



COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

**A HISTORY OF AGARFA DISTRICT
(Ca.1941-2000)**

BY SHIFERAW MITIKU

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF
JIMMA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY.

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JIMMA, ETHIOPIA

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Key to the transliteration system

1. The seven sounds of the Ethiopia alphabet are represented as follows:

Symbol	Example		
1 st order	በ	Ḃä	ጠ።Bäla
2 nd order	ቡ	Bu	ቡ።Buna
3 rd order	ቢ	Bi	ቢ።Bila
4 th order	ባ	Ba	ባ።Bado
5 th order	ቤ	Bè	ቤ።Balé
6 th order	ብ	Be	ብ።Behér
7 th order	ቦ	Bo	ቦ።Bona

1.1 Palatalized sounds are represented as follows:

Symbol	Example	
ሸ	Ṣ	ሸ።Ṣäwa
ቸ	Č	ቸ።ČäräČärä
ጸ	Ñ	ጸ።Daña
ጺ	J	ጺ።jägna
ሸ		ሸ።Zhጸ።Gäzh

1.2 Glottalized sounds are represented as follows:

Symbol		Example
ɸ	Q	ቃሶQaso
ጠ	ፒ	ጠቢቃፒTäbäqa
ጮ	ፑ	ጮፈፑČafë
ጸ/ፀ	ፑ	ፀሎፕŠälot
ጸ	P	ጸጸስPapas

2. Afan Oromo transliteration

2.1 Afan Oromo vowels.

In Afan Oromo there are short and long vowels

	Short	long	example	English meaning
a	aa		<i>gaalacamel</i>	
	<i>eeeseera</i>		law	
iii		<i>dhiiramale</i>		
	<i>oookoraasaddle</i>			

2.2 Afan Oromo Consonants

In Afan Oromo the whole letters used in English language as used as consonants and they are stressed (germinated) by doubling similar consonants. There are also consonants from combination of two different consonants. These are ch, dh, ny, ph and sh.

	Oromo	symbol	example	English meaning
Ch	č	<i>Billaacha</i>		butterfly
Dh		<i>Dhadhaa</i>		butter
Ny	ñ	<i>Nyaara</i>		eye brow
Sh	š	<i>Shantama</i>		Fifty
	Ph	P	<i>buuphaa</i>	egg

Afan Oromo consonants that have different sounds from English language.

AfanOomo	symbol	Example	English meaning
C	č	<i>culullee</i>	eagle
Q	q	<i>qamadiiwheat</i>	
Xṭ	<i>xalayaa</i>	letter	

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with A History of Agarfa district 1941 -2000. The main purpose of this study is to examine the political, economic and social developments in the district from the restoration of the monarchy to the fall of derg regime. The data obtained from archival source, secondary written sources and oral informants were used in writing this thesis. Before incorporation the Oromo of Bale in the district of Agarfa were administered by the gada system. .pastoralism was the main economic activity of the people and land was maintained as a common property of members of the gosa. The people of district were the first victim of the war carried to incorporate the province of Bale to the Ethiopian empire state. The Oromo of Bale in the district faced political and economic oppression under gäbbar-näffäña system. The Italian occupation of the district resulted in the abolition of the gäbbar-näffäña system and the military camp established by Italians laid basis for the foundation of Agarfa town. The introduction of new land tenure, land measurement and taxation resulted in the eviction of the peasants from their lands under the pretext of tax default. The land reform issued by the military government of derg relieved the peasants from the terms of tenancy while whilevillagization and the establishment of producers' cooperatives negatively affected the productivity of the peasants.

Preface

This study is concentrated on the reconstruction of the History of Agarfa district 1941-2000. The main objective of this study is to examine the political, economic and social developments 1941-2000. The data used for the writing of this thesis obtained from archival, secondary written sources and oral informants. The data obtained from different sources were analyzed and the history of the district is reconstructed. The study began by discussing the geographical setting, early history of the Oromo of in the district and socio-economic condition in the district before the incorporation of the province of Bale into the Ethiopia empire state. The second chapter of the study deals with historical developments before 1941 such as the process of the incorporation and socio-economic developments in the aftermath of the incorporation. It also discussed how the Italian occupation led the foundation of Agarfa town and socio-economic condition during the Italian occupation.

The third chapter of the deals historical developments in the 1941-1974. It discussed how the different Political and economic reforms introduced in the post liberation period were implemented in the district and the impacts of the implementation of the reforms on the people of the district and the reaction of the people against new land tenure and burdens of taxation.

The fourth chapter deals with the historical development 1974-2000. It discussed how the different reforms introduced by the military government such as the establishment of peasant association and implementation of land reform, villagization, the establishments of producers cooperatives and the establishment of Agarfa multipurpose Farmers training center and the advantages and disadvantages of the implementation of these reforms. It also deals with the development of Agarfa town and the introduction of different social services to the town and rural villages of the district. The study will provide frame work of events and comprehensive accounts of socio-economic and political development of the district in the period under discussion. It will also help to have broaden knowledge about the district of Agarfa.

Acronym

ADADO- Agarfa district Agricultural development office.

ADCTO- Agarfa district culture and tourism office.

ADEOAS- Agarfa district education office archive section

ADFEDO- Agarfa district finance and economic development office.

AMFTC- Agarfa Multipurpose Farmers training center

BKPO-Bale Kiflahager plan Office.

BZAAS- Bale Zone administration archive section.

BZADAS- Bale zone Agricultural development office archive section.

CELU- Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Union.

EPRP- Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party.

ENLF- Ethiopian National Liberation Front.

Meson- the Amharic acronym of All Ethiopian Socialist Movement.

NALA- National Archive and Library Agency.

PC- producers Cooperatives.

SALF- Somali Abo Liberation Front.

SDADOAS- Sinina district Agricultural development office archive section.

WSLF- Western Somali Liberation Front.

WTMAC- Woldemeskal Tariku Memorial Archive center.

CHAPTER ONE

1. GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Geographical Setting

The district of Agarfa is found in South Eastern Ethiopian region in the North Western corner of Bale zone of Oromia regional state.¹

The capital of the district, Agarfa town is located at 460km from Addis Ababa and 30km from Robe, the capital of the zone.² The establishment of this district as administrative unit goes back to the period of Italian occupation of Ethiopian.³ The district was established as administrative unit by comprising some parts of present day districts of Dinsho and Gasara in addition to the territory that belong to Agarfa district in 1938.⁴

The establishment of Agarfa as administrative unit under Ethiopia Empire state was linked with the new administrative restructuring following the liberation of Ethiopia from the Italian occupation made Bale one of the districts under Hararghe Awraja. According to this administrative restructuring Agarfa was made one of the kebeles in Bale district. Agarfa was

Measurement carried in Bale in 1944. As Bale was promoted to the status of *awraja* under Harärgè *täqlay gezat* Agarfa was promoted to the status of district. It was one of the seven *waradas* under Bale of *awraja* under Hararghe *Taqalay gezat* (provincial governorate) where the 1951 land measurement was carried by using *qälad*.⁵ The new administrative restructuring that separated Bale from Hararghe *Taqalay gezat* and promoted it to the status of *Taqalay gezat* (provincial governorate) made Agarfa one of the districts under Fasil (the later Mandoyu *awraja*) that consisted on of Agarfa, Goba, Sinana, Dinsho, Gasara and Goro district.⁶ Agarfa continued to

¹ Oromia Bureau of planning and economic development: *Physical and socio economic profile of 180 districts of Oromia*, (Finfine, 2000), p.55.

² *Wajjira aadaa fi Turizimii aanaa Agaarfaa: "Seenaa Magaalaa Agaarfaa* (Agarfa district culture and tourism office: A history of Agarfa town)", (Agarfa20150), p.5.

³ *Ibid*,p.7

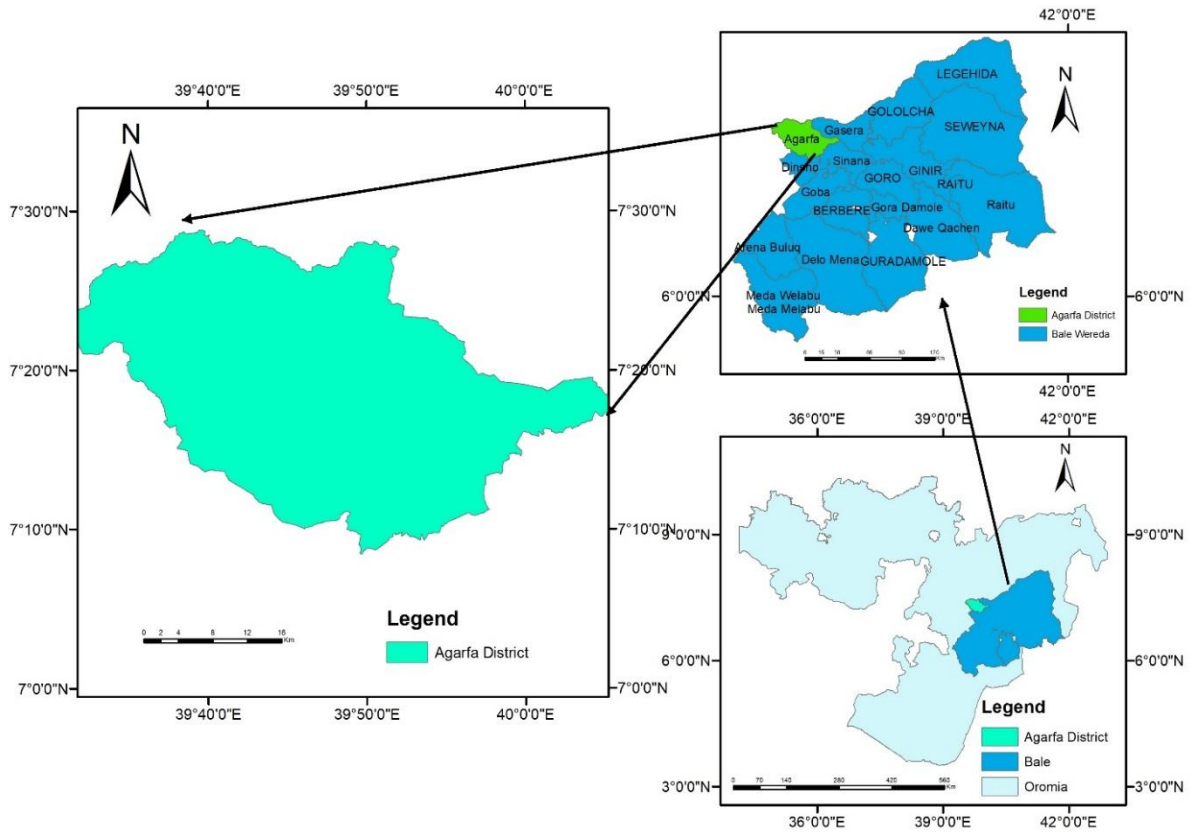
⁴ Infomants: *Haji. Ebrahim Bakaro, Haji. Hussien Alo and Haji. Jamal Ahmed.*

⁵ *Tsehae Ti 'zaz Wada Masqal Tariku Memorial Archive center of IES* (Institute of Ethiopian studies) (WTMAC here after) Folder No.1337 File No.2147.

⁶ National Archive and Library Agency (NALA here after), Folder No.17.02 File No. 403.01.

be part of Balé *keflahagär* under the Derg regime with the status of district. Under *Derg* regime Agarfa was one of the districts was districts in Ethiopia in general and in Bale in particular, where the military government attempted to implement

Map. 1. Map showing the location of Agarfa district.



Source. GIS Map

Socialist agriculture policy by establishing state farm and farmer training center.⁷ The detail of those institution will be discusses in the other chapter of this study.

The administrative restructuring and reforms carried by the *Derg* military government which led to the establishment of the Ethiopian people democratic republic 1987 resulted in the promotion of Agarfa to the status of *awraja* by the name of Hora *awraja* by merging it with the neighboring district of Dinsho and Gasara. At the same time the town Agarfa was made the capital of Hora *awraja*.⁸

The new federal restructuring of the country that followed the fall of *Derg* in 1991 made Agarfa one of the 17 districts in Balé zone in Oromia regional state. Currently, it is one of the twenty districts in Bale zone and share boundary with Shirka district of Arsi in North, Dinsho in south, and Gasara in East and Sinana in south east and Adaba in west.⁹ The total area it is 1258km² and ranks 15th largest district in Balé zone. Astronomical it lies at 7^o17' N latitude and 39^o47' E longitude ranked 15th district in the zone in terms of area.¹⁰

There are 21 *kebeles* within the total areas of the district. From these eighteen *kebeles* are rural villages and 3 *kebeles* are towns. The rural *kebeles* include Ali, Amalama, Amigna, Atiba Shawiso, Elabidu, Gelama Hebrano, Maqqala, Qaso wara, Qaso Manso, Oda Nägelé, Oda Chafo, Mokna Farajo, Shanaka, Wabe Sa'ada, Walta'i Wagarge, Hora Goda, Mokona Caffo, the Urban *kebeles* are Agarfa, Ali and Ambéntu town.¹¹

1.1.1 Physical Features and Climate

There are different land scape structures in the district. The eastern and extreme western part of the district are plain. The elevation of this part of the district ranges between 2300m and 2700m and it account for 61% of the total are of the district. The second category of landscape in the district included Wabe gorge and related rugged terrain in northern part of the district. The general elevation of this part of the district ranges between 1250m and 2300m. The land under

⁷ Bale zone prisons administration: A Bulletin *Teweweq: Terri la Iteyopiyanoch* (Call for Ethiopians), (Addis Ababa, 2007), p.22.

⁸ Agarfa district Finance and economic development office (ADFEDO here after): Socio economic profile Agarfa district, (Agarfa, 2016), p.2.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.3.

this category accounts for 31% of the total area of the district. The third group is the mountainous ranges of south western part of the district which adjacent to the present day Bale mounting national park. This part accounts approximately 8% of the total area of the district. The height of this massif rises up to 3855m above sea level. The major mountains are Gashangala, Garjo, Dhaka Bora and *Sheik* Ali Mountain.¹² The known gorges in the district are Wabe, Hursa, Waka lali, Eulo, Awala, Qilé alati, Chalalaki and Arari. In addition to these there are also well known local hills such as Ambälat, Rado, Warb Gari and Faracha.¹³

Climate: - the existence of different altitudinal zone in the district lead to the existence of different climate zone in the district. There are four agro climatic zones in the district namely cool (Alpine), temperate, sub-tropical and tropical agro climatic zones which accounted for 0.8%, 40.2%, 53%, and 6% of the total area of the district respectively.¹⁴

The different parts of the district experiences different temperature based on its altitude. The mean annual temperature of the district is 17.5⁰c .The temperature reaches up to 25⁰c in the lowland areas of Wabe Shabele River and about 10⁰c in the western highlands of the district.¹⁵

Concerning rainfall distribution of the district, Agarfa is one of the areas with bi-modal rainy season. The main rainy season are spring and autumn. The district also experience rain in summer season. the distribution of rain also varies like that of temperature with altitude variation the mean annual rain fall ranges between 1200mm and 400mm with average annual rainfall of 800mm.¹⁶ The existence of different agro ecological zones in the district created a favorable condition for the production of different crops and rearing of different livestock.¹⁷

There are different types of soil in different agro ecological zone of the district. The major soil types of the district are Eutric cambisols, pellic vertisols, chromic luvisols and lithosols.¹⁸ The part of the district with Eutric cambisols includes the north and north western part of the district where there is steep slope. The area with this type soil has limited agriculture value. Pellic vertisols mainly found in north east and south east part of the district and characterized by

¹² Council of Oromia, p.55. ADFEDO, p.3.

¹³ ADFEDO, p.3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁶ *Wajjira qonnaa aanaa Agaarfaa* (Agarfa district agricultural development office) (ADADO), *Haalawaliigala aanaa Agaarfaa* (general information about Agarfa district), (Agarfa, 2016), p.8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Council of Oromia, p. 55; ADFED office, p.6.

logging of water in rain season and cracking in that dry season. Cromic luvisol covers the plateau of central and north western part of Agrafa district. This type of soil is the most suitable soil for agricultural activity in the district.¹⁹ In order to overcome the problems related to the type of soil different traditional and scientific methods are used by the farmers of the district.²⁰

The district of Agrafa lies within two main drainage basins of Wabe Shabele and Ganale. The north and north western parts of the district lie within Wabe shabele drainage basin while south and south eastern part of the district is found within Ganale drainage basin. There are a number of perennial and seasonal rivers within these two drainage basins. The main perennial rivers are Wabe, Weyib, Chocho, Makala, Inzira, Malka qori and Wachuma. While the seasonal rivers include Chorino, Siso and Kale.²¹ Wabe Shabele which is found in the northern part of the district is the longest river in the district. This river was commonly known as a boundary between Arsi and Bale before the establishment of West Arsi as a separate zone by taking the former Genale *awraja* that comprises the district of Dodola, Adaba, Nansabo and Kokasa from Balé. Still today the river served as a boundary between the Arsi and Balé in general Agarfa and Arsi zone in particular.²² The other major river is Wayib that drains to Gänalé river basin. This river is considered a boundary between the territory inhabited by the two major Arsi clans Siko and Mändo in Balé. The river is also remembered among the elders of the district for the battle that was fought between the army of *Ras* Dargé and that of Balé Oromo in the process of incorporating Balé into the Ethiopian empire state.²³

1.1.2. Vegetation and wildlife

The district of Agarfa is endowed with varieties of wild life and vegetation in different climatic zones of the district. The most commonly known natural vegetation in the district belongs to two major groups, junipers proceri (Tid) and podocarpous (Zigba). The area with an altitude between 2300 and 3100mm with mean annual rainfall varying from 500mm to 1100mm is dominated by juniper forest while the podocarpous type of forest is mainly found in the low land

¹⁹AFEDO, p. 6.

²⁰*Ibid*, p. 14.

²¹*Ibid*, p. 4.

²²*Ibid*.

²³ Ketema Meskela, "Evolution of land ownership and Tenancy in the Highland Bale; A case study of Goba, Dodola and Sinana to 1974" (MA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2001), p.16.

part of the district.²⁴ From the total areas of the district about 15,265 hectares of land is covered with variety of forest, woodland and bushes and 683 hectare of land is covered by manmade forest owned by the government.²⁵

There are a variety of wild animals in the district. Some of the wild animals in the district are lion, leopard, Nyla, fox, rabbit, pig, ape, monkey, hyena, duikes, and warthug. There are also varieties of birds in the district. The district shares boundary with Bale mountains national park. Some areas such as Goda Gimba, Goda Hori and Sheik Ali Mountains are considered as sanctuaries by the resident of the district.²⁶

1.1.3 Population and Economy.

As it was discussed earlier the province of Bale where Agarfa is one district was part of Hararghe *Taqalay gezat* (provincial governorate) from 1892 to 1960 with the status of *wäräda* and *Awarja*.²⁷ It was considered as the remotest and inaccessible part of the empire by the imperial government of Ethiopia.²⁸

The patterns of settlement of the people of Balé were largely determined by climatic variation. The highland part of the zone is settled by a large number of people. Agarfa is one of the highland districts of Bale that has of a suitable climatic condition and arable lands that attracted a number of people to settle in the district.²⁹

The Oromo are numerically the dominant people living together with other ethnic group such as Amhara, Gurage, Walayta and other nationalities. In terms of religious composition, the people of the district are the followers of Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Protestantism, Catholicism and traditional religion³⁰.

According to population census of 1984 the total population of the total Agarfa district was 46,624 with 22,725 males and 22,899 females. This was the total population of the district that

²⁴ ADADO, p.12.

²⁵ Council of Oromia, p.55. ADFEDO, p.6.

²⁶ ADFEDO, p.5.

²⁷ Solomon Korsu, "Rural Land distribution and management in Highland Bale; A Case Study of Goba, Dodola and Sinana 1975-1991" (MA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa university, 2005), p.4.

²⁸ Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia, from the Thirteenth century to the Twentieth century*, (Addis ababa, 2000), p.243.

²⁹ Eshetu Bekele and Sali Mama, *Baale Eessaa gara Eessaa: Seenaa Baalee gabaabinaan* (Bale from where to where: A short History of Bale) (Bale Robe, 2013), p.11.

³⁰ ADFEDO, p.3.

were living in 22 peasant association, one town, one state farm and one farmers training center by the time of the first house and population census. From the total population of the district the rural population accounted for 41,722 with 20,292 males and 21,430 females, the urban population accounted for 3064 with 1378 males and 1,686 females. The population of the Shanaka state form accounted for 871 people with 452 males and 419 females and the population of the Agarfa farmers training center accounted for 967 with 603 males and 364 females.³¹

The 1994 House and population census conducted by central statistical Agency (CSA) shows the total population of the district reached 66610 with 33509 males 33551 females. According to the report of this census the rural population of the district accounted for 59200 with 29526 males and 29674 females. The rural population of the district showed an increment of 17478 people as compared with that of the 1984 population census while the urban population accounted for 7410 from which 3533 were male and 5877 were females.³²

According to the third house and population census conducted by central statistical agency in 2007 the total population of the district was 102110 of whom 52136 were males and 49974 were females. In its urban rural distribution the rural population accounted for 89203 with 45573 males and 43630 females. Concerning religious composition of the people according to this census the followers of Islam, orthodox Christianity, Protestantism, Catholicism and traditional religion and others were 78262 ,22802 ,971, 38, 26 ,12 respectively. The majorities of the people of the district are followers Islam and followed by orthodox Christianity.³³ Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of the people of Agarfa district the existence of different agro-climatic zones in the district created a favorable condition for the cultivation of variety of crops and rearing of different live stock. The major crops are barley wheat, oats, maize from cereal crops, peas, horse beans from pulses; linseeds from oil seeds, paper orange lemon, banana,

³¹People's Democratic republic of Ethiopia office of the population and housing census commission of 1984, *Analytical report on Bale region*,(Addis Ababa, 1989), p.82.

³²Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia office of population and housing census commission central statistical Authority: *The 1994 population and housing census of Ethiopia results for Oromia region volume I Part I*, (Addis Ababa, 1996), p.24.

³³Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia office of population and housing census commission central statistical Authority: *The 2007 population and housing census of Ethiopia results for Oromia region volume I Part I*, (Addis Ababa,2010), pp.355-356.

onion, cabbage, sugarcane are also among the agricultural product in the district. The distribution of crops varies in accordance with the climatic variation in the district.³⁴

Cereal crops like barley and wheat are the dominant product in the highland part, the *badda daree* (the temperate) is mostly known for its pepper production particularly Ambentu and the surrounding villages are known for their production of pepper at zonal level. Banana, Lemon, orange, sugarcane are the main agricultural products in the low land region of the district.³⁵

1.2 Historical Background

1.2.1 Early History of the people.

The Oromo people are one of the Cushitic people that had been living in north east Africa for a long period of time. The Oromo had their own political economic, social and religious institution that made them unique from other nations, nationalities and people of Ethiopia. For political economic and social purpose they were organized in to a *gada* system.³⁶

The *gada* system was a system by which *gada* classes succeeded each other every eight year by having political military, economic and ritual responsibilities. Each *gada* held a power for the terms of eight years and no one had the right to stay on power for more than eight years or to transfer power hereditary. The *gada* class that is going to held political power was expected to carry a war known as *Buta* war and to occupy a new territory that had not been occupied by the Oromo people before. This traditional is said to have contributed for the expansion of the Oromo territories.³⁷

The Oromo had also their own religion known as *Waaqefannaa*. They believed in a supreme being called *Waaqa* (God). The religions leader of the Oromo was known as *Qallu*. *Qallu* was respected among the society and was influential had also the right to involve in non-religious matters.³⁸

³⁴ ADFEDO, p.13.

³⁵ ADFEDO, P.14.

³⁶ Asmerom Legese, *Gada, Three approaches to the study of African society*, (New York, Toronto, 1973), p.8; Tesema Ta'a, 'Bribing the Land' *An Appraisal of the Farming system of the Macca Oromo in Wallaga*, North east African study New series, vol.9. No.3, (Michigan state university, 2002), p.99.

³⁷ *Ibid*; Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau (OCTB here after), *The History of The Oromo to the Sixteenth Century, Second Edition*, (Finfine 2006), p.17.

³⁸ Teshome Amanu, "The Rise and Expansion of Islam in Bale of Ethiopia Socio-Cultural and political factor inter religious relations" (MA Thesis, The Nowegian Teacher Academy, Department of philosophy of religious

The Oromo is divided in to two confederacies, Borena and Barentu. Each confederacy was divided in to different clans and sub clans. During the expansion the two confederacies followed two different directions. The Borena moved to north western direction and the Barentu moved to north eastern direction. Oral traditional obtained from the Bale Oromo elders in Agarfa cited their original homeland to Madda Walabu, the area in Mada Walabu district of present day Balé and they explained that they came to the present day locality in the direction of Dallo.³⁹

The Arsi to which the Balé Oromo in Agarfa belongs is categorized under Barentu confederacy. There are different traditions about the genesis of the name Bale and Arsi. According to one of these traditions the name Balé is believed to be named after the name of a man called Baalé. According elders the tomb of this person is found in Sambitu, a village to the north east of Robe, town the capital of Balé zone. According to this oral tradition a *gosa* known as Allosé is said to have carried *muda* ceremony on the tomb of Balé.⁴⁰

The other oral tradition concerning the genesis of the name Balé stated that it was named after the culture of *baala buufannaa* / leaf laying culture/. According Bale Oromo elders in Agarfa *Baala buufannaa*/ leaf laying culture was used by the Oromo to show the occupation of the land by a certain *gosa* (clan). This tradition associate the genesis of the name Bale with the culture of *baala buufannaa*/ leaf laying culture) used by the Oromo in the course of their 16thc expansion.⁴¹

According to written source the name Balé started to exist in literature by the times of Zagwe kingdom. The documents of the time mainly focused on the Muslim sultanate of Bali (Balé) and the war carried by the Christians kingdom to occupy this sultanate and the conflict between the two states. The sultanate was of Bali was one of the Muslim sultanate along Zeila long distance trade route and it is believed to be situated in the highland Bale to the south of Wabe Shebele. According to written source the present day district of Agarfa was part of this Muslim sultanate.⁴²

The Oromo of Bale belongs to Arsi clan, one of the clans under the Barentu confederacy. There are oral tradition about the genesis of the name and how Arsi occupied the present day territory.

Education, 2008), p.26.

³⁹Asmerom, p.11.

⁴⁰Eshetu and Sali, p.13.

⁴¹Ibid; Informants: Usman Garado, Hussien Alo and Ebrahim Bakaro.

⁴²Terje Ostebo, *A History of Islam and inter-religious relation in Bale, Ethiopia*, (Stockholm, 2005), p.15.

According to the most widely accepted oral tradition the name Arsi was evolved from the name of a man called Arsé. This tradition stated that Arsé was living in the area of present day Sambitu, where he begotten two sons, Siko and Mändö. Siko and Mändö had begotten five and seven sons respectively. The sons of Siko were Bulala, Wachale, Jawi, Waji and Ilani While the sons of Mando were Raya, Hawata, Wanama, Uta, Wayu, Kajawa and Beltu.⁴³

The twelve sons of Siko and Mändö increased in number in course of time and resulted in the emergence of the different *gosas* of Arsi that occupied a very large region that included Balé, Arsi, south eastern Shawa and Sidama. The clans belong to Siko crossed Wabe river and occupied Arsi while the clans belong to Mändö remained in Balé. However, it is common to find the clans belong to the two major clans both in Arsi and Bale. In case of Bale for instance, the eastern part is mainly inhabited by the *gosas* under Siko and Wayib River is considered as a boundary between Mando and Siko. This indicates that the existence both Siko *gosas* in Bale⁴⁴.

The fundamental question such as when the name Arsi emerged, when it was divided in to major clans and occupied the present day territory including Agrafa district are points of debate among scholars. Ketebo Abdiyo traces the emergence of the name Arsi and its separation into separate entity back to the pre expansion period. He stated that “the name Arsi started to be used before the 16th century expansion as a result of the growth of population and their division in to sundry tribes and subtribes.”⁴⁵ According to Braukamper the name Arsi might have emerged in the process of the expansion.⁴⁶ Ketema Meskela stated that “while the other Oromo group had moved north, south, east and west during the 16thc expansion the Arusi remained in the original home land. According to him there is a general consensus among scholars that south and south central part of Ethiopia which includes the modern province of Balé was the ancient home land of the Oromo.⁴⁷ The Balé Oromo elders in Agrafa also trace Mada Walabu as a place of their origin and Abba Muda of Dallo as a center where religious ceremonies were carried and explained that their ancestors came to the locality where they are living at present in the direction

⁴³Midaye Abebe, “The Oromo of Bale: A Historical survey to 1974”, (MA thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 2005), p.19; ketema, p.15.

⁴⁴ OCTB, p.203; Eshetu and Sali, p.12.

⁴⁵ Ketebo abdiyo, “A Historical Survey of the Arsi Oromo 1910- 1974”, (MA thesis, Addis Ababa university, History, 1999), p.3.

⁴⁶Ulrich Braukamper, The Islamization of Arsi Oromo in *the proceeding of eighth international conference of Ethiopian studies*, (Addis Ababa, 1987), p.767.

⁴⁷Ketema, p.16.

of Dallo.⁴⁸ My intention is not to deal with the whole history of Arsi Oromo in general or Arsi Oromo in Bale in particular. However, to discuss some points about the early of the history of Arsi Oromo, since it is part of the history of Bale Oromo in Agarfa. So, my attempt is to present a general understanding about Arsi Oromo to whom the Oromo of Balé in Agarfa belongs.

According to existing literature and oral tradition collected from Oromo elders in Agarfa the Arsi Oromo in Agarfa is categorized under the Kajawa sub clan of Mändo. According to this information the Kajawa clan of Mändo is divided in to five sub clans, namely, Agarfa, Ambentu, Qaso, Ali and Gambo. Each clan is further divided into different *gosas*. However, the existing written source only listed the *gosas* under three of the five sub clan of Kajawa. It failed to list the *gosas* under Ali and Gambo clan.⁴⁹ I have made an attempt to get the list of *gosas* under these clans and the elders that I have interviewed in Agarfa district have listed the *gosas* that belong to Ali sub clan. According to these informants Doyo, Hariro, Garado, Gajaba, Abano and Gobaya are the *gosas* that belong to Ali sub clan of Kajawa.⁵⁰

The present day settlement pattern of population in Agarfa district is based on lineage groups mainly belong to the different *gosa* that belong to the sub clans under Kajawa. The major towns of the district, Agarfa and Ali and rural villages such as Ambentu, Elani, Farichu, Qaso Wara, Manso and Sabaja are among the villages named after the names of the different clan and sub clan under Kajawa.⁵¹ In addition to Agarfa district the clans and sub clans under Kajawa also live in neighboring districts of Dinsho and Sinana.⁵²

On the basis of existing source the genealogy of Kajawa clan is presented in the following family tree.⁵³

⁴⁸Informants: Kädir Chuqle, Jéylan Ahmed and Usman Garado.

⁴⁹ OCTB, p.229.

⁵⁰ Informants: Kädir Chuqle, Jeyilan and Usman.

⁵¹Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau p.229; Informants: Jämal Usman, Jäylan Ahmed and Usman.

⁵² OCTB, p.229.

⁵³*Ibid.*

Arsi

Mando

Kajawa

AgarfaAliAmbentu GamboQaso

Dange	Hulule	Gofingira
Sabaja	Abargada	Qaso-elabidu
Elani-Godage	Shando	Hersho
Farichu		Qaso-warra
		Manso

Source. OCTB, The History of the Oromo to the 16thc, p.229.

As it was discussed earlier Agarfa is one of the sub clan under Kajawa clan of Mändo and presently it is the name of a clan, a town and a district. So, it is important to deal with genesis of the name to know about the historical evolution of the name.

According to a popular oral tradition among the Bale Oromo elders in Agarfa the name Agarfa is evolved from two Oromo words *Aaga* and *Farra* (Literary to mean peace and trouble maker respectively).⁵⁴ According to this oral tradition the genesis of the word was associated with the coming of two individuals, namely Garo and Hadago to the area of present day Agarfa town. These men were welcomed by a man called Abiyu, the then leader of *gosa* and were allowed to settle around present day Agarfa town. These individuals gradually involved in the expansion of their holdings. Abiyu was disappointed by the actions of the individuals whom he welcomed as guests and requested them to leave the land belong to his clan. However, the individuals were unwilling to leave the area. This resulted in conflict between Abiyu and the new settlers. The genesis of the word is associated with the process of solving the problem happened among these individuals.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ADCTO, p.6.

⁵⁵*Ibid.* Informants: Hussien Alo, Ebrahim, Bäkaro and Kädär Chuqule.

There are two traditions on the event that the word was used for the first time. The first tradition states that as the two individuals refused to leave the land belong to Abiyu, the issue was taken to Abba gada. The Abba *gada* after hearing their cases decided that since you allowed them to settle in this locality at the beginning you do not have the right to displace them from their holdings. Abiyu was disappointed by the decision of the Abba *gada* and said to have said the following in Afan Oromo.

Situ teesiseen Aaga

Sirra hin ka'uun farra

It means that your recognition that I allowed them to settle as guest is good. However, your decision against their evacuation from my holding is trouble making.⁵⁶

The other tradition concerning the genesis of the name states that as Garo and Hadago refused to leave the land was the property of Abiyu, they entered in to conflict and war was fought between two groups and Abiyu was defeated and was unable to dislodge these individuals from his land. After this the clan led by Abiyu entered in to conflict with Ambentu and war was fought between Ambentu and Abiyu. Abiyu was unable to resist the attack from Ambentu. As a result he requested Garo to help him in the war against Ambentu and the request was welcomed by Garo and he fought on the side of Abiyu and enabled Abiyu to be victorious over Ambentu. After his victory Over Ambentu Abiyu decided to adopt Garo in to his clan according to the Oromo *gada* system.⁵⁷ According to this tradition the word *Aaga-Farra* was used on the ceremony of adopting Garo in to a clan of Abiyu. According to *gada* ceremony a bull should be slaughtered by the adopting clan. However, in the process of adopting Garo after a bull was prepared to be slaughtered by Abiyu. However, Garo deliberately slaughtered the bull. The wife of Abiyu who observed the event is said to have said the following in Afan Oromo.

Wanti kun Aagaa farra

Kormi qalamuun aaga, araara

buusuuf, nama kanaan qalamuun

⁵⁶ADCTO, p.6; Informants: Hussien Alo, Ebrahim Bäkaro and Kädär Chuqule.

⁵⁷Informants: Hussien, Ebrahim and Kädär Chuqule.

isaa farra, olaantummaa isaa isin

*irratti gonfachuuf yaaduu isaa agarsiisa.*⁵⁸

It is mean this action is peace and trouble. The slaughtering of the bull is to settle dispute and for seeking peace. However, the bull should not be slaughtered by a man to be adopted; this is trouble making and declaring superiority over the adopting clan.

Despite, the disagreement on the event on which the word *Aaga farra* was used the two oral traditions agreed on the evolution of the word *Agarfa* from the Afan Oromo words *Aaga* and *Farra*. The words first evolved to *Agaafraa* and gradually took the present day form, *Agaarfaa*. Still today the elders used to call *Agaafraa*. It was this process that led to the evolution of the word which is now the name of a clan, district and town⁵⁹.

1.2.2. Kinship Organization

Before their Oromo expansion of the 16th century the Oromo had been under one *Gada* system. The decision that concern the whole Oromo nation was passed by one gad assembly different *gada* centers had been used by the Oromo in different times. Oda Nābe was the *gada* center where the Oromo used to pass different decisions that concern their nation. Due to different pressures the *qallus* and other officials were forced to search for a new *gada* center and after a long period of interruption of the *gada* system Oda Roba, in the eastern part of Balé was established as a *gada* center in 1316 and continued to serve until 1378.⁶⁰

The human and natural factor once again forced the *gada* officials and *qallus* to search for another *gada* center that was safe from any pressure and environmentally suitable for human beings settlement. After a long period of searching for a *gada* center Mada Walabu was selected as *gada* center. Mada walabu is believed to be where *gada* system was renewed. It continued to serve as a *gada* center for a long period of time. Following the 16th expansion of the Oromo different *gada* centers were established by the Oromo in different parts. While the other Oromo clans established a new *gada* centers the Arsi Oromo renewed the former *gada* center of Oda

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰Eshetu and Sali p.14.

Roba. It was this process of expansion and establishment of a new *gada* centers that led to the formation of *gada* system of the Arsi Oromo to whom the Bale Oromo in Agarfa belongs.⁶¹

The Arsi Oromo kinship organization had different levels of organization. The lowest level of organization was *warra* (family) above *warra* there were *balbalas* (a minimal lineage group). A number *balbalas* formed *gosa*. According to my informants the lowest level of kinship organization is the system by which one's identity of lineage is identified. Whenever they met a stranger they ask to which *gosa* and *balbala* the individual belongs to identify his lineage group.⁶²

There were two ways for oneself to be a member of lineage on which the kinship organization is based. The first was through blood relation that means individual should be descended from the two major clans of Arsi Siko and Mändao. The other one was through adoption as *gosoomusuu* (adoption in to a clan). Membership of a lineage group could be claimed only from the father line.⁶³

There were three ways in which the Arsi Oromo identified their relationship. There were *Aanoma* (relation through descent), *soddooma* (relation through marriage) and *Arsooma* (Arshihood) and it refers to the cultural homogeneity and *allo* (customary code).⁶⁴

The Arsi Oromo *gada* system in Balé had five *gada* classes, Birmaji, Bultuma, Horta, Bähra and Robale. The different *gada* classes had been linked with different issues. Birmaji was associated with Birmadu (elder wife) wishing to have good relationship between husband and wife., Bultuma is related with reproduction, Bähra linked with avoiding conflict and Robale hoping not to be endangered. ⁶⁵

The *gada* system of the Arsi Oromo in Balé to which the Arsi Oromo in Agarfa belongs had its own unique characteristics. The *gada* political and social structures were organized on the basis of lineage at *gosa* level. Each *gosa* had its own *saddééta* (an assembly of eight men). Election was based on membership of *gosa* and seniority and functioned according to the *gada*

⁶¹Ibid, p.16.

⁶²Ketema, p.17.

⁶³Teshome, p.31; ketema, p.19; Mindaye, p.25.

⁶⁴Teshome, p.31.

⁶⁵Mindaye, p.29.

principles.⁶⁶The head of *Chaffe* of a certain *gosa* was elected every eight years from the different *gada* classes. The deputy of *Aba Boku*, the *Bahra* was hereditary. *Bahra* was elected from the elder *gosa*. *Bähra* was more influential than *Abba Boku* and had a power to decide on the major issues that affect the lives of the society such as “arbitrating and mediating *gosas* and punishment of criminals by death including hanging (*Toga hidhuu*) as well as introduction of new laws and a measurement of laws.”⁶⁷

Following its renewal, Oda Roba served as a *gada* center for Arsi Oromo. The different Arsi clans met every four year at Oda Roba to pass new regulations and to deal with court cases raised from conflict between *gosas* and those related to crime. According to existing written sources the Arsi *gosas* in Agarfa were among those who attended the Assembly held by Arsii *gosa* at Oda Roba every four year.⁶⁸

1.2.3 Socio economic Condition before incorporation

Before the incorporation of Agarfa in to the Ethiopia Empire state following the conquest of Bale by the army of Menelik, the Arsi Oromo in Agarfa were predominantly pastoralists. Land was a common property for all members of the *gosa*. Each *gosa* had its own land that was inherited from their fathers and fore fathers. The land belong to a certain *gosa* was first occupied by ancestors of the *gosa* by the culture *baala buufachuu* (leaf laying culture).⁶⁹

According to Arsi Oromo elders in Agarfa the *baala buufachuu* (leaf laying) culture was used to demarcate a land that was used by a certain *gosa* and to avoid a claim over the land by other *gosa* by indicating that it was already occupied and belong to other *gosa*.⁷⁰ This idea is also supported by scholars who carried research on the history of Arsi Oromo. For instance ketebo Abdiyo states that “according to Arsi tradition land was occupied by laying leave (*baala buufata*) to establish precedence which was similar to *Qabiyyee* (land holding rights) among the Wallaga Oromo. Unlike the western group possession of land through *baala buufata* did not led to the rise of private ownership of land”⁷¹

⁶⁶Ketema,p.17; Ostebo,p.22

⁶⁷Ketema, p.17.

⁶⁸Ostebo, p.22.

⁶⁹Informant: Jämal Ahmed, Ahmed Alo, Jéyilan Ahmed.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹Ketebo, p.16.

There was a belief among the Arsi that land had connection with people. So, after occupying a land that belong to other people they slaughter a goat in order to purify the land from the former relation it had with the former people and to establish a new relation with the newly occupied land.⁷² The land owned by a certain *gosa* continued to be communal property for the members of that *gosa* for a generation. Those who were descended from that lineage group had the right to use over the land. Members of other *gosa* was allowed to use a land belong to one's *gosa* as long as he became a member of that *gosa* through adoption to that *gosa* by the process of *gosoomusu* (adoption into a clan).⁷³

The inheritance of land by members of *gosa* had its own rules. Ketema Meskela stated that “The Arsi Oromo married outside their *gosa* and women did not have the right to claim the right to ownership of land from her father's *gosa*. She was counted as a member of her husband's *gosa*. Children had no right to claim the land belong to their mothers *gosa*.”My informants from Agarfa district also explained that the males had the right to inherit land from their fathers' lineage and females from their husbands' lineage group.⁷⁴

A land that was inherited from *gosa* was not subjected to sale or transfers it for oneself outside the lineage group. There was a strong tradition of keeping land under the control of *gosa*. Mamo Hebo states that “Among Arsi Oromo the relationship of people, at different levels of social organization, with land is multi-faceted. It is historical, economic, and ritualistic or religious land is a basis for the expression and maintenance of identity. The connections such a way that people strive to maintain their identity by maintaining their territory”.⁷⁵

The possession of land and its succession to the next generation was not only the issue of providing the succeeding generation with economic basis of the society. However, it was also a moral and social responsibility. Being able to transfer land to the next a generation was considered as maintaining one's identity and it resulted in praise and respect from the society because of the ability of maintaining the identity his father while one who failed to do so was disregarded and degraded among the society and commonly known as “*nama gurra*

⁷²Mamo Hebo, *land, Local Custom and State Politics: Land tenure, land dispute and dispute settlement among the Arsi Oromo of Sothern Ethiopia*, (koyoto, 2006) p.34.

⁷³ Ketema, p.19.

⁷⁴ Ketema, p.19.

⁷⁵ Mamo, p.30

abbaanyaate”, to mean that the one who ate his father’s ear. Here ear refers to honor and the person considered as the one who degraded his father’s personality and dignity.⁷⁶

To express the strong relationship between people and land there is expression among Arsi Oromo “*Namni lafaa fi lafee hin qabne hanga tokko*” a man without land is similar with a man without bone. As a man could not a live without bone it is also impossible for him to survive without having land. It was this strong tradition of relation between land and people that enabled the Arsi Oromo to maintain land as a property that was no subjected to sale for centuries.⁷⁷

The above mentioned tradition was also common among the Arsi Oromo in Agarfa my informants explained that it was strictly forbidden to sale land and to mortgage among the Arsi Oromo in Agarfa and also forbidden to handover it to a certain *gosa* or for oneself outside the lineage group. This strong tradition of maintaining *gosa* land in Agarfa is said to have lead the different *gosas* in Agarfa in to conflict over land. According informants there were conflict between aAmbentu and Agarfa and Ambentu and koloba, Ali and Shafila were among the *gosas* entered in to conflict over land.⁷⁸

In the period before the incorporation of the Balé in to the Ethiopia Empire the Oromo of Bale were predominantly pastoralists. However, there was a practice of sedentary agriculture in the highland part of the province. Agarfa was one of the areas in highland Bale where sedentary agriculture was practiced to a limited degree. Concerning administration by the eve of the conquest of Menelik the *gada* system of Arsi Oromo in Balé was weakened probably due to the influence of Islam.⁷⁹ Sources indicate that the introduction of Islam to Balé goes back to 12thc. At the eve of the conquest of Menelik Islam was well established in highland Bale. The district of Agarfa was one of the Islamic centers in Balé that played important role in providing religious education.⁸⁰ Among the Muslim religious leaders who played important role in spreading Islam in Balé were those who known as *Imaama Torban* (the seven Imams). One of the seven Imams was sheikh Abdulwab of Agarfa.⁸¹ According to my informants the Balé Oromo in Agarfa embraced Islam before the conquest of Balé by the army of Menelik II. The introduction of

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p.35.

⁷⁸Informants: Jemal, Ahmed and Jeylan.

⁷⁹ Ketema, p.15.

⁸⁰Ostebo, p. 15 and 36.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p.27.

Islam to the district of Agarfa however did not led to the total decline of the *gada* system rather it led to the merger of the *gada* rules with that of Islam. For instance, the hill of Ambälat in Agarfa district served both as a center of Muslim religious ceremony and that of *gada* assembly.⁸²

Since the Oromo of Balé in Agarfa were pastoralists the main sources of their food were animal products. The people in this district were far from market where they could exchange their commodities with other commodity that were important for survival. This problem led to the emergency of market place on the hill of Ambälat.⁸³

Before the establishment of this market the hill was used as a burial place for the surrounding people. Later it was started to be used as a center for celebration of the birth day of Prophet Mohammed. The tradition of celebrating the birth day of Prophet Mohammed at the hill of Ambalati is said to have started by a man called Abdala Gälgälo or Abba Hamido. The aim this individual was to provides help for the poor and the disabled on the birth day of Prophet Mohammed in the form *Zaka* (compulsory payment) according to the religion of Islam. Informants are not quite sure about the exact date when this ceremony was started to be celebrated at the hill of Ambalat. But they assume that it was started in the last quarter of the 19thc. The celebration of the birth day of Prophet Mohammed on the hill of Ambalat paved a way for another development in this area.⁸⁴

According to informants in the last quarter of the 19th century highland Balé was affected by different socio-economic problems. One of these problems was the absence of market in the surrounding areas where they could exchange their animal products with other products. This problem led to the establishment of three markets in three different district of present day Balé. These were the market of Afo in Gasara district which later evolved to the present day town of Gasara, the market of Abakara Hambare in Goba district and the market of Ambälat in Agarfa district.⁸⁵ Ambalat was selected to be a center for the people that were living in present day Agarfa district and selected as a market place since its establishment it continued to serve the local community and was visited by merchants from other districts of Bale as for as Dallo and

⁸²*Waa'ira aadaa fi Turiizimii aanaa Agaarfaa: Seenaa Ambälaat* (Agarfa district Culture and Tourism office: The history of Ambalat, 2015, p.5; Infomants: Ebrahim Bakaro, Hasan Sultan and Husien Karku.

⁸³*Ibid*, p.10; Informants: Husien Karku, Hasan Sultan, and Kädir Dheko.

⁸⁴ADCTO, *The History of Ambalat*, p.11.

⁸⁵*Ibid*.

Gadab. The main trade items that were exchanged at this market included *gonfo* (hat) *nati*, (cloth for women) coffee, salt, butter, honey, and grain to a limited degree.⁸⁶

The market place of the hill of Ambalati was known by another historical event. As a market was established to solve the socio-economic problems of the people of the surrounding areas another problem came in to being in the region. Robbery and theft became a common phenomenon in Agarfa district of the present day. This problem forced the people to seek a solution to the existing problem that threatened the lives of the people of district. Accordingly, a committee of eight men was elected to discuss on the issue and to come up with a solution. The committee discussed on the issue and presented a solution by which peace and stability could be maintained. The solution was that the one who was caught of theft and robbery should be punished by death penalty by hanging him on *Toga*. To that end *Toga* was erected in the market place of the hill of Ambalati.⁸⁷

The leader of the committee who played the leading role in formulation of the solution and erecting the *toga* was a man called Yasu Mangi. According to the law passed by the committee of eight men one who was caught of theft should be punished without discrimination regardless of his lineage group and social status. Surprisingly, the first man to be punished or to be hanged on the *Toga* was the relative of Yasu Mangi an influential person in formulation the law and erecting *Toga*.⁸⁸

A young man who was the son of the brother of Yasu Mangi is said to have interested to check whether the law was applied to all sections of the society by believing that he wouldn't be punished since his uncle was leader of the committee. Accordingly, a young man said to have taken some coffee that belong to other people, immediately he was captured and presented to a committee led by Yasu Mangi. A committee discussed over the issue and wanted to decide in favor forgiving the young man by saying that his crime is not as such great. However, Yasu was said to have refused them by arguing that there is no minor and great crime, the law should be equally applied over all section. If we do not punish this individual we cannot apply this law on anyone in the future and we could not maintain peace and order in our surrounding areas. Yasu Mangi is said to have said the following on the occasion

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷*Ibid.*,p.13

⁸⁸*Ibid.* Infomants: *obbo*.Husien Karku, *Shiek*. Hasan Sultan and *käd*ir Dheko

“*gaafa keenyaa nama jennee gaafa ormaa raqa hin jennu.*” *Seerri nama hundaaf walqixahajjachuu qaba.* It means we should never treat our relatives as human beings and others as useless creatures. He argued that the death penalty should be applied on the son of his brother. Accordingly, the young man became the first victim of the law formulated under the leadership his uncle.⁸⁹

The establishment of *toga* is said to have played important role in maintaining peace and order in the district. A number of criminals were hanged on this *toga* and the hanging ceremony was carried on the market day in order to teach other people that the same punishment will be effected on them if they commit the same crime. This tradition continued in the district until the incorporation of the district in to the Ethiopia empire state.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ADCTO, “The History of Ambalat”, p.1; informants: Ebrahim, Husien Karku and Hasan

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

CHAPTER TWO

2. AGARFA DISTRICT 1890s -1941.

2.1 The Conquest of Bale and incorporation of Agarfa district.

In the last quarter of the 19th century was a period of Menelik's territorial expansion toward south, south east and south western Ethiopia region. Menelik's territorial expansion to the south was preceded the incorporation of the Oromo that surrounded the Shawan state by the predecessors of Menelik. The incorporation of the Oromo in Shawa was followed by the south ward expansion in which the Gurage became the first victim next to the Oromo groups in Shawa.⁹¹

In his south ward expansion Menelik used two policies on the basis of the advice presented in *Fetha Negest*. These were a policy of peaceful submission and forceful subjugation. In his policy of peaceful submission the local officials were persuaded to submit peacefully by convincing the local people and it was the first option presented to local chief before any military confrontation in return for maintaining their political position by paying annual tribute. This policy was more effective in south west and western region where local chiefs accepted the request for peaceful submission in the regions like Jimma and Wollega.⁹²

The second policy was applied in the region like Walayta, Kafa, Arsi and Harar where the local refused the question of peaceful submission. In his expansion to south eastern Ethiopia region Menelik faced a serious challenge from Arsi, who fought against the army of Menelik at different battles until their defeat by the army of Menelik lead by *Ras Darge Sahleselasie* at the battle of Azzule in 1886. The next victim was Harar, where the Harari and the Oromo of south eastern Ethiopia, who turned down Menelik's request for peaceful submission. The refusal of the Harari and the Oromo forced to carry military conquest. The military conquest finally resulted in the defeat of the Harari and the Oromo at the battle of Chelanqo in January 1987.⁹³

⁹¹Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991, Second Edition*, (Oxford, Athens, Addis Ababa, 2002), p.61.

⁹²John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of Traditional polity Third Edition*, (Addis Ababa, 2006), p. 131.

⁹³Bahru, p.63.

After accomplishing the mission of incorporating Aris and Harar the major interest of Menelik was to occupy Bale by crossing Wabe River. This mission was given to Ras Darge.⁹⁴ Four individual are remembered by the elders of Balé Oromo in Agarfa district in the process of occupation of Bale by the army of Menelik namely, Lenjiso Diga from Koloba *gosa* in Arsi, Kabir Huba, leader of koloba *gosa* from Siko clan, Wate Dibu of kadu *gosa* from Mändo clan and *Sheik* Busari by the role they had in the process of the conquest by facilitating the conquest or opposing the conquest.⁹⁵

Before military confrontation with the Oromo of Balé *Ras* Darge tried to know the general condition in Balé to that end he sent a spy to Balé from his camp at Dida'a in Arsi proper .To that end, *Ras* Darge sent a man named *Shek* Busari from Wollo, who took part in the war against Arsi Oromo in Arsi proper, whose real name was *Fitawrari* Bi'da.⁹⁶ Busari crossed Wabe River and made his first contact with Kabir Huba of Koloba. In his first mission *Shek* Busari travelled in different parts of the province as a Muslim religious teacher. He told the people that he was sent by Allah because of the people of Balé were followers' sheik Hussien. The knowledge he had about Quran helped him to easily convince the people. Busari used religion as a cover and collected valuable information about socio-economic condition in Bale and returned back to *Ras* Darge's camp in Dida'a in Arsi.⁹⁷ In his second mission sheik Busari brought a cloth contaminated with small pox and distributed to the people in the name of religions solidarity. Those who wear contaminated cloth were affected by small pox and many people died of these disease. In addition sheik Busari also brought animal disease such as *sombe* and *wara domsa* which resulted death of cattle and highly affected the economy of the people. The people were demoralized by the death of many people and by loss of a large number of cattle by the disease introduced by *Sheik* Busari. These actions of *Sheik* Busari facilitated favorable condition causing human and material destruction.⁹⁸

According to my informants from Agarfa district the conquest of Balé was also facilitated by a man called Lenjiso Diga. Lenjiso was a man from Koloba *gosa* in Arsi proper who convinced kabir Huba leader Siko clan in Balé to submit peacefully and directed the army of Menelik

⁹⁴Mindaye, p.45.

⁹⁵Informants: Ebrahim Bakaro, Jemal Ahmed and Usman.

⁹⁶Esetu and Sali, p.18.

⁹⁷Mindaye, p.46.

⁹⁸Ibid; Informants: Ebrahim, Jemal and Usman.

towards Balé. As the army Ras Darge moved to ward from his camp at Dida'a kabir Huba was also is said to have moved to Wabe in order to meet *Ras Darge* and to show his willingness to submit peacefully.⁹⁹

My informants who cited their relatives who were the eye witness stated in his way to Wabe to meet *Ras Darge* Kabir Huba was accompanied by his father in law kabir Mahaammado Hafxii, the then leader of Kajawa clan and sons of kabir Mahaammado, Kädir and kimo. These men were from Agarfa district who were living in the area of the hill of Ambalat. Kabir Huba meet *Ras Darge* by crossing Wabe in Arsi territory at a place called Tulluu Midir.¹⁰⁰ Informants remembers the question presented by *Ras Darge* to Kabir Huba and the response given by Kabir Huba in the following way. To quote.

Ras Darge- *Malliif natti dhufte?*

Kabir Huba- *yoo ta'e Baale hundaf sitti dhufe*

- *Baale na didu Heero sadeeniif sitti dhufe*
- *Heero na didu Kolobaaf sitti dhufe*
*Kolobni na didu lubbuu kiyyaa fi maatii kiyyaaf sitti dhufe.*¹⁰¹

It means:

Ras Darge- why you have come to me?

Kabir Huba- If possible I have come for submission of the whole Bale

If Balé refused I have come for submission of three Heros

If Heros refused I have come for Koloba

If Koloba refused I have come for my family and for my self

The three Heros that Kabir Huba had promised for submission in second place included Koloba, Shafila and Ambentu. Ambentu is with in Agarfa district. Sources indicate that this first submission of Kabir Huba was made without consulting his own clan and other Siko clans in the surrounding areas. Several factors are noted for his first submission of Kabir Huba. Among those

⁹⁹Informant: Hussien Alo, Ebrahim and and Kädir Chuqule.

¹⁰⁰Informants: Hussien, Ebrahim and Kädir.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

due to the proximity of his clan territory Arsi proper Kabir Huba had information about the war fought between the army of Menelik and Arsi Oromo and the punishment carried on Arsi Oromo following their defeat and this might have put on him psychological pressure. Kabir Huba had also information about the rights enjoyed by the local chiefs who submitted peacefully. Lénijso Diga a man from Koloba clan in Arsi said to have played a role in convincing Kabir Huba to submit peacefully.¹⁰²

As the Shawan army camped at Malka Qurele representatives of Siko and Mändo clans were ordered to come to the military camp of *Ras Darge* to discuss about the submission of their respective clan. Accordingly, Kabir Huba from Koloba *gosa* by representing Siko clan and Wate Dibu from Kadu *gosa* by representing Mändo clan were sent to *Ras Darge's* camp at Malka Qurele.¹⁰³ After holding discussion with *Ras Darge* the two leaders asked to discuss the issue with people and returned to their home to discuss either to submit peacefully or to fight against the army of Menelik. Accordingly, the Siko clans met at a place called Shanaka, a village in present day Agarfa district and held discussion on the question presented by *Ras Darge* through the agency of Kabir Huba. On the discussion Kabir Huba was able to be successful in winning the support of the representatives of the different *gosa* in favor of peaceful submission.¹⁰⁴

According to informants it was before this discussion that Kabir Huba personally promised to submit peacefully without consulting Siko clan, even members of his own *gosa*. In his first submission Kabir Huba made different promise to *Ras Darge*. As it was discussed before Kabir Huba promised the submission of the whole Balé if possible. By the discussion he held with the representatives of different *gosa* of Siko clan he was successful in winning the support of the representatives of the different *gosa* of the Siko clan.¹⁰⁵

The Mändo clan on the other hand held a discussion at a place called Hambare to the east of Goba town. Wate Dibu, the leader of Mändo clan who saw the army of *Ras Darge* made an attempt to convince the people by explaining the superiority of the enemy forces. To quote--

“Diinni manaa fe’atee dhufe, abidda kiisitti baatee, meeshaa fagootti ajjeesu baatee deema, nuti ammoo kana hin qabnu.” It means the enemy has come to us having the modern firearms that

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³Ketema, p.24.

¹⁰⁴Eshetu and Sali, p.18.

¹⁰⁵Ketema.p.25.

can kill at far distance. We do not have such kind of firearms to confront them. By this speech he was almost said to have win the support of the people in favor of peaceful submission.¹⁰⁶ However, the condition was changed automatically when one of the participants presented different questions to Wate Dibu concerning the army of *Ras Darge*. As Mindaye Abebe states the following questions were presented to Wate Dibu by the representative of one of the *gosa* under Mando clan.

Diina kana ati ija keetiin agartee? Akkuma keenya namaa? Akkuma keenya ija lama lama, harka lama qabaanii?

It means have you seen the enemy with your naked eyes? Are they human being like us? Have they two legs, two hands and two eyes like us?

The response of Wate Dibu to above questions was yes. After listening the response of Wate Dibu, the representative argued not to submit by saying that ‘I will never submit and acknowledge the over lordship of the enemy who is human being like me’.

This argument of the representative reversed all things and all representatives rallied behind him and refused Wate’s demand for peaceful submission and determined to confront against the enemy.¹⁰⁷

Here I want to note that my intention is not to deal with whole process of the conquest of Bale. But to discuss the major events that had effect in the process of the conquest and its aftermath on my subject of study.

Following their decision not to submit peacefully the representatives of different *gosa* of Mando clan ordered Wate Dibu not to have any contact with *Ras Darge*. So, the proposal of peaceful submission was rejected. As a result of the refusal of the proposal of peaceful submission by the Mānado clan it was only Kabir Huba, who returned back to *Ras Darge*’s camp at Malika Qurele. Contrary to Wate Dibu who faced opposition from his clan representatives, Kabir Huba was able to win the support of the representatives of his clan and had officially submitted on the behave of his clan.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶Eshetu and Sali, p.19; Mindaye, pp.50-51.

¹⁰⁷Mindaye, p.51.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.* Ehetu and Sali,p.18

Following this the Shawan army accompanied by Kabir Huba and *sheik* Busari camped at a place called Leqa, a place in koloba. The submission of Kabir Huba was followed by the submission representatives of other clan such as Nago Ali of Shafila, Kabir Luxa of Garado, Hamadu Imamu of Illu, Adam Halima of kersa and Kabir Mame of Säda.¹⁰⁹

The refusal of the Mändö clan to submit peacefully is said to have influenced some Siko clans to shift their position from peacefully submission to military confrontation on the side of Siko. For instance Ambentu was among the clans that changed their decision. Informants from the village Ambentu in Agarfa district stated that Ambentu refused to submit from the very beginning. As we discussed earlier Ambentu was one of the three Heros (koloba, Shafila and Ambentu) that kabir Huba promised for submission in the in his first contact with *Ras Darge*.¹¹⁰ My informants from the village of Ambentu also agree with the above idea. However, they argued that the Ambentu belongs to the Mändö clan. According to informants the Ambentu opposed to kabir Huba's request for peaceful submission even before the discussion held at Shanaka and remember what kabir Huba said to *Ras Darge* when he directed him against Ambentu due to their refusal to the proposal of peaceful submission. To quote...

“Wayta gaara olbaatu gara mirgatti gori”

After crossing the hill turn to the right side.

According to my informants the above sentence was the method used by Kabir Huba to show the location of the territory Ambentu who refused to the question of peaceful submission presented to them by *Ras Darge* through the agency of Kabir Huba. The village of Ambentu is found to the right of Koloba, the village of Kabir Huba for the one who come the region in direction of north.¹¹¹ Informants argued that Ambentu was the first battle ground of the army of Menelik and members this *gosa* were the first victim of the conquest of Balé. The people were ignorant of modern fire arms and it was their first time to hear the sound of modern fire arms and they perceived it as a sound of Dibbé (Drum) and were very surprised when the fighters were shoot down modern firearms as if the fighters were fell down in fear of the sound of Dibbéé (drum) and made an attempt to uphold fighters who fell down being shoot down by modern

¹⁰⁹Mindaye, p.51.

¹¹⁰Informants: kedir Chuqule, Jemal Ahmed and Fayo Qabato.

¹¹¹Informants: Kedir, Jemal and Fayo.

firearms. They stated that the Ambentu faced total defeat in the hands of *Ras Darge's* army. After defeating Ambentu the army of *Ras Darge* turned to east, unable to cross Wayib River due to the flooding of Wayib River and then camped at Guranda.¹¹²

Written sources on the other hand stated the following about the way in which the army of Menelik crossed Wabe River and how *Ras Darge* established military camps in the territory of Siko clan and how his army fought against the Mändo clan. For instance Mindaye Abebe by his study of the historical survey of the Oromo of Balé stated that following the first peaceful submission of Kabir Huba “the Shawan general along with Kabir Huba and sheik Busari came to koloba (the village of Kabir Huba) and camped at special place called Leqa.”¹¹³ Koloba did not continued to serve as a military camp for the army of *Ras Darge* because of its closeness to the territory of Mändo. Hence, he was forced to search for a locality with strategic importance in Siko territory since the Siko clan agreed to the terms of peaceful submission. *Ras Darge* was able to get the with strategic importance within Siko in present day Gasara district at a locality called Guranda and his fortification from where he launched his campaign against Mändo clan of Balé Oromo.¹¹⁴

This idea is similar with the information I have gathered from informants. The only disparity between the idea of my informants and that of Mindaye is the sequence of the war. Informants argued the battle was before the establishment of Guranda as a military camp while written source indicate the war was launched from Guranda. I assume that early military clashes might be considered as a major battle by informants.

The submission of Siko clan enabled the Shawan army to camp at first at Leqa and then at Guranda. After establishing itself in the area that had strategic importance *Ras Darge* continued to send message to the leaders of Mando to secure their peaceful submission. However, the Mando were unwilling to accept the proposal peaceful submission.¹¹⁵ The refusal of Mando clan to *Ras Darge's* repeated request for peaceful submission resulted in military confrontation between the army of *Ras Darge* and Mändo clan of Balé.¹¹⁶ Accordingly, *Ras Darge* sent his army to fight against the Mando clan. According to informants a number warriors warriors were

¹¹²*Ibid.*

¹¹³Mindaye, p.51.

¹¹⁴*Ibid*, p.52.

¹¹⁵Mindaye.p.52.

¹¹⁶Ketema, p.25.

equipped with traditional fire arms such as *waraana* (spear) *wantee* (shield) and other traditional weapons came from different *gosas* of Māndo clan to fight against the Shawa army. The Oromo used military experience and technology they had. That was the skill they had in horse fight. A number of well experienced cavalry had come to fight against the Shawan army particularly from different villages of Goba district.¹¹⁷

At the beginning the Māndo Oromo of were able to resist the Shawan army and even blocked them from crossing Weyib river. The two armies are said to have camped on the either sides of Weyib. The military clash and resistance continued for about two weeks. The resistance forced *Ras Darge* to send a well-organized army to the battle field. The decisive battle between the Shawan army and Bale Oromo was fought at the battle of Malka Bal'o to the west of Koloba on the Shore of Wayib River in 1892. At this battle the Shawan army enjoyed complete superiority over the Oromo of Bale. The Oromo of Bale were strange to the modern fire arms used by the Shawan army against them. They had no skill of defending themselves from these weapons since they were horse fighters who used traditional fire arms.¹¹⁸ A number of Oromo fighters said to have lost their lives at this battle. Among these the death and Kusa Obsa, a well-known fighter is said to have demoralized the Oromo fighters.¹¹⁹

The Oromo resistance to the Shawan army was collapsed. After accomplishing the mission the Shawan army returned to his military camp at Guranda. After this battle the *Ras Darge* was called back to Addis Ababa by Menelik and the responsibility to accomplish the next campaign was given to *Dejazmach Asfaw Darge*.¹²⁰

After their defeat at the battle of Malka Bal'o the Mando clan sent Arabo Konso to Guranda to show their willingness to submit peacefully. Asfaw Darge sent seven soldiers with Arabo Konso to investigate the existing condition in Karmamida. However, six of the seven soldiers were killed by Abarosa and Emery sub-clans. This action forced *Dej.Asfaw Darge* to take serious measure against Karmamida. Accordingly the army led by *Ras Layeh* carried devastative attack on Arbarosa and Emery clan and killed a number people and burnt down their houses and

¹¹⁷Informants: *Haji.Ebrahim*, Hussien Alo and Kedir Chuqle.

¹¹⁸Mindaye, p.53; Informants: Kedir, *Haji.Jemal* and Fayo.

¹¹⁹Ketema, p.25.

¹²⁰Ketema, p.25.

confiscated their properties and his army occupied the hill of Karmamida, presently known as Michael *gara* (hill) after church of saint Mikael.¹²¹

In other parts of Balé the army led by *Dej.* Wolde Gabriel took the responsibility to conquest the eastern part of the province. After the occupation of Goba the army of *Dej.* Asfaw continued the process conquest in other parts of the province.¹²²

I would not like to deal with the detail of the conquest since it was what we have discussed that marked the occupation of central Highlands of Balé including Agarfa. So, I would like to focus on the impacts of the conquest in highland Balé in general and Agarfa in particular.

2.1.1 Impact of the Conquest.

As it is known Menelik's territorial expansion to south resulted in the introduction of new socio-economic and political system in the newly incorporated areas. This system was the *gäbar –näffäña* system. The introduction of this system in southern Ethiopian region resulted in the eviction peasants from their lands and the denial of the right to self- rule by local officials. The political and economic measures taken against the newly incorporated regions were more severe in the regions where the army of Menelik faced strong resistance from the local people in the process of occupation. In the regions where the policy of peaceful submission was successful the local chiefs were able to maintain their economic and political positions.¹²³

In case of Bale as it was discussed earlier there were mixed responses to the question of incorporation. The Siko clan in highland Balé submitted peacefully and the Mando refused to submit peacefully and were subjugated by force. The Oromo of Bale Agarfa were among those who resisted submitting peacefully. As a result of this the territories of some clans of Oromo in present day Agarfa district became first battle ground between the army of Menelik II and that of the Mando clan of Bale Oromo. Due to this the Oromo of Balé in Agarfa became the first victim of the conquest who lost a large number of people at the battle.¹²⁴

Like other parts of the province the conquest brought economic social, cultural and political impacts on the people the district of Agarfa. Politically the conquest introduced a new system of

¹²¹Mindaye, p.55.

¹²²Eshetu and Sali, p.19.

¹²³Bahru, p.87.

¹²⁴ Mindaye, p.55; Informant: Jemal Ahmed, Kedir Chuqule and *Haji* Usman Garado.

administration that was alien to the local people by hastening the decline of the *gada* system which is said to have already begun to decline even before the conquest. As a result of the conquest the *gada* officials lost their political power and a new system of administration was applied over the district. As they did in other parts of the province the Shawan army destroyed the market place and *gada* center of the hill of Ambalat, where the different *gosa* in the district used to pass laws in order to maintain peace and security of the different *gosa* in the district.¹²⁵

With the introduction of a new administration system the *gada* officials lost their power and replaced by the Shawan officials who were appointed at different level. At the district level the *Mislane* were appointed having the responsibility of administration and expropriation of local people. At lower level of the new administration the local chiefs were appointed with the title of *balabat* and *burqa*. The *balabats* and *burqas* were mainly from the Bähra of each clan. Their position was to serve the Shawan officials at the lower level of administration. It is possible to say it was indirect rule policy rule applied at lower level of administration.¹²⁶

According to Mindaye Abäbä it was lack of man power that forced the Shawan officials to appoint the local chief as *balabats* and *burqas* at lower level.¹²⁷ Concerning the appointment of the local Oromo chief at lower level of administration ketema argued that “the measure was an attempt made by the Shawans to link the existing structure of the local government with the new system of administration”.¹²⁸ Contrary to this Mindaye argued that” being deprived of the jurisdiction of expressing their own affairs the local Oromo official were no more than channels through which merely appears to the filling the gap that Shawan could not, that is acting as the bridge between their people and the Shawans.”¹²⁹

My informants also stated that the former local official who had given a new title *balabat* and *burqa* were not in a position to exercise their former political power but were responsible to implement the interests of the Shawans at a local level by being a channel of communication between the local people and higher Shawan officials at different level. The officials were responsible to implement the rules and regulation to enforce the local people to provide different services to the Shawan officials. The *balabats* and the *burqas* were also responsible to deal with

¹²⁵Informants: Hussien Karku, Hasan Sultān and Ebrahim.

¹²⁶ Mindaye, p.59.

¹²⁷Mindaye, p.60.

¹²⁸Ketema, p.30.

¹²⁹ Mindaye, p.60.

judicial case at lower level. This power is said to have let them to involve in the exploitation and expropriations the local people.¹³⁰

In economic sector, as it is known in the regions where there were resistance to the army of Menelik the local people were evicted from their lands two-third of the land was given to the official, the Church and soldiers who participated in the wars of territorial expansion. But in case of Bale where Agarfa is one district the conquest was not followed by direct confiscation of land. As the local chiefs were appointed as *balabats* and *burqas* in administration sector, land was remained under the control of the clan administration.¹³¹ However, according to my informants and written source a new socio economic system known as the *gäbbar näfṣāña*. System was introduced. According to this system the local peasants were assigned to the Shawan official commonly known as *Mälkäña* and the soldiers known as *näfṣāña*. Accordingly, the local people were made *gäbbars* to the *mälkäñas* and the *näfṣāñas*. This system was known as *quṭer gäbbar*. It was a system in which a number of *gäbbars* were assigned to officials in accordance with their political and military positions. The Balé Oromo in Agarfa were among the victim of this system that followed the incorporation of the district. According to this system 10-20 and 15-50 peasants were assigned as *gäbbars* for solders and officials respectively.¹³²

The *gäbbar* had an obligation to pay one tenth of his produce to the official as a tax which is commonly known as *asrat* (tithe). In addition to the annual tax in kind similar to in other parts of Bale the *gäbbars* in Agarfa were forced to provide different items such as honey, butter, sheep, gesho (hop), and goat on the Christian holidays, marriages and baptismal ceremonies of their children.¹³³

The *gäbbars* in Agarfa had also an obligation to provide labor service to their masters. They involved in providing labor service such as building houses, constriction of granaries, ploughing and harvesting the crop of the *mälkäña*. The *gäbbar* wife on her part carried different labor

¹³⁰ Informants: Ebrahim, Kedir and Jemal Ahmed.

¹³¹ Ketema, p.32; Abbaa Gadaa Warqiidha Abbaa Soorii, *Sirna Gadaa Saba Oromoo, Maxxansa 3ffaa (The Gada System of The Oromo people)*, (Finfinnee, 20100), p.112.

¹³² *Ibid*; Mindaye, p.66.

¹³³ Mindaye, p.67. Informants: Ahmed Alo, Abdo Adäm, Kassim Hussien.

services such as grinding, baking and various kinds of indoor services. The children were involved looking after the cattle of the *näftäña*.¹³⁴

In 1920's, the former tribute in kind was replaced by tax payment in cash. According to the new tax law the *gäbbars* were classified in to four groups in accordance with their economic status. The criteria of classification were the number of cattle owned by *gäbbars*. The amount of taxes decided to be paid according to this tax law were 40, 30, 20, 10 birr for the first the second the third and the fourth categories respectively.¹³⁵ The impact of the conquest on the Arsi Oromo in Agarfa of Bale was not only in political and economic sphere of life. The oppression also manifested itself in cultural aspect of life. Informants remembers the cultural and religious oppression they faced under *näftäña-gäbbar* system. As the *gada* system was destroyed and replaced by a new political system the cultural values of the Oromo were degraded and regarded as backward and traditional.¹³⁶

There was superiority complex from the sides of settlers. The Oromo cultural institution and traditional dietary and traditional wearing styles were despised among the Christian Amhara settlers and were regarded as “uncultured” and “backward”. At the early years of the conquest the Christians were unwilling to eat with the local from the same dish. This action led to the development of superiority over the local people in all aspects. Among the major factors behind inferiority complex were “the success of the settlers in the process of the conquest and the defeat of the Oromo and the mental subjugation that followed the conquest.”¹³⁷

The other area where the Amhara settlers manifested superiority complex was language. As Mindaye stated not able to speak Amharic has been considered as a “symbol of backwardness”. There was also superiority complex religious sphere of life. The Oromo ritual practices were despised among the Amharas.¹³⁸ Generally, like the Oromo in the other districts of Bale the Bale Oromo in Agarfa faced political, economic and cultural oppression under the *gäbbar*

¹³⁴Haro Biyansa.Oromia. *Ye Oromia hizb Tarik (The history of the people of Oromia)*, .Trans. (Addis Ababa, 1993), p.97; Informants: Abduro Kädär, Qassim Hussien and Kädär Dheko.

¹³⁵Mindaye, p.68.

¹³⁶Informants: Abdo, Kassim and Kädär Cuqule.

¹³⁷Mindaye, p.61; Informants: Kädär Dheko,Alo Bäkar and Adäm Dawud.

¹³⁸ Mindaye, p.62.

näffäñ system that imposed over them following the incorporation of the district in to the Ethiopia empire state.¹³⁹

2.2 Agarfa District during the Italian Period.

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 was the result of the Italian interest to establish a vast-Italian colonial empire in Africa. The attempt to establish a vast colonial empire was started in the last quarter of the 19th century.¹⁴⁰ The attempt to made Ethiopia part of their colonial empire in Africa in the late 19th century was unsuccessful due to their defeat at battle of Adwa in March 1896. Their defeat at Adwa resulted in opposition against the government of Italy and forced them to renounce their colonial ambition and to recognize Ethiopia as independent country. This was followed by the opening of Italian legation in Addis Ababa and establishment of diplomatic relation with Ethiopia.¹⁴¹ However, the Italian interest to colonize Ethiopia did not die totally. The Italians reflected their interest to colonize Ethiopia in tripartite treaty of December 1906 and by the allied power discussion of 1915. By the tripartite treaty Italy's interest to merge the hinterland of Ethiopia with her colonies of Eritrea and Italian Somali land was recognized by Britain and France and by allied discussion of 1915 Italy presented her plan to take over British and French Somali land Bank of Abyssinia and Addis Ababa Djibouti rail way. These are sings that indicate the revival Italian in Ethiopia.¹⁴²

The Italian used different strategy before their invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. In the four decades that followed the victory of Adwa Italy carried military preparations at home and at her colonies in Africa that shares boundary with Ethiopia, Italian Somali land and Eritrea.¹⁴³ On the other hand the Italians were involved in subversive activities to win support disappointed local chiefs by the different measures taken by the emerging autocratic government of Emperor Haile Selassie. The Italians used ethnic and regional discontent against the government Emperor Haile as the best opportunity for their subversive activities.¹⁴⁴ After completing the necessary preparation Italy invaded Ethiopia in October 1935 by using the Walwal incident of December,

¹³⁹Informants: Ebrahim, Hussien Alo and Usman.

¹⁴⁰ Crummey, p.233.

¹⁴¹Bahru, p.150.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

¹⁴³*Ibid*, p.181.

¹⁴⁴Saheed A. Adejumobi, *The History of Ethiopia*, (London, 2007) p.74.

1934 as a pretext. The invasion came from two directions, in the north from their colony of Eritrea and from their colony of Italian Somaliland.¹⁴⁵

The province of Balé was invaded by the Italian army from south that stationed in the Italian Somaliland. The Italy army entered Balé via Elkere in 1937. As they did in the other parts of the country the Italians made their best effort to win the support of Somali and Oromo local chiefs. Their effort was able to bear fruit when they won the full support of the Somali local chief in Elkere, named Fatule Taqane.¹⁴⁶ The Italian used the strategy of persuading one local chief with the other local chief. For instance, they sent the Somali local chief Fatule Taqane to Fitawrari Nuho Dadhi of Rayitu. Nuho Dadi in turn was sent to Goro to win the support *Qañazmach* Mahammed Yube. Nuho Dadhi played important role in convincing the Goro local chief and in spreading the news of the coming of the Italians among the local people and persuaded them to stand on the side of the Italians. Mähämmäd Yube also persuaded the *balabat* of Robe walashe, who guided the Italians in their way to Goba the then capital of the province

2.2.1 Patriotic Resistance Movement.

Like other parts of the country there was a patriotic resistance movement in Bale against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. The patriotic movement was led by *Ras* Desta Damtaw the governor of Sidamo and *dajazmach* Bäyänä Märed, the governor of Balé.¹⁴⁷

According to my informants the Balé Oromo in Agarfa were among those who participated in the Patriotic resistance against the Italian invasion at the beginning. However, many of the local Oromo were forced by the government to participate in the patriotic resistance movement and those who refused to participate in the war of resistance were punished by the government. A symbol of coward is said to have been made by hot metal on the forehead of those who refused to join the patriotic movement.¹⁴⁸

At the very beginning of the invasion of the province the Bale Oromo in Agarfa joined the patriotic movement against the invasion until the Italian subversive activities was able to bear

¹⁴⁵Cummey,p.233; Bahru,p.153

¹⁴⁶Mindaye, p.71.

¹⁴⁷Ketema, p.49; Tadla Zeyohannis, *YeItiyopia Tarik: Italiya Beitiyopia Kewalwal esk Gonder Ginbot 1927 –Hidar 1934 EC (Ethiopian History: Italy in Ethiopia From December 1927- November1934 EC)*, (Addis Ababa, 2012), p.87.

¹⁴⁸Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Kädär Chuqule and Hussien Alo.

fruit. Informants membered how one of the Bale Oromo in Agarfa whose name is Hussien Darmo fought against Italians was praised by the local due to his determination and courage at the battle field. To quote the words my informants.

Huseen Darmoo Lolee it means, Hussien Darmo Who owned a number
Kan sangaa hore of oxen and the hero man who
*Kan diinan lole.*¹⁴⁹fought the enemy forces

There were also other fighters who participated in the struggle against Italian invasion. A number of local people lost their lives while fighting against the Italians forces. Later on the local people heard information that the Italian attack was not against the Muslim, rather against the Christian settlers as a result they began to refrain from fighting against the Italians.¹⁵⁰

According to different writers the Italians applied the policy of divide and rule policy in order to win the support of Ethiopian people by using ethnic, religious and economic oppression in the country for their own ends.¹⁵¹The Italians were well aware of the *gäbbar-näffäña* system imposed over the people of southern Ethiopia. The Oromo were among the victims of the *gäbar-näffäña* system. So, the Italians believed that The Oromo will support them in the process of occupation of Ethiopia. To that end, the Italy included the Oromo policy in her war of aggression which was intended to use the Oromo against the Amharas .The Italians severely treated the Amharas to win the support of the Oromo.¹⁵² The Italians had also Muslim policy that intended to win the support of the Ethiopian Muslims.¹⁵³ As stated by Trimminghah the leader of the fascist Italy declared in speech “Fascist Italy intends to guarantee the Muslim peoples of Libya and Ethiopia peace, justice, prosperity, respect the laws of the Prophet, and wishes moreover to manifest its sympathy with Islam and Muslims of the entire world.”¹⁵⁴Following their occupation of Ethiopia the Italians implemented their Muslim policy by constructing mosques in Muslim inhabited regions, appointing Muslim administrators at local level and facilitating Muslims

¹⁴⁹Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Kädär Chuqule and Hussien Alo.

¹⁵⁰Informants: Hussien Alo, Mohämmed Waqjira and Adäm Hussien.

¹⁵¹Tadla, p.400; Emishaw Alemayehu, *Iteyopia Be Italiya Fashitoch Werara ametat 1928-1933 EC* (Ethiopia during the Italian invasion 1935-1941).Trans. (Addis Ababa, 2002), pp.173-174.

¹⁵²Emishaw, p.174.

¹⁵³Ibid, p.179.

¹⁵⁴J. Spencer, Trimmingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, (New York, Toronto, 1952, p.137.

Pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia. In Bale the Italians facilitated pilgrimage to Muslim religious centers in the province.¹⁵⁵

The Italians applied both the Oromo and Muslim policy in Balé. This policy was able to bear fruit in Agarfa. The Balé Oromo in Agarfa district, who faced economic and political oppression under the *gäbbar-näffäña* system, welcomed the Italian calls for peaceful submission. According to my informants as they understood that the Italian attack was not against them the local people hosted the Italian flag in different parts of the district in order to show the submission of the people in order to save the people from the Italian aerial bombardment.¹⁵⁶

The patriotic resistance was carried in different parts of the province was crushed and the Italians were able to occupy Goba the then capital of Balé. Following the Italian occupation Bale was divided in to two commissariats and six *residenza* (district). These were the commissariat of Goba including the *residenza* of Goba, Dodola and Sacchegillo (Dallo) the commissariat of Ginnir that included, Ginnir, Magalo and *Shek* Husien. According to this administrative arrangement made by Italians Agarfa was under Goba *residenza* (district) later the Italians established center of Administration in Agarfa. This became a factor for the foundation of the present day Agarfa town.¹⁵⁷

Following their occupation the Italians introduced various reforms that enabled them to win the support of local people. As they formerly promised to “liberate” the Ethiopia Muslim they took a measure against the socio-economic and political system imposed over the local people following the incorporation the district into the Ethiopian Empire state. Hence, the Italian abolished the *gäbbar* system in which the peasants were quartered to the *mälkäñas* and to the soldiers commonly known as *näffäña* and local officials at the lower level of administration. This Italian measures relived the local community from the burden imposed over them by the *gäbbar näffäña* system. As a result they supported the Oromo of Bale in Agarfa district supported the Italians. By abolishing the *gäbbar-näffäña* system the Italians restored the land appropriated from the local people to their former owners. Informants remember what was said by the Oromo of Bale in Agarfa to show their support and allegiance to Italians in the following way?

¹⁵⁵Emishaw, p.182; Mindaye, pp.73-74.

¹⁵⁶Informants: Usman Garado, Hussien Alo and Ebrahim Bakaro.

¹⁵⁷Ketema, p.49; Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Nure Chuqle and Hussien Alo.

Irri kaartaa

Jalli saanjaa

*Hin hidhadu erbee ni galla baandaa*¹⁵⁸

It is to mean that to be equipped with modern firearms I would like to Banda (collaborator of Italians) than wearing erbe (a traditional cloth made up of leather). This was the intention made by the local people to show to how much degree their rights were respected under the Italian rule.

Concerning religion the Oromo of Balé in Agarfa like their fellow men in other parts of the province of Balé granted the right to exercise their religion with freedom. According to my informants it was a time when they were treated as human and their right to equality was restored in all aspects of life.¹⁵⁹ In other parts of Balé the Italians constructed mosques in the towns like Goba, Manna, Ginnir and also facilitated pilgrimage to Muslim center in the province like that of Dire Sheik Hussien. But in Agarfa the Italians had not constructed either Mosque or religious school.¹⁶⁰

At the early stage of the occupation in line with the abolition of the *gäbbar* system and the land categorized as government land and the land occupied by the *mälkäñas* and soldiers was restored the *gosa* that it formerly belong. The Italians exempted the Oromo of Bale from paying *asrat*. However, in the later years of their occupation the local people were ordered to pay *asrat* through *balabats* based on the number cattle by an individual. According to my informants toward the end of their Italians rule turned to be oppressive and exploitative. To express to how much degree the Italian rule became oppressive and exploitative toward the end of their rule they explained it in the following way. “*Xaaliyaaniin gara boodaa koora kopheeffachuun akka fardaa nu yaabbachuu barbaadde.*”¹⁶¹ Toward the end of their rule the Italians had prepared saddle to ride like horse.

AS it was discussed before one of the Italian divide and rule policy was the Muslim policy that aimed at winning the support of Muslims. Like other parts of the country this policy was used by the Italian in the district of Agarfa .The Italian execution directed against the Christians in

¹⁵⁸Informants: Kädär Chuqule, Fayo Qäbäto and Jämal Ahmed

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰Mindaye, p.73; Informants: Kädär Chuqule, Fayo and Jämal Ahmed.

¹⁶¹Ketema, p.50; Informants, Kädär Chuqule, Adäm Dawud and Kassim Hussien

Agarfa and the main victims of the Italian occupation and their rule in the district of Agarfa were the Christian settlers. According informants it was the collaboration of the Muslims that saved things from going from bad to worse. In spite of the political and economic oppression they faced under the *gäbbar-ntfäña* system the Muslim in Agrafa like others Muslim in the other parts of the province helped the Christian to escape from the Italian execution by providing them Muslim cloth such as *Imama, Gufta, and Darga*.¹⁶²

In Agarfa the leading role in the process of saving the Christian from the Italian execution is said to have been played by a Muslim religious leader *sheik* Abdulwahab Yunus of Horro, who convinced the local people not to handover the Christian to the Italians. The people accepted to the advice of this Muslim religious leader and provided the Christian with Muslim cloths and saved them from total humiliation. In the struggle made against Italian towards the end of the Italian period like the early resistance to Italian, the Christians took the lead in the second phase of struggle against Italians.¹⁶³

2.2.2The Foundation of Agarfa Town

Urbanization in Bale is a recent phenomenon. The major towns in the province were the outcome of the incorporation of the province into the Ethiopian empire states in the last decade of the 19th century. The process of incorporation led the development military garrison into. For instance, the major towns the province towns Goba and Ginnir were formerly a military garrison established by the army Menilik led by *dajazmach* Afaw Darge and *dajazmach* Walde Gabriel.¹⁶⁴

The establishment of Agarfa town was the outcome of the Italian occupation of the district. According informants Agarfa was administered from the Italian administration center at Goba. Before the establishment of Agarfa as a military camp and center of administration their first choice was the area of present day Dinsho town. Due to unfavorable climatic condition Dinsho no longer remained as a center for administration. The second choice of Italians next to Dinsho was the area of present day town of Ali in Agarfa district to the south east of Agarfa town. Ali was a market place for the people of the district and the people surrounding following the

¹⁶² Informants: Usman, Hussien Karku and Hasan Sulṭan; Biniyam Wandifraw, “life in the twentieth Century Ethiopia: Autobiographical Narratives of Ato Muhé Mohammäd, Wäyzäro Tänañewärq Assäged and Ato Yäšiṭla Habtäellase”, (BA thesis Addis Ababa University, History, 2003), p.47.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Mindaye, pp.55-57.

destruction of the market of the hill of Ambalat by the army of Menelik.¹⁶⁵ The town of Ali also failed to fulfill the necessary criteria to be a military camp firstly, the land scape of the town and the surrounding area is plain had no strategic significance to defend themselves from attack. In addition there was no water in the town and its surrounding area. A combination of these factors forced the Italian to abandon to use Ali as a military camp and forced them to search for another site. The local *balabats* guided Italian to the area of present day Ambentu to the north east of present day Agarfa town, Abmebentu was also not the Italians choice. Finally, the area where the present day Agarfa town exists was selected by the Italians as a center of administration.¹⁶⁶

There were different factors for Agarfa to be selected by the Italians, firstly the land scape has strategic importance, the western part of the town is bounded by mountain and there is a cave in the nearby area that could serve Italians as a fortification against their enemy. In addition Weyib River is in the nearby area to the west of the area selected as a center of administration. Accordingly, the Italians built their first administration site in Agarfa in 1938 in the southern part of the present day town at the place called Asano. This event marked the foundation of Agarfa as a town.¹⁶⁷

By the time of the establishment of Agarfa as administrative center by the Italians ten *balabats* were put under this administrative unit. They were from present day districts of Agarfa, Dinsho and Gasara. The ten *balabats* were Fasasa, Shafila and Koloba from Gasara, Seyimana and Lajo from Dinsho, Sambitu from Sinana and Agarfa, Ali, Ambentu and Qaso from Agarfa.¹⁶⁸

Following the establishment of Italian administrative center at Agarfa Tilinti Bolboni and vice Tilinti Fasola were appointed as administrator and vice administrator respectively. In addition the Italian officials two men were elected from the local community both from Christians and Muslim to run administrative activities under the Italian officials. These officials were Alamayehu Kasa from Christians and Haji Mohammed from Muslims. The then Italian military camp gradually developed to urban center and continued to serve as administrative center under different regions to the present day.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵Informants: Ebrahim, Ahmed Alo and Hussien Alo.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Informants: Ebrahim, Amed Alo and Usman.

¹⁶⁹ Agarfa district culture Tourism, The history of Agarfa town, pp.7-8.

CHAPTER THREE

3. THE DISTRICT OF AGARFA 1941-1974

3.1 Administrative Reforms and the role of local chiefs.

Following his coronation in 1930 Emperor Haile Selassie I introduced the first written constitution that aimed at strengthening his autocratic rule by centralizing the political power by weakening the political power of hereditary local chiefs.¹⁷⁰ The Emperor also introduced reforms in economic sector such as reforms on traditional land holding and taxation system were introduced with the aim of introducing the state income.¹⁷¹ The reforms were started to be implemented in the first five years of after the coronation of the emperor. The reforms were aimed at centralizing the political power and financial resources. The reforms introduced by the Emperor were started to be implemented in the early years of the 1930s. However, the implementations of the reforms were interrupted by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.¹⁷²

The reforms of the Emperor were against the privilege of hereditary local chiefs and the socio-economic conditions under the new emperor were oppressive and exploitative that forced some disappointed officials to side with the Italians during the Italian invasion. The Italians also tried their best to win the support of the people of southern Ethiopia by abolishing the *gäbbarnäffäña* system which enabled them to appear as a liberator.¹⁷³ As it was discussed before the Oromo of Balé in Agarfa welcomed the Italians who relieved them from the *gäbbar-näffäña* system that imposed over them following the incorporation of the district.¹⁷⁴ It was within the period of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia that the town of Agarfa was established as one administrative unit by using the area of present day Agarfa town as a military camp and center of administration. It was this event that marked the foundation of the town Agarfa that continued to serve as administrative center as capital of the district to the present day.¹⁷⁵

The Italian occupation came to an end in 1941 and the country was liberated from the Italian occupation and the emperor was restored to his former position in the same year. The liberation

¹⁷⁰Harold G.Marcus, *Haile Sellasse I The formative years 1892-1936*, (Lawrenceville, Asmera, 1987), p.117; Bahru, p.140.

¹⁷¹Markakis, 148.

¹⁷²Adejumobi, p.56; Markakis, p.148.

¹⁷³Adejumbi, p. 74; Mindaye, pp.72-73.

¹⁷⁴Informants: Hussien Alo, Ebrahim and kädir Chuqule.

¹⁷⁵ADCTO, The history of Agarfa town, p.7.

of Ethiopia from the Italian occupation and the restoration of the monarchy were followed by administrative restructuring that reduced the former 34 administrative units into 12 *Taqalaygezats* (provincial governorate) and decided to be ruled by appointed officials.¹⁷⁶ According to the new administrative restructuring Bale was made part of Hararghe provincial governorate with the status of *wärada* (district) and it was divided into *kebeles*. In 1946 Balé was promoted to the status of *awraja* under Hararghe *Taqalaygezat* (provincial governorate).¹⁷⁷

With the promotion of Bale to the status of *awraja* Agarfa was also promoted to the status of district. In reports about land measurement in Bale in 1944 and 1951-1953 Agarfa was explained with two different statuses. By the time of the first land measurement in Bale that was carried visually Agarfa was listed as one of the *kebeles* where visual land measurement was carried. According to some archival sources and other written source Agarfa was one of the seven *wäradas* (districts) under Balé *Awraja* where the land measurement by *qäläd* was carried. This indicates that Agarfa was promoted to the status of with the promotion of Bale to the status of *Awraja* and continued to maintain this administrative status under the restored monarchy.¹⁷⁸ The government once again carried administrative restructuring. This administrative restructuring promoted Balé to the status of *Taqalaygezat* (provincial governorate) by separating it from Hararghe *Taqalaygezat* and divided it into five *awrajas*. By this administrative structure Agarfa continued with its status of district and became one of the districts under Fasil *awraja*.¹⁷⁹

Following the liberation of the country the restored monarchy appointed his officials that administered the district that was established as administrative consisting of ten *balabats* during the Italian occupation. In the post liberation period the government continued to appoint the officials with Shawan background, the policy that was adopted by Emperor Menelik. Accordingly the first governor to be assigned as a governor of Agarfa district in the post liberation period was *balabaras* Tadäsä Shibash. He was a man from that locality with Shawan background. The official is said to have governed the district for about ten years.¹⁸⁰ On the other hand local Oromo chiefs were also recognized over their respective clans and regions. In order to easily communicate with the local people and to effectively implement the orders given from the

¹⁷⁶Teshale Tibebe, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974*, (Lawrenceville, 1995), p.115. Markakis, p.348.

¹⁷⁷Mindaye, p.15.

¹⁷⁸WTMACT, Folder No.2137 File No.5/78; Ketema, p. 63.

¹⁷⁹NALA Folder No.17.02 File No. 403.02.

¹⁸⁰Markakis, p.353. ADCTO, *The History of...*, p.8.

government the local *gosa* (lineage) leader were appointed at the lower level of administration. The local officials continued to use former titles of *balabat* and *burqa* that given to local officials following the incorporation of the district in to the Ethiopian Empire, the *balabat*. In addition to this appointment titles such as *Grazmach*, *Qagnazimach* and *Fitawrari* were also given to local chiefs in Agarfa.¹⁸¹ According Teshale Tibabu the above appointment titles were military titles that were given for the officials of the *gäbbar* system who participated in the wars of territorial expansion. However, these titles were given by Emperor Haileselesie for civil officials who had not served the state as leaders of the army.¹⁸² The district of Agarfa was divided into small administrative unit based on the settlement patterns of the different *gosas* and put under the administration of the *balabat*. According to oral and written sources the well-known *balabats* in the district were the following.¹⁸³

Table 1. List of the main *balabats* in Agarfadistrict.

No.	Name of the main balabat	Locality under his administration
1	Grazmach Kedir Abduro	Agarfa
2	<i>Grazmach</i> Burqa Batiro	Lajo
3	<i>Girazmach</i> Mohammed Siraj	Ali
4	<i>Girazmach</i> Sani Mame	Ambentu
5	<i>Girazmach</i> Qassim Bilu	Saymana
6	<i>Balabaras</i> Hussien Kediro	Qaso
7	<i>Ato</i> Kedir Usman	Sambitu
8	<i>Ato</i> Hussien Aba Jima	Oda

Source. A Report from Bale *Taqalay gezat* to the ministry of interior about low level local officials in January, 1963.

¹⁸¹Informants :Usman, Ahmed Alo and Jämal Usman

¹⁸²Teshale, p.116.

¹⁸³ NALA Folder No.17.1 .5 File No. 16.06

The local chiefs /*balabats and Burqas*/ were assigned at lower level of administration and they were empowered with the power to deal with administrative and judicial issues in their localities as long as it was not beyond their power. However, the officials were subordinate to the officials assigned by the central government and their power was very limited. They served as bridge between the local community and the higher government officials. The implementation of different decrees and proclamation and the collection of tax were carried through the *balabats* and *Burqas*. The *balabats* were entirely from the local people.¹⁸⁴

In order to make the system of administration more efficient and to create a favorable condition for tax collection the unit administration under one *balabat* was further divided into small administrative unit and administrators known as *čiqasum* (village chief) were appointed over these administrative units. The local official officials were instrumental in facilitating the exploitation of the local people.¹⁸⁵

Unlike the main *balabats*, who were from the local Oromo of Bale the *čiqasum* were appointed both from the local Oromo and the Amhara but large number of the *čiqasums* were from the Oromo of Bale. The *čiqasum* was empowered to administer and to collect tax in the locality under his administration under the supervision of the main *balabat*. There were also absentee *čiqasum* in the district of Agarfa. For instance, the wife of the Emperor, *Itege Menen* was mentioned as one of the *čiqasum* in Agarfa district as a *čiqasum* of Mokona.¹⁸⁶

As the main *balabats and thechiqashums* in other parts of the province the *balabats* and the *čiqasum* in the district of Agarfa were politically subordinate the officials appointed by the central government and economically also they were not given the right given the *balabats* in the other southern Ethiopian provinces. The *balabats* in Agarfa like the *balabats* in other parts of Bale did not enjoy the right to *siso* for the service they offered for the government. They were appointed as administrators over their respective *gosa* (lineage group). The land owned by these local officials was the land that belonged to their own lineage group before the conquest of Menelik.¹⁸⁷ In the process of land measurement in Bale that aimed at privatizing land the *balabats* in Agarfa tried their best to appropriate the *gosa* land for them to hold it as private

¹⁸⁴NALA Folder No.17.1 .5 File No. 16.06

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶NALA Folder No. 17.1.5 File No. 16.04

¹⁸⁷Informants: Kädır Dheko, Adäm dawud and Kassim Hussien;

property. In addition to this some of the *balabats* widely involved in purchase of land following the land measurement carried in the district which enabled them to own a number of *gashas* of land.¹⁸⁸ By the time of the introduction of the *qalad* institution in Bale *Awraja* in 1951, When the right to *siso* was demanded by the *balabats* in other districts of highland Bale some of the Agarfa *balabats* played important role in convincing the other *balabats* to turn down their demand fearing the eviction of the peasants if the redistribution of land was carried to grant the right to *siso* for the *balabats*.¹⁸⁹ Since the *balabats* did not given the right to *siso* a salary of ten Ethiopian birr was given from the government in lieu of *siso* right which continued until 1961.¹⁹⁰

Politically, the local *balabats* continued be subordinate to the officials appointed by the central government under the imperial regime. They were unable to enjoy equal access to political rights with that of the Christian officials appointed even at district level.¹⁹¹ For instance, from the nine governors who were assigned as a governors over the district from liberation to revolution as it is listed in the document obtained from Agarfa culture and Tourism office only *Fitawrari* Husien Mame was from the local Oromo of Bale eight of them were Christians who had the Shawan background. This indicates how much the local chiefs were denied equal access to political power and forced to remain subordinate to the Christian officials appointed over the district.¹⁹²

The denial of equal access to power was not exception to Agarfa district. It was a common problem in the province. As Gebru states it was this denial equal access to political and economic power that forced the local gentry in the low land Bale to search for external support to struggle against the existing exploitation and oppression.¹⁹³

Despite, the denial of equal access to political and economic rights the local Oromo officials continued to struggle for this rights .For instance, on the eve of the 1974 Ethiopian revolution one of the *balabats* of Agarfa made an attempt to be a member of a parliament and presented himself as candidate to represent Fasil and Delo which was then categorized as one election region. The *balabat* was *Grazmach* Kädär Abduro. However, the *balabat's* attempt was unsuccessful. As it was explained by the appeal to the imperial government of Ethiopia he was

¹⁸⁸Informant: Kädär Dheko, Aäm Dawud and Qassim Hussien.

¹⁸⁹Ketema, p.87; Informants: Ebrahim, Hussien Alo and Usman.

¹⁹⁰Ketema, p. 87.

¹⁹¹Informants: Kädär Chuqule, Jämäl Ahmed and Ahmed Alo.

¹⁹²ADCTO, p.8.

¹⁹³Gebru, p.136.

cheated by the official of the electoral board in the process of election. To quote some ideas of his appeal.

“----- ለ5ኛኒዜተደረገውየዘንድሮምርጫሕገመንግስትአንቀፅ 94
 እንዲሁምየምርጫአዋጅቁጥር 125 አንቀፅ 6
 ጋርየማይስማማዲሞክራሲያዊባለሆነመንገድብድምፅብልጫሳይሆንበሹመትመልክበምርጫቦርድባለ
 ስልጣኖችፍላጎትናትዕዛዝእንዲፈጸምተደርጓል፡፡”¹⁹⁴

The fifth round election carried in this year was against article 94 of the constitution and it contradicts with electoral decree number 125 article 6 and it was against the principles of democracy and given to the official not on the basis election but given as a reward of appointment. In his appeal the *balabat* further argued for the punishment of the officials who had violated his right and demanded to regain his right and moral compensation for the crime committed against his right. However, his appeal failed to bear fruit and he was accused of collecting money from local peasants and the Agarfa district police office was ordered to follow the action of this local *balabat*.¹⁹⁵

3.2. The Introduction of New Land Tenure system and Land Measurement.

As it is known land was a communal property among Arsi Oromo in Balé. It was a common property to members of a lineage group. However, there was difference in status among the members of a lineage groups based on their economic status mainly based on the number of herds owned by individuals. Irrespective of this difference in social status among the members of *gosa* (lineage) land remained a communal property of among the Oromo of Balé for generation until the conquest of the province by the army of Menelik in the early 1890s.¹⁹⁶

The conquest of Menelik was the first threat to the communal land owning system in highland Balé. Agarfa was one of the districts in highland Bale where the new socio-economic policy was implemented following its incorporation to the Ethiopian Empire. In the process of converting the communal ownership of land in to private ownership both Menelik and Haile Selassie

¹⁹⁴ Archive, NALA Folder No.17.1.5 File No.20.02.
¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*
¹⁹⁶ Ketema, p.19; Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Kädîr Chuqule and Fayö.

followed a systematic approach to implement the policy of land privatization that was unique from other conquered regions of southern Ethiopia at least in the process of privatizing it.¹⁹⁷

Following the conquest, the *gäbbar-näffäña* system was implemented in the way that was different from other regions. In other southern regions the conquest was followed by the eviction of peasants from their lands and the government took the largest portion of land and the local officials were granted the right to *siso* or one third of land for the service they offered for the gov't.¹⁹⁸ In Balé however, the conquest did not result in total dispossession of land. The local officials who were given the title of *balabat* under the new socio-economic system but did not enjoyed the right to *siso* like the *balabats* in other parts of the country.¹⁹⁹ They were only appointed over their own lineage group having the responsibility of serving the system at local level. Land remained under the control of the lineage group. However, the local peasants were assigned for officials and soldiers and they forced to pay tribute and to offer different services by the system known as *quter gäbbar*. In the course of time different methods were used by the settlers to evict the peasant from their lands. Forceful eviction and gifts were among the methods used to evict peasants from their land.²⁰⁰

In the post liberation period the government of Emperor Haile Selassie I issued different proclamation in relation to taxation and land tenure. The proclamations were aimed at increasing the state income from land by privatizing land. To that end, the government showed its determination in formulating series of taxation and land tenure decrees that were applied all over the country in general.²⁰¹ The first taxation decree in the post liberation period was issued in 1942. This decree decreased the amount of land tax to be paid by peasants by half as compared with the land tax in the prewar period. In line with the decree that decreased land tax the government came up with a solution that could maximize the income that the state could obtain from land by privatizing it.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷Informants: Jämal, Kädär and Fayö.

¹⁹⁸Hussien Jima, *The politics of Land Tenure in Ethiopian History: Experience from the South, paper prepared for XI world Congress of Rural Sociology*, (Torndhim, Norway, 2004) p.4; Siegfried Pausewang, *Peasant, Land and Society, Social History of Land Reform in Ethiopia*, (Munchen, koln, London, 1983), p.39.

¹⁹⁹Ketema, p.32; Archive, WTMAC Folder 2137 File No. 5/78 see appendix II

²⁰⁰Ketema, p.32; Mindaye, p.66; Informants: Mohammäd Waqqira, Hussien Karku and Hasän Sulṭan.

²⁰¹Markakisp.149; Bahru, p.193.

²⁰²Bahru, pp.192-193.

According to this decree the government planned to redistribute and to privatize it by abolishing the communal ownership of land that existed in Balé for centuries. This new plan of the restored monarchy was a new threat to the communal ownership of land in Agarfa since it targeted at centralizing and distributing the land maintained by the lineage group as a common property.²⁰³ The government decree was against the tradition of maintaining land in common which the local people prefer. So, the measure was not welcomed by the people from the very beginning since it was against their tradition of land holding, which was suitable for their economic activities.²⁰⁴

Among the major factors behind the decree of land measurement one was to identify the quality and size of land on which the government could levy taxes based on the cultivability or its productivity. In line with this the government was committed to standardize and centralize the fiscal policy by eliminating the intermediaries in the process of collecting tax by abolishing traditional form of land holding.²⁰⁵

The process of land measurement that was carried in Bale including Agarfa that had the aim of centralizing and distributing land created a favorable condition for government official and local chief to appropriate the largest portion of land for themselves in the whole process of land measurement and privatization. The taxation laws that followed the land measurement were used by the local officials as a means of evicting the peasants from their lands. It was from the very beginning of the process the peasants in Agarfa like peasants in other parts of the province began to suffer by measurement of land and introduction of new land tenure.²⁰⁶ As Ketema Meskela argued

The primary purpose of land measurement was identification of taxable land, one of its major effects was the conversion of the peasantry from tribute payers to individual land owning tax payers. But the high handed administration and intimidation by officials coupled with onerous taxation had resulted in the expropriation of many of the peasantry. Land measurement and taxation was thus

²⁰³Ketema, p .55; Informants: Ebrahim, Alo Bäkar and Adäm Dawud.

²⁰⁴Informants: Ebrahim, Alo and Adäm.

²⁰⁵Markakis, p.148. Ketema, p.54.

²⁰⁶Informants: Hussien Alo, Adäm Dawud and Aman Abdo.

had somewhat contradictory effect on tenure in highland Bale that enhancing individualization of tenure and undermining security of tenure.²⁰⁷

In addition to the decree that aimed at privatizing land the restored monarchy also introduced a law that abolished the *gäbbar- näffäña* system that was imposed over the people following the conquest by Menelik. It and also eradicated any payment of labor services to individuals. The attempt of the abolishing the *gäbbar- näffäña* system is said to have started before the Italian invasion. However, it was formally abolished by the Italian in southern Ethiopia which helped them to appear as a liberator.²⁰⁸ The restored monarch introduced a new tax law in 1942. According to this new tax proclamation land owners were ordered to pay 15,10,5 Ethiopian birr for *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf* (fertile, semi fertile, and unfertile) lands respectively. This tax law failed to make distinction between measured and unmeasured lands.²⁰⁹

The new taxation laws and measurement laws by which Bale was selected as a testing ground for its implementation was not supported by the people of Agarfa district who had faced different oppression under *gäbbar-näffäña* system. According to informants the people who were relieved from the *gäbbar-näffäña* system by the reforms introduced by the Italians were not interested by the restoration of the emperor and the different decrees that were issued following the restoration of the emperor.²¹⁰

The opposition against the monarchy began even before land measurement by the times of the restoration of the Emperor. According to existing literature attempts were made by the people to prevent the restoration the monarchy. Among these attempts people of Balé and Sidamo in collaboration with ex colonial soldiers led by Nur Gurwein made their own efforts to prevent the restoration of the monarchy and the *gäbbar-näffäña* system from which they relieved by the Italians.²¹¹ Similarly in the district of Dalo there was opposition to the restored monarchy and the new orders passed by the restored monarchy that was accompanied with armed revolt. For instance Mohammed Gada led armed struggle against the government in 1942 for about eight months in Dallo which created a great challenge to the officials who were administering the then

²⁰⁷Ketema, p.55.

²⁰⁸Markakis, pp, 149-150.

²⁰⁹Markakis, p.151; Ketema, p.56.

²¹⁰Informants: Usman, Jämal Ahmed and Hussien Alo.

²¹¹Gebbru, p.131.

Bale *warada*. This show how much the decrees issued by the restored monarchy had faced serious opposition from the very beginning.²¹²

The government decree of land measurement was first put in to practice in Bale in 1944. The district of Agarfa was among the district where the first land measurement in Bale was carried. The first land measurement was visual and it was carried by the officials at *wäräda* level in collaboration with the *balabats, burqas* and elders of the district who were responsible for administration at lower level of administration. Since the main objective of the land measurement was to identify taxable land by identifying settled and unsettled lands. The local peoples were ordered to indicate the lands belong to their *gosa*. Accordingly, *gosa* leader showed the lands that they claimed as on communal property of their *gosa*.²¹³ According to archival sources the visual land measurement categorized all measured land under *gäbbar* and unsettled land. All measured land in Agarfa was categorized under *gäbbar* land.²¹⁴ By the visual land measurement of 1944 the total amount of measured land in the district of Agarfa was 890, 905 and 105 *gashas* of *läm* (fertile), *läm-taf* (semi-fertile) and *täf* (poor) land respectively.²¹⁵

The 1944 visual land measurement was the first step in the process of land privatization in Agarfa district. By this stage of land measurement even though the government was unable to a large amount of land that could redistributed, the government was successful in facilitating favorable condition for the payment of land tax by registering it as a private property of a certain *gosa* among the society that maintained land as a common property for generation. The visual land measurement of 1944 laid basis for the privatization process carried in the latter two decades.²¹⁶ Even though land was previously a communal property the amount of land registered by the names of individuals within one *gosa* was different from one another depending on the individual's seniority, wealth and strength. The process of land measurement was full of corruption and the senior *gosa* and the rich are said to have taken the lion share of the land. This stage of land measurement individuals were not registered as owner private land. Land was

²¹² Ketema, p.56.

²¹³ *Ibid.* p.58; Mindaye, .76.

²¹⁴ Archive, WTMAC Folder No. 2137 File No.5/78

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Ketema, p.59; Infomants: Ṭäha Dawud, Aman Abdo and Alo Bakar.

registered by the name of *Angafa* (senior) that represented the other member of the *gosa*. The visual land measurement carried in Agarfa district was one step towards tenancy in the district.²¹⁷

The visual land measurement of 1944 did not bring an end to the communal ownership of land in the district of Agarfa. The pastoral way of life forced the local people to maintain land in common. Those who were relatives are said to have maintained land communal and preferred to be registered by the name of a senior of the *gosa* and continued to use it common.²¹⁸

The tax imposed on the peasants following the land measurement was based on the number of *gäbbar* land not on the size of land. This was also one factor behind maintaining land in common by local people in addition to their tradition of using land in common. The amount of tax paid according to the first land measurement that was carried visually was based on the number of land owners registered in tax book.²¹⁹

The land measurement that was carried visually failed to achieve the intended outcome. It did not result in standardizing and redistributing land as it was planned since the measurement was carried on the basis of the information provided by the local people. The size of land regarded as one *gäbbar* was different from one *gäbbar* land to another. However, the same amount of tax was levied on the different *gäbbar* land with different size. Following this land measurement the peasants in Agarfa district began to pay land tax. There was no difference in amount of tax paid among individual peasants. All of them were requested to pay twenty Ethiopian birr irrespective the size of land.²²⁰

The visual land measurement carried in 1944 did not result in the eviction of the peasants from their lands at this stage, the government preferred to register lands by the name of individual owners. The process did not meet such resistance and individuals were able to be registered as land owner as long as they were recognized by the members of the *gosa*. The registration did not include those who were out of the lineage group. By this stage of land measurement the government was unable to divide land among the state, church and the *balabats*.²²¹ According to archival source by the visual land measurement land was categorized into two categories, *gäbbar*

²¹⁷ Informants: Ṭäha, Aman and Alo.

²¹⁸ Ketema, 58.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*; Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Ahmed Alo and Hussien Karku.

²²⁰ *Ibid*.

²²¹ Ketema, p.59; Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Kädär Cuqule and Hussien Alo.

and unsettled. All visually measured land in Agarfa district was categorized under *gäbbar* land. The government was only able to own the land that was considered as “unsettled” land in other district of Balé.²²²

In 1947 the government introduced a new taxation decree that aimed at increasing land tax. According to this decree the peasants who were registered as land owners were ordered to pay twenty Ethiopian birr. The decree did not make any distinction between small scale holders and that of peasants with very large holding. According to informants the new tax law was imposed over them without considering the size of land owned by individual land owner and its fertility. The government was also unable to collect valuable amount of tax land following the land measurement. The peasants began to complain the tax imposed over them without considering the size of the land holdings.²²³

Following the completion of visual land measurement and the registration of individuals as private of the *gosas* the government officials in Bale who were well aware of the problem behind visual land measurement recommended the central government about the introduction of the *qäläd* institution that could help the government to appropriate extra land and also could also increase the income that could be obtained from land tax.²²⁴ The leading role in informing the central government about the importance of introducing the *qäläd* institution in Bale was played by the then governor of Balé. As it was explained by Ketema the *qäläd* institution was seen by the governor as the best means of evicting peasants from their lands by imposing of tax following the land measurement. The governor recommended that the government land tax that will be imposed over peasants following the land measurement will help the government to get land to be owned by the state which could be granted to land seekers by confiscating it from the peasants who failed to pay land tax.²²⁵

Another government official also recommended about the importance of the introduction of the *qlad* institution in Bale. The official explained the problem the Amhara and the soldier had faced during the Italian invasion in the years after the liberation due to the absence of the holdings and

²²²WTMAC, Folder No. 2137 File No.5/78

²²³Informants: Usman, Mohammed Waqjira, Ahmed Alo.

²²⁴Ketema, p.60.

²²⁵Ketema, p.60.

asked for the implementation of the *qälad* institution in Balé as a solution to provide *Madärya* land for the Soldiers by giving priority for the local people.²²⁶

The repeated recommendation and Appeal from the officials of Balé forced the imperial government respond to the appeal of the officials of Balé *awraja*. According to one letter written from central government to Balé *awraja* the government understood the problem behind the visual land measurement in Balé which created inequality among people and became administrative problem since individuals were requested to pay the amount of their holdings. The official also promised that the surveyors will send to Balé to implement the *qälad* institution.²²⁷⁺

On the other hand the people were against the government's plan of introducing the *qalad* institution in Bale. Information's obtained both form oral and written sources stated that as the government determined to introduce the *qälad* institution in highland Bale that included Agarfa district he local *balabats* who were well informed about the government plan and the impacts of the implementation of the *qälad* institution in other provinces decided to take their own actions against their introduction of the *qälad* institution.²²⁸ The local *balabats* discussed that the measurement of land and its registration in the name of an individual land owner will bring an end to communal ownership land in which all members of the *gosa* had equal to use the land for grazing.²²⁹

As it was discussed earlier the conquest of Balé was preceded by the conquest of Arsi which served as a stepping stone to conquer Balé. The leader of Siko clan Kabir Huba, Who was well aware about the conquest of Arsi and what happened to the people following the conquest accepted the peaceful submission presented by *Ras* Darge the in the process of the incorporation of Balé.²³⁰

The measurement of land in the province of Bale was preceded by that of Arsi. The information the local *balabats* in Agarfa district and other parts of the province had about the introduction of the *qälad* institution in Arsi and the outcomes of the introduction of the institution of *qälad* in Arsi proper forced them to stand against the introduction of *qälad* institution. The discussed

²²⁶Archive, WTMAC Folder No.2137 File No.5/78

²²⁷*Ibid.*

²²⁸ Ketema, p.p61; Informants: Hussien Alo, Kädär Dheko and Jämal Ahmed.

²²⁹Ketema.p.61; Informants: Ebrahim, Hussien Alo and Jämal Ahmed.

²³⁰ Ketema, p. 24; Mindaye, p.55.

about the negative impacts of the introduction of the *qalad* in Arsi on the local people and agreed to oppose the government plan of introducing the *qälad* institution. The leading role in convincing the local *balabats* to oppose the government plan for land measurement was played by religious leaders of Dire *Sheik* Hussien (Muslim religious sanctuary) in Bale. The Imam informed the local *balabats* were how the local Oromo people in Arsi were evicted from their lands following the introduction *qälad* institution and how the Amhara and Shewa Oromo became land owners in Arsi while the local people reduced to the status of tenancy and warned them not to allow the land measurement in their locality.²³¹

The opposition from the local *balabat* was solved by the then governor of Bale, who formerly recommended the introduction of the *qälad* intuition in Bale. The governor persuaded the Imam and the *Qadi* to attend the meeting held by the local *balbats* about the importance of the introduction of the *qälad* institution and convinced them to allow the land measurement in Bale. Accordingly, The *Imam* and the *Qadi* presented their appeal to Balé *awraja* and expressed their willingness to allow the land measurement .These religious leaders explain they will not a factor for the delay land measurement in Bale .They also demanded the government should give special consideration to the religious center of Dire Sheik Hussien and *Madärya* land should be given for it.²³² It was after this the governor informed the government that had facilitated the necessary condition for the land measurement .Based on this the government sent surveyors to Balé. The process of land measurement was started in 1951. Three groups of surveyors were sent to Balé. The first group was assigned to Goba and Dello, the second group was assigned to Dodola and the third group to Ginnir. The land measurement in Agarfa was carried by groups assigned to Goba.²³³

Even though the governor tried his best to convince the *balabats* in including that of Agarfa district the introduction of the *qälad* institution in Agarfa district was not free from opposition. The people, the *gosa* leaders and opposed to the land measurement and refused to cooperate with surveyors and threatened the process of land measurement in the district. Hence, the surveyors faced serious challenge in Agarfa since the peasants refused to appear on their lands when they

²³¹Ketema, p.61.

²³²Archive, WTMAC Folder No.1337 FileNo.2147

²³³ Mindaye.p.76; Ketema 62; Informants: Hussien Alo, Kädär Deko, Jämal Ahmed

were requested by the surveyors to show them the boundary of their land.²³⁴ Due to strong pressure from local communities the surveyors in Agarfa carried the measurement under the protection of the police force and even the surveyors appealed to the *Awraja* governor and the ministry of interior affairs and requested them to take action against the local people. Accordingly, the people were warned by the government that their land will be confiscated if they became obstacle to the process of land measurement and delayed its completion according to the time set by the government. The people on their part demanded that their land should be measured visually. The government accepted the demand and visual measurement was also applied which resulted in mixed type of land measurement.²³⁵

The first land measurement by *qälad* was completed in 1953 and the measured land was divided in to four categories based on the ownership of land. They were *gäbbar* (private land), *Sämon* (church land), government land and *madärya*.²³⁶

Table .2. Distribution of land in Agarfa district by Tenure according to the 1951 land measurement.

No	Types of land	Size of land in <i>gasha</i>
1	<i>Gäbbar/rest</i>	7099
2	<i>Sämon</i>	136
3	<i>Madärya</i>	1
Total		7236

Source. Ketema, p.63

The amount of state land according to the first measurement in Agarfa was not separately listed as that of the other categories of land. Existing literature only shows that there was about 2416 *gashas* of land was categorized under the state land in six districts including Agarfa.²³⁷

²³⁴ Ketema, p.62; Informants: Usman, Ahmed Alo and Kädär Chuqle.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Ketema, p.63.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

In principle the land referred as the state land was the land that was not claimed by individual landowners or the land without effective control under individual ownership. There was a tendency to claim that all lands in the low land areas as a state land. There was also a legal tradition that considers all land in the country as the property of the state.²³⁸

Samon (church land) this category of land was belong to the Ethiopian orthodox. According the first land measurement by *qäläd* 136 *gashas* of land were categorized as *samon* (church land). The church was empowered over this land to collect the different taxes. In northern Ethiopia the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was holders of a large proportion of land. The church land was not a common property of all churches. It was divided among individual churches and leading clergy.²³⁹

The land grant made by the government following this land measurement enabled the church to have its own income to run different activities and to support the church functionaries.²⁴⁰

The other category of land was *gäbbar* land. The *gäbbar* land refers to the land that was registered in the name of individual land owners. Land owners registered under this category paid tax directly to the government. The land under this category was the largest of all other categories in Agarfa it comprised 7099 *gashas* of land.²⁴¹

The *qäläd* institution also resulted in the classification of land based on its cultivability as *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf* (fertile, semi-fertile and unfertile). The amount of tax that was levied on peasants to be paid was based the cultivability of the land. Accordingly the tax was increased to 45, 40 and 15 Ethiopia birr for *läm*, *läm-täf*, and *täf* lands respectively.²⁴²

The land measurement of 1951 -1953 was more successful than that of the visual measurement of the 1944. It led to the registration of the former communal land owners in tax book as *alaqa* and *menzir*. *alaqa* refers to senior and the *menzir* refers to co-heirs. This tradition of land is said to have resulted in conflict among *alaqoch* and *menziroch* over land ownership in the years of head.

²³⁸ Equar Teka, ‘‘Agrarian reform and social change in Ethiopia since 1975’’, (BA thesis, Addis Ababa University, department of Applied sociology, 1986), p.11.

²³⁹ Ketema, p.63; Equar,p.10

²⁴⁰ Mindaye, p.76.

²⁴¹ Ketema, p.63.

²⁴² Informants: Mohammäd Waqjira, Adäm Hussien and Adäm Dawud.

According to my informants the main source of land dispute in Agarfa during the Imperial era was related to the conflict between *alaqa* and *menzir* over land ownership.²⁴³

Even though the first *qäläd* institution is said to have been successful than that of the visual land measurement of 1944, it was not free from corruption. As it was discussed earlier Agarfa district was one of the districts in Balé where the surveyors faced a serious opposition in the course of land measurement which resulted in visual land measurement in combination with the *qäläd* institution.²⁴⁴

This paved away for propertied class and the surveyors to involve in corruption by which the local *balabats* and other propertied class used to hide their actual possession. It was only the small scale holders who were victim of the introduction of *qäläd* in the first stage.²⁴⁵

By the time of the introduction of *qäläd* institution in Balé, the *balabats* of Balé who were denied the right to *siso* since the incorporation the province demanded the right to *siso* that was enjoyed by the *balabats* in other parts of the country. However, the *balabats*, who feared that the request to the right *siso* may lead to the eviction of their own people from their land. Among the *balabats* who played role in convincing the other *balabats* were *Haji Adem Sädo*, *Qäñazmach Husien Mame*, and *Qäñazmach Kénno Bänta* of Agarfa were the leading figures.²⁴⁶

Even though the land measurement carried in 1951-1953 was more successful than that the visual land measurement of 1944 it was not free from problem. According to informants and written sources corruption was a common phenomenon in the process land measurement. The propertied classes persuaded the surveyors with bribe and tried their best to hide their actual possession and to categorize their land under the category of *täf* (unfertile land). So, the surveyors and the propertied classes were the benefitters of this land measurement.²⁴⁷

The government realized the problems related to the process land measurement and the problems arise from the land measurement in the years ahead and ordered to re-measure land in 1963. The land measurement at this stage was more serious than the previous land measurements and it found thousands of *gashas* of land as extra land. This land measurement exposed that many

²⁴³*Ibid.*

²⁴⁴Ketema, p.63. Informants: Ebrahim, Hussien Alo and Jämal Ahmed.

²⁴⁵Solomon, p.9. Informants: Adäm Dawud, Kädär Deko and Abdo Adäm.

²⁴⁶Ketema, p.87; Informants: Ebrahim, Hussien Alo, Usman and Jämal Ahmed.

²⁴⁷Archive, WTMAC Folder No. 63 File No. 2137; Solomon, p.9.

landholdings particularly that of land lords were underestimated deliberately to benefit the land lord

3.3. The Burdens of taxation and Maladministration.

Increasing the revenue obtained from land was the main concern of the Ethiopian government since 1930s. The government introduced a policy that abolished the traditional land holding and taxation system in which a large portion of the tax appropriated by various intermediary level that served as bridge between the state the cultivator of land. However, the implementation of this policy was interrupted by the Italian invasion in 1935.²⁴⁸

Following the liberation of the country from the Italian occupation the government continued to implement the policies that were issued in the 1930s and also introduced news proclamations concerning land holding and taxation .In 1941 the government issued a uniform regulation for provincial administration that ended the traditional method of land holding by government officials as a substitute of Salary. According to this proclamation all the government employees were to paid monthly salary and the government officials' right to collect taxes, and free labor services were outlawed.²⁴⁹

In 1942 the government introduced a new tax proclamation that established a uniform taxation to be paid in the newly introduced Ethiopian currency. This proclamation also classified land into three categories fertile, semi-fertile and poor based on cultivability. A land tax of 15, 10 and 5 Ethiopian Birr was decided to be paid for fertile, semi fertile and poor land respectively.²⁵⁰ As it was discussed in the preceding topic the government carried successive land measurements as one means of increasing the state revenue from land. The province of Bale was selected as a testing ground of the new land measurement.²⁵¹ The district of Agarfa was one of the districts where the land measurement was carried. Following the visual land measurement of 1944 the

²⁴⁸ Markakis, p.148.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*; Bahru, p.193; Ketema, p.56.

²⁵¹ Ketema, p.56.

peasants in the district of Agarfa started to pay land tax. This brought to an end to the former tax based on the number of cattle owned by individual peasant.²⁵²

The first land measurement by *qäläd* was completed in 1953 by classifying land into four categories, namely, *gäbbar*, *sämon*, government and *madärya* based on ownership of land and also classified it into three categories such as *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf* based on its cultivability. The completion of the land measurement was followed by serious measures that attempted to increase the state income and to benefit its officials and soldiery. Following the completion of the land measurement the government issued new tax proclamation that could applied uniformly all over the country. Accordingly, individual land owner was expected to by pay 45, 40 and 15 Ethiopian birr for *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf* respectively.²⁵³

According to sources both oral and written the peasants were required to pay taxes both on the land that was registered by their name by the visual land measurement of 1944 and the extra lands found by the *qäläd* measurement of 1951-1953. However, it was difficult for the peasants to pay the tax imposed over them by the government. There were different factors behind this among this there was no infrastructure and access to market in the province of Bale in general and the district of Agarfa in particular which could help them to sell their products to pay the government taxes.²⁵⁴ The then governor of Balé *awraja* is said to have argued about the unfairness of the tax imposed by informing the absence of infrastructure as a major problem and recommended the central government that it should put this into consideration before imposing the same amount of taxes with other parts of the country. Nevertheless, the recommendation failed to bear fruit and the governor was warned by the ministry of interior that he will be responsible for any failure of tax payment by the peasants.²⁵⁵

The other major problem was that by the times of the introduction of new taxation law in 1954 the highland Balé was affected by a serious drought. Agarfa was one of the most seriously affected parts of Balé by this drought. The government tax law did not put consideration the seasonal variation of products. A combination of these all factors forced the local people to appeal to the governor of Bale *awraja* .The governor took measure to solve the problem. He

²⁵²Infomants: Usman G, Kädär Chuqule and Jämal Ahmed.

²⁵³Ketema, p.84.

²⁵⁴ Informants: Ebrahim, Usman and Kädär Chuqule.

²⁵⁵ Ketema, p.65; Infomant: Kädär Dheko, Qassim Hussien and Alo Bäkar.

promised to postpone the payment of *asrat* and ordered only the payment of land tax. However, once again he was warned of by the minister interior of exercising power beyond his authority and encouraging tax evasion.²⁵⁶

According to my informants when their appeal failed to bear fruit even in the times of problem when the district was affected by serious drought they were forced to default tax which in turn led to the other problems that affected the lives of the peasantry. The refusal of paying tax was not the only problem that happened following the introduction of the *qalad* institution. However, peasants refused to pay tax since the visual land measurement of 1944. There are a number of letters written to Balé *awraja* about tax arrears in Balé. For instance, a letter written from the ministry of finance to Balé *awraja* in November 1949^{Ec} stated that there were a total of tax arrears of 2194066.08 Ethiopian birr in six districts of Balé. From this 349640.52 Ethiopian birr was unpaid tax in the district of Agarfa from the visual land measurement of 1944 to November 1956.²⁵⁷

According to my informants there were different factor behind the peasants failure of paying tax. Firstly, the peasants were against the introduction of new land tenure from the very beginning since it was against their tradition of holding land in common. Secondly, the peasants complained that their holding was over estimated by the surveyors since visual land measurement was also applied in the district side by with the introduction of the *qälad* institution, thirdly the severe drought that affected the district by the time of the introduction of the *qälad* institution and the government refusal to respond the peasants appeal.²⁵⁸

The peasants' refusal to pay tax forced the government to take different measures. The local *balabats* were ordered to collect the tax arrears in the locality under their administration. The peasants were given two alternatives either to pay tax or to lose their land. This forced the peasants to pay tax even by selling land in order to escape from the total confiscation of their land.²⁵⁹ However, since there was a large amount of unpaid tax it was very difficult for peasants to pay all the tax arrears. Hence, they continued to default tax which resulted in accumulation of a large amount of tax arrears. According to the report presented to Imperial government of

²⁵⁶ Ketema, p.65.

²⁵⁷ Archive, NALA Folder No.17.01.05 File No.04.01

²⁵⁸ Informants: Ebrahim, Adäm Dawud and Jämal Usman.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Ethiopia at the time of the promotion of Balé to the status of *Taqalay gezat* there was 4,000,000 Ethiopian birr tax arrears in the province of Balé.²⁶⁰ This indicates the peasants continued in their refusal of pay tax. This forced the government to take different measures. Among these the government decided to confiscate the land of those who failed to pay the government tax and to sell it for those who were interested to buy it.²⁶¹

According to informants they were forced to sell their properties to pay tax and many peasants lost their holdings. As a result of this the peasants appealed to the government that their holding was over estimated by the surveyors during the land measurement and they forced to pay tax for the land that was belong to them.²⁶² The government on his part committed to collect the tax arrears by enforcing the local officials and the peasants. A campaign of collecting tax arrears was carried. According archival sources obtained from Balé Zone administration archive section a campaign of collecting tax arrears of 1953-1962 was carried in the district of Agarfa from August 1961 to November, 1961. By this campaign 16430 birr were collected.²⁶³

The collection of tax arrears was accompanied with land confiscation and imprisonment of the peasants. The problem forced the representative of Fasil *awraja* appealed to the then Ethiopian parliament that the people were unable to shoulder the tax imposed over them due to over estimation of the land holdings by the surveyors and the people forced to lose their and demanded that government should re-measure the land peasants should pay in their actual holdings. The representative also requested that peasants should pay tax according to the 1944 visual land measurement until effective land measurement will be carried. Official at district level also complained about the unfairness of the tax imposed over the people by explaining the impacts of collecting tax arrears without clearly known individual holding.²⁶⁴

The problem related land and tax such the peasants complain and the government's belief that actual land holding was hidden due to the corruption committed by the surveyors and this forced the government to re measure land in Bale. Accordingly, the surveyors were sent to Balé and the land was re-measured in 1963.²⁶⁵ The district of Agarfa was among the highland district of Balé

²⁶⁰ Archive, NALA Folder No. 17.02 File No. 403.01

²⁶¹ Informants: Ebrahim, Adäm Dawud, Hussien Karku.

²⁶² Informants: Ebrahim, Adäm Dawud and Mhammed Waqqira.

²⁶³ Bale Zone Administration Archive Section (BZAAS here after) Folder No. A1 File No. 14.

²⁶⁴ Archive, WTMAC Folder No. 2137 File No. 5/78 see appendix VI

²⁶⁵ Gebru, p.132; Laphiso, p.184; Solomon, p.9.

the land measurement of 1963 was carried. The land measurement carried in Agarfa district at this stage excluded the forested land under the *balabats* of Lajo that was under the rule of Burqa Batiro, Agarfa that was under the *balabats* of Hussien Mame and Aba Jima while the Shafila, Koloba, Fasasa, Sambitu, Ali and Qaso were the regions where the whole area were measured.²⁶⁶

According to a letter sent to Bale *Taqalay gezat* from central government there was disagreement between local officials in which the local officials condemned the surveyors that they failed to get extra land. The letter was a response to the letter written from Balé *Taqalay gezat* it warned the officials in the province not to become obstacle to the process of land measurement by stopping the surveyors from measuring land and the process land measurement should be carried by respecting the right of the people.²⁶⁷

The land measurement at this stage was serious and was more effective than the former land measurement carried in the province. As it was expected by the government the land measurement was completed by getting extra land. Following the completion of the land measurement the government came up with a new a serous solution to overcome the problem of tax default. The new solution was that the government decided to confiscate the land of the individuals who failed to pay the land tax for three consecutive years. This government measure led to the emergence of a new category of land known as *gebrätäl* (land confiscated from those who failed to pay land tax).²⁶⁸

In line with the re- measurement of land tax was also increased from 58, 52, 19.50 Ethiopian birr to 72, 64, 24 Ethiopian birr for fertile, semi fertile and poor lands respectively. The peasants were unable to pay the tax imposed over them and tax default continued and this resulted in confiscation. According written sources 4851 *gashas* of land were confiscated in Fasil *Awraja* that consisted of six districts including Agarfa.²⁶⁹ Archival sources indicate that 193 *gashas* of land was confiscated from district of Agarfa as *gebrätäl*. According to this archival source the land owners handed over their lands to the government by “their own will and interest” due to

²⁶⁶ Archive, WTMAC Folder No. 2137 File No. 5/78

²⁶⁷ Archive, NALA, Folder No. 17.1.5 File NO.16.06

²⁶⁸ Gebru, p.133; Laphiso, p.186; Solomon, p.10. Hussien, p.6.

²⁶⁹ Gebru, p.133; Laphiso, p.186.

their failure to pay land tax. The tax that was imposed over the peasants resulted in the eviction of the peasants from their lands.²⁷⁰

Following the land measurement of the Emperor visited Balé in March, 1964. Representatives of different district of Balé explained their problem to the Emperor. During his visit the Emperor issued different proclamation based on the appeal of the people and the explanation presented by the governor of Balé about the problem of infrastructure and the backwardness of the province which was stated as one factor for the peasant failure to pay tax. One the proclamation was about the large amount of tax arrears in Balé. The Emperor ordered that the tax arrears from 1953-1962 should be collected through the treasure of Balé governorate general and should be used for the construction of infrastructure in the province and the tax arrears of 1964 and 1964 should be paid directly the central government.²⁷¹

Despite the Emperors proclamation and promise the peasants continued to default tax. For instance, a letter written from Bale *Taqalay gezat* to the governor of Fasil *awraja* Täddäsä Shibash in February 1965 there were 103623.91 Ethiopian birr tax arrears of 1953 and 1964 in five districts of Fasil *awraja*. From this 14023.16 were the tax arrears in the district of Agarfa.²⁷² As it was discussed earlier the tax arrears in the district of Agarfa until 1956 was 349640.52 Ethiopian Birr. After a decade the tax arrears was reduced to 14023.16 birr there is very great variation between the tax arrears of the two period .This indicate that the campaign carried by the government to collect the tax by enforcing the peasants to sell their tangible assets and land was more successful in the district of Agarfa. However, this does not mean that the people of Balé in general and that of Agarfa continued to pay the land tax imposed over them by the government following the 1963 land measurement and the visit of Bale rather the peasants continued to default tax since the measurement exposed a number of hidden *gashas* of land mainly that of propertied class on which they were requested to pay tax. As it was discussed earlier one of the factors behind tax default was lack of infrastructure. The government made no attempt to introduce infrastructure and the province was backward. So, the peasant continued default tax

²⁷⁰ Archive, WTMAC Folder No.2137 File No.5/78

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² WTMAC, Folder No.112. File No.--

since it was not used for the benefit of the people of Bale and felt that exploited and oppressed by the administrators and local land lords.²⁷³

The government on his part continued land confiscation, forcing the peasants to pay tax and imprisoning the peasants which forced peasants in the district of Agarfa to lose their land. According to the existing source the tax arrears increased at very large scale from 3,381,568.32birr for the year 1953-1953 to 8,012,226.20 for the year 1960-1964 at provincial level.²⁷⁴

The imposition of heavy tax was not the only system by which peasants in Agarfa were evicted from their holdings. The government officials assigned at district level used systematic forceful eviction of peasants from their peasants. For instance, one of my informants by citing his father and grandfather stated that his grandfather was evicted by from his holdings in the locality known as Galema Hebano by an official called *Gerazmach* Giza Hayile, who ordered him to settle at a place called Shawade, near present day Ali town.²⁷⁵ Later, according to this informant his grandfather and father were appointed over the responsibility to keep the state granary that was built in Shawade to store *asrat* (one tenth of the produce in kind) paid by peasants for the state. The taxes in kind were collected from all villages in the district and stored in the state granary in Shawade near present day Ali town.²⁷⁶

The other informant whose background was Shawan Oromo stated that he father bought land from the locality of Galama Hebano and put all receipts related to land in the hands of one district official whose name is Eshete Sertsemedin, who was became the father of this informant through Oromo culture known as *harma hodhaa* (fatherhood through breast feeding). Following the death of the father this informant the official refused to hand over all receipts related to land to the informant and evicted this informant and others from the locality known as Galama Hebano. As a result this informant was forced to lead a life of tenancy at Garora a place within this district due to the dispossession of his land by this official.²⁷⁷ The existing literature on this issue support the idea presented by these informants. For instance, Gabru stated that “governors

²⁷³Gildas Nicholas, *Protest in Ethiopia, Ufahamu: A journal of African studies*, 1972.

²⁷⁴Gebru, p.133; Informants: Mohammed Waqjira, Jämal Usman and Usman.

²⁷⁵*Ibid.*

²⁷⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷⁷Informants: Mohammed Waqjira, Jämal Sulṭan and Usman.

confiscated lands claiming that owners had either failed to pay tax levied or committed criminal acts against the state.²⁷⁸

The land measurement and the increment of tax did not only result in the confiscation of land. It also became a factor for land sale, the practice which was formerly alien to the local community. The new land tenure that had privatized the communal land lands to the introduction of land sale. As a government increased land tax to increase its income was obtained from land tax the main victims of the government measures were peasants with small holdings became the first victim of the measures taken by the government. This was because the feudal lords passed the burden to the peasants.²⁷⁹ On the other hand the government warned that the land will be confiscated if oneself failed to pay the land for expected from him to be paid for the government. As a result peasants in the district of Agarfa who were unable to pay the tax imposed over them preferred to sell part of their holdings in order to pay tax and to escape from the total confiscation of their land by the state.²⁸⁰

As it was discussed earlier before land measurement under the restored monarchy land was a common property of the lineage group and it was not subjected to sale. The tradition of maintaining land as a communal property was common among the Oromo people until the conquest of Menelik. This tradition continued in Balé despite the loss of parts the land the *mälkäña* and *näḥḥeña*.²⁸¹ The privatization of land however resulted in the registration this communal property in tax book in the name of *angafa* (senior) who took the name *alaqa* who represented his coheirs, who took the name *Menzir*. This type of registration of land is said to have resulted in land sale in the years ahead. Due the conflict between the two on the ownership of land the land belong to them was largely subjected to sale.²⁸² According to my informants the common ownership of land by *alaqa* and *menzir* was the major source dispute over land in the district during the imperial era.²⁸³

²⁷⁸ Gebru, p.132.

²⁷⁹ Gebru, p.133; Informants: Ṭaha Dawud, Aman Abdo and Alo Bakar.

²⁸⁰ Informants: Ṭaha, Aman and Dawud.

²⁸¹ Pawsewang, *Peasant, Land and Society*-----, p.20; Ketema, p.30; Informants: Hussien Alo, Jämal Ahmed and Adäm Dawud.

²⁸² Ketema, pp.64 and 74; Informants: Hussien Alo, Ebrahim Bakaro and Jämal Ahmed.

²⁸³ Informants: Hussien, Ebrahim and Jämal Ahmed.

The actors of land market were both the Christian settlers and the local chiefs. Some local chief were largely involved in land purchase. The Shawan Oromo who came to the district in the post liberation were among the participant of the land purchase. There were also local *balabats* who largely involved in land purchase. Informants remember to what degree one of the *balabats* of Agarfa was involved in the land purchase in the following way. According to informants a local chief named *Qāñazmach* Kenno Banta is said to have said the following to express the degree of his interest in land purchase. To quote the word of the *balabat* as it was explained by informants “*Lafa kiyya irra deemee Agaarfaa ka’ee Anaajina bu’uu barbaada*”

“I want to travel from Agarfa to Anajina (Dire sheik Hussien) on my own land.” This indicates to how much degree the local *balabat* was interested and involved in the process of land purchase to be a land lord with very large holdings.

The other measure of the government that threaten the life of the peasants of Balé including that of Agarfa district following the introduction of the new land tenure was the imperial land grant. The post liberation period witnessed a large scale imperial land grant.²⁸⁴ The tradition of land grant was commonly known even in the prewar period in which the government officials and church were made beneficiaries. Existing literature shows the church held up to 30% of land in northern Ethiopia.²⁸⁵ It was this tradition of imperial land grant that was carried in a wider scale in the post liberation period aimed at increasing supporters. To implement his plan the government enacted a series of proclamation that aimed at imperial land grant. In 1942 and 1944 the government enacted the proclamation by which it promised land grant to the patriots exiles, families of the patriots and civil servants.²⁸⁶

Imperial land grant was a new phenomenon in the district of Agarfa in the post liberation. In pre Italian period there was no official land grant carried in the district. However, the officials were able to own land through forceful eviction and gifts. As it was discussed earlier the south ward expansion of Menelik resulted in the *gäbbar näftäña* system by which the local people were assigned to the *mälkäñas* and *näftäñäs* to serve them as *gäbbar*. Informants remember the oppression and exploitation the Oromo Balé in Aarfa district had faced under the *gäbbar* system that was imposed over them following the incorporation the district into the Ethiopian empire

²⁸⁴Ibid; Informants: Gärma Däbalé, Tulu Däbalé and Bäkälä Abäbä.

²⁸⁵Equer; p. 10.

²⁸⁶Bahru, p.192

state until the Italian occupation.²⁸⁷ The Italians abolished the *gäbbar* system mainly to win the support of the local people in order to be seen as liberator.²⁸⁸ The informants consider the period of Italian occupation as a time when their rights respected in all aspect. They argued that the imperial land grants in post liberation period as a negative impacts of the Italian occupation since the liberation was followed by imperial grant mainly to the patriots, exiles, families of patriots and other loyal and civil servants which in turn led to the eviction of the peasants from their lands under different pretexts.²⁸⁹

According to the proclamation issued to grant land for the patriots, exiles, families of the patriots and civil servants the grant was carried was from the land tenure categorized as state land and *gebräṭal*. Here we have to note that to whatever the category the land belongs *it* was formerly belonged the local community in the period before land measurement and introduction of new land tenure.²⁹⁰ Lands under these categories were the lands that were taken from the peasants under the pretexts of ‘unsettled land’ which was categorized as government land and the land confiscated from those peasants who failed to pay land tax to the state which was categorized as *gebräṭal*. It was the land taken from the peasants in this way which that was granted the patriots, exiles, families of patriots and civil servants who were mainly from the northern part of the country. The law also changed the former *maderia* to freehold.²⁹¹

The government issued additional decree concerning imperial land grant in 1952. This law ordered that land should be granted to all landless and unemployed Ethiopian. According this law landless citizen had the right to apply to be granted land. However, the process of land grant for landless Ethiopians were very bureaucratic and one should first get a certificate of land grant and his/ her appeal should be approved by different officials from low level to higher level official starting from the burqa to the governor general and applicant was also expected to approve the existence of land to be granted. So, this process was tiresome and difficult for the poor. As a result the poor in this district did not benefit from the imperial land grant.²⁹²

²⁸⁷Informants: Kädär Dheko, Usman, Adäm Dawud and Kädär Sulxa.

²⁸⁸Mindaye, p.72.

²⁸⁹Bahru, p.191; Ketema, p. 70.

²⁹⁰Ketema, p.70.

²⁹¹*Ibid.*

²⁹²Informants: Germa Däbälé, Tulu Däbälé, Hussein Karku and Mähämmäd Waqjera.

Existing literature show that a large proportion of the land granted was from Bale. For instance Gebru stated that “the policy of imperial land grant also disinherited many farmers between 1942 and 1974 the government granted more than 4,828,560 hectors of land, most of it to its dignitaries from civil servant and military services perhaps as much as 30% of this located in Balé.”²⁹³

Archival sources also support this idea. For instance, a letter written from ministry of land administration to Bale governorate general stated that 1000 *gashas* of land was allowed to be distributed to the *näče läbaš* who were assigned in Bale to keep peace and security in the province. According to this letter the land should be granted to the patriots, exiles, widows and orphans and soldiers. It stated that land granted should vary according to the rank of soldiers. It mainly aimed at granting land for the above mentioned groups who registered for land grant 1954.²⁹⁴ Based on the order from central government a letter written by the governor of Bale *Awraja* governor to the governors of district stated about the allotment of addition land for grant and explained the size of land to be granted for *näčeläbaš* according to their rank. He ordered that three *gasha* for *shambal* (leader of three hundred men), two *gasha* for *hamsa alaqa* (leader of fifty) one and half *gasha* for *asir alaqa* and (leader of ten) and one *gasha* for a soldiers was decided to be granted in their in their locality).²⁹⁵

According to the order given by the then governor of Balé *Awraja* to six districts two *shambal* (leader of three hundred men), four *mato alaqa*(leader of hundred), ten *hamsa alaqa*(leader of fifty), fifty *asir alaqa* (leader of ten) and two hundred soldiers were assigned in Agarfa district to be given land. The total land assigned to be granted for the soldiers was 315 gshas of land.²⁹⁶ Another letter written by the governor of Bale *Awraja* to six districts in March 1954 stated about the allotment of additional land to be granted the *načlabaš* who were serving the government ordered the district governors to grant land for additional *načlabaš* assigned in their respective district. Accodngly, a total of 262 *načilabaš* were assigned over Agarfa district to be given 298 *gashas* of land.²⁹⁷

²⁹³Gebu, p.132.

²⁹⁴Archive, WTMAC, Folder No. 2137 File No 5/78.

²⁹⁵*Ibid.*

²⁹⁶*Ibid.*

²⁹⁷Archive, WTMAC, Folder no.2137 File No. 5/78.

My informants also stated that the imperial land grant was carried in the district of Agarfa following the land measurement carried in the district which resulted in the eviction of the peasants from their lands.²⁹⁸ However, both oral and written sources did not show the exact data of the land granted to different groups of individuals in the period under discussion. The main beneficiaries of land grant were the northern settlers and the churches. As it was discussed earlier the church in Agarfa was granted 136 *gashas* of land by the first *qälad* institution applied in the district from 1951 to 1953.²⁹⁹

The imperial land grant was accompanied with land sale since the grantees were allowed to sale the land granted to them without restriction. There were different factors that encouraged land sale. These were the increments of land price and commercialization of agriculture and accumulation of land in the hands of few individuals and the right given to sell it was among the factors for land in Ethiopia.³⁰⁰ There was an increasing demand for land due to the increasing number of landless people who want to own land through purchase. The coming of the Christian Shawan Oromo to Balé due to shortage of land and exploitative feudal orders in Shawa was among the factors that increased the demand for land in the district of Agarfa.³⁰¹ According to informants it was the new land tenure policy which was applied all over the country that created a favorable condition for the landowners in Shawa to be turned more exploitative and oppressive which in turn made the life of the peasantry more miserable. In order to escape from the existing oppression and exploitation the Shawan Oromo decided to flee to Balé where land was believed to be abundant by the time.³⁰² Most informants stated that early Christian Shawan Oromo arrived in the early years of 1950s and gradually increased in number. The Shawan Oromo were interested to have their own land since it was problems related to land forced them to flee their home. The only possible way for them to be landowner was through land purchase. So, they involved in land market and became one of the factors behind the increasing demand for land increment of its price which in turn force the landowners to provide land for market.³⁰³

²⁹⁸ Informants: Adäm Dawud, Kädär Dheko and Qassim Hussien.

²⁹⁹ Ketema, p. 63.

³⁰⁰ Bahru, p. 192.

³⁰¹ Informants: Tulu Däbälé, Bäkälä Abäbä, Nägash Rata and Germa Däbälé.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ Informants: Tulu Dabale, Bäkälä Abäbä, Nägash Rata and Germa Däbälé.

In addition to imperial land grant, confiscation of land by the government, sale of land peasants and forceful ejection of the peasants from their lands there was also another factor which is said to have played important role in increasing the percentage of land loss among the peasants. This was the system by which peasants lost their lands to money lender which was commonly known as *wälädaged*. Different factors such as paying tax, buying implements, tools, clothing, memorial feasts and wedding are said to have been the factors behind that forced the peasants the terms of the institution of *wälädaged*.³⁰⁴ According to this tradition a peasant took money from money lender to pay it back on fixed duration of time. The money lender on his part had the right to enjoy the right to hold the land belong to a peasant until the peasant pay back the money according to their agreement. If a peasant failed to return back the money according their agreement the money lender had the right to hold the land permanently. This system was among the way in which the peasants in Agarfa district lost their lands.³⁰⁵

Generally, the imperial land grants, forceful eviction and land sale resulted in the emergency of absentee land in lords in Agarfa district and other parts of highland Balé. Existing literature show that absentee landowners comprised about 15 percent of total number of land owners and their holdings was estimated to 12% of private land holdings in the province.³⁰⁶ Informants explained that large size of land was owned by absentee land lords whose lands were rented peasants or worked by landless tenants under the supervision of representatives from local officials. The accumulation land in the hand few individuals resulted in the emergence of mechanized agriculture in the highland part of the district in the locality known as Amigna on the eve of the 1974 revolution.³⁰⁷

The denial of equal access to political power and economic oppression related to heavy taxation and forceful eviction from lands were not the only means of oppression and dominance over the local people in the post liberation period. The dominance and oppression expressed itself in many ways. Since the incorporation of the district in to the Ethiopian empire state made the local people were made *gäbbars* of the soldiers and the officials. In the post liberation socio -cultural dominance of the Settlers over the Oromo Bale community continued to exist in many ways.

³⁰⁴Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Hussien Alo and Tullu Däbälé.

³⁰⁵*Ibid.*

³⁰⁶Laphiso, p.226; Solomon, p.11.

³⁰⁷Informants: Ebrahim, Usman Garado and Hussien Alo

Among these measures discrediting the Oromo cultural practices related with the *gada* system. The measures to erode the cultural practices related *gada* system was started since the incorporation of the province. However, the remains of these cultural practices that continued to be practiced even in the post liberation period. In spite of their adoption of Islam the Oromo of Bale continued to practice cultures that were associated with the *gada* even in the post liberation period. Different measures were taken in the post liberation period to ensure cultural dominance the Christian settlers over the local Oromo culture.³⁰⁸

The action of the government to hasten demise the cultural practices related to the *gada* system was further strengthened in the post liberation period. According to Mindaye Abebe the main measure taken by the government to eliminate the *gad* practice was accusing the *gada* leaders as criminals and prohibiting meeting related to *gada* cultural practices. My informants also argued that any attempt of meeting related to *gada* was strictly forbidden in the post liberation period. This played its own share in the demise of the *gada* system and ensuring the cultural dominance of the Christian settlers.³⁰⁹

Among the major areas where in equality manifest itself one was religion. Even though there was a principle of equality citizens irrespective of their religion in reality however the Muslims in the district like Muslims in other parts of the province were unable to enjoy equal rights with that of the Christians. The church received both material and financial support from the government. At provincial level the diocese (*the hageresibkat*) in Amharic was headed highly paid Bishop whose power was surpassed only by the governor general. In the post liberation period the church was one of the beneficiaries of the imperia land grant. *Sämon* or church land was one of the categories of land tenure in Agarfa. As it was discussed in the previous topic the first granted 136 *gashas* land by the time of the introduction the *qälad* intuition in Balé. According to informants there was no financial and material support for the Muslims who comprised the largest portion of the population of the district. There was no land grant or government support for Mosques in the district in the period under discussion.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸Mindaye, p.78; Informants: Usman, Ebrahim and Jämal Ahmed.

³⁰⁹*Ibid.*

³¹⁰Abera Ketsela, "The rebellion in Bale (1963-1970)", (BA thesis, Haile Selasie I university, 1971), p.18; Ketema, p.63; see also Adis Hiwot, *Ethiopia from Autocracy to Revolution*, (London, 1975), p.99; Gebru, p.136.

Unlike the church whose construction was supported by the government the mosques construction was not supported by the government. The construction of mosques was mainly supported by the local communities. The Muslim religious holydays were not recognized as national holiday. The *sheiks* were also not encouraged and supported by the government while the church at province level was led by government paid Bishop.³¹¹

The other areas of inequality were education. The introduction of modern education in the district was a recent phenomenon. The first schools were opened in early 1960s. Even though the establishment of schools in the district can be taken as a positive measure the system of offering education did not encourage the Muslim students. This was due to the presence of the moral education known as *Gebragab* in the curriculum which mainly based on the principles of Christianity.³¹² So the Muslim parents feared that their children might become victim of this education and said to have refrained themselves from sending their children to school and preferred to send them to *Darasa* (where Islam education was rendered). These who were attending schools were forced to attend school in Muslim religious holidays since Muslim religious holidays were not recognized as a national holiday “The government also made an attempt to use education as an important channel for propagating the state nationalism that highly disillusioned the Muslim Oromo of Balé”.³¹³

The oppression and maladministration under the imperial rule of Haile Selassie was also to be seen in the judiciary sector. Like Muslim in other parts of the country the Muslim Oromo in Agarfa district also did not have access to equal freedman in judiciary sector. Even though the Muslim courts were allowed to deal with issues related family their recognition was nominal and there was no financial support from the government.³¹⁴ Modern Courts in the district other parts of the province were mainly occupied by Christian judges. The Court language was Amharic and the local Oromo were forced to deal with their cases through translator. Language was also area where the Christian settlers manifested cultural dominance over local Oromo people. Speaking Amharic was seen as a sign of modernity while speaking Afan Oromo was seen as backwardness. The policy of this cultural dominance had support from the imperial government.

³¹¹Abera, p.8.

³¹²Mindaye, p. 79; Informants: Ṭaha Dawud, Kädır Dheko and Aman Abdo.

³¹³Mindaye, p.80.

³¹⁴Informants: Ahmed Alo, Kädır Chuqule, Usman Garado and Qassim Hussien.

For instance, according to Emperor Haile Selassie “Claiming to be Ethiopian without a thorough knowledge of Amahric is tantamount to having no country and not knowing one’s parents.”³¹⁵ These indicate how much the Ethiopian nationalism was intermingled with language.

3.4. Reaction against Maladministration.

As it was discussed earlier the restored monarchy introduced various administrative and economic reforms that aimed at strengthening its power and increasing the state income. To that end the government followed a systematic approach towards land privatization through successive land measurement that was followed increment of tax that resulted in heavy burden a peasant could not shoulder in the absence of roads and communication.³¹⁶

The peasants were always in opposition since the beginning of land measurement and the increment of tax that accompanied the land measurement. For instance, the peasants in Agarfa district expressed their opposition by refusing to cooperate with the surveyors and also petitioned to the concerned authority and even forced the government to carry the measurement of land visually side by side with *qäläd*. They also opposed to the imposition of tax over them following the completion of land measurement in 1954.³¹⁷

The post liberation was not only characterized by land measurement and increment of tax. It was also accompanied by land alienation and ethnic and religious oppression. The government confiscated land under the pretext of tax defaults. In addition of this powerful local officials forcefully evicted the peasants from their land. It was such oppression that led to a wide spread rebellion in low land parts of Balé.³¹⁸

For the society that had a strong link with land being deprived of access to land was intolerable. As Gebru states “the issue of land was the major factor behind the rebellion” peasants thought of justice primarily as access to means of substance land for livestock, and was generally true for southerners, no experiences was painful as the loss of land.”³¹⁹

³¹⁵Oyvind M. Eide, *Religion and Revolution, The Growth and persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church 1974-1985*, (Oxford, Athens, Addis Ababa, 200),p.19.

³¹⁶Gebru, p.133; Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Hussien Alo and Mohammäd Waqjira.

³¹⁷Ketema, p. 63.

³¹⁸Gebru, p. 136.

³¹⁹Gebru, p. 131.

The opposition was not only from the ordinary who were the first victim of land alienation. The local officials, the *balabats* who served as a bridge between the state and the peasants were in continuous conflict with the government officials since the incorporation of the province of Bale into the Ethiopian empire state.³²⁰

The local officials requested equal access to political and economic power with the Christian officials assigned by Central government. Economically the *balabats* in Bale were not granted the right to *siso* like the *balabats* in the other provinces. Repeated request for this right was one of the economic rights demanded by local officials.³²¹

As the request and appeal from the local officials for equal political and economic rights became serious the then governor of Bale Abäbä Gäbre made an attempt to introduce a reform that aimed at calming down the situation. Accordingly, he proposed to appoint an Oromo or Somali deputy for an Amhara officer and vice versa. However, his proposal of reform faced a serious opposition from the settlers who petitioned against the proposal. As a result the attempt of the government general failed to bear fruit and he was replaced by *Fitawrari* worku Enquselase. Worku favored the Christian settlers at the expense of indigenous Oromo and Somali. Work's appointment marked the beginning of the revolt.³²²

On the other hand the government continued to confiscate of land imprisonment of these who failed to pay tax. These all measures forced the people to rebels. Rebel started in different parts of lowland districts of the province. The rebellion was first started in Elkere district by Kahin Abdi who was offended by the imprisonment of his son in failure of paying the state tax.³²³ Kahin began his struggle as a *shifita* (bandit) and other peoples who had grievance rallied behind him. The rebellion in Elkere continued under the leadership of Sheik Mohammäd Abdi Nur who replaced Kahin Abdi. The rebellion also spread to other parts of the province.³²⁴

Wabe *awraja* was among the region where the rebellion spread. In Wabe the leading rebel leaders where Haji Isak Dadi of Rayitu, who fled to Moqadishu in 1961 to escape from for his assassination of Amhara official in Ginnir. From Somalia he established a line of

³²⁰Ibid.137.

³²¹Ketema, p. 87.

³²²Timothy Derek, *Serfs, Slaves and Shifita in Pre Revolutionary Ethiopia*, (Addis Ababa, 2010), pp.284-285; Lapphiso, p.187.

³²³ Derek, p.285. Gebru, *Power and protest---*, p.140.

³²⁴Derk, p.285. Gebru, *Power and protest---*, p.141.

communication with other bandits who rebelled on the government such as Hussein Bune Darara, Aliye Dadi and Ismi Husu supplied them armies with the help from Somalia under the organization known as western Somali liberation front (W.S.L.F) challenged the government in Wabe.³²⁵

In south western part of the province the group led by Wako Gutu went to Somalia after his conflict with the government and returned back armed by the government of Somalia in 1965. Wako Gutu joined the other rebels in Dalo such as Aliye Chiri and Waqo Lugo. The revolt lead by these leaders seriously challenged the government force in Delo and was able to score victory on the government force in Oborso in February, 1965.³²⁶ The rebellion in this direction was beyond the control of the government army as a result the then governor general of Balé appealed to the Imperial government of Ethiopia for assignment of a large contingent of army in the province.³²⁷

The revolt spread to the high land part of the province in the course of time and peasants from the districts of Goba, Ginnir and Dodola also sided with the rebels. The rebels who began their struggle in the low land districts of the province in the form *Shifta* (bandit) were able to attack the capital of the province, Goba twice in 1966.³²⁸ They further expanded their attack the western part of the province and defeated the police force and territorial army of the districts of Adaba and Dodola and killed the governor Adaba *Gerazmach* Bäqälä Harägu in 1965 and the governor of Dodola, *Fitawrari* Waldamikael Bu'i in 1966.³²⁹ These developments forced the government to reinforce the Fourth army division stationed at Negele Borana, Robe and Goro and the province was put under martial rule except Fasil Awraja by the state emergency declared in 1966.³³⁰ The province was put under military rule except Fasil *awraja*. The army was given absolute power to take measures against the suspects. To overcome the problem the government used different strategies. Among these the former rebels were persuaded to organize counter guerrilla against the rebel. For instance, Kabir Hussein the head of Degodina was used to

³²⁵Ketema, p.86. Derk, p.286.

³²⁶Gada Melba, *An Introduction to the History of Oromo People*, (Minnolis, 1988), p.113; Gebru, pp.142 and 144.

³²⁷Gebru, p.144.

³²⁸Ibid, p.145. Ketema, 89.

³²⁹Ketema, p.89. Gada, p.113; Gebru, pp.142 and 144.

³³⁰Gebru, *power and protest...*,p. 145; Ale de Waal, *Evil Days: 30 Years of war and Famine in Ethiopia, An African watch report*,(New York, Washington,1991), p.61.;Gebru,p.145.; Ketema,p.89.

organize counter guerrilla following his capture. The government also carried severe punishments and confiscation of the land of the suspects.³³¹

Despite the different measures taken by the government victory was not as easy task for the government. There were different obstacles to that hindered the victory of the government forces over rebel forces such as the guerrilla tactics used by rebel, lack of infrastructure and the dispute between army officers and governor general. In 1968 Worku Enquselase, the then governor of Balé was replaced by Waldeselasia Baraka. The new governor general on his part took different measures such as rewarding loyal officials and strengthening ground operation by aerial attack, raised the number militia and constructed bridge over Ganale Doriya with the help of British engineers to facilitate a favorable condition for the campaign.³³²

By the time when the government intensified its attack to the rebel group lost support from Somalia due to internal problem in Somalia and the agreement made between the government of Ethiopia and Somalia. The loss of external support and strengthened ground and aerial attack from the government weakened the rebels. The government also persuaded rebel leaders to surrender. Based on the governments call for peaceful submission the deputies of Wako Gutu surrendered and it was followed by the surrender of Wako Gutu on 28, March 1970 which marked the end of the rebellion.³³³ The surrender of Wako Gutu was followed by the declaration of amnesty from the government and the surrender of the other rebels who were in the bush. The revolt caused human and material losses on both sides. At the end of the revolt the government declared that it had cancelled the tax arrears up to 1967 and announced that the peasants whose land taken by the government should apply for reconsideration of their holdings.³³⁴

Concerning the protest against the imperial government in the district Agarfa in the post liberation there were individual and group protest against maladministration and oppression even before the beginning of Bale Peasant rebellion. However, there was no open revolt in the district like the low land district of Balé that carried in the 1960's. The individual protest carried in the district during the imperial era created a security problem in the district. Here I would like to mention some of the factors behind the security problem in the district and how it affected the

³³¹Gebru, pp. 145-146.

³³²Ibid, p.147.

³³³Ibid, p.148.

³³⁴Ketema, p.90. Laphiso, 187.

lives of the common people. Among the events that created a security problem in the district of Agarfa was the assassination of five individuals in Dec, 1955 by a certain individuals at a place called Koto a place within Agarfa district at the border of Gedab district.³³⁵

The assassination of these individuals created a security problem in the locality and identifying the criminals' identity and deciding the necessary punishment on the criminals became the main concern of the district officials. To that end, the local people were ordered to carry *Afarsata* (a meeting carried to expose the criminals). However, the meeting carried by local people failed to bear fruit since the local people refused to explain the identity of the individuals who committed crime.³³⁶

The refusal of the local people to explain the identity of the individuals and their failure to handover the criminals forced the governor of Bale *awraja*, who was waiting solution from the meeting held by the local people to take another measure. Accordingly, a committee of ten men led by Demssie Woldeamanuel, the then governor of Balé *awraja* held a discussion to find a solution for the problem. The governor explained that the different measures taken by the government to solve the problem such as repeated warning and meeting of the local people which failed to bear fruit due to the refusal of the local people and explained about the necessity of a new measure that could enforce the local people to expose the individuals who committed the crime.³³⁷

The governor condemned the local people for their failure to capture the criminals by the time of the accident. According to him in the locality where there were a number of individuals who had modern weapon and where there were a number of well-known elders the escape of the criminals from the very beginning indicate that the local peoples cooperated with criminals.³³⁸ By the discussion the committee remembered that the local officials signed an agreement to expose and handover individuals who participated in the different activities that threaten peace and security in their locality and to shoulder the consequences if they failed to do so. By using this as a guide the committee led by the governor of Bale *awraja* passed the following solution to enforce the

³³⁵ Archive, NALA, Folder No.17.1.5 File No.17.04

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ Archive, NALA, Folder, No.17.1.5 File No.17.04

local people to expose and handover the criminals.³³⁹ Accordingly, the main *balabat* 300birr, *Burqa* 200birr, a land owner 10 birr per *gasha*, a man who had a gun 20birr, a tenant 5birr and an ordinary man 2 birr punishment was passed for their failure and recommended another punishment if this failed to bear fruit and the money was decided to be given for the families of the victims as a compensation.³⁴⁰

Following this new measure a meeting was held by the *gosa* (lineage) of these who assassinated the five men at Koto in Dec, 1948 E.C. The meeting after the measure of the committee at *awraja* level forced the local people to give their eye witness and explain about the background of the individuals. Accordingly, eighteen who represented the Gofingra *gosa* (lineage) explained that the crime was committed by Indrias Amino in collaboration with Abduqadir Kediro. They explained the individual was imprisoned in *awraja* prison for his robbery activities and once again he involved in the same activities after his release from prison. They explained that they have no opposition for the measure the government will take on the individual and agreed not to ask any compensation if the government killed the individual.³⁴¹

Similarly, fifteen elders who represented the Sayimana *gosa* explained that one of the criminals was Abdulqadir Kediro, who belongs to their *gosa*. They also explained that he was imprisoned at *awraja* prison and his involvement in this criminal activity show that there was no behavioral change. Like the elders of the Gofingra *gosa* they also agreed not to oppose any measure taken on this individual by the government and not ask any compensation for the action that will be taken by the government.³⁴² After the witness given by the local community, the *awraja* governor ordered the governors of Agarfa and Gadab district to follow up and capture the suspects. He recommended that the suspects should capture peacefully as much as possible. If not possible force should be used in the way did not endanger those who will involve in the process of finding the suspects and the local community.³⁴³

Archival sources failed to explain whether the individuals were captured or not. At the same time factor behind the individuals action was not explained by the archival source. Here I want to note that my main concern is not to deal with the crime committee by certain individuals. However, I

³³⁹Archive, NALA, Folder No.17.1.5 File No. 17.04

³⁴⁰*Ibid.*

³⁴¹*Ibid.*

³⁴²Archive, NALA, Folder No.17.1.5 File No. 17.04

³⁴³*Ibid.*

attempted to explain how it created a security problem in the district and how the local community was affected by the action of the individuals.

Concerning the role of the people of Agarfa district in the Balé peasant rebellion the district was not within the territory held by the rebels. It was under *Fasil awraja* and was far from rebel basis. However, the rebellion in the other districts of Balé had its own influence on the people who had grievances on the government since they faced the same exploitation and oppression with rebels in the lowland parts of the province. According to my informants even though there was no open revolt in the district, the Oromo of Balé in the district indirectly involved in the rebellion by providing material support to the rebels in the other districts of the province³⁴⁴

By the time of the revolt there was also a security problem in the district. Some archival sources indicate that there were bandits who entered the district from the province of Arsi and ordered the governor of the district to take the necessary measure to avoid the occurrence of serious security problem. Similarly, the district of Dinsho, whose part of it was formerly part of Agarfa district, was under a serious security problem. The bandits blocked the road from Adaba to Robe. To solve the problem the *Näči labaš* /local militia/ from Agarfa district were ordered to keep the security of the region.³⁴⁵

The *nači- labaš* who were assigned to keep the road from Adaba to Robe were affected by the security problem in the locality. They complained that they were forced to stay there for a long period of time which in turn affected the lives of their family. They complained that they were recruited from the society based on 1946 E.C *näči labaš* proclamation and served the state locally. However, they were not given salary, uniform and promised *madaria* land was not given to them and requested to return back to their home. The question of the *näči labaš* was not given immediate response to the government. As a result about 40 *nači labaš* left the region and returned back to the home in Agarfa without the permission of the government.³⁴⁶ This forced the higher officials the *Taqalay gezat* to order the governor of Adaba district to send the *näči labaš* that will replace the *näči labaš* from Agarfa district. From this we can understand that there were some attempts of rebellion in the district that affected both the local people and local *militia* in

³⁴⁴Informants: Ebrahim, Hussien Alo and Usman.

³⁴⁵Archive, BZAAS, Folder No. A1 File No.14.

³⁴⁶Archive, BZAAS, Folder No.A1 File No.14.

the district by creating a security problem in the district and neighboring districts by the time of the Balé peasant rebellion.³⁴⁷

In addition to the above individual and group protest against the mal administration in the district there was peaceful protest against the land measurement and heavy tax imposed over them following successive land measurements. As it was discussed in the preceding topic the people of Agarfa district opposed the land measurement of the 1951 by refusing to cooperate with the surveyors. Peasant from Lajo went to Addis Ababa to present their petition by opposing the tax imposed over them.³⁴⁸ After the introduction of agricultural income the peasants in the district of Agarfa appealed to the then governor of Bale General Jagama Kelo the problem they in assigning the amount of agricultural income and demanded him to give them just decision.³⁴⁹ Generally, the people of the district expressed its grievance in different ways by opposing exploitative and oppressive orders of the regime.

3.5 Development of Sedentary Agriculture and Tenancy

As it was discussed before land was a common property among the Oromo of Bale before the incorporation of the province to the Ethiopian. Each *gosa* had its own land that they inherited from father and forefather and the members of the *gosa* had had the right use the land freely for grazing since was the economic activity of the people. However, this does not mean that there was no agricultural practice at all in Balé. There were agricultural activities in some parts of highland Bale. Agarfa was one of the highland districts of Balé where crop cultivation was practiced in limited degree before the incorporation of the province into the Ethiopian empire state.³⁵⁰

Following the incorporation of the district the economy gradually transformed from pastoralism to crop cultivation. The process of transformation passed through different stages and there where different factors behind it. One of these factors was the conquest of Menelik which resulted in *gäbbar näfṭeña* system by which the local Oromo peasants where assigned for the

³⁴⁷BZAAS, Folder No. A1 File No. 14 see appendix VII

³⁴⁸Archive, BZAAS, Folder No A1. File No.14. see appendix I

³⁴⁹Archive, NALA, Folder, No.17.1.5 File No. 16.08. See appendix II

³⁵⁰Ketema, P.20.

officials and soldiers according to their rank which was commonly known as *quter gäbbar*.³⁵¹ According to existing sources it was the reduction of land owned by a certain *gosa* following the south ward expansion that gradually shifted the Oromo people from pastoralism to sedentary agriculture.³⁵²

The incorporation of Balé was not followed by the confiscation of land. Land is said to have been maintained by the local peoples. However, parts of the land formerly belonged to the local community was given to the officials as *madärya* for the settlers and the church and there were also a systematic eviction of the peasants from their lands. So, the *gäbbar-näffeña* system that was imposed over the local contributed its own share in the development sedentary agriculture in the district of Agarfa by reducing the size of land owned the different *gosas* that was mainly used for grazing.³⁵³

The other factor that that played important role in the development of sedentary agriculture and emergence of tenancy was the different proclamations issued by the government of Emperor Haile Selassie in the post liberation period. Among these factors one was the introduction of new land tenure and taxation in the post liberation. The restored monarchy introduced a new land tenure that aimed at privatizing and increasing the income obtained from land. To that end, successive land measurement land measurement was carried and privatization of land was effected step by step.³⁵⁴ The land measurement also resulted in the classification the land into four categories based on tenure type namely, *gäbbar*, *sämon* (church land), and *madärya* and government land to be owned by different group. This in turn reduced the size of land that owned by a lineage group as a common property for centuries and individuals were forced to limit themselves to the land registered by their name under the category of *gäbbar* land which was not a such sufficient for livestock rearing as compared with the former communal land holding in which grazing land was abundant.³⁵⁵

The land measurement was followed by the increment of tax since increasing state income was a factor behind land measurement. This in turn contributed its own share in reducing individual land holdings in different way particularly after the 1963 land measurement. Taxation resulted in

³⁵¹ Ibid, P. 32; Mindaye, p. 66; Solomon, p.6; Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Adäm Dawud and Usman.

³⁵² Pausewang, peasant, Land and Society, --p.40.

³⁵³ Ketema, p.32; Solomo, p.7; Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Adem and Usman.

³⁵⁴ Ketema, pp.54-55; Informants: Mähämmäd Waqjira, Abdala Mähämmädsani, and Umar Unsi.

³⁵⁵ Informants: Mähämmäd, Abdala and Umar.

loss of land in two ways and reduced individuals land holding mainly that of small plot holders. First, the peasants were forced to sell their land to pay the government tax in order to escape from total eviction from their land. Second, the government confiscated the land of the peasants who failed to pay land tax and categorized it as *gebrāṭal* (land confiscated from those who failed to pay tax). As a result peasants were left with small plot of land that was not sufficient for grazing. So, the peasants with small plot of land and were forced to be sedentary agriculturalist with a limited number of cattle.³⁵⁶

In addition to the above mentioned factors the imperial land grant was also another factor behind the change of economic activity from pastoralism to sedentary agriculturalist. As it was discussed before the government granted land for the patriots, exiles, families of the patriots and civil and military officials from what was known as government land and *gebrāṭal*. The imperial land grant was also accompanied with forceful eviction of peasants and accumulation of land in the hands of few individuals both local absentee landlords and reduced the land holding of the majority of the peasants.³⁵⁷

Land sale was also another factor that facilitated the accumulation of land in the hand of few individuals. According to informants officials both the local *balabats* and the Christian settlers in the district involved in large scale land purchase from the peasants who were forced to sell it as a result the tax imposed over them and from the individuals who were granted land by the government which enabled them to accumulate a large amount of land in their hands and reduced the land holdings of the majority of the peasants and forced them to limit themselves sedentary agriculture with a limited number of cattle.³⁵⁸

All the above mentioned developments facilitated the development tenancy since they contributed for the concentration of land in the hand of few individuals on one side and reduction of land owned by the majority of peasants which forced the great majority peasants to be owner of small plot of land or landless peasant.³⁵⁹ The two groups were in extreme point having different demands. Individuals with large holdings were in demand of farmers who could work on their agricultural field while landless peasants those with small holdings were in demand of

³⁵⁶Informant: Ṭaha Dawud, Aman Abdo and Alo Bakar.

³⁵⁷Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Ebrahim, Hussien Alo and Usman.

³⁵⁸Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Ebrahim, Hussien Alo and Usman

³⁵⁹*Ibid.*

land to be cultivated in order to support their family. As a result they entered into an agreement of crop-sharing that marked the beginning of tenancy commonly known as *čisaña* in Amharic.³⁶⁰

Like the other highland districts of Bale the very beginning of tenancy in the district of Agarfa was an arrangement between relatives. According to this early form of tenancy arrangement a tenant was given a plot of land by the land owner and the tenant was expected to give some labor service. Following the land measurement the peasants whose land holding was reduced and those who faced opposition from the *alaqoch* to be registered as land owner began enter the terms of tenancy in order to support their family. On the other hand the Christian Shawan Oromo who had faced severe oppression and exploitation in Shawa migrated to highland Bale 1950s. The district of Agarfa was one the destination of the Shawan Oromo. The Shawan Oromo who came to the district of Agarfa entered the terms of tenancy with local land owners.³⁶¹

According to existing sources the terms tenancy at this stage was not much severe since finding tenant by itself was a major problem. At this stage of tenancy a tenant had some privilege. He was given a plot of land and a cow as a private property. This was the mechanism used by the lords to encourage the tenant to stay with him for a long period of time due to the scarcity of man power that could work on the land feudal lord.³⁶² There two types tenants in the district of Agarfa. The first group tenants were those who a small plot of land who entered tenancy in order to have additional income to support their family. The second group tenants were peasants without any land holding who entered the terms of tenancy. This type tenants were entirely dependent the land of the feudal lord with whom the entered the terms of tenancy. The types of tenants were both from the Oromo of Bale and Christian Shawa Oromo. Tenants from local Oromo were the peasants whose holdings were reduced or lost their as a result of the problems related to the new land tenure, successive land measurement and heavy taxation that followed the land measurement which resulted in confiscation of their holdings under the pretext of tax default and were reduced to the terms of tenancy.³⁶³

In case the Shawa Oromo many of them started to lead their life in the district as a tenant without land. In the course of land they were able to own their own land through purchase. The Shawan

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ Ketema, p. 93; Informants: Kädır Chuqule, Fayo Qabato and Jämal Ahmed.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ *Informants*: Ebrahim, Hussien Alo, Tullu Däbäle and İšetü Gezaw.

Oromo had a bitter experience of not having land. It was a problem that related which forced them to migrate to Balé to have their own since land was believed to abundant in Bale by the time of their migration to Balé. Hence, they tried their best to have their own plot of land through purchase. However the purchase of land did not made them free from tenancy. They continued under the terms of tenancy to support their family.³⁶⁴

According to Ketema Meskela tenancy was not a major problem in highland in the 1950s. The condition was changed since 1960 due to imperial land policy. The successive land measurement and the tax imposed on the peasants and their refusal to pay tax contributed its own share in aggravating tenancy. According to sources both written and oral the land measurement contributed in two ways in severing the terms of tenancy in two ways. During the land measurement the land of small holders was over estimated and the peasants unable to pay the tax imposed over them. This resulted in the confiscation of their land and forced them to live under severe terms of tenancy. The individuals whose holdings were under estimated were later exposed by the 1963 land measurement. Unable to pay the tax for all their holdings they gave part of their holdings to the government which was categorized under the category of *gberätäl*. With reduction of their holdings the feudal lords tightened the terms of tenancy.³⁶⁵

Another factor that made tenancy more severe was commercialization of land. The increased value of land created an opportunity to provide a large amount of land for market. The land presented to market was the one formerly ploughed by peasants under the terms of tenancy. Land sale together with land grant led the increased number of absentee land lords whose land was cultivated by tenants. According to scholars absentee land lord and tenancy were the sides of a coin.³⁶⁶

There were two forms of tenancy in southern Ethiopia. These were rental and crop sharing forms of tenancy. The common form tenancy was crop sharing. There were three forms crop sharing namely, *erbo arash*, *siso arash* and *yaguto* or *equ arash*. The main difference between three types of crop sharing was the amount of the produce a tenant share to the land lord and the contribution expected from both sides.³⁶⁷ According to informants all types of the above listed

³⁶⁴*Ibid.*

³⁶⁵Ketema, p.93; Solomon, p.9; Informants: Usman, Alo Abdulätif and Hussien Karku.

³⁶⁶Markakis, p.157; Bahru, p.192.

³⁶⁷Germa, Tullu, Ahmed Waqjira and Kädir Dheko

crop sharing tenancy existed in the district of Agarfa in the post liberation period. In case of *erbo arash* the land lord provide land and the rest was contributed by the tenant at the end of the harvest the tenant retains three-fourth of the produce and gives one-fourth to the land lord. Similarly, under *siso arash* the obligation of the land lord was to provide land the tenant was expected to provide seed, oxen and other necessary materials. At the end of the harvest the tenant retain two-third of the produce and give one-third to the land lord. In case of *yaguto* or *equil arash* as opposed to *erbo* and *siso* inwhich the tenant provides seed and oxen it was the land lords who provide land seed in *equil arash* crop sharing tenancy. The tenant obligation was physical labor. In the type of crop sharing the produce was shared equally between the land lord and the tenant. However the tenant had to pay back the seed before sharing.³⁶⁸

According to my informants in all forms of crop sharing tenancy in addition to sharing the produce for the land lord the peasants were expected to pay tithe (*asrat*), tax in kind paid to the government until it was replaced by agricultural income tax. The tax was paid from the tenants share after sharing. As it was discussed earlier it was the tithe (*asrat*) mainly collected from the tenants all over the district of Agarfa that was stored in the state granary built in the locality known as Shawade near present day Ali town.³⁶⁹

Even though the government legally abolished any form of fees and labor service by the peasants to feudal lords the tenants in the district of Agarfa continued to provide labor services to the feudal lords and also different forms of gifts since the feudal lords used different methods to enforce the peasants to provide them labor services and giving them different gifts. The traditional labor cooperative of the Oromo known as *dabo* was one the pretexts used by the feudal lord to enforce the tenants to work on their agricultural field.³⁷⁰

According to my informants tenancy became more severe in the district in the 1960s. Informants explained the degree of the severity of tenancy in the district by remembering the conversation between a tenant and a feudal lord from local Oromo. The tenant who exhausted of tenancy expressed to how much degree his life was affected under the terms of tenancy. I would like to present the conversation in Afan Oromo as it was explained by informants.

³⁶⁸Ketema, p.99; Informants: Tulu, Germa, Hussien Karku and Häsan Sulṭan.

³⁶⁹Informants: Usman, Jämal Usman and Mohammäd Waqjira.

³⁷⁰Informants: Hussien Karku, Häsan Sulṭan and Mohammäd Waqjira.

Tenant. *Aaba Kan bona liqeffanne ganna kafalla, Kan ganna liqeffanne immo bona kafala yoomuma nuuf darba.*

The land lord. *Hanga ifaajje ifaajjee du'uu malee maal sii darba.*

It means that the tenant asked the feudal lord that we will return back in summer what we have borrowed in summer and return back in winter what we have borrowed in summer how this condition will be changed and we can lead a better life. The land lord replied you will lead a miserable life until your death there in no hope for you to lead a better life.³⁷¹ The above conversation tell us that the tenants were unable to feed themselves and forced to borrow food crop from the land lords and to how much degree the land lords became cruel even to the native tenants who were owners of land under communal land owning system before privatization.

3.6. Agarfa town 1941-1974.

Urbanization is a recent phenomenon in southern Ethiopia in general and in Bale in particular. The major towns in Bale, Goba and Ginnir were the product of the incorporation of the province in to the Ethiopian Empire state. They were initially the military garrison for the army Menelik which gradually developed to major towns in the province.³⁷²

As it was discussed earlier the foundation of Agarfa town was associated with the Italian occupation of Ethiopia which used it as a military camp and center of administration. Following the liberation the former military camp continued to be center of administration under the Ethiopian empire state without having legal status as a town.³⁷³ According to informants its development as urban center was gradual process. In the course of time as it continued as administrative center it began to attract the neighboring communities and local chief to settle in it and to involve in different business activities. However there were no pull factors that could hasten the development of the town. The society was predominantly pastoralists and was alien to urbanization and urban life. Those who decided to live in urban were not encouraged even considered as the one who made and attempt to escape from agricultural activities.³⁷⁴

³⁷¹*Ibid.*

³⁷² Mindaye, pp. 55 and 57.

³⁷³ ADCTO, The history of Agarfa town, p.7; Informants: Ahmed Alo, Ebrahim and Hussien Alo

³⁷⁴ Informants: Ahmed Alo, Ebrahim and Hussien Alo.

The government on his part not committed itself for the introduction of different social services and infrastructure rather than using it as administrative center. Informants argued the in accordance the proclamation issued by the Emperor during his visit of Bale the tax arrears promised to be used for the construction of infrastructure was collected from the people of the district. Nevertheless, the government failed to introduced social services and infrastructure. Despite the commitment government official district level and the local *balabats* were to implement the different decrees and proclamations passed by the restored monarchy and did take significant effort to introduce infrastructure and social services in the town.³⁷⁵

The problem of social service and infrastructure was not unique to Agarfa it was a common problem of the province that why the province was considered as a remotest and in accessible part of the empire. Little attention was given to the province of Bale in general Agarfa district in particular. Even it took more than half a century to introduce social services and infrastructure to the capital of the province which was incorporated in the early 1890s. The road that linked the province of Bale with Addis Ababa was completed in 1969.³⁷⁶

In spite of the different hindering factors the town gradually developed to important economic and political center. The socio-economic transformation that followed the introduction of a new land tenure system is also said to have contributed for the development of the town as important market since the people of the district also began to involve in different business activities in order to support their family by generating additional income from trade. The market of Agarfa was visited by merchants as far as Shirka Arsi and Dalo in southern Balé and Gadab.³⁷⁷

The introduction of different social services in Agarfa town and other parts of the district were phenomena of 1960s. There were very few schools in the district of Agarfa during the imperial regime. From the four schools established in the period under discussion only two of them were established in the early 1960s the res two were established on the eve of the 1974 revolution.³⁷⁸ Concerning health service one clinic was established in Agarfa town after repeated appeal in 1974.³⁷⁹ In such gradual developments a number of houses were built in the town during the imperial regime. According to information obtained from Agarfa town more than 160 houses

³⁷⁵Informants: Ebrahim Bakaro, Hussien Alo, Usman and Ahmed Alo.

³⁷⁶Gebru, p.146; Crummey, p.243.

³⁷⁷Informants: Ebrahim, Hussien, Usman and Ahmed.

³⁷⁸Agarfa district Archive Section Folder No. 2 File No. 6.

³⁷⁹NALA, Folder No.17.2 File No. 403.2

were nationalized in Agarfa town based on the proclamation that was issued to nationalize extra urban houses following the 1974 revolution. This indicates that the town was able to attract settlers despite absence of social services and infrastructure and served as a center for administration and business activities.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. AGARFA DISTRICT 1974 -2000

4.1 The Course of the Revolution and Political developments in the district of Agarfa.

Under this topic the major political and social events that happened in the Agarfa district will be discussed. As it was explained in the preceding chapter the Imperial government of Ethiopia had faced opposition from different section of the society in different parts of the country. The province of Bale was among the region where the emperor's policy faced series challenge since the restoration of the monarchy. Since 1960 there was a strong opposition to the imperial policy which resulted in land alienation, culture and religious oppression which finally resulted in open revolt that lasted 1963-1970.³⁸⁰

There was also opposition to the Imperial government since 1960 from different social groups. The protest against the regime became serious in the early 1970s. The opposition from different groups was farther aggravated when the army joined the opposition in January 1974. The opposition from the army was first started by the army mutiny in Negele Borena and then spread to other army division in Addis Ababa and Asmara. A combination of popular discontent both

³⁸⁰Waal, p.67.

from the civilians and the soldiers resulted in the eruption of the upheaval in February, 1974.³⁸¹ Following the eruption of the upheaval different civilian population such as teachers, students and confederation of the Ethiopian labor union (CELU) went on strike on 18, Feb, 1974 teachers carried general strike by opposition Educational Sectors review. The soldier on their part presented their petition to the king through their representatives.³⁸²

The mounting oppositions against the regime forced the emperor to take measures to calm down the political situation in the country. Accordingly, educational sector review was suspended and salary increment was made for the soldiers. The salary increment made for the soldiers is said to have calm down the opposition from the army. However, the army was accused by the other sector of the society for their satisfaction with salary increment betraying the popular movement for change.³⁸³

The opposition against the regime from different sections of the society continued and forced the Emperor to reorganize his government which resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Aklilu Habtewold and his Cabinet from and its replacement with new Prime Minister, Endelkachew Mekonnen. The reforms introduced by the Emperor never stopped the process of revolution from going on. In June representatives the different army group established coordinating committee known as *derg* and adopted the slogan of '*Ethiopia Tikdam*'. Since the army began to play the leading role in the process of the revolution and began to actions against the officials of the imperial regime and deposed the new prime minister, Indalkachaw mekonnen on 22 July 1974.³⁸⁴ The popular uprising finally led the fall of imperial regime and the Emperor was formally deposed on 12, Sep, 1974.³⁸⁵

Following the fall of the monarchy junior army officers, who played the leading in the process of the revolution especially since June 1974 officially took over the political power by declaring the establishment of provisional military administrative council and begin to rule the country.³⁸⁶

³⁸¹Andargachaw Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution: A Transformation from an Aristocratic to A Totalitarian Autocracy*, (Cambridge, New York, 1993), p.37; Bahru, p.230; Crummey, p.245; Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in The Horn of Africa*,(New Haven, London, 2009), p.36.

³⁸²Andargachaw, p.39.

³⁸³Andargachaw, p. 43.

³⁸⁴Harold G.Markus, *The History of Ethiopia*, Berkeley, (Los Angles, London, 1994), p. 187.

³⁸⁵Ibid, pp.41, 70; Bahru, p.236. ; Crummey, land and society, p.245;

³⁸⁶Andargachaw, p.71. Bahru.p.236. Crummey, p.245.

As it came to power *derg* issued the decree that banned any attempt of opposition against the new regime and warned that participation in any form of opposition against the new government including peaceful demonstrations and meeting will result in punishment.³⁸⁷ Despite the decree and warnings from *derg* people went to streets and expressed their opposition to the *derg*. The confederation of Ethiopian labor union openly opposed *to derg* by passing a resolution that demanded the replacement of *derg* by provisional people's government. The students were among the groups that opposed to *derg*. The students of Addis Ababa University and Alemaya Collage of agriculture adopted the resolution passed by CELU and opposed to the *derg's* decision to send them to the countryside to educate the rural population about basic health and development problems.³⁸⁸ The military government also faced opposition from in the early years of the revolution come the then political organization namely, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and All Ethiopian socialist party (Meison) whose demand was also provisional peoples' government.³⁸⁹

The apposition to *derg* was not limited to Addis Ababa. Then were also oppositions to *derg* in the countryside. Concerning the political situation in the district Agarfa it is important to see with the general political condition in that province of Bale in the early years of the revolution. As it was discussed earlier the province of Bale was among the regions where the Imperial government of Ethiopia faced serious challenges in the 1960s. Maladministration and land alienation in the post liberation in the province was the factor behind the revolt in the province which lasted from 1963 to 1970 which was formally ended in March 1974 with submission of Waqo Gutu in March, 1970.³⁹⁰

Even though revolt in Bale is said to have ended in March 1974 there were rebels who went to Somalia by the time when the rebel the main leaders of the rebel and their soldiers summited peacefully.³⁹¹ On the other hand the Somali government once again revived its territorial claim and began to involve in the intelligence work in the province even before the revolution. According to archival sources a certain Somalians soldiers were sent to Bale to spy the condition in Bale 1973. As a result the then governor of Bale *Taqalay Gezat* General Jagama Kelo informed

³⁸⁷Bahru, p.236; Andargachaw, p.72.

³⁸⁸Andargachaw, 73; John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*, (New Jersey, 1986), p.115.

³⁸⁹Bahru, p.236.

³⁹⁰Waal, P. 67; Ketema, p. 90.

³⁹¹Gada, p.114.

the governors of the five *awrajas* of Bale to follow up the situation.³⁹² In addition to this there were movements of internal insurgents at the eve of the revolution an organization known as Ethiopian National Liberation Front (ENLF) under the leadership of Sheik Hussien was able to control significant areas in the highland of the province in 1973.³⁹³

Following the 1974 revolution there was some sort of opposition to *derg* in Agarfa district especially following the land Reform of March 1975. At this stage of the revolution there were attempts to oppose the proclamation issued by *derg* in the district of Agarfa. According to archival sources in the locality known as Garado a certain individuals opposed to the *derg's* slogan of '*Ethiopia Tiqdam*' (Ethiopia First) and the action of these individuals was put under the control by the effort of the peasant association. However, there was no general strike in the district against *derg* in the early years of revolution.³⁹⁴

At the beginning of 1976 President said bare of Somalia strengthened its relation with Ogaden clan promised to provide military assistance for their struggle against Ethiopia by re-establishing organization known as Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF). Since 1976 WSLF under the leadership of Mohammad Rube began struggle against the government in Bale. According to source the Somali government further strengthened WSLF to use them as one means of fulfilling its territorial claim in Ethiopia.³⁹⁵ There was Radio program in Afan Oromo from Mogadishu which Somalia called the language of Somali Abo. The used this radio program and propagated antigovernment propaganda and encouraged the Oromo of Bale to rebel and the Somali to rebel on the government. According to this source by using this Radio program the government of Somalia tried to convince the people by saying that you were ruled by the Amhara during the imperial era and you are still ruled by the Amhara and agitated them to rebel. The word Amhara by time had a religious meaning in Balé. All Christians including the Shawan Oromo were considered as Amhara in Balé.³⁹⁶

In addition to the propaganda by Radio from Mogadishu the Somali government also founded a guerrilla to fight in the area inhabited by the Oromo which came to known as Somali Abo Liberation Front (SALF). Waqo Gutu, one of the leaders of Bale peasant rebellion and *Sheik*

³⁹² Archive, BZAAS Folder No.B 3 File No. 6.

³⁹³ Waal, p. 69.

³⁹⁴ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.5 File No. 17.04. see appendix III

³⁹⁵ Waal, p.73.

³⁹⁶ Archive, NALA, Folder No. 17.01 File No 5.02.

Hussien, the founder of Ethiopian National Liberation of Front (ENLF) joined SALF and bring an end to ENLF. The Somali government never limited itself in propaganda campaign and helping internal insurgents it also openly invaded Ogaden on July, 23, 1977 by crossing Ethio-Somalian boundary.³⁹⁷ At this early stage of invasion of Somali the internal insurgent SALF in Bale was not in conventional war with the government. However, in the course of the time the whole province of Balé was overrun by the WSLF. A letter written from government high officials of the province of Bale to provisional military administrative council stated that the whole province was overrun by the insurgents. Accordingly this report from 25 *wärädas* of the then Bale only two of them were not attacked by the insurgents. The rebels controlled either the whole or part of twenty three *Waradas* in Bale.³⁹⁸ Agarfa is one of the two districts that did not fell under the control of the insurgents. The other district was the district of Kokosa, presently one of the districts in West Arsi Zone.³⁹⁹ According to informants due to relative peace in Agarfa at this early stage of the revolution a number of people migrated to the district. Informants argued that it was the unity among the people of the districts that blocked the entrance of the insurgents to the district during the Italo- Ethiopian war 1935-1941. The government also mobilized a local *militia* from the members of the peasant association to keep the security of their locality.⁴⁰⁰

Even though the district was not within the control of the insurgents the insecurity problem in the neighboring districts indirectly affected the people of the district. The Shawan Oromo, who afraid of the situation in the neighboring districts are said to have returned back to Shawa. From the local Oromo of Balé some who opposed to the *derg's* reforms joined the insurgents and to took exile to the lowland as a result of the government offensive attack.⁴⁰¹ On the other hand the government mobilized local militia from the district to keep the security of the district and to participate in counter offensive war with the insurgents. The local militias were also recruited to keep the security of the boundary between Bale and neighboring provinces. For instance, a letter written by *Shambal* Getachew Waqjira the then vice administrator of Balé to Mandoyu *awraja* ordered that 100 local *militia* and 50 supports to be mobilized from the district of Agarfa to

³⁹⁷Waal, p. 74; Marcus G, p.209.

³⁹⁸Archive, NALA, Folder No. 17.1.5 File No.02.01.

³⁹⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰Informants: Häsan Sulṭan, Hussien Karku, and Ahmed Waqjira.

⁴⁰¹Germa Dabale, Nägäsh Rata, and Bäkälä Abäbä and Magarsa Däbäle

participate in the joint campaign carried by Sidamo, Arsi, Hararghe and Balé along the boundaries of these provinces.⁴⁰²

4.2 Land Reform and its Implementation.

As it was discussed in chapter three following the restoration of the monarchy the government of Emperor Haileselassie I issued the land proclamation that aimed at increasing the revenue obtained from land by privatizing and granting it the seekers of land. In addition to increasing the state income land grant was also aimed at broadening the basis of support.⁴⁰³

The imperial land policy was against the tradition of land management in the district of Agarfa. The successive land measurement and privatization accompanied with the increment of tax resulted in the eviction of the peasants from their lands and accumulation of land in the hands of few. This imperial land policy met resistance from the people of the district from the very beginning. The land policy and its implementation was the main source of grievance against the government in the post liberation period. Like the peasants in the other districts of Bale the peasants in the district of Agarfa opposed the land measurement and refused to pay the tax imposed over them following the land measurement.⁴⁰⁴ The peasants' refusal to pay tax resulted in the accumulation of large of tax arrears. This in turn led the confiscation of land by the government under the pretext of tax default. It was this problem which became one factor for the Balé peasant rebellion which lasted 1963-1970. The revolt by peasants forced the government to introduce various reforms in order calm down the political instability in the province.⁴⁰⁵

The problem related to land was not a unique to the problem in the province of Bale. It was a common problem in southern Ethiopia. The systemic eviction of peasants from their land reduced them to the status of tenancy. The imperial land policy faced criticism from different groups. However, the government failed to give positive response to the criticism. The only measure taken by the government was the establishment of Ministry of land reform and administration to administer land related issues.⁴⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the ministry failed to introduce the measures that could change the existing land holding system. Since the mid of the 1960 the

⁴⁰²NALA, Folder No.17.1.5 File No.02.01. See appendix IV

⁴⁰³Bahru, *The History of Modern...*, p.192.

⁴⁰⁴Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Hussien Alo, Kädär Chuqule and Usman.

⁴⁰⁵Waal, p.68; Laphiso, p.189.

⁴⁰⁶Andargachaw, p.98.

university students who understood the impact of imperial land policy on the Ethiopian peasants opposed to the imperial land policy and carried demonstration against the government of Emperor Haileselassie I having a popular slogan 'Land to the tiller.'⁴⁰⁷

Following the February 1974 revolution the issue of land continued to be the major concern of the actors of the revolution. Before the fall of the monarchy the new Prime Minister Endalkachaw Mekonnen was asked by the actors of the revolution to present his proposal for land reform. The proposal presented by the ministry of land reform was not progressive. It only put a ceiling of 20 *gashas* of land to be owned by individual land owner. Following the monarchy on 13, September, 1974 the military government announced that it will issue a new land that will change the existing land holding system including the abolition of tenancy.⁴⁰⁸

Following the disposition of the Emperor the military government did not immediately introduce the new land reform proclamation. The land reform was preceded by different measures that will enhance the implementation of the land reform. One of these measures was the program known as *Edgat behibretZamacha* (development through cooperation). An attempt to organize the student for the campaign was started before the fall of the monarchy. *Derg* used the old tradition in which the students give national service and ordered the university to organize a campaign for development and cooperation. Accordingly a call was presented to all students to be assigned in rural areas to assist in development, educate rural masses, advance their political consciousness and explain the significance of the revolution under the slogan of '*Ityopya Tikdam*' (Ethiopia First).⁴⁰⁹

However, many students suspected the *derg's* plan for campaign and opposed the campaign arguing that their campaign will be fruitless without proclamation of land reform. The military government used different method and convinced the students to participate in the campaign and the campaign was also decided to include grade 11 and 12 students and was enacted as law on 25, November, 1974. Following this *Derg* declared Ethiopian socialism as an ideology and renewed its promise for land reform. After convincing and giving instruction more than 60000 students were sent to the rural areas of the country in order to participate in the program of

⁴⁰⁷Markakis and Nega, p.130; Andargachaw, p.98.

⁴⁰⁸Andargachaw, p.98.

⁴⁰⁹Pausewang, Peasant, Land..., pp.101-102.

development through cooperation. The deployment of the students to the rural parts of the country brought the revolution to the countryside.⁴¹⁰

In accordance with the plan of development through cooperation a group agricultural extension workers and students were sent to Bale. The first group of the campaigners arrived in Bale on 8, *Yekatit* (February) 1967 Ec. The campaigners were welcomed by higher government officials at the province. A group campaigners who were sent to Bale were assigned in different district of Bale .The district of Agarfa was one of the districts where the first group campaigners were assigned.⁴¹¹

As it was promised by the military government the deployment of the students to the countryside was followed by the proclamation of and reform. Before it was formally issued the proposal of land reform was discussed by the experts and modified by *Derg* and officially proclaimed on 4, March, 1975.⁴¹²

The land reform issued by the military government made all agricultural land the collective property of the Ethiopian people. The proclamation banned the different practices attached with land such as land sale and mortgage. It also prohibited the transfer land others except to the direct heirs. Land was forbidden to given for others in return for money. The land reform proclamation also abolished the different obligation attached with the imperial land tenure such as rental payment, labor obligation and other duties attached with land. All forms of tenancy were abolished and land was forbidden to be cultivated by hired labor. However, special consideration was made for the widows, Orphans, the aged and the disabled who could not cultivate the land on their own.⁴¹³

The land reform proclamation put a ceiling for the land to be owned by an individual cultivator. A maximum of ten hectors of land was decided to be owned by individual cultivator. The proclamation cancelled all debts of tenants to the land lord and the tenants were allowed to keep the land of feudal lord tilled by them before the proclamation. Different scholars argued that the

⁴¹⁰*Ibid*; Markakis and Nega, p.133; Solomon, p.18; Gebru, *The Ethiopian revolution...*, p.34; G.Marcus, *The Ethiopian...*, p.190.

⁴¹¹Solomon.20; Informants: Ebrahim, Jämal Ahmed and Usman.

⁴¹²Andagachaw, p.98; Markakis and Nega, p.132; Pausewang, p.13.

⁴¹³Pausewang, p.13; Andargacaw, p.100; Bahru, p.242; Hussien Jima, p.10.

proclamation did not give the land to the cultivator, what was given to the peasants by this proclamation was the right to cultivate and use the fruit.⁴¹⁴

By the time when the proclamation was the students were already deployed to the countryside and were expecting for the Promised Land reform at the *zamacha* post. The land reform was seen as the fruit of the struggle and considered it as the beginning of the revolution. The land reform was supported by the various urban populations. The Urban population expressed their support by public demonstration.⁴¹⁵

Concerning the implementation of the land reform in the district of Agarfa the campaigners began their work by communicating with local officials and elders to facilitate a favorable condition for the implementation of the land reform. Based on the land reform proclamation and the establishment of peasant association the campaigners made their first task establishing peasant association in the district.⁴¹⁶ They travelled from one locality another locality within the district and arranged meetings with the local community. They used the meeting they held with local communities to teach them about the revolution, class struggle and the significance of establishing peasant association for the implementation of the land reform and to struggle against anti-revolutionary forces.⁴¹⁷

The students were more committed to educate the masses since land reform one of the major demands of the students before the revolution. The military government sent them to the countryside by promising to issue land reform. The land reform proclamation was seen by the students as the fruit of their struggle and worked in determination for its implementation since the issue of land was the main topic of their discussion in the 1960s and it continued as their main question in the course of the revolution. According informants the campaigners in the district of Agarfa spread the idea of the land reform among the masses.⁴¹⁸

As part of southern Ethiopia, the district of Agarfa was one in Bale where land alienation was carried during the imperial era which reduced the peasants of the district to the status of tenancy

⁴¹⁴Bahru, p.242; Andargachaw, p.100; G.Marcus, p.192.

⁴¹⁵Andargachaw, p.103.

⁴¹⁶Informants: Ebrahim, Tulu, Jemal and Usman.

⁴¹⁷Informants: Mähmmä Waqjira, Jämal Usman Adisha Waru, Adäm Dawud Nägäš Rata and Germa.

⁴¹⁸Gebru, *The Ethiopian Revolution...*, p.27; Andargachaw, p.103; Informants: Mähmmäd Waqjira, Jämal Usman Adisha Waru, Adem Dawud Nägsh Reta, Germa and Kätäma Däbälä.

and forced them to live under difficult condition. This past oppression and exploitation enabled the campaigners in in the district of Agarfa to win the support of the masses who were exhausted of the burdens of tenancy hoped that the land reform will liberate them from the oppression and exploitation the faced both from local and absentee land lords.⁴¹⁹

Information about the new land reform by campaigners to the tenants was good news that was welcomed. In the absence of modern transport in the district the campaigners travelled throughout the district and thought the peasants and arose their consciousness about the revolution. The land reform proclamation ordered that the peasant association should be organized within an area of 800 hectares. Accordingly the campaigners in the district of Agarfa organized the peasants into peasant association within an area of 20 *gasha* (800 hectares) of land as one peasant association. The former boundaries of the territory of the different *gosa* (lineage group) were recognized as a boundary among the peasant association established in the district. All inhabitants with the land holding up to ten hectares were registered as the member of the peasant association.⁴²⁰

The peasant associations were established in the district with the effort of the campaigner in collaboration with the local people. The peasant associations were established their own structures and leaders elected from the members by the members. The establishment of peasant association was carried all over the province of Bale. According to existing literature there were 793 peasant associations in Bale with 110792 households and with average 140 members per association in January 1976. According to some archival sources there 63 peasant association in the district of Agarfa in July, 1977.⁴²¹

In line with the establishment of peasant association the other major duty of the campaigners to which they showed their determination for its implementation was the distribution of land. One of the major purposes of the establishment of peasant association was to facilitate the distribution of land.⁴²² Hence, the peasant association in the district took over the responsibility to distribute land under the guidance of the campaigners. In accordance with the land reform proclamation the tenants in the district were allowed to keep the land of feudal lord that the tilled and additional

⁴¹⁹Informants: Māhammād, Jemal, Adisha, Adām, Nāgaš and Germa and Kātāma.

⁴²⁰Pausewang, p.14; Informants: Kādir Chuqule, Fayo, Tulu, Nāgaš and Hussien Karku.

⁴²¹Archive, NALA, Folder No, 17.01 File No. 5.02; Pausewang, p. 128.

⁴²²Deselegn Rahmato, Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia, Scandinavian institute of African studies, (Uppsala, Sweden, 1984),p. 39; Andargachaw,p.102.

land was given to them based on the size of the land owned by the tenants.⁴²³ The land local feudal lords, absentee land lords and the Christian settlers were confiscated and distributed to the peasants who were the member of the peasant association. The confiscation and its distribution reduced the holdings the feudal lords that accumulated land by using different method in the post liberation period. The distribution of land carried in the district relieved the peasants from the burdens of tenancy which was imposed over them due to imperial land policy in the post liberation period.⁴²⁴

According to Deselagn Rahmato the very beginning of land distribution in Ethiopia was carried under difficult conditions and it was carried without experts by the time when there was political instability in rural Ethiopia.⁴²⁵ In case of Agarfa even though the vast majority the peasants who were living under the terms of tenancy welcomed the reforms introduced by the revolution there were some sort of opposition to the reforms from the propertied class. Existing indicates some group of people in the locality known as Garado opposed to the military government and its slogan of '*Ethiopia Tikdam*' openly expressed their opposition to the military government by the time of the implementation of the proclamation of land reform in July 1975. However the protest was put under the control with the effort of peasant association.⁴²⁶

The district of Agarfa was among the district in Bale where the establishment of peasant association was effectively implemented. Within a period of two years after the land reform proclamation the peasants associations in the district were strengthened. According to existing source 63 peasant associations in the district of Agarfa requested the concerned body of the government to facilitate them favorable condition for the plan to buy modern agricultural machineries such as tractors, combines and others machines. The request was presented to the government in July 1977. This indicates that the peasant associations established in Agarfa were strengthened within a very short period of time.⁴²⁷

In addition to the land distribution the peasant associations established in the district of Agarfa also took the responsibility to administer themselves and keeping the security of their locality by mobilizing local *militia* from the members of peasant association. According to informants one

⁴²³Informants: Usman, Kédír Chuqule, Tulu, Ešātu and Ebrahim.

⁴²⁴Informants: Adām Dawud, Gabii Tuke, Abduro Kādiro, Yasin Idiris, Nāgaš and Ešātu and Māgārsa Dabale.

⁴²⁵Deselegn, p.39.

⁴²⁶NALA, Folder No.17.1.5 File No. 17.04. See appendix III

⁴²⁷NALA, Folder No.17.01 File No.5.02 see appendix V

factor for the district to be free from the control of WSLF was the commitment of local militia in keeping the security of their respective peasant association. The peasant associations established in the district later merged together and formed village.⁴²⁸

4.3 Villagization in Agarfa

As it was discussed in chapter one the settlement pattern of the Oromo of Bale in Agarfa was based on lineage group. People belong to the same *gosa* (lineage) settled in the territory that belong to their own clan. In spite of land privatization in the post liberation period the continued to inhabit in the formal tradition during the Imperial era.⁴²⁹

Following the 1974 revolution the military government of Derg issued different proclamations that change the farmer socio-economic condition. One of the measures introduced by *Derg* was villagization. Before villagization the peasants were organized into peasant association. In accordance with the proclamation of peasants association the peasant in Agarfa district were organized into different peasant association by using the former boundaries of the territories of different *gosas* (lineage) groups.⁴³⁰

Villagization was the new measure taken by *Derg* military government following the establishment of peasant association and implementation of the land reform villagization was the concentration of settlements into centralize villages. It was the major goals of the military government since the revolution. There were different factors behind villagization. According to Mengistu Hailemariam the main aim of villagization was to create a favorable condition to provide the government services.⁴³¹ According to existing sources there was a security problem in many parts of the country. Villagization was one of the strategies used by the military government of *derg* to overcome the security problem in the South East Ethiopia through forceful relocation of the population and establishing in villages in selected sites where the movement could be easily controlled which in turn could help the government to deny the insurgents access to essential supply.⁴³²

⁴²⁸Informants: Adām Hussien, Mohämmä Waqjira, Jāmal Usman, Hussien Karku , Eshātu, Kābādā Badhané, Kādir Chuqule and kātāma.

⁴²⁹Informants: Ebrahim, Jāmal Ahmed and Usman.

⁴³⁰*Ibid.*

⁴³¹Clapham, p.175; Marcus, p.2009.

⁴³²*Ibid*; Waal, p.86.

The province of Bale is one of the South Eastern provinces of the country where there was a major security in the early years of the revolution. As it was mentioned earlier there was protest against the government in Balé during the Imperial regime as a result of maladministration. An individual and group protest in the province later resulted in an organized peasant rebellion that became one of the major challenge to the Imperial government. The rebellion lasted 1963-1970 resulted in human and material losses.⁴³³

During the rebellion in Bale the government of Somalia, who had territorial claim in Ethiopia supported the rebellion in Bale by providing military training and armies to the rebel. As a result of the military coup carried Somalia faced internal political crisis. The new government of Somalia signed an agreement with Ethiopia and agreed to stop the support it provided to the rebels. Hence, the internal political problem in Somalia became one factor for the end the rebellion in Bale with the victory of the government forces.⁴³⁴ Even though the government of Somalia signed an agreement with the Ethiopian government by the time of its internal problem its territorial claim in Ethiopia and the plan of establishing greater Somalia never died totally. According to archival source the Somali government sent spy to Ethiopia in February, 1973 and the then government of Bale General Jagama Kelo informed the governors of the five Awrajas of Bale to follow up and to take action against the spy sent by the government of Somalia.⁴³⁵ This indicates that the Somalian claim of territory in Ethiopia revived even before the 1974 revolution.

Following the revolution Somalia once again invaded Ethiopia. Balé was among the province that was seriously threatened by the Somalian war of 1977-79 and the war created a security problem and resulted in population displacement. According to existing source hundred thousands of people were displaced as a result of the war with Somalia.⁴³⁶ Villagization was among the measures used by the government as a strategy to combat against the insurgents by settling the people in protected village. As one of the provinces threatened by the WSLF the program of villagization was implemented in Balé between 1979 and 1982 a means of overcoming the security problem created by invasion of Somalia and internal insurgents.

⁴³³Gebru, *The Ethiopia Revolution*, p.14.

⁴³⁴Waal, p.71.

⁴³⁵Archive, BZAAS, Folder No. B3 File No. 5

⁴³⁶waal,p.74

Accordingly, about 560,000 people had been villagized in Northern Balé in 1979.⁴³⁷ The district of Agarfa is one districts in the northern part of the province where the program of villagization was implemented at initial stage of villagization of the province.⁴³⁸

According to existing sources during the Somali war of 1977-79 which was accompanied with internal insurgents from the 25 *Wärädas* (districts) in Balé according to the then administrative structure only two of them were not affected by the rebel group. The district of Agarfa was one of the two districts that did not fall under the control of the rebels. The other district that did not fall under the control of the rebel was Kokosa.⁴³⁹ According to informants even though the district Agarfa was not under the direct control of the insurgents the district was forced to shoulder the consequences of the war. It served as a host for the displaced people from the neighboring districts in Balé. It was the security problem which forced the military government to implement the program of villagization in Balé where Agarfa is one district.⁴⁴⁰

In the process of villagization certain criteria were used to villagize the people of the district of Agarfa. Among these the existence of water, food, shelter for the people and to how much degree the selected area was safe from natural hazards were among the criteria put into consideration in the process of selecting site for villagization. The model for villagization in Balé was drawn from villages set up in Arsi and Balé to resettle the peasants from the new state farm in the Wabe Shebele valley. In the process of villagization the different peasant associations that were established following the revolution were merged and resulted in the formation of 20 villages.⁴⁴¹

Villagization program carried in the district of Agarfa affected the lives of the people both positively and negatively. Among the benefits of villagization it helped the people to have easy access to health care and educational services. It also made it easier for the government to control the peasant associations.⁴⁴² On the other hand villagization affected the lives of the people from the very beginning of the program. Since villagization was a program of bringing scattered settlements into centralized villages in the area selected by the government the local people were forced to be involved in the construction of houses. As a result of this they spent much of their time

⁴³⁷*Ibid*, p.87

⁴³⁸Informants: Jämal Ahmed, Hussien Alo and Germa.

⁴³⁹NALA, Folder No. 17.1.5 File No. 02.01.

⁴⁴⁰Informants: Jämal, Hussien and Germa.

⁴⁴¹Clapham, p.175; Informants: Jemal, Hussien Alo and Germa.

⁴⁴²Informants: Ahmed Alo, Hussien Alo, Lägäsä Hurisa, Abdala Mohammedsani, Hundé Joté and Mägärsa.

in the construction of houses which in turn affected their agricultural activities.⁴⁴³ As the selected sites were not based on the will and the interest of the peasants they were displaced from their homestead and forced to settle in a new locality that was far from their agricultural field. This forced the farmers to travel a long distance to carry agricultural activities every day.⁴⁴⁴

In addition to this the villagization which resulted in concentration of large number of a people in a selected sites affected the environment by resulting overgrazing as a result of concentration of a large number of cattle in the villages and deforestation as a result of that the construction activities carried in the process of villagization. According to Informants the concentration of a large number of cattle also resulted in animal disease and resulted in death of a large number of cattle. Informants remembers that a large number of peasants lost a large number of cattle and this created economic hardship on the society and even affected agricultural activities in the districts.⁴⁴⁵

The other impacts of villagization in the district of Agarfa was that the concentration of a large number people in a village also put pressure on the nearby water resources and resulted in communicable disease. In addition to the problems related natural environment that affected the lives of the peasants directly and indirectly according to informants following villagization the government easily propagate the idea of agricultural producers cooperatives among the peasants and used different methods to enforce the peasants towards the membership of agricultural producers cooperatives and also used it to effectively implement Agricultural Marketing in which the peasants were forced to sell the produce to the government according the price limited by the government. Villagization made the system of control more effective since the government orders easily reached to each individual peasant and also to make measure against those who failed to obey the government orders. According to informants they were put under strict control since the villagization of the district.⁴⁴⁶

Villagization was accompanied with the drought of early 1980s and resulted in food shortage in the district. As a result of this the people of the district was forced to rely on the aid provided by the government. Archival sources also indicates that the district of Agarfa one of the districts that

⁴⁴³Informants: Kedir Chuqule, Fayo, Jämal Ahmed, Nägäš and Tulu.

⁴⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵Biniyam, p. 49; Informants: Kädär Chuqule, Fayo, Jämal Ahmed, Nägäš and Tulu.

⁴⁴⁶Informants: Jämal Usman, Ešätu, Mähämmäd Waqjira and Yasin Kädär.

was affected by drought in the early 1980s. Informants argued that villagization was one of the factors that lead to starvation in the district since it was a factor behind the death of a large number of cattle and also affected agricultural activities of the peasants by distancing them from their agricultural field which in turn forced them to spend much of their time on the journey.⁴⁴⁷

Despite its impact on the environment agricultural activity villagization enabled the military government to implement the different programs introduced before villagization and those introduced after villagization. Among these programs one was training peasants to transform the peasants' way of life by training peasants from each peasant association who will in turn train the members of their peasant association. In accordance with this program peasant with an average age of 25 and with education level of grade four were recruited from different villages of the district trained in the training center established in the province of Bale and other provinces of the country.⁴⁴⁸

In the period from 1978 to 1988 peasants from different villages of the district were given a short term training that lasted from 10 days to 20 days and long term training that lasted from 6 to 11 months. Short term trainings were given in the training centers established within the district in the villages of Ambentu, Amigna, Raṭaba and Sabaja and the towns of Agarfa and Ali and also in the neighboring districts of sinana and Goba and Bokoji in Arsi province. Long term training was given Agarfa multipurpose peasant training center and neighboring villages of Ambentu, Amiña, Raṭaba and Sabaja.⁴⁴⁹

From the total 1268 peasants who were given training 76 of them were trained in Agarfa multipurpose training center for the terms of six months, 1071 of them received short term training from 10 days to 20 days, 196 for three months and 120 for eleven months. The course given to the peasants were health and home economics, plant protection, animal husbandry, agriculture and natural resource management, wild life and forestry.⁴⁵⁰ According to some source the trained peasants tried to transform the way of life the peasants of their peasant association and were able to bring attitudinal changes in using fertilizes and selected seeds and

⁴⁴⁷Archive, NALA, Folder No.17.01 File No.5.02

⁴⁴⁸*Bale kiflehager plan tsefatbet*, "Be Bale kiflehager 1970-1980 EC be gibrina muya ye salatantu gabarewoch ataqalayi ye sira enqiqase tinatawi gimgama (Bale kiflehager plan office, evaluation of the peasants trained in agricultural skills in Bale kiflehager 1978-1988" (BKPO here after)), (1988, Goba), p.30.

⁴⁴⁹BKPO, p.33.

⁴⁵⁰Ibid, pp, 33, 34.

environmental protection. Even though the training offered to the peasants helped to raise the awareness of the peasants it had also negative impacts on other peasants since agricultural activity of the trainees were carried by the other peasants it created additional burden on the peasants.⁴⁵¹

The other program implemented in the district of Agarfa following villagization was forestation program. As it was stated earlier one of the impacts of villagization in the district was deforestation. Measures were taken to overcome the problem. Large scale reforestation and forestation program was carried in the district. Thousands of trees were planted along wayib river bank and the hill of Ambalat and other mountainous parts of the district. The present-day 683 hector of manmade forest in the district is the contribution of the military government of *derg*.⁴⁵²

Among the programs effectively implemented in the district was following villagization was literacy campaign. The program was carried to provide basic education to enable the masses to read and write. According to the program all adults in the district were ordered to attend the basic education offered in their locality. Absence from class resulted in punishment in money. Students at high school level participated in teaching adults. Elementary school teachers in different villages of the district were also the participant of the program. Students who completed grade twelve were sent to the district as in the form of campaign. According to informants in spite of its impacts on their agricultural activity the program enabled them to read and write to have skill in basic mathematical calculation. They argued that the literacy campaign was the positive contribution of the military government that made them free from signing with their thumbs.⁴⁵³

Villagization also enabled the government to effectively administer, control and to mobilize human and material resources of the district for national crisis. For instance, it helped it to mobilize the youth from the district for the wars carried in the Northern part of the country. The youth of the district were mobilized by village officials by using different means including the use of force, imprisoning the family of those who were recruited to be sent to military training center. The families were persuaded and also forced to hand over their sons to be sent the

⁴⁵¹BKPO, pp. 31, 32.

⁴⁵²Council of Oromia, p.55; Informants: Ebrahim, Ṭaha, Hussien Karku, Usman and Nägäš and kätäma.

⁴⁵³Informants: Kädır Chuqule, Fayo, Tulu, Hussien Karku and Ahmed Alo

military training and then to war fronts. According to informants the youth in the district were unable to escape from being caught by the village officials since villagization helped the inhabitant under the chain of centralized administration. The people of the district also forced to shoulder the effects of the war carried in the northern part of the since they were forced to carry the agricultural activities of those who marched to north. In the late 1980s as the number of those who marched to north the peasants were highly burdened and this affected the productivity of their own agricultural productivity.⁴⁵⁴

4.4 Producers Cooperatives in Agarfa District.

Following the revolution the military government introduced a new land reform proclamation that abolished the imperial land tenure that made land the common property of Ethiopian masses by the proclamation of March 4, 1975. According to this proclamation the former tenants were allowed to keep the land feudal lords that they tilled before the proclamation and land was also distributed to the peasants by the leaders of peasant association and the campaigners. This action of the military government was welcomed by the oppressed group in the district Agarfa. The former tenants cooperated in the process of establishment of peasant association and distribution of land.⁴⁵⁵

The establishment of peasant association and distribution of land was followed by villagization which forced the peasants to leave their homestead and to settle in a new site selected by the government. As it was discussed earlier villagization was one of the factors that enabled the military government to implement its policies effectively. Among the new policies implemented in the district of Agarfa following villagization was the establishment of Producers Cooperatives (PC). According to informants the government used systematic approach towards the establishment of Producer Cooperatives. At first members of peasant association were ordered till in cooperation and individual plot of land and also tilled a certain plot of land as common property of the peasant association. The product obtained from a plot of land tilled by all members of the peasant association was used to run the different activities of the peasant association.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁴Informants, Germa, Gabi, Abdisha, Tulu and Nägäš.

⁴⁵⁵Ibid; Markakis and Nega Ayele, p.132.

⁴⁵⁶Informants: Fayo, Kädär Chuqule, Tulu and Gabi.
Čuqule, Kăbădă Badhane, Lăgăsă Hurisa, Umar Unsi and Hundé Joté.

As it was mentioned earlier the peasant association in the district demanded the government to facilitate them a favorable condition to buy agricultural machineries. This indicates that there were some sort of agricultural activities in cooperation. This agricultural activity in cooperation was later followed by the establishment of Agricultural producers' cooperatives. By the time when the government declared the establishments of Agricultural Producer Cooperatives there were two responses to the governments call for its establishment. The former tenants who had no land during the imperial regime accepted the question in fear of losing the land given to them following the land proclamation and became the founding members of Agricultural producers cooperatives in the district Agarfa. On the other hand the peasants who had their own plot of land and the former land owners refused to be the member of agricultural producers' cooperatives. Hence, at the very beginning of its establishment PC in Agarfa were founded by small number of the former tenants.⁴⁵⁷

The members of PC in Agarfa gradually increased as a result the different measures taken that systematically in forced the peasants towards membership of PC. Among the measures the taken by the government the members of PC were allowed to take fertile arable land grazing land whether it belong to an individual peasant or not. As a result the peasants who lost their arable and grazing land to PC were forced to join PC.⁴⁵⁸ The government also provided oxen, fertilizer, seeds to PC. According to existing literature supporting members of PC was a general policy at national level. The government allocated 60 percent of scarce resources to the state farms and PC in order to make them attractive than individual peasant agriculture.⁴⁵⁹ In the district of Agarfa the officials of peasant association at village level continuously persuaded the peasants towards membership of APC. Informants remember a popular saying of the time that used by the village officials to convince the peasants about the inevitability their membership of PC. To quote '*Qabri fi Amrachi namni hanqatu hin jiru.*' The rough translation of this saying is that as anyone cannot refrain for from death; no one can escape the membership of PC. The word *amrachi* is the amhaic term commonly used as a short term expression of PC during *Derg* regime. The above

⁴⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁹Marcus, *The Ethiopian History*, p.205.

saying tell us that there a commitment from the government to collectivize the peasants. Membership of all peasants was only a matter of time.⁴⁶⁰

The different measure taken by the government gradually increased the members of APC in the district of Agarfa. However, PC was not uniformly established all over the villages of district. According to existing source from the twenty villages in the district during *derg* regime PC were only established in nine of them. There was no PC in mountainous and low land districts of the district. As it was explained by informant the founding members were very small in number. An assessment carried by Agarfa Farmers training center (AFTC) in March 1983 on four model PC supported by the training center confirm that PC in the district were initially established by former tenants even those who had not their own oxen with the total support of the government. Here I would like to present the development in model PC in the early years of their establishment.⁴⁶¹

Table 3. Members of Agricultural Producers cooperatives in Agarfa in four model PC supported by Agarfa multipurpose training center by the time of their establishment.

No.	Name of APC	Year of foundation	Numbers of founding members	Total number of family	Number of oxen	Total area of land owned by the PC in hector
1	Amigna	14/5/72 Ec	46	437	148	347
2	Ambentu	13/5/72Ec	38	156	115	70
3	Sabaja	27/6/72Ec	12		29	60
4	Rataba	7/3/75EC	27	127	13	117
	Total		123	720	305	594

⁴⁶⁰Informants: Häsan Sultan, Fayo, Kädär Chuqule and Jämal Ahmed.

⁴⁶¹Agarfa hulägäb yegäbarewoch Masaltagna Yemodäl Mahibarat gämgämi komité zagaba (Agarfa Multipurpose Farmers training center, a report of an assessment of the committee of model cooperatives), (Agarfa, 1983), p. 8.

Source. Agarfa Multipurpose Farmers training center a report of the assessment committee of model cooperatives p.8.

As it was mentioned earlier at the very beginning of the establishment of Agricultural producers cooperatives in the district of Agarfa it was the former tenants who joined the membership of PC. An assessment carried by Agarfa multipurpose Farmers training center also justifies the information given by the informants about the early condition of agricultural producers' cooperatives. As it is shown in the above table some members were peasants who did not own their own oxen. For instance, only 13 oxen were owned by 27 members of PC in Rataba. Concerning the land holding of the cooperatives it was less than the maximum size of land to be owned by an individual cultivator according the 1975 land reform proclamation. The average land holding per individual member by the time their establishment was 7.5, 1.8, 5 and 4.3 hectors for Amigna, Ambentu, Sabaja and Rataba respectively by the time of their establishment.⁴⁶²

Even the producers' cooperatives supported by Agarfa peasant training association were initially founded by small number of peasant association the different methods taken by the government policy and the support provided Agarfa peasant training center resulted in the increment of the members of producers' cooperatives.⁴⁶³

Table 4. Members of Producers cooperatives in model cooperatives in March 1983.

No.	Name of PA	Number of members of APC			Number of family			Number of oxen	Land owned in hector		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total		Far ming	Gra zing	Tota l
1	Amigna	161	31	192	294	508	802	195	440	383	823
2	Ambentu	109	10	119	184	323	50	124	260	160	420
3	Sabaja	62	2	64	121	317	338	100	130	120	250
4	Rataba	36	2	38				15	37	80	117

Source. AMFTC report of assessment committee of model cooperatives, p.9.

⁴⁶²*Ibid.*

⁴⁶³*Ibid*, p.9.

As it can be seen from the above table the members of PC in the four peasant associations in the nearby villages of Agarfa peasant training center. The above data is based on the assessment carried by Agarfa peasant training center in March 1983. It shows only the members of PC within these villages from their establishment to March 1983. When we compare the number of peasants who became member of PC in this four villages it increased in three folds for Amiña, Ambentu and Sabaja within a period of three years. There is no such increment of members in Raṭaba since this PC was established four months before the assessment carried by Agarfa Peasant training center.⁴⁶⁴

The assessment carried by the Agrfa peasant training center mainly focused on Amigna one of the four model PC supported by the training center. According to the finding of this assessment there were different problems with this this PC. Among these from the very beginning of its establishment was not well planned. The PC was founded by the support of the government. It was the government who provided the necessary implements for the founding members of this PC.⁴⁶⁵

Following the establishment the Agarfa peasant training the Amigna PC continuously supported by the training center. The members of the PC increased from 46 members in January 1980 to 192 in March 1983. Despite the increment of the members there was no commitment among the members to bring economic prosperity. Those who joined the PC were poor peasants who did not contribute to this PC in terms of material wealth when they became member of PC. There was a tendency of movement from other model cooperatives to Amigna. For instance 62 peasants who were members of Raṭaba PC left their and joined the Amiña Horo PC. These peasants joined Amiña by selling their oxen and implements to be benefited by the support provided by the training center.⁴⁶⁶

By the time when this assessment was carried the members of Amigna PC totally developed the culture of dependency. Having 80 pair of oxen the land tilled by the member of this was equal to the one that could be tilled. Their work ethics was poor. The members were expecting for the tractors of the training center to till their lands and for the combiners to harvest their crop. Fertilizer and seed was also provided by the training center. Generally, there was total

⁴⁶⁴ AMFTC report of assessment committee, p. 9.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.10.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

dependence on the Agarfa peasant center. The members of this PC at this stage were those who were ready to share agricultural products of the land tilled by the support of the training center. There was also similar problem in vegetable and fruit production and cattle breeding. The committee recommended that the government should take action to overcome the problem of dependence within this PC in order make it self-reliant cooperative.⁴⁶⁷

The Amigna PC gradually overcame the problem it had faced and strengthened itself and became a model cooperative at the province level. From twenty villages in the district of Agarfa during *derg* Amigna was the only village where all members of the peasant association were member of PC.⁴⁶⁸ Producers cooperatives in other villages of the district also gradually strengthened themselves with the help of the government and increased their members and land holdings. In the nine villages where producers were established the members of PC comprised from 16.55 percent to 100 percent of the members of the peasant association and 19.02 of the total members of the peasant association in the district in 1985.⁴⁶⁹

Table 5. Distribution of members of producers' cooperatives in nine villages of Agarfa Agarfa district in 1985.

No.	Name of the village	Members of PA			Total members of family			Members of producers cooperative			Members of PC in percent
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	
1	Ilani godage	350	10	360	891	1235	2126	76	2	78	21.67
2	Asano ganat	173	13	186	455	619	1074	38	1	39	20.98
3	Waltai Elabidu	260	13	273	620	854	1474	63	7	703	25.64
4	Ali	395	10	405	1021	1037	2058	73	4	77	19.01
5	Qaso	411	18	429	1064	1471	2535	71	-	71	16.55

⁴⁶⁷ AMFTC, report of assessment committee p.10.

⁴⁶⁸ AMFTC report of assessment committee, p.13; Informants: Adām Dawud, Ṭaha, Bākälä, and Kassim Hussien and Magarsa Dabale.

⁴⁶⁹ Sinana district agricultural development office archive section(SDADOAS here after), Folder No.3 File No. 7

	Manso										
6	Amigna Horo	147	48	195	335	464	799	147	48	195	100
7	Ambentu	409	33	442	1038	1440	2478	221	24	25	55.43
8	Rataba	179	13	192	485	634	1119	85	8	93	28.12
9	Sabaja goda	279	20	299	740	878	1618	85	8	93	31.1
	Total	2603	178	2781	6649	8632	15281	825	97	922	33.15

Source. Sinana district agricultural development office archive section.

From the total 2781 farmers who were member of the peasant association in nine villages where producer cooperatives were established 922 of them were member of the producers' cooperatives. This is 33.15 percent of the total members of peasant association in villages. The total number of peasant association in twenty villages in by that time was 4846. Members of producers comprised 19.02 of the total member of the peasant association in the district of Agarfa.⁴⁷⁰

The establishment of producers cooperative was more successful in the district of Agarfa than the other five districts of Mandoyou *awaraja*. The members and the capital of the cooperatives in the district of Agarfa showed continuous increment from 1983 to 1986 while there was no such increment in the other district.⁴⁷¹

Table 6. Distribution of the growth of members and the capital of producers' cooperatives in six districts of Mandoyou *Awraja* in 1983-1986.

No	Name of the district	1983		1984		1985		1986	
		Nu mbe r of me mbe	capital	Nu mbe r of me mbe	capital	Nu mbe r of me mbe	capital	Num ber of mem bers	capital

⁴⁷⁰Sinana district Agricultural development office Archive section, Folder No.3 File No. 7

⁴⁷¹Bale Zone Agricultural development office archive section (BZADOAS here after), Folder No. A2 File No. 3

		rs		rs		rs			
1	Sinana	331	281444	366	334481.02	489	334431.02	486	434249.81
2	Agarfa	541	357572.95	771	486143.40	808	512853.96	924	695248.59
3	Goro	514	319714.62	605	364465.31	511	419932.78	511	419932.78
4	Gasara	388	291196.60	431	181567.90	457	381531.25	348	416098.37
5	Goba	191	112506.82	183	123880	187	107639.08	194	107100.31
6	Dinsho	199	104412.62	248	109145.63	256	129284.87	280	135033.4

Source. Bale Zone Agricultural development office archive section Folder No. A2 File No. 3.

As it was discussed earlier at the very beginning of its establishment producers cooperatives in Agarfa was established by small number the former peasant with the government. The members gradually increased by the different methods used by government. Even though producers cooperatives were established only in nine villages of the district Agarfa was the district where producers' cooperatives well established in as compared with other districts of Mandoyou Awraja.⁴⁷² The producers' cooperative that was model at the province level, Amigna Horo was among the producers' cooperatives in the district. The whole members of this peasant association were members of the producers' cooperatives.⁴⁷³

The establishment of producers' cooperatives in the district affected the lives peasants who refused to be member of producers' cooperatives in many ways .First, since the members of the cooperatives given priority in seizing farming and grazing land in their villages those who refused membership were forced to lose their fertile agricultural field and grazing land to the producers' cooperatives. This forced them to be member of the producers' cooperatives without their interest.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷²BZADOAS, Folder No. A2 File No. 3

⁴⁷³SDADOAS, Folder No.3 File No. 7.

⁴⁷⁴Informants: Kädır Chuqle, Ahmed Alo, Hssien Karku, Aman Abdo, Nägäš and Adäm Kedir.

In Amigna Horo produces cooperative peasants who refused to be member were evicted from their villages and ordered to settle in villages. According to informants some of the peasants who lost their land took exile to other districts of the province secondly, the non-member peasants were forced to give free labor service to the cooperatives. They were forced to till their agricultural fields and harvest their crops.⁴⁷⁵

Following the down fall of *derg* the lands and implements belong to producers cooperatives were divided among the members. According to existing source the members of producers' cooperatives played a leading in the destruction of the properties of the cooperative. For instance, the different installations used for irrigation such as water pulling motors, water and other materials in Amiña were destroyed by the members who divided it among themselves. However, in some cases the peasants who lost their land to producers cooperatives evicted the members of the cooperatives and took their former land.⁴⁷⁶

4.5 Agarfa town 1974-1991.

As it discussed in chapter two the town of Agarfa was established by the Italians as military camp and center of administration in 1938. Since its foundation the town continued to serve as center of administration throughout the Imperial regime. Even though there was growth of the town in number of its inhabitants and number of houses there was no such infrastructure and social services in the town. The town was not linked with the capital of the province by all-weather road during the imperial era.⁴⁷⁷ The problem infrastructure was a general problem in the province during the imperial era. Provision of social service was also rare even in the last decade of the imperial regime. There was only one clinic in the town that began to give service in 1974 for the people of the town and the district. In education sector there were only four elementary schools in the district. One of these schools was in Agarfa town. Either this there was no other social service in the town. The imperial government did not take initiative to introduce social services and infrastructure in the town of Agarfa.⁴⁷⁸

The military government of *derg* almost inherited a town without infrastructure and social service. The only thing that *derg* gained from the town 160 houses nationalized as extra houses

⁴⁷⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁶Biniyam, p. 49; Informants: Usman, Jemal Usman, Kädär Chuqle, Tulu and Alo Bakar.

⁴⁷⁷Ebrahim Bakaro, Hussien Alo, Usman Garado, Yasin kedir, Germa Dabale and Käbäde Badhane.

⁴⁷⁸Archive, ADEDOAS, Folder, No. 2. File No.6; Informants: Hussien Alo, Ebrahim Bakaro, Ahmed Alo and Ahmed Waqjira.

in accordance with urban land proclamation of 1975. Unlike the imperial government that failed to introduce social services and infrastructure in the district in general and to the town in particular the military government of *derg* took initiative to introduce social service and infrastructure in to the town. The construction of all-weather road that linked the town with the capital of Mandoyou Awraja, Robe and the then capital of the province Goba was completed in 1978. The completion of the road solved an old age problem of the people the town since it enabled them to have easy access to the modern transport system which in turn helped them to carry their business activities by traveling to the major towns of Robe and Goba and the town of Ali in the district. The introduction of communication service was also the contribution of the military government of *dreg*. Postal service was introduced to the town in 1979. The first telephone service was introduced in 1979 and modern telephone service was introduced after the fall military government in 1998 and the town got clean water service in 1980 and electricity in 1981.⁴⁷⁹

In education sector the former Agarfa elementary school that was established during the imperial era was promoted to the status of high school in 1987 and a new elementary school of wayib was established in the same year. The military government of *derg* built a total of seventeen schools in the district. Additional schools were established in the town after the fall of *derg* and presently there are three elementary, one high school and one preparatory in the town.⁴⁸⁰

The introduction the above mentioned social services and infrastructure contributed for town to develop of as an important business and administration center. The construction of southern zone multipurpose peasant training center and the existence of Shanaka state farm were among the pull factor that contributed for the development of the town. Under the government of *derg* the town continued to be the administrative center of Agarfa district and it became the capital of Hora *awraja* following the administrative restructuring of 1987. The construction of offices of different sectors of the government contributed its own share for the growth the town.⁴⁸¹

The town also continued to be important business center in the district. The market held on Wednesday and Saturday was visited by the people from different villages of the district, government workers from Agarfa peasant training center, Shanaka state farm and people from

⁴⁷⁹ ADCTO, The History of Agarfa town, p.15.

⁴⁸⁰ Archive, ADEOAS, Folder No. 2 File No.6

⁴⁸¹ Archive, BZAOAS, Folder A File No. File No.A.5041.VII

the neighboring districts. The business activity carried in the town was the main source income for the inhabitants of the town. The revenue obtained from the town also became one source of income for the government. According to existing source there were 236 and 563 government and private houses respectively in 1991. There were 134 service providing organization in the town in this year the total population of the town in this year was 3891. Even though there was such socio economic development in the town the town remained with the status of kebele with having its own municipality administration.⁴⁸²

The status of the town was promoted in the last days of the *derg* regime and the town got its own municipality administration in 1991. Different factors were taken into consideration to allow the town to have its municipality administration. Among these its location along the road that led to multipurpose peasant training center, the favorable climatic condition, the income obtained from the town, the existence private and government institution were some the factors for the promotion of the status of the town in 1991.

After the fall *derg* the town got its master plan in 1996. According to archival source the master plan changed some of the former settlement patterns and the officials at woreda and zonal appealed for the rearrangement of the master plan. There was an appeal from individuals who had complained on the master plan.⁴⁸³ Under FDRE government the town continued to be the capital of Agarfa district and it is in rapid development. Presently the total area of the town is 1173 hector. From the total area of the town settlement area covers 663 hectors.⁴⁸⁴

4.6 Agarfa Multipurpose Farmers training center.

In order to implement the socialist agriculture policy and to equip the peasants with the idea of national democratic revolution and to strengthen producers' cooperatives the military government of *derg* tried its best to train the peasants by establishing training centers in different part of the country. Following his visit of the southern provinces of Ethiopia Mengistu Hailamariam, the chairman of provisional military administrative council forwarded an idea about the need to establish multipurpose peasant training centers in east, west, north, south and central part of Ethiopia.⁴⁸⁵ This was followed by establishing national coordinating committee for

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ Archive, BZAOAS, Folder A File No. A. 5041.

⁴⁸⁴ Agarfa town Administration office Archive section, Folder No.4 File No.2

⁴⁸⁵ Archive, BZADOAS, Foder A 1 File No. 3.

the selection of peasant training center site that was led by ministry of agriculture. A guideline for the selection of the training center was prepared for the committee. Among the guidelines land scape and climate, availability of land and its cultivability, the existence of river, infrastructure and communication were some of the guidelines for the selection of site for the peasant training center.⁴⁸⁶

Bale was selected as a center for the establishment of southern zone multipurpose peasant training center. Accordingly, a group of eight men having the guidelines were sent to select a site for training center. Based on the guidelines the committee carried survey and selected a site for the training center. The selected site was in the district of Agarfa the locality to the south of wabeshebele ridge that is bounded by Wagarge river in the east, river siso to the south, Shanaka state farm the north east and roughly divided in to two halves by river wayib was selected as a site for the peasant training center.⁴⁸⁷ The altitude of the project area is 2330-2245m rising gently rising from river wayib to the North West and southeast. The climatic condition the geology and cultivability of the soil rain fall distribution of the region was studied by the project committee. After the selection of the site the district was visited by Mengistu Hailamariam and its construction was decided to be carried and to be completed within a very short period of time.⁴⁸⁸

4.6.1 The process of construction and the role of local people and its impacts.

The first name of the training center was southern zone multipurpose peasant training center. It was planned to train the peasants recruited from the provinces of Bale, Arsi, Gamo Gofa and Sidamo according to the then administrative structure. The construction of the project was carried with large amount of money allocated by the government and the contribution of the people of the four provinces. The construction of the project costed more than 35 million birr. From this the people of the four provinces contributed more than four million Ethiopian birr. The workers in different sector and the people provided both material and material support.⁴⁸⁹ According to archival source the government workers contributed five percent of their salary. In

⁴⁸⁶*Ibid.* See appendix

⁴⁸⁷Mesfin Zawdie, "The role Agarfa multipurpose farmers training center in rural development" (BA Thesis, Department of economics, Addis Ababa University, 1980),p.15; Bale zone prison house administration a bulletin *Teweweq*, p.22.

⁴⁸⁸Archive, BZADOAS, Folder A 1 File No.3

⁴⁸⁹*Ye Agarfa Gibrina tekini na muya ye timhirt na sultana koleji ye bir iyobeliyu beal liyu Milineyem matset* (Agarfa Agricultural technical and vocation education and training college silver jubilee millennium bulletin), (Addis Ababa, 2008), p.8.

addition to material and financial support agricultural development workers from Mandyou Awraja and Agarfa warada were ordered to give technical support during the construction.⁴⁹⁰

In line with the construction of the project site a large scale forestation activity was carried within the project site. The people of the district of Agarfa were the main participant. The program was carried by paying grain for those participated in the program of forestation. At initial stage 3 kilo of wheat and 125gm of oil was given for the one who had prepared an area for planting 25 trees. Later this was commented expensive since the forestation program was carried for the benefit of the local people and the payment was changed to 5 kilo of wheat for the one who prepared an area for 60 trees. However, the reduction of the payment resulted in the reduction of the participants. According to existing source in March 1981 37.6 hectors of land was prepared for the plantation of trees with the payment of 166.7 kuntals of wheat under the program forestation of the project site. The locality prepared for the plantation of tree were wagarge, Ambentu and along the road from Agarfa town to the project site. According to archival source 4-5 million trees were prepared to be in 1981. The indicates attention was given for environmental protection in the selected site.⁴⁹¹

On the other hand the producers' cooperatives in four nearby villages were decided to be supported by the training center and model hoses were decided to be built. Accordingly, model houses were built in the neighboring villages. The people who were living in the Amigna village, who were living within the selected site were displaced from the village and forced to settle in a new sit established by the training center. The right to settle in the new site selected by the training center was given only for those who had willingness to be the member of producers' cooperatives. Those who refused membership were assigned in other villages in the district. This indicates that the peasants were not only evicted from their locality but also denied the right given for the member of producers cooperatives.⁴⁹²

Since special attention was given by the government the construction which was started in 1981 was completed within period of one year and eight months and inaugurated in September 1983 and started training in March 1983. The responsibility to select the trainees was given to peasant association. Based on the guidelines for the selection of the trainees the peasants were selected

⁴⁹⁰ Archive, BZADOAS, Folder No. A2 File No.4

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹² Archive, BZADOAS, Folder No. A 1 File No. 3

by their peasant association to be trained for the terms of six months. The trainees who from producers cooperatives were given the right to enjoy equal right with other members and those were from non-cooperative member given the right to be served by other member during his training. The trainees on their part were expected to serve the peasant association after completion of their training.⁴⁹³

Even though the training center initially built having the purpose of training peasants from southern provinces it began its training activity by the peasants recruited from 14 provinces of the then administrative structure. The course of training was divided in to two. These were general education and vocational training. Under general education health education that was aimed at controlling communicable disease while vocational course include agricultural and natural resource management, animal husbandry, cooperatives management, health and home management and techniques and handcrafts.⁴⁹⁴

4.6.2 Its achievements as Farmers training center.

As it was discussed earlier the main purpose of the establishment of the training center was to train the peasants having the aim of rural living condition. As a peasant training center thousands of peasants recruited from all administrative regions were trained in this training center for the terms of six months. According to existing source from 1983 to 1989 a total of 16332 peasants were trained for the terms of six months in eleven rounds. In addition to a short term training from one month to three months were given for 5228 peasants from 1983-1989.⁴⁹⁵

Table 7. Distribution of peasants trained Agarfa multipurpose training center for the terms of six months 1983-1989 in eleven rounds.

No.	Course	Number of trainees
1	Agriculture and natural resource management	6089
2	Animal husbandry	3306
3	Health and home management	2981
4	Cooperative management	3956

⁴⁹³*Ibid*; Mesfin, p.17.

⁴⁹⁴Mesfin, p.25.

⁴⁹⁵Agarfa Agricultural College millennium bulletin,p.8

	Total	16332
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Source. Agarfa agricultural technical and vocational college 25 years silver jubilee anniversary special bulletin p.9.

In addition to its service as a peasant training center it also served other purpose during derg regime. Due to the war in the northern part of Ethiopia in the last years of derg the derg government decided to transfer Asmara University to central part of the country. One of the selected areas was Agarfa peasant training center. Accordingly 1000 social science students of Asmara University transferred to the training center and the training center served as a training campus for Asmara University in 1991 for a period of six months.⁴⁹⁶

In line with the training of peasants in different skills agricultural activities were also carried by the training center. The main purpose of agriculture carried by the training center was to give practical training for the trainees and to generate income for the training center. Up to 2000 hectors of land were used when the college was peasant training center. The main crop produced during this period was wheat. The production was affected by climatic change. For instance, the product obtained from 1725.69 hectors of land in 1984/85 was 898 kuntal. Since 1990 the land used for agriculture gradually decreased and the land used by the college since 1998 for each year is less than 500 hector and the crop produced was changed from wheat to barley.⁴⁹⁷ Forestry is another activity carried by the college as it was discussed before large scale forestation activity was carried by the time of the construction of the training center. According to existing source 1038 hector of the land under the college is covered by natural and manmade forest.⁴⁹⁸

In addition to its contribution for the development the country both as the peasant training center and agricultural technical and vocational college it provided material and technical support to the nearby villages. During derg regime when the college was peasant training center the producers cooperatives in Amigna, Ambentu, Rataba and Sabaja were supported by the training center.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶Agarfa Agricultural college millennium bulletin, p.9.

⁴⁹⁷Ibid,p.13,

⁴⁹⁸Agarfa Agricultural college millennium bulletin,p.13

⁴⁹⁹Archive, BZADOAS, Folder A1 File No.3; Informants: Ṭaha, Nure Chuqule, Bäkälä Abäbä, Fayo and Magarsa.

Generally, the training center played important role in transforming agricultural sector of the economy by training peasants as when it was farmers training center during *derg* regime and training development agents as under the FDRE government.

Conclusion

The Oromo of Bale in Agarfa district belongs to the Arsi, one of the major clan under Barentu confederacy. From the two clans under Arsi the Oromo of Bale in Agarfa belongs to the Kajawa clan of Mando. In the medieval period the district was part of the Muslim sultanate of Bale. Before the incorporation of the province into the Ethiopian empire the Oromo Bale in the district were administered by the *gada* system. Like the Oromo in other parts of the province of Bale the main economic activity of the people was pastoralism and land was maintained as a common property of *gosa*. The district was among the few areas where sedentary agriculture was practiced to a limited degree before the incorporation of the district.

The Oromo of Bale in the district of Agarfa were the first victim of the conquest Bale by the army of Menelik since the war between the army Menelik led by Ras Darge and the Mando Clan of Bale Oromo was fought on the territory of the Oromo of Bale in present-day district of Agarfa. Their political, economic and cultural rights were threatened by the *gäbbar-näffäña* system introduced following the incorporation of the district.

The Italian occupation of the district resulted in the abolition of the *gäbbar-näffäña* system and restored the land taken by the officials and soldiers to the *gosa*. The Italians established military camp in the district and this laid basis for the foundation of the present day Agarfa town. During Italian occupation the Christians in the district were target of execution. The Muslims in the district provided the Christians with Muslim clothes and saved the Christians from the Italian execution.

The implementation of the different proclamation issued by the restored monarchy in the post liberation period seriously threatened the economic and political rights of the people. The land

measurement and land privatization and land grant that was accompanied with land sale carried in the district resulted in the eviction of the peasants from their land under the pretext of tax default and reduced many peasants to the status of tenancy. The peasants' opposition and repeated appeal to the concerned government official failed to bear fruit and the people were forced to shoulder the burden of taxation and related exploitation in the post liberation period.

The 1974 revolution which was the result of popular discontent against the regime from different section of the society bring an end to the imperial regime. Following the fall the Emperor the military government introduced the different proclamation that were implemented all over the country. One of the proclamation was the land reform proclamation of March 1975. This proclamation relieved the tenants in the district of Agarfa from the different obligation related to the term of tenancy and enabled them to own their own plot of land. During *derg* regime the district of was one of the where villagization carried in the late 1970s. Villagization of the district was followed by the establishment of Producers' cooperatives. A result of the establishment producers' cooperatives the peasants of the district were forced to lose their fertile agricultural field and grazing field to the producers' cooperatives. The nonmember peasants in the district were also forced to give free labor service to the cooperatives. The military government of *derg* also established multipurpose farmers training center in the district of Agarfa. The people of the district participated in the process of construction by providing human and material resources and they were also among the participant in the training offered by the training center.

Unlike the imperial government the military government committed to introduce different social sevices and infrastructure. The district was linked with the capital of the province by all-weather road. Social services such as telephone, postal service, electricity, clean water service were introduced to the district by the military government of *derg*. Schools were built in rural villages of the district. Following the administrative restructuring of 1987 the town of Agarfa was made the capital of Hora *Awraja* and got its own municipality administration in 1991.

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Folder No. 512	File.___

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Folder No. A1	File No. 14
Folder A	File No. 5041

Folder No. B 3 File No. 5
Folder No. B 3 File No. 6

1.4. Archival sources from Bale Zone Agricultural development Archive section.

Folder No. A1 File No. 3
Folder No. A2 File No. 4

1.5. Archival Sources from Agarfa district Education office Archive Section.

Folder No. 2 File No. 5 and 6
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List of oral informants

No.	Name of the informant	Age	place of interview	Date of interview	Remark
1	<i>Obbo</i> Abdala Mohammedsani	74	Agarfa	18/05/16	He provided me valuable information about the imperial regme.
2	<i>Obbo</i> Abdisha Waru	71		20/03/16	Well known local elder
3	<i>Haji</i> Abdo Adäm	69	Agarfa	18/03/16	He has a good knowledge about derg regime.
4	<i>Obbo</i> Abduro Kediro	58	Agarfa	13/02/16	He is the son of land owner. He has a good knoledge about the land measurement and its impacts.
5	<i>Haji</i> Adäm Daud	78	Agarfa	24/02/16	He was member of producers cooperatives.
6	<i>Obbo</i> Adem Hussien	66	Agarfa	13/02/16	Village official during <i>derg</i>
7	<i>Obbo</i> Admasu Haile	74	Ambentu	20/03/16	He has good information about the imperial and <i>derg</i> regime.

8	<i>Haji Ahmed Alo</i>	71		27/04/16	a merchant in Agarfa town. He has good knowledge about Agarfa town.
9	<i>Obbo Alo Abdulatif</i>		Agarfa	04/05/16	Well known elder who has knowledge about implementation of the land reform by derg.
10	<i>Haji Alo Bakar</i>	70	Agarfa	13/02/16	He was one of the victims of imperial land tenure.
11	<i>Obbo Aman Abdo</i>	72	Agarfa	08/06/16	Local tenant during the imperial era.
12	<i>Obbo Aman Galatu</i>	72		17/04/16	Well known elder
13	<i>Obbo Bäkälä Abäbä</i>	73	Agarfa	24/02/16	A tenant during the imperial era and member of producers cooperatives during derg.
14	<i>Haji Ebrahim Bakaro</i>	89	Agarfa	18/07/16	Well known elder and he was one of the early inhabitants of the town of Agarfa. He had a profound information about the town and the district.
15	<i>Obbo Ešäṭu Gezaw</i>	65	Agarfa	13/02/16	He was member of producers cooperatives during derg. He provided me valuable information about the implementation of different programmes by <i>derg</i> .
16	<i>Obbo Fayo Qabato</i>	64	Ambentu	17/04/16	A peasant with a plot of land and one of the victim producers' cooperative.
17	<i>Obbo Gabi Tuke</i>		Ambentu	17/04/16	A peasant who had lost his fertile land to producers'

					cooperatives during derg regime.
18	<i>Obbo</i> Germa Dabalé		Ambentu	16/06/16	The Shawan Oromo who came to the district in 1950s and village official during <i>derg</i> . He provided me information about the imperial land tenure and implementation of different programs by the government of <i>derg</i> .
19	<i>Sheik</i> Hasän Sultan	52	Agarfa	04/05/16	He has knowledge about early history of the people and burden of tenancy during the imperial era.
20	<i>Obbo</i> Hundé Joté		Ambentu	20/05/16	
21	Haji Hussien Alo	85	Agarfa	27/04/16	A judge during the imperial era. He provided me about early history of the people, the Italian period and the Imperial era
22	<i>Obbo</i> Hussien Karku	60	Agarfa	04/05/16	A local tenant who knows about the burden of tenancy.
23	<i>Haji</i> Jamal Ahmed	91	Ambentu	17/05/16	Well known elder from Ambentu gosa. He provided me valuable information about the impacts the <i>gäbbar-näffäna</i> system and the imperial land tenure.
24	<i>Obbo</i> Jamal Usman	52	Ali	19/04/16	The son of local official during the imperial era. He

					has knowledge about systematic eviction of peasants from their land during imperial and the impacts of producers' cooperatives.
25	<i>Obbo</i> Jeylan Ahmed	50	Ali	17/04/16	He has knowledge about the implementation of different programmes during derg regime.
26	<i>Obbo</i> Kābādā Badhané	72	Ali	17/04/16	Shawan Oromo who came to the district in the 1950s. He had knowledge about political condition in the district during imperial and derg regime.
27	<i>Obbo</i> Katama Dabalé	80	Agarfa	08/06/16	He the shawan Oromo. He has good information about the political condition in the district in the early years of <i>derg</i> regime.
28	<i>Haji</i> Kedir Chuqule	73	Ambentu	17/04/16	He has a good knowledge about the early history of the people and socio-economic condition of the district
29	<i>Haji</i> Kedir Dheko	80	Agarfa	27/04/16	He is well known elder who has knowledge about the socio-economic history of the the district.
30	<i>Haji</i> Kedir Sulta		Ambentu	20/03/16	Well known elder in the district who knows about the imperial and derg period.

31	<i>Obbo</i> Lägäsä Hurisa			27/04/16	He is the son of former tenant and he was village official during <i>derg</i> .
32	<i>Obbo</i> Mägarsa Dabale	77	Agarfa	18/04/16	The shawan Oromo who was able to own his own land through purchase. He has good knowledge about the imperial and <i>derg</i> regime.
33	<i>Obbo</i> Mohammed waqjira		Agarfa	04/05/16	He is one those who lost their through systematic eviction by officials at district level.
34	<i>Obbo</i> Nägäš Rata	68	Agarfa	18/05/16	He was village official <i>derg</i> . He knows well about the implementation of different proclamations issued by <i>derg</i> in the district.
35	<i>Haji</i> Nure Chuqule	71	Ambentu	20/03/16	He is the son of land owner. He has good information about the imperial and <i>derg</i> regime.
36	<i>Obbo</i> Qassim Hussien	75	Agarfa	02/03/16	He was member of producers' cooperatives
37	<i>Haji</i> Taha Dawud	69	Agarfa	02/03/16	He has information about the imperial and <i>derg</i> regime.
38	<i>Obbo</i> Tullu Dabalé	79	Agarfa	18/05/16	The Shawan Oromo who was able to own his own plot of land. He has a good knowledge about the political and economic condition in the district during imperial and <i>derg</i> regime.

39	Obbo Umar Unsi	76	Ambentu	04/05/16	He was village official during derg. He know well about the the imlementation of different reforms by <i>derg</i> government.
40	Haji Usman Garado	70	Ali	19/04/16	He is well known elder in the district who has a good knowledge about early history of the people.
41	Obbo Yasin Kedir		Agarfa	02/03/16	He was member of producers cooperatives. He has knoledge about tenancy and producers cooperatives.
42	Obbo Yasin Idris	58	Agarfa	24/02/16	He was member of producers cooperatives. He knows well about derg regime .

Appendix

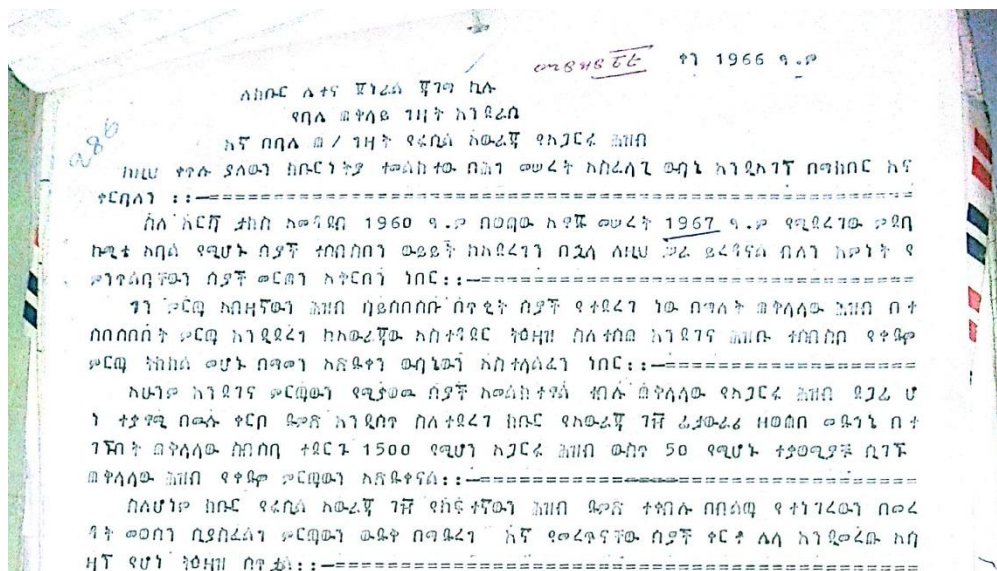
Appendix I

1359
 155/5
 10890
 212/51
 43.40 9.30
 707
 ክፍሎች ለሰነድ ማረጋገጫ የሚያስፈልጉትን ሰነድ ይጠቅሙ።
 ክፍሎች ለሰነድ ማረጋገጫ የሚያስፈልጉትን ሰነድ ይጠቅሙ።
 ክፍሎች ለሰነድ ማረጋገጫ የሚያስፈልጉትን ሰነድ ይጠቅሙ።
 ክፍሎች ለሰነድ ማረጋገጫ የሚያስፈልጉትን ሰነድ ይጠቅሙ።

A letter from *Qāñāzmach* Nāgash wärku to Fasi Awraja to Fasil Awraja on 6, Meskerem, 1964 Ec (September, 1961)

Source. Bale Zone administration archive section Folder A1 File No.14

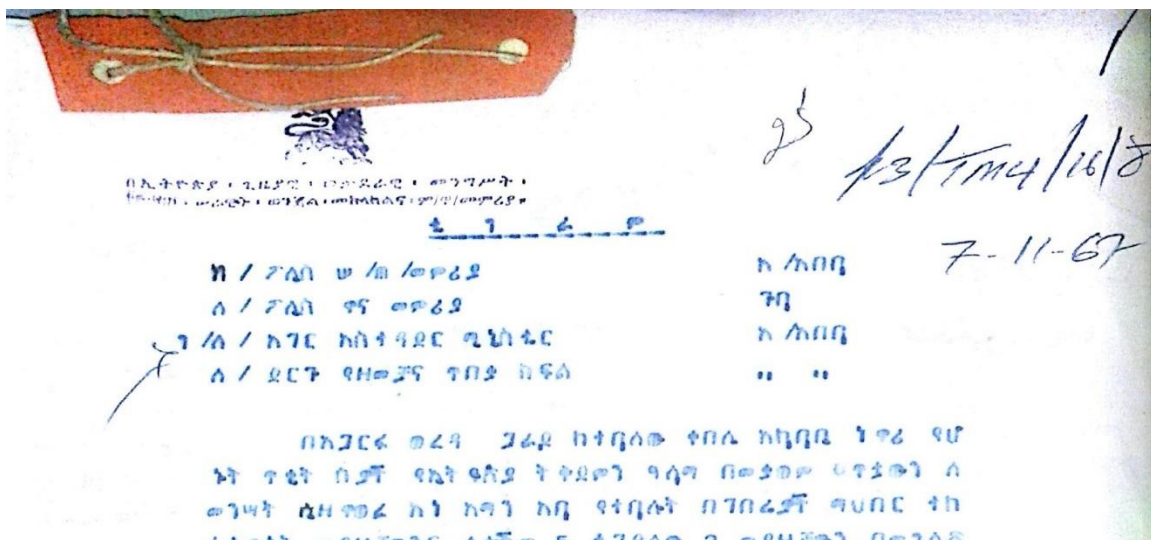
Appendix II



Letter of appeal from the representative of Agarfa district to General Jagama Kello, the then governor of Bale governorate general about agricultural income tax on 15, April, 1966 (1974

Source. NALA, Folder NO.17.1.5 File No. 16.08

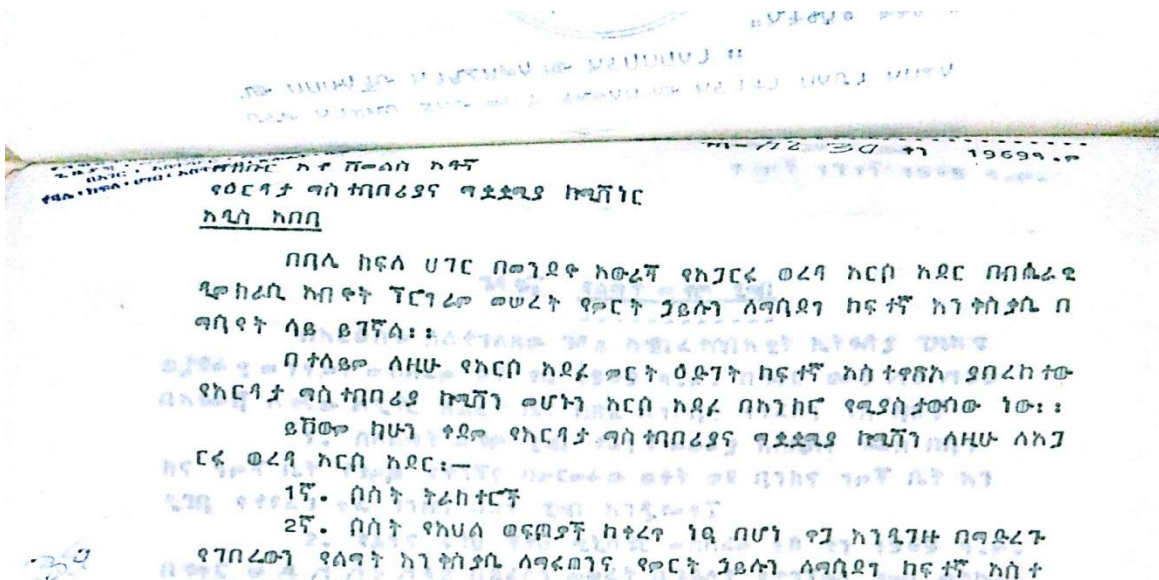
Appendix III



A letter from *Shambal* Getachaw Waqjira, vice administrator of Bale Kiflahager to Mondoyou Awraja in January, 1970 Ec (1978) about mobilization of local militia from four waradas of Mondoyou Awraja.

Source. NALA, Folder No. 17.1.5 File No. 02.01

Appendix V



A letter from Sahilu Ayalew to the ministry of finance of imperial government of Ethiopia on, 15 July, 1954 (1962) about tax collection.

Source. WTMAC, Folder No. 2137 File No. 5/78.

Appendix VII

Handwritten document in Amharic script, dated 15/7/54. Includes a circular stamp, a circled '90', and various handwritten notes and signatures.

Stamp: የፌዴራል ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር ዳይሬክቶሬት (የፊንጃንስ ሚኒስቴር)

Handwritten: 90

Handwritten: ቀን 15/7/54

Handwritten: ቁጥር 4383/4/54

Handwritten: ፊንጃንስ ሚኒስቴር

Handwritten: አክሱም ግንባታ ሚኒስቴር

Handwritten: 52

Handwritten: የአክሱም ግንባታ ሚኒስቴር ለፊንጃንስ ሚኒስቴር የሚያስገባ የግብር ስራ ስለሚፈጸም ስለሚችል ለፊንጃንስ ሚኒስቴር ለማስጠንቀቂያ ይጻፍላል።

Handwritten: ስራው ስለሚፈጸም ስለሚችል ለፊንጃንስ ሚኒስቴር ለማስጠንቀቂያ ይጻፍላል።

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Handwritten: ስራው ስለሚፈጸም ስለሚችል ለፊንጃንስ ሚኒስቴር ለማስጠንቀቂያ ይጻፍላል።

A letter from *Balambaras Bäqälä* Mulat Bekele the director of Fasil awraja to Bale governorate general on, 16, April, 1959 Ec (1967) about the *näčelabash* from Agarfa district who were keeping the security of the road from Adaba to Dinsho.

Source. Bale Zone administration archive section. Folder A1 File No. 14.

Glossary

Aadaa- Culture

Aanaa- relative, close kin; district.

Aba Boku- *Gada* leader of the Oromo in Oromo *gada* system

Alaqa- representative of a group of people who pay taxes together on piece of land, a person in whose ame land tax paid, ethnically regarded as owner of land by state, head of church, a learned priest.

Angafa- Genealogically elder, the preceding one.

Asrat- one tenth of the harvest paid to the state in the form of produce tax, later replaced by Agricultural income tax.

Ato- equivalent to Mr. in Amharic

Badda- highland

Baddadare- Zone between highland and lowland, midland

Bahira- Hereditary local official below Aba Boku among the Oromo

Balabat- Laterally one who has father, indigenous; more commonly a member of local community who Exercised authority under the imperial system, *balabats* provided communities and government Bureaucracy.

Baala buufata-laying leaves, symbolic leaves of occupation of land.

Balbala-Door; minimal lineage group; line of descent through *gosa*.

Balabaras- Head of an amba, a low level administrative title.

Birr- Official state currency.

Burqa- low level official whose responsibility was mainly to oversee land administration and tax collection of specified areas in the district.

Čisañä- Tenant or land owner who pays tax or tribute to someone other than state because of his ownership of land rights were considered to secondary.

Dajjazmach- commander of the gate, a politico-military title below Ras.

Equl Arash-sharecropper who splits the harvest in half with the land owner.

Endarase-In my place; viceroy or local representative of a higher authority.

Fitawrari-Commander of the vanguards, a title below *Dejjazmach*.

Gäbbar Tax payer; land on which tax was paid for the state in labor and in kind.

Gada-an age-grade socio-political system of the Oromo.

Gasha-Shield, a soldier, unit of land measurement usually about 40 hectares.

Gebrätäl- Land taken by the state for failure to pay tax.

Gebragab- Moral education

Gosa- Sort or Kind; lineage group, breed, genus, kind of species.

Gsoomsuu- Adoption in to a clan.

Grazmach-commander of the left a politico-military title above Balabaras.

Haji-Muslim religious title given for those who made pilgrimage to Mecca.

Läm-Fully developed, well cultivated or fertile land.

Läm-Ṭäf- Partially developed, partially cultivated or semi fertile land.

Madärya- Land temporarily held in return for service to the state.

Mälkäña- Official appointed by the state as a governor (administrator) with varying degrees and types of rights over land and income from his governorship, official given a number of *gäbbars*

Menzer-Individuals who share the tax burdens of land among themselves.

Mesläne- Royal official in charge of royal farms and tax collection; later district governor; sometimes equivalent to district.

Obbo- equivalent to Mr. in Afan Oromo

Sämon- Land under the control of the Church or land over which church exercised taxation right.

Siso- Literally, “one third”, land left to the *balabat* by the state up on land measurement, also called *ye balabat siso*; a share-cropping arrangements in the land owner obtain third of the produce.

Ṭäf- under developed, uncultivated or poor land.

Näçi-läbaš-“Those who wear white”; militia, civil defense force commanded by local nobles, rural auxiliary police force.

Näṭṭäñä- From *näṭṭ* ‘refile’ name given to Emperor Menelik’s warriors of northern origin, who later settled in south.

Qälad- A devise for measurement of land; sometimes used interchangeably with *gasha marét* to conquered land that was subsequently appointed by the state.

Qäñäzmach- commander of the right, a politico-military title below *Grazmzch*.

Quter-Gäbbar- peasantry who provided labor service and paid tribute to soldiers, priests or officials rather than directly to the state.

Ṭäf-under developed, uncultivated or poor land.

Wälläd-Aged-A system of borrowing money temporally.

Waaqa- God in Oromo.

Waaqefannaa- a belief in *waaqa*.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own original word and has not been presented as MA thesis in any other university. All source materials used in this this have been duly acknowledged.

Name Shiferaw Mitiku

Signature _____

Date of submission November, 2017

