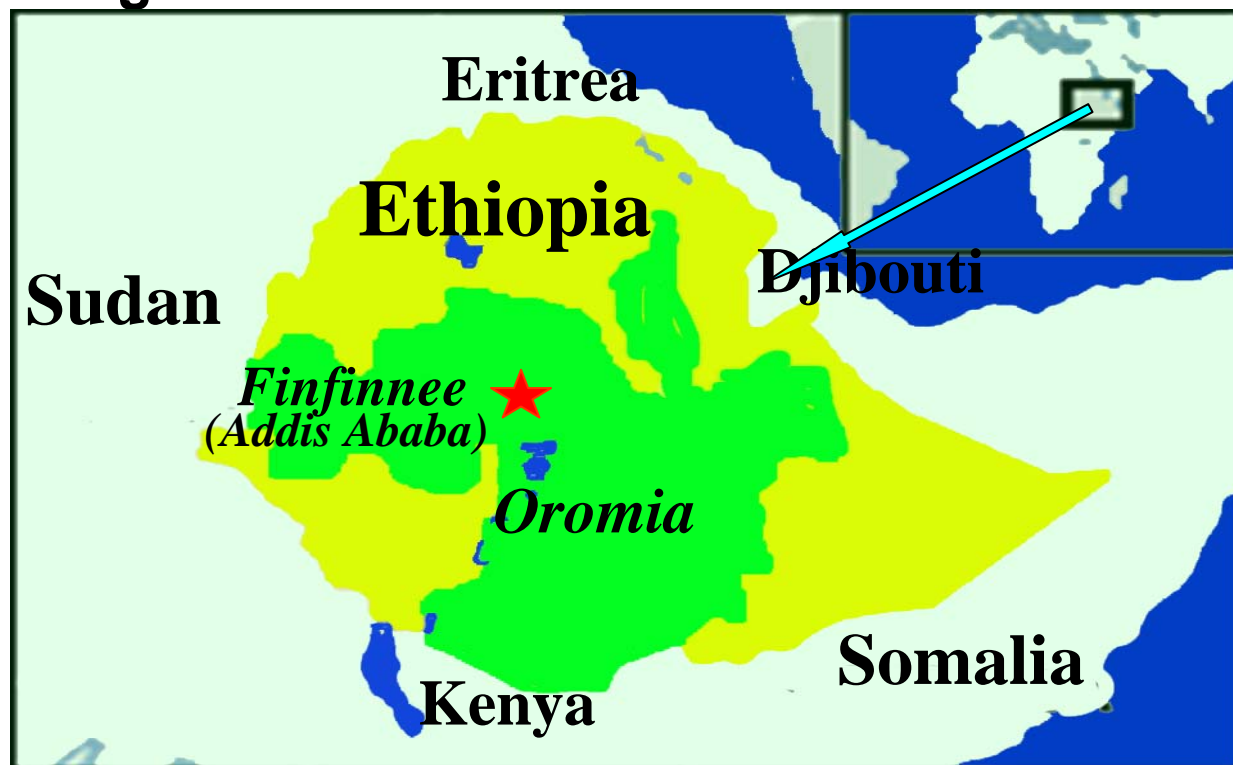


Oromo Studies Association

Proceedings



Two Decades of Service and Scholarship and 2007 OSA Abstracts

Edited by Beyan H. Asoba

Twentieth Annual Conference, July 29-30, 2006
Coffman Memorial Great Hall
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Oromo Studies Association

XX Annual Conference

Proceedings

**“Two Decades of Service
&
Scholarship”**

and

2007 OSA Abstracts

Edited by Beyan H. Asoba

July 29-30, 2006

The University of Minnesota

Coffman Memorial Union Great Hall

Minneapolis, MN 55455

Table of Contents

Foreword	vii
OSA President’s Report and Opening Remarks	1
<i>Asfaw Beyene, Ph.D., San Diego State University, San Diego, CA</i>	
Food-insecurity: A real threat to the Oromo people	5
<i>Assefa Regassa Gelete, Ph.D., Minneapolis, MN</i>	
Challenges and Opportunities in the Ethiopian Political Landscape.....	19
<i>Beyene Petros, Ph.D. Addis Ababa University and Member of Parliament, Ethiopia</i>	
Leadership and Organizational Issues in the Oromo National Movement	32
<i>Asafa Jalata, Ph. D. University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN</i>	
The Oromo Struggle for National Libation and the Questions of Human Rights, the Rule of Law and Democracy.....	41
<i>Beyan H. Asoba, M.A, LL.M., J.D. Columbus, OH</i>	
Dealing with Ambiguities: History, Politics, and Future of Oromo Nationalism.....	48
<i>Ezekiel Gebissa, Ph.D., Michigan State University, Kettering University, Flint Michigan</i>	
The Role of Oromo Intellectuals in the National Liberation Struggle.....	55
<i>Fido T. Ebba, Ph.D. Washington, DC</i>	
Human rights in Post-Zenawi Ethiopia.....	59
<i>Trevor Trueman, MD, UK</i>	
My Statements on Current Events in Ethiopia’s Political Landscape	63
<i>Bulcha Demeksa, M.Sc, Member of Parliament in Ethiopia.</i>	
The Oromo and the CUD.....	71
<i>Siegfried Pausewang, Ph.D., Norway</i>	
The Oromo Students’ Movement.....	79
<i>Kulani Jalata, Knoxville, TN</i>	
Abduction of Young Girls and Women for Marriage “Butii”: Girls’ Nightmare and Violation of Women’s Rights; the Cry of Oromititti	73
<i>Caaltu Dheereessa, Ph.D., Chicago, IL</i>	
Hajii Adam Jilo Webo: A Model Oromo Nationalist Hero (1917-2005).....	90
<i>Asafa Jalata, Ph. D. University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN</i>	

2007 OSA Abstracts

Organizational Models for Oromo National Movement: Lessons from the Past for Present Realities.....	95
Addisu Tolesa	
Can democracy Deliver a Comprehensive Solution to the complex Problems of the Ethiopian Empire?.....	95
Alemayehu Biru	
Music as a Gift to Society: from "karaan mana abbaa gadaa eessa" to.....	95
Ali Birra	
Mata dureen qophii kiyxaa. Sirna Gadaa Kaleessa, Ardhaa fi Hegere (The past, the present and the future of Gadaa).....	96
Aman Qamsare	
Oromia's Business Environment and It's Prospects	96
Amsalu Bultosa	
Thoughts on the Narrative of Modern Ethiopian Nationalists.....	96
Apee Jobi	
Applying Gada Principles to For and Build the State in the 21ST Century Oromia.....	97
Asafa Jalata	
International Trends and the Dynamics of Oromo Struggle: Impact of the first on the latter.....	97
Bahiru Duguma	
Collective rights and public health: The case of Oromo people.....	98
Begna F. Dugassa	
Lessons from the Bolivarian Revolution.....	98
Beka Jalata	
Some of the Challenges and Solutions for Oromo's Self-Determination in the 21ST Century.....	99
Daba S. Gedafa	
Comparison of Oromo's Gada System with Maasa's Age-Set System.....	99
Daba S. Gedafa	
Deemsa guddina og barruu afaan Oromoo keessatti gahee maxxansa Burqaa.....	100
Darara Matti	
Self-Determination Rights in Ethiopia: The Case of Oromia.....	100
Darara Gubo	
Connecting Immigrants to the Financial System of USA: The Case of Oromo Immigrants.....	101
Desta A. Gelgelu	
What is Music to a Society?.....	102
Elfinesh Qanno	
The Impact of a Century long HR abuses on the people of Ogaden.....	102
Fawosia Abdulkadir	

2007 OSA Abstracts

Human Rights Violations by the Ethiopian Government: The Inquiry Commission Report.....	103
Firehiwot Samuel	
“Whose Land is This Land?”: The Question of Resource Entitlement in Oromia.....	103
Gobena Huluka	
Oromo State Formations in Historical Perspective.....	104
Guluma Gemeda	
Agricultural/economic policy for a new state in the Horn of Africa.....	104
Harwood D. Schaffe	
The state of HIV/AIDS in Oromiya: What does it Require to have an Effective and Comprehensive Response to the Epidemic?.....	105
Ibrahim Amae Elemo	
Family Size and Children’s School Attendance in Rural Oromia.....	105
Kebede Feda	
Preliminaries to Oromo Dialectology: Towards Sub-classification.....	106
Kebede Hordofa	
The Impact of Oromo Heroes and Heroines in Oromo Society.....	107
Kulani A. Jalata	
A Grassroots Oromo Organization: Activities of Saphalo Foundation in Kenya.....	107
Mohammed Bedri	
Invasion of Borana Rangelands by Woody Perennials: Climate Change or Institutional Constructs.....	107
Mohammed Chilalo and Alemayehu Negassa	
Who Owns the Ethiopian Nation-State? Understanding Ethiopian-Somali Ogaden Conflict	108
Mohamed Mukhtar Hussein	
"Brutality: The Art of Governing in Ethiopia".....	108
Mohammed Hassen	
The Emergence and Consolidation of Electoral Authoritarianism in Ethiopia.....	109
Leenco Lata	
The Oromoo Gadaa System: Unacknowledged Indigenous African Socio-Political Democracy....	109
Lubee Birru	
The Ethiopian State, Electoral Politics and Oromo People’s Quest for Democracy.....	110
Merera Gudina	
Invoking the Right to Self-Determination in Ethiopia: Relevant or Taboo? The Oromo Quest to Self-Determination	111
Negaso Gidada	
Oromo Music: Where was it then and Where is it Now?.....	112
Qamar Yusuf	
Evaluating the Gadaa System and Compare it to Other Social Organizations Around the World.....	112
Rundassa Eshete Hunde	
The Challenge of Establishing Democratic Governance for Development in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa: The Critical Role of the Oromo in the Development of Ethiopia.....	112
Sisay Asefa	

2007 OSA Abstracts

Deforestation is Putting Fresh Water Resource at Risk in Oromia	113
Tolessa Deksissa and Bula Atomssa	
The Human Rights Record of the Ethiopian Government - an American import.....	113
Trevor Trueman	
Pan-Oromo Confederations in the Seventeenth Century: A Legacy?.....	113
Tsega Etefa	
Grassroots Activism to End Gender-Based Violence: Working From Within the Culture.....	115
Zegeye Asfaw	
The Cultural Oppression of Oromo Women in Society.....	116
Zeituna Kalil	

Foreword

The Twentieth Annual Conference of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) was held at the Coffman Memorial Union Great Hall, University of Minnesota on July 29-30, 2006. The theme of the conference was “Two Decades of Service and Scholarship.” OSA conferences are open to the public and it was well attended with about 500 plus registered participants and others. Most of the attendees were from North America while some came from Europe and Africa. They were academicians, students, activists, and politicians.

The distinguished keynote speaker was Obbo Dabbasa Guyyo who is a world renowned expert on Gada. He is a great orator and teacher who delivered a captivating speech as a man of wisdom, knowledge and great moral integrity. Obbo Dabbasa touched all the main components of Gada and explained how Gada principles are routinely applied for daily activities. He spoke on the harmony of nature and how natural laws that govern human activities are embodied in Gada. He is a living legend; a Gada authority who has traveled greatly to share his knowledge of Gada with indigenous people of the world. He is well versed in Gada astronomy, law, ritual, and etc., and made it amply clear that Gada is more complex than what textbooks try to present. Listening to him was like going back many centuries and visualizing how Oromos lived practicing Gada in its fullest. He emphasized that Gada is the world view of the Oromos and their philosophy of life. The keynote speech was followed OSA president’s address.

Oromo Studies Association is a multi-discipline organization and that is evident from the scope of presentations at the conference. Forty different topics grouped into the following thirteen panels: Viability of the Economy of Oromia; Oromo Unity; Nationalism and Democracy in the Horn; Language and Tradition; Identity, Democracy, and Nationalism under EPRDF; Reassessment of Discourses in the Oromo National Quest for Political and Economic Power; Challenges of the Oromo National Liberation Struggle and a Roadmap; Assessing the Current Political Situation and Explore an Amicable Direction; Human Rights; Student Movement; Nationalism with Perspectives for the Horn; Sustainability and Progress and Oromia and Ethiopia with Reflections on Political and Scholarly Discourse on Oromo and Ethiopian Identities. All panels were well attended and the audience actively participated by posing questions and comments. The conference was successfully concluded with OSA business meeting that was open only to active OSA members. The meeting was chaired by the outgoing OSA president Dr. Asfaw Beyene and OSA members listened to reports, discussed issues, made deliberations and elected officers.

This volume of OSA Proceedings contains thirteen papers that were presented at the conference and forty one Abstracts submitted for 2007 OSA conference to be held in Minneapolis, MN, USA. I have made only minor changes during editing of the proceeding papers and the abstracts. Therefore, the views expressed and therein are entirely those of the authors'. The 2007 Abstracts are arranged alphabetically by the author’s first name. I would like to thank all those who sent their paper and abstract on time. The map on the cover page above the Odda tree is solely to indicate the general location of Oromia and not necessarily drawn to scale and accuracy.

Beyan H. Asoba,
Incoming OSA president

OSA President's Report and Opening Remarks

Asfaw Beyene

Dear OSA members and respected guests:

My name is Asfaw Beyene. I am the current President of OSA.

On Behalf of OSA Ex. C., OSA Board, OSA members, and supporters, I would like to thank the University of Minnesota for allowing the 20th annual OSA Conference to take place at this prestigious campus. Minneapolis is home to tens of thousands of Oromos. Many of the young Oromos have chosen this campus as a place of their academic training. It is, therefore, fitting that this anniversary conference takes place here in Minneapolis, and here at University of Minnesota.

I would like to recognize a number of individuals. Members of OSA local organizing committee Obbo Amano Duube, Obbo Bulaa Atomsa, Adde Hawwi Alemayehu, Dr. Qannoo Baanja, Obbo Redwan Hamza (chair), Obbo Teferi Fufa, and Obbo Zecharias Hailu. Please rise and be recognized for your hard work in organizing the 20th OSA Annual Conference. I would also like to recognize OSA Ex. C. members, OSA Board members, OSA ad hoc committee chairs and members. This conference and OSA's performance is the collective output of all the above and many more donors, supporters, and volunteers.

Now I would like to welcome you all.

Welcome to the old friends of OSA.

Welcome to all the new members and new friends of OSA.

Welcome to the future friends of OSA.

Welcome to those who flew over 16 hours to be here at OSA.

Welcome to our keynote speaker, Dabbasa Guyo.

Welcome to our international friends and guests.

This year OSA celebrated its 20th anniversary, so we commemorate this beautiful birth of OSA. Happy Birthday OSA! Like every new born beloved child, OSA has gone through its vulnerable toddler years, then through a volatile teen life, and now headed for maturity. And yet even in its toddler years it firmly guarded and kept its scholarly tenet and the diversity of views in a style worthy of a scholarly organization few in our African continent can claim. In fact, I know of no other scholarly organization whose cause is so deeply embedded in a political injustice rooted in its own country, and yet ably swam through the two decades of highly volatile political debate that have split organizations and further split the already split. The secret of OSA's success I believe is respect for contending views and a majority decision so embedded in Oromo tradition.

However, at times, this respect for a majority decision and the very ideal of promoting open and scholarly discourse, which is a secret of OSA's survival and success, have been used to criticize OSA by those who claim that OSA gave voice to unfriendly voices. And yet the boundaries between friendly and unfriendly voices are blurred by political intolerance, unwillingness to

listen to the other side, and overbearing confidence holding once view as the only view that carries the entire truth. This momentum of self-indulgence has grown in size without content partly as a result of anarchy allowed by internet. However, teaching tolerance and practicing what we preach is a component of OSA's scholarly mission.

OSA scholars have the capacity and the data to openly engage anyone anywhere in any serious scholarly discourse. In the end, the Oromo struggle has nothing to hide and nothing to fear because it is based on a just cause. This is a scholarly fact; interest-driven politics need not abide by scholarly facts. So, such a just cause should be able to convince any genuine citizen of the universe. Only those who have something to hide and something to grind disallow or discourage objecting or opposing voices. To keep the purity of OSA's mission and the righteousness of the Oromo cause, therefore, it is imperative that OSA guards the freedom of expression so dear to any democratic and scholarly institution. This also fits the Gada system of debate and governance. We must demonstrate openness, and allow all minds to express their views no matter how badly we disapprove of them. If we silence them, we can not convince them. Tolerance to other views is a signature of a liberated mind. And only a liberated mind can liberate its people.

OSA is established to promote studies relevant to the Oromo people. The regular publications of the conference proceedings and the Journal of Oromo Studies have been critical instruments in the production and dissemination of knowledge about the Oromo. Scholars have been exposing the crude nature, inner workings, and consequences of Abyssinian colonialism, its ideological underpinnings, and the mechanisms with which the Abyssinian elite and their supporters have distorted Oromo history and undermined Oromo civilization. In the past two decades since its inception OSA has created a solid foundation for the development of Oromo scholarship and dissemination of a more accurate and reliable knowledge base about the Oromo people. And therefore, Happy Birthday OSA!

To make a continued progress in its scholarly mission, OSA must expand its horizon both inward and outward. OSA must expand its horizon inward by mobilizing Oromo scholars and seeking more participation of other Oromo sectors. I have in my mind two specific areas that should be targeted: Oromo Artists and Oromo youth, particularly the would-be female scholars. There is a serious gender gap in Oromo scholarship that we need to fill. We must be creative enough to combine art and scholarship in a manner that the Plastic People of the Universe of Czechoslovakia combined revolution with art to design the Velvet revolution. In adopting a Western style of academic structure, we must be able to think outside the box- like the children of Abba Gadaas and start assemblies with blessings, and end a failure with experience, and despair with hope. We must be able to blend the Beekaas like Dabbasa and the Jaarsas like the late Adam Jilo into our modern research theme.

We must expand OSA's horizon and accommodate the young ... as Abbaa Gadaas used to say when a youngster wants to speak "dubbii kenniif" (give him/her a chance to speak). There would be no continuity in OSA's mission unless OSA expands its horizon and embraces the young scholars to come in with her or his free and energetic mind. The young scholar must be protected from the overreaching dominance of the settled scholar, but should also be guided

through the demanding discipline of academia.

OSA also should expand its horizon towards Oromia. It is where the bulk of Oromo knowledge is cultivated and produced; it is the target of our mission where the tradition resides. OSA should establish a branch in Oromia. OSA should reach out to more Oromo scientists and engineers. The planned establishment of Oromo Medical Association as a branch of OSA is good news that could be emulated by other groups of professions. We need more diversity in OSA sessions. If OSA is to address the academic needs of a nation, the apparent political domination of our academic discourse must give way to science and engineering. We have serious engineering, environmental, educational, and health issues - no less serious than political issues that saturate our debates.

OSA should expand its horizon outward. We should welcome more non-Oromo scholars involved in research related to Oromo directly or indirectly. We should resist temptations of hiding in our own comfort zone and we should engage anyone in a manner that demonstrates our maturity and exhibits the purity of our just cause.

As I communicated many times before including in OSA newsletters, OSA has grown by leaps and bounds. The JOS which has become of world class quality is but one testimony to the true growth of OSA. We are proud to increase and sustain the quality of JOS. In order to disseminate the growing pool of knowledge, OSA should aim at publishing at least two Journals a year and attempt to disseminate it to a wider audience especially in Oromia, preferably free of charge.

This year we have about 40 speakers in 13 panels.

Panel 1 is on the Viability of the Economy of Oromia. This panel is a result of OSA's mid-year workshop in which experts of the field discussed the topic area. It is dedicated to the late Sisai Ibssa.

Panel 2 is a report of OSA's ad hoc committee on Oromo unity which was led by Prof. Asafa Jalata. The panel dedicated to the late Waqo Gutu.

Panel 3 is on Nationalism and Democracy in the Horn with an international perspective. It will be presented by three internationally acclaimed scholars. The panel is dedicated to Adam Jilo.

Panel 4 is on Language and Tradition, the first of two panels on the same area. Authors will explore Oromo tradition and indigenous knowledge.

Panel 5 is on Identity, Democracy, and Nationalism under EPRDF by scholars most familiar with the politics of EPRDF.

Panel 6 is a Reassessment of Discourses in the Oromo National Quest for Political and Economic Power.

Panel 7 is Challenges of the Oromo National Liberation Struggle and a roadmap. Panels 6 and 7

assess the current political situation and explore an amicable direction.

Panel 8 is on Human Rights. This year this standing panel of OSA unique in that it accommodates contemporary and historical Perspectives

Panel 9 is on Student movement. This panel has OSA's youngest and bright speaker.

Panel 10 is on Nationalism with perspectives for the Horn

Panel 11 is the second part on Language and Tradition.

Panel 12 on Sustainability and Progress addresses critical issues of development.

Panel 13 is on Oromia and Ethiopia with reflections on political and scholarly discourse on Oromo and Ethiopian identities.

We also have two featured Presentation by Prof. Asmarom Legesse an update on his research on the Gada system and by Goli Yohannes and Nardos Tassew "A Glimpse into the Lives of Oromo Youth in Toronto". As you can observe, we have loaded panels with some of the top experts in the field. So, once again, welcome to OSA 2006 Annual Conference. Let the minds think, logic prosper, ideas thrive, and knowledge flourish. The OSA 2006 Annual Conference is now officially open.

Happy Birthday OSA!

Food-insecurity: A real threat to the Oromo people

Assefa Regassa Geleta

ABSTRACT

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that everyone has the right of access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food and as such, governments of the world countries have the responsibility of protecting all people within their territories from hunger. Ethiopians are probably the most food-insecure people in the world as measured by the Daily Dietary Energy Supply. The daily per capita calories supply for the Ethiopian peoples is below the world minimum average requirement. Poverty, low agricultural productivity and demographic situation of the Empire, all of which that stem from bad governance have been identified as the main underlying causes of food-insecurity in Ethiopia. Over 60 % of the Ethiopian peoples live below the absolute poverty line. Population is growing at an annual rate of 3.4%, while the agricultural productivity is very low. The famine originated in early 1970s in the resource-poor areas of northern Ethiopia has now spread to the southern part of the Empire including Oromia. It is claiming lives and making the future citizens of the country mentally and physically handicap. All successive governments of the Ethiopian Empire have been spending the scarce resources of the Empire on building strong military to maintain the territorial integrity of the forcefully created Empire and consolidate their power rather than addressing the root-causes of food-insecurity. It is therefore suggested that all concerned parties do every thing possible to alleviate the food-insecurity threat posed on the Oromo people before it gets worse.

Key words: Ethiopia, Famine, Food, food-insecurity, Oromia, Oromo, poverty

1. Introduction

Food is absolutely essential for life. It supplies our body with materials required for healthy growth, maintenance and energy. Quantitative and qualitative shortages of various degrees could lead to health conditions ranging from physical and mental disorders to death. This is especially crucial during critical ages of growth.

Food comes from plant and animal resources around us. But, the selection of safe and nutritious food items has largely been determined by the cultural and traditional backgrounds of peoples. However, the expansion of agro-industry, global trades and to some extent food aids to low-income food-deficient nations, are limiting the cross-cultural food consumption barriers.

National food production could temporarily fall short of local demands in the faces of drought or other natural disasters in potentially food producing countries and permanently so in many dry countries. But food-security has always been maintained by importing from else where, while famine of any magnitude has been the result of poverty.

Ethiopia, an Empire state created during the end of the 19th century by Abyssinian rulers from different nations and nationalities in the horn of Africa, including the Oromo people; has been

severely hit by famine since three decades. Lack of responsible governments has greatly contributed to the situation. All successive governments of Ethiopia have been using the greatest proportion of the limited resources of the empire for the purpose of building strong military and waging war against the occupied peoples, in order to consolidate their power, rather than addressing socio-economic problems, such as food-insecurity and poverty. As a result, the famine that started about thirty years ago in the potentially poor agricultural areas of northern Ethiopia has now spread to the rest of the Empire including Oromia and is claiming lives in thousands. The objective of this article is therefore, to give an overview of the food-insecurity situation in the Ethiopian Empire, and to increase awareness and consequently trigger public pressure on the government and concerned parties to mitigate the condition.

2. The Global Situation

2.1 Background

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

It is believed that the world produces enough food to feed the current population of 6 billion. However, the poor do not have the required resources to secure their shares (Anon, 1999a). According to FAO, the current food production would have to show substantial increment to ensure adequate food supplies for the world population expected to reach 8.3 billion by the year 2025 (Anon, 1999a).

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that, “everyone has the right to a standard of living, adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food... (FAO, 2001a). In 1966, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights developed these concepts more fully, stressing “the right of everyone to...adequate food” specifying “the right of everyone to be free from hunger”. The World Food Summit held from November 13 to 17, 1996 in Rome, Italy and attended at the highest level by representatives from 185 countries and the European Union reaffirmed in the Rome Declaration of World food-security, “the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.”

Governments of the world countries therefore have the obligation to ensure that, everyone within their territory get access to food that is adequate in quantity and quality for a healthy and active life. Its fulfilment is essential to fight against poverty, which is one of the causes of hunger and also a consequence of it. Hunger dulls intellect and thwarts productivity (FAO, 2001a). However low-income countries heavily depend on their own agriculture for food supplies, income and

employment and have limited capacity to import food (FAO, 2001a).

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

Efforts made against food-insecurity in 1994, the FAO revised priorities, programs and strategies of the organization and concluded that improving food-security should be the top priority of the organization. Accordingly, urgent need to focus on increasing food production, improving stability of supplies and generating rural employment were recommended (FAO, 2001b).

As populations continue to grow, pressure on arable land steadily increases. Agriculture has to meet the challenge of rapidly increasing population mainly by increasing productivity on land already in use and by avoiding further encroachment on land that is only marginally suitable for cultivation (FAO, 2001b). It was therefore proposed that FAO should launch a special program for food-security focused on Low Income Food Deficient Countries (LIFDCs), the countries least able to meet their food needs with imports. This approach was endorsed by the world Food Summit held in Rome in November 1996, which called for concerted efforts to raise food production and increase access to food in 86 LIFDCs, to cut the present number of undernourished people in the world by half by the year 2015 (FAO, 2001b).

As one of its strategies FAO has identified a South-South Co-operation, based on exchange of knowledge and experience between developing countries to be a useful strategy to improve food production in LIFDCs. In this scheme, more advanced developing nations send experts and technicians to work directly with their counterparts and farmers in other developing countries. Accordingly Ethiopia was made to co-operate with China (FAO, 2001b).

Developing countries such as Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Mozambique, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey have managed to curb food-insecurity over recent years. They applied a mix of measures, which led to general economic growth and poverty alleviation (employment and infrastructure-improvement etc.), increased domestic food production, improved marketing system, established efficient early warning system and food safety nets for the most vulnerable sector of the community especially in traditionally drought affected areas, in the face of natural disasters etc. Among measures that contributed to increased domestic food production were: soil conservation, water harvesting, production and dissemination of new agricultural technologies (machineries, fertilizers, pesticides, high yielding seed varieties, irrigation, agro-industry, etc.), reduction in the production of labour-intensive and less productive traditional crops etc. (FAO, 2001a).

3. Food Production and Supply in the Ethiopian Empire

The overall economic output of the Ethiopian Empire is based on agriculture. Agriculture produces food and provides employment and income. Agriculture contributes to about 50% of Gross Domestic Production (services about 40% and industry about 10%), more than 90% of foreign exchange earnings and 85% of employment opportunities. Among the four major farming systems (subsistence peasant farming, pastoral nomadic, agro-pastoralism and modern commercial farming), subsistence peasant farming, accounts to more than 95% of agricultural production.

Agricultural growth rate has averaged about 2% between 1980/81 and 1990/91 while the population grew at about 3.4%. This has resulted into lower per capita agricultural production and a rise in the incidence of poverty (Demeke, 1999). Ethiopia is a country most affected by all forms of food-insecurity. Famine is one of them. It occurs as a result of a widespread failure in the food supply due to a collapse in food production and marketing systems. It is usually transitory and could be caused by either nature (draught, floods, earthquakes, crop destruction by disease or pest) or human (war and civil conflicts). The best example is the 1972/73 famine which was caused by drought. It was very much limited to northern Ethiopia.

Chronic food-insecurity is the most common one in Ethiopia. Chronic food shortages occur when the food supply fails to cope with the population growth rate (Smolin and Grosvenor, 1994). It is caused as a result of poverty and severe damage to the resource base, which endangers the means of survival of the people. The 1984/85 and 1987, and the one started in 1998 and going on to date are classical form of chronic food-insecurity. They are very wide spread involving almost every corner of the Empire. Anon (1997) reported that, between 1995 and 1997 about 51 % of the Ethiopian population were under-nourished. The DES for Ethiopia is one of the lowest in the world and below the minimum required level. Main indicators of the magnitude of food-insecurity in the population indicate sharp decline in per capita food availability, which is manifested in terms of energy deficiency in adults and stunted growth, wasting and underweight in children which is very widespread among the Ethiopian peoples (CSA, 1992).

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

Human population respond to chronic hunger and malnutrition by decreasing body size, a condition known as stunted growth. This process starts early if the mother is malnourished and continues through approximately third year of life. It leads to higher infant and child mortality, at a rate far below famines. Once stunting has occurred, improved nutritional intake later in life cannot reverse the damage. Stunting itself is considered as a coping mechanism, designed to bring body size into alignment with the calories available during adulthood in the location where the child is born. Limiting body size as a way of adapting to low levels of energy (calories) adversely affects health in a number of ways including premature failure of vital organs (such as heart) as a result of structural defects during early development, higher rate of illness and defects

in cognitive development. Percentage of underweight children in Ethiopia, Africa and world are 47, 30 and 27, respectively.

The average total calories, crop and animal products supply/capita/day for world, Africa and Ethiopia for some selected years (every other five years and the most recent one) are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3. In general, not only did the per capita calories, crop and animal products supply for Ethiopia over the last three decades remained to be the lowest in the world but also showed a tendency of decrease with time while the world and Africa figures showed a steady increase. The other form of food-insecurity is the one that takes a cyclical form. More than 40% of Ethiopian households face a cycle of hunger each year, just before harvest, when previous year's grain stock is finished and market prices are relatively higher (Tolossa, 2001).

In Ethiopia food-insecurity involves almost all walks of life. Based on the information obtained from the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in 1992, Clay et al. (1998) classified rural Ethiopia food-insecure people to be composed of 79.3% sedentary peasants and nomads, 8% internally displaced people by conflicts, 7% refugees and 5.7% demobilised soldiers. At present in Oromia (Arsi, Bale, Borana, Hararge, and East Shoa) alone, about one million people are starving (World Vision Ethiopia, 2006).

On the other hand, food aid distribution is highly politicised. Regional states like Oromia that are not well known for their sympathy to the current regime receive the least. Since the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government came to power, households in Tigray region (the home state of the prime minister) have received an average 829 kcal of food, as compared to 99, 35 and 30 kcal of food to food-insecure people in Amhara, Southern Ethiopia and Oromia regional states respectively (Clay et al., 1998).

Taking advantage of one's country food-insecurity appears to be a common feature of dictators. A Nobel Prize-winning economist, Amartya Sen stated that food problem is political. Naturally occurring events like drought could trigger famine conditions but it is government action or inaction that determines its occurrence and severity. When government comes to power by force or rigged elections, their base of support is often narrow and built up on cronyism. Dictators use food as a political weapon, rewarding supporters punishing opponents. Under such conditions food becomes a currency with which to buy support and famine becomes a weapon to be used against the opposition.

Table 1. Total calories supply /capita/day

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

Table 2. Animal products supply /capita/year (kg)

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

Table 3. Crop products supply /capita/year (kg)

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

Food-security needs an economic policy directed against poverty with particular emphasis to agricultural productivity. All medium and high-income countries of the world have demonstrated a substantial increase in agricultural productivity and eradication of poverty, before transforming from agrarian and semi-subsistence dominated economy into one where most of the workforce is engaged in non-agricultural diverse activities. This was caused as a result of rising labor productivity that created the opportunity to grow more food with less labour and paved the way for the rural population to engage into industrial development activities. At present this transformation has reached its highest stage in the USA, where only about 2% of the population are farmers. In 2000 the agricultural population of the World, Africa and Ethiopia was reported to be about 7%, 55% and 82% respectively.

4. Major Causes of Food-insecurity in the Ethiopian Empire

4.1. Crop

The average yield of grain per hectare is about one ton and a household with small plot can not produce enough grain to feed themselves resulting into chronic food-insecurity. This is largely attributed to lack of agricultural technologies such as improved seed, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, machineries etc. Improved seeds of major crops such as teff, burley, wheat, maize, sorghum, millet, oat, coffee, and fruits exist in Ethiopia. However the use is very minimal because of lack of availability (improved seeds constitute to only about 2% of seeds), poor quality (due to contamination), high price and lack of information.

Private sector participation is minimal. It is mainly controlled by a government agency, Ethiopian Seed Enterprise. Sales are largely carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture to farmer who participate in extension program. Large scale fertilizer (Nitrogenous and phosphate) use is a recent history in Ethiopia. Fertilizer business has become lucrative and its distribution is monopolized by companies that are closely linked or run by government. Fertilizer use since recent years is on the decrease nationally except in Tigray because of removal of subsidy (with an associated price increase by about 30%), lack of free-market in fertilizer business, lack of access due to rigid credit payment policies, delayed arrival of supplies, and distorted prices of some distribution companies (Demeke, 1999).

Irrigated agriculture is much more productive than the rain-fed one. It contributes to about 40% of world food production on 17% of cultivated land. It is believed that increased production to satisfy the food demand of the future must essentially come from intensification using agricultural technologies such as irrigation, rather than expanding to more fragile hilly and arid lands that are prone to environmental degradation (FAO, 2001a).

The potentially irrigable land of Ethiopia is estimated by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD 1987) to be 2.8 Million hectares. According to Ethiopian Valleys Development Studies Authority, only 4.5% of the potential irrigable land is estimated to be irrigated (CRDA, 1996). The contribution of irrigation to food production in Ethiopia is estimated to be less than 2%. The greatest proportion of irrigated land is used for industrial crops such as cotton.

Ethiopia is one among the least in the world with regard to use of agricultural machineries. Only 100 harvesters and threshers and 3000 tractors were in use in Ethiopia in 2003 as compared to 820 harvesters and threshers and 12844 tractors in Kenya during the same year (FAO STA, 1999). This indicates that large scale commercial farming is at its rudimentary stage and crop production almost exclusively (95%) depends on livestock originated draft power and non-labour efficient primitive farm implements. Oxen are also scarce and lack of oxen for ploughing is directly linked to decreased crop production. About 37.7% of the farmers have no ox, 32% have an ox and only 30.3% of the peasant farmers in the Empire have got two or more oxen (Anon, 1997).

A great deal of agricultural product is lost in Ethiopia due to pests, parasitic, fungal, bacterial and viral infections. Fungicides and insecticides consumption in Ethiopia in 2001 was 15 Mt and 153 Mt respectively, while it was 711 and 303 Mt in that order in Kenya for the same year. The role of biotechnology in food production is still a subject of international debate concerning ethics, safety and intellectual property rights (FAO, 2001a). Genetically modified crops are not as widespread in developing nations as they are in industrial nations. There is no information on genetically modified seeds in Ethiopia. But, it could be a potential area of interest for future considerations (Regassa, 2000).

4. 2. Livestock

Livestock production shares about 40% of the total agricultural output and when draft is considered up to 60%. Livestock is almost the only animal-origin domestic protein source and is the major source of cash income at farm level. Oromia accounts to more than 70% of the livestock population of the Ethiopian Empire and the economic benefit the Ethiopian government obtains from the livestock industry through the export of hides, leathers and live animals largely comes from Oromia.

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

Nutrition has become one among the most important livestock production constraints in Ethiopia (Mengistu, 1987). The present livestock feed supply exceeds maintenance levels only by 15%, leaving very little for production (Teketay 2001). It has been suggested that at the estimated growth rate of 1.1%, the livestock population would exceed the maximum carrying capacity of grazing land available by 2000 (Teketay 2001). Concentrate feeds are very scarce and pasture lands are being turned into cropland due to the ever increasing population pressure. Over 80% of livestock feed come from pasture, while the rest is from crop residue (straw), stubble and cereals.

The limited grazing land is also putting additional pressure on the land.

All important livestock diseases (viral, bacteria, parasitic etc) are widespread through out Oromia causing tremendous losses in both mortality and morbidity forms. Due to the poor animal health services, the annual mortality-loss in cattle, sheep and goats populations is estimated to be about 15%, 15% and 12% respectively (Anon, 2000b). This is among the highest in the world. The Oromia regional state covers only 22% of the prophylactics and 8.1% of the required curative services (Rashid, 1999). In general, due to the poor genetic potential for productivity, nutrition, and health the livestock sector is not contributing to its fullest potential to the overall food supply of the nation.

4.3. Land Degradation

Land degradation involves both soil erosion and loss of soil fertility. Ethiopia, with extensive steep slope lands is highly susceptible to soil erosion especially in the highlands (Teketay 2001). The removal of vegetation cover is the main cause of land degradation. Trees are cut due to increase in population growth to meet increasing demand for cultivable land, grazing land and fuel wood. Removal of vegetation-cover increases surface runoff and hence erosion. The removal of topsoil (the most fertile one) would mean less nutrient, less water holding capacity and less root anchorage for plants and hence less capacity to support plants and leads to dry-up of springs (Teketay, 2001, Dubale 2001). Soil erosion is greatest on cultivated land, being about 42 tons/ha as compared to 5 tons/ha from pasture-land per annum. Cultivated land constitutes about 13% of the Ethiopian land while contributing to about 50% of soil erosion (Huri, 1990). The soil in some areas have lost biological productivity and physical properties needed for optimal plant growth due to severe land degradation.

Ethiopia does not have landuse policy and legislation to prevent land degradation. Agro-forestry and tree plantation depends up on land tenure system that guarantees private land ownership (Bishaw, 2001). Peasant farmers are small-holder subsistence producers, and do not have enough land to leave aside for soil and water conservation (Dubale 2001). Rather, increased food production has been based on expanding the cropping area, often into marginal areas with lower sustainable yield potential (FAO, 2001a). As a result, forest which used to cover about 40% about a century ago, is covering less than 2.7% of the land since 1990 (FAO 1981, Bishaw 2001, Teketay 2001). Replenishment of soil components such as minerals could be attempted by the use of fertilizers. However the consequence of land degradation due to deforestation is far reaching. Therefore conservation remains to be the best policy to prevent land degradation (Smolin and Grosvenor, 1994). Lack of soil fertility as a result of land degradation is probably the most important factor in limiting agricultural productivity in Ethiopia. However, the government is not doing every thing in its capacity to curb this fast growing natural disaster in the making.

4.4. Drought

Transitory food-insecurity is caused by draught. Ethiopia is a draught vulnerable country with 30% probability for the occurrence (Annon, 1996). It is estimated that about 25% of the Ethiopian population lives in low-moisture area of the country, which make about 55% of the total area of the empire. Lasting solution plans, appropriate disaster mitigation strategies and

functional early warning system are not in place.

4.5. Poor Marketing System

Ethiopia has one of the poorest transportation network in the world. On the other hand agricultural product processing plants are very limited and most agricultural products (livestock and crop) are highly perishable and are largely produced in areas where they are not accessible by any means of transportation to move them to urban centres where they are needed most and cost beneficiary to farmers.

There are no large multi-national agricultural product traders with adequate storage and working capital. Small traders have limited capacity of handling large quantities of agricultural products for long period of time. Hence grain prices rise in years of poor production and are lower in years of higher production and immediately following harvest. The need to repay agricultural input loans and other financial obligations including tax, forces farmers to sell their products immediately following harvest. It is estimated that about 80% of farmer annual grain sales occurs right after harvest. As a result prices fall when almost every farmer is selling and rise later in the year when most of the farmers run out of stocks and buy from the market. This puts the poor, hand-to-mouth producing peasant in a disadvantage position.

Lack of competitive free market has also contributed its own share. During the military regime, agricultural trade is totally monopolized by the government. There was no incentive for food production and farmers are encouraged to produce cash crops for export. But prices are set by the government below the world market level. Farmers are forced to sell their crops to government buyers and the government sells their crop at full price, pocketing the difference. The present dictatorship government is also playing almost the same game. Agricultural input and product businesses are monopolized by state-owned businesses. Peasant farmers are denied of access to agricultural market information and are encouraged to buy inputs from these business firms and sell their products to them. This is creating an artificial poverty trap from which even the most hard working and motivated farmers may not escape (Cuny, 1999).

Crop prices have not shown significant increase until 2002 mainly due to lack of affordability on the side of consumers as a result of widespread poverty, rather than surplus production. However, the increased price of agricultural input such as fertilizer and improved seed has forced crop prices to show a steady increase over the past few years making it unaffordable to the most destitute sector of the population, with out making no economic benefit to the producer.

4.6. High Population Growth Rate

The Ethiopian population is estimated to be about 65 million, and is growing at an annual rate of about 3.4% (Bishaw, 2001; Dubale 2001). Over 85% of the population live in the rural area, employing them-selves on subsistence agriculture. Highland Ethiopia (1500 metres above sea level), which constitutes about 50% of the land area, hosts about 88% of human population and 60% of livestock population (FAO 1986).

There is not enough arable land in the rural area to cope with the exploding population growth. It is projected that in the year 2015 the per capita land holdings in the highlands would decrease

from the current level of about one hectare to about 0.66 hectare (Teketay 2001), further aggravating the already poor level of food production. Given the low productivity the production is barely enough for house hold consumptions, leaving little or no thing to invest on inputs such as fertilizer and improved seeds.

Tenure insecurity is also another problem. Land is public property. Peasants are made to believe that land is allocated to them as an exchange for their support to government. This has turned the peasant farmer into government tenantry. There is therefore no incentive to invest on land, and prevent land degradation. Communal grazing and woodland is allotted to new claimant farmers for crop production, encroaching on hilly and non-agricultural lands further aggravating the already worse land degradation situation.

4.7. Poverty

Ethiopia is classified as one among the poorest nations in the world with income per capita of about \$100 (World Bank 2001) and external debt of about \$6 billion. Over 60% of the population live below the absolute poverty line (Anon, 2000a). When the poverty line proposed by some experts in the World Bank which suggests US\$ 1 per day is applied, about 85% of the total population of the Ethiopian empire live below the absolute poverty line at the beginning of 1994 (Dercon and Kirshnan, 1998).

Poverty is manifested, in the highest incidence of malnutrition and food-insecurity. The causes of food-insecurity in Ethiopia are in general, the widespread poverty and drought. Sen (1981) reported that thousands of Wollo people in north-east Ethiopia starved to death with out substantial rise in food prices in the area. This was because they did not have enough income to purchase food. On the other hand, under-nutrition results in disease and disability, which in turn limits the ability to produce/acquire food. Poverty therefore can be viewed as the cause as well as the result of inadequate food production and distribution, lack of health care and education.

If money is scarce, food cannot be obtained, health care and education are unavailable. Malnutrition does not only lead to loss of productivity as a result of decreased work performance but also diminishes cognitive ability and school performance and increase susceptibility to disease. Lack of health increases infant mortality and the incidence of low birth weight (Smolin and Grosvenor, 1994). Ethiopia is 170th out of 175 countries in terms of its human population development index, which determines achievements in areas such as education, health, nutrition and life expectancy (Anon, 1997). The life expectancy of Ethiopians is about 48 years while the adult literacy rate is 35%.

5. Conclusions

Countries that succeeded in reducing poverty and hunger have exhibited more rapid growth in agricultural productivity and economy in general. They formulated a policy that involves assisting the poor in getting access to food, increasing the availability of agricultural technologies, maximizing farmers profit through improving accessibility to market, controlling population growth, and improving human resource development through education and health services, applying principles of democracy, human right and the rule of law.

In Ethiopia, high population growth coupled with lack of diversification of the economy has put heavy pressure on the land. About 90% of the population depend on farming for their livelihood. Agro-industry is at its rudimentary stage and off-farm employment opportunities are very limited. As a result, crop production is encroaching on forest and grazing lands than ever before leading to excessive deforestation and land-degradation.

The forest which used to cover more than 40% of the land about a century ago has now diminished to about 2%. Destruction of forest means: erosion, lack of soil fertility, reduced soil canopy cover, lack of perspiration and precipitation, dry water shade system, dry springs, dry rivers, desertification and inhabitable land. There are reports that the current regime has even set fire on forests in Oromia.

Agricultural productivity is not showing any sign of improvement. Agricultural technologies are both unavailable and unaffordable. Agricultural machineries are very few in the country. Improved seeds are not readily available, expensive and poor in quality. High price, tight payment terms and lack of loans, and timely distribution problems have limited the use of fertilizers. The role of irrigation in food production is far below its potential level and chemical control of diseases and pest of crops is not much known. Farmers are not making the most out of their agricultural products due to lack of accessibility to market, agro-industries and information, and pressure by government owned business companies.

Improvements are not observed in the areas of human resource development (education and health). The economy is getting worse and poverty is spreading at an alarming rate. The number of food-insecure people is on the increase and is feared that the future generation of the Oromo people could turn mentally and physically disable. In general, the cumulative effect of bad governance has reached its climax point in Ethiopia. It is therefore suggested that all concerned parties/individuals do everything in their capacity in putting pressure on the existing regime to take appropriate measures before the looming humanitarian crisis in the Oromo people gets worse.

6. References

- Albeto, M., 1983. Comparative performance of F1 Friesian x zebu heifers in Ethiopia. *Animal production*, 37, 247-252.
- Anon, 1995. *Cattle breeds: An encyclopaedia*. Misset uitgeverij bv, postbus 4, 7000 BA Doetinchem - NL.
- Anon, 1996. Food-security strategy. A document prepared for the Consultative Group Meeting of December 10 – 12, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Anon, 1997. Report of FAO/WFP crop and food supply assessment mission to Ethiopia, 19 December 1997, Rome, Italy.
- Anon, 1999a. Report of world food summit, 13-17 November 1996, Rome Italy.
- Anon, 1999b. Report of a workshop held to develop a community-based programme, 29, November, 1999, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Anon, 2000a. Report of symposium on food security, 11 March 2000, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Anon, 2000b. *Livestock Research Strategy*, Ethiopian Agricultural Research Organization, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

- Bishaw, Badeg. 2001. Deforestation and land degradation on the Ethiopian highlands: A strategy for physical recovery. In Proceedings of EAF International Conference on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, August 16 – 18, 2001, Western Michigan University, USA.
- Clay, D., et al. 1988. Food aid targeting in Ethiopia: A study of household food aid distribution, Food security research project working paper #2, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- CRDA (CHRISTIAN RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION) 1996. Membership water and sanitation survey 1991 – 1994. Prepared by D. Schotanus, Arba Minch water technology Institute, Arba Minch.
- CSA 1992. Basic report on National nutritional surveillance system, Core module nutrition survey of rural areas, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Cuny, Fred, 1999. *Famine, Conflict and response: A basic guide*; Kumarian press.
- Demeke, Mulat, 1999. Agricultural technology, economic viability and poverty alleviation in Ethiopia. Agricultural Transformation Policy Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya, June 27-30, 1999.
- Dercon, S. and P. Krishinan, 1998. Changes in Poverty in Rural Ethiopia 1989-1995: Measurement, robustness Tests and Decomposition. Centre for the study of African Economics, Oxford University and Katholieke Univesiteit Leuven (unpublished memo)
- Dubale, Paulos, 2001. Soil and water resources and degradation factors affecting their productivity in the Ethiopian highlands agro-ecosystems. In Proceedings of EAF International Conference on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, August 16 – 18, 2001, Western Michigan University, USA.
- FAO STA, 1999. <http://apps.fao.org/cgi-bin/nph-db.pl?subset=agriculyure>.
- FAO, 1981. Tropical forest resources assessment project. Forest resources of Tropical Africa, part 2, country briefs, FAO, Rome, Italy.
- FAO, 1986. Ethiopian highlands proclamation study, Final report, FAO, Rome, Italy.
- FAO, 2001a. <http://www.fao.org/Focus/E/rightfood/right1.htm>
- FAO, 2001b. <http://www.fao.org/spfs/objec-e.htm>
- Geleta, Assefa Regassa, 2002. The livestock of Oromia: An industry in a negative growth. The Journal of Oromo Studies, July 2002, Vol. 9 No. 1 & 2.
- Hurni, H., 1990. Degradation and conservation of soil resources in the Ethiopian highlands. In Messerli, B., and Hurni, H. (ed.), *African mountains and highlands: problems and prospective*, Missouri, USA.
- IFDA (INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT) 1987. Ethiopia, special country program. Report No 6393-ET January.
- Maxwell, S., & Frankenberger, T. (1992). *Household food security: Concepts, indicators, measurements, A technical review*, New York and Rome, UNICEF and IFAD.
- Mengistu, A., 1987. Feed resources in Ethiopia. Proceedings of the First National Livestock Improvement Conference, 11-13 February 1987, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 143-146.
- Mugarwa, Mukasa, E. & Mattoni, M., 1988. The reproductive performance of indigenous zebu (*Bos indicus*) cattle in Ethiopia. Proceedings of the 11th International Congress on Animal Reproduction and Artificial Insemination 26-30 June 1988, Dulin, Ireland.
- Rashid, Muktar. 1999. Brief information on Animal Health Service delivery in Oromia Regional State.
- Regassa, Assefa, 2000. The use of herbal preparations for tick control in western Ethiopia. *Journal of the South African Veterinary Association*, 71, 240-243.
- SEN, A., 1981. *Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlements and Deprivation*. Oxford

University Press, Oxford.

Smolin, L. A. & Grosvenor, M. B., 1994. Nutrition: Science and applications, second edition, Saunders College Publishing, Philadelphia, USA.

Tekestay, Demel. 2001. Deforestation and environmental degradation in highland ecosystems of Ethiopia: Urgent need for action. In Proceedings of EAF International Conference on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, August 16 – 18, 2001, Western Michigan University, USA.

Tolessa, Degefa, 2001. Causes of seasonal food insecurity in Oromiya zone of Amhara region: Farmers' view. In Proceedings of EAF International Conference on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, August 16 – 18, 2001, Western Michigan University, USA.

World Bank, 2001. World development indicators, Washington, DC, USA.

World Bank Vision – ETHIOPIA, 2006. Providing Emergency Relief assistance in Ethiopia.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE ETHIOPIAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Beyene Petros

1. Historical Highlights of Modern Ethiopian Polity

One good essence of knowing our history is to avoid repeating past mistakes. I also believe that it is reasonable and useful to acknowledge the fact that the reconstitution process of the Ethiopian polity had, through the years, involved numberless political, social and economic forces. Thus, it was unavoidable truism that there was no way for a mechanism of equitable pristine polity acceptable to all to have emerged. As such, I have no choice than to recognize another truism that the pristine tribal configuration of the country accepted conquest and subjugation of one's neighbors as the most ordinary, and even in some cultures a mandatory, thing to engage in.

It is unfortunate that there are sectors of our educated elite that do take pride in such darker side of our history. This is better stated in the words of one writer: "A few born-again Neftangnas pride themselves on past achievements of conquest and arrogantly declare praise for the dark ages of cruelty and inhumanity perpetrated by the various warlords and royal houses. They have no scruples about using derogatory terms and languages to describe the various groups that constitute Ethiopia" (Assefa Endeshaw, 2002).

In order to appreciate the basis for such concern, it will be appropriate to highlight how the Ethiopian South was forced into the modern Ethiopian empire built by Emperor Menelik II. Menelik II, as Showan ruler (king), pushed the frontiers of his rule to the South, East and West by the use of brute force. This incorporation of resource-rich regions of the South ensured Menelik a steady source of revenue, which was critical to his political and military position in his ultimate bid for the position of "king of kings". However, the incorporation of these hitherto autonomous self-ruled regions was not achieved without fierce resistance. To just cite some among the major events (Bahiru Zewde, 2002):

- The protracted fierce resistance Minilek faced from the Arsi people until it was broken in the battle of Azule in 1886;
- The 1887 carnage at the battle of Challanqo, which broke the resistance of the population in the Harar front;
- The resistance of Hadiya-Gurage coalition force led by Emam Hassan Enjamo, which was brutally crashed in 1888 by Ras Gobana, Minelik's general;
- The subjugation of the powerful southern kingdom of Wolyta after one of the bloodiest campaigns of the whole process of expansion to the South by the coalition army of all principalities that had been conquered earlier on and led by Minelik himself in 1894;
- The conquest of Kafa in 1897, which also paralleled the Wolyta experience in terms of human and material cost.

According to many historians (Bahru Zewde, 2002 etc) this was the beginning of the forced integration process of Ethiopia of today, its shape consecrated by the boundary agreements made with adjoining colonial powers, after the battle of Adwa in 1896. Beyond this point, centralization became the dominant theme of Ethiopia's political history. Although the victory of Adwa gave momentum to the creation of the modern Ethiopian empire-state, that independence from aggression of Italian imperialism did not benefit the majority of the population, particularly the dispossessed peasantry of the South and the impoverished North, as it was not followed by modernization and economic development.

Instead, a coercive assimilation approach was adopted associated with manipulation and at times outright repression by those in power. Thus, in the beginning of the 20th century, the architects of modern Ethiopian empire tried to force the conquered peoples of the South into "Ethiopian unity" under the umbrella of the Orthodox religion, the Amhara culture and the Amharic language. I am not unaware of similar phenomena elsewhere whereby empires and quasi-empires, which had imposed internal domination on conquered peoples subjugating them to national oppression in the Empire-state building process.

This divide along nationality lines has been the rule rather than an exception between the conquered peoples of the South and the expansionist empire-state builders up until the downfall of the imperial order through the 1974 popular revolution. That situation ushered in the unfortunate dichotomy of the privileged versus the oppressed nations, nationalities and peoples in Ethiopia. And, the failure of successive regimes to infuse equity into the country's heterogeneity has time and again been putting the country's unity to a severe test. This was and is being expressed in the form of articulating and promoting ethno nationalist agendas by the oppressed and marginalized nations, nationalities and peoples.

Understandable as such movements and their agendas are, I am, however, convinced that any attempt at re-fixing damages done during the Empire-state building process, no matter how repugnant and heinous it may have been, cannot be achieved to any one's satisfaction and also lacks historical precedence. Even if one may imagine of some populist measures that might supposedly recompense historical injustices, I do not believe that it would succeed.

2. Missed Opportunities of the Recent Past on National Consensus Building in Ethiopia

2.1. Post-Haile Sellasie I Provisional Government

The call for a Provisional Government following the popular mass revolution of 1974 was manipulated and sidetracked by the military Dergue and was turned into a creeping coup d' etat. The populist, manipulative and nervous junior military officers had the land nationalization as, perhaps, the only credit to their 17 years of misrule. The entrenchment of the rule of the Dergue was facilitated by the severe political divide within the political elite, which would remain as a serious scar in the political history of the country. As a result of the political divide between the elite thousands had perished contributing all that was in their power to give, their precious lives.

2.2. Negotiated Settlement of the Eritrean Secessionist Movement

The lack of culture of negotiated settlement of political problems characterized by the tradition

of bravado that calls for "come ahead and challenge me, if you can" was the obstacle both during imperial rule, the Dergue era and the tradition continues under the EPRDF. That unfortunate culture of ultra nationalism of the Dergue was dramatically replaced by a policy of giving away national interests on a silver platter by the current EPRDF rulers. The opportunity that had presented through ascendance to power by General Amman Andom and his initiative to seek an amicable solution was short rooted in its budding by the myopic Dergue ultra nationalists. The arrogance and intransigence that led to uncompromising positions by both the Dergue and the Eritrean separatist movement shut off all opportunities that were presented by various well-meaning interlocutors. Thus, human carnage and suffering and economic destruction of unimaginable magnitude was what was achieved in the end.

2.3. An all-inclusive Negotiated Exit for the Dergue Regime

The total defeat of the Dergue military regime and the transfer of power in June 1991 to the TPLF-concocted and controlled, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) as a vanguard in the background, and a green light from the USA, was a critical historical moment in Ethiopia. The pharisaical "negotiation" organized by the US Under Secretary of State for Africa between the Dergue Government and the TPLF/EPRDF/EPLF was only a face saving gesture by the International community before its endorsement of government takeover by the TPLF/EPRDF in Addis and EPLF in Asmara. A serious undertaking should have been an all-inclusive negotiation of a transitional government of national unity whereby all the stakeholders would have a share of power and a contribution to make to an agreeable transition of the country into a democratic society. Such a transition could have avoided the break up of the country as well as avoided the subsequent exclusionist "victor's" dictates that became apparent in both Addis Ababa and Asmara.

2.4. An all-inclusive Post-Dergue Transitional Government

From the July 1991 conference, which was skilfully controlled by the TPLF under the buzz phrase "Peace and Democracy", came out the "Charter" which made up the basis for the Transitional Government. That coalition supposedly included all parties and political groupings that took part in the Conference. I think credit is due to all those who participated in the Conference and played a major role in negotiating the Charter, which could have served as a starting point for a consensual Constitutional process.

However, as, EPRDF, the "victor" of the 17 years long civil war, refused participation of some major opposition parties in the conference, the exclusionary nature of the events to come was obvious even from the very beginning. Vindicating the worries of some of us who participated in the process, the true domination agenda of the TPLF/EPRDF began to be apparent immediately after the transitional arrangement unfolded. All the nice and juicy talk about the magnanimity of the "victors" of the civil war was becoming void by leaps and bounds. TPLF/EPRDF skilfully manipulated the transitional coalition Government so as to float the non-TPLF/EPRDF members at the center (in parliament, government offices, etc) and refused political access at the regions, within their constituencies. It also unilaterally took major decisions, which were incompatible with the transitional mandate.

Through a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Transitional Charter, TPLF/EPRDF, in actual fact, was applying 'victor's justice' by using the newly acquired State power and resources of the whole country as booty. This was effected through an arrogant display of military force and the contemptuous attitude towards opinions other than those framed within the TPLF. Furthermore, the proclaimed right of nations, nationalities and peoples to be in charge of their destinies turned out to be a hoax. Thus, the ordeals of misrule have not ended with the Dergue but continued under the guise of "Revolutionary democracy" with EPRDF occupying the political kingdom of its own by vanishing others.

2.5. Negotiations and Mediation Efforts and “Donors” Democracy

The benefit of doubt that those of us who were part of the Transitional Government had about the good intentions of the “victor’s” in the years-long civil war, was frustrated miserably when TPLF/EPRDF decided to block participation of non-TPLF/EPRDF member parties in the 1992 Regional and District elections by waging a blatant war against them. Through a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Transitional Charter and a serious breach of good faith agreements between members of the Transitional Government, TPLF/EPRDF pushed out all the important members of the 'Coalition' from the Transitional Government. By so doing, it once again put the country back to the vicious cycle of civil war and instability, thus selfishly trampling upon the hopes of the Ethiopian peoples who have been yearning for the days of peace, harmony, stability and prosperity.

The 1994 Ghion Hotel "Peace and Reconciliation" conference called by the opposition organizations, which received broad support from the Civic Societies, religious circles, traditional elders etc, and to which EPRDF was also invited, but which it arrogantly dismissed as irrelevant, was another opportunity aimed at bringing the derailed Transitional process back on track. It was very sad that EPRDF arrogantly dismissed the good will of the opposition to find an amicable solution to the problems of the country.

Years of relentless lobbying within the donor diplomatic community inside and outside of the country by the opposition succeeded in convincing the donor community about the need for opening up the electoral process to the opposition parties. Thus, efforts to negotiate the accessibility of the political landscape for all Ethiopian political parties for the 1995 national elections had attracted the attention of several international actors on electoral matters. These included the late 1994 Carter Centre initiative that attempted to initiate dialogue between the opposition parties and then after arrange for negotiations with the Government. It is with great shame I recollect the dismal failure of the opposition to put its acts together and face the challenge. The opposition frustrated the initiators of the effort by refusing to enter into dialogue with each other, to find a minimum political agenda that could have been jointly negotiated with the Government.

The state of shameful disarray within the opposition continued into another initiative in 1995 whereby the US Senate led by Senator Harry Johnston and the State Department attempted to facilitate negotiations of the electoral process between the opposition and the Government. Once again, the opposition failed to present a common negotiation agenda; the majority choosing to

take non-negotiable extreme positions, such as "scrap the constitution, dismantle the army, etc".

The sad after-effects of that engagement was the vilification and demonization those of us who operated within the country received from the self righteous diaspora politicians when we proposed to continue the negotiation of the 2005 electoral process inside the country. Our good name and honor was smeared with lies and innuendoes that we have been bribed by the EPRDF to partake in the 1995 elections!

The failure of the 1995 US initiative had done damage to the efforts of the opposition to obtain US support for its agenda of democratization. It inculcated lack of confidence in the credibility of the opposition as an alternative to the ruling party. Since then the US government has given up on taking initiatives that might encourage negotiations between the opposition and the ruling party and government at the highest level.

The ruling party's preoccupation on electoral matters has been to entice the donor community into believing that,

- "Democracy is new to Ethiopia and hence the 'mistakes' being made are due to lack of electoral culture".
- "The mistakes are human errors, which can only be ameliorated through time and practice".

Frustratingly, the donors' attitude has been that of at least believing half of what was being told by the ruling party and by and large always trying to see a mountain out of a little mound in electoral space created for the opposition to operate. Thus, elections, in effect, have been conducted for donors' consumption over the past 15 years! And its significance to democratization has been so little that the Ethiopian populations, out of frustration, are currently being pushed to cynicism and resignation. It has also been so costly on the electorate that a great share of political harassments, in one way or another is associated with election related matters.

2.6. The 2005 Election and the Call for Government of National Unity by the Opposition

We, in the Southern Ethiopia Democratic Coalition (SEPDC) and the Ethiopian Social Democratic Party (ESDP) (ex- Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia) had demonstrated through the year 2000 national elections in Hadiya and the Kambata-Tembaro Zones, that if we mobilized our populations adequately and dared to struggle and are willing to accept sacrifices that may result from the reaction of the ruling party and government, that we can defeat the ruling party in the elections. As we expected, the ruling party reacted violently to our challenges during the campaign and later on to its defeat in the elections. EPRDF's violent reaction to the defeat made us pay so dearly in precious human lives and in the livelihood of so many innocent citizens. This heroic feat in the political history of the country was the trigger for the immense gains made by the political opposition in the year 2005 elections.

Based on the year 2000 elections experience, it was articulated by some political circles that '...if the poorly organized and monetarily impoverished parties of the South led by political 'novices' could make such gains, it should be possible, for a movement led by political technocrats

bankrolled by the financial magnates of true sons and daughters of Ethiopia to unseat the EPRDF government through the 2005 elections". We also heard public assertions as "...hereafter, Ethiopian politics will be decided by whoever that has the money...etc".

Thus, intense regrouping of all sorts within the opposition, some hastily and others that took years of planning preceded the year 2005 elections. Although the effort to negotiate the electoral process by the UEDF could only achieve a limited amendment of the electoral Law, access to the public media for campaigning and permission for the international community to observe the elections, the opportunity to put more pressure on the ruling party and obtain more concessions, such as overhauling the National Election Board, to better level the electoral landscape, was once again lost by the inability of the opposition parties, that were preparing to participate in the elections, to negotiate as a team. Thus, it was under a situation of grave imperfections that the May 2005 elections were conducted. And, these imperfections in the electoral process provided advantage to the ruling party to rig the election and manipulate the results. From our experience of earlier elections, such behavior of the ruling party was to be expected as the miniscule number of international election observers in a country that boasts more than 35, 000 polling stations was just no match to EPRDF's machinations to declare total victory for itself.

Among the post-2005 election events were the 'Election irregularities review' process and the various negotiation efforts between the ruling party and the opposition. This can be considered a positive development hitherto unknown in the Ethiopian political tradition, although the exercise was once again derailed by EPRDF and did not achieve the intended objective of correcting election irregularities. However, it did provide an opportunity for the electorate to openly challenge the ruling party and the fact that electoral matters can be seriously scrutinized, is something we can capitalize on in the future.

With the realization that consensus could not be reached on the outcome of the May 2005 elections, and as a result of which tensions were building high with eminent conflict on the horizon, a proposal for the formation of a Transitional Government of National Unity, on the basis of uncontested election results and invitation of parties that could not take part in the elections, was submitted for negotiation to the ruling party. With this proposal rejected by the ruling party, another opportunity for a negotiated formation of a government that would not exclude all stakeholders was missed.

After all is said and done about the outcome of the election, and the proposal for the formation of a transitional government of national unity got rejected by the EPRDF, some stakeholders started making the subject of joining parliament a serious issue of debate. Here again, in my judgment, another opportunity was lost, for the opposition could have coordinated its acts to extract maximum concession from the ruling party and minimized the atrocities that were perpetrated against the population that protested the rigged elections and the manipulated results.

3. Challenges of Consensual State Building Process

Global experience in state building shows that no nation has succeeded in one go. Even the French, with the most thorough clean up of the ancient regime; have their own turmoil time and

again. Globally, the process of centralization and a top-down state building is being challenged by a variety of social and nationality movements. This is because unitary state structures are controlled by hegemonic elites with wide patron/client networks, which exclude other nationalities.

Therefore, it would be unrealistic to think of pursuing the agenda of state building with the notion that a presumptive homogenous national entity had and should have a separate existence in Ethiopia. Assumption of separate existence of homogenous national entities, I believe, is not historically fully correct as it omits the huge and essential role played by these nationalities in the building of modern Ethiopia. As the old historical process of achieving nation building through a highly centralized state structure is not possible, it requires policies which are not merely assimilationist and integrationist but that truly recognize a multinational plurality. Thus, since many countries in the developing world are still in the process of nation building and we are not alone in facing its birth pains.

Since Ethiopia is a country whose past is characterized by the superiority of a single culture, religion, and language, neglected nationalities are struggling to put themselves on the map of the country for the past 15 years. Thus, the assumption of “complete oneness” by the centralists is not only unrealistic, but cannot be some thing else than a struggle to perpetuate the status quo. In stead, I find it reasonable to accept that one of the solutions to Ethiopian political problems is to create institutions and policies that allow for both self-rule that creates a sense of belonging and pride in one’s nationality, and for shared-rule that creates attachment to common institutions and symbols. Therefore, I have no quarrel with the provisions of the existing Constitution on this issue, expecting the right of secession.

Hence, unlike what some fervent supporters of centralism try to tell us, multi national federalism could provide room for diversity and offer a constitutionally guaranteed balance between shared-rule and self-rule. For example, multi national federations such as in Belgium and Spain constitutionally recognize multiple cultural identities. The elite that advocate centralism imply formation of a supranational identity that erases history, as was tried numerous times in Yugoslavia by its rulers from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to Tito's communist administration. However, that was a futile exercise as primordial cultural ties and national identities cannot be erased; they may at best only be weakened and diluted within an equitable socio-political arrangement. I recon that identity is a powerful symbol of meaning and worth; and the search for identity is a powerful psychological driving force, which has propelled human civilization.

In my view, the following four major processes must be effected for a sustainable consensual state building process in Ethiopia:

- An all-inclusive democratic constitution-making Process
- Effective management of Conflicts
- Democratization
- Good governance

3.1. The Constitutional Process

The undemocratic procedure pursued in the drafting and ratification of the National Constitution,

and the lack of consensus that followed, was one of the legacies of the TPLF/EPRDF era that has delved the country into an overstretched contention on the constitutional order, for some time to come. To see the highly placed hopes we had placed for a possibility of drafting and ratifying the constitution of the land through an all-inclusive participatory democratic process shuttered, by the TPLF/EPRDF, assisted by some imposters that masqueraded as technical experts, was a very frustrating moment. As a result, we, once again, lost an opportunity of putting the issue of the constitutional order to rest. Thus, at this historical epoch, where countries are debating and struggling around the issues of democratization, good governance, economic development, etc, it is saddening to see political parties in Ethiopia struggling to put in place a new constitutional order.

Out of so many considerations that are related to State building, the issue of consensus around the Constitutional Order is paramount. The opportunity that had presented for making a broad-based consensual Constitution was wasted by the EPRDF when it violated the provisions of the Transitional Charter on this grand issue. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to draw a consensus on how we perceive the current Constitution put in place by the whims of the ruling party and, if need be, to revisit the whole Constitution-making process once again.

If we are convinced that the alternative of making a new constitution is what our situation demands/dictates, global experience on making a consensual Constitution can be made use of. With the benefit of so much diverse global experience at our disposal, it should not raise much controversy to agree on an all-inclusive democratic process of Constitution-making. My position on this issue, however, is that since our input into the Transitional Charter making process was significant and the current Constitution does include much of the principles we have been fighting for, it is amendments that must be introduced to the Constitution through a parliamentary process.

I know that many will argue "...that the parliamentary process is not in place in an agreeable manner" and hence would consider my argument tautological! My reaction to such thinking would be that we must patiently and skilfully work to create a democratically elected parliament from within. Then again, many will challenge me by saying that "... after all there is no democracy in Ethiopia". Once again, my reaction to that serious concern will be that the prevailing undemocratic situation can be forced aside as our experience of the year 2000 and 2005 elections demonstrated. What I mean by this is that, in subsequent elections the opposition will have the requisite seats in parliament that would enable them to introduce amendments in the existing constitution.

One of the vital considerations of the task of constitutional amendment should be to place federalism even in a more firmer footing, with the provision that does not exclude nationality-demographic heterogeneity wherever desirable and feasible. We must ensure that power is decentralized and distributed to the different regional Governments. And, the regional Governments must enjoy true autonomy and power over constitutionally defined matters. Thus, federalism of the true type is the only reasonable guarantee for all nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia to represent themselves in equal terms. On the other hand, we are aware of the vocal elements that are working very hard to reduce many nationalities, through their so-

called "anti-ethnic" campaigns, to the status of spectators while systematically pushing their selfish agenda of playing the leading role in the life of the country.

3.2. Management of Conflicts in the State Building Process

The overwhelming features of the Ethiopian state actors has so far been acting as agents of arbitrary violence, perpetuating force and militarism as a way of resolving conflicts. As demonstrated by empirical studies elsewhere, the civil wars and strives, which are very common in Ethiopia are characteristics of a society where the ruling elite represents a minority nationality group, thus violating the desirable ethno-national representativity (Cederman and Girardin, 2005). The political exclusion along ethno-national lines has remained the source of civil wars in Ethiopia. These are usually ignited as some ethno national group or groups use governmental power to create and enforce public policies that advance their respective ethno nationalist objectives to the detriment and neglect of all others. Thus, it is a matter of priority that the question of the state and its formation must be decided amicably through a democratic process.

I would suggest the following as important mechanisms that should be used to contain and ameliorate the prevailing conflict ridden situation in the country as we vision building a consensual Ethiopian state.

- An enhanced role for the civil society organizations (CSOs)
- Making use of the traditional practices of conflict resolution
- Use of negotiations as conflict resolution technique
- Effective use of dialogue facilitated by the International community
- Use of democratic discourse to solving internal disputes.

3.3. Democratization: Consensus on Free, Fair and Genuine Elections

The Ethiopian electoral process is fraught with major challenges that engender mistrust and lack of confidence in the whole democratization discourse. These include:

- The election management system, which is run by the National Election Board, which merely is an instrument of the ruling party and has a very weak electoral management capacity and credibility,
- The ill-adapted electoral system design, which lacks consistency and transparency,
- The political system that does not foster genuine political competition,
- Political structure that does not accommodate diversity,
- A partisan public media that does not allow citizens access to information, and that does not provide equal opportunity to all political parties. The answer to much of the above problems can only be sought through respect for the democratic principles. However, yearning to bring about democracy and willing to pay heavy sacrifices is not adequate by itself. To avoid the pitfalls, lessons must be learnt from past and present Ethiopian advocates of change (“revolutionaries”) that lacked(s) an understanding of the nature of the struggle that could match and sustain their ardor and willingness for sacrifice.

Currently, there is a high level of polarization between key political actors and there is little agreement about the rules of the game of democratization. The recent Agreement signed by two opposition parties in parliament (UEDF and OFDM) with EPRDF is a good indicator of lack of common understanding of the letter and the spirit of the existing master documents (the

Constitution and other legal instruments). I am also aware of other agreements signed by other groups as well. However, as we have been part of so many such agreements before, it is proper to point out that the challenge of cultivating trust and good faith deals among political parties is an immature fledgling task.

Another major impediment that must be overcome to enhance democratization in Ethiopia is the difficult environment in which opposition parties are operating. This places serious limitations on them as they are expected to play an active and responsible role in pushing the country into a democratic trajectory. They face an uphill struggle to organize and finance themselves, and at the same time to lead and educate their constituencies which tend to expect very rapid dividends in political justice. As political justice is about citizens having effective control over political decision-making, and such decisions can only be made by citizens through electoral processes, credible and legitimate electoral processes that ensure free, fair and genuine elections are central to democratization.

3.4. The Question of Good Governance and the Manner the Ethiopian State Manages its Business

In Ethiopia, in spite of the big talk about federalism, power is concentrated around the central government, in fact within the central government, under the Prime Minister. As a result, many nations, nationalities and peoples object to their disproportionately low presence in the higher echelons of the central administration. Thus, good governance must ensure a representation that is commensurate with their demographic and economic strength.

Contrary to this, the state under the EPRDF has been reduced from an institution with possible tasks of preserving the peace, protecting the basic freedoms and facilitating economic activities, to better the lot of the general public, to that of an instrument that does the bidding of the TPLF-dominated ruling party. Every thing that the state does is measured against what the party needs and seeks to achieve for itself. It is my firm belief that EPRDF should not be allowed to continue to have such a free ride; we must be there to make its goings difficult even if we cannot put adequate pressure on it to bring about changes on its ill-conceived practices, to start with. We must realize that it is the lack of effective institutional mechanisms to restrain and monitor the exercise of power that has allowed the erosion of the quality and legitimacy of governance. Therefore, international experience in mechanisms and frameworks of good governance must be taken into account as we address the issue of governance.

Equally important is the question of equity and fairness in the allocation of resources for development, the lack of which has been the source of mistrust and lack of confidence, which must also be addressed in earnest. Under the condition of Ethiopia, this can only be promoted by political arrangements that will promote and protect equal opportunities and equitable sharing of resources. Thus, it is through these two mutually reinforcing systems that we could ensure accountability, transparency and participation in the workings of the Government.

Furthermore, the prevailing situation whereby political participation, equality before the law, and protection from arbitrary violence, which so far are the preserves of the privileged members of the "state-owning" ethno-national groups that masquerade as EPRDF members and as its allies,

must be redressed to address the issue of good governance in Ethiopia.

4. Opportunities for Forming a Government of National Consensus

As we vision formation of a Government of National consensus in Ethiopia, it would be most prudent to, perhaps, start counting what our "blessings" are. I will only imply that there are so many of them that are the envy of many globally, and we can effectively tap on them as we patiently, but persistently, proceed with the agenda of building a consensual Ethiopian state.

I would like to draw our attention to the following grand opportunities that can serve as good reason to build and protect a common home, Ethiopia, built on the basis of a government of national consensus. After all, there exists no historical evidence that, "Ethiopia", meaning a country of "dark-skinned peoples", to have belonged to or more associated with one or few nationalities than others. Thus, in our context, Ethiopianess excludes no body by any historical iteration.

4.1. Some Historical, Socio-demographic and Religious Capital on which to Tap on

- The glorious victory of the battle of Adwa forms a watershed in the modern history of Ethiopia, which one can consider as the beginning of multinational Ethiopianism. The fact that hundreds of thousands troops from almost all nations, nationalities and peoples of the land fought together behind every important chief from all over the country, and that a black African country prevailed over European imperialism, was a grand achievement which we must use as a common inheritance to build the future of the country around.
- Existence of systems of democratic self-rule, in which leaders will be elected for finite periods with the expectation that they would turn over the reigns of governance smoothly to a properly appointed successor cohort, as in the Oromo Gada tradition and the Sera of many Southern peoples.
- Social inclusiveness; as in the Oromo practice of incorporation through adoption - a practice that over generations enabled the Oromo to integrate groups from other nationalities, to assimilate immigrants, and to adapt to other cultures.
- Southern Ethiopia as a mosaic of nations, nationalities and peoples where citizens have been living in a state of relative harmony can serve as an embodiment of what the future relationships between all Ethiopian nationalities should be.
- The Raya region where Tigre, Afar, Agau, Amahara, and Oromo, long lived amicably, embodies Ethiopian multinationality at its nascency.
- Much of Wollo region symbolizes multinationalism at its best in Ethiopia.
- Compatible coexistence of all major world religions.

4.2. Some Developments of the Post-Dergue Era

- Voluntary demobilization of the Ethiopian Army following the demise of the Dergue regime was quite an unprecedented event that resulted in a minimal collateral damage the country could have sustained if resistance had been the chosen alternative by the members of the armed forces.
- We can hold EPRDF by its own program, which advocates political freedom and democratization, equality of all nations, nationalities and peoples;

- The EPRDF's public position is that it has given up most of the doctrines of communism/socialism and insists that it wants to move Ethiopia in the direction of multi-party democratization. This fact can be used to challenge EPRDF on its wavering practical stance on liberal democratic principles and practices.
- Provisions for Human Rights and enforcement of the Rule of Law exist in the current Constitution;
- The international donor community has substantiated government reports on Economic growth over the past 3 consecutive years. This is a glimmer of hope that this country could grow and ultimately develop in spite of the difficulties it has been encountering and while suffering from the lack of consensus among its citizens on the way forward!

4.3. Positive Developments in Electoral Politics

The following facts are to be noted in this regard:

- We recognize that the population has been mobilized to appreciate and fully discern political values and standards of acceptable governance.
- Mobilization around the values of change and transformation, participatory democracy and active involvement in the running of their lives had already been inculcated in the population up and down the country.
- It also is interesting to note that the resurgence of nationality organizations that have been demanding legitimate rights, have been expanding the basis for democracy by vying for adequate representation and devolution of power.

On the last point, I know that "ethnic politics" bashing is fashionable in some circles that consider themselves politically 'affluent', "civilized" or "advanced" and who fantasize that they are "more concerned Ethiopians" than some of us are. However, as I see it, nationality-based organizations are at their worst only when they are extremist political movements characterized by a belief in the superiority of the group they claim to represent, to the rejection of all others external to them. I am not very sure if such organizations, however they may be narrow minded and short sighted, exist today in Ethiopia. Thus it is only a federal arrangement, which is based on the principle of self-rule and shared-rule that would guarantee unity under diversity that can serve as a basis for a Government of consensus in Ethiopia. As Malloch Brown (2004) correctly observed,

National cohesion does not require the imposition of a single identity or the denunciation of diversity. Successful strategies to build "state nations" can and do accommodate diversity constructively by crafting responsive policies of cultural recognition. Policies that are responsive to diverse groups, provide incentives to build a feeling of unity and diversity - a "we" feeling where citizens can find the institutional and political space to identify with both their country and their individual cultural identities, to build their trust in common institutions and to participate in and support democratic politics. This is the most appropriate line of thinking to address consensual state building under the objective Ethiopian reality.

Also, as Lenco Lata (1999) aptly concludes, if all the stakeholders act and behave constructively, "...the birth of a New Ethiopia – an Ethiopia owned and governed by representatives of all her component communities – will be realized”.

Furthermore, as we seek solutions to the malignant problems of building a consensual Ethiopian state, other global developments must also be taken into consideration. Looking from broad global angle, we notice that the world is becoming more interdependent, leading towards coalition building, coordination, negotiation, and consensus rather than unilateral determination of one's own affairs. Thus, as a result of the fast changing world order, there is a realization that creating a regional framework with a move towards regional integration could permit the relaxation of strict boundary demarcations, allowing freedom of movement and interaction between peoples. This could predictably reduce the pressure for the creation of new independent states by disaffected nations and nationalities because there would be a new regional forum to redress their grievances or address their interests and rights without their being forced to resort to secession. I believe that current regional organizations, such as Intergovernmental IGAD should be empowered to play such a critical role in the Greater Horn of Africa. Thus, on this regard, I agree with those who promote the creation of a functional supra-state regional structure, in which the various groups in the Horn of Africa region have a say, but which is capable of dealing with problems that cannot be dealt with at the state level, and thus, could have a remedial effect on the conflicts between the states and the various groupings within it.

References

1. Assefa Endashaw, 2002. Ethiopia. Perspectives for Change and Renewal. Seng Lee Press Pvt.Ltd. Block 103 Boon Keng Road. # 01-10/19, Singapore339774.
2. Bahru Zewde, 2002. A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1885 - 1991. 2nd Edition. James Currey, Oxford; Ohio University Press, Athens; Addis Ababa University Press, Addis Ababa.
3. Brown, M, Malloch. 2004. Human Development Report 2004.Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World. UNDP
4. Cederman, L-E and Girardin, L, 2005. Beyond fractionalization: Mapping Ethnicity onto Ethno-Nationalist Insurgencies. Zurich: Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Centre for Comparative and International Studies.
5. Lenco Lata, 1999. The Ethiopian State at Crossroads: Decolonization and Democratization or Disintegration. The Red Sea Press, Inc. Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

Leadership and Organizational Issues in the Oromo National Movement

Asafa Jalata

At the 2005 OSA annual conference that was held in Washington, D.C., I presented a paper and suggested the establishing of a committee to identify and investigate major leadership and organizational problems that undermine the unity and performance of the Oromo national movement. This year OSA president accepted this suggestion and assigned me to form the committee to identify and study these problems. However, since eighteen individuals who were selected and agreed to be part of this committee were scattered all over North America and Europe, we could not come together because of several reasons. Despite these difficulties, ten of the committee members participated in identifying some major Oromo leadership and organizational problems that have slowed the progress of the Oromo national movement.

All of these individuals were from the Oromo diaspora, and nobody was included from Oromia due to logistic and security reasons. Therefore, the information we have obtained from this survey is limited in scope and mainly reflects the experiences of the Oromo diaspora. This preliminary research only helps in providing a limited feedback for Oromo formal and informal leaders, communities, and organizations on multiple levels and serves as a stepping-stone for future research.

These ten individuals participated in this project by answering the following questions: 1. Does the condition of the Oromo struggle allow you to fully contribute your fair share to the struggle in any capacity? If not, why? 2) A) Describe the nature of Oromo political leadership. B) When you compare Oromo political leadership qualities with that of other societies, how are they similar or different? Why? C) Why do you think that Oromo elites are factional in their ideologies and political activities? D) Why do you think that formally educated Oromos have not yet provided solid leadership for the Oromo society? 3) What factors have prevented the Oromo from establishing strong institutions and political organizations in the diaspora and Oromia? 4) A) What internal factors have prevented Oromo nationalists from consolidating their organizational capacity to politically and militarily challenge their enemy in Oromia? B) Why did Oromo organizations unable to win enough allies for the Oromo national movement both on regional and global levels? 5) Why did Oromo elites and political leaders fail to fully mobilize Oromo human resources to promote the Oromo national struggle? 6) A) What are the strengths and weaknesses of Oromo fronts and political parties? B) Compare and contrast these fronts and parties with the liberation fronts and political parties of other societies? 7) Suggest steps that should be taken to reduce or eliminate all problems that you have mentioned above.

The answers that the ten respondents provided clearly demonstrate what kind of leadership and organizational problems the Oromo national movement is confronted with. These problems can be broken into five sub-themes. The first sub-theme identifies and explains the main characteristics of Oromo elites and leaders. The second sub-theme addresses the issues of internal factors and general problems of institutions and organizations. The third sub-theme

explains why the Oromo national movement has not yet mobilized the entire Oromo nation to liberate itself from brutal Ethiopian colonialism. The fourth sub-theme identifies some strengths and weaknesses of Oromo fronts and political parties. The final sub-theme puts forwards some steps that must be taken to reduce or eliminate leadership and organizational problems in the Oromo society.

Characteristics of Oromo Elites and Leadership

A revolutionary segment of Oromo elites initiated the Oromo national struggle with great determination, and has continued it despite multiple challenges from internal and external enemies that have faced the movement. One respondent noted, “the Oromo have many brave leaders and a few charismatic leaders.” Another respondent mentioned, “the Oromo have produced individual leaders who have great competency in military, education, and business.” This respondent emphasized that the Oromo have yet to produce competent collective political leadership. He further noted that, “the reason why Oromos are not creating solid leadership is more reflective of the fuzzy vision and the lack of total commitment for realization of the cardinal objective of liberation. Where vision and mission lack clarity, people should not expect a miracle.”

The majority of respondents identified the following weaknesses of Oromo elites in general and the political leadership in particular: Oromo elites and leadership are characterized by ineffectiveness and vague national political ideology, rigidity, lack of dynamic leadership quality, inability to address and resolve conflict, division and disorganization in leadership, lack of concern for grass-roots movement and narrow emphasis on military means, lack of trustworthy working relationship and communication skills, and lack of accountability. They also said that the Oromo elites are disorganized and lack focus on national issues, and they are conflict ridden and spend most of their time and energy on petty issues. Some of the respondents also enumerated that the Oromo elites and their political leadership are not visionary and are burdened with a “victim mentality” which emphasizes what others have done to the Oromo; they are incoherent in political visions and messages and lack a strong sense of modern organizational and institutional accountability. In addition, the respondents also stated that Oromo elites do not have a sense of urgency in relation to time and do not have a mechanism for self-evaluation in relation to performance. According to the majority of the respondents, the Oromo political leadership has to yet develop the capacity to mobilize the majority of the Oromo for political action both in Oromia and the diaspora; Oromo political leaders do not closely interact with people at the grassroots levels to build trust and connections. Consequently, according to some of these respondents, the leadership could not influence the behavior of their people effectively. According to most of the respondents, the major weaknesses of the Oromo political leadership emerge from the weaknesses of Oromo elites who are factional in their ideological and political activities. They noted that some Oromo elites are not politically and ideologically mature enough to differentiate narrow partisan politics from national interest; they fight against one another rather than fighting against the enemy of the Oromo nation. These respondents also noted, several external forces work on Oromo elites to divide them on religious, regional, and ideological bases. They also mentioned a few negative behavioral elements that have stifled the potentials Oromo elites and leadership. Accordingly, some Oromo elites struggle to claim fame

and recognition before they register any thing positive for the national cause; they engage in insulting, belittling, and defaming those Oromo nationalists who have accomplished something for their people. A few of Oromo elites have big egos for themselves and disrespect one another; they do not separate ideas from persons, messages from messengers and personal interests from the national interest.

One respondent mentioned that “Oromo politics [lacks] a more civil and intellectual discourse that helps in clearly understanding the ideological line that various groups of Oromo elites propose for the resolution of the Oromo question.” Continuing his comment this respondent asserted that “failure of respecting organizational and democratic principles, lack of discipline, and failure of fulfilling ones responsibilities on the part of some Oromo political activists have led to proliferation of Oromo political organizations... In some cases, just because personal political ambition of some Oromos [are not] fulfilled within an organization, they create other splinter groups. It is also a common occurrence to see the drift of Oromo elites to one political group or another based on personal acquaintance or loyalty to political figures and not on ones’ conviction on a principle or an ideology one upholds.” Another respondent said, “Oromo elites are factional because they are affected by their democratic and egalitarian culture. Extreme democracy sometimes borders on anarchy. It is the culture that is affecting their activities and organizations.” Identifying and studying the main causes that contribute to the development of factionalism in Oromo elites and leadership and finding an appropriate solution must be an important agenda for Oromo scholarship.

Most Oromo elites are factional because they were uprooted from their Oromo cultural roots and baptized by Abyssinian and Euro-American cultures. However, they are neither culturally Oromo nor Abyssinian nor Euro-American. The system of colonial education disarmed the Oromo elites by denying them national psychological make-up and national cultural and ideological tools. The Oromo elites have varied religious, political, educational and social experiences. Most educated Oromos have given superficial and lukewarm support for the Oromo national movement. Some of the reasons why most of them did not join the Oromo movement are their low level of political and national consciousness, lack of open and conducive national forum, lack of appropriate and effective recruitment system, the lack of charismatic and persuasive leaders who can go beyond their narrow party circles, the influence of the ideology of Ethiopianism, lack of concern for the unity and suffering of the Oromo people, and organizational ineffectiveness to persuade and attract.

Serious and responsible Oromo elites must recognize that the liberation of the Oromo people requires political unity on common denominators and principles by going beyond political boundaries and by overcoming divisions. For this political unity to emerge and become practical, open dialogue, communication, and trust are necessary. Furthermore, replacing common sense politics with research-based knowledge is essential. Without fully developing Oromummaa, Oromo elites cannot build political unity and formidable organizations. Oromo nationalist elites should be knowledgeable, accountable, and promoters of the Oromo national interest.

Oromo political leaders need to change their styles of leadership since the changing circumstances require a new approach. They need to be closely connected to the Oromo in

general and the Oromo diaspora in particular by changing their attitudes about them. The methods of organizing the Oromo diaspora must be different from the way of organizing the Oromo who live under Ethiopian political slavery without the freedom of association and organization. In the diaspora, democracy should flourish among all Oromo communities and all sectors; particularly, Oromo women and youth should be democratically organized to unleash their potentials. Oromo political organizations and various Oromo diaspora communities should openly communicate to establish a global Oromo solidarity network based on effective community organizations. Ineffective Oromo organizations cannot survive in this competitive environment since they will be evaluated by what they do rather than what they say.

Internal Factors and Institutional and Organizational Issues

There are several factors that have hindered the establishment of stronger institutions and political organizations in the Oromo society. In Oromia, the Oromo people live under political slavery and are denied the right of association, organization, and the media. The ruthless Habasha political system does not tolerate the free operation of Oromo institutions and organizations in Oromia. Under these conditions, it is difficult to build institutions and organizations. However, the condition of the Oromo diaspora is completely different. The Oromo who live in the diaspora have the rights and capacities to build strong institutions and organizations. Despite the fact that they have created institutions and organizations, they could not play a decisive role in the Oromo movement because of the weaknesses of their institutions and organizations.

Most respondents identified the following internal factors for not consolidating the organizational capacity of the Oromo national movement. These factors include lack of cohesive national leadership with a practical national ideology, limited organizational and administrative capacity of the leadership, hidden competition among the leadership to the extent of using religion and locality at the cost of the national movement, lack of pragmatism in developing organizations, ideological differences, and the lack of consensus building on a common denominator.

One respondent pointed out that “it is the lack of a well developed overriding Oromian national objective and national ideology that have prevented Oromo nationalist organizations from consolidating and coordinating the liberation struggle.” On a similar line, another respondent said that we Oromo elites “never reclaimed our lost traditional political system or developed a new or adopted one. Without building a national political system in which every group plays its own game (as the five Gada parties did) that serves the interests of our society, dreaming to build a nation is a paradox.” He also added that, “without a strong national unity, without unity of purpose, without trust and common feelings, without a clear visionary leadership, and without the existence of a common center, Oromo elites cannot consolidate their organizational capacity to politically and militarily challenge their enemy.”

The Oromo political leadership has never been well connected with educated Oromos. According to one respondent, “Oromo students in North America and Europe who took initiatives and did meager diplomatic activities were frustrated and even dismantled

systematically. The Oromo Students Union in Europe became a mass organization of the OLF in 1985. Fifteen years later it was begging the OLF leadership for guidance, and in 2005 it was systematically dismantled.” The OLF foreign office mismanaged its relations with the organization of Oromos in North America in the 1990s, and created conflict between the OLF and the Oromo diaspora community.

Oromos in North America have had their own unique problems. Some respondents assert that Oromos in the diaspora still practice their culture and traditions which they have brought from colonial Oromia, rely on oral traditions and communications, and practice little written and formal documentation (such as minutes, record-keeping, documentation of decisions, follow-ups, etc.) that are indispensable for modern organizations and institutions. Oromo diaspora communities are amorphous and could not build strong institutions and organizations on clear objectives and clear lines of accountability for decision-making, resource utilization and results. There are other reasons for the lack of effective institutions and organizations in Oromo diaspora groups; these reasons include the lack of adequate Oromo media or resources of information, deficiency of commitment from Oromo political, academic, and religious organizations for the well being of the Oromo community, low level of national consciousness, lack of cohesive national leadership with commitment and determination, lack of common political and national vision, the misuse of civic and religious institutions, duplication of responsibility or the absence of division of tasks, division and conflict within the Oromo community, perpetual attack on Oromo heritage and psychology by the enemy and their Oromo collaborators, and ideological confusion that equates personal interest with the national interest. One respondent identified that, “the decentralized nature of Oromo society and culture has been acting against centralization and hierarchical authority and control. It has been easier for the Oromos to form series of small organizations instead of an overarching strong umbrella organization.” Of course, like in any nation, decentralization without an overarching political centralization has been very risky for Oromos. One of the main reasons why the Oromo people lost their sovereignty by the alliance of Ethiopian colonialism and global imperialism was the decentralization of gada authorities during the nineteenth century.

After dismissing almost all Oromo liberation fronts as irrelevant, one respondent recognized the OLF as a quasi-liberation front. In his words, “the OLF was a quasi-organization, a daboo, where every participant did as ... [he or she wished]. On top of this, OLF meant the polit-bureau of the central committee. It was only these two bodies that were responsible to move the organization from food distribution to commanding the army, and ... administrating the bureau work. The structure was only on the paper. There were no real members except in the army. People who were associated with the organization were called “nama keenya,” our men, to avoid the use of the word member; the leaders were very far away from the grassroots.” He continued to say, “You cannot simply get up and mobilize national human resources like a burial ceremony. Some preconditions must be there to start with. There existed no organizational nervous system that connects the brain, the leadership, and the grassroots, [and] the people together. An organization is a group of people clubbed together to do something which has a clear vision and to achieve this vision [it must have] elaborated rules and regulations in its constitution.”

Most educated Oromos have not contributed to the Oromo national movement since they have preferred to work for the Ethiopian system or sided with Ethiopian organizations. One respondent commented that most of “the educated [Oromos] abroad or at home have not practically joined the struggle... They [are] rather committed in faultfindings in the works of those who committed their lives for the cause. The great majority of the educated Oromos ... have not directly committed themselves to the challenge of the organizational problems.” The respondent further says that many of them “have been serving ... the [Ethiopian] state machine, the arch enemy of the Oromo people’s struggle. This has weakened the political and military organizational capacity of the camp of the Oromo struggle.”

Since the Oromo movement has not yet militarily, organizationally, and politically challenged the internal and regional enemies of the Oromo nation, the international community is not yet pressured to fairly deal with the Oromo national issue. Because of internal divisions and the lack of understanding of international politics, the Oromo diaspora community has failed to be an international ambassador for Oromia. One respondent noted as follows: “Some diaspora elites are so entangled in petty local and regional politics and never [think] about Oromo issues past the local or regional boundaries. The political leadership has failed to mobilize the elites for lack of aggressive approach to recruit them. Most of the elites shy away from fully participating in the Oromo politics ...”

The Oromo political leadership must study the connection between the internal factors of Oromo society and the capacity of Oromo organizations. Without mobilizing the majority of educated Oromos by resolving the contradictions among them through developing Oromummaa among this section of Oromo society, the Oromo movement cannot fully resolve its internal problems. The Oromo political leadership should develop new political approaches that can attract the educated section of Oromo society to join the Oromo national movement. To accomplish this political objective, the leadership needs to reinvent itself through developing new visions, tactics, and strategies.

Underutilization of Human Resources and the Inability to Mobilize the Nation

The human resources of Oromo nationalists in the forms of labor, knowledge, time and money are underutilized in the Oromo national movement. Seven respondents mentioned that the condition of the Oromo struggle does not allow them to fully contribute to the struggle. The reasons these respondents provided include the loose organizational nature of Oromo society, ineffective ways of conducting organizational affairs, a vague and ambiguous relationship between community organizations and fronts due to a confused and unclear division of labor, the inability of fronts to enlist the support of professionals in their areas of specialization, the failure to establish a functioning relationship between fronts and their constituencies lack of a strong national organization that can mobilize Oromo human capital, lack of clear policies and guidelines on several issues from the leadership, conflicting and contradictory messages from the Oromo political leadership, lack of confidence in leadership, and unhealthy competition for leadership.

What we learn from the majority of these respondents is that Oromo organizations have not yet developed the capacity to fully utilize the material and intellectual resources of their members, supporters, and sympathizers. Without recognizing the existence of this major problem and sufficiently learning about it in order to seek a practical solution, no front can effectively and efficiently advance the Oromo national struggle towards success.

Our enemies, because of their organizational effectiveness and their regional and international support, have mobilized and used the economic and human resources of our nation; they have accomplished these objectives through a brutal military force and ideological manipulation. Without developing a comparable political and military strength and ideological maturity, the Oromo movement cannot effectively challenge Ethiopian settler colonialism and its local, regional, and international supporters.

Most Oromo elites and leaders lack the clear understanding of these problems; hence, they engage in divisive politics, join the enemy camp, or remain passive. They are not coherent, persuasive and inspiring. They are too egocentric and poor at conflict management. As one respondent pointed out, "Oromo political leadership and elites themselves are not well organized and they have no communication network among themselves"; consequently, they could not effectively mobilize the human and material resources of the nation.

The Oromo political leadership must recognize that their main role is to enable the Oromo people by organizing them to fight and liberate themselves. It is a must that the leadership mobilizes and coordinates the Oromo human and material resources for the national cause. A few leaders and thousands of guerrilla fighters cannot liberate forty million Oromos. So the leadership needs to design new political and organizational strategies and approaches that can mobilize the entire nation and its sectors, such as women, farmers, workers, youth, intellectuals and various professional groups to be ready for self-defense.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Oromo Fronts and Political Parties

Independent Oromo political organizations have commitment for the Oromo national cause despite many years of mounting criticisms against them; they are sacrificing and committing themselves for the collective well-being and betterment of the Oromo nation; they are interested in developing the Oromo national heritage, such as culture, history, language. Further, they have interests in developing Oromummaa, and they have made the Oromo struggle alive. One respondent noted that the "consistent commitment of the OLF to the struggle under even difficult circumstances has made it to enjoy the support of an overwhelming majority of the Oromo people." Unfortunately, these organizations have the following weaknesses. They have not yet built strong communities and institutions that back up the struggle; these organizations have failed to organize educated Oromos in the diaspora to seek constructive ideas and support from them; they have also failed to manage and resolve internal conflicts properly in a timely manner. Some of them pursue their own political interests at the expense of the Oromo collective national interest; they lack long term visions and flexibility as necessitated by change in regional and global politics. One respondent pointed out that these organizations disseminate inconsistent political messages, and they do not have mechanisms of measuring progress; they do not have a

sense of urgency of time in what they are trying to do.

Oromo political organizations are different from the fronts and parties of other societies because the struggle of the Oromo people has more complex problems since the colonial state is located in Oromia. Most of the Oromo are rural, scattered and uneducated people; they are religiously, regionally and culturally diverse. All these factors have increased the complexity and the problem of the Oromo national struggle. The international community has a special relation with Ethiopia and it has not even recognized the existence of the Oromo and Oromo people until recently. The Oromo national struggle does not have regional and global supporters. There is not any colonized society that has liberated itself without substantive regional or global supporters.

Urgent Measures and Recommendations

Recognizing that all Oromo elites and leaders have an ideological problem must be priority. Before we criticize others and their organizations, every Oromo should ask himself or herself to evaluate his or her contributions to the Oromo national struggle. Saving the Oromo nation from historical shame requires that the Oromo elites and leaders recognize and agree that they have failed to pull out the nation from its ideological, organizational, and leadership crises. If we care for the Oromo people, we must stop any unproductive feud against one another over non-existent political power and think about the survival of the nation; we must work as a united political force. It is only then that we can fully and effectively mobilize all available Oromo material and human resources for the Oromo national struggle.

Developing Oromummaa as the key Oromo ideology and national ethos, which all Oromo individuals, institutions, and organizations will use, and building the Oromo national capacity are essential. Increasing organizational and institutional accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, and evaluating performance are also necessary. Individuals and organizations should be evaluated on what they propose and do. The Oromo national movement needs specialization and professionalization. The processes of specialization and professionalization will assist to reframe Oromo national issues in practical ways. We need to develop four activist group leaders or task forces in our national movement. The first task force may be called the Oromummaa Project Group. This group will engage in developing the culture and ideology of Oromummaa as national and international projects. This group will research and develop various Oromo social and cultural experiences as the self-representation of the Oromo nation to develop public policies that will help further flourish Oromummaa as national and transnational projects. This approach will help mobilize potential constituents and supporters for the Oromo national project on national, regional, and international levels.

The second task force may be called the Human Resource Mobilization Group. This group will search for new ways to end the underutilization of Oromo human resources in general and that of Oromo activists in particular. This group will suggest steps that can help in building the networks of Oromo civic and political organizations. This task group will also develop ways of forming an Oromo national solidarity network. The Oromo solidarity network will increase Oromo interactions among themselves and with numbers of actors engaged in transnational activities; Oromo activists need to go beyond physical, social, and cultural distances to persuade civil

society actors in every society or country to influence states and international organizations. This is only possible by creating an Oromo transnational solidarity network by using religions, cultures, politics and other activities. Both national and transnational solidarity networks must work hand in hand as a powerhouse of knowledge, information and policies to inform the Oromo national movement on national and global levels.

The third task force may be called the Organizational Capacity Task Group. By engaging in organizational and behavioral research, this group will develop ways of building culture of organizational accountability and effectiveness. It can also help in developing the procedures of performance evaluation of activists, leaders and organizations. This group will study the weaknesses and strengths of the Oromo movement, and suggest ways of building strengths and eliminating or reducing weaknesses. This group can also help in developing ways of improving the habits and behavior of activists and leaders by suggesting means of increasing their performance in the national movement.

The fourth task group can be called the Public Policy Group. This group will work on national strategies and security issues. By studying regional and global politics in relation to the national interest of Oromia, this group will develop possible political scenarios for the Oromo national movement.

OSA (Oromo Studies Association), as a scholarly organization, can develop these policy issues for the Oromo national movement. Therefore, the committee recommends that OSA courageously take these challenges to form these four task groups under its umbrella. It also recommends that all Oromo political and civic organizations cooperate with OSA to help in the formation and activities of these task groups. These task groups should persuade Oromo organizations to use their work in broadening and deepening the Oromo national movement. Finally, the committee suggests that the findings and recommendations of these four task groups should be presented at every OSA annual conference.

The Oromo Struggle for National Libation and the Questions of Human Rights, the Rule of Law and Democracy

Beyan H. Asoba

Introduction

This paper discusses the dialectics of the Oromo struggle for national self-determination or struggle for realization of the Oromo nation's collective human rights and the questions of individual human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Brief facts of historical background help to understand the basis of the Oromo nation's struggle for self-determination. It is now more than a century since the conquest and colonization of the Oromo people by the then Abyssinia State, currently called Ethiopia. The Abyssinian States, led by Emperor Minilik, conquered the Oromo people during the 19th century's partition of Africa among the European colonial powers. Emperor Minilk conquered the Oromo nation with the help of weapons and expert advices obtained from many European States. As Martial De Salviac, a French Missionary, in his book published in of 1901 correctly put it, "With Equal arms, the Abyssinians will never conquer an inch of [the Oromo] land. With the power of arms imported from Europe, Minilik began a murderous revenge, about 1870, which ended only in 1898, with the submission of Borana [Oromo]. The Oromo people resisted the conquest for 28 years. De Salviac also correctly predicted "the Oromo war of independence"

As the result of the conquest, the Oromo people lost political power over their own country, subjected to political repression, lost control over their natural and human resources, subjected to economic exploitation and culture domination. The Oromo language was suppressed and Oromos were deprived the natural right to learn in their own language and the right to use their language for official governance purposes. It should also be remembered and noted that the conquering Abyssinians sold tens of thousands of Oromos into slavery. It is believed that during the conquest, the Oromo population was reduced to half. The Abyssinian conquest and occupation has halted and/or distorted the natural process of the Oromo nation's political, economic, social and cultural development.

The treatment that the Oromo people have been subjected to and harm that they suffered under successive Ethiopian regimes and are still suffering under the current colonial occupation of TPLF are not any different, if not worse, than that of the other African people who were colonized by the Europeans. The Oromo case, rather, shows that the more the colonial power is economically and culturally backward and politically undemocratic, the oppression of the conquered people is more brutal, the colonial rule is devoid of any redeeming value and the conquerors use all means to perpetuate the colonial rule.

The Oromo Nation's National Liberation Struggle

The Oromo people never ceased struggling to undo the Abyssinian conquest and restore their independence. Like any other people, the Oromo nation has the natural right to be free from the alien rule. The objective of Oromo nation's national liberation struggle is the realization the Oromo people's right to national self-determination. The Oromo nation's struggle to self-determination is a legitimate struggle. It is a legitimate struggle justified both by natural law and international human rights laws.

As such, the Oromo nation's struggle to national self-determination is a struggle to be free from the Abyssinian alien rule. It is a struggle to freely and democratically determine the political status of the Oromo nation. It is also a struggle to freely pursue the Oromo nation's economic, social and cultural development. Furthermore, it is a struggle to enable the Oromo people to freely dispose of Oromia's natural wealth and resources; of course within the bounds of international laws and bilateral and multilateral agreements. Moreover, the Oromo nation's national liberation struggle is a struggle to end the alien deprivation of the Oromo nation's means of subsistence.

The Oromo nation's struggle for national self-determination is in and of itself a just struggle. The self-determination of the Oromo nation is in and of itself a human right. It is a struggle to realize the collective rights of the Oromo as a nation. The gallant sons and daughters of Oromo nation who sacrificed their time, lives and limbs for the realization the Oromo nation's right to national self-determination deserve nothing but praises of their compatriots. Likewise, the patriotic and proud sons and daughters of the Oromo nation who are affiliated with different Oromo national liberation organizations, free Oromo civic institutions and associations and who are currently struggling for the realization of the Oromo nation's natural and legal rights to self-determination deserve the utmost support and respect of their fellow Oromos.

The Oromo nation's struggle to national self-determination could be deemed realized when the Oromo nation is free and empowered to freely and democratically determine its political status. The political status that the Oromo nation would freely and democratically determine could either be the emergence of the Oromo nation as an independent and sovereign nation or the free, voluntary and democratic political association of the Oromo nation with other nations or peoples.

According to the international human rights law, in making the determination of a nation's political status, what matters most is the existence of free and democratic political atmosphere that enables the concerned people to make a free, informed and democratic decision than the outcome of the people's decision. In essence, what really matters is not whether the Oromo nation will choose sovereignty or a free political association with other people/federation. Rather, what matter most is the existence or non-existence of the free decision making process. Only a nation that is free from alien and tyrannical rule is able to freely and democratically determine its political status.

It is crucial to realize that the liberation of the Oromo nation from the alien rule, the realization of the Oromo nation's right to national self-determination, is only the first phase of the nation's

liberation. History particularly that of Africa, teaches that the realization of the national liberation does not necessarily lead to the protection of individual human rights, the rule of law and democracy. As seen in many African countries, a national liberation may also lead to and has led to tyranny.

I argue that the Oromo national liberation which does not protect the individual human rights, which is not based on the rule of law and democracy is not a complete liberation. The Oromo people's struggle for national liberation needs to avoid the policies and practices of African national liberation struggles that led to tyranny. The major policy mistakes that led to tyranny in African National liberation struggles was/is the liberators' paternalistic attitude towards the nation and postponement of the issues of human rights, the rule of law and democracy during the launch of the nation building exercises. The wrong policies that the new African Leaders adapted were based on a wrong assumption that granting human rights and freedoms and democracy to the people during the start would be obstacles to the nation building. The wrong assumption was that first the nation must be built before the people enjoy human rights and democracy. It is now proved that, a national building effort that alienates the people's free participation in government affairs, which postponed democracy, human rights and the rule of law is an approach that defeats the purposes of the liberation.

Therefore, to make the Oromo national liberation a complete liberation, the Oromo people's struggle for national self-determination must also at the same time struggle to lay foundations for the protection of individual human rights, the rule of law and democracy. I intentionally preferred to say a national liberation that does not lead to the guarantee of individual human rights is not a complete liberation. However, one can even argue that, a liberation which does not provide protection and guarantee for individual human rights, a liberation which is not based on the rule of law and democracy may not even be considered liberation. The question, therefore, that needs an answers is: how can the Oromo national liberation organizations lay foundations for the protection of individual human rights, the supremacy of the Rule of law and Democracy while struggling for national liberation? I will attempt address this question in categories of human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Human Rights

In making or developing laws, any self-respecting nation first draws on its own heritage. Likewise, we, Oromos first need to look into and study the Oromo concepts of human rights and its safeguarding mechanisms and develop and implement the rights and the safeguarding mechanism that do not contravene the universally accepted standards of human rights.

In order to lay ground for the complete freedom of the Oromo nation, the Oromo liberation organizations must now abide by the Oromo human rights laws. Moreover, to lay foundations for the future and complete freedom of the Oromo people, the Oromo liberation forces should now abide by and respect and implement internationally recognized human rights and freedoms. Towards this end, the Oromo liberation forces need to teach their members and the Oromo public at large the broad spectrum of political, economic, social and cultural human rights and freedoms that are enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International

Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other UN and Regional Human Rights Agreements.

Recognizing that only the informed public can defend their liberty and democracy, the Oromo liberation forces not only need to abide by but also need to educate their members and the Oromo people, among others, that all individuals have rights to equality, the right to life, liberty and personal security, freedom from arbitrary arrest, the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty, the right to own property, freedom of belief and religion, freedom of opinion and information, the right to peaceful assembly and association and the right to participate in government and free and periodic elections and freedom from state or personal interference in the preceding rights, etc. The education of human rights to the Oromo people is imperative because it is the way to deprive a chance of emergence of tyranny in free Oromia.

I believe that the concern about the possible emergency of tyranny in Oromo politics is not a far-fetched concern. In spite of our Gada heritage, a heritage of the rule of law and democratic governance, the possibility of the emergence of tyranny in Oromo politics is real. For one thing, Oromo political elites are human beings, they are not essentially different from others and they can also become tyrants. Most importantly, like all the colonized peoples' political elites/liberators, the Oromo political elites/liberators are more exposed to the tyrannical colonial political culture of Abyssinians and they have propensity to imitate it. We cannot confidently say that Oromo political elites did not internalize Abyssinian tyrannical political culture. Therefore, it is essential to educate the Oromo public about human rights now and lay foundation for complete freedom/liberation.

The Rule of Law

The education of human rights and freedoms to the Oromo public is not a sufficient safeguard for the protection of human rights and the establishment of a democratic order. Another indispensable means for the respect of human rights and the establishment of a meaningful functioning democracy is the rein of the rule of law. Therefore, to lay foundation for the rule of law in free Oromia, the Oromo liberation organizations need to practice the rule of law, while struggling for Oromo national liberation. What is the rule of law and why there is a rule of law?

More than two thousand years ago, Aristotle said that, "The rule of law is better than any individual." The rule of law means that all persons, natural and legal or governments and individuals are subject to law. The rule of law is not alien to the Oromo. The essence the Oromo Gada system is the rule of law and democracy.

To make the free Oromia a country of the rule of law, not a country of the rule of tyranny or individual, the Oromo political organizations and their leaders must now lay grounds for the culture of the rule of law. To develop the culture of the rule of law, first of all, all Oromo political organizations and Oromo leaders need to abide by their own constitutions, rules and regulations. They need to avoid the slippery road of tyranny that starts by disregarding their own laws, rules and regulations. A leader and a member of an Oromo organization who violated an organization's constitution, rules and regulations must be held accountable according to the

organization's law.

Furthermore, to lay ground for free Oromia based the rule of law, the Oromo political organizations need to teach their members and the Oromo public about the rule of law or the supremacy of law. It is important that they teach the concept of justice, the separation of government power into legislature, executive and judiciary. It is also important to teach the need for independent judiciary, the restrictions on the exercise of power by the legislature and the executive branches of Government, the mechanisms of checks and balances of the three branches of government, the concept of non-retroactivity of law, that is, the law making should be prospective and not retrospective, about law based on the concept of justice that is based on the rights and duties of the individual person, and about due process of law and the importance of adhering to procedures.

It also is important that the Oromo political and civic organizations teach their members and the Oromo people about human rights based legal concepts such as no ex post facto laws, (Nullum crimen, nulla poena sine lege), presumption innocence (that all individuals must be considered innocent until proven guilty by evidence and before an independent judiciary) the legal equality of individuals regardless of social status, gender, religion, political opinion, etc., and the right to habeas corpus (the right to be told the crime s/he was accused of, the right to request that his/her custody be reviewed by an independent judiciary, the right to be freed from an unlawful detention).

Teaching about the rule of law and practicing the rule of law while struggling for national liberation helps to diminish the possibility of the emergence of tyranny in free Oromia. Teaching about and practicing the rule of law while struggling for national liberation helps to maximizes the possibility of having a free Oromia based on the rule of law, not rule of an individual tyrant or a one-party dictatorship.

Democracy

Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as “government of the people, by the people and for the people.” For Thomas Jefferson democracy is where, “governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” Democracy is, therefore, a system of government in which, “the ruled controls the rulers.” Stated differently, democracy is a “process by which ordinary citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders.”

As previously stated, we, Oromos are not strangers to democracy and the rule of law. The Oromo Gada Democracy is our heritage. However, the Gada Democracy heritage alone, I believe, does not guarantee that the free Oromia would be a democratic Oromia. Alien rulers have banned and prohibit the Oromo Gada Democracy for more than hundred years and its development is halted. Hence, we, Oromos need to develop the Gada democracy, we need to take into consideration the human achievements in democratic governance and lay the foundation of democracy for free Oromia while struggling for national liberation.

The question is how do we lay ground for free the democratic Oromia while struggling for national liberation? Or what do we have to do while struggling for national liberation to make the government of free Oromia democratic, not a tyranny. I argue that proudly talking about Oromo heritage of Gada Democracy is not good enough to guarantee that the free Oromia will be a democratic republic, not a one party rule based tyranny.

We need to lay foundations for democracy while struggling for national liberation. Democracy needs to be practiced by all Oromo political organizations and civic organizations now. The Oromo political organizations need to practice organizational democracy. The Oromo organizations need to honor and implement the doctrine of majority rule that respects the minority's rights. It is important to realize that democracy is a compromise and it is a system that respects and considers minority views. We also need to avoid the temptation that majority is always right.

Free, fair and periodic elections must be implemented by Oromo political and civic organizations. The Oromo leaders of organizations, political or otherwise, need to know that the organization belongs to its members, not to say to the nation, and the leaders' authority drives from the delegation and consent of the members.

To help lay ground for the future democratic republic of Oromia, the Oromo political and civic organizations need to teach the Oromo people about Oromo democracy and the Western democracies. The Oromo people need to be thought about popular sovereignty, direct and indirect democracy, about periodic free and democratic elections, about political pluralism, etc.

Conclusion

The United Nation's Human Rights Commission has long ago declared that human rights are indivisible. Hence, the realization of the Oromo people's right to national self-determination and the individual human rights are indivisible. The future free Oromia that does not guarantee the individual human rights and is not based on the rule of law and democracy cannot be fully free. Therefore, we Oromos cannot postpone the respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy while struggling for national self-determination. We need to avoid the policies of African liberations that postponed human rights, the rule of law and democracy, and end up with failed states. Therefore, the objective of Oromo national liberation or the realization of the Oromo nation's right to self-determination should be understood not only as the liberation Oromia of from Abyssinian alien rule, but also as a process of laying foundations for the guarantee of human rights, the rule of law and democracy and a process for achieving a complete liberation of the Oromo.

Reference

Martial De Salviac, *An Ancient People- Great African Nation; The Oromo*, Translated from the Original French Edition by Ayalew Kanno, Paris, 1901.
Bulcha, Mekuria, *The Making of the Oromo Diaspora*, Kirk House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2002.

The UN Covenants of Human Rights, the UN Charter, African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, and the African Union Charter.

Lord Chief Justice Cock quoting Bracton in the case of Proclamations (1620) 77 ER 1352

Legesse, Asmerom, Oromo Democracy, The Red Sea Publishers, 2000 NJ, Gada, Three Approaches to the Study of African Society, The Free Press, NY, 1973.

Robert A. Dahl, A preface to Democratic Theory, University of Chicago Press, 1956.

Dealing with Ambiguities: History, Politics, and Future of Oromo Nationalism

Ezekiel Gebissa

The fall of the military-socialist regime, the derg (1974-1991), marked the apogee of the Oromo struggle for liberation. A little over a decade ago, Oromiya was a concept in the minds of Oromo nationalists, the qubee script a fancy dream of an Oromo organization striving to educate Oromos in the use of a foreign script, and being an Oromo a great obstacle to self-improvement in a world dominated by Amharic hegemony. Today Oromiya is a national entity with delineated boundaries and institutions of governance recognized by the Ethiopian government. The qubee script is the sole means of written Afaan Oromoo, the Oromo language, which is the medium of administration, instruction, and commerce in Oromiya. The foundations of Oromo identity, unity, and statehood have been laid and the struggle for national liberation has advanced onto a qualitatively different, if uncertain, phase.

A Historical Error

These profound changes came after a century of effort to destroy the Oromo as a nation. Shortly after its establishment, Menelik's empire had a historic opportunity to put the new entity on a trajectory that could have eventually led to the creation of a viable multinational polity in which people of various ethnic and religious loyalties would live in harmony and citizens would enjoy economic equality, social justice, and cultural autonomy. This historic moment came in 1909, when Menelik named his grandson, Iyasu II, as his successor. Upon assuming power, Iyasu embarked on a two-pronged policy to integrate the heterogeneous empire he had inherited. First, he went on a grand tour of the empire, spending most of his time interacting with people on the cultural and geographic periphery of the empire. At the same time, he consummated several dynastic marriages, marrying into the ruling houses of the old Abyssinian realms and of the newly annexed nations.

For those who did not want to see Iyasu crowned in the first place, it was convenient to dismiss the young monarch's effort as an infantile adventure. But Iyasu's prolific marriages were consummated with the goal of integrating the Moslem Oromo, Afar and Somali into Ethiopian national political life and creating a "national" monarchy in which the royal houses of the many nations in the empire would have a stake.

In addition to ensuring the unity of the heterogeneous empire he had inherited, Iyasu also endeavored to improve the life of all its citizens by reforming the structure and style of governance. He launched a campaign against corruption and abuses of power and carried out important reforms, including attempts to abolish the neftegna-gabbar system, establish a secular system of education, institute a system of audit and inspection in government, and reform the judicial system. The Abyssinian political establishment deemed these reforms a threat not just to their position and power, but also to the very survival of Menelik's state. After all, Iyasu was a scion of a Muslim Oromo from Wollo and therefore unfit to rule the Semitic-Christian Empire.

In the eyes of the Abyssinians, an Oromo and a Muslim was not fit to rule Christian Abyssinia. By a palace coup, Iyasu was removed, his experiments squelched, and the monarchy's Amhara-Christian identity protected. In the long run, however, this shortsighted act proved to be a grave historical error.

One of the central figures of the conspiracy that brought Iyasu down, Tafari Makonnen, later Haile Sellassie, seized the opportunity of Iyasu's ouster to inaugurate an era of a unitary autocratic state in which ultimate power was concentrated in his hands. To that end, Haile Sellassie designed, constructed, and extended the ideology and infrastructure of colonial domination to the regions conquered by Menelik in the 19th century. More land was confiscated through several privatization schemes, the Amharic language was made the official medium of local administration and instruction, and the Orthodox Church was declared officially the guardian and enforcer of Ethiopia's Christian identity, despite the fact that Moslems comprised a plurality of the empire's population. In effect, Haile Sellassie institutionalized Menelik's imperialist ideas and firmly planted Abyssinian power in Oromia.

Haile Sellassie's reign also witnessed the maturation of the Oromo struggle. The tradition of resistance against colonial rule that started with Menelik's conquest continued with greater ferocity. Expressions of discontent in the form of revolts and assassination attempts on the Haile Sellassie's life that became frequent in the 1950s and 1960s, signaled that the government did not have the capacity to contain the rising nationalism of the colonized people. The mere possibility that the popular Oromo general, Mulugeta Buli, might try to replicate Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser's overthrow of Egypt's King Farouk in 1952, made it clear to the Neway Brothers, Mengistu and Germame Neway, and their cohorts that Haile Sellassie's regime was too frail to withstand either a popular Oromo uprising or an Oromo-led violent takeover of power. In 1960, unable to persuade Haile Sellassie to enhance the capacity of the state, the Neway Brothers and a few other members of the Moja and Addisge families, attempted a coup d'etat of their own.

The imperial regime was shaken by the infighting within the imperial court, but the structures of the Ethiopian colonial system survived. In the period following the attempted coup d'etat, the regime's life was extended, thanks to Cold War superpower patronage and continental norms that favored state stability and sovereignty over individual rights and freedom. By the early 1970s, however, the political and economic structures that supported the regime had entered an advanced stage of decomposition. The regime began losing its ability to satisfy various demand-bearing groups in society as the resources at its disposal started to dry up. As the nationalist groups in the northern and southern extremities of the empire intensified their resistance, the regime increasingly deployed the coercive apparatus of the state to maintain order. In the end, the military entered the political arena to arrest the deterioration of the state, replacing the imperial regime that laid down the colonial infrastructure after Iyasu's experiment was destroyed.

A Hopeful Experiment

In order to gauge the effects of the military junta on the Oromo people's struggle, it is necessary to analyze the period of the Derg in two phases. First, what started out as an effort to reform the

colonial regime, turned out to be a process that dealt a mortal blow to the economic base of the colonial infrastructure. The Land Reform Act of 1975, written essentially by Oromo intellectuals, in effect, “liberated” Oromo tenants from the oppressive grip of settler-landlords and accelerated the destruction of the colonial order. Furthermore, Moslem holidays were established as national holidays on par with Christian ones, and the use of Afaan Oromoo in government-run radio and print media was permitted. In the eyes of the Amhara elite, these changes came to symbolize an “Oromo revolution.” In many parts of the core highland parts of the empire, landlords were able to mobilize tenants and small farmers for brigandage, convincing them that the land reform was a Moslem-Oromo plot which aimed at destroying the Amhara-Christian Ethiopian empire.

The effort to cast the changes that followed the 1974 uprising as an “Oromo revolution” and the apparent destruction of the colonial economic order eventually caused a backlash against Oromo gains. After 1978 the policies implemented by the military junta effectively reversed those of the previous years. The government instituted a policy measure, billed by many as “the second land reform,” with the aim of extracting surplus from the Oromo countryside through Producer’s Cooperatives, villagization schemes, and resettlement projects that brought Amharas and Tigreans to Oromia in massive numbers. The bureaucracy was purged of its limited Oromo components and a campaign was launched to destroy organizations that appeared to represent Oromo interest. Following the Somali invasion of 1977, the Derg embraced the Orthodox Church as the only Ethiopian Christian church, launching a campaign against “foreign” or “imported” religions. The political cadres of the Worker’s Party of Ethiopia (WPE) embarked on a crusade against evangelical converts in Oromia claiming to root out fifth columnists, saboteurs, and imperialist agents. At the same time, a brutal campaign against Oromo Moslems was carried out in Haler, Bale, and other areas under the guise of fighting infiltrators spying for Somalia. By 1980, the Amhara elite had reclaimed political and cultural power, not quite with a new Marxist ideology and party, but with a repackaged Amhara-Orthodox Christian theology and an invigorated infrastructure of domination.

The revitalized regime clung to power for a dozen years. The precipitous decline of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s deprived the Derg of the major force that had sustained the “dependent colonial regime” in power in Ethiopia since its creation in the early 20th century. The era of the derg came to an end rather uneventfully when the guerilla forces of the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) controlled Addis Ababa on May 28, 1991.

The collapse of the Derg regime coincided with the coming of age of the Oromo national struggle. The Oromo question, long disregarded as an inconsequential and meaningless cause in an unimportant corner of the world, burst into the international arena. The representatives of Oromo organizations fought for and literally put Oromia on the map, liberated the Oromo language from the shackles of the Geez alphabet, and elevated the issue of self-determination to such prominence that its rejection as a constitutional provision was not an option.

From the Oromo struggle’s standpoint, the 1991 revolution is an achievement of tremendous import. First, in their attempt to establish themselves as the senior partner in the Amhara-Tigrayan dyarchy, TPLF leaders completely dismantled the deeply entrenched military,

bureaucracy, and security institutions of the colonial regime and effectively removed the powerful Amhara elite from power and privilege. Second, as the official language, instructional media, and the lingua franca, the Amharic language had accorded previous regimes the cultural hegemony needed to maintain their power without having frequently to resort to the coercive apparatus of the state. Under the TPLF, Amharic was allowed to wither on the vine while other languages took its place at the regional level. That the TPLF could not conceive of ruling in Oromia without the Oromo-speaking OPDO is a powerful testament to the progress Oromo nationalism and that TPLF rule is devoid of any ability to elicit the consent of the Oromo for its rule. What is most important, out of miscalculation or by design, the TPLF allowed the creation of a national entity and national institutions bearing the name Oromia

To sum up, it took three revolutions to do away with the Ethiopian economic, cultural and political structures of domination that for eight decades maintained colonial domination over the Oromo people. The first attempt (1960) shook the colonial edifice to its foundation and stripped off its shroud of invulnerability. In the subsequent years, we see various manifestations of discontent in Ethiopia, ranging from literary criticisms of the body politic, to administrative reform, the rise in frequency of organized student protests, and the emergence of guerilla movements. The second (1974) dealt a severe blow to the economic base that underpinned the colonial superstructure. The third (1991) destroyed the political superstructure that had sustained Ethiopian colonial domination for several decades. Though the revolutions made significant changes to the economic and political structures of colonial domination, the Oromo and other subject peoples of the empire are not yet in charge of their destiny. Liberation has not been achieved, but it is nearer than ever. The remaining battle for the Oromo is not for visibility and recognition but for the appropriation and preservation of these achievements.

The Future of Oromo Nationalism: An Attempt at Political Prognosis

The border war with Eritrea (1998-2000) was a turning point in TPLF's rule in Ethiopia. The conflict exposed that the economy was in a more difficult state without a continuous infusion of direct foreign assistance. It deprived the TPLF an important ally that manned its military and security apparatus. It peeled away the mirage of cohesion and revealed the deep dissensions within the ruling party. This was followed by a series of defections of high-ranking party and government officials, several rounds of purges of the party structure, and rising discontent among the surrogate party organizations within EPRDF. The cumulative effect of all of these setbacks severely weakened the TPLF-led regime politically. The electoral challenge by opposition groups in the May 2005 election has made the political challenges of the regime tougher and exposed the reality that the regime's hold on power had always been tenuous. At this stage, the TPLF has imploded as a cohesive party and the regime faces a serious danger of collapse.

This is not a prophecy or a wishful hunch. The recent history of the country shows that widespread discontent emanating from economic crisis and the resultant instability has always precipitated the collapse of the incumbent regime. The conditions that have preceded the downfall of a regime in Ethiopia – signs of discontent and instability, economic crisis epitomized by food crisis, and a government that is suddenly responsive to public needs – appear to be

converging once again on the Ethiopian political scene. This time, however, the collapse is likely to be vastly different from previous episodes. When Haile Sellassie's government collapsed in 1974 and the Derg regime fell in 1991, the military and the guerilla groups that defeated the derg stepped in and established a successor government. Each time, the bureaucracy proved to be surprisingly resilient to carry on the routine task of running the government even when direction from a ruling body had ceased. In the event of the imminent collapse of the EPRDF government, given the absence of an organized body to take control of the helm of power and the lack of a cohesive and self-sustaining bureaucracy, the Ethiopian state faces the hard reality of a prolonged anarchy.

Some Oromos believe that a prolonged anarchy is good for the Oromo cause. I do not share the view that chaos creates an advantageous political atmosphere for the Oromo. Instead, I maintain that Oromo political organizations must do their level best to prevent chaos and prepare to step in and takeover when the incumbent regime meets its eventual fate of collapse. This requires dealing with the ambiguities within the Oromo national movement in three major areas: national liberation goal, national liberation strategy, and role of Oromo organizations.

Concerning national liberation goal, there are two competing notions: democratic unity and an independent republic of Oromia. The idea of democratic unity with other peoples in Ethiopia is a position openly championed by the OPDO, OFDM, and some elements within the OLF itself. The establishment notion of independent Oromia was the longstanding goal of the OLF, which one of its factions has clung to until this day. In my view, these two goals are not contradictory goals destinations but two stations along the path toward the same destination. Oromo organizations should not spend too much energy fighting each other over issues that do not warrant any fighting.

As regards national liberation strategy, there are once again two competing views. The first has been the method of armed struggle waged by guerilla forces to forcibly remove a colonial regime from power. This strategy has been espoused by all Oromo organizations until the fall of the derg regime in 1991. Those who maintain that the fall of the derg regime marked the end of the Amhara colonial system no longer view armed struggle as a necessary strategy for the Oromo national movement. Some do not see any difference between the present TPLF regime and the pre-1991 Ethiopian regimes. Logically, they continue to support armed struggle as the only legitimate means to end alien domination of the Oromo people. Other groups vacillate between the two strategies, sometimes declaring armed struggle as their primary means of struggle and at other times embracing the idea of peaceful political struggle within the existing Ethiopian system.

This issue is too complicated to resolve. Those who favor peaceful political struggle have already made their case that war is not a workable strategy of liberation in the era of heightened globalization, especially in the post-9/11 world of War on Terror. They argue that Oromos have grown war-weary even if the new global politics were conducive for guerrilla wars. They also believe that there is a window of opportunity to force a relatively effective peaceful political struggle within Ethiopia. This view was reinforced by the near successful political campaign waged by the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) for the May 2005 elections. On the

other hand, the advocates of armed struggle have argued that war is justifiable as long as the Ethiopian regime refuses to allow free political participation. However, as a matter of principle, war is the last resort, not the first choice in resolving political conflicts. The burden is on those advocating armed struggle to make their case that war is the only means available to Oromos and explain that the guerilla tactics that liberations movements successfully employed in the post-Second World War era to great effect is still a viable means for national liberation even in the post-Cold War era.

The third ambiguity that needs resolution pertains to the role of Oromo organizations. In Oromo politics, there are two organizational poles. One is held by the OPDO, the other by the OLF. The OPDO is no longer a monolithic entity that most Oromos think it is. Contrary to the popular perception, it is a fractured group composed of three main groups: the non-Oromo infiltrators, the Oromo opportunists, the Oromo pragmatists. The founders were prisoners of war of the Derg military who happened to speak the Oromo language. Most were descendants of the Amhara settlers in Oromo areas who knew the Oromo language enough to echo the OLF, but not quite committed to the Oromo cause owing to their non-Oromo background. The second group were members of the Oromo elite who joined the OPDO during the final offensive against the derg. They were individuals who had come through the Derg era either as apolitical bureaucrats who serve any government that comes to power or those who joined the incoming rebel groups in order to gain clemency for the crimes they had committed as members of the Derg era institutions. They offered their expertise to the OPDO in return for protection and stability in their personal lives. These are the Oromo opportunists who do not want to see their protagonist, the OLF, come to power by any means. As the TPLF consolidated its power and the OLF gradually disappeared from the scene, some Oromos joined the OPDO to try to work within the legal framework to improve the lives of the Oromo people. This group came to constitute the pragmatists who believe that the political space should not be ceded to those who have no interest in advancing the Oromo cause. In all, the nebulosity of the OPDO convinced the Meles faction that this is not an organization to be counted on as a dependable ally. At the moment, the OPDO is an organization that has outlived its usefulness to its TPLF patrons.

On the other end of the Oromo political spectrum is the OLF. In popular imagination, despite its severe weaknesses, the OLF is still the single only independent Oromo political organization that embodies the aspiration of the Oromo people. During the May 2005 elections, Oromos protested the fact that this organization was not on the ballot. Since then they have openly questioned the ruling authorities why the OLF should not be in the country while every criminal party in Ethiopian politics, including the EPRP, ME'ISON, and even members of the WPE, were allowed to exist legally and participate in the political process.

There is no doubt about the continued loyalty of the Oromo people to the OLF. It remains to be a genuine embodiment of Oromo aspirations. In the long struggle, The OLF has aided the movement in three major areas. First, life under the Amhara domination has divided the Oromo nation along regional lines into the Qottu of Harar, the Galla of Shewa or Wollega, and the assimilated Oromo of Wollo and Soddo. The OLF brought these disparate groups together and reamalgamated the Oromo into a single nation. Second, by insisting on making Afaan Oromo the working language of the Oromo and the qubee script the sole method of written Afaan Oromo, it

helped the birth of an unadulterated Oromo personality and identity. Third, by forcing the delineation of the actual borders of the Oromia state with its Oromo institutions it has laid the foundation for the realization of the Oromo ideals.

One must nevertheless make a distinction between the ideal and real. A glimpse at the history of the OLF since its expulsion from the Transitional Government reveals a great deal of truism that OLF the organization has fallen far behind the idea it embodied. There is a disconnect between the OLF as an idea and the OLF as an organization. The idea that the organization planted within the Oromo people has grown root and branch and has borne fruits. There is the reality of Oromia and everyone within Ethiopia and elsewhere now knows that the resolution of the Oromo problem is the only solution to sustained peace and stability in the Horn of Africa. The OLF organization has been rendered enfeeble by the internal infighting, organizational incompetence, and ideological intransigence within itself. For the sake of the salvation of the Oromo national movement, the idea which has grown, blossomed, and fruited over the past decade must reclaim the organization which has lately become out of touch and largely irrelevant to the political struggle that matters. OLF the idea is within the country and OLF the organization in self-imposed exile. The idea cannot follow the organization into exile. It is the organization the needs to return to the idea. Without the remarriage of the idea and the organization, the future of the Oromo national movement has no hope of completing the long struggle with victory. The OLF should listen to the call of the people, should end being a self-exiled organization, and must rejoin the people within the country.

Even in the limited space of one-party domination of the Ethiopian political scene over the last decade, the Oromo people have been able to lay the foundations of Oromo identity, unity, and self-determination. Oromo nationalists must not wait for the regime to collapse so that they can rebuild everything from scratch. I argue that the Oromiya national state, its governing institutions such as the Caafee Oromiya, and the qubee constituencies are important gains that must be protected and preserved as the basis for a free Oromiya, not alien institutions that should be left to the destruction of the imminent calamity of state collapse. Even the constitution of the Ethiopia, which was drafted with the full participation of several Oromo liberation fronts and still bears signs of its their input, should not be dismissed as a Woyane constitution. There isn't a more liberal constitution in the world than the current Ethiopian Constitution. The problem lies not in the design of the constitution, but the refusal fully to implement its provisions. The Oromo should not always clamor for the right to destroy-and-rebuild-anew. There should preserve their own gains and build on them.

The Role of Oromo Intellectuals in the National Liberation Struggle

Fido T. Ebba

The Oromo people have been waging a national liberation struggle to free themselves from over a century old alien misrule. The Oromos have resisted Abyssinian/Ethiopian occupation since its inception. In our struggle, Oromo intellectuals have played a determining role. My purpose here is look at the Oromo intellectuals' contributions and their failure to contribute to the ongoing Oromo national liberation struggle.

Who are Oromo intellectuals? For the purpose of this presentation I have divided them into three categories. This may not be the conventional way of describing "intellectuals." I leave that to social scientists to judge. In the first category are traditional Oromo leaders--the Abbaa Gadaas and their officers, the religious leaders, and in the latter part of our social history, the village or tribal chiefs such as Abbaa qoroos, Abbaa Burqaas and Garaadaas. At the beginning of the occupation of Oromia many of these traditional intellectuals led their people to fight against the occupiers with the ferocity that losing one's freedom demanded. Many Oromo leaders were massacred in several regions of our land at the beginning of the colonization in the late 1800s. The majority were coerced, deceived or/and bribed into serving the Abyssinian occupiers in their communities.

In the second category are Oromo civil servants and military personnel, who serve the Abyssinian rulers in various capacities. Of course, some among this group have significantly contributed to the liberation struggle. Also included are the musicians, poets, writers and journalists. Their contributions are enormous in reviving of the Oromo cultural life and revitalizing the Oromo people's national liberation struggle. The Oromo national liberation movement is the organized political expression of Oromo culture. National liberation is necessarily an act of culture, and these intellectuals have articulated the Oromo cause in their writings and other activities.

In the third category are the hundreds of Oromos with modern higher education--teachers, lawyers, medical doctors, engineers and academics - university professors and researchers. Many have been forced by the enemy to leave their homeland and are living and working in diaspora. It is this group in particular that I wish to address.

What proportion of these intellectuals are, in one way or another, contributing to their people's national liberation struggle? I can state with confidence that only a small fraction of the Oromo intelligentsia has provided the necessary ideological guidance and vision for the ongoing Oromo national liberation struggle. At the outset of the Oromummaa (Oromoness/Oromo nationalism) movement, intellectuals studied the history, culture, myths, and language and other specific traits of the Oromo that enabled them to construct a picture of the Oromo as a distinct group. In disseminating their findings, these intellectuals have re-created a sense of Oromummaa among Oromos by differentiating Oromo culture from the Abyssinian colonizers' culture, proving that theirs has been undermined for over a century by the Abyssinian elite.

Oromumma is a pan-Oromo consciousness that unites Oromos through out the Horn of Africa to fight for liberation and freedom. Oromummaa has spread through the Oromo population everywhere and lifted the deep-seated inferiority complex and self-hatred resulting from generations of Abyssinian oppression. Self-disdain is now being replaced with pride in their Oromo heritage; their consciousness elevated to heights heretofore unknown.

Abyssinians have always falsified our history, and most of our struggle has been in disproving the myths of our non-existence. In the 1970s, Oromo intellectuals wrote a theoretical political framework and re-invented the words Oromo and Oromia (Oromoland). Many of us worked as agitators, and mobilizers in the Oromummaa movement, acquiring a political identity by virtue of our ongoing struggle for recognition and self-determination.

The Oromo intellectuals' duty is not limited to a re-creation of a sense of Oromoness through studies of our cultural and political history. We promote discourse that undermines the legitimacy of the current regime, a discourse that de-legitimizes the Ethiopian state and its policies which pose a threat to the existence and natural rights of the Oromo nation. In this revolutionary work, we have acted at considerable risk to ourselves, our families and friends. Abyssinian tyrants have persecuted us, forced us to leave our country, professions and families. For more than three decades, Oromoland has experienced a brain drain due to the political, administrative, and academic harassment of intellectuals, creating enormous negative societal consequences. If it continues, this exodus will seriously hamper Oromo economic and social development.

Unfortunately, a number of Oromo intellectuals and academics have been bought off by successive Ethiopian regimes to legitimize their rule. Even though more and more Oromos are becoming conscious of their position as Oromos in the Ethiopian empire, many continue to serve the Abyssinian regime or remain detached from the liberation movement. Some continue to serve as agent provocateurs for pay, while others serve as members of the regime's bureaucracy and diplomatic corps. These modern Gobanas are telling our people that they are better off today under this regime than in the past, a cruel joke. Their actions reject the validity of the Oromo people's liberation struggle. Such disengagement from their people's struggle for freedom is morally irresponsible and reprehensible. I pity them, but I don't miss them!

Currently the number of Oromo intellectuals in diaspora is large and continues to grow. Oromo PhDs, medical doctors, engineers and lawyers present in the Twin Cities alone far outnumber those in any one city in Oromia, except perhaps in Finfinnee. These intellectuals have the rare opportunity to contribute to the ongoing national liberation struggle through their writings, financial support, and with ideas. They have unlimited access to modern media, international and national conferences and journals to expose the dismal situation of their people. However, only a few among them are contributing in these ways. The vast majority is silent in the face of the continued and intensified oppression and tyranny that their people are facing. They remain mere spectators and bystanders, refusing to take sides. Their behavior is tantamount to complicity. Of course, there are those who are outright obstructionists. For how long can they stand on the sidelines and not get involved? I find it strange that this group does not share the aspiration of

their people for justice and freedom.

Many Oromo intellectuals in diaspora have marginalized themselves from the political and social life of our people. They don't feel comfortable to be in the company of Oromo nationalists. Moreover, they are still reluctant to be identified with ordinary Oromos. They expect special treatment. Perhaps we should ask ourselves why they are that way. It seems that they have lost the sense of Oromoness. Instead they have their identity anchored in their new-found society and class and indulge themselves in the higher living standard they attained through the poor Oromo peasants' tax money. They are distinguishing themselves by their silence, submission and subservience rather than by courage in the face of continued political slaughter by the Habasha political elite. I would have expected these intellectuals to be in forefront of the liberation struggle as nationalist thinkers considering the dismal political and economic predicament their people are facing.

These intellectuals are not sharing the Oromo nationalist ideology of liberation and the Oromo people's aspirations for basic freedoms, justice and equality. Many have decided to distance themselves from the Oromo nationalist projects – the liberation of the Oromo people from over a century of Abyssinian occupation. They have abandoned the severely oppressed Oromo people, who look up to them for leadership in their struggle to liberate themselves from Abyssinian oppression of their identity, culture, and right to self-determination. Instead they harp on petty differences in approach, tactics and views on the national liberation struggle, and transform those differences into serious divisions that will not allow them to cooperate among themselves or with others.

Oromo intellectuals must join their people in the struggle for freedom and provide new ideas and technology to promote the advancement of the national liberation struggle. Today in Oromia the Oromo liberation struggle is fast gaining momentum and the resistance is everywhere. The entire Oromo population has risen to confront the Tigrean occupying force, its clients, collaborators and mercenaries. Participants of the ongoing massive popular uprising and demonstrations are confronting with bare hands an enemy armed to the teeth with machine guns and tanks. Today the rulers consider every Oromo a potential enemy. For the first time, the enemy is right! They even suspect maxxannes (collaborators).

All said, the contribution and the enormous sacrifices our peasants and students are making to the Oromo national liberation struggle should be acknowledged. Indeed they are the backbone of the Oromo national liberation struggle. In addition, the Oromo peasants have also contributed from their meager resources to finance the primary education of Oromo intellectuals. Also, it should be mentioned that most of our religious leaders who stand for universal values of humanity have sided against oppression, economic injustice, etc. Irrespective of consequences, they are supporting the ongoing liberation struggle.

In summary, Oromo intellectuals who have been participating in the Oromo national liberation struggle have served three major roles. First, they acted as architects of the Oromo nationalist movement by providing cultural, historical, political and economic arguments to sustain the distinctive character of the Oromo as a nation and a legitimization of its struggle to decide upon

its political future. Thus, these intellectuals have formed a common identity and vision that is guiding our struggle for liberation. Second, they constructed a discourse which undermines the legitimacy of the Abyssinian rule. They denounced the Oromo people's situation within the empire and offered an alternative to it by promoting strategies and tactics to dismantle the oppressive existing political, economic and social systems. Third, to help realize the vision, they created a liberation organization, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), with a clear political program and the clear objective to articulate liberation of the Oromo people.

Nonetheless, the majority of Oromo intellectuals remain indifferent in the face of eminent danger to the very survival of their own people. They must come forward with new ideas and technology to advance the national liberation struggle. They need to be reminded of their historical roles and responsibilities to lead their people in a national liberation struggle.

Our people are in a crisis situation, indeed at a decisive turning point in the recent history of the Oromo people. Under such critical circumstances, Oromo intellectuals must help lead their people out of this crisis by providing ideas, material and leadership. Those courageous, committed Oromo daughters and sons making sacrifices, some making the ultimate sacrifice, continue to hope that this group of intellectuals will come back and join them in the struggle.

Refernces

- Mkandawire, Thandika. 2005. African Intellectals and Nationalism In African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development ed. Zed Books. London.
- M'Bokolo, Elika. 2004. First Conference of Intellectuals of Africa and Its Diaspora: Pan-Africa in the 21st Century. Dakar 6-9 October 2004.
- Zewde Bahru. 1994. The intellectual and the State in Twentieth Century Ethiopia. In the 12th International Conference of Ethiopia Studies.

Human rights in post-Zenawi Ethiopia

Trevor Trueman

Problems concerning human rights in Ethiopia after Zenawi is removed from power may be considered at three levels. There will be issues which are specific to Ethiopia but which are related to problems faced by other countries emerging from abusive regimes and events. There will be problems which are due to the effects of globalisation on Ethiopia. Some of these are faced by all countries and some are mainly restricted to poor countries. Finally, there are problems which are global in nature and due mainly to the belligerence and hypocrisy of western nations and their 'war on terror'.

Ethiopia - Specific Problems

Reparation

It is important that repair, rebuilding and reconciliation occur. A degree of retribution is also necessary but without the revenge and perpetuation of abuse seen in the Dergue trials conducted by the present Ethiopian regime. Experience with Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and International Criminal Tribunals has been obtained by international bodies following the collapse of the apartheid regime in South Africa, the Rwandan genocide and the large scale atrocities which accompanied the break-up of Yugoslavia. The Gachacha community courts in Rwanda may also be relevant to the Ethiopian experience.

Expertise in these necessary healing processes has built up so that organisations such as Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch can be consulted on best practices to be observed when the TPLF hegemony is over. The process will not be easy. The terrible effects of torture on the families and whole societies of the victims need to be addressed and it is important to realise that those who have committed torture need healing as well as punishment if they are to contribute again to society. There will be difficult decisions to be made. What should happen, for instance, to the son of a poor farmer who has been coerced to join the EPRDF security forces by circumstances and threats to his family but who, at some risk, has enabled one or two victims to escape from detention? What should become of the 'PDO' member who joined in order to better the lot of his people but got embroiled in unfair distribution of food or medicines in order to avoid persecution? What should be the fate of EPRDF members who merely stood by while atrocities occurred? Are they qualitatively more culpable than those who fled the country and did nothing while cosseted in diasporan communities? Are some peoples or nationalities to be collectively punished because they enjoyed relative prosperity or were favoured for development?

At what level are punishments to be decided? Village, Kebele, Woreda? It is important that these issues are considered now. Similarly, it is important that thought is now given to the demobilisation and retraining of a brutalised army and local and Federal Police Forces.

Large Scale Violence

Whatever one's views are on the definition of genocide and whether current activities of the Ethiopian regime amount to genocide, there is potential for violence and killing on a massive scale in Ethiopia. Preconditions of genocides which have occurred elsewhere are eerily echoed in Ethiopia: extremely difficult and stressful life conditions, the Abyssinian culture of unquestioning obedience to rigid hierarchical power structures, presence of conflict, polarisation rather than pluralism defining opinion and debate. All are worryingly present in Ethiopia. Barely more than one year ago, before the pragmatic alliance between the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the CUD were promoting a return to the chauvinist Abyssinian monoculture of the past and pushing back hard won gains of regional autonomy. There still exists a belief among Amhara elites that Ethiopia belongs to them as a right, matching the belief of the TPLF that the empire belongs to them because they earned it in their independence struggle in the 1980s. Amhara and Tigre cultures incorporate feelings of racist superiority over the Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia. There is mutual derogation and denigration between Abyssinians and Oromo, down to the level of proverbs and sayings in both cultures. The singing of racist sentiments by Tigreans as they beat Oromo students recently in Tigray is particularly worrying.

The sense of injustice within Oromo youth is higher than for a century. Their self-belief and anger are now apparent in demonstrations across Oromia Region. Until now, however, there has been disappointingly little co-operation between Amhara and Oromo students in their demonstrations against the government. Amhara elites, like the TPLF, want to put Oromo culture in the Ethnographic Museum in Addis Ababa and lock it up there. The TPLF has been expert at instigating conflict between peoples in Ethiopia and is unlikely to lose power without promoting hostility between Amhara and Oromo. There will be dangerous instability whether Zenawi loses power by violence or by election in 2010. The related threats of a US-backed Ethiopian invasion of Somalia and renewal of conflict with Eritrea are further causes of instability. As pointed out by Michael Clough, former Africa Advocacy Director for Human Rights Watch, speaking at the Oromo-American Citizens Council conference in Minneapolis on 27 July 2006, the time to pre-empt large scale violence in Ethiopia is right now. Dialogue between Amhara and Oromo has never been more important.

Effects of Globalisation

According to the World Development Movement, eight companies earn more than half of the world's population. These private global actors are the worst violators of human rights, putting profit before people and they act without any accountability to those they abuse. Poor countries are getting poorer. This is not merely an awkward inconvenience. Poverty costs lives. Average life expectancy in the poorest countries is below 40 years. Two fifths of babies die before they are five years old. Poverty is man-made. It is not a natural phenomenon. Corporations are making record profits while the poor in poor countries and the poor in the USA are getting poorer. Between 1977 and 1999, earnings of the poorest 10% in the USA fell by 12%, while those of the richest 10% rose by almost 120%, i.e. more than doubled. Labour activism is being

met with increasing state repression.

Not only is globalisation leading to biodegradation and environmental damage, it is causing the loss of local control over local resources. There is increasing loss of cultures and loss of separateness and identity of peoples. Political disintegration, as seen in Rwanda, Burundi, Sierra Leone and Somalia, is followed by increasing violence and conflict along ethnic lines. As pointed out by Rev. Harvard Schaffer and Dr Bahiru Dhuguma in presentations to the Oromo Studies Association conference on 29 July, it is imperative that if the Oromo, and indeed Ethiopian, economy is to survive, there must be local control over local resources. Oromia and Ethiopia must resist jumping on the corporate bandwagon, whatever incentives are offered by the IMF and World Trade Organisation. [Globalisation information is from 'Globalization's impact on human rights' Peter Schwabb and Adamantia Pollis, in 'Human rights: new perspectives, new realities' Eds Pollis and Schwabb, 2000, pp. 209-223, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, London.]

Global Trends in Human Rights

In 1590, the physician to Queen Elizabeth I, a Spanish Jew named Lopez, was accused of being involved in a papist plot against the queen. An innocent letter which was written by him was said to have been in code and encouraging insurrection against her. He was tortured and then hung, drawn and quartered. Since then, it has taken four centuries to develop a legal framework to prevent such abuses in the UK. Human rights law, after 400 years, now exists to protect individuals against arbitrary detention, torture and extra-judicial killing. However, thanks to the prevalent axis of evil of Bush and Blair, we are experiencing a return to medieval values in respect of human rights in the west. 'The liberating spirit of the Enlightenment has been stymied' according to Schwabb and Pollis (p. 215, v.s.).

There is arbitrary detention, without charge or trial, in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantánamo Bay, the UK (Belmarsh detainees were released but are still being held in very restricted conditions in their homes) and in secret CIA detention centres in Europe and the Middle East. Notwithstanding the lies issued by George Bush and his administration, there is widespread torture of detainees in these places, according to numerous plausible, corroborated and consistent accounts of detainees. States now sponsor killing. Not only is Israel supported in its targeting for assassination of Palestinian leaders, the UK security forces have shot dead an innocent electrician on his way to work on the London underground. Jean Carles De Menezes, (?spelling) was pinned down by three or four policemen after being followed on to a train and shot in the head seven times, two weeks after the London bombings in July 2005. A recent public enquiry has exonerated all the individuals concerned and no charges are to be faced by any person within the police or the security administration. The UK and US rhetoric on the relative nature of human rights in the 'war on terror', as pointed out by Robin Phillips, Director of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, at the Oromo-American Citizens Council conference in Minneapolis on 27 July 2006, has been adopted and copied by Israel, India, Pakistan, Syria, Egypt and other countries in order to excuse their own repressive legislation.

Conclusion

The post-Zenawi administration in Ethiopia will have to face huge hurdles; at the national level, addressing national problems; at the national level facing effects of global problems, and; at the global level, as part of the international community. It is essential that the administration sticks to certain principles. Human rights are not relative. They are absolute. The rights to life, freedom from detention without trial and freedom from torture are, and must remain, absolute if we are to avoid terrorism by the state and a return to medieval standards. Economic rights to local control over local resources must be restored and farmers must be trusted guardians of Ethiopia's environment.

Also, two of the tenets of Mahatma Ghandi will help individuals and state structures navigate through the quagmire of difficult decisions to be made. 'In the kingdom of an eye for an eye, everybody is blind' he said. Forgiveness, not revenge, must be a byword for Ethiopia's recovery from centuries of abuse. Finally, when economic or any other decisions are to be made, Ghandi recommended that the correct decision will be the one which benefits the very poorest in society.

My Statements on Current Events in Ethiopia's Political Landscape

Bulcha Demeksa

For me, it is exhilarating to be in this kind of Oromo ambiance. I have always had profound respect for OSA and followed its activity from a distance. I also admire the work of many individual members of OSA.

To be here, restores my sometimes shaky confidence. I wish the general Oromo public knew that it has the brain powerhouse that this Assembly represents. Most of the political, social and economic debates in Finfinnee are dominated by non-Oromos. Such debates are often translated into policies which affect the lives of our people. I have something to say about this later.

I. WAFIDO

I suppose I have to tell you about the political party with which I am associated. In June 2004, we, who were associated with Matcha and Tulema, were demoralized. We had just tried to demonstrate against the Government's arrogant decision to move the Oromo capital from Finfinnee to Adama. As soon as some 500 people were assembled, seven police pick-up trucks arrived at Masqal Square. The policemen descended from the trucks and began beating everybody without any questions. There were no warnings. Many were injured. From among the elders, only two were hit with bats. We all went home greatly disturbed, with a sense of hopelessness.

Soon after, three veterans of Matcha and Tulema, invited two colleagues and myself to a meeting in April 2004, in the office of one of my two colleagues. These veterans of Matcha and Tulema spoke with passion. All three spoke in the same fashion. They pleaded with us "to do something" now that Matcha and Tulema had been closed and the Oromos had nowhere to go. In Matcha and Tulema assemblies, Oromos vented their anger in songs and dances. Speeches were made and passions cooled down until the next Assembly which was normally a month later. Now there were no meetings, songs or speeches. People had nowhere to go to just see each other. Irreefacha in Bishoftu provided an outlet. But it was only once a year and it was in Bishoftu.

Following the meeting of April 2004, no concrete action was taken. The call "to do something" was not followed-up. April, May and June passed and nothing happened. Matcha and Tulema leaders were still in jail and news of Oromos in urban areas being detained was being heard almost daily. By contrast, whenever something happened in Debre Berhan, Gondar or Bahar Dar to Amhara citizens, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the All-Amhara Peoples Party made loud noise. The Government always hesitated to arrest Amhara citizens, while Oromos were being detained in large numbers. Nobody spoke out for them. The foreign community did not get reports of Oromo arrests and detention. Oromos were demoralized.

In June 2004, three Oromo gentlemen (one of them was a veteran of Matcha and Tulema) came to my house and reviewed the situation of the Oromo people. They asked me again "to do

something”. “We cannot just sit and look while our people are being oppressed” they said. “Let’s form a political party”, they insisted. They asked me to play the role of the leader and that they would do the rest. They did not need to plead with me. I said: “If you support me, I am ready even if this meant imprisonment, torture or even death.” We had tea and said “Nagaan bulaa”. We were somber. I was preoccupied the whole night. The two colleagues who were approached along with me in April 2004 were somehow reluctant to embark on something that was so political. Mind you, they were both deeply involved in Oromo matters in other ways. One of them preferred to be involved in human rights matters. The other one was engaged in an Oromo NGO and he did not want to jeopardize the work of that NGO. He also had other reasons.

I then invited the three Matcha and Tulema veterans who spoke to me and my colleagues, back in April 2004 and the three who came to my home in June of the same year, to a meeting. Thereafter, the seven of us started meeting, and decided to invite more people. Three more persons were invited. Ten persons constituted the core of the body later called “Executive Committee” (these persons are still on the Executive Committee, except one who joined us sometime in August of 2004). The only place where we could meet, was the staff lounge of a two-star hotel, belonging to an Oromo businessman. We asked around, and nobody was willing to accommodate us at this stage. We met there part of June, the whole of July, August and September 2004. The owner of the hotel was sympathetic to our cause, but his wife was unfriendly.

By October 2004, we were ready with the three basic documents that the National Election Board required in order to register us as a national political party. These were: our Political Program, Memorandum, and Articles of Association.

While drawing up our basic documents, the Preparatory Committee sent two of our oldest members to the National Election Board. The Director General of the National Election Board surprised us by being unexpectedly polite and open. We asked him if we could register as a national party although we were principally an Oromo party. We wanted to register as an Oromo national party because we wanted to operate in Kamisse, Wallo and Metekkel in Beni-Shangul. He had no objection to our being registered as a National party as opposed to a Regional party. The Director General wanted us to change our party’s name on which we had agreed after much debate. We did not want the title “Oromo Federalist Democratic Party” because it sounded too inactive to most of us. We did not want to establish an ordinary political party which is often laid back and just wants to have a political office. We wanted the word “Movement” in our name.

In mid-November we went to the National Election Board with our application and the basic documents. On December 20, we were called and told that our license was ready. We could not believe it, but we went. They gave us the license and said “good bye”. So, we came back to our usual meeting place and stared at each other. What then? Where were we going to meet next time? How can we afford to rent an office? Back in September, we had established a Budget Committee and it had proposed 280,000 Birr for six months. We wanted to know the cost of running the office for six months because, frankly, we did not think that we could last six

months. We thought that the Government could close us down during the first few months of our existence, as it had done to Matcha and Tulema.

In mid-December 2004, we had to find an office. Some of our members started looking for an office in the hope that somebody will pay the rent. They found an old house, the rent of which was 2000 Birr per month. They demanded six-month rent in advance. We needed desks and chairs. They had to be bought. One of the members had to finance those expenses initially. But our concern was still there because many other things were needed. We moved into the office during the third week of December 2004.

The rest of the story of WAFIDO is well known to most people. I just want to say that the campaign months of February, March and April of 2005 were times of hardship in every aspect. In several places, we had to ride on mule back. I did so for a few hours when I went from Bodji Dirmajji to Laalo-Assabi. One night, when I was stranded in a village and my car could not move because of the mud, I spent the night on a “medeb”. In Mendi, a restaurateur refused to serve us food because he was afraid of OPDO. We made sure that we were out of rural areas before sunset because we were advised not to travel after dark. In a village, I was making a speech to a crowd, when a man sneaked behind me and tried to hit my head with a big stone. We later found out in court that he was a member of the Qebele.

While campaigning for elections, our message to our people was simple. We told them that freedom and liberty can be won through the ballot box. We told them that through Oromo voice, our people can regain their dignity and some of the values that were inherited from the Gada system. We summarized our Political Program which included the officialization of the Oromo language as one of the nation’s lingua, the return of Oromo land to the people, the transformation of the parliamentary system to the presidential system and the structuring of Federalism on a more stony ground. We almost sounded like Ghandi when we shouted at the top of our voices that “our vote is our gun”. We said that those Oromos who believe in armed struggle are free to pursue their chosen method but that we believed in peaceful struggle to legitimize Oromos’ right to be the most powerful political group in Ethiopia because they constitute the largest single ethnic group and possess the most fertile part of Ethiopia. In every country that is known to us, there is a rich and powerful part. In Germany, Italy, Russia, United States, Holland and Austria, and so on, there are rich and powerful regions. Why shouldn’t there be one in Ethiopia? It should be Oromia.

II. Brief Overview of Major Ethnic Groups in Ethiopia

Let us, for a few minutes, talk about where the Oromos are today in terms of their participation in politics and their relationships with other ethnic groups.

Every ethnic group in Ethiopia today has an apprehensive perception of the Oromo. The Amharas think that the Oromo have it too good now. They think that the Oromos behave like a spoiled child. I want to illustrate this: In the year 2003, 350 Oromo students were expelled from the University because they opposed the staging of an OPDO drama in the University. The drama was to demonstrate how happy the Oromo people are about the political state of affairs in

Ethiopia. The Oromo students were all the more incensed because they had planned to stage their own drama which they were prevented from staging. They left classes and demonstrated within the University. They were picked up by trucks and spent a night of torture in some dungeon.

Twelve Oromo elders went to see the President of the University to plead with him to readmit the students. We were worried that if the students missed their exams, their entire future would be jeopardized. The President made the following remarks which are symptomatic of what Amharas think of the Oromos nowadays: "Oromo students are arrogant. They are full of themselves; they think that they own the University and that everybody is afraid of them." What the President of the University said was also repeated by Amhara political leaders during the May 2005 election campaigns. To be absolutely even-handed, it should be mentioned that some Amhara intellectuals admit that it is now time for the Oromos to play their legitimate role in the Ethiopian political structure.

Nevertheless, questions about the Oromos still abound. "Who are the Oromos and what do the Oromos want?" many people ask. Let's not forget that many of Ethiopia's ethnic groups do not know the Oromos very well and those who know them have an image of dagger-toting, bush-haired fierce men. The Ethiopian groups which know the Oromos well are: the Shoa Amharas, the Gurages, the Walayitas, the Kambatas, the Hadiyas, the Gambellas, the Beni-Shanguls, the Somales, the Sidamas, the Yem people, the Gedoo, the Celtes and the Affars. There may be one or two that I do not remember. The others, such as the Tigres, the East-Gojjames, the Gonderes, the Wag, Lasta and Wadla-Delanta of Wallo, the Cheko-Majangars, the Gelebs, and the Omo people do not know much about the Oromos. The ones who do not know the Oromo fear the "Gallas" (the name our adversaries used for the Oromo until 1975) because of the stories told to them by the likes of Abba Bahre, Aleqa Taye, and Atsme, etc... The ones who know the Oromo harbor resentment bordering on hatred because they wrongly believe the story that the Oromos came from "somewhere" and took their land. Current stories depicting presumed criminal acts by certain contemporary Oromo groups, in recent years, have also given the Oromos an image of fierceness and brutality. One of the great challenges facing the Oromos today is to change their image vis-à-vis some northern and southern peoples.

Today, the Oromo themselves are aware of who they are. They are asking questions such as "Why have we been the oppressed people?" "Why were we treated like serfs?" "Why is it that the Amharas have always been politically and socially more powerful than the Oromos?" "Why is it that the people from Tigray are now more influential and dominating than the Oromos who are many more in number?"

A careful and wise guidance is required at this stage of the history of the Oromo people. The Oromos are feeling that it is now time for them to play their legitimate role in the Ethiopian political arena. Nobody wants war and destruction and the Oromos certainly do not want it. But nobody today can curb the legitimate aspiration of the Oromo people, to take center-stage in the Ethiopian political arena.

We, at WAFIDO, have been telling the Oromo that they have a weapon that they never used before, to regain their dignity and liberty. We have told them that they should vote for their own qualified and competent leaders during elections, be it local or national. This is not to assume that there is democracy and fair and free elections. The fight to exercise civil and political rights is perhaps more arduous than armed struggle. It is arduous because in elections the whole Oromo population faces the Government, whoever it may be, and the risk is immense. The population faces threats to their well-being. They are often told by the Regional Government that they would be denied normal government services if they voted for the Opposition. Such basic and vital commodities as fertilizers, food for work, selected seeds, vaccinations, seedlings, educational opportunities, etc. are all used as weapons against those population segments which might vote for the opposition. At the time these threats are made, which is normally just before elections, the citizens do not know whether or not the Government will carry out these threats. Therefore, the voters worry a great deal. Consequently, many people feel compelled to vote for the Ruling Party.

In 1994, during the campaigns for election of members of the Constituent Assembly in which I participated, the Ruling Party threatened to withhold the above-mentioned services from any community in which the Opposition won, thus secret ballot does not mean much because the whole community is threatened by the refusal of services.

I must say that those “qebeles” which voted for me were not denied these services. However, as these services are normally thin-spread, and some people are bound not to get them, one never knows whether those who did not get food, fertilizers, vaccinations, etc. were the ones who voted for me. The point is that the people understand that the road to freedom is full of obstacles but that they would still try to exercise their right to vote for candidates they trust. The people have repeatedly asserted their determination to do so.

During the election campaigns for the third National Election in 2005, the threats were repeated. But this time, the denial of basic services was not enough. The people, rather the leaders of the people, were physically punished after the elections. Excuses were created to imprison thousands of people who appeared to be activists and role players. They were taken away from their locale to other zones where relatives could not visit and provide them with food. In these detention centers, it was reported that actual physical tortures were not perpetrated. But many went without food for several days. Those who were sick got no medical care. After three to four weeks, they were returned to their districts but only to be thrown in the district jail again. By end of March 2006, most of these prisoners had been freed on bail although they were not charged with any crime. They were released following an Agreement with the Government and three Opposition Parties on the supremacy of the law and constitutional order. One wonders why they were beaten and illegally imprisoned in the first place.

Now, we hear that most of the people who were manhandled are angry and would vote against the Ruling Party if elections were held today. They are not cowered down or afraid, as indeed the Ruling Party had intended.

The above demonstrates the current political situation within Oromia. Two Parties, OFDM and ONC are trying to maintain their links with the people who elected them. OFDM won 11 seats in the Federal Parliament, and 12 seats in the 520-seat Oromia Regional Parliament. ONC won 39 seats in the Federal Parliament and over 90 seats in the Regional Oromo Parliament.

I believe that in the next National Elections, which are scheduled to be held in 2010, Oromos of the OFDM persuasion will vote for their own leaders, if free and fair elections were to be held.

III. Ethnic Divisions and the Future of Ethiopia

Ever since 1991, when the present Government took power and established a seemingly federal system of government, adversaries of the Federal System predicted the disintegration of the country, but it has not happened. There have been restlessness and even conflict among diverse ethnic groups. But these have not been motivated by opposition to the Federal System. Conflicts have arisen in opposition to EPRDF's lack of good governance. In some cases, communities have clashed over grazing lands and boundaries.

It is my considered opinion, supported by the experience of the last 15 years, that most Ethiopian ethnic groups, particularly those of the South, including Oromia, want a federal system of government and are opposed to a unitary form of government. They associate a unitary form of government with the past, when Southern peoples were exploited and treated like serfs in most parts thus the peoples of Gambella, Benishangul, Hadiyya, Kambatta, Wolayita, Southern Omo, Somalia, Afar and Oromo have spoken out against those who constantly try to reverse the march of history and re-introduce a unitary form of government. Therefore, any national government of Ethiopia which would try to abolish federalism, is bound to fail.

IV. Federalism

Federalism in Ethiopia, has been paid lip service ever since its inception. States created under the Constitution, are not given sufficient authority to administer their states autonomously. Chiefs of States have been removed without any consultation with the peoples of the State. Federal Police have moved in and out of states without the request of the concerned states, in accordance with the Constitution. They have crushed local uprisings and taken sides in situations where different ethnic groups clashed. Federal Police Force has violently put down spontaneous demonstrations organized by activists who took the provisions of the Constitution seriously and demonstrated against what they considered unfair or unjust policies or laws.

Judges have been removed from their posts without the approval of State Governments. Federally-funded budgets have been transferred to other regions without the knowledge and consent of the concerned States. Important legislative drafts have been sent to regional councils and have been enacted without much debate in the Regional Councils. Laws governing land holding, land lease, elections, certain taxes, etc. were just drafted and sent Oromia and other regional councils.

These are not the only problems faced by Federalism or federalists in Ethiopia. Several non-Oromo political parties have threatened to do away with Federalism if they won elections and established a non-ethnic government. People who lost their freedom to Emperor Menelik II at the end of the nineteenth century, such as the Oromo, Somalis, Gambelas, Sidamas, Benishanguls, Affars, Walayitas, are worried by these threats and have felt the need to declare loyalty to EPRDF which they support because they believe that, at least, EPRDF conceptually supports Federalism. They yearn for the day when they can manage their own affairs without having to be ordered around by other ethnic groups from other regions.

After the May 15, 2005 Elections, many Oromia zones were subjected to severe repression. These zones were mostly in Western Wallaga and Western Shoa where the voters dared to elect OFDM and ONC candidates respectively in Western Wallaga and Western Shoa. The people of these zones were accused of insurrections led by OFDM and ONC acting as agents of OLF. They were warehoused into barn-like huts to sleep on wet, cold and muddy floors. They were badly beaten. Young men who dared to ask why they were imprisoned were cruelly beaten. The number of people who were thus in prison in West Wallaga alone, was estimated at 5000. People in Harar, Arsi, Bale, and Northern and Western Shewa were subjected to atrocious treatment. One of the cruelest acts was transferring these prisoners to other towns, sometime 400 km from their homes so that their families would not visit them. This means that these prisoners did not get normal food for days. To prisoners who were transferred to Sanqallee near Ambo, OFDM raised funds and took them food because it is near Finfinnee.

It was while these repressive measures were being perpetrated against our people that OFDM began to negotiate with the Federal Government for the release of the prisoners, and allow us to open our offices which were closed when our members and supporters were being subjected to cruel treatment. After three months of negotiations, the three Parties (EPRDF, OFDM and UEDF) signed an Agreement on the supremacy of the law and constitutional order. We agreed not to lead “insurrections“ (although we never led any). The Government promised to obey the Constitutional procedures in arresting, jailing and arraigning prisoners in court expeditiously. It promised to observe the rights of citizens to bail and habeas corpus.

My fellow Oromos,

OSA is important. There must always be Oromo think-tank organizations. At this stage of our struggle, however, all of our brains cannot be engaged only with scholarly work from an ivory tower. We need to get out and get into practical politics and lead our people as they struggle to shake off their shackles. Here, I remember the organization of another ethnic group with the name of “Network of Ethiopian Professionals”. Their Internet debates on burning political issues in Ethiopia have often impressed readers.

There is a great need for able Oromo negotiators with the Government, other non-Oromo political parties and the international community. About a year ago, one of the leaders of a non-Oromo political party said to me the following: “For Oromos to say that Oromo land and other resources belong only to the Oromo, is like saying ‘the Nigerians in the Niger Delta should take all the oil revenues of that area’ “. I am not convinced that oil and land are the same resources.

Land is the basis of a people's identity and fundamental means of livelihood, whereas oil is there to benefit all the peoples of that nation. Issues of this nature will be increasingly important and we need our able professionals to defend the economic and political rights of our people.

V. Concluding remarks

Our most urgent need is to empower our people over our natural resources because they are rapidly being exploited and taken by other people. Sharing is natural, but being dispossessed is unfair and must be resisted. The Oromo are now opposing the exploitation of their natural resources. They are being oppressed for even faintly speaking out against political and economic domination. They are being punished for ostensibly supporting OLF. The Oromo population, like most exploited people, are poor and powerless. They are not in rebellion against the Government. OFDM's solution for these problems is to massively engage our people in elections. Political power is won in so many African countries through the ballot box. Ethiopia is not an exception. In Senegal, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, ruling parties have lost to the opposition. We are persuaded that this can happen in Ethiopia also.

We, the Oromo, have been oppressed and this historical fact should solidify our resolve to gain our legitimate right to be the leading political force in Ethiopia, and we are convinced that it is possible. We call for unity in our political struggle.

I thank you for your attention.

The Oromo and the CUD

Siegfried Pausewang

The Great Illusion of CUD

It is very likely that most of the leaders of CUD as well as the majority of their members seriously believe that they represent the rationally understood interests of “all” Ethiopians. They believe their political view is logical and self-evident, and they can not understand why people could oppose their logic, unless for purely selfish reasons of preserving the privileges the present regime offers them.

It is equally likely that most leaders of CUD in the evening of 15th May 2005 were seriously convinced they had won a majority in the House of Representatives. The huge demonstration of May 8 had created a veritable euphoria in Addis Ababa. CUD rallied more people than the government had managed a day before by offering free bus rides and organising participation in government offices and companies,. The message seemed obvious and clear: The masses are with us, they want a change, they want CUD. When the first election results announced, they were convinced of a resounding victory. CUD had won all seats from Addis Ababa except one in the House of Representatives, and victories from other towns, from Amhara and Gurage areas were reported.

Even from Oromia many reports of CUD victories came in. Later analyses showed that they came mostly from predominantly urban areas and from constituencies with a large component of non-Oromo immigrants. But there is no question that CUD received also a substantial part of protest votes from Oromo peasants. Trying to explain the motivation for such protest votes, it seems most likely that peasants were so much fed up with the kebele administration, that they felt anything else could only be better than OPDO, and voted for CUD instead.

Boycotting the parliament, CUD fell right into the trap and could easily be split into several fractions fighting and discrediting each other. But they still are all part of an urban political movement. As a political identity, I think it is still possible to speak of CUD as one camp.

The EPRDF Reaction and the Narrative on the Election Result

The election results came as a shock also for EPRDF. Prime Minister Meles had probably expected to loose in Addis Ababa and some other major towns. But Ethiopia’s population is only to 15% urban, and he had expected to control the support of the rural people. The events are known: The government introduced the same night a state of emergency, declaring a curfew, banning all demonstrations. Counting of the votes in the more remote areas was delayed beyond all reasonable limits, making all control of the process illusionary. At the same time, EPRDF announced they had won a majority in the Parliament, but acknowledged to have lost the regional election in Addis Ababa. CUD declared they had won the election, but the victory was stolen.

Final results were not announced until after the uncontested votes in Somali region, and after the re-running in some 30 constituencies, strongly manipulated, gave back all the disputed seats to the EPRDF. The final result gave EPRDF a two thirds' majority in the House of Representatives. The general narrative in the international press is today: EPRDF won the election, but the opposition does not accept the result.

Public Debate Excludes the Rural Majority

It is not astonishing that CUD appears as “the” opposition. But it is an appearance that hides a democratic deficiency. Since Ethiopia’s first experiments with democracy, public debate excludes substantial parts of the population. Observers unanimously agree that the public atmosphere before the 2005 election was much more open, inclusive, and democratic than any time before. Yet, we have to conclude that public debate excluded the rural majority. People in the rural areas, particularly the more remote parts far from towns and all weather roads, had and continue to have no access whatsoever to such debate. Their majority are illiterate, and have thus no access to read the press. Even those who can read, do not get newspapers regularly. The radio is the only medium they can access for information. But the radio continues to be in the hands and the control of the government. Peasants have no access to make their views and interests represented or heard on the radio. Even less is their access to the political discourse in Addis Ababa. In parliament, the democratic arena where interests and arguments are supposed to meet and confront each other, peasants are not represented as long as they have no political organisation that formulates their political views.

CUD claims to represent also their interests. So does EPRDF. But both do so against all logic. Even the election campaign, applauded for its opening of access to the press, and the debates live sent on radio and television, excluded the rural majority in practice. The debate was more or less monopolised by a confrontation between EPRDF and CUD, with some other parties in a marginal position. It had practically no input of what rural people would recognise as their interests. CUD was allowed to stand as “the” opposition, the only group to effectively present an alternative to EPRDF.

CUD can best be characterised as an urban Amhara populist movement to the political right. It is important to note its urban characteristics, for two reasons. It represents and gives voice to the interests of urban intellectuals, bureaucrats and business people, and is attractive even to the urban poor who hope for a business boom offering them jobs and opportunities. And it is urban Amhara, in the sense of an ambiguity in Amhara identity: Amhara, today the second largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, was the dominating ethnicity for many centuries. Since the 15th century, the Christian Amharic culture was the medium of assimilation in a multi-ethnic central state, as the late Sevir Chernetsov (1993, 1996) observed. Whoever wanted to advance in the military or the administration, would have to speak Amharic and adopt the essentials of Christian Amharic culture. Especially after the rapid expansion of the Ethiopian empire in the process of European colonisation of Africa, Amharic culture was superimposed over other conquered peoples in the South. The cultures of Southern ethnicities were suppressed, their languages forbidden in public context, and their peasants exploited and subjected to serfdom. In the 20th

century, Amharic became increasingly the language and culture of the educated elites and the bureaucracy (Chernetsov 1993, Pausewang 2005).

This urban Amhara elite group continues to be quite distinct from the rural Amhara as an ethnicity, who remained peasants, with a high level of illiteracy prevailing. In another context (Pausewang 2005) I have demonstrated why this group adopted an All-Ethiopian nationalism built on a vision of a strong central state with Amharic as integrating language and urban culture. The urban Amhara would appear as its natural leaders. But in the other ethnicities this vision revives a fear of a return to the Imperial order which would make them once again lose their freedom to develop their languages and cultures, and would bring back their erstwhile landlords with their hated neftegna (gun-men) rule.

CUD as a political movement is the direct heir to an Urban Amhara political protest in 1991. The urban multi-ethnic Amharigna-speaking intellectuals intended to overcome tribal differences by forming one integrated Ethiopia, and to create an all Ethiopian identity. They were refused to be registered as a political organisation of “Ethiopians”. Forced to identify as ethnicity, they ended up forming the “All Amhara Peoples Organisation”. Amharic as the leading language and culture in the region since several centuries, it seemed natural that it should become the lingua franca and the dominating culture in a multiethnic Ethiopia, and the educated urban Amhara must have appeared as its “natural” leaders.

Politically this All Amhara movement became organised for the first time in defence of “Amhara” who were mistreated, evicted, and persecuted in Southern regions. Busloads of young Amhara volunteers travelled to Arsi in defence of their Amhara brothers. They defended in some cases ethnic Oromo who were locally identified as Amhara not because of their ethnicity but their former political functions as representatives for the central state. Whether they knew this or not, it was in line with the logic of All Amhara identity.

So convincing must have appeared their vision of a united Ethiopian identity, that they did not even see why their programme should be disliked by other ethnicities or groups. Indeed, CUDs programme can not be acceptable to the rural majority. It can not either suit the interests of the Southern ethnic groups who still bear the trauma of conquest, occupation, and economic and cultural suppression. It is hardly to be expected that the Moslems would feel particularly attracted by CUD. True, they face under the present regime less restrictions than any time before and enjoy more freedoms to develop their culture and to build mosques all over the country. But it is not likely that they would follow a programme of a unification under a Christian – Amhara dominated party. And there are other groups too who would hardly feel represented by CUD. Altogether, this limits CUDs grounds for recruitment to a small fraction of the total Ethiopian population.

The Oromo and the CUD

For the Oromo, the vision of a CUD-dominated government recalls memories of suppression and occupation. It must revive the trauma of subjugation to landlords, the cultural discrimination, and the prohibition to use their language in public context. They have not forgotten the times under

Emperor Haile Selassie, when they were forbidden to teach their children in their own language, and when General Tadesse Birru was persecuted for his plans to start schools in rural Oromo areas to give Oromo youths a better chance in life. Oromo peasants would fear that a centralising government under CUD would bring back the hated landlords. It would almost certainly lead to an urban biased policy, not easing off, but rather aggravating the already excessive burden of over-taxation pressing on the peasants.

Why did nevertheless CUD collect a considerable number of votes even in rural areas in Oromia? Apart from the abovementioned factors of urban and immigrated people, three explanations appear likely. Peasants may have been so frustrated that they felt anything else could only be better than the OPDO controlled kebele officials. Second, the news of the unprecedented demonstration in Addis Ababa one week before the election reached also the peasants. Many of them may have been convinced that CUD could win, so they wanted to be on the winning side. Third, the peasants' own preference was not represented in the polls. OLF, the liberation front that still appears to control the loyalty of most Oromo peasants, was not there. So they could only opt for the next best alternative any way.

Protest votes are democratically legitimate. Nobody has a right to question the motivation for individual voting. Protest votes are every bit as valid as votes out of political tradition or rationally developed preferences. CUD has all the right to count every vote without distinguishing motivations.

However, it has to be observed that CUD could not be a realistic alternative in rural Ethiopia, as long as it is a movement built around a typically urban programme. Had CUD really won the election and formed a government, new political differences would by necessity have come to the fore. New conflicts would have arisen as soon as they intended to implement their programme. Maybe even more likely, CUD would have argued to have a democratic mandate for implementing their programme, and used repressive force against any movement trying to retard or reverse their implementation.

But Still CUD Poses as “the” Opposition, Speaking for All Democratic Ethiopians.

A Way Forward?

If this basic situation is to be changed, it is of utmost importance that the Oromo bring their political views and interests into the debate. They can not afford to leave the field open for CUD to speak for all Ethiopians. As long as OLF can maintain the support of an Oromo majority, it can bring a rural dimension into the urban-dominated discourse in Addis Ababa, built on its majority of rural members and sympathisers. Representing a people almost equally divided between Moslems and Christians, it can at least give some voice to a large population of Muslim faith, and contribute to maintaining a positive relation between the religious communities. Being the largest of the ethnic minorities, it can open space for better representation also of other Southern Ethiopian ethnic minorities, giving support to their frustration and trauma of being marginalised and subjected to assimilation or oblivion.

OLF demands since long time an all inclusive reconciliation conference in which all ethnic and political groups should participate. The main purpose of this conference would be to create a new and more democratic order in Ethiopia. Giving all groups and stakeholders a participation, it is hoped to achieve a more democratic dialogue and an order that does not discriminate a minority (or even several minorities).

In a way, this is to ask for a return to where things went wrong in 1991, to take up again the promise of the Transitional Charter and the Transitional Government of Ethiopia. While it would be excellent to correct the mistakes and faults in the development after 1991, it is not possible to turn history back. The EPRDF and the government have consequently refused to return to their starting position and redo their 15 years of governance. A new conference should not turn the clock back, but rather start a new chapter and begin over again from where democratisation failed. Reviewing the promises of 1991, it should identify what went wrong since then, and introduce those positive aspects that were not put into practice. It should not be too late to start on a more democratic course now. If there is a will, a new conference can open up for the participation of those who up to now have been excluded.

But there is a danger in such a vision. Any restructuring of the Ethiopian state would change the power relations. The governing EPRDF will not agree to a conference reshaping the power structure, unless it either expects more control from it, or it is forced to accept it to avoid less attractive alternatives. Opening for a new start would also bear the risk of changing power structures in a way that gives authority to other groups who could establish a new discrimination of the present power holders, or even other groups. In concrete terms, if the power is simply changed from the Tigre-dominated EPRDF to the Amhara of CUD, I am afraid it is likely that a new structure of domination and discrimination against other ethnicities would soon emerge. And if we imagine a new start establishing OLF as the new government, there is no guarantee that it would not offer a temptation to individual leaders who think that now it is the time for the Oromo to eat, to exclude others from the resources they have finally got access to utilise for themselves.

Democracy is not established by benevolent leaders, but by empowered populations. A new autocratic leadership can only be avoided if the Conference manages to establish secure guarantees for the rights and the influence of all minorities. There must be established control mechanisms which make it impossible to marginalise once again certain groups, be they small or large minorities or even majorities.

It is no easy task to establish a democratic public discourse, nor guarantees that the public can control elected authorities who have access to security forces. It is a gigantic task to build control mechanisms that stop violations of minority rights and discrimination. But without such guarantees, a reshuffling of power is not establishing democracy.

The “Alliance for Peace and Democracy”

OLF has recently formed an “Alliance for Peace and Democracy” with many other opposition groups both in Ethiopia and in the diaspora, including CUD. The objective of this alliance is to

unite all groups in a coordinated pressure for convening a comprehensive and all inclusive conference and a new democratic start. It is inviting also EPRDF, offering the government a chance out of the present democratic quagmire.

The vision is good, and the demand is important. But does it have a chance to be realised? It is not likely that EPRDF would accept to hold such a conference. After the new problems in Somalia, chances are still further reduced.

A political cooperation between OLF and CUD appears, after all that is said above, to be an odd alliance. But as a very limited initiative, an alliance created for one single purpose: to concentrate a maximum of political weight on the demand for the all-inclusive conference, it may have a justification. If indeed the Alliance has achieved its purpose and ends at the moment the envisaged Conference begins, it may be helpful for OLF to get back into the political discourse in Ethiopia. That, indeed, should be the major short term political goal of OLF.

Does OLF have a Key to Democracy in Ethiopia?

Democracy is not achieved when the Conference is realised. The struggle for democracy only begins there. This is to be strongly emphasized and kept in mind.

The Oromo may have a comparable advantage in establishing democracy. But it should not be over-estimated. The Oromo have their Gada system, which has been described as a fundamentally democratic social structure. It offers a division of powers as a check against misuse of power. It allows access for minorities and the participation of all men in a consensus-oriented debate. But it has also questionable practices, such as the exclusion of women, or the pressure on individuals to submit to the priorities of the community. It has to be adapted to modern democratic rules if it is to succeed as a democratic model.

Democracy would not either be achieved if (and when) OLF were given a chance to govern. To the contrary, that would be the test to the ability of OLF to implement democracy and the will of its leaders to restrain political powers while they have the power to do so. There is quite some chance that they would rather use their new powers to preserve their privileges and their access to the state resources.

Democracy is only to be implemented if OLF succeeds in establishing an inclusive debate representing all interest groups, irrespective of their political and social conformity with the new "leading" group. It presupposes tolerance for different opinions and goals, and it asks for the protection of the rights of minorities. OLF would have to establish a democratic culture, by, among others, establishing a positive right to food, hence to access to land or a right to work. And it demands freedom of opinion, expression, culture, religion, etc. OLF would further have the difficult task of establishing cooperation across ethnic, religious and other divisions, to attack some of the major long term problems of the region. There is a desperate need for new initiatives to organise serious cooperative work on problems such as population growth and food security, tenure security and agricultural incentives, a right to work, ecological deterioration, health services, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, education, infrastructure, and others.

OLF has a lot of work to do to be prepared for this gigantic task. At this moment, I am afraid, it is not ready. There is a lot of planning work to do to be prepared for establishing the necessary checks and balances and the mechanisms to control against misuse of power. And not least, to create among the own members and functionaries a culture of democratic tolerance and readiness to discuss and compromise. It is high time for OLF to start this work in serious efforts, to be prepared at the moment political openings offer them a chance to enter their plans into the political game.

Much can be achieved in Ethiopia, if an open dialogue including all groups is possible. But meetings building on consensus democracy have been held before without achieving peace and cooperation. There is no guarantee that an inclusive Conference will be able to establish a democratic dialogue. The Oromo can offer their institution of consensus democracy. But the Oromo have also some negative record. I referred above to the program against the “Amhara” “neftegna” in Arsi and other places, after the fall of the Derg. Oromo peasants victimized the “Amhara” in place of the Imperial nobility. They took revenge for the suppression and exploitation by the military dictatorship, against innocent people just because they were considered Amhara.

I promise I will keep a critical eye on OLF, in case OLF should come into a position to influence or to control government structures. If ever OLF leaders should start tendencies to suppress and exploit other minorities, to limit the dialogue, to curtail tolerance, to limit the human rights of others, I will be the first one to criticise. I will remind you that this was not what you promised to establish. For any attempt at limiting tolerance and the rights of others would be a road towards disaster, towards a new turn in the spiral of violence, revenge and despotism. And if not your friends tell you when you are wrong and heading for a new disaster, then who should?

References:

- Aalen, Lovise, Siegfried Pausewang and Kjetil Tronvoll (ed.), 2002: *Ethiopia since the Derg. A Decade of Democratic Pretension and Performance*, London, New York: ZED Books.
- Abbink, John, 2000: “The organisation and Observation of Elections in Federal Ethiopia: Retrospect and Prospect”, in: Abbink, J. and G. Hesselning (Ed): *Election Observation and Democratisation in Africa*, London: Macmillan..
- Abbink, John, 2006: “Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and its Aftermath”, in: *African Affairs*, 105/419, 173-199.
- Amnesty International, 2006: *Country Report Ethiopia*, London January 2006.
- Chernetsov, Sevir, “On the Origin of the Amhara”, in: *St. Petersburg Journal of African Studies*, 1 (1993), 97 – 113.
- Chernetsov, Sevir, 1996: “On the problem of the Ethnogenesis of the Amhara”, in: Rolf Gundlach, Manfred Kropp and Annalis Leibundgut: *Der Sudan in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart (Sudan Past and Present)*, Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 17 – 35.
- EHRCO 2000: *The May 2000 General Elections. A Report*. Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Human Rights Council.
- EHRCO 2002: *Report on the Zonal, Woreda and Kebele elections Held on December 23 and 30,*

- 2001 in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, Addis Ababa.
- Erlich, Haggai, 2006: Ethiopia – Homemade Democracy and Riots, Tel Aviv (circulated as manuscript).
- EUEOM 2005: The reports from the EU Election Observer Mission, www.et-eueom.org.
- HRW 2005, Ethiopia: Hidden Crack down in Rural Areas, Human Rights Watch, Washington D.C. <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/12/ethiop12417.htm>.
- Lefort, René, 2005:: Compte-rendu d'une brève enquête parmi des paysans du sous-kebele de Wäyr Amba, Nord Shoa: <mengist> et <gebäre>, research report to be published in Journal of Modern African Studies.
- Mohammed Salih, 2003: Movement governments and democracy in the Horn of Africa, paper presented at the Rafto Symposium, Oct. 30, 2003, published in Gunnar Soerboe and Siegfried Pausewang: Prospectives for Peace, Security and Human Rights in Africa's Horn, Bergen, Norway : Fagbokforlaget.
- Pausewang, Siegfried, 2004: Local Democracy and Human Security in Ethiopia: Structural Reasons for the Failure of Democratisation, Johannesburg:: SAIIA Report No. 45.
- Pausewang, Siegfried, 2005: "The Two-faced Amhara Identity" in: *Scrinium. Varia Aethiopica*. In Memory of Sevir B. Chernetsov St. Petersburg: Byzantinorossica.
- Shaw, Anthony, 2005: Some Thoughts on the CUD and other opposition parties, Addis Ababa (manuscript).
- Tronvoll, Kjetil and Sarah Vaughan, n.d. (2003): The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life, Stockholm: SIDA.

The Oromo Students' Movement

Kulani Jalata

The right to protest is a freedom all students should possess. It is a productive way in which students can peacefully voice their thoughts and opinions. In the United States, the First Amendment of the Constitution includes the right to petition the government for redress of grievances. Therefore, to limit this right equates to threatening freedom and democracy.

Unfortunately, many governments around the world are attempting to take away this basic human right to petition from their students. Today, my paper focuses on the Oromo students' movement and how the Ethiopian regime is seeking to suppress their voice by force. The Ethiopian government is one that uses sheer brutality and violence in attempt to intimidate students from protesting against the government's suppressive treatment of the Oromo people. The Oromo students are struggling against the state terrorism being exerted among their people. In definition, state terrorism is a governmental policy that focuses on eliminating any signs of political struggle or resistance of a given population by use of massive violence. Because there is no rule of law in Oromia or Ethiopia, the Oromo people have no personal or public protection or safety from this violence. They have been exposed to needless bloodshed of their family and friends, numerous human rights violations, absolute poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and preventable diseases. Through the government's own policies, the Oromos have been denied access to the media, freedom of expression and self-development, and are forced to provide their economic and labor resources to the Ethiopian colonizers in this twenty-first century. Consequently, the Meles regime engages in state terrorism to suppress the Oromo people and to prevent them from struggling against these problematic issues. Through numerous assassinations, killings, rapes, tortures, and imprisonments, the government is attempting to silence the Oromo people.

However, the Oromo students who are peacefully demonstrating against this cruel oppression are not being intimidated. Instead, the continuation of the exertion of state terrorism upon Oromo people is only building upon the Oromo students' determination for a liberated, free Oromia. The Ethiopian government's response to the Oromo students who refuse to accept the tyrannical regime's control has been imprisoning, torturing, raping, and murdering. Today, I will address the more recent entries into these extensive crimes committed against the Oromo students.

In April 2001, Ethiopian security forces that wanted to halt the student protests invaded Addis Ababa University (AAU). The students were questioning many university policies that limited academic freedom and the prohibition of student unions and student government. During the invasion, the security forces fired live ammunition at hundreds of students and teachers, killing 41, injuring 250, and arresting 2,200. Later in this same year, Ethiopian security forces continued to attack Oromo students of AAU and imprisoned more than 80. Also, three Oromo students were killed in Ambo, two in Dembi Dollo, and hundreds more arrested throughout Oromia.

Moving on to mid-May 2002, almost 200 students from Addis Ababa University were arrested when peacefully marching. The students were protesting about the Ethiopian government's refusal to hold a meeting to discuss about students' rights in Oromia. A few students were released, but an unknown number of students were kept in jail.

These incidents of 2001 and 2002 were the focus of a letter of appeal written by the AAS Science and Human Rights Program to the Ethiopian government. The program inquired that the Ethiopian government review again what they stated as, "Relevant Human Rights Standards." Here are a few of the standards:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.
- Article 09: No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
- Article 20: Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

- Article 10: All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

Simply stated, the program was requesting the Ethiopian government to, in their own words, ". . . adhere to the international human rights standards of free expression and honor the principles of academic freedom."

Unfortunately, the Ethiopian government did not value the letter of appeal. Throughout the years after the letter was sent, they continued to kill innocent Oromo students for expressing their concerns and opinions about the treatment of the Oromo people.

Sadly, violation of human rights, unexplained killings, disappearances and detentions are not unusual to this current regime as records from several human rights organizations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the AAS Science and Human Rights Program, the US Department of State, and the Oromia Support Group have indicated. These organizations have all come up with a similar bottom-line which, stated by the Union of Oromo Students in Europe (UOSE), is, "Any Oromo who demands her or his basic rights is immediately branded as a sympathizer of the Oromo Liberation Front and [is] persecuted."

According to an OSA Press Release, the Ethiopian government on January 18, 2004, accused Oromo students of raising questions and beginning to throw stones during a sham Oromo cultural show. The Oromo students denied the allegations; however, eight were arrested and taken to the Addis Ababa Crime Investigation Department where they were tortured. Oromo students protested for the release of the illegally arrested students. On January 21, hundreds gathered in front of the University President's office to demand and explanation why Oromo students were illegally arrested and tortured. In accord with the usual actions of the Ethiopian regime, the University President ordered hundreds of helmeted federal security police armed

with machineguns to round up students. 496 students were apprehended and taken to the Kolfe Police Training camp where they were tortured. Some were ordered to run and crawl barefoot over sharp gravel for several hours at a time. Some women Oromo students were raped. 329 students were suspended from the university temporarily that is if they apologized for property damage; 23 students were expelled.

Also, on March 7, 2004, while Oromo students were peacefully protesting the mass expulsion of Oromo students from AAU, police fired with machine guns as other security clubbed them. The government's military forces arrested over 700 students and wounded many.

The criminal events through 2004 clearly demonstrate the violence and state terrorism that was exerted upon Oromo students protesting for basic rights. However, as time progressed into 2005, the movement of Oromo students continued and even accelerated in momentum. In November 2005, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) initiated a nation-wide protest by the Oromo people against the Ethiopian regime. They dismissed the fraudulent May elections. In November, Oromo students who participated in several demonstrations all over Oromia answered the call overwhelmingly:

1) Reported on November 14, more than 500 Oromo students in the Faculty of Health at the University of Haromaaya protested the oppression of the Oromo people by the regime. Some slogans declared, "We want OLF in Oromia," and "release all Oromo political prisoners immediately." In response, the regime sent Special Forces to intimidate the students; they were unsuccessful in crashing the protest.

2) In Southern University of Hawaasaa, Oromo students demonstrated in support of the recent uprising. The police blocked the protestors from leaving campus (Sudan Tribune, November 2005).

3) High school students of Naqamte took part in a demonstration in the streets. The brutal Special Forces arrested and beat several students (Sudan Tribune, November 2005).

4) Anti-TPLF student protests erupted in Ambo, Jimma, Ghimbi, Haromaaya, and other areas. In Ambo, at least 5 students were killed and 17 others injured when police and rioting students conflicted. Three of the five students killed were identified:

- Jaagamaa Badhaanee (from Ambo, 11th grade)
- Kabbadaa Badhaasaa (from Xuqur Incinni, 11th grade)
- A female student (identity not confirmed yet)

5) On November 25, Oromo students at the Jimmaa Teacher's College put on a peaceful demonstration. It was reported that the Wayane assaulted, injured, and arrested 24 students. Some students arrested were identified:

1. Amanuu Wayyo
2. Olqaba Ibsaa
3. Biranu Tullu
4. Mohammad Suleman
5. Badhaatu Ayyaanaa
6. Amanu Abdullahii
7. Kasahun Getacho
8. Suleman Misganaa
9. Xayibaa Abbu
10. Hasha Raya
11. Fasiya Reebea
12. Yashii Alamuu
13. Chuchu Mokonon
14. Abdulshakur Mohaa Umar
15. Abduu Abaa Joobir
16. Tananyee Qananiisaa
17. Sisay Abarra

6) On November 29, 2005, Oromo students peacefully protested in the Jalduu district of Western Shawaa. The Ethiopian police responded by killing two students identified as Habtaamuu Bayyataa and Fiqaadu. Two more students were critically injured and several others wounded.

7) On December 20, 2005, the Ethiopian government killed three students in Qiltu Karaa, Western Oromia. Five more students were injured critically and one eventually died.

This is just a brief summary of the many demonstrations during 2005 that Oromo students participated in to resist the oppressive, brutal treatment of the Ethiopian government. In February of this year, Amnesty International declared that thousands of students over the past three months prior to February had been arrested in Ethiopia due to anti-government demonstrations. AI also said that the detainees were being held in areas where torture was occurring. The organization reported that, "The whereabouts of many of the detainees, some taken to remote rural prisons, are not known."

Of those thousands, I have but a few pictures of some students who were tortured or killed after being illegally arrested by the Ethiopian government police. The sacrifice of their lives that these heroic Oromo students and others today are still making is one that represents the powerful determination and will that exists to struggle for Oromo nationalism, for justice, and for freedom. It is important to understand that a people without a government, without basic human rights, that is under the rule of a tyrannical regime cannot be shunned. Oromo students are voicing their demands and wishes for the Oromo population to be represented politically all throughout Oromia. Consequently, the Ethiopian government, somehow intimidated by peaceful protesters, is using sheer brutality and violence to torture, rape, and murder several Oromo students. It is my deep hope that the Oromo student movement will have their primary goal accomplished, that the heroic moves taken by Oromo students every day risking their security, their health, their lives to protest against the suppression of the Oromo people will have a most fruitful outcome; a free, just, and democratic country-Oromia. However, I feel that the actions of only Oromo students in Oromia are not enough. For Oromia to be free, there must be a joint cooperation of all Oromos not only in Oromia, but around the world; of all ages from children, to youth, to adults to fight in their own way against the tyranny of this Ethiopian regime, to contribute to the struggle for a liberated Oromia.

Abduction of Young Girls and Women for Marriage “Butii”: Girls’ Nightmare and Violation of Women’s Rights; the Cry of Oromititti

Caaltu Dheereessa

Introduction

In 2005, after I sent a copy of my book “Oromtitti : the Forgotten Women in Ethiopian History” to an elderly relative of mine Dr. Emanuel Abraham, he sent me a note reminding me of the plight of young girls and women in Ethiopia and requested me to do research on Butii, or abduction of young girls for marriage. Therefore, this research is dedicated to him and to those who reminds the younger generation to use their skills and education in addressing important injustice issues affecting Oromtitti and women general.

In this paper, I want to focus on one specific harmful tradition practiced in Oromia and the Ethiopian Empire State referred to as “Butii” or abduction of young girls for marriage. When I was a child, I used to hear about “Butii” or “durbaa buttuu”. It was not common in the village where I grew up but happened in rural areas. When I was in elementary school and even in high school, students at school used to laugh about it and make jokes about such practices. We used to refer to the “ancient practice of marriage”. Thirty-five years ago, the practice was fading away. Even the brutal Marxist government of Ethiopia, in the late seventies and eighties, attempted to abandon many of the traditional harmful practices. In spite of many setbacks, the Marxist government tried to promote equality among gender. Currently, under presumption of revival of culture and traditional Butii, abduction of young girls for marriage is in full gear in Oromia, Ethiopia. Harmful traditional practices that were abolished many decades ago are revitalized, reborn and renewed. Yet traditional practices including democratic systems, respect for elders, community support systems, and many of the good values inherent to Oromo society are unfortunately diminishing.

The objectives of this paper are: a) To inform audiences and readers to understand “the abduction of young girls and women for marriage” as a violation of women’s rights that negatively affects social, psychological, and physical well-being of young girls and women. b) To expose such harmful customs and call upon scholars, researchers and educators to address this problem as a national issue that degrades and violates the basic human rights of women, and educate those who are engaged in these practices to stop such practices that are harmful to their nation. To address this problem in public and condemn this practice that dehumanizes young girls and women. c) To call upon local authorities and local community leaders to find ways to stop such violence and take to court those who violate the rights of women, especially those who abduct young girls.

Negative Effect of Abduction of Girls and Women for Marriage

Abduction or “Butii” in Afaan Oromo is forced wife acquisition; it involves rape, physical struggle and abuse, torture, and humiliation to the victim as well as her family. Abductors are often older men or men of legal age and, in very rural areas, some tribal leaders. A group of

young men typically abducts a girl; the man who wants to marry her may be someone she knows or a total stranger. Immediately after abduction, the man who wants to marry her rapes the girl. The elders from the man's village then apologize to the family of the girl and ask them to agree to the marriage. The family often consents because a girl who has lost her virginity would be socially unacceptable for marriage to another man. A girl who spent a night with a man is from then on a woman that no other man will marry. Her reputation is mottled; she may not have any choice except to remain married to a man who abducted her. Sometimes the abductor keeps the girl in a hiding place and rapes her until she becomes pregnant, at which time her family feels they have no option but to agree to the marriage. Often she is forced to sign a marriage agreement.

The practice of abduction of women for the purpose of marriage persists in many countries including Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, the Caucasus region, among the tribal people in India, and south East Asia, Rwanda and Ethiopia. Marriage by capture was practiced in ancient cultures throughout the Mediterranean among agricultural and patriarchal societies. Although illegal, abduction and rape of young girls for marriage is common in rural Ethiopia, especially in Amhara, Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region. Although statistical data collected in rural areas are not often reliable, UNICEF estimates that more than 70 percent of marriages in Ethiopia are initiated through the abduction of young girls. In a remote area in Arsi region, nearly 80% of marriages are reported to be the result of abduction. Regardless of the reliability of the statistical data, there are some evidences that indicate the severity of the situation and the commonness of the practices in Ethiopia. While such abductions in African countries are typically committed during war, they have been a marriage custom in some parts of Ethiopia. There are also some social and economic reasons for abduction that need to be addressed. However, government officials, local authorities and law enforcement officers tend not to get involved, sighting "tradition" or "culture".

In June 2005, the BBC and Associated Press reported a story of a 12-year-old girl who was beaten and abducted by seven men and rescued by three lions who apparently had chased off her captors about 350 miles southwest of Addis Ababa, in Bit Genet, Ethiopia. The headline story "Lions save girl from beating, abduction" appeared in many papers and on web sites. Many commentators were understandably perplexed at the story. Although it is difficult to believe that lions rescued a girl and protected her from abductors, certain evidence indicates, "Animals can be more protective and caring of the young than some people." There are lessons to learn from animals that are very protective of the young and weak. The story of the lions and abducted girl is one of the recent incidents that raised many concerns and exposed the unhealthy traditional practices. However, these ancient inhumane acts continue to destroy the lives of many young girls.

Abduction of girls for marriage, especially young girls, is harmful in various ways. Abduction and forced marriage involves rape and physical abuse. It forces young girls to drop out of school at a tender age; forced sexual relations expose women and girls to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. Early pregnancy is one of the most dangerous consequences, since it results in high rates of maternal and infant deaths, as the bodies of young girls are not physiologically mature enough for childbearing. Due to their underdeveloped bodies, girls under

the age of 16 are more likely to die from childbirth than women in their twenties.

There are many social, economic and political factors behind marriage by abduction, among them:

1. Poverty. The poverty rate is extremely high in the country, therefore many men, particularly in the rural areas, are poor and cannot afford to pay the traditional dowry of jewellery, money, clothes, domestic animals and other gifts to a woman and her family. Abduction is a much cheaper way to obtain a bride, and some poor men view it as their only option. Similarly, poor families who have few resources to care for their children have little reason to protest after a daughter is abducted, because after abduction she will be the abductor's responsibility and no longer their dependent. Without an independent income of any kind, a girl is victim of her circumstances and has essentially no choice in the matter of how she is married.

2. Gender disparities. Women are less educated than men and often do not know their own rights or legal options, nor do they have the resources to act upon those rights. Reports from 1999 estimated literacy rates at 25% for women and 45.5% for men in Ethiopia. Discrimination against women is common in rural areas, where 85% of the population lives. Although women in rural areas work over eighteen hours a day both on the farm and at home and contribute significantly to the economy, their contribution is often ignored and undervalued.

3. Illiteracy is another significant factor contributing to abduction. Due to the absence of educational facilities, young people grow up in a climate that accepts abduction as a cultural practice. Although school enrollement rates for girls have increased in the last few years, significant gaps persist between girls and boys' enrollement. During the 1999/2000 school year, approximately 35% of girls and 56% of boys were enrolled in primary school in Ethiopia. For secondary school, the enrollement rates dropped to 8% of girls and 11% of boys. The number of women attending colleges and universities is even much smaller.

4. Lack of effective laws. In Ethiopia, although illegal, the abduction of women and girls as a form of marriage continues in regions including the Amhara, Oromia and Southern Nations and Nationalities and Peoples Regions. Punishments regarding abduction are not fully enforced by local authorities. Families of abducted girls fear what the abductors may do to them, so they often cannot help their daughters. There is no effective legal recourse for abducted girls or their families.

Ethiopian Laws on Abduction of Girls for Marriage

Ethiopia Empire State remains one of Africa's most traditional societies, even when it comes to legislation. Although the country has a great ethnic, nationality, religious and cultural diversity, attitudes towards women's rights are relatively homogenous in rural societies, where the status of women remains poor and often women experience abuse. Rural communities are often deprived of basic education, and resources, which causes widespread and extreme poverty of which women are the principal victims. International laws that provide protection for women are not practiced and are unknown, although the federal government theoretically supports many of the

UN policies. Ethiopia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1981.

Historical and past system of government continues to have some influence regarding the status of women. The 1957 Ethiopian Civil Code was based on a monarchical constitution that treats women as if they were children or disabled. Discriminatory regulations in the civil code include recognizing the husband as the legal head of the family and designating him as the sole guardian of children over 5 years old. Family Arbitration Councils, and not the courts, have the legal power to dissolve marriages. Domestic violence was not considered a serious justification under the law to obtain a divorce. Domestic violence, including wife beating and marital rape, is a pervasive social problem. Social norms and limited infrastructure prohibit many women from seeking legal redress, especially in rural areas. Although women living in urban areas are more aware of their rights, limited resources and generations of social norms holds them captive. Therefore, women are treated as second-class citizens or are not even considered valuable human beings. This attitude transcended into the culture and tradition continues to affect women.

After 1974, the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association (REWA) was established by proclamation to address issues related to gender equality and to promote policies that will protect women. In reality, social, economic and political lives of rural women have not improved. After the downfall of the Derg regime the Transitional Government and the present government of Ethiopia has given priority to the speeding up of equality between men and women. Although there has been some progress in addressing laws and policies to protect women, rural women continue to suffer from inherited traditional harmful practices.

In 2000, Ethiopian Parliament adopted a new family law, which raised the legal age of marriage for girls from 15 to 18, the same as for boys. This puts civil law above customary and religious law. While the government continues to review the laws and address harmful traditional practices, implementation of the laws remains a constant battle.

Although the Ministry of Justice in recent years has reviewed the 1957 Civil Code, traditional harmful practices are still practiced in rural areas. Abduction and rape are criminal offenses under the current Ethiopia law. Nevertheless, in the event of subsequent marriage to his victims, the perpetrator was exempt from criminal responsibility for these crimes. The Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association (EWLA), a leading local non-governmental women's rights organization, has been trying to force the government to impose heavy sentences for offenders. Only in May 2005, the new Ethiopian Penal Code finally came into effect, which removed the marital exemption for abduction and rape. The revised penal code imposes a maximum three-year jail sentence on anyone who carries off a woman by violence for marriage. The government also took some measures to help eradicate female genital mutilation. The new penal code of 2004 criminalized the circumcision of any female by imprisonment of three months or a fine of not less than 500birr.

Regional councils had authority to determine family law for their respective regions. However, regional laws are not uniformly enforced. By law, they cannot conflict with the national constitution. In reality, harmful practices continue to be practiced under the disguise of

preservation of culture and customs of various nationalities in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian constitution Article 34 (4) says, “The State shall enforce the right of women to eliminate the influence of harmful customs. Laws, customs and practices that oppress or cause bodily or mental harm to women are prohibited. However, these laws are not often applied in practice.

International Laws and Challenges in Protecting Women’s Rights

In the twenty-first century, where advancement in technology combined with advancement in scientific and social development has reached beyond human imagination, harmful cultures and traditional practices continue to degrade and humiliate women and young girls in many countries.

Recently the world community began to recognize some cultural and traditional practices that are physically, socially, economically and psychologically harmful to the other half of the world population – “Women”. Some of these harmful traditional practices are considered human rights violations since the practices are gender oriented, unhealthy, brutal in their practices and dehumanize women.

Traditional cultural practices reflect values and beliefs held by members of a community for periods often spanning generations. Every social grouping in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others are harmful to a specific group, such as women. These harmful traditional practices include abduction of girls for marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage, the various taboos or practices that prevent women from controlling their own fertility, nutritional taboos and dowry price. A national Committee on Traditional Practices in Ethiopia (NCTPE) survey published in 1998 indicated that 73% of women in Ethiopia have undergone some form of female circumcision, down from 90% prevalence. Ethiopia’s high maternal mortality rate stems in substantial part from childbirth complications related to FGM. Despite their harmful nature and their violation of international human rights laws, such practices persist because they are not questioned and take on an aura of morality in the eyes of those practicing such violation.

Many of these traditional harmful practices do not seem to improve quality of life or are helpful to the individual or the community and do not have religious basis although religion may have been used as a scapegoat. However, power and domination, manipulation, inequality, discrimination, lack of political will and backwardness combined with many social factors may have allowed such practices to continue. Many women, especially in rural areas, are not aware of their legal rights and even those who are relatively educated remain subservient to avoid confrontation.

Many women and young girls, especially in Africa, endure rampant and brutal human rights violations in their homes and in the public sphere, perpetuating their inequality and putting them at risk for diseases, poverty and degradation of life. Governments have done far too little to end abuses such as domestic violence, marital rape, abduction of young girls for marriage, forced marriage, genital mutilation, unequal property and inheritance rights, trafficking, labor rights abuses, sexual violence in armed conflicts and discrimination in education and health care

systems. In many countries, statutory laws actually support these abuses. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the United National General Assembly, described as an international bill of rights for women, is not fully embraced and enforced by many governments.

In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This violation is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. In principal, many governments have accepted the resolutions but the implementation of these resolutions has been difficult for many countries. Culture, customs and traditions have been sighted as a major obstacle in protecting girls and women from many abuses.

The international community has become aware of the need to achieve equality between the sexes and of the fact that an equitable society cannot be attained if fundamental human rights of the half of human society that is women continues to be denied and violated. However, the bleak reality is that the harmful traditional practices have been performed for male benefit. For a long time, governments and the international community had not expressed sympathy and understanding for women who, due to ignorance or unawareness of their rights, endured pain, suffering and even death inflicted on themselves and their female children. In spite of the slowness of action to challenge and eliminate harmful traditional practices, the activities of human rights bodies in recent years have made noticeable progress. The slogan “Women’s Rights are Human Rights”, adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the General Assembly the same year, captured the reality of the status accorded to women. While many progresses have been made in the last ten years to protect women from dangerous practices, still many young girls and women in Oromia, Ethiopia, and many African countries are daily exposed to harmful traditional practices, including abduction of girls for marriage.

Some of the factors that lead to abduction such as poverty and lack of money to pay the dowry have to be stopped since they perpetuate the practice. The population needs to be informed and trained about traditional harmful practices. Unproductive and harmful culture and traditions need to be addressed. Local political leaders and elders in the community need to encourage girls to get better education and promote equality among their children. Although education is a primary tool for changing attitudes, formal education alone would not bring about change; however, knowledge of legal rights, information campaigns and other awareness-raising efforts would help both men and women to internalize women’s human rights.

The challenge for the lawmakers, researchers, scholars, business people, politicians, intellectuals, religious groups and every man and woman is to challenge harmful practices, seek alternative means and prevent the traditional practices that are destroying the lives of young girls and women. It is vital to promote positive values and cultures while educating people on the negative cultures that dehumanize some segments of society. If we do not speak and address issues that are negatively affecting our society, the international community, with all good intention, may

not be able to impose the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or Women's Rights. One has to accept and admit that not all-traditional culture and practices have to be maintained and preserved at the expense of the other half of society.

Notes

- ⁱ <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/marriage> by_ abduction
- ⁱⁱ Mitchell Anthony, Ethiopia: Abduction and Rape of Young Girls for Marriage in Rural Ethiopia, Victims and Aid workers say, Associated Press, September 29, 2004
- ⁱⁱⁱ Tewedji Kebede, The Plight of women, the Reporter Dec.8, 1999, and Women of the World Report,2000
- ^{iv} Mitchell Anthony, Lions Save Girl from Beating, Abduction, Associated Press June 22, 2005
- ^v <http://www.fourlitracies.org/Early%20marriage.htm> (Early Marriage, Forced Marriage and Abduction, The East Africa four Literacies Program,
- ^{vi} U.S. Department of State, Ethiopia: country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001, released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, March 4, 2002.
- ^{vii} Ethiopia: country Reports on Human rights Practices -2005, Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human rights, and Labor, March 8, 2006.
- ^{viii} Women of the World Report: Ethiopia, <http://www.crlp.org/pdf/wowaappr-ethiopia.pdf>
- ^{viii} Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against women, .A...res48/104 U>N.GAOR Supp. (no.49) at 217 U.N. Doc a/48/49, 1993.

REFERENCES

1. Mitchell Anthony, Lions save Girl from Beating, Abduction, and Associated Press June 22, 2005.
2. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. United Nations Treaty series, vol. 1249.no 20378
3. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women G.A. res48/104 U.N. GAOR Supp. (no.49) at 217 U.N.Doc a/48/49, 1993.
4. Mitchell Anthony, Ethiopia: Abduction and Rape of Young Girls for Marriage in Rural Ethiopia, Victims and Aid workers say, Associated Press, September 29, 2004.
5. Tewedji Kebede, the Plight of Women, the Reporter, Dec.8, 1999, and Women of the World Report
6. Ethiopia: Forced Marriage-ruining Lives of Rural Girls in Arsi-East Africa/culture February 14, 2006.
7. AFRO Gender Profiles:
Ethiopia:http://www.afro.com/categories/women/profiles/Ethiopia_women.htm
8. Update: women's Action 22.4 June 2005, Ethiopia: Abduction and Rape—Law Reform and the Case of Woineshet Zebene Negash
9. http://www.equalitynow.org/english/actions/action_2204_en.html
10. <http://www.feminist.com/violence/spot/ethiop.html> . Spotlight on: Violence Against Girls in Ethiopia Marriage by Abduction and Rape
11. http://www.spokesmanreview.com/nation_world/story.asp?ID=76316 Lions save girl from beating, abduction
12. <http://www.warmafrica.com/index/geo/9/cat/3/a/a/artid/579>

**Hajii Adam Jilo Webo: A Model Oromo
Nationalist Hero
(1917-2005)**
Asafa Jalata

From 1962 until his death in 2005, Hajii Adam Jilo Webo had fought with great determination and heroism for his colonized and oppressed people, the Oromo. Since he was a wise and intelligent man, at his young age he recognized that Ethiopian colonialism put the Oromo nation under brutal oppression, darkness, ignorance, poverty, backwardness and continued subjugation. Since he was born in 1917 and raised at Mada Walabu, the cradle of Oromo culture and civilization, and since his parents and community through traditional Oromo channels inculcated in him Oromo history and culture, he never accepted the notion that other peoples have better cultures and civilizations than the Oromo. Consequently, he was a confident, resolute and constant Oromo nationalist who sacrificed most his life for the liberation of Oromia.

Hajii Adam Jilo did not learn about the suffering his people from books. When he was young, he observed first hand when Ethiopian colonial settlers expropriated Oromo farmers and herders, and when these farmers and herders were transformed into gabbars (semi-slaves). He observed how the Ethiopian government and the settlers mistreated and abused the Bale Oromo by forcing to work for them and by increasing taxation. Since he was a determined and brave man, he did not hide his political feelings. One time when Haile Selassie visited Bale and gave speech by saying “We the Ethiopian people are one nation; we have one flag and one country,” Hajii Adam responded to him as the following: “We are not one people, and we have nothing in common.” When the king asked him why he said that, Hajii Adam said: “The king is an Amhara, the judge is an Amhara, the governor is an Amhara, and even the office messenger is an Amhara in Ethiopia. We Oromos have no rights to run our affairs. Therefore, we have nothing in common.”

After both of them exchanged their political views on administration, citizenship rights and several problems, Haile Selassie failed to persuade him and got angry. In order to frighten and intimidate Hajii Adam, the king tried to link him to Somali to charge him with treason. The king ordered his officials to imprison Hajii Adam by accusing him as an agent of Somalia who agitated the Bale Oromo not to pay tax and who encouraged them to revolt against the government. He was sent to jail in 1962 and released in 1963. In 1963, the Bale Oromo held a conference to decide how to resist the abuse of the Ethiopian colonial state. At this conference, General Waqo Gutu was elected as the commander-in-chief and Hajii Adam as his deputy.

The same year the general and his deputy and other leaders went to Somalia to seek military training, weapons and ammunition. After receiving support from the Somalia government, they returned to Bale and started guerrilla-style armed struggle. The other leaders of the Bale Oromo movement included Hajii Kilta, Ali Butta, Aliye Butta Qumbi, Mohammed Gulichu Toga, Halima Hassan, Haala Kormee, Halima Waqo, Aliye Chire Jara, Mohammed Adan Jillo and others. After liberating Bale and some parts of Sidamo, the resistance movement was defeated because of the intervention of Israel, the United States and England on the side of Ethiopia. The conflict came to a formal end in 1970. In 1974, the Haile Selassie government was overthrown and replaced by the military junta. After trying to persuade the military regime with other

prominent Oromo nationalists to change the Ethiopian policy towards the Oromo people, Hajii Adam realized that the colonial nature of the Ethiopian state remained the same. Consequently, he went back to Somalia in 1977 to enlist support for the emerging Oromo national movement. When he arrived in Somalia, the Siad Bare government was engaged in the project of trying to Somalize the Oromo by organizing them under the name of “Somali Abbo.” Although there were Oromo leaders who accepted this political project, Hajii Adam rejected the idea of remanufacturing the Oromo as Somali Abbo. As a result, the Somali government imprisoned him from 1977 to 1980. He was released because of the pressure from the Oromo Liberation Front. After he was released, the Somali government continued to put him under pressure to Somalize him. One time when he was asked to swear to demonstrate he was a Somali, he refused and said in the front the Somali officials: “Wallaahi-Billaahi-Tallahi ani Oromoo.” Consequently, he was sent to jail several times. When the Somali government and its agents made Somalia hell for him, he returned to Oromia in 1988. Immediately the Mengistu regime imprisoned him. Finally, he was released in 1991, when the regime was overthrown.

When many Oromo leaders were creating or building the organizations which they headed, Hajii Adam Jilo chose to work toward building a centralized, Oromia-wide organization capable of confront the heavily armed and Euro-American financed Ethiopian government. At that juncture he joined the Oromo Liberation Front. This demonstrates that Hajii Adam never cared for his personal power and glory, but he only cared for the liberation of his people. Between 1991 and 1992, he travelled all over Oromia to spread the essence and importance of Oromummaa and why it was important to build the OLF as the emblem of the Oromo identity and freedom.

When the OLF was expelled from the Transitional Government of Ethiopia in 1992, he joined the Oromo Liberation Army in his mid-70s and engaged in armed struggle with the well-known Oromo hero, Gutama Hawas, and others. Because of health problems, he left the armed struggle and sought political asylum, first in Kenya and then in the United States. In the diaspora, he continued to be involved in the Oromo struggle by supporting the OLF and by focusing on building Oromo unity. Further, he pressured OSA to make Afaan Oromoo the medium of communication rather than English. My children, Beka and Kulani, were fascinated by his courage and articulation at several OSA conferences and called him “one of the red-bearded Oromo heroes.”

Hajii Adam was an Oromo revolutionary model, which embodied indigenous Oromo wisdom and knowledge. For almost five decades he fought against the Ethiopian and Somali governments. He relentlessly resisted against the authoritarian-terrorist regimes of Haile Selassie, Mengistu and Meles, and he fought bravely with determination to liberate his people and country from Ethiopian and Somali colonialism. By combining Oromo original wisdom and knowledge with revolutionary heroism and Oromummaa, Hajii Adam Jilo Webu entered Oromo history as one of the fathers of Oromo nationalism. Let all of us stand up and celebrate what he achieved for the Oromo and for Oromia!

Oromo Studies Association XI Annual Conference

Challenges and Opportunities for Oromo Quest for Self- Determination in the 21st Century

2007 Abstracts

**The University of Minnesota
Coffman Memorial Union Great Hall
Minneapolis, MN55455
July 28-29, 2007**

Organizational Models for Oromo National Movement: Lessons from the Past for Present Realities

Addisu Tolesa

Examining the Oromo national development via the organizational structure appears a significant way of understanding the situation. In the re-evaluation of the Oromo experience the formation of the Maccaa-Tuulamaa Self-Help Association (MTSHA) stands out as, for the first time, a centrally led organization that has been created since the 1960s. One of the challenging issues facing the MTSHA seems to be the need as a priority to 'improve' the colonized Oromo living condition or standard. Primarily, the Oromo indigenous democratic institution, gadaa, was forced to disperse by the Ethiopian/Abyssinian colonizers of Oromia. The gumii, delegates to the caffee, general assembly, was forbidden under the colonial divide and rule policy. To make their colonial rule more devastating to the Oromo, the colonizers used their strategy to create and recreate condition for the Oromo to fight amongst themselves. Under colonial rule, the Oromo Oda Nabi where laws passed, disputes were settled in dialogue, and conflicts were resolved peacefully was denied. Consequently, the Maccaa-Tuulamaa tradition, the remarkable gadaa system of democracy has been curtailed. The Oromo leaders of Maccaa-Tuulamaa creatively set up the organizational model. Accordingly, the MTSHA model could be studied in three ways: (1) Consultation, (2) Self-Help, Self-reliance and (3) Tolerance and unity among the Oromo.

Can democracy Deliver a Comprehensive Solution to the complex Problems of the Ethiopian Empire?

Alemayehu Biru

Today virtually all political forces in Ethiopia claim to be committed to democracy, despite their contingent and conflicting political agendas. Based on this premise, this article tries to examine how genuine these commitments could be and hence unshakeable in the foreseeable future. Given the prime importance of ethnic issues in Ethiopian politics, the article also aims at assessing different forms of structural arrangements democracy can offer in addressing those aspirations of various peoples in Ethiopia. It does so by contextualising the issue of democracy within the bigger picture of globalization and pluralism.

Music as a gift to society: from "karaan mana abbaa gadaa eessa" to "sporty jaalalaaf"

Ali Birra

The famous artist will present his own experience from his many years of rich history as a gifted vocalist of our continent. He will discuss his early years of experience, the beginning of modern Oromo music, and bridge it to the many young artists of the recent years.

Mata dureen qophii kiyjaa. Sirna Gadaa Kaleessa, Ardhaa fi Hegere (The past, the present and the future of Gadaa)

Aman Qamsare

Mata duree kana keessatti Maalummaa sirna Gadaa cuumfee dhiyeessa. Dhalata, guddinnaa fi dagaagina sirnichallee xiinxalla. Hariiroo sirni Gadaa jaarmaya Qaalluutii fi jaarmaya (gitalamooyyee) wajjiin qabu tuttuqee agarsiisa. Sababiilee hangafoo sirna kana laaffisanii fi dadhabsiisan akeeka. Itti aansee sirna Gadaa dandamachiisuuf nu Oromoon maal godhuu akka qabnu yaada kiyaa gumaacha. Dhuma irrattillee walitti hidhannoo sabboonummaan Oromummaatii fi sirni Gadaa qabaniin qophii kiyaa goolaba.

Oromia's Business Environment and It's Prospects

Amsalu Bultosa

This paper attempts to address fundamental aspects of Oromia's Business Environment and its prospects in a broader view. Business organizations operate within complex internal and external environments that could affect their performance. Understanding of these complex issues helps decision makers to identify variables that directly or indirectly affect their businesses and make adjustment and make optimal decision. The focus in this article is about the external forces that affect businesses in Oromia. It tries to present these issues to make it suitable for further studies within the context of International societal environments for Oromia, where various variables are further addressed. The main aim is to present helpful business information as a decision making tool to diaspora Oromo, intellectuals, international observers, investors as well as local business entrepreneurs. As external force affecting businesses, in a broader view, the political-legal, economic, sociocultural and technological variables are discussed in a descriptive manner. There are many variables under each of these broad categories but their analysis is beyond the scope of this article as it depends on how each of these variables affects each industry and individual companies. The individual industry and company requires further detailed study by decision makers in order to understand the implication of these variables for their businesses. The paper is organized in a sequence of explaining the economic importance of Oromia within Ethiopian economy context followed by sociocultural aspects of Oromo people. The last two sections address the political-legal affecting Oromia businesses. The last section focuses on technological issues facing Oromia business enterprises. The main focus in each section is trying to present the actual data for understanding and then comment the potentials, difficulties and impacts on businesses and investments in Oromia. Within each of these four broad categories, few selected key variables are discussed in a broader sense to the level of presenting data. Finally, few suggestion and comments have been made where deemed necessary to welcome comments, trigger debate and further discussions.

Thoughts on the Narrative of Modern Ethiopian Nationalists

Apee Jobi

There has been a renewed debate over the roots of Ethiopia's troubles. Marginalized communities in the country have continued to maintain that the roots of Ethiopia's troubles lie

with the rigid centralized power in Addis Ababa. Ethiopian Nationalists, however, claim the roots of Ethiopia's troubles lie with the spreading liberation movements organized by marginalized communities. Both positions should not be right. Which position is correct in this debate among the two positions? What are implications for each side position? Using contemporary Ethiopian nationalists' arguments, I argue in this paper that the Ethiopian nationalist position carries serious flawed assumptions and the marginalized community is correct in the debate. Marginalized communities created liberation fronts/movements to protect their peoples from despotic regimes in Addis Ababa and free them from ashes of hegemonic state. This can neither be roots of Ethiopia's troubles nor a crime in any neutral court. To understand this thesis, let us turn to theoretical discussions.

Applying *Gada* Principles to For and Build the State in the 21ST Century Oromia

Asafa Jalata

The main goal of the Oromo national movement is to decolonize Oromia and to construct the state that will protect the security and interest of the Oromo and others. As the central force of this movement, the OLF has played the leading role in developing *Oromummaa*, revitalizing Oromo culture, history, and language. The process of institutionalizing these achievements requires dealing with the prospects and challenges of state formation. To empower the Oromo people and to be at peace with other peoples, the OLF needs to engage in a truly democratic process by challenging exclusivist and anarchist political tendencies. This paper demonstrates that the reinvention and application of certain *Gada* principles to the process of state formation can play a decisive role in enabling the OLF to initiate the construction of a democratic government.

International Trends and the Dynamics of Oromo Struggle: Impact of the first on the latter

Bahiru Duguma

In the 1970's and 1980's, the Tigrians, Oromos, and Eritreans relentlessly fought the military regime of Ethiopia to liberate their respective nations. Following the demise of the regime in 1991, most, if not all Oromos sincerely believed that at last, freedom was in sight. Since then, the Eritreans have successfully secured a permanent palace among the free nations of the World. The three or so million Tigrians have transformed themselves from insignificant power players to political and economic elites of Imperial Ethiopia. Unfortunately, only the Oromos continue to endure cruel and criminal subjugation and exploitation. And the Oromo misfortune does not end there. Fully aware of the fact that an unhindered access to and control of the resources of Oromia is critical to maintaining their economic dominance, the Tigrians (TPLF) have made Oromos the primary targets of their ethnic cleansing strategy. These appalling realities have triggered intense debate and range of actions among the Oromo public and Oromo political Organizations. New Oromo political Organizations are mushrooming both in Oromia and abroad. The existing organizations (e.g. the Oromo Liberation Front) are busy revising their alliances, strategies, and

in some cases, even their organizational goal. The nation's political veterans have chosen to fight each other with vengeance than forming a united front to dismantle the empire and free the colonized people. And in the process, Oromo struggle for freedom and justice has recently suffered a significant setback. A school of thought that questions the Original goal of the Oromo struggle and strategy, reportedly due to the changing global political and economic evolution is largely responsible for the current deplorable state of the Oromo struggle.

Collective rights and public health: The case of Oromo people

Begna F. Dugassa

In the formation of the Ethiopian state in the 1880s, Oromia was colonized by the Abyssinia, supported by the European empire builders. Colonization of Oromia is a direct attack to the Oromo people's identity and their social, economic, political, cultural and environmental interests. The international human right covenant of 1966 recognizes collective rights of people. These covenants state, "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development". This statement suggests that those peoples who are not self-determined should be free to choose the form of governance they desire, what form of relationships they want to establish with neighboring peoples; and where they allocate their resources. If people are self-determined, they can effectively manage their affairs and prioritize their needs, which is essential in the enhancement of quality of life for the societal members. The history of colonialism has shown that as indigenous people are colonized and denied the right to decide on their affairs, actions taken by the colonial powers may either compromise their safety and security, or at least, be inefficient, as it is executed slowly, and without understanding the problems. Denials of such right are a collective violence and thus, expose the colonized people to overt and covert harms. My findings suggest if the Oromo people are entitled to decide on their social, economic, political, cultural and environmental affairs, they would have better guarantee themselves flexibility and adoptability in unpredictable internal, external, social and environmental conditions. Collective right makes people: a) quickly and creatively react to the social, economic, political, cultural and environmental problems; b) bring together their human and natural resources; c) become more independent in understanding their needs, setting goals, and taking actions. These conditions are essential to advance public health.

Lessons from the Bolivarian Revolution

Beka Jalata

In this paper, I will explore the experience of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. I will discuss how the Bolivarian Revolution can help the Oromo struggle in constructing the new Oromo nation. In Venezuela, Hugo Chavez plays the central role as a revolutionary figure who stands for the politically and economically oppressed majority of the Venezuelan people. Chavez stands as a figure to challenge local and intermediary classes and global imperialism. Among the vast amount of public interest that Hugo Chavez stands for, his chief priorities are the egalitarian distribution of resources to the masses, providing adequate social and health services the public, reducing governmental corruption, and promoting grassroots popular democracy. I

will assess some lessons that the Oromo people may learn from Venezuelan Bolivarian Revolution. I will conclude that in order for Oromos to attain true and complete *bilisummaa*, they must establish an *Oromummaa* revolution, which is perpetual and strives to provide complete justice and democracy.

Some of the Challenges and Solutions for Oromo's Self-Determination in the 21ST Century

Daba S. Gedafa

Oromo people are the largest single ethnic group in the Horn of Africa and Ethiopian Empire. They have their own language, culture, social-economic activities, history and the tradition of Gada that is egalitarian-democratic system. Abyssinians were able to colonize them and their land through the help of European imperialist powers during the last decades of 19th century. Oromo people have been subjected to political domination, social subjugation and economic exploitation by succeeding repressive Ethiopian regimes. They have been struggling for justice, equality, freedom, peace, stability, coexistence and prosperity. Some of the notable struggles for self-determination include: the long and bloody uprising of Bale Oromo in the 1960s led by the legendary Gen. Waqo Gutu and the formation of many Oromo liberation fronts since 1970s. But their aspiration for self-determination was not realized due to various challenges. The main objective of this paper is to point out some of the challenges and solutions for Oromo's Self-determination in 21st century based on literature review and personal experience. There are internal and external challenges for Oromo's self-determination. Some of the internal challenges are: lack of unity, efficiency, vision, determination and dedication among Oromo political forces; some opportunist Oromo groups who side with anti-Oromo ideologies; lack of awareness among Oromo Society especially elderly people; regionalism and differences in religion; geographical location of Oromia; other nations in Oromia; natural resources of Oromia without which others may not exist; financial problems; other anti-Oromo's self-determination political forces and nations; and most importantly, the minority led TPLF/EPRDF regime in Ethiopian empire which include all the stakeholders. Some of the external challenges include: neighboring countries of Oromia; Western Countries; international organizations including UN and AU; and international financial institutions. Some of the solutions are: unity among Oromo political forces struggling for self-determination with good vision; increasing awareness of the Oromo society; increasing awareness and convincing the international society that Oromo's self-determination is important for stability, peace and prosperity in the Horn of Africa. The question of self-determination costs a lot, but if the Oromo people unite irrespective of their minor differences and convince all the stakeholders, the time to fulfill their aspiration for self-determination will not be long.

Comparison of Oromo's Gada System with Maasai's Age-Set System

Daba S. Gedafa

The Oromo people live in East Africa, mainly in the Ethiopian Empire. They are the largest single Ethnic group in the region. Maasai people also live in East Africa, particularly in Southern

Kenya and North-central Tanzania. Both Oromo and Maasai people have their own language, socio-economic and cultural activities. Oromo's gada system and Maasai's age-system are well organized systems in which men of both societies pass through different stages during their life time. The main objectives of this study were: to describe Oromo's gada system and Maasai's age-set system and compare and contrast some of the similarities and differences between these two systems. Oromo's gada system is self-sufficient system which has influenced every aspect of Oromo's life. It is a system that organizes the Oromo society into groups that assume different responsibilities in the society every eight years. There are five gadas in a cycle of 40 years. The five gadas in the cycle have names that vary slightly from region to region. There are gada officials during each cycle with different responsibilities. The officials serve the society for eight years and then transfer their power to people in the next cycle. Gada system has guided the religious, social, political, and economic life of Oromo for many years. It has also served as a base of democratic and egalitarian political system. Maasai's age-set system is the system in which every male in the society passes through three main stages; namely, childhood, warriorhood and elderhood. People in the same age-set have their own responsibilities and leaders. Children become warriors once they are circumcised when their age is about 15 years. Warriorhood is the best time in Maasai's male life in which the people in this age-set live in Manyatta. Some of the similarities in these systems are: both are practiced by men; both societies are well organized in these systems to lead their people, defend their land, and property; and both systems have lost their political role due to colonizers and successive repressive regimes. Some of the differences are: Oromo's gada system has five stages whereas Maasai's age-set system has three stages; gada system is generation-set whereas the other one is age-set system; gada system has definite period whereas age-set system has no definite period; time between different stages may change depending on various conditions. To conclude, both systems have attracted the attentions of scholars and it is most probable that the systems may regain their political role.

**Deemsa guddina og barruu afaan Oromoo keessatti
gahee maxxansa Burqaa
Darara Matti**

Burqaan maxxansa walaba yeroo ammaa kanatti dhimma Oromoo fi Oromia irratti hundaa'ee baatii sadi'itti yeroo tokko afaan Oromoon qophaa'ee ba'u maxxansa Oromoo tokkicha. Qabiyyeen maxxansa kanaas oduu fi odeeffama qabatamaa yeroo ummata Oromoon ga'u, dhimma siyaasaa, hawwaasummaa, aadaa fi og barruu Oromoo irratti xiyyafachuun barnoota adda addaa kan dhiheessu yoo ta'u, seenaa dhuunfaa gootota Oromoo dhiheessunis akeekaa fi kaayyoo goototni Oromoo kaleessa darbanii fi har'a itti jiran ummata waliin dhiheeniyatti akka wal baran taasisuu irratti xiyyaafata.

**Self-Determination Rights in Ethiopia: The Case of Oromia
Darara Gubo**

The modern Ethiopian State is largely the result of emperor Menelik the II's expansion into the southern parts of the country. The expansion which commenced in the end of 19th century

culminated in the beginning of 20th century. The northern conquerors established control over peoples who had a wide range of social structures and practices which were usually ignored or destroyed. Some such as the people of Kafa, Janjero, Male and six Oromo regions had their own king and queens. Others had no states but ran their affairs through a variety of arrangements, including political system based on elections large assemblies, and various associations. Thus while monarchies existed among some conquered peoples, other maintained a high degree of egalitarianism. Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples which was adopted on December 14, 1960 by the General Assembly in resolution 1514(XV) is another instrument dealing with the question of self-determination. Its preamble contains such statements like “Solemnly proclaims the necessity of bringing to a speedy and unconditional end colonialism in all its forms and manifestation.” Paragraph 1 of the declaration states that: “The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation.” Paragraph 2 of the declaration provides that: “All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. I will present the case of Oromia and other nations and nationalities that are entertaining the right to self-determination and its consequences.

Connecting Immigrants to the Financial System of USA: The Case of Oromo Immigrants

Desta A. Gelgelu

In this paper, I will focus on the need for financial education for Oromo immigrants and how financial education program be delivered. The Oromo immigrants come from a region where financial sector is least developed in the world. Most people in the region of east Africa do not have access to even basic payment services or savings accounts. Credit is not an option to largest proportion of the people. As a result, the crucially important role of financial institutions is not understood by several immigrants- particularly those who came from the region of East Africa. As it is in homeland, the challenge before the Oromo immigrants is to overcome economic problem in a land of free enterprise. A well developed financial system helps reduce poverty. It reduces credit constraints to the poor. It helps households invest in education, plan for retirement, own home, insure against risk. It allows small enterprises and individuals to make use of new opportunities. In order to emerge as dynamic society in a free land, the Oromo immigrants need to understand themselves know how the financial system and economy of America works. Only dynamic and economically strong community can grab opportunities and play central role in mitigating challenges before the Oromos. Because of advances made in the means of communication and computing provision of financial services changes from time to time. Most of the financial services offered by banking and insurance companies are absolutely new to most immigrant consumers and owners of enterprises. In order to choose wisely from the variety of financial products and providers available in the market, the immigrants must have the necessary financial knowledge. With out some knowledge in finance, they will not be able to navigate today’s increasingly complex market for financial services. As it is true with any market, consumers who are knowledgeable about financial services get better deal from service

providers. Financial education for the immigrants also benefits financial institutions. Better decision making by immigrants is crucially important for the proper functioning of the financial institutions; because financial education may reduce the risk of default and delinquency. The time and place demand that Oromo immigrants adapt to the advanced and complex financial system of the western world. Thus, financial education program is crucially important in order to empower Oromo immigrants to make better decisions for themselves and their families.

What is Music to a Society?

Elfinesh Qanno

Art is a shared denominator of a society expressing the commonalities of people. It serves his supreme purposes through beautiful vocal expressions and physical motions. As an emotional and powerful unifying tool, music is no less threatening than the gun in establishing the ideals of a nation. That is why the artist with a liberated mind often suffers under ruthless regimes. I will present my painful experience in the TPLF prison and share my views of liberation art with the OSA audience.

The Impact of a Century long HR abuses on the people of Ogaden

Fawosia Abdulkadir

The Ogaden, also known as the Somali Region State of Ethiopia, homeland to ethnic Somalis, has longstanding history of being contested territories. This paper aims to reveal the human face of this long suffering of the people who inhabit these territories. This research paper focuses on the enormity of their sufferings brought to bear by a century long Ethiopian state sponsored violence directed at the people of these territories. The main purpose of this presentation is two-fold, on the one hand, to advocate for basic human rights for the masses of Ogaden, and on the other hand, to contribute some critical analysis towards the human rights debate. The paper commences with some background information on the region, followed by an examination of the role played by successive Ethiopian regimes in constant and consistent process of overt and oftentimes widespread human rights abuses in the Ogaden. The paper then examines the impacts of these deliberate and systemic marginalization of Somalis which not only kept them at the fringes or margins of Ethiopian socio-economic and political arenas, but also disrupted their human capacity development. Followed by a section underlining the importance of identifying and addressing some 'pre-conditions' necessary for democratization in Ethiopian. Given that Ethiopian was ruled initially through autocratic Abyssinian monarch, then through dictatorships, there has to be mechanisms to address historical atrocities and processes that put into place the foundations solid democracy that ensure substantive equity in the context of Ethiopian diversity. Substantive equity in Ethiopia which transforms it into a place where the people of Ogaden, Oromia and others are no longer subjected to unlawful jailing, harassment, rape, and torture. In addition, this research paper will highlight the numerous times that Ogaden Somalis have been internally and externally displaced over the years. Underlining the impact this has on human and sustainable economic development. This paper concludes with some thought provoking questions. Questions that situate the plight of the people of Ogaden within the context of the current US discourse of "war on terror"; and the dilemma facing the Somalis as they attempt to

disentangle their cause from the rhetoric of today's global security.

Human Rights Violations by the Ethiopian Government: The Inquiry Commission Report

Firehiwot Samuel

In May 2005, about 26 million Ethiopians went out to the polls to elect their representatives for federal and regional parliamentary seats. This was the third election since the current regime came to power. The ruling party and opposition parties participated in this highly competitive election. The result of the election was contested by the opposition parties and the public at large. There were demonstrations throughout the country protesting an alleged vote rigging by the ruling party. During the protest there were clashes between government security force and civilian protesters in the capital, Addis Ababa and in other cities. There were losses of life and damage to property as a result of the clash. In October 2005, Federal police commission, which initially involved in the clash, presented to the Parliament its report about the incidence. However, the Parliament and the international community were not convinced by the police report and therefore called for an independent panel to investigate the actual nature and incidents of the case. Especially donor governments and human right organizations and institutions were concerned that the Ethiopian government may have used excessive force to quell the protest. They put enormous pressure on the Ethiopian government to establish an independent Commission to investigate and report the real details of the incidents. Thus an Inquiry Commission, composed of 11 members, was established by virtue of Proclamation Number 478/2005. The Inquiry Commission was established to investigate the authenticity of the police report on the abovementioned post election crisis, and disclose the true nature of the government actions against the protesters based on verifiable and valid evidence as stated in the proclamation.

“Whose Land is This Land?”: The Question of Resource Entitlement in Oromia

Gobena Huluka

The history of land ownership in Oromia in particular and Ethiopia in general is closely related to ethnic identity and geographic location during the last three successive regimes. The Amharas and the Tigres in the North had communal land ownership systems during the feudal regime of Haile Selassie whereas the Oromos and the other ethnic groups in the South were landless peasants as the result of Menelik conquest. The Land Reform Proclamation of the Derg Regime on March 5, 1975, made “all land the collective property of the Ethiopian people”, and the 1985 Ratified Constitution made it “the property of the Ethiopian State”. The current Ethiopian Constitution of the EPRDF recognizes the right of ownership in both rural and urban land, but it specifically delegates the power to the State and the people of Ethiopia without clear distinctions the role of each rather than proclaiming that the land shall not be subjected sale or exchange. Though the non-privatization and the protection of peasant against eviction are clearly stated in the constitution, but the government is acting as the sole owner and distributor of the land. Land

is a special resource for peasants. It is similar to the right to air and water that they can not live without. Thus, the indigenous peasants should have entitlement to the land they till without government interference with respect to their sole ownership. Liberal definition of privatizing a land or government/collective ownership may not be the best options to increase agriculture productivity and sustainability.

Oromo State Formations in Historical Perspective

Guluma Gemed

The Oromo, often considered as egalitarian society before the 18th century, made several attempts at building state systems to mobilize population and govern themselves. In long historical framework, these attempts can be divided into four periods: the *gada*, monarchical, conquest and liberation periods. The *gada* period flourished from, at least, the 15th to the early 18th centuries, and in some places even longer. After the break-up of the pan-Oromo *gada* system in the 16th and 17th centuries, some groups established monarchical institutions and started competing among themselves and their neighbors for resources and territories. This process was disrupted by the Abyssinian conquest of the second half of the 19th century. During this period, all Oromo communities lost their independence and fell under Abyssinian political control. After sporadic forms of resistance, a more organized national liberation movement emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the original goal of this movement is the liberation of Oromia, the future shape and nature of the national state is still debated among Oromo nationalists, intellectuals, workers, farmers and pastoralists. Taking the *long duree* of the history of state formation by the Oromo people, this paper attempts to highlight the historical circumstances during the first and second periods. The paper also suggests why the Oromo failed to stop the Abyssinian conquest of the late 19th century that effectively ended the *gada*-based self governments in some areas, and the consolidation of monarchies in other regions. The paper does not discuss the current nationalist movement, but participants may find the historical lessons useful to carry out a successful national struggle.

Agricultural/economic policy for a new state in the Horn of Africa

Harwood D. Schaffer

For more than thirty years, Oromo nationalists have been engaged in a struggle to liberate Oromia, the largest conquered nation within the Ethiopian Empire, from a succession of minority dominated governments and create a multinational democratic state in the Horn of Africa. As the liberation movement matures, one of the crucial tasks is the formulation of an agricultural/economic policy that will meet the needs of a nation in which nearly 80 percent of the population is engaged in subsistence agricultural production. This paper examines the current agricultural conditions in Oromia: coffee prices that have fallen since the early 1980s, the lack of infrastructure, state ownership of the land, a rapidly increasing population and decreasing farm plot size, and crop yields that are well below world averages. The neo-liberal solution to these circumstances includes the privatization of land ownership, the development of an export oriented agriculture to supply fruits, flowers, and vegetables for the European market, the importation of foodstuffs to reduce the level of malnutrition, and the elimination of tariffs.

Ignored in these recommendations are the economic characteristics of crop production—the low price elasticity of both supply and demand and the fixity of resources—as well as Oromo traditions which are based on a respect for the essential interconnectedness of creation and the maintenance of a balance between community ownership of land and individual responsibility. This paper identifies agricultural/economic policy elements that are consistent with Oromo traditions and values simultaneously taking into account the economic characteristics of crop production.

The State of HIV/AIDS in Oromiya: What does it Require to have an Effective and Comprehensive Response to the Epidemic?

Ibrahim Amae Elemo

HIV/AIDS prevalence in Oromiya is estimated at 2.4% of the population and about 300,000 people are estimated to live with the virus. Oromiya is among the states with relatively large population of persons infected or affected by the scourge of the deadly disease. In fact, some of the big towns in Oromiya such as Nekemte, Jimma, Shashamane do not only have high HIV infection rates in the country, but at a time when the epidemic is stabilizing in almost all of the major towns in the country, HIV infection continues to rise at an alarming rate in some parts of Oromiya. Besides, Oromiya was one of the states with the least capacity to absorb the various AIDS funds and execute different programs and projects. Cognizant of the magnitude of the problem and the intensified global efforts and partnership to halt the ride of the epidemic and mitigate its impacts, Ethiopia formulated the first AIDS policy in 1998, fourteen years after the discovery of the virus in the country. This was followed some years later by the establishment of HIV/AIDS prevention and project coordination offices in all national states. In Oromiya, during the last couple of years, relentless efforts were made to overcome some of the challenges in order to expedite comprehensive response to the epidemic through effective coordination of the endeavors of all stakeholders and actors. Different initiatives were undertaken and promising results obtained. However, although a lot remains to be done, the Oromiya HIV/AIDS office has been dissolved recently. Presently, the prevailing situation in Oromiya is very much frustrating and HIV/AIDS related service delivery and coordination of programs is one of the weakest in the country.

Family Size and Children's School Attendance in Rural Oromia

Kebede Feda

This paper is a topic from my dissertation essay for partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Economics. Many studies have been done in the rest of the world about the relationship between family size and children's school attendance, but to the best of my knowledge this is the first study for Oromia. Most studies found negative relationship between school attendance and family size in developed countries and mixed outcome in less developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan African countries. For instance, in my early study on Tanzania data, I found negative relationship but statistically insignificant before controlling other factors which may affect school attendances; however, after controlling parent characteristics (such as education and wealth level) the result turn to be positive but still

statistically insignificant. Just to highlight about insights of the study, schooling can be thought of as both an investment and consumption good. It represents an investment by parents in the future productivity and earnings of children, which affects the well being of parents and their children in the long run. To the extent that parents also get utility directly from the satisfaction of having “educated” children, it can also be thought of as consumption good. The factors affecting parents’ decisions to enroll their children will include measures of the costs and benefits of schooling both now and in the future, as well as measures of the household’s budget constraint. Specifically, these include: the intrinsic value that parents place on an education; the expected long-run benefits of schooling, the opportunity cost of schooling, and the costs of schooling, including school fees, uniforms, and the costs of other schooling inputs and the availability of schools. While these factors may explain the cause, my study is limited to how family size correlated to child schooling without accessing the cause of the sought relationship. The relationship between family size and child schooling may be altered by different factors, hence the effect of parent education and wealth is consider for farther justification while other factor still controlled. The data source for the study is household survey by the World Bank in 2006 for Rural Investment Climate Assessment in Ethiopian. The study employed/would employ a two-stage regression method to capture the two-way effect of the relationship (endogeniety). Household size refers to total numbers of people who lives in the household during the survey period. Number of children in the household is generated based on household head response. This include: son/daughter, son /daughter in law and grad son/daughter with respect to the head of the household. Parent’s education refers to the height formal schooling grade they completed. School attendance by children refers to whether the students were in school during the survey period. Finally, wealth indicator for household will be generated based on common/standard wealth indicator. The detailed descriptions of the variables mentioned here would be discuss.

Preliminaries to Oromo Dialectology: Towards Sub-classification

Kebede Hordofa

Information regarding the dialect situation in a diverse and largely unwritten language like Oromo is essential in standard work like dictionaries and reference grammars. Comparative Cushitic linguistics contains references to Oromo, and that data may be reliable enough, but as my excerpts of comparative word-list shows, there are interesting variations between the dialects. Basically published comparative data on Oromo dialects come from Heine 1981 and Stroemer 1987 on varieties of Oromo spoken in Kenya. Relatively little comparative work has been done on Ethiopia side although there are some useful pieces of work on individual dialects as far as it could be ascertained from the published literature. In the presentation I shall review the previous work on varieties spoken in Kenya since they have been the bases for further data collection from Ethiopia. I shall also introduce methods of data collection, analysis and arriving at conclusions. In general the paper introduces the study on progress which aims at identifying certain features (or isoglosses) that may characterize major dialect areas in Oromo including Kenya.

The Impact of Oromo Heroes and Heroines in Oromo Society

Kulani A. Jalata

I identified several outstanding Oromo heroes and heroines and examined the roles they have played in building Oromo consciousness and Oromummaa. I then specifically identified and explored key elements and characteristics that they have possessed and used to defend their people. I also explained that the Ethiopian government has killed many Oromo nationalist heroines and heroes in attempt to silence Oromos and destory their identity and peoplehood. In conclusion, I focused on their impacts on today's struggle for national liberation and democracy and what we can gain from their efforts and experiences.

A Grassroots Oromo Organization: Activities of Saphalo Foundation in Kenya

Mohammed Bedri

Education is an indispensable key to personal and social improvement. It can help ensure a safer, healthier, more prosperous and environmentally sound world, while simultaneously contributing to social, economic, and cultural progress as well as tolerance, and international cooperation. The number of Oromo refugees in Kenya has dramatically increased in recent year mainly for relative peace and stability compared to other neighboring countries. Currently, more than 20,000 Oromo refugees to live in Kenya, with overwhelming majority live in Nairobi. However, only 2% of these refugees are recognized by the UNHCR with of course very little assistance. The fate of the remaining vast majority categorized by the same organization as asylum seekers and unregistered migrants is yet to be known. Geographically, they are located at unhealthy and unsecured corner of the city neighboring at the notorious slump called Mathare. The area is so rampant and lawless that robbery and thefts are routine on daily basis. Police harassments and security threats from Ethiopian government sponsored killers make living really insufferable and agonizing one. As a result, they desperately needed someone who could share the burden. We could not help, but organizing them in the form of community, teach them how to combat and overcome such horrible difficulties are the solutions, we thought, we could attain. This paper present the activities Saphalo Foundation in Kenya.

Invasion of Borana Rangelands by Woody Perennials: Climate Change or Institutional Constructs?

Mohammed Chilalo and Alemayehu Negassa

Until the recent past, the Borana's own the largest population of herds in east Africa. The production of these herds entirely depends on the availability and management of pasture resources. For more than two millennia, the Borena have adopted a livelihood strategy in a fragile ecosystem by shifting the seasonal feeding grounds and using communal wells set out according to democratic institution called the Gada system. That way of life is now eroding to the extent of threatening their livelihoods. Undesirable woody perennials and unpalatable forbs

are invading the entire rangeland that was once finest rangeland in east Africa. The objective of this paper is to explore the causes of woody perennial invasion to these prime rangelands and recommend corrective policy measures. To attain these objectives, about four hundred comprehensive interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with pastoral and semi-pastoral households in three districts of Borana (Liban, Arero and Moyale) in 2004/5. Respondents asserted that the main causes for woody perennial invasion are the interplay of various factors. These factors are official banning of indigenous rangeland management practices, flawed development intervention, overstocking of livestock because of land distribution and new boundary demarcation, change in pastoralist livelihood strategy such as introduction of camel and sedentary farming, and to a lesser extent recurrent drought. The external restriction to the indigenous range management practice distorts the equilibrium condition of woody perennial-grass coexistence, which was fueled by extra ill-development interventions practiced by successive Ethiopian regimes. This disequilibrium favored the proliferation of woody perennials responsible for the reduction of rangeland pasture productivity. The overall erosion of the livelihood strategy constructed by state policies resulted in extreme poverty and food insecurity in the region. If current trend continues the well-being of the Borana people is under sever threat. Therefore, we recommend policies that integrate indigenous knowledge and urgently transform the neglected welfare of Borana people.

Who Owns the Ethiopian Nation-State? Understanding Ethiopian-Somali Ogaden Conflict Mohamed Mukhtar Hussein

The ownership of the Ethiopian nation-state was problematic from its inception in the last quarter of the 19th century, and particularly from the perspective of non-Abyssinian nations. Incongruous state formation processes resulted in colonization, conquest and annexation, which aggravated harmony among Ethiopian ethnic groups. Strong Abyssinian central control, shored up by long-term European and American support, impeded reconstruction of a modern nation-state and hardened tendencies to impose top-down and conceited common territorial identity. The Somali Ogaden people were the first, and one of the major, ethnic groups who challenged the legitimacy of a dominant ethnic state control. Somali nationalism has been the major expression of this challenge and has evolved, over time, into an outright demand for independence. With the demise of the imperial and militaristic domination and control, the Somali people contributed to the reconstruction of the state in 1991 as an ethnic-based federal system. Despite the attractiveness of the theoretical framework upon which Ethiopia was re-built on the ascent of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) to power, practical government implementation and sustenance of ethnic tokenism and puppetry and subsequent state abuse of human, environmental, and political rights re-stimulated Somali nationalism in Ethiopia. As a result of the destruction of the democratization process in 2005, national struggles for self-determination are at patience-deprived condition, which may lead either to disintegration of the Ethiopian nation-state into its constituent ethnic states or to collectively-owned rationale coalition for state reformation process. This research provides background information on the history and politics of Somali Ogaden struggle for self-determination and relates it to contemporary issues of ethnic federalism, secession demands, democratization processes and

opportunities and risks associated with political alliances for remodeling state power and mending ethnic relations. The research also provides analytical scenarios into the dynamics of regional and international state policies and their long term effects on the advancement of freedom, peace and justice in Ethiopia and of regional economic integration.

"Brutality: The Art of Governing in Ethiopia"

Mohammed Hassen

This paper is based on careful examination of several Abyssinian primary sources. Among others, these sources provide us with the Abyssinian worldview, how they perceived the government as an institution and how leaders came to power, and for what purpose they used their power. These sources form an important data for the study of a government as an institution within the Abyssinian political culture. In other parts of the world, a government is an institution that provides service, maintain law and order and respects the dignity of people, which are virtually absent from the Abyssinian political culture. Throughout the Abyssinian primary sources the same phenomenon is repeatedly observed. Leaders come to power only through war and warfare remains at the center of the life of every Abyssinian leader. By tradition, an Abyssinian leader had to be a warrior in the highest degree, brigand by necessity, and self-made king or leader. The marvelous thing about these primary sources, especially the chronicles, is that they do not omit even some of the leaders profoundly shocking barbarity. The chroniclers express without apparent intention of so doing how each leader executed his wars with a thoroughness and cold-bloodedness which would at times make a leader a monster. And it is probably never far from truth. Amazingly, there is not a single example of an Abyssinian leader who did not use brutality as an art of governing. Brutality as an art of governing is of course horrifying, but above everything else, it is the endless pillaging, looting and massacring of the peasantry in the name of governing, which is most shocking. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, perhaps of all the successes and victories attributed to the Abyssinian leaders and celebrated in their chronicles, is their looting, pillaging and massacre of the Oromo people. These sources clearly establish that the modern Ethiopian empire was built on the destruction of Oromo power, their political, cultural and religious institutions and devastation of the Oromo people themselves. For the Abyssinian leaders the cruel and brutal measures taken against the Oromo and other conquered people of southern and eastern Ethiopia were an integral part of their art of governance. Sometime things, ideas, institutions appear to change without actually changing. That is the case in Ethiopia, where governments, governing ideologies and leaders have changed in 1974 and 1991. However, brutality: the art of governing in Ethiopian has continued with shocking barbarity even in the so-called Democratic Federal Republic of Ethiopia, where innocent Oromo nationals are massacred and their dead bodies are left in the forest as food for wild animals.

The Emergence and Consolidation of Electoral Authoritarianism in Ethiopia

Leenco Lata

I will introduce the phenomenon of Electoral Authoritarianism and then go on to trace the history

of how TPLF leaders came to practice it. I will also touch on to the factors that conduce to the transformation of Electoral Authoritarianism into full-fledged pluralist electoral democracy.

Oromoo Gadaa System: Unacknowledged Indigenous African Socio-Political Democracy

Lubee Birru

Gadaa is a socio-political democratic system, invented by ancient Oromoo people to regulate political stability, economic development, social activities, cultural obligation moral responsibility, and the philosophy of religious order of the Oromoo society. It is an expression of an indigenous democratic knowledge that guides daily life of the Oromoo people. Politically, Gadaa is a democracy of five-fixed party system, a national program of eight fixed years, and an eight-fixed year stay in political power for the party and its officials. Educationally, it has a curriculum developed for six fixed learning grades, five fixed educators programs, eight fixed years to stay in each grade, forty fixed years in learning and teaching program and then eighty-eight fixed years to stay in the Gadaa system. It is also a system of smoothly transfer of power to the next party on line. In the Gadaa socio-political democratic system, members of all parties have an equal chance to learn from grade one to five, and have an equal chance to teach from grade one to grade five; equal chance to administer in the highest grade six or Lubaa grade through system of rotation where each party holds the highest offices in their nation for a limited eight years. At the end of eight years, for example, the first party on power known as Lubaa grade transfers the offices to Qondaala grade or the second party on line. The system puts all parties to move one-step forward every eight years as learners, from the lowest grade one to highest grade six, and then as educators from the highest teaching grade, seven, to the lowest teaching grade eleven. Gadaa is a well-established ideology for Oromoo people, they have practiced it for thousand years in Oromiyaa at the statewide level, and still they are practicing it at the local and village level. It has survived the colonial suppression because the system requires new born children automatically to be placed into their parents' proper party and grew up practicing it and remain practicing it for life. In short, it takes eight learning years to complete single grade; it takes forty learning years to get into Lubaa grade or grade six; it take forty teaching years for those in educator grade seven to eleven, it takes eight years to stay on political power, and it takes eighty-eight biological or social age to retire from the Gadaa system.

The Ethiopian State, Electoral Politics and Oromo People's Quest for Democracy

Merera Gudina

This planned paper will give the historical summary of the creation of the modern empire state of Ethiopia and the incorporation of the Oromos into the expanding empire. It then takes up the evolution of the empire state and the asymmetrical relations of the Oromos with the empire-builders. It moves to discuss the Oromo people's struggle for democracy and self-rule for much of the second half of the 20th century and beyond. By giving much emphasis to the present, it analyses the Ethiopian experience at electoral politics since 1991 using universally accepted

standards for “free and fair” elections, and sees how Oromos have been fared in such games to date. Finally, by taking as a point of departure the current political reality in Ethiopia, it attempts to answer the central question – to what extent electoral politics can deliver the Oromo people’s quest for democracy.

Invoking the Right to Self-Determination in Ethiopia: Relevant or Taboo? The Oromo Quest to Self-Determination

Negaso Gidada

I was serious on the issue of the right to Self-Determination when I stressed it in my speech on December 12th, 1994. On the closing ceremony of the Constituent Assembly I said “Every citizen’s human and democratic rights are respected; Through the unconditional recognition of the right to self determination, nations, nationalities and peoples entered a covenant: whereas no one can coercively make them Ethiopian, they willingly choose to live together to be Ethiopians;...Our focus, next, shall be on the implementation of issues found settlement in the Constitution. We face the task of establishing a government which will build the new Ethiopia under the guidance of the Constitution. This task requires the active participation of all the peoples of Ethiopia. Unless a government that respects and enforces the Constitution is established, there is no doubt that the aspirations affirmed in the Constitution will be emasculated.” I have tried in this presentation, through life experiences I have gone through, to trace back the evolution of the struggle of the Oromo people for the respect of their right to Self-Determination. The ruling class in Ethiopia in the past as well as present does not tolerate the invocation of the right to Self-Determination. But political organizations demanding the respect of the right of the Oromo people to Self-Determination have evolved since 1973 and have mushroomed at present. This, contrary to what many think, is for me healthy, human and democratic. They have the right to exist. They also give options of choice for the people. What is demanded from them is only the respect of others, mutual tolerance and the willingness to bow down to the will and choice of the people. There are also issues which the Oromo people raise and which should be addressed genuinely. They are questions of Self-Determination. The right to Self-Determination is provided in the Ethiopian Constitution and International Covenants. These documents are not meant to decay on our book shelves. They have life and have to grow every day. They are there to work. They are there to be implemented. The right to Self-Determination has “Internal” and “External” dimensions. Whether “Internal” or “External” the options must be referred to the people and ask them to choose the best option which satisfies their interests. One who is sure of oneself and is self confident does not fear others and has courage to bow down and accept the decision of the people. The important point to be remembered is that the people decide or determine on their own destiny. No body else, not political organizations, not the government, not big powers, and not God decides their destiny and determine their fate. This is what is lacking in Ethiopia in general and in Oromia in particular. This situation is harming the people. I hope that the discussions at this conference would contribute to the efforts being made to save the people from further harm.

Oromo Music: Where was it then and Where is it Now?

Qamar Yusuf

Personal views and overviews of the recent progress and challenges in Oromo music will be presented. Visions relative to future advancement of Oromo art with emphasis on the need to maintain the soul of Oromo artistic identity will also be included. Techniques in the uniqueness of Oromo music, its distinctiveness from other musical traits will be illustrated.

Evaluating the Gadaa System and Compare it to Other Social Organizations Around the World

Rundassa Eshete Hunde

Like others systems of our world, the Gadaa system is one of forms of social organization which the Oromo nation have invented for their organizational use. Other systems such as capitalism, socialism, fascism, Nazism, welfare-statism and communism etc have their own weaknesses and thus looking at the Gadaa system from this point of view and see the weakness of the Gadaa system will be a fair move. Throughout human history, several basic forms of social organizations have been used and these basic social organizations share common goal and purpose even though contemporary systems such as the capitalist system narrowly focused on promoting individualism while socialism's motto was the promotion of collectivism. Looking at the Gadaa system in the light of these two systems may provide us a hint how systems can grow to their aging life expectancy and where the Gadaa system share same fate and modify it for Oromians future use.

The Challenge of Establishing Democratic Governance for Development in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa: The Critical Role of the Oromo in the Development of Ethiopia

Sisay Asefa

In this short presentation I will review my personal views and understanding the of the critical role of the Oromo in Ethiopian state, including their key contribution to the formation of the modern Ethiopian Society. I will then move on suggestions on how to empower the Oromo within a united and democratic multi-ethnic Ethiopian state including the critical constructive role political elites and leaders of the Oromo must play in this process. The Oromo people constitute the majority of the population of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. The overwhelming majority of the Oromo of about 40 million are in Ethiopia with some living in northern Kenya. The Oromo are diverse in spite of a generally common culture and language. This diversity is natural and it is primarily based on the geographic location of where they live. The Oromo are also among the most assimilated group in Ethiopia, through historic migration and having intermarried with virtually all other ethnic groups of Ethiopia such as Amhara, Somali, Tigray, and various Southern Peoples. They practice Christianity and Islam as well as indigenous or

traditional religions. Most Oromo make their livelihood on agriculture and they produce the bulk of food that feeds the Ethiopian population. The Oromo constitute the heart and trunk of the modern Ethiopian state. There can be no viable modern Ethiopian state without the Oromo. The Oromo played key role in battles in the unity of Ethiopia and against foreign invaders. Oromos today constitute a major part of the Ethiopian Defense Forces over the past century across different Ethiopian regimes. The Oromo have one of the most open and democratic culture among Ethiopians. Their system of African Democracy known as *Gada* is a well known African indigenous political system that governs social order, politics, as well as peaceful conflict resolution. In spite of the above natural and human resource, cultural, and economic potential, the Oromo share mass poverty and lack of empowerment with other peoples of Ethiopia. The primary reason for this dire situation is rooted in the lack democratic and responsible governance and abuse of central state power over the various Ethiopian regimes of the past, as well as misguided economic and agricultural development policies including land policy by recent Ethiopia regimes with various degrees. This paper will argue the current and future viability as well as the democratic revival of the Ethiopian state is not possible without the political and economic empowerment of the Oromo in proportion of their representation in Ethiopian society aimed at enhancing their livelihoods through improvement in education and other areas of human development such as health, employment, and quality education.

Deforestation is Putting Fresh Water Resource at Risk in Oromia

Tolessa Deksissa and Bula Atomssa

Most parts of Oromia were used to have excess fresh water resources where streams were originated from springs surrounded by densely populated endogenous trees. To date, however, deforestation, resettlement, soil erosion, land degradation and overgrazing are putting the sustainability of such water resource of the region at risk. Forested headwater streams are the source of much of the streams of the region where any human-induced or natural disturbances in the headwater determines the quantity and quality of water. The current soil and water conservation practice in the region is not comparable with the alarming rate of deforestation and soil erosion, and consequently water quantity as well as quality is deteriorating continuously. Objectives of this review study include assessing the current situation of water resource management in Oromia, and highlighting what could be done to reduce the problem. During dry weather flow, it was found that natural streams in the central high lands of Oromia strongly depend on springs that can be affected by change of land use, deforestation and removal of endogenous tree species that are crucial for soil and water conservation in the region. Furthermore, multidisciplinary approach that may help in protecting the fresh water resource in the region is presented.

The Human Rights Record of the Ethiopian Government - an American import

Trevor Trueman

Despite the paper pledges of previous and current Ethiopian regimes to U.N. human rights

principles, human rights have never been respected in Ethiopia, since its establishment as an empire state. Human rights rhetoric has only existed in order to give cosmetic credibility to the support given by western governments, most notably that of the USA. Growing appreciation of the dire state of human rights and democracy reached a peak in the west due to the violence unleashed by the Ethiopian government in response to public outcry following the 2005 elections and the publication of damning reports by Human Rights Watch of ongoing atrocities against Oromo people. However, the U.S. client status enjoyed by the TPLF-led government has been strengthened by its invasion of Somalia on behalf of the U.S. in its war of terror on Islam.

Pan-Oromo Confederations in the Seventeenth Century: A Legacy? **Tsega Etefa**

The Oromo seem to have lived in a single government before their separation during the medieval period. Since antiquity they used to defend themselves and conduct territorial expansions together. While the main factors which led to their separation are still far from mature, demographic factors, territorial expansion and the structure of their Gadaa governance system, seem to have led to their fission. In spite of the emergence of several groups, the Oromo still kept their unity and identity. “After separation, the different branches of the Oromo nation lived in federations and confederations in several autonomous but contiguous territories. Segmentation into different branches did not diminish the shared belief of common descent from one founding father”. Some of such confederations include the Afre (formed by four groups of the Boranaa branch) and the Sadacha (formed by three groups of the Barentuu as well as Boranaa branch). But the Oromo from both Boranaa and Barentuu branches laid governance strategies and formed well-planned confederations. Such confederations existed at least since the second half of the sixteenth century. Although we lack detailed sources about the names of these pan-Oromo confederations, from the chronicles accounts, we have the Boranaa League which was formed in 1617. According to the league, the Boranaa and the Itu were lined up against Gojjam; the Marawwaa against Bagemedder; and the Karrayyuu against Tigre. Emperor Susenyos (1607-32) and his officers were confused as to which region to defend and what priorities to set up. This helped the Oromo to consolidate themselves both north and south of the Blue Nile. Pan-Oromo operations seem to have been phenomenal particularly during the seventeenth century. In the opinion of Manuel de Almeida (wrote in the first half of the 17th century), “What makes the [Oromo] much feared is that they go to war and into battle determined and firmly resolved to conquer or die.” The pan-Oromo confederations continued in the eighteenth century though seem to have declined in the 19th. But the legacy continued. The Maccaa-Tulamaa association of the 1960s seems to be one of the greatest legacies of the early pan-Oromo confederations. Oromo unity and nationalism had long roots in the past. Therefore, the Oromo nation must dig into its past, rediscover its true self and bring out those values that enabled pre-colonial Oromia to defend itself and to maintain social harmony. The present paper is a preliminary attempt to look into the history and legacies of the seventeenth century pan-Oromo confederations.

Grassroots Activism to End Gender-Based Violence: Working From Within the Culture

Zegeye Asfaw

This short paper attempts to highlight experience of a local NGO, HUNDEE/Oromo Grassroots Development Initiative. It in particular describes grassroots activism to institutionalize respect, fulfilling and protection of women's human rights. The experience and its interpretation are personal and draw heavily on direct engagement and conversations with rural communities in Oromia. Live stories depicting women's world is like reading a 'text' and its interpretation is influenced by the 'world-view' the reader holds. The local NGO that I happen to lead is civic and developmental, where even the latter engagement is defined by a search of the positive within the Oromo culture and accompaniment of rural communities to build on their positive 'stories', which have seemingly succumbed to debilitating narratives, but, which surprisingly enough, could be rekindled or 'resurrected'. Our role and responsibility is nothing more or less than such accompaniment where rural communities become authors of their own dreams and designers of a better future where human dignity and prosperity become the norm rather than an exception. What we label as civic engagement is conveniently labeled as 'civic education', and the phrase is less threatening than the image 'human rights education' creates in any jurisdiction where accountability of 'duty bearers' to 'right holders' has not yet been mainstreamed in the thinking of many. The choice of the phrase 'civic education' has not in anyway whatsoever compromised the integrity of our engagement working towards institutionalizing respect and protection of women's human rights. Our search of the 'positive' within the Oromo culture as the basis of questioning and stretching the 'status quo' and aligning it to conform to values of human rights behooves us to explore the rural landscape with 'appreciative eyes'. Such exploration of the 'positive' demands of the facilitators, respect and reverence for the receiving culture and readiness to be guided and coached by those 'accepted' as repositories of the Oromo culture. Another commitment to the process is a conscious watchfulness against any trace of an interventionist agenda, which may deny us a status of 'insider' in the search of 'positive' elements of the Oromo culture. Being so accepted has consequently created 'open space' where issues of concern, which either advance or denigrate the human worth of women, are raised and discussed without limitations and restrictions. Inquiry to find out and nurture 'positive' elements of the Oromo culture has taken us to rural landscape where two great religions are practiced (Islam and Christianity), and where 'Waqeefach' as a religion is comfortably nested in the domain of the dominant religions. The Oromo 'Gada' system of governance, fragmented as it might appear, holds strong influence upon the conduct and behavior of rural communities irrespective of the religion one associates himself or herself with. The popular stance among rural communities is that "they are first and foremost Oromo with rich Gada traditions, and all other is secondary". The revival of 'Siqqee' or 'Siinqqee and all what it symbolizes is facilitating women's 'claim making' of their rights and human dignity they deserve.

The Cultural Oppression of Oromo Women in Society

Zeituna Kalil

This paper identifies and explains some cultural elements that oppress and undermine the role of Oromo women. It points out how Oromo women face triple oppression: national or ethnic, class, and gender oppression. First, it explains how Oromo women are oppressed and exploited by the Ethiopian colonial state. Second, the paper discusses how Oromo women are exploited and dehumanized because of their social class. Third, it explores how Oromo women are oppressed by the Oromo culture that mainly protects the interest of Oromo men at the cost of Oromo women. Finally, the paper systematically examines how these different forms of oppression limit the visions and potentials of women in Oromo society.