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THE JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

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Table of Contents

Articles

Echoes of Bulloo: Unveiling Oromo Identity Construction through Protest Music 1-36
Zelalem Jabessa Gabul, PhD Candidate

The Necessity of the Rebirth of Sovereign and Democratic Oromia 37-76
Asafa Jalata

Utilizing Local and Global Knowledge for Sustainable Agricultural Production: Lesson from Oromiya and the American Low Desert 77-98
Oli Bachie (PhD) and Worku Burayu (PhD)

Demystifying Internal Colonialism in Uncolonized Ethiopia through Dukkanaan Duuba Play 99-120
Zelalem Jabessa Gabul, PhD Candidate

Mutual Insurance: A History of the Wallagga Association 121-154
Tsega Etefa

Book Reviews

Klemm, P. M. (2022). ***Dressing Modern like our Mothers: Dress, Identity, and Cultural Praxis in Oromia***, The Red Sea Press, 206 pages 155-158
Zakia Posey

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 3 7/15/2024 4:15:20 PM

"The World the Oromo Made", Review Essay, Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa, by Gemetchu Megerssa and Aneesa Kassam (Addis Ababa: Fifth World Publication, 2019), 314 pages **159-176**

Mohammed Hassen

Echoes of Bulloo: Unveiling Oromo Identity Construction through Protest Music

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Abstract: *This study examines the construction of ethnonational identity of the Oromo in Ethiopia through protest music circulating on social media. The research focuses on the investigation of 3Obsa, a YouTube video clip by Yosan Getahun, which has garnered the most extensive viewership among Oromo songs since its release in 2021. This research employs Multimodal Discourse Analysis to investigate the representation and construction of Oromo identity. The study utilizes the multimodal aspects of the protest music and the corresponding YouTube responses, supplementing a comprehensive analysis. The results demonstrate that the amalgamation of 3Obsa and social media specifically Youtube is a convenient medium for negotiating, representing, and constructing Oromo identity. The research findings suggest that the fusion of social media affordances and protest music play a central role in constructing ethnonational identity, focusing on revalorizing Oromo culture, identity, and values.*

Keywords: Oromo identity construction, ethnonational identity, oppressive ethnonationalism, emancipatory ethnonationalism, emojis, attire, 3Obsa

Identity Construction and Social Media

The construction of identity in the digital domain is not a new phenomenon. The extant literature shows different identity construction

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 1 7/15/2024 4:15:20 PM

practices on various social networking platforms, with varying levels of emphasis. For instance, Moinian (2006) examined how children construct their identities through video dairies online, while Cook and Hasmath (2014) focused on gendered identity construction on Facebook. Koteyko and Hunt (2016) observed Facebook profile pictures to explore the construction of health identities. Other studies have explored collective identity (Gal et al., 2016; Khazraee & Novak, 2018), political identity and biographies on social media (Barassi & Zamponi, 2020), contemporary identity construction focusing on social media (Stokes & Price, 2017), heterogeneous and fluid identities (Li & Huang, 2021), religious identity construction (Ikhwan & Wafi, 2022), and privacy identity and the internet of things (Chang, 2023), discursive construction of identity (Ruelle & Peverelli, 2017), among others.

In the African context, there has been extensive research conducted on identity construction. Noteworthy studies explore the construction of national identity (Edu-Buandoh & Nkansah, 2018), mixed-race identity (Metcalfe, 2022), self-identity (Mashiya, 2018), and political identity (Moussa, 2019), among others. These studies contribute to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of identity and its significance within African societies, reflecting the diverse and evolving dynamics of identity construction in the continent.

In the context of Ethiopia, too, there exists a diverse range of perspectives and arguments regarding identity construction practices. MacLeod (2014) contends that Ethiopia's rich history, cultural heritage, and multiethnic composition contribute to the complexities and challenges associated with identity formation in the country. The author stresses that the absence of external colonization has played a crucial role in facilitating the preservation of distinct identities among the diverse ethnic groups in Ethiopia. On the other hand, at the center of Ethiopia's historical context of identity construction practices lies the deliberate endeavors of Ethiopian emperors to shape and forge a singular identity that have profoundly influenced the evolution of the identity question in the country.

These deliberate initiatives aimed to exert influence and modify existing identities, ultimately striving for a more uniform and centralized sense of identity. Scholars argue that Menelik II pursued a strategy known as *Habashaization* (Yates, 2016), seeking to assimilate the northern highland specifically Wallo and Shawa into the broader Habasha cultural identity. Similarly, Haile Selassie employed an *Amharization*

policy, aiming to assimilate ethnicities in the country (Abbay, 2023; Keller, 1995). In response to these ambitious initiatives, the issue of identity gained significant attention and sparked intense public debate during the 1960s. Notably, Walelign Mekonnen's essay, spanning five pages, emerged as a prominent contribution challenging the notion of a centralized identity that neglects social and cultural diversities (see Mekonnen, 1969). Additionally, Ibsa Gutama's poem titled "Who is Ethiopian" emerged as a significant critique of the ongoing construction of a centralized Ethiopian identity, offering a thought-provoking challenge to the prevailing efforts in establishing a singular national identity (Dumessa & Godesso, 2013).

The emergence of the Oromo identity question gained prominence in the 1960s, with Keller (1995) attributing it to the Mecha-Tulama Foundation, while Jalata (2023a) credits the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and its founding figures. However, it was not until the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991 that ethnic identity was formally instituted in the constitution (Regassa, 2012). Despite the promotion and practice of ethnic identity across diverse social and cultural backgrounds over the past three decades (Abbay, 2023), the assumption of power by Abiy Ahmed in 2018 presented a challenge to the prevailing political ideology, as he sought to restore a centralized imperial ideology (Jebessa & Abdeta, 2022; Regassa, 2021).

The incumbent government's dissolution of ethnic-based coalition parties and their replacement with a single Prosperity Party (EPP) is perceived as an effort to eradicate any ethnic affiliations, signaling ulterior motive to restore imperial Ethiopia that marginalized diverse cultures and identities (Ayele, 2021; Dibaba, 2021). However, the reginal media outlets are encouraged in promoting cultures and identities of their respective communities than any time before (Dessie et al., 2023; Skjerdal & Moges, 2021).

This article endeavors to examine how protest music disseminated through social media platforms plays a crucial role in the construction of Oromo ethnonational identity, serving as a response to the institutional repression of diverse social and cultural existence that promotes coexistence and aesthetics. In this era where the producer/consumer binary has no to little power due to the advancement of communication technologies (Yamamoto et al., 2020; Zajc, 2015), individuals use social media affordances to engage in political activism and discussion. However, more research is needed to fully comprehend how protest music and social media work together to mediate and facilitate the construction

of ethnonational identity practices. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of literature by conducting a critical multimodal analysis of the YouTube medium, specifically focusing on the Oromo protest song YouTube video clip titled *3Obsa*.

Defining Ethnonational Identity

The indiscriminate inter-utilization of *nation* and *state* created ambiguity in the term nationalism whereby the concept of the nation-state could refer both to *uni*national and *multi*national identity (Connor, 1994 [1976]; Travis, 2013). Nationalism connotes identification with and loyalty to a nation that favors blood and ancestral relations—ethnic nationalism as well as identification with and loyalty to a nation based on the state structure no matter what the composition and identity of the groups (Conversi, 2003). Walker Connor coined ethnonationalism to resolve such an ambiguity (Conversi, 2003). Hence the concept of ethnonationalism or ethnonational identity is understood as an identity that stands for and favors nationalism perceived based on the common biological and historical root of primordiality with a shared culture, language, and ancestry, etc., while the *regular* nationalism favors and encourages mongrelized diversity of various ethnic backgrounds (Agbaria, 2018; Connor, 1994; Udeh, 2017).

It is crucial to note that ethnonationalism distinguishes itself from regular nationalism when a 'nation' is conceived in terms of ethnicity, not citizenship, which settles the ambiguity mentioned earlier because the combination of *ethno-* and *-nation* succinctly demonstrates which nationalism it refers to (Yun, 1990). The root words from which ethnonationalism derives *ethno-* (denotes people or culture) and *nation* (refers to people having common descent, culture, history, language, etc.). Thus, the central focus of the present study revolves around the examination of ethnonational identity construction. This research aims to delve deeper into the ways in which a YouTube video clip song contributes to the expression and the shaping of ethnonational identity. In the subsequent section, a precise examination will be conducted to present two distinct variations of ethnonationalism: oppressive ethnonationalism and emancipatory ethnonationalism. In so doing, I aim at highlighting the significance of embracing and advocating for emancipatory ethnonationalism, and demonstrating how the Oromo people utilize protest music as a means to embody and promote this ideology. By elucidating the importance of pursuing emancipatory

ethnonationalism through cultural expressions like protest songs, this study attempts to contribute to a deeper understanding of its transformative potential within the Oromo context.

Oppressive Vs. Emancipatory Ethnonationalism

An oppressive ethnonationalism represses those 'outside the circle' where the manifestation includes imposing own attributes on others, disregarding and discouraging visibility of diversity and difference working systemically to ensure control and sustenance of the dominant culture. In the contemporary world reality, the systematic normalization and imposition of one's cultural attributes can be driven by any one of political, religious, national, or subcultural interests. Over the past decade, there have been growing incidents of ethnonational sentiments in various nations, including the western world where accommodative culture is claimed to have taken root and celebrated more than anywhere else. Dominant groups often practice oppressive ethnonationalism to gain political and economic control (Manza & Crowley, 2018; Shammas & Sand set, 2020; Thompson, 2021). This ideology is also employed to establish religious dominance over minority populations (Agbaria, 2018a, 2018b; de Souza & Hussain, 2021; Fozdar & Low, 2015; Markakis et al., 2021).

However, *emancipatory ethno-nationalism* is a galvanizing force against an oppressive system or group that targets to dismiss or dissolve the beauty of diversity. Contrary to the position held by great powers and scholars sympathizing that ethnonational sentiment could apocalyptically and abruptly cause political instability, there still exist counter-arguments that ethnonationalism among political minority and oppressed groups leads toward freedom, democracy and self-determination (Connor, 1994; Jenber & Zhen, 2021; 2023; Travis, 2013). Mobilizing ethnonational groups can help stave off destruction and help preserve the history, culture, and values of the oppressed (Ayoob, 2007; Udeh, 2017).

The spirit of ethnonationalism in developing nations is often attached to the need to secure economic resources and political power in the fight against rampant marginalization, inequalities, underdevelopment, and undemocratic governance, usually among competing ethnic groups (Duruji, 2012; Gilbert, 2013; Olayode, 2010). The current study positions itself within emancipatory ethnonationalism trying to demonstrate how the Oromo through music and social media withstand socio-economic, political, and cultural hegemony in Ethiopia.

The Oromo and Protest Songs

Among the Oromo, protest songs hold a dual significance, serving as both a form of artistic expression and an integral part of their daily life (Jebessa, 2022). Protest songs are significant cultural practices among the Oromo, playing a substantial role in their socio-economic, political, cultural, and historical life (Holcomb & Klemm, 2018; Einashe, 2016). For over a century now, the Oromo have cultivated the skills and experience of using songs to respond to oppressive forces, analyze and interpret their challenges, and recommend solutions based on Oromo's ontological and philosophical understanding (Gabul, 2013; Mollenhauer, 2011; Holcomb & Klemm, 2018). Regassa (2023) asserts that throughout prolonged decades under different regimes, the Oromo people have utilized protest music as a means to resist and fight against subjugation and domination.

Research on Oromo protest music is disproportionately scarce, considering the Oromo's status as the largest single ethnic population in East Africa and the significant role that protest music has played among them for many decades, serving as a potent tool in their resistance against subjugation and defiance of various forms of domination. The majority of previous studies seemed to document and preserve Oromo cultural practices, particularly their skill of improvisation or recitation of oral songs (see Dibaba, 2016; Gidada, 1983; Kelbessa, 2013; Mollenhauer, 2011; Triulzi & Bitima, 1996). Indeed, it is noteworthy that a considerable portion of recent scholarly research pertaining to Oromo protest songs predominantly focuses on the analysis of their lyrical content (see Abebe, 2019; Bidu, 2019; Jebessa, 2022; Jebessa & Abdeta, 2022; Regassa, 2023). The emphasis on lyrical analysis offers valuable insights into the underlying themes, messages, and cultural significance embedded within the protest songs of the Oromo population. However, there remains a pressing need for further exploration of other modes and facets surrounding Oromo protest music. One such avenue is to investigate the nexus between protest music and social media, in facilitating the construction of ethnonational identity in the digital age. By expanding our analytical lens to incorporate these digital contexts, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving nature and broader implications of Oromo protest music in contemporary society.

Social media played an irreplaceable role in mobilizing the Oromo struggle against Ethiopia's deeply entrenched oppressive system. The emergence and widespread use of Oromo protest songs on social media

platforms have provided a powerful means for galvanizing the Oromo, raising awareness about their struggle, and expressing their grievances against the Ethiopian government. The *Qeerroo* Movement, which originated in 2014 (Dibaba & Fanon, 2018; Regassa, 2021), subsequently evolved into the #OromoMovement, deriving significant advantages from political activism facilitated by social media platforms (Arora, 2020; Murrey, 2023), as well as from the power of protest songs (Holcomb & Klemm, 2018). Social media platforms play a pivotal role in not only mobilizing the Oromo struggle through disseminating Oromo protest songs, but also by fueling the momentum of the Oromo movement. As an example, during the initial stages of the Oromo protest against the Master Plan, protest songs that faced censorship by mainstream media outlets gained significant popularity and widespread dissemination through the utilization of social media platforms (Jebessa, 2022).

Social media facilitated the preservation and dissemination of the Oromo cultural heritage and identity, strengthening their collective resolve in their fight for justice and equality. Using Oromo protest songs on social media platforms has allowed artists to showcase their talents and gain recognition beyond traditional censorship. It allows them to re-embrace and own their traditional values and reconstruct Oromo identity.

YouTube as a Political Medium

YouTube provides video-uploading applications accessible to anyone from anywhere for free (Febriyanti & Tutiasri, 2019). Genetu and Tegegne (2019) argue that YouTube has emerged as the second most popular social media platform in Ethiopia, after Facebook. The study highlights the continuous growth of YouTube's user base, solidifying its position in the country. Studies further show that YouTube overtakes traditional media, and the rising dominance of YouTube in Ethiopia attributes to the youth's disengagement from conventional media and the platform's interactive and user-generated content. As the number of YouTube users have grown considerably over the past decade (Berhane, 2019), it has become a platform for political discussion in Ethiopia.

The protest music uploaded on YouTube triggers political discussions and functions as a medium of ethnonational identity representation and construction. YouTube viewership has grown significantly over the last few years and has become alternative media for political discussion among the Oromo. For instance, the top-viewed protest song during the

Oromo protest years back in 2015 is Hachalu Hundessa's *Maalan Jira,* with a current view count of 12.5 million in 8 years. However, this trend is fast changing as protest songs uploaded on YouTube are getting millions of views within months shortly. For example, Yosan Getahun's video clip *3Obsa* got over 28 million views just in three years. According to Androutsopoulos (2013), YouTube offers a plethora of opportunities for researchers, encompassing not only video clips like protest music but also the audience viewership and user comments, which greatly enhance the richness of data and interpretations.

Contextualizing Ethiopia's 2018 Change and Ramification

Despite peaceful protest approaches followed during the protest years in Ethiopia prior to the 2018 change, authorities resorted to violent measures in their attempts to suppress protesters across the country (Kelecha, 2020, 2021). Studies reveal that between 2014 and 2018 alone, over 5000 Oromo were killed by government forces including school children and pregnant women (Bedaso, 2021; Jalata, 2020). However, the persistent and irrevocable protests continued plunging the EPRDF/TPLF government into a severe economic downturn, leading to a critical self-evaluation of the ruling party. This internal self-critique, known as "ጥልቅ ተሃድሶ" in Amharic, spanned several days behind closed doors (Fisher & Gebrewahd, 2019). Eventually, the defunct OPDO emerged victorious, propelling Abiy Ahmed to power in April 2018.

With Abiy Ahmed assuming power, hopes were high for an end to oppression, prevalence of equality, and transition to a long-awaited democracy, etc. (Fiseha, 2022). And Ethiopians irrespective of their backgrounds welcomed the new administration with optimism and aspirations for a new Ethiopia (Dibaba, 2021; Workneh, 2021). The Oromo, in particular, held onto the expectation that the sacrifices made during the struggle for change would yield meaningful results (Hassan, 2022). However, the new administration continued to systematically marginalize and oppress the Oromo (Abdushekur, 2023; Kelecha, 2023). Instead of achieving true liberation, the incumbent government filled prison cells with hundreds of thousands of Oromo youth, opposition political party leaders, members, and supporters alike (Jalata, 2023). This occurred shortly after the claims that the prisons had been emptied during the initial year of the transitional period.

This recurrence mirrors the disproportionate imprisonment of Afaan Oromo speakers during the TPLF regime (see Murrey, 2023). The Abiy government also decided to dissolve the ethnic-based federal system that had been in place for thirty years (Fiseha, 2022). In its place, there has been gesture of reinstating an outdated unitary system that had previously proven unsuccessful over an extended period (Abbay, 2023; Bedaso, 2021; Sheikh & Abdi, 2019), endangering mushrooming alternative political ideologies, ethnic identity and regional autonomy.

Methodology

This study employs a Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) approach to investigate the construction and representation of Oromo ethnonational identity through the YouTube platform. MDA is chosen as it recognizes the evolving nature of communication in today's multimodal landscape and goes beyond traditional approaches that focus solely on language (Leeuwen, 2005). By considering various semiotic resources, including visual and textual elements, MDA enables a comprehensive analysis (Zhao et al., 2018).

The study focuses on analyzing a YouTube video clip of Oromo protest song namely *3Obsa* to understand how it contributes to the construction of ethnonational identity. The selected video clip serves as a representative sample of protest music that has gained significant viewership within the Oromo people. The analysis explores the ways in which textual and visual elements are employed to construct and convey ethnonational identity within the socio-cultural context of the Oromo.

Ethical considerations regarding privacy and consent are important when conducting research on social media platforms like YouTube. While the video clip is considered public data once uploaded and accessible to the public (see Fassbender, 2021; Legewie & Nassauer, 2018), measures have been taken to protect the privacy of individuals' reactions in the comment section by masking their names and profile pictures to protect their identity.

The study also draws upon the social semiotics approach developed by Gunther Kress, which emphasizes the construction of meaning in all its forms and the influence of social contexts (Kress, 2009). However, understanding the construction of ethnonational identity is not readily available; rather, it is the product of social interaction in social environment (Adami & Kress, 2014). By analyzing the interplay of various semiotic

resources and their contextual and socially shaped interactions, the study aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which ethnonational identity is constructed and represented through protest music specifically on YouTube.

The research methodology involves a systematic analysis of the selected YouTube video clip, focusing on both visual and textual elements. The analysis is conducted through meticulous observation, transcription, note taking, screenshotting, and interpretation of the video's content, paying attention to the use of multimode by adapting MDA (Djonov & Van Leeuwen, 2018; Leeuwen, 2004, 2005; Yang, 2016). Additionally, the analysis explores the socio-cultural context within which the video is situated, considering the broader significance of ethnonational identity construction within the Oromo people.

By employing a rigorous methodology that combines MDA and social semiotics, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how protest music on YouTube contributes to the construction and representation of Oromo ethnonational identity. The findings from this research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on political discourse and the role of digital platforms in shaping identity formation.

Digital construction of ethnonational identity

This analysis focuses on the digital construction of the Oromo ethnonational identity through the examination of protest music on a YouTube video clip. For this purpose, multimode of *3Obsa* video clip and viewers' comments will be analyzed. YouTube video clip integrates and serves as a medium of "participatory spectacles" where different modes co-occur (Androutsopoulos, 2013, p. 47). The co-occurrence of these modes is suitable for comprehensive analysis where the focus is not only the video clip per se but also other modes that come along, such as user comments. Accordingly, lyrics, comments, Emojis, and clothes would be analyzed in an integrated manner to see how the interaction of each mode complements each other in constructing identity. By analyzing the different modes, I will try to show how their integration enhances ethnonational identity construction within the Oromo socio-political and historical context.

The Video Clip: 3Obsa

Yosan Getahun's song, *3Obsa*, was released in September 2021 and quickly gained widespread popularity, amassing millions of views making

it the most-viewed Oromo protest song. As of the time of writing, the video has been viewed over 28 million times. On 29 June 2022, Yosan Getahun was awarded the *Best Rhythm Award* by the Hachalu Hundessa Foundation (HHF), established on June 17, 2021 to honor the artistic legacy of Hachalu Hundessa, whose politically charged songs had a profound impact on the contemporary Oromo movement prior to his assassination on 29 June 2020 (see Regassa, 2023). The fact that *3Obsa* has garnered millions of views shortly, along with artist Yosan Getahun winning the *Best Rhythm Award*, serves as indicators of the positive reception of this artistic work by the audience. Given the wide array of identity elements the video clip displays along with YouTube's ability to engage audiences, Yosan Getahun's *3Obsa* presents adequate opportunities for identity construction analysis, particularly utilizing multimodality lens. *3Obsa* revealed Yosan Getahun's unique musical talent and introduced *Vision Entertainment* to the Oromo music industry and music lovers.

Although the Oromo have deeply connected with songs for generations (Holcomb & Klemm, 2018; Regassa, 2023), producing and disseminating music and other literary works was challenging due to socio-economic and political factors beyond this study (see Gow, 2004). In response to these challenges, *Vision Entertainment* was founded in 2019 following the 2018 reform. *Vision Entertainment*, a media company owned by young Oromo professionals based in Addis Ababa, offers high-quality recordings, career development, and artistic support at an affordable price for up-and-coming singers specializing in Oromo music[1].

Deciphering Oromo Political Incarceration

Through analysis of *3Obsa*'s lyrics, three central themes emerged. The themes revolve around the plight of Oromo political prisoners, the importance of learning from historical ramifications concerning call for alliance and support for the war in the north, and the quest for justice about the heinous assassination of Hachalu Hundessa. These themes significantly contribute to the construction of Oromo ethnonational identity providing valuable insights into the politicohistorical backdrop of the Oromo people.

1 Click this link: https://vision-ent.com/about/ for more information about *Vision Entertainment*.

Screenshot 1: *Artist Yosan Getahun*

[8] Bulloon garmaamu tola Maa mana hidhaa oola,
Bulloo deserves frolicking on a stage,

[9] Bulloon garmaamu tola Maa mana hidhaa oola?
Why confine such beauty within a cage?

Utilizing the *bulloo* metaphor, indicated in the above verses, the artist symbolically communicates the incarceration of Oromo politicians within the context of the ongoing political crisis in Ethiopia. Studies indicate that horse –symbolized as bulloo in this study– has a unique place in the Oromo socio-cultural and political context and that the Oromo have excellent horse-riding skills (Baxter et al., 1996; Hinew, 2013). The metaphorical representation of Oromo political prisoners as a confined horse (See screenshot 2) resonates with the collective experiences of the Oromo people following the 2018 change. It symbolizes the struggle for freedom, the longing for self-expression, and the desire to break free from oppressive circumstances. By drawing on the imagery of the *bulloo*, the lyrics evoke a sense of Oromo cultural pride, emphasizing their historical connection to horses and the need to break free from *vicious circle oppression*.

Incontrovertibly the Abiy administration took amenable and promising reform activities during his early office period (Mokaddem, 2019), from freeing the media landscape and easing freedom of expression to emptying prison cells by releasing almost all political prisoners to

welcoming home the once 'terrorist organizations' (Mokaddem, 2019). In recognition of his commitments and by taking for granted these early reform activities, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee awarded Abiy Ahmed the 2019 Peace Prize (Jima, 2021).

However, long before celebrating its second anniversary, the new administration had already amassed hundreds of thousands of political prisoners back into prison centers, mainly Afaan Oromoo and Tigrigna speakers (Jalata, 2023). Consequently, during the release of the video clip under analysis, activist and political mogul Jawar Mohammed, along with his fellow OFC leaders including Bekele Garba and Hamza Borana, were in prison. However, they were subsequently released shortly after the release of this significant song. It is important to note that Jawar Mohammed has gained recognition for his instrumental role in mobilizing people towards the Oromo protest through the powerful medium of social media (Wilson et al., 2021). Hence Samuel (2022, p.48) dubbed his tech savvy as "keyboard warrior". Imprisonment of such a personality and others struggling for democratic governance and equality threatened the promised reform and endangered democratic undertakings. The utilization of the *bulloo* metaphor is mainly to describe such an incarceration of Oromo politicians. The artist portrays the situation as unjust compared to caging a horse that was supposed to freely frolic and serve its life's purposes to the fullest.

Screenshot 2: *Symbolic representation of incarceration of the Oromo*

The verses that follow demonstrate the construction of Oromo ethnonational identity through connecting it with the Oromo struggle.

[16] Hayyicha Sanyii Gootaa,
Elite of noble lineage, brave and bold,

[17] Yoo tuqan lolee isa qolachuu beekuu,
Ready to defend when foes are so cold,

[18] Maa Tuttuqani tola nurraa eegu.
Yet they tease and mock, expecting us to hold.

The above verses present an additional perspective on the construction of Oromo ethnonational identity by establishing a connection between the present generation and the esteemed Oromo ancestors known for their courage and greatness. Particularly, these verses link the 2014-2018 Oromo protest, which exhibited a remarkable level of Oromo resilience. They emphasize that the Oromo possess moral and courageous virtues, enabling them to resist extreme oppression. This sentiment aligns with the historical reality of the Oromo struggle, where they have consistently rejected oppression and demonstrated unwavering determination. Notably, the Oromo's indomitable spirit was vividly showcased during the Oromo protest, which ultimately led to the downfall of the TPLF/EPRDF regime in 2018.

Non-alliance as a strategic tool in ethnonational construction

The construction of Oromo ethnonationalism through lyrical analysis incorporates a style that intertwines with a retrospective examination of historical alliances the Oromo formed during the resistance against the military unitarist system back in the 1980s and 1990s. This lyrical expression reflects a thoughtful assessment of past alliance and its profound impact on the Oromo struggle. An illustrative excerpt is presented below:

[25] Reebicha Dibbee sirba Kaabaa
Drums beat war's call in the northern land,

[26] Faana raagaduun kuni madaa nuu qaba
We shun their charms, refusing to take a stand.

[27] Shishi girrise marxifatee kaabbaa
Cloaked in overcoats, their dance they sway,

[28] Maaliin na firooma waanbadeen kaabaa?
But what kinship with these gangsters may we display?

[29] Dhaaba kallattin gama lachuu beekna
We're well aware of both sides, that much is clear,

[30] Nuuf ta'u jenne jara akkamiin amanna
But trusting their allegiance to our cause, we must fear.

It is essential to note that the release of the video clip coincided with a period of rallying Ethiopians from diverse ethnic backgrounds to unite against the TPLF in support of the federal government and other regional administrations such as Afar and Amhara. In response to this call for mobilization, the artist urges the Oromo people to consciously examine the situation, particularly by linking it to the consequences of past alliances between the Oromo and non-Oromo ethnic-based fighting groups, which aimed to overthrow the Derg regime.

Through the aforementioned verses, the artist aims to bring the significance of Oromo's past alliance with the TPLF to the forefront. This alliance ultimately led to severe violations of Oromo rights after the TPLF faction gained power and established EPRDF—a coalition party that claimed to represent four major ethnic groups but effectively allowed the TPLF to control and monopolize military and economic power (see Hassen, 2002). Line [28] emphasizes the absence of a shared cause between the Oromo and the warring groups in the north which the artist differentiates using words such as *kinship* and *gangsters* demonstrating non-alliance of the Oromo. Lines [29] and [30] further reinforce this non-alliance stance by substantiating the lack of trustworthiness of any of the warring groups, including the federal government and the TPLF—demonstrating retrospective examination of the experiences of the Oromo during the 27 years under TPLF rule, as well as since 2018 under the current government (Samuel, 2022).

The existing scholarly literature provides compelling evidence supporting the perception of betrayal of the Oromo by the TPLF-led EPRDF and the EPP-led government alike. It underscores the lack of trustworthiness exhibited by the EPP (Tronvoll, 2022; Zaragoza, 2022), akin to

the demonstrated unreliability and mischief of the TPLF, as exemplified by their denial of the OLF following the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991 (Hassen, 2002), and the EPP's conduct after the overthrow of the TPLF-EPRDF (Feldwick-jones, 2023). This parallel demonstrates the shared disloyalty towards the people thereby advocating for a united struggle and emphasizing the need for the Oromo people to strive for genuine democracy and liberty.

Quest for retribution

In the analysis of the lyrics, an additional thematic element that emerges is the notion of retribution, which the artist skillfully employs to highlight the need to seeking justice and redressing the appalling assassination of the renowned young Oromo artist, Hachalu Hundessa. Hachalu Hundessa's artistic contributions have played a significant role in fostering awareness and mobilizing the *Qeerroo* in the struggle against oppression over the past decade or so. The subsequent lyrics emphasize the urgency of demanding retribution and ensuring the perpetrators are held accountable.

[31] Goota dhabanii callifachuun ooda
To stay silent upon a hero's loss is a shame,

[32] Dhiiga marartuu sana nuu barbaadaa
Find justice for the blood of that beloved hero's name.

[33] Geeraruu male an akkamiin cooku
I sing geerarsa, how come I yell!

[34] Haa bahu gumaan ilma dhugaa beekuu (x4)
Justice be served for the truthful son, we compel.

As evident in the aforementioned verses, Yosan Getahun passionately urges the Oromo people to actively seek justice for the tragic loss of their revered hero, artist Hachalu Hundessa. The artist emphasizes the urgent need to bring retribution for the innocent blood that was shed, highlighting the fact that the true culprits responsible for this heinous act have not yet been identified nor faced justice. This absence of justice and accountability is regarded by the artist as a source of great shame, not only for the Oromo people but also for justice loving society as a whole, as referenced

in [32] and [34]. Furthermore, line [33] alludes to the significance of *geerarsa* performances in the construction of Oromo identity. *Geerarsa*, a cultural song form, serves as a means through which the Oromo portrays their social, cultural, or national identity (see Garbii, 2018; Tasfayee et al., 2023; Tolesa, 1990). It allows them to honor the bravery of their clan members while also serving as a platform to voice their discontent with societal issues such as the failure to attain justice or seek retribution for the loss of innocent lives as in the case discussed herewith.

Social media facilitates the use of different identity construction markers and symbols. Different social, cultural, or religious groups utilize social media affordances to construct and present their preferred identities. We need to consider how people construct their social media identity by looking at what they choose to wear. For example, a netnography study by Kavakci and Kraeplin (2017) demonstrates that *hijabista*—the head covering scarf worn by Muslim women—is utilized to construct fashionable self-identity, nullifying the association of wearing hijab as uncivilized in the Western world. Another study exhibits cultural clothing or attire as a critical symbolic identity marker or constructor (Akinci, 2020).

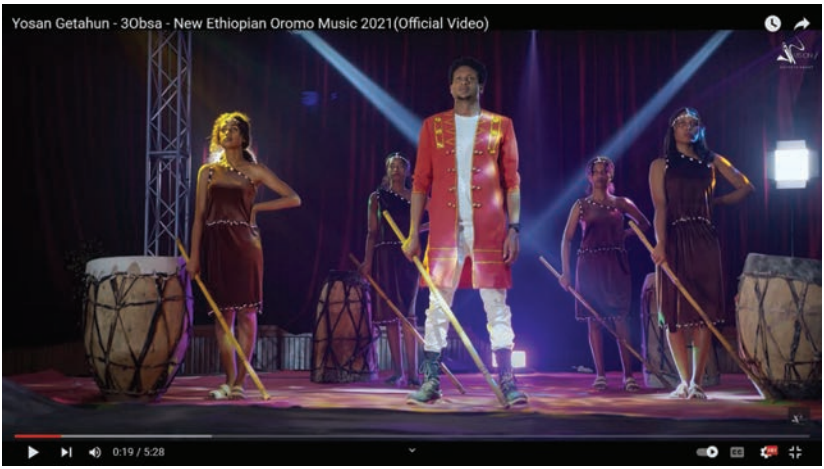
The subsequent analysis will delve into the intricate process of identity construction, specifically examining the role of attire in shaping the Oromo ethnonational identity. The focus will be directed towards the Oromo identity marking clothes showcased in the *3Obsa* video clip.

Attire as Oromo identity construction praxis

I want to clarify here that the analysis of this portion should not be taken independently as standing alone but as complementary to the analysis of other modes. Over the past decade, Oromo traditional attire has moved beyond *cultural* to become *political*[2]. These Oromo tradition attire could be designed and fashioned differently based on individuals' preference, but this does not reduce or change its value so long as it carries, for example, symbols belonging to the Oromo such as the *odaa*—sycamore tree and Abbaa Gadaa colors specifically *black*, *white*, and *red* colors, or alternatively colors identified as flag of OLF—*red-green-red* color combinations, etc. (Einashe, 2016).

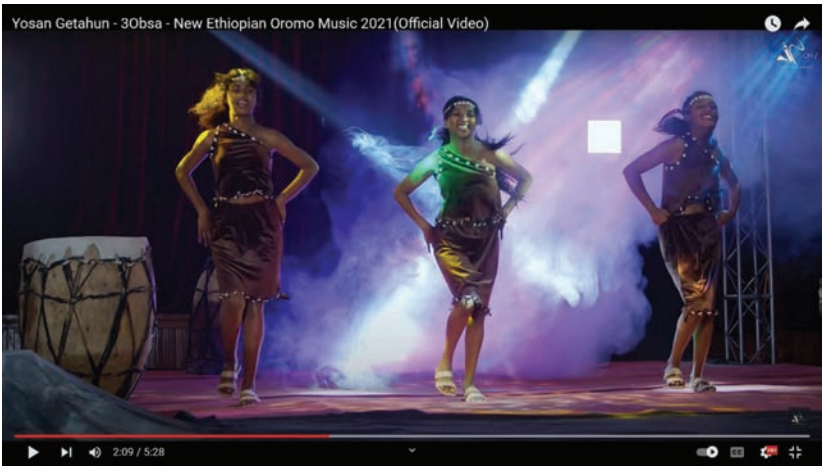
2 https://www.amplifyafrica.org/how-clothes-display-growing-ethnic-pride-for-oromos/ (Accessed on 10 May 2023)

Under this section, I will thoroughly examine the praxis of Oromo attire contributing to the construction of the Oromo ethnonational identity. This examination will complement the exploration of other modes, such as the lyrics discussed earlier and other emerging modes specifically in relation to user comments, which I will address later. By delving into the significance of attire, I aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how it intertwines with other elements to shape and reinforce the Oromo cultural identity.



Screenshot 3: *Semiotic representation of Oromo identity*

The visual representation depicted in the provided screenshot encompasses a diverse array of modes, offering a rich tapestry for multifaceted analysis aligned with specific research objectives or questions. Within the scope of this study, the focal point shall be directed towards the examination of attire and its significant role in the construction of the Oromo ethnonational identity. By delving into the intricate significance of attire, a comprehensive understanding will be sought, elucidating its interplay with other elements, and the subsequent influence on the shaping and reinforcement of the Oromo cultural identity.



Screenshot 4: *Attire as identity formation*

In this analysis, I posit that the Oromo attire donned by the background artists (choirs) in the video clip signifies a purposeful and informed decision made by the artist (See Screenshots 3 and 4). The deliberate curation and selection of each element displayed, including the attire, demonstrates a conscious effort to represent Oromo dressing culture and construct the Oromo ethnonational identity. Supporting this notion, Klemm (2021) emphasizes the significance of dressing choices and practices among the Oromo people as a means of cultural expression and identity formation. Therefore, the attire showcased in the screenshot is not only a deliberate choice but also an embodiment of the distinct Oromo culture and identity.

Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge the profound impact of the intentional use of the *Orooroo*—bamboo stick by the Oromoo artists depicted in the screenshot. Paired with their resolute expressions, this symbolic representation conveys a compelling message. It underscores the urgent imperative for the Oromo people to confront and resist oppression, particularly in relation to the need for retribution and end the unjust incarceration of Oromo individuals. Beyond instilling courage and audacity within individuals, this symbolic representation aims to mobilize collective action, urging the Oromo population to rise against injustice, assert their rights, and strive for a more equitable future.

Screenshot 5: *Simian fur as Oromo identity construct*

Moreover, the presence of simian fur in the video clip, specifically highlighted in screenshot 5, holds significant cultural significance within the Oromo people. This practice, rooted in Oromo traditions (Klemm, 2021), represents heroism and bravery, serving as a tangible symbol of Oromo ethnonational identity. Wearing animal skin or fur has long been observed among the Oromo people, a tradition that may also exist in other indigenous societies worldwide. Interestingly, in certain instances, it was considered a prerequisite for young Oromo men to wear such fur as a demonstration of their eligibility for marriage (Triulzi & Bitima, 1996).

The act of adorning oneself with furry animal skin by *foollee*, a Gadaa grade responsible for defense (Hinew, 2013; Kelbessa, 2013), establishes a connection between the Oromo and their ancestral heritage. This cultural practice plays a crucial role in the construction and preservation of Oromo ethnonational identity.

Screenshot 6: *Abbaa Gadaa attire as identity construct*

An additional crucial aspect to consider regarding the attire featured in the video clip is the one showcased in screenshot 6. This particular attire holds immense significance as it serves as a powerful representation of identity, intricately linking the Oromo people to their rich cultural heritage and the esteemed Gadaa system—an indigenous sociopolitical governance framework invented by the Oromo long before Western democracy emerged (Aman, 2020). Adorned with the colors black, red, and white, this attire not only contributes to the construction of Oromo ethnonational identity but also signifies the Oromo's aspirations for a democratic rule firmly rooted in the principles of the Gadaa system.

User comments as identity constructs

Screenshot 7: *User comment 1*

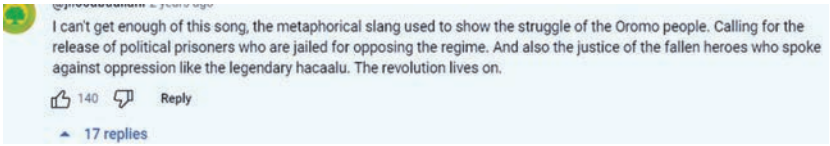
The user comment, provided in the screenshot (7) above, transcends the realm of mere music, transforming the song into what has been

described as "A Book 📖 ‼️" — a profound compilation encompassing various topical issues relevant to the Oromo people. These issues include "O-resistances and movements," "O-political prisoners," and the "inevitable O-Revolution." Notably, each of these phrases commences with the capital letter "O," symbolically representing the Oromo nation itself and serving as another means of constructing the Oromo ethnonational identity. These phrases epitomize the interpreter's understanding and perception of the themes addressed in the song, while the exclamation marks denote their unwavering conviction. Furthermore, artist Yosan is hailed as "A True Son of the Nation," with the term "nation" embodying the Oromo's collective or ethnonational identity. Screenshot 8 below also echoes the idea reflected in screenshot 7 above in that the two places the protest song or the video clip beyond just a music.

On the other hand, screenshot (7) elicited an approximate count of two hundred reactions (likes), while screenshot (8) below garnered nearly a thousand reactions or likes. These numerical figures serve as a testament to the widespread dissemination of the ideas reflected by the users resonates within a substantial audience. Notably, the user comments reflected in the screenshots underscore the audience's perception that the song deeply connects with the Oromo cause. Screenshot (8) described the video clip as a "secret language and mind of the Oromo people." This characterization further emphasizes the profound impact and significance of the song in establishing the song's construction of the Oromo nation's identity.

Screenshot 8: *User comment 2*

In a similar vein, resonating with the previous analysis and discourse surrounding the theme of retribution, the ensuing screenshot (9) presents a video clip that offers a critique of the ongoing imprisonment of the Oromo community within a regime that purports to align with or represent their interests. The video clip explicitly calls for the release of all political prisoners, shedding light on the audience's perception that the song advocates for retribution in honor of not only Hachalu Hundessa but also all the fallen heroes and heroines who fearlessly championed the cause of the oppressed against the oppressors.

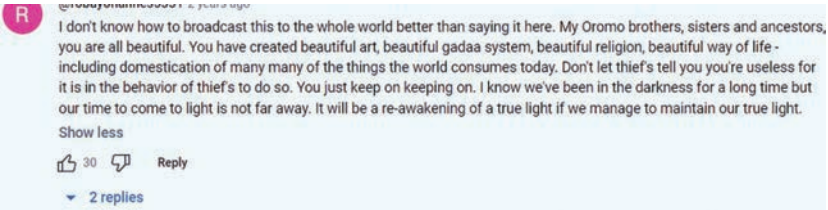


Screenshot 9: *User comment 3*

Furthermore, an additional endorsement that validates the video clip's contribution to the construction of Oromo identity is presented in the accompanying screenshot (10). The user's reaction in the screenshot exemplifies various elements of Oromo ethnonational identity construction. Through their language, the user establishes a sense of kinship and connection by addressing fellow Oromo individuals as "My Oromo brothers, sisters, and ancestors." The user emphasizes the Oromo's accomplishments, highlighting the creation of the remarkable *gadaa* system and a distinctive way of life, which includes the domestication of many food sources consumed globally today (see Houston, 1926).

The user's perspective also encompasses a recognition of the historical struggles faced by the Oromo, symbolized by the metaphorical reference to emerging from darkness into light. This alludes to the generations of oppressive regimes that the Oromo people have endured. The user emphasizes the imperative for unity around a collective cause, specifically the liberation of the Oromo. Moreover, the user's compliment, "*Don't let the thief's tell you you're useless, for it is the behavior of thieves to do so,*" reflects that the Oromo have been unjustly marginalized and belittled (see Mollenhauer, 2011). Scholars, working to tarnish the image of the Oromo and conceal their rightful cause and achievements from the rest of the world, have propagated the notion that the Oromo lack a significant history to offer (see Jalata, 1996). By highlighting these sentiments,

the user not only reinforces the Oromo ethnonational identity but also exposes the attempts to undermine and suppress the Oromo narrative and achievements.



Screenshot 10: *User comment 4*

Emojis as identity construction medium

Since its official entrance into the English dictionary in 2015, Emoji has been widely used globally mainly to communicate emotions. Throughout these periods, different Emojis were used for representation and construction of identities across various socio-cultural groups. Studies indicate that the same Emojis do not construct the same identity and they convey different stand for different social contexts (Maryam et al., 2020). The authors, for example, elaborate that the red heart Emoji (❤️) is used differently to express varying emotions across English speaking countries. This indicates that Emojis do not have a universally accepted representation nor construct *a-one-for-all* identity as that differs based on contexts of their use. Studying Emojis or the interplay between texts and Emojis could easily be done by looking at social media reactions (Tian et al., 2017).

I observed excessive Emojis use in the video clip's comments sections. These Emojis offer different contextual representation and identity representation in the Oromo socio-cultural and political setups. In most cases, these Emojis are coupled or tripled in their usage to construct the Oromo ethnonational identity. For instance, in screenshots (8) and (11), triple Emojis were used at the end of each text. In different cultural groups or contexts, the three or triple Emojis might represent different identity or even might not have any representation at all. Within the context of the video clip under analysis and Oromo sociopolitical and cultural setting, the red heart-green sycamore tree-red heart (❤️🌳❤️) Emojis represent an OLF flag—a group claiming to fight to free Oromo and Oromia. Conventionally, flag is a representation of sovereignty of a nation.

In their current context use, however, it seems that these Emojis stand for an aspiration to see a free or independent Oromia. The act of raising a flag that deviates from the conventional one serves as a symbol of a group's desire for sovereignty, and such a flag conveys the unique identity of the group that has chosen to raise it (Prinsen et al., 2017).

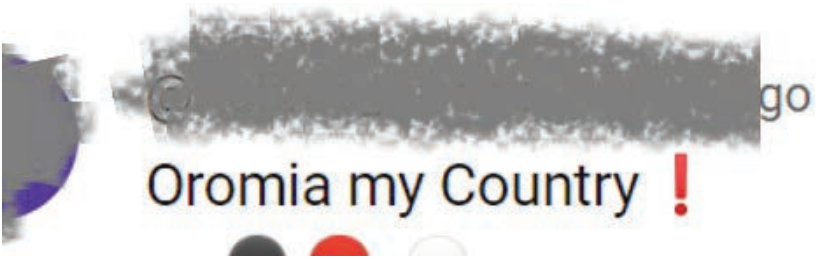
Subsequently, it is important to examine the ensuing instances of Emojis screenshots from the user comment section.

Screenshot 11: *Combined Emojis as identity constructs*

It is worthy to note that in the context of this study the shape of the Emojis does not matter as much as the color and the order in which they appear. Regardless of their shape, combined red-green-red Emojis have been utilized in the comment section. For instance, screenshot (11) showcases red heart-green sycamore tree-red heart Emojis (❤️🌳❤️) and red-green-red combination of squared Emojis (🟥🟩🟥) both standing for similar representation—collective Oromo identity as discussed earlier.

Likewise, the combination of black-red-white heart shaped Emojis (🖤❤️🤍) (see screenshot 11 (B) above and screenshot 12 below) represent the official Abbaa Gadaa colors that identify and connect the Oromo people to the Gadaa system that unites the Oromo as one nation. The use of a combination of Emojis having different shapes and colors discussed so far represents and identifies the Oromo as a distinct nation. This compelling evidence unequivocally showcases the intersection between the video clip and the users' YouTube comment section, effectively contributing to the construction of the Oromo ethnonational identity. I perceive

this representation as a manifestation of *dual identification* within the Oromo community.



Screenshot 12: *Combined Emojis representing Abbaa Gadaa*

The incorporation of red-green-red color Emojis serves as a significant indicator of the Oromo community's active involvement in the relentless pursuit of liberation and self-governance. This endeavor encompasses not only the quest for self-determination but also the determined response to the Pan-Ethiopian movement, which lacks recognition for diverse cultures and identities. Moreover, the utilization of black-red-white Emojis also symbolizes the aspirations for reviving the Gadaa system, an egalitarian and democratic mode of governance deeply rooted in Oromo heritage.

Conclusions

The intricate and diverse nature of identity construction has been a topic of great interest among scholars for years. Employing a multimodal discourse analysis, this paper has illustrated the construction and representation of Oromo ethnonational identity through diverse semiotic modes, incorporated within a protest music on YouTube space. The article also highlights the use of lyrics, clothing, and Emojis as tools for articulating and representing Oromo ethnonational identity. The amalgamation of diverse semiotic modes has facilitated a profound comprehension of the intricate mechanisms involved in the Oromo identity construction through diverse communication mediums. This paper contributes to existing literature by examining the construction and representation of Oromo ethnonational identity using a multimodal approach, which has demonstrated how this approach can enhance our understanding of how identities are formed through various modes of communication. The methodology has facilitated a thorough comprehension of the

complex procedure of identity construction and portrayal within the Oromo populace through investigating various semiotic modalities. The findings of this study demonstrate that a multimodal approach to ethnic identity construction and particularly of the Oromo ethnonational identity construction can enhance our understanding of the complex mechanisms involved. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of considering diverse semiotic modes in analyzing ethnic identity, which can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the process of specifically ethnonational identity construction. By illustrating how diverse modes of communication packed in a protest music on YouTube platform through examination of Emojis, audience comments, and attire this article articulates the construction of ethnonational identity and underscores the importance of a multimodal approach in enhancing our understanding of identity construction of the Oromo nation in east Africa.

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The Necessity of the Rebirth of Sovereign and Democratic Oromia

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Introduction

The Oromo people have shared history, culture, identity, collective grievances, and political aspirations. As one of the largest national groups in the Ethiopian Empire, Africa, and the world, and having rich economic and human resources, it is paradoxical that the Oromo nation does not have a sovereign state to protect it from internal and external enemies. Today, out of 193 countries, only twenty-two have more populations than the Oromo nation, estimated at half of the 120 million people in the Ethiopian Empire. New countries are still emerging in the world, and since 1990, thirty-six new countries have been born,[1] and ten more countries may emerge soon.[2] This paper provides historical, cultural, political, moral, and legal reasons why the Oromo nation must intensify its national struggle to recreate a sovereign and democratic Oromia as other liberated and liberating countries and be a member of the United Nations.

The piece focuses on five central issues. First, concerning the Oromo question, it briefly provides some historical and theoretical perspectives

1 See https://www.thoughtco.com/new-countries-of-the-world-1433444, accessed on 07/04/2022.

2 These entities are Catalonia, Flemish Republic, Veneto, Scotland, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, New Russia, West Papua, and Somaliland. See https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-next-10-countries-the-world-s-most-likely-new-nations.html, accessed on 07/04/2022.

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 37 7/15/2024 4:15:25 PM

on the modern nation-state and the interstate system in the capitalist world system. Second, the paper demonstrates that, before its colonization, Oromia had its unique civilization and sovereign democratic state, which the Oromo people enjoyed until the mid-nineteenth century. Third, it also explains how the Oromo have suffered politically, economically, culturally, psychologically, and socially for about 150 years. Fourth, recognizing the significance of ideology and worldview, the paper compares *Ethiopianism* and *Oromummaa* and explains why an Ethiopianized Oromo class has defended the Ethiopian Empire at the cost of the Oromo national interest, identity, history, and culture. Finally, the piece provides reasons for applying the principles of the United Nations and international law to determine Oromia's national destiny.

The Modern Nation-State: Historical and Theoretical Considerations

Large-scale and long-term social changes since the sixteenth century, with the development of capitalism as the modern world system, necessitated the invention of political structures, which have become nation-states and interstate or international systems. Nation-states have become the basic units of political organizations in the capitalist world system. They have established themselves as international systems through trade, colonization, imperialism, and global political and economic institutions. After WW II, the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund have buttressed the international system.

Each nation-state theoretically claims that it governs a nation or a people with a common identity based on factors such as language, cultural practices, institutions, historical experiences, and interests. Theoretically, the nation-states have created the ideas of citizenship, a uniform system of law, and legal equality, but practically practiced colonialism, racial slavery, segregation, dehumanization, and exploitation of the peoples they have considered different from those who have controlled the political economies in these states and beyond (Jalata, 2001).

The Oromo people were almost outside of the capitalist world system until the last decades of the nineteenth century, when they were colonized by the alliance of European imperialism, Abyssinian colonialism, and an Oromo collaborative class, which sided with the enemies of the Oromo people for their individual and group interests (Jalata, 1993/2005). Before their colonization, the Oromo people had an

egalitarian political and economic system known as the *gadaa/siiqqee* system and their sovereign and democratic state (Jalata and Schaffer, 2013). Currently, Oromo nationalists are organized to mobilize and empower their people to liberate themselves and to inform the world community about the necessity of the rebirth of the sovereign, democratic Oromia state.

Before the sixteenth century, when capitalism developed in Western Europe and expanded to different continents, there were about sixteen known ancient civilizations or cultures[3] and a few countries worldwide. Starting from the sixteenth century, Portugal, Spain, Great Britain, France, and Holland mainly developed their nation-states with the development of capitalism and began to expand their colonial territories (Jalata, 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Shannon, 1996).

The Oromo people were sovereign and democratic until the mid-nineteenth century (Baissa, 2004). But they were enslaved and colonized for almost one and a half-century and have become the colonial subjects of Habashas or Ethiopians starting in the last decades of the nineteenth century (Melba, 1980; Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990; Jalata, 1993). The Abyssinian/Ethiopian colonial state and its agents have controlled almost all Oromo resources, including land and human resources, through violence, genocide, cultural destruction, and the control of the

3 There were 16 know oldest or ancient civilizations or cultures around the world: The Incan civilization (1438 A.D-1532 A.D.), the Azetic civilization (1325 A.D.-1521 A.D.), the Roman civilization (753 B.C.-476 A.D), the Persian civilization (550 B.C.-331 B.C.), the Ancient Greek civilization (2700 B.C.-479 B.C.), the Chinese civilization (1600 B.C.-1046 B.C.), the Mayan civilization (2600 B.C.-900 A.D.), the ancient Egyptian civilization (3150 B.C.-30 B.C), the Norte Chico civilization (in Peru) (3000 B.C.-1800 B.C), the Danubian culture (Lower Danub Valley and the Balkan Hills) 5500 B.C.-3500 B.C.), the Mesopotamian civilization (6500 B.C.-539 B.C.), the Indus civilization, around the Indus River, (2600 B.C.-1900 B.C.), the Jiahu culture(in China), 7000 B.C-5700 B.C.), Ayn Ghazal (in Jordan), 7200 B.C.-5000 B.C.), the Çatalhöyük Settlement (in Turkey), 7500 B.C.-5700 B.C.), and the Indigenous Australians, 50,000 B.C.-today. Jana Louise Smit, "Ancient Civilizations Timeline: 16 Oldest Known Cultures From Around The World", History Cooperative, December 15, 2019, https://historycooperative.org/ancient-civilizations/. Accessed June 16, 2022

Oromo minds by imposing *Ethiopianism*[4] through auto-oppression and self-rejection (Jalata, 1993/2005; 2016).

Historical *Biyya Oromoo* (the Oromo Country)

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, when they intensified their territorial recovery through the *butta* wars, many Oromo branches were under one *gadaa* government (Jalata, 2019)). The g*adaa* system empowered the Oromo people politically and militarily to recover their lost territories and communities and accommodate their increased population and stock (Legesse, 1973). The Oromo fought twelve *butta* wars between 1522 and 1618, recovering and reestablishing the Oromo country called Oromia today (Ta'a, 1986). According to *The Oromos: Voice against Tyranny* (1971: 12-13), "the sixteenth century's so-called [Oromo] invasion was neither an invasion nor a migration. Instead, it was a national movement of the Oromo people incited by the southern Oromos and supported by the northern Oromos under the domination of the Abyssinians with the specific goal of liberating themselves and their territories from colonial domination."

Until the alliance of the Abyssinian warlords and European imperialists, which resulted in colonization during the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Oromo people were sovereign, democratic, and free people (Melba, 1980; Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990; Jalata, 1993). As Virginia Luling (1965: 191) notes, "from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the [Oromo] were dominant on their territories; no people of other cultures were in a position to exercise compulsion over them." Until the mid-seventeenth century, all Oromo branches lived under one *gadaa*[5] government and later built a confederation by establishing the *Gadaa* Republic of Oromia (Baissa, 2004: 101).

4 Ethiopianism is an Habasha/Abyssinian/Ethiopian ideology that justifies Ethiopian colonialism, racism, and the perpetual subordination of the Oromo and other colonized peoples to the *nafxanya* class and its state that dominates the bureaucracy, the army, culture, and and the Ethiopian colonial political economy.

5 The concept *Gada* has three related meanings: it is the grade during which a class of people is in power by having politico-ritual leadership; it is period of eight years during which elected officials take power from the previous ones; and it is the institution of Oromo society.

After the mid-seventeenth century, different Oromo groups started to have autonomous *gadaa* governments (Baissa, 2004; Jalata, 2005a). However, various Oromo branches and their autonomous local governments formed alliances, federations, and confederations to maintain political and cultural solidarity and defend their security and interest from their common enemies (Bulcha, 1996: 50; Etefa, 2008). The *gadaa* system had the principles of checks and balances (such as periodic transference of power every eight years and division of power among the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches), balanced opposition (among five *gadaa* grades[6]), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots. The system has accepted the Oromo people as the ultimate source of authority, and nobody was above the rule of law.

All *gadaa* officials were selected/elected by established criteria[7] from the *qondala* grade and receive rigorous training in *gadaa* philosophy and governance for eight years to enter the *luba* grade (administrative grade). The main criteria for selection/election to office included bravery, cultural knowledge, honesty, demonstrated ability, etc. *Gadaa,* as an integrative social and political system, organized male Oromos according to *hirya* (age sets) and *luba* (generation sets) for social, political, and economic purposes. The *gadaa* and *siiqqee*[8] institutions influenced the Oromo value system in pre-colonial Oromo society. During this period, Oromo women had the *siiqqee* institution, a parallel institution to the *gadaa* system that "functioned hand in hand with *gadaa* [sic] system as one of its built-in mechanisms of checks and balances" (Kumsa, 1997: 119).

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the sovereign Oromo people were also administered by the *gadaa* government and independent *mooti* states (kingdoms) in Wallo, Gibe states, Leqa-Naqamte, and Leqa-Qellem (Abir, 1965; Lewis, 1965). These autocratic and hereditary chiefs emerged by overthrowing democratically elected leaders because of the external influence and the internal weakness of the *gadaa* system after its decentralization. Under *gadaa*, the Oromo established the rule

6 For example, these five grades are called *itimako, daballe, folle, doroma/qondala*, and *luba* in central Oromia.

7 We need to further investigate more in depth how the selection process was conducted to have a better understanding.

8 *Siiqqee* was a woman institution, which functioned parallel to the *Gada* system to protect the rights of Oromo women in pre-colonial Oromia.

of law and promoted social equality, justice, and democracy. Specifically, the design of *gadaa* as a social and political institution worked to prevent exploitation and political domination.

Consequently, under the *gadaa/siiqqee* system, Oromo society enjoyed peace, stability, and political sovereignty. The Oromo had a glorious history and practiced democratic governance (Jalata, 2019), which the colonial government outlawed and suppressed (Jalata, 1996). As *The Oromos: Voice against Tyranny* (1971: 9) notes, the Oromo settled in their Oromo country before "the so-called Sabeans crossed the Red Sea and started settling on the East African Coast." The hostile relationship between Oromos and Amharas began twelve hundred years ago, and most Oromos had successfully defended themselves for many centuries from their enemies (The Oromos. 1971). Sociologist Mekuria Bulcha (2011: 221-222) argues that "the Gaalaan and the Amhara were fighting in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. The Gaalaan, who the Tulama Oromo considers as *angafa* (the senior *gosa* or the firstborn), is numerically the largest Oromo *gosa* [clan] cluster." He considers the northern Shawan plateau the ancient country of the Oromo nation and refutes the claims that the Oromo came to Oromia from another place.

Furthermore, Mekuria characterizes the Shawan plateau as the "*cradle of Oromo civilization and springboard for Amhara expansion"* to the Oromo country. But other sources consider Odaa Mormor (the Blue Nile)[9] the first place where the first *gadaa* assembly occurred in the fifth century A. D. before other *gadaa* centers (Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2006: 74). How did the Abyssinian (Habasha-Amhara) colonize Oromo society, which was free and independent? How did/does this colonization affect the Oromo people?

Colonial Terrorism, Repression, and Unfreedoms

The alliance of European imperialism, Ethiopian colonialism, and an Amharaized/ Ethiopianized Oromo collaborative class ended the existence of the sovereign Oromia (Jalata, 2008). Abyssinian warlords established

9 Abaya or Mormor was the original center of *Abbaa Gadaa*, the president of the Oromo parliament, *caffee*, and the center of *Abbaa Muuda*, the leader of the Oromo indigenous religion known as *Waaqeefannaa* until it moved to Odaa Nabee (near Finfinnee) in the fifth century A.D (Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2006: 74).

strong relationships with European institutions and governments in the nineteenth century (Harris, 1844; Hassen, 1981). Orthodox Christianity created a bridge between European imperialism and Ethiopian colonialism as a religion and state ideology. It also helped Amhara warlords create the Amharaized/Ethiopianized Oromo collaborative class, which played an essential role in the colonization of Oromia.

However, the alliance with European powers was the primary factor in strengthening the Abyssinians militarily to colonize Oromia. For instance, around 1840, the British and French governments supplied Sahle Selassie, Menelik's grandfather, with firearms "so that he could spread the seeds of civilization [i.e., Christianity] among the [Oromos]" (Isenberg and Krapf, 1968: 251). European missionaries, explorers, and merchants convinced their respective governments to support the Abyssinians/Ethiopians against the Oromo and others that they considered "pagan" and "savage."[10] Between 1855 and 1868, under the leadership of Tewodros, the Amhara fighters started campaigns to colonize and convert the Wallo and Yejju Oromos to Orthodox Christianity or expel or exterminate them (Crummey, 1971: 107-125). Before this period, Wallo, Yejju, Azabo, and Raya Oromos had accepted Islam "as a bulwark against being swamped by Abyssinian nationalism" (Trimingham, 1965: 100).

The Habasha rulers have feared Islam and the Oromo since the sixteenth century, "and the thought of the two in combination has been their recurring nightmare" (Baxter, 1978: 285). Tewodros mobilized the Amhara fighters against the Oromos by reintroducing the fear of the Oromo and Islam (Abir, 1968) and defeated the Yejju Oromo dynasty of Ras Ali II in 1853; then, he concentrated on the de-Oromoization of Wallo by imposing terrorism, mutilation, and killing starting in 1855 (Crummey, 1971: 107-125). He also exterminated the Tulama Oromos living between Dabra Berhan and Angolala (Crummey, 1971: 107-125). Despite his barbaric campaigns and the attempt to deport the Wallo Oromo *en masse* to western Abyssinia, Tewodros failed to control them effectively (Crummey, 1971: 107-125).

10 Using weapons that these government provided, Sahle Selassie's forces made 84 raids in one year against the Tulama Oromo; in one raid, his forces massacred about 4,500 persons, looted some 43,000 animals, and enslaved more than 1,000 Oromos, but whenever the Ethiopians established their settlements among the Tulama Oromo, the Oromo collectively chased the settlers away or killed them.

In his letter to Queen Victoria of England, Tewodros boastfully stated: "My fathers, the emperors, having forgotten the creator, He handed over their kingdom to the [Oromos] and Turks. But God created me, lifted me out of the dust, and restored this empire to my rule. He endowed me with power and enabled me to stand in the place of my fathers. By this power, I drove away the [Oromos]. As for the Turks, I have told them to leave the land of my ancestors" (Cited in Greenfield and Hassen, 1980: 8). When the British ignored his letter, Tewodros mistreated and imprisoned British diplomats. Great Britain sent an expeditionary force to release the hostages, and Yohannes of Tigray provided logistic assistance. Surrounded in 1968 by the British expeditionary force and near defeat, Tewodros released other prisoners and expressed his hatred for the Oromos by massacring 1,000 Oromo captives (Waldhaansso, 1979: 19-20).

Then he committed suicide, and his dream of unifying Abyssinia proper (Rubenson, 1976: 173) and colonizing the Oromo people failed. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Yohannes IV of Tigray and the Amhara king, Menelik II, allied with rival European powers to centralize their political power and expand their territories by participating in "the scramble for Africa." When the rivals— Britain, France, Russia, and Italy— sought alliances with the Abyssinian warlords to obtain jumping-off places in the Horn of Africa, Yohannes and Menelik, with the assistance of these imperialist powers, started to lay the foundations of the Abyssinian/Ethiopian central state administration.[11]

Yohannes obtained rewards of military technology and army expertise for helping the British eliminate Tewodros opened a new opportunity for Yohannes. He became the emperor of Abyssinia in 1872. He reigned as emperor until 1889 and came into conflict with the

11 The two warlords had earlier established a base for cooperation. Yohannes and Menelik started their alliance by helping the British to destroy their stronger rival, Tewodros. Tewodros of Amhara, who tried to centralize Ethiopia politically, was unsuccessful because of the lack of "both resources and experience needed to handle the European powers properly." Yohannes and Menelik learned much from his failure. Although Menelik agreed, the British expedition had to eliminate Tewodros, it was Yohannes who played an important role in cooperating with this force because of the proximity of his geopolitical center, Tigray. Although Britain could have colonized Ethiopia, it instead left the region after the destruction of Tewodros' power base and his suicide.

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 44 7/15/2024 4:15:26 PM

Mahdist state of Sudan and the Italians who had occupied the Red Sea basin. Due to the geographic location of his political center, Yohannes was put under severe external political pressure: The Italians were expanding their territory from the Red Sea coast to Tigray and allying and consolidating Menelik in Shawa. At the same time, the Mahdists were penetrating Abyssinia through Gondar. As the British expedition removed Tewodros from power, the Mahdists killed Yohannes in 1889 and developed an equal political opportunity for Menelik, who transferred the center of power from Tigray to Shawa (Caulk, 1971: 23-420.

By allying with the European imperialists, Menelik successfully strengthened his Shawan administration. The French, Italians, and British continuously supplied Menelik with various weapons, ammunition, and the technical expertise necessary for his administration (Darkwah 1975: 205). "The French armed his troops with firearms and [helped in organizing] his campaigns . . . The [Oromo were] thus conquered by the Habasha [Ethiopians]" (The Early Lytton, 1975: 205). With the Oromo economic and human resources, Menelik "rewarded his generals, paid his soldiers, and bought, first from the French and then from the Italians, huge supplies of arms and ammunition wherewith to equip his ever-growing armies" (Murray, 1922: 36). These resources were initially obtained through raiding, property confiscation, enslavement, control of trade routes and marketplaces, and tribute collection and exported to European markets. "To obtain the necessary finances," Harold Marcus (1975: 44) says, "Menelik and his advisors decided to organize a caravan to carry various . . . products to the coast for transshipment to Europe."

In a letter to European powers, Menelik expressed his intention to participate in the scramble for Africa: "I have no intention of being an indifferent spectator if far distant Powers make their appearance with the idea of dividing Africa" (Quoted in Skinner, 1906: 145). Using European military advisers and firearms, the invading Ethiopian army defeated the Oromo people between 1868 and 1900 and then organized an occupying force that ruled Oromia and its people.[12] According to Marcus (1975: 64-65), Menelik organized expedition forces "during times of

12 Menelik first colonized the Oromo regions bordering on Manz (Shawa). The Wallo Oromo kingdoms were conquered between 1868 and 1876. At roughly the same time, Menelik's army colonized the Liban Oromo. The Gulale, Yaha, Wachbacha, Bamici, and Mettaa Oromos came under Ethiopian control in 1878.

famine when numerous refugees went along to settle in newly conquered lands with the soldiers who stayed behind to garrison the fortified villages (katamas) erected as control points."

Menelik also used Oromo mercenaries and collaborators to colonize Oromia. Through his Ethiopianized Oromo general, Gobana Daacee, Menelik made some Oromo leaders, such as the Jimma and Wallaga kings, submit to Ethiopian rule. Mohammed Hassen (1981: 11) asserts that Gobana "was born into a Christian Oromo family, where the policy of forced Amharization weighed heavily, permeating the whole atmosphere, affecting the family, their psychological attitudes and their whole manner of life." Although Gobana was bilingual (speaking *Afaan Oromo* and Amharic), he preferred to speak in Amharic (Hassen, 1981: 6). In addition to Amharization, Gobana had developed a strong interest in his military career in Menelik's army. As soon as Gobana began to provide his military service for Menelik, he was appointed as abagaz, chief palace guard (Hassen, 1981: 14); he was later promoted to the position of commander of the armed forces.

The process of Amharization and political ambition turned Gobana against his people (Hassen, 1981: 15), and now any Oromo who has collaborated with the Ethiopian state is called Gobana— a traitor. Gobana helped Menelik in building the Ethiopian Empire and then lost his authority. As Mohammed Hassen (1981: 20) asserts, "After his removal from the administration of the Oromo . . . his influence in the imperial government diminished as fortuitously as it had risen, while that of the Amhara . . . grew steadily as the completion of the colonization became the hub of the government." The Ethiopian colonial expansion resulted in mass killings, destruction, and expropriation of property, plundering, and enslavement (Bulatovich, 2000). In these colonial campaigns some French, Russians, and others participated (Jesman 1958: 94).

Between 1882 and 1886, the bloodiest colonial wars were conducted against the Arsi Oromo because they resisted Ethiopian colonialism under their *gadaa* government. Menelik colonized them in 1886 after running six savage campaigns. In addition to mass killings, the hands of thousands of Arsi Oromo men were cut off, and the breasts of thousands of Oromo women were mutilated by order of Menelik at Annole in 1886 (Gnamo, 2014). The massacre and enslavement of the Oromo continued through various colonial means. The Ethiopian army reduced the Oromo population from about ten million to some five million between 1868 and 1900 (Melba, 1980: 2; Bulatovich, 2000).

The Ethiopian colonial government developed five significant institutions in Oromia: the *katamas* (garrison cities), Slavery, the *balabat* system (the collaborative class), the *nafxanya-gabbar* system, and the colonial landholding system (Jalata, 1993: 80-81). The *nafxanyas* (gun-carrying settlers) organized the garrison cities as their main geopolitical centers for practicing political domination, wealth and capital accumulation, and religious and cultural dissemination in Oromo and other colonized societies. Enslaved individuals served as domestic workers or were exported to other countries through the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. When patriotic Oromo leaders who resisted Abyssinian colonialism were killed, the Oromo intermediaries (*balabats*) were given one-fourth of Oromo lands and received Ethiopian titles, such as *balambaras* and *grazmach*.

The Oromo were victims of Habasha and Arab slave traders. Sandra Rowoldt Shell's book, *Children of Hope*, has increased "our understanding of how [enslaved Oromo] children were ensnared into the Indian Ocean slave trade, which connected much of the Eastern African interior to Arabia, the Persian Gulf and India. Long after the Atlantic slave trade was snuffed out, the Indian Ocean trade continued almost to the beginning of the 20th century."[13] Richard Pankhurst called slavery in the Abyssinia/Ethiopia "great antiquity." Enslaved population groups were racialized, oppressed, and exploited, and considered inferior human beings. Slavery was considered "a national custom"[14] until the Italians abolished it in the Ethiopian Empire in the mid-1930s. Ethiopian warlords were known for their slave trade: "Consecutive regional polities, whether Christian or Muslim, executed slave raids into their respective hinterland well into the 20th century. The internal Ethiopian slave trade connected the political centers of Ethiopia with its peripheries and the trade in slaves connected Ethiopia with the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean world."[15]

The *nafxanya-gabbar* system was another institution that entitled the colonialists and their intermediaries to exact labor and agricultural products from the Oromo and others. The settlers—soldiers, clergy

13 https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2012/01/ethiopian-emperors-and-slavery/, accessed on 2/14/2021.

14 https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2012/01/ethiopian-emperors-and-slavery/, accessed on 2/14/2021.

15 https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/ethiostudies/about/conferences/ices2018-panels/ices2018-slavery.html, accessed on 10/6/2023.

members, and administrators (all known as *nafxanyas*)—exploited *gabbars* (semi-slaves) to provide them food, free labor, tribute, and tax revenues in cash and in kind. The Habasha colonialists continuously settled their countrymen and women in Oromia. As James McCann (1986: 369) writes, "A key component of this process has been the movement of people out of . . . Abyssinia's empire into the south [mainly Oromia], first as soldiers/settlers and then as landlords, administrators, and political entrepreneurs." The colonial state claimed absolute rights over three-fourths of Oromo lands and provided portions for its officials instead of salary. The Habasha notables and ecclesiastical, such as civil, and military officers were rewarded with grants of *maderia* and rist-gult.[16]

The Amhara farmers and foreign mercenaries who participated in the colonization of Oromia as soldiers, settlers, messengers, priests, spies, and correctional officers were also granted land as a reward for their services. The amount of land (whether given temporarily or permanently) depended on rank or position. An ordinary soldier received from one to three *gashas* (a gasha is approximately forty hectares), a captain of fifty soldiers was granted up to five *gashas*, and a leader of three hundred soldiers received up to twenty *gashas* of land (Markakis, 1974: 113). The state also commodified and sold some lands to individuals. Following Menelik's footsteps, Haile Selassie expanded settler colonialism by establishing and consolidating *Habasha's* political and religious institutions and garrison cities. The he created and consolidated an intermediary class and developed colonial education, the colonial landholding system, and the media.

Under these conditions, most Oromo farmers, pastoralists, and others became landless and impoverished and were forced to produce food and other commodities for their colonizers and the Ethiopian colonial state. In the 1960s, these collective grievances resulted in various resistance movements in parts of Oromia and other territories. The successive governments of Mengistu Haile Mariam, Meles Zenawi/Haile Mariam Desalegn, and Abiy Ahmed have continued state terrorism, repression,

16 The land of the colonized Oromo that was given temporarily to the settlers in lieu of salary was called maderia. When the land was converted into the property of the holder and became salable and inheritable, it was called rist-gult.

gross human rights violations, and economic exploitation, as we shall see below.

The Authoritarian-terrorist State and Ethiopianized Oromos

Since their colonization, the Oromo have faced state terrorism and repression from successive Ethiopian governments. The Ethiopian authoritarian-terrorist state is characterized by militarization and repression, tight control of foreign aid and domestic financial resources, and direct ownership and control of all aspects of the state, including the security and military institutions, judiciary and other public bodies, and financial institutions (Jalata and Schaffer, 2010). Through its educational institutions, the Ethiopian political system has produced a small number of Ethiopianized Oromo collaborative leaders that would function as intermediaries between the Ethiopian colonial ruling class and the Oromo people. The design intentionally limited the number of educated Oromos by denying education to the overwhelming majority of Oromos (Tusso, 1982). Furthermore, the Ethiopian government has disconnected most of the few educated Oromos from their cultural and historical roots through various political, educational, and cultural mechanisms, such as assimilation, political marriage, religion, and divide and conquer policies, and continuously forced them to show loyalty to the colonial state. The political and military leaders of the successive Ethiopian governments have been gangsters and robbers; they have used state power to expropriate lands and other resources in the name of privatization—all with the support and blessing of the World Bank and the IMF (Jalata, 2011). Successive Ethiopian governments have targeted the Oromo because of their economic resources and refusal to submit to the orders of colonial authorities and their Oromo collaborators.

The military regime that emerged in 1974 under the leadership of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam replaced the Haile Selassie government and continued dictatorship and Ethiopian colonial policies. When Oromo activists and the people started to resist the military regime, it intensified its state terrorism and political repression. The Military government (*derg*) and its supporters committed massive human rights violations in the name of the so-called Revolution (Singer, 1978: 672-673). The *derg* continued mass imprisonments and killings. In 1980, the Oromo Relief Association (1980: 30) mentioned that "the Oromo

constitutes the majority of the more than two million prisoners that glut Ethiopia's jails today."

In the 1980s, hundreds of Oromo nationalists were murdered or imprisoned. The regime also terrorized other elements of Oromo society. According to Gunnar Hasselblatt (1992: 17-19), the military government

> Repeatedly held mass shootings among the Oromo population, hoping to break the free, independent Oromo spirit. A hundred, sometimes two hundred men were shot on this raised dry field … and were buried with bulldozers. Over the years, this procedure has been repeated several times. Other techniques were used when the method did not work, and the Oromo population could not be forced into submission. The victims were made to lie down with their heads on stone, and their skulls were smashed with another stone. The … government … tried everything to consolidate its reign of terror and exploitation of Oromia …. When the Oromo movement could not be quenched by shooting or the smashing of skulls, [the government] devised a new idea. Men's testicles were smashed between a hammer and an anvil. Three men tortured and maimed in this way are still living.

Ethiopian state terrorism manifested itself in different forms: Its obvious manifestation was violence in the form of unjustified war, assassination, murder, castration, burying alive, throwing off cliffs, hanging, torture, rape, confiscation of properties by the police and the army, forcing people to submission by intimidation, beating, and disarming citizens (Pollock, 1997: 81-110). It is impossible to precisely know at this time how many Oromos have been murdered because successive governments hide this information.

Since 1992, security forces of the Tigrayan-led government had imprisoned and killed thousands of Oromo on charges of plotting armed insurrections on behalf of the OLF. Such accusations had been regularly used as a pretext to detain or kill individuals who publicly questioned colonial government policies. Various human rights organizations reported the testimonies of former prisoners to depict the criminality of the Tigrayan-led regime: Former prisoners testified that their arms and legs were tied tightly together on their backs, and their naked bodies were whipped. Large containers or bottles filled with water were fixed

to their testicles, or if they were women, bottles or poles were pushed into their vaginas. Some prisoners were locked up in empty steel barrels and tormented with heat in the tropical sun during the day and cold at night (Fossati, Namara, and Niggli, 1996). Some prisoners were forced into pits so that fire could be made on top of them. The Ethiopian colonial system has taken away the sovereignty of the Oromo people and exposed them to absolute poverty by denying them their fundamental human rights and needs that Ron Shiffman (1995: 6-8) calls subsistence, protection, affection, and understanding. Most Oromos in urban and rural areas have low subsistence levels because they do not have adequate incomes, enough food, and livable homes. The Oromos have been denied their inalienable right to self-determination and democracy. They have been denied the right to build their social, economic, cultural, and organizational infrastructures. Without political freedom, democracy, and a responsible government, a community cannot improve its quality of life. People like the Oromo who do not have personal and public safety in their homes and communities and are denied the freedom of self-expression, association, and organization do not have a good quality of life.

In the twenty-first century, when the world is changing fast because of the intensification of globalization, social revolutions, and revolutions in technology, information, communication, and transportation, the Oromo people are in the darkness of ignorance and poverty. Successive Ethiopian governments have banned independent Oromo organizations, including the OLF, and declared war on these organizations and the Oromo people. In addition, these governments have outlawed Oromo journalists and other writers and closed Oromo newspapers. They have also banned Oromo musical groups and all professional associations and continued to eliminate or imprison politically conscious and self-respecting Oromos; thousands of Oromos have been in official and secret prisons simply because of their nationality and resistance to injustice. The bureaucrats and collaborators have believed that Oromo intellectuals, businessmen and women, conscious Oromo farmers, students, and community and religious leaders are their enemies and should be eliminated through terrorism and genocide (Hizbawi Adera, 1996 and 1997; Jalata, 2020/2022).

The government officials, cadres, and soldiers had frequently raped Oromo girls and women to demoralize them and their communities and show how the rulers and their collaborators had wielded limitless power (Fossati, Namara, and Niggli. 1996: 10). *Amnesty International*

(2014: 1), in its paper entitled "Because I am Oromo," notes, "Between 2011 and 2014, at least 5,000 Oromo [were] arrested because of their actual or suspected peaceful opposition to the government, based on their manifestation of dissenting opinions, the exercise of freedom of expression or their imputed political opinion." In 2014, the government massacred over seventy-eight university students in Ambo for peacefully protesting the so-called Addis Abbaba Master Plan.[17] Large-scale arrests, massive shootings, rapes, tortures, extra-judicial executions, and deaths due to suffering or lack of medical treatments had been everyday events in Oromia. The Tigrayan-led government and its agent, the Oromo People Democratic Organization (OPDO), accused students of organizing demonstrations and arrested and tortured them; they detained and tortured singers for cultivating Oromo nationalism and not praising the government. People had been arrested and tortured for not providing false testimonies against other people or being accused of supporting the OLF and the OLA[18]

The opposition to land grabbing, gross human rights violations, cultural destruction, political and economic marginalization, poverty, and rampant unemployment mobilized almost the entire Oromo society against the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government and the OPDO. It engaged in the *Qeerroo/Qarree*-led peaceful protest movement between 2014 and 2018. The *Qeerroo/Qarree* were predominantly students from elementary school to university, organizing collective actions through media networks, such as radios, televisions, and personal relations and networks. Through daily slogans or chants, the *Qeerroo/Qarree* had clearly articulated that the OLF should replace the Tigrayan-led government and recognized the front as the origin of Oromo nationalism. The government's reactions to the *Qeerroo/Qarree* protests had been violent and suppressive. The Tigrayan-led government had been able to use martial law to kill or detain thousands of Oromos, holding them in prisons and concentration camps.[19]

17 file://Oromo Protests and Ethiopian Reression Overview Oromo Oromia Gadaa.com-FinfinneTribune.html, accessed on 04/11/2016.

18 *Ibid.*

19 www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/16/such-brutal-crackdown/killings-and-arrests-response-ethiopias-Oromo-protestsholding them in prisons and concentration camps, accessed on 06/09/2017.

This government also implemented security structures called *tokkoo-Shane* (one-to-five), *garee*, and *gott*;[20] their responsibilities included spying, identifying, exposing, imprisoning, torturing, and killing Oromos uninterested in serving the government. Thousands of Oromos were maimed or blinded due to torture, beatings, or the suppression of protests.[21] For example, during the Oromia-wide day of peaceful protest on July 6, 2016, the regime's army, *Agazi,* massacred nearly 100 Oromos.[22] *Amnesty International said* government forces killed 400 Oromos before July 6, 2016.[23] The Tigrayan-led government and the OPDO engaged in beating, torturing, castrating, decapitating, raping, and murdering Oromo students, farmers, educators, and merchants to stop the Oromo struggle.[24] In early October 2016, when millions of Oromo gathered at Hora Arsadi, southeast of Finfinnee, for the *Irreechaa* celebration, the Oromo national holiday, the government's army killed more than 700 Oromo and injured or imprisoned thousands.[25]

The emergency to curb the growing anti-government protest movement was declared for six months and extended by three months. This action was the last attempt by the government to stop the Oromo protests and stay in power. Therefore, the Tigrayan-led government used all situations to gain control over information and the rally;[26] it utilized heavy forces and denied the freedoms of organization and association. For several years, the Oromia region had been under a crackdown enforced by special police groups and the army known as *Agazi*.[27] After the protest movement started, according to rights organizations, more than 2000

20 www.hrw.org/reports/2005/ethiopia0505/2.html, accessed on 06/09/2017.

21 www.hrw.org/reports/2016/06/16/such-brutal-crackdwon/killings-and-arrests-response-ethiopias-oromo-protests, accessed on 06/09/2017.

22 www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37015055, accessed on 06/09/2017.

23 www.newsweek.com/ethiopia-hundreds-killed-excessive-force-oromo-protests-says-hrw-470800, accessed on 6/10/2017.

24 http://amharic.voanews.com/a/what-is-the-current-situation-in-oromia-region/3331322.html, accessed on 05/17/2016.

25 www.opride.com/2016/10/02 irreecha-massacre-several-dozens-feared-dead-bishoftu/, accessed on 06/09/2017.

26 www.yahoo.com/news/ethiopia-declares-state-emergency-101402878.html, accessed on 06/09/2017.

27 www.ayyaantuu.net/ethiopia-oromia-regional-state-under-siege/, accessed on 06/10/2017.

Oromos were killed in eleven months.[28] Several thousand more had been imprisoned, tortured, blinded, and raped. The Tigarayan-led government stated that 11,000 people were detained, and the regime had blocked the internet and collected phones from thousands of Oromos to hide its crimes from the international community.[29]

The protest movement brought about some changes in Oromo society. Young Oromo protesters were equipped with the ideology of national *Oromummaa* (Oromo nationalism), which had uprooted the divisions that the enemies of the Oromos created among different Oromo branches. Oromo collaborators and opportunists who had been evicting Oromo farmers from their ancestral lands by joining the Tigrayan elites were temporarily shocked and felt national shame. The Oromo protest movement demonstrated that it could destroy Oromo intermediaries or mercenaries who worked for the enemy at the cost of the Oromo nation. The Oromo protesters had practically shown that they were struggling to establish a democratic system that would exercise the principles of national self-determination and egalitarian multinational democracy, which align with their democratic tradition.

The cost the Oromo had paid in lives and suffering was very high. According to different reports, between 2014 and 2018, more than 5,000 Oromos, including school children, pregnant women, and older people, were massacred, and tens of thousands of Oromos were imprisoned, kicked, beaten, tortured, and decapitated. As one of the Oromo national struggle phases, the Oromo youth movement emerged as a formidable political force and shook the foundation of Ethiopia's Tigrayan-led racist and terrorist minority government. The brain 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. Mainly as the result of the popular struggle of the *Qeerroo/Qarree* movement, the ruling party, the EPRDF, was reorganized in April 2018, and Colonel 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 Desalegn.

Abiy "stepped into power [because of] the historical success of the *Qeerroo* movement... This unprecedented grassroots movement enabled

28 www.hrw.org/reports/2005/ethiopia0505/, accessed 06/10/2017.

29 http://ecadforum.com/2016/10/06/internet.blocked-in-ethiopia/, accessed on 06/10/2017.

the birth of Team Lemma, a reformist group within the ruling party of Oromia, which in turn forced the EPRDF, the long-ruling authoritarian party, to undertake an intraparty '*tehadiso*,' or deep reform, in response to the youth's relentless demands."[30] As a colonel who worked in the security system, Abiy was a trusted man for the TPLF/EPRDF. The TPLF-led government assumed that he was an Oromo, and appointing him as the prime minister would cool down the Oromo protest movement. The West, in general, and the US, in particular, pressured the TPLF to transfer power to Abiy Ahmed, assuming that he was a reformist Oromo politician because they were fading up with Amhara and Tigrayan political leaders that failed to establish solid and acceptable government.

The Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government changed its leadership by selecting and mandating Abiy to introduce needed reforms and facilitate the transition to democracy.[31] The choosing of Abiy to the premiership position showed the lack of Oromo national organizational capacity that could have mobilized the Oromo human and material resources under national leadership to confront and defeat the internal and external enemies of the Oromo nation. The *Qerroo/Qarree* movement lacked the required national organization capacity to remove the TPLF/EPRDF, the terrorist and genocidal government, to form its own. The absence of robust Oromo organizations helped Abiy use the OPDO and the protest movement to gain political power and hijack the revolution.[32] To undermine its potential enemies or competitors, the Abiy government invited all diaspora political organizations, including those of the Oromo, to return to Oromia and Ethiopia and participate in the so-called process of democratic transition.

However, the Abiy government has been anti-democratic and terrorist and genocidal like the TPLF/EPRDF regime it replaced. It only changed its name from the TPLF/EPRDF to the Prosperity Party (PP) without changing its essence and characteristics. In other words, the PP is

30 Milkessa M. Gemetchu, "How Abiy Ahmed Betrayed Oromia and Endangered Ethiopia," https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/25/abiy-ahmed-ethiopia-qeerroo-oromia-betrayed/, accessed on March 4, 2022.

31 *Ibid.*

32 Mudihin Siraj, *The Hijacked Revolution,* Hamile 2011 Ethiopian Calendar, https://mylibrarianship.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/e18ba8e189b0e-18ca0e18888e18d88_e189b5e18c8de1888d_the_hijacked_revolution1.pdf, accessed on March 15, 2022.

TPLF minus the EPRDF. Therefore, most leaders and members of the PP were members of the EPRDF and have been in power since 1991. As a result, the EPRDF/PP is called the neo-*nafxanya* government by Oromo nationalists and others. Almost all *Amhara* organizations have allied with the neo-*nafxanya* government of Abiy because it articulated that it would restore so-called glorious Ethiopia and popularized its former leaders, namely Menelik, Haile Selassie, and Mengistu Haile Mariam.[33] Abiy's political intention is to achieve absolute power by rebuilding the Ethiopian Empire in the image of Amhara history, culture, and language and by attacking Oromo nationalism and Oromo nationalists and organizations, such as the OLF, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), and the Oromo Federalist government (OFC).[34]

The Abiy government invited the OLF leadership and its army to return to Oromia from Eritrea and peacefully struggle for Oromo rights. The way the OLF was received on September 15, 2018, in Finfinnee was beyond the government's imagination and the enemies of the Oromo. On September 15, 2018, Aljazeera said: "Hundreds of thousands of people have gathered in the capital of Ethiopia to welcome leaders of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the latest members of a formerly banned rebel group, to return home following a string of political reforms in the country. On Saturday, the jubilant crowd waving OLF flags gathered at Addis Ababa's Meskel Square [by organizing a large concert] to welcome the group's leader, Dawud Ibssa, and others. In contrast, similar events were held in Ethiopia's Oromia region."[35]

The same source also said 1,500 OLF fighters returned to Oromia from Eritrea.[36] One thing that was not clear to many people was that there were numerous OLF leaders and soldiers in Oromia while some

33 Max Bearak,'A place of ghosts:' Ethiopia opens controversial palace to a divided public, October 11, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/a-place-of-ghosts-ethiopia-opens-controversial-palace-to-a-divided-public/2019/10/11/4ddd2d9c-ead5-11e9-a329-7378fbfa1b63_story.html, accessed on March 4, 2022.

34 Milkessa M. Gemechu, "How Abiy Ahmed Betrayed Oromia and Endangered Ethiopia," https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/25/abiy-ahmed-ethiopia-qeerroo-oromia-betrayed/, accessed on March 4, 2022.

35 https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/9/15/thousands-of-ethiopians-hail-return-of-once-banned-oromo-group, accessed on March 3, 2022.

36 *Ibid.*

leaders and members were returning from Eritrea. After some OLF fighters who returned to Oromia were abused and mistreated by the Abiy government, those OLF fighters already in Oromia started to suspect the peace deal that the OLF leadership made with the government and decided to continue the armed struggle. Gradually, the OLA split from the OLF leadership. The Abiy government deployed its security networks and the Ethiopian National Defense Force to Wallaga and Guji to root out the OLA and its leadership on December 19, 2018.[37] Gradually, Kumsa Diriba became the OLF-OLA High Command, popularly known as Jaal Marroo. Jaal Marroo and Jaal Gamachu Aboye, his deputy, articulated their dissatisfaction with the policies and actions of the Abiy Ahmed government and declared that the government was the continuation of the previous colonial government.

"On December 19, 2018, the Ethiopian National Defense Force started a mass deployment of its forces across Oromia state (mainly the Wallaga zones and the Guji ...) Eyewitnesses stated that the military was digging encampments in the middle of cities and hauling in sandbags for fortification."'[38] At the same time, Jaal Marroo released a video circulating on social media, explaining the similarities between Ethiopia's transitional period of 1991 and 2018.[39] During the 1991-1992 transition, thousands of Oromo fighters were encamped and destroyed by the TPLF/OPDO soldiers after the OLF leadership was expelled from the transitional government. Jaal Marroo's assessment was correct, and Abiy openly expressed that he and the OPDO should rule Oromia for several decades as the TPLF ruled Tigray. Milkessa M. Gemechu, who was a member of the OPDO/ODP, says: "When opposition leaders were arrested *en masse,* I recalled that during an Oromo Democratic Party [ODP] central committee meeting that I attended in late 2018, Abiy said his government should learn from the TPLF, observing that it ruled

37 Whispers North: Bold and Frank, XCLUSIVE: Who is Kumsa Diriba alias Jaal Marroo? – OLA Commander," November 13, 2021, https://www.whispersnorth.com/2021/11/13/exclusive-who-is-kumsa-diriba-alias-jaal-marroo-ola-commander/, accessed on March 8, 2022.

38 *Ibid.*

39 "EXCLUSIVE: Who is Kumsa Diriba alias Jaal Marroo? – OLA Commander," Whispers North: Bold and Fronk, https://www.whispersnorth.com/2021/11/13/exclusive-who-is-kumsa-diriba-alias-jaal-marroo-ola-commander/, accessed on March 3, 2022.

Tigray for over 27 years without any opposition, especially from within the region."[40]

For half a year, "Abiy publicly committed to follow the mandate given [to him] to bring the country through a transition to democracy under his watch. He has failed to honor that commitment. Abiy was not a part of the youth movement, yet he came to power on the shoulders and sacrifices of the Oromo youth. He had already lost his popular base even one year into his premiership. To a large extent, he was openly regarded as a traitor in Oromia."[41] Once he came to power, Abiy started to divide and conquer the *Qeerroo/Qaree* movement by attracting the opportunist elements, providing them jobs, land, and money, and attacking, repressing, and killing the nationalist ones. Within six months, Abiy controlled the critical branches of the federal state machinery, such as the national intelligence and security agency, defense forces, the police, and other institutions.[42] He started controlling the Oromia Regional State, the largest state, by dividing and conquering the OPDO.[43]

In April 2019, Abiy deposed Lemma from the Oromia presidency by replacing him with his yes-man, Shimelis Abdisa, and removed Oromo political leaders that he suspected had the spirit of Oromo nationalism and supported Lemma Megersa.[44] At the same time, he intensified the attack he started in December 2018 on the OLA in western and southern Oromia. Suspecting the connection between the *Qeerroo/Qarree* and the OLA, Abiy also intensified the attack on the Oromo youth in June 2019. Milkessa M. Gemechu, who attended a meeting with Abiy, testifies: "During a high-level central committee meeting of the Oromo Democratic Party, at which I was present, Abiy argued that the *Qeerroo* posed the 'number one potential threat to his power.' Many of us were shocked by this sharp reversal. He demonized the youth as an 'ungovernable pestilence that must be dealt with soon as possible.' He said that 'these unarmed *Qeerroo* are more dangerous than the Oromo Liberation Army."[45] While criticizing, attacking, imprisoning, and killing Oromo nationalists, Abiy formed and his neo-*nafxanya* party, by using the

40 Milkessa M. Gemechu, *ibid.*
41 "EXCLUSIVE: Who is Kumsa Diriba alias Jaal Maro? *ibid.*
42 Milkessa M. Gemechu, *ibid.*
43 *Ibid.*
44 *Ibid.*
45 *Ibid.*

ideology of "medemer" or "synergy" and by creating his party called the Prosperity Party.

Starting in December 2018, Abiy began establishing command posts in different parts of Oromia to impose state terrorism, crush the Oromo national movement, reestablish the archaic ideology of *Ethiopianism,* and practice settler colonialism with the help of the neo-*nafxanya* (colonial settlers) class. Currently, for Oromo nationalists, only three independent political forces are engaging in the Oromo national movement: the OLF, OLA, and the OFC. Oromo nationalists assert that the OLF and OLA have achieved the ideological victory of Oromo nationalism. The OLA intensifies the guerrilla struggle in Oromia to liberate the Oromo people and their country, Oromia. 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 and building solid national civic institutions and political organizations are urgent steps that should be taken immediately.

The Oromo youth protest movement created conducive conditions for restoring the Oromo democratic tradition and building solid national civic institutions and political organizations required to establish a sovereign Oromia democratic state, which may join a confederal multinational democratic state. The OLF and OLA are facing multiple enemies during this historical period. The neo-*nafxanaya* government and its allies, such as the Amhara Regional Government, including the Amhara Special Force, the terrorist group called *Fano*, the Somali military forces, the Eritrean soldiers, and other regional forces are mobilized against the Oromo in Wallo, Wallaga, Tulama, and Guji areas. These forces are the primary enemies of the Oromo nation. All these forces are terrorizing and massacring the Oromo people to prevent them from supporting the OLA. These actions will increase the commitment and determination of the OLA and the Oromo people to intensify their liberation struggle.

Abiy also has intensified ideological warfare on national *Oromummaa* (Oromo history, culture, identity, and nationalism) by glorifying Amhara nationalism disguised as *Ethiopianism* to advance the Amharization nation-building project (Jalata, 2022). He belittled and attacked independent Oromo political and cultural institutions to accomplish his political objectives. In addition to imprisoning Oromo nationalist leaders, his military and security forces killed fourteen *gadaa* leaders of the Karrayu Oromo, including *Abbaa Gadaa,* on December 1, 2021, and

falsely blamed the OLA (Jalata, 2021). Abiy and his agents have used the strategy of imposing state terrorism to intimidate the Oromo public to change their political behavior and support his administration. This government has given a free hand to federal and Oromia regional military and security forces to kill Oromo youth and other civilians suspected of supporting the OLA. As a result, these forces massacred thousands of Oromos in different areas of Oromia. They have executed individuals in public squares, roads, and jungles.

The government agents have denied relatives the corpses of their loved ones to be eaten by hyenas. Overall, the Abiy government has committed crimes against humanity, such as burning Oromos' houses and grain storage to the ground in rural areas, executions, rapes, arbitrary arrests, detentions, and tortures.[46] The Abiy government has frequently instituted a state of emergency and curtailed freedom of expression, media, and association or organization by shutting down internet and phone connections.[47] It has almost outlawed the OLF and house arrested Dawud Ibssa, the chairman of the OLF, and imprisoned other top leaders, such as Abdi Raggaasaa and Mikael Booran, executive committee members; Kennesa Ayana and Gamachiis Tolosa, Aman Filee Oromsis Elemo and Kaayyoo Fuufaa, central committee members; Battee Urgessa (who was assassinated by government security forces on April 9, 2024) Senior Public Relation Officer, Lammi Benga, Head of Youth League, Dr. Gadaa Oljiraa, Chief of Administration; Yazoo Kababaa , Senior Staff; Gadaa Gabisa, Senior Staff of Organizational Affairs, Yeroosan, Senior Staff in Political Department; and Dachaasaa Wirtu, Head of Youth League.

Furthermore, as Lami Gemechu, a temporary OLF public relations officer, stated on March 14, 2022, between 10,000 and 13,000 OLF leaders and members suffer in various Ethiopian prisons; this figure does not include those imprisoned in hidden informal camps.[48] These prisoners

46 "Ethiopia: Rape, extrajudicial executions, homes set alight in security operations in Amhara and Oromia<," https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/05/ethiopia-rape-extrajudicial-executions-homes-set-alight-in-secur, accessed on June 23, 2022.

47 Human Rights Watch, "Ethiopia: Events of 2020," https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021, accessed on March 11, 2022.

48 Lami Gemechu, "ስለ ኦሮሚያው የሲቃይ ማዕከል" ገላን ሶሎሊያ ያልተሰሙ ሚስጥሮች//ልዩ ዝግጅት ከአነግ ጊዜያዊ የህዝብ ግንኙነት ሀላፊ አቶ ለሚ ገመቹ ጋር," Ubuntu Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a345gNqW-7s, accessed on March 15, 2022.

are not provided adequate food, and they do not have enough access to medical services.[49] For instance, Battee Urgessa and others had hepatitis and were denied treatment for some time. The Abiy government has criminalized these leaders because they refused to join the neo-*nafxanya* government. It has also outlawed their leadership in the OLF.

These leaders did not commit any crimes, and government high courts have found no crimes against them. Also, the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) leaders were imprisoned, including Bekele Gerba, Jawar Mohammed, Dejene Tafa, and Hamza Borana, and recently released. The crimes of these leaders are their membership in OFC, which has refused to join the neo-*nafxanya* government, too. The Abiy government has prevented the OLF and the OFC from participating in the elections in Oromia and Ethiopia. in 2021. Abiy's party claimed to win most parliamentary seats in Oromia and Ethiopia. This neo-*nafxanya* government has stopped the process of peaceful struggle, and the only option that has remained is the OLA option, which is the protracted armed struggle. Those Oromo nationalists who have asserted that the Ethiopian Empire cannot be democratized because of the *nafxanya* system and *Habasha* political culture, which promotes zero-sum politics by killing and dominating, are political realists and prophetic thinkers. The ideology of the *nafxanya* system is *Ethiopianism,* which contradicts national *Oromummaa*.

Ethiopianism vs. National Oromummaa

The ideology of *Ethiopianism* explains and justifies the formation of the Ethiopian Empire and denies the colonization of the Oromo and other peoples. To understand the sources of this ideology, it is necessary to comprehend the name Ethiopia, which originated from the Greek word *Aethiopes.* Classical Greek explorers and writers named the territories inhabited by Black peoples that they called burned-face peoples in Asia and Africa.[50] Even though the historical meaning of Ethiopia applies to all Black peoples, its contemporary name applies to Habashas or

49 *Ibid.*

50 According to A. Wallis Budge (1928: 120-121), "The descriptions of Ethiopia given by Homer, Herodotus, Diodorus, Starbo and Pliny make it quite clear that they indicated by this name the vast tracts of country [regions] in Asia and Africa that were inhabited by dark-skinned and black faced peoples."

Abyssinians (mainly Amharas and Tigrayans). The Amharas and Tigrayans have successively dominated Abyssinian/Ethiopian state power. In the Bible, the name Ethiopia also applies to the Black world. Recognizing the political and ideological significance of the word Ethiopia and especially its Christian Biblical connections, Abyssinian leaders have claimed an Ethiopian identity and asserted that their ancient territories included all regions that classical geographers and historians described as Ethiopia.

The official adoption of the name Ethiopia for the Abyssinian Empire occurred in 1931 when Haile Selassie officially changed the name Abyssinia to Ethiopia in his constitution (Melba, 1980: 32). *Ethiopianism* is a political and ideological construct that Amhara and Tigrayan state elites have used to justify and rationalize Ethiopian settler colonialism, the *gabbar-nafxanya* system (semi-slavery), the racialized state power, and an ethnic-racial hierarchy. The current Ethiopian state continues the Abyssinian racialized state, which committed cultural genocide on indigenous peoples, such as the Qemant, Gafat, Agao, and later the Oromo (Jalata, 1993). Contemporary Ethiopia emerged as an empire by claiming the name of ancient Ethiopia and justifying terrorism, enslavement, colonization, and the continued subjugation of Oromos and others through the discourse of race and religion (Jalata, 2001/2012).

The West praised Abyssinia (later Ethiopia) as a country that was never colonized. The idea that Ethiopia was not colonized laid the cornerstone for the ideology of *Ethiopianism* of "Greater Ethiopia." Thus, Ethiopia was seen as a "civilized nation of immense intelligence, the only one that is civilized without wearing trousers and shoes" (as quoted in Marcus, 1996: 7). *Ethiopianism*, or Greater Ethiopia's ideology, claims that Ethiopia was not colonized like other parts of Africa because Habasha's bravery and patriotism made this empire unique in Africa ((Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990: 143; Jalata, 1993/2005; Megerssa, 1997). The Ethiopian historical discourse claims that Ethiopian boundaries are sacred since they were established 3,000 years ago. Also, it was asserted that Abyssinian "society represented an advanced level of social and economic organization" that enabled it to defend itself from European colonialism by eliminating slavery and protecting "all the peoples of greater Ethiopia from falling prey to European imperialism" (Levine, 1994: 16) and that Ethiopia played a crucial civilizing mission by dominating the Oromos and other nations who were considered backward, pagan, destructive, and inferior.

These racist mythologies assisted Ethiopia in enjoying more recognition in Europe and North America, and "there was extended public discussion of Ethiopia's place in the world community and a great elaboration of the Ethiopian mythology initiated by European writers for a European public" (Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990: 176). As a racist ideology, *Ethiopianism* claims that Habashas are different from other Africans and superior to them lay at the core of the European justification for empowering them to colonize and rule the Oromos and other nations. The Ethiopian Empire was created with the alliance of European imperialist powers. Habasha warlords had maintained themselves through a coalition with successive imperial superpowers, namely, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States, and China, that have protected successive Ethiopian state elites and their governments (Jalata, 1993/2005: 2005). The colonial settlers and their collaborators in Oromia and other regions have justified their colonial domination with a racist discourse.

With the establishment of their colonial authority in the colonized regions or countries, Habasha settlers "assumed that their innate superiority over the residents accounted for this accomplishment" (Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990: 111). These essential components of racist discourses have remained intact. "Socialist" and then "democratic" lessons have been introduced by successive Habasha state elites and accepted by their global supporters without changing Ethiopian society's colonizing and racist structures. Because of its racist policies, the Ethiopian state has different policies within Abyssinia proper, the homeland of Amhara-Tigray, and the colonized regions such as Oromia. The Ethiopian state has acted in an authoritarian manner toward Amhara and Tigray ethnonational groups from which it emerged and in a terrorist fashion toward racialized peoples, such as Qimants, Agaos, Oromos, Afars, Sidamas, Ogaden-Somalis, and others, that it suppressed and exploited.

The Ethiopian state is owned mainly by the *nafxanya* class, which includes Habasha elites and Ethiopianized Oromos and other collaborators who control all aspects of state power and use state terrorism to maintain their power and privilege (Jalata, 2005). This state has been Abyssianized, racialized, and Christianized to exclude non-Habashas peoples from decision-making power. The Ethiopian state has effectively used Ethiopianism to hide the crimes against humanity. Today, Oromo elites who defend the Ethiopian Empire are either politically misguided or opportunists who sacrifice the Oromo national interest for their personal and group interests. These elites call themselves Ethiopians, the

identity that true and revolutionary Oromo nationalists reject. If those colonized peoples around the world did not abandon their indigenous identities to accept the identities of their colonizers, why do Ethiopianized/Amharaized Oromo elites call themselves Ethiopians?

The Ethiopianized Oromos have perpetuated Ethiopian colonialism and the domination and dehumanization of Oromo society. Whether they claim to advance *Ethiopianism,* socialism, or democracy, they have contributed to maintaining the racialized Ethiopian state during and after the failed revolutions of 1974, 1991, and 2018. The only way to liberate Oromo society is by building and strengthening the Oromo national movement based on the ideology of national *Oromummaa* and egalitarian democracy. The Habasha state elites and their collaborators have used *Ethiopianism* to claim the unity of the colonizer and the colonized population groups while committing crimes against humanity. Rejecting the ideology of *Ethiopianism*, the Oromo nationalists have developed national *Oromummaa* to oppose and dismantle the Ethiopian racial/ethnonational hierarchy and settler colonialism and its institutions.

National *Oromummaa,* as an Oromo nationalist ideology and worldview, builds on the best elements of Oromo culture and traditions and advances an indigenous Oromo democracy known as the *gadaa/siiqqee* system (Jalata and Schaffer, 2013). It sees the Oromo culture as the center of Oromo life (Jalata, 2015) and bases its vision on Oromo egalitarian democracy, an institution that existed before American democracy. Before their colonization, the Oromo had the *gadaa* system of government, which "organized [them] in an all-encompassing democratic republic even before the few European pilgrims arrived from England on the shores of North America and only later built a democracy" (Holcomb 1991: 4). Currently, the Oromo national movement led by the OLF, and the OLA is struggling to retrieve popular Oromo democracy through the principle of national self-determination.

The aspiration to restore this form of popular democracy is like developing Afrocentric awareness in the Africana diaspora communities. Molefi Kete Asante (1988: 49) states, "a critical Afrocentric awareness develops when the person changes to a conscious level of involvement in the struggle for their mind liberation. Only when this happens can we say that the person is aware of the collective consciousness. An imperative of will, powerful, continuous, alive, and vital, moves to eradicate every trace of powerlessness." Those Ethiopianized Oromos who endorse and glorify *Ethiopianism* are undermining the Oromo-centric awareness to enjoy the

power and material benefits at the cost of the Oromo and other colonized peoples. National *Oromummaa,* as an intellectual and ideological vision, places the Oromo man and woman at the center of analysis and, at the same time, goes beyond Oromo society and aspires to develop global *Oromummaa* by contributing to the solidarity of all oppressed peoples by promoting the struggle for national self-liberation and egalitarian democracy. It is a complex and dynamic national and global project.

As a national project and the ideology of the Oromo national movement, national *Oromummaa* enables Oromos to retrieve their cultural-centric political strategies and tactics that can mobilize the nation for collective action, empowering the people for liberation. As a global project, national *Oromummaa* requires that the Oromo national movement be inclusive of all persons, operating democratically. The global *Oromummaa* enables the Oromo people to form alliances with all political forces and social activities that accept the principles of national self-determination and egalitarian democracy in promoting global humanity free of oppression and exploitation. In other words, global *Oromummaa* is based on the principles of mutual solidarity, social justice, and popular democracy. National *Oromummaa,* as an element of culture, nationalism, and vision, has the power to serve as a manifestation of the collective identity of the Oromo national movement.

The foundation of national *Oromummaa* must be built on overarching principles embedded within Oromo democratic traditions and culture and, simultaneously, have universal relevance for all oppressed peoples. The main foundations of national *Oromummaa* are individual and collective freedom, justice, popular democracy, and human liberation, all of which are built on the concept of *safuu* (moral and ethical order) and are enshrined in *gadaa/siiqqee* principles. Although national *Oromummaa* emerges from the Oromo cultural and historical foundations, it goes beyond culture and history in providing a liberating narrative for the future of the Oromo nation and the other oppressed peoples, particularly those who suffered under the Ethiopian Empire. As a critical ideology and worldview, national *Oromummaa* challenged the idea of glorifying kings or dictators who collaborated with European slavers and colonizers and destroyed African peoples by participating in the slave trade and the project of colonization.

Successive Ethiopian government elites have built their power on the foundation of an ethnic-racial hierarchy rationalized and justified by racism. They have maintained their legitimacy and survival through external

connections and domestic political violence. Because they have failed to remove the political obstacles that have facilitated external dependency and state violence, they cannot build multinational democracy, peace, stability, and development. Because the Ethiopian state has been supported by mighty global powers and the imperial interstate system, there have been connections between racism, state violence, and global tyranny in Ethiopia. National *Oromummaa* promotes sovereignty in opposition to dependency, sustainable development and self-sufficiency, national self-determination, and egalitarian democracy.

Oromia's Sovereignty, the U.N., and International Law

Oromia deserves national self-determination, which is an internationally accepted political principle. The U.N. recognizes "the desire of every people [or every nation] to determine its destiny, free from dictatorship or control by others" (Ishay, 2007). However, every nation must deserve it through different mechanisms, mainly through various forms of struggle. It must create its organizational and military capabilities to defeat a dictatorial/colonial government that denies the right to self-determination and democracy. The U.N. only recognizes these rights theoretically, but the entity is not committed to implementing them because most of its members are dictatorial, colonial, and imperial states. The principle of national self-determination is based on the four pillars of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights: (1) the right to life, liberty, and security, (2) civil liberty and property rights, (3) political and social rights, and (4) economic, social, and cultural rights (Ishay, 2007).

If a nation is denied the right to implement the principle of national self-determination, its universal human rights cannot be protected. The U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights expands human freedoms if implemented or practiced. Based on the spirit of human rights, Amartya Sen (1999) suggests five types of instrumental freedoms: 1) political freedom, 2) economic freedom, 3) social opportunities, 4) transparency guarantees, and 5) protective security. The political and civil rights include (1) the right to determine who should govern and on what principles, (2) the right to scrutinize and criticize authorities, (3) the right to political expression and an uncensored press, and (4) the freedom to choose between different political parties, etc. *Economic freedoms* and rights entail (1) freely participating in markets and generating wealth and public resources, (2) the availability and access to finance, (3) utilizing

economic resources for consumption, production, or exchange, and (4) basic economic security and entitlement.

Social opportunities involve (1) social arrangements such as open access to education and health care; (2) the services that influence the individual's substantive freedom to live healthy, better, and longer; and (3) the increasing of more effective participation in socio-economic and political activities. Similarly, *transparency guarantees* consist of (1) the freedom to be open and deal with one another, (2) the right to disclose corruption and financial responsibilities by preventing underhand dealings, and (3) increasing accountability of institutions, governments, corporations, and building institutions of unemployment benefits and income supplements, famine relief or emergency, public employment, etc. The denial of national self-determination denies the colonized nation, such as the Oromo, all these rights and the development of human freedoms and capabilities. Similarly, Martha Nussbaum explains the principle of the capability approach, which enables all individuals in society to develop their abilities.

She lists ten capabilities to promote human rights and capabilities: (1) Life – preventing dying prematurely; (2) Bodily health and integrity – having good health; being adequately nourished; having necessities; (3) Bodily integrity – having personal safety and security; enjoying life without any restriction; (4) Senses, imagination, and thought – imagining, thinking, reasoning, and expressing ideas without any restrictions; these capabilities must be developed through an adequate education, scientific reasoning; (5) Emotions – having rights to develop attachment to persons and things; caring and loving those who cares and loves you; (6) Practical reason – engaging in critical reflection about one's own life; 7) Affiliation – showing empathy and concern for others; having capability for friendship and justice; having the right to be respected not to be humiliated; not to be discriminated by others; (8) Other Species – living with and protecting animals, plants, and nature; (9) Play – being able to laugh, to play, and to enjoy recreational activities; and (10) Control over one's environment: (a) Political - having the right to associate, organize and make political choices; having the rights of political participation, free speech; (b) material – having the right to own property; having the right to have jobs and livable wages.

The Ethiopian colonial state has denied the Oromo and other colonized and oppressed peoples all political, economic, cultural, and social rights that the U.N., Amartya Sen, and Martha Nussbaum describe

above. Even the dominant nations, namely Amhara and Tigray, are underdeveloped and suffering from poverty and recurrent famines. They must detach themselves from their abusive and exploitative elites to overcome their complex socioeconomic and political problems. They should also stop to brag about their terrorist emperors and leaders and join the struggle for self-determination and democracy. Since the implementation of national self-determination is in the hands of the Oromo, they should be better organized to intensify their struggle and ally with all peoples committed to the principle of national self-determination and egalitarian democracy.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Oromo national movement has fought to recreate Oromia's sovereign democratic state and Oromo freedom by demolishing the combined forces of the colonialists, imperialists, and the Ethiopianized Oromo collaborative class. The brutality and criminality of the Ethiopian colonial state, the deplorable living conditions of Oromo society, international law, and the violations of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples justify the rebirth of the sovereign and democratic Oromia state. Even though the Oromo have abundant economic resources, they live under the darkness of ignorance, abject poverty, and political slavery and are exposed to state terrorism and massive human rights violations. They are denied the freedom of expression, the media, organization, and the freedom of self-development. The Oromo are forced to provide economic and labor resources to the Ethiopian colonizers and their supporters while living under deplorable conditions in the twenty-first century.

Oromo nationalists are convinced that the only way for the Oromo to get out of the deplorable political, economic, cultural, and social conditions is by intensifying their political and armed struggle led by the OLF and OLA. In the capitalist world system, might is right. The *neo-nafxanaya* government, the imperial interstate system, the African Union, the U.N., and Western and other powerful states cannot stop the Oromo if they unite to defeat all political forces that deny them their universal human rights and human capabilities. Most colonized nations worldwide have achieved their freedom and sovereignty by engaging in protracted political and armed struggles, which are self-defense rights. The Oromo people are lucky to have the OLA, which is paying heavy

sacrifices to show the way to Oromo sovereignty and Oromo freedom. The OLF and OLA need to build strong national organizational capacity by integrating political and military activities, preparing a ground for the rebirth of the sovereign and democratic Oromia state.

Furthermore, all self-respecting Oromos should pay the necessary prices in the form of knowledge, logistics, human power, and money to support the OLF and the OLA. The Oromo youth should also join the OLF and OLA rather than become the colonial government's mercenaries and kill their citizens or killed or die while running away from Oromia to foreign countries or being massacred by the Abiy government. The Oromo nation deserves popular sovereignty, statehood, egalitarian democracy, and membership in the U.N. to restore their human freedoms and build their capabilities to achieve security, peace, and sustainable development. The human rights of the colonized Oromo people will be protected if they defend themselves by any means necessary from their executioners by organizing and struggling to form their sovereign and democratic government and other essential institutions.

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Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 76 7/15/2024 4:15:32 PM

Utilizing Local and Global Knowledge for Sustainable Agricultural Production: Lesson from Oromiya and the American Low Desert

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Abstract: Indigenous systems of crop production in Oromiya have evolved over centuries of traditional and natural evolution and can serve as the basis for adopting new technology and practices. Implementation of new knowledge, technology, and resources from one ecosystem into another would require an understanding of the local ecosystem practices and suitability for adaptability of any new system. Without access to external inputs, capital, and modern scientific knowledge, farmers have been producing indigenous crops and adjusting to changes in environmental conditions and cropping seasons. Both subsistence and advanced growers need to understand the changes in the local environment, how to adjust to condition changes and remain climate resilient to undertake sustainable food production and be able to feed the alarmingly increasing human population in Ethiopia. The purpose of our present review is to assess current practices, natural resource degradations, and the shortcomings of Oromiya's farmers and their strategies coping with natural resources degradations, drought, food shortages and famine. The paper

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 77 7/15/2024 4:15:32 PM

also gives important information on how the low deserts of America, particularly in Southern California and Arizona, have utilized available resources and converted deserts into a global food and feed belt. We will share the experiences of American growers and the farm industry and suggest how their advanced cropping system, climate smart farming and practices can be used to enhance Oromiya's farming practices for sustainable food production and food security in the region and the nation at large.

1. Richness of Oromiya's farmlands

Oromiya has a long history of agriculture and has substantially contributed to crop biodiversity. The region varies greatly in terms of topography, traditional groups, rainfall pattern, minimum and maximum temperatures, vegetation and soils. Land, soil, forest, and water resources of Oromiya (Figure 1) and its diverse climatic conditions make it one of the best naturally endowed regions, serving as the breadbasket of the country, Ethiopia. Oromiya's favorable climate allows it to grow diverse crops such as cereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, and root crops. Cereals are the dominant and most important crops in almost all crop production areas. Cash crops such as coffee and chat are widely grown and have a lion's share in their impact on the economy of the country. In addition to cultivating annual crops, farmers practice mixed farming that keeps livestock on their farms for various economic and social reasons. The main reasons for keeping cattle are prestige or sign of wealth, income, social security, dowry, draught power, milk, meat and manure. Oromiya's economic potentialities are in stark contrast to the abject poverty of its population and has not been fully harnessed for the benefit of Oromiya due to many political, economic, and social factors. Most of the population lives off the land eking out a miserable existence with a terribly low standard of living. It is not the intention of this paper to elaborate all factors. This paper is intended to give a birds-eye view on utilizing local and global knowledge for sustainable agricultural production.

Figure 1. *Naturally endowed Oromia land with soil, forest, and water resources. Gedo, West Shoa Zone (June 2019, Photo: Worku Burayu)*

2. Experiences from Oromiyan farmers: Knowledge in resource conservation

More than 85% of Oromiya's population is engaged in agriculture as a means of livelihood. Such strong reliance on agriculture as an economic driving force entails that natural resources of agricultural significance should be managed on a sustainable basis. Soil and water conservation are important among those natural resource concerns, and sustainability in terms of both resources implies utilization of soil and water without wastage or depletion, in order to have a continuous high-level crop production. However, agricultural sustainability in Oromiya is hampered with several factors including the pressure from a rapidly growing population and diminishing natural resources. To cope with such degradation of resources and productivity decline, smallholder farmers are forced to implement conservation measures. The focus of soil and water conservation efforts in Oromiya during the last decades have largely been on diagnosing crop performances under physical conservation structures such as stone terraces, soil bund and weir in the semi-arid regions and on Broad Bed Furrow (BBF) in the humid and sub-humid Vertosol soil areas. Several attempts have been made to evaluate the effects of components of crop management practices such as the effects of tillage, fertilizer management, or cropping sequence on crop yields in different locations of dryland areas. However, recently it

was realized that the use of physical conservation structures to conserve soil and water and the outcome for components of crop management practices might not significantly improve the agricultural productivity of smallholder farmers where the land is fragmented, and land shortage is a chronic constraint.

What indigenous knowledge do Oromiyan farmers have? There have been many traditional soil conservation systems evolved by farmers of Oromiya over the course of time to suit certain environmental conditions and cropping seasons, even without access to external inputs, capital, and modern scientific knowledge. These indigenous soil conservation systems generally are agronomic, vegetative or physical in nature.

2.1. Agronomic and vegetative techniques

Agronomic or vegetative techniques (Figure 2) include practices such as agroforestry, crop rotations, mixed cropping and trash lines. Farmers plant and maintain deliberately, trees to develop a microclimate that protects crops against extremes (Figure 3). Mixing agriculture with forestry techniques helps to control temperature, sunlight exposure, and susceptibility to wind, hail, and rain. This system provides a diversified range of products such as food, fodder, firewood, timber, and medicine while improving soil quality, reducing erosion, and storing carbon.

Figure 2. *Vetiver grass as a means of erosion control and a trap for eroded soil around Bako-Tibbe, West Shoa Zone. The same plot of land in 2004 (left) and June 2019 (right) sustained by agronomic techniques.*

Figure 3. *Mixing coffee production with forestry techniques helps to control temperature, sunlight exposure, and susceptibility to wind, hail, and rain. Limu-Seka, Jimma Zone.*

2.2. Crop rotations, mixed and multiple cropping

Crop rotations, mixed and multiple cropping (Figure 4) are traditional systems that are widely practiced in Oromiya. Farmers have successfully used the practice of growing different crops on the same land so that no bed or plot is allocated to the same crop in successive seasons, which is the main principle of crop rotation. Crop rotation is a practice designed to preserve the productive capacity of the soil, minimize pests and diseases, reduce chemical use, and manage nutrient requirements, all of which help to maximize yield. The practice of crop rotation builds better soil structure and increases the ability to store or sequester carbon on farms. Good crop rotations such as maize followed by legumes facilitate the conservation and addition of organic matter, restoration of soil structure and fertility and reduction of pests and diseases. In mixed cropping, two or more crops are grown in the same field in the same season. In most cases grains and leguminous crops are mixed. The fast-growing legumes provide soil cover early in season, shielding the impact of raindrops, fix atmospheric nitrogen, and thus help to maintain soil fertility. Through crop rotation, farmers can maximize land use while reducing the risks associated with single crop failure. Intercropping also creates biodiversity, which attracts a variety of beneficial and predatory insects to minimize pests and can also increase soil organic matter, fumigate the soil, and suppress weed growth. Multiple cropping

systems involve growing many plants of different species in the same area, often in a way that imitates nature. By increasing plant biodiversity, multiple cropping systems promote diet diversity in local communities, are more adaptable to climate variability and extreme weather and are more resilient to pests and diseases. It also provides many advantages such as better soil quality, less soil erosion, and more stable yields when compared to monoculture systems.

Figure 4. *Multiple cropping system whereby teff, wheat, barley and chickpea grown together on the same field to maximize land use while reducing the risks associated with single crop failure in West Shoa Zone around Ginchii (Danddii District).*

2.3. Physical techniques

In some parts of Oromiya, earth bunds are used for slowing down runoff in maize and sorghum fields where they are usually constructed along the contour after planting the crop. A few farmers use stone bunds at regular intervals along the contour, particularly in Eastern Oromiya. Stone bunds retain or slow down run off and hence control erosion. In some other parts of Oromiya, traditional ditches are constructed using a 'maresha' *orddaa* plough pulled by oxen and made to dispose excess water and drain out of cultivated land, to the side of an artificial or natural waterway. A ditch may sometimes be dug on the upper side of the cultivated land (East Wollega, West Shoa and Jimma) or as a crisscross (West and East Shoa) to act as a cut off drain to protect the field from the runoff coming from the higher elevations. Thus, traditional ditches drain excess water from the field, protect the soil from being washed away by runoff and reduce surface runoff generated within the cultivated land. In some areas, there are no primary till or pot holing practices. These are essentially a dry planting, slashing, and burning systems. This practice involves slashing of the vegetation, leaving it on the ground to dry and burning the residue to leave a clean seedbed. Planting is then done without disturbing the soil,

except for the planting holes that may be done with the pointed stick, followed by very early weeding using the slashes, a few days after the emergence of the crops (maize, sorghum, oat, wheat). The practice is common in Jimma, Wollega, IlluAbbabor and West Shoa zones.

2.4. Mulching and Trash lining

Mulch farming (Figure 5) maintains surface residues on tilled land. Oromo farmers recognize that plant residues are useful in conserving the soil, controlling water runoff, improving soil physical conditions and increasing soil fertility. *In situ* mulching was fairly commonly practiced in Jimma, Wollega, IlluAbbabor, and West Shoa areas. The practice has declined as a result of other competitive use of the crop residues such as feed for livestock, fuel and building materials in East Shoa, Hararghe and some parts of Arsii zones. Mulching, however, is still practiced in oats, wheat and coffee fields, in horticultural crops, and in areas of high rainfall. In sloping hillsides, maize, and sorghum stover are sometimes used to make trash lines where both crops are growing, particularly to the western part of Oromiya, where it helps in slowing down the flow of runoff, and traps eroded soils. The technique is used both for erosion control and fertility improvement.

Figure 5. *Combination of technologies (In situ mulching and introduced management with grass) as a technique to slowdown the flow of runoff and control erosion, and to build-up organic matter and fertility improvement in Jimma Zone around Limmu-Kosoo area.*

2.5. The Dikee system

Cattle are enclosed in the typical Oromo barn (Figure 6) during the night from three to seven days based on the number of cattle (large number less days, small number more days), season (during the rainy season, only 2-3 days, and during the dry season, 4-7 days), topography (flat land less days, sloppy land more days) and fertility status of the soil (relatively fertile soil less days). In such area, manure from stall fed cattle is incorporated into the soil only by one-time plowing. The frequency of the tillage is decreased remarkably (mostly one to two times plowing) when using this system (Figure 7). This practice is still widely used in many districts of West Shoa, Jimma, Wollega, IlluAbbabor and some parts of East Shoa zones. In some districts of East Showa this system is rarely practiced due to the shifting purpose of using animal dung for fuel (cooking) instead of using the manure for soil fertility.

Figure 6. *Typical Oromo Barn in Eastern Wollega Zone of Oromiya with protective home for herding man (left) and protective barn for cattle (right) where enough animal dung is used to add nutrients to the soil.*

Figure 7. *Plot with no animal dung (left) already plowed twice of the five to six plowing frequency compared to plot with animal manure that doesn't require more than one plowing (right).*

2.6. Water Harvesting

Water harvesting is defined as the redirection and productive use of rainfall, involving a variety of methods to collect as much water as possible out of each rainfall. Many water harvesting structures and systems are specific to the ecoregions and culture in which it has been developed. This may involve collecting water from rooftops, from swollen streams and rivers during monsoon season, or from artificially constructed catchments. This ensures that farmers have a substantial amount of water stored up in case of drought or limited rainfall. The practice is very limited in moisture prone areas of Oromiya.

2.7. Coping Strategies

Farmers have developed a range of indigenous coping strategies, through trial and error, to combat their challenges and constraints. They have been changing crops and cultivars according to the type of season and follow several tillage practices (Figure 8) to improve soil fertility, conserve soil moisture, and control weeds. To minimize the effects of poor soil fertility, they practiced crop rotation such as using "Noug" (*Guizotia abysinica*) for black soil, adding farmyard manure for red soil, and allowing fallow for one to two years for red soil. When there was a moisture stress during planting, farmers planted Teff or other crops such as sorghum instead of maize. To conserve soil and to control erosion, they plowed along slopes and open waterways along the field (Figure 8).

Figure 8. *Different tillage operation practiced based on the slope of the land in Oromiya, June 2019.*

Allowing fallow period for some time and opening *boraatii lolaa* (waterway) are the common practices to reduce runoff (Figure 9).

Figure 9. *Traditional run off and erosion control method whereby water way is opened across the teff field in Western Shoa around Babichii District.*

July and August are the two months when weeds become more problematic. Hand weeding is a major method used to control weeds. *Babbaqaa* and slashing are also carried out for the late emerged weeds. A pickaxe is the main implement used to control weeds. Some important strategies include that farmers start practicing several tillages as soon as soil moisture is sufficient to ensure moisture infiltration and to encourage weeds to germinate. When weeds emerge, farmers plow them under to reduce weed seed pressure for the future crop. Farmers adjust the sowing time according to the crop, cultivar, and soil type and availability of moisture. Drought tolerant crops are grown as early as possible in low-lying areas that receive run-off. Sowing is delayed on drought prone soils until sufficient moisture is conserved. Farmers sow early in the morning or late in the evening to avoid soil moisture loss. In May, during the hottest period of the year, farmers try to prevent livestock from walking on the fields to avoid loss of conserved moisture by evaporation. Some farmers divert run off into established (sown) fields whenever possible, especially at the flowering stage. They overcome labor shortage partly through exchange of labor. Depending on the availability of rain, farmers change crop and variety sequence of planting. In expectation of insufficient rainfall, farmers plant maize and vegetables around riverbank to overcome food shortage. If rain comes late, they plant pulses such as chickpea and haricot bean instead of teff or wheat. They also practice dry planting for crops like sorghum and maize on limited plots of land 6-8 days before the expected rain day. To overcome labor and oxen shortage, farmers mobilize community labor (*Daboo*) for land preparation, weeding, harvesting, and threshing.

2.8. Post-harvest technique

Farmers in Oromiya utilize a variety of traditional techniques to store crop seeds for later use. Maize, teff and sorghum are stored either inside the house on the roof where the roof is smoked every day to avoid molding or outside of the house (Figure 10) to be used as a source of seeds for the upcoming planting season.

Figure 10. *Maize, teff and sorghum stored inside and outside of the house to be used as seeds for the coming planting season, Billo-Boshe, East Wollega Zone.*

3. Current farming and land degradations in Oromiya

The traditional "slash and burn" or "slash and mulch" agricultural practice was sustainable and effective in restoring soil fertility for the prevailing level of crop yields and intensity of cropping. In the last few decades, however, the traditional shifting cultivation practice has changed due to demographic and economic pressures, converting to permanent farming fields and frequent tillage of crop production systems, particularly on hill tops (Figure 11). There has not been much work done to curtail hillside farming and to encourage transformation of degraded hillsides into productive farmland. Accordingly, widespread gullies exist, and eroded soils are carried away through rivers (Figure 12). The intense population growth is making the challenge even more complicated. The strategy that subsistence farmers have adopted to provide nourishment to the growing family size is through expanding farmlands to mountain tops. In the Oromiya region, the highlands comprise about 44% of the total landmass and accounts for 95% of the cropped land (Erkossa and Ayele, 2003). The lands that were traditionally left for grazing are now being used for crop farming. This has further intensified deforestation and contributed to more soil erosion. The high rate of erosion is caused mainly by vegetation clearance and intensive tillage. The introduction of frequent tillage has triggered drastic changes in the intensity of soil

erosion and has virtually eradicated indigenous technical knowledge in soil and water conservation and related farm activities.

Figure 11. *Hill top farming with high erosion incidences, Tokkee, West Shoa zone (Photo: Oli Bachie)*

There are several repercussions of such agricultural land use changes and intensification, the most important once being accelerated soil erosion and the deterioration of soil nutrient status (FAO, 1986; Hurni, 1988, Worku, 2006). Soil nutrient depletion arising from continuous cropping and frequent tillage along with the removal of crop residues, low external inputs and the shortage of adequate soil nutrient saving technologies have exacerbated resource degradation (Bojo and Cassels, 1995; Worku, 2002). Such progressive deterioration of biological and physical resources of the land has led to declining productivity and unsustainable yields of crops (Worku et al., 2006). In some cases, poor harvest and even total crop failures are common occurrences, particularly in the semiarid areas. In this long process farmers have their own means that partially play a key role in sustainable smallholder farming, thanks to their traditional knowledge and understanding of ecological systems and local biodiversity. Very few of those knowledge and practices are elaborated here.

4. Constraints and challenges of indigenous knowledge

Over the centuries, the people of Oromiya have provided a series of ecological and cultural services to humankind. The preservation of traditional forms of farming knowledge and practices helped maintain biodiversity, enhanced food security, and protected the natural resources to some extent. Although three systems of agricultural mechanization (manual power, animal-drawn implements and motorized power) are currently in use in Oromiya, techniques of production involve mostly simple implements, and traction is generally limited to draught animals. The traditional plough and hand tools such as the hoe, machete, pickaxe, shovel, sickle, etc. are the most widely used implements by smallholder farmers. Traditional conservation

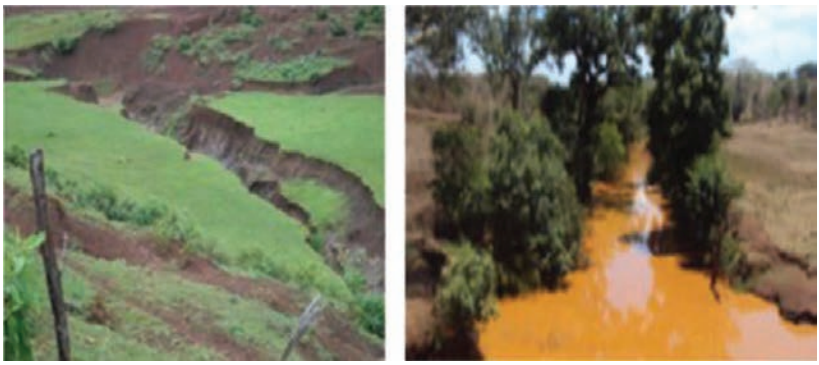

Figure 13. *Oromiya farmers still use old age simple tools as techniques of production which are inefficient & labor intensive, and traction is generally limited to draught animals*

tillage has been a major pre-occupation of subsistence farmers since time immemorial. While indigenous soil conservation methods still play an important role, they are highly location specific. Techniques of production involve simple tools; traction is generally limited to draught animals and the traditional plough and hand tools are ineffective and labor intensive (Figure 13). Some of these measures are difficult to mechanize, thus severely limiting the cropped land. Physical conservation practices alone have not been very effective where land is fragmented, and labor

shortage is chronic problem. Agronomic and vegetative measures alone have not been very effective where marginal lands like steep slopes are put under cultivation as a result of land pressure.

5. Why do Oromo farmers favor traditional knowledge and resources?

The basis of food security in Oromiya is mainly land and family labor. Leaving a legacy of better land for future generations is one thing, but the short-term need to feed the present generation and to make a living is quite alarming and unprecedented in Oromiya today. An important reason for the poor adoption of new techniques in general is the inability of subsistence farmers to take risks, although the essence of farming is trying to improve the odds in the gamble against weather, pest, and disease. Such risks are also exacerbated because farmers mainly depend on rain-fed agriculture. Oromo farmers have no risk capital to gamble with, so their whole strategy is geared towards safety and the reality of feeding the present generation. Not unreasonably, short-term realities usually take priority. Certainly, there have been good new techniques such as conservation agriculture in crop production but there has also been crop production failure particularly in the dryland areas during the drought years. The priority of most forward-looking or innovative farmers is to avoid the risk of failure. Farmers would rather use their traditional farming system with a low-yielding variety, which gives some yield every year, than a new tillage system with improved variety and recommended fertilizer management, which will give an increased yield most years, but none during bad years (e.g. the 2002 drought year in Oromiya). Even if the chance of an increased yield is nine years out of ten, it is still not an acceptable gamble for the small subsistence farmer, because in the tenth year, the year of failure, his family could starve to death. It is neither stupidity nor lethargy when the farmer sticks to his traditional management and old variety, but an acceptance of the realities of life. Thus, the perception of risk is probably the single biggest factor governing the implementation of any new techniques, and it is likely to remain so for a long time.

6. Global knowledge:

Experiences from American desert. The American low desert is a good example for Oromo growers to learn about how an ecosystem facing

non-hospitable weather can be converted into a surplus global food production region through various technologies such as irrigation, fertilizers, pesticides and planting of improved varieties or species. A lot of food is raised in the American low desert using water from the Colorado River (Figure 14). The Colorado river, the only source of irrigation, provides sustainable agricultural production complemented with sustainable local and global marketing for low desert farmers, ranchers, and the rural communities. One of the most sustainable characteristics about agriculture in the American low desert, just like in most of Oromiya, is the abundance of sunshine. However, the low desert also has a renewable resource for year-round: green house and improved outdoor growing that advances agricultural production (Figure 15). As a result of the irrigation water resource, one of the low desert regions, the Imperial Valley, has become a year-round crop growing region. It provides two-thirds of the nation's winter vegetables, produces over 100 crop commodities that were worth the gross production value of $2.23 billion for the 2018 production year (Ortiz, 2018), ranking it the 8th in the nation for agricultural revenue. Accordingly, the large acres of prime farmlands have transformed the desert into one of the most productive farming regions in California accounts for 48% of all employment for the region (Wikipedia, accessed June 2020)

Figure 14. *Colorado River Dam designed to provide irrigation water & hydropower to the imperial Valley & surrounding regions.*

Figure 15. *Improved farming practices in the low desert USA (Imperial Valley, CA)*

Since water is the most limiting resource in the low desert, technologies that make efficient water use are promoted by policy makers, researchers, and communities. Water use strategies involve the use of not only irrigation but also the use of the most *efficient* irrigation methods such as drip irrigation systems, dense plantings, the use of mulches to prevent evaporation and the use of drought-tolerant varieties that are deep rooted, heat tolerant and that mature in short growing seasons. In Oromiya, sustainable farming could be achieved through replanting with native grasses to cover the ground, careful rotational grazing, and the building of small check dams to slow the water down so it sinks in. As mentioned previously, the indigenous knowledge base and institutional arrangements in Oromia are proving inadequate in addressing the food demands of an alarmingly increasing population—the farming practices used in the American low desert could be a useful model to glean from.

6. What should be done to enhance agricultural sustainability, to reduce the impact of climate change and to secure an adequate and balanced food supply?

The need to reconcile agricultural production and production-dependent rural livelihoods with healthy ecosystems should originate from widespread innovation to coordinate landscape and policy action for sustainable food production. (Jackson & Jackson 2002). Feeding a population of over 100 million Ethiopians by using the current farming methods could result into converting another large hectare of natural habitat for agricultural production. Current yields are relatively low, and implementation of existing technologies could double or even triple yields, with adequate investment, market developments and attention to good ecosystem husbandry (UN Millennium Project 2005). Therefore, there must be strategic planning and initiatives taken by the government, farm institutions and individual farmers for agricultural development with a focus on adopting productive farming systems, diversifying crop commodities to secure sufficient and balanced nutrition. Zimmerer (2012) emphasizes that integrating the conservation of biodiversity by smallholder farmers with agricultural intensification is increasingly recognized as a leading priority of sustainability and food security amid global environmental and socioeconomic change. Because agricultural products are constrained by widespread resource degradation and inappropriate utilization or underutilization of available resources (many rivers in Oromiya are potential irrigation water sources), agricultural sustainability will require investment in ecosystem management and beyond. Some of the recommendations to be implemented are as follows:

- **Investing in irrigation infrastructure and maximizing the use of Oromiya' s water resources for agricultural production**. It is estimated that only about 4% of arable land in Oromiya is irrigated, regardless of the rich rivers, lakes and other water resources Oromiya has. Instead of heavily depending on rain-fed agriculture, farmers in Oromiya need to tap into Oromiya's water resources for irrigation. The region has many rivers such as Angar, Chogo, Suphee, Ejersa, Baredaa, Kono, Asattii and Jarmat, Gabar, Gembo, Danabaa and Abjar, Nashe, Amartii, Abuna, Boye, Asendabo, Gabate, Qorke, Qarsaa, Ambabo & Dade wata, Gudar, Abaya Fincha'a, Ganalee, Baroo, Awash, etc. and many lakes and ponds with the potential

for irrigation. Combined with the suitable climate, this could make the region one of the year-round food production regions. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations' 2001 Report stated that meeting "future food demand must come from intensification of irrigation, rather than expanding cultivation to more fragile, hilly & degraded lands", from increasing efficiency by use of external inputs and mechanization, and from maximizing the flow of natural resources to harvestable products.

- **Enhance agricultural productivity through crop diversification and introduction of alternative crops**. The UN Millennium Project (2005) stated that considerable investments will be required to rehabilitate degrading resources and ecosystems upon which food supplies, particularly of the rural poor, depend. That investment should include crop diversification to undertake risks and provide balanced food sources to citizens.
- **Reduce soil erosion and improve productivity of farmers.** Hilly side farming is prone to heavy erosion and should be reduced. Further, farmers can generate more income and elevate food security by producing *avocados, mangos, breadfruit, fig trees, pineapples, olives, Date Palms, Moringa, Quinoa, etc.*
- **Use combination of technologies such as soil erosion reduction techniques** (Terracing, contour planting, strip cropping, etc., and using reduced tillage/no tillage systems).
- **Sustainability through soil health**. Soil health promotes agricultural practices that are not only good for the farmer, but also good for the environment. Beneficial cropland management practices include cover cropping and conservation crop rotation.
- **Integrating livestock & crops can be more efficient & profitable**. Contrary to common assumptions, farmers and their communities often have strong economic and social rationales for supporting biodiversity conservation: to reduce production costs, raise or stabilize yields, improve product quality, protect their right to farm/herd/harvest wild products in and around their farms.
- **Adopting agroforestry practices** can provide shade and shelter to protect plants, animals, and water resources, while offering additional income.
- Move from wood biomass energy (fuel wood) to *solar cookers, solar ovens & other renewable energy sources* (hydropower, wind energy) to reduce firewood consumption and deforestation.

Conclusions

Oromiya's indigenous systems of crop production evolved over centuries of traditional and natural evolution and can be a basis for the adoption of new technology or practices. The incorporation of locally acceptable new technologies, appropriate soil moisture conservation measures, fertility improvement means, and proper agricultural implements are important to ensure sustainable crop production. These measures should be integrated into the normal crop-livestock husbandry concept, where care and improvement of land resources comes first with controlled degradation as part of the caring and improvement process. The coping strategies that farmers use to cope with natural resource conservation measures and crop related risks are valuable from an agricultural development perspective. For instance, farmers' knowledge of soil moisture conservation means, soil fertility improvement strategies and removal of water logging measures provide a basis for building a technology that accommodates farmers' indigenous knowledge. Participatory community-based approaches involving the stakeholders in planning and implementation are necessary in order to create a higher ownership attitude. Clear messages on any new technique should be included in the normal extension packages and training of both village extension workers and farmers should be emphasized to improve their understanding and skills. Modern and new technique tends to be more acceptable to farmers if it serves multiple objectives and helps increase crop productivity. For the many smallholder farmers, conservation of natural resources has no end. It is rather an integral part of the everyday efforts to improve and sustain livelihoods. In the meantime, improving productivity of farms is an underlying rationale. When farmers' strategies, their indigenous knowledge, and making decisions are better understood, all stakeholders can work in harmony with farmers. Oromo farmers will be more open to accepting new technologies that sustain agricultural production if such technologies account or based on farmers indigenous knowledge of their farms. However, new technologies become less likely to be adopted.

Farmers, policy makers and other stakeholders must become knowledgeable about the existence and extent of land degradation and nutrient depletion and its contributory factors. It must be noted that the major causes of land degradation and nutrient depletion are soil erosion, intensive tillage, exhaustion of nutrients by crops and deforestation, among many other deleterious factors. Indigenous knowledge should integrate

new knowledge, technology, and resources from one ecosystem into another. For example, one potential solution is to introduce edible tree crops such as palm oil (Mexii) and olive trees (Ejjersa) in a way that reduces erosion in hilly areas. It is well documented that these tree crops grow well and produce edible oil and fruits under several tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world.

This paper outlined some strategic actions required to mobilize eco-agriculture initiatives on a scale that would have a meaningful impact on Oromiya's agricultural production and ecosystem management. Implementation of such policies with government participation and support could transform the old age traditional farming practices into modern farms and increase the capacity of the country to feed its citizens.

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Demystifying Internal Colonialism in Uncolonized Ethiopia through Dukkanaan Duuba Play

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Abstract: *This study critically analyses a play, namely Dukkanaan Duuba, thereby uncovering the existence of internal colonialism in Ethiopia, a concept that has been hotly debated since the 20th century. The play portrayed how nations and nationalities in Ethiopia, specifically the Oromo, suffered under successive imperial systems since their colonization in the late 19th century. The play aims at reactivating Oromo self-consciousness to help realize the hegemonic system in place to reclaim and restore their cultural values. It specifically unearthed how the Abyssinian (Amhara-Tigre) centered identity was systematically imposed on the Oromo with the aim of stripping off their identity, culture, and value. Moreover, the play depicts how public institutions were instrumentalized to oppress diversities and discourage differences. The play further displayed how self-conscious Oromo individuals were systematically targeted and criminalized. The characters performed representing members of a family portraying how the system was embedded at all social levels and institutionally to show how each family member was morally and psychologically affected, socially reduced, and politically and economically marginalized. The findings of this study demystify the presence of internal colonialism and unveil the struggles faced by individuals and communities in the country.*

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Introduction

Dukkanaan Duuba[2], a play written and directed by Dhaba Wayessa, holds a significant place among the Oromo people in bringing to the artistic stage and unveiling the horrific memory of internal colonialism the Oromo have endured under successive regimes in Ethiopian empire since the forceful annexation of Biyya Oromoo—the Oromo country. Dhaba, renowned for his diverse talents as a playwright, novelist, director, filmmaker, and journalist played a pivotal role in bringing Oromo issues to the forefront artistically through his various literary works and skills (Djote, 1993; Roba, 2022). He made substantial contributions to the Oromo literary and artistic movements, fostering Oromo self-consciousness and revitalizing Oromo cultural values and identity.

The ousting of the communist regime by liberation fronts comprising TPLF[3], EPLF[4], OLF[5] along with other ethnic based militant factions, created a conducive environment for the proliferation of artistic endeavors (Jalata, 2002; Wagaw, 1999). *Dukkanaan Duuba* premiered in Finfinnee as a live theater production at the National Theater (ENT) auditorium in December 1991 before it was abruptly halted thereafter. The regime change that facilitated the revival, creation, and widespread distribution of ethnic and cultural artifacts as emblematic representations of identity, encompassing musical ensembles, independent media outlets, literary works, and theatrical productions early 1990s (Abbink, 2011), swiftly interrupted and targeted Oromo nationalists and artists (Jalata, 2019).

Effectively advertised through traditional social networks (TSNs), such as small group gatherings (SGG), public meetings (PMs), sharing in marketplaces and places of worship (SMPW), interpersonal communication (IC), and significant gatherings like scheduled weddings (SW) and

2 *Dukkanaan Duuba*—translated as *Beyond the Darkness.*
3 Tigray People Liberation Front
4 Eritrean People Liberation Front
5 Oromo Liberation Front

accidental funerals (AF) (Masiello & Izzo, 2019; Spiegler et al., 2011), *Dukkanaan Duuba* garnered high receptivity.

The play holds the distinction of being among the first plays performed in Afaan Oromoo since the imperial system officially banned the use of Oromo vernacular in public spaces, institutions, and artistic works (see Bulcha, 1997; Djote, 1993). The play unequivocally exposed the unacknowledged realities of colonialism the Oromo people faced under the Ethiopian empire, a country that boasted of never having been colonized. *Dukkanaan Duuba* provided a thought-provoking opportunity for the Oromo to develop a heightened sense of self-awareness. Through informal conversations and personal communication, it became evident that *Dukkanaan Duuba* and related artistic works of the time deeply resonated with thousands of Oromo individuals, played a significant role not only in raising their self-consciousness, but also in fostering unity among the Oromo people. Owing its contribution in immortalizing the impact of internal colonialism—or settler colonialism in Jalata's term (Jalata, 2002), *Dukkanaan Duuba* could have attracted significant scholarly attention. However, despite its impact, widespread reception, and social approval, the play has largely been neglected by scholars. I prefer to utilize the concept of *internal colonialism* in the context of this study to clearly elucidate the persistent colonization the Oromo people experienced since Biyya Oromoo was forcefully annexed to the Ethiopian empire through the colonial project of *Ethiopian Unification* in the 19th century. The colonization of the Oromo people and other southern nations was intensified within the boundaries of the Ethiopian empire since the formation of the so called modern Ethiopia.

The absence of research on the play for an extended period can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the play exposes the presence of *internal colonialism* in the Ethiopian empire, a narrative that goes against the acceptance and acknowledgment desired by pro-imperial elites. Secondly, the play advocates for and promotes the construction of a culturally inclusive, accommodative, and diverse identity. Thirdly, the education system of the Ethiopian empire has discouraged and systematically hindered the production and dissemination of genuine knowledge (see Bulcha, 1997; Dugassa, 2016). This situation indicates that even the proclaimed promotion of freedom of expression and cultural identity under the EPRDF rule holds little substance beyond mere rhetoric. Alternatively, it could be suggested that researchers may have been monitored and restrained as evidenced by the mass dismissal of over 42 professors from AAU on a

single day (see Abegaz, 2015), and the expulsion of the playwright shortly before the play's release in the case of *Dukkanaan Duuba*. Regardless, the exclusion of *Dukkanaan Duuba* from academic discussion and analysis in light of the direct target audience—the Oromo nation alone that constitute over 40 percent of the Ethiopian population is illogical.

More tangibly, the exclusion of *Dukkanaan Duuba* from *Cine-Ethiopia*, a meticulously researched book that examines the history of Ethiopian cinema and related works, is a deeply troubling aspect. Within the context of this substantial 316-page publication, jointly authored by Ethiopian and international scholars, the omission of the play raises significant concerns. This exclusion could serve as a plausible indication for the ongoing marginalization of Oromo studies, even in the present day. The reference to Mollenhauer's (2011) work from 2011 further reinforces this notion. This observation underscores the pressing need for more inclusive and comprehensive research endeavors that recognize and embrace the diverse cultural expressions and contributions of different communities in Ethiopia.

Therefore, drawing on the insights of postcolonial theory, an interdisciplinary framework that critically examines the historical and ongoing effects of colonialism on societies, this study seeks to shed light on the significance of themes explored in *Dukkanaan Duuba*. The objective of the study is to elucidate the role of *Dukkanaan Duuba* in exposing the exercise of internal colonialism in the Ethiopian empire that prides itself on its history of resistance against foreign colonizers and paving a way for the Black resistance to slavery and their subsequent independence. In an attempt to rectifying such a narration, this article examines how *Dukkanaan Duuba* depicts the manifestation and representation of internal colonialism within the Ethiopian empire.

Theoretical Framework

This article employs postcolonial theory as a theoretical framework to provide a detailed analysis of the play. By exploring the memory portrayal of internal colonialism in Ethiopia through *Dukkanaan Duuba*, this analysis sheds light on power dynamics, ideologies, and social inequalities. The analysis focuses on key themes including internal colonialism and power relations, language and cultural suppression, resistance and agency, and the impact on individuals and families. Through a comprehensive examination of the play, this article contributes to a deeper understanding

of the complex dynamics surrounding internal colonialism within the context of Ethiopia.

Postcolonial theory, an interdisciplinary framework that emerged in the mid-20th century, critically examines the historical and ongoing effects of colonialism on societies. It challenges dominant narratives, power structures, and cultural hierarchies established during the colonial era (Ashcroft et al., 2013). According to Bhabha (1994), postcolonial theory seeks to "write back" against colonial discourse by analyzing how colonized subjects negotiate and resist the effects of colonization.

Postcolonial theorists emphasize the construction of the "Other" and the marginalization of indigenous cultures and knowledge systems (Rukundwa & Van Aarde, 2007). They highlight the importance of language and cultural reclamation as acts of resistance (Spivak, 2012). Postcolonial theory also recognizes the agency of the colonized in challenging colonial structures and creating counter-narratives (Hamadi, 2014). Cited in Hamadi's work, Edward Said posits that a prevailing colonizer has enforced a specific language and culture upon the colonized peoples, concurrently neglecting and distorting their multifaceted cultures, histories, values, and languages. The primary objective of the colonialists has been to assert dominance over these populations and exploit their resources, all while masquerading under the guise of enlightening, civilizing, and even humanizing them (Hamadi, 2014).

Postcolonial theory enables individuals who have experienced socio-political and economic subjugation to reclaim their agency in pursuit of equity. Rather than waging a war against the past in dislocated cultures, postcolonial theory confronts the exploitative repercussions of historical events. By fostering self-consciousness, postcolonial theory sparks a transformative shift in the perspectives of both the colonized and the colonizer, aiming to construct a new society founded upon principles of liberty and equity (Rukundwa & Van Aarde, 2007).

Although the Oromo have inhabited the Horn of Africa for centuries exercising an egalitarian socio-economic and political culture namely the *gadaa* system (Bariso, 2018; Jalata, 2020; Ta'a, 2016), the Abyssinian colonial powers that invaded and took control of Biyya Oromoo at the end of the 19th century plunged the Oromo people into colonization (Abbas, 2014; Hassen, 2002; Jalata, 2019). The prohibition of promotion and practices of cultural values was followed by imposing single cultural identity. The Oromo since then have been struggling both artistically, clandestinely, scholarly, and militarily to realize their

liberation and preserve their identity and cultural values (Gabul, 2013; Jalata, 2007). They were also denied the right to media and modern education (Bulcha, 1997; Dugassa, 2016). Not only the play exposes internal colonialism in Ethiopia, but it also decolonizes unitarist Ethiopian cultural identity.

The Paradox of Uncolonized Ethiopia

On March 1, 2024, Ethiopia has commemorated the 128th anniversary of its victory over Italy at the historical Battle of Adwa in 1896. Italy's attempt to occupy Ethiopia during 1935-41, 39 years after its shameful defeat at Adwa, did not sustain beyond it occupying insignificant areas with trivial or no colonial effects (Bulcha, 1997; Clapham, 2019). Consequently, Ethiopia claimed to remain the only African nation to have never fallen under the arms of European colonizers, and its citizens have never tasted the bitterness of external colonialism. Ethiopia also has historical records of successfully defeating external invaders, including Egyptians and Sudanese in the late 19th and Somalians in the late 20th centuries with all its controversies. Consequently, especially following the reprehensible defeat of Italians at the Battle of Adwa, the Black nations distinguished Ethiopia as a symbol of African liberation and many other colonized folks elsewhere (Palmeri & Palmeri, 2018). However, the persistent imperial system that emerged and took root under the *unification of Ethiopia* ended up stripping off indigenous values, cultural traditions, and identities of self-administering kingdoms and ethnicities, leaving behind contentious legacies that no one has healed hitherto. For instance, Ojo (2015) contends that kingdoms and chiefdoms that eventually metamorphosed into the present-day Ethiopia experienced colonization under Menelik prior to European conquest of Africa where culture and values of the colonizing group imposed on the colonized.

Scholars argue that Ethiopia, burdened by its complex history, has turned the writing of Ethiopian history into a contentious battleground among the diverse ethnic groups that comprise the nation (Thomas et al., 2018). Ethiopia's victory over Italy's invasion and occupation got overemphasized to blur the internal colonial legacies that many nationalities suffered afterward. However, the practice of internal colonialism that came with the project of unification of Ethiopia was disregarded, creating binary and divisive sentiments among nationalities across ethnic lines (Sorenson, 2017; Thomas et al., 2018). These rival discourses

and narratives have conflictingly been *co*-existing for so long now. The Ethio-centric cultural group that over the last hundred years somehow benefited economically, socially, culturally, and politically not only revere historical Menelik but also crave and aspire to inoculate and transplant his unitarist project in present Ethiopia (Regassa, 2021).

This group claims the victory over Italy as their own and emperor Menelik as a hero for pulling together ethnonationalists from various localities living independently that finally won him that historical and glorifying battle successfully (Abdi, 1981). On the other hand, the unification of Ethiopia that is claimed to have broken the spinal cord of Western colonizer ended up making way for the establishment and sustenance of internal colonization. As a result, Ethiopian elites in the diaspora since the 1970s had heated debates over whether historical Ethiopia could equally represent all Ethiopians with all their diversity and differences (Thomas et al., 2018; Birru, 2011). The Ethiopian empire is seen as glorious for some elites while others including the Oromo, regard it and by extension emperor Menelik as incurable historical wounds and the mastermind of all monsters respectively (Abbas, 2014; Jalata, 2021). In contrast to the *pro Menelikites*, the Oromo perceive Menelik as vindictive slave-master under whose rule millions of Oromo were murdered on their ancestral lands, countless men and women got their arms and breasts amputated for resisting to submit to slavery while many others were sold as objects to slavery (Abbas, 2014; Ararssa, 2016; Jalata, 2017).

Due to such paradoxical and contradicting memories and narratives, elites from different social and cultural backgrounds have held controversial legacies of the Ethiopian empire as well as its historical narratives (Hussein, 2006). One of the reasons pro-imperialists romanticize Ethiopian history from a superficial look is the mighty victory Ethiopians won over external invaders, as discussed earlier. They have held a strong belief that victory would not have been achieved if Menelik did not dissolve kingdoms and chiefdoms and brought them together against the outside invaders. Accordingly, they perceive that regardless of their varying historical ambivalence, Ethiopians should equally and proudly celebrate Ethiopian history and accept Menelik as a hero (Hassen, 2016). However, most Ethiopians whose grandfathers suffered under Menelik rule aggressively challenge this appeal, justifying that Ethiopians never consider Ethiopian history in general and Menelik in particular as a shared and representative historical value (Ararssa, 2016; Gebissa, 2007).

For the Oromo people, in particular, Menelik is perceived as a historical behemoth who used mischievous tricks of recruiting brave Oromo leaders such as Ras Gobana to diplomatically bring the Oromo under his arms, who eventually destroyed, denied, and languished Oromo identity and cultural values (Dilebo, 1974; Hussein, 2006). The Oromo elites strongly claim that one could not capture the complete picture of Ethiopian history without bringing forth and recognizing the least emphasized legacy of internal colonialism in the mainstream discourse (Hassen, 2007; Jalata, 2019; Singer, 1970). Such a debatable conception of Ethiopian history determined how Ethiopians today imagine the past, which affects the historical representation of Ethiopia and how it is kept on boiling anger among Ethiopians. I argue that the ongoing conflict, socio-economic, humanitarian, and political crisis in the country has its root in the Ethiopian history.

Upon assuming power on the back of the *Qeerroo*[6] protest and Oromo national movement, the Abiy administration erected statues of emperors Menelik & Haile Selassie in the National Palace shortly (Regassa & Emmenegger, 2023). Oromo activists and elites stringently criticized this act because Menelik signifies disgrace among the Oromo. The premier's intention was made clear later as critics speculated from the onset. There are gestures indicating attempts of dissolving diverse cultures Ethiopians enjoyed in the last three decades under EPRDF rule. This has been well reflected in the inaugural speech of the premier on 2 April 2018, emphasizing: '*We will make Ethiopia great again*!'

Internal Colonialism

The concept of *internal colonialism* has been conceptualized distinctly in various colonial contexts. Much of the application of internal colonialism was associated with the traditional colonial contexts as an extension of external colonial history in many countries. Scholars referred to those colonial experiences as *internal colonialism* (Gutiérrez, 2004) or *domestic colonialism* (Ogunyinka, 2019; Savitch, 1978; Tabb, 1974), while relatively both indicating the notion of the continuation of

6 The Oromo (male) youth—the equivalent of which for female is 'Qarree'—who persistently protested from 2014 up till 2018 and removed TPLF dominated EPRDF regime in Ethiopia making way for Abiy Ahmed to come to power.

traditional colonialism handled and exercised by local powers on the local citizens once the practice of external colonialism fades away at least theoretically. In other words, internal colonialism was a new version of traditional colonialism where former colonial powers systematically continued their influence in the socio-economic and political affairs of their former colonies using the less visible hands and through local leaders. The concept of *internal* originated in Latin America to define the social segregation imposed by the dominant group to demarcate their class or status from the subordinates (Gutiérrez, 2004). Therefore, the dominant-subordinate racial and social binary set in internal colonialism confirms the continuation of colonial legacies.

However, the concept of internal colonialism in the context of the Ethiopia empire profoundly contrasted the above in that Ethiopia was never colonized, and the practice of internal colonialism was not the perpetuation of external colonization. From the 1880s and especially in the aftermath of gaining victory over Italy in 1896, emperor Menelik fully consolidated imperial power and somehow succeeded in the project of centralizing power through force weakening kingdoms and chiefdoms (Abbas, 2014; Dilebo, 1974; Hassen, 2016; Hassen, 2007), which proved sustenance of the imperial system until the last emperor Haile Selassie was brought down and replaced by the socialist regime in 1974. Throughout the process and making of the Ethiopian Empire since the end of the 19th century, southern nations and the Oromo were considered and treated like subjects, not citizens, being sold to slavery as economic source (Barxter, 1978; Moore-Harell, 1999). Therefore, the concept of *internal colonialism* in the Ethiopian context is understood as the colonization of the local people by local and dominant imperial powers by adapting Western colonial systems through strengthening diplomatic relations with foreign powers who had a better experience in colonialism (Hassen, 1983). Some conceptualize the colonized in the context of internal colonialism in Ethiopia as slaves and properties of their king with no rights (Bass, 2019). To strengthen their colonial power, Ethiopian emperors benefited greatly from their foreign diplomatic relations because these relations were the primary source of their weapons, which they used against their people (Dilebo, 1974; Hassen, 1983).

On the other hand, they internally discouraged creativities and local innovations such as craftsmanship, smithing, weaving, tannery, and pottery to quickly debilitate any form of resistance (Bevan & Pankhurst,

1996). In other words, the Ethiopian empire established internal colonialism by utilizing armaments they got from their western alliances while disallowing any form of handcraft-ship to destabilize the power of the colonized (Bevan & Pankhurst, 1996; Konso, 1968). Until recently, weaving, pottery, tannery, and blacksmith have been socially discriminated against in many parts of Ethiopia, paralyzing the art of vocational skills, which have laid the basis for modernization and industrialization in many countries.

Methods

The research involved a comprehensive approach. As the play is already available online, I repeatedly viewed and took notes to ensure a thorough understanding of its content and nuances (Wu et al., 2019). Transcripts and dialogue exchanges were meticulously examined, paying close attention to key scenes and interactions that shed light on the theme of internal colonialism within Ethiopia. Additionally, relevant scholarly articles, research papers, and literary analyses were consulted to provide a broader context and theoretical framework for the analysis. This interdisciplinary approach aimed to capture the multifaceted nature of internal colonialism and its manifestations within the play. The play was performed in *Afaan Oromoo,* and its movie format does not have English subtitles which I translated into English verbatim. I need to clarify that I have years of translation experience. Apart from taking translation courses I had independent training for translation and received certificates and recommendations from international organizations and translation agencies. Hence, I am confident that the ideas reflected in the source language are transferred into the target language maintaining accuracy and equivalence.

The exploration of *Dukkanaan Duuba* told stories of colonialism in the Ethiopian empire. It is noteworthy that Ethiopia exhibits elements of internal oppression akin to colonial systems. The analysis aimed to uncover the layers of internal colonialism depicted in *Dukkanaan Duuba*, shedding light on the various forms of oppression and the experiences of marginalized communities within the geographical terrain of the Ethiopia empire. Through this exploration, a deeper understanding of the complexities and implications of internal colonialism is sought, ultimately contributing to a broader discourse on social justice and equality.

Discussions

The stage play showcased a notable ensemble of characters including Gudina, Warqe, Meti, Chali, Badhadha, Belaynesh, and Kumilachew. Gudina assumed the role of a father and husband, while Warqe portrayed the character of a wife and mother. Meti and Chali, representing the children of Gudina and Warqe, portrayed the roles of students. Badhadha, a character purported to possess a European Master's degree, played the role of job seeking as Gudina's close friend. Belaynesh, on the other hand, embodied the character of a government institution secretary within the play, while Kumilachew portrayed the role of a manager at the same institution where Belaynesh worked.

The play came up almost after a century since the Oromo and other nations fell under Abyssinian colonization, critically challenging the formation of a unitarist system that discourages multilingual and multicultural Ethiopia during the last one hundred years. Before the play came to the stage, the mainstream media, social discourses, and historical narratives worked institutionally to erase the moral and psychological damages the imperial system caused and collective memories of the colonized (Bulcha, 1997).

One of the central depictions of the play was that the Oromo people had been oppressed under the arms of imperialists since Menelik forcefully invaded the Oromo and disintegrated their *Gadaa* system. Gudina, the major character, tried to portray how the Oromo have been repressed to lose hold of their cultural identity, values, and language to acculturate to the imposed single identity of the oppressing group coated with a pseudo name Ethiopia. Gudina represents the self-conscious group who made commitment to stand firm with the Oromo cause and influenced others, particularly other characters who had less understanding about how the subjugation operates hegemonically. Due to his commitment and boldness about his Oromo identity, Gudina had to endure the suffering of various kinds, including being fired from office, targeted, and harassed afterwards. The play displays through the major character that the government assigned security personnel to spy over self-confident Oromo individuals. The responsibility of the security men was to discouraging sense of *Oromummaa*[7] and Oromo cultural identity by way of persecution, imprisonment, and torturing.

7 A concept that defines Oromo identity, culture, language, and values etc. holistically (Jalata, 2007).

Existing literature significantly supports and proves that the character Gudina played reflects the reality the Oromo have faced since the Ethiopian empire was built at the end of the 19th century (Dugassa, 2016; Hassen, 2016). The scholars argue that the eyes of the Ethiopian regimes have been on self-conscious Oromo elites. The Oromo speaking for their cause and rights have been systematically singled out, labelled as members of terrorist group, imprisoned, made to lose their job, and forced to flee the country (Dugassa, 2016; Jalata, 1990). Dugassa asserted that the Oromo were distanced from holding key government positions and that they would be targeted anytime they were identified as self-confident and conscious Oromo. The author further asserts that Emmanuel Abraham, who was serving the Ministry of Education as Director General from 1944-47, was finally charged with false allegations once his Oromo identity was discovered (Dugassa, 2016), which has been a norm through which the Oromo were removed from key government positions.

Regardless of internal challenges of life with his family and external political pressure he faced, the major character accepted writing the suffering of his people, their historical and social values as a priority. He often argued with his wife Warqe and his friend Badhadha that the Oromo should not only demand freedom but also should be ready to pay any sacrifice it requires to realize it. However, his wife and his friend blamed Gudina for demanding what was "impossible" to get and his wife often insisted him to demand what is attainable which includes accepting culture of the oppressors, writing and speaking in their language etc. However, Gudina strongly believed that attainable was only servitude, washing other's legs and living under their feet—which the internal colonizers put in place to respect.

The role played by Warqe, Gudina's wife also represents an important reality in the Oromo political struggle. Her disapproval of her husband's position was not because she denied that the Oromo have been under subjugation, but because she cares more about the present reality of their daily life that she expects her husband had to deal with. Most importantly, Warqe fears that they might exterminate her husband like others which directly affects her personally as a mother and wife for her husband's absence would cost her to lead a widow life with two kids without anyone to support them. Her perspective was somehow influenced by her lack of political awareness and the hegemonic internal colonial system that took root deep in the social structure.

Likewise, their close friend, Badhadha Gammadaa, did not understand much about how the system belittled the Oromo until he finally saw how partial and inconsistent the system was. Badhadha completed his studies in the UK and graduated in Master of Arts in Accounting. Even though he got back home with the hope to serve his country, none of the applications he made for one solid year was successful. He was not aware that the system cares more about the identity of the applicant not their qualifications or degrees for long time. He has got typical first and second Oromo name unlike Emmanuel Abraham and Tadesse Birru whose Oromo identity is untraceable by mere names. Badhadha holds not only predictable but also common Oromo names that the oppressors could easily recognize. The fact that Badhadha's application was turned down regardless of his outstanding credentials is not a mere construction of the play, but it is what is documented in scholarly works, as discussed in the paragraph that follow.

Dirribi Demissie Bokku's (2011) *Oromo Wisdom in Black Civilization* uncovered that many Oromo were denied getting any job with their Oromo names and that they had to choose either to take the job with their name changed or reject the job and maintain their Oromo name with all its consequences. Such a game did not only target eliminating Oromo cultural values, identity, and ethnic representation in the country but also systematically controlling and owning Oromo natural resources thereof. Another study also discovered that names of many Oromo towns were replaced with new names such as Adama to Nazareth, Bishoftu to Debre Zeit, Haramaya to Alemaya, etc. (Ayele, 2016), to facilitate overall colonization through leaving distorted historical legacies. The practice of forcing the Oromo to get their names changed to secure jobs and controlling their land through altering the original names was normally to expedite systematic control over the Oromo by destroying any sense of their identities.

The character represented by Badhadha played another key role in the play. All the girlfriends he dated broke up with him once they knew his Oromo identity, which the system ascribed to be perceived as disgusting or defiled identity. Belaynesh, a good-looking young girl, was so happy when she first met Badhadha in her office when he showed up to drop a job application. She was interested in him and had a personalized first-day interaction to establish her interest. Badhadha was a handsome guy with grace of manhood and complete sense of self-confidence. Belaynesh appreciated and challenged him that she must know him somewhere but

with pretention. After a while she insisted on to make sure of receiving his contact address and she gave him her regular telephone number. After a while, upon discovering his Oromo identity, her smile and giggle swiftly faded away. The smooth, charming, and informal communication suddenly altered itself to a formal office talk where she demanded him to leave office directing him to check the status of his application via phone. When Badhadha called later that day, Belaynesh answered and informed him he must have rung the wrong number just to avoid him. After several attempts, she informed him his application was missing which was another way of saying his application was turned down.

What is so intriguing here is not the identity per se but the power in the notion of signification. Although Belaynesh liked Badhadha at the first glance and they already had a very sound first day communication that laid a good ground for further dating, she changed her mind as immediately as she discovered his identity. The identity itself is not an issue nor a problem; what matters is the signification assigned to identity and the connotation it gives thereof. What makes someone or something good or bad, likeable, or hateable, beautiful, or ugly etc. is the signifying meaning attached to it and the cultural interpretation assigned to it not the name itself. That is there is no go or bad name for anyone anywhere. The arbitrariness of meaning, non-essentialism, and the non-universality relations between signifier, and signified is revealing (Barker & Jane, 2016). This is a prime example of the manifestation of hegemonic power relations and the operation of internal colonialism, extending even to the interpersonal level. It ultimately results in the establishment of class distinctions and the categorization of certain individuals as first-class citizens, while relegating others to second-class status, consequently eroding social cohesion.

As previously alluded to, Meti and Chali assume crucial roles within the narrative, symbolizing the experiences of Oromo students within educational institutions and shedding light on the way they were treated within the broader school system, particularly in relation to their Oromo identity. The characters performed by Meti and Chali depicted how the Oromo have been oppressed due to their identity and that many Oromo students must have left schools being bullied by other students because of their Oromo names and ethnic identity. In the play was shown that both Meti and her brother Chali came home crying being insulted at school by their classmates. Meti asked her father many questions one after the other that he couldn't give straight answer for. When children are singled out

and insulted by other students at school because of who they are and the social identity they represent, it hurts beyond imagination, and it could force the victims to drop schooling even if that could not be the right choice. Because psychological and mental trauma they might experience persists way longer. Years back I read a book ***ጡርቃዝምታ*** (***The silence of Burqa***) that narrates a story about how a student committed suicide after being rejected and bullied repeatedly by her school mates because of her identity. Bullying Oromo students had another aim apart from psychological damage through which diverse cultural identities were repressed. The book was written by the late Tesfaye Gebreab who claimed to have written based on a true story. The aggregate of formal way of reducing enrolment of Oromo students and systematically expelling the ones already in school indirectly through attacking them because of their identity elongate the circle of oppression.

In reference to Zoga (1993), Begna Dugassa, whose study surveyed the prevalence of racism, particular to the education sector, claimed that the Amhara ethnic identity dominated more than seventy percent of the enrolment in the 1940s while the remaining percentage represented the majority that constitutes over 80 ethnic identities in the country including the Oromo (Dugassa, 2016). General Tadesse Birru, an Oromo elite whose name identifies him as non-Oromo who worked as a chairperson of the National Literacy Program, warned by Akililu Habtewold, that educating the Oromo would cost the system to lose control over them in the long run (Dugassa, 2016).

Conclusions

The world is full of controversies. Human society are both the products and producers of these controversies. Oppressor/oppressed binary opposition has existed maybe ever since human beings existed. I argue it would be perpetuated with dynamic systems altering the way it operates. The story in the stage play is not something new. It is a reality that must have happened to many fellow humans at any historical point in time. The play was selected for analysis because it is the first Oromo play that came to stage in the history of Oromo stage play. It might be surprizing why a single study has not been conducted on the play so far. The fact that the play has not been studied yet could serve as a lens through which to see the oppression that sustains itself keeping the colonized remain colonized even after relative freedom. Postcolonial

scholar who also is much attracted in the study of the global south Raew Connell condemns colonialism for it sustains itself even after its official closure as a program (Connell, 2020). Although Ethiopia's outward look as a non-colonized black nation in the world is highly venerated, it must equally be recognized for colonizing other independent kingdoms within its territorial terrain, especially the Oromo since 19th century. The project of Ethiopian unification, an idea first launched by emperor Tewdros and later implemented by Menelik, remains a chronic political trauma that no deliverance nor healing has been sought for yet. The civil war with the Tigray Regional government and the conflicts across Oromia and Amhara and Benishangul Gumz including arbitrary searches and arrests without court warrants, and the extrajudicial killings in different parts of the country over the last five years all signal the gesture of the continuation of colonialism.

The play reflected three types of persons that could represent any oppressed social group. Gudnia, who suffered a lot from losing job to lifetime imprisonment, constructs a character of a true freedom fighter whose focus is emancipation of his people with strong commitment and boldness who is ready to pay any sacrifice it requires for what they believed in. Badhadha's position was a bit contradictory for in the real life he had a better academic exposure that could have helped him to better understand the internal colonialism in operation. However, it took him a year to understand what was going on after the girls he dated rejected him once they discovered his Oromo identity, and all his job applications turned down. On the other hand, this tells the fact that educated people often takes the safest side in their political engagement aspiring to take better advantage because of their education. The character Warqe played is also significant because it represents most people who want to lead ordinary life without political involvement and accepting whatever operating rules and regulation put in place. She represents the laissez-faire people who are more concerned about their day-to-day life often trying to avoid any repercussion that come their way whenever it comes to politics.

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Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 120 7/15/2024 4:15:40 PM

Mutual Insurance: A History of the Wallagga Association

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Abstract: This paper explores the history of the Wallagga Self-Help Association from its foundation to its collapse. Starting as a burial association (*iddir*) in 1946 in Ethiopia's capital Finfinnee, the association reorganized itself into Maradaja Mahber (Self-Help) with clear and achievable goals in early 1961 and survived until 1979. The association played a crucial role in supporting its members at times of need and contributed to regional and national causes. The research methodology employed included interviews with the founders and members of the association; primary sources, including the statutes and minutes of the association; and the available literature.

Introduction

In many communities within developing countries, the method of forming indigenous non-governmental self-help associations plays a vital role in daily life. These mutual associations, which are a source of strength to families during occasions such as births and weddings, illnesses and deaths, deserve closer attention due to their economic, cultural, and social significance to the contemporary world. Although the Gurage people of Ethiopia are believed to be the best example of a population employing this long-established mechanism, the Oromo and other groups within Ethiopia have also developed such associations. David Korten rightly states that the Oromo "have been more receptive

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 121 7/15/2024 4:15:40 PM

to cooperative schemes. Several projects have been undertaken with prospects for success."[1]

Burial associations, commonly called *iddir*, are one type of community-based non-governmental organization and are believed to have expanded in Ethiopia during the Italian occupation (1936–41).[2] *Iddir* refers to "a group of associated individuals who contribute a regular monthly contribution into a common fund which is paid out to contributors on the basis of need arising from death, loss of job, illness or accident."[3] During the resistance against the Italian forces, "many people were killed who had no relatives to bury them. It has served an important function in providing a formalization of village obligations within the otherwise disorganized and impersonal setting of modern town and city life."[4] Thousands were massacred in the capital in 1937, for example, after an attempt on the life of the Italian colonial governor Rodolfo Graziani. The survivors of the massacre needed assistance and a way of organizing together to honor and bury the dead. After fundamentally starting as burial associations in urban centers, *iddir* gradually proliferated in rural areas as well.

The average size of an *iddir* could be fifty to a hundred members. The *iddir* members elect a committee who are responsible for the activities of the *iddir*. Members can be expelled due to continued absence from the monthly meetings or funerals or for failure to pay the monthly contribution; however, due to social pressures and lack of alternatives to social affiliation, expulsion from membership is limited. The *iddir* elders also serve in other roles, including as mediators in local disputes.

Other types of community service associations in Ethiopia predate *iddir,* including the agricultural associations known as *dabo*. A *dabo* is initiated by an individual who needs to obtain the assistance of the other villagers for a significant task and it refers to the people who work, and

1 David C. Korten, *Planned Change in a Traditional Society: Psychological Problems of Modernization in Ethiopia* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 328.

2 Alula Pankhurst and Damen Haile Maryam, "*Iddir* in Ethiopia: Historical Development, Social Function, and Potential Role in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control," *Northeast African Studies* 7, no. 2 (2000): 39.

3 Arnold M. Zack, *The New Labor Relations in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University, 1962), 1-2.

4 Korten, *Planned Change*, 96.

also the system of work. Depending on local custom, the initiator plans with his wife how the work will be carried out. His wife prepares food and drinks for the *dabo,* while her husband goes around the neighborhood asking the villagers to come to his *dabo* on the appointed day. At the appointed time, the workers begin working, with lunch served in the field. The number of people participating in the *dabo* varies from 20 to 100 depending on the work. Peak agricultural seasons almost inevitably force every agrarian to seek help from another neighbor. House and bridge construction, harvest, and weeding seasons require more hands. Such a practice significantly contributed to community relations throughout the country.

On the Move: From Wallagga to Finfinnee

Wallagga is a region in western Oromia; it is bordered to the north by the Amhara Regional State, to the south by Illubabor Province, to the east by Shawa Province in the Oromia region, and to the west by the Republic of South Sudan. It includes all territories to the south of the upper Gibe River near the town of Bako. The Gibe River forms the natural boundary between the Shawa and Wallagga regions.[5] Unofficially, all territories south of the town of Ambo are sometimes referred to as Wallagga. In the past, Wallagga may have been a more extensive territory including Illubabor to the west of the Gojjab River and the Gambella region.[6] Naqamte, founded by hereditary ruler Bakare Godana, is the principal city, although Najjo, Gimbi, Dambi Dollo, Mandi, Shambu, Gidda, Arjo, Aira, Gulliso, and Bojji are also prominent towns of the Wallagga region.

The nineteenth century witnessed the decline of the Oromo Gada system in Wallagga, which was mainly due to the rise of petty chiefs who established themselves in the different localities of the region. Gada is an indigenous democratic governance system of the Oromo nation recently recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.[7] In the region, new laws and moral beliefs that

5 Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and His Work* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1987), 921.

6 Charles Beke, "On the Nile and its Tributaries," *Journal of Royal Geographical Society of London* 17 (1847): 49-50.

7 Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO, 2016.

coped with the newly evolved indigenous political structure followed, at the expense of Gada leaders. However, before this new political structure strengthened itself, the region was incorporated into Ethiopia under the rule of emperor Menelik II (r.1889–1913), which made Orthodox Christianity the official religion in Wallagga and introduced rudimentary church education. Indigenous beliefs and practices were outlawed by decree, although the local people continued, to some extent, to practice them. During this transition, Protestantism became another new external influence in Wallagga. Daniel Ayana said, "This condition favoured the Protestants who systematically used, among others, village schools to preach Protestantism."[8] The protestant missionaries, then, established several village schools that later developed into modern schools. Daniel Ayana continues,

> The protestant missionaries or their Ethiopian counterparts used village schools to establish themselves among the local people. Prior to 1935 the Swedish, the American and the German protestant missions were active in Wollaga. The presence of these missions enabled most parts of this region to have schools. Thus, in the pre-occupation period there were eight schools out of which five belonged to the Protestants.[9]

Enrollments of local students in these schools increased gradually, and they transformed into modern elementary schools . The existence of Protestant village schools in Wallagga seems to have made local chiefs more open to the young attending the new schools and to continue further education in the capital, Finfinnee. The students in these schools were not obliged to embrace Protestantism and to go to villages to expand Christianity. Those who could afford it, went to Finfinne for further education. In the capital, two modern schools, Tafari Makonnen School and Menelik II School, began drawing students from the region. For

8 Daniel Ayana, "Some Notes on the Role of Village Schools in Grafting Protestantism in Wollega: 1898-1935" in: *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* vol. 1, ed. Taddese Beyene (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University,1988), 332.

9 Ayana, "Some Notes," 332.

example, Tafari Makonnen School opened in 1925 with "thirty students" from Wallagga.[10]

Some rulers of Wallagga also continued to send students both to cities in the region and to Finfinnee. For instance, the hereditary ruler of Wallagga, Habte Maryam Gabre Egziabeher, sent twenty-three students to the Tafari Makonnen School. In comparison, Fitawrari Mardasa Jote of Leqa Qellem selected forty students from Gidami, western Wallagga, and enrolled them in the American Mission School established in 1919 at Sayyo (known today as the town of Dambi Dollo).[11]

These numbers illustrate the people of Wallagga moving to Finfinnee for further education. Protestant missions also established schools in the capital in the first decades of the twentieth century. Therefore, at this time, most of individuals from Wallagga came to the capital for school or service in missionary organizations there. Finfinnee began to act as a "magnet" attracting people from different parts of the region, mainly after the Italian occupation. The Italian occupation led to Ethiopia's urbanization, bringing rural people into urban centers. According to Mekuria Bulcha,

> though Ethiopia is still not very much exposed to western cultural influences the short period of Italian occupation which had a traumatic effect on her age-old cultural heritage, and the slow but steady process of urbanization and industrialization that have been going on since then, have created new circumstances and new social system for many people who were otherwise of rural traditional background.[12]

The urbanization process accelerated after the Italian occupation ended in 1941. Establishing essential institutions, foreign companies, and government and mission schools attracted people from different regions of the country. In addition to students, many people came from Wallagga, and other parts of the country, due to the existence of various

10 Ayana, "Some Notes," 333.

11 Ayana, "Some Notes," 333; Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

12 Mekuria Bulcha, "Eder: Its Role in Development and Social Change" (paper submitted to the School of Social Work, Haile Selassie I University, Addis Ababa, 1973), 1-2.

institutions and opportunities in the capital. After graduation, many students from Wallagga remained in the capital and found jobs. They began sending remittances to their families in Wallagga and bringing their siblings for education in the capital.

Most people from Wallagga moved to the capital after liberation from the Italian occupation for self-improvement schemes. Those who had completed middle school came to the capital to find jobs in private or government institutions. Others, who could not find jobs, opened small businesses, such as barbershops, or became taxi drivers. As many others moved to the capital, they were able to find ways of advancing their education.[13] Interestingly, "in the late 1920s and before 1935 the number of students in Wollaga had exceeded the number of students in the capital."[14]

However, the great majority moved to the capital after students of the region began to take the National School Leaving Examination. Those who passed the examination went to the universities and colleges in the capital. Others moved to the capital to take part in government services. Those elected to parliament, for example, moved to the capital with their families for government duties. Others came after being recruited into the army. During the second Italo-Ethiopian war (1935–41), for example, many were recruited to join the military, and some remained in the capital after the war, including Colonel Abdissa Aga.[15] Born in Wallagga, Abdissa Aga joined the Ethiopian Army at young age and courageously fought the invading Fascist Italian army in the mid-1930s.

Merchants settled in the capital, too. They brought items such as butter, coffee, hides, and skins, and brought school supplies, furniture, clothing, and other items back to Wallagga, taking the three-week journey on foot each way. Gradually, some established businesses such as pastry shops and hotels and permanently settled there with their families. Others came for better healthcare options. Generally, most who came to the capital were there for education and self-improvement. Before 1935 (and mainly in the 1920s), approximately five hundred people from Wallagga were permanent dwellers in the capital. These arrivals formed a Wallagga residential quarter in the capital.[16]

13 Terefe Nagaro and Bayisa Homa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.
14 Ayana, "Some Notes," 334.
15 Bayisa Homa and Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.
16 Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

Foundation and Growth of the Association

As many people from Wallagga permanently settled in the capital, they were no longer able to depend on their families for social support and economic assistance. Minimal economic help was coming from the parents they left behind in their rural villages. . In Wallagga, they had experienced intimate and personal social interdependence. They had depended upon the local community and their relatives for economic assistance, psychological support, and social support in times of death, illness, marriage, and so on. While in the capital, many had few to no acquaintances on whom to call for help. An impersonal system confronted them. Given these circumstances, joining together to form an association that could replicate the functions of their hometown interaction would be indispensable. They needed help in finding housing, jobs, and other necessities.[17] The self-help associations in urban centers "basically mirror the traditional village patterns of mutual assistance and social control."[18]

According to Alemayehu Seifu, in the Ethiopian countryside a person enjoys the support of the community "even in the absence of the extended family":

> He knows almost all the members of his community and is known by the same. He shares his happiness and sorrow with the community. If a relative of his is dead, he sends messengers to the community members informing them of the death. Then they come and help him, before, during and after the funeral. They carry the coffin, dig the grave and stay with the bereaved for a few days. In addition, they bring him food and drink from their homes. Through these they give the bereaved the support and consolation which will lessen his sorrow and enable him to adjust more easily to the new situation. In time of harvest or ploughing, the rural dweller can rely on the support of his community. He asks the people in the community to come to his farm on a certain day and help him in the field. He will prepare food and drink for the people, for that day. Eventually they will come and the work that would have taken him many days

17 Alemayehu Seifu, "Eders in Addis Ababa: A Sociological Study," *Ethiopia Observer* 12, no. 1 (1969): 8, total pages, 8-33.

18 Korten, *Planned Change*, 88.

> will be done by the community in one day. This system of mutual assistance is called "*jige*" or "*debo*." If his house is burnt down by fire or his oxen killed by a disease, the community will rebuild his house or lend him their oxen as the case may be.[19]

Many people from the Wallagga that moved to Finfinnee saw each other in religious centers, bars, and sporting events. Interviewees stated that there was a bar in the capital's Dejazmach Wube quarter where many frequently met. However, due to the wide dispersal of their residential areas, they could not adequately meet and help each other in times of death, illness, or other issues. In urban centers, people working in various institutions on an hourly basis would not have the flexibility to go to funerals at any time as they could in their hometowns. Due to lack of time, they could not help each other adequately.[20]

Also, as the number of residents from Wallagga increased, political tensions with elites from other backgrounds intensified. The capital had been a garrison city taken forcibly from the Oromo and settled predominantly by the Amhara group, whose elites continued to harass individuals from different backgrounds, including the Oromo. In addition, there needed to be organization that could help new arrivals' smooth transition to urban life. The Oromo in the capital shared their political problems when they met. John Markakis observes that "Given the uneven distribution of power and status in this society, the propensity of such groups to develop political tendencies is quite natural."[21]

Therefore, aware of these problems, a few individuals founded the Wallagga *iddir* in 1946. Its key initiator and first president was Tasisa Ebba. He was a government employee, while the great majority of the members were barber shop owners, taxi drivers, and small business owners. Members paid a monthly contribution of twenty-five cents in Birr (Ethiopian currency). Members were obligated to attend the funerals of members and their relatives.[22] Interestingly, the Wallagga *iddir* was formed a few years after the liberation from the Italian occupation. As stated earlier, it is widely believed that *iddir* began to be widely formed

19 Seifu, "Eders in Addis Ababa," 8.

20 Terefe Nagaro, Urgessa Dana, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

21 Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 180.

22 Tasisa Ebba, Terefe Nagaro, and Dhaba Sunta, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

as a result of urbanization during the occupation as many moved to the capital.

The Wallagga *iddir* did not function as expected and it was discontinued. Its members wanted a more expanded role that would address issues other than burial including development projects. Therefore, in the early 1960s Wallagga residents in the capital formed a stronger and more robust self-help association. Initially, *iddirs'* "usually only function is to provide assistance in time of death"[23] and "Most members conceive of their association simply as a burial society, which is what it is essentially."[24] Former members of the Wallagga *iddir* and other non-member Oromo individuals in the capital met on Sunday, December 11, 1960, in the compound of a church in the city's Yohannes neighborhood. They discussed how to form a solid association with a strong organizational structure, help each other in the capital, and implement developmental projects in Wallagga. They decided to create a self-help association that could function as a burial service and carry out other development projects.

However, two days later, on Tuesday, December 13, 1960, a coup attempt to remove emperor Haile Selassie occurred. It was unsuccessful, but the government banned all public gatherings, so the Wallagga self-help association initiators were forced to meet in individual houses. In early 1961, in a meeting at Terefe Nagaro's house, the group decided to form the Wallagga Maradaja Mahber (self-help) association. The group formalized the association on March 19, 1961, in a meeting at the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church meeting hall. Forty-five men signed their names as the founders and contributed a registration fee of ten Birr each. After the experience of the Wallagga *iddir's* failure, they carefully organized this one with clear leadership, organization plans, and execution.[25]

The 1960s saw a mushrooming of such self-help associations in the capital, formed by arrivals from different parts of the country. In theory, "there are no limitations on the freedom of association in Ethiopia, and ostensibly the government does not oppose the formation of self-help associations. Article 47 of the 1955 Constitution guarantees the right to

23 Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 171.

24 Markakis, *Ethiopia,* 172.

25 Tesera Kassa and Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

form or join associations."[26] Many of them adopted names respective to the regions from which they hailed. They kept their ethnic or regional affiliation, and the major reasons for their formation included economic, cultural, political, and social factors. As Markakis states:

> In recent years a new type of association has emerged, the purpose of which is to promote development in the provinces and districts which are the original home of its membership. Known as *meredaja mahaber*, these self-help or development associations are identified with and bear the name of a particular region or ethnic group whose development they seek to foster.[27]

Markakis also observes that:

> Some of these originated as *edir,* and these still perform their initial function for their urban membership. The main function of self-help associations is to raise funds in the towns for the implementation of development projects in the provinces. The building of roads, bridges, schools, clinics and other basic facilities are the projects financed.[28]

The Wallagga self-help association was an example of the growing association trends in the capital. Self-help associations' main goals included supporting new arrivals from rural areas by providing financial and material assistance, comforting grieving individuals, and providing development projects in the provinces they came from.

The founders of the Wallagga association were mostly educated people, including the leader of the original Wallagga *iddir* Terefe Nagaro, who was a teacher at Tafari Makonnen school and later worked in the Ministry of Education. Another critical founder, Jalata Jafaro, was a writer. Since its foundation in March 1961, the association's membership gained momentum as other vital personalities joined it. The initial office building of the association was in the residential compound of Dajazmach Fikre Selassie, who had been hereditary ruler of Wallagga and

26 John Markakis, *Ethiopia. Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 177.
27 Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 172.
28 Markakis, *Ethiopia*. 173.

later moved to the capital. He gave his meeting hall to the association upon request and they stayed there until they built their office building.[29]

The main aims and objectives of the Wallagga association, as defined in their statutes, were a) to help each other in times of death and disease, b) to help each other in times of unemployment, c) to take part in the development programs of Wallagga, d) to help the country in time of natural hazards, e) to set up startup businesses. Their aims also included giving psychological and social consolation to the new arrivals from Wallagga. In essence, they wanted to create close connections and strong unity among themselves in the city.[30]

As the association grew in numbers and resources, its functions also increased. Beyond helping each other in the capital, they planned to set up regional schools and buy buses to operate along the road to Wallagga to ease the transport problem. As Georges Savard states, self-help associations "may begin as self-interest groups but, if they develop normally and especially if they are properly oriented, they can develop into associations that have considerable social influence."[31] Even though they start as burial aid institutions, these self-help associations "take on additional obligations of mutual assistance toward their members in other times of need."[32]

Ethiopia's 1955 revised constitution provided for the formation of associations with clear objectives. In 1960, the government further revised this provision to include governing the formation and functions of associations. The provision required each association to be registered and to give their statutes to the Department of Association to be studied and approved. Despite the constitutional right of association, due to fear of subversive political movements, the imperial government was reluctant to give permission to associations and "in order to secure permission to establish an association, it is often necessary for its sponsors to gain the backing of high officials or, preferably, the blessing of the Emperor."[33] These associations were also required to include such statements as "this *iddir* (association) will not pursue any political objective,

29 Terefe Nagaro and Tesera Kassa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

30 The Wallagga Self-Help Association statute, 1-2.

31 Georges Savard, "The People of Ethiopia: Draft of a Text for the Freshmen of Haile Selassie I University" (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1973), 63.

32 Korten, *Planned Change*, 88.

33 Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 178.

membership is open to anybody regardless of his tribe, religion, age or sex."[34] The associations were also required to submit written progress reports, respect the rights of other associations, and make it clear if they want to make relations with similar associations. The Wallagga self-help association met all these regulations and was given legal status in 1963.[35]

The initial capital of the association was 450 Birr. According to association records in 1961, the Wallagga Self-Help association required members to pay 2 Birr in addition to the initial registration fee of 10 Birr. As the association's membership increased, the monthly contribution rose to 3 Birr.[36] If members failed to pay the membership fee, they could be fined one Birr. Those who failed to pay the membership fee for more than six months would be expelled; however, in cases where members' income ceased due to unemployment or other problems, they could retain their right of membership and they could pay the accumulated fee when their situation improved. If an accident befell a member and he/she appealed to the association for help, they would give him/her the extra money left after a deduction from accumulated dues. If a member cancelled his/her membership on his/her own initiative, then he/she would have no right to demand the contribution he/she had paid previously. However, members rarely withdrew their membership due to social pressure, the importance of the affiliation, and psychological satisfaction associated with membership.[37]

The Wallagga self-help association assisted every member and their families in times of death and illness. The amount of assistance given was the same, no matter the familial relationship. In addition to money for funeral expenses, the association could also lend tents and other items to the bereaved member. The association also helped its members holding weddings by lending items including chairs, tents, and utensils.[38]

The association's funds were deposited at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. They would keep small amounts of cash for emergency cases

34 Mekuria, "Eder," 20.

35 Ye Liyu Liyu Mahbaroch Mizgaba, Archival material in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1.

36 The Wallagga Self-Help Association statute, 2-4.

37 The Wallagga Self-Help Association statute, 1-2; Bayane Abdi, Tesera Kassa, Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

38 The Wallagga Self-Help Association statute, 1-2; Bayane Abdi, Tesera Kassa, Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

with the cashier. The chairperson or, in later times, the president and the cashier, were responsible for depositing the money in the bank. It was also their duty to make withdrawals. Association funds could not be used for trading or lending without assembly approval. If any member used the money for personal gain, they would be fined one thousand Birr and forced to return the money immediately. The association's assets were reported to the general assembly every three months. The balance between the income and expenditure of their capital was calculated by auditors every three months. The auditors would calculate the past due amounts for any people who did not pay their dues and report them to the assembly.[39]

The association had its own yearly budgeting system. The fiscal year of the association ran from March to March every year. The accounts of the association were reported to the assembly yearly in March. The total activities of the association were presented or reported by the president. The general assembly approved the amount of money to be used up (operating budget) for the year.[40]

Membership

According to the statutes adopted in December 1962, membership in the association was open to any Ethiopian regardless of ethnic background, religion, gender, or education. Any citizen who accepted the rules and regulations of the association could join. In practice, however, membership was largely based on ethnic affiliation. The admittance committee rigorously studied each membership application to verify the applicant's background and political affiliation before rejecting or accepting them. There were some non-Oromo members in the association. Non-Oromo who hailed from Wallagga and spoke the Afan Oromo language could join; for example, the Reverend Badima Yalew of the Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Church was a member and Fitawrari Teferra Estifanos was an associate member. The association had three types of membership: regular member, benefactor member, and associate member. Regular members applied for membership; their applications were first analyzed by the Executive Committee and then approved by

39 The Wallagga Self-Help Association statute, 8-9.

40 The Wallagga Self-Help Association statute, 9; Nagasa Tumsa, Urgessa Dana, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

the general assembly. A regular member was required to accept the rules and regulations of the association. They were required to pay the admission fee and the same monthly contributions that the original founders had paid. Most association members were regular members.[41]

Benefactor members were those who donated a maximum of a thousand Birr or those who could give movable or immovable property of that same value to the association. Associate members could be employed or unemployed; the association they granted them associate membership in exchange for voluntary service in that month or year. Associate members were not given membership identification cards.[42]

The association's membership increased over time. In the 1960s, the total number was three hundred and sixty-nine. The membership included educators, preachers, government officials, and several key personalities, including the writer Jalata Jafaro, as well as Temesgen Gobena, Abiyu Galata, Dr. Paulos Kenea, and Yilma Deressa. Yilma Deressa served as finance minister, foreign affairs minister, ambassador to the United States, and "For many years he was the only senior official in Haile Selassie's government with training in economics."[43] Dr. Amanuel Abraham served as president of the Ethiopian evangelical church for more than two decades. Blatta Deressa Amante was a significant figure in the Ethiopian intelligentsia.[44] Known religious leaders included Reverend Gudina Tumsa and Reverend Mamo Chorqa. Military officers including Colonel Gobena Isaak, Colonel Kelbessa Beka, and Shambel Abdissa Aga were associates.[45]

All members were required to maintain discipline during meetings and funeral ceremonies, and to regularly attend meetings, funerals, and committee meetings in person.[46]All members had equal rights in the

41 Bayane Abdi, Tesera Kassa, Dhaba Sunta, Olana Nathanael, Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992; The 1962 Statute of the association.

42 Bayisa Homa, Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992; The 1965 Statute of the association.

43 Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 226.

44 Bahru Zewde, *History*, 107.

45 Mammo Gemeda, Urgessa Dana, Nagasa Tumsa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992; List of names of the members.

46 Terefe Nagaro, Bayane Abdi, Bayisa Homa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 134 7/15/2024 4:15:42 PM

association. But if an individual donated high-cost material they might enjoy a prestigious position among the membership; for example, they had the right to withdraw from membership at any time.

Leadership and Meeting Procedures

The association had a developed system of organizational structure composed of elected members serving on committees; it had a president and a Board of Management. Several committees had different functions at different levels depending on the objective; i.e. fundraising, funerals, the budgeting system, and others. The committees were responsible for managing the activities of the association and executing the programs approved by the assembly.[47]

Although the elected committee members would render services free of charge, the messenger or guards of the office building were paid 40 Birr per month. All were elected by a majority vote in a meeting attended by the majority of the members. Elections occurred every year but elected members could stay for more than a year if the assembly accepted their continuation. Elections were conducted fairly and openly. The committee members initiated new programs and activities and represented the association in meetings, when needed, with the government and other agencies. The committee members met monthly on Sundays at 3 p.m., while the general assembly met four times a year, in March, June, September, and December at 2 p.m. Attendance was required and those with unexcused absences were usually fined.[48]

Relations with the Macha Tulama Association

The Wallagga association had good relations with the Macha Tulama association after the latter was founded in 1963. The Macha Tulama association took its name from two significant Oromo branches, the Macha and Tulama. The Oromo in central Oromia predominantly belong to the Tulama, while those of Wallagga and Illubabar belong to the Macha. From its founding, the Macha Tulama association attracted strong support among Oromo people of various backgrounds. Its objective was to

47 The 1965/66 statute page 3.

48 Terefe Nagaro, Dhaba Sunta, Tesera Kassa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992; The last statute.

promote development in the region where its members lived through fundraising from both urban and rural areas. It also sought to raise consciousness of the Oromo nation's politics, culture, and language, including the use of Afan Oromo in meetings and collecting Oromo stories, dances, and songs.[49] Eventually, this created tension and suspicion with the imperial government of Emperor Haile Selassie. As Christopher Clapham states, "general Tadasse Birru and several associates tried to use regional Oromo (sic) self-help association as a means to arouse provincial Oromos to an awareness of their position and press for political action."[50] John Markakis also adds that,

> The [Oromo] composition of its membership, and the wide focus of its efforts encompassing southern provinces with vast [Oromo] populations, raised fears of united [Oromo] activity that could easily turn political. The prominence of [Oromo] military men in the leadership of the organization reinforced these fears. The behavior of some of these leaders, particularly General Tadesse Biru, was considered inflammatory. The latter reputedly made unveiled references in his public speeches to the poverty of the [Oromo] peasantry, linking this condition to the expropriation of their land by Emperor Menelik. The Amhara governors of the southern provinces deeply resented the activities of the association in their domain and the competition of the association's fund-raising campaign with their *lemat* [development] projects, and their reports to the Ministry of Interior stressed the political implications inherent in these activities.[51]

The Wallagga self-help association also had long-term political ambition. Its members deeply hated the appointment of non-Oromo administrators over the region. They wanted to expand education throughout Oromia and eventually to unite pan-Oromo political activity. However,

49 Randi Balsvik, *Haile Sellassie's Students: The Intellectual and Social Background to Revolution, 1952-1977* (East Lansing, MI: African Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1985), 280.

50 Christopher Clapham, *Haile Selassie's Government* (London: Longmans, 1969), 81.

51 Markakis, *Ethiopia,* 179.

when the Macha Tulama was formed, some young educated members of the Wallagga association joined it, as did other educated young Oromo across Oromia. Individuals such as Fekadu Waqjira and Dhaba Sunta were members of the Wallagga association who joined Macha Tulama. Their large membership and activities in several regions of Oromia overshadowed the Wallagga association.[52]

Although the two associations were willing to form a single association, they did not formally create a united association. Initially, they deliberately avoided forming a single association for fear of a much bigger and powerful movement and possible ban by the government. Also, as sources reported, the Wallagga association wanted a gradual transition to political activity, while the Macha Tulama wanted speedier action. The Wallagga association wanted to reach out to Oromo in every part of Oromia before demanding political reform.[53] The government was also against the unification of the two associations, fearing pan-Oromo unity as a threat to itself.[54]

Indeed, some key founders of the Oromo Liberation Front, particularly Baro Tumsa, "relied on preexisting associations, such as the Wallaga Maradaja Mahibar (Wallaga Self-Help Association) and the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association (MTA), to identify, mobilize and organize trustworthy members of the educated Oromo elites."[55] Some members of the two associations were active in the Oromo national movement and consulted with each other on how to move forward in raising political consciousness across Oromia. As Asafa and Tumsa state,

> For instance, Fiqadu Waqjira (Qaxalee), a member of these two associations, met Baro between 1964 and 1965 and got closer to him in 1976 when working as a land reform surveyor. By traveling to different parts of Oromia, Fiqadu learned about all regions of Oromia (the Oromo country) and Oromo branches.

52 Terefe Nagaro, Dhaba Sunta, Tesera Kassa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

53 Bayisa Homa, Olana Nathaniel, Terefe Nagaro and Tesera Kassa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

54 Asafa Jalata and Ayetu Tumsa, "Baro Tumsa's Political Activism and Involvement in the Macha Tulama and Oromo Liberation Front," *The Journal of Oromo Studies* 29, no. 2, forthcoming.

55 Jalata and Tumsa, "Baro Tumsa's," 8.

> Baro was very much interested in learning about these issues from Fiqadu. Later, when the government appointed Fiqadu as the Director of the Land Settlement Authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, Baro requested him to hire seven prominent leaders, including Kebede Demise, Muhe Abdo, and Getachew Baisa. Consequently, Faqadu hired them and gave them cover to work on the organizational activities of the OLF.[56]

While the two associations worked on how to eventually form a single association, as Balsvick states, in late 1966 the Macha Tulama association was banned and its leaders arrested: "In a trial in June 1968, two were condemned to death, later commuted by the emperor to life imprisonment, for 'subversive activities against the state, and for disseminating false propaganda in an effort to divide the Ethiopian people.'"[57]

Following the dissolution of the Mecha Tulama association, some of the Wallagga association members who had joined it returned. After the Macha Tulama leaders were arrested, the government began to strictly follow the activities of every association. Indeed, "the government discourages the formation of modern associations through a rigid registration policy, and restricts the capacity of existing associations for action through oppressive surveillance tactics and the maintenance of a general atmosphere of intimidation."[58] The Wallagga association survived and continued its activities, though under strict surveillance.

Functions and Achievements of the Association

Although its main function and objectives were to organize mutual assistance in times of need, the Wallagga association began developing educational, regional, social welfare, and economic programs as its resources increased. Some associations in the capital participated in different activities related to community development, such as the construction of public roads, schools, and clinics for the benefit of their localities. But the Wallagga association could not participate in such activities because it was not based in any particular quarter in the capital. Although some members lived in a particular quarter, most were scattered all over the capital.

56 Asafa and Ayetu Tumsa, "Baro Tumsa's."
57 Balsvik, *Haile Sellassie's Students,* 280; see also Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 179.
58 Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 180.

The association also had plans to develop projects in Wallagga, including small business projects such as laundromats and kindergartens, but progress was slow. The association's major contribution remained providing social support to its members and helping new arrivals in the capital to adjust to life. By becoming members of the association, newcomers enjoyed a sense of belonging they had missed. The association had a separate committee that arranged social gatherings with the aim of fostering friendships and a sense of belongingness. This created a strong bond among members.[59]

In a country with no health or life insurance at the time, this kind of self-help association served as a significant substitute mechanism to fulfill social and economic needs. The Wallagga association provided monetary donations to bereaved members, in addition to arranging gatherings to comfort bereaved families. For example, in 1966, the association donated more than 1150 Birr for the funeral expenses of ten members. In the same year, it also paid a lump sum of 800 Birr to bereaved families. In 1967, it donated 275 Birr to three bereaved members for funeral expenses and an additional 300 for supporting their bereaved families.[60]

The Wallagga association also contributed to national efforts to alleviate the effects of natural disasters such as drought and famine. In 1967, it donated one thousand Birr for the people of Wallo due to famine.[61] In the 1970s, it made a similar donation to the people of Kellafo in Ogaden, where crops were destroyed due to floods.[62] The association also encouraged social participation and elevation of women and youth in the society. Women were active participants; in 1974, the president of the association was Mrs. Elizabeth Kerorsa, who was a capable leader. For the younger groups, the association planned to set up a kindergarten, although this was not completed.[63]

In its education policy, the association planned for the expansion of schools and to assist those already established in the region. It made

59 Dhaba Sunta,Tefera Estifanos, Bayane Abdi, Urgessa Danu, Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992; The 1965/66 statute, 1.

60 Fifth- and Sixth-year reports of the association; see appendix, too.

61 Sixth-year report of the association; 1967, see appendix, too.

62 Mammo Gemmeda and Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

63 Mammo Gemmeda and Tesera Kassa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

a generous grant of 1000 Birr for the growth of the Dongoro Technical School in Gimbi province in 1966. The Bojji and Naqamte Secondary Schools also requested assistance, but the association was not in a position, by then, to help them.[64]

Furthermore, the association, together with the Haile Selassie I university students and other government officials, planned to establish a university in Wallagga. In support of the plan, the association began fundraising elsewhere. Important personalities such as professor (at Harvard and Princeton) Ephrem Isaac, Yilma Deressa, Dajazmach Kassa Walde Mariam (who had formerly been president of the Haile Selassie I University), Baro Tumsa, one of the key founders of the Oromo Liberation Front, and others were enthusiastic and active supporters. Randi Balsvick stated that:

> After 1970 there were persistent rumors that a university was being planned for Wellega. Oromos in Addis Ababa allegedly contributed money to what was called an Oromo university. A university librarian told me enthusiastically that he had seen a blue print for this university written by Kassa Wolde Mariam, the former HSIU [Haile Selassie I University] president, who became governor of his home province of Wellega in 1969. His transfer to the Minister of Agriculture was seen as proof of the government's wish to stop the plan. Yet, beginning in autumn 1972, Radio Voice of the Gospel was allowed to broadcast in the Oromo language, which shows that pressure the government could not afford to ignore totally was coming from the Oromo population.[65]

Professor Ephrem Isaac was able to raise funds in America, and the Swedish Government was persuaded to help to establish the university. After the association's members decided to found the university in Wallagga, they presented the plan to Emperor Haile Selassie's government.

64 Mammo Gemmeda and Tesera Kassa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

65 Balsvik, *Haile Sellassie's Students*, 280-281. Kassa Wolde Mariam was appointed as the university's president in 1962 and he was the grandson-in-law of the emperor Haile Selassie. He was from the king Jote Tullu family of Leqa Qellem. See, Balsvik, *Haile Sellassie's Students,* 25; also, Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 231.

The Ethiopian Council of Ministers was not interested. They received the plan without any enthusiasm and responded to the association's request with the empty promise to consider it in the future. With the beginning of the 1974 revolution, the idea finally died.[66]

The Wallagga association also planned to buy buses to further facilitate transport in the region. However, before the association could do so, individual members of the association as well as others bought buses to operate on the profitable Wallagga route. Most active in this respect was Namara Deressa, who was a member of the association. As a result, the association's plans in this direction were curtailed.[67]

A significant achievement for the association was the building of its head office prior to any other self-help associations in the capital, according to sources. The members contributed 100 Birr each and bought land from Mrs. Ayenat Wadajo in the Gullalle area in 1966. The house's construction costed 14808.95 Birr.[68] According to informants, the Wallagga association built its own head office prior to any other self-help associations in the capital, which met in the open air or in church compounds. The Wallagga association operated its head offices in the Gullalle district along Patriots Road in Higher 08 Kebele 03 until its final dissolution in 1979.[69]

The head office had amenities such as running water, telephone, an assembly hall, and guards. The property of the association was also stored there. Until 1966, they had one tent, which had been purchased for 520 Birr; in the early 1970s, they bought an additional tent. They also had furniture. The association planned to set up branch offices in the province, but this was not implemented due to government strict control.[70]

As the association's membership grew, several subsidiary institutions began to emerge. In the 1960s, some members began to form a credit association. Called *quqube* in Afan Oromo, credit associations are essentially a savings association whose membership ranges from five to

66 Mammo Gemmeda and Bayisa Homa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

67 Terefe Nagaro and Tesera Kassa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

68 Fifth year Report of the association; see appendix, too.

69 Mammo Gemmeda and Tesera Kassa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992; see appendix, too.

70 Terefe Nagaro and Tesera Kassa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992; see appendix, too.

forty. People gather monthly and contribute money. They elect a committee responsible for the overall activities of the association. They draw lots; one of them takes the lump sum of money and the rest of the members get the same amount in turns. In addition to offering credit, *quqube* also functioned as voluntary women's associations. Interested women, usually of a particular village or school, typically gathered on Sunday or Saturday afternoons. They helped each other in various activities including teaching each other how to spin or simply to strengthen friendships. Foods, particularly bread and coffee, were served.

Individuals such as Abiyu Galata, Sanbata Ayansa, and other members of the Wallagga association initially contributed 100 Birr each to form a *quqube*. However, this plan did not last long and it was dissolved soon after. Generally, *ququbes* are short-lived; they are formed as needed. The association also began to form a welfare association that could take responsibility for its property after its dissolution, but the plan was never implemented.[71]

Generally speaking, the association contributed much to the social welfare of its members and, to some extent, to the development of the Wallagga region. However, it began to decline after the 1974 Ethiopian revolution. According to informants, neither mismanagement nor quarrel among the leaders or members contributed to its failure. Instead, the military regime that took power after the fall of emperor Haile Selassie's government caused its dissolution. The regime confiscated the tents of all associations in the capital and took them to the Tatek Military Training Camp. The regime also declared that ethnic or regional associations should no longer exist.

From 1976 onwards, the association ceased to function properly. When the government began confiscating houses, the association leaders decided to lend its office building and property to Higher 08 Kebele 03 for an unlimited period of time. After prolonged discussion with the kebele members, they turned the property over on May 8, 1979. That was the end of the association.[72]

71 Mammo Gemmeda, Sanbata Ayansa, and Terefe Nagaro, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992;

72 Mammo Gemmeda, Bashare Tolasa, Marga Guddina, Bayane Abdi and Tesera Kassa, interview by the author, Finfinnee, 1992.

Conclusion

Cooperation is an ancient tradition that runs through the fabric of Ethiopian society, and the spirit of self-help has been an integral part of both urban and rural communities. The voluntary, non-governmental grassroots organizations known as self-help associations mushroomed in the 1960s in Ethiopia. In many parts of the country, communities have formed labor-sharing and other mutual assistance associations, particularly during the cycles of peak agricultural seasons. These organizations were mostly for the service of the community and were voluntary in the sense that membership was neither mandatory nor acquired through birth and existed independently of the state. They also played a significant role in the mutual co-existence of various neighborhood groups and have held economic and social significance in contemporary Ethiopia. Such associations provide a highly personal basis of relationship and mutuality.

As a result of urbanization, many people from the various provinces of the country moved to towns, particularly to the capital, Finfinnee. Educational, religious, social, political, and employment opportunities as well as civil service sectors, are major attractions. Students, businesspersons, members of the military, and even members of parliament relocated from provinces to the capital.

Away from home and from their close-knit communities, these new urban dwellers needed help in times of illness, job loss, death, and other challenges. The lack of life and health insurance systems led to the formation of several self-help associations. While some active members started the Wallagga *iddir* as a burial association, members were also experiencing political, educational, and economic issues and sought support both for themselves as well as for the wider Oromo nation. They needed a larger organization that could both function as a burial system and fulfill their other ambitions, including giving back to the communities they had left behind in their provinces. The Wallagga self-help association founded in 1961 developed into one of the most developed associations in the country at the time. With the coming of the socialist regime in 1974, its role declined as the regime prohibited such associations. The association eventually collapsed and its office building became one of the regime's district offices in 1979.

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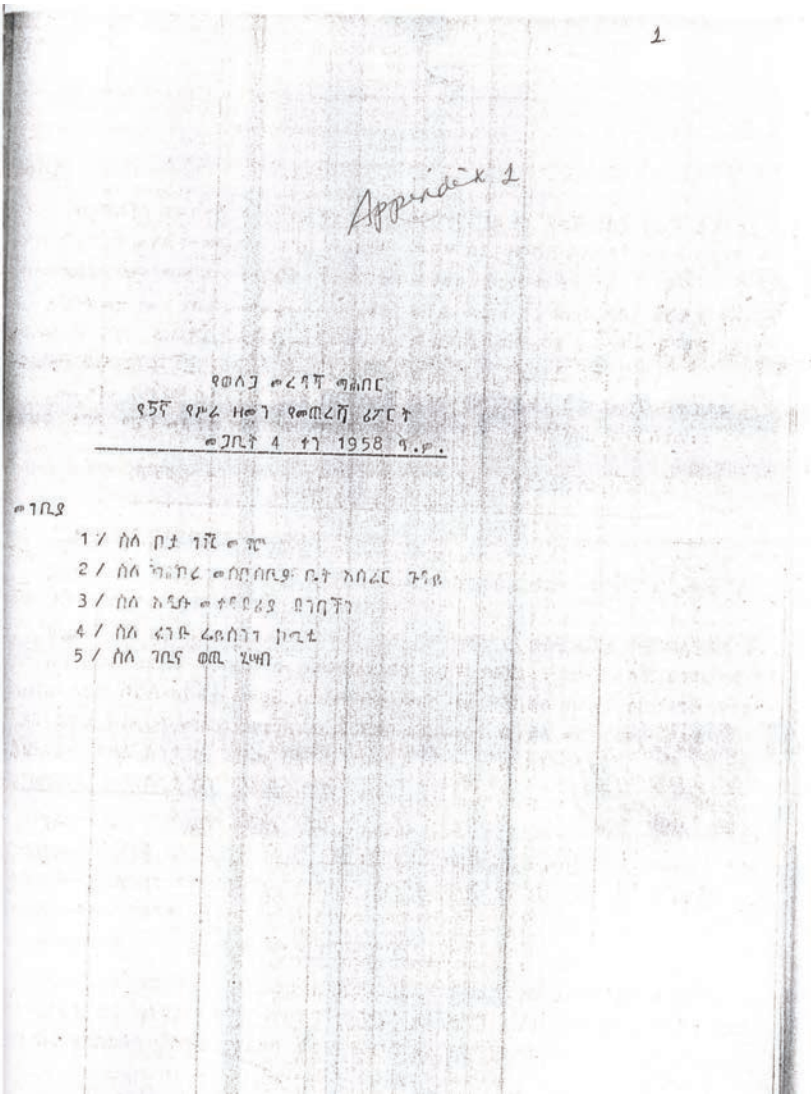
Appendices



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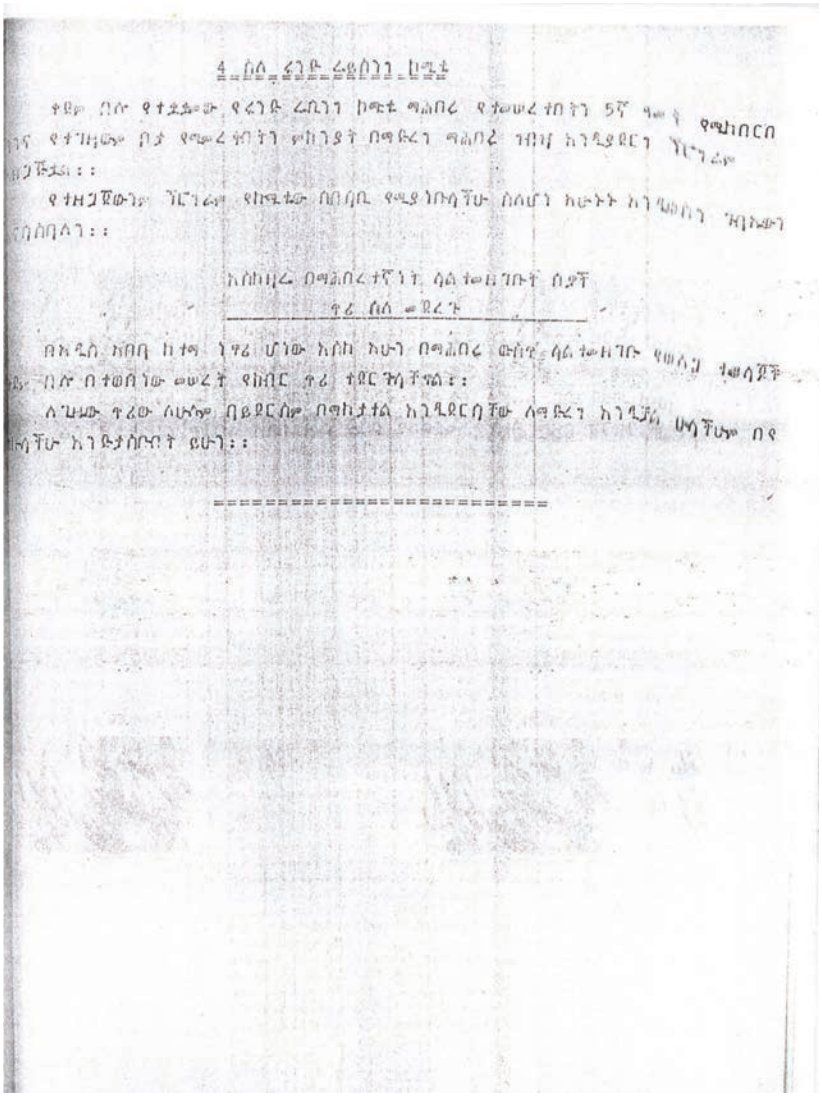
Appendix 1

የወለጋ መረዳኛ ማሕበር
የ5ኛ የሥራ ዘመን የመጠረሻ ሪፖርት
መጋቢት 4 ቀን 1958 ዓ.ም.

መግቢያ

1 / ስለ ቦታ ገሺ መ ጭ
2 / ስለ ካፒቮረ መሰጠቢያ ቤት አሰረር ጉባዔ
3 / ስለ አዲሱ መተዳደሪያ በንጥችነ
4 / ስለ ፋንቡ ረዳስንነ ክሚቴ
5 / ስለ ገቢና ወጪ ሂሣብ



ፋ ሰለ ፈንቦ ራዬለንገ ኮሚቴ

ቀዩ ሰሉ የተቋቋሙ የሩነቦ ረቢነገ ኮሚቴ ማሕበረ የተመረተበትን ዓሾ ዓመት የሚከበርበ
ንና የተገኙውም በታ የመረተበትን ሥከገያት በማቡረገ ማሕበረ ገብገ አገሪያዩርገ ዝርገራም
ዘንቹኒ::

የተዘጋጀውገ ዝርገራም የኮሚቴው ሰበሰቢ የሚያነቡሳችሁ ስለሆነ አሁኑት አገሚሰገ ዝገአውገ
ናስለባለገ::

አስከገረ በማሕበረተኛነት ሳልተመዘገቡት ሰያች

ዋሪ ሰለ መዩረቱ

በአዲስ አበባ ከተማ ነዋሪ ሆነው አሶስ አሁገ በማሕበረ ውስጥ ሳልተመዘገቡ የመሰጋ ተመሳያች
ዲ በሱ በተወሰነው መሠረት የክፍር ቃሪ ተደርጉሳችሗል::

ለጊዜው ዋሪው ለሁሎም በይደርሰም በማከታተል አገዲደርጎችሁ ለማቡረገ አገሚሰ ሀሳችሁም በዩ
ዘሳችሁ አገድታስቡት ይሁገ::

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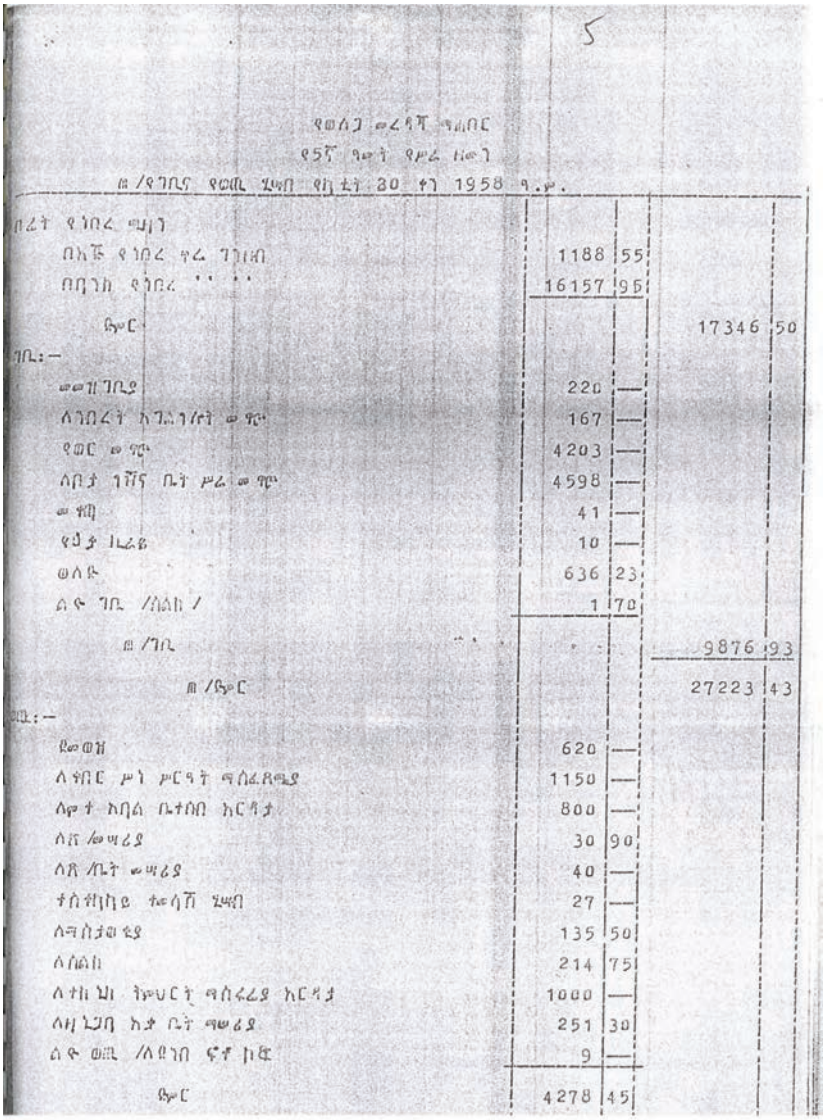

የወሰን መረዳሻ ኅብር
የ5ኛ ዓመት የሥራ ዘመን
ጠ/የገቢና የወጪ ሂሣብ የሚቴት 30 ቀን 1958 ዓ.ም.

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ለገበረት አገልገሎት መጥ	167	—		
የወር መጥ	4203	—		
ለቦታ ገሸና ቤት ሥራ መጥ	4598	—		
መቀጫ	41	—		
የሀታ ሊራዬ	10	—		
ወለዱ	636	23		
ልዩ ገቢ /ስልክ/	1	70		
ጠ/ገቢ			9876	93
ጠ/ድምር			27223	43
ወጪ:—				
ደመወዝ	620	—		
ለቀበር ሥነ ሥርዓት ማሰፈጸሚያ	1150	—		
ለሞተ አባል ቤተሰበ አርዳታ	800	—		
ለቢሮ መሣሪያ	30	90		
ለጽ/ቤት መሣሪያ	40	—		
ተስቫነስዬ ተመሳሽ ሂሣብ	27	—		
ለማስታወቂያ	135	50		
ለስልክ	214	75		
ለተከ ህዝ ትምህርት ማስፋፊያ አርዳታ	1000	—		
ለዛ ኒጋቢ አታ ቤት ማሠሪያ	251	30		
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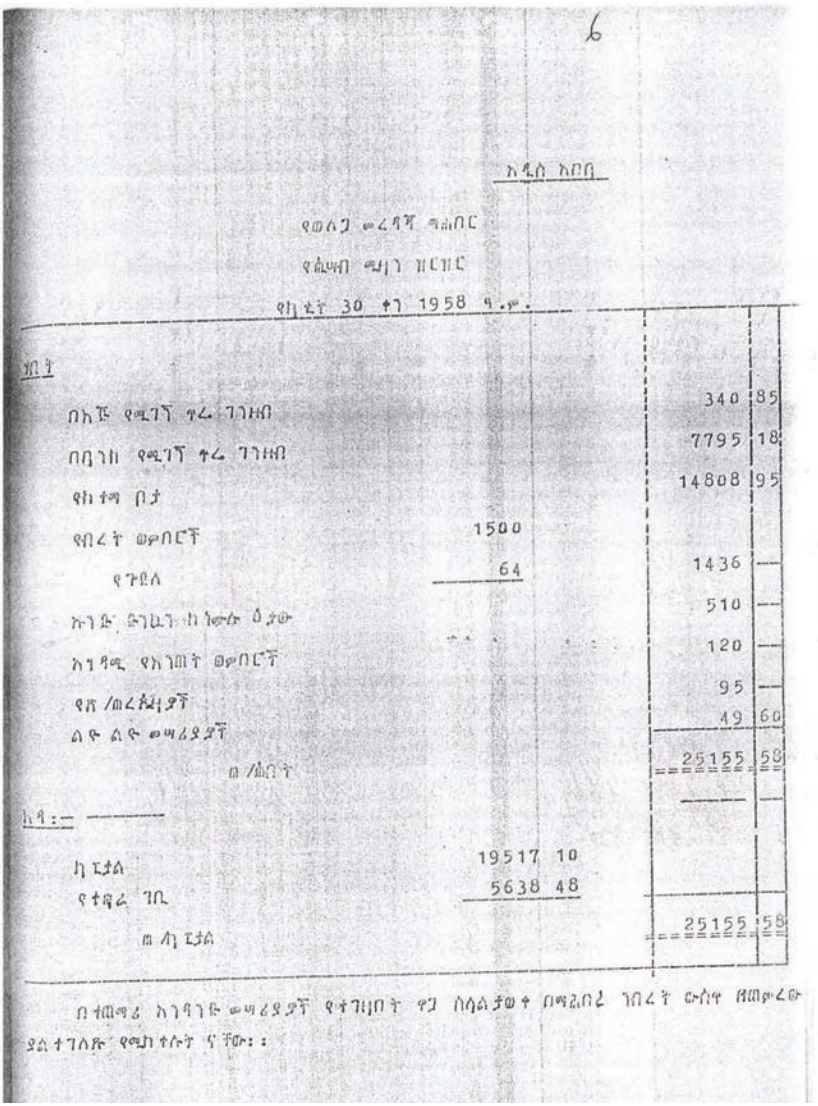
ድምር	4278	45		



6

አዲስ አበባ

የወለጋ መረዳሻ ጣሕቦር

የሒሣብ ሚዛን ዝርዝር

የኪቲያ 30 ቀን 1958 ዓ.ም.

ገቢ			
በአጅ የሚገኝ ጥሬ ገንዘብ		340	85
በባንክ የሚገኝ ጥሬ ገንዘብ		7795	18
		14808	95
የክተማ ቦታ			
የብረት ወፆቦርች	1500		
የጉይለ	64	1436	—
ኩንድ ድንጊኒ ክ ነሙሉ ዕታው		510	—
አነጻሚ የአንጠት ወፆቦርች		120	—
የጽ /ጠረጴዚያች		95	—
ልዩ ልዩ መጣሪያያች		49	60
ጠ /ሐቦ ት		25155	58
አላ :—			
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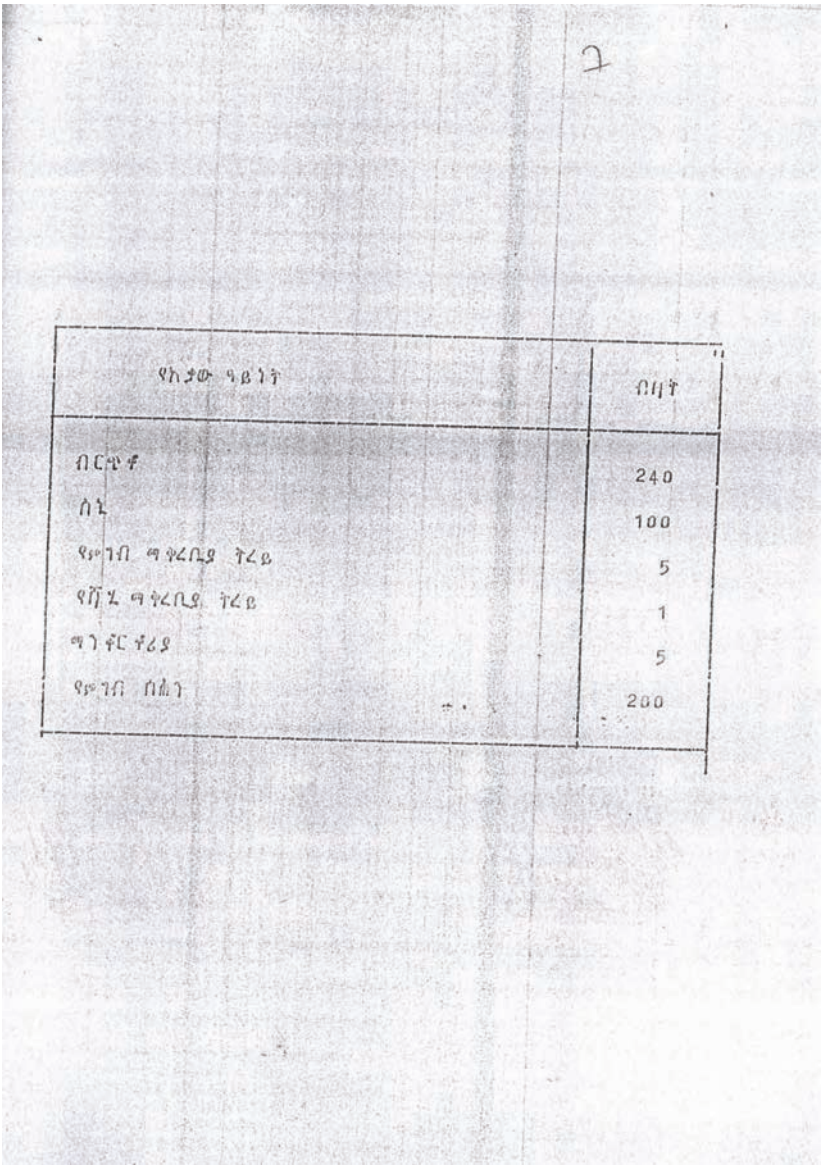
የተጫረ ገቢ	5638 48		
ጠ /ካ ፒታል		25155	58

በተጠቃሪ አገላገቡ መጣሪያያች የተገዛበት ዋጋ ስሳልታወቀ በማጀቦሪ ገበረት ውስጥ ዘጠኖረው ያልተገለጹ የሚከተሉት ና ቸው፡ :



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ሰኒ	100
የሥገብ ማቅረቢያ ትሪይ	5
የሻኂ ማቅረቢያ ትሪይ	1
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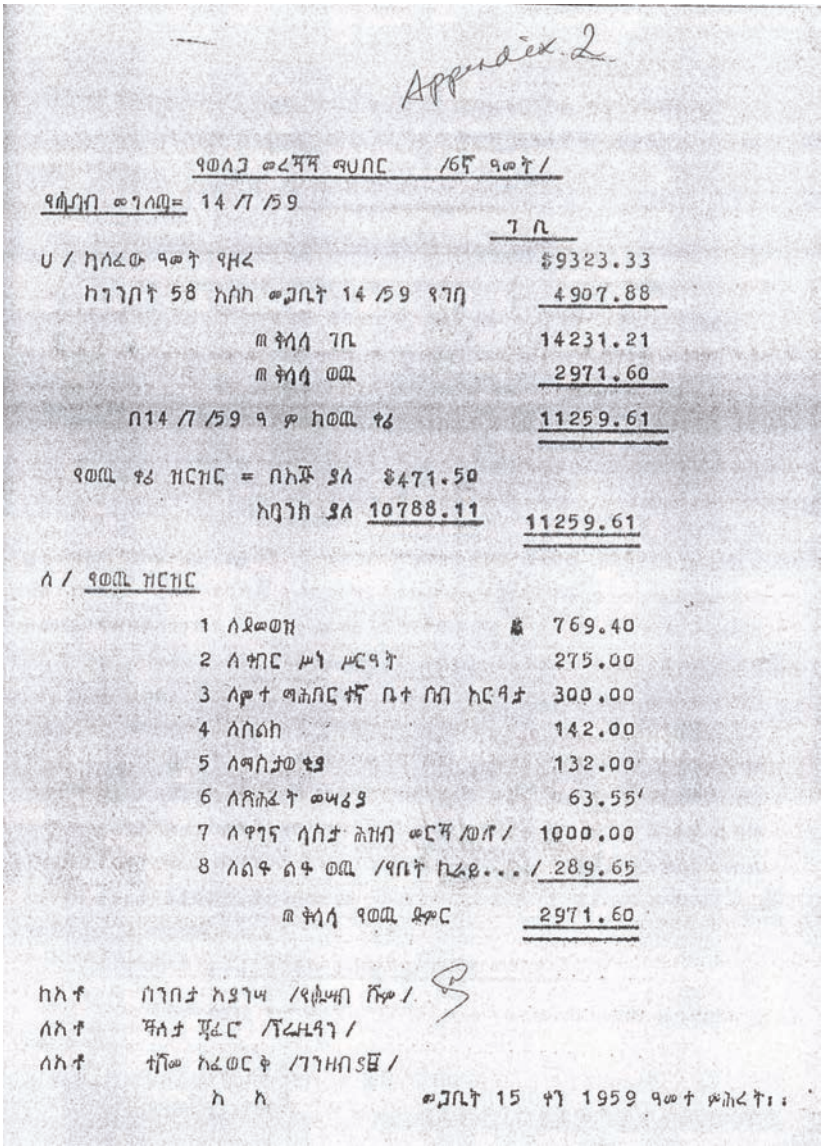
የሥገብ በሒን	200



Appendix 2

ዓወለጋ መረሻሻ ጣህበር /6ኛ ዓመት/

ዓሰታብ መግለጫ= 14 /7 /59

	ገ ቢ
ሀ / ከለፈው ዓመት ዓዘረ	$9323.33
ከገንቦት 58 አስከ መጋቢት 14 /59 ዓገበ	4907.88
ጠቅላላ ገቢ	14231.21
ጠቅላላ ወጪ	2971.60
በ14 /7 /59 ዓ ም ከወጪ ቀሪ	11259.61

ዓወጪ ቀሪ ዝርዝር = በአሜ ያለ $471.50
አቢንክ ያለ 10788.11 11259.61

ለ / ዓወጪ ዝርዝር

1	ለደመወዝ	769.40
2	ለቋር ሥነ ሥርዓት	275.00
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4	ለስልክ	142.00
5	ለማስታወቂያ	132.00
6	ለጽሕፈት መሣሪያ	63.55
7	ለዋግና ላስታ ሕዝብ መርዣ /ወሶ/	1000.00
8	ለልዩ ልዩ ወጪ /ዓቢት ኪራይ.../	289.65
	ጠቅላላ ዓወጪ ድምር	2971.60

ከአቶ ሰንበታ አያንሣ /ዓሰሣብ ሹም/
ለአቶ ሻለታ ሺፈሮ /ቸረዚዳን/
ለአቶ ተሾመ አፈወርቅ /ገንዘብ ያዥ/

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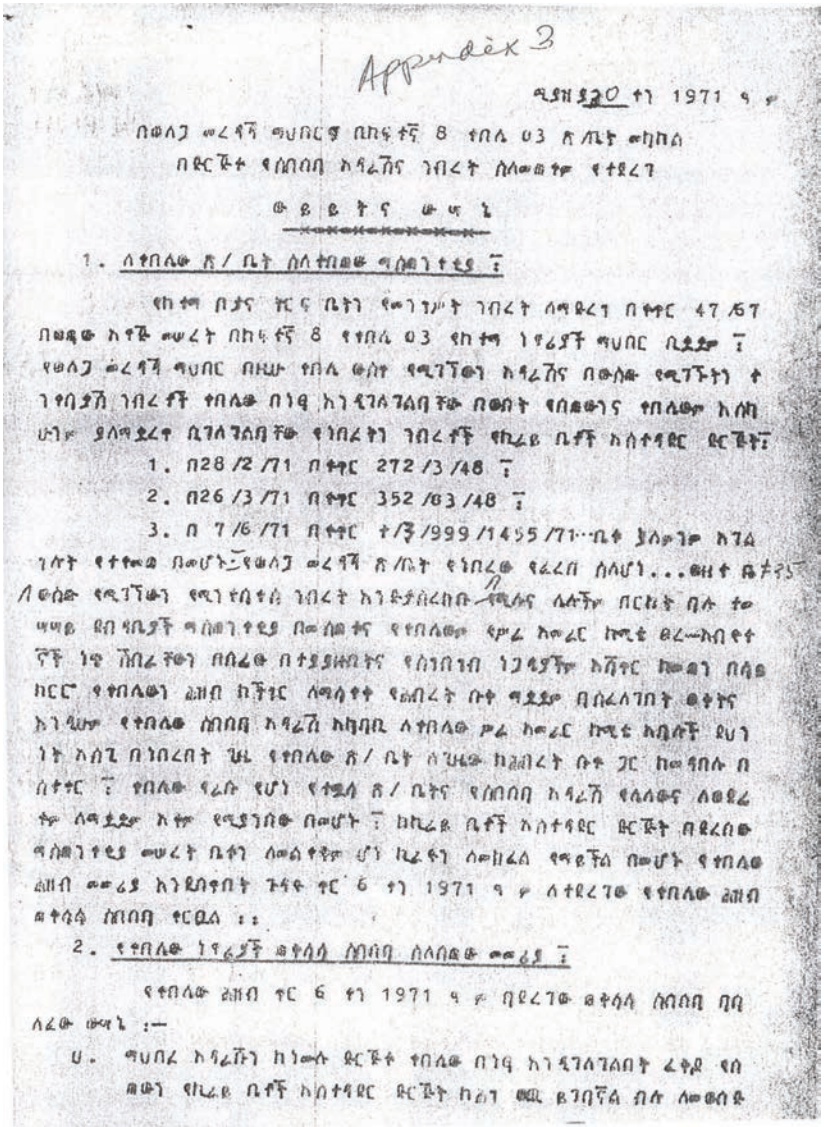


Appendex 3

ሚያዝያ 20 ቀን 1971 ዓ.ም

በወለጋ መረዳጃ ማህበርም በስፍራቸዉ 8 የተበሉ 03 ስ/ቤት መከስሰ
በፍርዱት የሰበሰባ አሳሪሽና ገበረት ስለመወሰኑ የተደረገ

ውይይትና ውሳኔ

1. ለተበሉው ስ/ቤት ስለተበመው ማስጠንቀቂያ ፡

የከተማ ቡታና ዝና ቤትን የመገንጠት ገበረት ለማቋረገ በተቀር 47/67 በወጪው አዋጅ መሠረት በስፍራቸዉ 8 የተበሉ 03 የከተማ ነዋሪያች ማህበር ቢቋቋም ፣ የወለጋ መረዳጃ ማህበር በዙሙ የበሉ ውስጥ የሚገኘውን አሳሪሽና በውስጡ የሚገኙትን ተገባቢያሽ ገበረቶች የበሉት በነፃ አገዳገልባቸው በወሰት የበቋቁሙና የበሉሙም አለከሁነ ያለማቋረጥ ቢገለገልበቸው የነበረትን ገበረቶች የኪረይ ቢቶች አስተዳዳር ፍርጁት፣

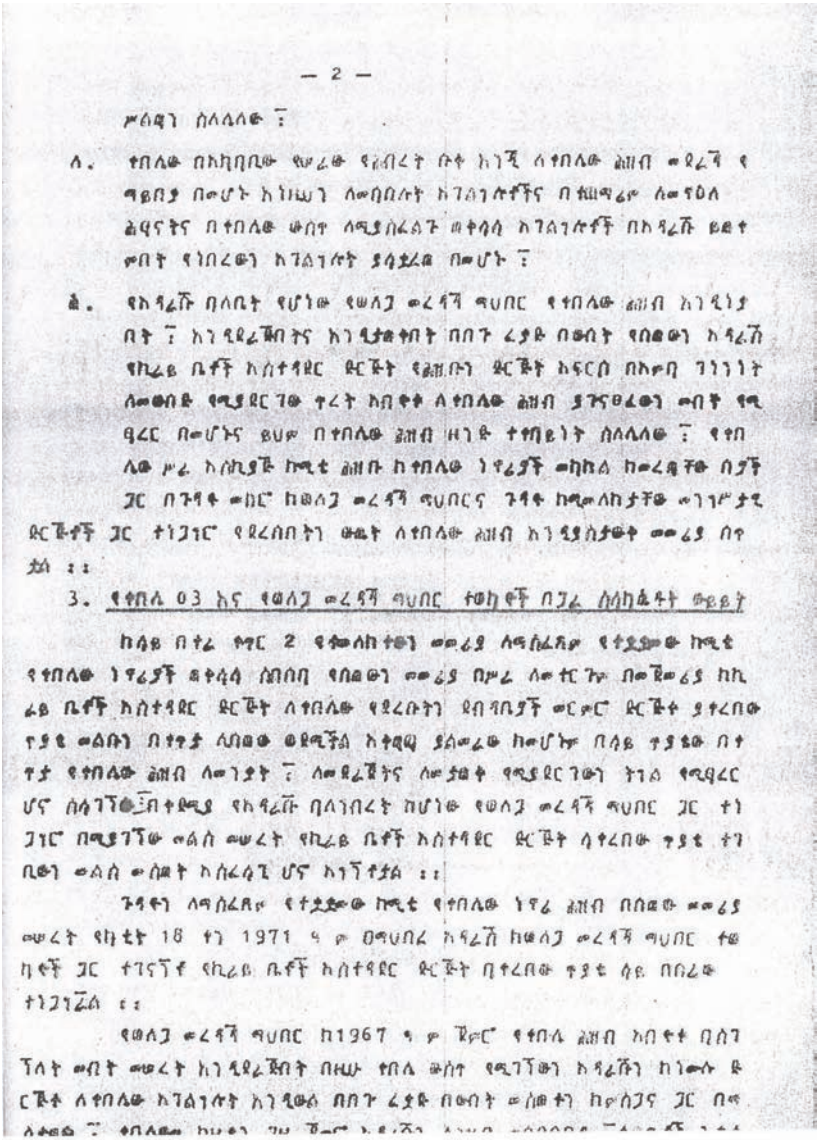
1. በ28/2/71 በተቀር 272/3/48 ፣
2. በ26/3/71 በተቀር 352/03/48 ፣
3. በ 7/6/71 በተቀር ተ/ቁ/999/1495/71…ቢቶ ያለውገው አገል

ገሎት የተመዉ በመሆኑ የወለጋ መረዳጃ ስ/ቤት የነበረው የረረበ ስለሆነ...ወዘተ ቤቶቹን ለውሰው የሚገኘውን የሚገቢሰ ገበረት አገዱታስረከቡ የሚሉና ሌሎችም በርዱት በሉ ተመ ሣሣይ ዩበ ሳቢያች ማስጠንቀቂያ በመሰጠትና የተበሉመው ፍሥረ አመረር ኮሚቴ ፀረሙስብ ቀተ ሮች ነዋ ሽበረቸውን በሰረው በተያያዘበትና የስንበንብ ነጋዳያችም አሻጥር ከመፀን በሳይ ከርር የተበሉውን ልዘብ ከችነር ለማሳቀት የልበረት ቡቱ ማቋቋም በሰረለገበት ወቅትና አገሳሙ የተበሉው ስበሰባ አሳሪሽ አከባቢ ለተበሉው ቦሬ አመረር ኮሚቴ አቢሉች ደህን ነት አሰጊ በነበረበት ጊዜ የተበሉው ስ/ቤት ለጊዜው ከልበረት ቡቱ ጋር ከመሳበሉ በ ሰተር ፣ የበሉው የረሱ የሆነ የተቋለ ስ/ቤትና የሰበሰባ አሳሪሽ የሉለውና ለወደረ ትው ለማቋቋም አቅም የሚያገሰው በመሆኑ ፣ ከኪረይ ቢቶች አስተዳዳር ፍርጁት በደረሰው ማስጠንቀቂያ መሠረት ቤቶን ለመልቀቅ ሆነ ኪረሱን ለመክፈል የማይችል በመሆኑ የተበሉው ልዘብ መቋሪያ አንደሰጠበት ጉዳዩ ተር 6 ቀን 1971 ዓ.ም ለተደረገው የተበሉው ልዘብ ወቅሰሳ ስበሰባ ተርዷል ።።

2. የተበሉው ነዋሪያች ወቅሰሳ ስበሰባ ስለሰጠው መፍሪያ ፡

የተበሉው ልዘብ ተር 6 ቀን 1971 ዓ.ም በደረገው ወቅሰሳ ስበሰባ ባባ ለደው ውሣኔ ፡—

ሀ. ማህበረ አሳሪሹን ከነሙሉ ፍርጁቱ የበሉው በነፃ አገዳገልገለበት ረቅደ የሰ ጠውን የኪረይ ቢቶች አስተዳዳር ፍርጁት ከሰገ ወጪ ይገባቸዋል ብሉ ለመወሰን



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ሥልጣን ስለሌለው ፣

ለ. የተበላው በአከባቢው የሠራው የፈጠረት ሱቱ አገኚ ለተበላው ሕዝብ መደረግ የ ግይበታ በመሆኑ አነዚህን ለመበበሱት አገልገሉቶችና በ ተዘጣሪም ለመዩለ ሕዛናትና በተበለው ውስጥ ለሚያስፈልጉ ጠቀሳሳ አገልገሉቶች በአዳራሹ ይደተ መበት የነበረውን አገልገሉት ያሳቷረዉ በመሆኑ ፣

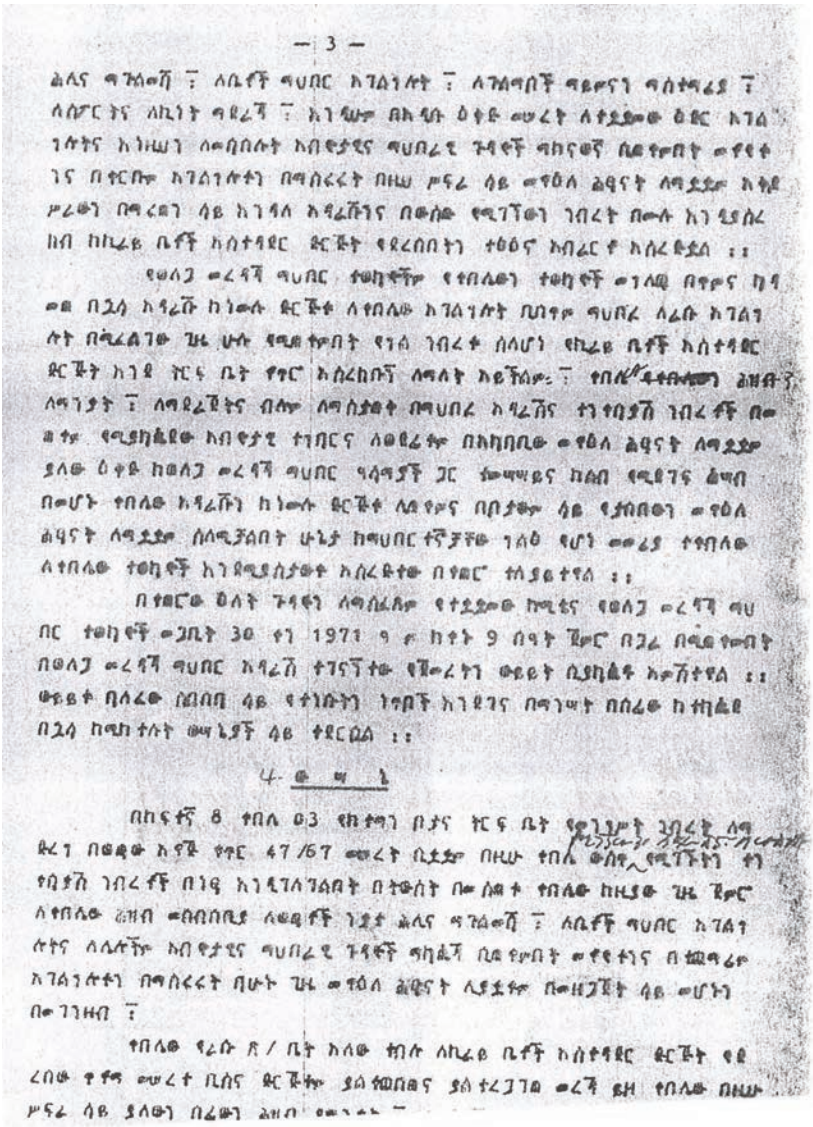
ሐ. የአዳራሹ ባለቤት የሆነው የወለጋ መረዳሻ ማህበር የተበለው ሕዝብ አገዚነታ በት ፣ አነዚያዴቹበትና አገዚታቋቀበት በበጉ ረታዩ በውስት የበቋውን አዳራሽ የኪሬይ ቤቶች አስተዳደር ዴርዥት የሕዝቡን ዴርዥት አፍርቦ በአመቢ ገነንነት ለመወሰዱ የሚያዴርገው ጥረት አብቀቶ ለተበለው ሕዝብ ያጉናፀፈውን መብቶ የሚ ፃረር በመሆኑና ይህም በተበለው ሕዝብ ዘገዱ ተቀባይነት ስለለለው ፣ የተበ ለው ሥሬ አስኪያጅ ኮሚቴ ሕዝቡ ከተበለው ነፃሬያችች መከከለ ከመረቋቸው በያች ጋር በጉዳቱ መከር ከወለጋ መረዳሻ ማህበርና ጉዳቱ ከሚመለከታቸው መንገሥታዊ ዴርዥቶች ጋር ተነጋገር የደረሰበትን ውጤት ለተበለው ሕዝብ አነዚያስታውቀት መመሪያ ሰተ ቷል ።

3. <u>የተበለ 03 አና የወለጋ መረዳሻ ማህበር ተወካዮች በጋራ ስሰከሷቱት ውይይት</u>

ከሳይ በተራ ቁጥር 2 የቋመለከተውን መመሪያ ለጫሰፈጸም የተደጅው ኮሚቴ የተበለው ነፃሬያችች ጨቅሳሳ ስበሰባ የበቋውን መመሪያ በሥራ ለመተርጉም በመጀመሪያ ከኪ ራይ ቤቶች አስተዳደር ዴርዥት ለተበለው የደረቡትን ደብግቢያች መርምር ዴርዥቱ ያተረበው የያቴ መልቡን በተጉታ ሊሰጠው ወደሚችል አቅጣጫ ያልመራው ከመሆኑ በሳይ የያቴቱው በተ ጉታ የተበለው ሕዝብ ለመገኔት ፣ ለመዴረጀትና ለመታዘቱ የሚያዴርገውን ትገል የሚፀረር ሆኖ ስሳገኘውጅበተዴያ የአዳራሹ ባለገበረት ከሆነው የወለጋ መረዳሻ ማህበር ጋር ተነ ጋገር በሚያገኘው መልስ መሠረት የኪሬይ ቤቶች አስተዳደር ዴርዥት ሳተረበው የያቴ ተገ ቢውን መልስ መሰጠት አስረዳጊ ሆኖ አገኘተታል ።

ጉዳቱን ለማስረጸሥ የተደጅው ኮሚቴ የተበለው ነፃሬ ሕዝብ በሰጠው መመሪያ መሠረት የኪቲት 18 ተን 1971 ዓ ም ወሳህበረ አዳራሽ ከወለጋ መረዳሻ ማህበር ተወ ከቶች ጋር ተገናኘቶ የኪሬይ ቤቶች አስተዳደር ዴርዥት ቢተረበው የያቴ ሳይ በበረቁ ተነጋገሯል ።

የወለጋ መረዳሻ ማህበር ከ1967 ዓ ም ጀምሮ የተበለ ሕዝብ አብቶቱ በሰገ ኘለት መብት መሠረት አነዚያዴርገት በዛሡ ተበለ ውስተ የሚገኘውን አዳራሹን ከነሙሉ ዴ ርዥቱ ለተበለው አገልገሉት አነዚህን በበጉ ረታዩ በውስት መሰጠቱን ከሥሰጋና ጋር በማ



— 3 —

ሕሊና ማኅሰጣሽ ፣ ለቤቶች ማህበር አገልገሎት ፣ ለንብማበቾ ማይሥናነ ማስተማሪያ ፣ ለሰሥር ትና ለኪነት ማዳረሻ ፣ አነ ዓሡ በክዓቡ ዕቀዱ መሠረት ለተደጅው ዕዳር አገል ገሎትና አነዝሠነ ለመሰበሰቡት አብዮታዊና ማህበራዊ ጉዳዮች ማከናወኛ ሲል የሥበት መኖሩቱ ነና በቀርቡሥ አገልገሎቱነ በማስሩሩት በዚሠ ሥናሬ ሳይ መኖዕለ ልዳናት ለማደጀሥ እቅዴ ሥራውነ በማሩዉነ ሳይ አገዳለ አዳራሹነና በውሰጡ የሚገኘውነ ነብረት በሙሉ አነ ዒያስረ ከብ ከኪሩይ ቤቶች አስተዳደር ዳርጅት የደረሰበትነ ተዕዕና አብሬተ ኦ አሰረዱደለ ::

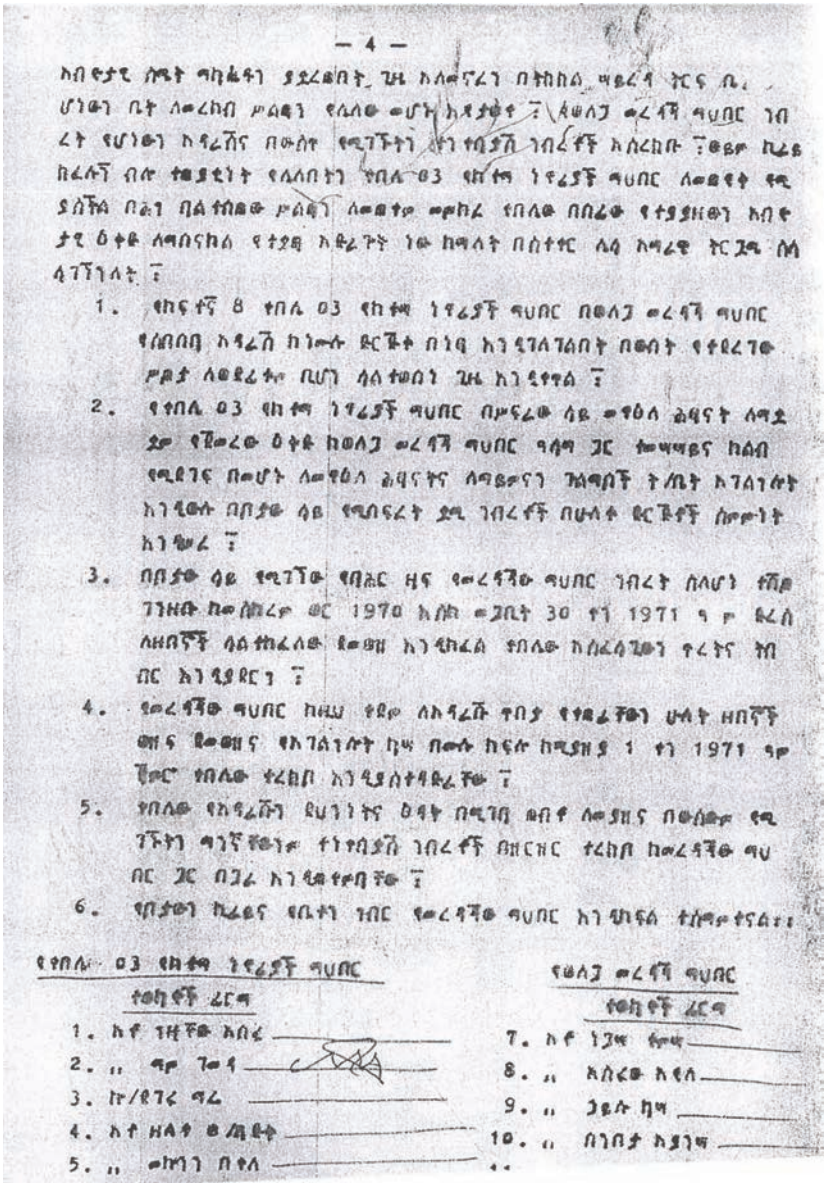
የወለን መረዳኛ ማህበር ተወካዮችሥ የተበሌውነ ተወካዮች መነለዉ በየሥና ከዳ መዉ በኋሳ አዳራሹ ከነሙሉ ዳርጅቱቱ ለተበሌው አገልገሎት ቢሠነየሥ ማህበሩ ለሬቡ አገልገ ሎት በሚረልገው ጊዜ ሁሉ ዳሚዉ ተሥበት የነሰ ነብረቱ ሰለሆነ የኪሩይ ቤቶች አስተዳደር ዳርጅት አገዩ ኮር ና ቤት የተሮ አስረከቡኝ ለማለት እዩችለሥ ፣ የበሰ ዳ ተከብሮ ነ ልዘብ ና ለማገኘት ፣ ለማዩረጀትና ብሎሥ ለማስጀመቱ በማህበሩ አዳራሽና ተነተበያሽ ነብረቶች በመ ዘተሥ የሚያከዲዩው አብዮታዊ ተነቢርና ለወዩሬቱሥ በአከባቢው መኖዕለ ልዳናት ለማደጀሥ ያለው ዕቀዱ ከወለን መረዳኛ ማህበር ኅሳማያች ጋር ቴሙሣዩና ከሰብ የሚዩገና ልማብ በመሆኑ የበሌው አዳራሹነ ከነሙሉ ዳርጅቱቱ ለዉየሥና በቦታውሥ ሳይ የታበበውነ መኖዕለ ልዳናት ለማደጀሥ ሰለሚቻልበት ሁኔታ ከማህበር ተኛቻቸው ነገሰዕ የሆነ መመሪያ ተቀብለው ለተበሌው ተወካዮች አነዩሚይስታውቱ አሰረዱተው በተዳር ተሰያይ ተናለ ::

በተዳርው ዕለት ጉዳዩን ለማስፈጸሥ የተደጀመው ኮሚቴና የወለን መረዳኛ ማህ በር ተወካዮች መጋቢት 30 ቀን 1971 ዓ ም ከጥኑ 9 ሰዓት ጀሥር በጋራ በሚዘ የመበት በወለን መረዳኛ ማህበር አዳራሽ ተገናኘተው የጀመረነነ ውይይት ቢያካሄዱ አመሽተዋል ::
ውይይቱ ባለረው ስብሰባ ሳይ የተነሱትነ ነጥቦች አነዩገና በማገጫት በሰሪው ከ ዝዝይዩ በኋሳ ከሚከ ተሉት ውሣኔያች ሳይ ተደርሷል ::

ሣ ው ሣ ኔ

በከፍኛ 8 የበሌ ው3 የክ ተማነ ቦታና ኮር ና ቤት የሚገኚሥት ነብረት ለማ ዳረነ በወቋው አዳዩ የተር ፋ7/67 መሠረት ቢቷደም በዚሡ የበሌ ውሰዩ የሚገኙትነ ተነ የሰያሽ ነብረቶች በነቂ አነዲገለገልበት በትውሰት በመ ለጨ ተበሌው ከዚያው ጊዜ ጀሥር ለዩበሌው ሬዝብ መሰበሰቢያ ለወዩቋቶች ነገዳ ሕሊና ማኅሰጣሽ ፣ ለቤቶች ማህበር አገልገ ሎትና ለሌሎችሥ አብዮታዊና ማህበራዊ ጉዳዮች ማከጨሻ ቢሮ የሥበት መኖዩቱነና በ ቋሚማሪሥ አገልገሎቱነ በማስረሩት በሙሉ ጊዜ መኖዕለ ልዳናት ሊያቋርጡ በመዘንጋት ሳይ መሆኑነ በመገነዘብ ፣

የበሌው የረሱ ጽ/ ቤት አለው ቋሚ ለኪሩይ ቤቶች አስተዳደር ዳርጅት የዩ ረበው የ ቶማ መሠረተ ቢስና ዳርጅቱሥ ያለ ፋወበወና ያለ ተረጋገዉ መረጫ ይዘ የበሌው በዚሡ ሥናሬ ሳይ ያለውነ በረውነ ልዘብ መመሩሩ —



— 4 —

አብዮታዊ ሰሜት ማከፋፋን ያደረጓበት ጊዜ አለመኖሩን በትክክል ማይረዳ ትርና ቢ፡ ሆነውን ቤት ለመረከብ ሥልቱን የሌለው መሆኑ አጸያቂዋ ፤ ለውለጋ መረዳሻ ማህበር ነብ ረት የሆነውን አዳራሽና በውስጥ የሚገኙትን ነገ ተባያሽ ንብረቶች አስረክቡ ፤ወይም ኪራይ ከፈሉኝ ብሎ ተወያቂነት የሌለበትን የበለ 03 የከተማ ነዋሪያች ማህበር ለመወዳት የሚ ያስችል በልነ ባልተከፀው ሥልቱን ለመወተው መቀስፈ የበለው በበጋው የተያያዘውን አብዮ ታዊ ዕቅዱ ለማበናከስ የተያዘ አዲሱ ትት ነው ከማለት በስተቀር ሌላ አማራጭ ትርጋሚ ሰለ ላገኘነለት ፤

1. የከናቶና 8 ተበሉ 03 የከተማ ነዋሪያች ማህበር በወለጋ መረዳሻ ማህበር የለበበቧ አዳራሽ ከነሙሉ ዕርጅቱ በነባቧ አንዳገለገለበት በወሰት የተደረገው ሥልታ ለወደፈት ቢሆን ሳለ ተወበነ ጊዜ አንዲየተል ፤
2. የተበሉ 03 የከተማ ነዋሪያች ማህበር በሥናረው ሳይ መየዕለ ልዛናት ለማቋ ቋም የሚመረው ዕቅዱ ከወለጋ መረዳሻ ማህበር ባለማ ጋር ተመሣሣይና ከልብ የሚደገፍ በመሆኑ ለመየዕለ ልዛናትና ለማይመናን ገልማሶች ትለት አገለገሎት አንዲውሉ በቦታው ሳይ የሚሰናረት ደሚ ገብረኖች በሁለቱ ዕርጅቶች ስሙነት አንዲሠረ ፤
3. በቦታው ሳይ የሚገኘው የባሕር ዛና የመረዳሻው ማህበር ንብረት ስለሆነ ቀሽይ ገንዘቡ ከመስከረም ወር 1970 አስክ መጋቢት 30 ቀን 1971 ዓ ም ዕረስ ለዘበኞች ሳልተከፈለው ደመወዝ አንዲከፈል የበለው ከሰረዳገዝን ቀረትና ክህ በር አንዲያዘር ፤
4. የመረዳሻው ማህበር ከዚህ ቀደም ለአዳራሹ ቀበታ የተጠራቹን ሁሉት ዘበኞች ወዘና ዱመወዝና የአገልገሎት ክፍ በሙሉ ከናሱ ከሚያዘያ 1 ቀን 1971 ዓም ጀምሮ የበለው ተረክቦ አንዲያስተዳዳሪቹ ፤
5. የበለው የአዳራሽን ዩህንነትና ዕቅት በሚገባ ጠብቀ ለመያዘና በውሰጡ የሚ ገኙትን ማንኛቹንም ተነተባያሽ ንብረቶች በዘርዝር ተረክቦ ከመረዳሻው ማህ በር ጋር በጋራ አንዲፈጽሙ ፤
6. የቦታውን ኪራይና የቤትን ንብር የመረዳሻው ማህበር አንዳከፍል ተሰመሩ ተናሳ።

የተበሉ 03 የከተማ ነዋሪያች ማህበር

ተወካዮች ፈርማ

1. አቶ ንዛቹው አሰረ _____
2. ,, ማሩ ገሙላ _____
3. ኮ/ዩገሬ ማሬ _____
4. አቶ ዘለቀ ወ/ጊዩት _____
5. ,, መኮነን በቀለ _____

የወለጋ መረዳሻ ማህበር

ተወካዮች ፈርማ

7. አቶ ነጋሣ ቶሌሣ _____
8. ,, አሰረው አቀለ _____
9. ,, ጋይሉ ከማ _____
10. ,, ሰነበታ አያነሣ _____

Book Reviews

Klemm, P. M. (2022). *Dressing Modern like our Mothers: Dress, Identity, and Cultural Praxis in Oromia*, The Red Sea Press, 206 pages

Dressing modern like our mothers: Dress, identity, and cultural praxis in Oromia is a nuanced and complex analysis of the aesthetic practices of the Barentuma Oromo women of Eastern Ethiopia. In this book, art historian Peri Klemm illuminates the complex meaning(s) associated with contemporary Oromo women's dress and artistic expression and situates it within the ethnic and religious diversity of Eastern Ethiopia and the history of Oromo marginality and nationalism. The title can be understood as a play on words as it problematizes, inverts, and decouples our common associations of modernity with the present and tradition with the past by highlighting the ways in which contemporary Oromo women's fashion, broadly conceived, is connected to the past and at the same time, how Oromo women use modern fabrics and materials to dress like their mothers to maintain continuity with their cultural roots. The first half of the books explores the specific ways in which the changes to Oromo culture over the last two hundred years, due to conquest, trade, and religious conversion, have become conceptually embedded within Oromo women's aesthetic choices. In the second half of the book, Klemm focuses our attention on the specific ways that Oromo women fashion themselves, over their life cycle and during important cultural rituals. She also explores the ways in which modern forces have shaped Oromo identity and adornment practices, material, and form.

Klemm focuses on women because they are an understudied group within Ethiopian Studies and more importantly, she asserts that, during the modern period, Oromo women's aesthetic practices are more conservative and culturally rich than other groups in the region. During the

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 155 7/15/2024 4:15:46 PM

modern period, due to incorporation, westernization and religious pressures, the public articulation of Oromo identity has been under attack. As a result, Oromo men, as a means of survival because of their more public facing positionality, have had to assimilate toward Christian, Islamic or Western norms of dress. Because women tend to occupy the private realm/domestic space and because they are less threatening, they have been able to maintain more traditional forms of Oromo dress. This was in part due to their own agency, but it also occurred because of the historic, social, and economic forces that constrained their aesthetic options in ways that facilitated these cultural survivals. As such, this book outlines the very specific ways in which Oromo women have become the carriers and performers of Oromo history and culture through their fashion choices. It illuminates the many ways in which Oromo women fashion themselves to both convey modernity and at the same time it explores how they engage in a kind of dress that also links them to Oromo traditions, history, and nationalism. Klemm views "the body as an aesthetic and symbolic system" that is used by women via dress, jewelry, body modification, and hairstyles to display key aspects of Oromo identity and nationalism. The past informs the present with respect to the ways in which Oromo women adorn themselves and mark themselves off as distinctly Oromo.

In exploring Oromo women's dress, Klemm bring our attention to a host of binary tensions that are characteristic of Oromo culture. One of the most fascinating insights that she reveals is about the performative side of Oromo women's dress related to visibility and concealment. Throughout the books, she masterfully illustrates how this binary appears again and again within women's adornments practices. For instance, Klemm discusses the ways in which the upper body has been traditionally associated with men in the West and in Oromia and the area from the waist down, women. For example, the Oromo women she studied traditionally wore a voluminous skirt called a *saddetta* which contained folds that supplied wearers a hidden space to carry valuables or to conceal pregnancy. The tying of the *sabbata* (a woman's belt) is a symbol of marriage, fertility and claims to space. The sabbata belt sits at the nexus of Klemm's insights on gender, culture, the great mother, concealment, and the wrapping of the belt represented a gendered expression of Oromo culture that is vital to how, the women she studied performed their identities in subtle, yet powerful ways. It also reflects the importance of the belly as both a repository of life that the belt conceals and protects. The material used to create the *sabbata* changed over time, but its significance remains.

Disclosure and concealment are a part of Oromo cosmetics, hair styling and dress more broadly. Often, a woman's natural beauty is concealed by covering or through disfigurement by way of practices such as scarification, tattooing and the current use of fingernail polish to paint the face. At times, these adornment practices can serve two purposes simultaneously; they are beautifying, but they can also be used to repel negative spirits or to avert the gaze of jealous people. For example, children's heads are shaved in certain patterns as a means of protection as they alter their natural state of beauty which could arouse jealousy and harm. Continuing with the topic of hair, married women among the Barentuma traditionally covered their hair with a special kind of hair net called *gufta*. The *gufta* is always worn publicly and it indicates the contained femininity a married woman. It also serves as a screen that separates a woman from her youth and her natal family. In addition to the *gufta,* Muslim Oromo women, depending on where they live and their degree of religiosity, may also wear a *foota*, a shawl or kind of long scarf that covers the head and torso in public and is a marker of religious identity shared by all Muslim women in the area. For Muslim Oromo women, wearing both the *gufta* and *foota* highlights the complexity of Oromo identity reflected through dress and the recurring theme of concealment and revealing discussed throughout book. It also speaks to Oromo integration within the local, regional, and global economy and symbolic systems as well. According to Klemm, body ornamentation functions as "cultural map documenting historical, regional and lineage associations through style and form". She notes that there is a layering of Oromo symbols that can be read on Oromo women's bodies.

Klemm's work underscores the many ways in which women perform culture through their fashion choices which are layered, accumulative and symbolically rich and often act as a kind of resistance. Klemm's groundbreaking work is full of rich cultural material and thought-provoking insights. It is situated at the intersection of art history, anthropology, political science, and performance studies. *Dressing modern like our mothers: Dress, identity, and cultural praxis in Oromia* is one of the first studies of its kind to delve deeply into the study of Oromo art from a gendered perspective and it is a must read for anyone interested in the ways in which global and regional forces impact local culture and symbolic systems.

Zakia Posey

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 158 7/15/2024 4:15:46 PM

"The World the Oromo Made"*, Review Essay, *Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa*, by Gemetchu Megerssa and Aneesa Kassam (Addis Ababa: Fifth World Publication, 2019), 314 pages

Mohammed Hassen

Rarely does one come across a book that establishes with historical linguistic evidence that Kushitic languages speakers once lived in what is today eastern Sudan and the Red Sea littoral of Eritrea around 15000 BC.[1] The Oromo language "belongs to the Afroasiatic…macro family" (p.38), of which the Kushitic language family is one of five branches. *Afaan Oromo* is the largest branch of the Cushitic language family. As will be shown below, the book presents irrefutable evidence that demolishes the Abyssinian narrative depicting the "Oromo as barbarian hordes" who arrived in Ethiopia at the beginning of the 16th century. It establishes that the Oromo are one of the earliest indigenous peoples of Ethiopia, who lived in independent and self-governing states until they were conquered and colonized by King Menelik of Shewa (1865-1889) and later Emperor of the Abyssinian Empire (1889-1913).

In the conquest's aftermath, the Oromo lost their sovereignty, land, and human dignity. They fought successive Ethiopian regimes to recover

* I am indebted to Professor Ezekiel Gebissa, for suggesting this beautiful phrase and also his wonderful comments that shaped this short review essay.

1 Ehret, Christopher, The Civilization of Africa: A History to 1800 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002), pp. 35-41.

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 159 7/15/2024 4:15:46 PM

their lost assets. In 2018, after four years of peaceful resistance, Oromo young men (*qeerroo*) and women (*qarree*) brought down the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) regime (1991-2017). The book under review chronicles the long, rich, and complex Oromo history and broadens the readers' understanding through in-depth exploration of the historical records. *Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa* is a product of extensive research and lifelong devotion of its authors, Drs. Gemetchu Megerssa and Aneesa Kassam, to Oromo studies.

One of the authors, Gemetchu Megerssa, was born to a family versed in Oromo oral tradition. He was inspired at a young age to understand the Gada system. His great-grandfather and grandfather were custodians of "the bokku, the hereditary scepter which symbolized the authority of his people."[2] His parents and other family members instilled in him profound reverence for Oromo cultural heritage. Such background launched Gemetchu's life-long quest for understanding the vast Oromo cultural universe. He writes: "This quest began at an early age, when he was socialized into its songs, proverbs, riddles, folktales, botanical, zoological, and medical knowledge as well as into its moral norms by his maternal grandmother, Balfe Kura…and his mother Dossee" (p.93).

Socialized into Oromo culture and endowed with natural talent, Gemetchu became a prolific songwriter in the 1970s, composing several songs for prominent Oromo song artists such as Ali Birra, the legendary Oromo song artist whose unique melody and baritone voice inspired the Oromo public for the last six decades. Gemetchu's contribution to Oromo music can be summed up: "There is no doubt that the songs composed by Gemetchu and performed by Ali Birra opened up the universe of Oromo music to their generation, cultivating Oromo people's interest in their own music, history, language and values. This prompted a yearning for freedom and human dignity."[3]

The story of Gemetchu's grandfather and the bitter experience of losing land and human dignity suffered by his parents' generation gave Gemetchu acute awareness of imperial politics in his formative years.

2 Gemetchu Megerssa and Aneesa Kassam, *Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa*, 3-6. See also Mohammed Hassen & Bonnie Holcomb," Nomination of Dr. Gemetchu Megerssa to Receive the OSA Lifetime Achievement Award" (dated June 14, 2022), p. 1.

3 Hassen & Holcomb, *ibid*.

Gemetchu puts the disturbing activities of court and government officials, as told by his grandfather's and parents' generations, in this way.

> We were forbidden to speak in our language. We were forced to be baptized in the nearest river. A person whose language we did not understand uttered some words and threw handfuls of water over us, naming all the men Wolde Mariam and all the women Walata Mariam. We had to accept this humiliation… We had to accept the loss of our lands and pay the heavy taxes … [that reduced us] to destitution (p. 5).

The fall of Haile Selassie's regime and its replacement by a military junta on September 11, 1974, created a relatively favorable situation for Gemetchu to conduct research on the Oromo people. In March 1975, the military regime promulgated a land reform law that distributed "land to the tiller." Rene Lefort surmises that the military regime took radical measures, including the Land Reform Act of 1975, to obviate an Oromo uprising.[4]

During the implementation phase of the new law, Gemetchu served as a district director of the agricultural reform program in Wallaga." (p.3). The assignment gave him an opportunity to record his grandfather's history carefully. Ruda Kura, Gemetchu's grandfather and "the custodian of the *bokkuu*, the hereditary scepter which symbolized the authority of his people," was born in 1870. He grew up in a free and self-governing society. After Wallaga was incorporated into the expanding empire of Menelik of Shoa in 1886, the region continued to be ruled by local officials for a short time before it was placed under direct Amhara rule.

Consequently, the free people lost their land to their Amhara suzerains, becoming *gabars* (serfs) paying exorbitant dues. In addition, the "multiple exactions imposed on the Oromo *gabars* meant the loss of considerable portions of the [*gabars*] production, onerous labor service and manifold other impositions."[5] This turn of events exposed Gemetchu's grandfather to degrading humiliation. The governor of the region had

4 Lefort, Rene, 1981. *Ethiopia: An Heretical Revolution*? (London: Zed Press, 1981), p.110.

5 Hussein, Abdulmejid, "The Political Economy of the Ethiopian Famine," *Rehab: Drought, and Famine in Ethiopia,* ed. Abdul Mejid Hussein (London: International African Institute, 1976), 14.

him "chained like a dog to a tree in the marketplace [for a year on market days] …For refusing to pay the 'slave' taxes that he had levied on the populace" (6).

Working for the land reform implementing agency gave Gemetchu Megressa an opportunity to travel through most areas of today's Oromia. During his travels, he had conversations with Christians, Muslims, and believers of the traditional Oromo religion. As a result, Gemetchu realized that the Oromo were united by language, way of life, worldview, and a shared history of conquest and domination. He also "observed the exploitative conditions under which all the Oromo were forced to live" (94). During his travels in the Borana region, southern Ethiopia, Gemetchu met with Oromo custodians of knowledge and traditional teachers. Combining the knowledge of the Oromo tradition he acquired from his family and the instructions of his Borana teachers, Gemetchu dedicated his life to a quest to understand and write about the gada system, the foundation of the indigenous Oromo democracy and history. Gemetchu's travels in different Oromo regions inspired him to write extensively on Oromo cultural unity, their economic exploitation, political domination and cultural dehumanization under Amhara rule. "The Oromo…conceptualize their conquest as the enslavement of a free-born and self-governing people whose rule of law has been replaced by the rule of violence" (p.9).

Throughout his youth years, Gemetchu was in and out of prison regularly. While serving in the land reform agency, he was imprisoned for the fifth time. He felt the regime was trying to discourage him from generating indigenous knowledge of the Oromo. Upon his release, he sought asylum in Kenya in 1985. In Nairobi, he met his co-author, Dr. Aneesa Kassam. He used his stay in Nairobi to learn about the gada system at the feet of Borana wisemen, who had a broad knowledge of Oromo cultural, political, and religious institutions. They included but were not limited to, Bulee Guyyoo, Abdullahi Jirma, and Dabbasaa Guyyoo. The latter had all-rounded knowledge about the Gada system, Oromo myth of origin, traditional Oromo religion, calendar, Oromo worldview, and much more. Because of Dabbasaa Guyyoo's profound wisdom about traditional Oromo institutions, he was invited to give talks both in the United States and Latin America. Gemetchu posits that Borana teachers possessed "Encyclopedic knowledge about the gadaa system, traditional Oromo religion, Oromo law, calendar, the complex and all-encompassing and

principles of Oromo sacred wisdom and the basic components of the Oromo accounts of creation."[6]

Wasting no time, Gemetchu began to carefully and painstakingly record what he learned from his Borana custodians of indigenous knowledge. Later, he used his extensive collection of indigenous knowledge he recorded from Borana sages as a major genre of sources for his 1993 Ph.D. dissertation at the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University of London. He titled his 1993 dissertation "Knowledge, Identity, and the Colonizing Structure: The Case of the Oromo of East and Northeast Africa."

Dr. Gemetchu returned to Ethiopia in 1996 and started teaching at Addis Ababa University in the Department of Anthropology & Sociology, which gave him a wonderful opportunity to share with his students his vast knowledge of the Oromo worldview and other key Oromo concepts that he developed in his dissertation. Through frequent media appearances, "He also courageously gave memorable radio and television interviews on Oromo issues raising awareness of the beauty, integrity and internal consistency of Oromo sacred wisdom, presenting profound ideas in ways that were accessible to all listeners throughout Ethiopia."[7]

Through his public lectures and radio and television interviews, Gemetchu Megressa contributed to raising Oromo political awareness about their deplorable condition under successive Ethiopian regimes. In this regard, no other scholar has written more than Gemetchu Megerssa in expanding our intellectual horizon for understanding profound Oromo concepts such as Oromo worldview, nagaa and ayyana. The last category "is central to Oromo thought and without understanding it, one cannot make sense of Oromo world view".[8] It was his reading of Gemetchu's dissertation and conversation with its author that inspired Charles Verharen, Professor of Philosophy, for comparing the Oromo and that of the ancient Egyptian philosophies.[9]

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6 Hassen & Holcomb, *ibid*., p.2.

7 *Ibid*., p.3.

8 Hassen, Mohammed, *The Oromo and the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia, 1300-1700* (James Currey , United Kingdom, & Boydell & Brewer LTD, Rochester, New York, 2015, reprinted in 2017): 25-26.

9 Verharen, Charles, "Comparing Oromo and ancient Egyptian Philosophy", *The Journal of Oromo Studies* 13, No.2, (July 2008): 12-13.

> Both philosophies insist on the mysterious nature of the origins of universe. Both claim that the first principle of creation is primordial water. ..The Oromo call this creative water walaabu, which must be distinguished from Madda Waalaabu, water in a specific geographic location. The ancient Egyptians call it Nun. Both philosophies hold that primordial water is organized by creative principles, called ayyaana by the Oromo and Khepera by the Egyptians. Khepera is translated as becoming. The principles of Khepera are immanent within Nun, and their self-organizing processes creates the powerful Force manifested as the sun or Ra.. [T]he creative principles of ayyaana are also linked to the sun. Both traditions postulate an evolution from an inert substance, water, to an active principle, the sun. The ayyaana in the Oromo tradition constitutes the ordering process whereby the sun emerges from the primordial water. The ayyaana through the sun start 'the process of time and creation, through which all things come to life.[10]

While reading Gemetchu's dissertation, Verharen was surprised by the similarities between the Oromo and ancient Egyptian ethics. Oromo ethics is articulated through the concept of *nagaa*, peace, but also "carries extended meanings such as harmony, order, balance, and justice."[11] Verharen "finds parallels between the Oromo concept of *nagaa* and ancient Egyptian concept of *maat*.[12]

> The Oromo use of the concept of nagaa or peace to test their adherence to saffu or the moral code calls to mind the ancient Egyptian concept of maat, the peace, harmony, order, balance that must characterize our responsibility to the continuance of life…Like the ancient Egyptians, the Oromo share the idea that all humans are subject to a universal principle of harmony and order, nagaa- from the elected leaders of the gada to the lowliest herd boy.[13]

10 *Ibid.*, 15,19.
11 *Ibid.*, 15, 19.
12 *Ibid.*, 19-20.
13 *Ibid.*, 25.

The core of *Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa* is based on Gemetchu Megressa's 1993 dissertation. Of course, the authors spent years expanding the scope of their book and refining their argument to a higher plane of scholarly abstraction. To do so, they extensively used Oromo traditional knowledge as a major valid source and other written primary and secondary sources for writing the book that shines a bright light on different aspects of the rich Oromo heritage.

The authors reject the ideologically motivated Abyssinian representation of the Oromo as "nomadic hordes" who arrived in the region only during the first half of the 16th century. The Oromo have a long history of "habitation in the region, as envisioned by their oral historians and attested by historical linguistics, archeology, archaeo-zoology, plant genetics, rock art and other data" (p.36). Additionally, the authors establish on the basis of linguistic evidence that the Oromo language "belongs to the Afro-asiatic …macro family" (p.38). As the authors put it, "The homeland of the proto–Afro–Asiatic speakers … lie in what are today the Ethio-Sudanese borderlands, in an area situated roughly between the Nubian Nile Cataracts, the Red Sea hills, and the Atbara/Tekezze river basin, where two of the earliest forms of food production…developed" (p.39).

There are five branches of the Afro-Asiatic language family, one of which is the Cushitic language micro family. The Oromo language is the major branch of the Cushitic language family. The authors' state, "the ancestral speakers of the Afar, Oromo, Somali and others began to move gradually southwards from the Red Sea coast into the Rift Valley, onto the Harar and Shoan plateaux, and down the Indian Ocean coast from about the fifth millennium BC "(p.51). This establishes that the Oromo population movement started from northern Ethiopia and Eritrea during the fifth millennium BC, making the Oromo one of the most indigenous peoples of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. According to the authors, "Geographically, the Oromo consider themselves to be a people of the Great Rift Valley (Goooroo Fugug), an environment that has shaped their history, mixed economy, institutionalized networks of exchange, social structures and structures of consciousness" (p.25).

Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa is an excellent book that systematically maps Oromo history through multiple disciplines. It is thematically organized to include "the rounds of Oromo history and pre-history, political context, hermeneutics, anthropology, astronomy, time-keeping, sociology, development,

philosophy, law, religion, governance, the unique Gada system, and the Qaalluu institution.[14]

Though the authors of *Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa* took years to publish their book; through hard work, perseverance, iron determination, and thirst for knowledge based upon the Oromo value of truth, they succeeded in producing the book that shines bright scholarly light upon what happened to the Oromo after their conquest during the 1880s and 1890s.

> (1)[That] the Abyssinian colonial occupation of the Oromo physical space and the systematic imposition of a Christian topography on the indigenous onces.…(2). [that] the Abyssinians [adopted] policies to domesticate Oromo thought and to deny them all forms of cultural expression(language, religious worship and ritual performance) or the possibility of renewing their culture in embodied ways; (3) the integration of the Oromo into the global economic order and the impact of the world system on their life-ways and thought ways. [and] how the Oromo were economically and politically disempowered and disenfranchised in favor of Christian Abyssinians (p.97).

The authors of the book under review characterize Emperor Menelik's occupation of Oromo land as part of his imperial expansion to seize land and natural resources. The authors use interchangeably Abyssinian or Amhara colonialism, which subjected the Oromo to massive economic exploitation, political domination, and cultural dehumanization. As Deane puts it, "At its most powerful, colonialism is a process of radical dispossession."[15] Historical evidence supports the authors' conclusion that Menlik's conquest was driven by unbridled ambition to occupy "the green and lush Oromo lands and their boundless commodities (gold, civet, ivory, coffee) and [their] prosperous markets.[16] That motivated his brutal conquest of Oromo land. "Throughout history, the cruelest

14 Hassen & Holcomb, *ibid*., 4.

15 Semus Deane, in *Nationalism and Colonialism and Literature,* Eds Terry Eagleton et al (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990): 10.

16 Hiwet, Addis, *Ethiopia from Autocracy to Revolution* (London: Merlin Press, 1975): 4.

massacres were committed in the building and maintaining of empires."[17] The Oromo were massacred in the building of the Ethiopian empire, and to this day, they are still massacred by those seeking to maintain the same empire."[18] For the Oromo, colonialism was more than political, economic, and cultural dispossession. It was the loss of sovereignty, independence, land, and human dignity. Once the Oromo lost their sovereignty, their culture was exposed to attack, and their language was transformed from being a language of business and governmental services to that of backwardness and darkness.[19]

> Following their conquest, the Oromo institutions of Self-government were destroyed, their leadership liquidated or Co-opted, their territory divided, their social cohesion disrupted, their cultural institutions destroyed, their property plundered, their traditional religion interfered with, and their population [reduced almost by half] by brutal warfare,[20] and natural calamities which accompanied that warfare.[21]

Let me give two examples of key Oromo institutions that were deliberately banned. In 1900, Emperor Menelik banned by decree the gathering of *chafee* assembly, the foundation of Oromo democracy,[22] which suffered a major blow to its survival, except in a few peripheral areas among

17 Chalk, Frank & Jonassohn, Kurt, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analysis and case studies* (New Haven Yale University Press, Press, 1990): 30.

18 Hassen, Mohammed," Genocidal Conquest, Plunder of Resources and Dehumanization of the Oromo in Ethiopia," *Journal of Genocide Research*, October 2021: 116.

19 *Ibid.*

20 De Salviac, Martial , *An Ancient People Great African Nation The Oromo*, trans. from the original French, Ayalew Kanno (Self-published, 2005), 350_. See also Alexander Bulatovich, *Ethiopia through Russian Eyes: Country in Transition, 1896–1898*, trans. and ed. Richard Seltzer (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 2000), 68–69).

21 These included the cattle plague of 1888–1892, which wiped out a vast part of the animal population, typhus epidemics, dysentery and the great Ethiopian famine of the period.

22 Tafla, Bairu. trans. and ed., *Asma Giyorgis and His Works: History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Shawa* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag: Wiesbaden GMBH, 1987): 134-135.

nomadic Oromo groups. The same year, the Emperor banned by decree the Oromo pilgrimage for honoring the Abba Muudaa, the Oromo spiritual leader,[23] which dealt a fatal blow to the traditional Oromo religion. According to De Slaviac, for Emperor Menelik "the pilgrimage appeared …the principal boulevard of the patriotic spirit, the sovereign activity of the Oromo life and ferment for eventual revolts".[24] The goal of banning both institutions was to undermine Oromo national identity and to destroy " the crucial links that sustained Oromo cultural, political and religious unity."[25] Ernest Gellner aptly described Ethiopia as "a prison house of nations if ever there was one."[26] In that prison house, "the Oromo language was banned from being used for preaching, teaching and radio broadcasting up 1974".[27] In fact, "it was neither permissible to teach nor to produce literature in the Oromo language, nor was it possible to use it in legal forums" [and for local administration] until 1991.[28] Even in 2024, Oromo Orthodox Christian clergy do not have the right to preach in their language to their own Oromo-speaking congregations.

Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa deals with several topics, including the traditional Oromo naturalization policy that was practiced for hundreds of years. In fact, the discussion on this topic captures the essence and beauty of how the Oromo incorporated non-Oromo into their society through their naturalization policy based on cultural belonging rather than on biological one. In some ways, the Oromo naturalization policy is similar to the naturalization policies of contemporary Western democratic countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia. The Oromo practiced their open-door policy of naturalization policy centuries before the above-mentioned countries were established. According to the authors, the ideas of Oromo naturalization

23 Knutsson, Karl Knutsson. *Authority and Change: A Study of The Kallu Institution Among the Macha Galla of Ethiopia* (Goteborg: Enografiska Museet, 1967), 147–155.

24 De Salviac, i*bid*., 182.

25 Hassen, Mohammed , "Pilgrimage to the Abba Muudaa "*the journal of oromo studies ,* volume 12, numbers 1 & 2,(july 2005): 154.

26 Gellner, Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Cornell University press and Blackwell, Ithaca and Oxford, 1983):85. See also Hassen, "Genocidal Conquest," *ibi*d., 117.

27 Hassen, Genocidal Conquest, *ibi*d., 117.

28 Baxter, Paul . "Ethiopia's Unacknowledged Problem: The Oromo," *African Affairs* 77 (1978): 288.

> Were made manifest in the rites of naturalization (*horomssa*) performed to incorporate non-Oromo individuals into the larger society. Through this ritual, anyone, even an enemy captured in battle, could acquire equal rights to those who possessed them by birth. As long as the new member agreed to abide by the communal customs and laws. Given this open–door national policy, the Oromo consider themselves to be a cultural rather than a biological entity. This cultural belonging is based on the idea of Oromumma (core essence of the Oromo; Oromo-ness) founded on the totality of their values (26).

Traditional Oromo naturalization was conducted by the leader of Gada assembly that was in power on behalf of his people and in the presence of large members of Oromo confederacy (see below), where prayer was performed and the new members blessed, protected and accepted as equal members of the Oromo. What makes Oromo naturalization policy interesting and probably ahead of its time was that those who were present during the ceremony "collected contributions of cattle and other property for the support of the [newly naturalized] members".[29] "As I have noted elsewhere, "Any cattle or property that was given to the [naturalized] members were considered as *andhura*, meaning umbilical cord, thus expressing a special gift that a father gives his son at the time of his birth. Any property that was given as *andhura* was untouchable by others."[30]

In several sections of *Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa,* the authors emphasize that the Oromo generally administered themselves through the confederacy by electing Gada leaders every eight years. According to Gemetchu and Kassem, "The Oromo confederacy was premised on a pact of concord and peace (*nagaa* Oromo) through which it was forbidden to shed the blood of any of its members and on their adherence to custom and law" (p. 65).

Every eight years, each confederacy elected its Gada leaders, who managed the affairs of the confederacy only for eight years. The elected leaders presided over the Chaffee assembly (traditional Oromo parliament), which dealt with the making of law, declaration of war, and making of peace. The authors of the book under review provide the best and

29 Hassen, *The Oromo and the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia,* 156.
30 *Ibid*., 157.

the most succinct description of the functions of Oromo assemblies. They state:

> It was also through these assemblies that law and order was [were] kept, sanctions were imposed, rituals were performed, and through which the collective resources were defended. In other words, these assemblies provided the economic, judicial, political, military and religious institutional arrangements through which the confederacy was governed from both below and above (p.65).

It is precisely for this reason that the authors urge "[Oromo] scholars to begin to think about their cultural knowledge within their own conceptual frameworks" (98), which facilitate exploration of Oromo cultural universe through their "System of knowledge…articulated in their myth of creation" (p.109). The authors provide a detailed discussion of the creation myth of the Oromo. The origin of that myth is the "Black Deity of the Oromo, Waaqa Guraacha, as the supreme principle and primary cause of the universe. This notion of 'blackness'…is associated with purity and truth" (p.109). The authors succinctly state that the Oromo creation myth.

> "... provides the matrix within which the primary and derivative concepts" are interconnected, including, but not limited to the following ones; (1) Waaqa, the monotheistic Creator; (2) Uumaa, the manifold aspects of the created universe; (3) ayyaana, the sacral time-force that lie at the heart of all beings and things; (4), safuu, the moral that defines the ethical boundaries that exist between all created things; (5), nagaaa, the principle of peace, harmony and universal order that operates in the world;(6), Finna, the fluctuating flows of creative energy or 'vital force ' which circulate in the world; (7) Horo, the incarnation of the totality of the cosmic principles and of the Boorantica, the Ideal first –born Man, and the custodial keeper of the sacred laws; (8) Yaayya shanan, the numerical code and natural law that provide the foundations for the universe; (9) isaa-isii the gendered nature of all things in the universe; (10) Oromumma, the core 'essence' of the Oromo collective being (p.111).

The above interconnected derivative concepts are extensively discussed in four chapters. The discussion is centered on multi-disciplinary approaches such as anthropology, history, Oromo Meta dynamics, social philosophy, and worldview. In Chapter 6, the authors provide a fascinating, detailed discussion of the Oromo calendar. They argue that the Oromo calendar appears "to have many similarities with the ancient Egyptian and Merotic calendars" (132). What is more, Oromo calendar is

> Based on observational [and] mathematical …rules for making predictions. In making their calculation, the Oromo time-keepers use stellar, lunar, and solar astronomical data, and like the Chinese and Mayan calendric experts, they permutate both names and numbers(pp.131-132).

In chapter 8, the authors discuss Oromo institutions of custom and law, which was the foundation of Oromo democracy. The authors start their insightful discussion by stating that "the Oromo consider themselves to be a people who live by the rule of law" (*seera* or *heera*), (p. 184). This is an accurate conclusion supported by several reliable sources. Antoine de Abbadie, a French explorer and geographer, recorded in 1843 the legislative proceedings of the *Chafee* assembly (Oromo parliament) of the Guduru Oromo. While he lived among the Oromo for two years, d'Abbadie attended sessions of *Chafee* assembly meetings. As mentioned above, the leaders of the *Chafee* assembly were elected by their people to serve for eight years. According to Abbadie, the Gudru *Chafee* assembly remained the Oromo political nerve center, where the people debated important issues of the day and made laws.[31] In the words of de Abbadie,

> When the orator finished, the assembly kept quiet for a long while in order to allow him to continue his speech if he then recalled an omitted argument. In these oratorical contesters of Africa, there is always a natural dignity and decorum that we would like to see in the turbulent chambers of Europe where the wisest have sometimes regretted untimely vivacity.[32]

31 de Abbadie, Antoine. "On The Oromo: Great African Nation Often Designated Under The Name "Galla" translation from French by Ayalew Kanno, *The Journal of Oromo studies* 14, No 1 *(2007)*:130.

32 *Ibid*.

D'Abbadie tells us that while the *chafee* assembly was in session, its leader held in his hand the *bokkuu,* the specter symbolizing the authority of his people. He adds that "the bokku can be compared to the mace of the English Parliament."[33] His observation Confirms that the Chafee assembly was the source of law and that "the Oromo have had laws as valuable as those of the English."[34] D'Abbadie adds three interesting points. First, that "the Oromo, as ancient Rome, have faith in their future greatness".[35] he Oromo hope for better future was aborted by Emperor Menelik's conquest and colonization of Oromo land. Second, that "the Oromo have established separation of power",[36] which is the basis for modern democratic societies. Finally, that the Oromo developed complex rules of government comparable to those of the great Roman Republic during its democratic period.[37] D'Abbadie's observations established that the Chafee assembly made laws through which the Oromo administered themselves. As indicated above, by banning the gathering of chafee assembly in 1900, Emperor Menelik deliberately crippled the key Oromo institution that was the foundation of Oromo democracy for hundreds of years.

The book is unparalleled as a comprehensive study of all major Oromo institutions, including the *Ireechaa,* the festival of thanksgiving marking harvest, and an Oromo new calendar year (p.145). After the conquest of the Oromo land, the Orthodox Church clergy condemned the *Irrechaa* festival as a pagan practice that had to be abandoned. Under immense pressure from the Orthodox Church and its strongest backers, imperial regimes, the *Irrechaa* festival went underground. "The current version was revived in the mid- 1990s" (p.145), after the establishment of the Oromia regional state as an autonomous entity. According to the authors' description, "The…irreechaa malkaa rites for watering places takes place at Lake Arsadi (Horaa Arsaddi) …in Bushoftuu, one of the seven lakes….[and] these lakes formed part of the sacral topography of the Abbaa Muudaa center (145-146).

Following the Irreecha festival's resurrection, Horaa Arsadi was transformed into a significant sacred Oromo site, where people gathered to thank Waaqa, the Oromo God, for the blessing he bestowed upon them

33 *Ibid.,* 134.
34 *Ibid.*
35 *Ibid.*
36 *Ibid.*, 127.
37 *Ibid.*, 129.

during the previous year and prayed for peace and well-being of all people during the coming year. Millions gather in peace and joyful excitement to thank Waaqa and pray for peace and harmony among the people of Ethiopia. The Oromo Irreecha celebration is the single largest spiritual and cultural gathering on the continent of Africa, where millions of colorfully dressed Oromo men and women of every age, from every walk of life and belonging to different religions, peacefully celebrate their most sacred day in the Oromo calendar. In fact, the irreecha festival is celebrated globally among the Oromo Diaspora. Mekuria Bulcha states that the Irreechaa "festival is now playing a significant role in the manifestation and preservation of Oromo national identity."[38]

In chapter 10 of the book under review, the authors discuss extensively Oromo traditional religion known as *Waaqeffannaa*, which is "based on the worship of a monotheistic Black Creator (*Waaqa Gurraacha*) and on a cult of nature, which honors and celebrates the Divine Spirit ((*ayyaana*) in all existent beings and things (p. 236). The extensive discussion in this chapter clearly shows "that traditional Oromo religion had an institution, ritual practices, ritual experts, calendars, and ritual terminologies and texts that were common for all Oromo."[39] After extensively discussing the Qaalluu institution and the pilgrimage for honoring the Abba Muudaa, (pp.236-250) the authors conclude that for hundreds of years, Finfinnee was scared Oromo religious center.

> In the collective memory and historical consciousness of the Oromo, Finfinnee (now called Addis Ababa) remains their spiritual capital, to which they have been denied their political and cultural rights of access and belonging by the Christian Amhara kings and their modern surrogates (p.251).

In the epilogue, the authors of *Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa* briefly summarize Oromo's thoughts and beliefs that

38 Bulcha, Mekuria, " Oromia's *Irreecha* Festival - A Revival of an Ancient African Culture :An Attempt to Understand and Explain" (unpublished 2015 paper): 1.

39 Bulcha, Mekuria, *Contours of the Emergent & Ancient Oromo Nation Dilemmas in the Ethiopian Politics of State and Nation Building*, (Cape Town, South Africa, The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society, Second Revised Edition, 2016): 254.

are extensively discussed throughout the previous eleven chapters of the book based on a solid scholarly foundation. They state that:

> All aspects of Oromo thought and belief can be derived from [their creation myth]: their ideas of time and spaces; their numerology; their pentadic system of classification; their gendered and relational modes of thinking; the values that they attach to all first principles, beings and things; and the centrality of water and water bodies in their religious practices. The myth centers on the emergence of Horo, The First Human Being, from the waters of the below and on the gendered, paired division of all things (Issa-Isii). Horo, the First Man, and Hortu, the First Women, become the progenitors of the Oromo people (p.285).

In their study on Oromo calendar (pp.138-159), the authors suggested "that the [Oromo] New Year rites that commemorated the myth of Horo formed part of a wider set of regional traditions that thematised the renewal of time and nature" (p. 285). The authors ask "who exactly was Horo? Was he one of the local Kushitic manifestations of the [ancient Egyptian] falcon –god Hor? (p. 285). As noted above, Charles Verharen , compares the Ancient Egyptian and Oromo philosophies. He notes, "Both philosophies hold that primordial water is organized by creative principles, called ayyaana by the Oromo and Khepera by the Egyptians. Khepera is translated as becoming".[40] Verharen also "finds parallel between the Oromo concept of *nagaa*[peace adherence to safuu)in] and ancient Egyptian concept of *maat*, the peace, harmony, order, balance.[41]

The authors of *Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa* discuss several parallel concepts, principles, and "Cosmos-Theologies," practices, and New Year festivals among the ancient Egyptians and the Oromo (pp. 286-294). They conclude their excellent book based on multidisciplinary primary and secondary sources coupled with rich oral traditions they collected among the Oromo in Ethiopia and Kenya. The authors encourage other scholars to continue with the broad scholarly path they have charted in their study of Scared *Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa*, for connecting future Oromo and other Cushitic people's studies with the Nile basin civilizations where available

40 Verharen, "Comparing Oromo and ancient Egyptian Philosophy" 12-13.
41 Ibid., 15, 19, 25.

sources permit. They surmise: "these Oromo and [ancient Egyptian] ritual performances have many parallels, which, if collated and analyzed would lead to explanations of popular customs and religious practices hitherto unexplained or at best, obscure (p. 295).

Like other scholarly works, *Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa* is not free from some weaknesses. First and foremost, the book lacks an index, which is necessary for a scholarly book such as this one. If the authors plan to reprint their book, this reviewer strongly suggests that they add an index to it. It may take a few weeks of their time to prepare an index, which their book deserves. Second, as the principal author of this book, Gemetchu Megressa's educational path and work experience have been woven into the narrative of this book, which is indeed admirable and necessary. However, it would have been nice to add the educational background of Dr. Aneesa Kassam. Third, the authors state that there was conflict between Christian force and the Oromo, which led to the killing of the qaalluu(spiritual leader of the Oromo traditional religion). "As a result the politico-ritual centre was relocated from Finfinnee to Odaa Robaa in the present day Baale zone of Oromia(p. 75). The authors should have supported their conclusion about an important event that took place more than seven hundred years by quoting from easily accessible historical sources.[42] Remarkably available Christian sources confirm the existence of conflict between the Oromo and Christians in the region of Shoa during the last quarter of the thirteenth century and the beginning of fourteenth century.[43]

Finally, *Scared Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa* has provided the scholarly community with a fascinating book containing a treasure trove of new multi-disciplinary data and sophisticated analysis. Their fresh interpretation brings to life several aspects of Oromo history. The authors are trailblazers in placing Oromo history within the context of the Horn of Africa and beyond. This is a very insightful, extensively researched book. It is an excellent addition to the field of Oromo studies and will remain an indispensable source for years to come.

42 Among others, see Hassen, *The Oromo and the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia, ibid.*, 69-72.

43 Haile, Getatchew, *The Works of Abba Bahriy and other documents concerning the Oromo,* (Avon, Minnesota, self-published , 2002), 27, 233, citing his work, Haile (Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts, Vol. IX, 270).

Journal of Oromo Studies_V29.indb 176 7/15/2024 4:15:49 PM