THE JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

Volume 14, Number 2 July 2007

JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

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THE JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

Volume 14, Number 2 July 2007

Publication of the
Oromo Studies Association

The Journal of Oromo Studies (JOS), is a leading scholarly publication of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA). Issued twice a year, the journal publishes articles pertaining to all areas of Oromo Studies past, present and future, including topics related to the Oromo diaspora worldwide. Its interdisciplinary scope and revisionary approach offers readers a critical view of the socioeconomic, political and cultural achievements of the Oromo people in their interactions with the people of the Horn of Africa.

Reflecting the diverse interests of OSA members, the journal emphasizes multidisciplinarity and embraces variety by publishing articles that allow both the specialist and the general reader gain far-reaching insights and a thorough understanding of the Oromo people and the Horn of Africa region.

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Annual Subscription Rates

Individual	$35
Institutional	$55
Single Issue	$20

Add $15 annually for shipping.

Send in US currency payments and subscription requests to: Oromo Studies Association P.O. Box 32391, Fridley, MN 55432, (USA). Make checks or money orders out to the Oromo Studies Association.

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Editorial Overview

Over the past few years, Oromo studies scholars have been compelled to expand their thinking beyond the internal issues of the Oromo to seriously integrate the multidimensional challenges associated with the task of changing the conditions of life in Oromia. Considering the array of forces with which the Oromo national movement must grapple in the increasingly interdependent world, the complexity of the work ahead is clearly enormous. In any event, there is little doubt that Oromo studies will play a pivotal role in determining whether the Oromo nation will meet the political, social and economic needs of the disenfranchised Oromo in the twenty first century. Every issue of the *Journal of Oromo Studies* will attempt to advance the twin objectives of disseminating knowledge about the Oromo and moving forward the Oromo cause for freedom to control their destiny and from all constraints and interferences that restrict the exercise of that freedom.

The articles in this issue contribute to the achievement of these objectives in three different areas: the international dimension of the Oromo struggle, the Oromo past as a guide

to the future of the Oromo people, and issues affecting the development of the Oromo people, their history, and their culture. While exploring a specific aspect in one of these areas, some of the articles attempt to influence policy formulation to ameliorate the grievous conditions of life Oromia.

One of the challenges of the Oromo struggle at this stage is to uphold the Oromo cause before the international community. Seeking solidarity with other oppressed people, so as to learn from their experiences, has proven to be an effective method of educating the international community about the Oromo people and their quest for self determination. A few years ago, Asafa Jalata wrote a book, *Fighting Against the Injustices of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements*, in which he compared the Oromo experience under Ethiopian regimes to that of African-Americans under American racist system, thus forcing many people, particularly African Americans, to learn about the Oromo and their national movement for self determination In this issue, sociologist Azlan Tajuddin compares the struggles and predicaments of the Oromo and the Moro people of southern Philippines. In both cases, the people were subjected to political marginalization, economic exploitation, and cultural alienation by a local elite supported by external imperial powers. Tajuddin demonstrates that the Oromo and Moro struggles did not follow identical trajectories, even though both experienced similar oppressive systems Their liberation has thus far been delayed by the apathy of the international community that intervenes selectively in addressing the plight of people around the world. The post-9/11 mentality in the West has created a climate of fear and confusion which the oppressive regimes in both Ethiopia and the Philippines have been able to skillfully exploit to achieve sinister political ends Despite the challenges, Tajuddin believes that the next stage of the struggle of both ethnonational movements is in the international arena.

The second article moves the focus from the international arena to a deeper meditation on Oromo political culture and Oromo history in order to map out the future of the Oromo people. Donald Levine, a long time observer of Ethiopian society, looks back deep into Oromo history and imagines a direction in which the Oromo struggle should proceed. Anyone who has read his *Greater Ethiopia* cannot fail to notice Levine's consistency in advancing the place of the Oromo in the construction of a multiethnic society in Ethiopia. In his contribution to this issue, he identifies and analyzes narratives from the Oromo past and urges Oromos to look forward to the possibilities of the future. As a sociologist intimately familiar with how people create and relate narratives, Levine tries to make sense of the various strands of Oromo narratives and explore possible connections among them. He does not attempt to speak for the groups. His role is that of the analyst, a mediator, who attempts to help each group listen to the stories of the other.

Among the Oromo, Levine identifies three narratives: the Traditionalist Narrative, which aims to preserve and strengthen Oromo traditional institutions by emphasizing the positive aspects of the Oromo past and sacred values; the Colonialist Narrative, which endeavors to expose the century-and-a-half of Oromo subjugation under Ethiopian colonialism; the Ethiopianist Narrative, which attempts to depict the Oromo as major players in a five-century process in which diverse ethnonations interacted to form a multiethnic national society. Concerning the quest for Oromo freedom, the first does not rule out any modality of redress, the second encourages confrontation with the Ethiopian political center, and the third sees greater opportunity today for the Oromo to reshape the Ethiopian political landscape and to institutionalize multicultural democracy. Levine reads these narratives as Oromo narratives borne of actual experiences of important actors. He imagines the Oromo community as a large *gumi gayo*,

the octennial assembly of the multitude, where the participants deliberate with civility, respect, and mutual deference. The result of such a dialogue, Levine envisions, will be an enormous contribution to organizing political discourse in the Horn of Africa and to the search for a variant of democracy that can serve the world better than the existing models. For this to happen, the Oromo need to begin to listen to each other's narratives in a spirit of the traditional Oromo deliberative process. Levine's analysis of Oromo narratives obliquely admonishes other Ethiopians to acknowledge the contributions of the Oromo to the Ethiopian state and to embrace the corporatist-egalitarian values of the Oromo in the construction of a new Ethiopia

The next two articles deal with development issues in a broader sense. In an article titled, "Food Insecurity: A Real Threat to the Oromo People," Asefa Regassa Geleta argues that food insecurity is a major threat to the development of a healthy and prosperous society in Oromia. Given its rich agricultural resources and natural endowment, Oromia should not be a food deficit region in Ethiopia. Parts of the region have nevertheless become food insecure measured on the level of daily dietary energy supply in Ethiopia. The reason for the improbable eventuality is, among other factors, the policy environment in the country that blatantly discriminates against the Oromia region in terms of supplying agricultural inputs, marketing agricultural commodities, and distributing food aid Geleta calls on the international community to bring pressure to bear on the current government to change its policies to obviate an impending disaster in Oromia.

Food security is one of the inherent and fundamental human rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration also states explicitly that cultural rights are indispensable for human dignity and the free development of his/her personality. Language constitutes an important part of cultural rights whose development is critical

for preserving a group's total way of life Kebede Hordofa Janko's article contributes to the scientific development of Afaan Oromoo, the Oromo language Presenting an array of evidentiary material from various Afaan Oromoo dialects and related Cushitic languages, Janko proposes a linguistic scheme that governs the creation of causative verb forms Janko's hypothesis is not the final say in the area of his investigation. Other linguists are welcome to refute or support his proposition.

In the special feature section of this issue, we have made available a translation of Eloi Ficquet's fascinating article which assesses the various theories on the origin of the Oromo. Ficquet's article posits that the origin of the Oromo, so far considered a settled issue, and the stories about their brutal invasion of Ethiopia's highlands, are largely a fabrication based on misreading, or deliberately distorting, the contemporary records Most contemporary historians ignore the political context in which the sources, local and foreign, were created and read them as though they were unbiased, authentic reports of the period In the process, they have helped the reproduction of stories that do not comport with historical reality. While the translation of Ficquet's article is hoped to engender a lively scholarly debate, it also makes an important document accessible to non-French readers, thus advancing the goal of disseminating knowledge about the Oromo as widely as can be done at this moment Oromo studies scholars are indebted to Ayalew Kanno for his studious effort in carrying on his indispensable project of translating unique documents that are pertinent to the study of the Oromo.

It must now be clear that there is renewed interest in the issue of the Oromo origin. Ever since the publication of his book, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860* in 1990, Mohammed Hassen has argued that the sixteenth century migration was not the original debut of the Oromo on the Ethiopian central highlands. One of the oft-cited sources used to

sustain the sixteenth century migration is *Zenahu Le Galla*, a short manuscript written by the Abyssinian monk Abba Bahrey. The document has been translated into many languages. More recently, Getatchew Haile produced a new edition and translation into Amharic and English of *Zenahu Le Galla* and other documents dealing with the migration of the Oromo. The novelty of this edition is that Haile has included translation of selected extracts from other Geez texts and provided extensive commentaries to clarify the original texts.

Mohammed Hassen acknowledges that neither Abba Bahrey's manuscript nor Haile's commentaries cast the Oromo in a positive light. *Zenahu Le Galla* was written as a political pamphlet meant to mobilize the Christian society against the advancing pastoral Oromo forces and, as such, it should not be expected to be an accurate account of Oromo history. Surprisingly, Hassen locates sufficient references in Abba Bahrey's work that ascertain the presence of Oromos within the Christian empire certainly in the fourteenth and possibly in the thirteenth century. There are also indications that these Oromo groups were in contact with the Zagwe kings of Abyssinia.

If past experience is a guide, Oromo studies scholars should anticipate likely strong reaction from Ethiopianists who are opposed to anything that challenges the accepted dogma. It is neverthethless the goal of the *Journal of Oromo Studies* to publish revisionary texts and articles that endeavor to set the Oromo record straight. In light of Ficquet's argument that much of what has been said about Oromo origins is fabricated, Mohammed Hassen's contention about the ubiquity of evidence regarding the presence of Oromo groups within the Abyssinian kingdom as early as the thirteenth century, and even the highlights of evidence in the review of Negaso Gidada's book in this issue, it is not difficult to comprehend the timeliness of Mohammed Shamsaddin Megalommatis' call in the previous issue of the *Journal of Oromo Studies* (Vol. 14, no. 1)

for Oromo and Meriotic scholars to collaborate in a research project whose aim is to reexamine the issue of Oromo origin

Ezekiel Gebissa, Editor
Kettering University

Ethnonational Oppression and International Apathy

Comparing the Struggles of the Oromo in Ethiopia and the Moro in the Philippines

Azlan Tajuddin

Though the Oromo constitute the largest ethnonation in East Africa, they are treated as an oppressed minority in Ethiopia. Despite their struggle against the injustices of the Ethiopian state for more than a century, little is known about their plight worldwide. Thousands of miles away in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, Moro separatists have fought century-long wars for independence. Just like the Oromo, the Moro are a silent voice in the world, and statehood for them remains a mere vision. This article attempts briefly to illustrate similar systemic patterns of oppression between the Oromo and Moro experiences. By using a comparative-historical approach, it critically ana-

Journal of Oromo Studies Vol. 14, no. 2 (July 2007), pp. 9-41

Azlan Tajuddin is the Chair of the sociology department at La Roche College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He received his PhD in Sociology from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and now teaches a variety of sociology courses, including Race and Ethnicity, Social Change and Development, and Social Movements and Resistance. His research specialty is in the areas of Southeast Asian social development and culture, and social change

lyzes the racist colonization of the Oromo and Moro ethnonations. The article also examines the armed liberation struggles of each group and the respective state's conferring limited autonomy on each group. In order to highlight contradictions in Western moral standards in its advocacy of democracy and justice worldwide, the article also discusses the historical reluctance of the West, particularly the US, to intervene on behalf of these oppressed groups.

Colonialism and Ethnonational Oppression

As Harry Magdoff (1982, 16) noted long ago, "the aim of colonial policy was to create a self-sufficient empire, providing for, to the extent possible, the raw material and food needs of the mother country." In many instances, this process is achieved through the use of violence, and serves to enrich the colonizer at the expense of the social and economic development of the colonized (Amin 1982). While there certainly exist, for the colonial power, economic rewards of colonization, the justification for colonial rule however, often takes on a racial-cultural dimension. In other words, the underlying rationale behind the colonial policies of the modern capitalist state has been the deep-seated racism of the colonizer against their colonized subjects. Nazi Germany, for example, annexed its neighbors during the Second World War to assert, among other things, its 'Aryan' dominance over Europe; American forces occupied the Philippines to 'civilize' the native islanders; and Israel continues to colonize Palestine in order to realize its race-based Zionist prophecy. Considering conquered peoples as inferior, unknowledgeable, and barbaric, colonizers arrogate to themselves, a 'righteous' mission to either 'civilize' or exterminate their colonial subjects. The colonizers' political and economic hegemony is often established expeditiously through violence and oppression (Smith 1983).

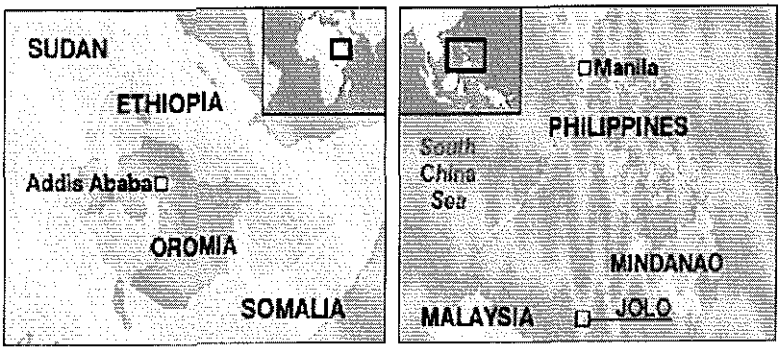
For both the Oromo and the Moro, the nature of colonial rule is manifested by ethnonational oppression through state

violence, forced assimilation or 'nationalization,' and ethnonational impoverishment. Oromian colonization began with the occupation of their lands by Abyssinia. The invasion of Oromo lands was motivated by two main considerations. One was economic. Historically, mineral deposits and coffee production in the fertile regions of Oromia have provided Ethiopia with much needed export earnings, making Oromia the country's bread basket. The famous Ethiopian victory over the Italians at the Battle of Adwa in 1896 was largely financed by resources plundered from Oromo lands. Ironically, incomes from the sale and exports of resources in Oromo lands have also been used to further oppress and marginalize Oromos. Second, and more pertinent to the focus of this paper, is the aspiration of Abyssinian (Amhara-Tigrayan) elites to establish their cultural hegemony over all the lands that constitute the present Ethiopia (Jalata 1993).

The origin of the historical oppression against the Oromo dates back to the seventh century. With the spread of Islam between the seventh and tenth centuries across eastern and northern Africa, and into Asia Minor, traditional ties between the Abyssinia and the Byzantine Empire began to weaken. With the fall of the Axumite dynasty, an increasingly vibrant Arab-Muslim trade network not only dislodged Christian-Abyssinian commercial influence in the area, but also occasioned the conversions of much of the populations in the north, east, and south of the Ethiopian region into Islam (Abbas 1995). In the face of an Islamic threat, successive Abyssinian leaders became preoccupied with reasserting their Christian-Semitic cultural hegemony throughout the region. Convinced that their culture was superior to others, the Ethiopians spread their Christianity with the twin purposes of fulfilling both their colonial needs and their religious obligation. As Sorensen (1993: 13) observed, "Christianity was one aspect of the civilizing mission which the Amhara saw as their imperial duty."

The early thirteenth century witnessed the ascendancy of successive Amharic Christian kingdoms, each intensifying its cultural-religious dominance in the region by attacking neighboring states and propagating its brand of Orthodox Christianity. Under Zara Yakob (r. 1434-1468), Amharic hegemony in Abyssinia was virtually consolidated. But Amharic influence could not further expand due to the significant presence of Oromo groups, who were busily involved in the political/economic activities of the region. By the sixteenth century, the large Oromo populations had greatly affected the balance of power in the area. Unlike the Amharas, the distribution of the Oromo was rather decentralized. Many Oromos intermarried with other ethnonational groups, adapting quite quickly to their new socioeconomic environments. Notwithstanding their integration, the Oromo remained bonded through their traditional *gada* system of administration (Levine 2000, 136-140). They also preserved much of their cultural identity, especially in the use of their language, *Afaan Oromo* (Bartels, 1990). This, and the fact that many Oromos had converted to Islam under Abyssinian rule, may have provided the Amhara elite with a contemptuous and prejudiced disposition toward the Oromo population in general. It was not surprising that, when the Amhara elite gained political control of Ethiopia, the Oromo became the brunt of their resentment. With a population of more than 30 million today, the historical land of the Oromo stretches from the eastern border with the Somali and Afar lands, and Djibouti to the western border with Sudan. It also extends to the south to the borders of Somalia and Kenya, and to the north to what is considered the original Abyssinia (See Figure 1).

Unlike the populous Oromos in Ethiopia, the Moros or Muslims of southern Philippines constitute only about 11 percent of the Philippines' 90 million people. Modern Philippines consists of 7100 islands inhabited by about 110 ethnonational groups. Moros are largely concentrated on the islands of



Mindanao, Sulu (Jolo), and Palawan (see Figure 2). Colonization has created and institutionalized socioeconomic differences among these ethnonational groups. Its impact on contemporary Philippine society can be seen through the state's hybrid political system, in which a Christian *mestizo* landowning oligarchy utilizes the so-called democratic institutions to monopolize wealth as well as 'buy' political power (Haynes 2001, 88; Karnow 1989, 9).

In the twelfth century, Muslim traders from Persia and the Middle East penetrated the eastern seas to trade with Malay maritime merchants for spice and gold. By the fifteenth century, many of the settlements along the western shores of the Philippines had sizeable Muslim populations, with a well-organized Sultanate of Sulu established in the southern part of the archipelago. The Muslim population lived on continuous merchant trade and agriculture, which brought them relative economic prosperity and political stability. By the late fifteenth century, a sultanate under Raja Sulaiman had controlled the Manila (present capital of the republic) Bay area on the northern island of Luzon. By the late sixteenth century, after several failed attempts, including one by Ferdinand Magellan, Spanish Conquistadores had managed to colonize a large portion of the archipelago. They named it the Philippines, after their King Philip II. Their rule was brutal. Forced conversion of Muslims and non-Muslims to Catholicism, the main mis-

sion of the Spaniards, became the key to controlling the population (Serajul Islam 2003, 196-7).

Because of the fierce resistance of the Moro in the southern islands of Mindanao and Sulu, the Spanish conquest and colonization of the Philippines was not completed until 1876. In that year, the Spaniards purchased a fleet of gunboats from the British, destroyed Moro fortresses, and forced the eventual surrender of the sultan. Guerilla warfare nevertheless continued well into the twentieth century. The experience of Moro colonization under the Spaniards was particularly violent due to the fact that the Spaniards had always perceived Muslims as 'enemies of faith.' After expelling the Moors from Spain, it became a mission for the Iberians to treat all Muslims inhumanely. Even the name Moro, from the word Moor, is a reflection of their general classification of all Muslims as one group of people. The Spaniards ruled the Philippines for 400 years until the Americans defeated them in 1899 (Tate 1971, 345-50).

In the case of the modern Ethiopian state, violence and racism against the Oromo are expressed in their most egregious form in the systematic enslavement of Oromos. This consolidated total Ethiopian control over the Oromo population (Sbacchi 1997). It began with the initial invasion of Oromia in the late nineteenth century when the Emperor Menelik II forcefully dispossessed the Oromo of their lands and reduced many Oromos to *gabbar* (landless peasants) status. The *gabbars* were frequently subjected to slavery by the emperor's warlords or *naftanya,* who then provided the emperor with the foundations of his colonial administration through terror and exploitation (Hassen 2000, 110; Messing 1985). The church and the state became inseparably dependent on each other during their crusades as both enjoyed the rewards of booty they plundered from Oromo lands (Bulcha 1993). It was reported that, by the early part of the twentieth century, the number of Oromo slaves could have been as high as about a quarter of the total

Oromo population (Lata 1999). During Italian colonialism (1935-1941), many Oromos were freed from slavery, and willingly fought with the Italians against the Amhara monarch (Sbacchi 1997, 175-6). This only exacerbated the emperor's suspicion and contempt of the Oromo as a 'fifth column' in Ethiopia. Upon his return from exile in 1941, Haile Sellassie imposed a ruthless policy of *Amharization* that effectively devastated the capacity of the Oromo to fully function as a culturally independent people within Ethiopia (Bulcha 1997, 33-35).

As the policy of *Amharization* proceeded, with Amharic strictly enforced as the national language of Ethiopia, Oromo-speaking children were denied access to a quality education. The curriculum glorified the Amharic language, emphasizing its Semitic origins, and associated Abyssinian heritage with the civilizations of the Middle East and Europe. This was done not only to equate Ethiopian nationality with Amhara identity, but to also indirectly 'elevate' Amhara culture above the 'backward' African culture, to which the Oromo were told they belonged. If the Oromo were included in the national education curriculum, it was in the form of negative portrayals of Oromos as backward and uncivilized (Bulcha 1993). Often referred to by the derogatory term *galla*, the Oromo experienced the extensive displacement as well as denigration of their culture (Jalata 2001, 72).

Hence, the *Amharization* project through education not only placed Oromos at an economic disadvantage. It also socially marginalized those Oromo children who persisted in maintaining their language in spite of the efforts to bring them into compliance with the expectations of a different culture. Yet, the *Amharization* effort was so effective that many Oromos, especially the elite, opted to become *Amharized* to gain access to Ethiopian social privileges (Bulcha 1996; Markakis 1987). Because Oromos have never been considered a part of the Semitic-Ethiopian dominant group, they have always been

subjected to systematic social discrimination and second-class citizenship throughout the history of Ethiopia, even for those assimilated Oromos (Markakis 1987).

The *Amharization* policy in Ethiopia could not have succeeded without the political and economic support of the West. As Western powers scrambled for pieces of the African pie in the nineteenth century, they created an alliance with the Christian Abyssinian elite in Ethiopia. An opportunistic and geopolitical relationship was established between the West and Ethiopia, through which a large quantity of European weaponry was traded for Oromo slaves and natural resources. Absorbing the racist discourse on Ethiopia's Christian heritage, Western powers also helped Ethiopia gain admission to the League of Nations in 1924 (Holcomb and Ibssa 1990). After the Italian invasion, Emperor Haile Sellassie aspired to modernize Ethiopia, and sought the aid of the British, who in turn saw in Ethiopia a strategic base from which they could strengthen their influence along the Red Sea trading route. However, modernization never took root since much of the help was selectively used by the Emperor to consolidate his position and power. At this time, pleas for help by Oromo leaders to the British to remove their lands from Ethiopia and place them under a British mandate were never taken seriously. The British preferred to see a 'united and stable' Ethiopian kingdom friendly to their interests, thus indirectly aiding Ethiopia's continued colonization of Oromo lands (Sorensen 1993).

The advance of the US to the status of world hegemonic power encouraged Ethiopia to develop a close relationship with the Americans. The US, with intentions of galvanizing its regional influence centering on a strong Israel, ushered in a pact with Ethiopia, allowing for the use of intelligence facilities in Eritrea. The Kagnew Station, a large communications base, was built in Asmara to monitor any Soviet advances in the geopolitically sensitive Horn of Africa region. Because of

these interests, the US supported the maintenance of a greater Ethiopian empire under Amharic domination. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed massive American aid, which helped the Emperor put down several rebellions and attempted *coups d'etat* (Pateman 1995, 53). The US also remained silent on Ethiopia's annexation of Eritrea, disregarding a UN resolution for its autonomy under a federal arrangement. Meanwhile, US economic investments, through its multinational corporations, extracted Oromo resources such as coffee and other agricultural products, and helped strengthen the *Amharization* of Ethiopia through infrastructural projects in schools and universities (Legesse 2000) While corporatization of self-subsistent farming created widespread famine and landlessness among many Oromos, US aid and arm sales, sometimes under the guise of famine relief, benefited the Ethiopian elite (Kissi 2000).

The monarchy was ousted in 1974, but oppression of Oromos continued unabated The 'socialist' government of Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974-1991), which eventually came to power, was politically inexperienced in running a state. Coupled with its apprehensions of Oromo secession, the regime found it convenient to adopt the colonial policy of the imperial government. In the name of socialism, a land reform policy transferred land ownership from private landlords to the state (and its elite) It also harshly collectivized the agricultural sector, thereby controlling labor and produce in Oromo lands, further impoverishing the people (Hassen 1990). Significantly, the state embarked on a land resettlement program that forced non-Oromo peoples onto Oromo regions, further facilitating the disconnection between people and ownership of land Oppressive state policies also curbed the capacities of Oromos to sustain themselves in independent cash crop production, such as coffee and *khat* For Oromos, mostly farmers, these were issues of survival (Gebissa 2004; Lata 1999).

The suppression of Oromo rights by past Ethiopian monarchs and regimes has continued under the Tigrayan-led Ethio-

pian government of Meles Zenawi Portraying itself as a democratic federation of ethnonational entities, the present government is in fact responsible for an overall decline in human rights and civil liberties in Ethiopia. For example, in May 2005, several protestors took to the streets alleging that the recent general elections was fraudulent, only to be gunned down by Ethiopian forces. About 200 people died, many more disappeared and several thousands were injured. There have also been unlawful detentions, tortures and killings of Oromo students and social activists, as well as closures of Oromo organizations in the name of national security. The state continues to unlawfully detain several hundred opposition leaders and civilians, including many Oromos (Amnesty International 2006).

Historical inequities between the colonizer and the colonized have marked the social relationship between the Amhara-Tigrayan and Oromo. Just like their Amhara predecessors, the Tigrayan ethnocracy has given privilege to the Tigrayan elites at the expense of other ethnonational groups, including the majority Oromo. Today, the present regime has concentrated development and aid mainly in the Tigrayan region (Jalata 2001). Hassen (2000, 168-170) argues that the incumbent government also has been known for its widespread corruption, including the continuing plunder of resources from Oromo lands to finance its military oppression. In 2000, state corruption locked around 1.6 million Oromos into famine zones despite the availability of surplus grains (FAO 2000). Such a vicious cycle of economic exploitation and political repression against the Oromo continues to confine them to inferior status in Ethiopian society. Neglected in economic development and marginalized in education, the Oromo live on the threshold of absolute poverty given the political and environmental instabilities that have beset Ethiopia. Without full access to quality education and effective political power, the

Oromo find it very difficult to experience socially upward mobility.

A similar trajectory of state violence, nationalization, and impoverishment characterizes the colonization of the Moro. The only difference is that in the case of the Moro, these processes were initially overseen directly by the imperial powers—Spain and the United States. After defeating Spain in 1899, the United States turned to fighting a savage imperial war with Filipinos, in which the US prevailed in 1902. Approximately 20,000 Filipino nationalist fighters and 200,000 civilians perished (Ocampo 2002; Smith 1994, 225). Eleven years later at Bud Bagsak, American firepower managed to subjugate a weakened and somewhat divided Moro army which, to its credit, presented the last stand of local resistance against the new imperial master. It resulted in the massacre of about 1000 men, women, and children (Hurley 1936, 186). From that point on, a massive *Filipinization* program was implemented to integrate the Muslim south into the greater Philippines Commonwealth (Thaib 1996). Through centralized education, discriminatory land reforms, corporatization of local agriculture, and the abolishment of traditional customs, American colonial policies effectively impoverished the Moro, relegating them to minority status in their own land (Che Man 1990; Majul 1985, 110-13). American colonization also offered a strong 'Orientalist' narrative of a transcendent Moro Muslim ethnonational identity, whose non-Christian characteristics were perceived to require Western civilization (Angeles 2001, 186-7)

After the Philippines gained independence in 1946, state discriminatory policies against the Moro continued with brutal fervor (Che Man 1990). It is important to note that although no longer the colonial master, the US continued to support oppression of the Moro by Filipino elites. As a 'client state' of the US, the Philippine government also needed to safeguard US economic interests in the southern Philippines. The new state's reluctance to deal justly with the Moro can

also be explained by its own colonial interests through its Christian-settlers in Mindanao (Serajul Islam 2003, 198-9). Rich in natural resources, Mindanao has historically been considered an open frontier for Christians. Those who already had vested capitalist interests were reluctant to see it threatened. From 1930 to the 1940s, the Americans encouraged large Christian resettlement communities to spread rapidly into Mindanao. Such projects have continued since independence. Consequently, the proportion of Moros to the total population of the island fell from 98 percent in the early years of American colonization to about 40 percent in 1976. Such programs have displaced the Moro from their lands, and by the latest estimates, nearly 80 percent of them are landless (Jubair 2000, 121).

Despite harsh efforts to integrate them into Filipino society, Moros have remained steadfast in their struggle to preserve their ethnonational identity (Jubair 2000). The Moro have refused to assimilate into mainstream Filipino culture, because to them, the name 'Filipino' itself reflects a derogatory term implying 'those who bowed in submission to Spain' (Glang 1969, 21). Moros argue that their cultural existence predated the Filipinos by more than two centuries, and therefore saw no need for assimilation. Furthermore, centuries of persecution suffered at the hands of consecutive 'Christian' regimes have propelled the Moro to always set themselves apart from the majority population. There have been some from the Moro community who have made it into the mainstream of Filipino society, but like the Oromo in Ethiopia, they are seldom accepted as equals. For the majority of Moros, the educational system in the Philippines functions to either fully assimilate them into mainstream Filipino society, or neglect them through poor quality privately-run vernacular schools. Either way, education has not served as an effective structural assimilation or a social mobility mechanism for the Moro. Public school

enrolment in the Mindanao regions is among the lowest in the whole republic (Jubair, 2000; Tan 1990).

Quite similar to the Oromo, at the heart of the struggle for Moro nationhood is the goal of attaining political independence through the re-establishment of Moro cultural heritage of a proud *Bangsamoro* (Moro peoples) identity, supported by a system of self-governance and national sovereignty. Centuries of colonialism have successfully typecast Moro as savage and uncivilized, and the Moro see no use in being part of the Philippine nation that constantly vilifies and ridicules their culture. A recent study carried out by the United Nations, in partnership with the Philippine Human Development Network, revealed prevalent anti-Muslim biases and discriminations by mainstream Filipino populations against the Moro. It also noted that prejudices and stereotypes have been reinforced through the years by Western (Spanish and American) literature, as well as by an education system that not only fails to address these prejudices, but also ignores the existence of the Moro as a culturally independent civilization (Philippine Inquirer 2005)

At the same time, economic and political marginalization has kept the Moro in a cycle of perpetual poverty and powerlessness (McKenna 1998, 114-5). Poverty levels in the southern provinces have remained the highest in the country. The Philippines National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) reported that incidence of poverty in the Muslim provinces has increased from 57.3 per cent in 1997 to 69 per cent in 2000 (Philippines National Statistical Coordination Board 2002). Moro entrapment in poverty serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy for the state and its Christian elite, who maintain that the Moro could not administer their own economic development due to their relative cultural inferiority (Serajul Islam 2003, 200-1; Williams 1989) In the struggle to contain Moro rebellions, the Philippine military and constabulary forces have discriminately targeted Muslim civilians, subjecting them to arrests, torture, and incarceration without trial. Villages and

mosques in the south have also been favorite targets of bombings and raids (Jannaral 2004). In some impoverished areas in metro Manila, Muslims are made to wear identification tags to distinguish them from the local populations (AHRC 2000). The colonization of Moros has driven tens of thousands to neighboring Malaysia as refugees. Throughout the decades, tens of thousands more have died through subtle forms of ethnic cleansing (Hill 1996).

Armed Resistance and Conflict Resolution

Frantz Fanon (2004) remarked that the complicity between capitalism and colonialism, in which one culture seeks systematically to displace another, generates unending violence within the disputed territory. Hence, state or internal colonialism, which is usually racial or ethnonational in nature, often elicits responses from oppressed minorities through anti-systemic challenges against the state. Here, national independence becomes the desired alternative to citizenship under a culturally distinct and oppressive state (Carment 2003, 32). Ethnonationalism then becomes the central force behind grievances and demands for separate statehood (Smith 2001, 33-4; Reicher and Hopkins 2001, 74-5). Oftentimes, the state's refusal to bargain leaves armed warfare as the sole plausible means to protect ethnonational interests (Kaufmann 1998; Azar and Burton 1986). Moral ambiguity aside, the use of aggression by ethno-separatist movements in response to violent repression by the state is often justified (Hechter 1995, 60-2). At most, it provides an effective method of achieving movement success, and at the very least, it commands public attention (Gamson 1990). For many of these movements, possible conflict resolution comes in the promise of full independence status. However, semi-independence or regional-based autonomy often becomes the state's solution for conflict resolution (Gurr 1994). This process rarely fulfills the political dreams of the whole oppressed population.

Oromo and Moro Liberation Struggles and Limited Autonomy

The systematic subjugation of the Oromo was not met with political silence. Widespread Oromo resistance against the Ethiopian state was expressed through many rebellions and uprisings, especially after 1941. It was not long before an organization of respected Oromo intellectuals and figures formed the Maccaa and Tuulama Self-Help Association (MTSHA) in 1963. This association, surprisingly recognized by the state, virtually regenerated Oromo culture and unity at the official level. Its membership, vision, and approach commanded mass support of Oromos from every class, religion, and region in Ethiopia and abroad. However, the association grew too big, too fast. Before long, the association was radicalized through the efforts of the more militant members to 'capture' state power. The Bale uprisings (1963-1968), for example, which effectively challenged the credibility of the Ethiopian military through their victories, were linked to the association through some of its members. Finally, an abortive assassination attempt on the Emperor involving leading figures of the association ended its lawful existence in 1968.

The significance of the radicalized association has been its legacy in propelling Oromo ethnonationalism across all social groups (Bulcha 1997, 35-40). The Oromo struggle was sustained after the demise of MTSHA by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Formed in 1973, the OLF realized that the oppression of the Oromo by the Ethiopian state could only be ended through armed struggle for full independence in the form of a people's democratic republic of Oromia. The OLF engaged the Ethiopian army in several battles. Glimpses of hope for independence came when the Oromo liberation struggle helped overthrow the tyrannical Haile Sellassie in 1974. The hope was dashed however, when the incoming socialist-military regime (*Derg*), comprising overwhelmingly of Amharas, became increasingly ethnocratic in nature (Jalata

1993). Under Mengistu, the ruthlessness of the military regime against Oromo populations—2 million perished through hard labor, famine, and absolute poverty—intensified the OLF's struggle for liberation (Hassen 2000; Kaplan 1988).

In 1991, a concerted effort by various liberation groups resulted in the overthrow of the Mengistu government. What was again to be a period of elation for the Oromo people turned out to be one of disappointment. The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) had organized the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which cooperated closely with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the OLF. The strong unison among the various groups during the struggle against the Mengistu regime soon turned to uneasy alliances that later worked against the OLF (Lata 1998). While the EPLF eventually attained secession for Eritrea, the Oromo experienced an organizational weakening that came in two ways. First, the EPRDF created a puppet affiliate in the guise of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO). This virtually divided the political orientations of Oromo. Second, the OLF inadvertently encamped its army and allowed the TPLF to acquire total control of the Ethiopian armed forces, which later aided in the defeat and dismemberment of the OLF armed wing. The increased alienation of the OLF in talks toward the creation of a democratic government eventually led to the OLF's boycott of the May 1995 multiparty elections. The election process was alleged to have been manipulated, although the Organization of African Unity (OAU), for its own reasons, expressed otherwise (Ottaway 1995, 239).

The *de jure* administrative policy of the TPLF–led government in Ethiopia has been a Federal arrangement emphasizing ethnonational autonomy, in which the OPDO has been given the responsibility and privilege of ruling over the Oromo region. The *de facto* policy however is the TPLF's focus on building Tigrayan hegemony over other ethnonational groups. In

fact, Meles Zenawi's state policy has openly discouraged any form of ethnonationalism in Ethiopia, or as it contextually terms it, 'narrow nationalism' (Oromia Online 2001). The current Federal structure serves not only to control Oromos under the state, but it also placates some Oromo leaders, who have taken advantage of their positions to fulfill their own personal interests. With the OLF virtually left ineffective, the government of Meles Zenawi has been able to subvert so-called democratic policies in Ethiopia to stifle Oromo and other ethnonational groups' freedom of speech, movement, and access to resources. The state has also systematically disbanded various Oromo cultural organizations as well as imprisoned and eliminated members of the Oromo educated class (Jalata 1993)

Today the colonization, cultural disempowerment, and impoverishment of the Oromo continue under a façade of Ethiopian liberalism and democracy. Just as its predecessors had done, the present government has managed to divide Oromos by region, religion, and class. Though the OLF political leadership has split, armed resistance is being carried out by smaller Oromo groups. In 2000, a United Liberation Forces of Oromia (ULFO) was formed to unite all Oromo parties under the goal of the creation of an Oromia state. Further disagreements within the Oromo groups was highlighted in 2006, in which many in ULFO resented the OLF's cooperation with the Ethiopian opposition, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), to form the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD) (OLC 2006). The pivotal issue of the Oromo struggle now remains whether the Oromo should fight for total secession, or attain wider democratization and justice under a loosely-governed Ethiopian federation.

Like the Oromo, the roots of Moro discontent are based on social injustices, including constant efforts to push them off their ancestral lands (Noble 1976). Galvanized in their hostility toward the state, various Moro organizations merged

under the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM), demanding complete independence of Mindanao and Sulu (Gowing 1979, 42). In 1969, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was formed, furnishing a channel through which separatist aspirations could be fulfilled, including the pursuit of independence through armed struggle. By the mid seventies, the MNLF had recruited nearly 30,000 supporters, willing to volunteer on the frontlines through its armed brigade, the *Bangsamoro Army* (Noble 1986, 95). The state swiftly challenged these developments by encouraging the army and private Christian militias to inflict atrocities on Muslims in the south (Che Man 1990). When the MNLF fought back with equal vigor, the state promptly declared martial law in 1972, as a means to control arms flow to the separatists (Majul, 1985).

Representing themselves as an oppressed Muslim minority seeking freedom from a tyrannical state, the Moro did manage to capture the sympathy of the international Muslim community (Tanggol 1993). Responding to the concerns of their own electorate and citizenry, members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), especially neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia, became the only segment of the international community to show significant concerns for the Moro cause. At the OIC, the MNLF was given permanent observer status. Then, during the world oil crisis in the early 1970s, the OIC successfully used its petroleum exporting power to pressure the Philippine state into negotiating with the MNLF. The pressure paid off in an accord signed at the famous Tripoli Agreement in 1976, which sought to end the armed conflict between the two parties and to pave the way for the eventual autonomy of Moro lands (Timberman 1991).

However, the Philippine state skillfully maneuvered around its promises not to take any step toward Moro autonomy; thus the fighting continued (Che Man 1990, 151) Since a ceasefire never really got off the ground, persistent efforts by the OIC and neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia

culminated in another treaty between the Philippine government and the MNLF in 1996. This agreement formally ended armed warfare between the two parties and established regional autonomy for four of the thirteen Muslim provinces in the form of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) (Serajul Islam 2001, 214). Nevertheless, pledges of autonomy and economic development for Mindanao have yet to materialize. State development programs have been cosmetic in nature and continued to benefit mostly the military, Christian settlers in the south, and a handful of the Moro elite co-opted into the state machinery. In the meantime, the Moro people have little control over their political affairs, proving that regional autonomy has effectively become a farce. To the Moro, complete self-determination has become the only political vehicle for obtaining social justice (Serajul Islam 2003; Hesman 2003; McKenna 1998)

Critics of the MNLF alleged that the state had successfully appeased the group's leadership by the power conferred on them through the ARMM. Internal discord within the MNLF had already borne two other splinter groups - the Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The Abu Sayyaf, numbering only about 400, is confined to the island of Basilan, and its notoriety includes kidnappings, murders, robberies, and piracy. This group moreover, lacks support, legitimacy, and membership to be a serious contender (Bauzon 1991) The MILF, on the other hand, has become increasingly popular, and has never recognized any of the MNLF treaties with the state. Vowing to bring about the total liberation of the south through the establishment of an Islamic state, the MILF initially engaged in warfare with the MNLF.

In August 2001, a truce was brokered between the MILF and MNLF, and from 2000 to the time of this writing, the MILF and the Philippine government had begun a series of peace talks sponsored by Malaysia (Serajul Islam 2003, 206; Daily Telegraph 2001) On the surface, these talks seem to

project positive steps toward peace and reconciliation, but in essence, they have been less than fruitful. A major stumbling block to more meaningful dialogue has been the state's refusal to sincerely discuss Moro independence. Although the MNLF may have officially ended its quest for armed secession, Moro separatism, now carried on mainly by the MILF, is still alive and vigorously committed to attaining that aim (Gloria 2003)

Western Apathy toward Oromo and Moro Liberation

Ethno-separatist movements usually enhance their claim for full autonomy by creating alliances with powerful third party states or by drawing on the attention, and possibly, sympathy of the international community (Heraclides 1991). Third-party states and organizations tend to be attracted to these conflicts either for reasons of cultural and ideological affinity with the parties involved, or for geopolitical benefits derived from the movement's success or failure. Interestingly in the world system, economic interests in and ideological affinities with the oppressive state usually become the primary motivation for core Western countries to avoid interfering on behalf of resistant minorities (Ganguly 1998; Premdas 1990, 24). Although the United Nations (UN) hypothetically assumes the impartial third party role in conflict resolution, its initiatives have often been contingent upon the political interests of its permanent members, particularly the US. In many cases today, serious efforts by the US and the Western countries to intervene on behalf of a just solution have become critical since these core countries have the economic and political capacities to determine such outcomes (De Jonge Oudraat1996).

Unfortunately, the Oromo struggle for liberation from Ethiopian oppression has systematically been stifled by the West's historical recognition of Ethiopia as a 'Christian' nation. This is not unlike the situation of the Moro in the Philippines, with whom the West often identifies as the sole Christian country in Asia. After the fall of the emperor in Ethiopia,

the US continued to provide arms to the *Derg*, although complications related to the war with Somalia involving the Soviet Union eventually phased out US aid to the country. The US resumed its aid to the Ethiopian government with the inauguration of Meles Zenawi's regime in 1991. Consenting to Ethiopian racial discourse, the US has persistently maintained a cozy relationship with the Ethiopian dictator. Heralding Ethiopia's political reforms as a new era of democratic governance in Africa, US policy makers even cite Zenawi as a leader with a good human rights record. By the end of the twentieth century, Ethiopia became the second largest recipient of US aid in sub-Saharan Africa (Jalata 2001, 103)

The events of 11 September 2001 have intensified US support for Zenawi. Vigorous in its war on terrorism, the Bush administration's ultimatum to world leaders on 'which team they were on' prompted Zenawi to quickly proclaim himself as Bush's ally in the Horn of Africa. The US position has always been quite simplistic—irrespective of which tyrant is in power in a particular country, US strategic interests in that country come before the country's civil liberties. Despite waning support by other Western countries and organizations, especially after the 2005 elections fracas, Ethiopia's Tigrayan regime has been able to count on US support. In order to maintain the continuous flow of US aid, $20 million since 2002, the Zenawi regime has concocted baseless scenarios of Islamic threats to Ethiopian security coming in from Somalia, Eritrea, and Oromia. That Ethiopia's recent involvement in the massacre of thousands of Somalis in Mogadishu received President Bush's 'blessings' is testimony to the commitment of full US support for the current Ethiopian state (Slavin 2007; Woldemariam 2005)

Similarly, Moro separatism in the Philippines has not received significant interest or media coverage in the West. Despite unrelenting discrimination against the Moro under Manila rule, the UN, under US influence, has been unresponsive

to Moro petitions for a plebiscite, like the one conducted in East Timor, that paved the way for Timorese independence from Indonesia in 2002 (Mindanao News 2002). Western countries and organizations have been reluctant to consider the Moro issue as anything other than an internal matter. Similar to Zenawi regime's justification for its continued suppression of Oromos, a large part of the suppression of the Moro is the result of the way the Philippine state has systematically portrayed the Moro separatist movement as nothing more than an insurgency against its Western-type liberal democracy (Tan 1990; Majul 1985). As such, the US has always allied itself with the Filipino elite to sustain 'state stability.' In return, the Americans secured large air and naval bases on the islands, allegedly to contain Soviet influence in Southeast Asia. More importantly, American interests in the Philippines have also been intricately tied to the US's transnational investments and finances (Krinks 2002). By the end of the 1980s, US trade accounted for about a third of the state's total imports, its banks possessed about 65 per cent of the state's commercial bank liabilities, and its direct investments totaled about $1 2 billion - half of all foreign investments in the Philippines (Kessler 1989, 158). Therefore, despite its propaganda of democracy promotion, the US actually supported the brutal regime of Ferdinand Marcos (1965-86) and lauded it as an efficient and rational process of state stabilization (Schirmer and Shalom 1987, 168).

As the Marcos autocracy's gradual demise became apparent in the mid-1980s, the US quickly moved in and utilized various agencies under its National Security Council (NSC) to guide the transition of the Philippines toward a more 'democratic' state (Robinson 1997, 124-29). The aim was not to ease a popular government into power but to ensure state control by an elite previously sidestepped under the dictatorship. Interestingly, the US also advised the incoming regime of Corazon Aquino (1986-92) against further autonomy for the

Moro, since much of its own investments were located in Mindanao (Arce and Abad 1986). Any expectation of progress toward complete political independence for the Moro has gradually diminished after 11 September 2001. Mandating a transgression of the Philippine constitution, the 'global war on terrorism' allowed US troops to enter the country to perform an 'advisory' role to the state's 'counter-terrorism' campaign against the miniscule Abu Sayyaf group, whom the US claimed is closely linked to Al-Qaeda. For this, the US approved around $100 million in military and economic aid to the Philippine state, and much more have rolled in since (Tajuddin 2002).

In effect, the resumption of US involvement in Southeast Asia has provided the Philippine state with the remedy it needed. Under the current global US hegemony, the OIC has become relatively ineffective in its influence. Neighboring states such as Malaysia and Indonesia, as members of the strong Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN (the Philippines is also a member), have become more cautious in their support for Moro separatism. In fact, Malaysia recently arrested and repatriated former MNLF founder and ARMM governor Nur Misuari, who fled the Philippines after being accused of disrupting what was considered by many to be state-engineered local elections (The Manila Times, 2002). The effects of these international developments are twofold: while the Philippine state has constantly been given renewed power through Western support, the prospects of Moro statehood have become increasingly diffuse. Furthermore, although the Abu Sayyaf has been designated a target group in the war against terrorism, the wholesale labeling of Muslims as terrorists has served as the state's *raison d'etre* in hounding all Moro organizations it perceives to be threatening to its territorial unity. In this, the Philippine state has full Western support.

Conclusion

This article, albeit brief, draws several analytical conclusions. There is a common misperception that ruthless colonization ended with the collapse of direct Western colonialism. The article affirms that violent capitalist colonialism, founded by Western imperialism, reverberates throughout the world system wherever capitalist and elite interests are threatened. Since capitalist states are usually representative of a particular cultural or ethnonational group, the colonization process involving the domination of one ethnonational group over another maintains its racial character. In the case of both the Oromo and Moro, historical subjugation by a racist state includes systematic control policies of its 'troublesome minority' through terrorism, discrimination, nationalization, marginalization, and even extinction. While both the Oromo and Moro have undergone different historical experiences, the nature of those experiences is similar. For both groups, the result of state colonization has been a displacement of their cultural identity and power and the entrenchment of each group within the lowest rungs of socio-economic hierarchy.

Second, the analysis of each group's struggles has shown that armed liberation, to some extent or other, has brought beneficial results for each group. For the Oromo, the armed struggle contributed to the fall of the imperial and military-socialist regimes, and while the desired results were far from attained, it brought recognition of the Oromo as a significant force within Ethiopia. This is a crucial platform for further struggles. In the case of the Moro, the failure of successive regimes to totally subjugate them was also the result of their fierce armed struggle. The combative nature of the Moro resistance eventually forced the Philippine state to negotiate a settlement. In both these examples, the benefit of an armed resistance movement is that it galvanizes the unity of the oppressed ethnonational group and fosters a sense of collective identity against a common oppressor.

In both Oromo and Moro cases, the colonizing state's response to handling a war against armed liberation movements was the conferring of semi-autonomous status for their respective ethnonational minority. The autonomous region mechanism appeases important segments of the ethnonational minorities and ensures control of the population and the resources of the disputed area. More importantly, the state could show the world that it has resolved its ethnonational conflict by bestowing freedom and liberty on its minority. This solution however is neither effective nor just since oppression against Oromo and Moro communities still persists. Such limited autonomy tends to divide the Oromo and Moro groups along regional and class lines, since the benefits of such status also fall along these lines.

For both the Oromo and Moro, their armed struggles have had difficulty producing total success due to the absence of serious intervention by a powerful third party. Furthermore, the lack of international sympathy for their struggles and the massive support given by the West to strengthen the Ethiopian and Philippine states have made Oromo and Moro liberations even more challenging. During the oil crisis of the early 1970s, the Moro enjoyed the backing of the OIC. But this support was superseded by the overall support of a greater capitalist power, the US, to the Philippine state. In the capitalist world system, core power support to a peripheral state occurs because of neo-colonial interests in peripheral countries. The greater the core state's interests in those countries, the stronger the support for their governments. Further explanation for the reluctance of Western powers to intervene could also be seen in the way the West perceives both Ethiopia and the Philippines, as predominantly Christian states. These two states are seen as being culturally and politically closer to Europe and America when compared to the respective rebelling minority.

Hence, the Oromo and the Moro have experienced double colonization by their respective states and the US. While the US outwardly expresses its intention to promote freedom and democracy in the developing world, the real intention has been to pursue its economic interests worldwide. Deceptively correlating national cohesion with democratization, the US attains this goal by supporting tyrannical regimes that seek political stability through ethnonational oppression. For the Oromo and Moro, the intensity of colonization was magnified following 11 September 2001 since 'the war on terrorism' necessitates the prioritizing of US global interests over promoting democracy for oppressed peoples. Given that both the Oromo and Moro have large Muslim populations, the Ethiopian and Philippine states now enjoy a mandate to continue their policies of oppression against these minorities.

The quest for realizing Oromo and Moro independence under the current situation rests largely with the international community. In the absence of political support from the UN or the West, only pressure from powerful members of the international community can advance the cause of these two groups' ethnonational separatism. Western-based international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) in particular, could influence the electorates of powerful western states to compel their governments to provide a viable, just, and peaceful solution on behalf of the oppressed minorities. This approach could prove fruitful. Despite American aid, the Ethiopian and Philippine states are as unstable as ever, and it would not take much international pressure to force them into yielding more generous concessions to the Oromo and Moro peoples. Most importantly, the international community must first accept that Oromo and Moro separatisms are not internal state matter, but are instead compelling issues that are very much pertinent to Western concern for human rights abuse, racism, and social injustice against peoples whose identities and struggles have been shaped by decades of brutal suppression.

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Oromo Narratives

Donald N. Levine

Debates among Oromo citizens frequently turn about questions of identity and political action. In considering those questions, inquiries into views of the past may not be out of place. I support such inquiries on the basis of considerations spelled out in my book on the future of social theory, *Visions of the Sociological Tradition* (1995). Drawing on work by several social scientists, I argued there that narratives of the past held by human communities, no less than individual autobiographies, form an essential condition for constituting identity in the present and projecting meaningful action in the future. The point draws on a half century of discourse about the ways in which organizations of subjective meanings affect action, including the now classic text of Berger and Luckmann, which stresses the role of symbolic universes that locate all events "in a cohesive unity that includes past, present, and future" (1966, 103), and the seminal paper of psychologist Bertram Cohler (1982), which

Journal of Oromo Studies Vol. 14 no 2 (July 2007), pp. 43-63

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shows how narratives help persons make sense of their lives in times of change and how they revise earlier memories continually as a function of subsequent experience.

More concretely, at the communal level, as French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs famously demonstrated, collective memories prove indispensable for the functioning of social groups of all kinds, for in recalling signal events of the past, they offer a focus for group solidarity, and during periods of routine activity they keep alive a group's connection to its ideals and symbols of identity. Group memories also function defensively, to justify claims and to valorize aggressive actions triggered by aspirations to pursue those claims. And just as when actors grow and change, altered narratives about the self mediate changes of structure and commitment, so do alterations of collective autobiographies mediate changes in the lives of groups. One way to track the changes in the lives of communities, I argued in *Visions of the Sociological Tradition*, is to trace the sequence of narratives they tell about their own past as they evolve.

It is thus no accident that recent Ethiopian history has seen an outpouring of novel narratives in different communities. The massive introduction of Marxist ideas among educated Ethiopians in the 1960s engendered a number of new ways of telling the story of Ethiopia's past.[1] Such narratives need not be fully articulated or written down even; they may be vague and inchoate; but they play a necessary part in orienting Ethiopian actors, like any others, to a changing world. These new histories were most conspicuous – and consequential – in the case of Eritrean intellectuals, who developed a novel narrative of their past in the course of moving toward independence from Ethiopia, and by Tigrayan insurgents of the 1980s, whose distinctive narrative of Ethiopia's past helped to justify an ideology of ethnic federalism. In his perspicuous account of perspectival changes during the Derg years, Donald Donham notes that the effect of Derg policies was to alter the

imaginations of Ethiopians –"their sense of their place in the world and the shape of their pasts and their futures" What is needed to follow these changes, he asserts, is "an ethnography of local historical imaginations" (Donham 1999, xviii).[2]

The comparison of collective narratives forms a theoretically fascinating subject for historical sociology. It can have practical benefits as well On the one hand, by attending to the diverging narratives of groups in conflict, analysts can play a mediating role, by giving each group a sense that it is being heard and understood, and by helping ease the intensity of antagonisms through helping each group listen to the stories of the other. This was the use of narratives that I pursued in my little article, "Two Tales of One City" (2006a), in which I talked about the contrasting narratives of the polarized groups among Ethiopians following the post-election bedlam in 2005. On the other hand, the analyst may wish to reconstruct narratives in order to clarify options for the future, since visions of the future necessarily imply and flow from narratives of the past. That is the use of narratives I shall pursue in this paper. My aim here is to clarify Oromo options today by sketching in broad strokes some of the main types of narratives told by Oromos about themselves.

Although my analysis does not have the benefit of the fine-grained ethnographic reportage that Donham advocates, it may aid our understanding of these perspectives through a systematic articulation of their central assumptions and projections. I present these narrative perspectives in a form that sociologists refer to as "ideal types" – intellectual abstractions that rarely appear in pure form in reality but which are useful for teasing out the logic of various intellectual and normative positions.

I refer to these narrative types as the Traditionalist Narrative, the Colonialist Narrative, and the Ethiopianist Narrative I do not attempt to provide a social location for the persons and groups subscribing more or less to each of these

narratives. It should be noted, however, that the Oromo population I have in mind does not include the Oromos living in Kenya, but does include all the Ethiopian Oromos who live in the Diaspora and are thereby part of the reconfigured Ethiopian nation that I have depicted elsewhere (Levine 2004). As an approximation to those representing these ideal-typical narratives, I would suggest the names, respectively, of Gemetchu Megerssa, Asafa Jalata, and Fikre Tolossa,

Whatever form these Oromo narratives take, they presume a tradition of political culture that includes reference to common themes. These themes are common for being derived ultimately from the traditional institutions of the *gadaa-qaalun* system. Among Oromo groups that have diverged radically from the traditional culture, these themes have been altered to some extent. These groups would include the five Ghibe kingdoms of the southwest and the Leeqaa Neqamtee and Leeqaa Qellem kingdoms in Wallaga, which switched to a more traditional type of African monarchical system; those who converted recently to a radical Evangelical Christian belief system; and those who converted recently to a radical fundamentalist type of Islam. But the great majority of the Oromo in Ethiopia–those who did not convert to authoritarian political or religious systems–manifest each of the cultural themes, which I gloss below as egalitarian ethos, communal solidarity, democratic structures, separation of powers, and civility in deliberation.

Themes of Oromo Political Culture

Egalitarian Ethos

In nearly all areas of social relations, Oromo tradition deflates hierarchy in favor of egalitarian norms. Although differentials of rank and power exist throughout Oromo society, Oromo custom tends to minimize their significance. Delegated authority tends to be balanced by a countervailing authority held

by others. Those who occupy prestigious positions tend to be regarded ambivalently, and are treated with humor if not ridicule. Thus, although the father in Oromo families plays the role of patriarchal figure, good-humored, bantering relationships with his wife and children offset the deference due him. Men with high status in local communities are not deferred to obsequiously or automatically, nor are they entitled to order anyone about other than their own wives and children. Among the Maccaa, when neighbors meet to discuss problems of communal interest or settle disputes, they are guided by the notion of *qixe*, an extension of the word for 'equal.' In the words of Herbert Lewis, *qixe*

> stresses the ideal that when they come together, all the members of the group are equal. In fact, some men have more influence and esteem than others; they speak more, they direct the flow of the discussion, and their words count more heavily than those of others present. But the ideal does reflect important aspects of the reality: each member of the community is invited to and expected to take part in community affairs. (Lewis [1970]2000, 173)

The institutions of the *gadaa* system promoted an ethos of egalitarianism in many ways. By keeping adjacent generations at a distance from one another, *gadaa* protects the filial generation from excessive control by the paternal

> As soon as the paternal *luba* class comes to power, their sons receive their own separate identity by being initiated and given names. As the paternal class goes through the grades of semiretirement, the filial class becomes more independent and better organized. By the time the filial generation is ready to assume power, the paternal class proceeds to a grade of full retirement. (Levine [1974]2000, 138)

Gadaa also structures political relations in an anti-authoritarian direction. It does so through the regular circulation of elites, such that no ruling class is in power for more than eight years. The Tulema Oromo represent this in a traditional ceremony where the leader of the ruling class, after several years in office, climbs a platform of stones to proclaim the laws as usual only to be shouted down and ceremonially pushed off: a reminder that his rule is soon to end (Knutsson 1967, 174-5). Another respect in which powers are balanced appears in the positioning of moieties. Thus, the constitution of the Borana ruling council assures a painstaking balance of representatives from the two moieties. And throughout *gadaa* younger men, who on the basis of age alone should defer to older men, often hold more prestigious positions than their elders. In sum, Oromo customs see to it that no position of superiority puts a man beyond control or criticism from his fellows.

Communal Solidarity

The weaving of Oromo relations into so many corporate bodies – patrilineal families, local communities, age sets, generational classes – has traditionally had the effect of heightening the Oromos' sense of membership in solidary groups. The pursuit of individual interests among the Oromo has tended not to be obtained at the expense of their neighbors –as was the case typically in the North due to competition over land and for honorific appointments–and the satisfaction of personal success often redounds to the greater glory of their lineage.

As I noted in *Greater Ethiopia*, numerous observers describe a cooperative spirit in which most activities are carried out:

> Settlements are constructed and cattle are grazed and watered by members of the *olla* groups working in concert. Among the agricultural *Guji*, sowing and harvesting similarly are carried out on a communal, cooperative basis

> Comparable cooperative patterns appear in Oromo military expeditions. The Oromo formed age regimens, or *chibra*, which collectively undertook to collect supplies for the campaign, elect leaders recruit scouts, and distribute booty. (Levine [1974]2000, 141)

A disposition toward social inclusiveness forms a corollary to the theme of solidarity. It has enabled Oromos who converted to Christianity and to Islam to live amiably together, even intermarry, among themselves and with those who adhere to traditional Oromo beliefs. This is manifest notably in the Oromo practice of incorporation through adoption (*guddiffachaa*). Over generations this practice enabled Oromos to integrate groups from other ethnies such as Konso and Wolleyta and assimilate immigrants, through their "genius for assimilation" (Hassen 1994, 21

Democratic Structures

Recent accounts of the *gadaa* assemblies by Asmarom Legesse (2000) and Marco Bassi (2005) identify several respects in which traditional Oromo institutions exhibit exemplary democratic procedures. Laws stand above all men – even the Abba Gadaa is subject to same punishments as other citizens if he transgresses. Historic precedent in both judicial and legislative matters is taken as exemplary model for future action. Despite this, laws are always considered man-made institutions, not god-given; therefore they are mutable, amendable, open to discussion and reevaluation. Accountability of leaders is paramount: constituents judge the competence of their leaders, and when found lacking leaders are subject to penalty.

In the *gadaa* system, hereditary and elected leaders serve complementary but separate roles. Leaders are elected for a single term of finite length, with the expectation that they will turn over the reigns of governance smoothly to a properly appointed successor cohort. A trial period between election and investiture, during which leaders are elected to lower office

and promoted to higher office on confirmation of competence, ensures that no politician takes office on the basis of campaign bluster alone. Strict rules regarding representation maintain balanced opposition and distribution of power between moieties. A rule of staggered succession prevents transitional crises; discontinuity of authority subverts entrenchment of a single party, while oversight and counseling help prevent dilettantism and the errors of inexperience. Alternate age set groups form alliances with one another, transforming linear hierarchy into balanced opposition.

Separation of Powers

Traditional Oromo structures ensure that power can never be concentrated at a single spot. They embody a unique system of allocating political power equitably *across generations*: systematic allocation of responsibility to those in childhood, adulthood, and old age ensures access for all people and brings balance to the public realm.

Most tellingly, ritual and political spheres are maintained in a dynamic relationship of separation and interaction. The ritual sphere is headed by a *qaaluu*, who stays in office for life, whose office is hereditary, and who holds authority over one moiety, that is, only half of the tribe. Ritual participants are barred from carrying weapons and indeed wholly excluded from military deliberation. The political sphere is headed by an elected body, known as the *gadaa* class, strictly speaking. This class holds authority over the entire Borana population, yet holds office for eight years only. Participants in political ceremonies are required to bring weapons with them and take full responsibility for warfare.

Ritual and political elements commingle in varying degrees. The authority hierarchy between the Abba Gadaa and the Qaaluu varies according to the context of their interaction. The institutions themselves have spatial organizations that are separate from their functional roles: the Gadaa, for

example, is a mobile institution, while the Qaaluu is traditionally sedentary.

Civility in Deliberation

To facilitate mutual respect in democratic deliberations, various customs encourage civility in public discourse. The opening language in the traditional *gadaa* assemblies encourages speakers to avoid provoking resentments and to promote peace (*nagaa*). Proverbial sayings about right conduct enjoin participants not to be provocative or use the floor to upstage or "score points" against others. Speakers are expected not to make accusations or to show anger.[3] What is more, the pacing of decision-making in deliberative assemblies ensures that decisions to go on the warpath are not rash or hot-headed, and the fact that policy decisions are necessarily made with serious regard to precedent iterates the injunction to base deliberations on a highly respectful discursive field.

Views of the Oromo Past

Even apart from the need to fashion functional narratives in the present period, it was always of particular importance for Oromo males to possess a living sense of the past. Oromo tradition draws nourishment not only from Oromo language and culture, but also to a substantial extent on myths of origins, historical memories, and a vivid sense of the continuing impact of the past on present events and fortunes.

The Traditionalist Narrative

What I present as the Traditionalist narrative focuses on the sociocultural system embodied by the Oromo in their ancestral homeland in the south central part of present-day Ethiopia. The chief features of this system are well known and need not be repeated here.[4] Suffice it to say that this narrative hinges on a narrative that was embedded in its key institutions, the *gadaa* system of generational classes with a duration of eight years, the core symbolic status of the *qaaluu*, and an

octennial general assembly, the *gumi gayo*, that constituted the ultimate authority for all groups represented in it.

The *gadaa* system was nourished by the recollection of genealogical lines involving multiples of eighty years, since each new ruling class was obliged to function with reference to its antecedent class, located a remove of two hemicycles of eight years each. Oromo time-keepers (*ayyantu*) and learned laymen have reckoned genealogical lineages with depths of up to four to five centuries. The centerpiece of these narratives concerns the sequence of leaders installed and the special laws proclaimed in *gadaa* assemblies every eight years for as far back as the best memories of the oldest elders can reconstruct. Associated with each of the ruling *luba* classes might be some special events, or laws that distinguished their regime.

The main channel that links present and past generations flows through a structure formed by the ties between the classes of fathers and sons across many generations. This structure – the *gogessa*, or patriclass – constitutes a collective entity worthy of special homage. The *gogessa* carries a significant shared past and bears a special historical destiny. The historical destiny of the *gogessa* is represented by the concept of *dachi*, "the mystical influence of history on the present course of events," as Asmarom Legesse described it in his first brilliant analysis of this complex system (Legesse 1973, 194). *Dachi* is transmitted either from specific ancestors or from an entire ancestral *gadaa* class to one of its successors. Indeed, one particular ancestral *gadaa* class–the one that was in power thirty-five *gadaa* periods, or 280 years, earlier–is thought to have a determining influence (*dachi*) upon the fate of its latter-day successor.

> The class currently in power is obliged to avoid the chief misfortunes which befell its ancestors or to repeat the outstanding successes. At the same time it is setting a

> precedent which will affect its patriclass descendants thirty-six *gada* generations in the future. (Levine [1974]2000, 136)

As Legesse demonstrated, the operation of this system over time made it increasingly difficult to follow the norms that enabled it to function. Because of the two rules that governed recruitment into the *gadaa* classes – the rule of a forty-year interval between paternal and filial classes and the rule that no sons could be born before the man reached the fortieth year of the cycle – there was a cumulative tendency for the population to be distributed into classes occupying increasingly advanced grades in the *gadaa* cycle. This led both to the creation of age-homogeneous groups, the *hariyya*, needed to provide an ample supply of young warriors, and to the designation of new roles for the semi-retired grades, whereby they serve as ritual experts and "junior" councilors, a sort of cadre of *eminences grises*.

Such adaptations enabled the *gadaa* system to continue, in spite of internal strains it generated, among the Boran, the Guji, and the Wallaga Oromo. To my knowledge, there are no reliable studies about how changes of the past half-century have affected their historical outlook. Nevertheless, it will be articulated by any contemporary narrative recounted by an Oromo elder that presents Oromo tradition in some idealized form and represents the central features of contemporary Oromo life as so many efforts to preserve and sustain it. A Traditionalist narrative of that sort would recount the playing out of *gadaa* customary practices over generations, and would reconstruct the great Oromo expansions since the 16th century as driven by an injunction to go on *butta* (raiding wars) every eight years, which led to a series of conquests to the north, west, and east of their traditional homeland in and around the Bali region.

This narrative mode can be found as well among Oromo who have replaced traditional Oromo institutions and beliefs,

referring to their paramount deity Waaqa as Allah or Egziabher instead. For many Muslim Oromo, the institutional pilgrimage every eight years to the great Qaaluu was replaced by the custom of annual pilgrimages in honor of the cult of Shaikh Hussein (Gnamo 1991). Certain Sharia laws could be enfolded as part of the Oromo legal complex known as *seera*. Even the founder of an Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia changed his name to Sheikh Jarraa, taking thereby the name that forms the basis of the traditional Oromo calendar, since the term *jaarraa* represents the ceremony that marks the end of the *gadaa* cycle, where the outgoing, *luba* class, passes power to the incoming *gadaa* class. And among Muslim Oromo the community of True Believers (*umma*) has been folded into the notion of the community of all Oromo (*oromumma*) (Gnamo 2002).

The Colonialist Narrative

While the Traditionalist celebrates the time-honored and continued functioning of whatever can be retrieved and protected of the sacred practices of the Oromo past, the Colonialist Narrative emphasizes the suppression of this past and the people who bore it. This narrative resembles what has been called a lachrymose narrative in accounts of Jewish history, one that makes episodes of victimization and suffering the benchmarks of their historical experience. As such it attends to a different order of facts than that of the Traditionalist narrative, which focuses rather on positive accomplishments.

The time frame of the Colonialist narrative is necessarily shorter, although its "prehistory" can be lengthy. The extreme version would hold that since time immemorial, the Oromo people inhabited vast areas of Ethiopia. From the sixteenth century onward, they migrated into north, east, and western parts of the country. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, the Oromo were overrun, their traditions suppressed, and their status reduced to that of serfs. They remained in

this unrelieved suppressed status for the next hundred years. Despite the egalitarian pretensions of the regimes of the Derg and EPRDF, the Oromo to this day remain second-class citizens in a country of which they constitute the second largest if not the largest ethnic minority and have arguably become victims of a disproportionate percentage of human rights violations

The benchmarks of this narrative would include the martial victories of Tewodros against the Oromo in the 1860s, the defeat of autonomous Oromo groups thanks to superior military technology acquired by Yohannes and Menelik from the British in the wake of efforts to curb Tewodros, and the consequent appropriation of vast Oromo lands by Amhara and Tigrayan *nefteñña*s and the exploitation of Oromo who became tenants. They include the centralizing efforts of Haile Selassie who carried out an extensive program of Amharization, which led to such changes as the erasure of traditional Oromo names (Finfine to Addis Ababa, Bishoftu to Debra Zeit, and the like) and laws forbidding the use of Oromiffa in publications. An effort to redress these grievances was carried out with the Mecha-Tulema Association in the 1960s, but it was brutally suppressed

The Ethiopianist Narrative

This narrative presumes a broader perspective both in time and in space than the first two It views the emergence of distinctive Oromo language and culture through a multimillennial process of differentiation and interaction from a common Semito-Cushitic cultural matrix More proximately, it views the Oromo expansions of the sixteenth century as advancing the process of building a modern multiethnic national state.

Thanks to their openness for adoption, assimilation, and intermarriage, Oromo settlers blended readily with the peoples living in the areas that they penetrated. Their characteristic

openness and friendliness made it easy for newcomers to join their communities. They readily found ways of relating to peoples near whom they settled once the antagonisms of battle were temporarily or permanently set aside. Their penchant for affiliating with others disposed them to adopt the cultures of other as well as to share their own culture with outsiders. Oromos became Christians in the north and Muslims in the east; they established kingdoms in the southwest and farming communities in Shoa. It was thanks to their interaction with Amharic-speakers with whom they came in contact that Amharic, originally a purely Semitic language derived from Ge'ez, Tigrinya, Arabic, and Hebrew, came to incorporate significant East Cushitic linguistic elements–syntax, vocabularies, and idioms–from Oromiffa

In the south, these intermixtures involved whole groups Thus, Oromos who settled near Gurage adopted the *ensete* culture of their neighbors and came to be teased by other Oromo as "half-Gurage." The Otu branch of the Guji assimilated Sidamo culture so thoroughly that many came to speak only Sidaminya. On the other hand, the Guji Oromo readily incorporated groups of Sidamo and Wallayta people through the fiction of adoptive patrilineal affiliation As Legesse summarizes this process,

> The Oromo seemed to assimilate the conquered populations as frequently as they were absorbed by them In this process the [Oromiffa]-speaking region of central Ethiopia developed into a veritable cultural corridor. It opened up extensive cultural exchanges between societies, which would otherwise have remained isolated and atomistic. (1973, 9)

Beyond this steady stream of cultural intermixing with other peoples of Ethiopia, the Oromo moved to become significant actors at the national level. The Ethiopianist Narrative highlights the fact that Oromos penetrated the national

political arena centered at the Imperial Court from the late 16th century onward. They served already in the army of Emperor Sertsa Dingil (1563-97) in his battles against the Turkish invader, and it was only with the help of his Oromo friends and followers that Susneyos recovered the throne in 1603 (Hassen 1994). And from the eighteenth century on, Abir notes, "they became enmeshed in the already intricate web of the country (1968, 73).

Although the Oromo and Amhara interacted in many ways for generations, the process gathered momentum with the escape of future Emperor Bakaffa from the prison fortress at Wohni, from whence he went to live among the Yejju Oromo of Gojjam. Bakaffa grew up in accordance with the Oromo culture and became fluent in Oromiffa. As emperor (1721-30) he filled the court with his Oromo friends and soldiers, and sent Oromo fighters to rule over rebellious Amhara in Begemdir and Gojjam. His wife Empress Mentwab arranged for their son Emperor Iyasu II to marry an Oromo princess, Wubit (Wabi), daughter of the Wallo Oromo chief Amito. Their son, Iyoas, thereby became Ethiopia's first emperor with Oromo blood. Iyoas grew up speaking Oromiffa more fluently than Amharic. On reaching adulthood he assembled a Royal Guard consisting of three thousand Oromo soldiers and placed them under the command of his Oromo uncles Biralle and Lubo. Queen Wubit also appointed her brothers and other kinsmen to high positions throughout the empire.

When imperial power declined following Iyoas (during the Era of the Princes, *zemene mesafint*), power shifted to the Tigrean lord Ras Mikael Sehul; after Mikael's death, the power behind the throne was lodged in the court of a Yejju Oromo chieftain Ras Ali I, whose power derived from the support of Oromos in many provinces. W. Cornwallis Harris observed in 1840 that the Wallo Oromo "form the stoutest bulwark of the decayed empire" (1844, 354-5). Ras Ali's brother and then his nephew, Ras Gugsa, continued to form a strong political cen-

ter, with the support of both Amhara and Oromo fighters. Later royal figures with Oromo blood included Negus Tekle Haymanot of Gojam, Atse Menelik II, Itege Taitu Betul, Atse Haile Selassie I, and Itege Mennen.

From intermarriage with royal lines, high honorific positions, and military appointments, the Oromo became central to the creation of the modern Ethiopian nation under Emperor Menelik. Menelik's historic encounter with invading Italians, just as Haile Selassie's four decades later, depended enormously on the hearty participation of Oromo generals and Oromo soldiers and supporters, including Ras Gobena, Ras Mekonnen Gugsa, Dejjach Balcha Safo, and Negus Mikael of Wallo. The fact that eminent Oromo figures like General Mulugeta Buli and Minister Yilma Deressa played such central roles in his regime was not anomalous or tokenism, but a natural expression of what had come be a multiethnic mix of the new ruling elite.

Options for the Future

As a result of the tumultuous changers that their country experienced over the past half century, all Ethiopians today confront a need to make decisions about the direction of their future political engagement. How they construe the past has implications for current and future political realities. For many, those decisions will be colored by an identity that is primarily Ethiopian, not ethnic. These citizens include the millions of Ethiopians who do not identify with any single ethnic identity because of their mixed parentage and/or because they have grown up with patriotic sentiments oriented toward strong national symbols.

The options of those whose self-concept is primarily ethnic are likely to reflect diverse narratives, as among the Maale studied by Donham. This is surely the case for Oromo people, given the complexity of their historical experience. I have tried here to describe ideal types of three narratives that apply to

Oromo citizens. Awareness of the different paths embodied in the three narratives I have sketched may be useful in facilitating personal and communal deliberations. In making these choices, it may be of further value to consider the symbolic and normative implications of each one of those paths.

The Traditionalist Narrative identifies Oromo *culture-bearers as carrying a distinctive legacy of important sacred values*. It enjoins a course of action directed at sustaining and strengthening whatever can be preserved of the traditional institutions of the Oromo Gadaa system. Toward that end they should maintain a certain distance from the political center of the Ethiopian nation. They should do whatever can be done to resist the alienation of their land, and to promote the survival and rebirth of herds so important to their traditional lifestyle. The Traditionalist path could take a purely cultural form, with emphasis on the rituals associated with *qaaluu* and ceremonies that symbolize the continuing values of loyalty to *gogessa* and beyond that to the community of Oromo (*oromumma*). It could take political form, but that is only ambiguously Oromo. Their penchant, after all, although particularistic, is also be inclusive; separatism would be one plausible path; but so would one in which the notion of adoption were pushed much wider context. As Gemetchu Megerssa reflects, Oromo tradition should "not only be viewed as part of a static traditional past, but rather as an area that is being continually and dynamically constructed by the wider experience that is part of the present" (Megerssa 1996, 98).

The Colonialist Narrative identifies the Oromo experience as essentially one of *victims of a century-and-a-half of unrelieved subjugation*. Unlike the Traditionalist Narrative, it encourages actions that engage fully in contest with the Ethiopian national center. At the very least, it promotes a struggle to ensure adequate representation in the Ethiopian Parliament and in the federal bureaucracy, and to maximize full and genuine autonomy for the Oromia region. In the words of one of

its most eloquent proponents, it enjoins a "national liberation struggle [that] will continue between Oromia and Ethiopia until the Oromo nation freely decides its political future by uprooting Ethiopian settler colonialism" (Jalata 1993, 197).

The Ethiopianist Narrative identifies the Oromo *as participants in a five-century process in which diverse ethnies interacted to form a multiethnic national society.* In this view, differences among diverse Oromo groups are not to be suppressed or denied as compromising an integral Oromo nation, but as constituting strands of the tapestry of ethnies that constitute Ethiopia and the Horn. The opportunities for Oromo to contribute to the building of this nation have never been greater. In a period struggling to institutionalize pluralistic democracy and multicultural diversity, Oromo rhetoric and self-understanding should be revised to include appreciation of the many Oromo contributions to building the modern Ethiopian nation, and Oromo customs could be deliberately invoked and adopted to civilize the conduct of members of the national parliament and other deliberative bodies.

If something like this variety of narratives is acknowledged–and other narratives, which I have not articulated as such–the question remains: how are those committed to this array of narratives to relate to one another? In some contexts–Greeks versus Turks, Arabs versus Jews, Pakistanis versus Indians, and even, some might say, among extremist EPRDFers versus CUDers–differences of this sort have engendered mutual hatreds and uncompromising assertions of theirs being the only *right* point of view. But that is not the Oromo way to dealing with differences. Oromos generally insist on listening to each voice, to hearing everyone's story. As Gnamo wisely points out, "Oromo do have a centuries-long culture of tolerance and, as evidence, one can say that the Oromo do not have pejorative terms [such] as *aramane* (heathens) to qualify others" (2002, n.4).

Suppose Oromos listen to one another as participants in a *Gumi Gayo*. It might appear then that *each* of these narratives reflects the actual experience of important actors; that each retains important values; and that exclusive attention to just one neglects the values embodied in the others. If the airing of diverse narratives is carried out in that spirit, then perhaps Oromos can contribute not only constructively to the organization of discourse in Northeast Africa, but in an unparalleled way to contemporary efforts to organize dialogue in the global community.

Notes

1. In the words of Merera Gudina, "History [had] to be re-written so that it would serve the political interests of the hitherto marginalized groups" (2003, 94)
2. Donham himself proposes a typology of divergent responses to modernist interventions: Traditionalist, Anti-Modernist, and Modernist. This typology bears a family resemblance to the five-fold typology that I proposed in *Wax and Gold*: the Traditionalist, the Modernist, the Skeptic, the Conciliatory, and the Pragmatist (Levine 1965, 12-13). It is even closer to the typology I shall present in this paper.
3. When tempers flared during a large public meeting of Diasporan Oromo in Minneapolis in 2006, the session chair called upon one of the elders to bless the assembly. The elder obliged, showering the assembly with a very long stream of benedictory oration, following which the debate resumed in a more even-tempered way.
4. For a summary of the system and related literature, see Levine [1974]2000, 129-34

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Food Insecurity
A Real Threat to the Oromo People

Assefa Regassa Geleta

Introduction

Food is essential for sustaining life. Shortages of various degrees lead to negative health consequences ranging from physical and mental disorders to death. This is especially critical during the early ages of growth. While the selection of safe and nutritious food items has largely been determined by cultural and traditional factors, the expansion of agro-industry, global trade, and to some extent food aid to low-income, food-deficient nations, are decreasing cross-cultural food consumption barriers.

Recent history has shown that national food production often falls short of meeting local demand in times of drought or other natural disasters—temporarily in potentially food producing countries and permanently so in many arid countries. The case might be even more permanent in countries where

Journal of Oromo Studies Vol. 14, no. 2 (July 2007), pp. 65-86

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droughts are persistent However, countries with disposable resources have always maintained food security by importing from elsewhere to make up for shortfalls in domestic production This fact is a clear indication that in most instances famine of any magnitude is the result of poverty.

In the last three decades, Ethiopia has been severely hit by famine, making Ethiopians the most food-insecure people in the world as measured by the daily Dietary Energy Supply (DES). The daily per capita calorie supply for Ethiopians is the lowest in the world. According to the 1999 estimate the daily per capita calorie supply for Ethiopia, sub-Sahara Africa and the world was 1803, 2238 and 2808 respectively (Annon, 2003). Low agricultural productivity, poor marketing systems, a rapidly growing population, and poverty have been the underlying causes of food insecurity in Ethiopia The effect of these factors was often made worse by bad governance practices.

The frequent recurrence of famine that started in early 1970s in the resource-poor areas of northern Ethiopia has now spread to the southern part of the country, including Oromia. Famine is claiming lives and leaving future generations of the country more likely to suffer from mental and physical handicaps. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 proclaims that everyone has the right of access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food and as such, governments have the responsibility of protecting all people within their territories from hunger Instead of addressing the root-causes of food insecurity, successive Ethiopian governments have been spending the country's scarce resources on building a strong military to maintain the territorial integrity of an empire created by force and to consolidate their power domestically

This article aims to provide an overview and to increase awareness about the food insecurity situation in the Ethiopia with particular emphasis on Oromia. The Oromia Regional

State accounts for about half of the land area and of the population of Ethiopia and represents a wide range of geographical, agro-ecological, farming and economic features, providing a substantial portion of the food supply of Ethiopia. The impact of food insecurity in that region is therefore likely to be far more consequential than any other regional state. The data used in this article, though generally lacks detailed regional state specifics, is assumed to reflect the situation in Oromia.

The Global Context: Strategies against Food Insecurity:

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food needed for active and healthy life. In contrast, food insecurity is the lack of access to enough food. This state of food insecurity could be chronic, transitory, or cyclical (Maxwell and Frankenberger 1992). The primary indicator of world food security is per capita food consumption, measured by the average daily Dietary Energy Supply (DES) in calories. The average DES that could provide individuals with a minimum level of energy required for light activities was set to be about 1960 calories/day/person. The average daily DES gives an estimate of the proportion of people who are chronically undernourished and is used as the main indicator of food (in) security—in general the lower the DES, the greater the proportion of people who are chronically undernourished.

It is widely known that the world produces enough food to feed the current population of 6 billion. However, the poor do not have the required resources to access their share (Anon, 1999a). According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the current world food production would have to increase substantially to ensure adequate food supplies for the world population expected to reach 8.3 billion by the year 2025 (Anon, 1999a).

The question of food security has been the concern of the international community for some time. As noted, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that, "everyone has the right to a standard of living, adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food (FAO, 2001a). In 1966, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights developed these concepts more fully, stressing "the right of everyone to . . adequate food" and specifying "the right of everyone to be free from hunger." The World Food Summit, held in Rome from 13 to 17 November 1996 and attended at the highest level by representatives from 185 countries, reaffirmed in the Rome Declaration "the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger" (Anon 1999a).

Governments of the world have thus been entrusted with the task of ensuring that everyone within their territory has access to food that is adequate in quantity and quality for a healthy and active life. In the fulfillment of this task it is essential to fight against poverty—one of the causes of hunger and also a consequence of it. Hunger dulls human intellect and thwarts productivity (FAO, 2001a). However low-income countries heavily depend on their own agriculture for food supplies, income and employment and have limited capacity to import food to make up for their chronic shortfalls (FAO, 2001a).

Between 1990 and 1992, the average DES for developed countries was about 3350 while that of developing countries was only 2520 calories/capita/day. During the same period 840 million people in developing countries, about 20 percent of the world population, were chronically undernourished. At present, some 190 million children are underweight, 230 million children are stunted and 50 million children are emaciated worldwide, because of inadequate food supply (FAO, 2001a and FAO, 2001b).

In 1994, the FAO revised the programs and strategies of the organization and concluded that improving food security should be its top priority. Accordingly, it emphasized the urgent need to focus on increasing food production, improving stability of supplies, and generating rural employment (FAO, 2001b). To that end, a special program for food security focused on Low Income Food Deficient Countries (LIFDCs), the countries least able to meet their food needs with imports, was proposed. This approach was endorsed by the World Food Summit held in Rome in November 1996 and called for concerted efforts to raise food production and increase access to food in 86 LIFDCs in order to cut the present number of undernourished people in the world by half by the year 2015 (FAO, 2001b). As one of its strategies, the FAO identified a South-South Co-operation, based on exchange of knowledge and experience between developing countries, to be a useful strategy to improve food production in LIFDCs. In this scheme, the relatively advanced developing nations send experts and technicians to work directly with their counterparts and farmers in other developing countries. Accordingly, Ethiopia was made to co-operate with China (FAO, 2001b).

In recent years, some developing countries such as Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Mozambique, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey have managed to ameliorate their food insecurity. These countries applied a mix of economic growth and poverty alleviation measures (employment, infrastructure-improvement and other measures) which led to increased domestic food production, improved marketing system, establishment of an efficient early warning system and food safety nets for the most vulnerable sectors of their communities, especially those in traditionally drought affected and other natural disasters prone areas. Among measures that contributed directly to increased domestic food production were: soil conservation, water harvesting, production and dissemination of new agricultural technologies (machin-

eries, fertilizers, pesticides, high yielding seed varieties, irrigation, agro-industry), reduction in the production of labor-intensive and less productive traditional crops (FAO 2001a).

The Ethiopian Reality: Effects of Food Insecurity

Agriculture is an important economic activity in Ethiopia. It accounts for about 50 percent of GDP (services about 40 percent and industry about 10 percent), more than 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings, and 85 percent of employment opportunities. Among the four major farming systems (subsistence peasant farming, pastoral nomadic, agro-pastoralism and modern commercial farming), subsistence peasant farming, accounts for more than 95 percent of agricultural production. Between 1980/81 and 1990/91, agricultural growth rate averaged about 2 percent while the population grew at about 3.4 percent. This has resulted in lower per capita agricultural production and a rise in the incidence of poverty (Demeke, 1999).

Famine is one of the forms of food insecurity that affects Ethiopia rather frequently. In its transitory form, famine occurs because of widespread failure in the food supply system, caused by a collapse in food production and marketing structures. It is also engendered by either nature (drought, floods, earthquakes, crop destruction by disease or pest) or human activity (war and civil conflicts). The best example of the former is the 1972/73 famine which was caused by drought in northern Ethiopia.

Chronic food insecurity is common in Ethiopia. Persistent food shortages occur when the food supply fails to cope with the rate of population growth (Smolin and Grosvenor, 1994). It is caused by poverty and severe damage to the resource base, which endangers the means of survival of the people. The famine of 1984/85 and 1987, and the one that started in 1998 are classic forms of chronic food insecurity. They are very widespread, involving almost every corner of the country.

The FAO World Food Program (1997) reported that, between 1995 and 1997, about 51 percent of the Ethiopian population was under-nourished. The DES for Ethiopia is one of the lowest and below the required minimum in the world. The primary indicators of the magnitude of food insecurity in the population shows a sharp decline in per capita food availability, which is manifested in terms of energy deficiency in adults and stunted growth, wasting and underweight in children. These symptoms are very widespread among the Ethiopian peoples (CSA 1992).

The most disturbing situation is that of the future generations. Over 60 percent of under-five Ethiopian children are chronically under-nourished while about 45 percent are under-weight (Anon, 1997). The condition is very critical because newborns grow more rapidly and require more energy and protein per unit body weight than at any other time in life (Smolin and Grosvenor, 1994)

Humans respond to chronic hunger and malnutrition by decreasing body size, a condition known as stunted growth. This process starts in-utro if the mother is malnourished and continues through approximately the third year of life. It leads to higher infant and child mortality, albeit at a rate far below famine situations. Once stunting has occurred, improved nutritional intake later in life cannot reverse the damage.

Stunting itself is considered as a coping mechanism designed to bring body size in alignment with the calories available during adulthood in the location where the child is born Limiting body size as a way of adapting to low levels of energy (calories) adversely affects health in a number of ways, including premature failure of vital organs (such as heart and brain) as a result of structural defects during early development, and a higher rate of illness and defects in cognitive development Percentage of underweight children in Ethiopia, Africa and world are 47, 30 and 27 respectively.

The average total calories, crop and animal products supply/capita/day for the world, Africa and Ethiopia for some selected years (every ten years and two recent ones) are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3. In general, the per capita calories, crop and animal products supply for Ethiopia over the last three decades not only remained the lowest in the world but also showed a tendency to decrease with time while the figures for world and Africa showed a steady increase.

Table 1: Total Daily Per Capita Calorie Supply

Region	Year					
	1965	**1975**	**1985**	**1995**	**2000**	**2003**
World	2370	2428	2644	2758	2790	2809
Africa	2133	2218	2286	2398	2409	2437
Ethiopia	1812	1559	1670	1727	1803	1858

Table 2: Annual Per Capita Animal Products Supply (kg)

Items	Region	Year					
		1965	**1975**	**1985**	**1995**	**2000**	**2003**
Meat	World	25	28	32	36	39	40
	Africa	14	13	15	14	15	15
	Ethiopia	17	13	13	11	8	9
Milk	World	49	45	45	45	46	46
	Africa	24	25	27	26	27	28
	Ethiopia	16	15	16	14	15	17
Egg	World	5	5	6	8	9	7
	Africa	1	2	2	2	2	3
	Ethiopia	2	2	2	1	0.5	0.5

Table 3: Annual Per Capita Crop Products Supply (kg)

Items	Region	Year					
		1965	**1975**	**1985**	**1995**	**2000**	**2003**
Cereals	World	142	144	158	160	155	152
	Africa	127	130	139	145	144	147
	Ethiopia	135	115	117	123	136	141
Pulse	World	9	7	6	6	6	7
	Africa	9	9	8	8	10	9
	Ethiopia	19	13	12	13	14	13
Vege-table	World	60	63	74	88	109	118
	Africa	43	47	48	47	55	54
	Ethiopia	11	11	11	9	11	12
Fruit	World	41	45	49	57	61	62
	Africa	51	55	55	56	54	53
	Ethiopia	4	5	5	4	10	11

The other form of food insecurity prevalent in Ethiopia is the one that takes a cyclical form. More than 40 percent of Ethiopian households face a cycle of hunger each year, just before harvest, when previous year's grain stock is finished and market prices are relatively high (Tolossa, 2001). This form of food insecurity involves the vast majority of people in Ethiopia. Based on the information obtained from the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in 1992, Clay *et al.* (1998) classified rural Ethiopia's food-insecure population to be composed of 79 3 percent sedentary peasants and nomads, 8 percent internally displaced people by conflicts, 7 percent refugees and 5 7 percent demobilized soldiers Based on this calculation, about one million people are facing starvation in the Arsi, Bale, Borana, Hararge, and East Shoa Zones of the Oromia Regional State (World Vision Ethiopia, 2006)

Even though the at-risk population in Oromia is significant, the region does not receive a proportionate amount of food aid Regional states like Oromia, not the bastion of support for the current regime, usually receive the least amount of food aid. Since the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Force (EPRDF) government came to power, households in Tigray region (the home state of the prime minister) have received an average 829 kcal of food, compared to 99, 35 and 30 kcal of food to food insecure people in the Amhara, Southern Ethiopia and Oromia regional states respectively (Clay *et al.* 1998).

Many experts, including Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen, correlate food insecurity to a political problem Naturally occurring events like drought could trigger famine conditions but it is government action or inaction that determines its frequency and severity. When a government comes to power by force or through rigged elections, its base of support is often narrow and its governance becomes replete with political cronyism and nepotism Such governments use food as a political instrument for rewarding supporters and punishing opponents Under such conditions food becomes a currency with which to buy political support and famine a weapon to be used against the opposition.

Production and Supply Problems

Low agricultural productivity is the main cause of food insecurity in Ethiopia. The average crop yield (kg/ha) for Ethiopia, sub-Saharan Africa and the world in 2003 was estimated to be 1100, 1200, and 3000 respectively (Anon 2003). A household with a small plot cannot produce enough grain to feed itself, resulting in chronic food insecurity. This is largely attributed to lack of agricultural technologies such as improved seed, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, and machinery.

Improved seeds of major crops such as *teff*, barley, wheat, maize, sorghum, millet, oats, coffee, and fruits do exist in Ethio-

pia. However, their use is minimal because of the lack of availability (improved seeds constitute only about 2 percent of all seeds), poor quality due to contamination, high prices, and lack of information on the part of farmers as to their availability and productivity. The participation of the private sector in seed production is limited and is mainly controlled by a government agency, the Ethiopian Seed Enterprise. Sales are largely carried out by government agencies like the Ministry of Agriculture to farmers who participate in extension programs.

Large scale commercial fertilizer (nitrogenous and phosphate) use is a recent development in Ethiopia. The fertilizer business has become a lucrative business and its distribution is monopolized by companies that are closely linked to or run by government officials. With the exception of the Tigray region, fertilizer use has been on the decrease nationally in recent years because of the removal of government subsidy (in the face of an associated price increase by about 30 percent), the monopoly hold on fertilizer market, and the lack of access due to rigid payment policies, delayed arrivals, and distorted prices of some distribution companies (Demeke, 1999).

Irrigated agriculture is much more productive than the rain-fed agriculture. It contributes to about 40 percent of world food production from only 17 percent of the total cultivated land. It is believed that increased production to satisfy future food demand must essentially come from intensification, using agricultural technologies such as irrigation, rather than expanding cultivation to more fragile, hilly and arid lands that are prone to environmental degradation (FAO, 2001a). The International Fund for Agricultural Development estimates the potentially irrigable land of Ethiopia, to be about 2.8 million hectares (IFAD 1987). According to Ethiopian Valleys Development Studies Authority, only about 4.5 percent of the potentially irrigable land is irrigated (CRDA, 1996). The contribution of irrigation to food production in Ethiopia is estimated

to be less than 2 percent. The greatest proportion of irrigated land is used for industrial crops such as cotton.

Ethiopia is among the countries of the world where agricultural machinery is used the least. Only 100 harvesters and threshers and 3000 tractors were in use in Ethiopia in 2003 as compared to 820 harvesters and threshers and 12,844 tractors in Kenya during the same year (FAO STA, 1999). This indicates that large scale commercial farming is in its rudimentary stage and crop production almost exclusively (95 percent) depends on livestock draft power and labor inefficient primitive farm implements. Oxen are also scarce and the lack of oxen for plowing is directly linked to decreased crop production. About 37.7 percent of Ethiopian farmers have no ox, 32 percent have an ox and only 30.3 percent of the peasant farmers in the country own two or more oxen (Anon, 1997).

A great deal of agricultural product is lost in Ethiopia to pests, parasitic, fungal, bacterial and viral infections. Fungicides and insecticides consumption in Ethiopia in 2001 was 15 tons and 153 tons respectively, compared to 711 and 303 tons in Kenya for the same year.

The role of biotechnology in food production is still the subject of international debate concerning ethics, safety, and intellectual property rights (FAO, 2001a). Genetically modified crops are not as widespread in developing nations as they are in the developed nations. There is no information on genetically modified seeds in Ethiopia. Some have nevertheless identified it as a potential area of interest for future considerations (Regassa, 2000).

Livestock production accounts for about 40 percent of the total agricultural output and when draft is considered up to 60 percent. Livestock is almost the only animal-origin domestic protein source and is the major source of cash income at the farm level. Oromia accounts for more than 70 percent of the livestock population in Ethiopia. As such, the economic benefit Ethiopia derives from the livestock industry through

the export of hides, leathers and live animals largely comes from Oromia (Geleta 2002).

Under the current situation of low livestock productivity rate, a farming family must keep at least 10–12 head of cattle to maintain a pair of oxen (Teketay 2001). The indigenous livestock breeds kept by the Oromo people are low in productivity due to lack of genetic potential (especially for milk) and the low-input production system (Anon, 1997, Geleta, 2002). The highly productive European cattle breeds are highly demanding and are susceptible to many of the tropical livestock diseases. The milk production of the relatively less demanding 50 percent indigenous and Friesian crossbred cows are shown to be four times that of the indigenous local cows (Alberto, 1983; Mugerwa, 1988) and the Borana cattle of Oromia have great potential for beef production (Anon, 1995). However, not enough effort has been made to improve livestock productivity using these technologies

Livestock feed has become one of the most important livestock production constraints in Ethiopia (Mengistu, 1987). The present livestock feed supply barely exceeds maintenance levels, leaving very little for production. It has been suggested that at the estimated growth rate of 1.1 percent, the livestock population would exceed the maximum carrying capacity of grazing land available in the country (Teketay 2001). Concentrate feeds are very scarce and pasturelands are being turned into cropland due to the ever increasing population pressure. Over 80 percent of livestock feed come from pasture, while the rest is from crop residue (straw), stubble and cereals. The limited grazing land also puts additional pressure on the land.

All important livestock diseases (viral, bacterial, parasitic) are widespread throughout Oromia, causing tremendous losses in both mortality and morbidity forms. Due to the poor animal health services, the annual mortality-loss in cattle, sheep and goats populations is estimated to be about 15 percent, 15 percent and 12 percent respectively (Anon, 2000b). This is

among the highest in the world. The Oromia Regional State has access to only 22 percent of the prophylactics and 8.1 percent of the required curative services (Rashid, 1999). In general, due to the poor genetic potential for productivity, nutrition, and health, the livestock sector is not contributing its fullest potential to the overall food supply of the nation

Land degradation involves both soil erosion and the loss of soil fertility. Ethiopia has extensive steep slope lands which are highly susceptible to soil erosion and this is more so in the highlands (Teketay 2001). In such places, population growth has led to extensive forest clearing to meet the concurrent rising demand for cultivable land, grazing land, and fuel. Removal of vegetation-cover increases surface runoff and hence erosion. The removal of topsoil means less availability of key plant nutrient, less water holding capacity and degraded capacity for root anchorage for plants. The loss of topsoil also leads to the drying-up of natural springs (Teketay 2001, Dubale 2001) Soil erosion is greatest on cultivated land, occurring at about 42 tons/ha as compared to 5 tons/ha from pastureland per annum. Cultivated land accounts for 13 percent of total land in Ethiopia but contributes to about 50 percent of soil erosion (Hurni 1990). Overall, the soil in some severely degraded areas has lost biological productivity and the physical properties needed for optimal plant growth

Ethiopia does not have land use policy and legislation to prevent land degradation Agro-forestry and tree plantation depend on private land ownership and tenure security (Bishaw 2001). Peasant farmers are small-holder subsistence producers, and do not have enough land to dedicate to soil and water conservation (Dubale 2001). In fact, increased food production has been based on expanding the cropping area, often into marginal areas with lower sustainable yield potential (FAO, 2001a) As a result, forest coverage which was about 40 percent a century ago, has declined to less than 2.7 percent of the

land since 1990 (FAO 1981, Bishaw 2001, Teketay 2001, Lemessa and Perault, 2002)

Deforestation often leads to land degradation which is probably the most important factor limiting agricultural productivity in Ethiopia. It also diminishes the amount of annual rainfall, leading to drought and transitory food insecurity. Ethiopia is a drought vulnerable country with a 30 percent probability for reoccurrence (Annon, 1996). It is estimated that about 25 percent of the Ethiopian population lives in low-moisture areas of the country, which make up about 55 percent of the total area of the country. Replenishment of soil components such as minerals could be attempted by the use of fertilizers. However the consequence of land degradation due to deforestation is not fully reversible. Therefore conservation remains the best insurance against land degradation (Smolin and Grosvenor, 1994).

While conservation is always important, the strategy is complicated by a rapidly rising population. The Ethiopian population is estimated to be about 77 million, and is growing at an annual rate of about 3 4 percent (Bishaw 2001, Dubale 2001). Over 85 percent of the population lives in the rural area and is engaged in subsistence agriculture. Highland Ethiopia (1500 meters above sea level), which constitutes about 50 percent of the land area, hosts about 88 percent of human population and 60 percent of livestock population (FAO 1986). The high rate of population growth has aggravated tenure insecurity. Land is a public property. Peasants are made to believe that they are property owners, but in fact land is allocated to them in exchange for their loyalty to the government. This has turned the peasant farmer into a government tenant. There is therefore no incentive to invest in land and prevent land degradation. Communal grazing and woodland is allotted to new claimants for crop production, encroaching on hilly and non-agricultural lands, further aggravating the already worse land degradation situation.

There is not enough arable land in the rural area to cope with the exploding population growth It is projected that in the year 2015 the per capita land holdings in the highlands would decrease to about 0.66 hectare (Teketay 2001), further diminishing the already poor level of food production. Given the inherently low agricultural productivity, there is barely enough food for household consumption, leaving little or nothing to invest on inputs such as fertilizer and improved seeds.

Poor Marketing System

Ethiopia has one of the poorest transportation networks in the world. In the 1990s, the country's road system was composed of 4000, 9000 and 6000 kms of asphalt, gravel and rural roads respectively. The road density is only about 21 km per 1000 sq. km. At the same time, agricultural product processing plants are very limited while most agricultural products (livestock and crop) are highly perishable and are largely produced in areas inaccessible by modern means of transportation to move them to urban centers where they are needed most and where sales are likely to benefit farmers (Geleta, 2002; Annon, 2006)

There are no large multi-national agricultural product traders with adequate storage facilities and sufficient working capital. Small traders have a limited capacity to handle large quantities of agricultural products for long periods of time. Hence grain prices rise dramatically in lean crop years and decline substantially in good crop years, particularly following harvest. The need to repay agricultural input loans and other financial obligations, including taxes, forces farmers to sell their products immediately after harvest at depressed prices It is estimated that about 80 percent of a farmer's annual grain sales occurs right after harvest (Anon, 1998) Almost every farmer is selling immediately after harvest and prices rise later in the year when most farmers, short on stocks, are buying from the market. The result is a lose-lose situation for the farmer as

prices fall when they have product to sell and rise when they have nothing left for sale. The government does not seem to be doing all it can to mitigate the farmers' predicament. Lasting solution plans, appropriate disaster mitigation strategies, and functional early warning systems are not in place

Lack of a competitive free market has also contributed its share to increasing food insecurity. During the military regime (1974-91), agricultural marketing was totally monopolized by the government. There was no price incentive for food production. With prices set by the government, farmers were forced to sell their crops to government buyers at below market prices and the government sold their crop at full price, pocketing the difference. Even if there were modestly attractive prices for food products, farmers, encouraged to produce cash crops for export, were not in a position to take advantage (Gebissa, 2004; Annon, 1998). The present regime is also following practically the same policy. Agricultural input and product businesses are monopolized by state-owned firms. Peasant farmers are denied access to agricultural market information and are encouraged to buy inputs from these firms and sell their products to them. This has created an artificial poverty trap from which even the most hard working and motivated farmers may not escape (Cuny, 1999)

A steady increase in the price of agricultural inputs such as fertilizer and improved seed as a result of removal of government subsidy has surged grain prices over the past few years, making food unaffordable for the most destitute sector of the population without accruing any economic benefit to the producer (Demeke *et al*, 1998)

Even when food is available for purchase at a reasonable price, it remains beyond the purchasing capacity of the vast majority of Ethiopians. With income per capita of about $100 (World Bank 2001) over 60 percent of the country's population lives below the absolute poverty line (Anon, 2000a). When the poverty line proposed by some experts in the World Bank

which suggests US$ 1 per day is applied, about 85 percent of the total population in the Ethiopia lived below the absolute poverty line at the beginning of 1994 (Dercon and Kirshnan, 1998). Sen (1981) reported that thousands of Wollo people in northeast Ethiopia starved to death without a substantial rise in food prices in the area.

Poverty is thus made manifest with a high incidence of malnutrition and food insecurity. Under-nutrition results in disease and disability, which in turn limits the ability to produce/acquire food. Poverty therefore can be viewed as the cause as well as the result of inadequate food production and distribution, lack of health care and education. Malnutrition not only leads to loss of productivity as a result of decreased work performance but also diminishes cognitive ability and school performance and increase susceptibility to disease. Lack of health increases infant mortality and the incidence of low birth weight (Smolin and Grosvenor, 1994).

Conclusion

Countries that have succeeded in reducing poverty and hunger have exhibited a more rapid growth in agricultural productivity and economy in general than those that have not reduced poverty and hunger. They formulated a policy that involves assisting the poor in getting access to food, increasing the availability of agricultural technologies, maximizing farmers' profit through improving accessibility to markets, controlling population growth, improving human resource development through education and health services, and applying the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

In Ethiopia, high population growth coupled with the lack of diversification of the economy has put heavy pressure on the land. The greatest proportion of the population depends on farming for their livelihood. Agro-industry is at a rudimentary stage and off-farm employment opportunities are very limited. As a result, crop production is encroaching on forest and

grazing lands faster than ever before, leading to excessive deforestation and land-degradation.

Deforestation is progressing at an alarmingly fast rate. Destruction of forest means: erosion, lack of soil fertility, reduced soil canopy cover, lack of perspiration and precipitation, dry water shade system, dry springs, dry rivers, desertification and uninhabitable land. At the same time, no obvious activities are underway to develop lasting solution plans, appropriate disaster mitigation strategies and functional early warning system, to curb this fast growing natural disaster in the making.

Agricultural productivity is not showing any sign of improvement. Agricultural technologies are both unavailable and unaffordable. Agricultural machinery is scarce in the country. Improved seeds are not readily available, while they are expensive and poor in quality. High price, tight payment terms and lack of loans, and timely distribution problems have limited the use of fertilizers. The role of irrigation in food production is far below its potential level and chemical control of diseases and crop pests is virtually unknown. Farmers are not making the most out of their agricultural products due to lack of accessibility to markets, agro-industries and information, and pressure by government owned business companies. The number of food-insecure people is on the increase and it is feared that this could deteriorate to the extent of adversely affecting the physical and mental abilities of the future generation of the Oromo people.

Food security needs an economic policy directed against poverty with particular emphasis on agricultural productivity. All medium and high-income countries of the world have demonstrated a substantial increase in agricultural productivity and eradication of poverty before making the transformation from an agrarian and semi-subsistence-dominated economy to one where most of the workforce is engaged in non-agricultural activities. This was caused by rising labor productivity that

created the opportunity to grow more food with less labor This paved the way for the rural population to engage in industrial development activities At present this transformation has reached its highest stage in the United States, where only about 2 percent of the population comprises of farmers In 2000 it was reported that 7 percent of the World, 55 percent of Africa's and 82 percent of Ethiopia's population were engaged in agriculture. This anomalous situation must be turned around to prevent an impending human tragedy and the experience of other countries is critically instructive of the most effective policy direction.

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Causative Verb and Palatalization in Oromo

Evidence from Oromo Dialects and Related Cushitic Languages*

Kebedo Hordofa Janko

The Oromo language is spoken in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. In Ethiopia, Oromo speakers live in the area extending from Tigray (Rayyaa) in the north to the border with Kenya in the south, and from Wallagga in the west to Harerge in the east, with Addis Ababa (Finfinne-autonym) at the intersection of the two axes. Among the many peoples living within the border of present day Ethiopia, the Oromo constitute about 40 percent of the total population (See Gragg 1976, Heine 1981, Bartels1983, Lamberti 1983). The number of Oromo speakers in Kenya, according to Stroomer (1987:2), is about 150,000. As regards the number of Oromo in Somalia, no reliable figure exists at the moment.

Journal of Oromo Studies Vol. 14, no. 2 (July 2007), pp. 89-104

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But Lamberti (1983:156-57) introduces Oromo varieties in Somalia as follows:

> [The Oromo] ethnic groups live scattered in the whole region of Gedo on the frontier with Ethiopia. The language of the Oromo minorities of Somalia is evidently quite heterogeneous The relevant material, which I collected in the region of Gedo, indeed contains many dialectal differences, although from a linguistic point of view it is doubtlessly Oromo [ ] All of them are influenced to a certain extent by the Somali language, especially in the lexicon. Apart from Gedo Oromo minorities can be found in the region of Lower Juba and especially in the districts of Badhaade, Afmadow of Kismaayo.

From a wider perspective, Oromo belongs to the language family known as the East Cushitic languages, which is categorized under the Afro-Asiatic super family of languages.

The homeland of the 'father' (or proto) language of the East Cushitic group, according to Christopher Ehret (1976: 88- 89), lies somewhere in the south-central highlands of Ethiopia on both sides of the Rift Valley. From there, Ehert, posits that

> the spread out of proto-Cushitic speaking communities along a north /south axis through the Ethiopian highlands may have begun, in very approximate terms, during the fifth millennium B C. By the start of the fourth millennium [ ] Cushitic speech would already have been established from probably the Red Sea hills in the north to the far southeastern Ethiopian highlands[ ] (Ehret 1976: 88- 89)

In this wider area occurred an interaction between Cushitic (Oromo having the largest number of speakers among them) and Semitic language speakers. As the result, the "North Ethio-Semitic speech emerged along the far northern fringe of the highlands and spread into regions formerly Central Cushitic

in language. South Ethio-Semitic replaced earlier Eastern Cushitic languages in parts of the Central and Eastern Highlands." (Ehret 1976: 96)

Today the Oromo dialects spoken in Ethiopia and Kenya are known usually by the following local names, though the spellings are not always consistent in the literature: Wolo, Raya, Tulema , Mecha , Arsi , Hararge, Guji, Borana of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenyan, Orma, Gabra, Ajuran, Sakuye, Garreh, Munyo, and Waata. This article addresses the issue of consonant palatalization in the causative verbs of Oromo regardless of the regional varieties as far as it could be ascertained from the literature

In Oromo, the causative verb is usually analysed as derived by the suffix–*s* (see Heine 1980: 49, Owens 1985: 61-3, 175, Lloret 1987:144, Stroomer 1987:156-164) [1] This suffix is also analysed as if it triggers palatalization in an alveo-dental consonant, namely: t, d, and t,' l that comes preceding it at morpheme boundary during word formation (see below). Causative verb refers to the verb stem which says 'who or what causes something to happen.' And palatalization refers to the change or process resulting in a sound articulated broadly in palatal or palato-alveolar region of the mouth (See Matthwes 2005: 49,262).

Lass (1984: 215) points out that "we need external or substantive criteria for justification. If we want to make a serious decision about how a speaker might 'represent' a linguistic form (...), we must draw upon independent criteria: Evidence from areas such as typology, language history, and the like. Or at least there is a respectable tradition that claims that this is how we ought to go about it."

Based on an inter-dialectal material, this article argues that the suffix which derives the causative verb has rather been eroded and vowel i remains floating before it (On the use of 'erosion,' see Heine 2003:579 for example). To support my position, I will draw evidence from different Oromo dialects,

from other closely related Cushitic languages and from universals of language.

Evidence from Oromo Dialects

In Oromo dialects a root–final alveo-dental consonant, namely: s, t, d, t,' l palatalize at morpheme boundary when it is followed by the causative suffix -s according to the traditional analyses. This is shown in examples of (1) and (2) below (where the palatalized segments are shown in bold in the output on the left)[2]:

1	a	ge**šš**a "I make arrive; he etc." (e.g. from Raya)	< * gaj-ø - s-a "arrive"-1sg, 3sg - caus1-imperf
	b	ke**eššisi** "you make put" (e.g from Raya)	< * kaaj - sis-i "put"-caus$_2$–imperative (sg)
2	a.	guraace**šš**a "I make dark; he etc" (e g from Raya)	< *gurraacaw-s-a "be dark"-caus$_1$- imperf
	b.	ga**šš**a, gal**š**a , gal**č**a "I make enter; he etc" (e.g. from Mecha)	< *gal-s-ø-a "enter"- caus$_1$- 1,3sgm-perf
	c	bicisiis- "make buy" "make buy"	< *bit-sis- "buy"-Caus$_2$ "buy"-Caus$_2$
	d	ficisiis- "make bring" (e g. from Mecha)	< *fid-sis "bring"-Caus$_2$
	e	fic'isiis- "make finish" (e g. from Mecha)	< *fit?-sis- "finish"-Caus$_2$

We notice the sequence *j-s-* palatalizes to *šš* in examples of (1a) and (1b) above. Bhat (1978:49) points out that "the environment that induces the change must be a palatalized environment ..it must be a front vowel, a palatal semivowel or a palatalized consonant" Thus examples (1a) and (1b) above meet this universal principle since the root final *j* triggers the palatalization in the following *s* which finally ended up as geminated palatal *šš*. In examples (2) above, however, there is no such apparent segment which has triggered the palatalization of segments shown in bold in each case, namely: **aw-s* > ***eššš*** (2a); **l-s-* > ***šš, lš, lc*** (2b); **t-sis-*> *cisiis* (2c); **d-sis-* > *cisiis* (2d) and **t'-sis-*> *c'isiis* (2e). Therefore, it seems reasonable to question the analysis which posits or assumes that *-s* triggers palatalization in the alveo-dental consonants at morpheme boundaries in examples (2) above.

Evidence from vowel *(a)a* Raising to *(o)o*

Another piece of evidence that compels us to question previous analyses which says alveo-dental consonants, namely: s, t, d, t,' l palatalize at morpheme boundary when followed by the causative suffix *-s* comes from a stem vowel *(a)a* raising to *(o)o*. For example a stative verb stem with a general meaning "be X " can be inflected by a consonantal suffix *-n* 1pl or by the negative suffix *-ne* in the perfective aspect or by *t* 2sg. The same stem of the stative verb can also be inflected by the causative suffix *-s* according to the traditional analysis. In (3) to (5) below, *n* 1pl , *t* 2sg is thus inflected to the stem of the stative verb given under (a) while *-s* is inflected to the same stem under (b):

3	a	macooin/ta "we, you (will) become (are) drunk" (e.g. from Hararge)	< *macaw-n/ta "be drunk"-1pl, 2sg-imperf
	b.	maceessa "I make drunk, he etc " (e g. from Mecha)	< *macaaw-s-ø-a "be drunk"-caus$_1$-1sg, 3sgm-imperf
4	a	waammiʔoine 'It was n't sweetened" (e g. from Raya)	< waan- *miʔaaw-n-e neg (Perf) "be sweet"-neg (Perf)
	b	miʔeessa "I make be sweet, he etc," (e g. from Mecha)	< *miʔaaw-s- ø –a "be sweet"-Caus-1sg, 3sgm-perf
5	a.	beeloin/ta "We, you (will) become (are) hungry"	< *beelaw-n/t-a "be hungry"1pl, 2sg-imperf
	b	beelessa "I made feel hungry, he etc," (e g from Mecha)	< *beelaw-s- ø –e be hungry-Caus-1sg, 3sgm-perf

In examples of (a) above the labial features of **w* in the input spread to the preceding low back vowel *(a)a* raising it to *(o)o* as we observe in the diphthong *(o)oi* in the environment of a following *–n, - t*.[3] In (b) above, however, this **w* is deleted without leaving its traces on the preceding stem vowel[4] Instead the stem vowel *(a)a* changes to *(e)e* when the causative marker *s* follows it according to the traditional analysis. Furthermore, a parallel vowel *(a)a* raising to *(e)e* has also been observed in the language. For example, when the root- final *j* in **kaaj* – "put" is followed by the 1p marker *n* the preceding

root vowel *aa* raises to *ee* as in *keeñña* or *keenna* "we (will) put" (Example from Mecha /Arsi respectively)

To sum up, vowel *(a)a* in the verb root or stem changes to *(e)e* when the 'causative –*s*' follows the stem-final **w, *j* as we observe from (b) of (3) to (5) above (compare also (1) and (2a) above). However, this analysis is unnatural since the consonant s does not have the feature which raises or palatalizes vowel *(a)a* to*(e)e* Hence we need to re-examine the feature responsible for the process attested

Evidence from Vowel Length Dissimilation Rule

Language has a vowel length dissimilation rule that applies when a certain stem is inflected by vowel-initial suffixes as in examples below (for further detail see Gragg 1976:177, Owens 1985 :63, Lloret 1987:153). Thus in the examples of (6) and (7) below, the vowel at an initial position of the suffixes is part of the morpheme. In other words, the vowel is not inserted by rule but it is part of the suffixes Put plainly, they are the following suffixes below: *-ota*, *-olii* pl markers (6) and- *aw*-stative suffix (7). Furthermore, the process shown in bold in examples of (6) and (7) below is such that '.' the affix has a long vowel if the vowel in the preceding syllable is short, and a short vowel if the preceding vowel is long" (Lloret 1987:153):

A. Plurals[5] (Example from Mecha)

6	a	*nama* "man"Abs namoota "men" Abs	b. *ijoollee* "boy" Abs joollota "boys"Abs
	c	*muc'aa* "baby"Abs *muc'oolii* "babies"Abs	d. *gaangoo* "mule" Abs *gaangolii* "mules" Abs

B. Stative Verbs (e.g. from Raya)

7	a	*b'eelaw-* "be hungry"	b	*maèaaw-* "be drunk"
	c	*urgaaw-* "smell good"	d	*d'iitaw-* "swell"

The vowel *(i)i* in examples of (8) below, however is argued to be inserted by what Lloret calls a "Morphological Epenthesis rule" (Lloret 1987:146):

C. Double Causative (e.g. from Mecha)

8	a	*k'absiis-* "make catch" (fire for example)	b	*deemsis-* "make go"
	c	*dibsiis-* "make be anointed"	d	*d'iibsis-* "make push"

As already pointed out above, the vowels at the initial position of the affixes of (6) and (7) are parts of the affixes in the underlying form. The vowel *(i)i* in examples of (8), however, is inserted by "Morphological Epenthesis" rule according to Lloret (1987:146). Note that however the variation in vowel length shown in bold above indicates the rule of vowel length dissimilation is in operation vis-à-vis the length of the preceding syllable in the root The fact that *(i)i* undergoes the vowel length dissimilation rule just like other underlying vowels of the affixes in (6) and (7) above suggests that **i* should rather be treated as part of the causative suffix instead of an insertion by rule.

This might be clearer through the following presentation further. In (9) below, the vowel length dissimilation rule applies to the underlying vowel in the affixes (in the input) to

derive the stems indicated in the output But to examples of (10) below, this rule should not apply because *i* is inserted by rule in the derivation process according to Lloret (1987:146). But if **i* is part of the causative morpheme and not acquired by rule, as I argue it should be, the vowel length dissimilation rule applies to it on par with the underlying vowels in vowel – initial affixes as we notice from the examples below:

		Input	Rule	Output
9	a	*beel*-aw- "hunger"- stative (e g from Hararge)	vowel length dissimilation	*beelaw*- "be hunger"
	b.	ʔ*urg*-aw- "smell"- stative (cf urgáa "good smell") (e g. from Raaya)	vowel length dissimilation	*urgaaw*- "smell good"
10	a.	*deem-sis*- "go"-caus$_2$ (e g from Mecha)	vowel length dissimilation	*deemsis*- "make go"
	b.	*kolf-sis*- "laugh"-caus$_2$ (e.g. from Mecha)	vowel length dissimilation	*kolfiisis*-[6] "make laugh"

Thus, the fact that vowel **i* in the double causative – s(i)is- can undergo the vowel length dissimilation rule, just like an underlying vowel of vowel- initial suffixes we observe from examples of (9) and (10) above suggests that vowel **i* should form part of the causative morpheme rather than inserted by rule.

Evidence from Related Languages

Corresponding pieces of evidence in other genetically related languages to Oromo (see Black 1974 and Bender (ed.) 1976)

indicate that the causative morpheme has vowel **i* or its variants before the consonant *s*. Chomsky and Halle (SPE 1968: 49) point out that "it should also be observed that every different dialect may have the same or a very similar system of underlying representations. It is a widely confirmed empirical fact that underlying representations are fairly resistant to historical changes, by and large, to involve late phonetic rules. If this is true, then the same system of representations for underlying forms will be found over long stretches of space and time." The following pieces of evidence cited from languages related to Oromo are in complement with the quotation:

I. In Afar, a branch of Lowland East Cushitic languages group, "the common Afro-Asiatic Causative verb is normally formed ... with the suffix *is* for intransitivity verbs."(Bliese1981:129-130). In the following examples the causative morpheme is shown in bold:

Examples:

11	a	bay-**is's**-e "lose -caus-you-perf"	>	bayis'se "you lost"
	b	fat'-**ia**-s-aa-'na "boil-caus-you-imperf-pl"	>	fat'issaa'na "you boil" (plural)

II Vowel **i* is indicated before a single causative and double causative morphemes for Highland East Cushitic Languages (Hudson 1989: 6) Abbebe (no date) further gives the following examples for Sidamo, one of the Highland East Cushitic Languages (where the causative morpheme is shown in bold below):

12	a.	but'-**is**-su-he-e "poor"-caus$_1$-they-you-perf "they made you poor"
	b.	but'-**isiis**-su- 'n-e "poor"-caus$_2$-they-you-perf "they got someone to make you poor"
	c	bett-ho wot'e soy-**isiis**-ummo "boy"-for/to-money send-caus$_2$-imperf "I got someone to send the money to the boy"

III. In Bilen, an Agew language in the Cushitic super-family of languages, vowel *i* was reported before *s*, as in the following examples under (13) shown in bold below (Appleyard 1986:3) (=Schwa):

13	a	n ʾkol-**is**-, "love-caus" "cause to love"	b.	sat'-**is**- "take-caus" "cause to take"	c.	k'al-**is**- "see-caus." "cause to see, show"

IV. In Somali, one of the languages in the Lowland East Cushitic group, the causative morpheme is realized as *i(j), is* or sometimes as š (Giorgio Banti 1993, Personal Communication).

To summarize, I have put forward the following pieces of evidence to argue the form of the causative suffix in Oromo is different from the surface form which is usually analysed as *-s*:

- On the one hand, an alveo-dental consonants of Oromo; namely: s, t, d, t,' l palatalizes at morpheme boundary in the environment of the causative morpheme in each case. Corresponding forms in other related Cushitic languages have *i/j* before the consonant s or its variants like š in Somali. On the other hand the universal principle of pala-

talization holds the assumption that "the environment that induces the change must be a palatalized environment it must be a front vowel, a palatal semivowel or a palatalized consonant" (Bhat 1978:49).But the consonant *s* which is given as triggering palatalization in an alveo-dental consonant, namely: *t, t,' s, d, n,* that comes preceding it at morpheme boundary does not possess this phonetic feature.

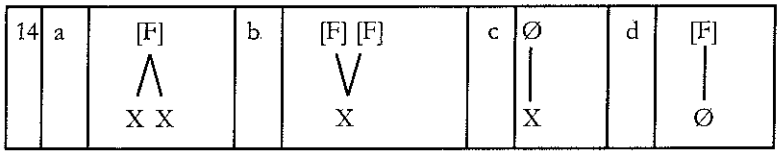
- The verb stem **beelaw-* "be hungry" for example becomes *beeloina* "we are hungry',' *beeloita* "you (sg) are hungry" when it is conjugated respectively by *-n, -t* and *–a* (imperfective aspect marker) (e.g. from Hararge dialect of Oromo). However, the same stem becomes *beelessa* "I make s.o. feel hungry, it etc.," when it is followed by the traditional causative marker *-s* and *–a* imperfective aspect marker (e.g. from Mecha dialect of Oromo). In parallel to this I have also shown, for example, that root vowel *aa* in **kaaj-n-a* "put-1pl-perf',' becomes *ee* as in *keeñña/keenna* "we (will) put" just like in *beelessa* "I make s.o.feel hungry, it etc.," (e.g. from Mecha /Arsi respectively).
- The evidence from vowel length dissimilation rule in section 4 0 above suggests that it applies to underlying vowels of vowel-initial suffixes such as in **macaaw-* "be drunk" and **beelaw-* "be hungry" for example (compare footnote 1). The same rule applies to *i* in the double causative verb as in ***deemsi****s* "make go" and ***kolfisii****s-* "make laugh" (e.g. from Mecha).

Conclusion

The argument made so far leads me to propose vowel **i* before the consonant s in the causative suffix of Oromo. In a sense this also matches the observation made by Hayward. As this segment is not physically attested synchronically however I suggest a different analysis which I, following Szpyra 1992,

label it as a "floating segment'.' Such a segment is represented on the Root tier, as it does not occupy timing slot called x-slot during articulation, and hence does not link to the x-slot in Auto- segmental phonology framework.

Szpyra (1992: 299) summarises the basic framework of the Auto –segmental model in which a floating feature is represented. In the representations below, F stands for Feature, X stands for skeletal slot and Ø stands for deletion of element. In (14a), [F] associates with two slots. In (14b) two, features dock on one skeletal slot, in (14c), [F] on the segmental tier facing X deletes. And in (14d), [F] on the segmental tier facing



X remains floating while the skeletal slot X that formerly corresponds to the [F] is deleted:-

In particular the representation numbered (14d) above captures my proposal in that the skeletal slot on which vowel **i* docks has been deleted while its point of articulation feature [F] remains floating on the segmental tier. And this floating **i* re-links to or in the more traditional term, palatalizes an alveo-dental consonant, namely: s, t, d, t,' */* that may come precedes it at morpheme boundary in causative verb derivation (compare section 2.0 above). The floating feature analysis also accounts for the root or stem vowel *(a)a* raising to *(e)e* before the surface causative consonant *s* in the traditional analysis as we saw in section 3.0 above.

Notes

* I acknowledge many individuals who directly or indirectly gave me useful comments on different occasions, including the anonymous referee that reviewed my paper. While I appreciate their suggestions

about sociolinguistics issues, I want to state that this article is firmly grounded in historical linguistics

1. Exception to this is Hayward who holds the assumption that the suffix should be *-is* (Lloret 1987:144)

2. Note the meanings of abbreviations and symbols used in the paper: Ø = zero morpheme, * marks a hypothetical proto form or doubtful form, perf = perfective aspect marker, imperf =imperfective aspect marker, Abs = in Absolutive case form Note also the following writing conventions and abbreviations used in the paper (For full inventory of Oromo sound segments see Gragg 1976 and subsequent publications on Oromo some of which are included in the Reference section):
   a. Glottalized stops are written with an apostrophe: *p,' t,' k,' d'* (=alveolar implosive).
   b. Long consonants and vowels are written as clusters of like phonemes, e.g. *tt* = /t: /, *aa* = / a: /.
   c. The alveo-palatal affricates are written as *c* (voiceless plain), c' (voiceless ejective)
   d. The voiceless palatal fricative is written as *š*, palatal semivowel as *j* and palatal nasal as *ñ*.

3. The fact that *a(a)* is raised to *o(o)* in the environment proofs *w was proto Oromo form at the stem-final position

4. The deletion of the stem- final *w here might be accounted for as **w* weakening to zero in an intervocalic position shown by the following process (vowel *i* before *s* in process here is arrived at in section 6.0 below):* *beelaw- *is-* "be hungry-make" > *beelawis-* > *beeless-* "make feel hungry" (e.g. from Mecha) The fact that *a+i* becomes e is also language universal phenomenon For example, for Bantu languages, Goldsmith (1990: 242) points out that "the result of juxtaposing two vowels is a long vowel and if the first is the low vowel *a* and the second is a high vowel (i.e. *i* or *u*), then the quality of the composite vowel is a mid vowel. Thus *a+u* becomes *o* and *a+i (j)* becomes *e*"

5. In the language an absolutive case is the citation form of a noun

6. Unlike the claim made by Vowel Length Dissimilation rule above, vowel *i* of the medial syllable (where the dots mark syllable boundary), *.fi.* does not react to the rule vis-à-vis the initial syllable (verb root) *kol.* which is also short Rather it is the last syllable (*siis.*) which reacted to the rule since it is long in contrast to the medial short syllable (*.fi*) This suggests that *i* in the later is inserted to regularize the surface form that otherwise produces unacceptable sequence of three consonants, namely:* *lfs* in derivation of the causative verb stem.

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FABRICATION OF OROMO ORIGINS*

Eloi Ficquet
Translation from French by Ayalew Kanno

Locating the land of Oromo origins is a serpent of Ethiopian studies, which resurfaces at regular intervals. The Oromo surged in the sixteenth century from obscure edges of medieval Ethiopia after the Islamo-Christian war of the so-called Grañ (wars) and conquered an immense territory that covers a third of the contemporary state. These new comers who appeared within an upset political space had to be identified. The suddenness of their conquest had to be explained. The vast nebula which they established as a result had to be linked to historical landmarks. To address all these issues, the question of their origins has become the subject of multiple conjectures in the myths, chronicles, and studies of the learned, and the admirers or combatants who have been dedicated to them. We are not going to discuss these narratives to find in them concordant

Journal of Oromo Studies, Volume 14, Number 2 (July 2007), pp. 105-30
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factual pieces of evidence in order to delimit Oromo *Heimat*, but we will observe from them the construction stages of a paradigm of otherness attributed to the Oromo in the space of Ethiopian identities.

The historical stereotypes most encrusted in the Ethiopian national fancy depict the Oromo, frequently designated by the name Galla, under the traits of formidable warriors, nomads with unpredictable movements, shepherds escorting their herds on the high farm lands left to lie fallow. After a shattering eruption onto the Ethiopian historical scene, the history of these people was put into contradictory, ambiguous, still unresolved setting. Having become sedentary and quiet, these invaders infiltrated the state apparatus, disguising their primordial "savagery," but remaining ready to resurge and to turn the political chessboard upside down. This suspicion continues to impregnate the Ethiopian ideological landscape and creates a big epistemological obstacle for observers of the Oromo in the comprehension of the territorial and identity alterations that have been assigned to them.

Historians and anthropologists specializing in the Oromo have already worked to deconstruct the representations relative to the origins of these people. Alessandro Triulzi has shown how to interpret in an interactive perspective of the mixed recollections that make up Amharic and Oromo traditions on the questions.[1] Jan Hultin, after having proposed to reconsider the historical phases of Oromo expansion and then to consider the notion of conquest as a symbolic model of virility,[2] has shown that the representations of the Oromo in the official versions of Ethiopian history fades from the character of the "savage to that of the invisible man."[3] Thomas Zitelmann has treated the same problem across the prism of etymological interpretations of the ethnonyms Galla and Oromo, bearers of adversarial meaning.[4] Without being exhaustive, we wish to present a large spectrum of these representations, whose analyses will make evident the articulations,

the assumptions and the resonance among the very diverse sources.

A Divine Punishment

The abridged versions and the most diffuse of Ethiopian history describe the Oromo invasion as a violent torrent, which brutally poured itself out on the lands of the Christian kingdom already devastated by the Muslim conquest of *Imam* Ahmed, known as Grañ in the sixteenth century.

The reading of the chronicles drawn up in that era offers a less cataclysmic view. After the abrupt disbanding of the Muslim armies upon the death of *Imam* Ahmed (1542), the convalescent Christian kingdom was at first a little troubled by the incursions launched at the borders of the country by the savage[5] tribes designated as "Galla," because they primarily attacked their Muslim rivals who still remained a menace. In spite of the attempt at restoration of its military force, the emirate of Harar was the first to submit to the assaults of the Oromo hordes. It was too weak to resist them, being able only to retreat into its city enclosure. The Christian king Galawdewos (r. 1540-1559) had succeeded in reconquering the provinces to the south and began to reconstitute imperial authority. He had repulsed several Oromo advances, and established garrisons in order to be forewarned.[6] But the new aggressors proved to have an astonishing tenacity, which became more and more alarming as they cut off the former dependencies of the kingdom one after the other and pursued the inhabitants. Their abundance became such that they now took on the characteristics of an uncontrollable scourge to unforeseeable relapses, attacking all parts. This new calamity bearing down on the kingdom was interpreted as a sign of divine punishment. The chronicles of the time nevertheless partly yielded to these etiological (causative) speculations, underlining the difficulty of combating this tenacious and extremely mobile adversary.

Let us note that the providential and moral conception of the Oromo invasion was resumed by Catholic missionaries, who attribute another motive to it: the refusal of Ethiopian Christians to recognize the authority of the Roman Holy See and the Chalcedonian dogma. Starting in 1608, the Jesuit Father Pedro Paez[7] reported in his *Historia da Etiopia* an interpretation of the origin of the Oromo, which would be relayed by his coreligionists.[8] Father João Bermudez[9] dismissed by King Galawdewos, predicted that "the lands of the empire would be ravaged by black ants that seem to be pagan Negroes who are called Galla."[10] Later, we will see again a similar prophecy in the work of the Capuchin Father Martial de Salviac who claims to have collected a story of the origin from the Arsi Oromo, where he identifies the personage of Father André de Oviedo.[11]

> God sent a prophet to the Amhara to bring them back to the way of their religion, which they had abandoned. That prophet invited them in vain to repentance and to the practice of divine law. They remained deaf to his advice as well as to his warning. They mistreated him, banished him from their country. He was obliged to live in the deserts alone, and praying that God avenge the outrage done to his ambassador. God was irritated and thundered this statement: 'I give the land to the Oromo. Victory to their spears!'[12]

The Princess and the Cowherd

From undoubtedly ancient oral propagation,[13] representations by the Christians of Ethiopia concerning the causes of the Oromo invasion and the basis of their identity are known in their written form from the short stories in the Amharic language composed in the nineteenth century. In April 1840, at Ankober, the missionary J. L. Krapf noted in his journal a summary of such a legend of which he said to have obtained a manuscript copy.[14] Texts introducing analogous themes were

deposited in European libraries, and later published, translated and analyzed.[15] At the beginning of his *History of the Oromo*, Asmä Giyorgis (whom we will introduce below) refers to a similar work which he designates as "*the book which Lady Agaya would have brought from Zeway and given to Emperor Sysenyos*"[16] and which he vigorously criticizes as a tissue of a plot composed by the hurtful monks. At the beginning of the Chronicle of Menelik, Gebre Sellassie recalls an identical story, to which he gives the status of historical truth.[17] These sources indicate that this mythological writing was probably composed in Shawa, the Christian kingdom isolated from the rest of the empire by Oromo territories, which were progressively re-conquered in the nineteenth century. The hegemony gained by Shawa in the course of the process of constitution of modern Ethiopian state allowed a large diffusion of these ideas relating to the Oromo across the stereotypes of collective Ethiopian memory.

These stories of the origins of the Oromo express much more than the apprehension of their invasion as a scourge in atonement for sins. They portray these people as an inferior and immoral *alter ego* of the Amhara, which embodies the Ethiopian national model. To analyze them, let us reduce them to their most abridged framework.[18] There, the Oromo are presented as children of a fallen Christian princess (often designated as the daughter of Emperor Zär'a Ya'eqob) and of a slave working as a cowherd-in-chief in the service of a governor of a southern province (Däwaro). Raised in the Christian religion of their mother, but maintaining the robber instinct of their father, they were drawn by one or several demons, either at the bank of a river or in a forest, to be initiated into robbery, their language, idolatry and the consumption of tobacco and qat. Once trained in this fashion, they reproduced and multiplied so rapidly that they attained demographic equality with the Christians and became ready to confront their armies and invade their land.

The victories gained by the Oromo were attributed to their completely warlike character, as much as to the decadence of the imperial regime, sanctioned by divine arbitration. These stories however bring this moral crisis back to the Oromo who, even before their invasion, would have exercised their pernicious influence over the morals of the Christian society as far as reaching Emperor Lebnä Dengel (r. 1508-1540) in person. The latter, in effect, would have behaved like a "Galla," in adopting their pagan practices, in smoking tobacco, in participating in horseback riding jousts, and in praying to God to bring him war. In spite of the recriminations of his clergy and the warning signs of his disgrace (by a prophetic dream conveyed by the archangel Raguel[19]), he would persist in his demeanor with the approval of the "Romans" (Jesuit missionaries). This anachronistic apprehension of Oromo (and Jesuit) influence is likely to be understood as a projection on the history of the latter part of the sixteenth century, perhaps that of the reign of Susenyos (r. 1607-1632), who had been favorable to the Jesuits and had made war in his youth at the head of an Oromo army.

Composed on a background of religious rhetoric anticipating the end of the world, these legends of the Ethiopian Christians provide a historic justification for the conquest of Oromo territories during the entire second half of the nineteenth century. They also express the fear of the consequences of that expansionism: the Oromo, on the way to integration into the Ethiopian political space, would retain in the bottom of their hearts a primordial wildness, based on a contradictory social model, whose resurgence and contamination (even all the way to the top of the state) should be feared. By stigmatizing Oromo morals in this manner, these stories trace the limits of the system of Ethiopian values by portending their possible reversal.

Two Ethiopians Out of the Ordinary: Bahrey and Asmä

Among the classical Ethiopian literary sources, rare are those that develop a critical perspective, independently from a decided flavor of theological controversy. If the transcriber or the chronicler can surreptitiously introduce into their text some modifications or significant opinions, the latter remain blended into a doctrinal confirmation or a strict factualism and are not claimed to be as an exercise of personal opinion, even rational. Two historical works relating to the Oromo are exceptions

The first Ethiopian text to have treated the Oromo in a thorough manner is a *History of the Galla* written in the Ge'ez language by a high-ranking clergyman, confessor of the king by the name of Bahrey.[20] On the question of geographic origins, this author is brief and precise, mentioning at the beginning of his text that, "the Galla came from the East, from the other bank of the river which they call Galana, at the frontier of the land of Bali, at the time of King Lebnä Dengel."[21] He rejects the argument that "those among the learned say, 'the Lord has punished us for our sins.'"[22] The real problem for Bahrey is to know for what reasons the Oromo vanquished the powerful armies of the kingdom. The response he proposes, which is perhaps a sociological given, we dare say is an anachronism.

To conclude his study, this chronicler develops a critical reflection on the Ethiopian social system in order to explain how it was overwhelmed by the Oromo invasion. The weakness of the kingdom would not be due to its sins, but to its social organization, which the author breaks down into classes distinguished according to the main activity of its members. Of the ten classes, only that of the warriors follows the king to war, the other nine being so fearful or making convenient excuses in order not to participate in combat,[23] while, "with the Galla the nine classes which we have just mentioned do

not exist. All, young or old, are trained in war, and it is for this reason that they ruin us and kill us"[24] As we will see further below, the other parts of this text emanate from the same peculiarity of the author, which the Ethiopianist J. Tubiana has described as "An Ethiopian Ethnography in the Sixteenth century."[25]

The bearing and the reasoning of this author (Bahrey) are exceptional in the Ethiopian classic literature and his work remains a fundamental document for the study of the Oromo and their history. The only literary Ethiopian to be directly inspired by him eventually is the historian and royal officer[26] Asmä Giyorgis, whose voluminous work[27] returns to and pursues the reflection of Bahrey three centuries later. Like his predecessor, Asmä does not believe that one can explain Oromo expansion by the stories mentioned earlier above, which he criticizes point by point, considering that they emanate from a "lie of a hurtful monk."[28] He seeks to substitute them with a comprehension of the political and social organization of the Oromo. His description of the generational system of the Oromo is more precise and is better informed than that of Bahrey. The history, which he proposes, retraces the relations between the Ethiopian state and its Oromo adversaries, by using royal chronicles, some oral traditions and observations that he was personally able to make while he was Emperor Menelik's intelligence officer. Elsewhere, Asmä borrows some hypothesis from missionary ethnographers whose teaching he followed until his conversion to the Catholic faith. His text thus mentions the theses of Martial de Salviac: not only the curse attributed to the Jesuit Bermudez,[29] but above all the hypothesis of Gallic migrations into Ethiopia,[30] which he rejects to maintain the one of migration originating in Madagascar. He does not argue this last assertion, as he likely holds other pseudo-scientific hypothesis circulating at that time combined with an excessive interpretation of an ultramarine ori-

gin of the Oromo, import of the myth of an original lake which we will analyze later below.

The theses of Asmä have been very widely diffused by Aläqa Tayyä[31] who took them up again word for word, by simplifying them, in his *History of the People of Ethiopia*[32] This work, published in 1922 in Asmara, six times re-published,[33] has long served as a reference book for public education. This broad "academic" had such an impact on popular historical representations that, "Perhaps often Western researchers have supposed they were hearing the ancient, naïve and authentic legends and tales of the origins of Ethiopian peoples, when what they were really hearing was Aläqa Tayyä's History, *second hand*"[34]

Later, Yilma Deresa, one of the highest dignitaries of Haile Sellassie[35] dedicated the last chapter of his *History of Ethiopia in the Sixteenth Century*[36] to the question of Oromo conquest. By a thick text, drawing freely from European ethnography,[37] he tried to give to the Oromo a full place in the official history of the kingdom.

So marginal and disparaged in the whole Ethiopian historiography, the Oromo have been an object of study for some historians occupying high political functions. The reflection on these people imposed on the learned a distance that is reverberated in the work of a critical history, throwing open a problem of acceptance and integration of segmental social system into a hierarchically standardized imperial political space. In opposition to the conservative point of view discussed above, which diabolized the foundation of Oromo identity, these intellectuals developed a reformist perspective by proposing to understand this culture and turning to account of its original resources.

"Oromophiliac" European Authors

When he evokes the hypothesis of the Gallic origin of the Oromo, Asmä notes that, "the French are well-disposed as

regards the Galla."[38] Several European observers–travelers, missionaries, the learned–have in effect tried to rehabilitate the Oromo by correcting the deplorable reputation that were attributed to them.

The first author who declared his sympathy for the Oromo was a Protestant missionary Johann Ludwig Krapf. In his stories of travel, he declares to have given particular attention to these people during his sojourn in Ethiopia (1838-1842), because he "considered that Providence destined them, after their conversion to Christianity, to attain importance and to fill up the mission that God had given to the Germans in Europe."[39] To this end, he first published linguistic materials, then undertook translation of the Bible, completed in 1875, with the aid of Oromo converts.[40] Krapf also gave to the Oromo a providential role in universal history, these people having "become an obstacle to Mohammedan blows coming from Arabia, by punishing at the same time the abominable heresies of Christian Abyssinia."[41]

Antoine d'Abbadie, who stayed in Ethiopia with his brother Arnauld between 1837 and 1848, published in 1880 a lecture entitled, "The Oromo, Great African Nation." In this text, he was the first author to set the name Oromo as an ethnic word by which these people referred to themselves. The name Galla was, according to him, only uttered as a war cry. Based on traditions that he himself collected from among the Gudru Oromo,[42] he attributes to them a Portuguese origin, by basing it on the consonance between the name of their founding ancestor Sapera and a name of Portuguese family (Sa Feira or Safera). He also points out that "Oromo traditions . . . call Walal their land of origin and recount that the crossing of the River Awash was their first act of hostility against their sovereign, the king of kings of Ethiopia."[43] Following in his article, d'Abbadie presents political and judicial institutions of the Oromo society by comparing them to the diverse types of European republics (Rome, Venice, Basque Assemblies). In

addition, a fervent Catholic, Antoine d'Abbadie was not deprived of interest in the evangelical propagation, and a similar declaration as the one Krapf attributed to them: "The Oromo would have had qualities of the French had they been Christians"[44]

Twenty years after the article by d'Abbadie, the Capuchin missionary Martial de Salviac, of the mission of Harar, published a voluminous work dedicated to the Oromo, honored by the French Academy, with an attractive title, "*An Ancient People in the State of Menelik, the Oromo (said to be of Gallic Origin), Great African Nation.*" The link claimed by de Salviac with Antoine d'Abbadie is explicit so much by the final detail, as by the quotation, which we just cited and which was put as an epigraph of the book. In the meantime, the denomination Galla was maintained for reasons that will be evident later below. This monograph on the Oromo, the first published in Europe, treats the different aspects of their social life, stressing religious practices, political organization and war, and so on. Interspersed with references to the biblical Hebrew society, this description is above all built on reasoning by analogies tracing each characteristic feature of the Oromo society to those of Gauls: the comparable rites and beliefs to the Druidical religion and expressing the same primitive monotheism, warlike fervor, good-natured temperament. This reckoning of Celtic relation to the Oromo is corroborated by a historico-etymological nonsense, beginning with the demonstration of a universal semantics of the Gallic root "*gall*" corresponding to the powerful warrior. Its vast ramifications would point to Celtic migration routes across the world, of which are Gallic colonies in Nubia who would have ascended the Nile as far as Ethiopia. According to another missionary historian, J. B. Coulbeaux, Salviac "did not delay to renounce this all gratuitous hypothesis"[45]

At that time, theories of Asiatic migration in Africa constituted a commonly accepted pseudo-scientific reading, made

of a collection of anthropological diffusionism, comparative linguistics, and ideas emanating from biblical history (descendance from Noah), aiming to explain the coexistence of degrees of civilization that were supposed to be unequal. Such a dualist scheme was applied in Ethiopia and continues to prevail under more or less sophisticated forms, by the distinction of Cushitic substrata of a Semitic civilizational contribution.[46] Molded by such a racialist confusion, the schema of Oromo migration was transposed towards the kingdoms of the great lakes when John Speke launched in 1863 the hypothesis of an Oromo origin from the Tutsi,[47] which prefigured the developments of a Hamitic ideology of which we know the tragic consequences. As Dominique Franche has shown with respect to Rwanda, the dichotomous notion between a conquering dominant race and the autochthonous (those held to have sprung from the ground they inhabit) emanated from the French historiographical schema designed by Léon Poliakov as the "war of the two races" which reduced the history of France to the opposition between a nobility of Frankish origin and the inferior Gallic people.[48] The laborious studies of de Salviac therefore represent only an exotic avatar (embodiment) of notions strongly encrusted in the French national imagination.

Without following this hazardous curve, other missionaries have continued to reconcile evangelization and research work of ethnographic or linguistic type on the Oromo.[49] Their results are generally of good empirical quality, but tend to sketch a pure Oromo culture, disconnected from their links with Christian and Muslim societies or polytheist neighbors. This of course presupposes a sort of spiritual virginity of the Oromo favorable to evangelization. The Lazarist Father Lambert Bartels is the missionary researcher who pushed the farthest the study of the ritual and cosmogonic (creation of the universe) experiences of a purely Oromo religiousness, filtered from their Christian or Muslim deposits. His "attempt to un-

derstand" Oromo religion proposes a reconstruction of an Oromo theological system which, according to Paul Baxter, "stands in comparison with (the works) of V. Turner, M. Griaule or P. Temples"[50] Finally, let us note that these research works have generally been undertaken by Catholic missionaries, rather than Protestants, in spite of the strong implantation of the latter in the western part of Oromo land through the Makane Yesus Church [51] Nonetheless, this church played an important role (which remains to be studied) in the awakening of Oromo national movement (notably through literacy and by the propagation of a theology of modernity distinctly opposed to the Ethiopian theology)

This "Oromophiliac" liking is expressed to a lesser degree among the researchers specializing in this society and its history. For a long time, these experts have not spoken out on the symbolic and political discriminations exerted against the Oromo, by virtue of a principle of ethnographic distance, participating in a positivist appreciation of objectivity. With the emergence of Oromo national movement, very active at the beginning of the year 1980, young Oromo intellectuals have violently contested this tacit reproduction of anti-Oromo prejudices emanating, according to them, from the colonial nature of the Ethiopian state [52] This reaction incited "oromist" researchers to better take into consideration this identity suffering. Paradoxically, it was the Ethiopian military dictator who facilitated the rapprochement of Oromo and Western academics, leading the first into exile and restraining accessibility of the second to their terrains. The British anthropologist P. T. W. Baxter is particularly implicated in the explanation of the grievances of Oromo nationalist speeches [53] More generally, the community of oromist researchers has maintained a friendly distance with the nationalist intellectuals. The collective work *Being and Becoming Oromo*, published in 1996,[54] manifested such willingness to associate academic work and militant speeches.

Nationalist Writing of Oromo History

Contemporary Oromo historians have retaken and criticized the literature on the history of the origins of their people in order to reconstitute what might be true from the point of view of the Oromo for whom they deem themselves to be the legitimate spokespersons. We could speak of an "Oromo-centrist" tendency, which is not without resemblance to "Afrocentrism" in vogue in the United States among Afro-American intellectuals. The historian Asafa Jalata has tried indeed to establish in his later work a parallelism between the Black American liberation movements and the Oromo nationalist struggles.[55]

Other than refutation of negative prejudices against the Oromo, the principal issue at stake in nationalist rewriting of history is the reversing of Ethiopian and Ethiopianist historiography, which reduced the Oromo to the role of invaders of the territories of the medieval Christian kingdom. For Oromo intellectuals, that meant a mystification by which the Ethiopian state justified the colonization of Oromo territories by pretending to lead a campaign of re-conquest. The reversing that was undertaken is at first semantic, these authors speaking of migration, not of conquest, and still less of Oromo invasion in the sixteenth century. The re-examination of the sources is also intended to prove the ancientness of Oromo presence in the territories they occupy, to alter the accusation of invasion by claiming autochthony (nativeness): "The claim that the Oromo migrated into Ethiopia is based on an inaccurate historical premise which seeks to establish the original home of the Oromo beyond the boundaries of modern Ethiopia, thus making them 'newcomers' to the country, of which they were the original inhabitants."[56]

The nationalist re-compositions of traditions of origin is today oriented towards a religious shift called *Waaqeffata** (devotion in Oromo language). This movement with delicate contours, which has not yet become a subject of studies, seems to

give birth to the infatuation of urban middle classes, disappointed by the impasse of political nationalism such as that is happening in the present federal framework. The invention of an authentically Oromo religion finds its principles in the track of the work of Bartels. The main informer of this last one, Gemetchu Megersa, titular in 1993 of a Ph. D. from the SOAS of London, today teaching at the Addis Ababa University, is one of the inspirers of this religious revival. By isolating the cardinal values of what he calls *Oromumma* ("Oromoness"),[57] he has in effect conceived of a hermeneutic model (the study of the methodological principles of interpretation) of Oromo cosmogony (creation of the universe), which seems to have exercised some influence on the intellectual environment.

Aquatic Myths

Before these contemporary reformulations of Oromo identity, the Oromo traditions of origins had been the subject of several works of comparative philology. These mythical stories had been compared with diverse sources (Amhara, Somali, Arabs, Portuguese) and indices (linguistics, archeological) in order to open the mystery of the rise of these people in the history of the Horn of Africa.[58] In 1986, U. Braukämper proposed to collect hypotheses on this question and noted that, "The interest (*in the question of origins*) has rather expanded to a broadening public of members of the ethnos itself and progressively starts to entail ideological implications. This fact increases the potential danger that unscientific sources of information are adopted in a stereotype and that a 'feedback' from literary materials on the orally transmitted traditions intensifies."[59] This assertion presupposes that a pure and scientifically more correct memoir exists than the spoken words, which it targets. We think on the contrary that this complexity of representations is part and parcel of the exposition of these myths which, according to A. Triulzi, "reflect the identity to-be rather than the way-we-were of an unchanged past."[60]

We will not analyze here the variations of the myths of Oromo origin across all the collections, but we will be based on those collected by L. Bartels among the Maccaa Oromo. In the analysis of their stories, this author noted the importance of the theme of water, which he proposed to interpret by symbolic association between the notions of humidity and fertility. Without rejecting this hypothesis, we will see the recurrence of aquatic themes as a constitutive trait of historical actuality attributed to the Oromo in the Ethiopian symbolic space.

Bartels first raised that the western parts of Maccaa understand their existence so much as distinct clans starting from the crossing of the Gibe River by their ancestors.[61] We have already seen appear at several times the mentioning of a crossing of a river as a founding episode of Oromo conquest. Since Bahrey, the Galana River has been identified by all sorts of sources, under different denominations (Ganalé, Gallani, Galla ...) as the original habitat of the Oromo. This hypothesis has been reinforced by etymological suppositions on the ethnic name "Galla," *galana* signifying "river" in Oromo language. Antoine d'Abbadie also raised the crossing of the river Awash as the initial act of conquest, whereas the Christian legends describe its banks as the starting place of the dispersion of the Oromo. Without pretending to provide an explanation of this common position, let us note the strategy of Oromo conquest that consisted of circling fluvial valleys, places feared by the Christian armies for their unhealthiness, constituting as a consequence very vulnerable roads to access the highlands.

According to Bartels, the eastern Maccaa do not mention the crossing of river as a fundamental act of their identity, but they think of their origins as an emergence from a "great expanse of water" which certain informers call Wolabo.[62] One of them, Gemetchu Megersa, is cited thus, "*We still say* 'Umen Wolabo baate – life came out of Wolabo.' Our people are born from Lake Wolabo"[63] Bartels does not state that this same

sentence was given word for word in Oromo by Alaqa Taye,[64] who took it from a note by Asmä Giyorgis on the cosmology of the Oromo.[65] Let us pursue here a tangible case of circularity between an oral tradition and its propagation in a bookish and academic direction. Without citing these texts, Bartels gives us a supplementary indication. He notes that, "the youth that have gone to school ... give a name to the 'land on the other side of the water.' Above all they mention Arabia, but sometimes also Madagascar ...,[66] a hypothesis that was also formulated by Asmä and echoed by Tayyä. In the meantime, the extent of the myth of Wolabo seems to go beyond this mode of transmission alone. The marshy lake of Hora (or Madda) Wolabo and the sentence that characterizes it as the source of creation are in effect mentioned by other collections of Oromo traditions.[67] This place is located some fifty kilometers to the east of the big Lake Abaya in the lowlands of the Rift Valley. Its mythological importance is maintained by its status as a sacred place. There lived one of the *Abba Mudda,* "Father of Unction," the most venerated priest of the Oromo religion, whose unction of butter is sought by pilgrims converging from all parts of Oromo land. This pilgrimage has been progressively canceled since the end of the nineteenth century until the 1950s, trends that are being reactivated today.

With respect to the original lake, let us examine the toponym (place name) "Baher Gama" (or "Barigamma") mentioned in Oromo and Amharic traditions as a designation of the land of origin of the Oromo. This word has a mixed etymology of being at the same time Semitic (*baher*, "sea, lake") and Oromo (*gamaa*, "beyond"), the meaning of which fluctuates between the crossing of an extent of water and the reference to a far away land, according to the Amharic word *baher mado* ("overseas, foreign"). In 1847, C. Beke said to have gathered this name in Oromo traditions under the form "*Bargamo*" to which he gave an interpretation rejoining the hypothesis of the crossing of the river.[68] This same place name appeared

toward 1640 in the map drawn by M. de Almeida, just to the north of the indication of "native lands of Galla."[69] We are not seeking here to draw a conclusion on the presumable location of this land of origin. This quest would lead us along other bushy roads. Let us just note that, whatever the signification of the first place name in question is, its interpretation and its transmission in the collective memory as a lake or a maritime concept of Oromo origin confirms the importance of the aquatic theme in the constitution of the mythological place of origins.

To finish with these ricochets, let us cite J. Hultin who has also noted the gestation of the metaphor of water to call up the Oromo from memory in the great stories of Ethiopian national history: "while the Muslims in this rhetoric are associated with extinction through fire, the metaphors employed to describe the Oromo are associated with destruction by water,"[70] i.e. wave, torrent, or flood.

The Threshold Between Oblivion and History

No sooner had they erupted on to the Ethiopian historical scene than the Oromo were taken into an eschatological (the final events in history) vision of history, exacerbated by the confrontation between Christian and Muslim powers that had preceded a little and without a doubt had given impulse to their conquest. The news of this barbarian invasion immediately reverberated in Europe by the accounts of missionaries. This story later on would guide scientific explorers, who observed the Oromo, took for authentic the traditions which they collected and formulated as a learned hypothesis as to their origin. These speculations were particularly picked by Ethiopian historians, largely disseminated by the leading academics, and redirected (and criticized in large part) by university researchers. Denying the completely negative image which had been placed against their people, Oromo intellectuals remained

inside this mythical discourse in order to repair it and to claim back their full belonging to the Ethiopian political scene.

From the cross-breeding of these constitutive accounts of a mythology of Oromo origins, arise three temporalities, three "strata" along which details of this fresco could be distributed. (1) The conquering Oromo first seemed to disengage themselves from the original beat which began to vibrate in the sixteenth century with the shock provoked by the war between the Christian and Muslim states, (2) such a violent torrent, they abruptly fell into the breach opened by the conflict, impossible to deflect from its course, and (3) slowly filtered themselves into the historical humus of the conquered societies. This passage, rapid and violent from the time of myth to that of history, is intimated in all the stories examined by the crossing of an expanse of water, more often a river that could be alternatively compared to the "Rubicon," for a frontier between a segmental society (the Gaul anew!) and an imperial state; to the "Jordan" by the demoniac "retro-baptism" which they have received according to certain Christian traditions; or else yet to the "Lethe" (a river in Hades whose waters cause drinkers to forget their past) for another Oromo tradition ascribes the land of origin to a "word of forgetfulness."[71]

This throwing into abysm as far as the inner walls of forgetfulness brings us back to the echo confounded in our initial inquiries.

Notes

* Translated from: Eloi Ficquet, "La Fabrique des Origins Oromo," *Annales d'Ethiopie* 18 (2002): 55-71

1 A. Triulzi, 1984

2 J. Hultin, 1982 and 1990

3 J. Hultin, 1996:83

4 T. Zitelmann, 1996

5 I use this pejorative redundancy intentionally to return to the description which royal chronicles give to the Galla

6 W. *Conzelman*, 1995:158

7 Paez was a missionary in Ethiopia between 1603 and 1622. By his talent of assimilation of the Ethiopian culture, he succeeded in converting Emperor Susenyos He began writing his *Historia* in 1615, which he completed before his death in 1622 (H. Pennec, 2000:325-47)

8 The same story is reported by Jeronimo Lobo in his *Itinéraire* drawn up in 1639 (J. Lobo, 1971:353) and Manoel de Almeida in his *Historia de Ethiopia a alta ou Abassia,* completed in 1646 (C. Beckingham and G W. B Huntingford, 1954:135). This last work is a rewriting of the *Historia* by Paez, considered to be very polemic (as H Pennec, 2000:350-63, has brilliantly shown).

9. Bermudez was a barber-physician of the first Portuguese Embassy in Ethiopia (1520-26). Staying in Ethiopia, he was charged by King Lebna Dengel in 1935 to solicit the assistance the Vatican and of Portugal to resist the conquest of *Imam* Ahmed Grañ He came back in 1541 with the troop led by Christovâo de Gama Self-proclaimed Patriarch of Ethiopia, his initiative did not receive the approval of the followers of Jesus, and offended Ethiopian clergy He was banished in 1556, transited through Goa, published his memoirs in Lisbon in 1565, where he died in 1570 (H Pennec, 2000:53-60)

10. P. Pais, 1945:286

11 Oviedo was at the head of the first Jesuit mission sent to Ethiopia in 1555 By his intransigent condemnation of the monophysite faith, he was relegated to a place far away from the imperial court, at Frémona in Tigray, where he died in 1577.

12 M de Salviac, 1902:30.

13 Since 1681, Ludolf has brought inquiries from his Ethiopian informer Abba Gorgoryos according to whom the Oromo were descendants of fugitive slaves: "In 1537, a master called Matthew from the kingdom of Bali having mistreated some slaves, they escaped, and in the hopelessness of pardon, began as bandits to run around in Abyssinia, gathering all the criminals and fugitives who wanted to join them" (1684:75-76).

14 W. Isenberg & J L. Krapf, 1843:234.

15 Translations by I. Guidi, 1970b and A Caquot, 1957a: analyzed by A Ferenc, 1988 and A. Triulzi, 1994

16 Bairu Tafla, 1887:81.

17 1930 vol. 1:40-49.

18 A more precise analysis is proposed by A. Triulzi, 1994

19. A. Caquot, 1957b.

20 This monk said he was originally from Gamo, the most southern province of the empire in the 16th century He witnessed the first Oromo invasion, "who destroyed his country." He found refuge with

Emperor Särsä Dengel, for whom he became confessor, and probably chronicler. (Chernestov, 1988)

21. Bahrey, translated by Schleicher, 1893: n. 4 p. 6. I choose here the transcription by Schleicher, who raises an error imputable to the copyist: the text says "came from the west," but the text that follows shows that they are well the provinces of the southeast that are in question. The Galana (or Ganalé) is an upstream of the River Juba. The name signifies "river" in the Oromo language.

22. Bahrey, translated by I. Guidi, 1907a:203.

23. His remarks emanate from an unprecedented audacity for the era when he discredited each class, for example: "the monks (...) countless (...) have no shame of their fear to go to war." "The palace guards (...) are strong men, valiant and robust who, in spite of that, do not go to battle because they say, 'we protect the ladies'!" [Translation by I. Guidi, 1907a:205]

24. Bahrey, op. cit.:205.

25. Title of the article by J. Tubiana, 1987.

26. Asmä Giyorgis (died in 1915) was Menelik's intelligence officer for the Muslim and Oromo regions, then chief of protocol for *Ras* Makonnen of Harar, cf. Bairu Tafla, 1987:54-55.

27. Published by Bairu Tafla, 1987. The text by Asmä, archived at the French National Library (ms. Ethiop. 302), is a 395 page manuscript.

28. Bairu Tafla, 1987:90.

29. Bairu Tafla, 1987:479-81.

30. Ibid.: 207. We will present this theory later.

31. (1860-1924) Originally from Gondar, this literate climbed up the ranks of traditional Ethiopian clerical training, having been educated at the Swedish Evangelical Mission at Emkullu (Tigray). He adhered to Protestant doctrines, without ever being converted to it. In 1905 and 1907, he was the assistant of the semitising E. Mittwoch in Berlin. On returning to Ethiopia, he became an intellectual figure of importance, strongly contested as an apostate, but protected by Emperor Menelik, then by Empress Zawditu.

32. Taye, 1987:62-63.

33. In 1927, 1933, 1955, 1962, 1965, and 1971 without counting the two printing (1987 and 1988) of the English translation which reproduced the original text.

34. G. Hudson & Tekeste Negash in the introduction to Taye, 1987:ii.

35. A descendant of the Oromo dynasty of Moroda of Wallagga, trained in economic sciences in England, he was named to the highest positions of the regime of Haile Sellassie (Minister of Finance, Ambassador to the United States, Minister of Foreign Affairs) from 1941 to

1974, the date when he was executed by the military junta. (Editor's note: In fact, Yilma Deressa was one of Haile Sellassie's ministers who was not executed by the Derg, the military junta that deposed the emperor)

36 Yilma Deresa, 1966

37. Notably by G. W. B. Huntingford, 1955.

38 Bairu Tafla, 1987:207.

39. J. L. Krapf, 1860:72

40. R. Pankhurst, 1976:198-199.

41. J. L. Krapf, 1860:72

42. Let us note that Antoine d'Abbadie's notebook, still unpublished, contains numerous field observations on the Oromo

43. A. d'Abbadie, 1880:172

44 Citation included in the middle of the title by M. de Salviac, 1902

45. J. B. Coulbeaux, 1929: vol. 2, p.153. More recently a theory appeared linking the Oromo language to Basque and ancient Sumerian, C. Granaroli, 1975

46 I have briefly treated the elaboration of these notions in E. Ficquet, 2001:501-502.

47. J. P. Chretien, 1985:135

48 cf. D. Franche, 1985:27-38.

49. See my review (2001) of P. Tablino, 1999 and M. Aguilar, 1998

50 L. Bartels, 1983:4th of the wrapping

51. The Makane Yesus Church, "Abode of Jesus," was established in 1959 by aggregation of Evangelical Lutheran Missions established in Ethiopia

52 E. Ficquet, 1997:71-73

53. See notably P. Baxter, 1983, 1994

54 By P. T. W. Baxter, J. Hultin and A. Triultzi.

55. Asafa Jalata, 2002. This author, Associate Professor of Sociology and African American Studies at the University of Tennessee, represents a hard line of Oromo intellectual nationalism

56 Mohammed Hassan, 1993b:26. The demonstration of Oromo presence in Shawa before the 16th century was developed by Mohammed Hassan, 1993a.

57. See Gemetchu Megersa, 1996

58 C. T. Beke, 1847; P. Paulitschke, 1889; E. Haberland, 1963.

59. U. Braukämper, 1986:28.

60 A. Triulzi, 1990:599.

61. L. Bartels, 1983:59-61. Gibé is the name given to the upstream of the Omo River.

62 *id* :60-62

63 *id* :62
64 Taye, 1987:63
65 Bairu Tafla, 1987:311-313
66 L Bartels, 1983:62
67 Cited by U Braukämper, 1986:34
68 C Beke, 1847:116 The author designated the River Baro , upstream of Sobat, confluence of the White Nile
69 C Beckingham & G Huntingford, 1954:XCVII, see p 220 for the uncertain dating of this map.
70 J Hultin, 1996:86
71 Tulu Walal is in effect another place name of origin mentioned in several collections of Oromo traditions (cf L Bartels, 1983:66-67) generally translated "mountain of forgetfulness," the word *walal* having been derived from the verb *wallaallu* "not to know, to forget." A mountain with this name is found in the west of Wallaga, in the Sayo massif. This site is reputed to be the most sacred in the region, certain traditions indicate that this mountain would be only re-duplication of another site, returning the lands of origin to an inaccessible distant place

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABBA BAHREY IN OROMO STUDIES

A COMMENTARY ON *THE WORKS OF ABBA BAHRIY AND OTHER DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE OROMO**

Mohammad Hassen

The contributions of Professor Getatchew Haile to the study of the Ethiopic calendar, Amharic and other Semitic languages, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Ethiopian history are widely recognized. In addition, he has done an admirable work of systematically cataloguing historical documents on Ethiopia available in foreign libraries and archives. Much less is known about Haile's views about Oromo history, his respect or lack thereof for the Oromo people, their culture, and political and religious institutions. With his translation from Geez into Amharic of the work of Abba Bahrey, the famed Ethiopian historian, and his extensive commentaries on the documents, he has shown his appreciation for the works of Abba Bahrey[1] and expressed his

Journal of Oromo Studies, Volume 14, Number 2 (July 2007), pp. 131-55.
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thoughts on the Oromo. Getatchew Haile deserves our gratitude for making such information easily accessible to all those who do not understand Geez, the classical Ethiopic language

The *Works of Abba Bahriy with Other Documents Concerning the Oromo* is not an easy book, especially for politically conscious Oromo readers. It is a collection of documents that represents the Oromo largely in a negative light, a practice which has remained a constant of Ethiopian historiography since Bahrey penned those pages. Consequently, readers have to approach it with an open mind to how they were interpreted by various scholars to gain a deeper understanding of the events of the sixteenth century. The careful reader will be surprised to learn that some of these documents show the presence of some Oromo groups during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries within the Christian Kingdom of Abyssinia, which is a radical departure from the presentation of early Oromo history within Ethiopian historiography. According to our interlocutor, the book

> ... is primarily a new edition and translation into Amharic and English of the work "*Zenahu Le-Galla*," a Geez study of Oromo society and Oromo migration into central Ethiopia in the sixteenth Century. The author of the text, the monk Abba Bahriy, was an eyewitness to this migration, himself fled his homeland of Gamo when the Galla/ Oromo overran and destroyed it. As such, Abba Bahriy's text is an important first hand account of the social structure of the pastoralists Oromo and the impact of their migration on the existing agrarian communities of central Ethiopia (p. 4)

Two points from the above quotation require careful elaboration. First, in terms of geographic location, central Ethiopia includes the region of what is today Shawa, the heartland of the medieval Christian kingdom of Abyssinia. Haile's work shows the presence of some Oromo groups in Shawa

during the 1330s, and even, possibly much earlier. Second, Abba Bahrey was apparently an eyewitness to the pastoral Oromo sixteenth century migration, which occurred mainly during and after the 1560s. He was not an eyewitness to the events that took place during the first half of the sixteenth century. As will be shown further in this essay, Bahrey was born in 1535 and lived in the province of Gamo, which was raided by pastoral Oromo groups only during the 1570s. Of course, Bahrey was a victim of the pastoral Oromo, who looted all his property and forced him to flee from his province.

It appears that the works published by Haile are intended for the purpose of educating Ethiopians on the events of the sixteenth century, specifically on the conflict between the Christian society and the migrating pastoral Oromo groups. As an educational material, these documents are one-sided. They express the biased views and prejudices of Abba Bahrey and his Christian society towards the Oromo. Useful teaching documents are based on objective, fair, and balanced assessment of events of the conflict of the sixteenth century. Views colored by prejudice are not helpful and some documents in Bahrey's book are potentially damaging as teaching material, as will be shown in this essay. There are nevertheless extracts of these documents that are beneficial as teaching materials.

In more ways than one, the work under review is part of the discursive contest over Ethiopia's past. Haile's extensive commentary on the works of Abba Bahrey makes it clear that the contest over Ethiopian history is as much a contest over the future as over the past. It is probably for that reason that Haile wrote about the good and bad use of history: "History is like fire. It can be used to build and reinforce our house of unity (our nation) or to burn it to the ground."[2] In the *Works of Abba Bahriy*, Haile goes further and stresses the need for controlling history. "Ethiopians, like all people with a rugged history, must be aware which part of their history is in the process of repeating itself. They must allow those parts that

are constructive to flourish and block those that are harmful" (p. 9) Contrary to Haile's admonitions, professional historians know full-well that history never repeats itself in quite the same way. According to John Gaddis, the celebrated American scholar, "the historian's business is to know the past, not to know the future... and whenever historians claim to be able to determine the future in advance of its happening, we may know with certainty that something has gone wrong with their fundamental conception of history."[3]

According to Bahru Zewde, a prominent Ethiopian scholar, "there are few people as obsessed with history as Ethiopians."[4] This obsession is intimately connected with a lack of authentic history, and the state control of what was written about the past. Gabra-Heywat Baykadan, was the first scholar who demonstrated the absence of authentic history in Ethiopian historiography.

> ...[H]istory can be of use only if it is authentic history And it is not easy to write authentic history, for it requires the following three God-given qualities: first, a keen mind to observe past deeds; second, an impartial spirit to pass judgment on them; and third, an impeccable writing style to communicate one's observations and judgments But our historians commit crimes on all three counts. They overlook the important and dwell on the inconsequential They eschew impartiality and embrace bigotry. Their style is so confused that it only confounds the reader.[5]

The works of Abba Bahrey have been "unquestioningly accepted as an authentic source" for the writing of Oromo history for four hundred years. Generations of Ethiopian and expatriate scholars unscrupulously extolled Bahrey's version of Oromo history up to the 1970s. This is now being redressed. Interestingly, the new interest in the works of Abba Bahrey appears to be intimately connected with the two major crises

of the Ethiopian state in the last three decades, both of which have had huge impacts on Oromo history.

The first was the revolution of 1974 which ended the institution of the monarchy, undermined the ideological underpinnings of the Ethiopia state through the separation of the church and state and officially recognized the name Oromo as the historic autonym of the people for the first time in Ethiopian history. The second major crisis was the events of 1991, which transferred the control and domination of the Ethiopian state from the Amhara to the Tigrayan elite. Furthermore, the events of 1991 gave birth to the formation of regional states, including Oromia, along linguistic lines. The establishment of Oromia, as one of the nine regional states within Ethiopia and the use of Qubee, the new Latin-based Oromo alphabet, have increased the apprehension of the Ethiopian elite, which looks ahead to nothing else in the new arrangement but the destruction of what is left of Ethiopia after the de facto separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1991.

It appears that the renewed interest in the works of Abba Bahrey since 1991 may reflect the Ethiopian elite's fear that Oromia may follow the example of Eritrea, thus leading to the disintegration of Ethiopia. Ethiopia will survive in spite of the exaggerated fear for its disintegration, if the rights to self-determination of its entire people, including the Oromo, are respected. The renewed interest in the works of Abba Bahrey shows that the past in which the Oromo were demonized is not dead. The following discussion attempts to show the impact of his work in shaping how the Oromo were perceived by the Amhara and Tigray society for centuries.

Abba Bahrey and the Significance of his "Zenahu Le Galla ("The News of the Galla")

Abba Bahrey was probably the most significant intellectual of his time. Although Bahrey authored other works, it was "Zenahu Le Galla," his 12 page manuscript that made him an

authority on Oromo history. The importance of his manuscript is six fold. First, it contains the first detailed account of Oromo history, their social organization and the course of pastoral Oromo migrations Second, Bahrey's work appears to have inspired at least two Amhara kings of Ethiopia to conduct spirited campaigns against the Oromo Third, Bahrey was the first social historian who analyzed the strength and weakness of the Christian society of his time in context of the contemporary socio-political framework to explain its defeat by the Oromo. Fourth, Bahrey's manuscript dates the arrival of pastoral Oromo on the border of historical province of Bali (on the southern borders of today's Arsi region) during the first quarter of the sixteenth century, thus making them "new comers" to Ethiopia - in utter disregard for the fact that the Oromo were one of the original inhabitants of that land. Fifth, the interpretation of Oromo history since 1593 has been to a large measure influenced by Abba Bahrey's "Zenahu Le Galla," which has achieved almost "canonical status" as an authentic historical source. Sixth, Bahrey was a deeply religious man, who worked assiduously to save the Christian Kingdom from falling under the control of pastoral Oromo. He expressed his feelings about this in his famous "Song of Christ" which he wrote in 1576.

> You elevated [this temple, the country] when she was still young
> Now you let her to be humiliated and her glory to dissipate
> Even though she[this country] Provoked your wrath
> Is she better off in the hands of the nomad?
> How long would it be before you revoke your wrath?
> The books have been burned and incinerated (pp.121-22)

From the above quotation it is clear that Abba Bahrey was a Christian nationalist, who believed that his people had

been punished enough for their sins. Since the Oromo war was not an ideologically motivated religious conflict like the *jihadic* wars of Imam Ahmad (1527-1543), the Oromo had no interest in burning the Christian books, as Bahrey suggest they did. If books were burned, the tragedy was most probably a collateral damage of war. Bahrey's claim that the books had been burned and incinerated was most likely a rhetorical devise for appealing to Christian nationalism. In 1576, when Bahrey composed his long "Song of Christ," he may have believed that his country could be saved through prayer. By 1593, however, Bahrey had realized that prayer alone was not enough to stop the Oromo onslaught. Prayers had to be backed by practical measures to turn the tide against the Oromo. Bahrey articulated the practical measures to be taken in section 19 of his manuscript, which will be discussed further in this essay. This in itself demonstrates that Bahrey was a farsighted intellectual and an original thinker who was ahead of his time.

Although a monk, Abba Bahrey was not a poor man. He had accumulated wealth for his old age, but lost everything he owned when the Borana Oromo ransacked his homeland of Gamo in the late 1570s. Bahrey was then forced to flee to the court of King Sarsa Dengel in Begemeder (1563-1597). The following prayer shows Bahrey never forgot nor forgave the Oromo for looting his property.

> Thank you, O Lord, Thank you
> I thank you by calling your name
> I speak about your graciousness
> Because you protected me
> For you did not let me down
> I beg you that you will not let me down in the future
> I beg you so that you save me
> From the thieves, who wounded me
> They took everything I accumulated for my future
> Please return to me everything
> The enemy took from me(p.39)

It is not clear in Haile's book, whether Abba Bahrey was physically wounded by the Oromo. The prayer probably alludes to the psychological wound of loosing his property and his banishment from his homeland, together with the Christian population of Gamo. What is clear is that Abba Bahrey was engaged in a battle of ideas on how best to mobilize Christian forces against the Oromo. Bahrey's manuscript depicts the conflict between the Christians and the migrating pastoral Oromo as the struggle between good and evil, and ever since has served as the lightening rod for the relentless, ideologically-motivated attack on the Oromo that goes on even today. It is the ideological appeal of Bahrey's manuscript that has made it the most widely read and referenced source on early Oromo history. No other Ethiopian document has been translated into three major European languages, German, French, and English. The manuscript was first translated into Amharic in the 1940s. The 1954 English translation was reprinted in 1992, with a new introduction by Donald Levine. It was again translated into Amharic in the late 1990s by Aleme Eshete. In 2002, the manuscript was once again translated into Amharic and English by Getatchew Haile.

Because of its ideological appeal, the manuscript's accuracy has never been questioned, its ideological stand never challenged, its usefulness as an enduring historical document never doubted. Four hundred years after it was written, the manuscript is the most passionately discussed historic document among Ethiopians, including the Diaspora Ethiopian online community. The passion this manuscript arouses is testament to the authority given to Bahrey's view of Oromo history. In fact, Bahrey's manuscript framed the Abyssinian elite's attitude towards the Oromo as dangerous enemies and vandals of a strong civilization.

Bahrey opens his manuscript with an introduction in which he forcefully and logically justifies his reason for writ-

ing about the Oromo, who were seen as wicked people He writes:

> I (hereby) begin to undertake the studies [I write] of the Galla in order that I may know the number of their tribes, their zeal to kill people, and the brutality of their demeanor. If there is anyone who would say to me: why has he written about the wicked ones like the history of the good? I will give him an answer, saying to him: search in the books , and you will see that the history of Muhammed and the history of the kings of the Muslims have been written, although they are our enemies in religion (p. 195).

Three important points emerge from the above quotation First, Bahrey's unstated message, "know your enemy," is an idea strongly stressed in this manuscript Second, Bahrey's claim of Oromo "zeal to kill people and the brutality of their demeanor" became a fundamental and unifying theme in the literature of the Christian Kingdom of Abyssinia since 1593, an article of faith for those bent on denigrating the Oromo, and an integral part of Ethiopian historiography. Third, Haile replaces the English phrase "the brutality of their demeanor" in previous renditions by "their beastly behavior" in his Amharic current translation. The translator did not explain why his Amharic translation is different from that of the English one. One can only speculate that he wants to telegraph different messages to the English and Amharic language readers? Is it because he wants to provide a more accurate rendition of Abba Bahrey's Geez text as it is understood within its cultural context? Whatever the answer may be, Getatchew Haile approvingly uses "beastly behavior" of the Oromo in his commentary (pp. 75, 82) What is tragic about this "offensively pejorative" description of the Oromo is that there is a strong possibility that Haile's Amharic translation will be used in schools in Ethiopia where Amharic is a medium of instruc-

tion. This means, young Ethiopian students will grow up on the intellectual diet of anti-Oromo prejudice.

The Myth of Oromo Brutality

On the authority of Bahrey's manuscript the purported brutality of the Oromo is exaggerated to a point of grotesque distortion when William Cornwallis Harris, writing in the mid nineteenth century, depicts the Oromo as "barbarian hordes who brought darkness and ignorance in their train "[6] The latest "authority" who characterizes the Oromo as plunderers and destroyers is Getatchew Haile himself

> The Oromo were plunderers and destroyers Destruction of churches and mosques did not give any meaning to them as they were enemy property to be destroyed. Even though their way of life was based on cattle keeping, their mode of living resembles that of primitive people, whose existence was based on hunting and gathering. The only difference is that the Oromo lived in villages, whereas primitive people lived in the wilderness (p. 119)

Apart from Abba Bahrey's manuscript, Haile did not cite a single example of destruction of a church or a mosque by the Oromo. And yet, he presents their alleged destruction of places of worship by the Oromo as a fact. By the mid sixteenth century, the Oromo were neither Muslim nor Christian Therefore, they did not have an ideological motive for destroying churches or mosques. If churches and mosques were destroyed, most probably it was by accident rather than by design. What is more, several historical sources indicate that the Oromo did not destroy places of worship For instance, of the hundreds of shrines in the vicinity of the city of Harar, not a single one was destroyed by the Oromo. In fact, Richard Caulk speculates that the places of worship may have served as neutral grounds where the Oromo settled disputes with their en-

emies.[7] Bahrey's claim that the Oromo destroyed churches was likely a rhetorical devise for mobilizing his Christian society against the Oromo

In the above quotation, Haile compares the pastoral Oromo with hunter-gatherers, describing them as "primitive." Furthermore, there are numerous references in the Christian chroniclers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (sources that Haile cites in his book), which show that professional Abyssinian soldiers were as plunderers and destroyers. According to Merid Wolde Aregay, a respected Ethiopian historian, "judging from the evidence of the chronicles, the brutality of the professional soldiers, be it to decapitate or emasculate men or to enslave women and children, does not seem to have been matched by the reputed savagery of the Galla."[8]

Obviously, Bahrey's exclusive attribution of brutality to the Oromo warrior is not justified. Yet Haile ignores the brutality of Christian soldiers and belabors Bahrey's unfair allegation that the Oromo killed "men, women, horses and mules" (p. 82). Traditionally, the Oromo did kill men in warfare. Killing women, however, was regarded as a cowardly and shameful act an Oromo warrior can not commit. It is an affront to Oromo tradition and a serious cultural taboo, and any perpetrator of such a lowly act would remain an object of ridicule and a laughing stock for the rest of his life. As pastoralists, the Oromo valued horses and mules. They, together with women, children, cows, goats and sheep, were the spoils of war. On Bahrey's authority, Haile claims that the Oromo "... attack[ed] the civilian population mercilessly for humaneness is not part of their culture."(p. 127). Such wholesale condemnation of the Oromo culture is not what is expected of a scholar who has written so much in the field of Ethiopia studies. Every culture, including Oromo and Abyssinian cultures, has an element of brutality as it does sparks of humaneness and all other human dispositions.

Further, Haile claims that Oromo "custom does not counsel against harvesting what one has not sown, rather it seems to encourage it" (p. 146). Taking war booty has been an integral part of the history of warfare among Abyssinians and other peoples across the world. In fact, plundering the peasantry was state policy as well as the sport of the nobility among the Amhara and Tigrayan societies.[9] For Haile, what is universally considered as the right of the victor is an act of a "primitive and destructive" people when it comes to the Oromo. Therefore, he asserts, "... it is unthinkable to expect a primitive people to do what is reasonable for a country with a highly developed civilization and regret the loss of the good that could have happened. Instead, these people, discordant among themselves, caused the disintegration of the government of this country" (p. 158). Thus, Oromo warriors are dubbed "primitive" for not preserving an ostensibly developed civilization. Even though internal factors contributed to the decline of the Abyssinian state, migrating pastoral Oromo groups were blamed for destroying an advanced civilization.

Bahrey ends his seminal work with a single dramatic sentence that captures the main argument of his manuscript "There is no one else who has found an enemy who is (so) zealous to do evil"(p. 213). According to Merid Wolde Aregay, Bahrey exaggerated Oromo eagerness to shed blood, because he "... had suffered from the Galla raids and conquests."[10] Personal vendetta is good enough motive for Bahrey to exaggerate the Oromo zeal to do evil. However, his exaggeration also had an ideological bent, which imbued the manuscript with staying power that was sufficient to influence twentieth century writers. If one juxtaposes the above description with what Edward Ullendorff wrote about the Oromo in 1960, the similarity is very striking. Where Ullendorff has no difficulty blaming the Oromo for their lack of significant material or intellectual culture,[11] Haile has no qualms representing the Oromo as primitive people, pure and simple. While Ullendorff

blames the Oromo for keeping the country in depressed state, Haile points the finger at them for destroying the government of a highly civilized country. From such stand point, it is only a short step to eternally perpetuate the myth of Oromo brutality (p 119).

The Myth of New Comers

Bahrey's slim manuscript starts by stating that "The Galla appeared from the west and crossed the river of their country which they call Gelena [Galana] to the frontier of Bale" [Bali] (p 196). By their country, Bahrey means the region of Harroo Waallaabu. Significantly, Bahrey's information not only makes one section of the Oromo, the Borana, neighbors with the Christian Kingdom, but also places their country squarely within the highlands of southern Ethiopia. The river that Bahrey refers to as Galana has been identified as Wabi Shebelle River,[12] the boundary between the historical province of Bali and the Oromo pastoralists who lived in the vast lands south of that province.

The essence of Bahrey's information was lost on subsequent scholars, who only concentrated on one aspect of his statement about the Oromo attack on the province of Bali. Indeed, internal Oromo evidence attests that the attack took place in 1522. Bahrey was born in 1535 in the province of Gamo and consequently could not have been an eyewitness to the attack. He wrote his slim manuscript in 1593, seventy-one years after the event he describes in it started unfolding. Bahrey did not mention the source of his information. Most likely he gathered it from others sources. The year 1522 is nevertheless important in a sense that it encapsulates the mounting of pastoral Oromo pressure on the Christian kingdom. It is plausible that Bahrey was describing the events of the second half of the sixteenth century when pastoral Oromo hemmed in the Christian kingdom.

Irrespective of its inherent shortcomings, Bahrey's dramatic story of the Oromo arrival on the border of Bali became the single most important evidence in establishing the Oromo arrival on the border of the Christian Kingdom in or around 1522. Over time, this story was transformed into the sixteenth century arrival of the Oromo. Though obviously based on an unreliable account, the story became accepted as the canonical truth of Ethiopian historiography and the Oromo were conveniently made "new comers to Ethiopia."

Not surprisingly the year 1522 became the "beginning of Oromo history," presumably because of their encounter with the Christians. Contrary to Bahrey's assertion, there are written sources showing the presence of some Oromo groups within the medieval Christian kingdom during the fourteenth century and possibly as early as the thirteenth century, more than two hundred years before the time of Abba Bahrey. What is over looked is the fact that Bahrey wrote his manuscript for the purpose of inspiring Christian resistance against the Oromo. For Bahrey, the struggle between the Christians and the Oromo was the struggle between good and evil. That was how he concluded his manuscript. "There is no one else who has found an enemy who is (so) zealous to do evil; and there is no one else who has found a master and a king who is (so) zealous to do good" (p. 213).

There is no doubt Abba Bahrey's manuscript is an original historical document. However, originality does not imply that the manuscript is free of inaccuracies. In fact, Bahrey's manuscript has never been examined seriously for its historicity. When subjected to critical examination, Bahrey's manuscript exhibits inaccuracies on several important points. Here it should suffice it to say that Bahrey's writing reflected his own prejudice and that of his society towards the Oromo. His writing by no means was the only way in which the negative image of the Oromo was shaped; but it was certainly an important element in the consolidation of the typical image of

the Oromo, the hallmark of which was "the brutality of their manners."[13] His manuscript provides a political vocabulary and its message is uniform and cohesive. The manuscript shaped Abyssinian attitude towards the Oromo as "merciless damanya (murderous),"[14] enemy of the Amhara, an attitude that has demonstrated a remarkable staying power. For instance, Afawarq Gabra-Iyyasus (one of the intellectuals of early twentieth century Ethiopia) wrote that Ethiopians (Amhara and Tigrayans) treat the Galla as less than human. [A Galla] is hassled like a dog that has trespassed into a church."[15] Margery Perham, writing in the 1960s, noted that the Galla were regarded as "heathens and enemies fit only for massacre or enslavement."[16] According to Asma Giyorgis, Ethiopian nobility and the Orthodox Church clergy "treat the Galla like slaves."[17] Importantly, Bahrey wrote his manuscript as a political document to save the Christian kingdom from falling under Oromo control. Subsequent scholars used it as a historical source to parlay their own prejudices and to advance their own political purposes, which were not very different from those of Bahrey himself.

The Myth of Divine Punishment

In section 19 of his manuscript, Bahrey presents the core of his argument by focusing on the root cause of why the Oromo defeated the Christians. He writes

> The knowledgeable ones make an extensive inquiry, asking 'How is it that the Galla defeat us, although we are many, and many are our arms?' There were those who said, 'God has allowed them because of our sins.' And there were those who said, 'it is because of our nation's division into ten classes. Nine of these do not come close to any battle, and they are not ashamed of their fear. But *the tenth class battles and fights to the best of its ability.* Although our number is big, those who can fight are few,

and those who do not come near the battle are many (p 209).

Bahrey developed his argument logically and succinctly, explaining the Oromo victory in terms of numerical disparity between the Christian and Oromo fighting men. He also suggested that the entire Oromo population was mobilized as a single body to wage war against the Christians. As the above quotation indicates, Bahrey located a decisive factor in the class structure of the Christian society of the time. He articulated what he regarded as the core weakness of the Christian defense system and presented the nine non-fighting classes of his society in the following dramatic manner

> One of these is the party of the monks, who are countless. There are those who become monks in their youth, when monks lure them while they are studying, like (the case of) the writer of this essay and those like him. There are also those who become monks because of fear of battle. The second group is called debetera. They study scriptures and all the professions of the clergy; and they clap their hands and stamp their feet; they are not ashamed of their fear. They take as their model the Levites and priests, namely, the sons of Aaron. The third group called jan hatsena and jan measere; These [claim to] guard justice and guard themselves from battle. The fourth is the group of deggafoch of the women of the dignitaries and the royal ladies, powerful men and strong young men, they do not come near the battle, they say 'We are attendant to the women.' The fifth group is called shimagille, geze,[" class of the landlords"] and beale rist ["the landowners, one of the two classes"] They give a portion of their land to the peasant and demand his services; they are not ashamed of their fear. The sixth group is the peasants. They spend their day in the fields and are oblivious about fighting. The seventh group is those who benefit themselves from commerce. They make

> profit for themselves. The eighth group is the artisans, such as the smiths, scribes, tailors, carpenters and their likes. They do not know fighting. The ninth group is the minstrels, those who play the gende kebero and the begena, who making begging a profession. They bless the one who rewards them; they give him vain glory and idle praise. And when they curse the one who does not reward them, thy are not charged, for they say, 'This is our tradition.' They keep themselves very far from battle. The tenth group is those who carry the shield and spear. These can do fighting, and 'follow the steps of the king to run.' Because of the fewness of these, our country is destroyed (pp. 209-10).

Bahrey thus presents in graphic detail the disparity in terms of fighting men between the Christians and the Oromo. The disparity may have been exaggerated; indeed for Merid Wolde Aregay, it is a myth created by Bahrey for a purpose.[18] When Bahrey writes, "it is because of the fewness of our fighting men that our country is destroyed," he is suggesting that the number of fighting men needed to be increased. He tries to drive the point home in three simple but eloquent sentences: "The Galla on the other hand, do not have any of these nine classes which we have mentioned. All are trained in warfare, from the small to the big. For this reason they destroy us and kill us." (p. 210).

It is clear that an important thesis of Bahrey's manuscript is not about Oromo strength *per se*, but the weaknesses of the Christian that facilitated Oromo victories, even though the former were more numerous and better equipped than the Oromo. Bahrey's interest in Oromo social organization was to understand the strength of their society. His discussion of the Christian society's military weakness was to encourage his people to turn their weakness into strength. Abba Bahrey was a truly keen observer, blessed with a deep sense of history, and highly articulate in expressing his ideas. His goal was to

stimulate Christian nationalism and challenge the Christian leadership to understand the secret of Oromo strength and the weakness of their society. His presentation of unparalleled disparity between the Christian and Oromo fighting men was meant to provide weight for his message in his attempt to impress upon the Christian leadership the moral imperative of increasing the size of Christian fighting men.

There is no doubt that Bahrey's "Zenahu Le Galla" exerted a strong influence on King Za-Dengel (1603-1604), who believed in Abba Bahrey's principle of resistance against the Oromo.[19] Giving his time and energy to implementing those ideas, Za-Dengel not only conducted spirited campaigns against the Oromo, but also proclaimed the most revolutionary decree of the seventeenth century, a call to full mobilization that was directly based on the content and spirit of Bahrey's "Zenahu Le Galla."

> If every man who is of age who lives in any land of my kingdom does not come, not only the chawa, whose task has always been warfare, but also the farmers as well as the retainers of the ladies, and the servants of the monks, if any one stays behind and does not heed this call-up, his house shall be pillaged and his property confiscated. All men who were of age for fighting and who carried instruments of war came and joined him. None stayed behind in the villages except the lame, the paralyzed, the blind and the sick. The retainers of the lords, he took all of them, and he made them chawa and called them Malak Hara.[20]

In Za-Dengel's proclamation, all classes mentioned by Abba Bahrey, even servants of the clergy were not excluded. Therein lies the tremendous impact of Bahrey's "Zenahu Le Galla," whose revolutionary measures "testify that he [Za-Dengel] not only knew, but shared the ideas of Bahrey."[21]

On the whole, Bahrey's manuscript appears to have had three goals. The first was to educate the Christian leadership on the source of Oromo military strength. The second is to turn the Christian society's source of weakness into its strength. Third, Bahrey characterized the Oromo as a dangerous enemy to be defeated, and wrote the following prayer for their defeat in 1576.

> Oh Christ, the fountain head of life
> Have mercy on your people, dislodge their enemy
> Gather them from scattering
> The wayward deserves mercy, the beggar a helping hand
> Please do not do to us what the prophets have spoken
> "Even when they stand in supplication before me
> As the righteous ones of the Old Testament - Noah, Job and Daniel
> I will not forgive this people"
> Even though our sin is heavy
> Heavier than the righteousness of these great ones
> Remember your mother's purity
> For that alone transcends everything
> Remember the scars of your hand
> To have mercy on us and to deliver us
> The only Child of God the father (pp. 121-22).

It is thus important to note what Bahrey wrote as a political document for his time to goad his king, mobilize his people, and defend his country, became the single most important source used to represent the Oromo as the eternal threats of the Ethiopian state. It had a political purpose then, and continues to do so.

Crucial Revelations

Despite several weaknesses, highlighted in this short essay, *The Works of Abba Bahriy and Other Documents Concerning the Oromo* is a very important and useful work. It is hoped that critical readers will be able to put some of the offensive lan-

guage in these documents in the context of the realities of the writer's time and salvage the critical information they contain about the Oromo.

Several points are worth mentioning which establish the presence of Oromo groups within the medieval Christian kingdom much earlier than hitherto known. First, Haile presents evidence that firmly establish interaction between the Christian community and some Oromo groups in the region of Shawa in the fourteenth century, and possibly in thirteenth century. The first of this interaction deals with the origin of the term Galla itself. In one Geez hagiography, which is believed to have been written in the 15th century, possibly earlier, there is a reference to a people called Galle [22] Who were the Galle? It is tempting to suggest that Galle was the early form in which the term Galla came into Christian church literature. Haile writes that:

> The term 'Galat' exists in the Geez language. But I am not sure if 'Galla" has any relationship with the Geez 'Galat.' In Geez,' Galat' is the plural form which means a horde. Earlier sources invariably refer to the Oromo as 'Galla," regardless of the number of the referent. Recent sources employ the plural 'Galat'('horde') or 'Galloch,' even then only rarely. Therefore one cannot state with certainty that 'Galat' was the plural form of 'Galla'. In any event, it is probable that 'Galat ' is the plural form of 'Galla' because, first, it shows the antiquity of the word, and second it will be shown that the word is used in the sources interchangeably with the Oromo loan word 'chifra'(horde), which is used to mean 'storming or disorderly movement.' (p.102)

Second, Haile makes another interesting observation that is relevant to this discussion. He compares the Zagwe (1150-1270) administration to that of the forty-year cycle of the *gada* system.

> It is probably that the Zagwe possessed an administration similar to the Gada system For instance, there are two separate lists indicating the reigns of various (Zagwe) kings Seven of the eleven kings in the first list and eight of the nine kings in the second reigned for forty years each. It is highly likely that the forty-year reign signifies a period in office It is very unlikely that the similarities are a matter of mere coincidence In addition, attributing the similarities to a scribe's error cannot be a satisfactory explanation (p. 101)

This passage indicates not only possible contact between the Zagwe rulers of Ethiopia and the Oromo, but also the likelihood that the term Galla probably came into use during the Zagwe period.

Third, citing his own previous work, Haile refers to a Galla group, described in his sources as trouble makers, living within the Christian kingdom during the last quarter of the thirteenth century or the early fourteenth century.[23] This is supported by Alaqa Tayya who attests the presence of some Oromo groups with the Christian kingdom during the reign of Widm Asferre (1299-1314).

> [D]uring the second year of his reign, when the Galla on one hand and the Muslims on the other rose up and wreaked havoc on them, the king, the officials, and the clergy got together and counseled in unity to make peace with these Muslims of Yifat[Ifat] and Wello[Wallo] in order to combat only the Galla. They not only counseled, but indeed made peace with the Muslims (p. 233).

There was a precedent for such a Christian-Muslim alliance. Common enmity against the "pagan" Kingdom of Damot and common economic interest had led to the creation of an alliance between the Amhara leaders of Betal Amhara and the Muslim leaders of Shawa. It was thus with Muslim support

that Yikunno Amlak (1270-1285) defeated and killed the last Zagwe king and established the new Amhara dynasty in 1270.[24]

Fifth, in 1332, Amda Siyon (1314-1344), the son and successor of Widm Asferre and the grandson of Yikunno Amlak reported to have led military expedition into the Hagara Galla (the country of the Galla). According to Haile, it is recorded in King Amda Siyon's chronicle that:

> "During his reign he had been to the country of the Galla. On April 28 [1332], the king first passed through and reached the Galla country. On June 7, he left the Galla country, along with his army. These statements refer to the king's movement within the country. They do not imply that the king ever left Ethiopia" (p. 26)

Finally, Haile makes a startling statement that has tremendous significance for Oromo history. He writes: "Perhaps an apparently difficult circumstance they have encountered might have forced the Oromo to leave Ethiopia and move further south" (p. 26). By Ethiopia, Haile means the medieval Christian kingdom, which was significantly smaller than modern Ethiopia. From the time he arrived until the time he left Hagara Galla (the country of the Galla), Amda Siyon appears to have stayed in this district which is located near Dawaro. This district must have been heavily cultivated and densely populated to sustain the king's large army for five weeks. By providing the above mentioned information, Haile confirms the Oromo presence in the region of what is today Shawa before and during the reign of Amda Siyon. There are also other sources that, because of space limitations cannot be discussed here, establish the presence of some Oromo groups in or around Hagara Galla.

From this perspective, it is not out of place to suggest the need for a paradigm shift in Ethiopian historiography as suggested by Ayele Bekerie:

> "Contrary to the popular beliefs that describes the Oromos as sixteenth century immigrants and settlers in the Ethiopian highlands, the Oromos appeared to be as ancient and indigenous, just like the Amhara, the Tigreans, Agaws and the Bejas."[25]

Such a radical paradigm shift in Ethiopian historiography will make the Oromo and other people of Ethiopia conscious of their dignity, unity in diversity, and promotes respect for each other's cultural heritage and strengthen mutual understanding. As an optimist, I have a strong faith in the ability of people to rise above and go beyond the system that has made them ignorant of each other's cultural heritage. It is through knowledge and understanding that a bridgehead of tolerance is built between peoples. It is also through the search for truth and knowledge that we will be able to see intellectually beyond past injustices, and to envision a better future for all the people of Ethiopia.

Notes

* Citations given in the text are based on, "Ya abâ Bâhriy dersatoè: Oromoèen kamimalakatu léloè sanadoè gârâ." (*The Works of Abba Bahriy and Other Documents Concerning the Oromo)* Translated with commentary by Getatchew Haile, (Kolegville, Minnesota, self-published, 2002) I would like to thank Professor Getatchew Haile for his generous gift of two free copies of this book. I would like to thank Professor Ezekiel Gebissa for his help with translation of the Amharic material into English

1. The standard spelling for the author, whose name Haile spells as Bahriy, is Bahrey. In order to avoid confusion, I use the standard spelling in this article, except when quoting directly from Haile's book

2. Getatchew Haile, "Getachew Haile's Response to Aleme" December, 7, 2001, sent to: ethiopia@home.ease.lsoft.com at(http://wwweedn.org): page. 2 I have a number of documents in my possession sent to the above mentioned web in 2001 discussing about Oromo history based on Bahrey's manuscript

3. John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University, 2002.): 58.

4 Bahru Zewde, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist intellectuals of the Early twentieth Century* (Oxford: James Currey and Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002): 141.

5 Ibid. p 24.

6. W.C Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia*, Volume III (London: 1844), 72-73

7. Richard Caulk, "Harar Town and Its Neigbours in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of African History* 13: 3 (1977): 372.

8. Merid Wolde Aregay, "Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom, 1508-1708, With Special Reference to the Galla Migrations and their Consequences" Ph.D Diss. University of London, 1971, 479-80.

9 Donald Crummey, "Banditry and Resistance: Noble and Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Ethiopia" Donald Crummey ed. *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*. (London: James Curry, 1986), 137

10 Ibid.

11. Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians. An Introduction to Country and People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 73

12 A. S Schleicher, *Geschichte der Galla Bericht eines abessinischen Monches uber die Invasion der Galla im sechzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin1893), 17. Quoted in Baitu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and His Work: History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Sawa* Trans. and ed. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, GMBH, 1987), 137 note 166.

13. Abba Bahrey, "History of the Galla." In C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford, *Some Record of Ethiopia, 1593-1646* Trans. and ed. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1954), 111

14 Leenco Lata, "Peculiar Challenges to Oromo Nationalism." In Asafa Jalata ed., *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse The Search for Freedom & Democracy* (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1998), 129

15. Quoted in Zewde, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia*, p 131

16 Margery Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia* (London: Faber and Faber1969), 300.

17 Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and His Works*, 125.

18. Merid Wolde Aregay, "Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom," 315.

19. S. B. Chernetsov, "The History of the Gallas and Death of Za-Dengel, King of Ethiopia (1603-1604)." *IV Congress Internazionale di studie Ethiopici* (Roma, 1974), 803-808

20 F. M E Pereira, *Chronica de Susenyos, Rei de Ethiopia*, 2 volumes (Lisbon, 1900) Translated and quoted by Merid Wolde Aregay, "Southern Ethiopian and the Christian kingdom," 398

21. Chernetsov, "The History of the Gallas," 806

22. J. Halevy, "Notes Pour l'histoire d' Ethiopia le Pays de Zague," *Revue Semitique* 4 (1897): 275-84
23. Getatchew Haile, "Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts," Vol. IX, 270 (Quoted in Haile, *The Works of Abba Bahriy*, 27)
24. Sergew Hable-Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa Printing Press, 1972): 254
25. Ayele Bekerie, "Ethiopica: Some Historical Reflections on the Origin of the Word Ethiopia," *The International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 1: 2 (2004): 116

Book Reviews

Seyoum Hameso and Mohammed Hassen, eds. *Arrested Development in Ethiopia: Essays on Underdevelopment, Democracy and Self-Determination*. Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2006. Pp. x+335. $34.95 (paperback).

Development may be broadly defined as the transformation of economic and social institutions for the public good through the mobilization of natural and human resources. The concept also involves generating wealth, improving the living condition of citizens through an equitable distribution of wealth, and creating a sound policy environment that promotes growth. Success depends on building the necessary infrastructures, good governance, participatory democracy, and a responsible state. Failure to achieve these stifles both economic development and democratic politics. The contributors to *Arrested Development* collectively argue that these conditions have not been met in Ethiopia because of the repressive nature of the Ethiopian state. With an excellent introduction by the editors setting the

tone for the book, the contributors engage in a discussion of issues pertaining to democracy, self-determination, and underdevelopment in terms of political repression and absence of good governance

The book has twelve chapters, an introduction, a prologue and a conclusion written by ten authors from different disciplines. For convenience, it is divided into three parts: social and political history; contemporary political economy, and nationalism; democracy and self–determination. The articles deal with the common historical experiences of four ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia– the Oromo, Sidama, Somali and Shekacho - and the life experiences of the authors. The authors try to expose the multiple faces of oppression that their respective ethnic groups suffered under successive Ethiopian regimes, supported by local collaborators such as Gobena Dache under Menelik and several political organizations affiliated with the ruling party under the current regime. Their conclusion is that political repression and misrule has arrested development in the conquered regions.

To maximize their exploitation of the conquered people, Ethiopian rulers periodically changed tactics and strategies of their rule; imperial system under Menelik and Haile Sellassie, socialism under Mengistu, and "federal colonialism" under the current regime. The rulers were also supported by global capitalism and Western powers to 1974 and since 1991. The Soviet Union filled that role between 1974 and 1991 (Hamdesa Tuso, Temesgen Erena, Asafa Jalata) In the opinion of the authors, external assistance, particularly from the United States, was crucial for the survival of Ethiopian regimes, including the current one. Referring to contradictions in US foreign policy vis-à-vis the legitimate Oromo cause, Tuso rightly questions why the United States stood on the side of the Bosnians and Kosovo Albanians against Serbian state terrorism, but lost its sense and sided with the Ethiopian government that terrorized the Oromo nation.

The experiences of the Sidama people under Abyssinian regimes, the modes of resistance and the rise of Sidama nationalism is presented by Seyoum Hameso and Mulugeta Daye. Mohammed Hassen and Abdurahman Mahdi provide respectively a historical survey of the rise of Oromo and Somali nationalism. Trevor Truman and Asafa Jalata analyze the extent and consequences of Ethiopian state terrorism, which they characterize as genocidal and racist. The latter term appears to be a fledgling concept, yet to be fully developed to explain the Ethiopian situation.

Notwithstanding the diversity of issues the authors addressed, this book has serious shortcomings. First, in spite of the editors' carefully crafted introduction, the book is full of repetitions. The theme of Seyoum Hameso's piece in "Myth and Realities of the Ethiopian State" is literally replicated in every chapter. Moreover, his two other chapters can be merged into one since they deal essentially with the same issues. Mohammed Hassen's "history of Oromo nationalism" is repeated by Jalata under a different tile, "Oromo movement." A considerable part of Jalata's chapter can be read in Truman contribution while Daye and Hameso echoed one another.

Second, only three contributors (Erena, Bulcha, Shana) provided conclusions that connected their discussion to the themes of the book. Erena attempted to apply quantitative methods to measure the level of underdevelopment in Oromia. Using a sociological analysis, Mekuria Bulcha describes the predicament of Oromo refugees from the time of their displacement to their destination in different parts of the world. All other authors focused on the "democracy and self determination" theme of the book, leaving the topic of underdevelopment explored inadequately. Even the long "Conclusions[*sic*]" failed to reflect back on the thesis of the book. The conclusion does not seem to accord well with the themes outline in the introduction

Third, the reliability of some figures in the text is questionable. First, Achame Shana has not provided compelling evidence for the astonishing gender ratio imbalance of the Shekacho, 75% female and 25% male (85) and for the number that 100,000 Shekacho were recruited into the Derg army (88) What was the total population of the Shekacho at the time of the census? Second, the evidence Jalata cited to support his point that Ethiopia "...liquidated half of the Oromo population (five million out of ten million] ..." (280) is hard to substantiate. He cites de Salviac (the whole book) as his source. Since what we are dealing with here is hard numbers, not a broad concept or idea, Jalata needs to indicate the specific page of the source so that readers can easily check the information. Even then, one would be hard pressed to know the methodology by which de Salviac himself came up with hard numbers to accept the authenticity of the figure. Third, citing an obscure source, Jalata reckons that "less than 0.01% Oromos received modern education out of the total population of about thirty million" (283). Converted into real numbers, 0.01% of thirty million is 3,000. Without bothering to find statistical evidence, one can easily count 3,000 Oromos who have attained modern education in the 1990s. In a nutshell, the fact that Oromo, Somali, Shekacho and all other southern peoples were oppressed and exploited by Ethiopians does not need to rely on a parade of unfathomable figures to be credible

On balance, the book is an important addition to the study of the conditions of the people of southern Ethiopia In as much as it is authored by a group of southern scholars, with a common historical experience (repression) and a common goal (freedom), it provides a context for forging the disparate southern nationalisms that now exist into a single *southern nationalism* to realize their common development and political objectives. Finally, selected chapters can be used as case studies by scholars teaching African history to students who have no idea

about the dark side of Ethiopia's political and economic systems.

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Negaso Gidada, *History of the Sayyo Oromoo of Southwestern Wallaga, Ethiopia from about 1730 to 1886*. Addis Ababa: Mega Printing Enterprise, 2001. 288 pages.

This book is a slightly expanded version of the author's Ph.D thesis completed at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University in 1984. Negaso Gidada was the first president of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and a controversial figure in Oromo politics. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he was an active member and later chairperson of the Union of Oromo Students in Europe (UOSE) at the same time I was the secretary of the organization. In those days, Gidada was a firebrand Oromo nationalist and a strong supporter of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Around 1982, he became alienated from UOSE, and subsequently went through a political metamorphosis. He embraced communism and later joined the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (OPDO), the organization created by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) to serve as a counterweight to the OLF and other independent Oromo political organizations. Since 1991, Gidada has held several high level offices in the Ethiopian government.

In the preface to the book, Gidada wrote so glowingly about the political situation in Ethiopia.

> The social and political realities that prevailed at the time when I was working on this thesis have now changed for the better. The Oromo people and indeed all other peoples of this country have liberated themselves from the op-

> pressive rulers. The people's right to self-determination has been guaranteed by law. Today human and democratic rights enjoy legal protection throughout the country. Our people are now running their own domestic affairs through self-rule. This is also the right being fully enjoyed by the Oromo people. The country has for the most part, moved into a historically new chapter as our people continue to cruise along the road to progress (p. VIII)

Two months after writing this optimistic passage, Negaso Gidada was disgraced and unceremoniously removed from his leadership position in the OPDO. Ethiopia indeed turned a page in 1991 not for a better future for all its citizens as Gidada described in May 2001, but in the sense that the domination and control of the Ethiopian state effectively passed from the Amhara to the Tigrayan elite. Toady, Gidada himself would not vouch that Ethiopia has changed for the better.

To his credit, Gidada published the book while in office, bravely challenging the fundamental premise of Ethiopian historiography concerning early Oromo history. The book has nine chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the human and physical setting of Sayyoo, including its climatic conditions, natural resources, and human settlement patterns. In chapter 2, the author discusses Oromo presence in the region of Shawa going back to the twelfth century, challenging the conventional wisdom in Ethiopian historiography that the Oromo arrived in the medieval Christian kingdom during the first half of the sixteenth century. Based on written Christian sources in conjunction with Oromo oral traditions, Gidada states that "...Oromo groups were living in north and central Shawa at least from the Gibe up to the lower Awash during the Zague period (1137-1270) and during the reign of ... Yekuno Amlaak [*sic*] (1270-1285) Amda Tsiyon[*sic*](1314-1344), Zara Yaaqob (1434-1468) and Lebna Dengel (1508-1540)" (pp. 29-30).

Gidada goes even further and claims that "...the Oromo may have constituted the majority of the population"(p. 42) in some districts of Shawa during the fifteenth century. Even though it is hard to substantiate the accuracy of Oromo majority, the evidence is clear that some Oromo clans lived in Shawa during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Taddesse Tamrat has long ago identified the people of Galan and Yaya who lived near Mount Yaya, somewhere east of Katata, where St. Takla Haymanot baptized them in the River Meesot.[1] Galan and Yaya are two Oromo clans and the place names of where they lived are unmistakably of Oromo origin. According to Gidada, the Galan and Yaya were,

> ...living in Shawa not far from Dabra Berhan during the reign of Amda Tseyon [*sic*] and during the expansion of Christianity in the region. From the sacrificial food they used then, it can be assumed that the Yaayyaa [Yaya] and the Galaan [Galan] cultivated wheat and raised cattle, goats and sheep. The name of their god 'Qorkee' was certainly an Oromo term, which had two meanings. One meaning of qorkee refers to the name of a type of antelope The second meaning of qorkee is the name of the Oromo month of February/March (p. 38).

In standard Ethiopian historiography, the Oromo were never credited for participating in the sixteenth century religious conflict between the Christians and the Muslims in Ethiopia. Gidada states without hesitation that the Oromo did take part in that conflict.

> That the Oromoo participated in the wars of Gragn is indisputable. Although Gragn was defeated and killed, the balance of power between Christians and Muslims certainly favored the Oromoo. They did not only liberate their regions to which the Christian state had expanded, but were also able to defend their independence until the European powers intervened by equipping the Christian

> state with modern weapons in the late 19th century (from the back cover of the book)

Chapters 3 to 6 deal with the history of the pre-Oromo inhabitants of the Wallagga region, the history of the settlement of the Sayyoo in Qellem, their traditional economic life, their gada system, qallu institution, and their legal system. These chapters are more ethnographic descriptions than historical analysis. Chapter 7 deals with the profound transformation of the Sayyoo Oromo mode of production, diversification of their economy, division of labor, and social differentiation, all of which facilitated the process of political centralization and the formation of state.

Chapter 8 discusses the formation of the Galaan kingdom by Abbaa Dhaasaa, who conquered various war leaders and established his hegemony, roughly between1860 and 1885. Through conquest, Abbaa Dhaasaa strengthened the economic base of his kingdom by expanding handcraft industry, controlling trade routes and market centers, and improving the training of its military force. The final chapter deals with the rise of the Sayyoo state and its decline under Jootee Abbaa Igguu of Leeqaa. Around 1885, the region fell under the Shawan Amhara rule spearheaded by the famous Ras Gobana.

Gidada ends his book with the following quotation, offering an explanation for the defeat of the Sayyoo

> One important reason was the military support whereby European imperialist powers enabled Menelik II to conquer the Oromoo. A second reason, as important as the first, was the internal rivalry between the ruling families and leading individuals of the area of our concern. Their selfishness made people suffer under their own rule and it enabled alien occupants to established an even harsher administration [for the defeat of the Sayyoo](239)

The book has several short comings. First, great strides have been made in Oromo studies since Gidada completed

his thesis in 1984. The book nevertheless did not take full advantage of nearly two decades of scholarship. The book is not much of an improvement over the thesis. Second, the style of writing could have improved if the manuscript was subjected to the rigors of a professional editor's pen. Third, the author mixes up English and Oromoo spellings, confusing readers who are not familiar with Oromo orthography. Fourth, the book has no index and has limited use for a researcher looking for a quick reference. Despite these weaknesses, this is a very useful book and a welcome addition to the growing literature on Oromo studies

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NOTES

1 Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972): 184

Bahru Zewde. *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century.* (Eastern African Studies.) London: James Currey; Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press; and Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press. 2002. Pp. xii, 228 $49.95.

Despite 20 years of gestation period, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia* delivers far less than it promises. The author devotes the first chapter to the concept of modernization and the role of intellectuals. He then explores the Westernization, adoption of modernization, of non-Western empires such as Russia, Japan, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, and Thailand. All these countries exhibit certain historical similarities and parallels. The reader would expect the whole point of comparison is to take

these unique situations into account and put them into context for understanding what modernization meant in Ethiopia This would mean exploring what modernization portended for peasants. It would have meant examining the extent to which the "pioneers of change" in central Ethiopia opened the eyes of the public to the contemporary feudal system It would have meant explaining whether or not the modernizing intellectuals affected the thinking of the Coptic Christians of highland Ethiopia.

Anyone expecting to be enlightened on these fundamental questions would be disappointed The author provides biographical sketches of people whose background is for the most part metropolitan and whose experiences involve those of a self enriching entrepreneurs. Bahru rarely takes into account the glaring contrasts between the petrifying educational system in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Quranic Schools in the empire. He could have mentioned the Quranic schools whose curriculum included arithmetic and science, and that the schools were accessible to all irrespective of race, class or gender. But these truly pioneering institutions did not fit Bahru's purpose and narrow focus.

The author's disregard for the role of Islam and Muslims in Ethiopia is a serious let down for the informed reader. Though they constitute more than half the population in the Ethiopian Empire, Muslims have largely been excluded from the chronicle of history. Said Mohammed Abdullah Hassen, whom the British called Mad Mullah, was educated in the walled city of Harer. Not mentioned at all are people like Hajji Abdul Rahaman Sheik Qasim. Renowned for his formidable intellect, Sheik Qasim started his education in Harer before he went on to the Middle East for further studies. Sheik Bakrii Saphalo, the most comprehensively educated Muslim intellectual of his time studied in the ancestral shrines of Bale and Arsi, before his pilgrimage to Mecca and stayed there to study under the learned men of the Holy City. But then, the Muslim tradi-

tional schools were not a match for the debtera schools in Bahru's book.

Even when turning to an analysis of the Christian highlanders, Bahru narrowly focuses on Hakim Wärkenäh and Heruy Wolde Sellassie and their scions. Wärkenäh, though Ethiopian by blood was an Englishman of genial disposition. Heruy was a homegrown dabtara and a self-made man full of vile intrigue. Given their differences, how was it possible for both of them to form a concrete intellectual fraternity while philosophically and spiritually at loggerheads? At other times, Bahru's focus seems broader and more inclusive. For example, there is a difference of twenty-six years in age between Wärkenäh and Makonnen Endalkachew, yet both are lumped together in the first generation of the pioneers of change. Memire Dasta Gwalu of Gojjam, a teacher of Empress Zawditu and father of Dejazmatch Makonnen Dasta, should have been included, with a host of others in the category of the first generation. The generational organization of the book makes the reader utterly confounded.

While the author rhapsodizes Heruy's seminal writings, he ignores the man's track record which demonstrates that he was as corrupt and venal as Makonnen Habt-Wald, the infamously mysterious private spymaster of Haile Sellassie. Nowhere does Bahru mention Heruy's legendary nepotism and shameless sycophancy. He seemed never to find fault with anything related to Haile Sellassie nor Ras Kassa. The same Heruy once ordered his driver on a sizzling hot day to beat a poor lady en route from a busy market to her home for carrying a red umbrella over her head. That an ordinary woman dared to use a red umbrella, reserved only for the king and the nobility, was an outrageous affront to Heruy's oceanic sensibilities. Is this an act of a thickheaded dabtera from the Raguel Church School or a respectable accomplishment of a "pioneer of change" that a book on progressive thinkers should acclaim?

Did the second generation have a more enlightened outlook than its predecessor? Did the cohort engage in a colossal act of corruption as their forerunners? Among the second generation, Makonnen Dasta was a man of extreme brilliance and probity. Like most of his contemporaries, Makonnen was infinitely well connected. He was a Harvard pre-med who fought racism head-on. During the Italian occupation, he thought science in Egypt One of his students at that time was Dejazmatch Zewde Gebre Sellassie, the historian who went to read history at Balliol, Oxford. For all his achievements, when he became Minister of Education in 1941, Makonnen ordered Takla Tsadiq Mukuria to write a short history of Ethiopia, which turned out to be a chronicle of kings. A few years later, when he became governor of Wallagga, he banned the teaching of the Bible in mission schools. For his actions, he holds a bitter place in the heart of many Oromos.

Eventually, Makonnen fell out with the Emperor and died in 1966 in Paris, France. His generation was no less corrupt and banal. Kifle Ergatu, who during the Italian occupation was an interpreter for the Japanese legation in Addis Ababa, became Chief of Security after the restoration. He had little regard for the rule of law. His tenure was a time when life spiraled into a world of cataclysmic fear and intimidation for many people Kifle was trained as a military man in Egypt and at St. Cyr in France. Kifle was openly and crudely racist, despite his experience abroad Aklilu Habt-Wald, who was educated in Egypt and France and later became prime minister, was the mirror image of Kifle in his banality. But this salient fact is given short shrift in the book.

In the aftermath of the Crash of October 1929, students in most of Africa groped to find an answer in Marxism Most embraced the leftist ideology and became life-long Marxists, including Kwami Nkhurma and Aimé Césaire, among many others. Compared to the experiences of their African counterparts, what were the views and perspectives of the second

generation of Ethiopians? Here again, Bahru is reluctant to place them in their historical context.

Major omissions include the poignant Menasie Lemma, an Ethiopian who grew up in Egypt. After the Italian War, little of significance was achieved without his input in the area of finance in Ethiopia. In 1945, he represented Ethiopia at the United Nations founding conference in San Francisco. Menasie was for many years the Governor of the National Bank. Dhabba Wasse, Mulata Buba, Tekele Rorro, Abebe Gemeda, Dmojjo Botara, Ayana Biru (the designer of the Amharic type writer) and Zewde Gabra Hiowt all went to school in Egypt and Sudan. Seifu Debebe and Mekbeb Damte studied in France and played prominent roles in the country's history, but failed to make it to the pages of Bahru's book.

One wonders why Bahru did not devote a chapter to land-tenure or reference it in any part of the book. People like Ras Emru, a man imbued with natural intelligence and wisdom, balanced his enlightenment with genuine compassion for the common people. Because of his inexplicably narrow range, the author missed the unpublished memoir of Ras Emru. Perhaps a champion of the peasantry such as Ras Emru was not a "pioneer of change" that fits Bahru's bill.

A mission educated young man, Damte Asemagne, perhaps the first Ethiopian to deal with gender issues, wrote a piece titled, "A Christian Woman in Gore," for the *Women's Missionary Magazine* in December 1933. Three years later, he played a prominent role as interpreter for the Goré Government and the British district commissioner in Gambella. After the restoration, he became editor of a newspaper of the Imperial Body Guard and served until the coup d'etat of 1960. How does Bahru seek to explore the pioneers of change in Ethiopia without a reference to the pioneering works of people like Damte?

Pioneer of Change in Ethiopia is neither comprehensive nor authoritative. At the end, the reader knows nothing more than

what he/she had known before reading the book regarding the impact of the "progressives" on Ethiopia's political and economic landscape. The author has focused on his "Ethiopia" and arbitrarily selected his progressives. Still, the book is worthwhile as a premier.

Paulos Assafa

Note to Contributors

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