

# Changes beyond the State Institution: Socialist Policies and Land Tenure in a Coffee-Growing Village, Southwestern Ethiopia

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The transition to socialism in Ethiopia brought a drastic change to the rural areas. The purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of the socialist policies of the Derg regime (1974–91) on a coffee-growing area where the state strongly intervened. The main focus is on the historical change of land tenure.

By tracing the historical process a coffee-growing village has experienced, it becomes apparent that socialist policy such as land nationalization and agricultural socialization not only integrated rural land that the peasants had owned and used, but also tried to “nationalize” the peasants through three national organizations - the peasant association, the state farm, and the producers’ cooperative. Furthermore, the analysis of land tenure dynamics reveals the fact that the influx of migrants, which had started during the first half of the twentieth century, was accelerated under the socialist policies. This enormous influx of population caused land scarcity and lengthened the duration of unstable tenancy that could have been settled by the land redistribution. Despite the state’s massive intervention under the Derg regime, social change in a rural area did not go exactly as intended by the political center. It is the movement beyond the state institutions that has created the conditions for changes in rural communities.

**Key words:** rural community, socialist policies, land tenure, coffee-growing area, Ethiopia.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The transition to socialism in Ethiopia brought a drastic change to the former imperial polity. Land reform, which the Derg promulgated in March 1975<sup>(1)</sup>, astonished even radical Ethiopian leftists. The proclamation declared rural lands a public property, prohibited any kind of land transfer, and made provisions for the redistribution of land to peasants. At first, this proclamation was admired as the most radical land reform ever seen in Africa (Kidane 1990: 89). The feudal land institution that imperial families, nobles, and orthodox churches had dominated as landlords collapsed rapidly following this land reform.

As sub-Saharan African countries achieved independence from colonial rule in the 1960s, many leaders in those countries adopted socialism. Their ideology is often called “African socialism” (Oda 1989: 43–65, 1991: 9–12; Ikeno 1997). They claimed that they

could achieve an African endemic socialism by recovering the socialistic ethos of traditional African communities in the pre-colonial era. In order to cast off the yoke of the West, the countries advocating "African socialism" sought a new national polity by abandoning the European capitalism of the colonial economy.

Socialism in Ethiopia was quite different. What the Derg sought to cast off was not the colonial economy or capitalism, but the feudalism of the imperial state. Ethiopia is said to be the only country in Africa where feudal tenancy had been developed. In the southern parts of Ethiopia, the expansion of the empire during the late nineteenth century rendered most peasants subordinate tenants by distributing land to soldiers, local administrators, and others.<sup>(2)</sup> Donham (1999: 27–8) points out that the socialist revolution of Ethiopia was an attempt to realize the modernism that intellectuals had envisaged. They aimed to emerge from the backwardness of traditional Ethiopia where feudalism still dominated and to establish a modern society just as in Europe. In this sense, socialism in Ethiopia ideologically struck out in another direction from African socialism.<sup>(3)</sup> Above all, land institutions were the central issue of revolutionary reform.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of socialist policies under the Derg on rural communities, focusing on the historical change in relationships between local peasants and their lands.

We have had many studies on socialist policy under the Derg. Among them, political analysis on land reform began just after the revolution of 1974. Most of these studies, however, focused on the political movement behind the revolution and which led to the radical reform in which government officials, the urban elite, and student activists were involved. The situation of rural areas was not clearly understood mainly because of the difficulty in collecting data under the socialist government.

After the collapse of the Derg in 1991, a number of researchers began to reexamine the socialist policy in various disciplines such as development economics, agricultural development studies and other social sciences.<sup>(4)</sup> This theme also marks one of the significant trends in anthropology today. Donham (1999) is a rare anthropologist who had experienced the 1974 revolution in his field, describing elaborately political and social change in Maale under the socialist regime.<sup>(5)</sup> Several anthropologists have contributed to an understanding of the various changes experienced in peripheral areas during and after the Derg (James *et al.* 2002).

This paper aims to suggest a new perspective on such issues by analyzing the historical change that took place in a coffee-growing area of southwestern Ethiopia. Coffee constitutes more than 60 per cent of the national income from foreign currency and has political as well as economic importance in Ethiopia. Therefore coffee-growing areas have been subjected to massive state interventions. This paper examines the dynamics of land tenure in such a coffee-growing area by analyzing the historical changes before, during and after the Derg era. It is offered as a contribution towards understanding the historical process in rural societies in the Ethiopian highlands, which has been relatively ignored in anthropological studies.

I have conducted fieldwork for a total of twelve months during the period from 1998 to 2003 and collected the relevant documents at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University in January 2001. The major method of my fieldwork was interviews with local peasants as well as state farm officers, and land measurements by using the global positioning system (GPS) mainly for making land use maps and confirming the boundaries of some historical places. Historical narratives people told me are plotted on that map, and it makes it possible to understand concretely the historical process that a rural community has experienced.

## 2. STUDY AREA

The study area is located at Gomma *wärüda* in Oromia Regional State, where you can see the glossy leaves of coffee trees almost everywhere. The Qomba village where fieldwork was

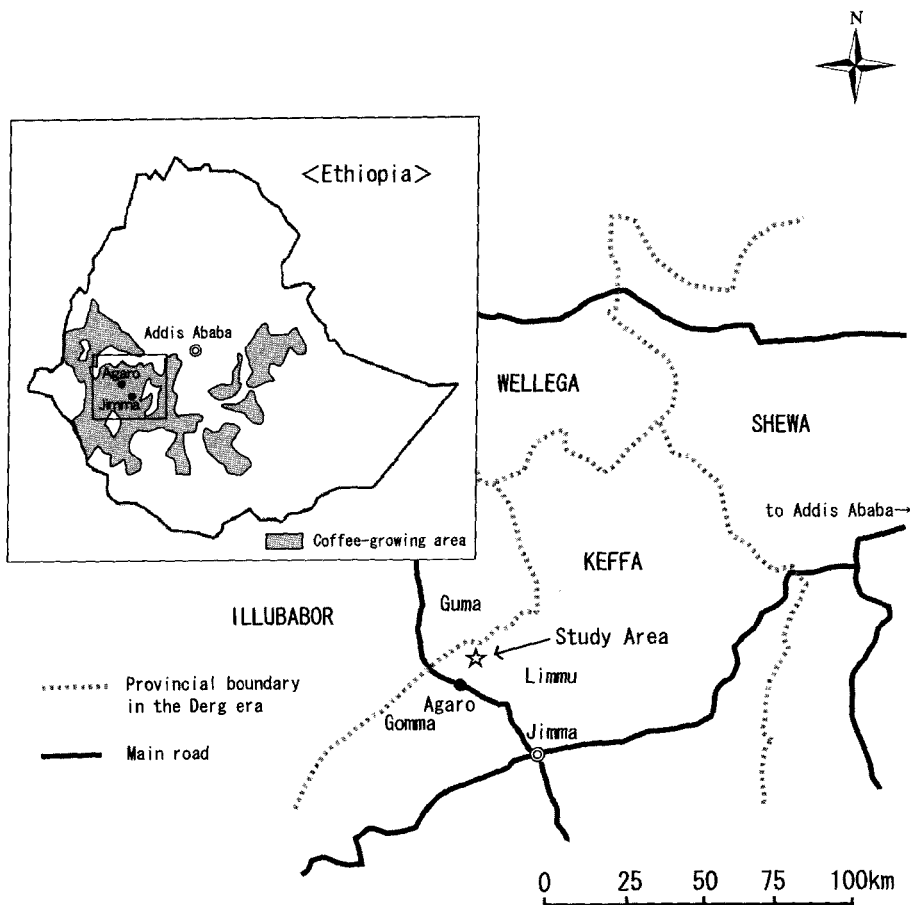


Fig. 1. Map of study area: coffee-growing area in southwestern Ethiopia

conducted is located 15km northeast of Agaro, which is known as one of the centers of coffee production (Fig. 1). A state coffee farm, Gomma II, adjacent to that village is also included in the study area. According to the national census in 1994, the population of Qomba was 1,987 (male 1,011 and female 976), with 451 households, and the numbers of workers living in Gomma II was 2,189 (male 1,135 and 1,054 female) (CSA 1996: 87).

The altitude of Qomba is about 1,500m–1,600m and the annual rainfall is about 1,300mm–1,600mm. Most peasants make their living by coffee production and cultivate maize fields for subsistence. The major ethnic groups are Oromo (about 70 per cent of the total population) and others include Amhara (about 12 per cent) and “Kullo” (about 10 per cent).<sup>(6)</sup>

This paper consists of two parts. In the first, I try to reconstruct, by using people’s narratives, the process of land tenure in Qomba through the Derg era. In the second, I will demonstrate the effects of socialist policies on rural lands by analyzing specific cases such as the process of land transfer in a number of plots and the history of how a peasant held his land and used it.<sup>(7)</sup> By trying to explain the relationship between peasants and land from various perspectives, I hope to shed light on the multiple aspects of land histories that the peasants have experienced. In the discussion, I will interpret the historical change of land tenure in the study area in terms of relations to the political history of the Ethiopian central government.

In this paper, words in the Oromo and Amhara language are annotated by italic *afaan oromo* (Or.) and *amharanya* (Am.). Other proper nouns and name of persons or places,

whose origins are not clear, are annotated by an English form, such as Qomba.<sup>(8)</sup> The use of square brackets [ ] shows information sources and corresponds to the informants list at the end of this paper.

### 3. EXPERIENCES OF THE REVOLUTION IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

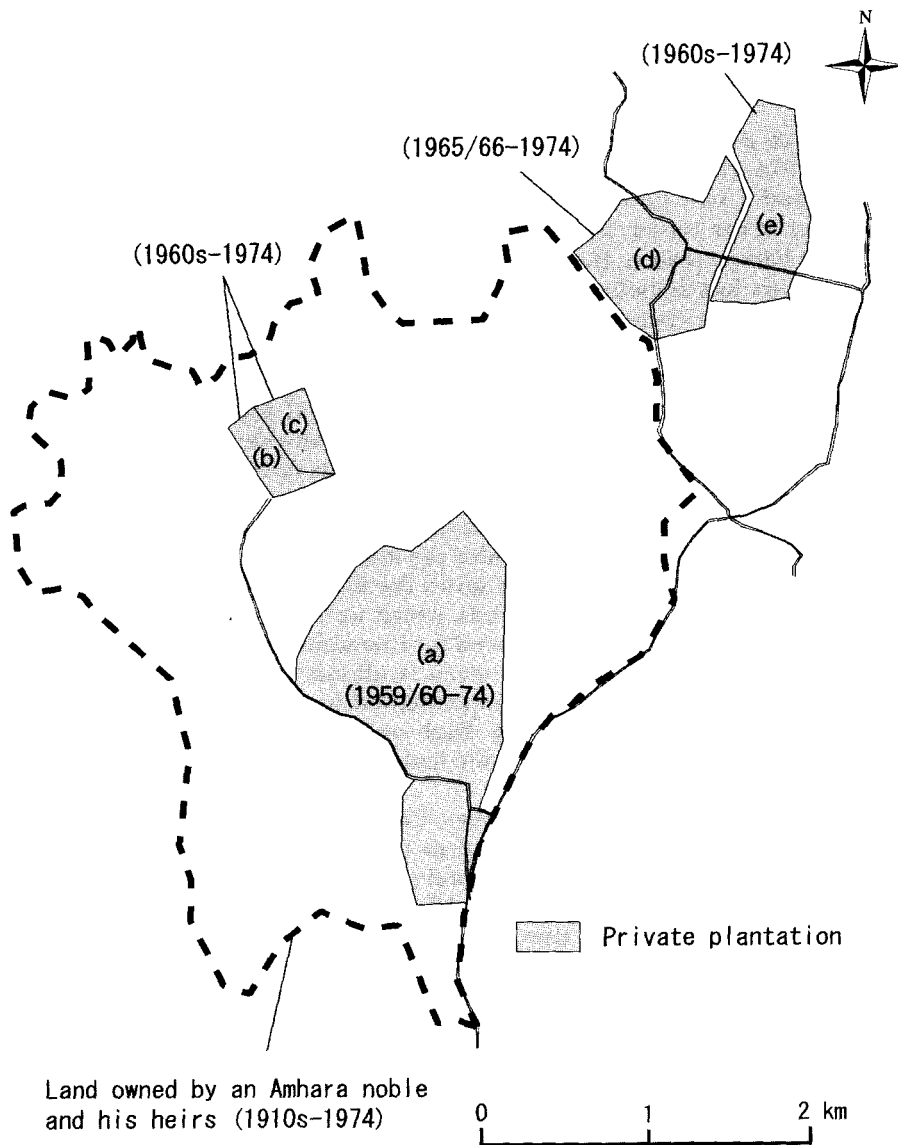
#### 3.1. *The way to the Revolution: Imperial expansion and plantation development*

The Gomma area was ruled by an Oromo monarchy, called the "Gomma," from the middle of the eighteenth century. It was one of the five Oromo states established in the Gibe region, namely: Jimma, Limmu, Gera, Guma, and Gomma. During the monarchy period, a political hierarchy developed in which a king *moti* (Or.) was at the top, assisted by councilors, *qopp* (Or.), who were respected wealthy people, chosen from the dominant clans within the kingdom (Guluma 1984: 114–29).<sup>(9)</sup> With the *qoppo's* advice, a *moti* selected a number of *abba qoro* (Or.), who took a judicial and administrative role as governors (*qoro*) of a province, and were usually recruited from among the majority clans in the province. While these *moti*, *qoppo*, and *abba qoro* held vast lands on which they had settled landless cultivators and their own slaves, the tenure of the lands not held by them was based on *qabiyyee* (Or.) rights in which the first occupants had priority and demanded the right of possession over unclaimed forest and pasture lands. Latecomers claimed the new status of tenants (*qubsissaa*, Or.) of *qabiyyee* holders or landholders (*abba lafa*, Or.). It is pointed out that for the inherited land, brothers held their respective pieces individually, and there were apparently no communal subdivision of the lands among all members of a lineage, which was widely practiced in northern Ethiopia, and that even the purchase of land was rather common among the Oromo at that time (Tekalign 1986: 153).

In 1882 the Gomma kingdom surrendered without a fight to *ras* (Am.)<sup>(10)</sup> Gobana, who was an able Oromo general of Menelik (r. 1889–1913), and began to pay tribute to the Shewan state (Guluma 1984: 159–60). In those days, Menelik as a Shewan king was expanding his territory rapidly to establish the base of the Ethiopian empire. Four years later, in 1886, the first Shewan governor, *däjazmach* (Am.)<sup>(11)</sup> Bashah Aboyye, was appointed and sent to Gomma with his soldiers to incorporate this area into the imperial institution.

Partly because Qomba was located in the buffer zone of the adjacent Limmu kingdom, there still remained vast unutilized forests at that time. An Amhara noble, *däjazmach* Wossene, who was a governor of this Gomma area from approximately 1907 to 1912 and built the first orthodox church in Qomba, deprived the "land of forest" (*lafa badda*, Or.), which covered the west part of Qomba [A & O]. He claimed tax payment from the peasants who lived dispersed on 86 *gasha* (Am.)<sup>(12)</sup> land and later confiscated it (Fig. 2). At that time, about 300 peasants became the tenants (*čäsänya*, Am.) of this governor. *Däjazmach* Wossene sent a few vassals to Qomba who forced peasants to surrender three-tenths of their harvests, two-tenths as a tenant's rent and one-tenth as a tithe. But this does not mean that all peasants living there were totally controlled by the Amhara nobility. A woman who was married to his vassal's son said, "He (*däjazmach* Wossene) had a salary from the government and did not need to get benefits from the land. He just took it that it was his own land" [M]. Another old peasant said, "Even when Amhara vassals evicted Oromo peasants (who didn't pay the tenant rent), they soon came back and cultivated the land again" [A]. It can be said that ownership of the vast Qomba forest by the Amhara nobility was not very rigid, but rather loose in its nature.<sup>(13)</sup>

This "forest land" was inherited by *däjazmach* Wossene's sons and grandsons and was partly given to certain vassals [F]. From the end of the 1950s, modern plantations have been established there. One grandson of *däjazmach* Wossene, *Fitawrari*<sup>(14)</sup> Gebre Kristos, opened a private plantation employing wage laborers ((a) in Fig. 2).<sup>(15)</sup> In 1959/60, he abandoned his career as a government official and switched this land to a commercial operation producing maize and coffee by expelling a large number of peasants [H]. People remember well the early stage of the plantation development and told me that



**Fig. 2.** History of land in Qomba (1): from the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 1974 revolution  
 \* Alphabets of private plantations (a)~(e) correspond to the description in 3.1.

many peoples' houses and garden farms were destroyed by the employees.

Thereafter, in the middle of the 1960s, Gebre Kristos lent a part of his unutilized land to two entrepreneurs, the Gurage brothers who lived in Agaro, for coffee plantations ((b) and (c) in Fig. 2). Furthermore, some private plantations were established on the northern part of the "forest land" (Fig. 2). In 1965/66, an Amhara officer who worked in the Agaro administration office got an 8 *gasha* land plot from the government and opened a plantation in which coffee and some kinds of fruits were grown ((d) in Fig. 2) [A, M & J]. Around then, another Amhara officer also acquired some of the land and started a coffee farm by introducing a modern facility, including a pulping station ((e) in Fig. 2). Thus some peasants in Qomba began to work as wage laborers in private plantations, mostly as temporary workers for coffee picking. Although most of the peasants were still tenants of

landlords, or some cultivated their own land for subsistence, since the middle of the twentieth century some portion of land in the coffee-growing area began to be invested in by capitalist landlords and exploited exclusively with wage labor.

### 3.2. *Organizing the peasants: Land redistribution and peasant associations*

In September 1974, the people in Qomba learned that the Emperor Haile Selassie I had been arrested and a new government, called the Derg, had seized power in turn. The change of power at the center, however, did not immediately affect the rural areas. In the following maize harvest season, from October to November, tenants paid share rent (*irboo*, Or.) to landowners just as before, and also sowed crop seeds from January to February 1975 under the old basis vis-à-vis the landowners [A & B]. In March 1975, however, a radio broadcast announced that all the land now belonged to the peasants.

On 21 March (*mäggabit* (Am.) 12) 1975, a car came to Qomba [A]. Two men got out and explained the new policy: “[There are] No landowner[s] now. All land is given to the peasants. And no one has to pay any kind of rents to anyone. Oxen also belong to the peasants.” Almost every day, the radio reported the places where *zämächa* (Am.) had visited that day. The *zämächa*, which means “cooperative development,” consisted of students who were sent to rural areas to organize peasants, and took an early and important role in spreading the new socialist policies.<sup>(16)</sup> Under the initiative of the *zämächa*, land reform was also carried out in Qomba. Tenants were given the fields where they had sown seeds and large-scale landlords lost most of their lands, which were redistributed to peasants except for only 5 *facasa* (Or.) (about 1.8ha) reserved for themselves.<sup>(17)</sup>

In the process of land redistribution, seven landlords were killed by *zämächa* around Qomba [A]. As land redistribution was implemented in such a manner that anyone who resisted reform would be killed, nobody disobeyed the order. In the harvest season of 1975, no one paid rents, but in turn everyone had to pay tax. One year after the revolution, the peasants faced drastic change.

Based on the proclamation of December 1975, a Peasants Association (PA) called *mahbär* (Am. = association) was established in Qomba.<sup>(18)</sup> This association was also the smallest unit of administrative organization and played a central role in implementation of state policies such as land redistribution. All household heads were registered as the members of the association and they elected a chairman, a clerk, councilors (20–25 persons) and vigilantes (20–25 persons). Following the establishment of the PA, collectivization led by the association began. On the “forest land,” the PA developed a community coffee plantation and the members had to work there for a few days each week without payment (Fig. 3). After 1982/83, such types of collectivization increased and the members spent much of their time working not only for the community coffee plantations, but also for the fields of Derg soldiers on active duty or for households lacking labor. Especially from May (*gänbot*, Am.) to August (*nähase*, Am.), the work on the community coffee plantation became heavy as this was the time for tree thinning, weeding and planting of seedlings [A]. The benefit gained from the community coffee plantation was not distributed to the members, but spent on the PA’s expenses, such as “salaries” for executive members.

### 3.3. *Agricultural socialization: Coffee state farms and producer cooperatives*

According to the land reform policies, all private plantations that had been developed before the revolution were to be confiscated. An officer sent from the government assessed the properties of such landlords as Gebre Kristos and seized them all [H]. Almost all the “forest land” was declared to be a coffee state farm. At the same time, a primary school and an agricultural training center were built on the confiscated land. A state coffee farm, Gomma II, was established in 1976/77 and then expanded gradually from 1979/80 by the cutting down of old trees and planting of new coffee seedlings of an improved variety [I & L]. After electricity was laid on for the state farm and the road was improved for transportation, settlements along the street developed and several merchants opened small shops (*suqu*, Am.) there. In the course of this expansion the peasants living in the state

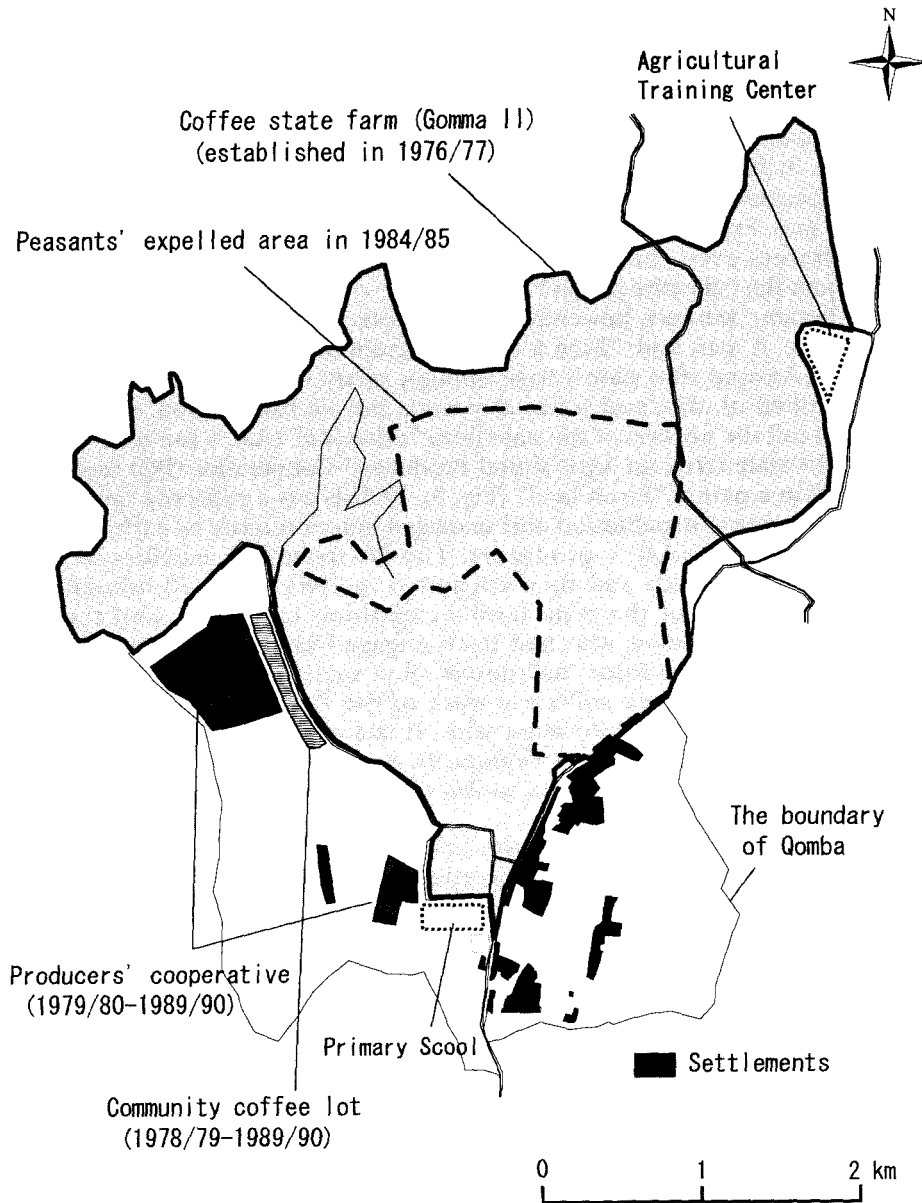


Fig. 3. History of land in Qomba (2): after the 1974 revolution

farm were expelled.

Tsaggai, who was appointed a new manager of the state farm in 1981/82, began to promote the expansion program more forcefully, and a number of peasants lost their land as a result [J]. An office of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) established in Qomba around 1984/85 played an important role in relocating peasants living in the state farm by giving other homesteads in return [A, B & H].<sup>(19)</sup> At the outset, the party organized a new employment campaign in which it employed the peasants living on the state farm as laborers by expropriating their land. When they became laborers, they were offered new houses in workers' villages and some plots for private cultivation. Furthermore, employment of peasants living outside was also encouraged and their land was given in

compensation to those peasants who had lost their land and refused to work in the state farm. At this time, many peasants lost their land by signing a contract and became farm laborers. People were tempted by an attractive slogan, "You can get a monthly salary by easy work only."

This massive campaign of employment and expelling of peasants by the state farm reached its peak in 1984/85. About 70–100 peasants in Qomba gave over their land to the state farm and became full-time plantation workers [A & N]. The approximate area from which peasants were expelled is shown in Fig. 3. It is said that most peasants made a choice to become laborers even though they were to lose their lands because they were disinclined to join the collective of the PA.

Those who became workers, however, suffered from hard labor conditions, contrary to the initial promise. A man said, "Even a ration of grain or salt was not free, but deducted from the salary. Anyone who didn't have enough salary was turned away with nothing. When they recruited us, they said it was easy work, but we had to work even in the rain" [H]. People still call the workers of the state farm "*wättaddär*" (Am. = soldier).

Other than the state farm, an Agricultural Producers' Cooperative (PC) was established around 1979/80 in a part of "forest land" (Fig. 3).<sup>(20)</sup> This was a collective farm in terms of the policy of agricultural socialization and managed autonomously by each PA. People in Qomba called it *ämrachi* (Am. = producer). The PC started its activities in earnest in 1981/82 with 23 households and then expanded in 1984/85 to 70 households. This coincided with the time of the state farm's expansion campaign, and therefore an enormous number of peasants who had been engaged in subsistence cultivation were organized into socialistic national institutions all at once. The peasants joined the PC voluntarily to escape from the collective work of the PA, from which they would get nothing in return for work. An informant said, "It was said that all agriculture was finally absorbed to the three organizations, Gomma II, *mahbär* and *ämrachi*. We thought that there would be no place to belong soon, unless we joined one of the three" [A]. Thus the peasants had little alternative.

The main crop cultivated in the PC was maize. A foreman recorded each peasant's workload and maize was allotted to him according to his workload and the number of his family members [B]. Any surplus of maize was sold and the benefit distributed in cash to the members once a year. But the motivation of the peasants was low and there was little benefit gained. An informant explained, "Everyone would not work hard because they could get something even without working. This is the reason that the *ämrachi* didn't work at all" [B]. In 1990, the PC was dissolved and its land was allocated to the remaining 33 households and landless peasants living in Qomba.

The changes in land tenure in Qomba during the revolution suggest that the slogan of land reform, "Land to Tiller," was hardly achieved. It becomes apparent that most peasants were removed from their land and incorporated by the state into three socialistic organizations, the PA, the state farm, and the PC. The massive power of the state, which had been less prominent during the Haile Selassie regime, intervened in the lands of a rural village and transformed it into national property. It may be said that not only the land but also the peasants themselves were nationalized in the Derg era.

#### 4. THE HISTORICAL CHANGE OF LAND TENURE

##### 4.1. Land tenure after the Revolution

As mentioned above, based on the 1975 proclamation, compulsory land transfers were frequently carried out by PAs. What kind of changes occurred in land tenure in this process? Here the process of land transfers is analyzed by focusing on an actual case of a settlement land (about 4.8ha) in Qomba. There are now 46 plots in this settlement including land for homesteads, coffee trees and some crop fields, which was formerly owned by three Oromo in the early 1970s. I asked several informants who had acquired each lot in what way and at what time [A, B, C, D & E].



**Table 1.** Reasons of land transfers after the revolution: a case of a settlement

| Land transfer  | Period I (late 1970's) | Period II (1980's) | Period III (1990's) |
|----------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Occupation     | 2                      | 1                  | 4                   |
| Confiscation   | 7                      | 3                  | 0                   |
| Villagization  | 0                      | 9                  | 0                   |
| Redistribution | 3                      | 4                  | 6                   |
| Purchase       | 0                      | 3                  | 23                  |
| Alienation     | 0                      | 2                  | 8                   |
| Total          | 12                     | 22                 | 41                  |

Table 1 shows the progression of land transfer in three periods: I (the early Derg era, 1974–80), II (the late Derg era, 1981–91), III (after the Derg, 1991–). “Occupation” means an “illegal” occupancy without an agreement between both parties; “alienation” a land transfer without money, including gifts made during life and inheritance within a family; “purchase” a land transaction with money; “confiscation” an expropriation by the PA; “redistribution” a land allotment by the PA and “villagization” a land provision by the PA based on the villagization program in 1987/88.

According to Table 1, the number of land transfers increased from 12 cases in period I and 22 cases in period II to 41 cases in period III. This fact suggests that the insecurity of land tenure accelerated after the revolution. Furthermore, the main reasons for the land transfers were “confiscation” and “redistribution” in period I and “villagization” in period II. Such types of land transfer based on socialist policy were not limited to the early revolution. It was also found more frequently in two short periods – the time of state farm expansion campaign in 1984/85 and the villagization program in 1987/88. This means that the land allocation to peasants was not only for “Land to Tiller,” but also to implement the state’s socialist policies. After the collapse of the Derg in 1991, there were no cases of “confiscation” by the PA, but in turn “purchase” of land increased rapidly, which seemed to be influenced by a new policy of economic liberalization under the EPRDF (Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front). However, the 1975 proclamation abandoned the land transfer by sale, and that policy was taken over by the new government. Government policy does not always work properly in rural societies. Inevitably, there are considerable gaps between what the political center intends to enforce and what is actually done in rural areas.

Table 2 shows the ethnic composition of landholders. Three Oromo initially owned this land, but at October 2000 it was owned by a total of 46 persons, who consisted of 19 Gomma Oromo, 10 Oromo from other areas, 9 Amhara, 3 Kullo, 3 others and 2 unknown. It is worthy of attention that a large number of migrants such as northerners like Amhara

**Table 2.** Ethnic composition of landholders after the revolution: a case of a settlement

| Ethnic group           | 1980 | 1991 | October 2000 |
|------------------------|------|------|--------------|
| Gomma Oromo            | 15   | 12   | 19           |
| Oromo from other areas | 2    | 8    | 10           |
| Amhara                 | 0    | 5    | 9            |
| Peasant Association    | 3    | 3    | 0            |
| Kullo                  | 0    | 1    | 3            |
| Others*                | 0    | 0    | 3            |
| Unknown                | 0    | 1    | 2            |
| Total                  | 20   | 30   | 46           |

\* “Others” involves some ethnic groups such as Tigre, Gurage and Walaita.

and Oromo from other areas as well as southerners like Kullo have moved into coffee-growing villages and settled with land. Among them, most of the Kullo came originally as seasonal workers for coffee picking in the state farm or in local peasants' farms.

In order to understand the details of this migration, I investigated when 122 household heads in six settlements of Qomba had migrated to this area. The results are shown in Table 3 and Fig. 4. This illustrates that 27 per cent of in-migrants came in the Derg era. It suggests that the influx of Amhara and Oromo from other areas was dominant in the Haile Selasie era (1930–74), while numbers of Kullo from the south increased in the Derg era (1974–91).

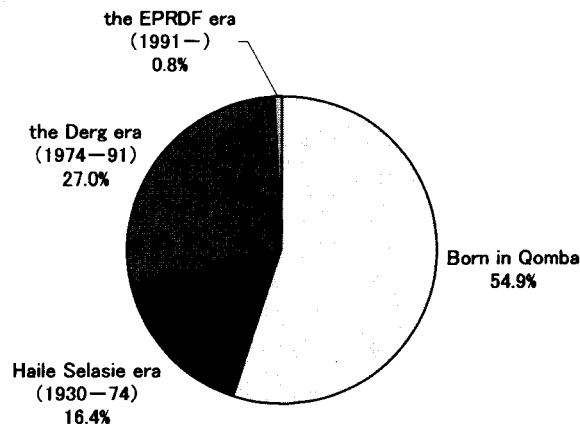
Back in the 1960s as well, some Kullo people used to come to this area for seasonal work of coffee picking in the farmers' coffee plots. In those days, however, such migrant workers did not settle in the village, but returned to their homeland at the end of the coffee season. It was in the Derg era that some Kullo began to acquire lands in the village and settle down. At first, most of them came to Qomba as laborers in the state farm, which offered them houses and some small plots of crop fields in the workers' village. They earned some money as wage laborers on the state farm and finally bought lands in Qomba from local farmers. The state farm, it can be said, provided Kullo with the opportunity to settle down in this coffee-rich area.

An Oromo peasant said, "In the Derg era, tenants got lands (by the redistribution policy) and many newcomers who had been landless began to settle down in Qomba. Some Oromo sold their lands to Kullo for money. Amhara chairmen of PA then gave lands to peoples other than Oromo. Nowadays, Qomba is no longer the land of the Oromo" [C]. The influx of migrants, which had been slow since the first half of the twentieth century,

**Table 3.** The time frame of the arrivals for different ethnic groups in six settlements

| Ethnic Group           | Born in Qomba | Haile-Selasie era<br>(1930-74) | The Derg era<br>(1974-91) | The EPRDF era<br>(1991- ) |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gomma Oromo            | 58            | 3                              | 3                         | –                         |
| Oromo from other areas | 2             | 7                              | 10                        | –                         |
| Amhara                 | 5             | 7                              | 3                         | –                         |
| Kullo                  | –             | 2                              | 10                        | –                         |
| Others*                | 2             | 1                              | 8                         | 1                         |
| Total                  | 67            | 20                             | 34                        | 1                         |

\* "Others" involves some ethnic groups such as Kafa, Kambata, Tigre, Walaita and Gurage.



**Fig. 4.** The time frame of the arrivals for household heads in six settlements

\* The total number is 122 household heads.

accelerated after the revolution. In that process, the main source of migrants changed from northerners of the landlord class in the Haile Selassie era to southerners who began their life as wage laborers on the state farm in the Derg era. The increase of inward migration has caused the fragmentation of lands and ethnic diversification.

#### 4.2. *Land and life history of a peasant*

In this section, I focus on a life history of a peasant in terms of his land use and landholding pattern. Such a case study may be helpful in understanding how peasants have actually engaged with land reform amid the dramatic changes mentioned above.

Abba Oli, who is one of my leading informants, was born in Qomba in 1935. His forebear, a warrior called Garbi Gube, fled from the Ilubabor kingdom to the Gomma kingdom in the era of Abba Jifar Abba Qereppe (r. 1864–77), who accepted him and gave him lands in the border area with the Jimma kingdom. The father of Abba Oli came to Qomba around 1900 and, at the end of Italian era (1935–41), he bought 2 *caba* (Or.) land (about 2.88ha) from an *abba qoro*, who had originally been a provincial governor in the Gomma monarchy era but was later downgraded to a low rank in the political hierarchy in the imperial regime. Table 4, Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 show the various plots of lands and their location that Abba Oli and his family were associated with from the beginning of the twentieth century to the Derg era. This includes the land they owned as well as the land they cultivated as tenants.

This sequence indicates that Abba Oli utilized and cultivated lands in various ways. On the one hand, he grew coffee in his own fields ((a), (b-1), (b-2) and (c) in Table 4 and Fig. 5), and on the other, he planted coffee as a tenant or sharecropper ((d), (e) and (f-2)). Moreover, he brought unutilized land owned by an Amhara under maize cultivation ((f-1), (g) and (h)). However, dominant Amhara landlords as well as the socialist government deprived him of most of these lands. Under the Derg regime, Abba Oli was expelled from several plots of land as the state farm and PC were established ((e), (f-2), (g) and (h)), and he became a laborer on the state farm, abandoning his lands when the state farm expanded ((b-1) and (i)).

Table 5 is a list of arable land that Abba Oli has been associated with after the retirement from the state farm. From 1995 to 1997, he cultivated maize and sorghum in a few small plots of his own homestead or by renting land from his brother. After 1998, he began to rent larger areas to cultivate maize with his sons. But in the following three years, he rented different farmlands year by year. This was because landholders were then expelling tenants for trivial reasons.

It was not rare before the Derg era for tenants to be expelled by landowners ((d), (f-1) and (f-2)). In that case, however, peasants could find other unutilized land in forests or other places even when someone had claim to them. But the land nationalization and the subsequent establishment of a coffee state farm changed the unused land to a national estate and encouraged an enormous migrant labor inflow. Consequently, population pressure in Qomba increased rapidly and almost all unutilized land vanished. After the socialist revolution, peasants suffered not only from the coercive power of the socialist state but also from competition for land with a migrant population. This led to the emergence of serious land issues such as augmentation of land conflicts and continuation of insecure tenancy.

## 5. DISCUSSION

I discuss the historical change of land tenure in the study area under the Derg socialist policies in the broader context of the political history at the center. Among the various issues of land reform, I focus on two controversial points. The first is tenancy reform, which had been contentious since the early Haile Selassie regime. And the second is agricultural socialization, which was central to the land policy in the 1980s.

**Table 4.** Land and life history of a peasant (1)

| Land place*               | Area**<br>( <i>facasa</i> ) | Year               | The way of acquisition/Use                        | Share rent                                 | Afterwards  |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|---|--|---|
| (a) <u>Ilu settlement</u> | 8 (2)                       | 1940~              | Bought by Father<br>Homestead, crops and coffee   | (Owned land)                               | Inherited 2 FACASA land for homesteads<br>after Father's death in 1987/88.              |
| (b-1) Ilu                 | 2                           | 1940~1984/85       | Bought by Father<br>Initially maize, later coffee | (Owned land)                               | Abandoned at the state farm's expansion<br>campaign in 1984/85 except for (b-2).        |
| (b-2) Ilu                 | 0.05                        | 1940~1993/94       | Bought by Father, coffee                          | (Owned land)                               | Alienated to eldest son's wife in 1993/94.  |
| (c) <u>Worzi</u>          | 1                           | 1955~1982<br>2000~ | Inherited from Mother<br>Coffee                   | (Owned land)                               | Alienated to eldest son in 1981-83, but in<br>1999/2000 a part of it was returned.      |
| (d) Kochole               | 4                           | Around 1965/66     | Owned by FM<br>Plant coffee                       | Expelled before<br>harvest                 | In 3 years after planting coffee, expelled by<br>landowner FM.                          |
| (e) And-aratt             | 5                           | 1957/58~1984/85    | Owned by B<br>Coffee                              | One half                                   | Annexed to state farm in 1984/85  |
| (f-1) Kushe 1             | 3                           | 1960/61~1970/71    | The land owned by FGC<br>Cleared forest, maize    | None for first 3 years,<br>later one third | After 10 years cultivation, expelled by<br>landowner FGC and annexed to his plantation. |
| (f-2) Kushe 2             | 3                           | 1960/61~1976/77    | Cleared forest, coffee                            | One half                                   | Confiscated by state farm in 1976/77.   |
| (g) Mio                   | 8 (2 <i>caba</i> )          | 1971/72~1976/77    | Cleared forest, maize                             | Not claimed                                | Confiscated by state farm in 1976/77.   |
| (h) Kusae                 | 4 (1 <i>caba</i> )          | 1976/77~1979/80    | Cleared forest, maize                             | Not claimed                                | Confiscated by PC in 1979/80.   |
| (i) Batiyu                | 4 (1 <i>caba</i> )          | 1981/82~1984/85    | Unutilized land, maize                            | Not claimed                                | Abandoned at the state farm's expansion<br>campaign in 1984/85.                         |
| (j) Loka                  | 1.75                        | 1991/92~1998/99    | Distributed by PA, coffee                         | (Owned land)                               | Eldest son used exclusively and given to him<br>by PA in 1998/99.                       |

\* The under line "place" means the land still owned in 2001. These land names (a)~(j) correspond to Fig. 6. The lands (b-1), (b-2) and (f-1), (f-2) are included in the lands (b) and (f) in Fig. 6, respectively.

\*\* Area unit 1*caba* = 4*facasa* = 1.44ha.

Fig. 5. Land and life history of a peasant (1)

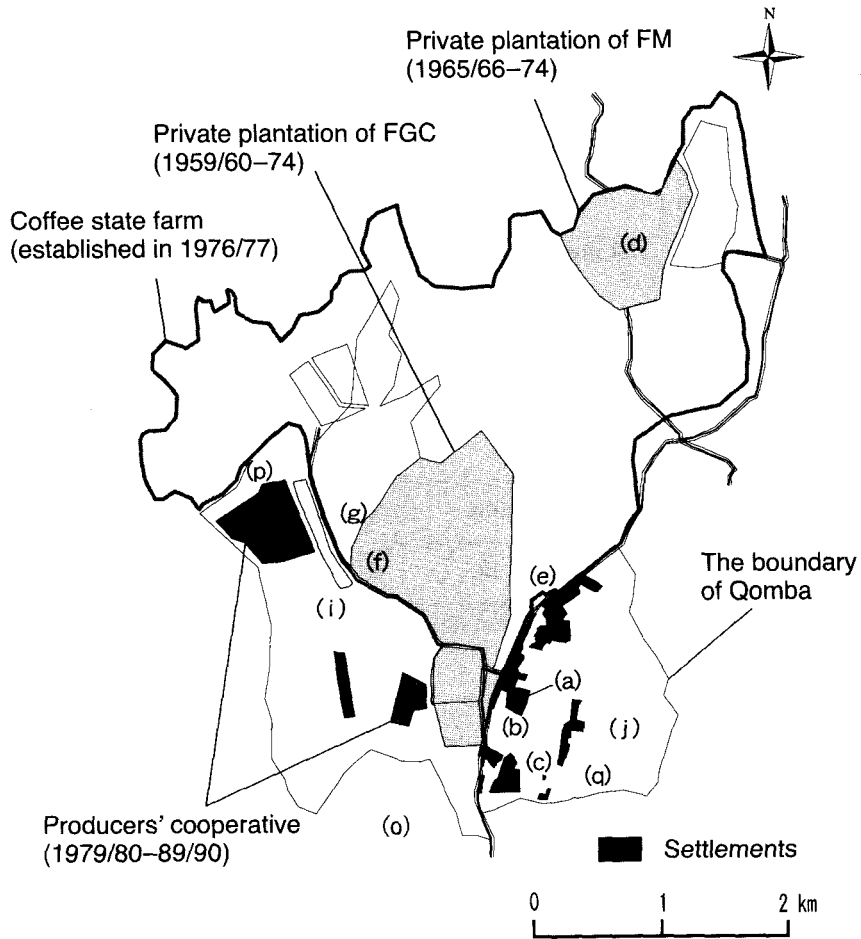
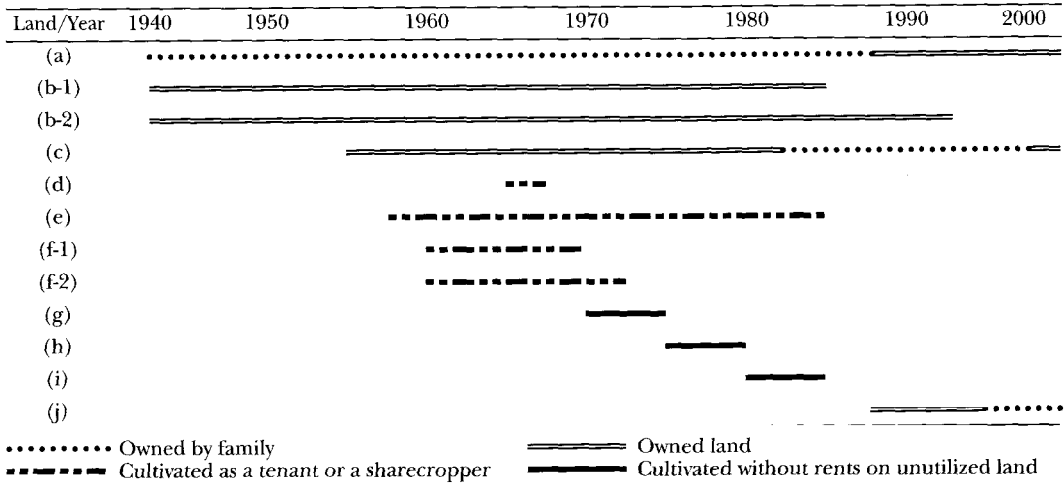


Fig. 6. Land and life history of a peasant

\* Alphabets of land (a)~(q) correspond to Table 4, Table 5 and the description in 4.2. Each land (k)~(n) is located in the land (a). The lands (b) and (f) include (b-1), (b-2) and (f-1), (f-2) in Table 4, respectively.

**Table 5.** Land and life history of a peasant (2): crop fields after the retirement from state farm

| Year | Land place*          | Landholder              | Area<br>( <i>facasa</i> ) | Crop    | Share rent                               |
|------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------|--|
| 1995 | (k) Ilu settlement 1 | Brother                 | 0.35                      | Maize   | One third, oxen borrowed from a neighbor |
|      | (l) Ilu settlement 2 | Brother                 | 0.4                       | Maize   | One third, oxen borrowed from a neighbor |
|      | (m) Ilu homestead 1  | Abba Oli                | 0.58                      | Maize   | (Owned land)                             |
|      | (n) Ilu homestead 2  | Second son              | 0.47                      | Maize   | (Owned land)                             |
| 1996 | (k) Ilu settlement 1 | Brother                 | 0.35                      | Maize   | One third, oxen borrowed from a neighbor |
|      | (l) Ilu settlement 2 | Brother                 | 0.4                       | Maize   | One third, oxen borrowed from a neighbor |
|      | (m) Ilu homestead 1  | Abba Oli                | 0.58                      | Maize   | (Owned land)                             |
|      | (n) Ilu homestead 2  | Second son              | 0.47                      | Maize   | (Owned land)                             |
| 1997 | (k) Ilu settlement 1 | Brother                 | 0.35                      | Maize   | One third, oxen borrowed from a neighbor |
|      | (l) Ilu settlement 2 | Brother                 | 0.4                       | Sorghum | One third, oxen borrowed from a neighbor |
|      | (m) Ilu homestead 1  | Abba Oli                | 0.58                      | Sorghum | (Owned land)                             |
| 1998 | (o) Gabata           | A man in nearby village | 3                         | Maize   | One half, oxen owned by landholder       |
|      | (m) Ilu homestead 1  | Abba Oli                | 0.58                      | Maize   | (Owned land)                             |
| 1999 | (p) Kusae            | A man in Qomba          | 1.5                       | Maize   | One half, oxen owned by landholder       |
|      | (m) Ilu homestead 1  | Abba Oli                | 0.58                      | Sorghum | (Owned land)                             |
| 2000 | (q) Bulesa           | A man in Ilu            | 2                         | Maize   | One half, oxen owned by landholder       |
| 2001 | (q) Bulesa           | A man in Ilu            | 2                         | Maize   | One half, oxen owned by landholder       |

\* These lands (k)–(q) correspond to Fig. 6. Lands of (k), (l), (m) and (n) are parts of land (a) in Fig. 6.

### 5.1 Tenancy reform as a contentious issue

After the territorial expansion of the late nineteenth century led by a Shewan king, Menelik, private tenure became the dominant land tenure system in the southern part of Ethiopia, as opposed to communal land tenure in the north (Cohen & Weintraub 1975: 35). Menelik granted various types of land to soldiers, northern civil servants who came to administer the new area, peasants moving south because of population pressure in the north, and the central and provincial elite close to the crown (MLRA 1972: 6–13; Cohen & Weintraub 1975: 35–9). This land institution rendered most of the local peasants subordinate tenants of the dominant landlords.

Consequently, excessive exploitation by landowners and insecurity in tenants' status began to be considered a social problem as early as the late 1920s. Some measures to improve the situation, such as the abandonment of tenants' private services for landowners, were taken by the government, but these policies were not effective in all rural

areas.<sup>(21)</sup> In land reform since the 1960s, a tenancy reform, in particular, improvement of the relationship between landowners and tenants was one of the main themes to be tackled.<sup>(22)</sup> Instead of MLRA (Ministry of Land Reform and Administration) officials' efforts to formulate policies in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, draft laws of tenancy reform were not enacted because of resistance by conservative councilors, orthodox churches and the provincial elite who were themselves landowners.

The 1975 proclamation tackled those policies much more radically. The main points it promulgated were the abolition of private property, no compensation to previous owners, the redistribution of land to the peasants with a maximum size limit of up to ten hectares, the prohibition of hiring labor by private individuals in agriculture and the abandonment of the transfer of land by sale, exchange, succession, mortgage, lease or other means (*Negarit Gazeta*, 29 April 1975; Kidane 1990: 90). This proclamation aimed to dissolve tenancy completely by redistributing land to all peasants' households and prohibiting any subsequent land transfers.

The cases in my study area suggest that land reform in rural societies did not always progress as planned by the central government's policies. As mentioned above, it is true that many peasants had cultivated land as tenants under the landlords since the end of the nineteenth century. But many informants indicated that the ratio of payments to landlords in those days ranged from three-tenths to two-thirds [A & E]. There were big differences between *gäbäre* (Am./Or.) or sharecroppers, who were mainly local farmers holding their homesteads in the village and oxen for plow, and *čäsänya* (Am./Or.) or tenants/serfs, who were mainly landless migrant peasants working dependently with oxen and farm tools owned by the landlords. Even now, the ratio of sharecrop rent is one-third when a tenant owns oxen and one half (two-thirds until the middle of 1990s) when a landowner owns oxen (see Table 5). It cannot be said that the status of tenants or sharecroppers has been improved dramatically. Moreover, from the case of Abba Oli, it is apparent that tenants are still suffering from insecurity and frequent expulsions by landlords. In effect the land reform by the Derg broke down the feudal land system and modified the socioeconomic inequality between landlords and tenants, but could not eliminate insecure tenancy itself.<sup>(23)</sup>

According to the evidence of Abba Oli, he could get another place to cultivate by clearing forest in the past even when landowners had expelled him. But more recently, various migrants moved into the coffee-growing area mainly because of the establishment of the state farm in the Derg era, and population pressure increased rapidly. Even if some land redistribution had been implemented, in conditions of high population pressure, many peasants became tenants again without sufficient lands for their subsistence. The population pressure, I suggest, was a major obstacle in implementing the land reforms, the spirit of which was expressed in the slogan "Land to Tiller." Thus insecure tenancy was structurally maintained.

### 5.2. *Unintended consequences of agricultural socialization*

At the end of January 1975, *zämächa* students were sent to rural communities and organized peasants into PAs. It was said that 18,000 PAs with 4.5 million members were established throughout the country by the middle of September 1975 (Ottaway 1975: 44–50). And then, the December 1975 proclamation declared the integration of peasants by establishing Producers' Cooperatives, based on a moderate collectivization of means of production, and two proclamations issued in March 1978 and June 1979 directed the actual processes of agricultural socialization (Kebebew 1978: 58–9; Cohen 1985b: 1).<sup>(24)</sup>

The ten-year development plan drafted in 1984 planned that most of the agricultural sector in Ethiopia would be transformed to socialistic collective farms by the end of the plan in 1993 and anticipated that 60 per cent of all arable land would be part of the socialist sector and then 50 per cent transferred to PCs (Dessalegn 1992: 47). But contrary to the plan, collective farms like PCs and state farms occupied no more than 15 per cent until the end of the 1980s, and they were criticized for a low motivation to work, delays in the necessary work and the poor quality of production (Dessalegn 1992: 48). Although the

policy of agricultural socialization had a central priority, it ended up with precious little achievement.

In the late 1980s, it was only a matter of time before the policy of agricultural socialization would collapse. On 5 May 1990, in a report to the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia, Mengistu Haile Mariam announced that the country would abandon its Marxist-Leninist economy in favor of a mixed economic system (Kidane 1990: 167). As part of this policy reversal, there would be privatization of certain state enterprises, the encouragement of private commercial farming and the dissolution of cooperative farms. It was clear that government itself recognized the failure of the agricultural socialization policy. But it was too late for recovery. Just one year after the report was submitted, Mengistu was exiled to Zimbabwe and the Derg regime collapsed.

The case of the study area demonstrates that peasants were forced to work under the three state organizations – the PA, PC and state farm – throughout the Derg era. The unpaid collective work organized by the PA was so heavy that peasants could not work on their own fields in some seasons. This critical work condition forced them to join the PC and the state farm as laborers even if this meant that they lost their own land.

In Qomba, land redistribution was implemented not only in the initial revolution period, but also during the state farm expansion campaign in 1984/85 and the villagization program in 1987/88. It implied that the land redistribution policy was a measure for expelling and organizing peasants to promote agricultural socialization rather than a measure for the creation of landed farmers, which was in principle the stated aim in the 1975 proclamation.<sup>(25)</sup> The expansion of a coffee state farm brought a vast forest, which peasants had partly cleared and cultivated, under intensive cultivation for coffee. This intensification and expansion of coffee production caused an enormous influx of migrant labor. Land problems such as fragmentation and high competition for ownership have progressed in parallel with agricultural socialization.

Clapham (1988: 165) has pointed out that, under the Derg regime, the movement of peasants in search of land from the north to the south stopped because of the land redistribution and the prevention of private hiring of labor and that most peasants were tied to their land. In a coffee-growing area of southwestern Ethiopia, on the contrary, the influx of a migrant population, especially from the south, was accelerated throughout the Derg era. Agricultural socialization, which created only nonproductive farms and almost totally failed as a national policy, brought a significant consequence, that is, the development of coffee production with enormous inflow of people from peripheral ethnic groups.

During the seventeen years of the Derg, the land in rural Ethiopia experienced dramatic changes. The process, however, was not what the central government intended to enforce, but went through various interactions in rural areas and created unintended consequences.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The history of Qomba illustrates that a larger framework over the peasants' community has increasingly affected the relationships between peasants and land. Clapham (2002: 14–15), the specialist of the modern political history of Ethiopia, points out that the military government incorporated peripheral societies into structures of control and intensified centralized state formation, expressing it as "the project of *encadrement*." The case of a coffee-growing area also suggests that the land nationalization by the Derg integrated rural land into a rigid state institution in which peasants also were "nationalized" into socialistic organizations. However, the process that rural land went through was not always an intended product of state policies.

In this coffee-growing area, the influx of migrants, which had begun in the early twentieth century, was accelerated during the socialist regime. It means that not only state power, but also migrant labor from various areas joined the coffee resource under the



Derg regime. As discussed above, tenancy reform and agricultural socialization that the Derg government promoted could not realize the initial intent of achieving “Ethiopian modernism.” It rather brought unexpected consequences such as augmentation of population pressure, which gave rise to serious land issues and maintained unstable tenancy. It is true that the influence of government policies was tremendous in the Derg era, yet the institutions established by the political center themselves changed in a dynamic local setting and transformed local communities.

In a center of coffee cultivation, migrants from the north who moved in as feudal landlords were replaced in the Derg era by others from various ethnic groups, especially from the southern part of Ethiopia. Entry from the external society to the coffee resource has been encouraged not only by dominant power of the state or landlords, but also by the high numbers of seasonal workers or migrant populations. Such people have entered into socioeconomic relations with local farmers through coffee cultivation, and created a dynamic movement of social change inside the community. It is a movement beyond the state institution that has laid the conditions for changes in the rural community.

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## NOTES

- (1) In the Ethiopian calendar, 11 (or 12) September is New Year’s Day and years are seven or eight years behind the Gregorian calendar. For example, 11 September 2002 in the Gregorian calendar is *māskārām* (the first month) 1 1995 in the Ethiopian calendar. In this paper, when informants referred to the Ethiopian calendar, dates were converted to the Gregorian calendar.
- (2) The feudal land tenure system in the south has been mentioned in various documents, FAO (1969: 4–6), MLRA (1972: 5–6), MLRA (1975: 2), Hoben (1975: 55–63), Cohen & Weintraub (1975: 34–9), Kidane (1990: 48–9) and Ishihara (2001: 86–7). Donham (1986: 4–17) argued that the “feudalism” or a “class system based on the right to land” in the Ethiopian empire had similarities to African political institutions rather than the feudal systems in Europe and Eurasia.
- (3) Cohen (1985a: 42) also pointed out, “the involvement of former student activists in the formulation of new policies led to a land tenure proclamation that was largely the product of urban Ethiopian intellectuals.”
- (4) Among those studies are Kidane (1990), Dessalegn (1992), Dessalegn (ed.) (1994), Dejene & Tefferri (1995) and Tegegene *et al.* (eds.) (1999).
- (5) Donham (1999) pointed out that there are differences within Maale society between the administrative center and peripheral areas and between those who converted to evangelical church and those who did not. In another anthropological study on the socialist regime in Ethiopia, Pankhurst (1992) conducted ethnographic research on the famine in the north and the policy of the resettlement program.

- (6) The survey on ethnic composition of household heads here was not based on the people's ethnic identity, but on interviews with several local Oromo informants [B, C & others]. "Kullo" is an appellative name used in the study area for certain ethnic groups in the north Omo area, such as Dawro and Konta, which are not distinguished by the informants. "Oromo" in this paper mostly means "Gomma Oromo" and indicates native Oromo people who can trace their clan origin to the Gomma monarchy era in the eighteenth century. It is recognized by peoples not as an ethnic branch, but a territorial category. "Oromo from other areas" means those who came from Shewa in central Ethiopia, Wellega in the west, and adjacent Gibe areas such as Limmu, Gera, Guma, and Jimma.
- (7) In rural areas of Ethiopia, where there is no land registration, it is not recorded who is the proper landowner or landholder of each land lot. In this paper, the identity of the landholder is based on interviews, with informants referring to it as "*abba lafa* (Or. = Father of land)." There are, of course, multiple aspects of land tenure including conflicts and deviance for those lands, which I will discuss in another paper.
- (8) The notation of Oromo language is based on the *qubee* (Or.), which was standardized by the Oromia regional government. The notation of the Amhara language is based on the following rule: vowels are 1<sup>st</sup> = ä, 2<sup>nd</sup> = u, 3<sup>rd</sup> = i, 4<sup>th</sup> = a, 5<sup>th</sup> = e, 6<sup>th</sup> = ə and 7<sup>th</sup> = o; ejective consonant is č, ț and q.
- (9) The number of *qoppo* was not fixed and reached 60 in Gomma. But the status of *qoppo* declined in the course of Islamization and reputed sheikhs stepped into that role after the 1830s when Islamic teachers came to this area (Guluma 1984: 118).
- (10) *Ras* means "head" or "general," and is a title given to generals or nobles.
- (11) *Däjazmach* means "commander of the gate," and is a title mainly conferred on high-ranking nobles or administrators.
- (12) Around 1950, a *gasha* was standardized at 40 hectares, after having varied from 35 to 83 hectares according to fertility (Mesfin 1970: 2–3). However, it was pointed out that there was a big difference from area to area, especially before 1936 (Lawrance 1963: 1–3). I do not convert *gashas* into hectares in this paper.
- (13) It was generally said that in the southern parts of Ethiopia an institution of landlord-serf relationship, called the *näftännnya-gäbbar* (Am.) system, was established after the conquest by Menelik II, in which peasants had to pay an annual tribute and perform labor service to imperial armies (Donham 1986). In Aari, for example, when families failed to pay tribute or to perform labor service, their members were taken as domestic slaves for soldier-settlers (Naty 2002: 60). In the Gibe region, however, at an early stage of the conquest in the 1880s, the harsh and repressive misrule of the *näftännnya* very often provoked revolts, led by Oromo warriors who continued to resist them for several years. Guluma (1996: 56–9) pointed out that after those rebellions in the Gibe region, especially in Gomma, the rebellion seriously threatened the Shewan soldiers in the late 1880s, after the governor tried to take the indigenous elite into the administration of the region. That Oromo elite remained strong and acted as important intermediaries between the settlers-soldiers and the peasantry and then the exploitation of the peasants was relatively weakened. Furthermore, the use of slaves was rather common in this area not only among *näftännnya* but also among Oromo landlords until the early 1930s. The slaves were supplied mainly from the Omo region through the slave market in Jimma (Fernvough 1994).
- (14) *Fitawrari* means "commander of the front" and is a middle-class title mainly given to regional governors or local elites.
- (15) Guluma (1994) describes the life of Gebre Kristos as one of the new coffee growers of the 1950s and 1960s in the Jimma-Limmu area of the Gibe region. Gebre Kristos developed his plantation into a profitable enterprise and, in the middle of the 1960s, established the "Gomma Coffee Farmers' Cooperative" with other coffee growers in order to protect the interests of the farmers against the state and coffee merchants (Guluma 1994: 727).
- (16) The Provisional Military Administration Council (PMAC), which seized political power in September 1974, shelved the resumption of the new school term of university and high schools, and made a decision to dispatch students to rural areas as part of a "National Work Campaign." After dispatching the first *zämächa* members at the end of January 1975, 6,000 students were participating by March. It is supposed that the government thought students would replace local administration and policing, which had collapsed, and advance land reform and the reorganization of peasants. At the same time it was feared that while the capital Addis Ababa was still unstable students returning to it for the new term might organize demonstrations and protest action against the government (Ottaway 1975: 43–4). In some areas, in May 1975 and

- afterwards, the *zāmūcha* camps began to be closed and the campaign was ended officially in June 1976 (Ottaway 1978: 86).
- (17) By the 1975 proclamation, the maximum area of land each household could have was specified as 10 hectares (*Negarit Gazeta*, 29 April 1975). However, in this research village, Qomba, the maximum area was said to be 5 *facasa* (= 1.8ha), which was thought to be insufficient for a peasant population compared with other areas.
  - (18) The proclamation of December 1975 is "Proclamation No. 71, A Proclamation to Provide for the Organization and Consolidation of Peasant Associations" (*Negarit Gazeta*, 14 December 1975). Later, in 1982, the Peasant Association was consolidated as the smallest unit of national administration by "Proclamation No. 223, A Proclamation to Provide for the Consolidation of Peasant Association" (*Negarit Gazeta*, 24 May 1982).
  - (19) The Derg established the committee known as the Political Commission to Establish a Workers' Party (COPWE), and Mengistu became the chairperson himself in December 1979. It is supposed that two-thirds of the membership was from the military authorities. The Workers' Party of Ethiopia was established and one-party dictatorship organization began in 1984 (Kidane 1990: 135).
  - (20) Collectivization of agriculture was specified in a Proclamation for Establishment of Producers' Cooperatives in June 1979 (Cohen 1985b: 1). It is supposed that an East German adviser was involved in the creation of this proclamation (Cohen 1985b: 7).
  - (21) The offer of individual service to landowners by tenants other than rent was forbidden in 1928, and the imperial order which supplied tenants with the surplus land more than a fixed area of 30 hectares (MLRA 1972: i). Furthermore, distribution of land owned by the government to a farmer was also determined in 1955, and it was presupposed that all landless peasants could own the land of half-*gasha* (MLRA 1972: i). However, many landless people could not complete a complicated procedure for receiving a land grant. Cohen & Weintraub have indicated that almost all land went to government officials, soldiers, and policemen. In 1972, it is thought that 46% of peasants all over the country were a landless tenancy (Cohen & Weintraub 1975: 60–1). Although many provisions for tenancy protection were incorporated in the Civil Code enacted in 1960, peasants were ignorant about their rights specified by this code, and it was not effective (Mann & Lawrance 1963: 5–6).
  - (22) In the second five-year development plan in 1962, "improvement of the relationships between landowners and tenants" was raised as one of four subjects that should be tackled intensively within five years. The others were "management of rent paid by tenants," "a stable tenancy system," and "legislation of a leased-land contract" (Imperial Ethiopian Government 1962: 326–7). However, the tenancy bill submitted in 1964 was rejected in both houses, while the agricultural tenancy bill, which was amended and was presented to Parliament in 1971 was discarded (Cohen & Weintraub 1975: 83–5).
  - (23) The increase of land-leasing practice (renting and sharecropping) in recent years is observed in the East Shewa zone of the Oromia region, where leasors broke agreements in order to get higher rental rates from other tenants, or sought additional agreement fees, and added to insecurity of land tenure (Workneh 2002). In the Arsi zone of the Oromia region, arrangement of sharecropping and cash rental is mostly on a single-harvest basis, and hence the renewal of a contract for the next cropping calendar is based on the goodwill of the landowner. Again this makes peasants feel insecure in their landholding position (Degefa 2002).
  - (24) The proclamation in March 1978 is "Proclamation No.138, Co-operative Societies Proclamation" and the one in June 1979 is "Proclamation for Establishment of Producers Cooperatives" (Cohen 1985b: 15). The rural land proclamation in March 1975 created the landed farmer by redistribution of land and was in contrast to the argument that promoted agricultural collectivization. The students and radicals who were supposed to promote agricultural collectivization from 1975 were already criticizing the land redistribution as its ultimate goal was to bring all nationalized land into the collective farm system (Ottaway 1975: 52–3).
  - (25) The recent study by Yigrenew (2002) of the Amhara region also reveals that the causes of many land redistributions were not equity in land access, but different rural policies and projects such as conservation, villagization, cooperativization, change of administrative boundaries, etc.

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## Appendix: List of main informants

|   | Age           | Sex | Occupation                  | Ethnic group | Interview* |
|---|---------------|-----|-----------------------------|--------------|------------|
| A | 65            | M   | Peasant                     | Oromo        | ① · ② · ④  |
| B | 28            | M   | Peasant (assistant)         | Oromo        | ①          |
| C | 25            | M   | Peasant                     | Oromo        | ①          |
| D | 50s           | F   | Peasant's wife              | Oromo        | ② · ④      |
| E | 60            | M   | Peasant                     | Oromo        | ① · ④      |
| F | About 60      | M   | Peasant/ Muslim <i>Imam</i> | Oromo        | ① · ③      |
| G | About 25      | F   | Domestic help               | Oromo        | ①          |
| H | Late 50s      | M   | Gomma II gardman            | Oromo        | ① · ③      |
| I | About 25      | M   | Gomma II agronomist         | Amhara       | ①          |
| J | Late 50s      | M   | Gomma II officer            | Keffa        | ①          |
| K | About 50      | M   | Gomma II engineer           | Oromo        | ①          |
| L | 30s           | F   | Gomma II officer            | Amhara ?     | ①          |
| M | 50s           | F   | Peasant                     | Amhara       | ①          |
| N | Late 60s      | M   | Peasant                     | Amhara       | ①          |
| O | More than 100 | M   | Peasant                     | Oromo        | ④          |

\* Style of interviews: ① direct interview in Amharic, ② direct interview in Oromo language, ③ direct interview in Oromo language by assistant, recorded on cassette tape and later translated to Amharic, ④ direct interview in Oromo language by assistant without recording to cassette tape.