

# *Natural resource competition, Conflicts and their managements:*

*Case Study from Wondo Genet,  
south-central Ethiopia*

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**GLOSSARY**

<i>aba-gada</i>	father of <i>gada</i>	<i>addaa</i>	tradition
<i>awraja</i>	sub-province	<i>bete-mengist</i>	royal palace
<i>bongoni</i>	a process of social ostracisation among the Sidama	<i>chiqa shum</i>	lower ranking rural resident official
<i>buden</i>	group	<i>dawana</i>	communally used land among the Sidama
<i>chemesa</i>	elder among the Sidama	<i>debo</i>	traditional labour exchange method
<i>chisegna</i>	tenant	<i>eqqa</i>	land allocated to son by father
<i>enset</i>	false banana	<i>fird-shengo</i>	judiciary tribunal of KPA
<i>gasha</i>	unit of land measurement equivalent to 40 hectares	<i>gebbar</i>	tribute payer
<i>gudumale chemesa</i>	Sidama high-level conflict resolution institution	<i>jarsa</i>	elder among the Oromo
<i>jarsumma</i>	Oromo conflict resolution means among the	<i>quebelle</i>	local administration unit
<i>maderiya</i>	in lieu of salary	<i>mura</i>	moral compensation
<i>murete</i>	leading elder of a village among the Sidama	<i>neftegna</i>	northerners in the south and their descendants
<i>qelad</i>	unit of land and also refers to land allotment mechanism	<i>rist</i>	hereditary use right of land
<i>seera</i>	traditional law	<i>semon</i>	church land
<i>shenecha gada</i>	councillors	<i>siso</i>	one-third
<i>utawa</i>	privately used land among the Sidama	<i>wonfel</i>	traditional labour exchange method
<i>woreda</i>	lower level of government administrative unit	<i>wotat-geber</i>	young farmer
<i>yeketema demb</i>	urban tradition	<i>yemengist meret</i>	state land
<i>semachoch</i>	Campaigners		

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 General Background

In agrarian societies like Ethiopia, peasant farmers' survival is inextricably dependant upon their access to agricultural natural resources such as arable land, water, pasture, forest and forest products. Access to these resources is determined by the tenure systems that govern the ownership and use rights of the resources. Tenure systems, in turn, are influenced and shaped by the ecology, resource potential, land use practice, social organisation of the society and, more importantly, by population density. Thus, based on these variables, tenure systems varies from one extreme of making a resource open to all users, irrespective of their locality and/or number, to the other extreme of exercising complete control by limited number of people, such as a family or an individual (Thebaud, 1995; Weinstock, 1986). Population density, in turn, is affected by the rule of access and the productive potential of the resources. In areas where population density is high and/or the land is fertile and risk of agricultural production is minimal, ownership of land and access rules are usually complex and competitive. High population density often leads to scarcity of resources and initiates more complex kinds of access rules and causes stronger competition among users.

Increase of population pressure and scarcity of resources often leads to changes in production systems and farming decisions. Agricultural intensification, rural-urban migration, use of better farming technologies, off-farm rural income and shift to cash crop production are some of the responses to scarcity of natural resources (Ahmed, 1984; Dejene, 1996; Bekure and Singh, 1996).

Besides the changes in production systems, scarcity of resources also shapes the relationships among users. As individuals or groups endeavour to satisfy their own resource needs at the expense of others, previously established social relations would be affected in one way or another. In the absence of proper mechanism for fair allocation of resources among users, the competition for resources would degenerate conflicts that can be expressed at different levels and forms. Conflicts can occur between individuals, groups, individuals and community, or even between communities and government or governmental organisations.

On the other hand societies use different mechanisms to solve conflicts arising over the use of natural resources. The conflict resolving mechanisms can be traditional, 'modern' ('formal') or even the combination of the two. In Ethiopia, where population is increasing at about 3% per

annum at national level and the level of technology used in agricultural production is backward, scarcity of resources and competition for them have tremendous ecological, social, economic and political consequences. In Wondo Wosha population pressure and resource scarcity are the major problems of the area especially after the 1975 land reform. Social tensions resulted from resource use are frequently observed in the past few decades. Based on these general premises, the study will try to identify the major causes of resource scarcity and competition among the various user groups in Wondo Wosha. It tries to examine the major factors that affect individual's access to resources in different periods. It also examines the different mechanisms of solving the conflicts arising over resource uses.

**1.2 Major Objectives of the Study:** The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the access rules to natural resources in different periods in Wondo Wosha.
2. To understand the various factors that causes resource scarcity, competition and conflict in the area.

3. To explore the dynamic circumstance generated by national economic and political policies over resource allocation and use.
4. To examine the different conflict resolving mechanisms used to solve conflicts arising over resource use among users.

### 1.3 Rationale For The Selection Of The Research Site

Wondo Wosha is selected for this research for various reasons. The first factor is the existence of very high population density. According to the 1994 National Population and Housing Census, the total population of the four peasant associations of the area was 21,157 with 3,173 households (CSA, 1994). That will give the area a crude population density of about 588 persons per sq. km. The population density of Awassa Suria *woreda* and the SNNP Region to which Wondo Wosha belongs are 357 and 95 persons per sq. km. respectively. That means the population density of Wondo Wosha is 16 and 61 percent higher than the *woreda* and the Region.

The high social heterogeneity exhibited in the area is the other factor for the selection of the research site. Besides the differences in household economy and income, the community is composed of diverse ethnic groups. About eight ethnic group members are living in the area and exploit similar resources. This fact sometimes leads the competition and conflicts over resources to be expressed in ethnic terms. Therefore, Wondo Wosha is found to be an ideal place to study resource competition and conflicts in light of the relationships between the various user groups, particularly to investigate how resource use affects the relationship between the different ethnic group members. The area is also both an ethnic boundary (between the Arsi Oromo and Sidama) and political boundary (between Oromiya and Southern Nations and Nationalities regions).

The two ethnic groups had a conflicting relationship since their encounter. This would give a good opportunity to investigate the competition and conflicts in light of the changes that took place in the past years.

The presence of various governmental institutions and projects that compete for the available resources made the area a suitable place to study resource competition and conflict. Furthermore, the impacts of the former Dergue government's political and economic policies, mainly the agrarian policy, were apparent. Thus, Wondo Wosha is conducive to study the impacts of these policies in resource utilisation and individual's access to natural resources and the consequent effects on inter-human

relationship in the area. The combination of the above mentioned factors made Wondo Genet suitable to study natural resource competition, conflicts and conflict resolution mechanisms.

### 1.4 Conceptual Framework

Natural resources can be defined as those components that are found naturally and provide goods and services for human satisfaction and utility. Based on their nature of existence and sustainability, natural resources can be grouped into two categories as stock resources and flow resources. Stock resources are exhaustible and non-renewable. Their physical quantities are limited and the amount of resource utilised at one time influence the quantity left for future use. Flow resources, on the contrary, are not limited in quantity. Since they are renewable and non-exhaustible, they can support people and of being endure indefinitely. Nevertheless, for some flow resources, there are certain critical sones below which sustainability of them is impossible (Gibbs and Bromley, 1989; Grima and Berkes, 1989).

Natural resources, with labour and capital, are one of the three major components of agricultural production. The ecology of a given area largely determines the availability and productivity of the natural resources, which in turn, conditions the population density of an area. Thus, in semi-arid areas where land fertility is low and the chance of improving production is little, population density is usually low. While in areas where soil fertility and production output are high and the risk of production failure is minimal, population density is usually high (Rosenswieg et al., 1984; Barlett, 1980).

Population pressure is regarded as one of the underlying forces behind social changes in general, and systems of agricultural production in particular. It is an aspect of the entire relationship between population on the one hand and resources base and production systems on the other (Mitchell, 1991). Increasing population pressure and the need for more resources would cause resource scarcity and lead to competition among users. In a condition of limited supply, the increased demand for resources would inevitably lead to "problems such as diminished per capita consumption, decreased returns for production effort, increased opportunity costs of procurement, or depletion and degradation of the resource base" (Ferguson, 1984:55).

National and micro level political and economic conditions and various state policies could further affect individuals' access to natural resources and may aggravate

scarcity and intensify the competition for them (Dessalegn, 1993, 1994; Gisachew, 1994). In Ethiopia, although the 1975 land reform had nationalised all rural lands,

capable of supporting the increasing population. However, it is not always easy to increase territories for various reasons. First and foremost, shortage of economically feasible 'free' territory hinders the visibility of this alternative. Even when it exists, the expansion is conditioned by the economic and social costs of opening it. As population pressure becomes more acute, the opening cost of new territories will increase, while the return from them decreases (Price, 1984).

**Table 1.1 Population size of the four KPAs of Wondo Wosha in 1994**

Peasant Association	Population size			Number of Household	Average hh Size
	Total	Male	Female		
Wosha Soyama	7,363	3,883	3,480	1,481	4.97
Shesha Kekele	6,590	3,404	3,186	1,177	5.6
Wotera Kechemba	5,452	2,761	2,691	1,139	4.79
Gotu Onoma	1,752	923	829	337	4.65
Total	21,157	10,971	10,186	4,134	4.86

Source: Population and Housing Census, 1994 KPAs of Wondo Wosha in 1994

abolished tenancy and gave "equal" access right to all farmers, lack of legal mechanisms to ascertain farmer's ownership of his/her land resulted in high degree of tenure insecurity. The agrarian policy of the Dergue government, which was targeted to establish socialist relation of production in rural areas, had tremendous impacts on farmers' access to land and production decisions. The establishment of State Farms and Tea and Coffee Development schemes had displaced a number of farmers from their holdings and increased the pressure on the remaining resources. Similarly, the State and Community forest developments in some areas had increased resource scarcity, mainly land, and intensified the resulting competition for arable land (Dessalegn, 1993; Gisachew, 1994; Yibeltal, 1994).

Likewise, the establishment of Peasant Producers' Cooperatives (PPC) and Villagisation Programmes had adverse consequences on farmers by increasing resource scarcity and decreasing productivity. To implement the agrarian policy, individual farmers' best land were taken and valuable resources, such as water points and pasture, were given to PPCs, which had been much less efficient than private farmers. The evicted farmers were usually relocated in marginal lands or made landless (Dessalegn, 1994; Beyene, 1992).

Therefore, it is possible to argue that population pressure created by population growth and/or diminishing of resource bases, causes resource scarcity. When it is coupled with unfavourable government policies, the scarcity would be acute and competition would be more fierce. Farmers respond to problems of resource scarcity in various ways. In time of increasing resource scarcity and high competition for them, literature indicates that people would opt for one or a combination of two major categories of responses (Ferguson, 1984; Price, 1984; Brown and Podolefsky, 1974). The first and perhaps the simplest response is expansion to new territories that are

The second alternative is intensification of production with the available resources and trying to get maximum returns. Increasing cropping intensity, decreasing fallow land and period, applying more labour per unit of land, use of high price and high yield variety of crops, shifting to cash crop production are some the common responses to increasing resource scarcity (Ahmad, 1984; Bilsborrow, 1987; Dejene, 1996). However, this option is also subject to ecological, economic and social factors and may also have adverse environmental as well as social consequences. What is adaptive for an individual might be maladaptive to the environment or the community and may ultimately worsen the problem (Bennett, 1996).

The types of responses adopted by farmers are largely determined by the intensity of the problem, their standard of living, the potential for use of labour intensively, and availability of other economic opportunities, and above all, the ecology of the area (Bilsborrow, 1987).

Competition for scarce natural resources also shapes the relationship among users. Competition can be defined as a "process wherein two or more parties strive to achieve scarce goals within a normative framework" (Jiobu, 1990:163). It can occur between individuals, an individual and a community or between groups. Competition at an individual level (intra-group competition) usually weakens the group's solidarity, while inter-group competition strengthens its unity among group members.

Whether competition at any level leads to conflict or cooperation is largely determined by empirical facts and types of resources strived for. However, the power relationships between the competing groups and the national and micro level political and economic conditions have significant roles in determining the aftermath of the competition. In the absence of proper mechanisms to solve

the problem of resource scarcity, the process of competition would adversely affect inter-human relationships.

Jiobu argued that "competition, to be competition, must take place within a normative framework. It establishes the implicit and explicit norms, values, rules, and laws that govern the striving. Without the framework, the striving would too easily degenerate into conflict and, possibly violence" (Jiobu, 1990:163-64). Thus, increasing scarcity and competition for resources may encourage actions that violate the existing norms and relations. Ronald Cohen also stresses that "the greater the competition for scarce resources (CSR), the greater the potential for and the probability of disputes; the greater the number of disputes, the higher the likelihood of warfare in any particular region" (Cohen, 1984:333).

Disputes and conflicts arising over the use of natural resources can be managed in different ways. Societies have developed their own conflict management systems which, of course, undergo continuous changes. The ways conflicts are resolved vary in accordance to the level of the conflict. However, the systems of conflict resolution mechanisms can be categorised into two broad categories. The first category is traditional conflict resolution methods, which are solely based on the traditions and customary laws of societies. They are influenced by the existing socio-economic and political conditions and shaped by the culture of the societies. They are also transformed overtime with the changes in other aspects of the societies and by external influences. The second resolving methods are the "modern" mechanisms that involve state judiciary and law enforcing bodies. Sometimes the two mechanisms can be combined and work together.

However, both traditional and "modern" mechanisms have their own respective advantages and limitations. Indrissa Maiga and Gouro Diallo (1998), for instance, indicated a number of limitations and merits of both mechanisms in their study of land tenure conflicts and managements in Mali. They argued that the traditional or customary laws are problematic for their reinterpretations, lack of authenticity from unfavourable side and unsustainability. The laws also lag behind the social changes the society undergoes in resource use pattern, population density, and the social and cultural complexion of the region. They argued that the traditional mechanism, on the contrary, is advantageous not only for its simplicity and low cost, but also the "ways in which settlement is reached is suited to the

social, historical and cultural realities of the region and involves the whole community in finding a solution. The decisions taken often reflect a collective intellectual effort to solve the problem submitted to local authority" (Maiga and Diallo, 1998:15).

On the other hand, settlements by modern system through state institutions are advantageous since the decisions arrived are recorded (i.e. not subject to reinterpretations). However, the 'modern' methods are slow and expensive. There is also a possibility that the assessors to be corrupted and/or unfamiliar with local situation.

## 1.5 Description of the Study Area

### 1.5.1 Geographical Location

Wondo Genet is located in Awassa *woreda*, Sidama zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR). It covers the area from some 15 km. south of the town of Shashemene, near the Wondo Genet College of Forestry, to Malge Wondo, where the Meat and Vegetable Canning Factory is located (few km. east of Awassa). Although the area is collectively known as Wondo Genet, it is divided into sub-regions that have climatic, demographic and socio-economic variations. The area close to Shashemene is Wondo Wosha, while the town located some 22 km. south of Shashemene is called Wondo Kella. Busa, Basha and Malge Wondo are situated in the southern parts of the area. Most parts of Wondo Genet, except Wondo Wosha, had been part of the former Sidamo province under Awassa *woreda*. Until the 1991 new administrative division, Wondo Wosha was administrated under Shewa province of Shashemene *woreda* and constituted four of the 81-*kebelle* peasant associations (KPA) of Shashemene *woreda*.

Wondo Wosha is the research area of this study. The name Wosha derived from the small stream that passes through the small town, which is also called Wosha. Wosha, therefore, is the name of the stream, the town and the surrounding area. Although Wondo Wosha is part of the larger Wondo Genet, it is separated from the adjacent areas by natural and cultural boundaries. In the north, Mount Abaro is the boundary between Wondo Genet and Shashemene (i.e. SNNPR and Oromiya Regions). It also serves as a traditional ethnic boundary between the Arsi Oromo and Sidama. Gerarimo and other chain of hills that stretch to the northern, northwester and western parts of the region separate Wondo Wosha from the neighbouring Sidama highland areas. In the south, the Hallo stream is the boundary between Wondo Wosha and Wondo Kella

town. In the western side, Wondo Wosha adjoins the Arsi dominated Borera and Meddo KPAs of Shashemene *woreda*.

Wondo Wosha is consists of four KPAs, namely Wosha Soyama, Wotera Kechema, Shesha Kekele and Gotu Onoma. The total area is estimated to be 90 *gasha* (36 sq.km.) that comprises a good deal of uncultivable hillsides, marshy and stony lands. Owing to the favourable climatic condition and good quality of agricultural natural resources, the arable land is very conducive for production of cereals and perennial crops as well as animal husbandry.

In pre-1975 period, besides individual farmers, the richness of the natural resources attracted agricultural and agro-industrial investments in the area. After the revolution some of them were appropriated by the state and continued to operate. Currently, there are four major government institutions and forest development scheme that retain vast plots of land. These are the Wondo Genet College of Forestry, The Essential Oils Research Centre (commonly known as perfume factory), the Wondo Genet Wabi Shebelle Resort Hotel and the branch of the former Shashemene-Munessa State Forest Project.

### 1.5.2 Population

Wondo Wosha has one of the highest population densities in the country. The 1994 Population and Housing Census confirm this fact. The following table shows the population size of the four.

The population density of the area in 1994 was about 588 persons/sq. km., which is much higher than the average population densities of the Region (95 persons/sq. km.), the Zone and *woreda* (357 persons/sq. km.) to which it belongs (CSA, 1994). Since considerable size of land is uncultivable and some of the arable lands are held by the organisations, the agricultural population density is believed to be much higher than the average of the Region and the *woreda*.

Besides natural increase, in migration is the major factor for the high population density of the area. People had been coming from other areas in search of better economic opportunities since at least the beginning of 1950's. The private land tenure system and the introduction of cash crop production in pre-1975 period, and later the 'Dergue' agrarian policy contributed to the augmentation of the population density.

Currently, there are eight major ethnic groups that live and exploit similar agricultural natural resources in the four KPAs. Out of them the Sidama, Guji and Arsi Oromo constitute the majority. The Wolayita, Hadiya, Kembata and Amhara are also significant in number. The number of the Gurage is small and some of them are engaged in other businesses in the town of Wosha.

Based on their period of settlement in Wondo Wosha, it is possible to divide the eight ethnic groups into two categories. The first group constitutes those who settled in the area relatively earlier and claim to be indigenous to Wondo Genet. The Sidama and Guji comprise this group.

The second group is those who migrated and settled in the area relatively recently. These are the Wolayita, Hadiya, Kembata, Amhara and Gurage. The land grant to notables as private property and *rist*, and to Orthodox Church as *semon* land and the consequent opportunity for landless people to acquire farmland as *chisegna*, attracted large numbers of people to Wondo Wosha. The Amhara were the first to arrive at Wondo Genet soon after the incorporation of the area by Minilik's force. More Amhara arrived later in search of arable land and settled in Wondo Wosha.

The Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita migrated to Wondo Genet for economic reasons. Their homelands are known for high population pressure and subsequent land shortage. The 1984 population census revealed that the former Kembata and Hadiya *Awraja* was the most densely populated region in the country with 239.2 persons/ sq.km. Wolayita *Awraja* was the second with 216.9 persons/sq. km. (CSA, 1984). The introduction and expansion of commercial agriculture in Wondo Wosha and neighbouring *Woredas* also attracted large numbers of people from various areas. Similarly, the coffee plantations and the agro-industries of Wondo Wosha had brought in many Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita as daily labourers to the area.

The case of the Arsi Oromo is a little bit different and they share some of the features of the two groups. The Arsi have been in the Rift Valley area for long period of time. Most of the rural population of Shashemene are Arsi Oromo and they had been settled in the northern boundary of Wondo Genet for a long time. However, in spite of the geographical proximity of Wondo Wosha to Arsi settlement areas, the animosity between the Sidama/Guji and the Arsi hindered significant Arsi settlement in Wondo Wosha until few decades ago. It is after the Italian period

that the Arsi began to settle beyond Gotu area. The Arsi settlement in this direction was expanding and at present the population of Gotu Onoma is predominantly Arsi.

Owing to the influence of the long established Protestant churches in the area, most of the Sidama, Guji, Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita are Protestant Christians. Large number of the Amhara and Gurage are Orthodox Christians, while the Arsi are predominantly Muslims. The Philadelphia Mission in Wondo Kella, the Edola *Hywot Birhan* Church and the *Mekane Yesus* (Evangelical Church) in Wosha are very active.

### 1.5.3 Natural Resource Endowments

Wondo Genet is well endowed with rich, but depleting, agricultural natural resources. The primary asset of the area is the existence of fertile soil suitable for the production of both cereal and perennial crops. Even if the uncultivable lands (marshy, stony and hillsides) constitute a significant proportion of the total land size, the quality of the remaining arable land is very good, and makes Wondo Genet one of the most productive areas of the region.

However, there are variations in soil fertility among KPAs and within a KPA. Wosha Soyama generally has the best fertile soil, while Gotu Onoma is the least of all. Shesha Kekele and Wotera Kechema are moderate. Within Wosha Soyama, the Soyama area (east of the main road) is more fertile than the western part of the KPA. Similarly, in Gotu Onoma the Gotu area is least fertile while the lands adjacent to Wosha Soyama and Shesha Kekele are better in quality. Soil erosion and land degradation are apparent due to the deforestation of the hills. This is more evident in Gotu Onoma partly due to its location at the bottom of Abaro hill.

The other natural asset of the area is its rich water resource. In fact, the existing agricultural production system and economic conditions of Wondo Wosha are made possible by the availability of rich water resource. In addition to the small springs at the bottom of the hills, there are four major streams, namely Wosha, Worqa, Hallo and Lango. The water resources are intensively used both by the institutions and individual farmers for irrigation. The introduction and expansion of commercial agriculture was made possible by the use of irrigation. Moreover, it is used to supply the town of Shashemene with water since 1975/6. To solve the serious water shortage caused by the rapid population increase of the town, the water supply from Wondo Wosha was recently upgraded.

The hot springs are the other natural resources of Wondo Wosha. They are found in Wosha Soyama, just at the bottom of the Gerarimo hill (around the Wabi Shebelle Hotel) and in Gotu Onoma near the College of Forestry. Apart from the ordinary use, the Belle and other small hot springs are used for medical purposes. The Wabi Shebelle Hotel is the major user of the hot spring water in the main hotel at Soyama and Belle Fill Wuha. The Hotel uses the natural hot water to serve an open-air bath and swimming pool conveying the water through pipe. Likewise, in Belle similar indoor service is given. In fact, the hot springs, the open-air bath and the Belle Fill Wuha are the main tourist attractions of Wondo Genet.

The forest resource is the other asset of Wondo Wosha. Available documents and oral information indicate that Wondo Wosha had been covered with dense forest only about half a century ago. Mount Abaro and the other chain of hills had been covered by dense forest with economically valuable species. The total forested land of mount Abaro, which stretched further to Shashemene *woreda*, was estimated to be 10,000 hectares (250 *gasha*) in 1940's and had the best *Zigba* trees (*Podocarpus gracillior*) in the country (Russ, 1947:204). The forest resource of Wondo Wosha had been used for timber production since the period of the Italian invasion until recently. Even if there are still some small spots of natural forest in the upper parts of the hills, most parts of it were cleared for agriculture, settlement and timber production. The reforestation schemes of the Wondo Genet College of Forestry and State Forest Project in the past couple of decades had contributed much in recovering the deforested hills, and helped to control soil erosion and land degradation.

Just like the natural forest, the presence of adequate water and fertile soil made Wondo Wosha a suitable place for pasture. Wondo Wosha is said to have been traditional seasonal grazing area for the nearby Sidama, Guji and Arsi Oromo. Besides the traditional animosity among these groups, competition for pasture and water resource of the area had been the major cause of conflict in the past years. Currently, high population density and the need for more arable land significantly diminished the pastureland. In some KPAs unsuitable plots of land are kept aside for pasture while in others, like Wosha Soyama, there is virtually no common pastureland.

Favourable climatic condition and better infrastructure are the other assets of the area. The region has a wet *woyana*



*dega* climatic condition with an altitude of 1700-1800 m. above sea level. Using irrigation, farmers can produce two or more times a year with minimum risk of production failure. The road that connects the area with the nearby town of Shashemene enables the people to have easy access to markets and social services. It was constructed before the Italian invasion and later improved by the Imperial state, partly because of the introduction of commercial agriculture and the construction of a recreation

centre for members of the royal family in the area. It was later reconstructed anew in 1974/5.

The combination of the above mentioned factors made Wondo Wosha attractive for individual and commercial agriculture, and the establishment of research and socio-economic institutions, which ultimately, resulted in high population density and scarcity of natural resources.

## Part II. LAND TENURE, ACCESS RULES AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE PRE-1975 PERIOD

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### 2.1 Land Tenure in Pre-1975 Period

Due to the agro-ecological variations and specific socio-political developments in different parts of the country, pre-1975 land tenure in Ethiopia significantly vary across regions. However, two major kinds of land tenure systems prevailed in the northern and southern parts of the country respectively. In the northern highlands the *rist* system was the dominant form of land tenure system in which land was communally owned by descent groups. Access to land was determined by virtue of individuals' membership to descent groups subject to the payment of tribute, taxes and services to the authorities. The holders of *rist* land had a usufruct right over the land, but could not sell, mortgage or exchange it in any way (Hoben, 1973; Dessalegn, 1993; Bruce et al., 1993).

In the southern part of the country that was put under the political sovereignty of the central government at the end of the last century, the old traditional political, economic and social systems had been dismantled and replaced by new systems imposed by northern state. Accordingly, the existing indigenous, largely communal, systems of tenure were abolished and the state became the sole proprietor of all the land in the occupied areas. The largely "unoccupied" land was declared *yemengist meret* (state land) and the *qelad*<sup>1</sup> system was introduced. The state granted large plots of land to men of influence and power, local notables and traditional leaders to reward their services and loyalty. *Qelad* land could also be bought and became private property. This process introduced in the occupied areas a new kind of tenure equivalent to free holding (Dessalegn, 1984; 1993; McClellan, 1986).

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<sup>1</sup> *Qelad* is a term for a rope for measurement of qelad land which is about 66-67 meter in length. Later the term became synonymous with land measurement and allocation (McClellan, 1986).

The state also allotted *gebbar* land or labour to the northerner soldiers and civil servants, usually known as *neftegna*, as *maderiya* land (in lieu of salary) with a number of indigenous people on it. The *neftegna* were entitled to exact tribute from the indigenous people both in kind and labour. In less densely populated areas where the indigenous population was too small to grant *gebbar* land, *qelad* land was granted as *maderiya* land. The holders of *maderiya* land either worked themselves or parcelled out the land for those who may work as tenants (sharecropping arrangement). The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was also granted large plots of land in various parts of the incorporated areas as *semon* land (Church land).

The holders of *maderiya* and *semon* lands, like that of *rist* land holders, had only a usufruct right, while the free holders had a right to sell, mortgage or exchange the plots as long as the government tax was paid. "In the south new settlers were generally faced with two types of land to exploit. (1) Inhabited land already under cultivation, from which immediate benefit could be derived, and (2) underdeveloped, generally pasture or forest, in the northern Ethiopian perception, under populated and underutilised" (McClellan, 1986:176-80). The alienation of the indigenous people from the land and the appropriation of the land by the outsiders and some local notables produced what was known as *neftegna-gebbar* (patron-client) system in the south.

In addition to the two major forms of tenure, there were a considerable number of farmers owning and operating small plots by themselves. However, their number and economic significance, compared with the *rist* holders and *gebbar*, were very limited (Bruce et al. 1993). In the eastern, western and south western peripheral lowland

areas, the social, political and economic developments at the end of the last century had brought little changes to the existing indigenous land tenure systems, and even after the incorporation, previous indigenous land tenure systems had more or less persisted.

Among the Sidama, before the subjugation there had been two types of land. The first one was called *utawa* on which an individual member of the community had a private use right. The second type of land was called *dawana*. It was usually forest and pastureland, and utilised by all community members collectively. Both types of land belonged to the community and there was no private ownership of land or land market. In time of land shortage, a community might change a plot of *dawana* into *utawa* and allocate to individuals (Betana, 1993). Similarly, among the pastoralist Guji, land had been communal property of the society administrated by *Gada* authority. Thus, before the advent of the *neftegna*, communal ownership of land had been the sole land tenure system in both societies.

Although the conquest of Sidamo, south of Lake Awassa, was initiated at the beginning of 1889 by one of Minilik's leading generals, *Dejasmach* Beshah Aboye, a full scale conquest was launched in 1881 by *Dejasmach* (later *Ras*) Li'ulseged. He subjugated all the Sidama and Guji clans one after the other and controlled the whole territory (Berhanu, 1993). In Wondo Wosha, the prevalent conflict between the Arsi and Sidama/Guji and the pastoralist way of life of the surrounding people hindered agricultural settlement in the area well until the Italian period. Thus, Wondo Wosha was regarded as 'unoccupied' land and declared *yemengist meret* (State land). To grant land to institutions, members of military, administration and civil servants the *qelad* system was introduced in Wondo Genet. The main executor of the *qelad* system was a loyal Wolayitan official named Ondo. With this, private ownership of land was introduced.

Before 1975, different forms of land tenure systems used to exist in Wondo Wosha. Based on their holding and status, it is possible to divide the pre-1975 landowners of Wondo Wosha into three.

The first group of landowners was high-ranking officials and notables, mainly members of the royal family. They neither resided in the area nor partook in production in anyway, but retained most of the fertile land. Owing to the increasing importance of commercial agriculture, mainly coffee production and the natural attraction of Wondo

Genet as a recreation centre, members of the royal family developed an interest in the area. Dispossessing most of the land granted to a certain official, *Dejasmach* Amberber, they partitioned most of it among themselves. Most of the Wondo Wosha land was owned by Princess Tenagnework Haile Sillasie, Prince Mekonene Haile Sillasie, Princess Ayda Desta (grand daughter of the Emperor), *Ras* Andargachew Mesay (husband of Princess Ayda), *W/ro* Konjit Abent (widow of *Ras* Abebe Aregay and aunt of *Ras* Andargachew).

The second group of landowners was those who owned private and *rist* land and were not members of the royal family. Their holdings were moderate in size. Some of them were living in the area and control, partly or fully, the production processes. *Dejasmach* Amberber (who had been holding most of the land before he was dispossessed by the state), his son Captain Demesse (the then director of Sidamo province), *Ato* Mekuria and his son Teka Mekuria and *Girasmach* Nadew Gebre-Tsadiq belonged to this group.

The third group of landowners was institutions. After taking most of the land from *Dejasmach* Amberber and declaring state property, the Emperor granted some 16 *gasha* in Wotera Kechema KPA to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as *semon* land (Church land). Similarly, the Emperor granted some 10-14 *gasha* to the philanthropic organisation he established (Haile Sillasie I Foundation), which was later sold to the Norwegian Lutheran Mission and Agriculture and Handicraft School was established.

## 2.2 Mode of Access and Uses of Natural Resources

Before the 1975 land reform, there were two major types of modes of land access in Wondo Wosha. These were tenancy and contract (concession) exercised by individual farmers and by entrepreneurs (often foreigners) respectively. Tenancy was a kind of sharecropping arrangement in which a peasant obtained arable land from a landlord and in return gave a portion of the produce and labour service to the landowner. Tenancy was widely common in Wondo Wosha before 1975.

There were two types of tenancy arrangements. The first and common type of arrangement was called *siso*, (one-third) in which the tenant handed over one-third of his produce and gave labour service to the landlord. The other kind of tenancy arrangement was in the form of fixed rent, which was locally known as *yeketema demb* ("urban tradition"), in which the tenant would pay a fixed amount

of rent in cash to the landowner annually. The *siso* arrangement was made by poor farmers who could not afford to pay in cash while better-off individuals made arrangements of fixed rent. The amount of the rent in early 1970's was said to be about 20 *birr* per *gasha* annually. Most of the tenants in *siso* terms produced cereals while those in fixed rent produce cash crops as well.

Contract or concession was the second type of mode of access to land and related natural resources. It was typically made by foreign entrepreneurs for commercial agriculture and agro-industries in fertile and irrigable land. Accordingly, Soyama became the focus of the entrepreneurs. They were engaged in agricultural and agro-industrial operations. In the agricultural sector, coffee was the sole cash crop produced. Coffee had already become the major export item in the national economy as early as the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and there were a number of expatriates engaged in coffee business. Especially after the implementation of the *qelad* system, coffee from Sidamo province to the centre had greatly increased in volume. In the post-Italian period, the volume of coffee trade in the south expanded further. While the state was trying to attract the direction of the coffee trade towards the centre, the number of foreign traders and companies engaged in coffee trade equally increased (McClellan, 1984; Berhanu, 1993). Therefore, it is believed that the entrepreneurs in Wondo Wosha were motivated by the rewards of coffee production and business of the period.

Accordingly, a number of foreigners, mostly Italians, began coffee production in Wondo Wosha. The availability of privately owned suitable land accessible in contract, and the relatively better infrastructure of Wondo Wosha made the introduction of commercial coffee production possible. The first to initiate it was a British physician named Dr. Thomson who was affiliated with the Kuyera based Sudan Interior Mission. Initially he had established water propelled grinding mill on Wosha stream, later he undertook a large coffee plantation in Soyama. Then later, Mr Ottonelli, Mr Olibetto (Italians), Justin Van Billon and his brother (Belgians), Dr. Mulat (an Ethiopian) had been engaged in coffee development.

In the agro-industry sector, there were two major operations. The first one was a sawmill run by a certain Italian named Mr Vincenzo Pettinelli. An Italian concessionaire, Mario Rappetti, had established the mill in Soyama as a branch of the Shashemene Giggessa and Sole Sawmills just after Italian period. When Mr Rappetti failed

to continue the operation, Mr Pettinelli took the concession of the mills including the Wondo Wosha sawmill and Malge Wondo Tomato Canning factory. Later on, he made a contract with Princess Tenagnework Haile Sillasie to supply logs to the Wondo Genet and Shashemene mills from her privately owned forestland at Wondo Genet. The Wondo Genet forest had supplied the mill with logs until it was closed due to the exhaustion of the accessible forest in 1969 (Zerihun, 1988).

The other agro-industrial venture was the production of essential oils. It was first established by Mr Justin Van Billon (a Belgian) along with coffee plantation. But later, for unknown reason, he dropped it and was taken by a French businessman, Mr Hard. He took a large plot of land in contract for cultivating the plants used to produce the oils and to establish a compound for distillation. The possibility of acquiring farmland for small-scale household and commercial farming, and the increasing job opportunities in the newly opened farms and industries attracted large numbers of people from different directions. In addition to the existing population the arrival of new people rapidly increased the population of Wondo Wosha.

### **2.3 Resource Competition and Social Relations in Pre-1975 Period**

Until the spontaneous settlement of people and establishment of agro-industries and commercial farms, Wondo Wosha had been sparsely populated. Similarly the competition and conflicts for natural resources were limited. The relative abundance of the resources was one of the major factors that limited competition and conflicts over natural resources.

The rules of access also contributed to minimise the competitions for resources. Land and related resources, such as forests and pasturelands, were the private properties of individuals and institutions and their availability was largely determined by the different arrangements made between the owners and the users. Individuals irrespective of their locality or origin could have access to resources as far as they fulfilled their obligations as a tenant. This hindered a competitive feeling among the different user groups, especially between the lately arrived groups and the early settlers.

The difference in ways of life was the other factor that hindered fierce competition and conflicts. Some of the early settler groups, particularly the Guji, were leading

different way of life as cattle herders and exploiting the resources in different ways.

However, resource competition was one of the factors that shaped the relation between the Sidama, Guji and the Arsi Oromo. Hostility, war and raids had characterised the relations between the Arsi and Sidama since the period of their encounter. Besides the cultural factors that exacerbated the conflict, economic factors were crucial for the hostile relations between them. There were frequent clashes between them over pasture and water in Wosha area. Cattle raids were common.

Similarly, the relationship between the Arsi and Guji had been characterised by conflict and war. Competition for

economic resources seems to be the major factor for the conflicting relation between them. Both groups had been leading a similar life style as pastoralists with little subsistence farming. Wondo Wosha had been their seasonal source of pasture and water for their cattle. The competition for these valuable resources often led them into conflict and violence.

As the number of the latecomers increased and scarcity of resources became apparent, the early settlers began to see the latecomers, mainly the Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita, in suspicion. The 1975 Land Reform profoundly changed the social relations with the changes in the rural social organisation, access rules and status of the late settler groups.

**Part III.**  
**LAND TENURE, ACCESS RULES AND RESOURCE**  
**SCARCITY DURING THE DERGUE PERIOD**

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**3.1 The 1975 Land Reform and Changes in Social Relations**

The 1975 land reform is a major landmark in the history of the land tenure systems in Ethiopia. The reform nationalised all the rural land and abolished any form of private ownership of land by individuals or institutions. Land became 'public property of the masses' and all farmers were granted 'equal' usufructuary rights to arable land and related natural resources. Large-scale farms were confiscated and turned into state or cooperative farms or parcelled out and given to individual farmers. The reform also eliminated outsiders, mostly northerners who controlled the land and, consequently, changed the former socio-economic relations based on *neftegna-gebbar* system with the obligations the peasants owe to landholders (Dessalegn, 1984). The reform proclamation allowed for the establishment of a Peasant Association in an area of 800 hectares, called *Kebelle* Peasant Association (KPA). The KPAs were responsible essentially for administering the land, enforcing law and order and tax collection in the *Kebelle* that had been executed by *chiqa-shum* (low ranking rural resident official) and other overlapping offices in the past. The KPAs were empowered to establish judicial tribunals (*fird-shengo*) and defence squads to arbitrate and enforce the decisions of the tribunal and KPA leadership. Membership to KPA became the only formal way of having access to arable land. Therefore, the 1975 land reform had drastically changed the political, social, economic and administrative structure of the rural community (Dessalegn, 1984; 1993).

Just like in other area, the reform abolished the previous land tenure systems, including all forms of private land ownership, and proclaimed equal access of usufructuary right to all farmers in Wondo Wosha. The area was divided into four KPAs, each being, at least in principle, 20 *gasha*. Initial land distribution was held by the respective KPAs leadership with the assistance of the *Semachoch* (campaigners of Development Through Cooperation). Family size was taken as the major criterion for the size of land allocated for each household. Most of the *chisegna* were given the plots they were operating before the reform. New claimants and the agricultural

labourers were given the land operated by entrepreneurs and *rist* holders. The initial size of farmlands given to each household varied across KPAs with the smallest in Wosha Soyama (less than one hectare) and the largest in Gotu Onoma (up to two hectares). In fact, since the number of people in the area was limited, there was no serious land shortage at the time. Later, the land held by the Norwegian Mission was distributed to new land claimants and land-hungry farmers in the four KPAs. However, the Government later transferred this land to the Wondo Genet Agriculture and Livestock Development Enterprise.

The land reform, on the other hand, had profoundly changed the relationship between the different user groups, mainly the relation between the early and late settlers. The new access rule changed the settlement pattern and economic status of the latecomers. The previously *chisegna* and, more importantly, labourers became small peasant producers settling permanently in Wondo Wosha.

Membership to KPAs and similarity of economic occupation and status brought the various previously aloof groups into close contact. Consequently, suspicion and avoidance characterised the relation between the two groups, especially after the gradual increase of the latecomers in number. The latecomers, primarily the Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita, were regarded as unwelcome 'intruders' by the early settlers, mainly by the Sidama. In the initial land distribution the early settlers objected to the idea that the latecomers could be KPA members and acquire farmlands. The latecomers, especially the agricultural labourers, were labelled as 'berary' (fliers) implying that they were not permanent residents of the area. These people had come largely as daily labourers less than a decade before and most of them retained strong attachments to their home areas. Thus, the people who considered themselves as 'indigenous' to Wondo Wosha could not tolerate the idea of allowing 'intruders' to own land with equal status.

In spite of the opposition of the early settler groups, the existence of seemingly sufficient land for all groups at that time, and partly with the influence of the *Semachoch*, the Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita were given farmlands and became KPA members. The Sidama were in the forefront

of the opposition because they constituted the largest portion of the population of the area and regarded Wondo Genet as Sidama land. Moreover, the increasing population of the latecomers created a feeling of threat among the Sidama.

Generally speaking, the relations between the early and the late settlers, mainly the Sidama and Kembata/Hadiya during the first few years of the revolution (1975-79/80) were characterised by mistrust and aversion. As the former farm labourers became settled members of KPAs and claimed equal access rights to resources, the early settlers developed a feeling of economic threat and psychological insecurity. However, with the existing socio-political condition, the power balance was in favour of the early settlers. They predominantly controlled KPA leadership using their numerical superiority.

### 3.2 Factors that Intensified Resource Scarcity

As correctly argued by Mitchell (1991), besides population growth, diminishing of natural resources initiated by political, economic and environmental factors causes 'population pressure which, in turn, aggravates scarcity of resources and the competition for them. In Ethiopia, although the 1975 land reform entitled every farmer to a right of holding farmland, it lacked the necessary legal frameworks to ascertain farmers' right over their holdings. The reform gave the state a strong hold on rural land and a potential to displace farmers for various reasons. Rural land was also subject to periodic redistribution to accommodate new claimants. These factors resulted in high degree of tenure insecurity expressed in displacement and dispossession of farmers, which Bruce and his colleagues censured as "the most damaging aspect of the reform" (Bruce et al., 1993:2).

In Wondo Wosha, besides population growth, the Government's decision to reopen some of the former organisations, forest project and the implementation of socialist agrarian policy had aggravated resource scarcity. These processes had initiated frequent land redistributions, in which many farmers either lost part of their holdings or were made absolutely landless. Although the problem was common to all four KPAs, it was more pronounced in Wosha Soyama where most of the organisations are located.

It is possible to categorise the factors that caused or intensified resource scarcity, chiefly land shortage, into two. The first factor comprises organisations and the state

forest project that holds vast land and, consequently, reduced the size of arable land available to the farmers as a whole. The second set of factors is the Government's agrarian policy that generated disparity of holdings among the farmers and created conflict among users.

#### 3.2.1. Organisations that Reduced the Available Natural Resources

**A. The Essential Oils Research Centre:** The Wondo Genet Essential Oils Research Centre is one of the governmental organisations that compete for available natural resources in the area. It is located in Wosha Soyama KPA. It was first established in 1961/2 by a Belgian named Mr Justin Van Billon who had been engaged in a coffee production as well. Later, another foreigner, Mr Hard (French) took it. The availability of privately owned fertile land, the rich water resource, the relatively better road and the geographical closeness of the area to Addis Ababa, where the market was supposed to be, facilitated the establishment of the scheme in Wondo Genet. Some labourers, mainly Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita, were hired to work in the farm and in distillation section. Before the scheme began to produce at its full capacity, the 1975 land reform nationalised the land and, consequently, the scheme was terminated. The farmland occupied by the industry was distributed to farmers including those who were working as labourer in the farm. The compound, including the distiller and other equipments, remained idle until it was reopened after a decade.

Stressing the importance of the industry for the national economy, the Government reopened it in 1985/86 as Wondo Genet Essential Oils Production Project under the then National Chemical Corporation and later put under the Ministry of Industry and turned into a research Centre (SHWAO). The Wosha Soyama KPA handed over 80 hectares of land in the most productive part of the quebelle by displacing about 50 households. Of the displaced farmers, 21 households remained landless at least until 1990, while most of the others were relocated in marginal lands. The project also affected the neighbouring KPAs, which handed over land to Wosha Soyama to accommodate the farmers displaced by the project.

**B. Wondo Genet Collage of Forestry:** The Wondo Genet College of Forestry was established in 1977 in a compound set up by a Norwegian Lutheran Mission as an Agricultural and Handicraft School before the revolution. The Mission had bought the land from Haile Silliasie I

Foundation, which had been granted it by the Emperor. When the Mission left Wondo Genet in 1975, the compound, with the materials and buildings, was put under the custody of the Ministry of Agriculture, while most of the farmlands were distributed to farmers from the four KPAs. When it was soon reopened as Wondo Genet Agricultural and Livestock Enterprise under the National Livestock Development Enterprise, the KPAs were ordered to take all the farmers settled in the former Mission farmland back to their respective quebelles, where they were given farmlands by redistribution. In 1977 the compound (including the farmland) was turned into a Forest Institute under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Wild Life Conservation and Development Authority to train foresters at a diploma level.

In 1987 the Institute had owned around 540 hectares of land in and around the campus. Of which, 370 hectares (68.5%) was forest and steep slopes, while 16 hectares (3.0%) was residential area. The remaining 154 hectares (28.5%) was used for farming (Erikson and Stern, 1987). In the farmland the College produces cereals such as maize, teff and wheat. It also has a coffee farm, bee section and dairy farms. It uses the weir constructed by the Norwegian Mission for irrigation. Later, the College acquired additional forestland for a demonstration site from the State Forest Development Project. The current holdings of the College are estimated to be 16 gasha (640 hectares), of which about one fourth is farmland.

**C. Wondo Genet Wabi Shebelle Resort Hotel:** Wondo Genet Wabi Shebelle Resort Hotel is located in Wosha Soyama KPA. It was first constructed as a country house for members of the royal family to stay in when they came to Wondo Genet for recreation (thus, it is still called betemengist- Royal Palace). After the revolution, the Palace was initially put under the National Resource Development Enterprise. Later, considering the readymade facilities (building, road, hotel equipment, swimming pool etc.), and the natural tourist attractions of Wondo Genet, it was turned into a resort hotel.

In the restructuring of Government hotels administration, the Wondo Genet Resort Hotel was put under Wabi Shebelle Hotels Administration Enterprise. With the gradual increase of visitors, the Hotel initiated an upgrading project in 1984. The project included construction of additional guest rooms, restaurant and bar, swimming pool and, more importantly, developing a large garden and woodlot around the Hotel. To make the project feasible, the Hotel required additional 42 hectares of land

in the most productive parts of the quebelle, near the source of the irrigation water. The Government issued an order to the concerned parties, including the Wosha Soyama KPA, to hand over the land to the hotel by relocating the people on it to other areas. The Hotel was instructed to pay compensation for the houses and perennial crops of the farmers on the land.

Accordingly, in 1985 the houses and perennial crops of 33 farmers were estimated by experts at a total of birr 26,422.10. In spite of their fierce resistance, 15 farmers were forced to take compensation and settled in other, mostly marshy, lands. The remaining 18 farmers declined to leave their houses and farmlands on the pretext of the smallness of the compensation to be paid for their properties. The KPA was also reluctant to enforce the order partly due to the acute land shortage to relocate the farmers. Some of these farmers had been displaced more than once by other factors (PPC, state forest project, and villagisation) before they finally settled in the land now claimed by the Hotel. Later, as the Hotel failed to protect the land to which it paid compensation, additional farmers displaced by villagisation, PPC and state forest project began to reside on it. Encouraged by the indifference of the KPA leadership, the farmer's openly defied government's decision and the claim of the Hotel on the land. More people had settled on the land after the fall of .....**Dergue**..... and at present the Hotel is confined to its pre-1984 holding.

**D. Munessa-Shashemene State Forest Development Project:** The other institution that aggravates resource scarcity in the area is the former State Forest Development Project, which was established with the objective of reforesting the deforested forest resources of the area. Needless to say that, deforestation and soil erosion are serious environmental problems of the country in general and Wondo Wosha in particular. The forest resource of Wondo Genet and adjacent mount Abaro were seriously affected both by extensive exploitation of sawmills and clearance for settlement, farmland and energy source.

To save the remaining natural forest and reforest the degraded land, an extensive project had been initiated as early as 1969 in a vast geographical area that included parts of former Shewa, Sidamo and Arsi Administrative Regions. In 1970's the project had been divided into two organs run by Forest and Wild Life Authority and Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit (CADU) respectively. The Forest and Wild Life Authority had been commissioned

with the conservation and reforestation Programmes in and around Shashemene area (including the research area), while CADU was responsible for the activities in Munessa area. In 1983/84 the Authority had made a survey of the Regions and prepared a topographic map indicating the area of operation (SWAO).

Lack of clearly set aims, objectives and organisational structure, shortage of trained man power and, above all, absence of coordination between the two organs hindered them from attaining the intended objectives. To solve the above mentioned problems and promote effective forestation and conservation Programme, the two previously independent organs were merged to form the Munessa-Shashemene State Forest Development Project in July 1987. The Project had three branches in Shashemene, Gambo and Munessa whose offices were located in Sole, Gambo and Degaga respectively. In 1988/89 it had demarcated 101,539 hectares of land (about 2540 gasha) in the former Arsi (59,547 hectares), South Shewa (28,685 hectares) and Sidamo (13,307 hectares) Administrative Regions (SWAO).

The project had been in severe conflict from the outset with the farmers living in the areas demarcated as forest territory. Farmers had been settled in a good part of it since long before the land reform. The Shashemene branch had a claim of land in 31 KPAs in former Hayqoch Awraja (the present Shashemene and Arsi Negele Woredas), of which four KPAs were completely under the domain of the project (SWAO). In addition to open forest and marginal lands, the project had been conducting reforestation Programme by displacing farmers from lands under cultivation. Local Government officials were often pressurising KPA leaderships and farmers to cede lands to the project. The displaced farmers were usually given small and marginal lands by redistribution or were made landless

The conservation and reforestation Programme in Wondo Genet was carried out by the Shashemene branch of the project. In Wondo Wosha, the Programme directly affected the three study KPAs, except Shesha Kekele. The Programme was launched in the area in 1985/86 (before the establishment of the Munessa Shashemene Project), in

Gotu Onoma near Belle in 4 gasha land. Although the land includes hillsides and degraded land, some part of it had been used for many years. To give the land to the project, about 50 farmers were relocated to other parts of the KPA.

In Wosha Soyama, the project claimed 9 gasha land, which was largely held by farmers. The project was requesting for more land from the farmers annually (SHWDA). Although the requests were partially met by the influence of the woreda officials, there were strong resistances and complaints both from the KPA leadership and individual farmers. The protest was stronger when the project claimed and took 3 gasha land near the Wabi Shebelle Hotel, where about 50 households were evicted and some of them relocated mostly to marshy lands and others were

made landless. The project indirectly affected other KPAs as they repeatedly handed over some hectares of land to Wosha Soyama to alleviate the serious land scarcity in the quebelle caused by the project and other factors (SHWAO).

According to the Shashemene Woreda Department of

Agriculture, in 1990 the project claimed 9 gasha (360 hectares) of land in Wotera Kechemba KPA, of which, 300 hectares (83.4%) was used for farming and pasture and only the remaining 60 hectares (16.7%) was forest land. As the project took some of the land it claimed, the displaced farmers, as usual, were relocated by conducting additional redistribution. The Shesha Kekele KPA was also affected by the project indirectly. It lost a good deal of land to Wosha Soyama by the order of the woreda officials to accommodate the displaced farmers in Wosha Soyama (SHWAO).

The project totally retained about 14 to 17 gasha (560 to 680 hectares) land that includes, of course, highly deforested and eroded hillsides and hilltops. However, a considerable size of it was (still is) considered as pasture and farmland from the farmers' point of view. Currently the project is terminated and the forest in Wondo Wosha is put under the Awassa Woreda Department of Agriculture. The operation of the remaining parts of the project in Oromiya Region has continued with a new organisational

**Table 3.1: Estimated Size of land held by organisations**

Organisation	KPA	Land size (in ha.)
Essential Oils Research Centre	Wosha Soyama	80
College of Forestry	Wosha Soyama and Gotu Onoma	640*
State Forest	Wosha Soyama, Gotu Onoma and Wotera Kechemba	240*
Wabi Shebelle Hotel	Wosha Soyama	42
Mena and Patmos International	Shesha Kekele	25
<b>Total</b>		<b>1027</b>

\* This includes hillsides, hilltops and other marginal lands.  
 Source: Shashemene Woreda Department of Agriculture and Survey made by a special Committee, August 1990.



structure as Munessa-Shashemene Wood Industry Enterprise under Oromiya Region.

The role of community forest development Programme in aggravating land scarcity, on the contrary, was limited. Even if every KPA was obliged to undertake a community forest development Programme, the plots assigned to it were usually unproductive and small. The size of the community forest plantations in Wosha Soyama, Shesha Kekele, Wotera Kechem and Gotu Onoma were 8, 5, 2.5 and 10 hectares respectively (SHWDA).

**E. Others:** In addition to the above mentioned organisations and forest project, two other Non-Governmental organisations retained some land. Even if the size of the land they held is relatively small, it has definitely contributed for the diminishing of farmlands in the area. The expansion of the town of Wosha has also put pressure on the available farmlands around the town.

i. Mana Family and Community Development Organisation: Mana Family and Community Development Organisation was first established as Edola Family and Community Development Organisation with the assistance of World Vision Ethiopia to carry out family and community development Programmes. To begin its activities the organisation was given 25 hectares of land in Shesha Kekele KPA by relocating some 25 to 40 farmers. All of them were given farmlands in other areas and compensated for their houses and properties on the land. In 1987 the organisation transferred 15 hectares of land to another NGO, Patmos International, and continued to operate with the remaining 10 hectares.

The organisation is under Edola Hiywot Birhan Church and gives assistance to poor families by establishing connections with supporting families abroad. It also provides cloth and food aid to poor families and conducts some social services and development activities, such as constructing roads, weir, running a kinDerguearten and a grinding mill. Except for the few hectares used for building the church, kinDerguearten, wood workshop and offices, most of the land is used for farming. Currently it is covered by sugarcane, maise and eucalyptus trees. The

organisation was registered in this name as a local NGO in 1995/96.

ii. Patmos International: Patmos International was established by the Finnish Government in July 1987 with the objective of supporting orphans by establishing an orphanage. To start its operation, the organisation had requested 25 hectares of land in Shesha Kekele KPA. However, the KPA leadership, including the quebelle WPE secretary, declined to evict farmers as land scarcity had reached its climax (SHWAO).

Consequently, an agreement was reached between the organisation, Edola Family and Community Development Organisation and worda administration to give the organisation 15 hectares of land from the Edola holding. The orphanage began its operation by collecting orphans from different parts of the country. Part of the 15 hectares of land is used for producing various crops and a small nursery.

**iii. The town of Wosha**

Wosha is a small town located in Wosha Soyama KPA along the main road to Kella Town. Although information indicates that the town had been established in the 1940's as a small village, it did not grow enough to obtain town status by the Ministry of Urban Development or in the National People and Housing Census. However, the introduction of commercial agriculture and the subsequent flux of people increased its population and size, especially after the land reform.

The increasing displacement of farmers, shortage of farmland to be given to new claimants, expansion of cash crop production and increasing migration steadily enlarged the population of the town which led to the gradual expansion of the town domain at the expanse of farmlands around it. In 1990 the worda Urban Development and Housing Office tried to demarcate a large area as urban territory. Instructions were given to KPAs not to allow people to plant perennial crops in this territory. The decision was later called off by the worda WPE office,

**Table 3.2: Number of farmers made landless by PPCs and villagisation**

Programme	Wosha Soyama	Shesha Kekele	Wotera Kechem	Gotu Onoma	Total
PPC	30	15	17	—*	62
Villagisation	13	8	6	—*	27
Total	43	23	23	—*	89

\* data not available - Source: Survey made by a Committee, August 1990.

mainly due to the failure of the Urban and Housing Development Office to request "revolutionary guidance" of the Party (SHWAO). Recently the population of the town is growing more and the town is expanding to the farmlands around it.

### 3.2.2 Government Agrarian Policy

The agrarian policy of the 'Dergue' Government has adversely affected farmers' access to agricultural natural resources. The promotion of Peasant Producers Cooperatives (PPC) and Peasant Service Cooperatives (PSC), state farms, villagisation and grain requisitions were the major components of the 'socialisation' agenda intended to transform the relations of production in rural areas. The policy had altered previous patterns of resource allocation and often aggravated land scarcity and decreased productivity (Bruce et al., 1993; Dessalegn, 1994; Beyene, 1992). In Wondo Wosha the impacts of the agrarian policy were clearly observable. The establishment and expansion of PPCs and the implementation of villagisation Programme were the two major components of the policy that influenced resource allocation and created resource competition and conflict in the area.

#### A. Peasant Producers Cooperatives (PPCs)

In Wondo Wosha, PPCs were established in all KPAs in August 1979. Although PPCs were started with few members, limited means of production and land, soon valuable resources, including former community grazing land, were reserved for them. In the absence of free land, PPCs expansion was realised by displacing private farmers who were often relocated in marginal lands or made landless. The attempt to expand PPCs had aggravated the land scarcity and, more importantly, escalated farmers' tenure insecurity and, consequently, changed the relations among themselves. The effects of PPCs in resource competition vary across KPAs. It was more pronounced in Wosha Soyama and Shesha Kekele where Regional and *Woreda* Administrations and Ministry of Agriculture officials were trying to establish model PPCs for the Region.

The size of the PPCs holding had been and the number of landless farmers steadily increasing, while the share of private farmers was consistently diminishing. The intensive pressure from the Regional and *Woreda* officials to organise the farmers in PPCs and, particularly the intention to make the two PPCs model cooperatives, made

the endeavour to consolidate them in members, land and other resources very intensive and haste. For instance, the Wosha Soyama PPC, established with 47 members and 20 hectares of land, had reached to 87 members and 170 hectares of land within four years. Similarly, the Shesha Kekele PPC had expanded to 272 members, 416 hectares of land and 93 oxen from 15 members, 10.5 hectares of land and 10 oxen within a decade (SHWDA).

To discourage private agricultural production in favour of collectivisation, membership to PPCs was based on an indirect compulsion. Those who refused to be members were often deprived of equal opportunities. PPCs held more lands beyond their actual production capacities. Furthermore, the intention of consolidating PPCs' farmlands displaced private farmers adjoining them. The general consequences of the PPCs' expansion were scarcity of farmland, pressure on the remaining available resources, increasing use of marginal lands and, ultimately, conflicts between PPCs and private farmers.

The impact of the PPCs was not limited on the farmlands. They also created scarcity of grazing lands as well. For instance the previously communal grazing land in Shesha Kekele KPA was reserved by the PPC as its oxen pastureland and private farmers were denied access to it.

#### B. Villagisation

The Villagisation Programme was initiated in Wondo Wosha in 1985/86 in all four KPAs. Experts planned villages with a capacity of hundreds of households. Each household was allotted with 1000 sq. meters of land for house making and a backyard plot. Farmers living in scattered villages were forced to abandon their houses and make new ones in the villages. Some farmers also lost their farmland as their plots were included in the area selected for establishing villages. Those who were reluctant to join the newly formed villages were pushed to marginal lands. In addition to aggravating land scarcity, villagisation was a pretext for conducting more land redistributions that usually ended up with diminishing the available land for a given household. It was also a basis for nepotism and favouritism. Generally, the Programme increased the number of landless farmers and farm distances while diminishing farm size, quality and productivity.

### 3.3 Resource Competition And Social Relations

Scarcity of resources leads to twofold developments. Firstly, it often direct to changes in resource use pattern and economic organisation at household and community levels. This includes agricultural intensification and search for other means of income generation. Secondly, and in the mean time, it shapes the relationship between competing parties. Competition for scarce resources leads either to cooperation or conflict among the competing parties. The outcome of the conflict, however, is largely determined by the intensity of the problem, the type of resources strived for, the availability of other economic alternatives and the effectiveness of the resources allocation mechanisms.

Likewise, the competition among different parties in Wondo Wosha has shaped their social relationship. The competition was exhibited in two levels. The first one was between farmers and organisations and the second level is among farmers themselves.

### **3.3.1 Relations between farmers and Organisations**

The relations between farmers and the different organisations in the area vary from close cooperation to open conflict and sporadic encounters. The type of relation an organisation developed with the community was largely determined by the type and amount of resources it held, the way it acquired them, the effects it brought on the lives of the people, the power the organisation has or is perceived to have and the economic and social benefits it renders to the people. Based on these factors, it is possible to divide the organisations into two: those which developed relatively harmonious relations and those which have incompatible relations.

The Wondo Genet College of Forestry is one of the organisations that have little problems with the people around it. It was established on the land that had been occupied by the Norwegian Lutheran Mission and it did not displace farmers from their farmland. Those settled on the current College holdings soon after the land reform were displaced by the National Livestock Development Enterprise before the establishment of the College and were given a fair size of land in their respective KPAs. Moreover, although the size of its holding is very vast, a good portion of it is hillsides and rugged lands that are unsuitable for agricultural production.

The College also created job opportunities for the people. Currently, it has 235 employees (135 permanent and 100 in contract base). Some of the permanent and most of the

contract base workers (largely farm labourers and forest guards) are from the surrounding areas. Some of them are also KPA members and possess farmlands. They supplement their agricultural income with the earnings they make from the College. The job opportunities created by the College helped to alleviate the problems created by scarcity of land.

The social services the College renders to the community also contribute to develop harmonious relationship between the College and the people around. The College has constructed water pipe line for the people in front of the main gate that solved the problem of travelling long distance to fetch drinking water. Its clinic has been giving emergency medical service to the people. The people also perceive the College as an institution with immense Government interests and attention, and refrained from taking adverse actions for fear of possible Government measures.

In spite of the relative cordial relationship of the College with the people around it, confrontations over the use of resources occasionally occur. A number of people had settled within the domain of the College before the land reform. Some of them were settled by the Norwegian Mission as watchmen and remained there after the establishment of the College. In 1988 the number of the settlers had reached 39, of whom 18 were College employees and transferred workers, and the remaining 21 were private farmers living as cattle herders. None of them were KPA members. Even if later their number was reduced to 27, the College was unable to dislodge them from its domain until they were relocated in Gotu Onoma KPA in 1990.

The other issue that spoils the relationship of the College with the people is the intrusion of some farmers into the College's domain for pasture. They are pushed by shortage of pastureland in the area. However, partly owing to the strict guarding of the College domain, the problem so far is not out of the control of the College.

Mena Family and Community Development Organisation and Patmos International, likewise, have relatively good relationships with the people around them. The smallness of the land they hold (25 ha.), the compensation paid to the farmers for their properties on the land, and the job opportunities they created for some people (meanly in their farming sections) significantly contributed for the development of cordial relationships between the organisations and the people. Moreover, the developmental

activities and social services they render helped them to built positive images among the people. However, the more important factor for the cordial relationship between the organisations and the people is the religious attachments between them. Mena Family and Community Development Organisation is under the Hiywot Birhan Church to which many people adhere.

The relationship of the farmers with the Wabi Shebelle Resort Hotel, Essential Oils Research Centre and State Forest Project are generally characterised by high degree of competition, accusation and conflict. The Hotel had demanded additional land in a situation where the people had been already suffering from acute land shortage. The farmers held the requested land since the land reform and some of them had been displaced by other factors more than once. On the other hand, the farmers were not convinced about the kind of activities the Hotel wanted to undertake on the land. Although the Hotel claimed that the land was required to expand the tourist attractions of the area, the farmers complained that it was intended to produce agricultural products (mainly vegetables), so as to supply the Hotel and the nearby Wabi Shebelle branch Hotels (Awassa No.1 and No.2 and Langano Wabi Shebelle Hotels) with the products. The leadership of Wosha Soyama KPA was (still is) supporting the position of the farmers and repeatedly overlooked the order of the *Woreda* officials to relocate the farmers from the land. In addition, the Hotel offers little job opportunities and social benefits to the people around it.

The Essential Oils Research Centre also faces similar problems. It had displaced more than 50 households from the farmlands they had been using for more than a decade. Some of them were made landless. The people are barely benefiting from job opportunities the Centre created due to the very low wage the Centre pays (currently it pays 3 *birr* a day for farm labourers). The other factor for developing negative attitudes towards the Centre is that the farmers are not convinced about the priority of the objectives of the Centre. Their suspicion is strengthened by the land use of the Centre. At present, only half of the 80 hectares of its holding is covered by eucalyptus trees and lemon grass and the remaining land is

either idle or used to produce other cereals, such as *teff*, which have nothing to do with oil production.

Intrusion into the centre's farms for pasture is the other main source of conflict between the Centre and the farmers around it. The Centre's officials argue that they are not against farmers' use of the grass under the eucalyptus trees, but complain that the cattle destroy the upper soil with their hooves. To solve the problem, they allowed the workers to cut and take the grass. Moreover, as the chemical nature of the dropped leaves deters good growth of grass, shepherds, who know this from experience, usually pull out the seedlings planted by the Centre.

As the problem became more serious after the 1991 political change, the Centre was forced to employ more guards (currently it has about 20 armed guards that constitute one sixth of the total employees). Previously, fear of measures from the *woreda* Administration and Party Offices restrained farmers from taking actions against the Centre. The Centre officials complain that currently the measures taken by local Government officials against those who intrude into the centre's farms are not swift and effective. This encouraged more adverse actions. Diminishing of pastureland seems to be the real reason for the intrusion. The increasing shift from crops such as potatoes, maize and other cereals to sugarcane production has significantly reduced pastureland and forced farmers to encroach into the centre's domain for pasture.

Similarly, the relationship of the State Forest Project with the surrounding farmers is not cordial for the same reasons. However, the endeavour of the project in Gotu Onoma (in Belle area) did not result in indignation from the farmers for two basic reasons. Firstly, the land taken was largely hilly and exposed to severe erosion for years. The farmers living at the bottom were suffering from the flood from the hills and they welcomed the attempt to solve the problem. Secondly, the farmers displaced from the land were given farmlands in other parts of the *quebelle*, which were generally better in quality than the previous ones.

**Table 3.3: Number of Landless households in Wondo Wosha in 1990**

KPA	Number of Farmers		Total
	Made landless	Never had land	
Wosha Soyama	71	200	271
Shesha Kekele	23	142	165
Wotera Kechemma	23	135	158
Gotu Onoma	0	0	0
Total	117	477	594

*Source:* Survey made by a Special Committee, August 1990.

In Wosha Soyama and Wotera Kechema, where land scarcity is very acute, situations were quite different. In Wosha Soyama the land taken by the project in a village locally known as *Kentteri* (just above the Wabi Shebelle Hotel), had brought serious conflict between farmers and the KPA on one hand and the project on the other. The land was considered by the project as one of the areas threatened by erosion and badly needing forestation, while the people and the KPA still consider it as a land suitable for agriculture and pasture. In one of the many petitions written to the former South Shewa Administration Office in 25 June 1990, the KPA office insisted on the return of the land to the farmers.

.... It is known that the forest project has taken 9 *gasha* farm and pastureland from our *quebelle* which was used by our and neighbouring *quebelle* farmers. Considering the problems and misery of the people and acknowledging the invalidity and illegality of the demarcation made by the project, we request [the Office] to make the project return the farm and pasturelands to the farmers and ascertain our right to have pastureland.

In another similar petition addressed to the *woreda* WPE, Administration Offices and Department of Agriculture, the KPA complained about the absence of proper consideration for the farmers on the land.

The Munessa Forest Project had taken 3 *gasha* irrigable land from farmers above Wabi Shebelle [Hotel] around *Kentteri*. Even if [the action] was intended to foster state forest, the land was taken from the farmers through the then [Government and *quebelle*] leaders and officials without undertaking deep and intensive study (SHWAO).

This indicates that the land, in the eyes of the people, is regarded as farm and pastures land, not as marginal or degraded land which needs reforestation. The forest project was displacing farmers from

their farmland without paying compensation for their properties on the land. The decisions to hand over land to the project were usually made through the interference of the *Woreda* officials who often did not have adequate knowledge and information about the socio-economic conditions of the area. As a result, the project often encountered challenges from farmers to carry out its operation properly. Moreover, the project neither created

significant job opportunities, nor provided any kind of social services to the people.

On the other hand, it should also be noted that all farmers' attitudes and reactions to the organisations discussed above was not homogenous. In fact, some portions of the community are beneficiaries of the job opportunities and social services the organisations are rendering, while others are negatively affected in the ways mentioned above. An organisation's relation with the people is largely based on the balance between the advantages and opportunities it created and the number of people who benefited from them on the one hand, and the constraints it imposed and the number of people affected by them on the other.

### 3.3.2 Relations Among Farmers

#### A. Relations between landholders and the landless

As land became scarcer and other economic alternatives were limited, youngsters who formed new households were the primary victims of the problem. Previously young men who reached the age of establishing their own households were registered in every KPA as *wotat gebere* (young farmer) and given farmland during the periodic land redistribution. With the increase of the number of the landless people and diminishing of land, redistribution was abandoned. Parents offering farmlands to their young sons became the only means of acquiring land for construction of a house as well as for farming. However, the holding of most of the old households is too small to satisfy their sons' need of land. Besides new claimants, displacement had increased the number of landless and land-hungry

farmers in the area. The landless people were forced to depend on other economic alternatives usually with marginal income (daily labour,

migration to nearby areas, sharecropping, etc.) or remained dependent of their families and relatives for support.

The uneven distribution of farmland brought conflict between the landholding and landless people. The conflict remained latent until the abolition of the PPCs in 1990. The landless and land hungry farmers had insisted the participation of elders and private farmers in the

Table 3.4: PPC and private farmers landholding of Wosha Soyama and Gotu Onoma KPAs in 1990

KPA		Number of farmers	Total land holding (in ha.)	Size of land/ household (in ha.)
Wosha Soyama	PPC	169	250	1.49
	Private	373	252	0.67
Shesha Kekele	PPC	279	416	1.53
	Private	418	272	0.65

Source: Shashemene *Woreda* Department of Agriculture.

distribution of PPC lands among members. But both Government officials and PPC members rejected the request. Farmers who had been made landless by PPCs also claimed their previous farmlands. Some of them tried to use force to farm the land left from distribution among PPC members. In the confrontation, some of them were arrested as ringleaders of "unrest among the rural mass" (SHWAO).

The 1990 survey indicates that, in addition to 117 farmers who were made landless by various factors mentioned before, there were 477 households which never owned farmland. Accordingly, the official number of landless farmers in 1990 was 594. However, it is strongly believed that the figure was much higher than the official report.

### **B. Between PPCs and Private Farmers**

The second form of manifestation of the conflict between the haves and have-nots was between PPCs and private farmers. As mentioned earlier, PPCs were established and expanded by displacing private farmers, usually from the fertile lands. The holdings of the PPCs were increasing annually, while individuals' farmland diminished steadily. For instance, the Wosha Soyama PPC which was established in August 1978 with 47 members and 20 hectares of land had increased its holding 12.5 times with in 9 years, while the number of members increased only 3.6 times.

The intention of the Government to promote collectivisation over individual production induced a number of actions that adversely affected the latter. For instance, the Wosha Soyama PPC had reserved 10 hectares of previous communal grazing land as its oxen pastureland and denied private farmers access to it. The PPC went further to the extent of asking the *woreda* Department of Agriculture to prohibit private farmers from selling their potato production until the PPC sold its own (SHWDA).

The conflict between the PPCs and private farmers remained latent until the policy of Mixed Economy was issued in March 1990. Soon the policy was issued all the four PPCs in the area were abolished by the consensus of their members. In the guidelines made by the Ministry of Agriculture on the abolition of PPCs, it was stated that all properties of PPCs, including farmland, would be divided only among members. However, it was asserted that the size of farmland allotted to members would not exceed the average holding of private farmers and the remaining land would be kept aside until further Government instruction is

given (SWAO). In the processes of redistribution of PPC farmlands, private farmers who had lost farmlands to PPCs were anxious not to let their former holding become private property of other individuals.

In all KPAs, PPC members took fertile and more than the average holdings of private farmers. With this and the relative weakening of Government power in the rural areas by then, the already strained relation between PPCs and private farmers erupted into an open conflict which took an ethnic form.

### **3.4 Manifestation of Resource Conflict in Ethnic Form**

Scarcity of resources and the unequal access opportunities caused conflicts among farmers. The conflict that had been latent until 1990 turned into violence as a conflict between the Sidama and Kembata/Hadiya.

The armed conflict was ignited by the murder of Mesfin Someno, 24, a Sidama from *beleche* sub-clan, in July 19, 1990. The ex-chairman of the Wosha Soyama KPA, Lefebo Biyero, a Hadiya, and his clique who were deposed from KPA office a day before were alleged as Mesfin's murderer. The ex-chairman had deep rooted conflict with the deceased and his close relatives over the redistribution of land.

The Sidama, mainly the *beleche*, attacked the Kembata/Hadiya who are regarded as one group. They retaliated by killing two Kembata/ Hadiya and fatally wounding other one and burning many houses. As the conflict became more grave and caused mass panic, an *ad hoc* committee composed of people from the Regional and *woreda* WPE offices, police public security and commissariat and a military force led by the deputy administrator of the Region was deployed in the area.

In spite of the attempts of the committee to bring peace and stability, the unrest had continued for five months and cost the life of five Kembata-Hadiya and two other were wounded. 83 houses were burnt and 345 people were made homeless. It also caused the displacement of large numbers of people, mainly Kembata, Hadiya, and some Wolayita, from Wondo Wosha (SHWAO).

The conflict, which arose from resource competition between the haves and the have-nots, was expressed in ethnic terms between the early and late settlers, mainly the Sidama and Kembata-Hadiya. It is important to scrutinise why the conflict took an ethnic form or, in other words,

why ethnicity was involved in a conflict caused by resource competition among individuals. The major factors for the expression of the conflict in ethnic terms were the following.

**A. Initial encounter and differential responses to the agrarian policy:** The relationship between early and late settlers was characterised by mistrust, avoidance and hatred from the beginning of their close contact in 1975. There was little social contact (through voluntary associations, social tie formation, marriage etc.) between them. In the initial years of the revolution, the early settlers had been generally better off than the latecomers. Most of them held relatively fertile and fair size of farmlands. During this period almost all key KPA posts (chairmen and secretaries of KPA and judiciary tribunal, commander of defence guards) were held by the early settlers. In fact, until 1979 the balance of power, both in terms of land holding and KPA power control, was in favour of the early settlers.

After 1979, the 'Dergue' agrarian policy and politicisation of rural organisations had changed the *status quo*. Initially membership to PPCs was almost open to all people who were willing to be member. However, there was a difference among

farmers in their responses to the call to establish PPCs. Those who were landless or held insufficient and/or marginal land were often the first to respond positively to the endeavour in order to have access to better land. Those who held relatively fertile and large plots resisted it more strongly. The latecomers who held small and/or unproductive farmlands were the first founders of PPCs in all KPAs. Joining the PPC was, therefore, partly a response to resource competition. The possibility of becoming KPA member through membership to PPCs initiated the arrival of more latecomers to Wondo Wosha.

As recently arrived Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita became members and acquired land for house making and backyard farm, most of the early settlers who declined to join PPCs lost their farmlands. The steady expansion of PPCs in every KPA had expropriated the fertile land, mostly held by early settlers. Furthermore, joining the PPC was a response to the social insecurity that prevailed among the latecomers. Generally, the establishment of PPC, while giving the latecomers more security and land, dispossessed the private farmers who were largely early settlers. As most of the PPCs members were latecomers, the conflict between the PPCs and private farmers became a conflict between the early and late settler groups.

The following table shows the ethnic composition of Wosha Soyama and Gotu Onoma KPAs in which the Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita constituted 56.2 and 85.4 percent of the total PPC members respectively.

No	Ethnic Group	Wosha Soyama	Shesha Kekele	Wotera Kechemma	Gotu Onoma	Total	%
1	Sidama	211	168	182	113	674	31.0
2	Guji Oromo	23	227	210 <sup>1</sup>	0	460	21.2
3	Wolayita	82	36	83	94	295	13.6
4	Hadiya	85	165	0	0	250	11.5
5	Kembata	44	36	21	86 <sup>2</sup>	187	8.6
6	Arsi Oromo	34	15	0	104	153	7.0
7	Amhara	45	30	25	23	123	5.7
8	Gurage	15	13	0	0	28	1.3
9	Tigre	3	0	0	0	3	0.1
	Total <sup>3</sup>	542	690	521	420	2173	100

**Source:** Shashemene *Woreda* Finance Department office and field survey.

**B. Corruption and nepotism:** The system of appointment and lack of proper mechanisms to control the leaders created favourable condition for corruption and favouritism among KPA leaders. In Wosha Soyama, power abuse, corruption and nepotism were rampant. The ex-chairman, who held power for 11 solid years, was alleged to be despot both at KPA and PPC leadership. He abused his power to favour his kin and supporters and harm his opponents. The villagisation Programme, PPC expansion, national military service, grain requisition and, more importantly, the repeated land redistribution and relocation had been good

Table 3.5: Ethnic composition of members of Wosha Soyama and Gotu Onoma PPCs.

No	Ethnic Group	Wosha Soyama PPC		Gotu Onoma PPC	
		members	%	members	Percent
1	Wolayita	53	31.4	41	54.7
2	Kembata and Hadiya	42	24.8	23	30.7
3	Amhara	32	18.9	8	10.7
4	Sidama	30	17.8	1	1.3
5	Arsi and Guji Oromo	9	5.3	2	2.6
6	Gurage	2	1.2	0	0
7	Tigre	1	0.6	0	0
	Total	169	100	75	100

pretexts to be corrupted and to favour kin and friends. Moreover, he was accused of bringing his relatives and kin from other areas and giving them fertile land by relocating previous holders to marshy areas (SHWAO).

Although the injustice and corruption were committed against the whole community, private farmers, mainly some *beleche* sub-clan members, were the primary victims of the atrocity. Thus, the introduction of new Kembata and Hadiya into PPC and KPA, their appropriation of fertile land and the displacement of private farmers in favour of the chairman's relatives and kin gave the conflict an ethnic form.

**C. Partisan politics and associating the negative effects of the national political and economic policies with the KPA leadership:** As explained before, in the early years of the revolution key KPA posts were held by the early settlers and some Amhara. The politicisation of rural organisations and the expansion of the Party (WPE) structure down to the *quebelle* level changed the system of power holding in KPAs which play key role in resource allocation. Since 1979 loyalty to the political system and the ability to execute the orders and interests of the government became the major criteria to hold key KPA posts.

Thus, increasing number of individuals began to hold KPA offices without the consent of the mass. The people could hardly depose them from offices. With this new political opportunity, the latecomers were able to have access to key KPA posts. It was in this way that the Wosha Soyama ex-chairman, Lefebo Biyero, came to power in 1979 and stayed until 1990. The ‘Dergue’ Government had also expanded its party structure down to KPA levels. Grassroots WPE offices had been established and were active in Wosha Soyama and Shesha Kekele KPAs.

The various notorious national policies of the ‘Dergue’ Government (PPC, grain requisite, national military service, etc.) were implemented by KPA leadership who were regarded as loyal to the Government. The people began to associate the effects of the policies with the KPA

leaders who were mostly latecomers. This exacerbated the already hostile relationship between the two parts.

**D. Numerical significance of the latecomers:** As indicated in the first chapter, the possibility of acquiring land as tenants and increasing job opportunities had attracted large number of Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita to Wondo Wosha. In spite of the opposition of the local people, in the 1975 land distribution they became KPA members and obtained farmlands. They gradually began to increase their population by bringing in their kin. The political condition, especially after 1979, and the establishment of PPCs gave an opportunity for more Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita to come and settle in the area.

**Table 3.7: Number of farmers, their land size in ethnic group in Wosha Soyama.**

No	Ethnic Group	Total	%	Under half ha.	% of half ha. holders	Out of the total half ha. Holders	Out of the eth. Group	Made landless* No.	%
1	Sidama	211	38.9	95	50.3	45.0	34	47.9	
2	Hadiya	85	15.7	20	10.6	23.2	2	2.8	
3	Wolayita	82	15.1	14	7.4	17.1	10	14.1	
4	Kembata	44	8.1	15	7.9	34.1	2	2.8	
5	Amhara	45	8.3	19	10.1	42.2	16	22.5	
6	Arsi	34	6.3	17	9.0	50.0	6	8.5	
7	Guji	23	4.2	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8	Gurage	15	2.8	8	4.2	53.3	1	1.4	
9	Tigre	3	0.6	1	0.5	33.3	0	0.0	
	Total	542	100	189	100	---	71	100	

These are farmers who had been paying tax before they were dispossessed and the figure does not include the landless people. Source: Survey made by a Special Committee, August 1990.

**Table 3.6: Ethnic composition of KPA members in Wondo Wosha in 1990**

- <sup>1</sup> It includes both Arsi and Guji Oromo
- <sup>2</sup> It includes both Hadiya and Kembata
- <sup>3</sup> It does not include the landless and the non-farmers.

**Source:** Survey made by a Special Committee, August 1990.

Table 4.6 indicates that the Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita constituted about 39 percent (211) of the Wosha Soyama, and 33.7% of the total four KPAs land holding farmers. The two groups collectively formed the largest group among the latecomers. Consequently, they were regarded as posing serious competitive threats and faced strong indignation from the early settlers.



**E. Inequality of Landholding:** The cumulative effect of the above mentioned factors was inequality of landholding among farmers in favour of the latecomers. Available data indicates that the disparity was much more pronounced in Wosha Soyama, where ethnic heterogeneity was high and corruption was rampant. The existing power balance and political condition had concealed the conflicts until 1990. When PPCs land was distributed among members, those who had little or no land before joining PPCs became owners of fertile and larger land. As most of the PPCs members were latecomers, they were the beneficiaries of the land redistribution after the abolition of PPCs.

A survey held in 1990 indicates that all 189 farmers in Wosha Soyama holding under half hectare were private farmers. Out of them, 48 farmers were fully or partially located in marshy lands. 29 private farmers holding half or more hectare were also located in marshy lands. On the contrary, former PPC members had taken 0.7 hectare each from the former PPC holdings and 140 of them took a total of 23.1 hectares of land above the size decided for them.

There was also disparity in land holding along ethnic lines. The percentage of the Sidama holding under half hectare (45%) was almost two times larger than their Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita counterparts (23.2%). Similarly, the Sidama constituted about half of the farmers dispossessed by different factors. Disparity of land holding, coupled with other factors mentioned above, gave the competition and the conflict between the haves and have-nots an ethnic form as a conflict between the Sidama and Kembata/Hadiya.

The conflict was finally solved using traditional mechanism (*shimigilna*). 29 elders were elected from the four KPAs (6 from Wosha Soyama, 9 from Shesha Kekele, 10 from Wotera Kechema and 4 from Gotu Onoma). It was tried to represent all major ethnic groups in the

*shimigilna*. All major ethnic groups (Sidama, Guji, Arsi, Kembata, Hadiya, Amhara, and Wolayita) were represented in the process.

The traditional method was preferred for certain reasons. Firstly, the *ad hoc* committee believed that competition for resources (mainly arable land), the disparity of holding and related corruption and nepotism members as the root causes of the conflict. The incident was believed to be the cumulative effect of the long time concealed conflict between the groups. Thus, it was believed that it would be difficult to resolve the problem and bring sustainable settlement by treating the immediate cause of the conflict in courts.

The second, and perhaps the strongest reason, for using traditional method was the need to bring a lasting solution to the problem. The resolution made by traditional method will be forced by cultural elements to avoid further retaliation.

The number of the people involved in the conflict also made the use of 'modern' method difficult. Once Mesfin was killed, four people from the Kembata/Hadiya side were killed and large number of others went to jungles. Also many individuals were said to be involved in setting fire on the houses of the opposite group. Therefore, it was difficult (if not impossible) to take all the people involved in the conflict into courts.

However the traditional method was not left alone to solve the problem. The Government used its power to influence all parties involved in the conflict to accept the terms of the agreement. The *ad hoc* committee established a police station in Wosha town and deposited military force to show its power. The elders were elected by *ad hoc* committee and the committee was controlling the whole process.

**Part IV.**  
**CHANGES IN MODES OF ACCESS AND SOCIAL**  
**RELATIONS AFTER 1991**

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#### **4.1 Modifications Of Access Rules**

The introduction of a Mixed Economic Policy in March 1990 and the related changes in agrarian policy had abolished some of the elements of the former notorious agrarian policy in rural areas. It relaxed the grip of the government on the rural people and allowed farmers to lease their farmlands temporarily. The prohibition on the use of hired labour was also lifted. This paved the way for the operation of informal mechanisms of having access to land (Dessalegn, 1993; 1994).

In Wondo Wosha, in the land redistribution following the abolition of the PPCs most of the dispossessed farmers were given some amount land from the remaining Cooperatives holdings. Those who were highly affected and located in marshy and stony lands were also given additional land as compensation. However, the landless farmers, mostly the youth who had never possessed land before, were excluded in all KPAs for shortage of arable lands. In general, former PPCs members were still better off than most of the ex-private farmers both in quality and size of farmlands.

The introduction of the Mixed Economic Policy has changed the previous rigid formal way of access to land only through membership to KPAs. With the possibility of transferring land to others in lease and use of hired labour, previous landless farmers began to acquire farmlands in different forms.

Contract, sharecropping and transaction are the three forms of land transfer. Contract is a mechanism in which a landowner transfers his/her use rights on the land to the lessee for fixed amount of money for specific years. It is commonly used by farmers who are short of capital and/or labour. The two parties make a written agreement that would be ratified by KPA offices. The lessor passes all the rights and obligations on the land (the right to use the land, paying government tax and KPA contributions etc.) to the lessee for the period of the contract. It is the widely claimed type of arrangement in the area, though not practically always true.

Sharecropping is the second form of securing access to farmlands, in which a landless farmer operates a land and hands over part of the produce to the landowner in return. Although the amount of the produce given to the landowner varies depending on their agreement, equal sharing between the two parties is quite common. Unlike contract, in sharecropping the landowner does not relinquish his/her rights and obligations on the land. It is usually preferred by non-farmers who acquired land by purchase, but live far from the farm. They often give the land to a trustworthy and industrious farmer in the village to operate it and give a portion of the produce in return.

The third form of access to farmland is through purchase. Although it was illegal both during the 'Dergue' period and remain so now, disguised as contract, land transactions prevailed in the area since the Mixed Economic Policy was issued. It is the most prevalent form of land transfer than the others (see details in section 4.2.2). The increasing shift to sugarcane production and the possibility of employing hired labour made contract and sharecropping arrangements less significant, especially where irrigation is used. Scarcity of land and the smallness of available farmland for a household restricted the possibility of transferring land in contract. Contract and sharecropping are more common in cereal producing parts of Gotu Onoma, where an average land holding of a household is higher than the other KPAs.

Although land is scarce and sometimes too small to produce household consumption, poor farmers in serious problems (debt, illness, death etc.) are often forced to sell their plots or a portion of it to acquire money. However, those who leave the area for various reasons are the major source of land for sale. The persistent ethnic conflicts since 1990 have contributed to the expansion of land market. It is more frequent in Wosha Soyama and Shesha Kekele, where soil fertility is high and irrigation is widely practised. Absence of water for irrigation and the social insecurity resulted from ethnic discontent has reduced the magnitude of land transaction in Gotu Onoma. The existence of land market contributed to the increase of KPA members in most *quebelles*.

## 4.2 Changes In Agricultural Production

### 4.2.1 Cash Crop Production

One of the major changes induced by scarcity of natural resources was a growing shift to production of high yield and high price cash crops. Cash crop production is introduced in Wondo Wosha long ago. Sugarcane, *chat*, *enset* (false banana), potatoes, coffee, carrots, cabbages, red beats, tomatoes and other vegetables and fruits have been familiar products of the area for a long time. Although coffee had been the primary cash crop before 1975, the coffee disease that spread rapidly in the area reduced its significance as cash crop. In addition, the repeated displacement of farmers for various reasons reduced the production of coffee and other perennial crops (avocados, papayas, *chat*, etc.) that take long time to grow.

The availability of water for irrigation promoted the shift to cash crop production. In fact, the use of irrigation enabled farmers to sustain their livelihood with a very small amount of land (sometimes as small as 0.1 hectare), by producing high price crops two or more times annually. The good price for the products also encouraged the shift to cash crop production. Many merchants and brokers usually come to Wondo Wosha to purchase agricultural products directly from farms.

Currently, in irrigable areas, sugarcane surpasses other crops, including potato, which was the dominant crop grown a few years ago. The expansion of sugarcane production is related with the current high price for the product in the market. In Gotu Onoma and other areas where irrigation is not developed, maize is the dominant crop produced with rain-fed agriculture. The intensive agricultural production and the capacity to produce two or more times annually require more labour than rain-fed cereal farming. In other words, as farmers strive to produce more yields from a unit of land, they apply more labour on it. Thus, irrigated farming needs more labour than rain-fed agriculture. Traditional labour exchange mechanisms, mainly *debo* and *wonfel*, have been common in the area for long time, though their importance is now declining.

In *debo*, a farmer summons other farmers (usually his friends, kin

and neighbours) to help him in his farm for a day. He prepares food and drinks for them. The degree of his social relationship and the amount of labour he requires determine the number of people participating in the *debo*. He is indebted to the farmers and works on their farms in return when they require labour. In *wonfel*, the farmers form a working party in which they work on each other's farms in turn. The number of the people participating in *wonfel* is usually smaller than in *debo*.

Diminishing of farmlands, shift to sugarcane production and the possibility of using hired labour reduced the importance of the traditional labour exchange methods. Household labour is often enough to cultivate the usually less than half hectare of land owned by a household on average. Those who face labour shortage hire landless farmers and seasonal migrants. Large numbers of seasonal labourers, mainly Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita, were came to Wondo Wosha during harvesting seasons, especially when potatoes and maize were the dominant crops produced. They arrive in June, to harvest maize and depart in September and comeback in November to harvest potato which lasts until January. The decline of maize and potato production in favour of sugarcane (which needs less labour than potatoes), and the past years ethnic conflict are responsible for the decrease of seasonal migrant labourers in Wondo Wosha.

Scarcity of land also led farmers to apply more fertiliser and abandon fallowing. Yibeltal's survey conducted eight years ago indicated that the fertiliser application of Wosha Soyama KPA was 79 percent, while fallowing was only 0.1 percent of the total arable land (Yibeltal, 1991). Currently, with the shift to sugarcane production, fallowing seems to be none at all as every inch of land is covered by sugarcane, *enset* and other crops.

### 4.2.2 Land Transaction

**Table 4.1:** Number of taxpayers in the each KPA for the years

Year	Number of Taxpayers			Wotera Kechema	Gotu Onoma
	Wosha Soyama	Shesha Kekele			
1986/87	558	---	---	---	383
1989/90	542	690	520		420
1992/93	558	716	540		---
1996/97	1190	816	728		468

\* data is not available. **Source:** Shashemene and Awassa *Woreda* Departments of Finance.

The introduction of the Mixed Economic Policy in March 1990 paved the way for land transfers in different forms, including transactions. Land transactions, disguised as contracts, are prevalent in Wondo Wosha. The social conflicts since the early 1990's and the subsequent displacement of people have reinforced the land markets. In the 1990 conflict, many late settlers, especially those who were involved in the political system of the 'Dergue' or were believed to have involved in it, had felt insecure and sold their lands to leave the area. The change of Government and the new ethnic politics increased the anxiety of the late settlers and many of them sold their land to leave the area. Land transactions also enabled large numbers of non-farmers to hold land through purchase. Some of them are town dwellers engaged in different businesses, but registered as taxpayer farmers. In addition to population increase, transactions intensified fragmentation and diminishing of farmlands. Some of the farmers, on the other hand, are intensively engaged in other economic activities including trade. Land markets also initiated the arrival of new people, mainly the Sidama, from neighbouring areas. The number of taxpayer farmers in all KPAs has shown striking increase in recent years. The increase is more dramatic in Wosha Soyama. The following table shows the growth in the four KPAs for a decade.

As the table indicates, the growth is highest in Wosha Soyama followed by Shesha Kekele and least in Gotu Onoma. Soil fertility and the resulting variation in productivity of the land are the major factors for the difference in population size among KPAs. In Wosha Soyama, the availability of rich water resources and fertile soils attracted more people into the *Kebelle*. Non-farmers also preferred to acquire land in Wosha Soyama where high production of cash crop is possible using irrigation. Consequently, land transactions are much more prevalent in Wosha Soyama followed by Shesha Kekele and Wotera Kechema. As a result, population density and land fragmentation are more pronounced in Wosha Soyama. On the contrary, absence of irrigation and less fertility of the soil reduced the intensity of land transactions in Gotu Onoma, and resulted

in relatively lower population density and land fragmentation.

However it is striking that the number of taxpayer farmers grew very significantly in 1996/97. In Wosha Soyama, the number of farmers in 1995/96 was 765. In 1996/97 it increased by 425 (55.6 %) to reach 1190. In Shesha Kekele and Wotera Kechema, similar increases are reported by the KPAs leadership. One of the factors for the increase in this particular year was the registration of the previously tax exempted farmers and non-farmers, who acquired land in purchase, as taxpayers. As tax is paid on the basis of annual income, those who hold 0.1 hectare were exempted from the obligation. The Wosha Soyama KPA leaders indicate that in 1996/97 these people requested to pay tax and registered as taxpayers and augmented the total number of taxpayers in the KPA.

The request to pay tax and the subsequent increase of the taxpaying farmers, are the results of the reactions of the people to possible future Government actions. They expect some kind of general land redistribution in the near future by the Regional State. This expectation is strengthened by the similar action taken by the Amhara Regional State in 1996/97. The people learnt a lesson in the 1990 redistribution, in which the landless farmers were excluded from it. Only those who were paying tax before they were made landless and those who were transferred from the

College domain were allotted land. Thus, they recognised the importance of paying tax to be considered as full-fledged farmers and to be eligible in the future possible redistribution. Those who hold more than average land also took similar actions to maintain their holdings in the possible redistribution. They usually parcelled out their land and registered them in the name of different household members, usually wives and children who are

sometimes very young to be registered as farmers. These actions have increased the number of farmers in the KPAs without corresponding increase of number of the households.

In spite of the increase in price, land is hardly available for sale at present. Increasing land transactions resulted in

**Table 4.2:** Distribution of households of Wosha Soyama and Gotu Onoma by landholding

Land Size (in ha.)	Wosha Soyama		Gotu Onoma	
	Frequency	Size of Land (in ha.)	Frequency	Size of Land (in ha.)
0.10-0.15	365	36.75	11	1.10
0.20-0.30	325	79.85	99	25.90
0.35-0.40	140	54.85	68	27.20
0.45-0.50	138	67.65	43	21.50
0.55-0.60	124	73.75	22	13.20
0.65-0.70	35	24.40	69	48.30
0.75-0.80	21	16.70	43	34.40
0.85-0.90	7	6.25	1	0.90
1.00-1.25	27	28.05	101	102.00
Above 1.25	8	12.50	7	10.50
Total	1190	400.75	464	284.00

Source: Awassa Woreda Department of Finance

diminishing of farm size and inequality of holdings. The size of farmers' holdings has shown significant decrease since the last redistribution in 1990.

As the above table shows, the inequality is more pronounced in Wosha Soyama where 58 percent of the total population (690 farmers) hold only 29.1 percent of the total arable land (i.e. 0.1 to 0.3 ha. each and a total of 116.6 ha.). Currently the average holding of a household in Wosha Soyama is 0.33 hectare, while in Gotu Onoma it is 0.61 hectare.

#### 4.2.3 Cattle Production

Diminishing of land, shift to cash crop production and ethnic conflict have had some effects on cattle production. Absence of pastureland brought tremendous changes in cattle resources of the area. Individuals had already abandoned reserving land for pasture long ago and land preserved for community grazing are mostly unproductive (marshy and rocky). With the decrease of grazing land, farmers have greatly reduced the number of cattle they keep. The cattle population is found to be indirectly proportional to agricultural intensification. In Wosha Soyama, where intensive agriculture using irrigation is common, the cattle population is small. In cereal producing Gotu Onoma, farmers possess a greater number of cattle and pasture them in the uncultivable lands and at the bottom of Abaro mountain. In Shesha Kekele and Wotera Kechemba, where small community pasturelands exist (mostly marshy lands), farmers have more cattle than in Wosha Soyama. Scarcity of pasture, as explained in the previous chapter, is one of the basic causes of conflict between farmers and organisations.

The shift to sugarcane production also lessens the importance of oxen for agricultural production. Thus, the people resorted to keeping milk cows only. In cereal producing areas, oxen are still the crucial means of production and farmers still keep them alongside cows. On the other hand, sugarcane production helped to alleviate the problem of pasture as its upper part is used for animal feed.

#### 4.3 Resource Conflict and Forms of Expression

As indicated in the previous chapter, the competition for and the conflict over natural resources during the 'Dergue' period were finally expressed in ethnic terms at group level. The manipulation of the strong latent power of ethnicity in the competition between the haves and have-

nots made the conflict between the early settler and latecomer groups.

The change of the agrarian policy and national political conditions mitigated the preconditions for the conflict to be expressed in ethnic forms and group level. The competitions and conflicts after 1991 are largely confined to individual or household level. The major factors for the decline of the previous ethnic form of resource conflict are:

1. Change of access rule and the operation of informal tenure arrangements. The various pretexts for conducting frequent redistributions and evicting farmers were abandoned. This highly alleviated the tenure insecurity farmers were experiencing during the 'Dergue' period.
2. The general redistribution of farmland after the 1990 conflict. As indicated in table 3.7 the inequality of landholding between the PPC members and private farmers (which was regarded as the inequality between the early and late settler groups) was significant. The **ad hoc** committee tried to balance the disparity of holdings by conducting new land distribution. Farmers made landless for various factors were given land. Those holding marginal land were also given additional plots as compensation from the remaining previous PPC land. This minimised the wide disparity among farmers. In fact disparity of holding is becoming more significant currently. However, the present inequality is regarded as a result of the competition that takes place "within a normative framework" and does not create group level conflict as before when land was allocated solely by KPAs.
3. The decrease of the relative number of latecomer, mainly the Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita in the area, lessen the feeling of competition among the early settler groups. Before 1990 the Kembata and Hadiya constituted 23.8% and 20.5% of Wosha Soyama and Gotu Onoma KPA members respectively. In 1998 their number was reduced to about 11.1 % in both KPAs.
4. The Sidama and the Kembata/Hadiya made an alliance in 1991 in the ethnic discontent between the Sidama and the Oromo over the regional demarcation of Wondo Wosha. In spite of the violent fighting just a year ago, the Kembata/Hadiya sided with the Sidama for some reasons (they are largely settled in Sidama

dominated areas, fear of retaliation from the Oromos, estimation of power balance). The new alliance relaxed the previous conflict between the two groups.

The combination of the above mentioned factors minimised group level resource conflicts that were expressed in ethnic forms. In post-1991 period, competitions and conflicts over natural resources are largely expressed in individual or household levels.

#### 4.4 Sources of Conflicts Over Natural Resources

The uses, ownership and allocations of certain resources cause conflicts among users. At present the main sources of conflict are:

**4.4.1 Land:** Conflicts over land are different in forms and magnitudes. Survey conducted in the area indicated that ownership, contract and boundaries are the major sources of conflict over land. Ownership and use right of land deal with both the land and the resources directly related with it. Conflicts over land ownership were widely common during the “.....Dergue”..... period as a result of the frequent displacement of farmers from their farmlands and homesteads in redistributions and evictions. In the process of redistributions and relocation farmers were victims of corruption and nepotism. After 1990 termination of redistribution has solved the conflict arising over relocation. Without further land distribution in the area, land allocation by parents, called *eqqa* among the Sidama, is one of the sole means of having access to land for farming and house making for newly formed households. Since available lands for households are often too small to give to sons, inter-generational conflicts frequently arise between sons and fathers over allocation of *eqqa*. A father may insist his son to be engaged in non-farming activities or to delay from forming his own household. The other source of conflict in land is on transaction. As explained in previous chapter, land transaction is common in the area. Conflicts arising on transaction are equally apparent. As land is regarded as an asset of a household, transactions made by a head of a household without the consent of other family members often create conflicts within the household and between the seller's family and buyer. Sharecropping is the other forms of having access to farmlands, especially in cereal producing parts of Gotu Onoma. Failure to fulfil the terms of agreement as a result of crop and/or price failure often initiates conflict between lessee and lessor. When the harvested crop from the contracted or sharecropped land is not as expected, the contracted parties may conflict over the

payments and/or share of the products and expenses. In contract, conflicts can be caused for different reasons. Disagreement over the duration of contract years is the major cause of conflict. Due to the fluctuation of cash crop prices (such as sugarcane and horticultures), the contracting persons may insist to extend the years of the contract or drop the contract before the year is over. The lessee may also request for more years once he/she planted perennial crops. A case seen in Gotu Onoma KPA can be an example to the conflicts over contract period. The lessee took 0.2 hectare (2,000 sq.m) land from the lessor for three years. They made a written agreement and submitted to the KPA office. After the three years were over, they extended the contract for another two years by the request of the lessee. After using the land for a total of five years, the lessee still required the extension of the contract for more years. The lessor brought the issue to the KPA *fird-shengo* after he failed to settle the issue in *jarsumma* (by elders). The main argument of the lessee for asking for more years was that he had invested his money and labour to plant sugarcane and other perennial crops which would be harvested in the coming years as well. He demanded, therefore, either the extension of the contract period for additional two years or to be compensation for the crops on the field. Conflicts over boundaries also occur. However, because of the smallness of the lands available for households, boundaries are often well demarcated. Boundary conflicts often arise with the change of ownership by sell or contract. Boundary conflicts are common among family members who share common farm borders as a result of *eqqa* allocation. As a father allocates *eqqa* to siblings from a single plot, brothers and father share boundaries. The severity of the land shortage and the vagueness of *eqqa* boundaries (unlike the boundaries between the unrelated person plots) gradually cause conflict.

**4.4.2 Water:** The competition for irrigation water sometimes causes conflicts between individuals, *buden* (group), communities or communities and institutions. However the mechanisms used for allocating water are strong enough to avoid serious conflicts among users. There is an elected body responsible for the fair allocation and use of the water resource. All users are divided into *buden* (groups) in their villages and contribute in their labour to use the water resource. Minor conflicts may arise when an individual uses the water more than the time allocated to him and take the share of others. Such kinds of conflicts are often solved by the *buden* leaders and water committees. In fact scarcity of irrigation water led to more effective cooperation among users than conflicts as explained in the next section.

**4.4.3 Trees:** Forest resource is a source of conflict between government organisations (State forest, EORC and WGCF) and farmers. The severe shortage of firewood forces farmers to use the forests to collect fuel wood. Poor and landless individuals collect firewood from the forests and sell in town. Especially those living in the hilly part of Wosha Soyama (which is part of the state forest domain) harvest the forest products illegally. About 95 percent of the respondents in Gotu Onoma indicated the Abaro forest area as their permanent source of firewood. Similarly 78 percent of the respondents of the Wosha Soyama collect firewood from the state forest domain. The project, in fact tolerated them as far as they do not cut big live trees. Cutting live trees is mentioned as major problem of the EORC. The growing urban population and the related increasing demand for forest products stimulated the use of the forest by farmers and the consequent conflict between the users and the organisations. Scarcity of land and the government policy that reserved ownership of forests only to the state and KPAs (communities) discouraged private tree planting. Private trees are very limited and restricted in boundaries and marshy areas that are unsuitable for farming. Conflict between individuals over trees is uncommon.

**4.4.4 Pasture:** Although competition for the rich pasture and water resources of Wondo Wosha had been the major cause of the conflict between the Sidama, Arsi and Guji in early days, the changes in way of life and production system made cattle keeping less important. As a result, currently conflicts over pasture among individuals or communities are minimal. The main factor for the decrease of conflict among farmers over pasture is the diminishing or absence of pastureland in the area because of the expansion of agriculture and organisations. In Wosha Soyama there is no land reserved for pasture, while the existing pasturelands in Shesha Kekele, Wotera Kechemba and Gotu Onoma are communal

and there is no restriction of their uses. They are either degraded or marshy lands unsuitable for agriculture. On the other hand, scarcity of pasture is one of the factors that shape the relation between the farmers and the organisations established in the area. The desperate problem for cattle feed leads farmers to intrude into the domain of the WGCF, EORC and the Forest project for pasture and (as explained in chapter two), it is one of the factors that shape the relations between the communities and the organisations. The collage and EORC established a barn in their compounds and penalise intruders.

#### 4.5 Cooperation As A Result Of Scarcity

Although competition for scarce resources is often associated with conflict, it is also a means for developing cooperation among users in order to exploit the limited resources fairly and efficiently. In Wondo Wosha, use of irrigation water has obliged the users to develop efficient means of cooperation to use the resource fairly equally. It should be noted that the rich water resource is the major factor that makes Wondo Genet attractive for settlement, agricultural production, tourism and establishment of institutions. Thus, access to this valuable resource is essential for the survival of farmer households on a small farmland. Cooperation in water use is exhibited among farmers, Peasant Associations and between organisations and individual farmers.

Farmers of every KPA cooperate among themselves in clearing canals and respecting the rights of one another in the use of the water. All the farmers using irrigation participate in the clearing of the canals from the sources to farms in their respective *quebelle*. They elect *quebelle* Water Committees and set regulations about how to use the water, which include penalties on free-riders. The Committee divides the *quebelle* into sub-areas, called *buden* (groups), and assign a leader for each. It arranges a distribution programme in which each *buden* is allocated specific days, and every farmer, in turn, is given specific hours (depending on the size of the farm). The KPA leadership is not directly involved in water distribution. It rather, controls the Water Committee, which does the actual job. Every farmer is expected to comply with the Programme. Those whose turn is violated are strictly forbidden from taking their own action, but appeal to the Committee. Members of the water Committee inspect the farm of the accused and if found guilty, penalise him in accordance with sets regulations. Currently, fine in cash

and imprisonment for hours or a few days are common penalties on free-riders. However, denying access to water as a penalty is strictly avoided since it ruins the farm of the accused and jeopardises the life of all the household members.

Scarcity of water also initiated cooperation between farmers and organisations. The Essential Oils Research Centre and the College of Forestry are the two major users of the resource for irrigation. Since the College has its own small weir constructed by the Norwegian Mission and an independent water line, it enjoys the resource without many competitors. The limited number of farmers below the College also minimised the competition. The Essential Oils Research Centre, on the other hand, has developed effective cooperation with the Wosha Soyama Water Committee on the use of the water. The Centre participates in clearing the canals along with the people, while the Committee arranges fixed dates for the Centre in the Programme. In times of extreme need the Centre may request the Committee to arrange for more days in the

distribution Programme. Thus, unlike the uncertain attitude of some farmers towards the Centre, the KPA has managed to develop cooperation with the Centre to use the resource effectively and fairly.

The use of water also necessitates cooperation between KPAs located near the source and far from it. The mutual arrangement between Shesha Kekele and Wosha Soyama is an example of cooperation generated by scarcity. Wosha Soyama is advantaged as it is located near the source of the water. The farmers of Shesha Kekele are situated far from the source and suffer from shortage of water. The Committee and leadership of Shesha Kekele explained the problem to their counterparts in Wosha Soyama and the two KPA leaders agreed to share the water fairly. They increased the amount of water that goes to Shesha Kekele by taking a limited amount from every line going to farms in Wosha Soyama, including the farms of Essential Oils Research Centre.



## Part V. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

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In a state of increasing scarcity of resources and, more importantly, in the absence of fair and proper allocation of the scarce resources, the competition for them generates into conflicts with tremendous social, economic, environmental and political implications. Based on the macro and micro level socio-political conditions and the power balance between conflicting parties, conflicts arising over the use of natural resources can be implicit or explicit. Although conflicts are generated and felt by the conflicting parties, they remain implicit or latent so far as the existing socio-political system is capable of keeping them from being explicit or turning up into violence.

When the existing socio-economic and political system can no longer maintain the *status quo* among the conflicting parties, latent conflicts will turn into open confrontations and even armed fighting. The conflict between the PPCs and private farmers during the 'Dergue' period in Wondo Wosha is an example of the transformation of latent conflicts into explicit conflicts or violence. Although the conflict between the two groups prevailed from the outset, the 'Dergue' economic and political policies enabled the PPCs to keep the balance of power in favour of them and kept the conflict latent until 1990. The change in the country's economic policy in 1990 altered the *status quo* and turned the conflict into open armed confrontation.

On the other hand, societies use different resolution mechanisms to solve conflicts arising for different reasons and at different levels. It is possible to categorise these mechanisms into two broad categories as traditional and "modern" conflict resolution mechanisms. Traditional mechanisms are culturally oriented and implemented by traditional social institutions. They are based on norms, traditions and unwritten customary laws of societies and have little contact with state apparatus and power structure. As they are bound to cultural frameworks, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms vary from society to society. They are also subject to transformation over time. With changes in traditional social institutions and/or external influences, traditional conflict resolution methods change in application, use and effectiveness.

'Modern' conflict resolution mechanisms, on the other hand, are developed and exercised by external forces

(mostly the state) to enforce "law and order" and often operate outside the indigenous systems. However, The people involved in 'modern' conflict resolution methods may not be necessarily outsiders, but it is the system which is alien to the society. The local people can serve in 'modern' conflict resolution institutions such as, KPA *fird-shengo*. They are not necessarily modern or efficient than the traditional mechanisms.

In Wondo Wosha both the traditional and 'modern' methods are operating to solve conflicts arising over resource use since long ago.

### 5.1 Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Since traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are culturally oriented and vary across societies, it is essential to review them briefly among the two major ethnic groups in the area i.e. the Sidama and the Oromo (both Arsi and Guji). To understand how traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are used to settle conflicts arising over the use and right of natural resources, it is also essential to see briefly how it generally operates.

#### 5.1.1 Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism among the Sidama

There is a long established traditional conflict resolution methods among the Sidama called *chemesa* (by traditional elders). The term is also used to refer to the elders involved in the process. *Chemesa* has two levels. The first one is a village level *chemesa* and deals with every type of minor conflicts arising between individuals, households or groups. The second and higher level of *chemesa* is called *Gudumale chemesa*, which often deals with serious cases such as murder, murder attempt, house burning, among the group members and with others.

A village level *chemesa* can be initiated by one of the conflicting parties or the elders themselves. The conflicting groups or individuals elect equal number of elders (usually 3-5) whom they regard as wise and impartial. The elders add one or two other neutral elders to ensure the fairness of their decisions. The election of the elders is usually based on their good conduct, age, knowledge of solving problems, reputation in mediation and trustworthiness for impartiality. A person elected to be

a *chemesa* is culturally obliged to accept the duty. If he declined to accept the duty without justifiable reason (such as previous conflict with one of the currently conflicting parties), he will lose his social credibility.

The *chemesa* listen to both sides view and the testimony of other individuals to understand the causes of the conflict. They make decisions based on the norms and traditional law of the society called *seera*. They can declare one or both sides guilty and may sentence the guilty one to pay fine and moral compensation called *mura*. Unlike modern law, besides the level of the damage caused, the economic position of the person found guilty determines the amount of fines and *mura*.

However, village level *chemesa* is more of a reconciliation rather than an arbitration. Moreover, except the traditional moral obligation, the elders do not have a power to enforce their decisions. The implementation of the decisions is largely depends up on the willingness of the conflicting parties. Any one not satisfied with the decisions has a right to take the case to the next step.

If the reconciliation at lower level *chemesa* failed, one of the possibilities for the dissatisfied side is to take the issue to higher level of traditional arbitrators known as *Gudumale chemesa* or simply to the *gedete*. The *gedete* are traditional clan leaders who held their positions by merit and birth. Issues referred to them are more serious and found to be beyond the capacity of village level *chemesa*. A *murete*, who is the leading elder and speaker of a village, often brings the issue to the *gudumale chemesa*. Sometimes a case can be taken from courts or *fird-shengo* to *gudumale chemesa* with the agreement of both sides. However, serious cases, such as murder, might be brought to the *gudumale chemesa* without asking the consent of the individuals directly involved.

In *gudumale chemesa* decisions are made strictly following the traditional rules and laws (*seera*) of the society and are supposed to be final. The verdicts are generally considered as impartial and culturally justified. The *gedetes* see cases of Sidama against non-Sidama in the areas of their jurisdiction. Any one who failed to comply with the decisions will be punished by social ostracisation called *bongoni*. *Bongoni* includes exclusion from burial associations and services, denying fire sharing, banning his/her cattle from common grazing areas and communal herding.

### 5.1.2 Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism among the Arsi and Guji Oromo

Traditional conflict resolution mechanism among the Arsi and Guji Oromo is common. It is generally called *jarsumma*, a name derived from *jarsa* (elder) and used to solve all types of conflicts, including those arising over the use of natural resources.

Just like the Sidama, the traditional conflict resolution mechanism among the Oromo has different levels. At the lower stage a village level *jarsumma* is used to solve conflicts arising over minor cases among people of the same household, neighbours or villagers. Every village has its own acknowledged elders who are responsible for solving conflicts in the village. They are selected for their knowledge of norms of the society (*addaa*), their wisdom, good conduct and age.

Among the Guji of Wondo Genet, conflicts that caused heavy damages or considered to be serious are seen by a high level *jarsumma*, which involves the *aba-gada* (father of the *gada*) and clan leaders. Although its power and influences are very limited, the *gada* system is still alive among the Guji of Wondo Genet. There is an elected *aba-gada* who is symbolically serves as the moral, spiritual and cultural guardian of the societies. In clan level, the eight Guji clans in Wondo Genet have their respective elders who are responsible to solve all intra-group and inter-group conflicts in their communities. The *aba-gada* and the elders form a 'council' in which the *aba-gada* serves as a chairman. The 'council', represents the society in a conflict among the Guji and between the Guji and other groups.

Similarly, the Arsi Oromo in and around Shashemene (including Wondo Genet) have a *gada* council known as "*shenecha*" (the council of five). They are, at least in principle, are responsible for solving all types of problems that concerns the whole society. However it is a clan level *jarsumma* which plays crucial role in solving conflicts among the Arsi Oromo in and around Shashemene. All clans have their own traditional leaders and elders (*jarsa*) who are involved in all affairs that concern their clan members. When a case is referred to them they summon the conflicting individuals and others who might be involved in it. After investigating the root cause of the conflict, its consequences and implications, they give a decision in accordance to the tradition of the society and local realities. If the conflicting individuals are from

different clans, the elders from both sides participate in the *jarsumma*.

They mediate the conflict based up on the traditional law of the society. They may declare one side guilty and impose fines and compensations. The type and amount of fine and compensations are determined by the intensity of the transgression, whether it was committed deliberately or by negligence and also the economic capability of the guilty person, his family and clan.

Just like the Sidama, the village level *jarsumma* does not have a power to enforce decisions. It rather tries to solve problems or disagreements by compromises. Failure of village *jarsumma* leads cases either to higher level *jarsumma* or to 'modern' conflict resolving institutions.

Clan level *jarsumma* is more effective in enforcing its decisions using traditional means. Failure to comply with the clan *jarsumma* decisions would create antagonism between the clan leaders and the person. A person who refused the decisions of the clan *jarsa* will be announced as he and his family are socially ousted from the community. Anyone who violates the announcement and makes social interaction would face severe penalties. Thus, the close relatives and friends of the convicted will avoid him and his family and, in fact, force him comply with the decisions of the elders.

### 5.1.3 Factors for the Decline of Traditional Conflict Resolution Methods

Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are widely used to solve group level conflicts since long time. Recognising their importance, governments frequently use them in Wondo Genet and around to solve the long established conflict between the Sidama, Arsi and Guji. However, they are currently becoming less effective especially to resolve inter-group (inter-ethnic) conflicts. The first factor for its decline is the absence of strong body to enforce the decisions passed in traditional mechanisms. Although the government is involved and often initiate the process, the working mechanisms and structures of the government law enforcing bodies are less efficient to enforce the decisions passed in traditional ways.

Difference of cultural background among the elders involved in the mediation is the other factor for the inefficiency of the mechanism especially to solve inter-ethnic conflicts. The elders selected from the both

conflicting groups differ in tradition, culture and may be influenced by their ethnic sentiments.

Perhaps the most important factor for the decline of the mechanism is the weakening of the traditional institutions and forms of social organisations. The increasing urbanisation process and contact with outside world have significantly changed the people's way of life and transformed the traditional institutions and social organisations. The power of traditional leaders and the role of traditional laws are equally declining. The *gada* system and its leaders in the area have lost their practical influence long ago. Previously their words and decisions had strong influences among the people. The expansion of Islam and Christianity has also contributed for the decline of the traditional institutions, and ultimately to the decline of their roles in solving conflicts.

The introduction and expansion of modern institutions that compete for the roles of the traditional institutions in conflict resolution is the other factor for the decline of the effectiveness of traditional mechanisms. During the Imperial period, the *Netch lebash*, *chiqa-shum* and rural judge had taken the role and power of the traditional leaders to arbitrate conflicts and enforce decisions in the rural area. The 'Dergue' also significantly contributed for the decline of the traditional conflict resolving mechanisms by establishing all-encompassing institutions in rural areas. KPA, party structures, women and Youth associations undermined the power of the traditional institutions in rural areas. In Wondo Genet the above mentioned institutions were highly politicised and primarily used to fulfil the interests of the Government. Currently the revival of ethnic identity and the development of ethnic based political organisations have contributed for the revival of some of the elements of traditional institutions.

However, there are cases preferred to be solved in traditional methods than by *fird-shengo* or other 'modern' arbitrating bodies. These include:

1. Conflicts over natural resources between family members, close relatives and kin (father and son, siblings etc.): As the conflicting individuals or families are socially closely related and have similar cultural background, they usually preferred to solve their conflicts in traditional ways than taking to KPAs or courts.

2. Conflicts that arise over betrayal: When the accuser cannot produce evidence to take the case to *fird-shengo*, traditional arbitration is the best way of solving the problem, in which the moral judgement of the elders is taken into consideration.
3. Conflicts emanating from illegal agreements: When a conflict arises out of an illegal agreement made between individuals, the conflicting persons prefer traditional method to solve the conflict. Although the KPA takes local conditions into consideration, it adheres to the laws of the Government. Thus, any agreement that does not correspond with the existing laws is unacceptable by KPA. For instance, though land transaction is widespread and common knowledge of the community, it is still regarded as illegal and any claim as a result of land transaction cannot be treated directly by *fird-shengo* or other courts. Therefore, traditional methods are more suitable to solve conflicts emanating from such kind of controversy.
4. Group conflicts: Both 'modern' arbitration bodies and traditional methods can easily handle individual level conflicts. However, conflicts that are ignited by individual can sometimes easily be turned into group conflict. Similarly groups with similar causes and interests can clash with other groups. Although the effectiveness of traditional methods is declining, they are still better than the 'modern' methods to solve group conflicts. The Government at different periods used traditional methods to solve the recurrent violence between the Arsi and the Sidama. The larger number of people involved in group conflict and the need to have culturally secured solution often lead Governments to use traditional methods to solve group conflicts.

#### Advantages of traditional Methods:

1. **Lasting Solution**: Since they are based on long established tradition of societies and take cultural variables and local realities into consideration, they are able to give solutions, which can be acceptable to both sides. They often try to make a compromise. Fear of social ostracisation and the social stigma attached to violating decisions made in traditional methods hinder people to defy them openly.

2. **Less Costly**: Settlement procedures take place in the locality and the conflicting parties do not often travel to other areas for the settlement. Unlike the 'modern' methods, the conflicting parties do not spend money for the process (application writing, stationery, transportation etc.).
3. **Rapid Solution**: Traditional methods are less complicated and give solution relatively in short period of time. The procedures are less formal and not rigid.
4. **Flexibility**: Unlike 'modern' systems, cases can be seen at any convenient place and time. The decisions are strongly flexible and take the local situation, the conflicting individuals personal conditions (age, economic condition, knowledge etc.) into consideration

It may be a mistake to presume that decisions given in traditional methods are always impartial and fair. Sometimes political power, social difference between conflicting parties and the strength of their group influences decisions made in traditional methods. For instance, one of the many allegations made against the former Wosha Soyama KPA chairman, Lefebo, was taking moral compensation and fines from innocent peoples by intimidating them by his supporter elders in unfounded accusations. The report indicted him and the elders for the atrocities made against innocent people using traditional conflict resolution methods by Lefebo (SHWAO).

#### 5.2 'Modern' Conflict Resolution Methods

The other way of solving conflicts arising over natural resources is through 'modern' system. 'Modern' conflict resolving institutions are established in the area since the incorporation of the area into the Ethiopian empire. There were *balabats* and *chiqa-shum* assigned in the area before 1974 (Wondo Wosha was under the Arsi *balabat balanbers* Julla who was residing in Shashemene). The 1975 land reform brought tremendous changes in the rural political, social and administrative structures of the rural communities.

All outsiders involved in keeping peace and stability and administrating the rural areas (*Netch lebash*, *chiqa shum* and rural judge) were eliminated. New structures were created to solve all kinds of disputes, including those arising over resource use and ownership. The lower level

institution mandated to solve conflicts are the KPA and its judicial tribunal called *fird-shengo*. The *fird-shengo* is empowered to solve all kinds of conflict in its jurisdiction. As to the important role the *fird-shengo* plays, Dessalegn wrote:

The judicial tribunal [*fird-shengo*] is an important institution in the rural community in that it provides a vehicle for internally resolving conflicts, which otherwise would involve outsiders, that is, the *woreda* court and the police. Peasants have easier and access to judicial services, and, since tribunal members are peasants themselves and residents of the community, the chances for a timely and sympathetic hearing are better now than before. (Dessalegn, 1984:79).

Conflicts over natural resources are directed to the KPA executive committee, mainly to the chairman. The committee often tries to solve it by themselves. If the case is beyond their capacity, it will be transferred to the *fird-shengo*. It is also possible to appeal directly to the *fird-shengo*. In spite of some of its limitations, the *fird-shengo* is sometimes preferred by people solve conflicts arising over natural resource uses mainly for the following reasons are:

1. KPA is the sole institution with significant power of administrating the resources in its jurisdiction on the behalf of the state. It allocates, redistribute and control the resources. Thus, the people found it wise to take cases emanating from resource rights and uses to the authority that is vested in the power to control it.
2. The *fird-shengo* was initially established to solve land disputes among PA members. Later its power was extended to see all kinds of cases (both civil and criminal cases) and “to impose penalties up to 300 *birr* or 3 months in jail” (Dessalegn, 1984:38). Moreover, KPAs are vested with legal power to enforce the verdicts they pass by the *fird-shengo* using its defence squad or local militia.
3. Decline of the traditional authorities make the people more dependant on the formal structures to solve conflicts.
4. When the conflict is between different ethnic group members, possible cultural differences decreases the effectiveness of traditional methods. In fact, traditional conflict resolution methods are more effective to solve intra-group conflicts than inter-group conflicts. In Wondo Genet, where more than eight ethnic group members live together and exploit similar resources, cultural differences hinder the use of traditional methods in conflicts between members of different ethnic groups. The *seera* used to arbitrate are based on the culture of specific ethnic group, and others may be unaware of the system and even uncomfortable to be treated by “others law”. As a result, 'modern' methods, mainly *fird-shengo*, are found to be better means of resolving conflicts.
5. The need to get guarantees is other factor for preferring formal methods. As stated before, since the traditional enforcing mechanisms are weakening, the implementations of the decisions made by traditional methods are subject to the goodwill of the people concerned. As the decisions made by traditional methods are often compromising and sometimes may not correspond with the existing laws, they may not be acknowledged by the KPAs. This gives a chance for a dissatisfied side to raise the issue again in courts. Thus, use of formal method are believed to solve cases once and for all.
6. The influence of urbanisation and the legacy of the ‘Dergue’ period is the other factor for the increasing inclination towards the modern system. At present Wondo Genet is becoming more urbanised and exhibits features of decline of the previous rural way of life and social organisation. The community is adapting to urban way of life and is becoming more socially diversified. Moreover, the strong and unquestionable power of the KPAs during the ‘Dergue’ period over issues related with natural resources established the tradition of taking cases concerning natural resources to KPAs than resolving in traditional methods.

However the *fird-shengo* is closely working with the traditional methods. Cases, as indicated before, will be taken from the tribunal to be solved in traditional methods. Moreover, some of the features of the traditional methods are also reflected in the arbitration process of *fird-shengo*. Local situation and moral judgements are often taken into considerations.

In spite of the differences in origin, application and source of power, traditional and 'modern' conflict resolution mechanisms sometimes work together. Chemesa and jarsumma relies on the formal institutions, often KPAs, to legalise the agreements they make. As explained before, cases can be taken from *fird-shengo* and courts to settle in traditional way. Similarly, the 'modern' system uses the traditional ones to solve conflicts especially group level violent encounters.

## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

High productive potential of agricultural natural resources often attracts migration of people from different directions and social and economic investments into an area. In Wondo Wosha, the rich agricultural natural resources (fertile land, rich water resources, favourable climate etc.) attracted people from different parts of the country, mainly from the densely populated areas of Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita, to the area. It also drew private commercial farming and agro-industry investments. The job opportunities created in the schemes, in turn, brought more people as labourers and contributed to increase population density of the area.

The existing *rist* and private land tenure systems, which allowed migrants to have access to land as tenants, facilitated the arrival of spontaneous settlers as well as the establishment of commercial farms. Thus, the arrival and settlement of migrants were made possible by the rich productive potential of the natural resources, the access rules that allowed spontaneous settlers to have land as *chisegna* and the job opportunities created in the commercial farms and agro-industries. Consequently, the population of Wondo Wosha grew rapidly. Meanwhile, in addition to the existing Sidama, Arsi and Guji, the arrival of these groups ethnically diversified the population of the area.

In pre-1974 period, in spite of the establishment of agro industries and commercial farms and the arrival of other groups, there was no scarcity of agricultural natural

resources. The people living in the area were leading different kinds of way of life and exploit the resources in different ways. The Guji were predominantly cattle herders with little subsistent farming and exploiting different "ecological niche", while large numbers of settlers were labourers who did not directly use the resources. The available resources were capable of supporting the existing population in their level of exploitation and way of life. Therefore, scarcity of resources and the consequent competition for them was almost absent.

The existing tenure system and modes of access also hindered the development of competitive feeling among user groups. As land and related resources were the private properties of individuals and institutions, people could have access to them in various arrangements they made with the owners, irrespective of their origins or localities. Thus, the social tensions, cleavages and conflicts over resource might be expressed along class lines between the land owning and the deprived classes.

Although competition for the rich pasture and water resources of Wondo Genet had been one of the factors for the frequent clashes between the Arsi and Sidama/Guji, cultural factors and long year protracted hostile attitude towards each other were more important for the persistent of the conflict among them.

The 1975 land reform and related changes of access rules profoundly changed the resource use pattern and social relations. The establishment of KPAs and its role of allocating resources and administrating the area brought the different groups into close contact. As the reform abolished tenancy and farm labour and granted equal use right to all individuals, the relatively recently arrived *chisegna* and farm labourers became permanent residents of the area and owners of farmlands. In spite of the availability of sufficient resources for the existing population during the early years of the revolution, the possibility of the farm labourers and *chisegna* to be landowners on equal status created anxiety and threat of competitive feeling among the early settler groups.

In the mean time, besides the rapid population pressure, the decision of the Government to open various social and economic organisations significantly reduced the available resources and intensified the resource scarcity. The rapid population increase and the reopening of the previous institutions and state forest project turned the "imagined" threat of resource scarcity into a real problem that jeopardised the lives of many people. The latecomers, who

had already been anxious about the attitude of the early settlers towards them, responded to the problem of resource scarcity and the threat from the early settlers by identifying their economic interests and social security with the state's economic and political policies. They exploited the agrarian policy and partisan politics of the 'Dergue' to satisfy their resource needs and ensure social security.

The 'Dergue' Government's political and agrarian policies brought about dual, but related, consequences. Firstly, the major components of the agrarian policy, particularly collectivisation and villagisation programmes restricted farmers' access to resources. By controlling considerable portions of the KPAs' fertile arable land, PPCs displaced large numbers of private farmers from their holdings. The attempt to enhance state owned economic and social organisations and the related expansion of the governmental organisations exacerbated the displacement of farmers. In the meantime, using partisan politics, the latecomers succeeded in controlling key KPA positions and averting the threats they perceived from the opposite groups. They often abused their power to satisfy their resource needs and to dominate the other groups. The implementation of PPC and villagisation Programmes escalated the already acute problem of resource scarcity. Since PPCs were strongly supported by the state and acquired significant resources and social services, they were used to respond to the problem of scarcity. Those who held small and unproductive lands were the first to join PPCs.

Thus, the Kembata, Hadiya and Wolayita responded more positively to the establishment of PPCs in order to get social security and land. As the Sidama, Guji and Arsi perceived themselves as being barred from equal access to resources, ethnic identity was further crystallised and used to mobilise opposition against the latecomers. As a result, competition and conflict between the PPCs and private farmers were transformed into competition and conflict between the early and late settler groups.

The introduction of Mixed Economic Policy in March 1990 and the change of Government after a year modified the former rigid access rule and paved the way for the operation of informal land arrangements, including land transaction. The 1990 conflict and the later fighting between the Sidama and Oromo increased the insecurity of the latecomers and decreased their relative number in the area.

Competition and conflicts after 1991 are expressed in individual or household levels. The increasing population pressure, scarcity of resources and social differentiation does not lead to group conflict since the inequality of holdings are a results of normal process of competition.

The conflicts arising over the use and ownership of resources are managed either in traditional methods or by modern conflict resolving institutions. However the traditional mechanisms are declining. Some of the factors for their decline are the results of the social changes the societies are undergoing. The trend shows that they are still weakening more. However, they are still more effective than the 'modern' methods to solve some kinds of resource conflicts. On the other hand, in spite of Government structure and its influences in all aspects of the rural people, modern conflict resolution mechanism does not get complete dominance over the traditional methods.

The strength and limitation of both mechanisms call for a need to complement each other. The process of complementing is already started at lower level (*fird-shengo*) where the judges are amateurs and share most of the feelings of the community and take local conditions into consideration.

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