The State, the Peasantry and Rural Class Formation in Prerevolutionary Ethiopia

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Résumé: La dynamique des rapports agraires est souvent le résultat du caractère interne de l'Etat et de ses rapports avec le Capital. L'apparition de l'Etat après 1941 est conçue comme la consolidation d'un Etat tributaire éthiopien. La question de la transition agraire, au lieu d'être une simple réaction à l'accumulation de capital au centre, se situe au niveau du processus d'expansionnisme éthiopien induit, de l'autonomie relative de l'Etat par rapport au capital, des relations étroites entre l'économique, le politique, l'idéologique et le culturel et de l'autonomie de toutes ces dimensions. Le problème fondamental de l'étude de la transition agraire en Ethiopie concerne l'émergence d'un Etat central autocratique grâce à la consolidation des rapports tributaires de production sans les changements concomitants dans les forces et rapports de production. De même, l'autonomie relative de l'Etat par rapport à l'impérialisme limita la pénétration du capital au commerce plutôt qu'à l'infrastructure et au capital productif. Ces deux facteurs limitèrent le développement de nouvelles forces de production et caractérisèrent la spécificité de la structure agraire de l'Ethiopie d'avant 1974.

Introduction

It has now almost become a truism to assert the existence of an agrarian crisis in Africa. Minor regional variations notwithstanding, the abysmal failure of African agriculture to raise land and labour productivity to fulfil its role in the development process is now well documented in country studies and for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole[1]. The problem has afflicted countries with sizeable levels of non-agricultural exports, economic and military aid and/or accumulated international debt. Given the overriding dominance of directly land-based resources to the livelihood of the masses

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1 For a recent theoretical analysis and surveys of some countries see Lawrence, (1986). For a comparative assessment between regions, countries and non-African ones, see the series on *World Development Report* by the World Bank. In 1965-1983 annual per capital agricultural output in sub-Saharan African declined by -0.8%.

of the population[2], the manifestation of the problem, especially in the urban areas, has been an important component of the crisis of the state

Ideologues of the bourgeoisie consistently call for 'getting the internal and external prices right' to reflect scarcities. Removal of subsidies, devaluation, charging economic cost to social services, trimming the public sector especially marketing parastatals, have now become the new orthodoxy of the theory and practice of development[3]. Radical dependency theorists locate the root of the agrarian crisis in the formation and law of motion of capital as a world phenomenon and its stunting effect on the periphery of the world system. Although challenged by the upsurge of capital accumulation in the newly-industrialized countries, their powerful critique of the marginalists (and their implicit assumption of the capitalist mode of production as a necessary and sufficient condition for development) is now well established[4]. Classical marxist theorists drawing largely from the economic history of Western Europe, validate their thesis of the development of capitalism by drawing attention to the ongoing process of accumulation and self-sustaining industrialization in a number of economically important regions outside Europe[5].

Historically informed political economy studies on pre - and post-colonial Africa indicate the specificity of the agrarian class formation, either in the absence or in the process of formation of articulated agrarian classes. With the relative scarcity of labour in relation to land, the introduction of poltax, the growing of cash crops (sometimes in conflict with the demand of colonial planters) and plantation employment, the colonial state set out to 'organize' the conditions for the exploitation of the peasantry[6]. Under-

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2 According to the World Bank's survey, only high-income oil-exporters, all in the Middle East, experienced higher rates of population growth than sub-Saharan Africa. However, given the resource reserve bases of Zaire, Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria etc., which make up more than 50% of sub-Saharan population, demographic pressure on food is a manifestation of the distorted pattern of development rather than the cause, on which Malthusian alarmists prefer to focus attention.

3 It is our contention that the causes of Africa's underdevelopment have to be sought in the specificity of the interaction if the pre-colonial social formation with the demands of colonialism, the crises of the state to which it gave rise in the post-colonial period and the restructuring of capital at the centre. These issues are discussed in various papers in Arrighi and Saul, (1973 and 1979), and Lawrence, (1986) with reference to Africa. This article takes (Saul: 1973 & 1979) as a point of departure in trying to locate the specificity of the Ethiopian state and the theoretical and methodological issues in the analysis of rural studies.

4 See Frank, (1967), Baran, (1960); Wallerstein, (1974) and for the later formulations Kay, (1975); Palma, (1978).

5 This is demonstrated by Warren, (1972); Schiffer, (1981); Laclau, (1974).

6 For the theoretical and specific aspects of this issue, see Cliffe, (1977, 1978); Bernstein, (1979); Arrighi and Saul, (1973 and 1979). A very provocative study of these issues and their implications for accumulation in sub-Saharan Africa is found in Hyden, (1984, 1985).

standing the agrarian crises in Africa requires the specification of the dynamic of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial state and society structures as is theorized for capital in the formation of strategic class alliances for planning and independent development[7].

At the level of Ethiopia as a whole, a number of analysts characterize the state and society as feudal (Crummey: 1980, 1981; Cohen: 1974; Markakis: 1978; Gilkes: 1975; Hobben: 1964). An economist in the unformalized debate entitles his work *The Feudal Paradigm as a Hindrance to Understanding Ethiopia* (Ellis: 1976). Deducing from changes in the relations and forces of production in selected areas in the mid-sixties and their increasing link with the world market, others give equal if not a predominant position to capitalism (Stahl: 1973; Bondestam: 1974; Cliffe: 1974). The social conflict between non-capitalist production relations on the one hand and the rapidly expanding mechanization of agriculture since the early 1970s on the other, prompt another writer to invent the term 'mechanized feudalism' (Gilkes 1975: p. 169). Taking the feudal mode as a special case of transition from tributary modes in the European social formations, Amin applies the tributary mode to Ethiopia as in other African social formations (Amin: 1974; 1980). Murry and Stahl argue along similar lines in their analysis with the latter restricting it prior to the advent of the new technology inputs in the mid-sixties.

Another main theme of agrarian studies in Ethiopia is the supposedly different agrarian structures in the north and the south. 'Pure feudalism' is restricted by some to the 'land-lord tenant' relations in the South (Crummey: 1981; Gilkes: 1975). Others conceptualize elements of capitalism within the same relations (Cliffe: 1974; Stahl: 1973), assigning pure feudalism to the 'lord peasant' agrarian system under 'communal' forms of land tenure in the north.

When cast in the cultural and historical trajectories of the African continent (Diop 1974, 1987, 1989; Amin 1974, 1989), the relation of the state and the peasantry has its own problematique which cannot be resolved by dismissing it as not being feudal (Anderson: 1978 p. 411; Ellis: 1976); by identifying it as feudal in as much as it possesses all the major elements of feudal societies of Western Europe of Japan (Cohen: 1974).

The so far unformalized debate on state and society in general and that of agriculture in the particular case of Ethiopia encompasses a wide range of

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7 For a rigorous theorization of these in relation to modes of production problems of periodization locating the dominance on the relations of production, see Hindess, (1975) Meillassoux (1973: 81-90; and 1978: 127-58) asserts the forces of production as 'dominant' in the transition to class societies in the context of pre-colonial Africa. See also Dobb, (1981); Mukhia, (1983); Wickham, (1983) for the concretization of the mode of production with respect to Europe, India and China respectively.

positions at the level of synthesis. However, very little analysis of the structural components upon which they are generalized exists. Neither the specificity of the models in its/their Ethiopian variant nor the problem they pose within the wider context of non-capitalist non-socialist modes or an historical appraisal of the dynamic of the agrarian structure are dealt with in any considerable detail. Following this introduction, the next section builds the static and dynamic characteristics of agrarian relations in Ethiopia as a prelude to the analysis of the state and the peasantry.

The historical evolution of agrarian relations in northern and southern Ethiopia

In the Abyssinian section of the Ethiopia Empire, the hierarchy of the dominant class consisted of the *Neguse Negist* (King of Kings - Emperor) at the highest level. Under were regional warlords taking the title of *Neguse* (King) when their resource base and power vis-a-vis their overlord (Emperor) was strong, or *Ras* (Head) or *Dejazmatch* (Guard of the Rear) at other times[8]. A regional warlord may have under him a number of sub-regional warlords and their subordinates designated as *Shums* (Officer), *Melkegna* (administrator), or *Gultegna* (a more general term referring to one with entitlement of gult right defined below). Each maintained Ashkirs (literally servants) with little differentiation between household, economic, political and military functions, particularly at lower levels. The Emperor, members of his immediate family and occasionally well-established warlords, constituted the *mesafint* (princes), the lower-level gentry, *mekianint* (officers), and the rank-and-file soldiers, *wetadirs*. The most numerous social class, *balager* (literally one who lives in the countryside) was subdivided between *gebbars* (one who pays *gibr* - tribute) on the one hand, and the various submerged non-*gebbars baria* (slaves), *ketkatch* (smiths), *teyib* (potters), *faki* (tanners), on the other.

Whereas the geographic size and the distribution of hierarchical power waxed and waned[9]; the more stable and perhaps important institutions in understanding the agrarian relation are *rist* and *gult*. *Rists* are inheritable ancestral plots, the rights of which are believed to have emerged from *akgni abat* (founding pioneer father in the first cultivation of the land) (Nadel: 1946; Hobben: 1964; Bauer: 1977). *Rist* designated continuity in the posses-

8 This summary relies on Perham, (1969); Addis Hiwot, (1976): Gilkes, (1975): Mahteme Sellassie Wolde Meskel, (1949-50); Markakis, (1974); Gebre Wolde Engdaworg, (1961). For a summary on the medieval and modern initial history of Ethiopia, see Ullendorf, 1973; Jones and Monroe, 1978; Bahru, 1991.

9 Apart from these, there were also titles pertaining to the particular regions, such as *Bahre Negash* (King of the Sea) to the environs of the Red Sea; *Wag shum* to a region called Wag. In Begemder, a *gultegna* was known as feresegna (cavalry warrior [Mahteme Sellassie Wolde Meskel, (1949-50); Markakis, (1978: 84).

sion of land. It pertains not only to individually operated plots, but also to clan (*risti diesa*) and village lands (Nadel: 1946; Ambaye: 1966). A *gult* may be designated as the smallest tribute area presided over by the *gultegna*[10]. Both *gebbars* and those in the hierarchy of the dominant class possessed *rist*, and were known as *ristegna* or *balerist*. The *guitegna*, however, was not only a ristegna but also 'richer' and 'stronger'. This relative wealth and superior social position of the *gultegna* is epitomized by the saying translated from Amarigna[11]: 'The rich man with his *gult* and the poor man with his *rist* and *gult* is for the great warrior, *rist* is for the weak' Markakis: (1974 p. 84).

The *guitegna* as the greatest warrior in the locality, administered justice, collected tribute, maintained law and order, raised a levy of soldiers[12] for local use and higher authorities, and oversaw corvee labour. In the performance of these duties to the overlord, he obtained a *gult right* to administer and collect tribute (products, slaves, trade tax), part of which was passed hierarchically to his overlord. *Guilt* right was the principal basis for the extraction of surplus in kind and labour (Murray: 1976; Markakis: 1974; Pankhurst: 1968; Mahteme Sellasie: 1949/50). It pertained not only to the lower echelons of the dominant class, but also to members of the royal family, regional warlords and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. These were administered by *Melkegnas* on behalf of the higher authorities, and by the *semonegna* for the Church (Bairu: 1974: Haile Gebriel: 1972).

Gults were granted or recognized *de facto* in lieu of officialdom and services (state and Church), and such *gulte* given on a permanent basis were known as rist *gult*. Considering the instability of the Abyssinian dominant class, however, even *rist gults* transferred from one family to the other frequently (Grummey: 1981; Hobben: 1964). Caulk remarks:

> *in the absence or very limited development of non-farming occupations, part-time soldiering enabled a peasant not only to escape from being*

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10 Due to the continual fluidity of power centres in both geographical and dynastic terms on the one hand, and the difficult terrain and the resulting poor communications, especially during the rainy season, on the other Horvath in his study of urbanization in pre-twentieth-century Ethiopia, states 'potential integration dissolves on an annual basis' Horvath, (1969: 218).

11 In a micro study in northern Ethiopia (Gojjam), Hobben in his now classic and first detailed study of the *gult* system writes, 'In battle above all men could distinguish themselves by feats of bravery and loyalty for which they could hope to be rewarded with official rank and land grants. The land grants, known as *gult* in Amharic, involve the conditional granting by the rulers of judicial, tributary and corvee labour rights over a parish or part of a parish to loyal subordinates of 50-100 families' Hobben, (1964: 11)

12 The state language of Ethiopia, native to most numerous nationality in Ethiopia, the Amara.

prey to others, but also to participate in plunder (Caulk: 1978, p. 466)[13].

Arbitrary and multiple exaction by the dominant class and the political instability that accompanied it are said to have hindered accumulation by the peasantry. In the mid-nineteenth century: Plowden observed, 'these incessant commotions have had the effect of paralyzing the powers of the country, trade enjoyed no security and labour abandoned' (Pankhurst: 1966, p. 92).

Regarding the south, recent micro studies suggest that ecological diversity and varying social organizations may have led to differing land rights among the peasantry[14]. From a careful anthropological study using oral sources in the Oromo-settled part of Wellega (in western Ethiopia) prior to the conquest period, a land system in the process of developing along the lines in the north emerges (Hultin: 1977). Lineal descendants of the first *abalefa* (father of the land) had a holding right *kabbi* (to hold) as they belonged to the senior ancestral member of *balba guda*. The terms of use were mediated through the *abalefa*. Other more recent migrants both Oromo and non-Oromo acquired access to land as *copsisa* (tenant). In lieu of this right, they worked on the land of the superior *abelefa*. *Balbala Guda*, *abalefa*, and *kabbie* could be likened to *akgni abbat*, *balerist* and *rist* in the north. Slaves, war captives and artisans held similar positions in their exclusion from their possession of land rights. However, apart from the extraction of product and labour surplus from the *copsisa*, war captives and slaves, the democratic and participatory apparatus of the *gedda*[15] system based on functional division (administrative, judicial, military) according to the age cycle may not have subjected members of the *abalefa* to the payment of enforced tribute.

In the Gamo area, where land was plentiful and held collectively, the eldest son inherited his father's land while others obtained allotments for clearing and use from elders called *orshata* assemblies (Kluckholm: 1968). Near the Omo river, the Mursi were even a chiefless society (Turton: 1973).

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13 Prior to the establishment of a regular army just preceding the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1936, the *wetadir* (soldiers) were recruited from 'all walk of life' Pankhurst, (1966, 1968); and Gaulk, (1972, 1979).

14 The *gebbars* were segmented between those who offered part-time soldiering with full or part exemption from tribute payment, and those who surrendered the full obligations [Mahteme Sellassie Wolde, (1949-1950/50: 110).

15 The South consisted of peasant cultivators in the sense of their having had a long period of sedentarisation/peasantisation among the Kembatta, Wellaita, Sidama, Gurage, Kefta, and the Oromos of Herrerge and others, the relevance of which is discussed subsequently for clarity, see Pankhurst: (1968); and Mahteme Sellassie Wolde Meskel, (1945-1959). Lacking source materials from the south, the analysis is very tentative, requiring further micro studies, as is done for Derrasa (Gedeo) MacClellan, (1978); and part of Wollega (Hultin: 1977).

Among the *Gurage*, the *rist* (*yab afer* - land of the father) land system excluded *non-gurages* unable to trace ancestral lineages (Shack: 1967; p. 91). By contrast, over the Harer Plateau, which was nearest to maritime trade, save the Eritrean and Tigre Highlands, with the city state of Harer as its centre, an economy based on coffee developed into an elaborate system of land registration, cash tenancy and international trade (Fankhurst: 1968; Abir: 1964).

From the sketchy reconstruction of the economy and land system of the south in the pre-conquest period, it emerges that the agrarian system may have ranged from the apparently classless society among the Mursi to the relatively monetised, export-oriented economy and the privatization of land around Harer. In contrast to the ideological uniformity under the Ethiopian Orthodox church and access to advanced military technology in the north, the south exhibited much more diversity in its ecological, ethnic and socio-economic cultural settings. Where a dominant class was emerging, as in Keffa[16], it was not organized even loosely under central authority as in the north[17].

Whereas the agrarian structure in the north developed more or less autonomously, that in the south may have been altered as a result of its conquest. The impact of this conquest on the pre-existing social formation and land system may never be clearly known as there is little documentary or quantified evidence[18]. However, the conventional claim that Shewan conquerors 'expropriated'[19] the land, redistributed one-third to the government, one-third to the indigenous *balabats* (chiefs), and one-third to the Church (Niecko: 1980; Gebrewold: 1961) is dissimilar to the forces and relations of production in the agrarian system of the conquerors (northern Shewa). The primary mode of surplus extraction was tribute and plunder both in the north and south (Mahteme Sellasie Wolde Meskel: 1949/50, pp. 109-112)[20].

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16 For more on the *gedda* system, see Asmerom Legesse, (1963: 1-29).

17 Quoting European missionaries in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, Abir mentions five highly organized despotic monarchies between the Omo and the Didessa, and proposes that this might probably have been a culmination of a process by which the authority of a successful war leader or of a traditional office-holder was strengthened gradually Abir, (1964: 109).

18 For the gap in military technology and the difference in social organization at the end of the nineteenth century, see Gebre Sellassie, (1968), Levine, (1974), and Shack, (1966).

19 This Shewan conquest of the south is described by the imperial chronicler, who fails to record any substantive information on trade, culture or technology of the south Tsehafe Teezaz Gebre Sellassie, (1968). Historian and political activists variously interpret the process as reunification, expansionism and even colonialism.

20 Recently - based on oral history from elders - McLellan states of the agrarian history of Sidamo in this period, 'The near absolute monopoly over labour possessed by *gebbar* holders hindered the development of *gelad* (estate) land; without available tenants, holders of *gelad* tended to let it lie idle, earning rent from grazing but adding little to its tax base'

As the *gultegna/feresegna* in the north and the *neftegna/shelaka* in the south blended military, administrative and judicial functions, the extent of product and labour time left to the peasantry was determined by non-economic coercion. Where soldiers were quartered, the *gebar* was not only a tribute payer[21], but also a domestic servant and an appendage of soldiers in time of war for he could be forcibly mobilized for porterage if not allowed to carry arms (Pankhurst: 1968).

The completion of the Franco-Ethiopian Railway and expansion of trade with the then Italian colony of Eritrea, however, impinged on agrarian relations towards the commutation of labour services by money, differentiated dues to the local and regional warlords, tenancy and the payment of tribute in money. Together with the expansion of coffee and the change in the consumption habit of the state class, made possible from imports in lieu of the exports, the hitherto *gebbar* system was under increasing pressure towards monetisation. During the same period - 1928 and 1935 - attempts were made to change the basis of the state administration from the payment of tribute to the *gultegna* and *neftegna* to land tax based on its fertility (Mahteme Sellassie: 1949/50). The military, economic and political functions of the warlords were to be separated as also rent and tax. By doing so, the state in Addis Ababa aimed to shift part of the surplus labour of the peasantry directly to the central state[22].

However, in so far as the *neftagna* and *gultegnas* ruled according to custom unmitigated by any new control from below and that the commoditisation of agriculture was via trade rather than productive capital, the impacts of the agrarian reforms on peasant productivity may not have been substantial. Moreover, the regional warlords not only collected and retained a sub-

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receipt of rent for grazing and the cost of administration, on the one hand, and tax to the government, on the other. It was not unusual for such lands to revert as *gebretal* (repossessed by the state upon failure to pay tax.

21 The data compiled by Mahteme Sellasie are subject to a wide margin of error with respect to the extent of land under the various tenurial systems. This is because of the use of sources provided by the regional warlords. They lived very far from the areas, and thus their knowledge was not accurate. This was true especially of the unmeasured lands far from settlements (in climatically hostile areas prone to tropical diseases) for the Highland sedentarists.

22 This point is taken by Markakis: 'The immediate effect of the land policy on the southern peasantry was felt in the realm of tribute rather than in the transformation of tenure, the nature of which has been defined only gradually over the course of several decades' [Markakis, 1978: 113]. The occupying forces were given a number of *gebbars* according to rank. Pankhurst records 21.000 *gebbars* as being given to a *Ras*, 300 for a *Fitaurari* (Chief of the front Guard) 150 for *kegnazmatch* (Chief of the right flank) and 10-20 to ordinary soldiers (Pankhurst: 1968).

stantial portion of the tribute and plunder, their authority was backed by the provincial soldiers who were under their command[23].

The working out of the trend towards the centralization and modernization of the state apparatus was rudely interrupted by the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1936. Through the exaction of *asrat* (title), importation of capital and consumer goods and the corvee labour system which they inherited from the regime they overthrew, the Italian colonialists laid an extensive network of roads, public buildings and nascent industries. From practical non-existence, 3,000 kms of all weather roads, an estimated 2,000,000 sterling pounds worth of road machinery and about 1,500 commercial vehicles, many of them lorries (Perham: 1969; Pankhurst: 1978; Talbot: 1952), laid the second phase of infrastructure towards the commercialization of agriculture, earlier stimulated by the construction of the Addis Ababa a Djibouti Railway and trade with Eritrea[24].

Following the defeat of fascism and Haile Sellasie's return backed by the British forces, imperial authority instituted a national army[25] trained and supported by British and other European countries and a standard set of land taxes due to the centre and for the first time to be mediated by fully salaried officials. These were formalized in Proclamations of 1943 and 1944 (IEG: 1969). The effects of the change in agrarian relations from tribute to cash payment to the centre and with it the emergence of a proto-landlord class is in the separation of rent and tax is a subject not yet explored by micro-level studies[26]. In the south where in the early 1930s, 40% of the registered land

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23 The process of centralization in the emergence of the semblance of the modern state under imperial absolutism from the last two decades of the nineteenth century to the 1974 Revolution are discussed in (Addis Hiwot, 1975; Ferham, 1969; Clapham, 1969; Markakis, 1974; Halliday: 1981; Bahru, 1986; Dessalegn, 1989).

24 In 1901, at the celebration of the anniversary of the Battle of Adua, Menelik's chronicler reported the presence of 145.000 arm bearing soldiers from the south of the country (Guebre Sellassie: 1968, p. 308).

25 See Haile Mariam Larebo: 1989; on the agrarian policy of the Italians during their occupation of the country.

26 This was perhaps the most important phase of the recent political economy of the country comparable to Menelik's annexation of the south. For the first time in the country's history, with a monopoly of better armed soldiers both in terms of organization and technology, the Emperor retained effective control of the military making it possible for him to bring the regional warlord under his direct political command. This was made further easier by the Italo-Ethiopian War which decimated most of hitherto powerful *gultegnas* and *neftegnas*. For previously, while decentralization was being challenged by the superiority in men and arms of Menelik in the closing years of the nineteenth century. 'The contention between the nobility and the monarchy had been primarily for the control of the revenues from the districts and the segments in them... to make their governorship life-long tenures, the warlords found it necessary to keep on the throne weak Emperors who could be easily dissuaded from exercising the powers of their office' [Merid Wolde Argay, 1971: 354]. For several of this political arrangement in the constitution of the 'modern state' beginning under Menelik (1986-1913), and its crystallization in the

in measured areas was 'government' lands (Mahteme Sellasie: 1949/50, p. 109-111), their transformation from *maderia* (tribute right in lieu of service to the state) to *gebretel*[27] or for private was perhaps more straight forward. Although *sisso* tribute rights were granted to local *balabats*, it may not have been impossible to claim and register under the names of powerful *balabats*[28]. As the *gebbars* (peasants) were 'given' to *neftegnas* in the ensuing conflicting claims for land between the *gebbars*, *neftegnas* and *balabats*, the dominant ideological, political and economic position of the latter is likely to have determined the outcome. The more so where the new salaried state officials were recruited from among the *gultegnas* in the north and *neftegnas* in the south (Clapham: 1969). Under the new registration, apart from the strictly state lands (*hudad weregenu, tiklegna*) a substantial part of land hitherto held by *gebbars* may have reverted to state officials. In parts of the proto-peasant areas of the south, where vast areas of unsettled and grazing lands were *gebretel*, their successive allotment to civil and military officials by closing access to land reclamation by the peasantry led to the increasing rate of tenancy in the south.

With increasing sedentarisation and demographic pressure in a relatively peaceful era of the post-1941 state, the peasantry's right of becoming *akgnis* (reclaiming new lands) was restricted by grant/purchase accorded to state officials and later in conjunction with the commercial bourgeoisie both in the north and south. The private ownership of land legally defined the relation between the state and the new class of 'legally' constituted landowners. In this transitional period these emerging 'landlord relations' reduced the security of tenure of the former *gebbars*. The surplus due to the 'landlord' was defined by law however without a concurrent changes in the forces of production, there was no substantive change in relations between the former *gebbars* and the new landlords. Until 1964, the *gultenas* in the north collected land tax from *ristegnas*, part of which they retained for themselves (Lawrence and Mann: 1966). Although the administrative and tax reforms and the civil code in a period of over twenty years (1941-1965) attempted to define legally agrarian relations, the determination of the political over the legal and economic is borne out by the official recommendation of the FAO agrarian experts in 1965 which among other things called for 'the abolition

post-1941 period, see (Markakis, 1974; Perham, 1969, Addis Hiwot, 1975, and Clapham, 1969; Halliday, 1981; Bahru, 1986; Dessalegn, 1989].

27 The only such study at a micro level mainly constructed from extensive oral interviews, argues that the new tenancy areas were on 'measured' *qelad* land used for grazing at the margin of sedentary agriculturalists mainly on the climatically hostile 'lowlands' which the sedentary peasants were forced to settle on following demographic pressure and the cultivation of cotton [McLellan, 1978: 167-80].

28 Lands upon which no tax was paid because they were unsettled and/or used for grazing, where the cost of administering dues was higher than the rents.

of services' (Lawrence: 1966)[29]. Moreover, the transition was by no means complete as they hastened to add:

> *... the time has already come when it will be possible without undue dislocation and with considerable administrative advantages to convert the vast majority if not all of the existing forms of tenure to one form of individual ownership, the right and obligations of which can be clearly defined by law (Lawrence: 1966).*

The emerging 'proto-landlords' even maintained private prisons and administered 'justice' in their still 'tribute' area (Stahl: 1973, p. 27); Markakis: 1974, p. 27) in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The state, the peasantry and class formation in pre-1974 Ethiopia

Studies of the political economy of the poor countries have been concerned with the relations of non-capitalist formations to the penetration of capital under the aegis of colonialism/imperialism and the tendencies thereof in the post-colonial period. Ethiopia's emergence as a semi-colony[30] of imperialism during the colonial scramble, save for its brief occupation by Italy in 1936-41, on the one hand, and the specificity of the history of its social formation discussed in the preceding sections, on the other, introduce two important variables. These specificities and the formation of the 'absolute state'[31] in the post-1941 period are of critical importance in locating the problematique of the agrarian transition, elementalised into its politics, culture, economy and ideology.

Characterization of the dominant mode of production in general, and agriculture in particular, in Ethiopia as feudal has been made on the basis of the prevalence of a peasantry in contradistinction to pre-colonial Africa (Cohen: 1974) and the cultural separation between peasants and the dominant class (Gamst: 1973). This is said to form a socio-economic system that can be described as feudal as it has the major elements of the feudal societies of western Europe and Japan (Gilkes: 1975), including feudal landlordism and feudal conquest (Legesse: 1980). Others distinguish between periods and regions of the polity. Lambton restricts feudal to the pre-1941 period (Lambton;: 1971, p. 223). The introduction of land tax by the

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29 In the highly densely populated region of Sidamo, a recent study of this phenomenon documented a transfer of 20.000 hectares of land with tribute entitlement to a local chief to the royal family under private holding [McLellan, 1978: 181].

30 Under the Civil Code [Lawrence and Mann, 1966], landlords were legally entitled to claim up to 66% of the gross produce of sharecroppers.

31 It is in the same period that the country attained its current geographical/political territory. For details of this period of conquest and expansion, and its relations with foreign powers, see [Addis Hiwot, 1975; Bahru, 1986].

Central Government (applicable to both north and south) and the emergence of landlord-tenant relations to the post-1941 period in the south represented an advance (sic) over the form of feudalism practised in the north, leaving the northern peasants as small holders and the southern ones as landless proletarians (Markakis: 1974, pp. 25 and 41). Similarly, the southern agrarian structure with 'free labourer' is referred to as non-feudal (Cliffe: 1974).

Confining his analysis to pre-twentieth-century Abyssinia, Addis Hiwot traces Abyssinian feudalism to the last four or five centuries (Addis Hiwot: 1975, p. 26). According to him, the surrender by gebbars (peasants) of surplus to those who fought (*mekuanint* - *gultegna* the lower aristocracy) (*kahnat* - the priestly) were the same as the three fundamental elements that dominated tenth-century European society. The agrarian system in the south-east and south-west, on the other hand, is designated as: ... 'a classical system of feudal serfdom' (Addis Hiwot: 1975, p. 31)[32]. Like others who take the feudal position, he raises but does not problematise the social and economic dynamic of the formation.

Recognizing Ethiopian cultivators as peasants, the social hierarchy of Abyssinian society and elements of the cultural gap between the *gebbars* and *gultegnas*, some similarity with west European and Japanese feudalism is suggested. Nevertheless, at the level of superstructure, the pre-twentieth-century Abyssinian social formation is likened to other African 'tributary'[33] formations (Stahl: 1973; Murray: 1976) since it lacked the social and economic dynamics of transition. Crummey observes the striking similarity of Bloch's abstraction of feudal society - the dependence of the pre-1935 Abyssinian state on the produce of the land, the similarity of the *gults* to fiefs as institutions of ruling class support, the warrior ethos of Abyssinian society, the patron-client relations between *gultegna* and *gebbar*, and the fragmentation of authority. However, when situating his analysis within a mode of production framework, the control of land by the Abyssinian

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32 For the social and political basis of the absolutist state in Europe, see [Marx and Engels, 1970: 164, 165] Anderson, 1978. In the only serious attempt so far to locate the social basis of the Ethiopian 'modern state' Addis Hiwot argues, "Unlike the Europeans and Japanese, and so much like its Czarist counterparts, the modern state arose in Ethiopia not as an agency of social-economic change but as a method, as an apparatus of administration and government with remedous resources and capacity for repression. For the express role of the modern state in Ethiopia is the defence of the status quo' [Addis Hiwot, 1976: 79] See also Bahru: 1986, Dessalegn: 1989]. Our position regarding the specificity of the 'modern state' with respect to agrarian transition, is elucidated subsequently.

33 He wrongly refers to the peasantry in the south as landless peasants [Addis Hiwot, 1975: 31]. We have argued that notwithstanding the cultural and national domination in the pre-1941 period, the agrarian relation was not very different from the north in so far as it depended on the appropriation of tribute under similar levels of the forces of production.

peasantry, the appropriation of surplus by the *gultegnas* in the form of tribute rather than rent, and the strict property relations that the latter entails, leads him to discern 'a significant departure from the European feudal mode of production' (Crummey 1981, p. 128).

He is hesitant to use either the tributary or Asiatic modes. The former is inadequate for while describing the nature of surplus extraction, it fails to specify the relations of production. The Asiatic mode is rejected for its internal inconsistency[34]. The feudal mode is said to be the only viable referent and proposes an analytical construct of class. This is based on the distinction between those who lived off the surplus and those who produced. Crummey also stresses the elaborate difference of behaviour in the social hierarchy, the continuity of class relations and dynastic rule through time as constituting sufficient conditions to pose class relations in Abyssinian society. Having posed class relations, however, he does not read class action in the social formation when he states:

> *Within the wider comparative network, the lack of rigid stratification and the intimacy of class contacts helps to explain the notable lack of peasant movements in the period under review. Class conflict there undoubtedly was, but in our period it rarely expressed itself openly, and certainly never in spectacular uprisings (Crummey 1981: p. 136).*

Based on a comparison of the Abyssinian social formation's superstructure with Europe, two well-known Ethiopianists (Markakis: 1974; Perham: 1969) reject the application of feudalism. In the words of the latter historian,

> *... although the word feudal is freely used of Ethiopia, there never developed in that country a hereditary class of nobility able to exhort contracts about its powers and rights from its kinds (Perham: 1969, p. 161).*

Markakis states:

> *the power of the monarch to give and rescind office and status represented the main obstacle to the entrenchment of a truly feudal class in traditional Ethiopia (Markakis: 1974, pp. 38-9).*

Ellis rejects the 'feudal paradigm' because of the prevalence of an independent peasantry subject to the state in the payment of taxes (applicable to the post-1941 period) and not serfs in the north, and:

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34 The tributary mode has been analytically distinguished on the basis of the relative separation of the ruling class from the process of production in the feudal mode, compared to its total separation in the former [Wickham, 1983: 186]. For more analytical examination of the tributary mode, see [Amin, 1982, and Murray, 1975].

> *... the lack of feudal ties of services and obligation between the conquerors and the vanquished peasants which made the tenure in the south one of occupation rather than overlordship (Ellis: 1976, p. 284).*

Anderson also rejects the application of the feudal mode to pre-twentieth century Ethiopia due to the absence of private ownership of land and the property relationship it entails in the European transitions (Anderson: 1978, p. 411)[35].

The literature on the mode of production in Ethiopian agriculture draws substantially from the superstructural similarity of European feudalism and the Abyssinian social formation. The debate also raises the matter of difference with respect to the condition of the dynamism of European and Abyssinian feudalism, without, however, attempting to explain them[36]. The incorporation of the south into the Empire and its impact on the agrarian structure of the latter, the agrarian reforms from above and the penetration of foreign capital since the early twentieth century, are not systematically analyzed to delineate the Ethiopian social formation.

The most important aspect of the Ethiopian social formation relevant to illuminating the state, the peasantry and their dynamics, is the *gebbar* system. The reproduction of this system over a millennium with the control of land resources by the peasantry, the limited division between town and country, the fluidity of vassalage/tenement, and the accompanying low level of primary accumulation[37], are at the core of the problems and its transition. The wider parameters of this problem are circumscribed by the geographically changing locus of the Empire, the indeterminate power equilibrium between, imperial, regional and sub-regional authority within a generally unstable social formation located away from maritime trade[38]. It is these relationships and their probable causes and effects which are fundamental in explaining the resemblance of the *gebbar* system to the central models of

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35 For the concept of the Asiatic mode, see [Marx, 1964; Hindess and Hirst, 1975; Mellotti, 1982.

36 In seventeenth-century Abyssinia, when imperial power attained a large measure of authority and relatively stability, there was both private ownership and registration of land [Pankhurst, 1968: 289].

37 Dobb in his well-known work on the European feudal system, says that within its shell, the urban economy of the Middle Ages contained feudalism which was indissociable from maritime transport and exchange. The changing effects of demography (the supply, demand of labour) and the forces of production (resulting in changes in agricultural productivity, farm-cropping patterns, new techniques) interacted locally, regionally and internationally, setting the dynamics in the relations of production rather than their continual reproduction [Dobb, 1981, Mukhia, 1983; Banaji, 1977].

38 We do not have adequate source material to substantiate comparisons with other sedentary, non-irrigation agricultural systems in the distant past. The culturally loaded, primitive, it substituted by primary.

feudalism (European and Japanese) the Abyssinian social formation's point of departure and the specificity of its dynamism in relation to internal expansionism and incorporation into world trade.

Summing up a survey of Ethiopia's history, referring to the power balance within the centre and regions, Perham comments:

> *The two elements remained in a permanent tension, the balance swayed from one decade to another, and through the six hundred years or more of which we have reliable knowledge neither side until this century seems to have gained upon the other (Perham: 1969, p. 268).*

The changing power balance within and the continuity of the social formation as a whole ensured the reproduction and the ideological cohesion of the Christian empire and its *gebbar* agrarian system *vis-a-vis* outside invaders. However, the internal economic, social and political integration was constrained by the autonomy of regions and sub-regions which was a function of the poor transport and communication systems on the one hand, and the level, organization and distribution of the means of coercion on the other. Whereas the hierarchical *gultegnas* maintained *ashkirs* (home soldiers/servants) at all levels (Gilkes: 1975), most of the fighting forces at the inter- and intra -, local, regional and imperials levels were levied from '... all walks of life' (Pankhurst 1968, pp. 554-6). Their supply depended on plundering and/or provision by loyal vassals (Caulk: 1978).

The simplicity and similarity of the level of the arms technology, the power to levy *ashkirs* of similar fighting calibre recruited from among the peasantry at different levels in the hierarchy and the poor system of transport[39] over the northern Ethiopian Highlands appears to be the basis for the contingency of the decentralization of power and the sources of its incessant instability[40]. These structured the *gebbar* agrarian system and the resultant dominance of the relations of production in the social formation, defining its core elements and the limits of its dynamism. In so far as the two predominant forms of surplus extraction from the peasantry, tribute and plundering, were arbitrary and their lower and upper limits were circumscribed by the necessity of the reproduction of the peasantry and the size of the warrior class with no determinate medium- and long-term stability, the *gebbar* system articulated the relations and forces of production. The hegemony of hierarchical lords effected through the recruitment of

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39 This aspect of the political economy of the region in terms of enclaves, littoral and internal empires and their relations with trade routes, especially arms, is discussed in [Murray, 1976].

40 In some parts a caravan could travel for only six kilometers per day [Abir, 1964]. Another researcher on urbanization in pre-twentieth-century Ethiopia, designates Abyssinian emperors as 'royal nomads' [Akaly, 1967]. See also [Horwath, 1969].

their own *ashkirs* required the lateral expansion of their tribute area[41]. Under these circumstances, the ownership of land by the dominant warrior aristocracy was not a necessary condition for its reproduction.

The interaction of topography and the level and the organization of the means of coercion conditioned the continual indeterminate distribution and fluidity of power. Within this social formation, while appropriating surplus in the form of tribute and plunder[42], the relations of production may have stifled the commoditisation of agriculture and the social division of labour within agriculture and between agriculture and non-agriculture. The *gabbar* agrarian system with its two principal classes, the *gultegna* and the *gebbar*, differed from other pre-colonial formations in Africa in the prevalence of a subject peasantry and a dominant warrior class reproduced through the agricultural surplus extracted from the peasantry for over a millennium.

We can thus try to explain the specificity of the Ethiopian social formation and its deviations from the central models of feudalism; in the non-requirement of the possession of land by the warrior class for the reproduction of agrarian relations, the provisionality of the entitlement of *gult* rights, the very restricted extent of commodity production, the limited division between town and country, the low level of the social differentiation of the peasantry, the fragility of the state in the process of its reproduction and the waning of its legitimacy - in short, the conditions which reproduced material stagnation. In so far as the static characteristics of the feudal mode of production[43] are conceptualized to locate the dynamics of its social economy - the control of both land and peasant labour by the dominant classes and the change in agrarian relations in response to externally and internally induced variables (demography, trade, conquest) - as a basis of agrarian transition, its application to the Abyssinian social formation especially prior to the last two decades of the nineteenth century is unhelpful either as a theoretical construct, or as a basis for social action.

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41 Instability caused by the attempted intrusion of non-Christian contenders for power, European imperialism, and the scramble for local, regional and imperial lordships within the empire.

42 While the peasantry may have had a choice between being a *gebber* and *ashkir* to a *gultegna*, in time of war the choice was very theoretical, for in the words of Caul, '... *part-time soldiering was almost the only way a farmer could escape for a time from being prey to others by participating in the plunder' [Caulk:* 1978: 466].

43 The well-known economic historian of Ethiopia comments, 'Peasant poverty was plenty due to crop failure, ravage of locusts, death of oxen, depredation of troops. Furthermore, that people may have been dissuaded from storing surplus grain by the fear that the existence of stores would merely be an invitation to the soldiers or tax-gatherers to increase their exaction' [Pankhurst, 1968:216]. For a vivid analysis of the same process in 1900-1930 in northern Wallo, see [McCann, 1987].

The Abyssinian emperor's nominal power over the regional warlords, the endemic wars and continual change of *gultegnas*, the very low levels of long-distance trade in agricultural commodities and urbanization set it apart from the Asiatic empires. The classical and primitive communal modes do not obviously fit. The other recently theorized modes - lineage (Terray: 1972), African (Coquerry-Vidrovitch: 1978), domestic (Sahlins: 1972), peasant (Banaji: 1972), and Colonial (Banaji: 1972, Alavi: 1975) are at variance with the Abyssinian social formation described earlier. Adherents of the transitional mode (to capitalism) (Stahl: 1973; Cliffe: 1974); Bondestam: 1974) have yet to demonstrate conclusively the dynamics set in motion by capital in Ethiopian agriculture; encompassing changes in land and labour productivity, accumulation and their impact on regional and national economics[44].

The tributary mode in which surplus product is derived from the land and appropriated through tribute and plunder (Amin: 1980; Murray: 1976) is the nearest to capturing the articulation of the relation and forces of production in the Abyssinian social formation in the pre-Menelik period.

Lack of source materials do not allow us to undertake any serious synthesis of the southern social formation prior to their conquest. With the conquest of the south which meant: the decisive sway in the balance of power to the emperor; the centralization of the state apparatus (national taxation, army and bureaucracy); the incorporation of the empire into the world market via merchant capital; the separation of tax and rent and part of the peasantry from its means of production (land) and the increasing control of the labour process by the 'proto-landlords' (especially in the coffee-growing regions) without, however, a radical change in the fores of production; the tributary mode was propelled towards petty commodity production both in the north and south.

The central problem in the analysis of agrarian transition in Ethiopian agriculture is, unlike others where absolutist central state power emerges as the '... rule of the feudal nobility in the epoch of the transition to capitalism, the end of which signalled the advent of bourgeois revolutions and the emergence of the capitalist state' (Anderson: 1978, p. 42), that it came as a consolidation of tributary relations of production without the concomitant changes in the forces and relations of production. The dominance and consolidation of centralized state power in Addis Ababa especially in the post-1941 period, the Italian colonization of Eritrea and the construction of the Franco-

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44 For a rigorous theorization of modes of production, especially non-capitalist ones, the theoretical and empirical conditions of their transition, see [Hindess and Hirst, 1975; Dobb, 1981; Carter, 1978; Meillassoux, 1973, 1978; Vidrovitch, 1978; Balibar and Althusser, 1979; Mukhia, 1968; Laclau, 1974].

Ethiopian railway, undermined the two basic constraints in the dynamics of the Abyssinian social formation: its temporal distance from the world market[45] and the fluidity of the regional balance of power.

The two key variables, the emergence of the absolutist state as a consolidation of the tributary mode and the entry into the world market via merchant capital as a semi-colonial state and thus with a relative autonomy[46], from imperialism, themselves result of the resolution of conflicts between European colonialism and Abyssinian expansionism, set the parameters of the dynamism and constraints of its transition and its articulation[47] with the capitalist mode via trade.

The apparent dichotomy in agrarian system - the relatively higher proportion of independent peasant holdings in the north and of tenant holdings in the south[48] - are variant forms of class relations of a tributary state

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45 In 1974, in a country of over 30 million people, total capital assets in non-peasant agriculture and manufacturing industry totalized US$25m and 136m respectively [Dessalegn, 1985: 31-3]. In the same year, 65% of exports consisted of coffee and 15% of the remainder was accounted for by hides and skins as by-products of subsistence consumption in peasant agriculture [PMGSE, 1982: 402]. While part of the estimated annual production of 200.000 tons of coffee is partly produced as a cash crop by peasant holdings in Sidamo and Harerge, a large part of the rest comes from 'forest' trees where the main input is labour for picking [Teketel, 1971: 262]. A network of 7.900 kilometers of all-weather roads in the country as a whole is 1 kilometer per 240 sq. kilometers of land [PMGSE, 1982: 358). Describing the level of foreign capital in Ethiopian agriculture on the eve of the Italian occupation, Pankhurst writes that there were well over a dozen foreign-owned farms, the majority in the capital mostly supplying fruit, vegetables and poultry to the urban elite of foreigners and Ethiopians [Pankhurst, 1968: 209]. According to Perham, Ethiopia in 1935 was economically very little changed from what she had been in the tenth century [Perham, 1969: 180].

46 In 1984/1985, long before the colonization of Eritrea and the Franco-Ethiopian railway, the prices of wheat, barley, beans and lentils were one-eighth, one-tenth, one-ninth, and one-sixth in Adua (northern Ethiopia) of the prices in Paris [Pankhurst, 1968: 192].

47 The relative autonomy of the state (a certain degree of independence) in relation to social classes, and revolution as an historical specificity, was theorized by [Marx, 1970: 576). For other formulations with regard to class formation under colonialism, and its implications for the relative autonomy of the state from metropolitan capital and indigenous social classes in the poor countries in the post-colonial period, see [Alavi, 1972; Leys, 1976; Saul, 1979]. We have used it in a different context by locating the relative autonomy of the Ethiopian modern state since the colonial scramble from imperialism preserving the tributary mode in production, and its incorporation into the world market via trade. The notion captures the preservation of the tributary agrarian relation, the level of accumulation it implies, and the provision of military and economic 'aid' to retain it as a raw-material-exporting imperialist satellite.

48 Almost all agrarian studies and the derived policy prescriptions focus on tenancy and its preponderance in the south compared to the north following Abyssinian expansion in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Analysis of the state, the peasantry and the forms of its incorporation into the world market, demonstrate that the forms of sharecropping which emerged in the post 1941 period with changes in the relations of production, were more a reflection of land labour ratio between the highlands and the adjacent lowlands, on the one hand, and within the highland areas both in the north and south, on the other. As

rather than the expressions of the degree of feudalism or capitalism as some writers have asserted (Stahl: 1973; Cliffe: 1974). The expansion of the tributary state and the 'radical' superstructural and agrarian reforms it introduced from 'above' were the realization of the increasing relative dominance of the absolutist state over the regional *gultegnas*, namely, within the state, in Abyssinia and the southern social formations. In so far as these measures were not, however, a revolutionary culmination of the new relations of production deriving from changed forces of production and class formation as in the European transitions, they cannot be construed as capitalist or entirely feudal[49].

The change from the appropriation of surplus labour in the form of tribute mainly in kind to taxation by the state and share cropping rent to the 'proto-landlords', was a formalization of the economic obligation of the *gebbar* (both in the north and the south) to the state and his overlord on the one hand, and of the latter to the state on the other. Landlordism in the making defined the economic and political relation of the state and the *gultegna/neftegna* by at least formally locating the political, military and judicial function at the discretion of the centralizing state; By doing so, it began to change the basis of the *gebbar* system - towards the requirement of the private ownership of land - a process fundamental to the dynamics of the core feudal model. Nonetheless, the penetration of capital being mainly merchant in nature and with the continuation of a similar labour process in agriculture and the formalization of *gult right* to tax and share cropping tenancy rather than a change in the labour process itself, the agrarian reforms from above attempted to move the communal basis of land possession towards privatization. However, this was without the requisite technical basis (physical, infrastructure, research) which was fundamental in the transition of the rich capitalist countries, the social differentiation of the peasantry in Asia and Latin America and the expanded commoditisation of agriculture elsewhere in Africa under colonial rule (Kitching: 1980; Bahduri: 1976; Patnaik: 1972, 1976; Howard: 1981).

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such, it is a reflection of the form of surplus extraction between the peasantry and increasingly autonomous proto-landlords on the path towards centralization of the state apparatus (taxation, military, bureaucracy). Neither was tenancy restricted to the south, nor is it even a wide measure of absolute and relative poverty, as most poor/landless peasants were in the north, and tenants in both regions constituted proportionately more of the middle and rich peasants. For the problematisation of this issue, the empirical data and their implications for agrarian transition, see T. Bonger, 'The New Technology, Agrarian Reform and Peasant Differentiation in Ethiopian Agriculture in 1966-1980, with special reference to the Arsi Region', unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1987.

49 For a concept of articulation between the relations and forces of production, within and between more than one mode of production, see [Carter, 1978; Bradby, 1975: Althusser and Balibar, 1979].

Since the onset of the post-independence period in 1941, however, with increasing demographic pressure, a relatively peaceful era[50], the changing basis of the appropriation of surplus labour, the expansion of commodity production and physical infrastructure, a combination of lack of access to land by the peasantry (both in the north and south) through being *akgnis* and its allotment as grant/purchase by the functionaries of the state, the tributary basis of agrarian relation was in the process of change towards share cropping. In so far as the *gebbar* system was the principal agrarian relation with *unlimited* access to the product and labour surplus of the peasantry, 'land-ownership' may have become necessary only in the post-war period, as McLellan has demonstrated in one area (McLellan 1978). Whereas the historic *gultegnas* expanded their surplus through the lateral expansion of their tribute areas, the new functionaries of the state in the post-1941 period did so in the possession of 'unoccupied'[51] land of actual or potential cultivable areas mostly in the 'proto-peasant' areas in the south, but also partly in the north. However, the expropriation of land the appropriation of surplus from the peasantry were limited by the slow development of commodity production on the one hand, and by low productivity and a high man/land ration on the other. In the high land/labour ratio regions[52], the availability of labour rather than land set the limit of appropriation (McLellan: 1977); Pankhurst: 1968, Markakis: 1974). With land possession by most of the peasantry in the north and to some extent the south, and its relatively high supply in the 'proto-peasant' regions, the levels of agricultural tenancy within the largely hitherto existing labour process was a reflection of the relative land and labour ratio and to some extent the degree of class dominance by the proto-landlords in parts of the south, rather than of feudal or capitalist relations of production.

The two predominant social classes in Ethiopian agriculture were the peasantry and the 'proto-landlords', with the latter anchored in the state apparatus from the royalty down to the lowest administrative unit. The territorially expanded, centralized and functionally differentiated post-1941

50 The supremacy of imperial power in arms, and the increased security in the period during the colonial scramble by Menelik, is described thus: 'An American traveller observed that the name Menelik meant safety, and that the rulers of the provinces rose to show respect when they saw the seal of the king' [Marcus, 1969: 454].

51 In view of its occupation by Shewan *neftegnas* and the wide technological gap in arms with the conquered social formations, the dominant state class in the south held more sway over the peasantry (with perhaps more 'privatization' of the hitherto *gebbar* holdings), although rebellion was by no means absent, as in the uprising of the Gedeo in Sidamo [McLellan, 1978]. For the process of privatization, see [Wetterhall, n.d.; Cohen, 1976; Pausewang, 1978; Bondestam, 1974; Dunning, 1970; Gilkes, 1975, and Lawrence, 1966].

52 With regard to the peasantry in the Highlands, such areas in the adjacent Lowlands were hazardous with a high incidence of malaria and animal diseases which is why they were not populated in the first place.

Ethiopian state was a legitimization of the domination of the peasantry as a whole via the changing agrarian relations, and the political, ideological and cultural hegemony of its Abyssinian parentage over the people of the south. At the level of its economic decomposition, the incorporation of the empire into the world market (with the exchange of agricultural surplus for the amenities of modern consumption goods), without significant change in the labour process, resulted in small but politically important new social classes - the urban proletariat (in state utility services and in industries owned by foreign capital), the salariat and mercantile petty bourgeoisie fractionalized into corporate and regional section[53]. The pre-1974 state was thus the site of the intersection of conflict between *the state and the peasantry as a whole*, the political, ideological and cultural hegemony of the Abyssinian social formation on the peoples of the south, and of the conflict between the traditional dominant and the emerging new social classes - the latter located in the lower echelons of the modern state and the sectors of the economy catering to the home market.

The rapid demise of the *ancient regime* and the seizure of power by one fraction of the petty bourgeoisie (the military) is a reflection of the constricted transition from the tributary mode and the fragmentation of civil society that it entailed. As a resolution of the conflict between the old and a fraction of the new social classes, the 1974 revolution was radical in dismantling the economic and political bases of the *ancient regime's* tributary agrarian relations in favour of a uniform land use tax by the peasantry. However, in so far as it is a revolution *within* the state[54] and given the pre-1974 transition from the tributary mode of production, its capacity to develop the productive forces for accumulation in agriculture and initiate a transition to socialist relation of production is dependent on the resolution of conflict between the hegemony of the dominant and dominated nationalities on the one hand, and the democratization of state to overcome economic, regional and cultural fragmentation of society by the tributary class formation on the other.

Conclusion

The relative autonomy of the state from colonialism/imperialism, which limited its articulation with capital in exchange, on the one hand, and the parentage and emergence of the absolutist state as a consolidation of the Abyssinian tributary mode rather than as a culmination of the development

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53 For class formation in the social formation, especially in the post-1941 period, see [Markakis, 1974].

54 For the concept of revolution within the state in the context of Japan's Meiji restoration, Turkey's Attaturk, Nasserist Egypt, etc. see [Trimbuger, 1977].

of the feudal mode and the social classes therein, on the other, leads us to argue that the predominant mode of production in pre-1974 Ethiopian agriculture as a whole was a transitional one from tributary to petty commodity production.

In Asia, Latin America and Africa, the mode of production debate is problematised around the role of the colonial state in initiating the breakdown, and in most cases to some extent the transformation of the non-capitalist modes, without, however, successful classical transitions to agrarian capitalism and industrialization. In Ethiopia, incorporation into the world economy with the relative autonomy of the state (the specification of which was outlined above) from imperialism limiting the penetration of capital to the sphere of trade rather than infrastructure and productive capital, constricted the development of new forces of production while reforms from above resulted in changes in agrarian relations from tribute to absolute ground rent. This is a fundamental specificity of the Ethiopian agrarian structure: crucial to an adequate delineation of the apparent schism in agrarian structures in the north and south, the evolution of social classes, the identification of the trend towards the social differentiation of the peasantry, accumulation, distribution and the theorization of the pre-1974 state.

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ERRATA

We would like to apologize for the many errors contained in Tinker Bonga's paper entitled "The State, the Peasantry and Rural Class Formation in Pre-revolutionary Ethiopia" published in *Africa Development* Vol. XVII No. 2, 1992. The following is the list of the errors and the corrections.

Page #	Para #	Line #	Error	Correction
89	Note 1	3	not "capital"	capita
90	Note 2	4	"the" missing	..of the sub-
90	Note 2	2	"African" missing	African population
91	Note 7	1	"and" missing	... and problems
92	Sub-title 2	Note # 8 missing	Ethiopia	
	2	3	"him" missing	Under him were
		17	gebbars	gebbar
92	Note 8	1	Not 1976	Addis Hiwot 1975
	2	5	"," missing	trade "," tax
		4	Grummey	Crummey
	Note 10	4	potential	political
	12	1	to ..... most	the second most
94	3	7	kabbi"	kabbie
	Note 13	3	Gaulk	Caulk
	Note 15	2	Kefta	Keffa
		6	Fankhurst	Pankhurst
	Note 19	5	Historian	Historians,
96	1	4	gebar	gebbar
97	2	3	title	tithe
	3	7	"class" is	cancel class
	Note 23	3	Ferham	Perham
	Note 26	8	century	"," after century
	Note 26	13	several	reversal
98	1	12	hudad	"," after hudad
	2	7	period	periods
		7	these	the emerging
		8	gebbars	gebbar
		8	The surplus	Since the surplus
99	Note 29	2	20.000	20,000
101	2	7	gultegnas	gultegna
103	Note 40	3	Akaly	Akalu
	Note 40	3	Horwath	Horvath
105	4	2	emerges	emerged
	Note 44	4	1968	1981
108	1	18	ration	ratio

Bibliography - error reference tabulated by name of author

111	Banaji	1:1	not "25002"	2502
	Bauer	1:1	not "social"	Social
	C. Vidro	1:3	"State .. Ethiopia"	Work is by Crummey
112	Gebre Sellassie		not "region"	reign
	Haile Mariam Larebo		"The .... 1941"	" " missing
	Leys	not "Reveleation"	Re-evaluation	
	Marx	not "Hobsbawn"	Hobsbawn	
	McLellan		inverted comma for	title missing
	Mesfin Wolde Mariam		inverted comma for	title missing
	Meillasoux		inverted comma for	title missing
	Patnaik		inverted comma for	title missing

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