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**Social Soundness Analysis of Agrarian Reform in
Ethiopia**

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Social Soundness Analysis of Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia

Prepared for USAID Ethiopia

by

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February, 1976*

This report was prepared at the request of the USAID mission in Ethiopia to provide social background information to assist with the appraisal and evaluation of current and proposed AID funded programs in Ethiopia. Specifically, it is to assist with:

- 1) reviewing the compatibility of the current Development Assistance Program approach to the social/cultural environment in the Ethiopian rural sector;
- 2) developing profiles of small farmer beneficiaries who will be participating in rural development;
- 3) identifying patterns of expected responses from highland small farmers who will be recipients of rural development programs; and
- 4) identifying and assessing other social factors in Ethiopia pursuant to the social soundness analysis considerations described in Attachment 2 of the Project Review Paper Outline.

*In this (December, 1976) draft only minor changes have been made. No attempt has been made to describe or analyze progress that has been made during the intervening period.

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I. Introduction

Since it came to power in 1974 Ethiopia's new ruling group has introduced a number of revolutionary institutional changes designed to alter the country's class structure and bring about a major redistribution of development benefits to the rural poor. The most important of these were: 1) the removal from high office of most members of the old elite and the replacement of almost all district and sub-district administrators* by younger and more educated men; 2) the weakening of the elite's economic base through the nationalization of urban real estate and all but the smallest firms; and, of central interest for this report, 3) the introduction of a sweeping program of agrarian reform.

The two most important features of Ethiopia's agrarian reform are: a) a land reform program which abolishes private land ownership and land sale, limits holdings (in usufruct) to ten hectares, confiscates all holdings in excess of 10 hectares without compensation except for improvements and prohibits tenancy or the use of wage labor; and b) the establishment of peasant associations which are to implement land reform and regulate land allocation, to encourage cooperatives and collective farming and to facilitate all other aspects of rural development. The task of explaining these sweeping changes to the peasants and of implementing them was entrusted to a small task force of land reform officers assisted by thousands of high school and university students sent to the countryside.

The magnitude of the changes to be brought about by Ethiopia's agrarian reform program and the rapidity with which they have been in-

* Administrators were formerly called governors.

roduced are unique in Africa, if not in the world. For this reason it will be of great interest to all those concerned with rural development to see to what extent the program will attain its objectives and at what human, social and economic costs.

The purpose of this report is to provide preliminary answers to some of these questions. It is to assess the initial effects of agrarian reform in terms of the criteria set forth in AID Handbook 3, Appendix 5A, Social Soundness Analysis.

Thus, in most general terms it is concerned with the effects of agrarian reform on the lives of the many different groups of rural Ethiopians -- on their production, income distribution and participation in decisions that will affect their welfare. More specifically it is an attempt to assess: 1) the degree to which the institutional changes being introduced are compatible with or in conflict with existing social organization and values; 2) the ways in which different groups (and categories) of rural Ethiopians, defined by ethnic affiliation, economic position, social class, age, sex and occupation, think that these changes will affect their interests; 3) the actual effects of reform on these groups during the first six months; and 4) the ways in which these groups may be affected by the alternative policies that may be pursued by Ethiopia's rulers in the months ahead.

The primary emphasis in this report is on the institutional framework of rural Ethiopian society and its relationship to changing patterns of land tenure rather than on the macro-economic issues analyzed by John Meller in his report for USAID.*

*Meller, Post Land Reform and Rural Development Issues in Ethiopia Food and Agriculture Division, USAID, May 28, 1975, revised June 20, 1975.

It should be stressed that this is a preliminary report. In part this is due to the inadequacy of the available data. More importantly, however, it is not clear at the time of writing to what extent the Ethiopian government has the will or the capacity to carry out the various aspects of its ambitious program. For these reasons, perhaps the most important contribution of the report is to identify critical issues and the kinds of questions that should be asked about them during the coming year.

The next section provides a short summary of the report. Section III gives a brief introduction to the country and the people. The fourth section is concerned with the political and economic dimensions of Ethiopian land tenure systems prior to reform -- with the patterns of economic, political and social stratification which agrarian reform is explicitly designed to challenge. The fifth section examines other aspects of pre-reform rural social organization with particular attention to the organization of interests and activities which are to be transferred to the newly-formed peasant associations. The sixth section is concerned with the political background to land reform, with the land reform proclamation itself and with the way the government tried to implement it. The seventh and eighth sections are about the response of rural Ethiopians to reform, and the final sections present analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

The data used in this report were gathered from a number of sources. Material concerning recent events in rural Ethiopia was obtained in part during field trips taken between August 28th and October 5th, 1975. The trips took me to Arussi, Sidamo, Gemu Gofa,

Keffa, Illubabor, and Shoa. During these trips I spoke with farmers, members of the Campaign for Development through Cooperation, agricultural extension agents, officials of CADU, WADU, and EPID, land reform officials and provincial, awraja and district administrators.

Information on the impact of land reform was also obtained through interviews with government officials, campaigners, social scientists and missionaries and others in Addis Ababa who had first-hand knowledge of rural areas. Insofar as was possible I tried to get detailed descriptions of particular cases based on participation or personal observation, rather than generalized accounts.

Material on land tenure and social organization before reform has been drawn from the work of a number of scholars who have conducted micro-studies during the past two decades, rather than on standard reference works which are at best unreliable. For this reason my account of pre-reform land tenure is considerably more complex than that found in these references and in the developmental literature on Ethiopia. In particular I question the utility of employing a simple, large land-holder-share-cropping tenant model in many parts of the south. While the introduction of these complexities make my analysis somewhat longer, I believe that it is a necessary step in understanding regional variations in rural Ethiopians' response to land reform and in formulating an effective regionalized strategy for rural development in Ethiopia.

For their special help I am particularly indebted to Johann Holmberg, Assistant Director of EPID; Dr. Asefa Mehretu, Director of the Institute for Development Research; and Per Arne Stroberg of CADU.

Finally I am indebted to Bert Gould, Acting Mission Director, Richard Cobb, Barry Riley, Larry Saiers and Peter Shirk for their moral and material support and most especially to Ted Morse for his substantive help, his critical judgements and, above all, his warm enthusiasm.

II. Summary

In March of 1975 Ethiopia's rulers issued a proclamation that abolished the private ownership of land, tenancy and the private employment of agricultural labor. Recognizing the fundamentally political character of land reform the government took its implementation out of the hands of the courts and of the landlord dominated local administration and entrusted it to newly created peasant associations under the guidance of land reform administrators appointed directly by the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration. To overcome an acute shortage of personnel the task of explaining reform and organizing peasant associations was given to 50,000 secondary school and university students.

The students, resentful of their exclusion from the decision-making process in the new central government, tried to compensate for this in the countryside by introducing changes even more radical than those called for by the land reform proclamation.

The student's program included: 1) an attempt to exclude wealthy peasants, traditional elders and ritual experts from the leadership of peasant associations in favor of the young and the disadvantaged; 2) an attempt to establish collective farming immediately; 3) an attempt to redistribute plow oxen; and 4) an attempt to arm the peasants and urge them to fight their "class enemies," including former landlords and, in some instances, merchants and the local police.

From March until May the students pursued their objectives with relatively little interference from the government. After this initial period the government has taken increasingly firm action against student attempts to arm the peasants--although its

6a.

establishment in the summer of 1976, subsequent to the writing of the first draft of this paper, of peasant militia organizations in the various regions brought a result in the long run similar in many ways to the students' original intention.

The effectiveness of the student campaign to mobilize the peasantry varied regionally with ethnicity, pre-reform patterns of land tenure and the economic significance of cash crops. In the relatively undeveloped northern highlands of Begemdir, Gojjam, Wello, Tigre and northern Shoa small holder Christian Amhara and Tigre peasants are deeply suspicious of land reform. Student efforts to organize peasant associations have met with widespread resistance, and there have been a number of armed revolts led by former members of the national or provincial elite.

In the more market-oriented midlands of Shoa eastern Hararghe, north-west Arussi and eastern Wellega characterized by share-cropping and tenancy eviction, Galla and some small-scale Amhara farmers received the students as liberators from Amhara rule, drove out large landlords and took up the cry for arms.

In the less commercialized, densely settled highlands on both sides of the rift valley small holders have driven out corrupt landholding officials of their own ethnic group and many landholding Amhara who have settled amongst them.

Finally, in the largely tribal regions still further from Addis Ababa markets and modern means of transportation the students have had relatively little impact. The most important changes are that collective cash rents will no longer be paid to absentee landlords or their agents and that there has been an increase in intertribal warfare.

The probable effects of land reform on Ethiopia's rural poor and low-status groups also vary by region. In the Amharar-Tigre north there has been no redistribution of land rights and hence

no improvement in the conditions of the poorest farmers. Low-status artisans, who are generally landless, are finding it difficult to rent land from former landlords and may face great hardship during the coming year. In the Galla mid-region former tenants anticipate a marked improvement in income, and in some areas formerly landless laborers have received land or have been included in collectives. Low-status artisans have generally had their economic and social status improved. The economic and political status of women has also been affected positively in areas where students have been most effective. On the negative side, thousands of hired hands, often migrants or former slaves, have been excluded from the new peasant associations and forced to seek a new means of livelihood.

While it is too early to judge the actual effects of reform on income distribution, since there has not yet been a harvest, there can be no doubt that there is a sense of participation, hope, and uncertainty among the rural poor in this region. In the small-holder highland areas adjacent to the rift valley farmers do not expect to benefit immediately from reform, since they consider their major problem to be a shortage, not a maldistribution, of land.

The elimination of the land-based local elites throughout Ethiopia initially impaired the Government's ability to maintain order and left it without the traditional means to administer locally rural development programs. In parts of the north where the economic interests of these elites are not sharply differentiated from those of their fellow peasants, the Government lost control of the situation when its intended concessions to local tradition in these areas were ignored by student cadres.

In the south, where elites played a more exploitative role, there is considerable support for the government and its reform program. In the fall of 1975 there was virtually no institutional structure linking the peasants to the district administration. Contact with peasant associations was largely maintained through the students, through overworked representatives of the ministry of land reform and through agricultural extension workers. In December a new proclamation gave legal personality to the associations and recognized them as units of local administration. The government is also training additional land reform administrators and community development workers and is planning a political party that would incorporate peasant associations at its lowest level.

The absence of stronger administrative links with the center and the concomitant absence of government directives has left even the pro-regime mid-region peasants facing the future with uncertainty. Former tenants fear that the government may allow local police to reinstate the landlords. At the same time small holders and tenants alike are apprehensive that they will be forced to farm collectively in the coming year, or that, as the landlords have suggested, they will become landless laborers for the state. In short, despite the revolution, each household remains a largely independent unit of production and security and its head is still preoccupied with obtaining land and good prices for his surplus crops

During the years ahead the Ethiopian government must make further decisions on policy issues that may determine the course of its ambitious agrarian reform program for decades. The most important of these issues are: 1) whether to press for an equal redivision of land

within each peasant association, to press for collectivization or to allow present inequalities between small holders to persist; 2) to what extent to provide peasants with positive individual rewards, in the form of high prices for their produce and moderately low taxes, or to "syphon off" the peasants' surplus through taxation or price policy in order to provide funds for social services and national needs; 3) whether to continue to strengthen the peasant associations and encourage them to participate in decision-making or to recentralize administrative and political power. The way the government responds to these issues will have a great impact on whether recent gains to peasants will be consolidated or lost.

Because the coming year will be a critical one for the future of Ethiopian agrarian reform, USAID and other donor agencies should seek to support the Ethiopian government's resolve and its means to maintain its commitment to its rural poor.

III. The Country and the People

Ethiopia is located in northeast Africa between the Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, the Territory of the Afars and Issas and the Red Sea, and is approximately equal in area to Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico combined (457,000 square miles). About two thirds of the country is a high but broken plateau rising from the surrounding lowlands to between 6,000 and 15,000 feet above sea level. Most of Ethiopia's estimated 27,000,000 inhabitants, including the highland farmers with whom this report is concerned, live on the plateau (see Map 1).

Far from being a homogeneous people, highland Ethiopians exhibit great diversity of language, physical appearance, ethnicity, mode of livelihood, social organization and religion. For the purposes of this report it is useful to distinguish three ethnic clusters of highland farming peoples: the Amhara-Tigreans; the Galla or Oromo; and the ensete cultivators (see Map 2).*

The Ethiopic Christian Amhara and Tigreans have until recently been the dominant ethnic groups in Ethiopia.** The Tigreans live in the western part of Tigre and the south central part of Eritrea. The Amhara occupy a contiguous region that includes parts of western Wello, northeastern Gojjam, southeastern Begemdir and northern Shoa. Together the Tigreans and Amhara are estimated to number 10,000,000.*** Most

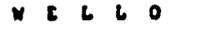
*The best recent attempt to classify Ethiopia's many groups is to be found in Donald N. Levine's Greater Ethiopia.

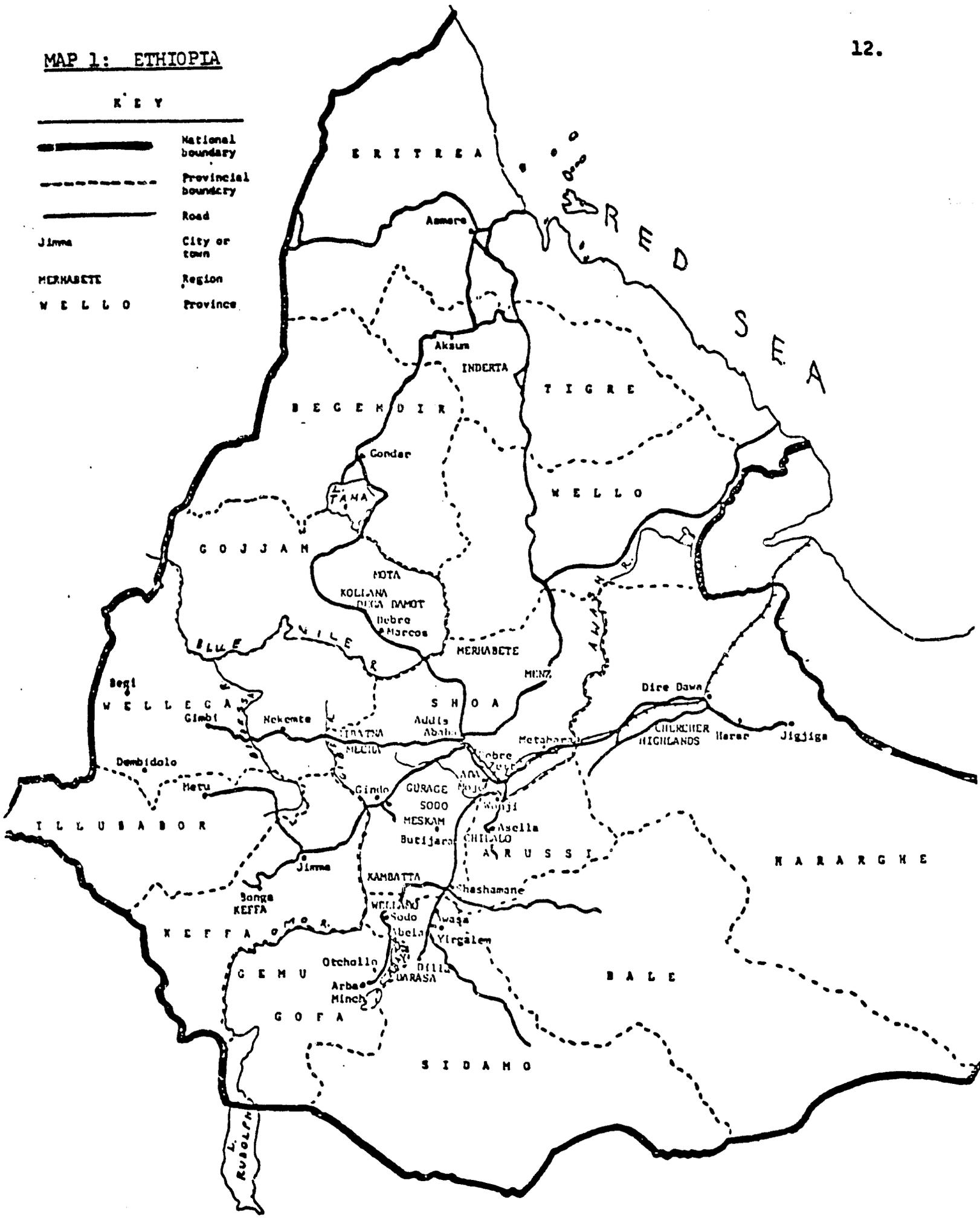
**For most purposes except linguistic classification the Agew speaking peoples of Gojjam, Begemdir and Wello are similar to the Amhara and Tigreans.

***Since there has not yet been a national census in Ethiopia all population figures are somewhat speculative.

MAP 1: ETHIOPIA

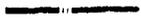
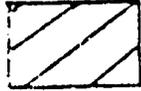
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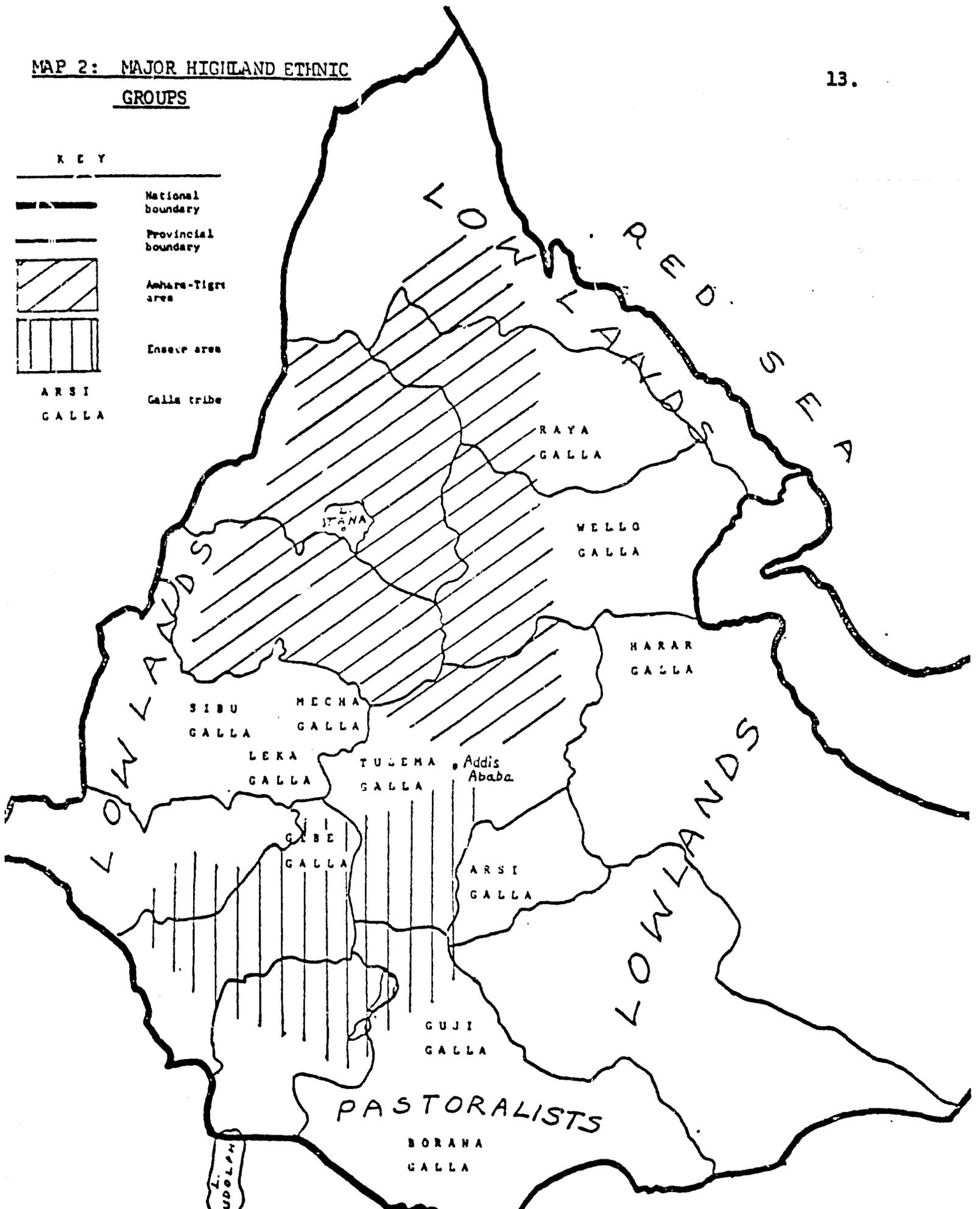
-  National boundary
-  Provincial boundary
-  Road
-  Jimma
City or town
-  MERHABETE
Region
-  WELLO
Province



MAP 2: MAJOR HIGHLAND ETHNIC GROUPS

KEY

-  National boundary
-  Provincial boundary
-  Amhara-Tigre area
-  Ensete area
- ARSI
GALLA Galla tribe



rural Amhara and Tigreans are small-holding peasants who cultivate cereals and pulses with an ox-drawn scratch plow and keep cattle, sheep and goats. Particularly in the northern part of the region population densities are high in relation to the carrying capacity of the land. Deforestation and erosion are extensive, malnutrition is endemic and famine has been a recurrent problem, especially in Tigre. There has been a pattern of migration from north to south in this region for centuries -- migration which has played an important part in the military expansion of the Amhara-Tigrean kingdom.

The Galla or Oromo numbering 7,000,000 are the most widely spread ethnic group in Ethiopia. Beginning as warlike pastoralists in the sixteenth century they have spread rapidly over large parts of Sidamo, Bale, Arussi, Shoa, Wello and Wellega provinces. Because of this recent diaspora most of them still speak mutually intelligible dialects of Gallinya, an eastern Cushitic tongue. Lacking central political authority or a sense of strong cultural identity, however, they have tended to adopt the mode of livelihood, religion and political institutions of those among whom they settled. Today only the Galla who live at lower altitudes follow a pastoral or transhumant way of life. (Most importantly these include the Borana, the lowland Guji, the lowland Arsi and the Raya Galla.) Most highland Galla (including the Tulema, Mecha, Lega, Sibru, Gibe, Wello and Harer Galla) have adopted a mixed farming mode of livelihood that is similar to that of the Amhara. From an ecological perspective, population pressure on the land in most Galla farming regions is less great than in the north. Because of a high concentration of the ownership of land, high rates of tenancy and the in-

creasing commercialization of agriculture, however, there has been steady migration and resettlement in the less densely populated and less developed regions to the south and west of Addis Ababa.

The ensete cultivators of southwest Ethiopia are a highly diverse cluster of peoples who are being grouped together here largely on ecological grounds.* They are located in the central part of Keffa, northern Gemu-Gofa southwestern Shoa and northern Sidamo. Altogether they are believed to number somewhat over 4,000,000. Their distinctive subsistence pattern is based on labor intensive activities including the hoe cultivation of cereals, careful tending and stall feeding of cattle, and the planting, fertilizing and mulching of a tuberous plant, known as ensete, which produces an abundant supply of starchy flour. While there is regional variation in its relative importance, it is above all ensete, with its intensive labor requirements in cultivation and preparation, its slow maturation and its remarkable storage qualities, that accounts for the high population densities, sedentary residential pattern and extraordinary cultural differentiation that characterizes the region.

Historically the most important division of Ethiopia's peoples has been between the northern Ethiopic Christian Amhara and Tigrean peoples who supported the Ethiopian monarchy, and the southern tribal peoples, who were brought under imperial rule by conquest during the past one hundred years. This distinction between north and south is

*The most important sub-groups in the cluster are: the Semitic speaking Gurage group; the eastern Cushites (including at least 17 tribal groups); and the Omotic speakers (including at least 32 tribal groups).

reflected in differences in land tenure, the nature of local elites, economic growth and response to land reform.

In the north, land use rights are held individually by small holders while reversionary rights are vested in groups of kinsmen. There is little concentration of land holding or ownership of property. Absentee landlordism is rare. Share-cropping tenancy is common, but in most cases it is due to inter-household disparities in access to the right mix of land, labor and plow oxen, rather than to large holdings. Landless tenants are not numerous and are largely low-caste artisans who have some additional means of income.

In the southern conquered region, by contrast, land tenure is characterized by a higher concentration of land holding and land ownership. Official surveys, which are not entirely reliable in Ethiopia, indicate that approximately one out of every two farming families in the southern provinces are landless tenants and that collectively they farm well under one half of the cultivated land. Data on the concentration of holdings, concentration of ownership of land and absentee ownership of land are summarized in tables 1, 2 and 3. Two important types of regional variation are not revealed by these aggregate data. One is that provincial data disguise substantial pockets of small holders including much of the ensete cultivator region discussed above. The other is that there is great regional variation in the social economic and political meaning of tenancy in the south. The nature of this variation is explained below.

In the north the local elites through whom the government administered the peasantry were not large land holders, nor were they from a

TABLE 1

TENANT POPULATION AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RURAL POPULATION IN PRIVATE TENURE AREAS

PROVINCE	RURAL POPULATION	TENANT POPULATION				TOTAL	
		WITH WHOLLY RENTED LAND Number	%	PARTLY OWNED AND PARTLY RENTED LAND Number	%	Number	%
Arussi	690,600	307,764	45	50,724	7	358,488	52
Gemu Goffa	583,300	249,412	43	21,633	4	271,045	47
Hararge	1,435,570	703,429	49	71,778	5	775,207	54
Illubabor	515,375	376,224	73	10,307	2	386,531	75
Keffa	969,100	571,769	59	29,073	3	600,842	62
Shoa	3,585,000	1,828,350	51	573,600	16	2,401,950	67
Sidamo	1,987,590	735,408	37	39,751	2	775,159	39
Wellega	1,064,100	574,738	54	49,715	5	624,453	59
Wello	2,061,800	341,586	16	330,396	16	671,982	32
TOTAL	12,892,435	5,698,680	46	1,176,977	9	6,865,657	55

Source: Cohen and Weintraub, Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia, Table 11.
 Note: The province of Bale was not included in the National Survey Sample. Low population figures indicate problems in survey.

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL CULTIVATED AREA BETWEEN OWNERS AND TENANTS IN PRIVATE TENURE AREAS

PROVINCE	OWNED		RENTED		PARTIALLY OWNED/RENTED	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Arussi	84,789	38	114,178	51	25,542	11
Gemu Goffa	29,246	48	28,592	46	3,855	6
Hararge .	117,312	39	136,690	46	45,647	15
Illubabor	26,055	34	47,718	62	3,433	4
Keffa	58,278	29	135,246	67	8,225	4
Shoa	314,826	28	618,409	55	191,144	17
Sidamo	125,728	64	68,453	35	2,302	1
Wellega	102,905	46	110,291	49	10,792	5
Wello	239,654	61	56,438	14	96,267	25
TOTAL	1,098,793	39	1,316,015	47	387,207	14

Source: Cohen and Weintraub, Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia, Table 13.

Note: The province of Bale was not included in the National Survey Sample.

TABLE 3

EXTENT OF ABSENTEE OWNERSHIP IN PRIVATE TENURE AREAS

PROVINCE	ABSENTEE OWNERS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL OWNERS %	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL OWNED AREA HELD BY ABSENTEE OWNERS %	
		Measured land	Unmeasured land
Arussi	28	27	-
Bale	15	12	-
Gemu Goffa	10	42	8
Hararge	23	48	-
Illubabor	42	42	-
Keffa	18	34	16
Shoa	35	45	22
Sidamo	25	42	5
Wellega	29	28	-
Wello	26	13	27

Source: Cohen and Weintraub, Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia,
Table 6.

non-local ethnic group. In the south local elites who played an equally important role in administration were usually large land-holders and were either ethnically northerners or more often were members of families that had been coöpted by the northern invaders through land grants and other privileges.

Paradoxically the commercialization of agriculture had progressed much farther in the south than in the north. To a large extent this is due to proximity to Addis Ababa, suitability for raising cash crops like coffee and lower population densities. To some extent, however, it is because southern elites could control land and labor more effectively than their northern counterparts.

Finally, as has been noted, the response of the peasantry to land reform has corresponded very closely to the north-south division -- the north generally opposing it and the south generally welcoming it.

The following section on land and polity prior to reform is intended to provide a deeper understanding of these regional variations in the land-based institutional structure of Ethiopian society.

IV. Land and Polity Prior to Reform

In order to understand more fully regional variation in rural Ethiopians' response to land reform it is necessary to understand more fully the nature and genesis of regional variations in the relationship between land rights and political power prior to reform. This section is concerned with the land-based political economy of the north, with the way an altered form of this political economy was imposed on the south, and with the ways that recent administrative, legal and economic changes transformed the political economy of both north and south in the decades prior to reform. It will become evident that, far from being static or tradition-bound, land tenure has undergone major changes everywhere in Ethiopia during the past century. Although the pace and details of this change have varied with time and place its direction has been towards an increasing differentiation of the political and economic significance of land rights.

Land and Polity in the North

Prior to the changes introduced by Haile Selassie during the present century the Amhara-Tigrean Christian kingdom of Ethiopia was ruled by a military elite. Below the throne were great military lords who competed with one another for royal favor in the form of honorific titles, court office, regional governorates and fief-like land grants. At the regional level the same organizational pattern was repeated. Each regional lord had a military camp of his own and his own followers who, in turn, sought of him titles and land grants. The pattern might be repeated yet again to a greater or lesser extent at the local level. Ultimately, of course, the whole elite structure was, in the Amhara idiom, carried on the backs of the peasants.

Land grants represented the granting away by the king or regional lord of a large part of his taxational, judicial and administrative rights in return for political and economic support. They were given to individuals for loyal service and to religious institutions as endowment. Different types of grants were distinguished according to the identity of the recipient, the rights and duties conferred by them and their duration.

Titles and court offices stressed personal bonds and services rendered to one's superior and at the same time gave to their recipient a diffuse sense of status honor that, unlike the personal bond, lasted until death.

The outward resemblance of the Amhara Tigrean governing institutions to those of feudal Europe has fostered three major misconceptions. The first is that the important men who held land grants possessed "primary land rights" in them and that the cultivating peasants held only "secondary" rights in the land.* Consequently, it has often been assumed peasants paid high rents, gave innumerable services and were insecure in their tenure. The second misconception is that most political military and religious power was concentrated in the person of the Emperor and his regional agents.** The third is that since land and status were hereditary the peasantry was a comparatively closed, disadvantaged and disenfranchised status group that might easily be mobilized once it was made aware of its own class predicament. Each of these misconceptions has implications for the northern peasants' response to

*See for example pages 2 and 6 of the April 1974 USAID Ethiopia DAP.

**Ibid page 2.

land reform.

Land Rights

It is essential to understand that there were formerly two basic kinds of land rights in the north. One was the type under which land grants were given (generally known as gult or gulti). The individual or institution that held such rights had the right to receive taxes and services from those who farmed it, and also judicial and administrative authority over those who lived on it. They did not, however, have the right to use or rent the land.

The other type of land rights were hereditary use rights. The holder of use rights, normally a peasant, could cultivate his land as he wished, subject only to the limitations imposed by the following pattern of his neighbors. By virtue of using the land, however, he became subject to the administrative control of the individual or institution that held the land grant in which his land was located. Taxes owed the land grant holder were generally on the order of one fifth of the crop. In addition the cultivator was commonly required to make seasonal payments of livestock, honey or other produce and to give several days' service a year to the lord on whose land grant he lived. These obligations might be burdensome at times, yet it was the peasant proprietor and not his lord who decided when and what to plant and how to dispose of his crop after taxes. It was the peasant who passed his land to his heirs (use rights could not be bought or sold), and his lord could not intervene or take his land from him and give it to another. If the term primary is to be used for land rights in the north, then surely it is the cultivators' hereditary use rights that are primary.

The Nature of Authority and Power

The only fully legitimate source of secular authority in prerevolutionary Ethiopia was the throne, from whence it flowed down in the form of honorific, largely military, titles and other symbols of royal favor. Once graced with the symbols of authority a man was shown great deference upon all public occasions not only by his own followers but by the followers of others as well. The elaboration of deferential behavior, exhibited in insignias, clothing, genuflection, seating patterns, forms of address and precedence, has often created the illusion that men of authority are necessarily men of power. Yet there is abundant evidence that this ritualization of authority is often a veneer covering the essential frailty of political power.

Power, in contrast to authority, was decentralized and tended to flow up from one's supporters rather than downward from the crown. The failure of the elite to monopolize land use rights, military skills or, for the most part, weapons, meant that relations between a man and his followers were always subject to a transactional bargaining process. Political support was based on contract and not on loyalty or mere dependence, and it could be withdrawn when the contract no longer suited the client's self-interest. It was thus not unusual to find a military leader changing sides after his personal lord was killed or an outlaw with a large following being made a governor -- his de facto power being recognized by the government and clothed with authority.

The de-centralized and contractual nature of power has limited the ability of the government to introduce change into old Amhara and Tigrean areas. In this regard the difficulty the Ethiopian government

is currently experiencing in much of Gojjam, Begemdir and northeastern Shoa is not merely opposition to land reform but also reflects the peasants' view that the proper sphere of governmental interference is narrowly limited. From this perspective the violence in the Amhara heartland today is no more a sign of the region's falling apart than that, for the first time, it is being integrated into the contemporary Ethiopian polity.

Social Stratification and Class Consciousness

Traditional Amhara and Tigrean society was divided into commoners and titled elites. Each of these groups was further subdivided into laymen and churchmen. Below all these groups were the low-caste artisans and slaves. Differences in honor between and within these strata tended to correspond to differences in control over land, political power, and life style. Nevertheless, with the exception of the low-caste artisans, Amhara-Tigrean society was not a closed society in which status was narrowly ascribed by birth or the rules of inheritance. Because of the way land use rights were inherited and allocated (see below) intergenerational social mobility within the peasantry was normal and mobility into the elite, especially through outstanding military service, though never common, was always possible. Titles and offices were not in principle hereditary and large holdings of fief-land seldom passed intact to a single heir.

Local Elites*

For the purposes of this report it is important to understand the role of the local elites who provided the administrative link between the

*This section is drawn from Chapter 4 of Allan Hoben's Land Tenure Among the Amhara of Ethiopia.

over-arching land-based institutions of church and state and the local peasant community. A great northern lord or monastery might control vast grants of land, and much of this land might be contiguous, forming a single tract of land. However, from an administrative standpoint and in the eyes of the peasants land grants were divided into separate estates, usually averaging from one to three square miles in area. Each of these estates was a distinct unit with its own internal organization and its own administrative head. These administrators constituted the local elite.

Prior to the Second World War these administrators, land grant holders or their appointed representatives, were almost the sole intermediaries between the feudal government and the peasants with regard to the administration of justice, the maintenance of civil order, the organization of statute labor and the collection of tax and tribute. In his judicial capacity the administrator had the right and obligation to investigate and arbitrate minor disputes in which persons resident on his estate stood accused. In return for this service he received a pledge in currency or kind forfeited by the losing party regardless of whether he was the plaintiff or the accused. If a crime was committed on his estate, the administrator was bound to investigate it and, if necessary, to convene a public inquest to apprehend the criminal; or, failing that, to levy a collective fine to be paid by all household heads under his jurisdiction.

If there were a proclamation to be made, the administrator was responsible for its reaching his peasants. Often these proclamations concerned government works, for the household heads from each estate

were ordered up by turn to help maintain major trails, to work on the construction of fortifications, buildings, and storage bins anywhere in the region and to help with the cultivation of fields known as hudad, which were worked for the personal benefit of the regional ruler. The administrator was assisted in carrying out his work by minor officials known as chiga shums.

The local elites of the northern highlands were not an alien or closed group, nor was their life style sharply differentiated from those among whom they lived. On the contrary, they were themselves members of the local community, bound to those they administered by ties of kinship, vicinage and membership in the local Christian community. To be sure they could turn their administrative power to economic advantage in numerous ways. Usually they held some land by hereditary use right within their administrative estate, and it was normal for them to use their influence to obtain additional land and labor. Nevertheless neither in theory nor in practice did they possess the kind of control over land enjoyed by their counterparts in the southern conquered provinces described below.

Under these conditions neither the peasants nor elites developed a strong sense of class consciousness. On the contrary, most rural northerners still identify with local leaders and take pride in their more festive forms of conspicuous consumption. The attempts of radical students to mobilize the northern peasantry have thus far fallen on deaf ears.

The Beginnings of Change in the North

Though there is little visible evidence of change in the north

the political economy of the region has been fundamentally altered during the past four decades. The major sources of this change have been the gradual introduction of centralized bureaucratic government and a re-orientation of the economy from tribute to market.

Traditionally there was very little differentiation of governmental tasks in the northern provinces. The same set of unspecialized quasi-military officials carried out most of the rather limited administrative, judicial and taxational functions of government. During the past four decades the military elite and the institutions on which it depended for its support have been progressively eroded and replaced by a functionally differentiated bureaucracy under the direct control of the central government in Addis Ababa.

By 1973, on the eve of the revolution, the provincial military elites were gone, feudal tenures under which land grants were given had been abolished and the central bureaucracy had penetrated to the district (wereda) level of administration. Below this level the government was still dependent on the local elites for direct administrative contact with the peasantry, but their autonomy and power had been greatly reduced. Most importantly this was accomplished by abolishing the old system of services, taxes and tributes in kind payable to the local elites, replacing it with a cash tax payable directly to the district tax collector.

Economic change in the north has attracted little outside attention, since much of it involved reorganization rather than growth. Traditionally there was relatively little separation between political power, the control of land and wealth. Men who enjoyed high positions

of secular authority usually controlled much land. They were also at the apex of a redistributive economic organization. They collected tax and tribute from those over whom they held authority and expended a large portion of it again on the feasts and followers that were essential to the maintenance of their political power and their legitimacy in the eyes of their subjects. In contrast to this redistributive economic system in which political considerations ultimately had primacy, trade and voluntary exchange of goods were comparatively weakly developed. For men who sought to increase their power and status, land was as much a political as an economic commodity in the way in which it was acquired and the way in which it was used.

By 1973 the politically dominated redistributive economic organization of the north had been greatly weakened. The tribute and tax formerly received by government officials from their subjects had been replaced by a cash salary from the central government. With their authority backed to a greater extent than ever before by the force of the central government, office holders were no longer willing or able to feast their followers as in the past. Land, power and wealth, under these changing circumstances, were becoming increasingly distinct.

Though the breakdown of the old redistributive economic organization has not been accompanied by an equally rapid growth in the exchange economy, there are signs that the penetration of national markets is having an effect. The most important of these are: gradual but steady price increases for crops and livestock; rising rents; and an increase in the pawning of land, a practice which under some circumstances becomes a covert form of land sale.

Land Polity in the South

There is much greater regional variation in patterns of land holding and in the political and economic significance of land in the southern provinces than in the Amhara-Tigrean north. This variation can best be understood in terms of three processes. The first is the process of conquest and incorporation, through which southern Ethiopia's diverse ethnic groups were brought under imperial control. The second is the process of land measurement and land grants, through which the imperial government tried to impose on parts of the south a land-based administrative structure analogous to that of the north. The third is the process of legal change and economic development, through which land came increasingly to be a saleable, scarce factor in production.

Conquest

In 1865 when Emperor Menelik came to power in Shoa his kingdom extended to the southwest no farther than the present site of Addis Ababa and included, in addition to Amhara, only christianized, bilingual Galla. By 1900 Menelik had expanded the Ethiopian Empire to approximately its present boundaries and absorbed scores of diverse ethnic groups.

Though Menelik's conquests were on an unprecedented scale, Amhara expansion was not a new phenomenon. Rather, it represented the culmination of processes that had their roots in the very inception of Amhara society. As an ethnic group the Amhara seem to have had their origins well before the year 1000 AD when Christian soldier settlers from Axum began pushing south, colonizing and absorbing the pagan peoples they encountered. In the 13th and 14th centuries a new dynasty of Amhara kings inspired by the quest for tribute and by revitalized Christian zeal built a vast, if ephemeral, empire that included much of what

is now highland Ethiopia. Throughout the centuries of political setback and partial dissolution that ensued the vision of a greater Christian Ethiopia, the will to dominate and the conviction that Ethiopian Christians were a chosen people endured.*

In an important sense, then, the script for Amhara expansion was already written when Menelik, the able and ambitious leader of Shoa on the southern marchlands, managed to acquire a large supply of modern rifles. Expanding his empire rapidly, Menelik was able to obtain vastly increased wealth in tribute, booty and new land with which to reward his followers. His armies were swelled with peasant soldiers, Galla as well as Amhara, who left their crowded homelands in search of booty, rapid advancement, land and serfs to till it.

The process of Amhara domination began with far-reaching dry season raids. Recurrent raiding forced nearby chieftains into tributary submission while other local leaders, often well beyond the immediate marchlands, voluntarily sought to ally themselves with the Amhara ruler. The latter paid tribute and, in some instances, took Amhara wives from the royal court and "christianized" their local following with the aid of Amhara missionary priests. Large areas, including much of central Wellega and the Jimma region of Keffa were thus brought into the empire without undergoing the ravages of military conquest. Other areas, however, which put up stiff resistance to Amhara armies were mercilessly plundered. Such areas, including northeastern Arussi and the region around Bonga in Keffa, still bear the imprint of ruthless conquest in their land tenure systems and their attitude towards the Amhara ethnic group.

*The best analysis of the early formative period of Amhara history is to be found in Tadesse Tamrat's Church and State in Ethiopia. For an analysis of the Amhara-Tigrean ethos, see Donald Levine's Greater Ethiopia, chapter 7.

Following conquest the northern generals established a network of fortified encampments always on the high ground of their newly won territories. The peoples of the conquered region were administered indirectly through their former leaders or members of their group appointed by the invaders. These coöpted leaders, generally termed balabats, became a new local elite.

In order to further secure their position the northern generals settled their land-hungry soldiers in the countryside between the forts. Each soldier was assigned according to his rank a number of conquered cultivators, known as gebar, who were obligated to provide him with labor to maintain his household and till his fields. From the conqueror's point of view it was labor and not land that was the scarce factor of production. In the early period there was little to check the soldier's arbitrary or harsh treatment of his gebars except their willingness and ability to flee. Particularly for the sedentary ensete cultivators servitude to the northern soldiers was not easy. Over the years, however, those soldier-settlers and their descendants who have remained on their land have tended to marry local women and take on the way of life of the ethnic group among whom they live, thus blurring the initial ethnic distinction between rulers and ruled.

Land Measurement

In the decades that followed the conquest of the south Emperor Menelik and his successors attempted to measure land in order to introduce into the southern provinces a system of land tenure, administration and taxation that was analogous, though by no means identical, to that of the old northern provinces. Several motives prompted this move. One was to gain more direct control over the region. Another was to increase tax revenues, and a third was to enable the ruler to make direct land grants to his personal favorites and followers. This last motive was of particularly great importance, for in the old Amhara polity the power of the emperor to hold the loyalties of his tenants-in-chief rested on his ability to reward them with land.

Land measurement was an essential first step, for in the south, unlike the north where land has never been measured, there were no clearly delineated, named estates of land that could be given at once as land grants and serve as minimal units of secular administration. After being measured into standardized units, lands were classified and assigned under various conditions to individuals and religious institutions. The details of this classification are complex and regionally varied. The most important distinctions, however, were between lands assigned to the balabats (the coöpted local leaders), lands assigned to royal favorites, military men and government officials, lands assigned to churchmen and religious institutions and lands held directly by the crown.

The lands given to the balabat consisted of some portion of the lands over which he had administrative responsibility. Initially the

significance of balabat land was more political than economic. The balabat continued to share the land with his kinsmen and fellow tribesmen and received from them small rents and services. As late as the 1920's in some regions (including the Chilalo awraja of Arussi) balabats were still freely giving land to their kinsmen. More recently, however, such free transfers have been replaced by the sale of land. Thus as the economic value of land increased so did the dispersion of ownership of balabat lands. Nevertheless, on the eve of reform balabats still possessed lands many times larger than those of their administrative subjects.

The lands given to favored individuals, almost inevitably outsiders to the local community, were given under a variety of tenures. Some grants were for the duration of services rendered to the government, some were for life and some were in perpetuity. Another dimension of variation was that some tenures included only the kinds of administrative and taxational rights associated with land grants in the old north, others consisted only of land use rights and still others included some combination of both.

The lands given to the church were also under a variety of tenures. Under some of them, generally known as semon, religious institutions were assigned administrative rights and the right to tax or service from the cultivators on the land. In another form of tenure, termed church gult, the use rights in the land were held directly by the local church or monastery and were assigned to individual clergymen while they were serving the religious institution. Precedent for both these arrangements is found in the north.

Government or crown land was a residual category of measured and unmeasured lands out of which the government has made additional grants as pensions and rewards to its supporters. The granting of government land, often under the pretext of land reform, continued at an increased rate after the abortive coup of 1960 in an apparent attempt to obtain the loyalty of the new urban and military elites and to give them a greater interest in maintaining the old regime.*

Land measurement and attempts to superimpose on the south modified northern tenures took place during the first three decades of the present century. It was carried out most completely in the longest held and politically most central Galla region of Shoa. Farther from the center of the empire measurement was resisted more or less successfully by coalitions of gebar-holding soldier-settlers, balabats and northerners already resident in the south, all of whom stood to lose land they already possessed.

The imposition of quasi-northern tenures in the conquered provinces greatly affected but did not immediately abolish pre-conquest forms of customary land tenure. In the absence of either a market for staple crops or of high population densities landlords were more concerned with obtaining labor services and tributes in high value commodities such as coffee, cloth and honey than with directly controlling access to land use rights. The cultivators were technically tenants but continued to use the land they considered to be theirs by ancestral or

* An excellent discussion of the political uses of land grants is to be found in John Cohen's "Ethiopia After Haile Selassie: the government land factor." African Affairs LXXI 289 (1973) pp. 365-382.

tribal right. From their perspective, if not from the central government's, the new system did not represent a loss of land use rights but the imposition of onerous tributes and services. Later, the developments described below transformed landlord-cultivators in the direction of true tenancy in many areas. Nevertheless, many tenants retained the view that the land they cultivated was their own and have consequently seen land reform as the restoration of their legitimate rights to their birthright.

Despite the conceptual origin of southern tenures in the feudal system of the north and the de facto survival for a time of southern customary tenures, land use rights in the south differed from those of the north from the outset in one crucial respect; they could be bought and sold. Initially this difference was the product of historical chance more than design. In principle, land use rights in the north could also be sold. In practice, however, reversionary rights in land were vested in a kin-group composed of all the descendants of the first holder, and land sale was the concern of this group. Since in long settled Amhara and Tigrean areas this group was very large, land sale was virtually impossible. In the newly conquered south, by contrast, land use rights were held by the individuals to whom they were granted or, with the passage of time, by their children.

Had there been no further change in the political economy of the south, it is likely that the descendants of those first granted land use rights might well have come to constitute land-holding kin-groups like those of the north. Two major developments, however, precluded this possibility. One was a series of legal reforms which transformed most southern tenures into freehold. The other was a process of eco-

conomic growth that created an ever greater market in land.

The Transformation of Southern Tenures

At the beginning of the present century the ecological and economic potential for agricultural development in the southern provinces was considerably higher than in the north. Indeed the availability of sparsely populated, fertile and well-watered land was one of the major attractions that had led Emperor Menelik to turn from his traditional enemies in the north to the conquest of the south.

During the next three decades the growth of the newly founded city of Addis Ababa created a steadily rising demand for food crops and livestock in adjacent regions. As prices for crops and land rose, landlords turned increasingly to share-cropping arrangements with their tenants.

The comparative "scarcity" of arable land in market-oriented areas led large numbers of Galla cultivators to migrate to the now peaceful marchlands of northwestern Arussi, southern Wellega and Illubabor where they could obtain land at lower rents or prices from predominantly pastoral Galla balabats or Amhara landlords. With the passage of time the market economy penetrated further into the more fertile and accessible parts of the hinterland and the process of migration and resettlement was repeated. Thus some of the Shoan Galla migrants who settled in Arussi in the period prior to 1920 again found it advantageous to resettle, this time in Bale still farther to the south, by the early 1940's. In each case land prices rose markedly during the decade after settlement, suggesting that the settlers were not seeking to escape economic change but to profit by it.*

*A detailed and illuminating account of Shoan Galla settlers in Bale

Farther from Addis Ababa economic growth before 1935 was less common and was for the most part limited to the production or collection of high value cash crops like coffee. The Italian occupation of 1936-1940, however, had an important effect on all but the most remote areas. Numerous northern soldier-settlers and landlords were killed or driven out of the southern provinces by the local population. Equally important, the Italian administration abolished the burdensome services owed by the gebar cultivators. Communications were also greatly improved by the construction of roads.

Though northern rule was re-established with the return of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1940 it soon became evident that he did not intend to re-institute the pre-Italian order. A series of land proclamations in the early 1940's legally abolished all payments in kind and labor services formerly owed by the gebar, many of whom thereby became small free-holders, particularly in the ensete areas. By 1966 all forms of feudal tenure which had granted away to individuals taxational and judicial powers of the crown had been legally terminated.** The direction of this change was towards freehold tenure with the former holder of feudal rights being allowed to convert some part

is to be found in a Ph.D. dissertation by Hector Blackhurst entitled A Community of Shoa Galla Settlers in Southern Ethiopia, submitted at the University of Manchester.

**Though there was great regional variation, individually or privately held land accounted for approximately 80% of the arable land in the southern provinces. The remainder was more or less equally divided between church land and government land.

of his land into that form of tenure. In legal terms, then, major steps in land reform had been taken prior to the land reform proclamation of 1975. In reality, however, both labor services and feudal tenures persisted in some areas such as Illubabor until March of that year.

The legal transformation of southern land tenures to freehold would have had little effect, had it not been accompanied by further economic growth. Road construction opened up more of the countryside to the penetration of national markets with the predictable result that commodity prices, land prices and rents continued to rise.

The effect of these legal and economic changes on the real income and security of rural Ethiopians in the southern provinces was not uniform. In some prosperous small holder areas there was a greater dispersion of the ownership of land as prosperous small farmers bought land from balabats and landlords who found it more profitable and attractive to invest their capital in urban enterprise and real estate. In some particularly favored regions, such as northwestern Bale, the opening of a road has led to sharply higher prices, the adoption of double cropping and increased purchase of consumer goods. Landless tenants in prosperous areas, however, have benefited less from economic growth and some have doubtless suffered a reduction of real income as arable land became scarce and rents rose. On the positive side, there was a small but growing tendency for cash rents to be substituted for share-cropping.

Whatever the developmental benefits of a land market may have been, they were greatly diminished by the fact that it was not yet free of political control and manipulation. As land values rose the forced and fraudulent sale of peasants' lands to government officials

or their relatives became an increasing problem. Once again, land, especially valuable land situated near towns, was passing into the hands of outsiders.

The final impetus for economic change was the introduction of green revolution inputs and mechanized farming during the late 1960's. Paradoxically it was this last development, fostered to a great extent by the efforts of USAID, SIDA and Ethiopian government subsidies, that created the greatest hardship for the rural poor. For the first time commercial farming became a more attractive investment than could be found in the urban or industrial sector.

Weekend farmers from Addis Ababa, businessman and bureaucrat alike, began leasing land from landlords in the fertile and accessible regions of western Arussi, northern Sidamo and southern Shoa. In the years between 1967 and 1972 the number of commercial farms in Chilalo awraja grew from under 10 to 126 and by 1970 9,700 hectares or 25% of the tractor-cultivable area was under tractor cultivation.* Urban entrepreneurs who had never lived near a farm devoured the latest books they could obtain on modern agriculture. Some of them invested large sums in experimental irrigation and cropping schemes.

Virtually all of the large-scale farmers mechanized their farms many finding that they could amortize their investment in equipment in one or two years. Tenant evictions, which had formerly been rather rare, increased at an alarming rate. An estimated 500 families were evicted in 1969 and 1970 alone in Chilalo and the total number of peasant holdings in the awraja decreased by 2,300!** Cultivators who had enjoyed de facto though not de jure security of tenure under the customary arrangements decried by foreign advisors found themselves deprived

It should be evident at this point that patterns of land tenure, political economy and social stratification in the southern provinces defy easy generalization. Characterizations of the entire region as feudal, static or dominated by absentee landlords are oversimplified and inaccurate. On the contrary the agrarian organization of each locality has evolved rapidly during the present century and must be understood in terms of several factors, including ethnicity, ecology, the nature of northern conquest and exploitation and the growth of a market economy. Despite this complexity, or rather because of it, it is useful to conclude this section with a brief regional survey of the southern agrarian organization on the eve of revolution.

The Shoan Galla region, which includes Addis Ababa, has, not surprisingly, been greatly affected by northern conquest and subsequent developments. As a result of the comparatively early date of conquest of this region and extensive Amhara settlement the Galla (often referred to as Tulema Galla) have become Christian and have come to resemble the Amhara to a greater extent than have other Galla groups. Ecologically the region is suited to the Amhara pattern of mixed agriculture. Virtually all the arable land was measured, land ownership is concentrated and the mode of exploitation has evolved to one of share-cropping tenancy. The market economy is comparatively well developed. Mechanized farming and tenant evictions are extensive in the fertile teff-growing Ada area south of Addis Ababa. Recently this pattern began to spread along the roads to the southeast, the west and southwest of the city.

The Wello Galla and Harar Galla are today essentially islamicized

peasant farmers whose economic circumstances do not differ greatly from those prevailing in central Shoa.

To the west of Shoa between the Gibe and Didessa rivers in Wellega the Lega Galla developed a monarchy and adopted orthodox Christianity just prior to their peaceful incorporation into the Ethiopian empire. Because it did not resist Amhara rule this region saw comparatively little Amhara settlement or expropriation of measured land to outside landlords. Nevertheless there was considerable concentration of land ownership in the hands of descendants of the local Galla ruler and his balabats. Well over half of the operated holdings in the region are made up entirely of rented lands and share-cropping is the dominant form of rent, especially in the area around the provincial capital of Nekemte connected to Addis Ababa by an all-weather road.

Still farther to the west in Wellega, beyond the Didessa river is the region of the Sibü Galla. This relatively isolated region has had less direct contact with northerners but has been much influenced by the Scandinavian and German Evangelical Mission which has been active there since the conquest. Except in the northwest border district of Assosa approximately one half of the operated holdings are held in tenancy. Low man-to-land ratios and a weakly developed market for grain, however, prevented the development of the highly exploitative share-cropping arrangements more common to the east. Rather modest cash rents predominate, and relations between Galla balabat landlords and their tenants have been free of great tension. In recent years a great increase in the production and marketing of coffee has brought

prosperity to many of the region's cultivators.

South of eastern Wellega in Keffa province is a region inhabited by the Galla who overran the Gibe states of Jimma, Limmu-Enarya, Guma, Gomma and Gera. All of these Galla had taken over the monarchical institutions of their non-Galla predecessors before their submission to Amhara dominance and all have been converted to Islam. This well-watered, fertile region is one of the richest agricultural areas in Ethiopia and much of it is well suited to coffee. The old kingdom of Jimma, which made voluntary submission to Menelik, did not suffer extensive northern settlement or expropriation of land. Other parts of the region fared less well, and in the region as a whole over 60% of the cultivators (including non-Galla peoples) were tenants, mainly to local Galla balabats with whom relations were often tempered by kinship ties. Because of coffee, however, the real incomes of even the tenants are high by Ethiopian standards, and in recent years an increasing proportion of the labor used to harvest that crop has been supplied by seasonal migrant workers from as far away as Wello and Begemdir. Another consequence of increased coffee production is that there are marked differences in income within the small holder population.

To the west of Keffa lies the sparsely populated province of Illubabor, which was brought into the empire by conquest with relatively little difficulty. Large tracts of land were alienated to northerners and the government and much of what remained was given to Galla balabats. The percentage of cultivators who were tenants (73%) was the highest in Ethiopia. Only 34% of the privately held land was cul-

tivated by its owner and 42% of all privately held land was held by absentee landlords.* Because of its isolation from modern transportation and concomitant economic forces the administrative, legal and taxational reforms of the post-war period had little effect on the region. Landlords continued to exact tributes and labor services from their tenants. Since the opening of an all-weather road to Metu coffee production has risen, but a large part of the increased wealth seems to have stayed in the hands of the landlords. Over the past few decades there has also been a continuing process of migration, settlement and clearing of new lands along the northern fringe of the rain forests south of Metu. This has led to considerable deforestation and degradation of the land, which reverts to a scrub forest of acacia after a short period of use.**

Prior to their incorporation into the empire the Arsi Galla were predominantly cattle herders occupying what is now Arussi and north-western Bale. Since the conquest the highland Arsi of Arussi have adopted the agricultural pattern of the Shoan Galla and Amhara who have settled among them. Because the Arsi fiercely resisted conquest and as pastoralists did not appear to be using the land intensively, much of the best arable land in Arussi was taken by northerners. Almost half the cultivators are share-cropping tenants.

A combination of fertile land, adequate rainfall and access to national markets has brought a rapid growth in the market economy and

* See tables 2 and 3 above.

**This phenomenon has been described by Adrian Wood in a paper entitled Migration and Settlement in the Forest Fringe, Illubabor Province, Ethiopia.

rising land prices since the mid-20's. In the last years before the revolution mechanized large-scale agriculture spread rapidly along the road from the provincial capital of Asella to Addis Ababa, forcing thousands of tenants to leave the land.

An all-weather road and economic growth have come to highland Bale more recently. There too, however, the Arsi pastoral way of life was giving way to a sedentary agricultural pattern brought by Shoan Galla settlers from the north.

The final Galla group who are partially sedentarized are the Guji to the southeast of the Arsi in northern Sidamo. Much of the land in this region was technically owned by absentee landlords and balabats. In reality, however, away from the road the system amounted to little more than a tax farming arrangement in which the landlord or his agent negotiated an annual collective payment with tribal leaders.

Except for the kingdoms of Wellamo and Keffa the ensete cultivators in southwest Ethiopia put up little effective resistance to the overwhelming firepower of the northern armies. Forts were established and soldiers were given the tributary and labor services of gebar families in the usual way. However high population densities and the intensive cultivation of ensete, which the northerners did not consider suitable food, discouraged the conquerors from expropriating large amounts of land. Instead they forced the local people to labor on grain production, often on previously uncultivated land located at lower altitudes on the periphery of the highlands.

Land measurement and the more direct imposition of northern forms of administration was generally pushed more vigorously in these cash crop producing borderlands than in the higher areas planted more

heavily in ensete. Consequently, when the post-war tax reforms abolished the labor services of the gebar, a majority of highland ensete cultivators became small free-holders while their relatives who had resettled in the surrounding lowlands, along with poor northern settlers, often found that they had become tenants.

Though there has been great resentment against the arrogance and arbitrariness of northern rule in much of the region the greatest economic hardship facing most cultivators is the absolute shortage of land. Holdings in many parts of the region are less than one hectare. In response to this condition there has been increasing labor migration to plantations from Kambatta and extensive population movement especially out of the crowded Wellamo and Gurage regions during the present century. This movement has been facilitated by the suppression of intertribal warfare and has greatly complicated the ethnic picture in the southern provinces.

All of these regional variations in land tenure and land use have conditioned the response of southern cultivators to revolution and to agrarian reform. This response is the subject of sections seven and eight.

V. Social Organization

The previous section was concerned with the changing role of land tenure in the political economy of Ethiopia. The purpose of this section is to examine somewhat more closely the social organization of production; the organization that land reform is intended to alter. The specific institutions with which it is concerned are the household and the community. The household is critically important because throughout Ethiopia it has been the primary unit of production management. The community is important both because it provides the immediate setting in which each household head seeks security, prestige and power, and because leadership and dispute settlement responsibilities traditionally organized at the community level are to be transferred to the new peasant association. Once again it is useful to examine separately the institutions of the northern and southern provinces.

Household and Community in the North

The Amhara and Tigrean household is not a familial unit whose size and fortunes are determined primarily by the facts of marriage, birth, death and inheritance, for neither the members of which it consists nor the land on which it subsists are bound together by invariant rules. It is rather an enterprise based in a group of people predominantly linked by ties and sentiments of kinship who live together in a single homestead under the managerial authority of a head and his wife.

The composition, the size and the social standing of a household are dependent not only on its initial endowments at marriage but also on the managerial talents of its head -- on his ability to maintain orderly relations among its working members, to maintain plow oxen and other livestock,

and to gain and retain control over land.

In attempting to maintain the right mix of labor, livestock capital and land the household head is faced with a culturally distinctive set of opportunities and constraints. A household which is well supplied with livestock and land but lacks labor may bring in a hired hand or, if the need is long-term, foster children from less fortunate households. In Tigre a wealthy household may also require labor services in return for a loan. Conversely a household with excess labor tends to shed it by putting out a child for hire or fosterage. Wage labor in agriculture is uncommon and is considered demeaning.

While a household that lacks a pair of oxen is at great disadvantage, not more than one household in five has sufficient land to justify the expense of maintaining two pair. It is essential, however, that the household head have adequate liquidity in sheep, goats, fire arms and cash to purchase additional oxen, should they die.

Land presents the greatest problem for the household manager, because it cannot be bought and sold. To be sure, additional land can be obtained through tenancy but only at the cost of giving up from one-fourth to one-half of the crop. Equally important, land used in tenancy provides no security for an aging couple who are no longer able to labor on the land. It is thus a vital concern of each household to acquire use rights over an adequate supply of land.

The land on which a household depends for its livelihood does not constitute a clearly delimited estate which passes intact from the household head to a principal heir. It rather represents a collection of fields brought under the control of the household head through diverse

processes and strategies only to be divided up once again among all his children at his death.

The fields themselves are not thought of as objects that can be bought and sold but as shares of a much larger tract of land. Reversionary rights in this larger tract, often covering a square mile or more of land, are vested in a community defined by descent from its first holder, or, in parts of Tigre, a community of all those currently resident on the land.*

An individual may acquire use rights in a field by inheritance from either parent, by gift in anticipation of inheritance or by litigation against other members of the community of holders.** Regardless of how it is acquired, the field is always potentially subject to the competing claims of kinsmen who think their claim to it more valid.

A man's ability to obtain and retain land is thus closely related to his ability to compete successfully in the politics of his kin-

* The complex organization and functioning of the Amhara land tenure system is described in Allan Hoben's Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia.

** Under an alternate system of tenure found in parts of Tigre province, all households resident in a village have a right, in theory, to an equal share of the village's arable land. Recent research by Dan Bauer, however, reveals that manipulations of this system generally give rise to inequalities similar to those produced in the more prevalent, ancestor-oriented system.

group and community.

An Amhara or Tigrean farmer's incentive to adopt innovations and to increase his production must be understood in relation to these organizational constraints. Despite stereotypes to the contrary, there is abundant evidence that northern Ethiopian farmers quickly accept innovations that are to their advantage and are consistent with using the household as the unit of production. Maize and the Irish potato, both new world crops, have assumed major ecological importance. The now ubiquitous eucalyptus tree was not imported from Australia until the turn of the century. The rapid adoption of the eucalyptus is of particular interest, since it casts doubt on the oft-repeated assertion that communal land tenure prevents northern Ethiopians from making improvements on their land.*

More generally, it has been found by anthropologists working in the north that farmers are keenly interested in experimenting with new varieties of staple crops that they have heard are being raised in nearby regions. Moreover in each locality there is extensive empirically derived knowledge of soil types and of their potentials under different varieties of crop and differing patterns of rainfall. It is striking that this knowledge has not yet been systematically been studied and put to use by the agricultural extension service of EPID.**

*At least on Gojjam it was also found that fertilized fields, along with house sites, are normally exempted from the redistribution of ancestral lands occasionally necessitated by litigation.

**Appendix B suggests the ways such research might usefully be undertaken.

Agricultural innovations that cannot be organized within the household because of their large capital or labor requirements would presumably be more difficult to introduce. It should be stressed, however, that there is presently no experimental evidence that economies of scale would result from the adoption of available innovations. The construction of more than a dozen water and diesel driven grain mills by local entrepreneurs in Gojjam province since the Second World War indicates that the problem of capital formation per se is not insurmountable, even in the most economically undeveloped and "traditional" areas.

Recent anthropological research indicates that under present conditions it would be irrational for northern farmers to maximize their production of marketable crops; for to do so would not maximize their chances of improving their security or social status. Like most cultivators without access to savings institutions or government welfare programs, Amhara and Tigrean peasants must follow production strategies that will minimize risk of falling below subsistence in a bad year rather than strategies that will maximize average annual income. One way in which risk of total failure due to weather is reduced is through the fragmentation of holdings. Fragmentation, which is incorrectly attributed to "traditional" rules of inheritance, enables a household to have lands that vary greatly in altitude, exposure, drainage and soil type.

A second way in which risk of failure is reduced is by planting a variety of crops rather than concentrating on the production of crops that have the highest average market value. A third practice which reduces risk at the cost of lower average yields is the avoidance of manure

as fertilizer in areas of uncertain rainfall.*

Even within the constraints set by prudent risk aversion, many farmers do not attempt to maximize production by applying known techniques, such as additional soil preparation and weeding. This unwillingness to work when the marginal returns to labor are low reflects the peasant's accurate assessment of his economic situation and of how he can best improve his security and status. There can be no doubt that low prices for produce are a major deterrent to increasing labor inputs. As one peasant succinctly explained to this writer, "We are lazy here because money is too expensive." Furthermore, in most of the north the absence of access to national markets results in low price elasticity in each locality providing a further disincentive for increased production.

The other major deterrent to increasing labor inputs has been the political rather than economic character of transactions in land -- and more generally the primacy of political over economic power as a source of security and prestige in the political economy of the old north. Wealth could not be directly converted into land. Once he had attained a modest level of economic security an ambitious man's efforts to gain land were better rewarded if he was active in local politics and litigation than if he worked harder on his land. Similarly it has been more effective strategy to give non-essential land to tenants who might also become clients than to expand the household labor force and spend more time in farm management. For to spend more time in farming was to spend

*These comments are based on research of Dan Bauer reported in a dissertation entitled Land, Leadership and Legitimacy among the Inderta Tigray of Ethiopia. University of Rochester, 1972.

time in the local political arena where influence and land were to be won or lost. Finally, under the conditions that have prevailed in the northern highlands it was generally not possible for a man to improve his social status by buying consumer goods. On the contrary, since it was felt that they were the prerogative of politically important "big men" it could be difficult for a man of low status to maintain unusually valuable goods he might purchase.

The foregoing remarks are not meant to suggest that the northern peasantry has been untouched by economic change. Along roads, especially near towns, prices have risen, effective land sale through antichresis or pawning has become more frequent and increasing numbers of oil lamps, manufactured clothes, radios and tin roofs have made their appearance.

In closing this discussion of the household it should be stressed that the absence of more economic growth in the northern peasant sector is not due to ignorance or the sheer weight of tradition, but to the economic and institutional context in which peasants are making decisions concerning production. The peasants cannot be expected to change their behavior in response to education or propaganda but in response to altered alternatives and opportunities.

In the absence of effective mass media, extensive labor migration or regular contact with urban centers the northern household head's most important reference group is his local community. It is his frequent face-to-face interaction with this group of neighbors and kinsmen that most affects his material interests, his attitude towards consumer goods, his standards of morality and conduct and his self esteem.

It is essential to understand that the social organization of the northern peasant community is not dominated by a small land-holding elite but is characterized by the broad participation of small holders. Furthermore, the minimal role played by the old military elite in local government gave community institutions great scope in regulating their own affairs. The vitality and autonomy of these decision-making institutions has, if anything, been strengthened by the replacement of the old land-grant based feudal administration by a more remote and inscrutable bureaucracy.

The most distinctive cultural characteristic of Amhara and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Tigrean community organization is that it lacks unitary structure. Visually, this lack of centralized community organization in the countryside is evident in the absence of nucleated settlements.* Structurally, there is no single institution with a wide range of responsibilities and concerns. Instead different types of interest and activity are organized in different structures and each of these may provide a unique way of grouping households.

For religious purposes the most important institution is the

*In the Inderta region of Tigre peasants reside in villages.

parish, a named, bounded territorial unit under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of a local Ethiopic Christian church. Administrative and judicial relations with the government are maintained through the office of the neighborhood judge. This recently introduced office has territorial jurisdiction over one of the old administrative land grants (see page 26 above), a unit which often crosscuts parish boundaries.

The allocation of land use rights is the concern of a group of men and women who hold fields in a tract of land by virtue of the fact that they recognize one another to be descendents of its first holder. The members of this land-holding kin group are never all resident in a single parish or neighborhood, nor are they predominantly linked by close ties of kinship.

Help in time of need is provided by kinsmen or by religiously sanctioned, voluntary mutual aid societies the membership of which crosscuts all other types of groupings.

This distinctive crosscutting pattern of social organization has implications for the organization of community projects, for patterns of leadership and consequently, for the introduction of the new peasant associations in the north. Since each household head finds his varied and changing interests divided among many groups he can afford to give his loyalties to none of them. Under these conditions organizing cooperative tasks in northern Ethiopian communities is no easy task. Generally it requires that a forceful leader exert his personal influence on the members of the group. A striking example of this organizational process is seen in the way parishioners rebuild their parish church. Despite the shared belief that their collective and individual welfare depends

on the functioning of their church, parishioners are seldom able to overcome their mutual suspicions and organize work on church repairs without the intervention and assistance of an important local leader. It is significant that the most important leaders in each community are referred to in Amharic as "big men," an appellation that correctly suggests that their power rests not so much on the possession of clear-cut office as on their ability to gain control over a potentially diverse set of resources and political prerogatives.

In the past the most influential person in the community was the holder of the land grant or his agent. Even then, however, his powers of leadership were muted by the division of tasks and interests between the community's several institutional structures. Eligibility for positions of leadership in church, landholding kin group and minor administrative office (e.g. the chiga shum) rested on the possession of fields in particular land tracts. The erosion of the land grant holder's position and his replacement by the neighborhood judge has had the effect of diffusing community power even more widely, with the result that it is more difficult to accomplish public projects, such as clearing trails.

It should be stressed that the weak development of group solidarity in Amhara and Tigrean community organization is not per se a constraint on development. On the contrary, there are numerous examples of communities that have managed through their own efforts to build schools, build clinics and raise money for road construction. The fact that such projects are undertaken only after exhaustive discussions of how they will affect all parties' interests may well improve project design. The point is that northern peasant households cooperate only

when they need to because the task in question cannot be organized at the household level. Unlike the Galla and other formerly tribal groups in the southern provinces they do not often work together merely for the sake of sociability or to express their loyalty to kinsmen and neighbors.

While northern social organization is not in itself an insurmountable barrier to development it does constrain the organizational forms through which development can be most efficiently and humanely introduced. First, it should be recognized that any thought of redefining land rights is deeply disturbing to most northern peasants. Land rights are not only the basis of each household's security but they also define an individual's position in his community. In their most general sense, they symbolize the free status and independence denied to cultivators in the conquered southern provinces.

Second, the fact that existing institutions are effective at meeting the peasants' perceived needs and involve most household heads in decision-making makes it difficult to replace these institutions or radically alter them by imposing the new peasant associations.

Third, the crosscutting pattern of community organization and the wide dispersion of community power makes it virtually impossible for the government to simply remove or coopt a key local office holder in order to gain control of existing institutions.

In recognition of these difficulties the provisions of the land reform proclamation partially exempted the northern "communal" tenure areas from the immediate effects of reform. Unfortunately, however, the student campaigners who brought word of reform to the northern peasantry disregarded the sections of the proclamation dealing specifically

with the north. The result has been apprehension, disaffection and sporadic violence.

Household and Community in the South

In the south, as in the north, the household is the basic unit of production management, and the local community is its principal reference group. However household composition and community social organization are different from those of the north and are subject to regional variation. In this report only those gross differences in organization which are most likely to determine the outcome of agrarian reform are considered. In ethnic terms the most important distinction to be drawn is between the Galla and the ensete cultivators.

Though a majority of Galla households are based on a nuclear family like those of the Amhara two more complex arrangements are found: the extended family and the polygynous family. While it is generally considered appropriate that a man's sons remain with him after marriage the extent to which this ideal is attained varies with the ability of the father to obtain and monopolize resources in land and cattle. It is clear however, that the frequency of large extended family household enterprises is higher in Galla areas than in most Amhara or Tigrean regions.* In islamic areas of Arussi and Keffa a wealthy man may have more than one wife. In such cases each wife usually has her own homestead and associated property to manage. Often the homesteads are some miles apart and in different ecological zones, enabling the husband to partially specialize his production at each.

*In the Amhara area around Mahel Meda in Menz district of Shoa extended family compounds are common.

As the sedentary Galla agricultural complex has been taken over from the Amhara its requirements in labor, livestock and land are similar. There are differences, however, in the ways they are obtained. With regard to the organization of labor the most striking difference is that Galla households prefer to work together in cooperative labor exchange groups (debbo) while Amhara households tend to cooperate in agriculture only to the extent that they see an economic advantage in doing so.

There is also a greater cultural emphasis on cattle among the more recently sedentarized Galla than among the Amhara. According to Blackhurst who has conducted extensive research in northwestern Bali, however, this cultural bias in itself does not lead to greater dependence on cattle or the maintainance of larger herds.*

It was with regard to land that the situation of the Galla region household differed most from its northern counterpart.** The most important differences were that: 1) almost half of the household heads were landless tenants and many others were partially dependent on rented land; 2) land could be bought and sold; and 3) in the southern and western Galla regions arable uncleared land was not scarce except along the roads.

The land strategy of a household head varied with his circumstances. In regions where land had become scarce only the son of land holders could remain in his father's extended family after marriage or hope to

*Blackhurst, 1974.

**The differences in access to land described here arise from differences in land tenure rather than ethnicity per se. The land situation of Amhara living outside their northern communal tenure areas is essentially similar to that of the Galla.

receive ample land of his own. A young man not fortunate enough to have a wealthy father had to support his new household by taking land and often oxen from a landlord in return for a substantial share of the crop. If he were ambitious, such a young man was likely to seek additional income through migrant labor, swidden agriculture in adjacent lowlands, or trade.* Alternatively a man might migrate and resettle where land was not yet so scarce. There he could rent land for his household more cheaply and, in some areas, through increasing his production of cash crops, buy land.

In sum the picture of the Galla region farmer that emerges from recent anthropological studies is one of a relatively autonomous pragmatic household manager whose economic and locational strategies are not greatly constrained by membership in land-based forms of local social organization.** This qualitative picture is confirmed by Bisrat Aklilu's recent quantitative analysis of the adoption and diffusion of fertilizer in Ethiopia's Minimum Package Programme.*** On the basis of his macro-analysis of twenty Minimum Package Programme areas Bisrat concludes that:

The five MPPAs...where the rate of adoption was the highest are areas where the returns from fertilizer use was not only the highest but also the degree of risk was the lowest. Risk was measured by the yield

*The role of swidden agriculture in the economic strategy of young men has been described by Knutsson in an unpublished paper titled Ploughland and Swidden.

**The most important recent studies include: Blackhurst on Shoan settlers in Bale, Lexander on Arussi, Knutsson on Shoa and Wellega, Wood on Ilubabor and Sperry on Wellega.

***Bisrat Aklilu, Technological Change in Subsistence Agriculture, Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1975.

variability of fertilized crops as compared to the variability of unfertilized crops. On the other hand, the group III MPPAs which have "failed" to accept the new input on a major scale are areas where the value of the incremental output due to fertilizer was not only very low but the risk factor was also high.

Interestingly he also found no significant difference in adoption behavior between north and south that could be attributed to differences in land tenure.

Bisrat also conducted a micro-analysis of factors that account for the differential time of initial fertilizer use and the differential level of fertilizer use in the areas of highest and lowest adoption. On the basis of this study he concludes:

In Jimma, which the macro-analysis identified as having high profitability and low variability, the level of fertilizer use was determined by the profitability of the innovation and the economic pressure the farmers were facing to adopt a land augmenting technology. Those who had higher level of fertilizer use were farmers who had higher man-to-land ratio, higher oxen-to-land ratio, higher borrowings, higher consumption units in the family and higher tenancy. Fertilizer not only complemented their available resources and increased their respective productivities, but it also released their binding constraint -- land. Hence it was this economic pressure and incentive to adopt a profitable innovation that determined the level of use.

Galla community organization is distinguished from that of the Amhara and Tigreans by an emphasis on voluntary affiliation with egalitarian associations rather than on membership in land-based hierarchically structured institutions. This difference in community organization is related to the character of early Galla tribal organization and the ways it has been altered by northern conquest.

Recent studies of the still pastoral Borana and Guji Galla indi-

cate that before their expansion in the sixteenth century the Galla were organized in cross-cutting descent groups generation classes and local groups.* The descent group of clan and lineage system was important in matters of kinship, marriage, morality and ritual, and provided an all-inclusive system of classification for all Galla. The generation classes were important in relation to marriage, ritual and warfare. Local groups, though important in day-to-day affairs, were not considered very significant in the larger scheme of things, since individual households might shift their residence.

During the ensuing centuries of expansion and conflict with the Amhara, Galla generation classes tended to lose their military functions, while initially temporary war leaders emerged increasingly as permanent political leaders. With the Amhara conquests under Menelik, many of these strong men were coöpted into the new regime as balabats and the generation classes suffered still greater atrophy.

As administrative and judicial agents for the Amhara rulers and as large land holders the Galla balabats exercised great power. However, in the more commercialized regions, they came increasingly to be viewed as corrupt representatives of an alien group, and they lost their legitimacy in the eyes of their subjects. As the moral authority of the balabat was eroded it was replaced in many communities by that of a new figure, the head of a spirit cult. This individual might or might not be the head of a dispersed lineage, or gallu. His moral and secular authority, however, rested not on principles of kinship but on his presumed ability to mediate with the world of spirits. Backed

*The best recent study of the Borana is Asmarom Legesse's Gada and the most important work on Guji has been done by John Hinnant.

by the threat of supernatural sanctions some of these spirit cult leaders came to exercise greater judicial authority than the balabats and were able to amass considerable fortunes in land and livestock.*

What is most striking about Galla community organization, however is the great emphasis placed on task-oriented voluntary groups that appear to have their cultural roots in the older local groups and generation classes. Generalizing from his own field work among the Mecha Galla, Herbert Lewis concludes that the most important principles of this mode of super-household community organization are:

- 1) the right of an individual to associate with others on the basis of friendship and free choice and to enter into contractual agreements with friends, neighbors, and partners;
- 2) the expectation that neighbors will aid and co-operate with each other, although friendship and free choice may cross-cut and weaken contiguity per se;
- 3) obedience to the formal rules of the voluntary associations to which individuals belong and loyalty to fellow members;
- 4) the application of universalistic achievement criteria in the choice of fellows and leaders; and
- 5) the use of election, casting lots, and taking turns to insure fairness.**

Galla community organization, itself the product of a century of rapid political and economic change, was better suited to Ethiopia's agrarian reform program than that of any other ethnic group in the country. The high concentration of land holding and the ownership of property, the under-utilization of large holdings, the growth of the cash economy and rising land prices all created an economic rationale for land reform, while the nature and recentness of the Amhara conquest added to its political popularity. The balabats' loss of legitimacy

*The most detailed account of this process is to be found in Karl Eric Knutsson's Authority and Change.

**Herbert Lewis, "Neighbors, friends, and Kinsmen," Ethnology 13:(2):146.

made it difficult for them to organize resistance to the changes that stripped them of land and office. And finally, neither the new peasant associations nor cooperative work patterns represented a sharp organizational break with existing social structure. If agrarian reform was to be well-received anywhere, it should have been in the middle Galla region.

Since the ensete cultivators are culturally even more diverse than the Galla it is even more difficult to generalize about their household and community organization. In many groups the patrilocal extended family is considered an ideal and, except among Christian converts, polygyny is considered the prestigious form of marriage.

The household's agricultural requirements vary considerably with the degree to which it is dependent on ensete for its subsistence. Ensete itself requires comparatively little land but much labor in transplanting, manuring, mulching and preparation. In areas of intensive ensete cultivation grain and other crops are interplanted with the ensete and cultivated by hoe. In this pattern of farming cattle are valued for their produce and their manure but are not used for plowing.

In most of the ensete region desirable land has become increasingly scarce since the conquest and the cessation of warfare. As among the Galla, but in contrast to Amhara custom and national law, land was inherited only by sons and only at the death of the father, though they might be given use rights inter vivos. Evidence from Darassa, Gurage and the Gama highlands indicates that even before the conquest land was sometimes bought and sold, and labor was scarce enough so that in some regions those vanquished in war were forced to give periodic labor dues to their conquerors rather than land or rent. More recently wage labor

in agriculture has become common and daily wages in the Gurage region are frequently higher than can be obtained by unskilled laborers in Addis Ababa.

In the past high population densities led to warfare and settlement. More recently peaceful migration into the lands used only by pastoralists has been common among the Darasa, the Sidamo and the Wel-lamo. Particularly since the imposition of a cash tax prior to the Italian invasion there has also been an increasing amount of labor migration both to Addis Ababa and to the large plantations that have been established in the Awash River Valley. For example, the Gurage have come to dominate petty trade and portering in Addis Ababa, the Kambatta have supplied most of the labor for the Wonji sugar plantation, and the Dorze have established themselves, both in their homeland and in Addis Ababa, as Ethiopia's most renowned weavers. Where possible, cash crops, especially coffee, have also become common.

Many ensete cultivators have thus become enmeshed in the cash nexus through necessity or choice. It is difficult, however, to see how they can realize great benefits from agrarian reform so long as they suffer from land shortage and so long as the efforts of Ethiopia's agricultural research and extension facilities are primarily focused on cereal production.

Despite the pattern of migration out of the ensete regions, internally there is less inter-community mobility than in either Galla or Amhara regions. Most importantly this is due to the long maturation of ensete. To some extent, however, it also reflects the tightly knit character of local community organization, which usually links local

clusters of patrilineal kinsmen to one another in elaborate ritual structures based on territory or putative common descent. Many positions of leadership are tied to particular lineages and their authority usually rests on ritual powers and prerogatives. A second type of leadership position found in many groups is open to anyone not of low caste or artisan status and is attained through the staging of large, ostentatious feasts.

Many tribal groups in the ensete region also had semi-sacred chiefs of kings with numerous titled and ranked retainers. Some of these rulers, especially the kings of Wellamo, and Keffa were powerful leaders able to defend themselves surprisingly well against the vast superiority of Amhara arms. While most of these rulers' descendants have lost their former status or have been absorbed into wider Ethiopian urban society, many of the local leaders' descendants were still bala-bats on the eve of the revolution. Though some of them held large amounts of land, in many small-holder areas they were not set off from their fellow tribesmen as much as were their Galla counterparts.

VI. The Commitment of the Central Government to Agrarian Reform

A primary conclusion from examination of past experience with land reform is the overriding importance of the political factor in securing meaningful change. The concentration of control over land provides a power base for many groups in the LDC's. Land is a symbol of authority and a source of political power, especially where the land owner controls the access of peasants to their only source of security -- the land. A meaningful land reform program will inevitably destroy or limit the power base of many persons. It is not surprising therefore, that land reform is often a central issue in political debates and that these debates are often couched in terms of redistributing political power as well as wealth. Ambitious programs of land reform will seldom be implemented unless there are shifts in political sentiment and power.*

In Ethiopia, as elsewhere, the introduction of radical agrarian reform has been, in large part, a political rather than a legal or an economic process. This section is concerned with the generation of this political process in Ethiopia's central institutions. The next two sections, VII and VIII, are concerned with the political impact of reform and the response to it in rural areas. The alternative directions that land reform may take in the future and their implications for economic development, income distribution and the participation of the rural poor in decision-making are assessed in section IX.

The Political Background to Land Reform

It is striking, though by no means unique to Ethiopia, that political agitation by peasants played no role in bringing about land reform. In the years that followed the Italian occupation, peasants from some southern areas, including Keffa awraja, petitioned the emperor to

*Quote from Land Reform, pp. 6-7, World Bank Paper, Rural Development Series, July 1974.

prevent the return of their former northern landlords. Except for this action, which met with mixed results, the only political action taken by peasants prior to the revolution was represented by isolated rebellions against new taxes, especially in Gojjam, and against excessive tax and tribute around the southern town of Dilla.

The conviction that the major constraint on development in Ethiopia lay in its "feudal" land tenure system was deeply rooted among college students by the late 1950's. From there it was spread by a generation of college graduates to all circles in Ethiopia's nascent educated elite.

The students' slogan, "land to the tiller," was echoed in the reform program announced by the leaders of the abortive military coup of 1960. The government responded to the growing demand for land reform by appointing a Land Reform Committee, which was later transformed into a Land Reform and Development Authority and finally, in 1966, into the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration (in MLRA). As John Bruce has succinctly noted, "this institutional escalation obscured a complete lack of substantive progress."* At first the only significant activity of the ministry was the administration of imperial land grants out of government lands. This activity supported the existing imperial patronage system and reduced increasing numbers of cultivators to the status of share-cropping tenants.

Between 1968 and 1973 the MLRA prepared legislative drafts for:

*John W. Bruce, "Ethiopia: nationalization of rural lands proclamation, 1975." University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center. The brief summary of MLRA activity presented in this report draws heavily on Bruce's insightful paper.

1) tenancy reform; 2) a cadastral survey and registration of title; 3) progressive taxation of unutilized lands; 4) the abolition of land grants; and 5) direct expropriation and redistribution of large holdings. Only the first of these proposals ever reached parliament and it, though modest enough, was defeated three times.*

In retrospect, however, it appears that the formation of the MLRA served two very important functions. It produced a group of officials well-trained (especially by the AID-funded University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center), dedicated but frustrated, and, despite its small research budget, it added greatly to available data on land tenure in Ethiopia.

Early in 1974 a series of relatively unorganized strikes and mutinies in the armed forces revealed the essential weakness of the old imperial regime and set Ethiopia's "rolling revolution" in motion. As the revolution gained momentum, so did the support for land reform. In April a short-lived reformist civilian cabinet announced that excessive holdings would be taken over by the government and redistributed to "those who will make their living by working on the land."** A former minister of the MLRA who had been dismissed for his reformist views was reinstated, and a ministry task force set to work revising the previous proposal for expropriation.

In September of 1974 the minister presented a draft of the proposed reform legislation to the ruling Provisional Military Advisory

*The politics of tenancy legislation has been analyzed by Peter Schwab in a book entitled Decision-making in Ethiopia. 1972.

**"New Cabinet Issues Policy Declaration," Ethiopian Herald, 9 April 1974.

Council (PMAC). The PMAC objected that the draft was too conservative. During the closing months of 1974 younger personnel in the MLRA who favored radical land reform prepared a new draft that lowered the size of maximum holding from 40 hectares to 10 hectares, eliminated compensation for confiscated land and included other radical innovations. It was essentially this draft that was promulgated on March 4, 1975 as Proclamation no. 31 A Proclamation to Provide for the Public Ownership of Rural Lands.

The Land Reform Proclamation

Proclamation 31 is a remarkable document. Its major goals correspond with those enunciated by major donor agencies in four important respects. 1) Not only does it attempt to improve income distribution in the rural sector immediately, but it attempts to prevent the re-concentration of holdings and income in the future. 2) It recognizes the fundamentally political nature of land reform and takes its implementation out of the courts and the hands of local, land-based administrative elites. 3) It requires the participation of the rural poor in decision-making with regard to the implementation of land reform and subsequent developmental initiatives. 4) It is regionalized, in that it contains special provisions for the communal northern areas and for nomadic lands.

More specifically the proclamation declares that all rural land except forest and mineral land is the collective property of the state. No compensation is to be paid to former owners except for movables and permanent improvements exclusive of trees (including coffee).

Tenancy is abolished and former tenants are given possessory rights

in the land they cultivate. Debts to landlords are canceled, and for three years tenants are entitled to use oxen and agricultural implements they have used, after which time compensation is to be paid. Resident landlords share their land with their tenants, and small landholders who are unable to farm their land (widows, orphans, the aged and the infirm) are able to retain their land. How these provisions are intended to work is not clear.*

Commercial farms become state farms, cooperatives are subdivided among individual cultivators. Compensation, once again, is paid only for movable property and permanent improvements. Wage labor in agriculture is forbidden, except on state farms.

In areas of private tenure (i.e., outside the communal northern areas) any person, regardless of sex and previous status as a landlord is entitled to an allotment of land sufficient for his and his family's maintenance, provided he or she is willing to cultivate it personally.

An individual enjoys use rights in his land so long as he cultivates it himself but he cannot transfer it to another person through sale, exchange, succession, mortgage, lease or antichresis (pawning). Despite an explicit prohibition of testamentary succession, however, the proclamation (Art. 5) suggests that upon the death of the holder possession of the land passes to the deceased's spouse or minor children or, lacking these, to any child who has reached majority. It is not clear how this quasi-heir is selected since designation by will is prohibited. It seems likely that this and other ambiguities in the way land rights are to be allocated to individuals over time reflect the

*Legal ambiguities in Proclamation 31 of 1975 are discussed in Bruce, cited above.

conviction on the part of most MLRA officials that ultimately land will be controlled communally.

In recognition of the political nature of land reform, Proclamation 31 attempts to secure the participation and support of Ethiopia's rural poor by organizing them into peasant associations. Each association is based on an area of 800 hectares (a little more than 3 square miles). Initially the association is to consist of tenants, landless persons, hired hands and landholders with less than 10 hectares. After their excess land has been taken from them, former large holders can also join the association.

The association is given nine functions:

- 1) to distribute, with the solicited assistance of the Government when necessary, land forming the area ... as much as possible equally, and in the following order:
 - a) to farmer (sic) tenants and former landowners residing within the area,
 - b) to evicted tenants,
 - c) to persons who reside within the area but do not have work or sufficient means of livelihood,
 - d) to farmers coming from outside of the area,
 - e) to pensioned persons who are willing to undertake personal cultivation,
 - f) to organizations needing land for their upkeep.
- 2) to follow land-use directives to be issued by the Government;
- 3) to administer and conserve any public property within the area, especially the soil, water and forest;
- 4) to establish judicial tribunals to hear land disputes arising within the area;
- 5) to establish marketing and credit co-operatives and other associations like the debo which would help farmers to co-operate in manual and other works;
- 6) to build, with the co-operation of the Government, schools, clinics and similar institutions necessary for the area;
- 7) to cultivate the holdings of persons who, by reason of old age, youth or illness, or in the case of a woman,

by reason of her husband's death, cannot cultivate their holdings;

- 8) to undertake villagization programmes;
- 9) to exclude from distribution mining and forest lands and places of historical and antiquarian significance.*

The proclamation also provides for the creation of higher level peasant associations (associations of representatives from local associations) at the district level (of which there are 550) and the sub-province level (of which there are 109).

Finally, in addition to enabling the peasants to participate in the implementation of land reform, Proclamation 31 makes special provisions for the "communal tenure" (i.e., Amhara and Tigre homeland) areas of the northern provinces and for "nomadic lands."

The special provisions for the communal areas appear to represent an interim attempt to avoid undue political problems rather than a fundamental difference in long-term objectives. Officials of the MLRA are well aware of the unpopularity of land reform in the northern areas and of the fact that, though holdings are unequal, there are few large holdings or landless tenants. Consequently Proclamation 31 (Art. 19) gives peasants in the communal areas possessory rights over the land they presently till. In recognition of the fact that many northern "tenants" are in reality comparatively wealthy peasants who own oxen and hence plow their less fortunate neighbors' land, tenants are given possessory rights in the land they farm only if they are landless.

Yet whatever confidence these provisions might give the northern

*Proclamation No. 31 of 1975, Art. 10.

peasant is undermined by Article 20 which prohibits land litigation, and article 23 which says that the main function of the peasant associations shall be "to induce and organize peasants into cooperative farms."

Lastly, though it is beyond the scope of this report, it is interesting to note that the proclamation grants Ethiopia's nomadic groups "possessory rights over the land they customarily use for grazing or other purposes relating to agriculture."

Problems of Implementation

The staggering difficulty of implementing the reforms introduced by Proclamation 31 must be understood in relation to the nature of provincial administration and local government in Ethiopia.* The country as a whole is divided into fourteen kifle hagers (formerly provinces, now technically governorate-generals), 102 awrajas and 550 weredas (districts). Below this administrative level are areas administered by unsalaried local leaders, usually atbiya danyas in the north and bala-bats, chiga shums or chiefs in the south.

Each kifle hager, awraja and wereda is governed by an administrator appointed by the Ministry of the Interior. Before the revolution loyalty to the old regime was the most important criterion for appointment to these offices and the educational level of administrators was very low. In theory administrators were under the close control of the Min-

*A useful summary of provincial administration is to be found in Ted D. Morse, "Local Government Administration in Ethiopia," USAID/Ethiopia, September 1975.

istry of Interior to which they were solely responsible. In practice, however, they enjoyed considerable autonomy and were able to establish independent power bases among the local elites through the astute distribution of patronage.

Recognizing the difficulty of introducing change through uneducated and conservative men the revolutionary government replaced more than 400 of the 673 awraja and wereda administrators with individuals of twelfth grade (for the wereda) or B.A. level (for the awraja) education shortly before the proclamation of land reform.

In addition to the administrators appointed by the Ministry of Interior there are field agents of a number of other ministries in each center of provincial administration. These field agents are in an ambiguous position, since they are under the nominal control of the administrator in their area but look to their superiors in their own ministries for technical advice, salary and promotions. This situation, as well as competition between the ministries in Addis Ababa, fosters jurisdictional disputes, ineffective planning, poor coordination, jealousy, political intrigue in most provincial towns. This problem, though recognized by Ethiopia's new rulers, has not yet been solved.

If salaried provincial administrators were unlikely to support land reform, the unsalaried local leaders below the district level were bound to oppose it, for their administrative position was dependent on their status as substantial landowners. Indeed, one of the immediate consequences of reform was to effectively eliminate the balabats, chica shums and similar local leaders from playing a role in the administration of rural areas. With the lowest level of traditional government

gone, district officials were left to communicate with the peasantry as best they could. Since the average area of a district is 2000 square kilometers, and modern communications are poorly developed, this was no easy task.

Faced with the ineffective and conservative nature of provincial administration, the central government decided to bypass normal channels of provincial administration and justice and to rely on new structure to organize the peasant associations and implement land reform. Proclamation 31 called for the appointment by the MLRA of land reform administrators down to the district level. Initially, however, the MLRA had only between two and three hundred men with eight to twelve years of education. Its field staff was limited to one representative per governate general and perhaps 20 representatives in selected awrajas. In a desperate attempt to make up this deficiency the MLRA held a seminar about a week before the proclamation of land reform in order to select additional personnel from other ministries. According to a spokesman for the MLRA:

The purpose of the seminar was to introduce the persons who would be selected to work in the implementation of the legislation and to briefly discuss with them the political philosophy which underlined (sic) the legislation. At the end of the seminar the participants were interviewed to see the level of their political consciousness, their dedication to the implementation of the legislation, etc.*

Even with these additional field agents the MLRA was unable to place one land reform administrator in each district, let alone establish contact with the rural peasantry. For this reason the task of contact-

*A Brief Press Release from the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, Sept. 11, 1975.

ing and organizing the peasants was ultimately carried out not by the old provincial administration or the new land reform administrators but by 50,000 high school and university students and teachers who had been deployed throughout the country under the auspices of the Development through Cooperation Campaign.

The Development through Cooperation Campaign or zemetcha (literally, "campaign" in Amharic) was hurriedly organized in early September when the students were coming back to Addis Ababa for the new school year. Its purpose seems to have been two-fold: "to carry the political and social revolution to the countryside" and to remove the students, who had a long tradition of political activism, from Addis Ababa at a critical phase in the consolidation of the revolution.

All students and teachers from the eleventh grade and above from public and private schools (except military colleges) were required to join the campaign. About one-third of the 60,000 persons in these categories were in Addis Ababa, and something under one-third were women.

Initially many students were opposed to the campaign because it had been imposed on them by a military regime they no longer trusted to carry out the radical reforms they had long sought. Most of them joined it, however, after the government announced that those who refused would not be permitted to continue their studies, leave the country for study or even work within Ethiopia.

Campaigners were trained in their own schools by their own teachers, reinforced by orientation teams from the campaign headquarters. Training was generally superficial. Some groups had no more than three sessions to prepare them for their work in rural areas and among unfamiliar peoples whom many of them had never seen.

In spite of great organizational and logistic difficulties the campaign was able to deploy advance parties by late December. By late January the first group was in the provinces, and by March about 30,000 campaigners had been deployed. Eventually the number reached 50,000.

The campaign is directed, at least in theory, from its Addis Ababa headquarters and organized into six major regions, 54 centers and 450 stations. The stations are the most effective units. Each has between 100 and 120 campaigners under the dual "control" of a civilian and a military commander. The station receives ET \$30 per month (about US \$15.00) per campaigner for food and ET \$100 per station for administrative costs. Food is prepared and eaten communally without regard to sex or religion (at least in those stations observed). In reality the campaigners at each station, particularly the students, were able, at least during the first six months, to operate independently of direct authority in their day-to-day activities.

Officially the campaign has eight programs: 1) political education; 2) agricultural and cooperative extension; 3) public health; 4) public works; 5) literacy and basic education; 6) land reform; 7) research; 8) national heritage and culture preservation. The first campaigners to arrive at their stations, however, found little that they could do -- in a sense they had arrived in the countryside before the revolution. In some areas conservative local administrators set the students to work on make-work tasks, such as clearing rubbish out of the town stream; but in general the overwhelming mood was one of sullen boredom.

The situation changed drastically in early March, when land re-

form was announced, and the campaigners were asked to move into the void left by the collapse of land-based local administration and to organize the new peasant organizations. Radical student leaders, who effectively controlled the student movement as a whole, saw in land reform an opportunity to pursue their cherished goal of creating a peasant revolution.

Communication and coordination between student leaders was surprisingly good, and their revolutionary agenda seems to have been essentially the same everywhere. It was thus their version of agrarian reform that was presented to the peasants and which, in the initial phase, appeared to have government backing.

The main elements of the student campaigners' program were: 1) to read and explain the land reform proclamation to the peasants; 2) to give the peasants political education concerning the revolution; 3) to neutralize the political power of the large landlords, traditional authority figures and wealthy peasants; 4) to see to it that members of disadvantaged and low-status groups were elected to positions of leadership in the new peasant associations they organized; 5) to arm the peasants and encourage them to attack their class enemies -- landlords, wealthy peasants, merchants and the provincial police; and 6) to organize collective farming. While some of these objectives were consistent with government policy the major independent thrust of the student effort was to bring about a peasant revolution that would check or overthrow the military regime the students believed to be illegitimate.

VII. The Rural Response to Reform: Political Aspects

In the first and most violent phase of land reform the student campaigners had the full support of the PMAC and its newly-appointed administrators and land reform administrators. Local elites, including balabats and other landed, unsalaried local officials, opposed reform, and the provincial police were generally reluctant to take action against their allies in and landed gentry.

Under these conditions the students' ability to implement their radical program depended to a great extent on their ability to generate political support within the rural population. To anticipate, it appears that the students were most successful in mobilizing support in regions: 1) that had been subjugated to the empire by force of arms; 2) that were characterized by ethnic prejudice against the indigenous population; 3) that had a high concentration of land-holding and ownership; 4) that had been most affected by the commercialization of agriculture and tenant evictions; and 5) that had progressive or radical administrators, extension agents and land reform administrators who backed their revolutionary efforts.

Not surprisingly, the response to land reform and the campaign was poor in the communal small holding areas of the northern provinces and was favorable in the conquered and more developed regions of the south. For this reason most of the following discussion is concerned with the southern provinces.

The North

Throughout the northern small holder "communal" tenure Amhara

and Tigrean region the students' revolutionary message was badly received. There was no mobilization of poor or landless people against the wealthy peasants or local administrative elites. There was apparently no significant redistribution of land or oxen and no collective farming. On the contrary, to the extent that there has been mobilization it has been directed against land reform and the government that brought it about.

There had long been opposition to land reform among the northern peasants, who equated it with the confiscating land measurement policies pursued by the "Shoans" in the southern provinces. Indeed, there had been armed rebellions in both Gojjam and Menz in protest against minor changes in land taxation, which were viewed as harbingers of land reform.

Officials of the MLRA were well aware of this opposition to reform among the small holders of the Amhara and Tigrean homelands and had (as was noted) specifically, if somewhat ambiguously, exempted the "communal lands" from an immediate redistribution of land. Moreover, PMAC representatives tried to reassure the northerners that land reform would not affect them.

The student campaigners, by contrast, made little concession to the special circumstances of the north. Instead, in many places, they made verbal attacks on balabats -- a term which, in the north, refers to any holder of communal land -- and urged the immediate collectivization of land and oxen. The peasants, already deeply suspicious of land reform and of a government that had recognized equal status for Moslems and had imprisoned Amhara Emperor Haile Sellassie, were generally in no mood to take orders from urban students.

In Tigre there was much apprehension concerning reform, but, at least on paper, many peasant associations were formed, each grouping two or three traditional parish communities. The more successful associations are reportedly settling disputes among their members. There has been no change in land-holding or in the condition of landless tenants, artisans or Moslems.

In the Amhara highland parts of Begemdir, Wello, Gojjam and northern Shoa, opposition to reform has been greater. MLRA figures indicate that there are few peasant associations, even on paper, in the more conservative Amhara areas. In Shoa, for example, predominantly Amhara "communal" Menz and Merhabete awrajas have 40 and 11 associations respectively, though the average number of associations per awraja in Shoa's other nine awrajas is 488. In Amhara Gojjam only 138 associations are claimed for easily accessible Debre Marcos awraja (which includes the provincial capital), while for Kollana Dega Damot (accessible by road) and Mota (accessible only by air) awrajas the figures are four and one respectively.*

Even more serious, from the central government's point of view, were the spreading armed rebellions which, as of mid-October 1975, were found in parts of all the Amhara homeland provinces. Many of these disturbances were led by royalists, former members of parliament and former southern landlords with ethnic and kinship ties in their ancestral northern communities.

*"A Brief Press Release from the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration," Sept. 11, 1975.

There can be no doubt, however, that many Amhara peasants have rallied around their "reactionary" leaders to defend what they see as their own interests, while southern peasants have generally ignored the pleas of their former balabats and landlords. As one Amhara elder expressed it:

When I heard about land reform, I thought, 'That will be good for the southern provinces, but here we don't need it--we already have our own land.' Then the students came and called a meeting. No one went. They came again, by appointment, on another day. They told us that we would have to plow our land together and share the crops. They read out a list of names (Apparently from the tax records, which, in the area in question, do not list more than one out of five families) and told us we would have to tell them how many oxen each of us had. Then they went away and never came back.

The Neutralization of Southern Elites^{1/}

In the southern provinces the peasants' attitude towards land reform and initial response to it were much more favorable than in the north. During the month that followed the proclamation of land reform on March 4, the students pursued their goals with vigor, unhampered by the central government. So effective was their effort to mobilize the peasants that by April the army was forced to put down student-led groups of poor peasants who were attacking landlords, wealthy peasants, and the police in Jimma. Other incidents soon followed and were repressed. By the end of May the exuberant, active and most violent phase of land reform in southern Ethiopia was over.

The student effort was weakened by the absence of trained cadres, and lack of information on practical aspects of socialist land reform, a lack of familiarity with local systems of land tenure and social

^{1/} The case material in this section was gathered from a number of sources and is, on the whole, I believe, accurate. It is obvious, however, that I was not able to do in-depth research during the time available and have had to rely on reports from other observers for much of the case material. It is intended to illustrate some of the complex responses to land reform and some of the processes that underlay these responses. It is not intended to be a complete or definitive description or history of land reform.

organization, and, above all, by the lack of coordination with PMA policy.

In light of these difficulties the students' achievements were most impressive. By mid-September 1975 large holdings were virtually non-existent. The balabats and their landed subordinates had lost their land and power, at least in accessible areas. More than 13,000 peasant associations with over 3,500,000 members had been reportedly formed.* More than 54,500 hectares of choice large-scale farmland had been distributed to peasant associations.** Extensive collective farming had been established on some of these redistributed lands and at least a few hectares of land had been farmed collectively in most other effective peasant associations.

The generally favorable response of southern cultivators to land reform was, in large part, related to the fact that they had never accepted the loss of their customary rights to the Amhara invade as legitimate. Over the years there were many isolated instances of southern groups appealing to the Emperor to defend or restore their land rights. In a few localities, including Dilla in Sidamo, there have even been riots over excessive rents and taxation. Land reform was thus viewed as liberation from Amhara rule, as well as in more narrowly economic terms.

Escalating tenant evictions in areas of mechanized farming and, after the revolution, rumors of impending land reform added ur-

*"A Brief Press release from the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration." September 11, 1975.

**Brig-Gen. Teferi Bante, The Ethiopian Herald, Sept. 13, 1975.

gency in some areas to the peasants' desire for reform. By the summer of 1974, almost a year before land reform was finally announced, the Amaro and Darasa east of Dilla had expelled unpopular Amhara landlords. In the commercial farming areas a number of tractors were burned, attempts were made to take over land, and, in some instances, landlords began selling their land at a reduced price. By and large, however, on the eve of land reform there had been a change in the peasants' mood, in their expectations, rather than a substantive change in the distribution of land.

Though southern cultivators were initially favorable to the new government, land reform and the student campaigners there were significant regional variations in their response to the students' program. For purposes of analysis and exposition, the discussion of these regional variations is organized in two parts. The rest of this section focuses on the neutralization of the political power of the landed elites, the balabats and the landlords. The following section is concerned with the organization and functioning of the new peasant associations and their relationship to older forms of local social organization.

The neutralization of absentee landlords was accomplished without the need for direct intervention of the central government and its provincial representatives; the landlords were simply afraid to visit their land. Many of those interviewed in Addis Ababa had not even bothered or dared to register their tractors and other improvements in order to receive compensation.

Their land either remained in the hands of their former tenants rent-free or, if it was in a large-scale commercial farm, it became a state farm or was allotted to peasant associations.

Locally resident landlords were a greater problem, since many of them did not have other means of support and most of them were armed. Moreover, for the historic reasons outlined above, many of them were ethnically northerners, whose relations with local people were tinged with racial arrogance. A few exceptional landlords managed to give up their land with grace and remain peacefully in their homes. Most of them, however, fled to the towns, were arrested by the students and were sent to the provincial towns, from whence they were eventually released and now reside; or they took up arms and organized opposition to the student-peasant coalition.

The balabats and other landed local officials proved to be a more difficult group to neutralize since, in addition to controlling land, weapons and administrative authority, they were members of the local ethnic group and, in many cases, the kinsmen of their subjects. Not surprisingly many balabats were at first nominated for positions of leadership in the peasant associations (contrary to the provisions of the land reform proclamation). The students attempted to disqualify them from nomination or to have them removed from office. The extent to which the students succeeded in turning the peasants against their balabats seems to have been positively associated with land ownership, and/or the commercialization of agriculture.

The student campaigners did not limit their attack to those elites whose power rested on the control of land. They also challenged

the authority of traditional leaders whose legitimacy was based on age, membership in prestigious kin groups or on non-Christian religious beliefs. These efforts were most successful in some of the more stratified traditional societies where there were already latent tensions between social groups or emergent classes. They were least successful where traditional authorities had become symbols of opposition to the old regime.

Though the picture of regional variations in the neutralization of elites is far from complete at present, it is possible to sketch its broad outlines with some degree of confidence and to glimpse the process in greater detail in selected locations.

In the predominantly Galla, market-oriented areas of central and southern Shoa landlords and balabats appear to have lost all their land and authority. A number of the largest landowners, including the former governor of Shoa, took up arms against the government even before land reform and were subsequently killed or captured. The extensive commercial farming areas around Debre Zeit and Shashamane on the main road south of Addis Ababa have been given to peasant associations (most of which are farming them collectively, see below) or are being run as state farms.

Brief reports from western Shoa indicate that, there too, the landholding class has been neutralized:

The district center of Gindo lies some 30 km. to the north-west of Walkite, from which it is accessible by only a dry-season road. Before land reform 90% of the land was owned by 48 balabats and Amhara landlords. Most cultivators were share-cropping tenants paying up to 50% of their crops if they did not own oxen.

After land reform was announced, the campaigners

(approximately 120) came to the district and organized 75 peasant associations. Most of the balabats and resident landlords became outlaws, and they kidnapped some of the students. Eventually the police came and fought a battle with them, killing 29 and capturing most of the rest. Those captured have been released. Some of the balabats who had good relations with their tenants have come back to their homes now, but they don't have their former land.

This year the former tenants are plowing the same land as before. They haven't redivided, nor are they plowing more than 10% of the land collectively. They don't want to farm collectively next year. There is talk about redivision but no agreement on how it should be carried out.

Since the population is low in relation to the area, there are only about 80 households per association. The land is good and the cultivators will be rich this year if the trucks come. White teff sells for only \$18 per quintel (as compared with an unofficial price of over \$50 per quintel in Walkite).

When the students came to Gindo there were few radios and little interest in listening to it. Now that there are radio broadcasts in Gallinya they listen eagerly.

To the north of Gindo in Jibatna Mecha awraja about 20% of the land was held by Amhara soldier settlers and their descendents. After land reform about one-third of these Amhara landlords became outlaws and were killed or imprisoned. The rest of the landlords are still in their homes, but they have no tenants. They are farming the land adjacent to their houses themselves. Many of them have not done their own work before, and their former tenants laugh at them.

In Wellege, which had not suffered from the excesses of Amhara conquest or the alienation of a high proportion of its land to outsiders, the students found it more difficult to mobilize the peasants against the balabats.

*It was not possible to check the information in this interview against more than one source.

Reports from Dembidolo Begi and Gimbi in Wellega confirm the impression that, in many parts of the province, land reform was comparatively peaceful, and, as will be discussed below, involved less radicalization of the peasantry than in many other regions in the south.

In the Galla regions of Ilubabor to the south of Wellega, the students had comparatively little difficulty in turning the peasants against their Amhara landlords and Galla balabats. The ease

and relative peacefulness with which the students and peasants were able to break the archaic landlord-tenant relationship, drive out the Amhara and neutralize the balabats is related to the very high concentration of holdings and land ownership (the highest in Ethiopia) in the region and to the absence of a strong middle group of prosperous small holders, such as existed in Wellega.

A number of former tenants interviewed along the road expressed the opinion that they would enjoy improved levels of income this year, since they do not have to pay the customary cash rent, tax, coffee payment or two days a week labor to their landlord. One man interviewed near Metu said he had been a servant for the local balabat until this year. Now he has been given a few hectares by his peasant association.

The fertile and comparatively well developed region around Jimma in Keffa to the east of Illubabor contrasts with Illubabor in several informative respects and proved an even more fertile field for the students' attempts at radicalizing poorer peasants against not only large land holders but against rich peasants as well.

Jimma, unlike Illubabor, was a traditional Galla kingdom that joined the Empire without conquest. Largely because of this peaceful incorporation, Jimma has much less concentration of land ownership. While there were a few large holders with in excess of 1600 hectares, a majority of farmers owned the land they cultivated and most "landlords" were small proprietors with one to three tenants. Because the region is commercially developed and, in some places, is rich in coffee there were substantial differences in cash income -- differences not eliminated by the 10 hectare limit on landholding, since 10 hectares of productive coffee trees in a good year may yield a gross income of over \$30,000 ET (about \$15,000 US).

When land reform was announced the large landholders offered little overt resistance. Perhaps half of them went to live in the city of Jimma where, like most former landlords, they agitated against

the change and spread rumors to the effect that the peasants were not allowed to plant without government permission and that the produce of all collective agriculture (which was being promoted by the students, land reform officers, and extension agents) would be seized by the government. Small landlords, many of whom held less than ten hectares in any case, remained on their land.

During the first weeks of their activity the campaigners organized the poorer cultivators and agitated against landlords, "rich peasants" and the local police. By April tensions were great, and there were several incidents of violence near the town of Jimma in which student-peasant groups arrested rich peasants and policemen. The trouble spread to the town itself, where there were demonstrations -- some of them openly anti-government. The PMAC investigated the problem and decided to back the forces of law and order against the student-inspired revolution from below. The enforcement of this decision was accompanied by further violence, and it is reported that 24 students and an unknown number of peasants were killed.

The suppression of the student revolution in Jimma marked a turning point in the course of land reform, for it gave a clear signal to the campaigners and more radical officials in the MLRA that land reform would not be allowed to follow what these groups regarded as its "logical course."

In the heavily forested old kingdom of Keffa (corresponding more or less with present day Keffa awraja) to the southeast of Jimma the campaigners had no difficulty displacing northern land holders and met no opposition from rich peasants. Their attacks on traditional authority figures whose legitimacy was based on mystical powers and covert opposition to Amhara rule, however, were met with

violence.

Unlike the kingdom of Jimma, Keffa put up stiff resistance to Amhara conquest and was treated very harshly after it fell. During the first years of occupation, at the turn of the present century, perhaps as much as half the population of the kingdom fled, was enslaved or killed. Population densities are still low, with much land remaining forested.

Large tracts of land were alienated to northerners after the conquest, and, though much of this land was lost to them after the Italian period, the process of alienation to outside government officials has been accelerating once again in recent years.

The major source of food production in the area is ensete (sweet potatoes are also important), which was grown without interference by landlords. Some grain was also produced, with the landlords generally supplying the oxen, which they, in some cases, monopolized by force.

Many peasants were also required to give two days per week in labor service and a fixed proportion of the coffee they harvested to their landlord.

Under these conditions, there was little incentive for cultivators to develop more land or increase their grain production. Because of this and the generally poor relations between the local population and the northern administrative and land-holding elites, the common people of Keffa have turned towards their traditional secular and religious leaders, who were never effectively coöpted into the administration. Missionaries who have worked in Dembidolo and Keffa describe the Keffa people as "traditional and fatalistic."

The student campaigners, encountering little serious opposition from the northern landlords in Keffa, turned their attacks on the traditional unofficial Keffa authorities. In an act of calculated effrontery the semi-divine and normally secluded geramanja was unceremoniously paraded in the streets of a provincial town. Later a group of students visited his compound, where they

were feasted by his followers. Just what happened is not clear, but several accounts agree that the students deliberately desecrated the geramanjas sacred eating utensils and, after dinner, seated a low-caste manjo on his special horse.

The outraged followers of the geramanja waited until the students had assembled in a school building in the neighborhood. The building was surrounded and put to the torch. According to reports, which could not be cross-checked, all the students died in the blaze or were shot as they fled.

In much of the densely populated ensete growing area of southwestern Shoa and northeastern Gemu Gofa there was little concentration of land-holding or ownership, but rather a pattern of small holding that had resulted from the decay of the gebar system (see page above). In these areas the students' attempts to neutralize elites and mobilize the poor took a number of different directions, depending on local patterns of social and economic stratification.

In the small-holder region of eastern Gurage the students had little success in radicalizing the peasants.

Balabats in this region (Sodo and northern Meskan) were, for historical reasons, mostly Gallas rather than Gurage. Their patrilineal descendents today constitute higher status lineages, but they no longer control a disproportionate amount of land or political power. In fact, over the past three decades they have been overshadowed in the prestige hierarchy by a new class of wealthy merchants, who have enjoyed great commercial success as middlemen in Addis Ababa.

While holdings are by no means equal, it is unlikely that in Sodo more than 5% of the holders can be accounted wealthy in land, and most of them have only three or four times the ordinary holding. Land is scarce and land sale, though resisted by patrilineal kinsmen, is not infrequent.

The announcement of land reform had less impact on land-holding than in the areas discussed previously. Soon, however, the student campaigners stationed in

Bui and Butajira began agitating against the local elites, including the administrators. The latter, together with a number of local notables whose prestige rested on their participation in the resistance to the Italians, organized an armed rebellion and the campaigners were forced to flee. Eventually in mid-summer the army attacked the rebels and re-established order. In September the students were back in their encampments, and there were no further reports of violence.

Further to the south, in the lower, grain growing area in Kambatta, fragmentary reports indicate that land reform has contributed to famine conditions.

Unlike the ensete areas adjoining it, this region was characterized by a high concentration of land in the hands of local balabats and Amhara landlords, many of whom lived in the provincial town of Hosana. Land reform resulted in an influx of poor Kambatta who had been working on the commercial plantations at Wonji and Metahara and who were afraid that if they did not return home they might lose an opportunity to obtain land. It is reported that, in the confusion that ensued, a large portion of the arable land was not cultivated.

In Wellamo, south of Kambatta, the campaigners succeeded in mobilizing the peasants against landlords and individuals who were thought to have profited by participating in the corrupt balabat-chiga shum system of local government.

The old kingdom of Wellamo, like that of Keffa had resisted the Amhara armies with some success before it was conquered in 1894. Unlike Keffa, however, it was left under its native ruler (the Kao) until 1903, when he was replaced by an Amhara governor. Even then, the old territorial divisions

and officials were retained, in a policy of indirect rule. Thus the seven regional officials formerly termed alana danna were given the Amharic title abagaz, and their subordinates, the senga dannas, were dubbed "chiga shum."

Under Amhara rule, however, these traditional offices were endowed with extensive lands (2400-2800 hectares or more, according to my informant, himself or the former land holding class) and made appointive by the governor instead of elective by the people.

Later, under Haile Sellassie, the land was taken away from the offices once more, and the higher officials were given salaries. Appointment to office remained dependent on the favor of the governor of Wellamo -- favor which, it is believed, was obtained with bribes. Public office thus became effectively restricted to the class that could afford it. Generally, according to my informant, the abagaz (wereda governor) was chosen from among men with approximately 40 hectares -- while men with as little as 10 hectares might compete successfully for a chiga-shum-ship. The successful candidate was able to amortize his investment almost immediately by collecting gifts from his kinsmen and supporters as a down payment on future influence.

On the eve of revolution Wellamo's few large landlords and local landed gentry probably did not control more than 15% of the land. Most farmers were owners, but the mean holding was only 2.5 hectares, and many men were forced to take a plot in tenancy or leave Wellamo in search of casual employment. Resident landlords might have some of their land worked for them by their tenants, but the more prevalent form of tenancy was a form of cash rent that in many respects amounted to little more than tax farming.

As soon as land reform was announced the three or four largest land-holders (together they may have held on the order of 4,000 hectares) stopped coming to Wellamo or moved to their Addis Ababa homes. One of them was later pulled from his car and killed by a rioting mob when he had the misfortune to return to investigate the looting of his home in Wellamo, during the "revolt" (see below). Most smaller landlords remained on their land.

The students had little difficulty in turning the small holders and tenants of the Wellamo highlands against unpopular members of the remaining landlord class. Moreover in many associations they were able to disarm the landlords and form armed security forces of poor young men and returning migrant day laborers who, as in Kambatta, had come home to claim land.

With the aid of their security forces the students arrested unpopular landlords and took them to the awraja prison at Sodo. In one of Wellamo's seven districts eleven landlords were thus imprisoned. The awraja administrator, finding no charge against them, released them. Hoping that things had calmed down, a number of the landlords returned to their homes, only to be forced to flee. Many reportedly then went to Addis Ababa.

The students also urged the peasants to kill landlords and rich people who had "exploited" them. This was in keeping with a widespread belief among the student leaders that, unless they shed the blood of their class enemies, the peasants would not be fully conscious of their power. I was not able to find out how general the response to this effort was, but in one association three men were killed, including my informant's uncle, an unpopular descendent of an abagaz and owner of ten hectares.

The radicalization of Wellamo reached a dramatic climax in early summer when the MLRA land reform administrator, the campaign leaders and the administrator of Sodo organized a workers' association and took over the town. The revolutionary coalition, which controlled the police, attempted to disarm "reactionaries" in the town and a six-hour gun battle ensued, during which several people were killed.

On the following morning student organizers went into the countryside and called emergency meetings of peasant associations. They informed the assembled peasants of the events in Sodo and told them they were to decide then and there which of the associations' residents should be killed for their past exploitative behavior and crimes. In at least some associations accusations were made, debated and voted upon on the spot, and those unfortunate enough to be convicted were seized and held for execution. Wealth and bad character seem to have been the main grounds for conviction. The

three individuals sentenced to death in one association were: a well-to-do man with about 10 hectares, who was believed to have gained his wealth initially through theft; an ambitious man who had unsuccessfully sought appointment as chiga shum and who was suspected of keeping bribes for himself that he had been entrusted to deliver to the awraja governor; and an unpopular woman generally believed to be a witch.

Few if any of the people convicted by these people's courts were executed, for on the next day the army arrived in Sodo and the revolution collapsed without resistance. The peasants had thought they were following government orders all along and had neither the will nor the means to resist the army. The MLRA administrator and the awraja administrator were hanged, and a special judicial investigation of the incident, headed by three members of the Supreme Court from Addis Ababa, was still in progress in September when I was in Sodo.

To the south of Wellamo and west of lake Abaya lie the more than three dozen formerly independent tiny republics and mini-kingdoms of the Gama highlands. Though these tiny polities were less differentiated politically and economically than Wellamo they exhibit a remarkable degree of complexity in their social, cultural and ritual organization. Since the Amhara conquest and the cessation of internecine warfare in the region, social relationships within and between these groups have been altered and subjected to new strains by increasing and unequal population pressure on the land, increasing differences in cash income deriving from cottage industry, weaving, trade and migratory labor, and religious conversion. Ultimately the responses of the peoples of the Gama highlands to student mobilization will have to be understood in relation to their complex social organization and the tensions produced in it by these processes of change.

The following description of a successful social revolution in one of these small republics, Otchollo, should not be taken as typical but as illustrative of the kinds of forces that affected political mobilization in the region.

The former republic of Otchollo straddles a mountain spur that juts out dramatically from the highlands to the north of Arba Minch. A rocky pinnacle rises from the end of the ridge dominating Otchollo and the lowlands that stretch away beyond its borders to the shores of lake Abaya. Perched atop this pinnacle is the fortified citadel that served as the political and ritual center of the republic. The citadel's defensive posture, its closely packed compounds and its now deserted, elaborately laid out, tree shaded council grounds symbolize Otchollo's past and present.

Otchollo as a whole was divided into approximately twenty territorial sections or wards, each of which had its own governing council, farmland and ritual life. Access to authority, prestige and to some extent economic resources in each section was governed by a rather complex organization of castes, clans, and hereditary and competitive titles, as well as sex and age.

The main caste distinction was between ordinary men and potters, who were forbidden to hold land, to eat with others or to intermarry with them.

Each section had a ritually dominant clan associated with it and membership in that clan conferred prestige. Membership in the section was, however, based on residence, and many members of the section were not members of its dominant clan.

The overall prestige ranking within each section was symbolized in the seating arrangements at the council grounds during meetings and ritual sacrifices. In most sections the most honored stone bench was reserved for Kao, hereditary sacrificial clan officials whose office passed from a man to his first-born son. Next in honor were the first class alekas, men who had distinguished themselves by working and saving hard enough to give three memorable feasts for their friends and neighbors. Once attained, the title of aleka was retained for life but the honorific public office it connoted passed

to the next individual who happened to complete the requisite feasts. Below the first class alekas were the second class alekas, who had given only two feasts, and below them the apprentices, who had only given one feast. Still lower in the seating order and prestige were the ordinary elders, the young men, the women and low caste potters.

The territorial sections themselves were also ranked in relation to one another with the geographically central and supposedly most ancient sections enjoying the highest ritual and social prestige. Highest of all was the section whose dominant clan claimed to be autochthonous. Its elevated position was symbolized at meetings in the great council place, where members of all the sections gathered on occasions of mutual civic and ritual interest.

Otchollo informants say that their fathers did not fight the Amhara invaders and that the latter never occupied their citadel. This may well be true, for the overcrowded, steeply inclined and ensete covered slopes of Otchollo were hardly a prize for the grain-eating northerners. In any case, Otchollo emerged from the gebar era in possession of its own lands, and, what is more, it was able to assert ownership over the adjacent lowlands which its farmers cultivated increasingly as the healthier highlands in which they lived became more crowded.

Though Otchollo was spared the devastation and loss of land suffered in many other regions, its incorporation into the wider Ethiopian economy and polity have deeply affected its economy and its pattern of social stratification. As population pressure increased many Otchollo, like their neighbors, the Dorse, turned increasingly to trade and to weaving fine cotton cloth as a cottage industry. A new category of wealthy merchants began to emerge and many of them began to purchase land in the lowlands and to assume yet another role, that of landlord.

The opening of the all-weather road from Arba Minch to Wellamo Sodo in the lowlands below Otchollo has spurred further change. The creation of a large commercial cotton plantation has destroyed Otchollo's sacred forest. An increasing number of land-poor Wellamo settled in the lowlands, and many of them became tenants of Otchollo landlords adding

yet another dimension to social inequality in the region. Finally, in the last years of the Haile Selassie regime a number of Otchollo farmers were forced to resettle in the lowlands, despite their objection that the area was malarial.

The challenge to Otchollo's traditional organization was not merely political and economic but religious as well. Christian missions were active in the highlands around Chenchä. Some years ago an Ethiopian protestant mission was established in one of the less prestigious sections of Otchollo. The more conservative high-status clans in the allegedly older sections objected strongly to this challenge to their ritual and hence political primacy. Tension mounted and fighting broke out between the two factions. Though the hostilities were suppressed, the strains that produced them endured.

The student campaigners who came to Otchollo had little difficulty in mobilizing disadvantaged groups against the local elites and appear to have triggered a fundamental change in social, political and ritual organization.

The students held meetings at which, as always, they spoke of feudalism, capitalism and socialism and attacked traditional authority. The attack on feudalism was well received, since the Otchollo identified the Amhara invaders as feudal. The attack on capitalism appealed to those who resented the growing economic power of merchants and lowland landlords. What socialism may have meant to the largely illiterate people of Otchollo is not clear, but the attack on traditional authority was divisive.

Members of the older, high-status clans and sections, particularly the elders who held title, ritual office and land, opposed the students and accused them of favoring the Wellamo (as tenants) over Otchollo. Members of lower-status clans and sections, including those of the Christian faction, led by younger men who were excluded from the old prestige hierarchy, supported the students. With this base of support, the students were able to bring the low-caste potters and a number of women into the politically active group that domi-

nated the peasant association election. The inclusion of the potters represented the most drastic change. As one informant remarked, "It is only fair that they be allowed to hold land, and I suppose it won't hurt to eat with them -- but we won't marry them."

The attack on traditional elites went beyond excluding them from positions of leadership in the new associations (several were formed in Otchollo because of its size). Several wealthy merchants were arrested by the students. They had not returned in September. Even more significant was the banning of the section and Otchollo council meetings and the ritual sacrifices that symbolized their secular as well as their sacred authority. Finally, the competitive feasts formerly required of would-be alekas have been forbidden, and would-be alekas have been forced to sell the goods they had been accumulating for a feast.

The most far-reaching change brought about by land reform, however, may be the resettlement of the majority of Otchollo's farmers in a new community in the lowlands. This move is in part a response to the fact that the people of Otchollo will lose their land rights unless they live in the peasant association where the land is located. It has also been fostered by the students, by proximity to the all-weather road, and by substantial grants of food from World Famine Relief on the questionable grounds that, as new settlers, the Otchollo have no access to food from their old, highland ensete fields.

In September it was not clear whether the people of Otchollo planned to remain permanently in the lowlands or to transport their crops back to their healthier home in the highlands. It seems unlikely that they can prosper, however, unless they continue to exploit both altitudinal zones. It is also unclear whether the old elites and the cultural beliefs on which they were founded are gone. For the moment, at least, the council grounds are quiet.

Further to the east, in northern Sidamo, land reform was accompanied by violent conflict between northern land holders and mem-

bers of local ethnic groups, and, to some extent, between members of different ethnic groups. The region is marked by great variations in altitude and ecological adaptation. The highest mountains support only barley and livestock. Somewhat lower in the well-watered highlands ensete predominates as a staple crop. Still lower ensete gives way to grains and maize. Coffee trees were being planted by northern landlords in the region between Yirgalem and Dilla (now connected by a major north-south all-weather road) by 1920 and in recent decades it has spread further into the lower part of the ensete zone. To the south the land gradually becomes lower and dryer, and the intensive cultivation of the ensete peoples gives way to the Guji Galla, who are more dependent on their cattle herds. These differences between ecological zones played an important role in determining pre-conquest patterns of land use and settlement, post-conquest land tenure and land measurement, trends in economic development and the local politics of land reform. An example from the Derasa ethnic group around and to the west of Dilla serves to illustrate many of these points.

During the last decades before the Amhara conquest there was a shortage of agricultural land in the densely settled Derasa highlands west of Dilla. Use rights in cultivated land were individually owned (residual reversionary rights are vested in the patrilineage). Sons received land when they married with the eldest son getting a larger share and the youngest son eventually receiving the homestead and the largest share of the land. Young men who were unable to obtain sufficient land from their fathers or the elders were beginning to resettle in the lower land to the east, an area sparsely populated with Guji Galla who were then suffering from the economic effects of a rinderpest epidemic.

In 1893 a northern expeditionary force under Ras Lulseged approached the Derasa highlands from the east. The Derasa, who had heard about the Amhara attacks on Wellamo and met a few well armed raiding parties, put up little resistance. Instead the elders sent a small group of representatives to make terms with the powerful invaders. The Ras accepted their capitulation and appointed one of the representatives as Balabat of Derasa.

In the early years of northern rule the usual pattern of rule was established. A garrison town was built at Bule in the highlands and its soldiers were given various types of tributary rights over the adjacent cultivators. Somewhat later soldiers were settled in scattered locations and assigned families as gebar. The balabat was responsible for civil administration. His jurisdiction was subdivided into seven sections each under the control of a Koro and each of these, in turn, was responsible for up to fifty minor territorial officials.

Derasa resettlement in the eastern lowlands continued at an increasing rate. This movement was encouraged by military officials and soldier settlers who found that they could extract higher tributes from their "transplanted" gebar in the lowlands, where cash crops could be grown. Thus by 1905 all lands except government lands were under the tributary control of the military governor (then Ras Balcha), military notables around the garrison town, soldier settlers or the Derasa balabat and his subordinates.

Around 1920 the governor ordered the balabat to institute the system of land measurement and reapportionment described in Section IV. The balabat refused, and the governor was forced to appoint other Derasa to attempt land measurement. Measurement was strongly resisted by northern gebar-holder and gebar alike, since neither group thought they would profit from the alienation of land to imperial favorites or the church.

Measurement proceeded slowly. By the time of the Italian occupation in 1936 most of the lucrative coffee-producing land around Dilla had been measured into galad and assigned to northern landlords and northern settlers. Derasa gebar on the mea-

asured lands often found themselves in the unenviable position of being forced to pay tributes and rents to both their former overlords in the highlands and their new landlords in the lowlands! In the highlands little land was measured and the old gebar relationships were ruptured only by the Italian conquest.

During the occupation many of the soldier-settlers and other northern land holders in Darasa were killed or driven out. Some returned after the war but not without arousing further bitterness. As a result of the land reforms of 1943-4 the gebar system was abolished and in the highlands land rights devolved to the gebar and to resident soldier-settlers and their descendents. In the lowlands the landlords and settlers who held measured (gelad) land kept it in freehold.

During the last three decades an excellent all-weather road through Dilla has greatly stimulated the production of coffee and other cash crops in Derasa. The resultant higher land prices, rents, tributes and tax payments to landlords have exacerbated the already poor relations between Derasa cultivators and northern land holders. Indeed, Derasa was more than once the scene of ruthlessly suppressed peasant riots.

Encouraged by the interim cabinet's promise of land reform, Derasa cultivators had driven out many northern land holders by June of 1974. In the more remote uplands, some northerners who were highly acculturated to Derasa culture seem to have been able to remain up until the present.

With land reform and the coming of the student campaigners the situation polarized further. Virtually all of the northern landlords and settlers in the lowlands came under attack and approximately 80 landlords formed a well armed band of outlaws. They attacked and terrorized their former tenants and burned hundreds of homesteads. Casualties, which are usually exaggerated, are reported by one observer to have been in the hundreds. By September government forces reportedly had broken the outlaw landlords' power.

The fertile and well-watered uplands of northwestern Arussi, encompassed in present-day Chilalo awraja, have been transformed over the past century from a remote region inhabited by Arsi Galla pastoral nomads to one of the richest and most developed areas in Ethiopia. The impact of land reform in Chilalo must be understood in relation to this process of rapid transformation and the forces that brought it about.

As a result of the forceful and bloody conquest of the Arsi Galla (see section IV above) a large part of the gently rolling plain in the northern part of Chilalo was alienated to large landlords. Even in the less accessible and more uneven southern part of the awraja large amounts of land passed into the hands of northern landlords and Galla balabats.

In the first decades of the present century large numbers of Shoan Gallas, some of them displaced by the founding and growth of Addis Ababa, settled in Chilalo and the indigenous Arsi gradually shifted from pastoralism to sedentary agriculture. Near Asella settlements of Amhara farmers were also established.

Because of its favorable agricultural endowments, its relatively low population and, in recent decades, its accessibility to Addis Ababa the region experienced a rapid increase in production and monetization. By 1920 land was being bought and sold. By the mid-nineteen sixties share-cropping arrangements were becoming more favorable to landlords and cash rents were becoming more common. In the latter half of the decade a maximum package development project was introduced into Chilalo with the cooperation of the Swedish government. CADU as the project is known, introduced green revolution inputs, extension services, agricultural credit, cooperatives, a dairy industry and numerous support services. Despite Swedish efforts to the contrary, local and national elites were able to reap the lion's share of the project's benefits. In the northern part of Chilalo, which is best suited to mechanized agriculture, there

were massive tenant evictions. In the south small farmers, particularly those with above average holdings, also prospered. The presence of the project also gave most of the local population experience in dealing with extension services and development agencies.

When the campaign and land reform came to Chilalo, they came to a society that cannot meaningfully be called traditional. In the southern part of the awraja cultivators were more or less successful peasants. Land-holding balabats had great influence in local politics by virtue of their economic power, but they enjoyed little legitimacy and were viewed by many as a corrupt and unjustly privileged class. In the north on the mechanized farms social relationships between rich and poor were those between management and labor. Many of the small land-holders who had managed to survive such tactics as having their homesteads deliberately encircled by plowed land were essentially cash-cropping small farmers.

Landlords, "weekend farmers" who leased the lands and balabats were generally unable to offer resistance to land reform. A handful of balabats put up no forceful resistance and are still in their homes or in the towns. The largest land-holder in the north fled his vast estate and became the leader of an armed revolt in Menz, an old Amhara region in northeastern Shoa. Other landlords in the northern part of Chilalo tried to subvert efforts to subdivide their land, establish cooperative farms and get the crops planted on time. Altogether it is estimated that about 500 large holders lost their land. At the time of my visit to the area in early September approximately 50 of them were present in the provincial capital of Asella, where they were regarded by the students as a subversive and potentially dangerous group. A more detailed account of the process of organizing the peasant associations is found below.

It was not possible in the time available to visit the Bale highlands in the extreme southeastern edge of the Ethiopian plateau or to obtain reliable information on events there from others. Fragmentary reports suggest that near Goba, the capital, there were vio-

lent clashes between landlords and the students. Equally fragmentary evidence suggest that in some areas the students had great difficulty in turning Galla cultivators against their balabats, under conditions reminiscent of Wellega in the far west. At the time of this writing, there are reports of a resurgence of the irredentist Galla movement that flared up in Bale in the middle sixties.

On the rich Cher Cher highlands to the west of Harar land passed into the hands of cultivating tenants without resistance. The reason for this was that landlords in this region were northerners whose large holdings traced back to land grants given out by Ras Mekonnen, the general who had conquered Harar and the father of Emperor Haile Selassie. As such, they enjoyed virtually no local support.

VIII: The Rural Response: The Organization and Activities of Peasant Associations

The land reform proclamation gave the peasant associations major responsibilities for distributing and regulating land rights, establishing markets and credit cooperatives, assisting with the construction of schools and clinics and participating in villagization programs. With the virtual collapse old land-based local ad-

ministration in much of the south during the first months of the campaign, peasant associations also assumed responsibility for many of the functions of local government, including the maintenance of civil order and the administration of justice. The central government subsequently confirmed the associations in these administrative and judicial responsibilities (in December 1975) and designated them as the local units of tax collection (January 1976), the 1977 census and future party organization.

Because of this major role assigned to the new associations it is important for the purposes of this analysis to make a preliminary assessment of their effectiveness and viability. The first part of the discussion is concerned with the organization of the associations and their relationship to pre-existing patterns of local social organization. The second part is concerned with function of the associations.

Organization and Membership

According to Proclamation no. 31 each peasant association was to have a minimum area of 800 hectares. The proclamation also suggests that in most cases the old chiga shum areas (in the south)* or the parish (in the north)** will be taken as the territorial basis of the association.

*Proclamation no. 31, article 8.

**Proclamation no. 31, article 23. The text refers to a debr or got. Debr refers to a parish. A got is an administrative unit that comprises a part of a parish but does not include the parish church; often it is under the jurisdiction of a chiga shum.

The association's membership is to include landless tenants and subsistence farmers who formerly owned no more than 10 hectares.* A subsequent directive issued by the PMAC in order to establish peasant associations states that "farmer shall include an agricultural worker who had been hired as a servant for a fixed period of time earning either cash money or in kind."**

Proclamation no. 31 does not specify how the associations were to be organized but the pursuant directive is quite explicit. Final authority in the association is vested in the General Meeting of the majority of the registered members. The General Meeting is: to make resolutions and directives; to appoint administrators to an Administrative Executive Committee composed of at least three members (a chairman, a secretary and a treasurer); to appoint a three-man Judicial Tribunal to settle land disputes; and to appoint delegates to the wereda peasant association. To ensure the democratic functioning of the association the directive states: "The General Meeting shall supervise and control the activities of the administrators, judicial tribunal judges and the Woreda Delegates. If need be it has the prerogative to dismiss them.***"

Most peasant associations in the southern provinces are in fact based on pre-existing territorial units of local administration such as the chiga area, the golmasa or gebele. Indeed, cam-

*Proclamation no. 31, article 9.

**"Translation from Original Amharic: Directive Issued by the PMAC of Ethiopia in Order to Establish Peasants' Associations," translated May 20, 1975.

***Ibid., section I, article 6.

paigners initially had to rely on the landed officials responsible for these units in order to assemble the peasants for their first meeting. The formal organization of the associations' executive committees and judicial tribunals also corresponds quite closely to that prescribed in the directive. With regard to membership and leadership in the new associations, however, a number of problems arose; problems which are interesting and informative because they illuminate difficulties in the relationship between associations and other local institutions.

Membership in the association came to be viewed as a strategic resource and hence as a matter of vital concern to competing interest groups within the local population, for two reasons: because it connoted the right to participate in the association's governing General Meeting; and because it was widely believed that members would each receive up to ten hectares of land.

Conflicts over membership emerged during the process of registration. Many of them centered on the status of persons who were not clearly the heads of farming households but who nevertheless could lay claim to some degree of autonomous status. Such persons included: young men who had not yet established full economic and jural independence from their fathers' households; women heading households either because they were widowed or divorced or because they were married to muslim men who were in residence with another wife; migrant workers living and working as hired hands in the households of small farmers; artisans; and former slaves.

Though available information is far from complete, it appears

that in a number of widely separated areas there was a tendency for successful farmers, often together with tenants, to form coalitions against disadvantaged groups which were supported more or less successfully by the students, land reform administrators, extension agents and, in some areas, by representatives of Ethiopia's maximum package programs. In at least some areas there was also a tendency for women to see their interests in land as opposed to those of men. Once again it is useful to examine selected cases in greater detail in the hope that they will at least illuminate some of the issues that should be investigated in more depth in the future.

The first case illustrates problems that arose concerning the registration of moslims' wives.

Shortly after land reform was proclaimed, a debate developed between the members of the campaign stationed in Asella, the capital of Chilalo awraja, and in Arussi. At issue was the registration of moslim co-wives. One faction of students, including most of the predominantly moslim campaigners from Arussi, maintained that a married woman heading a household in which her husband was not normally resident should be registered as a member of the association in which she lived.

The other faction, including most of the predominantly Christian campaigners from Shoa, held that a man together with his several wives constituted but a single family unit and should be registered only once.

At the end of a week of preparatory discussion the issue had not been resolved. The teams of three and four students that subsequently went out to organize the peasant associations in the area followed no uniform policy with regard to the registration of moslim co-wives.*

*While it is not clear just who was and who was not registered,

This very lack of uniformity in registration policy may well have increased anxiety, but in any case there were numerous complaints from both men and women. Men whose non-resident wives were not registered separately complained that the wives would not have enough land to cultivate in the future, while those whose wives were registered separately expressed fears that separate registration might constitute de jure divorce. At the same time a number of women have made discreet inquiries of CADU officials as to the status of their land rights, should they decide to leave their husbands.

Interviews with students from
the campaign and CADU employees

The next case, also from Chilalo, concerns conflict between former hired hands and small farmers who were anxious to exclude them from membership in the association and a share of the association's land.

In Chilalo, as in other areas, prosperous peasants with insufficient domestic labor normally sought to bring a hired hand into their household in return for food, shelter, clothing and perhaps an annual wage. Many of these hired hands were former tenants who had been evicted as a result of the mechanization of agriculture north of Asella. During registration for membership in the peasant associations some of these unfortunate individuals were dismissed from employment and prevented from registering locally on the grounds that they were not really resident farmers or tenants.

Just how many hired hands were expelled in this way to protect the land interests of the more established households is not known, but over 400 of them soon had congregated in Asella where they plagued the administrator with requests for land. Eventually the administrator prevailed upon CADU to register the lumpen in the area and resettle them on confiscated large scale commercial farm land in the northern part of the awraja. Over 2,000 were registered

it is interesting to note that 113,000 members are claimed in the awraja, which is reliably estimated to have only 60,000 households.

The original intention of CADU was to resettle their wards in small groups, but for logistic reasons in the end they were forced to place them in groups of 100 in the abandoned buildings of commercial farms. Altogether, some 1300 of those who had been registered as landless were resettled.

Peasants living in communities adjacent to the commercial farms chosen as resettlement sites complained vehemently that the influx of strangers would deprive them of the ten hectare farms to which they were entitled by land reform. CADU officials assured them that there was more than enough land available, but the old residents remained hostile towards the new settlers, most of whom were single men.

The settlers were completely dependent on CADU for food, seeds and plowing. CADU, in turn, was overtaxed trying to provide plow service with nationalized tractors to the many former tenants and agricultural wage laborers in northern Chilalo who owned no plow oxen.

Alarmed that their land had not been plowed by the regular planting season, the settlers, led by student campaigners, commandeered CADU tractors, hijacked a truckload of diesel fuel bound for Asella and set to work cultivating their land.

The hijacking was criticized by newspapers in Addis Ababa, but no action was taken by the government. Emboldened by their success, the settlers escalated their conflict with the local peasants. A band of settlers raided a neighboring community, carrying off grain and guns.

In massive retaliation the local peasants attacked the settlers, killing several and wounding more than forty. FMAC officials who happened to be in Chilalo at the time sent forces to suppress the fighting and 120 settlers were arrested. They were still being held in Asella at the time of my visit in September.

In the aftermath of the fighting, an investigation was conducted, and a number of students were arrested for inciting the settlers. The settlers, for their part, became very cautious and perhaps one-third of them have left.

Interviews with students and
CADU officials

In the lowlands of southeastern Wellamo prosperous settlers in a World Bank-funded WADU resettlement scheme staunchly defended their right to exclude their hired hand squatters from membership in the local peasant associations.

The settler communities at Abela and Bele have been established over the past 5 years on the alluvial plain that slopes gently up from the northern end of Lake Abaya towards Sodo. The area, which was formerly not used for sedentary agriculture, has been made healthy and productive through substantial inputs of technical assistance, including tractor service. Each settler was allotted five hectares of rich farmland and has received intensive extension services. By 1975 the 1600 settler families in the scheme were, by Ethiopian standards, a remarkably prosperous group with an average household income of over \$1,200 ET.

When I visited the settlements, accompanied by WADU officials, a delegation of farmers repeatedly explained to me that they were not happy with "these new associations" the students had organized. They did not want to move, to give up their farms, or farm collectively. They were incensed that hired hands, squatting on their land, had been registered in the peasant associations. Further questioning revealed that one association with 260 "legitimate" settlers had been forced to register sixty squatters.

The head spokesman for the group, well-versed in the ways of development agencies, pointed to my discreetly closed briefcase and asked me rather crossly why I wasn't taking notes. They would like me to report their point of view to officials higher up -- and to note that what they really wanted was not these new associations but running water, electricity and a high school (their local school only continued to sixth grade) so that their children would not have to be bussed to school in Sodo.

The selection of leaders to serve on peasant association executive committees and judicial tribunals was influenced by the student organizers' desire to appoint radical leaders, the peasants'

desire to appoint leaders capable of representing their interests to the new government and the desire of former community leaders to maintain their authority and control.

After they had explained the land reform proclamation, given speeches on socialism and registered members in the association, student organizers conducted elections. In some areas the students were able to exercise direct control over the selection process; indeed, Marina Ottaway reports that in some instances students assumed all leadership roles, even judging cases involving marital disputes! In most regions, however, it appears that the campaigners limited their interference in the electoral process to disqualifying nominees whom they thought too reactionary and insisting that representatives of disadvantaged groups be included on the committees.

In most of the Galla-speaking middle region the most important change in the distribution of community power has been the elimination of the landed administrative elites. Committees about which I was able to gather information seem to be dominated by the more successful small farmers who had exercised leadership in the democratic voluntary organizations that are characteristic of the region. In many instances former tenants and ethnic minorities (including Amhara farmers in Chilalo) have token representation. There appears to have been a preference, however, for younger men and men with enough education to ensure their literacy and numeracy, skills that are considered essential for dealing with the government. I was not able to find out to what extent the students had

been successful in preventing leaders whose authority rested on claims to mystical power from being elected to committee positions.

In the small-holder ensete regions, where balabats played a less dominant political role, there seems to be a greater disjunction between the younger and poorer individuals elected to peasant association committees and the more gerontocratic and religiously sanctioned leadership. The situation in Otchollo has already been described. In the eastern Gurage region it is reported that leaders of traditional territorial groupings have generally been able to exercise covert control over peasant association committees. Just how widespread these or other patterns of peasant association leadership are within the ensete region is difficult to say.

Since the withdrawal of PMAC support from the radical student movement and the withdrawal of many students from active participation in peasant associations in May and June, there has been little outside pressure on peasant association political processes. It is thus unlikely that there has been great disruption in more traditional patterns of community organization and leadership, except those specifically related to the role of balabats and landlords. What is more, it seems unlikely that there will be significant changes in the immediate future unless there is a substantive redistribution of land among association members, bringing with it a redistribution of economic and political power.

Functions of the Associations

The viability of peasant associations and their effectiveness in supporting agrarian reform and rural development will depend more

on their functions than on their formal organization, membership or leadership. It is therefore of critical importance to assess the role they are playing; a role that is in some ways smaller and in some ways larger than was envisaged in Proclamation 31.

Except in those few and rather unusual associations discussed below that have decided to work their land collectively, most peasant associations have not yet undertaken the most important and difficult function initially assigned to them, the equal redistribution of land. They have, however, assumed judicial and administrative functions that exceed those originally given them.

Judicial and Administrative Functions

Wherever effective associations have been formed, their judicial tribunals are serving as courts of first instance for all types of disputes that arise, and not merely in disputes that concern land. In many areas the tribunals are not only making judgments but are assigning punishments and fines to guilty parties, though either party can appeal the decision directly to the district court. Near Metu in Illubabor some tribunals were even defending their new jurisdiction by fining association members who took their disputes directly to the district court without bringing it before the tribunal. In an important sense the tribunals owe their success to a strong tradition of local dispute settlement by elders throughout Ethiopia. The devolution of the judicial powers of the balabat and his subordinates to the peasant associations represents an important step towards revitalizing this tradition and restoring the rights lost by southern cultivators when they were incorporated into the empire.

In the fall of 1975, half a year after the announcement of land reform, peasant associations were being treated as legitimate units of local government by district governors in the regions I was able to visit. At that time, however, there was still a somewhat uneasy relationship between the generally educated and progressive district administrators, the peasants and the students, who, at least in sentiment, were opposed to the central government. As one harried administrator put it, "It isn't an easy job (being administrator). The students are very sincere, but they want complete "scientific socialism," and they want it right now. And wherever I go to talk to peasants' associations, all I hear is that they want "people's government" (i.e., not the present military regime) and arms. But what do they know about people's government? They only know what the students tell them. Still, things are happening very quickly out here (in the countryside). I just hope they can catch up back there in the ministries in Addis."

In mid-December a new proclamation recognized and regularized the administrative role of the associations. It grants them legal personality and stresses the need for the masses to run their own local administration, judicial and public safety units. It also provides for the establishment of cooperative service associations and producer cooperative units.

At the time of my visit in the fall of 1975 associations were not collecting taxes, but there was considerable apprehension as to what taxes would be levied and how they would be collected. In January 1976 a new proclamation established a use tax to be paid

by all cultivators and a progressive income tax. Both taxes are to be collected by the association, which will receive a 2% rebate from the total amount collected.

Collective Farming

The fact that most associations have not yet undertaken the redivision of their agricultural lands is of the utmost significance, for it means that little progress has been made towards attaining the basic goal of Ethiopian socialism in agrarian reform -- the creation of a rural society in which there are no class differences based on unequal rights in land. On the contrary, the increased security of tenure and the abolition of rents enjoyed for the first time by almost half the cultivators in the southern provinces may well have increased individual attachment to land rights and their significance in community social stratification.

At present (February 1976) it appears certain that the Ethiopian government will not push for an immediate redistribution or collectivization of land. This decision seems to be more pragmatic than ideological, for the commitment of the PNAC and many key officials in the MLRA to establishing a more socialist form of agriculture appears to remain unchanged. It is thus important to examine peasant associations' experience with collective farming during the 1975 season and more generally the attitudes towards cooperative and collective farming that will affect future developments.

The main impetus for collective farming in the spring of 1975 came from the student campaigners, but the idea was also supported by many extension agents and land reform administrators. Though the primary objectives of those who advocated collectivization were political and ideological, there was also a widespread conviction that it would result in technological improvements, economies of scale

and higher agricultural output.

The student campaigners advocated collectivization in virtually all the peasant associations they organized. Collective farms were established, however, almost exclusively on what had been large-scale mechanized farms, where former employees and tenant laborers lacked oxen, seeds and other forms of agricultural capital. Collectives were thus established in northern Chilalo, in Ada, around Shashamane and Awasa and on the western shore of Lake Abaya in Wellamo and near Arba Minch.

In most cases scarce inputs, including tractor service were supplied to the new collectives by the extension agents of CADU, WADU and EPID's Minimum Package Program. Indeed it was the possibility of obtaining these inputs, along with the forceful advocacy of their student advisors, that induced most associations to farm their land collectively.

Even these inducements were not always sufficient to prevent the associations from dividing their new land into individual holdings. In Etaya district of Chilalo awraja only four of 54 peasant associations agreed to farm collectively in order to obtain most favorable credit terms from CADU. The reluctance of the remaining cultivators to form collectives must be attributed, at least in part, to rumors fostered by former landlords that the government would take all the grain from the collectives and their members would be reduced to the status of wage laborers.

The organization of collective farming has not been uniform in all associations. In the region south of Addis Ababa, from Ada

through Shashamane and Awasa, where a majority of all collectives are located the most frequently encountered pattern of land use involved the subdivision of the association's land into several large sections, each of which was farmed jointly by association members resident on or near it.* Each household was also given a private plot of one or two hectares for its own use. Attempts were generally made to record the contributions of each household to the collective effort in terms of labor and plow oxen. Elsewhere scanty evidence suggests that many collectives were managed by extension agents with less organized participation by association members.

Because of the late date of the land reform proclamation, breakdowns in tractors, a shortage of plow oxen (many were sold or killed by angry landlords) and organizational problems, crops were planted later than usual on many of the mid-region collectives. In some regions up to a hundred teams of oxen were seen at work well after the normal planting season. This later than usual planting seems to be responsible for an increase in the acreage planted to horse beans in Ada. In any case, the rains were long and ample, and in October of 1975 it appeared that earlier fears of a massive drop in production were unjustified.

Since most collectives are on favored land and since man-to-land ratios are generally quite low, due to the previous eviction of tenants, per capita income on collectives should compare favorably with incomes their members have previously known. Production per hectare, however, may well be lower.

*There are few nucleated settlements in this or any other part of southern Ethiopia.

The following two sketches have been included to illustrate more concretely some of the differences between collectives noted in the foregoing discussion.

The first case is from Ude, just south of Denkaka, in Adawraja.

Because the area produces excellent teff (a domesticated grass seed), is accessible to Addis Ababa, has enjoyed extension services and is relatively flat it has been subject to mechanization and tenant eviction. Most of the householders who were still on the land at the time of the proclamation were partly dependent on wage labor and partly on unfavorable tenancy arrangements.

The cultivators' initial response to news of reform was very positive. All looked forward to receiving 10 hectares of fertile land. Later, when the campaigners established associations and announced that the land would not be distributed but farmed collectively there was much disappointment.

At first there was open opposition to collective farming, but eventually, with promises of tractor service and political pressure from the campaigners, it was established.

The lands of each association were divided into four equal sections. Residents on each section elected one representative to the association's Administrative Executive Committee, and one member was elected at large. The Executive Committee then allotted a small field to each household and, in conjunction with students and extension agents, planned how to plant the large communal field. With the help of the students, tractor service and fertilizer were obtained, and, despite a number of problems, it appears that most households will have a much improved real income.

On one collective farm unit for which unusually detailed data is available, for example, 21 households now control approximately 200 hectares. With the 17 pair of oxen they owned between them these households would not have been able to cultivate more than about 70 hectares. With the help of tractors they were able to plow all the land. In

the absence of disks or harrows, however, the soil was not broken up sufficiently to provide an ideal seed bed for teff. Nevertheless, teff was sown on most of the collective field.

In September it appeared that the yield per hectare would be rather low, but that the yield per household would be very high. The observer, an agricultural economist familiar with the area from previous research, estimated that, barring difficulties at harvest, each household should receive between \$3,000 ET and \$4,500 ET for its share of the crop. This would represent an increase of approximately tenfold in cash income!

Personal communication from
Dr. Gene Ellis

The second case is from a new settlement near the road south of Wellamo Sodo and not far from the prosperous WADU settlement scheme described previously.

The association consists of 92 landless men, mostly without their families, who were forced to leave the Wellamo highlands in the spring of 1975 as a result of land reform. Most were hired hands and servants of slave family background.

For the time being, the association members are being fed with food brought to Ethiopia for famine relief. At the time of my visit in September they were cutting timber for their new homes.

The association has been given 200 hectares of cleared land that was formerly operated as a large-scale mechanized farm. This year the land was plowed and planted by WADU employees with the help of campaigners. The association is accumulating a debt of \$125 per month for the tractor driver, plus other costs for seed and fertilizer. The debt will be paid back out of proceeds from the sale of the crops.

Because of late planting, only 25 hectares was planted in maize, the staple food crop in the lowlands. Another 80 hectares was planted in teff, eight in cotton, five in chick peas and three in Michigan pea beans.

The association president told me that after they had sold their crops and paid their debts they would divide the profits among the members. In reply to my questioning he said that each member was assigned work points for each day's work, pro-rated according to his physical size. Upon further questioning, however, it turned out that none of the members knew how many points he had accumulated. The extension agent in charge said there had been no disagreements yet -- since they had had nothing to divide.

When asked whether they would continue to farm collectively after they obtained oxen, the president of the association replied that they would do as they were told by the government. What if the choice were left to them? Then they would wait to see the results of this year's effort and compare.

In peasant associations not located on former large-scale farms, collective farming, if practiced at all, was limited during the 1975 season to a small portion of the land, often on the order of five or ten hectares. These collective plots were created at the students' insistence. In some areas they were established on the land formerly worked for large landholders with labor owed them by their tenants. In areas where all land was directly managed by small holders and tenants it proved more difficult to establish collective plots, since farmers were unwilling to give up land over which they exercised any type of possessory control. In eastern Keffa and in the Wellamo highlands many associations were pressed to clear additional land from the forest and to plow up a part of their pastureland. The ecological consequences of this action could be deleterious.

While cooperative labor arrangements have long been popular in all parts of Ethiopia, cultivators' attitudes towards collective farming are, at present, negative. Reasons given for opposing collectiv-

ization are generally pragmatic and predictable. The most frequently voiced objections are: 1) that some people might be lazier than others; 2) that the government might take the crops; and 3) that there would be difficulties in deciding how to divide the profits equitably. Underlying these specific objections is the idea that the best form of economic security is the possession of land.

* * *

In concluding this section, it should be stressed that it is much too soon to pass judgment on the success of peasant associations in fostering agrarian reform and development. Ultimately their viability and effectiveness will depend on the extent to which they control resources of vital interest to their members. Most importantly these resources will include land, access to government services, and the generalized political power that devolves on the local representative of a remote bureaucracy.

IX. The Social Soundness of Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia

The purpose of this section is to assess the initial effects of Ethiopia's agrarian reform program in terms of the issues raised in USAID Handbook 3, Appendix 5A, Social Soundness Analysis; to review major issues and policy alternatives still facing the Ethiopian Government with regard to agrarian reform; and to suggest ways that USAID assistance to rural Ethiopia can be made consistent with Social Soundness considerations.

The central purpose of the Social Soundness Analysis is:

... to assure the wide and significant participation of the poor in the development process. In this sense, "participation" means not only sharing the economic benefits and contribution of resources but also involvement in the processes of problem identification and solution, sub-project selection and design, implementation and evaluation. The participation approach to development demands that AID project designers and implementors have a much deeper understanding of the socio-cultural setting or projects than has been required in the past.*

The scope and pace of agrarian reform in Ethiopia require that the specific questions asked in the Social Soundness Analysis be modified if this purpose is to be retained. Rather than analyze the probable effects and optimal locations of projects to be initiated by USAID, it is necessary first to assess the effects and potential of the sweeping institutional changes already introduced by Ethiopia's revolutionary regime. The fundamental question in Ethiopia is not, as the Social Soundness Analysis asks, what kinds of new structures

*USAID Handbook 3, Appendix 5A, p. 1.

should be created by AID, but whether and in what ways AID can work through the new structures already created to promote the participation of the rural poor.

In this report I have focused my analysis on two new structures: a new land tenure system designed to give land to the tiller, and peasant associations which were created to replace older land-based forms of social organization and to ensure the participation of all rural Ethiopians in development. In the first part of this concluding section I take up once again and attempt to answer the questions about these institutional changes posed in the introduction: 1) to what degree have these changes been compatible with or in conflict with pre-existing social organization and values; 2) how have different groups of rural Ethiopians thought these changes would affect their interests; and 3) what have been the actual effects of these changes during the first six months of reform. Following this, judgments on the potential effectiveness of these new institutions for fostering broad participation in the developmental process are presented in relation to Ethiopia's future policy alternatives.

The Initial Impact of Agrarian Reform

In broadest terms, the response of Ethiopia's highland farmers to land reform and peasant associations varied regionally. It was best in the predominantly Galla mid-region of the country, worst in the Amhara-Tigre north and mixed in the ensete growing regions of the southwest. These regional variations in response were related to historical events and to differences in land tenure, land use, the commercialization of agriculture and social organization.

The favorable response of Galla cultivators to agrarian reform was hardly surprising, for in several respects it was designed to meet their special needs. First, the Galla region (with the exceptions previously noted) suffered greatly from the northern conquest with regard to the alienation of land, Amhara settlement and more recently the commercialization of agriculture, with its attendant increasing rents and tenant evictions. Second, much of the Galla region is ecologically suited for cash crops including grains, legumes and coffee; and, because of the skewed land-holding pattern, has substantial amounts of under-utilized land. Third, Galla household heads, because of their central location, have had more experience than many of their counterparts on the periphery with cash crops and a cash economy and are keenly aware of the possibility of utilizing additional land and of raising their income and standard of living. Fourth, the pattern of task-oriented voluntary associations so prevalent in Galla social organization made the formation and functioning of peasant associations comparatively easy, once the balabats had lost their land and authority.

The negative response of the Amhara, and to a lesser extent the Tigre, in the northern highlands was also predictable.* In an important sense the old regime was an Amhara regime, its Ethiopic Christianity was their religion and its monarchy was their monarchy, whatever they might individually think of the incumbent. While it

*An extended discussion of opposition to land reform in the Amhara areas is to be found in Allan Hoben, "Social Anthropology and Development Planning," Journal of Modern African Studies 10 (4): pp. 561-82, 1972.

was true that the Amhara and Tigre peasants who remained in their homeland received little material benefit from the conquest of the south, they were nevertheless spared the harsh treatment, the excessive labor exactions and the cultural arrogance suffered by southern cultivators.

Equally important was the fact that the northern peasantry never lost control over their land. To be sure, there are inequalities between peasant holdings, but they are not of sufficient magnitude or permanence to lead to the development of class consciousness within the peasantry, nor is there a separate, hereditary class of landlords, as in the south.* On the contrary, intergenerational upward and downward social mobility is the rule rather than the exception. Under these conditions the able and ambitious leaders in the local community -- the men whose opinions count most in local council -- are precisely those who have most to lose by the redistribution or abolition of individual land use rights, while those household heads who, at the moment, have smaller holdings are hopeful that they or their sons will be more successful in acquiring additional lands in the future. Nor was the proclamation's prohibition of litigation over land popular among these northern small holders, for, next to inheritance, it was the most important mechanism through which land was obtained by successful men.

The northern peasants' perception that land reform was not relevant to pressing economic needs is, to a large extent, justified. There are virtually no large and under-exploited holdings in the northern highlands. Nor is there hard evidence that it is insecurity

*See Allan Hoben, "Social Stratification in Traditional Amhara Society," In A. Tuden and L. Plotnicov, eds., Social Stratification in Africa, 1970.

of tenure, rather than the absence of available technology, that is the constraint on capital improvements in agriculture. On the contrary, the major constraints on development are low prices for crops; the absence of feeder roads and the high cost of transportation across the rugged mountain terrain; especially in Tigre, lack of rainfall; soil erosion; and, above all, the absolute shortage of land.

During the first six months of agrarian reform comparatively few functioning and viable peasant associations were established in the Amhara region. In Tigre more associations were established but many of them seem to lack enthusiastic participation. To a great extent this comparatively poor reception of peasant associations is related to the peasants' generally negative perception of land reform and to their rejection of the radical reforms advocated by the student campaigners. Moreover, the violent suppression of peasant protests in Menz, Gojjam, Wello and Begemdir has done little to generate popular support for the regime or its reform program.

Looking ahead, however, there appear to be a number of other problems relating to the nature of Amhara and Tigrean social organization and cultural patterns that will have to be overcome if effective peasant associations are to be established in the northern highlands. The most important of these are the vigor and viability of existing land-based institutions in which most peasants currently participate and a cultural emphasis on individual, patron-client styles of leadership, rather than on decision-making by voluntary associations of equals.

It should be emphasized, however, that these problems are not

insurmountable, provided that the central government can regain the confidence of the peasants and that the peasants themselves (not merely the government planners) see participation in the associations as holding forth the promise of improved social services and material benefits.

The response of the ensete cultivating peoples was more varied, as are the ecological and economic conditions in their area. Like the Galla, these peoples were pleased to be rid of the old regime and its local administrative elites. The degree to which land reform itself was perceived positively varied regionally with the extent of tenancy, the importance of grains and other cash crops, as opposed to ensete, and the degree of commercialization of agriculture.

In densely settled small-holder areas of intensive ensete cultivation it is the shortage of land, rather than tenancy or tenure, that is felt to be the most pressing problem. Cultivators in these areas are delighted at the thought of obtaining ten hectares of arable land but are aware of the fact that in their own locality equal redistribution would yield much smaller holdings. They are also apprehensive about the possibility of resettlement, since ensete takes many years to reach maturity.

The response to the formation of peasant associations during the first six months is also intermediate between that of the north and the Galla regions. During the first phase of reform, the student campaigners in some areas were able to generate considerable enthusiasm among the rural poor for attacking landlords and other

traditional authority figures. Later, after the central government had made it clear that it did not support the students' conception of a violent peasant revolution, cultivators have become uncertain as to the purpose of peasant associations. In some areas visited, "those new associations the students brought" were being viewed as just one more institutional imposition of the outside government--an imposition, like those before it, to be accepted and contained so as to minimize its impact on more indigenous forms of social organization.

In the future it can be expected that peasant associations will assume greater significance in the more accessible, cash-cropping areas within the region, such as northern Sidamo; while the more remote societies, farther from all-weather roads in the south and west, will continue to lead a cultural and social existence that is little touched by the mainstream of Ethiopian society.

Finally, it should be noted once again that this report is concerned only with Ethiopia's sedentary highland cultivators. It is important that the country's pastoralists and shifting cultivators who inhabit the peripheral lowlands on all sides of the central plateau not be forgotten in the process of development planning. It is recommended that they be the subject of another Social Soundness Analysis in the near future.

Outstanding Policy Issues

The future direction of the Ethiopian government's agrarian reform policies and its capacity to carry them out remain uncertain. It is therefore important to review the outstanding issues in regard to peasant participation in rural development and to relate them to

policy decisions facing the Ethiopian government and USAID.

The basic assumption underlying the congressional mandate to AID and the Social Soundness analysis is that rural development depends on engaging the active participation of the target population in all aspects of the developmental process. The assumption is supported by recent comparative studies of rural development projects by Uma Lele for IBRD and by Elliott Morss and others for AID.*

A corollary of this assumption is that rural people will participate in a development program only if to do so is consistent with their perception of their own interests, rather than with national goals or the motives imputed to them by development planners. It has been found generally (and in Ethiopia) that small farmers' perceptions of their interests and hence their motivation is rational in light of the ecological, economic and political constraints under which they operate and their understandable need to place security ahead of profit maximization. To put it another way, small farmers' agricultural and economic practices must be viewed as natural systems and not traditional systems. They must be understood not as unchanging practices adhered to because of the sheer weight of custom but as the outcome of an on-going process of choice and evaluation--a process which is generally very responsive to even small variations in environment or opportunity.

The consequence of this finding for rural development policy in Ethiopia is that, if peasants are to participate in the associations and in the development process, there must be a dialogue between the

*See Uma Lele, The Design of Rural Development: An Analysis of Programs and Projects in Africa, IBRD, 1974; and E. R. Morss, et al., Strategies for Small Farmer Development: an Empirical Study of Rural Development Projects, AID, May 1975.

associations and higher level policy makers -- not merely one-way communications channels that will enable government officials or technical experts to tell peasants what ought, in theory, to be good for them and how to improve their agricultural techniques. The success of agrarian reform rests on the ability of the peasants, through their associations, to transmit information to the government -- information concerning the constraints they face, the help they think they need and their experience with government-suggested solutions to their problems. It also depends on the government's willingness to help the farmers experiment with local solutions to their local problems, instead of attempting to impose national or regional solutions adopted for ideological reasons or recommended by technical experts on the basis of out-of-context controlled and limited experimentation.

More specifically, the economic success of the Ethiopian reform program in fostering the participation of peasants in the developmental process will depend on its success in tapping the managerial talent and detailed ecological knowledge already possessed by Ethiopia's small farmers. Similarly its success in establishing effective peasant associations will depend on its ability to incorporate into them local traditions of dispute settlement, cooperative work and communal resource management.

The critical questions, then, from the point of view of this report, are to what extent the Ethiopian government will be successful in mobilizing these local institutional resources and in what ways USAID can assist in this process.

Officially Ethiopia's ruling PMAC is unequivocally in favor of encouraging the participation of the country's "broad masses" in land reform, local administration and all other aspects of rural development. Moreover, they have shown their commitment to this policy in many of their actions, including the abolition of tenancy and the creation of locally-based democratic peasant associations with significant powers. In its cultural policy, too, the PMAC has recognized diversity and shed the Amhara Christian bias of the old regime. Islamic holidays have been given equal status with Christian holidays. Writing systems (using the Amharic alphabet) have been devised for half a dozen southern languages, and teaching materials are being prepared in each.

At the same time, as should be clear from Sections VII and VIII, land reform, as it was implemented, did not prove equally acceptable to all segments of the rural population. It was perceived by many (including, of course, those whose power derived from land) as an attack on their rights, institutions and values.

Now that the first violent phase of land reform is over, three policy issues face the Ethiopian government that will have to be satisfactorily resolved if it is to ensure the participation of its cultivators in development. These issues concern land tenure, incentives and the role to be played by the peasant association.

The first phase of land reform was very successful in taking land rights from large holders. Effecting this change was comparatively easy, once the government withdrew its political support from the land-holding elites, since most cultivators welcomed it.

Virtually no progress was made, however, in achieving the second major goal of land reform, establishing equal access to association land to all members through equal division or collectivization. Achieving this second goal appears to be much more difficult, yet it is likely that it remains the ultimate goal of those in power. Equal redivision of land within each association would undoubtedly be opposed by those peasants who have relatively large holdings and who, for this reason, tend to be influential. It would therefore require force and would very probably lead to bloodshed. Moreover, there has been no cadastral survey in Ethiopia, and it would take years to complete one, even if resources in men and money were available.

Collective farming received strong support from predominantly urban students and from a number of equally urban government officials, but, as has been seen, it is not popular among rural Ethiopians. The widespread establishment of collectives under present conditions would be politically unfeasible and, judging from the experience of other countries, would be an economic disaster.

For the present agricultural season (1976) Ethiopia's leaders have decided to concentrate their efforts on the development of cooperatives to facilitate marketing, the delivery of minimal package inputs, the extension of credit and the delivery of better social services. It appears that, for the moment, the thorny problem of land equalization will be set aside or at least left up to individual associations.

Yet if land reform stops at its present stage it will leave a residue of social, economic and ideological problems for Ethiopia's

policy makers. At present land remains unevenly divided among the peasants in each locality, resulting in an unequal distribution of income. Particularly in areas with high value cash crops like coffee, there is thus the basis of continuing sharp class differentiation within the peasantry -- a situation contrary to declared PMAC policy. Ultimately the solution to this dilemma will require a regionalized approach and a serious and on-going dialogue between policy makers and the peasants whose lives it will affect.

A second major policy issue facing the Ethiopian government concerns the type of incentives to be used to increase agricultural production. For purposes of discussion it is useful to distinguish two opposing positions on this issue. One favors a controlled market low price and high tax policy, while the other favors a high price - low tax policy. Advocates of the first position include those of "traditional" and Marxist persuasions. The traditionalists argue that rent, tax and tribute have always been major "incentives" for peasant production and that, unless the government holds prices down and increases taxes, the peasants will simply produce a smaller "surplus." The Marxists, by contrast, fear that if farmers are encouraged to increase their profits they will become individualistic and capitalistic kulaks. Better, they argue, for the state to take most of the surplus and to provide collective incentives in the form of social services.

Advocates of the high price and low tax policy, including representatives of all major donor agencies assisting Ethiopia, argue that experience elsewhere shows that only positive incentives will

induce peasants to increase their productivity. Furthermore, a low price - high tax policy would be contrary to the stated PMAC objective of helping the rural poor to raise their standard of living and would badly erode confidence in the new regime.

The findings of this Social Soundness Analysis strongly support the high price - low tax policy. It is possible that in some remote tribal regions, where social standing in the community is not yet related materially or symbolically to the possession of consumer goods, lower rents will result in lower production. However, since these regions contribute little to the national markets, even a marked decrease in their productivity would have little impact on the economy as a whole.

Evidence from small holder regions that prospered from the advent of cash crops prior to reform indicates that the demand for consumer items, such as tin roofs, better clothing and radios, provides a powerful incentive for increased production. The incentive to improve one's status through increased productivity will be further enhanced if traditional avenues to power through the domination of land and the labor of others are effectively blocked by land reform.

The demand for better social services, particularly schools, clinics and stores, can also serve as a positive incentive, provided that the beneficiaries of these services are required to raise a substantial part of the requisite funds within their own associations.

For the present, it appears that Ethiopia's leaders will follow a policy of positive and largely individual incentives, but the

issue is likely to be a recurrent one. The idea that peasants are tradition-bound and ignorant farmers who must be forced to improve their agricultural techniques and increase their output still enjoys currency with many urban bureaucrats. Furthermore, as the government gains more control over marketing and storage and is less concerned with the political support of the peasants, it may be tempted to turn to political rather than economic rewards systems. Finally, government policy remains officially committed to cooperative and collective, rather than capitalistic forms of agriculture.

A third set of policy issues that will affect the participation of Ethiopia's rural people in development concerns the role of the peasant association. To the extent that they are effectively established, peasant associations should have little difficulty maintaining the peace, settling disputes or collecting taxes, for self-regulation and collective responsibility were functions of the local community under the old regime.

The important question is whether associations will also function as effective units for the mobilization of local resources, the introduction and utilization of extension services, the allocation of new resources and the organization of social services or will assume a more traditional adversary relationship with the government. The answer to this question will depend on the way associations are dealt with by government officials -- on the extent to which these officials listen to the peasants' views and respond to their needs. In other words, it will depend on whether the associations enable the peasants to participate in identifying their problems and finding solutions to them.

From the perspective of the Social Soundness Analysis, the most important single constraint on peasant participation in the development process has been the absence of an on-going dialogue between those responsible for planning and executing development policy and the peasants. Peasant associations, because they provide an institutional link between the face-to-face local community and the government, have the potential for playing a critical role in breaking this constraint. At present, however, a number of factors militate against their playing this role. The most important of these are: the poor development of communication and transportation in rural areas; the absence of trained personnel to work with peasant associations; and the attitude of many educated Ethiopians that peasants are ignorant and inefficient farmers, who must merely be convinced to adopt new, readily available agricultural practices.

X. Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations are pursuant to the objectives set forth in AID Handbook 3, Appendix 5A, Social Soundness Analysis. Consequently they are concerned only with issues of social soundness and peasant participation and not with wider macro-economic issues.

Conclusions

1. The Ethiopian government is strongly committed to bringing the benefits of development to all segments of its rural population, including the rural poor.

2. The design of Ethiopia's agrarian reform program is consistent with the objectives of the Social Soundness Analysis in regard to the participation of the poor in the development process.

3. During the initial phase of agrarian reform large landlords in the southern provinces lost their political power and their land, with the result that their former tenants will enjoy substantially higher real incomes.

4. Serious political problems have arisen in the northern small holder provinces because of the mode and speed of implementation of agrarian reform.

5. Despite these problems, Ethiopia's agrarian reform program should be supported by USAID.

Recommendations

The following recommendations suggest ways that USAID can lift the constraints on peasant participation in the processes of problem identification and solution which were discussed in the

last section by sponsoring social research, training and workshops. These suggestions are intended to complement and not to compete with assistance that may be required to alleviate other constraints, including the absence of feeder roads, marketing and storage facilities, the shortage of extension agents and community development workers and the thinness of the package offered by the MPP.

Only a brief summary of each recommendation is given here. If there is interest in pursuing them further, it is suggested that the author of this report or another social scientist concerned with implementation of the Social Soundness Analysis objectives be asked to prepare brief proposals for discussion with the relevant Ethiopian officials.

Research

While social research should not be regarded as a substitute for the direct participation of peasants in identifying and solving their problems, it can be a valuable source of feed-back information for planners concerned with issues such as transportation, marketing, price policy, tax policy, agricultural practices, the organization of community services or health care delivery. If it is to be useful in lifting the constraints identified above, such research should include participant-observer micro-studies which focus on the actual context of peasant decision-making. Sites for in-depth study should be selected so that they include communities representative of Ethiopia's major ecological, economic and ethnic zones. Finally, communities studied in depth should be monitored by less intensive but on-going research in order to obtain information on the effects of changing conditions or new policies. The primary goal of this

research should be to provide policy-relevant information on the problems, interests and motives of rural Ethiopians, rather than to develop abstract analytical models.

Specifically it is recommended that AID explore the possibility of:

1. Strengthening EPID's capacity to conduct evaluative research on the effectiveness of the MPP, using micro-economic and participant-observer techniques in tandem;
2. Establishing a program of research in cultural ecology in cooperation with the IAR and the IDR to conduct intensive quantitative research on the resource management strategies, time budgets, economic decisions and risk aversion techniques of household heads in varying ecological settings. The object of this research would be to identify technical and agricultural constraints and to anticipate problems that may arise when a new crop, technique or form of technology is introduced into the context of household farm management;
3. Helping IDR to develop more meaningful data collection techniques than it has used in its previous surveys;
4. Assisting the MLRA in establishing evaluative research on the effects of land reform.

Training

Extension agents' work would be more effective if they had a deeper understanding of the peasants' problems of farm management,

security and risk aversion. For this reason it would be useful for AID to sponsor workshops or other forms of training programs for Ethiopian field agents and other personnel to sensitize them to the need for engaging in a dialogue with peasants.

Workshops for Leaders of Peasant Associations

The organization of regional or sub-regional workshops for leaders of peasant associations by AID would facilitate communication between peasants and high level policy makers. The purpose of these workshops would be to encourage peasants to compare their problems and to prepare reports to be made available to officials responsible for development planning.