

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

A HISTORY OF LAND TENURE SYSTEM IN LAALO QILEE DISTRICT,
QELLEM WALLAGA ZONE

Ca.1941-2002

BY

GEREMU REGASA

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JIMMA

A HISTORY OF LAND TENURE SYSTEMS IN LAALO QILEE DISTRICT
FROM 1941-2002.

BY

GEREMU REGASA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
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Key to the Afaan Oromo Transliteration System

In writing the Ethiopian names the following transliteration system has adapted to write this thesis: Oromo couplets, verses and process are speled according to the newly introduced Oromo alphabet (*Qubee*) to simplify the problems of reading Oromo sayings.

Oromo vowel

Short	long	Example	English meaning	English equivalent
a	aa	balbala	door	a= are
e	ee	seera	law	e= were
i	ii	diina	enemy	i= he
o	oo	qotaa	fortress	o= for
u	uu	tulluu	hill	u= you

Oromo consonants are stressed by doubling the similar phonems and combined by two different consonants. These are five defferent Oromo phonemes that are formed by combining two different consonant leters. These are ch, ch, dh, ph, ts, ny and sh. Two of them have English equivalent.

Oromo	English	Example
ch	ch	chappaa
sh	sh	Shaggar

Three of them have no English equivalents. These are dh, ny and ph.

Oromo	Equivalent symbol	Examble	English meaning
dh	dh	dhagaa	stone (rock)
ny	ny	nyaata	food
ph	ph	nyaphaa	a secret provider

In Oromo alphabets, consonants like c, q and x have different sounds while the remaining have almost the same sound as English consonants.

Oromo	Example	English meaning
c	caffee	meadow (assembly)
x	xaafii	teff
q	qeeroo	youngsters

Key to Amharic Transliteration System

I. The seven sounds of Amharic alphabets are represented as follows

በ	Bä
ቡ	Bu
ቢ	Bi
ባ	Ba
ቤ	Bé
ብ	Be
ቦ	Bo

II Palatalized sounds are represented as follows

ሸ	šä
ቸ	čä
ኸ	ňä
ዸ	zhä
ጀ	Jä

III. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows:

ቀ	qä
ጠ	ṭä
ጮ	chä
ፀ	ṣä

Acronyms

ADLI	Agricultural Development Led Industrialization
APC	Collective Peasant Associations
APDM	Amhara Peoples Democratic Movement
E.C	Ethiopian Calender
E.O.C	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
EPDRF	Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Revolutionary Front
EPLF	Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
G.C	Gregorian Calender
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KM	Kilometer
LQCTO	Laalo Qilee Cultural and Tourism Office
MOARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
OCTB	Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization
PAs	Peasant Associations
PMAC	Provisional Military Administrative Council
RGO	Regional Government of Oromia
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF	Tigray Peoples Liberation Front
WOC	Western Oromo Confederation

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Abstract

This study is a historical survey of land tenure system in Laalo Qilee District from 1941-2002. The purpose of the study is to reconstruct the socio-economic and political history of Laalo Qilee District of Qellem Wallaga Zone, focusing on the periods between 1941 and 2002. The year 1941, was a turning point in the history of the district because of the restoration of imperial regime with land redistribution policy in large scale for soldiers, nobility, church, *gabbars* and the like in Laalo Qilee District while the year 2002 is a landmark when the Regional Government of Oromia (RGO), enacted a policy related to land under the supervision of EPRDF. In Laalo Qilee district, the peasants of the district faced socio-economic and political problems and loss of their indigeneous rights over their land starting from the conquest of Emperor Menelik II up to the period under study. This thesis reconstructed the history of land tenure systems in Laalo Qilee District based on relevant archival, primary, secondary and oral sources. Appropriate data from different sources like archival materials, government published reports, manuscripts, theses and dissertations, books and oral informations are gathered and organized. The collected data with oral information carefully arranged and crosschecked then the data are analyzed, interpreted and narrated chronologically. It is in this way that the history of land tenure of the district under study from the restoration of Emperor Hayiläselassé to the first decade of 21st century is constructed. The thesis offered background knowledge related to the pre-1941 period. In short, the main objective of the thesis is to show the local changes observed in Laalo Qilee District in the context of change in policy and government at national level. The restoration of the imperial rule and the subsequent reforms that imperial government introduced, especially in relation to administration, land and the subsequent reactions of the people of the district to and against the policy are the main themes of analysis for the period between 1941 and 1974. Thus, this thesis argues that the socio-economic and administrative changes made by Emperor Hayiläselasé's government in the post-1941 period brought little improvement in the living conditions of most of the local people of the district. The study also tries to examine developments that Laalo Qilee District witnessed during the *Därg* regime (1974-1991). The military regime's attempts to place its power on a better position by introducing several measures at a national level had their own negative and positive effects in socio-economic and political life of the people of district. The thesis also examines the land tenure policy since the fall of *Därg* in 1991 and its subsequent development under EPRDF.

Preface

The purpose of this thesis is to reconstruct a history of land tenure system in Laalo Qilee District from the liberation of Ethiopia from the Italian's occupation in 1941 to the introduction of land policy by the Regional Government of Oromia in 2002. The thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter deals with the geographical and historical background of the district. This chapter tries to look at the geographical features as well as the people of the district. It also tries to assess the expansion and primogeniture process among the Macca Oromo, the settlement of Laalo Oromo, especially the land tenure system of Laalo lineages and its administrative structures.

The second chapter emphasizes on the land tenure system in the district in post-1941 Imperial Period. It briefly describes land distribution, measurement, system of taxation, tenancy and its major effects and the resistance of the local peoples to the land tenure system from 1941-1974.

Chapter three examines the era of *Därg* rule in the District. It discusses the preliminary reforms of *Därg* including land reform and its policy after 1974. It also assesses the major policies of *Därg* like formation of peasant associations, villagization and resettlement programs. The last chapter concentrates on the land tenure's policy and reforms of the district since 1991. It also explores the policy's positive and negative effects on the local society of district.

The historical data used in the thesis consists of three kinds of sources. The first category is literatures like books, theses, journals and articles. The second category of sources used in the work is primary sources like manuscripts and archival sources. Manuscripts that found at Laalo Qilee Land and Agricultural Office, Laalo Qilee District Finance Office, Laalo Qilee Administration Office and the like are used. Thirdly, the researcher has gathered oral information from knowledgeable personalities who had direct or indirect relations with the history of the district as leaders, participants, observers and administrators.

Generally, this study aimed at constructing the history of the land tenure system of the above-mentioned district. It is different from the earlier studies in many ways that is in terms of time, and it covers all the changes and continuities unfolded in the region from 1941 to 2002.

CHAPTER ONE

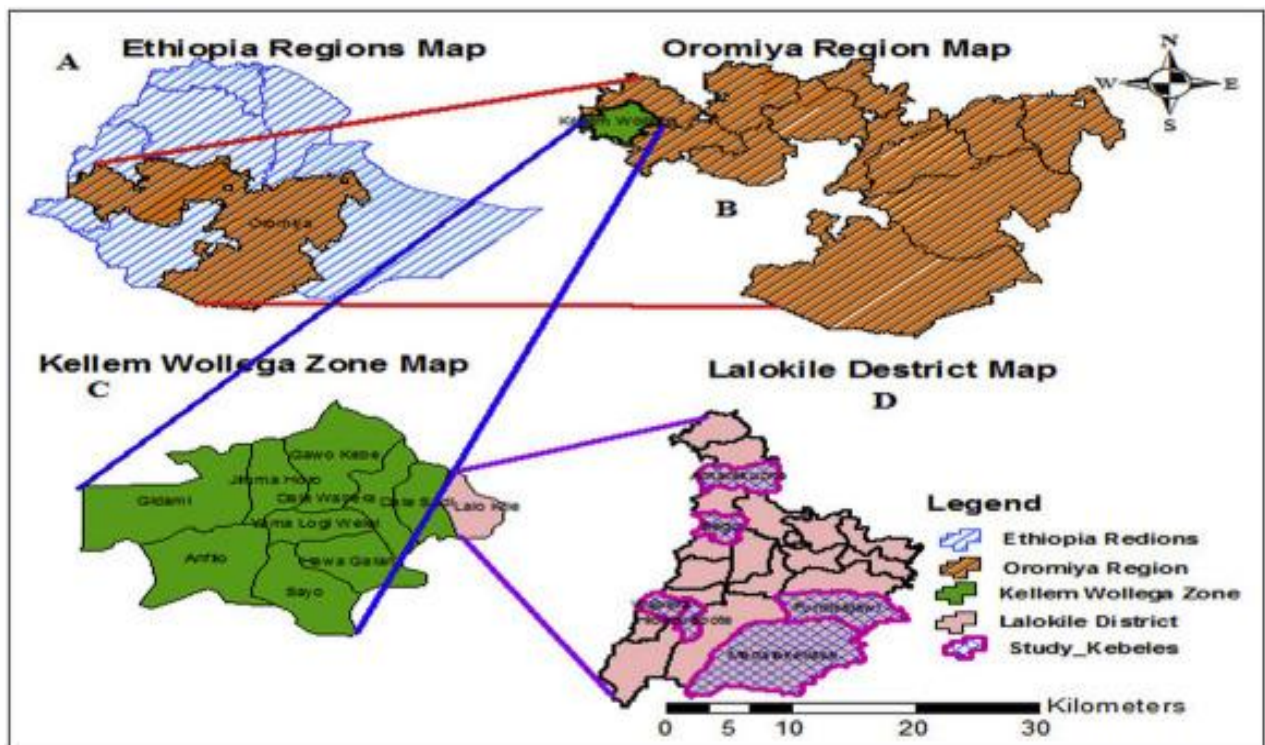
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

1.1 Geographical Setting and Naming of Laalo Qilee District

Location

Qellem (today the Qellem Wallaga administrative zone of the Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia) is found at 652 kms distance from Addis Ababa. Astronomically, the zone is found between 8042'6" N-902'17"N Latitude and 35014'2"E-35019'24"E Longitude with an altitude of 1701 to 1872 m.a.s.l. The zone has an average annual rainfall of 700-1500mm per year. The annual minimum & maximum temperature is 18-38 degree centigrade respectively. It is located to the west of Gimbii and Najjoo of west Wollega, south of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional State and north and northwest of Illu Abba Bora of Oromia regional state.¹

Map 1: Laalo Qilee District in Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia



Source: Laalo Qilee Cultural and Tourism Office, p. 3

¹ Fanta Desisa, Desalegn Tura et al, Epidemiological Study on Foot & mouth Disease in Cattle: Sero prevalence & risk factor Assessment in Qellem Wollega Zone, West Ethiopia, *African Journal of Agricultural Research* (Bishoftu, Vol. 9 (18), 2014), p. 1392.

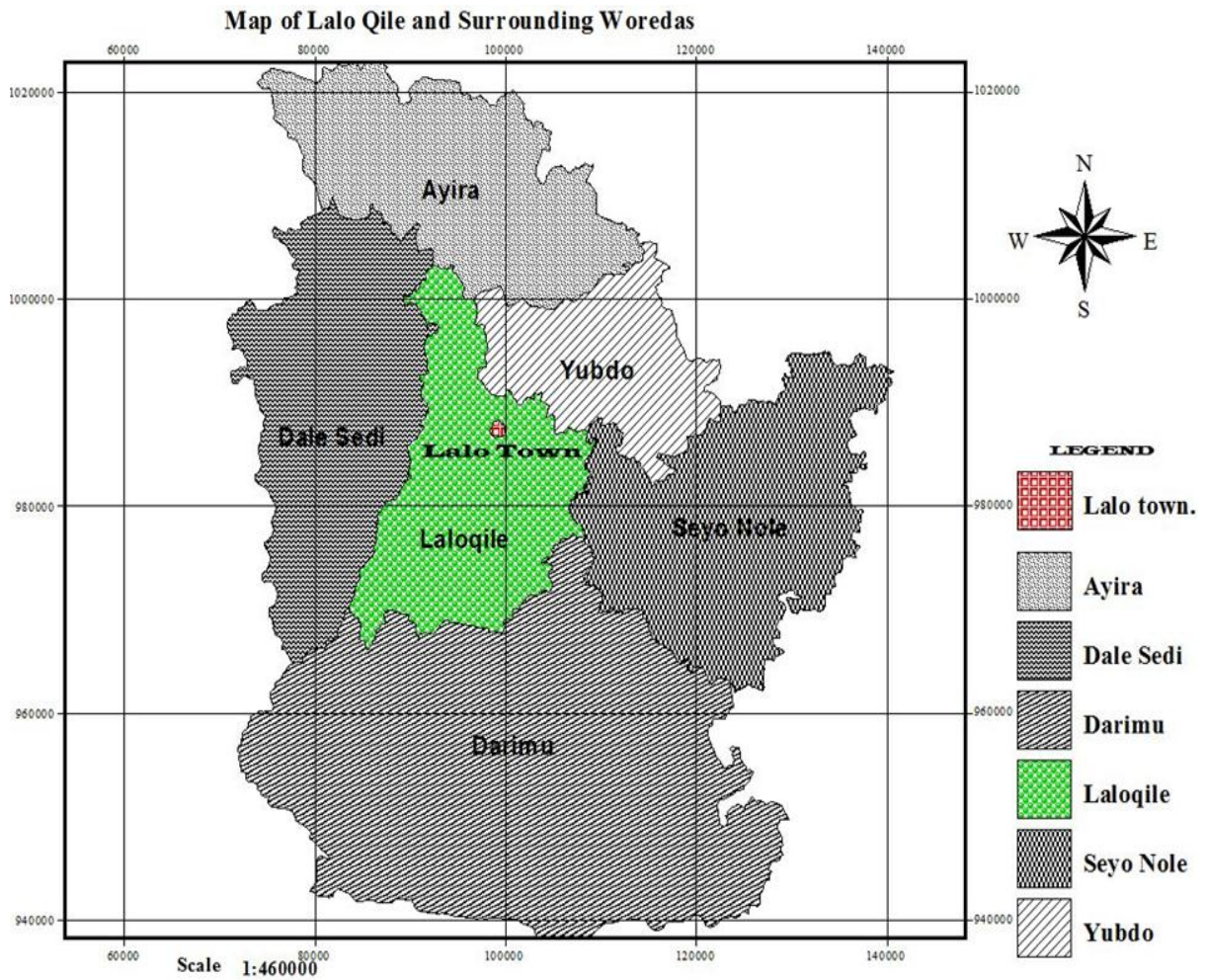
Laalo Qilee district is one of the districts of Qellem Wallaga Zone which was located in the eastern edge of the Zone in the south western part of Ethiopian region. It is located at 550 kms south-west of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia and 115kms from Dambi Dollo, capital of Qellem Wallaga administrative zone. It is situated at an altitude ranging from 1169 to 1791m.a.s.l. Its total area is around 45,797.195 hectares which constitutes about 4.6% of the total area of the zone. Astronomically, Laalo Qilee district is found between 8042'6"N-902'17"N Latitude and 35014'2"E-35019'24"E Longitude.²

The north-south extension of Laalo Qilee District is longer than that of the east-west extension. From this, one can infer that Laalo Qilee district has elongated shape.³

² Daniel Ayana, "Land Tenure and Agriculture in Sayyoo-Anfillo, Western Wallaga", Ethiopia, 1880-1974 (PhD, Department of History, Addis Ababa University),1995, p.5; Gebeyehu Tamiru, "Assessment of Termites' Impact on Vegetation, Crops and Buildings in Laalo Kile district, Kellem Wollega zone", western Ethiopia, (PhD, Department of Zoological Sciences, Addis Ababa University, 2018), p. 25; Dejene Abraham, Lensa Tesfaye et'al, Prevalence of Intestinal Parasitic Infection and Associated Factors among Pregnant Women Attending Antenatal Care at Public Health Facilities in Laalo Kile District, Oromia, western Ethiopia, *BMC Research Notes*; Girma Shigut, Participation of Parent-Teacher Students Association in the Management of Secondary Schools in Laalo Qilee Woreda, (PhD Dissertation,, Department of English, Addis Ababa University, 2019), p.27. ; Girma Shigut, p.27.

³ Gemechu Berhanu Karorsa, Assessment of Public Awareness on common Zoonotic Disease in Laalo-Qilee District, Kellem Wollega Zone, *Ethiopian International Journal of Biomedical Engineering & Classical Science*,(Dembi Dollo University Vol. 5, No. 4, 2019), p.60; Gemechu Berhanu, Tesfaye Itafa et'al, Major constraints of Livestock Development in Laalo Kile District, Kellem Wollega Zone, Ethiopia, *International Journal of Agriculture & Agribusiness*,2018 , p.14; Abebe Olani & Dagim Bekele, Epidemiological Status & Vector Identification of Bovine Trypanosomosis in Laalo Qilee District of Kellem Wollega Zone, Western Ethiopia, *Journal of Veterinary Medicine & research*, 2019, p. 2; Fanta Desisa, Desalegn Tura and et'al, p.1392; ; Girma Shigut, p.27.

Map 2: Laalo Qilee and the Surrounding Districts



Source: Gafarso Fayera, “A History of Oromo of Laalo Qilee...”, p.5

The district is bordered by Sayyoo Noole, Ayira and Yubdoo districts of west Wallaga Zones in east, south and north-east respectively. Dalle Sadii district of Qellem Wallaga Zone to the west and Darimuu district of Illu Abba Bora to the south.⁴ Moreover, Laalo Qilee is surrounded by larger water bodies such as Birbir River in the East, South and Southeast and Qilee River in the west.⁵

⁴ Gebeyehu Tamiru, p. 25; Dejene Abraham, Lensa Tesfaye et’al, p. 1.

⁵ Gafarso Fayera, “A History of Laalo Oromo in the District of Laaloo Qilee; Qellem Wollega Zone from 1870s to 1991”, (M.A Thesis, Department of History, Jimma University, 2017), p.8.

1.1.1 The Naming of Laalo Qilee District

The name of “Laalo” in this thesis represents both the place name and one of the Oromo clan that settled in the area under study after the Oromo population movement of sixteenth century. Regarding the district’s name, it is named after two words known as “Laalo and Qilee”. Laalo refers to a group of the Dullacho of Sayyoo clan (descendents of Maccaa) that permanently inhabited and settled over the vast territory of the district, whereas Qilee indicates the deepest valley which has attractive mineral stream water (*Hora*) which has great importance mainly to the livestock. It served as an important medicinal value for livestock production and as a boundary between the territory of Daale (elder) and Laalo (the younger) of Dullacho of Sayyoo clan. Today, this river separates Alem Teferi (now Daale Sadii district) from Laalo Qilee district.⁶

The district has many mineral stream waters, but the largest and the most known one is *hora Qilee* (*Qilee* mineral stream water). *Hora Qilee* was founded by a prominent leader called Qeerro Shekacho. The peoples of the area drink this mineral water two or three times a year in a month of autumn. This mineral water kills various types of worms existing in the animal’s body which affects both the development and the production of animals. The peoples of the area use this stream water for many socio-economic purposes. They used it not only as a drinking water, but also as a balanced diet and medicine for their animals. It also plays a great role in ritual, conflict resolutions and blessing purposes. Therefore, the name of the district is derived from the inhabitants and the precious mineral stream water which has inseparable relations with their animals.⁷

1.1.2 Topography

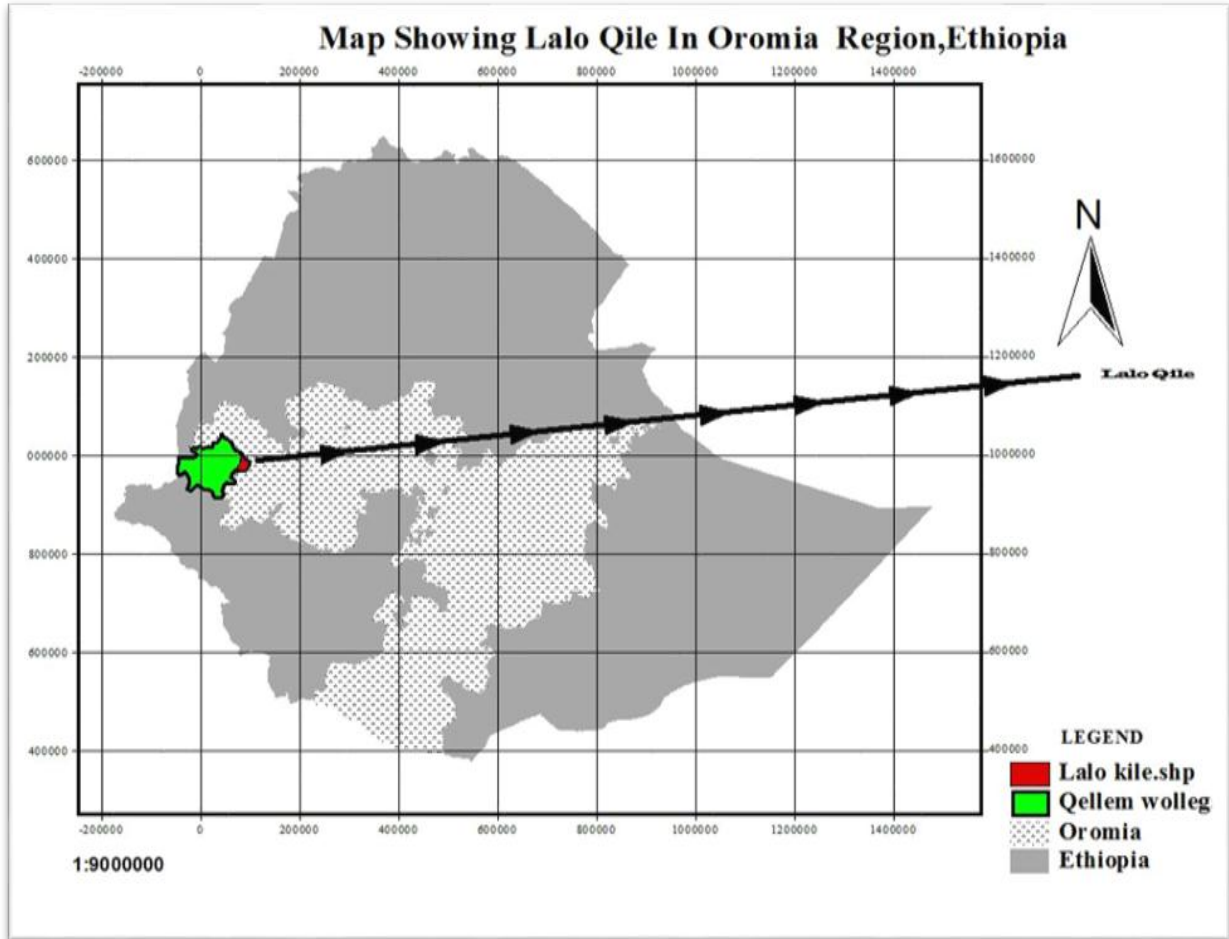
According to Laalo Qilee District Agricultural and Rural development Office, the altitude of the district ranges from 1169-1791m above Sea level. By topology of the study, Hilly land accounts 4%, Plateau 75%, Plane 13% and Valley is 8%. Since, most parts of the study area are Plateaus, the area is characterized by severe erosion due to the clearing out of natural vegetation for agricultural land expansion and the dependency of the rural inhabitants on natural vegetation for their income and energy consumption. Most parts of river valley in the lowlands of the district are affected by gully erosion and huge numbers of top soils are

⁶ Ibid, p.8

⁷ Informants: Darajee Fidaa and *Qes* Dheressa Amantee.

washed down to the river. Nowadays, hilly areas are standing without dense natural forests due to the above mentioned reasons.⁸

Map 3: Laalo Qilee District in Ethiopian Empire



According to survey study of the district’s Land and Environmental Conservation office 2017 report, topography of the district has shaped the climate, settlement pattern and land use in the district.⁹

The dense forest in the Laalo Qilee is mainly located in *kebeles* of Billee Buubaa, Madaale Kallisa, Darraa Jaarsoo along the Birbir and Qilee River. Laalo Qilee district was covered by a variety of Vegetation like *Eucalyptus*, *Podo corpus* (*yeferg tide*), etc. Almost all flat-topped plateaus have small form of natural Vegetation; whereas the gorges, valleys and sloppy sections are covered by scattered bushes and shrubs. Particularly river valleys are covered by

⁸ Laalo Qilee District Agricultural and Rural development Office, p.13.

⁹ A Short study of General situation of Laalo Qilee District (GS LK, 2018), pp.9-10.

short and denser natural Vegetation. These forests were composed of tree species like *Albizzia gummifera*, *Syzygium guinnennense*, *Allophyllus abyssinicus*, *Schefflera abyssinica*, *Dracaena afromontana*, *Celtis africana*, *Chionanthus mildbraedii*, *Erythrococca trichogyne*, *Olea welwitschii*, *Vepris dainelli*, *Grewia ferruginea*, *Cyathea manniana*, and *Ficus spp.*¹⁰

Topographically, the land feature of Laalo Qilee is dominated by valleys, hills, plains and plateaus. The district has abundant natural resources such as different kinds of minerals, sufficient water bodies and rainfall, dense forest, attractive holes and fountains.¹¹ As Davies has also noted, the region is rich in valuable agricultural products such as coffee and also mineral deposits.¹² The district is endowed with rivers, forest and wild life and cultivable land. One of these major rivers is Birbir which flows from the eastern towards the Southwestern part of the zone to join Baro River, which passes through the district border. Other river such as Buubaa, Qilee and Birbirsa rivers flows towards Birbir River which goes as far as Baro River.¹³ In addition, oral as well as written sources indicated that the district was rich in wildlife resources in its forest areas. Qellem Wallaga zone in which Laalo Qilee district belongs paid tribute to the central government from these rich natural resources. In the district, the common type of soil is nitosols, which is naturally acidic, that made problems on the agricultural activities in the district.¹⁴

1.1.3 Climate and Agro-Ecology of the District

Oromia region is generally divided into three main zones according to the agricultural production potential which is based on agro-climate, soil and production systems. These were high potential cereal zone, low potential cereal zone and perennial zone (coffee, enset and the like).¹⁵ The whole Study area is lying within a tropical climate as a humid region according to the study made by Ethiopian Meteorological Agency. The Climate of Laalo Qilee district is characterized by four distinct seasonal weather patterns; the main wet season (Summer), which is locally named “*ganna*” extends from June to August, a minor rainy season called (Autumn), in Afaan Oromo term “*birra*” that extends from

¹⁰ Land and Environmental office of Laalo Qilee District, p.12.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Steven Davie, ed. Andrew, *The political Economy of land Tenure in Ethiopia*,” (/n.p/, /n.d/, 2008), p. 124.

¹³ Land and Environmental office of Laalo Qilee District, p. 7.

¹⁴ A Short study of General Situation of Laalo Qilee District , p.10.

¹⁵ Buzuayehu Tefera, Gezahegn Ayele, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) Ethiopian Agricultural Development and Environmental Protection Authority, *Nature and Causes of Land Degradation in the Oromia Region: A Review Socio-Economics and Policy Research Working Paper* (Addis Ababa ,2002), p.15.

September to October, a little rainy season (Spring) locally named “*arfaasa*” extends from March to May and more likely no rainy season (Winter) known as “*bona*” extends from December to February. In general, based on local climatic classification, Laalo Qilee District is grouped only under two agro-climate zone which are “*Baddaa*” or Sub-tropical climatic zones that is sixty percent (60%) of the area and 40% are humid low altitude (*gammoojji*) or tropical agro-climate zone.¹⁶

The Study area has average daily temperature ranging from 10-31 degree celcius. The average (mean) annual temperature of the study area is ranging from 22-80 and 29-10 degree celcius.¹⁷ Rainfall starts at the beginning of March and ends late in October in Laalo Qilee district. But, sometimes it lags and extends due to the disturbance of the climatic conditions. In March, April, and May, it has moderate type of rain and in June, July and August; it has a high rain season while in September and October the amount of the rain decrease. Almost a vast area of land is broadly homogeneous in terms of its rainfall and grouping of soils that reflect similarities. The temperature of the district has been increasing from year to year due to deforestation, fossil fuel burning, and land degradation; because forest plays great important role in the global carbon balance.¹⁸ However, the region experienced extreme fluctuation in rain fall both in its annual totals and the distribution throughout the year, which has constraints on agricultural activities under rain fed condition, when cropping seasons began, it usually either begins lately or quits very early before the crops get mature. The average annual rainfall was about 1000-1500^{mm}. The highest rainfall occurs in the spring and summer seasons (from May to September). The rainfall reaches its peak in July and August.¹⁹

Regarding mineral deposits, gold, platinum, iron ore and different kinds of building rocks and various types of sand stones are common in Laalo Qilee district. Gold and platinum deposits are widely distributed in various territories of the district. But, the major deposits are located in the surrounding areas of the *Buuba* and the *Birbir* rivers drainage systems. Different kinds of rocks which are being used for different constructional purposes are the other dominant natural resources of the district.²⁰ According to informants, about half a century ago most part of the land of Laalo Qilee which was estimated to be greater than 80% had been covered

¹⁶ Land and Agricultural Office of Laalo Qilee District, p. 5.

¹⁷ Bikila Fikadu, “Impacts of Deforestation on Local Environmental and Rural Livelihoods in Laalo Qilee District of Qellem Wollega Zone of Western Oromia, Ethiopia” (M.A, Department of Geography, Jimma University, 2022), p.26.

¹⁸ Abebe Olani & Dagim Bekele, p. 2.

¹⁹ Land and Agricultural Office of Laalo Qilee District, p. 7.

²⁰ Laalo Qilee District Cultural and Tourism Office, p. 6.

with a large body of forest. The dense forest of the district consisted of economically significant trees including wild coffee and different types of wild animals like lion, tiger, buffalo, elephants, antelope, etc in large number. But the dense forest was gradually declined as a result of the combination of both human and natural hazards. However, the reservation of dense forest is still existed scarcely along the larger river bodies of the district like the *Qilee*, *Birbir*, *Buuba*, *Shaabo*, *Reeji* and *Birbirs* rivers. The remaining and the existing forest is still being served as the habitat of many different kinds of wild beasts such as lion, buffalo, tiger, hippopotamus, hyena, antelope and many different kinds of birds.²¹

In addition, Laalo Qilee has some attractive natural environments which could be considered as natural heritages. These include *Fincaa'aa Buubaa* (Buuba fountain), *Uursaa Goodarree* (Goodare fountain), *Holqa Shuushii* (Shushi hall), *Holqa Bultii* (Bulti hall), *Dhagaa Qaaqee* (mount Qaqe rocks), *Gaara Qaaqee Wallaggaa* (Qaqe Wollega Mountain), *Dhagaa Qeerroo* (Qeerro rock) and several mineral water streams like *hora* Qilee.²²

1.2 Historical Background

1.2.1 Demographic Aspect of Laalo Qilee District

In Laalo Qilee district, in addition to the “four Laalo clans”, there were other Maccaa Oromo clans like the Leeqa, Jawii, Amaraa, Dha’ee, Nonno, Calliya, Dallee and so many others are settled over the territory of Laalo Qilee. These diverse groups have been lived peacefully together as one entity through the Oromo social institutions, cultural interaction and marriage.²³ Although the early inhabitants are the Laalo of Qilee, nowadays there are diverse non- Oromo nationalities in the district. The non-Oromo nationalities like Amhara, Gurage, Tigre and others are scatteredly inhabited the town of Laalo Qilee and neighboring territories.²⁴ According to the 2007 CSA, the total population of the district is 51,448, of whom 25,040 were men and 26,038 were women; 2,805 or 5.45% of its populations were urban dwellers. The majority of the inhabitants were Protestants with 73.79% while 19.28% observed Orthodox Christians.²⁵ More than 50% of its human population is youngsters. According to Census report of CSA (2017), the projected total population of Laalo Qilee district was 66,398 people, out of which 32,688 (49.2%) are males and 33,710 (50.8%) are females. From

²¹ Informants: Bekuuma Hikkaa & Ofga’aa Wirtuu.

²² Workineh Shiferaw Oliqa, “*A History of Leqa Qellem CA. 1840s to 1941*,” (M.A, Department of History, Jimma University, 2013), p. 8

²³ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Dagafee Dhabaa; Laalo Qilee Cultural and Tourism Office, pp.4-5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.35.

²⁵ CSA (Central Statistical Agency), 2007 report.

these total populations, 61,872 (93.2%) people live in rural areas whereas 4,526 (6.88%) people dwell in urban areas.²⁶

1.2.2 The Process of Primogeniture among the Maccaa Oromo

When the Maccaa Oromo moved to where they live today in the 16th and 17th centuries, the principle of primogeniture influenced the pattern of settlement. The eldest son (*hobo* or *hangafa*) always remained on his father's land (*qe'ee*); and younger (*shora* or *quxxisuu*) were left with gift of *gudru* (cattle which had been given to them during childhood initiation and a small portion of the farm land. The younger went in search of new land for themselves in distant places; later sons of those eldest sons, in their turn followed their relatives who went before, and joined them in the new country. The first-born son is a pillar to stay; the junior is an offshoot to extend. According to my key informants, the way that Laalo (son of Dullacho of Sayyoo) settled was in the above way. Despite changes in their economic activities and population growth, the Oromo had regulated land rights and allocation through the *qabiyyee*, which as a system refers to established rights of precedence in the occupation of newly conquered land.²⁷ During their expansion, the Oromo took into practice their traditional principle known as *Qabiyyee* (land holding system) as a means of peaceful territorial allocation. Apparently, the *qabiyyee* system also had traditional sanctions to regulate land rights among different tribes based on the same concept of *hobo* (elder families) and *chora* (younger families). Tessema Ta'aa in his book entitled "*The Political Economy of south-central...*" stated the process as follows:

*According to the Oromo custom the eldest sons in their family (the hangafa) remained at the place of their father's residence by inheriting the qabiyyee land of their fathers while the younger sons had move in to a fresh land. In the process of Oromo expansion, this was the way the Tulama (elder family) remained in Shewa and the maccaa (the younger family) moved west wards and occupied their present location. This practice operated smoothly in the early days of Oromo expansion and settlement, particularly, in the event of west ward trek of the maccaa. This strategy of obtaining unrestricted access to fresh land seems to have been away areas.*²⁸

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Assefa Tolera, "Ethnography of Resistance and Poetics: Power and Authority in Salalee Oromo Folklore", (PhD, Dissertation, Folklore, Indiana University, 2015, p.233; Daniel Ayana, Land Tenure and Agriculture in Sayyoo-Anfillo, Western Wallaga, Ethiopia, 1880-1974 (PhD Dissertation, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1995", p.70.

²⁸ Tessema Ta'a, "The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From mid-16thc to Early 20thc" ,(PhD. Dissertation, Department of History, Michigan State University, 1986), p. 45.

Tradition has it that the *qabiyyee* system regulated land occupation rights within the hierarchies. younger families had the responsibility to move ahead, conquer new lands and established their own *qabiyyee* as pioneers. To simplify the implementation of this traditional rule, the *chora* families often established their residence on the outer fringes of the settlement so that whenever the need arose, they could easily move out in to new far places. Traditions collected by Lampert Bartels in south west Wallaga also clearly illustrate this point:

*“When we move westwards, it was like this: the eldest son always remained on his father's land; the other sons went in search of new land for themselves. Later, the sons of those eldest sons, in their turn, followed their relatives who went before them, and joined them in in the new country”.*²⁹

As the Laalo Qilee informants have noted, before their expansion in to Qellem Wallaga, the Sayyoo permanently lived first in Ulmayya near Gedo in Eastern Wallaga with his Leeqa ally. But, Sayyoo gradually expanded in to Badda Ulmayya or Badda Sayyoo in the now days of Noolee Kabba. After many years of residence with his Leeqa, Tumme and Siibu near mount Jorgoo. Most of Sayyoo tribes commonly known as six Sayyoo's (Daale, Laalo, Garjeeda, Hawwu, Halaaku and Galaan) penetrated in to the territories around *tullu* Walaal through crossing the Birbir forest. They adopted their traditional principle known as *qabiyyee* (land holding system) as a means of peaceful territorial allocation.³⁰

1.2.3 Genealogical Aspects and Settlement of Laalo Oromo in Laalo Qilee District

The first reference to Sayyoo in a written source dates back to 1593, when the Abyssinian monk, Abba Bahrey, recorded the genealogy of the various Oromo clans that undertook the dramatic migrations of the sixteenth century. Sayyoo was then mentioned as the “sons” of one the forefathers of the Oromo.³¹

Today, most of the inhabitants of Qellem refer to themselves collectively as “*Ja'an Sayyoo*” the six Sayyoo's, to distinguish themselves from the other Oromo and non-Oromo in the area. These were Daale, Laalo, Garjeeda, Hawwu, Halakuu and Gelan. It was from these upland areas of *tullu* Walaal that the various lineages of Sayyoo gradually descended and settled on the lower regions, south and south east of Walaal. This pattern of settling on the healthy uplands and gradually expanding into lower but still hospitable areas was one

²⁹ Daniel Ayana, p.79.

³⁰ Gafarso Fayera, p.18.

³¹ Daniel Ayana, p.24.

major way in which ecology shaped the settlement process.³² Dullacho and Abiyyu were born to Sayyo. Both Dullacho and Abiyyu (Akkayyu) had their own three children each. One of the three children of Dullacho is Laalo. Different clans of the Dullacho tribe of Laalo are separately settled over the present regions of West Wallaga and Qellem Wallaga. Many groups of the Dullacho of Laalo are living in *Qilee, Asabi, Cabal, Garee, Ko'ii, Qaara, Waalal, Geeja, Doganoo, Ganqaa, Bille* and *Deenta*.³³

The senior clans of Sayyoo; Daale, Laalo and Garjeda had occupied the highland east of the Walal mountain, while the junior clans like Hawwu, Alaaku and Gelan settled over the territories to the west of the mountain. But, they gradually penetrated in to the vast territories in the western part of Walaal until the border of Sudan. The Laalo informants have similar information with Tessema and Negaso's analysis. According to them, Laalo Qilee had been occupied by one of the Nilo Saharan groups called Yamboo before the settlement of Laalo Oromo.³⁴

According to Eide, the early inhabitants of the present day Qellem Wallaga were Damot, Mucuco, the Gabato, the Agadi, Kaza, the Warago, the Gaanqaa, the Konchi, the Mao Busase, the kwegu, the Kwama and the Majang. During the Macha's expansion the majority of the early settlers were peacefully assimilated, but others were escaped to relatively peaceful regions to save their life.³⁵ They had scatterly settled over the present territory of the Laalo of Kile. Some of the Places which are being called after the early settlers included *Harawwa* Maa'oo (Ma'o's lowland) in Kutalla Lube, *Gaara* Murii (Murii's mountain) in Bille, *Dhagaa* Cuqqalli (covered rocks) in Uddoo Deenta are the major ones. Therefore, the Laalo of Qilee settled over the present territory following their victory over the early settlers around the last quarter of the sixteenth century.³⁶

³² Ibid, p.42

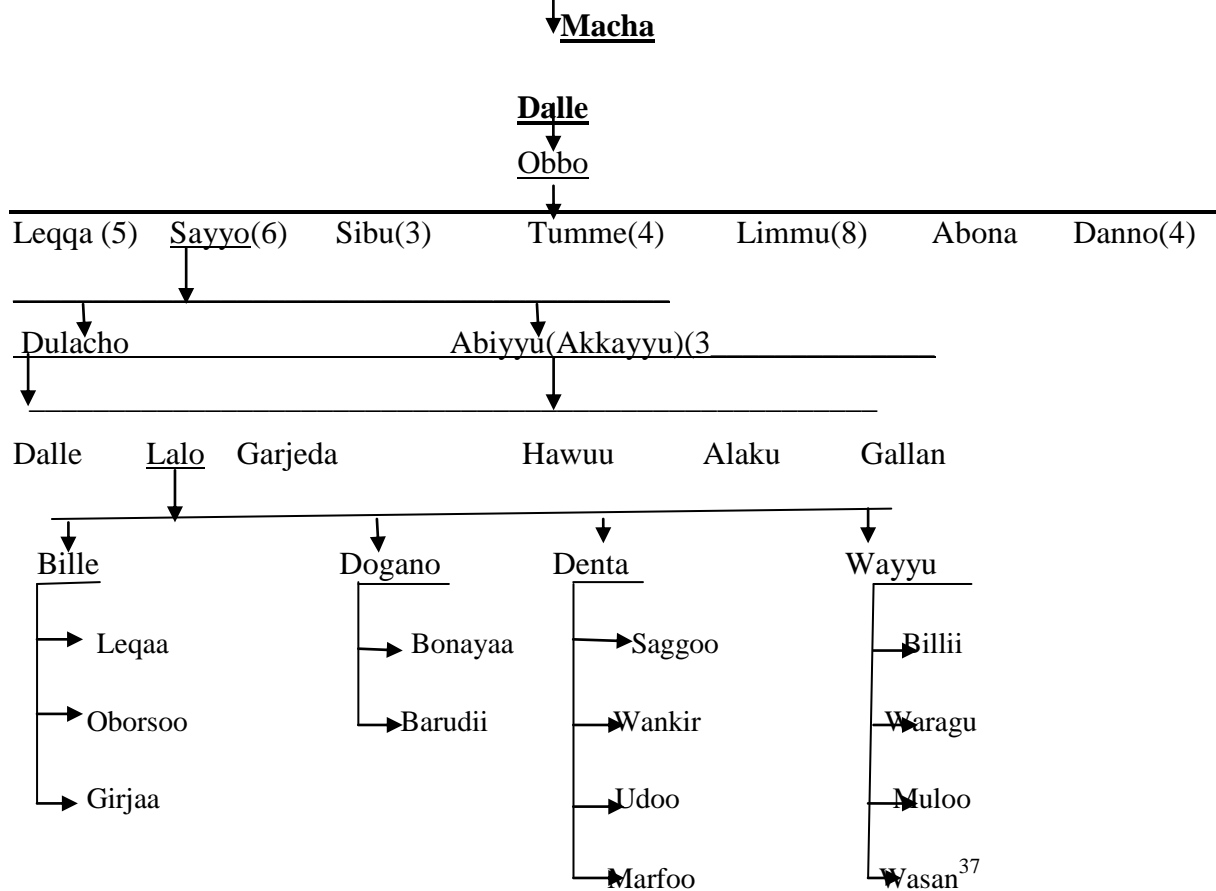
³³ Negaso Gidada, *History of the Saayyo Oromo of South western Walagga. Ethiopia from about 1730 to 1886* (Frankfurt, Mega Printing Press, 1984) p. 353.

³⁴ Gafarso Fayera, p.19

³⁵ Qyuvind M, Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia, The Growth and Persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church 1974-1985*, (Oxford, 2000), P. 41.

³⁶ Gafarso Fayera, p.20.

Graph 1: The geneology of Obbo of Dallee



Source: OCTB (Oromia Cultural and Tourism Bureau, P. 157

However, there is a disagreement on the father of Sayyoo and Leeqa between some scholars. Tesema in his account *የወለጋ የታሪክ ስነ ጽሑፍ* (the Document on the History of Wollega) indicates that, Leeqa and Sayyoo were born to Dadhii.³⁸ On the other hand, the material of the OCTB shows, Obbo is the father of seven children including Leeqa and Sayyoo.³⁹ But, the Laalo informants agree on the idea that, Obbo is not the father of Leqa and Sayyoo, they were born to Dadhi. These Laalo Qilee informants count their genealogical tree up to Dadhii and beyond.⁴⁰ The Macca assembly seems to have instructed their juniors to go further west across the Dhidheessa in search of new hospitable land, and the early settlers were therefore left behind. Smaller Maccaa lineage groups such as the Leeqaa, Amaara, Jidda, Jimma and Horro took the cool and fertile highland territories surrounding *Tulluu* Walal, the highest mountain in western Ethiopia. Once established, they organized themselves and travelled

³⁷Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, *History of the Oromo to the 16th century*, second Edition, P.157

³⁸Tesema Ta'a and Alisandro, *Ye Welegga Ye Tarik Senedoch*, P.301.

³⁹Oromia Cultural & Tourism Bureau, P. 157.

⁴⁰Informants: Yaada Qana'aa; Dheresa Amante & Dagafee Dhaaba

southeast to the still friendly areas which include the present Laalo Qilee district.⁴¹ The local tradition relates that east ward expansion into their present-day settlement areas took place on the lowlands in relation to Sayyoo district of Qellem Wallaga zone, which formed the right bank of the Birbir river. The early settlers were left behind between these two rivers and the juniors moved ahead to look for new lands. The same traditions attests that expansion was needed to secure adequate grazing lands away from villages surrounding of were fully farmed. After crossing the Dhidheesa River, the three senior lineages of Sayyoo (Daale, Laalo, and Garjeeda) then occupied the right bank of the Birbir River which gradually forms the uplands of the Walal Mountain. These three lineages are referred to as the Sayyoo Dullacho, the descendents of Dullacho (the son of Sayyoo). They are believed to be the first comers to Qellem Wallaga. They were followed by the *sadan* Akkachuu or Akkayyu (the three sons of Akkachuu) who were Halaaku, Galaan and Hawwu) on the lower areas east of Walal mountain.⁴² Informants have noted that the position of the senior person is a privileged one in land tenure system. He is responsible to lead, guide, and bless his society. In the case of *rist* right (*dhaala*), the senior is the one who had priority to obtain most productive and sufficient lands. Therefore, following the traditional custom, the senior clan of Sayyoo; Daale occupied the eastern territories of the mount Walal, while Laalo settled over the vast territories beyond or east of Daale tenure and Qilee River.⁴³ To secure farming and extensive grazing lands, the various clans and lineages of Sayyoo competed to claim unoccupied frontier land outside their settlement areas. This brought conflict with the neighboring Oromo and non-Oromo groups.⁴⁴ Negaso Gidada in his book entitled “*The History of Sayyoo Oromo of south western...*,” described the land tenure system of the area as follows:

Those who immigrated later (including Laalo) or who were genealogically younger are to be found in the lower zones. When the arable land becomes scarce, people had to move towards the lower areas. After the "senior" clans of the Sayyoo, Daale, Laalo and Garjeeda had occupied the highland East of Wallal Mountain. The six Sayyoo who spread in Qellem Wallaga were Daale, Laalo and Garjeeda (jointly known as Sayyoo Dullacha). The other three groups were Halakuu, Hawwu and Galaan (known as sadan Akkayyu).⁴⁵

The coming of Sayyoo (their forefathers) was from eastern to western direction and go as far as Dembi Dollo town. The land tenure of Laalo's fate become returning back to the land they

⁴¹ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Teshomee Ballaxaa

⁴² Daniel Ayana, p.42

⁴³ Gafarso Fayera, p.20

⁴⁴ Daniel Ayana, p.51

⁴⁵ Negaso Gidada, “The History of Sayyoo Oromo of South Western...,” p.16

formerly pass over which basis itself on the primogeniture principle.⁴⁶ Since Daale is senior person, he occupied the land that found at upper place. The area he settled is now called Daale Sadii district. Since the juniors moved a head to find new lands, Laalo settled beyond Daale further to east. Laaloo Dullachoo of Sayyoo had four sons namely Billee, Deentaa, Dooganoo and Waayyuu which were collectively called *Afran* Laalo. These clans inhabited the region according to their elder-younger relation in present Laalo Qilee District.⁴⁷

Each of the sons of Laalo had their own childrens. For instance, Billee had three sons namely Leeqaa, Girjaa and Oborsuu. Deentaa also had four sons namely Saggoo, Naanoo Jeenoo, Wankiir, Marfoo and Uddoo. The childrens of the third son of Laalo (Waayuu) were Billi, Waaraguu, Mullo and Wasana (Henna). The childrens of the last son of Laalo called Dooganoo included Boonayaa and Baruudii. The descendents of Dogaanoo lives in the present day *kebele* of Dogaanoo Dhumugaa, Kuttalla Lubee, Nya'aa, Manjooso Jirruu, Furdiisaa Jaawwii, Madaallee Kaallisaa and Wabaara. Those sons of Dogaannoo had their own childrens each. For instance, Bonaaya himself had seven childrens by a name Kuttalaa, Nya'aa, Abbiyyuu, Fuurdiisa, Bulluloo, Boroo and Giddannoo.⁴⁸

The Bille community in Laalo Qilee district occupied the more fertile and strategic place and the land inhabited by them included the present-day area of Bille Kella, Bille Buupha, Naanoo Jeenoo (around Jeenoo), Naanoo Miika'eela (around St. Michael church) and in a *kebele* called Dhumuuga. The land inhabited by Bille goes as far as Aira (a district in West Wallaga) in north and Yubdo (a district of west Wollega) in northeast. It goes as far as the entrance gate to the town to those peoples coming from elsewhere except those coming from Darimu of Illu Abba Bor which is in southern direction. In general, the land tenure of Bille is in northern and northeastern part.⁴⁹

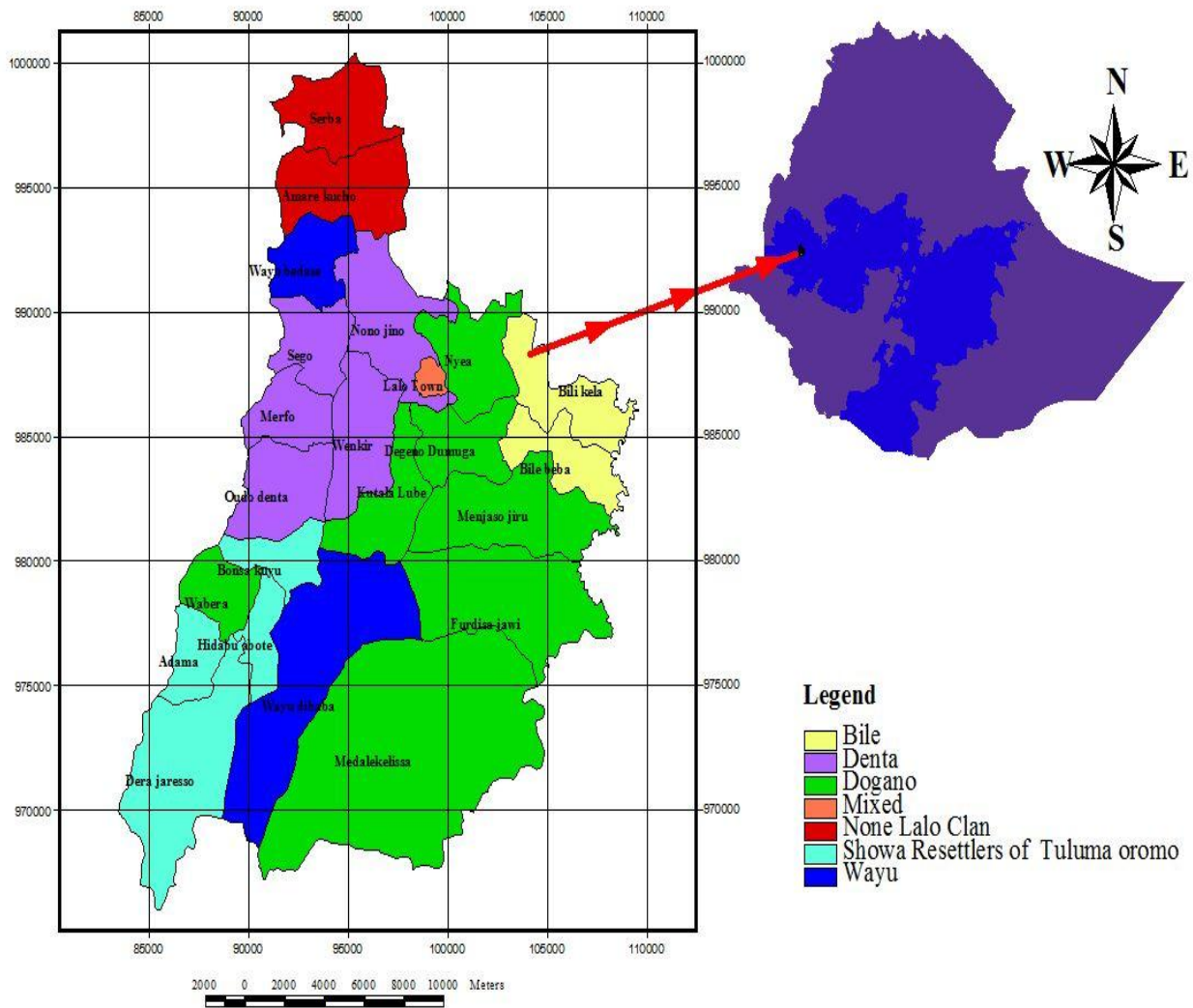
⁴⁶ Informants: Tasfaa Kumarra and *Qes* Dheressa Amante; Mohamed Hassan, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860*. (Cambridge University Press. 1990), pp.94-96;

⁴⁷ Laalo Qilee Cultural and Tourism Bureau; Informant: Darajee Fiidaa and Alamii Gabisaa

⁴⁸ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Namaraa Bayyanaa

⁴⁹ Informants: Efireem Qannasee & Dassalee Ya'ii

Map: 4 The Lineages of the Four Laalo's and their Settlement Areas



Source: Zegeye Kumera, “Environmental History of Laalo Qilee...” p.7.

Since Deentaa was the second son, his land possession would be below the possession of Bille. His land tenure included the present day *kebele* of Saggoo, Wankiir, and Deentaa (by his name itself) and Marfoo. The land occupation of Waayyuu included the *kebele* of Waayyuu Dibaaba and Waayyuu Baadhas. The land possession of the last son of laalo, Dogaannoo, is a vast land which included a territory that goes up to the district of Yubdo of west Wallaga, Nya’aa in northeast and up to Maadallee Kaallisaa and Darimuu of Illu Abba Bor in the south. The settlement pattern only of Nya’aa is something controversial in case of principle of the primogeniture land tenure process. Its controversiality is in case of land

tenure of fertile area and upper land as far as the boundary of Yubdo by being a descendent of the last son of Laalo called Doogano.⁵⁰

1.2.4 The Administrative Structure of Laalo Qilee District

Mohammed Hassan in his book entitled, “The Oromo of Ethiopia...,” confirms that the Oromo peoples were organized and led by their own traditional administration of *Gadaa* system before their incorporation into Ethiopian empire. Using oral tradition in addition to Mohammed Hassan’s and various written sources, the researcher concluded that Laalo Qilee did not face multi-structural administration before its incorporation into Ethiopian empire.⁵¹

Following its incorporation into the Ethiopian Empire state in the 1880s, Wallaga was divided into three provinces: Leeqaa-Naqamtee and its dependencies under *Däjjazmach* Kumsaa (*Gäbrä-Egzabiher*) (1889-1923), Qellem under *Däjjazmach* Jootee Tulluu (1855-1918), and Arjoo and Horro-Guduruu, administered by officials directly appointed by Emperor Menilek II. At that time, Laalo Qilee district was put under the administration of Arjoo and Horro Guduruu province. Geographical divisions were made for the convenience of the government in Addis Ababa and ignored socio-economic and political realities.⁵²

The history of Laalo Qilee district in case of administration goes back and includes the time when the Oromo society was used to be ruled by the *gadaa* system. Laalo Qilee received the structure of *woreda* (district) at several times and released it too at different times. The area assumed the structure of a district for the first time in 1873. After the occupation of the area by emperor Minilik II, *Ras* Gobaana (the leader of the army) sent a person named Xiiqii Eebichoo to administer the district. Among the ten *koonyaa* (districts) of Qellem Wallaga, its establishment ranks second next to Gidaamii district.⁵³

After the initial formation of the empire, districts became fundamental administrative units. Around 1910 Emperor Menilek appears to have personally restructured his Empire into six administrative regions, a completely new administrative structure that differentiated the Empire from its previous traditional provincial administrative style.

⁵⁰ Laalo Qilee District Cultural and Tourism Office, p. 12

⁵¹ Mohamed Hassan. *The Oromo of...*, p.64; Laalo Qilee District Cultural & Tourism Bureau, p.13; Informants: Mitiku Dafa and Namaraa Bayaanaa

⁵² Tessema Ta’a, “The Political Economy ...,”p.45; Informants: Yaada Qana’aa and *Qes* Dheressa Amantee

⁵³ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Tashomee Ballaxaa

Although some historians claim that population density, lifestyle, geography, language, soil fertility, historic ties and politics governed the administrative divisions; the entire terrain of its evolution suggests a more complex set of ideas which belie simplistic classification. The introduction to one of Mahtama Sellasse's papers dividing the Ethiopian Empire's administrative structures into four on the basis of typology of land tenure substantiates this. Suffice it to say that prior to the Italian occupation of 1935/36, districts were the main administrative units. During the 1920's and the beginning of 1930's, the administrative restructure and centralization of government taxation was being advanced in all over the country by Emperor Haile Sellasie I.⁵⁴

As part of *Africa Orientale Italiana*, the Italians organized the empire into five Governorate Generals, each sub-divided into various administrative units. Following the 1941 Italian evacuation, the restored Empire underwent administrative reorganization in which sub-counties, *meketel wäräda*, were introduced as the lowest unit of administration below district level. These were soon succeeded by counties (*wäräda*). Wallaga was one of fourteen provinces (*täqalay-gezatoch*), a huge territory which included what is now the Benishangul-Gumuz National Regional State.⁵⁵

In 1942, the imperial government issued a decree directing the empire into a new administrative system. According to this proclamation, the country divided into fourteen *Ṭäqelay Gezat* (governorate-generals), one hundred and three *awrajäs* (provinces), five hundred and five *Wärädas* (districts) and nine hundred and forty-nine *meketel Wärädas* (sub-districts).⁵⁶ By the 1974 revolution it had been divided into fourteen provinces (*täqalay-gezat*), each of which was subdivided into districts (*awraja*). The administrative divisions were in constant flux, and their boundaries were at times inconsistent. Between the 1890s and 1974 they underwent considerable organizational changes.⁵⁷

As stated above, the 1942 decree divided Ethiopia into 12 *Awrajas* (provinces), 60 *Woredas* (districts), *meslanes* (sub-districts) and *Mekitil Meslanes* (sub-sub districts). Where as according to the 1946-decree restructuring took place. These were upgrading of *Awrajas* into *Teqalay Gezat*, *Woredas* into *Awraja*, *Meslanes* and *Mikitil Meslanes* in to the

⁵⁴ Yonas Seifu, "A Historical Survey of Jimma Town 1936-1974" (M.A Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2002), P.15

⁵⁵ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Qes Dheressa Amantee

⁵⁶ Hawi Tilakune, "The Ethiopian State: Perennial Challenges in the Struggle for Development", (M.A Thesis, Macalester College, International Studies, 2016), p.88

⁵⁷ Mesfin Wolde Mariam, *An Atlas of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, 1970), p.4; Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935-1941* (Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press, 1997), p.137

status *woreda Gizat* and *Miketil Woreda Gizat* respectively. It was in the 1960's that the emperor made Ethiopia in the state of fluidity. Another administrative rearrangement was also made in the early 1960's at the country level in which the administrative division is frequently changing in the 1960s.⁵⁸

Following the introduction of the new administrative structure in the 1960's, the emperor started to appoint various officials and *ballabats* who had a close relation with the central government to govern Laalo Qilee district. By this new policy, *takelay gizats* were responsible for the central government, while *awraja gizats* were for the *takelay gizats warada gizats* were responsible for the *awraja gizats* and *metekel gizats* to *woreda gizats*.⁵⁹ Laalo Qilee served as a capital of many of nowadays districts of Qellem Wallaga which stretches from Daaphoo Gaachoo of Illu Abba Bor up to Tajjoo Walaal of Qellem Wallaga by including the districts of Daale Sadii, Daale Waabaraa, Gaawwoo Qeebee, and Haawwa Walaal until 1944. But, later by considering the long distance the district under study had from them, Daale Sadii was selected as a capital of the above-mentioned areas in 1945. Thus, Laalo Qilee reduced to and become one *kebele* of Daale Sadii district with its capital called Haroo Sabbuu town until 1957. After 1957, it again assumed the structure of a district. This was after considering its large territorial area and an increasing population. This took place until 1980.⁶⁰

In 1981, due to the administrative restructuring program of Emperor Haile Sellasie, Laalo Qilee was again put under Yubdoo district of today's west Wollega. This is for short period of time which ended until 1982/83.⁶¹ The year 1983 E.C (1974 G.C) is a turning point in the history of the district. This is because of a government change in Ethiopia when *Derg* overthrow emperor Haile Sillasie from power. The district becomes once again a district by itself which ended until 1988. From 1988-1993, the district again merged and put under Daale Sadii, which appeared to be for the second time and three times under the neighbouring districts. The two districts together adopted the name "Daalee- Laaloo" until 1995.⁶² In 1991, several districts seceded to Qellem Wallaga during the reign of EPRDF in which Laalo Qilee district was one of it. In that year, there were 31 *kebeles* in Laalo Qilee district including one administrative town. But, many *kebeles* seceded from it. The reason for their departure was the peoples of the the *kebeles*

⁵⁸ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Qes Dheressa Amantee

⁵⁹ Informants: Sanbatoo Gaalatee; Dagafee Dhabaa

⁶⁰ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Dagafee Dhaaba

⁶¹ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Mitikkuu Dafaa

⁶² Ibid

were not comfortable with the administration of Laloo Qilee administration. Those *kebeles* who were seceded to Yubdoo district of west Wollega were Booxii Ayira and Yamaloogi Ayiraa. But, others such as Sarbaa Raajo, Warra Kurra Suchii, Warra Baaboo Suchii, Warra Homii Suchii and Bonda'oo were those *kebeles* who were formerly under Laalo Qilee district and at present they became *kebeles* of Ayiraa district of west Wallaga.⁶³ In 1994, local population of Laalo appealed to the government officials to administer themselves. Their focal point of appeal was the farness of Daale Sadii district from them. Based on that, government officially made Laalo Kile as a separate district in 1995. Since then, it served as a district and at present time it constitutes 22 *kebeles* with 1 administrative town.⁶⁴

1.2.5 The Customary Land Tenure among the Laalo Qilee Oromo

Traditionally, land has never been a commodity for sale and still is not in principle. In Ethiopia law forbids the sale of land, but peasants can lease a certain portion of their holding. The provision says, 'a peasant can lease not exceeding half of his holding to anyone, at any rate, for a maximum of three years'. Theoretically, therefore, this provision forbids land sale and purchase.⁶⁵ Land was central to the life of Oromo cultivators and pastoralists. Land which was transmitted through generations and was recognized by the Oromo as the collective party of the society at large was lost.⁶⁶ Before incorporation into Ethiopian empire, communal land holding system was a predominant feature among the Oromo people. The land was divided among the clans and each member of the clan was said to lay claim a certain portion of it. According to this view, the communal land included ritual sites and grazing lands while individual holdings were plots farmed by different households. The individual holdings were conditioned by the rights of the lineage members, whose tacit approval the individual needed as the land was communal property. The conceptualization of Oromo land holding as communal seems to derive basically from the misunderstanding but accepted way of identifying lands in terms of a group of occupants.⁶⁷ The southwest part of the present-day Ethiopia was mostly controlled by the local community up to the end of the 19th century.⁶⁸ Untill the introduction of the new land measurement, the local peoples of Laalo Qilee district

⁶³ Informants: *Qes* Dheressa Amantee Dagaafee Dhaaba

⁶⁴ Laalo Qilee District Cultural and Tourism office, p.11

⁶⁵ Asefa Tolera. "Where has the forest gone? Settlement, Dislocation and Development Discourse in Western Oromia , Ethiopia". (PhD Dissertation, Department of History, London University, 2002) p. 152

⁶⁶ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Baluudee Ifaa

⁶⁷ Daniel Ayana, p.66

⁶⁸ Informants: Tarrafaa Wayyuu & Tashooma Balaxxaa

used to manage their land by indigeneous landholding system called *Qabiyyee*, which was violated by the newly enacted land tenure system.⁶⁹ Land has not been an instrument of oppression among the Oromo. There was no sale of land and nobody was deprived of the right to own land. It was not a scarce resource. *Abba qabiyyee*, accompanied by slaves and dependents, undertook various rituals and practical procedures to acquire unoccupied land. Once they found unoccupied land, they built a hut on a higher ground for a temporary shelter, and as a proof of effective occupation. Due to the established filial relations the members of each lineage, both the early settlers and the late-comers, referred to each other as a single *qomoo* (lineage), and felt that they belonged to a single *biyyaa* (country).⁷⁰

There is a relationship between humans and land among Oromo is the common recognition in Oromo cosmology of a mystical bond between the two. There is a form of personification of the land among the Oromo, who believe that land has eyes and ears and can act up on men who have usurped the rights of the rightful owners even long after the latter have died or moved elsewhere. The Oromo cultural and traditional attitudes toward land have contributed significantly to the proper management of arable land among the Macca Oromo farmers.⁷¹ Negaso Gidada, in his book entitled “A History of Oromo of South western...,” stated that;

*Land or lafa with all its resources such as soil, pasture, water supply or minerals was under strict ownership of the extended families. Access to land was only possible through the initial occupations by persons who thus become abba qabiyyee. Later migrants and dependent families could obtain share of the qabiyyee through inheritance rights (dhalaa), through presents (kenna) such as that given to the offspring of daughters (ganjti) or through purchase (bitta). The basic prerequisite for land ownership was first of all membership in a land-owning family, lineage or clan. Secondly, one had to be a freeborn man of independent status, i.e, emancipated from the patriarchal authority of one's father. Thus, in principle, only heads of (at least nuclear) families were entitled to possess land. Sons could own land only after their father had from the socio-political responsibility for the family at the age of forty.*⁷²

Before Minilik's conquest, even among the Maccaa amongst whom the institution of kingship *mootii* had evolved, the ritual and religious practices of *gadaa* had not been entirely

⁶⁹ Informants: Alamuu Cawwaqaa & Alamuu Cawwaqaa

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Tesema Ta'a. *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Antropological Enquires*. Ed. P.T.W. Baxter, Jan Hulin and Alesandro Triulzi. (Gotab, Stockolm. 1996) p.135

⁷² Negaso Gidada, *The History of Sayyoo Oromo of...*, p.132

abandoned. Indirectly, they regulated land use and occupation rights and promoted reciprocal associations. Land then was not short. Every male member has entitled to his *dhoqee* (arable land) which he could cultivate and the right to graze cattle, sheep and goats.⁷³

The administrative arrangement was partly the result of the settlement pattern that began at the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of twentieth century. These patterns were based on the *Gada* laws pertaining to land holding known as the *qabiyyee* system. They recognized the right of precedence. One of the laws promulgated by the *Gadaa* council, *chaffee*, held that land belonged to pioneer settlers. The pioneer settlers in Sayyoo were individuals searching for unoccupied land in accordance with the principle of ‘*darbii qabadhu*’ which literally means ‘go by and take possession’, which regulated the system of land acquisition for the Oromo community at large had, its roots in the principle of family property inheritance.⁷⁴ Each *gosas* had autonomous rights over its *qabiyyee* (possession) in which all clan members had equal rights to use land. During the communal land holding, land was not short and every male member was entitled to his *dhoqee* arable land.⁷⁵ Thus, it is clear according to informants, that the Laalo Qilee peoples practiced communal land holding for a long period of time. They had *qabiyyee* (possession) rights on extensive stretches of unmeasured land which they cultivated and on which they raised large herds of cattle, sheep and goats.⁷⁶

In the pre conquest period, the most common type of tenure system which was communal land ownership known as *qabiyyee*.⁷⁷ This type of land tenure involves particular land occupation, where land was categorized into clan, sub clan lineage family and private (*dhoqee*) ownership.⁷⁸ The system divided land for forest, cropland, residence, grazing land, and others. According to Negaso Gidada, the generational occupations were for only *abbaa qabiyyee*, property rights where as internal migrants escape inheritance rights of ‘*dhaala*’.⁷⁹ The traditional Oromo ancient institutions ‘*qabiyyee*, ‘*dhaalaa*’ and ‘*Kennaa*’ simply family gift were indigenously practiced in Sayyoo.⁸⁰ This practice was specifically the same in Laalo Qilee communal tenure system before dismissal of the *Gadaa* system. According to Asafa

⁷³ Assefa Tolera , p.23

⁷⁴ Daniel Ayana, p.69

⁷⁵ Assefa Tolera, p.107; Addis Hiwot, ” *Ethiopia from Authocracy to Revolution* (London Review of African Political Economy, 1975)”, p.4

⁷⁶ Informants: Tarrafaa Wayyuu & Alamu Cawwaqaa

⁷⁷ McCann, James, *People of the Plow: An agricultural history of Ethiopia, 1800-1992* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p.13

⁷⁸ Informants: Ofga’aa Wirtuu & Alamu Cawwaqaa

⁷⁹ Negaso Gidada , *History of Sayyoo Oromo...*, ” p. 27

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*,p 28

Tolera, the Maccaa Oromo practiced *qabiyyee* system before incorporation into Ethiopian empire.⁸¹ The *qabiyyee* (possession) was derived from Oromo verb ‘*Qabuu*’ or to hold, by communal form of patrilineal descent.⁸²

Before conquest, the ‘*darabaa institutions*’, hunting expeditions, clearing of forests by fire, grazing land without care and the like directly affected the Laalo Qilee physical environment.⁸³ As it is known, land was a communal property in Laalo Qilee district before incorporation into Ethiopian empire. It was a common property to members of lineage group. However, there was a difference in status among 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 status among the members of *gosa* (lineage), land remained a communal property among the Oromo of Laalo Qilee until incorporation into the empire of Ethiopia.⁸⁴

The *Abba Qoroos* had almost similar positions and responsibilities among the Maccaa Oromo of southwestern and western Ethiopia. It was reported that before subjugation of Laalo Qilee district by the force of Menelik II. *Abba Qoroos* served as the agent of the *mootii* (king) and they held important positions in Laalo Qilee district.⁸⁵ Informants asserted that the inheritance of land was through blood relationship from father to son in the communal land holding systems which is still applicable in the district under study. Since the position of land was communal, the accountability to keep it from enemies was also communal in the district under study.⁸⁶

Especially, *abba biyyaa* (father of the country under local king) were expected to safeguards their lineage *qabiyyee* (land possession) and *biyya* (country). They were also given full rights and order to involve in territorial expansion and conquest of their adjacent land.⁸⁷ According to the system, land was divided into residential, forest; grazing land etc and each of these were governed by certain rules and regulation, which guided utilization and management in Laalo Qilee district. Grazing land included areas rich in grasses, forest sides, bush land, and savanna growing areas. Such areas were allocated for grazing based on the consent of the

⁸¹ Asafa Tolera, P, 231

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.234

⁸³ Daniel Ayana, p.89; Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Dagafee Dhaaba

⁸⁴ Ketema Meskela, “Evolution of Land Ownership and Tenance in the Highland Bale; A case Study of Goba, Dodola and Sinana to 1974” (MA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2001), p.19; Informants: Yadaa Qana’aa and Dagafee Dhaaba

⁸⁵ Informants: Assafaa Bashii & Alamuu Gabisaa

⁸⁶ Informants: Galataa Dhabaa & Shumii Barakaa

⁸⁷ Addis Hiwot, p.4

clan members.⁸⁸ Parts of the grazing land were also assigned for cultivation and residence based on the demand of the clan members. Areas such as Billee Buubaa, Manjooso Jirruu, Wayyu Dibaaba, Furdisa Jaawwii and Waabara were major areas of grazing.⁸⁹

Forest land was largely remote areas including, river valleys, lowlands, riverine and hilly areas. It was located in the periphery of the dense forests in the lowlands of Birbir River valley along Eastern and southern boundaries of the district.⁹⁰ This dense forest was available in the lowlands mainly in Madaale Kallisa, Wayyu Dibaaba, Darraa Jaarso *kebeles* along Birbir and Qilee River and the main species include *Albizzia gummifera*, *Syzygium guinnennense*, *Allophyllus abyssinicus*, *Schefflera abyssinica* and etc.⁹¹ The other middle altitude forests were mainly located in the districts along Bille Buuba, Manjoso Jirruu, and Waayyu Dibaabaa *Kebele* with real cover ranges between 2 and 3 percent.⁹² As in case of dense forest, the area is characterized by limited grazing and extracted woods included *Coffee berry*, *Aframomum corrorima*, “*kororima*” and are collected from these areas.⁹³

The Major activities of the society includes livestock grazing mainly cattle, extraction of wood for fuel, farm tools and house construction and probably in some places hanging of beehives are common.⁹⁴ The other landscape as a category of forest was wet land. Such category of land was important for irrigation agriculture, alternative grazing areas. Besides *qabiyyee* system, the *safuu* (norm of the society) governed the resource utilization and management system.⁹⁵ Every activity in the human ecology relations were governed by certain defined rules ad regulation.⁹⁶ Oral information argued that, in the communal land holding, it was only male members who had the right of land inheritance.⁹⁷ Negaso and Tessema Ta’aa confirmed that Since womens joined different clans through marriage, only male members of the clan were entitled to a plot of land which some called *dhooqee*, some *maasii*, and still others *burqii*, which may mean the plot of land belonging to a man who has the right to use and gradually transfer it up on his male offspring. Key informants confirmed

⁸⁸ Informants: Alamii Gabiisaa & Fayeraa Ergaa

⁸⁹ Agricultural Office of Laalo Qilee District, 2018 Report, p. 11

⁹⁰ Laalo Qilee District Land and Agricultural Office, p.17

⁹¹ Short study of General Position of Laalo Kile District (GPLK), 2018, p.14

⁹² Laalo Qilee Agricultural Office, 2018 report, p. 7

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Short study of General Position of Laaloo Qilee district, p.12

⁹⁵Workineh Kelbessa, Indigenous and modern Environmental Ethics; *A study of Indigenous Oromo Environmental Ethics and modern Issue of Environment and Development. CRVPH* , (Addis Ababa University, Sept. 2010), p .113

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*,p.112

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

this land holding system in Laalo Qilee district which is the same with what Negaso and Tassama stated above.⁹⁸ Like the other part of Wallaga, the Laalo Qilee Oromo demarcated the individual farm lands, which were usually closer to the villages by trees, stones and *temjii* leaves. At this juncture, the concept of individual holding system could be posed in contradiction to the category of communal holding. The communal lands were lands not claimed or held by individual households and whose use left for public, and whose sizes remained fluid.⁹⁹ The Oromo indigenous system was beginning to decline following the introduction of the monarchical system in the region. The monarchical system was introduced to the Laalo Qilee district in the first half of the 19th century. During this period, hereditary form of government was emerged in many different localities. For instance, the four Laalo clans (Bille, Doganoo, Wayyuu and Deenta) established their own respective influence of territories and a form of self-rule.¹⁰⁰

The customary land use system namely *maasii* (land for cultivation), *lafa dheechisaa* (land for grazing), *daggala* (land for thatch), and *bosona* (forestland) determined the land use systems in the Laalo Qilee for a long period of time. Based on the relative location from the residence as a nucleus, land for cultivation was categorized into homestead (*maasii qe'ee*), the main field (*maasii*) and *bonee* (dry season irrigation).¹⁰¹ A household garden (*maasii qe'ee*), was either annual or perennial, or mixed crop-growing land cultivated without fallow system. The main farmland (*maasii*) was a larger plot of land for annual crop-growing area. Uncultivated grassland, grazing land and forest side potentially fertile land was categorized as *bajjii*. The term *bajjii* also stands for a recovered fallow land which farmers identified by the type of plants it grows.¹⁰² When *bajjii* was converted to farmland, it was known as *maasii*. *Bajjii* was highly valued for its high productivity. After the land was exhausted after four or five years of cultivation, it was changed to *borqii* that a farmer would abandon it as fallow.¹⁰³ Since the last quarter of the 19thc, most of the communal lands in Laalo Qilee district were converted to government property. The ruling elites and their co-workers gave a large portion and they allocated a small portion of the land to the *balabbats*. Through this

⁹⁸ Tessema Ta'a, *The Political Econ....*, p.47; Negaso Gidada, *History of Sayyoo Oromo of South Western...*, p. 133; Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Dagafee Dhaaba

⁹⁹ Informants: Tarrafaa Wayyuu and Mitikkuu Dafa; Daniel Ayana, *The History of Land Tenure System in...*, p.79

¹⁰⁰ Gafarso Fayera, p.35

¹⁰¹ Informants: Tarrafaa Wayyuu & Shumii Kababa

¹⁰² Knutsson, K. Eric "Plough and and Swidden: A dual system of Agriculture in Western Ethiopia." *Mimiograph*, Addis Ababa, p.10

¹⁰³ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Shumii Baraka

system, the local people lost their rights to the land previously belonged to them. The majority of people of the area that lost their communal ownership rights over the land later converted to *gabbar*.¹⁰⁴

1.2.6 Laalo Qilee District under the Influence of Menelik II (1873-1911)

In the year from 1878-1882, there were series of clashes in which Oromo of Wallaga were defeated by the Shewan forces on June 6, 1882 at the battle of Embabo.¹⁰⁵ Gobanaa Dachii (a chief of Abbichuu Oromo collaborated with Minilik II), worked determinedly and headed for the conquest of the Oromo territories of Wallaga, Illu Abba Bor and the Gibe region. Menelik promoted him to commander of the armed forces with the rank of *Dejazmach* and later awarded him with the title of *Ras* (head) with the hint of future promotion to the title of *negus* (king).¹⁰⁶ Ras Gobana also used the internal conflicts among the Oromo leaders as an advantage to fulfill the objectives of Menelik's territorial expansion.¹⁰⁷ Harold Marcus also argued that, the *naftagna*, the Orthodox Church and the *balabbats* were those who assisted the development of Ethiopian "nation".¹⁰⁸ Gobana Dachi's army controlled Laalo Qilee district and appointed a person named Xiiqi Eebicho as the first administrator of the district. This is the beginning of the end of indigeneous rule in the district and other districts in Qellem Wallaga zone.¹⁰⁹ The economic visibility of the Oromo in which Laalo Qilee district belongs began to face serious stress and strains following the increment of centralization process. One of the main features during Minilik's reign was new land tenure systems named the *qalad* or *gasha* system through proclamation. According to Minilik's proclamation, all the land was measured and redistributed on the basis of military, political and religious services to the central government. The *qabiyyee* rights of the indigenous peoples were wiped out, rendering them legally landless.¹¹⁰ Two third lands of colonized peoples were divided to *Naftagna* according to their position in the government. A governor received 1,000 Gasha, a *Fitawrari* (commander of the front) 300 Gasha, a *Qanyazmach* (commander of the right) 150

¹⁰⁴ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Kababba Ciibsaa

¹⁰⁵ Yasin Mohammed, A History of Illu Abba Bora, Ethiopia Ca. 1889-1991 (PhD Dissertation, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2009, p.36; Mekuria Bulcha, Genocide Violence in the Making of Nation and State in Ethiopia (African Socialist Review, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2005), p.333

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p.69

¹⁰⁷ Negaso Gidada, *ye Oromo Hezb...*, p.340

¹⁰⁸ Harold Marcus. G. *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia 1844-1913* (Lawrenciville, N.J: Red Sea Press, 1995), p.2.

¹⁰⁹ Mahtema Selassie Wolda Masqal, *Zekre Neger* (Addis Ababa, 1962E.C.), p. 165; Bahiru Zewdie, A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991 (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press), p. 87; Etana Habte, "Integration and Resistance in the Ethiopian Empire State: The Case of Qellem, 1886-1941" (*Journal of Florida conference of Historians*, vol.19, 2012). pp. 87-100

¹¹⁰ Tassama Ta'a, p.206; Informants: Mitikkuu Dafa and Tashomee Ballaxaa

Gasha and soldiers according to their ranks and ordinary soldier, depending on length of service received from one to three *Gasha*; and captain of fifty men was granted up to five *Gasha*; commander of one hundred received up to twenty *Gasha* of land.¹¹¹ Minilik II introduced the new land tenure system, known as the *Qalad (Gasha)* by issuing *Awajs* (edicts). The land proclamation of 1909/1910 required the measurement of all land and its redistribution based on military, political and religious services to the central government.¹¹² Both written documents and oral sources revealed that the newly introduced *Qalad* or *Gasha* system violated the traditional land tenure system of Oromo's of Wollega and Illu Abba Bor.¹¹³

The incorporated lands of Laalo Qilee district was measured in *gasha* (1 *gasha* equivalent to 40 hectares) was divided to the officials of Minilik and to who came as soldiers, priests, governors, irregular fighters and others. Redistribution of land during and after the conquest was patterned based on the way the region was brought under the Shewan rule. Local ruling classes who peacefully submitted to the Shewan bayonets were allowed to keep part of their landed property. More often they were allotted a third of their previous holdings known as *siso* lands, even though the size of the land original owners were allotted to keep did not always amount to a third.¹¹⁴ Menilek himself wrote the directive under which his military colonists would be 'planted' (*የሚከተሉትን ደንብ*, in its Amharic rendition, meaning 'the law according to which they would be planted').¹¹⁵ Prior to the great territorial expansion of the late 19thc, most peasants worked land not held under private tenure. The private type of tenure system expanded more during the reign of Minilik II, during which sharecropping relationships were common. The Private tenures were created when the crown confiscated land conquered by its armies and granted vast blocks to a wide range of people and institutions. Grants were made to soldiers and civil servants who came to administer new areas, peasants moving to south because of land pressure in the north.¹¹⁶ Following the conquest, the lord-serf system was implemented and it resulted the eviction of peasants from their lands and the government took the largest portion.¹¹⁷ The first ruler of Laalo Qilee district after the conquest was a person named Xiiqii Eebichoo who came fro Shewa by the

¹¹¹ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Baluudee Ifaa

¹¹² Tessema Ta'a, p.195.

¹¹³ Ibid, p.196

¹¹⁴ Informants: Teshomee Ballaxaa and Qes Dheressa Amantee

¹¹⁵ James McCann, pp.72-73; Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Qes Dheressa Amantee

¹¹⁶ Informants: Teshomaa Ballaxaa and Dagafee Dhaaba

¹¹⁷ Hussein Jemma, *The Politics of Land Tenure in Ethiopian History: Experience from the south*, paper presented for XI World Congress of Rural Sociology, (Torndhim, Norway, 2004), p.4

order of Gobana Dachee (a chief of Menelik's army). Initially, he occupied a place called Dhumugaa in Bille Dogaanoo *kebele* and stated admistering the society in 1873. But, in 1974, since it was not a strategic place, he came to the place of present day Laalo Qilee town which is upland suitable for war. He ruled until 1880 and the area he later settled developed in to the present town and he ruled until 1880.¹¹⁸ As a manuscript and oral information stated, the Shewan hegemony over the local peoples and the adjacent areas of Laalo Qilee started in 1873.¹¹⁹ When the alien rule imposed on the Laalo Qilee and the neighbouring areas, the Oromo *mootiis* (local chiefs) of the area were not silent and they resisted from the beginning. But, this does not mean that they subjugated forcefully. Rather, it was about what happened after beginning of imposition of ruling system, especially which was related to land tenure.¹²⁰

Written literatures and oral sources indicated that the peoples of Oromo in general and Qellem Wallaga in particular, expressed their dissastifiction through poems-song ways as it was stated by Alessandro Triulzi.¹²¹ Due to this, the peoples of the area described their anger for the coming of Shewan officials through the following gerrarsa-poem songs.

Afaan Oromoo	English Translation
Ilmaan haadha waalattee	You the son of 'haadha walattee'
Shawaadhaa gadi harattee	Migrated to us from Shewa
Ol adeemaa muka keenyaan ilfinyii qaxxalaxxee	You built a house by our young trees
Ol deemaa ilma keenyaan ashkarii qaxarattee	You hired our young son's labour
Ol deemaa intala keenyaan garadii qaxarattee	You homestead our daughter
Ilaamee muka abbaakoo minalee muka abbaasa	Oh, the about of my father
Ya ilmaan ' <i>dahinadaruu</i> ' waaq badaa isin haa haruu	Oh, the about of your father You, sons of ' <i>dahinaderu</i> ' may God Dismiss you ¹²² .

¹¹⁸ Laalo Qilee Cultural and Tourism..., p.2

¹¹⁹ Ibid; Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Qes Dheressaa Amantee

¹²⁰ Informants: Mitikkuu Dafa & Motumma Baatuu

¹²¹ Alessandro Triulzi, *Protests and Rebellions in Some Gerarsa Song-Poem in Kellem Wollega*, 1977, p. 9

¹²² Zegeye Kumera, *Environmental History of Laalo Qilee District, KellemWollega, WesternEthiopia, ca.1897-2004*, (M.A, Department of History, Wollega University, 2019); p.25 ;Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Baluudee Ifaa

1.2.6.1 Taxation system in Laalo Qilee District During the Reign of Menelik II (1873-1911)

In the nineteenth century as indeed also in earlier centuries in Laalo Qilee District, the economic basis of political power was tribute and surplus labour. Both were extracted from the peasant, who held his land (*rist*) by genealogical descent, and who was known as *gabbar* (after *Geber* or tribute). The tributes were of a diverse nature in the district under study. The main tribute was the land-tax or rent. Its value varied according to the degree of cultivation of the land (cultivated, *lam*; uncultivated, *taf*; semi-cultivated, *lam-taf*). Next came the tithe or *asrat*, which, as both the English and the Amharic words indicate, amounted to a tenth of the peasant's harvest is an additional tribute in Laalo Qilee district during the reign of Emperor Menelik II.¹²³

In addition to these two tributes, the *gabbar* was obliged to supply provisions, *maten* and *dergo*, for officials and visitors passing through Laalo Qilee district. He had to provide firewood for his overlord, known as *malkagna* or *shalaqa* (representative or commander), twice or thrice a year. He made available the honey (*mar*) that was so essential to make *tal* (mead, hydromel) for the ruling class. He was also expected to express his joy by offering 'gifts' at the appointment of a new governor, his promotion or decoration, or the birth of a son to him.¹²⁴

It was also the *gäbbar's* responsibility to construct fences and build houses for his master when instructed to do so. Labour was also required to feed horses and mules. In addition, every Oromo *gäbbar* household paid tax to the state based on the number of oxen it possessed. A household with a pair of oxen or a single ox paid 3.25 and 1.10 Maria Theresa dollars each year respectively. Families without oxen were not exempted. The strength of the household labour was assessed and categorized as "strong hoe" and "small hoe." They paid 1 and 0.1 Maria Theresa dollars respectively. But there was no differentiation on the honey tax each Oromo *gäbbar* was expected to pay. A tax of 2 Maria Theresa dollars was levied on each household. Those who grew coffee also paid 1 Maria Theresa dollar for every 40 fertile coffee trees.¹²⁵

Since neither the governor nor the retainers were paid salaries, they derived their income from the service of the *gabbars* who were granted to them for that purpose. The number of

¹²³ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Dagafee Dhaaba

¹²⁴ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Tashomee Ballaxaa

¹²⁵ Ibid.

*gabbar*s allotted obtained up to a thousand, the intermediate ranks up to three hundred, while the low ranks received ten to twenty *gabbar*s. The *gabbar*s tilled the lord's plot, erected the house of the *neftegna* and also provided the household of the latter with food, drink and firewood.¹²⁶ Three times in a year he (*Gabbar*) surrenders 15 *quna* (baskets) of ground flour to the *Melkegna* (Abyssinian governor) tribute in honey, and a tenth of his produce to the state. At the *qalad* the inevitable happens; the *Mislene* (the governor's representative) engaged the peasant in the renovation of the *melkegna* house on the *qalad*.¹²⁷

In addition, peas, beans or cowpeas (depending on the season) were also demanded. The Oromo *gäbbar* also had to work two days a week on the farm of the *mälkägna*, who sometimes asked for cash in place of labour. Additional provisions would be required while the *mälkägna* went on a trip, be it for his master or for his own purposes. Wives of the *gäbbar* were required to grind grain and bring firewood, while children under 15 years worked daily at the *mälkägna*'s residence.¹²⁸

In Laalo Qilee district, the ruling class appropriated not only surplus product from the *gabbar* but also surplus labour. The chief expression of this forced labour or corvee was farming on state or governor's land (*hudad*). This generally took about a third of the *gabbar*'s labour time. The *gabbar* also ground grain for the *malkagna*. He engaged in the construction of granaries and fences for the governor or the *malkagna*. He was custodian of any state prisoner with liability to take his place if a prisoner escaped. He also provided transport service, carrying personal effects of the governor or an official in times of peace and provisions in times of war. The areas that were spared the imposition of *neftegna gabbar* systems were those that had peacefully submitted to Menelik and had thus managed to retain some degree of autonomy. A fixed annual tribute (*qurt Geber*) was imposed on the province as a whole, and it was collected by the governor and delivered to the emperor in Addis Ababa with considerable pomp and ceremony.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Informants: Dagafee Dhaaba and Yaada Qana'aa

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Etana Habte, p. 107

¹²⁹ Informant: Qes Dheressa Amantee; Ofga'aa Wiirtuu and Barakaa Shumii

CHAPTER TWO

LAND TENURE AND TENANCY IN LAALO QILEE DISTRICT DURING THE IMPERIAL PERIOD (1941-1974)

Before further going to see the nature of land tenure system under the imperial era, it is worth to mention what exactly mean the land tenure. In this paper, land tenure system refers to the social and administrative concept. It does not show physical or ecological concept. Land tenure system is a complex concept that includes the ways in which land came into the hands of government, how it was categorized and strategies, through which access to land is obtained, maintained and lost. The state exerted considerable influence on local land tenure systems throughout different political regimes for a long period of time.¹³⁰

Hussein Jemma, in his book entitled, “*The Politics of Land Tenure in Ethiopian History...*,” also stated that land tenure system in a given legal power comprises set of possible bases on which land may be used. As such, this range includes rural and urban tenures and ownership, tenancy, and other arrangements of land use. He further argued that, the use rights on land are defined to include hunting, passage, gathering, grazing, cultivation, mining of minerals, the use of trees, and even the right to destroy the resource. The countries geographical, ethnic and cultural diversity and historical backgrounds were mentioned among those factors that had produced highly varied forms of land use and ownership. Historical traditions confirmed that the land tenure systems in Laalo Qilee district were highly influenced by the rulling agents.¹³¹

The process of land tenure had three forms. Firstly, the northern settlers who had acquired tributary rights over southern peasants, the *gabbar* ended up by owning the land together through purchase from the distressed *gabbar* or forcible seizure. Secondly, the *maderiya* land given to those in government service in lieu of salary was made convertible to freehold. Thirdly, and this appears to have been the most prevalent pattern, the government made extensive land grants from its large reserve, which came under the conveniently vague rubric of government of land (*ye mangest maret*). Of the nearly 5 million hectares allocated after 1941, only a few thousand reached the landless or unemployed. The privatization process has a number of problems. As a conceptual level, it

¹³⁰ Girma Kassa, “Issues of Expropriation: The Law and the Practice in Oromia”, (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, 2011), p.12

¹³¹Hussein Jemma, pp.3-4; Informant: Alamii Gabisaa and Tashomee Ballaxaa

was attended with changes in the connotation some important terms.¹³² In the past, the Oromo had their own customary tenure systems that evolved but they were introduced to different land tenure systems during the twentieth century. Land tenure is one of the most important institutional factors affecting farmers decisions with regard to land use and management such issues as tenure security, entitlement, modality of ownership or management of land, size and fragmentation of land holding the right or ability to mortgage and transfer land by sale, lease or bequeath etc. are therefore, pertinent with regard to their impact especially on the land degradation processes in the Laalo Qilee district.¹³³

According to James McCann, land tenure is both an economic and political institution. In relation to the latter aspect, the specific rules of a tenure regime must be implemented within, and indeed be derived from a given society and, hence the political entity that the governors and legislates that society must be a determinant of both the nature and efficacy of the tenure system.¹³⁴ It was the distribution of that which led to the beginning of the system of *Gabbar* (in Amharic word means one that pays tax or tribute) which system later become similar with serfdom.¹³⁵ The new colonial landless subjects were forced to farm the land of the new landlords. These landless people were forced to handover up to 75% of their agriculture products to the landlords. That is why these people struggled to regain their stolen land for many decades. The inhabitants of the conquered country are registered in families by the Abyssinian chiefs, and every family of Abyssinians settled in the country there is assigned one or more families of conquered as *Gabbars*. The *Gabbar* family is obliged to support the Abyssinian family; it gives that family its own lands, build and maintain the hut in which he lives, cultivates the fields, grazes the cattle, and carries out every kind of work and performs all possible services of the Abyssinian family in Laalo Qilee district.¹³⁶

The *näſſägnä-gäbbar* system, an alien rule bitterly resented by the Oromo and generally characterized by ethnic stratification exemplified power relations throughout the Ethiopian empire state. Men were required for normal farm labouring, and women and children for

¹³² Bahru Zewude, P.191

¹³³ Informants: Ayyana Ejersoo & Tashomee Ballaxaa

¹³⁴ James McCann, pp.72-73

¹³⁵ John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*, (Nothinham: Spokesman press, 1988), p.24

¹³⁶ Informants: *Qes* Dheressa Amantee and Dagafee Dhaaba

weeding the crops. This labour was needed constantly until the crops had been gathered and stored in granaries located in Laalo Qilee district.¹³⁷

Ketema Meskela stated that in an attempt to gain support, Italian land policy favoured the peasants of the south, promised the Oromo population in safeguarding their rights and interests over land in their administrative policy. Among other things, the peoples of Laalo Qilee district were allowed to retake lands that were formerly designed as “government land” as well as lands owned by northerners who had fled.¹³⁸ In fact, Italians abolished *gabbar-neftenna* relationship in the whole part of Ethiopia. Ketebo Abdiyo put this right as “the most important achievement of fascist Italy in the south was the abolition of the exploitative *gabbar-neftenna* system”.¹³⁹

The Italian administration in Laalo Qilee district cut the imperial political and economic centralization. Moreover, Italians opposed the existing land tenure of Ethiopia under imperial Haile Sillasié I. Some peoples welcomed the Italian land policy while others particularly the local *balabbats* resisted the policy. Informants state that, under Italian colonial rule, the *gabbars* in Laalo Qilee district were allowed to use the land which they rented formerly from the land lords. They gave compensation to those *gabbars* who had been exploited by the administration.¹⁴⁰

The Italians introduced a number of changes in the Laalo Qilee province.¹⁴¹ The Italians rule of the peasants of the southern Ethiopia had brought a sort of advantages in abolishing the former *Gabbar* system, which forced the peasants to give free service and make them landless.¹⁴² They introduced some policies such as withdrawing of taxes and letting the peasants reclaim the land, which lasted until the restoration of the monarchy. Unlike pre-Italian occupation, during the Italian period, there was no *irbo* collection, there was no tax for grazing, and there was no tax in honey. In addition, regarding the possession of land belonging to orthodox churches, the Italians took and set aside the best and abundant land

¹³⁷ Etana Habte, p. 107; Informant: Yaada Qana’aa and Baluudee Ifaa

¹³⁸ Ketema Meskela, pp.49-50; Informants: Tashome Ballaxaa and Yaada Qana’aa

¹³⁹ Ketebo Abdiyo, *The Political Economy of Land and Agrarian Development, the Arsi Region Since 1941* (Route Ledge, 2018), p.27

¹⁴⁰ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Alamii Gabisaa; ¹⁴⁰ Ketebo Abdiyo, p.27; Endalkachew Lelisa, “Land Tenure, Labor Allocation and Life of Coffee Farmers in Coffee Producing Areas: The Case of Jimma and Limmu Awrajas Since 20thc”, *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 8, No. 7, 2018, p.2

¹⁴¹ Yasin Mohamed, p.65

¹⁴² Guluma Gamada, “Land, Agriculture and Society in the Gibe region; southwestern Ethiopia, ca 1850-1974...”, p.235.

around the capital for themselves.¹⁴³ In January 1933, as the *näffägnä-gäbbar* system was lifted and the last Amhara governor of the system (*Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Wäsänè) removed, local Oromo elites who had co-operated with the empire in its conquests not only of their own province but also of the broader western Ethiopian region complained that “they had become slaves” of the *näffägnä* after serving all imperial demands in their country.¹⁴⁴ In Ethiopia in general and Wollega in particular the rules to hold, measure and use land have changed from time to time. This is because land has one of the most highly valued possessions of human society. Up to the collapse of *Derg*, there were different types of land tenure system practiced in Ethiopian empire.¹⁴⁵

The period 1941-1974 represents a summation of modern Ethiopian history. The land privatization process initiated with the institution of land measurement called *qalad* and unequal distribution increased. Extensive land grants by the state to its officials and supporters reduced substantial portion of the peasantry to the status of tenancy, particularly in the southern half of the country in which.¹⁴⁶ The two major factors that lead land reforms or land policy were: the first was the maximization of state revenue which was termed as agricultural income and the second was the patency that emperor has done in order to win the loyalty of the devoted patriots against Italians (1935-1941).¹⁴⁷

The post 1941 period saw structural transformations in many fields of state and society. Among them the most significant areas of change was the land tenure system.¹⁴⁸ After the evacuation of Italians, the imperial government once again restored to power in May, 1941 and continued to undertake establishing new cabinet, extensive of land measurement, confiscation, registration, inheritance, litigation, increase tax and exodus imposition, Christian settlers and extreme land privatization in Ethiopia in general and Laalo Qilee district in particular. In the post liberation period, the restored Ethiopian government took measures to alienate land from peasants through land measurement, land sale, land grants,

¹⁴³ Oljira Tujuba, “Oromo-Amhara Relation in Horro Guduru Awraja (Northeastern Wollega), ca.1840’s-1941” (MA Thesis, Department of History, AAU, 1994), P. 39; Wagari Mosisa, “A History of Horro District, 1910-1991” (MA Thesis, Department of History, AAU, History, 2015), p. 22

¹⁴⁴ Etana Habte, pp.121-123.

¹⁴⁵ Informants: Dagaafee Dhabaa and Shumii Barakaa

¹⁴⁶ Bahru Zewde, p.178

¹⁴⁷ A Proclamation to Provide a Tax on Land, Negarit.No.8(1942); Perham; Shiferaw Bekele, “*The Evolution of Land Tenure in the Imperial Era,*” *An Economic History of Moder Ethiopia: The Imperial Era,* 1941-1974, 1 (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995), p.109; Guluma Gameda, p.61

¹⁴⁸ Shiferaw Bekele, PP.73-74

increment of taxation and the like throughout the country.¹⁴⁹ Aleme Eshete in his papers entitled, “*General Ethiopian Examination of Feudalism*” indicates that the *gabbar* peasant (owner of land) becomes *Chisenya* and owner of *maderia* become the owner of land. The distribution of land was allotted to the government soldiers, nobles, priests and the *melkegna* as a compensation for the service they rendered during the war in supervising the conquered areas in Laalo Qilee and elsewhere.¹⁵⁰ The key informants stated that this was the way how the majority of land holders in Laalo Qilee district become landless due to the government policy of land distribution for those stated above.¹⁵¹

Many literatures indicated that in the post liberation period, Emperor Haile Sillasie I continued centralization of power thereby increased the magnitude of the misery of the Ethiopian people and made them under autocratic rule. In different direction, the exploitation continued as in the pre-Italian occupation period in Laalo Qilee district.¹⁵²

The privatization of land had become the basis for the consolidation of the Imperial regime. Before the Italian occupation, the attempt to privatize land became a fertile ground for Emperor Haile Sillase I to later intensify land privatization practice that led to the replacement of *gult* holder-*gebbar* system in south by land-lord tenant system. In the post occupation period, two processes played significant role for emergence of private land. On the first place, in 1941 following his restoration to power, Emperor Haile Selasie I made extensive land grants to selected individuals like victims of the Italian occupation, civil servants and soldiers as freehold. Secondly, in accordance with the 1942 tax reform, all land that belonged to farmers who could pay tribute for the land they were using, were recognized by the state as its owners or private land owners. Payment was made to be in cash with a clearly defined tax rate.¹⁵³ The Ethiopian land tenure system during the imperial era was so complex. Land ownership right was given for individuals not to own rather to use the land that formerly belonged to Laalo Qilee peasants. From time to time tenancy increased due to land redistribution process.¹⁵⁴ In Laalo Qilee, as it was in other parts of the country, the patriots,

¹⁴⁹ Donald Crummy, *Banda, Italian Resistance: Noble and Peasant in 20th century*, (/n.p/, /n.d/ 2002), p.13; Informant: Baluude Ifaa and Yaada Qana’aa

¹⁵⁰ Aleme Eshete, “General Examination of Ethiopian Feudalism”, *In Papers Presented to the Conference on Ethiopian Feudalism and the Historical Survey of Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, 1976, p.19; Informants: Tashomee Ballaxaa and Baluudee Ifaa

¹⁵¹ Informants: Yadaa Qana’aa and Mitikkuu Dafaa

¹⁵² Christopher Clapham, *Haile Sillasie’s Government*, (London, 1969), p. 9; Donald Crummy, p.237; Informants: Qes Dheresa Amantee and Dagafee Dhaaba

¹⁵³ Shiferaw Bekele, pp.76-77

¹⁵⁴ Nuru Yimam, “A History of Geera District, Jimma Zone, 1941-2010” (M.A. Thesis, History, Jimma University, 2019), p.23; Informants: Faxxanee Basiraa and Alamii Gabiisa

wounded soldiers, orphans of the patriots, those whose families died in the war, were grant land in *gashas*. In addition, the *balabbat* and *Chikashum* were also made the land distribution of the district become severe. Therefore, majority of them were mostly landless peasants.¹⁵⁵ The former *naftagna gabbar* system of relationship gradually changed to another one, which was mainly based on the land lord-tenancy system which had already began to appear even in the pre-Italian period. The advent of the new socio-economic relationship was particularly initiated with the beginning of the land measurement which was commonly known as the *qalad* system.¹⁵⁶ The July 1942 and 1944 were the early imperial decrees. Thus, decrees were later amended several times to include and grant armed force, and civil servant to land as a reward for their services and loyalty.¹⁵⁷ In Laalo Qilee district land grant system was highly practiced during Emperor Haile Sillasié. Under him, the loyalty of the military, the civil service, and the rural elite was held through grants of land ownership.¹⁵⁸

After 1941, the former *naftagna gabbar* system of relationship gradually changed to another one, which was mainly based on the land lord-tenancy system which had already, began to appear even in the pre-Italian period. The advent of the new socio-economic relationship was particularly initiated with the beginning of the land measurement which was commonly known as the *qalad* system.¹⁵⁹ As it was elsewhere in the southern provinces, in post-liberation period, Laalo Qilee had experienced such grants of land in similar manner. These land grants through the various decrees had greatly affected the majority of agricultural population.¹⁶⁰ In other way, lands become privatize through different ways. The state had been granted lands as a salary (*madariya*) to the *balabbats*, *malkannas* and other government servants of officials instead of salary in pre-war period. These lands were changed to *rist* (private) lands after 1941. Like this, the *gult* lands of the gentry and nobility of the previous period was changed to private or *rist* lands in post liberation period. The other way of changing to private was that the land which obtained through inheritance. These kinds of lands were owned by *gabbar*.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Informants: Motummaa Baatuu and Ayyanaa Ejersoo

¹⁵⁶ Panchrust Richard, *State and Land in Ethiopian History* (Haile Sillasié I University, Addis Ababa, 1966), p.31

¹⁵⁷ Tessema Ta'aa, *The Political History of...*p.210; Hussein Jemma, p.1

¹⁵⁸ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Mitikuu Dafa

¹⁵⁹ Richard Panchrust, p.31

¹⁶⁰ Informants: Dheressa Amantee and Dagafee Dhabaa

¹⁶¹ Bahru Zewde, pp.199-200.

2.1 Land Measurement, Grants and Types of Land

2.1.1 Land Measurement

In Ethiopia, the rules to hold, measure and use land have changed from time to time. This is because land has been one of the most highly valued possessions of human society. Up to the collapse of *Derg*, there was a different type of land tenure system practiced in Ethiopia.¹⁶² It is supposed that land measurement was started during the Gonderine period in the late seventeenth century in Begemidir. Nevertheless, it was in 1879-1880's in Shewa that land measurement started and continued until the collapse of the imperial regime in 1974.¹⁶³ Land measurement was one of the most land reform in the post liberation period which resulted in privatization of land.¹⁶⁴

The *Qalad* system sustained in existence and was revised during the period from 1941-1974. The process continued until the downfall of the regime of Haile Sillasie's imperial government in 1974.¹⁶⁵ The measurement of land was also accompanied by an increment in taxes payment. It was also an attempt to generate additional revenue by converting collective owners into individual owners. According to informants, the measured land was grouped under three categories namely *lam* (cultivated land), *Lam-taf* (semi-cultivated land) and *taf* (uncultivated land) based on the fertility of the land.¹⁶⁶

As soon as, the emperor Haile Silasie I restored to his political power in 1941 in post liberation period, he passed the new land decree that was a *qalad* system. The land measurement was called as the *qalad*, after the rope ceased to measure the land. The *Qalad* estimation of the time was about 66/67 meter long. This *Qalad* system was started before the coming of Italians, widely strengthened and expanded in post liberation in Laalo Qilee district.¹⁶⁷ The first land measurement by *qalad* was completed in 1953 by classifying land into four categories, namely, *gabbar*, *samon*, *government* and *madariya* based on ownership of land and also classified it into three categories such as *lam*, *lam-taf* and *taf* based on its cultivability. The completion of land measurement was followed by serious measures that

¹⁶² Temesgen Gebeyehu, "History of Land Measurement in Shashemane (Ethiopia) 1941-1974" *African Journal of History and Culture* Vol.I (4) (2009), p.67

¹⁶³ Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in...*, p.120; see also Richard Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia: 1800-1935*, (Addis Ababa, 1968, pp.152-153; again, see also Bahru Zewde, "Economic Origins of the Absolutist State in Ethiopia 1916-1935)", *Journal of Ethiopian Ethiopian Studies*, Vo..17, p.13

¹⁶⁴ Bahru Zewde, pp.199-200.

¹⁶⁵ Temesgen Gebeyehu, "Land Tenure, Land Reform and Qalad System in Ethiopia, 1941-1974" in *Ethiopia, Journal of Asian and African Studies* 46(6), (Bahir Dar University), 2011), p.569

¹⁶⁶ Informants: Namaraa Bayyanaa and Dagafee Dhaaba

¹⁶⁷ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Dagafee Dhaaaba

attempted to increase state income and to benefit its officials and soldiery. The government issued a new tax proclamation that could be applied uniformly all over the country. Accordingly, individual land owner was expected to pay 45, 40 and 15 Ethiopian Birr for *lam*, *lam-taf* and *taf* respectively.¹⁶⁸ The first attempt of measuring land in Laalo Qilee district was said to have started in 1944. It was carried out mainly by a low-ranking official such as *meslane*, the *balabbat* and the *Burqa*.¹⁶⁹ In Laalo Qilee district, during pre-Italian occupation and post liberation period (1941), land measurement was conducted by local *balabbats* supported by government delegates and local elders.¹⁷⁰

The indigeneous landless supported the land re-measurement edict in Laalo Qilee district to gain the half *gasha* promised by imperial Haile Silassie I decree of 1955 E.C. According to the decree, more than half of *gasha* was not allowed for tenants. To the contrary, the *balabbats* who held many *gashas* feared the land measurement policy. Because, if the hidden *gasha* known, those *balabbats* would be forced to pay all the debt and moreover, they lost their *siso* land. As a result, such *balabbats* did not want to land re-measurement at all.¹⁷¹

2.1.2 Types of Land Ownership

The Ethiopian empire accommodated a land tenure system that is described as one of the most complex compilations of different land use systems in Africa. The terminology that has become the commonly used classification of the pre-revolutionary land tenure types does not reflect this plethora of local land tenure systems but refers mainly to the imperial administrative classification. It is commonly distinguished between communal (*rist*), grant land (*gult*), freehold, or sometimes referred to as private (*gebbar* tenures), church (*samon*), and state (*maderia*, *mengist*) tenure regimes in Laalo Kile district.¹⁷²

During the reign of Haile Sillasia, the different categories of land in Laalo Qilee district were *yamangist yezota* (state land), *rist* (private) and *Samon* (church lands), *Maderiya* and *siso* land. The first kind was registered as to government possession in time of land measurement. Some communal ownership and grazing lands delivered to become government lands.¹⁷³ Except the government land, the rest holders did not have final authority over their holdings,

¹⁶⁸ Ketema Meskela, p.84

¹⁶⁹ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Tashomee Ballaxaa

¹⁷⁰ A proclamation of private land holdings, 21/1955, No.33, year 231 (1995); Informants: *Qes Dheressa Amantee* and *Yaada Qana'aa*

¹⁷¹ Informants: *Dagafee Dhaaba* and *Ofga'aa Wiirtuu*

¹⁷² Informants: *Tashomee Ballaxaa* and *Faxaane Basiraa*

¹⁷³ Informants: *Baluudee Ifaa* and *Masarat Tulii*

but they had legal rights to use it.¹⁷⁴ In addition, there were also categories of land as *diquana* (deacons) and *qesina* (priests) in the Laalo Qilee district.¹⁷⁵ The different land tenure arrangements in general, can be categorized into usufructuary and private tenures. The usufructuary tenure system included the *rist*, *semon* and *Madeira* or *yemengist* forms that differ principally in the type of institution holding the ultimate reversionary rights over the land. The *rist* system was one of the oldest and most common forms of usufructuary tenures that characterized the land tenure system of northern Ethiopia where the community held the ultimate reversionary rights over the land. *Rist* was a right, which a holder could claim a portion of lands from his or her ancestors who originally held the land. The *semon*, a system where the church held the primary reversionary rights, arose when the crown granted rural land to the Ethiopian Orthodox church to generate financial and material support for this service. The church in Laalo Qilee district, during this period owned a substantial share of tax-free rural lands. As the church itself was not directly involved in farming, it leased out its lands to the local farmers under sharecropping arrangements and collected the rents as well as land taxes (tributes) that would have otherwise gone to the government treasury. *Maderia* or *yemengist* lands were originally unoccupied lands that were declared state property, most of which are located in the south. When the imperial government conquered the south, south west and Eastern part of the country, all unoccupied (unsettled) rural lands were declared state property and given to state officials and loyalists of the crown.¹⁷⁶

The second type of land in the district was *rist* lands that existed in the post liberation period. The third type of land existed in the district was church land called *samon maret*. In the district, the church land was owned by church leaders, priests, deacons, *marigeta* and *gabaz* which termed as *yastadader maret*, *yeqesena maret*, *yediquana maret*, *yamarigeta maret* and *yagabaz maret* respectively. The peasants in their respective church provided free labour of churches and contributed grain and different commodities from their product voluntarily.¹⁷⁷ In the process of land measurement, land was classified in to various categories. These were *taf-meret* (government land), *Samon meret* (church land), *siso meret* (land belonging to the local community) and *maderiya meret* (land granted to government officials). Indeed, *maderiya-meret* was the land granted to the patriots who had fought the war of liberation and

¹⁷⁴ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Namaraa Bayyanaa

¹⁷⁵ Informants: *Qes* Dheressa Amante and Mitikkuu Dafa

¹⁷⁶ M.M Ahmed and eta'l, "The Evolution and Technical Efficiency of Land Tenure Systems in Ethiopia", In *Socio-Economic and Policy Research Working Paper*, NO.39, International Livestock Research Institute (2002), p.6; Informants: Huseena Sardaa and Gammachis Banjaawu

¹⁷⁷ Informants: Namaraa Bayaanaa and Faxxanaa Basiraa

participated in the conquest.¹⁷⁸ The most central terms used to explain Ethiopian land tenure systems, such as *gebbar*, have had differing meaning across space and time in some regions of the country and during different time periods, at times opposite to its use in official tax nomenclature. However, the latter was frequently adopted by scholars of the Ethiopian land tenure system. Contradictory interpretations are also found for the term *rist*, which the majority of writers denote it as collective property, but which is also described as “rigorously individualistic”.¹⁷⁹

One category was the *gebbar meret*, a private holding on which the proprietors paid taxes directly to the place. The purpose of this type of holdings was to redirect payment of taxes and tribute away from the local ruling elites and directly to the Shewan treasury. The Ethiopian church also received its share of land, known as *semon meret* with *gebbar*s who provided the necessary labor government officials collected taxes in lieu of salary from *maderiya meret*, land granted for service rendered to the government or simply to a royal favor.¹⁸⁰ According to *gebbar-neftegna* system, most of the Oromos were reduced to the status of serfs for nearly a century.¹⁸¹ According to many sources, *maderiya* was the land granted to government employees in lieu of pension. Moreover, it was the land granted to individuals as areward for their cooperation in a war of liberation. *Maderia* holders were obliged to pay taxes. The holders of this tenure could not transfer the land by sale, gift or inheritance.¹⁸² Ketebo Abdiyo using the Dunning sources maintains that “to have rights over land is to be human...to be landless is to be sub human.”¹⁸³

According to oral informants, in 1951, there was another land measurement which was completely different from the previous one because the central government had assigned surveyors commonly known in Amharic as *qalad tayoch*.¹⁸⁴ Those surveyors classified the measured lands into four categories. The first category was known as *gabbar* (private) land which was a common form of tenure in Laalo Qilee district after liberation¹⁸⁵. The second category was church land, the third *qalad* system was a land allotted to the soldiers which

¹⁷⁸ Informants: Yaada Qanaa’aa and Baluudee Ifaa

¹⁷⁹ Wibke Crewett and Benedict Korf, “Land Tenure in Ethiopia: Continuity and Change, Shifting Rulers, and the Quest for State Control”, In International Food Policy Research Institute, CAPRI Working Paper 91, (Washington DC, 2008), p.7.

¹⁸⁰ Informant: Dagafee Dhaaba and Alamu Cawwaqaa

¹⁸¹ Assefa Jallela, *Bribing the Land...*,p.364

¹⁸² Informants: Shifaara Qana’aa and Sanbatoo Galatee

¹⁸³ Ketebo Abdiyo, *The Political Economy of...*, p.14

¹⁸⁴ Donald Crummy, p.234

¹⁸⁵ Informants: Alamii Gabiisa & Yaada Qana’aa

was designated as *madariya* land. It was a land used as a payment to the service rendered by soldiers (*nachlabash*) and other government officials.¹⁸⁶ The fourth category was *yamangist maret* (government land). This land was particularly controlled under the private property of the state and the revenues extracted from this land were assumed to go to the central government treasury. According to key informants, “unsettled land” come under this category. It was claimed that such lands were not properly utilized and so that the state could put it under a better use.¹⁸⁷

2.1.3 Land Grants to the soldiers

After liberation, the land tenure system is the means or the system of acquiring land, land holding and land management.¹⁸⁸ The amount of land granted varied according to its quality, the war record, the rank and the total of service years accumulated by the official and soldier. *Maderiya* rights were linked to civil and military service and therefore temporary. They normally lasted until the dismissal or retirement of the holder. Only after 1941 could select groups of *maderiya* holders convert their land rights to permanent possession. In most cases, *maderiya* land was exempt from taxation, and holders only had to pay *asrat* or *tithe*.¹⁸⁹ According to Dechasa, the person who had the opportunity to become *balabbat* was someone who locally had the position of leadership (like clan leader) from his father. *Malkanna* was the commander of the army during conquest that inhabited a vast uninhabited land and made it state ownership.¹⁹⁰

The measured land was divided to *neftenna* (armed settlers) and to the soldiers, priests, governors, irregular fighters and others.¹⁹¹ The *qalad* system was a land allotted to the soldiers which was designated as *madariya* land. It was a land used as a payment to the service rendered by soldiers (*nachlabash*) and other government officials.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁶ Mindaye Abebe, “The Oromo of Bale: A Historical Survey to 1974” (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2005), p.77

¹⁸⁷ Informants: Alami Gabiisaa and Bekuuma Hiikaa

¹⁸⁸ Ketabo Abdiyo, *The Political Economy ...*, p.14

¹⁸⁹ Informants: Tafarii Tareesaa and Simeessoo Hirphoo

¹⁹⁰ Dechasa Abebe, “A Socio-Economic History of North Shewa, Ethiopia (1880s-1935)”, (PhD Dissertation, Department of History, University of South Africa), p.68

¹⁹¹ Informants: Baluude Ifaa and Huseena Sardaa

¹⁹² Mindaye Abebe, p.77

Table 1: Land Granted to the Government Officials

Officials	Assigned Land per <i>Gasha/ Qalad</i> . (N.B: 1 <i>gasha</i> =40 hectares)
<i>Dejazmach</i>	40-50 <i>gasha</i>
<i>Fitwrari</i>	30-40 <i>gasha</i>
<i>Qagnazmach</i>	25-30 <i>gasha</i>
<i>Meto-Aleqa</i>	15-20 <i>gasha</i>
<i>Hamsa Aleqa</i>	10-15 <i>gasha</i>
<i>Soldier</i>	1-10 <i>gasha</i>

Source: Yasin Mohamed, *Border and Border Crossing....*, p. 142.¹⁹³

The land or *lafa* of the Oromo peoples was measured in *gasha* (40 hectares). The *Gabbar* system was built up on an extensive confiscation of land from indigenous peoples and was divided among the Abyssinian Royal families, the state, and the Abyssinian nobility, the Orthodox Church, officers and soldiers who participated in the conquest and settled in the annexed territories. The colonial government introduced the *balabbat* system in which the land was divided in to three parts called *irbo*, *siso* and *ekul*. A Dejazmach received 40-50 *gashas*, a *Fitwrari* (commander of the front) 30-40 *gasha*, a *Qanyazmach* (commander of the Right) 25-30 *gashas*, *Meto Aleqa* from 15-20 *gashas*, a Captain of fifty men granted 10-15 *gashas*, an ordinary soldier depending on the length of service, received 1-10 *gashas* in Laalo Qilee district which is the same with what Yasin Mohammed listed in accordance with the above table.¹⁹⁴

2.1.4 Land Grants to the Nobility

In pre-Italian occupation, land was given to a class of nobility who lead Minilik armies in the conquest of the southern region and subsequently wielded influential political power. These

¹⁹³ Yasin Mohamed, *Border and Border-Crossing: The Case of Internal and External Migrants into and out of Illu Abba Bor, 1904-1936*, p.142

¹⁹⁴ Alemayehu Kumsa, 'The Conflicts Between the Ethiopian State and the Oromo People', *5th European Conference on African Studies in a Multipolar World*, 2014 Centro de Estudos Internacionais do Instituto Univeritairio De Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL) ISBN: 978-989-732-364-(Charles University in Prague), p.11

groups played a great role in the Menelik's territorial expansion. In turn, they profited from the entire revenue and collected taxes for their own use. The distribution of land allowed to the government officials as compensation for the service they rendered during the war in supervising the conquered areas.¹⁹⁵ As it was stated above, land was distributed to the nobility as well. After the introduction of the *balabbat* system, land was divided into three parts, theoretically into three equal parts, after the conquest. They seized two-third outright, leaving the last third to the local people who used to work as agents for the *balabbat*.¹⁹⁶

Key informants argued that the *baläbbat* came to power with the help of the central government. The *baläbbats* were engaged in most administrative activities in collaboration with the governors of the *wäräda* and *meketel wärädas*. Moreover, due to their honorable status, they created positive relations between the government and people. The *baläbbats* were not earning monthly salary. However, the *wäräda* and *meketel wärädas* were employees of the central government with monthly salary. The amount of monthly salary to a *wäräda* governor was one hundred birr. Below the *baläbbat*, there were other government servants without formal cash payment from the central government. These were called *Abba qoroos*. They were assigned by the *baläbbat* in order to pass regulations and orders to the rural people. Since they were responsible to the *baläbbat*, therefore, they could not act and make decision of their own in any condition. The principal works of *Abba qoroos* were to encourage the people to pay their tax to the *wäräda* treasurer on time and distributing the land among the people. Moreover, they were the right hand of the *baläbbat* that provided different information on civil and criminal issues.¹⁹⁷

From the time of the conquest of Laalo Qilee by the Menelik forces, the eviction of peasants from their land; confiscation of their properties like crops; and the imposition of heavy taxes that they could not pay were common. The local *balabbats* served as agent for the *neftegna* in exploiting peasants. The *neftegna* has used marriage arrangement as an instrument to establish strong bonds with the local *balabbat*.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, like in any other areas of south and south western Ethiopia, the local *balabbats* in Laalo Qilee district received rewards from the emperor for their cooperation with the emperor. The reward was a plot of land called *siso*, which was a portion of land allocated to the local *balabbats*

¹⁹⁵ Informants: Dagafee Dhaaba and Mitikkuu Daafaa

¹⁹⁶ Alemayehu Kumsa, p.2

¹⁹⁷ Nuru Yimam, p.18

¹⁹⁸ Informants: Fayeera Ergaa & Ayyanaa Ejersoo

where he allowed retaining one-third of the measured land.¹⁹⁹ *Balabbat* with a *siso* land grant joined Ethiopian officials in local administration known as *melkenna*. Together, they enforced payment of tribute and services to the state and maintained law and order in their localities. Where *siso* grants were small, the *melkegna* or *balabbat* might receive an additional grant of land called *dasata*, for which the tribute was one hundred thalers of mule.²⁰⁰

Where there was state structure and ruling classes existed, Ethiopian generals and administrators tended to expropriate land in the emperor's name and then redistribute it between the crown and the settler elite (*naftegna*) of Ethiopian soldiers, officials and clergymen on the one hand, and leaders of the subdued people on the other (*balabbats*). Provincial governors used the latter as intermediaries between the Ethiopian administration and the local population.²⁰¹

In order to easily communicate with the local peoples and to effectively implement the orders given from the government, the local *gosaa* (lineage) were appointed at the lower level of administration. The local officials took the title *Balabbat* following the incorporation of the district into Ethiopian Empire. In addition to this, the appointment titles such as *Grazmach*, *Qagnazmach* and *Fitwrari* were also given to local chiefs in Laalo Qilee district. According to Teshale Tibebu, the above appointment titles were military titles that were given for the officials of the *gabbar* system who participated in the wars of territorial expansion. However, these titles were given by Emperor Haile Sillase for civil officials who had not served the state as leaders of the army.²⁰²

The most beneficiary of the land hold proclamation of 1941 was obviously the *balabbat* and other officials who had strong connection to the regime. The ordinary peoples and tenants had no opportunities to benefit from the decree. Therefore, the period was characterized by the increasing of land privatization and tenancy rate.²⁰³ Informants as well as written sources confirm that the division of *gasha* of land to different *balabbats* and local officials was not uniform. Notable *balabbats* obtained *gasha* of land based on the service they render to the government and on the loyalty of the governors. Accordingly, the hierarchies were from least

¹⁹⁹ Informants: Mitikuu Dafa & Tashomee Ballaxaa

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Informants: Tarrafaa Wayyuu and Shumii Kaababa

²⁰² Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974*, (Lawrensville, 1995), p.116

²⁰³ Informants: Alamii Gabisaa and Qes Dheressa Amantee

to the highest were *Barambaras*, *Girazmach*, *Qagnazmach*, *Fitwrari*, *Dajazmach* and *Ras*.²⁰⁴ The local chiefs or *balabbats* were assigned at a 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, these *balabbats* were subordinate to the officials assigned by the central government and their power was very limited. They served as a bridge between the local community and the higher government officials. The implementation of different decrees and proclamation and the collection of taxes were carried out through the *balabbats*. They were entire from the local people.²⁰⁵ Various officials such as *balabbats* and *Cheqashums* were assigned throughout the country to be governors of their respective areas without autonomous status to help enforcing laws, collecting taxes, registration and collection of taxes from *gabbars*, the effective control of the provinces through loyal subordinate officials.²⁰⁶

The *Cheqa Shums* had the responsibility to report various issues to the officials above them in Laalo Qilee district. For instance, they should report crime to the police that could not be solved at the local level. In addition, they should provide support to the *balabbats* in making sure the payment of taxes by the peasants under him. Furthermore, it was their responsibility to keep peace and security of the areas under their administration. They also passed information they received from the higher officials through the *balabbats* to the peasants. By accomplishing these, they would receive a percentage of the tax they collected from their respective areas. Based on their status of responsibility, the *balabbats* held large tracts of land. Besides, they forced the peasants to provide them with various provisions such as free labour services, honey, butter and cereal crops.²⁰⁷

2.1.5 Land Grants to the Church

Forced conversion during the early period eventually compelled the Oromo *balabbat* to formally attach themselves to the EOC (Ethiopian Orthodox Church), although they secretly continued to worship *Waaqa* (Oromo's traditional religion). The forced conversion did not effectively expand Orthodox Christianity among the *balabbat*. But, the advent in Qellem of the EOC was not a simple introduction of new religion; it was part of the conquest.²⁰⁸ The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was reputedly an extensive land holder both in north as well as in

²⁰⁴ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Alamii Gabisaa

²⁰⁵ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Kababaa Ciibsaa

²⁰⁶ Tamam Adam, "An Agro-Ecological History of Bakko Tibe District 1941-1991", (MA Thesis, Department of History, Jimma University), 2015), p.15

²⁰⁷ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Yaada Qana'aa

²⁰⁸ Etana Habte Dinka, p.76.

the south. Through the time, however, a larger size of land and a number of *gabbars* were set aside for the church.²⁰⁹ At the initial period of their occupation, the conquerors brought priests, deacons and the like to Laalo Qilee district to give service in the Orthodox Church. For their service, *mootiis* (local kings) were forced to give them land. As continued to expand territories, the Oromo *mootiis* were Christianized and adopted the language and religion of the conquerors and they were appointed with the title of *Fitwari, Dejazmach, Qagnazmach, and Grazmach* in the Laalo Qilee and neighbouring areas based on the loyalty of the governors. This resulted the conquest of Laalo Qilee Oromo which removed *Gadaa* democracy in the area and marked the beginning of indirect rule through puppet *balabbats* and representatives of Shewan rulers in Laalo Qilee, the *meslanes*. Thus, for the first time, tribute payment was introduced to the district.²¹⁰

Church land was owned by the church and cultivated by the peasants for the benefit of those who served the church. Landed property, which is called church *gult*, had been also granted to the church. The *Aleqa* (church leader), rendered services to the church and distributes these lands.²¹¹ Church had played the leading role in pacifying the local resistances. As a result, Menelik gave reward for clergies who serve those churches. Accordingly, a priest received six *gashas*, a deacon received three *gashas*, a *gabaz* received two *gashas* and a *dabtara* received one *gasha* of land.²¹² The clergy too got its share, one third of church land for its maintenance. As a result, all warrior aristocracy including soldiers and retainers, even without having the required class status, and church officials obtained *gult* land. The state protected the *gult* holders' right for tribute in kind and tax collection as well as other benefits.

Traditional leaders and the indigenous farmers on the contrary lost their land and associated socio-political values.²¹³ Apart from leaving their land, the local peasants expected to cultivate the land given for church for the benefit of those clergies who served the church. On the other hand, either those who worked on *semon* holdings could inturn rent them out to others on a share-cropping basis or in payment of a fixed tribute; nevertheless, they could not sell, mortgage or exchange them in others ways.²¹⁴ Many sholars claimed that the Ethiopian

²⁰⁹ Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, 1967, p.7

²¹⁰ Informants: *Qes Dheressa Amantee & Dagafee Dhaaba*

²¹¹ Gebre Wold Ingida Worq, pp.308-309; see also Lulseged Asfaw, *The Role of State Domain Lands in Ethiopia's Agricultural Development*, (Madison, 1973), p.9

²¹² *Qes Dheressa Amantee; Dagaafee Dhaaba*

²¹³ John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*, (Trenton N.J. Red Sea Press, 1986) pp.23-24

²¹⁴ Dessalegn Rahmeto, *Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia*. (Scandinavian Institute of African studies, Uppsala. 1984, p. 17

Orthodox Church established itself in Wallaga in general during Minilik’s conquest of the Oromo people. Informants state that 12-115 *gashas* of land in Laalo Qilee was given for each of the three churches and *gabbars* were forced to pay *asrat* (among ten one) to help clergy.²¹⁵

It is said that the first Orthodox Church built in Laalo Qilee district was the Laalo St. Michael church that was built in 1849. Informants tell us that, at present, there were six orthodox churches in the district. But, three of it was built during the reign of Emperor Menelik II and Haile Sellasie I who involved in land tenure system. These were Laalo Qilee St. Michael church, Jirruu Mariam church and Amaraa Kuchoo St. George Church. According to tradition, in Laalo Qilee, land was distributed to individuals who served the church. The Laalo Saint Michael Church had possessed more *gashas* of land. For instance, a priest received six *gashas*, a deacon received three *gashas*, *gabri* received two *gashas*; *dabtara* received one *gashas* of land.²¹⁶

Table 2 : The Three Orthodox Churches in Laalo Qilee District

No.	Name of the Church
1	Laalo Saint Michael Church
2	Amaraa Kuchoo Saint George
3	Jirruu Mariam St. Church

Each church in Laalo Qilee was granted *gashas* of land based on the number of priests resting in the church and took large tracts of land by giving different names, such as *itanazur* (land licence), *ye irsho maret*, *qisina*, *diqua*, *ye dimet maret*, and *gibzina depterinat*, *kuta*, *safa’at*, *nifro*, *wuha-siqu* and probably others.²¹⁷ Similarly, *deway* (bell ringers) received one *gasha*, grinder, (a woman who ground grain for the sacred bread in the church) received two *gashas*, and *qarafii* (wood splinter) received one *gashas* of land. The same is true to other churches located in other *kebeles* of Laalo Qilee district such as Jirru Mariam church and Amhara Kuchoo St. George church. Servants of the church at different levels were given *rist gult*

²¹⁵ Informants: Ergaa Fayeera and Hambisaa Teshomee

²¹⁶ Informants: Dheressa Amante and Alamii Gabisaa

²¹⁷ Qes Dheressa Amantee and Dagafee Dhabaa

land. Informants tell us that the heads of churches, *merigeta*, had from one to three *gashas*, *samonagna* varying from five to seven depending on the status of the church. Abyssinian Orthodox Church exploited the land of Laalo Qilee along with its peasants. The Laalo peasants served their lords and also presents various kinds of provisions in the name of *teskar* (commemoration feast) after the royal families deceased. Furthermore, the priests and deacons exploited the properties of the peasants by going to the peasant house and made them to give food for them frequently. They went to the peasant house in the name of religious activities such as *betmerechet*, *teskar* and *kiristina*. Consequently, the peasants were affected in different ways. For instance, they were alienated from their land by the clergies and they were obliged to feed clergies who settled on their land. Despite losing their land, they were considered as *yalamene ahizab* (a society with no religion).²¹⁸

Table 2 : Land *Samon-meret* (church) Granted to the servants of the church

Servants	Assigned Land per <i>Gasha</i>
Priest	Six (6) <i>gashas</i>
<i>Deacon</i>	Three (3) <i>gashas</i>
<i>Gabazi</i>	Two (2) <i>gashas</i>
<i>Dabtara</i>	One (1) <i>gashas</i>

Sources: Yasin Mohamed, p.143.²¹⁹

The land was also cultivated by the followers of the faith who obey the religion, while the countryside holding was given to crop sharing in the name of the priest. Additionally, the church as an institution did not itself carry on agricultural activity; it leased the land instead to others in return for tribute or tax.²²⁰ When *rist gult* land belonged to a *gebez* (a church official), the tax from such lands went to the treasury of the churches in Laalo Qilee district as long as the land was owned by the *gebez*. Taxes given to *memhirs*, *alekas* or *mérigétäs* (church officials) were collected from *rist*s belonging to the church. A *mehir* is a head of monastery. Because of his position, he owned *gult* Land. An *aleka* (a head of *debir*), he too owned *Gult* land. A *merigeta* is a head of

²¹⁸ Ibid

²¹⁹ Yasin Mohamed, "Border and Border-Crossing: The Case of ...", p.143

²²⁰ Informants: Qes Dheressa Amantee and Alamii Gabisaaa

district church, which has inferior administrative position to that of *debir* in Laalo Qilee district. These types of church division are found in rural Areas. A treasure called *gebez* collects the property belonging to the church in the three groups named above.²²¹ According to oral and written sources, in Laalo Qilee, land was distributed to individuals who served the church according to their rank. Priests got more *gashas* of land than deacons. Priests took more than two *gashas* of land and more fertile land. The priests did not pay taxes. Each deacon would obtain one *gasha* of land for the service they render to the church.²²²

As the other part of Wallaga, in Laalo Qilee, the church claimed to have the right of tax collection (including land tax, *asrat*, educational tax and health tax).²²³ The priests, clergies, deacons, and the other land holders had full right to use and occupy land until he or she terminates their period of service. They leased the land and demand rent from tenants, but they cannot sell, credit, or pass on the land by inheritance.²²⁴

2.1.6 Land Grants to the *Gabbars*

In Ethiopia, a *gebbar* (tribute payer) peasant had existed both in the north and in the south. The *gebbar* in the southwest where the peoples of Laaloo Qilee belongs, were a landless peasants who had been assigned as tenant or servant to the *balabbat* or retainer who on the basis of pre-eminence right of kings or emperors all the land in the empire is believed to have been belonged to the emperor.²²⁵

The imperial land tenure system had enduring effects on both the economy of the local people and the environment. In the first place, the system created classes of societies mainly the minority landholders and the majority landless peoples. According to Daniel Ayana, three stages of societies emerged namely the *naftegna* landlords, tenants and superior elites. Landlords and *gabbars* became a socio-economic and political order up to 1974.²²⁶ The local people were alienated from their land and systematically made to either pay tax or buy their

²²¹Gebre-Wold Ingida Work, Trans.Mendesha Gessesse, “Ethiopia’s Traditional System of Land Tenure and Taxation”, in *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol.5, No.4 (Addis Ababa, pp.308-309; *Qes Dheresaa Amantee and Baluudee Ifaa*

²²²Wagari Mosisa, “A History of Horro District, 1910-1991” (MA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2015), p.22.

²²³Informants: Alamii Gabisaa and Shumii Barakaa

²²⁴Ketema Meskela, p.41; Gebre wold, pp.338-339

²²⁵ Daniel Weldegebriel, Land Rights and Expropriation in Ethiopia, (Doctoral Thesis in Land Law, Department of Real Estate and Construction Management, School of Architecture and the Built Environment Royal Institute of Technology KTH, Stockholm), 2013, pp. 50-52; Ambaye , “Land Rights in Ethiopia” Land Rights and Expropriation in Ethiopia, (Springer Theses, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015), p.45

²²⁶ Daniel Ayana, p.270.

land possession.²²⁷ In the post liberation period, the state introduced new land and tax decrees to increase its income. These changes land use systems specifically in a way people made relation with the environment. It in general introduced a system that was more exploitative in terms of environment. The changes aggravated the exploitation of natural resources. The taxation system of the imperial period also brought stress on the environment, as local people had to tap natural resources to pay tax. In Laalo Qilee, the most visible effects of the period were in terms of hunting, forest clearing and the settlement and cultivation of formerly uncultivated areas. In terms of wildlife, the period witnessed extensive hunting practices. According to local elders, in the post liberation period due to the availability of firearms and partly weak resource management, hunting for trophy, raw materials for market and bush meat was frequent and extensive.²²⁸ Land grants in the uncultivated land was made according to No 2, 1942 proclamation Based on that, the system encouraged local people to cultivate formerly uncultivated areas including lowlands and disease infested areas.²²⁹

The process also encouraged the privatization of land, which systematically alienated the local people from their possession. Informants noted that Waayyuu Clan of Laaloo's son was alienated from the present day kiftaana area, in kutaalla Luube *kebele*. Informants narrated that local peoples lost grazing areas to the nefteгна settlers.²³⁰ Economic exploitation of *gabbars* was wide spread in Laalo Qilee district.²³¹

The state-society relation become harsh in district as it was in other parts of Ethiopia in the period under study. Local peoples were considered as subhuman under the lord serf system.²³² This implies that the local peoples had no rights at all. For instance, the right to land and even the right to life. *Abbaa Qoroos* who were elected by the government for economic, political and administrative purposes occupied each *kebeles* of Laalo Qilee district.²³³

The local peoples were reduced to *gabbar* and *geerarsa* poem-song of the local peoples reflected the situation as follows:

Afaan Oromo

Gloss

²²⁷ Informants: Dheressa Amantee and Baluudee Ifaa

²²⁸ Informants: Fitee Galataa and Efireem Qanasee

²²⁹ Informants: Dagafee Dhaaba and Tashomee Ballaxaa

²³⁰ Informants: Dheressa Amantee and Fauxanee Basiraa

²³¹ Asafa Tolera, p.88.

²³² *Ibid.*,p.236; Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Yaada Qana'aa

²³³ Daniel Ayana, p 210.

<i>Ijoollee biyya keenya</i>	<i>Boys of our Country</i>
<i>Maal goonee biyya teenya</i>	<i>What have we done in our regions?</i>
<i>Qonnee gombisaa hin guunne</i>	<i>We farmed and filled the grain store</i>
<i>Dilbiidhaan kooti hin jenne</i>	<i>And couldn't say the wealth is ours</i>
<i>Ajjeefnee mirga hin fuune</i>	<i>We killed and not brought trophies</i>
<i>Ilaa mirgaa koo hin jennee.</i>	<i>And did not say, "See this is my trophy".²³⁴</i>

As a result, this shows how much the local peoples lost their former privileged status and in what condition they emerged after the occupation of the area after the imposition of the lord-serf systems. In addition to land alienation, the imperial over taxation created pressure on the environment. The state demanded taxation in kind which were obtained by taxing the environment. This meant the local society depended on the environment to pay tax to the state. The obligations imposed on them were not only in case of paying taxes in kind and cash, but, the *neftegna* forced the society to plough their land, weeding, harvesting on land some day in the week, building fences, kraal for his cattle. In addition to this, the *gabbar*'s wives and children also have various obligations like fetching water, grinding grains, collecting fire wood, washing clothes and the like. Generally, the landlords extracted labour services from the families of the *gabbar*.²³⁵

Several resistance songs of the period also reveal the scale of the exploitation and the final reversion of the local people. Among these, the following song was one among many which indicated uncomfotability of the society to the lord-serf system.

Afaan Oromo	Gloss
<i>Aleelikaaleleluu</i>	<i>I am ready to attack, shall I attack!</i>
<i>Sodaatta yaa Dabeeruu</i>	<i>Are you afraid? "You, who fear always"</i>
<i>Jarri kun nuuf adeemu.</i>	<i>They have come for us.²³⁶</i>

²³⁴Alessandro Truilzi, Edi.Tubiana Joseph, *Modern Ethiopia from the accession of menelik II to the present. Social protest and Rebellion insome Gabbar songs from Qellam Wollega*. Proceedings of 5th International conference of the Ethiopian studies. (France. 1977), p. 102

²³⁵Alamayo Kumsa, *The Question of Land Ownership and Its Implication on the Economic Development in Ethiopia*. alemayehu.kumsa@ff.cuni.cz.p 12

²³⁶Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Darajee Fiidaa

Songs of these types demonstrate peoples open revolts against the system as a restriction to their alienation from their holding areas. During the harsh imperial tenure system, the local peoples lost grazing and farm land.²³⁷

The following son shows regret from such limitations.

Afaan Oromoo	Gloss
<i>Maal gaaratti yaafnaree</i>	<i>Why we drive cattle to the hill</i>
<i>Yaa ijoollee biyya keenna</i>	<i>Oh, boys of our region</i>
<i>Mee akka waan dhibba qabnuu</i>	<i>as though we had a hundred</i>
<i>Maal geeraraa bullaree</i>	<i>Why we spend the whole night in singing</i>
<i>Yaa ijoollee biyyaa keenyaa</i>	<i>Oh, Boys of our region</i>
<i>Mee akka waan dhibba qabnuu.</i> ²³⁸	<i>As though we had trophy.</i>

The message of the song was that farmers lost the opportunity of gazing ample land due to the exploitation and partisan of socio-economic order. The imperial regime implemented the *rist* system (land communal practice) in the north, while the ‘*naftegna gabbar* system in the southern part of Ethiopia. In the south land was expropriated and distributed to the new settlers. The southern peasants became serfs and *gabbars* to the land lords. Moreover, the state and the church independently controlled lands.²³⁹. After 1941, according to informants, in Laalo Qilee district, some of the former names of the areas were renamed in Amharic languages. For instance, Nya’a *kebele* to *Safara Qees*, Waayyuu to *Safara gondaree* and Aallee to *Safara Bet lij*.²⁴⁰

The imperial land tenure system disturbed the former customary land holding system of the local peoples of Laalo Qilee district. However, due to the harsh *neftegna* system, the local peoples forced to move to remote areas of Birbir river valley where the control of *balabbats* was somewhat weak. That means, the *naftegna-gabbar* system aggravated the movement of local peoples towards forested lands.²⁴¹

²³⁷Siegfried Pausewang, *Peasants, Land and Society. A social history of Land reform in Ethiopia*, (München, London, Welt forum Verlag 1983), p.18.

²³⁸Alessandro Truilzi, p.23

²³⁹Alemayehu Geda, “*The political Economic Growth in Ethiopia*,” Chapter 4 of Vol.2 (Cambridge, 2007), PP.16-17

²⁴⁰ Informants: Yaada Qana’aa and Dagafee Dhaaba

²⁴¹ Informants: Tashomee Ballaxaa and Galataa Fiixee

In 1960s, Imperial government ordered landless societies to occupy unoccupied lands in the forested areas of the country.²⁴² Then, local societies of Laalo Qilee districts occupied places like Malkaa Buubaa along Buubaa Rivers in the form of private *rist* holding system. The state proclaimed that those farmers developing or cultivating the lowlands would be free from taxation for some three years and would pay less tax in the years that follow which improved productivity in the district. The scarcity of food in the Laalo Qilee district aggravated their needs to consume wild plants and animals to sustain their life and to escape over taxation and land alienation.²⁴³

In the First Five Years Plan (1968-1973), the government gave attention to commercial agricultural activities with the opportunity of developing lowlands.²⁴⁴ The program supported the agrarian capitalist who occupied land in the river valley for investment. The state claims that it planned such development to assist landless farmers to hold plots of land. In post-liberation period, the highly marketable products like coffee, cotton, spice crops and the like aggravated the movement of peoples towards the lowland or valley areas as a result of factors such as landlessness, cattle disease and over taxation.²⁴⁵

In Laalo Qilee district, the land of landlords and tenants signed a contract for a certain period of time on the issues such as the fertility of the soil and the treatment of the *balabat* toward the tenants. Land alienation and confiscation forced most of the Oromo into tenancy and dramatically reduced their standard of living. Peasants were forced to produce only food grains.²⁴⁶ In fact, Ethiopia's taxation system was not uniform throughout the country for a long period of time; it has disparity between the South and northern provinces.²⁴⁷

Emperor Haile Sellasie I attempted to standardize the countries taxation system in 1930s; however, his effort interrupted by the Italian occupation. The Italians at the beginning, ceased to collect land taxation in order to get acceptance by the peasants. Later on after liberation, the emperor tried to implement the taxation system introduced before his exile, so issued continuous tax proclamations.²⁴⁸ In 1942 the government introduced a new tax proclamation that established a uniform taxation to be paid in the newly introduced Ethiopian currency. This

²⁴² Informants: Faxxanee Basiraa and Yaada Qana'aa

²⁴³ Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant and the State, Studies in Agrarian change in Ethiopia 1950-2000s*, (Addis Ababa, 2009), p.28

²⁴⁴ Bahru Zawde, p.194

²⁴⁵ Informants: Tashomee Balaaxaa and Shumii Barakaa

²⁴⁶ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Alamii Gabisaa

²⁴⁷ Informants: Namaraa Bayyanaa and Baluudee Ifaa

²⁴⁸ Informants: Namaraa Bayyanaa and Alamii Cawwaqaa

proclamation also classified land into three categories fertile, semi-fertile and poor based on cultivability. The government carried out the land measurement as a means of increasing the state revenue from land.²⁴⁹ This proclamation was crucial among the decree introduced by the emperor. Accordingly, the major tax proclamation passed in 1942 aimed to legalize and establish the uniform taxation based on fertility of the land. For facilitation, the decree classified the land into *lam* (fertility), *lam-taf* (semi-fertility) and *taf* (infertility). Based on the land classification, the tax rate was uniformly imposed in many areas of Ethiopia. This decree was seriously implemented in the Laalo Qilee district. In addition to the national fixed tax, there is also some land related tax which the local *balabbat* impose on them. By this all tax related expenditure; the tenants of the study area paid from 9-20 Birr. Therefore, the local *balabbats* added 4 Birr on the lowest tax payers as well as 6 Birr on the tenants who had access to the *lam* land. In this way, tax was collected in the Laalo Qilee district in cash. Additionally, the local peoples paid 1-2 Birr for the animals which they brought to market for sale or buy.²⁵⁰

After liberation, several proclamations had issued in Ethiopia to reform the tax system such as proclamations of 1942 and 1944. Based on fertility of the soil, agricultural lands were classified into three. These were land cultivated, semi-cultivated and uncultivated land on which a uniform amount of tax levied for each category. The tax rate was levied 15 Ethiopian birr for one *gaša* (40 hectares) of cultivated (*läm*) land, 10 birr for semi-cultivated (*läm-täf*) and 5 birr for uncultivated land (*täf*). However, the 1944 proclamation increased the tax rate in to 50, 40 and 15 birr per *gaša* of *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf* land respectively. Furthermore, the 1944 tax decree abolished free labor services and other forms of fees imposed on the tenants. Later on, the government declared different kind of taxes by the name of education tax in 1947 and in 1959 health tax. However, in 1967 tithe or *asrat* was abolished and changed in to agricultural income tax. Always church land exempted from tax in Ethiopia throughout the country.²⁵¹

Thus, the 1942 land tax proclamation brought several changes on the local inhabitants of Laalo Qilee district. One of the changes was the replacement of traditional tax collection in kind by new taxation system in cash. Before the declaration, tax payment was not fixed as a result of prevailing tax collection in kind in different areas including Laalo Qilee district. The assigned tax assessors were also corrupt when they levied tax on the land owners based on the proportion of the land belonging to individuals in the Laalo Qilee district. Moreover, the whole

²⁴⁹ Informants: Yaada Qanaa'aa and Namaraa Bayyanaa

²⁵⁰ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Dibabaa Eebbaa

²⁵¹ Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant and the State, Studies in Agrarian change in Ethiopia 1950-2000s*. (Ethiopia. Addis Ababa Press, 2009), p. 293

of the collected tax would not reach to the government.²⁵² Most of the time, the agreement was conducted orally between landowners and tenants and its amount varied from *kebeles* to *kebeles*. Landowners could cancel these agreements at any time they want. It could be *irbo* (1/4), *siso* (1/3) or *ekul* (1/2) based on fertility of the land as well as local tradition. Additionally, tenants of Laalo Qilee district were required to pay *asrat*. The escalation of land privatization took place as settlers from north either purchased or duly occupied large amount of land given for patriots, exiles, soldiers and government employees as a salary. This land afterwards turned into a private possession which was formerly belongs to the local community of Laalo Qilee district.²⁵³ Patriots who had fought against Italians during the occupation of Ethiopia by Italians were given lands in the Laalo Qilee district. Moreover, these patriots requested the district administrator additional land and based on that they were granted more land through Rural Land Administration Office.²⁵⁴ In the district under study, tax was collected through *Abba qoros*. Nevertheless, there were officials called *Čiqa Šum* who worked under *Abba qoros* who were appointed by the district governor to facilitate the tax collection. Each *Abba qoro* had two *Čiqa Šums* who were responsible for collecting taxes from the peasants who were ninety two in number as the Laalo Qilee district in general.²⁵⁵

The *chiqa shums* were empowered to administer and collect tax in the locality under his administration under the supervision of the main *balabbat*. Politically, the local *balabbats* continued to subordinate the officials appointed by the central government under the imperial Regime. They were unable to access to political rights with that of the Christian officials appointed at the district level. For instance, from the nine governors who were assigned as a governor over the district eight of them were Christians who had the Shewan background²⁵⁶. In 1944, the tax collection system was improved. In this year, payment of tax had been raised up to 50, 40 and 15 Birr per *gasha* on cultivated, semi-cultivated and uncultivated lands respectively on the lands that were measured by *qalad*.²⁵⁷

Emperor Haile Sellasie restructured the archaic fiscal system by introducing a new monetary taxation and public expenditure system under the Ministry of Finance. Salaried tax officers

²⁵² Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Dibaba Eebba

²⁵³ Bahru Zewde, A Modern History..., p.191; Dessalegn Rahmeto, *Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia*, Scandinavian Institute of African studies, (Uppsala, 1984) p. 25; Informant: Yaada Qana'a and Teshomee Ballaxaa

²⁵⁴ Land and Agricultural Office of Laalo Qilee District, p. 12

²⁵⁵ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Dagafee Dhaaba

²⁵⁶ Informants: Tashomaa Gamtessa and Efireem Qanasee

²⁵⁷ Bahru Zewde, A History of Modern..., p.192; Donald Crummy..., pp.237-239.

were appointed from the centre to all levels of administration. All collected taxes had to be transferred to the central treasury, leaving nothing to the provinces. The tax reform also curtailed the privileges of the regional nobilities to levy and collect taxes.²⁵⁸.

Obviously, land tenure system in the imperial era exemplified by unlimited power and inequality between property owners and *gabbars*. For instance, in his important work, Bizuwork Zewde indicates that the major role of the *balabbat* was, to preserve security, assist the regional and local governors in collecting taxes and tributes, mobilizing the local people when the central government needed their services and assisted the emperors' land expropriation program in which he seized two-third of the lands in regions. In response, *balabbat* had their lands spared from expropriation.²⁵⁹

Table 4: The Land Tax Rates on Measured Land in Laalo Qilee District

Types of Land	Land Tax Rates from 1942-1944	Land Tax Rates from 1944-1967 per gasha
<i>Lam-meret</i>	15 Birr per <i>gasha</i>	50 Birr per <i>Gasha</i>
<i>Lam-tafmeret</i>	10 Birr per <i>gasha</i>	40 Birr per <i>gasha</i>
<i>Taf-meret</i>	5 Birr per <i>gasha</i>	15 Birr per <i>gasha</i>

Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Dagafee Dhaaba.²⁶⁰

In 1967, there was also another complex land tax proclamation in the district known as the New Agricultural Income Tax. According to this proclamation, any kind of products obtained by peasants from land rented were forced to pay on agricultural products. The proclamation also removed the difference between measured and unmeasured land. This new proclamation was levied on agricultural products without considering the land. The implementation of this

²⁵⁸ Gebrehiwet Tasfai, “*The Practice of Fiscal Federalism in Ethiopia: A Critical assesment 1991-2012 an Institutional*”, (PhD Thesis, Presented to the Faculty of Economoics and Social Sciences, Switzerland, Fribourg University), pp.21-22

²⁵⁹ Zemelak Ayele, “Local Government in Ethiopia: Still an Apparatus of Control Law, Democracy and Development” Volume 15 (2011) doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/1dd.v15i1.7> ISSN: 2077-4907 Doctoral intern with Local Democracy, State, Peace and Human Security Programme Community Law Centre, (University of the Western Cape), p.7

²⁶⁰ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Dagafee Dhaaba

proclamation was generally levied on the product of the harvest, type of crop and the local price of crops. Thus, after 1967, the peasants of Laalo Kile district were forced to pay tax on agricultural products.²⁶¹ The peasants of the district were also forced to pay tax in kind. This type of tax payment was also well known in the district. Accordingly, the tenants of the district began paying to the *melkegna* (landlords) in kinds. In addition, the tenants were forced to pay *asrat* which was mostly paid in kind. The tenants of Laalo Kile district paid this type of taxes to the church. They paid one tenth called *asrat* (1/10) from their products. The kind payments were measured by the traditional measuring materials. In this way, the tenants of the districts who rented land and cultivated paid it in *qunna* (around 15 kg), *Enkib* (50 kg) and *Dawula* (nearly 100 kg) as the local measurement materials.²⁶²

The informants noted that when the *balabbat* came from high authority to his respective *gult*, the *gabbar* prepared warm welcome to that *balabbat*. The *balabbat* took rest and stayed for few days in the house built for him in a very old form of construction in the Laalo Qilee district. In addition, they presented gifts from the best of what they have like goats, sheep, honey, butter and other products. Taxes in Laalo Qilee district was collected by representatives of the *balabbat*. These tax collectors were called *chikashum*. He collected from all productive items of crops that were suitable for the *balabbat* families like bean, chicken, peas, lentils, wheat and other products. The *Chikashum* collect these items of crops and brought to the *balabbat* at the end of harvesting time mainly from *Tahsas* (December). In this way, the *balabbats* and other officials of the imperial period lived in the prosperous life.²⁶³

Each *gabbar* (one who pay taxes) faced different kinds of onerous works (plough, wedding, harvesting) on the some day in the week, build fences, kraal for his cattle; meanwhile *gabbar's* wives and children also have duties to fulfill for wives of *neftegna* such as fetching water, grinding grains, collecting firewood, washing clothes. Generally, womens and childrens of the *gabbar* had household duties for the family of *neftegna*. When the *neftegna* sales his land or give as a gift for some body, the *gabbars* were transferred to the new master.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Laalo Qilee District Finance Office, p.4

²⁶² Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Namaraa Bayyanaa

²⁶³ Informants: Tafarii Tareessaa & Alamu Gabisaa

²⁶⁴ Informants: Dagafee Dhaaba and Namaraa Bayyanaa

There is a high relationship or bond between the upper class and lower classes. For instance, on the top of the hierarchy, there is a central government who controls the fiscal systems. Below them, there were those who gave orders to collect taxes in Wallaga province of Nekemte town. The district governors of Laalo Qilee were accountable to those officials who were above them. Under district governors, there were *balabbats* who give orders to *melkegna* to collect taxes. The *melkegna* in their turn give orders to *Chika shums*. The lowest level is a place where one can find *cisegna* (peasants). *Melkegna*, who was known as *abba lafa* or land lord had several responsibilities like collection of taxes from society, forcing peasants to do *mando* (ploughing the land of the landlord by his own ox), collecting the price of grass and firewood. He was empowered to prevent women not to collect firewood until they pay the price of the firewood. The peasants were not allowed to build houses in a beautiful way and not to plant trees like mango, coffee, Eucalyptus...etc. *Chikashums* who worked under the *melkegna* was a person who ordered the *cisegna* or peasants to pay a tribute. If the peasants refused to pay taxes, he informed to the *balabbats* and detains them. According to informants, the collection of taxes or tribute in the district was operated in the December according to Ethiopian calendar, as it was stated above. This is because; it is a harvesting season.²⁶⁵ When the government intends to collect tribute from local peoples of Laalo Qilee district, in a first place, the governor of the district issued a decree. A person who issued a decree goes through the town on a market day. This person also carries a flag of Ethiopia on his hand. This man was a landlord.²⁶⁶

The governor of the district (*warada gazhi*) stands in front of his office where peoples gathered at one place. Movement of the peoples was not allowed. Those who refused to come together at a place were forced to come to the place by *Nech lebash* (white army). Another service of the *nechlebash* was bringing those peoples who killed others in Laalo Qilee to Nekemte. They were like today's police force. Due to their service, the governor of Laalo Qilee district gave them one *gasha* of land (40 hectares). After everybody comes together, they sat down on the ground to hear the message of the day. The land lord who declared the message, repeated it again by saying “*dhagaa’aa dhageeffadha*”, literally “Here and again here” and said “all of you are required to bring the taxes you used to pay as usual”. What is left then is preparing the amount the used to pay in previous times. The amount of tax varied from individual to individual based on the amount of land he holds. For instance, a person

²⁶⁵ Informants: Kababbaa Ciibsaa & Shifarraa Qana’aa

²⁶⁶ Informants: Dagafee Dhaaba & Ofga’aa Wiirtuu

who holds a large land pays 20 birr who is considered as a rich man. A person who is neither rich nor poor, a middlaman, pays 10 Birr. The third division is those peasants who were poor pays 5 birr. Besides that, a person who is considered as *hikkatee hafataa* (who owns nothing) give corvee labour such as building houses, working on the field, collecting firewoods, grinding grain and the like.²⁶⁷ Those who were under one *balabbat* paid taxes by contributing money based on the amount of land each holds. Since the society was illiterate and literacy is a recent phenomenon in Laalo Qilee and elsewhere in Ethiopia, the way they count money that has to be paid as a tax was something surprise. For instance, to know the contribution required from each tenant for the requested amount of 80 Birr, they counted it as follows. For instance, if the amount needed from Tolosa is 10 Birr, they put 10 corns in front of him. They do that for each tenants and finally count the number of that corn to know wether it is 80 in number or less or more than that amount. If the amount of tax they collected exceeds the amount requested from the government, the rest goes to the land lord's pocket. If it became less than the needed amount, they were required to fix it by dividing the amount left for each members.²⁶⁸

In Laalo Qilee district, the amount of tribute or tax to be paid for the *lam* (fertile) land for one *gasha* was about 76.65. The tax for the *lam-taf* (semi-fertile) is about 43.50. The tribute exacted from the *taf* (uncultivated) land is about 22 Birr. The payers of these taxes were those who were beneficiaries of grass for their cows, firewood and others. All of these payments have no receipt. As informants have noted the payment of irbo looks like the following. A person, who pays 20 Birr in an annual tax, pays 40 Birr, who paid 10 Birr, pays 20 and those who paid 5, pays 10 Birr.²⁶⁹

Land tax in Laalo Qilee was not uniform. Like other parts of Ethiopia, land was classified based on the fertility of the land. Together with the land tax, church tithe, educational tax and health tax were paid by each farmer.²⁷⁰. Between 1941 and 1961, the emperor revised tax laws several times in an effort to increase the amount of state revenue.²⁷¹ Tribute and surplus labour were the major sources of income to strengthen their political power in Ethiopia before

²⁶⁷ Ibid

²⁶⁸ Informants: Yaada Qanaa'aa & Sanbatoo Galatee

²⁶⁹ Ibid

²⁷⁰ Informants: Bluudee Ifaa & Shifaaraa Qana'a

²⁷¹ Desta Roba, "A History of Kofale District 1941-1991", (M.A Thesis, Department of History, Haromaya University, 2013), p.45

and during the 19thc.²⁷² Both extracted from peasants, the tributes were of a diverse nature. The main tribute was the land tax or rent. Its value varied according to the degree of cultivation of the land (cultivated, *lam*; uncultivated, *taf*; and semi-cultivated, *lam-taf*).²⁷³ Later on, the reviewed 1944 Land Tax Proclamation raised the amount of tax. It is the continuation of the 1941 land tax proclamation except the increase in amount of tax and the transfer of church tithe to be paid by land user together with land tax. Later on, in 1947 and 1959 education and health taxes were introduced respectively and increased burden on the tax payers.²⁷⁴

In late 1944, a new decree was issued which raised the tax on measured land to a total of \$ \$Eth.50, 40 and 15 per *gasha* or *lam*, *lam-taf* and *taf* respectively. In theory, the decree of 1944 was to abolish the numerous fees and labor services traditionally imposed on the tiller in a case in point. In practice, however, such labor services continued to be exacted. A proclamation of 1947 further emphasized that the church was exempted from the abolition order. The third decree on land-tax issued in 1966 was apparently designed to eliminate the intermediary role of the *gult*-holder in the surplus appropriation process. All owners of land under *resta gult* and *siso gult* were to pay the land tax directly to the state, instead of to the *gult* holder.²⁷⁵

In the last days of the imperial government, 25% of the rural land in the south was occupied by absentee land lords. The land tax of 1944 divides the land tax rates on the basis of fertility. The same article (4) repealed any other taxes or services given to local land owners and set peasants free of *gult* holder obligations. However, the law was not implemented at the grassroots level and in reality; it doubled the oppressions of the peasants and tenants of the south, where their land had been measured.²⁷⁶

Some *balabbat* or feudal lords also took state lands by forcefully dislocating peasants from state land. This case, is a clear indication about the fact even though the imperial government desperately tried to increase its revenue from rural land, it ended up only with doubling the exploitation of the peasants and increased tenancy.²⁷⁷ Land grants to officials, churches, dietaries and soldiers which started pre-Italian occupation increased tenancy in

²⁷² Bahru Zewde, pp.88-89

²⁷³ Informants: Namaara Bayaana & Baluudee Ifaa

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Bahru Zewde, p.193

²⁷⁶ Proclamation (Proc. No. 70/1944), Land Tax proclamation (in its Sub Article 4)

²⁷⁷ Muradu Abdo Srur, *State Policy and Law in Relation to Land Alienation in Ethiopia*, (PhD Dissertations in Law, School of Law, University of Warwick, 2014), p. 67

post liberation. But the majority of ordinary population was left with small plot of land and others totally reduced to rent paying tenants.²⁷⁸

2.1.7 Tenancy and Its Major Effects in Laalo Qilee District

One of the main features of Minilik's reign was a new land tenure system named the *qalad* or *gasha* system through proclamation. The unit of measurement was *qalad* and the unit of land measured was known as the *gasha maret*. According to the proclamation, land was measured or redistributed on the basis of political, military and religious services to the central government. The *qabiyyee* rights of the indigenous people were wiped out, rendering them legally landless.²⁷⁹

As a result of the introduction of *neftagna gabbar* system, the Oromo of Laalo Qilee reached near to loss all of their cultural, economic, social and political identities. During the Italian occupation (1936-1941) the fascist agents known as *kappo (banda)* did the same thing after the defeated *melkegna-cisegna* system.²⁸⁰ The *gabbar* was obliged to supply provisions, *maten* and *dergo*, for officials and visitors passing through his *woreda*.²⁸¹

Generally, *gabbar* means that pays tribute to a superior person, institution or state, but in its application to the conquered peoples of the south, the term become synonymous with serfdom. Hence the land tenure system that was imposed on the peoples of the south by the conquerors was called *neftegna-gabbar* system.²⁸² The hardship and economic misery caused by the settlers was captured in Oromo *geerarsa* (poems-protest) which was recorded by Allesandro Triulzi.²⁸³

²⁷⁸ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Alamii Gabisaa

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Zegeye Kumera, p.25

²⁸¹ Yasin Mohammed, pp.60-61

²⁸² Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Dagafee Dhaaba

²⁸³ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Motummaa Batuu

From Triulzi's record of *geerarsa* poems protest, one says;

Afaan Oromoo	Gloss
Ijoollee biyyaa keenyaa	Boys of our region,
Maal jennee biyyaa teenyaa	What we have done to our region?
Qoonee gombisaa hi guunee	We farmed and filled the grain store
Dilbiidhaan kooti hi jennee	And we couldn't say "the wealth is ours"
Ajeefne mirgaa fuunne	We killed and brought trophies
Ilaa mirgaa koo hin jennee	And couldn't say "see here is my trophy"
Yaa masaquulli birraa	Oh, Masqallaa of the dry season
Nuuyi aggaguulii jirraa	we live uncertainly (?)
Sareen guumbii hurtee kaa	the dog had broken the grain store
Duubbii gadheen dhuftee kaa	difficult time had already come. ²⁸⁴

From the time of the conquest of Laalo Qilee by the army of Emperor Minilik II, the eviction of the peasants from their land, confiscation of their properties like crops and the imposing of heavy taxes that the peasants could not able to pay were common. The local *balabbats* served as agent for the *neftegna* in exploiting peasants. Moreover, like any other areas of the south and southwestern Ethiopia, the local *balabbats* received rewards from the emperor for their cooperation with the emperor.²⁸⁵

Minilik's colonial establishment in all the Oromo territory was built on and sustained by the labor of Oromo farmers, whose status was reduced to that of *gabbars* (serfs). Since the armed settlers were not paid salaries and did not engage in productive activities, they were given Oromo *gabbars* in lieu of salary and as material property to be owned and used as personal property. Burdensome and exhausting obligations were put on the Oromo *gabbar*, who according to one scholar;

²⁸⁴ Alessandro Triulzi, p.180

²⁸⁵ Informants: Alamu Cawwaqaa & Ayyanaa Ejersoo

*A gabbar had to surrender a portion of the produce of the land to the Landlord as a tribute. The amount varied between a quarter and a third, but it was usually more as the legal ceiling was that it should not be more than three quarters. Besides, he paid a tenth of his total produce for the tithe. He was also expected to provide his landlord with honey, meat, and firewood, dried grass and sundry other items. Labor service was an added burden, he had to grind the land lords share of the grain, transport it to his residence, build his house, maintain his his fences, care for his animals and act as a porter, an escort or a messenger. There was an obligation to present gifts on religious holidays and other social occasions. The multiple exactions imported on the Oromo gebbars meant the loss of considerable portions of the gebbars' production, onerous labor service and manifold other impositions.*²⁸⁶

In addition to the exploitation of the system that caused for shortage of land, the behavior of the local *balabbats* was also very difficult. The considered the peasants just like a property.²⁸⁷ The tenancy rate of the different *kebeles* of Laalo Qilee district was not the same. This is because the more fertile land resulted in high concentration of landlords. The majority of the land owners in the district possessed less than half a hectare. The issue of tenancy was the major problem in the district under study. When the land tenure system was extremely harsh in the district, peasants were migrated from *kebele* to *kebele* or from their district to the nearby districts.²⁸⁸

In this regard, Hussein generalizes the various systems of exploitation imposed on peasants into four as tenancy, sharecropping, eviction and giving labor service (corvee labor) to the landlord. Dislocation or eviction from land was not a threat in north but it was a serious menace to the southern peasants.²⁸⁹ Another major event that affected the south and central provinces in the post occupation was resumption of intensive land measurement. Indeed, some provinces of the south like Wallaga had already seen the impact of land measurement when the land measurement proclamation of 1909-1910 was issued. As Tesema Ta'a clearly indicates, this proclamation led many peasants in Wallaga to lose their land to the central government and increased peasants' grievances against the central government.²⁹⁰

The government controlled the process of forced recruitment of labor through slavery and *neftegna gebbar* system to get adequate cheap wage labor for their agricultural plantations in

²⁸⁶ Tessema Ta'aa, *The Political...*, p.129

²⁸⁷ Informants: Namaaraa Bayaanaa & Alamu Gabisaa

²⁸⁸ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Tashomee Ballaxaa

²⁸⁹ Hussen Jemma, p.4

²⁹⁰ Tesema Ta'a, *The Political...*, pp. 197-198

the horn of Africa.²⁹¹ In Laalo Qilee district and elsewhere in Ethiopia, there existed three major forms of share cropping arrangements classified according to the share of harvest paid to the land owner as rent. In *siso* (one-third) arrangement, the tenant supplied all the inputs, mainly seed, oxen and labor and paid one-third of the harvest to the land owner as a rent. Since the tenant paid one-tenth of the harvest as a land tax known as *asrat*, before sharing the harvest with the land owner, the tenant effectively retained sixty percent of the harvest. In *irbo*, (one-quarter), the rental payment was one-fourth of the harvest after deducting the *asrat*, and so the tenant effectively retained two-thirds of the total harvest. In *ekul* (equal) arrangements, the land owner sometimes supplied some of the inputs, especially oxen and seed, and after paying the *asrat*, the harvest was divided on a fifty-fifty basis. Most of the sharecropping arrangements were verbal and the terms were based on customary practices of each area.²⁹²

In the process of land measurement and privatization policies, one can mention land alienation as best example. Land alienation had adversely affected agricultural areas of the region. It forced most of the people of Laalo Qilee into tenancy, severely reducing their living standard. It also increased hostility of the people towards imperial government and caused the outbreak of conflicts followed by arrests and imprisonment of people for various reasons.²⁹³

Most tenancy agreements were verbal, involving sharecropping agreements known as *irbo* (a quarter), *siso* (one third) and *ekul arash* (half). Parallel with the privatization process, the central tried to increase the revenue from land. The process had begun before 1935, but it was after 1941 that tribute is replaced by tax to increase revenue.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Assefa Jallela, *Fighting Against the Injustices of ...*, p.57

²⁹² M.M Ahmed and eta'l, p.7.

²⁹³ Bahru Zewde, p.238; Tessema Ta'a, *The Basis of Political ...*P.184; Tessema Ta'a, *The Political Economy...*, p... p.37

²⁹⁴ Bahru Zewde, p.192

The objective of the land measurement was to facilitate the mechanism of collecting tributes. Land was concentrated in the hands of powerful individuals throughout Wollega in general and Laalo Kile in particular. Perhaps all this discontent forced peasants to express their emotion as follows:

Afaan Oromoo	Gloss
Hundee reejii yaa balaasa	Oh, the leaves of reeji tree
Abban lafa kunoo hin teessii balbaalasa	The balabbat seats in front of it
Hoofa fuutee naf hin waraantuu fagaarasa	Why you not pick up stick to beat his batack
Abbaa lafa yaa guuguufaa	You, the old land lord
Qooyi ammaan qabee sii sukkuuma	Now, I will beat you
Abbaa lafa yaa duulatti	You, the old land lord
Ammaa sareen afaan sii dhungaati. ²⁹⁵	Oh, the dog will kiss your mouth

The land distribution enabled the Ethiopian soldiers, clergymen, colonial administrators and their Oromo collaborators to exact labor and agricultural products from the Oromo farmers. They were forced to provide food, tribute and tax revenues both in cash and kind.²⁹⁶

The families of the tenants were oppressed by the hands of landlords. Accordingly, the wives of the tenants were frequently suffered from the daily collecting wood. They were carrying out most of the house hold works in the house of the land lord. In this way, cleaning house, fetching water were another major home duties of the tenant's wives.²⁹⁷

The male tenants were highly engaged on the field works. Like their wives, they also give free labour services for the *balabbat*. For instance, ploughing the land of the *balabbats*, cutting grass, repairing fences and construction of houses without payment. The childrens of the tenants were also had responsibilities like keeping the cows of the land lords. It is possible to conclude that, the whole families of the tenants were worked for the landlords. Therefore, the harshness of the tenancy system and the shortage of land were the major problem of the above-mentioned district.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ Informants: Simeessoo Hirphoo & Alamu Gabiisaa

²⁹⁶ Assefa Jalleta, *Fighting Against Injustices...*, p.2

²⁹⁷ Informants: Dagaafee Dhaaba & *Qes* Dheressa Amantee

²⁹⁸ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Tasfaa Kumarraa

According to Bantalem Tsagaye, Certain obligations also imposed on the wives of the peasants; they were forced to fetch water for the wives of the *neftagnas*, forced to feed the horse and a mule which he explained as follows:

“Naftanyaan gaangoo fidee mana gabarii jalaati hidhaa. Gabariin immoo Okkaa itti hamtee ergaa nyaachistee booda, inni immoo dhufee fardaa isaa fudhata. Yommuu fudhatuu funyoodhan mudhii fardaa isa safara. Yoo fardii sun safara jalqabaa yeroo itti kenne hanqatee, fardaa koo huqistee jechuun gabbarii sana adaaaba”.

Translated as Follow

“The *Gabbars* were given horses and mules to feed. The horses and mule’s stomachs were measured in *funyoo* (rope). After a week, the *balabbat* came back and measured the width of his horse or mule. If the size becomes less than the initial measurement, he punished the *balabbat* by saying “you did not feed my horse very well”.²⁹⁹

The majority of the tenants were highly rebellious against the harsh exploitation of the feudal system. However, they were not organized themselves like the peasants of Bale and Gojjam. Despite strict control of the government, however, the government couldn’t stop the resistance on the group and individual basis. They formed different groups and acted against the land lords. All peasants were lived in worsened condition. They were denied fair justice that consequently wishes the radical change in the state structure and policy.³⁰⁰

The land of Guuta Hurcaa in Laalo Kile district was distributed for the following *Ballabats*. A *Balabbat* named Tolosa Gumayi took four hectares, Merdasa Gumay took two hectares, Beekaa Guyyaa took “*sangaa afur*”, meaning that a land that would be ploughed for four days. This is according traditional land measurement of that local society. Accordingly, one hectare is equivalent with a land that would be ploughed for six days. Sheikh Musaa Deentaa (the then governor of Nya’aa *kebele* of Laloo Qilee took “*sangaa afur*”. The other local *balabbat* that shared the land of Guuta Hurcaa was Fidaa Mul’ataa (a local militia of Nya’aa *kebele*). He took “*sangaa sadii*” from the land originally belonged to the above mentioned peasant.³⁰¹ The other peasant who lost his land was Tarafaa Galata. His land around his house was divided for four *balabbats*. The other one is a peasant named Jifaar Shonoo. His land was distributed for a *Balabbats* named Ganati Gangila and Gemechuu Tola. During the reign of

²⁹⁹ Bantalem Tsagaye, “A History of Darimu *warada*, Illu Abba Bor Zone, southwestern Ethiopia, ca. 1889-1991(M.A Thesis, Department of History, Jimma University, 2009), p.39.

³⁰⁰ Informants: Dagaafee Dhaaba & Tasfaa Kumaraa

³⁰¹ Informants: Yaada Qana’aa and Dagaafee Dhaaba

Emperor Haile Sillasié I, a peasant cannot build a house from *qorqorro*. Even, it is not allowed to build the house in a good way from *ciita* which is somewhat similar with the house of the local *Balabbat*. The local residents were also not allowed to cover the wall of their house. In a similar way, they were not allowed to plant trees, especially plants like mango, *Eupycluptus* (bargamoo) and the like. This is because, these *balabbats* considered this action as loss of their *rist*. Beside that Emperor Haile Sellasié I forbid childrens and womens not to go the school for education.³⁰²

Generally, the local peoples were affected in different ways, on one hand, they were confiscated from their indigenous land by the clergies and on the other hand they were obliged to feed the clergies who settled on their land.³⁰³ Peasants encountered different forms of exploitation. In the district under study, they had faced several responsibilities which included feeding the conqueror's soldiers, working for and providing presents the *malkagna* (chief of many hundred men).³⁰⁴

Hussen Jemma, who contributed dozens of works on land tenure studies, noted that contrary to their northern class partners, who by virtue of protection by customary law got a right to control, use and inherit their land, the southern peasants became tenants to a *gult* holder and became insecure with constant fear of eviction from the private land on which they just began working on. As subjects with no social status, the southern peasants became excessively dependent on the land of land lords and they were dislocated in various pretexts even by absentee private land owner³⁰⁵.

The rate of land alienation progressively increased during the reign of Emperor Haile Sellasié I, because after 1941 land grants and transfer of *Madeira* land into private was started.³⁰⁶

In Laalo Qilee district and elsewhere in southern region, land confiscation lead to the rise or introduction of tenancy. So, conquest was seen as a land mark event on the spread of tenancy and other problem in the region.³⁰⁷

³⁰² Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Balludee Ifaa

³⁰³ Informants: *Qes* Dheresaa Amantee

³⁰⁴ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa Dagafee Dhaaba

³⁰⁵ Hussen Jemma, pp. 3-6

³⁰⁶ Bizuwork Zewde, "Land Grant and Tenancy: A Case Study of Arsi", *In Papers of 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vo.1, (Michigan State University,1994), p.534; *Negarit Gazeta*, 21/1955

³⁰⁷ Informants: Ayyana Ejersoo & Motumma Baatuu

Land alienation and confiscation forced most of Oromo into tenancy and dramatically reduced their standard of living. It also had a serious negative impact on the cooperative traditions of the Oromo owing to the deteriorating socio-economic and political conditions following the land proclamation. The Oromo tenants were forced to pay about three fourth of their produce to the *neftegna* settlers and the new land lords who also the administration in Oromo areas. They were obliged to give labor services to their overlords and pay taxes to the state which was often burdensome and unbearable. Although the cooperative traditions continued, gradually a majority of the Oromo peasants lost incentives to work as hard they used to do before the conquest and here subjected to poverty and destitution.³⁰⁸

In Laalo district, the high rate of tenancy was the result of the confiscation of local people from their customary land by nobility, the church, the soldiers, civil servants, local *balabbats* and other privileged individuals through land grant. Additionally, land sale, land measurement, re-measurement and imposition of high tax methods were also increased tenancy in the district. These were largely practiced in the regions during the restored imperial rule, which required payment to be in cash.³⁰⁹

Most of the time, the agreement between the landlord and tenants was verbal and the amount of taxes varied from areas to areas. On the basis of fertility of the soil and local tradition, the payment could be *irbo* (1/4), *siso* (1/3), *equl* (1/2). Beside those payments, tenants were required to pay *asrat* (1/10).³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Tessema Ta'a, *Being and Becoming...*, p.207

³⁰⁹ Donald Crummy, p.238.

³¹⁰ Nuru Yimam, *A History of Geera District...*, p.23

Table 5: Government Land Grant (1946-1956) in gashas

No	Category of Grants	Date of amount granted	Amount granted per person
1	Patriots and exiles from Italian occupation	Hamile/16, 1934 E.C (July, 1942)	One gasha or qalad
2	Field work in the study area to collect data	Hamile/16, 1936 E.C (July, 1944)	One gasha or qalad
3	Pre-war soldiers and public servants	Tekemt/23 E.C 1945 (October, 1952)	Two gasha or qalad
4	All <i>maderiya</i> holders	Tekemt/27, 1951 E.C (November, 1958)	Two gasha or qalad
5	Members of armed forces and police and civil servants	Tekemt, 27, 1957 E.C (November, 1964) (October, 1952)	Two gasha or qalad
6	Landless and unemployed Ethiopians	Tekemt/23, 1945 (October, 1952)	One half gasha or qalad
7	H.I.M Special grants for meritorious services to the government	Article 31 (d) of revised constitution of 1955	Varying amounts

Sources: Mohammed Hassan, “The evolution of,” p.140

The land grant emphasized the political rather than the economic use of the land in Ethiopia. The priority was given to the government workers rather than the majority peasants. The amount of land that each grantees received depended on their rank³¹¹.

2.1.8 The Resistance of the Local Peoples

2.1.8.1 The Struggle of Guuta Huurca Donjaa

The pattern of historical development in early twentieth century Qellem points to some mechanisms as collective (petitions, court litigations, banditry), and some as individual

³¹¹ John Cohen and Dov Weillreb, *Land and Peasant in Imperial Ethiopia: The Social Background to a Revolution* (Addis Ababa, 1975), pp.28-61, 71-93

(forcing all of the family to obediently serve the *mälkägna*, serving the *mälkägna* as informers against one's own villagers, working for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church). Some are both (individual and mass out migration), while others relate to marginal opportunities created by regional commerce (employment as porters in Sayyoo-Gambella trade)³¹². Internal dynamics created warrior groups and individuals who vied for political supremacy and subsequently ravaged areas and their peoples, both as nobles and *shifita*. A hundred years later, powerful brigands robbed in troops, preying unwary travelers and on occasions paying tribute to the emperor. By the nineteenth century, a period of *sheftenat*, an Amharic term that embraces concepts of both rebellion and banditry could even raise prominent nobles to the imperial throne, a process demonstrated by Tewodros II and Yohannis I.³¹³

Before Ethiopia's incorporation into the capitalist world economy in the early 20thc, banditry was a feature of essentially feudal societies.³¹⁴

All banditry embraces rebellion against higher authority.³¹⁵ Where there was a peasant resistance, it was against predatory laws.³¹⁶ If *shifita* was a feature of Abyssinian society, the northern highlands had no historical monopoly over banditry within the borders of what becomes the modern Ethiopian state. In other parts of Ethiopia, there were bandits long before Minilik annexed these vast to the empire of Ethiopia in the late 1800's. Among the factors which made for their appearance in any given part of the south before then were the nature of pre-conquest social formations, cultural and environmental distinctions and regional patterns of trade.³¹⁷

After Minilik's military expeditions, the south a new, a profoundly different phase in its historical development, now subject to an authoritarian imperial state and to settler elite that was more alien. The southern peasants faced loss of power and status, deprivation of land use rights and high levels of surplus extraction. As demands for their labour and land mounted, and the settler regime proved repressive, even rapacious, many indigenous turned to banditry as a mode of resistance.³¹⁸ The policy of land measurement gave rise to the emergence of political dissidents and *shifitas* (banditry) in the area. Assefa Tefera argued that the concept of

³¹² James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance* (London: Yale University Press, 1985), 290.

³¹³ Informants: Baludee Ifaa & Yaada Qana'aa

³¹⁴ Ibid

³¹⁵ Informants: Dagafee Dhabaa and Alami Gabisaa

³¹⁶ Informants: Ayyanaa Ejersoo & Shumii Barakaa

³¹⁷ Informants: Qes Dheressa Amantee & Tashomee Ballaxaa

³¹⁸ Ibid

shifita (bandit) has a historical root in resistance against cultural domination, economic exploitation, and political exclusion different parts of Ethiopia.³¹⁹ As it is known, there is a struggle of peoples in group and individually against the land tenure systems and policy in different parts of Ethiopian empire at different times. Their forms of struggle are not the same in different areas of Ethiopia.³²⁰

The peoples of the district under study expressed their dissatisfaction in different ways. For instance, blocking the main road as an obstacle for free movement in which the government could not work effectively in the area. They organized themselves in to a group, who were small and large in number and become bandits (*shifitas*) by being living in the forest. Some of them struggled against the repressive government on individual basis. The other way through which the local peoples of Laalo Qilee expressed their dissatisfaction is through an appeal to a high court by accusing a balabat on several occasions.³²¹

A man named *obboo* Guuta Hurca Donja is one among those who joined the forest to struggle against the lord-serf system in Laalo Kile district. He lived in a *kebele* called Moddo (Moddo *qalad*). He belongs to the Makko Billi's family lineage. For instance, Bajoosa, Makkoo, Billi, Hooraa, Kuufama, Utuubo, Urgoo, Moddoo, Uddoo, Deentaa, Laaloo, Duullacha, Sayyoo, Maccaa. He married a woman called *Aadde* Dhabe Darsaa. He was the second son next to his eldest brother, Eerga Huurcaa. Gabisa Hurcaa and Jirru Hurcaa were the third and fourth sons respectively. During the reign of Emperor Haile Sillasia, I, when an order came to take his land from him, he refused to transfer the land to them. Instead, he began the struggle at a place called Golole in Moddo.³²²

³¹⁹ Assefa Tefera, "Ethnography of Resistance Poetics: Power and Authority in Salale Oromo Folklore", (PhD.Dissertation, Folklore, Indiana University,2015), p.318

³²⁰ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Yaada Qana'aa

³²¹ Informants: Tashomee Ballaxaa and Dagaafee Dhaaba

³²² Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Dagaafee Dhaaba

By opposing the ongoing situation, Guuta forwarded *geerarsa* poem-song protest by saying;

Afaan Oromo	Gloss
Koloole yaa fardaa Henna	Koloolee, the horse of henna
Golooleen duruu keenyaa	Goloolee belongs to us
Botooron gadiisa hin jeetu?	Why you did not say Botoroo has a shadow
Sheereekoo, Moddoo koo	Why you did not say my sheeree, my
Uddoo koo, Deenta koo, Laaloo koon	Uddoo, my Deenta, my Laaloo, make
Caalchisaahinjeetuu?	Great them than others? ³²³

This land was taken from his family by a *balabbat* (local landlord) serving emperor Haile Sillasie I called Asires Abbay. After taking the land of Moddo kebele of Laalo Kile district that belongs to him, Asires sing a song by saying;

Afaan Oromo	Gloss
Abbaaya kan keenyaa	Abbaya belongs to us
Siraaseen ilmaa keenya	Sirase is our son
Gadi qabneeraa Gallaa	We sat down over the Galla
Gad jallaa keenyaa	Who were living below us. ³²⁴

Obboo Guuta Huurcaa entered the forest and began his struggle not to give his land to the balabats by being a group of twelve individuals. These were four individuals from Laalo Kile district including him, four from Sadi Gumayi (present day Harro Sabbu district) and the other four from Sayyoo Baddaa. The other three individuals from Laaloo Kile district were, Guutuu Huurcaa (his brother), Korsaa Harboo and Wayyeessa Bukkoo (belongs to Liban clan of Tulama confederacy) that came from Shewa and lived in the district under study. He was with those who joined the forest for the same purpose from the nearby districts. After two years of struggle in a forest, Guuta Hurcaa came in to conflict with the government soldiers.³²⁵ After exchanging several shots in a forest, Guuta Hurcaa was shot by two bullets.

³²³ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Dagafee Dhaaba

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Dagafee Dhaaba

One on his right leg and the other on his left chest by a Diliftori (a gun with a round head). Guuta Hurcaa shot three government militia while he himself was shot and being sleep on the floor. Among those shot by him, one said that;

Afaan Oromo	Gloss
Gaafa Guutan fookkoree	When Guuta fookkoree
Ani baaqaan abbalee	I intend to run
Ol kaachuuf naadheen keessaa	To run to the highland, I am in womens
Baqaachuuf bakkee keessaa	To run in another way, it was a barren land
Yaa waaq maaliif nan teessaa?	God, why not you not kill me?. ³²⁶

Waayeesaa Bukkoo (friend of Guuta) arrived and saw Guutaa while he was shot and slept on the floor and his enemy running. Then, Wayyeesaa said the following song poem to give morale for Guuta Hurcaa.

Afaan Oromo	Gloss
Jaajjabatuu akka wayyaa daaraa	You, as strong as clothes immersed in ashes
Gangaalatuu akka dhagaa gaaraa	You, as a rolling stone from mountain
Dhuufee buukkessaa buukkoo	I, bukkeessa bukkoo is here
Bukkeesite Eessa dhaqxaa?	Where you go after shoting him? . ³²⁷

He began shooting those fighters in which he himself was wounded which finally leds him to death. Guuta then become *naafa* (disable man to walk). He struggled for six years by being in the forest with his fellows. After returning back to his home, he continued his resistance by refusing paying unnecessary taxes. Since getting treatment at that time is so difficult, a person called Baguude tied his chest. He recovered from this wound after 12 years. When the tax collectors came and asked him to pay a tribute, he replied by saying " I will not pay the tribute, because you took our land, broken our bones and make us to bleed". Those tax collectors asked him to leave the land of Moddo. Then, Guuta asked them to give him additional years for preparation to descend. Because he told them that he is *naafa* and his

³²⁶ Informants: *Qes* Dheressa Amantee and Teshomee Ballaxaa

³²⁷ Ibid.

body is not recovered well yet. Based on this, they give him three years which he considered not enough time. Then, three years added which become six in total. After the end of the first three years, he began preparation for searching where to settle. He went to Nya'aa (one *kebele* of Laalo Kile district) and got a land on which he is about to settle. That was a *qalad* that belongs to Aadde Ramate Jamboo on arada of Suqutu Waqo around Qilxuu Jawwee³²⁸.

The local *balabbats* gave Guuta six years to move from the *qalad* he resides to another *qalad* called Nya'aa. When the six years given for him was ended, he was ready to leave the land of Moddo.

At this place, on the Nya'aa *qalad*, he continued his struggle against the land tenure system employed by the government. After the completion of the given time, he moved to that *kebele* with 80 cows, many cattles, donkeys and three weapons. After his settlement, he entered into a contract (a contract which forbids him not to pay irbo, siso, not to plough a land for the land lord, not to pay the price of firewood. In general, he paid 30 birr per a year. He then forwarded the following song-poem to which shows his reusal not to pay various taxes.

Afaan Oromo

Siraasee gabaree

Simees hin gabbaruu

Gibiraa nan kaffalla

Ani irboo hin kaffaluu

Gloss

I paid a tribute for Siraasee

I will not pay for Simee

I will pay a tribute

But, not irboo.³²⁹

His family is still living on the *kebele* of Nya'aa because of the previous displacement made during the reign of Emperor Haile Sellasie I.³³⁰

2.1.8.2 The Struggle of Farajaa Makkoo

There are so many individuals who refused paying taxes to the imperial regime and *Derg* in Laalo Kile district. Among them, a peasant named Faraja Makkoo who lived in a *kebele* called Marfoo in Laalo Kile was one. The *qalad* on which he settled belongs to a *balabbat* named *Mamire Mokonnon Zeleke*. When this *balabbat* ordered him to pay him *irboo*, to give *mando* (corvee labour), to pay a price of grass and firewoods, he replied that "I will pay only the tribute, but not the rest, because land belongs to God". Then this *balabbat* accused him first at the *kebele* court at Daale Sadii when Laalo itself was one *kebele* of that district. They

³²⁸ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Dagafee Dhaaba

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

went up to the extent of Nekemte (capital of Wollega). In order to reach Nekemte, this *balabbat* used horse up to Gimbi and then goes to Nekemte by a car. But, Faraja Makkoo goes up to Nekemte on bare foot for five years. Finally, that *balabbat* decided to go to the house of Faraja Makkoo with police, his childrens and relatives to take all his his property including cattles. When they tried to take his cows, the family of Faraja Makkoo and his neighbours expelled the soldiers and his family after beating them. However, he was again accused because of what he did and detained in Dembi Dollo town (capital of kellem Wollega zone). When five months left to finish the terms of imprisonment, they poisoned him and he was died and buried in Dembi Dollo.³³¹

³³¹ Informant: Dagafee Dhabaa & Alamii Cawwaqaa

CHAPTER THREE

LAALO UNDER THE DERG REGIME (1974-1991)

3.1. Socio-Economic and Political reforms introduced by the Derg regime(1974-1991)

3.1.1. Rural and Urban Land Reforms

The provisional government was established on September 12, 1974 by the *Derg*. Immediately after its occupation of power, the military regime made some reforms including the nationalization of all rural and urban lands.³³² Land proclamation was declared on March 31, 1975.³³³ According to the 1975 declaration, all rural land was the collective property of the Ethiopian people, with the exception of large-scale private farms, which in terms of the law, the government could run. All private owned rural land was to be distributed to people who were willing to cultivate their holdings personally.³³⁴ Many of the southern farmers who had been dispossessed got their land back in what might be called a radical land reform³³⁵. The declaration allowed land less peasants to have sufficient lands from 2-10 hectares depend on peasant's household members and the fertility of the land.³³⁶ Land proclamation of the *Derg* was regarded as affirmative step to the Oromo people who had been threatened as tenants under the hereditary rule of Solomonic dynasty since the beginning of the 19th century.³³⁷

The Laalo informants explain that, at the beginning, most of the *Derg's* policies had been welcomed by the Laalo of Qilee. The land proclamation of March 31, 1975 was considered as the major development for the tenants. Several *gasha* of lands previously controlled by landlords were expropriated and distributed to peasants in accordance to the declaration. The life of tenancy was abolished and peasants began to work on their own private land

³³² Girmay, *Ke Derg Mahider*, P. 205

³³³ Kifilu, *Itiyophiya Hoi*. (O! Ethiopia'), pp. 278-279

³³⁴ Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1991*(London, 1990), p.152

³³⁵ Informants: Baludee Ifaa and Alamii Gabisaa

³³⁶ Ke Kolonel Mangistu Haile Maryam, *Tigilachin: Ye Itiyophiya Hizbi Abiyotawi Ye Tigil Tarik Qitsi No.1*. (Addis Ababa. 2004), p.280

³³⁷ Tesema Ta'a, *The place of the Oromo in Ethiopian History...*, P.7

As per to the Urban Land Proclamation of July 26, 1975 the *kebele* (Urban Dwellers Association) was founded. The *kebele* formed the basic unit of administrative structure under the Derg military regime and carry out political and development functions. There were other administrative structures that extended to the qabale level. Such as the judicial branch known as *ferd shengo* as well as the *milisha* as the executive branch of peace keeping force.³³⁸

During the reign of Derg, peasants were organized in to corporations called “*Amirach*” in Amharic terms which means “working together” organization. Derg introduced this policy because it was believed that surplus production would be achieved through this working together than ploughing land on individual basis. As my key informant stated, this peasant associations at Laalo Qilee level was built by officials serving in ruling party. Some peoples joined it without their interest. The issue of land ownership, which had orchestrated in early 1970s into a motto as „Land to the Tiller!!“ by the Marxist oriented radical student movement, was undisputedly one of the central questions of the revolution and it was this same revolution that brought the Provisional Military Administration council (PMAC commonly known as the *Dergue*) to the center stage politics to manipulate the whole measured and they remained unaffected (continue with old or traditional low rates). A tenant was a peasant who worked on “land owners” land on the basis of various sharecropping agreement. When the value of land increased following wide spread of commercial farms, the “land owner” totally evicted and made some of them destitute affairs of the country.³³⁹

It had to take this sensitive issue as priority to be addressed soon. Therefore, within a year after its seizure of power in 1974, the *Dergue* or the PMAC issued a Land Nationalization Proclamation (Proclamation 31/1975). It was a redistributive land legislation that brought about land deconcentration which brought the rural land under state control with version of people’s ownership of land.³⁴⁰

By sweeping away the entrenched landlord-based land tenure as well as private ownership of land, the Land Reform Proclamation nationalized all rural land and ownership right which was effectively entrusted to the state. Feudal land ownership and tenancy as a system was formally abolished. Accordingly, every family was allowed to have a plot of farm land not larger than 10 hectares and it prohibited employing workers on a farm. The proclamation also

³³⁸ Eshetu Chole and Mokonnen Manyazewal, The Macroeconomic Performance of the Ethiopian Economy 1974-1990”, in *the Ethiopian Economy: Structure and Policy Issues*, (Addis Ababa. 1992), p.9

³³⁹ Bahiru Zewdie, A History of Modern..., p. 192

³⁴⁰ Muradu Abdo Srur, State Policy and Law in Relation to Land Alienation in Ethiopia, (PhD Dissertations in Law, School of Law, University of Warwick, 2014), p. 67

prohibited transfer of land in any form (lease, sale and mortgage) except for qualified bequeathing. Thus, the 1975 land reform transferred only usufruct rights to the rural peasantry. In addition to this, the law allowed peasants to organize themselves into peasant associations with one *kebele* for every 800 hectares. Each peasant association headed by executive committees was responsible for enforcement of the new proclamation including administration of land.³⁴¹ The *Dergue* (1974-1991) justified and associated the reason for the land reform program to two principles. One was as a remedy to historical justice and to overcome the exploitative character of imperial agrarian relations and the second was to bring social justice by providing each farm family with equal access to cultivation land according to their needs. In principle, the reform brought a uniform land tenure system in the whole of the country and initially it enabled to secure support from the rural society.³⁴²

In 1966, Derg confiscated land of the landlords and distributed it for the landless peasants who were victims of the land distribution policy of Emperor Haile Sillasié I for soldiers, nobility, church and the like. When Derg declared that, the distribution of land looks like the following. For instance, a recently born child (*muccaa buttaa nyaate*) took around half of hectare. According to local land measurement, it is about "lafa sanga afur", meaning that a land that would be ploughed for four days. But, his family (father and mother) took one hectare each. One hectare means "lafa sanga ja'a", meaning a land that would be ploughed for six days according to the then local land measurement in Laalo Qilee district.³⁴³ This declaration was followed by eviction of landlords and *Abba Qoros* from the land they formerly hold and the landless peasants of Laalo Qilee district began to retake the land they lost during the reign of Emperor Haile Sillasié I. As it was already stated in Chapter two, the rights of citizens in some areas were not respected. Unlike the reign of Emperor Haile Sillasié, the *Derg* regime has some positive reforms. For instance, a peasant can build a house with different structure and in a beautiful way. He can also plant trees in his garden and elsewhere. The rights of childrens and womens for education were fully respected in Laalo Kile district.³⁴⁴

Peasants became land owners and obtained complete right over their lands. The land reform of *Derg* banned the payment of rent and feudal dues and developed the status of the tenants to

³⁴¹ Abebe D. Beyene et al, "Contract Duration under Incomplete Land Ownership Rights, /n.p/, 2012 pp. 4-5.

³⁴² Wibke Crewett et al, p. 12

³⁴³ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Motumma Baatuu

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

that of an owner of all his produce³⁴⁵. Regarding urban land reform, the military regime also made some reforms in urban lands. The declaration on urban land and rentable houses (*tirfi betoch*) were publicized on 19, July 1975³⁴⁶. In Laalo Qilee district, the childrens of those peasants who lost their land during the reign of Emperor Haile Sillasié become educated well during the reign of Derg. They began to struggle through accusation and by other means to retake their family's land and houses. In Laalo Qilee town, they retake the house through “*qulfii kutanii galuu*”, meaning that “retaking through breaking keys” which is a popular way in which residents of Laalo Kile town retake their former houses lost during the reign of Emperor Haile Sellasié I.³⁴⁷

Rentable houses and apartments were monopolized by the *Derg*.³⁴⁸ On August 7, 1975 all urban land and extra houses would become the property of government. It allowed a person or a family to own one dwelling house. Extra homes in the towns were also taken from feudal lords and allocated to the poor people in Laalo Kile district.³⁴⁹ The *Derg* regime formed the organization of rural and urban population into cooperatives just to facilitate its administrative control³⁵⁰. According to Laalo informants, *Derg* organized Laalo rural and urban communities into different divisions. It established a group of ten, a group of fifty, a group of hundred, etc and appointed their leaders in the titles of, head of ten, head of fifty and head of hundred respectively. With this method *Derg* adopted active supervision and active communication at the root level. They were encouraged to work together cooperatively. They were engaged in crop gathering campaign (*mirt zemecha*), building houses, etc.³⁵¹

Before 1974, the Ethiopian state and ruling elites depended on a mode of production based on land and tribute from land. The period from mid-19thc to the restoration of Haile Sillasié I in 1941, social and economic relations in much of southern Ethiopia, notably in the south west, corresponded to a feudal mode of production.³⁵²

3.1.2 Land redistribution and Its Policy

Following the popular revolution of 1974, the *Derg* made a great deal of reforms like land reform, urban reform, education and so many other reforms. However, the period was

³⁴⁵ Tesema Ta'a, “Being and Becoming Oromo...,” P. 161

³⁴⁶ Girmay, Ke Derg Mahider, P. 205

³⁴⁷ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Tashomee Ballaxaa

³⁴⁸ Asafa Jaleta, Oromia and Ethiopia..., p. 141

³⁴⁹ Andargachew Tiruneh, p.103.

³⁵⁰ Asafa Jalleta, Oromia and Ethiopia..., P.139

³⁵¹ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Tahomee Ballaxaa

³⁵² Ibid.

dominantly characterized by, red terror (endless internal and external wars, chaos). This in turn resulted in the radical decline in human population that ever seen before and the destruction on other natural and artificial wealth in Laalo Kile district and elsewhere in Ethiopia³⁵³. For seventeen years, the Oromo suffered under a brutal military dictatorship. Hundreds of thousands of Oromo farmers lost their lives between 1974-1991.³⁵⁴

3.1.3 Resettlement

In mid-1980's, *Derg* started a program of resettling three million northerners in the south, mainly in Oromia. The government's massive schemes of villagization of peasants, collectivization of their produce and resettlement of northern farmers in the south.³⁵⁵ Resettlement and villagization programs in Ethiopia have been implemented in the southern regions since the late 19th and 20th centuries. It has been regarded as a solution to the serious hunger and shortage of land.³⁵⁶

As a means to resolve the problem of drought and famine that happened mainly in northern part of Ethiopia, *Derg* introduced the resettlement program in different provinces of the Oromia region. As part of the Wollega province, Laalo Qilee became the storage of northern settlers. The Walloyye settlement was made in the present *kebeles* of Bille Buba, Marfoo and Bille Kella. The indigenous inhabitants were directed to build homes and provide necessary provisions to all of the new comers separately. At the beginning, Laalo community was forced to provide all of the basic needs to the new settlers.³⁵⁷ In order to realise its model of society, the *Dergue* used quick, and often very cruel, methods to terrorise the peasants and solicit their obedience. Its cadres set fire on the houses of peasants who refused to move from their homes, and shot leaders who were vocal in their opposition to villagization. Thus, many homes in Laalo Kile district were burned during the reign of *Dergue*.³⁵⁸

Since the 1980s, Ethiopia has been a major recipient of emergency food and cash assistance from the international community. Access to land is a critical issue for millions of farm households in which Laalo Kile district belongs.³⁵⁹ The resettlement program had negative effects on the lives of the indigenous populations and the environment wherever it was

³⁵³ Gafarso Fayeera, p.35; Informants: Dagafee Dhaaba and Teshomee Ballaxaa

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Informants: Alamii Gabiisa & Yaada Qana'aa

³⁵⁶ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Alamu Gabisaa

³⁵⁷ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Alamii Cawwaqaa

³⁵⁸ Mekuria Bulcha, p.33

³⁵⁹ USAID, Ethiopia: Property Rights and Resource Governance, An Overview of a Country Profile, p.1; Informants: Dibaba Eebba and Shumii Barakaa

located.³⁶⁰ The *Derg* made the resettlement program as an effective weapon to suppress, explore and control the Oromo population³⁶¹. Most of the resettlement schemes have been established in the western and south western part of Ethiopia. In 1980s, the resettlement plan was selectively implemented in the areas that shelter the opponents of the regime, especially in Laalo Qilee district.³⁶² According to Lionel Cliffe; in the absence of promised services, *Derg's* resettlement program was resulted in heavy human and material costs some died on the way many more of disease³⁶³.

As Laalo informants have noted, *Derg* implemented extensive resettlement plan in the Laalo of Kile. *Derg's* settlement plan was started following the emergence of the Wallo famine. During the rule of Kumarra Atomsa (1985-1987) over the district of Laalo, famine was very strong in the northern part of Ethiopia due to the occurrence of drought. This resulted in the loss of lives of many peoples.³⁶⁴

However, permanent settlement was not made by all of the Wallo people that came to the district of Laalo Qilee. Their settlement did not last long because of several factors including their inability to adapt into new weather condition, lack of the supply of health care and other social services. Some lost their lives and many of them saved themselves by migrating into neighboring territories. But, a few of them are still living in Laalo Qilee.³⁶⁵

3.1.4 Villagization

In July, 1985, the *Derg* declared villagization to move rural households from dispersed settlements to compact “villages” arranged in grid patterns as one means to increase agricultural productivity through formation & expansion of advanced communal cooperatives. Proclamation No. 138 of 1978, provided for the establishment of Cooperative Society. In its subsequent publications and media programs, the government declared that villagizations would also spread rural development by making farm households easier to

³⁶⁰ Mekuria Bulcha, p.43

³⁶¹ Gada, p.101

³⁶² Richard Pankhurst, Peoples, space and State: Migration, Resettlement and Displacement in Ethiopia, P.193; Informants: Fiida Tokkii and Taddasaa Cawwaqaa

³⁶³ Lionel Cliffe, *International and Ethiopian Resettlement Experiences: People, space and State*, Migration, Resettlement and Desplacement in Ethiopia, ed. Alula Pankhurst and Francois Prioud (Addis Ababa, 2004), p.193.

³⁶⁴ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Fiida Tokkii

³⁶⁵ Informants: Dagaafee Dhabaa and Mitikku Daafaa

reach by public health, water, electricity, and other social services and infrastructure which is applicable in Laalo Qilee district of the present day Kellem Wollega zone.³⁶⁶

Laalo of Qilee was ordered to be gathered into specific areas and to form new and specific villages.³⁶⁷ Limited and specific time was given to the Laalo peasants to shift their home into the newly assigned centers. They had lived scatterly in various villages on their own fertile lands before the declaration of Villagization. Some had many different resources in their garden like bee's hive, cattle homes just before the emergence of *Derg's* policy of villagization. The *Derg* failed to put into consideration the difficulty of accomplishing its policy, and forcefully ordered the peasants to leave their early permanent villages.³⁶⁸

The direction and the punishment against the disobediences were so frightened that, the peasants began to settle in the new centers after destructing their early gardens. *Derg's* local chiefs also destructed the house of some peasants those who failed to accomplish their commitment at the time. The new settlement that made in the specific villages left without any significance to the Laalo community. The many *Dergue's* promises were left without any fruit.³⁶⁹

As it was already stated above, *Derg* declared the formation of cooperative society at various provinces of the empire. Thus, the villagization process began in Laalo Qilee district on November 16, 1976. Thenafter, *Derg* began creation of new roads to the place *Derg* considered suitable place for settlement. Based on that, in 1977 the society of Laalo Kile district began settling on the place prepared for settlement. For instance, the selected settlement places were the following. From Nya'aa *kebele*, the *qalad* of *obbo* Tola Doora was selected. Those who settled on his *qalad* came from the *qalad* of Waddessa of Tayisaa Libaan. It was named "first zone" which stretches from a place called Sarraa up to the *qalad* of *obbo* Tola Doora called Harroo. The other one is that society that went and settled on the *qalad* of Ramate Yamboo. They came from their former residence called "laga *Dabasee*" which includes the *qalad* of Bulguu Tulluu, Hambisa Guyyaa and *obbo* Wolde Manneen. The area they settled were called "second zone". The "third zone" were those society displaced from the *qalad* of *obbo* Billee Tulli and settled on the *qalad* of *obbo* Adinoo Liiban. Peoples stayed and lived in these places until 1983. But, the process of returning back to their former

³⁶⁶ James C. MCcan, p.253; Informants: Mitikkuu Dafaa and Tafarii Tareesaa

³⁶⁷ Gada, pp. 105-107

³⁶⁸ Informants: Dagaafee Dhabaa & Ayyana Ejersoo

³⁶⁹ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Faxxanee Basiraa

place started in 1982.³⁷⁰ The *Derg* launched the policy of villagization and resettlement plans in Oromia to lead the Oromo security villages as means of producing vast fertile areas to new settlers. *Derg* employed his policy of villagization in Laalo of Kile forcefully. In the name of his promise to provide several social services like clean water supply, electricity, health care and the like the.³⁷¹

3.1.5 The Formation of Peasant Associations

The Derg Regime on 4 March 1975, the “Provisional Military Administrative Council” – also known as the *Derg*, after it had overthrown the imperial regime of Haile Selassie, announced an agrarian reform program known as Proclamation No. 31/1975 “Proclamation to Provide for the Public Ownership of Rural Lands.” This proclamation declared all rural land to be the property of the state without any compensation to previous right holders and prohibited all tenancy relations³⁷². Based on this, the landless peasants of Laalo Kile district returned back to their land they formerly hold. After this declaration, the peasants of the district took their land from *balabbats*.³⁷³

The Proclamation provided the legal basis for the distribution of usufruct rights to a large number of rural families who had been working under exploitative tenancy contracts for a small group of landlords. The reform hence implemented the “land to the tiller” approach that was popular in the 1970s.³⁷⁴ The *Derg* justified the land reform program on two principles: The first one was historical justice to overcome the exploitative character of imperial agrarian relations and the other one was providing each farm family with equal access to cultivation land according to their needs. Farmers were not allowed to transfer their usufruct rights by sale, mortgage or lease in Laalo Kile district as it was everywhere in the empire of Ethiopia.³⁷⁵ The plot size per family was restricted to a maximum of 10 hectares, and the use of hired agricultural labor was prohibited in Laalo Qilee district. The reform was the first uniform tenure system imposed up on Ethiopia as a whole.³⁷⁶

The state thereby effectively abolished the remains of traditional institutions of *rist* and *gult* systems in Laalo Qilee district and elsewhere as soon as it came to power, and took over the control to distribute access to land through Peasant Associations (PA). Membership in

³⁷⁰ Informants: Yaada Qana’aa and Fiidaa Tokkii

³⁷¹ Asafa Jaleta, *Oromia and Ethiopia...*, p.142

³⁷² FDRE constitution, Article 3

³⁷³ Informants: Baluude Ifaa & Faxxanee Basiraa

³⁷⁴ Informants: Yaada Qana’aa & Ayyanaa Ejersoo

³⁷⁵ Informants: Shumii Barakaa and Fiida Tokkii

³⁷⁶ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Motumma Baatu

Peasant Associations was established as the central element of the state's rural bureaucracy and became obligatory for all farmers in Laalo Qilee district. But, some peasants in Laalo Kile refused to be the member of the association. This is because; they believed that it resulted in the eviction of some of them from their land.³⁷⁷

The formation of peasant associations at the district level was one of the most important features of the land reform. The peasant association was gained legal recognition in the land reform proclamation No. 71 of 1975. Here the major goal of the introduction of peasant association was to monopolize the rural area of the country. Accordingly, the reform was established the numbers of peasant association in the Laalo Kile district. The main objective of the peasant association was also distributing the land among members.³⁷⁸

The leadership of the Peasant Associations was entitled to expropriate land from the landholders and distribute it equally among its members, which made the collectivity of the members of the Peasant Association proprietors of the land. In the initial phase of the reform, especially in the South, a considerable proportion of the rural peasantry supported land redistribution. But, later on it faced opposition in Laalo Kile district as it was stated above. Most of the redistribution seems to have been completed as early as 1976.³⁷⁹

In case of the association, it was not allowed to move from one kebele to another since that peasant was a member of the peasant association of one particular *kebele*. Thus, many Peasant Associations in the district gradually faced scarcity of land to be distributed to new members. The scale and frequency of redistribution differed in the various *kebeles* of the district. Redistribution occurred frequently in some densely populated areas due to fertility of the land, but in other localities, the Peasant Association leadership allocated the land only once during the initial distribution of 1975-1976. Towards the end of the 1970s, the Derg intensified the collectivization program with the promotion of Agricultural Producer Cooperatives (APC) and the establishment of large-scale state farms. The head of the cooperatives automatically became the head of the Peasant Association and thereby could exert substantial political control and power over all association members. Officially, peasants should enter APCs at their free will. But, my key informants stated that there were occasions when more forceful implementation of cooperatives took place in Laalo Qilee

³⁷⁷ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Mitikku Daafaa

³⁷⁸ Proclamation to Provided for the Organization and Consolidation of Peasant Association, *Negarit Gazeta*, December, 1975), pp.108-109

³⁷⁹ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Fiidaa Tokkii

district.³⁸⁰ In Laalo Qilee district, after 1975 the land tenure system is completely changed and came to be in line with the above stated socialist proclamation. But, the implementation of the proclamation was not smooth enough and orderly organized in the line of the rule of law. In the study area the first victims were high ranking officials, ballabats and the like.³⁸¹

The peasant association become widely accepted and spread in to every *kebele* of Laalo Qilee district and the greater part of the peasants in the district become members of the newly established association in their respective *kebeles*. Each peasant associations in the district were led by an elected chairman and committee. They elected chair-person and executive committee who were responsible to carry out the day to day affairs of the associations. Apart from this, they also deliver judicial service through the institution known as *ferd-shango* in their respective localities and preparing defence squad committee known as *abiyot tebaqa* to keep peace and stability of their locality. The most important duty of a peasant association was to carry out the process of land distribution to the landless peasants. The process of land distribution had two phases. The first one was the abolition of tenancy and legalizing the land holding of each tenant, as the proclamation put an end of feudal system and the estates of landlords was to be redistributed to poor peasants. The second phase was phase was to actually take lands from the land lords and redistribute among members of peasant associations as equal as possible.³⁸²

Access to land was largely not allowed for women according to the legislation. But, women's rights depended on marriage and were not registered separately in the district under study. They therefore lacked control of agricultural land. Membership in PA was restricted to heads of households but married women held indirect rights as member of the household.³⁸³

Broadly speaking, an individual farmer was compulsory member of a collective of a Peasant Association controlled only a limited bundle of rights. He or she had access, withdrawal rights, and possibly management rights, but the latter depended on decisions and interferences of the Peasant Association. Such farmer can be classified as a claimant. The APC committee in Laalo Qilee district also had collective choice rights of exclusion and management over the resources of the APC. This analysis indicates that the revolutionary system of tenure replaced the pre-revolutionary functions of landlords as overlords and tribute collectors by a system of state control, where Peasant Associations and APCs played

³⁸⁰ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa and Mitikkuu Daafaa

³⁸¹ Informants: Baluude Ifaa & Ayyanaa Ejersoo

³⁸² Informants: Kababba Ciibsaa & Qes Dheressa Amantee

³⁸³ Informants: Tarrafaa Karoorsa; Fiidaa Tokkii and Yaada Qana'aa

the central role. The power of the associations was based on their right to distribute land. With the usurpation of the Peasant Association in Laalo Qilee district by the central rulers, they became effectively an instrument of the *Derg* rulers to control and govern the peasantry.³⁸⁴

Even though, land rights were granted to households, in practice they were given to the registered member of the Peasant Association, usually the male head of the household, so that married women held only indirect rights to land. The widows were also landholders as primary heads of households in Laalo Qilee district of Qellem Wollega zone. Overall, the *Derg* regime failed to increase agricultural productivity with its agrarian reforms. At the same time, the 1975 Proclamation ensured that a much larger number of rural farm families received access to land. Tenure security under the *Derg* was clearly limited as key informants stated. They pointed out that it constituted a marked increase in tenure security for former tenant cultivators in the Laalo Qilee district who became Peasant Association members with an entitlement to land. Sources of insecurity included the redistribution of land (for example, due to establishment of cooperatives or population growth), forcefully implemented producer co-operatives, which required peasants to pool their land, and compulsory resettlement.³⁸⁵

It was observed that in many of the villages of Laalo Qilee district, initial redistribution occurred within the first two years after the proclamation of 1975. During this period, farm families had particularly insecure effective rights to individual plots, although they had a general entitlement to an undefined share of the Peasant Association's land endowment. This system resembles the *rist* tenure of the North, but was extended from *rist* right holders to all members of the Peasant Associations. Broadly speaking, landless, wage laborers, tenant cultivators, and poor, powerless *rist* rights holders are often considered as the winners of the *Derg* reforms in Laalo Kile district. However, it is also important to note that bribery of officials was a regular practice to ensure that the better-endowed farmers would get access to a better quality or a larger parcel of land losers of the reform were the *gult* and *rist gult* lords as well as peasants with *gabbar* rights.³⁸⁶ During the reign of *Derg*, the peasants of Laalo Kile took physical measures against the local *balabbats*. Informants stated that, following the immediate overthrow of Emperor Haile Sillase I from power, the tenants of the district confiscated the properties of their local *balabbat*. They also destroyed the house of the

³⁸⁴ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Yaada Qana'aa

³⁸⁵ Informants: Hambisaa Teshomee and Mokkonoon Naggasaa

³⁸⁶ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Dagafee Dhaaaba

landlords mainly the house of those *balabbats* who severely treated them under the monarchical rule.³⁸⁷ The last decade of imperial period was mostly characterized by the popular opposition. The political turmoil reached its momentum mainly during the 1960's and early period of 1970's.³⁸⁸ Accordingly, the 1974 Ethiopian revolutionary was the outcome of the long year's popular discontent and dissatisfaction with the imperial government. The grievances of the students, teachers, army, tax drivers and peasants accelerated the downfall of Haile Sillasié I.³⁸⁹

The deposition of the Emperor from power became a good news for the peoples of Laalo Kile district. The inhabitants became the owner of the land and holds other individual property rights. The deposition also brought an end the old political supremacy of the feudal aristocracy in the study area. In this way, the *Derg* government put down the former political position of the big landlords of the district.³⁹⁰ After coming to power, the *Derg* regime undertook the agrarian reform programme in 1974, proclaimed all rural farmland as belonging to 'people' but was to be controlled by the government. This was largely a response to the popular discontent about the highly exploitative tenure systems prevailing in Ethiopia and a large-scale eviction of tenants and small holders following the policy of establishing large commercials during the third five-year plan (1968-1973).³⁹¹

The year from 1974-1991 was a period when the government introduced the numbers of reforms in the political and socio-economic fields. The reforms were mainly aimed to overcome the privilege discontent of peasants' crisis. To achieve its goals, *Derg* government demanded different reforms such as land reforms and other proclamations.³⁹² The feudal land tenure policy was practiced in Ethiopia until the 1974 revolution. The old regime of the land tenure policy was replaced by the new land reform proclamation issue of the 1975³⁹³. The *Derg* introduced the 1975 land proclamation with the objective of abolishing land lordism in Ethiopia which was implemented through redistribution of the most important economic asset

³⁸⁷ Informants: Mitikuu Daafa & Kaababa Ciibsaa

³⁸⁸ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern...*, pp.229-236

³⁸⁹ Fred Holiday and Maxine Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (London, Ford Press, 1991), pp. 83-85; Christopher Clapham, *Transformation and Continuities in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.38

Bahru Zewde, pp.236-237;

³⁹⁰ Informants: Baaludee Ifaa & Ittansaa Goobanaa

³⁹¹ Informants: Kaababa Ciibsaa & Baluudee Ifaa

³⁹² Steven Davies, "The Political Economy of Land Tenure in Ethiopia" (PhD Dissertation, University of St. Andrew, 2008), pp.137-138; Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Trento, Red Sea Press, 1989), pp.11-13

³⁹³ Marina Ottawa, 'The Ethiopian Land Reform: From Political Change to Economic Development' *In Proceedings of the Eight International Conference of Ethiopian Studies II*, 1989, pp. 189-191

land among the ordinary people.³⁹⁴ The major part of the proclamation in the entitled “the public Ownership of the rural land” included the abolition of the private property of land, the abolition of the tenancy, the right of every landless peasant to own land, prohibition of corvee labour, restriction of the land holding size at the maximum of ten hectares and creation of rural institution like peasant’s association.³⁹⁵ The *Derg* government assumed that increasing agricultural productivity could be realized through the formation of advanced peasant cooperatives. To this end, the government agitated peasants on to join producer cooperatives and also gave moral and material support in order to attract the peasants to be members.³⁹⁶

In the post 1974, migration and settlement of the last three decades have been enormously influenced by the tenure reforms (nationalization and redistribution) and settlement policies of the post 1974 regimes in Laalo Qilee district as it was elsewhere in Ethiopia. Proclamation No. 31 of March 4, 1975 nationalized all rural lands and provided for the organization of peasant’s association (PAs) as a basic instrument for the allocation and redistribution of land. Among those entitled to obtain land were included’ farmers coming from the outside area’ and the settlers who arrived in Wollega few years before and immediately after the land reform benefited from this provision. Another impact of the reform was the dispossession of the land lords that forced some to the bush and others to migrate from Laalo Kile to nearby districts.³⁹⁷

Land transactions between individuals, such as selling, share cropping and renting were outlawed. The government also established co-operatives and they were the favored institutions for resource allocation compared to private farmers. Through villagization and co-operative policies of the government, private forestry and hillside closure, including communal grazing res Proclamation No. 31 of 1975, which was entitled ‘Public Ownership of Rural Lands Proclamation’ was the first and central legislation which set off the process of land distribution and remained as the basic document of the country’s agrarian reform. The document expressed the hope that the reform will serve the goals of economic development

³⁹⁴ Desalegn Rahmeto, “Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia: *Paper Presented at the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, (Lund: University of Lund, 1982), pp.587-595; Dula Abdu, ” Land Reform in Ethiopia: A Prelude to Socialist Development”, *In Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, (Session B, Chicago: University of Illinois, 1978), pp.729-740; Paul B. Herze, *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, 2004), p.290.

³⁹⁵ Andargachew Tiruneh, pp.101-102; Allen Hoben, Social Anthropology and Development planning: A Case Study in Ethiopian Land Reform Policy, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, X (1972), pp.561-572; Proclamation No. 31 of 1975, A Proclamation to Provided for Public Ownership of Rural Land (*Negarit Gazeta*, April, 1975), pp.94-96

³⁹⁶ Informants: Baaludee Ifaa & Fiidaa Tokkii

³⁹⁷ Assefa Tolera, p.107; Informants: Baludee Ifaa and Dagafee Dhaaba

in general and rural development in particular. The basis of this development was founded up on a new agrarian order in which the independent small holder in Laalo Kile district will become the major force in rural production, and in which inequalities of wealth and possession will be eliminated as far as possible. The proclamation prohibited private ownership of land by individuals or organizations, the transfer of land by sale, lease, mortgage or similar means. Thus, the law acknowledged only the use right of the cultivator over his holding.³⁹⁸

The peasant association campaigns of the districts were registered their members. The newly registered in the peasant association of Laalo Qilee district were the tenants, agricultural workers whose age was above 18 years old, ex-land owners who had below 10 hectares and others. This is to make fair distribute of land among the members and for the facilitation of other peasant services.³⁹⁹

The *Dergue*'s Reign of Terror, 1974-1991 Following the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie's autocratic government, a group of low-ranking officers from the armed forces and the police called the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), or more generally known as the *Dergue*, took power in Ethiopia. During the first two years of the revolution, the country experienced not only freedom of speech but also a radical change in its political and social structure. Following land reform in 1975 that made urban and rural land state property, the feudal power structure of the Ethiopian state was abolished. However, the initial period of democratic opening provided by the revolution was closed brutally when an uncompromising faction of the junta led by Mengestu Haile Mariam took power, assassinating General Teferi Benti, the Chairman, and other moderate members of the Dergue on 3 February, 1977.⁴⁰⁰

The peasants elected different *kebele* officials such as chair person, secretary, treasurers and assistances. According to the legal provision of the decree, some land owners who had less than 10 hectares been joined to the peasant association in the initial period of the reforms. In this way, the local landlords of the district who had treated the tenants fairly were allowed to join but, those who oppressed the peasants did not allow joining. In the beginning, the peasant associations with the guidance of the campaigners were distributed land to the respective members. The excess land confiscated from the land lord and unoccupied land was

³⁹⁸ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Motumma Baatu

³⁹⁹ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Bajaawu Tasiisaa

⁴⁰⁰ Mekuria Bulcha, p.24

the distributed for the landless peasants in accordance with the size of the family which is a major factor for land distribution. But, some peasant associations failed to accurately determine the amount of estimated land available for the distribution. The other members were forced to take an infertile land. That means the distribution of land among its members was not equal in size and fertility. The situation caused for the peasant uprising on the misdistribution of the land.⁴⁰¹

The government established granaries in different *kebeles* of Laalo Qilee district which is a place where they store the grain. In Laalo, the government granaries was built in Laalo Qilee town near nowadays' market place. It was built by the *gabbars*. In addition to land distribution, the peasant associations of Laalo Qilee district made an active involvement in the coordinating activities of road building, tree planting, as well as soil conservation program. In relation to this, like the *Abba Qoros* and *balabbats* during the imperial period, the leaders of the peasant associations collect taxes in their respective areas. The coming to power of *Derg* with land reform has so many importances for the peasants of Laalo Kile district in general. This is with regard to abolition of the *balabbats* and distribution of the land for the landless peasants.⁴⁰²

The judicial tribunal have established at the *kebele* level. The main objectives of the establishment were to resolve the conflict which could arise among the members of the association. The peasant could appeal their case to the district tribunal if they were not satisfied with the decision of the *kebele* tribunal.⁴⁰³

The peasant association was the mass-based participatory and democratic institution. But, it was failed on the implementation. The proclamation further stated that the *kebele* peasant association would be under the control of the peasant themselves and provide the organizational means for the administering the land reform, dealing with social and economic problems within the peasant community.⁴⁰⁴

The several *kebele* peasant association of the Laalo Qilee were accountable to the district peasant association which had responsibility of solving matters that arise from the members of the association. That means the association had its own structure of administration and roles to play. But, the leaders of the association were unable to perform their duty due to the

⁴⁰¹ Informants: Dibabaa Eebbaa & Banjaawu Tasiisaa

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Proclamation No. 31 of 1975; Proclamation No. 130 of 1977, All Ethiopian Peasant Association Establishment Proclamation (*Negarit Gazeta*, 1977), pp. 99-102

involvement of officials of the district. Key informants also confirm that, the leaders of the peasant association themselves were corrupt and had exploited the resources of their respective associations. Thus, some associations brought their problems to the *awraja* administration. However, they couldn't gain what they wanted from the *awraja* administrators. As a result, the problems of the peasant association in Laalo Kile district continued until end of the *Dergue* regime.⁴⁰⁵

In the producers cooperative (*ye amrachocho hebrat sera mahaber*), the plan of the government was to motivate peasants to integrate in the member of producers' cooperatives and made an active involvement in the collective farm on the plot of land. Based on this, the peasant associations of Laalo Qilee district were formed a number of producer's cooperatives⁴⁰⁶. Some peasants of Laalo Qilee joined the peasant associations established at kebele level. But, there were peasants who refused to join it because they believed that it resulted in eviction from land as it did. Due to the formation of peasant associations, so many peasants displaced from one *kebele* to the other. Those leaders of the association took twice what each peasant shared after the harvesting system. For instance, if one peasant received one *kuntals* (hundred kilogram), the leaders took two *kuntals*. But, in principle, it was an association based on equal distribution. They constructed granaries for the purpose of storage. For example, in Laalo Qilee district, the granaries of the peasant association called Ayira Booxii peasant association was built beyond the present Birbir elementary school in Nya'aa *kebele*. While these peasants working, no one is allowed to pass by and go without helping them. What made the Dergue's Red Terror so pervasive was the active involvement of two mass organizations known as the *kebele* and *gabare mahber* or urban dwellers' and farmers' associations. Together, the two organisations controlled every individual and household in the country. Though initially organised to promote the interests of the people in their respective areas, they were brought under the control of the regime and were used as instruments of its terror. Places of detention increased at least tenfold when the *kebele* and peasant associations were proclaimed and given the power to have their own local tribunals. Between 1700 and 2000 kebeles, and about 23,500 peasant associations were established throughout the country. The associations were empowered to impose sentences of imprisonment up to three months and hard labour up to fifteen days. In other words, they had a total control over the population: they kept strict control over peasants through registration

⁴⁰⁵ Informants: Hambisaa Teshomee & Baluudee Ifaa

⁴⁰⁶ Informants: Mitikuu Daafa & Beekumaa Hiikaa

of house holds, individual identity cards, roll calls at compulsory weekly meetings. The movement of people from one place to another was controlled through a pass system, whereby everyone was required to have written permission from the officials of the associations to leave their village to another.⁴⁰⁷

Peasant associations were also formed by the effort made by this campaign to implement the 1975 proclamation which was empowered to organize co-operatives, redistributing land and resolving conflicts at which the *zamacha* members played significant role in organizing it. These associations were empowered for tax collection with the support of warada finance office.⁴⁰⁸ The 1975 overthrow of the Selassie regime by the Derg provided usufruct rights to large numbers of rural families while declaring all land to be the property of the state⁴⁰⁹. Following the land reform of 1975 that made the urban and rural land state property, the feudal power structure of the Ethiopian state was abolished.⁴¹⁰

In 1990, the Derg regime issued the so called ‘mixed economic programme’ that liberalized some of the highly centralized system of economic management. The reform conferred a transferable and life-long leased to holders of rural lands. With this reform, the ban on a temporary land lease was lifted and farmer to farmer land contracts become official. Thus, the government intervened only to formalize ongoing process.⁴¹¹

3.1.6. The rise of Internal and External Opponents and the end of the Military Dictatorship

Derg adopted the unitary state structure and established the appointment of his officials from top to bottom. From 1975-1976, *Ato* Tekle Mariam Mekuria was appointed as the chairman of the district of Laalo Kile. The land proclamation that issued in March 1975 and some other *Derg*'s reforms were followed by civil wars between the early landlords and the new land owning peasants in the Laalo Qilee. Landlords opposed the land proclamation because their socio-economic and political privileges were seriously affected by it.⁴¹² In the settlement of the new decree, the district's officials employed harsh measures against landlords. Many local

⁴⁰⁷ Informants: Fayeera Eergaa & Motumma Baatuu

⁴⁰⁸ Yasin Mohammed, “A History of Illu Abba Bora, Ethiopia, Ca.1889-1991”, (PhD Dissertation, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2009), p.31

⁴⁰⁹ USAID, p.3

⁴¹⁰ Mekuria Bulcha, The Survival and Reconstruction of ...,p.26

⁴¹¹ Informants: Namarraa Bayyanaa & Fiidaa Tokkii

⁴¹² Laalo Qilee Cultural and Tourism Office, “The historical foundation of the the history of Laalo Qilee,” P.14

landlords were captured and imprisoned.⁴¹³ Conflict was broken out between the newly established ruling class, the peasants and the early land lords. It was happened when peasants that had been remained under the absolute poverty for a half a century failed to rehabilitate themselves to the new mode of life. The problem was aggravated following the disagreement that happened to support the poor peasants in providing oxen and crop for cultivation by the rich peasants or the early landlords.⁴¹⁴

In 1977, Tekle Mariam Mekuria was replaced by *Ato* Melkamu Werqu (1977-1979) as a ruler of Laalo Kile. During this period *Derg* was attacked by both internal and external opponents. Internally, *Derg* had been in the civil war with various different parties. Externally, the *Derg* was in the conflict with republic of Somalia. The military regime tried to recruit Laalo youths forcefully for the war with the Republic of Somalia.⁴¹⁵ The Democratic Republic of Somalia invaded Ethiopia in the middle 1977 in their ambition to creat “greater Somalia”. The military campaign between Ethiopia and Somalia that began in July 1977 lasted until 1978.⁴¹⁶ *Derg* commanded the districts and provinces to recruit only male adults with complete health in the age starting from 18-40 for military services.⁴¹⁷

According to Etana, during this instablity the peasants of Wollega hoped that, *Derg* through its Oromo agents of *Maison* (the all Ethiopian socialist movement) could solve their long-lived problem.⁴¹⁸ Some political figures of *Maison* obtained public support among the western part of the Ethiopian region.⁴¹⁹ The people of Wollega were secretly mobilized by *Maison* agents to abandon their loyalty towards *Derg*. *Maison* criticized the military "*junta's*" forceful unification of the regime and determined to establish people's government⁴²⁰. According to most of the Laalo informants, a form of opposition movement against the military dictator was formed at the very beginning. The movement was initiated by the political figures of the district including *Ato* Tolera Fayisa (the chairman), Dagafa Ganati and Daniel Deresa. The secret organization was formed in the place known as Baddeessaa Tarree, near Birbir River. They determined to eradicate the symbol of old regime and tried to introduce a form of self rule. In their revolt they advocated the slogan known as "*Mana*

⁴¹³ P.14

⁴¹⁴ Kifilu, p. 292

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, p.15

⁴¹⁶ Gebru Tarekegn, *The Ethiopian Revolution, War in the Horn of Africa*, (New Haven, London, 2009), p.186

⁴¹⁷ Ke Kolonel Mangistu, *Tigilachin...*, p. 390

⁴¹⁸ Etana Habte, *Administration of Wollega...*, P.119

⁴¹⁹ Clapham, *The Political Frame...*, p.16

⁴²⁰ Kifilu, p.154

keenya haa qulqulleessinu”, which literally means “we have to clean our own homes).⁴²¹ The leaders of the movement firstly, refused to recruit and provide Laalo youths to Derg's military service. During the Ethio- Somali war, at initial time, Laalo of Qilee refused to recruit and provide youths for military training. Most of the Laalo officials supported all of the Ethiopia socialist party (*Maison*) which includes some Oromo officials. They hoped to be free from alien or foreign rules and to be ruled by their own Laalo Oromo officials.⁴²²

In their attempt to clean their home they raided, captured and gathered the remnants of landlords (*naftegna*) at Baddeessa tarree to punish them. Many landlords were captured and imprisoned. It was aimed to destroy the scare of the old regime and restore the abundant Oromo's cultural identity. But, the rebellion was easily crushed when Nigusie Fanta; the then governor general of the province of Wollega directed imperial army to the district of Laalo Qilee. Most of the prominent figures of the movement were captured and imprisoned at Naqamte. But after many years of trial, they all were released from prison.⁴²³

The opposition movement between *Derg* and *Maison* was developed in mid 1977. Many of the Wollega assigned leaders were seen as supporter of *Maison*. When fighting was beginning between the two political parties, many of the local leaders appointed in Wollega either fled or imprisoned or executed. Some members of *Maison* joined OLF.⁴²⁴ On July 2, 1978 many *Maison* members were assassinated.⁴²⁵ Following his victory over *Maison* and Somalia in March 1978, *Derg* strengthened his establishments in Laalo Qilee district. In the years from 1980 to 1981, *Ato* Dagim Aweqe was appointed as chairman of the district of Laalo Qilee. He made some socio-political reforms like the building of the large hall known as the Laalo hall by peasants labour. The establishments of many different offices were also introduced.⁴²⁶ In order to crush every aspects of crisis against it, *Derg* issued the ‘red terror’ program in the year between 1976 and 1978. For the control of any reaction, the agents of the ‘red terror’ secretly distributed into the all villages of the Ethiopian region.⁴²⁷

Two forms of secret agents were established. One group was attached to soldiers and the other was closely organized within the political party of *Derg*⁴²⁸. The number of prisons and

⁴²¹ Informants: Dibabaa Eebbaa & Yaada Qana'aa

⁴²² Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Namaraa Bayyanaa

⁴²³ Zegeye Kumera, p. 53

⁴²⁴ Kiflu, p, 165

⁴²⁵ Informants: Ofga'aa Wiirtuu & Namaraa Bayyanaa

⁴²⁶ Laalo Qilee Cultural and tourism...,p .15

⁴²⁷ Kiflu, pp. 136-137

⁴²⁸ Girmay, p. 213

prisoners were dramatically developed by the military government. The total number of prisons of the time was 31,000. Every prison usually held from 20-200 prisoners at a time⁴²⁹. In 1981, Ato Dagim was replaced by *Ato Hika Mesad* (1982-1984) as the leader of the district of Laalo.⁴³⁰

Derg strengthened its power and gradually established strong force even in the continent of Africa⁴³¹. In the period from 1976-1991, the *Derg* regime was characterized by continuous domestic and international wars. It concentrated only on the import of a large number of firearms. The military expenditure consumed the budget for the basic means and other development projects.⁴³²

In spite of the existence of continuous wars between *Derg* and different parties such as OLF, TPLE, and EPLF some social services like education were also developed. *Ato Kumera Atomsa* emerged as the ruler of Laalo Qilee from 1985- 1987. The period was characterized by expansion of education, continues civil wars and widely spread famine and population resettlement.⁴³³ Under the *Derg* regime, there was no religious secularism. The military dictatorship determined to upset all aspects of religious life except Orthodox Church. Protestants were imprisoned and religious evangelization was strictly prohibited. Some were imprisoned; others were fled to remote areas to save their life. The Oromo traditional religion was also regarded as evil and the Laalo attendants were restricted to follow it.⁴³⁴ Under the military rule, the Oromo socio-cultural identity was seriously challenged in the same manner as the long period of the imperial rule⁴³⁵.

The life of the Oromo people in general was transformed from bad to worse. The Oromo lost their independence, language and their culture.⁴³⁶ The young and educated Oromo peoples were forced to participate in many different wars or the work in government projects without salary⁴³⁷. The Oromo youths were recruited extensively into military and police force. Except fighting in open wars, they got the high status in police and military services.⁴³⁸ The Laalo Youths, in the district of Laalo Qilee were involuntarily involved in the many different

⁴²⁹ Kiflu, p.164-165

⁴³⁰ Laalo Qilee Cultural and Tourism..., p, 15

⁴³¹ Ke Kolonel Mangistu, p. 423

⁴³² Gebru Tarekegn, p.133

⁴³³ Laalo Qilee Cultural and Tourism Office..., P.15

⁴³⁴ Informants: *Qes Dheressa Amantee & Mokkonoon Naggasaa*

⁴³⁵ Asafa Jaleta, *Oromia and Ethiopia, State Formation...*, P.141

⁴³⁶ Tesema Ta'a, *The place of the Oromo in...*,P.7

⁴³⁷ Asafa Jalleta, *Oromia and Ethiopia...*, P.161

⁴³⁸ Gada, p.76

wars including Ethio- Somali war of 1970s and the Eritrean war. Some were captured from schools and others were through raids. Female's participation was discouraged and it targeted males in large number. This resulted in the reduction of the number of male population while growth in female population.⁴³⁹

Bearing male offspring which was traditionally invested with high social value, now became a liability. The recruitment bred corruption and nepotism among the peasant association, the urban dwellers and association's.⁴⁴⁰ In the last regime of Deg between 1988 and 1990, Ato Biratu Zewude emerged as the governor of the district of Laalo Qilee. During this time, the district under study was forcefully joined with neighboring district known as Yubdo as one political entity. Until the down fall of Derg and establishment of transitional government in 1991, the Laalo Qilee lost its economic, political and social opportunities.⁴⁴¹

According to the Laalo informants narrated that, between 1988-1990 most of Laalo's material resources like official documents, Laalo's archives, cars, chairs, desks were looted. They were taken to Yubdo. This aggravated the grievances of the Laalo community against Derg regime. It was also the period when most of the Ethiopian nations engaged in the fighting against the military dictatorship.⁴⁴²

Hamdessa; informs that, the Oromo liberation front (OLF) started its military campaign against the Ethiopian ruling class in Hararge in 1974. In 1980s, the armed struggle of OLF expanded into the provinces of Wollega bordering the Sudan⁴⁴³. According to the Laalo informants, in the middle of 1980s the present province of Qellem Wallaga was begun to be influenced by the OLF. The Derg soldiers and policies were threatened and defeated by the force of OLF. For instance, in the late 1980s Yubdo was attacked twice. During this period some of the discontented nationalists in Laalo Kile joined the soldiers of OLF.⁴⁴⁴

On may 25 1991, *Derg* was disposed by the joint operation of the Tigray people Liberation Front (TPLF), the Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).⁴⁴⁵ The down fall of the *Derg* regime was followed by the adoption of the transitional government (TGE) headed by the Ethiopian people revolutionary Democratic Front (EPDRF)

⁴³⁹ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Fiidaa Tokkii

⁴⁴⁰ Bahru Zewde, *Society, State and History...*, p. 288

⁴⁴¹ Laalo Qilee Cultural and Tourism Office..., P,16

⁴⁴² Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Mokkonoon Naggasaa

⁴⁴³ Handessa Tuso, *The survival of Oromo Nationalism*, (Manitoba, 1986), pp. 14-15

⁴⁴⁴ Informants: Fiidaa Tokkii & Mitikkuu Daafaa

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

which is supported by several liberation movements like the Oromo People Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Tigre Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Amhara Peoples Democratic Movement (APDM).⁴⁴⁶

After the 1974 revolution, the *Derg* regime introduced the socialist ideology and had taken political, economic and social structural reforms. It essentially retained the preexisting regional administration system based on the *awraja* and *warada*. The imperial *Taqalay Gezat* was renamed as *Kefla Hagar* and the *Awraja* and *warada* remained as they were. Generally, the goal of the regime remained the centrally commanded and organized state.⁴⁴⁷

At the early period of *Derg*, the rural population was not the focal point. The revolution had been considered as almost an urban affair controlled by urban forces. Based on the 1975 rural land proclamation, peasant associations were formed. Those peasant associations empowered with distributing the land, resolving the conflict among the members, and electing committee to supervise various tasks. The peasant also took the responsibility to collecting tax from each farmer with the representative of a government office. The *balabbats* in such conditions challenged and even uprooted from their lands and forced to move to nearby towns.⁴⁴⁸

Under the *Derg* regime, as in the other parts of Ethiopia, Laalo Qilee retained its previous territorial boundary. The *kebele* system formed the low level of this centralized hierarchy by which its policies were implemented. Through the kebele system, the societies of the district were organized into 22 *kebeles* of peasant association each covering a defined territory under its own administrative council and officers⁴⁴⁹. One of the most important aspects of the land reform relates to rural mass organizations which were set up following the first proclamation of 1975. These organizations, of which the local or *kebele* peasant Association was the most central and were to provide the organizational means for administering the land reform, and dealing with the social and economic problems arising in the peasant community.⁴⁵⁰

In the middle of 1970's *Derg* passed proclamations that called for the establishment of an elaborated hierarchy of centralized government. The Land Reform Proclamation of March, 1975 called for the formation of Peasant Association with provisions for self-administration. Successive national governments in Ethiopia have implemented different approaches to the

⁴⁴⁶ Tesema Ta'a, *The place of the Oromo in Ethiopian History...*, P.7

⁴⁴⁷ Sarah Waughon, "Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia", (PhD Dissertation, the University of Edinburgh, 2007), pp.148-149.

⁴⁴⁸ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Motummaa Baatuu

⁴⁴⁹ Eshetu Chole and Mokonnen Manyazewal, p.9

⁴⁵⁰ Informants: Namarra Bayaanna & Dagafee Dhaaba

distribution of rural land. The imperial regime of Haile Sillasié allocated land ownership to political supporters. Between 1976-1991, the Derg implemented a series of reforms in which all rain fed farm land in the highland Ethiopia was confiscated and redistributed. The government formed by the incoming Ethiopian people's Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) in 1991, largely maintained the policies of the Derg with regard to land, ownership to the state, and use rights to farmers and livestock keepers, while prohibiting sale and collectivization, encouraging redistribution at the village (*kebele*) and district (*woreda*) to avoid landlessness and permitting limited leasing and inheritance rights to be exercised.⁴⁵¹

Migration and settlement policies of the last three decades have been enormously influenced by the tenure reforms (nationalization and redistribution) and settlement policies of the post 1974 regimes. Proclamation No.31 of March 4 1975 nationalized all rural lands and provided for the Organization of peasants' Association (PAs) as a basic instrument for the allocation of land. Among those entitled to obtain land were included 'farmers coming from outside the area' and the settlers who arrived in Wallaga few years before and immediately after the land reform benefited from this provision.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵¹ USAID, p.5

⁴⁵² Assefa Tolera, p.107

CHAPTER FOUR

STATE LAND POLICIES DURING THE REIGN OF EPRDF (1991-2002) AND ITS EFFECTS

In the last chapter, attention has been given to the attempts of the *EPRDF* to transform economy through environmental transformation, policy and proclamations to land. We have indicated that in the process forest environment were largely converted to residence, farmland and extensively encroached for resource extraction. After the fall of the *Derg* (military socialist) regime of Mengistu in 1991, privatization of farm collectives took place rapidly, and many international observers expected that in this process of “post-socialist transition,” a transformation of land institutions towards a privatization and registration of land titles would follow, which was regarded as a means to increase productivity of Ethiopia’s smallholder agriculture. However, these expectations were soon disappointed. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia, in its declaration on economic policy in November 1991 (Transitional Government of Ethiopia 1991), announced the continuation of the land policy of the *derg* regime.⁴⁵³

The new constitution of 1995 approved and confirmed the state ownership of land in Ethiopia (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 1995)⁴⁵⁴. Article 40 of the 1995 Ethiopian constitution states that “the right to ownership of rural land and urban land, as well as of all natural resources is exclusively vested in the state and the peoples of Ethiopia. Land is a common property of the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia” (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 1995, Article 40). The article further specifies a “right to obtain land without payment” for “Ethiopian peasants” for grazing and cultivation purposes as well as a right to be “[protected] against eviction from the possessions”.⁴⁵⁵ The article further stipulates that any transfer of land is prohibited and “shall not be subject to sale or other means of exchange”.⁴⁵⁶

Many scholars have questioned if the 1995 constitution provided any differences to the land reform proclamation of 1975. There are, nevertheless, some notable differences between the rules of 1975 and 1995 as my key informants stated. The 1975 proclamation did not allowed

⁴⁵³ Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), 1991.

⁴⁵⁴ The FDRE constitution, 1995

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, Article 4 and 5

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, section 3

the lease of land and the hiring of labor and concealed the maximum land size per individual to 10 hectares. But, such provisions are not included in the 1995 constitution.⁴⁵⁷

Furthermore, Article 40, section 7 specifies the rights to the compensation payments for investment on land in case the “right to use expires,” also newly introduced:

*“Every Ethiopian shall have the full right to the immovable property he builds and to the permanent improvements he brings about on the land by his labor or capital. This shall include the right to alienate, to bequeath, and where the right of use expires, to remove his property, transfer his title, or claim compensation for it”.*⁴⁵⁸

The right to use land depends on the residence in the kebele, a restriction already in place under the derg regime. At the same time, some regions formulate the aim to introduce certificates designed to increase tenure security and to reduce border conflicts. Inheritance rights have also been specified and in some case been extended beyond the core family. The “Oromia Rural Land Use and Administration Proclamation 56/2002” (Regional Government of Oromia 2002) grants higher levels of tenure security than the other three regional policies of Amhara, Tigray and Southern nations, nationalities and peoples regional state of Ethiopia.⁴⁵⁹

Because it rules out redistribution of land plots (Regional Government of Oromia 2002). The proclamation grants “lifelong usufruct rights” to agricultural land and “free of payment” to all male and to female residents whose livelihoods depend on agriculture.⁴⁶⁰

However, there are three important restrictions formulated in the proclamation that allow the state to expropriate land use rights from plot holders. Article 6.4 grants the right of expropriation if land is required for “more important public uses”, but the rights holder needs to be compensated and can remove investments thereon⁴⁶¹. Importantly, Article 14.4 specifies that “irrigation land” is excluded from the prohibitions of land redistribution, which is allowed subject to the “participation and consensus of the user community.” Those losing irrigation land are entitled to compensation with “reasonable rainfed land.” Third, land can be expropriated if needed for irrigation infrastructure. In the latter case, even the compensation

⁴⁵⁷ Informants: Dagafee Dhaaba & Shumii Barakaa

⁴⁵⁸ FDRE constitution, 1995, Article 40.7

⁴⁵⁹ Oromia Rural Land Use and Administration Proclamation 56/2002

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, Article 14.1, 6.1 and 5.1.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, Article 6.4

to the former rights holder is limited.⁴⁶² Many land rights holders in Oromia now enjoy a larger bundle of rights than under the derg and can be regarded to be owners, in principle. This holds particularly for married and non-married women who also received individual rights titles. Laalo Kile peasants now have improved exclusion rights through a relaxation of inheritance limitations and the abandoning of redistribution programs, which is accompanied by the right to rent out a share (up to half) of the landholding. However, there are severe limitations of these rights for some rights holders. Divorced women still lack secure land rights since numerous exceptions severely limit these rights. Owners of very small plots may experience intervention by others such as co-heirs and holders of irrigation land who share the management right of 'making improvements of the resource' in the community where they live. At the same time, some provisions in the proclamation and in particular in the regulation attenuate this tenure security by imposing limitations on lifelong tenure (for example, by defining management obligations) or linking land rights to social status (such as denying effective equal rights to widows and divorced women). Given the number of exceptions and prohibitions, and the lack of clear specifications of responsibilities and decision criteria, the current legal framework allows for an enduring influence of the state bureaucracy on land distribution and land rights. This offers potential spaces for corruption, political interference, and bureaucratic arbitrariness.⁴⁶³

In the post 1991 period owing to the free market economy and the increase in the farming as well as resource demanding population, environment remained to be the resource base. In the period the region witnessed the expansion of small scale agriculture into formerly uncultivated areas, leasing land for investors, settlement in the virgin lands and wood extraction in uncontrolled manner. The post-1991 mode of production and resource extraction was more depressing to the environment of Laaloo-Qilee district. The period experienced a complex environmental encroachment for both production and extraction. In this chapter, emphasis has been given to EPRDF's policy on land and land use rights in Laaloo-Qilee District.

The EPRDF's Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) strategy obviously targeted to utilize the agricultural opportunity of rural areas to produce surplus and transform

⁴⁶² Ibid, Article 14.4

⁴⁶³ Informants: Fiida Tokkii & Yaada Qana'aa

the national economy.⁴⁶⁴ One of the opportunities in this aspect was to cultivate the vast uncultivable virgin land in the wetlands of the southwest and western Ethiopia. The main goal of this strategy was to attain fast and broad-based economic growth. This market based economic strategy favored the practicing of better commercialized form by using the new land utilization of both small and large scale possession through peasants providing agricultural activities as the first goal to deal the economic agenda of the country as the whole.⁴⁶⁵ The process also promoted the speed up the occupation and cultivation of land for commercial and subsistence agricultural activities.⁴⁶⁶

Following the adoption of privatization of the economy, capitalist mode of production expanded in the country in the country in general and Laalo Kile in particular.⁴⁶⁷ The proclamation No 15 of the 1992 of the council of representatives in the '*Investment Code*' in general and agricultural code in particular indicates the government hopes to develop the economy of the country through activating the utilization of natural resources.⁴⁶⁸ Based on that a large area of land was given for various investors in Laalo Kile district to develop the economy of the country, the district and for the better improvement of the economy of those investors.⁴⁶⁹ According to the evidence obtained from the investment office of Laaloo-Qilee District, there were about 8 Agricultural investors who leased land for more than 30 years contract and agreed to involve in environmental conservation on the 2% of their possessions.⁴⁷⁰ The major areas of land where investors occupied were Billee Buubaa, Madaallee Kaallisaa, Darraa jaarsoo villages of the district. Such areas unusually experienced extensive deforestation.⁴⁷¹

Accordingly, it formally confirmed that the specifically lands given for the investment implication the local societies lost their communal property right of the forest along Birbir river valley. Numbers of farmers were engaged economically on the forest resources.⁴⁷²

For these purpose, there were wider-range of land occupation and cultivation in Laaloo-Qilee. Apart from the population increase in the region, a number of farmers also came to settle there for cultivation. On one hand, population increase caused the intensive cultivation and

⁴⁶⁴ FDRE Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD) 2010-2020 (Addis Ababa, 2010), p.13.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.12

⁴⁶⁶ Informants: Fiidaa Tokkii & Tashomee Ballaxaa

⁴⁶⁷ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Baludee Ifaa

⁴⁶⁸ Dasalegn Rahamto, *Land Tenure and Land policy in Ethiopia after ...p.* 147.

⁴⁶⁹ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa Shumii Barakaa

⁴⁷⁰ Laaloo Qilee district Investment Office, p. 9

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid*

⁴⁷² Informants: Simessoo Hirphoo & Yaada Qana'aa

the application of chemical fertilizers to enhance production. On the other hand, agricultural expansion in the district entailed the conversion of vast hectares of uncultivated land to farmland. Hence, major economic activities in the post 1991, including agricultural expansion was followed by deforestation and land degradation and environmental changes in diverse ways in Laaloo-Qilee District, which have been discussed shortly.⁴⁷³

For a long time, social pressure on the environment and an increase in the use of land to feed the growing population, the trends in land use has been changed. This can be reflected in the expansion into the formerly grazing, forest and wetland areas as well as the intensive use of land. In fact, encroachment into marginal land began with land use change following the conquest in the late nineteenth century with lesser scale.⁴⁷⁴

Farmers encroached marginal lands when tenancy dispossessed land during the imperial regime. The villagization and resettlement programs of the *Darg* regime also brought land use change when extensive "uncultivated" land were converted to either settlement fields and cultivation areas⁴⁷⁵.

Then, the insecurity of farmers on their own land and absence of promoting soil fertility meant there was no sufficient production to sustain their family. According to the short study documents of Laaloo Kile district confirmed that the peasants surplus production not sufficient, to the maximum subsistence.⁴⁷⁶

Laaloo Kile district intensively cultivated land percentage cover of trees and shrubs is 51 percent or more of the unit which is under cultivation. This unit land coverage has 23359.685 hectares.⁴⁷⁷

To some extent also, the need to produce surplus crops and the belief that virgin land was better for high grain production derived farmers to the formerly uncultivated land. Despite the intensive and extensive land utilization system of the *Darg* period, by the early 1990s, in the district uncultivated land accounted for larger size of land. This included land that people used to use for forest land and grazing. The type of land preferred for agricultural expansion

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Dasalegn Kaba, "The Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts of Large Scale (Agricultural) Land Acquisition on Local Livelihoods: A Case Study in Bako Tibe *Woreda* of Oromia Region, Ethiopia." (M.A. Thesis in Philosophy in Culture, Environment and Sustainability, University of Oslo, Norway, 2013), pp.85-86.

⁴⁷⁵ Informants: Alamii Gabisaa and Yaada Qana'aa

⁴⁷⁶ Short study of General situation of Laaloo-Qilee District....,p. 12

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid*....,p.13

were mainly extensive lowlands, river valleys, forest land and common grazing areas. In most cases, forest land rocky and infertile soils were also kept as forest land. Areas that had been identified as common pasture land were converted to arable land by either the local people or the endorsement of the local government. This suggests a limited opportunity for conservation and potential available cultivable land were converted to agricultural land. This is particularly true in the Birbir River Valley, and areas adjacent to the resettlement and villages established during the *Darg* regime⁴⁷⁸.

4.1. Investment and Its Policy

In the post 1991, several social and natural factors brought intensive and extensive use of land. On one hand the decline in soil fertility because of repeated cultivation, termite infestation and erosion. Conversely the need for more produce to feed the growing population resulted in the intensive use of land. The system involved the use of fertilizers to fertilize the soil and chemicals to protect weeds, pest etc. This involved large number of small scale and large-scale cultivators in the recent times.⁴⁷⁹

In such conditions, what matters was the access to land. When farmers became insecure on the fertility of land they expanded to marginal land which they considered more fertile. Some farmers successfully became rich by exploiting this opportunity. Such farmers came to be self-sufficient farmers. In due course, extensive farmlands in the Laalo Kile were converted to agricultural land through clearing the land. Besides, farmers from the *Derg* period settlement areas also cleared the land establish additional arable land. On the other hand, land use change in Laalo Kile came from the extensive conversion formerly uncultivated areas to agricultural centre. In the post Darg period, the most important pull factor that attracted human population to the formerly uncultivated areas was the availability of land for investment, share cropping, land renting and sufficient opportunity for labor work on the one hand, and on the other profitable as well as hot commercial activity. The EPRDF constitution and investment policy, free citizens' movement, resettlement with in regional state. However as a result of integration of local societies forest and any natural resources many local communities mutually suspect each other.⁴⁸⁰ This was due to the ownership of land in huge amount the investors secretly used every fauna and flora of in their occupation

⁴⁷⁸ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Alamii Gabisaa

⁴⁷⁹ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa and Ofga'aa Wiirtuu

⁴⁸⁰ Informants: Fiidaa Tokkii & Yaada Qana'aa

especially along Birbir river valley villages.⁴⁸¹ The integration of local production systems into the global economy, with the increase of commercial crops farming investment has expanded into areas previously less encroached. As a result, in many areas like Laloo Kile district, crops were being replaced by cash crops and cereals for market through commercialization of agriculture mainly in lowland areas. The process of the expansion of commercial farm had important implications for the formerly uncultivated land. Production of commercial crops increased the value of the land and triggered competition on land and land disputes.⁴⁸²

Government policy of investment might have intended for long-term economic transformation. Agricultural activities and social relations on the ground do not seem to have been in accordance with the designed system. This refers to the occupation of land for agricultural investment and timber production in the lowlands and forest land respectively. Perhaps, the investment on valley land and forest land has been the major cause of change in land use in Laalo Qilee district and elsewhere in the country. Apart from disturbing the ecosystem, the informants noted that the local communities did not accept the investment policy along their forest since 2007 in Laalo Qilee district.⁴⁸³ Even the land use changes alienated the local society from the rights of using the environmental resources.⁴⁸⁴ The occupation of vast land for investment by private investors led the local society to limited access to land. In this aspect, the interest to produce surplus food changed the trends in land use. Thus, many peoples began occupying rural land for agricultural purposes that caused dramatic change on the environment.⁴⁸⁵

On the other hand, the competition on land acquisition, illegal migration and land grabbing, ill cultivation system, deforestation for farm expansion, charcoal, timber and other forest products have important effects on the environment of Laalo Kile district. The customary land holding system eroded in the district. Shortage of rain due to deforestation and pest attack led to subsequent crop failure in 1990s in Laalo Kile district which was followed by the use of fertilizers and chemicals to enhance production as well as crop protection. It resulted the decline of fertility through time in Laalo Kile district⁴⁸⁶. The use of animal manure as in previous times becomes impossible because the land adapted with the artificial

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸² Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Tashomee Ballaxaa

⁴⁸³ Informants: Hambisaa Tashome and Baqaalla Bosaara

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ Informants: *Qes* Dheressa Amantee and Waqjiraa Tuutaa

⁴⁸⁶ Belletech Deressa, p.53.

fertilizers.⁴⁸⁷ MOARD reported that by 1994, the whole of our country agricultural input had been dominated by subsistence, low input and high output, inflation of farming system that encourages the chemical use of fertilizers.⁴⁸⁸ However, in the country's constitution of Article 44 and 92 introduced the importance of environmental conservation principles to clean and healthy environment, which all citizens shall have the right to live in clean environment.⁴⁸⁹

Hence, the virgin land and other natural resources had been exposed to the additional chemical fertilizers, which made soil regeneration and its application began in Laalo Kile district⁴⁹⁰. Many *kuntals* of fertilizers were distributed to the local societies⁴⁹¹. By the new government strategy which came to be known as Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI), which emphasizes raising the productivity of smallholder agriculture and the importance of labor intensive industrialization.⁴⁹²

The policy also purposely supported commercial farming and the state provide appropriate incentive structures using agricultural extension as the so called engine of development⁴⁹³. The government has given vast areas to investors and small scale farmers.⁴⁹⁴ These processes brought the deteriorating of the environment and also damaged the remaining traditional land use system in Laalo Qilee district. In this case, the Birbir River valley was the most affected ecology in the district under study. Agricultural modernization by the investment led to the replacement of the traditional perceptions to environment.⁴⁹⁵

Land occupation was based on the *FDRE* proclamation of 1992/ 1993 which targeted to satisfy the minorities who have affiliation with the government. The proclamation promoted agricultural investment in Laalo Kile district as it was elsewhere.⁴⁹⁶

Large scale private farmers were highly blamed for bad cultivation system, unbalanced resource utilization and etc⁴⁹⁷. The growth of agricultural production linked with commercial agriculture was the major ways of environmental degradation in the post 1991 period. The process also broke the link between the people and their environment. Hence, the

⁴⁸⁷ Informants: Hambisaa Tashooma and *Qes* Dheressa Amantee

⁴⁸⁸ FDRE, "Ministry of Ethiopian Agriculture and Rural Development MOARD," p.12

⁴⁸⁹ Federal Negarit Gazeta ,FDRE 1995 constitution, (Art 44 and 92)

⁴⁹⁰ Agricultural Office of Laaloo-Qilee District, p. 12

⁴⁹¹ Farmers Association Office of Laaloo-Qilee District, p. 8

⁴⁹² Beletech Deresa, p.165.

⁴⁹³ Alemayehu Geda, p.166

⁴⁹⁴ Dereje, "Agriculture and Environment in the Angar...", p.391.

⁴⁹⁵ Informants: Efireem Qanasee and *Qes* Dheressa Amantee

⁴⁹⁶ Desalegn Rahmato, Land tenure and Land..., p.148.

⁴⁹⁷ Dereje Hinaw, p .406

environment of Laalo Qilee district was affected enormously.⁴⁹⁸. The major visible areas of this change includes the Birbir River Valley where Billee Buubaa, Madaallee Kaallisaa, Darraa Jaarsoo villages were established. The total sizes of 617.384 hec were untouched forest and savanna grass land have been highly exploited⁴⁹⁹.

4.2 Resettlement and Land Use

As it was followed by the establishment of residences and farm land in formerly uncultivated areas, resettlement in Laalo Qilee brought by far negative consequences on the environment. This was in terms of deforestation, land use change and deterioration of wildlife and soil degradation along western Wollega secretly implicated under the so called the resettlement program.⁵⁰⁰

Different writers argued that resettlement in Ethiopia was caused by economic problem particularly drought.⁵⁰¹ Despite different views on the causes of the resettlement programs, the 1984/85 resettlement project of the *Darg* was a reaction to the widespread drought and famine in northern part of Ethiopia particularly Wallo, Tigray, and Gonder. In the process, southwestern Ethiopia specifically uncultivated lowland and river valleys from Kaffa to Gojjam were preferred for large-scale resettlement of hunger strikes areas.⁵⁰² According to the program, people were relocated from northern to these selected areas in to conventional (*medebegna safara*) and shuffling (*sigsega*) settlement camps. In Wollega, four large-scale resettlement sites, namely Angar, Keto, Jarso and Asosa, and several small-scale commonly known as sigsega were established⁵⁰³. Laalo Qilee was one the areas selected for small-scale resettlement sites. Most of the settlers who settled in Laalo Kile were from Wollo region. The selected settlement sites were the formerly unoccupied area of Billee Buubaa, Waayyuu Badhaas, Marfoo and Saggoo villages. The larger settlement villages and settlement farms were established on lands covered by forests and river valleys. Both Buubaa and Kile rivers were tributaries of Birbir River on the upper course. These areas were renamed as *safara*

⁴⁹⁸Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant and the State...*, p. 36.

⁴⁹⁹Laalo Qilee Land and Agricultural Office, p.19

⁵⁰⁰Sandra, S, "Resettlement and Villagization : *Tools for militarization in South Western Ethiopia, in Cultural Survival Quaternary*", *Darg's 10 years Plan*. Issue 11, No 4, 1987, p. 3

⁵⁰¹Holden, Stein and Hailu Yohannis. "Land Redistribution , Tenure insecurity and Insecurity of production." *A study of Farm Households in the southern Ethiopia*. (Wisconsin University press, Vol, 28, No,4, 2002), p. 47

⁵⁰²Yasin Mohamed, p. 198.

⁵⁰³ Etana Habte, Administration of Wallagga under,” p.122

walloo.⁵⁰⁴ The settlement sites selected in Laalo Qilee were disease-infested areas. It is diseases which affects both human and animal lives such as malaria trypanosomiasis and other disease were prone in the areas. This inturn had adverse effect on crop and animal's production. There were large scale death records among the settlers who arrived in the district under study. The agricultural activities of the settlers were also faced challenges from the environment. While *trypanosomiasis* and other disease hindered livestock production, a number of day and night time wild animals attacked the crops settlers cultivated.⁵⁰⁵

Some studies support the view that the resettlement caused environmental and economic changed in Wollega in which Laalo Qilee belongs. They argued that the *Darg's* relocation program paralleled with climatic, economic and invalidating ethnic based issue by combining with south and southwestern Ethiopia especially in the Oromo land.⁵⁰⁶ According to Etana, Wollega was mostly affected by the resettlement program. Apart from the occupation of land which accounts 42.7% in south western Ethiopia, the resettlement program resulted in different social, environmental and economic changes.⁵⁰⁷ The environmental consequence in the areas of settlement is clear throughout the occupation period in western regions particularly in the Laalo Kile district. As remarked by Asafa Tolera, all what settlers did was to "clear more forests if we need more land to cultivate".⁵⁰⁸

The Wollo community occupied the forested areas in various *kebeles* of Laalo Qilee district. After they settled, they said that " We are here only to get our daily food", which literally means "*Enga ye metan le Enjera bicha new*" in *Amharic*.⁵⁰⁹ Hence, from their saying one can conclude that they are careless about the environment in case of clearing forests and preparing it for agriculture. Resettlement was conducted in the virgin lands through clearing and burning of forests. Then the land using system along forest and grass lands where settlers occupied were seriously damaged.⁵¹⁰ Deforestation become the main feature in the district after the settlement along the forest and River valleys.⁵¹¹

Settlers from Wollo, Shewa and Tigray came with different land use strategies. Some individuals from the settlers used to remove trees around their residence and farm lands with

⁵⁰⁴ Informants: Tashomaa Balaaxaa & Yaada Qana'aa

⁵⁰⁵ Informants: Baluudee Ifaa & Tashomee Ballaxaa

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁰⁷ Etana Habte ,Adminstration of Wallagga ..., p. 118.

⁵⁰⁸ Asafa Tolera, "Where has the forest...", p.157.

⁵⁰⁹ Informants: Yaada Qana'aa & Dagafee Dhaaba

⁵¹⁰ Yasin Mohamed, A History of Illu,... p.200.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid*, p.201.

the perception that “big trees will attract evil (*setan*)”. Many big trees that the local people used to put beehive for honey production were removed as the result of which the local people entered into conflict with the new comers. In some areas, the new comers resorted to selling of wood rather than clearing it for the purpose of agriculture. Apart from habitat, destruction for resettlement, hunting in the name of crop protection exacerbated wildlife deterioration. Many of the habitats of wildlife that the local people maintained until the period of resettlement program were destroyed and resulted in migration of animals to other places. On the other hand, the *Darg* did not promote forest preservation because forest was regarded as the base of OLF fighters. Forest in the district particularly on the border between Wollega and Illu Abba Bor was subject to scrutiny by the state soldiers in fear of the attack from the rebel group. It was in this forest that the *Darg* undertook resettlement in which the settlers were given responsibilities to be spy for the government for the purpose of security.⁵¹²

Hence, the major resettlements areas including Billee Buubaa, Marfoo, Waayyu Badhaas, and Saggoo villages of Laalo Qilee district lost their dense forest coverage due to the above mentioned reasons associated with the settlers.⁵¹³ The different land use strategy of the settlers additionally contributed to the forest deterioration of the district. It resulted in the degradation of environment and poor economy. For instance, peoples of the local area faced shortage of grazing lands, forest and honey production and deterioration of the ecosystem. Tree species and wildlife in Laalo Qilee district reduced in number after the implementation of the resettlement program.⁵¹⁴ These deforestation opened a way for the establishment of villagization in Laalo Qilee district.⁵¹⁵

Ethiopia is a large, ecologically diverse country with a rapidly growing population of around 110 million people living in eleven regions and two chartered cities (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa). Following the defeat of the Derg regime that ruled the country from 1974 to 1991, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was formed, with the regions largely defined on the basis of ethnicity or nationality. Ethiopia’s economy is heavily dependent on agriculture. The population is said to rely on it in whole or part on the production of crops and livestock and

⁵¹² *Ibid* .,p.127.

⁵¹³ Informants: Masarat Tuulii and Baacaa Fiixee

⁵¹⁴ Desalegn Kaba, *The Socio-Economic & Environmental Impacts of Large Scale Woreda of Oromia Region of Ethiopia* (M.A Thesis in Philosophy and Culture University of Oslo, Norway, 2013), p.88.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid*....p. 63.

more than 40% of GDP coming from that sector.⁵¹⁶ Land policy in Ethiopia has been controversial since the fall of the military socialist *Derg* regime in 1991. While the FDRE government has implemented a land policy that is based on state ownership of land (where only usufruct rights are given to land holders), many agricultural economists and international donor agencies have propagated some form of privatised land ownership. Ethiopia is one of several post-socialist countries undergoing an ambivalent transformation process towards some kind of capitalist economy. This applies in particular to land tenure regimes. After the fall of the *derg* (military socialist) regime of Mengistu in 1991, privatisation of farm collectives took place rapidly. Many international observers expected that in this process of ‘post-socialist transition’, a move towards privatisation and registration of land titles would follow, which was regarded as a means to increase productivity of Ethiopia’s small-holder agriculture. However, these expectations were soon disappointed. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia, despite being committed to the liberalisation of the economy, decided not to question state ownership. In its declaration on economic policy in November 1991, it announced the continuation of the land policy of the *derg* regime. A referendum that was promised to decide the future of the land tenure system never took place. Instead, the new constitution of 1995 approved and confirmed the state ownership of land in Ethiopia.⁵¹⁷

Crewett & Benedikt, confirm that the TGE that replaced the *Derge* continued enforcing the *Derge*’s land policy. However, Muradu rejected this idea and argued that the TGE temporarily refrained from dealing with the thorny land tenure issue. Muradu (2014:9-10) attributed its avoidance to two reasons. Firstly, EPRDF had been strongly criticizing some aspects of the *Derg*’s land tenure reform and blamed it for failing to maintain tenure security for small farmers and pastoralists. On the other hand, replacing the command economic with the free market principle, the EPDRF was demanding that land should be reformed along with market principles. Later when it announced its land policy, however, EPRDF declared “Peoples „ownership of land”. As enshrined in FDRE constitution of 1995, up on its ratification, the concept of public land ownership and the inalienability of landholdings enshrined in Article 40 sub article 3 of the Constitution the FDRE constitution. It is clearly stated that: “The right to ownership of rural and urban land, as well as of all-natural resources, is exclusively vested in the State and in the peoples of Ethiopia. Land is a common

⁵¹⁶ USAID, Ethiopia: Property...,p.3; Informants: Baludee Ifaa & Dagafee Dhaaba

⁵¹⁷ Wibke Crewett and Benedikt Korf, p.203.

property of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia and shall not be subject to sale or to other means of exchange.” As clearly stipulated in the FDRE constitution (Article 52 sub article 2(d) the regional states are granted power to administer land in accordance with federal laws. On the basis of this provision, the Rural Land Administration were favored by the delday committee were those who could either pay bribe to leading committee members or influential party members at qabele level.⁵¹⁸

According to Tesfaye Teklu, the TGE kept the basic elements of the 1975 proclamation like, for example, public /state ownership, universal free access to rural land and prohibition land transfer through sale retained unchanged. By keeping state ownership, the ruling party lifted restrictions on some tenancy relations. Unlike the *Derge*, the EPDRF led government allowed sharecropping and renting land allowing gifts or borrowing, fixed rent tenancy and share tenancy. No matter whether land use and management are guided by state or federal laws, the Ethiopian government insisted on making land to be vested on the state and the “people’s ownership of land” got legal protection.⁵¹⁹

Ethiopia’s current tenure system reflects long-standing and competing historical themes, including feudal traditions and the effects of military rule to rectify feudal injustices. The prevailing constant, regardless of the form of governance, has been significant control by the state over the allocation and use of land. Continuing government resistance to private ownership of land is in part, a legacy of the injustices experienced under the feudal tenure system prior to 1974.⁵²⁰

Property rights have been a continuing source of controversy. Current property rules have evolved from the imperial period, which started in the mid-19th century and continued up to 1974. As the imperial regime expanded, it incorporated different approaches to land tenure, most based on usufruct that were in use in different areas of the country.⁵²¹

Ethiopia’s economy and the well-being of its more than 80 million citizens depend on the productivity of its natural resources, principally land and water that are used for production of

⁵¹⁸ Crewett & Benedikt, Ethiopia: Reforming Land Tenure: *Review of African Political Economy*, (No. 116:203-220, ROAPE Publications Ltd, 2008) p. 204; Muradu Abdo Srur, State Policy and Law in Relation to Land Alienation in Ethiopia, (PhD Dissertations in Law, School of Law, University of Warwick, 2014), pp.9-10

⁵¹⁹ Muradu Abdo Srur , p. 10; Tesfaye Teklu (2014). “Rural Land Rights and Security in Cultivated Highland Ethiopia: Incremental Reform but Persistent Uncertainty” *International Journal of African Development* , (V.2. NO. 1, 2014)., p. 110.

⁵²⁰ Donald Crummey , USAID, Ethiopia: Property Rights and Resource Governance, An Overview of a Country Profile, 20000, p.3

⁵²¹ Ibid. p.3.

crops and animals that provide more than 40% of Ethiopia 's GDP. Governance of these resources is shared between the federal government and nine ethnically based regional governments. The decentralized approach to government further extends public sector oversight and involvement to district (woreda) and local (kebele) levels.⁵²² Average farm sizes in Ethiopia are small with more than 85% of farming households operating less than 2 hectares and, in 2000, more than 40% having 0.5 hectares or less.⁵²³ Article 40 of the 1995 Ethiopian constitution states that: 'the right to ownership of rural land and urban land, as well as of all-natural resources is exclusively vested in the state and the peoples of Ethiopia. Land is a common property of the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia (FDRE, 1995, article 40)'. The article further specifies a 'right to obtain land without payment' for 'Ethiopian peasants' for grazing and cultivation purposes as well as a right to be '[protected] against eviction from the possessions. The article further stipulates that any transfer of land is prohibited and 'shall not be subject to sale or other means of exchange'. These provisions in the constitution seem to have been subject to controversy in the Constituent Assembly, but due to the overriding majority of the ruling party and its allies, the Assembly finally passed it.⁵²⁴ The Oromia Rural Land Use and Administration Proclamation 56/2002' (RGO 2002) and No.39/2003 stated as follows:

The RGO 56/2002 Land Proclamation Grants higher levels of tenure security than the other three regional policies, because it rules out redistribution of land plots (RGO, 2002, Article 14,1). In addition, the proclamation grants 'lifelong usufruct rights' (Article 6,1) to agricultural land 'free of payment' to all male and to female residents whose livelihoods depends on agriculture (Article 5,1) and determines payment of compensation in case land is used for major communal purposes. It grants lifelong use rights independent of marital status or locality of residence. However, there are three important restrictions formulated in the proclamation that allow the state to expropriate land use rights from plot holders and therefore attenuate the lifelong usufruct rights: (1) Article 6,4 grants the right of expropriation if land is required for 'more important public uses', but the rights holder needs to be compensated and can remove investments thereon; (2) Article 14,4 specifies that 'irrigation land' is excluded from the prohibitions of land redistribution, which is allowed subject to the 'participation and consensus of the user community'; and (3) Land can be expropriated if needed for irrigation infrastructure.⁵²⁵

⁵²² Ibid, p.1.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Wibke Crewett and Benedikt Korf, p.207

⁵²⁵ Ibid, p.209.

The transitional government of Ethiopia established in 1991, initially continued the Derg's land policies under the 1995 constitution, the state ownership of all land and the right to seize and redistribute as needed. The constitution affirms that the right to ownership of rural and urban land as well as natural resources is vested in the state and in the peoples of Ethiopia and reserves the right of the government to stipulate the amount of land a citizen may hold. However, the constitution also recognizes the right of the peasants to obtain land without payment and the protection against eviction from their possession.⁵²⁶

After the transitional government came to power in 1991, state ownership of land and natural resources was retained and usufruct in land by users was granted. This was conceived primarily as a preventive measure against possible massive peasant displacement and was a safety-net instrument for the majority of poor peasants. The 1994, and later, 1997, proclamations delegated power to the regional states to administer land and other natural resources and further provided the responsibilities and mechanisms of administration of land.⁵²⁷

The Federal Rural Land Administration Proclamation' (Proclamation 89/1997) which enacted in July 1997 stated that; while the proclamation transfers the authority for land administration, including rights to distribute land, to the regional governments and vests them with the power over the 'assignment of holding rights and the execution of distribution of holdings' (Article 2, 6) it clearly limits the space for regional administrations to exercise those powers. The preamble of the proclamation confirms the constitutional claim that land ownership rights are vested in the state and it rules out the possibility of mortgaging and selling land. It also continues to hold the redistribution of land holdings by the regional governments to be legal. Article 6 authorises regional governments to implement periodic adjustments of individual farmers' land holdings and to demarcate land for communal use (grazing, residence, local forests and social services).⁵²⁸

⁵²⁶ USAID, Property Rights and..., p.6; GOE Constitution, 1995, Article, 40

⁵²⁷ Informant: Tashomee Ballaxaa & Yaada Qana'aa

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to deal with the general history of land tenure system in Laalo Qilee district (Qellem Wollega), from 1941-2002. It briefly highlighted a wide range of economic and social phenomena related to land use and find out how the various types of land tenure operate, how much of the land falls under each of types of tenure, what proportion of the varies categories of land were fertile, semi fertile or poor included in this study. It investigated factors that led to land measurement in Laalo Qilee district and subsequent tenant insecurity and eviction. Tenure security has been cited as one of the limitations of one of the features of the pre- revolution land tenure system. Endless litigation has also been mentioned as one of the features of the rist tenure.

The paper mantains that land in Laalo Qilee was the subject of numerous disputes and endless litigation. Civil disputes over land were cases such as failure of the tenant to pay rent, failure of the tenant to pay the price of grass imposed on them, eviction, claims of inheritance and ownership. It has also founded out the peasant's reaction to the land lord and the prominent heroes of Laalo Qilee Oromo in resisting the existance of feudal administration system in 1960's and 1970's. It highlighted the post land reform policy and the role of the peasant association in Laalo Qilee district. Furthermore, the thesis the thesis explored that how much the land reform of 1975 eliminated the influence and power of the Laalo Qilee local elites. Moreover, this work has explored the relationship between the peasant and the land as well as the nature of the land tenure system under the imperial and *Derg* regime. In such a way, this work is very important because it would have significance for academic research and our knowledge on the history of land tenure under the study area. At the same time, there are serious omissions that leave tenure security unclear. In particular, the proclamation does not state the duration of usufruct rights for landholders. Broadly speaking, while the 1995 constitution and the subsequent Proclamation 89/199713 largely confirm state ownership of land as continuation of *Derg* policies, they also provide some specifications that seek to take account of the necessity for a rural land and labor markets to emerge. Several regional governments have made use of the powers vested in them in the 1995 constitution and Proclamation 89/1997 to formulate their land policies, among them Oromia Region stste was in 2002. According to the constitution, regional land policies need to be in accordance with federal law; all regional policies therefore validate state ownership of land and farmers only receive usufruct rights to plots of land without transfer rights, such as sale or mortgage.

LIST OF INFORMANTS

No.	Name	Sex	Interview			Remark
			Age	Date	Place	
1	Alaamii Gabiisaa Aaddee	F	74	10-02- 2022	Jeenoo	She provides me with information on the peasant association established during the reign of Derg and divisions of land
2	Alaamuu Cawwaqaa (Obbo)	M	81	01-04- 2021	Wankiir	He gave me information about the customary land tenure system and Emperor Menelik II's occupation of the district.
3	Asafaa Bashii	M	65	15-06- 2022	Dentaa	Provided me significant information on how the lord serf system operated in the district and Abba Qoroos of the district
4	Ayana Ejerso	M	82	12-01- 2022	Lalo 01	Told me how Macha made expansion into this part of the Ethiopian region.
5	Baludee Ifaa	M	77	26-06- 2021	Wayyu	He told me about the land tenure system of the "four Laalo's" in Laalo Kile district
6	Banjaaw Tasissa	M	64	27-04- 2021	Laloo 01	Told me what the villagilization and resettlement process looks like in the district
7	Bekuuma Hikaa	M	65	23-03- 2022	Dogaano	Provides me with information about the population and historical background and the types of forest and animals of the district
8	Dagafee Dhabaa (Obbo)	M	68	08-03- 2022	Lalo 01	Told me about ways of tax payment and the struggle of local peoples and the administrative system
9	Daraajee Fiida (Obbo)	M	75	05-02- 2022	Naanoo Jeenoo	Gave me information on government, church land and land that belongs to the nobility and the meaning of the name called Laalo Kile.

10	Dassalee Ya'ii (Obbo)	M	94	11-12- 2009	Saggioo	Provides me with informations such as list of Laalo Kile mayors
11	Dheressa Amante (Qes)	M	75	10-01- 2021	Laalo 01	He used to be a pastor of Laalo St. Michael Church and gave me about the church land holding system and how the clergy collected church tribute and the meaning of Laalo Kile
12	Dibabbaa Eebbaa (Obbo)	M	76	14-02- 2021	Wankiir	On the Dergue's aggressive measure on other political groups and religion.
13	Efireem Qanaasee (Obbo)	M	71	30-06- 2022	Wankir	Told me about the process of primogeniture among the Macha Oromo and the Laalo Oromo settlement in Laalo Kile district
14	Fayera Erga (Obbo)	M	75	26-03- 2022	Shanoo	Provides me with the effects of lord serf system
15	Fetene Besira	M	64	14-06- 2009	Lalo 01	A government employee who had given me information about government policy on land since 1991 and its investmsnt policy
16	Fiida Tokkii (Obbo)	M	56	12-02- 2022	Waankiir	A Government employee, who gave me some descriptions on the occurrence of opposition movement against Haile Selassie government.
17	Fite Galata (Obbo)	M	68	07-09- 2022	Kutalla Lubee	Had been a kebele chairman during Derg and supplied me with information on the climate and agro-ecology of the district
18	Gammachis Banjaaw	F	84	04-05- 2022	Laalo 01	Served in Laalo Kile culture and tourism office who was an expert in Oromoo geneology

19	Hambisaa Teshomee	F	70	13-05- 2022	Waayyuu	Gave me some information on the life of tenancy administration system of the district
20	Huseena Sardaa	M	71	25-06- 2021	Lalo 01	Supported me in giving hint about the orthodox church land tenure
21	Ittansaa Gobbanaa	M	52	07-03- 2022	Bille Kella	Local elders who asserted about Laalo under the influence of Emperor Menelik II
22	Kaababa Ciibsaa (Obbo)	M	50	23-01- 2021	Naanoo Jeenoo	A farmer who gave me about the effects of tenancy in Laalo Kile district
23	Mitikkuu Daafaa	M	49	23-04- 2021	Laalo 01	Provides me with the nature of land tenure during the diarchy and Italian period
24	Masaraat Tulli(Obbo)	M	65	15-04- 2021	Laalo 01	He had been a member of the committee of peasant association at kebele level and had plenty of information on this point.
25	Mitiku Dafa Teacher	M	54	04-01- 2021	Nya'a	Information on the formation of the Shoan governor of Lalo.
26	Mokonnon Naggasaa	M	67	30-05- 2021	Laloo 01	He gave me a plenty of ideas on the genealogical tree of the four clans of Lalo and the background on the name of the district
27	Motummaa Baatuu (Obbo)	M	52	23-03- 2021	Kuuyyuu	Told me the land grants to the nobility, soldiers and gebbars
28	Namarra Bayana (Obbo)	M	71	07-05- 2021	Laalo 01	Information on Lalo socio-cultural and political life before and after its incorporation and the types of land.
29	Ofga'aa Wiirtuu (Obbo)	M	73	24-01- 2022	Saaggoo	Gave me information about list of informants in the district and types of land tenure
30	Qes Dheressa Amantee	M	70	12-04- 2021	Dhuumuga	Informed me the introduction of Orthodox Christianity in Lalo of Qile.

	(Obbo)					
31	Sanbaatoo Galatee (Obbo)	M	95	10-03- 2022	Naanoo Jeenoo	A farmer who gave me about the Laalo's administrative structure
32	Shifaaraa Qaana'aa (Obbo)	M	49	02-03- 2021	Marfoo	He gave me some ideas on different established peasant associations during Derg.
33	Shumii Kabaabba (Obbo)	M	60	14-05- 2021	Lalo 01	Rose ideas on Derg's rural reforms.
34	Simeessoo Hirphoo (Obbo)	M	67	09-04- 2021	Wankiir	A farmer who told me about the landmass of the district and songs against land alienation
35	Taddasaa Caawaqaa (Obbo)	M	65	23-05- 2021	Kuuyyuu	He gave me some information on villagization and settlement process during Derg.
36	Tafaarii Tarressa (Obbo)	M	75	06-04- 2021	Nya'aa	Provide me hint on the tribute collection system and payment during Dergue
37	Taraafaa Karoorsa (Obbo)	M	73	12-06- 2021	Kuuyyuu	A farmer who had given me information on Derg's resettlement and villagization program.
38	Taraafaa Wayyuu (Obbo)	M	76	04-05- 2022	Saggoo	A farmer who provides me with the ways of tax payments and communal land tenure system

39	Tasfaa Kumaraa (Obbo)	M	65	25-04- 2021	Billee Buubaa	A farmer, who had given me some ideas on the land tenure system and the opposition against it.
40	Theshooma Gamteessa(O bbo)	M	49	21-04- 2022	Nya'aa	Gave me ideas about land grants to the royal family
41	Yaada Qana'aa (Obbo)	M	75	24-02- 2021	Deentaa	Supplied me with information such as the Laalo clans, the struggle, peasant associations, Menelik II's conquest and tribute payment, Qalad system and land measurement and song-poem, Derg policies and the like

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GLOSSARY

Abba lafaa _____ landlord

Ato _____ a civil term to address adult men which is equivalent to Mr.

Awraja _____ an administrative unit bellow the level of the province

Balabat _____ land lord or local hereditary chiefs

Balambaras _____ a military title just bellows grazmach.

Bale-gult _____ owner of a plot of land offered for the service given to the government

Baleqalad _____ owner of land that traditionally measured in a rope

Birr _____ Ethiopia paper currency

Caffee _____ gada council (assembly)

Chiqa-shum _____ village head during imperial period

Dajazmach _____ commander of the gate politico-military title bellow ras

Derg _____ the military gov. of Ethiopia

Fitiwarari _____ commander of the vanguard military title bellow dajazmach

Gabbar _____ tribute paying peasant

Gasha _____ traditional unit of land in which one gasha is equivalent to 40 hectares

Gizat _____ an administrative unit

Malkegna _____ local administrator that denotes landlord

Massalane _____ a sub-district governor

Metekel massalane _____ an administrative unit bellow massalane

Nac-lebash _____ local milisha

Naftenna _____ the one who carry gun

Negus _____ king

Qabiyyee_____afan oromo (holding)

Qegnazmach_____politico-military title above grazmach

Qoro_____ local chief in afan Oromo above chiq-a-shum

Ras_____head, a greater political military title next to negus

Teqlay gizat_____an administrative unit equivalent to province

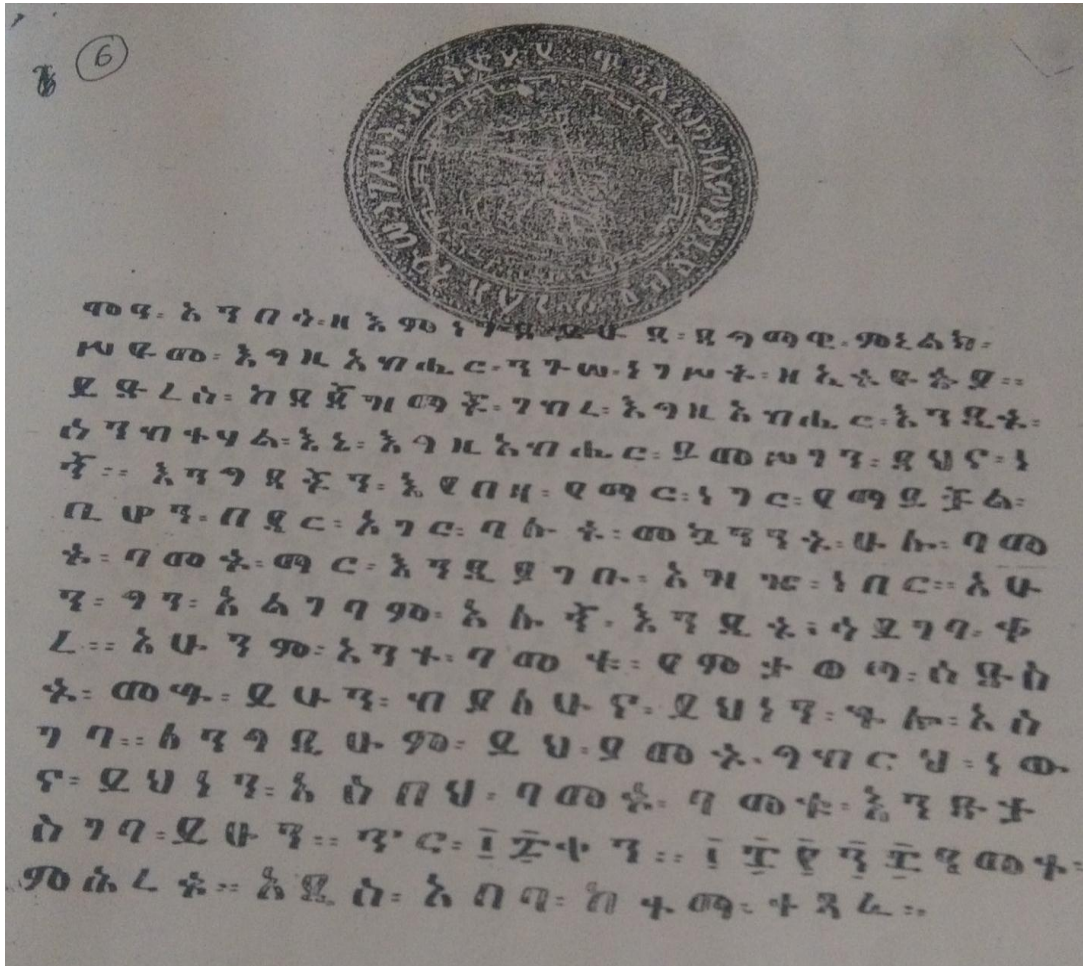
Warada_____district

Zamacha_____campaign

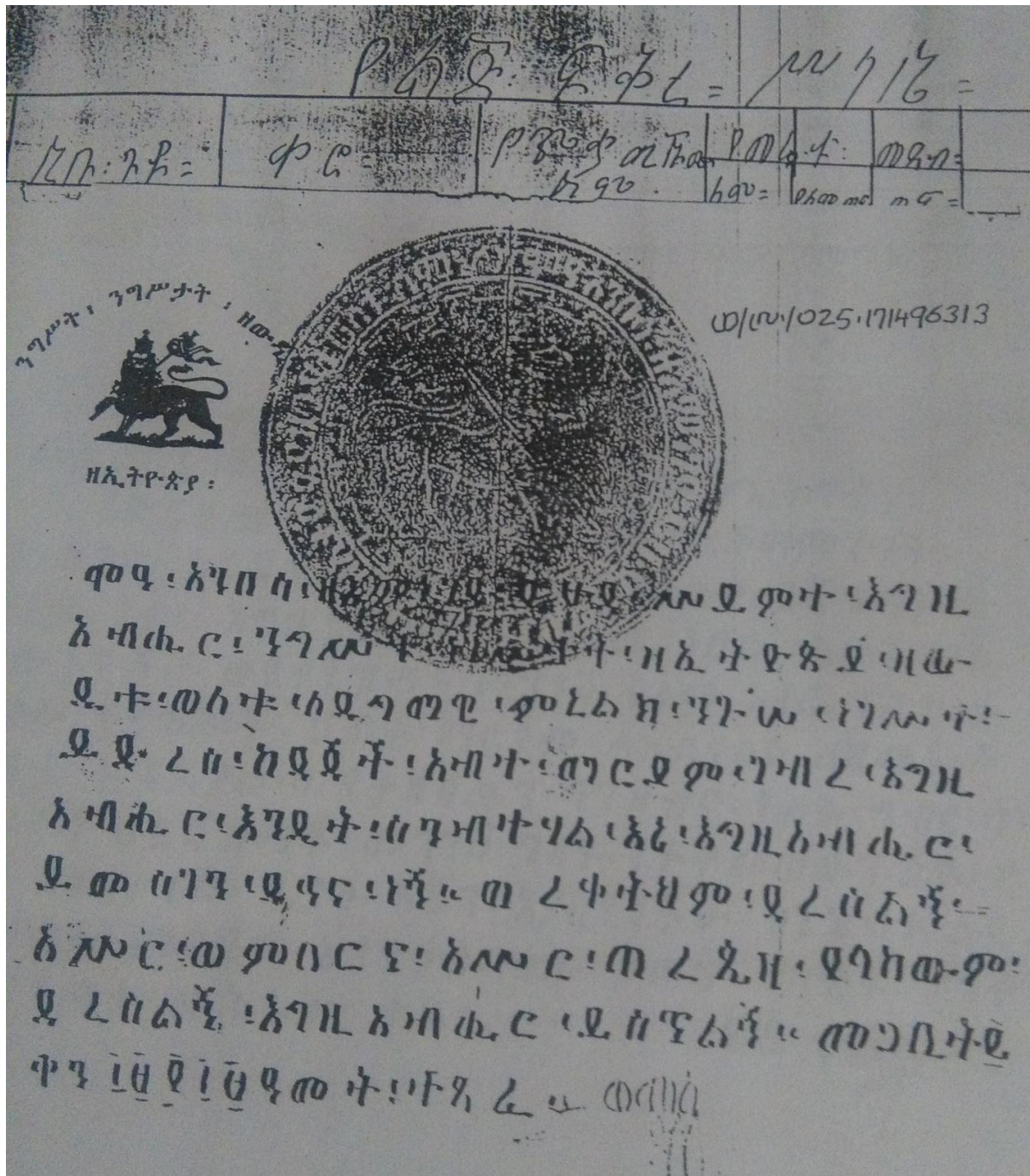
Zone_____an administrative unit bellow regional state

APPENDICES

Appendix I

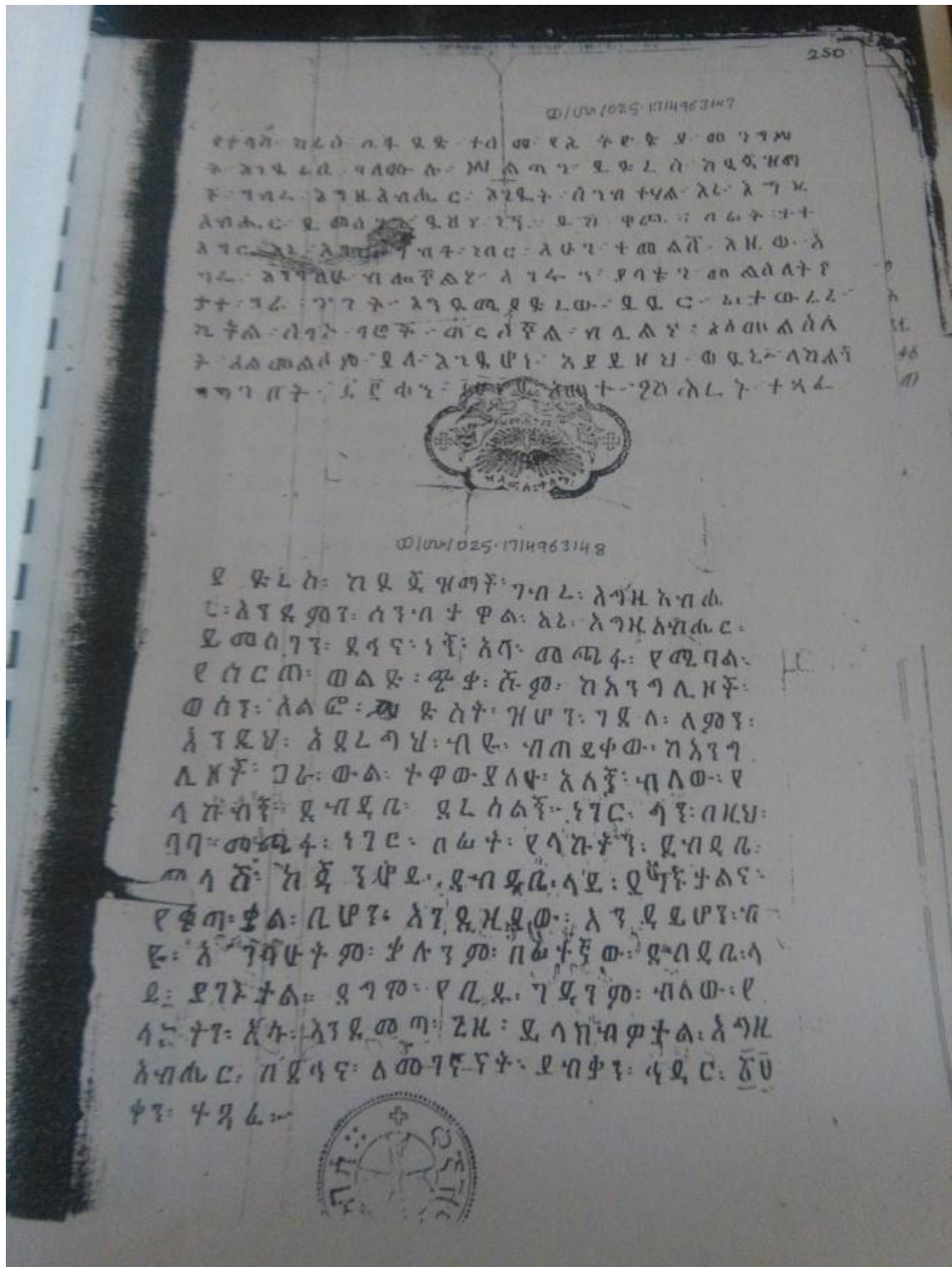


It is a letter that was written by Menelik to Dajjazmach Gebre Egzihaber on January 18/1888. The material is about a tribute that the ruler of Leqa Naqamte ought to pay in honey to the king of Shawa.



The letter was sent to Dajjazmach Habte Mariam from Empress Zewditu Menelik. It was written on March 02/1919 on the paid tribute in the form of chairs and tables by Habte Maryam

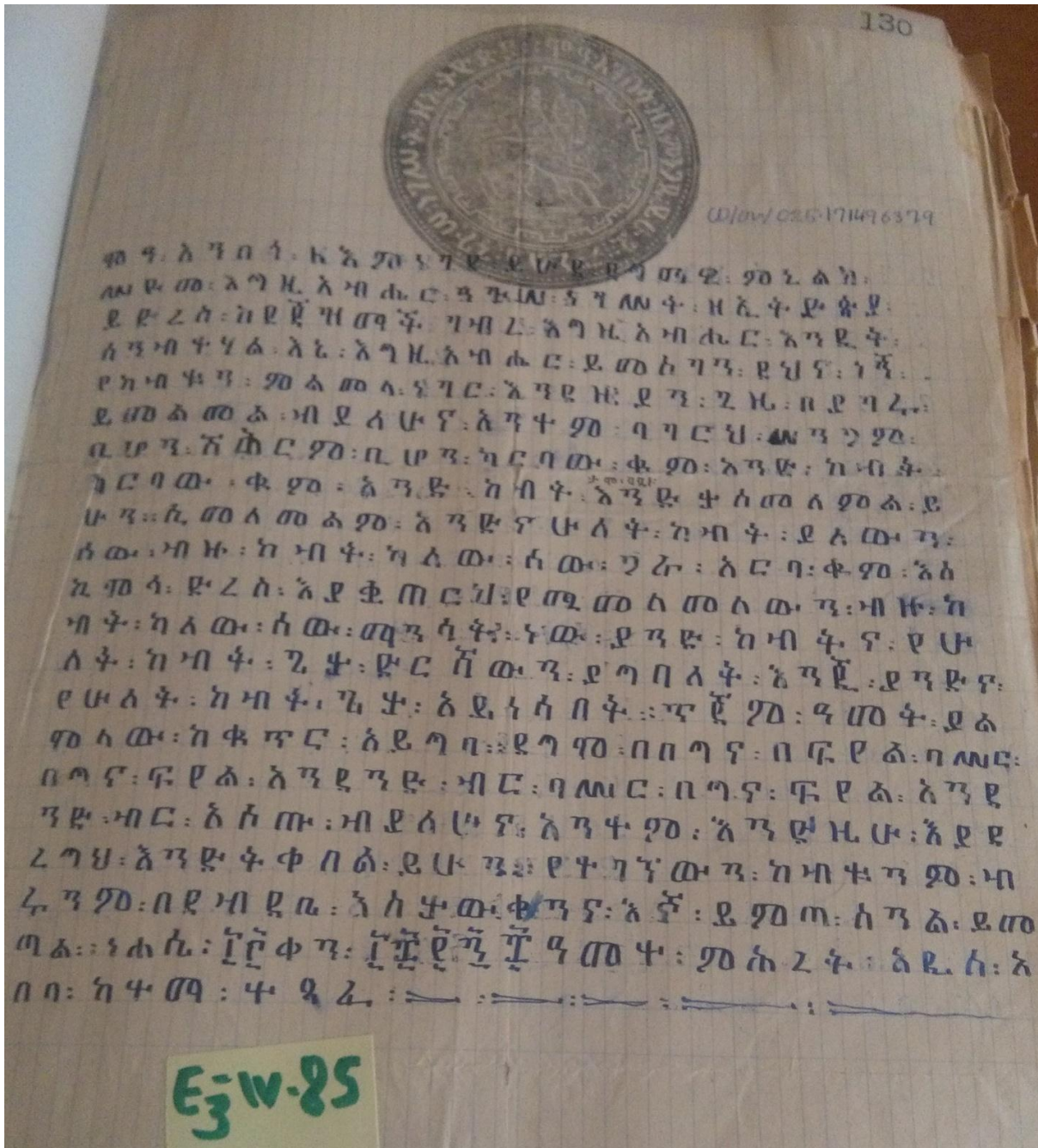
Appendix III



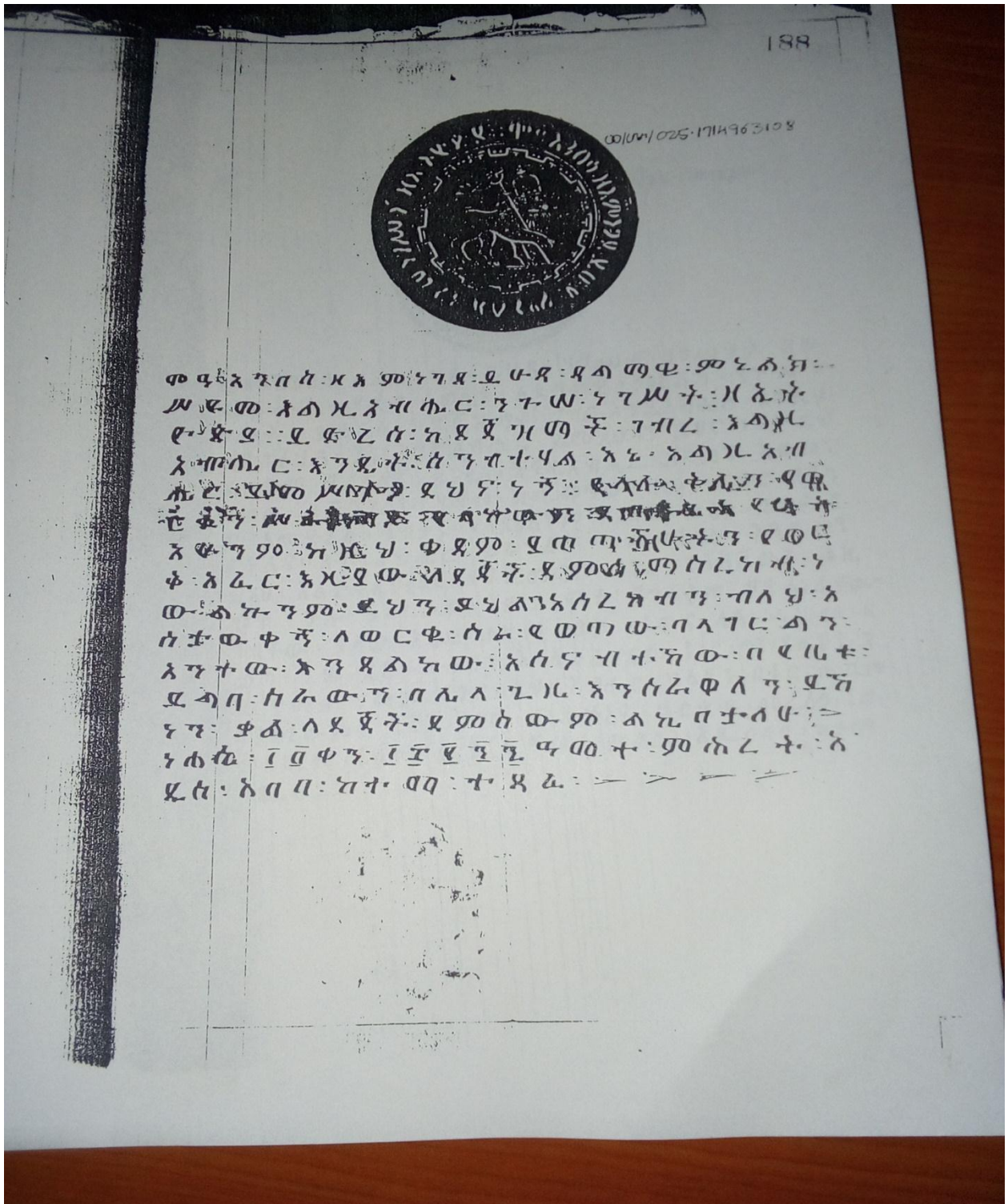
Ras Teferi wrote a letter to Dajjazmach Gebre Egzihaber to stop uncontrolled elephant's raids

Appendix IV

Ras Teferi wrote a letter to Gebre Egzihaber on February 12/1917. It emphasized on the implementation of the Qalad system and the payment of tax in Qellem Wollega

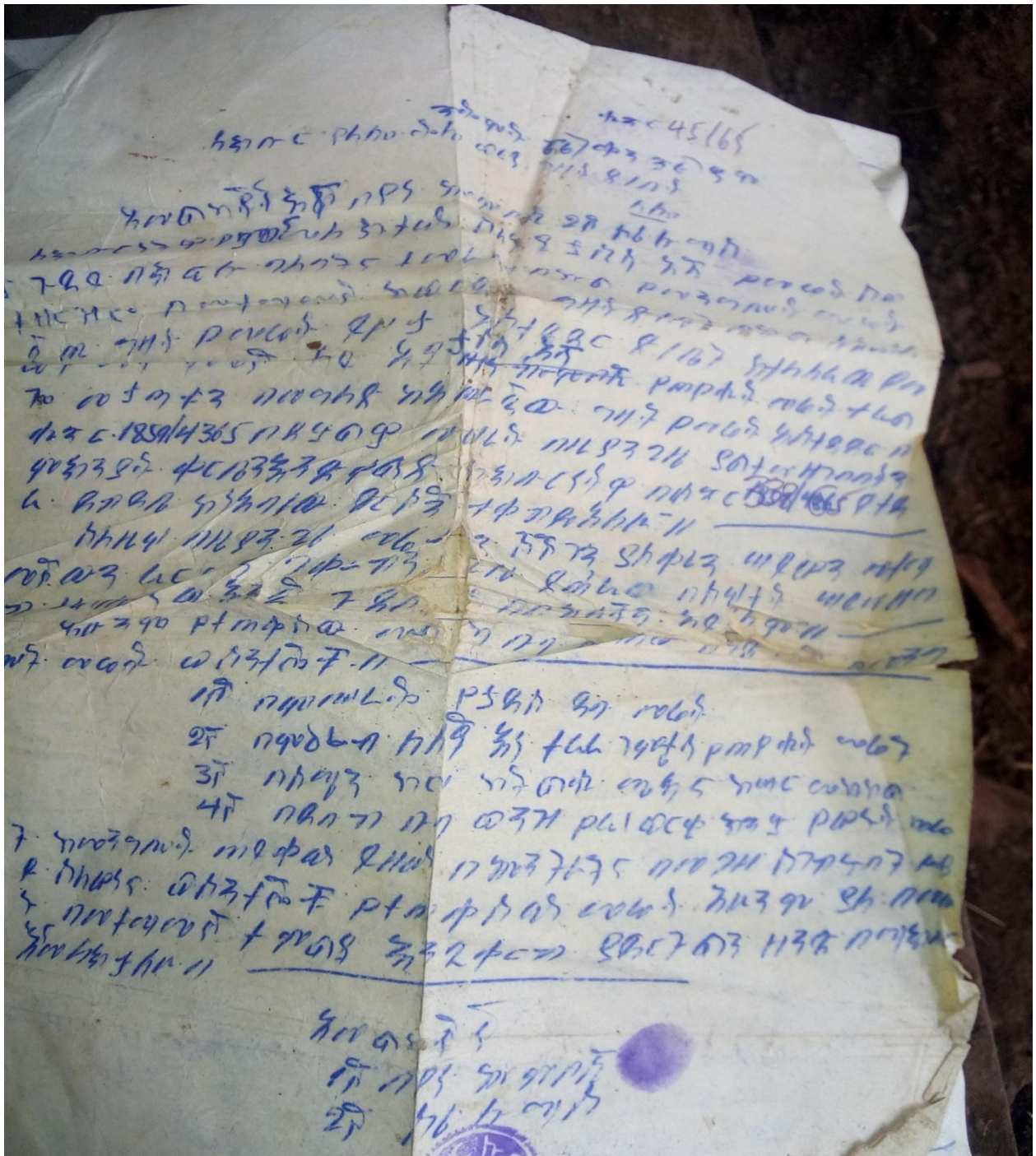


The above account which was written on August 13/1898 by Emperor Menelik to Gebre Egzihaber was focused on tribute payment in cows, goats, and sheep and also in berr.



The letter written and sent from central to *Dejach* Gebere-Egzibiher of Leeqaa-Naqamtee the former wallagga governor province (from August 11,1887to August 28,1928 ,Addis Ababa(, in the File No 3/W/M Nekemt , No 51

Appendix VII



The occupation of local societies of Laalo Kilee districts, along Buubaa Rivers in the special area of Malkaa Buubaa bought in the form of private Rist rub gasha land saling system

APPENDIX VIII



It is the letter sent from Laaloo Qilee Environmental office report on 28/2011, evidenced that the major visible investment involvements along the Birbir River Valley Billee Buubaa, Madaallee Kaallisaa, Darraa Jaarsoo kebeles with total sizes of 617.384 hec were controlled

Appendix IX

ጥር 2/16783
ጊዜያዊ 22/589.ዓ.

ለሰጠ ደብዳቤ ስርዓት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ
የወለጋ ወተላቤ ገዛት አገደረቢ
ገጥቷ

ገጥቷ - ስለ የገጠት ደን ማረጋገጫ

3

በሰጠ ሆኖ
በወተላቤ ገዛት የሚገኙትን የገጠት ወዘተ የሆኑትን ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ
በ የቤት 29/5599 በጥር 2/9279/የአፍገውን በማስታወስ፡-
አውገዳዎች ገጠ ገጠት ማረጋገጫ የሆኑትን ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ
የደን ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ
የሆኑትን ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ
7/2/141-የተዘረዘሩትን ደብዳቤ ገልጻል፡- ገጠ ገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ
አለበት በተለይ ጥር በስተላለፍነው ትኩረት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ
ወዘተ የሆኑትን የደን ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ
ያል ያስረዝቡትን የደን ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ
ገለጻል፡- በማስታወስ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ

በማስታወስ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ

ጥገታ
ይገር ገዛት ሚኒስቴር
ገልጻል

በማስታወስ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ

ለኢትዮጵያ ገጠ ገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ
የሆኑትን ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ
አላሳ ለገጠ

ጥገታ ለገጠ

ገጠት 9/19589 በጥር 7468/80
በተዘረዘሩትን ደብዳቤ ገልጻል፡- ገጠ ገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ
ጥገታ የወለጋ ወተላቤ ገዛት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ ለማድረግ ለገጠት ማረጋገጫ
ጥገታ ለገጠ

ጥገታ ለገጠ

Appendix XII

የገንዘብ ደብዳቤ

ለገንዘብ ደብዳቤ ለመሙላት የሚያስፈልጉትን መረጃዎች ይሙሉ።

ተ/አ	የገቢዎች ስም	የገቢዎች ደብዳቤ						የገቢዎች ደብዳቤ							
		ሰኞ	ሰኞ	ሰኞ	ሰኞ	ሰኞ	ሰኞ	ሰኞ	ሰኞ	ሰኞ	ሰኞ	ሰኞ			
1	ለገንዘብ ደብዳቤ	26	44	25	..	1991	12	50	2061	37	50	48385	63
2	ለገንዘብ ደብዳቤ	423	50	..	734	25	..	4475	87	50	5633	62	50	177065	38
3	ገቢ	179	12	50	233	75	..	2094	25	..	2507	12	50	74664	26
4	ገቢ	2929	37	50	720	25	..	1706	12	50	4459	75	..	181163	13
5	ገቢ	45	25	..	34	81	25	3319	3399	06	25	89764	33
ጠቅላላ ገቢ		2703	25	..	1767	31	25	13986	37	50	18056	93	75	571042	73

ጠቅላላ ደብዳቤ

15/ ገቢዎች ደብዳቤ ለመሙላት

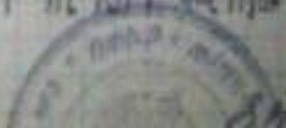
25. ገቢዎች ደብዳቤ ለመሙላት

35. ገቢዎች ደብዳቤ ለመሙላት

571,042.73 ሲቪ

250,011.23 ሲቪ

321,031.50 ሲቪ



[Handwritten signature]

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ቁ፡ጥር ፡ 4/2351

መጋቢት ፱ ግ. ፲፱፻፺፮ ዓ.ም.

8-h-2-335

13/7/53

41306/53

ለከበር የግዕድና የወገንነት ገበሬት ግደታ
አዲስ አበባ ፡፡

ገዢው ፡- ሰለጠረት ተላይ መለከት ፡፡

ከከር ሆይ ፡፡

ሰለጠረ መቀላይ ገዛት ባላባቸው ሲሆን ግደታ ገበሬ ግደታ
ፈለግ ግደታ መለከት ተቆይቶ 17/53 ዓ.ም.፡ በጥር 8/33/1931/

53 የዳኔቸውን ደብዳቤ ይርብናል ፣ የተባለውን አገርና ሌሎችም በ
ተላይ ለማሰለጠን ያለባቸውን ችግር በወገላሽ የወጣት ገቢ የኖ መሆኑን

ቤት መስከረም 20/53 ዓ.ም.፡ በጥር 143/7/53 ለዳኔልን ደብዳቤ
ተቆይቶ 2/53 ዓ.ም.፡ በጥር 4/1126 የሰጠውን መልስ አገልግሎት

ለከተት ትክክል ገልግሎት አገልግሎት ገደ ከዚህ ጋር አያይዘን መላካቸውን
አዳገለጽን በተመጣጠኑ አገልግሎት የጠየቁትን ተያይዞ ስለተፈተኑትን በ

አዳገለጽን በተመጣጠኑ አገልግሎት የጠየቁትን ሆኑን በጥከር አናስቷቸዋል ፡፡
ከጥከር በላይ ጋር ፡፡

አዲስ አበባ
ጥያቄ ተቀባይ
አዲስ አበባ
ጥያቄ ተቀባይ

18/7/53

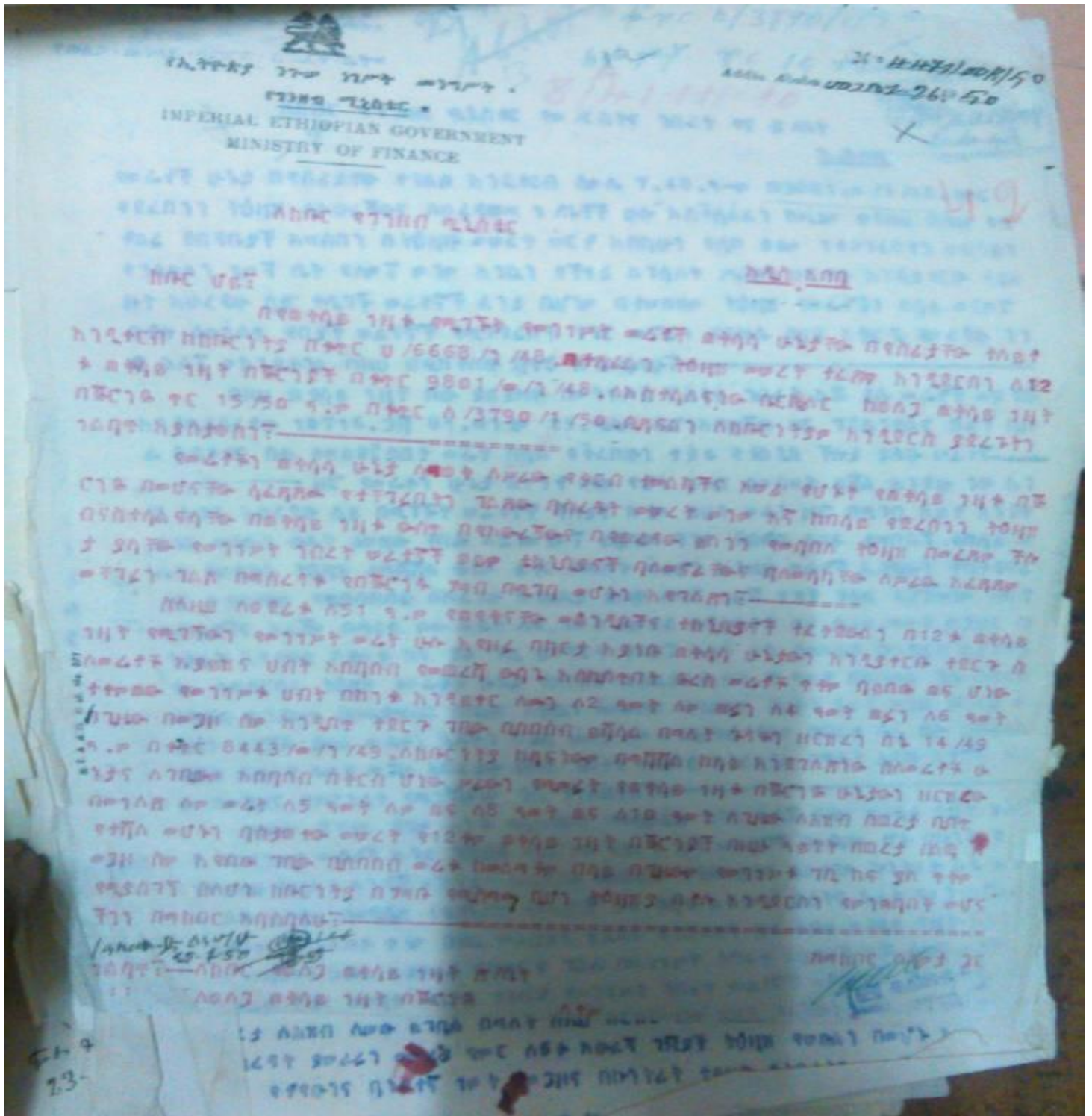


Emhane
የጥገናና የጥበቃ ሚኒስቴር
የአገልግሎት ሚኒስቴር

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ገልግሎት ፡፡
ለከበር የገንዘብ ግደታ
አዲስ አበባ ፡፡

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I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and that all sources used for the thesis production have been fully acknowledged. It has not been submitted to any other university for degree or any other award.

Name: _____

Signature _____

Date of submission _____