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ETHIOPIAN HISTORY, 1916-1935**

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HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY, DEMOGRAPHY, AND THE "PUSH" FACTOR
IN NORTHERN ETHIOPIAN HISTORY 1916-1935*

By James McCann

Over the course of the last century perhaps the single most significant event in Ethiopia's history has been the extension of political and economic power of the Amhara-dominated central state over the population and economic resources of Ethiopia's southern peripheries. A key component of this process has been the movement of people out of the northern and central portions of the old "Abyssinian" empire into the south, first as soldier/settlers and then as landlords, administrators, and political entrepreneurs. This transplanted population, mostly male and mostly young, made up the flesh and sinew of the imperial state's control over the labor, land, and surplus product of the country's rich southern provinces. Despite the importance of this population movement we have virtually no empirical studies of the motivations behind the emigration, the economic and social conditions the emigrants left behind, and the relative effect of "push" versus "pull" factors in their decision-making process.

The purpose of this paper is to document the "push" side of the migration equation by examining the political, economic, and demographic factors which convinced many young men and some young women to leave their homelands in the north and seek a new life in the new frontier of southern Ethiopia in the period 1900-35. It is the argument of this paper that the material conditions of life in rural northern Ethiopia, especially in the northeast, declined precipitously during the first third of this century, particularly in the final decade and a half of that period. The declining state of the environment, population pressure on land, and the imposition of state policies on rural institutions of production and distribution pushed many households beyond the break-even point in the household production/consumption equation. The long-standing formulae within the rural household economy which had sustained the social and economic fabric proved unable to deal adequately with the new set of demands on it. Patterns of land-holding, labor allocation, and institutions of economic distribution changed and new economic strata emerged in the society. The end result was a squeezing out of middle peasants, the growth of a new class of capital-rich administrators, the beginning of the commoditization of land and labor, and an out-flow of a huge number of peasants who sought their future elsewhere in Ethiopia's emergent political economy.

The key unit of analysis employed here is the rural household which, together with related institutions of distribution, served throughout the north as the unit of production, consumption, and social reproduction. By focusing on these factors it is possible to trace the effect of national and regional policies at the grassroots level, to explain micro-economic decision-making, and to appreciate the particular ways in which northern Ethiopian peasant society dealt with economic and political crises. The structure of the household economy of northern Ethiopia and key rural

institutions like land tenure, taxation, and capital borrowing are accessible through qualitative methods and indicate shifts in relations of production. The "push" effect which drove large numbers of people out of northern Ethiopia was a direct product of a crisis in the peasant household economy brought on by both local conditions of production and intervention by the state.¹

Although the argument in this paper applies generally to northern Ethiopia as a whole, my specific focus is on the Lasta region of the central highlands. Lasta provides a useful case study for a variety of reasons. First, it is an area of the north fairly well isolated from the direct effects of the world economy; the area produced little that could be sold on the world market, save a trickle of hides and skins. Trade from and through Lasta consisted primarily of perishable middle-distance goods (butter, spices, honey, and livestock) and bars of salt transshipped from salt-flats in Tigre's eastern lowlands. Production in Lasta took place almost exclusively in agricultural households which relied on the ox-drawn, single-tine plow used in the cultivation of cereals and pulses. Rural institutions of distribution tied households' production processes to the state, church, and community. Surplus production in Lasta went to support a non-producing class of military and ecclesiastical elite who governed locally, supervised the collection and redistribution of taxes, and provided for the physical and spiritual security of the producer population.

Lasta provides a useful study for two additional reasons. First, the area was governed from 1917 to 1935 by one administrator, Ras Kassa Haylu, whose conservative reforms generally reflected the national policies of Ras Tafari's government. State policies which penetrated Lasta eventually also reached elsewhere in the north. Second, physical and demographic patterns which are now well advanced in all of northern Ethiopia were already in evidence in Lasta in the 1916-1935 period. The effects of population growth, erosion, loss of pasturage, and land fragmentation could be seen in the area's distribution of land, labor, and capital. Consequently, the interaction between state policy and the physical constraints on the household economy can be assessed and the relative effects on emigration determined.

State Intervention in the Rural North 1916-1935

Although the process of central state expansion had been in progress since Emperor Menilek's accession in 1889, the rise of Ras Tafari Makonnen to the position of the head of government in 1916 accelerated its pace. In the north, and to a large degree in the south as well, two policies dominated imperial state actions. The first was the policy of "fiscalism" in which the state attempted to generate its revenue in cash from new sources to pay for ambitious new programs in defense and infrastructure development. The second overall goal was to break the economic and political base of the rural elite in the north who still occupied key governorships and dominated local political offices in areas like Lasta, Gojjam, Wallo, Tigre, and Bagamder. Both processes were slow, but Tafari and his reform-minded supporters were successful in creating over the course of the 1920s and the early 1930s the right conditions for the penetration of imperial government policy.²

The eighteen-year administration of Ras Kassa Haylu in Lasta (1917-35) provides an excellent example of the role of the state in affecting rural relations of production in northern Ethiopia and the struggle between the state, local elite, and the peasant population.

Together with data on the condition of the household economy, evidence on the role of the state in Lasta's rural economy explain much of the background to the large-scale emigration which began from Lasta in the period. From the beginning of his governorship in 1917, Ras Kassa Haylu had sought to install an effective administrative structure, to regularize procedures, and to put in place a loyal cadre of state functionaries. Those who disobeyed his direct orders were to receive severe punishment of their "soul and body."³

Although often couched in religious metaphor, his proclamations were clearly intended to break the economic base of the local elite. As with the national government, control of customs and market revenues was the first order of business. By 1924 he had placed his own nagadrases (market heads) along major trade routes and in district markets to take over revenue collection from local elites whose loyalty he questioned. In those proclamations he specifically excluded local elites from the process of collection, although they were to receive a small fixed portion of the revenue.⁴

As significant as the control of customs and market revenues was, the state's determination to affect the distribution of tax income derived from local production, the control of which had previously rested almost entirely in the hands of local military officers (gult-shum) and land-holders (balabbat). One of the earliest recorded proclamations of Ras Kassa's Lasta administration codified the process of redistribution which had previously operated at the whim of local elite. Kassa's edict prescribed the exact apportionment of the tax revenues in kind which reached Lasta's regional treasury at Lalibala:

Firstly, divide all the grains collected from every region into three sections. Then one-third for the mad-bet [kitchen], receiving guests, and for the woman's ration. Second, after dividing the remaining two-thirds into four sections; three-fourths will be soldiers' rations and the rest will be for charity and daily meals for the poor. This is to be told to all officials.⁵

Even though they were an affirmation of conventional procedures, this edict and others reinforced the state's right to determine such matters which previously had been left to the local elite. In 1924, Kassa further diminished the role of the local elite as conduits for tax collection by requiring that peasants deliver grain directly to government granaries.⁶ Under Kassa's administration, tax collectors and assessors were direct appointees of the state as represented by Kassa's court in Shawa. Local elites received a portion from the surplus product of Lasta agriculture, but participated less in its assessment and collection.⁷ Grants of land - an extremely limited resource in Lasta - favored official state appointees or those of the landed elite who had demonstrated their loyalty to the regional government.⁸ The state's power increased accordingly at the grassroots level as those incomes were redistributed among loyal followers at descending levels in the administrative structure.

State authority intervened in other domains of the rural elite as well, especially in their juridical prerogatives in the form of fines and bribes which had provided supplementary income and allowed those holding judgeships to garner power in local politics and the distribution of factors of production, especially land. Kassa, for example, began his governorship in 1917 by appointing judges to sub-district courts only

after they had taken a firm oath to abide by a rigid set of procedures designed to reduce individual prerogatives. In 1924, he issued a four-page proclamation providing explicit instructions to Lasta judges on how to conduct court.⁹ Together with the regulations on taxation, these controls severely circumscribed the traditional rights of local elite and effected a transformation in the relationship between those elite and rural producers. The state competed with local military and church elite for control over revenues, land, and the support of the peasantry. The historical terms under which these relations sorted themselves out did much to increase the risk factor to peasant household economies. With the state control of customs, the judiciary, and key portions of the process of redistribution, the rural elite lost the income which had made up an important portion of their resources, and the peasant population had lost the indirect protection from elite demands which these revenues had always provided.

Changing Demands on Rural Producers

As a result of the new role of the state in the system of rural redistribution, new patterns of surplus transfer and taxation emerged in Lasta and all over the north. With major reductions in basic categories of income such as the proceeds from customs and lowland tribute, evidence suggests that members of the rural elite recouped their losses by exploring new ways of deriving revenue from producers. Total collections per household increased and changed in type. Based on evidence from interviews, archives, and comparative data it is possible to trace both qualitative and some quantitative changes in the sorts of demands made on peasant producers by the state and rural elite, and therefore comment on the political and economic climate in which peasant households sought to survive.

As the basic forms of taxation in northern Ethiopia, the tithe (asrat) and land tax (yachaw geber) constituted the ideals against which peasants judged other forms of taxation. My reconstruction from oral and documentary evidence suggests that the following features were most prominent: first, the local official assessed the land tax on community units and not on the individual or the household. The descent corporation on which they levied a given tax had the responsibility to distribute the tax load within the unit. Even though local military officers and the hereditary soldier class were exempt from land tax and therefore added to the burden on producers, assessments carried out by them nonetheless had provided for an accommodation between producers and local administrators. Individual households could be assessed according to the size and quality of their holdings and the exigencies of individual circumstance might be taken into account on a year to year basis.¹⁰ The flexibility in this assessment system affected the amount of taxes paid, but also increased households' sense of security and the ability to manage risk.

The second important feature of taxation belonged to the collection of asrat. As a tithe, this tax was proportional to the annual net yield and not a fixed assessment. During interviews covering taxation, Lastans regularly named asrat as the foremost and most legitimate levy. Labor obligations which formed a part of the dues owed to the landed elite usually took place in the local community where they benefited the collective spiritual well-being of the community through church-building or work on local hudad land whose produce served partially for local feasting ceremonies. Finally, peasants paid these taxes in kind or at least in salt bars readily available locally. The flexibility of these

taxes in kind or at least in salt bars readily available locally. The flexibility of these proportionately based taxes proved a critical feature in household risk management.

In the early twentieth century, a plethora of new taxes and assessments on produce and labor emerged to change the basic fiscal structure of rural society in Lasta. Some of these new demands were idiosyncratic and others constituted new permanent taxes collected in new forms; some emanated from the state and others from local elites attempting to maintain their relative advantage and economic power. Most importantly, the new assessments, whether one-time collections or permanent, tended to be fixed assessments which therefore overturned the fundamental principles of taxation in the rural north. Moreover, new labor obligations to support the expanded state administration often took Lasta householders away from the local community and collectors demanded many obligations in cash. The nature of the source material available on early twentieth-century Ethiopia makes the exact amount of demand on each household impossible to determine, nor can one assess the fluctuations from locality to locality or from year to year. The essential point, however, is that the fixed rate tax considerably increased the risk facing each household, both in material terms (food, seed, and livestock) and in the "emic view" of the household itself.

The shifting pattern of rural taxation in northern Ethiopia actually emerged first in 1892 when Menilek attempted to modernize the fiscal structure of his new empire-state by ordering that the tithe paid to support the local church be transferred to state granaries to maintain the army.¹¹ By thus exercising direct control over soldiers' rations and the process of collection, the local power of the imperial state grew sharply.

By the end of Menilek's reign, other demands made on peasant production had begun to change. Tax rates which had once been set at low levels underwent a process of inflation as local and state officials competed for revenues. Salt customs rates in the northeast which had been one salt bar per camel load of goods in the 1880s had increased eight-fold by 1911 despite the overall increase of the price of salt relative to silver.¹² By the early 1920s, the imperial government had taken control of salt revenues; local officials who had lost this income passed along the loss to peasants by increasing their demands upon them. Over the course of the next two decades, competition over rural revenues between the state and local elites intensified and caught peasant households in Lasta and in northern Ethiopia as a whole in a precarious squeeze which threatened the margin of surplus needed for social and physical reproduction of rural society.

New exactions demanded from northern Ethiopian households in the early 1920s were a mixed bag of formal and short-term taxes, labor obligations, and judicial fines. These demands fell on households which were still required to pay the more traditional - and accepted - tithe and land tax. The first of these new taxes was a national one. In 1907, Menilek proclaimed that all households in the empire were to pay a one taler "telephone" tax to help absorb the expense of implementing the first phase of the line linking the empire to the new capital.¹³ Unlike the existing set of taxes, this assessment was to be paid in cash and on the spot.

Despite these nominal efforts to garner cash from the reluctant north, Menilek still financed his infrastructure development largely by revenue from imperial control of extractive trade in the south. At first these consisted of the imperial duties levied on slaves, and state

monopolies on ivory and gold. By Menilek's death in 1913, imperial sources of revenue had begun the gradual shift to coffee, hides, and marketable foodstuffs. Northern Ethiopia contributed little to the imperial coffers and continued to pay their local taxes in kind. By 1919, state officials in Lasta were demanding that the rural population pay the telephone tax regularly and that the local communities pay fines when the region's single telephone link was damaged or vandalized.¹⁴ That this exaction coincided with a major grassroots rebellion in Lasta should not be surprising. Peasants must have wondered what in the world they were paying for. The same could have been said in 1921 about the imposition of the unheard of "head" taxes in Bagamder and Gojjam.¹⁵

In addition to fixed taxes, northern Ethiopia's peasant producers paid an increasing number of special fees to their administrative elite. Some of these were traditional ones paid in kind for the celebration of feasts on important saints' days or to fete the local gult-shum's family during a rite of passage. While these placed burdens on local producers, they took place within the local redistributive network. Labor and payments in kind were compensated by invitations to feasts, help to a loyal household during an off-year, or protection under fictive godparent relations.

The new demands of the 1920s, however, had a different character. Collectors demanded payment in cash and they often lavished the benefits on their own or state interests outside of the locality. The trappings of modernity - rifles, Scotch, high quality cloth, and bribes to higher officials - had become expensive. In 1922, for example, Wagshum Kabbada, governor of Wag in northern Lasta, announced his intention to travel to Addis Ababa and issued a proclamation calling for the peasantry around his capital to contribute to the trip's cost in talers, honey, and other portable, non-perishable commodities. He demanded a total of 3000 talers, a huge sum for cash-poor Wag peasants to provide.¹⁶ Other lower officials in Lasta made similar demands when they chose to travel to Addis Ababa to pay homage to Kassa or the imperial court. By the 1930s, Lasta's administrative decision-making took place increasingly in the capital since Kassa had chosen to remain close to the imperial court. The elites of Lasta who built houses around Kassa's Addis Ababa compound in the 1920s and '30s supported themselves through collections made back in Lasta and transferred to the capital.¹⁷

Given state-level efforts to systematize the collection and distribution of tax revenues, local elite who wanted to maintain or increase their own portion of peasant produce had to develop new income sources outside state supervision. Their activities are best described under the rubric of "corruption." During the 1920s and 1930s, evidence suggests that pressures on institutions for the assessment, collection, and distribution of taxes, as well as the judicial process, became a field for the clandestine accumulation of wealth by rural classes who controlled political office. At all levels, officials who participated in the political, juridical, and fiscal roles of government squeezed extra revenue out of the already overburdened producer population. This corruption took many forms. Just as the designation gult-shum had entitled one to rights of collection in a particular fief, the holding of political office entitled one to the spoils of that position. The process began at the lowest levels with chiqashums and dambanya (local tax assessors). Ato Alamu Warqnah, a tax assessor in western Lasta in the late 1920s, reported bribes and "considerations" as a regular part of his income.¹⁸

The tax collection process itself was a major source of corruption

and supplementary income for the local elite, especially when state officials did not appear as prescribed by Kassa's edicts. One informant described collection procedures at the local state granary where collection officials (the chiqashum and dambanya) conspired to collect grain beyond the amount of the tithe:

For tax payments, the delegate would come, delegated by the Wagshum. The dambanya would come to the area, or if this one was not around, the chiqashum. When the compound was finished and the granaries made [by peasant labor], the chief of the gult would be there to watch it. It was once in many seasons the grazmach or qanyazmach [state-appointed officials] were going there. Otherwise it was the chief of the district.

It was there that the enqeb [earthenware jar] was filled. The enqeb would be filled up to its mouth. After pushing down on the grain like this and giving a hard kick with the foot, it goes down. He would then say fill it! Again it would be filled. With a good measure he would add two more measures of grain. The rest of the grain that was spilled over would be kept by the grain storekeeper. This grain would not be less than ten qunna [c. 20 litres]. This one, the chiqashum, who keeps the granaries was the one who took it. He would take from every type. This man was rich and he was a lord.

This informant, as many others, perceived that the problem was not with high officials who lived off regular state incomes, but lower officials who had lost their prerogatives in the reform process:

Of course, there were some who complained when they were oppressed too much. Those who lived on farming had to take honey, butter, etc. and pay the tax, one out of ten of every produce. There were some who complained and some who did not. But it was those under the lord who made them complain ... those who take the honey and butter in the name of the lord.... All the areas were under them. Everything was according to their wish. They could put you in jail, or whip you. They demanded money, grain, sheep, and everything else too!¹⁹

The process of extralegal collections went well beyond the collection of the formal taxes. It involved a range of institutional transformations which necessarily affected the nature and amount of demands placed on rural households as well as the overall distribution of the means of production. Office-holding itself was part of the means of accumulating revenue. The practice of collecting mashumiya [lit. "that which brings an appointment to office] contributed greatly to the incomes of those who controlled the power to appoint. In theory the institution was not new. Accounts previous to the twentieth century report the presence of a prestation to one's superior in recognition of an appointment, usually a head of livestock or jar of honey. The remnants of that tradition carried into the twentieth century in the form of Yachiqa mar, the payment made by the local bailiff to his superior on his assumption of duties. By the 1920s in northern Ethiopia, however, offices often went to the bidder

offering the highest mashumiya payment. Payment came to be expected in silver and the rights to collect it from one's subordinates became an accepted prerogative of local office. Predictably, an inflationary spiral in fees followed and those with access to cash held the inside track to local office.²⁰ In the competition between state-appointed and local officials (many appointees enjoyed both designations), new avenues for extorting cash and income from local communities proliferated. Judges from the local to the regional level were in the best position to benefit; Ras Kassa's attempts to codify judicial procedure sought, largely in vain it seems, to prevent corruption. Cash payments, or at least gifts of livestock or honey, were expected if a litigant were to be successful in land disputes or civil hearings. Crimes like murder, slave-trading, or failure to appear in court carried cash fines of from 9 to 80 talers. Fines and confiscation of a felon's property could reach up to the fourth genealogical line. Distant relations could be asked by the court to pay one taler each on behalf of their kin.²¹ Because of poor accounting methods, rural judges could appropriate any or all of their collections. Supplicants to local officials had to make payments in cash or kind to receive a hearing and Kassa's appellate courts were too distant to offer much help. Most judicial procedures in fact took place at the sub-district level where local elite influence was the greatest. Northern Ethiopians returning from military service in Tripoli, trade expeditions to Eritrea, or target labor in Sudan regularly paid cash to local officials for the right to pass through their territory or to resume their place in the local land division. To a large degree, the Italian, French, and British reports of brigandage along the eastern trade routes to Eritrea were extra-legal collections of duties by local judges and office-holders.²²

Legitimate court proceedings had also shifted into the cash economy. Verdicts in all types of criminal cases increasingly required cash payment of fines and constituted an important source of revenue for state coffers and official incomes. In 1933, for example, a bloody border skirmish between a Lasta village and one in Yajju resulted in a seven taler per capita fine on all of the villages involved.²³ According to both oral and documentary sources, cash fines increased in frequency and in the amount of payment during the 1920s and early 1930s.

A useful example of the expansion of judicial procedures designed to generate money for state purposes was the institution of afarsata. In this procedure, a village harboring a felon could be held accountable for producing the criminal on pain of a large fine levied on the community as a whole. State-appointed representatives conducted the proceedings and received a portion of the fine in payment as well as food and drink from the local population for the duration of the procedure. Major crimes punishable through afarsata were animal theft, slave raiding, cutting the tendons of a slave, robbery, murder, house-burnings, and assault. Fines claimed by a plaintiff or assessed by the court for a particular infraction were often considerably less than the total fine assessed on a community which was unable or unwilling to produce a culprit; the state and its local representatives kept the difference.

While recognized in traditional jurisprudence in Lasta and other areas of the north, the use of afarsata in the 1920s shifted from criminal prosecution to revenue generation. Over the course of the decade and a half from 1920 to 1935, officials invoked the method to prosecute lesser crimes and the frequency of occurrence increased dramatically. This was partially because the total amount of fine paid was always

greater in cases where the community could or would not produce the criminal. The procedure was an extremely popular one in imperial circles and formed a major part of the judicial program of Ras Kassa in Lasta and Ras Emru, the imperial representative in Wallo (1928-1932) and Gojjam (1932-1935). The institution proved particularly effective at squeezing currency out of cash-poor areas in the north which otherwise yielded tax revenues only in kind. Evidence from Lasta indicates that the use of afarsata had become not just a judicial procedure, but also a source of revenue for local representatives of the state. Ras Kassa recognized the trend as dangerous to the economic stability of the subject population. In 1924, Ras Kassa issued a proclamation which effectively reduced the number of officials legally empowered to initiate the procedure, citing the need to reduce the frequency of the procedure. Oral sources suggest that his edict was ineffective and afarsata continued as a means for local officials to supplement income over and above their state-granted allowances.²⁴ With institutions of this type as regular fare of the local state administration, peasant households obviously felt the threat of sudden demands on their household resources.

For a cash-poor imperial government, peasant corvee labor also provided an important resource which provided concrete results at a minimal cost to the state. In addition to payments of tax, tribute, and fines, the labor power of the rural population was also a source of competition between local requirements and state demands. Peasant households in Lasta and northern Ethiopia fulfilled a number of labor obligations to the local community, including the building and repair of churches, the cultivation of church land, the building and repair of houses for the local elite, and the clearing of local roads for special occasions. There is good evidence that the imperial state and its representatives expanded these obligations to the local community by involving peasant labor in building a permanent infrastructure designed to support the political economy of a modernizing state. Much of this process concentrated in areas producing directly for the world market. In Lasta and environs the demands were modest, but nevertheless impinged upon the limited pool of labor time available outside of the agricultural cycle. Households along major trade arteries felt most of the effect as they were called upon to repair and maintain the roads already existing and to build new ones designated by imperial planners in the capital. Between 1928 and 1935, peasant labor built roads from Addis Ababa to Dase, from there to Koram, and from Yajju to Lalibala.²⁵

Building roads was a complete social process which involved household resources in labor from male and female members as well as food reserves to feed the supervising officials. Ato Chakola Lamma recalled the process along the rocky canyons between the market towns of Saqota and Koram:

The wood and stone would be placed in a proper way and the bumps would be filled by soil and the area cleared. It was said that the road was cleared when the Wagshum came, when he was going from Saqota to Koram or Koram to Saqota, the road would be cleared. Although it was not like today with well chopped stones and wooden poles and cement, it was fine.

It was the rural people who were working. The army never lifted a finger. The soldiers only followed their officers, it was the people who worked. While [the men]

cleared, "the women' baked bread. Honey would be taken, butter would be taken; sheep, beer and many other things when the Wagshum's arrival was known.²⁶

The organization of road-building to some extent replicated the work involved in the cultivation of state lands (hudad) in Lasta. Here the work of plowing, cultivating, weeding, and feeding the workforce involved the labor of all members of the household. The timing of both of these factors was critical since each household was keenly aware that their own productivity depended on the timeliness of plowing and sowing.

Thus by the late 1920s and early 1930s, the fiscal demands on the peasant household had altered considerably from a few decades before. Not only had taxes, demands on labor, and extra-legal drains on cash supply increased, but they had done so in ways which considerably increased the risks to the household economy. As a result of the struggle between the state and local elites the overall rate of taxation and tribute collection had increased. More importantly, the types of new exactions had changed; the proportional asrat tax made up a smaller portion of the overall drain on household income. Fixed taxes, payable in cash, and unpredictable fines and levies now dominated the revenue transferred from peasant producer to administrative elite (whether local elite or the state - Lasta's peasant population could hardly have noted much of a distinction). This shift in the type of tax/tribute, independent of the overall increase of assessment, seriously affected the stability of the household economy as well as challenging the ideology of subsistence and risk management which dominated the rural population.²⁷

Table 1 suggests in abstract terms the effects of a shift from proportional to fixed assessments. In agricultural systems dominated by unstable production conditions (weather, pests, access to means of production) like Lasta, fixed taxes considerably increased the chances of a production unit falling below the amount of food required to reproduce its labor supply and to fulfill social obligations to the community.²⁸ Under a system of fixed taxes, high levels of production provided a higher level of after-tax surplus than under a proportional tax system like the asrat. At lower yields, however, the fixed tax cut more quickly into surplus. Proportional taxes, by contrast, required higher net payments during good years, but were less likely to produce deficits after a poor harvest, and produce less severe shortfalls when they did. Thus while the total after-tax surplus of a household in a random five year cycle of production yields may be higher under a system of fixed taxes, the risk in any one year would be considerably greater than under a system of proportional taxes. The risk to a single household of not producing sufficient surplus to reproduce its labor supply or to continue as a production unit therefore significantly increased under a tax system which emphasized fixed payments.

Table 1

Comparative Effect of Proportional and Fixed Assessments
on Peasant Income and Subsistence

	Net Yield (in mädējja*)				
	50.0	40.0	35.0	30.0	25.0
<u>Asrat</u> (10% proportional tax)	5.0	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5
Remainder after taxes	45.0	36.0	31.5	27.0	22.5
Surplus or deficit based on subsistence rate of 30**	+15.0	+6.0	+1.5	-3.0	-7.5
Fixed tax of 5 mädējja	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Remainder after taxes	45.0	35.0	30.0	25.0	20.0
Surplus or deficit based on subsistence rate of 30	+15.0	+5.0	0.0	-5.0	-10.0
Mixed tax of <u>asrat</u> plus fixed rate of 5 mädējja	10.0	9.0	8.5	8.0	7.5
Remainder	40.0	31.0	26.5	22.0	17.5
Surplus or deficit based on subsistence rate of 30	+10.0	+1.0	-3.5	-8.0	-12.5

*Mädējja is a unit of grain measurement equivalent to c. 32 liters.

**Subsistence rate of 30 mädējja per household is based on 1937 calculation by Vinigi Grottanelli in the Lake Tana district southwest of Lasta.

Demography and Household Economy as "Push" Factors

Beyond the effects of the direct intervention of the state in local affairs after 1916, changing conditions for production and reproduction in Lasta had a major role in pushing Lastans out of their homeland. The available evidence seems to argue that agricultural productivity in Lasta decreased during 1920-1935 - in some years and in some areas at an alarming rate. While we have no quantified data, my research on the conditions of production in Lasta makes a clear case for this position. The decline can be seen in terms of produce per unit of land, in output per unit of labor, and in output per production unit (the household).

A primary cause for declining productivity was the population pressure on land which pushed cultivation onto new, previously uncultivated land above 3000 meters, areas in lowland valleys below 2500 meters, and on to the precarious slopes of Lasta's ubiquitous canyons. Land in these areas simply did not produce as effectively as had the ideal zones of first occupation. The danger of frost higher up and floods in the lowland valleys made them high-risk investments of labor and seed. Moreover the crops grown in zones such as barley in the highland areas and sorghum in the lowland valleys were socially less desirable than the tef grown in the 2500 -3000 meter zone.²⁹

Increasing demand for land in the ideal middle zone and the nature of the land distribution system meant an increasing fragmentation and scattering of plots.³⁰ The pressure on fertile land also prompted Lasta farmers to reduce fallow periods; while Lasta farmers knew its value, fallowing came to be viewed as an unaffordable luxury.³¹ In the rush to till all available land, including forested areas, land-poor farmers put forest and scrub areas under the plow, thus reducing firewood sources, eliminating forage for livestock, and inducing erosion of the unterraced hillsides. These factors of environmental damage were cumulative and lowered yields as well as optimism about the future.³²

These conditions had the immediate effect of intensifying the labor demands on the household economy in Lasta and the long-term effect of bringing about further stratification among rural producers. New demands on household labor included the additional labor required to break ground in areas which were not only difficult to cultivate because of elevation, but also because of the steep slopes which imperiled the plowman and his oxen. Breaking new ground was extremely arduous, exhausting work for man and animal. Proper preparation of the soil for planting tef, for example, required at least five passes to prepare the soil for sowing. If a farmer tried to spare his oxen he risked poor yields. On the other hand, by exhausting oxen on breaking new soils, a cultivator sacrificed efficiency in tilling his remaining plots, since tired and malnourished oxen perform significantly less well than fresh and well fed ones.³³

The strains of decreasing land and capital resources were not evenly distributed between households or within households. Needless to say, poor and middle peasants felt the effects more than capital rich ones. New plots located on the periphery of settled zones as well as nearby fragmented plots each required additional time and effort spent in transporting equipment, seed, and oxen to the site. Distant plots could not be easily protected except by having younger household members encamped nearby. At harvest, crops had to be transported to a central point for threshing and winnowing and then again carried to regional granaries. All told, labor required per unit of land increased significantly. Decreased fallowing and the poor soil quality of newly cultivated areas required much more labor than larger plots and well

rested soil. Weeding time increased on poorly prepared ground. With more and more pasturage put under the plow, households - if they could - invested significantly more labor in maintaining livestock herds, especially oxen.

It is possible also to speculate that women's work expanded as a direct result of the expansion of cultivation and land fragmentation. Homesteads in new areas often were located far from water sources. The clearing of forest and scrub also increased the time spent in search of firewood; the choice of using dung for fuel instead of as fertilizer or for covering floors and household equipment would have been a difficult one. Young members of the household fed livestock by the labor-intensive "lopping browse" which meant ranging far from the homestead in search of bush and foliage which was then chopped and hand-fed to livestock.

Labor costs to the Lasta household in this period therefore grew sharply, and the ration of household workers to consumers (young children and older infirm members were consumers only) became a critical factor. With the decreasing quality and quantity of land available in Lasta the situation paralleled Chayanov's data for peasant farm organization in Russia: "The peasant restrained in its land area forces up its labor intensity...however, this is achieved at the cost of reducing the payment per labor unit which requires that the farm's equilibrium be established at a lower level of well being."³⁴ Households with a low worker-to-consumer ration either had to intensify the work of able members or cease to be an economically viable unit of production. In general, this meant households early in the development cycle (a young couple with children) or in a later stage (a single household head whose mature children have moved away) operated on the margin of viability.

In Lasta, population pressure on land and the decrease in the land's productivity brought on precisely the type of intensification of labor and decrease in material welfare described by Chayanov. Households faced with this squeeze had either to expand their land holdings or accept the conditions of more labor and less food. Obviously, most households ended up accepting the latter condition. The case of those who were able to expand their land holdings will be taken up later.

The increasing amount of labor required to maintain Lasta households accounts in great measure for the continued demand for slaves in the northern rural economy. Unlike family labor, kin, or Amhara itinerants, slaves had few opportunities to establish independent production units, making them more likely to remain with one household and thus a more reliable source of labor. Central government prosecution of the slave trade and closing of the southern frontiers in the 1920s and 1930s had cut off the supply of slaves to Lasta and the north, raising their price, and forcing Lasta's workforce to rely on those already present in the workforce. With increasing prices and the worsening of labor conditions on small-scale peasant holdings, however, many slaves took advantage of the new anti-slavery regulations and left their masters. Many attached themselves to wealthy households which could provide protection from their former master's claims and which offered better conditions for their labor. Still others who left their homes took refuge at the compound of the anti-slavery court at Dabra Tabor set up by Ras Kassa after 1930. After experiencing the poor conditions and inadequate food supplies of the court, many escaped slaves in the 1920s and 1930s chose to join local governors and state officials as "contract" laborers referred to locally as YaSar Barya (lit. "grass slaves"). Many slaves did remain with their masters, but the shift of large numbers of slaves from middle peasant households to those of the rich and powerful paralleled

the movement of other means of production in the same direction.³⁵

Questions of labor, however, were part of a larger production equation. In Lasta's production system it was capital and not land or labor per se which determined the ability of the individual household to amass the means of short-term survival and the reproduction of its labor in the long run. The labor power of oxen was the scarcest factor of production in Lasta and northeast Ethiopia as a whole.³⁶ Without owning oxen or having access to them, land had little meaning; claims not plowed quickly reverted to those with sufficient draft power to put them into production. Both in the social categories perceived by local cultivators and in terms of the actual control of the means of production, ownership of oxen determined economic status: a poor peasant was one with less than a yoke of oxen, a middle peasant had at least one yoke, and a rich peasant or member of the elite would have had several pair, or even more.³⁷

The evidence from Lasta during the 1920s, 1930s, and into the post-war period suggests that the practice of poor households lending land in exchange for use of capital (called Magazo) grew in importance to the rural system of distribution. The effect, though, was not to balance control of capital among and between strata, but to exacerbate class differences and allow richer peasants and officials to accumulate land and labor through their control of capital. At the foundation of this process was the fact that ownership of oxen proved far more efficient means of cultivation than access through borrowing. Borrowers could not be choosers, and owners of oxen invariably made sure that their oxen worked prime plowing days on their own land. Plowing and sowing too late reduced yields and required more time of exhausted animals. Recent research in northern Ethiopian farming systems has shown a direct correspondence between the number of oxen actually owned, as opposed to borrowed, and the number of actual plowing days available per household.³⁸ A simple corollary to this evidence would argue that the lower the number of oxen actually owned, the less land cultivated and the lower the total household production.

In Lasta where conditions for the household reproduction of cattle were difficult because of topography and vanishing pasturage, the opportunity costs of engaging in agriculture grew considerably as oxen became more time-consuming to feed and maintain and the cost of borrowing more dear.³⁹ The overall effect of the decreasing quality and nourishment of oxen owned by Lasta peasant households and the difficulty of access to alternative means of plowing parallels conditions described for Russian empirical studies:

if there is a deterioration in the type [or quality] of draught animals used, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the general maintenance of the animals and the treatment of the soil, as well as the food and living conditions of the farmer have likewise deteriorated.... the harder the animals are worked and the worse they are fed, the harder the peasant works and the worse he is fed.⁴⁰

There is no question that with fragmentation of plots, unproductive new land brought under cultivation, and the shortage of forage, that the conditions for Lasta's oxen population, and production in general, deteriorated. The conditions which promoted the cycle of impoverization cited above also stimulated a reciprocal, but much smaller, cycle of

enrichment whereby wealthy peasants and office holders expanded their control over the means of production through the manipulation of changing rural institutions. The two cycles complemented one another: capital-poor households sought to maintain themselves by ceding land use rights and labor in exchange for oxen from richer households. Even in years with poor harvests, wealthy peasants and the administrative elite could obtain surplus food through loaning their draft animals. Office holders, a class which included the state, the church, and local elite, insulated themselves from the effects of declining productivity by living off fixed assessments of labor, food, and cash. Even when their own animals succumbed to epizootic disease, both state officials and local elites enjoyed "rights in draft power" which allowed them to claim the use of peasant animals on their own lands. Through this means and access to the judicial and tax assessment systems, the elite effectively controlled the distribution of the means of production in the rural political economy.

On the basis of the above evidence, one could argue that two systems of agriculture evolved in Lasta during the environmental and economic crises of the 1916-1935 period and beyond. One set of peasants, relatively wealthy in the means of production and fallowing properly, relied on its own draft power, attracted free and slave labor, and even engaged in rudimentary cash-cropping of cereals and pulses.³⁸ A second system depended to an increasing degree on the use of borrowed capital, lent out its land through Magazo, and subsisted on low yields of grain from poorly cultivated and seldom fallowed plots. This latter group worked harder and were in a poor position to recruit labor. Peasant households at the lower end of the spectrum had difficult choices to make; they could choose either to intensify their own labor to maintain subsistence with decreasing productivity, or seek additional income outside of household-based agriculture. Those households near major markets or trade routes did so by engaging in petty trade or selling food to caravans. This situation, however, was by no means a socio-economic structure at equilibrium, but rather one in a downward spiral where the means of production fell increasingly into the hands of the rural elite and their allies among upper peasants.⁴²

Understanding the cycle of enrichment which emerged in the midst of general economic decline requires a careful scrutiny of the process by which the administrative class accumulated productive resources. If the basis of rural stratification in Lasta was control of oxen and their labor power, the control of land nevertheless serves as a useful indicator of the distribution of factors of production. While the equal distribution of land was an important tenet of the land tenure system, and one of the core symbols of Lasta rural producers' moral economy, changes in the system took place during 1916-1935 which resulted in patterns of landholding directly benefiting the upper class.⁴³

In Lasta's property system, land could be alienated from a hereditary land-holder (restenya) only in certain specific circumstances. The most important of these were treason, non-payment of taxes, and abandonment of land. In the case of the latter, members of the rural military class retained a long-standing right to occupy land which restenya households had abandoned. Through the lending of oxen and seed, capital-rich tenants also had a de facto means to alienate land by claiming its use through their superior capability of cultivating it.⁴⁴

On the basis of available qualitative data, I have concluded that during 1920-1935 rural elites in Lasta and northern Ethiopia significantly expanded their control of land resources. This process took place partially because of their control of land courts, the need (and

ability) of the state to settle its new representatives on the land, and the need for poor and middle peasants to transfer their traditional land rights in exchange for access to oxen, seed, and food. Perhaps the most significant source of land transfer in the period was the ability of the military and administrative elite to take over land abandoned by Lasta households which had failed as viable production units and had left the area (see below).⁴⁵ The episodic political and economic crises of the period, in fact, sped up the transfer of land from poor and middle peasants to rich ones and to the administrative elite.⁴⁶

The imperial state was aware of the trends in landholding and even participated in it. Administrative reforms emanating from the central government or Ras Kassa's court required new personnel to implement them. New officials invariably received grants and rights of collection which lent added pressure to already overcrowded districts. Some even received lands outside of Lasta. In 1924, for example, Kassa's records contain a note on a grant of 10 gasha of land (c. 400 hectares) to a minor official, "in addition to what you already have in Lasta." His son Dajach Wandbawassan received a similar amount in Lasta when he took the governorship.⁴⁷ These officials and the local elite they replaced competed to expand land holdings through both official prerogatives and traditional mechanisms. In fact, evidence from documents and interviews suggests that the enlargement of their own land holdings through the manipulation of local privilege formed part of the way in which non-state elite resisted attempts by the central government to undermine their wealth and social position.

Yet state representatives such as Wagshum Kabbada (governor of the Wag region north of Lasta from 1917-1935) engaged in it also. One informant reported that his father had taken the Wagshum to court in Saqota, Dase, and Addis Ababa to fight confiscation of his land. He described the local reaction to the Wagshum's attempts to extend his land holdings and that official's poor knowledge of local procedures for claiming land:

My father had made him [the Wagshum] come to Dase two times and to Addis Ababa two times, because unless he showed his birthright, unless he recounted his descent, he could not take the land by force.

"You [Wagshum] won't cultivate the land unless you have counted your lineage! Whose son was your father Wagshum Tafari? Whose son was Tafari? Tafari was the father of Kabbada, Haylu was the son of Kabbada, Sehaynash was the daughter of Haylu. How were they descended from ancient time?"

He [the Wagshum] did not know because he had been living in Addis Ababa, Wallaga, Gama Gofa and other places. Because of this he had no case and was worried.... When he refused [to answer], and wanted to take it by force, the people would refuse. He was made to come [to the capital] once, twice, three times!⁴⁸

Most rural cultivators did not have the means to mount such a challenge and lost their land, but enough petitions and complaints reached the imperial court to prompt action. In 1928 the newly crowned Negus Tafari issued orders to restrict the confiscation of hereditary rest land to cases of treason against the royal family.⁴⁹ There is little evidence, however, that the decree altered the accumulation of land by the rural elite.

Similar signs could be discerned in the uses of labor as well. Traditional rights of corvee labor underwent a transformation as both local officials and the state made demands on the peasant labor pool, as discussed. Households living on the margins of solvency not only had to fulfill normal corvee obligations and to transport their own taxes to government granaries, but they also regularly exchanged labor in return for access to oxen, seed, or food. Such labor could have been agricultural work on wealthy neighbors' plots, or shegela (lit. "to carry") - demeaning day labor previously the province of slaves. Increasingly, destitute farmers competed with landless ex-slaves, the other component of the free labor pool. By the post-war period, new sections in markets had appeared where poor highland farmers offered their labor in exchange for food or, after 1941, cash. Some households managed to avoid shegela labor by taking up petty trade, brigandage, or simply by tightening their belts and accepting life closer to the edge of penury.⁵⁰

Disequilibrium in Lasta's rural society was already evident by 1917 when bad harvests prompted banditry and the resistance to Wagshum Kabbada's appointment as governor of Wag. During that same period Ras Kassa received complaints from Lasta churches which asked for additional land allotments to feed increasing numbers of residents dependent on church charity. In 1924 the ras took action against the growing numbers of indigent peasants who endangered trade and public security. One 12 September 1924 he issued a proclamation:

It has been the rule [in Lasta] not to allow any person in the territory who is a stranger to live without a guarantor. In recent years it has become known that the number of thieves and bandits have increased. This condition has given rise to gatherings which have disrupted trade and farming. Thieves and robbers are usually jobless or idle persons. Therefore a complete census should be taken and the population should be recorded in the judges' register. Peasants who do not farm, traders who do not trade, soldiers who are not known by their commanders, priests who do not preach or teach, and artisans who do not engage in their work are considered idle. Anyone who allows such idle persons to live on his land is considered to be harboring the bandits and therefore is responsible for the property lost [during robberies or raids]. Nevertheless, if anyone hands over idle people to the judge, he is entitled to receive half of the fine assessed to the criminal.⁵¹

The "idle" persons Kassa acted against and those who converged on the church compounds asking for ecclesiastical largesse were products of a rural economy unable to support an increasing population on decreasing productivity.

Household Choices and the Formation of Empire:
Rebellion, Pauperization, and Emigration

The economic and political conditions described in the previous sections offered a series of unpleasant choices for Lasta's peasant households. The demands of the state and new strategies of the local elite together with the difficult conditions for production pushed them close to or beyond the threshold of subsistence. In 1917-1919 and 1928-1930 many Lastans and northern Ethiopians opted for rebellion, the results of which only intensified the level of state intervention.⁵² For others, especially those operating closest to the margins of subsistence, the only path was to enter into a relation of direct dependence on the largesse and capital resources of the small wealthy class.

Neither of these strategies worked very effectively for the vast majority of Lasta households. Rebellion profited only those few of the military class who retained booty from raids or government reprisals. The new class of wealthy administrators was much too small to absorb all the households tottering on the margins of economic viability. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that many young Lastans and northern Ethiopians turned to labor migration or emigration as solutions to the economic decline of their homeland.⁵³

By 1920, Lasta was not a closed system but existed as a part of a larger imperial whole and a regional economy which offered the population some new options for coping with the weakness of the northern household economy - choices which presented themselves to the well off and destitute alike. The north-south migration which took place in Ethiopia between 1890 and the post-war years was perhaps the most significant single process in the foundation of the modern Ethiopian social formation. Menilek's conquests meant little without a ready population of soldier/settlers willing to leave the cycle of subsistence production in the north and settle into the huge tracts of alienated land offered in the wake of the imperial conquests. Primitive accumulation in the form of saleable land, labor from slaves and serfs, and the support of state power brought on a rapid growth of commodity production in coffee, hides and skins, foodstuffs, and labor.⁵⁴ The inexorable movement of men, sometimes women, and even entire households out of northern rural society and into national economic and political life provided the human side of the imperial presence in southern Ethiopia and therefore the foundation of the modern Ethiopian empire-state. For Lasta, the relocation of a large part of its population into the southern economy represented its most important contribution to modern Ethiopia.

The basic outlines of the northerners' roles in southern Ethiopia in the early twentieth century Ethiopia are becoming fairly well known, particularly from the perspective of southern land systems.⁵⁵ What has remained unexamined in the literature is the exact nature of the "push" factors out of the north, the effect on those who remained behind, and the relative size of the southern movement as against internal migration, target labor, and the movement into adjacent colonial economies. The latter point is especially relevant since northern Ethiopians, including many from Lasta, chose a whole range of avenues from permanent emigration to short-term wage labor.

Migration was by no means an entirely new process in Lasta or in the northern Ethiopian household economy. In fact, the Amhara/Tigrean landholding and property systems promoted the breaking up of family land

and property estates upon the death of the household head or the economic collapse of the household unit. In the natural, and expected, development cycle of a rural Lasta household, young men and women left their natal households and sought to establish their own independent production unit through marriage, procreation, and labor recruitment. Moreover, the nature of the rest land system encouraged new land claimants to move away from the homestead and parish of their parents in order to activate land claims in other areas not yet exploited by other members of their cognatic descent group.⁵⁶ Lasta peasants, like their Amhara/Tigrean counterparts elsewhere in the north, were not legally bound to the land, nor to local administrative elites. Tax and labor obligations belonged to the land itself and to those who occupied it at any given time. As Donald Crummey has pointed out in his insightful work on early nineteenth-century rural society, man was free and land the taxpayer.⁵⁷ The movement of the rural population within Lasta was therefore an anticipated part of the normal life cycle of a young person and of the household unit itself.

The timing of household development cycles varied according to the ecological, economic, and even political climate in which they produced. In ideal conditions, young people routinely left their homes to improve their status and prospects for setting up an independent household of their own. For young men the attractions were hunting, raiding, or attaching themselves to the household and fortunes of a wealthy official. Young women had fewer options, although they had the option of joining a successful household where conditions for their labor might be better. Criminals or even those falsely accused of crimes often resorted to flight rather than facing the consequences of their crimes locally. Since relatives up to the fourth collateral line could be held liable for fines, close kin often accompanied the escapee to a new life on the frontier where a man or woman's past mattered less than their adaptability to a new situation.

In his research on a southeastern Tigre village in the 1960s, Bauer noted six reasons why a household might decrease in wealth and face dispersal:

- 1) crop failure requiring borrowing
- 2) death of an ox
- 3) theft of oxen
- 4) losses in trade
- 5) destruction of stored grain [for example, by fire or vermin]
- 6) loss of a court case [or confiscation by political authority].

When household control of the means of production, especially capital and land, fell too low, the unit broke up and members dispersed.⁵⁸ Even in the most economically viable of households a tension existed between the household head who sought to retain the younger members within the unit and the young people's desires to establish their own independent households as soon as they could accumulate the requisite means of production. Many of these conditions occurred even in the best of times and were expected eventualities in the normal course of rural life; rural institutions grew up around the principle of avoiding the risks involved. Political conditions such as warfare and heavy tax assessments potentially increased risks as did the deterioration of the environment.

Patterns of Emigration

There is good historical evidence that the deterioration of political conditions and the environment had already created difficult circumstances in northeast Ethiopia before the opening of the twentieth century. Here the evidence includes Lasta but goes beyond to describe processes going on in much of northern Ethiopia. The major trend, though not the only one, was for northern migrants to move south into the emerging center of Shawa. In the early years of Menilek's reign as negus of Shawa, a key cadre of his troops consisted of the remnants of Emperor Tewodros's Gondar army which had fled south after the Tigrean Yohannes had taken the throne.⁵⁹ Some of these were certainly Lastans. Nor did the north-south movement necessarily end up as far south as Shawa. During the violence and disruption of the war with Egypt in Eritrea and Tigre, peasants from Hamasen moved south into Wag and fought with the population there before settling down on the land.⁶⁰ The movement out of Tigre into Wag, Lasta proper, Gondar, and further south accelerated in the late nineteenth century as a result of the shift of the political center but also because of the advanced state of erosion, deforestation, and capital shortages in the aging northern production system. By 1900, Tigrean migrants had pushed their language and political influence deeply into Wag and had penetrated even further south along the southern caravan route toward Shawa. That many of the Tigrean migrants came as petty merchants and entrepreneurs indicated the extent to which their environment had driven them from reliance on agriculture.⁶¹ During and after the great famine of 1889-1892, huge numbers of northern Ethiopian migrants made their way to the coast or the western border area in search of food, better land, and opportunities to generate income outside of agriculture.⁶²

Although part of an on-going process, the emigration of Lastans during 1916-1935 accelerated precipitously as a direct result of political, economic, and environmental circumstances already described. As fewer households managed to weather the pressures on land and the demands on their income they sought to supplement agricultural production by engaging in petty trade. A destitute farmer might offer his labor to a neighbor in exchange for seed or the use of a yoke of oxen. Others raised capital from local usurers and went to Tigre to buy salt or manufactured goods to trade locally. Still others collected hides and skins for sale to the depressed markets in Asmara, Waldiya, or Dase. While Tigre remained unattractive for agriculture, it did possess the rudiments of a cash-based economy based on its role in the salt trade and proximity to the colonial economy of Eritrea. Cash, when returned to Lasta, could buy scarce commodities: seed, oxen, or even access to land.⁶³ Wag and Tigre farmers in particular relied on the income derived from trade to augment the meager produce of the land.⁶⁴ More fertile areas of Lasta adjacent to the Takkaze valley absorbed new populations seeking arable land.

Documents from the region suggest that many destitute householders sought refuge in one of the only rural institutions capable of providing support in times abject need, the Orthodox church. During 1920-1935, the population of church lands grew and demands for support from the church patrimonies increased dramatically. Local churches responded by petitioning the governor for additional lands and grain allocations.⁶⁵ Available documents suggest that these requests met with some success. Churches, monasteries, and their administrators increased their lands, thus reducing the area available to support civil and military authority

and ultimately requiring the peasant population to produce more. Although less easy to document, one can speculate that elite households expanded also, as the weakest of the household economies failed and desperate peasant farmers sought succor with their local elite.

By the 1920s, the opportunities for migration expanded, just as the intensity of "push" factors increased. Besides the opportunities to join the developing political economy of the new empire-state in the south, northern Ethiopians also were able to participate in the growing colonial economies of Sudan and Eritrea which afforded opportunities for trade and wage labor paid in cash which the northern Ethiopia's sluggish rural economy did not. To date, historians have not investigated the extent to which large numbers of northern Ethiopians migrated into adjacent colonial economies for wage labor. Most of this movement constituted "target labor," since those who left home did so not for emigration, but as a means of obtaining the wherewithall to reinvest their earnings in their local rural economy through the purchase of oxen, seed, or even land.

Given the nature of the sources, it is often difficult to determine the points of origin of the "Abyssinian" labor which presented itself in Eritrean or Sudanese development schemes. Certainly a preponderance must have originated in adjacent zones like Tigre and Gondar, but Lastans and Gojjames participated as well. As early as 1911 Sudan intelligence sources reported that the dom nut forests around Kassala were filled with day-laborers - mostly "Abyssinians" - who earned as much as ten piastres a day for their collections.⁶⁶ Labor migration from northern Ethiopia was also considerable around the eastern Sudanese town of Gedaref which by 1935 had a permanent "Abyssinian" population of 1000 who lived in the quarter called "medina al Habash" (lit. the Ethiopian city). Women had joined the emigration: many of Gedaref's and Khartoum/Omdurman's Ethiopian population were Amhara and Tigrean prostitutes popular in Sudan. In addition to this permanent population, an annual influx of northern Ethiopians occurred during the time of the dura (sorghum) harvest.⁶⁷

A similar movement took place towards Eritrea where Italian efforts to develop cash and food crop production required a skilled agricultural labor force. Major centers for agricultural wage labor were at the Gash river project in the west and at the experimental agricultural station at Fagrena where cotton and coffee projects were underway.⁶⁸ Similarly, "Abyssinian" labor engaged in road-building, housing construction, and especially the military activities which sustained the coercive power of the colonial state. In 1912, an official British delegation estimated the annual influx of northern Ethiopian labor into Eritrea at 12,000, few of whom remained permanently.⁶⁹

Probably the single most important form of "target labor" of northern Ethiopians in Eritrea was service in Libya with the Eritrean and Italian armies where they made up well over half of the troops used to pacify rebellions in Cyrenaica and the Fezzan between 1911 and 1931. During those years, over a quarter-million northern Ethiopians served in Libya. In 1918 alone, Count Colli of the Italian legation in Addis Ababa reported that 18,000 "Abyssinians" were serving in the Eritrean army and another 30,000 fought as a part of Italian army in Tripoli.⁷⁰ Many of these "Abyssinians" were Tigrean or Gojjame, but a fair number came from Wag, Lasta proper, and other areas of the north. Italian agents working in Tigre without the consent of the central government recruited large numbers of young men. Piacentini claimed to have signed up 5000-6000

during one trip in 1922. But most arrived in Asmara on their own volition, attracted by the prospects of earning a salary, obtaining clothing, and arms just for fighting the "Araba" of "Trimboli."⁷¹

The motivations of the young men who traveled to Eritrea and later to Tripoli varied considerably, but it is clear from extant evidence and interviews that few planned to or did remain. Certainly the adventure of traveling to a distant land to fight Muslims enticed many highlanders. But the major motivation would seem to have been the desire to collect the means to survive and reproduce in the rural economy which increasingly required outside income and start-up capital.

Attracted by the stories of those who had successfully returned, young men from all over the north left the rural economy to take up arms for pay. Those that escaped the high rate of death from dysentery, seasickness, and Sanusi attacks returned home with cash, arms, the means of production, and an important skill. Returnees from Libya occupied important places in both local and state administration. Moreover, their cash income also ended up back in the rural economy in the form of bribes, taxes, and extortions by local officials. Ras Haylu of Gojjam, Ras Siyum of Tigre, and the local officials of Lasta demanded cash fees from those who returned from Tripoli service.⁷² In the declining conditions of production in the north, and in Lasta and Tigre in particular, however, this source of capital and income was only a temporary palliative.

For most Lastans who chose to or were forced to leave Lasta's rural society, however, southern Ethiopia provided the greatest attraction. There, the Shawan conquest had made productive land available for those who were willing to leave the subsistence cycle and attach themselves to the extended household (or court) of the military officials who governed southern regions. One generation earlier, the Shawan and northern Ethiopia soldiers who had followed Menilek had obtained their reward in the form of huge tracts of land and the labor of indigenous cultivators and slaves. During the 1920-1935 period when many Lasta farmers found life in their home regions untenable, the coffee economy of the south was flourishing. In the south, a few years of service usually yielded a land grant, a title, and a status far beyond what would have been possible in the north where stratification had become more and more rigid. Lastans claimed to me that the same amount of labor on virgin southern land as had been invested in the depleted soils of Lasta yielded many times the produce. True or not, Lastans believed it to be so. The availability of gabbar (serf) labor made a huge difference as well.

Lastans who emigrated south in the 1916-1935 period found a previous generation of Lastans already well established, willing to accept their services, and able to provide them with land, labor, and access to the coercive power of the state. Merely by being Amharic-speaking and Christian, Lastans enjoyed a social status far beyond what would have been possible in Lasta itself. Lasta landlords, while fewer than other groups, were nonetheless spread over much of the south. One of Wagshum Berru's aides had established himself in Wallaga, a large branch of Lasta nobility was in Harar, and Ras Kassa had huge tracts of land in Arsi and southern Shawa which he sold or gave to his northern followers. The rural population in Lasta seems to have been well aware of which of their compatriots had successfully moved south, providing opportunity for others to do the same.⁷³

As each succeeding ecological or political crisis unfolded, more Lastans chose to abandon the rural cycle of subsistence or at least to

try and supplement it with an outside source of income in wage labor, petty trade, or dependency on a richer neighbor. At the base of the breakdown of the rural economy was the inability of individual households in poor and middle ranks successfully to reproduce themselves. Informants who had been a part of the process accounted for their emigration by describing both the attractions of the emerging commodity production of the south and the difficulty of conditions in places like Lasta. Certainly the former played an important role in feeding Lastans into the national economy, but, overall, the decline of conditions in Lasta must have been decisive.

The evidence available on rural society in Lasta during 1900-1935 points directly to the impoverishment of the household economy and the erosion of a rural production system whose technical base, systems of resource allocation, and social structure had proved extremely resilient over a number of centuries. The new intervention of the state in the 1916-1935 period was critical in precipitating the process of economic decline by placing new pressures on the limited resources of land, labor, and produce. Moreover, by introducing collections in cash and stimulating the commoditization of land and labor, the state had served as the primary agent for the introduction of the world economy in the region. If the penetration of the world system into the rural north was less than in southern Ethiopia, it nevertheless precipitated changes in rural society which pushed northern Ethiopians out of their homelands and into the modern Ethiopian social formation.

By 1935, well before the ecological calamities of the 1960s and 1970s, the Lasta rural economy had proven incapable of supporting a population of independent and self-reproducing peasant households. In these conditions, Lasta's contribution to the growth of the modern Ethiopian nation has been primarily a steady flow of emigrants hoping to find a place in a new national economic and political structure. To a large degree many of them succeeded in parlaying their cultural heritage and linguistic affinity to the holders of power in the central state into a more viable life in the center and south of the country.

Notes

*This research was part of a 21 month project carried out in Ethiopia, Sudan, Britain, and Italy with support from the Social Science Research Council and Fulbright Hays. Interviews in Ethiopia were carried out from January through September 1982 in two migrant communities, one on the outskirts of Addis Ababa and another in Nazret.

¹Households in Lasta in this period may be described as corporate small-holder farm units in which the members have pooled labor, land rights, and property. Kinship was a common, but not essential, element determining membership. Economic decisions were made on the basis of the members' collective interests. For a fuller description of the northern Ethiopian household and its use here, see James McCann, "Households, Peasants, and Rural History in Lasta, Northern Ethiopia 1900-1935," (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1983); Dan F. Bauer, Household and Society in Ethiopia (East Lansing, 1977); Allan Hoben, "Family, Land, and Class in Northwest Europe and Northern Ethiopia," Proceedings of the First United States Conference on Ethiopian Studies (East Lansing, 1975); and Vinigi Grottanelli, Missione de studi al Lago Tana (Rome, 1939). All four of these studies point to the importance of the northern Ethiopian household as a political and economic unit where kinship in the actual production process played a relatively minor role.

²Reports on the extension of central government authority over customs collection in Tigre, Wallo, and other areas of the north are found in Rome in the Archivio Storico delle Ministero Africana Italiana (hereafter ASMAI) 54/4, 54/5, and 54/36. Also see Brielli Report for 16-30 September 1933, ASMAI 54/6. Richard Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, 1968), 524. Carlo Annaratone, In Abissinia (Rome, 1914), 125. Chakola Lamma, interview #2, 17 March 1982. Copies of all interview notes and tapes have been deposited at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University.

³Document #256 of the manuscript "Ya Ras Kassa Astadadar Damb" admonishes local officials for their inefficiencies. This manuscript consists of over 400 separate administrative documents: decrees, appointments, tax collection procedures, land grants, and administrative directives issued by Ras Kassa between 1919 and 1935. With the help of my research assistant Dagnachew Tefera and my colleague Tesema Ta'a I have indexed and translated most of the 400 documents (and all of those relating to Lasta). The original document was lent to me by Fitawrari Nabiyauleul Takla Sadeq who served for many years as Ras Kassa's personal secretary and confidant. I have a photocopy of this 300-page manuscript in my possession and have deposited an additional copy in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies.

⁴Ibid., documents #94 and #49. Asras Walda Mikael, interview #2, 21 April 1982. Trends in central government taxation reform policy can be seen in the taxation data found in the Frank de Halpert papers at Rhodes House, Oxford.

⁵"Ya Ras Kassa Astadadar," document #99. Fit. Nabiyauleul, interview #5, 23 August 1982. An elected local official called the chiqashum supervised assessments in each land division in conjunction with state scribes and supervisors. Among other procedures, Kassa ordered all tax

payers to use notched sticks which kept a record of assessments and payments understandable to the illiterate, thus making overassessment by local officials more difficult. The ras also maximized state market receipts by forbidding the selling of livestock outside of designated market places covered by state assessors. See "Ya Ras Kassa Astadadar," document #236.

⁶See for example, "Ya Ras Kassa Astadadar," documents #221, #102, and #102b.

⁷Ibid., document #35.

⁸Ibid., documents #113, #89, #91. Although most land continued to be distributed through the rest land tenure system, the state retained the right to allocate rights of collection (gult) to its functionaries. It also controlled plots of state land (hudad) which carried with them obligations by local peasants to cultivate, sow, and harvest. In Lasta, Ras Kassa's documents make it clear that he also exercised the right to reapportion lands granted to military and church officials.

⁹Ibid., document #151.

¹⁰If such accommodation did not often happen, it was at least the perception among producers that it could and should. Interviews, *passim*. In a number of cases, the rural population sent petitions to state representatives requesting to be taxed in "the old way." See "Ya Ras Kassa Astadadar," document #101-102; Querrolo to Astuto, 1 December 1931, ASMAI 54/37; and Paulicelli to Addis Ababa, 29 January 1922, ASMAI 54/36.

¹¹ Abba Getu Endasaw, interview #4, 25 May 1982. Mahetma Sellase Walda Masqal, "The Land System of Ethiopia," Ethiopian Observer (1957), 294.

¹²A.M. Tancredi, "Nel piano del sale," Bollettino della Societa Geografica Italiana, 48 (1911), 170. For figures on prices of silver relative to salt, see Pankhurst, Economic History, 463.

¹³Mahetma Sellase, "Land," 291.

¹⁴Pollera to Addis Ababa, 20 August 1919, ASMAI 54/8.

¹⁵Andalem Mulaw, "Bagemdir and Simien (1900-1930)" (B.A. thesis, Haile Sellassie I University, 1971), 28. Paulicelli to Addis Ababa, 24 October 1921, ASMAI 54/36. Chakola, interview #3, 6 May 1982. Abba Getu, interview #4, 25 May 1982. Kassa's delay in imposing such a tax probably derived from the fact that he had other revenue-generating governates to the south-Haylu and Gugsu did not. The timing and coincidence of hut or head taxes in colonial policies elsewhere in Africa, but the possibility should not be ruled out. Both were astute observers of British policy in Sudan.

¹⁶Pollera Report, 8 February 1922, ASMAI 54/36.

¹⁷Abba Alamaraw, interview #2, 14 June 1982. Asras Walda Mikael was one of these. He lived at Ras Kassa's court in Addis Ababa and served as treasurer while holding the title and privileges or meslane. Ras Haylu of

Gojjam invested a great deal of his revenues from Gojjam's taxes and trade in the capital where he reputedly owned over 250 houses, a bunna bet, and several taxis. See Zoli to Ministero delle Colonie, 11 April 1930, ASMAI 54/5.

¹⁸Alamu Warqnah, interview #2, 22 April 1982; Abba Getu, interview #4, 25 May 1982; Chakola, interview #1, 10 March 1983.

¹⁹Chakola interview #1, 10 March 1982.

²⁰Chakola interview #1 10 March 1982; Asras interview #2, 21 April 1982. Mashumiya was an increasingly common practice during 1900-1935 and a number of my informants commented on it. For nineteenth-century citations, see Crumney, "Abyssinian Feudalism," 127, when the requirement was simply a gift and not a cash payment for office.

²¹"Ya Ras Kassa Astadadar," passim. Alamu Warqnah, interview #4, 14 May 1982. Brielli Report, 16-30 September 1933, ASMAI 54/6. In 1928, the newly appointed Negus Tafari issued a proclamation forbidding the confiscation of land by rural elites. See Berhanna Salam, 15 Tekemt 1921 E.C.

²²This was true for Gojjam, Bagamder, Lasta, and Tigre. Chakola, interview #1, 10 March 1983; Alamu Warqnah, interview #1, 22 April 1982; Della Stufa Report, 16-31 December 1929, ASMAI 54/26; Pollera Report, January 1930, ASMAI 54/26.

²³Brielli Report, 22 June - 20 July 1933, ASMAI 54/6. The Italian report mentions a per capita assessment of taler, but one taler per household would be more likely. Also see Notiziario Politico, 3 May 1928, ASMAI 54/5 for example of similar fine imposed by the Wagshum for an attack on mail carriers.

²⁴"Ya Ras Kassa Astadadar," document #151; Abba Getu, interview #14, 7 July 1982. The American traveler Blanchard witnessed an afarsata at Lalibala in 1933. For the increasing use of this institution in Gojjam and Wallo after 1930, see ASMAI 54/6 and 54/7, passim. The increase in frequency of afarsata was a major peasant grievance and it was successfully suppressed by Italian authorities after 1935.

²⁵See, for example, Brielli Report, 16-31 December 1933, ASMAI 54/6; Sudan Military Intelligence Report, #61, 30 November 1937, enclosed in F.O.371/20930.

²⁶Chakola, interview #1, 10 March 1982.

²⁷My perspective here follows that of James Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasantry (New Haven, 1976), 31-34.

²⁸Ibid. 53. My chart has been adapted from Scott's with some additions regarding the Ethiopian case.

²⁹Cultivation on the steep and rocky slopes of Lasta's canyons was simply hard, dangerous work. Oxen could easily be injured, killed, or worn out in breaking new ground there. Above 3000 meters, frost was always a danger to seedlings and mature crops. In lowland valleys,

flooding posed comparable dangers. Liver flukes which infested lowland swamps often killed or debilitated the cattle and oxen grazed there. The barley and wheat most acclimatized to high elevations were less productive and less valuable as commodities and the tef favored in the middle elevation zones.

³⁰These conditions were reported generally in interviews. Haile Gabriel Dagne "The Famine Situation in Lasta" (unpublished mimeograph, University Famine Relief Committee, 1974), 21, reported that in 1974 Lasta farmers tilled up to 30 separate plots. Dr. Fassil Gebre Kiros of the Institute of Development Research of Addis Ababa University has told me that similar conditions exist in northern Shawa. The social impact of the process needs empirical study by both developmentalists and historians.

³¹Sagaye Sategn, interviews #1 and #2, 13 and 26 April 1982. Lasta's cultivators were aware of the need for fallowing but simply had no choice. The decrease in fallowing no doubt contributed to the loss of a sense of well being.

³²Pollera to Addis Ababa, 1 September 1921, ASMAI 54/36; Talamonti to Addis Ababa, ASMAI 37/6 and 8 August 1926, ASMAI 54/36.

³³The quantification of oxen strength and nutrition has been the subject of research by Michael Goe of Cornell University. I am grateful to him for sharing his findings with me. Producer cooperatives in contemporary Ethiopia face similar problems since farmers prefer to use their oxen first on their private plots and to work them less strenuously on communal plots.

³⁴A.V. Chayanov, "Peasant Farm Organization," in D. Thorner, B. Kerblay, R.E.F. Smith, eds. The Theory of Peasant Economy, 113.

³⁵For a more complete argument on the place of slaves, see interviews, passim, and my "Children of the House: Slavery, Its Suppression, and the Rural Household in Northern Ethiopia 1900-1975 in Suzanne Meirs, ed., The Suppression of Slavery in Africa (forthcoming). An argument for decreasing supply and high prices as the key agents in the decline of slavery can be found in Jon Edwards, "Slavery, the Slave Trade, and the Economic Reorganization of Ethiopia 1916-1935" African Economic History, 11 (1982), 3-14.

³⁶For a more elaborate argument see James McCann, "Rethinking the Production Equation: Rural Capital in Lasta," paper presented at the conference "Political Economy of Northeast Africa," Michigan State University, April 1983.

³⁷Abba Gabra Masqal, interview #5, 3 April 1982; interviews passim. Lenin offered a similar typology based on Zemstvo statistics. V.I. Lenin, The Development of Capitalism in Russia (Moscow 1977), 87.

³⁸Noel Cossins, "The Day of the Poor Man" (Addis Ababa, 1975), 44; Hoyt Alverson, "Arable Agriculture in Botswana: Some Contributions of the Traditional Social Formation," Rural Africana, 4-5 (1979), 36. Alverson's field situation in Botswana differs from the northern Ethiopian case because of the importance of kinship in the sharing of draft animals.

³⁹No documentary evidence of the inflation of rates for Magazo exists, but it would seem likely. Further research needs to be done on this point. See chapter two of McCann, "Households," for a discussion of the increasing household investments of labor in livestock raising in northeast Ethiopia.

⁴⁰V.I. Lenin, "The Agrarian Question and the 'Critics of Marx'," Collected Works, vol. 5 (Moscow 1961), 194-205.

⁴¹A small-scale trade in grain and red pepper grew in response to demand in Tigre and Eritrea, areas chronically short of foodstuffs, in the early twentieth century. This trade to the north brought salt, plow tips, and "Amerikani" cloth into Lasta. For the important Eritrean demand for grain, see the annual reports of the Sudanese Central Economics Board at the University of Khartoum's Sudan collection.

⁴²Lenin describes an analogous process in rural Russia which he describes as the development of the 'home market.' Lenin, Development of Capitalism, 73.

⁴³For an excellent description of this process in a rural Tigrean village, see Dan F. Bauer, "Land, Leadership, and Legitimacy among the Inderta Tigre of Ethiopia" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1972), 195.

⁴⁴Alamu Warqnah, interview #4, 14 May 1982; interviews, *passim*. Also see Joanna Mantel-Nieko, The Role of Land Tenure in the System of the Ethiopian Imperial Government in Modern Times (Warsaw, 1980), 152.

⁴⁵Abba Gabra Masqal, interview #7, 14 May 1983.

⁴⁶This trend has been noted as well in more recent periods of famine. See Assefa Bekele, et. al "Zobul: An Experiment in Relief and Rehabilitation," unpublished mimeograph, University Relief and Rehabilitation Committee, 1974, 5, and Martin Meredith, "A Famine that Left the Rich Richer and the Poor Dead," The Sunday Times, 25 November 1973, 8.

⁴⁷"Ya Ras Kassa Astadadar," #91. Although the statistics reflect national and not Lasta figures, it is nevertheless interesting to note that since the Italian occupation 95 percent of the registered and 75 percent of the unregistered government land grants have gone to members of the civil service, military, and police. See Cohen and Weintraub, Land and Peasants, 61. Evidence from Ras Kassa's administrative documents would suggest that this trend existed in Lasta for the pre-war period as well.

⁴⁸Chakola, interview #3, 6 May 1982.

⁴⁹See Marsae Hazan, "Zawditu," 434; Berhanna Salam, 15 Tekemt 1921 E.C.

⁵⁰See Assefa Bekele, "Zobul," 5; Haile Gabriel Dagne, "Famine," 20; and Alamu Warqnah, *passim*.

⁵¹"Ya Ras Kassa Astadadar," #151; also see #98, #333. For a

description of the terms under which agricultural laborers worked in northern Ethiopia see Marcel Griaule, "Le travail sur l'aire au Wollo (Abyssinie)," Journal de la Societe des Africanistes, 12 (1942), 81-86.

⁵²For a description of the underlying causes and course of events in these two rural rebellions see chapters four and five of McCann, "Households."

⁵³My colleague Gebru Tareke and I have discussed the fact that many of the recruits of liberation groups operating in the northeast are those who in earlier generations might have migrated south or joined the Italian army in Eritrea, i.e. the products of an essentially unviable rural economy.

⁵⁴The best description of the development of the southern coffee economy, northern migrants, and their effect on the nation-state can be found in Charles McClellan, "Reaction to Ethiopian Expansionism: The Case of Darasa 1889-1935" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1978).

⁵⁵The most notable recent work is the Cambridge/Stanford working group which held conferences on the topic. Proceedings of those conferences are currently being edited for publication by Donald Donham and Peter Garretson.

⁵⁶Life histories of my informants collected during interviews support this generalization. Also see Hoben, Land Tenure, passim.

⁵⁷Crummey, "Abyssinian Feudalism," Past and Present 80 (1980), 130.

⁵⁸Bauer, "Land and Legitimacy," 172.

⁵⁹Tafara Siyum, interview #1, 31 August 1982.

⁶⁰Sven Rubenson, The Survival of Ethiopian Independence (Addis Ababa: 1976), 378.

⁶¹Wagshum Wassan, interview #1, 22 August 1982. The presence and activities of Tigre-speaking people in northern Lasta are common knowledge. A more general theory of the reasons for movement out of agriculture and into outside sources of income like trade and petty commodity production can be found in Lenin, Development of Capitalism, 96.

⁶²Pankhurst, Economic History 277.

⁶³Alamu Warqnah, interview #6, 10 June 1982. In 1900, Wylde reported immigration from the north into Yajju. Wylde, Modern Abyssinia (London 1901), 263.

⁶⁴Chakola Lamma reported that his uncle owned a number of camels which he rented out for farmers engaging in part-time salt trading. For a description of similar phenomena in the 1960s, see Bauer, "Land and Legitimacy," 15.

⁶⁵See, for example, "Ya Ras Kassa Astadadar," documents #333, #98. I am grateful to my colleague Tesema Ta'a who pointed out to me the relevance of church complaints of their expanded staff. Some processes at

work today in "Ras Kassa safar" suggest the importance of the church in distributing food to the destitute and infirm.

⁶⁶Sudan Intelligence Report, #203, June 1911. Here the term "Abyssinian" distinguishes northern Ethiopians from Eritreans. The same report indicated that the dom nut collection had made labor expensive in nearby Kassala town, an indication that the town also relied on "Abyssinian" labor. Dom nuts were exported to Eritrea for the manufacture of buttons.

⁶⁷Central Records Office (Khartoum), Kassala 1/26/207, D.C. Gedaref to Deputy Public Secretary, 21 February 1938. Also see Abd Al-Rahman Ahmed Al-Bashir, "Problems of Settlement of Immigrants and Refugees in Sudanese Society" (D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1978), 301, 379.

⁶⁸See, for example, Bollettino dell'Istituto Coloniale Fascista, 15 July 1933 and files on the Gash river project in the Central Records Office in Khartoum. Alamu Warqnah, interview #6, 14 May 1982.

⁶⁹Doughty-Wylie Report, 31 August 1912, FO 371-1294.

⁷⁰Campbell Telegram to F.O., 8 November 1918, FO 371/79730. Overall figures are my calculations based on average length of service and numbers of years in the entire Libyan campaign.

⁷¹Addis Ababa Intelligence Report, 30 April 1922, F.O. 371/7152. Alamu Warqnah left his birthplace in southwest Lasta in 1921 with nine others to enlist in the Italian army in Eritrea. Although Tigreans and Gojjame were most numerous, young men of Lasta were also present in good number.

⁷²Alamu Warqnah, interview #1, 22 April 1983. My Gojjame neighbor in 1973-1975, Ato Warqnah Messeker, had also served in the Libyan campaign. Ethiopian recruits served in one-year stints with the option to re-enlist. Salary in cash was payable at Asmara at the end of service and many recruits also received furlough in Italy as a reward for service. The skills brought back by Libyan veterans proved important resources for the state. Dajach Ayalaw of Bagamder employed a veteran of Libya service to train his troops in the Italian method; the Imperial police and bodyguard also regularly used these troops in command positions. See, for example, Cheesman Report enclosed in Barton to Addis Ababa, 8 June 1927, F.O. 371/12339; Cheesman letter of 20 September enclosed in Waterlow to Dunbar, 2 December 1928, F.O. 371/13103. Brielli Report 4-22 March 1933, ASMAI 54/6.

⁷³Abba Getu, interview #13, 2 July 1982. Abba Getu provided me with a long list of names of Lastans who had served as titled officials with Ras Kassa in Shawa and further south.