxist associations assumed that the state the post war imperial government was an instrument of domination by local bourgeois that always predisposed to act in favor of that 'class' during the post liberation period. The government has been considering its priority agenda of safeguarding the interest of the propertied 'classes, pride of place to the broad-masses including *ṭisäññoch* as in the light of my study on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Changes in the means of production were, therefore, attributable to the growing exploitation of the majority poor peasants by the nobility and 'gentry', not to mention the *balabbatoch* in the context of my study area. Accordingly, the whole reform was to expedite the growing disparities between rich and poor to the concentration of land in the hands of the few 'propertied classes' with commercialization of land. Thus, scholars of the Marxist affiliations have to see the Ethiopian past through the feudal lens, as a revealing

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Some representative standard works on the Marxist affiliation are Gebru, *Ethiopia Power and Protest*, pp. 1, 4-5, 20, 45-51, 166-168; Crummey, *Land and Society*, p. 241; McCann, *An Agricultural History of Ethiopia*; Markakis and Nega, *Class and Revolution*, pp. 37-69; Cohen and Wintraub, *Land and Peasants*; Tesema, 'The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia', p. 210; and Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 118-120, 342-356.

insight to exploitative form of 'productive relationship'.⁶⁰ However, scholars of the Liberal affiliations such as Shiferaw rejects the feudal construct as borrowed model of the European medieval tradition for a non-Ethiopian reality.⁶¹ Thus, the applicability of the concept of feudal paradigm to Ethiopian history has still the theme of the widest concern among scholars of the Liberal and Marxist persuasions.

Above and beyond, there are major differences in outlook resting on the nature of peasants' reaction relating to the land reform measures of the postwar regime between the two sides of scholars. Initially, scholars of the Liberal connections presented the whole reform measure merely as a clash between modernization commitment of the Emperor Haile Sellassie himself as the government so as to transform the long-standing land tenure system and tradition opposition of the society towards the new reform measures.⁶² Nonetheless, for some historians such as Shiferaw and Gebru the government did not face intense reaction from Gojjam peasant's resistance, since the latter were suppressed without much trouble by the former's armed forces.⁶³ Overall, while he has done a nice job in showing the limitation of the Gojjam peasant's resistance to the imperial reform measures, Gebru's assertion could not be accepted without reservation for some important reasons.

That unlike in other territories of Ethiopia, Gebru claimed, the Gojjam peasant resistance was 'ill-equipped and fragmented', 'less effective', 'no unified leadership', 'lacked strong sense of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Shiferaw, 'The Evolution of Land Tenure', p. 121.

⁶² Ibid, p. 139; Dessalegn, *The Peasant and the State*, pp. 27-71; *idem*, 'Agrarian Class Structure', pp. 4-13; and Berhanuo, *Evolution de la propriete fonciere au Choa (Ethiopie)*, cited in Tekalign, 'A City and its Hinterlands', p. 11.

⁶³ Shiferaw, 'The Evolution of Land Tenure', p. 139; and Gebru, *Ethiopia Power and Protest*, pp. 177-193.

solidarity' and above all to his tendency towards the opposition. He simply gave the title 'a vendée revolt?' for the postwar Gojjam peasant's opposition⁶⁴ that masks its different contexts in light of my study on Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam, as I gave a vigorous defense of my beliefs that implied attempting to reach the truth or arrive at a decision by balancing conflicting claims or evidence on the issue. As a whole under present level of historical knowledge on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) most of the conclusions of that scholars of the Liberal inclinations have arrived at—the peasant's crude reaction did not weaken the old regime, as they assumed it simply as a resistance to new modernity of the regime's reform plan are hardly acceptable. Hence, when the peasants of twentieth century Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) revolted against the imperial regime, they sapped the energies of the latter. It means that the peasants had effective military organization and leadership experience for long. The fact that the evidence of the incurring and continued uprising of the peasants of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam suggests that the peasants' opposition was often succeeded in withstanding the government pressure until the revolution, as discussed in the light of this study under chapter four.

In that way, scholars of the Marxist connections also rejected the Liberalists' dichotomy between modernization and tradition for the peasant's reaction to the new reform plans. It is, the Marxist understood, to deny the political and social contents of the revolt as a new form of social inequality that maintained and continued in its own inherited ones.⁶⁵ So much so that, the revolt, the Marxists understood, debilitated the energies of the old regime coincided

⁶⁴ Ibid pp. 160, 185-192.

⁶⁵ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 3, 5, 21-51; Crummey, *Land and Society*, pp. 234-238, 240, 242-244; and Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 376-387.

with the revolution, which also needs to be reconsidered in light of my study. Most of all, in his remarkable works, the historian Tesema commented that the postwar land grant orders issued by the government of Haile Sellassie could not be a fertile ground for development purpose and its sustenance. The grant orders brought antagonism between the *česāñña* and the few landed 'aristocrats' that expedited the demise of the regime,⁶⁶ while the peasant question in Modern Ethiopia, the Marxists added, entailed significant regional difference owing to wide variation in societies and landscape incorporated as well as the imperial policies perused.⁶⁷ Cognizant of this, here it is also useful to relate that for its relevance and close-fitting features with, the earlier of discussion on tenancy issues—resting on the north-south dichotomy during the imperial era—is observed among the Marxists and the Liberalist debate, who stress in support and against it, respectively.

Overall, scholars of the Liberal connections have done nice jobs in showing the limitation of the Marxist associations to imperial Ethiopian reality. However, their outlook could not be accepted without reservation for some important reasons. Firstly, most of their imaginations were not in close-fitting features with my study on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). That the historical tenure system of many parts of imperial Ethiopia sanctioned private ownership of land to the privileged 'few class' is fundamentally correct, however. Nevertheless, the Liberal scholars vehemently masks the occasion of social inequality, which was so prevalent throughout the post liberation Ethiopia, was, one could argue, the logical outcome of a system of social domination that the imperial government showed towards its reform plans is

⁶⁶ Tesema, 'The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia', p. 210; and *idem*, "'Bribing the Land'", pp. 107-110.

⁶⁷ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 20; Crummey, *Land and Society*, pp. 234-238, 240, 242-244; and Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 376-387.

hardly unacceptable, which is one of the orthodox ideas and thoughts of scholars of the Marxist connections.

However, while it has now fallen into a general disfavor, the applicability of the concept of feudal paradigm to African history—often connecting to Ethiopia has been the theme of the widest concern among African and Africanist scholars in the 1960s and 1970s. In that case, scholars on African studies brought a credible contribution to the debate on whether pre-colonial African history could be considered feudal with gain and safety or not that is beside to the debate between the Liberal and Marxist connections in the field of Ethiopian land studies in particular as presented above. In that way, there are two groups of scholarly works. Firstly, we have the works of the late Professor Jack Goody (1971), Guy Hunter (1969), and Gene Ellis (1976) with the contention that feudalism as a hindrance for Ethiopian history and/or generally African history. Secondly, we have the works of W.G. Clarence-Smith (1979), Sara Berry (1992 and 2004), John M. Cohen (1974), and Donald Crummey (1980) with the contention that the term feudal as a useful descriptor of African social reality for its relevance and close-fitting features with the European experience sometimes in the past. Initially, while acknowledging the existence of some similarities in the some aspects of the productive system of pre-colonial Africa and 'feudal' Europe—including in the 'system of exchange'—and in the system of military organization, Goody passes a scathing criticism on those who see pre-colonial African history through the feudal lens.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Jack Goody, *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa* (New York/London, Oxford University Press, 1971).

According to Goody—a British anthropologist who writes social history profoundly in a different method and interpretation from his discipline—pre-colonial African societies were not even remotely close to the medieval European experience so as to justify the use of the term feudal as a useful descriptor of pre-colonial African reality. Goody stresses that the major point of difference between pre-colonial African societies and medieval Europe lies not so much in the ‘system of exchange’ but in the sphere of ‘productive relationship’. He does so on the ground that in Africa, with the exception of Ethiopia, land was not a key factor of production and African ruling classes generally did not derive their social and political power from the control and ownership of land. Succinctly put, the agrarian technology in Africa was at the lowest level of development in relation to those found in Eurasia and land in Africa was ‘virtually a free good’ to serve as a basis for social stratification. The socioeconomic consequence of the abundance of land in pre-colonial Africa was therefore the conspicuous lack of the development of ‘landlords’ and tenants. That there were lords and chiefs in Africa could hardly be denied, however. Nevertheless, Goody’s contention is that the forms of social and political domination that existed in Africa and medieval Europe were markedly different. In Africa, the ruling classes derive their political power from control over people rather than land. Hence, slavery that was so prevalent throughout pre-colonial Africa was, Goody argues, the logical outcome of a system of social and labor domination that relies on the exercise of brute force.⁶⁹

Likewise, while acknowledging the existence of some similarities in the some aspects of the productive system of Africa and ‘feudal’ Asia in the past Guy Hunter strictly defined African

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 21-37.

rural settlements were not as usually peasant societies: tribal societies would be a little nearer the practice of these two forms of tenancy relations were markedly different. That Hunter strongly masks the feudal construct as devoid of any analytical utility for Africa, in this way, Ethiopia.⁷⁰ Last, but not least, in her remarkable work 'The Feudal Paradigm as a Hindrance to Understanding Ethiopia' the economist Gene Ellis argues that the feudal paradigm can be applied to Ethiopia only with the greatest of generality. There are numerous significant differences between Ethiopian experience and European feudalism; that attempts to apply only the most general feudal paradigm ignore important causative factors, while leading to low projecting power and poor policy planning; and that less paradigmatic approaches would be more fruitful. Hence, Ellis vehemently rejects the feudal construct as 'name-calling', viz., impolite and ill-treatment of the Ethiopian people⁷¹ in a similar breath to what Goody and Hunter describes the same subject in question as 'exceptional' by way of Africa in the past as presented above. In contrast to the contention of the above scholars, therefore, Clarence-Smith, Berry, Cohen and Crummey explained the feudal construct as a useful analytical utility for African (Ethiopian) history. Most of these works provide a useful model and framework that could be used to study regions within a restricted geographical sweep with broadly similar historical trajectory.

In that way, these scholars accepts the feudal construct of Europe as key analytical utility for African history with restricted similar historical venture. That in historic Africa land was more than a factor of production, as it served as an important marker of social boundary and

⁷⁰ Guy Hunter, *Modernizing Peasant Societies: A Comparative Study in Asia and Africa* (New York and London, Oxford University Press 1969).

⁷¹ Gene Ellis, 'The Feudal Paradigm as a Hindrance to Understanding Ethiopia' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (Vol. 14, No. 2, 1976), pp. 275-295.

social identity so as to exercise influence over people. Firstly, and foremost, in his local study in one of the districts of Zambia called Buluzi, Clarence-Smith emphasis the existence of feudal forms of 'productive relationship' in the area. His argument was based on the known fact that in Buluzi slaves benefitted from royal guarantee of access to the 'means of production' in land and extraction of rent from it by hereditary 'class of land owners' called 'landlords', which is an insightful analysis of the form of social and political domination that existed in pre-colonial Africa.⁷² Secondly, in her limited scope of historical reconstruction in such states as Kenya and Ghana, Berry stresses the existence of contest over productive forces, as pre-colonial African reality. After all, long before the European conquest, Berry argues, land served as an important avenue of political competition and social stratification in such politically organized societies of pre-colonial Africa.⁷³ Last, but not least, focusing on Ethiopia in the past, both Cohen and Crummey write in light of the feudal construct as a useful analytical utility for African history.⁷⁴ In any case, Clarence-Smith, Berry, Cohen, and Crummey convincingly showed us the closer similarity of pre-colonial Africa and the medieval Europe, something as little insight about the current academic discourse on African property system.

⁷² W.G. Clarence-Smith, 'Slaves, Commoners and Landlords in Buluzi, c. 1875 to 1906' *Journal of African History* (Vol. 20, No. 2, 1979) pp. 222, 232-234.

⁷³ Sara Berry, *No Condition is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), p. 28; and *idem*, *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power and the Past in Asante, 1896-1996* (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. xix-xx, 7.

⁷⁴ John M. Cohen, Peasants and Feudalism in Africa: The Case of Ethiopia, *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1974); and Donald Crummey, Abyssinian Feudalism. *Past & Present*, No. 89 (1980); this is beside to scholars of the Marxist proclivity in the field of Ethiopian land studies, not to mention Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*; and Crummey, *Land and Society*; and Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*.

Overall, while it has now fallen into a general disfavor, the applicability of the concept of feudal paradigm to African history has been the theme of the widest concern among African and Africanist scholars in the 1960s and 1970s. Goody, Hunter and Ellis have done nice jobs in showing the limitation of the feudal paradigm to pre-colonial African reality. However, their arguments could not be accepted without reservation for some important reasons. Firstly, it has been established that the analytical category of 'feudalism' is built on a deeply flawed foundation and could not adequately describe the historical experience of European society in the Middle Ages, not to mention non-European societies. Secondly, the scope of their studies is very general and/or draws entirely on secondary literature. Finally yet importantly, they do seem to have avoided a body of historical evidence that does not suit their premise and argument. That the historical tenure system of many African societies—including Ethiopia in light of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)—sanctioned private ownership of land and the fact that many pre-colonial African states were anchored on agricultural production is beyond doubt. That Goody, Hunter and Ellis vehemently rejects the feudal construct as devoid of any analytical utility for African history; however they does not advance any alternative theoretical framework into which pre-colonial African historical experience could be fitted. As a whole, under present level of historical knowledge on Africa (Ethiopia) most of the conclusions that Goody, Hunter and Ellis have arrived at are hardly acceptable.

However, considering the two perceptions I resumed the particular reality of Ethiopia in the light of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam): roughly between the first half of the twentieth century and the post liberation period, which filled those all shortcomings. This unquestionably contributed to the growth of the literary thickness of the agrarian historiography of Ethiopia

(Africa). To sum up, the whole studies so far—the two perceptions as well as studies on the agrarian hagiography of Ethiopia cited—are a point of reference not only for my research but also for those who are interested to work in the field. Chapters found in these several works are not included in this literature review. However, they have given much attention to property holdings, land measurement, property reform or agricultural land reform, tribute to tax, land and state, in their respective periods and geographical areas. Yet, an in-depth and comprehensive investigation, in an *awrajjja* (district) or province (*ṭäqalay-gezat*), context was made to fill those all shortcomings.

Research Aims and Objectives

Generally, the study aims to reconstruct and document the measures taken by the imperial regime to regulate, systematize and reform the customary land tenure and the socioeconomic relations derived from it that prevailed in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) within the specified time setting.

Specifically, the study has the following objectives, i.e. to

- a. reconstruct and document the ‘customary land tenure’ that prevailed in Däbrä Marqos or Gojjam at large.
- b. discover the influence of 'the custom of the society to land' in its meaning and necessary implications including the course of individuals’ claim, reclaim and counter reclaim to property that infiltrated in the area.
- c. justify the use of the term feudal as a useful descriptor of the local Ethiopian social reality, in this way, pre-colonial African actuality at large.

- d. examine the levels and effects of 'cadastral land survey' and/or 'land measurement', a prelude to tax exaction that exerted in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, which was observed especially during the three and a half decades between liberation and the 1974 revolution.
- e. identify 'land distribution and the granting of title deeds' that was observed in the *Awrajja (Ṭäqalay-Gezat)* and weigh it against the different presupposition of the property reform models of twentieth-century Africa at large.
- f. examine the nature of 'surplus appropriation' mainly the 'transition from kind to cash' that succeeded in the *Awrajja (Ṭäqalay-Gezat)* all the way through the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era.
- g. assess the 'extent and characteristics of tenancy (known in local parlance as *ṭisännänät* or *česännänät*)' that prevailed in the area.
- h. detect 'the reaction of the local people to the new reform measures' with the nature of their military organization and leadership as well in comparison with its vicinity or the country at large which was observed during the three quarters of the twentieth century, as well as far into the past, generally prior to the end of the imperial era.

Academic Value of the Study

Compared to the existence of quite a huge amount of land and land related archives what has been studied so far is very little, while it served as background knowledge for my study on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) within the specified period. Hence, it is the goal of this study to exploit it and to transform the existing body of knowledge into a comprehensive specialization with new findings. Here, an in-depth and comprehensive investigation of the

history of land tenure will not only benefit Ethiopian studies but provides evidence to the current vibrant-debates on twentieth-century African property system on privatization of land versus keeping it within the collective/public sphere which provides a coherent perspective to the understanding of the continent land system for expedited and sustained economic development. What is most opted for is to furnish insights for future researchers who will venture in the same direction. To be precise, although the geographical scope of my study is limited to Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), this study provides a useful model and framework that could be used to study regions beyond Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) with broadly similar historical trajectory.

Methodology and Structure

Historical research is a systematic collection and analysis of primary and secondary sources for a balanced account of events to be furnished. This study therefore began with extensive reading of the secondary literature; thereby *identified* and *framed* the chief areas of concern on the subject, in question. Subsequent to the approval of the research proposal, therefore, the study focusing on the existing primary sources combining documentary and oral evidence are examined, by way of original historical reconstruction, while it was finalized by secondary sources for all that written records of the past events were not available. Cognizant of this, here it is prudent to discuss briefly on the nature of the standardized historical methodologies by way of external criticism and internal criticism more precisely source evaluation on a level with contents interpretation that were made for their relevance and close-fitting features with my study on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), roughly from 1901-74, as presented below.

Source Evaluation

This was the first level where authentication of a document and refining the text of corruption were furnished, as applicable in their historical context. Initially, documentary evidence were identified based on the author, place and origin of writing the wider knowledge of the period as well they perceived to be. In cases where dating becomes impossible the purpose or approach and striking similarities have been used to date. These governing inquiries are particularly appropriate in the case of legal documents that are the most recognized and credible source materials in the field of legal history. In this study, legal documents found in the form of courtroom records that are interpreted as evidence of the execution of law rather than their creations were used. There are also administrative documents were used. They are so vast in extent and so varied in character mainly in the form of contracts, registers, charters and tax records. These sources offered with suitable and detailed evidence to my study for the specified place and time setting.

Cognizant of this, here it was prudent to use such key issue oriented sources in the customary land tenure system, more precisely a particular form of land tenure before dealing with the socioeconomic relations derived from it for its relevance and close-fitting features with the study, as presented in any detail in subsequent chapters. Compared to other sources, therefore, I have used new and more conventional genre of sources, *viz.*, legal and administrative documents. That legal document is the single most important genre of source evidence used in my research. Thus, my emphasis on courtroom ruling is informative of interpreted evidence of land law of the period that was in effect, as markedly different usually for its authentic-opinions expressed. To examine the reliability of this particular

historical evidence, however, a distinction between the court intention/attitude and analogy cross-examination of witnesses in a court of law has been made. Thus, every single document discovered and found in the local court Däbrä Marqos understood in a guarded way, as the key genre of source evidence to the study within the specified place and time setting.

Other genres of sources are government documents and public records. Government documents include such reports of the Imperial Ethiopian Government MLRA as Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province (1971), decrees using the authorized imperial newspaper *Negarit Gazeta* and issued in a series proclamations from 1942-1967, petition letters, grants and contracts, as recognized 'title-deeds'. With the exception of reports, others were read as processes, by way of groundbreaking sources for exhaustive investigation on the issue. The series of petition letters reflected 'governors' unwarranted exercise of power or ignorance passionately against *ṭisäñña* appellation of land security for their long history of occupation in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Public records, in turn, include land registers and tax records that are lists of landholdings and/or payments in kind and in cash, respectively.

However, government property-documents and public records were certainly detected, the former were usually intended for wider circulation and thereby exaggerated to influence its public recipients, and the latter tended to reflect the principal interest of the government authorities who wrote most of them. In fact, from government's investigative 'Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province' (1971) one can see figures that are shown in table 2, 3, and 4 all used in chapter three of my study—without regard for reliability and comparisons. That only figure in table 2 has clearly distorted errors of typing or copying passed on from

one level of the bureaucracy to the next. In that way, sequence of relevant figures that was discovered and identified (detected), as clearly elaborated in the light of my study under chapter three. That these figures convincingly showed me to provide details to the differential treatment of land concentration accorded to a few people who had all the power over land—once built-in feudalistic terms for centuries—under the postwar Haile Sellassie government, as all used for chapter three of this study.

Furthermore, very significant clerical records in the local church treasuries as registers, charters and hagiographies were used for the study on land and the socioeconomic relations derived from it. These religious texts that often gave information in which witnesses' existence have been authenticated about the issue on their folios. The documents were detected since they were usually circulated by copying by hand where the original would not be survived because of wars and lootings in the area for long covering the whole gamut of the medieval period to the modern times. So much so that, errors have crept in the process of copying and that usually increased as each copy was used as the basis of another. However, these clerical records might not be intentionally distorted, since they were, and still are, held in reserve for the church that believed to be the safest place to keep documents and also the fact that individual witnesses were routinely called upon land transactions that could ensure the validity of such records. Below are three of the oldest and most important church institutions I photographed them in the course of my field research at various times in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), with the tradition of great insight into how the Ethiopian churches are built in the area where land and land related sources originated in their treasury and used in this study.



Illustration 2A. *Däbrä Zäyet Mahfud Maryam Church, in what is now Sinan, formerly Gozamen, established as an institution in the lifetimes of Ašé Ménas (r.1559-1563)⁷⁵*



Illustration 2B. *Abema Maryam Church and established as institution in the lifetimes of Ašé Zärä Yacob (r.1434-1468)⁷⁷*



Illustration 2C. *Däbrä Marqos Church, established as an institution in the middle of nineteenth century⁷⁶*

It is also important to the make use of visual materials as a series of three traditional wall paintings that I discovered and found to fully understood in exploitative form of 'productive relationship' in historic Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Here, so far as I am aware no historian once went themselves to get a series of such detailed forms of traditional wall paintings in the field of land tenure and rural organization on historic Ethiopia, more precisely Däbrä Marqos

⁷⁵ Meslä Feqer Wälda, MS Däbrä Zäyet Mahfud Church; and an interview with Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu.

⁷⁶ Täklä-Iyäsus, Yä-Zämän Tarik Maṭäraqäméya, folio 102 verso and 103 recto.

⁷⁷ History of Gojjam from *Ras Haylu I* to *Ras Haylu II*, folio 92 verso.

(Gojjam) in the course of the twentieth century prior to the end of the imperial era. The paintings that illustrated a series of chain of events in which the two most important social groups are 'lord' and *ṡisäñña* showed feudal forms of 'productive relationship', constituting the earliest known valuable discovery by filling in all of the answers I am reasonably sure of the issue on study.

Equally important are biblical references in prehistoric period and after such as the Old Testament and the New Testament in which the classic forms of exploitative form of 'productive relationship' along with Ethiopia, one of the earliest known centers of word civilization, in this way, *Däbrä Marqos* (Gojjam) were also used under chapter three of the study. That 'lord-tenant relationship' has long been associated with the property system of old Ethiopia encompassing *Däbrä Marqos* (Gojjam). In addition, newspapers and electronic sources were used in showing a conspicuous origin and/or development of socioeconomic relations derived from land—not to mention in the system of taxation or payment—discussed in chapter three as well. Especially a certain electronic source in the form of private collection is a representative sample of the nature of relations between the ill-treated local sociopolitical elites and government authorities, as observed at the imperial court of justice, as part of the general manifestation of deep-rooted crisis in the area in the immediate post liberation period, as discussed in chapter four.

Based on the above possible justifications, therefore, it is apparent that the research was not wholly guided by the degree of conviction of every single legal and administrative documents with which opinions are expressed, while they were the most important genre of

source evidence for my study. So much so that, other applicable genre of sources fixed in the form of traveler accounts, government sponsored writings and personal writings like memoirs often by way of officials contemporary to the study were used on several occasions. Traveler accounts, through European missionaries have usually reflected what they perceived as an adventure, and thereby sensationalized for European attention. Likewise, government sponsored writings are also often reflected what they presumed for short-term public consumption. Their discussions on land issues exist in the form of ancillary to official reports, compilations/recollections, and lexicons. Compared to legal and administrative documents produced in the process of judicial and administrative dealings respectively, government sponsored writings are very small in genre, amount, content, and intentionally produced thereby distorted has been identified in light of the study. Thus, I observed that there was statistically considerable difference between the two genres of source evidence.

Despite some local varieties, memoirs as private writings were very significant in shaping the exhaustive historical investigation of the subject just similar to the legal and administrative documents that occurred in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), could hardly be denied, however. Nevertheless, my detection is that travelers account and government-sponsored writings have had somewhat slight significance for their credibility in sharp contrast to memoirs and legal and administrative documents in light of the study. Not surprisingly, I used a certain Amharic novel in showing the existence of 'lord'-*ṭisännä* relationship and the socioeconomic consequences derived from it in the course of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era. The book is based in fact, but the author purposely fictionalized many of the events, as I utilized on several occasions in chapter three and four.

Equally important are some significant photographs of *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot and *Ras* Haylu II—consort of the form as well—added for their extended office of tenures and influence in Gojjam, one after the other, were used and displayed in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. Photographs of the age-old silver coins—*Maria Theresia Thaler* or *Dollar* and *yä-Minilek-ṭägära* made of solid silver were also used in chapter of the study. Last, but not least, black-and-white photographs of the local palace gate—also refers to the *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot public square that left a famous legacy of *Däjjazmach* Šähäyu Enqo Sellasé in his tenure of office over Gojjam, from 1960-68 and Emperor Haile Sellassie in his state visit to that same province in 1969, were also utilized in chapter four of my study. That it clearly bears my study out. Simultaneously with documentary research, oral research open-ended and issue-oriented questions that entails more than yes or no conversations through a recorded date, place and person interviewed has then been undertaken and obtained information that even could not found with the help of first hand documentary evidence and enriched my study. In that way, below are the photographs of four prominent informants—I identified from all twenty-eight informants that I talked to this study at various times in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).



Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé
(Male, at the age of 89)



Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé
(Male, at the age of 82)



Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa
(Female, at the age of 84)



Märiḡetta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu
(Male, at the age of 88)

Thus, every informant at the age of 60 and over with eyewitness accounts was interviewed in his/her local language, Amharic, and has enriched my research with ample oral data. In that way, I only preferred individual interviews in order to detect the limitations of group interviews. In this manner I avoided individual's influence with distorted information on others. It is, therefore, clear that in my individual interviews every informant helped me with oral history and oral tradition. However, I detected the outputs of all informants by cross-

checking oral histories which are more reliable than oral traditions.⁷⁸ Not surprisingly, my other achievement in this study is the careful utilization of famous speeches and social proverbs as public expressions and culturally constructed understandings of the society in the reconstruction of the modern social history of Gojjam including Däbrä Marqos.

Besides my research use of proverbs, oral data and documentary evidence in this study, I have also used new and less conventional genre of source, *viz.*, courtroom observation since it is still conveyed in local court dealings by means of land litigation with respect to the culturally constructed understandings of the society at the town of Däbrä Marqos. It was simple to detect cross-examination of court witness, as misleading, in the evidence. In any case, empirical research through courtroom observation has been conducted under my own surveillance partly to ascertain the reliability of customary law in the light of historic Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). That genre of source evidence gathered from courtroom observation are generally complementary to oral data could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, I found that much of the information provided by the court cases have been very restricted to deception is markedly different.

Hence, oral data much more helped me to provide evidence that was not yet covered by means of documentary evidence. Cognizant of this, here I crosschecked these all genre of sources as of documentary evidence with oral feedbacks and vice-versa before dealing with interpretation of the source contents exploitation. To be precise, I found that close examination of primary sources on a particular land and the socioeconomic relations derived

⁷⁸ One of the standard works on the basic issues and debates involved in African oral historiography at large is Tesema Ta'a, *Issues in the Historiography of Africa* (Addis Ababa, AAUPP, 2010).

from it has been undertaken for its relevance and close-fitting features with the issue, while multiple source evidence were already located, indexed and filed in a ring binder as the end of first stage of the methodology. Then, combining archival sources and oral data helped me to provide a juicy story and advance a new interpretation of the property system and the social and power relations arising out of modern Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam which is the second and most important stage of the methodology, as presented below.

Writing and Interpretation

This was the next and most challenging task of my study where contents of the assessed sources were lucidly argued and thoroughly analyzed on land and its related issues. Primarily, research notes reiterated pertinent points through an audition on a handwritten paper have been prepared for the first draft of the subject. This has been undertaken based on careful examination of the research topic, research questions and the wider knowledge of the subject, as indicated earlier. Yet, the feedbacks of unearthed source evidence necessitated reconsideration of the study title and its sub topics for some modification—though the Department of History at the UNISA once approved the research project's provisional topic for me on 'A History of Land Tenure in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*, Ethiopia 1941-1974'. In that way, the provisional topic of my study was just removed and replaced by myself resting with adopted main topic on 'Land Tenure Reform and Socioeconomic Structures in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), Ethiopia: c.1901-1974', without changing into something else and having that final form or character. Beside to its expansion in geographical designation, I modified the study time framework to make it more at ease in the light of new source evidence that defied the conventional historical record and makes a substantial and original contribution to the subject

knowledge. Cognizant of this, here it was also prudent to modify slightly the wide range of chapter topics more precisely subtopics and in date order that aimed at the discovery and interpretation of new facts before the first draft has been framed for their relevance and close-fitting features with the main topic of my study. So much so that, research notes generally arranged in modified subject series of topics for the first draft of the study.

The *making* of first draft has been structured already entered into a computer and easily edited on screen with backups with established links between different ideas and concepts, the logical aspects of my study structure and development founded on the use of research notes. In the middle of using the research notes, I take care of in my study was the careful utilization of supporting evidence through careful review of documentary evidence and oral data, in the reconstruction of the modern social history of Ethiopia, more precisely the region of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the northwestern part of central Ethiopia. The draft material has been revised at later stage when it was organized combining with chronological and thematic understandings for flexible style and swiftness of the story that advances how I succeeded to provide details to the land tenure reform and the socioeconomic structure of modern Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) actually came into view for the specified period. This was the stage where clarity of expressions, logical development of central thesis drawn from strands of arguments the balance between explanation and analysis and the amount and accuracy of any of my study details were undertaken. In short, accepted subject groups and individual chapters verified by annotated footnotes has been structured or framed.

When the difficult task of understanding genre of primary sources furnished, determining and examining the possible use of secondary sources, by way of synthesis combining diverse property conception of my study and the old works. In addition, antithesis of my study alongside with the established scholarship on the subject carried out by review of accepted perceptions in the light of new facts. In this regard, the conventional perceptions from the available and remarkable works on property system were recognized and fixed. What scholars has been ignored, misinterpreted and masked that I questioned have provided an excellent complement of the old works on the subject at an appropriate level arising out it of groundbreaking source evidence. In this study, therefore, I have provided significant summary of the old works on the subject. To be precise, I look forward to resume works than merely what the old agrarian historiography allows, pending for the realization of my research proposal.

Overall, focusing on its style and presentation, I carefully read the latter final draft of my study with a more detailed analysis and revision and eliminating cliché all at the same time. Several sources evidence routinely presented in their original manner in their citation done in contents for soundness and precision of my study in its entirety. Not surprisingly, three of the oldest and most important church institutions—I photographed them in the course of my field research at various times in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) where land and land related sources originated in their treasury and used in this study—are displayed in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. At the final chapter, there will be some reflections on groundbreaking source evidence utilized in my study. At the end, there is a bibliography (list of sources)—already cited in the footnote references provided in a logical way for validity and accuracy of my

assertion issued in this study that includes oral history indicated above by way of tape-recorded historical information obtained in interviews concerning personal experiences and recollections. Especially, four prominent informants identified from a list of twenty-eight informants that I talked to this study at various times in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) had the most important role in that case.

It should be noted here from the outset that the name of Ethiopian informants together with authors of scholarly works and other contributors is placed on the list of sources, as of it was to borne in common by members of a family, but not immediately following the none-Ethiopian tradition of added name derived from occupation or other circumstances. To be precise, the name by members of a family with first name followed by their father's name continued to play a significant role in the Ethiopian state sanctioned by custom. Even presently Ethiopian women for marriage ties do not change their family name, as devoid of surname utility for Ethiopian social reality. As a whole, sufficient care has been undertaken in the preparation of the final draft of my study in the light of the general points once indicated in the approved project for it with logical flow of events from one chapter to the next.

As I discussed thoroughly in the subsequent chapters, my study provides a coherent series of arguments leading to the overall thesis of the issue under consideration. That is to say, each subsequent chapters would have a central theme topic and sub-topics—linked to that theme. In a preview of that discussion, I argue as the first strand of the main argument of my study under chapter two that though an old concern, because of the imperial reform measures that

the traditional land tenure system of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was never the same again during the twentieth century prior to the end of the imperial era. One of its defining features was the process of creating a homogenous tenure entity, especially made and implemented in the immediate post-liberation period. This move meant to maximize the central government's revenue from land in the area. The realization of this project required, among other things, reducing the power of local and regional rulers' and become dutiful to absolute centralization of the Haile Sellassie government. This made the collection of increased revenues directly from the majority peasantry through a homogenized form of tenure system, imperative.

As the second strand of the main argument of my study, under chapter three, I argue that while it had a strong bearing on impeding the social developments of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), a series of proclamations pertaining to tax collection and increasing government revenue were made and implemented in the period under stated. While it was primarily initiated by Emperor Minilek's tax administration in the course and progress of its changes, the taxation system of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) ushered in a new era of assessing and collecting land taxes in the restored government of Emperor Haile Sellassie in 1941 at the center took root in Addis Ababa. One of the defining features of the immediate post-liberation administration of Haile Sellassie was the process of absolute centralization. This move was meant to increase the central government's control over local and regional ruling houses. The realization of this project required, among other things, strengthening the financial capacity of the central government by means of increased revenues from the majority peasantry through a systematized form of tax collection.

As the third strand of the main argument of my study, under chapter four, I argue that while small parts of the locality succumbed to the pressure from the government, big portions of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) succeeded in withstanding that pressure. This move was meant to be recurring and continued popular uprising against the government's impatient reform plans fell through violent approach, as the constant features of the area from early on. I realized that despite the debilitating defeat of the local population fought in many battles with the government's victorious army, the latter's revolt sapped the energies of the former for its continued aggressive posture. That is quite a few of the local notables who led the uprising remained loyal to their personal interest could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, my contention is that the government could not supplant the peasants uprising was markedly different. In fact, Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was a resistance place to stop pressures from total shocks and damages wrought by the government forces when the people intensely defied and succeeded into a good part of the locality.

As the main argument of my research under chapter five, therefore, I assert that despite significant changes, the reform measures could not bring what it entails on the ground. The prominent role played by the people's reaction reinforces this assertion. I merely detached scores of other factors that induced peasants to strange or erroneous reactions through intense resistance and other means. Economic distress, commercialization of land, maladministration and violence all served as the background to impede that changes, in the course and progress of the Shewan domination, most actively between 1941 and 1974. That Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam went to a series of property and administrative changes corresponding to the national political developments all the way through the twentieth century and prior to the

imperial era could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, my contention is that the local people resented it from full implementation during the post liberation that continued in its vitality until the country's revolution is markedly different, a development observed even in our own time. Not surprisingly, this conclusion part provides a specific recommendation for agricultural policy reform within and outside Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).

Cognizance of this fact, I will have a brief discussion of prospect in adopting a policy that has greater opportunity to succeed in economic development within the time framework and geographical scope, swiftly in our time evermore than the past experiences as well as present conditions. The case seeks to draw on or reinforce significant measures of the policy that would expedite legal landholdings and the system of effective administration in the area. That Ethiopian history encompassing Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) virtually symbolizing pre-colonial African history could be considered as feudal with gain and safety. Not surprisingly, in this cogently argued and thoroughly analytical study, I advanced a new interpretation of the social and economic history of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) beginning with the turn of the twentieth century and ending with the revolution in 1974. As part of its detailed investigation at the heart of the subsequent chapters it is vital to mention local administration and the state administrative machineries that had a bearing on the systems of surplus appropriation and land tenure changes in the area, as presented in a few pages below.

In that case, changing the pre-existing tenure arrangement of Ethiopia, including Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), at all levels of the administration became the top priority agenda of the central/imperial government during the twentieth century well into the post liberation period.

The central government at Addis Ababa—the capital and largest city of the country—started the task of re-working the time-honored taxation of Gojjam, as well as Däbrä Marqos, attached to its customary land tenure system. First and foremost, the regime succeeded in changing the *asrat* (tithe) taxation of the area from kind to cash which was paid mainly to the soldiery and civil servants by way of salary in return for rendering various services to the former, as initiated by Emperor Minilek II (r.1889-1913), in the course and progress of its changes in 1941.⁷⁹ Here, the payment of *asrat* tax in cash was stipulated, first and foremost, by the regional hereditary 'lord', *Ras* Haylu Täklä-Häymanot (*Ras* Haylu II) whom did the Emperor, Haile Sellassie removed from his office on May 27, 1932. In that, *Ras* Haylu II supported *Lej* Iyasu (r.1913-1916)—the grandson and legitimate successor of Minilek II (r.1889-1913)—in his struggle to win back his throne, following his deposition in the years between 1916 and 1921. In consequence, the ruling house of Gojjam has been busted at a single stroke, with the removal of Haylu II, and subsequently the power was entrusted to new Shewan rulers.⁸⁰ Here, it is apparent that changing the system of land tax was applicable along with transferring the former rulers of that province to its newly appointed Shewan governors, as presented in a few words below.

Here after the removal of Haylu II, Gojjam remained under the overall governorship of Shewans, first and foremost by *Käntiba* Matäbé Käbbädä—with interim administration since May 1932—and later substituted by the enlightened and a close companion of the Emperor Prince *Ras* Emeru Haylä Sellasé. In that case, Emeru arrived at the administrative capital

⁷⁹ Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, pp. 201, 233, 243, 246-249, 262-265.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*; and also Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp. 6-7.

Däbrä Marqos with his Shewan soldiers and civil servants—known in common parlance as *Kebur Zäbäñña* ('Security Guard'). That year witnessed two important changes with a bearing on the local administration. One of these changes relates to the above-mentioned administrative reshufflings and interventions and improving the system of taxes in the area but the local people resented the Shewans rule, before the Italian Occupation. Hence, subsequent to the Italian invasion in 1935, the local people refused to join *Ras Emeru's* Shewan *militia*, mentioned above, and in its place, they often hang on mass-violence that led to a total breakdown of law and order in the area and generally in the country.⁸¹

So much so that, the Italians swiftly embarked on pacifying the population and reorganizing the administration of the various regions, including Gojjam that encompasses Däbrä Marqos, while there was continuous patriotic resistance, until they were expelled from the country in 1941.⁸² The restored imperial government of Ethiopia, in turn, faced difficult tasks, of which pacifying the population and reorganizing the administration of the various regions of the country with *ṭäqalay-gezat*, *awrajja [gezat]*, *wäräda [gezat]*, *mekettel-wäräda [gezat]*, *aṭebiya-dañña* (village judges) and *čeqa-shum* (village head and usually responsible for taxation) came on top of its agenda. Overall, these two parallel processes proceeded smoothly. The administration of the country was organized into fourteen governorate-generals, of which Gojjam that having eight *Awrajjawoch* encompassing Däbrä Marqos was one.⁸³ (See Map 1d and Map 3b displayed in preceding this chapter). The task of reorganizing the administration of Gojjam that encompasses Däbrä Marqos was entrusted to

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Tesema, 'The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia', pp. 209-210.

⁸³ Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 79.

the first of its postwar governor, *Ras* Haylu Bäläw (hereafter Haylu III), who came to Gojjam in 1941/2. It was during his brief office of tenure that the administration made on developments in the state administrative machineries, which had a bearing on changes in the systems of land tenure and in improving surplus appropriation in the area. The establishment of branch offices of several ministries at the administrative capital Däbrä Marqos provoked multi-faceted changes in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.⁸⁴

However, as indicated in the second paragraph in this chapter earlier, the lower level ministerial offices with the most significant impact on the people of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) were the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI). After 1966, however, in 1966 MoI was transferred to the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration (MLRA) with the purpose of land administration. The MoF (later substituted by MLRA) manifested itself especially in its strong intervention in the system of taxation relating to land in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at large. In Gojjam, MoI entrusted primarily to put cadastral land survey through the nearby municipal officials, who perhaps had acquired a lot of expertise in the field. The general principles of land survey entail investigation, assessment and measurement of lands. Accordingly, the MoI proposed that conducting land tenure survey was a crucial step for rationalizing and homogenizing landholding as well as to generate/capitalize the government income from land.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ሆን/አስ/0068, File ደ/ግ 164/68, Letter ቁ22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal).

⁸⁵ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Interior, *Yagär-Gezat Minstér*, pp. 30-43; and Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp. 1, 6-7, 20, 23, 34, 35.

While endorsing the need to introduce some radical changes in the system of landholding, the MoI proposed the need to recognize and take into consideration some old established boundaries on occasion of the actual surveying process. However, the MoI had spelled out certain conditions which warrant the recognition of long-standing boundaries. Thus, old-established boundaries separating the holdings of two or more individuals would be recognized during the work of survey, if and only if, they were not already a subject of dispute or would give rise to dispute among individuals.⁸⁶ Moreover, before the document produced by the survey team and recognized as legally binding and legitimate, it was required that individuals directly concerned with the surveyed land had to authenticate and endorse it. If one or two individuals disputed its authenticity, then the case would be referred to the *wäräda* or *ṭäqlay-gezat* court for verification and decision.⁸⁷

Until a disputed land survey was verified by a court, the registration of the property would be postponed. The legal term used to designate such disputed lands was *ya-feläma-märét* or *yä-kerker-märét*, literally means disputed land. The decision of the appeal court was binding and could not be disputed. Hence, it was only after a suitable process of the law and careful review of the concerned bodies that a disputed land survey document certifying property right would be enrolled into the central registry. The land survey document was prepared in

⁸⁶ Ibid; EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ፩፪/44, File 44, *Rist* Land Litigation, Letter 44, May 1953 (*Genbot* 1945 Eth. Cal.); and Folder ፳፯/፳፱/0082, File ፩ 164, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, Letter 11883/9139, 6 March 1971 (27/6/63 Eth. Cal).

⁸⁷ Ibid; WMA Archives, Folder 2116, File 2075, Letter 2545/291 and 3762/13/8/67, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam Ṭäqlay-Gezat], 22 June 1955 (15/10/47 Eth. Cal), 1964/65 (1957 Eth. Cal), respectively: here, the regulation also states that the surveying of any locality is a multi-step process. Primarily, the direction and initial point for surveying would be established by the head of the surveyor team and the standard unit of length used in surveying was 500 x 800 or 400,000 km². In that way, one can also see the contemporaneous technical diagrams of land survey in one of the standard government document: MSNLAA Archives, Mahtämä-Sellásé, Selä-Ethiopia Yä-märét Serét Astädädär, pp. 1-2.

several copies with a copy to be kept in the archives at all levels of the administration.⁸⁸ Thus, it seems warranted to infer that the principle of land survey and registration of property spelled out primarily by the MoI was quite flexible and accommodative. Although it prioritized landholding and agricultural reform as its top concern, the imperial government's reform agenda covered the whole gamut of national life. Partly, because of its obvious importance to implementing the land reform policy, the government tried to thoroughly centralized the administration of the country by diminishing the power of local rulers most often *ṭäqlay-gezat* rulers/governors that aimed at creating an administrative system dutiful to the central government.⁸⁹

Hence, in the mid 1940s the government introduced a new system of administration in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* by creating the seven smaller administrative units of such *wärädas* (districts) as Gozamen, Aneded, Dejen, Basso-Liben, Sinan, Awabel, and Machakel (see Map 1d displayed in preceding this chapter). There were also twenty-four *mekettel-wärädas* (sub-districts) below the *Awrajja* level of the administration. These smaller units of administrations were staffed by salaried officials directly appointed by the central government; thereby making them dependent on the latter for their position. The *Awrajja* and the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* governors represented the apex of the administrative hierarchies in Däbrä Marqos and Gojjam, respectively. Most often, the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* governor controlled the activities of the *Awrajja* governor; the latter in turn managed the *wäräda* and *mekettel-*

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ EGZHC Archives, Folder አ17, File መ/አ. 17, Letter 38009/47, [Territorial] Boundaries [of Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*] Delimited [at all levels of the Administration], 15 August 1955 (9/12/47 Eth. Cal).

wäräda governors within. In any case, leaving aside some minor changes, the administrative boundaries of Däbrä Marqos and all at once Gojjam remained certainly stable until 1974.⁹⁰

Hence, it was in this way that the dominant forms of tenure in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), *viz.*, *rist-märét* hereditary land owned by tribute and taxpaying peasants—and *gult-märét*—government land given to soldiers and civil servants in return for rendering various services to the former were managed within. Unlike those granted *rist-märét*, owners of *gult-märét* in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) were empowered by the government to demand corvée services and collect both tax and tribute in kind from the holders often *ṭisäññoch* of their respective locality.⁹¹ However, the government's reform policy no more recognized such property rights for revoking *gult-märét* in the course of the post liberation period prior to the end of the imperial era.⁹² Below is the list of individuals who had assumed the office of the governorship of Gojjam—in chronological order prior to the end of the imperial era.

⁹⁰ IES Archives, Folder 7-8, File A7/003, No. 14, Letter 12497, Quarterly Report on the Governor General of Gojjam, 8 May 1966 (30/8/58 Eth. Cal); EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ~~H7/ħ1~~/0082, File ~~ጁ~~ 164, No Letter N^o., [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, 21 June 1970 (14/10/62 Eth. Cal).

⁹¹ Crummey, *Land and Society*, pp. 8-13, 229-240.

⁹² *Ibid*, p. 241.

Table 1. *Governors of Gojjam, from 1901-74.*⁹³

No.	Governor/s	Governorship/Administration
1	<i>Ras Haylu II</i>	1901-1932
2	<i>Käntiba Matäbé Käbbädä</i>	1932-1933 (for seven months of interim administration since May 1932)
3	<i>Ras Emeru Häylä Sellasé</i>	1933-1935
4	Italian administration	1935-1941
5	<i>Ras Haylu III</i>	1942-1946
6	<i>Däjjazmach Käbbädä Täsämma</i>	1946-1950
7	<i>Ras Haylu III</i>	1950-1957
8	<i>Däjjazmach Säbsebé Shebru</i>	1958-1959
9	<i>Däjjazmach Yämanä Hassen</i>	1959-1960
10	<i>Däjjazmach Šähäyu Enqo Sellasé</i>	1960-1968
11	<i>Däjjazmach Däräjä Mäkönnén</i>	1968/9-1974
12	<i>Lej Häylä-Maryam Käbbädä</i>	1974 to the revolution, in the same year

Emperor Haile Sellassie removed and/or appointed most of the aforementioned governors of Gojjam for their loyalty and obedience to him. They served as his *indärasés* (sing. *indärasé*: personal administrative deputy) over the governorship of the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*. Among them, *Ras Haylu II*, *Ras Emeru Häylä Sellasé*, *Ras Haylu III*, *Däjjach*, later *Däjjazmach*, *Käbbädä Täsämma* and *Däjjazmach Šähäyu Enqu-Sellasé* are well-remembered by informants as governors of Gojjam, of whom the first and last governors unpopular governors in the area.⁹⁴ Informants and *Ato Täshomä Gäbrä Maryam* who was the Imperial Attorney General in an interview with a certain journalist of *Shägär FM 102.1* agree that unlike others, *Šähäyu* is

⁹³ Ibid; EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ሰን/አስ/0068, File ደ/ማ 164/68, Letter ቁ22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); *Interviews with Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, Ato Ayaléw Gäbré Mäkönnén, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Märiqétta Libanos Yätämähñ Kokäbu, Ato Abbäbä Yaläw Wasé, Ato Awoqä Berhäné Därsäh, and Ato Ayaléw Gäbré Mäkönnén*; and Nebeyu Eyasu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam 1941-1974' (MA Dissertation in History, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, 2004), pp. 48-70.

⁹⁴ *Interviews with Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, Ato Ayaléw Gäbré Mäkönnén, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Märiqétta Libanos Yätämähñ Kokäbu, Ato Abbäbä Yaläw Wasé, Ato Awoqä Berhäné Därsäh, and Ato Ayaléw Gäbré Mäkönnén.*

best remembered for his creative energy in initiating development activities such as road construction and repair and environmental rehabilitation, in spite of his no sense of justice to the local people.⁹⁵

However, I was not able either to corroborate or refute this story through documentary sources. Nevertheless, the historian Bahru writes that Šähäyu's administration generated unrest and discontent in fully implementing the imperial land tax proclamations that eventually transferred him to a new *ṭäqlay-gezat*, Kaffa but with his position in 1968.⁹⁶ In his place, *Däjjazmach* Däräjä Mäkonnén and *Lej* Häylä-Maryam Käbbädä were directly appointed by the emperor one after the other as governorate generals of Gojjam until the revolution in 1974, pointed out in the table above. The subsequent chapters will further elaborate this interplay of both internal and external factors that provoked changes in all aspects of life particularly in the field of land tenure and the socioeconomic relations with multiple reactions derived from it as implemented in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* prior to the end of the imperial era.

⁹⁵ Ibid; and Täshomä Gäbrä Maryam (*Ato*), who was an attorney general of the Haile Sellassie government, talking about his life experience with an Ethiopian journalist Mä'aza Berru' (in Amharic) on 'Yä-Čäwata Engeda' ['A Special Gust Play'] *Shägär FM 102.1*. Addis Ababa, October 28 2010/1(*Ṭeqemt* 20, 2003 Eth. Cal).

⁹⁶ Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 217.

Chapter Two

Customary Land Tenure and Land Distribution in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)

As it was primarily initiated by Emperor Haile Sellassie's land administration in the pre-Italian period, one of the immediate defining features of Haile Sellassie's administration became the process of creating homogenous tenure entity. This move was meant to maximize the government's revenue from the lands of local and regional 'ruling classes'. The realization of this project required, among other things, reducing the power of local and regional rulers and, through that, the latter become dutiful to the former's absolute centralization. This made the collection of increased revenues directly from the majority peasantry, through a homogenized form of tenure system, imperative. It was due to this objective I argue in this chapter that because of the imperial reform measures, the traditional land tenure system of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was never the same again all the way through the twentieth century and prior to the end of the imperial era, while it was a great concern for Ethiopian emperors from early on.

In pre-modern and modern agrarian societies such as Ethiopia which practice agriculture, the land system serves as an important socioeconomic foundation serving both as the chief employer of labor and sign of the nature of social organization obtained from it. In particular, land serves as a symbol of social boundary in agrarian societies such as twentieth century Ethiopia including Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Many scholars working on the land system of Ethiopia in the past have emphasized that land played a significant role in the development of

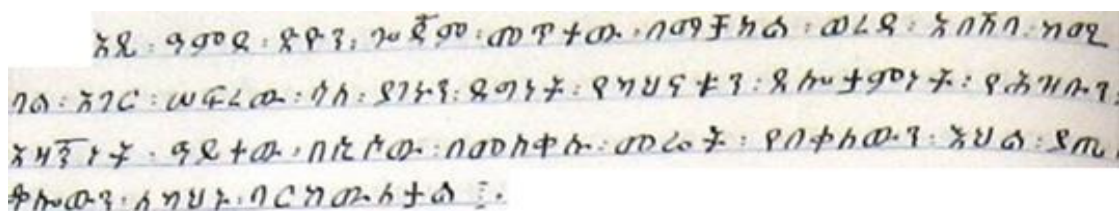
the Ethiopian state. The conquest of new regions by the Ethiopian state was usually accompanied by the introduction of the land tenure system of the old core territories of the kingdom into these newly incorporated regions. Moreover, the country's rulers paid the army and officials by giving land in lieu of salary. Hence, land served the Ethiopian rulers as a way of bringing newly incorporated regions and peoples into their influence and paying for their officials.

One of the most dramatic examples of the way in which land served as a system of political consolidation and integration of newly occupied regions into mainstream national life is represented by *Ašé*/Emperor Amdä-Šeyon's conquest in the first half of the fourteenth century A.D. In his remarkable work, *Church and State*, Tadesse Tamrat writes that most of the northern provinces of Ethiopia, including Gojjam or Central Gojjam (the later Däbrä Marqos) was incorporated into the Christian kingdom and its direct access to the Red Sea was opened in this period. The vital process of the integration of Gojjam into the mainstream national life was further promoted by evangelical activities, accompanied by considerable Christian settlement from Shewa and Wello (formerly Bétä Amhara).⁹⁷ So much so that, the system of tenure applied in Gojjam was introduced from the old Aksumite tradition, when the medieval Christian kingdom expanded into the area. Based on the available sources in the form of chronicles—granting land usually to services rendered—one can come across some examples for Gojjam in the fourteenth century, while I am not able to find out it dating exactly from its incorporation. Nonetheless, chronicles clearly revealed—what their scribes

⁹⁷ Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527* (London, Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 20, 119-155, 196.

experienced, even earlier than their actual lifetime—that ensured to look at the occasions of land grant orders very closely as an inward looking.

In that way, 'Collection of Chronicles' documented by Täklä-Iyäsus testifies that one of the earliest known grants of property in Gojjam relates to the land charter of Ašé Amdä-Šeyon (r.1314-1344). Below is the reproduced land charter of Amdä-Šeyon:



Ašé Amdä Šeyon [r.1314-1344] liberally endowed Aše-qollo tribute to members of the clergy [of St. Michael Church] from the already known estate/government tenure in Gojjam called yä-mäsqäl-märét, while he came to visit the area, in a mobile court camped at the village of Abäsheba [what is now Abäshäm] in Machakel district, in the fourteenth century A.D. In clear terms, the grant was an act of Amdä-Šeyon's sympathy and sensitivity to the kindness of the people therein, with a good reputation for being strict observance of members of the clergy's courteous services. Therefore, land served as the means of 'social relationship' in its own makings.⁹⁸

Three interesting points emerge from the discussion above. Firstly, although the charter by no means mentions the nature of property rights involved in the grant order, it was *gult* land on condition that members of the clergy were said to have been fixed to tributary right referred to as *ašé-qollo-geber* also called *yä-negus-qollo* with a fifth of crop harvest⁹⁹ in Machakel (Gojjam) during the fourteenth century. This means that members of the clergy

⁹⁸ Täklä-Iyäsus Waaq-Jiraa (*Aläqa*), Yä-Zämän Tarik Maṭāraqāméya [lit. means Collection of Chronicles] (National Library Manuscript Collection in MSNLAA Archives, Addis Ababa, Call N°. 382/63/now 009.45 2፯፻፱), folio 80 verso.

⁹⁹ Here, leaving aside some minor changes, the tribute demand for *yašé-qollo-geber* or *yä-negus-qollo-geber* was a fifth or a tenth of the land production during the seventeenth century, as mentioned in Joanna Mantel-Niećko, *The Role of Land Tenure in the System of Ethiopian Imperial Government in Modern Times* (Krzysztof Adam Bobinsky, (trans.)) (Warsaw, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1980), p. 127.

were once given the right to demand the specified tribute from the peasants residing and working on *yä-mäsqäl-märét* ('land of the cross'), or *yä-qés-märét*, also called *yä-qesena-märét* ('land of the priest'), as their Godfathers.¹⁰⁰ This tenure was a variety of the estates/government *gult* land commonly referred to as *hudad*.¹⁰¹ On the occasion that, *Ašé Amdä Šeyon* was a secured base of tribute demand for members of the clergy to be treated with sensitivity and sympathy to land. In that way, the clergies remained loyal vassals to *Amdä Šeyon*. In that way, the grantor *Amdä Šeyon* (r.1314-1344) apparently won support from the local population. In this regard, the interest of clergies and tenants were not contradictory. So much so that, it is apparent that in the course of time, the positive acceptance of tribute demand—for the continued support and maintenance of members of the clergy—significantly strengthened the position of the Ethiopian state in the area, in the first half of the fourteenth century.

Secondly, and most importantly, in the process of tribute demands by way of *yä-mäsqäl-märét*, the tenure was already known to exist prior to *Amdä-Šeyon's* grant order, as one of the earliest known tribute demands in the area. Hence, St. Michael church was the most important religious centre—perhaps one of the oldest churches of the region. Last, but not least, with these sensible implications, *Amdä Šeyon's* tribute demand meant to expedite unjust social dealings without conflict, just as there was no disappointment among the peasant-tenants resided on the land. That is to say, the grant order with liberally endowed tribute demand for clergies that eventually targeted the majority peasants and, through that,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid; and also Gäbrä-Wäld Engeda-Wärq, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét Ena Geber Sem* (in Amharic) (*The Ethiopia's [Customary] Land [Tenure] and Tribute Name*) (Addis Ababa, Tinsa'e Ze-guba'e Printing Press, 1948 Eth. Cal.), p. 21.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

undoubtedly promoted tenancy and tenancy relations in that province. The peasants' status of subject tenants and the clergies tributary right on same plots of lands would be a sober reflection of the earliest instance of feudal system of 'productive relationship' in [Central] Gojjam analogous to medieval Europe.

That land served as an important source of social status and privilege in the area could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, it has been a reputation for the peasant's being in harsh realities of life, for all that clergies, as social elites, sought to drive their power and social domination over control of land rather than people without conflict. As well, the grant order established a more contractual character of property transactions between the state (grantor) and the grantee. Hence, the term 'feudal' could be used as a useful descriptor of the local Ethiopian social reality that virtually symbolizes pre-colonial African society—at least in looking at the existence of exploitative type of 'productive relationship' from early on. It is only fitting that the Ethiopian (African) social reality be perceived on one occasion for this discovery.

Moreover, it is evident from the available sources dating from the later parts of the medieval period that kings and powerful 'lords' of Ethiopia also liberally endowed property rights to many other ecclesiastical and secular 'lords'—for the respective services they rendered in the Ethiopian context at large. All the same, for their political ties with local administration, Amdä-Šeyon's successors as kings and powerful 'lords' of Ethiopia actually expedited and continued in making extensive property rights to social elites, usually with local origins, thereby encouraging the severity of the tribute demands towards the peasants in many parts of [Central] Gojjam. However, a local source acknowledges that the property system of

Three interesting points emerge from the discussion above. Firstly, as the direct outcome of his property policy, *Ašé Zä-Dengel* meant to reciprocate the obligation of providing labor service and tribute payment by imposing light tribute demands on the peasants, paid for the most part in land. This means that *Zä-Dengel* went to change property rights of the elites segments of the society by way of imposing land tribute in lieu of labour demands, conceivably anchored on agricultural production—with Christian moral foundation and practices—suited to the property system of Gojjam at the turn of the seventeenth century. Thus, elites, as 'lords', who were given over-right in the form of *gult* could not claim obligation of tribute payment and providing labor service over the *rist* land of peasants. Generally, the state and the officials it delegated over the land of peasants as *gult* holders recognized the right of the peasants over their *rist* land on condition that they met their obligation of tribute payment derived only from it. It was for *Zä-Dengel*'s policy with the property reform that 'lords' appear to have refrained from making heavy tribute demands from peasants of the kingdom thereby encouraging the leniency of local 'lords' towards the peasants. In that case, *Zä-Dengel*'s property policy has to give a new lease of life to the many deteriorated and long ill-treated *ṭisäññoch* in the kingdom.

That 'lords' did have a potentially harsh exploitation of the *ṭisäññoch* in different parts of the kingdom is beyond doubt. Prominent informants and the record in Alvarez's description agree that medieval Ethiopian provinces paid the tribute due from them to local 'lords' in the form of corvée services and tribute obligation.¹⁰⁵ Secondly, and most importantly, giving

¹⁰⁵ Interviews with *Märiḡetta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, and *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé; and Francisco Alvarez, *The Prester John of the Indies* (trans. Lord Stanley of Alderley, and rev. and ed. C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford) (Vol. I, London, the Hakluyt Society, 1961), pp. 425-426.

allowance to the violent means he employed to fulfill his objective, on the positive side the undoubted moderating impact of Zä-Dengel's reform policy had indirectly helped for fostering property system that the Ethiopian state had experienced from early on. That he promoted control from labour (people) to land. Land designated as an important source of power and social domination. In that instance, control of land leads to control of people for social domination. Land as an economic factor on which, in Zä-Dengel's policy that, all legal, social and political relations were formed encouraging 'lords' to live on appropriate tribute demands as functional in the medieval province of Gojjam.

Last, but not least, Zä-Dengel indirectly meant to weaken the practice of slavery and enslavement throughout the kingdom, including [Central] Gojjam, by actively repealing the labor due rights that could get along with his property policy and accepted to heed to his demands at that point in time. That freeborn human into slavery could be considered simply as another addition to Zä-Dengel's property policy. In short, in his property policy Zä-Dengel took cautious and pragmatic approaches in all territories, depending on the reality on the ground and the level of threat that corvée labour and tribute extraction (obligation) pose to his property character and above all to the nature of relation between 'lords' and the subject population with Christian duty. Giving allowance to Christian duty for property relations he proposed to fulfill his objective, on the positive side the undoubted moderating views of his property policy had indirectly helped for fostering anti-slavery and enslavement sentiment within the Ethiopian context. All these seem to have disfavored a potentially harsh exploitation of the peasants of medieval Ethiopia by local rulers, as 'lords'.

In spite of that, whether his governorship brought any significant improvements on the lot of people is difficult to tell for lack of sources and because his tenure of office was rather short could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, one can argue that Zä-Dengel made some effort to regulate tribute extractions and corvée services and limit the excesses of the 'lords' by defining and prescribing their power and rights in the regulation he issued is beyond doubt. While Zä-Dengel chose religious persuasions to enforce his property will on medieval Ethiopia, the new policy was supposed to improve *ṭisāññoch* of any obligation they used to owe local 'lords' in tribute and labour services based on the age-old traditions. In fact, despite Zä-Dengel predisposed to repeal solidity of the ensuing socioeconomic structure, the demands such as rendering of ingrained labour and tribute extraction for 'lords' persisted in Ethiopia, in various forms in premodern and modern periods. Nevertheless, the character of property and the nature of relation between 'lords' and the subject population of the empire apparently witnessed significant changes with anti-slavery and enslavement sentiment discouraging tribute and labour demands at various times in the course of the medieval and modern times, as discussed briefly below.

In that way, scholarly works and local clerical records acknowledges that the issue of anti-slavery and enslavement during medieval and modern Ethiopia was overall good. Primarily, the late Professor Merid Wolde-Aregay writes that in his reform policy, *Ašé Zara Yacob* (r.1434-1468) might have inclined to ban the occasions of slavery and enslavement, while he banned every activity and undertakings of robbery and lootings in the kingdom,

encompassing Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).¹⁰⁶ Here, although Merid considered Zärä Yacob's legal order vaguely as an act of his kindness to address the then social problems, so far I am aware, Zä-Dengel's policy indicated above is something the first Ethiopian social reform without any discrimination, though not articulated document in any detail at the turn of seventeenth the century. That the policy is just predisposed to improve the lots of freeborn human and its indirect bearing, 'anti-enslavement sentiment' is beyond doubt.

Subsequent to Zä-Dengel's reform policy, however, Merid clearly writes that *Ašé* Susenyos (r.1607-1672) directly pronounced anti-slavery with a decree that legally banned slave trade.¹⁰⁷ Susenyos' successors did also more to promote anti-slavery with various decrees that legally banned slave trade chiefly *Ašé* Téwodros II (r.1855-1868),¹⁰⁸ and as Mahtämä-Sellásé Wäldä-Mäsqäl writes *Ašé* Minilek II (r.1889-1913)¹⁰⁹ and the historian Teshale also writes *Ašé* Haile Sellassie (r.1930-1974), partly for their modernizing zeal.¹¹⁰ Among other things, the twentieth century global-and nation-wide prolonged social reforms such as anti-slavery and slave trade campaigns that gradually ameliorated the old established feudal pattern of relations, *viz.*, 'landlord-tenant relationship' within the Ethiopian context.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Merid Wolde-Aregay, 'Yä-Téwodros Alamawoch Käyét Endämänäču' (in Amharic) (lit. 'Where did all the reforms and the policies of Téwodros come from?') *Kassa and Kassa Papers on the Lives, Time and Images of Téwodros II and Yohannis IV 1855-1889* (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, 1990), pp. 105-106.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Mahtämä-Sellásé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, *Zekrä Nägär* (lit. *Oral and Written Legacies [of Historic Ethiopia]*) (Addis Ababa, Näšanät Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal.), p. 46.

¹¹⁰ Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974* (Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1995), p. 63.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Cognizance of the complexity of the situation and in appreciation of the high importance, in which Ethiopian emperors safely assumed and steadily executed, it seems warranted to infer that Zärä Yacob and Zä-Dengel *initiated* Susenyos, Téwodros II and Minilek II *elaborated* and *consolidated* and Haile Sellassie *completed* the general functional property system from control of labor to land. Albeit such significant changes, in social and legal practices, a further derive to freed slaves was gradually but steadily manifested itself at the individual level, for their Christian ethical foundations more willingly than out of their profound sense of human duty. This conditions manifested in pace and intensity itself in the course of the second half of nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century, as clearly elaborated below.

Apart from pronouncements of the above emperors/kings, powerful 'lords' who exercised an extensive amount of rights over property often engaged in a derive to anti-slavery and enslavement sentiment, and its indirect bearing property restructuring in the empire at large, as a trend for social reforms that prevailed up to the modern period. Dealing with this issue, we have clerical records in the Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) church and all at once in the region at large. Firstly, in his remarkable work entitled *Mäšehafä Čäwatta (Literary Play)*, the enlightened *Däbtära Zänäb* who prompted the mid nineteenth century Ethiopian literary and religious activities describes that 'although the crowd shouted to insult a person as slave, he was still the son of the biblical Adam'.¹¹² This would be in seeking for social justice and fairness sought Zänäb himself following the prevailed unjust social dealings in the mid nineteenth century Ethiopia and after. In that way, one can say that Zänäb was optimistic,

¹¹² Zänäb Zä-Ethiopiawé (*Däbtära*), *Mäšehafä Čäwatta Segawé-Wä-Mänfäsawé* (in Amharic) (*Secular and Spiritual Literary Plays*) (Addis Ababa, Täsfa Printing Press, 1951 Eth. Cal.), p. 11.

forward looking and free from the rigidity of people of his own time; urged for relieving the kingdom's serious social problems, by way of 'anti-slavery' and/or 'anti-enslavement sentiments' that apparently conveyed social justice, albeit the custom contested to unnoticed of it for some unfortunate reason. More precisely, Zänäb sought the very fact that equal social positions should progressively came to include slave sections of the society within the Ethiopian kingdom, including Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), not to mention land use right; for people be treated on equal basis by way of social reform.

Secondly, and most importantly, secular elites in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)—reinforced by Christian ethical foundation had a predilection for social improvement just by way of 'anti-slavery-and/or-enslavement sentiments' and its indirect bearing, property restructuring at various times, actually in the lifetime of Emperor Menelik II (r.1889-1913). In that case, the record from Däbrä Marqos church assured us that the two ladies—*Wäyzäro* Ҥägetu and *Wäyzäro* Teblät Dellu—as members of the local elites sought to set free over a dozen of their respective slaves in that particular period. Especially Ҥägetu justified the condition of freeing slaves as she pronounced that [፩፱፻፲፬ ዓ.ም. በሰንበት ሰዓት በቤተ ክርስቲያን ስር ሰጠች ለጌታዎቿ ስላቸው የነበሩ ጌታዎች ጋር ለገባቸው ገንዘብ ለጌታዎቿ ስላቸው ጋር ለገባቸው ገንዘብ ለጌታዎቿ ስላቸው ጋር ለገባቸው ገንዘብ] 'I had a strong desire to set free all my slaves (...) with having a reverent feeling towards God, pending I am alive'.¹¹³ However, although the record did not highlight the challenge to slavery itself by individuals' assurance, the whole deliberation against that social problem, considerably constituted the legal ground for radical changes in property relations and its indirect bearing, property structuring from control of labor to land in late nineteenth century Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in general.

¹¹³ Register of Deeds, MS. Däbrä Marqos, folio 13 recto.

On the whole, these and similar other measures taken by individuals—by way of powerful 'lords'—and emperors represented a direct hit against tradition and brought a significant break in bringing all inclusive social safety and its indirect bearing, property restructuring from control of people (labour) to land. Hence, the cumulative effect of the newly designed social improvement in property character by ruling elites—together with an inevitable demographic pressure—at various times gives the clear picture that in premodern and modern periods the problem of slavery and enslavement steadily abolished in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) or in Ethiopia at large. Only then the old labor due started to lose its social and economic importance in the kingdom, which therefore included Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), while the emperors could not able to eliminate completely all vestiges of corvée services and obligation from within.

As also discussed briefly in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, one of the most significant example of the way in which land served as a system of political consolidation and integration of newly occupied regions is represented by King Amdä-Šeyon's conquest of Gojjam in the first half of the fourteenth century. However, it was an exceedingly common occurrence in the course of the subsequent centuries. Hence, it is quite clear that although the old tradition of slavery and enslavement were steadily at ease, at the same time the deteriorated and long ill-treated life of the peasants of the kingdom, including Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) maintained and continued by way of 'lord'-*ṭisäñña* social relationship. Although slavery and enslavement was an exceedingly rare occurrence, 'lord'-*ṭisäñña* social relationship was very common on one occasion for land designated as the sole basis of social stratification.

Based on representative church records, Habtamu Mengistie (2015) writes that, from c.1700 onwards, as opposed to the preceding centuries, Ethiopian emperors involved in extensive *gult* grants to members of the clergy. Especially, *däbtäras* as 'lords' received extensive tract of *gult* lands for the services they rendered recurrently by displacing the previous cultivators' hereditary rights over land.¹¹⁴ In that way, the legal property configurations to land was to evolve or emerge gradually but steadily as socially and economically strong avenue of social dealings, land as chief employer of power over labour in slavery practices. Not surprisingly, the contemporary humanitarian grounds expedited to put an end to slavery and enslavement practices more steadily towards the development of social relations, in its move contained often-in civil rights' protection, in the Ethiopian context at large.¹¹⁵ Hence, the social conditions of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) or generally Ethiopia at large showed a sign of improvement since then. As a whole, the character of property and the nature of relation between social elites and the slave population of the empire apparently witnessed significant changes in the course of the medieval and modern times.

On the flipside, the continued changes in property configuration also steadily intensified the inherent development of exploitative form of 'feudal relationship', since the elite segments of that society sought to drive their power from control and ownership of land from early on. That land served as a symbol of social boundary in Ethiopian agrarian societies—anchored on agricultural production is beyond doubt. Hence, the feudal paradigm could hardly be a hindrance in a brief looking at the forms of social relationship that prevailed in Ethiopian

¹¹⁴ Habtamu Mengistie Tegegne, 'Recordmaking, Recordkeeping and Landholding—Chanceries and Archives in Ethiopia (1700-1974)' *History in Africa* (42, 2015), p. 439.

¹¹⁵ It is also described in *Kä-Bétä Mängest Dossé Yä-Blatta Wäldä-Maryam Mäzäker (in Amharic) (lit. A Chronicle of Blatta Wäldä-Maryam in Office of Tenure)* (com. and ed., Mäkuréya Mäkasha) (Addis Ababa, Alpha Printing Press, 2006 Eth. Cal), pp. 81-93.

history all the way through the medieval times and after closely corresponding to the historical processes in medieval Europe. This emphasizes that land was more than a factor of production as people struggle to acquire land to meet different ends. Among other things, land ownership served as an important marker of social boundary and social identity. Equally important, land used as a means to build one's following and to exercise influence over people, as discussed throughout this chapter above. In this regard, the general inference drawn from the above story suited as a sufficient ground to extend the discussion on the recent history of the political economy of Gojjam related to land tenure system. To be precise, in appreciation to the high importance that it would come to assume in the period with which this research is specifically concerned, it is important here to commit a few paragraphs to the early practice of land grants to individuals as elites or 'lords'.

Although sufficient evidence on which to base my statement is lacking, it seems warranted to infer that, contrary to the preceding centuries, kings and powerful 'lords' of the region involved in extensive grants to elite segments of the society, conceivably parallel with the institutional grants, seems to have been carried out in Gojjam during the nineteenth century and twentieth century. In that, the records from the Däbrä Marqos and Abema-Maryam Churches clearly mention several villages were granted as tribute rights to local elites who titled to all kinds of such social positions as *däbtäras*, *negus*, *wäyzäro*, *ras*, *däjjazmach*, *qäññazmach* and *fitawräri*, as the most important *gult* holders from such extensive grant orders for the respective services they rendered. In that case, the first-major benefactors, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the first quarter of the twentieth century,

were *Negus Täklä-Häymanot*¹¹⁶ and his son and successor *Ras Haylu II*,¹¹⁷ respectively. Thus, as the legal custom of the medieval times and after, the *gult* recipients were more likely to exercise tributary right from the people living and working on the land, even if not mentioned in these clerical records as discovered and found in the area.

Besides, the practice of individual grants in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) later picked up in pace and intensity all the way through the post-liberation period. The government gave lands to individuals often in the form of hereditary *gult* and/or *rist* rights. Thus, *rist* together with *gult*, constituted the two dominant forms of tenure in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, in its recent history. In fact, it was the predominance of *rist* in northern provinces including Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) that allows for the characterization and interpretation of the tenure system as one of 'communal' in general by many historians and other social scientists. In the classical *rist* forms of tenure, for the most part, peasants had usufructory right and were directly responsible for the cultivation of the land. Thus, individuals who were given over-right in the form of *gult* did not claim property right over the *rist* land. Generally, the state and the officials it delegated over the land of peasants as *gult* holders recognized the right of the peasants over their *rist* land on condition that they met their obligation of tribute payment and providing labor service. Thus, both *rist* and *gult* holders would be found on the same land.¹¹⁸ In such situations, since both property rights

¹¹⁶ Kebrä Mäzgäb (Glorious Register), MS. Däbrä Marqos, virtually all the first 4 folios and folios 63 to recto to 65 recto.

¹¹⁷ Gäbrä Hemam (The Passion) [lit. 'The he Sufferings of Christ between the nights of the Last Supper and his death'), MS Abema-Maryam, Däbrä Marqos.

¹¹⁸ The standard work on the conception of *rist* is Allan Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia: The Dynamics of Cognatic Descent* (London, Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1973), pp. 5-6, 13; and the standard account of the *gult* tenure is Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Addis Ababa, AAUP, 2000), pp. 9-12.

would be held by different individuals, each would be limited by the existence of the other, this confirms what Donald Crummey has been carefully explained for 'neither property rights would be absolute'.¹¹⁹

In the first half of twentieth century, the term *madäriya* came to be used widely to denote *gult* given to individual soldiers and government officials¹²⁰ thereby further diversifying the legal terminologies applied for property in land. Although different terminologies were used to refer to the same kind of landholding, it does seem, however, that the use of varying terms to denote property indicates the existence of confusing and complex property system and diverse status of land. However, in the 1920s and the beginning of 1930s, by way of improving the property system, the imperial government issued a series of decrees. Such decrees legally abolished not only corvée services imposed on the [peasant]-*ṭisännnoch* but the old system of tribute extraction became subject to revocation.¹²¹ As also indicated in chapter above, unlike other parts of Ethiopia, in Gojjam *Ras* Haylu II legally converted the system of surplus appropriation from kind to cash, while it was limited to *asrat* (tithe) tax at this moment and paid to the soldiery in the past. Likewise, when the Italians occupied the country in 1935, they found the land tenure system so chaotic and archaic that needed to be abolished.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 9, 12.

¹²⁰ Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 44.

¹²¹ Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, *Selä-Ethiopia Yä-Märét Serét Astädädär-Inna Geber Ṭäqlala Astäyayät* (in Amharic) (lit. 'A Brief Statement to the Ethiopian Land Tenure and the Tribute Administration Derived from it), (n.d, in MSNLAA Call N°. 333.73 MCp) and *idem*, *Zekrä Nägär* (in Amharic) (lit. *Oral and Written Legacies [of Historic Ethiopia]*) (Addis Ababa, Näšanät Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal), pp. 22-38.

¹²² Tesema Ta'a, 'The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From the Mid-16th to the Early 20th Centuries', (PHD Thesis in History, Michigan State University, 1986), pp. 209-210.

Consequently, they set up an office called the 'Royal Commission' to deal with every problems of land rights and abolished all forms of unpaid labor, including slavery and the *gäbbar*-system, as very common in the south.¹²³ However, the Italian land policy exempted the church, thereby allowed to continue its old custom side by side with the Italian administration.¹²⁴ Subsequent to liberation, in 1941 the restored Ethiopian government, in the interest of power centralization and organized tax collection, recommenced its prewar policies that consciously converted land from a political to an economic resource. For instance, the government reconfirmed the policy that legally abolished the payment of tribute and *corvée* services. Government officials and soldiers were to be paid salaries instead of living on tribute collected from peasants resided and worked on the land.¹²⁵ In the next section of this chapter, a detailed discussion will be made on the various forms of tenure obtained in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam)—which the government targeted to eliminate—through various decrees in its effort to create a homogeneous tenure entity throughout the country during the twentieth century prior to the end of the imperial era.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid; Interviews with Märiḡetta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, *Ato* Bälaynäh Akalu Dästa, *Ato* Ayaléw Gäbré Mäkönnén, *Ato* Bälay Engeda Yehun, and *Abba* Ejjegü Seménäh Wärqnäh.

¹²⁵ Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 79.

Major forms of Land Tenure (c.1901-1974)

In dealing with the predominant forms of land tenure system that had once widely applied in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam, one can single out the following: *rist-märét rist-gult* and *zämächa/zämach*, church (*sämon*) and government (*hudad*) lands. This tripartite division of the dominant tenures in the *Awrajja* was based on the different rights and obligations each types of tenure entail, particularly with the degree of ownership right exercised by individual holders. Accordingly, holders of *rist-märét*, *rist-gult* and *zämach* land exercised an extensive amount of property right over their land, whereas *sämon-märét* and *gult-märét* were much more restrictive and entitled holders to only subordinate/subsidiary right. Within each of these dominant tenure systems, we have other types of tenures that were sometimes complementary to the former but with their own particular features—as shall be discussed below.

Here, it is important to present briefly the traditional units of land measurement that were locally recognized and later appropriated by the government. It should be noted that although there is lack of sources on the commencement of land measurement in Ethiopia, there is a sort of clarification on it by Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl who provided authoritative documents on land and other related issues. He writes that the beginning of land measurement practices in Ethiopia apparently traced back to the Gondärine period (1632-1769), more precisely to the reign of Emperor Iyasu I (r.1682-1706). Nonetheless, he assures us that, it became a widespread phenomenon ever since the reign of Emperor Minilek II (r.1889-1913). Mahtämä-Sellasé has provided a more concrete account of the ways and

defects of land tenure measurement that prevailed during the post-liberation period.¹²⁶ Regarding land measurement in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam, there are pertinent and reliable evidences. Among other things, legal and property documents, such as petition letters, authoritative government sponsored writings and land measurement documents, generated both by government documents and clerical records represent the best type of sources to identify the different traditional units of land measurement that were applied in the area. In that instance, these sources use terms such as *gäzem*, *ṭemad*, *gämäd* and *eqa* in combination to denote the same size of land under the holding of an individual.¹²⁷

Here, Gäbrä-Wäld's authoritative source and informants agree that the size was determined by the amount of land ploughed in a day by a pair of oxen. According to the deduction of these sources, the size of *aned-gäzem-märét* (one land ploughing) is equivalent to a quarter hectare of land. Here the hybrid term *aned-gäzem-märét* refers to the size of holding involved in any forms of tenure. However, the size of land under the unit of measurement was not standardized that could vary from place to place.¹²⁸ In any case, the size of land under the holding of an individual was also recognized by the use of many technical terms such as *aned-gäzem* ('land ploughed by a pair of oxen') or *aned-gämäd* ('one rope') or *aned-ṭemad* ('a pair of cattle for land ploughing') or *aned-eqa* that was all approximately equal with

¹²⁶ Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Selä-Ethiopia Yä-Märét Serét Astädadär*, pp. 1, 14.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*; EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ጃጃ/44, File 44, Letter 44, All About *Rist*, 20 May 1953 (12/9/45 Eth. Cal.) and Folder ጃጃ/ሐሐ/0082, File ጃ 164, Letter 11883/9139, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, 6 March 1971 (27/6/63 Eth. Cal.); Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 61; and Kebrä Mäzgäb, MS. Däbrä Marqos, folio 29 recto 30 verso.

¹²⁸ Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 61; and *Interviews with Abba Ejjegu Seménäh Wärqnäḥ, Ato Zäwdu Däsaläññ Tayé, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, and Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé*; see also Mantel-Niećko, *The Role of Land Tenure*, p. 87.

a quarter hectare of land.¹²⁹ The nineteenth century land charter from Däbrä Marqos church also commonly mentioned another technical term *yä-čeqa-mägaräfiya* that signifies the size of land and the tributary payments derived from it. In that case, landholders commonly agreed to retain land referring to the size of the land under the holdings of an individual as *aned*/'one or more plots of land also referring to annual land tribute payment of *amolé* [-čäw] ('salt bar').¹³⁰ In any case, government officials and members of the land survey teams sent to Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the 1940s and 1960s appropriated most of these terms and used them to define the dimension of land for the purpose of tax assessment.¹³¹

Without any significant change in its value/content and the rights and obligations it evokes, in the post-war period the term *rist* came to be used in legal and documents to refer to lands that had been formerly designated as *rist*. Although the term signifies different values and ideas, it needs repeating here that holders of *rist* land enjoyed the same rights and obligation that are involved in the system of tenure described by the term *rist*. In bringing about homogeneous tenure arrangement in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* including Däbrä Marqos for organized tax collection, the restored government warranted the use of this term to denote the same form of tenure. In view of that, the term *rist* land was used interchangeably to refer to a

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Kebrä Mäz Gäb, MS. Däbrä Marqos; and Interviews with Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, and *Märiğetta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu*.

¹³¹ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder 245, File 12:44, No Letter N°, Tax Record, 4 September 1948 (29/12/40 Eth. Cal); Folder ጸጸ/44, File 44, All about *Rist*, Letter 44, 20 May 1953 (12/9/45 Eth. Cal), No Letter N°, 17 August 1971 (11/12/63 Eth. Cal); Folder ፱፯/፳፱/0082, File ጸ 164, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, Letter 11883/9139, 6 March 1971 (27/6/63 Eth. Cal); WMA Archives, Folder 2116, File 2075, Letter 2936/55 and 565 /22/55, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*], 22 December 1963 (13/4/55 Eth. Cal), 22 April 1963 (14/8/55 Eth. Cal), Letter 100/1024/3, 24 June 1964 (17/10/56 Eth. Cal); Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province [Ethiopia] Prepared by the Department of Land Tenure (Addis Ababa, January 1971, in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) Archive in the Main Library Collections, Call N°. 333LAN or in 333ETH); and Interviews with Ato Damté Tafärä Yayäh, Ato Dämälash Seyum Meteku, Ato Zäwdu Däsälänn Tayé, *Märiğetta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu*, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Ejjeju Seménäh Wäraqnäh, and *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé.

hereditary land, whose holder has the right to sell, bequeath and lease it. However, like in many peasant societies in Ethiopia, a typical holder of *rist* land in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) had some burdensome duties to fulfill to the government or the persons delegated by the central authorities, of which the most widely known was to work on government estates referred to as *hudad*. One of the defining elements of *rist* land was its heritability. Thus, legal heirs of an individual had the right to share their fathers' or their mothers' *rist* land at various times in the course of the life of the father/mother or after his/her death.¹³²

Although the customary rules of property and later the *Civil Code* of 1960 recognize the rights of children to their fathers' or mothers' *rist* land,¹³³ parents could exercise their unrestricted power to honor or dishonor the inheritance rights of their children. For example, there was minor land tenure practices that was clearly linked to *rist* land called *yä-leqena-märét* that was given by the father for one of his favorite sons, most often for the elder one to use it in private exclusive of the rest of his brother/s and/or sister/s. Accordingly, the privileged son would mediate disagreements when it arose amongst his siblings, as culturally constructed understandings of the society in the area.¹³⁴ Besides, individuals would give land to another individual for the former's socioeconomic as well as political purposes. So much so that, people continually gave their land to *Ras* Haylu II to gain his political influence, apparently in so far as they adopted him as their formal heir particularly in the late

¹³² Ibid; IES Archives, Folder 11-13, Letter 0/2114/292/60, File A13/009, Tax Record, 22 March 1968 (13/7/60 Eth. Cal); and Interviews with Ato Mälläsä Asräss Mälaku, Ato Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol, Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and Abba Ejjegü Seménäh Wärqnä.

¹³³ *Civil Code*, Proclamation N°165, 1960.

¹³⁴ An interview with Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu.

1920s.¹³⁵ After all, it was an established custom that individuals could donate and/or transfer his/her *rist* land to the government or to the immediate ruler/'lord' as a formal heir, when he/she found himself/herself aged and no longer defend their titles.¹³⁶

Above and beyond, one could also observe confiscation of the peasants' *rist-märét* by the state as *gebrä-ṭäl* or *geber-färash* (failure to pay any tributes) and converted into government *gult* land without regard for the inheritance rights of the children. The ruler that took control of the *rist* land as *gebrä-ṭäl-märét* did have the right to rent it by its former peasant holder, accordingly which was actually observed at the village of Yäfäsäs in Machakel, in Däbrä Marqos, earlier than the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935 to 1941.¹³⁷ Therefore, occasionally the inheritance right of children to the *rist* property of their parents could simply be theoretical. Beside the established custom of *rist* land allocation, there was division of land by allotment termed as *yadäb-märét* (collectively owned land) such as undefined forestlands, grazing lands, mountainous areas and all that. These could be divided equally among the village *rist* holders which was, and still is, the common practice in the area. In any case, *rist* tenure was the most widespread form of land, in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*, which played a significant role in the system of the social organization. Significant portions of peasants of the *Awrajja* or generally the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* were organized

¹³⁵ Ibid; and Crummey, *Land and Society*, p. 232.

¹³⁶ Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, pp. 31-32.

¹³⁷ IES Archives, Folder 11-13, File A16/001-043, Letter 54/13834, Tax Record, 17 June 1973 (10/7/65 Eth. Cal); An interview with Ato Menwuyélat Alalu Chäckol; and Esubalew Zewdie, 'Land Tenure and Taxation in Machakil Warada (1900-1974)' (BA Essay in History, Addis Ababa University, 1986), p. 11.

under this system of tenure throughout the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial regime.¹³⁸

Since *rist-märét* was a key institution for the peasants of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), *gult*, and its hereditary brand, *rist-gult* were the most important system of tenure for the elite segment of that society, including members of the 'royal' family (nobilities) and government favorites. This form of tenure became widespread in the post-liberation period, when the government granted extensive amount of land in the form of *gult* to many individuals. A typical *gult* or *rist-gult* land could sometimes extend to several villages with its borders often defined by such vague natural landmarks as rivers, mountains, and valleys. Hence, as the usual practice of medieval and post-medieval times, the *gult*-holders normally exercised their tributary right over the [peasant] *ṭisāññas*,¹³⁹ whom Mahtämä-Sellásé clearly labeled as *zégoch*—(sing. *zéga*)—who were living and working on the land.¹⁴⁰ This further reassured us that Habtamu's discovery of the *zéga*, a new social category as indicated in chapter above, is by no means strange and unacceptable to the conventional economic and social framework of Ethiopian land tenure and the social relations derived from it. Hence, other researchers would have presumed to authenticate and endorse it, as hardly unacceptable into the established academic discourse. If scholars have a propensity to conduct their investigation into that direction, it

¹³⁸ IES, Folder 7-8, File A7/003, No. 14, Letter 12497, Quarterly Report on the Governorate General of Gojjam, 8 May 1966 (30/8/58 Eth. Cal); Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, p. 180; and An interview with Abba Ejjegü Seménäh Wärqnäḥ.

¹³⁹ Ibid; IES Archives, Folder 7-8, File A7/003, Quarterly Report on the Governorate General of Gojjam, No. 14, Letter 12497, 8 May 1966 (30/8/58 Eth. Cal); WMA Archives, Folder 2116, File 2075, Letter N° 2936/55, 565/ 22/55 and 100/1024/3, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*], 22 December 1962 (13/4/55 Eth. Cal), 22 April 1963 (14/8/55 Eth. Cal), 24 June 1964 (17/10/56 Eth. Cal); and Interviews with Abba Ejjegü Seménäh Wärqnäḥ, Abba Gäbrä-Sellásé, Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, and Märiqétta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

¹⁴⁰ Mahtämä-Sellásé, *Zekrä Nägär*, p. 124.

would be helpful to make a thorough understanding of the subject under consideration, generally prior to the end of the imperial era.

Nonetheless, more often than not, it seems apparent that the land on which *gult* right created and imposed could likely be over usufructary *rist* lands of the local peasants—as *ṭisäññas*. However, when rulers gradually but continuously granted *gult/rist-gult* land to their favorites, *gult* or *rist-gult* tenure was also created over several types of tenures like *rist*, and *sämon* lands, which were commonly found here and there throughout Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Though such possessions were found scattered in the area as the property of the *mäsafents* (nobilities) and *liqä-kahenats* (clergies), and after death by their inheritors.¹⁴¹ In actual practice, *gult* could be sold, inherited and transferred to others as a gift. It was in this way that, the notables comes to acquire all of their *rist-gult* in the area at various times, in the twentieth century,¹⁴² and even before.

In view of that, it seems apparent that a typical *gult* or *rist-gult* type of tenure might have apparently existed, sometime in the past, in the province of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos, as the possession of nobilities from Shewa. This is owing to such form of property rights and/or relations that were applied all the way through the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century, in the area. In this case, Francisco Alvarez whom we have met in the opening paragraph above in his capacity as chaplain of the Portuguese government in the 1520s describes that Queen Elenni who was the legal wife of

¹⁴¹ Emeru Haylä Sellasé, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw* (in Amharic) (lit. *What I have seen and Remembered*) (Addis Ababa, AAUPP, 2002 Eth. Cal.), p. 251; see also Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, pp. 188-189.

¹⁴² *Ibid*; and Esubalew, 'Land Tenure and Taxation in Machakil Warada', p. 17.

King Zärä Yacob (r.1434-1468) was said to have had 'large estates', a typical *rist-gult* tenure existed in Gojjam. Later King Lebnä-Dengel (r.1508-1540) inherited it from his grandmother, Queen Elenni.¹⁴³

In that way, both holders of the property rights collected sizeable amount of *geber* (tribute) through their representatives called *bétudété*¹⁴⁴ possibly *bitäwädäd* entrusted to put the authority of kings and/or queens in the nearby localities under the latter's dominion—every year from the people who apparently had usufructory *rist* land rights on it.¹⁴⁵ Nonetheless, more often than not, it seems apparent that the land on which *rist-gult* right of members of the royal family, by way of nobilities from Shewa, created and imposed could likely be over usufructory *rist* lands of the local peasants, as *ṭisäññas*. This is used to explain the some point of similarities between Gojjam (by way of Ethiopia), and medieval Europe that lies so much in the ‘system of productive relationship’ for peace at all times.

In any case, in the course of the twentieth century *ṭisäñnoch* living on *rist-gult* lands often paid a third of what they produced. However, this was changed in the post–1941 period during which they were required to pay only a stipulated amount of cash that was directly fixed by Emperor Haile Sellassie, when he visited Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in 1944. It was a third of a tax—*siso-abäl* (a third allowance)—to be collected from the land as allowance to the *rist-gult* owner. Usually there was no much contact between *rist-gult* owners, and the *ṭisäñnoch* living and working on the land. The former received the tribute and tax from the

¹⁴³ Alvarez, *The Prester John of the Indies* (Vol. I), pp. 425-426.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Dästa Täklä-Wäld, *Addés Yä-Amareñña Mäzgäbä-Qalat* (in Amharic) (lit. *A New Amharic Dictionary*) (Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal.), p. 209.

latter through their local representatives called *wäkkil/täṭäri* (pl. *wäkkiloch/täṭäriwoch*) that resembles the above-mentioned *bitäwädäd*. The *wäkkél/täṭäri* who had the status of *mekettel-wäräda* governors (*meslänés*) were directly appointed or delegated by the *rist-gult* owners to collect the land revenue. They received their salary from the land revenue that they collected. So much so that, the *wäkkiloch/täṭäriwoch* served as intermediaries between the *rist-gult* holders and *ṭisäññoch* living on the *rist-gult* lands.¹⁴⁶

This system of tributary relation between the holders of *rist-gult* and *ṭisäññoch* lasted in its vitality throughout a good part of the period under study. Nonetheless, by the Land Tax Amendment Proclamation of 1966 the government no longer recognized the tenure in *rist-gult*. The proclamation required holders of *rist-gult* to pay land taxes to the government. The decree confirmed the right of *rist-gult* holders who had no *ṭisäññoch* on the land to have land use rights, but they were obliged to pay taxes just as peasant-*ṭisäññoch* do.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, as Crummey noted, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in line with its drive to centralize the collection of land tax revenue, the government terminated social intermediaries between the *ṭisäññoch* and holder of *rist-gult* or their representatives known as *wäkkiloch*.¹⁴⁸ These and similar other measures taken by the government represented a direct hit against tradition and brought a significant break in the practice of surplus appropriation involved in the institution of *gult/rist-gult*.

¹⁴⁶ WMA Archives, Folder 2116, File 2075, Letter 2936/55 and 565/ 22/55, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*], 23 December 1962 (13/4/55 Eth. Cal), 22 April 1963 (14/8/55 Eth. Cal), Letter 100/1024/3, 24 June 1964 (17/10/56 Eth. Cal); IES Archives, Folder 7-8, File A7/003, N°. 14, Letter 12497, Quarterly Report on the Governorate General of Gojjam, 7 July 1966 (30/8/58 Eth. Cal); Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Zekrä Nägär*, p. 124; Esubalew, 'Land Tenure and Taxation in Machakil Warada', p. 17; and An interview with Abba Ejjeu Seménäh Wäraqnäh.

¹⁴⁷ *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation N° 230 of March 1966; and Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Only then, *gult* started to lose its social and economic importance in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, while the government was not able to eliminate completely all vestiges of the old tenure system in the area. Moreover, a land tenure practice that closely resembles above-mentioned administrative *gult* that lingered until the middle of the imperial period is *yä-zämächa-märét*. This form of tenure also called *ya-zämach-märét*, which like *rist-gult*, was heritable. As the term indicates, *yä-zämächa-märét* or *ya-zämach-märét* was military land to represent various forms of tenures 'as a collective category'.¹⁴⁹

The tenure, *ya-zämach-märét*—granted chiefly to peasant soldiers—was recognized by a variety of terms in the province of Gojjam. It was deeply embedded in the tenure traditions of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Tradition attributes its introduction merely to sometime in the past, when kings and powerful 'lords' of Ethiopia commenced and stipulated the system of land tenure to Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), by which they gave land to their soldiers based on this form of tenure. Primarily and most importantly, this kind of land was given to individuals who were willing to join any battle or *zämächa* (campaign) to fight.¹⁵⁰ Because of this requirement in the *zämächa/zämach* tenure system, an informant testifies that [ግግግግ ለጦር ፥ እግሩን ለጠጠር ፥ ለሰጠ ይሰጣል] '*zämächa-märét* was granted for a soldier who was at the forefront of war, in taking part in ensuing battles'.¹⁵¹ For prominent informants I talked to this condition is a lived experience.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Shiferaw Bekele, 'The Evolution of Land Tenure in the Imperial Era', Shiferaw Bekele (ed.), *An Economic History of Modern Ethiopia, 1941–1974* (Dakar, Codesria, 1995), pp. 79-80.

¹⁵⁰ Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 61.

¹⁵¹ *An interview with Ato Menwuyélat Alalu Chäckol.*

¹⁵² *Ibid*; and *Interviews with Abba Ejjegü Seménäh Wäraqnäh, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, and Märigétta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.*

In that case, there are two forms of military lands or *ya-zämächa* (campaign) lands as *wällo-zämach* and *Tegri-zämach* that were granted to peasant *militia* who continually rendered military services, into the northern provinces of Wello and Tegray, respectively, generally earlier than the Italian Occupation (1935-1941). Primarily, *wällo-zämach* land was granted by *Ras* Haylu II to his hundreds of peasant-soldiers for their travel companion to Wello Province in March 1920/1 (*Teqemt* 1913 Eth. Cal.), after Haylu's reputable mobilization order: [ገባ ሠጢ. ዊ. ት. ገባ. ት. ገባ. ት.] 'Beat the Drum and get mobilized'.¹⁵³ This is also a well-remembered event for informants from Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).¹⁵⁴

Likewise, peasant-soldiers have received *Tegri-zämach-märét* grant by kings and powerful 'lords' of Ethiopia for their extended military services to the latter, in Tegray province and its vicinity. For instance, peasant-soldiers who were involved in the government's 'campaign of retribution' against the Rayya-Azäbo peoples' raid of the lowland Afar in the northeastern part of the country in the late 1920s were granted *Tegri-zämach-märét*—as a well-remembered event in the area. This explains the common reference to *Tegri-zämach-märét* in twentieth century land documents from Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*.¹⁵⁵ Like *Tegri-zämach*, *wällo-zämach-märét* is also mentioned in twentieth century land documents of Däbrä Marqos

¹⁵³ History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 128 recto; see also Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 61; and Käbbädä Täsämma, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha* (in Amharic) (lit. *A Historical Memoir*) (Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal.), pp. 52-53: here particularly both the first and last records agree that *Ras* Haylu once made a military campaign to Wello—in companion with the government army under the Crown Prince *Ras* Täfäri Mäkönnén (the later Emperor Haile Sellassie I)—in order to capture *Lej* Eyasu (r. 1913-16), the successor of Emperor Minilek II, after the deposition of the latter by the former.

¹⁵⁴ Interviews with Ato Menwuyélat Alalu Chäckol, *Märiyéta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, *Emahoy* Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, and *Abba* Ejjeju Seménäh Wäraqnäh.

¹⁵⁵ WMA Archives, Folder A26, File A3/583-1, No Letter N°, White Wearing and National Armies in the Governorate General of Gojjam, 3 August 1969 (27/11/61 Eth. Cal).

(Gojjam).¹⁵⁶ Soldiers who were granted *ya-zāmach-mārét* were exempted from the payment of tribute/tax and from providing corvée services. However, they had other forms of obligations to the government which they had to meet to keep their holding. Their principal obligation was fighting. In time of peace, they also served as guards, as messengers, as collectors of taxes and fines. Moreover, later in the mid twentieth century they were required to pay *asrat*, and Education and Health Taxes.¹⁵⁷

Yä-zāmach land could be transferred to descendants, who had the obligation to fulfill their duties and enjoyed the privileges of their fathers. If they failed to do so, they would be obliged to pay fixed tribute, but not evicted from the land. In 1943/44 the descendants of soldiers instituted at various times in the history of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), as *zāmach* (pl *zāmach*) which meant for ‘campaigners’ and were integrated into the newly organized *militia* called *Näč-Läbasha Ṭor-Särawit* (White-Wearing Army or Paramilitary Force). In 1959 the *Näč-Läbasha* developed into *Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit* (Territorial Army).¹⁵⁸ Subsequently, unlike other sections of the army, the heirs of soldiers were rewarded by the special order of Emperor Haile Sellassie by transferring their age-old military land into *rist* for their long history of military service. Moreover, like other members of the *Näč-Läbasha* or *Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit*, the government decided to provide the soldiers with a monthly salary of 15 *Birr*—the Ethiopian legal currency—for their services. However, the *zāmach* started to pay land tax at the rate of 32 *Birr* per unit of *zāmach* land as a formal freehold.¹⁵⁹ Hence, this and

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid; Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1996), pp. 52-53.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid; WMA Archives, Folder 2116, File 2075, Letter 26/3338, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*], 24 April 1964 (16/8/56 Eth. Cal), Letter S/ 1018/31, 18 July 1965 (11/10/57 Eth. Cal), and Letter

other measures had the effect of transforming the old tenure systems of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).

The third widespread system of tenure, *sämon-märét* was granted for the support of individuals who served churches and monasteries directly or through their representatives in various capacities. *Sämon-märét* comprised of *yä-dequna* ('land of the deacon'), *yä-mäsqäl* (land of the cross) or *yä-qés-märét* or *yä-qesena* ('land of the priest'), *yä-debtrena* (land of the ecclesiastical elite), ecclesiastical *rim* etc *märéts*—was heritable and had the character of *rist* land.¹⁶⁰ As discussed briefly in the opening paragraphs above by means of *yä-mäsqäl* (lit. 'land of the cross') or *yä-qés-märét* or *yä-qesena* ('land of the priest') with its character of *rist*, *sämon-märét* was one of the earliest form of tenures in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Apart from such *rist* type of lands, we have *gult* land rights given to the support of churches and individuals. One such type of land given for the church was identified as *däber-gult*. *Däber-gult-märét* was often found under the possession of such great churches (*däbers*) as Däbrä Gänät Elyas and Delma Amanu'el, in Machakel, and Däbrä Marqos at the administrative capital, Däbrä Marqos itself, over different *rist* lands to maximize their income. From these *gult* lands, large amount of tribute, in kind and/or in cash, were collected, accordingly. The money paid to these *däbers* was called *yä-däbtära-wärq* (ecclesiastic gold). Another such type of *gult* land given for church administrator called *gäbbäz* that is often stated in early

23738/5, 10 August 1965 (4/12/57 Eth. Cal); and Interviews with Ato Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol, *Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa*, and *Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé*.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*; Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Zekrä Nägär*, p. 120.

twentieth century church record from Däbrä Marqos church¹⁶¹ was *yä-gebzena-märét*. *Yä-gebzena-märét* was neither saleable nor transferable to a second party, including to heirs.¹⁶²

However, holders of other kinds of *sämon* lands, as *rist* holders could transfer their lands to heirs on conditions that the landholders observed their obligation meticulously. If the heirs could not perform the required services by themselves they could conduct it through agents called *wäkkiloch*. In return, the agents would be paid some amount of grain or money from the landholder. Besides serving the church in various capacities, holders of *sämon* land were required to pay *asrat*, Education and Health Taxes to the government. Usually, it was the government authorities who collected these taxes from holders of *sämon-märét* and submitted them to the church. Later in the mid 1960s the Health Tax that the government collected through its local agents from *sämon* land holders was transferred directly to the government coffers.¹⁶³ As will be discussed soon, while it was also recognized by way of secular tenure as *madäriya*, the *sämon-märét* designated by way of *rim* tenure is too well known to warrant a few discussions here.¹⁶⁴ Suffices to write here that Crummey—whom we have met earlier in his remarkable work as one of a few specialist in the field of Ethiopian land studies—and his student Habtamu Mengistie agree that a conspicuous origin and development of the practices of *rim* land grant order in the Ethiopian context apparently traced back to the Gondärine period (1632-1769). This is owing to kings and powerful 'lords'

¹⁶¹ Kebrä Mäzgäb, MS. Däbrä Marqos, folio 29 recto and 38 verso.

¹⁶² Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 24; Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Zekrä Nägär*, p. 120; Esubalew, 'Land Tenure and Taxation in Machakil Warada', p. 22; and *An interview with Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu*.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*; WMA Archives, Folder 2116, File 2075, Letter 23738/5, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam *Täqlay-Gezat*], 10 August 1965 (4/12/57 Eth. Cal); Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Zekrä Nägär*, p. 120; *Interviews with Ato Šägayé Muluyé Gojjam, Wäyzäro Bezunäsh Tassäw Aläm, Ato Menwuyélat Alalu Chäckol, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu*.

¹⁶⁴ Kebrä Mäzgäb, MS. Däbrä Marqos, folio 54 verso.

of the kingdom granted that property rights often to members of the clergy over the people who worked and resided on the land in that particular period.¹⁶⁵

Nonetheless, Habtamu claimed and deduced that it became a wide spread phenomenon ever since the year 1766 in the province of Gojjam and the year 1900 marks its suitable end, while extensive grants of ecclesiastical *rim* land was endowed in the lifetime of *negus* Täklä-Häymanot.¹⁶⁶ He also added that in this system of tenure, individual clergies were often received the land that appears to be permanently and in perpetuity by virtue of long history of services they rendered for their respective church institutions. Here, unlike other church *rist* owners, holders of *rim* could transfer and inherit the land, or rent it, or even sell it and, in that way, the buyers could observe the obligations or services to the church attached to the land meticulously. In that case, local nobilities including *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot himself and his wife, *Wäyzäro* Laqäch, as well as their two sons, *Däjjazmach* Bäläw and *Ras* Bäzabeh, held several villages as ecclesiastical *rim* land in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the course of the last quarter of the nineteenth century and after. This explains the common reference to ecclesiastical *rim* land in twentieth century land documents from Däbrä Marqos.¹⁶⁷ However, unlike the ecclesiastical elites who rendered services to the church in person, the local

¹⁶⁵ Donald Crummey, 'The Term *rim* in Ethiopian Land Documents of the 18th and 19th Centuries' Alessandro Bausi *et al* (eds.) *Materiale Antropologico E Storico Sul "Rim" in Etiopia Ed Eritrea Anthropological and Historical Documents on "rim" in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Torino: Editrice L'Harmattan Italia, 2001), pp. 68-69; Habtamu Mengistie Tegegne, 'Recordmaking, Recordkeeping and Landholding', p. 439; and *idem*, 'Land Tenure and Agrarian Social Structure in Ethiopia, 1636-1900' (PhD Thesis in History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2011), pp. 52, 139, 145.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Kebrä Mäzgäb, MS. Däbrä Marqos; and Gäbrä Hemam, MS Abema-Maryam: here, both documents would be good representative examples to the prescribed phraseology of *rim*.

nobilities were contingent upon their payment of the salary for church's personnel but not offered services to the institution directly.¹⁶⁸

In actual practice, the church records from Däbrä Marqos testify that ecclesiastical *rim* could be exchanged and transferred to others, as a gift. It was in this way that, *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot's *rim* holdings the village of Wänqa, in Gozamen openly exchanged with a certain *Abba* Ejjegü for another same variety of the latter's holdings the village of Abbazaži Géyorgés, in Sinan sanctioned by the *negus* himself.¹⁶⁹ It is also observed that a certain *Fitawrari* Tädla inherited *rim* land found in Yäwush, a village in what is now Gozamen from a certain individual named Ruh Maru who lived in Motta. In addition, a certain *Mämheru* (mentor) Mahbäru transferred his half of a certain land tenure of the village of Halqäto, in Gozamen, into *rim* and gave to a certain *Mämheru* (mentor) Asägahaññ, as a gift.¹⁷⁰ This apparently intensified the development of ecclesiastical forms *rim* holdings in the area. This is owing to such form of property rights and/or relations that were applied all the way through the last quarter of the nineteenth century and after in the area.

In fact, *rim* type of *sämon* tenure in Gojjam found only in eleven oldest and great churches (*däbers*) of the locality Bichena, Motta and Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjawoch* until the end of the post liberation period.¹⁷¹ Especially, the churches in Däbrä Marqos that had *rim* type of tenure were Däbrä Gänät Elyas and Dälma Amanu'el both in Machakel Gemja-Bét

¹⁶⁸ Habtamu Mengistie, *Lord, Zéga and Peasant: A Study of Property and Agrarian Relations in Rural Eastern Gojjam* (Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies, 2004), pp. 93-94.

¹⁶⁹ Kebrä Mäzgäb, MS. Däbrä Marqos, folio 10 verso and 30 verso, 37 recto, 40 verso and 47 recto.

¹⁷⁰ Giyorgis Wäldä Hamid Marqos, MS. Däbrä Marqos, folio 185 recto.

¹⁷¹ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp.5-6; and Habtamu, 'Land Tenure and Agrarian Social Structure in Ethiopia', p. 139.

Maryam—in Gozamen—and Däbrä Marqos.¹⁷² Although the range of its endowments was subject to restriction in its institutional scope for some unknown reasons, testimonies, such as *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* from the IES Library of the Addis Ababa University regarding the date of foundation of the churches in the area closely corresponds to the general grant order of *sämon* tenure to church institutions. For instance, the foundation of the church of Däbrä Gänät Elyas in Machakel, in 1468 in the lifetime of Emperor Zärä Yacob, followed by extensive *sämon* land grant order of the latter to the former from within.¹⁷³ This condition the very existence of church lands by way of *sämon* tenure from early on suggests that *rim* type of church holding has been established in the area even prior to the Gondärine period. In actual practice, however, the date of a conspicuous development of *rim* type of church/*sämon* tenure—granted by kings and powerful 'lords' of northern Ethiopia such as Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) closely corresponds to the efflorescence of the Gondärine period—especially in the middle of the seventeenth century and the subsequent periods—as testimony collected from historical researches described above.

Apart from kings and powerful 'lords', the church record from Däbrä Marqos testifies that subsequent to the development of *sämon* forms of *rim* land, individual local nobilities were holders of that property rights. It was also often granted to the local church institutions in the form of several villages as the most common phenomena during and after the 'lordship' of *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot in the area. It was in this way that, a certain noble named *Aläqa* Gäbrä-Maryam liberally endowed his *rim* possessions, the village of Mäsqäl Abäyya

¹⁷²Ibid; and *An interview with Märiqéta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu.

¹⁷³ Abebaw Ayalew, 'Debre Genet Elyas' Siegbert Uhlig, Baye Yemam *et al* (eds.) *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* Vol. 2 *D-Ha* (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Velg, 2005), p. 21.

we have trusted records from the churches of Däbrä Marqos dating from the medieval times well into the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Perhaps one of the earliest known land grants subsequent to Amdä-Šeyon's land charter, described in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, relates to the land charter of Emperor Dawit I (r.1380-1412) to the church of Däbrä Zäyet Mahfud Maryam, in Sinan, formerly Gozamen. The charter simply mentions the emperor's *gult* land grant, giving many villages in the area to the church but without specification on its purpose. However, since it indicates the terms of the grant as *gult*, the church would be generously endowed tribute right from the people who worked and resided on the land, perhaps *balä-rist*s ('*rist*-holders'). The charter also makes it clear that such *gult* right has been legally renounced by the regional 'lord' *Ras* Haylu I, virtually after four-hundred years of the church's right over land.¹⁷⁶ In any case, a clear illustration on the occasions of the violation of the local church's extensive *gult* rights by the 'lord' Haylu I himself is originally reproduced and displayed below.

¹⁷⁶ Gäbrä Hemam (The Passion) [lit. 'The Sufferings of Christ between the nights of the Last Supper and his death'), MS Däbrä Zäyet Mahfud Maryam Church, folio 10 verso 11 recto.

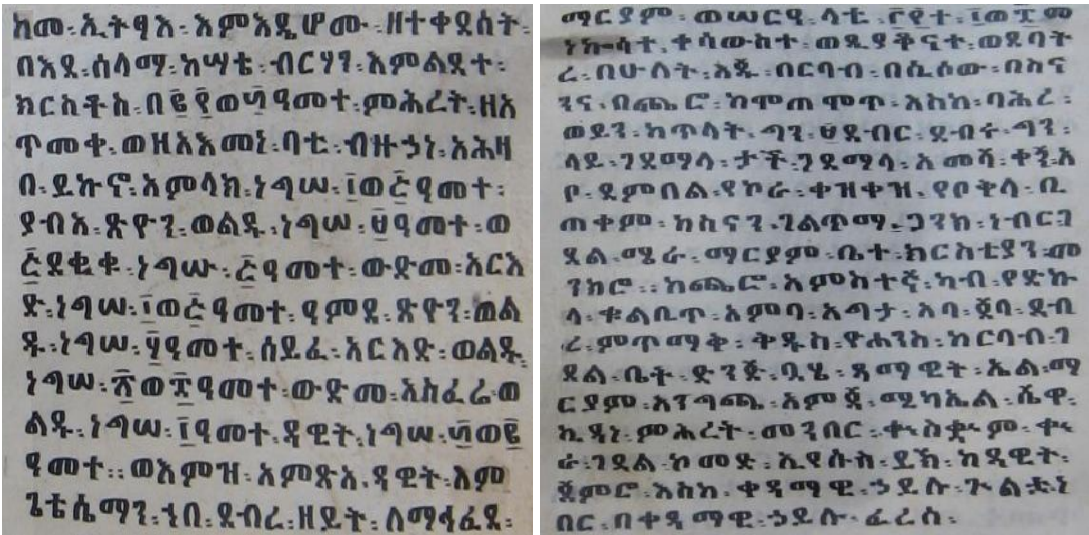


Illustration 3. A folio from the land charter of Däbrä Zäyet Mahfud Maryam. Note the first from the last three expressive phraseologies (on the left side), mentioning the grantee Emperor Dawit I (r.1380-1412), and the last three expressive phraseologies (on the right side) indicating the violation of the church's extensive gult rights by the regional 'lord' Ras Haylu I in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Most of all, note the entire folio dictating feudal forms of 'productive relationship' analogous to medieval Europe.

Here, more often than not, it seems apparent that for several reasons the violation of property rights—on which *gult* right was created and imposed—could likely be the common historical experience in Däbrä Marqos or in the Gojjam province at large. In spite of that, the size of land under the holdings of churches appears to have tremendously increased during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the course of the first half of twentieth century. Primarily and most importantly, the charter from Däbrä Marqos church at the town of Däbrä Marqos mentions the great Churches of Däbrä Marqos, Abema-Maryam, and Gemja-Bét-Maryam and Märṭo-Lä-Maryam, as recipients of many lands in the area. The most important benefactors of these churches were Emperor Yohannis IV (r.1872-1889), *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot of Gojjam (r.1881-1901) and his son and successor *Ras* Haylu II (1901 to 1932). Yohannis and Täklä-Häymanot's most important *gult* grants were to the churches of Däbrä Marqos and Abema-Maryam at the town of Däbrä Marqos, and Gemja-Bét-Maryam in

Gozamen—all in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*. The grant covers all the vast plain lands of Yäza, Débago, and Dalégaw, all in Gozamen, respectively. The church of Märṭo-Lä-Maryam in the nearby Motta *Awrajja* was also recipient of all lands beyond the village of Amenat, in the same *awrajja*, by the grant order of *Ras* Haylu II.¹⁷⁷ Since collecting tribute right was premeditated to those churches over their respective possessions, it was *gult* type of tenure, while it is not mentioned in the register, accordingly.

Alongside the kings and/or powerful 'lords', it is also apparent that many land grant orders were made by private individuals often *balabbatoch* (traditional rulers and/or landholders in a ancestral descent) to Däbrä Marqos church as the above-mentioned register deposited in its treasury clearly mentions two instances, as secular and ecclesiastical elites' grant to the former. As a secular elite grant order, a certain notable named *Gerazmach* Därsäh liberally endowed two third of tribute right namely *sendé-geber* (wheat banquet/tribute) from the people living and working on his holdings in Čänčärema village, in Aneded, to the church particularly to its *gäbbäz*. Here, although the terms of the grant order not stated in the document, it was perhaps *gult* land since tribute collection right is premeditated attached to the tenure, accordingly.¹⁷⁸ As ecclesiastical elite, a certain clergy named *Abba* Täklä-Häymanot liberally endowed his *rist* holdings to Däbrä Marqos church, while it required, first and foremost, the grantor to convert that property into *sämon* land. That is, suffice to the realization of the clergy's endowment, it was eminently warranted by the formal approval of *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot and the recipient-church itself, dated in 1894/5 (1887 Eth. Cal),¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Kebrä Mäzgäb, MS. Däbrä Marqos, folio 9 recto and 54 verso.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, folio 38 verso.

¹⁷⁹ Tarikä Nägäst (History of Kings), MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 3 recto.

which is markedly different from the above-mentioned individual's endowment to the same church.

However, the whole evidence explained the many point of similarities between [Central] Gojjam (Ethiopia), in this way, pre-colonial African societies and feudal Europe that lies so much in the 'system of productive relationship' and in the sphere of 'exchange of land' for peace at all times. Here, although we are lacking sources, it seems apparent that in customary law the transfer of individual's land into other variety of tenure apparently demanded some sort of legal process of approval, as sanctioned by both the immediate kings, 'lords' and/or 'chiefs' and the recipient, at least in the context of the church tenure as applied in the Däbrä Marqos church in the area. In that way, much of land donations to churches and monasteries were made by kings in their traditional right to distribute land for the formers support. The ideological background for this was ultimately derived from what Taddesse once rehearses, as pointed out earlier the constitutional theory that 'all land within his dominions belonged to the king'. In any case, a folio of the charter from the Däbrä Marqos church served as a good illustration of the actual practice of individual's donation of his *rist* holdings to the church and thereby sanctioned by the king himself is originally reproduced and displayed below.



Illustration 4. Part of a folio from the *Däbrä Marqos Charter (Tarikä Nägäst)*, indicating a certain local notable's rüst and other property endowments, entitled to reverence and respect to the church. It was so ordered in writing issued by the name of the Emperor Minilek II (r.1889-1913) under sealed (on the left side), entrusted to Negus Täklä-Häymanot, to whom it was aimed at executing an act specified therein, as sanctioned by Täklä-Häymanot himself (on the right side) that is similar to writ of feudal Europe.

The construction of new churches and/or the granting of land endowments for their support continued after 1941. A report prepared in 1965 (1957 Eth. Cal.) by the Gojjam *Täqalay-Gezat* to the MoI shows that in the post liberation period more than 320 *gult* lands were liberally endowed to various churches and thereby converted to *sämon-märét* in *Däbrä Marqos Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Täqalay-Gezat*.¹⁸⁰ It seems apparent that many grants by private individuals to various churches as a reputation for Christian moral foundation and practices—that are not included in the report, since it was an established custom of the society by the elite segments of that society, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. In any case, the historian Crummey convincingly writes that the obedience of the producers (subject farmer or *ṭisäñña*), and frequently, their subsequent allegiance, was maintained by the general Ethiopian cultural appeals and by appeals to spiritual concepts.

¹⁸⁰ WMA Archives, Folder 2116, File 2075, Letter 26/3338, S/ 1018/31 and 23738/5, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam *Täqalay-Gezat*], 24 April 1964 (16/8/56 Eth. Cal), 18 June 1965 (11/10/57 Eth. Cal), 10 August 1965 (4/12/57 Eth. Cal), respectively.

Christianity gave Ethiopian rulers access to a tradition of social thought, running back to the teachings of St. Paul, which enjoyed submissive behavior to the powers that be.¹⁸¹ Above and beyond, there were private grants of land by the common people to churches similar to one of the intents of social elites, i.e., just for Christian piety, all the way through the imperial period, as presented in a few words below.

Despite the restriction by the institution like the *čeqa-shum*, ordinary individuals converted their *rist* land into *sämon* land for the simple reason that the obligations and duties of church tenures were lighter than those of secular tenures were. For instance, with the exception of providing corvée services and tribute payment or obligation in grain usually *sendé-geber* (wheat tribute), [peasant-] *ṭisäññoch* living under ecclesiastic lords were exempted from cultivating government lands and paying land tax. Despite the discouragement of local government institutions like the *čeqa-shum* village headman who levied land tax on yearly basis and the *mesläné* or *wäräda* (sub-district) ruler, also refers to the sub-district itself all these encouraged individuals to convert their *rist* possessions into *sämon* land in the area.¹⁸² This condition creates two forms of peasant-*ṭisäññas*, as 'social classes', i.e., peasant-*ṭisäññoch* attached with dues and services to the government and those linked to the church, as *sämon ṭisäññoch*. Although we are lacking sources, social elites seem to be conventionally encouraged to convert their *rist* possessions into *sämon* land, in the same historical trajectory that the above-mentioned nobles and the peasant-*ṭisäññoch* experienced, often for their own economic advantage.

¹⁸¹ Crummey, *Land and Society*. p. 21.

¹⁸² IES Archives, Folder 11-13, File A16/001-043, No Letter N°, Tax Record, 20 May 1970 (12/8/62 Eth. Cal), Letter N° 54/13834, 19 March 1973 (10/7/1965 Eth. Cal); Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 24; Interviews with Ato Dämesé Täbbäjä Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Ato Hassan Adego Gäbré, Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Ato Mälläsä Kassa Gärämaw, and Ato Šägayé Muluyé Gojjam.

Although it treated the church and the people attached to its land differently and with sensitivity for so long, the post-war government policy eventually targeted the church possessions as well. For instance, just like those under secular lords, *sämon țisäññoch* were required to pay the stipulated Education and Health Taxes.¹⁸³ With this, the obligation of the *țisäññoch* under the domain of the church and those under secular lords turned out to be virtually equal. This in turn encouraged the development of a homogeneous tenure system at the regional level actively promoted by the central government. Besides homogenizing the tenure system, the postwar government's land policies brought in some lexical changes to describe different categories of land, without necessarily bringing any change in the content of the tenures. Although most of its defining elements are presented at various points in this and the previous chapter, it remains to add that, contrary to other categories of land, such as *rist*, *rist-gult*, *zämach* and *sämon*, *gult-märét* that were branded as *bétä-mängest gult-märét* (*gult* house of government) could not be transferred to one's heir. Hence, *gult* land was a temporary land grant given by the government to its functionaries as *madäriya* in return for their services. On the occasion of the death of the landholder and/or failure to perform his/her obligations, the government exercised its reversionary right and gave it to any person who could perform the obligations attached to the land.¹⁸⁴

The rights and obligations of beneficiaries of *gult* land could vary corresponding to the different types of land involved in this form of tenure or contingent upon providing corvée services or/and obligation to the government. In view of that, the two most important types of

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid; IES Archives, Folder 11-13, File A16/001-043, No Letter N^o, *Rist* Land Litigation, 20 April 1970 (12/8/62 Eth. Cal), Letter 54/13834, 19 March 1973 (10/7/1965 Eth. Cal); Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, pp. 15, 17; Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Zekrä Nägär*, pp. 123-124; and Esubalew, 'Land Tenure and Taxation in Machakil Warada', pp. 11, 17-18.

gult-märét are lands subject to tribute/tax and providing corvée services and exempted from such payment and services. The first brand of *gult-märét* subject to tribute/tax was created by converting other forms of tenure, most often *rist* lands of peasants who defaulted their tribute and/or tax obligation/s and committed political crimes, into the possession of the government. This is without any respect to the hereditary right of the peasants on their *rist* land as undertaken by the government or the local 'lord'/governor who variously known as *gult-gäze* (*gult* governor). This means that peasants would not have any property claim over their former *rist* land once it was converted into government *gult* land on a permanent basis and granted or rented to others. Hence, the status of the *rist*-holders was dramatically transformed from independent peasant landowners or peasant-*ṭisäññoch* to landless-*ṭisäññas*, in this way, in many parts of Gojjam, in the course of twentieth century, actually prior to the postwar period.¹⁸⁵

For example, as mentioned earlier, peasants of Yäfäsäs in Machakel were dispossessed from their *rist* land by Ras Haylu II (as *gult-gäze* or *gult* governor) on account of the former's failure to met tribute obligation, for which the land was designated as *gebrä-ṭäl* or *geber-färash* and rented it to Muslims, as once converted to [*bétä-mängest*] *gult-märét* in the area. Hence, the local Muslims received considerable amount of *gult-märét*, which was contingent upon providing tribute/tax to the governor, as *ṭisäññas*. In that way, an individual Muslim who resided and worked on that *gult* land was required to pay 100 *Birr*, as annual *qurṭ-geber* (fixed tax), and provide labor services to the governor, Haylu II as a grantee. In that case, although we are lacking sources, it seems apparent that the peasants who forfeited their *rist*

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

land were left to their fate, however. The dispossessed peasants could either leave their land and go elsewhere or work under other forms of tenure like the government land called *hudad* (cultivation of the *gult* governor's own land) as landless-*ṭisännnas*.¹⁸⁶ This apparently intensified the development of tenancy and tenancy relations in the area.

As mentioned above, *gult* subject to tribute/tax as *geber-färash* was created by an act of the government/governor from the lands of peasants without any respect to the hereditary right on their *rist*. However, the government used certain excuses to justify the dispossession of peasants from their land. Most commonly, tribute/tax default and crime committed by peasants were used by the governor/government, as an excuse to dispossess the former.¹⁸⁷ With respect to the crime excuses, it seems apparent that kings and powerful 'lords' of medieval Ethiopia contemplated it to dispossess peasants from their *rist* holdings. To mention but one instance, a certain hagiography evidently revealed that Emperor Zärä Yacob (r.1434-1468) issued a royal edict on the occasions of hosting *Däqéqä-Estéfanos* (Disciples of Stephen)—in nonobservance of the legal Sabbath within the Ethiopian church tradition in the fifteenth century—would lead a person to commit crime; thereby dispossessed from his/her *rist* land.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ 'Gädlä Abäw Wä-Ahāwu' (Lit. means 'Hagiography of Abäw Wä-Ahāwu') *Däqéqä-Estéfanos* "Bäheg Amlak" (in Amharic) (*Disciples of Stephen "Rules Given by God"*) (transl. from Ge'ez by Gétachäw Haylé) (Addis Ababa, AAUPP, 2002 Eth. Cal.), pp. 167, 175; in dealing with a brief mentioning of the career of *Däqéqä-Estéfanos* (*Disciples of Stephen*) within the Ethiopian church tradition see Taddesse, *Church and State*, p. 226: that the founder is known by the name Istéfanos and his followers as Stephanite during the middle of the fifteenth century A.D.

So much so that, Zärä Yacob's edict sought every peasants in [Central] Gojjam to stand united against the *Däqéqä-Estéfanos* (Disciples of Stephen), if not, it would be a political crime committed and subsequently evicted them from their *rist* holdings under his dominions. Therefore, as a 'champion' of the old Ethiopian Church tradition, the Emperor urged the peasants to purge the *Däqéqä-Estéfanos* (Disciples of Stephen) in the area. That all land under his dominions belonged to the emperor/the king in medieval Ethiopia and after could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, the hagiography has no mention the actual practice of the dispossession of peasants from their *rist*, as *gebrä-ṭäl-märét* and converted it to *gult*, by way of the estate/government tenure, on a permanent basis and given to anyone who could carry out the obligations attached to that property, accordingly.¹⁸⁹

The second brand of *gult-märét* exempted from the payment of tribute/tax—no more than government land was comprised by several types of tenures that were granted by way of salary mostly for individuals who had a long record of public services, persons of noble birth, as well as who have been performing administrative and military services to the government. The lands of members of the *Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit* or the *Näč-Läbash Ṭor-Särawét*, *yäṭur* or *mätäbéya*, *yä-qäläb-tämälash*, secular *rim*, *hudad* incorporating *eqa-bét/ma'ed-bét* or *ganä-gäb* and *mägäzzo* were all the tax-exempted *gult-märét* varieties in the past, actually in the course of the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era.¹⁹⁰ During

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ IES Archives, Folder 11-13, File A16/001-043, No Letter N°, Tax Record, 20 April 1970 (12/8/62 Eth. Cal), Letter N°, 54/13834, 19 March 1973 (10/7/1965 Eth. Cal), Folder 18, File A16/001-010, Letter 40, [Rural] Farming System in the Governorate General of Gojjam, 4 May 1974 (26/8/66 Eth. Cal); WMA Archives, Folder A26, File A3/583-1, No Letter N°, White Wearing and National Armies in the Governorate General of Gojjam, 3 August 1969 (27/11/61 Eth. Cal); Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, pp. 15, 16-17, 22; Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Zekrä Nägär*, pp. 123-124; Daniel Dejene [Checkol], 'Land Tenure Reform and its Impact on Tenancy in Wadla-Dalanta Awrajja (Wello) [Ethiopia]: 1941-1974' (MA Dissertation in History, Addis Ababa University,

the imperial era, the largest amount of tax-exempted *gult-märét* in Däbrä Marqos was held by the *militia* called the *zämach* that was legally recognized in 1943/4 (1936 Eth. Cal.) as *Yä-Näč Läbash Ṭor-Särawit* (White-Wearing Army or Paramilitary Force). As pointed out earlier, the *Näč Läbash* soldiers were transformed into *Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit* in 1959, but the tenure *yä-näč-läbash-märét* continued without any change in its content and designation.

In view of that, members of the *Näč Läbash Ṭor-Särawit* or *Behérawi Ṭor-Särawét*—of whom the former *zämach* soldiers totally integrated into this newly organized peasant *militia*—received this type of *gult-märét* in return for their military service together with enforcing government orders like upholding taxes. Members of the *Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit* estimated in thousands did not have any other duties save providing these military services. They were exempted from the obligations of paying land tax except *asrat* and later education and health taxes.¹⁹¹ When the *Madäriya* land of the members of the *Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit* of Gojjam was converted into *rist* in the mid 1960s, they were required to pay the taxes required of *rist*-land owners while still providing military service. Since the *Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit* was required to pay taxes for owning their *Madäriya* land now turned to *rist*, the government found that the income generated from their land could not be sufficient for their support. Then, the government subsidized them once by instituting the monthly salary of 15 *Birr* to make up for the loss they incurred as the result of this tenure rearrangement and the accompanying increase of the army's obligation. The government had reversionary right over the land of the *Näč Läbash* or the *Behérawi Ṭor-Särawit* and could dispossess them for some

2009), pp. 50-52; Esubalew, 'Land Tenure and Taxation in Machakil Warada', pp. 11, 17-18; and Shiferaw Bekele, 'Some Notes on Secular *rim* from the Liberation to the Revolution' Alessandro Bausi *et al* (eds.) *Materiale Antropologico E Storico Sul "Rim" in Etiopia Ed Eritrea Anthropological and Historical Documents on "rim" in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Torino: Editrice L'Harmattan Italia, 2001).

¹⁹¹ Ibid; and Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 52-53, 172.

good reason. However, if they met their obligations meticulously or effectively, they could enjoy important property rights including passing the land to their heirs.¹⁹²

As pointed out above, *yäṭur* or *mäṭäbéya*, *qäläb-tämälash* and secular *rim* lands—exempted from the payment of tribute/tax—were also granted from permanently owned *bétä-mängest gult-märét*. Beneficiaries of *yäṭur-märét* or *mäṭäbéya-märét* were mostly persons of noble birth and individuals who rendered long services for the government but had become retired subsequently. They received such land in the form of pension. *Qäläb-tämälash* was given for individuals in lieu of salary.¹⁹³ In the course of the first half of twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era, secular *rim* land was given to individuals in lieu of salary as *madäriya*.¹⁹⁴ The employment of the concept of *rim* in government *gult* tenure as secular land is clearly imitative of and derived from the already well-established church/*sämon rist* tenure in everyday use to designate persons occupying a particularly ecclesiastical land, discussed earlier. To be precise, the long-standing *sämon rist* tenure designated by way of ecclesiastical *rim märét* is too well-known to acquire a new government *gult* tenure by way of secular *rim märét*, as the imperial state introduced the latter along the government *gult* forms of land tenure, after its former adopted character.

Compared to the long-standing ecclesiastical *rim*, however, the size in secular *rim* that the twentieth century imperial Ethiopian state introduced as a recent tenure development was apparently at the lower level to designate persons occupying a particularly social space in the

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Shiferaw, 'Some Notes on Secular *rim* from the Liberation to the Revolution', pp. 83-92: here Shiferaw is the first to document the occasions of the existence secular *rim* land during the twentieth century prior to the end of the Imperial Era.

context of unequal social and economic relations in the country. More precisely, unlike in ecclesiastical sense, secular *rim märét* might not that much influenced the social makeup of the country, as a relatively recent tenure development all the way through the twentieth century prior to the end of the imperial era. It was in this way that, as Shiferaw described, the government allowed secular form of *rim* land often in the *ṭäqlay-gezatoch* of Wello, Shewa, Sidamo and Harerge—connected to the *estate* of Princess Tänañña-wärq who is the daughter of Emperor Haile Sellassie. Hence, beneficiaries of secular *rim* land rendered social and political services in favor of the government.¹⁹⁵

In a nut shell, with significant changes in its value/content and the rights and obligations it evoke, during the twentieth century prior well into the post liberation period, the term *rim* came also to be used in legal and/or administrative documents to refer to government *gult* land that had been formerly designated as only *sämon rist* tenure. Thus, the range of *rim* holdings just appears to have been tremendously increased, as the most widespread form of land tenure in both the church and government lands in twentieth century Ethiopia prior to the end of the imperial era. However, in its *sämon* tenure forms discussed earlier, holders of secular *rim* land exercised much more restrictive and entitled holders to only subordinate/subsidiary right as *madäriya märét*. Although similar terminologies were used to refer to the different kind of landholding, it does seem, however, that the use of varying terms to denote property indicates the existence of confusing and complex property system and diverse status of land. That twentieth century political developments further complicated the tenure system and contributed to the birth of a complex system of land tenure in Ethiopia

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

at large. Cognizance of this fact, by way of reducing its complex character, the historian Joseph Tubiana proposed and suggested that the *rim* land tenure must be realistically studied only from the perspective of Ethiopian land law, their relation with the state and the rural population in the period under stated.¹⁹⁶

In any case, during the post-liberation period, the size of land given by way of secular *rim*—together with *qäläb-tämälash* conceivably varied corresponding to the salary rate of individual beneficiaries. As in the case of other government lands, the state had reversionary right over secular *rim* and *qäläb-tämälash* lands. Hence, *yä-qäläb-tämälash*, secular *rim*, *hudad* incorporating *eqa-bét/ma'ed-bét* or *ganä-gäb* were all the tax-exempted *gult-märét* varieties of government lands in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) during the twentieth century prior to the end of the imperial era, as indicated earlier. Of these three, *hudad* was the most widespread form of tenure as the government land in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) such as Däräbé, Enässé, Goncha and Fällägä-Berhän (all were in Motta) cultivated by the local *ṭisännöch* under the supervision of the *čeqa-shum* and the *mesläné* on behalf of the government. For a certain prominent informant that I talked to this condition is a lived experience.¹⁹⁷

In the post-1930s, one of the brands of *hudad* called *eqa-bét/ma'ed-bét* or *ganä-gäb* was also the well-known land as government tenure in Gojjam at large. Particularly after the removal of Ras Haylu II from office in 1932, Gojjam was bound to some shrinkage in territorial limits

¹⁹⁶ Joseph Tubiana, 'Nature and function of the Ethiopian rim: a short note' Alessandro Bausi *et al* (eds.) *Materiale Antropologico E Storico Sul "Rim" in Etiopia Ed Eritrea Anthropological and Historical Documents on "rim" in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Torino: Editrice L'Harmattan Italia, 2001), p. 61.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Märiğetta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

as carried out by the central government. In that, the Agäw Meder *Awrajja* remained under the overall of possession of the central government, for which Emeru's memoir (1936/7) clearly assured us that [ያገወጡ ያህን ግዛት በተለይ የመንግሥት ግድቤት ነው።] 'the Emperor transferred Agäw Meder as a special brand of its *ma'ed-bét* [for the provision of the requirements for the imperial kitchen for its banquet on annual basis]'.¹⁹⁸ That Agäw Meder *Awrajja* totally integrated into the government's possession by way of *hudad* land tenure with appointed *mesläné* and *nägadras* (lit. 'merchant chief')—administrator and tax collector, respectively—that is subsequent to the removal of *Ras* Haylu II from office. Besides, the delegated officials collected taxes in cash including the *asrat* from the holders who were often peasant-*ፕሳንኖች* of that district. In short, in the post-1930s the central government changed the Agäw Meder tenure system in its content and designation called *eqa-bét/ma'ed-bét* or *ganä-gäb-märét*,¹⁹⁹ as *hudad* type of government *gult* tenure. In the post-1941, however, *ma'ed-bét* and other forms of *hudad* lands were leased to private individuals.²⁰⁰ Similarly, *mägäzzo-märét* ('leased land') was a land given to farmers on a sharecropping or cash-contract basis and the rent submitted to the nearest government treasury with the *bäjäron*d. If the grantees failed to met their obligation, the government had the right to dispossess them and the land could be given to others who could give the service. Then, the former grantee could be reduced to the status of landless-*ፕሳንኖች*.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, p. 205.

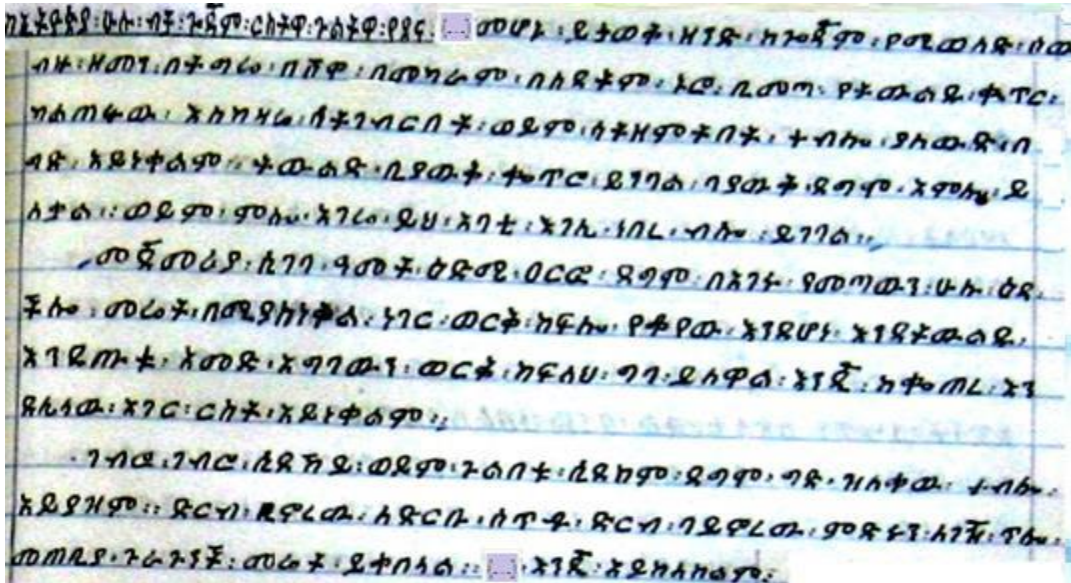
¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, pp. 15, 16-17, 22; and also Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Zekrä Nägär*, pp. 123-124.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*; IES Archives, Folder 11-13, File A16/001-043, Tax Record, No Letter N°, 20 April 1970 (12/8/62 Eth. Cal), Letter 54/13834, 19 March 1973 (10/7/1965 Eth. Cal), Folder 18, File A16/001-010, [Rural] Farming System on the Governorate General of Gojjam, Letter No. 40, 4 May 1974 (26/8/66 Eth. Cal); WMA Archives, Folder No. A26, File No. A3/583-1, No Letter N°, White Wearing and National Army in the Governorate General of Gojjam, 3 August 1969 (27/11/61 Eth. Cal); Daniel, 'Land Tenure Reform and its Impact on Tenancy', pp. 50-52; and Shiferaw, 'Some Notes on Secular *rim* from the Liberation to the Revolution', pp. 86-92.

Land Distribution, Reclaim and Counter Claim

As mentioned in the first chapter, the long-standing land tenure system and its constantly fluid configuration of allocation that it bred and encouraged were persisted during the modern era, particularly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the course of the first half of the twentieth century Gojjam. The local chronicler Täklä-Iyäsus had to tell us that as originally reproduced and displayed below.



Unlike other parts of Ethiopia, [the age-old] rist and gult tenure system of Gojjam was markedly inviolable and inalienable. (...) because an individual who would be in trouble or went into exile in the nearby provinces of Tegray and Shewa, and not forfeited the tribute obligation or military services to land, he/she would not be evicted entirely from. Because property right could be retrieved on condition that the individual claimant was bound for enumerating the local ancestral genealogy or took the customary oath.

Suffices to that in this system of tenure one would have hereditary right to land by virtue of his/her descent from a common [though often putative] ancestor and, through that, allowed as a proprietor. However, the proprietor would be forfeited to met any legal obligations, usually in gold already paid by his/her partner or governor [as 'lord'], retrieved to land right from the former on that occasion.

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If the claimant would face any difficulties, only if the threat of bodily harm or land obligations, the individual would be relocated to a scorched land, in the form of pension, in exchange for the former land, so far assumed to be relatively more fertile. That the governor exercised its reversionary right, as gult holder, to land and gave it to a claimant's a layered person, corresponding person, who could perform the obligations attached to land. That is to say, despite the fact that the claimant could not entirely be dispossessed from the land, he/she would concur to forfeit or to cede his/her claimed land to ones counterpart or gult governor (...). In spite of that, the claimant's property right was inviolable and inalienable as fully applied in the area for so long.²⁰²

The above evidence, together with the discussion earlier, clearly explains how the long-standing tenure system commonly organized under *rist and gult* lands that deeply infiltrated the social structure of Gojjam that encompasses Däbrä Marqos in the past, actually during the twentieth century, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. That the tenure organization determined the course of individual's claim and access to land since property rights to land was subject to revocation or in a continual processes of negotiation for relocation or redistribution. In that case, it seems apparent that land was just taken way from a person who owned extensive tracts of land and given to people who did not have any land at all and/or had very little land, as long as its administration was entrusted to the custom of the society. Thus, vaguely, in social processes, land rights appears to have been essentially categorized or were in legal practice divided. The sum total of these processes clearly suggest that inclusive social safety is much more important than a reputation for immoral conducts and practices of Christian that steadily improved the social conditions of the people in the area for centuries, prior to the end of the imperial era.

²⁰² Täklä-Iyäsus, Yä-Zämän Tarik Maṭāraqāméya, folio 78 verso and 79 recto; it is also mentioned in one of the authoritative sources by Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märet*, p. 11.

In any case, the custom of the land was continually applied in Gojjam whether an individual lived in the village of his/her ancestors or not, property right could not be revoked since land right was being [ገዢ፣ ሰጪ] 'inviolable', and could be retrieved pride of place to its stripped of character. Thus, holder has accepted to concede land to the former possessor. Nonetheless, the claimant would pay costs of tribute on one occasion paid by his partner for the land. If an individual holder was unable to pay land tribute or could not provide military service or incompetent to use it, he/she would relocated to [ጠባብ፣ ገራገራ፣ ገራገራ] a scorched land in the form of pension as a source of livelihood while the former claimed one, so far assumed to be relatively more fertile, was generally to conceded to his/her partner. This is indicative of the fact that inviolable and inalienable rights of an individual who claimed access to land would have precedence over others who held extensive tracts of land, given that in customary law property rights were continually subject to revocation for its dynamic and fluid configuration in the area. In that way, land possession under ancestral groups was continually heritable and retrieved more willingly than to displace from its claimants. Hence, it is apparent that the customary law managed property more effectively—by way of oath—with a sign of giving legal proof to someone who possessed property right analogous to the modern 'title-deed'. This apparently conveyed social justice, albeit the state dispossessed and confiscated individuals' possession for some good reasons, not to mention *gebrä-ṭäl* ('failure to pay any tribute').

Overall, the fact is that the internal organization of the society with respect to fluid and dynamic configuration of the tenure system. In that, in earlier times, an individual claimant whose blood relationship to any group of ancestral group or family genealogy and could be

confirmed by others, or whose ancestry testimony could be proved simply by way of the customary [ገገሳ] 'he swore an oath' to defend the claimed land. It would often be managed or watched by experienced local elders—quite permitted to an equal share of the land. Thus, land distribution and redistribution among members of a family descent was held voluntarily, as long as access to land was subject to revocation or open to negotiation. So much so that, the occasions of individual's claim and access to land by way of negotiation—generally to ceded back to the former possessor rather than displaced him/her entirely from it at any time—call to mind and proves rightly the well-known Amharic social proverb that states [ርስት በሺህ ዓመቱ ለባለቤቱ] 'rist belongs to the proprietor after a thousand year'. Although we are lacking sources, the proverb with the customary dealings gives the general impression that claiming, reclaiming/retrieving and possessing land—based on ancestry proof might have been very common even in earlier times.

That there was no statutory limitation for claiming property rights in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) within the Ethiopian context well into the first half of the twentieth century is hardly acceptable. Nevertheless, distribution of all lands by descent groups was not easily accepted, all the same, with the growing awareness of the peasants. Dealing with this point, Emeru's memoir assured us that the claimant could easily succeeded in winning the claimed land, [ያውርጥ ሰብከት* እስከ ገበየት ቅርብ ጊዜ ድረስ] 'pending for the penetration of the preaching of European Liberal view of economic individuality into the Ethiopian empire all the way through twentieth century'.²⁰³ In that case, lengthy litigations and resorts to courts, in both the

Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*; and Käbbäda Mängäsha, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha* (in Amharic) (lit. *An Historical Memoir*) (Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal.), p. 218: Emeru wrote it in 1936/37

local elders/judges and the newly established modern state court systems, were very common. So much so that, the legal ground of *māhalla* (oath) encumbered with the modern court system. Or else, the modern court system would have primacy over the customary oath—with enumerating legitimate descent group by descent-enumerator—to recognize an individual as member of a family descent and permitted to an equal share of the land, generally prior to the end of the imperial era.²⁰⁴

In appreciation to the high importance that it would come to assume in the period with which this research is also concerned with, it is important here to furnish extended discussions to the post-1941 practices of land grant and/or land distribution and the occasions of lengthy litigations that it bred and encouraged in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). In keeping with and nurturing the old tradition, therefore, land distribution was one of the key marks of the post-war regime. The grants proliferated after 1941 partly because the government wanted to encourage agricultural development, as identified as the largest sector of the country's economy from which most of its revenue was generated. In cognizance of this, the imperial government made a series of land reform measures to promote agricultural productivity and, through that, to increase its revenue.²⁰⁵ That the imperial government issued a series of proclamations concerning land with various objectives, while it benefited only the elite

when he was caught by the enemy during the Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-1941) and kept as a prisoner at Ponza Island (Italy) for the subsequent four years.

²⁰⁴ EGAZHCA Archives, Courtroom Ruling N° 5, File 2/39, 2/42, 2/44, 2/46, 2/49, 2/50/ 2/51, No Letter N°, *Rist* Land Litigation, 1944/45 (1937 Eth. Cal); Folder 245, File 12:44, *Rist* Land Litigation, No Letter N°, 4 September 1948 (29/12/40 Eth. Cal); Courtroom Ruling No. 9, File 61, Letter 227/54, *Rist* Land Litigation, 20 March 1964 (11/7/54 Eth. Cal); and Folder ፩፯/44, File 44, Letter 44, *Rist* Land Litigation, 20 May 1953 (12/9/45 Eth. Cal), No Letter N°, 17 August 1971 (11/12/63 Eth. Cal); An interview with Märigétta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

²⁰⁵J.M. Cohen, 'Rural Change in Ethiopia: A Study of Land, Elites, Power and Values in Chilalo Awraja' (Ph.D. Thesis in Political Science, University of Colorado, 1973), pp. 331-332.

sections of the society as well as officials in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.

To begin with, on 24 July 1942 (16 *Hämlé* 1934 Eth. Cal.), a decree was issued which entitled *arbäñnoch* (patriots), who fought against the Italians, and exiles to have up to a *madäriya* of land.²⁰⁶ On condition that, a certain property document of the post-liberation period clearly mentions that [የግንባር ስጦት ሆኖ ይጠቅም] 'every government's land grant required a favor from a recipient to the former'²⁰⁷ people serving the government for free like patriots who rendered military service particularly in the Italo-Ethiopian war would be compensated with this decree. On 24 July 1942 (16 *Hämlé* 1936 Eth. Cal.), another decree was issued allowing pre-war civil servants and who were by then serving as soldiers up to a *gult-madäriya* of land.²⁰⁸ A proclamation issued on 1 November 1952 (23 *Ṭeqemt* 1945 Eth. Cal.) entitled landless and unemployed Ethiopians to have half a *gult-madäriya* of land.²⁰⁹ The 30 December 1956 (23 *Ṭeqemt* 1948 Eth. Cal.) decree turned all *madäriya* land into *rist*,²¹⁰ which was the major hit of the imperial land policy in homogenizing the tenure system of the country at large. In that way, the imperial reform measures also brought in some lexical changes to describe different categories of land. For instance, the land called *gebrä-ṭäl-märét* once denoted the dispossessed *rist* land of peasants was changed in its

²⁰⁶ WMA Archives, Folder 2116, File 2075/44, Letter G/ 263/5/50, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*], 25 September 1957 (15/1/50 Eth. Cal).

²⁰⁷ Ibid, File 2075, Letter 2797/3, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*], 25 February 1963 (18/6/55 Eth. Cal).

²⁰⁸ Cohen, 'Rural Change in Ethiopia', pp. 331-332.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation N° 221, December 30, 1956.

meaning and content as equivalent to the tenure called *ṭäf-märét* (infertile land) which had no inhabitants.²¹¹

Besides, on 5 November 1958 (27 *Ṭeqemt* 1951 Eth. Cal.) a proclamation was issued that allowed members of the armed force and police to have a *gult-madäriya* of land.²¹² On 29 October 1966 (21 *Ṭeqemt* 1957 Eth. Cal.) a decree was issued giving civil servants a *gult-madäriya* of land.²¹³ As pointed out in chapter above, the administration of land was initially entrusted to the imperial government's MoI and after 1966 to the MLRA, as indicated in second paragraph of the chapter above. Although the stated objective of the land orders was to maximize the income of the government from rural lands, the state tried to use it as a political instrument to encourage or discourage certain processes as the case may be. The main beneficiaries of government land grants, in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) included members of the *balabbatoch* (holding land through ancestral descent), the *mäsafents* (nobilities), Territorial Army, clergy, retired civil servants, veterans all referred to by the broad term of *balä-wuläta* who had a long record of services in favor of the government and government officials at that big moment.²¹⁴ Although the November 1, 1952 (23 *Ṭeqemt* 1945 Eth. Cal.) land grant order promised any landless *ṭisännnoch* to have at least a half *gult* of land from unoccupied government land, those in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) hardly received any land

²¹¹ Esubalew, 'Land Tenure and Taxation in Machakil Warada', p. 11.

²¹² Tekalign Wolde-Mariyam, 'A City and its Hinter Lands: The Political Economy of Land Tenure, Agriculture and Food Supply for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 1887-1974' (Ph. D. Thesis in History, Boston, 1995), p. 140.

²¹³ WMA Archives, Folder 85000, File 20/850, Letter 00/2483/p/16076, Tax Record, 24 November 1971 (14/3/64 Eth. Cal).

²¹⁴ IES Archives, Folder 5, File 7/513, No Letter N°, Public Land Grant, 1972 (1964 Eth. Cal).

while the available arable land there was in the area. Beside the landless *ṭisäññas*, scarce landowning peasant *ṭisäñnoch* were hardly received any land in the area.²¹⁵

Nonetheless, the government was examining it very closely, since the reform package was not fully applied in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. The justification for this was that the Gojjam land tenure system and the fate of *ṭisäñnoch* living and working on it were the least understood and needed further study before it was fully applied in the area. Subsequently, the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration (MLRA) under the Department of Land Tenure through its Team of Experts designated to conduct a survey on the general feature of land tenure and into the backgrounds of the demands of *ṭisäñnoch* in Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos.²¹⁶ This would be considered as an integral part of the general principle of land tenure survey and measurement.

Consequently, from 20 December 1969 to 8 February 1970, the Department team members discovered the existence of undefined land ownership systems and high-rate of tenure fragmentation that affected the life of considerable number of *ṭisäñnoch* in the *Awrajjawoch* of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, of which Däbrä Marqos was one. Then, in January 1971, the Department recommended to seek for extra lands just for peasant-*ṭisäñnoch* who owned insufficient hereditary *rist* through kinship where unoccupied government lands were found within the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. Nevertheless, the Department's Team of Experts unnoticed for the existence of considerable number of landless-*ṭisäñnoch* who were commonly living and

²¹⁵ Ibid; WMA Archives, Folder 2116, File 2075, Letter 2936/55, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*], 22 April 1963 (14/8/55 Eth. Cal); and Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 35.

²¹⁶ Ibid, p. 1.

working on thirteen percent of the rented lands of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or twenty percent of the rented lands of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at large. They were often Muslims and craftsmen, known in local parlance as *ṭebäbännä* [ጥጥባላ] ('artisan'). These artisan segments of the society include weavers, tanners, potters and smiths, all dehumanized by culturally constructed understandings of the society as *tanash-säw* (subhuman).²¹⁷

This condition creates two forms of *ṭisännä*s, as 'social classes', in the area as well, i.e., *ṭisännöch* with scarce landowning called peasant-*ṭisännä*s, and who did not have land of their own at all called landless [peasant]-*ṭisännöch*. The peasant-*ṭisännöch* were proposed for extra lands while the landless peasant-*ṭisännöch* were left to an open question by the Team of Experts' concluding remark. As also discussed thoroughly in preceding chapter, the government was committed to execute its reform package by conducting land tenure survey in the country, of which Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos was one. Nonetheless, in Gojjam there was no land survey and measurement conducted in any details as the term itself is simply understood. This problem seems to have emanated partly from the top-down administrative approach that the government authorities continually followed without convincing the people, thereby the latter were often resistant to it in the area.²¹⁸ Thus, land measurement called *qälad* itself was carried out in some localities of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. Only

²¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 11, 2, 20, 23, 35; EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ፱፯/አሰ/0082, File ፩ 164, No Letter N^o, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, 21 June 1970 (14/10/62 Eth. Cal); and Esubalew, 'Land Tenure and Taxation in Machakil Warada', p. 7.

²¹⁸ Ibid; Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Interior, *Yagär-Gezat Minstér Shumamentochena Säratägñöch Seljanena Yä-wusṭ Däneb* (in Amharic) (lit. *Duties and Authorities of [the Official] Appointees and Civil Servants of the Ministry of Interior*) (Addis Ababa, Berhanena Sälam Printing Press, 1934 Eth. Cal.), pp. 30-43; Peter Schwab, 'Rebellion in Goj[j]am Province, Ethiopia' *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 4, 2, (1970), pp. 250-253; and Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 34.

0.1 percent of the total land, c.64, 000 square kilometers in Gojjam was measured between 1942 and 1966.²¹⁹

After the report of the Department in 1971, however as a justification for the reform and also to clarify their position on confusions regarding land tenure, the Team of Experts recommended transferring landholdings from the age-old collective system into individual property rights configuration as the best solution; thereby brought tenure security. Above all, it could generate more income to the government in the area. This was because the land reform, if properly applied, made many individuals eligible to pay tax. All these suggest that the terms of the reform were not literally applied as the individuals entrusted with enforcing it gave the interest of the government, since land was much more important than landless-*ṭisännöoch* to the government in the area. Hence, outside the spirit and framework of the whole land reform package, the government's stipulations went only to the privileged segments of the society, as indicated above.

In that way, the privileged groups permanently owned more than 87 percent of the tenure in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjä* or generally 80 percent of the tenure in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, with little or no attention was given to the *ṭisännöoch*. It was especially landless *ṭisännöoch* who hoped the government would grant land to them for their long history of occupation were that of the most affected segments of the society in the area.²²⁰ In that, any privileged *rist*-holder enjoyed all rights of property, such as the right to use, to mortgage, to sell, to pass it on to

²¹⁹ Ibid, EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ፩፪/44, File 44, Letter 44, *Rist* Land Litigation, 20 May 1953 (12/9/45 Eth. Cal); see also Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 168.

²²⁰ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp. 20, 23, 35.

one's heir etc. The approval of such bundle of rights could also serve as evidence of an individual's legal ownership that was directly secured by a Certificate of Model Five—pride of place to the customary oath that is similar to 'title deeds' issued primarily by the office of MoI and after 1966, by the MLRA which indirectly secured rights of inheritance.²²¹ Besides, as the pre-intended objective of the government, the reform measures allowed the state to facilitate taxation and regulation of titleholders in cases of imposing costs of property on others. These significant measures were sometimes complementary to the Liberal property rights model, describing twentieth century African property system at large, but with their own particular features as discussed below.

In that case, the rights of the government and property became more clearly distinguished and a more contractual character of property transactions between the grantor and the grantee were established. Here, it is not intricate to determine precisely how the customary land tenure system codified and fixed by the imperial government. Generally speaking, the whole reform measures appears to inform and held that it vaguely, in legal terms, codified along the Liberal principles and opinions that imagined private property rights configuration, pride of place to collective system for twentieth century property system of Africa, in this way, Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam (Ethiopia). More to the point, proponents of the Liberal property-rights-system argue that by empowering individual/corporal agents to exclude others from access to resource, well-defined property rights allow the right holders to capture the benefits of resource by transferring them to others. Since property-holders have a vested

²²¹ Ibid; EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ዞገ/አሰ/0086**, File **ጸግ** 164, Letter 334/62, The Municipality of Däbrä Marqos, 27 March 1970 (18/7/62 Eth. Cal); Interviews with Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä, Ato Ayaléw Gäbré Mäkönnén, Ato Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa, Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, Ato Mälläsä Kassa Gärämäw, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Ato Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol, and *Abba* Ejjegu Seménäh Wärqnä.

interest in maintaining or increasing the value of their property, well-defined property rights are also said to encourage investment and guard against resource depletion. In cases where resources are used in ways that benefit the owners but impose costs on others, registration of title is said to facilitate regulation by making it easier to hold property owners accountable for the consequences of their actions. The power of exclusion, which lies at the heart of this conception of property and its role in history, may be deployed in many ways. The right to exclude other people may refer to specific uses of a thing rather than the thing itself an individual, for instance, owns the right to cultivate a piece of land, and excludes others from doing so, but may not be entitled to use it in other ways including gathering fruit from naturally occurring trees.²²² In that case, advocates of the Liberal school of thought considered individuals as independent historical actors relating to twentieth century African property system at large.

In that way, the occasions of privatization of land rights through clear titles that secured titleholders' inheritance, taxation and the like were actually fixed by the imperial government through its reform package. In consequence, as the regime actually drew attention to it, the reform measures made in close matching to the Liberal property rights model that could be used as a useful descriptor of twentieth-century imperial Ethiopia *viz.*, individual's as

²²² The literature along the liberal paradigm is voluminous, to mention but three instances, we have the works of Daniel Biebuyck (Ed.), *African Agrarian Systems* (London, Oxford University Press, for the International African Institute, 1963); H.W.O. Okoth-Ogendo, 'Some Issues of Theory in the Study of Tenure Relations in African Agriculture' *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 59 (1), 1989: 6-17; and more recently by the restatement of World Bank, *Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa. A World Bank Agenda* (Washington D.C, World Bank, 1996): here, exponents of the Liberal model took thier root from the eighteenth-century enlightenment ideals of Europe.

independent historical actors.²²³ However, it was in the context of twentieth-century imperial Ethiopian government that for several reasons free landholders rights were less absolute and subject to restriction, as shall be discussed briefly below.

For several reasons free landholders rights were less absolute and were more liable to be divided and shared. First and foremost, if a holder could not pay land taxes, the property would be subject to confiscation by the government. Above and beyond, the right to sell one's own *rist* land was not permitted, it necessitated the permission from the government signifying Emperor Haile Sellassie himself if an owner intends to sell it to non-Ethiopian 'citizens'. Besides, it is apparent that the stated objective of the grant orders was to take advantages of the government from the land, pride of place to its grantees.²²⁴ Thus, there were considerable restrictions on individual's absolute free-property rights by the government. Apart from the government, the most remarkable limitation on the supposedly absolute free-property rights came from landless *ṭisāññoch* living and working on the land for long, as sanctioned by culturally constructed understandings of the society. In that way, commencing from the earlier times land was subject to open negotiation dictated by the customary law which is a well-remembered event in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).²²⁵

²²³ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp. 20, 23, 35; Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 11; and IES Archives, Folder 11-13, File A13/008, Letter 0/2088/292/60, Tax Record, 22 March 1971 (13/7/63 Eth. Cal) ; EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ዞን/አስ/0086**, File **ጸግ** 164, Letter 334/62, The Municipality of Däbrä Marqos, 27 March 1970 (18/7/62 Eth. Cal); Interviews with Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä, Ato Ayaléw Gäbré Mäkönnén, Ato Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa, Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, Ato Mälläsä Kassa Gärämäw, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Ato Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol, and *Abba* Ejjegu Seménäh Wärqñäh.

²²⁴ *Ibid*; and Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Interior, *Yagär-Gezat Minstér*, p. 40.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 11, 45; and An interview with *Märiqéttä* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu.

Thus, the custom of the land was, and still is, inexorably managed to resolve disputes borne out from the land in the area. First and foremost, jurists constantly issued the customary property law with *rist-qoṭari* ('descent enumerator') who knew more of the local genealogy and residing near the land for long. This was usually by way of proof of legitimate descent to a family group on the face of *yä-agär shemagelés* (local elders) as informal judges. Besides, reputable oaths, individual's social status, and ability to influence and won dispute were also vaguely, in legal terms, served as the general rules in local court dealings. If the court could not succeeded by means of the customary dealings, the dispute would be finalized through the existed statutory laws, as initiated subsequent to the introduction of the country's 'modern' constitution in 1931. In any case, the legal court system, together with informal judges, served to reconcile disputes borne out from the land, while the former would have precedence over the latter at different levels of the administration in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* during the imperial era.²²⁶ Besides the experience during the imperial era, currently with my courtroom observations in 2015 from Däbrä Marqos town zonal legal court system evidently revealed that, jurists issued continually ancestry proof—generally to act in accordance with prevailing standards or customs of the land.²²⁷

²²⁶ EGAZHCA Archives, Courtroom Ruling N° 5, File 2/39, 2/42, 2/44, 2/46, 2/49, 2/50/ 2/51, No Letter N°, *Rist* Land Litigation, 1944/45 (1937 Eth. Cal); Folder 245, File 12:44, No Letter N°, *Rist* Land Litigation, 4 September 1948 (29/12/40 Eth. Cal); Courtroom Ruling 9, File 61, Letter N° 227/54, *Rist* Land Litigation, 20 March 1962 (11/7/54 Eth. Cal); and Folder ፩፪/44, File 44, Letter 44, *Rist* Land Litigation, 20 May 1953 (12/9/45 Eth. Cal) and 17 August 1971 (11/12/63 Eth. Cal).

²²⁷ Courtroom Observation in *East Gojjam Administrative Zone High-Court* in Däbrä Marqos Town: this is based on my own field work—personal observation—that I conducted for close examination of the vibrant land litigation with three cases under eight jurists namely, *Ato Täfärra Dämesssé*, *Ato Šähay Tameru*, *Ato Yäzéh-Aläm Tameru*, *Ato Yeh'näw Zäläläm*, *Ato Mohammed Jebrél*, *Ato Tadässä Azemäraw* and *Ato Mulusäw Bétäw*, Dated 14-18, 24-25 September, and 12-16 October, and 19-23, 26-30 October, and 11-13, 16-20, 23-27 November 2015: here in every cases in judging land disputes, for the most part, the general rule that jurists followed, in judging disputes borne out from the land was to look up on the custom of the society, to prosecute the *fetabehér* (civil case) not the criminal cases. In that case, I observed the existing land litigation cases and the

In that case, the court authorized social judges known in common parlance as *mahbärawé ferd-bét* founded in every single *qäbbälé* (village) as adjudicators to win lengthy disputes over land in the area. Besides, the earliest known *yä-agär shemagelés* (local elders) also functioning to reconcile and succeed land disputes sanctioned by the custom of the people, as informal judges. It follows that, the people would have two optional judges to reconcile and succeeded their disputes; though finally verified by the legal court system. If not, the case to be conveyed and reconciled through the existing statutory laws and orders of the legal court, while it still came to look upon the custom of the society. That history constantly brought to bear on the negotiation of contemporary relations of the contestants in judging lengthy litigations or disputes over land could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, it seems apparent that the occasions of the actual practice of court rulings are constantly open to negotiation as long as the legal grounds of ancestry proof still succeeded in a manner evocative of reconciling contestants over land. This explains the present day court system's common reference to courtroom rulings of the post-1941 regime from Däbrä Marqos.²²⁸

That is to say, like the post-1941 court ruling, my courtroom observations in 2015 evidently revealed the actual practice of resolving property disputes continually through the customary law pride of place to the existing statutory law in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Hence, the legal understandings along the indigenous tenure arrangement—all in the course of the first half of twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era and after—vaguely, in legal terms, would be proof of the person's 'ownership' analogous to the 'modern' legal document called

attempt to resolve it through the custom of the society; and also *Interviews with Märiqétta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä, Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, and Abba Ejjegu Seménäh Wäraqnäh.*

²²⁸ Ibid.

'title-deeds'. Nonetheless, individual's could not exercise absolute ownership as sanctioned by the custom of the society but only remained in the minds of the holder. Hence, the general reality in Gojjam addressing Däbrä Marqos revealed property rights as never complete since land could not be detached from the local social reality from which it was made.²²⁹

Hence, the Ethiopian customary law that inexorably applied in judging land disputes unquestionably restricted the supposedly free-holding rights of individuals in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* that addressed the general reality of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* principally during the imperial era. On condition that, one of the most remarkable customary limitations on the supposedly individual's 'absolute' or 'free-holding' rights in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* came from landless-*ṭisäññoch* who were found below the *balabbatoch*, the privileged segments of that society who held sufficient lands in the area. In that way, in conditions of the customary law any landless-*ṭisäññoch* who had accepted himself/herself on the land as a *ṭisäñña* and who would remain a loyal and dutiful *ṭisäñña* had some claim to pass on his-holdings to his/her children.²³⁰ After all, the most remarkable limitation on the supposedly 'absolute free-landholding' rights came from the government's law itself, since it represented inviolability of land rights by empowering individual agents alone, the general idea of 'absolutization' of tenure has been loosely defined by the legislations of the imperial government.²³¹

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, pp. 11, 45; EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **፳፯/አሰ/0082**, File **፳** 164, No Letter N°, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, 21 June 1970 (14/10/62 Eth. Cal); and Interviews with Ato Täggäñña Asräss Engeda, Ato Täshomä Adäraw Gétanäh, Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and Ato Yehanäw Ṭénaw Admass.

²³¹ Tekalign, 'A City and its Hinterlands', p. 50.

By implication, the government appears to have principally, but vaguely in legal terms, restricted individual's 'absolute' property rights attached to the land. Hence, individual's 'absolute free-holding' rights could not exist anywhere other than in the minds and polemics of those who are anxious to defend their rights against the political system, together with the customary dealings, in twentieth century Ethiopia (Africa). Thus, vaguely, in social processes, land rights appears to have been essentially categorized or were in legal practice divided. So much so that, it was socially and legally clear, for instance, as the most common form of land question by landless-*ṭisäññoch* at the village of Boräbor, in Dejene, in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*, following the final reform measures of the imperial regime generally in Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* in 1967.²³²

Here, the *ṭisäññoch*'s claim to the land was for their long history of occupation and remained loyal and dutiful occupants to the privileged and/or free-holders of that society called the *balabbatoch*. The *ṭisäññoch*'s claim became more articulated when the *balabbatoch* evicted the former violently from the land, as legal owners, and began to enjoy it by themselves in accordance with the final reform measures of the government. The *balabbatoch* were said to have been expelled the *ṭisäññas*, following a growing winds of change already the country was on a prelude to revolution with socialist principles that created new stages and demands for confiscation of land. In fact, it was contrary to the age-old feudal forms of 'productive relationship' under the popular slogan 'Land to the Tiller', as an inevitable consequence of the

²³² EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ዞግ/አሰ**/0082, File **ደ** 164, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, 21 June 1970 (14/10/62 Eth. Cal).

time. Hence, this event led to the *ṭisäññoch* disappointment and opposition to the government decree, first foremost, through non-violent means.²³³

Accordingly, in expressing their plight, in June 1970, more than 64 landless-*ṭisäññoch* led by a certain representative *Ato Ibrahim Ayqär* were said to have marched to the administrative capital *Däbrä Marqos* to petition to the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* governor *Däjjazmach Däräjä Mäkonnén* and protest against the government edict.²³⁴ In consequence, those *ṭisäññoch* in that villages, in *Dejene Wäräda*, bore no fruit, since the land they had settled for a very long period was once distributed to local *balabbatoch* as *rist* by the order of the MLRA. However, the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* governor by no means maintained the *ṭisäññas*, who were the ex-formal tenant landholders, exclusive of land. Instead, when they were pleading to the government to receive land in exchange to the land granted to former *gult* holders, the *ṭisäññoch* returned to their village, in that same year, with land grant promised through the agency of the *Däbrä Marqos Awrajja* governor, *Fitawrari Mäkonnén Kassa*.²³⁵ In the process of such land grant or redistribution promised, however, *Fitawrari Mäkonnén* was more concerned with the general social security reasons, *viz.*, the intensity of peasant revolt in the *Awrajja* and all at once in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at that big moment, as discussed thoroughly soon after the subsequent chapter. Thus, the *Awrajja* governor ignored or unnoticed for the demands of these landless *ṭisäññoch* in the area. Hence, to alleviate such plight, apart from formally

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid, Letter /14197/9177, 24 July 1970 (17/11/62 Eth. Cal).

acknowledging them for *rist* land, at least in the context of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* governor, no effort of the *Awrajja* governor went to land allocation.²³⁶

Then, these dozens of landless *ṭisäññoch* attempt relocation arrangement to them on the *rist* lands of the *balabbatoch* of the their locality, as they went as far as in the capital Addis Ababa to petitioned the MLRA and protest against the measures of the *balabbatoch* at that big moment. In consequence, in August 1974, the central authorities were keen to land grant order to landless *ṭisäññoch* under the actions and decisions of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. However, the *ṭisäññoch* bore no fruit to their land question, for all that the top down approach at all levels of the administration. In consequence, only the *balabbatoch* from Däbrä Marqos and other *Awrajjawoch* of Gojjam were said to have been received lands, as free-holders, through the imperial reform package in the area. In any case, it is apparent that the presence of maladministration at all levels of the government, principally at the local level that authorities might have been guarded against encroachment by landless *ṭisäññoch* of the area.²³⁷ This was on the ground that in 1971 the Department of Land Tenure evidently exposed the 'availability of better land[s] for the *ṭisäññoch*'s from unoccupied government lands in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*,²³⁸ which verifies local officials' intrusion of *ṭisäññoch*'s access to land rights. In consequence, the socioeconomic status of landless *ṭisäññoch* in most parts of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam could be worsened since they were continually evicted by the local landowners at various times—in the course of the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era.

²³⁶ Ibid, No Letter N°, 19 August 1974 (13/12/66 Eth. Cal).

²³⁷ Ibid, Letter 29454/4/6285/66, 29 August 1974 (23/12/66 Eth. Cal).

²³⁸ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 14.

Cognizant of this and other developments, what scholars in the best Liberal tradition in the field of Ethiopian land studies imagined, discussed in subject literature section of the chapter above, the general impression that placed the imperial government to function impartially and rationally for the common good compliant with the reform measures—mask its different context. That the whole land grant order was actually in favor of social elites as applied in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Thus, the general inference drew from the local reality made an excellent complement to what scholars of the Marxist proclivity in the same field of study visualize that the imperial government tried to use the whole land grant orders as an 'instrument of domination' and/or a political instrument to encourage or discourage certain processes as the case maybe. Among other things, in safeguarding the interest of the 'ruling class' in general or the elite segments of the society like the *balabbatoch*, with little or no attention given to the majority poor *ṭisäññoch's* as applied in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the course of the post-liberation period. That the imperial state was to function in the direction of the growing disparities between rich and poor thereby the concentration of land in the hands of the few propertied 'classes' as long as the *balabbatoch* actually evicted the *ṭisäññoch's* from the land that the latter occupied for so long. So much so that, outside the spirit and framework of the reform package all the way through the imperial era, the stipulations of the government cemented that holds the rich and poor disparities in the area.

Nevertheless, later in September 1974, with the demise of the imperial government and the establishment of the 'Provisional Military Administrative Council' (PMAC), a new socioeconomic relationship was apparently established with socialist principles—in contrast to the age-old feudal forms of 'productive relationship' for social justice and fairness relating

to land in the Ethiopian context at large. In consequence, the militants declared the welcoming revolutionary slogan 'Land to the Tiller' and preceded in March 1975 by the proclamation of nationalization of rural land, which abolished all forms of private land rights and the socioeconomic relations derived from it, particularly tenancy.²³⁹ In that way, those dozens of landless *ṭisäññas*, in the village of Dejen, in Däbrä Marqos, found in a continuous formal pleading for land bore fruit, when they irrevocably won their claimed land in October 1977 (*Ṭeqemt* 1969 Eth. Cal.).²⁴⁰

Hence, revolutionaries land redistribution to the *ṭisäññas*, within and outside Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), could help them significantly to evolve from their socioeconomic peripheral positions. Particularly, it is pretty clear to be observed in Dejen, in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*, that *balabbatoch* did not form any more of a distinct category in terms of social and economic status that they had on the peasant tenants before the revolution. This is due to the fact that *ṭisäññooh* in that particular *wäräda* irreversibly become free from the imposition of those *balabbatoch* and gradually they could emerge as socially and economically strong like their counterparts. That it was the result of an effort made by the revolutionaries at the central level of the new administration in bringing social justice in the process of land redistribution.

In conclusion, it is apparent that starting from the middle of the fourteenth century until the end of the third quarter of the twentieth century, rulers and powerful 'lords' of Ethiopia issued

²³⁹ Crummey, *Land and Society*, pp. 244-245, 247; Teshale, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 168; and Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991* (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press, 2002), pp. 241-242; see also the memoir of one of the militant revolutionaries at that big moment FeqräSellasé Wägdäräs, *Eñña-na Abyotu* (in Amharic) (lit. *The Ethiopian Revolution and Our Role in it*) (Addis Ababa, Šähay Printing Press, 2013/4 or 2006 Eth. Cal), pp. 211-220.

²⁴⁰ EGAZHCA, Folder ዞግ/አሰ/0082, File ፩ 164, No Letter N^o, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, 3 November 1971 (23/2/69 Eth. Cal).

property documents in granting land, everlastingly and/or temporarily, to churches and monasteries as well as to their functionaries in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. However, unlike the old times, the post-Italian regime land grant reveals change in the meaning and content of much of the tenure structure of the *Awrajja* (*Ṭäqalay-Gezat*) but exclusive of in its move on land redistribution measures that have covered only the privileged section of the society. It ranges from state officials to elites as a function of socioeconomic and other interconnected factors within and outside the *Awrajja* (*Ṭäqalay-Gezat*). Hence, these events by no means witnessed rationalization of land allocation but deteriorated the terms and conditions of social relations derived from it until the revolution. However, there was significant change in the customary land tenure system and in fostering sizeable tax derived from it that took place in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). In view of that, the next chapter will further demonstrate this chain of events that triggered political and socioeconomic changes in the area.

Chapter Three

Imperial Land Tax Reform and the Tenancy Issue

While it was primarily initiated by Emperor Minilek's tax administration in the course and progress of its changes, the taxation system of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos (Central Gojjam) ushered in a new era of assessing and collecting land taxes in the restored government of Emperor Haile Sellassie in 1941 at the center took root in Addis Ababa. One of the defining features of the immediate post-liberation administration of Haile Sellassie was the process of absolute centralization. This move was meant to increase the government's control over local and regional ruling houses. The realization of this project required, among other things, strengthening the financial capacity of the central government. To be precise, while an old concern, the series of tax proclamations of the post war government in Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam was in substitution of the centuries old system of surplus appropriation in kind and labour for cash. Despite the incurring and continued challenges, all forms of taxes introduced in that particular period were implemented in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) through local government offices set up for the purpose. This made the collection of increased revenues from the majority peasants through a systematized form of tax collection, imperative. It was due to this objective I argue in this chapter that while it had a strong bearing on impeding the social developments of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos a series of proclamations relating to tax collection and increasing government revenue were largely made and implemented in twentieth century Ethiopia prior to the end of the imperial era.

Changes in Taxation System

As discussed thoroughly in the preceding chapter, the earliest known fixed tax using tribute in Däbrä Marqos is traced back to the fourteenth century and the subsequent periods, when the two Emperors Amdä Šeyon (r.1314-1344) and Dawit I (r.1380-1412) granted land rights to the church and its dignitaries in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Accordingly, a third of the land production was paid by the local peasants who worked and resided on the land in parts of Däbrä Marqos for members of the clergy analogous to feudal Europe. Overall, there were two kinds of tax destined for the state, *viz.*, 'salt bar' mentioned in local parlance as [አዋላ] *amolé* [-čäw], as salt tax estimated and paid based on the production of the land as *asrat*, a tenth of the land production and usually measured by *madega* ('jar [made from clay]'). It was paid for the soldiery who rendered military services sometimes in the past and all the way through the medieval period and after. That, for the most part, the land system of Gojjam (Däbrä Marqos) seemed categorized fairly into three: a third destined for the church while two third meant for the soldiery (the state) at various times, in the course of the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era.²⁴¹

So much so that, one could have conceived of a formative age of the development of exploitative form of 'productive relationship' between the privileged *balabbatoch* or the nobilities and unprivileged peasants, as the most common forms of 'social classes' related to land. That the elite segments of the society 'exploited' the [peasant-] *ṭisännnas*, as the latter

²⁴¹ Gäbrä-Wäld Engeda-Wärq, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét Ena Geber Sem* (in Amharic) (*The Ethiopia's [Customary] Land [Tenure] and Tribute Name*) (Addis Ababa, Tinsa'e Ze-guba'e Printing Press, 1948 Eth. Cal.), pp. 61, 224; and *Interviews with Ato Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa, Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä, Ato Mälläsä Kassa Gärämäw, Märiḡetta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Abba Gäbrä-Selläsé, Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, Ato Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol, and Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa.*

were being unnoticed, for the most part, to land rights all the way through the medieval and modern times, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. In that case, independent peasants turned out to be dependent *ṭisāññas*, irreversibly not free from the imposition of the privileged segments of that society who gradually but steadily emerged as socially and economically strong *balabbatoch*, as social elites analogous to feudal Europe. Hence, this created burdensome living conditions upon the *ṭisāñnoch* who had to endure for long, for the most part, under the institution of *asrat* (tithe) tax that was already in existence during the *Zāmānā Mäsafent* or Age of the Princes (1769-1855) or the biblical Era of the Princes. *Asrat* was the occasions of quartering the soldiery on the tributary peasantry, by which the former generally obtained one-tenth of the land production by way of tribute in lieu of salary from the latter. Dealing with this point, several documentary evidence testify the ways and defects of the *asrat* tax levied in the course of the last decades of nineteenth century well into the first half of twentieth century. First and foremost, Mahtämä-Sellasé assured us that, Emperor Minilek II stipulated the *asrat* tax in cash in 1892/3 that was generally remunerated so as to dispose of the notorious system of quartering soldiers on the tributary poor and majority peasants all over the modern Ethiopian realm. The money meant for the soldiers' salary in lieu of living on tribute collected from peasants.²⁴²

On that occasion, the age-old Austrian silver coin namely *Maria Theresia* Dollar or Thaler known in common parlance as [ታላሪ] *taläri* was the major unit of currency all over the

²⁴² Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, *Selä-Ethiopia Yä-Märét Serét Astädädär-Inna Geber Ṭäqlala Astäyayät* (in Amharic) (lit. 'A Brief Statement to the Ethiopian Land Tenure and the Tribute Administration Derived from it), (n.d, in MSNLAA Call N°. 333.73 MCp) and *idem, Zekrä Nägär* (in Amharic) (lit. *Oral and Written Legacies [of Historic Ethiopia]*) (Addis Ababa, Näšanät Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal), pp. 49-51; and *idem, Zekrä Nägär* (in Amharic) (lit. *Oral and Written Legacies [of Historic Ethiopia]*) (Addis Ababa, Näšanät Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal.), pp. 232-234.

Ethiopian empire, as brought it by foreign merchants at the end of the eighteenth century.²⁴³ Later, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Emperor Minilek II himself issued other form of silver coin called *yä-Minilek-ṭägära* [*birr*].



Illustration 5. Photographing scenes, from the local private collections of Mälkam Simäññ and I myself, respectively, identifying the two sides of coins—Maria Theresa Thaler or Dollar (on the left side) and yä-Minilek-ṭägära (on the right side)—made of solid silver.

Besides these, Italians also introduced a new silver coin, called *shelleng* during the occupation period (1935-41). All these silver coins known in common parlance as *ṭägära* [*birr*] were actually fairly in a widespread circulation until the end of the imperial era—that is besides the *birr* used as the legal tender since 1931. However, *yä-Minilek-ṭägära* and *shelleng* did have greater denominations over the *Maria Theresa Thaler* in circulation during the last and a half decades of the post-liberation period. This is owing to the latter's scarcity and seeking a sky rocketing in price for some unknown reason. In that case, one *Maria Theresa Taläri* had a denomination of three *shelleng*. For prominent informants I talked to this condition is a lived experience.²⁴⁴ It is also a well-known fact that a half to one kilogram of *amolé* [*čäw*] served as a unit of currency on condition that the exchange rate found below the *taläri* and other forms of *ṭägära birr*.²⁴⁵ Nevertheless, on several occasions, every genre

²⁴³ Richard Pankhurst, 'Tribute, Taxation and Government Revenues in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Ethiopia (Part III)' *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* (6, 2, 1968), pp. 99, 296.

²⁴⁴ Interviews with Märiḡetta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu and, Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa.

²⁴⁵ Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 28.

of the *ṭägära bIRR* including the *taläri* did have precedence over *amolé* [čäw] in denomination. That is for the simple reason that the monetary revenues or taxable wealth of imperial authorities as well as powerful local 'lords' was exacted in a variety of *ṭägära bIRR* pride of place to *amolé* in consequence of expedited restructuring the system of taxation in cash related to land.²⁴⁶

Dealing with the issue, in his memoir, Emeru reassured us that, while the drama of conversion and reaction to it was unfolding, *Ras Haylu II* who was the regional hereditary ruler of Gojjam from 1901 to 1932 is stated as promoted and endorsed the *asrat* cash tax with significant consequences on the subsequent Emeru's office of governorship over that province. That the cash payments secured from *asrat* became a widespread phenomenon even under Emeru's administration of Gojjam. Below is the intriguing section of the memoir.

*(...) since Ras Haylu II [r.1901-19032] once approved the payment of asrat in [cash ṭägära-] bIRR taxation, we found it without any trouble on the tax administration of Gojjam as of it in sharp contrast to other provinces of Ethiopia. As a result, asrat levied in kind and labour based on the age-old traditions was subject to much trouble in other territories of the country.*²⁴⁷

Based on the above Emeru's description, it is worth mentioning that, since the government used to owe the *asrat* tax in Gojjam often in cash, primarily the new system was supposed to improve peasants of any obligation, as persisted right up to the Italian Occupation. It is also clear that Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos represents one of the oldest provinces where

²⁴⁶ Pankhurst, 'Tribute, Taxation and Government', p. 99.

²⁴⁷ Emeru Haylä Sellasé, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw* (in Amharic) (lit. *What I have Seen and Remembered*) (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Printing Press, 2002 Eth. Cal.), p. 254.

cash tax evolved first, perhaps the outcome of a huge system of taxation under Haylu's lengthy tenure of office in the area. However, Emeru fails to provide details to the reasons for the differential improvement in the system of taxation accorded to Gojjam, though officially proscribed by law for all territories of Ethiopia. In the main part, it was the effort of *Ras* Haylu II for swiftly promoting the *asrat* tax from kind to cash, obviously to his predetermined political agenda apparent for the throne, as indicated in the final paragraph of chapter one.

In spite of that, while Gojjam became the prime example for the conversion of the system of *asrat* taxation from kind to cash and it was unfolding, Emperor Minilek II laid the legal ground for this restructuring in the Ethiopian context, in the course of the last decade of the nineteenth century, as indicated above. Subsequent to its promotion and endorsement the *asrat* cash tax levied impeded or apparently disposed of the notorious system of quartering soldiers on the majority poor and tributary peasants of Gojjam. If so, because of this significant improvements on the lot of peasants, it seems apparent that primarily changes in the system of taxation was by no means strange and unacceptable to the local population, not to be fiercely defended by the local people, as taxpayers. In that case, peasants were subject to cash tax to *asrat* at the level of the cattle population that they possessed in the area. It follows that each peasant with two plough oxen stipulated to pay two *Maria Theresia Dollars*/thalers once a year under the tax administration of *Ras* Haylu II,²⁴⁸ conceivably pride of place to the above-mentioned tribute in kind, obtained from the local population.

²⁴⁸ History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 127 verso, 129-130 verso. and Interviews with Ato Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa, *Märiqéttä* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, *Emahoy* Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, Ato Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol, and *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé.

On that occasion, Haylu II apparently won support from the majority peasants who occupied scarce lands under the *rist* system of tenure in the area. However, it is apparent that in the course of time, the positive acceptance of taxation restructuring changed into active rejection when Haylu raised taxes. As indicated above and in the final paragraph of chapter one, Haylu II was a strong rival of *Ras Täfäri* (later Emperor Haile Sellassie I) apparent for the throne. Thus, Haylu further made a significant break in all aspects of taxation in Gojjam encompassing Central Gojjam (later *Däbrä Marqos Awrajja*). However, because of high levels of taxation that obtained from the land and land related issues, the local people were disappointed with Haylu's tax imposition related to land in the area. These were *yä-zämächa-färi-geber* ('a payment for not to take part in a serious of campaigns'), *wurs-geber* ('Inheritance Tax'), *shumät-geber* ('Appointment Tax/Fee'), *ṭis-geber* ('Hut/Head Tax'), *ferd-mäčohiya-geber* ('Court Trial Tax'), *yä-däsdäs-alash-geber* ('Winner Trial Tax'), *mätaya-geber* ('Scene Tax'), *čera-geber* ('Cattle Head Tax'), *gësho-geber* ('*Rhamnus prinoides* Tax'), and *wuha-geber* ('Water Tax'). These all stipulated tax institutions all paid in hard cash under the tax administration of *Ras Haylu II*.²⁴⁹

According to *yä-zämächa-färe-geber*, every individual who were refused to take part in a campaign or not offered active military services in time of war were commonly obliged to pay ten [*ṭägära*] *birr* for security of their *rist* lands, as punishment by *Ras Haylu*. This explains the common reference to *yä-zämächa-färe-geber* in twentieth century land documents from the church of Saint Mark (*Däbrä Marqos*).²⁵⁰ With respect to *wurs-geber* ('Inheritance Tax'), Haylu ordered every peasant who met with no children to adopt him as

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ History of Gojjam from *Ras Haylu I* to *Ras Haylu II*, MS *Däbrä Marqos*, folio 127 verso, 129-130 verso.

their son, in this way, managed to take their property subsequent to the latter's death. For that reason, Haylu seemed to maximize his property rights in the area. In line with *shumät-geber*—already existed under *Negus Täklä-Häymanot* (r.1881-1901) but paid in kind—was also the most common form of tax institution for Haylu imposed on appointed officials in both secular and religious tenures related to land. Thus, the church apparently deprived of her former traditional authority to hire officials on its possessions to land, while the predecessors of both Täklä-Häymanot and Haylu II treated the church and the people attached to land differently and with sensitivity.²⁵¹

More to the point, Haylu made the appointment of the church functionaries as an act of collection of money that is beside the secular officials already made to his political agenda apparent for the throne. The rate of the payment to 'Appointment Tax' was varied usually by means of the renewal of the appointee's tenure of office every year and corresponding to individual's socioeconomic status in the area. For example, an individual with the title of *fitawrari* and bought their respective offices with one-thousand and two-thousand *Maria Theresia Dollars*, respectively. Thus, Haylu appointed both secular and church functionaries after they paid appointment tax/fee as his administrative appointees or delegated officials over the administration of lands as *rist* or *gult* tenure. Those tenure holders would recognize the right of Haylu over their tenure of offices, as long as they met their obligation of tribute payment as *shumät-geber*. With the passage of time, therefore, the social significance and

²⁵¹ Ibid; and Interviews with Ato Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa, *Märiqetta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, *Emahoy* Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, Ato Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol, and *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé.

importance of these elite segments of that society might have been reduced, along the *shumät-geber* at least under the tax administration of *Ras Haylu II*.²⁵²

Beside the *shumät-geber*, *ṭis-geber* ('Hut/Head Tax') was the most widespread form of tax institution imposed upon the local population by Haylu II himself. In that case, each individual unvaryingly qualified and taxed by means of a household income tax, as adult. Thus, every segment of the society including the soldiery were subject to taxation using *ṭis-geber* based on the value of individual's house analogous to 'property tax'. That is, the deduction of the tax-size varied, corresponding to individual's socioeconomic status in the area. In that, the elite segments of the society were levied at a higher rate than the majority poor peasants. For instance, an official with the title of *ṭitawrari* paid twenty *Maria Theresia Dollars*, while every segments of the society were levied indiscriminately by way of *ṭis-geber* once a year, as owners of distinct residences, as adult huts. However, since the local people greatly suffered from it, the *ṭis-geber* was extremely unpopular and highly showed antipathy towards it, particularly by the peasants,²⁵³ as will be discussed briefly in the first paragraphs of subsequent chapter.

The other most important tax institutions were *ferd-mäčohiya-geber* and *yä-däsdäs-plash-geber* and *mätaya-geber*. Primarily, *ferd-mäčohiya-geber* was payable by every individual with two *Maria Theresia Dollars* to stand trial for impeached on the court of laws examined and judged by *Ras Haylu II* himself. Thus, in every trial, individuals in court of dealings were legally subject to taxation with two *Maria Theresia Dollars* as *ferd-mäčohiya-geber*.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

On the other hand, the 'real winner' of the court of dealings paid *yä-däsdäs-plash-geber* analogous to 'legal tax'. In that case, it is apparent that the payment secured from *yä-däsdäs-plash-geber* brought social injustice on condition that the amount of money, paid vaguely in legal terms, determined the verdicts of the court system in the area. Thus, the local people were subject to high taxation on one occasion for 'winning' court verdicts.²⁵⁴ Apart from *yä-däsdäs-plash-geber*, *mätaya-geber* was payable by each individual just for watching and explaining their personal problems for *Ras* Haylu II. Accordingly, a fixed tax/fee of ten *Maria Theresia* Dollars was usually paid for watching *Ras* Haylu regardless of their socioeconomic status. Thus, the elite segments of the society who even had special right to visit the 'lord' Haylu were subject to such a tax.²⁵⁵

As the church record in the area testifies, the contemporaneous *Aläqa* Täklä-Iyäsus on one occasion paid ten *Maria Theresia* Dollars for his personal cases of watching and examined by Haylu II, as *mätaya-geber* analogous to the European feudal ceremony by which a man acknowledges himself as the vassal of a lord termed as homage. Overall, unlike the fixed taxations along with *ferd-mäčohiya-geber* and *mätaya-geber*, the taxable income under *yä-däsdäs-plash-geber* would be varied, reduced or maximized by way of the socioeconomic status of an individual pride of place to the actual procedure of winner's/loser's measure for court verdicts in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).²⁵⁶ Apart from the above tax institutions with the local justice system, 'social tax' categories meant for *Ras* Haylu were *čera-geber* ('Cattle Head Tax'), *gësho-geber* and *wuha-geber*. In the context of *čera-geber* and *gësho-geber*, an

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 127 verso.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, folio 127 verso, 129 - 130 verso; and Interviews with Ato Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa, *Märiğetta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Ato Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol, and *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé.

individual was levied with respect to the number of cattle population and planted *gés* (*Rhamnus prinoides*) that he/she possessed. Besides, any individual, usually a woman who fetched and sold water from a river stream paid a tax termed as *wuha-geber*,²⁵⁷ while it was ‘virtually a free good’, not to serve as a basis for social stratification within the Ethiopian context.²⁵⁸

Cognizance of these and other tax developments, one can possibly infer that every segment of the society were subject to taxation under Haylu's office of tenure, more than ever before, in the area that encompasses Däbrä Marqos. On the whole, while he created sever social conditions in Gojjam, *Ras* Haylu II transformed considerably the initiative framework and technical arrangement that informed the reform policy of the imperial government in changing the system of taxation from kind to cash in the area. In fact, as also indicated earlier and in chapter above, Haylu took the initiative to raised money only for his predetermined agenda apparent for the throne. As briefly discussed in chapter above, parallel to the move in changing the taxation system from kind to cash that the central government issued a series of decrees that legally abolished not only corvée services imposed on the majority peasants but the old system of tribute extraction became subject to revocation by way of improving the property system of the empire, including Gojjam in the 1920s and the early of 1930s. That the collection of tax was premeditated in cash instead of the old system, in kind. Such decrees legally transformed not only the taxation system but also abolished corvée services, especially imposed on the [peasant-] *ṭisäññoch* related to land.²⁵⁹ In most instances, although

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, pp. 217-218.

²⁵⁹ Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Selä-Ethiopia Yä-Märét Serét Astädadär*, pp. 22-38.

there was no uniform system of taxation in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), land committee comprised of the *gult-gäzi*, together with three local elders and the *čeqa-shum* levied a cash tax on arable land on yearly basis. As indicated in chapter two above, both oral and written sources agree that the terms such as *gäzem*, *ṭemad*, *gämäd* and *eqa* were—and still are—used in combination to explain the same size of land in the area.²⁶⁰

According to Gäbrä-Wäld's authoritative source, the tax deduction of an individual peasant was made relating to the land production measured usually in *gäzem*. On condition that, one *Birr* the recognized national currency was just paid for seven *gäzem* of crop growing lands or one *gäzem* of cotton and pepper (*Xylophia eathiopica*) growing lands in Däbrä Marqos or generally in Gojjam in the immediate post-liberation period. Beside to *gäzem*, *ṭemad*, *gämäd* and *eqa* are used to denote the same unit of measurement, comparable with a quarter hectare (2,500 square meters) of land. In that way, the standard tax for individual's land was ranged steadily from two *Birr* to eight *Birr* as the lowest and highest levels of taxes from Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the post-1941 well into in the 1950s. That the central government stipulated taxes and, through that, the local authorities extricated it from the land as applied in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*.²⁶¹ Here, although a variety of crops is grown, *ṭéff* (*Eragrostis tef*, sync. *E. abyssinica*) was and still is the single most important and widely cultivated crop in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam); thereby served as an important source of government revenue related to land in the area.

²⁶⁰ Interviews with Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, and Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa; and Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, pp. 61-62.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

In other cases, Gäbrä-Wäld further reassured us that, the tax for the whole area was also commuted to a payment in [*amolé-čäw*] 'salt bar' which was fixed and did not vary with the production of the land every year,²⁶² at the rate of a half to forty kilograms of *amolé* [*čäw*].²⁶³ The obligation to pay the tax in *amolé* [*čäw*] was divided among the same local ancestral groups—with the *Aqññi-abbatoch* and/or *menzer-abbatoch* who may have died a century before. In that case, tax was paid on the size of the land possessed, while it is conceivable that it took sometime to be fully applied at all levels of the administration as the political center took root in Däbrä Marqos—formerly Mänqorär. The other major tax institution, the *asrat* was levied throughout Gojjam by owners of ploughing oxen at the rate of one *Maria Theresia* Dollar for each cattle population,²⁶⁴ as promoted and succeeded under the tax administration of *Ras* Haylu II, as indicated earlier. Dealing with this issue, Emeru's memoir has provided a more concrete account of the meanings of *asrat* taxation in cash that prevailed at all levels of the administration of Gojjam in the course of the first half of twentieth century well into the end of his office of tenure in 1935.

(...) እኔ እራሴ ሰዎችና ከኔም ጋራ ወደ ጉጃም የዙሩት የመንግሥት ወታደሮች ብዙዎቹ የምንቀበለው ደግሞ ያለብን ብር ነበር፤ እዲስ አበባ ወስነው ራቅደውልን የነበረውን። በመንግሥቱም መስሪያ ቤት ሁሉ በሚበዛው ቦታ ላይ የመንግሥት ሰራተኞች ነበሩ፤ ሥራውን የሚያስኬፉ።

(...) *I myself [meaning Emeru] and many of administrative staffs by way of government soldiers who were transferred from Shewa, as my companion, and officials working at several levels of the government departments were paid salaries and allowances specially using Birr[usually collected from the asrat cash tax in the area], as sanctioned by the central authorities at Addis Ababa.*²⁶⁵

²⁶² Allan Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia: The Dynamics of Cognatic Descent* (London, Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1973), p. 211; and Interviews with Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Märigeṭta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, and Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé.

²⁶³ Gäbrä-Wäld, *Yä-Ethiopia Märét*, p. 61.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*; and Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, p. 211.

²⁶⁵ Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, p. 254.

Based on the above possible grounds, therefore, in post *Ras* Haylu II the *asrat* tax was significantly levied in cash, and destined for the soldiers and civil servants by means of salary and allowance sanctioned in local currency [~~ብር~~] *Birr* by the government—for the various service they rendered to the latter in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Besides, so as to put an end to tribute extraction Emperor Haile Sellassie imposed restrictions upon Emeru as *indärasé* or appointed ruler of Gojjam on behalf of the former.²⁶⁶ Thus, soldiers and government officials were monthly paid or salaried in *Birr* instead of living on tribute collected from peasants in the area. On that occasion, it seems apparent that in the course of time the medium of exchange or currency with *Birr* changed in favor of cash pride of place to kind that is beside to serving as a safe substitute for both *Maria Theresia* and *yä-Minilek Ṭägäras* especially the former at this big moment. Given that, ever since 1931 *Birr* clearly, in legal terms, became the standard unit of the Ethiopian national currency, as a safe substitute for those *ṭägäras*, though the term dollar was used to explain the English version of *Birr* until 1976. In fact, it is now *Birr* in English as well. In any case, *Birr* turned out to be the standard unit of the Ethiopian currency in denomination, in this way, the peasants used it for paying taxes including the *asrat* in post-1931 Gojjam.²⁶⁷

Therefore, in post-1931 soldiers and civil servants received their salary by way of the new currency *Birr*, as the most widespread unit of exchange as the country's legal currency. In that, the property tax anchored in *asrat* primarily fixed by Emperor Minilek in the Ethiopian context and promoted and endorsed by the regional 'lord' *Ras* Haylu II was swiftly proceeded

²⁶⁶ Ibid, pp. 205, 243-254.

²⁶⁷ Allan Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, pp. 213-215; and Interviews with Märigétta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, and Abba Gäbrä-Sellásé.

by the governorship of *Ras* Emeru over Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos, pride of place to other parts of the empire, as indicated earlier. It was in this way that changes in taxation system were managed in the area until the beginning of the Italian Administration in the country. Although there was no uniform system of taxation in several taxes before the Italian Occupation, the major tax labeled as '*asrat*' was paid unvaryingly at ease in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam, using the owner of oxen at the rate of one *Birr* for every cattle population once a year in cash conceivably in *Maria Theresia Thaler* and/or *ya-minilek-ṭägära* rather than in kind.²⁶⁸ Although additional sources are lacking, it seems warranted to infer that, the local people were all greatly relieved at the tax burden of *Ras* Haylu II, at the same time as the government steadily applied the 1920s and 1930s new legislation in the area. However, Gojjam significantly became the prime example of changes in taxation system from kind to cash within the Ethiopian context, generally prior to the beginning of the Italian administration in 1935.

The Italian invasion of the country in 1935 added further simplification to the situation, while the former local administration made a significant break in all aspects of the practice of surplus appropriation, that is subsequent to its initiation and promotion through the imperial government at that big moment. During the Occupation (1935-1941), the Italian standard unit of currency served until 2002 called *lira* also used in the Ethiopian market. Accordingly, three *Lire* had the denomination equal to one *Maria Theresia Thaler*.²⁶⁹ As indicated earlier, the Italian government introduced of the third and final *ṭägära* [*birr*] identified as *shelleng*

²⁶⁸ Ibid; and Interviews with *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Märigétta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, and *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

that is beside to the *Maria Theresia Taläri* and *yä-Minilek-ṭägära* that already used in the Ethiopian market until the revolution. Nevertheless, the Italians did not have effective administrative control over the rural areas of Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam to collect taxes on regular basis, while patriots just exacted tribute as they could from the local peasants without any contest for it.²⁷⁰

Following liberation in 1941, however, the restored Ethiopian government in the interest of power centralization organized tax collection—recommencing its prewar policies—that consciously converted land from a political to an economic resource. In that, the government reconfirmed the policy that legally abolished the payment of tribute and corvée services entirely. The major objectives from the very beginning were to convert all tax payments in cash and by having taxes paid directly to the nearby government treasury with the *bäjäronḍ*. Government officials and soldiers were already paid salaries—as stipulated and executed in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam. To be exact, it was during *Ras Emeru's* office of governorship over an already subject of premeditated payment of cash tax to validate the *asrat* among the local population of Gojjam province, prior to the Italian occupation. This further move, in the post-1941, meant to expedite the central government's control over local and regional authorities. The realization of this project required, among other things, strengthening the financial capacity of the government. This made the collection of increased revenues from the peasantry through a systematized form of tax collection imperative.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, p. 211.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

That is to say, changing the system of taxation from kind to cash made steadily along with changing the system of land tenure all over Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* encompassing Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*. It was due to this objective one could claim that a series of proclamations relating to 'property tax' and increasing government revenue are stipulated and that the affluence of its execution was destined for the nearby government treasury with the *bäjäron*d—a major concern of the postwar Ethiopian government—as indicated in the final paragraphs of chapter one. In that case, changing all 'property tax' from kind to cash and diminishing the power of *gult* and its hereditary brand of landholders are clearly mentioned in a proclamation issued by the imperial government—by way of the Emperor himself—in the post-1941. Succinctly put, while endorsing the need to introduce some radical changes in the system of landholding, the imperial government proposed the need to recognize and take into consideration of the long-standing land arrangement on one occasion for realizing the new legislation. However, the government had spelled out certain conditions that warrant the recognition of customary land arrangement. Thus, the custom of the society would be recognized during the execution of the new proclamation, if and only if, it was already a subject of premeditated payment of tax to validate 'ownership' among individuals.²⁷²

This move seems to be pragmatic for the government's control in an attempt to accommodate the reality on the ground over land. All the same, the restored government of Haile Sellassie cautiously recommenced and sustained its prewar policies using a series of proclamations that had a practical use all in the Ethiopian realm including Gojjam. The first of such proclamations was the March 30, 1942 Agricultural Land Tax Proclamation that stipulates all

²⁷² Ibid.

agrarian land in the country would be classified into three categories in relation to its fertility such as *läm* (fertile), *läm-ṭäf* (semi-fertile) and *ṭäf* (infertile) land. The amount of revenue to be collected from these categories was fixed with *Birr* 15.00, 10.00 and 5.00 per *gasha* of land, respectively. Thus, the 1942 Proclamation provided a uniform system of assessment and converting land taxation from kind to cash. It stipulated that the *asrat* tax was already to be paid in cash directly to the nearby government treasury with the local *bäjäronḍ*.²⁷³ Here, the town of Däbrä Marqos was the government's central treasury where the tax levied in the *Ṭäqḷay-Gezat* was kept in the branch office of the MoF.²⁷⁴

One of the earliest clear indication of the execution of the 1942 Proclamation by way of *asrat* tax was observed in Machakel, in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* in the same year and destined for the local patriots as sanctioned by [the special order of] the Emperor himself. In that case, since the MoF was responsible for organizing the way taxation was done or taken care of, the *bäjäronḍ* extricated 900.00 *Birr* of the government income tax by way of *asrat* from the local population of the specified *wäräda*.²⁷⁵ Taking into consideration of these payment were something the average tax deduction of the government by way of *asrat* at the *wäräda* level in the area. That the government would manage to extricate nearly 6,300.00 *Birr* 31,500.00 *Birr* from the local population of the seven districts of the *Awrajja* and the thirty-five *wärädas* of the *Ṭäqḷay-Gezat*, respectively, as the estimated *asrat* tax in that particular year 1942.

²⁷³ *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation N° 8, March 30, 1942.

²⁷⁴ EGAZHCA Archives, File 1, No Letter N°, Prisoners' Register, 1940/41 (1933 Eth. Cal).

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Be that as it may, the full implementation of the 1942 Proclamation was postponed, pending for the measurement and assessment of land where *rist* was the most widespread land tenure system in the provinces of northern Ethiopia including the *Awrajjja* or generally the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. As a result, the local people required to pay half of the rates applicable in 1935, at the level of the 1920s and the early 1930s imperial decrees relating to land.²⁷⁶ However, the payment in cash using the standard unit of the national currency in *Birr* already served as a safe substitute for the payment in kind with *amolé-[čäw]* also gradually but steadily the three traditionally standardized *ṭägära-[birr]* mentioned earlier as of the succeeding task of the government in the area. In the course of time, however, the postwar government tried to change the conventional system of taxation and its administrative system by issuing a series of decrees in *Däbrä Marqos Awrajjja* and all at once in *Gojjam Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, though not fully applied in the area.²⁷⁷

Revoking the 1942 tax Proclamation, therefore, the government issued a new legislation in 1944 that commenced a fixed rate of taxes in lieu of *asrat* and land taxes with *Birr* 35.00, 30.00 and 10.00 for every *gasha* of land on the three categories of land identified as *läm*, *läm-ṭäf* and *ṭäf*, respectively. However, the new legislation was also not fully applied in *Gojjam*, which therefore included *Däbrä Marqos*, and maintained *rist* tenure system was still in anticipation of measurement and assessment of the land for its full execution in the area. In spite of these proclamations, therefore, in the years between 1941 and the first measurement and assessment of land as maintained by the proclamation in 1950, the local peasants

²⁷⁶ *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation N° 8, March 30, 1942; and Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, p. 213.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*; pp. 211-214; and *Interviews with Märigétta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, and Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé.*

continued to pay land tax in relation to pre-war norms. However, since 1950/1 the condition of a pre-war tax deduction officially proscribed by law at the level of the 1920s and early 1930s decrees issued was improved in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. Like any other parts of Gojjam, therefore, the land tax of Däbrä Marqos was fixed with *Birr* 1.50 at the level of ancestral groups' possession. However, the government went to execute it without convincing the local population, and, in fact, the latter did not agree with it either.²⁷⁸ That it brought a total breakdown of peace and order in the area, as discussed thoroughly in subsequent chapter.

Thus, although they introduced some radical changes in taxation, the 1942 and 1944 measures have not been fully implemented in most parts of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* encompassing Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*. That in Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam the system of taxation in kind was sustained and continued—with the already changes in cash—for the local authorities received taxes from the local peasants largely by means of the land production and sold it. In fact, they converted it into cash and, in this way, directly submitted to the nearby government treasury by themselves with the *bäjäron*.²⁷⁹ Besides, all corvée services were not abolished, also for the church was exempted from the government land tax in the *Awrajja* and all at once in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.²⁸⁰ That the November 1942 Proclamation authorized churches to collect their land income through the MoF. However, the proclamation stripped off the office of the *gäbbäz* from the age-old right of exacting tribute from *yä-gebzena-märét*, as the church holding. The *gebzena-märét* was, therefore, subject to

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 6.

taxation to the church by way of the nearby government treasury for it turned out to be *rist* land derived from the office. Eventually, the category of the church land called *yä-gebzena-märét* was revoked for the office of *gäbbäz* that lost its economic foundation; thereby weakened its social position in the area.²⁸¹

Apart from land taxes, the government's effort to raise the tax revenue was extricated from the introduction and modernization of other forms of tax regulations. That the decree issued in 1944 as 'Personal and Business Tax Proclamation' was one at that big moment. It made any income—exclusive of the salary of the Territorial Army (formerly the *Näč-Läbasha* soldiers) and money earned from farmland—liable to business tax at a rate prescribed within.²⁸² For the reason that, civil servants of the *Awrajja* or generally the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* were apparently the principal source of revenue, whose monthly salary came from the state treasury. Given that the government officials were salaried, the decree was supposed to have expedited to relieve peasants from the age-old traditions of any obligation they caught up to officials in kind or labour services. Yet, Decree N^o. 93 of 1947 reinstated corvée services and tribute obligations for the church on one occasion for reinterpreting the 1944 proclamation²⁸³ that authorized the church with it exclusively.

Owing to this and other developments, historians Crummey and Bahru credibly write that the Land Tax Proclamations of 1942 and 1944 did not greatly enhance the government revenues

²⁸¹ *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation N^o 2, November 30, 1942.

²⁸² *Ibid*, 60, May 29, 1944.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 93, October 31, 1947.

in the Ethiopian context at large.²⁸⁴ These reasonable grounds apparently motivated the regime to come up with yet other tax legislations in 1947 and 1959 labeled as Education Tax and Health Tax, respectively.²⁸⁵ Such taxes targeted a wider section of the society including the Territorial Army or the *Näč-Läbash* who were previously exempted from any form of tax payment in cash. Multiple sources testify that the payment of such taxes were fully applied in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* no long after both were proclaimed that amounted to thirty percent of the tax on land.²⁸⁶ However, it was until 1950 that land was not totally estimated, classified and assessed in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at the level of other *ṭäqalay-gezatoch*. In consequence, there was no uniform system of taxation among the taxpayers of the peasants in the *Awrajja* or generally the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. During the governorship of *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä Täsämma over the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* in 1946 that he tried to change and/or improve the existing taxation system of the area in order to maximize the government revenue and to make the system at the level of the taxation system of other *ṭäqalay-gezatoch*, especially of south and southwestern Ethiopia. In that way, Käbbädä tried to persuade the local population to improve the taxation system, by conducting land assessment and, through that, classification by devising various techniques with elders and government authorities in the area.²⁸⁷

That Käbbädä primarily summoned local elders and all government authorities to the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* administrative capital Däbrä Marqos. Subsequently, he explained that unlike other

²⁸⁴ Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Addis Ababa, AAUP, 2000), p. 237; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 193.

²⁸⁵ *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation N° 94, November 30, 1947; and Proclamation N° 36, August 31, 1959.

²⁸⁶ It includes Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 15.

²⁸⁷ EGAZHCA Archives, File 2/45, No Letter N°, Civil Court Cases on *Rist* Land Litigation, 22 September 1952 (12/01/45 Eth. Cal.).

täqlay-gezatoch, the local people were taxed at the lower rate than the other *täqlay-gezatoch*, to a lesser extent, run by the local officials' salary. Käbbädä also explained how the whole tax reform measures could not be fully applied in the area. After several debates between Käbbädä and the local elders and authorities, therefore, significant measures were premeditated in a way of fully implementing the proclamations in the area. That in each district elders were to be elected for assessment as land committees known in local parlance as [አዳዳ] *eyuwoch* and, through that, classification at the level of the size and fertility of the possession in ancestral groups would be fixed.²⁸⁸ Owing to the diplomatic skills of Käbbädä, therefore, the meeting seemed to have succeeded to strike a compromise with the local population by way of the local elders and authorities for the meeting deliberations virtually accommodative of the reality on the ground; as the land would be assessed and classified with the possession of ancestral groups.²⁸⁹

However, the peasants of Däbrä Marqos and other parts of Gojjam rejected the new proposal entirely and went through a series of uprising in the area, as also discussed briefly in subsequent chapter. It was the peasants' suspicion that the assessment could affect their traditional land tenure system and lead to evict them from the land that they possessed for so long. This would be, they assumed, by way of re-organizing their lands to *qälad* tenure or *séso* system and transferring to others, *viz.*, the forms of tenure established by Shewan rulers in the conquered regions of central and southern Ethiopia during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the subsequent period. Besides, the level of tax on the church land

²⁸⁸ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 7.

²⁸⁹ Ibid; Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, pp. 214-215; and Interviews with Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, and *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa.

was lower than other land varieties on condition that the church did not usually collect it, in its place undertaken by the nearby government treasury as indicated earlier. In consequence, in 1950 the Emperor removed *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä from his position, and reinstated *Ras* Haylu III for the governorship of Gojjam.²⁹⁰

The Emperor also made tax relieve with third—as of premeditated by Käbbädä during his brief office of tenure—and a general amnesty granted for the rebelled peasants. Besides, the taxation system was premeditated by executing on crude estimates of the size and production of the land instead of its actual measurement/assessment and classification. On condition that, some peasants were subject to high levels of taxation but others crude estimates of the size and production of the same land, thereby done without much consistency and precision on it. However, changes in the system of taxation from kind to cash maintained and sustained under the government pressure. In that, while a derivative of the deliberation of Käbbädä during his office of tenure, the Emperor (the government) simply instituted new taxes under the governorship of *Ras* Haylu III over Gojjam. In that way, the stipulated tax rate for 'fertile land' were *asrat Birr* 16, land tax *Birr* 32, and education tax *Birr* 14.40. However, the rates for 'semi-fertile land' were *asrat Birr* 11.67, land tax *Birr* 23.33, and education tax *Birr* 10.50—and for 'poor land' were *asrat Birr* 4, land tax *Birr* 7, and education tax *Birr* 3.60.²⁹¹

Accordingly, in 1950 like in other parts of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* many land [tax] committees were swiftly set out to estimate the land, while it is difficult to imagine how they precisely executed the assessment only by way of observation of the land

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, pp. 214-215.

in the area. That some lands could be heavily taxed and others may not—even if they were found in the same property category, and above and beyond some may not even not recorded for the land was founded without assessment and classification. Be that as it may, the land committee composed of the *Awrajja* government officials, tax collector from awrajja MoF authorities—usually the *bäjäron*d—and three elders chosen from every village in the area. The committee estimated the size and the production of the land and levied a tax on every *abbat* area. The tax was paid collectively through the representatives of the ancestral groups—known in local parlance as [ጥጥጥ] *tätäri* also called *wäkkil* (lit. 'one who is called'),²⁹² and conveyed to the nearby government treasury where the tax was registered with the *bäjäron*d—in the name of the *aqññi-abbatoch* and/or *menzer-abbatoch* who may have died a century before. Here, the *tätäri* (*wäkkil*) was directly appointed and entrusted with collecting taxes after allegedly putative though ancestral *rist* landowners. Accordingly, the *tätäri* obtained two percent of the income tax by way of allowance for the services he rendered. In the process of taxation, therefore, there was no direct contact between the landholders and the tax collector from the local branch of the MoF.²⁹³

Besides, the full amount of taxes paid by each *abbat*, and the share that added to an individual holder often varied once a year. This is relating to the number of individual holders in each *abbat* area and/or the productivity of the land varied, eventually. The amount of tax was distributed every year among the individual ancestral holders, as levied by means

²⁹²Ibid; GAZHCA Archives, File 2/45, No Letter N°, Civil Court Cases on *Rist* Land Litigation, 22 September 1952 (12/01/45 Eth. Cal.); Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp. 6-7, 11; and Interviews with Märiğetta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, and Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa.

²⁹³ Ibid.

of the size and productivity of the land through *eyuwoch*. However, the practice of tax burden that was shared fairly among individuals was secret except for the respective *abbat* or descent group members who possessed the land. Besides, the land [tax] assessment extricated from the ancestral groups under the *eyuwoch* was to be binding. Though crude system, the tax assessment was at ease some major objects of taxation, among other things, to the advantage of avoiding tax exemption analogous to 'tax avoidance' because tax-enforcing officer under the government treasury had to deal only with few persons, usually the *tätäri* or *wäkkil* in the area.²⁹⁴ As mentioned in chapter above, the December 30, 1956 (*Teqemt* 23, 1948 Eth. Cal.) decree that turned all *madäriya* land into *rist*,²⁹⁵ was a radical transformation of the imperial tax policy in homogenizing the taxation system of the country into a higher level of cash tax.

However, members of the Territorial Army casted in thousands did not have any other land duties save providing military services and liable only to the education and health taxes. They were exempted from the obligations of paying land tax except *asrat*/tithe and education and health taxes.²⁹⁶ In the mid 1960s, in an effort to consolidate its tax reform measures, the government issued a series of crucial decrees pertaining to land tax appropriation. Primarily, when the *madäriya* land of members of the Territorial Army of Gojjam was converted into *rist* in the mid 1960s the soldiers who formerly liable only to the education and health taxes

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation N° 221, December 30, 1956.

²⁹⁶ IES Archives, Folder 11-13, File A16/001-043, No Letter N°, Tax Record, 20 April 1970 (12/8/62 Eth. Cal), Letter N° 54/13834, 19 March 1973 (10/7/1965 Eth. Cal), Folder 18, File A16/001-010, Letter N° 40, [Rural] Farming System in the Governorate General of Gojjam, 4 May 1974 (26/8/66 Eth. Cal.); WMA Archives, Folder A26, File A3/583-1, No Letter N°, White Wearing and National Armies in the Governorate General of Gojjam, 3 August 1969 (27/11/61 Eth. Cal); and Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1996), pp. 52-53, 172.

were required to pay taxes for owning their *madäriya* land now turned to *rist*.²⁹⁷ Secondly, by way of amending the Land Tax Proclamation of 1944, Proclamation N° 230 of 1966 issued by the government abolished *rist-gult* and *séso-gult* tenures,²⁹⁸ though once repealed by the Ethiopian Parliament in 1963.²⁹⁹

More to the point, Mängestu Haylä-Maryam who was interrogating the deposed Emperor Haile Sellassie reassured us that, *gult* and its hereditary brands of tenure have ceased to exist in the course of the post-liberation period.³⁰⁰ This apparently consolidated the transformation of taxation system from kind to cash in the empire including Gojjam that encompasses Däbrä Marqos. That the Proclamation of 1966 declares that those who claim *rist-gult* and its land rights on grounds of *rist-gult* holding would pay land tax directly to the nearby government treasury.³⁰¹ These all acts obviously allowed the government to maximize its tax revenue in cash pride of place in kind in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.

Finally, yet importantly, revoking the 1942 and 1944 Land Tax Proclamations, the government issued a new Agricultural Income Tax Proclamation N° 255 of 1967. It meant for maximizing the government revenue from land. The proclamation legally renounced the *asrat* tax payment and repealed the three distinctions of land taxation identified with *läm*,

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation N° 230, March 7, 1966.

²⁹⁹ Bizuwork Zewde, 'The Problem of Tenancy and Tenancy Bills with Particular Reference to Arssi' (M.A. Dissertation in History, AAU, 1992), p. 92.

³⁰⁰ 'Jänhoy Bä-Eser Lay' (in Amharic) (lit. 'His Majesty Emperor Haile Sellassie in Prison'), *Yä-Lieutenant Colonel Mängestu Häylä-Maryam Tezetawoch* (lit. *What Lieutenant Colonel Mängestu Häylä-Maryam Remembers*) (Vol. I. Third Edition, Addis Ababa, Alpha Printing Press, 2008/9 (2002 Eth. Cal.), p. 129: A Journalist Genet Ayälä conducted an Interview with the former Ethiopian president Mängestu Häylä-Maryam, from 1974-91.

³⁰¹ *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation N° 230, March 7, 1966.

läm-ṭäf and *ṭäf*, respectively. In that, the land committee was liable to the production rather than the size and fertility of the land, stipulated at the level of the 1942 and 1944 Proclamations. Thus, the new tax regulation was applicable to all arable lands since rented lands such as sharecropping tenancy arrangement and individual landholdings assessed by the already established land committees.³⁰² Every land committee comprised of members two local elders entrusted to the local population and one government official at the level of the *Awrajjä* administration approved for that occasion. The committees' meeting was set out in harmony with the representative of the Income Tax Authority of the local branch of the MoF usually the *bäjäronḍ* that offered before tax record to the former in the area. The tax record testifies a list of all individuals, largely with ancestral descent who owned farmlands and subject to taxation—on a par with 'property tax'.³⁰³

Not surprisingly, it is conceivable that social justice could be succeeded on one occasion for what the government tried to tax every individual, including the [peasant] *ṭisäñña* and the landowner regardless of his or her social status. In that, the new Agricultural Income Tax Proclamation of 1967 progressively came to tax all segments of the society including members of the Territorial Army formerly White Wearing Army in *Däbrä Marqos Awrajjä* and all at once in *Gojjam Ṭäqlay-Gezat*. This seems fairly too close to reassure what scholars of the Liberal tendency on Ethiopian studies imagined how the majority *ṭisäñnoch* and/or *gäbbaroch* transformed into or assumed for a perfectly respectable social position in the vein of landowning population as taxpayers. Indeed, this has been emanated only from what the

³⁰² Ibid, 255, November 23, 1967.

³⁰³ Ibid; and IES Archives, Folder 18, File A16/001-010, Letter 40, [Rural] Farming System in the Governorate General of Gojjam, 4 May 1973 (26/8/65 Eth. Cal).

government gave greater attention to changes in taxation system from kind to cash, in this way, maximized its revenues, though not fully applied in the *Awrajjja* or generally in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. This is to the extent that the actual practice of a typical tenancy arrangement—known in local parlance as *ṫisäññanät* or *česäññanät* sharecropping arrangement, also referring to the condition of *ṫisäñña* or *česäñña* was paid both in kind and cash in the area in the course of the post-liberation period, actually at the twilight of the imperial era.³⁰⁴ Below is the investigative report of the Imperial Ethiopian Government MLRA (1971) that clearly bears these out.

Awrajj[as]	Mode of Payment of Rent				Total
	Crop	Cash	Crop and Cash	Other Share	
	%	%	%	%	
Agew Meder	79	6	3	12	100
Bahar Dar	59	30	—	11	100
Bichena	48	46	2	4	100
Debre Markos	55	35	—	8 [10?]	100
Kola Dega Damot	69	9	2	20	100
Motta	70	16	5	7	100
T O T A L	63	24	2	11	100

Table 2. Part of the statistical compilations of the Imperial Ethiopian Government MLRA (1971:15), indicating the percentage distribution of rented holdings anchored in sharecropping-and cash payments in tenancy agreements in Däbrä Marqos Awrajjja and all at once in Gojjam Ṭäqalay-Gezat in the immediate post-liberation period, actually at the twilight of the imperial era.

The above investigative report shows that though it varied from *Awrajjja* to *Awrajjja*, the highest proportion of payments obtained from rented lands in local tenancy agreements was in kind and labour that is pride of place in cash as applied in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjja* and all at

³⁰⁴ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp. 11, 15.

once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* well into the end of the imperial regime. Endorsing the kind system of taxation was already proscribed by the final proclamation of 1967.³⁰⁵ Nevertheless, high levels of transformation of the cash payment instead of kind and labour was made during post-liberation period. This significant change in the system of cash taxation was indeed expedited in consequences of the series reform measures of the imperial regime. In fact, all acts of the government to expedite the market system in denomination with the national currency *Birr* was one of the fundamental reasons for pre-emptedly endorsing the system of taxation in kind in the period under stated, as indicated earlier. In that way, subsequent to crop harvest, the government primarily deducted the cost of *asrat*—by way of eight [or 10?] percent of the land production from that tenancy relations as the statistical data above showed us in its right side column for ready reference by way of 'other share'. Yet, the standard tax deduction for *asrat* was paid primarily in kind. Here, it is conceivable that, sold and converted into cash by government officials, for all practical purposes, just similar its execution under other [land] tax categories levied from the area, as also indicated earlier. Therefore, it seems apparent that the payment in kind and labour sustained in various forms right up to the revolution.

This points to the most important conclusion that changing the system of taxation from kind to cash could not ever succeeded compliant with the imperial tax reform plans— notwithstanding the significant changes made in other forms of farmlands in that *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* and thereby in Däbrä Marqos. However, the whole significant measures obviously allowed the government to maximize its tax revenue in cash pride of place in kind in Däbrä

³⁰⁵ *Negarit Gazeta*, N° 255, November 23, 1967.

Marqos *Awrajja* or generally in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. The imperial government just collected and improved its cash tax revenue before and after the final new Agricultural Income Tax Proclamation of 1967. Not surprisingly, the government could not change the system of taxation totally from kind to cash, given that the local people could not adapt to the changing conditions of the government's cash tax in the area. The local peasants conceived of additional tax burden if their lands were liable to measurement and assessment at the level of the new proclamation—thereby preempted a revolt before fully applied in the area, as discussed thoroughly in subsequent chapter. However, some segments of the society agreed a new levy on land in relation to the new proclamation of 1967 in the area. They were Muslim landless *ṭisännöoch* who felt that they would establish their ownership right,³⁰⁶ followed by individual landowner in Sinan.³⁰⁷ One of the fundamental reasons for pre-emptedly endorsing the cash taxation system was to the unyielding nature of the uprising in the area, as discussed thoroughly in subsequent chapter. Hence, the system taxation in kind and labour lingered on, pending for the revolution.³⁰⁸

That the twentieth century imperial government, especially the immediate post-war government tried to change the conventional system of taxation and its administrative system by issuing a series of decrees, though not fully applied in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. It is clear that the change from kind to cash was directly intertwined with the national political development, but the custom of the society continually

³⁰⁶ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ዞገ/አሰ/0082**, File **ጸ 164**, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, 21 June 1970 (14/10/62 Eth. Cal).

³⁰⁷ Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 192-193; Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, pp. 226-227; and Interviews with Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*; and Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp. 11-34.

contested for its fully execution in the area. Above all, the postwar new tax stipulations could not adequately describe the custom of the society with respect to land. The fact that the historical tenure system of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) imposed sanctions on private ownership of land is beyond doubt, as the difficult task of changing the taxation system for ancestral holding system dominated in the area, as also discussed in chapter above. Hence, these two parallel processes—the custom of the society and the new reform package could not proceeded at ease—as the interplay of both national/external and local/internal dynamics—that steadily deteriorated the social conditions of the peasantry. It is, therefore, the interplay of both internal and external factors that determinedly accounted for social injustice to agricultural productivity and, through that, to augment the development of landlessness and tenancy relations in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the period under stated. The subsequent section of this chapter will further elaborate this interplay of both external and internal factors that provoked radical changes in many aspects of social status in the area.

The Nature and Development of Tenancy: Landlessness and its Causes

As also discussed thoroughly in the opening paragraphs of chapter two, representative sources confirm that land was more than a factor of production with the institution of tenancy for the continued existence of the Ethiopian state incorporating [Central] Gojjam from early on. (See map 2 and Map 2d displayed in preceding chapter one). In that, feudal forms of 'productive relationship' characterized Gojjam that virtually symbolizing Ethiopia (Africa) in miniature during the medieval times and after, just analogous with feudal Europe. That in

Gojjam (Ethiopia) the 'feudal ruling classes' generally derive their social and political power from control and ownership of land from quite early on, going as far back as the prehistoric period that shall be discussed in its closing features with this chapter later.

This remarkably warranted to infer, what the medievalist Taddesse already passes a credible validation of the constitutional theory that 'all land under his dominions belonged to the king [in medieval Ethiopia]'.³⁰⁹ More precisely, in the third decade of the sixteenth century that Alvarez put a clear picture of the system of surplus appropriation and the development of social boundaries derived from the land in the empire. That, in clear terms, he sheds light on the existence and predominance of 'large estates' a typical *gult* type of tenure that resembles *rist-gult* land and their makeup, a classic form of 'lord'-*ṭisännña* relationship that prevailed in [Central] Gojjam.³¹⁰ Hence, one can draw from this evidence that the 'productive relationship' involved in Central Gojjam later Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam could be considered as exploitative analogous to feudal Europe, as indicated in earlier and preceding sections of this chapter. The following series of wall paintings from Däbrä Marqos also clearly demonstrate this out.

³⁰⁹ Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527* (London, Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 98.

³¹⁰ Francisco Alvarez, *The Prester John of the Indies* (trans. Lord Stanley of Alderley, and rev. and ed. C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford) (Vol. I) (London, the Hakluyt Society, 1961), pp. 425- 426.



Illustration 6. Traditional wall paintings from Däbrä Zäyet Maryam Church in what is now Sinan, formerly Gozamenh. Such a series of paintings were depicting a conspicuous development of two markedly different social positions by way of militaristic aristocracy and subject farmer or [peasant-] *ṭisāñña*, as 'social classes', compliant with the land system of modern Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). As described in Amharic at the bottom of the above paintings, *Aläṓqa Täklä-Iyäsus Waaq-Jiraa*—whom we have met in chapters above in his capacity as a credible scribe of the local record deposited with 'Yä-Zämān Tarik Maṣāraqāméya'—was the painter. Täklä-Iyäsus painted the murals, with unpaid labor due exacted from the local peasants, in the lifetimes of Emperor Minilek II and the regional 'lord', Ras Haylu II in 1908/9 (1901 *Eth. Cal*).

Source: I photographed the above wall paintings by permission of the church administrator *Märiḡetta Aymära*, during my field research in the area on 20 March 2016. The paintings were originally arranged in disarray forms with other conventional religious images and used in the devotions of the local Christians that adorned with the inside wall of the church building. That Täklä-Iyäsus displayed these pictures to show expedited surplus appropriation and the unlimited excesses of the local governor, *Ras Haylu II* (r.1901-1932) by defining and prescribing his power and rights in a series of decrees and regulations he issued during his extended tenure of office. In that way, the painter was depicting social relations to land in a generic sense as a system of 'tribute appropriation', while showing its decorating character. While displayed for decorating purposes, the whole paintings portrayal and purposely placed far apart and in no fittingly order perhaps meant to hide the painter Täklä-Iyäsus himself from risk taking under the repressive rule of Haylu at that big moment masks their different context. I will adopt the murals for they eminently signs the meaning suggested by their own close fitting features in the relation of one image from another to hair styles and/or similar clothing style with three-part series on the history of Ethiopian feudalism to the relationships of 'tribute appropriation'. Hence, when the various kings of medieval and post medieval Ethiopia were giving tribute right to social elites, as 'lords', it means that they were given the right of collecting tribute from the land and the people living on it. The fact that the evidence of series of the paintings of Täklä-Iyäsus suggests that tribute right was often given for status maintenance, because 'lords' were principal beneficiaries from the land system. This evidently shows that though 'communal' *rist* was the dominant form of landholding system in Gojjam in general and in Däbrä Marqos in particular, there was feudal forms of 'productive relationship' in the area, the logical outcome of a system of social and labor domination that relies on the exercise of control in conformity with the customary dealings. The cumulative effect of these unjust social dealings to land in the area reached its expedited development in the first decade of the twentieth century. This is evident from the fact that subsequent to the post-Täklä-Häymanot tax reorganization of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), the locality was under the repressive rule of Haylu II, as presented earlier. Hence, the paintings clearly showed us such condition and other interconnected factors that could aggravate the living condition of the majority *ṭisāñña* and subsequently, the expansion of agricultural tenancy of the area. As of it, Haylu often gave greater control of farmlands to himself and his subordinate 'lords' that had an adverse effect on the socioeconomic makeup of Gojjam in general. In any case, this wide-ranging representation of 'tribute appropriation' using images that intrigued me very much became artistic painted pictures, so as to produce the visual effect of a constant development of exploitative form of 'productive relationship' in which the majority peasants exploited sometimes in the past, actually in the first decade of twentieth century Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).

Here, by piecing together the above series of wall paintings in showing the feudal forms of social relations obtained in the land system of early twentieth century Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) that was built deeply later in the post liberation period through various decrees a detailed discussion will be made below. According to these paintings, it is conceivable that an armed 'lord' or a militaristic aristocracy ruled over subject farmer or [peasant-] *ṭisäñña*, the latter was under subjugation of the former in Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam sometimes in the past, actually in the first decade of the twentieth century. Thus, these wall paintings are fully understood in exploitative form of 'productive relationship' in which only a few people had all the power over land. In that case, the two most important social groups shown in the paintings are 'lord' and *ṭisäñña*. That 'lord' who controlled the activities of the *ṭisäñña* represented the apex of the social hierarchy in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Because of this condition mainly in the land system, it is conceivable that there had been tremendous social insecurity that bred chaos and despair, for the most part, in the period under consideration, as important stages for the deterioration of the social condition of the peasants in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).

Firstly, the painting placed *on the left side* with glowing picture of farmland was representing the two most important social groups as 'lord' in his finest attire as 'lord' and *ṭisäñña* in his severe dress as 'feudal tenant' at the turn of twentieth century Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). That 'lord' known in local parlance as *gétoch* or *géta*, also *yä-märét-käbärté* ('landed gentry') and much wealthy enough to employ others as 'lord'³¹¹ armed with his bow and arrows made an obscene gesture of contempt, pointing in his forefinger (index finger) upward while keeping

³¹¹ As defined in Dästa Täklä-Wäld, *Addés Yä-Amareñña Mäzäbä-Qalat* (in Amharic) (lit. *A New Amharic Dictionary*) (Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal), pp. 243, 323, 545.

the other fingers down with threatening a *ṭisäñña* who was carrying his hoe with humped cattle. In any case, in the first visual representation showed as an armed 'lord' stared at a *ṭisäñña* in perplexity or swear a pained expression of an order on his face. Obviously, it illustrated the traditional Ethiopian plough usually pulled by a pair of cattle as observed in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). That *ṭisäñña* was engaged in land ploughing under the watchful eyes and an aggressive treatment of an armed 'lord'. A 'lord' with his face turned something gloomy and his eyes bulged, seemed to spoke of "thou shalt have no other 'lords' before me" for the *ṭisäñña*, while the latter filled with a facial expression of grief or displeasure ploughing the field following the aggressive treatment of the former. The event had stirred the *ṭisäñña* upon the 'lord', swiftly to trouble, as the latter's experiences had clearly traumatized the former.

Secondly, and most importantly, in a similar style to the painting placed *on the left side*, the painting *at the centre* was illustrating a 'lord' ever armed with a bow and arrows and clothing and straightened out hairstyle and a *ṭisäñña*'s hair has been cut or shaped. At this instance, however, that 'lord' was holding *ṭäj-mabräjjä* usually a smaller silver or copper made of vessel, with a narrow opening and a handle in which one of the distinguished Ethiopian sparkling yellow alcoholic beverages termed as *ṭäj* cooled and poured in. It is usually produced by honey of *African* bees (*Apis mellifera scutellata*), *géshe* (*Rhamnus prinoides*) and pure water. In doing so, the *ṭäj-mabräjjä* cooled in called *ṭäj*, just akin to European variants of wine. *Ṭäj* as one of the *vin du pays* (a variants wine of the locality) was cooled in *ṭäj-mabräjjä* akin to any wine cooler of the none-Ethiopian societies. That light yellow alcoholic beverage was used very well for a few social elites' leisure time rather than the

majority population in the area. Hence, from the expression of the painter Täklä-Iyäsus, it is feasible that besides its obvious beverage alcoholic connotation, *ṭäj* did represent the total amount of the land production. It is also conceivable that a *ṭäj-mabräjjä* managed by a 'lord' served as a symbol of any of the various containers used for a variety of grains measurement, such as *ṭéff* (*Eragrostis tef*) which is still the single most important and widely cultivated crop, after a good crop harvest in that particular year. This simple unit of measurement was managed directly by the 'lord'—thereby making the *ṭisäñña* dependent upon him for his subsistence.

Cognizance of this, a drop of *ṭäj* poured from the *ṭäj-mabräjjä* was a symbol of a small amount of the land production that a *ṭisäñña* shared from the total amount of the land production, as a sharecropping arrangement, managed by 'lord'. In that way, a subject farmer was in fear and a lot of uncertainty—as watched over his face—about the armed 'lord' and contemplating for the latter's experiences imaginably traumatizing the former in a shocking and offensive way. It is clear that a *ṭisäñña* pleaded for a fair sharing of the land production the finest artistic image feasible for the majority peasants by way of pouring *ṭäj* only by the will of the 'lord', without any trouble from the *ṭisäñña*. However, an armed 'lord' was conceivably safe for the occasion of maintaining the highest proportion of crop harvest important for his status maintenance, while *ṭisäñña* tried so much to obtain a fair share of the land production.

In that instance, a small share of production meant a source of livelihood for *ṭisäñña*, whereas the highest amount of that return was for the 'lord' as 'tribute appropriation' or

'surplus appropriation' as a single aspect of feudal form of 'productive relationship' in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). It is observed that a 'lord' handling *ṭäj-mabräjjä* symbolizing the total amount of the land production by way of *ṭäj* was by far the best artistic picture used to explain the amount of a variety of crops produced using the labour of *ṭisännña*. Thus, there was a considerable difference between the two social positions, as 'social classes'. That painting depicted hybrid illustrations perhaps by combining lord's free from all pre-harvest responsibilities and simply collected his share of the final produce, with a few estimate of crop harvest for a tenant's labour under a share of the tenancy relations that prevailed in the area in that particular year. Hence, under this system, the limited amount of produce went to the tenant but the 'lord' who took most managerial decisions independently of the tenant, and simply collected his lion share of the final produce that a tenant required to pay to obtain his tenancy right on the land. That armed 'lord' managing *ṭäj-mabräjjä* was a symbol used to represent a lord's estimate of a peasant's labor share of the annual crop harvest—an objectively measurable aspect made up of a small unit by way of *ṭäj*.

It was in this way that, land served as an important source of revenue for the elite segments of that society for centuries. Because of the existence of these two different social positions as 'social classes' they would have exercised *gult* and *rist* variety of rights over the same plot of land, respectively. If not, the *ṭisännña* with no land at all would be in tenancy relations, merely as sharecropper with the social elite, as 'lord', clearly illustrating the existence of exploitative form of 'productive relationship' in the area. In fact, the 'lord' in the area maintained a sizeable land production at various times in the past. This definitely led to the sweeping development of the wealth of the elite segments of that society but the *ṭisännnoch*

grievance that would have social and political repercussions in the area. That the 'lord' had more control over the *ṭisäñña* for security and status maintenance was a common practice. In that way, the *painting* at the centre with the 'lord' handling *ṭäj-mabräjjä* by way of pouring *ṭäj* was already used to accentuate the *ṭisäñña*'s insecurity of a good share of the land produced only through the labour of *ṭisäñña*, while 'lord' managed it. That 'lord' was in full control of the land for once bestowed with a few amount of its production to the *ṭisäñña*—illustrated using a drop of *ṭäj*—with a variety of the grains pouring out—for social domination—a fate inexorably intertwined with the social conditions of the majority poor *ṭisäñña* in the area.

Last, but not least, the third and stunning painting placed *on the right side*, was illustrating a 'lord' once had to leave off his weapons a bow and arrows netting over a tree, conceivably for safety. That 'lord' was at a single occasion of sitting next to the farmland something for a leisure meal very well with *ṭäj* contained in the *ṭäj-mabräjjä* placed safely beside him. So much so that, the visual representation of that image with the face of 'lord' turned something bright and his eyes evermore bulged meant to express his contented character for a large amount of the land production he possessed by way of *ṭäj* contained in the *ṭäj-mabräjjä* that he placed beside him. Above all, According to the local religious ethical foundations, a *ṭisäñña* was also once constrained to empower his 'lord', as a means of grace, the logical outcome of a system of social and labor domination detached from the brutes. All these seem to have favored a potentially harsh exploitation of the peasants of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) by local elites, as 'lords'.

It is also conceivable that the last painting was representing a 'lord' who always wore a striking leisure clothes with something yellow fur and black spots which bear a resemblance to a leopard (*Panthera pardus*) known in local parlance as *näber* which is a rogue wild cat that lives apart from the main group and is often dangerous. Thus, the painter Täklä-Iyäsus was drawing a 'lord' who was merciless to take a large portion of the produce of *ṭisäñña* land and took responsibility for the latter's suffering that says that *a leopard cannot change his spots* would almost naturally follow from an accepted expression of that wildcat family to be fundamentally correct. It is also conceivable that a 'lord' with shaggy blackish hairstyle was the painter's portrayal in manner of cruelty, and dressed something carcass of a hunted leopard was felt to resemble that cat family, as an emblem of authority sanctioned by custom. Obviously, it was a heraldic representation of merciless strong cats, in this way, harsh exploitation and misappropriation of a *ṭisäñña* by 'lord'.

On condition that, a 'lord' was eating the traditional meal of sliced raw meat known in local parlance as *qäye* [*berendo*] *ṭeré qurṭ-sega* mostly cattle in a full-grown state with the alcoholic beverage *ṭäj* to drink partly showed his harsh exploitation and misappropriation of the local population. That character of 'lord' brought misery to many of the rural population. It showed the continued peasants' hardship, as it left many people to destitute in the area. Here, *ṭäj* is a costly alcoholic beverage intended for drinking with local leisure meals, not to mention *ṭeré qurṭ-sega* (sliced raw meat). That traditional *ṭäj* was a more appropriate choice with any of the various [leisure] meals. In fact, presently eating raw meat and drinking *ṭäj* is an important marker of social status to more affluent—than others—used for leisure time, as well as held in recognition of some occasion or achievement within the Ethiopian context.

In keeping with a striking illustration of the third image, a 'lord' was trying to cut the raw meat carefully along his lips with large sharp piercing and whitened front tooth with a large knife, carrying in his left and right hands, respectively. The surface with a bright green colored with pigment illustrated the sun-bleached. This noticeably gave the effect of Ethiopian day of spring season usually between September and November for flower blossoms appear in that season was used for a 'lord' at leisure. In that way, the third image was illustrating a 'lord' once at a continuous sitting on the floor of a flowering shrub in his traditional leisure meal, red raw meat, and alcoholic drink *täj* contained and cooled in *täj-mabräjjä* he possessed. It seems warranted to infer that since the elite segments of that society looked forward especially to a life of well-deserved leisure, in the eyes of the painter Täklä-Iyäsus, a 'lord' with bright bold illustrations on open field pleasantly dazzling surface often planted with scattered trees or bushes all in flowers on them was at leisure. That 'lord' in any particular appearance of his face in his luminous eyes illustrated did have much time for leisure, leased a prosperous and glorious level of life, whereas *ṭisäñña's* mutilated and flung his limbs and head down all over the place showed beside the 'lord'.

That *ṭisäñña* who is usually subject to tenancy was completely spoiled and ruined leased steadily deteriorated and long ill-treated life. The occasion that a 'lord' squeezed the peasant heavily to enable him accumulate wealth and build his power with an aspiration for social domination as his notoriety and harsh exploitation of the peasantry and, through that, the latter's decayed level of life, while the former was rogue. That 'lord' as a man who behaved in a considerably bad or dishonest way, but whom *ṭisäñña* population still like. In any case, it seems warranted to infer that there was leisure 'class' by way of exploitation, accumulation of

wealth for status maintenance that had a strong bearing on the plight of the local population at large. In that case, one could have conceived of the continued existence of acute social condition that would not be an oversimplified issue, even if *rist* was the dominant tenure system of the area. In that way, as discussed on several occasions in chapters above, *rist* was not more complete and exclusively held than traditional *gult* holding acceptable in its entirety. This explains what Tekalign (1995) describes a practice of 'landlordism', ownership of land was vested in a 'lord' who leased it to cultivators—as an important descriptor of the old Ethiopian social reality is fundamentally correct.³¹²

It is also important to take note of the imagined 'lordships' characters in Gojjam, as perceived by the classic Amharic novel of Häddés Alämayähu entitled *Feqer Iskä Mäqaber (Love unto Crypt)* (1965)—widely circulated and read that is broadcasted in several separate parts on Radio Service of Ethiopia. We have, for instance, *Fitawrari Mäshäsha* one of the central characters in the novel who has the real meaning as big *gult* holder, as a notorious 'lord' of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). It is a well-known fact that the novel of Haddis is based on actual events, but he purposely fictionalized many of the possible events to evoke a desired emotional response in the reader that dares to challenge the theocratic powerhouse of the old Ethiopian imperial state during the twentieth century prior the end of the imperial era.³¹³ The novelist Häddés grew up in agricultural communities of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) and farming was still in his blood. Obviously, he was one of the widely known political figures of the imperial government, which is a sober reflection of something to his petition to the

³¹² Tekalign Wolde-Mariam, 'A City and its Hinterlands: The Political Economy of Land Tenure, Agriculture and Food Supply for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 1887-1974' (Unpublished PhD Thesis in History, University of Boston, 1995), pp. 50, 113-115.

³¹³ Häddés Alämayähu, *Feqer Iskä Mäqaber* (lit. *Love unto Crypt*) (First Edition, Addis Ababa, Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1958 Eth. Cal.).

government and protest against the imperial politics for the same reason, and as Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) is the place where he was born.

In any case, it is important to take note of the fact that the above series of wall paintings clearly showed the local peasants were given the difficult choices of either exploitation into 'lord'-*ḥisäñña* relationship or losing their livelihood, including land. It is also conceivable that many people, especially the peasant majority, observed to tribute demand were bitterly subject to a potentially harsh exploitation by few local 'lords'. On condition that, since they had lived in a more or less severe social condition for long, *ḥisäñnoch* have been reacted in various ways primarily for fair share of the land production. This partly explains the deeply ingrained grievances of the peasants against social elites, as 'lords', in the area during the first half of the twentieth century. However, it was observed just fine in the course of the post liberation period well into the end of the imperial era, as will be discussed in the chapters that follow.

In any case, the painter Täklä-Iyäsus illustrates a clear picture of Haylu's period as formative stage in the development of 'feudal' relations of production and appropriation in the area. In clear terms, he sheds light on the existence and predominance of exploitative form of 'productive relationship' and its makeup, a classic form of 'lords-tenant relations' which prevailed in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) that resembles medieval Europe. These artistic works, therefore, credibly patronized Täklä-Iyäsus with a striking illustrations against acute social conditions in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), a sober reflection of his meaningful work. That Täklä-Iyäsus' paintings clearly showed the continued existence of the very foundations of agrarian

society in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) as the militaristic aristocracy ruled over the *ṭisäñña* and spent a lot of time for his leisure a constant features in the recent history of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). That social condition of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) never showed a sign of improvement since then. Indeed, even in earlier times Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) for several occasions was a classic form of Ethiopian 'feudalism' analogous to medieval Europe.

As discussed briefly in the introductory paragraphs of the chapter above, it is conceivable that exploitative form of 'productive relationship' that prevailed in the region, more precisely Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) where the majority of the population were *ṭisäñnoch* on the land controlled by state dignitaries and functionaries, as 'lords', is beyond doubt. That the Gojjam people were even remotely close to the medieval European experience so as to justify the use of the term 'feudal', in relation to those found in Eurasia and land in Ethiopia (Africa) was more than a factor of production from early on. Land was not free from the elite control to serve as a basis for social stratification and thereby a conspicuous understanding of the development of 'lord'-*ṭisäñña* relationship. That event, sometimes in the past, with exploitative form of 'productive relationship' was very common in Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam (Ethiopia). Thus, tenancy and tenancy relations were the most widespread phenomenon, a fate intertwined with harsh realities of life for the majority poor *ṭisäñnoch* in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) at various times in the course of the medieval times and after analogous to European experience.

Dealing with this monumental sociopolitical and cultural changes that the region was going through, some European travelers Alvarez and Manoel De Almeida arrived as chaplain of the

Portuguese diplomatic mission to Ethiopia in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, respectively agree that the medieval Ethiopian societies experienced feudal form of 'productive relationship'.³¹⁴ Especially, Almeida, who arrived in 1622 almost after a century of Alvarez's arrival conspicuously describes that the medieval Ethiopian social elites as 'lords', with a king at the top who did have 'absolute control over the lives and property of the whole population',³¹⁵ as he ruled over. Hence, it is evident that exploitative form of 'productive relationship' was in existence in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), as of it was created the impact of exploitation hundreds of years ago, as a useful descriptor of pre-colonial African reality is beyond doubt.

Succinctly put, the agrarian technology in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) or Ethiopia was at the highest level of development in relation to those found in Europe and land in Ethiopia (Africa) was more than a factor of production. Land was not free from the elite control to serve as a basis for social stratification and thereby a conspicuous understanding of the development of 'lord'-*ṭisännä* relationship. That the existence of feudal forms of 'productive relationship' in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, the fact that Ethiopian feudalism was the logical outcome of a system of social and labor domination that relies on the exercise of thought and intelligence detached from brute force that virtually symbolizes Africa analogous to feudal Europe³¹⁶ is fundamentally correct. Therefore, similar to many parts of Europe, in Gojjam or generally Ethiopia (Africa) the ruling 'classes' derive their political power from control over land rather than people.

³¹⁴ Alvarez, *The Prester John of the Indies* (Vol. I), pp. 425- 426; and Manoel De Almeida, 'The Travels of the Jesuits' *Travellers in Ethiopia* (ed. Richard Pankhurst) (London, Oxford University Press, 1965).

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 36-38.

³¹⁶ Here, one of the standard reference works on feudal Europe is Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals the Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (New York, Oxford University Press Inc., 2001).

Hence, one can draw from this confirmation that the relations of production, which prevailed in the medieval social history of Ethiopia, more precisely Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) could be considered as exploitative analogous to feudal Europe. That African society were even remotely close to the medieval European experience so as to justify the use of the term 'feudal' as a useful descriptor of pre-colonial African reality. As discussed briefly in the opening paragraphs of the chapter above, the prolonged social reforms—in the terms and conditions of social relations derived from land—gradually but steadily catalyzed the long-standing feudal forms of 'productive relationship' in the Ethiopian context during the medieval and modern periods. In that, transforming a 'master-slave relationship' into 'landlord'-*ṭisäñña* relationship attached to land executed steadily in the old provinces of Ethiopia, including in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Thus, in legal and social practices, the sweeping development of the *ṭisäñña* population was so prevalent in the region sometimes in the past.

That sum total of the developments of exploitative forms of 'productive relationship' tremendously increased the tenant population of the area could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the prevalence of tenancy increased dramatically after the reform plans of the twentieth imperial government, especially during the post liberation period in the aftermath of finalizing the land reform measures at the twilight of the imperial era. In any case, leaving aside some minor changes, the social hierarchies of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam remained certainly stable until 1974. In cognizance of this, it is useful to deal with the characteristics of tenancy and tenancy relations, with a strong bearing on the social conditions of in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) during the twentieth century, generally prior

to the end of the imperial era. The custom of the society once created two aspects of tenancy such as *yä-mofär-zämät-arash* land transaction on equal terms and *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* land sharecropping on yearly basis that lies not so much on unequal basis as 'social class' in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the period under stated. Dealing with this point, both informants and representative government documents agree that while it has once fallen into a general termination, the practice of these aspects of tenancy relations into Ethiopian land system has been the most common experience among the people of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in pre-1974. *Yä-mofär-zämät-arash* a peasant farmed the land of neighbors in return for giving his/her own small plot of land found at a distant place—and *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* a [landless] *ṭisännä* farmed the land of a 'lord' in various terms in sharecropping arrangement with the latter in the area—considered the two aspects of tenancy relations with gain and safety or not.³¹⁷

While acknowledging the existence of some similarities in the some aspects of a brief possession or occupancy—usually on yearly basis—including in arranged tenancy of others arable land—and have in need of the agreement of everyone involved and kept it confidential, the practice of these two aspects of tenancy relations were markedly different. Unlike in *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* arrangement, in *yä-mofär-zämät-arash* tenancy was useful to deal with security from risks, given that both occupants would be leased on their own lands. This assured them that the terms of the agreements as safe and sound. That both

³¹⁷ WMA Archives, Folder 7356, File 10, No Letter N^o, The Governorate General of Gojjam to the Imperial Ethiopian Government; Folder A26, File A3/583-1, No Letter N^o, White Wearing and National Armies in the Governorate General of Gojjam, 3 August 1969 (27/11/61 Eth. Cal); Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp. 8, 11, 34; and Interviews with *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Märiḡetta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Ato* Awoqä Berhän Därsäh.

occupants were less likely to take risks so as to feel safe in this neighborhood and premeditated for equal rights merely for the land held by the two sides. As also expected, both occupants were feeling confident and certain and not worried, if either of the two were demanding for the agreement in the process. It is also worth mentioning that, unlike in *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* where the 'lord' had the right to terminate the agreement and expel the *ṭisäñña* merely for the sole owner of the land in *yä-mofär-zämät-arash* tenancy agreement if the agreement broke off, both occupants would be secured from threat of loss merely for both parties were in transaction of their own land. In any way, both occupants would have equal chance of gaining a good harvest of the land in the area.³¹⁸

That the major point of difference between *mofär-zämät-arash* and *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* tenancy lies not so much in the 'brief period of tenure arrangement', but in the sphere of 'security of tenure'. In that, unlike in *mofär-zämät-arash* arrangement, a *ṭisäñña* demanding to compete for the land with gain and safety was not on equal terms with the 'lord' in *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* tenancy. Thus, the 'lord' would feel safe over the *ṭisäñña* in this neighborhood. In particular, *ṭisäñnoch* who did not land owned at all would be more likely to such risks than *ṭisäñnoch* who had fragmented and scarce lands, for the termination of the tenancy arrangements attached to *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* tenancy. This apparently intensified the development of landless *ṭisäñña* compliant with the land system of Däbrä Marqos (formerly Central Gojjam) or generally the much larger Gojjam province prior to the end of the imperial era. In Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), these landless *ṭisäñnoch* of the society comprised of Muslims and craftsmen/artisans namely weavers, tanners, potters and smiths

³¹⁸ Ibid.

already known in local parlance as *tanash-säw* (subhuman), as discussed briefly in the last paragraphs of the chapter above.

Thus, landless *ṭisäññoch* were working in favor of their sustenance only on the possessions of their 'lords'. However, peasant *ṭisäññoch* owning scarce land resources were not feeling anxious and gloomy about the unconditional termination of their arrangement by way of *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* tenancy. Thus, *yä-mofär-zämät-arash* tenancy relations permitted not likely to take risks at the resort by prior arrangement between the occupants as landholders. To be precise, unlike in *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* tenancy, the occupants in *yä-mofär-zämät-arash* arrangement were safe and sound, This suggests that *ṭisäññoch* in *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* tenancy relations could not kept all their legal rights and privileges with gains and safety during their brief period of tenure arrangement. This and other developments would have to expedite sever living conditions of the majority peasants evermore by way of landlessness—as the constant features of the area. Given that, in this aspect of tenancy, the 'lord' merely had the 'absolute' right to terminate the agreement, in this way, evict the *ṭisäñña* from the land as its legal owner. In that, a *ṭisäñña* had no tightened security of tenure for land.³¹⁹

All the same, the available sources assured us that three aspects of tenancy relations such as *irbo-arash*, *séso-arash* and *ikul-arash*, as a quarter, a third, and a half sharecropping tenancy arrangements, respectively, in *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* tenancy arrangements, were the widespread phenomenon in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam in the past. That *yä-*

³¹⁹ Ibid.

qänjja-märét-arash arrangement was very common aspects of tenancy relations greatly over the twentieth century, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. To be precise, such tenancy relations were the widespread phenomenon than the former two categorizations, merely *mofär-zämät-arash* and *yä-qänjja-märét-arash* arrangement that glossed over the *ṭisäñña*'s inherent problems, and known in common parlance as *ṭisäññanät* or *česäññanät* (sharecropping relations or the condition of being a *ṭisäñña*) in the area. The first two tenancy relations were very common in the 1940s and 1950s and the *ṭisäñña* or *česäñña* obtained the arable land, seed, farm equipments and oxen from the 'lord'. However, in *ikul-arash* tenancy relations an exceedingly rare occurrence in that particular period the *ṭisäñña* took part in share of farm equipments in some way. The *ṭisäñña* necessitated for oxen but equal share of seeds with the 'lord'. On condition that, the 'lord' offered the land, farm equipments and seeds, while the *ṭisäñña* involved only in labor.³²⁰

The major difference between *irbo-arash* and *séso-arash* was to act in conformity with [local] legal obligations to land arrangement. In aspects of *séso-arash* tenancy, the *ṭisäñña* had to pay a payment known in local parlance *yä-mofär-mägadämiya* or *mababäya* payment for the 'lord' to have security of tenure merely before the commencement of land ploughing. In Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), the commencement of *séso-arash* relations is usually attributable to the governorship of *Ras* Haylu II in the course of the first quarter of twentieth century well into the end of his office of tenure in 1932. This condition intertwined with other factors, including peasant-*ṭisäñnoch*'s evicted from their lands as discussed briefly in chapter above with *gebrä-ṭäl* apparently intensified the development of tenancy relations, in this way, acute

³²⁰ Ibid.

social conditions as a fate inherently intertwined with the majority peasants in the area. So much so that, subsequent to crop harvest—as discussed above—a quarter or a third or a half of the land production went to the *ṭisännoch* after the government deducted the cost of *asrat* from it, generally prior to 1941 and after.³²¹ In that case, several sources testify that tenancy and tenancy relations were very common in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) greatly over the three and a half decades of the post-liberation period, as carefully explained below.

In the main part, political, socioeconomic and environmental factors intensified the development of landlessness and tenancy relations in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the immediate post-liberation period. First and foremost, the political issue was the fundamental reason for the development of landlessness, in that way, tenancy relations in the area. As also discussed thoroughly in chapter above, commencing from the fourteenth century the elite segments of that society earn their wealth and power in their property rights over land as its chief owners, as 'lords'—given that land served as the chief employer of labor for the latter. In that, several kings take part in *gult* land grant orders to social elites, especially to clerical 'lords' alongside to the church institutions for their favor to the former. That they received tributary *gult* rights from the people living and working on the lands. More to the point, as pointed out in chapter above, 'from c.1700 onwards, contrary to the preceding centuries, Ethiopian emperors involved in extensive *gult* grants to clerical 'lords', recurrently by displacing the previous cultivators' hereditary rights over land. That the state delegated clerical elites, as 'lords' over the lands of peasants. On condition that, peasants would meet their obligation of tribute payment and providing labor services to the *gult* holders. These all

³²¹ Ibid.

apparently explained the development of exploitative form of 'feudal relationship' that closely matches medieval Europe as a pre-colonial African experience.

As discussed briefly on several occasions in chapter above, kings and/or powerful 'lords' of Ethiopia confiscated the peasants' *rist-märét* for all time under the pretext of in defiance of the law and failure to pay land tribute/tax by way of (*gebrä-ṭäl*) and converted it into government *gult* land. It was without regard for the fate of the peasants who possessed that land for so long. In that way, the rulers who took control of the peasants' *rist* did have the right to rent it as applied in a certain village of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* under the governorship of *Ras* Haylu II. Therefore, the peasants' *rist* land rights had been in continual state of violation, as the customary law of the land in the area. In that way, it seems apparent that the peasants who forfeited their *rist* land were left to their fate. In that, the dispossessed peasants could either leave their village and go elsewhere or work under other forms of tenure like the government land called *hudad*, as landless *ṭisäññas*. This became the most widespread phenomenon at various times in the office of the governorship of *Ras* Haylu II during the first quarter of the twentieth century, as discussed briefly in chapter above. Hence, one could have conceived of a conspicuous development of landlessness, in this way, tenancy relations in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) during the twentieth century, generally prior to the end of the imperial era.

Apart from the pretext of *gebrä-ṭäl*, high levels of taxation were the most widespread phenomenon for the development of landlessness, in this way, tenancy relations evermore under Haylu's office of tenure. As also discussed thoroughly in earlier sections of this

chapter, in conditions of changing the system of taxation from kind to cash, it is quite clear that Haylu never refrained from expediting the tax burden and encouraging the severity of the local administration towards the people. Haylu was an affluent person in a growing economic power in the area and even in the country at large.³²² In that way, he emerged as the most serious rival for the throne.³²³ Yet, it noticeably served as a breeding ground for political contest with the power holding Shewans in the late 1920s. In cognizance of this and other developments, the manuscript from the Däbrä Marqos Church, however, clearly testifies that [ፊ.ሥ. ሩዕሳዊው ገዢ አክሱም (...)] 'Ras Haylu II continually used his money to tell a feeling of being grateful (...) about his adventures at leisure'.³²⁴ His private life was notably extravagant as a nice obsession to tell using his surplus appropriation. He liberally endowed his officials with *qämés* a firm closely woven cloth usually of cotton (*genus Gossypium*) used for clothing especially worn as an emblem of high rank or authority as nobles. Haylu's obsession did even spare festivities like military procession in 1920/1 at Dässé, capital of Wello Province,³²⁵ as shall be discussed briefly in the next chapter.

To mention but a single instance, in October 1920 in his campaign to Wello Province, his soldiers stood and marched together in the ceremonial formation of a body of troops before the Crown Prince *Ras* Täfäri (later Emperor Haile Sellassie) and his entourages in the provincial capital Dässé Town. Likewise, [ፊ.ሥ. ሩዕሳዊው ገዢ አክሱም (...)] 'Ras Haylu II (...) domesticated and raised a couple of lions obviously for his leisure time'. Haylu also liked and went for hunting with his subordinates at leisure, once at a continuous grouping covered in

³²² History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 128 verso.

³²³ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991* (Addis Ababa, AAUP, 2002), p. 98; and An interview with Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa.

³²⁴ History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 128 verso.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

dense forest at leisure in the area. This was an event similar to the finest wall paintings displayed earlier, with a 'lord' sitting on the forest floor for his leisure meal while it has a glowing picture of exploitative forms of 'productive relationship' that was a common phenomena in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) during imperial Ethiopia. All the same, Haylu provided a banquet with British diplomats in the local palace on the occasions of the annual traditional game played for the Ethiopian Christmas with a wooden toy and hockey stick termed as *gänna* resembling a field hockey game on a turfed field that he continually enjoyed for adventure. All the same, Haylu often spent the Ethiopian rainy season (summer) between June and August at leisure in the political centre Addis Ababa.³²⁶

More to the point, based on local records and other medieval paintings, the late historian Richard Pankhurst also writes that the nobilities' hobbies and interests for hunting and playing Ethiopian chess known in common parlance as *gäbäṭa* as the most favorite games for their leisure time during the medieval times and after.³²⁷ Besides, such increasing contacts of Ethiopian nobilities with the capitalist world as *Ras* Haylu II in his tour in companion to the Crown Prince Täfäri (later Emperor Haile Sellassie I) in 1924 into different territories of Europe,³²⁸ did led to the intensification of the development of unequal 'productive relationship' in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam province. That the 'lord' Haylu II apparently spent much of his time in the middle of endowments, eating, hobbies, and so

³²⁶ Ibid, folio128 verso-128 recto, 129 verso-129 recto, 130 recto.

³²⁷ Ethiopian chess was an old-fashioned type of the game, which differed from that in vogue in Europe in that the queen moved only one square at a time, while the Bishop could jump over other pieces just like a Knight. Besides, players moved simultaneously until the first capture was affected, after which they played alternately as 'modern chess'. This is indicated in one of the standard reference works on the history of medieval Ethiopia: Richard Pankhurst, *A Social History of Ethiopia The Northern and Central Highlands from Early Medieval Times to the Rise of Emperor Téwodros II* (Addis Ababa, AAU Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1990), pp. 3-4, 168.

³²⁸ Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 137.

forth, for the most part the natural extension of his predecessors as member of the ruling aristocracy in the area. These leisure activities became the common practices of the ruling elites for centuries and accumulation of wealth remained an integral part of the ruling aristocracy of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), as discussed on several occasions above.

Hence, while hereditary *scarce-rist* land was the dominant tenure system of the area, there was leisure class and exploitation of the majority poor peasants for accumulation of wealth— with no dispense for status maintenance explains the existence of 'feudal' forms of 'productive relationship' during the medieval period and after, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. That the majority poor peasants were heavily taxed, at the higher rate than the affluent and/or the elite segments of that society, on several occasions for land and land related issues, under the tax administration of *Ras* Haylu II, as discussed thoroughly above. The contemporary clerical record from Däbrä Marqos testifies that the poor peasants under the lots of Haylu's exorbitant tax have been in a convicted offense.³²⁹ That Haylu's exorbitant tax steadily deteriorated the social condition of the common people especially the majority poor peasants. This apparently intensified the development of landlessness, in this way, tenancy relations in the area. On the flipside, the elite segments of that society including powerful 'lords' with clear manifestation of accumulation of wealth, hobbies and interests including a sense of adventure, procession, hunting and games leased a prosperous and glorious level of life in the area. Hence, these feudalistic social status and privilege had deteriorated the social conditions of the majority peasants and the sum total of these processes enlarged the *ṭisäñña* population, a fate intertwined with harsh realities of the

³²⁹ History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 129 verso.

majority peasants in tenancy and tenancy relations the peasant farmers at various times, in the course of the medieval periods analogous to feudal Europe.

Here, it is also important to take note of the fact that a peculiar characteristic of an innocent human with Ethiopian descent that was locally recognized and later appropriated by the custom of the society in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam. There is a sort of clarification on it by Mahtämä-Sellasé who provided authoritative document on child rearing and other related issues. He writes that the beginning of innocent child rearing practices in Ethiopia just traced back to the earlier times. Nonetheless, he assured us that, it became a widespread phenomenon even in the lifetimes of Mahtämä-Sellasé himself generally prior to the end of the imperial era. Mahtämä-Sellasé has provided a more concrete account of the ways and defects of bringing up innocent Ethiopians, in many cases the ruling families of the aristocracy, which prevailed in former times just similar to feudal Europe. In that way, in creating innocent 'citizens' with Ethiopian custom and practices, those ancestral descent at different years of age had to have learnt religious moral values and practices, and trained or skilled in musketry, shooting, archery, stone-throwing, riding, swimming, hunting and other related athletic activities, as the most widespread phenomenon all the way through the medieval and modern times.³³⁰ Hence, hobbies seem to have evolved from this historical experience in Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos.

³³⁰ Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, *Zekrä Nägär*, (in Amharic) (lit. *Oral and Written Legacies [of Historic Ethiopia]*) (Addis Ababa, Näšanät Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal), pp. 879-903; *Idem*, 'Ya-Qädemo Zämän Čäwa Ethiopiawé Ṭäbay Enna Bahel' (in Amharic) (lit. 'Characteristic Qualities of the Ethiopian Innocent Citizen with Descent Culture in Former Times') *Ya-Belatén Géta Mahtämä-Sellasé Wä/Mäsqäl Sebeseb Serawoch* (lit. *The Works of Belatén Géta Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl*) (Second Edition, Addis Ababa, n.p, 2007 Eth. Cal), pp. 1-12; see also Pankhurst, *A Social History of Ethiopia*, pp. 3-4, 63, 80, 168, 242, 270.

Allowing that, the most widely read novel of Häddés together with a copy of 'the History of Gojjam' found in the church of Däbrä Marqos discussed above underline that different games were played by elites in similar status of nobles, who lived roughly in modern periods prior to the end of the imperial era. Thus, hobbies were well-known to warrant extended discussion here. Suffices to write here that in hobbies, the remarkable novel by Häddés, the character of *Fitawrari Mäshäsha* to play games indicate the existence of the different kind of hobbies played in similar status of nobles in historic Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). To be precise, the character *Fitawrari Mäshäsha* is used to designate the shooting, horse raiding and musketry that he constantly played with his opponents in his earlier days in parts of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).³³¹

Like shooting, horse raiding and musketry, hunting and other related games are also mentioned in this work of fiction, as the novelist's personal experience to address the different kind of hobbies that came to be used widely with extended time at leisure to denote nobles of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam sometimes in the past.³³² Hence, some writers, such as Jack Goody, in his work, *Technology, Tradition and the State*, writes that Ethiopian rulers as 'landlords' enjoyed leisure is fundamentally correct at least in the context of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) even if he claimed a vehement denial of the feudal construct as devoid of any analytical utility for Ethiopian history or generally African history.³³³ Yet, since the earlier times down to the collapse of the imperial government in 1974, in return to their *rist* land, the majority poor *ṭisäñña* peasants were found in acute social conditions owing to

³³¹ Häddés, *Feqer Iskä Mäqaber*, p. 278.

³³² *Ibid*, p. 266.

³³³ Jack Goody, *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa* (New York/London, Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 30.

surplus appropriation and obligations and services by nobles often given for status maintenance, because 'lords' were principal beneficiaries from the land system indicated earlier. In short, despite some changes, since the earlier days hobbies became the common historical experience thereby further expedited for exploitation of the majority local peasants, as *ḥisāññas*.

It seems apparent that following the end of Haylu's office of tenure in 1932, however, peasants in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) welcomed the new Shewan rulers first by *Käntiba Matäbé Käbbädä* (1932-1933), later by *Ras Emeru Häylä-Sellasé* (1933-1935) and hoped for improvement in the system of administration and taxation under them, especially the enlightened *Ras Emeru*. Informants claimed to articulate the plight of the peasants during the governorship of *Ras Haylu II* and the high expectation that the population of Gojjam had towards the new administration under Emeru. That the local peasants apparently welcomed Emeru so as to relieve them from exorbitant tax with finding the legal ways to pay less tax.³³⁴ On condition that, partly because of its obvious importance to thoroughly centralize the administration of Gojjam by diminishing the power of local rulers most often the provincial ruler aimed at creating an administrative system dutiful to the central government. Emeru, who had assumed the office of provincial governorship of Gojjam, has provided a down to earth account of defining and prescribing his power and rights, in a delegated authorities dispatched from Emperor Haile Sellassie himself and informed Emeru during his brief tenure of office as it clearly bears this out.³³⁵

³³⁴ Interviews with *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Ato Bäzé Aschalä Chäckol*, and *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämähñ Kokäbu.

³³⁵ Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, p. 205.

መልክተኞቹ፣ «አንገዴህ የጉጃምን አገር ስትሾም ማደሪያህ የተወሰነውና ማናቸውም እገዛዝ ሁሉ እንደ [ጉጃም] ራስ ኃይሉ ጊዜ አለመሆኑን አስታውቶት ብለውናል» ብለው (...) አሉኝ።

Following the appointment of Ras Emeru over Gojjam was such that Emperor Haile Sellassie himself dispatched high-level delegation addressed to Emeru, and succeeded to strike a compromise with the former on administration of the province that expected to be. The dispatched delegation, bearer in the Emperor's government service, told "Emeru that (...) unlike the tax administration of Ras Haylu II, he was allowed to live only with adequate cost-of-living-allowance [including a monthly salary] fixed by the government on his appointment as governor of Gojjam. Hence, there was no exorbitant tax administration of Gojjam, to be issued in Emeru's brief tenure of office in the area".³³⁶

In view of that, in order to put an end to tribute extraction restrictions were imposed upon Emeru as *indärasé* (appointed ruler of Gojjam on the behalf of Emperor Haile Sellassie) as indicated earlier. As a result, Gojjam was subject to the administrative centralization of Emperor Haile Sellassie for the task of reorganizing the taxation system of the kingdom. However, *Nägadras Gäbrä Heywot Baykadaanñ* one of a leading pioneers of change in twentieth century Ethiopia and familiar with the basic concepts of political economy writes that the Ethiopian state always faced the task of reorganizing the taxation system of the kingdom, including Gojjam, when individual claim over land become articulated overtime. 'Menelik-Ena Ethiopia' is empirically grounded theoretical and analytical work that seeks to figure out the dynamics of Ethiopian political economy in a very imaginative way.³³⁷

Gäbrä Heywot states despite the ease with which Ethiopian kings were able to systematize the system of tax collections in fair way, the state always faced a daunting challenge of administering very vast provinces with diverse resources encouraging the severity of the tax

³³⁶ Ibid, pp. 243-254.

³³⁷ *Nägadras Gäbrä Heywot Baykadaanñ*, 'Menelik-Ena Ethiopia' *Nägadras Gäbrä Heywot Baykadaanñ Serawoch* (in Amharic) (*Nägadras Gäbrä Heywot Baykadaanñ Works*) (Addis Ababa, AAUP, 2014/5, 2007 Eth. Cal).

administration towards the peasants. Hence, to get around the difficulty, he set out to the design of collecting tax based on the wealth of provinces and taking into consideration of advanced European states as well as Japan as a crucial step for rationalizing and homogenizing the taxation system during the first quarter of the twentieth century and after.³³⁸ Accordingly, unlike Shewa and Tigray provinces that had huge resources, Gojjam and its surrounding provinces with very limited resources the tax burden of the peasants need to be significantly reduced that proved to be fair overtime.³³⁹ This justifies the need to reconsider the nature of tax administration in the area during the period under consideration in the framework of the national political development.³⁴⁰

However, as pointed out earlier, while the dispatched bearer in the Emperor's government service seemed to have succeeded to strike a compromise with encouraging the leniency of the local tax administration towards the peasants of Gojjam, the Emperor had no clear messages of the need to take into consideration of any alternative tax regulations. That is on the occasion of the actual assessment process, and through that, to establish control over the behavior and movement of the rural population in the area. The Emperor simply acknowledges that the administration of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos during Emeru's reign was to be overall good. That Emeru's administration enormously needed to meet the demands of the Emperor is beyond doubt. In that way, Emeru appears to have refrained from making heavy tax and tribute demands from the peasants of Gojjam, thereby encouraging the leniency of his administration towards the peasants of the area, at creating an

³³⁸ Ibid, pp. 1-28.

³³⁹ Ibid, pp. 23-24.

³⁴⁰ *Nägadras Gäbrä Heywot, Nägadras Gäbrä Heywot Baykadaññ Serawoch*, pp. 1-186.

administrative system dutiful to the central government and remained loyal and dutiful ruler to the Emperor. That is to say, unlike the tax administration of *Ras* Haylu II who once administered the region with heavy hands, the governorship of Emeru seems to have treated the peasants with sensitivity and sympathy. He also appears to have refrained from making heavy tax and tribute demands for his Shewan origin. Most of the governors of several districts of Gojjam during Emeru's 'lordship' still had, however, local origin. Their authority was sanctioned by custom and shared the same cultural tradition with the population they ruled over.³⁴¹

All these seem to have disfavor a potentially harsh exploitation of the peasants of the empire, including Gojjam by local governors. That Emeru apparently to reciprocate by imposing light tax and tribute demands on them, paid for the most part in kind at this big moment. In any case, it seems apparent that Emeru's new administration actually demanded for the task of re-working the taxation system of Gojjam for rational manifestation of tax relieve analogous to 'tax evasion'. On that occasion, what the Emperor noticed for Emeru reassured us that, unlike *Ras* Haylu II, Emeru could not enjoyed somewhat complete autonomy in his tax administration of Gojjam conceivably for the former's left many people destitute. That Haylu's huge tax deteriorated the social conditions of the majority peasants in the area. In spite of that, whether the governorship of *Ras* Emeru brought any significant improvements on the lot of peasants is difficult to tell for lack of sources and because his office of tenure was rather short.

³⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 243-254.

However, the local record from Däbrä Marqos church acknowledges that the tax administration of Gojjam during *Negus Täklä-Häymanot*'s reign was overall good. Unlike *Ras Haylu II* who has been administered with heavy hand, the governorship of Täklä-Häymanot seems to have treated the peasants such as the army with sensitivity and sympathy. All along the political career of *Negus Täklä-Häymanot*, Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos proved to be a secure base of power for him. During this time, especially the army obtained grace in the court of Täklä-Häymanot by imposing light tax and tribute demands on them, paid for the most part in kind in between the years of his political career (1881-1901). However, the change in the administrative personnel had no practical importance in changing the life of the army. *Ras Haylu II* could not deliver the army from the difficult social conditions they found themselves in. Hence, the army's hardship continued until his removal from power and succeeded by Emeru in 1932/3.³⁴²

Yet, it is evident from Emeru's memoir that his administration made some efforts to regulate tax collection and limit the excesses of the local governors by defining and prescribing their power and rights in a series of decrees and regulations he issued during his brief office of tenure, just for an enlightened person as indicated above. Yet, subsequent to the Italian Invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 the local people left to join the Ethiopian army when Emeru needed to mobilize their support to protect the country's sovereignty. They often hang on mass-violence that led to a total breakdown of law and order. That the new Shewan administration did not produce any meaningful outcomes on the social condition of the area, as a constant annoyance of the local population who expected yet not succeeded to attain an

³⁴² History of Gojjam from *Ras Haylu I* to *Ras Haylu II*, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 128 verso 128 recto 129 verso.

improved way of life, in the post-Haylu era related to land. This would never stop the people's displeasure and grievance over the local administration, in this way, not to join Emeru attempting in his competence to fix the people's stubborn refusal to take part in the battle.³⁴³ Yet, there was continuous and effective patriotic resistance against the Italians in the area until the end of the latter's occupation the country in 1941, as indicated in the final paragraphs of chapter one.

In any case, the improvement in the relationship between the local administration and peasants was not late in coming. As also discussed on several occasions earlier and in chapters above, the new Italian administration legally renounced all forms of corvée services and obligations, while they did not have effective administrative control over the rural areas to collect taxes on regular basis. Likewise, when the Italians occupied the country in 1935, they found the land tenure system so chaotic and archaic that proposed to be abolished. These were all greatly relieved the peasants' grievance to see that evermore from high levels of taxation. All the same, the introduction of the Italian national currency called *Lire* and their minted coin identified as *shelleng* that is beside to the already existing *Maria Theresia Taläri* and *yä-minilek-ṭägära* and used in the Ethiopian market as a medium of exchange until the revolution. In that way, the Italian administration also played significant role in the already changing system of taxation from kind to cash, without any contest for it accordingly. Hence, one could have conceived of significant improvement on the social conditions of the majority peasants' such as in tenancy and tenancy relations that to impede 'Ethiopian feudalism' in general That is to say, along the task of reworking the administration of the country, the

³⁴³ Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, pp. 243-254.

Italian administration was in charge of executing to relieve the plight majority peasants. In spite of that, the Italian government could not effectively control the rural areas in fully implementing its rational manifestation of tax collection, as the resistance centers, until they were expelled from the country in 1941, as indicated earlier.

Subsequent to liberation in 1941, however, the restored Ethiopian government recommenced its prewar tax policies that consciously converted land from a political to an economic resource to maximize its revenue that steadily impeded the great improvement virtually achieved by the Italian administration on the social conditions of the rural population in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, including *Däbrä Marqos Awrajja*. That the postwar government's reform measure steadily deteriorated the social condition of the majority poor peasants in the area. The task of reorganizing the taxation system of Gojjam that encompasses *Däbrä Marqos* was entrusted first to its post-war Governor *Ras Haylu III* (1942-1946). That is to say, in improving the system of taxation from kind to cash at several levels the administration, in this way, to maximize the government revenue while it had a bearing on the plight of the local people in the area. Overall, the three parallel processes changing the systems of land tenure, surplus appropriation and the plight of the majority poor peasants proceeded concurrently, though the latter two were the extensions of the pre-war foundation in the area. That the reform package of the postwar government witnessed greater land alienation and its concentration in the hands of the few that eventually led to the spread of landlessness, in this way, tenancy relations. Besides, the common people obliged to offer such unpaid labor services as road construction and repair as well as environmental rehabilitation that would

have deteriorated the social conditions of the majority poor peasants in the *Awrajjja* and all at once in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, as indicated in the final paragraphs of chapter one.

As discussed earlier and in the chapter above, in an effort to consolidate its agrarian reform measures the government issued a series of crucial decrees relating to land tax appropriation in the Ethiopian realm, including Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* that, in turn, encompasses Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjja*. These premeditated proclamations steadily deteriorated the social condition of the area. Especially, in the mid 1950s, when the *madäriya* land of members of the Territorial Army casted in thousands was converted into *rist*. In that way, the soldiers, formerly liable only to the education and health taxes, were required to pay taxes for owning their *madäriya* land now turned to *rist*. Secondly, by way of amending the Land Tax Proclamation of 1944, Proclamation N° 230 of 1966 issued by the government also abolished *rist-gult* and *séso-gult* tenures, though once repealed by the Parliament in 1963. The sum total of these processes would have to enlarge landless population of the area on condition that the reform package granted unrestricted freedom mainly to evict the *ṫisäññoch* living and working on the land for so long, as indicated in middle paragraphs of the chapter above. As also indicated on one occasion in chapter above, the Proclamations of March 1966 and November 1967 that turned all *gult* and its hereditary brand of tenure into *rist* land, encouraged to increased the value of land as time went on. Thereby, it would expedite landlessness, with meager resources for tenancy relations. The sum total of these processes also created acute social condition in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. That the final reform measures led the landholders to unrestricted freedom to

dispose of the land mainly through sale or to evict the *ṭisäññoch* living and working on it for long, as 'lords'.

As described in chapter above, the general land grant order was, therefore, all went to the sociopolitical elites, including officials, and the church. The official line was that the concentration of land in a few hands in the same way conveyed dramatic changes on the social conditions of the area. That the government land grant order have had led to the development of a few landowning 'classes', in this way, sizeable *ṭisäññoch* reduced to the status of landlessness in the area. In fact, the development of landlessness was very common in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*, in this instance, when more than sixty-four Muslim peasant-*ṭisäññoch* once expelled from the land working on for so long by the *balabbatoch*, as a prelude to revolution at the turn of the 1970s, as indicated in the final paragraphs of the chapter above. Hence, the existence of these dozen of landless peasants ever in a certain rural village of Däbrä Marqos to tell us that significant number of peasants often has been getting a lot of attention to landlessness and/or subject to landlessness obesity from eviction and to endured great pain herewith. That the majority poor *ṭisäññoch* were not secured from eviction because they were not likely to change that condition mainly for the land held by the *balabbatoch*.

Thus, the whole reform measures expedited the growth of landlessness in many parts of the *Awrajja* or generally the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at various times in the immediate post-liberation period, actually at twilight of the imperial era. That the reform package applied in the area was apparently without any property security given to the *ṭisäññoch* living and/or working on

the land for so long. This means that the *ṭisäññoch* did not have any property claim over the land they resided and worked for so long, when all *gult* lands were converted into *rist* tenure on a permanent basis and granted to the elite segments of that society. As a result, the *ṭisäññoch* who exercised land use right for so long were dramatically transformed into landless-*ṭisäñña*, in this way, in many parts of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, as discussed briefly in the final paragraphs of the chapter above. Dealing with this point, the contemporary government record and the historian Teshale agree that acute social problems were very common in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.³⁴⁴ The following statistical data from the government clearly illustrates the situation.

Awraj[j]as	Owned	Rented	Partly Owned and Partly Rented	Total
Biohena	63	30	7	100
Agew Meder	76	9	15	100
Bahar Dar	85	11	4	100
Debre Markos	87	8	5	100
Kola Dega	84	12	4	100
Motta	71	7	12	100
T O T A L	80	13	7	100

Table 3. Part of the statistical compilation of the MLRA (1971: 20), indicating the percentage distribution of holdings by tenure in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.

Two interesting points emerge from the government investigative report indicated above. Firstly, large section of the land was transferred from 'communal' to 'private ownership' by

³⁴⁴ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 20; and Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974* (Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1995), p. 138.

the government, but the interest of the government and the custom of the society were contradictory over the agency for land ownership right. That the government tried to transform the conventional land tenure and its taxation system by issuing a series of decrees that allowed for the characterization of privatization of land. The predominance of 'communal' system of tenure, however, has been an impediment to its full development in the area. The Muslim landless *ṭisāñnoch* from Däbrä Marqos were constantly claiming the land by way of the custom of the society, not to mention for their long history of occupation. Yet, the government was functioning in a sharp contradistinction to the customary dealings of the society, as discussed briefly in the final paragraphs of the chapter above. Secondly, the general land grant order was all for officials, the sociopolitical elites and the church institutions for the regime's predisposition that gave them greater rights, pride of place to the *ṭisāñnas*, as also discussed in the chapter above. In that way, the government could not bring social justice, which paved the way for the concentration of land in a few hands and brought dramatic changes on the social conditions of the area. Because of these radical changes, the reform package allowed and reinforced individual's unrestricted freedom to dispose of the land mainly through sale, as the above systematic study of the government clearly illustrates this out.

Besides, in his remarkable work, the historian Teshale also confirms that land was actually in possession of the richest individuals. To mention but one instance, a certain local notable namely *Ato Sheta Leyäw* was on his way to buy virtually all the lands of the town of Däbrä Marqos.³⁴⁵ The sum total of these processes increased the landless population with meager

³⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 138.

resources in the area. In this way, land costs escalated swiftly in the area actually at the twilight of the imperial government. For many of the informants I talked to this problem is also a lived experience.³⁴⁶ Besides, the rumor began to circulate that the upcoming revolutionary activity—with social reforms—would confiscate the *balabbat's* land by way of 'lords' possessions.³⁴⁷ In that case, the *balabbatoch* as legal holders evicted the *ṭisāññoch* violently from the land relating to the upheaval of social reforms and began to enjoy it by themselves, as observed in a certain village of Däbrä Marqos indicated in chapter above. Thus, while the custom of the society impeded it, the newly introduced legislation that pretty much boosted the 'communal' system of tenure into 'private ownership' would expedite the development of landlessness, in this way, added the cost of using resources—as for tenancy relations. That is to say, the difference between the actual practice of tenancy relations resulting from the customary law and that of substitute legislation had risks but the latter expediting extreme landlessness in existing conditions of tenancy relations in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally in Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*.

Hence, pragmatically one may well suggest that unlike the predisposition of Liberal scholars on the condition of twentieth century African property system, as briefly discussed in the chapter above, postmodernists envisioned ownership may be vested in groups in which resource use depends, in part, on culturally constructed understandings of the society. By focusing their analysis on the local levels, scholars of the postmodernism present revisionist

³⁴⁶ *Interviews with Märiḡetta Libanos Yätämāññ Kokäbu, Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Ato Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa, Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Ato Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol, and Abba Ejjeḡu Seménäh Wärqnäh.*

³⁴⁷ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ገገ/አሰ/0082**, File **ጸ** 164, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, 21 June 1970 (14/10/62 Eth. Cal); and Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 13

critique of the historiography on African political economy and the nature of the changes which showed how African property systems, power, and labor relations intersected and how they evolved over time during the colonial period and after.³⁴⁸ Their works are mostly empirically grounded theoretical and analytical researches that seek to figure out the dynamics of African political economy in a very imaginative way. As exponents of the postmodernism perspective argued, in western property law ownership of an asset usually conveys the right to alienate it, while in many parts of Africa (Ethiopia) this is not the case, particularly with respect to land. That is, in the African context including Ethiopia property ownership to exclude others may be vested in groups rather than individuals in which case resource use depends, in part, on culturally constructed understandings of the society in question.³⁴⁹ Thus, Ethiopia by way of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) with the dominant 'communal' *rist* system of tenure share many similarities. This may well reduced the existing academic dialogue, while communal *rist* was not more complete and exclusively held than traditional *gult* holding acceptable in its entirety that could be used to see the case of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), as indicated in the middle of the chapter above.

³⁴⁸ Some representative scholarly works on the postmodernism model are Clarence-Smith, 'Slaves, Commoners and Landlords in Bulozhi, c. 1875 to 1906' *Journal of African History* (Vol. 20, No. 2, 1979), pp. 219-234; Parker Shipton and Mitzi Goheen, 'Introduction Understanding African Land-Holding: Power, Wealth and Meaning' *Journal of Africa* (Vol. 62, No. 3, 1992); Michael Watts, 'Idioms of Land and Labour: Producing Politics and Rice in Sänégambia' *Land in African Agrarian System* (Madison and London, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Berry, *No Condition is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); and *idem*, *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power and the Past in Asante, 1896-1996* (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004): here, the main advocates of the postmodernism model stresses a breakdown of enlightenment values and principles of the Liberal school of thought. However, postmodernism is not a school of thought, not something that one can be for or against. It is simply an academic approach against the Liberal ideals since the late 1970s and 1980s. On balance, the two perspectives do so on the ground that their diverse perceptions could bring development in present African reality.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

If people fixed along the customary property law, the postmodernists emphasized, they could manage resources more effectively together than they would individually. The 'house of commons' is not at all an inevitable consequence of collective ownership. After they figured out what the content of the traditional land tenure system of Africa including Ethiopia was like, the Postmodernists argued that although it is very fluid and dynamic property system in twentieth-century Africa is essentially a *social process*. It follows that the attempt to codify and fix African land system along the European/Liberal line would produce the *invention of African tradition*. Thus, the Postmodernists have to infer that development in Africa should be along the indigenous tenure arrangement.³⁵⁰—not to mention the legislations passed by the imperial Ethiopian government for expediting landlessness and/or tenancy relations in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). In that case, the judicial understandings of the custom of the society but retrieving to contemporary statutory laws and orders still made an excellent complement to what the post-modernists perceived to twentieth-century African property system, in this way, Ethiopia during the imperial era, essentially as a *social process* sanctioned by custom. In that way, advocates of the Postmodernism considered groups as historical actors over the liberalists' deliberation—*viz.*, individuals as independent historical actors. That the general reality in Gojjam addressing Däbrä Marqos revealed property rights as never complete since land could not be detached from the local social reality from which it was made, as discussed above.

That is to say, in changing and/or finalizing the system of taxation from kind to cash and maximize its revenue, the imperial Ethiopian government expedited the expropriation of the

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

peasantry from the land they were working on for so long. In that, extensive tracts of lands were transferred by way of ownership to the sociopolitical elites as 'lords' in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), for which property documents demonstrate the process of intensive eviction or alienation of the peasantry from the land in the area, as indicated in the final paragraphs of the chapter above. This event credibly showed the concentration of land among the few segments of the society that indirectly bears out the growth of landlessness and/or the development of a much more exploitative form of tenancy relations between the *ṭisäñña* and the 'lords'—in the area, actually at the twilight of the imperial regime. However, the imperial government introduced two consecutive tenancy bills in 1964/5 and 1970/1 by way of the Parliament', as a drive to relieve the plight of *ṭisäñña* in the Ethiopian context at large. The 1964/5 draft bill that lastly sanctioned by the Emperor limited the share of the 'landlords' to fifty percent, which was basically intended to amend the *Civil Code* of 1960, replacing the highest seventy-five percent of rent that the *ṭisäñña* used to pay.³⁵¹ However, though the 1970/1 draft was a much more comprehensive bill, no radical transformation was made on the social conditions of *ṭisäññas*.³⁵² Even so, landless segments of the society such as Muslims and artisans were allowed to buy land in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at the twilight of the imperial government.³⁵³

Dealing with this monumental sociopolitical and cultural change that the country was going through, Baron de Jarisburg who was a Belgian traveler and the *New York Times* correspondent in an interview with Emperor Minilek II in Ethiopia in 1909 to relate that the

³⁵¹ Bizuwork, 'The Problem of Tenancy and Tenancy Bills', pp. 81-114.

³⁵² Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991* (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press, 2002), p. 195.

³⁵³ Teshale, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 138.

drive to social reform was often manifested itself much earlier. That is to say, with a plan to abolish feudal laws along the lines of the European constitutional monarchy in the lifetimes of Emperor Minilek II (r.1889-1913).³⁵⁴ As briefly discussed in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, it is worth mentioning that Minilek II initiated and promoted changes in the system of taxation from kind to cash which disposed of the notorious system of quartering soldiers on the tributary majority poor peasants for which feudal dues and obligation became subject to revocation. Hence, the 1972 and 1973 Bills of Haile Sellassie, for the most part, seemed the natural extension of Minilek's plan to relieve the plight of *ṭisāññoch* that is beside to the 1920s and 1930s decrees that legally abolished the old system of tribute extraction and corvée services imposed on the peasant population, with abolishing feudal laws. It meant to improve the property system of the empire at large, though no radical transformation was made on the social conditions of *ṭisāññas*, as indicated in chapter above.

Hence, the *ṭisāñña* apparently came down paying old forms of tribute and rendering labour services in the area. This is beside to the corvée services they legally rendered to the local churches for which the 1947 Proclamation seemed to have further solidified it³⁵⁵ that could intensify the development of tenancy relations in the area. Not surprisingly, unpaid labour was also exacted by the regional authorities especially for road construction and repair, as indicated in the final paragraphs of chapter one. Thus, a series of plans to abolish feudal laws manifested and developed under Haile Sellassie's government was unavoidable obstruction, once every single individual 'citizens' could not impede these inherent problems but to extend

³⁵⁴ Baron de Jarisburg, a foreign correspondent for the *New York Times* in Brussels, 'King Minilek [II] has Investments here, Abyssinia's Ruler is Said to be a Heavy Buyer of American Railway Stocks. HAS AIDED HIS PEOPLE Remarkable Progress During His Reign—Baron de Jarisburg Tells of the Monarch, Now Reported Dying. Special Correspondence the New York Times', *The New York Times* (November 7, 1909).

³⁵⁵ *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation N° 94, November 30, 1947.

or expedite these conditions for social injustice. On condition that, both the 1972 and 1973 bills did not press for written bases³⁵⁶ that could be terminated independently, the 'lord' may have purposely broken the tenancy agreement as the most common practice in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.³⁵⁷ This apparently brought what Bahru credibly writes greater property in security for the *ṭisäññoch* and thereby subject to high levels of taxation, if not to evict them from the land soon by the 'lord'.³⁵⁸ Perhaps, the only progressive aspect of the latter bill was its provision for taxation of uncultivated land. Despite these significant arrangements, members of the Parliament swiftly pre-empted the whole legislations or proposal with respect to tenancy relations, because they were the big landholders as 'lords' by themselves. In consequence, the bill was to expedite the development of the eviction of *ṭisäññoch* for landlessness.³⁵⁹

On condition that, the terms of the reform package was not literally applied as the government authorities entrusted with enforcing it gave priority to the interest of the elite segments of the society, to maximize their revenue, more importantly than the majority *ṭisäñña* population. That is outside the spirit and framework of the reform package, the government's measure went to social elites rather than the *ṭisäññas*. Thus, privileged groups permanently owned extensive tracts of land, pride of place to the *ṭisäññoch* who hoped that the government would grant them to land in the *Awrajja* or generally in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. This government's measures, therefore, unnoticed the November 1952 Proclamation that entitled landless and unemployed Ethiopians to have a half *gult-madäriya* of land, as

³⁵⁶ Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 195.

³⁵⁷ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 11.

³⁵⁸ Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 195.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

indicated in chapter above. Hence, initially the government's concern for rationalizing the landholding system one of its top priority agendas would be theoretical. In its place, the regime deteriorated the social condition of *ṭisäññoch* and incited them to landlessness in the area at various times, largely at the twilight of the imperial era. That ultimately the government's reform measure by no means brought social justice in its meaning/content. This is too complementary to what scholars of the Marxist affiliation in the field of Ethiopian studies clearly envisioned the imperial reform package that clearly intensified the development of social injustice in the terms and conditions of social relations in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) related to land. The sum total of these processes enlarged landless population with, of course, no radical transformation made on the social conditions of the majority *ṭisäññoch* in tenancy relations.

Apart from the political aspects, socioeconomic factors in a similar breath intensified the development of landlessness and tenancy relations though not more importantly to validate the issue comparable with the former one. Here, looking back to the earliest period from our own time, one could come across religious boundary along with the Judeo-Christian ethical foundation that served as a breeding ground for social injustice, in this way, landlessness and tenancy relations in the area. It has-been established that the cultural, social, and religious beliefs and practices of the Jews—a nation existing in Palestine from the six century B.C. to the first century A.D. (now part of the state of Israel)—is gradually but steadily infiltrated into other human societies, of whom Ethiopian society is one by means of Judaic Sacred Scriptures called The Holy Bible.

Primarily, the two biblical personalities by the names of Moses and David 'in command of the Lord of the Old Testament' were allowed to presided over the other segments of the society and, through that, promoted and proceeded the development of different social position related to land in the ancient land of Israel.³⁶⁰ With the efflorescence of Christianity, social justice could not also be an integral part of the social safety. This is for the simple reason that in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus Christ, the Savior and Son of 'the God of the Old Testament' said, 'I have come not to abolish the [ancient Judaic] law and the prophets but to fulfill them'. That Christ already justified 'His arrival' would be amenable and malleable to the commands and arrangements of 'the God of the Old Testament'.³⁶¹

Thus, the principles of 'the God of the New Testament' evermore accelerated the process of uneasy pray for social safety, i.e., social injustice in the terms and conditions of social status related to land. Overall, religious boundary at the middle and lower social stratifications between people with belief and faith in [ancient] Judaism and later Christianity and without it actually dictated that social hierarchy. Because, the people associated with Judaic/Christian ethic would be landholders as elites, if not they had to obey the former possessors, as 'social

³⁶⁰ Orét Zä-Dagem ([The Fifth Book of Mosses commonly called] Deuteronomy), *The Holy Bible [in Amharic] Containing the Old and New Testaments* (Addis Ababa, Berhanena Sälam Printing Press, 1962 Eth. Cal), Chapter 24: 4, p. 162; The Fifth Book of Mosses commonly called Deuteronomy, *The Holy Bible [in English] Containing the Old and New Testaments Revised Standard Version* (New York/Washington/Chicago and Los Angeles, William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd, 1952), Chapter 24: 4, p. 176; and Yä-Dawét Mäzmur (The Psalm of David), known in common parlance as 'Psalms', *The Holy Bible [in Amharic] Containing the Old and New Testaments* (Addis Ababa, Berhanena Sälam Printing Press, 1962), Chapter 2: 8, p. 434; The Psalm of David, known in common parlance as 'Psalms', *The Holy Bible [in English] Containing the Old and New Testaments Revised Standard Version* (New York/Washington/Chicago and Los Angeles, William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd, 1952), Chapter 2:1-8, p. 473: here, the two representative biblical accounts explained the already development of unjust social dealings by analogy with a group of people primarily with ancient Judaic faith who were chosen by God because they are special in some way to presided over others and, through that, promoted and proceeded the development of different social position related to land.

³⁶¹ The Gospel of Matthew, known in common parlance as 'Matthew', *The Holy Bible [in English] Containing the Old and New Testaments Revised Standard Version* (New York/Washington/Chicago and Los Angeles, William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd, 1952), Chapter 5: 7, p. 4.

classes'. Ethiopians had promoted and endorsed exploitative form of 'social relationship, in command of both the 'Old Testament' and the 'New Testament' from early on, even ahead of Europeans, though it most actively existed in the medieval and modern times.

Nonetheless, many thinkers of the modern era just tried to figure out the Christian era in markedly different ways especially on power and domination of species in creation. In that way, the enlightened Ethiopian, *Nägadras* Gäbrä Heywot whom we met him in his capacity as pioneer in describing Ethiopia's political economy writes that human claim over land became more articulated over time when humans just tried to figure out the Christian era in markedly different ways especially on power and domination of species in creation, subsequent to the population pressure. In the new world order, humans derive their power from control over land, hung the picture upside down. Hence, the struggle for power which was so prevalent throughout pre-Christian era or pre-historic period was, Gäbrä Heywot argues, succeeded in the Christian era or of the preceding period of human history (historic period) the logical outcome of a system of domination that relies, for the most part on the exercise of thought and intelligence, not to mention the Ethiopian societies. He has showed how Ethiopian property systems, power, and labor relations intersected and how they evolved over time during the efflorescence of the Christian period and after.³⁶² All the same, while it could not go to the extent of compromising the secular agenda of the death of God, the clerical record [*Ya-Gojjam Kebrä Nägäst*] 'Glory of the Kings of Gojjam' from Mängesto

³⁶² *Nägadras* Gäbrä Heywot, *Nägadras Gäbrä Heywot Baykadaññ Serawoch*, pp. 64-186.

ancestral descent of the biblical Adam'.³⁶⁵ In that case, Zänäb sought that there was inequality in the evil committed by the social relations as customary offense that made him feel strong emotions for justice and fairness in terms of social status.

It follows that, Zänäb with forward looking complained of human being ill-treated by culturally constructed understandings of the society. This is used to explain his effort to relieve or reduce the existing social imposition upon the Cushitic speaking population to whom artisans and Muslims belonged in terms of status and privilege for safe and sound social relations with other segments of the society in the area at various times, actually in the lifetime of Emperor Téwodros II (r.1855-1968). So much so that, Zänäb stressed that Cushitic speaking population would be an integral part of the social safety, in this way, access to land in the area. Nevertheless, the custom maintained and continued in a determined way to the growing realization of social injustice to subjugation in agricultural productivity and, through that, increased its power and social domination within human society. If 'God' does not set a good moral example who does so? He was unjust and urged 'His People' on to acts of inhuman treatment with respect to land, as indicated above.

Hence, the custom of the society already sustained and expedited the development of social injustice that would almost naturally follow from the Judeo-Christian property system to be fundamentally correct. In that, human conceded for the Judeo-Christian ethical foundation and, through that, expedited social injustice in the terms and conditions of social status attached to land. This gradually but steadily produced the much more exploitative form of

³⁶⁵ Zänäb Zä-Ethiopiawé (*Däbtära*), *Mäšehafä Čäwatta Segawé-Wä-Mänfäsawé* (in Amharic) (*Secular and Spiritual Literary Plays*) (Addis Ababa, Täsfa Printing Press, 1951 Eth. Cal.), p. 11.

'productive relationship' in post-God societies such as Ethiopia, encompassing [Central] Gojjam, over the last two millennia and after. Thus, one could have conceived of as the historian Taddesse once verified the constitutional theory 'the land under his dominion belongs to the [Ethiopian] king', most actively during the medieval period and after³⁶⁶ analogous to feudal Europe. That land became a key factor in the terms and conditions of social relations to serve as the source of political power and social domination, as the chief employer of labour. This apparently paved the way for a conspicuous origin and development a sort of *balabbat-tisäñña* analogous to 'lord-tenant social relationship', as the natural extension of Judeo-Christian ethical foundation in the Ethiopian empire, of which [Central] Gojjam was one.

In a nutshell, in keeping and nurturing the institutionalized system of the Judeo-Christian ethical foundation, human already endorsed and expedited the development of social injustice in the terms and conditions of status attached to land permanently and in perpetuity. Thus, social hierarchy became a predictable consequence a more clearly distinguished social stratification relating to religious boundary such as Ethiopia encompassing [Central] Gojjam at various times in post-God era. That one could have conceived of mankind had to promote and proceeded the growing realization of social injustice from early on. Beside to this, the settlement of the Semitic speakers migrants from South Arabia often for arable lands in the course of the first millennium B.C in the old core territories of northern Ethiopia, including [Central] Gojjam also complicated the ethnic and religious picture of the region. Christianity was gradually but steadily substituted for ancient Judaism. The Semitics in belief and faith in

³⁶⁶ Taddesse, *Church and State*, p. 98.

Christianity were only allowed to presided over the indigenous Cushitic population. In that way, while the indigenous Cushitic speaking population, many of whom were probably artisans and Muslims, conceivably turned out to be landless population, with social injustice as the natural extension of Ethiopian society to maintain permanently and in perpetuity in post God era, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. That the Semitic people as Christians rose to prominence over the Cushitic speaking population as Judaic communities also later to Muslims with the efflorescence of Islam in the six century A.D. Those Semitic speakers steadily adopted agricultural practices and came to dominate the agricultural complex both culturally and politically, although the Cushitic speakers continued to participate in it. Yet, Semitics would be an integral part of the social safety, pride of place to the Cushitic speaking population in the area.³⁶⁷

The new development tenet in land was not inherently inimical to sustain the Judaic ethical tradition. In that case, property holding in post-God era was not more complete and exclusively absolute than the traditional religious system of social relations as acceptable in its entirety. That is to say, mankind promoted and proceeded the central tenets of Judaic ethical foundation by way of unjust social dealings, more often than not, a in post-God era. Yet, unjust social relations was already different from the pre-Christian period was that the former Judaic societies such as the Cushitic speaking population—of whom artisans and Muslims were the two social groups who were landless segments of the society—instead of the Semitics. Hence, there was dynamism in the land system all for the privileged section of the society once changed in holding upside down, by means of religious boundary, in the old

³⁶⁷ Crummey, *Land and Society*, pp. 20-22, 266.

core territories of northern Ethiopia, of which [Central] Gojjam was one, as indicated above. In that case, the Semitic people gradually but steadily emerged as the privileged segments of the society over the indigenous Cushitic speakers in the old core territories of northern Ethiopia including [Central] Gojjam relating to land. That the practice of treating the Cushitic population with social advantage linked to land over the Semitic speakers was very common in old Ethiopia, which therefore included [Central] Gojjam, until the efflorescence of Christianity. In fact, in the ensuing Christian era and even after people possessing land were associated with Christianity pride of place to those in Judaism and Islam. Hence, in the course of time, the tide of events, in land possession, changed in favor of the Semitic population over the indigenous Cushitic speakers by means of Christianity for unjust social dealings.³⁶⁸

In cognizance of that, people associated with the none-Christian ethical foundation such as artisans many of whom were probably the native Cushitic speaking population, also in belief and faith in Judaism in the region had only a peripheral role in social relations relating to land,³⁶⁹ as poorly inflexible in post-God era. In that case, artisans and Muslims were the earliest known landless communities in old Ethiopia including [Central] Gojjam. As indicated above, both artisans and Muslims were deliberated as 'Unblessed Communities', while Christians as 'the Blessed people', in terms of social status. Hence, Christians were once protected by the doctrine of The New Testament to ascertain proprietary rights [to land] analogous to those conveyed by The 'Old Testament', as the central development tenets of the Christian era and after. Dealing with this point, *Däbtära Zänäb* with his own lived

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Zänäb, *Mäshehafä Čäwatta*, p. 27 and An interview with Märiğetta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu.

experiences expressed social stratification especially in reference to the 'New Testament'. That Zänäb still has to show or establish the alleged causal connection between Judaism and Christianity retroactively to Judas accusation and the subsequent Christian development—as part of the general manifestation of the moral sayings and councils forming Old canonical Jewish and Christian Scripture. That [መስቀል ፣ አይዑድን ፣ አጠፋ ፣ ከርስቲያንን ፣ ግን ፣ ጠቀመ] 'the cross on which Jesus was crucified all brought with it the preservation of the Christian deity but the destruction of Judaic immortality'³⁷⁰ relate that the Semitic and Cushitic population within the Ethiopian context, respectively.

That deterioration in the social condition of Judaic societies as Cushitic population was not late in coming with the efflorescence of Christian era by way of Semitic within the Ethiopian context. Cognizant of the strong religious support they had in the area, the Christian social foundation already proved to the salvation of the local Semitics over Cushitic population, in this way, into a general favor to land since then. This religious arrangement brought in new forces into play with a strong bearing on the social organization of old Ethiopia encompassing Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) relating to land. Besides, though we are lacking sources, this irreversible process of social change of landholders generally from Semitics into Cushitic population in the area inevitably created social chaos and disorder something for the latter's effort to restore their position to power and keep the *status quo* ended in total failure sometimes in earlier times. That the custom had no concern for the protection of the majority Cushitic population who leased a steadily deteriorated and long ill-treated life, not to mention to landholding, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. The fact that the Crucifixion

³⁷⁰ Zänäb, *Mäshehafä Čäwatta*, p. 27.

impeded the Judaic communities by way of Cushitic speaking population—control over land but it revitalized the Christians safety by way of Semitics in the Ethiopian context as a means to retrieve their plight, in terms of social status, under the former's property system in the past.

The belief that the Semitics were obviously allowed to have had lands outside the custom was once considered heretical. To be precise, the irreversible process of the allocation of property in land and the accompanying change of elites, the Semitics population as Christians succeeded in dominating the influence from the Cushitic as Judaic communities. In that way, Zänäb clearly explained the Christians as advantaged Semitics endowed with social advantage, in this way, gained access to land exclusive of the Cushitic speakers as Judaic communities of whom artisans and Muslims were one social group who fell into a general disfavor at various times during, before and after nineteenth century Ethiopia. That Cushitic population already remained to be in tenancy relations with the Semitics with great intensity in the area. In consequence, the socioeconomic status of the Cushitic population in most parts of the empire, including Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), could be worsened as landless *ṭisännöch* since they were continually evicted by the Semitics as landowners at various times in the course of the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era. In that, the Christian Semitics exercised an extensive amount of property right over land, whereas none Christian communities were much more restrictive and entitled holders to only subordinate/subsidiary right. Nonetheless, Zänäb seemed to assured us that, it already became a widespread phenomenon as recognized and appropriated by the Ethiopian state encompassing [Central] Gojjam.

In that case, the people's religious beliefs were manifested in every aspect of their lives in the area. It follows that, Christians shall not guilt up on the land which the 'Lord their God', by means of 'divinely ordained king', gave them for possession over others. Hence, people belonged to Christianity were privileged or secured as of from the intricacies of landlessness. It was in this way that, Christians were only allowed to presided over the other segments of the society such as artisans and Muslims in old Ethiopia including [Central] Gojjam. It was also apparent that, in the course of time, reinforced by demographic pressure with meager resources, social injustice derived from it severely intensified, as the Christians societies were even not remotely relieved from it that justified the *ṭisäñña's* population continued to grow, as long as the next generations keep them alive. That gradually but steadily the Christian segments of the society transformed into landlessness all for tenancy relations with scarce land resources and other interconnected factors failed to follow suited in new property obligations in violation of the Judeo-Christian ethical foundation. This was to the extent of land confiscated by way of *gebrä-ṭäl*, even if *rist* was the dominant tenure system of the area, as discussed briefly in chapter above. Hence, land held to be so much necessary all for unequal social position. The sum total of these processes apparently enlarged the *ṭisäñña* population for tenancy relations that conceded in many parts of [Central] Gojjam, generally in the course of the Christian era and/or post-God era.

In any case, religious boundary so much explained a conspicuous origin and development of landlessness, in this way, tenancy relations for exploitative form of social relationship in the Judeo-Christian era and after. Hence, improving social relations from the Judaic foundation to the basic development tenets of human society could not ever succeeded compliant with

the conventional land system, notwithstanding the significant measures made by Emperors and 'lords' of Ethiopia, in this way, [Central] Gojjam at various times in the course of the medieval and modern times, as discussed briefly in chapter above. Nonetheless, the elite segments of the society have generally emphasized exploitative form of 'productive relationship' with the development of the Ethiopian state at various times, in earnest in the fourteenth century and the subsequent period of which the incorporation of Gojjam into the mainstream national life in that period was one as indicated in chapter above. That land played a significant role in shaping the development of the Ethiopian state in conformity with indigenized Judaic tradition at various times is hardly unacceptable. So much so that, the system of tenure applied in the Old core territories of northern Ethiopia, of which [Central] Gojjam was one, maintained and continued from the old Judaic ethical foundation—in conformity with the indigenized Aksumite tradition when the medieval Christian kingdom expanded into the region, as indicated in chapter above.

Cognizant of that, finally adopting the general institutionalized system of the religious principles that informed the land system of the Aksumite kingdom, [Central] Gojjam continued to emphasize the occasions of endorsing or the actual practices of 'productive relationship' for expedited and sustained the Judeo-Christian ethical foundation since the earlier times, most actively in the medieval period and after. Yet, although information on the property system of [Central] Gojjam prior to the medieval times is not definitive, it is apparent that the traditions and systems of social injustice that encouraged in conditions of interactions with the ancient Judaic kingdom of Israel might have been introduced into the area from early on. This is owing mainly to the existence of a strong tradition with the

putative Ethiopian Queen of Sheba's son Minilek I who carried out a successful raid on *the True Ark of the Covenant*—a box containing the laws of ancient Judaism that believed to have been brought directly from the biblical King Solomon's Temple, the father of the former.³⁷¹

In that case, Minilek I and his subordinates actually chose Gojjam for hosting this box at the Island Monastery of Tana Qérqos, in Lake Tana in what is now west Gojjam. Using the difficult terrain of the Island Monastery as safe hideout, the local monks apparently started to secure this precious box and other 'sacred' paraphernalia from looting for so long, as a national inheritance until the successful raid on it by the Ancient Aksumite ruler king Ezana in the fourth century A.D. It follows that, Ezana hosted that box once again in his political centre Aksum, in what is now Tigray Region. So much so that, this treasure became and remain an integral part of the cultural identity of Ethiopia. The story and tradition of the box that had once adorned the ancient kingdom of Aksum is still alive in the memory of the people of Däbrä Marqos, formerly Central Gojjam, or the much larger Gojjam province and in the psyche of the Christian population of Ethiopia at large.³⁷²

Above all, the medieval Ethiopian Emperors and their successors also often claimed direct descent from the biblical King Solomon and the putative Queen Sheba of Ethiopia by means

³⁷¹ Interviews with Märiqetta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Emahoy* Hebitu and Abäbayähu Dästa; The earliest known indigenized record originated as a Christian Coptic text on the Solomon-Saba and the Lost Ark of the Covenant—as the centerpiece of the story—is the thirteenth century Ge'ez version, *Kebre Negest (The Glory of Kings) the True Ark of the Covenant* (com., ed and trans. by Miguel F. Brooks) (Asmara, the Red Sea Press, Inc, 1998); and based mainly on such record one of the representative standard reference works on the issue is Graham Hancock, *The Sign and the Seal A Quest for the Lost Ark of the Covenant* (Britain, Arrow Books, 2007).

³⁷² *Ibid.*

of that a royal bloodline. It was due to these conditions that, the Judaic ethical foundation and the social relations derived from it was endorsed into the Ethiopian kingdom from early on. That the Judaic social relations was so prevalent throughout pre-Christian era and after, the logical outcome of a system of social and labor domination that relies mainly on the exercise of the 'general cultural appeals and by appeals to spiritual concepts',³⁷³ in this way, Judaic ethical foundation analogous to the ancient Israelite experience. Hence, the Judaic ethical foundation took part in shaping the social relations of the Judeo-Christian societies such as Gojjam, even remotely close to the ancient Aksumite experience so as to justify the deeply flowed foundation of the ancient Judaic social identity as a useful descriptor of the distant local reality. The remarkable medievalist historian Crummey also writes that the Ethiopian political economy of land tenure, 'which, politically, drew on the concept and reality of monarchical power to reinforce its own existence', probably preceded even Christianity.³⁷⁴

That Ethiopia is one of the earliest known centers of world civilization, almost certainly preceded Europe, with plough agriculture, by which land served as a key source of political power and social domination is hardly unacceptable (on the continued existence of the earliest Ethiopian state formerly Abyssinia (see map 2 displayed in preceding chapter one). In any case, in premodern and modern agrarian Ethiopian societies such as Gojjam that practice agriculture, the land system serves as an important socioeconomic foundation serving both as the chief employer of labor and sign of the nature of social organization obtained from it. This religious development further complicated the tenure system and contributed to the birth of a complex system of property rights—that is beside to the political

³⁷³ Crummey, *Land and Society*, pp. 20-22.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 21.

development in the region at large. That religious conduct partly paved the way for a conspicuous origin and development of exploitative form of 'productive relationship', even remotely close to the European experience so as to justify a sort of feudal form of relationship in the area. In keeping and nurturing the institutionalized system of the Judeo-Christian social injustice to land, the right of the majority Christians was expedited with little or no attention given to the minority artisans and Muslims in [Central] Gojjam at various times during the twentieth century, generally prior to the end of the imperial era.³⁷⁵

As indicated in the final paragraphs of the chapter above, the Amharic word as *tanash-säw* (subhuman)—just in a consideration of [አረመኔ, *arämäné*] 'Barbarian [implied not CIVILIZED]³⁷⁶ and [አሕዛብ, *Ahزاب*] 'accursed people'³⁷⁷—became a pejorative term for both artisans and Muslims in Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos. However, acceptable and healthy expression of [ቅዱስ, *qedus*] 'blessed' became the positive terms given for the majority Christian population, with religious belief and faith in God and later in the Gospel',³⁷⁸ in the area. Thus, artisans and Muslims considered as 'unblessed communities' and ill-treated by the majority-Christian segments of the society, as the constant features of the area for so long. The two social groups were alienated constantly from land as applied in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam sometimes in the past, most actively in the medieval and modern times analogous to the Judeo-Christian ethical foundation. Seeing the religious boundary in such a pain really had an effect on the social conditions of the region, as the Ethiopian church was

³⁷⁵ Ibid; and EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ፲፯/አሰ/0082, File ፯ 164, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, Letter 11883/9139, February 1975 (13/6/67 Eth. Cal.).

³⁷⁶ Dästa, *Addés Yä-Amareñña Mäzäbä-Qalat*, pp. 137, 523.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 439,1270.

³⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 137, 196, 523, 680, 1034.

clearly, in legal terms, became the ideological arm of the state prior to the end of the imperial era is beyond doubt.

That artisans and Muslims were especially alienated from the land grant orders of kings and powerful 'lords' of Ethiopia, permanently and in perpetuity, as the key marks of the Ethiopian [Christian] empire including Gojjam until the revolution. The land grants proliferated partly because rulers wanted to encourage so much the Christians—but discouraged others such as artisans and Muslims as 'Godless communities' with the Judeo-Christian social foundation—analogue to 'God's Chosen People of Israel out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth'.³⁷⁹ The land tenure system was ready for Christian development notwithstanding the Muslims and artisans—sanctioned by former rulers—as an early instance of Christian fascism. This steadily intensified the development of landlessness, in this way, tenancy relations—derived from the deeply flowed Judeo-Christian ethical tradition. Hence, artisans and Muslims were actually landless sections of the society and subject to tenancy relations as continually applied in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. As also indicated on several occasions in chapter above, in the course of time due to a typical demographic pressure, reinforced by the penetration of capitalist ideas, every land grant orders were not easily accepted only for belonging to the Ethiopian church, though fulfilled a required favor from a recipient to the respective rulers.

In that way, ecclesiastical matters especially members of the clergy much more serving rulers and rendered religious services for free were favored and allowed to preside over the

³⁷⁹ The Fifth Book of Moses commonly called Deuteronomy, Chapter 7: 6-7, p. 162.

Christian peasants who held scarce *rist* lands in the area at various times during the medieval and modern times. Dealing with this point, Emeru's memoir also clearly testifies that [ገደማው ገደማው ገደማው ገደማው ገደማው... ገደማው ገደማው ገደማው ገደማው ገደማው] 'many members of the clergy seemed to held vast tracts of land (...) in Gojjam and Bagemder [in what is now Gondär]'.³⁸⁰ These extended land grant orders to the clergy severely intensified social injustice prior to the Italian administration in the area. In fact, demographic pressure together with the penetration of capitalist ideas explains the development of landlessness, in this way, tenancy relations—even if the region largely organized under the communal *rist* tenure system.³⁸¹ Thus, the religious safety actually crossed beyond the Judeo-Christian confinement to social injustice that Christians commonly involved in tenancy relations in twentieth century Gojjam, and even before. In cognizance of this and other developments, That the occasions of land distribution in favor of clerical 'lords', pride of place to others apparently changed the social conditions of the region at various times, in the course of the first half of twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era.

However, it should be noted here is that far from being static, the social structure that had applied in [Central] Gojjam was dynamic and constantly changing that significant Ethiopian sayings hold approval to a fair share of the land. To mention but two instances, [ኃይማኖት የግል ነው፤ ሀገር የጋራ ነው!] 'Religion Is Private; Nation [meant Land] Is Communal', and [ጢሰኛ ሲሰነብት ባለርስት ይሆናል፡፡] 'A *ፋሽኤኛ* could exercise *rist*-land right for long history of occupation' are the best well known historic and public saying gives in that dealings in the

³⁸⁰ Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, p. 251.

³⁸¹ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp.34-35.

past. Thus, though we are lacking sources, these historic and public saying gives the general impression that land grant to landless tenants based the custom of society was very common even before the imperial regime in the Ethiopian context at large. Thus, vaguely, in social processes, land rights appears to have been essentially categorized or were in legal practice divided all for social justice and fairness. This, in part, used to explain the dominant theme of the post-modernists perspective in describing twentieth century African property system, in this way, Gojjam (Ethiopia)—viz., land was essentially a social process. Yet, the religious foundation was a lot sharp and clearly defined social injustice in terms of status and privilege at various times in the past, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. That landlessness and tenancy relations were a normal condition of Central Gojjam symbolized by the contemporary Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or the much larger Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. That religious boundary already endorsed and conceded social injustice so much preceded by political factors, as of very common in the *Awrajja* and all at once in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* in the past. Therefore, it is apparent that social injustice to land sustained in many parts of the region in various forms right up to the revolution. Even so, the earliest known Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was never the same again.

On the whole, it is a well known-fact that, since strict observance of Judeo-Christian tradition have been going on for over a millennia and, through that, social status has been constantly changed in the area, Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) represents a serious case of unjust social dealings in the terms and conditions of status and privilege attached to land. As a result, the region was subject to frequent social injustice. The artisans and Muslims, together with considerable Christian peasants with scarce *rist* landholdings, were the best-known case who

seriously affected by the social relations of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). However, an important caution that should be noted here is that far from being static, the land system that principally had deeply ingrained customary dealings in the region was dynamic and constantly changing, having the characteristics of impeding the intensification of tenancy and tenancy relations in the area. Yet, the social conditions of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam never showed a sign of improvement since then. It is in the context of this religious-historical background described above that landlessness and tenancy relations became the constant features of the area during the twentieth century, pending for the revolution. Along with the religious grounds, the imperial reform measures contested for the customer's ancestral proof for claiming share of the land and, through that, to intensify the *ṡisäñña* population of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally Gojjam *Ṥäqlay-Gezat* in the course of the first half of twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era.

As discussed briefly in the middle paragraphs of the chapter above, the customary law that formerly recognized individual's claim of equal share for the land, whether the claimant lived in his/her village or not, was now revoked for its 'PERMANENT IMPROVEMENT'³⁸² in the tenure system of the *Awrajja* or the *Ṥäqlay-Gezat* at large. In that way, the customary law that once impeded social injustice in terms of status and privilege as fully applied generally until the beginning of twentieth century to expedite it in the subsequent periods, especially in post-1941 as at the twilight of the imperial era. That the occasions of individual's claim and access to land by way of negotiation to ceded back to the claimant rather than displaced from the land permanently in the past was now subject to revocation. This was made along with the

³⁸² Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 8.

government's attempt for the commoditization of land that allowed individual's for unconstrained freedom to dispose of it mainly through sale because the possession of immediate holder as discussed thoroughly in chapter above. The sum total of these processes often manifested itself in the development of landlessness and tenancy relations in the area.

However, the application of individual's claim and access to land could not be an old-fashioned event in its entirety during the twentieth century until the demise of the imperial era, especially in the post-1941. It was executed by way of litigations in a court of dealings in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.³⁸³ In that case, if the individual claimant and members of the descent group disputed over the authenticity of land claimed, the case would be referred to courts at several levels of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* courts, especially to the *awrajja* courts for verification and decision. Until a disputed land was verified legally as binding and legitimate by the court, the cultivation of the land would be postponed known in local parlance as *šom-adär-märét* that literally means 'uncultivated land'.³⁸⁴ This eventually deteriorated the socioeconomic conditions of the local population that inexorably intertwined with the majority poor *ṭisäññoch*, by way of the development of landlessness and/or tenancy relations in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). The tables below clearly illustrate this out.

³⁸³ Ibid, and Interviews with Märiḡetta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, *Ato Bäzé Aschalä Chäckol*, *Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw*, *Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä*, and *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

Awrajjas	Total No. of Civil Cases	Land Cases		Claiming Share	
		No.	%	No.	%
Agew Neder	80	14	17.50	10	71.42
Bahar Dar	50	12	24.00	5	41.67
Bechena	40	21	52.50	14	66.67
Debre M.	119	5	4.20	4	80.00
Kola Dega	76	32	42.11	21	65.62
Metekel	41	7	17.07	2	28.57
Notta	19	8	42.11	5	62.50
T O T A L	425	99	32.29	61	61.62

Awrajjas	Total [No. of] Criminal Cases	Criminal Cases Arising Out Of Land	
		No.	%
Agew Neder	212	69	32.55
Bahar Dar	483	81	16.77
Bechena	276	116	42.03
Debre Karkos	455	200	43.96
Kola Dega Danot	556	122	21.94
Metekle	207	6	2.90
Notta	226	116	51.33
T O T A L	2415	710	29.40

Table 4. Parts of the systematic study of the government (MLRA 1971: 27), indicating the percentage distribution of property disputes borne out from the land, and referred to all the awrajjas courts of Gojjam Ṭäqalay-Gezat, which therefore included Däbrä Marqos, for verification and decision using the indigenized (on the left side) Civil Case,³⁸⁵ and (on the right side) Criminal Case.

Two interesting points emerge from the above contemporary statistical data. Firstly, the table ('on the left side') shows that people were striving for social justice with great intensity of litigations over 'claiming share' of land in the seven *Awrajjas* courts of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* using civil case. On condition that, the highest level of contest over land was referred to the *Awrajjas* courts of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* for verification and decision using litigations, pride of place to what the remaining statistical data conveyed as 'trespass' or encroachment, 'landlord'-*ṭisännä* relationships, 'boundary' and other disputes' borne out from the land.³⁸⁶ Compared to the level of contest on property, however, Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjas* showed that the highest proportion of a disputed land was conveyed for verification and decision using civil cases, pride of place to other *Awrajjawoch* of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* (still 'on the left side'). Secondly, the table (on the right side) still pretty much enough to validate the issue—litigation conveyed in a similar breath showed the highest level of land disputes were referred to the

³⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 27.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

Awrajja courts of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, which therefore included Däbrä Marqos, using criminal cases.

Because of these inherent problems in the land system, there had been tremendous insecurity of property and chaos in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), just before the end of the imperial era. This apparently deteriorated the social conditions of the majority peasants, in this way, expedited tenancy relations, given that a disputed land could not be cultivated until its authenticity was verified by the court in the area. Given that claims to land was largely conveyed by means of extended time of 'litigation' in court of dealings, while it was usually manifested itself through a short session of 'negotiation' in customary dealings. For significant number of the informants I talked to this problem is also a lived experience.³⁸⁷ In that way, the court system apparently expedited the conditions of tenancy and tenancy relations, while the customary application impeded it, in many parts of Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam during the imperial era, actually at the twilight of the imperial government. As also indicated earlier, and in chapter above, further drives to landlessness and the subsequent tenancy relations were demographic pressure and subjective tax appropriation.

That subjective land tax appropriation has been to executed on crude estimates of the size and production of the land members of a descent group as a single tax payer not usually by means of the actual measurement and assessment techniques in Däbrä Marqos or generally in Gojjam. In that, the region was largely organized under *rist* system of land tenure and the

³⁸⁷ Interviews with Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä, Ato Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Ato Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, and *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

whole reform package was strange to the local population, while the government more susceptible to top down approach for its full realization, as shall be discussed thoroughly in next chapter. By this means, the amount of taxes all people paid in a descent group was not equal, some were heavily taxed and others not. Besides, the level of tax on the same size and production of land was not levied uniformly. Some were heavily taxed and others not. Thus, crude tax appropriation was applied pride of place to actual or personal basis in the area.³⁸⁸ For some of the prominent informants that I talked to this problem is a lived experience.³⁸⁹ The continuity and severity of such obligations—also unvarying demographic pressure for resource constraints—meant to deteriorate the social conditions of the majority *ṭisäññas*. Eventually, the event's full implication would only be intensifying the development of tenancy and tenancy relations in the area at various times, actually at the twilight of the imperial era.³⁹⁰

All the same, rent in tenancy relations contributed to the development of landlessness in the area. As indicated earlier, it was especially noticeable in the mid 1960s when *ikul-arash* swiftly became the most widespread form of tenancy relations in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. That is to say, unlike the former times, 'lords' under *ikul-arash* became free from all pre-harvest obligations and simply exacted their share of the land production from the *ṭisäññoch* such as artisans and Muslims at the twilight of the imperial government. So much so that, the socioeconomic status of *ṭisäññoch* in most parts the *Awrajja* or the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* could be worsened, given that they were continually exacted

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Interviews with *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Emahoy* Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, and *Märiqéttä* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

³⁹⁰ Ibid; and Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, pp. 8, 11-13, 33-34.

and evicted by the local big landowners as 'lords' at various times, in the course of the first half of twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era. Besides, since they had no any alternative to challenge 'landlords', the *ṭisäññoch* paid more obligations or services to the former—that is beside to what they observed to the local church meticulously such as cultivating the church's land.³⁹¹ That evicting the *ṭisäññoch* sooner or later led many of them go elsewhere leaving the land that they were working on for so long—as a reaction to the continuity and severity of obligations and services that eventually enlarged landlessness in the area. The situation in which the *ṭisäññas*, especially their security matters in land use right, affected their subsistence was clearly observed in conditions of the Muslim landless *ṭisäññoch* in Dejen, in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*, as described thoroughly in the final paragraphs of the chapter above. The sum total of these processes clearly intensified the development of landlessness and tenancy relations in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), pending for the revolution.

Last but not least, natural misfortunes such as drought, severe frost, plague raids and other related factors virtually enough to validate these conditions that is beside to the political and socioeconomic factors described briefly above reinforced the conditions of landlessness and tenancy relations in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). That is to say, while it is difficult to indicate the natural factors precisely in a similar breath to the political contexts of the subject under discussion, natural misfortunes deteriorated the social conditions of the area from early on. Primarily, by referring to *Mäṣehäfä Senksär* (the Ethiopian Synaxarium), Pankhurst writes that famine and plague raids in the second quarter of the ninth century A.D were the earliest

³⁹¹ Ibid.

known natural misfortunes in the territories of northern Ethiopia.³⁹² Later, in the sixteenth century the Portuguese missionary Alvarez also has to relate that serious natural misfortunes brought 'great damages' in the region.³⁹³ In cognizance of these and other related factors, it seems apparent that the recurrent natural misfortunes that eventually deteriorated the social conditions of the region, such as in the recent history of in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) were the natural extensions of the earliest known problems in the area. Thus, these natural misfortunes reinforced the development of landlessness and tenancy relations in the area at various times, during the medieval and modern times, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. That the severity and continuity of natural problems is used to explain the social conditions of the region encompassing Däbrä Marqos (formerly Central Gojjam) or Gojjam province at large.

Gojjam is still one of the richest agricultural provinces of Ethiopia. At the same time, however, it is one of the environmentally deprived parts of northern Ethiopia. In striking contrast to its economic prosperity, poverty and famine triggered by the above-mentioned natural misfortunes are constant features in the recent history of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos. Since cultivation of crops and rearing of animals have been going on for over a millennia and the natural vegetation is destroyed, Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* represents partly serious cases of environmental degradation at various times, in the course of the first half of twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era. Especially, Bichena, Däbrä Marqos and Motta *Awrajjawoch* were environmentally the deprived *Awrajjawoch* of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* that socially acute to frequent drought and famine during the twentieth century,

³⁹² Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics in Ethiopia prior to the Twentieth Century* (London, H and L Communications Ltd., 1985), p. 9.

³⁹³ Alvarez, *The Prester John of the Indies*, (Part II), p. 189.

actually in 1961 (1953 Eth. Cal) and 1973/4 (1965/6 Eth. Cal).³⁹⁴ As a result, poverty and famine which seriously affected those *Awrajjawoch* the three best-known cases reinforced the development of landlessness and tenancy relations. Especially Bichena was indeed completely devoid of its natural forests due to the 1953 famine. In that way, the legal document from Däbrä Marqos clearly mentions [ወገን ለሰላም ጸርፎ / ረገዝ 1953] '[severe] drought that brought famine in Bichena *Awrajjja* in [1960/1 or] 1953[Eth. Cal]'.³⁹⁵

All the same, in parts of Däbrä Marqos, Sinan and Dejen, and Motta were constantly prone to poverty and famine triggered by the above-mentioned natural misfortunes. Especially, severe frost conditions incapacitated the agricultural land of Sinan—enclosed by many rivers that flows into the larger rive called Abay (Blue Nile). Thus, the land turned out to be unproductive, in this way, the peasants who left their plots of land enlarged steadily, as a serious natural misfortune of the area.³⁹⁶ The investigative report of the government (1971) indicating 'land getting poor', as one of the basic reasons for terminating tenancy relations, with the highest intensity observed in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjja* also clearly illustrates this out. That is to say, poor land conditions expedited the decline of crop production that was one of the deep-seated natural misfortunes to terminate tenancy relations in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) at various times, in the course of the post-liberation period well into the end of the imperial

³⁹⁴ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ሞ/አስ/0068, File ረ/ማ 164/68, Letter ቁ22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal).

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid; IES Archives, Folder 11-13, File A16/001-043, No Letter N°, Tax Record, 20 May 1970 (12/8/62 Eth. Cal); EGAZHCA Archives, File 4/62, Letter ሰ22/22, Civil Court Cases on *Rist* Land Litigation, 1 June 1973 (*Genbot* 24, 1965 Eth. Cal); and Folder አ17, File መ/አ. 17, Letter 38009/47, [Territorial] Boundaries [of Gojjam *ፒäqalay-Gezat*] Delimited [at All Levels of the Administration], 15 August 1955 (9/12/47 Eth. Cal).

era.³⁹⁷ These eventually brought the decline of crop production. Gradually but steadily, the decline of crop production deteriorated the social conditions of the majority peasants and, through that, came to transform them as landless segments of the society in the area. Moreover, cattle plague such as render pest—known in local parlance as *abba-sānga*—was the most common cause of cattle raids that killed over 16, 282 ploughing oxen especially in Dejen, in Däbrä Marqos, Motta and Bichena *Awrajjawoch* in 1973/4. For that reason, the peasants could not farm their lands unless they had ploughing oxen.³⁹⁸

In consequence, many peasants ruined in selling their lands at low prices and subjected it to *wäläd-agäd* (mortgaging) because they had nothing to survive on—given that they were prone to the recurrent famine that apparently intensified the development of the peasant population who left their lands in the area.³⁹⁹ For a certain prominent informant that I talked to this problem is a lived experience.⁴⁰⁰ This explains how formerly independent land-owning peasants actually transformed into landlessness, and go elsewhere or work under tenancy arrangements at various times, in the course of the first half of twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era. That *ṭisāññanät* or *česāññanät*—triggered by the above-mentioned inherent problems were the constant features of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) even if there were better lands for the *ṭisāññoch*'s but officials' tended to work against their encroachment in the area at various times, actually during the post-liberation period, as indicated in chapter above. The environmental conditions in parts of Bichena, Däbrä Marqos

³⁹⁷ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Report on Land Tenure Survey of Gojjam Province, p. 14.

³⁹⁸ Ibid; IES Archives, Folder 11-13, File A16/001-043, No Letter N^o, Tax Record, 20 May 1970 (12/8/62 Eth. Cal); and EGAZHCA Archives, File 4/62, Letter 122/22, Civil Court Cases on *Rist* Land Litigation, 1 June 1973 (*Genbot* 24, 1965 Eth. Cal).

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with Märiḡetta Libanos Yätämāññ Kokäbu.

and Motta never showed a sign of improvement since then, as Gojjam was an old settlement area as well. These eventually expedited the continuity and severity of these problems is fundamentally correct. Hence, the existence of 'communal' land tenure system by itself could not prevent the peasants' from landlessness in the area from early on, generally prior to the end of the imperial era.

The manifestation and development of landlessness as a 'social class' became unavoidable, once peasants could not be impeded these inherent problems. In that way, the socioeconomic status of peasant-*ṭisäñnoch* and landless *ṭisäñnoch* could be worsened at various times, in the course of the post-liberation period well into the end of the imperial era. The sum total of these processes gave us a clear picture that in the course of the twentieth century well into the imperial period the conditions of landlessness and tenancy relations relatively became very severe in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at large. The phenomenon of tenancy in this restricted case perhaps virtually revealed land concentration in the *Awrajja* or generally in *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, though the regime proposed long-term recovery plan for 'settlement scheme' to the drought incapacitated territories of Ethiopia. This is beside to the short-term rehabilitation program to give assistance often with food and seed crops as well as ploughing oxen for relieving the plights of the peasants within one and a half years ever since January 1974.⁴⁰¹

Whether the government brought any significant improvements on the lot of peasants is difficult to tell for it already served as a prelude to the revolution. For significant number of

⁴⁰¹ Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Agriculture Extension and Project Implementation Department (EPID), *Short-Term Recovery Programme*, pp. 1, 8-29, and its 'Annex I':10.

informants that I talked to this problem is a lived experience.⁴⁰² However, evidence show that the socioeconomic status of peasant-*ṭisāññoch* and/or landless-*ṭisāññoch* in the north, including Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), could not be comparable with their counterparts in southern parts of Ethiopia at various times, in the course of the first half of twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era. That is to say, unlike in the south, although other forms of tenure existed in the area, in the past, large section of the population in the north was organized under the 'communal' *rist* system of land.⁴⁰³ Suffices to that in this system of tenure, individuals of both sex claim hereditary right to land by virtue of their descent from a common, though often putative, ancestor, as discussed thoroughly on several occasions in chapters above.

However, the entire population of the south was made landless *ṭisāññoch* and termed as *gäbbaroch* and, through that, the 'ruling classes' held the land privately in the period under discussion. This manifested and developed landless social 'classes' as unavoidable obstruction, once every single peasants could not impede these inherent problems but to fulfill their obligations and services in the area. Thus, the socioeconomic status of the people in the south could be worsened. That is to say, in a striking contrast to the north characterized by 'communal' land tenure system, the south with private tenure held mainly by the ruling

⁴⁰² Interviews with Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Ato Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Ato Hassan Adego Gäbré, Ato Täshalä Dästa Welätaw, Ato Mälläsä Asräss Mälaku, Ato Täggäñña Asräss Engeda, Ato Menwuyélat Alalu Chäckol, and *Märiyéta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu.

⁴⁰³ See the three of the standard works on the issue, Tesema Ta'a, 'The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From the Mid-16th to the Early 20th Centuries' (PHD Thesis in History, Michigan State University, 1986); Tekalign Wolde-Mariam, 'A City and its Hinterlands: The Political Economy of Land Tenure, Agriculture and Food Supply for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 1887-1974' (PhD Thesis in History, University of Boston, 1995); Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 20; and Cohen, J. and Weintraub, D, *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia: The Social Background to a Revolution* (Assen, Van Gorcum & Comp. B.V., 1975), pp. 50-51.

'classes' expedited greater insecurity property, in land, in the face of landlessness in the area.⁴⁰⁴ Hence, the conditions of landlessness and tenancy relations relatively became very severe in the south rather than in the north at several times, actually in the course of the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era. Because of these inherent problems in the tenure system of the south, there had been tremendous insecurity of property in the face of landlessness in the area.

In any case, leaving aside some minor modifications, the social conditions of the southern parts of the country remained certainly stable until 1974, which is the widest concern for scholars of the Marxist affiliations with the issue. Not surprisingly, the socioeconomic consequence of the lack of 'communal' land tenure system in the south was therefore the conspicuous abundance of the development of 'landlords' and *ṭisāññoch* that lasted in its vitality up until 1974. This is because in the north that encompasses Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was usually not perceived with greater land insecurity, since landholding through the descent group has traditionally regarded as the single most important evidence of 'communal' ownership system, which guaranteed to manage subsistence in the area. That there were *ṭisāññoch* and 'lords' in the north could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, the forms of social and political domination that existed in the northern and southern parts of the Ethiopia were markedly different one can safely assumed, there had been tremendous insecurity of property in the south though in the country 'ruling classes' drive their political power from control over land as a whole from early on. In spite of that, I contend that 'landlord'-*ṭisāñña* relationship which was so prevalent throughout medieval and modern Ethiopia (Gojjam)— virtually

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

symbolizes pre-colonial African reality as well as the logical outcome of a system of social and labor domination detached from the brutes is fundamentally correct. On condition that, Ethiopia with these two vast regions have had a similar socioeconomic characteristics with Europe, even though they came from vastly different historical backgrounds.

In conclusion, looking at the twentieth-century from the imperial era, one can say that pretty much has changed in terms of taxation from kind to cash, as endorsed and promoted by the imperial authorities in Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos. It is clear that the changes in the system of taxation from kind to cash was made along the changing conditions of social relations in terms of status and privilege. These changes were further promoted by regional authorities in the area. In the wake of that, internal dynamics within Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), however, brought severe social problems that inexorably intertwined with the majority poor peasants. It is, therefore, the interplay of both local/internal and external factors that brought these changes until the Italian administration created a fleeting relieve in the area. However, rapid changes in terms of social status and privilege—were made during the post-liberation period that directly intertwined with the government's reform plans in the area. It is clear that with its important changes in taxation system, the new reform plans radically maintained and continued the severity and proportion of peasant's hardship in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. Hence, the government measure led to the rise of the tenant population that deeply influenced the social history of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam in the period under discussion. Although the government measure noted for swelling up the prevalence of tenancy in the post liberation period, in actual fact, socioeconomic and natural phenomena were other basic factors to the growth of tenancy in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), as

discussed above. That religious tradition manipulated the deep-seated peasant's hardship from early on could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, it is clear that the new reforms with the local authorities' conformist implementation enormously invigorated the tight-grip of the sociopolitical elites. Therefore, both internal and external factors accounted for the rapid changes in taxation and social status in different parts of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam in the period under stated. It is in the context of these changes also that I reconstructed the reaction of the people, as will be discussed thoroughly in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

The Reaction of the Local People to the Reform Measures

The recurring and continued popular uprising of the peasantry against the imperial government's new reform plans has not succumbed to the latter's pressure in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). That the people resented the government's reform plans from its full implementation mainly for the latter's violent reprisal of the former's uprising in the area. Beside to violence, economic distress, commercialization of land and maladministration all served as the background to expedite the uprising, in the course and progress of the Shewan domination, most actively between 1941 and 1974, as the constant features of the area for long. Despite the government's victorious soldiers inflicted heavy damage on the peasant revolts of post liberation Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), I realized that the latter sapped the energies of the former. That quite a few of the notables who led the uprising remained loyal to their personal interest. Nevertheless, the government pressure could not supplant the peasants uprising. In fact, Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam was a resistance place to stop pressures from total shocks and damages wrought by the government forces when the people intensely defied and succeeded in a good part of the locality. It was due to this objective I argue in this chapter that, while small parts of the locality succumbed to the pressure from the government new reform plans, big portions of Gojjam including Däbrä Marqos succeeded in withstanding that pressure, as the constant features of the area for long. Yet, the nineteenth century Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was never the same again.

The Reaction of the Peasants 1901-1967

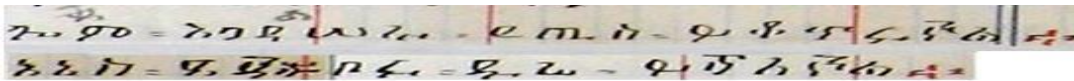
Although information on the reaction of the people related to land prior to the twentieth century is lacking, it is apparent that peasants that had lived in a more or less similar sociopolitical and cultural conditions might have reacted from early on. That the reaction borne out from the land bred chaos and disorder in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) at various times, during the twentieth century, actually during the imperial era. As discussed thoroughly in chapter above, it is evident that exploitative form of 'productive relationship' was in existence in pre-modern and modern Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) or generally Ethiopia (Africa) analogous to Europe. On condition that, a considerable amount of land was confiscated from the peasants in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) at various times in the past. This definitely led to the sweeping growth of tenancy and other peasant grievances that had social and political repercussions in the area. In that case, although it is difficult to pinpoint a specific date as to when peasant discontent started in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), it goes back to a sweeping development of exploitative form of 'productive relationship' during the twentieth century, generally prior to the end of the imperial era, as discussed thoroughly in chapter two above. This partly triggered various forms of resistance from the peasants. Hence, the local peasants could not be passive in the face of these harsh realities of life. However, it was just observed clearly in the course of the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era. The reaction was spanning from passive protest to active resistance as of the reaction of majority peasants in the area.

Primarily, it was under the governorship of *Ras* Haylu II (1901-1932) that the peasants of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) protested in opposition to the new regulations. Although information

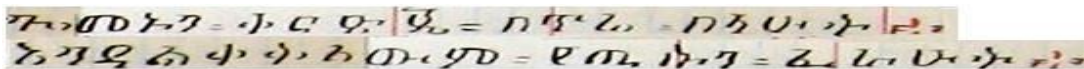
on the special occasion of the peasants' aggressive posture is lacking, it is apparent that their poor living condition borne out from Haylu's exorbitant taxation might gradually but steadily bred chaos and disorder in the area. Hence, as has already been discussed at some length in the previous chapter, in due course the amicable relations between the tax administration of Haylu II and the local population gave way to violent and acrimonious relationship, which continued to the end of the former's office of tenure in the area. Dealing with this monumental socio-political and cultural changes that the region was going through, the existing sources testify that on several occasions the people expressed their grievance and disappointment ensuing this huge tax. As discussed thoroughly in the chapter above, despite pretty-well progresses following the promotion of changes in taxation system of the empire with the reconstruction of the monarchical authority in the north that it instigated the reaction of the people in Gojjam (Däbrä Marqos) at various times, under Haylu's office of tenure.

Succinctly put, the task of reorganizing the taxation system of Gojjam encompassing Central Gojjam (Däbrä Marqos) was entrusted to its first Governor, *Ras* Haylu II on its promotions and ensuing developments at several levels of the administration, which had a bearing on the plight of the people. Overall, these two parallel processes changes in the systems of surplus appropriation and the plight of the local people proceeded simultaneously. Nevertheless, significant changes in the system of taxation could not supplant the plight of the local people easily. In fact, it was generally apparent that Haylu's exorbitant tax at a higher rate than before that steadily deteriorated the social conditions of the people in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam, as indicated in chapter above. The region could not be a place of social safety that served as a breeding ground for the development aggressive posture. These clearly

revealed as part of the general manifestation of this inherent problem of the local population, as they were disappointed ensuing the tax burden of *Ras* Haylu II, as discussed thoroughly below. The existing sources testify that the people expressed their discontent using individual acts of verses as well as in getting group petitions that clearly revealed the lots of the people by way of Haylu's exorbitant tax. Thus, the people shifted steadily from passive acceptance of wrongs (passive protest) to active rejection. The following three Amharic couplets—I discovered and found from the treasury of Däbrä Marqos Church and a certain popular informant—composed to express the plight of the local peasants during the governorship of *Ras* Haylu II clearly bear these out.



*On account of building my house I was subject to [tis] smoke or hut tax,
Hence, I shall live in Däjjach Borru's Jungle [located in the village of Ṭa'emawit Gyorgis, in what is now Sinan, formerly Gozamen], as it would secure me from threat of that pain.*⁴⁰⁵



*I have eaten the [thinly] sliced raw cabbage [Brassica carinata] of food before processing, or without roasted over fire,
Because I feared of subject to [tis] smoke tax derived from it, as has already been paid for Ras Haylu's administration.*⁴⁰⁶

ራሥ የውሽ ገቡ፤ የዳ ጥለውኝ ፤
ውሃ ዋና-አንኳ-አለውቅ፤ ዋ! ምን -ይበጀኝ?

*Leaving me alone at Yäda River [that flows into the larger rive Abay or Blue Nile],
Ras Haylu II crossed and entered into Yäwush [a village in what is now Gozamen],
What could I do? I could not swim across that river!*⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 128 verso.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ An interview with *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa.

Leaving the first two couplets for their direct expression of the issue, I will briefly discuss the third and last couplet as a strikingly sardonic literary form that characterized by irony in a way that many people felt about the repressive rule of *Ras* Haylu II, in the paragraph that follows. That Haylu made no effort to regulate tax collection and limit the excesses of the tax administration he issued during his lengthy tenure of office. That the third and last couplet has been very much sensitive to an ironic expression or utterance of grief to the way many people in the locality felt on Haylu by means of ['ሰምና ወርቅ', *sämena wäirq*] wax and gold poetic license. In that, the term ['ሃዳ'] *yäda* has more than one meaning. This is besides its obvious river stream connotation, the term *yäda* expressed Haylu's huge tax imposition up on the local population that reduced many of the poor peasants to destitute. Unlike the 'lordship' of *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot, in his lengthy tenure of office, Haylu became much more unfair and inappropriate and went about his measure for imposition in the systems of landholding and taxation in a systematic way. In a more pragmatic way, the third and last couplet above expressed that the local population were struck by harsh realities of life that such measure resulted in unfair rise in the amount of tax the majority peasants had to pay as per the provisions of Haylu's governorship over the region, as discussed thoroughly in the chapter above. Thus, the couplet expressed the plight and misery of the majority peasants of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) under *Ras* Haylu's tax administration.

Overall, the above-mentioned three couplets gave artistic expression to the local population who felt their plight under Haylu's exorbitant tax administration and, through that, complained that the way the new tax implemented was by and large unfair and inappropriate. Therefore, the tax already imposed should be revoked and a new measure be carried out that

would relieve them from that severe pain and suffering. As has already been discussed in chapter above, Haylu's tax imposition was destined to his political agenda as a strong rival of the Crown prince Täfäri later Emperor Haile Sillassie apparent for the throne is beyond doubt. Nevertheless, the fact that poor living condition of the local population a fate inexorably intertwined with the social condition of majority peasants is extremely intense to challenge Haylu's agenda for the throne in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Hence, the office of the governorship of Haylu rejected the complain bitterly about the tax imposed, which transformed the peaceful opposition from peaceful idiomatic expression especially by its lower level of intensity to a more increasingly but formal signed petitions, as discussed in paragraphs below.

Succinctly put, besides the above ways of social sayings expressed in short well-known statements that contained advice about social life in general, the local population increasingly expressed their disappointment and plight in signed petitions as well, as part of the opposition against *Ras* Haylu's tax burden in the area.⁴⁰⁸ Moreover, the majority peasants, members of the Gojjam army were also subject to heavy taxation. Hence, as the local church record testifies, many members of the army expressed their bitter feelings of resentment towards Haylu's tax administration in the area. Soldiers showed their displeasure at Haylu's tax burden by booming quietly, which is also the other form of opposition among the local population against Haylu's tax burden in the area. They feel anxious and annoyed at Haylu's measure where his predecessor, *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot had exempted them from paying tax, except the military services they rendered to land they possessed, variously known as *yä-*

⁴⁰⁸ History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 129 recto 130 verso.

zämächa-märét or *yä-zämach-märét*, discussed in chapter two. Hence, the elite segments of the society were also subject to huge taxations.⁴⁰⁹ It seems apparent that in the course of time, the tide of objection to Haylu's exorbitant tax extended to the elite segments of the society, *viz.*, in support of the majority peasants in the area. Be that as it may, at that point in time, the common people, usually the poor peasants were heavily taxed at a higher rate than before, in this way, deeply disappointed and objected to the terms of taxation formally in petitions both at the local and central levels of administration.⁴¹⁰

Eventually, it manifested itself in public reaction, for the most part, in the forms of pleading to retrieve their problems until the end of Haylu's tax administration. In that case, the majority peasants backed by the elite segments of the society with delegated committees continually went to Addis Ababa. Thus, they pleaded for social justice and fairness in the terms and conditions of taxations in the area. Yet, these series of appeals bore no fruit as unnoticed by the concerned authorities at the centre—that is besides the authorities at the local levels of administration. Hence, the government authorities at all levels of the administration deterred the wide appeal of the peasants' objection to excessive taxation. Primarily, it is apparent that Haylu enjoyed complete autonomy from the central government in his tax administration of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos, even if it alienated him and his functionaries from the rest of the society in the area. The fact that such requests of objection to excessive taxation were ignored, it inflamed peasant grievances and rebellion in Gojjam in general and Däbrä Marqos in particular.⁴¹¹ That is to say, a sweeping development

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid; and Interviews with Märiqéttä Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, and *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

of exploitative form of 'productive relationship' triggered various forms of resistance from the peasantry.

Consequently, though the existing sources fail to furnish sufficient details as to how peasants reacted to such heavy handed treatments in the hands of Haylu II and his subordinate officials, as 'lords', it is generally important to remember that the novelist Häddés Alämayähu had memory of the events that happened afterwards, as pointed out in above chapter. To be precise, in his remarkable novel entitled *Feqer Iskä Mäqaber* covering twentieth century and many districts of the Gojjam province, Häddés' long story is based on actual events in its close-fitting features with the issue as peasants open opposition succeeded in the locality. It is important to take note of the fact that despite the narrated love stories of the book under consideration, *Fitawrari Mäshäsha* is the major character in many of the events that has the real meaning leading up to the development of local 'lord'.⁴¹²

For a certain individual of the locality, *Ato* [redacted] Béshaw Dästa who read the first edition of that novel soon in 1965, the publication is a lived experience. As intriguingly commented by Béshaw himself on one of the front pages of the publication, that along with the detailed narrative of Häddés [redacted] 'chapters numbered 18 and 20 necessarily corresponding exactly with the 1910/1 events within Gojjam'.⁴¹³ If so, the whole story widely circulated and read is a detailed revealing insight

⁴¹² Häddés Alämayähu, *Feqer Iskä Mäqaber* (lit. *Love unto Crypt*) (First Edition, Addis Ababa, Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1958 Eth. Cal.).

⁴¹³ It is now under the possession of Sewale Mekonnen, my field research companion in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Sewale possessed it from his father who primarily received that publication from Béshaw Dästa, as a

towards the social history of twentieth century Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). While Häddés wrote on the way he would like it to be, in actual fact, the novel is based on what is actually possible. Thus, the major character of *Fitawrari* Mäshäsha whose authority was sanctioned by custom and shared the same cultural tradition with the population he ruled over and opposition of him from peasants is used to explain Béshaw's lived experience.⁴¹⁴

This is clear, for instance, as the most common form of open opposition, first and foremost, through soft pacifist measures that was observed in the rural villages of Gulét in Gozamenh Bärbärema, Inamora in Bichena all in Däbrä Marqos, when peasants were obliged to tribute due, known in local parlance as *amätbale mäwaya*, in favor of the *Fitawrari* at Ethiopian Easter. Easter was and still is a holiday on the Sunday of Ethiopian Christian population. Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) paid this tribute due—by way of *amätbale mäwaya* on any holiday from peasants to the *Fitawrari*, as 'lord', for the most part, in the form of *qebé* (butter), *mare* (honey), *sänga* (fattened cattle) and *muket* (fattened sheep) for slaughter, and so forth, for centuries. However, as time went on, this condition set in motion tremendous tensions and chaos in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) as an imposition, while acknowledging the *gämmäta* (assessed) annual tribute to the *Fitawrari* by the peasants on the *rist* land they were living, at the same time as the former's *gult* holding.⁴¹⁵

In any case, peasants' opposition in those villages over the tribute due became more articulated when they were obliged to tribute due on the feast of Easter, subsequent to the

gift. Therefore, I found and photographed this piece of evidence from Sewale—who already in possession of the novel cited above—on 2 June 2016.

⁴¹⁴ Häddés, *Feqer Iskä Mäqaber*, pp. 209-236, 251-275.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

order of the *Fitawrari* , as hereditary 'lord' of peasants who lived in those villages. This event led to the peasants' disappointment and opposition to the *Fitawrari's* tribute demand, first and foremost, through non-violent means such as petitions to the *Fitawrari* through their elected peasant representatives, with elected *yä-gobäz-aläqa* ('leaders of the brave'), as their opposition leader. While their reaction ranged only from soft pacifist measures, peasants proved unyielding to both the violent reprisal and conciliatory approaches of the *Fitawrari* administration. Finally, the *Fitawrari* 'lordship', in those villages, ended in that same year (1910/1). It is interesting to note that, with the exception of usually imaginative narratives of the record, the system of land tribute and the tribute dispute that it bred and encouraged lasted in its vitality up until that particular year as actual events with some or no modification for all future generations. That major character of *Fitawrari* Mäshäsha is regarded as the very manifestation of 'feudal lord' perhaps representing *Ras* Haylu II and his subordinate officials or generally the theocratic powerhouse of the Ethiopian imperial state for deep-rooted crisis in the area during the twentieth century prior the end of the imperial era.⁴¹⁶

So much so that, the novel's narrative clearly used to show the social relations of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) that was built-in feudalistic terms for centuries.⁴¹⁷ Combining personal experience and creative imagination helped Häddés to provide a juicy story and advance what is actually possible manifestation of the property system and the social and power relations arising out of modern Gojjam. It was in this way that, the Häddés record of the actual events is preserved for all future generations, as the case of the three villages pointed out above amply demonstrates. Though different in character, cause and impact, the

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

Not surprisingly, although sources are not definitive on this, the novel of Häddés (1965) expressed peasants' dissatisfaction with elites' exploitation, and their attempt to hinder this exploitation in the area, by detaining their 'lord', as many of the events are based in fact indicated above. Hence, this condition would have to create havoc and instability in the area, for the government authorities were either unwilling or incapable of enforcing judicial verdicts. The local people had lost faith and confidence in the justice system that left many of them destitute, a fate inexorably intertwined with Haylu's exorbitant tax administration in the area. However, things have been changed subsequent to the removal of Haylu II from office on May 27, 1932. As indicated in the preceding chapter, the removal of *Ras* Haylu from the 'lordship' of Gojjam was carried out after his involvement in Palace intrigue in 1932 that had important socioeconomic and administrative consequences at the regional level. The first and immediate consequence that needs to be pointed out here is the change in governor of the region. At a single stroke, the local hereditary ruler of Gojjam was replaced by individuals of Shewan origin.⁴¹⁹

Hence, the removal of Haylu from office laid the foundation for the irreversible process of the centralization of the administration of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos which started with the appointment of the Prince *Ras* Emeru Haylä Sellasé who is a relative and close companion of Emperor Haile Sellassie himself as governor of the region in 1932/3. Gojjam remained under the overall governorship of *Ras* Emeru, who ruled the area until 1941, during which the Italian fascist government of Benito Mussolini made the invasion of the country to

⁴¹⁹ Emeru Häylä Sellasé, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw* (in Amharic) (lit. *A Remark and Reminiscence [of My Life]*) (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Printing Press, 2002 Eth. Cal.), pp. 244-247; see also Käbbädä Täsämma, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha* (in Amharic) (lit. *A Historical Memoir*) (Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Press, 1962 (Eth. Cal)/1969/70), p. 117.

avenge after their defeat by the Ethiopians, in 1896, at battle of Adwa, in what is now Tigray Region. On the occasion that, informants and the record in Emeru's memoir agree that, partly because of its obvious importance to implement the reform policy, the government tried to thoroughly centralized the administration of Gojjam by diminishing the power of local rulers most often the provincial ruler/governor that aimed at creating an administrative system dutiful to the central government. Hence, in the mid 1933 the central government introduced a new system of administration in Däbrä Marqos by creating eleven smaller administrative units as sub-provinces namely, Bichena, Yäwush, Däbrä Marqos (formerly Central Gojjam), Enässé and Enäbssé, Bibuññ, Aléyas, Dega Damot, Buré Damot, Yelmana Dénsa, Agäw or Agäw Meder, and Achäfär with several *wärädas* below the level of sub-provinces.⁴²⁰

These units of administrations were mostly staffed by salaried officials, with Shewan origin, directly appointed by the central government but a few governors of these districts had local origin; thereby making them dependent upon the former for their position. The authority of governors with local origin was sanctioned by custom and shared the same cultural tradition with the population they ruled over. The provincial governor, Emeru represented the apex of the administrative hierarchies in Gojjam, placed at Däbrä Marqos, formerly Mänqorär. Most often, he controlled the activities of the smaller administrative governors under him.⁴²¹ As also indicated in chapter above, Agäw (Agäw Meder) was detached from the governorship of Gojjam and incorporated into the central government's *eqa-bét* or *ma'ed-bét* (*ganä-gäb-märét*) with an appointed governor of Shewan origin, namely *Däjjazmach* Mäsfen. This

⁴²⁰ Ibid, pp. 205, 244-245.

⁴²¹ Ibid, pp. 244-245; and Interviews with Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé.

territorial deduction from Gojjam was made to weaken the region and diminish its relative strength and importance in national politics.⁴²²

In any case, leaving aside some minor changes, the administrative boundaries of Gojjam, which therefore included Däbrä Marqos, remained certainly stable until 1935.⁴²³ As described above, between 1932 and 1935 *Käntiba* Matäbé and *Ras* Emeru were directly appointed by the Emperor himself, as *indärasés* of Gojjam, one after the other. In that case, whether the new Shewans rule under *Käntiba* Matäbé (1932-1933) and *Ras* Emeru (1933-1935) brought any significant improvements on the lot of peasants is difficult to tell because their office of tenure was rather short. Yet, the record in Emeru's memoir evidently revealed that he made some effort—as an enlightened governor—to limit the excesses of the local governors by defining and prescribing their power and rights in a series of decrees and regulations he issued to regulate tax collection during his brief tenure of office.⁴²⁴

That is beside to the special order of the Emperor to him on a room for improvement on the character of the governorship of Gojjam, as indicated in the preceding chapter. Hence, Emeru appears to have refrained from making heavy tax and tribute demands from the peasants; thereby encouraging the leniency of the local administration towards the local people in the post-Haylu II Gojjam. Yet, despite the end of the administrative extreme of *Ras* Haylu II, the courageous supporters of Haylu brought havoc and disorder in the area. Dealing with this monumental change that the region was going through, both informants and the record in the

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, p. 246; see also Käbbäda, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha*, pp. 117, 120-121.

area agree that Haylu's supporters and many of the local people led by *Fitawrari* Admassu, the son of the deposed 'Haylu, inflicted heavy damage on the locality. The destructive Admassu forces did not even spare from looting. To name but a single instance, in September 1932 Haylu's supporters and many of the local people led by Admassu broke into the treasury house of Haylu in the local palace of *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot in the town of Däbrä Marqos, formerly Mänqorär. These soldiers, therefore, broke into the local palace and carried off plenty of precious metals such as silver coins and gold, and also elite goods as well as other palace paraphernalia such as cups made of solid silver which, for the most part, accumulated under Haylu's tenure of office.⁴²⁵

The storming of the treasure that inflicted heavy damages mainly by Admassu and his supporters is well-described in several sources. Though they used different terminologies, several sources fixed and mention in a similar breath to the events that Admassu inflicted heavy damage on the locality. Firstly, the property document in the area clearly mentions as [ገጽ 3220 ገጽ 21 ግ/1925] 'the occasion of Admassu's broke into the treasury house of *Ras* Haylu II [in the town of Däbrä Marqos] on 28/9 September 1932'.⁴²⁶ The record in Emeru's memoir describes the event, the removal of *Ras* Haylu II from the governorship of Gojjam that set in motion tremendous tensions and chaos [that took several days to work the government out]. That the havoc and disorder led by Admassu was very clear on condition that his father's removal from office caused 'chaos throughout that province'. Both Emeru's memoir and popular informants commonly describe the condition as [ገጽ 21] 'Gojjam was in

⁴²⁵ Ibid, pp. 118-121.

⁴²⁶ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ፲፯/አሰ/0068, File ፩/፲፯ 164/68, Letter ፳22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal).

a state of complete chaos'.⁴²⁷ For the most part, the Emperor chose force to settle the chaos and disputes on the local population of Gojjam. In that way, Admassu's havoc and disorder with local chiefs supported him had a strong bearing on the local administration, as discussed briefly above.

This move meant also to impede the government's control over the local treasury and redistribute the local wealth for the safety of the people, especially the common peasants as a means to retrieve their plight under Haylu's tax administration. As also indicated earlier and in chapters above, *Ras* Haylu is well-remembered in local tradition for his notoriety and harsh exploitation of the peasantry. He squeezed the peasants heavily to enable him accumulate wealth and build his power already with his unyielding program of struggle apparent for the throne. On that occasion, the people steadily shifted ranging from soft pacifist actions to active rejection. However, in the late 1920s, his relations with the central government soured and he soon fell out of favor. Haylu's disagreement with the central government developed into open hostility eventually leading to his removal from the 'lordship' of Gojjam. In the wake of his removal from office, Haylu was kept in prison for life in Arsi *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* that was under the governorship of a certain *Däjjazmach* Amädé.⁴²⁸ Probably, Amädé took the task of Haylu's incarceration for his loyalty and obedience to the Emperor at that big moment.

⁴²⁷ Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, pp. 233, 239-242; and *Interviews with Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä, Ato Menwuyélat Alalu Chäckol, Ato Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa, and Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa*; this issue is also described in a similar breath in the memoir of Käbbäda, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha*, pp. 118-121.

⁴²⁸ Käbbäda, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha*, p. 117; Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, pp. 233-258, 270-271.

However, the incarceration of Haylu by itself could not pacify the local population, in its place; it witnessed havoc and disorder led by Admassu in the area. On the occasion that, Admassu and his supporters continued the havoc and disorder of Gojjam, which had a strong bearing on impeding the process of the centralization of the region under the Haile Sellassie administration. Dealing with this sociopolitical and cultural change that Gojjam was going through, the record in Emeru's memoir revealed that the Emperor expressed his displeasure in conditions of Gojjam swiftly with the looting of properties from the treasury house of Haylu,⁴²⁹ perhaps for his predilection to collect it from early on. With the severity of the condition especially in the administrative capital Däbrä Marqos, therefore, was such that the Emperor dispatched a high-level delegation led by his close companion, *Azaži*, later *Däjjazmach*, Käbbädä Täsämma to the area in 1933. The delegation held a public meeting with significant local sociopolitical elites at the administrative centre Däbrä Marqos. Owing to the diplomatic skills of the *Azaži*, therefore, the meeting said to have been succeeded, in striking a compromise with the local notables, even if there was some chaos and disorder borne out from capturing Admassu and his small but courageous supporters who created havoc and instability in the area. In the wake of capturing Admassu, therefore, no sooner had the delegation left the area. Hence, Haylu and his son Admassu lost their power base forever and the government effectively silenced their courageous supporters from Gojjam in the years between 1932 and 1933. Especially, when the government captured Admassu in 1933 and kept in prison in the capital, Addis Ababa.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁹ Ibid, pp. 233-235.

⁴³⁰ Käbbädä, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha*, pp. 117, 120-121; and also Bahru Zewde, 'The Italian Occupation of Ethiopia: Records, Recollections and Ramifications' *Society, State and History Selected Essays* (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press, 2008), p. 386.

On the whole, Admassu and his supporters' reaction did not bear the fruit it was expected to produce. However, it was not a total failure either. Firstly, new offices were built in several territories of Gojjam including Däbrä Marqos, as the direct outcome of Emperor Haile Sellassie's power of centralization. Secondly, his power of centralization gave a new lease of life to the many deteriorated and long ill-treated peasants in Gojjam. Thirdly, and most importantly, the Emperor's measure undoubtedly displeased exorbitant tax that Gojjam had experienced from time to time and through that promoted tax relieve in that province. Last, but not least, the Emperor significantly strengthened the position of the central government throughout Gojjam, including Däbrä Marqos, by actively appointing rulers often chosen from the Shewans and, through that, he radically weakened the autonomous status of the local ruling family who could not get along with his centralization policy and refused to heed to his demands. Besides, by actively deducting territory often confiscated from the overall governorship of Gojjam, the Emperor was aimed at creating an administrative system dutiful to the central government. In short, the centralization policy of Haile Sellassie had left a contentious legacy and produced equivocal outcome. Giving allowance for the violent means he employed to fulfill his objective, on the positive side the undoubted moderating impact of his centralization policy had indirectly helped for fostering tax relieve in the area. However, the easy success of Haile Sellassie (the central government) in pacifying Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam and the initial acceptance they enjoyed from the local people changed pretty much quickly.

Despite the end of the administrative extremes of former local governors and the supposedly reduction of dues and obligations for the safety of the majority poor peasants meant to

reverse the latter's plight under Haylu's tax administration no amount of Shewans brought significant changes that could legitimize their rule in the area. That in the course and progress of the Shewan domination between 1932 and 1935, the peasants' plight was virtually a constant feature of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in a striking similarity to its recent history under the administration of *Ras* Haylu II. Most people in Gojjam felt quite separate from the central government and began to work towards its end. Using the intricacies and sociopolitical changes that the region was going through in the wake of the Italian invasion of the country as found safely armed local patriots started to harass Shewans. Such local notables as *Fitawrari* Yayährad, *Fitawrari* Tamrat and *Däjjach* Gässäsä Bäläw were in the forefront of the resistance against the Shewans. Shewan reaction to the rebel movement ranged from soft pacifist measures to extreme reprisals. Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos remained under the overall governorship of Emeru, who ruled the region by directly appointing subordinate officials, until 1935 before the Italian Occupation. Hence, peasants' discontent in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) did not explode into major action prior to 1935.⁴³¹

However, after the dramatic defeat of the Ethiopian army, in the north at the battle of Mayčäw on March 31, 1936 the peasants of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) led mainly by *Däjjach* Gässäsä found expression for their accumulated grievance by killing and harassing the retreating Ethiopian soldiers, including the soldiers of Emeru. Emeru, who supported the Emperor during the latter's campaign to Mayčäw, in the north, has provided a down to earth account of the way the peasants reacted to the retreating Ethiopian soldiers. He writes that most peasants of Gojjam, with local chiefs including *Däjjach* Gässäsä supported them, were

⁴³¹ Interviews with Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, *Ato* Bäläy Yehun Qallu, and *Märiqéttä* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu; and Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, pp. 233-258, 270-271.

merciless to the retreating Ethiopian soldiers whom they frequently attacked and killed.⁴³² This partly shows the frustration and the deeply ingrained grievances of the peasants against governors whom they took responsibility for their suffering. However, not all the population of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) reacted to the retreating Ethiopian soldiers in the same way. For instance, Emeru has to relate that *Däjjach*, later *Bitäwädäd*, Mängäsha Gänbäré, *Fitawrari* Damtjäw and *Fitawrari* Haylu Emeru were influential local notables who protected him from the attacks of armed peasants in Gojjam after the final blow at Mayčäw, in what is now Tegray Region, in 1936.⁴³³ However, Emeru finally caught by the Italians in 1936 and kept in prison at Ponza Island, in Italy until the latter had been expelled from the country in 1941.⁴³⁴

Both informants and the record in Emeru's memoir agree that, the Italians entered Gojjam without much resistance and established military camps in such towns of the province as Däbrä Marqos, Bichena, Dejen, Buré, Fénotä-Selam and Motta from where they administered the area since then. However, the majority peasants of Gojjam, with local patriots supported them, were merciless to the succeeding Italians soldiers whom they frequently attacked and killed. In fact, Dejen was a strong Italians' resistance place to stop pressures from total shocks and damages continuously wrought by the armed force of Bälay Zälläqä when the latter intensely defied and succeeded into a good part of the locality. At the same time, however, the Italians won some local allies, of whom the most important three

⁴³² Ibid, pp. 278-279.

⁴³³ Ibid; Interviews with Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, and *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu; and also Zäwdé Rätta, *Yä-Qädamawé Haile Sellassie Mängest Andäñña Mäšehäf 1930-1955* (in Amharic), (*The Government of Haile Sellassie I Volume I 1930-1955*) (Addis Ababa, Shama Books, 2005 (Eth. Cal)/2013), p. 404; and also Alberto Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini: Fascism and the Colonial Experience* (London, Zed Press, 1985), pp. 156-157.

⁴³⁴ Ibid, p. 236; and Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, p. preceding table of contents; and Interviews with Wäyzäro Bezunäsh Tassäw Aläm, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

were *Ras* Haylu II freed from his captivity with the help of the Italians *Fitawrari* Gäböyāhu and *Däjjach* Gässäsä. In return for their services, the Italians rewarded them by providing huge salaries.⁴³⁵

The freed *Ras* Haylu II from Emperor Haile Sellassie's detention in Addis Ababa, formerly in Arsi province as indicated earlier, and came to assume *Negus* while he pledged his loyalty to the Italians.⁴³⁶ On condition that, Haylu found expression for his accumulated grievances for constantly incarcerated and harassed by the Emperor, in the wake of his removal from the 'lordship' of Gojjam.⁴³⁷ By referring to the contemporary records, certain anonymous writer—but in a usually regular series of local magazine—namely *Life* (2013), confirm that Haylu II was paid a monthly salary of the Italian *Lire* \$40,847—and singled out as a huge known payment under the Italian administration of the country.⁴³⁸ The Italians had also supported Haylu in arms and ammunitions for his already program to the throne, though he was not succeeded in withstanding the pressure especially from the Shewan ruling elites at the centre.⁴³⁹

The Italians administration of the country formed that had had six major ethnic based administrative designations, of which *Amhara* encompassing Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was

⁴³⁵ Ibid, p. 278; and Zäwdé, *Yä-Qädamawé Haile Sellassie Mängest*, p. 400-401.

⁴³⁶ Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini*, p. 157.

⁴³⁷ Emeru, *Kayähut Kämastawesäw*, pp. 207-208.

⁴³⁸ 'Jägnoch"än Yä-Metakäber Agär Bä-Yät Nat?', *Life* (January 2013, Vol. 7, N°99. Addis Ababa), pp. 10-11.

⁴³⁹ Zäwdé, *Yä-Qädamawé Haile Sellassie Mängest*, p. 402; see also Mesfin Welde-Mariam, *Mäkshäf Endä-Ethiopia Tärék* (in Amharic) (lit. *Decisive Change is Impending, a Scene Reminiscent of the Old Ethiopia History*) (Addis Ababa, n.p, (2005 Eth. Cal.)/ 2012/3, pp. 7, 16-18.

one—as part of the 'Italian East Africa' administration, 1936-41.⁴⁴⁰ (See Map 2c and Map 3a displayed in preceding chapter one). Both informants and the record in a remarkable work of the Italian historian Alberto Sbacchi agree that the regional governor *Ras* Haylu II was also commander of more than three thousand soldiers under the Italian military officer, namely Teruzi.⁴⁴¹ Informants also remembered every one of the Italian soldiers with the Amharished-Italian name of *bäṭoloné*⁴⁴² (probably any soldier of the fascist Italian ruler Mussolini at that particular period). As indicated in chapter above, the Italians sought general popularity through renouncing the *asrat* from all kinds of lands—of course, significant in the improvement of the social condition of the peasants—through their appointees assisted by *Ras* Haylu II and other local notables under him.⁴⁴³

In that way, *Ras* Haylu II was promoted to the status of *negus* and declared as heir apparent for the throne. The Italians' effort to restore *Ras* Haylu to power and keep the *status quo* maintained and continued in an overall success⁴⁴⁴ after his removal from the hereditary governorship of Gojjam, by the deposed Emperor Haile Sellassie in 1932, as indicated above. In any case, this political arrangement brought in new forces into play with a strong bearing on the local administration of [Central] Gojjam. The local patriots supported the deposed and exiled Emperor to Britain in his struggle to win back his power in the years between the

⁴⁴⁰ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991* (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press, 2002), p. 162; and Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini*, pp. 156-157.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-159.

⁴⁴² Referred to Kābbāda, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha*, p. 387.

⁴⁴³ Interviews with Ato Täshomä Adāraw Gétanäh, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Ato Täggāññä Asräss Engeda, Ato Yehanaw Ṭénaw Admass, Emahoy Hebritu Abābayāhu Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and Märiḡetta Libanos Yätämāññ Kokäbu; and Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini*, pp. 156-157.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Occupation periods. However, *Ras* Haylu II and his subordinates joined the Italian administration, until the latter's expulsion, as indicated on several occasions in chapters above. In the early years of Italian rule, the people of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) seemed to have got temporary relief from the instability raised by the administrative reshuffling and the accompanying change of governors. The tax burden of the peasants was significantly reduced, as indicated above. Moreover, the Italians abolished the detested *corvée* (unpaid labour) services and demanded only two *Birr* from holders of *gult-märét* to have ownership rights. Although *Birr* was used side by side with it, the Italian *Lire* was made as the national currency of the Italian administration, and daily laborers, civil servants and military officials, in Italian service were paid in *Lire*, as indicated earlier by means of *Ras* Haylu II's salary paid with this by the Italian administration for years.

Perhaps, the most important legacy that Italian rule left behind in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) is the road they built connecting Addis Ababa and the towns of Däbrä Marqos and Gondar. The river Abay (Blue Nile) served as a natural frontier separating Shewa and Gojjam on both sides of the bank. Hence, a bridge built across the river Abay (Blue Nile) and began to provide service after the Italian Occupation, officially opened on 18 January 1947/8 (11 *Mäskäräm* 1940 Eth. Cal.), as a kind of war reparation of the post-Mussolini Italian government for the heavy damages inflicted on the Ethiopians during the Occupation period. Yet, the bridge is now out of use for its long years of service and so that replaced by a new bridge opened in 2007/8, in front of the former one. Thus, the road passed the difficult terrain but the spectacular of gorge of Abay. Italians employed peasant labor while building this road and the bridge and paid them cash for their service. Seen against the background of

corvée or unpaid labor services with which they were familiar, the peasants saw the payment they received from the Italians in return for the labor they spent on building the road in particular as a sign of progress.⁴⁴⁵

However, the easy success of Italians in pacifying Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) and the initial acceptance they enjoyed from the local people changed pretty much quickly. That is to say, the improvement in the relationship between the Italian administration and peasants was not late in coming. Despite the end of the administrative extreme of the former Ethiopian governors and the reduction of dues and obligations, no amount of Italian modernizing effort could legitimize their rule in the area. Most people in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) felt quite separate from the Italian Occupation and began to work towards its end. Using the difficult terrain of Somma in Bichena, Bälaya in Agäw Meder, and Buré in Dega Damot as safe hideout, armed local patriots started to harass Italians. On account of the strategic location of these areas, the patriots used these localities as a launching pad to subdue the Italian forces of Gojjam and its vicinities. Such local notables as *Däjjazmach* Mängäsha Jämbäré, *Lej* Dämess Alämayähu, *Lej* Yohannis Iyasu, *Fitawrari* Admassu Alämu, *Fitawrari* Bäyyänä Béshaw, *Lej* later *Ras* Haylu Bäläw, *Lej* later *Däjjazmach* Abbärä Yemam, and *Lej* later *Däjjazmach* Bälay Zälläqä who is Oromo in his ethnic background, were in the forefront of the patriotic resistance.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid; Käbbäda, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha*, pp. 288, 383; EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ዞገ/አስ/0068, File ፩/፵፱ 164/68, Letter ቁ22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); and Zäwdé, *Yä-Qädamawé Haile Sellassie Mängest*, p. 400-401.

Here, it has been established that the Oromo played a vital role in the country's military organization and leadership from early on, not to mention the 1896 military success of Ethiopia at the battle of Adwa, in what is now Tegray Region, when the pluralistic society of Ethiopia succeeded in withstanding the Italian colonial assertive mode. In that case, the latter returned to avenge the former almost after four decades, in 1935 that continued in its vitality to 1941. It follows that, the Italian reaction to the patriotic struggle ranged from soft pacifist measures to extreme reprisals. However, the patriots proved unyielding to both the violent reprisal and conciliatory approaches of the Italian administration.⁴⁴⁷ Yet, the patriots were constantly fought to each other to their pre-eminence in the area. To mention but two instances, as the record in Kābbādä's memoir testify that patriots *Lej Haylu Bäläw* fought against *Lej Bälay*, and *Lej Abbärä Yemam* fought against *Däjjazmach Mängäsha*, in the east and western parts of Gojjam, respectively. On the contrary, the patriots proved unyielding to conciliatory approaches to collect tribute from the local population as the constant features of the area.⁴⁴⁸ In fact, the local people supported by the patriots defeated the Italians at several dramatic battlefields. To mention but two instances, the people spearheaded by *Lej Bälay* and *Fitawrari Admassu* fought and inflicted heavy damages upon the Italians and their supporters known in common parlance as *bandas* (sing. *banda*) at the battles of Dejen and Zéba, in Aneded, all in Däbrä Marqos, in 1940/1, respectively. Finally, Italian rule, in Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos, ended in 1941.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid; Kābbādä, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha*, pp. 288, 293, 338, 383.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

The restored imperial government of Ethiopia faced difficult tasks, of which pacifying the population and reorganizing the administration of the various regions of the country, including Gojjam come on top of its agenda, as indicated in the last paragraphs of chapter one. Thus, these two parallel processes proceeded smoothly. The administration of the country was organized first into thirteen and soon after ever since 1962 into fourteen governorate-generals with the unification of Eritrea with Ethiopia at that point in time of which Gojjam was one. The task of reorganizing the administration of Gojjam, which therefore included Däbrä Marqos, was entrusted to the first of its post-war governor, *Ras Haylu Bäläw* (*Ras Haylu III*), who came to Gojjam in 1941/2. It was clearly mentioned in the contemporary document from Däbrä Marqos as [19 12/6 015 0704 26/21 13/2 00 1933] 'the arrival of *Ras Haylu Bäläw* to Gojjam on his appointment as the first governor of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* in 1942'.⁴⁵⁰ This actually used to explain the reinstatement of the local ruling family after the removal of *Ras Haylu II* who again caught and kept imprisonment with his son *Fitawrari Admassu* by the Emperor in 1942 at a place called Gara Mulätta (pronounced in its Afan Oromo origin as Gaara Mul'aata), in Harerghe *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.⁴⁵¹ On the occasion that, the restored government of Emperor Haile Sellassie took the task of Haylu's incarceration for his loyalty and obedience to the Italians, during the Occupation period, and in consideration of that Haylu II died in May 1942 (25 *Méyazéya* 1933 Eth. Cal.).⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Zäwdé, *Yä-Qädamawé Haile Sellassie Mängest*, p. 404; Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini*, p. 159; and An interview with Märiqétta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

⁴⁵² Mahtämä-Sellásé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, 'Ché Bäläw' (in Amharic) (lit. 'He used to Ride His Horse All the Time'), *Ya-Belatén Géta Mahtämä-Sellásé Wä/Mäsqäl Sebeseb Serawoch* (lit. *The Works of Belatén Géta Mahtämä-Sellásé Wäldä-Mäsqäl*) (Second Edition, Addis Ababa, n.p, 2007 Eth. Cal), p. 47.

That in 1941, the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* (governorate general) of Gojjam was formed, and it was organized into seven *Awrajjawoch*, of which Däbrä Marqos was one. For the sake of administrative convenience, the *Awrajja* was further sub-divided into seven *wärädas* (see Map 1d displayed in preceding chapter one) that consisted of twenty-four *mekettel-wärädas* as indicated in the final paragraphs of chapter one. At the same time, in the wake of the restoration of Emperor Haile Sellassie, particularly in the years between 1946 and 1950, that the district of Agäw Meder reverted back to Gojjam.⁴⁵³ As stated earlier and in chapter two, subsequent to the removal of *Ras* Haylu II from office in 1932 this district was put under the government's possession, as a special category of the government's *ma'ed-bét* land, by way of *hudad* variety of tenure with appointed *mesläiné* and *nägadras*. Despite its incorporation into the government tenure system, Agäw Meder was treated as inseparable and coherent unit of the administration of Gojjam, as a single unit of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* in conformity with the custom relating to the administration of this territory. However, the Emperor directly appointed Shewan governors over Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, as indicated earlier.

Yet, in the post-1941, Agäw Meder became an integral part of the much larger Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.⁴⁵⁴ It continued to be treated as indivisible and preserved its distinct territorial unity—as a separate *Awrajja* even if the irreversible process of the centralization of the administration of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* was made in the post-1941, exceedingly. Hence, unlike the pre-war period, in due course the violent and acrimonious relations between the central government and the local population gave way to amicable relationship. This was especially

⁴⁵³ An interview with Abba Ejjeju Seménäh Wärqnäh; see also Nebeyu Eyasu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam 1941-1974' (MA Dissertation in History, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, 2004), p. 58.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

by way of the restoration of the local ruling family with the political ascendancy of *Ras Haylu III* who is the son of *Bäläw Täklä-Häymanot* (brother of *Ras Haylu II*) as the governor of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, even if the Emperor was making him dependent upon himself for his position, as indicated in chapter one.

In any case, leaving aside some minor changes, the administrative boundaries of *Däbrä Marqos Awrajja* or *Gojjam Ṭäqalay-Gezat* remained virtually stable after 1941 until 1974, as indicated in the first chapter. Since this topic the administrative reorganization issue of *Däbrä Marqos Awrajja* or generally *Gojjam Ṭäqalay-Gezat* is treated at fair length in the last paragraphs of the first chapter; here the focus will be on the developments in public reaction that had a bearing on the systems of surplus appropriation and the government pressure in the area. The character of reaction and the nature of relation between the government and the peasant population of the area witnessed significant changes in the course of the post-liberation period well into the end of the imperial era. That period witnessed two important changes with a bearing on the reaction of the peasants in the area. One of these changes relates to the reform plans of the government and improving the system of taxes in the area but the local people resented it until 1974, as carefully explained below.

Though different in character, cause and impact, the widespread discontent and resistance of the peasantry in *Gojjam Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, that encompassing *Däbrä Marqos Awrajja*, persisted to the post-liberation period. Peasants' dissatisfaction with government reform measures and their attempt to hinder their implementation in the area were clearly observed as part of the general manifestation of deep-rooted crisis in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. That the reform plan of the

government towards Gojjam was subject to resentment among the local population of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. The majority of the peasants accused the central government for fostering severe tax from the land, as an administrative extreme of Haile Sellassie in the region. Here, the imperial reform plan perceived as threat to land security in favor of the historical background of Gojjam was going in the years between 1902 and 1932 under the tax administration of *Ras* Haylu II. As has already been discussed at some length in the previous chapter, before its significant changes in the course of Emeru's administration well into the beginning of the Italian Occupation, the social condition that would become Gojjam was deeply deteriorated and long ill-treated for *Ras* Haylu's measure of notoriety and harsh exploitation of the local population. Thus, the majority of the peasants never accepted the reality of the reform plan of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) and improving the system of taxes in the area, which took place following the removal of *Ras* Haylu II from his 'lordship' in 1933.⁴⁵⁵

The history and tradition of Haylu's notoriety and harsh exploitation of the peasantry that had once squeezed the latter heavily to enable him accumulate wealth and build power was still alive in the memory of the people of Gojjam and in the psyche of the peasant population at large. Hence, from the perception of the peasants and more importantly their descendants, Gojjam did not represent a fresh and strange lease of exorbitant tax field; instead, it was an integral part of Gojjam's local and social life that had been intensely deteriorated and long ill-

⁴⁵⁵ *Interviews with Ato Bälay Yehun Qallu, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Ato Bäzé Aschalä Chäckol, Ato Yehanäw Ṭénaw Admass, Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellásé, and Märiqétta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu; and History of Gojjam from Ras Haylu I to Ras Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 29 recto.*

treated peasants in that province by taking advantage of the local ruling family's weakness.⁴⁵⁶ Owing to this and other developments, the historian Gebru Tareke writes that the peasants of Gojjam resented the government's increasing intrusion into the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.⁴⁵⁷ In his remarkable work, John Markakis also writes that the opposition in Gojjam openly commenced from 1941 onwards, mainly for the government's increasing administrative centralization of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.⁴⁵⁸ As also pointed out in chapter above, *Nägadras* Gäbrä Heywot writes that, despite the ease with which Ethiopian kings were able to impose the Ethiopian taxations, the state always faced a daunting challenge of administering very vast provinces of the kingdom, including Gojjam and the surrounding provinces, with scarce resources and poor taxation system. That the state imposed to levy a tax on the land was encouraging the severity of the tax administration towards the peasants of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos during the imperial era.⁴⁵⁹

Therefore, the tax already imposed should be revoked and a new assessment be carried out. However, the central authorities rejected or unnoticed of Gäbrä Heywot's new proposal, or his political elites have poured scorn on his ideas for improving the existing tax system, which transformed the rural opposition into a more militant and violent one in the immediate post liberation period. When the central government decided to improve the Gojjam taxations into a higher level of cash tax, therefore, in one's perception Haile Sellassie was simply reinstating and continuing the old tradition of squeezing the former heavily, as already

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1996), p. 160.

⁴⁵⁸ John Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (Second Edition) (Addis Ababa, Berhanena Sälam Printing Press, 1975), p. 377.

⁴⁵⁹ *Nägadras* Gäbrä Heywot Baykadaññ, *Nägadras Gäbrä Heywot Baykadaññ Serawoch* (in Amharic) (*Nägadras Gäbrä Heywot Baykadaññ Works*) (Addis Ababa, AAUP, 2007 Eth. Cal/2014/5), pp. 23-24.

observed in Southern regions of the country in general. Thus, the postwar Gojjam peasant's move meant to impede that exorbitant tax for their safety, as a means to enact their plight under the government of Haile Sellassie in the area. Therefore, the imperial government's reform decisions and actions have been placed in this historical context—that the way the new decree was implemented was by and large unfair and inappropriate—to fully understand the peasants' reaction and the historical drama derived from it.

Thus, although it was an old concern, in the course and progress of Haile Sellassie's land tax burden between 1941 and 1974, the social condition of the peasants of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) steadily deteriorated and, in that way, the people assumed aggressive posture in the area.⁴⁶⁰ Thus, the imperial government's policy meant to use state power with respect to land, which brought chaotic social and economic conditions in different parts of the country, of which Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was one. As also discussed on several occasions in chapters above, the 1942 and 1944 land tax decrees, backed by a variety of other measures, have been acts of political reform and as acts designed to raise revenue, against the long-standing and complex land tenure arrangements of the country, in the interests of the autocracy. The decrees issued from 1942-1967 converted land taxes from kind to cash regularized their payment with the exception of the church tenure. However, the impact of the whole reform package entailed regional difference by way of violent resistance that the rural population of the country reacted towards the government.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ቡን/አስ/0068, File ፩/፵፱ 164/68, Letter ቁ22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal).

⁴⁶¹ See Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 160-161; Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 369-370; and Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Addis Ababa, AAUP, 2000), pp. 242-244.

It is established that the most violent and widespread resistance observed in the three *ṭäqalay-gezatoch* of Tegray, Bale, and Gojjam—that came one after the other all the way through the imperial period. However, it is vital important to note here is that far from being fragile and impeded the full execution of the reform package, the uprisings were markedly different in terms of motives and government reactions. Dealing with this monumental sociopolitical and cultural change that the country was going through, many scholars agree that unlike peasants of the southern regions such as Bale, peasants of the north such as Gojjam and Tigary were largely holders of the dominant local *rist* tenure, in this way, experienced no much suffering in land alienation. That the occasions of the imperial tax proclamations led to extensive alienation of land rights as observed in Bale *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* in the south.⁴⁶² Hence, it is reasonable to visualize that the peasant's uprising in Bale would have much more adequate grounds, pride of place to those in the north. Yet, the government was bad and corrupted as countrywide in general.

Aside from social and class differentiation, like the revolts of Bale and Tegray (the latter known as *Wäyané*) the uprising in Gojjam closely corresponds to the historical process of the formers' in resentment towards the Shewan domination.⁴⁶³ It had also external connection along its borders and supplied with weapons and ammunitions drawn continually from the outside forces hostile to the Ethiopian state such as Sudan, to the west,⁴⁶⁴ as well as from the inside forces Boräna-Sayent, in Wello, to the east of Gojjam.⁴⁶⁵ After all, the government was procuring simple weapons and ammunitions in commercial transaction, especially at

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ History of Gojjam from *Ras Haylu I* to *Ras Haylu II*, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 127 verso.

⁴⁶⁵ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 191.

local market in the administrative capital, Däbrä Marqos.⁴⁶⁶ Thus, they would be much more armed to challenge the government to realize something they contemplated, resisting pressures from anyone else. Yet, the government could not be tolerant of any peasant rebellions; but to 'silence' them eventually by its own coercive power, as the rebels challenged its legitimacy. Last, but not least, the peasants' rebellion in Gojjam lingered on, pending for the revolution, which meant to impede the government's administrative extreme over the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*⁴⁶⁷ in a similar condition to other rural societies of the country. Yet, it seems apparent that in the course of the 1940s and 1950s, the opposition was sporadic and/or less intense to challenge the government in the area. Hence, the government and the people have reconciled their differences, for the most part, in favor of the former, as discussed thoroughly in this chapter below.

Yet, the government's reform plans of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and other parts of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* was not fully implemented owing to the nature of the traditional property system and other developments in the area. By referring to contemporary government record, Peter Schwab observed why the reform plans could not be fully applied in the area writes that since a large section of the population of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos were organized under the 'communal' *rist* land system, the imperial government had always had troubles in collecting taxes from the local population. That only the name of *aqññi-abbat* or *wanna-abbat* who believed to have been died hundreds of years ago was entered on the tax register, pride of place to the actual owners. In consequence, there was no uniform system of

⁴⁶⁶ History of Gojjam from *Ras Haylu I* to *Ras Haylu II*, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 127 recto; and *Interviews with Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Abba Ejjegu Seménäh Wärqnäh, Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and Märiqétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu*; see also Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 186.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid*; see also Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 385-387.

taxation among the taxpayers of the peasants in the area.⁴⁶⁸ It is also important to take note of the fact that despite the repeated administrative reshuffling and changes in the political fortunes and frontiers of the area, one of the fleeting elements in the history of Gojjam (Däbrä Marqos) is the restoration of its ruling family soon after the liberation of the country.

As indicated earlier, *Ras* Haylu III appointed by the Emperor to the apex of the administrative hierarchy in Gojjam as the governor-general of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* in 1941/2. This move meant to reverse the violent and acrimonious relation between the postwar government of Haile Sellassie and the local population towards amicable relations—to expedite the former’s sociopolitical and economic control over the region. On condition that, prominent informants singled out the appointment of *Ras* Haylu III as a time of relatively internal stability and easiness in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at large.⁴⁶⁹ Partly, because of its obvious importance to implementing the land reform policy, the government tried to thoroughly centralized the administration of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* diminishing the power of local rulers, such as *Ras* Haylu III that created an administrative system dutiful to the central government. Hence, subsequent to appointment of Haylu III, the government introduced a new system of administration *vis-à-vis* the Italian re-organization in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* by creating the seven smaller administrative units of *Awrajjawoch*, of which Däbrä Marqos was one. (See Map 3b displayed in preceding chapter one).

⁴⁶⁸ Peter Schwab, 'Rebellion in Gojjam Province, Ethiopia' *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1970), p. 249.

⁴⁶⁹ Interviews with Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Märiqetta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

Yet, in the wake of the *Ras*'s appointment to the office, there was public unrest in Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos and its vicinities. Particularly, in the years between 1942 and 1944 that land survey and/or measurement and subsequently registration of individual holdings and the subsequent changes and improvement in taxation system of the area was violently hated by the local population. This is because the reform plans were usually perceived as greater land insecurity by way of the government's intrusion upon the 'communal' *rist* landholding system, which guaranteed to manage subsistence. Since land tax payment through the descent group has traditionally regarded as the single most important evidence of 'communal' ownership, it was generally believed that land measurement plan and the subsequent changing and/or improving the system of taxes were inevitably bound up with changes in land use right. To reject the reform package was, therefore, to defend the authenticity of *rist*. If not, the local people assumed, there had been tremendous insecurity of property and chaos in Däbrä Marqos or generally in Gojjam under the governorship of Haylu III. On the flipside, this would mean to continue the long-standing tributary system in the area permanently and in perpetuity. In a more pragmatic way, the local people were afraid that the measurement plan would result in unfair rise for taxes they had to pay by way of the 1942 and 1944 Proclamations. They were realistically knew what was going on especially in the southern part of Ethiopia and understood the alienation of land rights due to the measurement of land through the institution of *qälad*. What the majority peasants wanted to avoid was, therefore, the administrative extreme of the Haile Sellassie government in the area.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid; EGZHZCA Archives, Folder ዞን/አስ/0068, File ደ/ሰግ 164/68, Letter ቁ22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic

In 1942-44 and in the subsequent periods, owing to the government's task of executing the its reform plans and regularizing the taxation system—as fully applied in the southern-central regions—therefore, popular anxiety erupted into major uprisings in the area. The local people never accepted the reality of the reform of Däbrä Marqos and other parts of Gojjam and improving the system of taxes in the area. It was dramatized by the sociopolitical elites who were variously disappointed by the government and supported the peasants' uprising, with strong courage to their move against the government's pressure in the area. The former *Lej Bälay Zälläqä* who once came in the forefront of the struggle against the Italians Invasion was the single most important sociopolitical elite and supported the peasants' uprising in the area, especially in Bichena and Motta and Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjawoch*. In that instance, the postwar government of Haile Sellassie disappointed Bälay, as he was unjustly treated with the former's administrative reorganization, particularly in the area. The disappointed Bälay, therefore, challenged the Emperor's power basis by turning to *shefta*—viz., ill-treated and disappointed noble who went into jungle or any isolated pocket for political advancement in old Ethiopian empire. Thus, *sheftanät* (being and becoming *shefta*) was the most common phenomena, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. In that way, both informant and the record in Gebru's work agree that, Bälay said to have annoyed the Emperor by commenting that 'God created every one of us, but did not appoint any one to rule'.⁴⁷¹ In his recent work, the late historian Timothy Derek Fernyhough (2003) writes that the imperial government

Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal). and also Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 166-167.

⁴⁷¹ An interview with *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu; and Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 167.

'was no solution for more profoundly alienated figures', not to mention Bälāy Zälläqä. He described Bälāy and other noble *sheftas* (sing. *shefta*) as 'revolutionary traditionalists'.⁴⁷²

In the wake of Bälāy's displeasure with the Emperor the majority peasants' outraged by the new reform plans of the land government therefore, the government army commanded by the local notable *Bitäwädäd* Mängäsha Jämbäré have launched [የገንጠል ስልጣን ተቀባይነት ለማረጋገጥ] 'a campaign to Soma in Bichena and caught Bälāy Zälläqä in 1943/4'.⁴⁷³ In that, the local peasants spearheaded by Bälāy himself fought a battle with the Mängäsha's force. After intense resistance, however, Bälāy and his small but courageous supporters succumbed to the Mängäsha's army. That is to say, the government captured Bälāy and his prominent supporters and kept in prison in Addis Ababa until 1944.⁴⁷⁴ In that year, the annoyed Emperor sentenced Bälāy and his several courageous soldiers to death by hanging in public square. Bälāy provided his persecutor with additional reason to sentence him to death. The national fame and prestige Bälāy enjoyed—as a national hero—with his personal courage, were too much for the Emperor to stomach.⁴⁷⁵

As indicated earlier, Bälāy's acrimonious relationship with the current governor of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat Ras* Haylu III, since the patriotic struggle against the Italian Occupation, might have added the former's misfortune at that big moment. Yet, though it seems silenced with

⁴⁷² Timothy Derek Fernyhough, *Serfs, Slaves and Shi[el]fta Modes of Production and Resistance in Pre-Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, Shama Books/Rohobot Printing Press, 2003), pp. 223, 251-252.

⁴⁷³ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ደ/አ/0068**, File **ደ/ግ** 164/68, Letter **ቁ22/22**, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal).

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 167; and also Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, p. 377.

pressure, the uprising proceeded in withstanding the government pressure, in spite of changes in the character of reaction and the nature of relation between the government and the peasant population of the area. On that occasion, the people expressed their reaction, also by way of couplets. The following three historic and lively couplets composed to express the grievance, discontent and great misery of the local population towards the government forces but along with the fame and prestige of Bälay and Bichena where he was born clearly bear this out.

**ከበላይ ዘለቀ ከተሰቀለው፣
ይሻላል ሽፌራሁ ሰማ የቀረው።።**

*Compared to Bälay Zälläqä who was captured and hanged down in front of his enemies,
His biological brother Shefäraw who really fought with great courage and annoyed the government army, and left to die at the Somma big moment was far better.⁴⁷⁶*

**ተውት አትቅረቡት የበላይን አገር፣
ሰሙ-እንኳ ሲጠራ ያሻግራል ድንበር።።**

*Do not strike the people of Bälay's birthplace [means Gojjam, more precisely the district of Bichena],
Because the name of the land by itself has greater value and respect across the frontier, for its brave inhabitants.⁴⁷⁷*

**ወይ አገር! ወይ አገር!፣ ወይ አገር! ቢቸና፣
በላይ የለህም ወይ? ህመሜ ሲጠና።።**

*What a courageous land!, What a courageous land!, What a courageous land Bichena was!,
Where else could I get Bälay from [signified to whom wore Bälay's courageous deeds and stood back up again] for the protection of the local population against the chronic pain and misery [meant for the repeated attack wrought by the government forces] in the area!⁴⁷⁸*

In that case, particularly the final and most important couplet clearly expressed the discontent, great misery and pain of the local population towards the government in the area.

⁴⁷⁶ An interview with Ato Damté Tafärä Yayäh.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ An interview with Ato Mälläsä Kassa Gärämäw.

Thus, though existing sources fail to furnish sufficient details as to how peasants variously reacted quite possibly to such heavy handed treatments of the government, it is generally evident the peasants of Bichena, Motta, Däbrä Marqos and their vicinities were not passive in the face of these harsh realities of life that subsequent to the Soma Confrontation (1944). That is to say, the final couplet had strong bearings on the prevalence of the peasants' strong reaction, particularly retaliated by resorting violently to the government forces, to their defeat at the Somma confrontation in the area. Hence, an important caution that should be noted here is that far from being static, the reaction primarily borne out from the land measurement plan was dynamic and constantly changing, given that on several occasions the people expressed their disappointment ensuing to the new tax plan that might have bred chaos and disorder in the area. In short, although information on the special occasion of peasants' intense resistance subsequent to the hanging of Bälay is lacking, it seems apparent that the local population succeeded in withstanding the government pressure in the area. That the occasions of measurement of all lands to tax development by the government was not accepted by the local people, in the course of the post-Soma confrontation well into the subsequent periods, as discussed below.

For the reason that, eventually the amicable relations between the tax administration of Haylu III and the local population gave way to violent and acrimonious relationship and was followed by the end of the former's office of tenure in the area. By the end of the 1944, and also in the subsequent periods, the peasants had not lost their motive: owing to their reaction and other developments, they still paid taxes according to the pre-war stipulations; thereby succeed to impede the full implementation of the government's reform plans, even under the

tax administration of Haylu III in the area. If so, it seems apparent that after the Soma confrontation, the peasants opposition could not effectively silenced by the government pressure in the area, given that the above-mentioned proverbs and the impediment of tax development clearly revealed as part of the general manifestation of the rebellion continued, notwithstanding in intensity, permanently and in perpetuity.⁴⁷⁹ With the severity of the condition especially in Bichena, Motta and Däbrä Marqos, therefore, was such that the Emperor made the succeeding task of administrative reshuffling of the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* with a strong bearing on improving the system of taxes in the area. The task of 'pacifying' the population and reorganizing the administration of Gojjam was entrusted to the new of its appointed governor *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä Täsämma. That the Emperor removed Haylu III and in his place, the former *Azaži*, now *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä was appointed as the governor-general of the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* in 1946.⁴⁸⁰

The record in *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä's memoir has to testify that Käbbädä himself served as the liaising between the Emperor and the Gideon Force (British Army) on the one hand, and the patriots of Gojjam, on the other, during the Italian Occupation. More to the point, Käbbädä is a well-known individual by the people and patriots of Gojjam, in his constant companion with the Emperor from Sudan to Gojjam all the way through the liberation period.⁴⁸¹ Hence, the appointment of Käbbädä meant to expedite the Emperor's centralization of the administration of Gojjam, as dutiful to the former. On condition that, Käbbädä

⁴⁷⁹ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **፳፯/አስ/0068**, File **፳፯/፳፯** 164/68, Letter **፳፯/22/22**, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); and Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam', pp. 52-54, 58.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid; and Käbbädä, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha*, p. 454.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 207-410; and Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam', pp. 52-54, 58; see also Bahru, 'The Italian Occupation of Ethiopia', p. 386.

reorganized the administration of Gojjam into five *awrajjawoch*, of which Däbrä Marqos was still one. However, Agäw Meder and Bahir Dar were among the newly reorganized *awrajjawoch*, as a single *Awrajjä* unit. Besides, though not succeeded in opposition of the local population, Käbbädä planned to transfer the administrative centre of the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* from the town of Däbrä Marqos for most of its lands belong to the church to Fénötä Sälam, in Dega Damot.⁴⁸²

All the same, since the peasants of Gojjam still paid taxes according to the pre-war stipulations, Käbbädä tried to persuade the people to improve the system of taxation into a higher level of cash tax, by way of measurement, assessment and classification of the land. Primarily, land committees were formed to execute the measurement/assessment plans of Däbrä Marqos and other parts of Gojjam, as indicated in chapter above. However, the peasants rejected the new proposal, which bred chaos and disorder in the area. It was still the peasants' suspicion that the measurement could affect their traditional land-holding system and led to evict them from the land that they possessed for so long. This would be, they assumed, by way of reorganizing their land to *qäläd* tenure and transferring to others, as the dominant forms of tenure in the conquered regions of southern Ethiopia, including Bale, by Shewan rulers since the last quarter of nineteenth century prior to the end of the imperial era, as indicated earlier.

Because of these inherent problems in the *rist* system, informants and the record in Nebeyu's dissertation agree that in the course of 1950 there had been tremendous insecurity of property

⁴⁸² Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam', pp. 52-54, 58.

and chaos in Däbrä Marqos or generally in Gojjam, under the governorship of *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä. Here, it seems apparent that because of Käbbädä's Shewan domination, the local people accused his stipulations for severe tax and portray it to raise the tax payment, as Haile Sellassie's administrative extreme over Gojjam.⁴⁸³ In fact, the 1950 uprising was to prevail on the ground that the government was wrongly decided for inconvenient tax improvement by way of land measurement of the area, allowing to a drastic decline of cereals, in price, had hit the peasants very hard.⁴⁸⁴ This gave the occasion of the uprising, already led by the disappointed local notables, against the government. The local notables who felt anxious about the local administration of Käbbädä and/or deeply disappointed by the central government not sensitively rewarded them for their services and sacrifices in the resistance against the Italian Occupation were in the forefront of the peasants' uprising so as to resist the regime's pressure in the area.⁴⁸⁵

That the sociopolitical elites who complained of being ill-treated at several levels of the government began to agitate the local population saying that, 'your land was going to be measured and, through that, *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä would introduce *qälad* in the area just similar to the southern parts of the country'. This made the majority peasants felt anxious about the government and went into a major rebellion in 1950/1. Among these local notables, *Däjjazmach* Abbärä Yemam from Méčä (pronounced in its Afan Oromo origin as Maccaa), in Agäw Meder and *Fitawrari* Terfé Rätta from Bichena and/or Motta are well-known

⁴⁸³ Ibid; and *Interviews with Märiqéttä* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, and *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa.

⁴⁸⁴ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 166-167.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid; and Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam', pp. 52-54, 58.

personalities to warrant as leaders of the uprising in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.⁴⁸⁶ On condition that, although we are lacking sources on a specific place where the uprising was incited, it is apparent that generally the local population shifted steadily from passive protest to active resistance in the area. Intense oppositions were observed especially in Agäw Meder and [Kolla] Dega Damot, and Bichena and Motta, led by Abbärä and Terfé in that order. Thus, it is clear that the majority peasants of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* resented the government pressure, in this way; both Abbärä and Terfé were well-known personalities, as shall be discussed below.

Primarily, the majority peasant *militia* in Agäw Meder, Dega Damot and in the immediate vicinities of them spearheaded largely by Abbärä rose up against the practice of measurement for the subsequent assessment and classification of land in the area. As pointed out earlier, when Käbbädä reorganized the administration of Gojjam Agäw Meder and Bahir Dar were reorganized as a single *Awrajja* unit. First and foremost, the *wärädas* of the former Agäw Meder *Awrajja*, namely Méča (Maccaa), Achäfär and Yelmana Dénsa (pronounced in its Afan Oromo origin as Ilmaana Deensa) were under the *meslänés* of *Däjjazmach* Abbärä, *Däjjazmach* Ayaläw Mäkonnén and *Däjjazmach* Deräs Shefäraw, respectively. However, with treatment of Agäw Meder as inseparable and coherent unit of the administration of Dahir Dar—the former relating to the latter as a single *Awrajja* unit—the former *mesläné* of Achäfär, *Däjjazmach* Ayaläw was appointed governor of the new Agäw Meder-Bahir Dar *Awrajja*.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁶ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ዞገ/አሰ/0068**, File **ደ/ግ** 164/68, Letter **ቁ22/22**, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); An Interviews with Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu; and Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam', pp. 55-60.

⁴⁸⁷ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ዞገ/አሰ/0068**, File **ደ/ግ** 164/68, Letter **ቁ22/22**, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic

However, Käbbädä simply dismissed Abbärä and Deräs over the local administration. It was Käbbädä's deliberate attempt to create disagreement among those notables, thereby vaguely in legal terms for the irreversible process of centralization of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* administration into the mainstream national life. In the wake of that, the notables especially Abbärä began to complain and continued to protest Käbbädä's administration, that to succeeded in support of the peasants' opposition in the area. In that case, thanks to the ill-treatment of the people ever since the tax administration of *Ras* Haylu II and already under the imperial era, however, Abbärä was able to mobilize over fourteen thousand (14,000) peasant *militia* from within. On the occasion that, the government was being disseminated many leaflets where the uprising was going on with a message that states, 'anyone who could capture Abbärä and hand him over to the government would be awarded'. Yet, the local peasants spearheaded by Abbärä sustained the uprising. The local bandits who came on the heels of the peasants' uprising repeatedly looted the government treasury at the town of Dangela capital of Agäw Meder.⁴⁸⁸

In a similar way to Agäw Meder and Dega Damot, the uprising in Motta *Awrajja*, especially in Goncha (pronounced in its origin of Afan Oromo as Gonca) Séso Enässé prompted a lot of public outrage against the government. As indicated above, Terfé spearheaded an aggressive program of resistance to the government force in Motta and its vicinities. Surprisingly enough, the local people objected to taxation without representation—*viz.*, being taxed without having someone spoke for them in the government—as they hated the new tax plan of Käbbädä. Yet, in 'silencing' the uprising in Motta and its vicinities, the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*

Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); *Interviews with Abba Ejjegu Seménäh Wärqnäh*, and *Märiqéttä* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu; and Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam', pp. 55-60.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

governor Käbbädä himself mobilized over a thousand government soldiers—members of the Territorial Army based in Däbrä Marqos Town. On condition that, Terfé was also able to organize over nine thousand peasant *militia* from Goncha Séso Enässé and its vicinities. After intense resistance, Terfé has been caught by Käbbädä's army. Nevertheless, Käbbädä and his army could not effectively pacify the area as many peasants resented the incarceration of Terfé subsequent to the latter's capture by the government force in the locality. Thus, the peasants' uprising was recurring and continued in the area—just similar to Agäw Meder and Dega Damot. In that, Abbärä with his courageous peasant *militia* was also in fierce resistance against the Territorial Army and inflicted heavy damages upon the latter.⁴⁸⁹ The following couplet composed to express Abbärä's success in his intense resistance against the government forces and the great admiration that the population of Gojjam had towards Abbärä for his courageous deeds clearly bears this out.

**አበረ ይማም፣
ነዳው እንደ ላም።።**

*Like too many cattle population,
The government army was cowed into silence by Abbärä Yemam with his small but
courageous supporters.*⁴⁹⁰

According to the above couplet expressed loudly enough for the conflict between the two factions turned into a full-blown war as intense resistance in the area. Hence, it is conceivable that Abbärä with his peasant *militia* routed the courage of government army by intimidation in a fierce resistance. However, while elders were trying to reconcile the dispute—Abbärä was eventually caught by the army in Méča (in what is now Agäw Meder)

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ An interview with Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu.

at a small river stream known as Buhoro and kept in life imprisonment in Addis Ababa until 1973. Hence, Abbärä's Agäw Meder and Dega Damot were never the same again at least in the course of 1950s.⁴⁹¹ However, we should not exaggerate the success of the government in the 1950s Gojjam. While parts of Agäw Meder, Dega Damot and Motta succumbed to the shocks and damages of government forces, at the same time places such as Méča—in Agäw Meder—Buré—in Dega Damot—and Goncha Séso Enässé—in Motta—certainly succeeded in withstanding the pressure. Since it recurred and continued in different parts of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, the uprising could not be effectively silenced by the government pressure in the area.⁴⁹²

With the severity of the condition especially in Agäw Meder and Dega Damot *Awrajjawoch* was such that the Emperor dispatched a high level of delegation spearheaded by *Ras* Abäbbä Arägay Minister of Interior at that big moment so as to settle the dispute primarily borne out from the government's reform plans in the area. The delegation held a public meeting with the inhabitants of the area. Therefore, owing to the diplomatic skills of *Ras* Abbäbä, who went and made a meeting at the town of Buré in Dega Damot, seemed to have succeeded to strike a compromise with the people in the locality where they pleaded for the removal of *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä from the governorship of Gojjam. In consequence, *Ras* Abäbbä took *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä with him to Addis Ababa. In his place, the Emperor appointed *Ras* Haylu III once again as the governor-general of Gojjam that marked the end of Käbbädä's

⁴⁹¹ Ibid; and EGAZHCA Archives, Folder *ዞ/አ/0068*, File *ደ/ግ* 164/68, Letter *ቁ22/22*, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); and Interviews with *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Märiḡetta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu, *Emahoy* Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, and *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé.

⁴⁹² Ibid; and also Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, p. 377.

office of tenure,⁴⁹³ as *Ras* Haylu III was appointed/reinstituted directly by the Emperor himself a safe substitute for the former as governor of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* in 1950/1, as indicated in the last paragraphs of chapter one.

Besides, though calmed through coercive approach used by the government, the 1950/1 uprising had some positive returns to the inhabitants of the area, i.e., it had delayed the full implementations of reform plans in the area. The Emperor sanctioned the new tax reform of *Käbbädä*, nevertheless deducted with a third and implemented on crude estimates of the size and production of the land rather than its actual measurement and/or assessment. In the wake of that, Terfé was released from prison and returned to his village, in Motta, though *Abbärä* was found dead following his release from captivity in 1973. Nevertheless, in the conflict between the local people and the government force, *Gojjam* was seriously devastated. The *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* could not recover completely from the shocks and devastation wrought by the government's army. On the whole, the 1950 uprising in *Gojjam* was 'silenced' by the government using both violent and conciliatory approaches, even if not all the peasants of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* involved in the uprising it was not fully developed and advanced into the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. Yet, the uprising served as an 'ideological arm' of the sociopolitical elites of the area.⁴⁹⁴ As also indicated earlier, following the debilitating defeat of the uprising, peasants were not effectively silenced by the government's victorious army. However, *Gojjam* was never the same again meant for the irreversible process of the centralization of

⁴⁹³ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder *፲፯/አሰ/0068*, File *፩/፳፯* 164/68, Letter *፳፯/22*, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting *Gojjam* Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); Interviews with *Abba* Ejjeju Seménäh Wäraqnäh, and *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu; and Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of *Gojjam*', pp. 55-60.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

the administration of the region which is a sober reflection to its diminishing importance in regional politics.

Though existing sources fail to furnish sufficient details as to how peasants variously reacted imaginably to the subsequent heavy-handed treatments of their governors in consequence of the uprisings of 1944 and 1950/1, it is generally evident that they were recurring and continued the uprising in different parts of Gojjam in the course of 1950s. Above all, the majority peasants of Agäw Meder, Dega Damot, Bichena, Motta and their vicinities still well-known for their courageous deeds could not be passive in the face of these harsh realities of life. Hence, far from being less intense, the reaction borne out from the land measurement plan was dynamic and proved unyielding, as also evident from the intriguing couplets presented earlier. That the occasion of the administrative extreme of local authorities was not accepted easily by the local population. This apparently was arranged by the Emperor for he was annoyed by Bälay's comments on his 'divinely ordained' ideology *His Imperial Majesty Haile Sellassie I, Appointed by God, Lion of Judah* after the 1944 uprising, as mentioned earlier. That the local people openly defied the administration that impeded the measurement plan in the area. On condition that, changes for the governorship of Gojjam was a constant feature of the area. The occasions of appointment and removal of all governors of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* was continually observed in the course of the 1950s. In the fullness of time, therefore, the Emperor removed *Ras Haylu III* from office for he was accused of administrative inefficiency in the area. As also mentioned in the last paragraphs of chapter one, between 1958 and 1960 *Däjjazmach Säbsebé Shebru* (1958-1959) and *Däjjazmach*

Yämanä Hassen (1959-1960) were appointed directly by the Emperor himself as governors of Gojjam one after the other for their loyalty and obedience to the latter.⁴⁹⁵

Partly, because of its obvious importance of finalizing the reform package, the government irreversibly centralized the administration of the country by diminishing the power of local rulers not to mention the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* Governors in Gojjam. Prominent informants singled out the office of these two governors and *Ras* Haylu III—as a time of relatively internal stability and harmony as well as peace and order in Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos, albeit sporadic and/or less intense protests until the 1960s. In the fullness of time, Säbsebé and Yämanä were also removed from office for accused of taking bribes, even if their office of tenure was rather very short to confirm the accusation. In that case, by removing *Däjjazmach* Yämanä, the Emperor already appointed *Däjjazmach* Šähäyu Enqu-Sellasé as the governorate-general of Gojjam in 1960. It follows that, the prevailed peace and order was ended, while Šähäyu was attempted to implement the land measurement plan and improving the system of taxation in the area. However, Šähäyu was very popular with the provisions of social services and facilities as well as the building of administrative offices at different levels of the department in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at large. On that occasion, the local palace-gate—with two statues of a lion on its left and right sides was built in the administrative centers, Däbrä Marqos and Fénotä-Selam.⁴⁹⁶ Below is one of the photographs of the two statues of lions that virtually symbolizing the Emperor's claim of descent from the 'Lion of

⁴⁹⁵ Interviews with *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Emahoy* Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Märiqéttä* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu; and also EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ዞገ/አሰ/0068**, File **ጂ/ግግ** 164/68, Letter **ቁ22/22**, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); and Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam', pp. 59-70.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid; and Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 172.

Judah'—the most important legacy of Šähäyu's administration in the area—as displayed below.



Illustration 7. *The local palace gate—already known as Negus Täklä-Häymanot Public Square—with statues of lions at the top (on the left and right sides) at the downtown of Däbrä Marqos, as of it erected with consequence on Däjzasmach Šähäyu Enqo Sellassé's office of governorship over Gojjam from 1960 to 1968.*

Source: It is now a permanent collection of the town library of Däbrä Marqos. Therefore, I obtained this electronic copy of the photograph of the local palace gate by permission of the library manager Wäyzäro Mäsälläch Mänbäru in January 2017.

In spite of that, in due course Šähäyu faced opposition from the local population, for the most part, triggered by the New Agricultural Income Tax Proclamation of 1967, for which he meant to expedite the succeeding task of the reform package by conducting land measurement and improving the system of taxation in the area. He was a disrespectful and abusive governor by way of implementing the new proclamation in the area. He made it easier for the majority peasants to recur general uprising spearheaded by the sociopolitical elites against the imperial government. His appointment to the governorship of Gojjam was the high point of his career in the national political development. By taking the advantage of

enjoying the confidence and trust of the Emperor, Šähäyu set out to accomplish what his predecessors had failed to perform virtually bringing Gojjam under effective centralized administration most often concerning land measurement and improving the system of taxation. It was a huge task but brought social chaos and disorder in the area.⁴⁹⁷

In that case, in the course of the 1960s well into the end of Šähäyu's office in 1968 that the peasants' uprising in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* was gradually but steadily turned into a full-scale war that could not be fully succumbed to the government pressure in the area. It is interesting to note that as the tide of events changed in favor of the majority peasants, the land measurement plan for improving the system of taxation and the dispute that it bred and encouraged lasted in its vitality up until 1974.⁴⁹⁸ As discussed thoroughly in the preceding chapters, the new income tax proclamation of 1967, for which the imperial government committed to conduct land measurement, served as a breeding ground for an inexorable peasants' resistance, as they rejected it in its entirety, in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and other parts of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.

As also has already been discussed in the previous chapter, in the course of the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era the social condition that would become Gojjam (Däbrä Marqos) was deeply deteriorated and long ill-treated, for the most part, owing to the sociopolitical and natural factors that prevailed in the area. This certainly

⁴⁹⁷ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 169-170; and also Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 378-379.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid; EGZHC Archives, Folder *ዞገ/አሰ/0068*, File *ደ/ግ* 164/68, Letter *ቁ22/22*, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); and *Interviews with Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Ato Awoqä Berhän Därsäh, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

intensified the development of tenancy and other peasant grievances, which had social and political repercussions in the area that trigger various forms of resistance from the peasantry. Though an old concern, it created acute social condition, especially in the aftermath of finalizing the land reform measures by way of the proclamation of 1967 in the area. Not surprisingly, the history and tradition of Haylu II's notoriety and harsh exploitation of the peasantry that had once squeezed them heavily was also alive in the memory of the people of Gojjam and in the psyche of the majority peasants at large.⁴⁹⁹ On the occasion that, the people accused the Emperor for his exorbitant tax by way of the reform plans, as his administrative extreme analogous to the tax administration of Haylu II in the area, as indicated earlier.

As already indicated in chapter two, the imperial reform package was unpopular in Däbrä Marqos or generally in Gojjam for it proved to be in sharp contradiction to the long-standing land system of the area. Particularly, the 1967 Proclamation that converted all *madäriya* lands into *rist* a freehold to its holders deserves good reputation for the highest level of discontent among the common peasants. As also indicated in the last paragraphs of the same chapter, a pressing appeal for land claim observed in *wärädas* like Dejen, in Däbrä Marqos, when the *balabbatoch* (landholders) benefited from the Proclamation of 1967 and started to use the land by themselves, without prior attention given to the *ṭisäññoch* who were working on it for so long. Though the decree raised the *ṭisäññoch* hope that the government would grant the land for themselves, it was in the interest of the government to grant it for the *balabbatoch* as applied in the area, given that the service of the *balabbatoch* is much more

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

important than the *ṭisäññoch* in favor of the government. Therefore, the government could not bring social justice with respect to land; thereby the *ṭisäññoch* would be naturally disappointed. Besides, the principal objective of defending the people's easy access to land especially when their customary land right that guaranteed subsistence was violated or demands of them were suddenly and arbitrarily raised, as indicated in the final paragraphs of chapter two and discussed thoroughly in subsequent chapter. In that case, maladministration of possessions and economic inequalities might have escalated the uprising in the area. Hence, *rist*-claiming landless-*ṭisäññoch* and peasants with scarce lands had caught the government in contrast to its own makings and they wanted no involvement of the regime. Yet, the government's involvement would transform the uprising into intense resistance against the regime itself.

Experienced informants and the record in a series of contemporary administrative documents agree that, the most important issue that aggravated the bitterness of the people of Däbrä Marqos and other parts of Gojjam in the late 1960s was the land measurement plan in light of the proclamation of 1967 in the area. The common peasants perceived this move as a new potentially unsafe government's intrusion with serious socioeconomic problems on their already scarce resources. If the land was measured, the peasants believed that it would lose its productivity. While the reform package was completely strange and unacceptable to the people and they fiercely defended their rights according to the *rist* system, they afraid that the government would raise its income tax unfairly, by way of the proclamation of 1967. They saw measurement plan would increase their obligation as burdensome. The objection was, therefore, owing partly to the failure of the authorities at all levels of the government to get

its point and, through that, the measurement plan had positive returns to the government over the local population. That is, authorities took the usual top down approach, without convincing the local population who thought the idea of measurement, as strange and untraditional. Given that, they were not convinced at all, the people really hated the plan for land measurement—as an imposition—thereby resisted it.⁵⁰⁰

The people also complained that the existing justice system was dysfunctional and brought a lot of disorder in Däbrä Marqos and other *Awrajjawoch* of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. Thus, the chaos and disorder borne out from the land system created havoc and instability that the new reform measure brought in the area. Even if some people with their land cases in the court did not get the land that was decided because the local authorities were either unwilling or incapable of enforcing the decisions of the court. Hence, the people had lost faith and confidence in the justice system, as a natural extension of the pre-Italian period under the 'lordship' of *Ras* Haylu II who could have added the grievance and discontents of the peasants in the area. There was also a general situation that Gojjam received not sufficient social services and facilities than its tax money should pay for.⁵⁰¹ On condition that, the opposition shifted steadily from passive protest to active resistance. Contributing to that resistance were administrative abuse and continual repression by the armed force, of whom

⁵⁰⁰ Interviews with *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Ato* Bälay Engeda Yehun, *Abba* Ejjeju Seménäh Wärqnäh, *Emahoy* Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu; WMA Archives, Folder 2116, File 2075, Letters 2936/55 and 565 /22/55, Land Survey Conducted [in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*], 22 December 1963 (13/4/55 Eth. Cal), 22 April 1963 (14/8/55 Eth. Cal), Letter 100/1024/3, 24 June 1964 (17/10/56 Eth. Cal); and EGAZHCA Archives, Folder 481, File 118/2, Petitions from Däbrä Marqos, Enarje Enawga in Motta, Bichena, [Dega] Damot and Bahir Dar [*Awrajjawoch*] to the Emperor, 24 May 1968 (16/9/60 Eth. Cal), 16 June 1968 (8/10/60 Eth. Cal), 18 June 1968 (10/10/60 Eth. Cal), 22 June 1968 (14/10/60 Eth. Cal) and 23 June 1968 (15/10/60 Eth. Cal), respectively.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

the harassment of sociopolitical elites and coercive solution to the public reaction were observed in the 1944 and 1950/1 uprisings.

Overall, maladministration was a hindrance for the full implementation of the reform package, as the government authorities paid no attention to the court decisions and the full implementation of land measurement plan in the area. This ill-fated development, therefore, bred chaos and disorder that had a strong bearing on the social condition of the majority peasants; thereby fiercely resisted it. That the postwar reform package was unpopular in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, as the government already made plans for the full implementation of land measurement and improving the system of taxes into a higher level of cash tax.⁵⁰² Based on the above possible justifications, therefore, it is clear that the majority peasants resented the plans of land measurement and improving the system of taxation, in the course of the 1960 well into the demise of the imperial regime by the revolution. The peasants felt anxious about the government and went into a popular uprising, spearheaded by the sociopolitical elites against the latter. Though varied in intensity, the resistance gradually but steadily incorporated every single village of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* that impeded the administrative extreme of the central government or its centralization processes over the region. On that occasion, the majority peasants had expressed their grievances to the new policy, first and foremost, in making reconciliation—in signed petitions in the form of a collective appeal through elected representatives.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰² Ibid; see also Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 169-170.

⁵⁰³ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **፳፯/አሰ**/0082, File **፩** 164, [Petitions of] Muslims of Dejen Town, 21 June 1970 (14/10/62 Eth. Cal). Ibid, Letter /14197/9177, 24 July 1970 (17/11/62 Eth. Cal), No Letter N^o, 19 August 1974 (13/12/66 Eth. Cal), Letter 29454/4/6285/66, 29 August 1974 (23/12/66 Eth. Cal) and Folder 481, File **፶፱**8/2, Petitions from Däbrä Marqos, Enarje Enawga in Motta, Bichena, [Dega] Damot and Bahir Dar [*Awrajjawoch*]

As discussed briefly in the last paragraphs of chapter two, the representatives filed their complaint that the way the new reform plan executed was largely unfair and inappropriate. They, therefore, proposed a compromise that if the government would renounce the measurement plan, they would agree to pay the tax they were paying based on the 1950 stipulations with a descent group more willingly than individually given that the imposed taxes at the level of the 1967 Proclamation should be revoked. Thus, they opposed any future tax increase and the land measurement plan in the area. This confirms the intensity of peasants' detestation and displeasure expressed with the measurement plan, for the most part, it contested for the customary land practices of the area that is beside to their realistic apprehension about land alienation happened in the southern parts of the country. However, the government authorities have been variously rejected and/or ignored the people's pressing appeal, as unresponsiveness for social justice in the course of 1960s. For prominent informants I talked to this problem is a lived experience.⁵⁰⁴

Although the New Income Tax Proclamation of 1967 was decreed at a time when discontent was widespread in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, the peasants' active resistance in Gojjam was characterized by harassing individuals who stand for the new proclamation of 1967, chasing land surveyors and destroying government properties, while intense armed resistance was the constant features of the area against the government. The 1968 uprising brought in new forces into play against the government especially the local sociopolitical elites who felt anxious about the administration of *Däjjazmach* Šähäyu and those whose power stripped

to the Emperor, 24 May 1968 (16/9/60 Eth. Cal), 16 June 1968 (8/10/60 Eth. Cal), 18 June 1968 (10/10/60 Eth. Cal), 22 June 1968 (14/10/60 Eth. Cal) and 23 June 1968 (15/10/60 Eth. Cal), respectively.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid; and *Interviews with* Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Märigétta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Ato Awoqä Berhän Därsäh, and Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé.

away by the central government in their social intermediary role between the government and the primary producers such as the *gäbbäz*; thereby they wanted to win back their power. According to the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* received report dispatched from its sub-province Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* there was a rumor at that big moment that even the local notables who seemed to have extensive landholdings variously displeased with the new policy of measurement, as they assumed it might lead to reduction of their holding or raised the new agricultural income tax unfairly.⁵⁰⁵ Hence, the whole point explains why the year 1968 witnessed intense opposition, as a mass based movement in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and other parts of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, as discussed thoroughly below.

The local elites who were constantly harassed by the local administration under *Däjjazmach* Šähäyu who had once contrived to linger the peasants' resistance on the heels of the latter's opposition. They prompted against Šähäyu and refreshed the peasants' opposition in the same historical trajectory observed in the 1944 and 1950 uprisings, as described earlier thoroughly. In that, the disappointed elites increasingly provoked the 1960s uprising that 'your land was going to be measured and, through that, the government would introduce *qäläd* in the area just in a similar way to the southern part of the country.'⁵⁰⁶ Dealing with this sociopolitical and cultural change that the southern parts of the country was going through, Crummey writes that the occasions of the imperial tax proclamations reinforced by measurement by the *qäläd* in 1951 led to extensive alienation of land rights especially in Bale *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*

⁵⁰⁵ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder #2, File 1/1/37, Däbrä Marqos Awrajja Police Commander 'Report' to Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, 18 June 1968 (10/10/60 Eth. Cal).

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid; and Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam', pp. 55-70; and Interviews with *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Abba* Antänäh Moññ-Hodé.

became 'a classical Ethiopian instance of 'landlord' evasion of tax payment'.⁵⁰⁷ As also indicated above, the people of Däbrä Marqos and other parts of Gojjam were realistically knew what was going on elsewhere in Ethiopia and understood the alienation of land rights subsequent to the measurement of land through the institution of *qälad* or *gasha*. In a more pragmatic way, they were afraid that the measurement plan would result in unfair rise in taxation; thereby the people resented it from fully applied in the area.

Scholars, both Markakis and Gebru agree that the earliest dissatisfactions in Gojjam were closely associated with the early 1960s succeeding task of *Däjjazmach* Šähäyu in implementing the government policy. First and foremost, the governor determined to eliminate all forms of chaos and disorder in the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*. He had once widely applied that the people to have their guns registered upon payment of two dollars within three months of the issuance of the instruction if not forfeited a law that was being pending for disarming the population in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam at that big moment.⁵⁰⁸ Yet, the prompt, inept and often brutal manner of its realization swiftly became a source of public dissatisfaction. Former patriots resentfully disappointed and could not stomach the situation that the government tended to disarm them in time of peace.⁵⁰⁹ Partly, because of their obvious importance to implementing such kind of plans, Šähäyu tried to thoroughly use his directly appointed subordinate officials, particularly the *awrajja* governors by way of their loyalty and obedience to him.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁷ Crummey, *Land and Society*, p. 243.

⁵⁰⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 378-380; and Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 170-171.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171; and Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 378-380.

Those who could not be in that line such as *Fitawrari* Ayaléw Dästa of Motta and *Däjjazmach* Häylä-Iyäsus Felaté of Dega Damot and others in different parts of the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* were removed and replaced by other officials who subordinated to his Šähäyu's administration in the area. Šähäyu's most important subordinate official was *Fitawrari* Dämess Alameräw the governor of Bichena *Awrajja* who was backing the former in pacifying the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* by way of disarming the population.⁵¹¹ Šähäyu also moved to eliminate the administrative and judicial authority of monasteries and churches over their *gult* lands, a move that annoyed both the clergy and the peasantry, have inflamed an already tense situation. He tried to collect overdue taxes and prosecuted defaulters, to the extent of confiscating land analogous to the age-old legal practice of *gebrä-ṭäl-märét* as indicated in chapter two that it easily ignited the discontents of the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* population. In that, unlike the former times, in the course of 1960s the people of Gojjam mainly the majority peasants, members of the clergy and nobility reinforced to their accumulated grievances against the government in the area. Thus, the notables provoked and encouraged the majority peasants against Šähäyu.⁵¹²

On condition that, the peasantry complained primarily in the form of signed petitions by way of elected representatives against Šähäyu, Dämess and other subordinate officials and began to reach Addis Ababa by early 1964. By referring to these petition letters, Markakis writes that the charge ranges from illegal expropriation of land and embezzlement of public funds to criminal assaults and committed rape on women by subordinate officials of Šähäyu and

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 378-380.

Dämess.⁵¹³ Šähäyu and Dämess, in turn, dispatched delegations of their own subordinates against the public charges. Yet, the Emperor twice formed an advisory commission, consisting mainly of his senior ministers, to investigate the matter, but on both occasions their investigative report had not been made public, nor was any action taken, in its place, representatives of the local population were continually harassed by Šähäyu, Dämess and their close subordinates. Hence, many of the representatives who went to Addis Ababa on such tasks stayed behind, fearing reprisals of Šähäyu, Dämess and their subordinates if they returned to their localities. Thus, Šähäyu's administration harshly squeezed the local population. In full cognizance of these, conditions in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam steadily worsened and the people pressed against the government from all sides of the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*. For prominent informants I talked to this condition is a lived experience.⁵¹⁴

As also indicated earlier, the people of Däbrä Marqos and other parts of Gojjam were variously expected for correcting the government for justice and fairness, given that they realistically knew what was going on elsewhere in Ethiopia and understood the alienation of land rights by way of measurement in *qäläd*. Dealing with this point, since the government could not learn all the time from erroneously resort to pressure, Markakis clearly writes that 'the Gojjam uprising and the events that preceded it illustrate the complex nature of the relationship between centre and provinces in the governmental system of Ethiopia'.⁵¹⁵ Hence, the widespread grievances and discontent of the peasantry in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam persisted well into the late 1960s and the subsequent periods. Peasants'

⁵¹³ Ibid, pp. 380-381.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid; *Interviews with* Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Emahoy* Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Märiqéttä* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

⁵¹⁵ Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, p. 385.

dissatisfaction with the reform plans and their attempt to hinder its full implementation was part of the general manifestation of deep-rooted crisis in the area. On condition that, rumors of impending transformation of Gojjam *rist* land into *qäläd* measurement as a precondition to partial expropriation as the case of the southern provinces have been circulated swiftly among the local population, as observed in the uprisings of 1944 and 1950/1. Such rumors had been increasingly disseminated ever since the appointment of Šähäyu,⁵¹⁶ perhaps the disappointed elites in order to defy to the latter's governorship over Gojjam.

To mention but a single instance, we have *Fitawrari* Ayaléw Dästa the grandson of the illustrious local ruler Tädla Gu^älu who made sporadic but strong challenges of Kassa of Qu^ära, later Emperor Téwodros II in the mid nineteenth century formerly the governor of Motta *Awrajja*. Ayaléw was impeached twice for spreading such rumors that led to his removal from office by the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* governor Šähäyu himself, as indicated earlier.⁵¹⁷ Specifically dealing with this issue, while he was in a series of talking with a certain journalist over *Shägär FM 102.1* in October 2010/1, Ato Täshomä Gäbrä Maryam whom we have met in first chapter in his capacity as the Imperial Attorney General assured us that *Fitawrari* Ayaléw Dästa was convicted of conspiring social unrest in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. That *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* governor Šähäyu himself accused Ayaléw appeared in the imperial supreme court of appeals in 1967 for spreading of those rumors with distributed copies pamphlets setting out his ideas against the government's reform measures in the area. Then, the court with Täshomä who directly in charge of the case proved Ayaléw not to be guilty

⁵¹⁶ Ibid, p. 381; see also Peter Schwab, 'Rebellion in Gojjam Province, Ethiopia' *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1970), p. 256.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

with concrete evidence found from the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* police commander Colonel Gäbrä Abb. However, Šähäyu disputed the case for indecision of its authenticity, and then it was referred to the final court of appeals by way of Emperor Haile Sellassie himself.⁵¹⁸

Subsequently, the Emperor appointed a higher-committee headed by Aklélu Habtäwäld—the prime minister at that big moment who was allowed to observe the appeal into the backgrounds of the demands of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* governor concerning Ayaléw. Hence, it was only after a suitable process of the law and careful review of the appointed a higher-committee that Šähäyu and his subordinate officials themselves were found guilty of hatred and fraud on Ayaléw. Consequently, in 1967 the Emperor directly appointed *Fitawrari* Ayaléw as *awrajja* governor of Léqa Qélläm, in Welega, until the transfer of Šähäyu and his subordinate officials to other *ṭäqalay-gezatoch* in 1868, not to mention the guilty they made for the former,⁵¹⁹ as discussed after a while in this chapter. Thus, it seems warranted to infer that the existing documents produced by the local imperial authorities such as reports on the local elites and got mixed up with the local criminal elements needs to be cross-checked in light of the above varieties of court ruling sources by future researchers who could arrive a detailed investigation on the issue. If so, the whole story would be pretty flexible and accommodative of the reality on the ground. So much so that, the above court cases on Ayalew shows that besides his allegedly convicted of offense for the local uprising ignited, other local elites who were guilty of crime by the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* governor or administration were left an open question. All in all maladministration by local officials seems to have

⁵¹⁸ The case received massive amount of media coverage of Täshomä Gäbrä Maryam (*Ato*) who was an attorney general of the Haile Sellassie government talking about his life experience with an Ethiopian journalist Mä'aza Berru' (in Amharic) on 'Yä-Cäwata Engeda' [lit. 'a Special Gust Play'], *Shägär FM 102.1* (Addis Ababa, October 28 2010/1 or *Teqemt* 20, 2003 Eth. Cal).

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

added to the discontent of the peasants which was for the most part borne out of the unpopularity of the decrees discussed above and below.

1967 Income Tax Proclamation and the Ensuing Development

In that way, the Income Tax Proclamation of 1967 that required assessment of agricultural land appeared as a confirmation of these rumors, when the government followed the usual top down approach to implement the proclamation by way of the MoF in the area. Initially, the MoF created land committees comprised of three representative local elders, the local judges and the *awrajja* governor the chairman. Therefore, assessing the land's production was the principal objective of the land committee that would be amenable and malleable to the new proclamation. The MoF authorities specified to the deadline of 7 July 1968 the closing date of the Ethiopian fiscal year for the collection of the tax. Neither members of the land committee nor the people understood the meaning of the new proclamation, notwithstanding the MoF authorities dispatched a small army of assessors. Hence, the way the land committees planning to come across the assessment conducted to the cultivable land was by guesswork/presumption that bounces to arouse suspicion that is beside to complaints of unfairness and corruption among the local population over Šähäyu, Dämess and their subordinates in the area. In spite of that, after considerable pressure and intimidation by officials, almost all *awrajjawoch* completed the property tax assessments, although immediately afterwards the accuracy of many of the amount of tax that must be paid was challenged by the people in petitions to the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat's* Office.⁵²⁰

⁵²⁰ Ibid; and also Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 178; and EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ፲፯/አ/0068, File ፯/፲፯ 164/68, Letter ፳22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often

Even though the people in the main part the majority peasants have been variously led themselves by way of descent groups at the *awraja* or village level, just fear of alienation of land rights became the unifying force of the uprising at the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* level, which had a strong bearing on a hugely popular war. For a more coherent resistance, the local people were also effectively spearheaded by the disappointed local elites who complained of being ill-treated under the governorship of Šähäyu that is beside to the local notables who once felt anxious about their defeat by the government pressure in the course of 1940s and 1950s and subsequently tended to retaliate it. To mention but a single instance, we have Terfé Rätta⁵²¹ who opted courageously for the final show dawn with the government forces to retaliate his defeat in the 1950/1 uprising in parts of Motta and its vicinities. Above all, the legendary patriot of the Italian Occupation, but unjustly hanged for leading the uprising of 1944, notably Bälay Zälläqä was still alive in the memory of the people of Ethiopia and in the psyche of the local population of Gojjam as composed a few representative historic couplets presented earlier.

It follows that the local population drew inspiration and strong courage from Bälay's most charismatic figure and leadership experience with great honor and respect to attract and influence others in the region. Thus, the 1940s and 50s uprisings were also the possible grounds to expedite the uprising of 1960s and the subsequent periods. In that, the legendary resistance leaders either deceased or lived were highly significant personalities to sustain the uprising in the area at that big moment. Owing to this and other developments, it seems

including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal).

⁵²¹ Ibid.

warranted to infer that the sociopolitical and cultural change that the region was going through in the course of 1960s and after was quite a natural extension of the 1940s and 50s uprisings in the area. The most dramatic example of the way in which the reform plans of the government—served as a unifying force of the recurring uprisings into mainstream regional life along the lines of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* is represented by the local people's resistance in the course of the post-liberation period well into the end of the imperial era. The history of Gojjam is full of such processes prior to the end of the Haile Sellassie government. On condition that, most of the *awrajjawoch* of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* encompassing Däbrä Marqos resisted the pressure from the government in this way. As discussed thoroughly in the above parts of this chapter, the nature and character of uprisings that observed in Gojjam were borne out from the authorities attempt to expedite the full implementations of reform plans, primarily the land measurement plan in the area.⁵²²

On the whole, both the long-term and short-term repercussions of significant events in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, the local people had intensely resisted pressure to dispute their opposition over the full implementation of land measurement plan that informed the government. Peasants in every single *awrajjawoch* of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* never accepted the plan for the reform of the area and improving the system of taxes along the new proclamation of 1967. Compared to others, however, intense resistance that largely succeeded in withstanding the government pressure was observed in such five *awrajjawoch* as Motta and Bichena—led by the one eyed Bamlaku Ayälä and Terfé

⁵²² Ibid; Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, p. 381; Schwab, 'Rebellion in Goj[j]am Province', p. 256; Interviews with Ato Awoqä Berhäné Därsäh, Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä, Ato Šägayé Muluyé Gojjam, Wäyzäro Bezunäsh Tassäw Alämu, Ato Bälaynäh Akalu Dästa, Ato Yehanäw Ṭénaw Admass, Ato Täggäññä Asräss Engeda, Ato Ayaléw Gäbré Mäkönnén, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

Rätta, Dega Damot led by *Däjjazmach* Häylä-Iyäsus Felaté, Däbrä Marqos especially in Awabal *wäräda* under Alämnäh Zäyet, and Bahir Dar especially in Qunzella by *Ato Seménäh* Dästa. In that case, the government resorted to the usual alacrity of pressure in response to the uprising from the local population in the course of 1968 and subsequent to it. It follows that, the variously ill-treated and disappointed local elites were found in the forefront of the resistance in the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*. These most dramatic *awrajjawoch* had not yet succumbed to the pressure from the imperial government, for the uprising was effectively led by those local notables in their move against the government at that big moment.⁵²³

That the majority of the peasants in the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* spearheaded by variously ill-treated and disappointed local elites rose up and remained in armed defiance that had significant recurring role in the uprisings of 1968 and after, as the most effective way of expressing their plight in the area. For many informants I talked to this event is a lived experience.⁵²⁴ More to the point, when their conciliatory approaches to petitions were ignored, by early 1968, the people of Gojjam shifted steadily from passive protest to active resistance seeing that the government once predisposed to violent reprisal. Yet, intense resistance that largely succeeded in withstanding the government pressure was observed in the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*, not to mention Motta, Dega Damot, Bichena, Däbrä Marqos and Bahir Dar. Although we faced disagreements on the full meaning of the commencement of the resistance at a particular place and time at a single stroke the peasants prompted to a mass-based uprising the events especially in Motta and Dega Damot *awrajjawoch* served for the recurring of the resistance in the area. This intricacy seemed to stem out of the general impression of increasingly

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

intense resistance presumably in those five *Awrajjawoch* of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. By referring to official reports, Gebru writes that the uprising was commenced in northern Motta on February 2 and all at once spread into northeastern Dega Damot. On February 7 the peasant *militia* from the two *Awrajjawoch* met at Zawréät (Azwaré) River, in Dega Damot, and took the usual oath with men and sang courageous war songs known in local parlance as *qärärto*, *fukära* and *shelälla* which is a sober reflection of their unity for resistance.⁵²⁵

They also elected their respective councils (governors) who vaguely in social processes assumed the office of *yä-gobäz aläqas* ('leaders of the brave'), as resistance leaders.⁵²⁶ The people firmly believed that while the MoF tax assessors/committees planned to measure their land, they were unyielding to contrary arguments, for the most part, as a rise in government trickery. Since traditionally the tax receipt constitutes proof of ownership, the peasants also argued that in the future *ṭisännöch*, most of all landless *ṭisännöch* would be warranted to claim ownership by virtue of proof of payment issued as 'title deeds'. Hence, the peasant's statement was verified by 'farmers do not plow, ox do not wear the yoke, for you shall hear news in September [the first month] of the Ethiopian (New Year)'.⁵²⁷ It meant for greater land security that showed an intriguing peasants' imagination of poverty for sustained and expedited development as the most effective way of expressing their being ill-treated by the government authorities which predisposed them to behave in certain ways at that big

⁵²⁵ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 178.

⁵²⁶ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder **ዞ/አስ/0068**, File **ደ/ግ** 164/68, Letter **ቁ22/22**, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); and Interviews with Ato Awoqä Berhäné Därsäh, Ato Engeda Akalu Alänä, Ato Šägayé Muluyé Gojjam, Wäyzäro Bezunäsh Tassäw Alämu, Ato Bälaynä Akalu Dästa, Ato Yehanäw Ṭenaw Admass, Ato Täggännä Asräss Engeda, Ato Ayaléw Gäbré Mäkonnén, Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Emahoy Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and Märiqetta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

⁵²⁷ Referred to Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, p. 382.

moment. Among other things, the local people were officially be considered destitute in relation to the decline of production in land, with little or no attention given to chaos and disorder analogous to the fact that the celebrated Mahatma Gandhi's historic policy of *passive resistance* or *nonviolent protest (civil disobedience)* that helped Indians to gain independence from Great Britain in 1948.

This, in turn, used to explain what the postmodernists argued, discussed briefly in the chapter above, that continual development in relation to twentieth century African land use right depends in part on culturally constructed understandings of the society, not to mention Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) prior to the end of the imperial era. However, conditions changed into violent opposition after a dramatic event in Däbrä Marqos. Dealing with this sociopolitical and cultural change that the region was going through, experienced informants and the record in Däbrä Marqos agree that the people led by Alämnäh Zäyēt, commenced the opposition at a village of Yädwarach in Awabal *Mekettel-Wäräda*. This was owing to the MoF land committee comprised of the sub-district governor Ayalew Qäsqes and its officer Yezängaw Färrädä, and the local elder Čané Bázé tried to land assessment in that particular village. The legal document noticeably mentions the occasion of this dramatic event in the area as [ደጋፊ ላይ ለሰራተ ሰራተ ሰራተ ሰራተ ሰራተ ሰራተ 1968] 'the war between the local population and the government owing to the regime's land measurement plan at Yädwarach, in Awabal, in 1968 (1960 Eth. Cal)'.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁸ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ፲፯/አሰ/0068, File ፩/፲፯ 164/68, Letter ፳22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal).

It was Sunday afternoon, 9 March 1968 that many of the people were commemorating a [Christian] religious banquet known in local parlance as *sänbäté* when they heard such a shocking news. The land committee, secured by a few police forces, had begun to measure a plot of cultivable land on the holiest day of the week. The church was full of deeply angry people for opposition to the measurement plan in the area. Most of all, men sang courageous war songs as indicated earlier swapped from a memorable personal experience typically involving an element of threat and risk. The people also won blessings from the priests to defend the *rist*. Both women and men were unyielding to battle not to win against but—to succeeded in withstanding the pressure from the government, with a historic campaign slogan 'Die for your *rist*' used especially to rallied the former to a cause⁵²⁹

So much so that, in a historical drama derived from the Yädwarach (Awabal) resistance, in Däbrä Marqos, sources also testify that the majority armed peasants varying from nine hundred to one thousand with blowing *ṭerunbas* (sing. *ṭerunba*: 'trumpet') so as to awaken others. They met and mobilized to the agricultural fields where the MoF authorities conducted the measurement plan and posed a resistance and threat to the latter. The full importance of the event only manifested swiftly, in anticipation of the tax authorities' rejection of the peasants' demand for the measurement plan delayed. In that, the peasants inexorably attacked the tax authorities and took their weapons from the police forces, guarding the former. The next day, March 10, people all over Awabal and their neighbors met near the Bogäna River and elect their own leader, and decided to fight in withstanding the usual alacrity of violent reprisal of the government. In the wake of that, the government

⁵²⁹ Ibid; and Interviews with Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Märiḡetta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu.

armed force above all peasant *militia* commanded by *Fitawrari* Dämess Alameräw were dispatched to Awabal. After both factions fought a six hours war, the government army inflicted heavy damages on the peasant *militia* fighters. In that, fifty-six of the fighters were kept in prison with flimsy evidence, in court trials, by the special order of the government that is beside to more than three-hundred casualties on both sides of the warring factions. However, the peasants were not succumbed to the government pressure, for they courageously fought and proved unyielding to the pressure from the latter. Not surprisingly, the confrontation steadily inflamed the acrimonious relationship between the two factions in the area.⁵³⁰

Dealing with the issue, while the drama of land measurement and resistance against it was unfolding, the historian Gebru writes that government authorities were required to give up with the land measurement plan and remained the local population without any consequence on their way of tax payment to land. That the fleeting stalemate broke and the peasants' resistance continued in different parts of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*. In consequence, the government faced the difficult task of pacifying the population.⁵³¹ That Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* has been pretty well managed to deepen the acrimonious relationship between the local population, on the one hand, and the government, on the other hand, under the administration of *Däjjazmach* Šähäyu, could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, I realized that the early events in the *Awrajja* escalated the uprising with great intensity all over the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*, as the news had reached swiftly from within. It is worth mentioning that, at a single stroke the people of the *Awrajja* and other parts of the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* rose up

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 179.

in arms against the government and refused to remain under Šähäyu's administration. They often hang on mass-violence that led to a total breakdown of law and order in the area. Primarily, because of the local people were communicating messages and news of the recurred resistance in Awabal, in Däbrä Marqos, it swiftly expanded to the other parts of the *Awrajja* and all at once in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* as a hugely popular uprising. In the meantime, on April 6 more than six-thousand peasant *militia* from Däbrä Marqos, Bichena, Motta, and Dega Damot headed for Mängesto, in what is now Enämay *Wäräda*, formerly Bichena *Awrajja*, to set free the prisoners of the event in Awabal; thereby silencing *Fitawrari* Dämess who spearheaded the government forces at that big moment.⁵³²

However, when they were on the way to silence Dämess, the armed peasants were stopped by the combined forces of the government the territorial and the police. Owing to this, the principal target, *Fitawrari* Dämess managed to escape from the harm of thousands of angry peasant *militia*. He chose the nearby church for hiding himself. Yet, after two solid days of continuous and intense resistance, the government soldiers were in scarce ammunition, and only later the arrival of the regular troops had been saved them to the brink of extinction.⁵³³ Yet, one can envisioned that the unyielding peasant *militia* inflicted severe damages on the government force until the arrival of the Territorial Army in withstanding the former's line. That the resistance continued until a fleeting stalemate created by the mediation of the bishop could hardly be denied. Nonetheless, the fact that the MoF authorities tried to persevere with the land measurement plan that the fleeting stalemate broke and the peasants' resistance

⁵³² Ibid; see also Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, p. 382.

⁵³³ Ibid.

continued in different parts of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* is beyond doubt. Consequently, the government faced the difficult task of pacifying the population.⁵³⁴

With the severity of the condition was such that the imperial government swiftly made of its usual intervention—administrative reshufflings and violent reprisal of the uprising in the mid 1968. The need for urgent action to 'alleviate' the chaotic conditions of Gojjam was the great concern of the government in 'pacifying' the population and reorganizing the administration of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at several levels of the administration. Overall, the two parallel processes proceeded to succeed smoothly. First and foremost, from April to July 1968, three successive investigative commissions—composed of more than a dozen of high-ranking government officials including *Däjjazmach* Däräjä Mäkönnén who was a senate member at that big moment and elected local elders were dispatched one after the other—by the Emperor himself to study the problem in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. In that case, with his harmonious and excellent working relationship with the local population, that Däräjä attempted to settle the dispute between the people and the government. However, many of the local people, principally Dega Damot and Motta were suspicious and refused to join the commissions while the latter succeeded in investigating the difficult tasks of how the local population lived in chaos and disorder in relation to the new reform plans, as fear of the *qälad* became the unifying force of the uprising in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. For prominent informants I talked to this condition is a lived experience.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴EGAZHCA Archives, Folder *ዞገ/አስ/0068*, File *ጸ/ግ* 164/68, Letter *ቁ22/22*, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal).

⁵³⁵ Ibid; *Interviews with* Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Emahoy* Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellásé, and *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu; and Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 180-183; and

On condition that, in its futile but sensible attempt to restore peace and order, the third and the last commission's investigative report suggested that the removal of Šähäyu and his subordinates from office would be the easiest solution to the inexorable popular uprising in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. In the wake of that, the government swiftly embarked on administrative reshufflings of Gojjam at several levels of the government. Primarily, on the celebration of his official birthday, July 23 1968, the Emperor transferred Šähäyu to Kaffa *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, substituted by *Däjjazmach* Däräjé Mäkonnén, the former senate member, just for taking part in settling dispute between the people and the government already through the investigative commissions of the latter. Besides, more than half a dozen of Šähäyu's subordinates like *Fitawrari* Dämess Alameräw were removed, though not suffered from any ill-treatment. The government appointed them to similar posts in other *Ṭäqalay-Gezatoch*.⁵³⁶

Moreover, all the hereditary rulers of the various territories of Gojjam—including Däbrä Marqos—who were dismissed under the governorship of Šähäyu were restored to their former positions. That the notables who were ill-treated by Šähäyu's administration were reinstated to their former positions after the latter's removal from office. In that case, *Däjjazmach* Häylä-Iyäsus Felaté, *Fitawrari* Ayaléw Dästa, *Däjjazmach* Ayälä Tadässä and *Fitawrari* Mäkonnén Kassa, who spearheaded the 1968 uprising, were reinstated for the governorship of Dega Damot, Motta, Bichena and Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjawoch*, respectively.⁵³⁷ However, *Fitawrari* Ayaléw who was temporarily appointed as district governor of Léqa Qélläm (in Welega) now *awrajja* governor of Motta (in Gojjam) seemed to

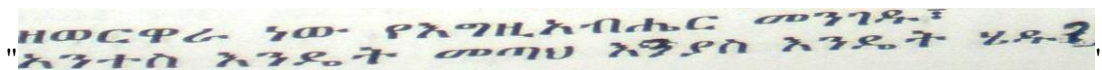
Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 381, 384; see also Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, pp. 217-218.

⁵³⁶ Ibid; and Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam', pp. 80-82.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

be not in the forefront of the uprising for once the imperial state's Attorney General proved him to be not guilty of such an instigation in 1968.⁵³⁸

However, this change in the administrative personnel had little or no practical importance in changing the life of the majority peasants. The sociopolitical elites could not deliver the peasants from the difficult social conditions they found themselves in. Hence, peasant hardship continued until the revolution. In that, peasants felt anxious about the government and recurred the uprising, even if the notables unvaryingly manipulated the deep-seated public grievance correspondingly for resolving or reinforcing their own interest and the existing social order.⁵³⁹ The following couplet composed to express the plight of the peasants during the appointment of one of these notables, *Fitawrari Ayaléw Dästa* as *awrajja* governor of Motta and the high expectation that the local population had towards the new administration under him clearly bears this out.



*The way of God is a zigzag [meaning the leaders with the people zigzagged back and forth down the resistance field],
How do you [spoke of Fitawrari Ayaléw] came to Motta and how did the legitimacy of the onetime [opposition leaders or clearly favored it now turned] governors had left a terrible legacy of corruption?!*⁵⁴⁰

In fact, the legitimacy of the former opposition leaders with the local people zigzagged back and put down the resistance field, as governors of the area. Hence, the people well versed in

⁵³⁸ 'Täshomä Gäbrä Maryam (*Ato*) Talking on *Yä-Čäwata Engeda* [lit. a Special Gust Play] about His Life Experience—as an attorney general of the Haile Sellassie government—with an Ethiopian Journalist Mä'aza Berru' (in Amharic) *Shägär FM 102.1* (Addis Ababa, *Teqemt* 20, 2003 Eth. Cal/October 28 2010/1).

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Referred in Nebeyu, 'Administrative History of Gojjam', p. 80.

the meeting were once to inform the cooperation of the current governor Ayaléw formerly in the forefront of opposition or in favor of them, if not he would face strong challenge just a scene reminiscent of the former governors in the area. In the wake of that administrative reshufflings, in September proclamations were also dropped from the air announcing all forms of penalties for tax default, but submitted unpaid taxes by December 1972 and promising a general amnesty of the protesting peasant *militia*. Other proclamations followed, putting the blame for the whole affair on a few 'lawbreakers who mislead the people', a common practice in Ethiopia used to separate resistance leaders from the people. In fact, many of the resistance leaders took advantage of the general amnesty assurance and succumbed to the government, not to mention the notably Bamlaku Ayälä who already spearheaded the resistance program in parts of Bichena and Motta together with Terfé Rätta, while the latter killed the former. That Bamlaku has been in convicted for his unfaithfulness to the occasion of the actual resistance or uprising as dutiful to the central government in the area. Yet, the general amnesty offered, accompanied by a renounce of reprieve from the new tax proclamation was the government's premeditated actions and decisions to 'silence' the uprising all over the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. On condition that, *Däjjazmach* Däräjé who came on the heels of Šähäyu's removal, entrusted to the difficult tasks of 'silencing' the population and improving the system of taxes and, through that, maximize the government revenue that came on top of the latter's agenda in the area.⁵⁴¹

In that case, Däräjé swiftly embarked on pacifying the population and improving the system of taxation all at once in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. Yet, before the dust has been settled, overzealous

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

land committees began to collect taxes that raised the people's taxable income by 1.50 *Birr* the amount of taxes all people must pay to the government through coercive means that recurred the uprising all over the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, as a popular war. The usual coercive approach used by the government was paralleled by civil actions such as the Emperor's appeals and came to visit Gojjam in May 1969 as discussed in subsequent paragraph but preceded by the government's police commissioner paid a one-day visit to Gojjam on mid December 1969. In that case, the commissioner recommended the delegation of local nobles as elders be sent to the most severe districts, namely Dega Damot and Motta. The police commissioner also suggested that logistics of armed force with adequate arms and ammunition entailed placing them permanently in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* to 'silence' the uprising effectively. In the wake of the commissioner's recommendation, therefore, the delegation led by the local notable Haylä-Maryam Käbbädä held a public meeting with the inhabitants of the area at the town of Färäs Bét, in Dega Damot on 21 December 1969. However, owing to their misfortunes of diplomatic skills, delegated authorities could not have ever succeeded to strike a compromise with the local population.⁵⁴²

Yet, in closely resemblance to other parts of the country such as Tegray and Bale, the deeply distressed majority peasants in Gojjam focused their anger on local authorities pride of place to the central authorities allowing for these historical drama derived from anticipated high property taxes without the Emperor's knowledge. If the Emperor realistically knew this condition, the peasants assumed, he would be on behalf of them usually for their property

⁵⁴² Ibid; and EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ፲፯/አሰ/0068, File ፩/፱፻ 164/68, Letter ፳22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); see also Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 180-181, 185.

security in the area. With no long awaited intervention of the Emperor Haile Sellassie was observed, therefore, 'a rumor spread that the Emperor was dead and succeeded by a Muslim ruler. Compelling was this rumor that local authorities later appealed the Emperor to state visit the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, which he did in May 1969'.⁵⁴³ On that occasion, the Emperor channeled the local churches and monasteries whose traditional privileges he reinstated with promotions and banquets as well as awarding titles and medals in a way that reinforced his own political position and the existing social order. In addition, the Emperor had made significant allowances for peasants. That the detested local governors were removed and land committees were swiftly recalled to the usual task assessment based on the new proclamation, at the same time as delayed the income tax until further noticed.⁵⁴⁴ Not surprisingly, the Emperor renounced all forms of peasants' unpaid taxes from 1950 to 68 an exemption for nineteenth years and a few of the uprising leaders were promoted to senior titles under the existing imperial firm, when the former came to visit the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* in May 1969.⁵⁴⁵ Below is the photograph of the Emperor on the occasions of his state visit in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) that clearly illustrates this out.

⁵⁴³ Referring to Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, p. 382.

⁵⁴⁴ Referred to Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 185.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.



Illustration 8. As also indicated in Amharic at the bottom of the photograph above, Emperor Haile Sellassie (on the right side) inaugurating the local branch of the State Bank of Ethiopia in May 1969 (1961 Eth. Cal.), the Current Commercial Bank of Ethiopia founded in 1963, in Däbrä Marqos while he came to Gojjam for a state visit in that particular period. The general manager of the Bank was Ato Täfära Dägäfé (on the left side) accompanied the Emperor on the occasion of that state visit. In any case, leaving aside his state visit to the Ṭäqalay-Gezat, the arrival of the Emperor was scheduled for all practical purposes as the government's conciliatory approach to 'silence' the local peasants uprising at that big moment.

Source: I originally reproduced the photograph—by permission of the bank manager Ato Argachäw Zärähun as displayed in the inside wall of its upstairs building on 20 March 2017.

The Emperor, first and foremost, channeled or induced land committees to levy a tax based on the new proclamation, and maximize the government revenue, in his to visit Gojjam. However, what the people really displeasured with and intensely resisted was any further attempt to land measurement plan and improving the system of taxes. In the wake of the Emperor's visit, therefore, the people precluded or resented the attempt to conduct land measurement for the succeeding task of improving the taxation system in the area. Eventually, the public reaction manifested itself in recurring popular uprising given that fear of *qälad* still became the rallying force of the uprising generally in the Ṭäqalay-Gezat. Descent groups also served as the unifying force of the uprising usually at the village level. Hence, it was only days granted official pardon of the Emperor that the uprising continued in

by 1.50 *Birr*, from 1968 (...) to 1974'.⁵⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that fear of the *qälad* system for land measurement and the tax dispute became the unifying force of the uprising all over the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, as of it bred and encouraged lasted in its vitality up until 1974 with some or no modification.

On condition that, the majority peasant *militia* were not effectively silenced by the government intimidation, in its place, by a deafening silence, the peasants backed by the disappointed sociopolitical elites intensely resisted and succeeded in withstanding the government pressure in the area.⁵⁴⁸ In the wake of that, *Däjjazmach* Däräjä informed the central government that three battalions of the Territorial Army and seven hundred police forces were needed additionally, for urgent action, to 'silence' the uprising in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* at large. Subsequently, the government deployed its usual alacrity of armed force involving the Territorial Army and the police force.⁵⁴⁹ This move meant to intimidate the local population to renounce all forms of resistance and sustain the land measurement plan, before they suffered the consequences of severe devastation wrought by the government army. However, while some of the leaders were surrendered, the majority peasants proved unyielding to the violent reprisal and conciliatory approaches of the government, given that the latter was more susceptible to violent reprisal of the uprising.⁵⁵⁰

Here, other inherent and recurrent environmental problems such as famine and drought in a similar breath reinforce the uprising as its unifying force that is beside to fear of the *qälad*

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid; and Interviews with *Wäyzäro* Bezunäsh Ṭassäw Alämu, *Ato* Gétachäw Mammo, and *Märiqétta* Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid; see also Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 185.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

system by way of land measurement plan in the area. In fact, as the result of the 1973/4 famine and drought the natural extension of the 1960/1 intrinsic problem—in parts of Gojjam such as Bichena and Däbrä Marqos, especially in Sinan, peasants were unable to pay taxes and signed petitions to the government for exemption. The fact that the government authorities ignored such petitions, it inflamed peasant grievances and uprising in Däbrä Marqos and other parts of Gojjam. In the mean time, poor living condition bred violence that apparently proceeded with chaos and disorder, pending for social justice in the area. Eventually, even if opposition to the new income tax of 1967 have been an increasingly continuous peasant uprisings, the recurring environmental problems clearly revealed as part of the general manifestation of the intensity of the uprising against the government in the area.⁵⁵¹

As indicated in chapter two, land measurement called *qäläd* itself was carried out in some localities of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. Only 0.1 % of the total land of c.64, 000 square kilometers in Gojjam was known to be measured between 1942 and 1966. Hence, it is clear that the government succumbed to the pressure from the people, given that there was no effective land measurement that impeded the succeeding task of improving the imperial taxation system in the area. However, when the government allowed Muslims to buy land in the course of 1960s, a persistent rumor saying that Muslims expressed sympathy for land measurement plan, for which remained in a series of attacks on them from the majority peasant population in the area. This partly diverted the character of the uprising as an 'interclass' conflict in the area. In fact, the government attempted to intertwine the resistance

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

into a local civil war among the peasant *militia* themselves. Because, in February 1969, the peasant *militia* from Agäw Meder invaded Q^warit, in Dega Damot, and Bibuññ in Motta. Likewise, peasant *militia* from parts of Dega Damot, backed by the Territorial Army, the police force and some regular troops, were mobilized against the peasants in other parts of Dega Damot.⁵⁵² However, the uprising was not effectively silenced the uprising that variously proved its unyielding to the pressure from the government in the area. So much so that, the government policy used to create an 'interclass' conflict a posture to 'silence' the uprising but the pressure could not supplant the peasants' uprising easily.⁵⁵³

Dealing with this point Markakis also observes that 'neither the peasants nor the government undertook a coordinated effort to sweep the opposition from the field',⁵⁵⁴ while the latter was let loose and inflicted heavy damages on the former.⁵⁵⁵ Owing to this and other developments, the government swiftly embarked on the subsequent and last of its task of administrative reshufflings and intervention into the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. In that, the Emperor directly removed Däräjé and appointed *Lej Häylä-Maryam Käbbädä* for the governorship of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* in January 1974. In fact, the Emperor removed Däräjé for his administrative inefficiency in the area. Hence, the succeeding task of improving the system of taxes was entrusted to its new governor, *Lej Häylä-Maryam*, though for some significant months, ever since January before the revolution in February 1974. That year witnessed two important changes with a bearing on the system of administration. It relates to the outbreak of

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ገገ/አሰ/0068, File ፩/ግግ 164/68, Letter ቁ22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); see also Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 185.

⁵⁵⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 382-383.

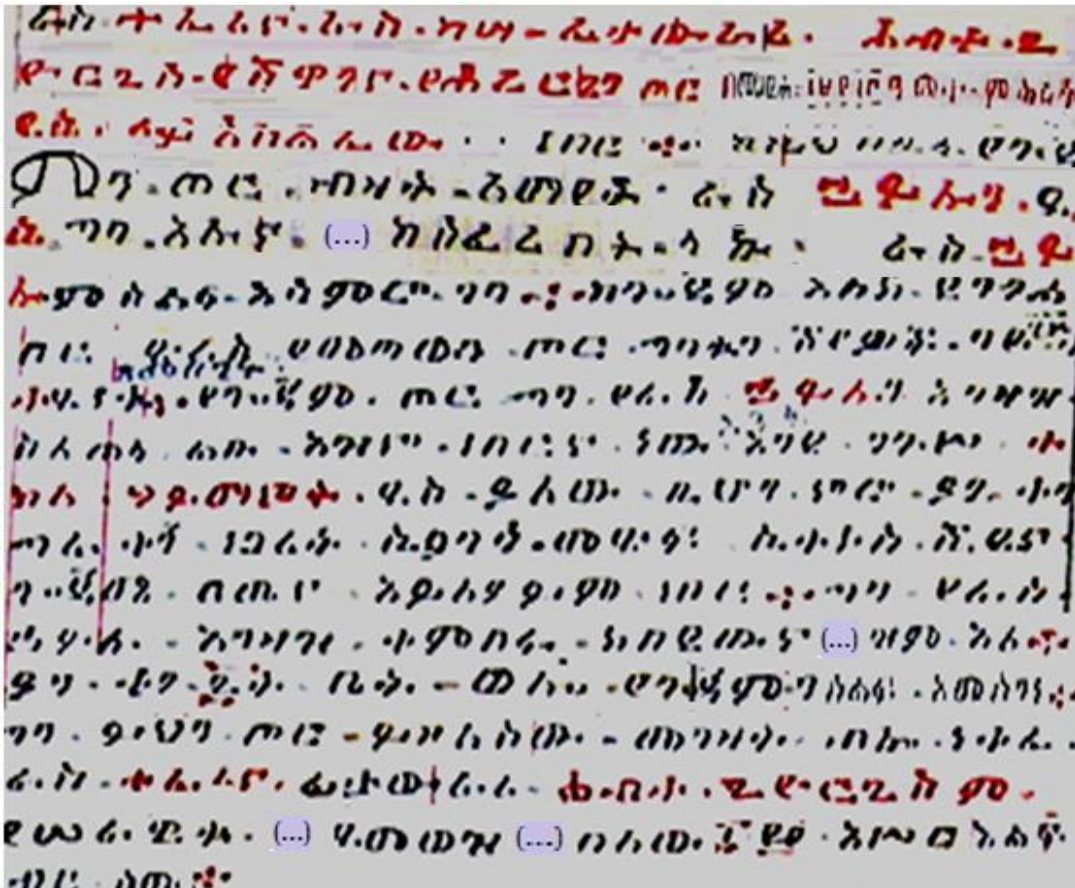
⁵⁵⁵ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 185.

revolution and its subsequent development the final stages of the uprising proceeded by the revolution with the popular slogan 'Land to the Tiller'. Whether the governorship of *Lej Häylä-Maryam* brought some minor or no any significant changes on the taxation system of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* is difficult to tell for lack of sources and because his office of tenure was rather short.

However, though at various levels, in the uprisings of 1968 and after, peasants' resistance continued with great intensity in different parts of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. It is worth mentioning that; the uprising could not effectively silenced by the usual violent reprisal of the government in postwar Gojjam. In fact, with little or no resistance in Metekel, antigovernment activities persisted throughout the postwar Gojjam.⁵⁵⁶ It is clear that the government succumbed to the pressure from the people, given that the former gave way to the gains and safety of the latter for its intense resistance, as observed in consequences of the 1944, 1950/1, 1968 and 1969 popular uprisings in the area. This seemed pretty much used to explain the people's to succeeded in withstanding the government pressure for the army was innately and strongly effective in organization and leadership, though the disappointed local elites manipulated the deep-seated peasants' grievance for reinforcing their own interest and the existing social order in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* during the imperial era. In dealing with the military organization and leadership, multiple sources testify that Gojjam had innately strong military discipline and energy with effective leadership and a lot of courage that succeeded in withstanding the enemy line all the way through the medieval and modern times. Primarily

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 177; and EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ዞን/አስ/0068, File ፩/፱ 164/68, Letter ቁ22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal).

and most importantly, the clerical record from Däbrä Marqos church clearly mentions the following.



There was a series of endless military parade celebrated in Dässé [capital of Wello] in March 1920/1, when every single regional armed force of the Ethiopian empire including the Gojjam army, were mobilized to and from the station. The top of the imperial authorities Ras Täfäri [later Emperor Haile Sellassie I], Ras Kassa [a relative and close companion of the former and governor of Säلالé, in what is now Shewa] and Fitawrari Häbtä-Giyorgis [the then Minister of Defence]—directed the performances of the visitors at the procession. Primarily, the imperial Authorities mobilized the Shewan and Harerghe armed force to that parade. Subsequently, by the special order of those imperial authorities that, the Gojjam army already set up a camp [near the Lake Tana, in Gondär] came to the court of the parade (...). In the wake of that, the Gojjam army spearheaded by Ras Haylu II himself swiftly broke the camp and mobilized to the parade, thereby examined by those authorities. There was an endless march of the Gojjam army to Dängäl Bar [in Gondär around the Lake Tana Region] and from Gojjam. In that case, the parade visitors who came from all corners of the country examined the army critically. Among other things, the Shäyé

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[meant for Shewans] looked at the army in admiration, as replied to an expression of thanks. The Seven Houses of Wello also thanked the army to march into the procession. Yet, Ras Haylu II and his military officer against whom the Seven Houses of Wello criticized as they remained within the political ascendancy of Shewan rulers in the national political developments with this courageous army. In fact, there was an acrimonious relationship between the Gojjam army and Ras Haylu, for the latter administered the army with heavy hand, in tax demands (...), thereby silenced the armed force at that big moment is beyond doubt. On the flip side, the 'lordship' of Negus Täklä-Häymanot father and predecessor of Haylu II—proved to be a secured base of tax demands for the army, being treated with sensitivity and sympathy. Thus, unlike to Ras Haylu II, the Gojjam army remained loyal vassals to Täklä-Häymanot. That army was in ill-fated development and thereby disappointingly hated Ras Haylu II. It would be hard to conciliate the army and Ras Haylu regarding the legal orders. In finalizing the parade ceremony, therefore, the spirit of the Gojjam army was far below the expectations. The army defied the old tradition and remained in dead silence to fight the Shewan army, when emblems of the nägarit [an Ethiopian Ceremonial and Proclamation Drum] played (on the left side) and the cannon fired explosive shells (on the right side). To the delight of imperial authorities, however, Ras Täfäri and Fitawrari Häbtä-Giyorgis exceptionally endowed every Gojjam soldier enough berr [possibly Maria Theresia Ṭägära] 100,000 by way of salary.⁵⁵⁷

In general, based on the above striking evidence with realistic observation and good expectation on the nature of its organization and leadership experience the Gojjam army have had courageous and strong military discipline and energy in withstanding pressures. This was the case in the past, actually in the first quarter of the twentieth century and prior to the Italian Occupation. With this, many of the parade visitors expressed their great respect and admiration for the Gojjam army with its military capabilities rallied around the ceremony to and from the town of Dässé, the administrative capital of the province of Wello. The fact that Gojjam army has amazed many visitors around the rally with its mobilization order, as of the latter gave thanks to the former. That the parade visitors greeted Gojjam with open arms is beyond doubt. The fact that Gojjam had a characteristic of quite an eminently armed force

⁵⁵⁷ History of Gojjam from Ras Haylu I to Ras Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 128 verso 128 recto 129 verso.

truly remarkable in experience as attracting attention through conspicuous qualities at that parade, i.e, of the highest grade within the existing Ethiopian military category.

Thus, the army with conspicuous success in spite of its difficulties has always been ready for challenging the Shewan army known in common parlance as *näffäñña* as the final showdown of the ceremony is beyond doubt. Imperial authorities who were in command of that military procession, viz., the Crown Prince *Ras Täfäri* (later Emperor Haile Sillassie I) and *Fitawrari Häbtä-Giyorgis* (who played a great role in the national political development until his death in 1926)⁵⁵⁸ thanked the Gojjam army for readily remarkable army, distinguished by some unusual quality from others of the same category. Thus, Gojjam was given a hero's welcome when its army returned home after winning that military procession. It was in this way that, beneficiaries of these multiple *wello-zämach-märét* grants were Haylu's soldiers who apparently had peasant background recruited from different territories of Gojjam including Däbrä Marqos and officials who assisted him in his parade efforts in his scheme for political prominence in the region, as described in chapter two. This partly is used to explain that the Gojjam army had effective organization and leadership experience for long.

However, unlike being treated with sensitivity and sympathy by *Negus Täklä-Häymanot*, the Gojjam army was ill-treated by the 'lord' *Ras Haylu II*. In consequence, the army response to the Shewan *näffäñña* army has been very courteous, in dead silence, in place of the usual alacrity of fighting each other for closing stages of that procession, given that both armies

⁵⁵⁸ One of the standard reference works on *Fétawrari Häbtä-Géyorgés'* contribution to the modern Ethiopian empire is Bahru Zewde, *Häbté Abba Mälla Kä-Ṭor Märénät Eskä Agär Märénät* (in Amharic) (lit. *Häbté Abba Mälla from Captivity of War to Important Leadership Role [in the Making of Modern Ethiopia]*) (Addis Ababa, Eclips Printing Press, 2016 (2009 Eth. Ca.).

were constantly fought each other in Ethiopia's military day parade. Nevertheless, it is apparent that Gojjam had a loyal and disciplined army with a cohesive organization, though in having this eminently armed force at different levels, Haylu allowed Shewans to have had primacy over himself and/or to rule over the country. Succinctly put, in appreciation to the high importance that many visitors came to assume in that military parade with which the Gojjam army was distinctly mobilized, it was impossible for some guests to exaggerate the success of *Ras* Haylu II.

Seeing that Haylu failed to defy the political tradition to grow better in the national political development in realizing his lively program to challenge the Shewan ruling elites apparent for the throne could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, the fact that imperial authorities were genuinely pleased about the Gojjam army's success in that parade, they gave the army money in thousands of *birr* [possibly *Maria Theresia Ṭägäras*] in lieu of salary, for its own special charm as markedly remarkable from others' army on that special occasions. Many of the parade visitors as well as participants thanked the troops for rallying. They knew and understood no army that stands to its obligations, even on its own despite, more solidly proved after the Gojjam army. As a whole under the existing condition of the Gojjam army most of the parade visitors considered its armed force as remarkable soldiers. They realistically knew and understood that Gojjam had good troops with full standing position, obviously well organized or mobilized and succeeded in rallying around the procession. The fact that the Gojjam army won the parade championship was the visitors' most indelible experience.

In spite of that, the change in the administrative personnel that is Haylu's removal from office, had no practical importance in changing the life of the army. *Ras Emeru* could not relieve the armed force from the difficult social conditions they found themselves in. Hence, the army's hardship continued until they seemed to have got a fleeting relief from the instability raised by the Italian invasion and occupation of the country, in the years between 1935-41, as indicated earlier and on several occasions in chapters above.⁵⁵⁹ It is also worth mentioning that, other available sources testify that even in earlier times the Gojjam had effective armed force that proved unyielding to the violent reprisal of the enemy forces. To mention but two instances, we have traveler accounts by the Portuguese Jesuits, Almeida and Jerome Lobo who arrived and remained in Ethiopia, one after the other, during the medieval period, actually in the first half of seventeenth century. Both travelers have some striking evidence to relate about the nature of the military organization of older Gojjam and/or Ethiopia at large.⁵⁶⁰

Primarily, Almeida (1622) realistically knew and understood that the people of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), which therefore included Gojjam that encompasses Däbrä Marqos, were good troops with full of a standing position, as naturally well equipped to succeeded in withstanding anyone else who would have fired upon them. In a more pragmatic way, he describes the military experience of the people as 'in war they were reared as children, in war they grew old'.⁵⁶¹ Likewise, intrigued by the nature of its military organization and

⁵⁵⁹ Interviews with Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, *Emahoy* Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé*, and *Märiqéttä* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

⁵⁶⁰ M.D Almeida, 'The Travels of the Jesuits' *Travellers in Ethiopia*, (ed. Richard Pankhurst) (London, Oxford University Press, 1965); and Jerome Lobo, 'The Sources of the Blue Nile' *Travellers in Ethiopia* (ed. Richard Pankhurst) (London, Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 47.

⁵⁶¹ Almeida, 'The Travels of the Jesuits', p. 39.

leadership, Lobo, who arrived on the heels of Almeida's departure, in 1624/5, especially understood that Gojjam had indeterminately numerous, intense and invincible army.⁵⁶² These all realistic observation and good expectation suggested that the region, more precisely Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos had a well organized and mobilized army with its memorable performance would not be succumbed to any pressure in the area for long, during the medieval and modern times, generally prior to the end of the imperial era. In any case, the Gojjam army played a significant role in the national political development, not to mention in such kind of military procession. Apart from participating in military procession, the Gojjam army succeeded in withstanding the invading Italian army that is in cooperation with other regional armed force of modern Ethiopia at the battle of Adwa, in what is now Tegray region, in 1896.⁵⁶³

In that case, the Ethiopian army including Gojjam remained in perfect condition for well-organized armed force that made the Italian army ineffective. Within the internal political strife, the Gojjam army leaders were variously expected for challenging the imperial government. Among other things, as pointed out earlier and in chapters above, Gojjam was one of the strong rivals of Shewa for the thrown in the course of the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century, as indicated earlier and in subsequent discussions. In any case, the relation between the Shewans and the Gojjam elites in the region was adversarial all the time. The last quarter of the nineteenth century was marked by infighting and mutual attrition of force among the 'lords' of those regions. The

⁵⁶² Lobo, 'The Sources of the Blue Nile', p. 47.

⁵⁶³ History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 128 verso 128 recto 129 verso.

distractive warfare among 'lords' sapped their power and made their respective territories an easy prey to Yohannis IV (r.1872-1889) who ruled the various regions of northern Ethiopia after Emperor Täklä Giyorgis (r.1868-1872).⁵⁶⁴ The following heroic and lively couplet also constituting a historical drama articulated during the interaction in a heroic couplets and concerned with a variance between the population of Gojjam, more precisely the district of [Däga] Damot and its frontier.

**አገራችን ዳግማዊ፣ ብር ነው ወንዞችን፤
ፍቅራችን ነው እንጅ! አይመቻ ጠባቾችን።**

*Damot is our birth place [meant for the local population], the river is Berr [that obviously allowed them to supplement their rain-fed agriculture],
The local population employed themselves on gentle persuasion over violent means so as to won their enemy forces in the frontier.*⁵⁶⁵

Accordingly, it is apparent that it was composed to express the usual military experience of the people of Gojjam, more precisely the district of [Däga] Damot in their bravery and courageous deeds concerned so much on 'peaceful coexistence' with their neighbors, whatever their nature' may be. While the enemy forces showed violent posture, then the local population would adopt a more hostile reprisal against the former sword. Giving allowance for the violent reprisal of the people of Damot employed to fulfill their objective, on the positive side the undoubted moderating impact of their customary dealings had indirectly helped for fostering their mutual tolerance that prevailed at all times in the frontier. Briefly put, the customary dealings of Damot have had left a famous legacy and produced clear outcome from within. That social relationship seemed to be faithfulness on behalf of others and usually security on the part of the local population that warrants the recognition of their

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ An interview with Märiḡetta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

custom of unyielding power to succeeded in withstanding any pressure for long. This has made it clearly accurate and in perfect matching to express the general manifestation and recognition of the long-standing custom of the Gojjam population. The people took cautious and pragmatic approaches in frontier territories, depending on the reality on the ground and the level of threat that their enemies pose to their conciliatory approaches and above all to violent reprisal of enemy forces. Generally, people’s pragmatism could go to the extent of compromising the liberal agenda they set for themselves to live with their neighbors as the case of Damot amply demonstrates. Given that, the violent reprisal and conciliatory approaches that the local population had towards others and defended themselves against anyone who would have fired upon them was and still is the constant features of the area. The fact that the Gojjam people never looked for war but always ready for it is beyond doubt. Dealing with this issue, the twentieth century clerical record from Däbrä Marqos also testifies that



Despite the occasion of failure to a bold move, the Gojjam's army proved to be a secure base of power for any violent pressures in the frontier. Hence, the existing literary work urged for objective historical writing in light of the Gojjam armed force. That historical truth would have been written with a look of sheer delight on a person who heard and read of it upon the standards relevant in a situation. (...). History is authentic only when it gives the writer's great integrity. History sought to accommodate the reality on the ground, based on what was actually possible rather than on the way one would like it to be with intricacies of deception, with its defied tradition on the conventional limits of historical writing.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁶ History of Gojjam from *Ras Haylu I* to *Ras Haylu II*, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 4 recto.

of fortune the latter could not supplant the former with spirit of a hugely popular bravery and courage that set in motion in conformity its militant activities at that particular battle is markedly different. That *Negus* Minilek eventually never succeeded in firmly violating the autonomous status of the province of Gojjam and fully incorporating the province itself into his political realm, as part of the province of Shewa at that big moment, which, the document mentions, anyone need to hear this historical truth.⁵⁶⁹

In spite of that, while the failure of Gojjam, following the battle of Imbabo in 1882, created a gloomy picture for its future, it has been changed pretty much quickly. Despite the battle sometimes gave Gojjam cause for melancholy; the army with its historical legacy soon legitimized its influence in the area, in a bloody battle against the invading forces of Därbush (Sudan), also known in common parlance as Ansar or Mahdist at Mätämma a boarder and custom trading post in present-day northwestern Ethiopia. That many members of the Gojjam army felt quite a lust spirit of adventure that set them in motion in changing their failure at Imbabo and began to work towards its end. In the meantime, Gojjam took the opportunity to thank Emperor Yohannis IV for his special order of battle against the raiding forces of Mahdists followers of Mahdi or Caliph Abdullah who was emir (ruler) in Sudan—along the northwestern Ethiopian realm,⁵⁷⁰ as shall be discussed in a few pages below.

The Mahdist Sudan made such a ride on Ethiopia owing to Yohannis' 'collaboration' with the British colonial interest over the former while in his best interest of the empire's a direct

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid; and History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 4 recto.

⁵⁷⁰ History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, folio 26 verso; and also Ya-Gojjam Kebrä Nägäst (lit. Glory of the Gojjam Kings), MS Mängesto Kidanä Mehrät Church, in what is now Enämay *Wäräda*, formerly Bichena *Awrajja*, folio 94 verso 94 recto.

access to the Red Sea be opened as a major factor that had a detrimental impact on the regional as well as national politics. It was primarily due to the violent reprisal of the Mahdist forces, in Dänbeya, and later across the entire regions of Bagemder, in what is now north Gondär, in northwest Ethiopia in the late 1880s. This violent posture primarily affected the border trade town of Mätämma located at a place where the boundary of Ethiopia and Sudan intersects and its vicinities, in the district of Dänbeya. The Mahdists based in the town of Mätämma carried their religion to largely Christian inhabited territories of the locality by the sword. In doing so, they looted and destroyed several churches and monasteries and above all started cleaning the district from potential enemies, such as the monks of one of the earliest known monasteries of the region, Mahabärä Sellassé. The monks of that monastery were unlike to Islam and supported the Ethiopian Christian kingdom.⁵⁷¹

Using the difficult terrain of the area as safe hideout, armed Gojjam peasants triumphed success over the frontier raiding Mahdist Sudan forces. Such local notables as *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot himself, *Fitawrari* Täsfayé, *Ras* Wäldä Maryam and *Däjjach* Nägash with a cavalry unit corresponding to infantry forces. As the local church record testifies, at this big moment Täklä-Häymanot's army was backed by [ጸረጸተጦራ], *iradat tor* 'auxiliary troops' sent from Tegray by the special order of the Emperor Yohannis himself led by *Wag-shum* Gäbru, *Däjjach* Hagos and *Däjjach* Berhané. On the other hand, thousands of the Mahdist Sudan forces spearheaded by a certain emir with such Amharished Arabic given names, described in local clerical record, as Salbé, Yakéma, Dawa and Sheik Jälé who positioned to trench warfare to the common battle with the Ethiopian forces. Then, the reaction of Gojjam army

⁵⁷¹ Ibid, folio 94 verso 94 recto.

developed into open resistance that eventually leading to the battle of Mätamma, in Dänbeya, in January 1887 where Mahdist Sudan was defeated by Ethiopian forces led by *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot.⁵⁷²

Nevertheless, it seems apparent that the place of the Tegray generals whom we have mentioned above in their capacity as auxiliary troops of the battle was, therefore, back on this front. Cognizant of functioning in their subsidiary capacity of the battlefield, the Tegray generals gave protection for Täklä-Häymanot and his army generals as the main armed forces who were in the forefront of the resistance against the Mahdist forces. In doing so, the illustrious Täklä-Häymanot ended cleaning the locality from potential and known leaders of enemy forces, pointed out above, and who soon became his war captives. However, Täklä-Häymanot's victorious soldiers inflicted heavy damage on the town of Mätamma, while Gojjam proved unyielding to the violent reprisal of the Mahdist army. That the Gojjam army often fought for the maintenance of their military land and through that, to perpetuate their legacy in that institution reversed their failure at Imbabo, in this way, there was no-more disappointment among the army for their failure at Imbabo five years ago.⁵⁷³

As the same record in the area testifies, [ገጽ 26 ላይ የተገኘው ሰነድ ይህንን ግንኙነት ያሳያል] 'Since the Imbabo failure brought misery to many of the Gojjam people to its militant activities, that saddened armed force marched through Mätamma battle where the army defeated the Därbush (Mahdist Sudan) force'.⁵⁷⁴ Because of its Mätamma combat, the army

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid, folio 26 verso.

hoped to dispel the general level of popular discontent and grievance that followed the Battle of Imbabo. This implies that in point of fact the local tradition acknowledges Gojjam as having effective armed force because it was expected to be successful of the Mätämma battle, instead of merely accepted the Imbabo failure by taking advantage of the army's weakness. Hence, from the perspective of local clerical record, the failure of Imbabo laid the foundation for the easy success of Mätämma, which could be said to have been completed shortly with the 'lordship' of Täklä-Häymanot himself, as ruler of Gojjam, in that big moment. This is a logical outcome of half a decade of the military strategy reworked and the total redeployment of Gojjam forces into a great regional triumph. This means the Mätämma event has been a success since its inception. Hence, Gojjam owed its January 1887 success at Mätämma and legitimized its influence in the area. Such was the confidence of Gojjam in the governorship of *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot that his army succeeded in withstanding the frontier enemy forces,⁵⁷⁵ which is a clear reflection to the continuing importance of Gojjam during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

In the mean time, Täklä-Häymanot commemorated a great feast for all his travel companions (accompanied soldiers). The specific purpose of the commemoration feasts of Täklä-Häymanot was for his for political prominence in the region with the presence of Shewan militaristic 'lords' led by *negus* Menelik and through that to perpetuate his legacy in the region.⁵⁷⁶ Moreover, although evidence on which to base my statement is lacking, it seems warranted to infer that the practice of Täklä-Häymanot grants of military land—variously known as *yä-zämächa-märét*—to soldiers seems to have developed—something *ya-*

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

mätamma-zämach-märét—parallel with commemoration feast for them, as the customary rules of property recognized the rights of the soldiers described in chapter two. In that way, the *yä-zämächa-märét* tenure system had witnessed significant changes in the course of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, even after, under the influence of the political developments in Gojjam. Thus, from the late 1880s onwards, when Täklä-Häymanot defeated the Mahdist forces and brought him into his political prominence in the region, *yä-zämächa-märét* grants proliferated and apparently became one of the most widespread forms of land tenure in the area. As indicated earlier, the 'lordship' of Täklä-Häymanot proved to be a secured base of power for the army, being treated with sensitivity and sympathy.

As described earlier, although Imbabo left behind a legacy of bitterness among the Gojjam army, for the most part Mätamma triumph turned down the intensity of the Imbabo failure. Victory went to Täklä-Häymanot, after the order of Yohannis for battle, as it has provided the missing Imbabo that was needed for the Gojjam's success. This means the Mätamma success became the Gojjam Imbabo as it reinstated Gojjam's power and glory, while the enemy forces inflicted heavy damage on its armed force in that particular event. Hence, as will be discussed soon, pragmatically one may well suggest that unlike the predisposition of some writers like Italy educated elite of the locality, Afäwäraq Gäbrä Iyäsus, who came up with a unrealistic piece of material on the nature of Gojjam army,⁵⁷⁷ some local records testify, in perfect match for on the military organization and leadership experience of Gojjam. That, since the earlier days, having competent and popular army became the common historical experience in the region is fundamentally correct. Hence, Täklä-

⁵⁷⁷ The literary work criticized by the local clerical record, cited below, is Afäwäraq Gäbrä Iyäsus, *Dagmawé Ašé Minilek* (in Amharic) (*Emperor Minilek II*) (Rome, 1908/9, 1901 Eth. Cal), pp. 32-37.

Häymanot restored his power soon and his enemy forces from the frontier were effectively silenced by his triumph. That Täklä-Häymanot's army proved unyielding to the violent reprisal of the Mahdists forces. Finally, Täklä-Häymanot's rule, in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), just fine in 1887.⁵⁷⁸

However, the bloody success of Täklä-Häymanot and his army in pacifying the region changed pretty much quickly. It was in 1888, and the following year, when the Mahdist armed force started to fight back the Ethiopian forces using the area (Mätämma, in Dänbeya) as their power base. They repeatedly looted and often burning churches and monasteries into ashes, with the deepest incursion they had yet made in the region. Wherever they take Christian districts, they burn churches and compel the inhabitants to adopt Islam. However, at that big moment, the Mahdists' emir, Abdullah, officially requested Emperor Yohannis to adopt Islam and to release Mahdist war captives, whom we have met above in their capacity as leaders of Mahdist forces at the Mätämma event, through gentle persuasion before force of arms that the emir won his Islamic followers in the area. In the wake of that, Yohannis once more ordered *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot to go into the second battle against the raiding Mahdist forces. Although Gojjam was able to establish a measure of victory over the Mahdists at the 1887 Mätämma bloody battle, it was marked by distractive warfare that especially sapped the former's power and energy, subsequently. Thus, the Gojjam militaristic 'lords' and *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot were given the difficult choices of either left battle into order or losing their harmonious relations with Yohannis, under the latter's special order for the next combat. While most of Täklä-Häymanot's army members joined by his generals including *Ras Wäldä*

⁵⁷⁸ Ya-Gojjam Kebrä Nägäst, folio 26 verso 94 verso 94 recto.

Maryam and *Däjjach* Nägash were willing to observe Yohannis' demand and grudgingly determined to battle. However, Täklä-Häymanot as ruler of Gojjam chose to provide details to the reasons for differential treatment of Gojjam not to fight back a loosing battle against the enemy forces.⁵⁷⁹

To put it briefly, the controversial military order of Yohannis towards Mahdist Sudan set in motion tremendous tension and chaos in the Gojjam army that took a swift decision to work themselves out. For the most part, the army chose battle to enforce Yohannis' political will on the raiding Muslim Mahdist Sudan, often by means of the traditional slogan, 'Die for Your Land!' that remained as the organizing and/or mobilizing force of the army for battle against the enemy force. Yet, the army of Mahdist Sudan was not match to the forces of Gojjam arrayed against them. Cognizant of the strong local support he had in the area, however, the harried Täklä-Häymanot moved into battle in 1888. Nevertheless, although the Gojjam militaristic 'lords' and their army were able to establish a measure of victory over the Mahdists at the bloody battle of the 1887 Mätämma, Gojjam was defeated by Mahdist destructive forces as it made the Gojjam army an easy prey to the Mahdists' force at the battle of [ገጽ:፩] 'Sar Wuha', in Dänbeya, in 1888. On account of the already declined of its power, therefore, the ill-fated Gojjam militaristic 'lords' and were unable to subdue the raiding Muslim Mahdist forces during the second battle, while the former's made a determined effort in the face of difficulty. That the Gojjam forces of Täklä-Häymanot were not match to the forces of Mahdist Sudan arrayed against them. Hence, Täklä-Häymanot lost triumph. Given that, the first battle already sapped Gojjam's power and energy. While the

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid, folio 26 verso 26 recto.

drama of invasion and resistance on that order of battle was unfolding, the Gojjam army successful of the first battle was now missing unsuccessful for the second combat and remained with great human losses.⁵⁸⁰

Consequently, Gojjam was expecting the emperor, Yohannis, to grant land as rewarding important property rights such as *zämach/zämächa-märét* by way of compensation as for services that the army rendered, Yohannis never subsidized them accordingly. Instead, in 1889, when they were demanding to receive land equal to the cost of suffering heavy losses and replacing damaged property after that particular battle for damage incurred, they observed to their village, which was seriously devastated to lose its influence by Yohannis' army under the pretext of Gojjam's unconcerned for losing the second battle at Sar Wuha. Hence, the province could not soon recover completely from the shocks and devastation wrought by the emperor's army. Owing to this destructive measure, his disagreement with the local population developed into open hostility and the name 'Därbush over Gojjam' came to refer to Yohannis, as articulated to express the plight of the local population. It was Yohannis' practices to turn out the locality after Därbush (Mahdists) stayed over the region. Hence, in due course the amicable relations between Yohannis and Täklä-Häymanot gave way to acrimonious relationship. That is to say, Yohannis' relations with Täklä-Häymanot soured and he soon fell out of favor.⁵⁸¹

Nevertheless, the Mahdists' victorious soldiers inflicted heavy damage on the soldiers of Gojjam. The destructive Mahdist forces did not even spare Emperor Yohannis himself from

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

killing and beheading. As the record in the area testifies, while the drama of battle and resistance against the Mahdist forces was unfolding, on his way to a final show down with the enemy forces over the frontier, in 1889, Yohannis had been actually observed what had remained dead with any consequences on the battle of Sar Wuha over a predominantly Gojjam soldiers. In that case, Yohannis expressed his regret to the reasons for the actual cost of the battle was much higher than the expected outcome as indicated above under the pretext of Gojjam's unconcerned for losing at Sar Wuha. That the battle of Saw Wuha had left a terrible legacy of dearly departed soldiers to Gojjam could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, it seems warranted to infer that since Täklä-Häymanot was governor of Gojjam province, in the eyes of Yohannis, he poses great threat at all to Mahdist forces at that big moment. After that campaign, however, the harmonious relationship between Täklä-Häymanot and Yohannis was already soured in consequence of Gojjam's devastation in the hands of the latter's army. This partly explains why Täklä-Häymanot was immune from the emperor's policy of resistance to the raiding Mahdist forces. This eventually leading to the battle of Mätamma, in March 1889, where the Ethiopian army lost triumph and Yohannis himself was killed and beheaded as a punishment by the Mahdists.⁵⁸²

As briefly discussed above, on account of the strategic location of the region, however, Yohannis initially used Gojjam as a launching pad to subdue the raiding Muslim forces of Mahdist Sudan. Yet, the policy of Täklä-Häymanot together with Shewa's *Nigus* Minilek (later Emperor Minilek II) who was also on antagonism mainly for his own political reasons towards Yohannis is subject to divergent interpretations among scholars and the public at

⁵⁸² Ibid.

large. Most of all, the historian Crummey accuse Täklä-Häymanot for his political intrigue against Emperor Yohannis.⁵⁸³ Be that as it may, Gebru stresses that 'whenever that feudal fidelity was breached, the [Gojjam] province suffered the consequences', as the case the 1889 shocks and devastation wrought by Yohannis' army amply demonstrates.⁵⁸⁴ Apart from historians' interpretations, the church record from Däbrä Marqos testifies that Emperor Yohannis was said to have observed the body of lots of humans who have been died after the dramatic defeat of Täklä-Häymanot's army at the battle of Sar Wuha, when he was traveling through the region on his way to the Mätämma incident in March 1889. Eventually Yohannis was saddened about his decision.⁵⁸⁵ Hence, Täklä-Häymanot's policy should be seen against the historical background of Gojjam in order to have a balanced view on the issue. As has already been discussed above, after the dramatic battle of the 1887 Mätämma, the deeply ingrained grievances of Gojjam against Yohannis took responsible for his defeat and lost himself at the battle Mätämma in 1889.

However, not all Gojjam reacted to the missing battle in the same way. The policy of Yohannis obtained the support of many members of the army in providing provision for the emperor in withstanding the pressure from the raiding enemy forces of Mahdist Sudan. However, Täklä-Häymanot the ruler of Gojjam never accepted the reality of the mobilization of Gojjam for the second battle, which took place following the decay of the army at the first battle. In that case, the second battle together with the first battle left a terrible legacy of distress in the memory of the regional armed force and in the psyche of the local population

⁵⁸³ Crummey, *Land and Society*, pp. 208, 370.

⁵⁸⁴ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 163.

⁵⁸⁵ Ya-Gojjam Kebrä Nägäst, folio 94 verso 94 recto.

It has been established that true patriots would be willing to do anything for their land, as the case of Gojjam army amply demonstrates for their military land *zämächa* or *zämach märét* fought at Imbabo and the subsequent years. Hence, under the existing condition on the military experience of Gojjam, most of the conclusions that Afäwärq has arrived at are hardly acceptable. He took no cautious and pragmatic approaches in the military experience of Gojjam, depending on the reality on the ground and the level of threat that the local army posed to its enemy forces and above all to the Shewan army at Imbabo. In fact, Imbabo was a resistance place for the Gojjam army chose force to impose its failure on the enemy forces to stop pressures from total shocks and damages wrought by the Shewan forces when the former intensely defied the latter with full of energy and courage.⁵⁹² This partly explains why Afäwärq was to ignore the whole effort of Gojjam to succeed in withstanding the pressure from the Shewan army. As also pointed out earlier, the fact that the Gojjam army gave a memorable performance at the 1920/1 Ethiopian military procession that could not easily be removed from the psyche of its visitors addressed the army with a fair and honest critique, as an authoritative critique. In that case, the Gojjam soldiers received payment by way of salary for their heroic actions at that big moment is beyond doubt. Hence, Gojjam was nothing more than the story with dogged perseverance is hardly acceptable, while its armed force primarily used mediation as a way of reducing pressure as prominence of evidence on the case of [Dega] Damot district amply demonstrates, in its historic verse indicated earlier.

Thus, we should not exaggerate the late nineteenth century success of Shewa and the Mahdist Sudan at the two successive battles over Gojjam. Gojjam had a well-organized army with

⁵⁹² Ibid.

long experience, while its army assumed violent reprisal in the course and progress of its frontier enemy attacks, as indicative of the above evidence. For some of the prominent informants I talked to this condition is a lived experience.⁵⁹³ In any case, one of the constant elements in the military history of Gojjam is the recognition and consideration of its courageous deeds at various times in the past, not to mention a prestigious royal award fixed by imperial authorities in the 1920/1 Ethiopian military parade held in Dässé (Wello). On that occasion, the Gojjam army was especially comparable to the only notorious Shewan army *näftännä* given that the Gojjam army constantly challenged the latter's army for their influence in the area is beyond doubt. This seems warranted to infer that, Gojjam continued to exert considerable influence, and become a focus of much interest among its rivals of the nearby districts for long. As has already been discussed at some length in the earlier pages, while endorsing the need to know some inherent problems in the strategy of the army, often by way of honest mistake of the self, the whole event not allowed Gojjam's failure by reason of indifference with enemy forces sometimes in the past. That Gojjam gradually acquired effective military organization and leadership experience is beyond doubt. Hence, Gojjam's action should be placed in this historical context to fully understand and noticed their resistance for long and the historical drama derived from it not to mention the practical military experience of Gojjam's peasant uprising during the twentieth century prior to the end of the imperial era.

In spite of that, under favorable a circumstance with such an eminent army, *Ras* Haylu II and his predecessor *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot seems easily grew into a serious rival of the frontier

⁵⁹³ Interviews with *Emahoy* Hebritu Abäbayähu Dästa, *Abba* Gäbrä-Sellasé, and *Märiyéta* Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

'lords', most actively in the course of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as indicated above. Most of all, Haylu's predecessors who acquired power through this army exercised their full authority in the 'lordship' of Gojjam. For all practical purposes, the local ruling family maintained a virtually independent local autonomy with this army holding *yä-zämächa-märét* in lieu of salary and continued to show the traditional signs of loyalty to the imperial Ethiopian government. Thus, local rulers obtained full royal confirmation until the removal of Haylu II from office in 1932, as indicated earlier. However, Gojjam was still safe and sound already inhabited by an invincible army not to mention its recurring and continued pressure over the government of Haile Sellassie in the course of the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era, as discussed above and shall be discussed further below.

For the most part, during the twentieth century prior to the end of the imperial era, Gojjam acquired with a prestigious supply and procurement of logistics that could even grow its army further in prestige. Primarily and most importantly, the government was supplying simple weapons and ammunitions in commercial transaction, including in the local market at the administrative centre, Däbrä Marqos. It is well-remembered event by informants, as customers of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) without any problem.⁵⁹⁴ Besides obtaining of military supplies by the legal system of the government, the locality was and still is procuring weapons and ammunitions from forces hostile to the Ethiopian state, not to mention the neighboring Sudan,⁵⁹⁵ as well as from the province of Wello through Boräna-Sayent district.

⁵⁹⁴ *Interviews with Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Abba Ejjegü Seménäh Wärqnääh, Ato Bälaynääh Akalu Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, Märiqéttä Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu, and Ato Dämesé Täbbäjä Dästa.*

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid*; History of Gojjam from *Ras Haylu I to Ras Haylu II*, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 127 recto.

the uprisings in other parts of modern Ethiopia, oath by singing to war chants that made to strengthen bonds of faithfulness and usually security along with minimizing the risks of dissension and betrayal on behalf of them under the imperial era.⁵⁹⁸ It was more fully applied in the patriotic struggle against the Italian Occupation thirteen years before so was in the uprisings in the postwar period conspicuously in 1944, 1950/1, 1968 and after that impeded the government's control over the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*.⁵⁹⁹

Hence, the postwar peasant *militia* uprisings backed by the ill-treated and disappointed elites were able to form a cohesive organization, that is beside to the condition that the people naturally structured themselves, recurring and sustained the uprising against the imperial regime. In that case, leadership was typically hierarchical with bottom up structure such as *yä-gobäz-aläqa* (chief of the brave), *ya-wänz-aläqa* (chief of the river), *ya-abbat-dañña* (judge of the father) and *säbsabé-abal* (summoners).⁶⁰⁰ As it was expected, fear of *qäläd* and ancestral *rist* tenure system served as the unifying forces of the uprising. Especially fear of *qäläd* that situated at the top of the leadership with the earlier mentioned historic slogan 'Die for your *rist*' that is used especially to rallied people to a cause, against the postwar Haile Sellassie's government was a safe substitute for the office of *yagär-azmach* (country war leader) in the locality. Since they pragmatically knew what was going on elsewhere in the country, such as Bale *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* by the imperial regime, local population were afraid that the *qäläd* system by way of land measurement plan would result in land alienation as well as unfair rise for tax they had to pay for the government. To reject the reform package was,

⁵⁹⁸ History of Gojjam from *Ras Haylu I* to *Ras Haylu II*, MS Däbrä Marqos, folio 127 recto; and Interviews with Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Ato Bälaynäh Akalu Dästa, Emahoy Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa, Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé, and Märigétta Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid; and Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, p. 382.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

therefore, to defend the authenticity of *rist* through intense resistance. Hence, there had been tremendous insecurity of property and chaos in Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam for the reform plans of the government.⁶⁰¹ That the recurring opposition in fear of land alienation continued for peasants' solidarity good enough to guarantee universal support for the resistance perhaps by way of country-war-leader generally at the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* level.

Hence, the army of Gojjam was innately and strongly effective in organization and leadership experience, as observed in the struggle against the Italian Occupation and in the immediate post-war period. As pointed out earlier, *Lej Bälay Zälläqä* was one of the most charismatic figures in his leadership experience. The record in Käbbädä's memoir testify that while it was later approved by the Emperor himself Bälay gave military and administrative ranks to his *militia* followers, even higher than his own position,⁶⁰² an aspect of his effective leadership experience in the military organization of the area. In that instance, patriots from the surrounding provinces, including Tigray chose Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam for their struggle against the Italian forces. For some of the informants I talked to this issue is a well remembered event.⁶⁰³ Based on oral data and archival sources in the area, at present it is one of the most widely read book of Ethiopia testifies, cognizant of the strong local support he had and the success of his soldiers from the invasion of Italy in 1935, Bälay was joined by patriots of other areas, that is beside to Tigray.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰¹ Ibid; and Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 166-167.

⁶⁰² Käbbädä, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha*, pp. 265, 294-295.

⁶⁰³ Interviews with Abba Antänäh Moññ-Hodé, Ato Bälaynäh Akalu Dästa, Ato Gétachäw Mammo, Abba Ejjegü Seménäh Wärqnäh, and Abba Gäbrä-Sellasé.

⁶⁰⁴ Muhäbaw Gädef, *Ya-Ethiopia Däm Mälash Yaltänägeru Ya-Abba Koster Bälay Zälläqä Ewunätañña Tarik 1902-1937 Eth. Cal* (lit. *Avenger of Ethiopia's Bloodshed the Untold Story of Abba Koster Bälay Zälläqä 1909-1944*) (Addis Ababa, n.p., 2018/April 2010 Eth. Cal), p.8.

In striking contrast to his counterparts, patriots from the districts of Gojjam and the neighboring provinces of Wello, Shewa, and other territories of the region—inspired by a wise, skillful, and respected military leadership experience of Bälay were constant companions in the patriotic struggle of the region against Italians. He was successful to mobilize more than 54, 000 band of soldiers in the years between 1935 and 1941. It is interesting to note that while the work is not as comprehensive as the title implies *Ya-Ethiopia Däm Mälash*, lit. *Avenger of Ethiopia's Bloodshed* (2018) the author adds that such a huge armed force with his warhorse *Abba Koster* (firm in courage) was the confidence of Bälay in his patriotic struggle against the Italian army using the area, especially Bichena, the place where he was born as his power base. Hence, the energetic Bälay won his power in that way and his courageous supporters from the region were effectively organized by Belay and his generals such as Ayalew Mäshäsha; thereby harassed the enemy force in the area.⁶⁰⁵

That significant number of patriots from different territories of northern Ethiopia were voluntarily joined Bälay's armed force during the resistance against the Italian Occupation. Hence, Bälay was able to attract and influence others with great honor and respect he acquired in the region. After all, though not operated for all office, Bälay was primarily chosen for his leadership position, eversince the occupation period, by the will of patriots themselves. To be precise, he was elected from the list of individual patriots who even acquired increasingly effective leadership experience with their courageous deeds at an organized *shāngo* (meeting) held somewhere safe in the spectacular gorge of Abay (Blue Nile) river, in the eastern edges of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Informants and the celebrated

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, pp.8, 21, 25, 210.

Ethiopian novelist Sebhat Gäbrä Sellassé's record who talk to members of the civil and military staff of Belay's army (as published in 2018) agree that Bälay was elected to lead the patriotic resistance against the Italians from among the local patriots in conformity with his great leadership experience and discipline.⁶⁰⁶

This seems warranted to infer that, for the most part, leaders were democratically elected, the fact of being Bälay was elected to that position by the will of patriots, outside the spirit of aggressiveness and cruelty posture. Hence, Bälay and his many subordinate peasant *militia* defeated the crowds of Italian soldiers at several dramatic battlefields, as eminent patriots, for correcting the invading forces of the Italian *fascist* government. Primarily and most importantly, Bälay and his courageous soldiers defeated the Italians and captured their flag at the battle of Däbrä Wärq, in Bichena, in 1938/9.⁶⁰⁷ He was among those effective and well-equipped resistance and uprising leaders who handled the organization and leadership of the local armed force—that 'turned him into a hero of legendary proportions'⁶⁰⁸ in the region or generally in the country, while hanging him by the order of the Emperor subsequent to the 1944 peasant's uprising in the area, as indicated earlier. In fact, even presently Bälay for many people is a prime example of quite an Ethiopian popular bravery and courage, as news of his heroic deeds spread far and wide.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid; Sebhat Gäbrä Sellassé, 'Bälay Zälaqa' (in Amharic) *Enaho Jägena* (lit. *Recognizing Great Patriots*) (Tenth Edition) (Addis Ababa, Hassab Publishers, 2010 (Eth. Cal)/2018), pp. 35, 37.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid; and EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ፲፯/አሰ/0068, File ፩/፵፯ 164/68, Letter ፳22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal).

⁶⁰⁸ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 167.

More precisely, and most importantly, Bälay's undoubtedly deed his entire fortune to the common good that Gojjam had experienced from time to time and through that promoted courageous deeds in the Ethiopian context. Having just acquired Bälay's charismatic leadership experience—most of all after he accused of and hanged by the Emperor—the local population agreed with alacrity to drive the government's force to the locality, at the twilight of the imperial era. Bälay is therefore still alive in the memory of the people of Ethiopia and in the psyche of the local population of Gojjam. Hence, the fame and prestige of Bälay sustained strong popular opposition to the imperial government, along with its new reform plans, in the course of 1944 is beyond doubt. Eventually, Gojjam did not represent a fresh and strange resistance field during 1944 and after; in its place, the 1944 uprising was an integral part of the subsequent uprisings in the area, pending for the revolution. In that, formerly subordinates of Bälay his courageous peasant *militia* backed by the already ill-treated and disappointed elites Abbärä, Terfé, Bamlaku, Seménäh and other minor notables in different parts of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* had been intensely resisted the government forces by taking advantage of the region's simply recurring and continued uprisings.⁶⁰⁹ Therefore, the people's action should be placed in this historical context to fully understand the resistance and the historical drama derived from it.

On the whole, the fame and prestige of the decisive and experienced uprising leaders who handled and mobilized their numerous, well-equipped and courageous peasant's armed force together with the growing apprehension of privatization of land against ancestral descent,

⁶⁰⁹ EGAZHCA Archives, Folder ፲፯/አሰ/0068, File ፩/፵፯ 164/68, Letter ፳22/22, A Chronological Record of Significant Events as Affecting Gojjam Often including an Explanation of Land Tenure and the Socioeconomic Relations that Derived from it, c.1975/6 (1969 Eth. Cal); and An interview with Märīgétta Libanos Yätämänn Kokäbu.

were increasingly enough to assured universal support for the resistance. That these conditions remained as the organizing and mobilizing force of the resistance, by means of the traditional historic campaign slogan 'Die for your *rist*' used especially to rallied people to a cause, against the postwar Haile Sellassie's government. The army with courageous and experienced leaders proved unyielding to both the violent reprisal and conciliatory approaches of the government. It is apparent that Gojjam with peasant *militia* was permanent in organizational structure and leadership, with strong commitment and effectiveness. Hence, the people's sympathy and sensitivity to unity was constantly formed in twentieth century Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) uprising, especially radical about that insight in the immediate post-liberation period. That is to say, while it was dynamic and constantly changing, effective military organization and leadership observed in twentieth century Gojjam was quite expected as a hugely popular bravery and courage that involves a continuing shed of fearless characters in a series of events for centuries. Thus, Gojjam principally with its invincible peasant *militia* had not yet succumbed to any pressure, not to mention the violent reprisal of the imperial government.

In that case, in a similar character, cause and impact, acquired for centuries, the widespread discontent and resistance in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam persisted to the 1960s well into the end of the imperial era. That peasants' dissatisfaction with the government reform measures and their attempt to hinder the latter's full implementation were observed as part of the general manifestation of the deep-rooted crisis in the area. The people proved unyielding to the land measurement plans that would result greater insecurity for the development of tenancy and tenancy relations in the area observed in southern parts of

Ethiopia especially on the Bale Oromo as discussed thoroughly in chapter above. Because of this realistic observation and high expectation of the privatization processes over the people's actual character of ancestral descent—that guaranteed to manage subsistence—there had been tremendous insecurity of property and chaos in Gojjam *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* at large, as discussed throughout this chapter. Thus, it is conceivable that social injustice that it bred chaos and disorder meant, vaguely, in social terms, for correcting the government's policy to property rights, in land, disregarding the condition of southern Ethiopian peasants especially in Bale *Ṭäqlay-Gezat*. That Gojjam with invincible peasant *militia* proved unyielding to the pressure from the imperial government.

Ultimately, these social and economic frictions between the two parties eventually manifested itself in a political upheaval that the imperial government succumbed to the pressure from peasant *militia* as the resistance challenged its legitimacy as a natural extension of the people' combatant culture for so long even if government authorities always tended to 'silence' the uprising with violent reprisal. Cognizant of this, one could observe how the Gojjam army was well organized and mobilized, as an eminent armed force at different levels, seeing that acrimonious relationships between the local population and the central government was the constant features of the area all the way through the post-liberation period. Given that, the occasion of the uprising was highly organized and very intense that played a significant role in the receding of the imperial government. However, we should not exaggerate the success of the peasants uprising in post liberation Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam. As discussed throughout this chapter above, while most parts of the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat* succeeded in withstanding the government pressure, 'parts of Metekel

refrained from anti-government activities throughout the crisis'.⁶¹⁰ The fact that *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* could not be effectively silenced by the regime's distractive forces is beyond doubt. The people obviously never allowed the full implementation of the imperial reform plans, for the package's batten on the pre-existing 'communal' property holdings of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, while it was quite a significant improvement carried out by the government. However, the postwar reform package was unpopular in Däbrä Marqos and all at once in Gojjam, even if the principle of agricultural land survey and registration of property spelled out primarily by the government was quite flexible and accommodative, as discussed briefly in the final paragraphs of chapter one.

Hence, the government hardly suppressed all the uprisings, since conditions are not always the same as observed especially in the course of the 1960s well into the end of the imperial era. In that, the character of reaction and the nature of relation between the government and the peasant population witnessed significant changes in the area, as discussed above. The local population achieved and sustained sufficient internal cohesion in withstanding the pressure from the government. The area witnessed such organizational unity involved or committed, as the government responded with the usual alacrity of pressure upon the uprising. That Gojjam with invincible peasant *militia* proved unyielding to the violent reprisal of the government at various times during the post-liberation period is undeniable fact, not to mention the advantage of tax exemption obtained from the government at several times, as discussed on several occasions in this chapter and previous one. Thus, closely corresponding to other popular uprisings of the country such as Tegray and Bale, the Gojjam

⁶¹⁰ see also Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 177.

uprising sapped the energies of the government. Cognizant of this, here it is prudent to deal with the nature of recurring and continued peasant's uprising against the new reform measures of the government and the subsequent violent reprisal of the latter in different parts of the country, more precisely in Tegray and Gojjam for its close-fitting features with the issue, as the historian Teshale Tibebu underlines. Teshale emphasizes that 'if Tegray was bombed by Haile Sellassie, so was Gojjam' all the way through the post liberation period. It was due to this objective Teshale argued that the 'ruling class could hardly be defined in ethnic terms' sometimes in the past. The Ethiopian state has been a dictatorial machine that crushes anyone that dares to challenge it with force.⁶¹¹

In any case, intense peasant's uprising in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* eventually sapped the energies of the government that could hardly be denied. Owing to this and other developments, Markakis who directly observed how the impending events expected to be writes that eventually the occasions of the Gojjam peasants' uprising 'demonstrates the limited capacity of the government that to impede the irreversible process of centralization of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* administration and its accompanying change of social configuration through coercive means.⁶¹² Likewise, Bahru who is one of the specialists on the modern history of Ethiopia writes that, while the government resorted to extreme measures, Gojjam 'had successfully resisted the pressures from the political centre' at the twilight of the imperial era.⁶¹³ In this regard, Häddés who writes a classic novel of imperial Ethiopian empire based on what is actually possible to the social history of twentieth century

⁶¹¹ Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974* (Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1995), p. 179; in a similar breath to this case see also Peter Schwab, 'Rebellion in Gojjam Province, Ethiopia' *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1970), p. 256.

⁶¹² Markakis, *Ethiopia Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, p. 386.

⁶¹³ Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 216.

Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) pointed out the popular perception [ወዘተ ፡ ሃገራዊ ልምድ ለሕዝብ ፡ ሃገራዊ] 'people hate for oppressive ruler arising out of God ties'.⁶¹⁴

In short, what the people really disliked was the policy of Emperor Haile Sellassie being extreme of his reprisals. This extreme reprisal was partly a result of the failure of his government to convince the inhabitants that the reform plans could have positive aspects. The imperial government took the usual top down approach without consulting and convincing the people. Subsequently, the local people saw it as an imposition. This explains why they resisted it. Thus, the chaos and disputes borne out from the government's reform plans that created havoc and instability continued in its vitality up to the end of the regime in 1974. Yet, the people of Gojjam seemed to have got fleeting peace from the instability raised by frequent administrative changes at several times, in the period under stated. Nevertheless, the government pressure to reform, as issued concerning land, a propensity to unite all segments of the society at the *Ṭäqlay-Gezat's* level. Hence, the government steadily lost its power base the majority peasants forever from Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) at the twilight of the imperial era. Especially, when its reform plan was expected to be finalized commencing from 1967 Proclamation, as discussed thoroughly in this chapter and on several occasions in chapters above.

Thus, though it seems silenced with coercive means, the uprising proceeded in withstanding the government pressure, despite the fact that changes in the character of reaction and the nature of relation between the government and the peasantry at various times, in the course of

⁶¹⁴ Häddés, *Feqer Iskä Mäqaber*, p. 266.

the first half of the twentieth century well into the end of the imperial era. The government usually succumbed to the gains and safety of the local population. For the most part, despite the administrative reshufflings, irreversible process of centralization of the administration and the accompanying change of governors, the local population succeeded in withstanding the pressure from the government. The Shewan domination in Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam coincided with recurring popular uprisings, maladministration, and opposition to the full implementation of the reform plans in the area. The new rulers and their subordinates all the time treated the local population with superiority and ruled with heavy hand.

Hence, in the course and progress of the imperial administration, for the most part, between 1941 and 1974, the social condition of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* steadily deteriorated that drive the majority peasants into intense resistance. Peasants in the *Awrajja* and other parts of the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* never accepted the new reform plans of the government. Although varied in intensity from *awrajja* to *awrajja*, the recurring and continued resistance turned into a more violent reaction as a popular movement, when the government gradually but steadily resorted to pressure in the *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, all the way through the post-liberation period, as discussed in this chapter. Hence, though partly exploited by the local notables the uprising in Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam impeded the full implementation of the reform package, within the period under stated.

This points to the important conclusion that Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos represents one of the provinces that could not effectively be silenced by the government pressure, for the latter owed strong military organization and leadership experience for long, most actively

in the course and progress of the government reform plans in the area. Gojjam gained a lot of experience at a considerable distance in time, far from the immediate post liberation period is undeniable fact. In their remarkable works, covering many regions of the Ethiopian state, some historians described the postwar peasant revolts, especially in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in its generic sense as ineffective and easily suppressed while acknowledges its multiple reactions to the new reform measures. Although acknowledging peasants resistance in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) as one of peasant revolts masks its different contexts, I extended this acknowledgment for it eminently resumes the recognition suggested by multiple sources to Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). It means that the imperial government succumbed to the pressure from the peasant revolts for anyone can understand it. The fact that Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) succeeded in withstanding the pressure from the government is beyond doubt. Cognizant of this, it is prudent to defy the conventional historical record on the Gojjam peasant revolts that have been putting pressures on the government by way of a revisionist critique investigation, contrary to the old historiography allows. It is only fitting that the Gojjam social reality be perceived on one occasion for the above discovery.

The findings and discovery that I showed towards the local social reality provides possible justification for the often fanatical image that some scholars have towards the military history of the region under consideration. Once members of the local clerical staff's pragmatism went to the extent of uncompromising the existing distorted records on the military experience of Gojjam, for their unrealistic writing set for themselves as the case of Imbabo amply demonstrates, discussed in close-fitting features with the issue in this chapter. Besides the local records, the remarkable works of professionals such as Donald Crummey and

Schwab significantly strengthened the position of local clerical staffs' observation on the peasant uprising of Gojjam including Däbrä Marqos. This is by pragmatically suggesting that unlike the predisposition of some scholars mentioned earlier, the condition of uprising in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) or generally northern and southern regions of the Ethiopian state share many similarities that sapped the energies of the imperial government. Besides the discovery and findings discussed in this chapter, both scholars in a similar breath reinforce this position, as narrated below.

Firstly, in the context of the northern Ethiopia at large: the historian Crummey writes that the imperial government was shaken by such massive public protests and, in September 1974, militant revolutionaries deposed the Emperor himself.⁶¹⁵ Secondly, and most importantly, in the context of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in particular, Schwab with careful utilization of multiple sources and as direct observer of the rebellion writes that the government's violent reaction with general hostility towards the local population only served to widen the level of violent decisions and actions of the peasants in the area. As a result, Schwab missed that 'Goj[j]am [encompassing Däbrä Marqos] defeated the Emperor [all the way through the imperial era]'. Since large sections of the local population were organized under the 'communal' *rist* land tenure, the imperial government always had the troubles of collecting taxes from the local population. That only the name of *Aqññi-abbat* or *wanna-abbat*, often-putative ancestor, was entered on the tax record, instead of the actual owners, while the government projected for abolishing the traditional property structure of the locality. In consequence, there was no uniform system of taxation among the taxpayers of the locality; in

⁶¹⁵ Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Addis Ababa, AAUP, 2000), p. 244.

its place, the local population resented it as strange and unacceptable that had a strong bearing on impeding the full execution of the government reform plans in the area. So much so that, the reform policy of Haile Sellassie had left a contentious legacy and produced equivocal outcome. Giving allowance to the violent means he employed to fulfill his objective, on the negative side the unyielding extreme measures of his administration had indirectly made an easy prey for the recurring and continued peasant uprising. Finally, imperial rule, in Ethiopia, ended in 1974.⁶¹⁶

It is clear that the new imperial reform policy imposed upon the local population was in contradiction to the long-standing tenure system of the country something borrowed model batten down the custom especially in the northern parts of the region, of which Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was one. Therefore, custom was invented and contested, for which property was essentially a social process. Hence, the reform measures without regard to the custom of the society that could be trusted to its fair raised by way of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), is something that confirmed and highly maintained the established imagination of postmodernists while defied the Liberal records describing twentieth century African property system at large, discussed on several occasions in chapter two and three above. That custom was a social process for social and power relations arising out of it in modern or twentieth century Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos. Hence, postmodernists found that the argument of Liberal paradigm that say that sustained and expedited development would almost naturally follow from individual holding and free market economies to be fundamentally incorrect. Communal holding is not inherently inimical to sustained economic development in Africa,

⁶¹⁶ Schwab, 'Rebellion in Gojjam Province', pp. 249-250, 254-256.

not to mention Ethiopia by way of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Nor is the argument that modern property rights in capitalist economies are more complete and exclusively held than traditional communal holding acceptable in its entirety, as fairly discussed in close-fitting features in the last two chapters above.

In appreciation to the high importance that it would come to assume in the period with which this research is specifically concerned, Mesfin Weldemariam a celebrated geographer and political analyst of the region provides a useful model and framework that could be used to sustain and expedite development in Ethiopia with broadly similar historical trajectory to the post-modernists outlooks. *Enzäč!-Emboč* (2017) is empirically grounded theoretical and analytical work that seeks to figure out the dynamics of Ethiopian political economy in a very imaginative way. Mesfin states that consecutive Ethiopian governments' complete rejection or a general disfavor of the customary law, as if it could not partly be trusted to its fair, in the reform plans of the country became one of the hindrance for development practices ever since the imperial era. Thus, the applicability of the custom of the society to present Ethiopian development needs to be the issue of great concern among the government authorities. Nevertheless, Mesfin proposed to take cautious and pragmatic approaches in making government's actions, depending on the reality on the ground and the level of threat that the customary law may pose to its decision and above all to understand fully its alternative development policy that would be ever more fruitful. On that occasion, Mesfin's pragmatism went to the extent of compromising the Western (European) liberal line he set for sustained and expedited development by foregrounding the neglected and undervalued

customary dealings as the case of the country's recent history amply demonstrates in its complexity.⁶¹⁷

As discussed on several occasions in chapter two and three, the effect of the postwar practice of land market or commercialization of property by way of individualization had not detached land claims from the social and cultural context in which they were made, as one of the reasons for peasants uprising in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). However, the intensity of peasants uprising reached a peak in the late 1968 and declined the imperial government in subsequent years, as discussed in this chapter. As a whole under present level of historical knowledge on Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), most of the imaginations that scholars of the Marxist affiliations have arrived at against the Liberal persuasion envisioned in the field of Ethiopian land studies during the imperial era is fundamentally correct. Among other things, scholars of the Liberal persuasion imagined the imperial reform measures merely as a clash between 'modernization' the Emperor or the government's attempt to transform the tax policy of the country and 'tradition' peasants' opposition towards that changes is fundamentally incorrect at least in looking at the condition of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in that particular period. The intensification of the development of social inequality in consequences of the imperial reform plans served as a breeding ground for peasant uprisings. To be precise, the government attempt to reform property created allowance for dispute, seeing that the people constrained to it were disappointed that tremendously intensified the development and apprehension of social inequality. Hence, while scholars of the Marxists persuasion succeeded to perceive

⁶¹⁷ Mesfin Weldemariam, *Enzäč!-Emboč! Yä-Ethiopia Guzo* (in Amharic) (lit. *Ethiopia has now Fallen Down on a General Development Activities*) (Addis Ababa, n.p, 2010 Eth. Cal., 2017) pp. 9, 60-62, 136-139, 187, 249-243.

these stuffing, scholars of the Liberalist association masks the political and social contents of the opposition or uprising in different parts of the country, not to mention Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the period under study.

In any case, leaving aside some significant changes, no effective reform plans were carried out in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), in its place bred social contradiction and chaos in the area, as discussed in this chapter. In fact, the nineteenth century Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) was changed from quite early on, going as far back as the turn of twentieth century. In the fullness of time, the imperial government no more continued to exist in the country's political system and the name 'Provisional Military Administrative Council' later the 'National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia' came to replace as a new administrative designation of the country. That in 1974 the recurring and continued peasant revolts proceeded to coincide with the country's revolution and ended seven hundred years of the Solomonic rule with the adopted slogan 'Land to the Tiller'. Dealing with this point, in his political memoire (2013/4) FeqräSellasé Wägdäräs one of the militant revolutionaries at that big moment describes that by declaring Christians and Muslims as equal, by separating state and church, by expropriating land from the 'landlords' and making available to the *ṭisāññas*, were indeed accomplished as a [social] revolution in 1974 and the subsequent periods.⁶¹⁸

In conclusion, looking back to the twentieth century from our own time, one can say that far from being static, the reaction of the local people to reform measures, accompanied by the

⁶¹⁸ FeqräSellasé Wägdäräs, *Eñña-na Abyotu* (in Amharic) (lit. *The Ethiopian Revolution and Our Role in it*) (Addis Ababa, Šähay Printing Press, 2013/4 or 2006 Eth. Cal), pp. 211-220; see also the standard works of Crummey, *Land and Society*, pp. 244-245, 247; and Teshale, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 168.

administrative reshufflings of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* and all at once in Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* were dynamic and constantly changing. The local population steadily shifted from passive protest to active resistance. It is also clear that the recurring and continued uprising, radically maintained and continued during the post-liberation period. This is not, however, equivalent to saying that the local/internal dynamics within Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) were not important in provoking reaction in that area. The disappointed and long-ill-treated local sociopolitical elites had great influence on recurring and continued uprisings keen in attention to their own interest sometimes to the point of being unethical to common goods and regional authorities' inept and awkward implementation of the reform plans prompted intense reactions in the area. It is, therefore, the interplay of both internal and external factors that accounted for the rapid changes in the reaction and administrative system of Gojjam encompassing Däbrä Marqos during the period under study. That the imperial government expedited the administrative centralization of the locality meant to maximize its cash tax revenue could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, one could argue that the recurring and continued popular uprising against the government's new reform plans could not foster better communication between the local population and the government, for the full implementation of reform, in most parts of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) until the revolution is beyond doubt. In view of that, the next chapter seeks to conclude our understanding of rural modern Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in its complexity.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In this study, I would like to forward a constructive criticism to those scholars who usually see the Ethiopian history by way of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) through the feudal lens. According to my findings, earlier Ethiopian societies were even remotely close to the medieval European experience so as to justify the use of the term feudal as a useful descriptor of pre-colonial African reality. I stress that the major point of similarity between pre-colonial African societies and medieval Europe lies so much in the sphere of 'productive relationship. That possible ties between the local social reality and exploitative forms of 'productive relationship' have been as old as the efflorescence of Christianity, followed by the creation of the earliest known Ethiopian church, as either the centre of faith or controversy. Strange looking land as an important social boundary began to appear in the Christian Bible supported by valuable other sources including authoritative church doctrines bearing a general resemblance to the former original one as for local custom largely bearing such an impression as early as the prehistoric periods. However, scholars may possibly reject it as deviation from accepted views of the scientific establishment, while it has been established that the common practices of Judaism is built on a deeply flawed foundation of non-Jew societies, not to mention Ethiopian societies by way of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) which could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, I stress that the social relations to land, as issues concerning feudalism, did have greater connection to unite all segments of the society during the medieval period and after.

Primarily, I have provided some latest summary of the old works on the subject feudalism. I figured out that the landholding systems of Ethiopia, by way of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), in pre-modern and modern periods focused on the occasion of exploitative form of 'lord'-*ṭisäñña* relationship and how the two most important social groups were related to the tenure system. Land is more than a factor of production. People continually tended to acquire land so as to meet different ends. Among other things, land ownership served as an important marker of social boundary and social identity. Equally important land is used as a means to build one's following and to exercise influence over people. I also underscore the fact that in Ethiopian agricultural societies property right tended to be divided and dependent on individual claims to land on broader social entities.

In this way, documentary evidence to images, in Christian art, depicting 'lord'-*ṭisäñña* relationship over the land system of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) has long been associated with exploitative form 'productive relationship'. This reveals an important point of conclusion that Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam represents one of the oldest provinces where feudal forms of 'productive relationship' which formed the predominant forms of tenure in Ethiopia in the past evolved first. Cognizant of this, I stress on the property system of pre-colonial African history as feudal with gain and safety, contrary to what the old agrarian historiography allows. The many points of similarities between pre-colonial African societies by way of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam or Ethiopia and pre-modern Europe lies so much in the sphere of 'productive relationship'. I do mean obviously that, the term 'feudal' could be used as a useful descriptor of the Ethiopian social reality that virtually symbolizes pre-colonial

African history at least in showing the existence of exploitative form of 'productive relationship' from within.

I explained the socioeconomic consequence of the *ṭisāñña* could hardly witness absolute right on the land that he tilled in modern Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) as a pre-colonial African reality. A meticulous investigation and interpretation of trustworthy sources covering the whole gamut of medieval and modern periods, that emperors and powerful 'lords' of Ethiopia issued decrees at various times by way of improving the property system of the empire to land. However, unlike the old times, I realized that the process of the establishment of exploitative social relationship between peasants and the social elites, as 'lords', in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) intensified during the first half of the twentieth century and fully blossomed during the imperial era, which is the time framework of my study. The later political developments further complicated the tenure system and contributed to the birth of a complex system of social stratification in Gojjam at large. Primarily, the imperial government succeeded in changing the taxation system from kind to cash in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). In the course and progress of that change, however, the post-Italian regime witnessed a highly significant break in the tenure system of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in 1941.

That break reveals only by favoring the few and privileged section of the society with institutionalized support with an extreme form of socioeconomic structures irrespective of rationalization of land could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, my contention is that the forms of social and political domination that existed in the post liberation Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjä* or generally Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat* is markedly different as a formative stage in the development

of 'feudal' relations of production and appropriation. Although the reform plan of the government noted for swelling up the prevalence of *česäññanät* or *ṭisäññanät* in the post liberation period, in actual fact, there were also other causative factors to the growth of *česäññanät*, not to mention socioeconomic and natural issues in the area. As has already been discussed thoroughly in the second section of chapter three, political and other intertwined factors that gradually but steadily led to the rise of the *ṭisäñña* population that deeply influenced the social history of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). This partly explains the violent peasants protest in many parts of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) in the period under discussion.

Under this consideration, I have organized my thesis and its analysis around these issues, as clearly elaborated in the chapters discussed. The prominent role played by the people's intense reaction reinforces my assertion. As the overall thesis of my study, therefore, I proved that despite significant changes, the imperial reform measures could not bring what it entails on the ground. I also isolate the myriad of other factors that induced peasants to revolt through intense resistance and other means. Primarily, after several centuries in relative autonomy that the province of Gojjam, encompassing Däbrä Marqos was dramatically reorganized into the limelight of the imperial government in the shaping of the modern state of Ethiopia during the twentieth century. It was along this development that the special arrangements of promotion for changes and improving the system of land tenure and taxation was expedited in the area. The imperial arrangement dating from the turn of the twentieth century (c.1901) to its demise in 1974 brought many changes in the field of land tenure and rural organization in Däbrä Marqos and in the whole of Gojjam. Certain core elements that constitute the earlier landholding system remained the same and survived into that period.

Indeed, the break in the rules of the traditional property dealings that have existed for long was swiftly made during the post-liberation period, while it maintained and expedited the conspicuous solidity of socioeconomic configuration, with social inequality in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* or generally Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*. Hence, in the course and progress of the reform plans, especially between 1941 and 1974, the social condition of the peasants of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) steadily deteriorated. The reform measures brought misery to many of the rural population.

In any case, it is quite clear that the government had no great concern for the protection of the rural population—even the people could not protect the burdens imposed on them for long—who already leased a steadily deteriorated and long ill-treated life throughout Ethiopia, of which Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) is one. As an inherent problem of the rural population in the area, therefore, peasants resented the imperial reform from being fully implemented. Particularly, the situation was noticeable in the course and development of the system of taxation, in finalizing the reform package in the area. Economic distress, land market, maladministration and violence all served as the background to impede that change, especially in the immediate post liberation period. In that case, I realized that despite the debilitating defeat of the local population fought in some battles with the government's victorious army, the imperial government could not supplant the rebellion of the peasants. In the many instances of the government's violent reprisal of the peasants' revolt speak to the intensity of the resistance in big portion of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay-Gezat*, including Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*. Thus, the chaos and disputes borne out from the land that created havoc and instability continued in the area until the fall of the imperial government.

That revolt expedited the decline of the imperial government could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, groundbreaking source materials that gave me an excellent complement to the available and remarkable works on land and peasant's revolt presented greater opportunities for comparison with such events within and outside Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). The many points of differences between my discovery and findings and the conventional perceptions from the available works that lie so much in the sphere of 'the reaction of the people to the reform measures. I do mean obviously that, accepted perceptions needs to be reconsidered in the light of new facts in the social history of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) at least in showing the nature of peasants' reaction to the new imperial reform measures from within. That discovery allowed me to see far into the past so much on property system as well as effective military organization and leadership experience of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Thereby it is used to challenge what have become accepted perceptions, while they are nice jobs in showing the limitations of the subject under consideration.

In fact, in the reconstruction of my study I showed that Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) is one of the richest agricultural provinces of modern Ethiopia, but it was the most economically deprived parts of the country. A meticulous investigation and interpretation of the sources within the period under study, the portrayal of the peasants' legal right of holding *rist* land as 'communal' masks its different context. Even if evidence shows the existence of 'communal' land system, in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) that gave the peasantry access to land, in actual fact, this condition by itself could not prevent the peasants' harsh exploitation. Hence, the emergence and development of exploitative form of 'productive relationship' became inevitable, when peasants could not earn a fair share of the land production that I discussed

thoroughly in the second section of chapter three. That unlike in the classical *rist* forms of tenure, for the most part, in twentieth century Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) peasants could unlikely exercise usufructory right on the land that they tilled. Cognizance of this and other developments, one may well suggest that the condition of *ṭisäññanät* (*česäññanät*) was too acute problem—regarding the fate of peasants who were living and working on the land—in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). Since maladministration—triggered by poor land system—has been going on for over a century from our own time, the area represents a serious case of poverty. That poverty and ignorance are constant features in the recent history of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). As a result, it left many people to destitute; a development that still prevails in the Ethiopian context.

This discovery continued to play a significant role in relieving the plight of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam (Ethiopia) from the chronic pain of the tenure system after the realization of my study in our own time. Nevertheless, the land system of Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) for any observer is still the best-known case which seriously affected many of the rural population often by means of land grabbing. That Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) continued to show a great pain and misery of Ethiopian societies even after the demise of the imperial domination encouraged further worsened into the current federal government from the revolutionaries' concern of 'Land to the Tiller' after the abolition of the age-old 'Solomonic' dynasty in 1974. The effort of the revolutionaries for land distribution and redistribution to the majority poor *ṭisäññas*, within and outside Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), could not help them significantly to evolve from the plight of landlessness. Because of this inherent problem in the tenure system, I observe that there had been great insecurity of property and chaos, in

Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), in the past well into the present time. However, gradually but steadily, the term *ṭisäñña* disappeared from the social position of Däbrä Marqos or generally Gojjam (Ethiopia) and the name landless farmer came to replace *ṭisäñña* as a 'social class' of the rural population.

In light of the preceding discussion, therefore, I would like to suggest that the existing Ethiopian federal state has to put into effect the improvement of the agrarian policy of the country. I do mean obviously that, there should be strong intervention of the government in the tenure system of the country, including Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam). That social devastation wrought mostly by poor land policy planning—a fate inexorably intertwined with corrupted individuals suddenly lifted from destitute to affluent category—caused the impediment of development within and outside Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) could hardly be denied. Nevertheless, my suggestion is that the current government should create conditions with the purpose of rationalizing the landholding system that would be amenable and malleable to the development needs and plans of the country is markedly different. In view of that, the federal administration should establish something about 'Agricultural Land-Holding Affairs' that is entrusted with the task of registering properties, granting land, regulating landlessness, to name but a few. Initially, unlike the old and existing conditions, the government needs to be much more committed and has to spell out its task of multifaceted land reform policy—quite making allowance for the customary law and the international perspectives—so as to reverse these inherent problems in our time than ever done before. Then, the way the new policy designed should be is to effect a more equitable distribution and the resulting redistribution of land be mentioned by the government's action which is by and large fair and appropriate.

Not surprisingly, the up-to-date deterioration in the relationship between the government and people is not yet rectified.

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A list of all the sources cited, only sources actually consulted and used, in this study.

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Archives: Private Collections, Church Archives—with Images as Visual Materials (Traditional Wall Paintings)—and Government Archives with Photographs

Private Collection in the form of Private Writings

Private Collections in possession of Sewale Mekonnen who was my field research companion in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), from the novel of Häddés Alämayähu—*Feqer Iskä Mäqaber*—cited below under 'Printed Materials and Electronic Sources Contemporary to the Study'. Primarily, *Ato* Béshaw Dästa made comments on one of the front pages of the first edition of the novel that he read and soon gave it to the father of Sewale. Therefore, I found and photographed this document from Säwala on 2 June 2016. He possessed it, from his father *Ato* Mekonnen Egzëru who in turn received it from *Ato* Béshaw Dästa, as gift).

Church Archives, with Traditional Wall Paintings and Photographs

(These manuscripts (MSS) references are drawn from documents in local Ethiopian churches. Primarily the captions of the manuscript are mentioned, followed by the names of churches and/or monasteries, written in Geez and/or Amharic).

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Gäbrä Hemam (The Passion), MS Däbrä Zäyet Mahfud Maryam Church in Sinan, formerly Gozamen. (It was originally written probably in the life times of the Emperor Minilek II (r.1889-1913) and the regional 'lord', *Ras* Haylu II (r.1901-1932). The entire section of the manuscript contains 20 leafs. From which the most important finding was not more than a pair of leafs that are rich records on land and land related issues. The manuscript is one of the earliest ecclesiastical documentary records in the area).

History of Gojjam from *Ras* Haylu I to *Ras* Haylu II, MS Däbrä Marqos Church. (It was written and/or ended in 1975/6 (1968 Eth. Cal.).

Giyorgis Wäldä Hamid Marqos, MS. Däbrä Marqos church.

Kebrä Mäzgäb (Glorious Register), MS Däbrä Marqos Church. (It was originally written, in Geez and Amharic, in the lifetime of Emperor Minilek II and the regional 'lord', *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot (r.1881-1901).

Meslä Feqer Wälda (lit. St. Mary gave Birth to Jesus Christ, [the Person who Christians believe was the son of God, and whose life and teaching Christianity is based on]), MS Däbrä Zäyet Mahfud in Sinan, formerly Gozamen.

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Tarikä Nägäst (History of Kings), MS Däbrä Marqos. (It was originally written in 1895, in the lifetime of Emperor Minilek II, and the regional lord, *Negus Täklä-Häymanot*, containing 74 leafs that to tell us letter of exchanges among kings, kings and clergies, kings and nobles, kings and church institutions relating to land and other related issues).

Ya-Gojjam Kebrä Nägäst (lit. Glory of the Gojjam Kings), MS Mängesto Kidanä Mehrät Church, in what is now Enämay *Wäräda*, formerly Bichena *Awrajja*.

Photographs and Traditional Wall Paintings

Photographs of three of the oldest and most important church institutions—Däbrä Zäyet Mahfud Maryam, Abema Maryam and Däbrä Marqos—with the tradition of great insight into how the Ethiopian churches are built in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) where land and land related sources originated in their treasury, as I photographed them in the course of my field research at various in the locality and used in the study its introductory chapter.

A series of [three] Traditional wall paintings of Däbrä Zäyet Mahfud Maryam church, in Sinan, formerly Gozamen, depicting tenancy and tenancy relations between an armed 'lord' and a *tisännä* in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam) at the turn of the twentieth century, as used in the middle paragraphs of chapter three. I have been taking the photographs of the wall paintings by permission of the church administrator *Märégéta Aymärä*, when I was in the field research on 20 March 2016 from within.

Government Archives

(They for public consumption, the following archival sources are written in both Amharic and English).

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<u>Folder/Ruling N°</u>	<u>File N°</u>
ዞጌ/አሰ/0082	ደ 164
ደጃ/44	44
ዞጌ/አሰ/0086	ደግ 164
9	61
6	6/38, 7/38, 18/38, 26/38, and 27/38
5	2/39, 2/42, 2/44, 2/46, 2/49, and 2/50/ 2/51
245	12:44
1943/44 (1936 Eth. Cal.)	1
	4/62
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<u>Folder N°</u>	<u>File N°</u>
2116	2075, 2075/44, 2075/55
26686	31853
85000	3853
2139	2075
A26	A3/583-1
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Photographs

Photograph of Emperor Haile Sellassie, in his state visit to Gojjam, inaugurating the local branch of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia in the town of Däbrä Marqos in 1969 (1961 Eth. Cal). I photographed it from the original one by permission of the current Bank's manager, *Ato* Argachäw Zäréhun, as displayed in the inside wall of its building on 20 March 2017.

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I obtained a copy of the following electronic sources from Shemelis Kassa Welde Eyesus—a field technician in the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation in the Northwest Region at the town of Däbrä Marqos—as his private collection.

Jarisburg, Baron de. 'King Menelik [III] has Investments here, Abyssinia's Ruler is Said to be a Heavy Buyer of American Railway Stocks. HAS AIDED HIS PEOPLE Remarkable Progress During His Reign—Baron de Jarisburg Tells of the Monarch, Now Reported Dying. Special Correspondence the New York Times' *The New York Times*. November 7, 1909: Jarisburg was a foreign correspondent for the *New York Times* in Brussels at that big moment.

Täshomä Gäbrä Maryam (*Ato*) who was an attorney general of the Haile Sellassie government talking about his life experience (in Amharic) with an Ethiopian journalist Mä'aza Berru' on 'Yä-Čäwata Engeda' [lit. 'a Special Gust Play'], *Shägär FM 102.1*. Addis Ababa, October 28 2010/1 (*Teqemt 20*, 2003 Eth. Cal).

Oral History: a list of twenty-eight individuals I interviewed that includes four individuals whom we have photographs of them in chapter one in their capacity as prominent informants, when I was still busy in doing field research from 2012-2017 in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam).

Interview with Antänäh Moññ-Hodé (*abba*) in Däbrä Marqos, 27 October 2016.

Awoqä Berhän Därsäh (*ato*) in Debre Elyas, 11 August 2015.

Ayaléw Gäbré Mäkönnén (*ato*) in Däbrä Marqos, 18 October 2015.

Bälainäh Akalu Dästa (*ato*) in Däbrä Marqos, 13 January 2016.

Bäläy Engeda Yehun (*ato*) in Amanu'el, 12 August 2015.

Bäläy Yehun Kallu (*ato*) in Wäjäl, 24 July 2015.

Bäzé Aschalä Čäckol (*ato*) in Amanu'el, 12 August 2015.

Bezünäsh Ṭassäw Alämu (*Wäyzäro*) in Däbrä Marqos, 18 October 2015.

Damté Tafärä Yayäh (*ato*) in Amber, 25 July 2015.
 Dämälash Seyum Meteku (*ato*) in Amber, 25 July 2015.
 Dämesé Täbbäjä Dästa (*ato*) in Fénotä Sälam, 24 July 2015.
 Ejjegü Seménäh Wärqnäh (*abba*) in Däbrä Marqos, 17 September 2015.
 Engeda Akalu Alänä (*ato*) in Wäjäl, 24 July 2015.
 Gäbrä-Sellasé (*Abba*) in Däbrä Marqos, 29 September 2016.
 Hassen Adego Gäbré (*ato*) in Däbrä Aléyas, 11 August 2015.
 Gétachäw Mammo (*ato*) in Däbrä Marqos, 14 May 2017.
 Hebitu Abäbayähu Dästa (*emahoy*) in Däbrä Marqos, 24 December 2014.
 Libanos Yätämäññ Kokäbu (*märiqéttä*) in Däbrä Marqos, 16-18 April 2014.
 Mälläsä Asräss Mälaku (*ato*) in Bahir Dar, 25 July 2015.
 Mälläsä Kassa Gärämäw (*ato* in Wäjäl, 24 July 2015.
 Menwuyélät Alalu Chäckol (*ato*) in Däbrä Aléyas, 11 August 2015.
 Shetähun Mälläsä Kassa (*ato*) in Amanu'el, 12 August 2015.
 Täggäññä Asräss Engeda (*ato*) in Ambär, 25 July 2015.
 Täshalä Dästa Welätaw (*ato*) in Däbrä Marqos, 13 January 2016.
 Täshomä Adäraw Gétanäh (*ato*) in Wäjäl, 24 July 2015.
 Šägayé Muluyé Gojjam (*ato*) in Dämbäčä, 12 August 2015.
 Yehanäw Ténaw Admass (*ato*) in Däbrä Marqos, 13 January 2016.
 Zäwdu Däsäläññ Tayé (*ato*) in Wäjäl, 24 July 2015.

Personal Observation—partly ensured the reliability of oral data, as the custom of the society is still conveyed in court dealings of the area.

The references are drawn from my own courtroom observation in East Gojjam Administrative Zone High-Court, in Däbrä Marqos Town, without the knowledge of both the jurists and the contestants. Accordingly, three land litigation cases were observed through *fetabehér* (civil case) charges—not by way of criminal basis—in the area in

**Courtroom 9*: under the jurist *Ato Täfära Dämesssé* alone, 14-18, September 2015;

**Courtroom 10*: under the jurists *Ato Šähäyu Tameru*, *Ato Yäzéh-Aläm Tameru* and *Ato Täfärra Dämesssé*, 24-25 September, and 12-16 October 2015.

**Leyu Ya-märét Kerker [Exclusive Land Litigation] Courtroom*: under the jurists *Ato Yeh^anäw Zäläläm*, *Ato Mohammed Jebrél*, *Ato Tadässä Azemäraw* and *Ato Mulusäw Bétäw*, 19-23, 26-30 October, and 11-13, 16-20, 23-27 November 2015.

(Here, in every case, in judging land disputes, the general rule often followed by the jurists was, and still is, the custom of the society which has precedence over the legal ground to win the dispute borne out from the land).

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