Ideology as Commodity:
Industry of a Theocracy and
Production of Famines in Ethiopia

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(final copy)
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
dedication

To my father Wako Adi Gurraa and my mother Woraaboo Kossi Raacha.
acknowledgements

A thank you to my supervisors and panel of supervisors over the few years I have been enrolled at UWS, Hawkesbury. The assistance, and especially the patience of Dr Bob Fisher, Dr Simon Combe and Dr Peter Martin, is highly appreciated.

I would also like to thank the Gietzelt family for all their moral support and offers of assistance.

Many thanks to Dale for her unswerving support, her encouragement, for the rounds of coffee and just for being there for me. Galatoomi!
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abstract

This work introduces an alternative paradigm that claims that the primary industry of imperial Ethiopia has been (and still is) one that has evolved around the Abyssinian national mission vis-à-vis the subject populations it rules from a point of conquest. Abyssinia, like Catholic Spain in the Americas, carried out a series of ‘civilising’ missions (Christianising), that has spanned centuries to modern times. Around a theocratic mission evolved a service type industry, I call theo-industry.

On that basis, the work demonstrates how the well-known categories of ‘land tenure’, namely, the gult/goolt, the gullenya/gooltenya, the rist, the ristenya, the gabbbar and related others are categories of a fiscal system of theo-industry, not of an agrarian system or agrarian industry. It is argued how these rather complex categories belong in the realm of wages and pensions of a service-type industry, not in those of agriculture.

By failing to establish the functional link between agriculture and the national mission of the rulers, the scholars of Ethiopian studies have so far been unable to identify this ‘elusive’ but all-pervasive primary industry of Ethiopia. That in turn, I argue, has had a rub-off effect in hindering a clear and comprehensive understanding of issues such as poverty and famine. The central topic of this work is the ‘identification’ of this ‘elusive’ industry. The study of its evolution, set in historical grounds, of its dynamics and the intricate maze of multi-natured relations is attempted. On this basis, the option of creating an independent (from theo-industry), and more importantly, renewable agricultural industry is proposed as the key to tackling chronic levels of poverty and famines in Ethiopia.

Key words: agriculture as a dependent industry, Ethiopia’s ‘elusive’ primary industry, the political economy of the industry of a theocratic mission (theo-industry), reinterpretations of categories of ‘land tenure’, poverty and famines versus theo-industry, (re-)making agriculture an industry, art of wealth creation, art of wealth expansion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abyssinia</td>
<td>The ruling nation of the empire of Ethiopia, a Christian nation with a long-standing tradition of conducting a Christianising missions amongst the aremene people in the Horn of Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aremene</td>
<td>A heathen, a pagan, a non-citizen, a non-Christian, a subject to be converted by into a Christian, a potential ‘benefactor from the Abyssinian ‘civilising’ or Christianising mission, a potential gabbar (see gabbar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balabat</td>
<td>A gobana, a prominent native employee of the Abyssinian crown/state, a native gooltenya, member of the traditional leaders converted into waged-employees of the Abyssinian colonial administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bara cinna/chin’a</td>
<td>Boran-Oromo word for an era of mass death, famine years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beela</td>
<td>Boran-Oromo word for hunger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birr</td>
<td>An Ethiopian monetary unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birre-gooltenya</td>
<td>A waged employee (of the state) paid in Birr, a salaried man/woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buusa gonofa</td>
<td>Boran-Oromo phrase for indigenous welfare system, form of social security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinna/Chin’a</td>
<td>Boran-Oromo word for severe mass hunger, famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chisenya</td>
<td>A share cropper, a tenant (of labour), a landless peasant, a goolbetenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>The opposite of the aremene, a citizen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Some of the concepts are re-interpretations of existing ones. Others have been coined to facilitate the comprehension of the topic at hand.
CIS see Commodity of Ideological Services

Commodity of Ideological Services (CIS) Derg and Woyane's version of the Commodity of Theocratic Services

Commodity of Theocratic Services (CTS) – see tebel

CTS see Commodity of Theocratic Services—see tebel

Deenaba Boran-Oromo word for war booty

Demoz a wage package calculated and paid in Birr, a monetary wage/salary

Demoztenya a holder of a demoz-paying post, an employee of the state

Derg a popular name for the Marxist dictatorship that ruled Ethiopia (1974-1991), a regime with self-assumed mission of carrying-out a Socialist Revolution

Ethiopia the empire of the Abyssinians

Finna Boran-Oromo word for an economic system, an economic condition

Finna gabba Boran-Oromo word for optimum economic condition, time of plenty (opposite of Finna huqqa)

Finna huqqa Boran-Oromo word for lean economic condition, poverty (opposite of Finna gabba)

Gabbar conquered peoples or the aremene turned into forced consumers of the Commodity of Theocratic Services (CTS) or the tebel, a type of coerced/forced customers of the Abyssinian national industry (theo-industry)

Gabbar countries nations/peoples conquered by the Abyssinians, the recipients of the theocratic missions of Abyssinia south of the heartland of Abyssinia (northern Ethiopia)
**Gada**
an Oromo indigenous political, social and spiritual system, a way of life

**Gasha**
literally a shield, a weapon

**Gasha land**
land acquired via an act of conquest, crown land, a *riste negus*

**Gibbir**
produce, labour and related services extracted from the *gibbir*-farms, resources the generated by the *gabbar* family units in their designated *gibbir*-farms, what the *gabbar* use to 'pay' for the *tebel/CTS*, the price of the *tebel*

**Gibbir-farms**
estates run by the *gabbar* where (a) *gibbir* is generated, and (b) *tebel* is consumed

**Gobana**
a native collaborator from amongst the *gabbar* nations/peoples, a trusted *gooltenya* of native origin, an aid to the Abyssinian administration in the *gabbar* colonies (see *balabat*)

**Goolbenyeya**
s/he who owns her/his labour, landlords, a sharecropper or share-grazer

**Goolt (Gult)**
a fiscal category of a theocracy or theocratic regime, a primitive type of wage to the employees of the Abyssinian/Ethiopian crown, a wage of the employees in the national theocratic mission of the Abyssinians/Ethiopians

**Gooltenya**
s/he who holds a wage post or a goolt, an employee of the Abyssinian crown, waged employee of theo-industry

**Goolt-post**
a wage-carrying post created in the context of the national theocratic mission of Abyssinia/Ethiopia, wage posts for the employees of theo-industry

**Kiffu qen / Kefu qan**
an Amharic phrase representing the extreme famine period of 1888-1892, a severe famine

**Nigus/Negus/Nigoos**
a minor king, a vassal of the Abyssinian/Ethiopian *Niguse negest*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Niguse negest</em></td>
<td>an Abyssinian sovereign, an emperor, a despot, supreme ‘owner’ of <em>gasha</em> lands (land acquired via conquest), ‘owner’ of (crown) lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension-farms</td>
<td>see <em>rist</em> farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rist</em></td>
<td>a form of citizen-owned property in land, a form of private property in land and other assets in its wider sense, a piece of crown land given to retired employees in the service of the Abyssinian/Ethiopian crown, a piece of land that sustains a pension-farm, a <em>riste Christian</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Riste negus</em></td>
<td>the <em>rist</em> of the sovereign, a crown land, a crown entrusted land of a nation that often started as alienated land or other assets of conquered nations, booty in land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC-FG</td>
<td>see <em>Riste Christian</em> through Free Grants (RC-FG), a type of <em>rist</em> or <em>riste Christian</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Riste Christian</em></td>
<td>see <em>rist</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Riste Christian</em> through Free Grants* (RC-FG)</td>
<td>a type of <em>rist</em> or <em>riste Christian</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ristenya</em></td>
<td>s/he who owns a <em>rist</em>, a pension-farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tebel</em></td>
<td>a symbolic/metaphorical representation of a package of ideas elaborated and delivered to ‘save’ the soul of the heathens, the pagans by the Christian evangelists of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. The service produce of a Christian temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Theocracy</em></td>
<td>a state regime built around an official religion and ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Theocratic mission</em></td>
<td>a campaign of (forced) Christian evangelisation, forced conversion of the <em>aremene</em>, a variety of a civilising mission (see theocracy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Theo-industry</em></td>
<td>a form of service industry, an industry that specialises in the elaboration, packaging and delivery/marking of a package of ideas, an ideology, or a way of life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tureta a pension package determined in Birr, a modern type of the Abyssinian ancient rist package

Turentenya a pensioner, a holder of a pension package or a tureta

Woyane a popular name for the regime that ousted the Derg by force and with its base constituency in the Abyssinian province of Tigray (1991-), a regime with a self-assumed mission of imposing a regime of 'Revolutionary democracy' in the place of Derg's Socialist Revolution
Figure i: Ancient Kingdom of Abyssinia in Relation to its Empire of Ethiopia
foreward

How the Topic Evolved

The subject matter I set out to tackle for this thesis was quite different from what I ended up writing about. The topic went through a few stages of metamorphosis along the way leading to one that ended up making an enquiry as to what exactly constitutes the main industry in the empire-state of Ethiopia. I got to a stage when I started questioning whether agriculture or any other productive activity is in fact the primary industry of the Abyssinians, the ruling people in the ancient empire of Ethiopia. If so, what are the implications of this order of things on the rest of the population in the empire? What are the effects of this on the processes of mass poverty and the widespread famines that made Ethiopia the by-word for a famine? These were some of the puzzles that ultimately led to the re-definition of the original topic.

"Appraisal of Indigenous Social Organisation for Rural Development in Ethiopia" was the topic I commenced researching. I adopted the Boran-Oromo country straddling the Ethiopia-Kenya border region in the Horn of Africa as the area of study. The consideration for the selection of this particular and remote southern frontier lands in Ethiopia owed to my knowledge of the Boran people (I am Boran myself). The Boran (also referred to as Booran and Borana in the literature) comprises a sub-section of the Oromo people. The Oromo constitutes the single largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and for over a century their country has been an area where Abyssinians have embarked on the forceful imposition of Pax Abyssinica associated with their self-assumed mission of transforming the population in their image. This process has been instrumental in relegating the whole region into Abyssinia’s own vast fiefdom. As the result, its people has been relegated to a status akin to European serfs (known here as gabbar) working land that no longer belonged to them but to the crown of the conquering nation (Abyssinia), centred on Addis Ababa.
However, and at least superficially, to some extent the Boran have retained some aspects of their indigenous way of life, despite the changes in the status that affected them, the rest of the Oromo people and other non-Abyssinian peoples conquered and ruled by the Abyssinians (Christian ruling people in Ethiopia).

Because of this, the Boran country appeared to be an ideal setting to explore the potentials for making an appraisal of the often-derided indigenous notions of development and institutions for development in Africa or in empowering the actual people to be active agents in the process of development. It was on the basis of this broad objective that I set out to carry out an exploratory fieldwork in southern Ethiopia and parts of northern Kenya (1994).

This was a period when Ethiopia and the region was undergoing yet another major political upheaval and a violent change of regime caused by deep-rooted economic and social crisis that have turned the heartland of Abyssinia into a near-permanent famine belt. The structure and ethnic composition of the old imperial army of Abyssinia was being changed during my stay, where the personnel of the victorious region of Tigray, a sub-region or province of Abyssinia in the far north of Ethiopia, took the reins of military and political powers. The Tigray region is believed to be the birthplace of the ancient state and empire of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. However, in recent centuries, the region has been relegated to the role of being a junior partner to the king-making Abyssinians from Amhara regions just to their south.

The Tigray region in northern Ethiopia, along with the rebellious province of Eritrea (with a Tigrigna-speaking dominant group) and the Amharic-speaking provinces such as Wollo, constituted the “famine belt” of Ethiopia, although large parts of Ethiopia have gradually been added to this ever-expanding belt. It is hard not to seek a correlation between the widespread penury and famines in Tigray and their widespread sense of having being marginalised by the ruling Amhara. Their grievances, at least to foreign observers, have been presented as one caused by exploitative practices of the Amharic-dominated Ethiopian dictatorial regimes.

However, this proposition is not accepted by many in southern regions of Ethiopia that see the Tigray region as a junior partner in the Abyssinian-dominated and exploitative
rule in southern regions of Ethiopia. The notion that the Tigre people are in revolt because they have been alienated from their land, resources and produce is hardly convincing when the region, despite being the home constituency of the ruling people of Ethiopia, has been synonymous with famines to the rest of Ethiopia. During my fieldwork in Ethiopia, many people found it hard to accept the widespread state propaganda that claimed that people starved in Tigray region because they had been exploited by rulers based in Addis Ababa. How could the state exploit a region that does not grow the bare minimum to feed itself?

Rhetorical sentiments that questioned whether the Tigre forces, largely made up of peasant-turned-militias, the self-assumed liberators of people in southern Ethiopia from the oppressive military dicatatorship (the Derg), were there to free the southerners or, like their Amharic predecessors, intend to use the resources of the region to ‘free themselves from famines’ in their home region, were common in Yaaballoo and other major towns I visited in southern Ethiopia.

The contradiction between the official excuse of the ruling Abyssinians to do ‘good things’ for Boran and other southern people and what the latter view as the ‘real agenda’ of the Abyssinians was palpable. The dramatic political/regime changes that occurred at the centre of the empire, and for reasons that are not entirely clear to the great majority of the Boran though their lives were set to be affected by it, was viewed with great trepidation. “Development” was not in their minds at all, but surviving yet again another round of “Sidaama” (Boran term for Abyssinians) rulers was the main preoccupation of the Boran and people in southern regions of Ethiopia I visited. My academic intentions seemed misplaced and, according to some, was “the sort of things only the faranji (White people or aliens ostensibly removed from the realities and worries of the people they study) could contemplate.”

Mr Tafara Nuura, a leading Boran traditional historian and member of the traditional ruling “elite”, as well as other (informal) insightful interlocutors such as Waaqoo Halakhe and Guffiuu Adi, dismiss the proposition that one group of Abyssinians could possibly liberate the Boran or the southerners from another group of Abyssinians as “raatummaa” (moronic). Waaqoo Halakhe stated that: “Sidaama jala isan bafanaani
Tigree tunni, fakkeenaft, woraabeessa yayii irra hiddi mulgui” (“the claim that the Abyssinians from the region of Tigray are here to free us form the Abyssinians from Amhara region is a bit like a hyena freeing a deer from the mouths of African wild dogs”.

Many Boran elders expressed their unease about the political turmoil by stating: “warri garaacha hinbulle, akkiin nama bulcha?”. Literal translation of this reads: ‘How could one expect generous rule from hungry rulers?’ The message is that it is moronic to expect an era of plenty or better living conditions from overlords that are themselves hungry/starving.

From this, they draw their own conclusions by conveying, in a typically Boran rhetorical style, the following: “nu hinbulchittu, nuun bultii arm ciifit” (‘They/Tigre/Abyssinians insist on ruling us not to better our lives but theirs’). The Boran villagers I stayed with in and around the township of Mooyale (on the Ethiopia-Kenyan border) reflected on this process more or less similarly, but with an advantage of a border-straddling people. These have an added advantage of being able to compare their status (Ethiopian rule) with the status of their fellow Boran in the former British-ruled Kenya. These Boran along the border add another dimension to their views in relation to their experience as the subject people of the Abyssinians.

One such informant stated the following: “Sidaamti waam faayda qaba takka beelee hinmidhaasitu. Haaja dhibbi hingabdu nuun malka baati arma ciifit” (‘Abyssinians are incapable of producing/creating something remotely useful to us/other people. They have no other business but the business of lording it over others’ [emphasis added]). Common statements like this latter embody Boran and southern views of the Abyssinians. Such views also provide an insight into what Abyssinians do for a living; what their primary industry is, at least in these southern regions of Ethiopia. Such views, ultimately, served as the catalyst in redefining the topic of this thesis.

Similar reasonably common statements are made by taking a contrasting view of the once-British-ruled Kenya and the Abyssinian-ruled Ethiopia. According to the Boran, Kenya is run by the hard-working and industrious Kikuyu, even with all the
widespread corruption and all that have come to characterise the post-British Kenyan state.

These contrasting views are expressed through statements such as: “laftii Kikuyyu, yo bonaallee, rooba”. Roughly, this translates as: “the country of the Kukuyu looks rainy/green even during the dry season”. Explicitly, it is making a reference to the irrigated farms in the coffee- and tea-growing regions in Kenya. Implicitly, it compares the industrious nature of the Kenyans with the idle ways of the Abyssinians who do nothing but soldiering and ruling other people, at the Boran’s expense. This is understandable given the fact that many of young or able-bodied members of the increasingly impoverished Boran community around the Ethiopia-Kenya border migrate to the “evergreen” Kenyan highlands in search of farm jobs or other similar low-skill and often casual occupations to supplement their meagre earnings. Such statements were revealing to me in more ways than one. The parasitic nature of the Abyssinian way of life in the regions they rule by force is contrasted to Boran’s way of life that revolved around pastoralism, where even the indigenous elite work in order to be accepted as such (be they political people or rulers). In fact, having substantial stock and the reputation that comes with this are the underlying criteria for a Boran to seek office in the traditional polity.

Many of these statements were not new to me as I had heard them while growing up in the region. However, this time, it gave me the fodder to question what exactly is the main industry of the Abyssinians, at least, in these southern regions.

It is almost a cliché to say that Abyssinia’s heartland is the country of essentially subsistence food/grain farmers. Those Abyssinians in the southern regions, however, virtually produced nothing tangible or did not farm. They lived off resources extracted from the local populations as members of the vast army and imperial bureaucracy. This reality is unchanged despite changes of regime and official ideology at the centre. This was all the more remarkable considering that Abyssinians, through their crown/state, owned all land, resources and even the people in these regions. They were landlords that did not or do not run or manage a farm, though still live off farming, indirectly.
Hence a gradual change of topic emerged, based on what I had observed and learned from Boran’s and southerners’ views of their predicament and the role of the Abyssinian-dominated state of Ethiopia in all this. This process led me to seek historical materials dealing with related subject matters, especially on the unnecessarily complex issue of land tenure in Ethiopia, on poverty and on development, all of which went hand-in-hand with Ethiopia and its famines.

I started suspecting and questioning the very methodological and theoretical foundations used to explain the topic of poverty/famines on one hand and the search for ways of overcoming these on the other. Questions such as, what if the cause of poverty and famine needs to be found in groups’ attempts to overcome similar conditions, often at the expense of others, began to overarch the topic.

More significantly, the Abyssinian-dominated state of Ethiopia owned not just land, people (labour) and produce of the subject peoples, but also the intangible resources such as the knowledge base, and the socio-cultural and politico-administrative institutions of the indigenous populations (in the south).

These intangible resources of the Boran and southerners, like land and other tangible resources, are allowed to be practised in a controlled way and only if they do not pose a threat to the Abyssinians’ main mission of ruling and changing others “for their own good”. They are permitted to exist if they and their practitioners (the indigenous elite) use indigenous institutions and traditions to assist in the all-transforming mission of the Abyssinians.

The mission involved had a strong component of assimilating these culturally and religiously distinctive people with an equally distinctive way of life, to the supposedly ‘better’ way of life chosen by the Abyssinians – all at the expense of the Indigenous people. Such an ideologico-political mission with the twin function of at once transforming the ruled to a desirable ideological and cultural mould, while simultaneously providing administrative services, appeared to me exactly what successive Abyssinian regimes have done and do in these southern regions of Ethiopia. This, not any productive activity like that of the Kikuyu or the Boran, defined the main industry of the Abyssinians, at least in these southern regions.
If that were the case, I thought, any enquiry made into the abstract topic of development, at least in the case of Ethiopia, will have to first establish what exactly constitutes the main industry in the country as a whole and in the Abyssinian-ruled regions of southern Ethiopia in particular. This developed into my chosen area of study. On this basis I wondered whether the rarely questioned statement that asserts that agriculture is the pillar of the Ethiopian economy, is not only misleading but bound to lead to a distorted conclusion during studies or appraisals in the topics of poverty and famines. At least it needs to be qualified so as to highlight its dependent nature to some other activity and/or industry of the empire-makers in Ethiopia.

On this basis, I came to the realisation that:

(a) the main industry of the ruling people of Ethiopia, at least in the southern-half of Ethiopia, has not been agriculture but one that revolves around state-sponsored acts of instigating ideologico-political missions aimed at transforming the subject peoples;

(b) Around this mission and industry, not any other (productive) activity, revolves Abyssinian strategy and practices of mitigating poverty and famine conditions in their home constituency;

(c) Abyssinian poverty-famine mitigating strategy and practices, in turn, induce other sets of poverty and famine in the non-Abyssinian constituencies ruled by the Abyssinians; and,

(d) The study of poverty and famines in Ethiopia and any attempts at making any developmental appraisal need to take into account these underlying and complex realities and relations.

Viewed from this perspective, the practices of the Abyssinian-dominated state of Ethiopia in extracting resources from its fiefs in the southern half of Ethiopia and the use of these to mitigate poverty and famine in the ruling constituency, fit in with A. K. Sen’s idea of “transfer of entitlements” to overcome famines.

However, the Abyssinian sort of transfer of entitlements does not sit well with Sen’s qualified transfer of entitlements theory which should be made both in the context of pre-established legal parameters and of the forces of the free market. Abyssinian
strategy and practices of mitigating poverty and famines, at least from the point of view of groups in southern Ethiopia, are neither legal nor done by observing the cardinal rules of Sen’s free market economy.

Rangasami’s view, in the words of Edkins (2002, p. 3), that: ‘famine cannot be defined solely with reference to the victim. The process is one in which “benefits accrue to one section of the community while losses flow to other (Rangasami (1985a, p. 1748)” is more fitting to what happens in Ethiopia as far as the strategy and practices of famine mitigation/reduction have been concerned. The following literature review on famines takes up this point further.

Thus, the original topic I started with was transformed along the way into some thing quite different, though related. It became one that studies the dynamics of a pervasive but elusive form of industry (theo-industry) that not only owns/controls the resources of the peoples it engages but one that also owns/controls their (indigenous) institutions and the elements of social organisation.

Theo-industry is the name coined to represent the main and all-dominating industry of the ruling people, and by extension, of imperial Ethiopia. It is a form of industry structured for and around the tasks of carrying out theocratic missions of one sort or the other in regions conquered by Abyssinians. In Ethiopia, important issues such as poverty, famine and development appraisal, I contend, cannot be tackled without establishing what exactly constitutes the main industry of the empire. Nor can we understand the essence of Abyssinians’ ancient strategy in tackling poverty and famine which revolves around the dynamics of this industry and the implications of this strategy for the peoples they rule.
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Objectives and Problem Statement

‘Famines’ and ‘Ethiopia’ have for some time been almost interchangeable concepts. At the same time, Ethiopian famines, as a rule, have been accompanied by organised violence or wars. It is not always clear whether cycles of violence are instrumental in triggering and exacerbating poverty and famine conditions, or are in fact mechanisms employed to mediate severe levels of poverty and famine by those who happen to be state-makers.

Parallel to this, there is an uncontested truth that is premised on the assumption that agriculture is the primary industry of Ethiopia. Consequently, this industry is perceived as both the ultimate source of the country’s wealth and holding the secret for the mitigation of the recurrent poverty and famine crises in Ethiopia. Ironically, however, agriculture – or problems associated with it – has always been seen as the cause of such crises.

But the question must be asked, is agriculture really the primary industry of Ethiopia? Indeed, is agriculture in the service of another mission carried out by the state-makers in Ethiopia? Are the peasants of Ethiopia producers in the strictest sense of the word? How many types of peasants co-exist in Ethiopia? How exactly are they linked? Are the agricultural systems in Ethiopia made up of qualitatively different elements, comprising those being practised in the heartland of Abyssinia (or the ruling nation) and those in the southern half of the country (or in the ‘gabbar’ colonies of Abyssinia)? Are agriculture and ‘peasants’ the by-products of another entirely different industry structured around the instigation and execution of a theocratic mission, with the inherent aim of cleansing the heathen souls of conquered nations or peoples?
A Search for the Elusive Industry

In this study, I contest the traditional view of Ethiopia's (or more precisely, Abyssinia's) agriculture being the primary industry, and propose a new paradigm, that its primary industry has in fact been (and continues to be) non-agrarian. This primary industry has been structured around an assumed theocratical mission of one sort or the other vis-à-vis other nations or peoples defined as the 'aremene Other' (the 'heathen', the pagans, the uncivilised, the unChristian, the non-Abyssinian in the past; and the 'underdeveloped', the 'undemocratic', in the present). The ultimate aim is to cleanse or purify a presumed malaise of the spirit, of the soul. The name 'Abyssinian' has been the used to represent the empire-building and ruling nation within the country known today as Ethiopia. These two terms – Abyssinia and Ethiopia – have often been used interchangeably, adding to the difficulties of understanding the realities in that country, located in the Horn of Africa.

Around the tasks involved in carrying out a theocratic mission I seek the structure of what has, I suggest, for long been the primary industry of Ethiopia and source of wealth. I call it 'theo-industry'. The term is prefixed by the Greek word 'theos' meaning 'god' (Macquarie Dictionary 1982) and 'industry', thereby denoting an industry of ideas, of a theology, of an ideology structured around the manufacturing, elaboration and packaging of a set of 'ideas' with the intended use value of 'improving' the spiritual life of a community of people or nation.

Central to the concept of theo-industry is the notion whereby a set of packaged 'ideas' a 'theology', an 'ideology' etc., not only justifies, defines, characterises, underpins, informs, and accompanies determined rule, a politico-social regime or a way of life. It transcends the preserve of being only the definer/maker of the 'superstructure' of a given social formation or society, and has the ability to make the infrastructure. Ideas and ideologies have the inherent virtue of defining an industry, the infrastructure. As such, the art of packaging or elaborating a set of ideas/ideologies, a way of life, and the 'marketing' of this service-type commodity, has sustained entire nations and financed series of civilisations. What is conceived as feudalism, such as the 'encomienda system' used for the forced and mass evangelistic mission in Spanish America, as well as the Abyssinian/Ethiopian
‘gabbar system’, I would argue, have been types of theo-industries or industries structured around the adoption, elaboration, packaging, and (coerced) marketing of the Commodity of Theocratical Services (CTS), the end produce of theo-industry.

Theo-industry is a form of industry constructed around the tasks of carrying out a theocratic mission vis-à-vis other peoples or nations. It specialises in the ‘farming’ and ‘sale’ of ideas, where real farming (productive) activities are relegated to the services of re-financing the ‘purchase’ or ‘consumption’ of ideas. As such, institutions such as the ‘gult’ and ‘rist’ land ownership (which will be examined in greater detail later) are not so much categories of an agrarian industry, but of an industry built around a theocratic mission or theo-industry. ‘Gult’ (spelt in this work as gooli) and ‘rist’ are concepts of a fiscal system of a nation whose primary industry has been structured around and been in the service of a theocratic mission.

This notion is in counter-opposition to the methodological premise that declared these (‘gult’, ‘rist’, the ‘gabbar system’ etc.) as being categories of an agricultural industry, a premise on which nearly all studies of Ethiopian society in general and its political economy in particular have been based (Wolde Maskal 1957; Hoben 1973; Crummey 2000).

Gult and rist, in this study, are studied as social institutions that embody a wage- and-pension package determined and allocated by the fiscal regime of a nation with a theocratic mission. They embody a ‘primitive’ type of wage-pension paying practice centred around the appropriation, allocation and consumption of the fruits of alienated (from the ‘Aremene’ nations) assets. The Abyssinian term ‘gasha meret’ (shield land or land acquired on conquest) embodies the notion of the alienated assets.

They (‘gult’ and ‘rist’) are categories of ‘public service’, but not of an independent agricultural industry, an industry that remains elusive to these days both in the northern half (‘rist’ countries) and southern half (‘gabbar’ countries) of Ethiopia. They have been ‘ancient’ versions of what, in the era of the monetary system, came to be known as the ‘demoz’ and ‘tureta’, wages and pensions determined and paid in monies instead of in what could be extracted from the alienated assets from the conquered ‘Aremene’ nations.
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Thus, the study of the economic system of Ethiopia based on the premise of agriculture as an independent industry is contestable. On that basis, attempts to locate the problematic of the growing levels of poverty, the structural foundation that underpins famines, as inherently being agricultural in foundation not only is misleading, but bound to produce a distorted appraisal of both poverty and famines, and strategies for their mitigation.

Alternative Methodological Paradigm

This thesis aims to correct this distortion by introducing another premise that points to the existence of an altogether different industry structured around the assumed mission of the Abyssinians (the ruling nation of the empire of Ethiopia) vis-à-vis the aremene nations, the former acquired via acts of conquest. This is the main objective of this work. I aim to demonstrate how agriculture has not been the primary industry and much less an autonomous one in Abyssinia/Ethiopia. Agriculture ceased to be an independent industry at the point where indigenous nations of the Horn of Africa were conquered by the nation with a theocratic mission. It has merely been forced to exist as the demand side of theo-industry. In this imposed status, agrarian production is not an end in itself, but a medium with which to generate funds with which to ‘pay’ for the theocratic services (forcefully) provided by the state of Abyssinia. The concepts and categories used to explain its nature: the system of land tenure, the ‘gulti’ land, the ‘rist’ land, the gibbir, the gabbar, the gooltenya, the ristenya, etc., have all been categories of theo-industry, not of agriculture.

The idea of conducting a ‘God-entrusted’ theocratic mission and the evolution of an entire industry for the purpose and the socio-economic impact of this process or industry on: (a) the nation with a mission (Abyssinia as the patron of the mission); and (b) the nations coerced to become the ‘beneficiaries’ of such a mission (that is, the heathen nations of the Horn of Africa) constitutes the NEGLECTED paradigm of ‘Ethiopian’ history and its economic system. What has been studied as ‘feudalism’ has more to do with a theocratic mission and its industry than socio-economic relations enacted around agricultural industry. As the result, Ethiopian feudalism here is conceived of as the by-product of another social process centred
around the idea of deconstructing the indigenous and African identity and spirituality, by a nation that has defined itself in contrasting and essentially non-African, non-black terms, as being a Semitico-Christian nation with a ‘superior’ tradition and way of life (Markakis 1974; McClellan 1988).

Around the notion of a ‘civilising mission’ of the heathen (‘aremene’), the Black, the African; therefore the ‘uncivilised’, we find the cardinal pole of the ‘Ethiopian’ history and its socio-economic regime. This in turn, has formed the essential backdrop to the conditions of poverty and famines that so much define Ethiopia and the Ethiopians today. The rationale of conducting such a mission, notwithstanding the use of violent coercion into submission of the ‘aremene’ for the purpose, is inherently a racist one.

There have been two criteria necessary for such a mission. There is the requirement of the ‘civilised’ with a ‘civilising mission’ and/or Christianising mission. In the Ethiopian case, this pillar has been represented by the Abyssinians, a Semitico-Christian people and nation that have always defined themselves in contrast to those they conceptualised as the ‘aremene’. The study of the evolution of these peoples is attempted in the earlier section of the thesis.

The contrasting pillar has been represented by those defined (by the Abyssinians) as the ‘uncivilised’, or the ‘aremene’ Other, the Heathen. These are those with the African, black, indigenous identities or those with a spirituality, a way of life, a defining national (tribal) ethos that is not Semitico-Christian (Haberland 1964). Roughly speaking, these are the Cushitic, Omotic, Nilotic groups in the Horn of Africa, the theatre for the theocratic mission of the Abyssinians and empire. As such, the idea of de-indigenisation, de-Africanisation, de-aremennisation of these peoples and their gradual transformation into the Abyssinian version of the ‘ideal’, the ‘civilised’ nation or identity, all through the use of violence, has defined the essence of the mission. Institutionalised violence has been the avenue that joined the two pillars, as a force that created the setting for such a mission to take place.

It is possible to change the criteria used to define the ‘uncivilised other’ on that basis, to alter the form but not the theocratic nature (by which I mean the content, the essence, the fundamentals, the ‘bottom line’) of the Ethiopian states/ regimes, or the fact that theo-industry, in one form or the other, remains the main industry of
the country. The ‘Marxist’ mission of the Derg (the Marxist military regime, led by Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam, in power from 1974 to 1991) and the ‘revolutionary democracy’ mission of the Woyane, a Tigre-dominated regime popularly known as the Woyane that came to power by deposing the Derg, are conceived as ‘modern’ versions of an ancient art of the Abyssinian-dominated state of Ethiopia: assuming and conducting a theocratic mission of its own ideology. The content of the theocratic mission has changed over time, but the theocratic nature of the Ethiopian state and the primacy of theo-industry, I argue, remain unaltered. The ‘modern’ era of Ethiopia has generally been the era of ‘neo-theocracies’. This period constitutes the study subject of the last section of the thesis.

This analytical or theoretico-methodological distortion, I claim, has led to misinterpretation of the nature of the Ethiopian economic system; by extension, it contributed to the distortion in the positive appraisal of the conditions of poverty and famines in Ethiopia.

The same has led to theoretico-methodological assumptions on the basis of which issues such as poverty, the causes of poverty, famines, wars, political instabilities, protracted feuds, and wars have been studied (Markakis 1964; Wolde Mariam 1986; McCann 1987, 1995). Consequently, nearly all studies on Ethiopia and especially those that aimed to appraise poverty and famine conditions (or their reduction), have been based in a similar paradigm that assumed the existence of a more or less autonomous agrarian industry, albeit with all sorts of ‘counterproductive’ influences and interferences from the makers of the Abyssinian/Ethiopian state (see the literature review in the next chapter).

The uncontested ‘truth’ that declared agriculture as the ‘backbone’ of the Ethiopian economy – when in reality theo-industry has been and still is, the said ‘backbone’ – has overshadowed the true nature of the Ethiopian economic system, thereby hindering a critical and positive appraisal of the causes of severe poverty (the structural foundation underpinning famine) in Ethiopia.

The same has led to the generalised conceptions of ‘Ethiopian agriculture’ and the ‘Ethiopian peasants’, when in reality, there have been two quite distinctive agricultural systems and similarly two qualitatively different types of ‘peasants’ in Ethiopia. There are the gribir-farmers or gribir-producing agriculture to be found
in the southern half of Ethiopia. There are the pension-farmers and the pensionproducing farms or agricultural system (the ‘rist-farmers’). The latter is typical of the Abyssinian heartland or the northern-half of Ethiopia. Both have been by-products of theo-industry or are functionally linked to this industry.

Agriculture, together with all productive activities, has long since been subordinated to the industry of a theocracy. The study in the political economy of poverty and famines in Ethiopia then would necessarily be associated with this previously unidentified form of industry.

By extension, attempts to appraise poverty (as the main structural foundation that underpins/informs famine conditions in Ethiopia) and famine conditions (in relation to proposing reforms for their mitigation) should commence from this assumption, in contrast to the traditionally-held views that have uncontestedly assumed agriculture as the primary industry and source of wealth in Ethiopia.

Please note, however, that this is not to say that agriculture is not the main source of wealth *per se*. Rather, it is whether the process of agricultural production (agriculture as a form of industry) is an autonomous activity carried out with the ultimate aim of direct consumption of what is produced. The issue is whether agricultural activity is carried out for that purpose or whether it has been violently put through a process that has transformed it into a dependent activity, attached to another type of industry (Theo-industry) with another intent.

The theocratic nature of the Ethiopian state remains unaltered; only the nature of the official theology of the state (that which underpins and informs a theocratic mission) has seen changes. As such, Ethiopia remains a theocracy, notwithstanding the ‘modern’ nature of the assumed theologies/ideologies, and the mission that these define (Marxian Revolution of the Derg, ‘Revolutionary Democracy of the Woyane). The main variable has been the set constituency that emerges as both the state-maker – the patron of theo-industry – and therefore the beneficiary.

Independent, let alone renewable, agrarian industry remains as elusive as ever. Failure to identify the ‘right’ primary industry of Abyssinia/Ethiopia, I claim, has led to the underlying ‘distorted’ methodologico-theoretical paradigm used in the study of the economic system of Ethiopia. By extension, attempts to identify the
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Structural causes of poverty and famines in Ethiopia and the corresponding policy proposals for the reduction of poverty and famines have also been based on a similar assumption.

All this begs the question: does Ethiopia need to free its agriculture from the tyranny of another industry before it can hope to improve the productive health of an essentially agrarian pattern of wealth-generation activities?

The introduction of a different paradigm in the study of the underlying causes of poverty and famines, with the ultimate aim of appraising a potential reduction of poverty and famine conditions, is the central theme in this work. It aims to identify what has for long been the primary industry of Abyssinia/Ethiopia, but one that has conspicuously been absent in the scholarly works on Ethiopia in general and its economic conditions in particular.

The central tenet of this thesis is that, if Ethiopian agriculture has to undergo a process of appraisal to enhance its poverty/famine reduction capacities then it must be ‘freed’ from the ‘economic tyranny’ of theo-industry. However, the birth of an agrarian industry is not an end in itself. It merely exposes it to the dynamics of what I have conceived as the Art of Wealth Creation (AWC) and the Art of Wealth Expansion (AWE). This way, it not only emerges as an independent industry, but one that may perhaps be the source of renewable and expandable wealth.

Theoretical and Historical Significance of the Thesis

The notion of conducting a theocratic mission of one sort or the other by one nation on another is hardly the preserve of the Abyssinians. Numerous similar parallels or cases have existed. The ‘encomienda system’ of Imperial Spain in the Americas has an uncanny similarity to the ‘gabbar system’ as used by the Abyssinians in their ‘civilising’ or Christianising mission vis-à-vis the ‘aremene’ nations in the Horn of Africa (Simpson 1966). Further, the processes of conquest that led to the formation of an Arab empire and the spread of Islam, share much with the theocratic missions (in the sense of forced evangelisation) of Catholic Spain in the Americas and through conquest. Spain itself was the only part of Europe that was brought under the Islamic Empire (Collins 1989). The pre-Christian and Christian
periods of the Roman Empire encompassing diverse regions from the Middle East and Egypt in the east to Britain in the west could be defined as ancient cases of the conquista-centred mission of ‘civilising’ peoples defined as the ‘heathen others’ or the ‘uncivilised others’.

If this is so, the economic system that has underpinned this process – a mission, I argue – was similar to that which informed later (arguably those before the Romans) cases of theocratic missions in other parts of the world. The Islamicisation mission started by a segment of Islamicised Arabs vis-à-vis indigenous Arabs – indigenous peoples of North Africa and Catholic Spain were but one more example.

The encomienda system of Catholic Spain was centred around the ‘civilising mission’ of Catholic Spain with regards to the indigenous nations of the Americas. It is possible then to extend the theoretico-methodological paradigm introduced here to demonstrate there has been such a thing as an industry of a theocratic mission or of a theocracy (theo-industry) and the rest of productive activities (especially agriculture) existed in subordinated fashion to its service.

On that basis, I argue how what passes as (the study of) feudalism needs to be located not in agriculture or agricultural-based productive relations but as one that is established between a nation with a theocratic mission (a civilising mission of one sort or the other) and those forced to become the ‘beneficiaries’ of these missions. These are ‘consumers’ of its service-type commodity (CTS). Feudalism, then, is conceived of as a by-product of another process, structured around another industry; where agriculture and all other productive activities of peoples are reduced to generate wealth with which to ‘repay’ or ‘re-finance’ the (forcefully) ‘received’ ‘civilising’ services. Thus, an alternative methodologico-historical paradigm in the study of ‘feudalism’ is introduced here.

*Violence as the Source of Wealth*

The study of theo-industry as well as the inner structures of this unique form of industry reveals its unique characteristics, its economic cycles, its inertia or dynamics and the historical processes that have influenced all these. This work will
show how theo-industry, regardless of its unique characteristics, is just another industry. The fact that violence, not the force of persuasion or market forces has served as the tool for the acquisition of a potential demand is one of this unique features.

Violence has not only been the source of a ‘coercible customer’ or a violently enforced demand for the end produce of theo-industry (CTS) – it has also been the tool to reproduce the imposed status of being the ‘coerced customer’. Theo-industry, as farming or any other economic activity, operates on more or less the same general rules that regulate the dynamics of any form of industry. As I have noted, it is made up of a supply side and a demand side. It needs constant renewal of its demand side or customer size, in order to expand its wealth-generating ability, in return for which it specialises in producing and ‘selling’ through the use of coercion. Its decline represents the onset of economic downturn, recessionary or depressionary economic condition. This, in turn, has informed the relative pauperisation of the nation that lives on it. Consequently, most of the cycles of Abyssinian wars of conquest, its wars for the preservation of the imposed status quo against internal (resistance of the conquered nations) and external (Arab, Turkish, European competitors) ‘enemies’ have ultimately been in the services of the national industry and economy.

The first set of wars was instrumental in the making of the coercible customer (in the form of conquered ‘Aremene nations’ to be turned into gabbar nations). The second and third sets of wars were instrumental in the preservation of the imposed status (being the gabbar) or the demand for the end produce of theo-industry (CTS).

Abyssinians or Ethiopians, over the past century or so, have become progressively poorer, not so much because of the inherent nature of their national industry, but due to reduced viability and/or renewability of their industry. The exhaustion in the conquerable aremene countries, and therefore an inability to expand or renew the demand side of theo-industry due to an end of the infinite nature of conquerable frontier lands of the ‘aremene’, has largely been responsible for the dramatic decline in the Abyssinian ability to sustain its growing population of citizens. The political and social turmoils in the twentieth century, the reforms and counter
reforms of the economy, the coups and counter coups, the endless wars of all sorts, have generally reflected the state of permanent economic depression that has affected the national industry.

It has had another (negative) economic effect on those nations reduced to being its coercible customers (its forced clients, the renewable source of demand for its service-type commodity (CTS)). This comes in the form of the structural foundation for the progressive impoverishment of the members of these (customer) nations, who have lost their economic agency. Ecological and other factors have tended to exacerbate this structural condition of impoverishment and have served as the catalyst that converts poverty into a famine condition. Superficially these two sets of poverties are identical. Closer scrutiny reveals how the two owe to quite different economic and political rationales.

Violence has been – and still is – an essential factor necessary for the operation of theo-industry. It has been the tool for making the demand side or the ‘customer’ out of the conquered nations. It has been instrumental in the maintenance of the imposed status. However, theo-industry is not alone in benefiting from the economic role of violence. In fact, all economic activities, forms of industries, cultures; independent of the type or nature of their industries or the levels of technological sophistication underpinning them – ultimately being nurtured from the bounties of a violent act of production, from a Predatory Art of Wealth Expansion (PAWE).

The main variable is not whether some nations and/or industries benefit from the nurturing virtues of violence, rather that the avenues used to tap into the benefits. Some nations carry out their own conquest, acquire the bounties, and on the basis of the nurturing effects, usually expand their primary industry, independent of its type or nature. Theo-industry has been the primary industry as well as primary beneficiary from the bounties of Abyssinian conquests. In societies where hunter-gathering, pastoralism or farming (cultivation) is the primary industry (directly), conquests add a fresh supply of land and other factors of production essential for these agricultural industries. The last section of the thesis discusses the general outline in the art of wealth creation, and more importantly, avenues in its expansion.
Thesis Outline

The thesis is sub-divided into four broad sections, each with its own chapters.

Part One, entitled ‘Abyssinia: Genesis of a Creole Nation and its Theo-industry’, seeks the origins of Abyssinia as an Afro-Semitic nation, with a series of ‘civilising’ missions of one sort or the other on the indigenous nations of the African sub-continent known as the Horn of Africa.

The origins of this nation are sought in the early trade-based ‘contacts’ between the Semitic peoples from a region known as Arabia Felix, or in what is today the Yemen, and the indigenous nations in the adjacent landmass of Africa. It proceeds to highlight how these contacts served as the catalyst in the evolution of Abyssinia as a Creole nation. However, regardless of the ‘African input’, Abyssinia is portrayed as a nation that has defined itself in contrasting terms to the indigenous peoples of the Horn of Africa, where its Semitic and Christian characters served to define its supposed uniqueness.

More significantly, Abyssinia came to assume a ‘civilising’ mission vis-à-vis the indigenous (African) nations, where a spiritual life of its choice was set to replace the indigenous spirituality or the way of life this entailed. As the result, around the notion of conducting a theocratic mission, evolved a form of industry or theo-industry, replacing the mercantile economy of Abyssinia in the previous times.

Part Two, entitled ‘Theo-industry: The Political Economy of a Theocratic Mission’, deals with the structure of this form of industry, with its inter-related functions of: (a) cleansing the indigenous spirituality, and (b) in its place, inculcate a chosen spirituality of the Abyssinians. Here, the centrality of violence in the making of a ‘customer’ for the service-commodity or the Commodity of Theocratic Services (CTS) features as an important ingredient for the operation of this industry.

Abyssinia makes up the ‘supply side’ of the industry of a theocratic mission, while nations it subdued via acts of conquest end up making the ‘demand side’ of the same industry. Abyssinia specialises in the ‘elaboration’ or ‘packaging’ of the CTS on one hand and the ‘delivery’ or ‘commercialisation’ of this commodity on the other. The subject nations (gabbar nations) become the coerced-consumers or
customers of its specialised service commodity. The union between the supply side and the demand side of theo-industry is viewed as the secret 'glue' that has bound Abyssinia to its subject populations, right up to the modern times.

The metamorphosis agriculture and other productive activities have undergone from being independent industries to becoming dependent activities in the service of another mission or industry is highlighted. The economic and social impacts of this mission and its industry, both on Abyssinia and its gabbar nations, are examined. On that basis, the structural foundation for the conditions of poverty and famines for both sets of nations is located.

The renewal of the economic health of the primary industry of Abyssinia, theo-industry, depended on its ability to carry out continuous rounds of conquests, aimed at making a fresh supply of Gabbar nations. Thus, the economic role of the state as the maker of a demand for theo-industry (in the form of the gabbar) features in this section. However, the continuous or sustainable supply of the 'aremene' (heathen) nations-cum-gabbar nations was dependent on other factors such as the geopolitics of the region or related historical processes. The second half of the nineteenth century created ideal conditions for renewed processes of imperial conquest for Abyssinia. The first half of the twentieth century, on the other hand, resulted in the exhaustion of the supply in the would-be gabbar nations. Thus, the former period is chosen as an ideal historical setting to study the dynamics of this ancient industry of Abyssinia. The latter period marked a decline in the viability or renewability of this industry.

Part Three, 'Theo-industry in Crisis', deals with the period where a fresh supply of gabbar could no longer be made via conquest. This in turn has led to the setting of a near-permanent recessionary condition, resulting in acute levels of poverty and famine conditions. These ills were set to continue as all and invariably top-down political and economic reforms aimed at seeking alternative and renewable form of industry (in agriculture) failed to materialise. At the same time, coups, counter coups and protracted wars have become the norm in Ethiopia. These turmoils are studied as resulting from overt and/or covert (under another political cause) competition over what little wealth is generated.
In the second half of the twentieth century, Ethiopia went back to the ‘devil one knows’ (that is, theo-industry), as its experimentation in recreating agriculture as an independent industry failed to materialise. The Marxist Revolution of the Derg (1974-1991) and the ‘Revolutionary Democracy’ of the Woyane (1991-present) are described as cases of neo-theo-industries. Both are theocratic missions of the modern times. These, like the Christianisation mission of medieval Abyssinia, have been assumed by a well-defined constituency and/or region and the beneficiary of the corresponding economic dividends. The economic effects of theo-industry are twofold and mutually exclusive. It benefits the constituency that emerged as the patron of theo-industry. At the same time, the decline in the economic health of this industry underpins the impoverishment of this constituency. The opposite has been the case for those forced to become the ‘consumers’ of the commodity of ‘revolutionary services’.

The structural foundations for the impoverishment of the ‘neo-gabbar’ (of the revolutionary regimes) are located in the latter’s imposed condition or in their continued alienation from their ancestral factors of production or assets such as land. The loss of the status of being (free) economic agents is noted. It owes to the imposed condition of having been forced to farm in order to ‘pay’ for a package of a ‘revolutionary service’ provided by the ruling regime and group in Ethiopia.

**Part Four: ‘Theo-industry and the Production of Famines’** is the last section and aims to highlight the main economic and social legacies of theo-industry. Theo-industry has led to the deformation of agriculture, rendering it a dependent activity. The same process has been responsible for the deformation of the status of being a farmer/producer.

The re(creation) of agriculture as an independent industry from underneath the economic tyranny of theo-industry, the emergence of true producers/farmers as agents of agricultural production, the arrival of the day where farming is carried out as an end in itself, rather than the (forced) medium for the consumption of some abstract commodity for the soul; is proposed as a necessary criterion for a viable and renewable agrarian industry. Renewable agricultural industry is held as having the inherent capacity to mitigate the conditions of poverty and reverse the onset of famines amongst the ‘two peasants’ of Ethiopia. This last aspect is discussed as the
concept of the 'Art of Wealth Creation' (AWC) and the 'Art of Wealth Expansion' (AWE).
CHAPTER 1

THEO-INDUSTRY AND FAMINES: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Understandably, the growing impoverishment of the Ethiopians in general and that of its ‘peasants’ – the great majority of the total population (where 85 per cent of the population ekes out a living from farming of one sort or the other) – in particular has emerged as the dominant topic in recent academic and related literature on Ethiopia. This has been all the more so, in an era where the very word ‘Ethiopia’ evokes thoughts of famine, a condition that in the minds of the relatively rich and well-fed Western audience, belongs to a long-forgotten, legendary, mythical and biblical era, not in the age of global satellite television.

Many of these studies have had a general aim of identifying the underlying (structural) and contributing causes of poverty and famine conditions (cyclical droughts, endless wars conducted by the regimes in Addis Ababa etc.) as a precedent to seeking ways of reducing the heavy humanitarian toll which would be unacceptable elsewhere in the world. These studies, as a rule, have had one thing in common: the presumption that agriculture is a more or less autonomous industry, albeit with many counter-productive interferences from the state in the form of ‘hefty’ taxes which have led to the ‘farmers’’ impoverishment.

The methodological significance of this assumption finds its way in studies that have sought to make an appraisal of the Ethiopian agriculture, in view of identifying the problem areas and to propose ways of improving the wealth-generating capacities of this sector. These studies have often been done with the ultimate aim of justifying the need for developmental aid of one sort or the other from external sources (Cohen & Weintraub 1975; Rahmato 1995).

Categories such as land tenure, taxes, marketing patterns of agrarian products, the correlation between landless farmers and landlords, between the farmers and the state, the nature of farming in Ethiopia and its inherent technological
backwardness, have all been studied on the premise of agriculture being the primary (and an autonomous one) industry in Ethiopia.

Concepts such as ‘gult’ or ‘goolt land’, ‘rist’ or ‘rist land’, ‘gibbir’, the ‘gabbar’, the ‘goolenyay’, the ‘ristenyay’ and many others have been studied as categories that belonged to a system of land tenure, that in turn, underlie an agrarian industry – a misplaced assumption, I argue. Such methodological imprecision has rubbed off onto studies aimed at seeking the causes of poverty and famines in Ethiopia, generally in the bid to make an appraisal.

As the result, what has been studied as land tenure, a omnipresent category in the ‘Ethiopian studies’, has in reality, been studies on the fiscal regime of a nation whose primary industry has been conducting a theocratic mission of one sort or the other vis-à-vis its subject populations that do farm.

The perpetuation of the myth that agriculture is the primary industry of Ethiopia on one hand and the failure to identify the industry that evolved around the adoption and instigation of a theocratic mission on the other have been two pervasive themes that flow throughout the studies on Ethiopia; regardless of their specific subject area. In the process, the commodity character assumed by the officially instigated ideology, with the intended use value of replacing ‘contaminating’ or ‘evil’ ideas or way of life with state-sanctioned and supposedly spiritually ‘liberating’ ones, has been overlooked.

As a result, many of the categories used to study the economic history and realities of Ethiopia (the gabbar system, land tenure, the gult, the rist, the gibbir etc.), I claim, have been based around an erroneous methodologico-theoretical foundation or premise. This in turn, has had implications for those scholars who have aimed to make an appraisal of the Ethiopian economy in the bid to elucidate ways of reducing the effects of severe poverty and famine conditions there.

The literature on the Ethiopian studies, in light of this, can be subdivided into four broad categories for analytical purposes, despite the fact that many of these studies have had similar theoretical foundations, and have tended to feed from or complement one another. These categories are:

- Studies of the infrastructure;
• Studies of the superstructure;

• Developmental studies; and,

• Anti-colonial studies (militant literature).

**Agriculture as an Industry: A Myth?**

A considerable portion of the Ethiopian studies has been composed of those aiming to decipher the nature and problems that affect agriculture, but from the premise that claims it to be the primary industry of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. All other non-productive relations (social, political, historical, etc.) are said to be structured around it, derived from it and/or affected by it, though with the ability to impact on it (agrarian industry).

Balambaras Mahteme Selassie Wolde Maskal was one of the local ‘connoisseurs’ of the system. In his study, ‘The Land System of Ethiopia’ (1957), he deciphers a series of nomenclature used to define a type of land or property tenure. Closer scrutiny reveals how some of these categories (‘gul’ and its derivatives) either point to a ‘job-description’, or to specific types of wage-posts attached to the industry of a theocratic mission. Other categories or nomenclatures of ‘land tenure’ (rist and its derivatives) have in fact been little more than a type of pension that is determined in a piece of arable land, in reflection of a primitive fiscal system, where wages and pensions were paid not in a monetary form, but in kind, in a piece of land or in what a piece of land could yield.

These studies have failed to perceive the agrarian industry as one structured around a set theocratic mission; that they are, in large measure, the embodiment of a fiscal system of a nation with a theocratic mission to carry out vis-à-vis other sets of peoples/nations and one whose industry is one structured for and around this mission.

The term ‘gul’, despite its association with a piece of arable land, belongs to the category of a fiscal system of Abyssinia, not to its agriculture – at least, not directly. It is a type of ‘wage’ or ‘remuneration’ for those actively employed in the national theocratic missions of the Abyssinians (the ruling nation in the empire of Ethiopia). It is the equivalent of a Roman stipendium. The term ‘rist’ is the
antithesis of 'guli'. It is a primitive type of pension for those that had served the
nation (or its crown or state) with a theocratic mission.

The source of the abovementioned assumption (agriculture being the primary
industry) lies in the proposition that had identified Ethiopia's predominant socio-
economic regime as feudal. European travellers and missionaries have provided the
earliest known descriptions of the socio-economic features of Abyssinia/Ethiopia.

Almeida, a Portuguese Jesuit priest, provided an historical account of Abyssinia as
early as 1620 (Dilebo 1982, p. 185) and noted the absolutist, hence feudal, nature
of the society where powerful lords had an absolute command over the lives and
property of the entire country. These overlords were described more as usurpers
than rulers. Ludolph Job, a seventeenth-century German traveller and missionary,
was also amongst the earlier exponents of the Abyssinian political economy in his

Later studies of Ethiopian political economy emphasised the assumption of
agriculture being the primary industry and a feudal one by nature. Crummey
(1980) noted how concepts of feudalism have been used to describe the nature of
Ethiopian economy and society from the nineteenth century to modern times. He
indicated how the striking similarity between Abyssinian social order and
European medievalism led many liberal and Marxist scholars of Ethiopia (such as
d'Abbadie 1868; Cerulli 1960; Conti Rossini 1960; Gilkes 1975) to identify the
latter as a feudal society. He pointed out how other scholars of Ethiopian studies
(for example, Markakis 1974; and Ellis 1976) have been hesitant to define Ethiopia
as a feudal economic regime.

Many studies on the political economy of Ethiopia, on agriculture, on issues of
land tenure (Schwab 1970, 1972; Hoben 1973; Cohen & Weintraub 1975;
McClellan 1988; McCann 1987, 1995), on peasants (Pausewang 1983; Tareke
1991; Rahmato 1995; Joireman 2000), on rural poverty and famines (Shepherd
1975; Clay & Holcomb 1985; Wolde Mariam 1986; McCann 1987), on
developmental issues (Ghose 1985; Bruce 1994) have more or less echoed the
essentially feudal nature of Ethiopia (in the pre-revolutionary era). By extension,
all of these studies have emphasised the premise that has agriculture as the primary
industry.
The complexity and confusion abounding in the concept of Ethiopian land tenure, as set in the context of a feudal regime, have featured heavily in the literature. One such work is Hoben’s (1973) study of land tenure among the Amhara. He describes Ethiopia as a kind of ‘agrarian civilisation’ and a given system of land tenure underpins this way of life (p.5). From there, he goes on to identify what he called the ‘basic principles of land tenure (in Ethiopia): gwilt and rist.’

For the present, gwilt rights may be thought of as fief-holding rights, and rist rights may be thought of as land-use rights. Gwilt (fief) rights provided economic and political support for the elite and in their territorial aspect constituted the framework for the administration of the peasantry. Rist (land-use) rights, on the other hand, played an important role in the social and economic organization of the local community (p.5).

While the use of land to pay for a type of administrative service (gwilt) provided by the ‘elite’ to the state/crown is clear, neither the origins of such land nor the rationale that has justified the administration of the peasants is established. The difficulty in establishing the cardinal link between the national mission of the state/crown of Abyssinia (civilising the heathens) on one hand and the use of land and other resources to finance this mission on the other, has hindered the deciphering of what I argue is the true nature of the ‘gwilt’ and the ‘rist’ or the so-called land tenure system in Ethiopia. Structured around the national mission, we find a whole industry, complete with its institutions, wage-receiving employees and pensioners, all paid in land and or in the products of the land.

The subordinated status of this sector, the fact that it is not quite been an industry on its own right, the fact that the supposed producers/farmers, in a twisted logic of things, have been made to consume not so much what they produce (except a fraction of this), but use it to repay what these are coerced into consuming for the improvement of their ‘soul’; is generally missing or not clearly established in the literature.

This has had far reaching methodological implications on the attempts that sought to make an appraisal of the problems of poverty and famines in Ethiopia. It has obscured the nature of property ‘land’ ownership, and the social relations that this served to define. One example of this has been the intractability, the complexity, thus the obscurity, that still accompanies the categories of ‘gult’, ‘rist’, the
‘gabbar’, the gabbar system’ etc. Siegfried Pausewang, a well-known specialist on matters of land tenure, Ethiopian (peasant) society and economic conditions, encapsulated this aspect:

There is hardly any field in which so much confusion persists so obstinately as that of land tenure in Ethiopian tradition. Even the word itself is misleading: rather than tenure, it would be more correct to speak about access to land. ...Many misconceptions are still reproduced in public debate as well as in scientific literature and official documents. Misunderstandings are repeated time and time again. Many official statistics have been produced in such a confused and misguided fashion that the figures are not even guesses; they bear no simply no relation to the reality of land holding. Nevertheless, they are quoted as scientific findings, and continue to mislead everybody (Pausewang 1990, p. 38).

Reference to the concept of land tenure in Ethiopia, whether it is done in the bid to explain the complex set of socio-political relations built on it (the study of the superstructure) or to make an appraisal of the conditions of poverty and famines that prevail in Ethiopia, has implicitly identified agriculture as the primary industry of Ethiopia.

The following are some examples of the first case (studies of the superstructure): Pankhurst (1961); Trimmingham (1965); Tamrat (1972b); Markakis (1974); Gilkes (1975); Crumney (1981); Dilebo (1982), Kaplan (1984); Schwab (1985); Donham & James (1986); Zewde (1991); Marcus (1994); and Tibebu (1995).

The following are examples of the second case: Dula (1969); Schwab (1970); Tafla (1974); Cohen & Weintraub (1975); Shepherd (1975); Hoben (1976); Ellis (1980); McClellan (1988); Ottaway (1990); Tareke (1991); Bekele (1995b); McCann (1995; 1997); Rahmato (1995); and Joireman (2000).

Idea as a Commodity: A Missed Point?

Much of what falls into the category of an ‘Ethiopian study’ has been predominated by historical enquiries that have sought to elaborate upon the ‘uniqueness’ of Ethiopia, in contrast to the rest of black Africa. The fact that it remained ‘independent’ when the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa fell under European colonial bondage, its ability to defeat a well-armed European army to preserve its not-quite-African (Semitico-Christian) and black way of life, have raised a curious
sense of inquiry from foreign academia and a series of ‘freelance’ scribes on the legendary tales of distant and exotic countries (Crummey 2000).

That it had institutions and a tradition that served as a kind of ‘living museum’ of a forgotten European despotism (feudalism), ancient Christian traditions and rituals with a Semitic (Judaic and Arabic) flavour no doubt only increased the value of its ability to attract academic curiosity of one sort or the other. However, the belief of being the ‘unique’ set of people amid the sea of ‘darkest Africa’ has long been a central theme used by the Abyssinian ruling elite and their scribes (historians) who were the product of a church-based (Orthodox Church) learning. The mythical origins of the Abyssinians or Ethiopians are defined along the lines that have sought to legitimise the aspect of ‘uniqueness’, a euphemism used to highlight the inherently non-African civilisation in a corner of the continent known as the Horn of Africa. The claim of the legendary Queen of Sheba as Ethiopia’s own, her liaison with king Solomon of ancient Israel and the birth of the founder of the ruling dynasty of Ethiopia (the Solomonoid Dynasty) has been enacted as the starting point of ‘Ethiopian’ history in general and as the rationale with which to justify the notion of uniqueness.

Many (foreign-born) exponents of Ethiopian history (such as Richard Pankhurst) have tended to highlight an essentially non-African or non-Black, and ‘Semitic’ myth of origins of the ruling people in the empire of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. However, equally as important has been the role of this myth (of unique Abyssinians) in legitimising the ‘civilising’ mission of Abyssinian vis-à-vis the ‘uncivilised’, the unChristian, and/or the heathen (aremene) nations and peoples of the region.

This belief of being the ‘unique’, the ‘civilised’, the ‘cultured’, the ‘Semitic’, the ‘Christian’, has helped espouse the notion of not just a ‘unique’ community of nation, but one with ‘superior’ traits and traditions to offer to those that ‘lacked it’. This idea has served define the ‘god-given/entrusted’ and self-assumed role of carrying out a civilising mission (de-Africanisation, de-indigenisation, Christianisation) of these (Semitico-Christian Abyssinians) in the region. Such a mission has served as the platform that adjoined, rather violently, the nation with a (godly) mission and those with a supposedly ungodly soul (the heathen) (Markakis 1974; McClellan 1988).
The content of the mission, the assumed official ideology that underpins a peculiar case of a theocratic mission, has changed over centuries. Nevertheless, the rationale for carrying out a theocratic mission and for having an industry on that basis remains unaltered in Ethiopia to this day. Many studies on religion (theology of the state), on the political ideologies, on the state and its functions have depicted these as aspects of the superstructure, complementing an underlying economic system (the infrastructure). In reality, it is such ideas and ideologies that have defined the primary industry of Abyssinia/Ethiopia, not an economic activity like the agrarian industry. The elaboration and the (forced) 'marketing' of packages of ideas have defined and continue to define the primary industry of Ethiopia. This is the 'missing' theme in the Ethiopian studies in general and in those that have made the study of the superstructure their speciality (Tamrat 1972a, 1972b; Dilebo 1982, 1983; Kaplan 1984; Zewde 1991; Jalata 1998a, 1998b). The explicit and underlying assumption here is the existence of an 'infrastructure', an agrarian economy and the productive relations it embodies. However, in a scenario where the carrying-out of a theocratic mission defines the national industry, those elements that have been identified as the markers of the 'superstructure' (ideas, region, state, etc.), in this case, mark its very antithesis: the infrastructure. There could be a service-type industry structured around the elaboration and delivery (a sort of marketing) of officially-sanctioned ideas, ideological services or theocratical services. Under such circumstances, ideas are more than just elements of the superstructure. They have the inherent ability to become commodities. The only hitch is the ability to market or find customers for a commodity for which there may not be a voluntarily-established demand. The study in the 'economic' function of violence, or violence as a tool in the making of a customer, a demand, comes to play. It is here where I locate the 'economic' role of the theocratic state and its institutions.

Whole nations could live on the earnings of such an industry, while employment opportunities, thus wages and pensions, serve as the access routes to get the share of what is earned by a theo-industry. It is possible to say that Ethiopia has merely shifted from being a nation whose primary industry has been structured around the forceful instigation of theological services to one structured around the instigation
of ideological (political) services such as Derg's revolutionary mission or Woyane's mission of revolutionary democracy.

In the nation of theo-industrialists, officially-held and -promoted packages of ideas, in a rather twisted logic, belong to the realm of the infrastructure. Thus that dichotomy of the superstructure versus the infrastructure is not a fitting element of methodological analysis to study Ethiopia's social formation, at best.

One way or the other, the economic subordination of agriculture and all other productive activities, has been the net effect of having theo-industry as a primary industry.

**Components of Ideological Services**

The aim of forcing conquered peoples into a desirable and malleable mould is the main feature of Abyssinian theocratic missions. Forced assimilation or Abyssinianisation (Amharisation is also used interchangeably) of the non-Abyssinian peoples, ultimately, is the function of this process. Consequently, assimilation can be seen as the synthesis in the act of consuming ideological services and being transformed by it.

Just as significant is what is forced to be abandoned by the 'consumers' in order to acquire a new identity or set of identity markers. During the centuries when Christianising the aremene (heathens) was the official mission of the Abyssinian state, the act of cleansing aremene from markers of their 'contaminated' indigenous identity and replacing it with inculcated a Christian or Abyssinian way of life, has been an important expression in the consumption of ideological services. This process was first enacted through the practices of inducing mass conversion (in Amharic, "metemeg"). The Orthodox Church with the cajoling arm of the conquering armies of Abyssinia was responsible in facilitating mass conversions. In some cases, Christian missionaries penetrated certain regions and established a foothold in non-Christian territories as if to prepare the ground for the conquest-based conversions that followed (Tamrat 1972b). However, one way or the other, organised and state-instigated violence has ultimately been the most effective method of achieving the aim.
Forced conversion of traditional leaders to spearhead mass conversion has been one other effective method of inculcating Christian ways to the aremene. For instance, following the conquest of the Boran-Oromo people, the top political leader of the indigenous polity (the Abba Gada) was summoned to the district capital of Yaaballoo and told to convert to Orthodox Christianity. The conversion of the figurehead of a group was meant to hasten mass conversion of the whole Boran population, and over a short period of time. He refused the demand and was jailed in a dark dungeon and, no doubt, tortured to change his mind (Boru Galma n.d.). According to local historians, this produced a mass revolt, made worse by the fact that it occurred in a border region with British East Africa with the potential of exposing Abyssinian brutal ways and inviting foreign intervention. The Abba Gada was released and Abyssinians temporarily abandoned that particular method of conversion amongst the Boran. The Boran case is an exception as many regions conquered previously were put to the process of forced mass conversion, with varied degrees of success (Tamrat 1972b; Dilebo 1983).

Once officially made into Orthodox Christians, such nations underwent what could be termed the process of religious consolidation. The church, with the assistance of the imperial army garrisoned in these regions to oversee the mission, took the process from there and made sure to mould new converts into practising Christians. In this task, it was assisted by hordes of settler Abyssinian families who were entrusted to ‘coach’ converts in the process; for which they were assigned a goolt-farm (complete with its gabbar) that provided them with gibbir consumed as wages.

New coverts were forced to observe the rituals of this church. Naming ceremonies of the converts and of members of their families ensured that indigenous names were replaced by Christian and/or Abyssinian names. Amharic, the official language of the empire and of the church (along with the defunct ge’ez), was taught. Abyssinian dress sense and customs were assumed. All these and related other ‘new’ ideas were inculcated with the aim of inducing a profound change of identity. These are some concrete expressions of the process of Abyssinianisation. They were a manifestation of the act of consuming ideological services from the Abyssinians or their state. The gabbar were forced to consume these and were
transformed by them into, at least initially and superficially, quasi-Abyssinians/Ethiopians.

Consuming markers of a new identity is not the only expression in the consumption of theoretical/ideological services. Undertaking a theocratic mission has always been flanked by the provision of ‘administrative services’. As I have noted, mass conversion into Christianity was aided by the brute force of the state. The imposition of *Pax Abyssinica* and the establishment of institutions of the state in conquered regions were essential to provide a systematic dose of institutionalised violence in a bid to force the new converts and/or the *gabbar* into consuming Abyssinian ideological services.

The process also meant the replacement of indigenous institutions and their norms of ‘law and order’ with the legal norms of the Abyssinians. Doing so gave Abyssinian institutions a monopoly in the delivery of the services of ‘law and order’ to all. In reality, these enforced the *status quo* where the *gabbar* people performed what is required of them (to consume ideological services) and work the land to ‘pay’ for it.

Given the number of distinctive indigenous nations conquered and rendered ‘customers’ of the Abyssinian mission under equally diverse politico-military conditions, the process was flexible to a degree. What aspect of the services had to be consumed by whom and when, varied. Some groups such as the Arsi-Oromo, Islamic Wollo-Oromo, Wolaita, and Kaffa had put up fierce resistance against Abyssinian conquest and the assimilation process (including its component of converting into Orthodox Christianity) (Dilebo 1983; Melba 1988). Even where converting whole group into Abyssinian Christian tradition was not strategically possible or ideal, as was the case amongst the Moslem populations, that did not mean that they were immune from the process. Some other aspects of the process of Abyssinianisation had to be instigated here. As such, it was possible to become a ‘true’ Ethiopian (read Abyssinian) by assuming the language, customs or the general way of life of the Abyssinians, minus its cardinal component: Orthodox Christianity.

It is necessary to note that the process of carrying out a theocratic mission is far more significant than its successful culmination. The process provides and renews
the purpose of the Abyssinians. It secures a sustainable source of customers for their services and industry. It provides them with a sustainable excuse to extract resources from the *gabbar* in ‘exchange’ for the ideological and/or administrative services.

The use of economic categories to interpret Abyssinian and non-Abyssinian relations emanates from the premise that carrying out a theocratic mission in itself could assume the form of an industry. However, that does not mean that the *gabbar*, the Abyssinians or others conceive the process in this light. But not conceiving as such does not mean that there is no functional correlation or interaction between the *gabbar* and the Abyssinians either. The Abyssinians did force into the former a form of identity – a religious and national identity akin to theirs. The *gabbar* nations have been alienated not just from their indigenous identity but also from their material resources and produce that sustained the Abyssinian officials and settlers in the service of either the church or the state. Consequently, it is possible to speak of a (forced) act of “exchange relation”, though ‘exchange’ assumes a more or less freely- or voluntarily-enacted give-and-take type of relation.¹

Whether it be the Iranian-type (Islamic theocracy), the kind exercised by Catholic Spain and used in mass conversion of the Indigenes of the Americas, or the Abyssinian version, all theocracies are a form of dictatorship. Institutionalised violence is the main tool of ‘governance’ in such regimes and at all levels. The making of the *gabbar* out of non-Abyssinian groups was possible as the result of violent conquest. The constant and overbearing presence of *Pax Abyssinica* has been required to carry out the official mission and force the *gabbar* into consumers of Abyssinian ideological services.

At least, three sources of institutionalised violence were instrumental in forcing the *gabbar* into consuming the service.

(a) *Melkenya* instigated violence:

*Melkenya* (also spelt as *Melkegna*) is a an armed steward or guard with the duty of enforcing discipline among the *gabbar* in the *gibbir*-farm(s)

¹ That is why this term is put in inverted commas throughout the thesis.
allocated to an Abyssinian beneficiary. *Melkenya* is an agent of the *gooltenya* and his position is similar to those who disciplined slaves on behalf of plantation slave owners. The *Melkenya* were often a law unto themselves. As distinct from all other sources of violence, the *Melkenya* delivered a ‘surgical’ dose of violence directly to unruly *gabbar* or *gabbar* communities at the level of the *gibbir*-farms. Because of this, they were the most feared of all agents of Abyssinian violence. The *Melkenya*, more than any entity, embodies the terror that underpins the whole system of *gibbir* production and the consumption of ideological services by the *gabbar*.

(b) Institutionalised violence:

This floats above the whole system and came to the aid of the *Melkenya* when the task of enforcing discipline at the level of the *gibbir*-farms became difficult. This came in the form of:

(1) the brute force of the Abyssinian army and militias garrisoned in strategic encampments in *gabbar* countries south of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia’s capital;

(2) the institutions of ‘law and order’.

These institutions included Abyssinian state security forces, loyal militias of the regime, police forces and the courts, all of which ensured that the *status quo* was maintained. The role of these forces remains unchanged regardless of changes in regimes and official ideologies in Ethiopia (Young 1998; Tronvoll 2001).

(c) Economic coercion:

This is generally a subtle, indirectly exercised and more important form of violence. It was enacted by rendering the *gabbar* population utterly dependent on their masters’ for everything, including the rations they lived on. As I have shown, triple alienation – of land, labour and soul of indigenous nations conquered by Abyssinia – preceded the creation of a *gabbar*. Because of this, the *gabbar* have been held hostage to acute hunger and deprivation (McClellan 1986; Jalata 2000).
The interaction of these sources of violence guaranteed the protection of the imposed status quo and served as the tool in enforcing forced consumption of Abyssinian ideological services. That, however, has not stopped individual and organised forms of resistance by the gabbar people. Many of the so-called peasant revolts in the southern half of Ethiopia have been cases of refusing to abide by their imposed status and of rebelling against forced Abyssinianisation (assimilation) (McCann 1985; Tareke 1991; Haji 1995).

**Famine and its Causes: Dominant Themes in the Discourse**

**Defining Famine**

Famines are as ancient as humanity itself (Woo-Cummings 2002). They are also universal (Devereux 2000). There have been major famines in Europe (Dutch; Russian, Irish), famines in Asia (India, Bangladesh, China, North Korea), famines in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia), famines in southern Africa (Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Swaziland), and famines in the Sahel (Mali, Niger, Senegal, Mauritania). However, it is pertinent to note that western academia and its paradigms are not the only ones preoccupied with this universal topic. Indigenous societies have had their own views of what is famine, what causes them and have generated traditional avenues to remedy them.

According to Arnold (1988, pp. 6-7), “famine signifies an exceptional (if periodically recurring) event, a collective catastrophe of such magnitude as to cause social and economic dislocation.”

Kumar (1990, p. 173) defines a famine as “virulent manifestations of intense starvation causing substantial loss of life.” Rangasami (1985a) claimed that there is more to a famine than what Kumar states and has defined it, to use Devereux’s (2000, p. 4) words, as “an intensification of ‘normal’ processes [of a given socio-economic system] rather than an aberrant event.”

Economic technocrats of the sort that devise developmental policies from agencies such as the World Bank provide a typically apolitical definition of famine. Von Braun, Teklu and Webb (1998, p. 1) define famine as “a catastrophic disruption of the social, economic, and institutional systems that provide for food production,
distribution, and consumption.” “Once famine is defined as a failure of food systems”, observes Devereux (2000, p. 24), “it is legitimate to analyse it as a technical problem, and seek solutions in terms of technical tinkering: liberalising agricultural policies, better information systems, integrated markets.”

Walker (1989) sought to provide an all-encompassing definition of famine, but one that “avoided taking simplistic theoretical position” (Devereux 2000, p. 4), and came up with the following definition: “Famine is a socio-economic process which causes the accelerated destitution of the most vulnerable, marginal and least powerful groups in the community, to a point where they no longer, as a group, maintain a sustainable livelihood” (p. 6).

Drèze and Sen (1989) in their book Hunger and Public Action embark on a largely academic attempt to make a differentiation between ‘hunger’ and ‘famines’. They highlight the difference between what they term ‘chronic hunger’ and ‘famine’. The former is defined as “a discomfort or painful sensation caused by want of food”, and famine as a “prolonged scarcity of food causing malnutrition and death by starvation”. Aydin (1997, p. 4) points out that,

famine is more than people dying of starvation, it is an acute breakdown of society bringing turmoil which cannot be ignored. What distinguishes famine from hunger and food shortages is that famine is political. Famine victims are a threat to stability.

**Nature, Overpopulation, Human Practices and Famines**

One persistent school of thought holds that decline in production relative to the size of the population is what triggers famine conditions and famines. This idea, though not exclusively European, is associated with Malthusian and Neo-Malthusian views that high rates of population growth lead to food shortages in relative terms to the size of the population. Reverend Thomas Malthus’ *An Essay on the Principle of Population as It Affects the Future Improvement of Society* (1798) expresses the notion whereby natural resources are finite or fixed in contrast to the population size that grows, unless unchecked by other forces such as diseases and natural calamities. Famine is conceived as one such force that checks the unhindered growth in the size of the population relative to finite resources. Accordingly, it is stated that famines restore an ideal equilibrium between the
population size and the need for food on one hand, and the existing food supplies on the other.

Those who advocate a 'naturalist thesis' (Aydin 1997) blame the aberrations of nature as the primary cause of famine. Amongst these are those who claim that drought and similar other natural disasters directly cause famines. Cutler (1985, p. 12), for instance, sees famine as "an abnormal event characterised by a breakdown in social relationships giving rise to an epidemic situation and excess mortality." According to this view, famine is caused by some identifiable cause such as droughts, floods and wars, and leads to an epidemic-like situation that results in mass death.

Others claim that ill-human practices that lead to environmental degradation in regions prone to droughts are the cause of famine. Redclift and Sage (1994), Glantz (1976, 1987a, 1987b), Watts (1987), and Franke and Chasin (1980) are, according to Aydin (1997), the main exponents of the naturalist school of thought. The critiques of this naturalist school of thought claim that famines do not necessarily emanate from droughts and similar natural causes. Some contend that droughts themselves are the result of human actions that end up or contribute to the ecological degradation (Bush 1988; Sen 1981; Watts 1991).

Some case studies show how droughts do not always mean famine in pre-colonial Africa. It is argued that droughts, floods, locusts, and related other natural disasters were common but many communities have managed to avert famine by resorting to their traditional coping mechanisms. On this basis, it is argued that European "colonialism destroyed people's survival strategies and increased their vulnerability to the vagaries of nature" (Dahl 1979; Shenton & Watts 1979; Kloos 1982; Baxter 1991; Ensinger 1992).

Neo-Malthusian interpretations of what causes famines are represented, among others, by Ehrlich (1968). It is pointed out how, due to advances in science and technology, nature no longer resorts to its 'positive checks' on population size and this has led to a 'population bomb' that results in famine. Ibrahim (1984), Hardin (1968), and Horowitz and Little (1987) are some of the exponents of this school of thought. Out-of-control population growth leads to the reduction in the sustaining ability of land and environmental degradation. This in turn results in "land
mismanagement, declining yields, over-cultivation of fragile lands, desertification and soil erosion” (Aydin 1997, p. 8).

One could ask whether African or Asian farmers are more environmentally destructive than European ones, including those who have populated vast continents outside their home continents. What would be the capacity of European farms to sustain the population had it not been for their ability to acquire vast new lands on to which to disperse large numbers of land-strapped farmers? Have Europeans been able to feed their people for a long period of time and avert famines due to their superior land management techniques or because they have also managed to reduce overpopulation and land degradation in relative terms because they have managed to acquire new vast lands through conquest? Overpopulation is a problem only if a nation or a continent is unable to acquire new supplies of lands with which to offset it.

Devereux (2000) notes that the 1960s and 1970s have marked the peak period for what he refers to as the “crude Malthusianism” with the appearance of titles such as *Famine-1975!* (Paddock and Paddock 1967) and ‘Lifeboat ethics: The case against helping the poor’ (Hardin 1977). He indicates that these strands of thought continue to set the tone of research in what causes famines by many who encompass the Washington-based think-tanks known as the Worldwatch Institute.

This is reflected in the debate on how, in Africa and Asia, population exceeding the “carrying capacity” of the land/resources is to blame for recurrent famines there (Devereux 2000). Neo-Malthusianism finds its expression in the so-called Food Availability Decline thesis (FAD) (Aydin, 1997).

Narrow and specialised theorising of famine predominated in recent decades and this, according to Devereux (2000), owes to an increase in “disciplinary specialisation”. He observed that:

*Generations of demographers, geographers, climatologists, economists, sociologists and political scientists offered increasingly sophisticated yet reductionist theoretical frameworks: ‘neo-malthusianism’ and ‘contramalthusianism, global ‘famine belts’, ‘entitlement failure’, ‘complex emergencies (p. 16).”*

He concludes by noting how all this hinders rather than helps the understanding of famines.
Alex de Waal (2000) views famine as a complex and hard-to-define topic as it encompasses a range of interconnected components. Hunger, impoverishment, social breakdown, mortality and resistance of individuals, families and groups to each of these components or people’s coping mechanisms are de Waal’s components of famine. These are symptoms one can find in any severely impoverished or famine-stricken society. They are rather the outward manifestation of a profound economic crisis that affects a given society, be this a pastoral, agrarian/small-holder, occupational or war-torn society. De Waal also views famines as a pathological condition or as a health crisis – suggesting a fitting approach in tackling the effects of famines (Aydin 1997, p. 12).

*Regimes Cause or Contribute to Famine*

Others claim that regimes deliberately cause famine conditions or exacerbate an existing one by pursuing/implementing exploitative, wasteful (like the use of resources to wage wars), sordid economic policies that disrupt food production or commerce (Wolde Mariam 1986). Wolde Mariam, an Ethiopian academic, in his earlier work contends that famines are fairly common in Ethiopia and those that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s owed to the “dysfunctional process of modernization” (Crummey 2002, p. 4, following Wolde-Mariam).

In a later work, notes Crummey, Wolde Mariam (1991, pp. 183-187) highlighted how ‘backwardness’ and ‘ill-directed attempts at development’ explain the ‘predicament’ of Ethiopia’s farmers and underpin their severe impoverishment and vulnerability to famine. “He [Wolde Mariam] identified three critical factors inhibiting development in Ethiopia: the ‘structural’ problem that farms are ‘too small and fragmented’; the ‘institutional’ problem of ‘very lop-sided priorities of officials;’ and the problem of ‘subsistence mentality,’ that ‘peasants cling insecurely to their subsistence goals of production’” (Crummey 2002, p. 4). I argue that the ‘structural’ problem to which Wolde Mariam refers is itself the consequence of a process that failed to happen and that both the officials and the peasants behave as they do in response to this. (This failed process will be explained in a later section of this chapter.) These same Ethiopian officials, in an attempt to mitigate a set crisis of poverty and famines (namely, that of the ruling constituency), introduce all sorts of exploitative wealth-/produce-skimming
practices that end up impoverishing even more people. Such practices are ‘lop-sided’ only when viewed from the victims’ point of view, not that of the beneficiaries. Those who stand to benefit from the limited opportunities of Ethiopia’s education system (that is, predominantly members of the ruling people) and who have managed to join the ranks of the ‘elite’ by becoming employees in Ethiopian academia and the bureaucracy, are some of the beneficiaries from these ‘lop-sided practices’.

Wolde Mariam’s (1991) use of the generic term “Ethiopian farmers” – and this criticism applies to many Ethiopian academics – as if they are one undifferentiated mass of suffering people from sordid actions of the same regimes and for more or less same reasons, is misleading at best. Its sweeping use hides the fact that all Ethiopian regimes have been dominated by Abyssinians, and, one way or the other, these have imposed extremely predatory economic systems that benefited both peasants and non-peasant Abyssinians alike in the non-Abyssinian regions acquired through conquest (that is, the southern-half of Ethiopia).

‘Peasants’ in the southern regions of Ethiopia have been put through an extreme system of exploitation similar to that imposed on European serfs, in order to benefit peasants-turned-soldiers of the conquering forces of imperial Ethiopia recruited mainly from the heartland of Abyssinia (or northern Ethiopia). This basic fact cannot be made explicit if the generic term “Ethiopian peasants” is employed. A similar case applies to the unqualified use of the term ‘famine’. Doing so masks the existence of two distinctive sets of famines in Ethiopia where one set of peasant communities (those in northern Ethiopia) end up benefiting from the misery of other peasants (in the south). There are poverty and famine that occur in the heartland of Abyssinia, the home constituency of the state-making people in Ethiopia. There is the condition of poverty and famine amongst the subject peoples of Abyssinia in the southern half of Ethiopia. Looking for crude ways of mitigating the poverty and famine conditions in the home constituency of the ruling people has historically been the prerogative and driving force of the Abyssinian state.

The conditions of poverty and famine among the peasants in the southern half of Ethiopia have many parallels with those in India and Ireland when these were colonies of the British Empire. Abyssinian colonial administration sustained by the use of brute force has allowed Abyssinians to expropriate the resources and
produce of its subject peoples in southern Ethiopia and has used these to sustain a large number of Abyssinian peasants-turned-colonists whose function has been serving in the vast colonial administration and army. While, from an outsider’s perspective, famine and poverty in any part of Ethiopia looked more or less the same, that does not mean that they have similar causes or rationales. The root cause of severe poverty and famines in the southern regions of Ethiopia, to a large extent, owes to the practices of the ruling Abyssinians in carrying out the illegal allocation of southern resources (land, produce, food) as entitlements to people from their home constituencies. In the process, the ruling Abyssinians invariably create another condition of famine, or exacerbate an existing one, in the southern half of Ethiopia, while attempting to mitigate the famine condition in their home constituency.

Other Ethiopians (to be precise, Abyssinians) who have studied famines in the northern regions of Wollo and Tigray have come to a similar conclusion. Paraphrasing Dejene (1990), Crumney (2002, p. 5) claims that famine in Wollo region is caused by “human-generated environmental degradation, the principal manifestation of which is soil erosion”. Azeze (1998), Adhane (1996) and Rahmato (1991) express similar views that natural phenomena such as droughts and locusts, together with land degradation, are the cause of famine in Ethiopia.

McCann (1987, p. 206) indicated that “...the region’s [northeast Ethiopia or Wollo, Tigray] vulnerability to famine appears to come less from drought than from a shortage of productive resources – land, oxen, and forage – some of which may be a result of lack of rain”. What causes this “shortage of productive resources” is not clear. As important is to note that what Abyssinians, through the agency of their state and institutions, used to do in the past in order to overcome such shortages, if any, is not explained.

Khalif (2000), in an article on “The politics of famine in Ogaden” (a Somali-speaking region in south-eastern Ethiopia), observes that people in this region succumb to famines mainly because of the indifference of the Ethiopian regimes invariably dominated by the Christian Highlanders or the Abyssinians. “The attitude of the Christian highland rulers towards the Muslim and ethnic Somali nomads in this region” says Khalif (p. 334), “has always been one of ambivalence as they expected them to leave, sooner or later, the Empire.” Khalif employs A. K.
Sen’s famous thesis that famines do occur even when enough food is produced or is available in the same country, to make his point. He reminds us how some reports show that Ethiopia had managed to produce more than enough food during all its recent famines (of the mid-1970s, 1980s and 1990s) when millions perished.

It is interesting to note that Sen (1981, pp. 63, 92, 137) made similar remarks in relation to the famine in Wollo. As if to note the adage of ‘old habits die hard’, Khalif highlights how the quite odd ways and practices of the Ethiopian regimes while millions suffer remain unchanged in relation to the famines in the Ogaden region. Drawing on the information provided in Sherwell and Harris (2000), Khalif (2000, pp. 334-335) states that: “Despite declining food production in certain parts of the country, the overall harvest of cereal crops across Ethiopia is expected to be 10 million metric tons this year, some of which will be exported abroad. Thus, the heart of the problem, at least in the Somali region, lies with the authorities’ inaction in terms of redistributing food stocks within the country and the bureaucratic red tape of delivering aid to remote rural areas”.

He could have added how not just food, but coffee, the major export commodity of Ethiopia, too is a food item that could have also been used to feed the starving and/or used to purchase food items to bolster the ‘food entitlements’ of the people in the Somali region. As is the case with Sen’s famous thesis, implied in Khalif’s idea is the belief that the state owns the food, and must divert part of the ‘surplus’ it extracts from better-off regions (unspecified) and redistribute it to the famine victims in Ogaden region.

It is not clear whether the “better-off farmers” consent without any resistance to the practices of the state to skim off part of their produce to feed people in other parts of the empire – worse, without receiving something in exchange for it. Implied in Khalif’s belief is the proposition that the Somalis too, like the Abyssinians in the highlands, must receive a “fair” share of what the regime routinely skims off from other supposedly better-off regions and divert it to feed those in need elsewhere. To put it in another way, he is suggesting that the Ethiopian state must increase the food ‘entitlement’ of the Somalis in Ogaden by resorting to the not-so-transparent, much less ‘legal’, practices of extracting produce and resources from certain regions to be consumed in other regions or social groups. Such practices are held
by Wolde Mariam (1986) and others as impoverishing peasants and exposing them to famines.

Resorting to such practices to mitigate one set of famine conditions runs contrary to a cardinal component of Sen’s notion of transferring additional food entitlements but by observing the rules of the free markets, and done, in Bhatia’s (1993, p. 36) terms, “within a well-defined and accepted legal framework of property rights and relations”.

Paul Keleman (1985) in the abstract of his paper, *The politics of famine in Ethiopia and Eritrea*, following the devastating famines of the mid-1980s, claims that: “The Ethiopian government has neglected the interests of the small peasant farmer who form about 90 per cent of the rural population. Investment, technical expertise and foreign aid have been concentrated on the state farm, where the state is directly in control of the surplus. The priority accorded by the Ethiopian government to increasing its income from cash crops is largely due to its military expenditure.”

Keleman – and this is a common oversight – seems to overlook one basic yet essential point in relation to what exactly makes regimes act so “nastily” in the face of tragedy. In Ethiopia’s case, it is necessary to note an empire created and run by a predominantly “peasant” population where famines have been the driving force for seeking new territories, wage wars and build empires. Accordingly, the principle that has guided the behaviour of such a regime and its dominant objective could hardly be solving all poverty and famine conditions in the empire. See, for example, Keller (1992), who discusses the active use of food and/or its denial as a weapon of war.

The driving force of the ruling Abyssinians, and of regimes backed by them that have ruled the empire state of Ethiopia for centuries, has been the mitigation of a specific set of poverty and famine conditions (those of the ruling constituency), and not the resolution of poverty and famines across the board. As such, the fact that the process ends up creating another set of poverty and underlying conditions for famines in constituencies ruled by the Abyssinians is a logical outcome of their main objective (namely, mitigating poverty and famine of their home constituency). The “nasty” acts of Ethiopia’s regimes in light of famines and poverty need to be seen in this light. The process of attending to the needs of the
ruling constituency in Ethiopia has been converting both the ruling and the ruled constituencies into one massive and undifferentiated famine-stricken wasteland. This too is the logical outcome of the actions of the regime whose main aim, however inadequate and in the long run counter-productive, was motivated in solving a specific set of poverty and famine conditions (that of the ruling people).

Viewed from the Ethiopian perspective, it is possible to conclude that one set of famine causes other set(s) of famine. As such, the cause for poverty and famine in non-Abyssinian constituencies, ultimately, lies in what Abyssinians do to overcome their own poverty, even famines. Putting it in another way, a nation’s or nations’ attempt at economic expansion is ultimately the cause of other nations’ economic contraction – a process which in turn informs poverty and even famines in some cases. This idea, to some extent, echoes Jenny Edkins’ view (2002, pp. 2-3) when critiquing A. K. Sen’s ideas. She noted that: “He [Sen] did not consider the possibility that famines could be a product of the social or economic system rather than its failure”. From this she formulated: “It is necessary to ask who benefits from mass starvations, not just who the victims are”. A similar idea has also been expressed by Rangasami (1985a, p. 1784).

David Keen (1991) and Mark Duffield (1993, 1994, 1998) have also noted that there are many beneficiaries from famines in the Horn of Africa, a region where famine relief, for all intents and purposes, has become a major industry – worse still, one that ends up sustaining regimes that represent those who benefit from the misery of millions (Edkins 2002, p. 3).

Alex de Waal goes even further and asserts that regimes commit a crime in causing or contributing to famines and suggests, in his words, “anti-famine contracts” between regimes and the public (de Waal 1997, p. 5). De Waal’s discussion on who benefits from the Sudan famine plus similar claims in relation to famines in Ethiopia could be used to illustrate this point. However, this functional correlation between the losers and the beneficiaries of famines applies not just to what happens during the processes of tackling full-blown famines but also in underlying economic relations that impoverish people and cause famines in the first place.

Ethiopia began the new millennium with an unprecedented famine that has gripped large swathes of the country, including regions that, during the massive famines of
the previous famine decades (mid-1970s, mid-1980s and mid-1990s), were
designated “tirf amrach akababiwoch” or surplus producing areas. As many as
fourteen million people, a quarter of the total population of Ethiopia, is in need of
urgent international food assistance. These are official figures and the figures were
steadily upgraded throughout the same year (*Addis Tribune* 2003).

Reflecting on this famine, Wolde Mariam (*The News International*, 21 June 2003)
remarked that, “The tragedy [famine] is latent. It is there as long as the peasant is
not liberated and his productive capacity enhanced.” Food insecurity, he predicted,
would continue as long as taxation of subsistence producers persists, as long as
peasants’ own subsistence requirements are subordinated to these contributions,
and as long as land tenure remains insecure for peasants.

Wolde’s contention does not provide a complete or accurate picture of the reality.
To start with, it does not provide a clue as to why successive rounds of all-
Abyssinian regimes of Ethiopia carry out such ostensibly predatory processes of
creaming off what little is produced by farmers. Nor does it specify which parts of
the country are put through such a process. There are those that stand to benefit
from such a practice, though this is only vaguely implicit in his remarks. It would
have been helpful if he had provided the details of the forces that motive the ruling
people to do these nasty things as well as their social background and geographical
precedence. The fact that the ruling regimes of Ethiopia have their main
constituencies in the severely impoverished peasant populations in the northern
half of Ethiopia (the heartland of Abyssinia) also needs to be mentioned. The
“famine belt of Ethiopia”, at least until the famine of 2003, has been in the
heartland of Abyssinia. As such, I could argue that widespread poverty and
famines in the constituency of the ruling people, rather than the attempt at tackling
these, have been the motivating force behind the “nasty” actions or policies of the
state-makers of Ethiopia – practices enumerated by Wolde Mariam. Viewed from
the perspective of the ruling constituency, the action of the state is a ‘positive’ one.
It is a concrete expression of how the agency of the state is used to mitigate one set
of poverty and famine; though, at the same time, doing so induces the exact
opposite in the constituencies of the subject peoples of the Abyssinian-ruled
Ethiopia found in the southern half of Ethiopia. Wolde Mariam presents us with a
rather romantic view of the “good old days” (when Ethiopia was ruled by the last
of its invariably despotic emperors, Haile Selassie I) as the solution to the plight of the undifferentiated Ethiopian peasants. He blames the Marxist regime of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam (the Derg) as the culprit in restricting the mobility of the peasants that has been instrumental in reducing the effects of poverty and famines.

“Restrictions on farmers’ mobility are another drawback, according to Mesfin” reads a passage from the same source (The News International 2003). The journalist states:

He [Mesfin] explained that during the reign of the late emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974), peasant farmers were highly mobile. For example, they moved from one region to the other to work as coffee pickers for about half the year and then went back to their plots. The money they earned kept them going until the next harvest. However, the regime of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam (1975-1991) nationalised rural land and created peasant associations, which controlled the movement of the farmers. This control, he [Mesfin] explained, has continued under the current administration [which is dominated by the Abyssinians from the region of Tigre/Woyane] since a farmer still needs a permit from his peasant association to travel out of his area.

Here, too, he neither indicates how the mentioned migratory process was one-sided or applied exclusively to peasants from the Abyssinian provinces in the northern half of Ethiopia, nor why the Marxist regime did as it did. There is nothing to suggest whether peasants in the coffee-growing regions stood to benefit from the same policies of the Derg that affected the “free” migration of northern peasants to coffee-growing regions in the south, if any. Closer scrutiny would reveal how all of the land, including much of the coffee farms that attracted poor peasant labourers from the heartland of Abyssinia were in fact owned either by Abyssinian crown/state or by Abyssinian landlords. The fact that the indigenous peoples of these southern regions were either serfs (Gabbar) in the service of Abyssinian employees of the crown and/or have been readily ‘evictable’ labourers on farms owned by Abyssinian landlords is not even remotely implicit in his remarks. In many instances, the evictions of indigenous farm labourers on Abyssinian-owned farms in southern Ethiopia were done with the intent of replacing them with impoverished kin and cousins of the landlords from the heartland of Abyssinia. This process is discussed in later chapters of the thesis.
Dessalegn Rahmato enumerates measures that he contends could reduce Ethiopia’s vulnerability to drought, and by extension, famines. “It is very important to free the market from any kind of constraint”, Rahmato has said. “Peasants must have free access to the market and the market must be free to deliver goods and services to communities….” He believes that certain regions should be deemed poverty zones and therefore relieved of all taxes. Especially vulnerable zones should be designated “food emergency areas and should be given greater support” (Rahmato in *The News International* 2003). He recommended the creation of “strategic food reserves” to withstand recurrent famines.

Rahmato, like Wolde Mariam, does not elaborate much on why Ethiopian regimes follow such seemingly sordid, anti-market, poverty-triggering or -exacerbating policies and practices. Nor is he explicit as to who are the beneficiaries from such policies and practices. Such seemingly sordid policies, in effect, are instrumental in tackling a set of poverty and famine but only that of the ruling constituency. It is not clear how his recommendation of creating a “strategic food reserve”, or storage of grain/food for lean times, could be achieved unless the regime resorts to the time-proven methods of skimming off from slightly better-off regions with the use of methods that are anti-market and impoverishes millions.

Andargachew Tiruneh, in an article titled “The peasant revolution that never was: exploitative surplus appropriation policies” (2003), discusses how the Tigre-dominated regime (*Woyane*) that also came to power at gun point like the *Derg* uses identical methods of market manipulation as a medium for a predatory extraction of resources from peasants mostly in the south-central regions. It is necessary to note that the home constituency of the *Woyane*, the Tigray region bordering on the newly-found state of Eritrea, has long been the “famine belt” of Ethiopia and was exempted from all sorts of taxes since the times of Emperor Haile Selassie. In one of his speeches, Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam asserted that “we have left Tigray to the locals. Annually, the central government allocates sixty million birr [local currency]. On the other hand, revenue collected from Tigray is not enough to cover the cost of chalk used in schools” (as quoted in the Amharic language newspaper *Ingocha*, 1986/1993). The remark was made to highlight the irony of a region that virtually depends entirely on budgetary allocation from the centre (Addis Ababa) and contributes virtually nothing to the
coffers of the state, yet is home to armed dissidents with grievances of regional exploitation by the state. It would be interesting to see the budgetary allocation to this region under the Woyane. There is nothing to suggest that anything has been done to correct such gross anomalies of Ethiopia’s budgetary system nor the anti-market and predatory methods of collecting revenue, then or since.

Under the Woyane, this same region (Tigray) emerged as the main source of massive numbers of personnel to bolster the regime’s vast militias, army, security forces and bureaucracy. All of these are sustained on resources extracted through the use of predatory and, according to Wolde Mariam, Rahmato and Andargachew Tiruneh, to name but a few scholars, anti-free market practices of the Ethiopian regimes. The use of predatory economic and market practices does impoverish many Ethiopian peasants and regions, but not all. Peasants and regions that form the home constituency of the ruling people have always emerged as the beneficiaries.

Comparing the predatory nature of the three, but all Abyssinian-dominated, regimes that have ruled Ethiopia in the post WWII period, Andargachew Tiruneh (2003) remarked:

The post-war reforms of Emperor Haile Selassie had limited the payments to the state by farmers who had their own plots\(^2\)… The payment to the landlord by the tenant was an average of a third of his produce… The Derg nationalized land because these payments, especially the payments of the tenant, were considered too exploitative. Subsequently, however, the Derg introduced a variety of payments to be made by the farmer to the state and to such social organizations… The heaviest burden that the farmers shouldered at the time was the amount they lost to the Agricultural Marketing Corporation of the state, they had to sell to it a part of their produce at below the market price. This was devised by the government for the prosecution of its many wars.

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\(^2\) This applied either to peasants in the heartland of Abyssinia or Abyssinian landlords in the non-Abyssinian southern half of Ethiopia. Most indigenous peasants in the southern regions were either serfs or landless sharecroppers or tenants on their ancestral land owned either by the state or by Abyssinian landlords.
Referring to similar practices of the regime that came to replace the Derg, he went on to write that, "...the surplus appropriation policies of Marxist Leninist League of Tigray / Tigray People Liberation Front MLLT/TPLF [Woyane] are no less exploitative than the Derg’s." Later, he noted how one major method of skimming off the earnings of the farmers by the Woyane was possible through the retention of a monopoly over the farm supplies such as fertilisers and loans to farmers.

EPRDF [an acronym of the Woyane] denationalized the corporations concerned with the supply of the agricultural inputs, particularly those with the supply of Dap and Urea [fertilisers]. The private sector was allowed to participate and a few corporations did, indeed, participate. However, the bulk of the fertilizer supply business was transferred to corporations owned by the ruling political organizations, a practice both unprecedented and unsavory.

Thus, the reality is far more complex than the often politically/ideologically motivated reasoning behind the determination of who is to blame for famines in Ethiopia. There have been both losers and beneficiaries from economic and political policies of the Ethiopian regimes. It all depends on whose point of view is highlighted.

Land privatisation is being echoed as the panacea to overcome widespread poverty and avert future famines in Ethiopia. This issue, by far, remains the most contentious one, not to mention the doubts about how doing so concretely improves food production in regions deemed the “famine belts” of Ethiopia. It could be asked why, for instance, regions in the heartland of Abyssinia where the rist, a type of private property, has long predominated, are amongst the most food-deficient areas in Ethiopia? Some suspect that, in real terms, this is a subtle agenda designed to make land in the southern half of Ethiopia available to land-strapped people concentrated in the constituency of the ruling people in the northern half of Ethiopia. Should the state return land to its indigenous peoples in the southern half of Ethiopia before contemplating the issue of land privatisation? All these and similar complex, if not worrisome, issues are being discussed as many seek ways of tackling the ever-worsening condition of poverty and famines in Ethiopia today.

It is not clear whether Ethiopia, a country where the ruling people continue to wield the absolute power of the state, can devise an economic system that has the ability to release the productive forces of all its farmers without having to resort to
the usual predatory extraction of produce and resources from some, in order to benefit members of the ruling constituency.

Another main thread in the debate of what is famine and what causes it has been dominated by A. K. Sen’s “entitlement theory”. This emphasises reduced access to food as the cause of famines rather than decline in food production.

Famines as caused by reduced access to food

It is suggested that famines could and do occur even when there is enough food in the same country and, therefore, the causes of famines need to be sought in what has made some section of the population not able to access food resources. These ideas have broadly been categorised under the demand-side theories of famines (Devereux, 1988, 1993).

It is claimed that famines are caused not so much due to reduction in the availability of food but mainly to a reduction in people’s ability to access existing food supplies due to what its best known exponent A. K. Sen conceived as “Food Entitlement Decline” (FED). This notion stands in opposition to the idea that advocates that famines owe to Food Availability Decline (FAD) or a reduction in the supply of food due to climatic, market anomalies (Seaman & Holt 1980) or political causes (Wolde Mariam 1986).

In his book Poverty and Famines (1981), Sen introduces his ‘Entitlement Theory’, introducing a ‘new’ perspective in what causes famines. Rather than reduction in food supply, he contends, “failures of effective demand, or entitlement collapse – [which is] the inability of identifiable groups of people to command enough food for subsistence, irrespective of the stock of food available at local or national level” is held as the cause of famine (Devereux 2000, p. 19) [emphasis in original].

The concepts of “entitlement” or “entitlement set” are critical in Sen’s work. According to Ravallion (1996, p. 5), entitlement set is:

all the commodity bundles than can be obtained from all resources at the individuals command in a given society, subject to the laws of that society. Starvation is then seen to arise from an ‘entitlement failure’, meaning than an individual’s entitlement set no longer includes enough food to stay alive.
Devereux (2000, p. 19) enumerates four ‘legal’ ways of acquiring food, which are ways that contribute to the ‘entitlement set’: a basket of food and essential goods of an individual. These are by: “growing it [food] (‘production based entitlement’), buying it (‘trade based entitlement’), working for it (‘own-labour entitlement’) and being given it (‘transfer entitlement’).” Then he deduces that, according to Sen, “Individuals face starvation if their ‘entitlement set’ does not provide them with adequate food” (Devereux, 2000, p. 19), derived from the combination of some or all of the four sources of food entitlements. See Sen (1981), Chapter 2 of Drèze and Sen (1989), Chapter 6 of Devereux (1993) and Osmani (1995) for a further discussion of these points.

Entitlement failure can be direct – a loss of access to production-based entitlement, for instance during a crop- and livestock-destructive drought – or exchange-related – a fall in trade- or own-labour-based entitlement due to unfavourable shifts in prices (livestock prices fall, food prices rise) or incomes (nominal or real wages fall, wages are lost due to unemployment) (Devereux 2000, p. 19) [emphasis in original].

Bhatia (1993) notes that Sen’s ideas and prescriptions are based on assumptions of an ideal type, a well-ordered, market-oriented, democratic and relative prosperous society; a society that can afford to purchase food either from other better-off regions within the same country and/or from outside sources, and allocate it to the less fortunate ones. According to Bhatia, Sen sees famines “as an event at a point of time in an isolated manner. It has no roots in history… Sen’s concern is more practical than academic. He advocates social security rather than food security as the appropriate approach to fighting the menace of famine and starvation” (pp. 37, 45).

**Famine as a Process**

Those who define famine as a process or structure hold that there is more to famine than a disaster triggered by a freakish climatic and/or man-made catastrophe (Rangasami 1985a; Walker, 1989; Devereux 1993; Floud & Rangasami 1993; Banik 1997; Pottier 1997). Floud (1993, p. 3) makes this point when referring to the main theme of a conference convened to this effect:
The reconceptualisation of famine as a social process could perhaps be considered the dominant theme of the conference. It was argued that the long-term problems of food production, poverty, and chronic, non-acute food shortages should be recognised as debilitating factors in that process, evoking social responses which may place whole communities, or sub-groups within them, at risk of succumbing to disaster in the event of an acute food shortage, whatever the proximate cause.

According to this school of thought (one that sees it as a process and with underlying structural causes/malaise), famine is intricately or functionally linked to underlying economic, political and historical conditions of a given society (Aydin 1997, p. 4). The main idea is that famines are the end result of long-term processes of impoverishment owing to deep-rooted economic and related malaise. The consequences of such malaise are manifested in the form of widespread poverty over an extended period of time that often, with the assistance of trigger factors such as droughts and wars, lead to famines.

Aydin (1997, p. 5) contends that this structuralist school of thought “...view natural disasters [as] precipitating factors, trigger events or intensifiers not the actual causes”, indicating that there is long-term structural weakening that makes societies vulnerable to famine and that these are complex.

This is a view I share but will aim to explore it further by identifying the underlying structural conditions that lead to famine in general and to famines in Ethiopia in particular. However, I contend that there is more to it than the existence of an inherently exploitative system that, over a long period of time, exposes people to penury and increases their vulnerability to succumb to any minor disruption in food production or access.

Other societies (in Europe, the Americas, in parts of Asia, even parts of Africa) have managed to feed most, if not all, their population over a long period of time with more or less similar structural, or otherwise, causes of famine. Equally as important is to find out what in turn causes the structural or other crises (such as overpopulation, land degradation, droughts etc.) that over an extended period of time lead to widespread impoverishment and, in some cases, famines.

There has been a vast body of work on famines theories in general and the critique of Sen’s entitlement theory on what causes famines and how to tackle them (see, for example, Devereux 2000; Edkins 2002; Woo-Cummings 2002). However, I
contend that no strand of the theories of famine adequately explain the reason why famines occur in general and why these are so common in some regions of Africa such as the Horn. Many of the human activities such as wars, misrule, exploitative economic relations, unequal wealth redistribution and the like often held as causing famines could also be attempts at overcoming or mitigating poverty and famines by others.

Questions such as who ends up inducing environmental crisis and for what reasons, who or which constituency emerges as the ultimate beneficiary, which constituency loses out and for what reasons, need to be tackled. Nor is the reasoning that famines occur because there is no adequate wealth redistribution mechanism or markets do not work properly, adequate. People or societies have managed to feed many and avert famines despite the in-built inequalities and where markets have not been fully developed, or, in some cases, were non-existent. Environmental crises, as famines, themselves could easily be the consequence of some other crisis.

Thus there is more to it than the debate around whether FAD or FED explains the causes of famine and suggest lasting solutions.

Edkins (2002, p. 3) echoed Rangasami’s views:

The process is one in which ‘benefits accrue to one section of the community while losses flow to the other’ (Rangasami 1985a, p. 1748). To study only the responses or coping strategies of victims while paying no attention to the actions (or inaction) of the rest of the community is to miss what is going on.

Edkins’ critical assessment of the definitions of famines, which I share, could be used here to provide a summarised view of the conceptions and theories of famines noted above. Edkins (2002, p. 5) asserts that:

Any definition of famine which sees it as a failure of some sort is missing the point. Whether famine is seen as failure of food supply, a breakdown in the food distribution system, or a multi-faceted livelihoods crisis, the outcome is the same. These definitions or concepts blind us to the fact that famines, and deaths, migrations or impoverishment that they produce, are enormously beneficial to the perpetrators: they are a success not a failure, a normal output of the current economic and political system, not an aberration [emphasis added].
But how exactly is it that famines are “a normal output of the current economic and political system, not an aberration”?

Economic Conception and Notions of Famine among the Boran-Oromo

The conception of what exactly constitutes a famine and the difference between starvation and famine has featured in many works in recent decades. However, it is neither a new subject nor an exclusive preserve of western thought. Other people or cultures do have their own notion of what constitutes hunger and famine. There is an acute awareness between ‘normal’ episodes of hunger and widespread food shortages that signal devastation on a large scale. Among the pastoralist Boran people of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, the term beela is employed to mean hunger or a period of tolerable levels of hunger. The term cinna (read approximately as chin’a) literally stands for decimation or mass death.

The Amharic, traditionally the ruling people of the empire of Ethiopia, use the term rehaab for hunger and kiffu qen (a terrible era; a period of mass death) to denote a famine. The term ilqit, roughly translating as ‘mass death’, is also used to emphasise mass death characteristic of the kiffu qen.

Concepts such as beela and cinna are often conceived in conjunction with the term finna, meaning roughly a livelihood or a good livelihood. Finna itself is qualified to express varied shades of the ‘good times’. Kassam (1994) has equated finna as the indigenous notion of the concept of development. There is the period of a finna gabba. “Gabba” means literally a fat or healthy state of animals, and by extension, a healthy state of humans that live off of their herd. Thus, “finna gabba” denotes a period characterised by a fat or healthy livelihood. “Finna dansaa” (dansaa is a Boran word for ‘good’) is another expression used to express “finna gabba”. The term gabba defines an optimum economic condition dictated by the healthy state of the herds that, in turn, is the basis for a good living condition. It is the antithesis of a cinna.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, there is a finna huqqa. The term “huqqa” literally translates as skinny and in this case, it denotes the less-than-ideal condition of the herd, and by extension, of the community of pastoralists that live off of such animals. The state of the herd symbolically defines good or bad times
as well as embodying their concept of a *cinna*, a famine, which is an extreme form of *finna hugqa* where there is no *finna* to speak of.

One salient feature of the conception of famine or *cinna* is that it is always defined in contrast to its opposite, *finna* or *finna dansaa*. Even when it is conceptualised on its own, the opposite concepts are implicit. A *cinna* occurs because a profound failure in *finna*, beyond a barrier that would allow a *finna diqqa* (characterised by tolerable levels of impoverishment).

Closer examination of the Boran or similar other peoples’ political and social systems reveal that these have in-built coping mechanisms to assist the most vulnerable during the periods of crisis. In the Boran case, a *buusa gonofa* or an indigenous social security system is in place to carry out any ‘transfer of entitlements’ to those in need. But it also reveals more than that.

The ability to fulfil the obligations of *buusa gonofa* is believed to be dependent upon the existence of a reasonably adequate level of production and wealth of stock by some members of the society. People may starve even when there is enough food being produced, to employ A. K. Sen’s entitlement theory, due to an inadequate or even unjust system of wealth redistribution prevailing. According to the Boran notions of *finna* and *cinna*, on the other hand, a good or efficient transfer of entitlements is possible provided that there is an adequate level of production or wealth generated by the economy. For an indigenous social security system to work properly (meaning, in order to transfer entitlements), the whole economy would have to generate an adequate size of production or wealth first. This notion is expressed with a saying such as: “*Qammana bara cinna*”. A *Qammana* is sour milk from which butter has been removed, and often or when the times are good (“*bara finna dansaa*”), donated to poor members of the community. However, when times are bad, there is no such luxury and owners of *qammana* consume it themselves. Hence, a “*qammana bara cinna*” represents an item that is of lesser value under normal conditions but assumes a (valuable) status it does not really deserve during bad times. This and other similar expressions are used to represent social events, or people’s changeable position or hierarchy within the society as the person’s size of wealth goes up or down.
The Boran adage: "janni malkaa, qaroon malkaa, dureessii malkaa" – roughly, "brave acts, wisdom and generosity during bad times are what a ford is to cross flooding rivers" – means that community survival is enhanced by the brave, the wise, and the generous acts of some members of the community. In a sense, having adequate platforms to transfer additional entitlements to the less fortunate members of the community during bad times is useful for tackling the effects of poverty and famines. However, these alone are not sufficient. The same society, or at least some members of it, needs to generate enough wealth so as assist others by the transfer of entitlements when things are not good.

To use the terminology employed in the rhetoric of famine, for the Boran, FAD (Food Availability Decline) and FED (Food Entitlement Decline) are not mutually exclusive but rather, complementary. A FAD at societal level necessarily implies a FED.

Environmental crises feature strongly in the conception of a finna and its opposite, the cinna. However, it is clear too that these alone rarely transform a finna huqqa into a cinna or bara cinna (era of decimation). Bara cinna happens when all the traditional avenues employed to minimise and overcome the effects of finna huqqa are no longer possible. These avenues include the proper working of the traditional social security. The other and more important one has to do with their ability to renew or expand their essential assets, namely grazing land and the (inadequate or reduced) size of the herd due to droughts or other reasons.

Implicit is the inter-workings of the temporal causes of finna huqqa (droughts, loss of herds to diseases or to cattle raids, the effects of ‘bad’ wars) on one hand and the structural causes that accompany and often exacerbate finna huqqa, transforming it to a cinna, on the other. Not all wars are bad, only those that are declared by others in which the community stands to lose. Raids and wars conducted by the Boran themselves on other people, especially those that ended up furnishing them with a supply of stock (deenaba) and fresh grazing territories (dhheeda) are ‘good’ wars. Different terms are used to describe different types of wars. There is a duula and a lola, for instance. The former denotes a war of aggression and the latter, simply a war but often a war of aggression by others on the Boran.
While droughts, diseases and wars are conceived as being integral features of a cyclical economic system, these are associated with temporary episodes of finna huqqa (bad times) which, ideally, must give way to the era of finna gabba (good times). A cinna or bara cinna happens because of an extended period of finna huqqa. This latter owes not just to droughts and similar natural or man-made calamities but also, more importantly, to the inability of the society to undertake the usual measures that would permit it reduce the effects of droughts and other crises. Overpopulation and overstocking (of cattle) relative to the limited or finite grazing land that causes overgrazing or barbada, for instance, are more the result of society’s inability to acquire fresh grazing land and additional stocks through raids and wars as much as to other factors.

From this it is possible to deduce the following: Inability to achieve renewal in the resource base (grazing land, stock, other resources) and/or the overall economy at more or less regular intervals, is ultimately the structural cause of famines.

What are held as the causes of famines are themselves just another consequence of some other fundamental malaise: failure by a society or an economy to renew its resources and economic base. This failure is what brings about overpopulation and overgrazing relative to available resources, increases people’s vulnerability to minor climatic aberration, to politico-social crises or to pandemics, severe poverty and ultimately famines. Factors that bring about the loss in traditional avenues of achieving the renewal/expansion of the resource and the overall economy of a society, ultimately, are the root cause of a profound structural crisis whose extreme manifestation is a famine.

The point is that, more so than the occasional and ‘normal’ incidence of droughts and similar factors that bring about finna huqqa. The inability of the society to undertake measures that traditionally have allowed it to achieve an overall renewal/expansion of its resources base (with main assets such as grazing land and stock) at more or less regular intervals is responsible for ultimately tipping what is finna huqqa to a cinna.

The political, social, ritual and military systems of the Boran are structured in such a way as to empower and mobilise some or all sections of the society to undertake acts that help achieve economic renewal at more or less regular intervals. Mass or
intermittent population movements or migrations, raids for stocks, acts of conquest that allow accessing or acquiring fresh grazing land (*abuuru*) and additional stocks are in-built activities of the Boran social-economic system (see the Boran or Oromo Gada age-grade system (Legesse 1973)). This propensity to achieve economic renewal is part and parcel of all economic systems. What is different is which society or civilisation emerges as the winner in a given period in history and which ones are losers in this most ancient of all human battles.

In the Boran case, the expansion of imperial Abyssinia both at the expense of the Boran or Oromo but also at the expense of their ability to expand at the expense of other nations/groups, by and large, is responsible in creating the structural cause for poverty and famines (*cinna*).

*Loss in Economic Renewal/Expansion: the Root Cause of Famines?*

I contend that loss in the (traditional) avenue in achieving an overall economic renewal or expansion by a given economic system or society and, at more or less regular intervals, is ultimately the root of the ‘structural causes of famines’.

Accordingly, I can identify three stages that lead to a famine condition and a full-blown famine:

(a) loss in the ability to renew/expand an economy at more or less regular intervals;

(b) the loss, in turn, is manifested in the form of acute temporal (environmental etc.) and ‘structural causes of famines’; and,

(c) this increases societies’ vulnerability to the so-called ‘trigger factors’ of famines, be they of man-made type (such as wars or political crises) and/or natural type (such as droughts, flooding, invasion of locusts, pestilence and the like).

Thus, the ultimate cause of famine needs to be sought, not in “c” or “b” but in “a”; as does the possible solution. In this thesis, famines in Ethiopia are depicted as essentially owing to the loss in the traditional avenues used to renew/expand the economic foundation at some interval, not so much because of an inherently unjust, exploitative, despotic economic and political system.
However, and as has been mentioned previously, it is necessary to note that there are two distinctive sets of poverty and famine in Ethiopia: famines in the heartland of Abyssinia (the northern half of Ethiopia) and famines in the colonies of Abyssinia (the southern half of Ethiopia). While the loss in the ability to achieve economic renewal is held here as the ultimate cause of both sets of famines, it is essential to note how the two sub-regions have lost their respective avenues to different forces.

The colonies of Abyssinia lost theirs to Abyssinians – rather, to the Abyssinian attempt to renew their economic foundation at the expense of the people and regions they have conquered in the southern half of Ethiopia.

The Abyssinians lost theirs to forces that rendered their practices of embarking on organised acts of conquest and colonisation, as their time-proven method of achieving economic renewal, unattainable or impossible. This, in turn, owed to changed geo-political re-alignment of the world dictated by the expansionist zeal of European powers that brought to an abrupt end Abyssinia’s ability to expand its realm or empire at regular intervals. The forces that ended up creating European colonies at the expense of the “backyard of Abyssinia”, followed by the emergence of independent African states in the place of former colonies, have been responsible for inducing Abyssinia’s loss of its traditional avenue to achieve economic renewal. This loss underlies both the structural and ecological causes of famines in the heartland of Abyssinia.

In a related note, some have observed that famines are caused by external causes such as colonialism and the economic systems imposed by it (as discussed by Shenton & Watts 1979; Mamadani 1993; and Lopez Gonzaga, 1993) or by unfavourable and globally-determined economic system (as stated by Chossudovsky 2000). But it could be in a different way than the one to which they prescribe. With the advent of colonial powers and rigid boundaries, African societies/economies lost their traditional avenues of renewing their economies by engaging in acts of raids and conquests. Such traditional actions allowed many to acquire new territories and additional stocks (in the case of pastoralist/nomadic economies) which were instrumental in reducing the effects of droughts and other calamities, more so than the workings of indigenous coping mechanism during difficult times. In fact, the coping mechanisms, the indigenous social security
systems used to assist the poor segments of the community, also ultimately depended on the ability of achieving an overall and comprehensive economic renewal at certain intervals.

With the dawn of the era of European colonialism, indigenous African economies lost their traditional avenues of achieving economic renewal without gaining an alternative one in its place. This, more so than any other reason, has been instrumental in inducing overpopulation and/or over-stocking relative to the resource base rendered unrenewable or finite due to the imposed geo-political order of the colonial forces, an unfriendly geo-political condition that has been retained since. The post-colonial era has inherited the colonial norms whereby traditional avenues of renewing the resource base of groups became no longer possible or legal.

All economic systems or relations have in-built inequalities. All suffer from bouts of ecological disasters that reduce the size of food production. Most economies experience occasional or cyclical economic downturns or crises that, as well as having an impact on the proper workings of markets, result in entitlement losses amongst a substantial section of their population. However, not all end up with a famine condition. Some do manage to feed most of their people despite these inner hiccups, not because they are immune from what are held as are the causes of famines elsewhere, but because they have avenues for achieving economic renewal from time to time. Because of this, their economies have been able to override the factors that could potentially lead to famines and feed most of their people even when nature is not at its best or very helpful. This process is evident in the Boran-Oromo people’s, and, no doubt, other indigenous peoples’, conception of famines and traditional avenues to overcome them.

_Theo-Industry versus Famines in Ethiopia_

The central topic of this thesis is the discussion of theo-industry as the main industry of the empire of Ethiopia and how this has made agriculture and other productive activities subordinate to it. This industry – it has not defined as such until now – is at the epicentre of the socioeconomic processes in the empire state of Ethiopia, as well as embodying the genesis of its two-pronged sets of famines.
While the cause of both sets of famines is related to the inner dynamics of this industry, I argue that that in itself is not the main cause for the creation of famine conditions in Ethiopia. Nor do famines occur simply because the country has had nothing but a series of despotic rulers who presided over a feudalistic system or merely because of a spate of unhelpful capricious weather conditions (droughts).

Therefore, the rhetoric of this topic needs to shift to the discussion of economic renewal, or the inability to do so, as the structural or root cause of cumulative/severe levels of impoverishment and famines.

The search for the causes of famines has shifted away from those who stress the supply-side or demand-side causes of famines. Trigger factors of famines, such as droughts, wars, or bad governance, do contribute to the exacerbation or intensification of poverty and help increase people’s vulnerability to famines. I argue that, in the past, societies have managed to feed a large percentage of their population when they were able to renew/expand their economies at more or less regular intervals. It was this latter that has permitted nations/peoples to achieve a culturally-specific optimum economic threshold that allows them to offset the mentioned causes of famines. What has caused the loss of their traditional avenues of achieving economic renewal/expansion, I contend, not so much the oft-mentioned causes, ultimately lies at the root cause of famines. The oft-mentioned causes of famines themselves are the consequence of a failure to renew the resource base of an economy or the overall economy.

Based on this view of what causes famines; and towards the end of the thesis, I introduce concepts such as ‘Art of Wealth Creation’ (AWC) and the ‘Art of Wealth Expansion’ (AWE) in a bid to define what I mean by economic renewal/expansion. By taking into account dominant world geo-political and economic realities, possible options of achieving economic renewal are suggested in the process.
PART ONE

ABYSSINIA:
GENESIS OF A CREOLE NATION
AND ITS THEO-INDUSTRY
chapter 2

ABYSSINIA:
GENESIS OF A THEOCRATIC
EMPIRE AND ITS INDUSTRY

Abyssinia is arguably the longest lasting state founded by Semitic settlers – from what is today the Yemen – in the Horn of Africa. This process began with a trickle of trading colonists settling along the coastline on the African side of the Red Sea and, over time, was instrumental in the evolution of a Creole\(^1\) national community known as Abyssinia (Conti Rossini 1908; Markakis 1974). From its ancient capital of Axum, this Afro-Semitic nation grew into an empire-building polity from as early as the so-called ‘Arabian Period’ (500BC – 100AD). The expansion of Abyssinia on a Christian platform from the fourth century AD onwards shaped its nature up to today and left a lasting effect on the populations of the Horn of Africa (Conti Rossini 1960; Huntingford 1989, p. 28; Mokhtar 1990, p. 231).

Its genesis lies in the interactions between two regions or cultures and their economic units: African and Arabian. Previously, trade opportunities provided the predominant platform of ‘contact’ between the two sets of peoples. It is in this context that the earlier formative period of the Semitic Creole nation of Abyssinia is located (Pankhurst 1961; Trimmingham 1965; Tamrat 1972b; Hourani 1995).

This was preceded by an epoch of imperial Abyssinia, an era referred to as the Axumite phase, that includes the period of Semitic conquest and expansions (roughly from 500 BC to the Christian age) and the era of Christian Abyssinia

\(^1\) Creole refers to the evolution of a national community formed from the cultural and/or genetic liaison between the Arab and African.
(from about the fourth century AD onwards) (Tamrat 1972b; Mokhtar 1990; Markus 1994). During the imperial phase of the Axumite, the main contact was through acts of conquest of the indigenous peoples of the region and in empire-building exercises. A central rationale for conquest-based ‘contact’ was no longer direct trade or the need to secure the source of regional tradable commodities. However, regardless of the changed rationale of ‘contact’ (from a trade-based contact to a theoretically religious-administrative and forced ‘contact’), the need to secure the sources of the main items of exportable commodities remained to form an integral part of this process. The latter case of ‘contact’ took place as part of the ‘civilising’ missions of Abyssinia vis-à-vis the peoples of the sub-continent (Pankhurst 1961; Markakis 1974). In this regard, this ‘contact’ has a similar rationale to that which led to the conquest and forced evangelisation of the indigenous populations of the Americas by Catholic Spain (Haring 1947; Simpson 1966). The centrality of religious ideology in the definition of the missions has been instrumental in defining them as theocratic missions.

**Semitic Traders and African Producers:**

**Contact and Transformation**

Abyssinia’s genesis has as much to do with Yemeni or Arab economic dynamics as with the African ones (Toussaint 1966; Hourani 1995). Nearby Arabia had a long and well-established maritime trading tradition that had linked Asia and Africa with the basin of the Mediterranean Sea (Doresse 1971, p. 51; Abir 1980). The provision of mercantile and maritime transportation facilities by Semitic settlers from the Yemen presented African economies of the Horn of Africa with alternative options to consuming what their lands yielded (Schneider 1973; Dilebo 1982). By the same token, this process served as the catalyst for the establishment of Semitic trading enclaves, the Arab version of European trading companies (forerunners of the later phase of colonisation), on the African side of the Red Sea / Gulf of Aden. From this, it is possible to extrapolate that the genesis of the ‘Semitic’ nation of Abyssinia lies in an Arab mercantile empire as much as the genesis of the Republic of South Africa lies in the setting of a Dutch trading colony on the southern tip of the African continent.
Chapter 2

The long stretch of the Red Sea coast was the natural setting for what I call the 'beach markets' of the Semitic merchants and dhow-based maritime trade from there. Dhow are a type of ancient Arab maritime vessel, similar to those used by those other Arab trading colonists in the flourishing mercantile domain along the East African coast, the Zanzibaris. This coast is also known as the Land of the Poont or the Habasha coast of spices by the ancient Egyptian merchant fleet operators and others (Toussaint 1966; Doresse 1971; Hourani 1995). The presence of Sabaen scripts and archaeological records are indicative of the Yemeni origins of the 'colonists' of the coast (Dilebo 1982, pp. 60-61; Huntingford 1989; Mokhtar 1990, p. 231). Nevertheless, long before a readily recognisable 'colony' of Yemenites took hold, "several centuries of silent penetration" of the Semitic peoples existed (Mokhtar 1990, p. 199).

The mainly mercantile activities centred on the coast of the Poont provided the earlier spatial and temporal setting in the evolution and consolidation of the Abyssinians, as the amalgam of the Arab settlers and Africans (Anfray, in Mokhtar 1990, p. 193). This phase was followed by another process that led to the era of 'mature' Abyssinia, where it began to look towards the interior of Africa.

The caravan routes that linked the coast with the interiors led to the emergence of smaller settlements both as secondary points of trade transactions and as stopovers (Pankhurst 1961; Tamrat 1972). I argue that some of these settlements, in time, served as the platforms for the inward marches of (until then) coastal Abyssinia. It was possible that some of these regions began to rival the coastal settlements in terms of their wealth. Given the fact that virtually all the exportable commodities emanated in the regions west of the highlands in what is today Tigray region, and beyond, the need to secure the caravan routes to and from these regions must had been one of the preoccupations of the rulers of the coastal colony or trading enclaves.

Mercantile Abyssinia or early Semitic trading colonists had the function of linking the economic processes of Arabia with those of Africa, while both had their 'contribution' in the demographic, cultural and historical formative elements (Conti Rossini 1937; Abir 1980). It is possible that as well as the Arab or Semitic values, the colonists may have been the catalyst in the transplantation of Judaism into the Horn of Africa. The presence of a Jewish community in ancient Yemen
can be linked to the Jewish saga that underpins the supposed origins of the ruling 
dynasty of Abyssinia, the Solomonoid Dynasty out of the liaison between the 
famous Queen of Sheba and King Solomon of the Israelites (Markakis 1974). 

The presence of the Semitic/Arab trading houses allowed qualitatively different 
‘exchange’-value outlets to the produce of the region. The trading colony of the 
ancestors of today’s Abyssinians, set in what is nowadays the Red Sea coast of 
Eritrea, in time evolved into the Creole nation of Abyssinia, with a strong kingdom 
of its own during the so-called Arabian period, and an empire centred on Axum 
afterwards. However, the pattern in the evolution of Abyssinia is hardly unique. A 
series of similar mercantile enclaves must have dotted the long coastlines of the 
Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, adjacent to the Arabian Peninsula and some of 
these grew into important entrepôts and states (Trimingham 1965, p. 62). 

The enclaves such as that which grew into the port of Adulis (Axumite port) served 
as venues where diverse peoples of the region met. Variations or specialised 
extraction of wealth dictated by the ecological diversities of the region would have 
probably allowed a presence of rudimentary processes of exchange of goods and 
services between, say, the highland peoples/tribes and those in the lowlands. The 
latter regions were, and remain so even today, the sources of frankincense, one of 
the three major exportable items of the region (Mokhtar 1990, p. 202).\(^2\) Mercantile 
Abyssinia arguably was one of the oldest Arab trading colonies in Africa. Its rivals 
came centuries later, in the form of Adal, immediately to the south, and the better-
known Zanzibar, on the east African coast. 

It is possible that some kind of barter trade existed between the indigenous 
communities based in the highland regions of the Horn and those in the lowlands 
(Cosmas, cited in Pankhurst 1961, p. 39). However, export-bound Arab trade, the 
establishment of Arab trading houses along the coast, the founding of Semitic 
settlements to facilitate the caravan trade from and into the interior, introduced 
qualitatively new factors in the later evolution of the African economies in general 
and their trading activities in particular. These Semitic settlements were both the 
terminals for the caravan routes that radiated into the interior and the centre for the 

\(^2\) This role was noted in a famous work by a Ptolemaic (Greek) sailor named Cosmas, namely, 
dhow-based maritime trade that served as the bridge between Africa and Arabia, and through that, with the rest of the known world. At the same time, they were bound to evolve into cosmopolitan and outward-looking (that is, towards the interiors of the Horn of Africa) communities that reflected and celebrated their Arab origins and traditions, while incorporating cultural elements from other nations with which they came into contact (Huntingford 1989).

**Impact of Export Trade on Indigenous Economies**

A predominant economic activity in the Horn of Africa at the time of recorded contacts between the two regions appears to be of the hunter-gatherer type, if the main exportable items of the region at that time and later can be taken as a guide (as enumerated in *Periplus* (Mokhtar 1990, p. 216)). Ivory, tortoise shells, frankincense and slaves were the most important of these. However, parallel to a hunter-gatherer type of economy, both a pastoralist and millet-growing cultivator type of agricultural economy co-existed from earlier times (Trimingham 1965).

However, the role of the Arab trading colony in rendering what until then were by-products of a hunter-gather economy into essential items of export trade cannot be overlooked. Ivory and slaves may well have been the by-products of indigenous economic and political processes (that is, wars). Organised raids on other nations or outright conquest of their domain would have yielded these items. Alternatively, these commodities were the result of the primary industry of either a hunter-gatherer economy or patterns of resource exploitation. However, the demand for the products and by-products of such activity in other lands meant that these economies produced with knowledge of other consumers, and more importantly, with the knowledge of the exotic commodities that could be acquired in exchange, through trade (Pankhurst 1961, following Cosmas).

Arguably, an important outcome of this trade-based contact between the Arab mercantile enclaves/colonies (complete with their maritime transport facilities or the dhow) and indigenous Africa was the transformation of the African primary industry itself. With the trading links facilitated by the beach markets along the Red Sea Coast, the caravan routes and the inland settlements that evolved along the caravan routes, the essentially hunter-gatherer economies of the Horn of Africa
began to be transformed. The increased commodification of what until then were by-products of their indigenous productive activity, such as hunting and gathering for survival, was one. Africans no longer hunted and gathered for the mere purpose of traditional consumption. The taste for imported goods began to dictate their productive activities. In the scenario where imported weapons (such as swords) assumed the status of most desirable imported item, failing to acquire these could well have altered the balance of power amongst the nations competing for the region’s resources. Ability to secure and defend one’s hunting-gathering frontier would invariably add another rationale to participate in commodity production and trade. The importation of swords and other metallic weaponry transformed the hunting-gathering process itself. Cosmas, the author of the *Periplus*, observed how imports such as “iron, which is made into spears [is] used against the elephants and other wild beasts, and in their wars” (quoted in Pankhurst 1961, p. 18).

The trading colonies had another legacy that over a lengthy period would transform the very nature of indigenous economies. They were the bridges that facilitated the importation of many of the domesticated animals and crops, originally from the Middle East and Asia, along with plough cultivation (Mokhtar 1990, p. 199). Zebu cattle, horses, sheep, goats, camels, all found their way into the region as part of trading contacts (Trimingham 1965). The export trade in what were the end products of a hunter-gatherer industry – notably ivory, slaves and frankincense – was the catalyst for the acquisition of cattle and crops. These items, in turn, would transform the political economy of the Horn as the ancient patterns of production were gradually replaced by pastoralist agriculture and crop cultivation.

By the time the kingdom of the Afro-Semitic people of Abyssinia emerged as a theocratic empire, and began its conquest-based expansion towards the African interior from its capital in Axum, the region had evolved other forms of resource exploitation such as plough-based crop-cultivation and animal husbandry or pastoralism (Hoben 1973; McCann 1995).
'The African' and the Evolution of a Creole Nation'

While both the indigenous African and Semitic colonists have had a part to play in the genesis of the Creole community of the nation, the predominance of the Semitic component over that of the African is nevertheless evident from earlier times and through the national saga of the Abyssinians/Ethiopians ever since (Markakis 1974).

The emergent community would emphasise the Semitic markers, thereby remaining the identifying element of the national character vis-à-vis the African peoples of the sub-continent as depicted through the national saga of the ruling dynasty and people in Ethiopia ever since. In time, the Creole nation would emerge as merely another 'tribe' or 'nation' of the Horn where its economic fate remained invariably bound up with the economic dynamics of the region as a whole.

The emergence of a Creole nation would have taken a substantial period of time. It is not clear at what stage the Creole nation began having an independent political and economic life, thereby breaking from their 'mother' country.

The Semitic and therefore perceived 'positive' (cultural/racial/genetic) pool and the African and 'negative' pool I argue are the two socio-demographic sources in the formation of the Creole nation.

Similar conditions underlie the formation of the Kiswahili people and culture along the long stretch of the east African coastline. Hence, it is possible to portray Abyssinia of the time as the Zanzibar of the Horn of Africa. The correlation between the political economy of indigenous Africa of the Horn and that of mercantile Abyssinia (pre-Christian) compares well with the economic patterns that linked Zanzibar with the equally vast interiors of East-Central Africa (Sheriff 1987). Similarly, the trade-based bridge that joined Zanzibar with its main markets in Arabia and Asia had its parallels in the links between mercantile Abyssinia and its overseas customers: Egypt, Arabia, India and the Mediterranean world (Toussaint 1966; Cosmas, cited in Huntingford 1989). Thus, the formative processes of Creole Zanzibar and Creole Abyssinia share many common features. However, Abyssinia is not only the oldest, but may also have succeeded where Zanzibar failed, by building a stubborn and resilient empire. Closer scrutiny reveals that such mutation or metamorphosis is hardly a straightforward process.
An assumed theocratic mission and not commerce, I suggest, was the basis of this economic and social mutation (empire) or be the ‘saviour’ of mercantile Abyssinia from the inevitable perils of the numerous doomed trading colonies that had evolved in a similar fashion. This impact is discussed in further detail in the next section.

The evolution of a communal language of trade was not only the result of such interactions, but also served the expansion of commerce towards the interior. The Abyssinian Creole language of geez played a similar role to the equally Creole language of Kiswahili, as an essential tool of inter-group communication. In that role, geez shared commonality not just with Kiswahili, but with many other languages such as Bahasa Malay in what used to be called the East Indies.

However, geez had other functions besides being the cosmopolitan language of commerce and diplomacy. It was the language of the Temples as of the state (Pankhurst 1961; Huntingford 1989). Processes that saw the marked transformation of the nation of mercantile Abyssinia into a theocratic nation with the mission of building a theocratic empire found a parallel in the function of geez. It became the language of this new theocratic empire and state. Tigrigna (the official language of Eritrea and the region of Tigray in Ethiopia) and Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia) are direct descendants of geez, while the latter is still the main liturgical language in the Orthodox churches in both countries.

**From Mercantile Kingdom to an Empire with a Mission**

The need to provide a secure passage for the caravan traders towards the interior of the sub-continent may well have been one of the catalysts in the evolution of early Abyssinian inland enclaves. Settlements such as Malezo, Yeha, Matara, Axum and others were arguably the result of this process. From the Periplus, we learn that Adulis, for instance, served as a chief market and outlet for Axum, especially for ivory. Rhinoceros horn, tortoise-shell and obsidian were also sold there (Mokhtar 1990, p. 204).

Facilitating trade in African commodities from the hinterlands, I argue, underpinned the emergence of both types of Semitic settlements: coastal and those straddling the caravan routes. The two complemented each other, as they were both
venues where the Arab encountered the African. The same ‘markets’ linked different African groups and economies, too. However, such contacts were both direct and indirect (through the caravan traders). They were the ideal settings for the diffusion of exotic religions, of ‘civilising’ ideas, in the same way the Arab/Islamic merchants served as the catalysts in the diffusion of Islam and the establishment of Islamic states (sultanates) in the Horn of Africa (Trimingham 1965).

These settlements were not just inland commercial centres; it was here where a Semitic way of life emerged, structured around the dominant Semitic temples of the era and reflecting the way of life in Yemen. These settlements were the ‘oasis’ of Semitic civilisation amidst vast networks of indigenous peoples and cultures (Huntingford 1989; Mokhtar 1990, p. 198). The centres however were not to remain merely venues where the settler society, perhaps with some African converts, exercised Yemen-like ways of living. They had the in-built capacity to transcend that function and become the point of diffusion for this ‘exotic’ way of living and spirituality.

The genesis of Abyssinian theocratic missions vis-à-vis the indigenous nations, by extension the form of industry that evolved around this task (what I call, theo-industry), can then be sought in these remote beginnings. These centres in general and the Semitic temple complexes in particular provided the spatial and logical setting for the ‘assumed’ civilising mission of ‘Semitic’ settler community or the Abyssinians amongst the indigenous nations of the Horn of Africa with a religious emphasis. Cosmas presents an inscription noting the conquests of one of the Axumite kings in the surrounding regions becoming submissive, thereby being made into tributary kingdoms:

…I made war and conquered the tribes..., taking for myself half their possessions and leaving them half. ... [The Sessea tribe] I blockaded and brought down and chose for myself some of their youths and women and boys and girls and all the property belonging to them... (Huntingford 1989, pp. 41-2).

However, the politico-ideological rationale, the motive that underpinned imperial conquests and the economic foundation for the acquisition of the traditional commodities, was no longer trade alone. The notion of ‘pacifying’ the troubled interior by an act of conquest and the submission of the indigenous nations
provided the Kings of Semitic Abyssinia with an alternative platform for engaging
the indigenous nations of the interior in place of trade or trade-related contacts.
This made Abyssinia a nation with a mission of 'pacifying' the unruly region. It set
out to provide its version of what was described as 'law and order' or
'administrative service' to those people conquered by its armies. This idea of
'pacifying' or the provision of 'administrative services' to conquered nations could
be interpreted as a rationale for carrying out a mission of 'improving' the ways of
life of other peoples. Around this mission evolved an empire and a qualitatively
different form of industry: the industry of the theocratico-administrative mission
(theo-industry). In this regard, a king/emperor by the name of Ezana left an
inscription depicting his 'civilising' mission with an administrative undercurrent,
and, no doubt, contextualised in the dominant religion of the state at that time.

He [Ezana] then marched on to Fantshahat, where he gave laws and regulations to
the Gabaza and Sabala peoples. He passed next to Hamasha and there imposed
civil government (Pankhurst 1961, p. 29) [emphasis added].

Acts of conquest and military/colonial occupation were the precursors to the
provision of these 'civilising' services. More importantly, the process yielded the
conquering kingdom and its citizens a wealth in the form of movable booty in
people and other goods, preceding a permanently-flowing tribute from the
conquered peoples/nations from that point onwards.

He [Ezana] sent his brothers, Shaizana and Hadefan, against the Bega [Beja] tribes
to the north, who had rebelled against him. His brothers captured six chiefs there
and brought them to Aksum with their men, women and children – 4,000 people in
all – 3,112 cattle, 6,224 sheep and innumerable pack animals... Well pleased with
this remarkable operation Ezana concludes his record by noting that he had
erected at Aksum five statues, one of gold, one of silver and three of copper. In the
Ethiopic [gee] version it is stated that these statues are dedicated to three gods:
Astar (sky), Meder (earth) and Mahrem (?) (Pankhurst 1961, p. 28).

Consequently, the traditional items of the source of Abyssinian national wealth in
general and its exportable commodities increasingly came to be generated in the
context of this mission and its industry, and no longer in the context of a
mercantile/trade type industry. The kings of Semitic Abyssinia, similarly to later
Christian Emperors of Semitic Abyssinia, contextualised their missions of
conquering and the mission of ‘improving’ the conquered natives in the religious ideals of the time. The fact that they dedicated offerings to the Semitic and Greek deities for having aided them in their undertakings is indicative of some sort of implicit ‘mandate’ from these deities. The notion of pacification and the ‘improvement’ of the ways of the natives as the stimulus for a civilising mission appears to have been accompanied by the diffusion of a unique way of life – or the way of life of the nation with the mission amongst the conquered peoples.

Given the centrality of the Semitic Temples and deities in defining the ‘peaceful’ way of life of Semitic Abyssinia, the mission of ‘improving’ the ways of the natives too imposed a set prescription of a ‘better’ spiritual way of life onto the conquered. Viewed from this angle, the mission of pacifying the natives had a political component in the form of providing a ‘better’ or a ‘peaceful’ administrative service on one hand and the provision of spiritual services on the other. The building of temples and monuments to the gods in the interior of the Horn of Africa and the use of native labour and resources in that task give us some clues to this process.

The transition from mercantile Abyssinia to imperial Abyssinia was accompanied by a qualitative change in terms of its economic life, its primary industry. It was not a transition from a trading kingdom/nation to a trading empire. It brought about a radical change in the way Abyssinia interacted with the indigenous peoples of the Horn of Africa. A Mission replaced trade as the rationale for engagement. Abyssinia found a new raison d’être. Around such a mission and in order to serve it evolved the industry of a theocratic mission, which I conceive here as theo-industry.

This era of imperial Abyssinia (also known as the Arab period) lasted to the period when Christianity was introduced to Axum, the then capital of the Semitic Abyssinian kingdom and of the empire.

Soon after its introduction, Christianity became the official religion of the state and added a new layer to the formative process of the Abyssinian national character. More significantly, it came to define the rules or rationales with which Abyssinia engaged the indigenous populations of the Horn of Africa.
Christianity or Christianising the *aremene* (pagans) in particular and the non-
Christians in general became the definer of the Abyssinian national mission and
the tasks of building or expanding a theocratic empire. Evidently, the introduction
of Christianity merely provided Abyssinia with a new religious ideology around
which to carry out a not-so-new national mission.

**Christian Axum: Trustee of a Byzantium Christianising Mission?**

The Christianisation, first of the kingdom of Abyssinia, and later of the empire,
symbolically began around 350 AD with the baptism of its ruler known as Ezana.
This took place when Constantine the Great was the emperor of the eastern and
Christian Roman Empire or Byzantium. The successive ruler (Kaleb), especially,
was noted for his zeal in expanding the realm of Christian Axum (Tamrat 1972b, p.
29; Kaplan 1984; Mokhtar 1990, pp. 226-229).

The adoption of an imperial (Roman) religion and Abyssinia’s mission of
expanding its own realm on the foundation of this religion reflected the geo-
political conditions of the times. Byzantium and Persia with a foothold in Yemen
and in other parts of the Arabian Peninsula tussled for dominance over the Red Sea
trade routes that linked the Mediterranean world with Asia (the Indian sub-
continent) (Simoons 1960; Toussaint 1966). It was in this context that emperor
Justinian of Byzantium (Eastern Roman Empire) forged an alliance with the then
newly Christian kingdom and empire of Abyssinia (Procopius: *History of the
Wars*, in Tamrat 1972b, p. 31). In the process, Abyssinia was set to receive a
super-power politico-diplomatic patronage while Byzantium secured a reliable ally
and access to the ports of Abyssinia. By design or default, Abyssinia became the
‘trustee’ of the Byzantium Christianising mission in its existing dominions and in
other parts of the Horn of Africa it set out to conquer. This situation is comparable
with the way imperial and Catholic Spain emerged as the trustee of the
Christianising mission of the Roman Catholic Church in the New World. In both
cases, the sword (conquest) and the Bible (evangelisation) went hand in hand. The
Abyssinians employed a system of conquest, colonisation and evangelisation
known as the ‘*gabbbar* system’ and the Spanish used a similar one known as the
‘*encomienda*’ (Haring 1947; Simpson 1966).
Two Syrian brothers, Frumentius and Aedesius, have been credited with the introduction of Christianity to the courts in Axum (Kaplan 1984). Abyssinia (Axum) fell under the doctrinal patronage of the patriarchate based in Alexandria, itself part of the Byzantium world. Frumentius was sent to Alexandria and returned as the first bishop of all Abyssinia (Tamrat 1972b). Following a doctrinal dispute in Alexandria, many Christian refugees found their way to the relatively safe haven of Abyssinia, where they were able to practise their version of Christianity unhindered. Among these were the famous ‘nine saints’ of Abyssinia (Sadqan) who, with the backing of Christian Abyssinian emperors, carried out the earliest known, systematic evangelisation mission in the empire and in the adjacent areas (Tamrat 1972b, p. 30). The provision of what Tamrat (1972b, p. 30), following Conti Rossini, called the ‘generous endowments’ of the Abyssinian rulers to the nine saints and similar others provided the economic foundation for the mission of evangelising the heathen (aremene). The ‘endowments’, then and since, have come in the form of alienated land and resources from conquered nations, as much as the subjects of the mission (nationals of conquered aremene nations). The evangelisation mission went hand in hand with conquest-based territorial expansion of Christian Abyssinia (Tamrat 1972b, pp. 30ff).

The region populated then by the Kushitic Agaw, south and south west of the Tigray region where Axum, the imperial and spiritual capital of the time, was located, was the earliest focus of Christian Abyssinia’s conquests and the mission of Christian evangelisation. Drawing on Masudi, Tamrat (1972b, p. 38) states that:

> The story of Digna-Jan [an early Emperor of the Axumite Empire]... strongly implies that the expansion of the kingdom was undertaken as part of a definite programme of Christian settlement and evangelisation. The kings built churches and established military colonies in their newly acquired provinces, and by the tenth century contemporary writers describe the kingdom as controlling a vast territory between the Dahlak islands and Zeila on the coast, and from upper basins of the Anseba-Barka rivers to the central Showan plateau in the interior.

Abyssinia not only added a Christian identity that completed its formative process, but it redefined its rationale in engaging the indigenous nations of the region. It furnished Abyssinia with a new national mission, a new ‘civilising’ mission with strong religious overtones in the Horn of Africa.
This manifest national destiny of the Abyssinians to conduct their version of a ‘civilising’ or Christianising mission then and since is expressed in *Kibra Negest*, a thirteenth century document conceived by Donald Levine as Ethiopia’s (Abyssinia’s) “national script” (in McClellan 1988, p. 20). Drawing on Levine, McClellan goes on to say:

Within it [*Kibra Negest*] the church and the state are linked as two central institutions, symbolic of their dual victory over adjacent animistic, Jewish [Falasha], and (later) Muslim peoples. The state is sanctified by the monarchy’s alleged ties to the Solomonic dynasty... and the transferral of God’s beneficence to the Abyssinians, His new ‘chosen people’. A kind of manifest destiny, not unique in the world, developed to motivate the Abyssinians in their two periods of territorial expansion. Not only did those of the nineteenth century take inspiration from the earlier state, but also some felt a God-given mission to re-create it and bring people to Christ. As Christians already, they deemed themselves superior, possessing God’s assent to rule those who were not (p.20).

*Figure 2.1* shows the Abyssinian patron saint, St George, spearing the Pagan (*aremene*), the Muslims and the Jews as a symbolic manifestation of the national mission.

![Figure 2.1: Abyssinian patron saint, St George](image)

(Beckwith & Fisher 1990, p. 49)
The Industry of a Christian Mission (Theo-industry)

Thus the evangelising mission not only went hand in hand with the conquest of the aremene nations, but the latter provided the resources for the former. In the interaction of these two processes, we find the essence of a (Christian) theocratic mission, and more significantly, a form of service industry that evolves for and/or around this process. This industry is conceived here as the industry of a Christian theocratic mission or theo-industry.

As a form of service industry, it too is made up of the ‘supply-side’ and the ‘demand-side’. The former is generally centred on Abyssinia as the conquering nation. The conquered nations (aremene nations) make up the ‘demand-side’ of theo-industry. Abyssinia, or rather its institutions, are responsible for the elaboration or ‘manufacturing’ and delivery or ‘marketing’ of a service ‘commodity’ with the use value of Christian spiritual gratification and salvation. The aremene nations end up as the source of (forced) demand for this ‘commodity’ while ‘their’ resources/assets and/or products ‘pay’ for that which is ‘demanded’ and consumed. I conceive this commodity for the soul as the Commodity of Theocratic Services (CTS). The Abyssinian term ‘tebel’ (water of baptism) is used in this thesis as a metaphorical representation of the CTS.

A way of life structured around what has become the primary industry, the feuds and competitions over the nation’s earnings or wealth amongst sub-regions of Abyssinia, the search for new sources of demand for the end product of its industry (tebel), waging a series of wars of conquest in the bid to secure fresh sources of demand (aremene), have all shaped the historical processes of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. The history of Abyssinian/Ethiopia, by and large, is the history in the dynamics of theo-industry.

The centre of power gradually shifted away from Axum to the southern parts of the interior reflecting the southerly direction of conquests and the evangelisation mission, while successive emperors and regional kings of Abyssinia continued what has become a historical mission of their nation in the Horn of Africa up to the twentieth century.
Church and State: Constituents of the Supply-Side of Theo-industry

These complexes, like the institutions of modern learning of today, specialised in the ‘manufacturing’ and delivery of a special commodity: CTS or tebel.

Churches fulfilled the tasks of being the venue for both the ‘manufacture’ of CTS and its delivery, in exchange for some sort of offerings, usually in some tangible material or monetary form. An act of exchange took place between the temple complexes (which were just another type of industry from this point of view) and its ‘customers’.

The CTS can be viewed as a packaged prescription in the form of a definite mode of spiritual life. It can even be seen as a capsule that contains a recipe for a type of ‘civilisation’.

This spiritually-defined, -rich way of life was an embodiment of a form of civilisation and could be packaged in such a way that it too could be offered to others, on demand, just like any produce or service-type commodity.

There is a contradiction here. How were they to go about selling a type of commodity for which demand could not be established voluntarily? What I conceptualise as the Theory of Coercive Demand Creation, which is detailed in a later part of this chapter, helps mediate this apparent impasse. This would show that human agency is as capable of accepting the tyranny of the ‘independently’ operating norms of the market forces as they are able to create alternative methods of ‘selling’ desired goods or services. The use of compulsion and violence thereby became valid tools in the creation of demand for certain goods or services, as well as in the maintenance of such sources of demand.

Temples of Christian Abyssinia (churches) served as the spatial setting where the packages of ideas were formulated and prepared for consumption. They can be conceived as the ‘factories’ of the CTS. See Figure 2.2 for a picture of priests of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church carrying a replica of the Ark of the Covenant (tabot). Temples constituted the ‘manufacturing’ arm of theo-industry, both then and since. They, as the state- or crown-centred institutions, became a major source of employment for the citizens of the nation with a mission. On the other hand, the state, through its institutions of coercion, was responsible for the making of the actual ‘customer’ or the demand for what was ‘manufactured’ at the ‘factories' of
theo-industry. The crown/state of a theocratic regime of Abyssinia comprised the ‘demand creating arm’ or the ‘marketing arm’ of the CTS.

The combination of the ‘manufacturing’ arm (temples as the factory of the CTS) and the ‘marketing’ arm (or the demand creating arm) of the CTS constituted the supply-side of theo-industry. The conquered aremene nations emerge as the source of demand for the CTS or made up the demand-side of theo-industry.

The state/crown-patronised theo-industry, as mentioned above, emerged as the primary source of employment in the era of theocratic Abyssinia. Those employed in either of the two sub-parts on the supply-side of theo-industry constituted the waged classes or the gooltenya in the period of Christian theo-industry. They were employees of an industry that specialised in the elaboration or making of a rather abstract set of commodity and its (forced) realisation/marketing. In return, they lived on what is/was charged for this service-commodity. Basically, the price of the CTS/tebel is what is known in Ethiopia as gibbir.

The size of the nation’s gibbir earnings was indicative of the nation’s economic health. Reduction in the existing gibbir-generation capacity, on one hand, and an inability to renew this capacity from time to time, on the other, signalled a crisis or a recessionary period in theo-industry.

Figure 2.2: Priests of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church carry a replica of the Ark of the Covenant (tabot)

(Camerapix 1995, p. 300)
Conquest and the Making of the Demand-Side of Theo-industry ('Customers')

In the condition where Christian temples and the provision of theological services are the primary industry of the nation, its potential for expansion would have to look beyond the confines of the national community, already well versed in the way of life these provide or instigate. The potential for the growth of the congregation requires the seeking of those deemed to need such 'purifying' services.

This outward-looking aim to expand the services has more than just a benevolent rationale. There is an inherently economical function accompanying and driving it. Such an expansion of services is significant in increasing the size of the 'customer-base'. Accordingly, what is received in 'exchange' for what is provided in the form of theological services, amounts to the increase in the earnings of such a service industry, hence of the nation. In the same way that other industries look for renewable sources of demand or new markets for their goods or services, so does the temple-based service industry.

Any nation, I argue, has an *a priori* and indigenous way of life, its own form of civilisation and its own codes of ideas that dictate a spiritual way of life. Indigenous nations of the Horn, the potential customers of Abyssinia's civilising missions, also had their own codes of living and would be unlikely to express willingness to erase theirs voluntarily for a so-called 'better' version, at some given cost (see McClellan 1988, on the *gabbar* system in Gedeo in southern Ethiopia).

The Agaw population in what is today the heartland of Abyssinia resisted the missions of Christian Axum in many ways. The wars that finally destroyed Axum and that phase of the Empire reflect this process (Trimingham 1965; Tamrat 1972). In this regard, Kaplan (1984, p. 19) observed:

> Whatever the successes of the Christian clergy in Shawa during the ninth century, these gains were largely reversed during the tenth and eleventh centuries [sic]...
>
> During the same period, a rebellion of the people of the south not only cost the Ethiopian King his life, but also led to the destruction of churches and the death of many Christians.
Chapter 2

At the same time, ‘erasing’ the ways of living of the indigenous nations and its replacement with ‘better’ ones is an essential criterion for Abyssinians to succeed in their intended mission. In a sense, a negative (or degraded) portrayal of the indigenous ways of life, civilisation, spirituality becomes an essential rationale to justify the ‘sale’ of the upgrading (positive) codes or prescription of living and civilising ideas held, and propagated, by the Abyssinians.

Defining indigenous way of life and spirituality as ‘impure’, ‘sinning’ and ‘undesirable’ by the ideologues of Semitic (and later Christian) Abyssinia has been the basic criterion that rationalised the civilising mission of the Abyssinians amongst the aboriginal nations or tribes of the Horn of Africa. In referring to Levine (1974), McClellan (1988, p. 20) states: “As Christians already, they [Abyssinians] deemed themselves superior, possessing God’s assent to rule those who were not.”

Such is the mission of de-constructing the ‘impure’ and replacing it with the ‘pure’, the ‘degrading’ with the ‘civilising’. The erasure of the ‘impure’ defined the initial phase of the mission. However, it merely paved the way for the delivery of the purifying and civilising code of ideas, the specialist service commodity of the temple-complexes of Abyssinia. Regarding the notion of the ‘aremene’ Other and the Abyssinian mission of changing it, Tibebu (1995, p. 13) observed that:

[A component of the Aksumite [Abyssinian] paradigm is one of self-consciousness of the religious and cultural supremacy of the Ge’ez civilisation over the “Other” – Muslims, Beta Israel and “pagans” (aramane) – all known by the collective negative identity of yaltatamaqu ahzab (unbaptized heathens). As Aksumites and their heirs moved further south into the domain of the “infidels,” it was seen as a positive expansion of the Ge’ez civilisation, of its Christianity, of its “high culture.”

As such, the ‘aremene’ nations conquered by theocratic Abyssinia comprised the demand-side of the former’s primary industry. But how to sell a package of ideas where there was no a priori demand for it? Is the force of coercion as good a medium as the force of persuasion? The role of the state as the patron of theo-industry, as the maker of a ‘customer’ out of members of conquered nations, and the notion of the Theory of Coercive Demand Creation help ‘sell’ a package of ideals or services for which there is no voluntarily established demand.
The State as the Patron of Theo-industry

Theo-industry is a form of service industry centred on religious temples and the state-/crown-sponsored mission of evangelisation. As stated earlier, ‘theos’ is the Greek word for ‘god’. Theo-industry, in its broadest sense, is a form of industry built around the ‘manufacturing’ and ‘marketing’ of a package of ideas with the inherent use value of bringing about a ‘superior’ way of spiritual being or spirituality. It is a form of ‘service industry’, similar to the industry of educational services of today. The centrality of theo-industry as an important and even primary industry of the Abyssinians, I argue, remains basically unchanged, notwithstanding the adoption of different sets of religious and/or political ideologies for the same purpose, over the centuries.

The state or the crown of Abyssinia, embodied in its all-powerful sovereign (negus), emerged, I argue, as a patron of what in time came to be the primary industry of the empire-building nation of Abyssinia (Markakis 1974). Under such conditions, the state becomes the sovereign:

> The state is primarily the King [Emperor] – his military, judicial and financial officials and other categories of authorities who exercise power in the name of the King (Tegenu 1996, p. 30).

Its economic role was set to increase, under circumstances where would-be customers of the end product of this industry had to be made via the instigation of organised violence or conquest.

More importantly, the state emerged as more than a mere agent of the temples and/or their services. By becoming a patron of the mission and of the economic regime erected around it, the state also emerged as the patron of theo-industry. Given the fact that conquest became an essential medium for the ‘making’ of the aremene or the category of coerced customers of the CTS of Christian temple-complexes, it is not difficult to discern the critical economic role of the state through its armed wing. In fact, the state was not just a patron of the temple-centred industry or theo-industry, but its active demand creator in the form of the inhabitants of the conquered aremene nations.

The emergence of the state as the patron of theo-industry implies the condition whereby it became not only the patron of the national (theocratic) mission, but also
patron of the form of industry that underpins it, the maker/acquirer of customers and the main source of employment for its citizens). This status prevailed for centuries and underpins the crucial place the state occupied in the redistribution of wealth in the later periods of Abyssinia/Ethiopia.

**Coerced Exchange Relation as a Tool to Sell the Undemanded**

But how to ‘sell’ a service commodity that was the product of the Christian temples of Abyssinia to customers (the indigenous nations of the Horn of Africa) who had no pre-established use for it? This was the dilemma that Abyssinia had to solve if its customer base for the produces of the temples was to expand. Precisely such an apparent impasse in the inability to expand demand for the services of the temples must have induced a process of institutional readjustment in Abyssinia, in the bid to respond to the challenge. The change in the position and function of the state was a major one.

The apparent contradiction between the Abyssinian need to ‘sell’ its services on one hand and lack of a voluntarily-established demand for it amongst the indigenous nations of the sub-continent on the other was conducive to the instigation of organised violence as an alternative avenue of inducing demand for the CTS; hence the essence of the Theory of Coercive Demand Creation.

Violence, as instigated through the agency of the state, I argue, has been an effective tool both in creating a demand (a customer) and in the instigation of forced ‘sale’ of the service commodity. Organised instigation of violence has served as a medium to (a) make/create a coercible customer/demand; (b) maintain the continuous flow of such a demand; and (c) acquire additional customers or sources of demand. The state, due to its inherent characteristics, was the ideal institution for the exertion of instigated violence as the source of coerced demand. Hence, the state emerged as one of the essential tools for theo-industry to succeed as an alternative industry. The state, viewed from this angle, is not a superstructure that floats above an economic base, but rather, forms an integral part of the latter. It is an organ of a form of industry.

Hence, state-sanctioned acts of conquest (empire-building exercises of Abyssinia) were acts of violently creating a class of coercible customer out of the vanquished
nations of indigenous Africa. These "customers" would be known as the *gabbar* in the Christian period of Abyssinian theo-industry. In this way, Abyssinia was able to guarantee demand or a 'market' for the end product of theo-industry. Just as significant is the role the *gabbar* nations had in 'producing' other goods and services for the 'repayment' of what they were forced to consume. This (what the *gabbar* pay) is merely the 'exchange' value of the CTS. It is what is known as *gibbir*.

In the study of the Christian period, the notion of the 'tebel' (water of baptism) is employed as a symbolic representation of the CTS. *Tebel*, as stated earlier, is a metaphor of what the Christian temples 'manufacture'. The predominance of agriculture as the main source of 'real' wealth amongst the would-be *gabbar* nations determined the agricultural nature of Abyssinian *gibbir* revenue; hence the 'peasant' character of the *gabbar* nations. The *gabbar* are but one of two types of peasants to be found in the theocratic empire founded by the Abyssinians or in Ethiopia. This aspect will be elaborated in later parts of the thesis.

However, continuity of this status (of being a coercible customer) was essential if there was a sustainable source of demand for the theocratic services of Abyssinia. Thus, the functions of the state as instigator of violence transcended its initial role as the maker of a customer. Sustained use of violence has been instrumental in reproducing the imposed status (of being a coercible customer of Abyssinia).

*The essence of the Coerced Exchange Relation is expressed in a scenario where a nation (Abyssinia) that specialises in the production of an abstract 'commodity' ends up not being its direct consumer. Those nations that do produce a tangible set of goods (real wealth) end up coerced to use these as the repayment for the abstract commodity they are forced to consume. This condition is essential to the understanding of the role of theo-industry in the mitigation of poverty and famine in Abyssinia/Ethiopia.*

An Abyssinian act of conquest renders a nation of producers into a category of coerced customers of its theo-industry. In doing so, the latter nations (*gabbar* nations) cease to be independent economic entities in their own right and end up becoming a part of the other's industry. They are reduced to becoming the building block with which the demand-side of Abyssinian theo-industry has been erected.
This arrangement, therefore, is the antithesis of a free market paradigm, where voluntarily established agreement connects a product with other sets of producers and/or clients.

Hence, the gabbar nations of Abyssinia/Ethiopia were not so much independent producers but merely constituted the demand-side of Abyssinian theo-industry. They were the forced consumers of ‘tebel’ as the symbolic representation of the CTS, in the era of Christian theo-industry. These were significant not so much for what they were forced to consume, but for what they were forced to ‘produce’ in repayment for what they were coerced into consuming. In order to ‘pay’ the ‘price’ for the consumed ‘tebel’ (in other words, gibbir), the economic structure of these nations underwent certain re-adjustments. It no longer carried out acts of independent production, but acts of gibbir production.

The gabbar as farmer-producers of vanquished nations turned into entities of coercible demand were made to operate gibbir-producing estates. For analytical convenience, I call these gibbir-farms. It is here where the main factors of production (the alienated land of the producers turned into gabbar, the labour pool of the gabbar family unit, the accumulated wealth of the gabbar nations etc.) were joined in such a way so as to facilitate the production of gibbir.

Simultaneously, the gibbir-farms were the spatial setting where the main function of the gabbar, in relation to the theo-industry of which they are now part, was realised. They were venues where ‘tebel’ was consumed. While tebel was the main item of consumption, it was hardly the sole type of consumption. The act of producing gibbir (in the form of the produce of the land) incurred a cost of production. The gabbar family had to live and reproduce in order to serve as both the source of coerced demand and the generators of gibbir with which to pay for the consumed ‘tebel’. Clearly, a portion of gibbir would have been dedicated for the daily consumption of the gabbar family unit.

Thus, theo-industry is made up of a supply-side centred on Abyssinia and its demand-side made up of members of the nations conquered by it. It exists on the symbiosis of these two parts adjoined by the force of institutionalised violence.
Long Trajectory of the Christian Mission

Like any other industry, theo-industry is bound by economic rules such as the correlation between demand and supply. External and/or internal factors affect the size of its customer base and foment a recession or depression. A decline in the economic health of theo-industry is manifested through the reduction in the size of a form of tribute or the gibbir.

The centuries-long history of the Christian Empire of Abyssinia has been emphatically marked by a series of phases of imperial expansion and contraction (Markakis 1974; Zewde 1991; Marcus 1994). The advent of Christianity to Axum in the fourth century AD led to an era of conquest and territorial expansion that resulted in the incorporation and Christianisation/Abyssinianisation of the Agaw and many other peoples in what is today the heartland of Abyssinia in northern Ethiopia. This was followed by a period of decline and the contraction of the empire, owing to the resistance from the Agaw and counter raids from the Beja people north of Axum (Trimingham 1965; Tamrat 1972b). This was followed by the Zagwe period (twelfth century) that led to the revival of the mission but from the heartland of the Agaw, at the expense of Axum and its region. The regime of the Zagwe was afflicted by a ‘crisis of legitimacy’ for having a dubious lineage that was not Solomonic or Semitic, but local, as distinct from rulers who emanated from Axum proper. This last regime was ousted by people who claimed to have a direct link to the Solomonid dynasty, thus restoring the centrality of Axum in the political life and in the national mission once again (1270). Successive rulers of this period presided over the expansion of the empire and extended the traditional mission of Christian Abyssinia into previously unconquered Agaw country, into the Sidama and other countries south of the Awash River (Tamrat 1972b).

In the meantime, Islam was expanding in regions east and south of Abyssinia. A series of Sultanates evolved out of the process, the strongest of which was Adal. It was from here that an anti-Abyssinian ‘jihadic’ war was launched. Many in the Sidama colonies of Abyssinia, in rejection to the superimposed mission of Abyssinia and the severe economic exploitation of the population, adopted Islam (Trimingham 1965; Abir 1980). The relatively quick submission of the Sidama
regions to the Islamic forces is said to reflect their antipathy to the Abyssinian rule, mission and heavy tributes (Dilebo 1982).

In these wars, Abyssinia not only lost its tributary colonies or *gabbar* colonies, but the very heartland of Abyssinia was ravaged in the process. What followed was an era of severe contraction of the empire and internal feuds amongst the regional kings in the heartland of Abyssinia (Jones & Monroe 1935; Marcus 1994). The ideal conditions to re-conquer the ‘lost’ colonies and for the resumption of its historical mission finally arrived in the mid-nineteenth century. The increased availability of firearms and the strategic position of the Abyssinian heartland to exploit export and import trading from the ‘lost’ colonies and beyond aided its revivalism. Its ability to re-establish a geo-political liaison with the Christian powers of Europe, a process that echoed the alliance between Axum and the Eastern Roman Empire, helped Abyssinia to once again become an empire (Hassen 1990).

The re-militarisation of the nation and the resumption of another cycle of conquest on other aremene nations of the region fulfilled this aim. The era of ‘reconquest’ (mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries) was just one phase of this renewalist process. The political and social upheavals of the previous centuries had led to a drastic reduction in the size of theo-industry. Abyssinia ultimately lost a sizeable portion of its *gabbar* nations in the process. This led to a period of severe political and social upheavals, impoverishment and famine, requiring the re-militarisation of the nation for the reconquest of the ‘lost’ colonies as a counter-measure. This act aimed at nothing more than ‘recovering’ the ‘lost’ *gabbar* countries in the previous wars (Adal versus Abyssinia) and ‘making’ fresh supply of the category of coercible demand, the *gabbar*, and with it, an increase in its *gibbir*-generation capacity. The increase in size, not efficiency, of the category of coercible customers was the traditional way to achieve this.

From its remote origins, theocratic Abyssinia had gone through numerous cycles of renewal. In fact, its long and complex historical processes have basically been the historical recount in the cycles of theo-industry on one hand and its impact on the Abyssinians and their *gabbar* nations on the other.
The era of 're-conquest' was the era of economic renaissance of the Abyssinian theo-industry. It marked the resumption of the Christianising mission, the origins of which goes back to the era when Ezana of Axum became the 'trustee' of the Christian 'civilising' mission of the then Byzantium/Roman empire.

The 're-conquest' of the 'lost colonies', from an economic point of view of theo-industry, led to a massive expansion in the demand-side (forced customers for Abyssinian Christian mission) of theo-industry.

The following part is a case study of the structure, dynamics and the economic and social implications of theo-industry for the Abyssinians and their gabbar subject populations from the mid-nineteenth century to modern times.
PART TWO

THEO-INDUSTRY:
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF
A THEOCRATIC MISSION
chapter 3

RE-CONQUEST AND EXPANSION OF THEO-INDUSTRY

Preamble to Abyssinian Re-Conquest of the ‘Lost Colonies’

The wars between Christian Abyssinia and Islamic Adal, both Afro-Semitic/Creole nations in the region, had other repercussions. While Abyssinia’s loss reduced its predatory existence on the indigenous nations, at the same time it was instrumental in clearing the way for the older and inter-African economic and political dynamics. This came in the form of increased competition over land and other regional resources between groups.

Raids and counter-raids between the Cushitic groups such as the Somali, the Oromo (Galla), the Sidama and others, raids and counter-raids within the same group (Almeida, in Markakis 1974, p. 17), and raids and wars between the Cushitic and the Nilotic groups were nothing new. However, the decline of their common predators, Abyssinia and Adal, added a new dimension to these ancient feuds and wars. One main outcome of this process was the unprecedented levels of population dislocation or migration, as well as the merger of previously separate groups (Dilebo 1982). It is not mere coincidence that populations that had long been under the predatory shadow of Abyssinia and Adal or those that were the tributary or gabbar colonies of Abyssinia stood to lose a great deal due to their weakened condition (Dilebo 1982).

Several Sidama groups, generally south of the Awash River, lost to what was until then a pastoralist Oromo or merged with the latter, thereby forging a different set
of people who took root in a region that was once a rich tributary colony of Abyssinia. Thus, Abyssinians had a remote memory of the space to be re-conquered, though not necessarily the demographic and cultural changes that took place during their absence (Markakis 1974, p. 23). Nor did it seem to matter, since the Oromo or the Oromo-Sidama group and others in the region fitted the Abyssinian notion of the *aremene*, this being a theoretical rationalisation to resume Abyssinia’s traditional mission.

**Warlordism, Unification and Re-Conquest**

As in earlier times, a way out of this crisis of depression of theo-industry required the recuperation of the ‘lost colonies’ of Abyssinia as the source of ‘lost-customers’ or ‘lost-market’ for its primary industry. It required the resumption of its traditional role in the region: the mission of Christian evangelisation, with its twin component of providing administrative services to the *aremene* nations of the sub-continent. As before, the would-be customers had to be acquired through the use of brute power or by an act of conquest (Markakis 1974, p. 22).

However, in order to wage wars for the recovery of the ‘lost colonies’, Abyssinia had to have a strong and visionary (in the sense of re-establishing Abyssinian position vis-à-vis the region) warlord, fit for the task (Markakis 1974, pp. 20-21; Zewde 1991; Marcus 1994). This was all the more important as the heartland of Abyssinia itself was no longer united and was ruled by virtually independent regional minor kings or principates (Jones & Monroe 1935; Keller 1988; Ofcansky & Berry 1993). A warlord by the name of Kassa emerged with these qualities in the region of Gondar. On conquering Axum, the doctrinal capital of Christian Abyssinia, Kassa was crowned the *Neguse Negest* (King of Kings or Emperor) of all Abyssinia/Ethiopia under the name of Tewodros. While the use of force was crucial for this, it was not the only medium. The strategic marriage between the rulers of the warring kingdoms was noted. Tewodros himself married the daughter of the ruler of Wollo-Oromo region. This process compares with the strategic union between the kingdoms of Castille and Aragon (Elliot 1963). This process served as the precursor for the Spanish conquest in the Americas, the mission of forced-evangelisation of the aboriginal populations that followed and the era of imperial Spain.
Like the *reconquista* leaders of Catholic Spain, Tewodros had the vision of reunifying the Christian kingdom as a precursor to take on those that he identified as the usurpers of the colonies of ancient Abyssinia. In the case of Tewodros, the Oromo (Galla) and the Turks (at times occupying parts of the Red Sea littoral and the important port of Massawa, Eritrea) were identified as the equivalent of the ‘Moors’ in Spain.

Tewodros’s letter to his contemporary Queen Victoria of England illustrates regions described here as the ‘lost colonies’ of Abyssinia, the supposed usurpers of these regions, his intentions to retake them by force and his implied need for Christian solidarity and assistance for the task at hand.

...Chosen by God, king of kings, Tewodros of Ethiopia, to her Majesty Victoria, Queen of England:
...
...My fathers, the Emperors, having forgotten the Creator, He handed over their kingdom to the Gallas [Oromo] and Turks. But God created me, lifted me out of the dust and restored this Empire to my rule. He endowed me with power and enabled me to stand in the place of my fathers. By this power I drove away the Gallas. As for the Turks, I have told them to leave the land of my ancestors. They refused. I am now going to wrestle with them ... (cited in Melbaa 1988, p. 46).

Though he managed to recreate a more or less unified kingdom of Abyssinia, it was under the rule of his successors, namely, Emperors Yohannis IV (from the Tigray region of Abyssinia) and Menelik II (from the Amharic region of Shoa) that Abyssinia’s re-conquest of the ‘lost colonies’ succeeded (Markakis 1974, pp. 22-26). As with the Spanish *reconquista*, it went beyond its initial aims of regaining the ‘lost colonies’ and ended up yielding entirely new countries for the born-again Empire of Abyssinians (Ethiopia) (Zewde 1991). The process would have continued had it not been for the fact that European powers had begun their colonial expansion in the very *arememe* backyard of Abyssinia (Markakis 1974, p. 24).

The recovery of the ‘lost colonies’ heralded the resumption of Abyssinia’s traditional mission in its ‘new’ colonies. As such, these regions emerged as the sources of the ‘market’ for the end product of Abyssinian primary industry. For this to eventuate, former citizens of the now-defunct nations had to be transformed into a kind of privately owned customers/consumers of the Abyssinian crown, the
patron of the nation’s theo-industry. This aspect is made explicit in the following quote:

Northern colonists viewed southerners as “... primitives, without culture and effective government, and lazy, dirty and warlike heathens who needed the words of God” (Donham 1986a, pp. 40-41).

This way, the target population for the mission was identified as the primitives, the heathens. The rationale for the mission was explicit through the statement that pointed to the heathens’ need of the world of God, ‘desirable’ culture, ‘ideal’ work-ethic in counter-opposition to their laziness, effective government/governance. The need to impose pax Abyssinica was to replace the lack in effective government and help remove the ‘undesirable’ characteristics of being war-like heathens, converting them into hardworking and docile subjects of the Abyssinian crown and/or nation.

The conquest of the Oromo regions in what is today Wollo and Shoa began the process of re-conquest (Markakis 1974, p. 19; Melbaa 1988). These initial conquests revived the greatly interrupted role of Abyssinia in the region in its theocratic mission and its long depressed primary industry. On the basis of the material and human resources obtained in the process, Abyssinia commenced a series of self-financing wars of conquest on the rest of the Oromo sub-groups or clans, and on the Sidama, the Nilotic and Omotic populations found at this stage to the south and west of the Oromo.

The following discusses patterns in the making of coerced-customers of the Abyssinian primary industry or the gabbar out of the vanquished populations/nations. Centred on the second half of the nineteenth century, it illustrates how conquest and the ensuing alienation of land asset, people asset and other resources emerges as just one more form of production/wealth creation (Markakis 1974, p. 104).

These assets are conceived of as the yields of Abyssinian industry of conquest or ‘war industry’. They are components of the Abyssinian equivalent of the British/Spanish crown land and crown-entrusted and/or -owned assets (Markakis 1974, pp. 80-81; Pankhurst 1986). Based on the traditional concept of property long in use in Abyssinia/Ethiopia, the rist, I introduce the concept of ‘riste negus’
or the *Rist* of the *Negus* (property of the king) to define the Abyssinian version of crown property in land and/or other assets. The need to introduce this and similar concepts owes to the desire to facilitate a better understanding of a vastly intractable or complex system of ‘land tenure’ in Ethiopia.

The acts of conquest then are instrumental in creating a fresh supply of the ‘raw materials’ or the building blocks necessary for the making of the ‘demand-side’ of Abyssinian theo-industry. It has been indicated how the supply-side of theo-industry has been centred on Abyssinia and is generally staffed by recruits from Abyssinia.

In the ‘demand-side’ of theo-industry, the coerced-customer or the *gabbar* is the essential component and this is expressed through its inherent qualities, as just another asset owned by the crown or entrusted to the crown on behalf of the conquering nation. These are the ability to ‘demand’ and ‘consume’ the end product of the Abyssinian primary industry (the CTS/*tebel*) and the ability to ‘pay’ for the ‘demanded’ and ‘consumed’ in the form of a *gibbir*, by operating a ‘*gibbir*-farm’.

**Conquest and Triple Alienation of the Aremene**

Let me now begin from the premise where a human agency is composed of the conscious faculty and the physical faculty, the mind and the body. Both are items able to be expropriated, following an act of conquest. Conquest allows the victors to strip or alienate the vanquished of either or both. In a sense, an act of conquest embodies a triple loss of ownership over the: (a) the soul as the embodiment of a spiritual way of life; (b) the body as the source of labour and intellectual resources; and (c) what was once owned by the alienated subject.

One of these losses is the faculty to freely decide what to consume or demand, be it a tangible item of produce and or an abstract item of consumption with the use value of transforming the mental well-being of the consumers, their spiritual

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1 *Tebel* literally is blessed water used in Judaeo-Christian rituals of baptism. It is used in this work as a metaphorical or symbolic representation of the (Christian) Commodity of Theocratic Services (CTS).
identity, their belief system, their way of life etc. On this basis, the victors, on becoming the owners of others’ body and soul, are able to dictate what their subjects must consume.

The expropriation of the mental faculties of the vanquished allows the victor to control the vanquished nation’s abilities to a freely determined demand for goods and/or services, including a choice to a chosen and imposed (spiritual) way of life by the conquerors.

In Abyssinia, where theo-industry has been (and continues to be) the main industry, the processes of conquest have had the ultimate function of making coercible customers of tebel out of the vanquished. Members of vanquished nations made into coerced consumers of the Abyssinian tebel are the gabbar. This then is a preliminary definition of the gabbar. The expropriation of the right of choice of consumption, based on the expropriation of the soul instead of the mind, or the right to a freely-exercised demand for a set spiritual way of life, becomes the source of coerced demand for tebel.

Alienation of the soul and the making of gabbar as the species of coercible customer of tebel are the single most important outcomes of the Abyssinian process of conquest. They represent the expansion in the size of the customer base, and hence demand, for the end product of Abyssinian theo-industry.

The expropriation of the conscious faculties of humans that dictate their ability to decide what to consume, demand, own, with whom to interact freely and so on leads to an automatic loss of the title of ownership over the ‘body’. The ‘body’, in the strictest sense of the term, is defined here as depositor of muscular and intellectual resources. In the wider sense of the term, the ‘body’ stands for what the body (and the soul) as legal entity used to own in the form of other tangible sets of assets or resources such as land.
Alienation and the Making of Abyssinian ‘Riste Negus’

The expropriation of the mind as well as being an essential criteria in the creation of a coercible customer of tebel or the gabbar; it sets the logical, legal and practical precedent for the expropriation of what members of the vanquished nations once used to own. As such, the process is instrumental not only in the making of a gabbar but one that is able to ‘pay’ or be charged for the consumed.

The consumed is ‘paid for’ from the alienated assets or factors of production, assets that, following conquest, become the national property of all Abyssinia or the crown owned assets of Abyssinia. I call this ‘riste negus’.

![Image of Menelik and Haile Selassie](image_url)

_Figure 3.1: Menelik, Nugusse Negest (Emperor Of Abyssinia, 1844-1913) [left] and Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia (1930-1974)_

*Riste negus*, being the expropriated property of conquered countries (Markakis 1974, p. 108; Marcus 1996, p. 19), literally stands for the private property of the sovereign or the King as the trustee or even on behalf of the Christian nation of Abyssinia (Conti Rossini, cited in Pankhurst 1968, p. 135; Johnston, cited in Pankhurst 1968, p. 139; de Coppet 1930, p. 611; McClellan 1988). Here, it is studied as one of the two main types of property ownership over land, people, cattle and other assets in Abyssinian ruled Ethiopia. ‘Riste negus’ is a type of

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2 Negus or Nigoos literally means ‘king’ but is used here in the sense of the (Abyssinian) Crown.
collectively owned property of the ruling community of nation or the Christian community (hizbee Christian) but entrusted to the crown/state for its centralised administration, exploitation and redistribution. Riste negus is comparable to the notion of crown property in the British Empire. Riste negus is derived from the practice whereby the Ethiopian emperors (such as Menelik II and Haile Selassie I (see Figure 3.1)), for all intents and purposes, were the absolute owners of all land in their realm. This is manifest in the following quote by Markakis (1974, p. 81):

Ethiopian emperors traditionally have acted on the premiss (sic) stated by Emperor Seyfe Arad (1344-72), who is said to have declared: ‘God gave [all the] land to me.’

Duchesne-Fournet’s assertion that “the authority of the Emperor [Neguse Negest] is unlimited... The people are his and his empire is his property” illustrates the pattern of property ownership in the conquered lands (quoted in Pankhurst 1986, p. 147). While the southern half of Ethiopia was the focus of conquest and property alienation by the Abyssinian sovereign (Negus) from the second half of the nineteenth century, the north went through similar processes in the past. Tamrat (quoted in Donham 1986a, p. 10), referring to similar processes, indicated that:

all the Christian provinces in the north were originally acquired by way of conquest... He [the King] appropriated all the people and their land, and reserved every right to dispose of them according to his wishes.

Riste Christian is the other form of proprietorship or property ownership in Abyssinian ruled Empire of Ethiopia. It is what is generally known as the rist (Markakis 1974, p. 78). Literally, it stands for the private property of the Christian citizens of Abyssinia or ‘hizbee Christian’. Being a Christian has generally defined the status of being the free and/or the citizen in Abyssinian-ruled Ethiopia for centuries. In contrast, heathens (aremene), Muslims and Jews (Falasha) were not considered full citizens of Ethiopia and were not allowed to hold land as a private property. The Falasha or the ‘Black Jews’ of Ethiopia have been forced to live as a lower caste people engaged in specific and often despised trades such as pottery while the Muslims engaged in commerce. The ‘aremene’ on conquest were turned into just one other component of riste negus of all Abyssinia. In this way, former citizens of the conquered nations were transformed into a nation-owned but crown entrusted People asset (Pa) or into collectively owned slaves of all Abyssinia. A
later chapter discusses how alienated Land and People assets are ‘invested’ into a type of farm (gibbir-farm) as venues where tebel is consumed and gibbir is produced as the ‘cost’ of the tebel.

Conquest itself is an act of production on its own right. It could be conceived as a form of industry whose end products appear mostly in the form of a crude sets of wealth or ‘capital items’ such as Land asset (La), People asset (Pa) or slave-labour, but not exclusively. The stored wealth of the conquered nations, the result of pre-conquest productive efforts of the conquered, constitutes another item of yield. The crown or the sovereign of Abyssinia, on behalf of its national constituency, emerges as the owner of these war-born assets. An act of conquest is conceived here as a form of industry where the instigation of organised violence by a nation on other nations becomes an art of production. Conquest adds a ‘war industry’ to a nation’s traditional industries. As well as being a source of wealth on its own right, it generates assets on which the wealth-generating capacities of the conquering nation expand. This is expressed well in the following quote by de Coppet (quoted in Markakis 1974, p. 108): “Conquered lands in southern Shoa,” wrote de Coppet, “were considered by all as belonging to the sovereign.”

Amongst the Abyssinians, the term gasha (the shield) has been used to represent assets obtained by an act of conquest; hence, the origins of the term ‘gasha land’, for instance (Zewde 1991). People assets (slaves) are another important yield of the Abyssinian ‘war industry’, though they have not as yet been studied as ‘gasha people’. Gasha land, gasha people and other assets once owned by the gasha people form part of what I define here as Abyssinian National Rist or ‘riste negus’.

The term ‘rist’ evokes the same concept as the Roman ‘res’. The Abyssinian ‘rist’ appears to be a corrupted version of the Roman term for a property: the ‘res’. It is possible that the term, like the Persian term ‘gabar’, meaning ‘infidel’ (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica 1986), owes to the longstanding contact and flow of ideas between the rulers of the Abyssinian/Ethiopian empire and the Greco-Roman world (Byzantium to be precise). It is a term that stands for property or proprietorship. In the Abyssinian case, ‘rist’ has stood for a type of a private property in land by the citizens of Abyssinia. However, it is a unique type of private property over a pension-yielding piece of land and differs from the sense
this term embodies in other parts of the world. This topic is discussed in a later part of the thesis.

‘Riste Negus’ and the Re-Financing of Conquest

Abyssinian wars of conquest, as the rule, have been re-financed from the spoils of wars of conquest (Markakis 1974, p. 109; Donham 1986a; Zewde 1991). In a way, such wars were financed on a type of ‘credit’ taken from citizens in the form of the services these provide to the crown in the tasks of conquest. This is so due to the condition where there is no pre-existing source of revenue with which the crown was enabled to cover the costs of conquering the aremene nation, in the bid to make gabbar.

All constituents of ‘riste negus’ – Land asset (La), People asset (Pa), Animal asset (Aa) and others – are in effect a type of income, a revenue generated in the context of the industry of war. A war booty, hence, is nothing more than the end product of a war industry.

Riste negus – or Abyssinian National and Communal Rist – ultimately ends up being the source of wealth with which the crown (patron of Abyssinian primary industry and national mission) pays the wages and pensions of its citizen-employees. This includes those employed by the crown in its war industry and those employed in the national mission of the Abyssinians (Pankhurst 1968; Markakis 1974, pp. 109-112; McClellan 1988; Marcus 1994).

Note how the industry of conquest merely is an auxiliary industry to the primary industry of the conquering nation. In the Abyssinian case, theo-industry is the primary industry. As such, an act of conquest has the inherent function of expanding the demand-side of theo-industry or the expansion in the size of those that are compelled to demand and consume the end produce of Abyssinian theo-industry: tebel. War industry has the function of making fresh supplies of would be ‘customers’ (the gabbar) for theo-industry or its end product. Those that have been employees of this auxiliary industry would be paid for the services rendered, either in the form of back pay or in the form of a pension pay-out when the service to the crown is terminated. Basically, there are wages and pensions to be paid from more
or less the same assets but over two distinctive phases: phase one, where war industry predominates, and phase two, where theo-industry predominates.

This apparent dilemma is solved via the in-built and dual options of consumption associated with any items of wealth, in this case the constituents of *riste negus* (Land asset/La, People Asset/Pa, Animal asset/Aa, Seed asset/Sa etc.). These are the ‘crude’ and ‘productive’ options of consuming/expending conquest-acquired assets.

**Crude Option of Spending Riste Negus**

The ‘crude’ option of consumption basically is the case of opting to use part or all of the assets as if they are end products. The use of any of these for the payment of outstanding wages and/or pensions (as well as other services) rendered is a case in the ‘crude’ option of consuming the assets. In which case, the assets pass hand and become the property of the waged employees of the Abyssinian crown recruited from the *hizbee Christian*. This way, assets (especially land) that began as *riste negus* are transformed into *riste Christian* or the private property of the citizens of Abyssinia. Traditionally the crown has been the patron of the war industry and of the national mission; therefore it has been the main provider of wage-paying posts and pensions for those that retire from its active services. These posts include those created in the context of the ‘industry of conquest’ or war industry and/or in the industry that underpins the national theocratic mission.

Crude option of consumption denotes the scenario where items/constituents of *riste negus* are used to pay wages and pensions as a type of an end-produce directly (or without having been put through a productive process of one sort or the other, first). The granting of the sovereign’s land (*riste negus*) in perpetuity in lieu of commendable services is an example of this (Markakis 1974, p. 83).

This option of consuming/spending *riste negus* allows the crown and the patron of theo-industry and of its auxiliary war industry to be able to pay for the cost incurred in the process of conquest. It serves the purpose of re-financing the war of conquest without the need to first invest the assets into the source of sustainable wealth such as crown-owned-farms. I call these *gibbir*-farms or *goolt*-estates after
the Abyssinian term 'goofil', meaning a type of wage paid to those who serve the crown.

In summary, the Abyssinian war industry not only invents or creates fresh customers, thus a demand for tebel. In the process, it creates net source of wealth, a wealth that often begin first as the collective patrimony of the victorious nation and tend to be held in trust under the jurisdiction of the sovereign (negus) of the nation. What follows is the trajectory in which what began as communal/collective property of the conquering nation, the riste negus of Abyssinian 'hizbee Christian' or Christian community of nation, is transformed into private property of the citizens, conceived here as citizens' 'rist' or 'riste Christian' (Tamrat 1972b; Conti Rossini, in Donham 1986a, p. 11).

**Productive Option of Spending Riste Negus**

Productive option of consumption basically depicts the scenario where the owner of these assets exploits the 'investable' (or capital) virtues of the assets, thus allowing itself (the crown) to benefit from a sustainable source of wealth. The usefulness of this option is evident when one has to take into account the more or less permanent nature of conducting a theocratic mission or the need to have permanent sources of income with which to cover the incurred costs in the process.

Paying wages and pensions for those in the more or less permanent services of the crown illustrates this point. The productive option of spending the constituents of riste negus has been the economic foundation of Abyssinian theo-industry. In it lies the economic foundation of gibbir production from the gibbir-farms. This option of consuming/expending riste negus has been the most important, in terms of its being a sustainable source of the bulk of wealth for Abyssinia. However, the two options of consuming/expending the war-acquired assets complement each other.

Any one of the assets that make up riste negus has the inherent potential of being consumed through a crude or a productive option of consumption. However, land asset, given its immobile nature, tends to be exploited more through the productive option.
Economic Dividends of a War Industry: A Brief Summary

Engaging in acts of conquest adds a rather temporary type of industry to the conventional ones, be they theo-industry, or agricultural, mining or manufacturing industries that depend on the raw materials from agricultural or mining industry—namely, industries that specialise in the provision of services etc.

War industry is rather a dependent type industry and has an in-built and dual function of being at once a source of a readily consumable wealth and the source of capital items with which other industries (conventional such as agriculture) are renewed from or expanded. It creates wealth and boosts the wealth generating capacities of the conventional industry (industries) of the conquering nation(s). In the Abyssinian case, the conventional industry, the primary industry has been theo-industry. Agriculture has merely been a by-product of theo-industry (I shall discuss this aspect later).

Thus, war industry has been instrumental in the economic renewal/improvement of the Abyssinian society. It has had an important economic role in the task of mitigating poverty/famine condition. The first avenue in this function is as the source of employment, generating wages and pensions for the citizens-turned-warriors. Its second economic purpose comes in the form of boosting the wealth-generating capacities of the conventional/primary industry of the conquering nation. “While the poor [Abyssinian] died, the less weak went to the country of the Galla [conquered lands in southern Ethiopia] (Giorgis, quoted in Markakis 1974, p. 24).

This in turn leads to a boost in the employment opportunities of the citizens in the context of the conventional or primary industry where its effect flows to the whole host of ‘secondary’ industries. The boost in the generated wealth allows the crown, as the patron of the primary industry, to create more wage-posts (goolt-posts) and the capacity to allocate more pension-packages (Wolde Maskal 1957). In short, then, Abyssinians stood to benefit from the yields of a war industry and theo-industry. The following chapter discusses the case in a productive option of consuming/expending assets that make up Abyssinian riste negus. In this option lies the essence in the political economy of gibbir production.
**chapter 4**

**POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GIBBIR PRODUCTION**

**Riste Negus in the Making of ‘Gibbir-Farms’**

The productive process centred on what I conceive as gibbir-farms is the process of gibbir production/generation. It is the process with the ultimate end of generating tangible sets of wealth with which the gabar ‘pay’ for the consumed portions of tebel, in a more or less sustainable fashion.

Gibbir-farms are venues where the productive option of consuming assets that comprise riste negus takes place. It is here where People assets fulfil their assumed role of coerced-customer: the coerced-consumers of tebel – that is, gabar.

More importantly, being a gabar is about being a type of forced clientele, a kind of owned-customer of theo-industry. It (gabar-hood) is simultaneously the category of tribute production (of gibbir) and consumption (of the end product of theo-industry, tebel). Once imposed, the status of being the coercible customers is reproducible via the permanent exertion/application of doses of institutionalised violence.

The southern peasantry which found itself on land claimed by the state lost whatever rights it had held traditionally over the land. The people were transformed into gabbars [sic] of the state and of the privileged group to whom the state granted rights over such land (Markakis 1974, p. 112).

In a sense, there are two interdependent functions formerly [free] producers-turned-into coerced-customers of the tebel or the gabar fulfil. One is being a kind
a customers, thus securing a sustainable ‘demand’ for the tebel. The other is being able to run a productive process aimed at generating tangible sets of wealth with which the supplied and consumed portion of tebel is ‘paid’ for. This last process is conceived here as gibbir production, while the whole process defines the essence of the so-called ‘gabbar system’. This is a system of production with the ultimate aim of financing a theocratic mission of Abyssinian choice. It sustains a form of industry, army of waged employees and an army of pensioners or pensioner-farmers that live off of a piece of arable land that began as riste negus (Markakis 1974, p. 113).

These twin tasks (that is, consuming tebel and producing gibbir as the ‘price’ of the tebel) are centred on a type of farmsteads into which the gabbar are organised. I call these farms the gibbir-farms.

The gibbir-farms, in effect, are the constituents of the demand-side of Abyssinian theo-industry. They are the source of demand for the end produce of theo-industry. They are venues where one finds the ‘beneficiaries’ of the soul-cleansing services of the tebel. They are venues where the national mission of Abyssinia is executed. These are venues where the seemingly contradictory notion of coerced exchange relations allowing for the ‘realisation’ or ‘commercialisation’ of the tebel takes place. It is here where the intangible and service-type commodity, with the use value of cleansing the aremene soul (the tebel) is ‘exchanged’ with a tangible set of products. The latter is conceived here as the gibbir.

Gibbir-farms constitute a type of “market” for the end-produce of theo-industry. It is where the customers for the end produce of the Abyssinian national industry is to be found. They (gibbir-farms) have no independent or autonomous existence of their own but exist as the opposite of the supply-side of theo-industry. As the definers of the demand-side of theo-industry, gibbir-farms complete what has for centuries been the primary industry of Abyssinia/Ethiopia — and still is, notwithstanding the changes in the content of the official missions over the past century or so.
**Gibbir Production as a Process**

Gibbir, being the ‘price’ of the delivered portions of tebel, is the earning of the primary industry of Abyssinia. It is the source of revenue with which the patron of theo-industry re-finances the costs incurred in the execution/implementation of the rather self-assumed mission of ‘saving’ the aremene nations from their ‘evil’ ways of being or indigenous spirituality (including a set value system, their way of life etc.). It is the main source of wages (for goolt-post holders) for citizens-turned employees of the nation in the context of the national mission.

The term ‘goolt’ basically represents a wage category or a wage package, while a goolt-post is a wage-carrying post of theo-industry, with a specific job description. Thus, gibbir consumed as wages (goolt), among other expenses, has provided an important platform for the allocation and redistribution of the nation’s annual produce to its citizen-employees recruited from amongst the hizbe Christian of Abyssinia/Ethiopia (Markakis 1974, pp. 109-111). This in turn has been an essential economic medium in the mitigation of the structural conditions that have underpinned the conditions of poverty and help reduce or retard the onset of famine condition amongst the Abyssinians (more on this later).

From a purely productive point of view, this process is centred on the ‘investment’ of the essential assets, with the main aim of elaborating an end product as gibbir (including the cost in gibbir production). This process is set on the gibbir-farms that in turn are made up of the main constituents of riste negus: namely Land asset (La), People asset (Pa), Animal asset (Aa), Seed asset (Sa) and others necessary for the making of a gibbir-farm. The process of gibbir production could be conceived as the art of inducing ‘productive depreciation’ or inducing the release of ‘useful energy’ from these assets with the ultimate aim of making the end product, the gibbir in this case. The act of inducing, tapping and storing productive energy in the form of an end product (agricultural in this case) is defined here as an ‘art’ of (gibbir) production.]

**Energy Yield of the Assets**

Every portion of energy release extracted from any one of the assets constitutes what is conceived here as a rate of asset depreciation (RAD). They are the ‘energy
releases' of People asset, Animal asset, Seed asset, Land asset etc. These assets, ultimately, are the constituents or the source of gibbir, independent of whether they are consumed for the production of gibbir in the form of a tangible end product or are consumed as a crude form of energy releases (corvé labour).

**People Assets and Animal asset as the Source of 'Energy'**

People asset (Pa) and Animal asset (Aa) yield muscular energy (plus intellectual energy inherent in People asset) that could be consumed directly by the owner of the assets (rather, by those to whom the gibbir-farms are allocated in lieu of wages, for their services to the crown) or used in the making tangible items of produce.

The former is a case of a direct option of consuming the energy releases and the later an indirect option in the consumption of the released/depreciated portions of energy by these factors of production. As a result, there are two main types of gibbir. There is gibbir in the form of crude energy releases or energy consumed as a corvé labour, for instance. This is Energy As Gibbir (EAG) or Labour As Gibbir (LAG). There is also gibbir in the form of a tangible item of produce as the result of employing the released/shed portions of energies in the elaboration of the end produce (PAG).

People asset and Animal asset are also the source of what could be conceived of as 'stored energy' or 'food energy'. They are able not only to generate useful energy that could be used towards the elaboration of other items of value, but are also potentially depositors of another type of energy: 'food energy'.

Animal asset that is the source of muscular energy under the 'normal' conditions (or when opted to be used for this purpose, primarily) is also a potential source of food and/or other valuables. This is possible under the circumstances where the owner opts to consume its work-animals or beasts of burden as food items or as a commodity in exchange for other products. Animal asset consumed as a food item indicates the inherent virtues of this asset as the source of 'stored wealth'.

In a way, they themselves have the inherent virtue of being consumed as an end product, as a food item or as a gibbir item. The notion of consuming People asset as food items echoes cannibalism. However, this option of consuming People asset, though perfectly feasible, has not been known to be the case amongst the
Abyssinians. Nevertheless, this apparent contradiction finds another solution when one considers the exchangeability/tradeability factor of this asset, like any other. Thus, it is possible to trade in this asset (slave trade) or use it to acquire other goods and/or services, as is the case with Animal assets.

Land Asset as the Source of Energy

Land, in its wider sense, is more than a mere lump of dirt. It could be made to include resources on a land and those found in land or under it. There is land as a lump of dirt with the inlaid nutrients as feed for the growth of plants and animals. There are mineral, water and other sources of wealth found on or under land. More, the earth/soil itself is not only made up of ‘dead’ plants, but is constantly nourished by such natural fertilisers or from artificial fertilisers manufactured from mineral resources found in land.

Forests/bushland, grass lands, wild animals (such as meat yielding bison of the American Prairies, ivory-yielding elephant herds of the African Savannah, fur-yielding animals in the vast temperate latitudes of what is today Canada and Russia) are resources found on the land. Mineral deposits such as coal and oil are resources contained underneath. They are the source of ‘fossil’ energy.

One could identify ‘Fresh energy’ and ‘Fossil energy’ as the two main items of energy contained in land. The former is a type of energy readily consumed as food directly by plants and indirectly by animals. This type includes plant products, animal products and others found on land. The use of fire wood, pits and coals as the source of energy in a farming community or the use of these and related others (oil, gas, etc.) for the operation of heavy machinery, is an example of ‘Fossil energy’.

The productive use of energy releases from Animal asset, People asset and Land asset is instrumental in the elaboration of an end product (gibbir as a product, in this case). These releases provide the essential ingredients with which a tangible end product is made in the context of a (gibbir) farm. However, this process of tapping these sets of energies and converting them into a readily consumable product is facilitated via the role of Seed assets.
The Role of Seed Asset in the Production of Gibbir

An asset that assumes the status of the Seed asset plays a major role in the process of gibbir production (that is, Produce As Gibbir). It is the Seed asset that has the inherent virtue of not only releasing its own set of energies, but also of tapping and storing the energy releases of other assets (in the gibbir-farms). Here, the end result comes in the form of the expanded/replicated version of the original Seed asset or invested Seed asset with which the productive process began.

As such, the exploitation of the inherent virtues of Seed assets with the ultimate aim of tapping and storing useful energies shed by various factors of production (Land asset, People asset, Animal asset, etc.) in the form of a tangible set of end product is what is defined here as (gibbir) production. Thus, production is the art of facilitating the: tapping and storage of energy released/depreciated by various factors of production in the making of a set end product.

The practices of plant and/or animal (seed) breeding, a practice otherwise known as farming, basically is one that allows a systematic tapping of energies from various sources (factors of production) and the storage of the tapped. This process is facilitated via the exploitation of the biological virtues/qualities inherent in plants and/or animals: the growth and reproduction of these as Seed assets.

The determination of what constitutes the Seed asset of the process is an essential criterion in the process/dynamics of gibbir production. While all assets form part of the ‘invested’ asset for the production of gibbir, nevertheless, the process revolves around or is centred on the item that assumes the status of Seed asset.

Where the art of breeding domesticated plants (botanical seeds) prevails, we have a crop-growing region. Gibbir-farms set in such a region are defined here as crop-growing gibbir-farms.

A pastoralist-type agriculture pointed to a region where the ‘art’ of breeding domesticated animals (‘zoological’ seeds) prevailed. On conquest, these tended to be turned into regions that specialised in the production of a pastoralist-type (produce) gibbir. Here, Animal asset becomes the Seed asset. Animal products and corvé labour from both People asset and Animal asset as beasts of burden become the main forms of gibbir.
In conquered regions where a hunter-gatherer type resource extraction were happen to be predominant wild plants and/or animals, previously owned by the community of the hunter-gatherer nations, emerge as the Seed asset,

All productive activity revolves around either the protection of these assets, while they grow and replicate autonomously, and the harvesting of the yield through acts of gathering and/or hunting. Thus, the activity of hunting and gathering defines the process of *gibbir* production *per se*. The production of ivory or wild coffee as items of *gibbir* has been the best-known feature of *gibbir* production in the mainly hunter-gatherer regions or by primarily hunter-gatherer *gabbar*. As such, wild elephants and wild coffee crop assume a similar status to a Seed asset in these cases.

Coffee is said to be indigenous to Ethiopia. However, nearly all of the coffee has originated not from the heartland of Abyssinia (interchangeably known as Ethiopia) but from the conquered regions (*Figure 4.1*). Until quite recent times, the bulk of Ethiopian coffee was the result of ‘wild’ coffee or coffee collected from the bush or forested areas in the south-western regions such as Kaffa. Coffee and frankincense, also known as *haancha* in some parts of Ethiopia (a millennia-old export commodity), are two notable wild plants looked after and harvested or collected as *gibbir* by the hunter-gather *gabbar*.

![Figure 4.1: Coffee harvest in southern Ethiopia](image)

Seed assets constitute the ‘variable’ asset or capital in the process of (*gibbir*) production. It is Seed asset that illustrates the increase in the volume of the original Seed asset or the ‘invested’ Seed asset with which the breeding process is launched. This variation in the volume of the ‘invested’ Seed asset owes to its
inherent ability to tap and store the series of energy releases from other assets (and itself) and its ability to use them towards the growing and/or breeding processes of itself.

The rest of the assets have the role of shedding fractions of energy releases towards the seed-breeding process. Such assets constitute a type of ‘constant’ capital and could include Land asset and People asset. The end yield contains all the released fractions of energy releases from both the ‘variable’ assets (Seed assets) and the ‘constant’ assets/capital (non-Seed assets) and constitutes what is defined here as the Gross gibbir (Gg).]

On this basis, it is possible to identify three types of gibbir that could be extracted from a gibbir-farm, independent of whether it is a crop-growing type or some other:

(a) Energy As Gibbir (EAG): This is the case where gibbir comes not so much in what is produced via the use of energy releases, but in the crude form of energy releases. Corvé labour is a form of EAG.

(b) Produce As Gibbir (PAG): This is the case where the released portions of energy are ‘invested’ or used to generate tangible sets of products as gibbir, at the end of a productive process. Here, gibbir comes in the form of readily consumable or tradable items.

(c) Assets As Gibbir (AAG). This is the case where the assets themselves end up becoming a type of gibbir or consumed as such. The scenario where Animal asset and People asset are withdrawn from the (gibbir) production process and appropriated as an end product is an example in Asset As Gibbir. The use of Land asset to be used in the payment of a primitive type of pension (rist) is another case in point here.

In any given fiscal year, the gibbir yield of an Abyssinian crown/state comes in the combined form: EAG, PAG and AAG. Its expenses or expenditure patterns too reflect this. A wage of an employee of an Abyssinian crown (the gooltenya) often has been determined and paid by combining PAG, EAG and AAG (to some extent). A sack of corn or teff or a yearly quota of mutton is an example of PAG. A corvé labour service from a designated gabbar family unit in the households of ‘their’ gooltenya is the case in EAG.
The use of a portion of crown land, allocated for those that retire from active services of the crown with a mission, constitutes a case in AAG (see Markakis 1974 on *riste negus*). In this last case, assets that up to then were part of the Abyssinian National *Rist* or *riste negus* are rendered the ‘private property’ of the former citizen-employees. These assets have the main function of generating a type of agricultural pension, and not so much a ‘taxable produce’, as is the case in other settings. (A later chapter discusses this aspect.)

However, the process of *gibbir* production mainly refers to the generation of EAG and PAG.

**Constituents and Layout of Gibbir-Farms**

Many of the conquered nations of Abyssinian have had an indigenous agricultural system that stood in contrast to the plough-based and ‘Asiatic’ type agriculture in Abyssinia proper. A pastoralist agriculture, as practised by pastoralist Oromo, and hoe-based cultivation, such as utilised amongst the Sidama, prevailed in many of the *aremene* countries south of Abyssinia (see McClellan 1988 on *ensete* production in Gedeo in Sidama). However, this is not to say that plough-based agriculture has not been practised in some regions at the point of their conquest in the second half of the nineteenth century. Even here, plough-based agriculture is a tale-tale sign of previous cycles of conquest of Abyssinia or influence from Abyssinia.

Abyssinians fundamentally altered the rational of agricultural production without necessarily replacing the pre-conquest agricultural/resource exploitation traditions, or at least not immediately. Pre-conquest indigenous production systems, be these crop-growing variety, animal husbandry, hunting-gathering or the combination of these were transformed into the production of *gibbir*.

On the long run, however, the very nature of indigenous agriculture undergoes a dramatic change, where Abyssinian-type agriculture (plough farming as practised in the ancient worlds of the Middle East) gradually replaces the ‘African’ farming systems. The transformation of indigenous agricultural systems into ones that echo the typically Abyssinian farming system takes place parallel to the processes studied here as ‘goolit-ification’ and ‘rist-ification’. The process of ‘goolit-ification’
is the process of creating wage-post and filling these with employees from amongst
the ranks of the hizbee Christian or the citizens of the Abyssinian theocratic
empire. Wages are paid by allocating gibbir-farm(s) to a given wage-post (goolt).
The process of ‘rist-ification’ is the process of paying a pension by allocating a
piece of riste negus (be this under a gibbir-farm or held in reserve) to the retiring
former employees of the crown, all in the context of the Abyssinian national
mission. These two processes tend to accelerate the Abyssinianisation of all
agricultural systems. The processes of ‘goolt-ification’ and ‘rist-ification’ will be
discussed in more detail in a later part.

Patterns in the setting-up of the gibbir-farms and gibbir production in the animal-
farming regions, crop-farming regions or hunter-gatherer regions conquered by
Abyssinians in essence have a lot in common. The essential variable here is what
constitutes the ‘Seed’ asset. As such, this variable determines the type of gibbir
extracted from a region. It helps determine regional speciality or peculiarity in
gibbir production.

‘Riste negus’ provided the essential capital or assets with which a gibbir-farm of an
Abyssinian crown was erected. Then, the making of a gibbir-farm is nothing more
than a practice of ‘investing’ assets that Abyssinia as a conquistador nation had
yielded via the use of organised violence (that is, wars of conquest).

Then, a gibbir-farm, regardless of the specific nature of the farming activity in
different regions, generally is made up of the ‘investment’ of the following assets,
all components of riste negus’: Land asset (La), People asset (Pa) or family units of
the vanquished nations as a private property of the conquering nation and the
source of slave-labour for the crown, Animal asset or farm animals used as a beast
of burden (Aa) and Seed asset (plant/crop and/or animals used as breeding stock or
‘animal’ Seeds asset) (Sa). Regarding the allocation of members of the vanquished
nations to a gibbir-farm, that in turn provided wage-in-produce to the employees of
the crown. McClellan (1988, p. 58) quotes a Burgi informant as saying:

What changed our way of life and made us miserable was [X]... [who] took a
census of the whole tribe and parcelled them [sic] up among his soldiers. The
Burgi were thus suddenly reduced to the status of GABBARI [original emphasis]
or serfs.
Thus, a *gibbir*-farm (Gf) comprises:

\[ \text{Gf} = \text{La} + \text{Pa} + \text{Aa} + \text{Sa} \]

As we have noted, the crown is only a *de facto* owner of these assets. Abyssinia, as the community of nation made up of an orthodox Christian population, is through its sovereign the *de jure* owner of all assets conceived here as 'riste negus'.

The Abyssinian crown is merely a trustee agent of 'riste negus', though not necessarily a 'passive' trustee. More significantly, the crown doubles as the patron of the national mission of Abyssinia vis-à-vis the *aremene* nations and of the primary industry of the nation structured around this mission. As such, it wields a considerable and nearly absolutist economic power (Markakis 1974, pp. 33-34). The fact that it holds a monopolistic control over these assets and the primary industry makes it the main employer of the citizens and this in turn gives it a near absolute control over the lives of its citizen-employees. It owns the *gabbar* population as merely another type of a beast of burden or Animal asset, which it allocates to the required *gibbir*-farms generating wages to the employees of the crown, in the same way Nazi Germany assigned Jewish slave labour to German companies, and the Spanish assigned the indigenes to *encomiendas* (Spanish version of *gibbir*-farms).

In regions where *gibbir*-farms are set for the production of *gibbir* in animals and animal-products, People asset emerge as the animal-breeding *gabbar*, a pastoralist *gabbar*. Land emerges as the source of an essential ingredient for the tasks of the *gibbir* production, a natural (not worked) source of animal feed. The cattle or the herd of the formerly free pastoralist-farmers now becomes the Seed asset or the breeding-stock, as well as being the source of a beast of burden or as work animals (see McClellan 1988 on the Gedeo and the Boran). *Gibbir*-farms however are owned by the Abyssinian crown, on behalf of *hizbee Christian*, these are managed by its People asset or the *gabbar* family as the basic productive unit.

As such, amongst the pastoralist *gabbar*, there are two sub-categories of Animal asset. There is the breeding stock that serves as the Seed asset or animals as Seed asset. There are animals that serve as the beasts of burden that aid the primary task of serving as the source of muscle energy necessary in the operation of a pastoralist type *gibbir*-farm. What the pastoralist Boran-Oromo conceptualises as the *geejiba*
or pack animals such as donkeys, mules, camels and horses are animals used as beasts of burden. The services of these work animals, like that of the gabbar, are generally exacted in the form of muscle energy. It could be consumed or used as a component of a primitive type of wage-package (goolt) for the waged-employees (gooltenya) of an Abyssinian crown in the context of its national theocratic mission. This is a case in a direct option of consuming the energy yields from the Animal asset of the crown. In a sense, a goolt (wage) payment is a type of an exchange relation between the employer (the crown) and its employee (the gooltenya). The gooltenya provides some sort of service (for instance, soldiering) to the crown and in exchange s/he receives a kind of remuneration paid in kind from an assigned gibbir-farm(s). Portions of corvé labour from People asset and Animal asset are items which comprise such a wage package. A Boran pack of donkeys used to fetch a ‘sooda’ (salt to be consumed by the animals and humans from a local salt pan) is an example of an indirect pattern in the extraction of energy yield from the Animal assets of the crown. Where the energy releases are consumed towards the generation of a gibbir in the context of the gibbir-farms, then, is a case of the indirect use of the energy yields.

In the case where the crown (or its agents) demands services in pack animals to be used in war efforts or to enforce the collection of gibbir, it is a case of a directly consumed gibbir in the form of muscular ‘energy’ (from the Animal assets of the crown). This includes cases where the similar portion of energy is consumed in the household of an Abyssinian gooltenya or the household to which a gibbir-farm(s) was assigned, in lieu of wage. This is a case of EAG (see McClellan 1988).

Alternatively, where the mentioned energy is consumed in the context of the pastoralist gibbir-farms or for the purpose of gibbir production, the end result comes in the form of Produce As Gibbir (PAG). Thus, PAG is the result of an indirect and/or ‘productive’ consumption of the energy releases from assets that make up the Abyssinian riste negus. In this regard, McClellan (1988, p. 64) remarked:

Livestock rather than land or labor provided the tax base [gibbir]. Boran gabbars [sic] came to be taxed on the basis of the karra (stockade of 100 cattle, camels, or horses or of 300 sheep).
On visiting the region in 1914, the British consul in Addis Ababa is reported as saying:

…the Boran are now divided out as bondsmen among the Abyssinian officers and soldiers, and for every hundred head of cattle the owner has to pay to his master a yearly sum of 18 dollars, provide him with a bullock on feast days, look after his mules, and generally be of service. They are also called upon to provide camels and men for transport work, for which they receive neither pay nor rations and have further to pay to the Central government a yearly tax of 1 dollar for every 100 cattle (quoted in McClellan 1988, p. 64).

In regions where crop farming happens to be the main, not necessarily the only, productive activity, grain crops tend to define the Seed asset. Here, the oxen, the horses or donkeys used as draft animals or beasts of burden constitute the Animal asset (Aa), along with the breeding stock of animals kept often on the side.

**Gibbir Farms and the Process of Gibbir Production**

Gibbir production is an art of facilitating the biological reproduction of the ‘invested’ Seed asset. While the process of (gibbir) production is centred on the task of achieving increment of the original/invested seed asset, nevertheless, the process is aided by the releases of (productive) energy from the rest of the assets that make up a gibbir-farm. The increment in the volume of the ‘invested’ Seed asset thus owes both to the Seed asset and non-seed assets that together make up a gibbir-farm (La, Pa, Aa). Invested Seed asset (be it grain crops or animals) is one with which the process of seed-breeding is launched at the beginning of a ‘growing season’.

However, this is not to say that those designated as non-Seed assets do not change volume or replicate, in the process. They do, if only to replace themselves or to expand on the original size of the non-Seed assets with which a gibbir-farm is made of. The expansion in the size of People asset and/or Animal asset, due to a breeding process, is one case in point. This way, these assets create their replacements and even increase on their original size. Land asset too is not immune to this process. The fertility rate of land is a variable factor. As such, any process that leads to increased fertility of the soil, in turn, permits a greater level of releases in (productive) energy from this asset. The fact that certain assets primarily assume
the form of Seed assets does not mean that replication is their sole virtue. They too have the inherent capacity to store and/or release (productive) energy, while replicating/breeding.

Then, the process of gibbir production is the dynamics of facilitating an increment in the seed asset, while inducing energy releases/depreciation in the rest of asset that make up the gibbir-farm (Land asset, People asset, Animal asset). A Seed asset, being the ‘variable’ asset, is the one that marks the changing magnitude in the assets or in process of production. It is the one that illustrates the increment in the volume of the ‘invested’ Seed asset with which the process of seed-breeding (production) was launched at the beginning of the [seed] growing or production season.

Then, the dynamics of gibbir production could symbolically be represented as the difference between the volume of ‘invested’ seed asset at the beginning of the [seed] breeding season and at the end of the season. This change in magnitude/volume, as indicated earlier, owes to the ‘input’ from non-Seed asset or due to the energy releases by non-Seed assets. The process of (Gross) gibbir production could be illustrated via the variation in volume of the Invested Seed asset (ISa) and in the volume of ‘Obtained Seed asset’ (OSa), at the end of the productive/breeding season.

Thus, the dynamic of Gibbir production is the combined result in asset depreciation or energy releases on one hand and the process in Seed asset replication on the other. The former refers mainly to the peculiar role or contribution of the non-seed assets in the process of gibbir production and the latter refers predominantly to the replicating virtues of the Seed asset in the process of (gibbir) production. The overall outcome of this process is reflected via the increased volume of the original or Invested Seed asset.

Thus the dynamic of gibbir production (Gp) could be symbolically represented in the following equation, where ‘d’ stands for the process of depreciation or energy releases by non-Seed assets and ‘r’ stands for the replication virtues embedded in those assets designated as Seed asset (Sa).

\[
Gp = d(La + Pa + Aa) + r(Sa)
\]
In order to show the changed volume or variation in the size of the invested seed asset, I employ two sets of equations. The first represents the dynamics of gibbir production at the beginning of the growing season. The second depicts the same dynamic at the end of the growing (gibbir production) season, by taking into account the time factor in order to symbolically illustrate the dynamics of gibbir production.

A Seed asset, as noted earlier, ultimately defines the specific nature of gibbir production and the type of gibbir items. Where a Seed asset is a breeding stock, we have a pastoralist gibbir-farm primarily. Where a Seed asset is made up of crop/plant seed (a grain crop); then we have a crop-growing gibbir-farm primarily. Where a Seed asset is made up of wild-animals as a breeding stock; we have a hunter-gather gibbir farm, primarily.

Thus, the dynamics of Gibbir production at the beginning of the (gibbir) production/growing season:

\[(Gp) = d (La + Pa + Aa) + r (Sa 1),\]

where ‘Sa 1’ symbolises an ‘invested Seed asset’ or the Seed asset with which the process of (gibbir) production/growing was launched, at the beginning of the growing season.

The same process, at the end of the growing season could symbolically represented as following:

\[(Gp) = d (La + Pa + Ba) + (Sa 2),\]

where ‘Sa 2’ symbolises the changed volume of the Seed asset at the end of the growing/gibbir production season.

The difference in magnitude or volume between the ‘Obtained’ Seed asset (OSa) – or the yield of Seed asset at the end of the growing period – and the ‘Invested Seed asset’ (ISa) or between ‘Sa 1’ and ‘Sa 2’, constitutes the total annual yield from a gibbir-farm or (Gross) gibbir (Gg). This is to say that the gibbir-farms are the source of not so much a product, but of a gibbir as their end product.

\[Gg = (Sa 2) - (Sa 1)\]

which in turn is the same as:
Gg = OSa – ISa.

All of Gross gibbir, legally and practically, is owned by the entity that owns the all the assets with which a gibbir farm is constituted from. The Abyssinian crown, and through it, the ruling nation of the empire of Ethiopia or Abyssinia, owns both the gibbir-farms and the end result of these or the Gross gibbir. This includes the portion of the Gross gibbir left to be consumed by the gabbar family unit(s) – basically the cost incurred by the owner of the gibbir-farms – in the process of gibbir production. The portion of Gg left for the sustenance of the gabbar family unit is defined here as the gabbar’s ration (Gr).

However, note that Produce As Gibbir (PAG) is not the only item of gibbir appropriated and consumed by the owners of the gibbir-farms during a set period of time. ‘Corvé labour’, both from People asset and Animal assets, or Energy As Gibbir (EAG) is an aggregate item of gibbir during the same period.

**Peculiarities of a Hunter-Gatherer Gibbir-Farm**

Hunting-gathering was the ‘indigenous’ resource exploitation activity in many part of the Horn of Africa, prior to their conquest by the Abyssinians (Donham 1986a). This is especially so when one had to take into account the ‘Asiatic’ origins of many of the domesticated plants and animals that came to define the pastoralist and/or the crop-growing agrarian systems, in the context of which many of the gibbir-farms were set.

The incorporation of these regions into the Abyssinian economic system and the specific nature of gibbir production here, though share the fundamentals, nevertheless present us with some unique features. To begin with, this region came to be the source of what could be called as the ‘strategic’ items or yield of gibbir. These regions yielded the bulk of the valuable and exportable items of wealth in the form of gibbir in ivory, frankincense (gum Arabica), readily tradeable slaves, ‘wild coffee’ and other items.

As has been the case in other sub-regions, it was not economical or cost effective to disrupt the existing or the indigenous agrarian system by the incoming Abyssinians (Donham & James 1986). Regardless of the reduced disruption, the indigenous populations stopped being the patron of the productive process as they
themselves were made into mere item of wealth, a people asset of the conqueringnation (trusted to its crown); thus the making of a hunter-gatherer type *gabbar*(Donham & James 1986; McClellan 1988; Zewde 1991).

Though hunting-gathering is the predominant productive activity, it was rarely theonly one in many places. As was the case in other sub-regions conquered by theAbyssinians, a sort of mixed farming prevailed, in some shape or form (Donham &James 1986). There were (a) hunter-gatherer who also keep some animals; (b)hunter-gatherers who practise some crop-farming (horticulture, see Maale and theregions in the Omo valley) (Donham 1999); and (c) hunter-gatherers who alsoengage in mining activities (gold-mining amongst the ‘Shankilla’ of the Assosaregion etc.) (Donham & James 1986).

Independent of the specific nature of the productive activity, conquest implied afundamental alteration in the essence of the production process. It no longer wasthe process of production, per se as the process of *gibbir* production. Formerly‘free’ producers (hunter-gatherers) are no longer so but just another item ofproperty, a type of capital, albeit with the inherent capacity to run a process ofproduction centred on Abyssinian-owned *gibbir*-farms.

As the result, Land asset, People asset, Animal asset and Seed asset, similar to theanimal and crop farming *gibbir*-farms, constitute the essential assets, the buildingblock, of which a hunter-gatherer *gibbir*-farm was composed.

Land asset, here, refers to a land rich in a hunttable and gatherable produce. Peopleasset refers to a hunter-gatherer people made into a hunter-gatherer *gabbar*.Animal asset refers to any domesticated herds of animals kept or owned by thecommunity of the hunter-gatherers as a beast of burden. The main variable herecomes in what assumes the Seed asset. Seed asset here is the hunttable-gatherable‘wild’ crops/plants and/or animals, instead of domesticated animals andplants/crops as found in crop-growing *gibbir*-farms or pastoralist *gibbir*-farms.Wild elephants (source of ivory) or ‘wild coffee’ plants become the Seed assets ina hunter-gatherer type *gibbir*-farm.
The Factor of Mixed Farming in Gibbir Production

Broadly speaking, PAG, EAG and AAG mark the main forms of gibbir, regardless of the distinctive types of gibbir in any one area (McClellan 1988). The predominance of one agricultural system or a system of resource exploitation; generally defines regions as being essentially ones with a crop-farming gibbir-farms, animal-farming (pastoralist) gibbir-farms or hunter-gatherer gibbir-farms. However, this does not preclude the overlapping of anyone of these in one area. Mixed farming has been the norm, in any one of the aremene countries conquered by the Christian and Semitic Abyssinians (Donham & James 1986). As the result, several items of production often make a regions' PAG. For instance, an essentially animal-farming region (pastoralist) could also have a crop-farming tradition on the side. As the result, the overall PAG could be made up of both animal products and farm products or grain crops. Therefore, it is possible to introduce what could be defined as a secondary, tertiary etc. item, gibbir in produce.

Alternatively, there could be a tradition of horticultural or animal farming production systems as 'secondary' or complementary production system to a hunter-gatherer one. On that basis, we end up with more than one item of gibbir from this sub-region. As a result, there is a primary item of gibbir, made up of, say, a yield of ivory or an annual quota of chattel slaves; a secondary item of PAG made up of a yield of dura, teff or corn; and a tertiary item of gibbir made up of animals and animal products etc. (Donham & James 1986).

'Slave-Breeding' Gibbir-Farms

People asset too has the inherent capacity to assume the status of becoming the Seed asset, as well as being a type of Animal asset used as the source of muscle energy. We have noted how animals as assets could be made into breeding stock and/or beasts of burden depending on how the owners' options of asset exploitation/consumption. Breeding stock constitutes a type of Seed asset or a variable capital/asset, while those used as draft animals (oxen, donkeys, camels and horses) are conceived of here as 'Animal assets' or beasts of burden, primarily.
As such, People asset or Animal asset used as beasts of burden acts as a type of constant capital/asset in the process of (gibbir) production.

This is to say that there is a degree of versatility in which animals that primarily serve as Seed asset could from time to time be used as draft animals and vice versa. By the same token, People asset also inherently has this versatility. It could be used as the source of muscular energy, primarily, in which case we have a ‘working gabbar’. It could be used as a breeding gabbar/breeding slave, where the end result of this process of gibbir production comes not so much in the form of grain crops, animal products or a piece of ivory, but in the form of chattel slaves. A gabbar used as breeding stock rather than as a beast of burden ends up producing a type of gibbir in its own image. The latter is primarily a type of ‘breeding gabbar/slaves’, not working gabbar. That is not to say that ‘working gabbar’ do not breed but to indicate how the ‘breeding’ process is secondary to the ‘working’ process in which muscular and intellectual energies of the gabbar are released towards the gibbir production process. After all, the ‘working gabbar’ breeds if only to replace the existing gabbar population, if not to increase it itself (Donham & James 1986).

Alternatively, ‘breeding gabbar’ work to aid the process that defines gibbir production there: the breeding of the gabbar and the making of removable or readily tradeable slaves. In a sense, gabbar produce gibbir not only in the form of tangible items of produce or energy (corvé labour), but in the form of themselves. People asset has the potential of at once being the producer of a gibbir and/or a gibbir item per se. Under such circumstances, hunting or gathering, horticultural or animal farming activities become secondary to the aspect that defines gibbir production, in regions where gibbir is collected in the form of chattel slaves primarily (Pankhurst 1968; Donham & James 1986). These activities, generally speaking, end up producing not so much a gibbir item but the ration of the breeding gabbar/slaves. However, we must take into account the fact that chattel slaves are rarely the sole items of gibbir in these areas, in the same way grain crops are rarely the sole items of gibbir in mainly grain-growing gabbar countries. Then gibbir in the form of animals or grain crops and in corvé labour (EAG) define the secondary items of gibbir in regions where gabbar/slave-breeding is happen to be the primary source of gibbir.
Regions where a hunter-gatherer-type agriculture prevailed tended to specialise in the production of *gibbir* in the form of chattel slaves where people asset is treated as just another breeding wild beasts. In this case, People asset assumes the status similar to wild elephants (Wako Adi 2001).

**Gross Gibbir according to its Portions of Consumption**

Gg from any *gibbir*-farms and in any given period is composed of:

\[
Gg = PAG \text{ (Main items of gibbir)} + EAG \text{ (Complementary items of gibbir)} + AAG \text{ (Complementary items of gibbir)}.
\]

As any process of production, there is a cost of *gibbir* production, incurred by the crown. In the Abyssinian case, the cost of *gibbir* production rarely originates from external sources or in the form of an additional investment. It is subtracted from what is produced or from the Gross *gibbir* (Gg). The cost of the *gabbar*’s ration (Gr) constitutes a major cost of *gibbir* production. As the result, once this portion is subtracted from the total *gibbir* yield, the crown is left with what is conceived here as the Net *gibbir* (Ng).

Then, Gg, according to its portions of consumption is made up of Ng (Net *gibbir*) and the *Gabbar*’s ration (Gr). Net *gibbir* is the portion of the Gross *gibbir* that flows to the Abyssinian crown) while *Gabbar*’s ration is the portion of the Gross *gibbir* that is left to be consumed by the *gabbar* family unit/s, thus constituting a cost incurred in *gibbir* production Thus:

\[
Gg = Ng + Gr
\]

where,

\[
Ng = Gg - Gr.
\]

Net *gibbir*, in effect, is the portion of the Gross *gibbir* that flows to the owner of the *gibbir*-farms: the Abyssinian crown/state. It basically is the ‘price’ the *gabbar* ‘pay’ in ‘exchange’ for having been the beneficiaries/consumers of the theocratic services of Abyssinia. Net *gibbir* is the ‘price’ the *gabbar* are forced to ‘pay’ for the portions of ‘tebel’, this being the metaphorical representation of the theocratic services provided by Abyssinia to (its) *gabbar* nations/populations.
The sum of Net gibbir from different gibbir-farming sub-regions is defined here as Total Net gibbir (TNg). That is:

\[ \text{TNg} = \text{Ng (crop-growing gibbir-farms)} + \text{Ng (stock-breeding gibbir farms)} + \text{Ng (hunter-gatherer gibbir-farms)} \]

The following chapter deals with the expenditure and consumption patterns of the TNg by the patron of theo-industry or the Abyssinian crown/state, and through it, by the citizens of Abyssinia as holders of wage-carrying posts (goolt). This includes those who retire from such posts and exit the process with a pension-package that often comes in the form of a piece of crown land or riste negus. It is such recipients of pension funds in land (rist land) and land grants as reward who become the pension-farmers of Abyssinia.

It is here where the poverty mitigating role/function of gibbir is revealed. This in turn has been instrumental in reducing the onset of famine-conditions amongst the beneficiaries of theo-industry or the citizens of Abyssinia. At the same time, the same process induces the opposite effect amongst the gabbar nations/peoples, as it leads to the creation and intensification of famine conditions there.
Twin Arms of the Supply-Side of Theo-industry and their Wage-Posts (Goolt)

The ‘supply-side’ of theo-industry, as indicated earlier, is made up of: (a) the ‘manufacturing/delivery arm’; and (b) the ‘demand creation arm’. These arms, in turn, are made up of wage-carrying posts or goolt-posts.

Those found on the ‘manufacturing/delivery arm’ of the ‘supply-side’ of theo-industry have the tasks of elaborating/manufacturing the service commodity with the use value of cleansing the aremene-turned-gabbar from their sinful ways. This commodity is metaphorically represented as the tebel. This arm coincides with the Church and related institutions.

The recruitment of citizens to become the ‘trustees’ of the crown for the evangelisation mission of the aremene has been an example of a post on the manufacturing/delivery arm of theo-industry. Such trustees have been the entrusted for the erection of the Christian temples, the elaboration of the tebel, and the delivery of this to the aremene-turned-gabbar (Pankhurst 1968; Bekele 1995b).

There are posts created on the ‘demand creation arm’ of theo-industry. This ‘arm’ fulfils interrelated tasks of: (a) secure (coerced) demand for the national industry and the tebel in the form of the gabbar; (b) insure the maintenance of the imposed status (gabbar-hood) in the bid to guarantee a sustainable source of demand for the tebel; and (c) expand the size of the ‘customers’ via renewed acts of conquest. The exertion of institutionalised violence, with the agency of the state, becomes an
essential tool both in the making of the actual customers or the *gabbar* and for the ‘delivery/marketing’ of the *tebel*.

These post holders, as employees in the multiple institutions of the Abyssinian state, have the collective tasks of enforcing the prevalence of forced demand for the *tebel*. They have the function of enforcing the status of the members of the vanquished nations as the source of coerced demand for *tebel* namely, the *gabbar*, and making sure that the *gibbir* (tribute) is ‘paid’.

The state, as the product of the networked institutions ranging from those looking after ‘law and order’ to those engaged in the tasks of overlooking or securing the collection of *gibbir*, constitutes the maker, reinforcer of the status of being the *gabbar*. It has the function of being the police of the coerced-demand. As such, the state, via its intricate correlations of institutions, has the ultimate function of creating the customers and then securing the ‘marketing’ of the Commodity of Christian Services (CCS) or the *tebel*.

In a way, the state serves as the demand-maker, customer-maker department of theo-industry. Thus, the supply-side of theo-industry is the dynamic symbiosis resulting from these two arms. Both, in turn, are made of a series of *goolt*-posts or wage-carrying posts filled in by candidates recruited from amongst the pool of the citizens of Abyssinia. A wage-post is a category that is set in an essentially non-productive industry with the ultimate aim of ‘reforming’ (rather, *deforming*) the ‘contaminated’ soul of the *aremene* nations conquered by Semitic and Christian Abyssinians.

The practice of *gibbir* consumption, as wage expenditure, takes place via the practice of furnishing designated *goolt*-posts with their corresponding source of *gibbir* (*gibbir*-farms). The same applies to non-wage expenditures of the crown. The practice of synchronising wage-posts with their *gibbir*-farm(s) defines the essence of *gibbir* expenditure and consumption.

*Gibbir* spent as wages (for the holders of wage-posts) has been the single most important case of Abyssinian *gibbir* expenditure. The diverse/multiple nature of the *gibbir*-farms reflects the diverse job-specifications necessary for the running of a theocratic mission (Pankhurst 1968, p. 135; Markakis 1974; McClellan 1988; Bekele 1995; Abebe, cited in Crummey 2000, p. 10).
However, these wage-posts fall within two broadly established terms, *semon* and *maderia*, terms that have often been the source of confusion (Zewde 1991). This has been the case, partially because they are used to describe either a wage-post/goolt-post and/or a gibbir-farm attached to a wage-post. The former, *semon*, roughly stands for wage-posts established for those that serve in the ‘manufacturing/delivery’ arm of the supply-side of theo-industry. These are employees of the church engaged in tasks directly related to the evangelisation process. The latter (*maderia*) generally stands for wage-posts created for those that serve in the demand-creation, demand-enforcing arm of theo-industry or employees of the Abyssinian state. Basically, the *semon goolt*-posts correspond to those engaged in the ‘temples’ of Christian Abyssinia or in institutions that ‘elaborate’ and ‘package’ a set package of ideological services. These are the ‘cadres’ of the theocratic services of the times. The latter (*maderia goolt*-posts) more or less correspond to the wage-posts created in the context of the state or the institutions of the state (army, security forces, bureaucracy, gibbir or revenue agents etc.).

Wage payment is realised via the process of furnishing a goolt-post or its holder, with a specific set of ‘job descriptions’ in the context of the national mission or theo-industry, with ‘its’ gibbir-farm(s) deemed sufficient to generate the equivalent of the post holder’s wage. This process is the prerogative of the agents of the crown or its bureaucrats (known as the *meikenya*) and in that capacity they too hold a goolt-post and their wages are ‘paid’ via the allocation of corresponding gibbir-farm(s) (Markakis 1974). As such, what is allocated to the holders of goolt-posts is not so much a piece of land under the jurisdiction of the crown (known as gult or goolt-land), but a gibbir-farm complete with its gabbar and other assets, all of which make up Abyssinian riste negus (Pankhurst 1968, p. 135). In the process, two sets of families are economically adjoined: the wage-post holder family unit made up of the Abyssinians and ‘their’ gabbar family unit or units in the gabbar countries concentrated in the southern part of Ethiopia from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards.

Note how the wage-post holders or gooltenya (by extension the family unit of this) serve the crown directly as employees of the industry with the overall national aim of conducting a theocratic mission. As such, here is an exchange relation between
the post-holders and the patron of the national mission or the Abyssinian crown, all centred on a wage category. Paying and receiving a wage package, hence, is an act of (free) exchange relation, while parallel to that there takes place a coerced-‘exchange’ relation (CER) between the Abyssinian crown as the patron of the industry and ‘producer’ of the Commodity of Christian Services (CCS) or tebel, and its ‘customers’, the gabbar populations. However, there have been two interrelated tasks that the state carries out towards the overall mission. One is pacification of the conquered lands, and the other is the actual mission. The latter is a long-term process and might not even take place. Under such conditions, ruling the conquered and potential consumers of the tebel defines the essence of the Abyssinian mission (cf. Markakis 1974).

Thus, the whole operation of this industry is built on not just one set of exchange-type relation, but two interdependent sets of transactions. In the process, the gabbar nations end up consuming the end product of the Abyssinian national industry as they are forced to ‘pay’ for what is consumed in the form of the gibbir in produce, corvé labour etc., from the designated gibbir-farms.

Tebel is what the gabbar family unit receives in ‘exchange’ for the portion of the gibbir (Net gibbir) they are not allowed to consume but must use to pay ‘their’ gooltenya or his/her household.

In order to live and produce a gibbir, in order to reproduce their status as the ‘customers’ of the Abyssinian national industry, the gabbar family units are allowed to live on a portion of what they produce in the gibbir-farms or the gabbar’s ration (Gr). As we have noted, gabbar ration is nothing more than a necessary cost of production incurred by the owner of the gibbir-farms or the assets with which the gibbir-farms are comprised (including the gabbar) (McClellan 1988, p. 73).

There will be a more or less sustainable source of (coerced) demand for the theocratic services of Abyssinia and/or the administrative services to rule, and equally sustainable flow of gibbir to Abyssinia.

On this basis, what is produced in the gibbir-farms is consumed by two sets of families: the wage-post holding Abyssinians or the gooltenya and ‘their’ gabbar
families. The former consume the (Net) gibbir made into a pay-package (goolit) and the later the portion of the Gross gibbir designated as gabbar’s ration.

Nevertheless, the primary item of consumption, as far as the gabbar family units were concerned, is not so much the ration, but the portion of ‘tebel’ these are meant to be provided from centralised positions. The spiritual cleansing of the gabbar nations from their aremene way of life is the intended net gain of the gabbar nations in this transaction. The ‘tebel’, in the end serves as the antidote of the heathen soul. It cleanses the evils of being the aremene, the indigenous, the African. The aremene, in the wider sense, implies the non-Christian, the non-citizen. From this perspective, it encompasses a wide range of people.

There is rarely is a direct correspondence between the job specification of a goolt-post or a gooltenya and what his/her gabbar are meant to consume. After all, the Commodity of Christian Services or tebel is the end product of the whole industry, not just of specific employees in theo-industry.

The goolt-posts or the gooltenya range from the cooks in the imperial palaces to the mail officer of the crown, from the generals of the Abyssinian army to the foot soldiers of the imperial army (n festena ), from the princely ‘class’ (the messafint) to knights (the mekuanint), from the bishops in the cathedrals of the Abyssinian Orthodox churches in main centres of the empire (such as Axum, Gondar, Addis Ababa) to the priestly ‘class’ in countless Orthodox churches (the debtera), from the head revenue collectors (negdrass) to the district revenue/gibbir agents (melkenya) from the top native collaborators (balabats) to the native aids in the local district administration (goro) (de Coppet, cited in Pankhurst 1968, p. 148; Mantama Selallase, cited in Pankhurst 1968, pp. 149-150).

However, all of these are wagged employees in the ‘supply-side’ of the Abyssinian national industry, albeit sub-divided between those employed on the ‘demand creation and demand-instigation ‘arm’ and those on the ‘manufacturing/delivery arm’ of the supply-side of the industry of a theocracy.

The production and delivery of the tebel are the result of the combined efforts of all the employees of theo-industry not of a single gooltenya. Consequently, the transaction between the crown (as the patron of theo-industry) and its ‘customers’
(the *gabbar*) becomes effective or materialised at a macro level, not between a set *gooltenya* and his/her *gabbar* family unit(s).

**Multiple Job Specifications and Multiplicity of Goolt-Posts**

There are wage-posts (*gibbir*-farms) attached to a specific task or duty at a district or provincial level. There are wage-posts and other non-wage expenditures attached to the central authority of the crown (patron of the theocratic mission and the industry that underlies this). Either way, the sources of *gibbir* for these expenses are one and the same: *gibbir*-farms or a *gibbir* from these. In order to meet extra regional expenses (or the expenses of the centre of the theocratic empire) some of the *gabbar* regions and/or some of the *gibbir*-farms would have to be assigned to an equally extra regional wage-posts (for instance the wage-posts of the employees of the imperial palaces (in Addis Ababa Menelik II and of Makale/Yohanis IV) (Pankhurst 1968; Markakis 1974, p. 10; McClellan 1986; Triulz 1986; McCann 1995).

As indicated, wage-posts were created for every conceivable task needed or performed for the running of the palaces, churches, and other centralised institutions. There were palace cooks, weavers, waiters, a postal employees or couriers of the emperor/king of Abyssinia guards, scribes, ceremonial officers etc. All these posts had to have their corresponding *gibbir*-farms often in the *gabbar* countries closer to the centres of the empire. For instance, the central Oromo districts of Aada were reserved as the *gibbir*-farms for the wage-post/goolt-post holders that served the imperial palace in Addis Ababa in a variety of specialised posts (Zewde 1991, pp. 90-91, McCann 1995, Wolde Maskal 1957).

The central administration, as distinct from the local ones, has had demand for imported goods and services. Financing the imports of firearms for the imperial guards and/or the army meant that the centre had to have direct control over regions where exportable-type *gibbir* (slaves and ivory) was to be found (Zewde 1991, p. 93). ‘Peripheral’ and often recently conquered *gabbar* regions tended to have the inherent qualities of being the source of ‘Strategic Gibbir Items’ (SGI) (Donham 1986b; Garretson, cited in James 1986, p. 122; McClellan 1986, 1988; Turton 1986).
Regions where a hunter-gatherer type agriculture or resource exploitation patterns prevailed, including where coffee bushes grew wild in the forests, tended to be the main sources of the SGI (Zewde 1991, p. 87). These often were attached directly to the central administration of the crown or were assigned to institutions or wage-posts of personnel serving from the centre. The emperor and the central treasury of the crown were amongst the main beneficiaries this. Often whole regions are turned into one huge gibbir-farm, as distinct from the practice of parceling these out into 'micro' gibbir-farms, attached or allocated to a wage-post/goolt-post (McClellan 1988 [on the Boran region]; Zewde 1991; Tibebu 1995, p. 42).

I call these regions with 'macro' gibbir-farms. In Wollega and Boran regions, both segments of the Oromo country/nation, have had a macro type gibbir-farms, primarily. 'Micro' gibbir-farms predominated in other regions, such as the Tulama-Oromo and Arsi-Oromo (central Oromo), Bararentuma-Oromo (Harar-Oromo or eastern Oromo), Sidama and other regions all in the southern half of the empire of Ethiopia (Donham & James 1986).

However, it should be noted how some of these regions were the gabbar colonies of Abyssinia prior to the Abyssinian-Adal wars of the sixteen century, albeit with a slightly different ethnic composition than the one found at the time of Abyssinian re-conquests in the second half of the nineteenth century. The gabbaro system that prevailed amongst the Oromo in the Gibe region and the Sidama groups there appears to be the 'indigenised' version of the gabbar system, introduced during their previous encounters with Abyssinian theocratic missions (Hassen 1990).

The practice of synchronising wage-posts (goolt) with their gibbir-farm(s) meant that often the same term has alternatively been used to define or describe both. This in turn has lead to an intractable and confusing array of notions that have hindered the understanding of the so called gabbar system, related concepts such as land tenure, etc. According to Pankhurst (1968, p. 135), "The situation [of land tenure], Margery Perham exclaims, was 'at least as intricate as in early medieval England', but lacked any Doomsday Book 'to give a clear point of departure and none of the excessive unraveling of generations of scholars to help the inquiries'." Some studies have defined categories of a wage-post as categories of land tenure (Wolde Maskal 1957), when in reality there have always been two types of land
and property (such as slaves) tenure in the empire: private property of all Abyssinia ("riste negus") and the citizen’s private property ("riste Christian").

"Riste negus" is used to pay outstanding wages and pensions for the employees of the national mission. It is the economic foundation of the primary industry of the nation. The latter is the source of primitive and agricultural pension for those that had once been the employees of the national mission or their descendants. Both types of land and other forms of property, ultimately owe their origins to an act of conquest and a property alienation process of the heathen at some point in time in the past, as indicated above. The conquest and colonisation of the Agaw Medir (the land of the Agaw) or the region that today forms much of the heartland of Abyssinia is such a case (Tamrat 1972b). Patterns in evolution of riste Christian or rist out of riste negus will be discussed in a later part of the thesis.

**Abyssinian Family Units as Venues in Gibbir Consumption**

Change in social status accompanies the process of becoming a gooltencya. This in turn induces the process of creating ‘idle’ souls who permanently live off of others. The very term of the ‘gooltencya’ is derived from an Amharic verb golete, as meaning he who holds a fief (Crummey 2000, p. 10). In the popular sense, it literally translates into s/he the ‘idle one’ (Negadras Asfework Gebreyesus, cited in Dilebo 1983, pp. 43-46).

This change in social status owes to the process of goolt-ification. This is the process of making a gooltencya by turning ‘pensioner-farmers’ (peasant citizens in the heartland of Abyssinia) into wage earning employees of theo-industry first and ‘pensioner-farmers’ ultimately. Becoming the gooltencya informed the transformation of not just of the immediate beneficiary per se, but a change in the social standing of his/her family unit and even of the extended family/clan. Remarkably Abyssinian women stood to hold goolt-posts as trustees of an evangelisation mission for instance and were equally entitles to inherit the family assets (riste Christian or ‘rist’) as their male siblings (Bekele 1995b, pp. 72-142).

Consequently, simple and working housewives of Abyssinia turned into the ‘emetee’. The emetee, roughly the Lady of the House or her Ladyship, evoked ‘idle’ or semi-idle consumers of something they were not instrumental in
producing. Thus, opportunities to hold public office, becoming the gooltenya inform changes in the social rank of the gooltenya, his wife, family and even children. (The use of the term ‘lij’ when making a reference to the children of the gooltenya household is another example of the same upward mobility.) All in all, female gabbar relieve the tasks of the female members of ‘their’ gooltenya households, including female slaves (Markakis 1974; Donham & James 1986; McClellan 1988).

There are tasks that are the preserve of the wives in the scenario where Abyssinian women are wives of a mainly ‘peasant’ household. The term ‘peasant’, as many other categories used to locate an Abyssinian farmer, is misleading as this activity has either been for the production of a gibbir (from gibbir-farms) or a primitive and agricultural pension (from rist-farms). The latter predominates in the heartland of Abyssinia, or in the northern half of Ethiopia.

Both farming activities do not exist independently but are attached to the national industry of Abyssinia. The gabbar ‘peasants’ operate the gibbir-farms of the Abyssinian crown, while being the ‘beneficiary’ of the national mission. The Abyssinian ristenya ‘peasants’ operate a piece of land given to them or their ancestors by the crown in lieu of a pension for past services, either as soldiers in the wars of conquest and/or as employees in theo-industry. Agriculture is yet to become an independent industry in Ethiopia. This dependent nature of pension-farming/agriculture will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

As we have seen, Energy As Gibbir or gibbir in the form of slave/corvé labour, along with Produce As Gibbir (PAG), has been a major item of gibbir extracted from the gibbir-farms. The Abyssinian family units set in the garrisoned towns of the Abyssinians, invariably set amid the gabbar countries, are the main venues where EAG or Labour As Gibbir (LAG) is consumed. Table 1 shows the items of Produce As Gibbir in the Gedeo region (reproduced from McClellan 1986, p. 181).

As McClellan notes, the table neither reflects the complexity of transactions involved nor changes in commodity importance over time.

Becoming a gooltenya implies a move from the ‘caste’ of peasant farmers to the class of waged employees of the crown. Such social mobility renders manual work of all sorts, including farming, a preserve of the ‘lower’ castes (Pankhurst 1968, p.
73). In the Abyssinian case, as its very name ‘gebere’ (the peasant, the farmer) indicates, it is the preserve of the gabbar, the privately owned slaves (bariya) or the chisenya (sharecroppers). Thus, such a taboo in performing the tasks preserved for the members of the ‘lower casts’ or slaves has been instrumental in fuelling and sustaining a huge demand for slave labour in virtually all walks of Abyssinian family and community life, right to the second half of the twentieth century.

**TABLE 1: Primary Products Used to Pay Patrons in Gedeo**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Percentage of Gedeo reporting payment in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensete</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tef</td>
<td>Fractional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bole</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So much so that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, virtually all households in the heartland of Abyssinia owned at least a female and male domestic or privately owned slave (Winstanley, cited in Pankhurst 1968, p. 74; de Coppet, cited in Pankhurst 1968, p. 74).

[T]o a greater of lesser extent according to their position and means... every household had its slaves from the thousands owned by the great landed proprietors to the single slave of the comparatively poor man (Rey, quoted in Pankhurst 1968, p. 75).

Under such conditions, being a citizen or the Abyssinian had to be defined in contrast to being the slave – or by its antithesis. Owning a slave had to be a marker of being the free, a status symbol (de Coppet, cited in Pankhurst 1968, p. 74; Zewde 1991).

One way or the other, the changed status implies the relegation of previously ‘honourable’ duties (be it household chores of the Abyssinian household and the farm and related duties that were the preserve of the male members of an
Abyssinian family unit. There are duties that are the preserve of the male privately owned slaves of the households. This includes working on the Abyssinian rist-farms (pension-farms) of the household, looking after the animal herds, looking after the safety of the family, and accompanying the ‘lords of the manor’ in most of their duties, such as going on raids or to wars. Through the duties of accompanying their owners in their social outings, the presence of the privately owned slaves served to define and reaffirm the status of the Abyssinian as a member of the superior caste. Figure 5.1 below shows slaves being taken to one of numerous slave markets in the Ethiopian empire, after World War II.

![Image of slaves being driven to market]

*Figure 5.1: Slave caravan: Slaves being driven to internal and export markets*  
(Everett 1997, p. 249)

**Consumption of Slave Labour in Gooltenya Family Units**

Typically there are two sets of slave categories that serve an Abyssinian household. One is the gabbar ‘of’ the gooltenya family unit and the other is made up of the privately owned slaves of the gooltenya (or ristenya) family units, also known as the ‘fingella’ slaves. As indicated, the former are the slaves of the whole nation (Abyssinia), but held in trust by the sovereign or crown/state of Abyssinia. They are the collective/communal slaves of the Abyssinian hizbee Christian from the
point of view of proprietorship, but are allocated or destined to provide services and goods for the upkeep of the holders of a wage-post to which they were assigned or ‘their’ gooltenya family unit (Markakis 1974; Donham & James 1986; McClellan 1988).

As noted previously, People asset of Abyssinia/Ethiopia was just one of the assets that were the end product of wars of conquest. From this general pool emanated the sub-category of slave labour in the realm of the Neguse Negest (Emperor) of Ethiopia.

There is a parallel between the gabbar and the Jewish slave labourers forced to work in German-owned companies during WWII. Similarly, parallels exist between the gabbar and the encomendado Indians of Spanish America. The family units of the latter, like the gabbar, were counted and allocated to the estates producing the equivalent of the wages of the employees of the Spanish crown. Encomienda is the Spanish term for such a farm and is the comparable term for the gibbir-farm.

In all three cases, the states and/or crowns of the conquering nations acquired a legal entitlement to determine the usage or exploitation options of Jewish labour, the labour of the encomendado Indians, and the labour pool of the gabbar families.

The consent for the use of the gabbar’s labour, as with the Jewish labourers and the encomendado Indians, lay not with the labourer but was at the discretion of the crown/state and enacted through its agents. As such, the entity that owns the consent over others’ labour owns the carrier/holder of such labour.

The consent of the gabbar over for whom, how and when to use his or her family’s labour, like expropriated land of the conquered nations, belongs to the crown/state of the conquering nation as a whole. S/he who has lost consent over the usage patterns of his/her own labour, and with that, has lost the right to own the produce of his/her own labour, is a slave. This is so, independently of whether the consent was lost to an individual or to a nation or to the sovereign of a nation. Under such circumstances, violence, not consent, becomes the tool to enforce the status.

Regarding the pervasiveness of violence to render the gabbar productive, McClellan (1988, p. 72) has remarked:
The neftenya [gooltenya] - gabbar dyad was an artificial linkage, clients [gabbar] resented it, and patrons [gooltenya] had to supervise constantly to render it effective... The threat of force was often sufficient, and one of the 'gabbar's greatest fears was being bound hand and foot to the doorway of the patron's compound until requisite services were provided by the client's family [emphasis added].

Female gabbar work in the households of 'their' gooltenya (to whom these were officially assigned) merely complements the specialised chores of domestic female slaves often acquired via purchase by using a gibbir-turned-into-a-wage-package or as part of pay-package or goolt, in the past. For instance, the use of corvé labour of the female members of the gabbar household – which includes the wife/wives, female children and grandmothers all looking after the gabbar household and the smaller children while the wife is away carrying out domestic chores in the gooltenya household – illustrates the consumption of Energy As Gibbir or Labour As Gibbir.

This work includes such tasks as the grinding of corn (teff, wheat, dura etc.), the fetching of firewood, the drawing of water or any one of the multiple services performed by the female members of the gabbar family unit(s) in 'their' gooltenya household. Under such circumstances, the household slaves assume a relatively superior position, as these tend to 'play' the supervisory role often played by the wife of the gooltenya (McClellan 1988).

These same female slaves of the crown are often required to labour in more or less same duties for when the gooltenya of a region throws a large feast for visiting dignitaries and foreign visitors while male gabbar are required to provide beasts of burden such as horses and mules, directional aid and food supplies to the official guests of the Abyssinian sovereign (McClellan 1988). The latter often go on to spread the word on the warm, civilised and dignified hospitality of the fellow Christian Abyssinians, often in contrast to the less than civilised standards of the non-Abyssinians and blacks elsewhere in the continent (Hodson 1919).

Male gabbar, while serving in the household of 'their' gooltenya, relieve the burden of the male household slaves, as well as tasks normally performed by 'their' gooltenya overlords. Children gabbar relieve the children of 'their'
gooltenya households from the normal tasks these would perform had they been in the heartland of Abyssinia as children of 'peasant' farmers.

Transporting the grain crop or other items of gibbir to its final destination is one example of gibbir in corvé labour or Energy As Gibbir. The same applies to the Animal assets (beasts of burden) used for the transportation of the items of gibbir into towns, the centres of the gooltenya community. For an example of both the drudgery in being gabbar and the attitude of the ristenya towards them: "he was not human born; he was only a gebbar [sic]", see the quote by Asbe Hailu in 1927, in the frontispiece of Donham & James (1986).

Thus, a three-tiered subordination is evident. Male gabbar and heads of the household exist in sub-ordination to the male gooltenya. The former becomes a kind of a 'privately' owned slave in the service of the male head of the gooltenya household (and to the heirs in his absence). Female gabbar are subordinated to the female members of the gooltenya households, including the female slaves. The female gabbar, for all intents and purposes, becomes a kind of 'privately' owned slave of the lady of the gooltenya household while the children of the gabbar household become the slaves of the children of their gooltenya overlords (McClellan 1988, Donham & James 1986).

The gabbar family unit(s) becomes slave to 'their' gooltenya family unit. As such, slavery of the family unit is the hallmark or the synthesis of the so-called gabbar system. It is not just the slavehood of the male head of the gabbar household, as it is often presented.

Beyond the [Produce as Gibbir] collected from clients, neftenya-gabbar [gabbar] provided considerable labor potential. Gabbars [sic] owed a wide variety of services to the patron... The value of these depended on the degree to which the neftenya [a type of gooltenya] chose to use them, and his decision could profoundly affect the indigene household. [The] Gedeo statistics indicate an average extended family size of 10.7 individuals... A neftenya with 20 gabbars thus would have the potential usage of 214 individuals... (McClellan 1988, p. 66).

Gabbar labour, which has more in common with the encomendado Indians in Spanish America than European serfs, helps reduce the burden of not just the gooltenya households, but of the privately owned slaves (of both female and male
variety). In this role, they are instrumental in the preservation/increase in value/capitalisation of the privately owned slaves.

[Privately owned] slaves might become agricultural laborers... but more likely they were used as domestic servants, for social prestige as opposed to economic gain... Slaves helped northerners establish households in the south; gabbars [sic] produced most of the items needed, while slaves did most of the processing...

This arrangement produced a relatively comfortable settler life-style and reinforced attitudes of superiority (McClellan 1988, p. 117).

However, the 'fingella' slaves began as the collectively owned slaves of the conquering nation or the People asset of the conquering nation (Montandon 1913; Zewde 1991). Just like land, their origins owe to the processes of conquest and commodification of the free people, along their other assets such as land. Others began as gibbir charged and/or collected in the form of slaves (Pa) from members of the vanquished nations (Garretson 1986; Johnson 1986). The goolt-ification process and the changes of social status this brings about amongst the Abyssinians, inform an increase in the demand for purchasable slaves. This in turn foments the need to have a more or less sustainable source of tradable slaves, either from the series of wars and raids and/or from gabbar countries where gibbir-farms specialise in 'breeding gabbar' not 'working gabbar' and gibbir comes in the form of slaves, among other items (Garretson 1986; Zewde 1991).

**Slaves as Gibbir and the Internal and Export Slave Markets**

The 'shankilla' countries traditionally used as the slave hunting frontier-lands tended to be the main source of chattel slaves as gibbir from the second half of the nineteenth century to the decade leading to the imperial conquests of Mussolini (1935). Here, annual rounds of slave raids and the practice of exacting gibbir in chattel slaves from the local populations became the embodiment of gibbir production. In a sense, the population, as far as the fiscal regime of the Abyssinian crown was concerned, were best if used as 'breeding gabbar' and the source of chattel slaves as gibbir (Garretson 1986; Johnson 1986; Zewde 1991).

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1 Negroid peoples on the periphery of the empire.
Chapter 5

The rest of their farming or hunting-gathering activities were rendered peripheral or dependent (to producing gibbir in chattel slaves). Under such conditions, what the ‘breeding gabbar’ produced was the equivalent of a gabbar’s ration, not a primary item of gibbir. They produced food on which to breed or generate the year’s quota of slaves as gibbir or chattel slaves for the Abyssinian crown and/or the ruling Christian nation (Wako Adi 2001).

 Tradable or chattel slaves ultimately began as the product of conquest or as gibbir in slaves from the ‘slave-breeding gibbir farms. Either way, they began as the property of the sovereign and used by him or his fiscal agents to pay for goods and services provided to him by citizen-employees (as wages), the merchant classes and others, all in the context of the national theocratic mission. Where there was gibbir in the form of chattel slaves, some wage-packages were bound to contain People asset (slaves) (Garretson 1986, p. 202).

On the other hand, the recipients of wages paid, among other items in gibbir in the form of slaves, were not necessarily the direct or effective consumers of all or part of the wage package. These would have the option of consuming the wage package as it is and/or exchange or sell it for other items of consumption or produces.

Hence, the option of consuming any constituent of a pay-package (of the gooltenya) through what it brings about in its exchange sustains a vast and intricate network of a trading system that adjoins:

(a) distinctive gabbar regions with their specialised gibbir items, that in turn, defines the existence of an equally different wage-packages;

(b) gabbar regions with the heartland of Abyssinia or regions where ‘Pension Farms’ predominate; and,

(c) the empire with the external world (export-import trade).

Markets and/or merchants have played an important role as the facilitators in allowing transactions between one set of gooltenya (rather one set of a wage-package) and another set – between a gabbar of one region (rather, one set of gabbar’s ration) and a gabbar of another region (Marcus 1994).

Abyssinian garrisoned towns that served as the supply-centres/ headquarters of the theocratic mission (ketema) and markets that evolved in them have provided the
ideal setting for the *gooltenya* to acquire other items of consumption in exchange for their region-specific wage-package (Keller 1988). The *gabbar* too, had an opportunity to use these same venues for the conversion of the Net *gibbir* (the portion of the Gross *gibbir* passed over to ‘their’ *gooltenya*) into other items as demanded by the *gooltenya* household or via their agents (*melkenya*) (Johnson 1986; McClellan 1988). As such, the *gabbar* was participating in an exchange relation of a sort with another *gabbar* (even with a *gooltenya or* a merchant) where in reality what was exchanged or traded was not his/hers, but belonging to ‘his/her’ *gooltenya*.

In a sense, a *gooltenya* could demand his *gibbir* not so much in the original products of his/her *gibbir*-farm(s), but in what is acquired by trading in the original trade items, often in the market venues set on the nearby *ketema*. As such, this process encourages a cross-regional exchange in *gibbir* items or wage-packages. A *gooltenya* from of a primarily crop-growing region (with a wage package in grains) uses the market place to carry out transactions with other set of *gooltenya* from other sub-regions (pastoralist, hunter-gatherer) and external producers (import goods brought about by merchants). This way, markets facilitate a diverse ranges/options of consuming an otherwise predetermined wage-package.

The use of a wage-package in cattle (typical of a pastoralist sub-region) for the purchase of *fingella slaves* (a *gibbir* item with which wages of the *gooltenya* in the hunter-gatherer regions were paid) is one example of such cross-regional transaction. In turn, slaves and ivory, both mainly products of the hunter-gatherer regions, had long been amongst the most lucrative export item of Abyssinia. In turn, firearms featured heavily in the import items of Abyssinia (Donham & James 1986). *Figure 5.2* depicts an Abyssinian slave market.
Figure 5.2: Abyssinian slave market

(Eppstein 1929)

In a sense, trade practices tend to obscure or 'fetishise' the inherently unfree nature in which the traded items have been 'produced'. Such markets also serve as the ideal venues where the gabbar carry out transactions with his share of the Gross gibbir or the Gabbar ration. In this sense, the transactions often are: (a) between two or more gabbar households from the same sub-region; (b) between gabbar households from different sub-regions; and (c) between gabbar and other suppliers of goods and services (e.g. imported goods brought about by merchants or from the Abyssinian-dominated towns amid the gabbar countries).

Market places and merchant classes served as the natural venues that aided the realisation/consumption of the Gross gibbir, not just of the portion (Net gibbir) that makes up wage-packages of the gooltenya households.

Gibbir, though is the single most important component of the Gross Produce of Abyssinia GPA, it is not the only one. There is the yield from the pension—farms of Abyssinia or from the 'rist' farms held by Abyssinians, both in the heartland of Abyssinia and in the gabbar countries. This latter is a type of Agricultural Pension. The composition of the Gross Produce of Abyssinia (GPA) on one hand and its consumption patterns including the role of the ketema as venues for the markets and 'secondary industries' on the other will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Gibbir for Wars

The tasks of waging wars of conquest and/or wars to preserve pax-Abyissinica from the internal and external foes of the Ethiopian empire not only has been a near
permanent phenomenon but arguably tended to consume the bulk of the gibbir. Under such circumstances, one of the crown's grandiose 'national' projects often assumes the form of wars of conquest or wars to protect the established status quo (Pankhurst 1961, p. 175; Caulk 1978; Keller 1988). Figure 5.3 depicts produce from gibbir farms being stored for Crown's war effort.

![Figure 5.3: Gibbir as grain stored for war efforts](Farago 1935, p. 243)

Gibbir earnings spent as wages, for those engaged in the vast army and security establishments of the nation, in effect constitute a type of an investment that guarantees the very renewal/expansion of theo-industry. After all, the demand for the tebel required another or fresh cycles of raids and conquest on aremene countries. Soldier-gooltenya of the crown accompanied by their privately owned
male and female slaves plus ‘their’ gabbar make up the bulk of the pre-20th century Abyssinian army (raiders) (see Tamrat 1972b on the conquest patterns of Abyssinia in Agaw countries during the medieval periods).

As such, the gabbar is the source of not just a productive labour and intellect necessary for the running of gibbir-farms but as required it is a vast and cheap (unwaged) source of fighting force (gabbar/slave-soldiers) in the army of the Abyssinian crown (McClellan 1988). This versatility of using gabbar ‘peasants’ as a vast source slave soldiers has allowed Abyssinia to have an efficient war machine in the region (Marcus 1994, p. 65). This is an example of Energy As Gibbir or Labour As Gibbir. It is a case of spending/consuming corvè labour from People asset (gabbar) and Animal assets (animals from the gibbir-farms) but for war purposes.

Parallel to this, the crown could call on all other wage-post holders to military service, by extension on ‘their’ gabbar family unit(s), where the young or the able bodied serve as soldiers in replacement or alongside their gooltenya overlords. The versatility to re-militarise the whole economy and the flexibility with which the waged-employees and ‘their’ gabbar are turned into soldiers of the crown, the flexibility to divert gibbir earnings to finance wars of conquest and/or defence have all aided the longevity of Abyssinia and its empire. The gabbar, in their capacity as slave soldiers, end up making a fresh supply of people to be turned into gabbar (McClellan 1988).

The tasks of building civic monuments, commissioned by the Abyssinian crown (often temples to one of the forty-four saints of Abyssinian Orthodox Christianity and ‘adobe’ palaces to the princely and knightly elite of Abyssinia are examples of gibbir in labour. Gabbar service as slave-soldier and/or their use in the construction of (corvè) Labour As Gibbir (LAG) (Wolde Maskal 1957).

Gabbar-turned-soldiers exploited in wars of conquest had the function of renewing the demand-side of theo-industry. Such wars have the ultimate objective of making a fresh supply of gabbar nations (coerced customers of the tebel) out of the vanquished nations. In a sense, the gabbar not only has the ability to serve as a sustainable source of (coerced) demand for the tebel, but used in war efforts, it has the inherent quality of making a fresh bunch of gabbar on which the existing
gibbir generating capacities are set to expand. A gabbar employed in wars of conquest is instrumental in aiding the renewal/expansion of the Abyssinian national industry; with that, an increase in the nation’s gibbir earning capacity.

Gabbar called to war services, strictly speaking, were providing war-related and direct services (e.g. serve as foot soldiers, as porters, as cooks, etc.) to ‘their’ gooltenya and through them to the crown/sovereign or the patron of the national mission and of theo-industry. As in peace, in war, the vast gabbar asset of Abyssinia served the crown by rendering services to those (gooltenya households) to which they were assigned. They served not so much a gooltenya but a predetermined post (goolt) of the crown, with all the flexibility in terms of the required services that come with the post/office.

Internal wars included (and include) wars to subdue the intermittent resistance of the gabbar nations. There are internal wars fought amongst the Abyssinian provinces for the ‘proper’ share of the booty (gibbir) and/or to secure the reins of power necessary to claim the regional/provincial entitlement rights to the national produce (gibbir) amongst the Abyssinians. Many of the Amharic-Amharic, Amharic-Tigre, Tigre-Tigre feuds and wars are fought for the entitlement rights to the nation’s wealth/produce, including the gibbir and ‘riste negus’ (this concept found continuity in the conception of ‘Ye Hizb Meret’ or ‘Public Land’ since the Marxist regime or the Derg).

The wars between the ‘Semitic’ and Christian Abyssinians and their ‘Semitic’ cousins known as the Adalis were the case in the external wars of Abyssinia (Simoons 1960; Tringham 1965; Keller 1988; Marcus 1994). In the case of the inter-Abyssinian wars, these hardly led to the absolute or overall increase in the size of the existing wealth. Theirs was either the matter of violent cycles of redistributing existing wealth or wars to protect the existing sources of wealth that often were the product of a previous cycle in the wars of conquest.

However, wars with the aim of securing a fresh supply of aremene countries, by far were the most ‘productive’ of all wars, from the point of view of the internal dynamics of Abyssinian theo-industry. These wars yield whole nations and render them into an economic carcass for the economies of the victorious nation(s).
They simply are an expression in a violent method of creating/inventing demand for a (service) commodity: the *tebel*. The whole industry of Abyssinia, its whole economy requires it (a war) and is replenished from it. The nations' ability to continue paying wages and pensions has ultimately depended on its ability to carry out successful acts of conquest or on the making of *aremene* nations. On the other hand, such wars themselves stood to be nurtured from the existing wealth generation (*gibbir*) capacities.

Thus *gibbir*, in their multiple formats, not only owed to past acts of conquest but end up financing fresh wars that end up renewing the existing *gibbir*-generating capacities of the nation with a mission (Abyssinia). In a sense, *gibbir* used to finance wars of conquest has been a type of investment and not an economic waste.

On that basis, the nation's *gibbir*-generating capacities were bound to get a boost in the form of a fresh injection of assets (*riste negus*) in the form of the carcass of the vanquished nation(s) (Markakis 1974; Donham & James 1986; Ofcansky & Berry 1993; Marcus 1994). Events that hinder or interrupt with this violent pattern of economic renewal were bound to interfere with the "natural" order of things. This was precisely the case in the twentieth century, where the seemingly infinite (to the overlords of Abyssinia) backyards of Abyssinia (*aremene* frontier lands) all of a sudden became finite due to competition from European empire-builders (Jones & Monroe 1935; Pakenham 1991; Zewde 1991). This aspect rendered theo-industry an unrenewable form of industry, thus heralding an era of semi-permanent recessionary condition that in turn lead to the intensification in the processes of Abyssinian/Ethiopian\(^2\) impoverishment. The increasing incidence of famines

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\(^2\) "Abyssinia" stands for the ruling Christian empire-building nation; "Ethiopia" stands for the empire of the Abyssinians. The name 'Ethiopia' is employed not only where reference is made to the empire but also where the process encompasses non-Abyssinian regions or *gabbar* countries as well as the Abyssinians.
during this period has been one manifestation of this process. This era is the subject under study in Part 3 of the thesis.
The notion of active employment implies the existence of its antithesis: a retirement. Waged employment often points to the existence of some sort of pension payment for the retirees. The industry of a theocratic mission or Theo-industry is not different. Where there is a ‘goolt’ (a wage category) and a ‘gooltenya’ (a holder of a goolt-post or a waged employee of a theocratic mission) there exist a ‘rist’ and a ‘ristenya’. Hence a preliminary (re-)definition of the concept of the ‘rist’ as the pension package calculated and paid in a piece of land (crown-held or riste negus/nigoos) to the possibly retiring employees of the Abyssinian theocratic mission or theo-industry. The genesis of rist land and its owner-farmers has been set in a fiscal process associated with theo-industry for centuries (Tamrat 1972b). However, as noted previously, the sovereign grants land without having to wait for the retirement of its employees. The granting of land in perpetuity as a reward for commendable services in wars of conquest was one way of making rist land out of land held as riste negus (Markakis 1974; Keller 1988). As such, land rendered rist formally exits the orbit of being the source of gibbir, and enters another geared to production of a primitive type of pension. This process lies at the genesis of the so-called ‘communal’ land-owning system that predominates in the heartland of Abyssinia.

Consequently, a ‘ristenya’ is a beneficiary of such pension payment and he who lives by farming a piece of land conceived as a ‘rist’. Rist, essentially, is a fiscal category (albeit with an agricultural tinge) of a fundamentally non-agricultural and non-productive industry. It is an ancient type of pension that evolved in an era
when a monetary type income was not the norm. It is a pension package calculated and allocated/paid in the form of a piece of land asset (*riste negus*), mainly.

It is a piece of Land asset (but also applies to any other assets) that has the capacity of generating an approximate value a pension in the form of its potential agricultural yield/produce. Evidently, the size of the *rist* land, by extension a *rist*-farm (or pension-farm) that emanates from it, reflects the stature of the retiree while in active employment. Generally, it reflects the size of the pay-package of the retiree, his/her *goolt* (wage) or the size of *gibbir*-farm(s) once assigned to a holder of a wage-post, in lieu of the size of his/her wage (*goolt*).

*Riste negus*’ is ultimately the source of assets with which both the outstanding wages, other costs incurred in carrying out a theocratic mission and also the source of funds (assets) with which pensions are paid. On this basis, assets (especially land) held in reserve, held under the *gibbir*-farms or long invested to generate *gibbir* are the main sources of funds with which the crown pays the pensions of its retiring employees or of those being rewarded for special or outstanding services to the crown (in wars etc.). The concept known as *rist-gult* (*riste-goolt*) was a gradual and generation-spanning method of transferring crown land (*riste negus*) to the employees of the crown as a type of private property. It is however a means of generating a type of pension for descendants of the first recipients. This process indirectly transformed the gabbar into tenants of labour and sharecroppers, but on land now owned directly by the citizens of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. Markakis (1974, pp. 84-85) has noted that:

> The state also granted, and continues to grant, rights of hereditary possession in land over which other rights have lapsed, have been abrogated, or were never raised; that is, government land… The crucial difference between this type of grant and the pure *gult* type… is that the peasants on such land become the tenants of the grantee, their own prior rights notwithstanding.

The act of paying a pension (*rist*) implies the transfer of ownership of a piece of land or other assets, in the same way that a wage payment (*goolt*) implies a transfer of produce or property from the payee (the crown as the patron of theo-industry) to its employees (Schwab 1972; Zewde 1991). As a wage, a *gibbir* income that began as the collective earning of the whole nation of Christian community or Abyssinia
(but held in trust of the crown or managed by it) becomes the private property of the recipients or the citizen-employees of the crown.

An act of paying a pension, like that of paying a wage (goolit) is an act of exchange relation between the crown (patron of theo-industry and employer) and the paid (the retiring employees). It too marks the transfer of assets from the former to the latter. It is done on the basis of transferring pieces of crown held but nation-owned assets (especially arable land) to the private ownership of the citizens of Abyssinia or to the members of 'hizbee Christian'. It is the act of rendering the citizens of Abyssinia direct owners of inheritable assets until then held in a kind of communally owned private property of the whole nation (Pausewang 1983). As the result, assets until then held as 'riste negus' become the 'rist' of the citizens of Abyssinia or 'riste Christian', albeit being a long process spanning generations. The main difference lies in riste negus being directly held by the crown (as a trustee) and instrumental in generating funds to finance an ongoing theocratic mission. 'Riste negus' converted into 'riste Christian' or 'rist' of the Abyssinian citizens generates a primitive type of pension for those who served the same mission at some point in the past.

A pension package (rist) like a wage package (goolit) is a category of a fiscal system attached to a form of industry set to conduct a theocratic mission. They both are types of citizen-owned asset (generally in reference to a piece of land, but also extending to the number of slaves, the size of breeding herd of cattle or any item of property). Both wage packages and pension packages are types of private property or types of 'rist', to use the approximate term used to define private property amongst the Abyssinians/Ethiopians. However, a pension package is generally calculated and paid in the form of a piece of arable land (crown held) as distinct from a wage package determined and paid in the form of an end product, extracted from (invested) assets of the whole nation such as land and labour or from the gibbon-farms of the crown.

As such, s/he who farms a piece of 'rist land' is an operator/manager of a type of pension farm, a producer of an agricultural pension, not an operator of an independent farming activity or industry. S/he is not a producer of a (taxable) produce in the strictest sense of the term. Such pension farms exist under the shadow of theo-industry and gibbon-farms that exist parallel to them and are the
source of revenue with which the crown pays wages and other outstanding costs incurred for the running of its vast bureaucracy or the theocratic state.

*Riste negus* in land held in reserve and that held under the *gibbir*-farms tend to be the predominant component of 'riste negus' used in the making of a *rist* ultimately.

At the same time, assets in reserve or crown's 'reserve lands' (also known as *Ye Mengist Meret*) have served as the fountain of resources from which land grants in *rist* were made (Wolde Maskal, cited in Pankhurst 1968; Gilkes 1975; Zewde 1991).

**'Rist-ification' and Genesis of Pension-Farms**

*Rist* thus serves as the genesis of a unique type of agrarian regime, where whole families and regions produced and live on not so much a taxable produce, as a type of pension. The *gabbar* countries of the nation are left to 'specialise' as the natural source of revenue (a tax, by default) that sustains the existing wage-paying posts and new posts for the citizens of the nation of pensioner-farmers (Abyssinia). A national theocratic mission and the industry it engenders (theo-industry) have been the genesis of both the Abyssinian property regime/system (*riste negus and riste Christiani*) and the agrarian system that has evolved from both types of *rist* (*gibbir*-farms and pension-farms) respectively.

Therefore, *rist*-based agriculture (*riste Christian*, in this case) is the by-product of another (non-productive) industry. More, its renewal or the economic renewal of those engaged in it is inherently attached to the economic health of theo-industry. On the expansion of theo-industry and the corresponding ability of the crown to create more wage-paying posts (with their *gibbir*-farms) and pension packages depend the economic renewal of the nation of pension-farmers (operators of *rist*-farms) or the *ristenya* farmers of Abyssinia (Markakis 1974; Pausewang 1983; McClellan 1988; Marcus 1994). This type of farming system has determined the unique nature of the Abyssinian 'peasants' and the legal (namely, inheritance) and other socio-political relations that characterise the society (Hoben 1973; McCann 1995; Rahmato 1995; Crummeey 2000).

The making of a fresh batch of pension-farms out of *gasha land* or 'riste negus' has been instrumental in the expansion on the existing pension-farms or the overall
yield from such farms. That means that the living conditions of the pension-farmer regions is set to benefit from the process of rendering gibbir-generating assets into pension-generating assets. Thus, the economic dividends of the war-born assets (or conquest-born assets or gasha-born assets) are felt long after these ceased to be the source of gibbir (McClellan 1984).

As the source of inheritable pension-fund (rist), these assets continue to furnish the beneficiaries and scores of successive generations with inheritable agrarian pension (or the yield from rist assets), until such a time that the size of the dependants outstrips the overall production capacity. The decline in the fertility rate of the land/farms such as unchecked erosion and relentless farming only hastens the reduction in the sustainability levels of these farms (Hoben 1973; McCann 1987).

Rist-ification, in essence, is the making of pensioners out of (former) waged-employees of a theo-industry. It is the reverse/opposite process of making waged-employees out of 'peasant' (poor ristenya) citizens of Abyssinia or the process of 'goolt-ification'. Rist-ification implies the making of a 'rist' or 'riste Christian' out of assets previously held as 'riste negus'. It marks the transfer of asset proprietorship from the crown to the retiring citizen-employees in the context of the former's theocratic mission, notwithstanding the avenues or methods used or the rationale invoked to effectuate this transfer of land.

Such a metamorphosis of ownership underpins the very genesis of the Abyssinian rist or the farming system that emanates on the basis of this. The Abyssinian agrarian system, I contend, has been the by-product of a series of theocratic services and the cycles of creating pension-farmers out of the employees of theo-industry. What is referred to as the 'first' land holder or akni abbat (Hoben, cited in Schwab 1972, p. 29; Pausewang 1983) from where the so-called 'communal' land holding system of Abyssinia is said to have evolved, basically is the original recipient of a rist land as a pension payment for services to the Abyssinian crown (Hoben, cited in Schwab 1972; Markakis 1974; Pausewang 1983).

Pension-farms, like gibbir-farms, exist as part of or in the service of an industry set out to finance the assumed national mission of Abyssinia (theo-industry). Where gibbir-farms generate agricultural items used for the payment of wages and to cover other outstanding costs incurred in conducting a theocratic mission, pension-
farms (based on a 'rist' land and run by owner-pensioner-farmers) specialise in the
generation of an agricultural pension. The system creates an inherently dependent
agricultural system whose avenue for renewal is deeply and parasitically attached
to the gibbir-producing farms elsewhere in the empire, through theo-industry. Its
main aim is to sustain pension recipients and their descendants who await an
opportunity to serve the crown as wage-recipients (gooltenya), either in the
'industry of conquest' and/or in what has long been their nations' primary industry
or theo-industry (Donham & James 1986; Keller 1988).

This status of being pensioner-farmers has been an inheritable one in Abyssinia. As
such, an entire clan or extended families evolve on the original rist holding while
the per-head share of the assets is bound to decrease as the original holdings are
continuously sub-divided down the generations. The resultant outcome would, at
the least, be the relative decline of the produce from the assets (land) in counter
position to the increase in the size of the descendants of the original recipient of the
asset.

Even if the level of productivity has improved down the generations, due to an
input from the owners in the form of technological advances or the use of artificial
fertilisers - an unlikely scenario in Abyssinia (Almeida, cited in Pankhurst 1961) -
it may not be enough to offset the increase in the number of dependants.

Either way, the process points to or leads to a structural impoverishment of the rist
holders. This condition also defines the structural foundation for the onset of
famine conditions, in the form of increased vulnerability to famines or inability to
offset famine conditions.

The traditional way-out to offset this structural crisis has lain not so much in the
improvement of the farming economy of the rist-farms per se - say, via a switch to
legal (or illegal) export crops that have been central in offsetting the decline in
farm outputs in many parts of the world. It lay elsewhere, or in the dynamics of the
primary industry of Abyssinia.

This has historically and invariably come in the form of renewed opportunities for
land allocated for the pension-farmers or ristenya farmers to secure fresh land on
which to settle (see Ye Amhara Rist, in Keller 1988) wage-paying posts (goolt-
posts) in the context of the traditional or 'reformulated' industry of a theocratic
mission or theo-industry. The latter refers to the post-Emperor Haile Selassie theocracies and theocratic missions of Abyssinia/Ethiopia and the corresponding primary industry of Ethiopia (see Part 3 of the thesis). The reverse process of ristification, gooltification, encapsulates the way-out or renewal in the economic foundation of the ristenya ‘farmers’.

‘Old’ and ‘New’ Pension-Farms

In a given fiscal year, the produce from the pension-farms of Abyssinians is one other component of their Gross Annual Produce. I call this the pension yield of Abyssinia (Py) and it is the main, if not the sole, form of agricultural production/income from the heartland of Abyssinia. Gabbar regions, depending on the degree of ‘rist-ification’ of Land asset there, provide the other smaller but generally growing pension-farms owned or run by their essentially Abyssinian ristenya or ‘landlords’ of pension-farms or lands (or Abyssinian settlers in their gabbar colonies), prior to the Marxist Revolution.

I call ‘old’ pension-farms those found in the heartland of Abyssinia. Though these farms were the by-product of another process and industry, in time, they came to assume the status of an ‘indigenous’ property and agricultural system there.

Many regions in what is today the rist heartland of Abyssinia such as Agaw Midir (country of the Agaw) went through this trajectory in the past (Tamrat 1972b; Crummeys 2000). The Oromo, Sidama and ‘shankilla’ countries conquered in the second half of the nineteenth century have been going through a similar process (rist-ification) ever since. In a sense, the existence of a small but growing size of pension-farms in a region where gibbir-farms predominated has characterised these regions during much of the first half of the twentieth century.

Pension-farms found in the predominantly gabbar regions are defined here as the ‘new’ pension-farms. Together the ‘old’ and ‘new’ pension-farms are the source of Total or Gross Pension Yield (TPy) or simply Pension yield (Py). That is:

\[
\text{Total Py} = \text{Py (from the ‘old’ pension-farms)} + \text{Py (from the ‘new’ pension-farms)}
\]

As such, Py compliments the gibbir (Gross gibbir) earnings of Abyssinia from its gabbar colonies. On this basis, we have the two main components of the Gross
Produce of Abyssinia (GPA): Total Gross gibbir T(Gg) and the Total annual Pension yield T(Py). That is:

\[ \text{GPA} = T(Gg) + T(Py) \]

A discussion of the determination and the economic benefits drawn from Abyssinian Gross Production features in the following chapter.

**Impact of Rist-ification on Gibbir Generation Capacity**

All in all, decrease in the gibbir generating capacity, as the result of increased ristification in the gabbar countries, induces an opposite effect in terms of an increase in the pension generating capacity of the nation. The making of private rist or citizen-owned rist out of what used to the ‘communal rist’ of all Abyssinia marks the ‘final leg’ of the trajectory of the ‘riste negus’ and the economic benefits that flow from these assets. The increase in poverty due to the imposed condition is the net side effect of this same process in the country of the vanquished nations-turned-gabbar (McClellan 1988; Clay & Holcomb 1985).

In a way, the relative decline in the gibbir generating capacity does not necessarily imply a decline in the Gross (Annual) Produce of Abyssinia (GPA). It only alters which side of the two farms of Abyssinia is responsible for its creation. However, the transfer of assets away from being the source of gibbir into becoming the source of pension, as a tendency, induces a decline in the Abyssinian ability to create fresh/additional gibbir-farms that allow the creation of additional wage posts for its citizens. This is generally the case unless the whole process is offset by renewed acts of conquest that bring about a fresh supply of riste negus’ (or gasha assets) and gibbir-farms.

**Inheritance and Tendencial Impoverishment amongst Pension-Farmers**

Given the inheritability of rist possessions and their divisibility down the generations, the overall tendency points to the setting of the process of gradual impoverishment, unless of course, members of these households manage to secure a wage-paying post (goolt) in the interim, thus enabling themselves to renew their
gooltenya status. This tendency points to a parallel-ly-occurring social transformation of those that had been in the upper echelon (or rich ristenya) into poor ristenya and the latter into ‘labour lord’ but land-poor ‘peasants’. It is this downward mobility that creates the chisenya or the sharecropper ‘peasants’ of Abyssinia/Ethiopia.

This process of gradual impoverishment forces Abyssinians to become ‘peasant’ farmers, initially for themselves (or on their own rist plots) and gradually forced to lease out their other rist possession (labour) to those that could afford. Hence, the genesis of a typical Abyssinian ‘peasant’: free but progressively poorer owners of both land rist and labour rist (see McCann 1987, 1994). However, as distinct from the gabbar-farmers, pension-farmers of Abyssinia stand to benefit from the economic agency of their crown/state. By contrast, the gabbar’s poverty is a patronless poverty. This process is encapsulated in the following statement in relation to a similar process in the rist countries of Eritrea:

We see that our gibri [piece of land] are getting smaller and smaller after each meltsi [land redistribution amongst the clan every seven years or so]. When I was a young man one man ploughed his gibri. Today three or four men plough the same area! Only God can help us to change this development. If not, the future is dead (former village chief, quoted in Tronvoll 2000, p. 607).

See Figure 6.1 for a view of the fragmentation of landholdings in the rist regions of northern Ethiopia.

Figure 6.1: Fragmentation of land holdings in the rist areas, northern Ethiopia
Gibbir-Farms and Pension-Farms as By-Products of Theo-industry

There exists a strong economic symbiosis between gibbir-farms and rist-farms, between being a gooltenya Abyssinian/Ethiopian and a ristenya Abyssinian/Ethiopian. Both the gibbir-farms and the rist-farms are by-products of or attachments to another industry structured around the tasks of carrying-out a theocratic mission of one sort or the other. However, these two are joined to theo-industry in a quite different manner. The gibbir-farms constitute the demand-side of theo-industry. These are venues where members of the conquered nations are turned into the gabbar, the coerced customers of theo-industry or forced consumers of the tebel and work to pay for it with a product turned into gibbir (tribute).

The rist-farms or pension-farms constitute or are the foundation of the supply-side of theo-industry. It is from amongst the community of pensioners-that-farm (Abyssinian ristenya ‘farmers’) that the crown in its capacity as the patron of theo-industry recruits its batch of waged employees (the gooltenya). Thus recruitment opportunities emerge not just during the actual mission but also during the phase of waging wars of conquest with the ultimate aim of acquiring a fresh supply of aremene nations (the art of making the gabbar) (Levine 1974; Markakis 1974; Clay & Holcomb 1985; Melbaa 1988; Marcus 1994).

Amongst pension farmers, the art of farming is not an end in itself but a transitory, temporary profession while awaiting opportunities to serve the crown as soldiers in the context of the national mission.

The ‘honorary’ profession, according to the mindset of the Abyssinians, has been and remains to be to these days, one that involves serving the crown while holding a wage-paying post. It is being the gooltenya. Being a citizen-soldier or nefitenya has been amongst the most preferred professions (Almeida, in Pankhurst 1961).

The notion of being a gooltenya or holder of a wage-post (goolt) finds its modern version in a demostenya, which is nothing more than a gooltenya in the era when wages (demoz) are paid in a ‘monetarised gibbir’, in Ethiopian currency the ‘Birr’. Tureta is the modern equivalent of a pension package or a rist, while turetenya is a type of ristenya paid in monetary form or in Birr, not in land. This last aspect is discussed in a later part of the thesis.
Symbiosis between Rist-ification and Gooilt-ification

Gooilt-ification, thus, is nothing more than an economic process by which the (negative) economic effects of rist-ification are offset. It has been the traditional method of countering the progressive processes of impoverishment or downward economic trends associated with the process of rist-ification. It has been Abyssinian way of countering or checking the progressive tendencies of impoverishment amongst its ristenya ‘farmers’. Gooilt-ification has been, and remains to be, the typical method in the mediation of the effects of poverty and famine conditions.

Ability or opportunity to secure a goolt-post or a demoz-paying post is in turn dependent upon the improvement in the economic health of theo-industry. This latter involves the renewal in the (coerced) demand for tebel that has come about as the result of renewed acts of violence with the aim of conquering aremene nations.

Farming is merely what Abyssinians are forced to engage when they are no longer waged employees of the crown (theo-industry) and could not afford to employ other people to work their rist lands. Even here, this activity is not an independent industry but a kind of a between-the-jobs activity (between one phase/stage of being a gooltenya and another phase, but generally spanning different generations).

Rist-ification ends up expanding the rist-holdings of the citizens of Abyssinia all at the expense of their ‘national rist’ or riste negus. Like goolt-ification, it too provides or releases assets for the benefit of the citizenry. However, unlike goolt-ification (the making of a waged-employee of theo-industry), the benefits of rist-ification have more informal channels of redistribution amongst a larger constituency than the immediate holders. Inheritance is one such channel of redistributing rist land.

However, in the recent times (second half of the twentieth century) this outwardly-looking (via conquest) avenue of renewing demand for the end produce of theo-industry was disrupted. Thus the ability to increase the size of gibbir, that in turn is the basis for the ability of the crown/state to create more wage-paying posts, has given way to an ‘intensive’ avenue of aiming to achieve similar outcomes.
However, this approach has had a much-reduced success in terms of meeting the increasing demand for demoz-paying posts for diverse constituencies.

Nevertheless, the process of goolt-ification continued to be the main avenue via which the successive state regimes of Ethiopia attempted to check the process of impoverishment. However, as was the case with the past processes of goolt-ification, a set constituency emerges as the main beneficiary from ‘modern’ versions of goolt-ification or the creation of new demoz-posts and a recruitment drive to fill the posts). This process is illustrated in the context of what is defined here as the era of ‘neo’-theocratic missions of Ethiopia (in the last quarter of the twentieth century). The era of the neo-theocratic mission is discussed in Part 3 of the thesis.

The existence of a crown-/state-assumed ideological mission (of either the theological or political variety), accompanied by a crown-/state-patronised wage-post creation scheme, the extraction and allocation of funds for these posts, as well as a targeted recruitment of would-be employees (and later, pensioners) into these posts from a set population, have always been the basic steps used by the successive, Abyssinian-dominated regimes to mitigate the poverty and famine conditions of their base constituency.

The Two ‘Peasants’ as By-Products of Theo-industry

In any given period of time, theo-industry engenders two qualitatively different types of ‘peasants’. The first are the gibbir-farmers or ‘peasants’ who operated the gibbir-farms and the production of gibbir. The second are the pension-farmers. The latter are the typical Abyssinian ‘peasants’. They work on privately owned land (rist) or farms, but with a unique feature. What is produced here is not so much a taxable product or a product in the strictest sense of the word as a primitive type of agricultural pension that could be taxed. More significantly, such farming systems and those engaged in it exist in a dependent or parasitic economic symbiosis with the gibbir-generating farms (the main sources of crown’s revenue) or with theo-industry. The economic renewal of the pension-farmers of Abyssinia is dependent upon not so much on the improved levels of agricultural productivity or sustainable increase in their farming output. It primarily owed to their ability to secure wage-
paying posts in the primary industry of their nation through the process of 

gooliteification.

Rist-ification has been the catalyst in the formation of the typical Abyssinian
'peasant' as pensioners of theo-industry that farm/live on their assets (especially
land asset) that owe their genesis to assets used for the repayment of pensions in
lieu of services in entirely different type of industry: theo-industry.

On the other hand, theo-industry engenders another category of 'peasants' parallel
to the formation of the Abyssinian peasants. Members of the vanquished nations
and former free producers cease to exist as producers on their own right. They no
longer are free peasants, but assets of another nation. They neither own their body
and soul, nor the produce they generate. These would have been turned into a
special category of owned customers/consumers of tebel or the gabbar.

Thus, from the trajectory of the same industry emerge two sets of qualitatively
different types of 'peasants'. Ones are pensioner peasants or pensioners of theo-
industry that farm for their pension. These are Abyssinian peasants. There are
gabbar peasants of the conquered nations. These farm to generate wealth with
which to 'pay' for the theocratic services they are coerced into consuming, as well
as a small portion of the annual yield these are allowed (by the owner/patron of the
gabbar as well as the farms) to consume as the gabbar ration. Neither of the two
are 'farmers' per se.

As the result, there are two qualitatively different sets of rationales that inform
equally two sets of poverty/famine conditions: the poverty/famine conditions of the
Abyssinian and non-Abyssinian (gabbar) peasants, respectively. This aspect is
discussed in a later chapter.
Chapter 7

GROSS PRODUCE OF ABYSSINIA
AND 'SECONDARY INDUSTRIES'

Equation of the GPA

From what has been discussed so far, it is possible to determine the annual Gross Produce of Abyssinia (GPA) on the basis of its two main sources. These are:

(a) what is earned in the context of the primary industry (theo-industry) and/or from the system of agriculture centred on the gibbir-farms – I called this a Total Gross gibbir (TGg); and,

(b) what is extracted from the ‘old’ and ‘new’ pension-farms. The ‘old’ pension-farms are a predominant form of farms found in the heartland of Abyssinia while the ‘new’ pension-farms are those that were being created amid the gabbar countries. This is conceived here as the Total Pension yield (Tpy) of Abyssinia.

TGg is made up of the sum total of the Gross gibbir (Gg) from all the gibbir-farms of the Abyssinian crown (all of which are based in the gabbar colonies of Abyssinia in southern half of Ethiopia).

---

1 Note that it is ‘Gross Produce of Abyssinia’ (GPA), not ‘Gross Produce of Ethiopia’ (GPE). It is what the nation of empire-builders earns in a given fiscal year, both in the context of its primary industry or theo-industry (from the gibbir-farms to be precise) and what its citizens extract from the pension-farms (in the heartland of Abyssinia).
According to the patterns of its consumption, TGg is sub-divided into the Abyssinian 'share' of the TGg and the 'share' of Abyssinian gibbir. The former is conceived here as the Total Net gibbir (TNg) and represents the percentage of the TGg that is retained by the Abyssinian crown and consumed as wages (gooli) and to finance other expenses of its state.

The latter is the Total of Gabbar's ration (TGr) and serves to maintain the gabbar family units in all gabbar countries of the Abyssinian Empire or Ethiopia. It is instrumental in the reproduction of the gabbar status as a type of coerced customer of the Abyssinian theocratic missions and as operators of the gibbir-farms and/or generators of the gibbir. However, note that the term 'share' is used here to identify who is left to consume what portion of the TGg. The Abyssinian crown, as indicated, owns both 'shares' of the TGg ultimately.

Thus Total Gross gibbir (TGg), according to its 'shares' of consumption:

\[ TGg = TNg + TGr \]

The Total Pension yield of Abyssinia Tpy, in turn, is made up of Gross or Total Pension yield (Gpy) from the 'old' pension-farms mostly found in the heartland of Abyssinia and the Gpy from the 'new' pension-farms. The latter were being established in the gabbar colonies of Abyssinia (in the southern-half of the Ethiopian empire from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards) as the gooltenya (waged-employees of theo-industry) retired with a corresponding pension land or 'rist' and via other methods of transferring riste negus in land to the direct and private ownership of the Abyssinian settlers in southern Ethiopia.

Thus:

\[ TPy = GPy \text{ (from 'old' pension-farms)} + GPy \text{ (from 'new' pension-farms).} \]

On this basis, the annual Gross Produce of Abyssinia (GPA) could symbolically be represented via the following equation:

\[ GPA = TGg \text{ (TNg} + TGr) + TPy \text{ (Total Pension yield)} \]

From this it is possible to deduce the Net Annual Income of Abyssinia (NAI). NAI is the sum of the Total Net gibbir (TNg) earnings of Abyssinia and the Total Pension yield of Abyssinia (Tpy). That is:

\[ \text{Net Annual Income of Abyssinia (NAI)} = TNg + Tpy \]
Net Annual Income of Abyssinia is nothing more than the Gross Produce of Abyssinia minus the portion of this left to be consumed as the *gabbar* ration to the producers of *gibbir* or the *gabbar* populations of Abyssinia.

That is:

\[
\text{NAI} = \text{GPA} - \text{TGr}
\]

On this basis I could reformulate the equation of the Gross Produce of all Abyssinia (GPA) as follows:

\[
\text{GPA} = \text{NAI} (\text{TNg} + \text{TPy}) + \text{TGr}
\]

The above equation illustrates the make up of the GPA of Abyssinia on one hand, and what portions are consumed where or by whom. It embodies the distorted or twisted patterns of consumption that underpins theo-industry or economic system built around this form of industry. It is indicative of the inherent distortions where those that generate ‘real’ wealth end up being not its consumers as these are forced to use the produced (*gibbir*) to ‘pay’ for the intangible commodity (*tebel*) that they are forced to demand and consume. As the result, the producers of the intangible set of commodity (Abyssinians) end up consuming the tangible set of wealth (*gibbir*) as the producers of the tangible (the *gabbar*) are forced to part from the tangible wealth in ‘exchange’ for an abstract set of commodity (*tebel*).

The equation also shows the pattern in coerced transfer of products that has defined the main structural foundation for the onset of famines (impoverishment) amongst the *gabbar* nations under Abyssinian rule. Their economic loss is a net economic gain for Abyssinia (McClellan 1988; Baxter 1978). Their failure to consume the bulk of what they generate ends up nurturing a nation, one that, curiously enough, has been the famine belt of Ethiopia in the age of televised famines (Clay & Holcomb 1985; McCann 1987; Clay *et al.* 1988).

On the other hand, any factor/s (political, ecological, or both) that interfere or ends up reducing either part of the GPA (TGg and/or TPy) are bound to exacerbate poverty, the structural cause for the onset of famines amongst the Abyssinians. The economic woes of the Abyssinian ‘peasants’ begin, I argue, from the time these emerge as pension-farmers and are bound to be exacerbated unless their condition is off set via a process of goolt-ification, as has been discussed earlier.
The agency of the Abyssinian state in creating fresh wage-paying posts or in providing land on which to settle (Keller 1988), for members of its pensioner-farmers or ‘peasants’ and the tasks of facilitating access routes to these posts, as indicated, have been the traditional medium used to reverse the process of impoverishment and reduce the incidence of famines. However, accessing wage-posts in theo-industry or colonising alienated land were not the only medium. Abyssinians stood to benefit from the secondary and tertiary sectors that emerged and expanded on the economic foundation of theo-industry.

**GPA: Economic Foundation of ‘Secondary Industries’**

The GPA fuels the establishment and expansion of a whole range of service-providing sectors or secondary industries with the ultimate aim of primarily serving those who serve the crown. These range from those run by citizens, by members of the ‘expatriate’ community based in major centres such as Addis Ababa and the state-run ones, with the ultimate aim of serving those that are employees of the crown/state (educational, health facilities, transport facilities etc.) (Gilkes 1975; Pankhurst 1985; Keller 1988; Zewde 1991). These state-run establishments are financed directly and mainly from the gibbir and the others have the role of facilitating the expenditure/consumption of the gibbir.

These sectors facilitate the consumption of the GPA, as a whole, not just the gibbir portion of it. After all, the gabbar households too participate in the Abyssinian markets, be it when they sell the Gross gibbir in order to sort it out into its sub-parts (Ng and Gr) or to sell or exchange their portion of the Gross gibbir or their gabbar’s ration (McClellan 1988). This way, they get to consume goods and services provided by those in the secondary sector. In the process, the gabbar too have been instrumental in creating employment opportunities for another segment of the citizens of Abyssinia based in towns (ketema) and all others forced to move into towns in search of jobs not fit for Abyssinians. Freed slaves and gabbar, especially since the Italian conquest and the Second World War, took all the menial works despised by the Abyssinians in major urban centres such as Addis Ababa (Dilebo 1983; Marcus 1994).
As such, the poverty mitigating effects of the gibbir (or the earnings of theo-industry) were felt both directly and indirectly. Directly, when it was instrumental in creating wage-paying posts (goolt-posts) for the citizens on the supply side of theo-industry (both in the ‘manufacturing-arm’ and in the ‘demand-creation’/marketing arm of this). Indirectly, when it (gibbir) serves as the economic foundation for the establishment and expansion of a whole range of mainly service-type industries that have the function of serving those who serve the national theocratic mission or are employees of the crown.

Settlements or garrisoned towns of Abyssinian-settlers or ‘ketema’ serve as the spatial setting for these ‘industries’, including those run by individuals and those run by the agencies of the crown/state (education, telecommunication, transportation facilities etc.) (McClellan 1988; Zewde 1991; Abate 1995).

**Goolt-ification and Abyssinian Out-Migration to Gabbar Colonies**

‘Goolt-ification’ represents a kind of economic boom for Abyssinia. In turn, this ‘boom’ foments the expansion of service-type industries that also create more employment opportunities for other citizens. All in all, the renewal of the economic health of theo-industry or increase in the gibbir generating capacities of the country, foments a migratory process of Abyssinians from the poverty-stricken heartland to the regions where the grass is happen to be ‘greener’ (namely, the gabbar countries of Abyssinia) (Clay & Holcomb 1985; Donham 1986b).

We have noted how this metamorphosis of impoverished peasants into wage-earning employees of the crown begins not just at the point when the crown carries out its mission proper. It commences with the phase where the nation embarks on its acts of conquests, intended at the acquisition of a fresh supply of aremene, that raw material for the mission. It begins with the militarisation of the Abyssinian state, aiming to make coercible customers of the tebel or gabbar out of vanquished nations.

Change of residence accompanies the mentioned social metamorphosis: from poor ristenya to gooltenya. While the ristenya peasants belong to a community of nation that work their inheritable pension-farms (rist land), becoming gooltenya implies a change in the geographical location of this. They are no longer peasants in the
heartland of Abyssinia, but wage earners amid the gabbar peasants of non-
Abyssinian regions.

Becoming gooltenya represents abandoning the lowly profession of farming that
preferably left to be worked by the lower 'casts' (gabbar, privately owned slaves
as type of 'rist' and impoverished labour-tenants or chisenya).

Garrisoned towns of Abyssinia (ketema) mushroom amid the vast networks of
gibbir-farms. The latter are attached to the wage-posts assigned to the Abyssinian
or Abyssinianised residents of the ketema. Such settlements, as well as being
demographic 'oases' of Abyssinians, serve as platforms in the poverty/famine
reduction of the nation they represent.

The ketema are venues that link the economy of the heartland of Abyssinia with
the economic activities of their gabbar countries, all through its primary industry.
They serve as venues that facilitate the consumption of Gross gibbir in general and
Net gibbir in particular. The ketema are the settings for the markets for the
gooltenya, the gabbar and others.

Ketema-based institutions that make up the twin arms of the 'supply-side' of theo-
industry are points from where tebel is 'packaged' and 'delivered' to its consumers
(McClellan 1988). Numerous temple-complexes, such as those that dot Addis
Ababa, were examples of these.

Through informal migratory processes to the essentially Abyssinian citadels such
as Addis Ababa, Awassa, Jimma, Dire Dawa, Harara, all set mid the sea of non-
Abyssinian gabbar peasant populations; impoverished pension-farmers and others
from the heartland of Abyssinian found an alternative avenue of earning a living in
secondary sectors. This pattern of Abyssinian out-migration and settlement in the
gabbar countries has not been the only one. State sponsored re-settlement of
northern/Abyssinian 'peasants' in the non-Abyssinian regions have been practised
by successive regimes and all Abyssinian regimes based on Addis Ababa (Keller
1988). The Derg's re-settlement and villagisation projects were the best-known
example of this (Clay et al. 1988).

Tigre-dominated regime in the post-Derg era or the Woyane, practices of re-
settling [highland] Abyssinian peasants from its main constituency of Tigray to the
more fertile regions along the Sudanese border is another example of this process
(Bruce *et al.* 1994) Tigre is one of the two segments of the Abyssinians. The Amharic comprises the other segment.

**GPA and Internal Trade**

*Ketema* or the garrisoned Abyssinian settlements amid the *gabbar* countries are citadels where the *gooltenya* ‘class’ has had its base and socialised. Note too, in the *gabbar* countries, what passes as a ‘produce’ is mostly the *gibbir*, though there is a produce from pension-farms being created in such regions. In the heartland of Abyssinia, on the other hand, a ‘produce’ is nothing more than an agricultural pension or the produce from inheritable and ‘old’ pension-farms.

*Ketema* constitute an enclave of Abyssinia amid the sea of non-Abyssinian, while this is not the case with the towns in the heartland of Abyssinia where ethnolinguistically identical people reside both in the towns and in the adjacent rural areas. *Ketema* have been important venues where the consumption of *gibbir* becomes effective. This has been possible through the facilities for the marketing or exchange of the *gibbir-cum-wages* and pensions in order to acquire other items of consumption being set in the *ketema* (Baxter 1978; McClellan 1988; Joireman 2000).

The existence of regions with a different agricultural systems and/or produces meant that *gibbir* came in different items of value.

While the recipient is entitled to consume these items as they are, this pattern of consumption was neither the ideal nor the most economical. In crown colonies that specialise in the production of food crops, the recipients have the desire and option of consuming the produces of other regions, both internal and external (imports). Firearms and items of clothing were amongst the top import commodities consumed by the waged (*gooltenya*) classes of Abyssinia (Donham & James 1986; Marcus 1994)

In the era where monetary system was not well developed, such markets were essential venues where one set of *gooltenya* was enabled to exchange all or part of his/her earnings with other *gooltenya*. This included acts of exchange between the *gooltenya* within the same agricultural region or between these and those based in different agricultural areas. The *gooltenya* based in hunter-gatherer crown colonies
would be attached to hunter-gatherer gibbir-farms, where ivory and slaves tended to be the main items of net gibbir-cum-wages (Darley 1935; Garretson 1986; Johnson 1986). That is Product As Gibbir (PAG).

Those in the pastoralist crown colonies would have gibbir in cattle and related items. Those in the crop growing regions would have their gibbir in food crops and/or cash crops. The negade (merchant classes) have had the all-important function of linking not just the gooltenya of different sub-regions but also the gooltenya with other producers/suppliers based in the lands beyond the seas (the importation of goods) (McClellan 1988).

In a sense the gooltenya of an essentially food crop growing gibbir-farms were able to acquire slaves and ivory, products of the crown gibbir-farms set in a hunter-gatherer crown colonies. In turn, these were the traditional export items of Abyssinia and the source of imports such as firearms. The taste for imported consumer goods such as firearms and pieces of imported items of garments were at the top of the shopping list (Darkwah 1975; Gabre-Sellassie 1975).

On the other hand, Abyssinian imports were financed via the exports of limited items, ivory and slaves that originate from certain regions at any given moment. Markets and the mainly Muslim/Arab trading classes traditionally facilitated the trade between the gibbir-cum-wage recipients of Abyssinia in one region and other regions (internal and external). In effect, what was exported was not so much a ‘produce’, but more, what began as gibbir.

In some cases, the gooltenya demanded his/her gibbir from ‘his/her’ gabbar families, not in the usual products of ‘their’ gibbir-farms but in the monetary equivalent or in other items. In either case, the gabbar were forced to participate in the regional markets a priori of ‘paying’ (paying is a notion of free exchange relations) the net gibbir to ‘their’ gooltenya. Again, the markets served as venues where this apparent contradiction is resolved.

This type of transaction, I argue, was not so much between ‘products’ and ‘producers’, in the strictest sense of the term. They were ‘trade’ between two sets of gabbar with two sets of gibbir (not produce). Parallel to that, the same venues served the gabbar family to have the option of exchanging their share of the Gross gibbir (gabbar’s ration), thereby obtaining other goods and services.
Chapter 7

The same markets were the principal venues where the *gooltenya* consumed the bulk of their net *gibbir*-turned wages. The merchants had the function of facilitating the expenditure of net-*gibbir*-turned wages. As such, the most significant proportion of the transactions was between the *gooltenya* and the merchants. At the same time, the taste of the *gooltenya* classes often reflected their social position in relation to the *gabbar* and other *gooltenya*.²

Slaves were amongst the most important commodity for centuries and lasted until the period of WWII. The acquisition of *fingella* slaves from such markets was not just a matter of securing a source of labour in the households and the *rist*-farms of the Abyssinians, be it the heartland of Abyssinia and/or in the *gabbar* countries/colonies. Acquiring slaves as a kind of private property (*rist* in People asset) and the size of the holding was perceived to be a good marker of ones social standing or status (Pankhurst 1961, 1968).

Note that being an active employee of the crown, thus the holder of a *goolt*-post, does not necessarily mean that s/he could not be owner of a *rist*-farm(s) or a *ristenya*, simultaneously. *Rist*, as we have noted, are a type of private property of the citizens of Abyssinia and the source of a type of a pension. *Rist, as a category of private property of the citizens, mostly applied to land but in its wider sense is applicable to all items of property, including slaves. As such, *fingella* slaves are the ‘human *rist*’ of the Abyssinian citizens (Tibebu 1995; Ahmad 1999).

**Gibbir and Export Trade**

The markets at the *ketema* have also been venues where the local produces (*gibbir*) are traded with customers and products of foreign origins (imports). They have served as the terminals of caravan trade that have long linked the interior of the Horn of Africa with the ports along the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden as well as the inland ‘ports’ such as Metema. Such caravans are the source of firearms, arguably the single most lucrative import commodity of Abyssinia during much of the period (de Prorak 1944; Darkwah 1975; Marcus 1994).

² On the patterns of trade among *gabbar* countries, see McClellan’s (1986) study of Gedeo.
However, such pattern of consumption must be viewed as an investment, a kind of capital expenditure as it would ultimately be a catalyst in the making of *gasha*-born assets (*riste negus*) that fuels the entire economic regime. Not all *gibbir* items are exportable items. Slaves and ivory, by far, were longest running and lucrative items of export (Austen 1979; Abir 1985). As such these items are the direct source of firearms and other imported items. Again, the markets are the ideal venues where the *gooltenya* of other regions where *gibbir* comes in, say grain crops, get to acquire slaves as the specialist *gibbir* of other crown colonies (hunter-gatherer or those in the initial phase of conquest).

Slaves acquired this way are destined to be ‘consumed’ directly by the acquirer (as privately owned slaves or *fingella* slaves) or to be traded in for the purchase of firearms and other imported commodities (thus being an important source of exportable slaves from Abyssinia/Ethiopia).

In short, *ketema*-based markets are the ideal venues where multiple and/or cross-sectioned transactions take place between the *gooltenya* and the *gabbar* of diverse regions on one hand and suppliers of goods and services based elsewhere on the other. Note that the crown’s employees on the demand creation arm of the supply-side of theo-industry (the state) are arguably the single largest block of *gooltenya* and one of the main customers of arms traders. After all, firearms are the tools of their trade used in the making the *gabbar* and to induce coerced demand for *tebel* in the *gabbar*.

However, Abyssinia has hardly been the sole beneficiary from this. Coast-straddling Sultanates/states or commercial enclaves along what are today Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia stood to benefit from the export-import trade from the Abyssinian dominated interiors of the sub-continent (Horn of Africa).

Following the era of re-conquest, I argue, Abyssinia became the main ‘producer’ of the same old export commodities of the region (slaves, ivory, frankincense etc.). In the process, it lubricated the economic engines of mercantile enclaves of Arabs and the Arabicised Africans along the coastlines of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. In effect, the coast of Eritrea and Somalia were the slave and ivory coasts of Abyssinia.
It was here where one finds the terminals of the caravan routes that led to central markets of Abyssinia — usually, the capital towns and settlements of the kingdoms that were in turn part of an empire. They became centres of dhow-based maritime trade that had linked the sub-continent with the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East, Egypt, Turkey, the Indian sub-continent as the main export markets of commodities that began mostly as ghibir of Abyssinia (Trimingham 1965; Austen 1979; Abir 1980).

As well as the transport type service industries, the state/communities of coastal enclaves have been venues where some of the export-bound commodities were processed. Facilities for eunuch making — out of the mostly young male slaves — were the prominent ones in Tajura in what is today Djibouti (de Prorok 1944). The tasks of handling the imports, their exchange with the traders that arrived there with the typical commodities of the interior constituted an important economic activity of the enclaves. Trade was the primary industry and source of wealth in the coastal Sultanates. In turn, this sustained its own secondary industries in the form of those serving those who were employed in their primary industry (caravan trade) (de Prorok 1944; Abir 1979).

In times when Abyssinia lost control over the slave and ivory rich countries in the interior of the Horn of Africa, as was the case after the wars with the Sultanate of Adal, favourable geographical location or the ability to control the caravan routes that linked the interior with the coast and the collection of tariffs on outgoing and incoming commodities became the alternative source of revenue. In fact, it was revenue collected this way that allowed Tigray and the rest of the Abyssinian kingdoms to finance their arms imports. Such imports, in turn, aided their reconquest of the ‘lost colonies’ during the second half of the nineteenth century (Gabre-Sellassie 1975; Marcus 1994). Table 2 shows the distribution of firearms in certain regions of Ethiopia between 1830 and 1850 (Gabre-Sellassie 1975, p. 19).

While the merchants and the markets they run constituted a major type of ‘secondary’ industry, scores of other service-providing industries were set in the towns to serve those who were the employees of theo-industry, and the gabbar, to a lesser extent.
TABLE 2: Distribution of Firearms, 1830-1850, Ethiopia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of matchlocks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tigray</td>
<td>28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begemdir</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoa</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wollo</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wag</td>
<td>several thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harar</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galla Territories</td>
<td>negligible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GPA and other Service Industries

The tej-making houses of Addis Ababa, for instance, were set to serve the gooltenya classes of the town during the reign of Emperor Menelik II. The consumption of tej, a type of mead, was the preserve of the gooltenya, hence a marker of their superior social status. Parallel to tej houses existed tella houses. Tella was a type of cheap beer and the traditional drink of the peasants, be these gabbar, the free peasants with land (tenants of land) and free tenants of labour (the chisenya).

There was a whole range of small-scale or cottage industries specialised in the manufacturing of shema (a type of Abyssinian clothing) to blacksmiths. There were builders of different categories. There were store-owners and/or shopkeepers of local origins and from the small expatriate community. The latter was comprised of Arabs, Armenians, Greek, Italians, amongst others (Zewde 1991). Although the gooltenya were the main customers of these services they were not the only ones. The crown/state and the Christian temples (the town-based main institutions of theo-industry) were other major consumers of goods and services provided by the owners of the secondary industries.

Gibbir as ‘Capital’ Expenditure of the Crown/State

The building and maintenance of the vast networks of Orthodox Christian temples, the stocking of these with imported paraphernalia mostly from Coptic Egypt and
the Levant (Palestine, Syria, Greece etc.) was one case in the centralised consumption of gibbir as a capital item.

The task of carrying out mega-projects such as the building of temples, palaces, bridges and so on has traditionally been entrusted to imported engineers and builders (Dilebo 1982; Ofcansky & Berry 1993).

The same was the case for the building of the seats of government, palaces, army barracks, modern schools, roads and communication facilities. Crown expenditure on schooling facilities, roads and communications facilities such as the Rail Way line that linked Addis Ababa with the port of Djibouti, the establishment of towns in the crown colonies were examples of non-wage (capital) gibbir expenditure (Keller 1988; Zewde 1991; Marcus 1994).

These expenses, at least in theory, were covered by setting special gibbir-farms to that effect. In practice, however, customs duty and roadblocks (kella) were used as the most effective way to collect the portion of the gross gibbir that the regions may have failed to forward to the central treasury of the crown/state.

Kella were roadblocks set along the main caravan routes used to funnel products to a set market place where the fiscal agents of the crown or the abegasses operated. They still are an integral part of the state revenue collection practices, along the fiscal-monetary tools (imposition of arbitrary tariffs) in use at present. In effect, the crown ‘taxed’ the traded Gross gibbir thus being nothing more than an act of reclaiming its portion of the gibbir (N$) regional agents or appointees failed to forward deliberately or otherwise. Custom duties on export and imports have long provided a more reliable and lucrative source of revenue to the central authorities of the crown (Schwab 1972; Zewde 1991; Joireman 2000).

The state/crown became just another customer of the town-based local and foreign owners of secondary industries and suppliers.

In a way, the theo-industry of Abyssinia has been instrumental in fuelling scores of ‘secondary’ industries with an equally various customer base. These ranged from the tella houses that were run by poor migrant households from say, Wollo, and which had the native gabbar (sharecroppers or tenants in the post-WWII period) as its main clientele to the tej houses run by migrants from the provinces of Abyssinia whose clients were mainly Abyssinian gooltenya.
In later decades, fashionable and Italianated cafes run by Eritreans of Tigre (Abyssinian) background came to rival the tej houses. Eritreans came to predominate in the building, transport, education and similar other sectors/industries, thanks to the legacy of their half a century brush with Italian colonial rule in their home region. These skills, I argue, allowed the Eritreans to establish a ‘niche’ in an economic regime where the primary source of wealth came in the form of gibbir.

Then it is not difficult to see how revenue from the crown colonies directly financed the wars of the Amharic dominated Ethiopia against the separatist Eritrea. Eritrea’s efforts to free itself were partially and indirectly financed from the secondary sectors run by Eritreans in other parts of Ethiopia and in Eritrea itself.

Italian-type bars and cafes in Asmara and Addis Ababa (the main urban centres in Ethiopia) were more likely to be owned by an Abyssinian of Eritrea whose customers were Ethiopian soldiers and paid from the revenue collected from the crown colonies of Abyssinia. Contributions from such café-owners in Asmara and Addis Ababa, among other sources financed the same war, but from the Eritrean side.

It also financed the ‘purchase’ of diplomatic recognition for Abyssinian-ruled Ethiopia, especially in the continent. It allowed Ethiopia to emerge as the ‘symbol’ of free Africa (and by extension, of the black race as a whole) while its capital, Addis Ababa, became the ‘de facto’ capital of the continent. It is from here that decade-long anti-colonial and anti-apartheid campaigns have been launched. The land (riste negus) and the halls of the Organisation of African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa (the UN headquarters in Africa) were ‘donations’ of the late emperor Haile Selassie in this context. Such ‘donations’ owed to alienated land (crown land) and resources that began as gibbir (Pankhurst 1968).
Theo-industry and the ‘Two Poverties’

The Crown as the Patron of the Abyssinian Economy and Poverty

The exploitation of Abyssinian riste negus in the context of theo-industry underwent or assumed, at least, three phases in its trajectory from being the product of an Abyssinian act of conquest to becoming the ‘rist’ of the Christian citizens or riste Christian.

The first phase is being the ‘undeveloped’ communal property of the conquistador nation of Abyssinia or gasha land (an Abyssinian version of crown land) and other assets.

The second phase denotes the ‘investment’ of gasha assets or the making of gibbir-farms out of the gasha-yield assets. This phase denotes the incorporation of gasha-born assets into the economy of theo-industry. This ‘investment’, as studies here, has the function of expanding the demand-side of theo-industry or its coerced clientele in the form of the members of the vanquished nations or the gabbar. The expansion in the size of the gabbar (demand-side of theo-industry) brings about an expansion in the gibbir earning capacities of the Abyssinian crown in its capacity as the patron of the nation’s theocratic mission and its theo-industry.

It is during this phase where the assets end up as the source of gibbir that flow to the Abyssinian crown, in a sustainable fashion. The crown is the trustee of the self-assumed mission of Abyssinia vis-à-vis the aremene nations. As such, on behalf of the Christian community of nation (Abyssinia), it is the effective beneficiary of the gibbir earnings (which are basically the result of the process of productive depreciation of the assets ‘invested’ in the gibbir-farms).

Gradually, the invested assets are disinvested so as to enable the crown to ‘pay’ those that have been on its payroll (goolt or wages) and retire, at some point. It is at this point where a substantial portion of the ‘communal’ assets of the whole nation (Abyssinia) undergo a third and last phase or metamorphosis and passes over to the direct and outright ownership of the Abyssinian citizens, riste Christian or the ‘rist’. However, there was a shorter trajectory from riste negus to riste Christian. A one-off granting of gasha land (riste negus) to reward citizen-employees of the
crown for a commendable act or bravery in wars of conquest was one example of this (Wolde Maskal 1957; Markakis 1974; Clay & Holcomb 1985; Keller 1988).

This way, the ‘rist’ or a type of private property ownership of assets in general but of land in particular evolves. It is essential to note that the concept of ‘rist’ in its wider sense denotes a type of private property: a citizen-owned asset in general. As such, this conception is applicable to the private ownership of People asset (Pa) or Animal asset (Aa). Fingella slaves or slaves owned by the citizens of Abyssinia, as distinct from the gabbar who are the communally owned slaves of all Abyssinia (Abyssinia as a community of orthodox Christian nation), constitute a type of ‘rist’ in slaves.

However, a note of caution is needed when the term private property is used to define the Abyssinian rist. It is not so much a basis of private enterprise (in farming industry or otherwise). It is a ‘primitive’ type of pension fund, a superannuation calculated and paid in terms of crown landholdings from riste negus.

Private property in land elsewhere is the basis of a more or less free agrarian industry. It is the source of wealth to the holders/operators of such an asset, on which tax on property or on yield is paid. Such tax, as distinct from a gibbir, represents a free exchange relation between the payee and the agency that collects it (the state). The former expects the delivery of agreed upon goods and/or services for the equal value paid in tax.

Rist, on the other hand, is a qualitatively unique type of private property. It has more in common with the superannuation fund or pension funds held, often by the segment of a nation that are no longer in the active age of generating [fresh] wealth. It denotes the private ownership of a pension fund, not of a piece of asset that is an active source of wealth to the nation.

Rist-based farming activities are nothing more than an art of producing not so much a taxable wealth, as a pension, that could be taxed to some extent. Paralegal services to settle endless land disputes in the heartland of Abyssinia are an example of this kind of service (Wolde Maskal 1957; Hoben 1973; Joireman 2000).

Rist is a type of private property designated to generate a type of pension for those that had served the crown, be it in the ‘war industry’ (in the tasks of conquering the
aremene nations) and/or in the nation’s theocratic missions (in theo-industry) at some point in the past. As noted earlier, rist is an inheritable type of asset down the generations and is bound to be subdivided amongst those that claim blood relation to the original/first recipient of the asset/title from the crown, at some point in the past. However, this does not mean that the owners of a rist could not simultaneously be a gooltenya family or attached to one based in the gabbar colonies of Abyssinia – to the contrary.

Most gibbir-farm holders also have a share/claim on the rist possessions in their ancestral home regions, although even these regions themselves began as gasha possessions of the crown or were part of gibbir-farms, at some point in time in the distant past (Tamrat 1972b).

The economic position of those regions and individuals where pension-farms predominate (the heartland of Abyssinia) is a ‘passive’ one in relation to the revenue generation patterns in the theocratic empire of the Abyssinians.

This economic ‘passivity’ is comparable to the position of the generation in industrialised countries that live on their superannuation pensions and therefore are not the main source of renewable wealth to the nation. The economic correlation between the heartland of Abyssinia and the gabbar countries of Abyssinia could be explained via the correlation between the tax-paying age group and the pension-recipient age group in countries like Australia or UK.

Both sub-regions – the heartland of Abyssinia and its gabbar colonies – with their sub-economies, are there to serve the Abyssinians; except that the former caters for those members of the Abyssinian confraternity or nation that have long been rendered to live on the produce of their pension-farms. The latter caters for those Abyssinians (and those non-Abyssinian ‘collaborators’ recruited by the Abyssinians) who are active employees of the crown in the context of the national theocratic mission and the form of industry that underpins it. Balabat is the term used to describe the segment of natives-turned-into-employees of the crown. These were just another category of gooltenya (Donham & James 1986; Keller 1988).

Hence, riste negus as ‘invested’ asset of the whole nation in theo-industry, pays the wages of the actively employed Abyssinians and other costs of the crown. At some later point, it would be transferred to the private ownership of citizen-employees of
the crown or citizens in the form of an asset on which the equivalent of a pension is extracted from. At this point, what used to be *riste negus* is converted into *riste Christian* or simply into the Abyssinians' 'rist'.

It is not difficult then to see the pattern of economic parasitism or dependency that adjoins the two sub-regions comprising the Abyssinian empire (Ethiopia) and their respective sets of farms, and the use of organised violence to reinforce it (McClellan 1988; Pausewang 1983; Clay & Holcomb 1985).

Historically, the primary industry of their nation (theo-industry) has served as the logical and natural source of economic renewal or as an avenue for the mitigation of the effects of poverty and famines. This included formal and informal access routes to *riste negus* in general and to what is extracted from the farms erected from it in particular. The redistribution of *gibbir* in the form of wages amongst its fundamentally Abyssinian employees and the redistribution of Land asset in lieu of pension payment for the retired employees of the Abyssinian crown constitute a formal access route to the wealth created in the context of their nation's primary industry (Cohen & Weintraub 1975). The formal routes refer to the crown/state-sponsored patronages and recruitment drives from the constituency of the pension farmers into the wage-carrying posts in the primary industry of the time or in the context of the theocratic mission of the crown/state (Markakis 1974; Baxter 1978; Clay & Holcomb 1985; McClellan 1988).

The formal access routes to the share of the national wealth generated in the context of theo-industry refers to patterns in the redistribution of a wage-package (*gooli*) and a pension-package (roughly the 'rist') resource between the citizens of Abyssinia. Informal access routes are those that allow the redistribution of assets (land) and/or products within the Abyssinians. Family or clan-centric inheritance practices have allowed many more to qualify or share in the assets (such as a piece of arable land), originally obtained as a pension or *rist* (Schwab 1972; Hoben 1973).

As such, farming is not an independent industry in Abyssinia/Ethiopia as a whole. It is made up of two sub-sections, where one part specialises in the production of a type of pension and the other a type of revenue (*gibbir*). The pension-farms generate an agricultural pension for those who work and own them (former
employees of the Abyssinian crown in theo-industry and their inheritors). The gibbir-farms of the crown (in the gabbar colonies) provide funds with which to pay the wages of those recruited from amongst the pool of pension farmers to serve the crown as wage-post (gooli) holders in the context of the ongoing national theocratic mission.

Those who live by working pension farms, derive their source of economic renewal not from improvements on their farms, but from their ability to secure wage-carrying posts for themselves or other members of their family and extended families in theo-industry. As a result, agriculture/farming, I contend, has been and continues to be a dependent economic activity in the service of another and entirely unproductive activity or a mission assumed by the rulers of the nation of Abyssinia.

*Living on a Tebel and a Ration: Genesis of a Patronless-Poverty*

It has been noted how gibbir-farms are venues where the designated item of consumption is not so much a tangible set of the produced but an abstract commodity or the tebel. Nevertheless, these double as venues where the gabbar family-units are forced to generate gibbir as the ‘price’ for what they have been coerced into consuming plus a smaller margin of the gross gibbir left to be consumed as the ration of the gabbar family units.

Both interdependent tasks: namely being the consumers of the tebel (thus the reproduction of the imposed status as the source of demand for the tebel) and the ability to engage in the concrete tasks of producing gibbir carry a cost of production in the form of the gabbar’s ration.

As such, the gabbar ration is not a cost of production incurred by the gabbar to produce the gross gibbir. Rather, it is what costs the Abyssinian crown, owner of the gabbar and all the assets with which the gibbir-farms were made from, to maintain the gabbar as the type of coercible and continuously reproducible customer of the tebel. In a sense, the gabbar’s ration, like the assets in the gibbir-farms, is the property of the Abyssinian crown, by extension a communal ‘rist’ of the nation. The gabbar ration is comparable to a bale of animal hay on which farm animals feed or a food ration given to plantation slaves in the Americas. Both (the
feeder and the feed) are owned by their owners, in this case the Abyssinian sovereign or crown as the trustee of the nation of Abyssinia.

Gibbir-farms are venues where a twisted pattern of economic relation is materialised and reproduced. Here, those that do produce tangible items of wealth are forced to use it to 'pay' for an intangible commodity tebel with a use value of 'decontaminating' the soul of the gabbar. Those that do specialise in the production of an intangible set of commodity (Abyssinians) end up consuming the tangible products of the gibbir-farms or the gibbir. These are venues where 'coerced-exchange-relation' (CER) effectively serves the realisation/commercialisation of an end product of an industry that, otherwise, could not secure a freely- or voluntarily-established demand for its end product (tebel).

This imposed status, being the gabbar, underpins or informs another set of structural foundations for the impoverishment of an entirely different constituency: the gabbar nations. The fact that these have been made into gabbar is symptomatic of a process of total alienation of entire nations. The loss of their status as agents of a productive process and consumers of the produced is one such indication (Clay & Holcomb 1985; Keller 1988; McClellan 1988). The alienation of their ability to determine a spiritual way of life (or a way of life in general) on their own is another.

Being the gabbar is indicative of an imposed status where once agents of production have forcefully been made into objects of others' system of production. As object of production, gabbar nations/peoples not only were devoid of the status of being (free) producers, but lost their status as owners of a (farming) industry. As a result, they have ceased to be agents of the Art of Wealth Creation (AWC) and with that the ability to benefit from the dynamics of the Art of Wealth Expansion (AWE). AWC and AWE will be discussed in the last part of the thesis (Part 4).

The gabbar have ceased to be the agents of the process of development (here meaning the ability of nation(s) to maximise their ability to generate wealth). They have become the Fodder of others' (Abyssinian) Art of Wealth Creation (AWC) and Art of Wealth Expansion (AWE), with that objects in others' process of development.
Other Factors that Affect the Size of Gabbar’s Ration

Environmental factors such as droughts have functioned to intensify poverty, both amongst the gibbir-farmers and the pension-farmers of Ethiopia. Such factors have served as the catalysts in triggering famine conditions by intensifying the underlying structural condition or poverty (Wolde Mariam 1986; McCann 1994).

The increase in the size of the population often implies a relative decrease in the GPA (the bulk of which is composed of gibbir) in general and the relative size of the gabbar’s ration. More and more Abyssinians are forced to live on more or less same or reduced size of GPA. Similar process takes place amongst the gabbar nations. More and more gabbar families are forced to live on the same or reduced levels of gabbar’s ration (Gr).

However, any absolute factor (environmental or man-made factors that lead to the reduction of the overall annual yield) or relative factor (increase of the gabbar population that live on the same or reduced size of Gr) also contributes to the increased vulnerability of the gabbar countries to famine conditions.

Any man-made or natural external factors that affect the level of production/or the size of yield from pension farms, is bound to exacerbate the underlying and permanent structural condition that informs the onset of famines. Cyclical droughts, pestilence, swarms of locusts, wars are amongst the top ranking external factors that contribute to the accelerated impoverishment of the already ‘grossly’ poor and the onset of famines in the heartland of Abyssinia or amongst the pension farmers of Abyssinia/Ethiopia.

However, any development that disrupts the position of theo-industry as the primary industry of Abyssinia and the main source of its national wealth would have been responsible for the acceleration in the Abyssinian/Ethiopian capacity to mitigate poverty and famines (mainly amongst the Abyssinians).

Any competition for aremene lands from other sources (European colonial expansionism from the mid-nineteenth century onwards) or political developments that threaten the established status quo have resulted in the disruption of the ancient norms resulting in a profound crisis for the theo-industry of Abyssinia. Such a crisis and its effects came to inform the cycles of famines, political
upheavals/revolutions and wars that have so much characterised Ethiopia in the ‘modern’ times. These in turn served as an important impetus for wars of conquest, albeit justified through the rationale of carrying out a type of ‘civilising’ mission (Triulzi 1986; Afrique Memoires et Documents Abyssinie, cited in Hassan & Greenfield 1992; Getahun Dilebo, cited in Hassan & Greenfield 1992).

Increased vulnerability of the Abyssinians to famine conditions is bound to have a rub-off effect on their gabbar colonies. It often leads to the intensification of extraction from the existing gibbir-farms in order to feed their own hungry, thereby transferring its burden onto peoples under Abyssinian rule via institutionalised violence (Clay & Holcomb 1985). Famine conditions in the heartland of Abyssinia are often accompanied with political instability and growing feuds amongst the provinces that comprise the ruling nation or Abyssinia.

The feud and wars between the king-making Amhara provinces of Abyssinia and the Tigray region over the share of the spoils since the period of re-conquest (mid-nineteenth century) has been one expression of this process, I suggest. The feud and wars between these two sub-regions of Abyssinia climaxed in the demise of the Marxist regime (1991) and brought about a change of political centrality in the capital Addis Ababa. As a result, the Tigray region became the king-making region since one of their own, Yohannis IV, was the emperor of all Ethiopia (1872-1892) (Young 1998). To quash dissent, settle the feuds or wage wars, those who control the levers of power squeeze more gibbir from the existing gibbir farm in the past, and the southern regions since, including human resources to be used as cannon fodder in Ethiopia’s endless wars. This in turn sustains the state’s ability to create additional wage-paying posts for some regions with all the economic benefits that this entails (Asfaw 1988; Ofcansky & Berry 1993).

The net effect on the gabbar colonies then is the intensification in the degree of poverty and increase in the vulnerability to famine conditions (Harbeson 1990).

**Native Collaboratism: A ‘Dishonourable’ Access Route to Gibbir**

However, having been forced to live on a ration does not necessarily mean that the gabbar countries (later bastions of sharecropper/share-grazer regions of Ethiopia) are devoid of some alternative channels for the mitigation of their (basically)
‘imposed’ structural conditions for progressive poverty and famine conditions. The difficulties of reaching the gabbar countries and other inefficiencies in the extraction of gibbir, I argue, worked to the advantage of the gabbar countries.

There is what could be called the political economy of native collaboratism with the Abyssinian rulers, in a bid to ‘share’ the spoils they are denied from consuming legitimately. These are channels via which limited members of the gabbar nations are recruited and get to occupy wage posts (goolt).

The so-called balabat are the best-known case of the native collaborator category of the gooltenya. Their services in facilitating smooth patterns of goolt-ification (creation and staffing of goolt-posts or wage-posts in the industry of a theocratic mission) have been instrumental in the ‘pacification’ of the conquered nations and the imposition of pax-Abyssinica there. To these, in theory, was allocated a third of the goolt-posts, with their corresponding gibbir-farms, not the third of the (alienated) native land, as it has been stated by many that has studied the so called gabbar system (Schwab 1972; Markakis 1974; Keller 1988). These were just another bunch of gooltenya, crown employees congregated mostly on the ‘demand-creation arm’ of the ‘supply-side’ of theo-industry (state, law-enforcement, security forces, administrative aids etc.).

A ‘back-door’ access to the GPA, by those forced to live on ration (or their offspring), by default emerges as the platform for the mitigation of the imposed poverty. Collaboratism or serving the impostors in the form of qualifying for wage-paying posts, away from the drudgeries of living as a gabbar family unit, emerges as the avenue in that poverty mitigation. The role of Oromo army recruits into the Abyssinian armies from the region of Shoa is a case in point (Marcus 1994).

This way, a substantial size of the members of the gabbar nations are forced to hold a ‘share’ or a ‘stake’ in the very system that underpins the impoverishment of their communities or nations, in the first place. As such, the system creates an in-built mechanism of self-defence where, as well as organised violence, making select natives stakeholders in the system aids the preservation of very regime from within. Oromo crown employees under the Selassie regime, Oromo cadres of the Revolutionary state of Ethiopia under the Derg, and Oromo members of the party
(OPDO) created and/or approved by the Tigre-dominated regime that replaced the Derg, are all cases of wage-posts designated for native collaborators.

This process is the more so emphatic if one has to consider the fact whereby the imperial army, police, security forces and being the ‘cadres’ (commissars) of the system are happen to be the main employers of those that exit the life of gabbardom and life as sharecroppers/share-grazer farmers (chisenya) since WWII. As a result, a segment of the gabbar nations become the defenders of the gabbar regime or of theo-industry.

Collaboratism, arguably more so than the use of brute force, has served the preservation of this economic system.

**Concluding Remarks**

One thing is the impoverishment and famine conditions amongst the Abyssinians (northern half of Ethiopia). The other is poverty and famines of the gabbar nations (southern half of Ethiopia). While both sets of poverty and famines are connected to the same economic regime, nevertheless they are due to quite different and mutually exclusive rationales.

In a sense, there are two sets of quite different structural foundations for progressive impoverishment and the onset of famines in the Abyssinian theocratic empire or Ethiopia: there is one for the ruling nation or Abyssinia and another one for the ruled or gabbar/chisenya nations. Consequently, their appraisals require separate consideration.

One set generally owes to or reflects the ‘economic health’ of the primary industry: theo-industry. This is Abyssinia’s. Any factor, political or social, that disrupts the operation of theo-industry, engendering a decline in the supply in the fresh supply of gabbar, is bound to bring about a recession/depression in this industry. This, in turn, is reflected in the relative (to the size of the population) or absolute reduction in the gibbir generation capacity of the nation. External and internal wars lead to a disruption of the national economy, where reduced ability to acquire a fresh supply of gabbar (aremene nations) and inability to enforce demand for tebel on the existing ones resulted in creating a recessionary condition (of theo-industry). This in turn leads to severe impoverishment of the Abyssinians.
The causes of impoverishment amongst the *gabbar* owe to their loss of being the economic agents. As such, they not only lost their indigenous farming industry, but along that, lost the economic agency and institutional framework necessary to mediate their condition: the agency of the state to be precise (Baxter 1978; Clay & Holcomb 1985; Asfaw 1988; Jalata 1998).

The *gabbar* nations neither owned a land, the farms, labour and other assets, nor the end produce of the farms found there. These are owned along the *gabbar*. The *gabbar* are not the economic agents but objects of others' economic/productive process. As such, their poverty and famine conditions are patronless. They are not meant to benefit from the economic agency/role of the Ethiopian empire-state, in terms of mitigating poverty, the structural foundation for the onset of famine conditions.

In fact, the role of the state in terms of mitigating one set of poverty/famine conditions (that of Abyssinia’s) has resulted in inducing the opposite effect of growing impoverishment amongst the *gabbar* nations/countries of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. In this regard, Keller (1988, p. 64) remarked:

> The state provided few if any social services for indigenous populations [in the south], and while it was convenient, it fostered feudalism as the most effective form of governance and economic exploitation. Peasants and tenants had very few rights. The state used its power and authority to establish and protect the rights and privileges of its agents and other northern settlers.

The following part discusses a recession that hit theo-industry in the twentieth century, its effects and attempts that were made to mediate it by successive regimes in Addis Ababa.
PART THREE

THEO-INDUSTRY IN CRISIS
chapter 8

THEO-INDUSTRY IN RECESSION

The viability of theo-industry has depended on the ability of the Abyssinian state and patron of theo-industry to be able to renew or expand the demand-side of its primary industry. This has depended on the availability of a steady supply of aremene nations to be turned into the gabbar or a kind of coercible customer of the tebel. However, the combination of regional and extra regional political developments during the first half of the twentieth century put the aremene frontier nations off limit to the Abyssinian conquistador army. This, from an economic point of view, meant a severe contraction of the size of the ‘market’ (coerced-demand) for the Abyssinia/Ethiopia. It was set to induce a recessionary condition in the overall Abyssinian economy.

This was not the first time when external factors were instrumental in disrupting the economic viability and renewability of theo-industry. The wars between ‘Semitic’ and Christian Abyssinia and the ‘Semitic’ and Islamic Adal (from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries had left a similar effect on theo-industry, and through that, on the economic life of the Abyssinians (Jones & Monroe 1935; Simoons 1960; Marcus 1994).

European Anti-Slavery Movement and the Supply of the Aremene

As studies, the period between the mid-nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth marked a period of relative boom for the Abyssinian theo-industry. This era had seen a grand expansion in the supply of the aremene, that raw
material in the making of the *gabbar*; consequently an increase in the *gibbir*-generating capacities of Abyssinia.

At the same time, the period presented Abyssinia with the greatest challenge to the viability of what had for centuries been its primary industry. The period marked the era of African colonisation by several European powers. The latter were advancing on the traditional *aremene* backyard of Abyssinia. The boundary accord between the Abyssinians and the authorities of British East Africa and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and Italy in Eritrea, for instance, effectively signalled the end in the Abyssinian ability to carry out its cycles of conquests on the *aremene* lands (Sanderson 1964; Mazrui 1986; Zewde 1991).

On top of that, the advent of European powers onto the doorsteps of Abyssinia was soon to be a threat to the existing imperial realm of Abyssinia itself. The Italian imperial scheme that began during the last decade of the nineteenth century was resumed by Mussolini in the mid nineteen thirties. Abyssinia stood to lose not just its crown colonies (in the south of the empire) but the heartland of free Abyssinia itself came under the threat from the imperial schemes of Rome (Makin 1935).

The Abyssinian Empire (Ethiopia) came to be a neighbour of alien powers with equally alien (civic) views on the former’s polity. European anti-slavery ideas and movements that were instrumental in the abolishment of the slave trades over the Atlantic and the Indian oceans finally reached Abyssinia (League of Nations 1935a; Baravelli 1935; Pankhurst 1968). Italy carved out a long seaboard from the sub-continent, thereby creating its colonies of Eritrea and what became Italian Somaliland. The former as indicated, has long been the most important, but not the sole, ‘slave and ivory’ coast of Abyssinia. The creation of a French outpost in the form of Djibuti and the establishment of the British rule in what used to be called British Somaliland put the remaining outlets of Abyssinian export-import commerce under the rule of not-so-friendly neighbours. The anti-slavery campaigns of the British in the vast Sudan had the effect of cutting Abyssinia off from raiding into the ‘shankilla’ frontier lands as well as closing the overland caravan routes that linked its inland ‘port’ of Metema with the Nile-Red Sea trade system (Darley 1935; Donham & James 1986).
On the other hand, Abyssinian emperors were no longer able to make wild claims over the aremene lands as their historical entitlements (as stated in Menelik’s circular to European powers, where the wild boundaries of Abyssinia were outlined (Zewde 1991). Nor could the Abyssinian army carry out its occasional raids into the aremene lands for slaves and ivory as these came under the jurisdiction of the British (Garretson 1986).

Both the Italians and the British, as well as banning the use of their colonies as the transit routes for the traditional export commodities of Abyssinia, also carried out naval blockades to enforce the ban in legal and illegal trades in human chattel. The presence of these powers was instrumental in triggering a profound crisis in the industry that ‘produced’ the traditional and main export commodities: slaves and ivory.

The effects from the crisis in export trade presented Abyssinia with a far ranging dilemma. It came at the period when the very existence of the realm was under a threat from powers with a vastly sophisticated military hardware. This meant that Abyssinia not only had to be able to maintain its traditional imports of firearms but also had to upgrade its military hardware if it had to remain as the sole and ‘shining’ symbol of free Africa. To do so, it either had to intensify its ability in the production of the traditional export commodities so as to finance the imports of firearms. Alternatively, it had to switch to other and more legitimate sources of export commodities, in the place of the export trade in slaves and ivory. As we have noted, the export trade in these commodities had been but a mere extension of a much larger networks of internal trade, all of which ultimately owed to the gibbir.

**Squeeze on Gibbir-Farms in Defence of the Empire: A Dilemma?**

This dilemma could only be mediated via an intensive expansion as distinct from a conquest-based expansion of theo-industry. Intensification in the patterns of extracting gibbir from the existing gibbir-farms as well as acceleration in the utilisation of the gasha-born assets of the crown held in reserve (gasha-lands yet to be developed into gibbir-farms) for the purpose were the obvious alternatives.
The lead-up to the Mussolini’s march onto Addis Ababa from its decades-old colonies of Eritrea and Somalia saw the intensification in the squeeze on the existing gibbir-farms in the bid to extract more gibbir with which to finance the war efforts of Abyssinia. The ‘illegal’ export trade in slaves boomed during the first decades of the twentieth century as the result. The increase in trade in slaves and ivory from the dominions of Abyssinia not only defied the reverse trend in eastern and western Africa. It came to capitalise on the demand for a commodity rendered illicit elsewhere. Interestingly, the Muslim-Indian and Arab dominated trading houses based in East Africa found their ways to the courts of Abyssinia where they came to hold the monopoly of export-import trades centred around the lucrative commodities (Darley 1935; Garretson 1986; Zewde 1991).

Italy, partially in a bid to justify its imperial ambitions over Abyssinia – more precisely over the more fertile crown colonies in the southern half of the empire – carried out an exposé of the intricate and interdependent maze of the Abyssinian gabbar system. Among other things the gabbar system had not just been instrumental in the use of slave-labour for the ‘production’ of gibbir in agricultural products but had also specialised in the ‘production’ of slaves and ivory as gibbir (Baravelli 1935; League of Nations 19935a). Britain, partially due to its local civic movements with a long tradition in anti-slavery campaigns, echoed Italy’s views, thereby indirectly endorsing the latter’s intentions.

In a sense, the effects from the presence of ‘enlightened’ neighbours (Europeans in their colonies) were far reaching than difficulties in Ethiopia’s ability to continue engaging in the export trade in illegitimate commodities. Its effects were to be felt in the economic system that underpinned the production of slaves and ivory as export commodities: theo-industry. The whole process put the gabbar system or the demand-side of theo industy under public (international) scrutiny, forcing Abyssinian rulers to undertake reform, in a bid to create a free agrarian industry on the basis of existing Land asset (riste negus).

The very survival of Abyssinia as an independent political entity came to depend on:

(a) its ability to defend itself via the importation of more firearms and an increase in defence expenditure; and,
(b) its ability to be accepted into the fold of the League of Nations dominated by those who opposed the Abyssinian slavist status quo, as a diplomatico-political shield against the impending fascist conquest.

All of these, ironically, pointed to the need to squeeze even more gibbir — especially gibbir in the form of exportable items — from the existing capacity, in counter-opposition to the trends of the times.

Nevertheless, eventually, Abyssinia was compelled to make a tentative transition from an industry that produces illegitimate sets of commodities and trades in these, to a legitimate one. In a way, the viability of theo-industry suffered a fundamental crisis as:

(a) it was no longer able to re-supply itself with a fresh set of aremene countries (the source of coerced demand for tebel, gasha-born assets or riste negus etc.);

(b) the operative patterns of the industry came under an increased international scrutiny and difficulties in the realisation/commercialisation of its end products;

(c) many of the aremene-turned-gabbar have gone through the processes of Christianisation/Abyssinianisation, where the mission of transforming them was no longer readily justifiable; and,

(d) the very rationale of carrying out self-assumed theocratic missions amongst the non-Christian groups in the Horn of Africa became increasingly difficult to justify to the international community.

In exchange for the vote of the powers-to-be within the League of Nations to be accepted as a ‘civilised’ member of the free world, Abyssinia began a reluctant attempt to ‘reform’ the economic regime with its vast supply of slave-labour (Pa) and alienated land (La) of the vanquished aremene nations. One such measure was the promulgation of laws that would accelerate the freeing of the privately owned slaves in Abyssinia/Ethiopia. Pankhurst (1968, p. 121) stated that:

Determined to bring the situation [vast slave owning] under greater control the Emperor issued a Supplementary Law on July 15, 1931, designed to accelerate emancipation and to make better provision for freed slaves. Article 1 specified that slaves should be immediately freed on the death of their master and not have to wait seven years as laid down previously.
This was an undertaking to satisfy the international public – the unfriendly gaze from the League of Nations – and was effective mostly in and around Addis Ababa and a handful of major towns (Fargo; 1935).

However, Abyssinia was nonetheless invaded by the fascist forces of Italy (1935). It was the Italians who helped precipitate the demise of theo-industry and paved the way for an alternative industry fit for the modern times and with more legitimate credentials (Dilebo 1983; Zewde 1991; Joireman 2000). Post-Italian Abyssinia/ Ethiopia was compelled to undertake a ‘reform’ of the gabbar system, with the ultimate aim of creating a free and self-renewing agricultural industry in the place of theo-industry. The creation of free labour out of the vast crown-owned slaves of the nation (the gabbar) and the freeing of all the remaining privately owned slaves was one part of the process. The conversion of riste negus into citizen-owned land property or into a type of riste Christian as the foundation for a free and renewable agricultural industry was the other part of the process. The former was achieved through official decrees (Dilebo 1983), and the latter via a mixture of politically determined and accelerated free land grants to citizens (mostly Abyssinians) and the symbolic auctioning of crown lands (Ayana 1995).

**Gabbar to Sharecroppers: Transforming Crown-Owned Slaves into ‘Labour lords’**

The outcome was a hastened process of freeing many of the gabbar, but not all, until a military and the Marxist regime, the Derg, completed the freeing of the remaining gabbar and many of the fingella slaves. Ironically, there were still pockets in the heartland of Abyssinia where there were several outstanding fingella slave ownerships by the time the Derg was ousted and replaced by the Woyane, another regime, this time with roots in the region of Tigray, deep in the heartland of Abyssinia (Wako Adi et al. 1998).

The process that saw the conversion of the gabbar into free tenants or owners of their labour was a ‘revolutionary’ one. It stood in contrast to the traditional patterns where a slow or an ‘evolutionary’ process was responsible in the gradual freeing of the gabbar and the fingella slaves and their merger into the social fabric of Christian Abyssinia (Tamrat 1972b). However, it came as part of the fiscal reform
that dictated the payment of wages in a monetary unit (Birr) in place of the traditional practice of paying wages by linking a wage-post (goolit) with its gibbir-farm(s). Overnight, a large pool of former gabbar was turned into owners of the labour/body or 'labour lords' and sharecroppers (chisenya).

This meant that the southern gabbar were turned into labour tenants without the traditional and slow patterns that led to the merger of the unfree with the free. There was not enough time to 'adopt' the gabbar and render them honorary citizens of Abyssinia over a long period of time spanning generations.

The process of wholesale freeing of the gabbar compared well with the wholesale freeing of the plantation slaves in the confederate south, in the USA, following the Civil War. Both processes were instrumental in creating a category of free labour that had nothing else in the form of assets. The freed slaves in America and the freed gabbar were basically cases of an instantly-made proletariat. Their former masters (gooltenya-turned-landlords in Ethiopia) were to be their employers where a wage type (employer-employee) relation replaced the property relation (the owner of a People asset-owned/slave) previous to that.

In contrast to the USA, however, Abyssinia/Ethiopia had yet to create a qualitatively different type of agrarian industry that would hopefully create wage-paying posts for the freed gabbar-cum-'labour lords' or the goolbetenya (a term coined here to denote owners of labour and meaning a labour owner in Amharic).

Ethiopia had virtually no other industrial sector worthy of mention that could absorb the freed gabbar in the same way the industrial cities in the north of the USA (Chicago etc.) were able to. The goolbetenya were left to the mercies and the whims of the gooltenya families, their former 'de facto' owners. The former gooltenya stood to benefit greatly from the massive land grants in the decades that followed WWII to the period of the Marxist regime (1974).

Reforms only made them into owners of their labour/body/life again. These became the 'ristenya' of the labour pool of their family units, 'ristenya' of the body and soul, not of land. As well as freeing labour it ones owned, the aim of giving the freed gabbar and privately owned slaves a piece of their ancestral lands could have left the regime without land possession from which: (a) to extract gibbir or any form of revenue to pay those who were still in active services of the
crown; (b) to allocate rist lands as pension for the retiring former employees of the crown; and (c) to create a qualitatively new category of free land owners as the foundation for a free agro-industry.

The grand crown land grants in the post-WWII period were designed in such a way that the former gooltenya, established land ristenya, and some other town-based merchants and others would emerge as the main, if not the sole, beneficiaries of the transfer of gasha-born lands (riste negus) in the southern half of Ethiopia to the individuals (Dilebo 1983; Keller 1988; Ayana 1995).

This status, in effect, made them (goolbetenya) a sort of semi-citizens, in a country where being a full citizen required an outright or at least corporate (family or extended family ownership of rist in the heartland of Abyssinia) ownership of land. The best they could hope for was to become waged employees or sharecroppers/share-grazers of those that have more than just their labour: the land ristenya.

However, the gabbar-turned-native-chisenya was not the only pool of free agricultural labour from which the instant landlords and former gooltenya could draw its farm hands. In many case and places, the land-strapped and often the kin of the emerging landlords of mainly Abyssinian origin competed for a sharecropper position with the former gabbar-turned-labour-lords.

**Making of Riste Christian through ‘Free’ Land Grants (RC-FG)**

Like the practices of floating the vast assets held by the state in the former Soviet Union and the ensuing process of allowing citizens to ‘buy’ a portion of share in state-held assets, land held as riste negus was made available for free land grants, where, in theory, all citizens, including the recently-freed gabbar, were candidates for its acquisition. Note how members of the Christian community of Abyssinia have always been the collective owners, albeit entrusted to their crown, of assets held as riste negus before the free grants of riste negus in land. The crown was merely a trustee of the nation made up of the Christian community.

The exercise was nothing more than a hastened or even revolutionary way of rendering indirect owners of gasha assets (riste negus in land) into direct owners. The grants represented a case of legislated transfer of what until then was a collectively held rist into a privately owned rist. Citizens of all Abyssinia not the
indigenous owners were to emerge as the effective beneficiaries of the process (Cohen & Weintraub 1975; Zewde 1991; Joireman 2000).

The Free-Land (riste negus) grants were a politically motivated move and had little to do with rendering the gabbbar into land-owning farmers as in the heartland of Abyssinia. It was the mainly Abyssinian employees of the state (gooltenya) who had stayed loyal during the Italian occupation and settlers in general who emerged as the prime beneficiaries of this hastened transfer of conquered land.

It was in the government land grant policies of Haile Selassie’s government that the issue of central commitment to development and social justice was most clearly revealed; for, despite government claims of interest in landless peasants, the land grant policy was based on political not developmental orientations... Those who received land were in most cases gentry, civil servants, and military or police officers rather than landless peasants, and they usually got their land as a reward for service and loyalty without any development conditions being placed on its use (Cohen & Weintraub 1975, p. 59) [emphases added].

The practice of floating crown land here has had its parallels in the similar practices undertaken by the British and other empire-building nations in their former colonies such as Australia (Bachelard; 1997). The settler/colonist, not the aboriginal population, was the intended beneficiary of the grand land auctions under the regime of the late Emperor Haile Selassie of Abyssinia/Ethiopia.

The squatted-upon crown lands (still held in reserve) too could be offered for the grand ‘sale’, the allocation of rist (in the traditional fashion), or for a lease to foreign investors/developers where the crown/state emerges as a shareholder (Cohen & Weintraub 1975).

The latter was the case with the land lease offer of the pastoralist Afar and Karayu-Oromo, both in the alluvial inland-delta areas in the Awash River Valley, for the ‘development’ of sugar-cane and cotton irrigation schemes. As was the case with all pastoralist peoples in the empire, the squatter nature of indigenous Afar and the Karayu-Oromo was brought to the fore in the process. These days, the same situation applies (Dilebo 1983; Gadamu 1994).

In a way, this process was just another case of rist-ification, or the transfer of ‘crown’ assets to the direct and private ownership of citizens. However, it was
meant to be qualitatively different to *rist*-ification as its outcome was to create not so much the traditional pension-farms or pension-producing farms, but ones generating taxable produce/wealth (Schwab 1972; Keller 1988).

In effect, *riste negus* was transformed into just another type of *riste Christian*, independent of the hastened and politically motivated transfer of land to citizens until then held by the crown, to the direct or private ownership of the citizens (Christians) of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. I conceive the resulting type of land ownership as *riste Christian*-through-Free-Land-Grants (RC-FG). As such, RC-FG is nothing more than a type of *riste Christian* but one acquired not in lieu of a pension payout in land – this being the traditional and most significant method of transferring crown land to citizens – but through imperial land (*riste negus*) grants.

This qualitatively different type of *rist* (RC-FG), to confuse the understanding of the economic system even more, came to be known as *ye gabbbar meret* (*gabbbar* land). This however often conveyed an extremely misleading notion of land owned by the *gabbbar*. As we have noted, the *gabbbar* are themselves a type of asset collectively owned by the nation of Abyssinia. They were the labour *rist* of the nation. One type of property could hardly own another type of asset/property. Just as the plantation slaves in the confederate south of the USA could not own other items of property, nor could the *gabbbar* and the *fingella* slaves of Abyssinia.

The source of the apparent confusion lies in the use of the term *gibbir* (noun) that could mean one or all of the following: tax, revenue, and/or tribute. The term *gabbbar*-land stands for land held by s/he who pays a *gibbir* (land tax).

The ‘*gabbbar*’ land is merely a reference to a type of privately owned land (RC-FG) that carries a property/income tax, as distinct from the era where there existed clearly-defined sub-categories of land/property holdings in relation to another industry: theo-industry. RC-FG is a type of *rist* land created in the former *gabbbar* colonies of Abyssinia (southern half of Ethiopia), following the grants of land acquired via conquest in the second half on the nineteenth century.

The net result was the making of a new category of landlords or *ristenya* (RC-FG) in southern Ethiopia, on top of the type parallel to the traditional *riste Christian* or pension-farms found mainly in the heartland of Abyssinia.
Following the massive land grants, two sub-types but fundamentally Abyssinian *ristenya* co-existed in the Empire: the *ristenya* of pension-farms (mostly in the Abyssinian heartland) and the *ristenya* of RC-FG (south). The former, as we have noted, farmed for their pension and acquired the land from the crown at some point in the past, as such. The latter obtained their land through legislated grants and thus a qualitatively different type of farm and production system (commercial farms similar to the White-owned commercial farms in the Republic of South Africa, in what used to be Rhodesia, or in the Kenya colony), at least in theory, were to emerge out of the process (Keller 1988; McClellan 1988; Tareke 1991; Zewde 1991).

The main beneficiaries in the making of ‘new’ *rist* (RC-FG) out of the gasha-born lands were the former *gooltenya* (mostly Abyssinians). A small band of native collaborators or *gooltenya* also known as the *balabat* came to be the beneficiaries for their services in the pacification of the conquered regions and their role as the facilitators in the gibbir generation operations there.

The effective transfer of crown land to the citizens of the empire of Ethiopia, the Abyssinians, was the most salient out come of the process. They were to emerge as the full-fledged private landlords out of which it was expected a new type of agri-industrialist would emerge. Their estates were to be the main source of renewable wealth, of tax revenue and the main employers of not just the freed *gabbar* of the south but also of the land-strapped and impoverished peasants from the heartland of Abyssinia (Schwab 1972; Dilebo 1983; Pausewang 1983).

Out-migration of poor Abyssinian peasants and the opportunities this opened up were the other benefits of the auctions. However, these ultimately came at the expense of the native labour tenants or *chisenya*. Any measure that could ensure the sharecropper securities of the native *chisenya* invariably has to come on the basis of reductions in number of the labour tenants that migrate from the heartlands of Abyssinia into the estates owned by their ‘cousins’ (McCann 1995). The latter was one major outcome from the reforms of the Marxist regime or the Derg in its bid to restore the sharecropper securities of the native *chisenya*.

There were neither guarantees nor precedents to make the latter (*ristenya* of RC-FG) a different type of *ristenya* from those traditional ones (*ristenya* of pension-
farms). As far as most were concerned, becoming a *ristenya* echoed a traditional pattern of private land ownership that was exempt from *gibbir* as well as being an inheritable asset amongst the blood relatives of the original beneficiary. It meant being the owners of *riste Christian* as found in the heartland of Abyssinia, as has sustained pension-farms.

One way or the other, the heartland of Abyssinia, via the employees of the crown and settlers based in the south, came to be the ultimate beneficiaries of the grants (Cohen & Weintraub 1975). The size of *rist* land possessions of Abyssinia was incremented several times as the ‘old’ *rist* holdings at home are expanded with the new acquisitions (RC-FG) in the crown lands/colonies. The wage-post (*goolt*) holders in the crown colonies, at least from a legal point of view, continued to claim a share in their ancestral *rist* lands in the home countries. The reverse was also the case.

Those Abyssinians based in the homelands stood a chance of claiming and acquiring an inheritance right on the newly acquired *rist* holdings (RC-FG) in the south as well. (This is discussed further in the last section of this chapter.)

**Land Grants (*Riste Negus*) and Competing Interests**

A difficult balancing act between the interests of the Abyssinians, the king-makers of Ethiopia, on one hand and of the *gabbar* nations on the other have been a prevalent theme of this process. Another was the ability to secure an alternative source of revenue on which to sustain the waged ‘classes’ (or those still on the payroll of the crown, despite the crisis of theo-industry) and those that expect the payment of pensions, on retirement.

So, the land grants and related ‘reforms’ had to achieve multiple goals without necessarily been revolutionary and disruptive and at the same time end up alienating the traditional beneficiaries of theo-industry, the Abyssinians.

Amongst these goals were:

(a) the freeing of all categories of slaves;

(b) the continued ability to pay pension to those that had served and serve the crown by converting *riste negus* into private holdings;
(c) to be able to make a qualitatively different type of propertied classes out of the former gooltenya where theo-industry gave way to a free agrarian industry; and,

(d) to end up with a self-renewing, viable agrarian industry that would replace theo-industry (the ancient primary industry of the empire) and would be instrumental in the generation of 'real' wealth and 'true' taxes on which to run a modern state. RC-FG was to serve as the economic foundation for the 'birth' of commercial farms or farms that produced neither gibbir nor a type of agricultural pension (as those in the heartland of Abyssinia) but a produce or taxable produce.

The hoped-for free agricultural enterprises (commercial farms or farms from which a produce is extracted) were expected to fuel all other secondary and tertiary sectors. These were meant to be the source of agricultural employment for the gabbar-turned-chisenya (sharecroppers) in the south and for the immigrant would-be chisenya from the heartland of Abyssinia (Pausewang 1983).

**Free Land Grants versus Revenue**

The crown could hardly afford to alienate its main constituency. After all, the whole economic regime built around theo-industry has had the citizens of Abyssinia as its primary beneficiary.

Giving crown lands to the freed slaves, on top of freeing gabbar labour, was economic suicide, to say the least. But nor could the crown afford to convert these lands into what crown lands had traditionally been converted into: the pension-generating private land holdings or the rist (riste Christian). Doing so would have starved the crown from its sources of gibbir without creating an alternative and renewable source of revenue. The introduction of a new concept of private land ownership where land would become more than a source of pension (tax) was an integral part of the 'reform' (Schwab 1972; Keller 1988; McClellan 1988).
RC-FG and the ‘Birth’ of a Free Agrarian Industry

The making of riste Christian through Free Grants (RC-FG), more than any other strategy, was meant to bring about a qualitatively new concept of farming and farmers. We have seen how farming in Abyssinia/Ethiopia revolved around gubber-farms for the production of gubber (with which to pay employees of theo-industry) and pension-farms as the source agricultural pension package for the long retired employees of the Abyssinian crown.

It was meant to usher an era where farming is an end in itself, not an activity carried out to fulfil the fiscal obligations of another industry (theo-industry). RC-FG was to serve as the economic foundation for the ‘birth’ of something that would resemble commercial farming where farming becomes an industry on its own right. On this basis, a qualitatively new type of farmer was expected to emerge out of the newly-created land-owning class or the ristenya of riste Christian through Free Grants (generally composed of former gooltenya).

The end product of such farms was to be neither a gubber nor an agricultural pension but a produce — more importantly, a taxable produce. This way, the country would end up with an alternative primary industry in the place of theo-industry. After all, converting all land held as riste negus (land) into the traditional type of rist (riste Christian) or into pension-farms could have signalled an economic disaster in terms of revenue. It could have reverted the gubber-farms into pension-farms or into what the heartland of Abyssinia has become, without having created an alternative source of revenue on which to sustain the vast bureaucracy of the state. While the gabbar countries were the focus of this ‘reform’, the heartland of Abyssinia was not immune to it either (Tareke 1991).

The pension-farmers of the north too were to be transformed into a similar category of farmers that were meant to evolve in the south following the land grants. They too were to become producers of taxable products, not producers of agricultural pension on their inheritable pension-farms that evolved on land held as riste Christian. A new concept of farmers and farming as an industry was to take root in the north as part of the reform. Such an experimentation in the north led to outright rejection and the so-called ‘peasant revolts’ (Schwab 1972; Gilkes 1975; Zewde 1991).
However, in practice, the benefits of converting *riste negus* into *riste Christian* through Free Grants was emphatic not in the establishment of a qualitatively new type of farming and farmers, but by adding a vast supply of ‘new’ *rist* lands to the existing ones (‘old’ *rist* lands held by Abyssinians both in the north and south). It laid the foundation for the formal (inheritance) and informal (sharecropping opportunities) redistribution of such lands and the produce amongst the Abyssinians based in the heartland and those that took root in the *gabbar* colonies.

The freeing of both categories of slaves (crown-owned slaves and citizen-owned slaves) created a legal, but not necessarily practical, platform that rendered the ‘new’ citizens of Abyssinia/Ethiopia qualified to benefit from the imperial free redistribution of their ancestral lands. In a sense, the freed *gabbar*, too, were theoretical beneficiaries from the granting of a piece of *riste negus* or land alienated from their ancestors. In practice, though, the citizens of Ethiopia (Christian Abyssinians), with a small band of the Abyssinianised southerners, emerged as the natural beneficiaries from the grand *gasha*-land auctions in the *gabbar* countries (Clay & Holcomb 1985; McClellan 1988).

The wholesale freeing of all types of slaves, like the across-the-board freeing of the American plantation slaves, was instrumental in the instant creation of labour lords or tenants, or what I have called the *goolbetenya* (*goolbet* is an Amharic word for muscle or labour). It was a catalyst in the creation of a free labour pool from the former *gabbar*. Freed *gabbar*, together with the pool of immigrant farmhands from the land-poor heartland of Abyssinia, were set to become South African-style black labourers that were to work on South African- or Rhodesian-style (Zimbabwean white commercial farmers) farms to emerge from the land grants.

**Attempts to Convert Pension-Farmers into Agri-Industrialists**

There was another aspect of ‘reforms’ with an implicit aim of rendering the peasants in the heartland of Abyssinia into owners of private property (land), not privately owned land that generated a pension. It had the ultimate aim of converting the *rist* lands (*riste Christian*) in the heartland of Abyssinia, hence the pension farms they sustained, into the same category of land tenure as that being created in the former *gabbar* countries or the RC-FG.
In this way, for the first time since the regions became the bastions of *rist* holdings, these peasants were to pay a property/income tax over their possessions as the crown could no longer rely on its *gibbir*-farms as the main source of revenue. The heartland of Abyssinia, in effect, had to be awakened from the relative privileges drawn from a condition where other regions and peasants had the unenviable task of generating revenue for the whole empire. The near irrelevance of the Abyssinian heartland as the source of revenue for the Ethiopian state has been pointed out by McCann (1987, pp. 57-58):

Northern emigrant soldier-peasants [settlers] had formed the flesh and sinew of Emperor Menelik's armies of expansion in the south and west, but revenues from northern peasant farms never were a significant source for Ethiopia's growth into a modern state.

In a similar vein, Joireman (2000, p. 50) observed:

The state was able to survive without the revenue from agricultural income taxes in the north because it was able to *effectively* tax the southern regions of the country and to *centrally* tax imports and exports [emphases added].

As part of the privilege was the near birth-right type claim that all 'Ethiopians' have over what goes into the treasury, notwithstanding how this was generated or whether or not they have contributed to it. Hence the right to the share of the *gibbir* (from the southern *goolt* countries), the feuds over *gibbir* and land 'entitlements', I argue, served as the underlying economic foundation for all feuds and wars amongst the Abyssinian sub-regions/provinces.

As expected, the aim at transforming the property nature of land in the heartland of Abyssinia and the imposition of similar land tax patterns there led to a stubborn resistance and in many places resulted in violent clashes. The so-called peasant uprisings in Gojam, Tigray and other places in the north were fundamentally different from those in the former *gabbar* countries in the south (Schwab 1972; Zewde 1991; Joireman 2000).

These 'revolts' were not so much against 'exploitation' but a rejection of change to the relative advantages and privileges of possessing a piece of land that generate a pension, while at the same time, the regions preserve the right to claim a share in the revenue from the *gibbir*-farms in the 'Galla' countries (*gabbar* countries).
These were a pro-status quo revolts. In the south, the natives were freed to have their labour, thus becoming the ristenya of labour but not of land. They were neither to become ristenya in the sense of their Abyssinian counterparts (owners of a pension-generating piece of land) nor were they to become ristenya of RC-FG.

The intransigence of the northern peasants in making the switch from the traditional type of rist land holding (that which has sustained pension-farms) to a new type of rist (similar to RC-FG) would serve to retain the parasitic economic attachment that has long underpinned the correlation between them and the gabbar farmers in the south. This phenomenon could be conceptualised as a type of ancient welfare dependency syndrome where the sources of the funds are to be found in the gabbar (slave) system.

**Riste Christian through Free Grants and its Poverty Mitigating Function**

The redistribution of riste negus was meant to be the basis for the emergence of independent agricultural industry in the form of commercial-type farms. These, in turn, were meant to be the source of taxable produce, as distinct from either the pension-farms that predominated in the heartland of Abyssinia and the gibbir-farms in the former gabbar colonies of Abyssinia/Ethiopia.

However, the reforms followed a protracted period stretching over decades. The north was left to its old ways, while in parts of the south, gibbir-farms were still intact, by the time the Marxist regime or the Derg introduced another top-down decree of land ownership, referred to as ‘land reform’ (Bruce et al. 1994).

What interests me most here is not so much the peculiar type of rist holdings into which the crown-holdings of the south were transformed following the free land grants by the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie I, but how land assets ended up becoming the riste Christian of settler Abyssinians or a property of the Abyssinians, all the same. These grants, like the traditional rist-ification processes that created Abyssinian rist land in the past, were instrumental in the transfer of ‘crown’ assets (riste negus) to the citizens of Abyssinia or Hizbee Christian (the Christian citizens of Ethiopia or the Abyssinians).
The conversion of crown lands into RC-FG, as was a hastened or ‘revolutionary’ transformation of crown lands into riste Christian of Abyssinians, independent of the rationale or method used for the transfer.

As in the past, this transfer of land to citizens of Abyssinia came to mark the third and last phase in the metamorphosis of conquest-born assets. As in the past, formal (inheritance rights) and informal (sharecropper opportunities for poor ristenya peasants of Abyssinia) avenues of land and produce redistribution between the Abyssinians come to replace the crown/state sponsored (allocation of wage-posts) avenues in land and produce redistribution.

The role of the riste negus in the mitigation of poverty amongst the Abyssinian ristenya of land (rich or poor) was set to continue under the new conditions. We have seen the role of the crown as the agent that facilitated the transfer or redistribution of resources created in the context of theo-industry. Under the new arrangements, informal and citizen managed avenues came to serve as the ideal platforms in the redistribution of land assets and benefits from the privatised land/produce to a much larger Abyssinian public. The sharecropper arrangements between the neo-ristenya (ristenya of RC-FG) and the immigrant poor ‘cousins’ of these from the heartland of Abyssinia were one avenue. The inheritance titles over the ‘new’ rist holdings/privatised lands by the blood relatives of the immediate beneficiaries, was the other informal avenue via which the benefits from these assets (land) flowed to a much larger constituency than the direct beneficiaries (Tareke 1991).

The gabbar-turned-goolbetenya found themselves in competition with landstrapped (though not necessarily landless) peasant migrants from the heartland of Abyssinia. The latter remained landowners or ristenya, despite the fact that their possessions were so meagre as to hardly provide enough to live on (Keller 1988; Joireman 2000).

Nevertheless a qualitative difference exists between the goolbetenya (freed gabbar of the south) and the poor ristenya (of rist lands) of Abyssinia who were forced to hire/lease out their labour to the Abyssinian instant landlords in the south. Being the ristenya (even if this was a matter of having a title on a corporate rist held by an extended family of Abyssinians) has been the signal of the free, of the citizen.
This was the marker of the social boundary between the slave or the gabbar and the citizens of Abyssinia.

Poor ristenya from the heartland of Abyssinia had a socio-psychological advantage over the freed gabbar or the goolbetenya. He/she has the advantages of being the co-relatives of their potential employers, the rich and instant land ristenya in the south. At least, both belonged to the community of orthodox Christians (McClellan 1988). In many parts of the crown colonies, the native population had opted to adopt Islam, partially, in rejection of the Christianising mission of Abyssinia. From an economical point of view, the poor ristenya had some fall-back position in the form of their privately and/or ‘communal’/corporate-held land rist holdings in their home countries, to which they could return to claim a share (Hoben 1963).

There were the informal channels that linked the ristenya of RC-FG in the south with their ‘cousins’ in the north. Inheritance rights were the main ones, as we have noted. Overall, the crown land grants in the south were instrumental in completing the transfer of gasha lands to the citizens of Abyssinia. Abyssinia, as a community of nation, ended up with a huge addition of rist land possession on top of their ‘old’ rist possessions. The rist possessions of Abyssinia more than doubled followed the grants (Cohen & Weintraub 1975).

Such pattern of ‘sharing’ the produces from gasha assets of the nation rist of all Abyssinia (riste negus) was not the sole platform via which the ‘spoils’ of the economic system went to mitigate poverty during this phase. This was only the direct platform. Indirectly, the ability of the crown to create wage-paying posts in its theo-industry for its citizens first and rist land allocation as pension or free grants later relieved the pressures on the rist land possessions in the heartlands. The process slowed down the continuous reparation/sub-division of land between the kin and family members in Abyssinia proper. McClellan (1984, p. 660) observed that:

For the individual northerner, emigrations provided an opportunity to relieve pressures on the northern household unit, insuring more land for those left behind as well as to gain power, status and wealth in the south. Attraction was strongest for the young who had the last opportunity in the north. Life would be hard, but the chances for both economic and social mobility were better.
Those who acquired a wage-post (goool), hence rist possesses on retirement, left their share of the ancestral rist lands for those left behind to live on. This does not necessarily extinguish the right to claim a share on the same portion of rist lands some time in the future. In relative terms, more farmable rist, hence, pension, was made available to those who were left behind. The holding capacity of the rist lands in Abyssinia were incremented due to the indirect economic benefits that flowed from access to gibbir initially and ‘new’ taxable rist holdings (RC-FG) in the south.

The benefits of peasant economies of continental Europe such as Ireland from the mass migrations to farm the vast lands in the Americas present us with some parallels. The continuous losses of the gabbar nations of Ethiopia/Abyssinia were a continuous gain for the members of the nation of orthodox Christian Abyssinia. This condition parallels with the losses sustained by the encomendado ‘Indios Brutos’ or Indian family labour assigned to the encomiendas (similar to gibbir-farms), first as encomendados (the equivalent of being a gabbar) and later when Indian lands were converted into privately owned possessions of the Spanish colonists, or into haciendas (Elliott 1963; Simpson 1963).

Whether it was due to the preferential employment opportunities or to the processes that force the land-rich to work the land themselves, the freed gabbar stood to loss from the ‘reforms’. The later saw both the consolidation of settler ownership of their ancestral lands and the loss of farm-hand job opportunities to the labour pool of the poor-ristenya from the heartlands of Abyssinia. Those goolbetenya natives that were lucky enough to secure a farm-hand job on the farms of the neo-ristenya (ristenya of RC-FG) lived under the threat of eviction due to the preferential opportunities given to the Abyssinian migrant poor-ristenya or option for mechanised farms (Clay & Holcomb 1985; Keller 1988). On the other hand there was the tendency in the relative decline of the margin of land that would have allowed the hiring of labour outside the family unit. Either way, the freed gabbar stood to loss the basic securities that once came with their status as the slaves of the nation or the gabbar, entitlements to their ration quota.

The loss of sharecropper (chisenya) positions and the associated evictions, by default, rendered the era of gabbar-hood and the securities of gabbar ration, the ‘good old days’. 
chapter 9

REFORMING THEO-INDUSTRY:
A CURE OR A CURSE?

Unequal Access to Gibbir and Crown Land: Cause for Inter-
Abyssinian Feuds?

The conversion of riste negus into rist Christian, be it under the traditional rationale where crown land is allocated as a pension pay-out or via free land grants, represented an effective transfer of land to the citizens of Abyssinia/Ethiopia, thereby facilitating the redistribution of land and its fruits to those still in the homelands.

However, sub-regions or provinces of Abyssinia have had unequal access to the spoils of gasha assets (McClellan 1988; Hassan & Greenfield 1992; Ofcansky & Berry 1993). As such, different regions had better ability of mitigating and coping from the effects of poverty/famines. Being the kingmaker province made all the difference as far as ability to benefit from the economic agency of the crown/state was concerned (Markakis 1974; Marcus 1994).

Note how the source of the sharecroppers in the rist lands created in the south was both the freed gabbar-turned-native tenants (of labour) and tenants from the heartlands of Abyssinia. In practice most of the later came from the Amharic speaking middle provinces of Abyssinia (McCann 1995), leaving the northerly Amharic provinces and Tigray relatively disadvantaged from both the wage-post (goolt) redistribution/allocation process, as well as in the opportunities as a sharecropper where kin-based contacts were a significant access route to either.
The effect of this alienation meant an unequal access of the Abyssinian regions to the fruits of theo-industry (gibbir) and in the acquisition of conquered land. This inequality, perceived or real, I argue, has been the main source of grievances and feuds between the provinces that benefited best and those that felt they were excluded from the ‘feast’ on the carcasses of aremene nations (Clapham 1990). The Amharic provinces of Abyssinian such as Shoa hold a dominant position from the mid-nineteenth century to the final days of the Marxist military dictatorship founded by the armed forces of the last of the Amharic Emperors, Haile Selassie I (1974-1991).

This phenomenon, more than any other, underpins the political turmoil and endless wars between the regions of Abyssinia. Gibbir as revenue derived from the gabbar nations then and whatever resources able to be squeezed from these same regions since, has fuelled these feuds. At the same time, wars have themselves become an industry, a major employer and the source of limited economic renewal to the warring parties, contrary to the conventional assumptions.

The following decades have seen coups and counter coups where different groups vied for a share of the dwindling revenue, mostly from the former crown colonies. All regimes have made an effort in acquiring the keys to the treasury of the state in Addis Ababa as they embraced on their own versions of theocratic missions, with the aim of ‘cleansing’ the evils of the regimes they came to overthrow, always violently. Such ‘neo’ theocratic missions, in as much as the ‘classical’ ones before them, were self-assumed missions that required no prior consent of those that were intended to benefit from them.

Later chapters deal with the aspect of neo-theocratic missions and their role in the mitigation of poverty amongst the constituency that assumes such undertakings. The Derg’s socialist revolution and Woyane’s ‘revolutionary-democracy’ are cases of neo-theocratic missions. Woyane is a popular name used for the regime founded and dominated by the Abyssinians from the northern Abyssinian region of Tigray. It came to power at the end of violent military campaign against the Derg, by extension against the long-standing Amharic rule of the empire.
To Tax or Not to Tax the Pension-Farmers of Abyssinia?

In the second leg of the protracted and deliberately cautious processes of ‘reforming’ the gabbar system, which was centred on the so-called Agricultural Income Tax Bill (1966-1967), there was an attempt to transform the economic fabric in the heartland of Abyssinia too. This was inevitable in the light of the crisis of viability that has hit theo-industry and the question of revenue (Schwab 1972; Tareke 1991).

There could no longer be an ‘external’ source of revenue that finances the wage-paying posts of the crown where the absolute beneficiaries of them have traditionally been the Abyssinians themselves. On top of that, regional fiscal expenditures of the provinces in the heartland of Abyssinia were subsidised from what is collected from the more productive southern half of the empire, if not squarely financed from it (McCann 1987; Joireman 2000). The system not only was inherently despotic, I contend, but also cultivated a severe case of fiscal dependency or parasitism in the heartland of Abyssinia.

These regions, perhaps inadvertently, long felt it to be their birth right to claim a share from what went into the central coffers of the crown (in the form of Net gibbir or fiscal revenue), independent of the size of their contribution or total lack of it. This notion continues to pervade the title over ‘taxes’ and the so-called state lands or ‘public lands’ (mostly in the south). In a sense, taxing the south-based and mainly Abyssinian owners of RC-FG and using it to finance the fiscal expenses of the provinces in the heartland of Abyssinia – regions that hold on to their tax-exempted pension rist holding – was not only impractical but bound to alienate the neo ristenya in the south (Joireman 2000).

This was all the more important considering how the entire economic fate of Ethiopia, in the post-theo-industry period, was invested in the hope of creating a Rhodesian-style farmer out of the former gooltenya turned ristenya of a new kind.

However, counter effects of northern fiscal dependency had to come in the form of imposing more and mostly indirect mechanisms of extracting revenue from the southern economy dominated by the Abyssinian landlords at this stage.
Given the country’s subsistence economy, which provided a limited domestic tax base, and because of the persistent resistance of traditional elites to taxes on income, the taxing of imports and exports proved to be a convenient alternative for generating the capital [revenue] needed by the state (Keller 1988, p. 113).

Keller (1988, p. 113) goes on to add: “The Haile Sellassie regime employed both indirect and direct taxes as means for generating income.”

To make things worse, the country was faced with a series of discontented regions and revolts, often with quite different reasons. Some of these were to retain the status quo at any cost (Gojam versus Pension rist). Others were to reverse the still-outstanding alienation of natives from their lands (Arsi-Oromo, in Bale region, Guji-Oromo uprisings in the Sidamo region, the Sidama-Darassa revolts etc. (Schwab 1972; Tareke 1991). The secessionist wars in Eritrea and the ever-present Amharic-Tigre rivalry over the emperorship (read political and economic centrality and the benefits that this entails) provided another focus of feuds and wars.

Both the costs of financing these wars and the need to suppress the insipid feuds amongst the political contenders in the Abyssinian heartland (through the redistribution of patronages) required additional sources of revenue; hence the aim to contemplate the near-taboo subject of interfering with the inalienable rist possessions in the heartland of Abyssinia. As part of the ‘reforms’, it was hoped that the northern risteriya (pension farmers) would become a tax-paying farmer, just as their Abyssinian counterparts, who took root in the south as owners of RC-FG.

The transformation was the centrepiece of the intended process, which among other goals had the aim of introducing the notion of private property in land in the heartlands of Abyssinia as well (Zewde 1991).

At the same time, such a transition was to be the cornerstone in transforming the agrarian economy of the north into an independent and potentially self-renewing form of industry on its own right. Agriculture in the rist lands of the north have long been centred around the production of a pension and operated with the premise where there existed another source of revenue for the nation in the form of gibbir, the coerced exchange value of ‘tebel’ (or the income of theo-industry).
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The intended outcome was the emergence of not just a new type of private property but an alternative, independent and self-renewing agrarian industry that was hoped serve as the source of savings/capital accumulation and fuels the establishment and expansion of other forms of industries. This way the north was to become a contributor to the country's coffers, as well as becoming its own source jobs and source of capital for its own process of industrialisation.

In practice the attempt triggered widespread discontent and in places an outright revolts as the notion of taxing *rist* land was readily equated with the notion of being treated as the *gabbar* were treated in the crown colonies to the south. This was equated with the notion where taxing *rist* implied the alienation of land and its transfer to the proprietorship of the crown, in the same way the conquest of the *aremene* countries lead them becoming the source of *gibbir* (Tareke 1991; Zewde 1991).

Wages vs. Revenue

They *ristenya* of RC-FG were expected to pay property tax and/or income taxes (to add more confusion, this property tax has also come to be known as *gibbir*). As distinct from *gibbir*, however, the land/income tax of the *ristenya* was something they, at least in theory, owned and they therefore expected educational, health or other kind of services from the state in exchange. Again, in contrast to *gibbir*, tax on property/income represented an act free exchange between the payee and the collector, at least that was the intended goal. The Abyssinian *ristenya* of RC-FG in the former *gabbar* countries, as distinct from the *gabbar*, have the legal and practical powers (plus regional followers) to force the state to fulfil its duties.

As indicated earlier, there was a reluctance and disincentives associated with paying a tax that may or may not be spent on the payee, and a lack of tradition in paying tax due to the ingrained notion of *gibbir* ('revenue/tax') being the prerogative of the subject populations not of the free. With these, the intricate methods of hiding the size of the income or the size of potentially taxable land/property possessions, and the corruption and the corruptibility of the tax officials meant that indirect patterns of collecting revenue had to be the better option (Schwab 1972; Keller 1988).
In a sense, the state was reduced to financing its modernisation scheme and paying its waged employees (birre-gooltenya or demoztenya) from indirect taxes or taxes on essential consumer items of mainly import type (Zewde 1991). With indirect or direct taxes, much of the revenue continued to originate from the south. However, the landlord ‘class’, unlike the gabbar, were more likely to seek the delivery of services from the state. This scenario vastly contrasted to the scenario where state and bureaucracy were run on a sustainably flowing spoil or gibbir which was ‘owned’ by the crown. The gabbar neither owned the gibbir nor were they payees of the gibbir. Consequently, there was no need to reciprocate them in any tangible form, except in the mission of ‘saving’ them from the evils of their indigenous spirituality and a way of life that came with it.

From an economic point of view, the hastened reforms into the gabbar system led to a relative decline in the ability of the state to generate enough revenue with which to meet the needs of several sub-groups. The ability to sustain the existing demoztenya or salaried employees of the state was one. There was the need to create new wage-paying posts for the growing army of (young) job seekers. There was the need to pay pensions to the retiring army of the state. Added to that, external factors such as the sharp rise in the price of petrol (1970s) made the already precarious living conditions of the waged classes even worse. Wage increases that reflect the rise in the cost of living were one of the main claims of the waged classes in the years leading up to the demise of the ancien regime of Haile Selassie I.

**Reforms, Diverse Social Groups and Competing Interests**

The aim of inventing a free agrarian economy and on that basis the birth of a property/income tax-paying classes was to be the main source of revenue on which to sustain the vast bureaucracy that was increasingly made up of the graduates from the modern schools in the empire, the neo-literati or the neo-elite (Ottaway 1980).

This sub-elite group was fundamentally made up of the offspring of the gooltenya based in the colonies and from their half-cousins based in the heartland of Abyssinia. They were the product of the schooling system financed in the form of
the gibbir consumed under the category of a 'non-wage' or 'capital' expenditure of the crown (for the building of churches, schools, roads, palaces, telegraphic services etc. under the gabbar system in the pre reforms decades.

In effect, the advent of the neo-literati ushered in an era where the traditional pool from which the would-be gooltenya were recruited. The Abyssinian homelands in general and church-based education in particular were no longer the main source of the would-be gooltenya or holders of wage posts of the traditional primary industry of Abyssinia that was rendered unsustainable during the twentieth century. The demoztenya recruited from the neo literati (gooltenya paid in monetary type of a wage) came to replace the traditional gooltenya paid via the allocation of a gibbir-farm.

This aspect of relative decline in the revenue base of the state contrasted with the fast growth of the neo-literati and urban-based elite that aspired to a wage-paying post in the ministries. Additionally, there was an emergent sub-group originally from the native populations, due mainly to the mission schools run by expatriate evangelists and the sons and the handful of daughters of the local balabat, themselves a type of the gooltenya previously on the payroll of the crown (Dilebo 1983).

The neo-literati or modern intelligentsia, descendants of the fundamentally Abyssinian former gooltenya and the ristenya came to be the focus of the attention of the crown/state (Baxter 1978; Harbeson 1988). This was the case partially due to: (a) their urban-based nature, hence proximity to the centres of governance; (b) their better faculty to have an insight to the tribulations and intrigues of the regime still dominated by the old elite; (c) their propensity to question and resist the policies of the regime, including its treatments of the so called peasants; (d) their demand for improved living conditions and jobs to their group; and (e) their unhappiness to the slowness of the modernist process and the illusive nature of the fruits. All made them the main source of threat to the status quo.

This insipid threat often came in the form of student protests, but the main ones came in the form of the discontent and the attempted coup of the armed forces on the regime. There was one such in the 1960s and this served as a pre-cursor for a
successful one a decade later and the ushering in of a military regime with a Marxist bent (Clapham 1969; Gilkes 1975; Marcus 1994).

The gain of the modernist elite came at the expense of relegating the ristenya peasants of Abyssinia as the focal constituency and beneficiaries from wage posts created by the crown/state. The net effect of this would have to be their no longer being the target population in the political economy of the free agriculture or enterprise that was resilient in emerging. The structural foundation for progressive levels of impoverishment as the result of the unreplenishable nature of the ‘old’ rist holdings in this era was bound to lead to a famine condition there.

Abyssinians in their rural heartland have lost their traditional channels to mitigate poverty and famines via the opportunities created in the form of goolt-ification (the occupation of goolt-post that carries gibbir-farm(s) and rist-ification. Simultaneously, they no longer were the main constituency to benefit from the economic agency of the state. The sizeable and growing urban and predominantly Abyssinian elite have emerged as the usurpers of that position.

The state was no longer the economic tool of the ristenya peasants of Abyssinia, but of their younger urban-based descendants. There was a coup of centrality, so to speak. This fall from grace was a main catalyst in the exacerbation of the levels of poverty amongst the Abyssinian peasants and worse their loss of virtually all traditional avenues for the mitigation of poverty/famine conditions.

The first ‘victim’ from the discontinuity of Christian theo-industry thus was the traditional avenue by which the impoverished ristenya citizens of Abyssinia accessed the wage-paying posts of the crown or their ability to qualify as a gooltenya. While the ‘reforms’ allowed the Abyssinian gooltenya to become the ‘new’ ristenya and outright owners of the gasha lands in the crown colonies, these were virtually the last ones to benefit from the process.

The heartland of Abyssinia not only lost the traditional industry but the traditional platforms through which poverty and famine conditions found a way out. The traditional channels in the mitigation of poverty/famines was the victim of the reforming or discontinuing theo-industry, unless of course, the hoped for and modern/free agrarian economy created an alternative channel, which it did not.
The central state and its treasury would have the grievances of the neo-literati (both the employed and students) in terms of finding wage-paying posts and the deterioration of their living conditions as the central and politically explosive issue since during the second half of the twentieth century (Markakis 1987). In a sense, the neo-literati not the Abyssinians of the heartland came to occupy the centre position as far as the policy matters of the regimes in Addis Ababa were concerned. This preferential treatment of this ‘class’ is often presented as the pro-urban biases in the policy matters of all regimes in Ethiopia.

The period saw the inauguration of a less controllable and less loyal class of Abyssinia and the Abyssinianised, mainly based around the main urban centres. Effectively, the period was characterised by a coup of the neo-literati class over the classical pool (ecclesiastically literate) from which a substantial portion of the traditional gooltenya were recruited. The heartland of Abyssinia was all but cut-off from the economic agency of the crown/state and from the benefits of theo-industry. There was even lesser chance of benefiting from what had replaced theo-industry.

‘Reforms’, centred on the privatisation of riste negus in land and the experimentation in commercial agrarian enterprise, thus marked the ‘beginning of the end’ in the economic centrality of the ristenya peasants of Abyssinia. The counter-‘reforms’ of the Marxist regime from the mid-1970s onwards, could only exacerbate the process. The structural foundations for severe poverty and recurrent famines could only get worse in the second half of the century, as the result.

Famines were not only bound to be the norm but also occurred without the traditional way-outs and the agency of the state in leading the impoverished peasants out of their predicament. Food aid, the product of international sympathy and due to others’ politico-strategic calculations, I argue, by default became the ‘gibbir’ from the international community. It became the supplementary income to the ever-decreasing yields from the pension farms of Abyssinia. In the era when there was no longer an additional or fresh supply of rist lands, more and more Abyssinian peasants had to depend on the same portions of land. The relative size of the farms decreased, and with it, their ability to support those who eked a living from them.
Be it the escalating cost of quashing revolts and depressing wars of secessions, the increased extraction from the farms in the southern half of Ethiopia, under the regime of Haile Selassie and since, was inevitable. At the same time this economic burden, arguably, was one of the major stumbling block as far as the hoped for emergence of a free agrarian industry similar to the commercial farms in the neighbouring Kenya or Rhodesia, was concerned.

Whatever little economic stimulus that existed at the beginning was removed as the increased cost of running an expanding bureaucracy, a modern army and security apparatus in line with the growing revolts was met by increasing indirect imposts on goods and services consumed by the landowners (ristenya) and the rest of the population. In the end, the economic position of the owners of land as riste Christian through Free Grants was closer to that of the gабbar than to the white Rhodesian landlords or commercial farm owners.

Few decades later, the replacement for theo-industry was as illusive as ever (Cohen & Weintraub 1975). The hoped-for free and self-renewing agrarian industry failed to materialise, both in the former crown colonies and in the heartland of Abyssinia. The gабbar-turned-sharecroppers or -chisenya were increasingly destitute, where the era of gабbar-hood assumed the undeserved status of the ‘good old days’. Life on gабbar ration appeared a luxury when compared to the insecurities of competing for a farm-hand position with migrant Abyssinian poor-ristenya in search of farming jobs (as sharecroppers) (Clay & Holcomb 1985; McCann 1995).

The peasants in Gojam disliked the regime in Addis Ababa, as did those in the Oromo region of Bale. But the rationales for their disapproval are diametrically opposite in many ways. The former opted to retain their entitlements to pension farms or rist lands, while not questioning the source of revenue on which the state is run. The latter opted for what the former have rejected.

Generally, the revolts of Oromo or Gedeo peasants in the south were for the right to job securities as chisenya, at least, and for the outstanding issue of remaining the landless tenants (of labour) on their own ancestral lands, a condition that was in a stark contrast to the inalienable rist land right that has been the hallmark of the Abyssinian.
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There was an aspiration to a land title (*rist*) over the alienated lands. It was a claim to a native title over land now that the title over the labour pool of their family unit has been restored. In the end, it was a cry for the right to an essential asset with which to mitigate the progressive processes of destitution and impoverishment (Diłebo 1983; Tareke 1991).

Generally, the gains of Abyssinia came at the expense of the loss of the non-Abyssinians. All attempts to correct this process would have to come at the expense of alienating the Abyssinians, as the two generally have mutually exclusive interests.

The decline in the living conditions of the *demoztenya* created another disgruntled sub-group in the form of the already employed and those within the aspirations for *demoz*-paying posts in the vast bureaucracy. Given the fact that the ‘old’ *goöntenya* ended up the main beneficiary of the ‘reforms’ as neo-*ristenya* in the south, while still retaining the political power of the state, this group was increasingly perceived as the embodiment of all the evils, the *aremene* that affected Ethiopia at this point. Rifts and conflicts between various groups and social classes were confusingly diverse and strove for different, at times mutually exclusive, goals.

The rifts and conflicts between the ‘old’ *goöntenya* and the ‘new’ *goöntenya* or *demoztenya* (both fundamentally Abyssinian) became the catalyst in removing the *ancien régime* and with it the vestiges of theo-industry in the mid-1970s. This regime, like the previous ones, embarked on its own mission of removing/cleansing what it declared to be the *aremene* evils of the time (the *ancien régime*) and the creation of another utopia in its place.

The absolute and relative (to the increase in the fiscal expenditure) decline in revenue was one of the main side effects of the free land (*riste negus*) grants.

**Reforms and the ‘Two Poverties’**

The massive free grants of *gasha* lands or *riste negus* in land were a ‘blessing’ for Abyssinians (both at homelands and their settler arm) in a short-term basis. In the long run the process marked the onset of the processes of gradual impoverishment of the *ristenya* as the rich *ristenya* slipped to the category of middle-ranged *ristenya*, the middle-ranged *ristenya* into the category of poor-*ristenya* and sitting
victims of famines. However, this time round, the decline in the place of theo-
industry as the provider of goolt-posts as a remedy was no longer feasible.

The era of unrenovable poverty and famine conditions thus arrived for
Abyssinians. The gabbar have never been the economic agents of Abyssinia but its
object, as we have noted. They were a mere factor of production, a type of human
capital. As sharecroppers, the former gabbar lost the securities to a gabbar ration.
The insecurities of farm-hand jobs (chisenya-hood) and the wide spread evictions
of the native goolbetenya, marked the progressive processes of impoverishment
amongst these set of ‘peasants’.

The feature of progressive impoverishment and vulnerability to famines amongst
the goolbetenya of the south was virtually indistinguishable from those felt
amongst Abyssinians, for an outside onlooker. Nevertheless, the two owed to a
qualitatively different rationales and economic processes.

Amongst Abyssinians, increased levels of impoverishment and vulnerability to
famines owe to the decline in their wealth generating capacities, both from within
their primary industry in the form of gibbir (theo-industry) and from their rist land
holdings (agricultural pension). Given their ability to influence the crown/state,
they had traditionally been the beneficiaries of the role/functions of the state as the
main agent of wealth creation and its renewal (Schwab 1972).

Amongst the formerly gabbar nations, poverty and increased vulnerability to
famines mainly reflected their fundamentally altered economic condition that made
them ‘fodder’ of the wealth-generating capacities of another set of nation,
Abyssinia. In concrete terms conquest and the alienation of all their assets
represented the loss of their status as the ‘focus’ of their pre-conquest wealth-
generating capacities. This imposed status was instrumental in extinguishing their
status as agents of their economic system. The loss of their economic agency was
their main gain from the process. Conquest meant the alienation of the gabbar
people form the bulk of the produce from the gibbir-farms, except the gabbar’s
ration which was a cost of gibbir production under the gabbar system. As chisenya
or sharecroppers on the ristenya’s land (post-WWII), the former gabbar were
forced to live on kind of a ‘wage’ paid for being mere employees on privately
owned farms.
The former gabbar lost more so than the right to consume the bulk of the produce from what used to be their ancestral lands. They had never been nor were to become the foci of the state’s (Abyssinian-dominated) role as an economic agent. The loss of autonomous political existence meant that their poverty and economic conditions have all but been rendered patronless. Former gabbar turned into goolbetenya (‘labour lords’) or chisenya (sharecroppers)] became the economic ‘orphans’ of Ethiopia. The exacerbation of their economic condition created on of the two rationales for the so-called peasant ‘revolts’ in Ethiopia.

Abyssinian peasants had their ‘revolts’, but as indicated with a fundamentally different rationales and demands. Any attempt or interference from the central state that was perceived to be counter to the established norms, invariably lead to discontent and revolts the centre could hardly afford under the circumstances where the Abyssinians have been the essential power base/constituency of the regime.

The attempted transition to an independent agrarian industry in place of theo-industry has been raked by ironic, conflicting and competing conditions and interests in Ethiopia. This state of affairs underlies the paradox of poverty and famines in an otherwise resource-rich country.

Ethiopia has great agricultural potential, but is one of the least developed countries in the world. Yet, she has a natural endowment of size, generally fertile soils, sufficient rainfall [in many parts], and a considerable variety of climates and elevations. This natural resource base and the existence of a large, hardworking peasantry, leads most experts to the conclusion that Ethiopia has a rich agrarian potential for being the bread basket of the Horn of Africa and the Middle East (Cohen & Weintraub 1975).

**Back to Theo-industry: A Solution?**

As we have noted, the hoped for transition to a qualitatively different type of agrarian industry as a medium to off set the economic crisis brought about the disruption in the operation of theo-industry did not materialise. The regime intriguingly continued to dole out gasha lands in the form of pension rist while at the same time it was offering other gasha lands (including those under gibbir-farms and those in reserve) for an auction.
The failure to transform the pension farmers in the heartland of Abyssinia into operators of renewable farming industry/economy could only add more fiscal burden onto the south-based farms owned by the new ristenya but worked by native chisenya. Operators of small-scale and generally service-type activities were the other source of income tax for the state.

As such, the visible culpable the embodiment of all the evils that affected Ethiopia found an expression in the royal house of Abyssinia and its timely Emperor Haile Selassie I. This ancien regime and all it represented came to be known as the ‘saw-belaw-siireat’ (the man-eater regime), hence the ‘aremene’.

From a wider point of view, the regime was the embodiment of all things evil and odd. This was revealed in the fact that it claimed to be Semitic, Solomonoid in a country where the vast majority are non-Semitic. Those who staged the military coup against the Emperor highlighted precisely such oddities in a bid to legitimise their claims and as a necessary political precedent for the de-construction of the mythical and legendary aura that has so much enveloped the ruling dynasty.

Ironically those that have violently removed the regime in the bid to carry out comprehensive reforms have ended up with their own version of a politico-ideological mission. Reforming the old theocracy became another mission. Removing a regime with a theocratic mission of the old type became the new mission of those who deposed the old rulers of Ethiopia by force.

With just another self-appointed mission of their own choice, the Marxist regime (Derg) and the one that followed (Woyane) ended up resurrecting the diminished economic role of the state.

The restoration of the lost functions of the state as:

(a) the patron of a mission;

(b) as patron of a theo-industry erected around an assumed mission; and,

(c) the proprietor, once again of riste negus and taxes on the basis of expropriating the beneficiaries of the old regime,

were the key undertakings with which the Marxist military regime sought to tackle the economic and social crisis of the country.
It was not so much an attempt to proceed with the departure from the legacies of classical theo-industry as one that represented a return to the past (theo-industry) for the resolution of the widespread crisis and discontent at the time of the coup. The regime managed to recreate a theo-industry but structured around a ‘modern’ and fashionable political ideology of its choice: the Marxist-Leninist philosophy and the creation of a socialist utopia.

This begs the question, how exactly did this help to reverse the fiscal crisis and tackle poverty? Before answering that, however, I shall examine the stages in the resurrection of theo-industry around the newly-assumed mission of cleaning the country from the evils of what the ‘revolutionary’ regime of Ethiopia or the Derg alternatively portrayed as the ‘aremene sireat’ (‘regime of the heathens’) and the ‘saw belaw sireat’ (‘man-eating regime’), and its replacement with the ‘liberating’ ideals in the form of socialist ideology.

The identification of the evil aremene that underpinned all that is wrong with the country, and its removal (cleansing-off) became the essence of the new theocratic mission. On that basis, and like the previous ones, this mission too was centred around/or structured on a theocratic-industry, complete with its supply-side and demand-side. Hence the notion of neo-theo-industry.

**Ristenya as the Embodiment of the ‘Aremene’**

The Marxist revolution of the coup makers had many parallels with the Christian missions of classical Abyssinia. Both were self-assumed and self-imposed, and had the aim of removing the ‘evil’ and replacing them with a ‘better’ way of being. The Marxist revolution was a theocratic mission of an ideologico-political type set out to remove the inculcated evils of the previous regime and its mission. I contend it was an attempt to cancel out the effects of an old mission.

Under the Semitic (pre-Christian) and Christian theo-industry, the ideals of the ‘aremene other’ represented the ways of life of indigenous peoples in the Horn of Africa. The ‘African’ spirituality and all other aspects that defined an African ways of living had to be defined as the embodiment of the evil, the contaminating, the unblessed, the uncivilised, the savage and therefore the undesirable. On that basis, the de-construction of all things African on one hand and the inculcation of
supposedly superior and blessed ideals (a prescription for a Semitico-Christian way of life) on the other have been the two aspects of the classical Abyssinian theocratic mission.

Hence, de-construction of the indigenous or the African and the construction of the Semitico-Christian in the African have marked the essence of the past mission and the economic foundation erected around it.

As studies, the crisis in the supply of fresh aremene nations induced a crisis of demand for the tebel, the essential commodity of Abyssinian theo-industry in the twentieth century. Over the decades, the crown and all that it stood came to embody a backward and the embodiment of all things that bedevilled Ethiopia.

The shameful levels of poverty that stood in reverse proportion to the instigated and supposed ‘uniqueness’ (read, Semitic superiority and civilised state when compared with the aremene peoples of the region) status of the Abyssinians/Ethiopians could only heightens the image of the regime as the source of all evils that afflicted the empire-state in the minds of the younger and literate generation (Ofcansky & Berry 1993). This view has been more emphatic amongst the emergent and town-based neo-elite or amongst the demoztenya and aspiring demoztenya class.

The blessing ideas of Semitico-Christian way of living, all things associated with the ancien regime increasingly were seen as the embodiment of the evil, the aremene that bedevilled Ethiopia. In a sense, ‘blessing’ packages of norms and ideas in time came to be perceived (by the progressive elements in Ethiopia) as the ‘contaminants’, the embodiment of the ‘aremene’. The beneficiaries of the Semitico-Christian missions (institutions and individuals) of the past missions emerged as the visible symbols of the ‘new’ evil, the collective aremene of all Ethiopia.

The identification and expropriation of the new aremene in Ethiopia launched the mission of the Marxist junta. The ristenya, the state dominated by them, the ruling dynasty that headed it, the Christian establishment and the codes that provided the legitimating ideals were all portrayed as the aremene and on that basis, their ritualised ‘conquest’ and expropriation (of their land and other assets) was enacted.
The ‘conquest’ and alienation of the land proprietor class, like the conquest of the aremene nations and their conversion into the gabbar in the past, provided the regime with the main assets with which to finance its mission of deconstructing or cleansing the new aremene of Ethiopia. The imposition (inculcation) of another ‘blessed’ and ‘freeing’ package of ideas or norms or the utopia of socialist paradise was the intended outcome of the mission.

However, the supposed beneficiaries of the mission or the coerced consumers of the Derg’s ideologico-political services were not only the expropriated former ristenya. The ‘peasants’ of Ethiopia, the single largest block of the total population, and all Ethiopians in general emerged as the coerced customers of Derg’s Commodity of Ideological Services (CIS) or its version of tebel.

In this sense, the Derg was, I argue, but another theocratic regime with a theocratic mission of its own. Contrary to being a departure from the old ways, it was the resurrection of the old patterns where the Abyssinian crown/state had its raison d’être through the tasks of carrying out a Christian theocratic mission and was the patron of an industry built around such a mission.

It was a regime that looked to the past order to mediate the impending economic and social crisis of the times. Its mission, like those before it, had the interrelated sub-parts of: (a) deconstructing the ‘evils’ of the Semitico-Christian regime; and (b) the inculcation of a liberating and blessed ideal of its choice: Marxist ideas and socialist utopia. The neo-elite was the main pool from which the warriors of the mission emanated (Keller 1988). This sub-group came to be the main source of personnel to occupy the wage (demoz) paying posts (birre-gooltenya) created in the supply-side of the mission – or the theo-industry of a Socialist Revolution.

As was the case with the supply-side of the Christian theo-industry, this one too had two sub-parts. There were employees of the manufacturing/delivery arm of the ideological services and there were employees with the duties of creating and maintaining demand for the packaged commodity or the demand creation arm of the supply-side.

The ‘cadres’ of the Derg were in effect the debtera (unordained clergy of the Orthodox church) of the revolutionary mission. The employees in the coercive arm of the state were the army of the coercive demand for the Marxian tebel of the
Derg. These two sets of employees were the Derg’s version of the gooltenya. This time, however, wages were paid in a monetary unit (Birr), as distinct from the older ways of paying the employees by allocating them a corresponding size of gibbir-farms or the gibbir generated there.

The wages of the cadres parallel the ‘semon’ gibbir-farms allocated to the debtera employees in the Christian missions of the past. The wages of those employed in the creation and maintenance of the coercive demand for Marxian tebel parallels the allocation of ‘maderia’ land or gibbir-farms to the neftenya (rifle welders or the army corps of the mission) in the Semitico-Christian missions of ‘classical’ Abyssinia.

The restoration of the central role of the state as the patron of a mission and of theo-industry was one main outcome of the Derg’s coup. However, as distinct from the previous regimes and missions, the ‘peasants’ of Abyssinia were no longer the main pool from which the candidates for the gooltenya posts (in this case, the demoztenya) emanated.

This privilege went to the town-based and growing sub-group of the neo-elite, mainly the offspring of the former gooltenya (Keller 1988; Ofcansky & Berry 1993). The increasing alienation of the Abyssinian heartland from the primary industry of the country, their inability to qualify for the birre-gooltenya (demoz) posts in effect closed off the very avenue that helped them to undergo a metamorphosis from pensioners who farm pension land (rist) to becoming the gooltenya-employees (wage-employees) in the theo-industry of the state. The layout, the benefits and the side effects of the Derg’s socialist theo-industry are the subjects under study in the following chapter.
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LAYOUT OF SOCIALIST THEO-INDUSTRY

The structure of the Derg’s theo-industry resembled the traditional one in many ways. They both are made up of a ‘supply-side’ and a ‘demand-side’. The former, in turn, is made up of its twin arms: the ‘manufacturing arm’ (of the Derg’s specific CIS with the use value of cleansing-off the evils of the ‘new’ aremene of the period) and the ‘demand creation and instigation arm’. The demand-side is made up of the Derg’s version of the gibbir-farms or the ‘neo’ gibbir-farms.

The combination of repossessed riste negus in land renamed as ‘state/public land’ and landless sharecroppers on ‘public’ land (but entrusted to the state) or chisenya of the revolutionary state provided (and still do) the building blocks for the ‘neo-gibbir-farms’. Such sharecroppers on state land in effect are the ‘neo-gabbar’ of the time.

Then, around a Marxist crusade, I argue, was structured a Marxist theo-industry complete with its version of the supply-side and the demand-sides. Revolutionary state or the Derg emerges as the patron of revolutionary/Marxist theo-industry in the same way the Abyssinian crown was the patron of the Christianisation/Abyssinianisation missions in the past. The supply-side of Marxist theo-industry would be centred on the elaboration, packaging and delivery/marketing of revolutionary ideals where first the revolutionary command centre or commissariat and later the Leninist party networks came to be its ‘temples’.

The commissariat and/or the revolutionary party, plus all other related institutions, represented the ‘manufacturing/delivery arm’ of this theo-industry. The revolutionary state, with its coercive institutions such as the army, security forces
and the courts, was responsible for 'making' the coerced customer (neo-gabbar) or the creation of demand for its service-type commodity. As in the past, the state ensured the payment of due 'price' in (coerced) exchange for its tebel by its equivalent of the gibbir.

Constituents of the 'Manufacturing and Delivery Arm'

In the context of the Derg's revolutionary mission, party offices emerged as the 'temples' of a socialist theo-industry. These were the 'factories' where its Commodity of Ideological Services (CIS)tebel was elaborated and delivered or disseminated.

Cadres of the Marxist revolution, thus, were the 'debtera' (Ethiopian clergy) of the 'new' theocracy. As employees of the Derg, the cadres held the equivalent of a wage-post or goolt that at this stage came to be known as a demoz-post or simply the wage package determined in the form of the monetary unit of Ethiopia (the Birr) and known as the demoz. The holders of demoz-posts were known as demoztenya. Viewed from this perspective, a demoztenya, be it a cadre of the revolution or officers in the Ethiopian army, was nothing more than a 'neo-gooltenya'. As in the past, active employment was accompanied by a process of retirement and the payment of pensions. 'Tureta' was the term used to represent pensioners in an era where wages began to be paid in Birr. 'Turetenya' (a retiring demoztenya of the state) is the modern day equivalent of the 'ristenya'.

Constituents of the 'Demand Creation and Instigation Arm'

As was the case with Christian tebel, demand for the ideological services of the Marxist state or a Marxist tebel had to be created and sustained coercively. After all, the Derg, as the previous ones, was a self-appointed regime with an equally self-declared mission. There could be no free demand for the Derg's tebel in the same way there was no freely established demand for the tebel of the Christian temples. Hence, the ability to 'sell' the undemanded had to be carried out via the old and proven methods of coercion.

As before, Marxist theo-industry needed the coercive arm of the state as the tool in the making of a coercible customer with a sustainable source of demand. This was hardly a difficult transition where the Derg itself was made up of the armed and
security forces of the crown it deposed in a coup (1974) (Harbeson 1988; Keller 1988; Clapham 1990; Ottaway 1990; Ofcansky & Berry 1993; Jalata 1998a). The state/Derg's army came to fulfil similar functions to the imperial armies of classical Abyssinia in the context of past theocratic missions and/or theo-industry: the creation, preservation and renewal/expansion of coerced-demand for its version of the 'tebel'. The 'red' army of the Derg too was the army of coerced demand. The revolutionary state, through its multiple institutions, came to embody the 'demand creation/instigation arm' of the regime with a new theocratic mission.

In a sense, the Derg, as the patron of a new theo-industry, had to resort to the use of institutionalised violence for the making of its version of the gabbar or a coerced customer of its theocratic services. It is important to recall how the 'gabbar' was defined as a type of (coerced) consumer of a theocratic mission or of tebel. It is a category that belongs to theo-industry, inasmuch as to farming or agriculture. As stated previously, the gabbar was an operator of a gibbir-farm which was a venue where: (a) the end produce of Abyssinian primary industry, tebel, was consumed; and (b) a farming activity was carried out, with the ultimate and primary aim of generating gibbir as the 'price' of the consumed tebel. The Derg's theo-industry, like the previous ones, required its own version of (coerced) customers or gabbar. I call these 'neo-gabbar' to differentiate them from the gabbar of the Christian missions in the past.

In summary, the supply-side of Marxian theo-industry, hence, was made up of the sum of the army of the ideology or the 'cadres' on one hand and the army of the coerced demand on the other. 'Cadres' stand for those with the task of packaging and disseminating/propagating the official theology of the time: the Socialist ideology. The army of the coerced demand was those employed to protect the established status quo and reinforce the dictates of the central command. They were the armed 'salespeople' of the Marxist tebel.

However, there were other 'auxiliary' establishments that had a supporting role, such as the law enforcement institutions or the revolutionary courts. The bureaucracy of the state had the duties of coordinating the creation of wage-paying posts (demozentya posts) and the allocation of these to a 'suitable' and selected set of people. The rest had the task of securing the collection of 'revenue' (neo-gibbir)
with which the wages (demoz) and pensions (tureta) of the employees of Derg's mission and/or theo-industry were paid.

**Repossession of Riste Negus and Re-Creation of the Demand-Side**

One of the first and radical undertakings of the new regime was the Land and Property Bill of 1975. In essence, it was a bill that was instrumental in the repossession of land held by the rich landlords or the ristenya of RC-FG, based in the former gabbar countries by the state. In that sense, it was a type of land expropriation except that its 'victims' were those who gained the most from the dispossession of the conquered aremene countries in the previous decades (that is, the mainly Abyssinian ristenya) (Ghose 1985; Pausewang 1990; Bruce et al. 1994).

However, land was not returned to the indigenous owners but made the 'public' property of all Ethiopians and held in a type of trust by the state (Negash 1997). The revolutionary state came to occupy a position similar to that held by the Abyssinian crown or sovereign in relation to expropriated land and other assets of the conquered peoples prior to the grand free land grants (riste negus) in the post-WWII decades.

The status of the former-gabbar-turned-sharecroppers (chisenya) on farms owned by mainly Abyssinian landlords fundamentally remained unchanged in terms of land ownership. The main variable was the alteration in who or what entity was about to become their landlord. Overnight the sharecroppers on privately owned farms, the squatter farmers and graziers (pastoralists) on what remained as crown/state land or ye mengist meret were transformed into sharecroppers/share-graziers of an equally absentee but more benevolent landlord in the form of the revolutionary state (Gadamu 1994; Wolde-Georgis 1997).

The process was not so much a radical departure from the past as a return to the securities of the past when the state was more than the mere collector of taxes. It ended up restoring the state as the main, if not the sole, landlord in the country in the same way the Abyssinian sovereigns/emperors were.

In a way, there were two interrelated components to the decree on land and property ownership known as land 'reform'. One was the task of rendering 'all'
rist lands 'public' (read, state) lands. This included the RC-FG that emerged following the massive crown land grants in the former gabbar countries and the traditional type of riste Christian that underpinned the pension-farms in the heartland of Abyssinia. In effect, this was an act of re-possessing the rich land ristenyaa citizens of Ethiopia (mostly in the south but also in the north to some extent) as a whole. But it had the aim of rendering the absentee landlords (mostly the south-based ristenyaa) into tenant farmers/producers but on a reduced size of 'public' land (10 hectares and less) (Pausewang 1983; Keller 1988; Wolde-Georgis 1997).

All possessions above the designated size (10 hectare) was to be made 'public' and made into smaller farm units worked by large number of households that were either sharecroppers or chisenya in the south and poor-ristenyaa of land in the north.

The regime hoped this would reverse the revenue crisis and allow it to meet the needs of the waged-classes. This was so because the state became the sole landlord, thereby replacing the individual ristenyaa. Doing so rendered the state more than being a mere collector of property/income tax as it became following the land privatisation 'reforms' of the previous decades. As a landlord, I argue, the state became a stakeholder of the total annual yield, a sharecropper. Like any landlord, it had a title over what has been designated as 'public' land, regardless of the obscure nature of what exactly constitutes 'public'. One thing was certain: essentially, what used to be the native property of the aremenye-turned-gabbar went through three forms of ownership/proprietorship, in less than a century. First, it became the collective 'rist' of all Abyssinians, but entrusted to their crown. Gibbir-farms were erected on these assets, where the assets in general and Land asset in particular, gradually passed over to the outright and direct ownership of the citizens of Abyssinia or was turned into a 'rist' (RC-FG). The Derg's land proclamation merely reversed what had been achieved via the accelerated, politically determined grants of crown land to trusted employees of the crown/state. It again made the state the trustee of what it called 'public' land.

In a way, the state was able to recuperate the economic grounds it had lost following the privatisation of riste negus in land by introducing a land proclamation bill (1975). Consequently, the 'peasants' in both locations were effectively turned into owners of their labour (including some farm tools, seeds,
breeding animals in the case of the pastoralists etc.) but not of land, from both a legal and practical sense of the term (Rahmato 1984; Wolde-Georgis 1997).

The peasants merely ended up with a relatively more benevolent, amenable and highly paternalistic landlord in the form of the revolutionary state (Ghose 1985; Bruce 1998). They merely shifted into becoming the chisenyas/sharecropper peasants of the Ethiopian revolutionary state, I argue. They got themselves the benefits of relatively more secure farming position, or a ‘farm job’ on land, in the case of southern peasants, alienated from their ancestors and yet to be returned to them. This continued alienation of their land thus became the state’s tool with which to instigate economic coercion necessary to secure a coerced demand for its CIS or its version of the tebel. State ownership of ‘public’ land is the economic foundation that guarantees the appropriation by the state of the ‘share’ of the annual yields from essentially sharecropper farmsteads of southern Ethiopia. This ‘share’ is effectively the ‘price’ that the sharecropper peasants (neo-gabbar) are forced to pay in exchange for the ‘Marxian tebel’.

However, for the peasants in the heartland of Abyssinia, the new arrangement marked a radical (and politically dangerous) departure from that which they had been accustomed. It, at least symbolically or psychologically, meant the loss of land title over what had for generations been a kind of private and inheritable property over land (Pausewang 1983). It reduced them to a similar status as that which the former gabbar had been reduced: to chisenyas peasants. It made them sharecroppers of the state on what used to be their ancestral land. In the south, the proclamation was tantamount to land dispossession of the mainly Abyssinian landlords and meant secure on-farm jobs (with sharecropper status) for the southern peasants. In the north, it meant the dispossession of all Abyssinian peasants from their pension-rist lands and rendered them sharecroppers of the state, at least theoretically. This was so because only a fraction of the landowners there had more than the 10 ha maximum required before the state (supposedly on behalf of the ‘public’) confiscated the surplus.

In so doing, the mainly Abyssinian ristentyas found both in their home provinces in the north and in the former gabbar countries in the southern half of Ethiopia were reduced to the same category of mere chisenyas of the revolutionary state. In the process, the decree was instrumental in the creation of a much larger pool of
*chisenya* than the existing one created when the former *gabbar* became free to own their labour (*goolbeteny*a), but left short of recuperating the ownership of what used to be their ancestral land.

Where the state was the sole *risteny*a of land, then it became the main provider of farm-hand posts/jobs. Not individual citizens but the state developed into the entity that engendered the demand for farm labourers on its ‘public’ land. As such, becoming the *chisenya* of the state emerged as the main, if not the sole, way of earning a living for the former *risteny*a and former *gabbar* (since made into *chisenya*) alike. By doing so, it created a large pool of landless ‘peasants’ (who could own other items such as work tools) who had no other alternative in making a living but to accept a sharecropper-like arrangement with the owner of ‘public’ lands: the revolutionary state. This economic-coercion emerged as the underlying power that made a malleable and vast pool of labourers with the sole skills of farming. The compulsion, born out of inevitable poverty and the need to avoid hunger, arguably became the foundation of inducing coerced demand for whatever grandiose mission those who controlled the reins of state power in Addis Ababa dictated. This form of coercion secured a sustainable demand for the ‘Marxian *tebel*’. Consequently, the sharecroppers of the state became the neo-*gabbar* of the revolutionary state or the coerced customers of the theo-industry of the revolutionary regime. The farmsteads of the sharecroppers of the state become the neo-*gibbir*-farms of the revolutionary state or the foundation of the demand-side for the Marxist theo-industry. The ‘share’ of the annual yield from these farms reclaimed by the state via a mixture of direct and indirect methods of ‘tax’ collection became the *gibbir* ‘paid’ by the neo-*gabbar* in (coerced) exchange for the CIS of the revolutionary state.

**Fear of Hunger as the Guarantor of Coerced Demand**

Coercion into consuming the Marxian *tebel* has been achieved via the combination of the forces of violence and more importantly, via the fear of inevitable hunger. As we have noted in the earlier chapters, the *gabbar* were forced to depart with the bulk of the produce in coerced exchange for the portion of *tebel* they were forced to consume. In return, they stood to consume a fraction of the total produce in the form of the *gabbar*’s ration.
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The ration had the function of guaranteeing the reproduction of the status as the gabbar or coercible customers of tebel, while at the same time, it was through the ration that the gabbar households lived. The gabbar ration marked the difference between secure destitution or hunger and a meagre existence.

The fear of losing one’s ration entitlements was the primary force of compulsion that, together with the instigation of institutionalised violence, secured the sustainable and coerced demand for tebel amongst the gabbar households in the past. By the same token, the fear of losing the sharecropper ‘contract’ with the sole landlord (the state), and with that, the loss of income (‘share’ crop as a kind of a wage), became the tool for the instigation of coerced demand for the Derg’s CIS or its version of the tebel.

The state’s share of the annual yield of crop or animal produce on state-owned land — but worked by the state’s own sharecroppers and share-graziers or chisenya — is defined here as (the Derg’s) birre-gibbir. A fundamental change in the methods used to reclaim the required ‘share’ of the state accompanied the process of birre-gibbir production during this period. This was largely achieved through the right of the state to reserve a monopolistic control over the spheres of circulation. Its uncontested and legislated control over the marketed produce, or more precisely over the portion of the produce the state deemed must be brought to ‘market’, provided one main avenue through which to skim off its ‘share’ of the ‘marketed’ produce in the form of ‘taxes’. This included both the sold/supplied and bought goods and services of the sharecroppers, share-graziers, merchants, operators of small businesses, waged employees of the state etc.

The products of the farmers and those that the farmers were more likely to buy — such as imported fertiliser and clothing — were traded not in just any market but in ‘markets’ designated by the state where the fiscal agents of the state operated. The latter refers to fiscal and custom control over the goods and services provided internally and those of an imported nature. In a sense, indirect methods of collecting the state’s ‘share’ of the annual produce from these farms came to be the politically less sensitive, the efficient and the ideal methods of claiming and collecting the neo-gibbir of the time (Wolde-Georgis 1997). This aspect is discussed further under the section in this chapter entitled: ‘Gibbir at Points of Circulation’.
Sharecropper/Share-Grazier Farms and the Making of ‘Birre-Gibbir’

Let us now examine the layout of the neo-gibbir-farms according to the assets with which they are composed in the era where land and labour are owned by different entities.

Neo-gibbir-farms in the era of the Derg are made up of state-owned land (Land asset) on one hand and the labour pool of the chisenya family unit (People asset) on state’s land/farm generally. Assets owned by the crop-growing chisenya or pastoralist chisenya such as (plant) Seed asset (Sa), animals as Seed asset (breeding cattle), tools or implements, the know-how of the chisenya to operate a farm, and the social and clan networks necessary for the optimal operation of such farms, all make up the assets of such farms.

On this basis, the layout of a neo-gibbir-farm worked by the sharecroppers/share-grazier on the state land could be symbolically represented as follows:

Neo-gibbir-farms (on state land) = Land asset of the state (La) + People asset of the sharecroppers/share-graziers (Pa) + Seed asset of the sharecroppers/share-graziers (Sa) + Tools (T)

That is:

Neo-gibbir-farms = (La) + (Pa + Sa + T)

In essence, the state was the owner of the constant capital/asset of which the farms were composed, while the chisenya were owners of some of the variable capital/assets on top of the labour pool of the family unit. Seed asset, be it plant/crop seeds or breeding cattle, was the form of variable capital/asset. Consequently, a type of State Feudalism emerged.

The end produce from these farms would then be composed of the depreciation rates of the assets owned by the state/public (land) and assets owned by the chisenya households or the sharecropper household(s). The former was a constant capital/asset and was not the dynamic component of the assets. The latter was a dynamic type of asset and had an in-built capacity to change its invested magnitude or original size resulting in an increased end product. The end product is the
combined result of the depreciation rate of all assets. (See also an earlier section studying the dynamics of gibbir production.)

Thus, the two parts had a share of the end product according to the relative value of their input. The ‘share’ of the state/public assumed the form of rent on (its) land, while the ‘share’ of the chisenya household assumed a kind of chisenya ‘wage’ for the services of rendering state/public land productive.

That is:

\[ \text{End product} = \text{Rent on state/public land} + \text{Chisenya 'wage'} \quad (\text{CW}) \]

Described in another way, the gross annual produce from the neo gibbir-farms in the era of the Derg was composed of the state’s ‘share’ (Ss) of the gross annual produce from the neo-gibbir-farms and the chisenya’s ‘share’ (Cs) of the gross annual produce from the neo-gibbir-farms. That is:

\[ \text{Gp} = (\text{Ss}) + (\text{Cs}) \]

In effect, a type of rent on state/public land (Ss), independent of the methods used in its collection, was, I suggest, the single largest component of state revenue in Ethiopia under the Derg and Woyane regimes. However, it was not the only one and nor was it collected directly from the gates of the farms. There was a flat-rate ‘tax’ on land (ten Birr) collected from the chisenya households, that resembled an income tax (Ghose 1985). This could hardly be described as a land tax, since land was owned by the state/public; more like a stamp duty paid to renew the contractual arrangement between the state and the chisenya. It could be conceived as a ‘fee’ paid to seal the land lease or contractual agreement between the landlord (state) and the chisenya, as a precedent for the sharecropper productive arrangement that underlay the regime of State Feudalism. Alternatively, it can be viewed as an income tax on the share of the chisenya or a tax similar to the one paid by public employees of the state on their wages.

In the end, the Net annual revenue of the state (Nr) was composed of the state’s share (Ss) of the Gp (from neo-gibbir-farms) and ‘tax’ on the chisenya wage, generally in the monetarised format of Birr. Hence, Nr is the birre-gibbir that flowed to the coffers of the revolutionary state during this period. It could be conceived as Net birre-gibbir (Nbg). Taxes from the salaried employees of the
state were paid from Nr. As such, an income tax on such a salary, in the end, did not constitute a fresh or additional source of revenue.

Net birre-gibbir (Nbg) = Ss (of the gross annual produce from the neo gibbir-farms or rent on state/public land) + ‘It’ (Income tax of the Chisenya and others).

That is:

\[
\text{Nbg} = (\text{Ss}) + (\text{It})
\]

Nbg has been the net earnings of the state of Ethiopia, under the regimes of both the Derg and the Woyane (which replaced the Derg). Both are theocratic regimes bent on carrying out a theocratic mission of their own choice/denomination. Both regimes have their own versions of theo-industry where Nbg is nothing more than the annual net income of this industry.

Net birre-gibbir (Nbg) was the ‘price’ charged by the revolutionary state in coerced exchange for the provision of its version of a theocratic mission. It was the ‘price’ the revolutionary state charged in coerced exchange for the provision of ideological services of a Marxian variant or its CIS in the post-Haile Selassie era. Nbg was the exchange value for the Derg’s and Woyane’s tebel production and coerced commercialisation, mostly to the ‘peasants’.

The former gabbar colonies continue to be the main source of Nbg under both the Derg and the Woyane regimes, in much the same away they were the source of gibbir in the past. The peasants from the heartland of Abyssinia have not been exempt from a similar sort of income tax. The flat rates (ten Birr) apply to them, provided that they are able to generate enough produce from the ever-decreasing yields from the farms in that part of Ethiopia. The region contains the ‘famine belts’ of Ethiopia. Many peasants in parts of Tigray, Wollo, Northern Shoa and Eritrea (independent since 1991) – all provinces in the heartland of Abyssinia – have been ‘pardoned’ from any form of ‘tax’ due to the prevailing and nearly permanent famine conditions there.

The whole of Eritrea was in the grip of wars during much of the period. As a result, a substantial portion of the Nbg was spent there to finance the decades-long war (Kelemen 1985). Many Ethiopians found wage-paying posts directly in the ‘war industry’ sustained by the state from Addis Ababa and funded from Nbg. Annual
army/militia personnel recruitments provided the single largest job opportunity for many that were lucky enough to go to school.

Regions adjacent to main urban centres such as Addis Ababa were the main beneficiaries. By extension, whole regions stood to benefit from the economic benefits of the Ethiopian permanent and celebrated warring tradition, all financed from a less-than-ideal economic ethos, namely, on an income that had more in common with booty than a tax. All sets of secondary and tertiary 'industries' emerged for the sole purpose of serving those who were fortunate enough to find their niche in the war industry run from Addis Ababa.

In turn, such regions around main urban areas such as Addis Ababa and Asmara in Eritrea became a catalyst in triggering migratory processes from the rural areas in search of a share from the 'greener pastures' built on the war-economy. A more or less similar effect was felt in the regions where the actual wars occurred, such as Eritrea. The whole region geared up to serve those who were warring, be this in the provision of goods and services directly to the war industry there or to the army personnel in the form of bars, cafes, prostitution etc. Further, during permanent wars, the proportion of the non-resident population increases and therefore the need for augmented services swells.

The provision of essential state-run services such as schooling for the children of the army personnel and health services became another source of employment for many others. Centres like Addis Ababa, again, tended to benefit from this, although regional centres such as Asmara stood to benefit too.

Interestingly, Tigre-Abyssinians (including Tigre people of Eritrea) run establishments/ businesses, geared up to serve mainly those employed in the war-industry of the Amharic-dominated state of Ethiopia. At the same time, this was an important source of finance with which these fomented/aided the war efforts of their fellow Tigre/Eritreans or those on the opposite side of what has in effect been a war between the Amharic-Abyssinians and Tigre-Abyssinians. Initially, Net gibbir and later Net birre-gibbir arguably financed the all-Abyssinian wars but on both sides.

Ethiopian wars, contrary from the conventional truth, were the source of economic renewal for the heartland of Abyssinia. War has long since become the main
industry, replacing its traditional role as the vehicle for the renewal of another industry; theo-industry in this case.

**Gibbir at Points of Circulation**

Indirect collection of ‘taxes’ (Nbg in general and ‘Ss’ in particular) came to replace the previous patterns where Ng was collected mostly at the gate of the gibbir-farms. This method took hold before the *Derg* but became more intensified since then. The introduction of a monetary system or the *Birr*, along the adoption of many of the fiscal-monetary concepts of the ‘modern’ economies, came to facilitate the extraction of revenue. The export-import excise tax or customs duty, for instance, was amongst the most important sources of revenue (Zewde 1991). The monopolistic right to determine: (a) the ‘price’ of farm products by the agents of the state; and (b) the ‘price’ of goods and services consumed by producers (the state’s sharecroppers/share-grazers) became a relatively easy, indirect (thereby less politically compromising) method of skimming off what in reality was a rather arbitrary ‘share’ by the state from the annual yield of the farms (Rahmato 1984; Ghose 1985; Bruce *et al.* 1994).

Note that Ethiopia’s economy is overwhelmingly agricultural. The bulk of its exports comprises coffee, all of which is generated by the former *gabbar*-turned sharecroppers on state/public-owned land. More than 85% of the total population is employed directly in farming economy. By the same token, the direct contribution of this sector in terms of taxes has been negligible (Schwab 1972; Keller 1988).

Regardless of the minuscule figure of the direct tax revenue, the bulk of the country’s wealth ultimately originated from agriculture in general and the neo-gibbir-farms in particular. Consequently, this was the source of the indirect taxes that comprised the greater percentage of the annual revenue for the Ethiopian state. The secret lay in taxing the farmers/producers, not just as producers/sellers of a produce but also as consumers of goods and services provided by merchants, state owned trading houses, and owners of small-scale and generally service-type establishments from state-regulated marketplaces (Kelemen 1985).

Heavy customs duties charged on imports consumed by the farmers were one way of achieving this. The retail price of items such as imported garments, fertilisers
sold by state-owned monopolies or fuel used by operators of transport companies reflected the paid duties. In a sense, ultimately, the merchants transferred what they paid as import/export duties or other taxes to the fiscal agents of the state, onto the consumers in general and the sharecroppers and share-grazers of Ethiopia specifically.

In order to get the best results from this process, a series of methods and rules were employed to regulate the movement of farm products towards the designated marketplaces. The use of interconnected roadblocks known as 'kella' is one example of this. As such, the 'producers' may not necessarily be the direct 'payees' of such 'taxes' or dues. Those who serve as the middle men, the merchants, tended to absorb these, only to transfer it onto the producers in the form of dictating reduced wholesale 'prices' to the farmers at the other end (at the farm gates). One salient aspect of this is the extraction of neo-gibbir in the form of labour. The large, annual conscription of young men for the numerous and nearly permanent wars of Ethiopia is a case in point. In this regard, this pattern of collecting/charging gibbir in labour compares to the past practices of gibbir in corvé labour (Kelemen 1985; Bruce 1998).

Indirect taxes and the practice of fixing the sale price of the farm products (lower than their real value in order to skim off the difference) have generally been used by the state to reclaim or collect its 'share' of wealth generated in the neo-gibbir-farms of Ethiopia.

**In Summary**

The fact that the state emerged as the undisputed master of the domains of circulation, on top of being the owner of all land, could only enhance its ability to dominate all phases of wealth creation and consumption. This monopolistic control over the domains of circulation (including the control over and use of the fiscal and monetary tools) emerged as the ideal and efficient way of extracting the desired percentage of whatever is produced and traded in the country.

These indirect (in a monetarised format and at points of circulation) patterns of gibbir collection contrasted to the traditional and direct (at points of production and in kind) patterns of gibbir collection in the past. State monopoly in the
(arbitrary) determination of prices of both the outgoing produce of the farms on one hand, and more importantly, of the imported essential consumer items such as fertilisers, fuel, clothing and so on, emerged as the most efficient but conveniently indirect and politically less sensitive way of collecting the Net Birre-gibbir.

This pattern of gibbir collection was indirect and had some similarities with the Goods and Services Tax (GST) or the Value Added Tax (VAT) systems used in many countries.

At the end of the day, the net revenue from this process is Net Birre-gibbir (Nbg). Nbg was the Derg’s equivalent of Net gibbir (Ng) earned by the Abyssinian crown from its gibbir-farms in the context of past (Christian) theocratic missions. Net gibbir was the net income of the classical Abyssinian/Ethiopian theo-industry for the delivery or ‘marketing’ of Christian tebel.

Nbg, in the era of Marxian theo-industry, was nothing more than the exchange value for the Marxian tebel, the produce of the primary industry of Ethiopia under the Derg. Nbg was what the sharecroppers of the state were forced to pay to the revolutionary state of Ethiopia for the Commodity of Ideological Services and the intertwined administrative services they were coerced into consuming.

**Impacts of Socialist Theocracy**

**Impact on the Abyssinians**

The ristenya of ‘RC-FG’ (predominant in the former ‘gabbar colonies’ of Abyssinia or in the southern-half of Ethiopia) and the ristenya of ‘pension-rist’ (predominant in the heartland of Abyssinia) simply came to be defined as sources of all evils, the ‘aremene’ by the Derg. Both sub-categories of the ristenya are nearly all made up of the Abyssinians with a small segment of the Abyssinianised element from amongst the indigenous populations of gabbar countries (Cohen & Weintraub 1975; Pasewong 1983; Joireman 2000).

The ristenya, following the ‘land reform’ of the Derg that made all land ‘public/state’ property, were reduced to the status of the goolbetenya (labour tenants) or what former gabbar became as they came to own their labour in the post-WWII period. As such, the alienated ristenya formed part of the pool of the
goolbeteny a from which the sole landlord (the state) recruited its sharecroppers or 'public/state chisenya'. In a sense, both the former gabbar-turned-goolbeteny a and the newly created goolbeteny a (up to then, ristenya of one sort or another, of Abyssinian origins) became the chisenya of the revolutionary state or Derg.

The process, perhaps inadvertently, reduced the Abyssinians to a similar status to that of its formerly subject populations in the south: goolbeteny a (tenants of labour)-cum-chisenya (sharecroppers).

The socio-psychological losses felt by the Abyssinians were as great as the perceived economic losses from the process (Pausewang 1983). However, many of rist landholdings (on which pension-farms were built) in the heartland of Abyssinia were smaller than the stipulated 10 ha, a ceiling above which land was expropriated. Abyssinian peasants experienced a largely symbolic loss of title over their inheritable rist holdings (inheritable pensions), though not necessarily an economic loss. After all, only a fraction of ristenya in the heartland of Abyssinia fulfilled the category of rich landlord (possessing more than 10 ha.), therefore to be expropriated from their land possession, as stated in the land proclamation bill of the Derg (Bruce 1998).

Still, the abovementioned socio-psychological loss was enough to incite an immediate resistance to the regime (Keller 1988). More importantly, the heartland of Abyssinia, traditionally the main constituency of the Abyssinian crown/state, lost a great deal from the economic benefits that flowed from the south, both via the formal channels and informal ones that linked it with what were once its gabbar colonies.

The Derg’s reforms and the exploitative extraction of resources could only have had a marginal effect in the heartland of Abyssinia where most people lived on much smaller and often less productive farms, and where most farms produced less than necessary to sustain their own families. A meagre level of production implies a low purchasing ability. The participation rate for the peasants in the heartland of Abyssinia reflects this situation. Consequently, the region is not a significant source of indirect taxes or resource extraction for the Ethiopian state.

Yet the notion of ‘exploitation’ of these regions by the central state, via any one of the regime’s well-documented excesses – such as land expropriation, villagisation,
collectivisation, arbitrary price setting, skimming off the bulk of the farm products, forced recruitment of militias for its wars against revolts and all sorts of dissident groups mainly in the heartland of Abyssinia – is routinely invoked to rationalise Abyssinian antipathy and revolts against the Derg (Kelemen 1985; Mengisteab 1991).

Nearly all of the aforementioned excesses were concentrated in the south, while most of the revolts that led to the downfall of the Derg took place in the northern half of the empire (Keller 1988; Clapham 1990). Could it be that those revolts/uprisings were not so much against exploitation but for a greater share of what the central state earned via the above-mentioned excesses, from the southern half of Ethiopia?

The side effects from this were manifold. For the first time the heartlands of Abyssinia were no longer the focal constituency in the state-patroned primary industry. The gasha lands in the crown colonies were no longer easily accessed by the Abyssinian increasingly ristenya peasants and served to mitigate the effects of progressive impoverishment there. Note how inheritance rights and sharecropper opportunities, as well as the state’s own land grants, were the main access routes to land and produce in the gabbar countries of Ethiopia.

This loss of being the focal constituency in the benefits of state-lead primary industry was the main side effect from the Derg’s mission and its theo-industry. The health of peasant economies in the heartland of Abyssinia continued to deteriorate as same rist land is subdivided between the growing numbers of blood relatives, down the generations (McCann 1987; Bruce et al. 1994).

Those that were rich ristenya and were relatively better off moved to the middle ranged ristenya that could no longer afforded the luxuries of employing/hiring labour tenants in the form of land-poor ristenya. Sharecropper opportunities continue to dwindle as the result. Those that were middle ranged land ristenya and worked their land with own labour pool gradually slipped into the category of poor ristenya. Those that were poor ristenya become destitute and were forced to move onto marginal lands deemed unsuitable for plough farming. The latter are the main casualty of recurrent droughts and famines in Ethiopia.
Impact on Neo-Gabbar Countries

For the southern goolbetenya (tenants of labour), the reforms had the opposite socio-psychological effect. The alienation of the landlords or ristenya (former gooltenya), at least symbolically, represented a reversal of fates when the nation of the expropriators (Abyssinia) became the expropriated. These socio-psychological gains in the south from the Derg’s reforms, arguably, have been as significant as the hoped-for and tangible economic outcomes.

As sweeping as the land reform proclamation was, its impact was not uniform. It was most effective in areas of the south that had been characterized by tenancy and absentee landlordism. There, land reform was greeted with great enthusiasm... Land reform was least effective in areas of the north characterized by rist tenure (Keller 1988, p. 217).

It was not difficult to discern why the south, at least in the earlier phases, warmly welcomed the Derg and its anti-ristenya (hence anti-Abyssinian) reforms. This was the case even when the Derg hardly severed the state monopoly of the Abyssinians. In this way, it merely marked the transition from the era of the ‘old’ and conservative elite to the ‘new’ and revolutionary elite (the product of modern schooling and urban-based) of Abyssinia as the state-makers. The southern goolbetenya did not see the restoration of indigenous ownership over their ancestral lands. Land in the south remained ‘public’ property (including the Abyssinians) by law. The state emerged as the trustee of the land it declared to be the ‘public’ property of all Ethiopians (Pausewang 1983).

There were some concrete economic gains to be had by the southern goolbetenya from the process. They made the transition from being disposable, readily evicted or superfluous sharecroppers during the time when southern lands were held by Abyssinian landlords (ristenya) to becoming secure sharecroppers of the revolutionary state. A much-improved security of tenure as sharecroppers, and thus a corresponding security to the share of the yield in the form of a ‘primitive’ type of labour wage, has been the single most important achievement for the southern goolbetenya.

On the whole, the improvements had more to do with job and wage security and little to do with being a ‘producer’. The ‘nasty’ and absentee Abyssinian landlords
were replaced by a paternalistic but still absentee landlord, the revolutionary state (Ghose 1985). Guaranteed farm jobs as sharecroppers meant an improved security to a share of the annual yield, with its poverty/famine mitigating effects.

However, in order to create a secure tenure for the southern goolbetenyä, the state had to make sure that the locals get precedent over the migrants (impoverished Abyssinians) seeking farm jobs (Bruce et al. 1994). The latter had better chances of securing a deal in the past where vast areas in the south were owned by their fellow Abyssinians, their ‘cousins’. That often came at the expense of the southern goolbetenyä, where evictions of native-born chisenya vacated a sharecropper opportunity for the Abyssinian migrant to the south.

One aspect of the psychological gain of the south from the Derg has been the perception that they, like Abyssinians, could lead the country or be political masters in their own right. This is implicit in the following quote from Haggar Erlich (quoted in Keller 1988, p. 184):

Mengistu [Derg leader] seemed to symbolize the revolution. He was the baria, the slave who overthrew the master, the member of the conquered tribe who got even with the conquerors, the poorly educated son of a servant who rose against the intellectual elite.

**Socialist Theocracy and the Intelligentsia**

The ‘Preferential Pool’ of recruits into socioindustry was mainly composed of the urban-based intelligentsia. It was from this group that the candidates for the demoz-posts (employees of the supply-side of socioindustry such as the revolutionary cadres and army) were recruited. On retirement, these stood to gain a pension.

As distinct from the Christian theo-industry, the Socialist/Marxian theo-industry had an entirely different set of ‘Preferential Pool’ from which to recruit the would-be demoz (wage) and tureta (pension) receiving employees. In a sense, the Derg’s mission completed the closure of the access routes to wage-paying posts (becoming the gooltenya) for the ‘peasants’ in the heartland of Abyssinia, thereby bringing to a close the traditional platform for poverty mitigation there.

The emergence and growth of a mainly Abyssinian neo-elite – and their coming from the ‘Preferential Pool’ from which the demoztenya ‘class’ (recipients of a
wage) were recruited — presented itself as the major challenge to the economic welfare of the Abyssinian peasants.

The intensification of poverty and the increased frequency of famines during the reign of the *Derg* were some of the explicit manifestations of this process (Kelemen 1985). The growing resistance of the southern peasants, struggling to become both the owners of their ancestral land and the agents of production and its consumption, presents the other challenge. However, their revolts played a largely peripheral role in the final downfall of the *Derg* (Markakis 1974; Clapham 1990).

Limited access to modern education to members of the southern groups in the previous decades was instrumental in the creation of a small, but steadily growing number of local/native ‘intelligentsia/neo-literati’. These stood to benefit from *demoz*-carrying post in the context of the theo-industry of *Derg*’s socialist revolution or socioindustry, as revolutionary cadres, as members of the revolutionary guard or the Ethiopian version of the ‘red army’ etc. *Figure 10.1* depicts Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam rallying his troops in rebellious Eritrea. Though these, in effect, were benefiting from the alienation/exploitation of their own people/nations, it nevertheless represented an indirect way of accessing resources that should have been consumed in the region or by the producers, in the first place.

*Figure 10.1: Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam rallying his troops in rebellious Eritrea.*
It was the convergence of the simmering discontents of the Abyssinian peasants, the Abyssinian landlords alienated from their land under the Derg (especially in the south) and the intelligentsia (who had to compete for the ever-dwindling numbers of wage-posts with the emerging southern intelligentsia), that served as the catalyst for forceful removal of the Derg in 1991.

The fact that Tigray, the most impoverished province in the heartland of Abyssinia even by the standard of the poorest country in the world, came to be at the forefront of the anti-Derg revolts and wars was not a mere coincidence. Some of its antipathy towards the Derg owed to both real and perceived neglect of the Tigray region by the Derg. Figure 10.2 shows a mass exodus of people searching for food aid, from famine-stricken Tigray. It is rarely clear which or whose revenue/taxes it is neglected from in the first place (Young; 1998). However, Tigray’s impoverishment reflected the region’s relative alienation from the economic benefits of the Amharic dominated crown/state based in Addis Ababa. The fact that the region was not able to get a ‘proper’ share from the spoils of empirehood or wealth created in the context of the Abyssinian primary industry (land and gibbir), I argue, had reduced its ability to retard the progress of poverty and mitigate its effects (famines).

![Figure 10.2: Famine in Tigray: Mass exodus in search of food aid](image)

Then, the time-proven way to counter the effects of severe poverty lay not so much in the improvement of the farming economy in Tigray or elsewhere in the heartland of Abyssinia. Instead, the ability of a constituency, a province or a social group to be able to grab the reins of state power and on that basis exploit the well known economic agency of the state for the economic benefit of its set constituency was what was required. Woyane is the popular name for the armed group from the Abyssinian region of Tigray that, with the help of the Tigré-dominant Eritrean fighters, ended up ousting the Derg.
chapter 11

‘REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRACY’: RATIONALE FOR ANOTHER MISSION

An anti-Derg movement and wars in the heartland of Abyssinia had its foundations in the cumulative and negative economic effects that have accompanied the decline in theo-industry over the decades, conditions exacerbated by the Derg’s anti ristenya decrees from Addis Ababa. The inauguration of another form of theo-industry, or the Marxian theo-industry, was not instrumental in reducing the effects of widespread poverty or in restoring the economic centrality of the heartland of Abyssinia.

The town-based neo-elite, made up mainly of the descendants of the former gooltenya Abyssinians, combined with a small band of native neo-elites, emerged as the main beneficiaries from the wage-paying posts created in the context of Derg’s mission and its theo-industry. In a sense, the Derg era merely exacerbated the alienation of the heartland of Abyssinia from the country’s primary industry and source of wealth, following the crisis of demand that hit Abyssinian Christian theo-industry in the twentieth century.

The Abyssinians, including those based in the heartland and those in the former gabbar regions to the south, as I argued earlier, were unhappy with the Derg, not so much because they were exploited but because they were no longer the main beneficiaries from the exploited wealth and assets (land). After all, there was precious little to be exploited as the farmers of the region lived on progressively decreasing yields from their pension farms/rist, for which food aid has became a kind of subsidy (Shepherd 1975; Clay & Holcomb 1985, Wolde Mariam 1986).
Inability to claim what has historically been their rightful ‘share’ of the gibbir and land assets taken from the subject populations in the gabbar regions to the south was at the heart of Abyssinian discontent, revolts and wars against the central state. They were unhappy because they were unable to claim the traditional right of claiming a share of the earnings of the national industry (theo-industry) (Young 1998). Added to that was the loss of both their superior social status vis-à-vis the subject populations as well as of having been the focus of the crown’s or state’s attention for centuries.

The practices of attempting to explain or justify the pitiful economic state of Ethiopian farming economy via what has taken place mostly in the southern half of the country is not only misleading and irrational, but is detrimental for the search of possible solutions. So in stating that, exploitative extraction of produce and resources from certain regions is inherently the cause of poverty. It depends on who ends up being the victim of the process, and who the beneficiary (Wolde Mariam 1986; Mengisteab 1991). The increasing shift of the powers of the state away from the heartland of Abyssinia and the modest but growing voice of the subject populations in the south led to the erosion of the channels through which poverty and famines conditions were mediated in the past.

However, the adoption of ‘modern’ ideas with which to define ‘new’ theocratic missions helped to restore both the historical role of Abyssinia as the patron of a theocratic mission and its position as the main beneficiary from the economic gains that flow from it. It is in this context, not in any appreciable improvement in the agricultural sector or others, that we find the role of the Ethiopian state, or, more importantly, the aim of taking state power by force, in the tasks of mitigating poverty and famines – however, with an emphasis on a set constituency.

The favourable political conditions set in the Cold War scenario were bound to benefit the cause of the Abyssinians against the Marxist dictatorship based in Addis Ababa. Abyssinians or their warlords found themselves on the side of the western coalition against the Soviet empire. The humanitarian and related international ‘aid’ to the heartland of Abyssinia played a significant part in empowering Abyssinia and its warlords, thereby serving as the catalyst in once again restoring Abyssinian politico-economic dominance in the form of a Tigre-dominated Abyssinian regime or Woyane. The following chapter deals with the
political economy of the anti-\textit{Derg} mission – broadly known as ‘Revolutionary Democracy’ – of a regime with a predominantly, if not entirely, Abyssinian power base (Young 1996).

The anti-\textit{Derg} resistance, mostly centred on the heartland of Abyssinia, emerged as a catalyst for the emergence of a qualitatively different type of rationale to carry out: yet another politico-ideological mission centred on cleansing Ethiopia of all vestiges of the \textit{Derg}, in the strictest sense of the term, thus challenging the century-old dominance of the Amharic Abyssinians as the state makers in the empire (Young 1998). In a sense, for the first time in decades, those in the northern heartland of Abyssinia found an ideal setting for the resumption of their traditional role to execute a modern version of their old theocratic mission vis-à-vis the ‘\textit{aremene}’. With it came the ability to restore their centrality in the country’s theo-industry.

The \textit{Derg} was identified as the cause of all evils, hence the embodiment of the \textit{aremene}, affecting Abyssinia in particular and all of Ethiopia in general, according to the exponents of the anti-\textit{Derg} movements in the heartland of Abyssinia (see Ottaway 1999). Consequently, the self-assumed mission of conquering the evil on one hand, and the tasks of de-constructing the evils of the \textit{Derg} from all Ethiopians on the other, I argue, emerged as the central themes of the ‘\textit{Woyane}’ anti-revolution-revolution.

\textbf{Conquering the ‘Aremene’ \textit{Derg}}

The conquest of the \textit{Derg} and the mission of cleansing all the evils of the \textit{Derg} or ‘Dergism’ were not so much a departure from the theocratic nature of the state in Ethiopia, but merely the replacement of one type of political theocracy (\textit{Derg’s} Socialist Revolution) with another (\textit{Woyane’s} Revolutionary Democracy). At the same time, the conquest was instrumental in putting the heartlands of Abyssinia in general and Tigray region in particular as the focal group, the main beneficiaries of the theo-industry built around this mission, once again.

The act of conquering an already established theocracy, from an economic point of view, has the function of creating demand for whatever ideologico-political or accompanying administrative services (the services of ruling the others) the
constituency of the conquering party (or social class) could provide via the use of coercion. In this sense, the Tigre-based Woyane, by adopting a theocratic mission of its own choice (cleansing the evils of Dergism from the whole country), has given its poverty-/famine-stricken constituency its own and brand new mission, and with that, its own theo-industry.

This was possible even though entire regions, especially in the southern half of Ethiopia, did not have a say on whether they want to be liberated from the Derg by a ‘liberating’ army made up of mainly poor peasants from the heartland of Abyssinia, in the same way their ancestors had no say in the missions of past Abyssinian emperors. This army was a mirror of the conquering armies of Christian Abyssinia which were made up of poor ristenya peasants in search of booty and a wage post (gooli) for their services to the crown/state in the past. As in the past conquests, there was no voluntarily-established demand for the ‘liberating’ services of the Tigre-dominated Abyssinian army nor for what they would set out to achieve in the form of their anti-Derg mission and/or their self-assumed mission of imposing the reins of ‘Revolutionary Democracy’. In the same way the ancestors of the Woyane did not seek the consent of the aremene nations for their Christianisation missions in the past, neither did the Woyane seek consent from the would-be beneficiaries of its mission. The use of state-instigated violence remained both the maker, rather the re-maker, of the ‘consumers’ as well as a tool for the maintenance of the imposed status (of remaining the coerced customers of a theocratic mission) under the Woyane regime (Jalata 1998b; Keller 1998).

In the process, the incoming regime becomes the patron of a theocratic mission, and of its economic base (theo-industry), enabling it to ‘sell’ the Commodity of Ideological Services (CIS) or tebel of its own choice. It becomes the patron of the tangible economic benefits gained from the coerced-sale of the tebel, in his case the birre-gibbon. The process allows the incoming regime and its constituency to emerge as the main source of employees to carry out the tasks of the mission. The regime creates wage posts or demoz posts for its recruits and pays pension (tureta) on retirement, these two being its version of the processes of goolt-ification and rist-ification that took place as part of the Christian missions of the past.

The creation of wage-carrying posts (on the supply-side) ranging from military/militia personnel to serving as the cadre of the mission in question came to
provide the Tigray region and the heartland of Abyssinia in general with considerable employment opportunities. This meant new and additional (on top of the ever-decreasing harvest from the *rist* lands of Tigray) sources of income in the form of what the coerced consumers of the mission (the south) are charged for the services (*birre-gibbir*). This is nothing more than a process of renewed *gooolt-*ification (the creation of wage-paying posts in the context of a theocratic mission). It has been the tangible economic gain of the *Woyane*’s coup for its base constituency.

**A New Theo-industry for the Heartland of Abyssinia (Tigray)**

In practice, the waning economic links between the heartland of Abyssinia, made up of the community of pensioned farmers on one hand, and its theo-industry on the other, was to be restored in the context of the anti-*Derg* mission. The resumption of the flow of *gibbir* into the economic lifeline of Abyssinia has, once again, emerged to mitigate the conditions of poverty and famines in that constituency.

The conquest of the ‘*Derg* the *Aremene*’ was the conquest of a political theocracy complete with its own theo-industry. The incoming regime stood to inherit a ready-made theo-industry or the structural foundation for such an industry, for the execution of the specific mission they set out to accomplish. The variable factor was the change in what defines the mission, their theocracy.

The *Derg* had the mission of de-constructing the ‘evils’ of the Semitic-Christian theocracy of classical Abyssinia/Ethiopia. The *Woyane* regime came to be structured around the mission of de-constructing the ‘evils’ of the *Derg*. The transition from the *Derg* to the *Woyane* regime, I argue, was all but a coup of one theocratic regime and mission to another. It hardly marked a departure, a discontinuity from the theocratic nature of the state in Ethiopia. The primary industry of Ethiopia remained one structured around a theocratic mission, notwithstanding the change in the set of ideas that defined the mission and the theo-industry built around it. It was basically a coup of one political ideology over another.
A Tigre-Abyssinian-centric theocratic regime merely overtook from a Shoan-Abyssinian-centric theocratic regime (including the ancient and Christian theocracy and the Marxian one). The process marked a coup of one constituency/region of Abyssinia over another one where the patrons of theo-industry, thus owners of gibbir, shifted from one to the other constituency. The Woyane merely inherited a ready-made theo-industry and the capacity to generate gibbir, but to finance the mission of it self-assumed (anti-Derg) (Young 1998).

Concretely, becoming the patron of a mission was an example of becoming the effective patrons of a theo-industry, and thus the income (gibbir) generated by this. Woyane’s theo-industry specialises in the ‘manufacturing’ and coerced marketing of a package of ideas (tebel) with the use value of serving as the antidote of another sets of ideas (Derg’s ideology) defined, as the embodiment of the ‘evil’.

The Woyane was able to create a supply-side for its theo-industry on the structures of Derg’s theo-industry; rather, on an existing demand-side in the form of the sharecroppers and share-grazers, mostly in the southern half of Ethiopia. The north or the Tigray region and its peasants become the main pool from which the employees on the supply-side of Woyane’s mission and theocracy were recruited. In the same way that the gooltenya of Christian missions of Abyssinia emanated from the pool of Abyssinian Christian peasants and community in general, the neo-gooltenya of the Woyane or the demoztenya emanated mainly from the pool of Tigre peasants and other members of that constituency.

It was a matter of restructuring the ‘manufacturing/delivery’ and the ‘demand creation/marketing’ arms of their version of the tebel in such a way that their specific constituency (Tigray or the heartland of Abyssinia) emerges as the main pool from which the would-be waged employees are recruited.

The heartlands of Abyssinia, once again, came to be at the epicentre of an industry it knew how to operate, albeit around a qualitatively different set of ideas and mission. As a result, this constituency emerged as the main beneficiary of the tangible sets of wealth created as the end product of this theo-industry, the anti-Derg tebel.

Neo-gibbir remains the ‘price’ paid by those who are forced to be the coerced customers/consumers of Woyane’s tebel (anti-Derg antidote). The ‘consumers’ of
this tebel comprise the same constituency that was coerced into being the consumers of Derg’s Marxian tebel. In a sense, what had previously been consumed as the antidote of an ‘evil’ (a prescription of the Derg’s tebel) becomes an embodiment of another ‘evil’ when viewed through the lenses of another regime. The Derg’s tebel was an antidote for the evils of the Semitico-Christian tebel or way of life, while the Woyane’s tebel emerges as the antidote of Derg’s tebel. One set of tebel, in effect, cancels out the previous one(s).

A coup on a set of ideas/ideology or on a definitive mission has been accompanied by a change in the stewardship of such a mission. The economic gains of Tigre-centric Woyane and its self-assumed mission vis-à-vis the rest would have to be achieved at the expense of the Amharic-centric theocratic missions the Woyane forced out of power. The Derg was the last of the Amharic-centric theocratic regimes in Addis Ababa.

The pattern of creating wage-paying post through forceful acts of dismissal of the employees of the previous theocratic mission, and replacing them with its wage-receiving employees, have characterised the theocratic regimes of Abyssinia/Ethiopia in the post-WWII era (Derg, Woyane). It is an ‘intensive’ pattern of creating wage-paying posts for a set constituency. In a sense, the gains of an incoming constituency (the coup masters) is achieved not so much on the basis of renewed ability to generate wealth that leads to the creation of additional wage-paying posts but to a large extent is achieved at the expense of the outgoing constituency.

It stands in contrast to the ‘extensive’ patterns of creating wage-paying posts in the past when it was possible to carry out successive acts of conquests on the seemingly boundless supply of fresh aremene nations as the basis for the expansion of Abyssinian/Ethiopian primary industry.

One of the first measures taken by the Woyane regime was the extinguishment of Derg’s mission. The dismantling of vast structure of the supply-side of Derg’s theo-industry (cadres, army and security apparatus) took place, mostly in the earlier years of the instalment of the regime in Addis Ababa.

The Derg regime too was established on the basis of forcefully discontinuing the previous regime and its self-assumed modernising mission(s). This was
accompanied by an uncompensated or poorly compensated disbanding of a sizeable portion of the former demoztenya or waged-employees of the previous regime, in addition to the expropriation of the rich ristenya.

The advent of the Woyane with its base in the most northerly of the Abyssinian provinces of Tigray has marked a change of provincial/region guard as far as centrality/dominance in the public service was concerned. However, it has been instrumental in inducing involuntary and an uncompensated dismissal of the significant portion of the 'public servants' in the bid to vacate (not create new posts) wage-paying posts for the constituency of the incoming regime.

In the process, the cadres of the Derg (the debtera of Derg's theocratic mission) are replaced with the cadres/debteras of the Woyane's anti-Derg theocratic mission. In the same token, the vast armies in the services of Derg's mission give way to Woyane's own armies and security forces. The Derg's army of the coerced demand is replaced by the Woyane's army of the coerced demand (Dercon & Ayalew 1998).

The Amharic-dominated regimes centred on Addis Ababa – regimes led by the last of the Abyssinian emperors, Haile Sellasie I and the Derg – have had one of the largest military and security personnel in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the huge network of their respective networks of 'public servants'.

The Woyane regime has effectively dismantled a substantial proportion of the Derg's (or the Amharic-dominated) wage-earning segment of the population, only to be replaced by another – but this time, dominated by recruits from its main constituency/region.

If only a quarter of a million posts went to members of Tigre-Abyssinians in the form of those recruited into the army, into the cadre and the bureaucracy of the mission, it will have a significant economic impact on the total population of Tigray region, estimated at five million.

Let us assume that a 'household' in Tigray region is composed of five people. Accordingly, there will be an estimated one million households in the region. As such, one in four households stand to benefit from the windfall of wage-paying posts (demoz) as the region emerges as the effective patron of a mission, thus of its theo-industry.
This process compares well with the earlier patterns of goolt-ification (the creation and allocation of wage-posts (goolt)) that saw the regions and households of Amharic-Abyssinians as the single most important beneficiaries. In as much as the Amharic rist-based farmsteads found renewal via the acquisition of goolt in the former gabbar countries, the Tigray rist-based and extremely impoverished households manage to renew their economic situation via the windfall of demoz-paying posts in the context of the mission assumed by the Woyane.

Members of Tigre peasant households made into the soldiers and cadres in the anti-Derg mission represent an act of goolt-ification. It is nothing more than an act of creating a ‘class’ of birre-gooltenya or demoztenya out of impoverished peasants of Tigre and other members of that community.

Consequently, the act of creating demoz-posts and filling them with recruits and the transformation/metamorphosis of the pension-peasants (ristenya) into waged-employees of a regime with a theocratic mission, has been and remains to be the essential avenue in the mitigation of poverty and famine conditions in the Abyssinian heartland.

Rist-ification is the antithesis of goolt-ification. It is the task of rendering active employees of the crown/mission into pensioners or those that are bound to live on a plot of land assigned for the generation of a ‘primitive’ type of pension in the past. In the era of birre-gibbir, both wages and pensions are drawn from the same source and are paid in the monetarised format or in birre-gibbir.

Thus, the new employees of the Woyane regime expect to retire with a monetarised pension. Monetarised pension, also known as tureta, is nothing more than a modern version of a rist determined in a monetary format. In a sense, the Tigre employees of an anti-Derg mission stand to benefit not just from wages in lieu of their active employment in the context of the mission and its theo-industry, but on their retirement as well. They, like their ancestors in the previous missions, stand to benefit both from the processes of goolt-ification and rist-ification.

In effect, despite the long and complex political trajectory in Ethiopia, theo-industry and control over it remains to be the main platform in use for the mitigation of poverty and famines. The main variable factor is the constituency that emerges as the main beneficiary.
The position of those left to make up the demand-side of theo-industry or the coerced customers of tebel, remains more or less intact. These have merely moved from being the coerced consumers of one set of tebel to becoming the consumers of another prescription/package of tebel.

In summary, the most important achievements of Woyane’s anti-revolution (Derg)-revolution, from an economic point of view, have been:

(a) the emergence of the region as the focal constituency, the patron of Ethiopia’s timely theo-industry built around the anti-Derg mission, and the effective ‘owner’ of the net gibbir from the mission; and,

(b) the capacity to allow a sizeable number of its main constituency (Tigray region of Abyssinia) to undergo that metamorphosis and become the birre-gooltenya (demoztenya) in the context of the mission.

In effect, the Woyane revolution has been instrumental in restoring the severed links between the community of poor ristenya peasants of Abyssinia (Tigre in particular) and what has been the primary industry of Ethiopia. This process has lead to the re-opening of the channels that allow the transfer of gibbir (the net income of theo-industry) to this constituency, with its poverty/famine mitigating functions. For the first time in decades, the heartland of Abyssinia came to have an additional source of wealth on top of the meagre wealth extracted from the rist-based farms or their pension-farms.

The neo-gabbar status of the southern peasants has remained the same. These have continued to be the sharecroppers and share-graziers on state owned land or riste negus designated as ‘public’ land following Derg’s land ownership bill of 1975 (Negash 1997; Wolde Georgis 1997). We have noted how the state’s monopolistic hold on land via institutionalised violence has become a major method of inducing coerced demand amongst the ‘farmers’ for the CIS (tebel) and for the related administrative services of regimes based in Addis Ababa. This consideration informs the persistence of the state makers in Addis Ababa not to restore native title of land to those from whom land was alienated on conquest (rather on the conquest of their countries).

Indirect methods used in the collection of the neo-gibbir or the ‘share’ from what is generated in the farmsteads operated by the share-cropper and share-grazier
farmers have generally been retained. The state's uncontested control over the
points of circulation such as markets, road blocks, customs, monetary and fiscal
control mechanisms, imports and export trade, price determination of certain
essential goods and services and the like – as under the Derq – continues to
facilitate the collection of neo-gibbir under the Woyane.

However, state instigated terror has been and remains an essential method of
creating coerced demand and maintaining it continuously.
PART FOUR

THEO-INDUSTRY AND THE PRODUCTION OF FAMINES
chapter 12

THEO-INDUSTRY AND THE 'TWO POVERTIES' OF ETHIOPIA

Modernising or Reforming a Theocracy?

All in all, Ethiopia has seen the succession of three different theocratic regimes during the twentieth century. The first was the theocratic regime of 'classical' Abyssinia. This has had the mission of providing a Christianisation mission, to the members of the conquered and heathen (aremene) nations in the Horn of Africa. While its speciality was the provision of Christian services, it has become entwined with the provision of administrative services or ruling those designated for a mission. This mission was structured around the 'manufacturing' and forced commercialisation/delivery of the Commodity of Christian Services, a type of the Commodity of Theocratic Services (CTS).

This period gave way to the era of Neo-theocracies, namely the Derg and the Woyane. These are regimes with a modern type of ideologico-political mission of their own specialty. The Derg’s theocracy or theocratic mission was structured around the tasks of carrying-out the mission of providing Revolutionary Service, where the Commodity of Revolutionary Services (CRS) becomes the specialist produce of its theo-industry.

The Woyane’s theocracy or theocratic mission is structured around the aim of carrying out the mission of imposing Revolutionary Democracy (whatever this means), where what could be referred to as the Commodity of Democratic Services (CDS) emerges as its version of the Commodity of Christian Services or the Derg’s Commodity of Revolutionary Services.

In any one of these regimes, the assumed and official religious and/or political ideas or ideologies are significant not so much in what they set out to accomplish
as what the instigators earn from the process (gibbir). The economic dividends of these missions are as significant, if not more, than their overt aim: namely, the imposition/inculcation of a seemingly liberating package of ideas/ideologies.

These self-assumed sets of ideas are significant in sustaining a form of industry. They are the source of income/wealth for their patrons and, consequently, the source of funds for the payment of wage packages and pensions for members of the constituency with a mission. As such, the Christian community of Abyssinia or the heartland of Abyssinia stood to benefit from the economic gains of the Mission of Christian Services. The mainly Abyssinian neo-elite of the Derg were the main beneficiaries from the Derg’s Mission of Revolutionary Services. Tigray region in the heartland of Abyssinia emerged as the patron of the Woyane’s Mission of Democratic Services and the main economic beneficiary from the (gibbir) earnings from its version of theo-industry.

Notwithstanding the political and economic turmoils over the past century or so, theo-industry remains to be the primary industry of Ethiopia, the main source of wage-carrying posts (demoz-posts) and the source of (monetary) pension packages or tureta for the retiring employees in this industry.

Theo-industry or control over it, despite the political upheavals that have characterised Ethiopia during the twentieth century, remained to be the ideal platform via which the then state-makers in Ethiopia tackled the economic woes of their specific constituency. Coups and counter coups, ‘liberation wars’ (in the heartland of Abyssinia) have generally been aimed at wrestling the reins of state power so as the get a ‘proper’ share of the ‘national wealth’ (read gibbir or the earnings from Ethiopia’s theo-industry). These were not set out to alter the fundamental nature of the economy or the theocratic nature of the regimes, where theo-industry remained to be the primary industry in the empire-state of Ethiopia and the main employer.

Coups and anti-state wars (those in the heartland of Abyssinia) were about identifying the times state makers and patrons of theo-industry as the cause of a constituency’s economic and social woes. These were revolts against those who had denied a constituency its historically established ‘share’ of (gibbir)
entitlements or the earnings of Abyssinia’s/Ethiopia’s national industry (theo-
industry).

This way, a victorious constituency emerges as the main beneficiary of the
earnings without having to add any new or additional portion of wealth to the
national and/or the coffers of the empire-state of Ethiopia. Such a coup is
instrumental in enhancing the earning capacity of a specific constituency all
without the need to add new wealth or even bring about ways that enhance the
wealth generating capacities of a constituency or region. They allow the transfer of
more or less same earnings from the same industry from the defeated state-makers
(the Amharic Abyssinians in this case) to the victorious and new state-makers (the
Tigre-Abyssinians, in this case).

Then, any radical reform in the nature of the primary industry, its replacement with
a free or an independent agricultural industry, the birth of a free class of
agricultural producers (farmers) in the gabbar countries; hardly is to the immediate
advantage of the Abyssinians. The freeing of the gabbar (understood here as a type
of coerced customers of successive theocratic missions of Abyssinia) implies the
loss of the traditional customers of Abyssinia’s traditional primary industry or
theo-industry. It means the loss of a market for the CTS of Abyssinia. Doing so
would automatically lead to the demise of their traditional primary industry and
(gibbir) earnings, without necessarily having to lead to the creation of an
alternative industry out of their pension-producing farms in the heartland of
Abyssinia. It would not necessarily lead to the making of a qualitatively different
type of farmer from the pension-farmers of Abyssinia.

Renewal/modernisation of theo-industry rather than removal/replacement of theo-
industry with a free agri-industry has emerged as a chosen prescription of a
’reform’ by all the post WWII and Abyssinian-dominated regimes in Addis Ababa.
The adoption of ‘modern’ ideas/ideologies of development (be this the
‘modernisation’ ideas of the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, the socialist
modernisation of the Derg, and Woyane’s Revolutionary Democracy) became the
definers of yet other theocratic missions. As such, these ideas, like the
Christianising/evangelisation ideas of the past, are significant not so much in
improving the economic foundation of a country where agriculture is supposedly
the primary industry, but in rendering a façade of modernity to a the existing theo-
industry.

So far, Ethiopia has merely renewed or even modernised its theo-industry by
grafting a sellable (to its intelligentsia and to the aid-providing organisations of the
time, for instance) and modern sounding ‘isms’ to the existing structure of its
old/ancient primary industry (theo-industry), complete with its ‘supply-side’ and
‘demand-side’.

The continuation in the dependent nature of agriculture has been a major side
effect of modernising a theocracy and the economic structure that sustains it (theo-
industry). This is all the more remarkable as it takes place in an era when there no
longer is a renewable source of customers or customer base for it since WWII.

As an essentially non-renewable type of industry, theo-industry could no longer
serve as the platform for poverty reduction and for the aversion of famine
conditions. Through coups and counter coups, and by inheriting the economic
agency of the state, regions or constituencies merely use the remaining wealth
generating capacity and/or foreign ‘aid’ but to the advantage of a set constituency.
This is rarely possible without inducing or intensifying poverty and famine
conditions in other constituencies (gabbar countries).

'Two-Peasants' and 'Two-Poverties' as By-Products of Theo-

industry

The gabbar (revenue-farmers) of southern Ethiopia and the pension-farmers of
(mainly in the heartland of Abyssinia) both have not only been attached to theo-
industry, but effectively are by-products of theo-industry. Neither of them is a type
of free or independent agricultural system. Neither of them defines an agricultural
industry. The gabbar-farmers operate gibbir-farms with the main aim of generating
products (gibbir) used to re-finance the forced consumption of the Commodity of
Theoretical/Ideological Services, the end produce of Abyssinian primary industry.
The pension-farmers operate a type of pension-farms whose end produce is a
primitive type of pension (for the former waged-employees in the Abyssinian
primary industry and/or their descendants). The former set of farms help pay wages
for the actively employed Abyssinians (in the theo-industry), while the later set
(rist-farms) help pay the pensions of the long-retired employees of theo-industry or their heirs.

Consequently, what passes as an agricultural industry not only is not an independent sector/industry that predated theo-industry (or a past stint with a theocratic mission), but also is itself the by-product of the theocratic mission. The gabbar farmers/peasants of Ethiopia, and over the past hundred years or so, were concentrated in the southern half of the empire. Regions that today form part of the heartland of Abyssinia had previously gone through a similar process (Trimingham 1965; Tamrat 1972b).

As such, both sets of farms and their respective ‘farmers’ are not only attached to another and entirely different type of industry (theo-industry), but so are the avenues used for the mitigation of poverty amongst these sets of farmers. However, Abyssinians or pension-farmers of Abyssinia achieved this directly or via the process of goolt-ification and rist-ification, where the agency of their state has been essential.

The Abyssinian pension-farmers get the poverty-mitigating effects of theo-industry directly or via the process of accessing wage-posts created there. The process of creating and allocating wage-posts (goolt) to the members of the pension-farmers (goolt-ification) followed by the payment of pension package (rist-ification) have been the typical avenues via which the state used its agency in improving the economic woes of the Abyssinian citizens. As we have noted both wages and pensions were paid in the form of crude assets held by the Abyssinian crown in the form of a crown land and other assets. In the era where revenue (gibbir) was collected in a monetary format, both wage and pension packages began to be calculated in a monetary unit or the Birr, assuming the names of the ‘demoz’ and the ‘tureta’ respectively.

At the same time, any improvement in the living conditions or the earning capacity of these has inherently been linked to the economic health/fate of theo-industry. The hope for improvement has always been tied-up to the agency of a theocratic state or their theocracy in terms of its ability to secure a fresh/additional source of (coerced) demand or aremene nationals-turned-gabbar, by conducting regular acts of conquests.
As such, the structural causes for the progressive impoverishment of the two qualitatively different sets of Ethiopian farmers (gibbir/revenue-farmers or the gabbar vs the pension-farmers or the Abyssinian ristenya ‘farmers’) will have to be sought or located in the dynamics of theo-industry.

Theo-industry and Impoverishment amongst the Abyssinians

The structural causes of poverty amongst the pension-farmers of Ethiopia (Abyssinian ‘peasants’) lie in the absolute and/or relative (to the size of the growing number of dependants) decrease in the holding capacity of the pension-farms (rist-farms), as the number of the inheritors/dependants increases over time.

Factors that result in the decline of the earning capacity of the national industry directly inform the impoverishment of the Abyssinians. A decline in the economic viability or health of theo-industry, as the outcome of exhaustion in the availability of a fresh supply of aremene nations (fresh supply of would-be gabbar), results in a form of recession. In turn, this condition leads to an absolute and/or relative (to the size of the population) decline in the size of the gibbir. Reduction in the size of gibbir leads to a decline in the ability of the crown to create new wage-posts (goolt), followed by a pension payment, for the young and aspiring members of the pension-farming communities.

The process of goolt-ification has been instrumental in offsetting the effects of progressive impoverishment that accompanies the status of being pension-farmers. Other familiar and external factors exacerbate the condition of poverty and help trigger famines. Cyclical droughts have been the most common trigger of famine conditions in Ethiopia and many parts of Africa. Droughts, pestilence and wars often serve as the catalysts in converting the structural cause of famines (poverty) into a famine condition.

Theo-industry and the Impoverishment of Gabbar Farmers

On the other hand, in the dynamics of theo-industry we find the (structural) causes that inform the impoverishment of the gabbar farmers or the gabbar countries in Ethiopia. However, these owe to a diametrically opposite rationale/reasons than the structural causes of poverty amongst the Abyssinian pension-farmers or ‘peasants’, despite both having theo-industry as a common setting/backdrop.
Chapter 12

The impoverishment of the gabbar farmers owes to their imposed condition of being farmers for the sake of consuming the end product of Abyssinian primary industry or theo-industry. Being gabbar implied the loss of being agents of a farming industry and its produce. Under this imposed status, farming has ceased being an independent activity or an activity done for the sake of it. It became a productive activity with the essential aim of paying for the (coerced) consumption of theocratic/ideological services provided by another entity (the Abyssinian crown/state). As part of the process, the gabbar have to generate their own ration or the gabbar’s ration. Under such circumstances, the gabbar lived on the ration and for the production of the gibbir (the price paid in return/exchange for the ideological/theocratical services of Abyssinia).

The gabbar family units or nations have no other purpose in life but to sustainably be the forced customers of Abyssinia’s Commodity of Theocratical/Ideological Services. They live to consume this commodity while (physically) reduced to live on the gabbar’s ration (Gr). Gabbar ration, as we have noted, is a small portion of the Gross gibbir or the produce from gibbir-farms.

Thus, the loss of the right to consume the bulk of what they generate (gibbir) becomes the structural cause that underpins/informs the impoverishment of the gabbar families and/or nations. In a sense, what is good for Abyssinia, what helps reduce/mitigate the poverty amongst the Abyssinians, induce the exact opposite amongst the Abyssinian ruled gabbar nations/countries.

Ironically, the same economic regime, rather in a twisted way, has provided a limited degree of poverty-mitigating avenues for a segment of the members of the aremene nations-turned-into-gabbar. This is a case in an indirect avenue of accessing the earnings of the Abyssinian national industry (gibbir) and become beneficiaries of its poverty/famine mitigating effects.

Native collaboration (with the conquering entity) or being a ‘gobana’, and the reservation/allocation of a percentage of wage-paying posts (in anyone of the posts that make-up the supply-side of theo-industry) to trusted few from amongst the gabbar nations has been the case in point. However, closer scrutiny would reveal that this process, in as much as the use of violence, has formed an integral part of theo-industry. The practice of seeking native collaboration merely has been a
practice that, to some extent, rendered elements of the gabbar nations effective shareholders and beneficiaries from the imposed status on the rest of their nations.

Being the ‘gobana’, notwithstanding its dishonourable feature from the point of view of the gabbar nations, as has been stated earlier, has become a ladder out of the imposed and degrading status of being the gabbar or members of the gabbar families. From an economic point of view, it has served as an avenue for the reduction of the resulting poverty (of the gabbar families).

In a sense, the reservation and allocation of the third (sisso) of the wage-posts (not land, as is often claimed (Wolde Maskal 1957; Markakis 1974; Donham & James 1986)) to the ‘trusted’ collaborators from amongst the gabbar nations, and the allocation of a corresponding percentage of gibbir as a wage (followed by a rist land allocation as a pension) has been an integral part of all Abyssinian-centred theocratic missions in Ethiopia.

The sisso is a theoretical percentage largely, and the same practices have been followed by the Derg and the Woyane regimes. The allocation of part of the gibbir for the goolt/demoz-posts to the native ‘collaborators’ or employees of the crown/state (patron of the theocratic mission) is a necessary cost incurred in order to secure a steady supply of demand for the mission or for the tebel. However, from a purely economic point of view, the same has been one of the few avenues through which members of the vanquished nations have managed to mitigate the effects of imposed poverty and lessen the degraded status of being the gabbar. Holding such posts rendered the beneficiaries as a kind of honorary citizen of Abyssinia or Ethiopia. Gobana-hood has been a passport out of gabbar-dom.

Economically, it was one way of accessing the wealth generated in the context of what has been the primary industry of Abyssinia: theo-industry. Gobana-hood has been an often-inglorious access route to claim what should have remained and be consumed amid the regions that have generated it in the first place.

Modern education amongst the natives (gabbar nations or non-Abyssinian nations) has become the criteria to qualify for such posts in the post WWII era. The role of foreign Christian missionaries in terms of providing modern primary education there has had a significant role to play in the regard (Dilebo 1983).
Native collaboratism owes to imposed conditions. Nevertheless, it has the function of allowing some of the natives to 'share' the spoils of gibbir from their own regions/constituencies. In doing so, the process serves as a leash that reinforces the whole process. It (what is paid for native collaboratism) is a small but essential cost paid by the patron of theo-industry. It has the function of securing the flow of the bulk of the gibbir to the predetermined beneficiaries (gooltenya) or to the treasury of the crown.

**Theo-industry and the 'Two Poverties' of Ethiopia: A Summary**

Economic depression that has affected Abyssinian primary industry, partially due to the reduced supply in aremene countries has informed the economic ills of this industry. This has served as the structural foundation for progressive processes of impoverishment that in turn underlies the cyclical famines in the heartland of Abyssinia. On the other hand, the structural conditions for the impoverishment of the gabbarr nations and the onset of famines owe to the effects that emanate from having been forced to be the source of demand for the end produce of the Abyssinian primary industry.

On a related note, Abyssinian poverty/famine has had discernible avenues for its mitigation in the form of state patronage of a theo-industry (Abyssinian). The growing demand from the non-Abyssinian regions and non-peasant constituencies (urban-based intelligentsia or the wage-receiving 'classes') on this role of the state in recent times, have tended to reduce the services of the state to its traditional main constituency: the heartland of Abyssinia as the domain of pension-farmers.

The poverty and famine-conditions of the southern 'farmers' (former gabbarr-farmers made into sharecroppers/share-graziers of the state in recent decades or the 'chisenya' of the state) have largely been a patronless condition. Theirs were not meant to be addressed/mitigated through the agency of the Abyssinian-dominated Ethiopian State.

*Figure 12.1* opposite portrays a mother and child awaiting famine relief in Oromia in southern Ethiopia.
Stagnant Theo-industry and Secondary Industries

The economic fate of trade sector or commerce, as an important component of the 'secondary industries, has been intricately tied-up to that of theo-industry. Commerce in general and export trade of Ethiopia in particular, by in large have been trade in something that begun as a gibbir. In this case, both Abyssinia/Ethiopia and its clients have a part in fomenting a less than legitimate trading relation, despite the fact that the later claim to the ideals of free and/or legitimate trade. The consumers of Ethiopia’s exports may not be aware of the underlying economic regime, as they were not aware of the origins of the so-called 'Blood Diamonds' from the war zones of Africa or the conditions that underpinned the rug industry in south Asia.

Commerce was not the only platform that linked Abyssinia/Ethiopia with the rest of the World. Poltico-diplomatic relations inspired in the context of the times geo-political conditions have made it an important ally of the West, for centuries. It has been one defence post of the interests of the free world, although its economic regime that finances its vast bureaucracy, armed/security forces and diplomatic relations has been the antithesis of free enterprise.

Developmental Aid, Famine Relief and Theo-industry

Under the conditions where theo-industry remained the primary industry of Ethiopia, developmental ‘aid’ is bound to end up as an aid to prop-up this same industry. Such aid would ultimately be an aid to increase the gibbir and rent (the main sources of state revenue and wages) generating capacities of the crown then and the state in recent decades (for example, US loans to expand coffee production in Sidamo) (McClellan 1988; Joireman 2000).

In turn, gibbir and rent on 'public land' (or the 'share-crop' of the state) ends up paying for the loans forwarded to increase the existing capacity to generate them. Most of the projects had the target population based in and around the main towns in Ethiopia, such as Addis Ababa, Asmara (Eritrea), Gondar, Harar etc. The mainly Abyssinian residents of these urban centres were set to benefit from the US aid for the building/expansion of the facilities of higher education. Figure 12.2 depicts the close historical strategic alliance between the USA and Ethiopia. Some see food
aid as an one other arsenal in the geopolitics of the US in the region (see Figure 12.3).

Figure 12.2: US has been and remains an important strategic ally of Ethiopia – US President George W. Bush with Ethiopia’s leader, Meles Zenawi (Kenya’s Daniel arap Moi at left back)

Figure 12.3: US Food Aid for famine victims in Ethiopia

The same constituency was set to benefit from the Industry of World Sympathy in the form of securing what little access routes or openings (migration) to the part of the World with the greener pastures at the moment.

Ironically, the heartland of Abyssinia became the last bastions of both the gibbon-farms (Wako Adi et al. 1998), hence of the gabbar system this embodies, and of the privately owned slaves, to the last days of the Derg (early 1990s). This was possible due to the resistance and outright aversion these regions had with the ‘reforms’ of the regime (Derg) they defined as aremene (evil) from the onset (Keller 1988; Ottaway 1990).

So where to from here?
Chapter 13

Conclusion...

And Some Remarks on the Art of Wealth Expansion

Theo-industry and Famines in Ethiopia

In recent decades, no other topic has dominated Ethiopian discourse than the subject of famine. Famines have served as the catalyst in wars fought amongst the Abyssinians, between the Abyssinians and non-Abyssinians, and between the Abyssinian-dominated regimes that rule Ethiopia from Addis Ababa and various dissident groups that have fought and continue to fight against the ruling regimes, though not necessarily seeking similar outcomes.

The very name of Ethiopia has become a by-word for famines. No other phenomenon represents Ethiopia of the modern times than widespread misery and famines, thanks, partially, to that ubiquitous and increasingly globalised media: the television.

The opening paragraph of a recent USAID/Ethiopia report reads (2000, p. 1): “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, famine, war, pestilence, and death, are not religious abstractions in Ethiopia. They are frequent – if unwelcome – visitors. During the past 38 years, Ethiopia has endured three wars (including a 17-year civil war), and three major famines or food emergencies.”

Historians note that Ethiopia is not particularly new to famines. Recent ones are just an extension of a series of previous ones. Some of these, especially those that affected the heartland of Abyssinia in the north, are recorded. Pankhurst (1986, p. 4) noted that: “Study of the history of droughts and famine in Ethiopia shows that the calamities of our time, with which the world has in the last year or so (famine
of mid-1980s) become familiar, are but the last of a long series of such disasters.” See also the appendix: “Some key events in Ethiopia’s history”, reproduced and adapted from a report by Bevan (2000, p. ii).

Many other famines, especially those that occurred in regions that today form part of southern Ethiopia and, according to oral history tellers, had led to massive devastation, are yet to be recorded. The Boran-Oromo account of “bara cinna” (an era of decimation or devastation) is one such example.

A pervasive tendency by Ethiopian (Abyssinian), but also foreign observers of Ethiopia, to view the country as if it is one undifferentiated mass, where whatever is stated more or less applies to all regions that comprise the empire-state, is noted in the thesis. This is palpable through generalised reference to events in Ethiopia such as “Ethiopian history”, “Ethiopian peasants”, “Ethiopian culture”, “Ethiopian politics”, “Ethiopian agriculture and underdevelopment”, “Ethiopian land management”, “Ethiopian poverty”, “Ethiopian famines” etc.

This line of enquiry runs the risk of eclipsing the cause-and-effect-type correlation between what happens in the northern half of Ethiopia (the home constituency of the ruling people) and in the southern regions (Shepherd 1975; Kelemen 1985; Wolde Mariam 1986; Tareke 1991; Crummey 2002). The fact that one region suffers from severe poverty and the effects of famines is routinely related to the (ruling) regimes but the same cannot be said about establishing a similar cause-and-effect link between one region or constituency and the other(s); between political and economic developments in the northern half of Ethiopia and their counterparts in the southern half.

Widespread poverty and famines are increasingly becoming the dominant feature of the whole of Ethiopia. The scale of the problem is such that a slightly generalised view of this topic is almost unavoidable.

A few decades back, large scale famines were associated with northern regions such as Tigray, Wollo and Eritrea. These days though, previously unheard-of regions from the southern half of Ethiopia have been added to the growing list of regions where famines occur almost once every decade and as a tendency on a large scale every time. Right now (in 2003), a severe famine is unfolding in Sidama, Guraghe, Konso, in a large swathe of Oromo country (including the once
"food basket" region of Arsi), in the Somali region of Ogaden and in many other parts of southern Ethiopia as well as the usual suspects (like Wollo and others) (see Kristof 2003; Liddle 2003). However, that does not mean that famines in the whole of Ethiopia are caused in the same way, by the workings of more or less same forces of evil (regimes) that behave in a same manner in all regions of the empire. The fact that a sub-region of Ethiopia suffers from widespread poverty and famine is not often adequately related to what those in other sub-regions do to overcome their own set of poverty and famine, through the agency of the state they or their ethnic brethren dominate.

It has been noted in the thesis how the driving force of north-south expansion of the Abyssinian empire has been state-led attempts to overcome decades – at times, centuries – of the cumulative effects of poverty that underpinned famines in the heartland of Abyssinia, in northern Ethiopia. It was noted too how it was not a mere coincidence that Abyssinian cycles of imperial expansion took place following periods of catastrophic food shortages and major famines (Melba 1988; Zewde, 1991).

The system that converted the indigenous populations of southern Ethiopia into serfs in the service of the Abyssinian state, its officials and large body of Abyssinian settlers evolved to facilitate state-led strategy of mitigating the effects of poverty and famines in the home constituency of the Abyssinians. As such, it is imperative to seek the structural causes of the increased vulnerability of people in the southern half of Ethiopia as to what the Abyssinian-dominated regimes have done and continue to do to overcome the plight of people in their home constituencies in the north. The agency of the Ethiopian state in impacting on poverty and famines present not just in the familiar rhetoric of creating obstacles that hinder the mitigation of poverty and famines. It also applies in its role in helping overcome a specific set of poverty and famine (that of its home constituency) while inducing the opposite effect in other regions.

Despite the repeated mantra of having the longest recorded history in Africa and its own writing system, Ethiopia is short of systematic records on events such as famines. In this regard, regions in the southern half of the country fare even worse due to the lack of state agency, written records and the like. However, a growing body of literature around the topic of famines is being produced on Ethiopia,
though not necessarily by the Ethiopians themselves – and much less from the perspective of the victims.

Though this thesis deals with famines in Ethiopia, it is not exactly a study of the history and scale of famines. It is more about the exploration into the structural cause of famines, in both the southern and northern halves of the country. This has been attempted through the study set around the dynamics of what I argued constitutes the main industry in the empire state of Ethiopia: theo-industry.

One main thrust of the thesis lies in establishing the cause-and-effect correlation between the poverty and famines in the northern half of Ethiopia (the constituency of the ruling people) and those that take place in the south.

The other thrust has been exploring alternative ways of overcoming poverty and famines through a discussion of possible ways of achieving economic renewal/expansion, so as to offset the effects of mass poverty and famines.

Thus, contrary to the conventional and rarely uncontested ‘truths’, the primary industry of Abyssinia/Ethiopia has not been agriculture but theo-industry. Agriculture or farming has simply been made a subordinate activity to the industry of a theocratic mission or theo-industry.

Many studies have sought the causes of Ethiopia’s economic and resulting socio-political woes in the state-posed ideologies. The use of Derg’s socialist ideology and its experimentation in a socialistic economic model (or the notion of socialist development) to explain the economic difficulties of Ethiopia has been (still is) fashionable, both amongst Ethiopian and foreign academics (Ottaway 1990). However, they have been unable to point out how the problem lies not so much in assumed ideologies of the state but in a riddle where the production (and ‘commercialisation’) of ideology has in fact been the specialist production of Ethiopia’s primary industry for centuries. State ideology has defined the national (theocratic) mission of the ruling Abyssinians in relation to the majority non-Abyssinian population in Ethiopia or the empire carved out in the Horn of Africa. Political developments over the past half-century or so have revealed how the ruling group in Ethiopia has managed to renew its ancient mission vis-à-vis the non-Abyssinians, not so much by seeking alternative forms of industry but by assuming ‘modern’ set of ideologies with which to redefine its old role. This way
the Abyssinians have managed to provide a new lease of life to what has been their primary industry for centuries.

Around such a mission evolved a form of industry, complete with its ‘supply-side’ and ‘demand-side’. Like any form of industry, it too has been to the mercy of the law of demand and supply. It too went through boom and bust cycles. It too had its recessions as the result of sagging demand for its service-commodity and expansions as the size of (coerced) customers grew, but as the result of acts of conquest.

The fact that theo-industry became a non-renewable industry, rather than its inherent nature of being one erected around a theocratic mission, partially explains the economic difficulties of Ethiopia (of the Abyssinians to be precise). Ethiopia’s failure in creating a free and, more importantly, renewable agricultural industry is the other reason.

**Poverty Reduction Where Agriculture is a Non-Industry**

One main outcome of theo-industry has been its ability to render agriculture a dependent economic activity. Agriculture became a not free productive activity caught up in the tasks of financing a theocratic mission of one sort or the other. It has been the source of gibbir with which the goolt (or wages in kind) or demoz wages in money) of those on the active duty of such missions were paid. Every active duty is accompanied by the phase of retirement where some sort of pensions would have to be paid. When and where agriculture is not providing resources with which to pay the wages of the actively-employed in the national theocratic mission, the essential aim has been the generation of a primitive type of pension for those retired from the national mission or their inheritors.

Neither gabbar-farmers nor pension-farmers are operators or agents of an agricultural industry. Neither of them are ‘producers’, in the strictest sense of the term. The former set operates a gibbir-farm with the ultimate aim of generating/producing a gibbir (the price of the CTS); while the latter set operates pension-farms (rist-farms) that specialise in the production of an agricultural pension. In a sense, at any given moment, a set agricultural activity is in the services of two different functions that are but different parts/phases of a non-
agricultural activity/duty assumed by the nation or its political system (the crown). Under these conditions, agriculture is not a venue for free, independent or self-contained productive activity, but in the services of an entirely different industry/mission. Abyssinian/ Ethiopian agriculture has been and remains to be under the tyranny another industry: theo-industry.

Where agriculture/farming is not an independent industry or a non-industry, there is no such thing as an independent farmer/peasant. Thus, there is no such thing as an agricultural industry nor a free or independent farmer or producer in Ethiopia, in the strictest sense of the terms. Under such circumstances, we have a rather deformed case of farming as a form of industry and what passes as farmers or producers are not independent operators of an agricultural industry but generally comprise the ‘supply-side’ (the pension farmers) and ‘demand side’ (the gibbir-farmers) of Abyssinian theo-industry. Farming is not an independent art of wealth generation that sustains a myriad of other activities or secondary/tertiary industries, but a dependent art of agricultural wealth creation with which to finance a theocratic mission. The ability to qualify and secure a wage-paying post then pension payment on retirement becomes the way out from the drudgery of having been caught in this dependent productive activity.

‘Farmers’ in the southern half of Ethiopia have either been the gabbar farmers (pre-WWII period) or the chisenya farmers (labour tenants-turned-sharecroppers/share-grazers) since. The gabbar, as noted earlier, were nothing more than nation-owned (but crown-entrusted) slaves. In Abyssinia, ‘farmers’ have been (and still are) nothing more than producers of an agricultural pension.

Agriculture in Ethiopia has not been the source of a produce, if produce means to be something owned by those who own or operate or are instrumental in the creation of an agrarian-type wealth. Consequently, it is not the source of taxes, either, if taxes mean an outlay for which desired services have to be provided for the payee. It has been instrumental in the generation of either gibbir (plus the inevitable portion left to be consumed by the gabbar or the ration), or pension.

The vast networks of waged employees of the crown/state are paid from the estates/farms the crown/state either owns outright (in the pre-WWII era) or partially (since WWII, where the state emerged as the sole landlord in Ethiopia).
The wages were paid from gibbir (Gross gibbir minus gabbar's ration) while pensions were paid by allocating a piece of crown-held gasha land (riste negus) to the retirees in the pre-WWII times. Since, birre-gibbir (gibbir in monetary form or in Birr) has paid both the wages (demoz) and the pensions (tureta). The state's 'share' from the farms operated by sharecroppers and share-graziers on state or 'public' owned land provides a type of rent. Such indirectly-collected rent is the main component of birre-gibbir, as analysed previously.

The emergence of agriculture as a free and independent industry from under the economic tyranny of theo-industry remains a yet-to-be accomplished undertaking both amongst the gibbir-farming regions (south) and in pension-farming regions (north) of Ethiopia. This remains to be an essential precedent if agriculture has to emerge as the source of renewable/expandable wealth necessary to tackle the growing process of impoverishment, this being the main underlying cause for the creation of a famine-condition.

Otherwise, free/independent agriculture remains the 'missing' or 'elusive' industry, both in the heartland of Abyssinia and with non-Abyssinian regions in the south. The same could be said with that category of 'a farmer', a 'producer'. Ethiopia is yet to create or re-invent a free and independent agrarian industry as well as the corresponding class of genuine farmers or producers. Only then could there be a case of a freely-established and a voluntary exchange relation between producers found in different parts of Ethiopia and beyond.

This is even more essential in the heartland of Abyssinia where theo-industry has traditional been the primary industry and the source of renewable wealth used to check the process of impoverishment. At the same time, the same process induced the opposite effect (impoverishment) amongst the non-Abyssinian gibbir-farmers in the southern-half of Ethiopia.

The transfer of the role of economic agency from the state/crown to a free class of producers remains an unfulfilled condition in Ethiopia. Only on the basis of a renewable source of wealth could a country, a nation or a region be able to tackle the problems of poverty and avoid the onset of famine conditions.

Theo-industry, at least from Abyssinian perspective, became a non-viable form of industry not because of its inherent nature of being one structured around the tasks
of carrying-out a theocratic mission, but because it has lost the ability to renew or expand. The crisis of demand for its specialist service commodity (CTS) the reduced ability to increase the size of its would-be customers (a fresh supply of *gabbar*) has rendered theo-industry a non-viable, non-renewable industry. Consequently, theo-industry has become an industry in a near permanent recession. This condition, not so much the nature of it, explains the economic woes of Abyssinia. As such, both Abyssinia and its *gabbar* countries/colonies have a long overdue need to look for a renewable industry. Agriculture is the main, if not the only alternative at this stage for both sub-regions.

**Free and Renewable Agriculture**

The idea of freeing agriculture from the economic tyranny of theo-industry and the ‘birth’ of a qualitatively new type of farmers/producers is suggested here as essential ingredients for the invention of a free agri-industry in Ethiopia.

However, the existence/birth of a free agriculture does not necessarily imply a renewable/expanding industry. It only frees the sector from the economic burdens of theo-industry. It only releases its essential assets (land and labour) as the foundation for an agrarian industry and as importantly, a renewable industry.

The secret is not just in having a free agriculture but also having the ability to expand its existing wealth-generation capacity. The fate of a free agri-industry without any avenue for expansion/renewal, like Abyssinia’s theo-industry today, is one of economic stagnation. The study of what I conceive here as the Art of Wealth Expansion (AWE) is a study of the avenues through which nations and/or economies have managed to expand their wealth-generating capacities historically. The examination of the potential avenues to attain an expansion in wealth-generating capacities amongst (yet-to-emerge) free farmers in Ethiopia is attempted in the context of the essence or dynamics of the Art of Wealth Expansion.

**Art of Wealth Creation versus Art of Wealth Expansion**

A basic and common feature to an economic system is the existence of a primary industry or a series of activities that collectively define the primary industry. As
such one could speak of a primary industry of an empire state, of a country made up of multiple nations, of a nation and/or a region. Around this and often to serve it emerge all hosts of secondary, tertiary etc. industries. Manufacturing and commerce/trade are amongst the commonest types of the later, while through commerce one set of economy is linked-up to other sets of economies. Trade and migratory opportunities are some of the avenues via which nations get to tap into wealth created in other nations. This aspect is studied in the context of what I call a Scavenger Art of Wealth Expansion (SAWE), to be examined ahead.

Parallel to a SAWE, nations have resorted to what could be conceived as a Predatory Art of Wealth Expansion (PAWE). The latter is the art of using organised violence as the source of wealth. It occurs where conquest emerges as an art of production on its own right, a Predatory Art of Production (PAP). It is where nations/economies temporarily resort to acts of conquest that are instrumental in yielding not so much a readily consumable wealth but crude assets/capital items necessary for the expansion of their existing holdings (in assets). ‘Booty’ in land and labour (slave labour) are the most important assets nations harvest through a PAP.

A Predatory Art of Production has traditionally been instrumental in yielding the essential productive assets that until then sustained the primary industries of vanquished nations/economies. Consequently, PAWE owes to the militarisation of a nation or a national economy. Through this process, members of nations and producers emerge as employees of a war industry, an industry of conquest and colonisation. In a sense, conquest implies the addition of a form of industry to the conquering nation, complete with its own CEOs (warlords) and employees (foot soldiers) and yield in the form of the ‘carcass’ of other nation(s) and/or economies. This yield or end product of an industry of conquest is what is popularly referred to as ‘booty’. Considering the cost of production involved in the industry of conquest, the result arguably can hardly be considered booty or something acquired gratis.

Then, there are two interdependent economic concepts that underpin the dynamics of an economic system or all economic processes. One is the Art of Wealth Creation (AWC). The other is the Art of Wealth Expansion or renewal (AWE/R).
Extractive Art of Production versus Predatory Art of Production

One feature of a national community or even of a civilisation is the existence of its distinctive culture of production. All nations and/or civilisations evolve a unique culture of extracting wealth from essential assets they own collectively (collectively held private property of a nation) or individually (private property). Crop cultivation, pastoralism, hunting-gathering, fishing, mining, manufacturing, service provision or arts and craft making are all definers of an art of production. Around these arts evolve a national industry of one sort or the other.

Not withstanding the technological sophistication achieved by a nation(s), some nations have extractive industries as their primary industry, with others assuming the status of secondary industries. Others have manufacturing as their primary industry, where extractive industries assume the position of a secondary, tertiary etc. sectors. Agriculture and mining are examples of an extractive industry. The art of production here involves the ‘art’ of squeezing readily consumable or tradeable end-products from Land asset or land as an essential capital, with the aid of the nation’s labour, technological knowledge and other resources.

Thus, Extractive Art of Production (EAP) is an art of production or wealth creation here. However, one thing is engaging in an EAP on the basis of more or less same assets and the other thing quite different is aim to expand the size of the overall yield one way (PAWE) or the other (SAWE). This expansion in the wealth generation capacity could be achieved from the same assets or on the basis of seeking ways of acquiring a fresh supply of assets with which to increase the size of ‘squeezable’ asset (land), ‘cheap’ labour and the size of extractable produce or wealth.

The notion of a PAP has implicitly been discussed in the context of Abyssinian acts of conquests, carried out with the ultimate aim of acquiring a fresh supply of ‘heathen’ (aremene) nations whose nationals are converted into gabbbar (coerced customers) of its primary industry. In the Abyssinian case, the primary industry was theo-industry and the ‘investment’ of assets meant the use of these in the making of fresh sets of gibbir-farms, with that achieve an expansion in the overall yield of gibbir.
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On this basis, an EAP and a PAP are the main components of nations’ AWC. They are the main sources of nations’ wealth. The former yields a defined set of products. The latter yields a carcass of other nations/economies and render it as the source of ‘new’ assets on which the EAP of the conquering nation(s) is set to expand. PAP rarely is an independent industry, but a supplementary industry with a temporary significance. It exists to re-supply nation(s) with a fresh batch of land (and often slave labour) asset and assumes the status of being an additional industry of a conquering or empire-building nation(s), for a while.

**Predatory Art of Wealth Expansion versus Scavenger Art of Wealth Expansion**

Nations have the ability to expand their wealth via an act of conquest which is instrumental in yielding crude assets such as land; hence the essence of a PAWE. As such, a PAP is both an art of wealth creation and art of wealth expansion at the same time. Conquest acquired assets are instrumental in the expansion of the primary industry of a nation(s), often of extractive nature such as agriculture, mining and/or fishing. Other secondary or tertiary industries also get to benefit from the resulting expanded wealth-generation capacities. The conquistador nation(s) or their industries are beneficiaries of the primary order, client nations of these stand to benefit from the same bounty indirectly or through ‘informal’ platforms such as trade, migratory opportunities, and similar others.

Then, nations achieve a dependent type of expansion in their wealth and/or wealth-generating capacity on the platform of economic and migratory links with nations that succeed in a PAWE (or empire-building nations). This indirect ‘art’ of managing to achieve the expansion/increase in nations’ wealth, is defined here as a Scavenger Art of Wealth Expansion (SAWE). It is ‘scavenger’ because their economies, like those of the empire-building nations, ultimately feed on the ‘carcass’ of the economically defunct nations/economies, thereby achieving some degree of economic renewal/expansion. Building an empire then is a manifestation of a PAWE. It implies an art of wealth expansion where nations aggregate ‘the industry of conquest’ to their ordinary and traditional industries. On this basis, such martial nations manage to create their own economic stimulus instrumental in
the expansion of their traditional industries and indirectly in the expansion of their client nations' industries.

**Violence and the Predatory Art of Wealth Expansion**

As indicated, an act of conquest has been instrumental in the expansion of the Abyssinia's theo-industry, as it provided them with a fresh supply of gabbar (People asset) and land asset. Acts of conquest and counter-conquests have underpinned the renewal of the main and indigenous industries of the Horn of Africa (hunter-gatherer, pastoralism and farming), before many of these ended up as the gabbar of the Abyssinians following their conquest (Trimingham 1965; Abir 1980).

On the other hand, an act of conquest is instrumental in an economic demise, if not the 'extinction' of the conquered nation(s), of the vanquished nations. As the result, formerly agents of an economy, of a production process, end up being objects of it, as was the case with the transformation of (free) producers into the gabbar people in the case of Abyssinian conquests. Conquest is instrumental in rendering nations of producers into an economic 'carcass' of the 'predatory' nation(s). It creates the primary element in the 'food chain' of economic expansion/renewal. However, some nations feed on the 'carcass' or get to benefit from its economic nourishment as predators (the conquering nation), and others (client nations) as scavengers.

Thus, a dynamic interaction between: (a) predatory nations/economies; (b) scavenger nations/economies; and (c) (economically) 'defunct' nations/economies, emerges as the 'necessary' underlying criterion of the AWE. This seems to apply to all cultures and/or civilisations. It applies, regardless of the proliferation of 'secondary' industrial sectors such as technology, telecommunication, trade and engineering that give the impression that a qualitatively new economic era, or one that does not rely on conquest and empire-building for its expansion, has dawned.

The economic expansion of nations ultimately depends upon the interplay of a PAP (of one's own nation or carried out by a 'friendly' nation/economy) and an EAP. However, technology plays a significant role in nations' ability to increase their wealth and/or wealth-generating capacities. Its role is more emphatic when
used to enhance nations’ ability to ‘discover’ potentially conquerable lands, in manufacturing a potent arsenal of weaponry, to waging efficient wars of conquest as well as in efficient extraction of wealth from the conquered dominions (EAP).

The British conquest and colonisation of the Americas and Australia are an example of a PAP. It is a case of a PAWE. The massive Irish and Italian migration to the dominions of the British Empire is an instance of a SAWE. Such migratory processes represented a relative boom in the demand for what the Irish and the Italians had to offer or to sell/hire to the migrant recipient economies in the form of their ‘desirable’ type of expertise and/or labour.

Out-migration in itself is a new source of wealth for the communities and/or nation of the out-migrants, where an informal transfer of remittance or wealth from the migrants and to their kin and cousins at home takes place. Migratory processes, as was the case with Abyssinian migration and settlement in their gabbar colonies, lead to a relative increase in the available land and other assets to those left behind. Out-migration generally implies a relative decrease of those who depend on the same piece of land/farm for a living. It improves the per-capita asset (land) holding capacity of the nation of emigrants. In addition, migrant communities themselves end up as the primary source of demand for goods and services of their former homelands. Emigration in itself creates increased demand for the goods and services of the ‘homelands’ amongst the more prosperous settler-communities in other lands. This way, the industries of the migrant-providing nations receive a stimulus, an expansion of demand for their culturally-specific goods and services to be exported and sold in ‘ethnic’ supermarkets similar to those in the USA or Australia.

The proliferation of Irish pubs, Italian and Chinese restaurants and specialised supermarkets is an example of this. In a sense, a ‘scavenger’ nation/economy stands to benefit from the prosperity of a friendly but empire-building nation, either through ‘formal’ or ‘informal’ channels. The reverse flow of the better-off descendants of migrants to the homelands of their parents and grandparents sustains an entire industry known otherwise as tourism. In this sense, tourism could be conceived as the ‘industry of homesickness’.
The expansion of demand for goods and services of the ‘client nations’ (Italy) as the result of the increased demand from the empire-building nation (Britain or Spain in the Americas), like migratory opportunities, is a type of ‘economic scavenging’. Either way, the ‘clients’ economies/nations of the empire-building nation(s) achieve a degree of expansion in terms of their wealth-generating capacities.

Thus, the wealth-generating capacities of predatory nations (Britain, Spain) and the scavenger nations (Italy, Ireland) ultimately depend on or feed from the economic demise of other nations or civilisations (indigenous America, Australia, parts of Southern Africa). The latter served as an (economic) ‘carcass’ on which the economies of the conquering nation (predatory nation/economy) and that of its ‘client’ nation(s) (scavenger nations/economies) feed and are nourished. Similar parallels could be established in relation to the Arab-Islamic empire-building exercises in North Africa and parts of Europe (Spain), following the advent of Islam. The Inca Empire in the pre-European period is the result of a similar process. In short, building an empire is case in a PAWE. Thus, PAWE is ultimately the source of direct (for the conquering nation) and indirect (for the ‘client’ nation(s)) platforms for achieving economic expansion/renewal.

**Violence: A Negative Virtue?**

Viewed in relation to the dynamics in the AWE, violence is not inherently a ‘negative’ force, but has an equally ‘positive’ side to it: it depends on whether one looks at it from the instigators’ point of view or the victims’ point of view. An act of conquest results in the acquisition of a fresh supply of land and people/labour assets on which whole industries such as farming, mineral, forestry, fishing, tourist etc., are created or expanded. Conquest renders the essential assets of the vanquished nations/economies as ‘fodder’ on which the economy of the victors is set to achieve nourishment.

Violence, ultimately and one way or the other (predatory or scavenger), is the engine of all economic renewals/expansions. ‘Racist’ theoretico-ideological paradigms that have underpinned European conquests and colonisation, those that have informed the legal precedents for the alienation of the vanquished from their
land and other resources such as Australia’s *terra nullius* (cf. Bachelard 1997) too, I argue, are imbued with both ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ virtues. They are ‘positive’ when viewed from the perspective of the conquering nation(s). They ended up yielding tangible economic dividends in the form of the alienated assets similar to what the British and the Americans have designated ‘crown’ land in Australia.

In a way, there is an inherent conceptual relativism in categories such as violence. Inherently it is imbued with both ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ virtues at the same time. It all depends on which entity (nation) ends up the beneficiary from an organised violent act and which entity or community ends up the victim of others’ instigation of violence. After all, the loss of the Aboriginal nations of Australia and North America has been a net gain to the British, directly, and to the client nations of the British indirectly.

Similar relativism could be extended to social conceptions and/or categories such as the ‘just’, the ‘moral’, the ‘legal’, the ‘racist’, even the ‘democratic’ etc. What is unjust has both ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ virtues, depending on from whose point of view the reference is being made. What is inherently unjust to the vanquished nations such as the Australian Aboriginals helped nourish the economic, social, humanitarian, and legal well being of their conquering nation. The same applies to the inherently racist theoreti-co-political doctrines that rationalise and justify acts of conquest and dispossession of some nations by others.

Patterns in nations’ economic expansion/renewal have been and continue to be dependent on the dynamics of the PAWE, ultimately. The only variable has been which nations emerge as predatory nations, which as scavenging nations and which ones end up becoming an ‘economic carcass’, an ‘economic fodder’; on which the above two sets of nations renew/expand their economies.

**Independent versus Dependent ‘Developments’**

Predatory and scavenger arts of wealth expansion, where free nations are the active agents of their economic life, are the options in the expansion of their wealth-generating capacity. Nations have the (theoretical) option of embarking on their own acts of conquests, with the aim of expanding their existing and essential assets, especially land. On this basis, such nations manage to expand their basic or
primary industries and the size of wealth, be these of a simple hunter-gatherer type, a pastoralist type, a farming agri-industry or similar others, on their own or via their own initiative. However, using history as testimony, only a few nations succeed in a PAWE, at any given point of time. At the same time, the ability of some nations to be able to ‘discover’ and conquer new frontier lands fomented the economic renewal of many more nations/economies, besides theirs. As such, empire building, independent of which nation carries it out, has been an essential ingredient in the economic expansion of primarily the conquering nations and of their ‘client nations’, albeit with a seemingly unavoidable ‘sacrifice’ of other nations/economies as part of the process.

Success in the expansion of a nation’s wealth (wealth being a culturally specific concept), be this via a PAWE or via a SAWE, is defined here as an act of ‘development’. In correspondence to its inherent nature, PAWE is conceived here as an ‘independent’ process of development. Consequently, a SAWE is conceived here as a ‘dependent’ process of development. An independent process of development points to the existence of a unique type of civilisation, amid other ones. Viewed from this perspective, development is neither a ‘rightist’ nor a ‘leftist’ paradigm. It is an ideologically neutral concept. One way or the other (PAWE and/or SAWE), nations have to achieve wealth expansion. What is ‘leftist’, ‘centrist’ or ‘rightist’, I argue, is not so much the concept of the AWE/development as the notions in the redistribution or allocation of the created wealth. After all, only a created wealth could then be redistributed fairly or otherwise.

Then, it is possible to have more than one process of development and/or civilisation taking place simultaneously – hence the notion of parallel developments or civilisations. In fact, this scenario was rather more a norm than an exception during the great part of world history. From time to time, a civilisation emerged to dominate or overshadow other civilisations, as was the case with the Roman Empire and the corporate empire of today’s Anglo-Saxons. However, this does not mean that the era of parallel developments or civilisations has ended for good.
Art of Wealth Expansion in the Era of Corporate Empires

Is building a corporate empire a type of PAWE? What constitutes the economic ‘carcass’ on which nations/economies nurture and expand in the era of corporate empires? Are there changes in the parametrics used to determine the ‘predatory’ nations/economies and the ‘scavenger’ nations/economies in the modern era? What are the chances of countries like Ethiopia (or part of it) to achieve expansion in its wealth generating ability as a scavenger nation/economy or even as a predatory nation/economy today?

Given the overwhelming presence of the so called ‘global economy, a euphemism for an economic system dominated by nations with corporate empires, a dependent process of development is the ‘achievable’ by seeking a niche in this global economy or supplying those that have an expanded wealth-generating capacity. However, this is not necessarily the only option of development for poor countries like Ethiopia or sub-regions that today form part of Ethiopia. After all, they could return to their indigenous patterns of achieving expansion in what they conceive as wealth or achieve their indigenous notion of the ‘prosperous’. They could, at least theoretically, return to their indigenous versions of achieving a PAWE, within a sub-continent or beyond. After all, parallel developments have been the norm throughout much of the history.

Notwithstanding the fashionable developmental prescriptions of mainly western origins that highlight the dogma of global economy, there is nothing that stops other cultures or societies from opting for their time-tasted and indigenous patterns of achieving economic expansion. It is possible to have parallel-running civilisations, in the place of mono-civilisation all are supposed to imitate. Seeking a way to develop or methods of reducing poverty have far more to do, with the agency of the instigators than what these are prescribed to do, especially where a PAWE is concerned. However, that is not to say that other, less dramatic channels of achieving economic prosperity are beyond the grasp of many poor countries such as Ethiopia.

The prospect for a SAWE, in the context of the global economy, exists. However, success in this owes as much to what happens (or do not) within countries such as Ethiopia to the tribulations of the global economy. The ‘invention’ of an
independent agrarian industry is a yet to be achieved in Ethiopia, to begin with. It has to have an industry before it could hope to succeed in expanding its wealth generation capacity in the context of this industry (agri-industry).

**Scavenger Art of Wealth Expansion: A Developmental Option for Ethiopia?**

Theo-industry has served Abyssinia for centuries, leading it through relative economic booms and busts, depending on the supply of the *gabbar* nations (source of forced demand for the end produce of theo-industry). In recent times, Abyssinian-dominated Ethiopia has merely shifted from an ‘old’ theo-industry structured around an equally ‘old’ theocratic mission (Christian) to ‘new’ theo-industry erected around ‘modern’ theocratic/ideological missions such as Derg’s socialist revolution/development and Woyane’s ‘revolutionary democracy’.

In Ethiopia, success in a Scavenger Art of Wealth Expansion primarily depends on the ‘birth’ of a free agri-industry and equally free agents as operators of such an industry. This applies to both the revenue or gibbir-farming regions/countries (south) and to pension-farming regions/countries (heartland of Abyssinia, north).

A radical departure from theo-industry as the primary industry and its replacement with a free agricultural industry (and one that foments other sectors/secondary industries) and the ‘birth’ of free farmers remain essential criteria if there has to be a renewable industry. This way, those that have been reduced to gibbir-farmers earlier and sharecroppers (in the south) since then could emerge as producers (in the strictest sense of the term) and agents of an agricultural industry there.

The transformation of the pension-farms of Abyssinia into farms of a renewable (cash crops, for instance) and taxable products is a yet to be achieved if there will have to emerge a free and auto-renewing (without having to prey on gibbir-farms of their nation) agricultural industry. The transformation of Abyssinian pension-farmers into producers (of taxable agricultural produces), or producers in the strictest sense of the term, is another yet to be accomplished undertaking if Abyssinia will have to have a free and renewable agricultural industry.

We have noted how the practice of ‘Coerced Exchange Relation’ has served as a link pad that joined the supply-side of theo-industry (centred on Abyssinia and the
Abyssinians) and its demand-side (gabbar colonies). Through the use of institutionalised and organised coercion, Abyssinia has managed to 'sell' its Commodity of Theocratical (Ideological) Services to its gabbar and neo-gabbar, while in turn, it 'forced' the gabbar to 'pay' for this service commodity in the form of the gibbir.

The 'birth' of a free agricultural industry in both sub-parts of Ethiopia implies the replacement of the practices of Coerced Exchange Relation with a freely established exchange relation between free producers in different parts of Ethiopia. Similar relations must underpin the relation between free producers and the state in the context of paying taxes and receiving services for the equal value of the paid.

However, the birth of free agricultural industry in both sub-regions of Ethiopia, the replacement of coerced exchange relation with a free and voluntary exchange relation between producers in different parts of the same country, merely is an ideal criterion for a renewable industry to evolve. It does not necessarily lead to an expansion in a country's wealth or wealth-generating capacity. Ethiopia or regions within it will have to come to terms with not just producing according to the local tastes or consumption, but according to the consumer whims in faraway markets.

This is the only way it could stand a chance to get the effects of what has been conceived here as a SAWE. For that to succeed, it will have to make provisions that aid the notion of producing with the taste buds of strange consumers in faraway regions or markets. It could outsource part of its operations or make arrangements to allow the establishment of 'trading companies' similar to those that have made Hong Kong, Singapore, and today parts of China, examples in successful cases of a SAWE.

First things first, though: free agricultural industry and free producers remain as elusive as ever, both in gabbar countries of the south and in the heartland of the ruling Abyssinia. Theo-industry, in its new forms, continues to hinder the birth of free agri-industry and free producers.

Nagaati


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Some key events in Ethiopia’s history

- Great famines in Ethiopia 1888-1892 (Kefu Qăn ["Evil Days", "Bad Days"]) served as a catalyst for the conquest and incorporation of the southern regions of what is today Ethiopia into the Abyssinian Empire
- Late 19th century - Emperor Menilik II was involved in a process of consolidating the Amhara conquest of territories inhabited by Oromo, Somali, Afar, Sidamo, Gedeo, Gurage, Hadiya, Kembata, Wolayita, Gamogofa, Kefe, Omotics etc.
- In 1896 he defeated the Italians in the Battle of Adwa and the boundaries of Ethiopian were consolidated
- Amhara domination of south and west involved an armed settler system and a law of conquest; it assumed that Amharic culture was so superior to other Ethiopian cultures that eventually they would be subsumed within it.
- An Eritrean liberation movement was founded in 1960
- Haile Sellassie’s attempt to modernise and Amharise this ‘multi-national feudal state’ ended in an urban uprising and military coup in 1974
- In 1975 a land reform (‘land to the tiller’) was introduced abolishing private ownership; no household was allowed to farm more than 10 hectares
- Claims from the colonised to the ‘right of self-determination’ were acknowledged, though later not met, by the proto-Marxist military government (Derg) in its nationalities programme of 1976
- 1974 - 77 was a period of acute conflict including labour strikes, urban unrest and military mutinies which were met with draconian responses; there was a heavy toll of civilian casualties through the ‘white’ and the ‘red’ terror including ‘extermination’ of the intellectuals who had been in the vanguard of opposition to the old regime
- In 1976 a group of students (including Meles Zenawi) left Addis Ababa for Tigray to found a Tigrayan liberation movement
- By 1978 Colonel Mengistu was firmly in power
- 1979-84 was devoted to the process of establishing a socialist republic based on the model of the USSR; this entailed a range of campaigns and mobilisations in the countryside
- In 1984 the People’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was created
- 1984/5 juxtaposed ‘pompous parades and extravagant celebrations’ (Kinfe, 1994:xix) and the spectacle of starving people in Welo and Tigray
- The years 1986-88 saw the spread of central planning
- 1987 saw another year of drought and a gradual escalation of the nationalities conflicts in Tigray and Eritrea
- In 1989 the government introduced the first of their liberalisation measures
- In 1991 the TPLF-dominated EPRDF entered Addis Ababa and took power, despite disappointment with the Mengistu regime people did not know what to expect of a regime which had been projected as a movement based on the ideas of Albanian socialism; there was also a fear of Tigrayan domination

* Bullet point added by Liban Wako Adi.
Between 1991 and 1995 Ethiopia was ruled by the Transitional Government; the government introduced more liberalising reforms which stabilised the economy and were associated with good rates of GDP growth.

- In 1993 Eritrea became independent following a referendum.
- 1994 saw the first poor harvest of the regime resulting in pockets of famine.
- In 1995 the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was established with a new Constitution; the principle of ethnic federalism underlies the political structure and many government responsibilities have been devolved to the regions.
- Meles Zenawi, President of the TGE, was elected as Prime Minister in the FDRE.
- In May 1998 a border dispute with Eritrea erupted leading to major fighting in February 1999; around 350,000 displaced people needed emergency assistance.
- In late 1998 and mid-1999 pastoral area rains failed in Somali regions and Borena zone area rains.
- 1999 the nearly complete failure of belg rains affected belg crops and preparation for the meher season leading to increased food needs in Oromiya, Amhara, Tigray and SNNP regions.
- In 2000 a peace was negotiated; famine appeared again parts of the west and south.
- In 2003 massive famine unfolds in Ethiopia, with more than 15 million Ethiopians (approximately a quarter of the total population) in urgent need of famine assistance.

*Adapted from Bevan (2000, p. ii)*