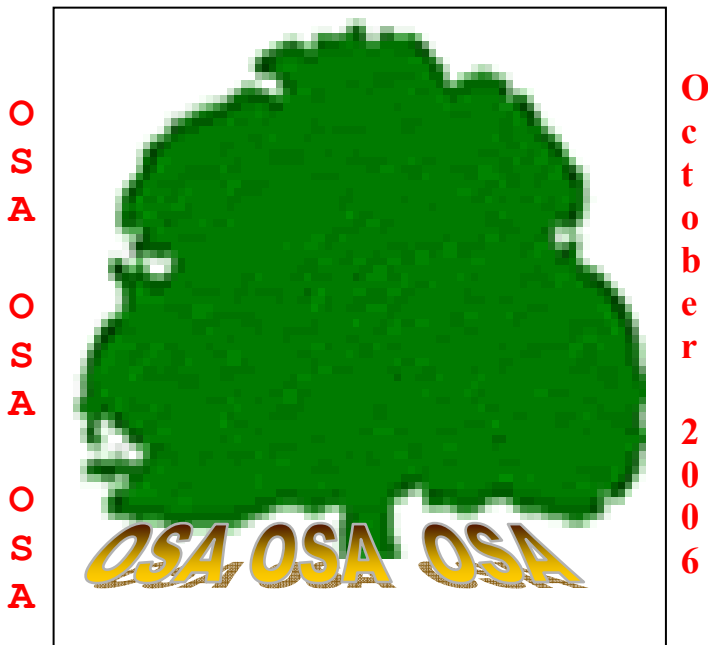


# OSA Newsletter

## Oromo Studies Association



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## 1. Message from OSA President

Dear OSA Family,

I do extend my warm greetings to each of you on behalf of the OSA Executive Committee members. I would like to thank Dr. Mohammed Hassen who graciously reported on OSA presence at the 49<sup>th</sup> African Studies Association (ASA), and Dr. Ayalew Kanno who sent me a piece written in 1894 by Onesimos Nesib and Aster Ganno that I wanted to share with you all. The observation contained in the parable of the piece is as applicable today as when it was 112 years ago.

It has been a while since I dispatched OSA Newsletter in part due to some interesting discussions that have been entertained by OSA members in response to the letter dispatched by Dr. Caaltu Dheressa, Dr. Bahiru Gametchu and Mr. Abraham Mosisa on October 10, 2006. Though the letter was not addressed to OSA Executive Committee *per se*, the committee felt it would be in the best interest of OSA and its members to take a collective stand about the allegation that has populated the internet. OSA Exe. dispatched a six-point statement on October 26, 2006 that highlighted its collective stand ([http://www.romostudies.org/UpComing\\_Events.htm](http://www.romostudies.org/UpComing_Events.htm)). We believe that any grievance or misunderstanding should be solved following democratic protocols in agreement with OSA bylaws. OSA president will announce through OSA Newsletter a formation of an inquiry committee that will thoroughly examine the issues and produce a report the will be presented to the general assembly through OSA president for discussion. We count on OSA members to support this proposal and constructively engage themselves for genuine and long lasting positive outcomes.

OSA is going through some challenges at this particular time in its growth. These challenges are neither unique to OSA nor universal to all OSA like organizations. Considering the prevailing Oromo political situation, pace of changes that are taking place and the indifference in Oromo population, divisions and frictions are inevitable. OSA members are asking fundamental questions about their organization set up, its strength, weakness, ownership, bylaws and even definition of words in the bylaws. OSA's challenge can be an opportunity for a remarkable growth if commonsense, pragmatism, selflessness, decency and democracy prevail. I do honestly believe that there are many dispassionate, intelligent and cultured OSA members who will raise up to this challenge and make OSA what it is; a pan-Oromo association where ideas freely flow, respect and tolerance reign supreme and *safu'u* guides our actions. It is high time that we all get motivated, energized and spend our total energy on making a positive difference in Oromo studies, Oromo communities and Oromo politics.

After all, we all are the children of our time and do not have absolute solutions for multi-faceted Oromo problems staring at our face. OSA should be the market place of all competing theories, hypotheses and possible solutions for Oromo problems. I do see no end for that market place because the unknowns dwarf our limited knowledge of our past, the challenges of today and the predictions of tomorrow. Adult OSA will be around for long time because there was a great Oromo Nation that made history for thousands of years and there are close to 40 million strong Oromos who are making history now everywhere around the world. It is our time now and it is up to each OSA member to bring to the market place ideas that will awaken the sleeping Oromo giant, produce unity, harmony, tolerance, selflessness, empowerment and Oromummaa. And who am I to limit what Oromo people need in

their market place and what their scholar sons and daughters can bring for sale?

## **2. 2007 OSA Annual Conference Panels**

About 220 days are left for the 2007 OSA Annual Conference. In less than eight months, we will meet in the Twin-Cities in Minnesota and share our researches, experiences, and observations. OSA annual conference is one of the very important events where live engagement is possible. It is a very special time to get motivated, connect words with faces, and make all kinds of bonds that will never be broken. Please plan to be there and believe me you will gain memories of a lifetime.

We do anticipate record number of presenters and encourage you all to participate. The following are suggested panels based on our past experiences, but by no means complete or exhaustive and not in any particular order.

- 1. Current Challenges and Opportunities for Oromo Quest for Self-Determination**
- 2. Resource Mobilization for Oromo National Struggle**
- 3. Oromo Religions (past, present and future)**
- 4. Norms of Oromummaa: Do's and Don'ts**
- 5. Nationalism, Ethnicity and Democracy in the Horn**
- 6. The Role of Oromo Youth in Liberation movement**
- 7. The Role of Oromo Women in Oromo Struggle**
- 8. Human Rights Violation in Oromia**
- 9. Political Economy of Oromia**
- 10. Health Status of Oromia**
- 11. Environmental Degradation in Oromia**
- 12. Oromo Language, Tradition and Culture**
- 13. Gada Democracy**

- 14. The State of Oromo Politics**
- 15. Role of Art in Oromo National Struggle**
- 16. Globalization and National Liberation movement**
- 17. US and EU Policies Towards the Horn**
- 18. Sidama Prospective, Somali prospective,**
- 19. Etc, etc, etc.**

You may suggest your own panel that will include three or four speakers. All should individually send me their tentative title and a summary BEFORE or ON February 28, 2007. If you do not have a panel, no problem; you will be placed with similar subject areas in a given panel. All efforts will be done to accommodate your request. I would like to encourage you to send me your tentative title and summary as soon as possible since that will help us plan accordingly. Please do not procrastinate, send me your titles during this holiday break. It is much better to come together and debate issues and agree or even agree to disagree than not to do so at all.

## **3. OSA Members at the 49th Annual Meeting of ASA (Dr. Mohammed Hassen)**

>>> "Mohammed Hassen Ali" <[HISMHA@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:HISMHA@langate.gsu.edu)>  
12/21/2006 11:20 AM >>>  
Dear Dr. Gobena,

I am writing this note for two purposes. The first is to complain about not having access to OSA list server. The second is to make a short report on OSA members participation in the 49th African Studies Annual meeting in San Francisco.

It was good seeing you at the Opening celebration of Oromo community Center in Atlanta on December 17, 2006. As I told you during our conversation, I did not have access to OSA list server almost for two months. It was good friends, including yourself, who forwarded to me what were posted on OSA list server in the past two months. I think the list server has problems. Those who may not realize that the list server has problems which prevents them from having access to it may ascribe it to duplicity what is really a problem with technology. That why it is very important to fix the problems with the list server as soon as possible.

#### **A short report on OSA members at the 49th Annual meeting of African Studies Association**

The 49th annual meeting of African Studies Association was held in San Francisco, November 16-19, 2006. The theme of the 2006 conference was " Rethinking Africa and the World: Internal Reflections and external responses". The broad theme provided a unique opportunity" multi-disciplinary exploration of Africa's changing places in world affairs and the emerging global recognition of the full dimensions of the African experience on the continent and in the Diaspora"( African Studies Association 49th Annual Meeting program p. 4).

I would like to thank Dr. Getahun Benti of Southern Illinois University for organizing a very informative and interesting panel devoted to " Setting the Record Straight: Revisiting the sources of the History of the Oromo". Indeed the scholars who presented papers in this panel, dispassionately and methodically set the record straight demonstrating the maturity of Oromo Studies. Interestingly, an American scholar, who in 1985 attacked the very idea of Oromo Studies as a transient project of

few individuals and predicted that will disappear within few years, admitted in front of several scholars, including this writer, that Oromo Studies has come of age, that it has established itself on firm scholarly ground and above all that it needs to be taken seriously. This is an encouraging development, the outcome of collective efforts over the past two decades by scholars committed to Oromo Studies. For over two decades panels on Oromo Studies have been established feature of annual African Studies meetings. This tradition has to be continued and expanded. In fact, Oromo Studies Association must explore ways and means of becoming an affiliate member of African Studies Association, which will give continental/ world wide visibility for our scholarly organization.

The 49th ASA meeting attracted more than a thousand scholars from all over the world. Seven of those scholars are OSA members. They are Professors:

Asafa Jalata  
Bichaka Fayissa  
Daniel Ayana  
Ezekiel Gebissa  
Getahun Benti  
Mohammed Hassen  
Seifudein Adem.

During the ASA meeting, there were 211 panels comprising 810 papers. Although there was only one panel devoted to Oromo history, Oromo issues were raised at several panels on the Horn of Africa. The days when Oromo issues were ignored by Africanist scholars is gone for good. This by itself is an encouraging development, which is the product of our people's long struggle for freedom and human dignity. Nevertheless, Oromo Studies will have a long way to go in building intellectual

powerhouse, thus becoming a field of specialization taught at several universities around world.

There were 44 major book publishers that exhibited their books on Africa for sale at ASA meeting in San Francisco. Twenty years ago, there was not a single book on the Oromo that was exhibited at the ASA annual meeting. This year I counted five different books on the Oromo exhibited by one publisher alone. Among the latest books that was authored by an OSA member and was exhibited at the ASA was that of Dr. Getahun Benti, whose book, Addis Ababa Migration and the Making of a Multi-Ethnic Metropolis, 1941-1974 is a well come addition to list of books published by OSA members. Deserving congratulations are in order for Dr. Getahun Benti for his a highly readable, interesting and valuable book on a major city in the heart of Oromia. The book can be ordered from the Red Sea Press (the price for the 279-page book is \$ 29.95).

Besides the Red Sea and Africa World Press, several other publishers also exhibited different books that deal with Oromo issues. This more than anything else demonstrates how far Oromo Studies has traveled and its scholarly promise for the future looks bright.

Among the papers presented by OSA members, I was truly impressed by Seifudein Adem's paper on the topic of " Africa and Japan in Comparative Civilization, Perspective: Convergence and Divergence". In this paper the most prolific Japanese Oromo scholar, discusses why Japan's modernization was a huge success while Africa failed to modernize. Seifudein marshals powerful arguments for Japan's and African divergence in experience. Let

me quote the following two short paragraphs from his long and interesting paper.

" The Japanese modified imported ideas and institutions, ranging from Confucianism to capitalism, and adapted them to local conditions with little concern about whether the end product had or did not have close resemblance to the original. The principle of creative imitation, itself deeply rooted in their culture, guided the Japanese endeavor.

Unlike the Japanese, Africans did not have a major say in the first instance in the process of selecting which ideas and institutions to import. Whatever new ideas came from abroad, they were imposed from above /outside or the choice was not much different from arbitrary. And yet Africa's post-colonial modernizers tried to stick to the script of a foreign idea as much as possible, believing vacillating between one system of ideas and another, or blending different systems, was a sign of indetermination. The guiding force behind Africa's pursuit of foreign ideas thus seemed to be ideological authenticity even as the ultimate goal was bound up with social purpose. This was again in contrast to the Japanese approach which favored not only the shifting of gears from one system or model to another but the blending of different systems too" ( pp. 4-5).

Finally, I hope Professor Seifudein Adem will share the full content of his paper with OSA members by posting it to OSA list server.

Mohammed Hassen  
Georgia State University

#### 4. Jalqaba Barsisa (1894) (Dr. Ayalew Kanno)

### Jalqaba Barsisa kan Onesimos Nesib fi Aster Ganno Qopheesan Keessaa kan Argamee

#### Waldidu Bu'aa Dhagna Namaa

Altoko Bu'aan nagna namaa walii hojjechu jibbannii. Debianii aka wali hinhojjenes walii galani.

Millie dhagna kaaniin jedhe: Ani maalifan kophaako isin baadha; yo adeemu feetan miilla barbaadadhaa.

Harki jedhe: Ani maaliifan kophaako warra kaanii hojedha; yo harka feetan barbaadadhaa.

Afaan guungume: Ani nama miti si'achi nyaata garaadhaaf yon qophesse; inni calluma jedhee ciisee nyaata, anis isaafan dhama'aree? Afaan yo fedhe ha barbaadatu.

Akanumamoo iji badaa dinqifate: Ani maalifan kophako dagna hundumaa eega, maalifanis isaanii ilaala?

Akanumas bu'aan dagna hundinu dubatani. Walii hojjechus didani. Eгаа maal ta'eree? Erga miillii adeemu didee; harki hojjechu didee; afaan nyaachu didee; iji ilaalu didee, nagni hundinu bu'aasa hundumaa wajin huqachudhaaf gogu jalqabe. Ergasii beekatani qalbii malee aka godhan waliigalaniis, debiani akana akangonet. Kanaa achi bu'aan hundinu walii hojjetee hundumti saaniis fayanii jabaatanis.

#### Disagreement Among Parts of the Body

Once upon a time, parts of the human body hated to work for one another. They agreed not to work for one another again.

The foot said to the rest of the body: Why should I carry you all by myself; if you want to go somewhere, find your own foot.

The hand said: why should I by myself work for the rest; if you need a hand; get your own.

The mouth murmured: I am nobody from now on if I deliver food to the stomach, it just lies there and feeds; am I toiling for it? If it needs a mouth let it find one for itself.

In the same way the eye became excited: Why do I all by myself look after all parts of the body; and why do I see for them?

Thus have spoken all parts of the body. They refused to work for one another. And then what happened? Since the foot refused to walk; the hand refused to work; the mouth refused to eat; the eye refused to see, the whole body with all its parts started to loose weight and dry up. So they learned their lesson that what they did was thoughtless and agreed among them not repeat it again. From that time on all parts of the body helped one another, and all of them recuperated and became strong.

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**Utu hin hubatin, quba hin gubatin**

**Without paying careful attention,  
Do not get your finger burnt.**

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“This lesson is as relevant today for all Oromo as it was in 1894 when it was written at Munkulo near Massawa. Those children of the sky, who have disagreements among you, please find a way to agree and put an end to it. Otherwise you will be hurting the very people you profess to love.” Ayalew Kanno.

Dear OSA Family,

I will be diluting this powerful message if I try to put it in any other way than what Dr. Ayalew summarized. We need one another and all Oromos are important and have a vital role to play in our quest for justice, equality, freedom any self-determination. May the Almighty Waaqayoo help us become part of that functioning healthy body that incorporates all Oromos to accomplish their noble task to materialize their aspirations. It is my wish and prayer that this coming New Year be a year of unity, victory, accomplishment, rejuvenation, bilisummaa and tokkumaa for the Oromo People and their friends, OSA and Oromo organizations.

You all have Happy Holidays!

Nagaan,

*Gedana Huluka*

OSA President

<http://www.oromostudies.org/>