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THE JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

Volume 26, Numbers 1 & 2 **2019**

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A Publication of the Oromo Studies Association

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THE QERROO/QARREE PEACEFUL MOVEMENT FOR NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION AND MULTINATIONAL FEDERAL DEMOCRACY

Asafa Jalata
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

The Oromo are the largest national group in the Ethiopian Empire[1] and they also reside in Kenya and Somalia. Presently, as persecuted political refugees, some Oromo are scattered all over the world, particularly in the Middle East, Europe, North America, and Africa.[2] The Oromo who survived colonial terrorism and genocide during the Scramble for Africa, and who used to enjoy an egalitarian democracy known as the gadaa/siiqqee system were forced to live an impoverished life under Ethiopian racism, terror, and repression. Furthermore, the other Oromo political system that was suppressed and coopted into the Ethiopian colonial system was called the mooti system, which emerged in a few branches of the Oromo.[3] This system was hierarchical and the opposite of Oromo democracy. The imposition of the Ethiopian colonial system and the emergence of the Oromo collaborator class have denied the Oromo the opportunity of building independent national institutions and organizations for more than a century. The Ethiopian colonial state established settler colonialism in Oromia and developed colonial institutions and the Oromo collaborator class. These colonial institutions and arrangements have been continuously created, during each regime, to control the Oromo and Oromia in order to intensify the exploitation of their economic and human resources.

However, recently, the conditions in Oromia have been changing in fundamental ways. The accumulated grievances, the recent intensification of land grabbing policies, particularly the so-

called Integrated Addis Ababa Master Plan, and the further development of the political consciousness of the Oromo people starting from the national struggle of the 1960s have resulted in the emergence of an Oromia-wide peaceful protest movement that started to intensify in 2014. The Qerroo/Qarree (Oromo youth) have led this popular national movement, which has intensified the Oromo national struggle for self-determination and egalitarian democracy. This paper critically explores three interrelated issues: First, it examines the dialectical connection between "violent development" and neoliberal globalization, the essence of Tigrayan racism and state terrorism, and associated gross human rights violations. This section also explains how global powers and their institutions have directly or indirectly supported the policies of violent development and contributed to gross human rights violations in Oromia and Ethiopia. Second, it explains how the policies and practices of the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian regime have contributed to the emergence of the Qerroo/Qarree movement and how this Oromo youth movement has been the continuation and culmination of the Oromo national struggle for liberation, statehood, and egalitarian democracy. Finally, the piece identifies and explains the major impacts of the Oromo peaceful protest movement in transforming the Ethiopian colonial system and in advancing the principles of national self-determination federal democracy.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN VIOLENT DEVELOPMENT AND NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION

In the current era of neoliberal globalization, in the name of democracy, development, and human rights, the neo-colonial state, multinational corporations, and international organizations are intensifying the dispossession of lands and other resources of the indigenous peoples while repressing and terrorizing them and their social movements.[4] Similarly, the brutality of Ethiopian colonialism and neoliberalism is causing massive poverty, recurrent famines, wars, terrorism, and massive displacements in Oromia and other parts of Ethiopia. Using international law and their political economic hegemony, the West and the emerging economies have continued to dominate and exploit former colonies; on their parts, neocolonial states have implemented the policies of neoliberalism by terrorizing and suppressing ordinary peoples in their respective

countries. Such practices have massively violated the human rights of indigenous peoples by dispossession of lands and forced resettlements and by destroying livelihoods and cultures in Oromia and other parts of Ethiopia.[5]

The continued accumulation of capital by dispossession has involved state terrorism and genocide as the case of the Oromo later illustrates. As the Oromo national movement has continued to resist the criminal policies of the Ethiopian government, the regime has increased terrorist activities and dispossession of lands and other resources with the support of Western powers, the emerging powers of China, India, and some Arab countries, as well as international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. Ethiopia's lack of accountability, within the international system, leaves room for its engagement in state terrorism and genocide. The United Nations theoretically recognizes the problems of state terrorism and genocide in the global system; but it did not yet develop effective policies and mechanisms of preventing these acts. Article II of the United Nations Convention defines genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." Kurt Jonassohn defines "genocide as the planned destruction of any economic, political or social group."[6] According to Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, "GENOCIDE is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator."[7] Furthermore, Chalk and Jonassohn identify two major types of genocide: the first type is used to colonize and maintain an empire by terrorizing the people perceived to be real or potential enemies. In this case, the main purpose of practicing genocide is to acquire lands and other valuable resources.

Then the maintenance of colonial domination by state elites requires the establishment of a cultural and ideological hegemony that can be practiced through state terrorism, repression, and genocidal massacres. By destroying members of a population that resists colonial domination, hegemony can be established on the surviving population. This is the second type of genocide; this form of genocide is called ideological genocide. Jonassohn notes that ideological genocide develops "in nation-states where ethnonational groups develop chauvinistic [and racist] ideas about their superiority and exclusiveness."[8] The Ethiopian regime has become an organ of

capital accumulation for Tigrayan and transnational elites by using racism, terrorism, and massive human rights violations in the process of separating the indigenous communities such as the Oromo from their lands and other resources. Furthermore, the World Bank, IMF, UN, European Union, African Union, and some non-governmental organizations, as structures of global capitalism, are the facilitators of regional and global capital accumulation, and they are less interested in promoting human rights and democracy in peripheral areas and countries like Oromia and Ethiopia.

The political and military leaders of the Ethiopian government have essentially committed a kind of theft; they have used state power to expropriate lands and other resources in the name of privatization—all with the support of the World Bank and the IMF. In achieving its political and economic objectives, the Ethiopian government has targeted the Oromo because they have been resisting Ethiopian colonial policies; the Oromo have been also attacked and terrorized because of their economic resources, and their refusal to submit to the orders of colonial authorities and their Oromo collaborators. This regime has banned independent Oromo organizations including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and declared war on these organizations and the Oromo people. In addition, the regime has outlawed Oromo journalists and authors and closed down Oromo newspapers.[9] It also banned Oromo musical groups and all professional associations. The government has continued to eliminate or imprison politically and socially conscious Oromos; thousands of Oromo have been in official and secret prisons simply because of their nationality and their resistance to injustice. Based on how the Oromo have been treated, many Ethiopian state bureaucrats believe that Oromo intellectuals, businessmen and women, conscious Oromo farmers, students, and community and religious leaders are their enemies, and hence, support or refuse to acknowledge state sponsored terrorism and genocide against the Oromo people.[10]

The government officials, cadres, and soldiers have frequently raped Oromo girls and women to demoralize them and their communities and to show how Ethiopian rulers and their collaborators wield limitless power.[11] Amnesty International[12] in its paper entitled "Because I am Oromo," notes, in peaceful opposition to land dispossession and the so-called Integrated Addis Ababa

Master Plan, "Between 2011 and 2014, at least 5,000 Oromo have been arrested as a result of their actual or suspected peaceful opposition to the government, based on their manifestation of dissenting opinions, exercise of freedom of expression or their imputed political opinion." In 2014, the regime also massacred over seventy-eight university students in Ambo for peacefully protesting against the so-called master plan.[13] Large-scale arrests, massive shootings, rapes, tortures, extra-judicial executions, and deaths due to tortures or lack of medical treatments have been common events in Oromia. Students accused of organizing demonstrations were arrested and tortured; singers were detained and tortured for cultivating Oromo nationalism and for not praising the government; people have been detained and tortured for not providing false testimonies against other people or being accused of supporting the OLF.[14] As I will explain below, the opposition to land grabbing policies, gross human rights violations, cultural destruction, political and economic marginalization, poverty, and rampant unemployment mobilized the entire Oromo society against the Ethiopian government and led to engagement in the Qeerroo/Qarree-led peaceful protest movement.

THE QEERROO/QARREE PROTEST MOVEMENT

The accumulated grievances and the broadening of the political consciousness of the Oromo in general and the Oromo youth in particular resulted in the Oromia-wide peaceful protest movement. In 1992, the Tigrayan-led regime pushed the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the brain of Oromo nationalism and politics, out of the transitional government, and the activist networks of the Qeerroo/Qarree gradually blossomed as a form of Oromummaa or Oromo nationalism.[15] It took more than two decades for this form of Oromo resistance to transform into an Oromo youth social movement. Although Oromo nationalists started organizing the Oromo youth with the formation of the OLF, the organization only paid serious attention to organizing Oromo students in the early 2000s. As we shall see below, between 2004 and 2005, the OLF focused on organizing students in clandestine cells, and coined the slogan called Fincila Dida Garbummaa (Revolt Aagainst Political Slavery). It took almost fifteen years, for the Qeerroo/Qarree protest movement to develop. Although scattered protests occurred starting

from the early 2000s, the popular protest movement erupted in Ginchi, near Ambo, on November 12, 2015, and shortly covered all of Oromia like wild fire. The Oromo elementary and secondary school students of this small town ignited the peaceful protests because of the privatization and confiscation of a small soccer field and the selling of the nearby Chilimoo forest to be cleared.[16]

In supporting the peaceful protests of these students and opposing the so-called master plan, Oromos from all walks of life joined the peaceful protest movement. For the first time since their colonization, national Oromummaa (Oromo nationalism) tied all branches of the Oromo together in order to take coordinated collective action to defend their national interests.[17] How did this social movement emerge? The so-called master plan was intended to expand Finfinneee (Addis Ababa) to 1.5 million hectares of surrounding Oromo lands by evicting Oromo farmers and by destroying Oromo identity, culture, and history,[18] and by replacing the Oromo with Tigrayans and Amharas and their collaborators. Many Oromos interpreted this policy as the replication of the policy of the Amhara-led government that had uprooted and destroyed the Oromo in Finfinnee and replaced them with Amhara colonial settlers and their collaborators during the formation and development of Addis Ababa as the capital city of the Ethiopian Empire. Through the accumulated experiences of the past two and a half decades, the Oromo people realized that the Tigrayan colonial elites had been expropriating Oromo lands and other resources and transferring to themselves and their domestic and global supporters.

In the process, the regime had merchandized Oromo lands in order to enrich Tigrayan and Amhara elites and their supporters.19 The Oromo who have been forcefully evicted have become daily laborers, beggars or destitute.[20] Furthermore, the Tigrayan colonial elites have dominated commerce, sold fertilizers at high prices to farmers, and directly or indirectly forced the Oromo farmers to sell their animals and grains at a low price in order to pay their debts and taxes, and other expenses.[21] In these ways, the Oromo people had become aliens in their own country, and Tigrayan elites essentially own many parts of Oromia. As a result, the Oromo people have been impoverished and lost hope. Educated Oromo had become jobless or daily laborers while Tigrayan elites dominate and control the political economy of Oromia and Ethiopia thus enriching

themselves.[22]At the same time, the Oromo national struggle that emerged in the 1960s has been penetrating the psyche of the Oromo people. The more the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), other Oromo political organizations and civic institutions challenged the legitimacy of the colonial regime clandestinely and openly by opposing its policies, the more the regime intensified its racism, terrorism, and repression.[23]

While engaging in low-level guerrilla activities in rural areas, the OLF has organized activist cells or nucleus to propagate its political objectives and to raise political consciousness and Oromo nationalism among Oromo urban dwellers, farmers, and students.[24] Civic institutions and legal political organizations have also engaged in Oromo cultural renaissance and political activities in Finfinnee and beyond. For instance, the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association (MTA) reemerged in Finfinnee in 1995, after having been outlawed since 1963, it resumed in order to rejuvenate Oromo culture, history, identity, and language through its weekly activities of cultural and musical festivals, poems, art, and writings in Finfinnee and in the surrounding towns.[25] The MTA formed the Committee of Culture, History and Religion to engage in Oromo cultural renaissance.[26] One of the significant achievements of this committee was the restoration of Irreessa or Irreecha, the popular Oromo national thanksgiving festival at Hora Arsadi, Bishoftu. The reestablishment of the celebration of Irreecha started with forty people in 1997 and by 2015, it was celebrated by nearly five million people.[27] Members of all Oromo branches, religions and age groups, and men and women from all over Oromia have started to travel to Hora Arsadi to celebrate Irreessa annually thus demonstrating their national culture, history, and identity and by realizing their potential as a people.[28]

At this festival, people sing revolutionary songs and express cultural codes to show their opposition to the Tigrayan-led regime.[29] Recognizing the revolutionary potential of the MTA, the regime outlawed it in 2011 to prevent the Oromo people from their cultural restoration and from struggling for their human and national rights. Learning from the experiences of MTA, Oromo students in different universities formed cultural organizations known as GAASO (Gumii Adaa, Afaan fi Seena Oromo/Assembly of Oromo Culture, Language, and History) or GAAO (Gumii Adaa fi Afaan Oromo/Assembly of Oromo Culture and Language) to retrieve

Oromo culture, language, and history through artistic expressions, poems, and writings.[30] When these activities contributed to the blossoming of national Oromummaa, the government labeled the prominent leaders of these cultural movements as terrorists, narrow nationalists, and members of the OLF, and targeted them for imprisonment, torture, and elimination.[31] All these factors contributed to the blossoming of Oromo nationalism or national Oromummaa, which has been mobilizing the Oromo nation.

The name Qeerroo gradually developed in 2011 after the OLF clandestinely organized Oromo students for many years.[32] After the OLF was forced from the transitional government, it focused on armed struggle and clandestinely organizing the Oromo in general and the students in particular.[33] Organizing the Oromo youth continued for many years, but it was intensified when the Bale and Borana forests of Oromia were burned and thousands of wild animals killed from January to the first week of April 2000, and when the Ethiopian government ignored the problem. In fact, the Oromo in Bale and Borana and others believed that the regime set the fires in order to deny a base to OLF guerrilla fighters when it was fighting against Eritrea in 2000.[34] Realizing that the government was not interested in putting out the fires, the Oromo students from Addis Ababa University volunteered to put out the fires. According Mekuria Bulcha, "for more than five weeks, the government did not take any concrete action to stop the fires. The students volunteered to fight the fires, which were destroying particularly ancient forests in the highlands of Bale and Borana regions. However, the regime did not allow the students to travel to the sites. Its spokesman told the public that the April rains would put out the fires and that therefore he did not see the reason to worry much about the problem".[35] When the high school students from Ambo, Naqamte, Dembi Dollo, and other places demonstrated about the burning of Oromian forests, the regime killed a few students and imprisoned hundreds.

The killing and imprisonment of these students increased the determination of Oromo students to resist the regime and to continue their struggle. Between 2000 and 2004, Oromo students and civic organizations such as the MTA and legal political organizations such as the Oromo National Congress and the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement resisted the movement of the capital city of

the Oromia Regional State from Finfinnee to Adama.[36] When on January 4, 2004, the leaders of MTA organized a peaceful protest against the change of the Oromia capital city, Oromo students, journalists, activists, and other civilians were targeted for imprisonment and killing.[37] Oromo students in universities engaged in various activities; in addition to publishing their graduating bulletins every year, these students started to celebrate an Oromo indigenous calendar that starts in January.[38] The more Oromo students in higher institutions increased their political and cultural activities, the more the regime increased its repression. The expulsion of 350 Oromo students in 2004 from Addis Ababa University demonstrated the large rift between the Oromo students and the regime.[39] The resistance of Oromo students to the burning of Bale and Bornana forests and the changing of the Oromia's capital city from Finfinnee to Adama helped these students learn about the importance of collective struggle and action. The OLF also learned from trial and error how to build secret activist cells through which to disseminate its directives and policies among Oromo students in colleges and high schools.[40] In 2005, it declared what it called Fincila Dida Garbummaa in which it invited all Oromo students and others to peacefully and clandestinely participate in the Oromo national struggle.[41]

The genocidal policies and other practices of the regime, the continuous humiliation of the Oromo people, the cultural renaissance initiated by the MTA and the students, the persistent struggle led by the OLF and legal Oromo political organizations, and the broadening of Oromo national and political consciousness among the Oromo youth and other sectors of the Oromo society cumulatively emboldened Oromo young people in 2015 and 2016.[42] At the same time, though the government claimed to support equality, federalism, and democracy, it actually practiced violent development through the impoverishment of the Oromo vis-à-vis the Tigrayans and their collaborators. While practicing state terrorism, genocide, and political repression, the regime lied about political and economic progress. Rampant unemployment and fake elections clearly convinced the Oromo in general and the students in particular that the regime had been colonial, terrorist, and illegitimate. As legally recognized civic and political organizations, the MTA, the Oromo National Congress and the Oromo Federalist

Democratic Movement (later both of them merged to form the Oromo Federalist Congress) tacitly became a political platform for Oromo students and other activists during the dark time for the Oromo people.[43] Falsely accusing that they broke anti-terrorist laws by associating them with the OLF, the regime imprisoned the top leaders and other activists of theses civic and political organizations.

Unfortunately, the Tigray and Amhara students and others did not like the emergence of assertive Oromo students; they feared and at the same time despised them. A few of them even wrote racist graffiti using the term Galla, the derogatory name that the Ethiopians use to characterize the Oromo as backward, uncivilized and pagan, in restrooms or in other places on university campuses to provoke Oromo students.[44] When Oromo students reacted angrily, the government army or police intervened and imprisoned or expelled Oromo students from universities.[45] Habasha professors are majority at the nation's universities and they too have discriminated against Oromo students by giving them bad grades when they challenge biased history in class.[46] Between 1992 and 2015, all groups, particularly the Tigrayans, despised and disrespected the Oromo and thought that they could do whatever they wanted to them.[47] The Oromo protest movement between 2014 and 2018 illustrated that the Oromo have the collective power needed to promote their national interests. As demonstrated below, this movement revealed its matured political strategy by focusing on the regime and avoiding attacking different ethnonations within Oromia and beyond; the Oromo even established solidarity with various ethnonations, such as the Amharas, Sidamas, and Konsos.

Today, the Qeerroo/Qarree are made up of Oromo youth; they are predominantly students from elementary school to university, organizing collective actions through media networks, such as the radio, television, and personal relations and networks. In order to increase its surveillance, the government expanded the use of communication technologies such as mobile phones, Internet, Facebook, TV, and radio. However, these innovations started to have unintended consequences during the Oromo protest movement. The Oromo youth had effectively used these innovations to communicate among themselves and to expose the propaganda of the government. Through the use of daily slogans and chants, the Qeerroo/Qarree clearly articulated that the OLF should replace the

Tigrayan-led regime and recognized the front as the origin of Oromo nationalism, although there are opposition groups who deny the existence of strong relationship between the Qeerroo/Qarree and the OLF. The government reactions to the Qeerroo/Qarree protests have been violent and suppressive. Despite the fact that Oromia is the largest regional state in Ethiopia,[48] it has been under martial law[49] since the protests began. The government has been able to use this law to kill or detain thousands of Oromo, holding them in prisons and concentration camps.[50]

The government also implemented security structures called tokkoo-shane (one-to-five), garee and gott;[51] their responsibilities included spying, identifying, exposing, imprisoning, torturing, and killing Oromo who were not interested in serving the regime. There have been deaths and reports of thousands of Oromo who have been maimed or blinded as a result of torture, beatings, or during the suppression of protests.[52] For example, during the Oromia-wide day of peaceful protest on July 6, 2016, the regime's army known as Agazi massacred nearly 100 Oromo.[53] According to Amnesty International, 400 Oromo were killed before July 6, 2016.[54] The Tigrayan state elites and their Oromo collaborators, who used to think that the Oromo people were a collection of "tribes" that could be used as raw materials and firewood, could not understand the essence of the Oromo protest movement. For some time, the regime believed that by beating, torturing, castrating, decapitating, raping, and murdering Oromo students, farmers, educators, and merchants that it could stop the Oromo struggle for statehood, sovereignty, and egalitarian democracy.[55] The protests gained increased traction as the state's reaction became violent. For example, in early October 2016 when millions of Oromo gathered at Hora Arsadi, south east of Finfinnee, for the Irreechaa celebration, the government's army killed more than 700 Oromo and injured or imprisoned thousands.[56] This was sparked by peaceful, anti-government chants by young Oromos.[57] After the massacre, Oromo protesters burned both locally and internationally owned businesses that had been built on land seized from the Oromo by Tigrayans and other business elites.[58] As the Oromo protest movement intensified, the Amhara, Konso, and Gedeo joined the protest movement. The Ethiopian government's response was to declare a state of emergency.[59] It was set to last six months, but was later extended by three months and its aim was to

curb the growing anti-government protest movement. The state of emergency was the last attempt by the government to stop the Oromo protests and to stay in power. The government was therefore using this situation to gain total control over information,[60] using heavy force and denying the freedoms of organization and association. As a result, the regions of Oromia, Amhara, Konso, and Gedeo became conflict zones[61] with the regime indiscriminately imprisoning, looting and killing protesters.[62]

According to the state of emergency rules, the Oromo, Amhara, and Konso were restricted from access to media. They were not allowed to listen to radio stations such as the Voice Oromo Liberation Radio, or to watch media channels, like the Oromia Media Network, the Oromia News Network, and the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio. Ethiopian soldiers enforcing these rules seized or broke satellite dishes. The emergency rules also prevented citizens from associating with political organizations that the regime had branded as "terrorist." One of these organizations was the OLF, which was established in 1973 by Oromo nationalists to promote the principles of national self-determination and democracy. For several years, the Oromia Region had been under a crackdown enforced by special police groups and the army known as "Agazi."[63]After the protest movement started, according to rights organizations, more than 2000 Oromo were killed in eleven months.[64] Several thousand more had been imprisoned, tortured, blinded, and raped. The government had stated that 11,000 people were imprisoned and to hide its crimes from the international community, the regime had blocked the Internet and collected phones from thousands of Oromo.[65]

THE IMPACT OF THE OROMO PROTEST MOVEMENT

The Oromo protest movement has had a positive impact on the Oromo in general and the Oromo diaspora in particular. It has revitalized Oromo national culture, history, and identity. The movement has influenced the Oromo diaspora through various radios and TV programs, and the Oromo diaspora have increased its communication with their people in their homeland. The Oromo diaspora has been learning about national Oromummaa and rallying behind the Oromo national struggle in Oromia. It showed solidarity with the Oromo protesters by demonstrating and financially and

diplomatically supporting them. In these processes, Oromo nationalism has become a global phenomenon and the previous isolation of the Oromo diaspora has been reduced. The more the regime brutalized the Oromo in different parts of Oromia, the more the crimes of the regime have been reported and exposed. Overall, such events have angered the Oromo and increased their determination to engage in collective actions. Gradually, the Oromo protest movement opened a new chapter in the history of Oromia and Ethiopia.

This history has been written by Oromo blood. The relationship between the Oromo and their colonizers has been forever changed. The final chapter of this history has not been written. Many things have changed as a result of the Oromo protest movement. The cost the Oromo have paid in lives and suffering is very high. According to different reports, between 2014 and 2018, more than 500,000 Oromo including school children, pregnant women, and elderly people were massacred, and tens of thousands of Oromo were imprisoned, kicked, beaten, tortured, and decapitated. In fact, at this time, we do not have enough data on the killings, imprisonments, and other crimes on the Oromo. Despite all these tragedies, the Oromo people have restored their national pride, patriotism, and bravery that they enjoyed prior to mid-19th century. As one of the phases of the Oromo national struggle, the Oromo youth movement emerged as a formidable political force between 2014 and 2018, and shook the foundation of the Tigrayan-led racist and terrorist minority government of Ethiopia. The core of this government was the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which organized and led the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) for almost twenty-seven years. As the result of the popular struggle of the Qerroo/Qarree and other movements the ruling party, the EPRDF, was reorganized in April 2018 and Abiy Ahmed, who was trained in the Ethiopian army and politics under the leadership of the TPLF emerged as Prime Minister by replacing Haile Mariam Dessalegn.

Until the EPRDF is overthrown, the Oromo will continue to suffer immensely. They are denied state support in relation to protection, food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and other necessary services.[66] Because the regime fears the size of the Oromo population, it attempts to reduce their influence through hidden

policies and war.[67] The regime has already prevented genuine Oromo representatives from coming to political power through systematic killings, imprisonment and exile.68 For these reasons, the Oromo are very concerned about their future. In addition, little looks set to change as a result of external pressure because international powers such as the United States[69] as well as organizations such as USAID have a close relationship with the government.[70] This gives rise to concerns within the Oromo community that their grievances are not heard and that they are not supported. Nevertheless, the Oromo people now seemed determined to change the status quo and better their future. That is why they are continuing with their movement, despite massive incidents of deaths and imprisonments. But the Ethiopian regime has demonstrated that it will dictate everything to the Oromo people and its leadership through the barrel of the gun. The Oromo people have rejected this heavy-handed approach. As a result of this conflict, there are two options—either the regime must go, and the Oromo be victorious, or the Oromo people must be destroyed to serve the interest of the regime.

Despite the fact that the regime has intensified its terrorism and genocide, the Oromo protest movement has started to change the political landscape of Ethiopia. Erupting like "a social volcano," it sent ripples through the empire with different groups changing their attitudes and standing in solidarity with the Oromo.[71] The protest movement brought about fundamental changes in the Oromo society. Young Oromo protesters are equipped with the ideology of national Oromummaa, which has uprooted the divisions that the enemies of the Oromo created among different Oromo branches. Some Oromo elements that have been suffering from the internalization of victimization are forced to start to rethink their Oromo national identity and the Oromo national struggle. Some Oromo collaborators and opportunists who had been evicting Oromo farmers from their ancestral lands by joining the Tigrayan elites, started to feel national shame. The Oromo protest movement has been demonstrating that it can destroy Oromo intermediaries or mercenaries who work for the enemy at the cost of the Oromo nation. Calling the names of Oromo heroines and heroes who have sacrificed their precious lives for them as OLF leaders and fighters, Oromo protesters have showed the Oromo flag and said that the

OLF is our leader without any fear and intimidation from the government and its OPDO collaborators.

The Oromo protesters have demonstrated that they struggle to establish a democratic system that will exercise the principles of national self-determination and egalitarian multinational democracy, which are in line with their democratic tradition. Globally and diplomatically, the Oromo protest movement has won international attention because of its political maturity, determination, inclusiveness, and for totally disproving the ideology and political program of the Tigrayan-led minority government. For the first time in Oromo history, media outlets such as Washington Post, BBC, Al Jazeera, Newsweek, AFP, the Guardian, and others have reported on the Oromo protest movement and its brutal crackdown by the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government. This peaceful movement to a limited degree has broken the international silence on the Oromo struggle. For instance, on January 21, 2015, the European Parliament condemned the violent crackdown of Oromo protesters and called for the establishment of a credible, transparent, and independent body for investigating the murdering and imprisoning thousands of protesters in Oromia.[72] Similarly, the UN Human Rights Experts demanded the Ethiopian authorities to stop the violent crackdown on Oromo peaceful protesters.[73] The US Department of State vaguely expressed concerns about the violence associated with the protest movement. However, in expressing its firm support for the regime, the United States signed a security partnership with the Ethiopian government to exchange "logistics, services, supplies" and planned "for a future security cooperation activities designed to meet mutual defense priorities."[74]

Unfortunately, due to the lack of Oromo national organizational capacity, Prime Minister Abiy, who was a colonel in the Ethiopian army, usurped the efforts of the Oromo peaceful movement and in the process helped to establish the neo-nafxanaya state. He has already established command posts in different parts of Oromia to continue state terrorism and gross human rights violations in an attempt to crush the Oromo national movement in order to reinstate the archaic ideology of Ethiopianism and settler colonialism with the help of the neo-nafxanya class. Currently, Abiy is dividing the Oromo through his policy of divide and conquer. He is buying hundreds of Oromo opportunists who sell their people and Oromia

for high paying positions and turning them against Oromo nationalists who are continuing the Oromo national struggle for national self-determination and multinational federal or confederal democracy. Currently, Abiy and his army and police are terrorizing and massacring the Oromo in Wallaga, Borana, Guiji, Wallo and some parts of Central Oromia claiming to protect them from the Oromo Liberation Army. I predict that the Qeerroo/Qarree movement and the Oromo Liberation Army are going to intensify their national struggle to liberate their people and country.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The availability of political opportunities, such as politicized collective grievances; the existence of the OLF and its underground cells; the increase in politically conscious students; the activities of legal Oromo political organizations; the cultural renaissance initiated by the MTA and students; the further development of national Oromummaa; the introduction of technological innovations, such as social media, including mobile phones, the Internet, tweets; satellite TV; and radio, have galvanized the Oromo people in general and the youth in particular to engage in the clandestinely organized and systematically networked peaceful protests movement that mobilized almost all sectors of the Oromo society. This movement has produced far-reaching consequences for the Oromo national struggle and politics in the Ethiopian Empire. It has already convinced the Tigrayan-led regime and their Oromo collaborators, the children of colonial settlers, and the Oromo people that the Ethiopian colonial state has been built on a shaky foundation that cannot survive the determined and organized Oromo revolutionary force. For the first time since their colonization, the Oromo people, under the leadership of Qeerroo/Qarree, have demonstrated that they are capable of determining their political destiny through collective action by dismantling Ethiopian colonialism and its political structures.

Particularly, the Oromo youth have changed the potential of the Oromo nation for collective action by uniting most sectors of the Oromo society. As a consequences of the recent Oromo protests, politically conscious Oromo and others have realized that it is only a matter of time before the Oromo nation will achieve its political objectives of national self-determination and egalitarian democracy

by establishing a democratic government on the grave of the colonial state. Farsighted political activists, serious nationalists, and organic intellectuals have realized that without building strong national civic institutions and organizations, protests or revolts alone cannot empower the Oromo nation. Developing new political strategies, building broad-based alliances, and working on building strong national civic institutions and political organizations are absolutely necessary to finalize the Oromo national struggle for self-determination and egalitarian multinational democracy. The Oromo youth protest movement has created conducive conditions for restoring the Oromo democratic tradition and for building strong national civic institutions and political organizations, which are required to establish a genuine democracy in Oromia and Ethiopia.

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THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL AT THE MARGIN OF AN AFRICAN EMPIRE: THE GIDAAMII REBELLION OF 1909-12

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INTRODUCTION: MITIGATING AND FOSTERING FACTORS OF REBELLION

Gidaamii is a sub-district located in the northern part of the province of Qellem, southwestern Wallagga, western Ethiopia. As a region overwhelmingly inhabited by Maccča Oromo peasants. Qellem provided a suitable milieu for the Ethiopian Empire to impose its state institutions following the region's incorporation into its economic and political systems ca. 1886. After accommodating the indigenous socio-economic and political structures for a little more than a decade, the Empire imposed the *näfṭagna-gäbbar* system—a paradigm of Ethiopian colonialism—which allowed severe exploitation of labour and wealth. Under the new system, Oromo peasant households were required to provide the Amhara colonists with labour, unlimited tribute and sufficient produce to sustain the state civil and military functionaries as well as the clergy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). This seriously threatened the subsistence lifestyles of Oromo peasant households, particularly between 1909 and 1912, and then in 1917—33. The historical relationship between the Ethiopian Empire-state and Qellem's peasants was marked by ethnocultural boundaries. In simple terms, the state's programs were controlled by ethnoculturally different Amhara elites who held the indigenous Oromo in low regard. This perceived slight to Oromo culture heightened the sense of threat to

their basic subsistence, provoking culturally-framed opposition, which took different forms—rebellion, banditry, terrorising the *näfṭagna*, riots, outmigration, appeals and petitions, court litigations—the Gidaamii rebellion of 1909—12, for understandable reason, remains the sole focus of this article. The resource extraction from peasant communities (innumerable taxes, tithes, forced labour and later limited access to land) led to the singling out of Amhara government agents and their local allies as the principal threat to the peasants' subsistence livelihoods and cultural identity.

In practice, the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system removed necessary labour from peasant households and the consequent wealth the peasants relied on when hard times arose. Peasant subsistence farming was severely threatened, but were these factors sufficient in themselves to cause a peasant rebellion? The unlimited exploitation of peasants by the state or landlords could, in theory, inspire rebellion, "but it is far from a sufficient cause."[1] From the broader view of history, acquiescence to oppression and exploitation is more prevalent than collective rebellion, or resistance. Oppression and exploitation may cause rebellion, but not on their own. Rebellion is in fact among the rarest outcomes of exploitation.[2] If exploitation alone constitutes adequate conditions for a rebellion, the daily lives of most developing countries would be characterized by almost constant conditions of civil war.[3] This question therefore compels a brief analysis (with emphasis on the western Ethiopian province of Qellem, and particularly on the Gidaamii subdistrict) of what conditions, when added to exploitation, would increase the likelihood of peasant rebellion, and what circumstances, despite the prevalence of exploitation and oppression, would mitigate the possibility of rebellion.

To study rural resistance—or indeed any collective action in imperial Ethiopia—is to examine the precise ties between the unequal socio-economic and cultural conditions in which the people were forced to live and those people's popular awareness. This involves an examination of structural and historical restrictions that worked against peasants as well as the alternatives that were available to them. Imperial Ethiopia's socio-economic order possessed many institutional arrangements that ruled the peasants' relations with one another and with the state. These multiple arrangements and the peasants' response to them had the conflicting

effects of mitigating and fostering rebellious tendencies. For Qellem's peasants, as with those in many parts of Ethiopia's south, land and their labour were the major source of livelihood. Despite the general trend in many parts of Ethiopia's south, the empire's process of land appropriation, the *qälad* system, did not occur immediately after Qellem's inclusion into the empire. This is another complex dynamic which demands separate treatment. Instead, Qellem went through the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system—a form of labour and wealth exploitation rather than land appropriation (although there were some exceptions). In this process, it is important to ask why the peasants of Qellem sometimes openly rebelled and at other times resorted to passive forms of resistance.

From a broader view of peasant politics, submission is more common than rebellion. Nevertheless, economic factors alone do not fully explain why some peasant societies are in general terms submissive, or why some peasant societies are more susceptible to rebellion than others.[4] As highlighted above, for a rebellion to break out, there should be additional vital factors to add to exploitation and repression. Such questions cannot be fully answered *a priori*. While theoretical considerations relevant to the broader issues of peasant politics remain important, disparities in the social bases of resistance suggest that they can only be adequately answered in relation to tangible settings. Economic and social inequalities, for example, may be major factors provoking a rebellion, but peasant outbursts cannot be structurally determined.[5] There needs to be an empirical and concrete historical and social setting in which questions relating to peasant rebellions can be asked and answered. This article attempts to answer these questions with Gidaamii, a subdistrict in northern Qellem, as a historical laboratory.

So what are the vital circumstances that, when combined with exploitation and repression, boost the possibility of peasant rebellion, and what situations make it less likely? Scholars of peasant politics suggest that exploitation and repression result in outright rebellion only when combined with two interwoven conditions related to sudden changes affecting peasant lives: changes that would threaten peasant subsistence and the capacity of external factors to affect the lives of substantial numbers of the peasant population.[6] Generally speaking, peasants tend to rebel particularly when their villages' habitual rights of securing

subsistence—the "peasant moral economy" in Scott's terms—[7]are compromised and breached, or when demands from them are abruptly and randomly raised.[8] These changes are very much related to an impasse in peasants' subsistence, which takes into consideration the relative significance of the nature and timing of exploitation, deprivation or repression as well as its level. As Barrington Moore observes:

> The timing of changes in the life of the peasantry, including the number of people, simultaneously affected, are crucial factors in their own right. I suspect that they are more important than the material changes in food, shelter, clothing, except for very sudden and big ones. . . . what infuriates peasants (and not just peasants) is a new and sudden imposition or demand that strikes many people at once and that is a break with accepted rules and customs.[9]

The breadth and the abruptness of changes negatively affecting peasant subsistence are vital for three distinct reasons. Firstly, only a shock of larger proportions will be capable of presenting a communal cause to act to a sufficiently sizeable peasant population. If the shock happens abruptly, it is problematic for a community's "moral economy" to deal with, and tends to encourage radical deviance from existing norms of reciprocity. "Much of the potential for the peasant rebellion must be understood, then, in terms of the structural vulnerability of the peasantry to the kinds of shocks in question."[10]

At the heart of the peasant "moral economy" is the argument that "…exploitation and rebellion is … not just a problem of calories and income but is a question of peasant conceptions of social justice, of rights and obligations, of reciprocity."[11] This is a reference to perceptions of economic justice and peasant characterizations of economic exploitation—"their view of which claims on their product were tolerable and which intolerable."[12] While the moral economy of the Macca Oromo of Qellem—like that of Scott's study (peasant groups in Burma and Vietnam)—is symbolic of peasants elsewhere, their conception of secure subsistence appears deeply rooted in and associated with their cultural identity. All their agricultural production methods, their labour mobilization, and the

use of the products that have been vital for family and generational survival were centred on and relatable to core cultural values. Tolerable and intolerable degrees of exploitation were to a large extent culturally defined. This will be fully explained when we deal with the rebellion.

The second and equally important factor relevant to peasant rebellion concerns the reasons for the absence of rebellion despite the exploitation, misery and repression. One reason is related to adaptive mechanisms that can at least temporarily weaken threats of insecure subsistence. Some of these mechanisms are collective (social banditry, for example), some are individual (short-term migration), and some are related to opportunities created by elites to minimize the likelihood of revolt (food relief, short term employment). The third concern calls attention to the fact that the fundamental restraint is not the adaptive strategies available to the peasants, but instead the peril of rebellion.

The idea of sudden changes closely linked to peasant livelihood fosters two factors that have powerful potential to propel rebellion: collective consciousness of the fact of exploitation and repression, and the need to act against them. According to Theda Skocpol:

> What is at issue is not so much the objective potential for revolts on the grounds of justifiable grievances. It is rather the degree to which grievances that are always at least implicitly present can be collectively perceived and acted up on.[13]

Skocpol's view suggests that the collective consciousness of the fact of exploitation, deprivation or repression, and the belief that they could be alleviated by collective human action, which Gebru Tareke calls "two essential ingredients,"[14] are also of paramount importance to provoking peasant rebellion. How groups of people occupying subordinate positions in social hierarchies understand the dynamics of power, exploitation and oppression and control, and then decide to take collective action, is strongly related to historical conditions as well as state structures and activities. The political choices by which varieties of grievances might be routed are closely associated with the cultural setting in which they are experienced and justified.[15] When institutionalized economic and social inequalities are merged with ethnocultural oppression, as was the

case in Qellem and many other southern provinces in the Ethiopian empire, the political choices through which the economic grievances are channelled tend to be informed by the ethnocultural particularities of the peasants. This tendency was partly attached to the empire's institutional arrangements and partly to the peasants' internal dynamics.

To understand revolt and non-revolt situations with particular reference to Qellem, it is important to understand three factors: the available alternative methods for survival and non-revolt, the structural setting of revolt, and the Ethiopian empire-state's architecture of exploitation and repression. To reflect the chronological patterns relevant to Qellem, we first briefly look at non-revolt conditions. To begin with, the analysis of available alternative methods of survival and non-revolt starts with the characteristic features of rebellion. Moments of rebellion are "moments of madness,"[16] says Aristide Zolberg. To speak of peasant rebellion is to pay particular attention to those unusual moments when peasants strive to reinstate or remake their world by force—but this ignores the fact that such moments in history are rare and only exceptionally result in revolutions. It also ignores the fact that the peasant is usually a casualty of violence, but most of all it ignores the fact that even during these "moments of madness," the main concern revolves around the effort of the peasant family to secure sufficient food for itself. The peasant, as a farmer with a set of essential and acute needs rather than an "ideologue with a long view," inescapably captures such moments to use them as survival strategies, which James Scott refers to as "opportunities."[17] Such peasant survival strategies in times of sudden dilemmas of subsistence vary greatly over time and space. In Scott's Southeast Asian context they took the form of eliminating valued ceremonial obligations, sharing, emigrating, serving in the local landlords' gangs and seeking charity.[18]

The pattern of historical development in early twentieth century Qellem, particularly in Gidaamii, points to some mechanisms as collective (petitions, court litigations, banditry), and some as individual (forcing all of the family to obediently serve the *mälkägna*, serving the *mälkägna* as informers against one's own villagers, working for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church). Some are both (individual and mass outmigration), while others relate to

marginal opportunities created by regional commerce (employment as porters in the Sayyoo-Gambella trade).

Such mechanisms mostly involve unlimited human cost. Conceptualization of this jumble of assembled themes is not an easy task, although they possess the potential to affect the likelihood of rebellion. As far as the marginal opportunities they offer to the peasantry to relieve short-term subsistence needs are concerned, they tend to minimize the likelihood of more direct and violent reactions. Additionally, while working as deterrents to open rebellion, such themes—especially in the case of Gidaamii—represent faces of rebellion.

We now turn to the analysis of concrete historical settings marked by complex state-society interactions in imperial Ethiopia, where various forms of peasant reaction to exploitation and ethnocultural oppression in Qellem possessed attendant contradictory effects of both deterring and fostering open rebellions.

Unlike other parts of Africa, peasant defiance in Ethiopia—despite various localized uprisings—was generally uncommon and ineffectual. Rebellions stretched state resources, but mainly targeted specific ethnic, cultural or regional grievances. Occasionally, as happened in Gidaamii between 1909 and 1912, the peasants scored short term victories against the state, destroying local institutions and removing the *näfṭägna* military aristocracy. Oromo peasant uprising was a factor of wider popular protests in Ethiopia, the nature of which varied from covert to collective disobedience. Gebru Tareke argues that "rebellions are invariably provincial … in that they seek to protect a vanishing world, or to restore the past, really an idealization of existing cultural values and social conditions."[19] Peasant rebellion in Qellem, however, also possessed many innovative elements.

But who and/or what did the Gidaamii rebellion of 1909—12 target? Did the Oromo peasants of Gidaamii, like other primary resistance movements in Africa, resist the imposition of colonial rule, or were their actions directed at specific pre-capitalist economic relationships linked with Ethiopian rule? Was this particular rebellion directed at the Ethiopian empire-state, which was perceived as alien, or at local Oromo elites who benefited from new socio-economic and political arrangements established following the Ethiopian conquest of Qellem in ca.1886?

In the context of Qellem, rebellion means dealing with complex and multifaceted structures which characterised constantly evolving peasant relations with local state structures, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), central government, and also with each other. Analysing the peasant actions demands a good understanding of imperial Ethiopia's institutionalized inequalities and requires analysis of the internal social structures of those who rebelled and those who were perceived as alien by those struggling to be spared from exploitation. A system of resource extraction existed in Qellem long before the arrival of the Ethiopian Empire, but threats to the existing system of land tenure and changes in socio-economic and political structures were the underlying factors stimulating opposition to the Ethiopian Empire. Literature on pre-conquest Oromo land tenure systems considers both individual and communal holdings and has presented the latter as a predominant feature.[20] However, the land tenure system in Gidaamii—and generally in the province of Qellem—did produce social stratification based on access to and produce from the land.[21] This was the foundation for the birth of the conglomeration of Oromo states which survived in Qellem up to the Ethiopian conquest in 1886.

Peasant societies of Qellem (Gidaamii included) were integrated vertically into economic groups and segmented horizontally into clans, kinship groups and religious affiliations. While these divisions generally discouraged collective resistance, they were not necessarily solid and permanent. They re-emerged as factors of and recreated new group cohesion whenever disruptive new policies were introduced by the state. Both vertical and horizontal segments dissolved into a cohesive local Oromo identity during the brutal *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system of 1909-1912 and 1917-1933, for example, to defend against severe exploitation that threatened peasant subsistence. The 1909—12 rebellion is an example of the contrary process that came when the Oromo peasants, and local chiefs who had rebelled together under the leadership of a member of the oppressive local Oromo political elite alleging that they were suffering under the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system because of its illegitimate collusion with the political centre.

The Oromo peasants rebelled against the Ethiopian empire's exploitation and domination partly because they were prompted to action by the members of the local Oromo ruling family who by

1908 lost their right of rule to the Amhara governors following the arrest by Emperor Menilek of the former's governor (Jootee Tulluu), to whom they were tied by common cultural values. Although there were instances when the peasants staged their own rebellion, the unity established between the local Oromo peasants and their elites underlines the peasants' flexibility in forging alliances with other classes. This characteristic helps us argue that the rebellion in Gidaamii was not based on a "false consciousness" impelling agrarian societies to resist the power of those who oppressed them, as some Marxist scholars might argue.[22] For Gidaamii, peasant rebellion may have been instigated, particularly in the period under consideration, by Oromo elites, but it was the peasants themselves who calculated what they would gain by involving in a violent rebellion as a distinct group.

If one target of the rebellion was severe and unlimited exploitation that threatened their subsistence, another was the perceived ethnocultural suppression of the indigenous community. This, albeit unconsciously, confronted the Empire's attempts at political integration. The Ethiopian empire's attempts at political integration were enacted as a facet of state centralization policies and were linked to maximization of resource extraction that had directly affected the peasantry. By extending control over local resources, the empire produced many local grievances, provoking the peasants into action against the state and dominant classes. In Gidaamii's case this overlapped with ethnocultural suppression. Although the state and land-owning classes were traditional allies in exploiting the peasantry, the latter also stood against the former as rivals for control of the land and its produce. Administrative corruption and violence by the armed forces fuelled already complex local problems. All of this was competently analysed in Gebru's *Ethiopia: Power and Protest: Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century,* and imperial impositions led to armed rebellions in two regions in the north (Gojjam and Tigray) and one in the south (Bale). Such regional disparities belie any generalisation of Oromo-Ethiopian peasantry as docile and passive—as in Robert Hess's *Ethiopia*—or as resolutely resistant, as in John Markakis and Nega Ayele's *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*.[23] The study of the Gidaamii rebellion of 1909—12 shows that both positions elide the subtlety of the empirical reality.

At the continental level, one research identified two salient features characterizing recent studies of rebellion, and more generally of resistance, especially those of the 1990s: "…internal differentiation in communities involved in rebellions," and "…the role of coercion in the mobilization of people for the rebellious cause."[24] The inclusion of and interplay between these two factors raise intricate and multidimensional conceptions of the meaning and objectives of rebellion, as well as its structure and development. Literature approaching resistance from such perspectives is lacking in Oromo-Ethiopian historiographies, and this study offers insights to fill this gap.

What were the outstanding features of the Gidaamii rebellion that helped it negotiate peasant survival, and how significant are they in broadening our understanding of the region and the period more generally? Compared to the relative paucity of peasant rebellions in the recent history of Ethiopia, Gidaamii provides an excellent opportunity to examine this mostly unexplored subject thoroughly. Gidaamii's experiences differed from the Mechele peasant uprising of 1960 in Gedeo, where the introduction of *the qälad* system did not damage the local socio-economic order. Even the brutal *näftägnä-gäbbar* system did not alienate land from the local peasants.[25] Gedeo should be an exception in this regard. The historical process by which Gidaamii peasants employed innovative approaches against violent state repression is quite distinct from the peasant rebellions of the 1940s and 1960s in the north—the Wäyyané rebellion of Tigrai and the peasant revolt in Gojjam. It is also dissimilar from the Bale peasant rebellion of the 1960s. The historian Tareke examines the causes, complexities, and outcomes of these rebellions, arguing that popular protests were not consequences of capitalist commercialization and exploitation, resulting instead from the birth of a bureaucratic and multi-ethnic Ethiopia. Tareke believes that the Wäyyané, Gojjam and Bale rebellions lacked urban links, and were rooted instead in local problems resulting from Emperor Hailä Sellassié's political innovations. They were non-revolutionary, and in Tareke's view there were similarities and differences that distinguished these movements. They were all caused by local grievances, but the rebellion in Bale survived longer because of Somalia's involvement, which provided arms, ammunition and food. Gebru believes that

ethnocultural identity was involved in the Bale conflict—linked with politico-economic and regional problems—but he is not convinced that this explains why the peasants became so effectively mobilised. He emphasises the lack of national integration which contributed to the localisation of the revolts, mainly due to a lack of organizational capacity.

SUBJUGATION AND UNLIMITED EXPLOITATION: THREATS TO PEASANT SUBSISTENCE LIVELIHOOD

In the two decades following 1890, the southern half of the Ethiopian empire (recognised in simplistic terms as the area south of the Blue Nile and the Šawan plateau) was subjected to the full extent of the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system. While the term *gäbbar* in the Abyssinian homeland referred to a tribute-paying peasant who had secure land tenure, or *rist*, it signifies a markedly inferior social position in the south, where a *gäbbar* remained on his own land but had no legal claim to it. He surrendered part of his produce and provided labour depending on local circumstances and the dictates of his overlord. The system had its origin in the Abyssinian homeland, but was shaped to fit local circumstances in the conquered south, which in turn depended on variations in economy, culture, society and geography. The common feature of the system, despite its many variants, was the reallocation of the labour and wealth of the erstwhile freehold peasants to their Amhara colonists.[26] The theory set out at the political centre to introduce the system to the conquered south appeared uniform, but the practice was more complex and exhibited much internal variation.[27]

The implementation in Qellem of the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* was carried out in two separate periods: 1908—12, and 1917—33. Jootee imprisoned in July 1908, and Menilek gave Jootee's domain to *Nägadras* Haila-Giyorgis Wäldä-Mikael, his minister of foreign affairs and commerce. Haila-Giyorgis was an absentee governor, so *Ras* Täsämma Nadäw, governor of the neighbouring Iluu Abbaaboor and the emperor's overseer of western provinces—and of the whole empire from May 1909 when he became *Lej* Iyyasu's regent—appointed *Fitawrari* Sahlä-Giyorgis, his brother, to take control of Qellem and introduce direct Amhara rule to the region.[28] Each peasant family, now *gäbbär*, was counted, registered and re-

distributed under the Amhara colonists on the orders of the emperor.[29] Menilek himself wrote the directive under which his military colonists would be 'planted' (**የሚተከሉበትን ደንብ**, in its Amharic rendition, meaning 'the law according to which they would be planted'). This letter of Menilek is a rare primary source that presents us with the hierarchical categories of *näfṭägna* from the perspective of the Ethiopian empire state.[30]

> May it reach *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma
> I am here by writing you the law according to which the men of *Ras* Makonnen who went to [colonize] the country of *Däjjach* Jotè should be planted. Give *Fitawrari* Abba Šawul [in lieu of salary] one hundred and fifty *gäbbär*, two *gäbbär* to a Šambal **(ሻምበል)** in charge of three hundred soldiers, thirty *gäbbär* each to the three *Mäto-aläqa* **(መቶ አለቃ)**, fifteen *gäbbär* each for the six *Hamsa-aläqa* **(ሀምሳ አለቃ**), ten *gäbbär* to the commander of thirty soldiers who came from Harärge with their arms, three *gäbbär* each to the commanders of ten [soldiers], ten *gäbbär* each for the commanders of twenty [soldiers], three *gäbbär* each to the commanders of five [soldiers], ten *gäbbär* each to the commanders of ten [soldiers], seven *gäbbär* each to those who have three soldiers, ten *gäbbär* each to those who have eight soldiers, three *gäbbär* each to those who have two soldiers, ten *gäbbär* each to those who have six soldiers, three *gäbbär* each to those who have one soldier under their command, ten *gäbbär* each for those in charge of either three, four or two soldiers. Give eight *gäbbär* to an ordinary soldier (*čäwa*) without any soldiers under his command, seven *gäbbär* to those below this rank, five *gäbbär* to those further below this [rank]. To all those below this [rank] give [daily] provisions (*qäläb*) they will need to live on.[31]

The imperial order sent to Täsämma Nadäw to distribute every fifteen years old Oromo peasant, now *gäbbar*, among the *näfṭägna* in Qellem in lieu of salary, was applicable on every Oromo adult including fifteen years old teenagers.[32] The damage the exploitation caused was therefore multifaceted and deeply felt. The socio-economic damage caused by the *näftägnä-gäbbar* system was far-reaching, but suffice here it here to deal with those which seem to be of direct relevance to the Gidaamii rebellion of 1909—12. The system reduced the population of Qellem to unprecedented levels of

poverty and led to a proliferation of beggars on a scale never before seen in the history of the province. John Iliffe recently stated that all pre-colonial African societies had their poor and that the culture of their respective societies prepared a mechanism for their survival. As far as Qellem is concerned, begging was claimed to have begun with the arrival of the *näftägnä-gäbbar* system. 'Oromoon kadhattuu hinqabu/the Oromo had no beggars' was a common saying. In 1900 an observer described Qellem as 'delightful park-like country' and its Oromo inhabitants as '…prosperous … farmers, raising good crops and owning fine cattle.'[33] In 1899 Qellem's output was commented by a traveller to the region as being '…the most valuable on earth', its climate 'healthy' and its population 'industrious.' It was therefore hoped that this region, under the rule of Menilek's empire, 'would continue to advance along the path of peaceful progress', an advance that would be beneficial not only for Ethiopia but also for the neighbouring countries.[34] In 1900 Major Austin also described Qellem as 'prosperous and seemingly contented …country.'[35] Ironically, these extremely valuable resources were rapidly stripped, while living standards deteriorated, and when local autonomy was finally dissolved in 1917 and handed over to Amhara governors, Qellem had become an impoverished country with numerous beggars. When he was ordered to take over Qellem in 1920 *Däjjazmach Gäbrä* Egziabhér of Naqmtee sent down his brother, who reported back to Addis Ababa that 'the country is already deserted and mostly abandoned, with a few scattered households left. The people have long left the farm work.'[36]

In the early 1920s, a missionary who was serving in Qellem referred to an unspecified but large number of beggars in the town of Sayyoo when describing the poverty of its inhabitants.[37] Gidaadaa Soolan's memoir also mentioned more than twice that about one hundred and sixty beggars would assemble to get a weekly handout from the American mission in a town whose population was less than three thousand.[38] True, like many African pre-colonial societies, the Oromo must have had their own poor. Yet it can safely be stated that it was the *näftägnä-gäbbar* system imposed by direct Ethiopian rule that had produced such a large number of beggars.

But what exactly gave rise to an armed rebellion in Gidaamii when the rest of Qellem did not? A comprehensive volume focusing

on the sociology and history of the Oromo nation has mentioned this uprising in a passing reference and interpreted it as a rebellion that had been provoked by Jootee's removal alone.[39] The study never explicitly says what prompted the rebellion, but its conceptualization of events implies that the rebellion was an expression of unity of purpose based on Oromoness. Jootee was known for his brutality towards the Oromo peasant population and the non-Oromo inhabitants (Anfillo, Mao and Abbigar) alike, although this could not match severe problems the *näftägnä-gäbbar* system brought to the region. Some of the allegations cited by Jootee's enemies and by Menilek's government, especially those related to misgovernment, were not completely false. His period governance in Qellem was characterised by occasional brutality, and severe injustice and harsh punishment. The problem with allegations levelled against Jootee was that they made his governorship look worse than the *näftägnä-gäbbar* system, which is contrary to the facts we have in documentary and oral sources. Jootee ensured that every local governing elite was under his firm control, which in some cases he did in a bloody violence, and reconfigured the administrative structures, political and economic alignments in a way that they could function with the new Ethiopian empire and also in a way that they could work for his benefit and the local Oromo governing elite. Even after the Ethiopian conquest, Jootee's policy of administration remained one committed for keeping the old alliances and coaptations with local elites. This policy is captured in a local tradition, '*guddaakee fidadhu* / send me your seniors.'[40] This does not mean, however, that Jootee's administration was benign or popular, it was not. The first evidence came out in a letter his subordinates and some of peasant representatives wrote to the central government years after his removal.[41] On balance, Jootee's governorship over Qellem was not the most favoured one. In short, the rebellion could not be interpreted as having been carried out to defend Jootee's governorship. There had never been a unity of purpose between the Oromo peasants of Gidaamii and the local leadership headed by Jootee. There is no doubt that this was an anti-Amhara rebellion, involving both peasants and the elite.

Alessandro Triulzi appears to make a direct association between the 'Amhara take-over', or the *näftägnä-gäbbar* system, and the Gidaamii rebellion of 1909—12, "…people reacted sharply to the

Amhara take over, a first rebellion took place in Gidami in February 1909."[42] "At the core of the anti-Amhara rebellions and the state of lawlessness which prevailed in the country [Qellem] …" Triulzi argues, "was the *gäbbar-näfṭäññа* relationship."[43] There is little doubt that the rebellion was related to the establishment of the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system because the unfolding of the system in Gidaamii meant the creation of circumstances that would eventually fulfil conditions of a rebellion. However, it was not the mere establishment of the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system which gave rise to the 1909—12 Gidaamii rebellion, the fact that the system threatened peasant subsistence and the fact that it suddenly and simultaneously happened to the overwhelming majority of the peasants did. The overall effect of the system threatened not a mall group of peasants; it involved a great majority of them in Gidaamii and the surrounding sub-districts of northern Qellem. The report *Däjjazmach* Habtä-Mariam wrote to the Emperor Hailä Sellasse regarding the nature and severe consequences of the system during its second phase (1917—33) is much applicable to what happened during the first phase (1909—12). Habtä-Mariam reports:

> I was sent by Your Majesty to Qèllem. As soon as I arrived, I wanted to inform you that your poor people (*dehochiwo*) are seriously affected. In Qèllem, the *qälad* system of land measurement is not done in accordance to His Majesty's [Menilek II] rules and regulations (i.e. land is not measured by *qälad*—a leather rope 67 metres in length serving to measure land). Thus, during the time of *Fitawrari* [*Däjjazmach*] Birru, after *Däjjach* Jotè had left the country, the rich and the poor were counted and were assigned [to the soldiers] as land equivalent to 5-10 *gaša* and 3-5 *gaša* respectively. Although counted [and distributed to the soldiers as resources to live on] the people had a good life ... But later on, things got worse. Family head and servant (*lolè*), husband and wife, father and child were separated and were assigned to soldiers. As a consequence, a *gäbbar* called Balcha Bullo was assigned as a *gäbbar* to *Grazmach* Täsämma, *Däjjach* Mäkonnen Wosänè's servant (*aškär*) to pay him tribute. Balcha Bullo had lots of cattle before. He became poor because he was paying tribute in terms of honey, steer and other castrated animals. He could not abandon the area because he had land. But he used to move from place to place in search of jobs because he had to get money. One day the soldier went to Balcha's house to get the

> remaining two *birr* of his salary from him. As he did not find Balcha at his house, he took his four years old daughter in exchange for two birr. For three years she was with him in his house. Finally, he said he was not going to give her back to him because she was no longer with him and claimed that she got lost. Hence, I asked the *qoro* why he did not appeal for all those four years when the child was kept at [his] home. I was told that he had asked not only *Fitawrari* Haylämariam, but also went to Addis Ababa and appealed to *Fitawrari* Jämanäh. So I am waiting for the judge that you are going to send me ... This is very painful not only to Your Majesty but also to any foreign Christian who observes it. I am just reporting what I saw and heard, and the last solution and decision depend on Your Majesty … I did [write this letter to you] … because the cry of your poor people will make me vanish both in Heaven and on Earth...[44]

The case of Balcha Bullo and some more detailed reports illustrating personal and daily sufferings of the *gäbbar Däjjazmach* Habtä-Mariam had produced[45] were not exceptional and isolated cases relevant to a few *gäbbar* households, it was the situation of the whole of Gidaamii and the surrounding subdistricts in the northern part of the province of Qellem. The upshot of the story of this local documentary primary sources illustrating the severity of the *näftägnä-gäbbar* system and the unlimited exploitation of resource and labour the local inhabitants were subjected to is that the system threatened the Oromo peasants' subsistence livelihoods.

Local oral traditions confirm Habtä-Mariam's report:

> When *Däjjazmač* Joté was still in prison, the *näfṭaññä* came and divided the land among themselves. Even after he was released from prison, he was restricted to his land beyond river Qämbäri with only two thousand tenants. On the rest of the lands, saleqa were appointed and on the remaining the army mälkäññä of Itégé, and Bitwäddäd Täsämma were allotted to. After these army chiefs held the land, they separated slaves from their masters, sons from their fathers, wives from their husbands, made the galla male cut grass and plough farms and the female sweep and collect animal faeces and grand grain. Thus they used them for their household work. From time to time /the gabbar/ cut wood and took it to /the soldiers/. They were forced on every holiday to pay money for the price of *mukket* (sheep) and *sänga* (bull). Moreover, they took

> powder salt and pepper to the houses of their chiefs. The galla of Jote began entering Begi when they became fed up with the administration of these *mälkäññä* (chiefs).[46]

Gidaadaa Soolan summarised the mayhem of the system and implied how it threatened peasant subsistence:

> The people, besides paying tribute, were forced to serve the Sidama [Amhara] [and] and to feed the horses and mules of the *Naftana* (soldiers). They had to build houses and fences for the Malkana (governors, or owners of fiefs). Besides working for the newcomers, the Oromo had to give provisions. A *gabar* [*gäbbar*] had to serve his lord at least three days a week in addition to Sundays.[47]

What caused the Gidaamii rebellion of 1909—12 was, therefore, not the simple fact that the direct Amhara rule, or the *näftägnä-gäbbar* system, was introduced, destroying and replacing the local Oromo governorship. This had a vital symbolic significance but not enough to fulfil a condition of rebellion. In the two decades following 1890, the Ethiopian empire's provinces in the conquered south was subjected to the full extent of the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system, but nowhere, as far as the existing body of historical knowledge is concerned, or at least as far as available sources are concerned, led to a rebellion. The condition of rebellion in Gidaamii was fulfilled when the majority of peasants learned that their subsistence livelihood was threatened, understanding the fact that unlimited exploitation of the *näftägnä* brought them to a point where they had very little for themselves to live on. I addition, the rebellion—and those that came after it—were usually culturally framed; the peasants defined their ethnic identity as their exploitation and subjugation lay in the hands of an Amhara hegemony supported by Addis Ababa. The Oromo deployed discourses, memories and narratives—often from their pre-conquest history—to express grievances against the state-imposed system. The overall nature of the narratives remained more or less constant across time, although details changed and were reframed to fit specific requirements of the tactics the peasants believed in.

Since the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system classified the Oromo peasants as a subjugated class and the conquering *näfṭägna* as a

ruling class, institutionalized and culturally defined conflict between the two groups was soon in full swing.[48] In their historical narrative, the Mačča Oromo of Qellem in general and those of Gidaamii in particular interpreted the period of direct Amhara rule as the beginning of *bittaa oromaa*, alien rule.[49] The Gidaamii rebellion was to some extent culturally defined from the outset. The ongoing socio-cultural conflict strengthened the peasants' determination to express their grievances via cultural idioms. Local Oromo identities were redefined more strongly and came to be increasingly framed about the exploiters, the Amhara. The establishment of direct Amhara rule was, therefore, a turning point in popular consciousness as its imposition brought drastic changes.[50] It symbolized the end of independence and imposition of rule by a people whose language, culture and manners were different from their own. Political and socio-cultural conflicts between the Amhara settlers and the indigenous Oromo were reinforced with every daily encounter, although this was not the case before 1908. Local oral tradition confirms that the peasants generally believed that all Amhara governors and their *näfṭägna* were the same, and regarded them as alien intruders however long they spent with them. Qellem oral tradition reiterates this clearly:

Oromo	**Rough translation**
Naqeen nugaggabse	Naqee/Nake choked us
Saahileen nuqaqqabdee?	Is Saahile/Sahle going to
Manni Simaa Guumaa	rescue us?
Jalli citaadhuma	The house of Sima, the son of
Naqeenii fi Saaleen	Guumaa
Jarri Sidaamuma	Its bottom walls are straw
Saahileen abbaa keetii?	Both Naqee and Saalee
Laaxee albaateetii	They are Amhara
Hundumaa Sidaama	Is Saahile/Sahle your father?
Hundumaa sisaama	You wallow in diarrhea
	All of them are Amhara. [51]

The threats the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system generated in Gidaamii were apparently what provided created 'collective consciousness of the fact of exploitation and repression,' by undermining horizontal and vertical segments within the peasants, but also articulated the

fact that their collective action was the most decisive factor to end them by force[52] As the months passed while the peasants suffered under the most exploitative and repressive system, they had never seen collective consciousness of the fact of exploitation repression, and the conviction that they could be removed by their collective action appears to have become clearer. The institutionalized economic and social inequalities were fused with perceived and real ethnocultural oppression in Gidaamii, as in many other southern provinces in the Ethiopian empire, the alternatives methods through which the economic grievances were presented came under ethnocultural particularities of the peasants. The choice was, of course, partly emanated from the empire's underlying institutional arrangements. Also, the local Oromo elites that had lost its power and dignity to the *näfṭägna* was very much in the play, it provided leadership, firearms and ammunitions. As we shall see below, Mardaasaa Jootee, son of the Qellem's governor imprisoned by Menilek, apparently led the rebellion while other personnel of the ruling family were involved in multiple ways. Here, James Scott's theory of moral economy is useful in understanding the peasants' preference for securing their subsistence over maximizing production. This risk-averse approach meant that peasants were willing to endure exploitation as long as their subsistence remained safe. The problem was requirements the *näfṭägnä-gäbbar* system imposed on the wealth and labour of the Oromo peasants were not only unlimited and arbitrary they were accompanied by violent measures by *näfṭägnä*, including the possibility of enslavement of the peasants' children or at the head of the family, mostly men.[53] Regarding what was tolerable and what was not the peasants could, and they did tolerate, levies imposed on their produces and their labour as far as it kept safe their subsistence, even when the amount was unreasonable and accompanied by limited level of violence, as it happened during the pre-*näfṭägnä* era. What was needed for a peasant family to survive not just the amount needed to eat, they need to have grain saved in their store, *gombisaa*, they want their oxen to be safe since they were used to plough their agricultural land, they need their cattle and other domestic animals to survive as these were one way of saving for any bad time that could lie ahead. All these were not just about eating to survive; they were about

peasant conception of social justice, about their dignity. It means the tolerable and intolerable exactions too were defined culturally.

Months after the system had been established, an armed rebellion broke out in the northern sub-district of Qellem, Gidaamii. Lasting between February 1909 and 1912, the rebellion resulted in the disintegration of the Ethiopian administrative system in Gidaamii and the neighbouring territories (Jimmaa, Amaara and Horroo), which were then under Gidaamii but later became separate sub-districts of the province of Qellem, presenting a serious challenge to Addis Ababa.[54]

THE REBELLION, 1909-12

In the rural areas of imperial Ethiopia, peasants rarely confronted the state openly and violently. But when such confrontations did occur, they were often significant enough to dissipate state resources and weaken the imperial regime. The limited frequency of open rebellion led some scholars to characterize the peasants as a docile and passive agrarian population. However, the few violent peasant rebellions in modern Ethiopia—apart from the bloody rebellion of 1632 that forced Emperor Susenyos to abdicate in favour of his son—convinced others to characterize the peasants as resolutely resistant and rebellious—the Wäyanè rebellion (1943), the Bale peasant uprising (1960—67), and the Gojjam uprisings (1968) are exceptions that are relatively well known in Ethiopian historiography.

In imperial Ethiopia, the *gäbbar* in the conquered south, in contrast to those of the Christian north, were too poorly armed to oppose their *näfṭägna* overlords. They were not without methods and skills of resisting when oppressed too severely.[55] There were many instances of armed resistance in the conquered south as well, which relied on the availability of a small number of arms, which were well dispersed. The prominent example—better known in the historiography—was the precedent set in Maji. In 1910 the transfer from Maji to Bägämeder of *Ras* Wäldä-Giyorgis created a catastrophic situation when *Däjjach* Damṭè, commander of Wäldä-Giyorgis' *näfṭägna* and the imperial soldiers, allowed the entire army to raid the province to capture as much booty as they could. Damṭè's removal was followed by raiding and looting of the whole of Maji and its hinterlands. This was repeated over and over again

until 1936, and there were about thirteen change-overs during this period.[56] As this cycle of violence continued, the indigenous population of Maji and its hinterland began to organize armed resistance, initially led by three *balabbat*, Debo, Serie and Mwanga, all of whom cooperated to mobilise recruits from Maji and the Boma highlands and joined forces with a few supporters from Gimra, Golda, and even as far as Akobo river. While Debo and Serie started the rebellion in retaliation to the raids, Mwanga had resisted the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system from the time of its introduction. The resistance continued until 1918 and was followed by similar resistance of the Tishana—now purely involving peasants—which was not overcome until 1925. [57] The 1909–12 rebellion in Gidaamii is much less well-known in the literature.

In the face of the heavy burdens the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system imposed, which had threatened the peasants' subsistence farming in Gidaamii as well as historical forms of social organisation, there was little reason for the peasants to refuse to cooperate with the local Oromo rulers who were preparing to rebel against Addis Ababa. The peasants were attracted to the campaign of mobilization by Mardaasaa, Jootee's son, and a large number of them became his followers. He established alliances even with those who did not wish not to join the rebellion and stayed at home. In December 1908, about five months after the deposition of Jootee, Mardaasaa, hurriedly left Gidaamii and made his quarters at Buree, about three miles to the west. [58] This was after rebellious peasants received from Jootee's 'head-slave', perhaps under the orders of Mardaasaa himself, about two thousand rifles and left Gidaamii to camp at Tulluu Arbaa.[59]

Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhèr of the neighbouring Leeqaa-Naqamtee appears to have been worried too much and sent a report to Menilek. He reports:

> *Janhoy*, I do not know what is going on in *Däjjach* Jotè 's country, Qèllem.[60] They are fighting among them and *Janhoy's* country is about to disintegrate. I have been informed about the problem there but I refrained myself to report to you because it was only rumor. And now, if *Janhoy* does not send an influential person down here, the country will fall apart. Everyone is doing things on his own. Their quarrel among them is strengthened. There is no responsible person with whom I can talk and try to resolve the

> problem. The situation there is such a childish thing. Let *Janhoy* know this. Written onb17 Ţerr1901.[61]

The empire's local army was swiftly mobilised to confront them but was immediately repulsed. Soon a demonstration demanding the departure of the Amhara governors was organized in Gidaamii.[62] Fearing the rebels, *Qägnäzmach* Godaanaa, the Ethiopian military commander in Gidaamii town hurriedly evacuated Gidaamii along with all his Amhara soldiers.[63]

Addis Ababa's response was more considered, fearing a sudden and much larger rebellion. The emperor immediately dismissed Godaanaa and dispatched a special force led by *Fitawrari* Abba Šawul, who had been in Qellem since removal of Jootee in July 1908. Contemporary British intelligence reported this armed unit as being the best in the whole empire. The force was divided into various units and was 'planted' across various parts of the province.[64] Abba Šawul carried out a bloody crackdown on both armed rebels and civilian peasants. He entered Gidaamii triumphantly but was unable to restore peace across the rebellious region. Overwhelmed by Abba Šawul's military might and forced from Gidaamii, the surviving rebels reorganized themselves in the neighbouring territories north of Gidaamii, where they continued to uproot the *näfţägna*.[65]

The empire had long sought to prevent the Oromo peasants from possessing firearms to prevent any possible Oromo rebellion taking over all of western Ethiopia. Although Addis Ababa had been lax in allowing firearms into the conquered south, the type of alliance it established with the ruling house of an Oromo highland periphery of Qellem on the Ethio-Sudan border appears to have compromised this trend. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhèr, alias Kumsaa Morodaa, the Oromo governor of Leeqaa-Naqamtee, a neighbouring region to the east of Qellem, for instance, while applying to obtain more firearms from the central government, which was confirmed, reported to Menilek that he already possessed four thousand and two hundred guns.[66] Menilek was wary of possible British encroachment on Ethiopia's western and southern borders, so on the march to Adwa he sent back four of his vassals (one of them being Jootee) with strict orders to guard "his country."[67] In 1897 Jootee had killed Captain Vittorio Bottego, the leader of Italian Geographical Society,

and his party after the latter's refusal to acknowledge Menilek's power, and this encouraged Menilek to give Jootee the task of guarding Ethiopia's borders.[68]

In 1911, Mardaasaa claimed that there were seven thousand firearms in Qellem, of which about one hundred and fifty were machine guns. After acknowledging the scarcity of ammunition because of seizures by Amhara forces the previous year, he petitioned a British officer to help him import one hundred thousand rounds of ammunition through Sudan. The officer promised to submit his request but hinted at the impossibility of its realization.[69] Mardaasaa now delegated leadership of the rebellion to two of his father's relatives, *Girazmach* Tuuchoo and Oonchoo of Bori, and left with Ammayyaa (Jootee's brother) to Khartoum to plead with General Wingate to influence Addis Ababa for the release of his father.[70] Wingate appears to have been unenthusiastic about the idea, but he wrote a vaguely-worded letter to *Abunä* Matewos and the British Minister in Addis Ababa. It is not clear whether the *Abun* made any effort, but the British Minister made a restrained plea to free Jootee from the allegations levelled against him by Addis Ababa. He remained very doubtful about the success of his negotiations with the government in the light of the latter's deep-rooted suspicion of governors closer to the Ethio-Sudan border and particularly "the leaning of [Jootee] and his family towards Sudan."[71] On his return, Mardaasaa was arrested and jailed near Gidaamii for two months, after which he was transferred to Addis Ababa for another month, then remained under surveillance in Addis Ababa for a further nine months.[72]

The rebellion continued unabated even after heavy losses caused by the arrival of Abba Šawul's army. The main job of Sahlä-Giyorgis, the administrator, "was confronting the task of quelling Galla revolt," said a British report of 1911.[73] H. Walker, a British Commercial Inspector, reported that Sahlä-Giyorgis was on the telephone to Addis Ababa every morning because of the instability of his province.[74] In mid-1910, while Mardaasaa and dozens of peasants were imprisoned in Addis Ababa, a renewed rebellion flared up which the Amhara government again combated at a heavy cost. This convinced the regime to send fresh troops and release Mardaasaa to help administer the region.[75] While still keeping his father in prison, Addis Ababa named Mardaasaa as *Fitawrari* and

promised him rule over Jootee's country, i.e. the entire province of Qellem, in the same way it had been governed before his father's removal. Having been instructed to restore peace and collect taxes, Mardaasaa was sent down to Qellem with *Qañña*z*mach* Naqi. He was able to restrain many armed rebels, but there are no available sources to tell us whether the tax collection was effective.[76] Despite Addis Ababa's original promise, Mardaasaa was given only a half of the province and was placed under the guidance of Sahlä-Giyorgis, who went to Sira, near Tulluu Walal, with some six hundred soldiers.[77] In 1911, Mardaasaa was summoned again to Addis Ababa to be imprisoned at Ankobär, and a new Amhara governor was sent to govern the still rebellious Qellem.

At the centre of the rebellion was, as discussed above, the conditions created by the introduction of direct Amhara rule, imposed under the new *näfṭägna-gäbbar* relationship. The cumulative effect of the severe exploitation imposed by the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system—tithes, various forms of tributes, labour and fines, as illustrated above by the case of Balcha Bullo—a case that, of course, represents peasant circumstances in Gidaamii and the surrounding areas—had threatened subsistence farming. The Oromo peasant rebellion of 1909–1912 therefore cannot be best explained by just by the mere imposition of a new extractive and exploitative system, but by the conditions of rebellion it created, i.e. the fact that it was injected suddenly into state-society relations threatening subsistence livelihoods of the overwhelming majority of the peasants and simultaneously at that. The imposition of the consequences of the *näfṭägnä-gäbbar* system that threated peasant subsistence livelihoods and the Amhara governors failed to tax the country for three years (1909–1912).[78] More importantly, the way Addis Ababa reacted to the rebellion exposed the state's weakness vis-à-vis the power of its peasant subjects.

This turbulent period, and the subsequent decades to the 1974 revolution would be essential in shaping socio-economic and political transformations within the peasantry, their relations with the *balabbat/ባለባት* (the empire's local allies), and more importantly their interaction with the state. The extreme exploitation of labour and wealth that the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system brought to the region had never been previously experienced, and threats to peasant subsistence had provoked a rebellion. Not only did consequences of

the encounter between the Gidaamii rebellion of 1909—12 and its efforts to remove threats the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system had introduced generated a new and a more severe round of the latter in 1917—33, but also provoked decades of peasant resistance that became generational and lasted until the outbreak of the 1974 Ethiopian revolution. By revealing to the peasants, the ethnocultural boundaries between themselves and their Amhara overlords and the extent of the contempt in which they held them, consequences of the 1909—12 rebellion thus gave them reasons to mobilise elements of their culture they had not hitherto cared much about.

However, the rebellion could not be interpreted as a defence of Jootee's governorship, as some studies argue. There is no doubt that this was an anti-Amhara rebellion, involving both peasants and the elite,[79] but there had never been much common ground between the Oromo peasants of Qellem and Jootee's leadership. Jootee was known for his brutality towards the Oromo peasant population and non-Oromo residents (Anfillo, Mao and Abbigar) alike. His period in Qellem was characterised by brutality, severe injustice and harsh punishment (criminals were sometimes thrown from a cliff with heavy stones tied to their backs).

The rebellion presented a considerable challenge to the Ethiopian administration in the region, but was never strong enough to end the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system. Instead, because of the empire states inability to quash the rebellion quickly, there came a short period when the *näfṭägna* were forced to live on whatever they could take from raids and looting. After a brief period of relief following Jootee's reinstatement in 1913, the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system was re-established more vigorously and continued until the introduction of property tax in 1933.

The consequences of the rebellion were far-reaching. It resulted in a long term socio-economic and political-administrative instabilities. Jootee was released in 1912 and was reinstated as a governor over his Gidaamii home country the following year, but never again over the entire province. The rebellion in Qellem had not been completely quashed when Jootee was reinstated in 1913. This first round of direct Amhara rule through the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system (1908–12) was cut short by the rebellion and never got into full swing until its second phase began in 1917. In the broader southern region, particularly in areas where the system had been in

place since the time of the conquest, the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system begun to break down in the early twentieth century for different reasons. The overwhelming flow of northern immigrants into the south (for example Harar and Sidamo) exceeded the number of available *gäbbar* and nearly caused the system to collapse, and the combined effects of paralysis in provincial administration and the increase in settler population strained the system still further in the south-western provinces such as Kafa and Gimra.[80] It was a time of new beginnings in Qellem.

Although Jootee had been reinstated, the *näfṭägna* forces deployed since 1909 were allowed to remain in place. However, the level of exploitation was not as severe as when it was first introduced.[81] Released from prison with bad health, Jootee, however, did not stay long even as a governor of Gidaamii. His rule was precarious, and he was removed again in 1917.[82] In March 1917 the regent Täfäri Makonnen ordered *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egziabhèr Morodaa, the Oromo governor of the neighbouring Leeqaa-Naqamtee, to take over Qellem on behalf of the central government in Addis Ababa and instructed him to govern the rebellious province on his behalf. Gäbrä Egziabhèr was relieved of his responsibility when the newly appointed Amhara governor, *Däjjach* Biru Wäldä-Gäbriel, arrived in October 1917.[83] *Däjjach* Biru's force overran Qellem with 7–8,000 large *näft'ägna* force.[84] This marked the commencement of the second, longer, even more exploitative and violent era of the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system.[85] This was how the Gidaamii rebellion of 1909—12 which aimed to remove the *näfṭägna-gäbbar* system, which it did in the short term, ended up provoking the reintroduction of the worst form of the system into the entire province of Qellem, save Haawwaa-Galaan, where Jootee's rival *Fitawrari* Buraayyuu Barii was allowed to exercise a semi-autonomous administration. By finally placing the province under direct Amhara rule, this period also signalled the complete termination of Qellem's local autonomy.

Nevertheless, that was never near defeat of the rebellion. The period from 1917 to the late 1920s was principally a time of anti-Amhara rebellions, because the reintroduction in Qellem of the *näfṭägnä-gäbbar* system provided further breeding conditions for both violent and non-violent methods of resistance. To survive subjugation and severe exploitation, the peasants employed multiple

tactics. They mobilised, relying on a historical consciousness of how their past had been memorised, narrated and interpreted. In addition to open rebellions, banditry, terrorizing *näfṭägnä* villages, outmigration into the neighbouring region to the north, Benishangul, and court litigation. The result was that, in January 1933, the *näfṭägnä-gäbbar* system was lifted and the last Amhara governor of the system (*Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Wäsänè) removed.[86] In the process, the state-society interaction through peasant efforts at survival and series of government responses became arenas of negotiation and bargain, ultimately determining the nature and the shape of the local state.

Notes

1 James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (London, 1976), 193.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Gebru Tareke. *Ethiopia: Power and Protest, Peasant Rebellion in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1991), 4-5.
5 — Ibid,1-11; James Scott, *The Moral Economy*, 5.
6 James Scott, *The Moral Economy*, 193.
7 Ibid.
8 Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, 1-11; James Scott, *The Moral Economy*, 5.
9 Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: lord and peasant in the making of the modern world* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 474.
10 James Scott, *The Moral Economy*, 194.
11 Ibid, vii.
12 Ibid, 3.
13 Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analyses of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge, 1979), 115.
14 Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest,* 5.
15 Ibid, 5-6.
16 Aristide Zolberg, "Moments of Madness," *Politics and Society*, 2 (2), 1972, 183-207.
17 Barrington Moore, *Social Origins,* 474; James Scott, *The Moral Economy*, 204.
18 James Scott, *The Moral Economy*, 204.
19 Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest,* 3.

20 See among others, Eke Haberland, *Galla Sud-Aethiopiens* (Stuttgart, 1963), 773; G.W.B. Huntingford, *The Galla of Ethiopia, the Kingdom of Kafa and Janjero* (London, 1955), 27.
21 Daniel Ayana, "Land Tenure and Agriculture in Sayyoo-Affillo, Western Wallagga, Ethiopia, 1880-1974," (PhD Thesis, University of Illinois, 1995), 67.
22 Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey N. Smith (trans. and ed.), *Selections from the Prison NoteBooks* of Antonio Gramsci (London, 1999), 196-200.
23 See Robert L Hess, *Ethiopia* (London, 1970), 148; John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Nottingham, 1978), 26.
24 Klaas Walraven and Jon Abbink. "Rethinking Resistance in African History: An Introduction," in *Rethinking Resistance, Revolt and Violence in African History* (Leiden, 2003), 10.
25 For issues related to tenancy and its consequences in Gedeo see Berhanu Tesfaye Aragaw, "Contested Land: land and tenancy disputes in Gideo, southern Ethiopia (1941-1974)," (PhD Thesis in History, SOAS, 2009), 315-317.
26 John Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers* (Oxford, 2011), 99-100.
27 Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*: *Essays in History and Social Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1986), 40.
28 WO 106/227, *SIR* 126 (January 1905), Appendix 'A' "Report of the Expedition to Gore, Saiu, Anfilo, Gidami, &," 6. Naqi is remembered in the local tradition as "Naqe," and variously as Nake, Naki or Anake.
29 A letter by Emperor Menilek II, perhaps to the public of Qellem, dated Hamile 13, 1900 E.C/ 20 July 1908 (declaring to the peasants that he had imprisoned Jootee and appointed a new governor and that they had to continue to be governed as before) in Paulos Ňňoňňo, **አጼ ሚኒልክ አገር ውስጥ የተፃፃፏቸው ደብዳቤዎች** [Emperor Menilek's Domestic Correspondences] (Addis Ababa, 2003 E.C), 454.
30 Menilek to Täsämma, Pagume 2, 1901 [12 September 1909] in Paulos Ňňoňňo **አጼ ሚኒልክ አገር ውስጥ የተፃፃፏቸው ደብዳቤዎች,** 570.
31 Ibid.
32 Daniel Ayana, ""Land Tenure," 111.
33 Charles Gwynn, "The Frontiers of Abyssinia: A Retrospect," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 36 (143) (April 1937), 155.
34 Herbert Weld Blundell, "A Journey through Abyssinia to the Nile," *The Geographical Journal* 15 (2) (Feb.1900), 118.
35 Major Austin, "Report on a Tour in Southwestern Abyssinia," 7 July 1900, FO 1/44.

36 Gäbrä Egzi'abhér to Täfäri Mekonnen and Empress Zäwditu, written on Tiqimt 17, 1913 EC/26 Oct.1920, 1/wä/mu Letter-book of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér Correspondence with the Central government, 1898-1917 EC.

37 Thomas Lambie, *Boot and Saddle in Africa* (New York, 1943), 26; *Idem*, *A Doctor*, 127-128, 133.

38 Gidada Solon, *The Other Side of Darkness* (New York, 1972), 6, 10-14.

39 Mekuria Bulcha, *The Making of Oromo Diaspora: Historical Sociology of Forced Migration* (Minneapolis, 2002), 158; See also Mekuria Bulcha, *Contours of the Emergent and Ancient Oromo Nation: Dilemmas of State Building in Ethiopia* (Cape Town, 2011), 336-339.

40 Daniel Ayana, ""Land Tenure," 105.

41 *Balabbat* and *Qoro* of Sayyo, Anfillo and Qellem to Hailä Sellasse, Tir 19, 1925 [27 January, 1933], in A.Triulzi and Tesema T. (eds), ***የወለጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች፡-ከ1880ዎቹ እስከ 1920ዎቹ (እ.ኢ.አ)*** [Documents for Wallagga History, 1880s to 1920s (E.C)] (Addis Ababa, 2004), 184-185; Idem, *Balabbat* and *Qoro* of Sayyo, Anfillo and Qellem to Hailä Sellasse, 187.

42 Alessandro Triulzi, "Social Protest and Rebellion in Some Gäbbar Songs from Qelläm, Wällägga," in Joseph Tubiana (ed.), *Modern Ethiopia* (Rotterdam, 1980, 178.

43 Ibid, 179.

44 Habtä-Mariam to Hailä Sellasse, Tahsas 5, 1925 [3 January 1933], in A. Triulzi and Tesema T. (eds), ***የወለጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች፡-ከ1880ዎቹ እስከ 1920ዎቹ (እ.ኢ.አ)*** [Documents for Wallagga History, 1880s to 1920s (E.C)] (Addis Ababa, 2004), 175-76.

45 See among others the case of another family he reported together with the case of Balcha Bullo in the same letter, but excluded here for lack of space; *Däjjazmach* Habtä-Mariam Emperor Haila Sellasse, n.d, in Alessandro Triulzi and Tesema Ta'a (eds), ***የወለጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች,*** 170, 172-174, 180-182, 184-185.

46 Yosef Jotè (*Qägnazmach*), "የክቡር ደጃዝማች ጆቴ ቱሉ አጭር የህይወት ታሪክ [A Short Biography of *Däjjazmach* Jootee Tulluu," (Amharic MS, n.d), 4-5.

47 Gidada Solon, *The Other Side of Darkness* (New York, 1972), 5.

48 See, for instance, Donald Donham, "Old Abyssinia and the New Ethiopian Empire: Themes in Social History," in *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, 24–48.

49 Informants: Fiixee Birrii (05/08/2010), Ulaa Fiixumaa (14/08/2010), Nägaš Shuuramoo (10/08/2010), D/Doolloo; Yosef Jotè, **“የክቡር ደጃዝማች ጆቴ ቱሉ,”** 4–5.

50 Bahru Zewde, "A Biography of Dejazmach Jote Tulu, Abba Iggu (1855-1918)," (BA Thesis, *Hailé Sellassié* I University, Department of History, 1970), 51; Nagaso Gidada, “The Impact of Christianity,” 5-6; Mitiku Tucho, “Impacts of Pastoralism on the Oromo of Qellam, Wollega,” (BA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 1983), 18.

51 Negaso Gidada, “Oromo Historical Poems,” 333.

52 — derived from Theda Skocpol’s theory, *States and Social Revolutions*, 115.

53 See, for example, Habtä-Mariam’s report quoted above, note number 44.

54 WO 371/1111, SIR 204, July 1911, S.F Newcombe, “Report on a Tour in South Western Abyssinia,” Appendix B. Alessandro Triulzi, “Social Protest,” 178–179.

55 Richard Caulk, “Armies as Predators: Soldiers and Peasants in Ethiopia. C.1850–1935,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 11 (3), 1978, 474.

56 P. Garretson, Garretson, Peter. “Vicious Cycles: ivory, slaves, and arms on the new Maji frontier,” in D. Donham and Wendy James (eds), *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*: *Essays in History and Social anthropology* (Cambridge, 1986), 202.

57 Ibid, 202, 206.

58 S.F. Newcombe, “Report on a Tour in South-western Abyssinia,” *SIR* 204, July 1911, Appendix B.

59 Ibid, 14.

60 Qellem here is a reference to Jootee’s home town in Gidaamii, not the province of Qellem.

61 Gäbrä Egzi’abhèr to Menilek, in A.Triulzi and Tesema T. (eds), **የወለጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች፡-ከ1880ዎቹ እስከ 1920ዎቹ (እ.ኢ.አ)** [Documents for Wallagga History, 1880s to 1920s (E.C)] (Addis Ababa, 2004), 93.

62 S.F. Newcombe, “Report on a Tour in South-western Abyssinia,” *SIR* 204, July 1911, Appendix B.

62 Ibid, 14.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Gäbrä Egzi’abhèr to Menilek, in A.Triulzi and Tesema T. (eds), ***የወለጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች፡-ከ1880ዎቹ እስከ 1920ዎቹ (እ.ኢ.አ)***

[Documents for Wallagga History, 1880s to 1920s (E.C)] (Addis Ababa, 2004), 78-79.

67 Gäbrä-Sellassè (Tsähafè-tizaz), ***ታሪክ ዘመን ዘዳግማዊ ሚኒልክ ንጉሰ ነገስት ዘኢትዮጵያ*** /History of Ethiopia During the Reign of Emperor Menilek II (Addis Ababa: Birhaninna Salam, 1959 EC), 231. The other three were Gabra-Egziabher of Naqamtee, Abbaa Jifaar of Jimma, and Kawo Tona of Walaitta.

68 Vannutelli and Citerni, *L'Omo* (Milano, 1899), 350-463; A. Lavagetto, *La vita* Eroica, 219-238.

69 H.H Kelley (Captain), "Report on A Journey From Malakal via River Sobat to Gidami (Abyssinia), Kurmuk and Gelhak (Western Nile)," SIR, 203, Appendix, June 1911.

70 SIR, 179, 1909; H.H Kelley (Captain), "Report on A Journey from Malakal via River Sobat to Gidami (Abyssinia), Kurmuk and Gelhak (Western Nile)," SIR, 203, Appendix, June 1911.

71 SIR 203, June 1911, Appendix.

72 SIR 204, July 1911, Appendix B.

73 SIR 203; FO 371/111, 10.

74 C.H. Walker, "Report on A Journey from Gambella Trading Post into the Country of Dejazmach Joti (Saiu, Walega)," SIR.188, March 1910, Appendix "C."

75 SIR 206, September 1911.

76 SIR 204, July 1911, Appendix B.

77 SIR 203; FO 371/111, 10.

78 S.F. Newcombe, "Report on a Tour," *SIR* 204, July 1911, Appendix B.

79 See, for example, Mekuria Bulcha, *The Making of Oromo Diaspora: Historical Sociology of Forced Migration* (Minneapolis, 2002), 158.

80 Menilek to Tafari Maskaram 26, 1901 [10 October 1908], in Paulos Ňňoňňo, ***ኦዴ ሚኒልክ አገር ውስጥ የተፃፃፏቸው ደብዳቤዎች,***488; Timothy Fernyhough, *Serfs, Slaves and Shifta: Modes of Production and Resistance in Pre-Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Rohobot Printing Press, 2010), 149–150.

81 Yosef Jotè (*Qägnazmach*), **"የክቡር ደጃዝማች ጆቴ ቱሉ,"**3-4**.**

82 Gäbrä Egrzi'abhér to Täfäri, Tikimt 26, 1910 [16 March 1917], in Triulzi & Tesema, ***የወለጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች,***112.

83 Gäbrä Egrzi'abhér to Täfäri, Ţiqimt 26, 1910 [05 November 1917] in Triulzi and Tesema, ***የወለጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች,***112.

84 *SIR* 284, March 1918, 4.

85 Gäbrä Egrzi'abhér to Täfäri, Ţiqimt 26, 1910 [05 November 1917] in Triulzi and Tesema, ***የወለጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች,*** 112.

86 Qoro and *balläbbat* petition of Qellem to Hailä Sellassiè," Ṭir 19, 1925 [26 January 1933], in Triulzi and Tesema, ***የወለጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች***, 175.

REDRESSING HOMICIDE: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND RITUAL REPARATION AMONG THE OROMO THE CASE OF THE NOONNOO BEENJAA

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INTRODUCTION

This research was conducted among the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo in the Jimma Zone of the Oromia National Regional State in Ethiopia. Noonnoo Beenjaa is situated in southwestern part of Ethiopia in the Gibe River Basin. Elders in Noonnoo Beenjaa are respected for their tremendous contributions to the political, social and economic lives of the society. Elders work within the framework of the *gadaa* system, which is still a living institution in the area. Noonnoo Beenjaa is one of the areas where *gadaa* has survived both internal dynamics and external factors. The *gadaa* system is the indigenous political system of the Oromo. It established five *gadaa* parties called *gogeessa gadaa*. There are five *gogeessa* and membership into a *gogeessa* is hereditary. Each party comes to political power in rotation for eight-years. Thus, each *gadaa* party comes to power every forty years. This system guides every aspect of the life of the Oromo (Legesse 1973; 2006).

Due to the pervasive nature of conflict, ways of addressing conflicts are necessary irrespective of contexts (Bohannan 1967, Khalid 2014). However, both the nature of conflict and the resolution methodologies vary across time and space. Regardless of some variations, customary mechanisms of dealing with conflict prevail everywhere in the world. Yet, they are more prevalent among traditional societies (Khalid 2014). Accordingly, among most African communities, customary systems still play a very central role in the process of handling conflicts, preventing their escalation into violence and maintaining social order regardless of whether or not they have legal backing (Gemechu 2007).

BASIC FEATURES OF CUSTOMARY JUSTICE SYSTEMS

The provision of justice, the restoration of social order, peace and harmony and the preservation of amiable relationships in the context of specific cultural values are common features of customary justice systems. They are not just concerned with adjudicating who is right or wrong and the reprisal of perpetrators, but the reunion of the conflicting parties (Khalid 2014). To this end, customary systems of justice operate in the framework of social norms and customs to sustain social order through common efforts. These systems entail social, economic, cultural and spiritual dimensions of the society. In customary systems of justice, actors are leaders of indigenous political systems, traditional chiefs, kings, priests, healers, elders and clan leaders and respected members of the community. In the process of deliberation, ritual gift exchanges and prayers to supernatural deities or ancestral spirits are commonly performed.

Recently, African societies have resorted to the use of customary mechanisms of justice as an alternative and complement to statutory laws even in addressing crimes against humanity. Some customary institutions have survived or been revived to address contemporary issues; the application of *gacaca* to resolve "modern" conflicts in Rwanda is a typical example. This has happened as a means to resolve conflict and it demands an understanding of the social milieu where the conflict erupted (Kariuki 2015). Similar examples can be drawn from the works of Höhne (2006) in Somaliland, Chiweza (2007) in Malawi, Zeller (2007) in Namibia, and Buur and Kyed (2007) in Mozambique. These works draw attention to the recognition of traditional leaders and customary institutions in post-Cold War political situations. Similar practices have been common in post-1991 Ethiopian political environment. The works of Unruh (2006) and Hagmann (2007) indicated how customary institutions and traditional leaders have been recognized and their efforts in conflict management have been boosted among the Afar and Somali.

Several factors have contributed to the survival and preference for customary system of justices in Africa. The first factor is that the Western justice system is basically individualistic and retributive in nature. This is quite different from African justice system which focus on the restoration of social harmony and sustainable amicable relations among the conflicting parties. Apart from the right of

individuals, the system pays attention to corporate responsibilities and relationships which are equally or even more important. The state court emphasizes the identification of loser-winner paradigm and leaves the pain of losing unhealed and might adversely affect any future relations of the parties. Secondly, the Western justice system generally is areligious, whereas African systems of justice entail spiritual components. This is revealed in two ways. On the one hand, the religious personalities who are believed to be endowed with the power of communicating between the spiritual deities and human being serve in conflict handling with their irresistible power of decision. Alternatively, whoever the mediators or the actors are, the issue of truth or justice is believed to be supervised and protected by the supreme deity, including ancestral spirits (Kariuki 2015). Any bending of the truth results in severe punishment from above. Thirdly, traditional justice systems are more flexible whereby disputants feel at ease in front of the local mediators or arbitrators. They also provide timely decision and are less expensive. The Western justice system on the other hand, involves more time taking and resource demanding technical procedures which are unaffordable to poor and indigent clients (Gemechu 2007; 2011). According to Choudree (1999), in Africa, customs and traditions guide the whole processes and procedures of customary conflict resolutions. This fact makes traditional processes more flexible, more at ease in a familiar environment and less menacing. An empirical study by Khalid (2014) revealed that people still opt for *Jirga*, the customary mechanism of conflict resolution among Pashtoon society in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This is because the majority of the society is out of the reach of the government. They have less access to modern education and the formal court system, and the government court is often accused of corruption, and delayed justice.

In spite of all its advantages, there are serious challenges which hinder the effectiveness of customary systems of justice. The negative attitude towards customary systems in general and pertinent ritual practices and procedures in particular are among the challenges. This is also coupled with the prohibition of traditional actors in addressing conflicts. Secondly, customary justice systems are considered inferior to and a violation of human rights. Further, the erosion of popular legitimacy has happened because the local

actors are affected by bribery, corruption and favoritism. In addition, modernity and westernization have destroyed the social capital, which is a basis for corporate responsibilities and accountability among families and kinsmen. Instead, westernization established an individualistic and legalistic society. The role of the awkward legal and policy frameworks on customary mechanisms of conflict resolution is are major challenges. Customary systems are not only denied legal support, but they are also subject to the interference of statutory laws against the enforcement of their decisions (Kariuki 2015).

If we are focusing on the Ethiopian case, since the time of the formation of modern Ethiopia, in the last quarter of 19th century, particularly, since the enactment of the criminal law of the Empire of Ethiopia, different Ethiopian societies have been practicing two different administrations of justice. These are: the government court system and the customary justice system. In this context, the prevalence of two publics has been discussed by different scholars Feyisa (2008), Fiseha (2013), Gabre (2011), Habitie (2011), Shack (1969) and Shiferaw (2011) are few among others.

Specific to the Oromo, Lephisa (1973) and Gololcha (1988), illustrated how the Oromo impose sanctions on offenders based on the nature and weight of the offense. The works of Gemechu (2007; 2011) showed the basic principles guiding *gumaa* (settling homicide case) the process, the spiritual and legal meanings it entails as well as the post *gumaa* relationships between the conflicting parties. Jambare (1998) also showed the rituals and meanings of the rituals of *gumaa* among the Oromo. He shows how a blood of a ram substitutes the blood of the slayer. Negasa (2011) discussed how the Ada'a Oromo address any case of homicide through customary mechanism. He also showed the role of the belief system in the process of investigating and proving the case of homicide and/or any offense. Bassi (1992; 2005) discussed Borana customary law and classifications of wrongs and sanctions. The study by Diribsa and Gemechu (2015) focused on ways of investigating hidden homicide among the Kuttaye Oromo. Mamuye (2011) showed the role of *siinqee*[1] institution in conflict resolution among the Arsi Oromo. Regassa and Gemechu (2015, 2016) discussed the *reejjii* and *jigaa* institutions which are still prevailing among the Oromo in Jimma.

These works have revealed the prevalence of customary justice systems in different geographical and cultural settings.

Beyond the prevalence of customary justice systems, the question concerning whether they are still relevant to the current world or not needs due consideration. Pertinent to the prevalence of legal pluralism, picking the example of the *Jirga* traditional institution among the Pashtoon of Pakistan and Afghanistan, Khalid (2014) showed the contending approaches of its effectiveness, utility and even relevance in today's world. There are two dominant opposing discourses: the first attempts to justify that *Jirga* is an outmoded way of dealing with conflicts and is irrelevant. The second attempts to praise the system and takes it as the only realistic option at the disposal of Pashtoon society. The author argued that this customary system has both positive and negatives aspects. Researchers are of great value to explore these merits and drawbacks of customary systems of justice to overcome their weaknesses and boost their potential benefits. Thus, similar research assessing why the traditional way of addressing the case of homicide through ritual and jurial restitution still persisting among the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo could well be of great value. This article provides an in-depth investigation into customary justice systems with a special emphasis on *gumaa*. It seeks to contextualize a customary justice system which was established to address cases of homicide. It is also relevant in signifying local views, common cultural and moral values to better apprehend the prevalence of customary mechanisms of conflict resolution.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Kariuki (2015) presented three major theories of customary justice systems which are pertinent to this work. These are: the social capital theory, social solidarity theory and optimal psychology theory. These theories are imperative in providing a theoretical context to comprehend customary justice system. Meinhard, Foster and Berger (2003) defined social capital as a broad concept including the customs and links enabling joint action for common benefit. Meinhard, et al. (2003) identified five themes of social capital: networks, reciprocity, trust, social norms, and personal and collective efficacy. Network refers to lateral relations among both individuals and groups. Reciprocity denotes the long-or short-term

returns of services. Trust, on the other hand, refers to confidence that others will react up to the expectation. Social capital is also based on social norms and cultural values. The final theme is individual and shared engagement as well as willingness of the concerned community.

Kariuki (2015) argued that the social capital theory is apposite in explaining the formation of communal societies and the consequent social relations that connect them together. Referring to Putnam R.D., the author depicted that social webs, links, reciprocal duties and reliance, keep people together and enable them to coexist. Society exists and functions properly due to these social ties. Putnam presents two types of social capital: bonding and bridging social capital. The first links individual members within a group. The second enables inter-linkage with similar other groups. Whatever its nature might be, the author convincingly presents that social capital theory explains the customary justice system in which elders and/or ritual leaders play a pivotal role in restoring social harmony, which is endangered because of wrongs committed or obligations omitted. Some appalling cases such as homicide entail public concerns beyond the victim and slayer, their immediate families and relatives as well as lineages/clans. In most of African societies, corporate responsibilities are at the stake in addressing serious issues such as a murder.

Social solidarity theory is the second relevant theory. This theory has emerged originally from the work of Emile Durkheim. Durkheim introduced the concept social facts in quite functionalist perspective in his work entitled "The Division of Labour". These social facts exist only if they have some purposes to serve. Social facts provide the framework in which social actors are supposed to act if the society is to sustain and function (Kariuki 2015). For Durkheim, social facts are rules of behavior, norms, standards and value which are external to individuals. Individuals find themselves in a world where there are certain rules and where they are punished if they act against these rules (Mair 1992). Social facts have coercive effects which they exert on individual behavior (Mennell 1980).

Applying this theory, the customary ways of conflict resolution are considered social facts serving the purpose of maintaining the society (Kariuki 2015). This is more explained by what Durkheim labeled as organic solidarity which is basically derived from

division of labor. In organic solidarity, cooperation is characterized by special and distinct function of each individual. A society of this kind resembles an organic whole whose various organs play unique functions for the survival of the whole (Osipova 1989).

Kariuki (2015) recommended optimal psychology theory as a relevant theory to understand customary mechanisms of addressing conflicts. This theory underlines how people understand reality and justice in their cultural contexts. It emphasizes that the use of one's culture in conflict resolution has positive psychological impacts. The opposite is true when conflicts are handled and real life conditions are led by any alien systems. Westernized justice systems are sub-optimal in African contexts because of cultural disparities.

In addition, within symbolic anthropology, the concept of social drama is relevant to our discussion of customary justice system because deliberations and conflict resolution are commonly ritualized. Some anthropologists, including Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner, emphasize the meanings of particular cultural symbols and rituals in cultural contexts. Turner (1957) depicted that ritual performance pertinent to conflict settlement as a social drama which involves four stages: (1) the break of rules, (2) the messes as an outcome of the breach of peace, (3) the practice of handling the crises and (4) restoration of social cohesion. This approach is pertinent to explain the *gumaa* ritual. In general, a combination of these theories are used to explain the customary justice system of the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo. The social capital theory is relevant to understand the collective responsibilities taken in processing *gumaa* and its results in maintaining social cohesion among the Noonnoo Beenjaa. Social solidarity theory is also pertinent to understand the various organs as well as norms, values and beliefs that make *gumaa* possible. Similarly, optimal psychology theory is useful to grasp the emotional and psychological implications of the *gumaa* ritual. *Gumaa* entails psychological punishment against the offender and his/her side and psychological restitution which goes to the victim side (see the discussion for details).

This research project employed a qualitative approach. Primary data were generated from the field through focus group discussions (FGD), key informant interviews and observation. In-depth interviews with 19 key informants drawn from local institutions (judges, police officers, members of culture and tourism and other

administrative offices. Three FGDs were conducted whereby discussants were drawn from relevant local institutions. Since the practice of *gumaa* is not a day-to-day activity, unfortunately, it was impossible to see its real practice in the study area. Instead, materials and a physical setting pertinent to the practice of *gumaa* were observed. Secondary data were also used in support of the primary data. These include minutes, reports, brochures and fliers obtained from different local institutions. Data obtained from different sources were categorized, arranged and made ready for analysis. Content analysis was used to analyze data generated from the field.

CONFLICTS AND CONFLICY HANDLING IN NOONNOO BEENJAA

Various forms of interactions, including clashes of interests are natural to any society. These clashes of interests can be physical, material or moral. Primary data from all sources revealed that the major causes of conflicts among Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo are competition over farm land, theft, disagreement on property inheritance, failure to discharge one's social responsibilities, dishonesty, gawky singing on one's personality, disgracing one's personality and infidelity. Conflicts might happen because of cultural factors such as failure to fulfill one's responsibilities to kinsmen, ritual leaders and/or self-help association members.

One of our key informants indicated that wrongs among the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo can be roughly categorized into two major types based on their mystical involvements: those which are a mere breach of norms and rules and those which have mystical implications (see also Gemechu 2007). Any form of conflict regardless of whether or not it is minor and trivial at the initial stage possibly escalates conflicts ends in heinous acts like murder if not addressed in time. The Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo addresses any breach of rules in accordance with its nature and severity. A minor breach of law, which do not demand psychological and ritual repatriations, can be mediated by neighbors and nearby elders or friends. The severity and the very nature of the conflict in question determines who the actors are, how long it takes to deal with and how it is treated. This study totally focused on homicide which demands community intervention and high level of deliberation through *gumaa*.

Mediators and Their Selection in *Gumaa* Process

To proceed with this issue, we need to define '*gumaa*'. Gemechu (2007) indicates that the term *gumaa* has different meanings. To capture its meaning requires understanding of the context in which it is used (see also Gemta 1989). The term refers to vendetta, vengeance or revenge. *Gumaa* also denotes blood price payment in compensating homicide or serious bodily injuries. Likewise, it implies the sacramental purification that follows homicide. In this article, it is used to refer to both the psychological reparation and the ritual of purification performed in addressing the case of homicide.

According to our key informants and focus group discussants, six elders in Noonnoo Beenjaa are selected from major clans in the area as judges in a customary court for unlimited term of office. Even though age is important as it contributes to life skill, the criteria of being selected as elders to serve in customary mechanisms of justice goes beyond seniority in terms of age. Those who serve in customary court are all males who are from the senior clan or lineage, member of one of the five *gadaa* parties with good communication skills. They should also be respected, impartial, and experienced, honest and hardworking.

The members of the selected elders are in charge of handling any case of conflict in as a group or separately, but commonly called upon for hearing serious cases such as homicide. These elders are not paid for the service they render; they shoulder the economic burden that would support their living. In the meantime, there is no permanent schedule for court sessions. There is also no permanent place where the elders assemble for hearing cases. It is situational in terms of space and time. However, the very principle of hearing cases of conflict is guided by the common cultural values of restoring social harmony, securing justice and sustaining social order.

Evidence from the field revealed that once these elders reselected by the community to serve in customary court, it is believed that *Waaqaa*, Who is the creator of the universe, source of order and justice, all knowing and perfect, is on their side. *Waaqaa* is believed to communicate with humans on earth through the prayers and blessings of these elders. The elders control the channel of communication between the human and *Waaqaa* (see Gemechu

2007). This role of the elders gives them popular and spiritual legitimacy. Further, the selected elders are revered for their pleasing functions and balanced, fair and critical decisions in the society. Their deeds and decisions are unquestionable.

Instant Reactions to Incidence of Homicide

Data from the field indicated that homicide is one of the most appalling offenses which attracts the interventions of different actors. Instant reactions to homicide are expected from the slayer, the family/agnates/lineages even clan of the slayer and the slain as well as the entire community at large. Given its dreadful nature, murder has potential effects disturbing the social order beyond the families of the slain and the slayer and wins the attention of ritual, institutional and political leaders of the community. The slayer and his/her immediate family members are placed in a risky situation for the family of the slain usually embark on retaliation of the act. The vengeance can be taken not only against the slayer in person, but also upon any family member or even close relative of the slayer. Similarly, revenging the act of killing is also the corporate responsibility of the extended family of the slain. Since both sides bear corporate responsibilities, the situation demands the circulation of information among both the slain and the slayer's side to be alert and watchful as regards the episode.

Primarily, the slayer has two options: hiding himself/herself to escape from the imminent danger of being killed in revenge or conceding to the nearby police office. If the slayer reports and surrenders himself/herself to the police, the case is handled by the state court system. The slayer is often put in jail and receives sentences from the court. Yet, the sense of vendetta between the two families/lineages and even clans remains unhealed.

If the slayer hides himself/herself, it is for several reasons. Primarily, it is simply to save his/her life from the emotionally guided retaliatory actions of the family of the slain. Secondly, it is one way of showing respect to the slain side and admitting one's own wrong act. It is also one way of acknowledging both the capacity and the mandate of the victim side to embark on revenge against the slayer. If the slayer does not abscond himself/herself, it means that he/she is ready to defend himself/herself. It connotes also looking down upon (despising) the slain side by undermining their

courage and potential to avenge. Thus, the conflicting families are contacted and advised by elders to avoid/reduce interaction until the issue is settled through *gumaa*. Sanctions, including free movement, are mainly imposed upon the slayer side. Failure to do so is culturally an omission and additional wrong.

In addition to the slayer, members of the entire family of the slayer may flee from the slain's relatives or remain at their vicinity depending on the nature of killing. Whether the killing is accidental or intentional, the relationships between the two sides and the geographical proximity between the vicinities of the two parties are important. If the killing is intentional and unkind, and if their former relationships were hostile, if they are neighbors and it is difficult to avoid each other, the family of the slayer would escape to another area leaving behind all their property under risky condition. The act has a very devastating psychological and economic impact upon the slayer's side; while it is emotional reparation for the victim's side. This may end in a permanent change of residence of the slayer and his immediate family. They intentionally avoid any frequent contact that may cause conflict to flare up. For the society, it is one of the mechanisms of controlling further retaliatory or self-defense killing.

According to data from key informant interview and focus group discussion, this is the first important step in the peacekeeping process that tends to create conditions favoring deliberation for *gumaa*. Peacekeeping in this context means keeping people from attacking each other by avoiding contact. As opposed to the international peacekeeping process where soldiers are deployed to barrier between the conflicting parties, the Noonnoo Beenjaa people use cultural values—avoidance to keep the two sides apart. The restriction puts barriers between the contenders not to share the same market, flourmill, drinking water, public recreational areas and other social services that may bring them to face to face contact. Priority is given to the aggrieved side, and restriction is imposed upon the offender's side. Elders and ritual leaders use their popular and spiritual legitimacy to monitor and observe the situation as peacekeepers. The relative peace provides safety to the conflicting parties and to the entire community. It also enables the community to commence communication activities, a move towards *gumaa* process.

Commencing and Processing the *Gumaa* Ritual

Our informants underlined that the investigation and identification of the slayer is the first step in commencing and processing *gumaa* ritual. The lineage takes the initiative, through its leader to proceed with *gumaa*. Lineage is not only liable to compensate the offense, but also takes on the full responsibilities of calming the tension through the *gumaa* ritual reparation. When any case of homicide occurs in the community, the slayer's family usually reports the case to one of the nearby elders serving in customary system of justice. If a person is killed and there is no information as to who killed him/her, a report by anyone then reaches one of the elders who are in charge of handling the case. Information is instantly disseminated, and elders are soon gathered to control any happening of violent reactions. Identification of the suspected offender is the primary action. Those in charge of investigating the case summon the villagers where the slain was living and/or where the dead body was found. The gathering is termed as *afarsaataa*. The dwellers are warned about the consequences of hiding murder; for it is said to be only out of the sight of human beings and vivid for *waaqa* whose penalty is more severe. The elders conduct a thorough investigation until the suspect is identified and presented either to oath or *gumaa*. If someone is suspected, he/she has to prove his/her innocence through oath or admit the commission of the act and resort to *gumaa*.

Once the slayer is identified, according to data from the field, the clan/lineage of the slayer is liable to compensate the lineage of the slain and to take initiative of ritual of purification. Whether or not the slayer is in prison, his family, through its representative, reports the case to the selected elders assigned for handling this kind of case. Since the two sides– the aggrieved and the offending families– are at odds with each other, both sides are represented by their respective clan or lineage leaders instead of communicating face to face.

The elders guarantee through a kind of arbitral treaty whereby the two parties take oath to pursue with *gumaa* that they never resort to any other means. A proxy oath is taken by two participating elders on behalf of their respective sides. The oath entails not to embark on vengeance, not to take the case to government court and to abide by the decision of the elders. Yet, it does not mean that the victim side

is easy going, and that the negotiation processes are without challenges.

Prior to commencing the actual deliberation, the elders investigate thoroughly the former relationships between the slain and the slayer: whether they are relatives or family members or not, whether there was a previous grudge, whether it was an accidental or deliberate killing, the time, place and context of the incident. Well informed of the case in focus, the elders and the ritual leaders use their popular and spiritual legitimacy to fix the case to be handled through *gumaa* with the assent of the conflicting parties.

After a couple of weeks or a month, when mourning time is over, the elders who are in charge of handling the case forward formal pleading to the victim's side through a culturally prescribed standard of doing this. One of the elders puts a bundle of fresh grass at the corner of the slain family's nearby farmland (fresh grass is considered as a sign of peace and peace seeking among the Oromo). The grass is put in a clear area in order that it is visible. If the slain family picks and takes the grass to its resident it indicates that the family is willing to negotiate as per the oath of promise. However, mostly, the family of the slain does not accept the request at once. The family of the slain normally ignores or throws the grass away from its way; this means that the victim side is not willing to negotiate. Declining the request is also taken as a sign of honor and a way of avenging the act by putting stress upon the slayer's side.

Depending on the symbolic communication of hosting or rejecting the bundle of grass, the same elder puts the same amount and type of grass closer to the former location more proximate to the farm land or the residence of the family of the slain. Once again the bundle of grass might be thrown as a sign of disapproval of the request and expression of their discontent. Yet, the same elder puts another bundle of grass for the third time, after some time, just on the gate of the house of the family of the victim. The time interval is simply to buy time and give the slain side time to cool their emotions and decide to come to the expected negotiation.

According to our informants, if the victim side rejects all the requests, other elders including the neighbors and other respected people come to the residence of the victim's family, stand outside and beg them to pursue with *gumaa*. Whether the response of the slain family is late or prompt, instantly positive or negative is

conditioned by the circumstances under which the incident has happened– whether it is intentional or accidental. Even if the slain side resists the negotiation stubbornly, the elders may plead repeatedly until their mission is achieved. This may take several weeks (requesting the slain family nine times with interval of fifteen days). According to our key informants and FGD participants, custom demands that the victim's family responds positively to the pleading team and agrees to proceed to *gumaa* process at least at the end of the pleading time. However, if they still reject the request, this will be final and the case will not be handled through *gumaa*. Data from the field indicated that there was no practical instance of this.

Begging: a Psychological Recompense

As opposed to reports by different writers on the *gumaa* among the Oromo, like Gemechu (2007) and Negassa (2011), there is no blood price transfer from the slayer side to the slain side in any form among the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo. The key informants and the focus group discussants confirmed that collection of blood money through begging is one of the components and a necessary condition of processing *gumaa* in the area. The slayer has to collect money required for the *gumaa* in nine physical markets regardless of his/her financial capacity to afford any expenses pertinent to the ritual. The slayer is intentionally exposed to serious psychological sentence in which he/she performs one of the most hated activities–begging. This is one of the strategies of punishing the slayer, his family/lineage and clan at large. Begging is a humiliating act that no one dares to bear among the people of Noonnoo Beenjaa. Noticing the slayer begging in public and at nine solid physical markets, gives psychological satisfaction to the victim's side. The lost prestige of the slayer who is made now a mendicant is considered as a compensation for the lost life of the dead. The slayer has to beg within the Noonnoo Beenjaa community, where people know the beggar plus his/her family, relatives and clan.

In addition to its psychological implications, as our informants explicated, begging is also used to win the attention of the market attendants in getting money and to communicate a practical consequence of killing a person to the public. No one refuses contributing the money for the purpose of *gumaa.* This act of

begging for *gumaa* is believed to be a sort of punishment from divinity. Teasing at and blaming the beggar is believed to be unethical and would bring about similar punishment against the teaser. The begging continues until the slayer satisfies the amount of money required for the expenses of organizing *gumaa*. All necessary materials, such as animals for slaughter, clothes for dressing, crops and oil for feasts and related expenses, including labor during *gumaa* ceremony must be covered with the money collected from begging. The contribution also indicates that the issue of the *gumaa* ritual is a public concern.

Cleansing the Impurity

Data from the field showed that among the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo, the act of killing is one of the aberrant acts that keeps the killer impure. This impurity transcends the killer to contaminate his/her descendants and relatives. As a result, it has to be cleansed through the *gumaa* ritual of purification. On the other hand, the victim side too should submit to the genuine request for cleansing impurity from the killer side. Declining such a request has also a negative outcome on the life of the refusing family. It is also believed to have negative implications on the community's peace and prosperity. As a result, common practices show that contending parties agree to put the case to an end through *gumaa* for the common good.

Gumaa is performed at a river side where annual the thanksgiving ritual *(irrechaa)* is celebrated. Attendants of the ritual of *gumaa* are from both families of the slain and the slayer as well as neighbors and relatives. All are guided by elders of the land to the river side. The elders are divided into two groups and sit with the two conflicting parties who are not allowed to come together until the ritual of purification is over.

After long abstaining of the slayer and his/her family from contact with the slain side, the two groups are brought together at this critical junction. The elders once again renew the oath of promise to refrain from any aggressive reactions of the parties. The elders warn the participants to abide by the rule of the game as per the original agreement. They extensively bless the land, the people and the deliberation and pray to the creator for prosperity, peace, wealth and settlement of this particular case. They curse any violent

action and refraining from peaceful way of settling the case at hand as follows:

If someone digresses from the peaceful way,
Let his/her livestock not reproduce,
Let his lineage not reproduce,
Let him/her suffer similar offense,
Let bad thing come to him/her,
Let he/she give birth to dog/hyena,

Finally, the elders ask heavenly help for the success of this *gumaa*. These words of elders are considered to be words mediating between the human being and the supernatural power. The community believes any one breaching the norm would suffer from the curse.

Our key informants attested that following the blessing, renewal of oath and cursing ceremony, the "*ebba merecca*", is served. The elders cut fresh leafs called *ebba merecca* (a type of plant leaf). They crush and mix it with water from the river. The juice of the leaf is sprayed on the contenders believing that it prohibits everyone from further retaliation and refraining from the oath. Besides, this leaf is believed to obviate the sin of the slayer and gives heart of mercy to the family of the victim. The '*ebba merecca'* is followed by extensive blessing of the two families, the entire attendants and the community at large. The elders continuously bless the good things and curse all the evils.

A ritual slaughtering of a sheep comes next. The slayer or his family provides a sheep for the ritual. The sheep needs to be free of any wound and disability, without blemish and should have one color (brown is recommended). This is to symbolize oneness, completeness or fullness of the process. The sheep is taken to the middle of a running river, slaughtered and pierced wide on its stomach by one of the relatives of the slain—a senior person closer to the slain. First, the slayer and one of the close relatives of the slain send their hands inside the stomach of the sheep through the widened hole and shake hands with each other. Other members of the respective families repeat the ceremony of hand shaking inside the stomach of the dead sheep. The Noonnoo Beenjaa people believe that feelings of human beings such as happiness, hatred, envy,

revenge, love and so forth are stored in the stomach. The practice of shaking hands in the stomach thus symbolizes forgiveness and reconciliation form the bottom of their heart or removing the grievances from the heart.

The key informants and the FGD discussants confirmed that the body of the sheep, all materials used for preparing and spraying the *ebba merecca* juice and other materials used for the ritual are thrown into the river to be taken away. Discarding the sheep and the materials symbolizes removal of the evil between the two parties. While doing this, the two representatives utter that the conflict is over leaving no revenge, and that they will live in peace putting behind bad memories and bad things.

It is believed that the sheep and the slayer exchange roles in such a way that the evil deed of the slayer is transferred to the sheep and the innocence of the sheep is transferred to the slayer. At this point, the slayer is considered as innocent because the sheep took away his sin and the sheep is thrown away taking the evils of the slayer. Now, the sheep is cursed a proxy curse, in place of the slayer, and is not worthy eating.

After the completion of the *gumaa* ceremony at the river side, the elders and the slayer's family invite all the attendants of the ceremony to a lunch party at the slayer's (family's) home. The slayer slaughters a sheep at the gate of his/her residence and strides over it to indicate the conclusion of the former chapter and the coming of a new dawn. This time, the sheep is not thrown away; rather it is served to the guests and the attendants of the ceremony. This is the first occasion where the slain and the slayer sides start eating and drinking together. The elders are seated in two groups–one group with the slain side and the other with the offender side. The two groups sit facing each other, and elders by the side of the slayer serve food to the people from the slain family while elders by the side of the slain family serve the slayer's family. Gradually, they encourage the two families to feed each other. A schedule is fixed for the same ritual feast and procedure at the residence of the slain family.

According to our informants, the elders must give priority to preparing the ritual feast to the slayer's side to invite the slain's relatives who have grievances and difficulty to visit the home of the slayer/family of the slayer. Once this happens, the second ritual feast at the residence of the slain family takes place to strengthen the

already established relations. The family of the slain, who visited the home of the slayer or slayer's family, also show their willingness to host the slayer and his/her relatives. Throughout the process, the elders continue inviting the supernatural into their endeavors through prayer and blessing.

DISCUSSION

Like elsewhere in the world, there exist two different forms of administration of justice operating among the Noonnoo Beenjaa: the indigenous mechanisms and the government court. The study population uses both systems alternatively in addressing cases of conflict, including the most heinous ones, such as homicide. In the context of the prevalence of legal pluralism, the customary means plays a central role in preventing violence and maintaining social order.

Gumaa, which is the concern of this article, has a role of controlling the escalation of conflicts by mollifying the feeling of the injured party. As the data from the field indicated, the community often opts for the customary justice system mainly for it enables them to restore harmony among the conflicting parities, rather than its reprisal role, though it does not exclude the latter. In other words, the basic objective of settling a case of homicide goes beyond punishing an individual offender. It rather targets maintaining social cohesion in the context of what some early writers such as Gluckman (1956) and Gulliver (1963, 1971) termed as cross cutting ties. To the opposite, the state court, which is a copy of Western justice system, is mainly individualistic and punitive in nature. It imposes punishment on an individual offender with the assumption of its deterrent effect of minimizing the rate of crime for the larger population. This approach neglects the potential retaliation between parties at feud with each other and focuses only on the legal issues.

Gumaa as a customary system operates in the framework of Oromo belief system in which the supernatural power is believed to take care of justice and truth in the process of deliberation. A supporting discussion was done by Gemechu (2007) who indicated that the Oromo consider that truth belongs to *Waaqa* and any violation of it is a breach of His rules. Similar evidence came from the work of Kariuki (2015) who showed that Western justice system

is secular, whereas African systems of justice have spiritual components.

Data from the field indicated that the customary system is at stake for various reasons both in the due process and outcome. In the customary system, the absence of eye witness is not a sufficient condition to decline the case or to declare that the suspect is innocent for cases are possibly proved through ritual oath. Further, disputants are exposed to lower or no cost in customary court.

There is also easy access to the customary court in terms of geographical proximity, cultural familiarity and bureaucratic procedures. Flexibility in terms of deliberation attracts the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo to opt for the customary justice system. Elders who hear the case are natives and peers in the same cultural setting. In terms of outcome, face-saving decisions are standard features in customary justice systems, whereby the decision targets corporate responsibilities of restoring positive relations and maintaining social order rather than imposing punishment on an individual offender. This fits to the work of Kariuki (2015) who presented some factors that have contributed to the survival and preference of customary system of justices in Africa. The finding also corroborates the work of Khalid (2014) and Choudree (1999) who presented factors that contribute to opt for customary justice system as well as their primarily aims.

In spite of its advantages, there are also complaints against the customary system of justice in general and *gumaa* in particular. Administrators, judges and the police complain that the customary system of justice has detrimental effect. According to this view, handling the case of homicide through *gumaa* by the elders encourages people to commit similar offenses. They seriously question the deterrent effects of customary systems. Police members also complain that local elders sometimes fail to cooperate with the police by hiding suspects. *Gumaa* as a mechanism addresses only the social and psychological interests of the conflicting parties overlooking the legal issues. Consequently, it is considered an outmoded system of dealing with conflict.

This finding is pertinent to what Kariuki (2015) presented as grave threats questioning the value of customary systems of justice. According to this author, one of these challenges is lack of recognition and appreciation of legal and policy frameworks on

customary mechanisms of conflict resolution. A more appropriate explanation was given by Khalid (2014) who indicated the two opposing discourses of customary system of justice: the blaming and the praising ones. From this angle, the *gumaa* practice of customary justice system has both merits and disadvantages. The community praises *gumaa* as a way of addressing the case of homicide, whereas it receives reasonable blame from legal personnel.

The findings also indicated that the psychological reprisal, the ritual cleansing and the reintegration of conflicting parties pass through an elaborated ritual processes. Practically, *gumaa* encompasses: the incidence that causes, the time of seclusion and abstaining of the slayer and his/her family in the post incidence period, the central session when ritual cleansing is performed and the final session of reintegration of conflicting parties. From this perspective, as Gemechu (2007) clearly put it, *gumaa* rituals impart the precedence of the societal order over individual rights among the Oromo. The Oromo elaborate and metaphorically show the resolution of conflict and the benefits of reinstatement of peace and unity. From theoretical point of view, such a ritual is labeled as a social drama with a central role of restoring unity and ensuring stability (Turner, 1957). The ritual also entails different levels in which case it fits to Turner's view of social drama.

In customary system of justice, social cohesion has precedence over the right of individual slain or slayer. This corroborates with the theory of social capital as presented by Meinhard, et al. (2003). Meinhard, et al. (2003) indicated how horizontal links, tradeoff, confidence, collective norms, and personal and collective willingness of the concerned groups serve as bases of social capital. Likewise, Kariuki (2015) indicated how social capital is maintained within a group and between groups for the society to function properly. Any measure which does not involve the entire society is unable to restore social harmony and peace of the land.

The elders among the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo are actors in securing justices and social harmony owing to the popular legitimacy which is vested in them. These elders do not have police force and penitentiary at their disposal to enforce their decision and impose sanctions on the offenders. Even though there is no legal support from the government legal institutions, the power of the elders in maintaining social order ultimately emerges from public

view, the ethical values held by the community and the power of coercion resides in elders. Elders also opt for ritual sanctions provided that the usual ways of healing the broken relations or retributions do not work.

Similarly, in spite of some of its shortcomings, social solidarity theory also explains the case of *gumaa* among the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo. Individual families, offenders and their lineages are not free actors. Rather, they are under societal rules, standards, values and norms with coercive force. Spiritual and sacred rituals pertinent to *gumaa* provide framework in which the actors should act with the basic objective of maintaining the society.

Finally, optimal psychological theory is also relevant to *gumaa* among the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo. Proponents of optimal psychological theory underscore how the community views justice and reality in terms of their specific cultures. In the same vein, redressing wrongs committed is satisfactorily done when it is in line with the cultural values. State court often focuses on the deterrent effects of legal measures taken against an offender; instead of healing the social and psychosomatic feeling of the conflicting bodies.

Among the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo, for an aggrieved party, regardless of the legal measure taken against the offense, an offender who is not ridiculed by being exposed to begging and/or whose act is not exposed to the public at large is still not punished. For the society, unless the ritual of cleansing is practiced, the slayer and his immediate family are still impure. This impurity negatively affects the social, material and spiritual wellbeing of the community. If the ritual of reintegration is not yet practiced, the two conflicting parties are still enemies and they are still predisposed to revenge and counter revenge. This has an adverse effect on the social order of the entire community. Any system, which is short of addressing the social and emotional aspects pertinent to homicide, is viewed as short of securing justice.

Finally**,** given the post-1991 Ethiopian political landscape in which ethnic groups have the right to promote and preserve their cultures, language and history, the revival of customary institutions is a common practice in the country. In this political and social context, customary mechanisms of justice system play an important role in maintaining the social order and complementing the state

court. The customary system is not still outdated and not in need of being substituted by the state court.

Yet, in practice, there are some disagreements between human rights models and local practices of promoting one's own cultures, including customary systems of justice. In the face of these contending models, a health policy framework that advances the virtues of customary system of justice and lessens its downsides is recommenced. To this end, an integration of customary legal system in the country's legal code is advised. This is imperative both in safeguarding the cumulative innovation and knowledge of several generations and securing justice in a way it is culturally valued. Thus, government judiciary personnel and institutions need to work with the elders and community leaders in building the capacity of the local institutions and advancing the efficacy of customary systems of justice.

We also recommend a legal framework to retain and protect the reliability and legality of the *gumaa* practice as a customary system of justice. A genuine acknowledgement and protection of the values and principles that guide the execution of *gumaa* in favor of securing justice and maintaining social order are expected. At the end, this study focused only on the *gumaa* practice among the Noonnoo Beenjaa Oromo. This system is widely used across different regions and has cultural variations. Accordingly, the researchers confess that this research work is not the last undertaking on the issue under discussion; rather, further profound studies are recommended.

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Notes

1 *Siinqee* is a ritual stick given to a girl on her wedding day. As an institution it is an exclusively women's institution which serves to protect the right of women. It also plays important role in political, economic and spiritual life of the society.

GLOBALIZATION, DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE MASS MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN ETHIOPIA: A PARADIGM SHIFT ON TRACK

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INTRODUCTION

The globalization cum democratization process in Ethiopia and its effect on the country's mass media landscape is a subject worthy of study. In general, the globalization and democratization process, as a subject, has been studied in many developing countries in Africa, Asia and South America, and has triggered communication and media scholars to examine it in detail and to even revisit old paradigms on development, communication, and modernization theories (McQuail, 2010; Curran and Park, 2000; Nyamnjoh, 2011; Rantanen, 2005; Clapham, 1993). These scholars posed perennial research questions such as, what actually is the relationship between mass media and modernization in development? Does globalization contribute to cultural homogenization or heterogenization of national products or both? What is the role of mass media in the democratization process? The debate continues whilst the globalization process actively persists in the ever-changing space of the communication and mass media environment as well as the cultural, economic, and political life. The introductory section of this paper briefly looks at the nature and development of globalization and democratization. This in turn will serve as a sine qua non to inquire about the dynamic interplay of globalization and democratization with the mass media landscape in Ethiopia.

Globalization

Globalization, according to Terhi Rantanen (2005:8) "…is a process in which worldwide economic, political, cultural and social relations have become increasingly mediated across time and space". As regards to communication media, globalization manifests similarities of media systems and products, ownership by global

firms, more choice of inter country media to audiences, and a certain trend of cultural homogenization and/or heterogenization[1] among others. The advent and further acceleration of globalization in the communication media is also connected to the rise of new communication technologies such as television satellites, feature films and Hollywood, popular music recordings[2], and international news agencies in the 19th century (Curran and Park, 2000; Rantanen, 2005; McQuail, 2010; Tassew, 1990). Having been affected by globalization, the mass media "… are in a special position themselves as both an object and an agent of the globalizing process. They are also the means by which we become aware of it" (McQuail, 2010:248).

The effects and results of globalization are varied and can be considered from varying angles. For some, it is seen as encouraging diversity when, Oromos living in Minnesota watching Oromia Broadcasting Television based in Ethiopia, or Korean Americans living in California have access to watch Korean TV on cable TV in California, and when Indian-British living in London can also watch Indian films on cable in London (Curran and Park, 2000:7). A view from a different angle is entertained whereby the consequences of globalization are marked by eroding national identities as result of homogenization, and on the other hand, it is perceived to strengthen or create 'national and local identities' as a resistance to globalization which at times tend to be aggressive (Rantanen, 2005; Hall, 1996 and 1991).[3] Going a bit further, Rantanen mentions, "What we have witnessed recently is resistance to globalization, in the form of religion (such as Islamic fundamentalism) or of nationalism. Globalization can actually contribute to increasing nationalism, as has happened in post-communist Russia" (2005:97). More recently, response to globalization may have influenced the British withdrawal from the European Community in 2016. It may have also influenced the outcome of the 2016 Presidential election in the United States.

On the other hand, globalization is given further credit for the realization of Marshall McLuhan's 'Global village' as new lines of communication are opened between different groups, and because of the internationalization of the mass media. (McQuail, 2010; Curran and Park, 2000; Rantanen, 2005). Besides, the homogenization vs heterogenization process, debate about the

consequences of globalization is still going on among scholars, even though for Terhi Rantanen, both occur as "they are not mutually exclusive" (2005:116).

Democratization

The term democratization carries along phrases and concepts such as citizen's participation, tolerance of opposing views, transparency in decision-making, respect for human rights and rule of law, multi-party and democratic voting system. The media's role in the democratization process is also adapting to the democratic ethos and being a player and supporting the democratic process by strengthening and further consolidating it.

During democratization processes, the role played by the national media in each country as well as the global media is significant (Randall, 1993; Nyamnjoh, 2011; Amin and Napoli, 2000; McQuail, 2010). Nevertheless, as it is clearly indicated in the Egyptian case, "…the country's political and legal structure has not significantly changed to accommodate it" (Amin and Napoli, 2000:185). For democratization to be tangible and present, economic and political reforms are becoming a sine quo non as the aid regimes conditionality by bilateral agencies such as USAID, DFID and international organization like IMF and World Bank clearly exhibit (Clapham, 1993).

On the other hand, based on the Cameroonian experience of media and democratization process, one of the country's mass communication scholars, Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2011) notes that the measurement of media's role in democratization is best understood by finding out if they:

> (a) are themselves adequately informed and educated on the importance of democratic pluralism, (b) have socialized and assisted society towards a democratic consensus or commonality of democratic values, (c) have assisted in reducing social tensions and cleavages in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Cameroon. In short, what have the media done to adopt and live the democratic culture and to promote democracy as a way of life in Cameroon (PP. viii-ix).

The mass media landscape, which this study investigates vis-à-vis democratization and globalization is the print and electronic

media, i.e, TV and radio, in Ethiopia. When examining the globalization and democratization process, the study briefly looks at the historical development of the mass media in the country. As regards to the democratization process and media, the main focus of the study will be post-Derg Ethiopia where private media institutions flourished and controversies with the legal regime in overseeing press activity by state authorities arose. It will also explore the legal and political environment in Ethiopia where the media and journalists are supposed to operate. The media journalists' professionalism and the media institutions, and journalists' financial and economic situation are also part of the investigation. Having thoroughly examined the process, the study ultimately investigates if a paradigm shift that has occurred in the communication process due to the interplay of globalization and democratization in the mass media landscape in the present day Ethiopia.

THE GLOBAL CUM DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS AND THE MASS MEDIA

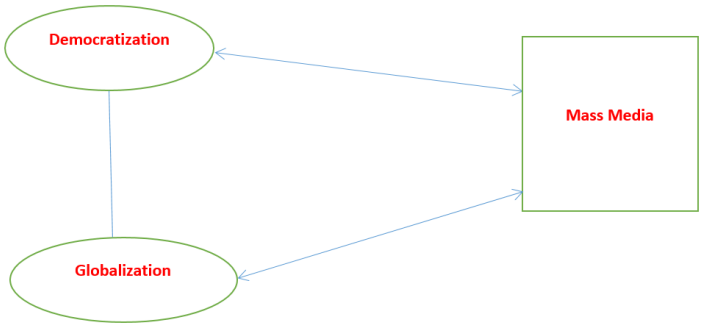

Figure 1. The interaction of Globalization, Democratization and the Mass Media

The mass media, as "an object and an agent of the globalizing process", constantly interplays with the globalization process by: allowing audiences the choice of media from different countries; encouraging diversity; strengthening and/or creating 'national and

local identities'; ownership of global firms; similarities of media systems and products like news and entertainment; cultural homogenization and/or heterogenization (McQuail, 2010; Curran and Park, 2000; Rantanen, 2005). On the other hand, both the democratization process and the mass media continually interact and accommodate each other while championing citizen's participation, tolerating alternating views, adhering to transparency and accountability, respecting human rights and rule of law, and promoting and adhering to democratic values.

Globalization Process and the Mass Media in Ethiopia

In the case of Ethiopia, it is worth noting that the globalization process during Emperor Menelik's rule at the beginning of the 20th century, resulted in the introduction of railway and telegraph services, which increased significant global contacts (even though globalization dates back to the 16th century when the country started contacts with the outside world like Portuguese missionaries and Arab and Turkish merchants). It was also in early 20th century that the first government newspaper started heralding the era of mass media in that country (Reta, 2013; Wolde Qirqos, 1999 E.C).[4]

The arrival of missionaries, especially Swedish evangelists and later Italian Lazarist missionaries and their engagement with printing by a printing press could well be associated with globalization and the advent of communication technology in Ethiopia (Reta, 2013; Janas, 1991). This interaction between globalization and communication technologies continued and radio broadcasting followed suit which helped the then Emperor Haile Selassie to broadcast an appeal to the world about the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (Reta, 2013). Television which had its initiation in 1955 for the then Emperor's coronation silver jubilee, formally started service in 1964 (Ibid). Considering both the print and electronic broadcast technology and their services through time, one cannot fail to notice what Terhi Ratanen (2005:69) remarked citing the frequently mentioned 'Imagined Communities' of Benedict Anderson:

> As Anderson (1983) has noted, all the citizens of one country are never able to meet each other, but they share a sense of belonging mainly through the media. The media keeps flagging…them

> about their citizenship, their mnemonic community, their nation. First it was the daily newspaper that served this function, later national broadcasting companies.

With globalization and the onset of television satellites, transmission and reception stopped being confined to national territory and people started enjoying other TV stations and programs from different countries. The popular dubbed television soap operas from Turkey, which is the diet of the urban TV audience of Kana TV in Ethiopia, is a case in point. Notwithstanding, the role the satellite TV stations of the regional governments in strengthening 'national and local identities' within Ethiopia, they also cross the country's border, and stations like OBN (Oromo Broadcasting Network) also help reinforce national identities of the Oromo living across borders.

Democratization Process and the Mass Media in Ethiopia

The mass media and the democratization process necessitates both the media and a country to practice and live in a democratic culture by initiating, promoting and strengthening the characteristics and edifice of democracy. Likewise, in Ethiopia "…the right to seek and obtain information as well as to engage in free expression on issues of concern without fear of harassment and punishment is a cornerstone for the exercise of democracy" (Bonsa, 2000:5).

The earliest newspaper, "Aimero" and the ones that followed it during the years preceding the second Italian invasion were initiated with 'good will' or knowledge of the country's absolute rulers and were with no written or otherwise guiding rules (Reta, 2013). It was Emperor Haile Selassie, during post second Italian invasion, who 'promulgated a Press Law' which allowed the publication of 'private newspapers, and magazines' and also authorized the Ministry of Interior to ban 'publication or distribution of press products that seemed dangerous for public and government consumption (ibid). Nevertheless, at this juncture, it is worth taking into account the observation of Negash Gebremariam (2006:7) who was the first journalism trained editor-in-chief of the government daily Amharic newspaper "Addis Zemen", where he notes that when he started his job, he came to understand that there was no written

guidelines or policy for the media, and it functioned literally by word of mouth orders of the Minister or the Officer-in charge.

As regards to censorship, it was during the emperor's time that the first board of censorship was established in the Ministry of Information, which later was given 'Special powers of 'refining' all kinds of information' during the Military regime (Reta, 2013; Bonsa, 2000; Janas, 1991). It was then that the censorship regime tightened and all materials meant for public consumption were put to scrutiny. For example, while working as a journalist in one of the government papers, one early morning I remember seeing the security police arriving at the office of the Amharic daily, "Addis Zemen", and taking away the editor-in-chief because of a picture that came out in the paper with some tiny mud spots in the cloth worn by the deputy secretary general of the ruling Military Committee known as Derg.

It was the Transitional Government of Ethiopia's Press Law – Proclamation number 34/1992- that was instrumental "…to free the press from the captivity of pre-print censorship" signaling tolerance of alternating views (Bonsa, 2000:57). In the words of the weekly Addis Fortune newspaper, May 16, 2017 editorial, "for the first time in history, the very existence and the functions of an undisputedly unpopular office, the Ethiopian censorship office, whose authority had been entrusted with the powers that be, to mind what citizens think and say, was outlawed". This road forward with the democratization process and the mass media had sown 'an element of freedom of expression' that stayed alive until the May 15, 2005 election (Beyene, 2011). As in the case of Egypt during Sadat's time where censorship was removed and media remained under the government's control, the TPLF[5] dominated EPRDF[6] government TV and Radio stations 'remain heavily censored' and continue to be the government's loyal spoke persons despite the end of pre-print censorship (Amin, 2000; Reta, 2013). During the EPRDF regime, Article 29 of the constitution along with the Press law of 1992 were on the right track in heralding democracy and easing the mass media activities after a long time in that country (Beyene, 2011, Bonsa, 2000, Reta, 2013). The 1992 Press law, which remained in force for sixteen years, was eclipsed with a rather harsh revised version in 2008.

The Press law, which legally guarantees freedom of expression and abolition of censorship, is not properly put to practice by the government (Reta, 2013). Regarding the actual implementation and the outcomes, Shimelis Bonsa (2000) in his study of the private press in Ethiopia notes:

> The importance of the press law as a legal guarantee of freedom of expression is thus seriously compromised by the erection of a considerable legal machinery. This had led some observers to characterize the Press law as one designed to penalize journalists, or as a gesture of giving something with one hand and taking it back with the other….For instance, pre-censorship, the abolition of which was a great achievement of the Press law, has been gradually replaced by self-censorship (possibly resulting in an unenterprising and timid press), for fear of official repercussions in the form of heavy penalties….A large number of journalists and publishers working in the private press were, at one time or another, harassed, intimidated, detained, charged, imprisoned and/or fined. Besides, harassment and beating of newspaper vendors continued…" (P.59).

Nevertheless, the change brought about by the 1992 Press law mainly lifted the restrictive policy of censorship and was also responsible for the booming of considerable amounts of private newspapers and magazines and the public being able to enjoy alternative sources of information (Beyene, 2011, Addis Fortune, May 16, 2017). It was in the early 1990s that the following Oromo magazines and newspapers flourished: (1) *Gada* (2) *Biftu* (3) *Madda Walaabuu* (4) *Odaa*, (5) *Urji* magazine, and the Urji newspaper.[7] Later, by using its restrictive legal mechanisms, the EPDRF regime closed all private Oromo newspapers, magazines, and imprisoned journalists. The attack on the free press literally killed the small publications in the Oromo language written in Qubee. The death of Oromo publications in Qubee has at the same time been a fatal blow to the flowering of Oromo literature and the standardization of the Oromo language itself. Likewise, newspapers and magazines in Amharic language like *Ruh, Tomar, Dewel, Tobia, Aimero, Habesha. Ethiop, Askual, Moged, Feleg, Mebreq, Addis Zena, Ethiopis, Fiameta* and many more were persecuted by the legal regimes and ceased publication; whilst most of the journalists ended

up in prison (Agena, 2012; Weyesa, 2018). In 2002, the government issued an 'editorial policy handbook' for the state-run media which stipulates the restriction, among others things, against the publication of articles that come from political parties carrying 'criticisms or complaints against the government' (Reta, 2013:303).The publication and practice of the editorial policy handbook is a reminder of the similar guidelines issued by the Korean government media policy office of the Ministry of Culture and Information where "the guidelines detailed not only what should be reported and what should not on the day. They also decided the priority of the news, pictures, and even the size of headlines for certain stories" (Park et al, 2000:113).

The much desired and positive initiation of the democratization process and the mass media officially came to a grand halt when the government announced the replacement of the Ministry of Information by the Government Communication office in 2009. This office is supposed to 'centralize' the news 'inflow and outflow'; block websites of opposition groups, and prepare guidelines for foreign news selection and reporting among others (Reta, 2013:315). Furthermore, the Anti-terrorism law which was in force since 2009 has stood firmly against the democratization process and the mass media in Ethiopia, where journalists find themselves unable to gather and report without fear of drastic measures from the government. In addition, the proclamation of state of emergencies by the government, have hastened the downward trend of bringing the newborn democratization process to a standstill.

On the other side, media in general is expected to 'adopt and live the democratic culture' themselves by being 'tolerant', 'respecting other opinions', and by being independent of pressures from others like opposition parties and 'power elites', or by being clean from corruption by 'external financial interests' (Nyamnjoh, 2011). Likewise, the Ethiopian mass media is required to have ethics, objective reporting practice, responsibility, credibility, professionalism and respect to the laws of the land, which the government accuses them of lacking (Beyene, 2011; Bonsa, 2000; Addis Fortune, May 16, 2017). In his study of media use and abuse in Ethiopia, Zenebe Beyene (2011) even gives some examples of abuse by the private press especially for lack of responsibility,

professionalism and ethics[8]. Furthermore, Addis Fortune newspaper in its May 16, 2017, editorial titled, "What Ails the Media Its leaders Reluctant to talk about", notes that 'resources and professionalism' are 'in short supply' in private media and journalists do not admit and deal with their 'inherent limitations' and do 'externalize' the problems found in the media industry as coming from the government among others.

THE MASS MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN ETHIOPIA

The Ethiopian mass media landscape as discussed in this paper includes only newspapers, television and radio. The official print media, i.e., newspapers, had its beginning at the time of Emperor Menelik in 1900, and radio followed suit in 1941, whilst Ethiopian television officially started service in 1964 (Reta, 2013; Janas, 1991). The initiation of the official print as well as the electronic media was by the governments of the time mainly for 'building images' of the rulers, public announcements, providing news and music. What is common for all the three types of media is they all operated under a severe regime of censorship or strict legal machineries in the time of Haile Selassie, Military Derg and EPRDF regimes. This very brief introductory discussion of the state of affairs of the mass media landscape in Ethiopia is to help understand one of the actors while examining the interplay of globalization, democratization and the mass media, and the ensued progress in paradigm shift.

Print Media – Newspapers and Magazines

The early newspapers, according to Meseret Chekole Reta (2013:16) were not government owned as "first, colonial and missionary newspapers started in the peripheral regions of Ethiopia; namely Harar and Eritrea…on the other hand, the royal court newspapers were launched from Addis Ababa, the nation's capital". *Aimero,* which was the first government newspaper, was launched during Emperor Menelik's time in 1900 and lasted for 35 years. Later, during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie, several government and pro-government i.e., Ethiopian Orthodox Church, owned newspapers were launched. Furthermore, the first private newspaper, *Berhanena Selam* which was owned by the then crown prince Teferi Mekonnen had its debut in the early 1920s (Ibid).

However, it was during the time of the Derg regime (1974-1991) that saw the full state ownership of all media organizations in Ethiopia. It took a change of the system and regime for the private press to make a comeback. The private press blossomed during the early period of the EPRDF regime. According to Shimelis Bonsa, the private press:

> …began life not as an instrument of government but as a rebel. Accordingly, the story it presents interlocks at every point with the political and social changes in the country. A profile of these stories would indicate that they constitute a saga of valor in the defense and, to a large degree, in the fostering of the democratization process. (2000: 68)

Electronic Media – TV and Radio

Radio broadcasting in Ethiopia started in 1935 from the "Akaki Road Transmitting Station" near Addis Ababa (Janas, 1991). Even though the broadcasting service was interrupted due to Italian invasion; it, nevertheless, continued its transmission in 1941 after the Italians were expelled from the country in 1941. Later during the long reign of Haile Selassie (1941-1974), there was the government owned Radio Ethiopia and a privately owned Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG) operated by World Lutheran Federation. However, during the Derg military regime RVOG was nationalized and used as the external service of the official Radio Ethiopia.

On the other hand, the introduction of Television in Ethiopia was in 1955 for the Emperor Haile Selassie's coronation silver jubilee anniversary; however, official service of Ethiopian TV did not begin until 1964 (Reta, 2013). During the reign of Haile Selassie, unlike radio, television service was never run privately.

It is only during the EPRDF regime since 1991 that privately-owned television and radio services and interactive programming started. FM radio services like *Sheger*, *Fana*, and *Zami*, and private TV stations/channels like *Kana* only began during this time. What these radio and television ownership have in common is that they are owned by TPLF members and supporters. *Fana* reflects the change that was going on in the media landscape. Furthermore, the interactive programming and transmission of films with voice over are among the changes in program presentation which are also part of the change on track.

THE INTERPLAY OF GLOBALIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE MASS MEDIA LANDSCAPE AND A PARADIGM SHIFT IN PROGRESS

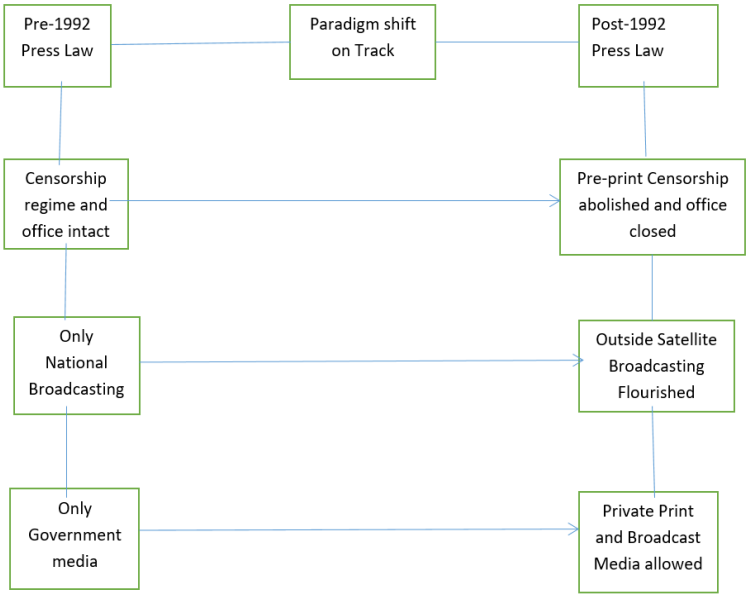

Figure 2. A paradigm shift on track through Globalization and Democratization interaction with the Mass media landscape in Ethiopia

The *Addis Fortune* (May 16, 2017) newspaper editorial triumphantly remarked that it has been 25 years "since Ethiopia made a significant stride in the spirit of freedom of expression and that of the press" by outlawing the office of censorship in the Press Law it promulgated. This phase also fits our threshold for tracking the paradigm shift that is on track in the mass media landscape in Ethiopia along with the interaction of globalization and democratization. As depicted in Figure 2, the model shows a paradigm shift on track between the pre-1992 Press Law and the post-1992 Press Law in the Ethiopian mass media landscape. It ought to be mentioned that the globalization cum democratization process's interaction with the mass media as discussed in the

previous sections has played a significant role in the ongoing paradigm shift in the mass media landscape.

Prior to the 1992 press law, pre-print censorship was intact and was performed by the office of censorship. But, post 1992 Press law, laid bare the abolishment of pre-print censorship and closure of the office of censorship. Nonetheless, despite the abolishment of pre-print censorship and closure of the office of censorship, self-censorship by journalists continues because of the legal machineries erected by the government (Bonsa, 2000; Reta, 2013). Concerning the choice and availability of broadcasting to the Ethiopian public, there was only national broadcasting in the form of Ethiopian Radio and TV during the pre-1992 press law period. Whilst, during post-1992 press law period, external satellite broadcasting flourished due to the globalization and democratization process among others occurred. Soap opera serials imported from outside that are dubbed in Amharic and broadcast by privately owned TV channels like *Kana TV* are some examples of the changes that occurred in the mass media landscape during the Post-1992 press law.

Pre-1992 press law can be identified only with the government media in the picture. But, the post-1992 press law period has seen the private print and broadcast media come in the media landscape alongside with the government media. "This period witnessed the birth of many newspapers and death of others. Changes occurred in the restrictive policies that had existed in Ethiopia. However, the practice of journalism by privately owned media remained problematic; getting information from government officials is difficult" (Beyene, 2011:712).

At this juncture, the selective privatization of FM radio and TV stations, satellite or otherwise like "Fana" and "Zami", and the favourite print media like the "Reporter", for example, reminds one of the close similarities with the Malaysian experience where "…the selective privatization exercise by the Malaysian government continues to extend the tentacles of the ruling coalition and its cronies even wider across the Malaysian economy, adding economic and cultural domination to what is already virtual political domination" (Nain, 2000:143).

A Paradigm Shift on Track at the Communication Process

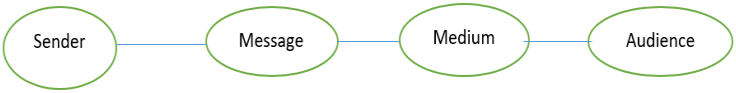

Figure 3. The Communication Process[9]

The convenient and comprehensive way of explaining the communication process is that it includes a sender, message, medium, and audience (McQuail & Windahl, 1981). This paper then looks at each component of the communication process and to discern if there has been a paradigm shift on track due to the interplay of globalization and democratization with the media landscape in Ethiopia. The study investigates the paradigm shift in the journalist as the sender; the messages in selection, gathering, and presentation of news, features, and opinions/editorials; the medium as newspapers, TV, and radio; and finally the audience in demographics, and reception patterns in the communication process.

Journalists

The newspaper editor was at the same time the printing press manager between the years of 1913 to 1916, according to Meseret Chekol Reta (2013). Furthermore, the editors belonged to the aristocracy or were related to it, therefore, press freedom didn't bother them as a serious issue. In addition, up until 1960, most of the editors were not trained journalists and were without formal education. "They did not even know the difference between fact and opinion, the difference between journalism and literary writing…they mostly wrote articles loaded with praise to the emperor" (Ibid:119).

During the post-1992 press law period, a paradigm shift in the communication process component, i.e. sender, in our case, journalist is taking place where journalists are:

1. Empowered and are exercising their rights to free expression and access of information
2. Challenging the state and powers that be
3. Joining the profession with more professional training

Journalists like Eskinder Nega, Reeyot Alemu, Befekadu Moreda, Dawit Kebede Wayesa, Sisay Agena, Woubshet Taye, Temesgen Desalegn, and a number of others who joined ESAT and MTN, and many more others, are living examples of resistance to state harassment and political condemnation because of their demand for free expression and access of information. Some even turned out to be opposition politicians and journalists fighting for democracy inside the country and from afar via satellite TV and Internet. [10] Furthermore, regarding training and professionalism, a change in the status quo is evident as "…by 2004 virtually all journalists working for the government newspapers had a two-year college education or higher" (Reta, 2013:321). In private media like *Fana* too, most recruits are 'first degree holders', and an in-house training for journalist is also practiced (Reta, 2013).

News, Features, Opinions/Editorials

Most of the news in the government media during the Military Derg regime as well as the EPDRF is "development oriented" and is used for propaganda functions (Reta, 2013). Furthermore, most of the news selection and gathering is "not initiated by the news staff" in EPRDF's Radio Ethiopia. In addition, "…since the latest organizational restructuring in 2009, the authority of editors over news selection is increasingly diminished. This means that the selection is made on political considerations rather than journalistic standards" (Ibid: 254).

On the other hand, in the case of the private media, which came into the arena as the result of the post-1992 Press law, news selection and gathering is the sole responsibility of the journalists of the private media, despite some of the legal regimes they have to pass through (Bonsa, 2000). Furthermore, unlike the government media's centralized news selection and gathering function, the private media's selection and gathering activity is ***decentralized.*** Regarding news source, the news and features that are printed or transmitted by the private media are ***multi-sourced*** unlike the government media which is tied to the government news agency as the main source of news. In addition, the Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO) sets "…guidelines for the selection and reporting of foreign news as well as pre-planning the

annual volume of news production by the state-run news organizations" (Reta, 2013:315).

Newspapers, Television, Radio

The circulation of the print media in Ethiopia compared to the reach of radio is very low due to low literacy rate, prohibitive cost of printing and poor communication infrastructure between cities and towns (Reta, 2013). Government newspapers, magazines, TV and radio were/are acting as 'organs of the state' during the Haile Selassie, Military regime, and the present EPRDF government. In the government media, "the newspapers and magazines like the broadcast media and news agencies disseminate government propaganda rather than report objectively" (Ibid:247).

With the advent of the 1992 Press Law and the subsequent availability of private press, "one major difference from the past two regimes is that government newspapers and magazines have been facing competition from the private press, particularly up to the 2005 election" (Reta, 2013:247). Besides, availability of alternative sources of information has been possible in the electronic media, i.e., TV and Radio, by the newly established private FM and TV stations like Sheger FM, Fana, Zami, and Kana. The presence and operation of TV and Radio stations owned privately by the TPLF members and its supporters, showed some difference from the Military regime, when all the electronic media was totally under the government ownership.

Audience

The audience in the Ethiopian mass media can be characterized by the type of media they consume and their demographics. For example, in the '1960s and 1970s' as the price of TV was very high and was not accessible to ordinary citizens, and the Ethiopian TV reception was limited to Addis Ababa and surroundings, "therefore the audience consisted of diplomats, foreigners working in Ethiopia, higher civil servants and well-off Ethiopian citizens" (Janas,1991:61). Furthermore, in a country where illiteracy was very high and the circulation of newspapers very low, the newspaper readers are also limited based on affordability and access. Lack of access to newspapers readership can be either because of living outside Addis Ababa where almost all the papers are printed,

therefore, not being able to get the papers because of transportation problems; or not being able to afford to buy the papers; or because of problems of literacy (i.e., unable to read the papers and access information).

Nevertheless, with the proclamation of the 1972 Press Law and the subsequent mushrooming of regional government and private media, the audience is entitled with more and better **1. Choice** and **2. Accessibility.** The availability of alternative sources of information also became real bringing a change in the mass media landscape. Regarding the reception pattern of the audience along with the progress of paradigm shift of the media landscape, readers were seen "…letting out papers and the consequent communal or multiple readership has now become a dominant practice" and "…private newspapers might change hands ten or a dozen times in the market place, passing the hands of many readers on a single day" (Bonsa, 2000:54). The FM services of private media like Radio Fana and Sheger FM also produce talk shows whereby they engage the audience in the programs and issues. According to Reta (2013:267), in Radio Fana, "at one time there were more than 25 weekly live talk shows, mostly on FM 98.1, which generated up to 2,400 calls a week from the audience".

CONCLUSION

The globalization process is making possible the choice of media from various countries, effecting cultural homogenization as well as heterogenization, strengthening local and national identities among others, in the Ethiopian media scene. At the same, time the democratization process has its contribution by the abolishment of the censorship office and practice which opens a wider venue for freedom of expression, citizen's participation and most of all 'tolerating alternating views'. The interaction between globalization and democratization along with the mass media has shown a clear paradigm shift on track with the proclamation of the Press Law of 1992. This law prompted a change in the existing practices of media censorship, broadcasting media operation, and media ownership. When the pre-1992 Press Law media censorship regime and office was intact, the choice and availability of the broadcast media (TV & Radio) was limited to only the national broadcasting, and the only officially allowed and operating media organization was the

government media. The post-1992 Press Law, on the other hand, saw the closure of the office of censorship and abolishment of the practice too. Furthermore, it allowed the air for broadcasting media to be open to outside satellite broadcasting too. In addition, private ownership of print and FM radio and TV stations/channels is officially allowed and were out to practice. It is this distinct change of affairs we tend to call a paradigmatic shift on track in the Ethiopian mass media landscape.

The 1992 Press Law was active until a revised and stringent version was promulgated in 2008 which opened room to strict legal devices that check the press freedom that was endorsed in the previous version. Furthermore, the Anti-terrorism Law of 2009 and the subsequent State of Emergency proclamations have put a fleeting break to the new found democratization in the mass media landscape. Nonetheless, the closure of the censor's office and abolition of pre-print censorship, availability and choice of outside satellite broadcasting along the national broadcasting, and permitting private print and broadcast media ownership and transmission which were the results of the Press law of 1992 were not directly revoked by the new version.

The globalization and democratization process and the subsequent paradigm shift in the mass media arena have had a marked effect on the Ethiopian mass media landscape over the years. The arrival of communication technologies first in the form of the printing press followed by radio, television and lately with the internet contributed a lot in connectivity and have brought the Ethiopian people closer in one "imagined community", notwithstanding the fact that it also reminds them of their being part of the "global village". Furthermore, the democratization process that outlawed pre-print censorship and resulted with the closure of the office of censorship is part and parcel of the paradigm shift in the Ethiopian mass media landscape and the communication process in the media.

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NOTES

1 "the idea of indigenization helps to explain how heterogenization occurs….. If we look at media and communications and their role in the process, at least three alternatives are possible. First, global media companies indigenize their own products. This may be either by producing products that have a global appeal as such, or by hiring

people with multicultural backgrounds and/or knowledge of the markets at which the products are targeted. These products are thus already indigenized when they enter the market. For example, one could argue that media companies in the USA and the UK have been able to create cultural products designed for global markets. The second option is that national media companies indigenize global products. They buy, for example, TV programme formats which they then indigenize by using domestic actors, as has happened with programmes such as 'Big Brother' or 'Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?'. National media companies also indigenize programmes just by translating them into national languages, using voiceover or subtitles, or by finding a domestic singer to perform a piece of music that has been produced and performed somewhere else. The third option is that the audience itself indigenizes cultural products" (Rantannen, 2005:99).

As regards to homogenization, "through access to media and communication, people also gain access to images. Here we see the most convincing proof of homogenization: all our families, despite their locations, have been, are and will be increasingly exposed to similar images, many of them still originating from the West." (Ibid:146)

2 The popular music industry's 'several major markets' are owned by big four companies, i.e., 'Sony, Warner, Universal, EMI' (McQuail, 2010:253).

3 Stuart Hall (1996:619) and (1991:26) as quoted by Terhi Rantanen (2005:97).

4 E.C = Ethiopian Calendar is seven/eight years behind the Gregorian calendar. The year starts in September 11 or 12 (during the leap year), and has 13 months, whereby the 13 month is only 5 or 6 days (during the leap year).

5 TPLF = Tigray Peoples Liberation Front

6 EPRDF = Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front

7 This information was provided by the renowned Oromo Scholar, Associate Professor Dr. Mohammed Hassen Ali of Georgia State University in the U.S.A.

8 "Artist Sileshi Demissie, commonly known as "Gash Abera Molla," has played a vital role in changing litter-filled public areas in Addis Ababa into garden and recreational areas…He managed to do this through mobilizing about 30,000 school children in Addis Ababa and obtaining strong financial support from some organizations. A journalist working for *Maebel*, a weekly newspaper, wanted to get 2000 birr (US$225) from him. He called and threatened to blackmail the artist unless he gave the stated amount of money. According to

personal communication with Sileshi, the journalist published an article alleging the artist was calling the school children away from their studies. As a result, the article held the artist accountable for a possible growing trend of delinquency among the students. More seriously, the article alleged the artist embezzled millions of dollars from the Royal Netherlands Government for the project. The article concluded with the promise to publish stories of the artist's "corrupt" practices. After the publication, the artist arranged a meeting to give the journalist the money. The meeting turned into a fight in which the journalist had a tooth knocked out. The conflict was settled through arbitration by professional associations" (P.718)

9 Based on Lasswell's and Braddock's formulas (McQuail & Windahl, 1981:10-11))

10 It is worth noting the dangers of politicization in journalism from Francis Nyamnjoh's (2011) observation regarding Cameroon's journalists: "Professionalism has thus been sacrificed in the process of politicization…. Journalists, in their numbers have preferred to bury professionalism and muffle the truth than risk the disapproval of those whose political beliefs and aspirations they share and promote. Because journalists have wanted to substitute politicians rather than simply seeking to collect, process and disseminate information, they have ended up doing a disservice both to the politicians they support and to the democracy they claim to be promoting" (PP.180-81)

HAMZA /ʔ/: THE DIFFICULT ELEMENT IN THE OROMO ORTHOGRAPHY

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The Oromo are a Cushitic people who mainly live in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, constituting 34.4% of the total estimated population of 96.6 million (CIA Country Report, 2014). The Oromo also live in parts of Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania (see Janko 2007; Clamons et al. (1999)). In general, the language is considered the third most widely spoken Afro-asiatic language in the world after Arabic and Hausa, and the second most widely used indigenous mother tongue in Africa, as well as a lingua franca for many groups in Ethiopia (Gragg, 1982; Bulcha, 1994). The Oromo language (Oromic 1) did not have an official writing system until 1991, when the incumbent government of Ethiopia allowed the use of the current Latin based alphabet.

The current orthography of the language is based on the work of a committee formed in the neighbouring country of Somalia in the beginning of 1980s. The members of this committee, that first made the adoption of the Latin alphabet in its current form, had individual experience of using other scripts in writing Oromic. They were a group of concerned amateurs mainly influenced by the works of Dr. Muhammed-Rashad Abdulle, who published an Oromic Reader in 1976 in Somalia where the Latin based alphabet had already been officially adopted for the Somali language. They started from the basic principle of simplicity: using the existing typing machines without any need to make special adjustments. They also considered avoiding diacritics, and other symbols outside of the English alphabet.

The committee agreed on basic conventions and left the rest, apparently assuming that the English conventions were to be followed. As time passed with no systematic follow up with the work of this committee, the need to add additional conventions became apparent. One such convention is regarding the glottal stop

(plosive), represented in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) chart by [ʔ].

In this paper, the unsettled issues in the Oromic orthography as adopted by the above mentioned committee regarding this glottal stop sound will be discussed and possible solutions suggested. I will mainly focus on the graphematic representation of this sound.

The committee mainly followed English conventions in adopting the Latin alphabet for the language's common sounds. The main divergence, as shown in Table 1, is in the ejectives, where they adopted [ph] for /pʼ/, [c] for /cʼ/, [x] for /tʼ/, [q] for /kʼ/; the implosive, where they adopted [dh] for /ɗ/, and the palato-alveolar nasal where they adopted [ny] for /ɲ/. Unlike in English, [g] is invariably /g/ and [j] is invariably /ʤ/. As for the glottal stop, they did not include it in the alphabet. They only noted it as a punctuation mark and called it [*huɗaa*] representing it with an apostrophe. They did not offer an explanation for this choice of symbol for the glottal stop. As time passed, it became clear that there are some unsettled issues around this sound. These issues include: its essence, whether or not it exists in the language as a phoneme; its graphematic representation; the place order in the list of the orthographic letters that it should hold; and its appellation, or what it should be called. The other problem that is not directly related to the orthography, but discussed here is its switch with more than one other sound in some dialects.

a	b	c /cʼ/	ch	d	dh /ɗ/	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	ny /ɲ/	o	ph /pʼ/	q /kʼ/	r	s	sh	t	u	w	x /tʼ/	y	z

Table 1. The inventory as the Committee put it. The non-English sounds are put in IPA underneath.

One of the issues that has not been considered about this sound is whether it is a phoneme, as in most Afro-asiatic languages, or simply a pause as in English. In Afro-asiatic languages like Arabic, where it is called *hamza*, in Hebrew and in the Ethiopic, *Abugida*, it is recognized as an independent phoneme and properly represented. In these languages, it is also contrasted with the pharyngeal voiced fricative /ʕ/, except in Amharic where the pharyngeal sound is lost, but the grapheme that represented it is still kept in the orthography. The problem this sound posed in Arabic itself, especially in

recording of the Qur'an, is discussed by Rogers (2005:137) where it was lost by the Medina Arabic variety while it existed in the other versions during the time of the recording of the Qur'an.

In the Oromo orthography, where the Latin alphabet is adopted, Oromo grammarians and even some linguists exclude this sound /ʔ/ from the alphabet altogether. The *Akkaadaamii* (1996:xi), the official Oromo dictionary; the Galata (1996:6) Oromo grammar; and the Gamta (1995:1) Oromo grammar excluded it from the phoneme inventory. All foreign scholars from Tutschek (1845:3) to Mewis (2001:13), who studied Oromic, and some Oromo scholars like Gamta (1989)[2], Abdulle (1986:1), Muhammad (1994), and Muudee (1995: xxi) included this sound in the total inventory table. However, Muudee excluded it from the consonant-only list (p. xxiii). Qajeelcha [The Oromic Study Committee] (1998) also excluded it from the consonant list (p. 13) and included it in a table on the page that followed.

Those who excluded it did not provide any reason to omit this sound from their inventories. The possible reason is that these authors did not consider this sound as a phoneme, but only like a pause in the articulation of the vowels. As the following short Table (2) shows, however, there is sufficient evidence that this sound is a contrasting phoneme. The minimal and near minimal pairs in column one show that ʔ is truly a phoneme of the language. Note that *aʔata* and *aata* in row 6 are actually read *ʔaʔata* and *ʔaata* respectively, but ʔ is not written in the word initially.

IPA	Orthography	English
mi?ii *mii*	*mi'ii* *mii*	*fresh milk* *ɪsn't ɪt?*
hi?i# *hii*	*hi'i* *hii*	*No* *ok what next? Excuse me!*
hoo *hoo?o*	*hoo* *hoo'o*	*what about* *here you go*
re?ee *ree*	*re'ee* *ree*	*goats* *this is what it is*
ka?a *kaa*	*ka'a* *kaa*	*gets up 3S* *that is it*
?a?ata *?aata*	*a'ata* *aata*	*saves for future* *you throw*
ba?aa *bahaa*	ba'aa bahaa	weight get out 2p
balaa *bal?aa* *ballaa*	balaa bal'aa ballaa	calamity wide blind
fe?e *fede*	fe'e fedhe	he loaded he liked
gal?ii *galii*	gal'ii galii	broken clay pot goal
lim?ata *ummata*	lim'ata ummata	grain people
qa?e	qa'e	the rain stopped
qabe	qabe	he grabbed
dawe	dhawe	he struck
nahe	nahe	he got startled
gaje	gaye	he arrived, enough

 # This one is actually <hi??i> but the gemination is not used because there is no rule.

Table 2. Hamza /ʔ/ As a Contrasting Phoneme

Once the issue of its phonemic essence is settled, the next step is its graphematic representation. Currently this sound is represented by an apostrophe. In this paper, I argue that the representation of this phoneme should be by the IPA proper letter /ʔ/ for the reasons to be discussed.

The grapheme that is currently used to represent this sound, the apostrophe, overlaps with the grapheme used to represent a single

quotation mark's right pair as in *'x'* and the separation marker as in *1970's* in English. In Qajeelcha (1998:63) for example, the single quotation mark is used both for quotation mark in ordinary quotation and linguistics in line translation as [*ba'uu* 'got out']. It is also used to separate cliticized particle morphemes and acronyms for example [*Dh.Q.O'fi A.E*,],[3] which is *fi* 'and' in this case.

In Hebrew and in *Abugida,* this same sound is represented by independent graphemes while in Arabic, it has a combination of a diacritic and the original grapheme for the phoneme before the latter had faded from the Medina variety (Rogers, op cit.). In all of these scripts, it is lined up with the consonants with its specific place and name.

The choice of the apostrophe used hitherto is from the initial literature by the committee following the adoption of the Latin alphabet in early 1980. This choice of representation, apparently taken from the English, made the concept of the sound as a punctuation rather than a phoneme, more considerable. The presence of an independent grapheme for its representation in the scripts of the neighbouring languages of *Abugida* and Arabic, as discussed above, seems to have been ignored. This could be viewed as the down side of the choice of the Latin alphabet because the latter does not have a distinct letter for this sound.

Using an apostrophe to represent the glottal stop sound has some problems. One of the major problems with the use of the apostrophe is that it can be confused with punctuation. This comes up in several ways. One involves the existence of geminated ʔ. While there are very few basic words with geminated ʔ, some exist. One is *hiʔʔi*, 'no' shown in Table 4 with a single ʔ.[4] According to Qajeelcha (1998:93) the word for 'negative' is written as *hi'eentaa* read "hiʔʔeentaa". The other word with a geminate glottal stop is *ʔaʔʔaa* 'nononono!', strong denial. All words derived from 'negate' have geminate ʔ, which cannot be shown in apostrophe as it would require a double quotation mark, something that is not part of the orthography. Furthermore, geminated ʔ is found in some central and southern dialects where /ʔ/ switches with /ɗ/. Since there is no standard Oromic spelling and every dialect can be written differently, anyone who will write in those dialects needs to write geminate ʔ, in the way illustrated above.

Another problem with the representation of this sound by an apostrophe is the use of the latter to mark elisions in English, which tempts many English literate speakers to copy that function to Oromic. Since English is the language of education from junior secondary and it is the second official language, copying some features from English could only have a positive contribution. There are many cases of elisions normal Oromic speech. The negative marker *hin* 'not' for example, is rarely pronounced as such.[5] Consider the following sentence for example:

1. *An hin deem-u.*
   I NOM not go I/II S AGR.
2. I do not go, is read as *ʔanin deemu*.

It may not be attractive to stick to the underlying representation while the surface one is so connected. Consequently, many are tempted and do write the above sentence as [ani'n deemu.] following the English "I don't go". It is necessary to truncate and indicate the elided /h/, especially when strictly transcribing speech. Introducing another symbol to represent this truncation will make the future learning in the English usage difficult. The easiest way is to leave the apostrophe for this purpose just as in English.

Sometimes, elisions involve change in the sound quality of the first syllable of the following word initial, usually causing gemination. For example when the adverb *gad* 'down' is followed by the verb it modifies, its final consonant regressively assimilates with the initial segment of the verb. Thus,

3. *gad taaʔ- i*
   down sit IMP II S
   sit down is pronounced as '*gattaaʔi'*

with no pause. If there is no indication of the elision in transcribing speeches or in an informal writing there could be ambiguity[6] while insisting on full text could be too formal.

With the expansion of digital writing machines, the use of apostrophe /'/ for this sound started weighing in with a challenge. In some cases like filling forms on computer software, for example, the apostrophe is not accepted as an ordinary letter; hence the machine

breaks down the word. This will force the writer to change the spelling. This again violates the original principle of simplicity albeit to a lesser degree.

One of the earliest suggestions to represent this sound by a different grapheme was made by Tutschek (1845:3). He used an Arabic letter, but confounded it with '*ayin'* the pharyngeal voiced fricative /ʕ/. Even though this could have been an eye-opener for subsequent writers, there has been no follow up. In any case, it poses the problem of the violation of the simplicity principle since no Latin alphabet keyboard includes a letter for this sound.

Computer scientists like Demissie Yahi [Ya:ʔi:] (1994:66) suggested the representation of this sound by [h]. His reasoning emanates from his observation that in Oromic /h/ does not occur in a word medially and hence using [h] for this sound word medially does not cause any ambiguity. Hence, we will pronounce [h] that is written word medially as /ʔ/. This reasoning of lack of medial word /h/ holds if we only consider some western Oromic dialects, see Raga and Adola (2012:39-40). Thus, the data Dr. Demissie observed must have come from recent literature. Because, as Banti (2011:61) also observed, "the present day language [Oromic] written in Ethiopia is based essentially upon Western and Shewan varieties with a few elements from the East".

In the other dialects /h/ clearly contrasts with /ʔ/ in initial, middle and final positions with minimal and near minimal pairs, as can be seen from Table (3). This causes what Cahill (2014:16) called underrepresentation, confusing the speakers of the other varieties in distinguishing which phoneme the grapheme [h] represents. Thus readers from the other dialect areas generally read /h/ everywhere they find [h], whether it is word medial or not, instead of the intended /ʔ/.

Alaanʔala	complaint
halaanhala	swollen sheep neck
baʔaa	load
bahaa	get out
kaʔe	he got up
tahe	happened, ok
goohe	made noise
ooʔe	wept
ɗamaʔaa	confused
kʼamahaa	chewer

Table 3. /ʔ h/ Pairs of Contrastive Positions

This idea of representing this sound with the letter [h] causes another problem when it is taken further by younger readers who simply read what they see, substituting not only the grapheme, but also the phoneme. Thus, when they hear /ʔ/ in the non initial positions, they substitute it by /h/. This completely eliminates /ʔ/ from non-initial word positions.

This substitution of /ʔ/ sound by /h/ is further aggravated by the fact that not only /h/ but also word medial glides /w,j/ are generally substituted by /ʔ/ in the western dialect. Thus *gaje* ‘arrived III&I S pst’ and *ɗawe* ‘hit III&I S pst’ in the eastern variety, for example, becomes *gaʔe* and *ɗaʔe* respectively in the west. If someone following the convention of representing the word medial /ʔ/ sound by the letter [h] wrote [h] at those spots then a reader who is not familiar with the western dialect will substitute what is represented by the glides in other varieties by writing and reading them as /h/ sounds. Again, as the following Table (4) shows, the glides and /h/ are contrasting phonemes in the non-western dialects.

boojji	cry
ɗoohi	explode
ɗahe	blocked
ɗaje	succeded
ɗawe	he hit
bahe	he quitted
kʼalahaa	empty shell
kʼarawaa	certain basket

Table 4. Pairs of /ʔ h w j/ As Contrastive Phonemes

In some cases this switch of /ʔ/ with /h/ has transcended some loan words in the language, which may also impact pronunciations.[7] This issue of wider substitution of the phonemes /ʔ/ by /h/ need be discussed broadly, improving awareness as to eliminate or minimize the ambiguities.

Furthermore, in the western dialect, word initial /h/ is substituted by /ʔ/ and vice versa. Raga and Adola (op cit.) call it "/h/ dropping" from initial position. It is not the case, however, that there are no /h/ initial words even in the western dialect. It looks like free variation.[8] It is true that writing a word with an initial apostrophe is strange in the Latin alphabet. On the other hand, if we use *abugida* or *abjad* it is clear that we do not start any word with a vowel.[9] This does not justify leaving it so disorderly, however, while the other dialects make clear distinction between the /ʔ/ initial and /h/ initial as can be seen from Table (5) below.

ʔaada *haada*	moans M string, rope
ʔaara *haara*	smoke red meat
ʔabaabuu *habaabuu*	ancestors to miss
ʔafi *hafi*	wait don't go
ʔalaanʔala *halaanhala*	complaint swollen sheep neck
ʔarma *harma*	here breast

Table 5. Minimal Pairs of /ʔ/ and /h/ Initial Words.

The suggestion of a grapheme to represent /ʔ/ has to take all the above issues into account. The idea of using an apostrophe to represent /ʔ/ has already blocked using the former for elision-marking as is common in English.

The safest alternative graphemes for /ʔ/ are adapting one of the letters that have no correspondence in Oromic phonemes or adopting a digraph. Using diacritics or introducing a new grapheme will contradict the original simplicity principle that the initial committee proposed. The only Latin alphabet letter that has not been

used is [v]. The other letter [p] is part of a digraph [ph] for the labial ejective /p'/, and may create confusion[10]. Additionally, with the inevitability of using the English language for higher education and the need to transcribe some scientific and technical words, using [v] or [p] to represent /ʔ/ will create unnecessary restriction.

Another alternative, using a digraph, would affect word length of Oromic, an agglutinating language which already has very long words. This can be anticipated when we imagine having all vowel-initial words to be digraph-initial words. Even if we avoid using it word-initially the insertion of digraphs in the middle of the words would disturb the alphabetical order of the words, causing burden for lexicography.

The lesser of the evil in my opinion is the adoption of the IPA symbol [ʔ]. This would not cause any confusion. It is true that it will violate the simplicity principle as it was interpreted. Not all ordinary typing machines have [ʔ] on their keyboard. However, those machines are fast fading, replaced by computers. It can still be argued that it needs more than one stroke to insert it. Furthermore, like the apostrophe, 'MS Word' considers [ʔ] as a punctuation mark and breaks down the word in some forms. Again, when sorting words, 'MS Word' puts [ʔ] at the end, unlike the apostrophe which comes before the other letters. Thus <bal'aa> comes before <balaa>, while <balʔaa> comes after <balaa>. These needs be programmatically addressed.

On the other hand, the issue of more than one stroke can easily be accommodated in any modern machine just like any diacritic or an upper case letter. The other advantage that the use of [ʔ] has is that unlike the apostrophe, it can be written cursively in handwriting. It will also lay good ground to introduce IPA, coinciding to what Cahill (op cit.) called transferability, minimizing the barrier to learning the other languages (p.18). Electronic and other dictionaries today extensively use IPA symbols in pronunciation keys, especially for English. Correctly using [ʔ] will facilitate that future learning either in referring to the English pronunciation keys in the dictionaries or learning IPA for other linguistic purposes.

The second unsettled issue is the appellation, what to call this sound. This issue of naming is also related to the issue of its existence. The other letters are named uniformly, suffixing long /a/ to the consonants and prefixing /ʔ/ to the long version of the vowels

respectively. Thus, [b] is called [baa], [g] is [gaa], and [z] is [zaa] while [e] is called [ʔee], [u] is [ʔuu] and so on. As it is not recognized as a phoneme, just as in the English for example where it is called 'glottal stop' and represented by hyphen as in [*co-operate*] or is simply not indicated (e.g., the opera Aida, sometimes written Aïda), it must have looked reasonable not to worry about the appellation. Thus, the appellation of this sound in the Oromo orthography is varied according to the individual writers, possibly because it was not clearly put by the pioneering committee on the level of the other phonemes. In the initial publications when the alphabet was adopted in the early 1980s, it was uniquely called *'huḍaa'*. The term comes from the act of strangling, indicating the stoppage of breathing. Mohammed (1994) in his Oromo grammar called it '*laagee*' from *laagaa* 'larynx' the place of its articulation. Qajeelcha [The Study Committee] (1998) also called it '*huḍaa'* (p. 18), and variably *iggita kokkee* 'glottal stop', an English direct translation (p. 22).

These appellations are ambiguous. The word '*huḍaa'* also means 'he who strangles' and a fruit type. The other words mainly refer to the point of articulation or feature of blockage. The point of articulation is also shared with /h/ indicating another ambiguity if this appellation is maintained. Besides these appellations used by the different Oromo authors, namely *huḍaa*, and *laagee*, have alredy been shown to lack popularity, possibly because they diverge from the convention used to name the other letters. Even if the conventional appellation is attempted, following the appellation of the consonants, it will overlap with the vowel [a], where both will be called [ʔaa] since vowels are named by putting /ʔ/ before its long version.

Linguists like Moreno (1964:23) proposed calling it *hamza* from the Arabic *hamzah*. I concur with Moreno in the use of '*hamza'* for the appellation of this phoneme. At least those Oromic speakers who are literate in Arabic are familiar with the term so it would not be a new word for at least that group. The logically following issue of *hamza* that has not been directly addressed once we accept its existence as a phoneme, is the issue of its order in the alphabet. Among the Oromo grammarians who acknowledge its existence as a phoneme, Mohammed (1994) suggests putting it as the initial phoneme in the alphabet. Abdulle (1986:1) puts it towards the end of the alphabet. His is a direct copy of the modified Arabic *Abjad*

order. Those who do not include it as a phoneme have of course no problem with its position. Currently, as represented by apostrophe, the computer puts *hamza* at the beginning.

This issue of order has implication concerning the ordering of words in dictionaries. Firstly, lexicographers will have to consider assigning a position to the words in a standard order. The readers also will have to learn where to look for words they want to look up, see Table 2, above. There will be clear confusion in alphabetically arranging words like '*balaa, balʔaa, ballaa'* [disaster, wide M, blind] and '*qalaa, qalʔaa'* [butcher, slim]. Since modern machines put the apostrophe before the letters it is safe to follow this practice and accept it as the first letter of the alphabet. Computer software put <bal'aa> before <balaa>. This suggestion of *hamza* as the initial letter simply follows the principle of simplicity where we simply substitute [ʔ] for the apostrophe.

Related to the issue of order, there is a problem with using the letters for ordinal numbers. It is established that in English the order is: a), b), c), d), e), and so on. If we say *hamza* is the initial letter, are we going to line up as ʔ), a), b), c), d), and so on?[11] There could be a challenge. Current computer software may need further programming in sorting items by this order. We can settle this issue by extending the tradition of not writing *hamza* word-initially, and also exclude its use for ordinal numbering purpose. Thus starting the ordinal numbering from a), b), c) and so on could be stipulated as a convention.

Finally *hamza* is used in gemination, which Cerulli (1922:11) calls "consonantal diphthongs" of liquids /l r/ in some western Oromic dialects like Jimma (SW). This is found, for example, in the east '*gurraattii*' [black F], in some western dialects this is '*gurʔaattii*', '*hollata*' [shivers III SM], in the east it is '*holʔata*' in the west. In the east the association of the /ʔ/ and the liquids is contrastive as in '*balʔaa*' [wide M] and '*ballaa*' [blind], '*gurʔuu*' [udder] and '*barruu*' ['writing' N]. This use of *hamza* for gemination negates the simplicity principle of "doubling the segment for a long sound". In my opinion, adhering to the original principle of simplicity and sticking to the use of double letter for long phonemes simplifies this matter, and provides standardized orthography.

In conclusion, it is time to update works of the committee that originally adopted the Latin alphabet for Oromic in its current form. Some issues that became salient with the expansion of the use of the alphabet needs additional attention. One such issues is the controversy over *hamza* /ʔ/. It has to be admitted that it is a phoneme, not a pause in articulation, and should be included in the alphabet. The major issue is regarding its graphematic representation. The use of the apostrophe could be continued, assigning it a name and place in the alphabet. I have advocated using the IPA symbol /ʔ/. There is no risk of confusion of this symbol with punctuation. Following the tradition established by the use of an apostrophe, it would not be written initially, only internally within a word. This choice has an advantage over the apostrophe, as it is a unique letter of the alphabet also has advantages over the unused Roman alphabet symbols that might be chosen. Hence, adopting the IPA letter /ʔ/ seems the best choice which also contributes to future learning of the IPA. Another benefit is that it can be handwritten in cursive. It can also be geminated. IPA is also a part of the English word pronunciation field in modern dictionaries. The better name for this phoneme seems to be the Arabic term *hamza* suggested by Moreno with which at least some section of the speakers of the language are already familiar. Then comes the place it can hold in the alphabetical order of the language, which seems to be at the beginning of the phoneme inventory. As we do not give it the initial position in a word, we should also avoid using it for ordinal numbering purposes. As for the role it has in some dialects and the subsequent confusions, it needs to be openly discussed without further delay with the objective of establishing a standard variety to adopt. Leaving it as it is hampers the process of creating comprehensive dictionaries, both electronically and in print; bilingual or unilingual. Lack of such a dictionary definitely hampers the learning process for native speakers. It has to have its own place in the list of the consonants of the language.

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NOTES

1 I prefer to use *Oromic* instead of 'Oromo language' following Arab → Arabic, Amhara → Amharic, Iceland → Icelandic.

2 Note that Gamta excluded in the latter book though he included Hamza in the previous book.

3 From a flyer calling for papers on Third Conference on the Oromo language, [all attached and highlighted.]

4 This is not the only phoneme to be left without a rule to geminate but the sounds written by digraphs also have no geminate forms

5 Some authors prefer to write it as a prefix but that is another issue.

6 This may also lead us to the issue of word boundaries in Oromic which is another topic in the process of standardization.

7 I recently saw an Arabic origin girl's name 'Samia <Saamijaa>' written <Saamihaa>, contrastive of course. We may soon see Australia called Awstraalihaa, Ottawa called Ootahaa.

8 In Gamta (1989: 288) under [h] out of 27 word entry on the page 15 are alternatively entered under vowel initial.

9 There is a debate as of the existence of vowel initial words in Oromic. Griefenow-Mewis (2001:20) argued that there is no vowel initial syllable in Oromic. However, at the word level it is written <'ulee> [stick] but write <ulee>, starting from the vowel that comes next to the initial *hamza*.

10 The use [c] for /c'/ and [x] for /t'/ ejectives has already created considerable burden especially for names.

11 In some literature it is written like a), b), c), ch), d), dh), e) and so on, including the digraphs [ch, dh, ny, ph, sh]

RE-EXAMINING THE PHILOSOPHY OF CONSTITUTIONALISM AND GOVERNANCE IN THE GADAA REPUBLIC OF THE OROMO PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

Constitutions and constitutionalism are common terms in modern constitutional and democratic governance systems; each term is defined in multiple ways as per the partisan interests of those who define them. The Oromo people had been governing themselves through *Gadaa*, a magnificent system of governance, which is very similar to and at times functions better than the contemporary constitutional governance systems of the democratic republics of the world. This article seeks to re-examine the origin and evolution of these concepts in the Gadaa republic in their traditional aspects through a comparison with the modern concepts of constitution and constitutionalism. In the Gadaa republic, the concepts of constitutions (unwritten constitutions) and constitutionalism (limited government and sovereignty of the people) had been present since at least the sixteenth century. Conversely, the concept of constitutionalism began to flourish and receive increased academic attention only after the Second World War in Western democracies.

At this stage, it is important to define the terms constitution and constitutionalism before delving into clarifying and comparing the Gadaa based constitution and constitutionalism with modern constitutionalism. Accordingly, a 'Constitution' is both a legal and political document which governs the legal, political and socio-

economic aspects of a certain nation. Constitutions contains principles, objectives, values and guidelines on important matters of national interest. Moreover, it gives directions on a country's foreign policy, election system, language policy, religion policy, human and democratic rights, system of governments, fiscal matters and others. Generally, constitutions serves as a framework for government organs, limit the power of governments, ensure the rule of law and democracy, guarantee rights and freedoms for citizens, forge unity among diversities, develop human dignity and values which calls for sustainable development.

On the other hand, 'Constitutionalism' is concerned with controlling, limiting and restraining the power of the state; hence, it is a legal limitation on government. 'Constitutionalism is the idea, often associated with the political theories of John Locke and the founders of the American republic, that government can and should be legally limited in its powers, and that its authority or legitimacy depends on it observing these limitations'(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016). This means government must act within the contents of the exiting constitution. Further, constitutionalism enshrines respect for human worth and dignity as its central principle. To protect that value, citizens must have a right to political participation and government must be hedged in by substantive limits on what it can do, even when perfectly mirroring the popular will. Broadly speaking, constitutionalism can be viewed as a principle that limits the exercise of power through the instrumentality of a constitution that serves as a constraint (Murphy, 2000).

In general, a constitution is a set of laws and rules used to establish the machinery of the government of a state. It also defines and determines the relations between different institutions and areas of government, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, the central, the regional and the local governments (Pylee, 2012). In fact, a constitution is the source, the jurisprudentially fountain head from which other laws must flow, succinctly and harmoniously (Ibid). However, constitutionalism is the issue of linking the constitutional text with its practices. Accordingly, a country may have a 'constitution', but not necessarily 'constitutionalism' (Jain, 1994). Therefore, constitutionalism is all about practicing or

implementing the contents of the constitution as it is provided in the constitutional text by government.

Hence, this article examines the extent to which Gadaa based principles fulfill the principles of constitutionalism and democratic governance. Additionally, the making of Gadaa based laws has been seriously assessed to determine whether it is compatible with modern and legitimate ways of constitution making in the democratic world. Furthermore, this article critically investigates the extent to which the Gadaa system is favorable to accommodate the principles of constitutionalism. Moreover, it discusses the reasons why Gadaa principles have never developed to the status of modern constitutionalism or constitutional governance. Finally, it provides important recommendations concerning the manner in which Gadaa principles could be molded to the status of modern constitutionalism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Constitutions and constitutionalism have been considered in various literatures; many scholars have written about the democratic aspects of the Gadaa system in their scholarly works. Among these scholars, Asmarom Legesse, Asafa Jalata, Dirribi Demissie, Mohammed Hassen, Martial De Salviac and others have revealed the Gadaa system is an indigenous, African based democracy. However, this article differs from previous research conducted on the Gadaa and constitutionalism in general because it claims that the Gadaa system contains the principals of constitutionalism within it. Moreover, this article examines the concept of constitutionalism as a governance ideology in African traditions, particularly in the Gadaa republic of the Oromo people. Therefore, it explores the mechanisms in which the Oromo people utilized in order to ensure the principles of constitutionalism while practicing their Gadaa system for centuries.

In the western democracies, the idea of constitutional governance and constitutionalism became a political agenda after the Second World War. In the Post Second World War period, constitutions can be categorized into three types based on their legitimacy and acceptance by their nations. They are as follows (Tommaso, 2015):

I. **Garantiste Constitutions**: These are constitutions proper, congruent with the 19th century consensus, which limit arbitrary government power and ensure limited government.
II. **Nominal Constitutions**: These constitutions are "fully applied and activated," but they perform no limiting function vis-a-vis the government because they merely formalize "the existing location of political power for the exclusive benefit of the actual power holders."
III. **Facade Constitutions**: These take on the appearance of a true constitution, but "what makes them untrue is that they are disregarded"

Accordingly, the concept of constitutionalism in its modern sense is linked to the '*Garantiste*' constitution; whilst the other two (*Nominal* and *Façade* constitutions) have no relation with the notion of constitutionalism.

In the modern state belonging to the western legal system, the power of the government is effectively limited through the mediation of particular principles of law, traditions and institutional mechanisms (Sajó, 1999). The model of governance in such a state is based upon the principles of a state governed by law (rule of law), democracy and human rights (European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission Report on the Rule of Law, 2013). Traditionally, the principles of a state governed by law and human rights are included in the concept of constitutionalism (Carzou, 2013). Hence, constitutionalism is a sufficiently complex model of state governance, demanding not only declaration of the respective values and principles in the texts of the constitution, but also their practical implementation (Ibid). Constitutionalism is also the tendency to promote the impact of constitutional law on all law branches within the state and beyond (Ibid).

Throughout the centuries, jurists and politicians believed that the evolution of constitutionalism had become an inalienable and significant heritage of Western legal traditions. Nevertheless, the notion of constitutionalism and constitutions did not garner broad academic attention until after the Second World War even in the Western countries. For instance, in Eastern Europe and in parts of Asia, the constitutional foundation began in 1989 when communism

collapsed in the region (Ibid). About the same time, Latin American states moved away from authoritarian forms of government, and South Africa moved away from apartheid towards constitutional democracy. However, within the Gadaa democracy, the tenets of constitutional governance and constitutionalism, like respect for human dignity, term limits, the right to asylum, elections, and the accountability of officials, were already in place by the sixteen-century (Makoo Bilii Laws, Article 13, 41, 55). Hence, this article claims that constitutionalism and constitutional government originated in the Horn of Africa among the Oromo people before Westerners shaped and nurtured the principles of constitutionalism and constitutional governance in their modern parlance.

A number of scholars have concluded that the Gadaa system, traditionally practiced by the Oromo, was a very complex social structure. The well known Anthropologist Asmarom Legesse who had conducted Second World War years of research on Gadaa system articulated following, "Gadaa is a system of generation classes that succeeded each other every eight years in assuming political, military, judicial, legislative and ritual responsibilities" (Legesse, 2006). Moreover, according to him, the "Gadaa system is an elaborate, well constructed system for distributing power among all the generational segments of society" (Ibid). Furthermore, Legesse explained that the "Oromo democracy is one of those remarkable creations of the human mind that evolved into a full-fledged system of government" (Ibid). "It contains genuinely African solutions for some of the problems that democracies everywhere had faced" (Ibid). According to Legesse, Gadaa have three interrelated meanings: it is the grade during which a class of people assumes politico- ritual leadership, a period of eight years during which elected officials take power from the previous ones, and the institution of Oromo society (Legesse, 1973, 2000/2006).

Asafa Jalata concluded in his works that "[l]ong before democracy and social equality were the norm in Europe and North America, the design of Gadaa as a social and political institution worked to prevent exploitation and political domination in Oromo society (Asafa Jalata, 2013). Consequently, under the Gadaa system, Oromo society enjoyed relative peace, stability, sustainable prosperity and political sovereignty (Ibid). According to Dirribi, the law of the Gadaa can not be broken or collapse once it has been

established, "Tumeen Seera! Hinjigu, hin dhangala'u; seera Gadaa Oromooti" (Dirribi, 2011). De Salviac, said that 'we would not have trouble to understand that the Oromo, who do not know how to write have laws all so valuable as that of the English' (De Salviac, 1901). He precisely compared the system of unwritten constitution [not a codified constitution in a single text] of England with the oral Gadaa system of the Oromo and remarked that they were similar. This illustrated the extent of the Gadaa democracy even though it was unwritten and expressed orally.

Lambert Bartels pointed out that Gadaa was more than a merely socio-political system; it enshrined the Matcha's traditional view of the world and their moral values (Lambert, 1990). Apart from upholding the Gadaa laws, the Gadaa group in power had to perform many rituals to ensure the country's well-being which included maintaining the fertility of the people and animals, good harvest (especially through rain), and mutual peace which they considered as a condition for Waaqa's (God/sky) blessing (Ibid). Hence, according to Lambert, Gadaa comprises all the aspects of Oromo people.

Therefore, this research project is unique because it enumerates the many ways in which the principals of constitutionalism and the notion of limiting the power of government represent deeply embedded and fundamental aspects of the gadaa system. Accordingly, this article differs from previous research on the topic in two ways. First, it argues that the birthplace of constitutionalism and constitutional governance was in the Horn of Africa in the Oromo Gadaa republic. Hence, the notion that the western legal system was the only source of constitutionalism and constitutional governance becomes questionable or at the very least the idea must be re-examined in light of what this paper highlights about the Gadaa system of governance. Second, previous research, conducted on the Gadaa system, focused on its origin, structure, and religious aspects; however this article emphasizes governance and the way in which leaders'/government officials' powers were traditionally limited.

METHODOLOGY

This research has attempted to make an appropriate review of the existing literature on the Gadaa system, constitutionalism, rule of law and broadly on the concepts of constitutional administration. It explores the ways in which one can utilizes the principles of the Gadaa system as modern constitutional principles. It re-examines the extent to which the traditional principles in the Gadaa republic are compatible with the modern principles of constitutionalism. Additionally, it strives to explore the ways in which the Oromo people limited the powers of their leaders in the traditional Gadaa republics. To fulfill these objectives, it reviews the various literature written on the Gadaa system, constitutional governance and constitutionalism in general. For this reason, its research methodology is qualitative. Moreover, the principles of the Gadaa system are compared with the modern principles of constitutionalism in order to show the prevailing and possible challenges and opportunities to develop the Gadaa constitutionalism in Ethiopia in particular and in Africa in general.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concepts constitutions and constitutionalism, in the modern sense, have already been elaborated. Accordingly, one can deduce that a constitution is either a written document, like the US Constitution, or it is unwritten and evolving as is the case with the constitution of the United Kingdom. Truly speaking, constitutionalism is not simply a text or a document; however, it is a culture which evolves over a long period of time. As a result, the culture of making or enacting a constitution is an event or component of constitutionalism. Thus, striving for codify the constitution, state structure and its power in a certain text itself legitimately indicates one sense of constitutionalism.

After a constitution is enacted, we must then assess its practices and check its legitimacy. Moreover, the culture of distributing powers among government branches; the existence of democratic and functional institutions to assist this legitimate political, economic and social culture is also necessary to ensure constitutionalism. Additionally, the availability of accepted and

recognized governmental and non-governmental frameworks to limit government powers in their daily actions and inactions is another aspect of constitutionalism. Furthermore, the power of ordinary courts to review the constitutionality of legislations/laws, enacted by the government, is also a sign of constitutionalism in a given country.

Accordingly, the concept of constitutionalism is too broad to be summarized in a single definition. Constitutionalism can be considered a theory like liberalism, socialism or scientism. It is worth asking what the theory entails and whether its claims are true or valid (Murphy, 2009). Constitutionalism refers to the sort of ideology that makes this attitude seem sensible, i.e. the attitude of adhering to constitutional principles (Waldren, 2010). Therefore, constitutionalism is all about the legitimate and democratic relationship between the government and their citizens/nations on one hand, and the legitimate political culture in which the relationship among the three wings of governments are governed. The writing and rewriting of constitutions are not rare acts, especially in Africa; what is rare is its legitimate making process; as well as its implementation, at least to the extent that it satisfies the majority of its nations' interests. Moreover, the contents of certain constitutions must accommodate fundamental principles of human and democratic rights, which limit government powers to ensure constitutionalism. Additionally, constitutionalism requires that a government commit itself to fulfill, enforce and protect the principles of constitutionalism which include the entrenchment of human rights, sovereignty of the people, the supremacy of constitution/basic principles, the establishment of an accountable and transparent government, and the separation of powers.

All of these principles of constitutionalism and constitutions are recent phenomena, especially in African countries. Even, in the Western civilized nations, the concept of limiting the governments' powers was only guaranteed after huge scarifies and atrocities, especially after Second World War.

However, the Oromo people had nurtured principles of constitutionalism in the sixteenth century in their traditional Gadaa system. It is difficult to recall exactly when and where the Gadaa system started. However, it is determined beyond any reasonable doubt that the Oromo people have been utilizing Gadaa system as a

traditional mechanism to ensure social justice for centuries. It was evolved from the cumulative experiences gained from experiments, practices, customs, and lessons of many generations of the Oromo society since immemorial time (Dirribi, 2011).

In the sections below, the researcher will analyze and compare the elements of modern constitutionalism, created by modern politicians, jurists and other social scientists, with the traditional tenets of Gadaa constitutionalism. This evaluation focuses on the philosophy of state/government formation, the lawmaking process, and other vital principles related to constitutionalism in order to assess the nature of constitutionalism and legitimate governance in the Oromo Gadaa Republic.

THEORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE STATE POLITY

Formation of Government: Modern Political System versus the Gada Republic

In political history, polities may be formed in three different manners (Daniel, 1985). The first one is the hierarchical model. In this form of government, everything is imposed from above including the constitution itself (Ibid). The subjects/citizens' interest in all aspects are not considered; hence the ruler made all their laws to suppress the nation for their own interest. For instance, states formed through conquest, dictatorship, and monarchical governments are categorized under this model.

The second form entails state formation through evolution in an organic model (Ibid). Hence, some states were evolved organically out of more limited forms of human organization and which over time concretize power centers which govern their peripheries (Ibid). Polities founded and organized on the organic model seemingly grow naturally, and as they develop, the more powerful or otherwise talented leaders form a political elite at the polity's center that rule over the vast majority in the polity, who are relegated to the peripheries (Ibid). The constitutions of the organically created states are enacted through evolution from the traditional body of accepted rules and customary practices (Ibid). The apotheosis of this model is Westminster-style parliamentarianism with the parliament being sovereign (Ibid).

Furthermore, some states are founded by design through a covenant in which power is shared through a matrix of centers formed by the government of the whole, on the basis of federal principles (Ibid). The covenantal model is different from the other types of state formation. Under the covenantal model of polity formation, there are at least two states; one is the federal state and the other is the regional state. They must bargain between themselves on all political, social and economic aspects of the nations living in that polity (George, 2008). This covenantal model of state formation is all about federation or the federal way of organizing a polity. Hence, federations originate from particular bargains on various issues related to political and socio-economic aspects of the public at large, which were struck at a particular time and designed to serve for generations (Assefa, 2006). In these bargaining between the federal and sub-units on a number of issues, a written and supreme constitution necessitates mandatorily (Ibid).

From these three political theories of polity formation discussed above, the Oromo Gadaa Republic shares the characteristics of the second (Organic Model) and mainly the third (Covenantal Model). Similarly in the Gadaa Republic of the Oromo, each clan or pair of clans of Oromo possessed religious and political centres (Odaa) where assemblies took place for religious or political purposes. However, even though each clan has an Odaa of their own, all of them have blessing of the 'Abba Mudaa' (ritual and cultural leader) at one center altogether. Accordingly, there was one Abba Mudaa at one center at a time to bless all the Oromo clan rulers in different regions who autonomously administered themselves within the binding general Gadaa system. Hence, the Oromo have had Abba Mudaa which unifies them and they have been administering themselves autonomously in other aspects. Thus, the researcher strongly claims that there are the concepts of shared rules and self rule in Gadaa system like in the modern covenantal Constitutions of federations.

Consequently, the process of state/polity formation in the Gadaa Republic was very democratic. The Oromo never established their government forcefully or through conquest by imposing rules and regulations on their citizens; since the Gadaa rules prohibits such acts. Hence, the principle of constitutionalism was well respected in the formation of government in the Gadaa Republic.

THE LAW MAKING PROCESS

Making Basic Laws: In Modern Governments versus in the Gadaa Republic of the Oromo

Making Basic Laws/constitutions is the most important event in the political life of a certain country. A constitutional moment is a revolutionary event (Regassa, 2010). It is a moment of constitutional festivity and it is a moment of negotiating national identity too (Ibid). Unfortunately, very few nations are blessed with constitutional momenst even in modern government system. In the making process, the makers of a constitution are confronting with various, complicated and competing interests from different groups. For the defeated party, it is a moment of frustration, desperation, criticism, conflict and extremism. Hence, making a constitution is a very difficult task. If the making process of a constitution is inclusive, broad based and participatory, it makes that constitution more legitimate. In addition, the legitimacy of a certain constitution can be evaluated by its contents and its practical application in the post-making process.

Accordingly, the creation process of any constitution may be categorized as either democratic or not in modern republics. Hence, many scholars categorized constitutional making using to two basic approaches; namely, the traditional and the new approaches (Tesfatsion, 2008). According to the traditional approach, a constitution is an act of completion. It is perceived as a contract, negotiated by appropriate representatives, concluded, signed and observed (Viven Hart, 2003). The issues are deemed settled with presumed finality and conclusiveness (Ibid). The new constitutionalism approach on the other hand is an approach centering on the participatory constitutional making or conversational constitutionalism (Paul R. William, 2006). It is perceived as a continuing conversation between the elites of a given society and the population (Louis Aucoin, 2007). It is carried on by all stakeholders and is open to new entrants and issues (Ibid). Its aim is to fashion and provide a workable formula that will be sustainable rather than assuredly stable (Ibid). This approach (new constitutionalism) is more sensible especially considering the essential nature or function of the constitution (Ibid).

Therefore, the following key principles can be used to describe legitimate constitutional creation.

The principles of inclusivity: This means that the participation of all the people or the groups in which they are represented should be ensured. The people should take part in the process and influence the contents of the constitution (Tesfatsion, 2008). If we read Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR], it provides that "every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity", among others, "to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives".

Political parties: "The role of political parties depends on the history of the country or polity concerned. The phrase "political parties" here refers to organizations whether labeled parties or not established for political purposes including that of contesting for or sharing state power. Hence, 'Fronts' are parties. The history of South Africa was such that the role of political parties in the constitution-making process was considerable" (Ibid).

The principle of openness/transparency: This means that the process is such that it is possible and open for the public to make their inputs. There are no impediments blocking them from being heard and making their contributions. This is of crucial importance for legitimacy: It is when the people feel that they could make their contributions that they would consider the final document as legitimate, in fact as their own (Ibid).

Since any basic law or constitution can be neither value neutral nor agenda free, its making process must be all inclusive, participatory and transparent or open to all interested parties and to the public at large. This may determine its legitimacy or recognition in front of its nation.

Consequently, when compared with these constitutional and legitimate ways of making basic laws in modern republics, what was practiced in the Gadaa republic was unbelievable. The law making practices that characterized the Gadaa system fulfilled all of the modern principles discussed above. In their culture, the Oromo people believe that law is not something sent from God to be kept forever; it is something that is made and if necessary changed based on the needs of the people (Dirribi, 2011). The concept that says the law is there naturally and it cannot be changed is not as such known

among the Oromo (Ibid). The Oromo believe that the law should be made by considering the situation and in accordance with human needs (Ibid). Asmareom Legesse stated:

> *One of the most interesting aspects of the Oromo tradition is that laws are treated as a product of human deliberation not a gift of God or of heroic ancestors. There is little in Oromo thought that suggests that laws are natural and, therefore, immutable. There is even less evidences that suggests that the laws are supernatural and, therefore, beyond discussion. On the contrary, they say that all their laws were created by men and can thus be changed by men* (Legesse, 2006).

Accordingly, the Oromo people are well known for making laws and executing them in their communities (Dirribi, 2011). It is said that the Gadaa laws of the Booranaa people were made by the Gadaa under the leadership of **Gadaawoo Galgaloo**; the Gadaa laws of Tuulamaa were made by the Gadaa under the leadership of **Caangaree Korboo** (Ibid). The Gadaa under the leadership of **Makoo Bilii** made the Gadaa Laws of Maccaa (Ibid). The Oromo people are great respecters of the law. The Oromo believe that law is more valuable than one's own child which means the Oromo people sacrifice their children for the observance of rule of law (Ibid).

Furthermore, the Oromo makes the laws in the way that satisfies at least the majority of the people. In the law making process of the Hayyuus, Abbaa Gadaas, the Raagaas and Ayyaantuus and the people at large all participate (Dirribi, 2011). The Oromo employ the peaceful process of discussion in legislating laws (Ibid). The legislation will be become law only if it is declared and accepted by the people (Ibid). According to the Gadaa laws, anybody can oppose the draft law by saying "damman qabe; korman qabe; fardaan qabe; tuni tuni sirri miti" which means this means that this law is not correct (Ibid).

Moreover, in the legislation of laws, no one would be silenced, but they are expected to talk based on the seniority of age (Ibid). When the people discuss and accept the laws made through such procedures, the Abbaa Gadaa slaughters a bull and

touches that blood with his bokkuu and says, "Tumeen Seera! Hinjigu, hin dhangala'u; seera Gadaa Oromooti" (Ibid). Which means the law has been made; it does not collapse; it does not break; it is the law of Gadaa of the Oromo. From this moment onwards, these laws will rule the country (Yilma, 1959). For the Oromo, no position of superiority puts a man beyond control or criticism from his fellows (Donald, 1974).

The Oromo people believe that 'it is we who are judges, it is we who make the law, and it is we, the people, who obey it and the Gumii will disagree anybody that breaks the law (Dirribi, 2011).

> *In the words of De Salviac: The Abba Bokku announces Serri bu'e! The Laws have fallen. The people object saying, "The law, the law, we want the law! The Abba Bokku then announces Seeri ba'e! The laws have risen again (*Asmarom, 2000, Cited in Dirribi, 2011).

This cultural tradition indicates that the people view the laws as being their own, not something imposed up on them by a superior force such as God or the elite class or a group of learned men. Therefore, the lawmaking process is all inclusive, participatory, it provides opportunities for people to contest and it is transparent even more so than the modern constitutional way of making laws. When compared with the constitutional way of legislating laws in modern era, the Gadaa brand of making laws is truly legitimate and fulfils all the criteria of enacting laws in the world of constitutionalism. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that in the Gadaa republic, the process of making basic laws for the nation is in line with the principles of constitutionalism and consistent with what takes place in modern Western democracies.

CONTENT OF BASIC LAWS

The Philosophy of Human Rights: In the Gadaa Republic versus Modern Governance

Human rights principals are recognized globally and have been incorporated into national constitutions in part due to emergence of international human rights instruments after the Second World War.

As per modern democratic constitutions, human rights and freedoms, emanating from the nature of mankind, are inviolable and inalienable (FDRE Constitution, Article 10). The same promises have been incorporated and adopted in various international human rights treaties and declarations like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR], the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR], the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [ICESCR] and others to avert gross human right violations throughout the world. These human rights and fundamental freedoms are therefore, not given by the state or authorities; but pre-exist their legal recognition by the state or the authorities. Because of the universal nature of human beings, Human rights are endowed with certain universal rights which are natural, inalienable and inviolable. Consequently, these human rights includes the right to life, prohibition against inhuman treatment, freedom of movement, the right to be free from torture, the right to food, shelter and clothing, the right to equality, the right to have health and a clean environment, and others (FDRE Constitution, Chapter Three); UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR.

Oromo philosophy, pursuant to the Gadaa republic, privileges the fulfillment, protection and respect of human rights. Accordingly, the traditional Gadaa system of governance protects human rights, ensures democratic governance, the rule of law and constitutionalism. Far before the invention the western concepts of human rights and democratic administrations and earlier than their incorporation in the well known human rights declarations and covenants like the UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, CRC the Gadaa system recognized, enforced and fulfilled all these concepts of human rights and constitutionalism.

Very surprisingly, in 16th century, when human beings were hunted, made slave and sold like property, the Oromo people had been commended for the protection of human rights (Makoo Bilii Laws, Article 13, 41, 55). This is evidenced by the Makoo Bilii laws which are a part of the Gadaa system of the Maccaa Oromo which were enacted in 1580s (Dirribi, 2011). These law protect females, children, refugees, and ensures equal protection and equal subjection of laws, adoption, accountability and transparency of the highest authorities (Ibid).

Moreover, among the Oromo people, not only human rights, but the rights of dogs are legally respected. That is why the Borana people say, "Seerri muummee seera saree" and the Tulama also say "Huuru dheeroo akka seeri, huuru gabaabo akka seeri" They mean dog and cat. Having a dog is not compulsory but if you have it, feeding is obligatory (Dirribi, 2011). Professor Asmarom also argues that:

> *Galma Liban said that the law does not only disciple the highest, it also protects the lowest. By way of illustration, he suggested that the dog is one of the lowest creatures in Borana: nevertheless, there are laws that protect him from harm. Borana says that "Seerri muummee seer-saree"*(Asmarom, 2006).

Furthermore, Balambaras Jabessa Ejjeta (who was born in 1909 in Horroo-Guduruu) had written the following human rights protection in the Oromo:

> *"The Oromo considered the an already born child as human being; all human beings have humanitarian dignity; A child of a nation is just like one's own; and the problem of the wife is the problem of the husband, any cattle has dignity."*(Dirribi, 2011).

As a result, the Oromo people created and utilized the Gadaa system which respects and exercises human rights not only for mankind, but also extends this recognition to the animals as well. Thus, it is possible to claim that Gadaa respects and enforces the principles of the sanctity of human rights even better than the modern written and codified constitutions of the western democracies and thereby ensure constitutionalism in a modern sense.

THE PRINCIPLES OF SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PEOPLE

The concept of sovereignty, in political science, has many definitions; however, usually, sovereignty is defined in one of two ways (Merriam, 1900 et. al). The first definition applies to supreme public power, which has the right and, in theory, the capacity to

impose its authority in the last instance, and the second definition refers to the holder of legitimate power, who is recognized to have authority (Ibid). When national sovereignty is discussed, the first definition applies, and it refers in particular to independence, understood as the freedom of a collective entity to act (Ibid). When popular sovereignty is discussed, the second definition applies, and sovereignty is associated with power and legitimacy (Ibid).

Therefore, the sovereignty of the people means, all the sovereign power vested in the hands of the people and their sovereign power is expressed in the basic laws/ constitution (e.g. see FDRE Constitution, Article 8(1, 2)). Their sovereignty shall be expressed through their representatives elected in accordance with this constitution and through their direct democratic participation (Ibid, Article 8(3)).

In the same scenario, the Oromo Gadaa system consists of smart principles which guarantee the principle of sovereignty of the people. The Oromo believe or have had a premise which claims that the law stands above all men. But the law does not stand above its makers or legislative assembly which represents the Oromo people in making laws. That is the reason why the statement that says, "The Oromo are governed by the law made by the people" (Dirribi, 2011). According to Asmarom Legesse, "one of the most interesting aspects of Oromo tradition is that laws are treated as a product of human deliberation not a gift of God or of heroic ancestors*".* The Oromo say that all their laws were created by men and can thus be changed by men" (Asmarom, 2006). So, the lawmakers (legislative assembly) or the representatives of the people at large are sovereign to make and unmake the laws on behalf of the people.

Again Dirribi has written the following which precisely point out the sovereignty of the people:

> *In Oromo democratic culture, the supreme power is not in the hands of those well-respected individuals (elders) having the knowledge of law making. It is also not in the hands of electoral committees, the 'Ayyaantuus', who get power through inheritance. The ultimate power holder is again not in the hand of 'Abba Duulaa' who gives military leadership for the armies; or those who are in the stage of kuusaa (qondaalaa) and gives military service in an*

> *organized way. All these have nothing to do with the ultimate power. The Abba Gadaa who are administering the country have no such authority. However, the supreme authority belongs to the people's Gumii (Assembly) the representatives of the people." (Dirribi, 2011)*

Thus, the sovereign power is vested in the hands of the people and the people are also considered as sovereign in the Gadaa system of the Oromo which is similar to what we see in modern constitutions.

SUPREMACY OF THE CONSTITUTION/BASIC LAWS

The supremacy principle shows that the decisions of the people, which are expressed and embodied in the basic laws, are immutable and cannot be violated by any force, law or body. No actions of bodies of representative democracy (the legislature, the executive, the judiciary and their officials) may override the decisions of the whole people as inscribed in the constitution. According to supremacy principle, the constitution is the supreme law of the land; any law, customary practice or a decision of an organ of state or a public official which contravenes this constitution shall be of no effect (FDRE Constitution, Article 9).

The Supremacy principle in Gadaa republic is more genuine than the modern Constitution in guaranteeing the supremacy of Constitution/ Core Gadaa Principles. The premise that laws stand above all men is the foundation of Oromo's Gadaa administration laws (Dirribi, 2011). Consequently, the Oromo have recognized the principle of the supremacy of basic laws in their Gadaa republic. Thus, this is one key element of constitutionalism in the modern context.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND LEADERS

As per the Gadaa republic, all are answerable to the law. The premise that that the law stands above all men is the foundation of the Oromo's Gadaa administration (Dirribi, 2011). The Oromo are accustomed to govern by the law made by the people (Ibid). Concerning this Asmarom Legesse has witnessed the following:

> *The Abba Gadaa himself is subjected to the same punishment as all other Borana if he violates laws, same laws, and same punishments. That is the evidence that shows us that law is above everybody including the Abba Gadaa (Legesse, 2006).*

Pursuant to the modern constitutional government, the conduct of affairs of government shall be transparent; as well as, any public official or an elected representative is accountable for any failure in official duties (FDRE Constitution, Article 12). This accountability of public officials is both a political and legal responsibility. Transparency, for instance, has to be measured against clear standards and requirements to be placed in detailed legislations and similarly accountability may be ensured by putting in place clear duties and responsibilities of the appointed and elected officials in various laws that pertain to their areas of operation, and by penal legislation in case of violations (Assefa, 2012).

Both the elected and appointed government officials cannot escape from responsibility under democratic leadership. This responsibility is both legal and political. If the representatives of the people did not fulfill their duty in favor of the people or the constituency who elected them, they will punish them with their during elections, so the right to elect is one guarantee to ensure accountability. In addition to this, all government officials are subject to legal punishment and court trial according to the law if they commit a crime.

Verily, the Gadaa system embodied the principles of transparency and accountability in an excellent manner. The major principles of Gadaa law do not only protect the rights of the weak, but it also controls and limits the highest authorities (Dirribi, 2011). According to the law of accountability of the Gadaa system, any authority that goes beyond his legitimate power shall be accused. Moreover, the concepts of privilege and veto power, in western democracies, are not recognized in the Oromo Gadaa republic. Among the Oromo, all are answerable to the laws. Even though the Abba Gadaa cannot be assassinated, he can be removed from his office if he abuses his power according to the Borana Oromo. Hence, after being dismissed from power, he can now be punished just like other individuals; therefore, the only privilege of Abba Gadaa is that

he is immune against capital punishment (Ibid). Under the Gadaa republic, the General Assembly serves this purpose (assessing the performance of leaders in the first-half of the term office); it may endorse the presidents' continuation or uproot a leader before completion of his term (Zelalem, 2015). Unlike the presidents and premiers across sub-Saharan Africa, who stay in power for an unlimited period of time, the single term of office principle under the Gadaa leadership reveals an incredible value to democracy. The evidence of accountability illustrates how the Gadaa Oromo ensures the principles of limited government (constitutionalism) during the sixteenth century when slavery was rampant here and there in Africa and other parts of the world. Even today, many constitutions do not specify and/or limit the term of office for members of the executive. For instance, the 1995 FDRE Constitution of Ethiopia does not specify how many times the Prime Minister can be re-elected on the other hand, within the Gadaa system, no one can be re-elected as the Abba Gadaa for a second time under any circumstances.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SEPARATION OF POWERS

In modern democratic constitutions, especially in federations, power is separated between the federal and regional states. This represents a vertical division of power between the federal and state levels. Whereas, the division or sharing of power among the three wings of governments (Legislature, Executive and Judiciary) represents a horizontal separation of power. The main objective behind the principles of separation and division of powers is to protect the people against capricious tyrannical and whimsical powers of the state (Bahadur, 1999). For instance, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia comprises the Federal Government and the State members (FDRE Constitution, Article 50(1)). The federal government and the states shall have legislative, executive and judicial powers (Ibid, Article 50(2)).

The Gadaa republic also recognizes the principles of separation of powers. The Gadaa is entitled with powers to govern the country and defend it from an enemy (Dirribi, 2011). For instance, the Kuusaa (qondaalaa) has the rights and responsibilities of attacking the enemy upon request (Ibid). The Gumii (Assembly) has the powers of changing laws, advising and guiding the Gadaa or uprooting and making other elections (Ibid). The Ayyaantuus (Abba

Mudaa) also has the powers to decide election day, to bless the authorities like the Ya'aas, Jiila, Gumii, and Abba Gadaas (Ibid). All groups work in cooperation and they do not have the super-ordinate and subordinate powers complexities (Ibid).

However, unlike the division of powers between the federal and the states, the Gadaa System of division of power follows generation and age-group based power division (Zelalem, 2015). It is the type of division of power in which every citizen is actively involved in the political and legal affairs of their country (Ibid). Hence, the Gadaa ensures the separation and divisions of powers even far better than modern democratic constitutions. Since the division of power is distributed across the generation, it has great value in creating an egalitarian society. It is an all-inclusive political system in which all age groups shoulder responsibilities.

PRACTICING AND IMPLEMENTING THE CONTENT OF BASIC LAWS/CONSTITUTIONS

The constitution will become a big bull without horns if it is not practiced or implemented. On the other hand, if the constitution is practiced and enforced by the government in its day to day decisions and actions, and if the public at large believes in the constitutional rights guaranteed them in the constitutional text, and these rights are enforced without violation by the government or by any other organ, then we can say that there is constitutionalism under such a system. If what is written in the constitution is respected, we refer to such a constitution as a '*Grantiste* constitution'. However, if what is written in the text is not enforced or is violated by the government itself, there is no constitutionalism under such a system; the public at large cannot accept such constitutions as well. We call this type of constitution '*Nominal* or *Faced* Constitution', i.e. a constitution for name; which is a sign of undemocratic governance or dictatorship.

Hence, legitimacy and the entrenchment of constitutionalism can be the most important factors to enhance the quality of constitutional practices. Accordingly, the above constitutional principles must be seriously considered to have sound constitutional practices. If the core principles discussed above are appropriately implemented, then the constitution/basic laws gets recognition and acceptance from the public at large. Therefore, the legitimacy of a

constitution is rooted in its moral, legal and sociological foundation (Richard, 2005). As Belgin argues, the "legitimacy of a constitution requires a genuine social acceptance, where the relevant public reverses and honors both political intention and expression behind the constitution and legal forms and foundational institutions instituted by the constitution" (Belgin, 2007). Consequently, constitutional legitimacy is ensured if the contents are continuously applied both by the government and the concerned organ/ people with at most commitment in all aspects.

In the Gadaa republic, the commitment to implement or practice the basic principles of the Gadaa system is very high. All persons including the Abba Gadaa himself, is subject to law and all laws are only enacted as per the interest of the whole people. All basic Gadaa principles are considered a covenant among the Oromo people since all are evolved from their values, custom, traditions and beliefs in a long period of time. The critical investigation of the Gadaa system reveals that it fulfills the three main elements, 'consenting, promising and agreeing' to a covenantal constitution of modern democratic federations like the USA, Germany, India, Canada and others. Because, the Oromo gave their consent to enact, to implement and to enforce Gadaa principles and exercising the practices of self-administration for thousands of years. They (each clan) have agreed to administer themselves autonomously and they also agreed to have some common center and rules that govern the affairs of all of the Oromos at once like the 'Abbaa Mudaa'.

Additionally, the Oromo have a genuine custom of transferring authority (Baallii) in a timely manner. Among the Oromo, seizing power, for longer than ones allotted term is abnormal (unconstitutional) (Dirribi, 2011). It is believed that if one does not transfer authority (Baallii), he may face a punishment from God (Ibid), whilst the nearest monarchies and kings existing at that time claimed that they must rule forever as the authority was given for them from the God. Hence, the Oromo have their Gadaa republic as a guarantee or promise for administering themselves through shared rule and self-rule very similar to the modern covenantal/ federal system of administration without any suspicions about the violation of their private and collective rights. Hence, the question of the legitimacy of the government, the basic laws and its implementation

are absolute and the Oromo believe and trust in their laws and their leaders without any suspicions.

THE CHALLENGES OF THE GADAA REPUBLIC

The challenges to Oromo values and their Gadaa republic have been taking place in various forms and at different times. The list below discusses the major challenges.

Foreign Aggression

The main challenges to the Gadaa system were alien forces or colonizers who suppressed the values of Gadaa for centuries. The campaigns of alien forces targeted all of the affairs of the Oromo: their religion (Waqeffanna), socio-political institution (Gadaa), economy, politics and all values of *oromumma* in general to eliminate the Oromo identity and thereby to destroy the property. The project of destroying the Oromo values had been conducted both forcefully and peacefully for a long period of time. Mesfin Wolde Mariyam said the following about the Oromo:

> *"It was really during the time of Tewodros that Oromo supremacy was weakened. It was Menelik who systematically assimilated them and making them share power in government, and through intermarriage at the time of Menelik, Oromo movement as a nomadic destructive and purposeless had ceased completely"* (Wolde Mariyam, 1972).

This points to the destruction of Oromo culture and values as a result of foreign invasion and war.

Lack of Written Literature

The lack of written literature, until the introduction of 'Qubee' (Oromo Alphabet), was the greatest challenge to the Gadaa system. Oromo philosophy, principles and law were all oral. The Oromo Alphabet was adapted from the Latin alphabet during the 1970s (Dirribi, 2011). This was a serious barrier and one of the main reasons that the Gadaa principles had not supported written documents or why it was not possible to codify them in the past. Though the Oromo are brilliant and created an amazing government

system (Gadaa), follow a monotheistic religion (Waqeffanna) and invented a complex calendar they did not have an indigenous writing system.

Historical Challenges

It is well established that the early history of the Oromo people in general and the Gadaa system in particular was not written by the Oromo themselves. The Habesha, Europeans and the Arabs were writing the history of the Oromo (Dirribi, 2011). Therefore, the majority of these alien writers reflected their hatred and often despised Oromo history and culture (Ibid). The Habesha writers (historians) like Abba Bahire strove to harm the psychology of the Oromo people and thereby destroy the culture and religion of the group. He said the Oromo people were cruel and inhuman in his book *The History of the Oromo*. Moreover, Woldemariyam states, "The Oromo military force has no other objective than destroying" (Woldemariyam, 1972). Furthermore, Getachew Haile argues that the Oromo people were ignorant and destroyed the Habesha's civiliazation by invading the civilized Habesha people (Haile, 2012). The European writers have affected and blurred the history of the Oromo system, particularly the Gadaa system though some the European writers like Martial De Salviac, Antoine D'Abbadie and others have strived a lot to write the true history of the Oromo people. For instance, the Portuguese who like the Habesha, hate the Oromo people in the past; as they did not know the Oromo or Oromo language. However, they got distorted information and facts about the Oromo from the Habesha people (Dirribi, 2011). Moreover, even though the Arabs came to Africa for trade and religious purposes, they wrote the history of the Oromo in as well.

Moreover, historically, the Oromo people have resisted the colonizers for centuries by protecting themselves and their lands. However, since 19th century, they defeated by their enemies (Ibid). After being captured by enemies through war, their history and culture have been violated and seriously destroyed (Ibid). As a result, the continuous history of the Oromo people has been disturbed and cracked for centuries. Consequently, the Oromo have been suffering symbolic and cultural segregation within the Ethiopian Empire. For instance, Mohammed Hassen argued as follows:

> *The new Ethiopian ruling class, typified by Emperor Menelik… found it necessary and profitable to denigrate the Oromo people, their culture, and their history in all ways great and small. This ruling class especially perceived the danger of the larger Oromo population to its empire. Consequently, the ruling class systematically depicted the Oromo as people without history, and belittled their way of life, and their religious and political institutions* (1990: 2).

Thus, history impacted the development of the Gadaa system negatively, and also, it has an immense effect on the current status of the Gadaa system.

Legal Challenges

For much of modern Ethiopia's history, until the flourishing of federalism in Ethiopia in 1991, the Gadaa system had been prohibited. Starting from Menelik II (1889) up to the introduction of the federal democratic state structure which was established under the 1995 FDRE Constitution, the Gadaa system was banned by government laws. Hence, utilizing and promoting the Gadaa system was unthinkable during the monarchies and during the military regime (Derg) in Ethiopia. Even today under the federal system of Ethiopia, it is too difficult to promote and harness Gadaa principles in molding and enacting Regional State Constitution and Federal Constitution. The 1995 FDRE Constitution and the Oromia Regional State Revised Constitution of 2001 did not accommodated the principles of the Gadaa system at all. Of course, the 1995 FDRE Constitution incorporates articles which give home for utilizing the traditional governance system. For instance, Article 34(5) says, "This Constitution shall not preclude the adjudication of disputes relating to personal and family laws in accordance with religious or customary laws, with the consent of the parties to the dispute. Particulars shall be determined by law." Furthermore, the same Constitution says, "Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history"(Ibid, Article 39 (2)). Moreover, it claims that government shall have the duty to support, on the basis of equality,

the growth and enrichment of cultures and traditions that are compatible with fundamental rights, human dignity, democratic norms and ideals, and the provisions Constitution (FDRE Constitution, Article 91(1)).

Additionally, at the regional level of Oromia, the Gadaa system is only recognized as a traditional ritual ceremony only. The 2001 the regional state constitution of Oromia and its amendments do not give consideration to Gadaa principles. This regional constitution is the direct replica of the federal constitution (FDRE Constitution of 1995). Also, the regional constitution is subordinate to the federal Constitution (FDRE Constitution, Article 9). Accordingly, the regional state Constitution of Oromia is modeled inline with the FDRE Constitution. Hence, this is represents a serious legal challenge as Gadaa principles are not recognized at even at the regional state level of Oromia.

Educational Challenges (Not Accommodated in the Curriculum)

The educational policy or curriculum of Ethiopia does not accommodate satisfactorily the principles of the Gadaa system neither at the federal level nor at the regional level of Oromia in its curriculum at the primary and higher education levels. A critical investigation of the Ethiopian educational curriculum pointed out that the principles of Gadaa system are rarely highlighted or touched upon in courses like History and Civics.

Rather than accommodating these golden principles, the educational courses contain the history of Ethiopian monarchs like Tewodros, Yohannes, Menelik, Hailesellasie and others. There is no center which promotes, gives training and conduct research on the Gadaa system in detail. Hence, this may be considered a serious challenge, since without educating the youth and conducting further studies about the Gadaa system in a comprehensive and detailed manner, it will prove very difficult to illustrate Gadaa principles in modern constitutional governance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Various peoples around the world have claimed for centuries to have constitutions and limited government. In other ways,

constitutionalism, since the creation of the state in political history. The making and remaking of constitutions is an important pathway to constitutionalism and constitutional governance. Of course at this stage (making process), the legitimacy of constitutions or certain principles must be checked. Accordingly, whether at the making process a certain system/constitution takes into consideration the interest of the people at large or whether the people give their consent to have such a constitution/system must be checked to determine the legitimacy of certain constitutions.

Additionally, the consent is the source of a constitution's/system's legitimacy. So, legality or legal validity indicates appropriateness of measures within the framework of the existing law or legal system. Legitimacy is however about the fundamental justification that asks whether a certain constitution/system is made according to the internationally accepted principles is also cumulatively required. Furthermore, the extent to which the government/leaders of certain system committed to enforce, fulfill and protect the contents of certain constitution or system/tradition is also a critical criterion to examine the prevalence of constitutionalism in certain nation/people.

That is why the researcher is interested in re-examinng the philosophy of Constitutionalism in the Gadaa republic. Consequently, Gadaa is like a hidden treasure; which had never been disclosed to Westerners and the outside world though it contained all the golden principles of Constitutionalism. For instance, the principles of human rights, the principles of the sovereignty of the people, supremacy of the basic laws, accountability of government officials, separation of power, conservation of natural recourses and even wild and domestic animals.

Accordingly, in its making process/ evolution, it is too difficult to recall exactly when and where the Gadaa system first emerged. However, it is determined that the Oromo people have been utilizing Gadaa system as a traditional mechanism to ensure social justice for centuries. Also, it has been developed and evolved from the cumulative experiences gained from experiments, practices, customs, and lessons of many generations of the Oromo society in a very long period. Hence, in its evolution Gadaa is very legitimate as it evolved from the values, customs and tradition of the Oromo; even more so than than the current constitution making process.

On the other hand the contents of the Gadaa republic have amazing principles which give protection to even unborn children, animals, foreigners/ refugees, war prisoners, women, and for the nature in general.

To sum up, this researcher would like to conclude that the Gadaa system is a covenant for the Oromo people and the principle of constitutionalism should be recognized as such since all of the Oromo people participate in their law making process at different levels and different ages grades. Since all the Oromo, in all age groups will give their consent to select or elect their representatives/leaders. Since the people put limitations on the powers of elected representatives through the principles of the Gadaa administration. Furthermore, as the nation, the Gadaa system guarantees that Oromo leaders are accountable and transparent both legally and politically in their day to day official decisions; and more importantly, the Oromo people and their leaders are highly committed to enforce, to fulfill and to protect the tenets of Gadaa republics.

That is why, the researcher would like to recommend that all concerned parties in general and all the Oromo scholars and peoples in particular must strive to re-examine the Oromo philosophy towards the principles of constitutionalism in their modern administration at the national and international levels. Finally, the researcher would like to encourage potential researchers to focus on redeeming the Gadaa Democracy using the following saying of Obbo Samuel Dafaa Jamoo as discussed in Dirribi Damissie Bokku's ,*Oromo Wisdom in Black Civilization* (2011: 23).

> *"We must, ever never let down the intelligent works of our ancestors, done during our Oromo glorious days; that means "Bara Oromoon Kaawoo of harkaa qabu".*

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The Oromo in the Politics of Christian Highland Ethiopia (1786-1853): Retelling a History

Dechasa Abebe [1]

INTRODUCTION

Historical facts were abused frequently in the modern historiography of Ethiopia. It has been written as if some of the ethnic or religious groups were strange to Ethiopia and contributed nothing in the processes of state formation in the history of the country. The notion that some groups became part of the Christian highland Ethiopian history only in the 16th century has begun to be challenged by newly disclosed historical evidence.[2] This became so due to the rereading of existing historical materials more crtically. Basically, the abuse of history in Ethiopia was to legitimize the illegitimate political power simply by defaming predecessors.[3] Particularly, post conflict and post dictatorial government history topics or lessons tried to justify the positions and deeds of the existing political power with claims that it sought to correct the wrong doing of its predecessors.[4]

In such cases, history is not taught for reconciliation, rather it tended to give recognition to one group and deny the contributions of others. It even accused only one group for the instabilities that took place frequently in the history of the country. It associated the absence of national unity or the retardation of the process of national unification with the fault of only one group of the people in the country.[5] This had been done through implementing some interrelated forms of abuses in the process of historical reconstruction in Ethiopia.

One way this was done was by omitting the historical sources that discuss the contribution of "unwanted" groups to the society; they could be religious, ethnic or occupational groups. This was done sometimes to the extent of destroying sources pertaining to

those groups.[6] The second one was by defaming through sorting out only the failure of those groups in the course of the history of the country.[7] This was also strengthened by labelling all the socio-cultural and economic systems different from that of those groups in political power as backward, barbarian or practices of Satan.[8] The third was by adding opinions more than what were easily identified in the historical sources.[9]

The overall purpose of the aforementioned abuses was to label those groups as outsiders or strangers to the history and systems in the country. It was also to ostracize or marginalize those groups from the national privileges in the consecutive regimes of the country.[10] The common privileges that were denied included political power, lucrative job opportunities, economic activities and possession of major national resources.[11]

One of the groups who were subjected to the abused historical writings in Ethiopia were the Oromo. Their share in the politics of the Christian Highland Kingdom of Ethiopia has been overlooked or marginalized in the historical wrings in the country or abroad for the last century. In fact, significant efforts were made to correct that abuse by a number of scholars recently.[12] So, the main objective of the present attempt is to add on those efforts to disclose the historical truth pertaining to the Oromo in the history of the country.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sources indicate that the profound involvement of the Oromo in the politics of the Christian highland Ethiopia began to be seen clearly with the reestablishment of the center of political power in the region north of the Abay (Blue Nile) by the first quarter of the 17th century. One of the major roles of the Oromo was serving as soldiers for the political power aspirant. The service helped the aspirant to come to the political power and maintain his position. The earlier of such service was provided to Susenyos in the last decade of the 16th century. The other role of the Oromo was hosting rebels who exiled among them retreating from the center of political turmoil of the Christian Highland kingdom of Ethiopia. Susenyos was one of such members of the royal family who was brought up among the Oromo and familiarized with the Oromo culture and could communicate in their language.[13] Geographically, the Oromo began to inhabit areas not very far from the capital town, Gonder. It is said that, Susenyos

settled a number of clan based Oromo regiments in the provinces north of the Abay like in Gojjam. So, he was one of the Ethiopian emperors who brought the Oromo to the heart of the post- sixteenth century political power struggle in the country.[14]

Of course, the Oromo were serving in the army (*chewa*) of Iyyasu I (1682-1706) to fight against his opponents including the Oromo themselves. Clan regiments like Itu, Wallaga, Gadisa, Tulama etc were some of the Oromo army serving in the Gonderine kingdom.[15] Hiroki further mentions that "the royal army at the end of the reign of Iyyasu I comprised troops led by provincial governors, troops of the Oromo people and others".[16] The same author underlined that "... Emperors had considerable household troops and that they depended increasingly on the Oromo people, and that the latter's political position rose during latter half of the Gonderine period".[17] So, it is suffice to say that almost all emperors of Gonder depended heavily on the Oromo for military purposes from its large size population, the practice continued to the 20th century history of Ethiopia.

The foundation of Gonder as a capital town of the kingdom in 1636 by Fasiladas, the son and successor of Susenyos, gradually resulted in the confinement of the political power in the town and its vicinity. Even, the immediate successors of Fasiladas, who were called as the "Great Kings" of the Gonderine period could not strictly put all the areas within their domain under their full control. The main achievement of the Gonderine kings in this regard was compelling those regions to pay annual tribute. Otherwise, they send their army to raid those rebel regions. Internally, those kings were pre-occupied by power, rivalry and turbulence. They attempted to solve such problems by confining all possible contenders in a royal prison, Wohniamba.[18]

Bakafa (r.1721-1730), who was the second next to Sysenyos in bringing the Oromo to the politics of the Christian Highland Kingdom, was one of the victims of the royal imprisonment. He managed to flee from the royal prison and exiled himself among the Oromo in Wollo, Worahimanu, at the home of a lord called Amizo. Later on, Bakkafa was supported by the Oromo of Wollo to secure his political power. That was followed by a marriage alliance between the two Bakafa and Amizo, who allied Iyyasu II (r.1730-1755) with Wabi (Christianized and named as Wubit or Wolete

Bersabeh) the son and daughter respectively.[19] The measure brought a number of influential Oromo individuals and groups to the palace to support one power contender against the other. The marriage alliance also gave rise to kings who had blood line from the Oromo. Those kings needed the support of their kinsmen in counseling, military commandments and services as the majority of the army. The case in point was that of Iyoas (r. 1755-1769) the son of Iyassu II who brought his uncles (Brilie and Lubo) and other numerous relatives from Wollo.[20] As a result, it has been said that his Oromo followers "over flooded" the town of Gonder and that their language became a court language (ልሣነ ንጉሥ). Iyoas himself spoke mostly Afan Oromo by which his other relatives from Qoara were disappointed.[21] The act brought two groups of power contenders not only for the position of kingship, but also for the positions of counseling and military commanders. Regarding the contenders, with respect to ethnicity, one group was from the Oromo and the other from the non-Oromo; and one from the Muslims (identified as Galla) and the other from the Christians (identified as Amhara). The latter could be the Agaws and other related Cushitic peoples like the Qimant from Quara. Most probably, the *Quaregnoch* were the Amharic speaking Qimant and the *Gojjames* were the Amharic speaking Oromos or Agaws.[22] At certain point, the monarchs could not manage the rivalry among these two groups, the *Quaregnoch* and the *Wollowoch*. As a result, they attempted to bring a neutral body from Tigray.[23] Unfortunately, that measure worsened the weakness of the monarchs to limit the power of these groups. This continual weakness of the Gonderine monarchs paved the way for the rise of the Yejju Dynasty (1786-1853) in which the Oromo became the main actor in the politics of the kingdom. With regard to this period, a number of abusive historical literatures were contributed. Some of the abusive stories pertaining to the period were on the rise of Yejju Dynasty, struggles for political power, the nature of political administration, the territorial extent of the kingdom, foreign relations and the nature of socio-cultural systems of the country.

THE RISE OF THE YEJJU DYNASTY AND STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL POWER

The end of the period of "king making and unmaking" by *Ras* Sehul Mikael of Tigray who was identified as "ቀታሌ ንጉሥ" "murder of kings" in Gonder gradually gave rise to the appointment of the Oromo to the position of the *inderasie* (viceroy) with a title *ras betwode;* the highest politico-military rank next to the sovereign, a monarch. The first *inderasie* from the Yejju family was appointed by King Tekle Giyorgis who came to power in 1777. In fact, it was his father (Guangul) who was invited by King Tekle Giyorgis for the position. But, Guangul recommended his own son Ali and Ali was appointed to the position.[24] By then, the political domain of the king was very small; he could not collect taxes and tributes from the regions which were tributary to the kings before him. Because of this, he planned to collect taxes from Begemidr itself which was exempted from that for their military services.[25] Unfortunately, the nobles of Begemdir initiated by certain *Dejach* Eshete Hailu from Estie rejected this plan or decree of King Tekle Giyorgis saying; "በበጌምድር የለ ግብር በሰማይ የለ ዱር፤ በጌምድር ደረቱን ለጦር እግሩን ለጠጠር መስጠት ነዉ እንጂ የማር የገንዘብ ግብር የለበትምና እርስዎ እንዳባቶችዎ እንደ ፋሲል እንደ አድያም ሰገድ ኢያሱ ያስተዳድሩን እኛም እንዳባቶቻችን አልጋዎን ደግፈን እንኑር።"[26]; "there was no tax in Begemidr like there was no desert in the sky. Begemidr was exempted from tax of honey or cash but gave his chest for spear and his foot for gravel. Please, govern like your fathers Fasil, Adiam Seged Iyyasu did, we continue our loyalty to you."

However, the king refused their appeal. As a result, they suggested a new form of government; "ንጉሣችን ያገርን አስተዳደር ከለወጡብን እኛም ገዢ እንለዉጥ አልጋችን በእጃችን" "if the king changed his administration, we [also] change our governor; our throne is in our hands!" They invited Ali to the position of their own *inderasie* instead of that of the king as "አጼ ተክለጊዮርጊስ የሰጡዎን እንደራሴነት ይተዉና በኛ በኩል እንደራሴ አድርገንዎታል፤ አልጋ ግን ከአገራችን እንዳይጠፋ ወይዛዝር ከሚባሉት ከነገስታት ዘር አጼ እያልን አንዱን እያነገስን እናስቀምጣለን..."[27]; "leave the position of *inderasie* of *Atse* Tekle Giyorgis, we will appoint you as our *inderasie,* but to preserve the tradition of monarchy we will put ceremonial kings on

the throne from the royal family." The act was to limit the absolute power of the king, in which the real political power should be in the hands of people's *inderasie*. Therefore, the government was headed by the *inderasie* of the people and the king became the ceremonial head of the state without real political power. That was why the Gonderine entitled him as "*woyizazir"* to mean ladies. So, Ali Guangul became people's *inderasie* (people's appointee) by leaving his position with the king. The king was disappointed by the measure taken by both the nobles of Begemdir and his own *inderasie* and exiled himself to Aksum saying "በጌምድር! ከኔ ከወንድምሽ የየጁ ጋላ ከተሻለሽ ደግ ነዋ !"[28]; "Begemidr! If the Yejju Galla is preferable to you than I, your brother, it is well." Thus, this measure was the opening of the period of Yejju Dynasty, the end of absolute monarchs. Not the end of government, but a change in the form of government. Tekle Tsadik Mekuria rightly commented that "ፍጻሜ መንግስት.....ይባላል። ነገር ግን የነገስታቱ ጎይል ደከመ ለማለት ነዉ እንጂ፣ መንግስቱ.... በመሳፍንቱ እጅ ቀጥሏልና ፍጻሜ መንግስት በማለት ፈንታ ፍጻሜ ነገስት ማለት ይገባል።"[29]; "….called the end of state; but it should be called the end of monarchs because the government continued in the hands of *mesafint*s." Unfortunately, the official history of the country identified the period as the time of "disorder" or "stateless" instead of identifying it as the period of limited monarchy.

Several opinions were written against facts concerning this historical period. Of these, the following can be re-thought looking in to the official sources contributed by the royal chroniclers and traditional historians. The majority of modern professional as well as amateur historians omitted those historical facts to legitimize all the political activities of Emperor Tewodros II (1855-1868) who brought the period to an end. Shiferaw Bekele and Tekele Tsadiq Mekuria, to the knowledge of the present researcher, became different from Ethiopian historians of the 20th century; both of them interpreted sources on this historical period genuinely and invited others for further investigation.[30] Asme Giyorgis Gebre Mesih also shared this peculiarity to some extent in his description of the period.[31]

The political power of the Yejju Dynasty was identified as "vassalage system" by Shiferaw Bekele, in which regional lords can

grant land and mobilize their own armies which were totally dependent on the regional lords. This inhabits the full control of the Yejju rulers on the regional lords indirectly.[32] All the rulers of the Yejju Dynasty from Ali I to Ali II were suzerain to all other regional lords within their domain, even if they could not be sovereign. Of course, the majority of the regional lords were protesting frequently either for the position of *ras betwoded* by which the Yejju rulers were identified.[33]

Thus, the period of Yejju Dynasty was characterized by intense power struggle for the position after the death of each *inderasie*. The claim for the position of *ras betwoded* from other regional lords was carried out frequently under the cover of identifying the Yejju *inderasies* as usurpers to the position.[34] The two major rival provincial lords for the position of *inderasie* were the lords of Tigray-Simien and Gojjam-Damot. The rest two, Begemidr and Wollo, were not frequently part of the struggle against the Yejjus because Wollo was already the main actor in the government system and Begemidr was the host of the system; even the Yejju rulers themselves were officially not only the *inderasie* of the kingdom, but also lords of Begemidr.[35]

Initially, there was a rivalry between *Ras* Wolde Silassie from Enderta and *Ras* Gebre Meskel from Tembien for the position of governorship of Tigray. They were aspiring not only for the governorship of Tigray, but also the position of *inderasie* in Gonder. For instance, *Ras* Gebre Meskel enthroned his own ceremonial king *Ase* Be'idemariam to mobilize support for the position of *inderasie*. At this stage, *Ras* Ali I was siding *Ras* Wolde Silassie against *Ras* Gebre Meskel. Because of this, *Ras* Ali had got at least the neutrality of *Ras* Wolde Silassie in his confrontation with *Ras* Gbre Meskel. As a result, *Ras* Ali was successful in defeating *Ras* Gbre Meskel and killed, *Ase* Be'idemariam. *Ras* Ali maintained his alliance with *Ras* Wolde Silassie and urged him to fight against *Ras* Gebre Meskel who escaped death and retreated. Accordingly, *Ras* Wolde Silassie confronted *Ras* Gebre Meskel and defeated him. Finally, he became the sole governor of Tigray. And *Ras* Ali secured his suzerainty in Tigray.[36]

The successor of *Ras* Ali was his own son *Ras* Aligaz. We cannot see clear confrontation between the lords of Tigray and *Ras* Aligaz from the available sources. What we can see from the sources

is only the refusal of *Abuna* Yosab and *Ichiegie* Wolde Iyesus to give recognition for *Ras* Aligaz as *inderasie* under the pretext that "they would not submit to the Galla". As a result, he had to battle with them and they were defeated. *Ras* Aligaz also had strong problem of power competition with his Yejju relatives and with *Ras* Asrat and *Ras* Wolde Gebriel of Lasta[37] who interrupted the Yejju Dynasty for six years (1794-1800) after the death of Aligaz of Yejju.[38]

The death of the Lasta brothers resulted in power vacuum at the position of *inderasie*. Then, Gugsa came to the position by the help of his brother Alula; "አሉላም ጉግሳን አለዉ ባልጋዉ አንተ ተቀመጥ.... ጉግሳም ማን ሰጠን ብለን ቢለዉ። አሉላም መለሰ ረቢ ሰጠን ብለን ብሎ፡"; "Alula said to Gugsa 'sit on the throne!' Gugsa replied that 'who gave us?' Alula said 'God gave us!'". In fact, just like others did before or after that. So, the second Yejju ruler who had long deal with Tigray was *Ras* Gugsa (1800-1826). He had hard times with *Ras* Wolde Silassie throughout his period of rule. The sources from the Tigrian side presumed that *Ras* Wolde Silassie did not accept the suzerainty of *Ras* Gugsa directly.[39] Of course, they did not have direct confrontational battles with each another; rather they were using a third party. *Ras* Gugsa instigated different opponents of *Ras* Wolde Silassie so that the later could not have time to strengthen his force even if he had access to modern European weapons in comparison to other provincial lords because of his proximity to the outlet.[40]

As usual, *Ras* Gugsa enthroned his ceremonial king *Ase* Eguale Tsiyon immediately after he came to the position of *inderasie*. Then, the new king became focus of attention for both *Ras* Gugsa and *Ras* Wolde Silassie. *Ras* Wolde Silassie, even if he was an old man, requested for the hands of the daughter of the king and married her. On the other hand, *Ras* Gugsa "forced" the king to marry Gugsa's sister Wolete Iyesus and the king, *Ase* Eguale Tsiyon, married her. As a result, the king stretched between his son-in-law and his brother-in-law. Still *Ras* Wolde Silassie could not be confident enough on this alliance that he was secured from the attack of *Ras* Gugsa as long as he did not accept the latter's suzerainty. As a result, he allied with *Ras* Gebre of Simien against *Ras* Gugsa.[41]

In the middle of this, *Ras* Gugsa confiscated 500 ounce of gold from the then old *abun* who stored such amount of gold for a gift to the government of Egypt to bring an *abun* that would take the position of church leadership after the former's death. *Ras* Gugsa took the gold justifying that how such amount of gold was going to be given to a foreign government from his country. This measure of *Ras* Gugsa was raised against him by his northern opponents, *Ras* Wolde Silassie and *Ras* Gbrie, who mobilized the Christian population under the pretext that he did that because he is a Muslim Oromo and working against the church so that the church could not get its *abun*. At this moment, *Ras* Gugsa became wise and gave back the gold, plus compensations to avert the coming challenges.[42]

But after this incident, he was working to separate their alliance. Then, he was instigating internal rivals for power in Tigray and the Raya Oromo persuading that "he is their brother" against *Ras* Wolde Silassie. Thus, he could divert the attention of *Ras* Wolde Silassie from the alliance with *Ras* Gebrie. Then, *Ras* Gugsa was going to confront *Ras* Gebrie alone in the mid of rainy season when *Ras* Wolde Silassie could not cross to Simien for support. Unfortunately for Gugsa, *Ras* Gebrie disbanded his army and retreated to Amba Gishien. While *Ras* Gugsa was waiting for *Ras* Gebrie to descend from the *amba* the rainy season passed and *Ras* Wolde Silassie became in a position to support the later. Now, *Ras* Gugsa could not be confident enough to confront the allied forces of the two, and went back to Begemidr. However, he continued urging the Raya and other opponents against *Ras* Wolde Silassie particularly, when the later left his territory for Simien. But, he did not support both opponents of *Ras* Wolde Silassie on their confrontation. As a result, the internal opponents and the Rayas beg for mercy and seem reconciled with *Ras* Wolde Silassie. But, after a while, they set the camp on fire including the home of *Ras* Wolde Silassie in Tigray. Anyways, after a certain time, *Ras* Wolde Silassie died a natural death and *Ras* Gebrie was confined to his own territory. By then, *Ras* Gugsa secured his suzerainty in Tigray and Simen.[43]

The same struggle continued between the Yejju and lords of Tigray and Simen after the death of *Ras* Gugsa in 1826. But his successor and son *Ras* Yimam was not as wise as *Ras* Gugsa. He rushed and made battles with these lords of Tigray and Simien, of course could defeat them. Particularly, the son and successor of *Ras*

Gebrie, *Dejach* Haile Mariam of Simien claimed that he was an *inderasie* of *Ase* Be'idemariam. But *Ras* Yimam confronted him at Waleb and Gonder and became victorious. After a year, *Dejach* Haile Mariam died and his son and successor *Dejach* Wubie also refused the suzerainty of *Ras* Yimam. They battled at Wegera and *Dejach* Wubie was defeated and returned to Simien. Thus, Ras Yimam became his suzerain.[44]

After the death of *Ras* Yimam, after having only been in office for two years, *Ras* Mariyie, his brother succeeded him. *Dejach* Wubie of Simen accepted the suzerainty of *Ras* Mariyie after his own defeat and the death of his ally *Dejach* Matentu at Inchet Kab. But *Dejach* Sabagadis of Agamie-Tigray refused the suzerainty of *Ras* Mariyie and prepared for battle. Here *Dejach* Wubie allied with *Ras* Mariyie getting a promise for governorship of both Simien and Tigray, after defeating Sabagadis, from *Ras* Mariyie. Finally, they fought at May Islamay in which both *Ras* Mariyie and *Dejach* Sabagadis were killed.[45] It seems that the battle safeguarded the position for *Dejach* Wubie who returned home with a glorious victory and began to govern both Simien and Tigray as far as Hamasien. *Ras* Mariyie's brother Dori, who was in support of the former in the war, managed to settle the disorder and secured Gonder. Immediately, he became *inderasie* with the title of *ras*. He also recognized *Dejach* Wubie as the governor of Simien and Tigray and in return secured his suzerainty. Surprisingly, his period of rule was only three months because of his natural death.[46]

Ras Dori was succeeded by *Ras* Ali II (Ali Alula) Alula, another son of *Ras* Gugsa who died before his father.[47] A challenge to *Ras* Ali Alula from Simen-Tigray was *Dejach* Wubie himself who was planning to refuse the suzerainty of the former and to even struggle for his position. At first, *Dejach* Wubie did not refuse the suzerainty of *Ras* Ali. He was paying annual tribute. They also made a marriage alliance. *Ras* Ali married the daughter of *Dejach* Wubie, Hirut. [48]But still, *Dejach* Wubie was working against *Ras* Ali. Particularly, he tried to attract *Dejach* Goshu of Damot-Gojjam and the ceremonial king Yohannis III by the then husband of *Etege* Menen, the mother of *Ras* Ali. *Dejach* Goshu was promised Hirut Wubie as a wife in case they could defeat *Ras* Ali. Conversely, *Ras* Ali instigated the brother of *Dejach* Wubie, *Dejach* Merso, against Wubie.[49]

By that time, *Dejach* Wubie was confident and proud of the large army he mobilized from his vast territory. Moreover, he had amassed many more weapons from outside because of his access to the outlet or the then colony of the Ottoman Empire. He was also successful in bringing a patriarch *Abuna* Salama II from Egypt for his possible coronation ceremony. Moreover, he built a beautiful church at Deresgie, Mariyam, designed by a foreigner named Schimper Wilhelm, for the ceremony.[50]

All of these activities were not out of the knowledge of *Ras* Ali, but he did not react directly. Instead he waited for *Dejach* Wubie to wage the war. After a while, as already expected, *Dejach* Wubie refused to pay the annual tribute and the suzerainty of *Ras* Ali. He even rushed to Debre Tabor with a large army and the patriarch for a final battle. *Ras* Ali also mobilized his army and got ready for the same purpose. On the incident, the patriarch was excommunicating the army and the people, saying that ከራስ አሊ ጋር ሆነህ ደጃች ዉቤን የወጋህ ገዝቻለሁ።"[51]; "I excommunicate those who ally with *Ras* Ali and fight *Dejach* Wubie!" But, the army of *Ras* Ali did not worry about the excommunication of the patriarch. At the climax of the fighting, both *Ras* Ali and *Dejach* Wubie retreated from the war front before knowing their final fate in the war. For a moment, the forces of *Dejach* Wubie seemed victorious and occupied the town of Debre Tabor and the court of *Ras* Ali. However, *Dejach* Wubie was captured suddenly by certain band of *Ras* Ali's army under the command of a man called Aligaz.[52] Consequently, *Ras* Ali's army was victorious and *Dejach* Wubie became a prisoner of war and *Dejach* Goshu retreated to Gojjam. Of course, While he was in Debre Tabor during the brief days of *Dejach* Wubie's victory, it is said that he met Hirut Wubie during this time. He assumed that once *Ras* Ali was defeated, she would become his wife.[53] However, after *Ras* Ali came back and secured his town and court he made peace with all of his opponents, *Dejach* Wubie and his allies. Then, *Dejach* Wubie was released and returned to his previous position accepting the suzerainty of *Ras* Ali, but leaving the patriarch behind for the later. Then, he became one of *Ras* Ali's vassals until the rise of Emperor Tewodros II. The ceremonial king Yohannis III was also brought back to his position.[54]

The other provincial lords who tried to refuse the suzerainty of the Yejju *inderasies* throughout the period of the dynasty, but without success, were those of Damot-Gojjam. They were Oromo like that of Yejju, but Christianized and fully converted to the Amhara identity. So, their identity was not questioned unlike that of the Yejju rulers who were considered as Oromo and Muslims.[55] Regarding, their relations with the Yejju *inderasies*, the sources do not indicate the position of earlier lords, like *Ras* Hailu I and his son *Ras* Merid. What we know from the sources is that *Ras* Merid was an active participant in the conflict between the two *indersasies*, *Ras* Asrat and *Ras* Wolde Gebriel. *Ras* Asrat had the collaboration of the lords of Tigray, Simien and Gojjam, whereas *Ras* Wolde Gebriel had the collaboration of Gugsa, the future *inderasie*. Finally, *Ras* Asrat and *Ras* Merid were killed whereas *Ras* Gebrie and *Ras* Wolde Gebriel retreated.[56] Then, Gugsa came to the position of *inderasie*.

Now a lord from Damot that did not recognize the suzerainty of *Ras* Gugsa was *Dejach* Zewde who had also battled horizontally with *Dejach* Gual the son and successor of *Ras* Merid. Because of this horizontal conflict between *Dejach* Zewde and *Dejach* Gualu, the later became loyal to *Ras* Gugsa so that he could withstand the attack of Zewde. In fact, his father *Ras* Merid was also an Oromo. And that was why Gugsa declared "የሞትንም እኛ ያለንም እኛ... ያለዉ ራስ መርዕድ የጎዣሙ ኦሮሞ ነዉና "[57]; "'those who died are we', 'those who alive are we'....said since *Ras* Merid of Gojjam was an Oromo". In this multiple struggle for political power *Dejach* Gualu also got the collaboration of *Dejach* Elias of Agewmidr. So, *Dejach* Zewde was alone and began to design a strategy on how to deal with them separately. He defeated both *Dejach* Gualu and *Dejach* Elias one after the other. Of course, he had mobilized a large Oromo and Amhara army.[58]

Now, Zewde went for another battle with *Ras* Gugsa. However, he was defeated and captured at the war and imprisoned on an island in Lake Tana. His son Goshu Zewde took the position of leadership in Damot. Still, Gojjam continued its loyalty to the Yejju *inderasie* but Damot refused it under the leadership of *Dejach* Goshu Zewude. *Ras* Gugsa came to Damot supported by *Dejach* Gualu to defeat Goshu, but Goshu retreated to the fort mountain of Jibela. Fortunately enough for Goshu, both *Dejach* Gualu and *Ras* Gugsa

died after awhile. Then, he took Gojjam and began to govern both Gojjam and Damot.[59]

Then, *Dejach* Goshu remained the strong opponent of the Yejju *inderasies* one after the other. For instance, he refused the suzerainty of *Ras* Mariyie. As a result, *Ras* Mariyie went to war with *Dejach* Goshu and his son *Dejach* Birru, but they retreated to inaccessible mountain. Then, *Ras* Mariyie appointed another lord, *Dejach* Matentu of Simen to Gojjam and returned to Gonder. Immediately, *Dejach* Goshu descended from the mountain fort and chased the appointee of *Ras* Mariyie to his locality in Simien. The successor and brother of *Ras* Mariyie, *Ras* Dori also attempted to bring *Dejach* Goshu and his son *Dejach* Birru to the position of vassals, but he could not because they defeated his army and forced them to turn back from Gojjam to Gonder.[60]

Still, after the death of *Ras* Dori, Ras Ali II succeeded him. *Ras* Ali sent an order of loyalty (for his suzerainty) to *Dejach* Goshu and his son. Both of them refused the order and prepared to confront him. Then, *Ras* Ali sent his three vassals (*Dejach* Seyum from Begemidr, *Dejach* Adoyie Babbu and *Dejach* Meshesha Babbu from Yejju) to Gojjam to fight. Unfortunately, they were defeated and killed by the forces of *Dejach* Goshu and his son.[61] Now *Ras* Ali approached them for reconciliation. He, made a marriage alliance and gave his daughter, Yewudar, to the son of *Dejach* Goshu, *Dejach* Birru[62] and a result, *Ras* Ali became successful in breaking the collaboration between *Dejach* Goshu and his son *Dejach* Birru.[63] The reason for the disagreement between *Dejach* Goshu and his son *Dejach* Birru was on the nature of their relationship with *Ras* Ali. *Dejach* Birru was not ready for the reconciliation with *Ras* Ali, his father-in-law, but *Dejach* Goshu recognized the suzerainty of the *Ras*. Finally, the father and the son went to battle in which the son was victorious.[64] Now, *Ras* Ali summoned both of them to his court for punishment. *Dejach* Goshu accepted the call and appeared in the court of *Ras* Ali, but *Dejach* Birru refused. After a brief imprisonment, *Dejach* Goshu was reappointed as governor of Damot and his son Tessema was appointed as governor of Agewmidr; and pay their loyalty to *Ras* Ali to the rise of Emperor Tewodros. But *Dejach* Birru remained a rebel until the time of Tewodros.[65]

Generally, the major position that was the bone of contention between the rivals was not the position of emperorship; rather, it was the position of *inderasie* where the actual political power was located. This was well understood and explained by TekleTsadik Mekuriya as "…በአሁኑ ጊዜ ያለዉ ትንንቅ ለንጉሠ ነገሥትነት በመሆን ፈንታ ስልጣን ያለበትን የእንደራሴነቱን ስፍራ ለማግኘት ብቻ ሆነ።"[66]; "now the struggle was instead of for the emperorship, it was for the *inderasie* where the real political power was." This analysis was contrary to what many professional historians had been teaching saying instead that the rivals were not struggling for the position of emperorship since they were not from the Solomonic bloodline. However, the actual reason was that they were struggling for the position where the real political power was located. These were the *inderasies* during the period of Yejju Dynasty (1786-1853), with brief interruption for about six years (1794-1800) by the Lasta brothers: *Ras* Ali I (1777-1789), *Ras* Aligaz (1789-1794), *Ras* Asrat and *Ras* Wolde Gebriel from Lasta (1794-1800), *Ras* Gugsa (1800-1826), *Ras* Yimam (1826-1828), *Ras* Mariyie (1828-1831), *Ras* Dori (1831) and *Ras* Ali II (1832-1853).[67]

The other related manifestation of the Yejju Dynasty was that the politico-military title "*Ras*" was not bestowed on anyone except the *inderasies* themselves; i.e, an indication of their suzerainty. The earlier lords with the title of *ras* from Tigray, Simen, Damot and Gojjam, were given the title before the rise of the Yejju.[68] After their death, none of their successors were given a title above a *dejazmach*.

THE NATURE OF POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION

One of the major characteristics of the social and political systems of the Yejju Dynasty was the power continuity of the preceding systems both in the court of Debre Tabor and in each region of the kingdom. Traditional royal houses in each region of the kingdom that were founded in the early 18th century continued within the same family to the 19th even 20th century.[69] If it were the period of disorder and anarchy, there would have been an interruption and the position would have been over taken by new classes. The anarchy happened when Emperor Tewodros attempted to interrupt that position in the middle of the 19th century. The nature of political administration throughout this period of Yejju dynasty was a kind

of center-periphery relations as it was common during the tenure of other dynasties. The Yejju *inderasies* were suzerains from the center and the provincial lords outside Begemidr were vassals.[70]

The other important characteristic of the Yejju political administration was that it did away with the absolute power of the emperor and the continuous wars for the position of emperorship or succession disputes. This was because the ceremonial emperors during this time were handpicked by the *inderasies* and lacked political power to wage wars or create disputes. In fact, it also resulted in another form of rivalry for political power as has been mentioned above.

It can be also understood that throughout all their wars, the Yejjus were not aggressive against their war captives or opponents in comparison to their predecessors, contemporaries or successors. After a showdown and achieving victory, the Yejjus let free and re-appointed their opponents through reconciliation instead of brutal killings or imprisonment. *Dejach* Wubie described one of such acts as "ሲቻለዉ ማሪ ዓሊና ፈጣሪ"[71]; "Ali and God are merciful [although they could kill]" for the mercy he got from *Ras* Ali II; contrary to what was common during the time of *Ras Betwoded* Sehul Mikael and Emperor Tewodros.[72]

Besides this, they did not rush to kill their war captives except in the case of *Dejach* Sabagadis who was killed after the death of his Yejju opponent killed by the son of Sabagadis, Hagos.[73] They also did not rush to war for every disagreement before attempting other peaceful means. They attempted to understand the actual power of their opponents. The case in point was the reign of *Ras* Gugsa and that of *Ras* Ali II. They failed to analyze such issue only in their confrontation with Kassa Hailu, the later Emperor Tewodros II who was successful in defeating the vassals of *Ras* Ali II one after the other and then finally the latter himself.

Moreover, unlike the claim of many scholars, the Yejju were strong and wise enough to collect the annual taxes and tributes in the kingdom. Let alone, those provinces in their own vicinity, they managed to collect taxes and tributes from Tigray which was a strong rival and fought for complete autonomy.[74] The declaration of *Ras* Gugsa about the land ownership of the kingdom was one of the manifestations of such a system of administration. "ባለ ንብረቱ

የሚጠቀምበት ዕቃ ከሱ በላይ ጠንካራ ከሆነ ምን ዋጋ አለዉ? የመሬት ባለቤቶች፣ ታዋቂ ሰዎችና የመሬት ጭሰኞች የዉርስ ጌትነት ብሎ ነገር የለም፡ ፡ እሱን እግዚአብሄር ለሚመጥኑ ሰዎች ይሰጣል። ያንን ስልጣን ለማንም አልሰጠም። ነገር ግን ለኔ ለጉግሳ ሰጥቶኛል፣ የመሬት ሁሉ ባለቤት ነኝ። የመሬት መብት ምንጩ ከኔ ነዉ። መሬትን ለመኳንንት፣ ለባላባቶቹ፣ ለጭሰኞቹ በራሴ ፍቃድ የማድለዉ እኔ ነኝ። እየቀረባችሁ ጠይቁ የማዕረግ ደረጃዎችን እስጣለሁ።"[75]; "if a property is stronger than its possessor, what is the value in it? Landlords, known individuals, tenants, there is no inherited lordship. It is given to those who deserved it by God. That is given to me. I distribute land to the *mequanents, balabbats* and tenants by my own will. Come to me and request. I bestowed every rank."

Moreover, *Dejach* Wubie, one of the strongest lords of Simen-Tigray, was paying huge amounts of taxes annually to *Ras* Ali II.[76] As a result, one can be safe to say, the Yejju were the actual governors of the kingdom rather than puppets who were denied recognition from the provincial lords. Therefore, the inward pulling political force was strong enough to save the kingdom from disintegration. There were also social and political practices pertaining to the administration of the period that were more unifying agents than dividing agents. Marriage can be a case in point. Almost all provincial lords had marriage alliance or blood relations with the *enderasies*. The one at the center himself had his wife and wives for his sons from those provinces. Particularly, those who became aggressive against the Yejju were united through marriage alliances.[77]

The peculiar nature of the Yejju Dynasty in their administration was that it was the period in which the Muslims were not marginalized in the political affairs of the kingdom. Even, sometimes they became the main actors. As a result, the kingdom during this time was relatively free from the dominance of the church in the politics or governance system.[78] Because of this, the period of the Yejju Dynasty was relatively free from the persistent wars under the cover of religion. The type of continual wars between the Highland Christian kingdom and Lowland Muslim sultanates from the last quarter of the 13th century to the first half of the 16th century were not prevailing during the period of Yejju Dynasty. The

foreigners both travelers and missionaries in Ethiopia by then indicated that the political behavior of the Yejju in comparison to the then provincial lords as generous, kind and disciplined. One can see the description of d'Arnauld Dabbadie who described that, *Ras* Ali II as kind and disciplined as well as generous, and *Dejach* Wubie as arrogant and greedy. Not only *Dejach* Wubie but his predecessor, *Ras* Wolde Silassie was known for his greedy behavior.[79]

TERRITORIAL EXTENT OF ETHIOPIA DURING THE PERIOD OF THE YEJJU DYNASTY

Concerning this issue, what has been available in most of the historical literature about the period is very far from facts. The issue has been treated as if there was no central government and the country was divided among regional lords who were in constant fighting for extra territory. However, sources indicate that no territory was lost during the period of Yejju Dynasty, from what the Gonderine kings administered beginning from the 17th century.[80] The only difference between the first half of the Gonderine period and that of the Yejju Dynasty in this aspect was the detachment of Shewa proper (approximately the districts of Menz, Merhabete, Moret as well as Tegulet and Bulega which were united under Negasi by the beginning of 18th century), from the subordination of Gonder in about 1730. As a result, Shewa became an "independent" territory governed by its own *rases* and even later, *neguses* (kings) without recognizing the supremacy of Gonder. This status continued throughout the period of the Yejju Dynasty. So, all the territories which were inherited from Gonderine kings in 1780s were fully governed with their usual internal autonomy by the Yejju *inderasies*.[81]

The major territories of the kingdom after the 16th century were Gonder, Begemidr, Tigray, Simen, Damot, Agewmidr, Gojjam, Dembiya, Lasta, Wollo and North Shewa[82]. All these were also parts of the kingdom during the period of Yejju Dynasty except Shewa. Different historical accounts put similar descriptions about the territorial extent of the kingdom during the period of Yejju Dynasty. For instance, the British traveller John Plowden listed the following regions as part of the kingdom; from Yifat to Sennar including the Aynana and Worhimenu Oromo area, the Agew of Lasta, Dembiya, Gonder, Quara, Gojjam, Damot, Agewmidr, from

Bass (Gojjam) to Hamasien.[83] For d'Arnauld Dabbadie, the territory included the following regions, Wollo, Worhimenu, Wag, Lasta, Wadla, Dalanta, Amara Saint, Begemidr, Gojjam, Damot, Agewmidr, Dembiya and Quara.[84] Of traditional historians, *Aleqa* Taye included the following regions, Yejju, Lasta, Agew, Wadla-Delanta, Wollo, Begemidr, Simen, Gonder, Wogera, Dembiya, Agewmidr, Damot and Gojjam in his description.[85] The only difference between *Aleqa* Taye and *Ato* Asmie was that Asmie[86] included Tigray otherwise both of them listed down identical regions. The lords of all these territories were paying annual tributes to the Yejju rulers in Debre Tabor and mobilized armies when they were ordered to do so. Thus, if all these territories were part of the kingdom, no territories were lost during the time of the Yejju comparing to that of the territories of the Gonderine period to 1780s and that of the reign of Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868).

ECONOMY- TRADE AND AGRICULTURE

The region south of the Abay became marginal to the center of political power of Ethiopia after the end of the 16th century. Gonder and its neighbours became the center of political power beginning from the 17th century. Particularly, in the 18th and 19th centuries the only constant agent of connection between the northern and the southern regions of the country was the long distance trade.[87] There were trade routes that stretched from the south western region to the north and north east regions of the country. Here, the focus of this discussion is the one that led to the north mainly, to the region that was considered to be the political heartland of the 17th century Ethiopia and the platform for the politics of "Zemene Mesafint". In fact, there was also a minor trace of the eastern branch of the route in Gojjam and Wollo[88]. These northern trade routes passed through vast territories and arrived at the town of Gonder. From there it led to two directions. One of the two routes led to North West via Metema to Sudan and the second route led to the north via Adwa to the Red Sea.[89]

So, the period of the Yejju Dynasty was not the time in which the trade activity was deteriorated, agriculture was stagnated or arts were withered away, it was a period in which cross border trade was expanded and even prospered. Abir discussed extensively about both cross border trade and local markets. Of course, he spent much

of his time discussing about slave trade. European travellers and missionaries' accounts tell us that long distance trade activities were carried out in large magnitude. They also listed not only the types of trade items, but also a number of trade terminals and taxation posts across the routes.[90]

Here, one important question has to be asked: how is it that long distances, an irregular geographical setting and culturally diverse communities could be crossed by merchants if there was political anarchy? Trade activities need a stable political system to transport such varieties of trade items and human merchandise from the southern half of the present day Ethiopia to the north since all the routes passed through the domain of the kingdom. Moreover, a number of markets were located within the kingdom that also needed relative peace.

Of course, besides, the multiplicity of taxation posts established by local lords within every territory, the presence of bandits hiding themselves in irregular river valleys along the route was a big challenge for the merchants. In fact, the merchants had different protections from the lords along the routes for whom they had paid taxes. Most probably, that was why the declaration after the coming to power of every local lord or the *inderasie* who claim that "they are patrons or protectors of merchants" contains "ሰራተኞች ስሩ ፣ ነጋዴዎች ነግዱ... "[91]; "[you] the workers work, the merchants trade".

The Yejju Dynasty was the period in which not only trade, but also other economic activities were in a better situation in relative terms. Donald Crummey explained that it was a period in which agricultural products, including honey wax and cereals, were produced in large amounts. He has extensively gone through the travellers accounts of the early and mid 19th century as his sources for this purpose. Unlike Abir who claimed that all the exported items were from the southern regions of the country, Crummey listed a number of exported agricultural products from the Central Christian highland kingdom of Ethiopia. Moreover, the fertility of the soil, the ratio of productivity per hectar and other related issues about the agricultural practices throughout the kingdom were described by European travellers. Depending on their descriptions one can argue that all those items for export, items for local consumption and the level of productivity could not be achieved in

the situation of total political instability. So, it can be deduced that the agricultural activities were in an eveb better situation than the decades before and after the period of Yejju Dynasty.[92]

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The presence of numerous European travellers and missionaries in the country was another possible indication that there was relative peace and security rather than total anarchy during the period under discussion. If there was a threat to peace and security like for instance during the period of closed door policy of the Gonderine kings and the later policy of Emperor Tewodros, there could not be such numerous foreigners in Ethiopia. The foreign relations of Ethiopia during this period were predominated by the British and the French because of the then global reality.[93] Portuguese and Spaniards were excelled. Germany and Italy had not emerged as nation states and were in the process of national unification. That was why we have a number of foreigners from these two European countries. That does not mean other Europeans were totally absent in Ethiopia during those decades. The early British attempted to have economic and diplomatic relations with the kingdom, but was not successful because they could not by pass the Tigrian territory to Gonder under the pretext of security problems; however, it seems that the Tigrian lords did not allow them to go to Gonder. That was why the relations of Valentia, Henery Salt followed by Nathanael Pearce and Coffin were limited to Tigray. Particularly, the latter two were in Tigray for years serving the lords of Tigray. Mainly Nathanael Pearce was with *Ras* Wolde Silassie for years and left after the death of the later. Similarly, Coffin was also there for long time and he was with *Dejach* Sabagadis after the death of *Ras* Wolde Silassie.[94]

It can be understood that the contact between Europe and the lords and kings in Ethiopia would have resulted in the strength of the latter because it created access to modern weapons as part of international trade and enabled them to defeat possible rivals. This idea was possibly in the minds of the Tigrian lords which likely why they prohibited the Europeans from penetrating to the interior of the kingdom. Once the Europeans crossed the territory of Tigray, they did not face significant security problems unlike it was presumed. They could move and explore almost many areas of the kingdom.[95]

If it were in a sort of total anarchy as it has been described in the literature they could not move from one area to the other within the entire kingdom.

The travellers and missionaries' books and memoirs are not predominated by descriptions of wars and conflicts, rather they were filled with the descriptions of how they were provided with different types of provisions for themselves and their animals. The situation in the kingdom enabled them even, to the extent of compromising with the peasants about the quality of the provisions (*metin*) they and their animals were provided with. They also described to what extent the general public were peaceful and needed different medical treatment from those travellers and missionaries. Some of the travellers and missionaries moved even to the territory outside the domain of the kingdom by then. Several French citizens moved to Gonder, Gojjam and to Shewa or Enaria and made a number of geographical and other related studies. They narrated about the resources, peoples' lifestyles and other detailed issues instead of anarchy or total lawlessness. Such descriptions came after Tewodros became an emperor. The threat to the lives of the foreigners began to appear during his reign. They described that the major obstacles to trade or to the exploitation of the products of this part of Ethiopia was the geographical setup, absence of rivers conducive for transport and the blockade of the outlets in all directions by the Ottoman Turks. Still, some of the travellers and the missionaries were expelled from the kingdom not because of the wars, but because of religious issue that they were preaching their own version of Christianity which disappointed the clergy of the kingdom.[96]

The British made the first successful official diplomatic relations with the last Yejju *indersasie Ras* Ali II by means of Plowden. By the way, the descriptions of Plowden about the kingdom had stories of wars. He attempted to emphasize his and John Bell's role in those wars particularly in their service to *Ras* Ali. While explaining the poverty of the country, Plowden underlined that the poverty was not because of lack of resources but because of prevalence of such wars. However, all the European accounts about Ethiopia during the period did not describe why, some Europeans stayed in Ethiopia for long even adapting the customs of the country and marrying the Ethiopian women if the country was in a Hobbesian state of nature.[97]

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SYSTEMS

The Yejju Dynasty was a period of Oromo government in somewhat a form of limited monarchy in the present context of the concept.[98] The rank and file in the army of the Yejjus at Debre Tabor were Afan Oromo speakers and affiliated to the religious fathers of the Oromo of Wollo; Muslims in their religion. The Yejju were dependent on those Muslim kinsmen for counselling purposes.[99] Unlike, what some professionals say[100], the sources do not indicate that Christology was the issue of controversy or reason for conflicts for them. Probably, they gave priority to national issues; the nature of relationship with the *abun* was also not strong. The case of gold confiscation from the *abun* by *Ras* Gugsa of the Yejju Dynasty is one indication.[101] The other case in this regard is that *Ras* Ali II did not go for war to bring the *abun* from Tigray who was with *Dejach* Wubie the governor of Simen and Tigray.[102]

So, the strong abusive historical interpretation about the time was to persuade readers that the Oromo and other non-Christian peoples of Ethiopia were obstacles to the unity and social harmony of the country. Most of the modern professional historians emphasized the divisive political and social nature of the system to justify this notion. Contrary to this, there were a number of unifying agents in the political and social systems of the period. One of them was marriage. The marriage interrelationship among regions and ethnic groups was very strong through the agency of three social classes of the society: the elites, the clergy and the army.[103] The peasants (*balagers*) who were the overwhelming members of the society were relatively static in their geographical settlement. The interrelationship among the *balagers* of different region was very minimal.

The marriage alliance was the basic means of interrelationship for the elites of the national court and regional lords. It played a very important role in national integration. Most of the elites either in the central palace or in the provinces were products of such marriage alliances and each were kinsmen or relatives of one another. Of course, what is common in the literature is their consistent rivalry for power. The funeral song "የገደለዉ ባልሽ የሞተዉ ወንድምሽ፣ ሀዘንሽ ቅጥ አጣ ከቤትሽ አልወጣ።"; "the murderer is your husband; the

murdered is your brother. Your sorrow is endless, since it is not out of your home" was not only for the marriage alliance and its outcome for a single family, but also a number of elites faced such problems because of the interrelationship.[104] From the very beginning, it was such marriage alliance that brought the Oromo to the national palace and it was not interrupted during the period of their dynasty rather it was strengthened. A given ruler from the national court was the kinsmen of all the elites in Tigray, Begemidr, Gojjam and Wollo.[105]

The clergy were also one agent of interrelationship during the period just like that of the earlier or later period. They were moving from one region to the other where best teachers, church scholars, were available to attend different levels of education. Similarly, they move from one region to the other where they could be paid better. As a result, they consider each province as their own "country".[106] The governing system of the Yejju family did not interrupt such practice.

A member of the army also moved from one region to the other to be employed where one could get better master. A man from Gojjam could be employed in the court of Gonder or the Tigrian gun bearers were moving from region to region and employed where they could enjoy better life.[107] That was why, the early Gonderine kings had a number of Oromo army regiments and even later, Menlik II had a military regiment known as Gonderie in the last quarter of the 19th century. The other aspect of the army's life was their movement from one region to the other for battles. In fact, the military arrangement of the period was a bit modified in comparison to the preceding period that strengthens the centrifugal force or makes it real decentralization in the modern sense of the term. During the preceding period it was challenging to mobilize armies for protest against the Emperor for a regional lord because the soldiers may hesitate that in case they were defeated, they would lose everything, but could appeal to the king in case there happen the punishment of regional lords because of their refusal to fight against the king. All of the armies, in general throughout the country, were indirectly under the command of a king, who was a sovereign. This was because it was only the Emperor that could grant land to them for their services.[108] But now the *inderasie* or

regional lords can do that. The decree of *Ras* Gugsa mentioned above is a case in point.

In general, most of the clergy and the army got their marriage partners from their area of destination not from areas of their origin by the agency of their masters or teachers. Here, the intention of the present discussion is not only indicating that the Yejjus continued the previous national administration and social interaction in a similar way, but also to indicate that all the Oromo of the Nile basin were part of all these social intermingling during the period under discussion.

THE FALL OF THE YEJJU DYNASTY

The Yejjus could not establish sustainable Oromo hegemony to the extent of their active role in the political history of Ethiopia. This was because of several reasons. Primarily, the Oromo had less interest to use firearms in comparison to the Amhara and Tgirians. The latter two were by far revolutionary in this aspect. So, they became gradually victorious because of their interest and access to firearms. Mainly, the Tgrians were advantageous due to their geographical proximity to the outlet to the sea. Most of the time, they blocked the route that led to the land of the Oromo so that they could not access firearms. Secondly, the reaction of the Amhara and Tigrian nobility, clergy and population to the rising of the Oromo to political power and their Islamic background or tendency was negative. Particularly, the notion that the continuous territorial expansion of the Oromo took place at the expense of the others was used as propaganda by the Amhara and Tigrian nobility and clergy.[109] Generally, even if it was a gradual process, the fall of the Yejju Dynasty was result of the rise of Emperor Tewodros II. Before the actual rise of Tewodros, there were multiple rivals of the Yejju *inderasies* waiting for the right time to dismiss them from their position. Thus, the initial period of the rise of Tewodros (Kassa) was considered as the golden opportunity for them to do away with the Yejju. Unfortunately, all of the rivals were dismissed by Tewodros himself one after the other. None of them allied to confront him together, either because of the reasons mentioned above or because of their feelings about him. They looked down upon him and considered that it was not up to their status to confront a village bandit in an open battlefield. In fact, Menen, the mother of

Ras Ali II, attempted to contain this newly emerged aspirant as a loyal servant by giving him the hands of her granddaughter as a wife. Unfortunately, that political strategy did not work because of the further ambitions of Kassa.[110] Primarily, the prevailing internal and external contexts pushed Kassa from being loyal to the Yejju in Debre Tabor. Externally, he was inspired by the existing political situation that anyone who was capable enough to mobilize forces can come to the top of the politico-military ladder. He was also disappointed by the nature of the treatment he got in the court of Debre Tabor and wanted to upgrade his status. Internally, he had a background that connected him with local lords of his birthplace as well as claimed remote blood relations with the monarchs of Gonder. By the way, this attitude of Kassa about himself pushed him to develop hostility against the Yejju *inderasies*, the Oromos. He claimed that "ያባቶቼን መንግስት ለጋላ ሰጠባቸዉ::" "[God] gave the government of my fathers to the Galla." He knew that the Yejju were the successors of the *Quaregnoch* in the position of *inderasie* or popularity in Gonder and it would be reasonable to assume that he developed a significant hatred against the Oromo although he joined them through marriage.

Consequently, he left Debre Tabor for Quara as a bandit. Then, the Yejju began to send a series of forces against him one after the other. The first force from Gonder was sent to capture him on *Tikimit* 14, 1839 EC (October, 1847). But he defeated that force and captured about a hundred guns from them. This was followed by another battle with the forces of Menen from Gonder under the command of *Dejazmach* Wondirad. He confronted and managed to defeat his force as well. Thirdly, a force from Gonder, under the nominal command of Menen herself went to fight him and still he defeated the force and captured Menen herself. All these victories of Kassa against the forces of the Yejju signaled the downfall of their dynasty. At this point, *Ras* Ali II attempted reconciliation and managed to free his mother from the captivity.[111]

Then, *Dejach* Goshu of Gojjam was ordered to fight Kassa. Unlike, his expectation *Dejach* Goshu was defeated and killed by the force of Kassa. As a result, it was said that

ጎሹ እንደ ኦርዮ 1ን/2 አሊ እንደ ዳዊት፤

ከጥንት አይደለሞይ ተልኮ መሞት።
ሓዋርያት አሮሞች ጥለዉት ቢሸሹ፣
አርብ ተሰቀለ አማኑኤል ጎሹ።[113]

Goshu as Uriah Ali as David
Wasn't it the ancient tradition to be sent and died?
The disciples Oromo retreated left him behind
Goshu crucified on Friday like Amanuel.

This poem indicated that *Ras* Ali was suzerain of *Dejach* Goshu and ordered him to fight against Kassa. Still, *Ras* Ali II did not confront Kassa by himself since he suspected the position of *Dejach* Wubie in the north. After the defeat and death of *Dejach* Goshu, *Ras* Ali mobilized the army of several *dejazmaches* and sent them against Kassa for a confrontation on April 5, 1853. They were also defeated. Now, after all of those attempts, *Ras* Ali fought Kassa by himself. He mobilized about a hundred thousand troops and confronted Kassa in Gojjam at Ayishal on *Senie* 23, 1845 EC (July, 1853). Unfortunately, he was defeated by the force of Kassa. By this victory, Kassa put the last nail on the coffin of the Yejju Dynasty.[114]

Generally, the downfall of the Yejju Dynasty was followed by the reconstruction of a number of abused histories about the dynasty and the personal behavior of the rulers. However, these historical accounts were written to defame the Yejju Dynasty because of their social background. Particularly, defaming the Yejjus to praise Tewodros was common throughout the literature of modern Ethiopian history; as Gebre Hiyowt says "ምኒልክን ለማሞገስ ዮሐንስን መስደብ..."[115]; "insulting Yohannis to praise Menilek…" The earliest in doing that was the chronicler of Emperor Tewodros, *Aleqa* Zeneb who wrote that Alula died at an early age because of his use of a certain stimulant ("አርዝም አደንድን...."; "enlarge and erect…") for sexual intercourse.[116] Similar defamation was told against Aligaz the successor of Ali I who was said to have wronged (have sex with) his own sister.[117] *Ras* Ali II was also labeled as a gay (homosexual)[118]. Those writers justified that Tewodros was enthroned divinely by God to punish the Yejjus and their followers because of such evil deeds. They added that Tewodros was

extremely aggressive and cruel in most of his acts in order to serve that purpose.[119] Of course, the professional historians claimed that he developed such behavior after all his attempts began to fail.

CONCLUSION

The period of the Yejju Dynasty was portrayed negatively in the literature of Ethiopian history. Facts were abused and descriptions about the period were extremely biased. Unlike what is common in the literature, the period was characterized by the relative political supremacy of the Oromo in which the absolute power of the kings was limited. It was also a period in which there were both significant continuities and some changes to the political practices of the preceding dynasties. Thus, a number of historical lessons can be drawn from the period. Primarily, it is possible to understand that an individual or a group from any ethnic or religious background can govern the country as long as they have the knowledge and skill to do so. Secondly, it is possible to deduce that a modern form of government identified as a constitutional monarchy was not a political practice that Ethiopia needed to import from abroad, but could have develop its own political culture by referring to the historical experiences of the period.

Moreover, one can understand that the dynasty was the period in which the country was governed by individuals who were instead of being servants of an emperor, they became appointees of the people. So, it was a period in which a political practice of "popular supremacy" was attempted. The other lesson that can be learned from the period of Yejju Dynasty is the skill of compromise in a political system, how to negotiate with opponents or claimants of political power as well as how to treat war captives; ሲቻለዉ መሃሪ ዓሊ ና ፈጣሪ". It is also possible to understand from the period that peace and security could not be possible by force, rather by sharing political power or not by multiplying enemies rather by increasing the number of friends. The other lesson that can be drawn is that the period was the one in which religious equality was prevailed in a way that was uncommon during previous time periods. Thus, it can be deduced that the dynasty was a period characterized by neither Christian nor Islamic dominance in government. Rather, individuals from both religious groups could serve in the rank and file of the

politico-military system. As an extension of this, the then kings were not anointed by the Patriarch, rather they were appointed by the king makers who were theoretically the representatives of the people. So, it can be logical to say that a people's representative can appoint the ceremonial head of the state. But what was done by *Ras Betwoded* Sehul Mikael who was identified as "ቀታሌ ንጉሥ", "murderer of kings" was illogical.

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Notes

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3 This can be understood from the historical literature written about Ibin Ibrahim Aligazi (Mohammed Geragn) and the Oromo in the post 16th century period, about Yejju Dynasty during the reign of Emperor Tewodros II, about Emperor Tewodros himself during the reign of Menilek II, about *Lij* Iyyasu during the reign of Emperor Haile Silassie I, and about Haile Silassie himself during the period of the *Derg* and now about the period of the *Derg* itself.

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112 It is an attempt to make comparison with Biblical David and his soldier Uriah mentioned in the second book of Samuel 11:11.
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