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Peasant Livelihoods in North Wälo, Ethiopia

A survey of key indicators in Tiweha, Dänkäna and Debeko *qäbälé*, Mäqét *wäräda*.

Harald Aspen and Svein Ege

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By

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Front page:
Man ploughing with horses, assisted by a young girl, Debeko 3 April 2003
(photo: Harald Aspen)

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Some Conventions

Transliteration

The transliteration of Amharic names and words in this publication is based on the system developed at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, with the following modifications:

1) Only those diacritical marks available on a standard computer in all programs have been used.[1] Therefore, plosives are marked with an apostrophe (ጠ: t'ä); some consonants are rendered by a combination of two letters (ኘ: gnä); and the vowels are rendered as ä, u, i, a, é, e, o.

2) Gemination has not been rendered, as this is not part of the Amharic script, and its pronunciation varies.

Plural of transliterated nouns

We have used the standard English plural added to the singular of the transliterated form, since this is easier for the reader, although it is of course incorrect. Thus *qäbälés* and *wärädas*.

Calendar

Unless otherwise specified, dates and years refer to Gregorian (European) calendar.

[1] Some authors underline plosives. This is a very good solution for word processors, but it does not work in current databases where formatting is quite restricted.

Preface

The current publication is a long overdue report from fieldworks in Mäqét *wäräda* in North Wälo, conducted in 2003, by Harald Aspen and a team of field research assistants. Despite of, or perhaps rather because of, the first outcome was planned as a rough and low level data report, it has suffered from repeatedly and consistently being second (at the best) whenever priority task lists have been made or revised.

When the fieldwork and data collection methods were planned and carried out, it was under a research project funded by the Norwegian Research Council called ”Rethinking Famine: New Perspectives on Peasant Livelihoods” (REFAM), headed by Svein Ege. The project lasted from 2001 to 2004. A further description of the project and some of the publications which emerged from it, including the current report, can be downloaded from http://www.svt.ntnu.no/ethiopia/.

The Indicator Survey method, and its “little brother” which was used to collect the data presented here, the Tax List Indicator Survey method, further described below, were originally developed by Svein Ege, who also trained the assistants who were employed for the fieldworks this publication is based on. Ege has also contributed by entering much of the data from questionnaires, and by reading and commenting earlier versions of the chapters, after they had been drafted by Aspen.

The group of assistants consisted of Abera Gebre Kidan, Berhanu Bétä, Lesanäwärq Bétä and Mäsärät Kenfä. As usual they did a great job, sometimes under difficult circumstances and always with high efficiency. We take this opportunity to thank them for their good work and pleasant company. We also thank people we met at the zone, *wäräda* and *qäbälé* administrative levels for their assistance. Most importantly, we thank the people we met and interviewed for their patience and willingness to share their experiences with us.

Introduction

The data reported here provide a snapshot of three local communities in North Wälo at the beginning of the third millennium. Wälo had been on "everybody's lips" twenty years earlier, when the great famine of 1984-85 was widely publicised world over. The world reacted with emergency relief, and food aid became a more or less permanent variable in the peasants' economic lives in the region. In 2003, for example, it was officially recognised that 363,000 people in North Wälo Zone was in need of food aid.[2] It seems that the need for relief in North Wälo was at a peak a few years earlier; in 2000 the figure was 656,763 people.[3] According to the zone administrator, a total of 26 NGOs had operations in the zone, of which 19 were international. The zone administration was worried about signals from the donors. "This region has depended on food aid for more than 25 years now. The donors are getting critical, they say that this is not an emergency crisis – it is lack of development".[4] At the time, a pilot project was being implemented in North Wälo and elsewhere –a resettlement programme by which peasants got some government assistance (transport, initial support) to travel to presumably more fertile and less densely populated areas to start a new life there. In North Wälo, the plan was to send 3000 households in the pilot project – by March 2003 about 2,200 people had been sent by the campaign.[5]

In Mäqét *wäräda* the situation was described by the administration as generally very difficult.[6] The *wäräda* had suffered from too little rain for the preceeding six years. Most of the time, we were explained, the rain started too early and would stop before *Mäskäräm* (September). 80% of the population could afford only one meal per day, according to our source. Much of the *wäräda* consisted of lowland tracts (*qola*) where the soil was washed out and too poor to feed its population. The *wäräda* had a long history as a relief dependent area and most of the *qäbälés* still had food aid quotas.

This was the situation in which we did our fieldwork, and while the current report is focused on key indicators of peasant livelihoods, it can also be read as an example of how topical issues influence academic work and reporting. Because the *säfära* programme, the aid quota system, micro credit programmes, the water pond construction campaign and the ban against early marriage (or, as in the case of Dänkäna, a general ban on wedding parties), to mention the most prominent, in variable degrees were influencing people's lives and their relationship to

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[2] NW1 pp. 169-171, Gädu Andargachäw (administrator), North Wälo Admin. Zone Office, Wäldiya 24 March 2003. ("NW1" and "NW2" refer to Aspen's fieldwork diaries. See the list of sources and literature at the end of this document).

[3] See Ege & Yegremew (2002:3).

[4] NW1 p. 170.

[5] NW1 p. 169. For reviews of the resettlement experience in Ethiopia, see Abraham (2003), Hammond (2008) and Pankhurst & Piguet (eds.) (2009).

[6] The following is based on an interview with Gäbrä-Amanuél Asäfa (acting *wäräda* administrator, Mäqét wäräda), NW2 pp. 6-7, 27.03.03

local and regional authorities (and relationships between administrative levels), they also became prominent in our discussions with people and administrative officers, and, consequently, in our notebooks and reports.

The issues mentioned here are discussed further in each of the three following sections, but they each of them are not treated with equal depth and strength for each of the three *qäbälés*. This is because some campaigns had higher priorities in some areas than in others, or at least, they were more pronounced among leaders and people in their encounters with us.

The campaign against early marriage was particularly prominent in Dänkäna, where it was also directed against lavish marriage feasts. It is therefore treated in more detail in the Dänkäna section below. The campaign was further followed up by Aspen (2005) and, togheter with Berihun Mebratie, with a brief fieldwork in 2006 (Berihun and Aspen 2009, 2010).

Most of the descriptive parts in the following chapters are written in the present tense. This was originally done to demonstrate that the report was a quick, simple and primarily empirical description (or "snapshot") of the situation in the *qäbälés* we covered. The time lapse since the fieldworks and the first report drafting has invalidated this argument and it has perhaps made the use of the present tense weird (at the best). Obviously, no parts of the world are fixed in time, unaffected by events elsewhere in the world,[7] and in our case, the situation caused by climatical (and weather) conditions most certainly changes over the years. We have, however, chosen to keep the tense as it is, since this is how it was originally written. When we write about prices, they also refer to the situation in 2003. We are quite certain that prices are different now, due to a general inflation in the country. An indication can be the exchange rates: 1 Ethiopian Birr (ETB) was 0.115 USD in April 2003, compared to 0.077 in January 2010.[8]

Method

In the surveys presented here we tested out an approach thought to be more efficient (but less accurate and detailed) than the earlier Indicator Surveys we had conducted in Ch'orisa in 2002[9] and in Jerelé[10] in 2002 and 2003. Unlike the previous Indicator Surveys, where each household head were approached and gave the relevant information to the interviewer, the present surveys are based on local informants who served as guides and walked with the interviewer from house to house. They would stop briefly outside each house and the guide gave the information about the household that was requested. In many cases, however, the head of the household or his/her spouse or other members of the household would join the little group and provide the information themselves. At the beginning, the guides were sceptical to provide information on land and cattle of others, but were soon convinced that

[7] See Fabian (1983) for a strong argument against the "ethnographic present".
[8] Rates as of 1 April 2003 and 27 January 2010.
Source: (http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/ accessed 27.01.10)
[9] Ege and Aspen (2003).
[10] The Jerelé data will hopefully be incorporated in a later publication.

this had nothing to do with taxation, land redistribution or the resettlement programme. Since the local guides were inhabitants of the neighbourhoods we were working in, they knew each household and their assets very well. Typically, they would know more about the land and the cattle than the family composition. Hence, we asked only about the adult, male labour available in the household (defined as male labour of full agricultural capacity, i.e. ploughing). The household head, if this was a male with full working strength, was to be included in this figure.

In addition to the verbal information from the guides and/or the household heads, the GPS position of each house was registered.

This approach, compared with a full-fledged indicator survey, represents a particular limitation on the data on the household members, and at an aggregate level, on the population. However, this was the approach we chose, since household level information of any detail (such as number of dependents, age of dependents and relations between the household members) would not be very reliable, as long as they came not from the household head but from an outsider. In hindsight, however, we realise that we might have been able to get relatively reliable data on adult women in the household. Female labour is extremely important in the Ethiopian peasant economy, and particularly important in North Wälo, where extra-agricultural activities such as petty trade, labour migration, and participation in aid programmes (cash-for-work, food-for work) may be more important than the agricultural production. This aspect of the local household economy was left out from the survey, together with an almost unlimited list of other potentially interesting issues. This was in accordance with our intention and ambitions. We were to cover a few economic parameters of great relevance – both for the economic reality the people live in, and for the scholarly interpretations of the peasant economy. As land and livestock, particularly oxen, are the key economic indicators in nearly all analyses of the economic predicament of the Ethiopian peasantry, this was, and is, our focus.[11]

Instead of a full-fledged survey, which would take much time both in the field and at the desk, entering and analysing the data, the Indicator Survey approach proved to be time efficient and accurate enough for the purpose.[12] The present approach, which we used in Tiweha, Debeko and Dänkäna, differs from the approach we used in Ch'orisa and Jerelé not only because it was even less detailed, but also because our starting point was the tax list for the *qäbälé*. If we at any point had an idea that this might save us even more time, we now know that this did not hold true – the work with accessing, copying and multiplying the tax lists for each assistant team proved to take quite much time. The other purposes with the tax list was to check the reliability of the tax list land data, to register

[11] For a discussion of the key analytical indicators in the literature, and particularly the focus on ox ownership, see Ege (1999).

[12] See also a brief description of the Indicator Survey approach in Ege and Aspen 2003 (pp. 19-20).

people who had migrated from the area, and to get an overall picture of the land distribution in the *qäbälé*.[13]

More detailed and contextualised discussions about the metods used in the field are found in the chapters on the specific *qäbälés* below.

The tax list approach

The Mäqét *wäräda* Finance Office provided us with all the tax lists for the *qäbälés* in the wäräda. The tax lists were copied by hand by the assistants. Carbon paper was used to make three sets of the lists. The tax lists were fixed to 1999. They were typically organised on sheets with pre-printed columns for information on taxpayer's name, *got'*, and land in *t'emad*. Each sheet had space for 10 names.[14] The lists were generally badly organised, and with no reference system, not even pagination, that could serve to check if the lists were complete. Many pages lacked information on *got'*, but in this respect the most relevant lists for our purposes were not the worst.

In 1999 there was a tax revision in the *wäräda*, and the lists of taxpayers and tax rate became the "basic data" for taxation of the *qäbälés*.[15] It seems that the result of the 1991 land redistribution was "permanently recorded" in 1999, and that the lists represent "the ones who legally have land",[16] and from the point of view of the administration, the 1999 tax lists represent the "tax quota" which each *qäbälé* is supposed to collect from its inhabitants. The individual names behind each tax remittance are a local responsibility. This may also explain the relative disorder of the detailed tax lists at the *wäräda* level – what matters is the "quota" assigned to *qäbälés*, not the individual level details.

In the field, each assistant brought a full set of the tax list copy, because it soon became apparent that the information on *got'* was not correct in all instances. The approach was less time efficient than we had hoped for. Since the list was a handwritten copy of the *wäräda* tax list, there was no means to organise it differently, for example to organise it in alphabetical order[17] and the assistants had to cross-check the list

[13] Tax list data were collected for all *qäbälés* in Mäqét *wäräda*. An analysis of these data is found in Ege (2004).

[14] Some sheets had more than ten names, some had less. In a few cases sheets had been used without the pre-printed table layout, and such sheets could contain more than 20 names.

[15] "The data are basic because there has been no redistribution since then," Ato Gätenét Engedäw Tadäsä, head of Mäqét *wäräda* Finance Office, explained to us (NW1 p. 105, 14.03.03).

[16] NW2 pp. 6-7, Gäbrä-Amanuél Asäfa (acting *wäräda* administrator, Mäqét *wäräda*), 27.03.03.

[17] An alphabetically ordered list could have been produced if the list was copied to a computer file. This was not done with the Tiweha list because we had only two computers which were mainly used for the *t'emad* data in all the tax lists of the *wäräda*, because we had limited electrical power (a generator provided Felaqit town with electricity from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. every evening – the hotel had a generator which they ran for us up to 11 p.m., and also in daytime, as long as it worked). The nearest photocopy possibilities were in Lalibäla (at the Bugna *wäräda* administration office and not in principle available to the public), in Wäldiya and possibly in Gaynt' – all several hours' drive away.

several times before they might be able to connect the household head in the field with a name listed in the tax list. The local guide would normally know if the person in question was supposed to be on the list or not – if he or she was a taxpayer at all, or if the person had got the land after 1999, typically youngsters.

In several instances, a household could be responsible for more than one tax name and tax payment.[18]

The data entry also took time for the same reasons. First the original data from the tax list was entered on an Excel worksheet, but without names. "Page" and line was registered, for later cross checking.[19] The assistants' forms had one line for each household, with columns for "page" and "line". In the "name" column they only registered the first name, since the full name (personal name, fathers' name and father's father's name) was already registered in the tax list copy. When the data was entered in the computer, the full name was registered for those we had survey data on. Hence it was necessary to check against the original tax list copy, which was disorganised after the assistants had been using it. Perhaps there could have been more efficient ways to enter the data and to compare with the original list, but this was the method selected. The result was that the time cost of linking the survey data with the original tax list data became relatively high.

The land tax formally consisted of two parts, land (*yä-märét*) tax and agricultural [income] (*yä-ersha*) tax. The tax was progressive in relation to land size. In 2003 twelve *qäbälés* paid a reduced land tax due to food insecurity: 01 Kurisa, 02 Wäfch'ena & Mabel, 04 Agrit, 05 Qila, 07 Serko, 09 Däbrä Kärbé, 023 Arebal & Defergé, 024 Mäsafena, 026 Debeko, 027 Aydefer, and 035 Qäy Afär.

Note that table i.1 lists land size both in hectares and in *t'emad*, which is common in documents of this kind. The standard conversion rate is always applied. In the table, the categories are unclear, since i.e. "2 *t'emad*" is a category both of the lowest and the next lowest tax rate ("2-4 *t'emad*). It is reason to believe that the lowest tax rate applies for land up to and including 2 *t'emad*, the next 3 to 4 *t'emad*, etc.

Table i.1 Tax levels in Mäqét (birr)

Land size (ha)	*T'emad*	Standard	Famine areas
0-0.5	2	20	13
0.5-1	2-4	25	18
1.0-1.5	4-6	30	23
1.5-2	6-8	35	28
2.0-2.5	8-10	40	33
Above 2.5	Above 10	45	38

Source: Table received from Mäqét *Wäräda* Finance office 13/3/03 (New income tax and agricultural land tax rates).

[18] One example is found in the section on Tiweha, where a person was responsible for four different tax names – his own, his mother's, his sister's and his wife's.

[19] The tax list sheets were not paginated, but when we worked with them, we numbered each sheet (with the permission from the *wäräda* Finance Office). The sheet number became the "page number" in the computerised file.

The total land tax income from the 35 *qäbälés* in Mäqét was 890,672 birr, distributed on 44,880 households (tax names). More than half of the households (63%) had less than 4 *t'emad* land, 32% had 4-8 *t'emad* land in the *wäräda*.[20]

The key indicator variables for the three *qäbälés* are presented in Table i.2 below and are further discussed in the following pages.

Table i.2 Key indicators for Tiweha, Dänkäna and Debeko

	Qäbälé		
	Tiweha	Dänkäna	Debeko
Population[a]	5,717	3,380	7,823
Households[a]	1,346	822	1,797
Average resources per household[b]	Indicator variables		
Land (*t'emad*)	2.33	3.44	2.87
Oxen	0.73	0.64	0.71
Cows	0.38	1.27	0.62
Male labour	1.20	1.07	0.92
P-score	3.39	3.66	3.02

Notes: [a)]Source: Ege & Yigremew (2002), Table 17, p. 49. [b)]Source: Indicator Survey.

[20] Source: Letter to North Wälo Zone Finance Office, Wäldiya, from Mäqét *Wäräda* Finance Office, ref no. 1582/93, dated 18/08/93.

1. Tiweha *qäbälé*

Bäyäma Täsäma's mother and wife working in the compound. Sholayé *got'*, Tiweha 21 March 2003 (photo: Harald Aspen)

The fieldwork in *qäbälé* 03, Tiweha, was carried out in March 2003. Prior to the survey work, the tax list for Tiweha was copied from the Mäqét *wäräda* Finance Office in Felaqit.

The survey was undertaken in the period 18-22 March. Each of the assistants worked with key informants (see section on method above). Aspen revisited Tiweha on 29 March together with Berhanu Bétä to spend some time with an excellent source of information, Ato Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw.

Although the ambitions for the fieldwork and the survey were rather modest, we were able to cover a large number of households in a short time. The qualitative information we were able to gather was limited. As Aspen did not fill questionnaires, but walked around with one of the assistants (Berhanu), he was able to go deeper into certain aspects of life in Tiweha, as topics presented themselves to us in the course of interviews, breaks and invitations for coffee and/or food in people's homes.

The whole team spent the nights at a hotel in Felaqit during our fieldwork in Tiweha. The hotel provided electricity that allowed us light at night and we could go through filled forms, enter tax list data on computer files, and discuss the progress of the work. We would climb down to Tiweha in the morning, following the very steep and curved road

from the main road on the plateau down to Sholayé in Tiweha. We would normally return in the late afternoon, preferably before dark.

The setting

Tiweha *qäbälé* is located west of Felaqit, in Mäqét *wäräda.* Tiweha covers a stretch of land from Sholayé *got'* at the highland plateu down to the *qola* Gafat Amba and Särt'é Wänz. The so-called "Chinese road", constructed in 1982-1983 according to informants in Agrit,[21] is situated on the higher (eastern) part of the *qäbälé*. A new dirt road, constructed by SOS Sahel on Dutch funds,[22] departs from the main road and throws itself down the wild escarpment towards the lower parts of Tiweha. From the main road, at an elevation of 2955 m, it goes down to the eastern part of Särko in Wäyra Bär & Särko *qäbälé*. The point where it crosses the Wäyn Arta river is probably the lowest, at 2097 m. The construction work engaged 500 people on cash-for-work conditions. Each person was paid 5 birr/day, and could work 15 days per month.[23] The road was probably built as a direct consequence of the recent droughts. According to the *wäräda* administrator the Wärya Bär & Särko area had been very hard hit. In Särko, there is a school and a clinic. Apparently, there is also a road from Särko to Lama Däber in Awsharo *qäbälé*.[24] According to our guide in Tiweha, Wädajé Mätäko Wäldé, the construction of the road started in February 1999. At the beginning, the work was done as Food For Work, but from 2000-2003 it was paid in cash (5 birr/day). Three *qäbälés* had been given a "quota" for the work: Tiweha, Agrit and Wäfch'éna & Mäbel. Tiweha had the largest quota because it had lost most land for the road construction. From 1999 to 2001 individuals who lost land to the road project had been compensated with other land, and they were also allowed to participate in the construction workforce. Since 2001 the land-land compensation (land lost to the road project compensated with other land) had been forbidden by the *wäräda* administration because priority had to be given to landless/-seekers. The argument was that if compensation continued the youngsters would never get land.[25]

As the road descends, it passes the *wäyna däga* plateaus at about 2500 m, with clusters of eucalyptus trees, wide areas of agricultural fields, but we saw only a few plots with stubs of *t'éf*. Further down towards the lowland we mainly saw bushes only and the soil looks

[21] The road was constructed at the same time as the *shegesheg* – the first land redistribution after the Land reform Proclamation (1975), i.e. in 1974-75, according to a group of men in Wz. Adisgé Mängisté's *t'äla bét* at the cattle market (Käbt Tära) in Agrit. NW1 p. 3, 30.05.2002.

[22] NW1 pp. 100-101, Alälägn Fantayé, Mäqét *wäräda* administrator, 13.03.2003.

[23] NW1 p. 101, 13.03.2003. The information was provided to us by the supervisor of the work, a SOS Sahel employee (his name was unfortunately not registered), at the site where a bridge was under construction.

[24] NW1 p. 101, Alälägn Fantayé, 13.03.2003.

[25] NW1 p. 135, Wädajé Mätäko Waldé, 19.03.2003. Ato Wädajé was the vice chairman and militia commander of Tiweha *qäbälé.* He explained that by *kelel* (regional) regulation, young, landless people were to be prioritised whenever land was available for distribution (*op.cit*.).

meagre. The dramatic landscape of the steep escarpment at the one side and the arid bushland at the other is softened in the middle section of the *qäbälé,* where seemingly fertile and relatively flat fields stretched themselves gently around clusters of trees and green pastures around the little streams and wells that make life easier for the inhabitants here. A small stream which descends down to the lower parts of Sholayé, Azazho Mäsk, was however dry in March 2003. "It is completely dry now. Since Haile Selassies time, this is the first time it has dried up," an informant told us.[26] It was apparent that drought was a problem. Another peasant, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw, told us that he produced *gésho* for sale to cover the cost of salt and *bärbäré*. "It is one of our products. But it is becoming scarce. Many people invested in it and shared the water, but now water is very scarce. *Gésho* is very recent, starting from Därg. We invested in *gésho* after land became scarce."[27] A sack of *gésho* could fetch 4 birr at the Gärägära market. But the summer rains were short in 2002, and the stream dried up in September. The *gésho* needs water but was now drying out.[28] Other peasants in Sholayé had access to another stream and could irrigate their nearby plots. There also seemed to be ample grazing fields, both private and common, some of which were swampy due to the water from the river. One particularly industrious peasant, Märsha Merät Däsita, had an impressive *gwaro* which was irrigated, where he cultivated a variety of spices and vegetables (cabbage, carrots and beetroots). Our local guide was eager to show us this extraordinary garden. ""He is a peasant like us but he is strong and he wants to do everything he sees in other places," he explained to us.[29]

The highland plateau (Tiweha and Sholayé *got'*) seems generally fertile. The normal crops are wheat and barley; in some areas beans, peas and flax (*tälba*) are also sown. Potatoes are also grown in this area, after the rains in March. It is harvested in August. It is normally consumed by the family. The seed potatoes are bought in Näfas Mäwch'a at a price of 20 birr per sack (short sacks containing about 25 kg). If public transport is used, the transportation cost is 5 birr per person and 3 birr per sack of potatoes. 25 kg of seed potatoes covers a 1/2 *t'emad* potato plot. One *t'emad* seems to be the preferable size of a potato field.[30]

Tiweha, as opposed to its neighbour *qäbälés*, was not among the twelve *qäbälés* in the *wäräda* where peasants paid a reduced land and agricultural income tax due to food insecurity.[31] It is difficult to see the reason for this difference, since these *qäbälés* seem to be very similar. It is also difficult to understand why the same *qäbälés* continued to pay a reduced tax year after year (since 1999 at least) without any reassessment. The then acting administrator of the *wäräda*, Ato Gäbrä-

[26] NW1 p. 127, Sätägn Alämu Läma, 19.03.2003.
[27] NW1 p. 63, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw, 29.03.2003.
[28] NW1 p. 127, Täsfayä Mära, 19.03.2003. Täsfayä's two sons left their home in search for work in 2002 "because of the problem." Täsfayä's house was very small, but a new house was under construction. He had about 20 *gésho* bushes in his *gwaro*.
[29] NW1 p. 152, Wädajé Mätäko Wäldé, 20.03.2003.
[30] Mäbré Admasé's wife interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfä 21.03.2003.
[31] With the exception of Mäsärut, all the neighbouring *qäbälés* to Tiweha paid a reduced tax. All of these are mainly lowland (Agrit, Wära Bär & Särko, Zufan Amba, Wäfch'ena & Mäbel and Kurisa).

Amanuél Asäfa, explained that at a meeting in the *wäräda*, peasants had asked for an explanation of the tax difference. The answer had been that the different tax rates were based on a study by the *wäräda* MoA which had identified which *qäbälés* were less fertile, and hence was to pay a lower tax rate. Furthermore, he added that because this was a recent decision, there had not been a revision yet.[32] A local explanation by a Tiweha inhabitant, however, was that the *wäräda* administrator in 1999, when the decision was made, favoured *qäbälés* where he had relatives; his father was from Wäfch'ena & Mäbel and his mother from Agrit.[33] Another explanation was provided by a female informant in the higher tracts of Tiweha. She explained that the tax rate was set at 25 birr because of the density of eucalyptus trees in the highland. Hardworking peasants can have up to 1500 trees, she said, while less industrious farmers can have 200 trees. Consequently, Tiweha was considered to be fertile and rich when it was assessed. The lowlanders, who cannot produce trees at this scale, protested and asked for a reassessment, but the authorities refused to reconsider the case.[34]

The difference between the normal and the reduced tax rate is only 7 birr (for holdings up to 2 *t'emad*). For most peasants it was probably a matter more of principle than substance, but for those who paid tax on several holdings the amount could be relatively larger (see the section on land tenure below).

The cropping calendar

In general, there is only one harvest per year.[35] Sowing normally takes place in June. The harvesting period depends on the crops and the specific area, both the altitude and the fertility of the land. In lowland Gafat Amba the harvest period stretches from November (*t'éf*, wheat, beans, peas, lentils) up to late December (chickpeas). *Gwaya* (grass pea) is not grown in Gafat Amba. In the higher parts of Sholayé (Ayn Däga), barley and wheat is grown. In the lower parts, "any cereal" can be grown, including *t'éf*, wheat and barley. These are harvested in December; chickpeas up to January. If there is bälg rain, sorghum (*zängada* and *mashela*) can also be sown.[36] In Tiweha *got'* there is a similar pattern. Here *gwaya* is also grown.[37] The last harvesting date is late January/early February (*Yäkatit* 5). This date marks the end of the period when grazing animals must be herded closely, not to destroy crops.

About the season of 2002-2003 Alälegn S'ägaw told that it started well. The rain was good when the sowing took place (June-July) and it

[32] NW2 pp. 6-8, Gäbrä-Amanuél Asäfa, 27.03.2003.
[33] NW1 pp. 121-122, anonymous informant, 18.03.2003. The then administrator later left the post and returned to his earlier position as a teacher in Däsé.
[34] Interview by Mäsärät Kenfä 21.03.2003. What this argument misses, is that also the highland plateau of Agrit *qäbälé* is rich in eucalyptus trees, but pays less tax.
[35] The following is mainly based on an interview with the *qäbälé* chairman, Alälägn S'ägaw (NW1 pp. 164-167, 21.03.2003).
[36] NW1 p. 117, *qés* Mulat Amaré, 18.03.2003.
[37] *Gwaya* (grass pea) is a potentially dangerous food item which can cause paralysis if it is consumed in large quantities.

rained the whole of July. “It was very promising, and we were happy,” Alälegn said. People sowed *t’éf* and other crops. Then, in August (*Nähasé* 26) the rain stopped. This was too early for the *t’éf* to have had matured and most of it was lost. Plots in Tiweha *got’* that in good years produce six quintals per *t’emad* now gave only one quintal; in Gafat Amba even less. The situation was somewhat better in Sholayé, where the yield of *t’éf* was 2-3 quintals per *t’emad*. Alälegn added that people who sowed in the optimal period (from *Säné* 12 to *Hamlé* 1) got a good harvest. He specifically mentioned people with their own oxen, who were able to sow early and consequently got a good harvest.[38] Ideally, this may be true, but the element of luck and chance is common to everybody in the climatic conditions which seem to be extremely unpredictable. Early sowing may just as well turn out to be a wrong decision as a late one.

A recent introduction to the peasants in the *qäbälé* is the production and application of compost. We observed a plot in Sholayé where compost was spread, and our guide told us that he had tried to use chemical fertiliser before, but because the rain stopped in September, the fertiliser dried up and it was of no use.[39] Mäbré Admasé had participated in the process of compost production in the highland of Tiweha. He was a member of a seven-man strong team, established for the purpose, and they dug two pits, 50 cm deep and 2 m wide. They mixed straw from beans and peas with horse and sheep dung, added ashes from the hearth and leaves from the fields, and mixed it all with water in one of the pits. It remained in the pit for two months, was turned now and then, until in May, when it was spread on the fields, before ploughing and sowing (in June). He explained that the compost serves as a fertiliser for two years. He commented that the compost was better than simply spreading dung on the fields, as they were used to, because the latter tended to contribute to spreading weeds. The new method was a better fertiliser and with much less weeds, he said.[40]

In Gafat Amba a common practice is wheat and barley intercropping in the same fields, called *wäséra*. Our informant claimed that this was “widely practiced”, but not without difficulties, since the two crops are ripe for harvesting at different times, making the harvest difficult. The barley is sown in June and is ready for harvesting at the end of September, while the wheat can be harvested from mid October. When there is sufficient rain, the wheat may be harvested as late as the end of October or beginning of November. Our informant, *Märigéta* S’ägayé Anemut, said that in his own judgement, “if there is enough land, sowing the barley and the wheat separately is a better choice.”[41] From our informant’s comment, it seems that the practice of *wäséra* is related to the land scarcity in Gafat Amba.

[38] NW1 p 167, Alälägn S’ägaw, 21.03.2003.
[39] NW1 p. 144, Wädajé Mätäko Wäldé, 20.03.2003.
[40] Mäbré Admasé interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfé, 28.03.2003.
[41] Märigéta S’ägayé Anemut interviewed by Läsanäwärq Bétä 21.03.2003.

Markets and marketing

Despite the rugged terrain and steep climb up to the main road and the *wäräda* centre, Felaqit, and its twin market town, Gäragära, most parts of Tiweha are in the close neighbourhood of the urban centres. There is a school in Sholayé, but higher grade pupils have to go to Felaqit for their education. Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw's son, a grade 7 student, takes two hours to climb to town in the morning, but it takes him only one hour to return.[42] The children attending the school in Felaqit are provided with a simple meal (*bäso*).[43] This is a government sponsored programme to avoid that students drop out of school due to the drought.[44]

A small market is currently (2003) emerging at the border between Agrit and Tiweha, in Särdo Mäsk, not far from the Abuna Arägawi church. The little market, called "*Robit*" since the market day is a Wednesday, started in 2001. On March 19, 2003 we observed about 30 people there at around 10.00 a.m., and about ten more women were on their way, loaded with clay pots and bundles on their backs. "They are just trying it," Qés Mulat Amaré said.[45]

Since we only occasionally gathered information of any detail on the household members' economic activities,[46] it is difficult to assess to what extent trade plays a role in the local economy. The general impression, however, is that trade is important. While well established households may be engaged in a certain petty trade, selling part of their agricultural products, and perhaps animals, to get cash for purchases and tax, youngsters will be particularly eager to be engaged in trade between the markets to build up a certain capital for future investments. The divorce rate seems to be high, and newly divorced women may live on trade and *t'äla* production and selling. This was the case with Täsfayé Wäday, a 28 year old woman, who had been married with a man in Tiweha, but had divorced and returned to her parent's house in Sholayé, bringing her little baby girl with her. Her previous husband, Mulaw T'änayé, had also returned to his parents, and had nothing he could assist his ex-wife and his daughter with. Täsfayé's parents had given them an ox when they married, but they had sold it and spent the money. When they divorced after seven years of marriage, it was the time of harvesting, but "he was not even willing to share the harvest with her", Täsfayé said. The case could have been reported to the *qäbälé* court but Täsfayé and her parents were afraid of escalating the conflict. Täsfayé lived in a little stone house in her parents' compound, and used the parents' main house for her little *korafé* business, selling *korafé* to customers for 50 cents per

[42] NW2 p. 69, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw 29.03.2003. We are not sure how many grades the Tiweha school in Sholayé offers. According to the DA in Jerelé, Kasa Yämata, however, the government has decided that rural schools are to be from grade 1-6. Consequently, the school in the vicinity of Jerelé *qäbälé* has reduced its services from grade 8 to 6 (NW1 p. 34, 02.06.2003).

[43] *Bäso* is roast barley flour, "a kind of iron ration eaten after mixing with water and a little salt" (Kane 1990).

[44] Mäbré Admasé interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfä 21.03.2003.

[45] NW1 p. 128, 19.03.2003.

[46] This was also not a part of the survey. There was a column, however, for "additional income", but this proved to be difficult to cover systematically and was not used in Tiweha.

½ litre.[47] The monthly "turnover" of the *korafé* business was 50 birr; she would buy barley for 50 birr which would be enough for a month's *korafé* sales, with a total profit of 15 birr per 50. She could probably not sell much, "people will come when they are thirsty, after ploughing and other work," she said. In addition to the *korafé* selling, she was engaged in petty trade at the embryonic Agrit market on the Agrit/Tiweha border; buying at the Gärägära market and selling at Agrit.

Täsfayé had no land; "they considered her to be a child [at the land redistribution], but she is the mother of a child herself," her father said.[48] We asked Täsfayé if she had considered joining the ongoing resettlement programme.[49] A discussion about the options open for a young woman with a child erupted between Täsfayé and her parents. Her father thought that rather than joining the government resettlement programme, she ought to go to Addis Ababa. "We have a lot of relatives there," he said. "Many people go to Addis Ababa and get work in private homes, as maids and cooks." Her mother replied that if she brought the child with her to Addis Ababa, it would be impossible to work. "The child has to stay with me if you go," she said. "I don't like it," Täsfayé said, "but what can I do?"[50]

We observed three houses were *t'äla* and/or *korafé* was sold by women. We did not observe selling of stronger alcoholic drinks (*aräqi*) in Tiweha.

We also got a glimpse of the spatial dimensions of the petty trade in North Wälo, when we were overtaken on the footpath in Sholayé by a group of young people, two young women, a boy and a young man who appeared to be strangers in Sholayé. Walking steadily in a row, with sweating faces under the bundles on their backs, they rather unwillingly stopped for a brief moment to answer our questions. They were coming from the Gärägära market, where they had sold cabbage and sunflower seeds, and bought ceramics and plastic containers. Living in Qedus Arbé *qäbälé* in Bugna (Lasta),[51] the roundtrip would take four to five days in total. One of the young women told us that they make the journey perhaps 3-4 times a year. Our local guide explained to us that people come from long distances, to survey the markets and test the trade.[52]

In Tiweha *got'* there is a hamlet, T'eré, where the inhabitants "without any exception" are engaged in traditional crafts; the women are potters and the men blacksmiths.[53] Like elsewhere in Ethiopia, these families are not fully integrated with their peasant neighbours. They are

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[47] *Korafé*, or *k*^{w}*ärafé*, is a less fermented variant of *t'äla*. Barley is fermented together with *gésho* for three days, and is kept as a basis for the *korafé*. Just before the *korafé* is to be drunk, boiled and grinded barley is added together with water. The result is a rather thick drink of less alcoholic content than the *t'äla.* When one has the basis, it is easy to make a portion of finished *korafé*, whenever there are customers. (NW1 p. 147, Täsfayé Wäday, 20.03.2003).

[48] NW1 p. 147, Wäday Negatu Sisay, 18.03.2003.

[49] The resettlement, or *säfära*, programme is described in more detail below. See also the introduction.

[50] NW 1 pp. 146-149, 18.03.2003.

[51] See Ege 2002a, plate 6.

[52] NW2 p. 70; Aytänäw Mälké, 29.03.2003.

[53] The following is based on an interview by Mäsärät Kenfä of Wädajé Däsaläw 20.03.2003.

called Fälasha; at present our information is too limited to judge wether the name is derived from their way of living and livelihood or if this actually is a group of "Ethiopian Jews", most of whom have been able to migrate to Israel.[54] The T'eré inhabitants are endogamous (i.e. they marry only other craftsmen from their own hamlet or from elsewhere) and live separately from the peasant population. The women make a range of pottery products, which they sell for cash or for grain. The men enter individual contracts with farmers on an annual basis. In return for producing metal tools and mending them, they are either paid in cash (10 birr per year), in grain (five to eight *t'asa*) or ox labour. In the latter case, the return service from the peasant is one day's ploughing in July (a team of oxen and a man), one day weeding and one day harvesting. The craftsmen have land, but one may assume that the actual agricultural work on the land is carried out by neighbouring non-craftsmen, in return for the regular services they receive. The women are believed to make good money on their pottery work; a big clay pots (*ensära*) fetch 15 birr, the smaller ones 10 birr. The coffee pots (*jäbäna*) are sold for 1 birr each.[55]

The highland plateau of Tiweha is crossed by the main road from Wäldiya in the east towards Näfas Mäwch'a (Gaynt' in Gondär) to the west. Along the roadside, large bundles of eucalyptus stems are waiting to be sold. Trucks are commonly seen along the road, loading construction materials for the urban markets in the region and beyond. The tree stems are normally split in several parts (the number depends on how thick the original stem is) to be used for construction works. One piece costs three birr. If the wood is sold as firewood, the price is three birr for one bundle.[56]

Migration

We made no systematic attempt at quantifying the outmigration from Tiweha, but we encountered several cases where adult sons without land had migrated to find agricultural employment in Raya (Qobo). Individuals also migrate to Wäläga and Gamo Gofa, according to Qés Mulat Amaré. His sister migrated to Mätama in Gondär eight years ago, where she works near the Sudan border, selling firewood to Sudan. In Qés Mulat's opinion, it is mainly women who prefer to leave; men tend to stay.[57] During the course of our survey, we also found several abandoned houses belonging to women who had married elsewehere, the land either given for sharecropping or ploughed by the new husband.

[54] For a brief introduction, see Kessler and Parfitt (1985).

[55] The range of households covered by the survey who are believed to be Fälashas is roughly indicated by Mäsärät in her note. The average values of the indicator variables for the sixty relevant households do not differ much from the overall averages (see table 1.3 below), except for the P-score, which is 3.92 for this group (against the overall average of 3.39). The other average values are 0.63 oxen, 0.37 cows, 2.50 *t'emad* land and 1.05 male labour per household (source: indicator survey). 12 of the household heads were women, 48 were men.

[56] Mäbré Admasé's wife interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfä 21.03.2003.

[57] NW1 pp. 117-199, *qés* Mulat Amaré, 18.03.2003.

Two local informants provided us with a list of names of people who had migrated from Tiweha. Twelve were listed as leaving for Mätäma in 2003, probably under the *säfära* programme (see below). Four had gone to Wäläga. Our informants generally claimed that many youngsters without own land had migrated to Wadla-Dälanta. No names were given of people who had migrated there, probably because the list only included household heads with land and families. In addition to more or less permanent out-migration, many married men migrate in search of temporary work and return after they have been able to save some money. "If we were to register such kind of migration, the list would have become long," our informants said.[58]

Eight people from Gafat Amba joined the government resettlement scheme. Others had left on their own initiative, due to low fertility of the land or unsettled debts, or a combination of these factors. Alämnäw Anemut was one of them. His household consisted of six family members, including himself. His three *t'emad* land had been "long used" and could not provide a good harvest any more, and he was not able to feed his family. He left his family in December 2002 and went to Balé. There he worked as a daily labourer for half a year. He returned in July 2002 with 300 birr which he had saved from his income. 100 birr was immediately spent to cover a loan he had taken when he left, leaving him with 200 birr. This money was spent on buying grain for food. This lasted only for the rest of July and August. Again he is facing problems and is planning to go back to Balé to find a job as a daily labourer. He has not yet been able to go because he lacks money for his transportation.[59] According to the survey, Alämnäw Anemut was 37 years old, had no livestock, 2.5 *t'emad* of land and his household had two adult male workers. The second was probably a son who took care of the agricultural work in his absence.

Another Gafat Amba inhabitant, Sisay Däräsä, had borrowed 600 birr from the *wäräda* MoA office, purportedly to buy seeds. Instead he bought food for his family. The following year he was requested to pay back the loan, but his harvest had failed and he had no money. As a result he sold his ox, covered his debt and migrated to Addis Ababa, where he works as a daily labourer.[60]

The first round of the government resettlement (*säfära*) programme was in full operation during our stay in Mäqét in March 2003.[61] We were provided with a list of the resettlement volunteers by the *qäbälé* chairman, Alälegn S'ägaw. In total 24 migrants left, some of them with their family members, totaling 69 people. Many of the migrants were indebted to the rural credit system (see section on credit below). The details are given in table 1.1.

[58] Wädajé Däsaläw and Tärech'é Gétenät, interviewed by Berhanu Bétä 21.03.2003.
[59] Märigéta S'ägayé Anemut interviewed by Läsanäwärq Bétä 21.03.2003.
[60] Märigéta S'ägayé Anemut interviewed by Läsanäwärq Bétä 21.03.2003.
[61] See Abraham (2003), Hammond (2008), and the edited volume by Pankhurst and Piguet (2009) for assessments of the resettlement programme.

Table 1.1 Resettlement participants from Tiweha

Name	gender	age	# of people	Debt	*Got'*
Yebré Wesán	m	50	5		Gafat Amba
Has taken his whole family with him. Has land in Dälaqit (*qola*)[62]					
Mäläsä Yebré	m	25	3		Gafat Amba
Has no land. Did not get in 1983, was too young. Has married, with children. Whole family goes					
Nebrat Taräqägn	f	24	2		Gafat Amba
She has a democratic right to participate, so she must be allowed. Her daughter is 4 years old. Nebrat has land. She was away in 1991. She was in Mätäma, N. Gondär. Came back, got 1/2 *t'emad* land. Never married.					
Mängestu Behunägn	m	50	1	800	Gafat Amba
He had already decided to leave and go to Raya (Qobo). I met him and told him to go on the govt. programme. I made him join the *säfära* programme. His land is totally eroded. Family stays behind. Has 800 birr debt.					
Géta Enyew	m	38	1		Gafat Amba
He has land here.					
Aynäw Wärqu	m	46	1	700	Gafat Amba
Has family and land. In big problem. Seriously poor. Their land is in the arid area, doesn't keep the moisture. Lost all harvest last year. Has 700 birr debt.					
Adäm Kasa	m	20	1		Gafat Amba
He is young, unmarried, has no land					
Kasa Wesén	m	51	7		Gafat Amba
He has land in *bäräha*,[63] arid. Goes with family					
Bäyänä Adisé	m	45	1	700	Tiweha
He has a 700 birr loan, cannot pay back, is in serious crisis, prefers to go by this chance. Has family and land. Family stays behind. None of the children plough.					
Kasa Sisay	m	48	6	350	Tiweha
Goes with family. Has land, in total 4 *t'emad*. But year after year he cannot feed his family, he sows and it cannot grow. Lives around Särt'ä Wänz (*qola*).					
T'äganäw Asäfa	m	33	1	650	Tiweha
He has land, decided to go alone, leaving his family with the land.					
Sisay Mola	m	58	5		Tiweha
Goes with family. Has land in *qola.*					
Anbeyä Amarä	m	46	1		Tiweha
He has land and family					
Därsé Gäsäw	m	45	1	800	Tiweha
He has land, and 10 family members. Goes alone. Has a son who ploughs but he attends school.					
Däsitäw Täsfayä	m	30	2		Tiweha
Is not in tax list but his parents are dead so he inherited the family land. Gave the land by *ekul*. Was married but his new wife could not go with him, her family refused. She is young.					
Mälké Bälay	m	59	1	650	Tiweha
He has land, his family stays behind. His problem is the loan. Has enough land but loan. His wife's family does not allow him to take her with him. In total 8 children, he goes first and prepares everything. Then they will come. Initially he decided to take the whole family with him.					

[62] The comments on each entry are by the *qäbälé* chairman, Alälegn S'ägaw (NW1 pp. 156-162, 21.03.2003).

[63] *Bäräha* is both used for "wilderness" and for semi-desert landscape.

Adisé Mewch'é	m	45	6	600	Tiweha
He has land, goes with whole family. Problem with loan. Could not produce enough food for his family. In total 4 *t'emad*. 2 *t'emad* in *bäräha*, 2 in Tiweha.					
Bisät' Erätä	m	49	1	600	Tiweha
He has land, but is in problem. One year's sowing gave nothing. Even if his land is in *däga*, the land cannot feed his family. He has taken a 600 birr loan from the government and it will not be cancelled even if he is poor.					
Däsé Ayal	m	38	1	500	Tiweha
He has land, 5 family members.					
Feqadé Erquyé	m	46	7		Tiweha
He has land but it is not sufficient to feed his family. 4 t*'emad* in *wäynä däga*.					
Masräshäw Sisay	m	49	6		Tiweha
He has land in *wäynä däga*. Went to Däbo in south Ethiopia with his family 2 years ago, did not succeed, the situation here is also not good, they do not have sufficient food. Was planning to take his family to Qobo but I convinced him to participate in the govt. programme.					
Taräqägn Kasa	m	39	1	700	Tiweha
He has family, and land.					
Feqer Arägä	m	35	1	700	Tiweha
He has land and family, but also loan.					
Adisé Aläna	m	48	7		Tiweha
He has land in *wäynä däga*. Goes with family.					

Source: Alälegn S'ägaw (NW1 pp. 156-162, 21.03.2003).

The resettlement (*säfära*) campaign was announced by the *wäräda* administration at a meeting in the *qäbälé*. The vice chairman of the *qäbälé* told the meeting participants about the procedure for registration to participate in the campaign.

> "We were told that the *wäräda* would guarantee for anyone who had a loan in the rural credit bank until they were well established at the new place, where they would get good land. They said the place was Dangla in Gojam – a very fertile place. I am very busy with my duties for the *qäbälé* administration [vice chairman and militia leader] without pay, and my economy is deteriorating. I registered as a participant at a meeting in February 2003 [*Yäkatit* 19]. When we asked the *wäräda* administrator to clear the [new] land, he told us that it is not in Dangla but in Mätäma and Armacho in Gondär. 'If you want aid and support from the government you have to participate in the programme. If not, we cannot give any more aid,' he said. I did not want to go to that place, it is *bäräha* and there is malaria there. The day after wheat was distributed to those who had registered but I didn't want to go there [and get wheat] because I didn't want to participate. They said it is not a new place, 'you will be in between the residents already there'. But I don't believe that.
>
> People can go to Raya in Qobo without aid and return safe. But Armacho and Mätäma are the worst places. Last *kerämt* people went there [Gondär] in search of work. They fell ill there, and came back only to die. It is better to starve here."[64]

[64] NW1 pp. 137-139, Wädajé Mätäko Wäldé, 19.03.2003.

Most probably Wädajé and others were sceptical for good reasons. A report by Medicins Sans Frontieres – Holland quoted by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs claimed that in a "resettlement camp in the Amhara region in the north (…) at least 69 people had died there over the last six months," of which 32 were children under the age of five.[65]

Also other informants in the *qäbälé* had understood the *wäräda* administrator as saying that food aid was reserved for the resettlement participants and their families if they stayed behind.[66] This was denied at the zonal level. The North Wälo Zone administrator, Gädu Andargachäw, said that the resettlers were not a priority group for food aid, there was no such discrimination. He pointed to the fact that while the government wants whole families to go, the peasants themselves want to see first and then decide. He also said that it had been made clear to people that the resettlement area was lowland, that there was malaria, and that there is not even a house waiting for them. The government would provide water and food aid, but the people were afraid of high temperature and sickness.[67]

Initially, more people than those who finally left had registered to leave with the resettlement programme. According to one source, a *mängisté buden*,[68] eight people from the *qäbälé* went as far as to receive the initial aid before departure, grain that they had to return after they changed their mind and decided to stay behind. As the grain was already consumed, individuals had to borrow money to buy grain and return to the *wäräda* administration.[69]

Those who registered were waiting in Felaqit since the meeting in February (19 *Yekatit*), living on food rations they had received as aid. The amount of aid varied with the family group; a family of eight members received 100 kg grain, plus 4 kg as provisions for the journey (*senq*).[70]

The migrants were guaranteed the right to retain their land in their original place within a period of two years. Many compared the present resettlement campaign with the one which was carried out by the *Därg*, commenting that the present one was much different because participation now was totally voluntarily. In 1979, people were forced to go, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw remembered. "Many people went, even if at that time, there was no problem with land. "Even my oldest daughter had

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[65] IRINNEWS (2004).

[66] NW1 p. 131, Sätägn Alämu Läma, 19.03.2003.

[67] NW1 pp. 169-171, Gädu Andargachäw, 24.03.2003. The Zone planned to send about 3000 households in the pilot programme of the first year (2003). About 2200 people had gone at the end of March, mainly from Bugna, Mäqét and Qobo.
The initial plan was to resettle 3,300 households from all zones of Amhara region (except West Gojjam), but this was later increased to more than 20,000 housholds for 2003 alone (Abraham 2003:4).

[68] A *mängisté buden* is a group leader in the *qäbälé*, responsible for about fifty households in his neighbourhood. The identification of needy families for aid is one of the main responsibilities, and he serves in general as the contact between the *qäbälé* administration and the smallest unit in the *qäbälé*.

[69] NW1 p. 132, Sätägn Alämu Läma, 19.03.2003.

[70] NW1 p. 133, Wädajé Mätäko Wäldé, 19.03.2003.

to go. She was married and later separated. Her ex-husband went on *säfära,* and informed the *wäräda* people that he had left his wife behind. They came with two people and forced her to go with him. I couldn't help her, I was forced. She never came back. The resettlers went to *Wäläga*, but they were later chased out by OLF. Now she lives in Addis Aäba. She has never been back here."[71]

Aid

The magnitude and importance of aid in the local economy is impossible to assess accurately, unless one carries out a longitudinal study. It seems clear, however, that aid, although not permanently, is an integral part of the local economy at large and of individual households. Aid is also a recurrent topic in the daily interaction between people – issues such as the expectation of new aid quotas, comparisons between receivers and non-receivers (or participants and non-participants in FFW campaigns, which will normally be the case), and old grudges against those in the administration (mainly at levels above the *qäbälé*, i.e. the *wäräda*) for aid that was promised but not distributed etc. The difference in tax level between Tiweha and its neighbouring *qäbälés*, as mentioned above, was raised by many, since the rationale behind this differentiation was difficult to detect.[72]

The competition for aid is probably strong at the local level. Impression management becomes important, to convince the authorities about one's eligibility as aid receiver. That aid finally ends in the hands of a needy recipient is the result of a long row of decisions, at the level of the international donor community and the national government, and later at the regional, zonal, district (*wäräda*) and *qäbälé* levels. The *qäbälé* is given a certain quota of relief aid of various kinds, and the *qäbälé* administration depends on the assessments of the *mängesté buden* who are responsible for about 50 households each. They select households who are eligible for aid, both free relief and FFW participation. Sätägn Alämu Läma, *mängesté buden* in Tiweha *got'*, said that the highest aid quota for the whole *qäbälé* was in 2001 (1,000 recipients). In 2002 it was reduced to 500. Only eight in his group received aid. "Now we are many people, and the quota is low when it reaches us" he explained.[73]

According to the *qäbälé* chairman, Alälegn S'ägaw, the figure for 2002 was 400 individuals, all of whom received free aid (old and disabled persons). There was no regular FFW, but two rounds of cash-for-work (the road project), 120 persons for 15 days in two rounds, totaling 240 participants.[74]

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[71] NW2 p. 53, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw, 29.03.2003.
[72] A reservation must be made here. I did not stay long in Tiweha and my discussions with people there were strongly coloured by my research agenda. What people commonly "talk about" in their daily lives is something that I strictly speaking know very little about. In their encounters with the research team, however, the above is true.
[73] NW1 p. 130, Sätägn Alämu Läma, 19.03.2003.
[74] NW1 p. 167, Alälägn S'ägaw 21.03.2003.

Aid is used as a carrot and a stick by the *wäräda* administration. In the recruitment process for the resettlement programme more or less open references were made to who future aid beneficiaries would be (see above), and we were also told that food aid was stopped for two months as a "lesson". In the lower part of Tiweha *got'*, where malaria is a recurrent problem, the *wäräda* health officer had ordered people to clean the springs to reduce the malaria plague in September (2002). "But people were busy and we didn't do as we were told. The health officer reported us to the MoA and we were punished. We received the aid for September in October. We never received the quota we should have received for October. The DA refused to sign and we got no aid. They said this was a lesson, that it is important to obey orders."[75]

There is also competition for aid quotas on higher levels. This seemed to have had a peculiar consequence in Mäqét *wäräda*, namely a more or less strict ban on marriage festivities (*särg*). The *wäräda* administration denied that it was a ban in the form of a law, but rather an advice – that people should not spend a lot of resources on marriages and other "cultural feasts", such as *täzkär* (memorial service for a deceasd relative), in this time of crisis. At the same time, a ban against marriage of children was announced.[76] From various sources, it was clear that the marriage feast "ban" was more or less initiated as an "impression management" strategy. The fear was that if (relatively) extragavant feasts were observed by donors, aid quotas could be reduced.[77] Also Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw, one of our informants in Tiweha, confirmed this. "The *qäbälé* administration called us for a meeting, and they announced two things; that it is forbidden to marry youngsters below the legal age, and that we should limit marriage festivals," he said. He accepted the ban against underage marriage, but had no understanding for the limitations on marriage feasts. "The rationale was that this year it is considered to be a drought here, and in this crisis situation it is forbidden to arrange *särg*, it may change the image and the government can reduce our aid quota. This is our law. One of my neighbours broke this law and he was arrested." Ch'ané added: "Everybody knows us as being hit by drought. But the government can decide that we are not hit by drought."[78] While the *wäräda* leader of the sports, culture and youth department argued that marriage is a burden not only for the families of the new couple, but also for friends and relatives who have to contribute to the feast,[79] Ch'ané argued that people who customarily is expected to contribute can negotiate with the families who plan marriage and most of the time the marriage will be postponed, if it is difficult to find the necessary support. "We do not need the administration to decide this for us!" he said.[80] The

[75] NW1 p. 131, Sätägn Alämu Läma 19.03.2003.
[76] NW2 pp.10-14, Gäbrä-Amanuél Asäfa, 27.03.2003. See also the section on Dänkäna below – the Dänkäna local authorities interpreted the "advice" literally as a law.
[77] NW2 pp. 31-33, Marägn Sisay (Dänkäna *qäbälé* committee member), 28.03.2003.
[78] NW2 pp. 66-67, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw 29.03.2003.
[79] NW2 pp. 13-14, Gäbrä-Amanuél Asäfa, 27.03.2003.
[80] NW2 p. 67, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw 29.03.2003. Ch'ané explained that in contrast to Lasta, where marriages are individual responsibilities, "everybody" is expected to share in Tiweha, by contributing *enjära*, *t'äla*, goats, butter and spices. The contributions will

number of new marriages had decreased for the last couple of years, he said, because people had decided to postpone it due to the difficult circumstances.

The prohibition against underage marriages, which was issued at the same occasion, seemed to be accepted, at least in theory, by most people we asked. In Tiweha, girls could be married from the age of eight, boys from 16-17 years. Very young girls are "protected" by her own or her husband's family until she is old enough to have sex with her husband. When I asked how long after her first menstruation she could have sex, Ch'ané and his wife became mildly shocked. "The appropriate time is before her first menstruation," they said. "If she sees her first menstruation, it is too late, by then she should begin to give birth. She will normally have sex with her husband at the age of 14-15 years."[81] The legal age of marriage is 22 years for boys and 18 years for girls.[82]

The impression management strategies are also at work at the local level. Ch'ané Mängestu's opinion was that what makes difference between people in terms of food security, is if they have cattle or not. "There is not much difference between people now – even women household heads have land, and plough by *ekul*. But some have cattle, some not. People with cattle have a chance to sell animals to buy grain from the market. They are not considered to be the poorest – cattle makes the difference," he said. But he seemed to feel that the difference is not so big: "If you have one cattle (*käbt*), they [the administration] consider you as relatively wealthy. Those who have no animals, also consider people with cattle as wealthy. The poor are those who are identified according to these criteria. How can this be correct? Like them, we have no grain! This is because of jealousy, they insists on equal status, they want to force us to be like them. But we have equal land, and no grain. There are people without cattle who live well, but look like they are poor, but still they can lend money and grain to others. They pretend to be poor. The point is not to have even a calf!"[83] Despite this rather bitter exclamation, Ch'ané also claimed that in Sholayé and Tiweha *got's*, aid receivers were not completely comfortable with the situation, and tended to share their FFW quotas, by calling neighbours and friends to participate in the work. "People are not comfortable with receiving aid. Only faith makes them different from others." Still, he did not think that aid represented a social problem: "It is the *wäräda* that decides who are legible to receive aid. If a *got'* leader decides to follow the regulation, it is no problem. But a local decision can also be to involve more people."[84]

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function as "delayed exchange" since "everybody will calculate that next time it may be his turn to receive" (*ibid.*).

[81] NW2 pp. 68-69, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw and his wife, 29.03.2003

[82] NW2 p. 47, Fäqadé Masräsha (member of the Mäqét *wäräda* council from Dänkäna), 28.03.2003. The Family Code of the Amhara National Regional State states that the minimum age is 18 for both men and women (Amhara National Regional State 2003:128).

[83] NW2 pp. 58-59, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw, 29.03.2003. Ch'ané has two oxen and no cow, according to the indicator survey.

[84] NW2 pp. 56-58, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw, 29.03.2003.

The Tax List Indicator Survey in Tiweha

The tax list indicator survey was carried out 18-22 March 2003. A total of 1,027 households were covered, from four *got's* of the *qäbälé* (table 1.2). In general, the assistant and his/her local guide would walk from house to house and stop outside each house, where the local guide would give the information required (in many cases the household head, his/her spouse and/or child(ren) would provide the information). When the line on the form was filled for the relevant household, the assistant would go as close to the actual house as was felt appropriate, and register the GPS position, before moving to the next house. Some clusters of households, mainly in Gafat Amba and Särt'é Wänz were registered without the use of GPS. This was because we were able to get all the relevant information from the local guides for the households in these areas. If they were to be registered by GPS we would have needed one more day of fieldwork, because of the distance. We decided to include the data, even if we do not have the possibility to locate these households accurately on the map. By choosing this method for the most distant hamlets, we also lost the possibility we had to countercheck the information given by the local guides, who might particularly overlook newly established households without land (and thus not in the tax list), or households that for other reasons were unknown or momentarily forgotten by the guide. Another set of data, from Tiweha, was inaccurate in the GPS registering, resulting in a long row of households registered with the same GPS number. Trusting that the assistant who covered this particular area actually had been to each house and had tried to register the GPS position, we have decided to include also these data.

Table 1.2 Tax List Indicator Survey coverage

	Households (N)	Female headed (%)	Male headed (%)
Gafat Amba	322	22	78
Sholayé	196	27	73
Särt'é Wänz	136	19	81
Tiweha	374	21	79
Total	1,027	22	78

Source: Indicator survey

A total of 1,027 households were accepted from the forms and included in the database. The tax list for Tiweha counted 1,293 names,[85] but the tax report for 2001 reports that a total of 1,183 persons had paid tax for that year.[86] Although the difference between the number of households covered by the survey, and the tax list names, amounts to 266, this is not necessarily the number of households not covered by our survey. The number may be higher, or lower, for several reasons. First, the tax list in the *wäräda* Finance Office consisted of loose sheets

[85] The total population of Tiweha was reported by the North Wälo Zone as 5,717. The number of households was reported by the *wäräda* to be 1,346 (Ege and Yigremew 2002).

[86] Letter to North Wälo Zone Finance Office, Wäldiya, from Mäqét *wäräda* Finance office, ref. no. 1582/93, dated 18/08/93 [E.C.]

assemblied in a folder. There was no means of checking that no sheets were missing. Second, the tax list was from 1999. In the years since the list was produced, several taxpayers who were originally listed, had died or migrated, and couples had divorced, sometimes resulting in more than one person paying tax, sometimes the land, and the taxpaying duty, had been transferred to somebody else. Thirdly, we covered all independent households we found, disregarding if they were taxpayers or not. We did indeed find people who were claimed (or claimed themselves) to have been taxpayers long before the 1999 tax list fixation, without being able to find them on the official list – perhaps an indication that some pages actually were missing. They could also be listed by other names than the one they usually used. Normally, such findings were annotated on the form, but we have decided not to analyse the relationship between the official tax list and our findings in depth. The number of tax payers in the official list is therefore only an indication of our coverage – we can safely assume that we have covered a rather big portion of the *qäbälé*, but we have no exact figure for it. The household heads whom we could not find on the list were simply appended to our forms. Some of these had never paid tax, since they either had no land or they had land from their family, in which case the tax was covered by the original tax list name. The consequence of all this is that compared to the original tax list, our data both shrunk and grew.

Lastly, there is no direct correspondence between the names listed in the tax list and the farming households. There is a general correspondence, but with many exceptions; with a more detailed method we would certainly have found more exceptions than we actually did. We found several tax list names of people who had either died or migrated. We also found farming households whose land tax was paid in the name of somebody else, usually a close relative; a son who had got a small plot from his father's land, or an old parent who had kept some land as his or her own, while a son had taken over both the bulk of the land and the tax duty.

Regional variation within Tiweha

Tiweha covers a stretch of land from Sholayé *got'* at the highland plateau down to the *qola* Gafat Amba *got'*. The Tax List Indicator Survey was carried out in Sholayé, Tiweha, Särt'é Wänz and Gafat Amba. The data from Särt'é Wänz are based on key informant information. The local guide who provided the information proved to know the area and the households extremely well. The exact locations of the households covered in Särt'é Wänz were not registered, simply because the assistant did not go there because the time available did not permit it.

The assistants worked individually, each of them with a local guide. Aspen joined one of the teams for two days, working in Sholayé *got'* with the field research assistant Berhanu Bétä and our local guide Wädajé Mätäko Waldé. Berhanu and Aspen visited Tiweha alone at a later date (29 March 2003), spending most of the day in Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw's house. The impressions of Tiweha presented here are thus mainly based on three days of work in Sholayé, although we also saw other tracts of Tiweha during the administration of the fieldwork.

Since the natural conditions of the *qäbälé* are so varied, we expect that this is also reflected in the key parameters we have covered in the survey. We have seen that the higher parts (Tiweha and Sholayé) have a certain wood market, based on eucalyptus plantations, while the lower parts (Gafat Amba and Särt'é Wänz) appear to be much more arid and vulnerable to climatic conditions. There are no forests, and hardly any trees to speak of, in the lowland. It would be an exaggeration to speak of forests in the highland plateau, but there are clusters of eucalyptus trees which contribute to the general impression of greenery, as opposed to the dry and brown hills in the lowland.

We did not ask about other animals than cows and oxen. One might expect that the lowlanders keep smaller animals, particularly goats, as a reserve and security in case harvests fail. We did no attempt to check this, however, and the current situation was most probably characterised by the consequences of several years of drought.

Table 1.3 Variation in resources (average values)

Got'	Land	Oxen	Cows	P-score	Male labour
Gafat Amba	2.37	0.68	0.38	3.19	0.96
Sholayé	2.28	0.68	0.36	3.53	0.93
Särt'é Wänz	2.02	0.76	0.37	2.68	1.01
Tiweha	2.45	0.79	0.40	3.74	1.20
Total/average	2.33	0.73	0.38	3.39	1.20

Source: Indicator survey. "Male labour": adult, able-bodied men in the household. Two cases of P-score=0 are not included in the calculation of the P-score.

Tiweha *got'* scores highest on average values for all four indicators. The directions of cause and effect forces are not easy to establish. Land and labour are critical factors for successful farm management and influences the ability, and incentive, to keep oxen; and cows as oxen producers. That also the average P-score is the highest for Tiweha may simply be a direct reflection of a relatively better resource endowment. The average value for adult male labour is also the highest for Tiweha. This may reflect that a relatively better land endowment both can sustain more people, and needs more labour. It may also be that relatively more youngsters remain dependants in their natal families without establishing their own households.

The P-score is very low for all areas, and extremely low for Särt'é Wänz (2.68). This indication of deep and widespread poverty fits well to our general impression of the area, long affected by crop failures and food deficiency. The average values for Gafat Amba and Sholayé are surprisingly close.

The original tax list data shows an average of 2.40 *t'emad* per taxpayer. The average calculated from the survey is quite close, at 2.33 *t'emad* per household. This figure includes the 96 households without land. The average value for the households who have land, is 2.57 (N=931), slightly higher than the tax list average. We cannot exclude the possibility that the "official" land figures from the tax list have had an impact on the land data reported by the local guides and/or the households. The tax list data were also found on the lists used by the assistants in the field. Only a detailed survey of the actual plots of land

belonging to the individual households could have produced a different, and perhaps a higher and more accurate, figure for land endowment.

Table 1.4 Tax list land data compared with survey data

Land	Tax list (N)	Tax list (%)	TL Survey (N)	TL Survey (%)
0	0	0	96	9
0-0.99	21	2	8	1
1	302	23	148	14
2	341	26	300	29
3	453	35	282	27
4	165	13	186	18
5	10	1	7	1
6	1	0	0	0
Totals	1,293	100	1,027	100

Sources: Indicator survey and 1991 E.C. tax list for *qäbälé* 03 Tiweha (Mäqét *Wäräda* Finance Office).
Note: Land is reported in *t'emad* by integers, where 2.50 is reported as 2.

The tax list includes registered taxpayers with as little land as 0.25 *t'emad* (one sixteenth of a hectare at the conventional conversion rate of 1 ha = 4 *t'emad*). A peasant holding 0.25 *t'emad* pays the lowest tax rate, i.e. 20 birr (defined officially as two different taxes, "land tax" and "agricultural income tax" at a rate of 10 birr each). The lowest tax rate applies to all land holdings up to 2 *t'emad* (see table i.1).

In the report about the tax revenue in 2001 from the *wäräda* to the zonal Finance Office, it is shown that the revenue from Tiweha amounted to 26,380 birr, distributed on two groups of land holders; 639 in the category 0-0.5 ha and 544 in the next category (0.5-1 ha). Although the tax list for Tiweha lists twelve tax names with land holdings from 4.5 *t'emad* to 6 *t'emad*, there was no tax revenue from land holdings of this category.[87] 164 taxpayers were listed with 4 *t'emad*, and these have certainly paid tax according to the second lowest rate, and not the third.

Household characteristics

The settlement pattern in Tiweha appears to be patrilocal, with a tendency to a concentration of close patrilineal relatives within the same compound. We found several quite large compounds with a number of houses, with several brothers and their families living closely together, sometimes also with an old parent in one of the houses, each with their own land and economy. Most probably there is much cooperation in the agricultural tasks, probably also in the daily chores of the women.

We found one of the most impressive compounds in Sholayé near the Yohanes church. Three children of a deceased priest had their independent households there, and their mother lived with one of them as a dependent. The land of the church must have been distributed to the church servants at some time, perhaps from the church itself for services

[87] Letter to North Wälo Zone Finance Office, Wäldiya, from Mäqét *wäräda* Finance office, ref nr 1582/93, dated 18/08/93 [E.C.]

rendered, or after the revolution, according to the "land to the tiller" slogan. The compound in question was well fenced and very clean. As a group of relatives, they were relatively well off. In total they have ten *t'emad* land, five oxen and two cows. Most probably they also have sufficient labour, in addition to the survey labour data (only adult male labour), they may also have younger children who can work as herders and do other work. The P-scores for these families are relatively high compared to the average for the *got'* (3.53) or for the *qäbälé* (3.38). We know nothing about the family sizes or to what extent they cooperate with agricultural tasks, but it seems safe to assume that it may be mutually benefiting for the families that they live so close together.

Table 1.5 Family group resource endowment

Name	P-score	Labour	Gender	Age	Ox	Cow	Land
Kasa Emeru Alämu	5	1	m	50	1	1	3
Qés Sentayähu Kasa Adal	5	1	m	45	2	0	3
Mäsganäw Kasa Adal	6	2	m	55	2	1	4

Source: Indicator survey
Note: Kasa is brother in law of the two others, who are brothers.

The family group described above may be a typical example for the area how land, houses and responsibilities are passed from one generation to another. The care for old parents may be a heavy burden, but it will also normally give access to more land. We met an industrious peasant, Bäyänä Täsäma Negusé, in the steeper part of Sholayé, just under the steep rock wall, where the soil is stony but fertile, and easy to plough.[88] Bäyänä Täsäma, aged 45, and his wife have five children. The oldest, a daughter, has completed grade 10 and has got employment as a development agent in Aymat' *qäbale.* The three younger ones are all boys, and all are attending school (grade 8, 3 and 2). His parents have lived with them since 1997. Their house was "getting old" and they did not have the strength to repair it or to build a new one. Consequently, they joined Bäyänä's household. His father is now 88 years old, his mother is 82. When we visited the family, the old woman was spinning cotton, while the father was just sitting in the sun, resting. "The problem is not that I have many children, but my old parents," Bäyänä said. "It is difficult to support them. I became old before my time because of them".[89] Bäyänä's father has 2 *t'emad* land, Bäyänä himself has 3 *t'emad*. Bäyänä ploughs the land of his parents and gives all the produce of their land to them. Bäyänä has two oxen and a cow; his parents are not registered with any cattle. Altogether Bäyänä scored relatively high on the P-score (5). His own industriousness and that of the rest of the family must certainly account for much of that.

The two examples above demonstrate a situation where the oldest generation is about to cease to exist and, in the cases here where they have able and willing descendants, are supported by their children and

[88] Before sowing, the land is ploughed three times. The fourth time is when it is sown (NW1 pp. 154, Bäyänä Täsäma Negusé, 20.03.2003).
[89] NW1 pp. 154-155, Bäyänä Täsäma Negusé, 20.03.2003.

families in their last part of life. In both cases above, the children, who now are the responsible farmers, were old enough at the latest land redistribution (1991) to get their own share. The child who assumes the main responsibility for his/her parents in their old age is therefore endowed with his/her own land, in addition to the land the parent holds (in the first case above, it is uncertain if the land of the mother of the three siblings comes in addition to or is included in the figure given for the son she lives with, *Qés* Sentayähu).

The present situation is different, when children grow up and establish their own families. If they were too young to get land at the redistribution (the redistribution is described below), they either must stay as dependents in their paternal home, or they establish themselves independently and live on ploughing other people's land as sharecroppers. A third option is to migrate in search for paid work.

The tax list survey aimed at all independent households. Dependents were in principle not considered, although in some instances land holding persons, such as children too young to establish their own household, were registered. Old dependents were normally not registered, if they did not have their own land which was managed by others than the hosting family.[90] One would therefore expect those listed without land to be young families in the process of establishing themselves. Table 1.6 explores this group.

Table 1.6 Landless households

Gender / age	Average	Max	Min
F	31.8	50	25
M	28.4	37	15
All (N=96)	28.5		
Gender/P-score			
F	2.4	3	2
M*	2.88	7	2
All (N=95)	2.85		
Gender/oxen			
F	0	0	0
M	1	2	0
All (N=96)	0.65		
Gender/cows			
F	0	0	0
M	0.43	2	0
All (N=96)	0.41		

Source: TL Indicator Survey. N=91 males, 5 females.
*Note: One male is registered with P-score = 0. This is not a valid value, and it was not included in the calculation of the average values for P-score. It was included in the other calculations for this table, however.

[90] We have no guarantee that this has been followed in all instances, and also not that we have been provided with all information on such cases. The method did not aim at perfection, but efficiency.

Only five women are registered in this group, one of whom as old as 50. Normally, a woman of this age would either live with a spouse, or with a relative. It is probable that this is actually the case. Another in this group is Täsfayé Wäday, the young trader woman whom we described earlier. A third woman in this list, T'ägaaläm Dargé was reported to have gone in 2003 on *säfära* (resettlement), but she was not included in the list provided by the chairman (see above). Perhaps none of these women are really active in farming; probably not, since they have no land and live independently from any man (it seems). They also have no animals, for lack of pasture perhaps, or lack of herding capacity. None of the women score higher than three on the P-score.

The men, who constitute a much bigger group of this category, are young, and many of them are active farmers, with a relatively high number of oxen. 31 of the men have no ox, only two have a pair of oxen, but as many as 58 have one ox, giving an average of 0.68 oxen per male landless household. This would have been high if the young men who were registered without land were considered as non-farmers. Many of them farm, however, either as sharecroppers on a regular contract (normally *ekul*, sharing the product equally with the land owner) or with a more favourable arrangement with close relatives (*siso*, keeping two thirds of the product). It seems that such arrangements are common for youngsters who establish their own families.

The P-score is low for the group of landless men, as would be expected. The P-score is based on the assistants' assessments, and includes both their general impression of the household and the resources they control; households with no land will necessarily get a low score. The highest P-score in this group is a priest. Service as a priest does not necessarily contribute to a higher welfare or wealth; the service for the church can contribute to a lower standard of living because time and energy are spent on the clerical work rather than on agricultural tasks. The rather exceptionally high score of 7 in this case may just as well be an indication of an extraordinarily industrious individual, who has personal resources sufficient both for securing his livelihood and for his functions as a priest.

We may assume that the landless households, particularly the male-headed ones, are in their early stages and with only small children, if any. The male agricultural work capacity is therefore normally the household head himself. He is, on the other hand, at the peak of his working capacity. While none of the five female-headed households without land were registered with male adult labour, 87 of the 91 male-headed households were registered with one male worker. Only four were registered with no such labour.[91] None had two or more.

From the survey data at large we get a strong impression of deep poverty. 90% of the female headed households and 74% of the male headed households have a P-score of 3 or lower. Only 6%, all male headed, score six or higher (see table 1.7). The average P-score for female-headed households is 2.96, for male-headed 3.50.

[91] We cannot be sure, however, if the zero value in this field has been entered as a mistake or if this is actually the case, i.e. if the male household head is inable to work, or if he is engaged in other work than agriculture, or attends school.

Table 1.7 P-score distribution by gender (%)

Gender	P-score									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	(N)
M	1	9	62	6	17	3	2	1	100	799
F	0	20	70	3	7	0	0	0	100	226
Total	0	12	64	5	14	2	2	0	99	1,025

Source: Indicator survey. Two cases of P-score = 0 are not included.

The average values for female- and male-headed households may be useful for later comparisons when particular assets are discussed. Due to the "incomplete" character of most female-headed households, compared to male-headed, the female-headed households score lower than male-headed on all indicators. The averages are given in table 1.8.

Table 1.8 Indicator values by gender (averages)

Indicator	Female-headed	Male-headed
P-score	2.96	3.50
Ox	0.21	0.88
Cow	0.17	0.44
Land (*t'emad*)	1.89	2.46
Male labour	0.25	1.27
Age	48.70	46.10

Source: Indicator survey. Two cases of P-score=0 are not included in the calculation of the P-score.

Land

Empress Mänän, the wife of Emperor Haile Selassie, owned much land in Tiweha as her *gult*. One informant said that half of the land was her *gult*, the other half belonged to the church.[92] It is not probable that all land in Tiweha was either her *gult* or church land, but she seems to have had a substantial land interest in the area. Another informant said she owned the very fertile land in the lowland and in the highland. "*At'biya dagnas* were here in all areas as representatives of the Empress," he said. But there were also other *gult* and *rest* land owners in the area. "They were many". The same informant complained that the lowest administrators – the *at'biya dagnas* – were open for bribes; "people who had nothing did not get justice".[93]

The national land reform was implemented in Tiweha by a land redistribution (*shegesheg*) in 1978-79. Land was allotted according to the family size. Ch'ané Mängestu was a relatively big *restägna*, owning twelve plots at different places, each of 3-4 *t'emad*. "I had two plots in Mäsärut, one in Sholayé, nine in Tiweha. I employed workers and paid them to work on the land. We practiced fallow at that time, half of the plots one year, the other half the next year. The land could rest for one year. The production was nice and the fertility was high. The land was my *rest*. I inherited it from my forefathers; they served the church, and

[92] NW1 p. 120, *Qés* Mulat Amaré, 20.03.2003.
[93] NW1 pp. 136-137, Sätägn Alämu Läma 19.03.2003.

they were given land as a salary. We paid tribute to the church in cash and kind, and tax to the government." Ch'ané lost much land in 1978/79, more than most others, he claimed. He was left with three plots, but they were good and fertile.[94] His son commented with a laugh that after the redistribution of 1991, his father was left with only one plot![95]

The land redistribution in 1991, after the EPRDF take-over, was also a complete redistribution. Like Ch'ané Mängestu, another informant also lost more land at that time. Prior to the *Därg* takeover, his family had about fifteen plots, more than 30 *t'emad* at his own estimate. His mother explained that her father was a local nobleman and as a consequence they had relatively much land. They ploughed half of the land themselves, while the other half was ploughed by tenants, who delivered one quarter of the product to the land owner (*erbo*). At the first distribution in 1978-79, the family counted three members, and they were left with three plots, one in each climatical zone (*däga*/highland, *wäynä däga*/middle land and *qola*/lowland), in total about 4-5 *t'emad*. At the EPRDF redistribution, in 1991, they were five family members and got two *t'emad*. "The administrator even insulted me and said that I was a son of a *balabat* and that I only deserved the worst land. He gave me a plot in the lowland – it is down there and is very eroded."[96]

This informant now ploughs land registered with four different tax names. In addition to his own land, he ploughs the land of his mother, sister and wife. His mother lives in a separate house in the same compound, and he sharecrops her land on *ekul* terms (sharing the produce equally with his mother). His sister migrated eight years ago with husband and children to Mätäma in Gondar, where she lives on selling firewood across the border to Sudan. She comes occasionally and collects her produce, which she sells locally (it is not clear if this is a sharecropping agreement; most probably it is by *ekul*). Her husband's land has been taken by the *qäbälé* administration and given to others. Our informant estimated the land of both his mother and his sister to be less than one *t'emad* each. Lastly, he ploughs his wife's land in Agrit. His oldest son, aged 23, lives in a separate house together with his very young wife (her father in law did not know her age, but estimated it to be about 14-15). They were married in 2000, and are yet without children. The son is a *diyaqon*, and ploughs the family's land together with his father, receiving one third of the produce.

The total tax burden on the four individuals is 69.50 birr, a matter that was of great concern for the informant. "It would have been fair if the land had been counted as one. But now we are four taxpayers on the land," he said. He also commented the current tendency of splitting the land of deceased persons without inheritors into two to three parts, which increased the tax burden on the land accordingly. His own household consists of his wife and himself, their two youngest children, who attend school, and a boy who lives with them and works as their shepherd. They

[94] NW2 pp. 54-55, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw 29.03.2003.
[95] NW2 p. 55, Täsfayé Ch'ané 29.03.2003.
[96] NW1 pp. 118-119, 122, anonymous informant, 18.03.2003.

have two oxen, two cows, one sheep, two goats and two donkeys, quite a lot compared to many of their neighbours.[97]

We have already looked at the group of independent households who do not have land. Now we shall consider the overall land endowment in Tiweha *qäbälé*. Table 1.3 showed that the average land holding per independent household is 2.33 *t'emad*, varying from 2.02 *t'emad* in Särt'é Wänz (lowest value) to 2.45 in Tiweha (highest value).

For our purpose it is perhaps more interesting to explore the gender dimension of land ownership. From the literature, and also by the peasants themselves, it is assumed that women-headed households are weaker than male-headed ones, that they have less resources and tend to be at the losing end in transactions over resources, particularly if they do not have male labour in their own household, in relation to the sharecropper who ploughs her land (in Tiweha the typical contract is *ekul*). A female household head is handicapped in ploughing her land, but can very well remain unmarried, even without other male hands in the household, and rather contract a sharecropper who takes care of her agricultural interests, while she is free to engage in petty trade or other activities.

Many of the female headed households are however widows or divorcees in an interim situation. Many will remarry, perhaps in another *qäbälé*, but keeping the land which either continues to be ploughed by a sharecropper, or will be ploughed by her new husband (the latter seems more typical in Tiweha). Table 1.9 shows that the majority (78%) of the female headed households lack adult, male labour, while only 5% of the male headed households are in the same situation. These figures should be read with caution, since the concept of "male labour" might have been interpreted in different ways by our informants and assistants. In general, however, the figures seem to represent the real situation fairly well.

Table 1.9 Male labour by gender of household head (%)

Gender	Male, adult labour						
	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
F	78 (178)	18 (41)	4 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	100 (227)
M	5 (42)	67 (536)	24 (188)	4 (31)	0 (2)	0 (1)	100 (800)
Total	21 (220)	56 (577)	19 (196)	3 (31)	0 (2)	0 (1)	100 (1,027)

Source: Indicator survey

Divorced women keep, in principle, their "share" from the EPRDF land redistribution which was implemented in 1991. This may explain the relative overrepresentation of rather small land holdings in this group. Elder women, typically widows, may figure as both household head and tax list name after their husband, but they do not necessarily remain with all the land of the original family, as the land commonly is split after the death of their husband. Table 1.10 compares the size of the land holdings of men and women. 77% of the land holding, female headed households have less than three *t'emad*, while the same figure for land holding male headed households is 35%. These

[97] NW1 pp. 117-124, anonymous informant, 18.03.2003.

figures do not include the group of landless households, which mainly consists of male headed households.

That few landless women have formed independent households may be an indication of a relative lack of opportunities for typically female economic activities, independent of agriculture, in the local community.

Table 1.10 Distribution of land by gender of land owner (%)

Gender	Land (*t'emad*)							
	0	0-0.99	1	2	3	4	5	Total
M	11	1	9	25	32	22	1	100
F	2	1	34	43	13	6	0	100
Total	9	1	14	29	27	18	1	100

Source: Indicator survey. N= 227 females, 800 males.
Note: Land is reported in *t'emad* by integers, where 2.50 is reported as 2.

The largest land holdings we registered were seven cases (1%) with five *t'emad*. We may assume that land was underreported and that it probably only included ploughland, not grazing land or bushland,[98] but not to such an extent that our figures are totally misleading. They also correspond well with the official tax list data, as was discussed above. 81% of the households have less than four *t'emad*. There is no indication of a small portion of the population controlling a relatively large portion of the land – a natural consequence, perhaps, of the latest land redistribution (1991), but also an indication of the lack of mechanisms in the economic or political system that make land grabbing possible. Table 1.11 shows the relation between P-score and land. If the relatively better off were in a better position because of land accumulation, one would expect that a small portion of the population (the "richest") controlled a relatively larger portion of the land. The data show no such tendency.

Table 1.11 Distribution of land by P-score of owner

P-score	% of households	% of land
0-1*	1	0
2	11	7
3	63	61
4	5	7
5	14	18
6	2	4
7	2	2
8	0	1
Total	100	100

Source: Indicator survey. The total land registered was 2,398 *t'emad*.
* Note: The two cases where P-score was registered as "0" are included. One of them had 2 *t'emad* land. N=1,027.

We did not collect data about household characteristics in our survey. To get a rough estimate of land per person in the *qäbälé*, we may apply the official population figures. The North Wälo Zone reported a population of 5,717 for Tiweha, while Mäqét *wäräda* reported 1,346

[98] Although the form had columns for such land it was not used in Tiweha.

households.[99] This makes an average value of 4.25 persons per household, which can be used to estimate the land per person in the *qäbälé*. We arrive as low as 0.55 *t'emad*, or 0.14 hectare, per person.[100] Land is an extremely scarce resource in Tiweha according to these calculations. As we shall se later, this is also the local opinion.

Table 1.12 Estimated land per person

Persons per household	Survey households	Calculated survey population	Survey land (*t'emad*)	Land per person (*t'emad*)
4.25	1,027	4,362	2,398	0.55

Source: Indicator Survey and Ege and Yigremew (2002).

Oxen

In the literature it is generally claimed that since land is strictly controlled by the state and distributed equally among peasant households, it is not land, but oxen, which is the strongest differentiating factor in the peasant economy. Ox ownership, it is claimed, is the key to accumulation, by renting out oxen for labour, cash or kind, or by sharecropping land of oxless households in arrangements that exploit the oxless landowners.[101] The tax list survey in Tiweha registered ox ownership as it was reported by our local guides and/or the actual household heads or members. We know from experience elsewhere that such information tends to be quite accurate, but the method we applied did not critically check the information we received. In the regular indicator survey, each household member would be listed, and its various resources, including oxen, would be registered. We may have missed instances by our approach of household members, typically adult sons who lived in the household of their parents as semi-dependents, but who were building up their own resource base for a future independent life. Typically, they would have been able to buy a calf and trained it as a plough ox, with which they could start sharecropping other people's land. We have no guarantee that such oxen were included by our informants. These reservations should be kept in mind when we interpret the survey data on oxen ownership below.

Table 1.13 Oxen by gender of household head (%)

Oxen	M	F	Total
0	30 (237)	80 (183)	41 (420)
1	54 (428)	18 (41)	46 (469)
2	16 (130)	2 (3)	13 (133)
3	1 (5)	0 (0)	0 (5)

Source: Indicator Survey.

The survey households own 750 oxen in total. Male headed households own 93% of these. Only five households, all male headed,

[99] Ege and Yigremew (2002).
[100] The standard conversion rate is 4 *t'emad* by 1 ha.
[101] See Ege (2002) for a review of the arguments.

own three oxen. The largest group (46%) has one ox, owning 63% of the ox population. 420 households have no ox (41%).

Table 1.14 Distribution of oxen between households (%)

Oxen	Share of households	Share of oxen
0	41	0
1	46	63
2	13	35
3	0	2
Total	100	100

Source: Indicator Survey.

41 female-headed households (18% of female-headed households) have one ox. Even if they do not have male labour in the household, but sufficient grass land and herding capacity, they can keep the full harvest of their land. Ankay Zälaläw Wudé in Sholayé is a 65 years old woman without male labour in her household. She is listed with only one *t'emad*, far too little for a normal family, and so small that a sharecropping agreement would leave very little both for herself and the sharecropper. Instead she teams her ox with the ox of another (male) one-ox owner. The man ploughs his own land for two days with the composed team, and one day for her.[102]

Three households headed by women have two oxen. All of them also have one cow. Their P-score is relatively high, from four to six, and with the exception of the oldest woman, aged 65, they have male labour. We have no additional information about three of the households, but we know from a note that Eténat Sahlé is the widow of the man who is still listed in the tax list. The age of these three women ranges from 38 to 65, and we may assume that they head well established households, which is also indicated by their high P-score compared to the average of female headed households (2.96). They also have more land than the average for female-headed households in the *qäbälé* (1.89 *t'emad*). Table 1.15 lists the characteristics of these three households.

Table 1.15 Female-headed households with two oxen

Name	*Got'*	P-score	Male labour	Age	Land (*t'emad*)
Habtam Nägash	Särt'é Wänz	4	0	65	2
Eténat Sahlé	Sholayé	5	1	50	3
Zärfé Tadäsä	Tiweha	6	2	38	4

Source: Indicator survey

The "ox theory" mentioned above indicates that ox owners are in a position that give them an upper hand in the local economy. In the following we shall see that the ox owners score higher on the indicators (more labour, more land, more cows and higher P-score) than the ox-less (see table 1.16). This does not "prove" the ox theory however. It simply shows that there is a relation between these indicators. Without more detailed data than we have at hand, we can only show that there are

[102] NW1 p. 140, Wädajé Mätäko Wäldé 19.03.2003 and Indicator survey.

relations, but we cannot say anything about the direction of cause and effect – on the basis of the data, we are left with a "chicken or egg" question: Do ox owners have more labour because they have oxen, or do they have more oxen because they have labour (for herding and ploughing).

Table 1.16 Key indicators by number of oxen (averages)

Oxen	Land	Labour	Cows	P-score	Age	(N)
0	1.99	0.65	0.16	2.89	46.6	420
1	2.39	1.23	0.41	3.39	45.7	469
2	3.17	1.62	0.91	4.78	49.8	133
3	4.00	1.8	1.6	6.8	56.2	5
Total/average	2.33	1.20	0.38	3.39	46.7	1,027

Source: Indicator survey. Two cases of P-score=0 are not included in the calculation of the P-score.

One should also note that the relatively high P-score of the households with two or three oxen is to some extent an effect of the fact that they have two or three oxen, since the P-score assessment is largely dependent on the assets of the household. Perhaps more telling is the fact that the average P-score for the one-ox owners is exactly the same as the average for the whole survey population.

The average age increases with the average number of oxen, with the exception of one-ox owners. The two- and three-ox owners are the oldest. These households are probably well established, with the household head still with working capacity but with a new generation reaching adulthood (as can be seen also from the average values for male labour, which are highest for the two- and three-ox owners). It would have taken us nowhere to claim that the ox ownership is the causing factor for the other high scores, we would just end up in endless, circular arguments. The most probable explanation is that what we see in the table above is a reflection of the development cycles of the households, mixed with a certain amount of "luck" as well as economic strategies, bad or good, by which the different households have been able to build up a relatively robust economy, or have failed in their endeavours.

Except for the potters and blacksmiths in the T'eré hamlet, who receive ox and ploughman service from the peasants in return for their services, we have no indications of ox rentals, where ox owners rent out their oxen for cash, grain, or labour. Sharecropping and different forms of ox teaming seem to be the regular forms of transactions in ox labour. The first impression of ox scarcity that we get from the data (table 1.14 above) may be misleading. 59% of the households have one ox or more. In the group of ox-less households we may assume that there is a substantial number of non-farming households, i.e. households with their main income, however small, from other activities than ploughing the land. It seems that the greatest problem is not lack of oxen, but land scarcity. In this situation it is of course a great asset to have oxen (as well as labour and grazing land), to be able to enter into sharecropping agreements and by that getting access to more land. But Ch'ané Mängestu complained bitterly that even with oxen, it was not easy to find

land owners who were willing to give their land for sharecropping.[103] He claimed that the relatively well off in the community were land owners who gave their land for sharecropping by *ekul*. The practice of paying the landowner in cash, in addition to sharing the harvest equally with her (or him), had gained momentum, it seemed. The pay-off in cash is called *gubo* ("bribe") - an indication that cash payments are a new phenomenon which changes the old tradition of *ekul* sharecropping.

> "Many women have land and they make an "auction", and people who have money pay to the landowner to get access to her land. Depending on the quality of the land, they can pay 100-300 birr as a *gubo*. The first approach is to promise to pay her land tax. But you have to be prepared with more cash, in the middle of things she may change her mind because somebody has promised to pay more money. 'If you don't pay that I will give the land to him', she may say. This happens even after you have invested labour in the land. The competition is strong. Wise people travel and survey the area, if they find well ploughed land, they go to the woman and promise to pay this amount, and she will threaten to cancel the contract if she is not paid more.
>
> One needs to predict the harvest and have cash to pay. Wise peasants are those who have saved money and prepared themselves.
>
> This is not a new thing, during Haile Selassie the agreement was *siso*. We had *ekul* also, on *rest* land. The difference now is that people compete strongly for this chance. Therefore it now involves *gubo*. Before, the *balärest* gave *ekul*. There is competition now because the population is bigger, there are many peasants here now. Land has become expensive, difficult to find."

Ch'ané's wife added: "We can also engage in this, we have oxen and labour but no cash. That is why our oxen are sleeping. We know which land is very productive. If not, we couldn't enter such agreements. We know the potential. But it is risky, if rain fails. It is a kind of game."

The sharecropping agreements are guarded by written contracts and with witnesses (*shemageléwoch*). If the landowner is dissatisfied with the work of the partner, if he spends most of his time on his own land, the landowner can take him to the *qäbälé* court.

Ch'ané claimed that there were also people who rent out their land for cash only (not sharecropping) by one-year contracts, but that there was no competition for this, most people were not interested, perhaps, he thought, because such agreements are illegal and secret and have no legal support.[104]

The sharecroppers normally have their own pair of oxen. The ox owner provides seeds, labour, oxen. The ox owner keeps the straw after harvest.[105]

The school in Sholayé has a fairly large compound, in total about 10 *t'emad* agricultural land, and some adjacent land which is swampy

[103] Ch'ané Mängestu had two oxen.
[104] NW2 pp. 60-62, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw 29.03.2003.
[105] NW2 p. 62, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw 29.03.2003.

from the water from the perennial stream and excellent for grass production. The school takes 1,500 birr per year for the right to plough its land. This will be announced by the *qäbälé* administration, and interested peasants can register and pay for the part they want to plough. The grass production has an annual worth of 1,000 birr. Usually the grass is sold to peasants who cut the grass themselves. But this year (2003) the school director had bought all the grass, the school children cut it. The school director has cattle of his own.[106] The rate applied by the *qäbälé* for the school land may be an indication of the land rent rate. Most probably it is lower than the "market", if it exists, since the arrangement concerns "government" land.

Tiweha *qäbälé* summarised

Tiweha *qäbälé*, although not classified by the local authorities as a "famine area" like the neighbouring *qäbälés*, is characterised by severe land scarcity (estimated to 0,55 *t'emad*, or 0.14 ha, per person), low and often failing agricultural production and a high pressure for outmigration. The *qäbälé* is extremely varied, stretching from the highland plateu in the south-west to the arid lowland in the north-east. A feeder road is being built with NGO funding, which crosses the *qäbälé* on its way to the lowland Särko. We did not observe any mechanised traffic on the road, with the exception of the 4WD pick-up of the road project supervisor, but this may have been seasonal, or it is too early. A small market is emerging at the plain in the middle level, just inside the border of Agrit & Azko *qäbälé*, and this may attract traders who make use of trucks in the future. The distance to Felaqit town and the neighbouring Gärägära market is not prohibitive, neither for school children nor for marketing peasants.

It is difficult to assess the severity of the recent drought and/or crop failures in the *qäbälé*. We know that very many peasants of the area lost more or less all their harvest for several consecutive years, a situation which seems to have been somewhat eased by the provision of emergency relief and food aid. It was also problematic, within the few days we were in the *qäbälé*, to get reliable information about the past production years.

To get accurate and reliable place references was perhaps even more difficult. Tiweha is both the name of the large *qäbälé* and one of the *got's* in the *qäbälé* – our information and also our mapping of the *got'* indicates that it is one of the biggest, and it comprises all the three agro-ecological zones. It has therefore been problematic to assess if "Tiweha" refers to the *qäbälé* as a whole or the particular *got'* with the same name.

Sholayé and the bordering part of Tiweha *got´* seem to benefit from a better climate, better water access (although streams, which under normal conditions were known to be perennial, had now dried up) and probably more fertile soil. These *got's* had the highest average scores on all indicators, suggesting a more robust economy than in the lowland.

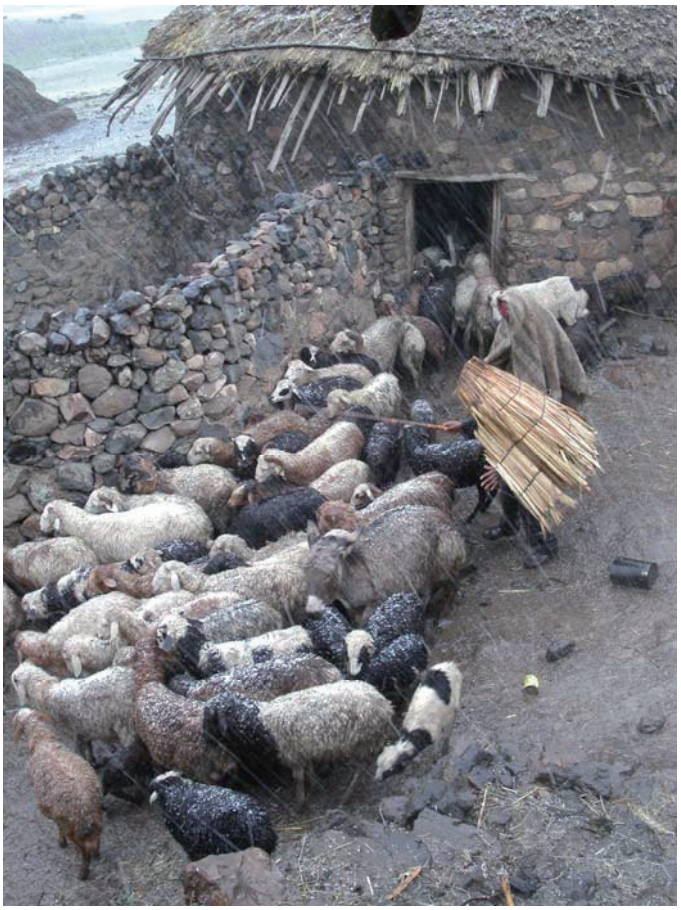
[106] NW1 p. 143, Wädajé Mätäko Wäldé 20.03.2003.

The *wäynä däga* character of Sholayé, with perennial streams and good tree coverage, probably gives more resistance to climatical changes than other areas. The great famine in 1984-85 (1977 E.C.) also struck Tiweha hard, but nobody died of hunger in Sholayé. According to Ch'ané Mängestu, many people came from the lowlands in the *wäräda* and "from places like Lasta", and many of them died before they reached the feeding centre in Felaqit. In Tiweha there was rain, but "the soil and the rain did not fit each other. Everything was there [growing crops], but everything stopped in the middle of growth and there was no grain."[107] Ch'ané Mängestu also remembered the 1965 drought in Tegray: "In 1965 Agäw people came here, there was famine in Tegray and they invaded us. They were begging around the threshing fields, they just stared at us to get some grain before we could get it into the house."[108]

Ch'ané's experience was perhaps coloured by his livingplace, with a relatively good access to water and with a seemingly fruitful soil. The fact that as many as 69 Tiweha inhabitants from 24 households joined the resettlement programme, indicates that the deep poverty we get a glimpse of in the survey data is indeed serious and damaging for many families.

[107] NW2 pp. 64-65, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw 29.03.2003.
[108] NW2 p. 64, Ch'ané Mängestu Bitäw 29.03.2003.

2. Dänkäna *qäbälé*



A flock of sheep, belonging to S'ägayä Mulatä, is brought home during a hail storm, Dänkäna 25 March 2003 (photo: Harald Aspen)

The fieldwork in *qäbälé* 034, Dänkäna, was carried out in March 2003. Prior to the survey work, the tax list for Dänkäna was copied from the Mäqét *Wäräda* Finance Office in Felaqit. We made a preliminary visit to Dänkäna 22 March, and met the *qäbälé* chairman and the MoA Development Agent (DA), and made an appointment for the coming fieldwork. The chairman, S'ägayä Mulatä, turned out to be an acquaintance from earlier – in June 2002 he was one of the *qäbälé* chairmen from Mäqét *wäräda* who were selected by a *wäräda* MoA officer to tell me about the EPRDF land redistribution of 1991. The DA, a young girl whom we met outside her little house close to the school building in Dänkäna, had started in her job only the day before and had little information about the *qäbälé* to share with us. Only a couple of days after we met her, a man from Dänkäna had attempted to rape her, and she had gone to the *wäräda* capital, Felaqit, with the arrested culprit. She did not come back to the *qäbälé* during our stay.

The survey fieldwork in Dänkäna was carried out 24-26 and 28 March. Berhanu Bétä, Lesanäwärq Bétä and Mäsärät Kenfä, each of them working with key informants, did the actual survey work (see section on method above). Aspen did not spend all these days in Dänkäna, but was

partly working elsewhere with Abera G/Kidan, partly he interviewed key informants, together with Abera or Berhanu.

In about two and a half days 772 households were registered. For most of them the indicator variables were also registered (for a number of reasons, we did not get information on all the indicator variables for each household registered). 626 of these entries were accepted for further analysis.

The team spent the days in Dänkäna but made use of the hotel facilities in Felaqit and in Wäldiya.[109] We would start early in the morning from the respective towns and worked the full day, except the last one, in Dänkäna. Each of the three assistants employed a local guide to walk with them and provide the necessary information about the individual households. From the experience we had from the preliminary visit to Dänkäna some days earlier, and the previous fieldwork in Baba Säat, an additional man was hired with the sole responsibility to protect the assistant and his/her guide from attacking dogs. Most households in Dänkäna had one or several watchdogs which invariably attacked strangers with determined ferocity. Some owners could barely control their dogs themselves, but it seemed that the wilder they were the prouder was the owner.[110] The *qäbälé* chairman, who owned three big and aggressive dogs, explained to us that the dogs were a necessary protection against thieves and hyenas.[111]

We were well received by the local leadership and our work went smoothly. Some of the guides and "dog protectors" we hired the first day did not come the next day, however, as a result of decisions made by the *qäbälé* chairman. The chairman was probably the wealthiest among our survey households. He was the owner of a grain mill, the only roadside "tea house" (*shay bét*), a big flock of sheep, and much livestock.[112] The chairman,[113] S'ägayä Mulaté Asäfaw, had been in the position for ten years, since 1993. He explained that the *qäbälé* population was organised in three associations, for women, youths and peasants (*yä-abatoch mahbär*). The membership fee was three birr per year in each of the associations. The money was deposited in the *wäräda*, where it would remain until "we identify a purpose" for the money, as S'ägayä expressed it.[114]

The Dänkäna tax list was copied by hand to A3 size sheets, accommodating space for columns to be used in the survey. Carbon paper was applied to make three sets of each sheet. The tax list counted 1,095 names. The tax list listed the living place of the tax payers. In total

[109] There were relatively good hotel facilities at a much closer distance, in Estayesh, but we failed to make use of them due to misunderstandings.

[110] In Baba Säat, a *qäbälé* on the same highland plateau but located further east, in Guba Lafto *wäräda*, a peasant was reported to have praised his dog and bragged about its deeds – that it had injured more than thirty people in its life (Berhanu Bétä, personal comm.)

[111] It happened, according to the chairman, that hyenas broke in and took a sheep. Hyenas are common in Dänkäna. There are also "jackals" (*qäbäro* – Simien fox), but they are active at daytime (NW1 p. 179, S'ägayä Mulaté Asäfaw 25.03.2003).

[112] Source: indicator survey.

[113] A more correct term would have been *qäbälé* administrator (*qäbälé astädadär*).

[114] NW1 p. 172, S'ägayä Mulaté Asäfaw 25.03.2003.

three *got'* names were used, namely , Dänkäna and T'elalo (also spelled Ch'elalo). The three assistants worked in one *got'* each, bringing with them a full set of the tax list copy. They filled the data directly on the form. Compared to the experience we had in Tiweha and particularly in Debeko, the tax list data on living place turned out, in most instances, to be correct.

The setting

A small section of Baltach *got'* extends into the deep gorge of the river that marks the border between Mäqét and Gedan - Säntäré Wänz. It is a wild landscape and the home of a large number of baboons, which plunder the agricultural fields above the gorge if they are not carefully protected from them. The rest of Dänkäna lies at the highland plateau west of Wäldiya, intersected by the "Chinese road". A miniature "town" – not more than a tea house (apparently owned by the chairman) and a couple of dwellings – lies at the roadside. The tea house is probably the start of what the chairman called a "new town". The little "town" started emerging a year before our fieldwork (2002).[115] The *qäbälé* extends to each side of the road with gently sloping hills with scattered houses. When we first visited Dänkäna the ground was dry and the grass stubs were brown. The *bälg* rain was expected, and it came during the days we were there, first in the form of a heavy hail storm that made us seek refuge in the nearest houses – we were invited to the chairman's house and spent a nice time there with his family and a group of workers who had been busy with constructing a new house in his compound when the hail sent them indoors. The most aggressive dog was lured into an empty house – apparently used, normally, as a shed for the sheep – with a piece of *enjära,* and we could relax a bit, knowing that the dog was pacified. Children became busy with chasing a large flock of sheep – more than thirty - into the compound and one of its houses. Covered with large hailstones, the sheeps melancholically huddled themselves together in front of the much too small door opening. In the course of the survey work, our assistants heard several comments on our questions about oxen, cows, horses and mules, indicating that the most important livestock in the Dänkäna economy was neither of these, but the sheep.[116]

At the arrival of the *bälg* rain, which lasted as long as we stayed in Dänkäna, the peasants started sowing. We observed several peasants ploughing with a couple of horses, as well as with oxen. One informant[117] explained that oxen were preferred for ploughing, but horses are cheaper than oxen. While an ox costs at least 500 birr, one can buy a good horse for only 200 birr. The horse is not as strong as the ox, however, and can only be used in soft and plain land. Muddy, heavy soil

[115] NW1 pp. 176-177, S'ägayä Mulatä 25.03.2003.
[116] NW2 p. 4, Berhanu Bétä 26.03.2003. According to Berhanu, a few peasants had up to 100 sheeps. In Dänkäna we included horse and mule in our questionnaire. The horse was obviously an important draught animal, and we also wanted to check the importance of the mule.
[117] The following is based on an interview by Mäsärät Kenfä of Yaléw Mäbré Tägägn, 24.03.2003.

and steep fields cannot be ploughed by horses. The horse has no value after it is too old for ploughing, while the ox can be fattened and be sold for 800-1000 birr. If the ox has to be slaughtered after an accident, one can still sell the meat for 100-150 birr.

Horse ploughing needs more human labour than ploughing with oxen. While one man is enough to plough with a team of oxen, the horse team needs a person in front, pulling the horses, and a man behind, steering the plough. Women and adolescent girls can pull the horses, while the actual ploughing is always done by a man. We saw several teams in the fields where a man handled the plough and a woman was pulling the horses. In our tax list indicator survey we only asked about male, adult labour, an unfortunate decision also elsewhere, but particularly in Dänkäna, where female labour could have a direct importance in the plough agriculture. While horses easily are injured in their neck if the soil is muddy and heavy, as in September, the oxen manage the ploughing without problems.[118]

There is a school in Dänkäna, close to the road. It had been in operation for seven years, and had four teachers, including the school director. The school had 370 students from grade 1-4.[119]

While three of the assistants were working in Dänkäna, Aspen spent some time together with Abera in Felaqit and in Wäldiya, interviewing *wäräda* and zonal officials. Our time in Dänkäna was partly spent with the *qäbälé* chairman, and partly, for a full day (28 March), with several informants in Baltach *got'*, when we also had the opportunity to walk around in the *got'* and get some impression of the area. Abatä Haylu and Täqu Märsha proved to be knowledgeable informants, and we spent much of the day in their company. We were also invited to Abatä's house, where we were served lunch. Abatä turned out to be the father in law of our local guide, Marägn Sisay, and two of Marägn's children lived with their grandparents. Abatä, in an interview with Berhanu, declared himself as a rich man, with five oxen, "about" 13 cows, 50 sheep and 2 mules.[120]

Climate and crops

When we were invited to the chairman's home, we innocently asked what the *enjära* was made of. "*Gäbs* [barley], of course", was the answer. Barley is the only crop in the highland, we were told. There are two types of barley, S'ägayä explained to us. One is suitable for sowing in *bälg* since it needs much water. The other one is sown in *mähär*, it needs less water. The *bälg* variety was sown at the time of our fieldwork, which was the normal sowing time – the *bälg* rains came a bit late, it should have started in February. The *mähär* barley can be sown in May or as late as in June. The barley sown in March is ready for harvesting in

[118] NW1 pp. 172-174, S'ägayä Mulatä 25.03.2003.
[119] NW1 p. 182; information provided by the teacher who had been working at the school longest of the four (three years). She lived with her two children in a concrete building in the school compound. Unfortunately, we did not note her name.
[120] Abatä Haylu Täfära interviewed by Berhanu Bétä 25.03.2003. The statement was made in connection with his complaints over the ban on marriage feasts in the *qäbälé* which is further discussed below.

August.[121] The existence of a *mähär* variety indicates that *mähär* harvests are not as unusual, or impossible, as one normally would believe, from both local and official sources, in which Dänkäna is regarded as a purely *bälg* producing area. We also saw tiny fields of wheat which must have been sown some time before our fieldwork, in small pockets with favourable soil and water. The wheat fields had been sown in April. One informant, Gétachäw Wäräta, commented that "if there is enough rain, our land has learned to accept any crop". He remembered a big famine which lasted for the whole period of the Italian occupation, caused by too much and too heavy rain. After the occupation the rain was good, he said, and there was good production of cattle, milk and honey. But temperatures were low and frost affected the harvests, even if only barley was grown. Compared to that period, the climate is now warmer, he said, and both peas, lentils and wheat can be grown here and there – hence the statement that the land has learned to accept any crop.[122] We got the impression that the peasants in Dänkäna were very open both to try new crops and to sow whenever there was rain, without strictly adhering to traditional seasons. Gétachäw Wäräta gave us an account of the climatic variations in the last few years. The previous year, 2002, was "not good", but better than the seasons of 1999 and 2000. In 2002, at least some had managed to get an average production, particularly sharecroppers (*ekul* agreements), according to Gétachäw, while the others did not get enough. 2001 had been very low, and much lower than the year after. There was frost, and too little rain, in May and June. People sowed their fields in February and March, but the rain stopped and the harvest failed. In 1999 and 2000 there were no *bälg* rains and consequently no production. The people were dependent on aid these years. The situation was similar in 1998. "Since this is a *bälg* area, it is not suitable for much rain (as in *mähär*). It did not rain during *bälg*. Here 3/4 of the land is suitable for *bälg*, 1/4 for *mähär*, since old days", Gétachäw said. There had not been any serious drought in Dänkäna since the Italian occupation, he explained. They only heard about the drought in 1974, when Qobo was hardest hit. 1985 was also a good year in Dänkäna, people came from other *wärädas* to buy grass and grain straws (*gäläba*).[123] The situation was like that from 1984 to 1986; "we were better off and could sell grain and fodder to neighbouring people." The problems in Dänkäna started from 1991. "During the *Därg* regime, if we failed to get rain in *bälg*, some of us could get something by *mähär*. But

[121] NW1 pp. 172-174, S'ägayä Mulaté Asäfaw 25.03.2003.
[122] NW2 p. 39, Gétachäw Wäräta 28.03.2003. Gétachäw was a child during the Italian occupation but remembers "all the rain, and the cattle. But there was famine, and we had to eat grass. Grain was expensive: a head of cattle cost only 1-2 Maria Theresa birr, grain was twice as expencive. 1 ox was worth less than 1 kg barley." (NW2 p. 42, Abatä Haylu 28.03.2003). This must be taken as a strong statement about the gravity of the situation at that time, rather than an accurate account of the value of oxen and grain.
[123] The *qäbälé* chairman was of a different opinion about the situation in 1985; it was "devastating", he said. He did however say that the agricultural situation in 1999-2000 was worse, but conditions for the people was better, because they received aid in these years. In 1985 there was no aid distribution in Dänkäna. (NW1 pp. 172-174, S'ägayä Mulatä 25.03.2003).

since 1991 the climate has become very terrible."[124] Abatä Haylu had a more poetic explanation of the climatic changes: "During the *Därg* we had enough land and a friendly climate. But now the land has decreased - there is a relationship between land and administration, perhaps the new administration is not on friendly terms with the land. It has become impossible to get the fruits of our labour, as we did previously."[125]

In the two most difficult years, 1999-2000, free aid was distributed to all families, at a rate of 50 kg per month for a family of four. At the time of our fieldwork in Dänkäna, there was only a certain FFW quota reserved for the *qäbälé*, of which 20% was distributed for free to old and disabled persons. In neighbouring Ahun Tägägn *qäbälé*, however, food aid was still distributed. This was explained by the fact that Ahun Tägägn belongs to Guba Lafto *wäräda*, not to Mäqét.[126]

In the major parts of Dänkäna, at the highland plateau, barley is practically the only crop. In the low river gorge in Baltach (Baltach *qola*, or lowland), the production is much more varied. Beans, peas, lentils, maize, wheat, oats, chickpeas, red pepper, *t'éf* and sorghum were mentioned, as well as cabbage and *gésho*. Maize is cultivated on fields irrigated by water from the river (Säntärä Wänz). Some of these crops are sold to the highlanders in the *qäbälé*. Our informant said that the highland is better off if there is sufficient rain – they produce more barley and have more sheep and cattle. "The lowlanders do not produce much even with good rains", he said.[127]

Linseed seems to be a recent introduction in the highland agriculture, at least at the scale it has now. While one informant mentioned that "some individuals recently have begun to grow linseed,[128] another said that "farmers grow linseed in great amount".[129]

Fertiliser is not applied on the Dänkäna fields. S'ägayä Mulatä indicated that chemical fertilisers could have been of use for the *bälg* crops, but fertiliser was not available at that time. If it was applied for *mähär* crops, the frost can destroy the harvest and the fertiliser would have been spent for nothing. He had tried fertiliser but it had no effect, he said. Instead, people follow the normal patterns. The first ploughing is made in September, and cattle graze on the fields until the onset of *bälg.* It is common to use dung, and the new invention introduced by MoA, compost. "We see that it [compost] works. It is free, it is homemade, and it is easy to make. But it needs much work. Hard working farmers use it and see that the output is increasing."[130] Also Gétachäw Wäräta had experience with chemical fertiliser, and he also mentioned the frost as a factor against it. He had used fertiliser four times and would have liked to continue with it, but the prices were steadily increasing and he had dropped it. The price was now up to 250 birr per 50 kg (210 birr + interest).[131]

[124] NW2 pp. 43-44, Gétachäw Wäräta 28.03.2003.
[125] NW2 p. 44, Abatä Haylu 28.03.2003.
[126] NW1 pp. 172-174, S'ägayä Mulatä 25.03.2003.
[127] Abatä Haylu interviewed by Berhanu 27.03.2003.
[128] Abatä Haylu interviewed by Berhanu 27.03.2003.
[129] Feqadé Masräsha Walä interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfä 28.03.2003.
[130] NW1 p. 175-176, S'ägayä Mulatä 25.03.2003.
[131] NW2 pp. 43-44, Gétachäw Wäräta 28.03.2003

There is not much grazing land in Dänkäna, and all is privately owned. Grazing land was included in the 1991 land redistribution. It is common to use the barley stalks to feed both oxen, cows and horses, and people also buy hay from the lowlands.[132] Abatä Haylu, who has much cattle, buys hay in the lowland and carries it up together with his sons. The price is 150-200 birr for one stable (6-7 *shekena*/manloads).[133]

The Dänkäna plain is almost nude of trees, but eucalyptus trees were seen in small groups here and there around the houses. A programme – probably by the NGO SOS Sahel – has been in operation in the *qäbälé* since 1995.[134] Each registered tax payer received 100 seedlings for free, and those interested planted them on their own land. Seedlings were free for three years (1995-1998) but after that interested farmers would pay one birr for 50 seedlings in plastic cover or 100 seedlings without cover. Hardworking farmers, according to our informant, can have up to 100 trees now.[135] The eucalyptus is used for firewood, but cow dung is still the major source of fuel in Dänkäna. Eucalyptus is also used to make agricultural tools, including plough and yoke. It seems that the eucalyptus has replaced some of the wood that previously had to be bought from the lowland.

The eucalyptus plantations are not without problems, however, and not everybody were positive to it. Unused to eucalyptus plantation, the peasants in the beginning planted the seedlings close to their agricultural fields. They experienced that nothing could grow around the trees, and the long roots extended into the fields, obstructing the ploughing. Learning from experience, they later started to plant the trees at a distance from their ploughland.[136] Another problem which came with the tree plantations was an increasing number of birds. A year after the tree plantation started (1996), people had to be on guard and spend time on chasing foraging birds away from the barley fields.[137]

A seed bank was established in 1995 by SOS Sahel. Members of saving associations (*qeré*) received ten *gulét* (one *gulét* is equal to 3 kg) of barley. The next year the borrowers returned 12 *gulét*. This is not primarily considered as a credit, but rather as a more efficient and safe way of seed storage, since the NGO in 1998 also assisted with constructing a grain store, built of stone and with a corrugated iron sheet roof. According to our informant, there is a grain store belonging to a *qeré* in each *got'*. In 2002 the *qeré* of our informant received four thousand birr in cash from the NGO. They used the money to buy barley seeds suitable for the area – an improvement from earlier when the NGO had provided seeds of barley varieties that were not as suitable for local production. In October 2002, all *qeré* members had returned their 12 *gulét* of seeds.[138]

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[132] NW1 p. 177-178, S'ägayä Mulatä 25.03.2003.
[133] NW2 p. 47, Abatä Haylu 28.03.2003.
[134] There was no forestation programme in the *qäbälé* during the Därg (NW1 p. 180, S'ägayä Mulatä 25.03.2003).
[135] This account is based on an interview with Bäza Wäräta Kasaw by Mäsärät Kenfä 25.03.2003.
[136] Interview with Bäza Wäräta Kasaw by Mäsärät Kenfä 25.03.2003.
[137] Interview with Feqadé Masräsha Walä by Mäsärät Kenfä 28.03.2003.
[138] Yaläw Mäbré Tägägn interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfä 26.03.2003.

A campaign for digging water harvesting ponds was going on in the *wäräda* at the time of our fieldwork, and peasants in Dänkäna had also been ordered to dig ponds near their compounds.[139] The purpose was to harvest water for irrigation of vegetable cultivation and for cattle watering. An informant praised the government for its big efforts to support the farmers, but was sceptical to the idea of vegetable cultivation. "We have not had a tradition for vegetable gardening since our fathers and forefathers," he said, "but if we were able to start vegetable production, we would be able to produce for the market and earn cash income to cover our expenses for salt, coffee, kerosene and such things. In that case our grain could have lasted longer."[140] A large pond for common use (cattle watering) had also been made not far from the chairman's house. It was not fenced, and at the time of our fieldwork (28 March) a six year old boy fell into it and drowned.[141]

Trade

One of our local guides, Marägu Sisay from Dänkäna *got'*, provided information on trade and traders in Dänkäna.[142] According to him, common trade commodities which local merchants and middlemen traded were coffee, grain (maize, wheat and finger millet [*dagusa*]),[143] cattle, sheep, poultry, clothes and sugar. The coffee traders, who mainly are from Dänkäna and T'elalo *got's*, were mentioned as "special", since they are better off than others. They hire labourers to work on their fields and carry on with their trade, "even in good rainy seasons". The coffee is bought in Däsé and in Wäldiya and is sold in the markets in Hamusit, Estayesh and Robit (Baba Säat).

Most of the grain which is sold in the local markets of the area is bought in Gojjam. It is brought by lorries and distributed in smaller quantities (20-30 quintals) to the local markets of Hamusit, Robit, Sägnit and Täkuläsh. The grain traders are also better off than most people. "They can cope with whatever crisis is facing the area. Sometimes one can even find *t'äla* [in their homes] in severe crisis situations. But the grain traders do not have big capital, although they are different from normal farmers. They get this small capital from the rural credit service"[144] (see also section on credit below).

Cattle trade seems to be of a certain scale – Marägu mentioned thirteen cattle traders from Dänkäna *got'* alone. Most cattle, as well as sheeps and goats, is bought from Näjat in Täkuläsh [145] and sold in Robit and Hamusit markets.

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[139] A description and evaluation of the experiences with the water harvesting campaign in Amhara and Tigray is found in Rämi (2003).
[140] Qäläm Mäkonen interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfä 25.03.2003.
[141] NW2 p. 25, 28.03.2003.
[142] The following is based on Berhanu Bétä's interview with Marägu Sisay, 26.03.2003.
[143] Most grain is traded from Gojjam. See below.
[144] Marägu Sisay interviewed by Berhanu Bétä, 26.03.2003, p. 2.
[145] This is probably a market around Jäbära Kidanä Mehrät in Gwazha & Jäbära *qäbälé*, Wadla *wäräda*.

There is also a certain trade in poultry. Marägu identified five "famous" poultry traders from Dänkäna *got'* and five from T'elalo. The fowls are bought from Kulmäsk, Gäragära and Waro and are sold in Täräch'é (?), Wäldiya and Hamusit markets. Some of these traders buy 50-100 hens at a time, while others trade 10-20. Poultry trading has its seasonal peaks, or at least the prices have peak seasons. The highest prices are fetched from April to June, the season for *mefäs* - offerings to forefathers and spirits (*qolé*).[146] The colours matter and the hens with the right colours fetch the highest prices. Red cocks are preferred to be slaughtered on behalf of the household head. These are called *yä-gobäz däm* ("the blood of the brave one") and are regarded as the fundamental medicine for reconciliation with forefathers and good health. Women should be represented by red (female) hens. White hens are slaughtered for the *qolé*, the guardian spirit of the family. It can only be eaten by the family members, "but the blood is for the *qolé*."[147]

Resettlement and credit

Another campaign which was at its first peak during our fieldwork in Dänkäna was the resettlement programme.[148] According to the chairman, only two persons finally went.[149] One of them was Muhé Haylu, who initially registered to be resettled and received two sacks and twelve *gulét* of wheat. After the wheat was consumed, he changed his mind and refused to go. Consequently, he was requested to return the wheat or the equivalent in cash (240 birr). Having neither money nor grain he went into hiding for a while. The *qäbälé* chairman held his wife, demanding her to repay the grain or to join the resettlers instead of her husband. The end of the story was that Muhé returned from his hiding and went to be resettled.[150] Despite the element of force in this account, resettlement was now voluntary, as opposed to the resettlement campaigns of the Därg. In the course of chatting with a group of men in the *qäbälé* chairman's house, one commented that "we saw heaven during the Därg" – it was a good time. Another responded that "*säfära* [resettlement campaign] was totally different at that time, anyone who refused would be put in jail. It is better now, we have democracy, people can sleep peacefully at night after having said no, that time one had to escape after saying no, and hide in the bushes."[151]

Both the Mäqét Micro Finance Institute (MMFI) and the Amhara Credit and Savings Institution (ACSI) are represented in Dänkäna and lend money to the peasants there. The chairman said that rural credit was a new thing for the *qäbälé*, and they had not yet experienced any

[146] Marägu used the term *mefäs*. This tradition is known elsewhere in Ethiopia as *ch'eda* (see Kane 1990:2238). Marägu Sisay interviewed by Berhanu Bétä, 26.03.2003, p. 6.
[147] Marägu apparently disliked this tradition. "*Qolé Säyt'an näw*" – *qolé* is Satan – he said. Marägu Sisay interviewed by Berhanu Bétä, 26.03.2003, p. 6. Compare with the *ch'eda* practices in North Shäwa discussed by Aspen (2001:108-110).
[148] See the UN field assessment of the resettlement programme (Abraham 2003) and IRINNEWS (2004)
[149] NW1 pp. 178-179, S'ägayä Mulatä 25.03.2003.
[150] Yaläw Mäbré Tägägn interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfä 25.03.2003.
[151] NW1 pp. 180-181, Tärära Areqé 25.03.2003.

problems in connection with repayments of loans. The total debt of the inhabitants in the *qäbälé* was about 32,000 birr according to him (probably debt to ACSI). The borrowers were organised in groups, and some had borrowed money for sheep fattening, others for trading. The loans were given for a two year period.[152] Other informants had a different version. According to these sources, twelve persons had been imprisoned in the *qäbälé* prison two years earlier for not settling their debt, and their property had been confiscated.[153] This is also confirmed by Marägu Sisay's personal experience which is presented in the following.

Marägu Sisay mentioned that the starting capital for many of the grain traders came from the rural credit service (see section on trade above). He also had personal experience with the credit programme, which is presented in some detail below.[154] The rural credit programme is a relatively new phenomenon in Dänkäna, it was probably initiated in 1995. Marägu identified the lending institution as "SOS" (SOS Sahel), the NGO which later handed over their credit programme to the formally indigenous institution Mäqét Micro Finance Institute. The first time loans were limited to 400 birr, and borrowers had to be organised in groups, each of which had an elected chairman and a secretary. Each member also had to save 25 cents (per month?).

Marägu was a member of a group of 20 women and 20 men – one of the conditions was that each group had women members ("this is why we had women in our group"). Initially each member of the group borrowed 50 birr for six months, with an interest of 6.25 birr for the period. Some of the members were not able to pay back the loan and were finally forced to do so. Marägu could not remember what benefits he got from the first loan – "the loan was small", he said. The second time he borrowed a total of 800 birr. He borrowed 400 birr in his own name, 200 birr in the name of his wife, and another 200 birr in the name of a woman group co-member who was not interested in borrowing for a second time. Marägu's intention was to buy sheep to fatten them for selling, and to buy grain to trade with. The loan was however taken at a difficult time, and production was insufficient. Instead of doing as planned, Marägu bought food for his family and hay for his cattle. The SOS employees had explained to the borrowers than one of the objectives of the credit programme was to help people stay at their living places, instead of being forced to migrate. "But our place is always unpredictable and we face unexpected problems," Marägu said. Marägu and several of his group mates were unable to pay their debt, and had to stand before the *qäbälé* court. The court judged in favour of SOS and in 2001 all the group members had to spend three days in the *qäbälé* prison. At this time, the court organised a committee to sell the property of the borrowers to cover their debt to the SOS.

Marägu paid 1.250 birr in total. 1.090 birr was covered by selling his property – 12 sheeps (630 birr), a horse (300 birr), and aid wheat (160 birr). "I used to be one of the *gobäz gäbäré* – good farmers – in this area.

[152] NW1 p. 179, S'ägayä Mulatä 25.03.2003.
[153] NW2 p. 2, Berhanu Bétä 25.03.2003.
[154] Based on Berhanu Bétä's interview with Marägu Sisay, 26.03.2003.

People called me *gobäz gäbäré*. But after this incident, my sheep flock and other proerty has decreased," he said.[155]

Marägu was very negative to the credit programme, but he praised the seed bank established by the SOS Sahel and the eucalyptus seedlings they provided (see above).

Aid and marriage

In 2003 there was no relief aid provided in Dänkäna, but there was a plan for a FFW distribution at a rate of 45 kg wheat for 18 days of work.[156] The connection between aid and the recent "advice" from the *wäräda* to stop or dramatically reduce the size of wedding celebrations was apparent in Dänkäna. Marägn Sisay reported from a meeting with the *wäräda* authorities, where the scale of wedding celebrations was discussed, that a direct link had been made between wedding celebrations and the competition between *wärädas* for aid. Since Bugna *wäräda* was still in crisis, it would make a wrong impression if relative plenty was demonstrated in Mäqét in the course of wedding celebrations. This might both incite Bugna people to migrate to Mäqét, and it could also give the authorities the impression that people in Mäqét had enough food, and cut back on their aid quota.[157]

The *wäräda* administration denied that they had banned wedding celebrations (*särg*) and parties (*deges*), it was rather meant to raise an awareness and to advise people to limit the scale of the marriage feasts.[158] Most people seemed to consider the rule as a law, however, and this was how it was implemented by the *qäbälé* administration. The decision had been in effect from 1 January, and families who already were in the process of preparing for the celebrations faced problems. Large amounts of meat, *enjära* and *t'äla* were spoiled since the feast had to be cancelled, under the threat of punishment by the *qäbälé*.[159] Also Abatä Haylu had prepared for the marriage of his 18 years old grandchild (daughter's daughter). Two barrels of *t'äla* and eight *gan* (large clay pots) of *korafé* (a *t'äla* variant with little or no alcohol content) had already been prepared and was ready just at the time of the ban. The drink had to be poured out. He estimated that he had spent about 4,000 birr on the preparations. He was not alone; 27 people in the *qäbälé* had to cancel their plans and their preparations were wasted, according to him. The reason for the ban, he said, was that the famine in Bugna, Wag and Lasta made people start migrating in search for food. Abatä was quite upset. "The girl is still not married. I cannot allow her to marry by elopement since I am a respected man. I am a rich man, and I cannot allow my daughter to go without anything."[160]

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[155] Marägu Sisay interviewed by Berhanu Bétä, 26.03.2003, pp. 2-4.
[156] NW2 p. 47, Marägn Sisay (member of *qäbälé* development committee) 28.03.2003. See also above.
[157] NW2 p. 30-31, Marägn Sisay 28.03.2003.
[158] NW2 pp. 10-14, Gäbrä-Amanuél Asäfa (head of Youths, Sport and Culture Office and acting *wäräda* administrator) 27.03.2003.
[159] Käbädu Kätäma interviewed by Berhanu Bétä 28.03.2003.
[160] Abatä Haylu Täfära interviewed by Berhanu Bétä 25.03.2003.

The church also supported the ban on wedding feasts. "The priests decided to condemn those who break this regulation, and the *qäbälé* administration will also follow [prosecute] anyone who breaks this law. Therefore most people have cancelled their plan. This was presented as a law," we were told by a *qäbälé* committee member. "The decision was good for the majority of the people but a blow to those who had prepared for the feast. But it affects the *wäräda* image, which is of very poor people. Up to now this image is correct. To keep the quota we cannot be extragavant," he added.[161]

The ban against "extragavant" wedding celebrations was interpreted locally as a ban against new marriages in general. It complicated the matter that the *wäräda* issued the "advice" against weddings together with a strict enjoinment of the ban against underage marriages. The legal age for marriage is 22 for boys and 18 for girls, but in this area, particularly the girls may customarily be married much earlier.[162] In Dänkäna, people had been arrested and sent to the *wäräda*, accused of marrying after the ban was in effect.[163] The *wäräda* authorities released those who were of legal age for marriage, while they still investigated cases of underage marriages, preparing to take them to court.[164] Some families arranged clandestine, miniature marriage ceremonies at night, with only a few guests and with no singing or dancing, as custom normally requires. Others sent their daughters to relatives in neighbouring *wärädas* and arranged the marriage ceremonies there. Another named person organised a wedding under the cover of celebrating St. George.[165]

Land tenure

Before the revolution, the land in Dänkäna was *rest*, and it seems that the *restägnoch* had relatively large land holdings. *Fitawrari* Däsé was one of the big *rest* land owners. He lived in Kulmäsk in Gedan. Sharecroppers (*tägazh gäbäré*) cultivated the land, and kept half of the produce (*ekul*).[166]

In 1975, a year after the emperor was dethroned, the *Därg* controlled the area, but in 1976 a battle between the *Därg* army and supporters of the old regime was fought in Dänkäna. The Gedan administrator was killed in the battle. After this incident the Därg finally had a firm control of the area.[167]

[161] NW2 pp. 31-33, Marägn Sisay 28.03.2003.
[162] The Family Code of the Amhara National Regional State states that the minimum age is 18 for both men and women (Amhara National Regional State 2003:128).
[163] Käbädu Kätäma interviewed by Berhanu Bétä 28.08.2003. Käbädu provided us with a list of seven persons who had been arrested.
[164] NW2 pp. 47-49, Feqadé Masräsha (member of *wäräda* council), 28.03.2003.
[165] Käbädu Kätäma interviewed by Berhanu Bétä 28.03.2003.
[166] NW1 pp. 180-181, S'ägayä Mulatä and Tärära Areqé 25.03.2003.
[167] NW2 pp. 39-40, Gétachäw Wäräta 28.03.2003.

The three *got's* in present-day Dänkäna were independent administrative units up to then. In 1978 the three were joined to one *qäbälé* under the leadership of Täqu Märsha.[168]

The land reform transferred the land ownership to the tillers (*märét lä-aräshu*), and they continued to plough the same land up to the distribution, when the land was measured (*bä-gämäd*; i.e. by rope) from 1977. The land distribution was completed in 1978.[169] At the Därg land redistribution each family member got 2 *t'emad* land.[170] The relatively large land holdings in Dänkäna may stem from this distribution, although the later EPRDF redistribution, which took place in 1991, probably reduced many family holdings. "In 1991 we lost the land size we had before. It was a very unfortunate experience. Land became very small and we had to stop using fallowing. We can say that after 1991 the soul of the land died," Abatä Haylu said. He explained the reduction of the land size per household with three factors; population increase, erosion, and that agricultural land has been used for house building. One consequence is that fallow is not practiced any more, all land is used every year.[171] Täqu Märsha indicated that the 1991 redistribution favoured "those who were in love with" the new regime's local officials, who took care of the redistribution. He saw this as one reason for differences between people.[172]

It seems that land was categorised in three qualities; good, medium and low quality (*dähna*, or *wäjat märét; mähalägna märét; gäha* or *gät'ar märét*), and that one share consisted of a plot of each category, with one *t'emad* of the best category, two *t'emad* of the medium, and four *t'emad* of the least fertile category. There was no allocation for children, and a husband and a wife received one share together.[173]

The Tax List Indicator Survey

A total of 626 registered households were accepted for further analysis. Another 146 entries on the forms were excluded.[174] None of these were registered with GPS position, since all, or almost all were households that no longer existed in Dänkäna; some were deceased, and many had left Dänkäna and lived elsewhere.[175] The accepted entries included 109 households which were not found in the tax list. The main reason for that is probably that these are new households, but it may also include households/taxpayers that are registered with a different name

[168] NW2 pp. 25-26, Täqu Märsha 28.03.2003. Täqu was chairman only for one year – it was hard to lead a rural community, he said, there was too much *bila* – too many negative things.
[169] NW2 pp. 25-26, Abatä Haylu 28.03.2003.
[170] NW2 pp. 26-27, Täqu Märsha 28.03.2003. The length of the rope (*gämäd*) was 60 *kend.* 60x60 *kend* was equal to 2 *t'emad.*
[171] NW2 pp. 27-28, Abatä Haylu 28.03.2003.
[172] NW2 pp. 35-38, Täqu Märsha 28.03.2003.
[173] NW2 pp. 30-31, Abatä Haylu 28.03.2003.
[174] 140 of these were represented by names in the tax list.
[175] Most of these entries had an annotation that the owner was dead or had migrated, or simply that he or she was "not here". For most of them, there was no additional data, in 13 cases not even the gender was mentioned.

(e.g. a deceased husband) in the tax list. There is therefore probably an overlap between the "new" households in the survey and the non-accepted entries (based on tax list data). To check this correspondence would demand much more work than what was feasible for the current study. The distribution of the 626 accepted households between the *got's* is given in table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Tax List Indicator Survey coverage

Got'	Households (N)	Female headed (%)	Male headed (%)
Baltach	129	26	74
Dänkäna	289	22	78
T'elalo	208	25	75
Total	626	24	76

The tax list counted 980 names. Our survey covered 517 (52%) of these (excluding the 146 households that were reported dissolved or migrated and the 109 entries with no correspondence with the tax list). The highest coverage of tax list entries was in Dänkäna (63%), T'elalo came next (54%) and Baltach had the lowest coverage with 39% compared to the tax list. The official statistics for Dänkäna, collected by Ege and Yegremew (2002), shows that Dänkäna had a population of 3,380 distributed on 822 households.[176] The household figure is notably less than the number of tax payers according to the tax list, but if we nevertheless make use of the official statistics, we get an average of 4.11 members per household. Applying this average on the households covered by the Indicator Survey, we arrive at 2,574 people or 76% of the population. There is obviously an error here, probably stemming from the official figure for the number of households in the *qäbälé*. Most probably we covered around 60% of the households (and the population).

Regional variation in Dänkäna

Dänkäna is a homogenous *qäbälé* in terms of altitude and climate, with the exception of the small section of Baltach that lies in the lowland. Lowland Baltach was not covered by the survey, however. The character of the households, their labour force and agricultural assets, and the gender of the household head, are factors that may account for differences between the households. Some of these variables are explored in the following. We first explore further the gender variable.

Table 2.2
Distribution of female- and male-headed households by *got'* (%)

Got'	Female headed	Male headed	Total
Baltach	26	74	100
Dänkäna	22	78	100
T'elalo	25	75	100
Total	24	76	100

[176] The tax data of 2001 reports a total of 967 tax payers in the *qäbälé* (Letter to North Wälo Zone Finance Office, Wäldiya, from Mäqét *wäräda* Finance office, ref. no. 1582/93, dated 18/08/93 [E.C.]).

There is no *got'* that stands out with a particularly high, or low, percentage of female-headed households. Female-headed households are in many respects more sustainable than a household without adult female labour. Because there are tasks in the peasant household that cannot be done by men, particularly cooking, a wife or an adult female relative is necessary for a viable and sustainable household. The cultural ban against women ploughing, however, is easier to circumvent by sharecropping or other, less market oriented arrangements (e.g. free ploughing assistance by male relatives).[177]

The group of female-headed households may also illustrate the movements between and among households, interim household forms between marriages or after the death of the spouse. The female household heads we found in the survey, about 25% of the households, either represent those who are permanently female-headed or those who are temporarily without a husband. A third possibility is that the woman, who is also the landowner, is counted as the household head even if she has a new husband. 63 out of the 148 female-headed households had one or two adult, male, ablebodied members – perhaps adult sons, or a new husband. We did not cover the composition of the households and can only guess about this.

In the group of 146 households (or household heads) that were reported migrated (or dead), we know the gender for 133 of them. 86 of these (65%) were women – indicating, perhaps, that women have a higher tendency to migrate to her new spouse's place than men. Alternatively, it results from the fact that in many cases, a female-headed household, perhaps only consisting of an old widow (or divorcee) and a grandchild, is only the remnants of a once viable household, which ceases to exist at the death of the old woman.[178]

In general, there is nothing in the data on the distribution of female-headed households that indicates that a certain *got'* in Dänkäna has an economy that differs to any degree from the others, e.g a more urban-oriented section with an over-representation of petty trade and/or *t'äla* selling, as we did in the Debeko *qäbälé*, where an emergent town along the highway constituted one of the *got's*. In the following, we organise the data on the key indicator variables by *got'* and not by the gender of the household head, but keeping in mind that about 25% of the household heads are women.

[177] While the ban against women ploughing may be seen as "cultural", one should also consider the fact that ploughing is physically demanding to such an extent that normally, only healthy adult men are actually capable of doing the work.

[178] It is common that at the end of their lif-span, men and women have a number of marital relations behind them. See, e.g., Aspen (1995).

Table 2.3 Variation in resources (average values)

Got'	Land	Oxen	Cows	Horses	Mules	Labour	P-score
Baltach	3.18	0.62	1.27	0.59	0.09	1.11	3.67
Dänkäna	3.55	0.68	1.46	0.96	0.11	1.09	3.69
T'elalo	3.45	0.60	1.02	0.76	0.06	1.02	3.66
Total	3.44	0.64	1.27	0.82	0.09	1.07	3.66
(N)	618	613	612	612	611	605	583

Source: Indicator Survey.

The indicator averages do not give an immediate impression of a society in crisis. The P-score is low, but not extremely low; the land endowment is good if the climate is favourable (as key informants also stressed; see above), and the livestock averages are also not extremely low, and perhaps good, if the sheep flocks were included. The low average values for oxen must be seen in relation with the same figures for horses; the ploughing power of Dänkäna *qäbälé* seems to be relatively good, and perhaps optimal (see also the section on draught power below). Dänkäna *got'* has the highest scores for all variables except male labour; it seems that people in this *got'* also has a higher preference for breeding cattle as well as for horses (and perhaps for breeding mules). The differences between the *got's* are small, however, and probably reflects the rather equal ecological conditions all over the *qäbälé* (except lowland T'elalo, which is not included in the survey data).

Land

The land data of the tax list shows an average land holding of 2.96 *t'emad* (N=977), about 0.5 *t'emad* less than the survey land data (see table 2.3 above). This may have to do with a certain underestimation for the tax purposes, or that the survey data are more precise. Compared to the tax list, in which land in relatively many cases is given with decimals (e.g. 2.5), the survey land data is in most cases rendered without decimals. The Dänkäna tax list includes registered taxpayers with land ranging from 0.25 to 10 *t'emad* (each of the extremes is represented by only one taxpayer; see table 2.4 below).

In the report about the tax revenue of 2001 from the *wäräda* to the zonal Finance Office, it is shown that the revenue from Dänkäna amounted to 22,545 birr, distributed on five groups of land holders. The tax payers are grouped according to their land holdings, expressed in hectares. The standard conversion rate is 4 *t'emad* per hectare.

Table 2.4 Tax payers by land holdings, *qäbälé* 034 Dänkäna, 2001

	Land holding (hectares)				
	0-0.5	0.5-1	1-1.5	1.5-2	2-2.5
Taxpayers	471	374	100	21	1
%	49%	39%	10%	2%	0%

Source: Letter to North Wälo Zone Finance Office, Wäldiya, from Mäqét *Wäräda* Finance Office, ref nr 1582/93, dated 18/08/93 [E.C.]

Dänkäna is not among the twelve *qäbälés* in Mäqét which pay a reduced tax due to food insecurity, and the Dänkäna tax payers pay standard rates of tax (see table i.1). The smallest holdings (0-0.5 ha) pay 20 birr, and then the tax increases with five birr for each category. The single tax payer of the highest category (in Dänkäna), 2-2.5 ha, pays 40 birr.[179]

Table 2.5 compares the land data of the tax list with the indicator survey data. The land data registered for individuals in the tax list differ to some extent from the land data registered by the survey. Of the 626 survey households, we have land data for 618 from the survey.[180] Of these, 512 are also registered with tax list land data. There is a complete match between tax list land data and survey land data in 39% of the cases. The percentage increases to 79% if we include tax list land data that are up to one *t'emad* bigger or smaller than the survey figures, a relatively good match.

Table 2.5 Tax list land data compared with survey data

Land	Tax list (N)	Tax list (%)	TL Survey (N)	TL Survey (%)
0	0	0	22	4
0-0.99	4	0	1	0
1	117	12	27	4
2	372	38	181	29
3	173	18	63	10
4	192	20	202	33
5	58	6	45	7
6	41	4	50	8
7	8	1	12	2
8	10	1	12	2
9	1	0	0	0
10	1	0	2	0
11	0	0	1	0
Totals	977	100	618	100

Sources: Indicator Survey and 1991 E.C. tax list for *qäbälé* 034 Dänkäna (Mäqét *Wäräda* Finance Office).
Note: Land is reported in *t'emad* by integers, where 2.50 is reported as 2.

Landless households

The Indicator Survey covered all individual households disregarding if they were in the tax list or not. Consequently, also households without land are included, a group which obviously should not be found in the tax list. Seven household heads were registered as landless in the survey, although they were identified in the tax list, perhaps because of changes in the land-holding household or simply

[179] Source: Table received from Mäqét W*äräda* Finance Office 13/3/03 (New income tax and agricultural land taxes). See also Table i.1.
[180] The eight cases where the land data are missing include two cases where the tax list name is a deceased person, and one case where the household head has migrated to Wäläga. The five remaining cases are simply not filled without any annotation on the form to explain why.

because of errors.[181] The chairman claimed that many people, about 150, did not have land, mainly youngsters who were too young at the time of the redistribution (1991), both men and women. "They try trading, some plough small parts of the family land, some also leave and sell their labour in Wäldiya, Raya in Qobo and in Addis Ababa. Most go to town (Addis Ababa). Everybody has a relative in Addis Ababa. That is why many people go there. But even without relations they prefer Addis Ababa before small towns".[182]

In the survey, however, we registered only 22 landless household heads. The "landless" group constitutes 4% of the survey households (3% of the male-headed households and 5% of the female-headed). The landless households are evenly distributed among the *got's*.

Table 2.6 Landless households by *got'*

	Gender of household head		
Got'	F	M	Total
Baltach	0	1	1 (1%)
Dänkäna	4	8	12 (4%)
T'elalo	3	6	9 (4%)
Total	7	15	22 (4%)

Source: TL Indicator Survey.

We have additional information about nine of the households that are registered as landless. One of them, Muluyé Bogalä Negusé, a sixty year old woman, explained that she joined the resettlement programme in 1985 and went to Wäläga "because of the problem". She returned in 2002, and lives with her sister. "I applied to the *qäbälé* for land but they refused. I have nothing", she said.[183] Muluyé is one of fifteen landless who are not in the tax list. Among these is a 25 years old man who has married, but lives with his mother, ploughing her land. Another young man, also 25 years old, is in the process of establishing his own household, perhaps also with assistance from parents. A thirty year old man reports that he works for a farmer in Dälanta *wäräda*, receiving ¼ of the produce.[184] A fifty year old woman is reported to have no land, and that she lives in her father's house. For those we have no specific information about, we may guess that they either are youngsters in the process of establishing their independent lives, with sharecropping other land, or that they in practice are retired from work and live as dependants in the homes of relatives. Table 2.7 below summarises the characteristics of the landless household heads.[185]

[181] Among the 147 households that were registered, but not included, in the analysis, only one was registered without land.
[182] NW1 pp. 176-177, S'ägayä Mulaté Asäfaw, 25.03.2003.
[183] Source: Annotation on survey form by Mäsärät Kenfä.
[184] The expression *erbo* is used, which means ¼, but the explanation given is that the land owner keeps four fifths, leaving one fifth to the worker.
[185] In some of these cases it is problematic to label the individuals as "household heads", since they may be dependents in other households.

Table 2.7 Characteristics of landless households

Gender		Age	
	Average	Max	Min
F	46.1	65	23
M	33.8	60	22
All (N=21)	37.9		
Gender		P-score	
F	2.80	5	1
M	2.71	3	2
All (N=19)	2.74		
Gender		Oxen	
F	0	1	0
M	0.43	2	0
All (N=21)	0.29		
Gender		Cows	
F	0.14	1	0
M	0.64	3	0
All (N=21)	0.48		
Gender		Horses	
F	0.14	1	0
M	0.43	2	0
All (N=21)	0.33		
Gender		Labour	
F	0.17	1	0
M	1.00	1	1
All (N=44)	0.76		

Source: Indicator Survey

Table 2.7 indicates that several of the households are active in farming. One of them, with three cows and two horses, is headed by a 28 year old man, obviously a sharecropper. A comment on the form tells that one of the cows is "used as an ox", i.e. for ploughing. The group of "landless" nearly disappears if we regard *access* to land, and not only formal land rights, in the land holding category.

Rich and poor

We did not collect data about household characteristics in our survey. To get a rough estimate of land per person in the *qäbälé*, we may apply the official population figures. The North Wälo Zone reported a population of 3,380 for Dänkäna, while Mäqét *wäräda* reported 822 households.[186] This makes an average value of 4.11 persons per household, which can be used to estimate the land per person in the *qäbälé*. The figure we arrive at is 0.83 *t'emad*, or 0.206 hectares, per person.[187]

[186] Ege and Yigremew 2002.
[187] The standard conversion rate is 4 *t'emad* by 1 hectare.

Table 2.8 Estimated land per person

Persons per household	Survey households	Calculated survey population	Survey land (*t'emad*)	Land per person (*t'emad)*
4.11	626	2,192	1,444	0.83

Source: Indicator Survey and Ege and Yigremew 2002.

Our survey data only include land that is formally "owned" by the household heads, and not land that is rented for sharecropping. We do not see any tendency of land accumulation in the data, and it is difficult to assess on what basis the "richest" members of the community have built their relative wealth. There are four household heads in our material with the highest possible P-score (10). All are men. They have relatively much land, and many animals. We only have detailed information about one of them, who happens to be the *qäbälé* chairman, S'ägayä Mulaté Asäfaw. He is the owner of a mill, in which an employee is paid 150 birr per month,[188] a tea-house (the only one in the *qäbälé*, located at the roadside). He has ten *t'emad* land, five oxen, four cows, two horses, one mule and a large flock of sheep. We have no indications, however, that his long tenure as a chairman had helped him to achieve all this. He is a strong and energetic 40 year old man, and may have worked himself up to his current position by his own. We observed, however, that he organised a large work campaign on one of his sharecropping fields (it was reported that he had many sharecropping contracts, in addition to his own land), perhaps an easier task for the local administrator than for a common member of the *qäbälé*.

Table 2.9 Household heads with P-score = 10

Age	Labour	Oxen	Cows	Horses	Mules	*T'emad*
60	1	4	6	1	1	8
54	2	3	4	1	1	10
40	3	5	4	2	1	10
69	n.a.	5	6	3	2	11

Source: Indicator Survey

Another method to check if land accumulation is a characteristic of the relatively wealthier in the community, is to compare P-score with land holding. Table 10 shows the relation between these values. The data show that the wealthiest portion of the community owns a relatively larger share of the land available. The table is based on the 581 household heads for whom we have both land and P-score data. These 581 households own 2,015 *t'emad* of land in total.

[188] Source: Annotation on survey form by Mäsärät Kenfä.

Table 2.10 Distribution of land by P-score of owner

P-score	% of households	% of land
1	3	2
2	8	6
3	52	45
4	9	11
5	18	22
6	3	5
7	3	5
8	1	2
9	0	1
10	1	2
Total	100	100

Source: Indicator Survey

We can also investigate the importance of land by looking at the P-score in relation to land holding. 92% of households with less than four *t'emad* land have a P-score of 3 or less. The percentage only gradually decreases with increasing land. More than 50% of those with about 4-5 *t'emad* have a P-score higher than 3.

Table 2.11
Distribution of P-score in relation to land (%) (households with land)

	T'emad									
P-score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	11
1-3	92	84	82	56	40	28	18	8	0	0
4-6	8	15	14	41	50	54	45	58	0	0
7-10	0	1	4	3	10	18	36	33	100	100
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	24	164	57	194	42	50	11	12	2	1

Source: Indicator survey
Note: Land is reported in *t'emad* by integers, where 2.50 is reported as 2. The group with 1 *t'emad* includes one case with 0.5 *t'emad*.

The success of a farming household depends probably more on labour than on its formal land holding. Table 2.12 shows that there is a positive relationship between male labour and P-score. The P-score increases with increasing number of able-bodied men in the household. We can only point to the relationship, not the direction of cause and effect. With more hands there is a greater possibility of renting land and run a successful farm. But more hands also means more consumers, and if the resource base for some or other reason is too small to employ each household member, a high number of household members becomes a liability rather than a resource.

Table 2.12 Distribution of P-score in relation to male labour (%) (households with land)

	Male labour in household					
P-score	0	1	2	3	4	(N)
1-3	92	66	34	19	0	347
4-6	8	31	53	31	67	174
7-10	0	3	14	50	33	32
All	100	100	100	100	100	
(N)	84	355	95	16	3	553

Source: Indicator survey

Draught power

In Dänkäna, both horses and oxen are used as draught power in ploughing. If we only look at oxen as draught power we will get a wrong impression. Oxen are a common indicator of relative wealth and ox ownership is thought to be one important factor of economic polarisation in the peasant communities in Ethiopia (see Ege 2002 for a critical view). Table 2.13 shows the relationship between P-score and ox ownership.

Table 2.13 Distribution of P-score by ox ownership (%)

	Oxen						
P-score	0	1	2	3	4	5	(N)
1	3	2	1	0	0	0	14
2	13	3	0	0	0	0	48
3	67	46	18	20	0	0	304
4	7	26	0	0	0	0	54
5	8	21	51	10	0	0	105
6	1	3	9	40	20	0	20
7	0	0	17	20	20	0	20
8	0	0	3	0	20	50	7
9	0	0	1	0	20	0	2
10	0	0	0	10	20	50	4
Tot.	100	100	100	100	100	100	
(N)	349	109	101	10	5	4	578

Source: Indicator survey

The highest P-score among ox-less households is eight; this is a 70 year old man with no oxen, but with two horses and two cows. He has five *t'emad* land, and two able-bodied men in the household. He probably ploughs with his horses, and perhaps his cows are used for breeding calves for a later replacement of the horses with oxen, or for selling. The second highest P-score among the ox-less households is attributed to three households, one female-headed and two male-headed, all of which have two horses each. There is a tendency that the P-score increases with increasing number of oxen – this may also have to do with other resources in the households, their labour and land endowment and their position in the household development cycle. They are most probably full-fledged households with sufficient labour. We have valid data on

horse ownership for 374 oxless households. 51% of these had no horses, while 16% had two. 189 households had no draught animal. Table 2.14 shows the distribution of oxen and horses among the survey households.

Table 2.14 Ox and horse ownership

	Oxen						
Horses	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
0	189	47	31	1	0	1	269
1	121	46	40	2	1	0	210
2	61	15	26	6	2	2	2
3	3	7	5	1	2	1	19
4	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Total	374	115	104	10	5	4	612

Source: Indicator survey

Presuming that all oxen and horses are used for ploughing, we can get a better impression of the total ploughing force in the community by adding the values for horses and oxen for each household. The average value for ox and horse combined is 1.4 per household, a good ploughing capacity, since not all households are active farming units. Compared with official figures for Dänkäna, which shows an average of 0.31 oxen per household (Ege 2002:67).[189]

The households for which we have survey data on oxen own 393 oxen in total.[190] Table 2.15 shows how this ox population is distributed among the households. 61% of the households have no share in the ox population, while 4% own 18% of the ox population.

Table 2.15 Distribution of oxen between households

Oxen	Share of households (%)	Share of oxen (%)
0	61	0
1	19	29
2	17	53
3	2	8
4	1	5
5	1	5
Total	100	100

Source: Indicator survey

This relatively skewed ownership of oxen, or draught animals, changes if we consider horses and oxen as one category.[191] There are a total of 892 ox/horse units (OHU) in the survey data. Table 2.16 shows how these are distributed among the households.

[189] This figure is notably also much lower than the average of oxen alone which has been calculated from the survey data (0.64).
[190] We have ox data for 613 of the households.
[191] One should keep in mind, however, that oxen have a higher value both in monetary and in practical terms.

Table 2.16 Distribution of ox/horse units (OHU) between households

OHU	Share of households (%)	Share of OHU (%)
0	32	0
1	27	19
2	22	31
3	9	20
4	6	16
5	2	7
6	1	3
7	1	3
8	0	1
Total	100	100

Source: Indicator survey

When ox/horse units are considered instead of oxen only, the group with no animal traction power is reduced from 375 (61%) to 203 (32%). This probably is a much more realistic assessment of the distribution of animal traction power in Dänkäna, compared to the impression we get by looking at oxen only. This is important because the horse economy is normally disregarded both in official statistics and in assessments of poverty and vulnerability, in which ox power is the only measurement

The survey households own a total population of 55 mules. We have too little information about the households and the local economy to be able to assess if mule breeding has any importance in the local economy. 41 of the mule-owning households have only one mule each, and four households have two mules each. Only one household owns more than two mules. This is is a 65 year old man, who is registered to have as many as six mules. He has a P-score of 4, owns a cow, an ox, and two horses, and has four *t'emad* land. If the number of mules is correct, it is perhaps used for transportation, or he trades with mules. At this we can only guess, since there is no additional information about him on the form.

We also do not know where the horses come from, to what extent they are bred locally, as the data does not differentiate between stallions and mares, or if they are bought from the market. We can however get an indication of the priorities in the livestock economy by studying the cow/ox ratio.

Table 2.17. Cow/ox ratio

Got'	Cows	Oxen	Cow/ox ratio
Baltach	164	80	2.05
Dänkäna	407	190	2.14
T'elalo	209	123	1.70
Total	780	393	1.98

Source: Indicator survey

There is very little difference between the *got's* of the *qäbälé* as one would expect; the economy is quite uniform in the highland areas of

Dänkäna. Two cows per oxen is an indication of the importance of the livestock economy in Dänkäna.[192] Not only sheeps, but also young cattle seem to be a part of this economy. "Cows are kept for the milk, which is consumed by the household, or to produce oxen," S'ägayä Mulatä told us. "If we sell, we normally sell the calves when they are two years old, male and female. We sell in times of scarcity, if there is plenty, we keep them. The market is Robit Baba Säat. They sell for good price there, 200 birr. But presently it is cheap, only 100 birr, because of the drought – there is no pasture."[193]

Dänkäna *qäbälé* summarised

Dänkäna *qäbälé* may be representative for the highland ecology and economy of the eastern parts of Mäqét, with its reliance on *bälg* production, combined with a relatively large livestock economy. The *bälg* production is of great importance, as became evident when the *bälg* failed from 1999 onwards, and the famine vulnerability and need for relief became concentrated to the western highlands of North Wälo, a change from the previous pattern of highest drought and famine vulnerability in the eastern, *mähär*-producing lowlands. The crisis was serious in Dänkäna, but its consequences seem to have been curtailed by quick and efficient distribution of relief aid. Aid apparently had become a field of conflict, particularly between the *wäräda* authorities, whose impression management strategies included banning conspicuous marriage celebrations, and the *qäbälé* inhabitants, who felt that they had a right to organise marriage celebrations for their adult children. The ongoing resettlement campaign, also with some connection with aid distribution, had very little appeal in Dänkäna.

Despite the recent history of crop failure and aid dependency, Dänkäna did not appear to be in acute crisis. The plough agriculture, dominated by barley production (but with a wide range of other crops, and during other seasons than the *bälg*, being tested out by individual peasants), seems relatively robust despite the harsh climatic conditions. With good rain at the right time, the barley field produce more than enough to cover consumption needs; if it fails, the peasants can fall back on their livestock.

The *qäbälé* is homogenous in topography, climate, ecology and economy, with the exception of a small lowland part which was not included in the survey. We found no clear patterns of differences between the different parts (*got's*) of the *qäbälé*. Dänkäna, although it is crossed by the Chinese road, has not yet an urban settlement of any importance, but an embryonic "town", only a year old, may develop into a bigger settlement – a tendency which can be seen all along the highway, in a matter of a few years.[194] Trade is nevertheless an important side- or major livelihood for many of the Dänkäna inhabitants, but our data are too rough to estimate the scale of this activity.

[192] The cow/ox ratio calculated on the basis of official statistics is 1.91 for Dänkäna (Ege 2002:67).
[193] NW1 pp. 177-178, S'ägayä Mulatä 25.03.2003.
[194] Cf. Aspen (2009).

The horse seems to be important for the plough agriculture. The average number of oxen per household is relatively low, but if the horses are also included, the total ploughing capacity of the *qäbälé* seems to be good. It is our impression that sheep breeding is an important element of the livestock economy, but that also young cattle is bred and used as a safety net in case of crop failure.

We found few household heads which were landless and without other means of livelihood. This may have to do with the decision to leave out 146 of the total of 772 entries, mainly because the data registered for them were insufficient for analysis, and because many of them had left the *qäbälé* and lived elsewhere, or were dead. Although all except one of these households were identified in the tax list as having land, they may still have been landless widows, descendants or divorcees of the person originally listed as taxpayer. It would have been of particular interest to follow up these households, but this was beyond the scope and opportunities of the present work.

In general, the land endowment is relatively high compared to other areas of Mäqét, but even so, it is too low as a basis alone for a livelihood. Sharecropping is probably widespread, and necessary for households for which the plough agriculture is the main source of living.

3. Debeko *qäbälé*

Landscape of Enkoybär got'*, Debeko, 2 April 2003 (photo: Harald Aspen).*

The survey fieldwork in *qäbälé* 026, Debeko, was carried out 1-2 April 2003. We also visited Debeko 30 March to prepare for the survey work. Prior to the fieldwork, the tax list for Debeko was copied from the Mäqét *wäräda* Finance Office in Felaqit.

The group of assistants who worked with Aspen in Debeko consisted of Abera Gebre Kidan, Berhanu Bétä, Lesanäwärq Bétä and Mäsärät Kenfä, each of them working with key informants (see section on method above).

Although the ambitions for the fieldwork and the survey were rather modest, we were able to cover more than 500 households in a short time. As Aspen did not fill questionnaires, but walked around with one of the assistants (alternating between Abera and Berhanu), he was able to go deeper into certain aspects of life in Debeko, as topics presented themselves to us in the course of interviews, breaks and invitations for coffee and/or food in people's homes. The qualitative information we were able to gather in the short time available was still, however, quite limited.

The whole team spent the nights at a hotel in Lalibäla during our fieldwork in Debeko. The journey between Lalibäla and Debeko took about one hour. We started early in the morning and returned in the late afternoon, preferably before dark. The coverage of households varied between the localities. The assistant working in Gäbäyaw Mändär

"town", Mäsärät Kenfä, had the highest coverage since the households were easily accessible around the main road and the settlement pattern was rather dense. The lowest coverage was in Jerar. Jerar is a typical rural area, with households clustered in village-like settlements. It took about two hours to walk there from the main road. Our original plan to settle in Debeko for a couple of days in a tent was cancelled due to the high malaria prevalence and lack of proper medication.

We had a brief stop at Debeko on 22 March to get some impressions and to look for available lodging and catering. We were not able to meet any *qäbälé* officials but had a brief chat with a group of men who were digging a new channel from a little stream close to the road. On 30 March we went to Debeko with a print-out of the tax list, which had been copied to a computer file and printed on our small ink-jet printer in the hotel room in Felaqit. Our purpose was to bring our research permit letters from the Mäqét *wäräda* administration to the *qäbälé* administration in Debeko, to discuss our work with the local authorities, and to cross-check the tax list information with them, particularly to check if the information on place names (*got'* names) of the list was correct. When we arrived, the whole *qäbälé* leadership was busy in a meeting in the local school building, but after some time, we met with *qés* Yerga Mängestu. He was head of Security and Justice Affairs and a member of the *qäbälé* cabinet, and he was serving as a priest in the Mariyam church of Jerar. He had been the *qäbälé* chairman for seven years, but was demoted in December 2002, after a conflict with the *wäräda* administration which is described below. *Qés* Yerga proved to be a very helpful and knowledgeable informant, and he also volunteered to serve as our local guide in his home *got'*, Jerar. He also assisted us with assigning local guides to accompany the three other assistants, and we agreed to come back two days later to start the actual work.

The Debeko tax list was entered to a computer file as it was, with information on name, land and *got'*. This list was discussed for almost a full day with *qés* Yerga, and we found that most of the information on residence of the tax payers (the *got'* names) was wrong. This was surprising, not only to us, but also to *qés* Yerga, who had been the *qäbälé* chairman in 1999 when the tax lists had been produced. He had no explanation of the errors, however. In the field, it appeared that also the corrections were perhaps incorrect, and some place names had to be changed again. In the afternoon, after going through each name on the tax list, *qés* Yerga took us to a point near the school where we had a good view of most of the *qäbälé* and explained to us where the different *got's* were. He also gave us an assessment of the walking distances to each part. On this basis, we decided which parts we were to work in, so that local guides with good knowledge of the respective *got's* could be recruited before we came back.

The following day was spent in Wäldiya, where we recoded the data on *got'* residence in the tax list according to the information we had been provided with by *qés* Yerga. A computer school in the town helped us with printing four sets of the reorganised tax list, which had also been provided with columns for the indicator variables in our survey. Each

assistant was then provided with a full set of the form, and could just fill in the variables directly on the form. Since the form was already computerised, the later data entry was easy and quick.

Apart from the time needed to cover the distances to the assigned *got's* by two of the assistant teams, the fieldwork was also smooth. The full set of the form on which the names were already filled in made the work efficient. Names of household heads which were not found on the form were simply appended to the pre-printed form.

The setting

The little town in Debeko, Gäbäyaw Mändär, is located on the main road from Gashäna to Lalibäla, at a relatively low altitude. The altitude of the veterinary clinic, which was out of operation when we were there, is 2,315 m. This is the highest point in the "town", but the *qäbälé* extends towards the sharp escarpment below Hamusit and Boya in the south-east with settlements at relatively high altitudes. The major parts of the *qäbälé* are in the relatively flat lowlands. We did not visit other parts of the *qäbälé* than the four we covered by the survey. Gäbäyaw Mändär and Enkoybär are easily accessed from the main road; Gäbäyaw Mändär more or less lies along the road, while the houses closest to the road in Enkoybär lie about 20 minutes walk away, on the big plain west of the road. I observed all the four *got's*, and spent a day in Jerar accompanying Berhanu working with the interviews, and another day with Abera in Enkoybär. The footpath to Jerar went through Agäré Tägägn in relatively flat terrain. After the border between Ageré Tägägn and Jerar, which follows a river, the landscape starts to rise and the terrain becomes steeper and more varied. The riverbed is at an altitude of about 2,210 m.

The lowest part of the *qäbälé* is Enkoybär. It has a typical lowland character, with bushes, some trees, and compounds with several houses. The houses are simple, made of wood and straw, where only the lower parts of the walls are covered and smoothed with mud. In some compounds there were more or less aggressive dogs, which sometimes made it difficult to approach the houses. Here and there we observed small thickets of bamboo, indicating water sources.

The Gäbäyaw Mändär village is typical for the small towns that emerge along the two relatively new roads in Mäqét (the "Chinese road" westwards and the Gashäna-Lalibäla road northwards). It has a relatively large Friday market almost on the road, and a few *buna bets*, coffee houses where simple food and drinks are sold. From the survey data it is apparent that quite a number of households, particularly those headed by women in the town, have *t'äla* (local beer) and *aräqé* (locally distilled alcohol) production and sales as their major, or additional, income. The town also has a school which was built in 1972, by "the people", *qés* Yerga proudly told us. Presently it accommodated grades 1-6, but construction work was underway to expand it to grade 8.[195]

[195] NW2 p. 115, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 03.04.2003.

There is also a health clinic in Gäbäyaw Mändär, where the numerous malaria victims may get treatment. The wife of the owner of one of the local food and *aräqé* houses was sick of malaria when we visited Debeko, and she had been treated with Fansidar. We were informed that many people did not get Fansidar if they had had malaria less than six months before; Fansidar is prescribed with at least six months break between the treatments. "But nowadays one gets malaria with only one month's break", we were told.[196]

Climate and crops

Our impression that the *qäbälé* mainly consisted of lowland was corrected by the Development Agent (DA) in Debeko, Zäläm Mulatu. According to figures on posters in his office, 75% (1,722 ha) is *wäynä däga* (middle altitude) and 25% *qola* (lowland). Zäläm argued that since it is possible to grow crops like beans and peas and others associated with this agro-climatical zone, it is *wäynä-däga*.[197] A poster in the DA office also listed the results of a "Total Land Use Study" of 2001. The data are listed in table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Debeko land coverage

Land type	Area (ha)
Vegetable land	11.3
Arable land	2.170
Pasture	1,691
Bushes	97
Forest	7
No use	53
Can be forested	23

Source: "Total land use study 1993 [E.C.]" Debeko Development Agent's Office (NW2 p. 111).

Debeko was one of twelve *qäbälés* in Mäqét *wäräda* with a reduced tax rate due to the drought.[198] It was however difficult to get accurate descriptions on the magnitude of the drought, both from peasants and from the local DA. The DA, Zäläm Mulatu, explained to us that the assessments of annual crop production were made by a "specialist team" from the *wäräda* (probably the *wäräda* office of the Ministry of Agriculture). The team makes assessments three times a year in selected *qäbälés*, with emphasis on selecting *qäbälés* in different agro-ecological zones. Debeko was one of the selected *qäbälés* which the team had visited. They also base their assment on reports to the *wäräda* from

[196] NW2 p. 114, Mukreyé Ch'ané 02.04.2003.
[197] NW2 p. 111, Zäläm Mulatu 02.04.2003. According to Zäläm, it was only two *got's* that were predominantly lowland (*qola*), namely Enkoybär and Mädänbiya. The others were predominantly *wäynä däga*. Zäläm also used a term for the altitude above the *wäynä däga*, *t'eg*, but this was not reflected in the posters on his office wall (NW2 p. 112, Zäläm Mulatu 02.04.2003).
[198] Letter to North Wälo Zone Finance Office, Wäldiya, from Mäqét *wäräda* Finance Office, ref nr 1582/93, dated 18/08/93 [E.C.].

the DAs, Zäläm said. When we asked him about recent reports from Debeko to the *wäräda* however, he could only mention that he and his colleague had reported about a flood in the highest part of the *qäbälé* (*t'eg*), but the flood had no significance for the assessment of relief need or aid. "It is difficult to report on relief need, so we only reported this incident", he said. "If we report on relief need, people will exaggerate, and therefore we do not use the peasants' own assessments", he added.[199] When we pressed him to make his own assessment of the last production year (2002-2003), he explained that the rains started early (June 2002) and stopped early (September 2002). Except in Enkoybär, where peasants started sowing early and got a relatively good harvest, the harvests in the *qäbälé* were very small, because the rain stopped when the grain was about to set seeds. We asked Zäläm to assess last year's production on a scale from 0-10, but he replied that they usually compare with "average production", and that "good" was many years ago. He added that the previous production year (2001-2002) had been better than the most recent one (2002-2003), but still it was very low compared to years when there is good rain. "The last year's production will be sufficient for most people up to June. From then there will be a big cattle market here", he said, implying that people will have to sell their animals in order to purchase food. "In good years, people will still have grain in their stores when they harvest again."[200]

Qés Yerga was more accurate, but perhaps mainly referring to his own area (Jerar). Last year's production was not sufficient, he said, but the "strongest peasants" who sowed in June at least managed to get some grain and fodder for their animals, while the majority got little. "Rain usually stops in September, but that is the time when it is needed, because it is the time when the *t'éf* sets seeds. This is why we always are in problem. When I compare this year with other years, we at least got enough fodder – in the middle of the *mähär* [summer rains] the rain stopped, but we could at least use the *t'éf* straw for our animals. We survive by selling animals, that is what keeps us alive."[201]

"The most difficult period starts in May. Up to then people normally have food. The easiest period is from November to January, this is the time when the harvest is in. May is the sowing time. Many face a problem with seeds; and some peasants have to rent out their land because they do not have seeds. The most difficult month is September. In that month people may even die due to lack of food. In October the first crops start to ripe and the early harvest can start (peas, beans, maize and barley). *T'éf* takes longer time."[202]

The most important crop in Debeko is *t'éf*. According to the DA, the crops grown in Debeko can be ranked according to their "importance" in the following order:[203]

[199] NW2 p. 112, Zäläm Mulatu 02.04.2003.
[200] NW2 pp. 112-113, Zäläm Mulatu 02.04.2003.
[201] NW2 pp. 82-83, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 30.03.2003.
[202] NW2 p. 100, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 01.04.2003.
[203] NW2 p. 110, Zäläm Mulatu 02.04.2003.

1. *T'éf*
2. Millet (*Mashela*)
3. Sorghum (*Zängada*)
4. Lentils
5. Peas
6. Beans
7. Wheat
8. Barley

In the lowest parts of the *qäbälé, t'éf*, millet and chickpeas are common crops. In the highest tracts (*t'eg*, see above) beans, barley, wheat and *t'éf* is grown. Eucalyptus trees were also mentioned as a crop there.[204]

Access to water varies between the areas of Debeko. In Enkoybär, some households, if not all, had to fetch drinking water from a well at the other side of the market in Gäbäyaw Mändär, about 30 minutes' walk away. In Jerar, there were several small streams; the biggest river was almost dry when we were there. The name of the river, which makes the border between Jerar and Ageré Tägägn, is called And Ayqadäsh ("one cannot draw water"). Yerga's explanation of the name was that the forest around the river was so dense that it was impossible to go there and collect water. Since the time of Haile Selassie the forest has gradually decreased. The forest was common property, i.e. free for anybody to cut trees.[205] Now there are no trees around the riverbed.

Aid

The aid provisons to Debeko had created a conflict between the local leadership and the *wäräda* administration not long before we were there. The previous *qäbälé* chairman, *qés* Yerga, was rather upset about this, and told us the story in detail when we first met. He had been removed from his position as *qäbälé* chairman in December 2002, after seven years in the chair. The reason, according to him, was that the *wäräda* administration accused him of inciting the people in the *qäbälé* to demonstrate against a new regulation regarding the aid distribution. In November 2002 there had been a conference at *wäräda* level, and the issue of corruption had been raised. To reduce the danger of corruption in connection with aid distribution, it had been decided that each aid recipient had to come personally to one of the two distribution centres in the *wäräda* to collect their individual quota. The recipients in Debeko sorted under the centre in Felaqit and had to go there to receive their wheat (the other centre was in Estayäsh).[206] Debeko had a quota of 900 FFW shares of 12.5 kg what each, from June to December 2002. Prior to

[204] NW2 pp. 82-83, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 30.03.2003.
[205] NW2 pp. 94-95, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 01.04.2003.
[206] The Amhara Rehabilitation and Development Organisation (ARDO) was in charge of the aid and relief distribution in Mäqét. The zonal relief coordinator, Täsgayä Bäkälé confirmed that the distribution was restricted to the two centres to reduce the risk of corruption, but also added that the centres must have good storage facilities and appropriate administration. (NW2 p. 84, 31.03.2003).

the new regulation, it was allowed for people to collect aid on the behalf of others. Believeing that this was still possible after the distribution was made from Felaqit, about 400 of the total of 900 persons eligible for support had gone to Felaqit, but were told that the relief grain had to be collected personally by the individual who had "earned" it. People protested and probably demonstrated in the *wäräda* capital. The chairman of the *qäbälé*, *qés* Yerga, was accused by the *wäräda* for instigating the people and for not being able to administer them. "Everybody should come to the *wäräda* to collect their share. But some were sick of malaria and other things, and the people who went said that 'we represent them – they are our parents and relatives'. So I was demoted."[207] It seems that the demonstrations continued in Debeko, by the 500 people who had not yet received their quota. In the end, everybody had to report at the distribution centre in Felaqit. The normal route to Felaqit is to walk along the old road, following the lowland tracts. It takes about four hours one way. Yerga commented that the travel itself also incurs costs, at least some expenditure for buying something to drink (a glass of tea), or even heavier expenses if things take time at the distribution centre and one has to spend the night in the town. The *wäräda* council had decided to remove Yerga from his position as chairman and replace him with Asäfa Alämréw. Asäfa was head of Security and Justice Affairs, a position that Yerga took over. "I have no problems with the new chairman – to be a leader of peasants is not a big deal!"[208] Asäfa did not feel comfortable with the situation, Yerga said, and "the people" had also tried to demonstrate against the reshuffling of the *qäbälé* leadership without any election.[209]

The aid quota was reduced from 900 to 300 for the following year (2003). Yerga believed that this was a punishment from the *wäräda*, because of the unrest connected with the aid the year before and because very few from Debeko had volunteered to join the official resettlement programme which was being implemented in the region.[210] Only four household heads, totalling eight people, had registered for the resettlement programme. "The *wäräda* asked us, 'why do you not go on *säfära* [resettlement] if you are poor?' We quarrel with the *wäräda* on this issue and we are in a deep crisis", Yerga said.[211] The DA in Debeko provided us with a different figure for the resettlement registration. According to him, three people registered, but in the end only one, Seraq Magnu, left. He lived in Gäbäyaw Mändär, had land there but had given

[207] NW2 p. 77, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 30.03.2003.
[208] NW2 p. 81, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 30.03.2003.
[209] NW2 pp. 76-83, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 30.03.2003.
[210] See an assessment of the objectives and early stages of the resettlement programme in Abraham (2003).
[211] NW2 p. 79, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 30.03.2003. That the reduction of the aid quota was connected with the Debeko people's unwillingness to join the resettlement programme was Yerga's understanding and not necessarily the actual reason. According to correspondence between Mäqét Wäräda and the North Wälo Zone DPPC office, the aid quota for 1994 E.C. was 185 for the period July to November 2002 and 742 for the period March-October 2002 (Letter to North Wälo Zone, DPPC office, Wäldiya, from Mäqét Wäräda dated 2/3/94 [E.C.] ref no. A48/1122/94**).**

it to somebody for sharecropping. With his family members who joined him, only three people left with the resettlement programme.[212]

The aid quota is 12.5 kg wheat for five day's work. Yerga listed several FFW projects, such as soil conservation, road construction, and the more recent trend, digging holes for water collection.[213]

Credit

Qés Yerga mentioned the lean season, starting from May, as the period when people are in need of credit. People may borrow grain from relatives, or cash from money lenders, who are either traders in Gäbäyaw Mändär town or rural butter traders. The semi-urban traders charge 10% per month, the butter traders 5%, he said. There are 3-4 butter traders in Debeko *qäbälé*, one of them turned out to be Yerga's brother. The Mäqét Micro Finance Institution (MMFI) has a branch office in Debeko.[214] The credit provided by MMFI is meant to benefit particular target groups, particularly women, who could get credit to start petty trade or other income-generating activities.[215] Credit for investment in farming is not MMFI's objective, but rather "micro-entrepreneurial" activities of petty trade.[216] Money borrowed by peasants from MMFI, disregarding the formal justification for it, tended to be spent on food instead of investments. "There are people who borrowed money from them, but spent it unwisely, thinking 'it is government money and I may not be asked to pay back'. They then are asked to return the money. People have borrowed from 200 up to 1000 birr. The interest is good, 2 birr/month.[217] The problem is the way people act. Most borrowers from them [MMFI] are in deep problem now."[218] The difference between rich and poor, in Yerga's view, depends on two things; one's ability to work, and luck. "While one peasant may get four to five calves from his cow, another may loose his cow and struggle to buy a new. These things make life difficult…"[219]

A seed bank, lending seeds to needy peasants, was also established in Gäbäyaw Mändär *got'*, probably by the SOS Sahel organisation. It does not seem to have been a success, at least not for the first year of operation. Negusé Agazä, the chairman of the local

[212] NW2 p. 109, Zäläm Mulatu 02.04.2003.
[213] NW2 p. 79, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 30.03.2003. We observed water collection holes in Tiweha and Dänkäna too. The holes were made as a result of orders from the *wäräda* MoA. See Rämi 2003 for an assessment of the water harvesting campaign in Amhara and Tigray.
[214] The other credit institution in Mäqét is the Amhara Credit and Savings Institution (ACSI). It has its *wäräda* head office in Felaqit and 24 branch centres in Mäqét (NW2 pp.22-23, Säfiyu Aläma [ACSI ledger accountant], 27.03.2003). ACSI has probably not a branch office in Debeko.
[215] NW1 p. 93, Tegest Käbädä (MMFI administrator), 10.06.2002.
[216] NW2 p. 19, Fantäw Ayalew (MMFI manager), 27.03.2003.
[217] Interest rates are often expressed in birr per 100 birr. MMFI informed us that their interest rate on loans was 20% per year (NW2 p. 20, Fantäw Ayalew [MMFI manager], 27.03.2003)
[218] NW2 pp. 100-102, *qés* Yerga Mängestu, 01.04.2003.
[219] NW2 p.98, *qés* Yerga Mängestu, 01.04.2003.

committee repsonisble for the seed bank, explained that the SOS initially selected 45 people in 2001, and they volunteered to contribute to the construction of the grain store, located in Ageré Tägägn. They used the sand and stone available around the construction place and the people contributed labour. Corrugated iron sheets, cement, wood, nails and the payment to the construction workers was covered by SOS. A chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, a store keeper, a grain purchaser and two auditors were elected among the 45 people (all were men). They were trained for three days by SOS before they purchased grain for about 12,000 birr (in December 2001 and January 2002) and placed it in the store. The grain was distributed in June the same year. Each borrower agreed, by signing a written contract, to return the loan the following December. But it seems that everybody failed to do so. "When we asked them to pay last December [2002], they asked for an extension of the agreement, because we had problems with grain. We agreed, and the grain is still with the farmers."[220]

Land history

Our only source to the land tenure system in Debeko prior to the revolution is *qés* Yerga. He was 41 years old in 2003, and his accounts of past systems and events may have been coloured both by the revolutionary understanding of the past, which was predominant when he grew up under the *Därg* regime, and by little actual knowledge about how things were. By his account Debeko was a *rest* area – *qés* Yerga knew of only two people who had been sharecroppers in *mägazo* arrangements with *balä restoch* (*rest* land owners). In *qés* Yerga's opinion it was easy to get *rest* land; "one had to be active, argue with others and win. It was simple to take land at that time – count back one's relatives, and one could win." [221]

The first land proclamation was in 1975, and in 1981 there was a "fair and just *shegesheg*" in *qés* Yerga's words. This was probably just the transfer of land rights from the land owners to the actual tillers, without any reshuffling of land between claimants. In 1984 there was a redistribution where land was measured by a rope (*bä-gämäd*) and was distributed to households according to their size (number of household members). According to *qés* Yerga, a family of six would get six hectares, equal to nine *t'emad.*[222] This is obviously not correct, a *t'emad* is usually counted as four hectares. *Qés* Yerga's explanation of the conversion rate as two *t'emad* per hectare is obviously also wrong if it is applied on his own conversion of six hectares to nine *t'emad.*

In 1991 a new land redistribution took place, under the new EPRDF regime. *Qés* Yerga's explanation of the reason for the redistribution was that many youngsters had established new households, and the number of households had increased very much, "but the land

[220] Negusé Agazä interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfä 02.04.2003.
[221] NW2 pp. 92-93, *qés* Yerga Mängestu, 01.04.2003. Yerga mentioned the names of both the land owners and the sharecroppers. Most probably he referred to his own *got'*, Jerar.
[222] NW2 p.93, *qés* Yerga Mängestu, 01.04.2003.

was the same". Arable land was divided into two categories, good land and *ch'ench'a* (medium) land.[223] One share of good land was 50x50 m,[224] a share of medium land was 50x100 m. A household with two adults only (husband and wife) would get one share of 50x50 m; if they had only one child there would be no addition to the land. If they had two children 4 m would be added (54x50 m), and then 4 m more for each additional child. Adult children (girls above 18 years, boys above 25 years) would get a share on their own. A share for a single person was 25x50 m.[225]

It is not clear if each household would get one share of land of each of the two qualities. According to *qés* Yerga, one share of 50x50 m was counted as one *t'emad*. This may be incorrect, also because one *t'emad* in this area is very little. The present average per household in the *qäbälé* is 2.84 *t'emad*, while in Jerar the average is the lowest (1.75 *t'emad*, see table 3.4 below). It seems more probable that the share per person was one *t'emad*. The case of *qés* Yerga's brother (Endebät Mängestu) and mother (*Emahoy* Kibrät Aräga) may be evidence of this. At the land redistribution of 1991 they were counted as one couple and got a full share of land. Later Endebät decided to establish his own household and built his own house. They consequently also split their common land in two individual parts. Endebät is not in the tax list, the tax is paid in his mother's name. He ploughs his own land, while the land of *Emahoy* Kibrät is ploughed by other of her sons. She is listed in the tax list with four *t'emad* land, while the indicator survey has registered one *t'emad* for each of them.[226] On the basis of this rather confusing evidence we cannot know what size the shares that were distributed in 1991 typically had. The comparison below between tax list data and the actual findings from the survey may give further indications, but the purpose of the indicator survey was to assess the current situation, and not the effects of the past redistributions on the current land holdings. The information provided above gives just a glimpse of the past and may be useful for later explorations and comparisons of the implementation of changing land policies in North Wälo.

The Tax List Indicator Survey

In total 504 households were covered by the survey, from four *got's*. The tax list refers to thirteen *got's.* The *got'* names refer to church parishes,[227] resulting in a rather unusually high number of different *got's*.

[223] Kane's translation of *ch'ench'a* differs from Yerga's usage of the term. Kane translates it (among other meanings) as "hard, stony ground which cannot be dug or plowed and which is usually barren" (Kane 1990). In Debeko, according to Yerga, the common land which is stony and non-arable and can only be grazed by goats and sheep, is called *wäl*. The term *wäl* means literally "common land" (Kane 1990).
[224] The term used was *kend*. One *kend* (cubit) is approximately one metre.
[225] NW2 pp. 93-94, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 01.04.2003.
[226] NW2 p. 102, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 01.04.2003 and indicator survey.
[227] NW1 p. 169, Negus Got'u, Abäbäw Mäkonen and *qés* Gétahun Asnaké, 22.03.2003.

The four assistants were assigned to work in one *got'* each, i.e. Ageré Tägägn, Gäbäyaw Mändär, Enkoybär and Jerar.[228]

Table 3.2 Tax List Indicator Survey coverage

Got'	Households (N)	Female headed (%)	Male headed (%)
Ageré Tägägn	83	22	78
Gäbäyaw Mändär	184	58	42
Enkoybär	115	20	80
Jerar	122	20	80
Total	504	34	66

Source: Indicator survey

The coverage of the households in the four *got's* varied. The best coverage, close to 100%, was in Gäbäyaw Mändär, since it was the easiest accessible *got'*. In Enkoybär, where the households also were easily accessible, about 10-15 households were left when we finished our work the second day.[229] The two remotest *got's* were also fairly well covered, but due to the distances we were not able to cover each household.

The original tax list, which was printed and used as a form by the assistants in the field, counted 1,410 names. The tax list land data was excluded from the form which the assistants used. We therefore know that the assistants were not influenced by the tax list land data, but the local guides and/or the land owners could of course tend to give the "official" data instead of their own assessments.

The official statistics for Debeko, collected by Ege and Yegremew (2002), shows that Debeko has a population of 7,823 distributed on 1,649 households, giving an average number of members per household of 4,74. Applying the average on the households covered by the indicator survey, we arrive at 2,391 people or 30.6% of the population. The official figures are uncertain, and the figures presented here can only be taken as rough indication of the coverage of the survey. The overall figures for Debeko as a whole also covers the internal variation in Debeko, which is more interesting to explore in the current context.

Regional variation in Debeko

There are basically two variables that produce regional variation in Debeko *qäbälé*, namely the altitude/climate axis and the urban/rural axis. One should note, however, that the whole of Debeko is regarded as a rural locality in all official statistics. As we shall see below, this may produce a skewed picture of the *qäbälé* because of the urban character of the Gäbäyaw Mändär village (or emergent town). Ox- and landlessness in a semi-urban setting has a very different meaning than in an urban

[228] Enkoybär seems to be commonly referred to as Debeko Enkoybär. Here we use the shorter form.

[229] We decided to finish our work in Enkoybär when the GPS instrument stopped working, in the afternoon of the second day of the survey work.

setting. One indication of the emergent town in Gäbäyaw Mändär is the high density of female-headed households there (see table 3.2 above).

We assume that the regional variation in Debeko, i.e. the differences between the *got's*, to a large extent are reflections of the variation in ecology. For Gäbäyaw Mändär, as mentioned above, the urban environment also has a visible effect on the data. In the summary table below (table 3.3) the effect is mainly on the P-score, i.e. the assistant's assessment of the household's wealth on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). The variable "labour", i.e. the household's total adult, male labour force (each male, ablebodied male counts as one), is particularly low in Gäbäyaw Mändär *got'*, again a probable effect of small and female-headed households in town. That there is a considerable in-migration to Gäbäyaw Mändär is indicated by the fact that 112 (61%) of the households registered in Gäbäyaw Mändär *got'* by the survey were not found in the tax list. This figure and the high number of female-headed households indicate that many of the households are the result of broken family (or marriage) bonds, and that divorced women seek to live independently in the urban setting.

Table 3.3 Variation in resources (average values)

Got'	Land	Oxen	Cows	P-score	Labour
Ageré Tägägn	3.86	0.82	0.58	3.10	0.98
Gäbäyaw Mändär	3.05	0.43	0.57	3.22	0.52
Enkoybär	3.06	1.31	0.91	2.90	1.19
Jerar	1.75	0.50	0.45	2.80	1.13
Total	2.87	0.71	0.62	3.02	0.92
(N)	503	504	504	503	477

Source: Indicator survey

The P-score value differs from the key indicators (land, livestock and labour) since it is an independent estimate of the household's relative wealth in the community. A household in Gäbäyaw Mändär with P-score 10 could very well have got a lower score in another, more prosperous, locality. The assistants were well accustomed with this value, but since the assessment was based on their personal judgement, together with the information they gathered from the local guide, the P-score is a very rough indicator. The values given by the assistants were entered to the data sheet without any further assessment, with one exception. In Enkoybär, the man who had been identified by our local guide as the "richest person" in the community had been registered with a P-score of 5 by the assistant. This was obviously a misjudgement, and the value has been changed to 9 in the data matrix that forms the basis for the current report. The person in question, Anbachäw Ayu, was registered with 8 *t'emad* land, 10 oxen (!) and 5 cows, but with only 1 male labour unit (obviously wrong). The number of oxen is highly uncertain, and perhaps rather an effect of our local guide's awe and admiration for the apparently big man. Anbachäw lived in a big and well fenced compound with several houses. People were threshing grain on the field outside, at a time when most people were about to finish their grain – this was the

only place where we saw stacks of grain still waiting to be threshed. Our guide was not willing to go close to the compound, arguing that Anbachäw had very fierce dogs that would attack if we came too close. This was not a problem in other households, the dogs would be kept away with sticks and stones, and if that did not help, with the help of the owner who would be called at a distance. It was respect for Anbachäw that kept us at a distance, not the potential threat of his dogs. Anbachäw apparently managed a rather big farm, with two permanent employees in addition to seasonal labour (he is further described below).[230]

The urban economy

The "town" in Debeko, called the Gäbäyäw Mändär ("the market village"), is a settlement alongside the road, with the market place as its natural centre. The market extends to both sides of the road, and on market days it accommodates several thousand sellers of agricultural products, cattle and manufactured goods. The present location of the town is probably a result of the current road, while the market may have been located further to the west before, along the route of the old road, somewhere in Enkoybär.

The town has a high concentration not only of female headed household but also of people with other income instead of, or in addition to, agriculture. In Gäbäyaw Mändär *got'*, as many as 22% of the households had no land (see separate section on landless households below), but 58% of the household heads had income from other sources than agricultural labour, excluding sharecropping. The sources of income (excluding agriculture) are listed in table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Extra-agricultural income sources

Source of income	Gäbäyaw Mändär *got'*	All four *got'*s
Weaver	1	6
Priest	0	23
T'äla and/or *aräqé* selling	68	68
Salary from employment	10	11
Daily labour	12	12
Trade	11	13
Wood collecting/water fetching	4	4
Pension	3	3
Hairdresser	1	1
Rent income from house	1	1
Servant	0	1
Restaurant owner	1	1
Grain mill owner	1	1
Blacksmith	1	1
Total	107	139

Source: Indicator survey

[230] Our local guide was Abäbä Gälaw. Cf. NW2, p. 107, Abäbä Gälaw 02.04.2003.

Of the total of 139 households registered with extra-agricultural income, 107 (77%) lived in Gäbäyaw Mändär *got'*. If we exclude the group of priests, whose salary is in the range of 100-150 birr per year,[231] Gäbäyaw Mändär *got'* households represent 92% of all households with income from other sources than agriculture. This should be expected, since many of the income generating activities are typically urban, such as food and drinks selling and salaried employment. The list is not exhaustive, however. Some have more than one source of income, such as one of the male daily labourers, whose wife sells *t'äla*, or the teacher, who has four *t'emad* land, an ox and a cow, and who built a two-storey house in Gäbäyaw Mändär and rents out the ground floor for 35 birr per month.[232] The registration of extra-agricultural income may also have varied with the assistants; those who covered the rural parts of the *qäbälé* may routinely have entered a "0" value in the column for "other income", since this seemed to be the rule. It is also probable that there are more servants than registered, but servants (maids) are normally counted as members of the household and are probably not paid in cash but rather in food (sharing the food with the household members) and in some clothing.

Only a longer and qualitative fieldwork could have disclosed in further detail and coverage the economy of this little town. With the present method, we cannot follow the webs of relations, the routes of trade, or transactions that are not easily identified. Prostitution is naturally not registered as an income source, but it certainly exists in connection with the many drinking houses in the town. Other arrangements of more or less market nature, notably semi-permanent arrangements between women and men, must also exist.

Another point in case are the four women who live on wood collecting and selling and water fetching. They gather wood and sell it to buyers in the town, and fetch water and carry it to households who can afford to pay 25 or 50 cents for the service. One of the women, T'egät Adat, explained that she sells the wood she collects for three birr per *shekem* (load carried on the back). The water is sold for 25 cents per *ensära* (ca 15-20 l clay pot) if the distance between the water source and the customer is not very far. "In 2002 the water was far away, and then I earned 50 cents per *ensära*" she explained.[233] She further explained that while the regular price for water customers, mainly sick and old people, was 25 cents, there was also a group of customers who paid double, 50 cents, per *ensära*. These were government employees, teachers, the DAs and the clinic workers, and the credit association workers. She also mentioned the owners of the *t'äla* houses, and particularly Adena At'enafi, the woman who owns the main restaurant in Gäbäyaw Mändär (P-score 8), and the richest woman in the town, the millhouse owner

[231] We have annotations on the income of two priests in the survey, both from Enkoybär. One receives 75 birr per year, while the other receives 150 birr per year plus 12,50 birr per month (this may be a confusion between monthly and annual salary, since 12,50 per month adds up to 150 birr per year, which is the most likely total salary). In addition, all priests have access to food in the church.

[232] He got the land while he was a student, he explained. His salary as a teacher was 550 birr per month (*Memher* Täsfayé Ch'egé interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfä 1.04.2003).

[233] T'egät Adat interviewed by Mäsärät Kenfä 1.04.2003.

Ayalnäsh Bälay (P-score 10). Perhaps these women, the wood and waters sellers on the one hand and the rich business women on the other, are the closest we come to polarisation in Gäbäyaw Mändär. T'egät, like two of the other three wood and water sellers in Gäbäyaw Mändär, was rated with the lowest possible P-score (1).[234] Each of them may have their personal histories about what has led them to the situation of deep poverty in Gäbäyaw Mändär, histories we presently do not have access to. It is very improbable, however, that the richest persons in Gäbäyaw Mändär have had anything to do with the events that have led them to their present condition. Rather, we see that they pay double of the "market price" for being supplied with water, although they would have had the power to negotiate a price below the normal fee. We can only guess how many other ways the members of the richest segment of the society find to support those who are less fortunate.

Table 3.5 summarises the characteristics of the four wood and water sellers in Gäbäyaw Mändär.

Table 3.5 Wood and water sellers in Gäbäyaw Mändär

Name	P-score	Age	Labour	Ox	Cow	Land
T'egät Adat	1	40	0	0	1	2
Täsfa Zäräfu Gäsäsä	1	40	1	0	0	2
Bezuyé Gänäw	3	24	NA	0	0	0
Endayähu Märäté Katama	1	40	0	0	0	2

Source: Indicator survey

Three of the women have two *t'emad* land each, but we have no information about how their land is managed. Only Bezuyé Gänäw has no land. She lives in the house which her child inherited from its grandfather. Endayähu lives in a *t'äla* house which belongs to somebody else. It seems that she lives there for free against "looking after" the house.

In general, there is a wide spread in the wealth status of the households with extra-agricultural incomes, perhaps not very surprising. In Gäbäyaw Mändär *got'*, both extremes are represented as shown above. Table 3.6 compares the average P-score values between the four *got'*s.

Table 3.6 P-score of households with extra-agricultural income

Got'	Average	Max	Min
Agäré Tägägn	3.5	5	3
Gäbäyaw Mändär	3.4	10	1
Enkoybär	3.0	4	2
Jerar	3.2	5	2

Source: Indicator survey

The biggest extremes are found in the town, which attracts both people interested in business and the extreme poor who see no other options than to try and eke out a living in a more diverse economy than

[234] In total 10 household heads were rated with P-score 1 in the survey. All but one were women.

the purely rural one. There are indications in the survey data that there is a certain pressure on the "urban" land and existing urban houses. The survey registered 20 house-rent arrangements, only one of which was income from houserent.[235] The others were houserent costs. The house owners are in most cases mentioned by name in the annotations to the survey, but only four of them are identified, with some uncertainty, in the survey data. None of them were registered as house-rent recipients. The houserent expenses ranged from 3 birr per month (*t'äla*-selling women) to 35 birr per month (a male leather and hide trader). In one house, three women share the monthly houserent of 10 birr. At least one of them (the oldest, who is 38) sells *t'äla*, possibly all three. The two others are younger (24 and 20 years), but it is not clear if they are related or just companions in the trade.

Two old women, aged 70 and 75, have another arrangement. Having land in Gäbäyaw Mändär, they have allowed others to construct a house on it, and in return they have the right to live in one of the rooms, while the house owner occupies the rest. Land has also been bought in Gäbäyaw Mändär; a trader, Asän Näjat, bought land for 500 birr to build a house. A *t'äla* seller, S'ähay Baybel, has agricultural land in Mäsäfena *qäbälé* but only the land for the house in Gäbäyaw Mändär, which she bought for 150 birr. She is rated as a poor woman by a P-score value of 2.

Land

Debeko *qäbälé* is one of the twelve *qäbälés* in Mäqét *wäräda* with a reduced tax rate due to the drought.

The Debeko tax list includes registered taxpayers with land from 0.50 *t'emad* up to 12 *t'emad* (only one tax payer is registered with 12 *t'emad*, see table 3.8). A peasant holding 0.50 *t'emad* pays the lowest tax rate, i.e. 13 birr in Debeko, defined as a famine area.

In the report about the tax revenue of 2001 from the *wäräda* to the zonal Finance Office, it is shown that the revenue from Debeko amounted to 20,758 birr, distributed on six groups of land holders. The tax data is summarised in table 3.7 below.

Table 3.7 Tax payers by land holdings, *qäbälé* 026 Debeko, 2001

	Land holding (hectares)					
	0-0.5	0.5-1	1-1.5	1.5-2	2-2.5	2.5+
Taxpayers	702	597	31	5	1	5
%	52%	45%	2%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Letter to North Wälo Zone Finance Office, Wäldiya, from Mäqét *wäräda* Finance office, ref nr 1582/93, dated 18/08/93 [E.C.]

The letter which table 3.7 is based on, provides a table of tax revenue from all 35 *qäbälés* in Mäqét *wäräda*. The table has a column for "total taxpayers". In the table, the "total" figure for Debeko is 1,336,

[235] A forty years old woman who earns a houserent of 5 birr per month. She belongs to the poorest segment of the community (P-score 2). She is registered with 2 *t'emad* land, no male labour and no cattle.

while the actual sum of the taxpayers as listed is 1,341. This may be due to a calculation error (the table in the letter has several addition errors), or errors in the detail data. The tax lists in the *wäräda* Finance Office were generally in a bad shape, and there was no system at work, as to our knowledge, to protect the lists from disappearing, being destroyed or else loose their validity. This may also be reflected in our own data. We worked with each list of taxpayers and entered the land data only in the computer, for the purpose of comparing and analysing the overall land and tax data from the *wäräda* (see Ege 2004). This list counts 1,336 entries, the same number as in the official tax statistics. The form we used was also based on the tax list, but the form has a total of 1,343 entries with data from the tax list. We cannot explain this difference, which is of no practical consequence for our purpose. In the continuation, the form with 1,343 tax list data entries is used.

Table 3.8 below compares the land data of the tax list with the indicator survey data. The land data registered for individuals in the tax list differ relatively much from the land data registered by the survey. Of the 504 survey households, we have land data for 503 from the survey.[236] Among these, there is a complete match between the tax list and the survey data in only 51 cases (18%). If we include tax list land data that are up to one *t'emad* bigger or smaller than the survey figures, 41% of the cases fall within the group (N=140). There may be several reasons for the deviations. The tax list data may be rough estimates while our field guides have provided more accurate data, or *vice versa*. In several of the cases, changes in the household and splitting of land may be the reason for the differing figures. The qualitative data, in the form of annotations by the assistants, are not detailed and systematic enough to have a clear opinion about the individual reasons adding up to the overall deviation. A check of four households which were registered with land in the tax list, but with no land in the survey data, showed that in two of the cases, the person registered as a tax payer in the tax list was dead, and the house was occupied by the inheritor. The land, in these cases, may have been transferred to others. Both are women, living in Gäbäyaw Mändär. One is 24 years old and lives in the house of her deceased affinal relative (the grandfather of her child), living on selling wood which she collects herself. The other is a 68 year old woman who probably lives together with a relative and is thus not self-dependent.[237] The third is also a woman in Gäbäyaw Mändär. She is young, 28 years old, and lives in a rented house at a cost of 10 birr per month. She lives from *t'äla* brewing and selling. We do not know where she comes from. The fourth person in this group is a 35 years old man from Jerar. He has been engaged in butter trade, buying locally and selling in Addis Ababa, but has been staying in Addis Ababa for the last five months. We do not know why the land which was registered in his name in the tax list is not mentioned by the local guide. Prior to his departure to Addis Ababa he had been living

[236] The last one is a woman in Debeko who produces *aräqé* and sells it in her house. We do not know if the assistant who filled the form felt the "land" column to be irrelevant, if the woman actually has no land, or if the column simply was forgotten.
[237] The annotation on the form is not clear.

with his father, and the land may have been registered as his in the survey.

The overall variation between the tax list and survey land data is given in table 3.8.

Table 3.8 Tax list land data compared with survey data

Land	Tax list (N)	Tax list (%)	TL Survey (N)	TL Survey (%)
0	0	0	45	9
0-0.99	11	1	0	0
1	254	19	60	12
2	448	33	151	30
3	378	28	60	12
4	214	16	97	19
5	17	1	39	8
6	15	1	47	9
7	2	0	0	1
8	3	0	3	0
9	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	1	0
11	0	0	0	0
12	1	0	0	0
Totals	1,343	100	503	100

Sources: Indicator survey and 1991 E.C. tax list for *qäbälé* 026 Debeko (Mäqét *Wäräda* Finance Office).
Note: Land is reported in *t'emad* by integers, where 2.50 is reported as 2.

Landless households

The category of "landless" shrinks dramatically, as we shall see below, when we look behind the figures and take into consideration that the economy of most of these households is not based on agriculture. The urban setting, hidden as it is in general statistics, when it is accounted for, produces a very different picture.

The indicator survey covered all individual households disregarding if they were in the tax list or not. Consequently, also households without land are included, a group which in principle is not to be found in the tax list (but exceptions exist, as with the four cases discussed above). The "landless" group constitutes 10% of the surveyed households (11% of the male-headed households and 7% of the female-headed). It is surprising that we find the highest concentration of landless in Enkoybär, not in Gäbäyaw Mändär, and that so many men are registered as landless. This may partly be accounted for by different practices between the assistants. In Enkoybär we found three instances where land was registered as "0", but with an annotation by the assistant that the young household head, recently married, had received *gulma* land from their fathers, which normally would be registered as the land belonging to the household head. In these cases, this was corrected in the final data matrix. It is possible that there are more cases than those with annotations which we cannot identify, and which contribuite to the high – and most certainly wrong - number of landless men in Enkoybär.

Table 3.9 Landless households by *got'*

	Gender of household head		
Got'	F	M	Total
Ageré Tägägn	0	1	1 (2%)
Gäbäyaw Mändär	11	6	17 (22%)
Enkoybär	1	17	18 (20%)
Jerar	0	9	9 (9%)
Total	12	33	45 (9%)

Source: Indicator survey.

The high percentage of landless in Gäbäyaw Mändär and Enkoybär does not reflect that there is a large and uniform group of "underdogs" in these communities. Rather, for Gäbäyaw Mändär, it is a reflection of a growing urban settlement characterised by a diverse economy (see the section on "the urban economy" above). In Gäbäyaw Mändär only four out of the seventeen households without land were not registered with other sources of income than agriculture. Of these four, one is registered with the highest P-score possible, 10, indicating that he is extremely wealthy by local standards. Asän Näjät is a 60 year old man from Sähod in the neighbouring Däfärgé *qäbälé*, who most probably is about to establish himself in business in Gäbäyaw Mändär. It is very likely that he has land in Däfärgé, but we only know that he has bought a plot of land in Gäbäyaw Mändär from Kasahun Märätu for 500 birr, with the intention to build a house there. The annotation on the form also tells that Asän has a rich child in Jedda. The support from Jedda is the most probable source of his relative wealth. Since Asän is a stranger (and judged by his name, also a Muslim), our informant may not know much about him, and his wealth may also be exaggerated, but there is no doubt that he represents the business section of this rural community.

Among the three others without other income sources, we find a 25 year old woman with no livestock, a 50 year old woman with two cows, and a 34 year old man with two oxen. Only the man has male labour in the household. We know nothing more about them, but the household without land, but with two oxen, would have been interesting to check further. Most probably he lives on sharecropping, although this is not annotated on the form. An alternative hypothesis could have been that he rents out his oxen for pay. This is highly unlikely, however, because although we had a special attention to the indicator variables, and particularly oxen, we heard nothing about such practices (while there were peasants with land, and without oxen, who would work for an ox owner for two days and in return could use the oxen on his own land for one day).

The rest of the landless household heads in Gäbäyaw Mändär *got'* have other sources of income than agriculture. Eight, all women, sell *t'äla*. Two men work in a seedling nursery and are paid in kind – one of them is the foreman at the nursery and is paid with an unspecified amount of wheat and oil, the other is a worker in the nursery and is paid 100 kg wheat per month. Two men are traders. One trades with hides and

coffee, and rents a house in Gäbäyaw Mändär for 35 birr per month. The owner of the house is his brother, who lives in Järar. The other trades with butter and honey, which he buys in Debeko and sells in Addis Ababa. Finally there is a 24 year old woman in this group. The house she lives in is inherited by her child from its grandfather (father's father). The land apparently is taken over by others (3 *t'emad* according to the tax list). The woman lives on collecting and selling firewood and fetching water for people.

The high percentage of landless in Enkoybär is more difficult to explain, but may simply be misleading due to an idiosyncratic practice of the assistant filling the form in that *got'* (see above). Furthermore, Enkoybär is close to the little market town, and it is located where the old road passed previously. Some households may therefore have been with characteristics similar to those of the present market town. Of the total of 18 landless households, only one is headed by a woman. She is 30 years old, and is divorced from her husband. She had land together with him, but left him without claiming her share. She presently works as a servant and as a daily labourer. All the other landless household heads are young men (average age is 30 years). They are "landless" in the sense that they do not have land on their own, but all of them have access to land, through sharecropping other people's land. Five of them plough their fathers' land on *ekul* terms (harvest is shared equally between land owner and plougher). The oldest man in the group (aged 40) actually has land in Däfärgé but has moved to Enkoybär and lives with his sister (who has land).

The landless household heads are, as one would expect, younger than the household heads at large (average age of 31.2 years against 46.1 in the total survey group), the average P-score is lower (2.73) than the average for the total sample group (3.01), and they have less livestock.

Table 3.10 Characteristics of landless households

Gender / age	Average	Max	Min
F	30.3	68	18
M	31.6	60	25
All (N=45)	31.2		
Gender/P-score			
F	2.17	3	1
M	2.94	10	2
All (N=45)	2.73		
Gender/oxen			
F	0.08	1	0
M	0.79	2	0
All (N=45)	0.60		
Gender/cows			
F	0.25	2	0
M	0.58	2	0
All (N=45)	0.49		
Gender/labour			
F	0	0	0
M	0.94	1	0
All (N=44)	0.69		

Source: Indicator survey

Altogether 17 households without land are registered with extra-agricultural income. Another 17 are registered as sharecroppers, either for their parents (nine cases) or for others. All registered sharecropping agreements are *ekul* (harvest shared equally between land owner and ploughman). At this background, "landlessness" becomes a much less problem than it might seem only from studying the figures, at least for those with independent households.

We did not collect data about household characteristics in our survey. To get a rough estimate of land per person in the *qäbälé*, we may apply the official population figures. The North Wälo Zone reported a population of 7,823 for Debeko, while Mäqét *wäräda* reported 1,797 households.[238] This makes an average value of 4.25 persons per household, which can be used to estimate the land per person in the *qäbälé*. The figure we arrive at is 0.66 *t'emad*, or 0.165 hectares, per person.[239]

Table 3.11 Estimated land per person

Persons per household	Survey households	Calculated survey population	Survey land (*t'emad*)	Land per person (*t'emad)*
4.35	504	2,192	1,444	0.66

Source: Indicator Survey and Ege and Yigremew 2002.

[238] Ege and Yigremew 2002.
[239] The standard conversion rate is 4 *t'emad* by 1 hectare.

We find no tendency of land accumulation by the wealthiest section of the community, perhaps a natural consequence of the latest land redistribution (1991), but also an indication of the lack of mechanisms in the economic or political system that make land grabbing possible. Table 3.12 shows the relation between P-score and land. If the relatively better off were in a better position because of land accumulation, one would expect that a small portion of the population (the "richest") controlled a relatively larger portion of the land, but the table shows a remarkable balance in this respect.

Table 3.12 Distribution of land by P-score of owner

P-score	% of households	% of land
1	3	3
2	29	19
3	51	55
4	7	8
5	8	11
6	0	0
7	1	2
8	1	1
9	0	1
10	0	1
Total	100	100

Source: Indicator Survey

Rich and poor

Land is a key resource for households that depend on agriculture for their livelihood. In Debeko *qäbälé* land ownership alone, however, does not produce big differences between people in terms of relative wealth. About 90% of households with 1-3 *t'emad* land has a P-score of 3 or less. The P-score gradually, and only slowly, increases with increasing land. This tendency is shown in 3.13.

Table 3.13 Distribution of P-score in relation to land (%) (households with land)

	T'emad							
P-score	1	2	3	4	5	6	8	10
1-3	92	87	88	84	74	53	0	0
4-6	8	13	10	13	26	36	67	0
7-10	0	1	2	2	0	11	33	100
All	100	100	100	99	100	100	100	100
(N)	60	151	60	97	39	47	3	1

Source: Indicator survey

Note: Land is reported in *t'emad* by integers, where 2.50 is reported as 2.

Qés Yerga identified a peasant's work capacity and luck as the main factors that produce differences between people.[240] We only registered male, adult labour (directly associated with agricultural work) in the survey. This is a weakness, since a successful farmer in most cases has a household with a variety of labour; young children who can herd animals and relieve the adults in their daily work, women who participate in weeding and harvesting, and the older generation who at least can contribute with their competent knowledge about farming. There is a tendency in the material that the P-score increases with increasing labour available. As many as 90% of those with land, but without male labour have a P-score of 3 or lower.[241] The "0" value on labour is probably overreported, but also households with labour "1" have a high frequency of low P-score (84%), but most of these score 3.[242] The details are found in table 3.14.

Table 3.14 Distribution of P-score in relation to male labour (%) (households with land)

	Male labour in household				
P-score	0	1	2	3	(N)
1-3	90	84	63	67	354
4-6	0	14	31	33	67
7-10	2	2	6	0	11
All	100	100	100	100	
(N)	125	227	62	18	432

Source: Indicator survey

There is no clear pattern of relationship between male labour and land. Land is not a market item that can be bought and sold following the fluctuations of the household development. Consequently, there are households with (relatively) too much land in relation to working hands, and others with too little for the work capacity, and consumption need, of the family. Table 3.15 shows the relationship between male labour and land.

[240] NW2 p.98, *qés* Yerga Mängestu, 01.04.2003.
[241] 10% of those with no male labour have a P-score of 1, 47% have 2, and 33% have 3.
[242] The distribution within this group (male labour =1) is 0% P-score =1, 18% P-score = 2 and 66% P-score = 3.

Table 3.15 Distribution of land in relation to male labour (%) (households with land)

	Male labour in household				
T'emad	0	1	2	3	(N)
1	14	17	3	6	60
2	43	31	19	17	140
3	12	13	15	33	59
4	22	21	18	0	88
5	6	8	8	39	39
6	2	9	34	0	43
8	0	0	2	6	3
10	0	0	2	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100	
(N)	125	228	62	18	433

Source: Indicator survey
Note: Land is reported in *t'emad* by integers, where 2.50 is reported as 2.

Oxen is a common indicator of relative wealth, and ox ownership is generally thought to be a decisive resource for farming households, accountable not only for relative wealth and poverty but also for forces of economic polarisation in the peasant communities of Ethiopia.[243] In the present material, there is a tendency towards higher P-score with higher number of oxen owned. This may partly be a direct effect of the measures we have used (the P-score is assessed on the basis of resources and general impression, and ox ownership ranks high also in the assessment of our assistants), partly it may reflect that the most efficient households, and therefore the most successful, also have oxen. Table 3.16 shows how ox ownership relates to P-score.

Table 3.16 Distribution of P-score by ox ownership (%) (all households)

	Oxen						
P-score	0	1	2	3	4	10	(N)
1	6	0	0	0	0	0	15
2	44	18	4	0	0	0	144
3	43	66	48	0	0	0	254
4	2	7	18	57	0	0	33
5	3	6	27	29	0	0	40
6	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
7	1	1	3	14	0	0	7
8	0	0	1	0	50	0	3
9	0	1	0	0	0	100	2
10	0	0	0	0	50	0	2
Tot.	100	100	100	100	100	100	
(N)	252	161	79	7	2	1	502

Source: Indicator survey

[243] See Ege (1999).

The average number of oxen owned in the survey data is 0.71 (cf. table 3.4). 50% of the households are without oxen; 83% of the female headed households have no ox, while the corresponding figure for male-headed households is 33%. Table 3.17 shows the distribution of oxen between the two categories of households.

Table 3.17 Oxen by gender of household head (%)

Oxen	F	M	Total
0	83 (144)	33 (109)	50 (253)
1	13 (22)	42 (140)	32 (162)
2	3 (6)	22 (73)	16 (79)
3	0 (0)	2 (7)	1 (7)
4	1 (1)	0 (1)	0 (2)
10	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (1)
Total	100 (173)	100 (331)	99 (504)

Source: Indicator survey

The single man who is registered with 10 oxen, Anbachäw Ayu, has already been mentioned. He is apparently an extremely successful farmer with much land and cattle and with enough surplus to employ workers on permanent and seasonal basis. He had two permanent employees, paying 300 kg grain per year as a salary to them.[244] The only woman with more than two oxen is the 60 years old Ayalnäsh Bälay, the owner of two diesel engined grain mills in Gäbäyaw Mändär. She is registered with four oxen, five cows and ten *t'emad* land and a P-score of 10. Apart from employed workers in the grain mills, she has employed two men who work in her agricultural fields. One of them is paid 300 birr per year, the other 65 *ladan* grain and 65 birr.[245] Ayalnäsh Bälay's wealth apparently is an inheritance from her husband, Däsé Asäfa, who died in 2001. He was a laywer during both the Haile Selassie and the Därg periods, working in Bugna and Mäqét *wärädas*. He had rest land and "was very rich". Obviously Ayalnäsh is very wealthy by local standards, but her wealth does not stem form exploitative relations in the rural community, but from decade-long extra-agricultural activity.[246]

The only man with as many as four oxen is Mola Abatä, a 46 year old man who trades with skins and hides. He has a two-floor house in Gäbäyaw Mändär "town" with tin-sheet roof. He hires an agricultural worker whom he pays 100 birr per year.[247] With four oxen, three cows and six *t'emad* land he is ranged with a P-score of 8, one of the highest in the survey. Again, we notice that his wealth stems from extra-agricultural activity, but the agricultural resources he commands, like the three other

[244] NW2 p. 107, Abäbä Gälaw 02.04.2003.
[245] A *ladan* is the same as a *quna* (a basket used for measurement) according to Mäsärät's note at the survey form. She also annotated that 65 *ladan* is equal to 335 kg. Kane (1990:113), however, states that a *ladan* is a "large basket used as a measure for grain which usually contains four q^w*ennas* but which may have two to ten q^w*ennas* in some areas". A *quna*, according to Kane (1990:782) is ca. 4.67 litres.
[246] In a study of money lenders in Ch'orisa, South Wälo, we also found that the local money lenders with a reputation for their relative wealth had extra-agricultural sources of income. See 6(2003).
[247] Source: Mäsärät's note on survey form.

wealthy persons mentioned here, are impressing by local standards. We do not know how these resources have been built up, and particularly how the relatively big land holdings have been "saved" from the redistributions that have taken place, and particularly the one in 1991 after the EPRDF take-over. What we can conclude is that we see inequality, but not necessarily exploitation. It would also be interesting to have a closer look at these households' ox management – if it is correct that Anbachäw Ayu has as many as 10 oxen one may speculate if he uses the oxen as a capital, i.e. rents them out against labour or pay. We have no indications of ox rent in Debeko, except the arrangement of exchanging two days labour for one day's ox-team borrowing.[248] Still, even if these households have relatively much land, it hardly justifies, in an economic perspective, the number of oxen reported.

The uneven distribution of oxen is related to lack of grazing land, lack of herding and ploughing capacity, or sheer unluck, but also to economic strategies. Even if there is no strict pattern, people with more land have more oxen, but as many as 77 (31%; 39 women and 38 men) of those with four *t'emad* or more are without oxen. 24 of these had extra-agricultural sources of income, however. 62% of them lived in Gäbäyaw Mändär "town". In several instances, the land was elsewhere, in some cases in other *qäbälés* than Debeko. The ownership of oxen in relation to land size is summarised in table 3.18.

Table 3.18 Ox ownership and land size (%)

	Oxen						
T'emad	0	1	2	3	4	10	(N)
0	9	10	6	0	0	0	45
1	15	13	3	0	0	0	60
2	38	27	13	14	0	0	151
3	8	18	15	0	0	0	60
4	22	18	16	0	0	0	97
5	5	6	18	57	0	0	39
6	4	8	28	14	50	0	47
8	0	0	1	14	0	100	3
10	0	0	0	0	50	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	
(N)	252	162	79	7	2	1	503

Source: Indicator survey

The 504 households own 359 oxen in total. Table 20 shows how this ox population is distributed between the households. While 50% of the households have no share in the ox population, 48% own 89% of the ox population.

[248] NW2 p. 96, *qés* Yerga Mängestu 01.04.2003.

Table 3.19 Distribution of oxen between households

Oxen	Share of households (%)	Share of oxen (%)
0	50	0
1	32	45
2	16	44
3	1	6
4	0	2
10	0	3
Total	100	100

Source: Indicator survey

Lastly, we have checked the relationship between oxen ownership and the key indicators. The average values increase, as one would expect from our discussion above, with increasing number of oxen. The average values for the smallest groups (households with three oxen or more) may not make much sense as averages, but they differ sharply from the rest of the group, since they are exceptional cases. In table 3.20, the one household registered with 10 oxen is merged with the two with four oxen each.

Table 3.20 Key indicators by number of oxen (averages)

Oxen	Land	Labour	Cows	P-score	Age	(N)
0	2.49	0.53	0.36	2.60	46.3	253
1	2.69	1.16	0.65	3.11	43.8	162
2	4.06	1.43	1.15	3.84	50.0	79
3	5.14	2.14	1.86	4.71	46.6	7
4+	8.00	1.67	4.33	9.00	55.3	3
Total/average	2.87	0.92	0.62	3.02	46.1	504

Source: Indicator survey
The "4+" category includes two households with four oxen and one household with 10.

One should note that the number of cows also increase with the number of oxen. Again, this probably reflects that the households with a better resource endowment are those which are at the peak of their household cycle and therefore the most fullfledged farming households. The households without oxen are also the households with the lowest average number of cows (0.36 against the total average of 0.62). Small households, perhaps consisting of a widow and a grandchild, may have a cow as a source of milk, but it is perhaps more important as a "savings account", and to breed calves for sale.[249] The aspect of breeding is probably of increasing importance for the wealthier households, who have a much higher average number of cows than the households with no or only one ox. The cow/ox ratio can serve as an indication both of the relative importance of cows and oxen and the reproducing capacity (both of oxen and of calves and cows). The cow/ox ratio differs between the *got's* in Debeko, either as a reflection of different ploughing requirements or of available grazing land, or both. The overall cow/ox ratio in the survey data is 0.87, a figure that does not point strongly

[249] See Ege (2002:38).

towards emphasis on cattle production (the average cow/ox ratio for Qobo *wäräda* in the eastern lowland is 2.70; a strong indication of a livestock economy). The survey cow/ox value is close to the ratio calculated from the official statistics for Debeko (0.93). Neither does it indicate an extreme reliance on ox-plough agriculture, as in Moja & Wädära and T'arma Bär in North Shäwa, where the cow/ox ratio is 0.51 and 0.74, respectively.[250] Table 3.21 shows the cow/ox ratio for the four *got's* covered by the survey.

Table 3.21 Cow/ox ratio

Got'	Cows	Oxen	Cow/ox ratio
Ageré Tägägn	48	68	0.71
Gäbäyaw Mändär	105	79	1.33
Enkoybär	105	151	0.70
Jerar	55	61	0.90
Total	313	359	0.87

Source: Indicator survey

The lowest cow/ox ratios are found in the lowland *got's* Enkoybär and Ageré Tägägn, while the highest is in Gäbäyaw Mändär with a ratio of 1.33. In the rural communities it seems that priority is given to oxen, while the semi-urban community of Gäbäyaw Mändär, where the economy is less plough-oriented, more priority is given to cows. This may support our supposition that cows are kept as milk and calf producers, but they probably do not play an important role in reproducing draught oxen for their owners. This may reflect a more market-oriented economy than in the rural parts of the *qäbälé*, but it primarily reflects the nature of the households in the more urban setting, where as many as 58% of the households are female-headed (cf. Table 3.2 above).

It is possible that the ox population in the *qäbälé* is lower than it would have been in better times; after several years of food deficiency due to failing rain people may have been forced to sell both cows and oxen.

Debeko *qäbälé* summarised

Debeko *qäbälé* is classified by the *wäräda* authorities as a famine-struck community and is a recipient of food aid. The tax payers pay a reduced tax due to food deficiency. The crop production in the *qäbälé* has long been low and an insufficient source of consumption for most households, but it is difficult to assess with any accuracy how the recent year's productions have been compared to better, or worse, production years. *Qés* Yerga indicated that the early end of the summer rains (in August), which is one reason for low production, is more the rule than an exception.

The snapshot of the *qäbälé* in April 2003 that the indicator survey provides shows a community in deep poverty. The average P-score is 3.02, but both extremes are found in the survey data, with households with P-score 1 and with 10. As many as 9% of the sample households

[250] The official statistics are collected and analysed in Ege 2002.

are registered as landless, but a closer look at these households show that some are not primarily dependent on agriculture for a living, but have other income sources, while others have access to land through sharecropping agreements or by sharing the land of their natal families, also by sharecropping. Of the 45 households registered without land, 34 are registered with extra-agricultural income (ranging from wood and water sellers with a P-score of 1 to a relatively wealthy trader with P-score 10 who has recently settled in Gäbäyaw Mändär to establish himself in business). The remaining 11 households almost certainly have income sources, perhaps from land elsewhere, from sharecropping agreements not registered, or by support from relatives – some of these are retired farmers with separate households but without independent economic activities.

The four *got's* covered by the indicator survey in Debeko *qäbälé* range from lowland to relative highland, but is dominated by lower tracts. There is variation between the *got's* which can be attributed to ecological variation, in terms of land size and number of cows and oxen. The most striking difference is however represented by the small urban settlement in Gäbayäw Mändär *got'*. Although the whole *qäbälé* is listed as a rural area in all official statistics (which for many reasons is an appropriate classification), the little "town" represents a variety of livelihoods that depend on the agricultural activity and rural population but only indirectly as it is based on trade with agricultural products and services to the population (and to some extent to the travellers along the road between Gashäna and Lalibäla). Here we found the extremes in relative wealth, land buying for house building purposes, and modern services such as a school, a health clinic and a veterinary clinic – the latter was closed at the time of our fieldwork for lack of personnel or funds, or both. We know little about the urban households, but in the cases of the grain mills owner and the Muslim "immigrant" to the town, we can safely assume that their relative wealth did not stem from exploitative relations with the rural farmers, but from inheritance and a rich child in Saudi Arabia, respectively. Among the farmers we found a relatively wealthy man with much land, many oxen and cows and several paid workers, about whom we know little. Perhaps he was one of the few successful farmers who have managed to establish an enterprising farm based on the resources the Enkoybär agriculture offered. How he managed that would have been extremely interesting to find out.

It seems that the major limitation for agriculture in Debeko *qäbälé* is not land scarcity but lack of sufficient rain. The land is fruitful and generally flat; when the rain season is good and sufficiently long most households do not face food deficiency according to the local DA.[251] It is possible that the ox population (the average number of oxen per household is 0.71) is reduced due to several years of crop failures. As many as 50% of the households have no ox. We found no reference to ox rent, except exchanging labour for ox borrowing (two days work for one day's borrowing). Sharecropping arrangements seem to be widespread.

[251] NW2 pp. 112-113, Zäläm Mulatu 02.04.2003.

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Grafisk utforming og trykk: NTNU-trykk

Peasant Livelihoods in Mäqét wäräda, North Wälo. A survey of key indicators in Tiweha, Dänkäna and Debeko qäbälé, by Harald Aspen and Svein Ege

Land, labour and oxen are key inputs to the peasant economy in highland Ethiopia. The present report is based on a survey of three local communities in North Wälo where these key indicators were investigated.
The report serves as an assessment of a quick and simple survey design, focusing on the key indicators of peasant agriculture, and it offers a snapshot of the situation in three local communities in North Wälo at the beginning of the third millennium. The intention of the report is to demonstrate the Indicator Survey method, and to make the data it generated available to others, for critical assessment and further research. Furthermore, as it also reports on issues of importance to the population of Mäqét in 2002-2003, it discusses themes related to development and modernisation, such as aid programmes, micro credit, trade, water harvesting, resettlement programmes, taxation systems and marriage practices.

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