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Annual Conference**

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OSA Vice President**

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Editor's Note

This publication contains the 21st Annual Conference Proceedings of the Oromo Studies Association, held at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minnesota on July 28-29, 2007.

As has been OSA's tradition for the last twenty years, I am honoured to follow in footsteps of many before me to present to you, as the Vice President of OSA, a collection of papers and essays discussed during the two-day conference.

The theme of 2007 Annual Conference was "Challenges and Opportunities for Oromo Quest for Self Determination in the 21st Century". It was rich and diverse in its coverage: it included issues ranging from human rights and democracy in the Horn of Africa, to challenges and opportunities for Oromo self-determination in the 21st century, to education and health in Oromia, to Oromo entrepreneurship and business opportunities, to women empowerment, to Oromo music and culture. It was also marked by a higher than usual participation of the Oromo youth in the discussion of these issues, thereby injecting a lot of fresh ideas and perspectives into the discussions.

Notwithstanding the rich discussions, this edition presents only some –not all--of the papers discussed at the conference. Following past tradition, I made a request to all conference participants to send in their full paper for publication by May 31, 2007. Included in this edition are thus only those papers, which were submitted at this due date.

The papers are presented to you in the order in which they were discussed at the conference. Please note that the last paper by Jimma D. Tufa was presented and discussed during the 2006 OSA Annual Conference—a carry-over from the previous year that nonetheless contains useful insights on the useful role that two previous Oromo journals played in the Oromo struggle.

You will note that this is a new presentation format as well. OSA is publishing, for the first time, its proceedings on a CD-ROM. The rationale for this has to do both with the desire to reduce the financial costs associated with such publications as well as to make it easier for our members to file and store the useful data, research, and analysis contained in these proceedings. I would like to thank Dr Mesfin Abdi for providing the technical support needed to publish it on a CD-ROM.

Finally, just as the human soul animates the human body, so too the pursuit of knowledge and advancement nourishes the soul of a nation and defines its status. For the past twenty years, OSA has been in the forefront not only of researching and understanding the soul of the Oromo people, but also of assessing its status as a nation. The papers in this edition, modest as they may be in terms of quality and coverage, can nevertheless be seen as a continuum in that worthy effort.

Abebe Adugna, Ph.D.
Vice President, 2008
Oromo Studies Association

Keynote Speech I
By Dirribi Demissie Bokku, Matcha-Tullama President
(Read out by OSA President)

I would like to join fellow speakers in congratulating OSA for organizing its 21st Conference. Above all I wish to congratulate those dedicated officers of OSA who worked to promote the goals of OSA in general. I am grateful to OSA's current president Dr. Gobena Huluka and all Executive Committee Members for their concern and timely invitation as a keynote speaker. I remain grateful for your understanding the work of Matcha and Tulama Association (M.T.A) and its current executive committee leadership. The current M.T.A. leadership tried its level best to carry on the struggle initiated by Oromo heroes like the late Haile Mariam Gammada who was a foresighted and talented organizer of the Oromo people. I am honored to make a keynote speech on the 21st Annual Conference of OSA about the history of M.T.A., self-help Association, and the role of NGOs in Ethiopia and elsewhere in the world. Unfortunately, I couldn't participated in this conference representing M.T.A. because of the rejection of my request for entry visa at USA embassy. Before I say a few words about history of M.T.A. and its future plan, I would like to state the historical conditions that led to the creation of Matcha-Tulama, Oromo Nation eldest self-help Association.

By mere geographical coincidence, Oromos are close neighbors of the birth places of the three Semitic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). These religions have been competing to get more followers using all means including brutal military aggression. The brunt of the problem fell on the Oromo people and hindered their political, economic and cultural development for more than 500 years. Typical example is the Abyssinian king Zerayakob (1434-1468) who killed four of his sons and three daughters who refused to accept Christianity (T. Mekuria 1951:158). The Semitic ideologies forced the Oromo people to reject its Gada democratic system of administration and imposed the Solomonic dynastic rule. They also forced the Oromo (Cushitic) people to reject their traditional religion Waaqeffanna and imposed Christianity on them. The Oromo people resisted the imposition of political, economic and religious system of Semitics by organizing themselves under the famous Gada organizational leadership. Of the 16th century's Oromo resistance, Gada Michelle's (1554-1562) is worth mentioning what they did at Dego against Christian army that were supported by Portuguese artillery and at Azalo against Muslims army which were supported by Turkish Musketter (Bahire, Getachew Haile, 1997 E.C., 82). In the 19th century, after European interference, Oromia was conquered and our political leaders (Hayyus), our religious leaders (Ayyantus) were systematically hunted and killed. Oromo's invaluable historical, cultural and religious knowledge's were also destroyed. The young and strong men and women were sold as slaves. Historical and religious artifacts of Oromo origin such as Chaachu, Kaallacha, Challe, and Bokku were destroyed by Semitics religion leaders. They changed names of persons and places to Semitic names. After Oromos were colonized, the self- identity of individuals as being Oromo primarily remained on individual and group levels and any mention of Oromo national identity was forbidden. Oromos identity was targeted for destruction by the colonial administrative regions that were established to suppress the Oromo people and exploit their resources. As the result, Oromo relational identities have been localized, and not strongly connected to the collective identity of Oromumma. Oromos have been

separated from one another and prevented from exchanging ideas and information for more than a century.

Gada ceremony at Chaffee under Odaa tree was outlawed. People were forbidden to go to Dirre Muuda or Ardaa Jilaa. Odaa tree of the Gada Assembly was cut down and military garrison were built on its site. They destroyed our Galma and Ardaa-Jilaa. Holy places were replaced by church and mosque (Qullabbil, Dirre Shek Husein). Thus, Oromo and Oromumma were systematically destroyed for a century. Ororno elites, who realized the deteriorating situation of Oromumma designed the way out of these difficulties. Hence, M.T.A was founded in 1962. Before the formation of M.T.A., there were two Edirs in Finffine (traditional association to help each other especially on burial ceremony). Tulama is the indigenous clan of Finfinne, while Matcha is indigenous of central and western Oromia. These two major Oromo clans were under one Gada administration under Odaa Nabe. In the good old days, they were competing to take slate power, until the Abyssinian regimes banned the Gada system and created suspicion and enmity between them. The designer of M.T.A. first merged these two Edirs and named it Matcha and Tulama Edir that advanced the formation of wide self-help association.

Since it was impossible to be organized in the name of all Oromos, the founding fathers of M.T.A. started their organizing projects safely under the guise of reconciling and pacifying these two “opponent” Oromo clans. Under this reconciling guise, they got permission to gather people at one place and teach Ororno history for a short while. They also advised other Ororno clans to be organized or to join M.T.A. with the main aim of raising Oromos’ self-awareness. The organizers of M.T.A. refrained from the use of Oromo names due to the fear of the then prevailing imperial regime. Almost all Oromo clans joined M.T.A. Thus, M.T.A. organized mass gathering in various town of Oromia, and encouraged the Oromo people to build schools, clinics, bridges and road. M.T.A. built many schools and clinics in various places in Oromia. M.T.A. taken as the pioneer of modern Oromo nationalism, has contributed immensely to the construction of self awareness among the Oromo people. The seeds of modern Oromo nationalism emerged among the Ororno elites, who were increasingly aware of their second status in the imperial regime’s military and civilian bureaucracy in the first years of 1960s, (Alana 1993; Merera, 2006). By mid 1960s, the M.T.A.had began to attract Oromo elites of the day and signaled to the imperial regime for the possibility and coming danger of Oromo Nationalism. Then M.T.A. was quickly banned and its leaders were killed, imprisoned or deported to solitary confinement in remote areas. The ideal of M.T.A. lived on and was taken up by Oromo students and the younger intellectuals, who totally elevated the Oromo question by demanding for the right to self-determination.

During the military regime, M.T.A. remained banned while the imprisoned and deported leaders were released. After the fall of the Military Regime in 1991, M.T.A. opened its office and resumed its organizing project. Under difficult conditions, the M.T.A. continued its work of educating and organizing the Oromo people in different parts of Oromia. The Abyssinian led government of Ethiopia, who was uncomfortable with the rise of Oromo self-consciousness, started plotting against M.T.A. and the interest of Oromos. The EPRDF decided to change the capital city of Oromia from

Finfinne to Adama (about 100 km east of Finffine). M.T.A. opposed this illegal attempt constitutionally by writing letters to the concerned authorities, to the House of People Representative, Prime Minister and Oromia's Regional Government to reverse the unconstitutional decision. In additions, it delegated Oromo elders for further negotiation. But all was in vain. Finally, M.T.A. called public demonstration in accordance with the constitution to show public grievance against the illegal move of the government to expropriate Oromia's ownership over Finfinne . In response to M.T.A call about, 100,000 people gathered on the 4th January 2004 at Finffine Square early in the morning. Unexpectedly, police force with armored vehicles dispersed the gathering by brutally beating the people. On the incident, M.T.A. leaders including the president were detained for a day, Oromo elders, Gutu Marga (82) and Mengistu Jalata (73) were brutally beaten by police and dragged on the ground by police.

This brutality offended Oromo youth. The university student requested to demonstrate against the expropriation of Finffine. Their legal request was answered by detaining about 500 Oromo students in Kolffe police training camp for 24 hours. After very harsh corporal punishment, police confiscated university ID cards and were refused entry to the campus. Since most of them were from peasant family who joined the university from remote region of Oromia, they became homeless. From the 500 expelled students, 347 students became homeless and were thrown on Finffine Street without food and shelter.

M.T.A. tried to supply these students with food and shelter by coordinating donors from domestic as well as from abroad. M.T.A. supported 347 students for about three months meanwhile it also strongly opposed the inhuman, illegal and immoral action of expelling 347 Oromo students of whom more than 60 were female. It also delegated elders to negotiate about their immediate readmission with the university authorities. This good will of M.T.A. sheltering the students and pacify the condition was also considered crime by Ethiopian authorities. After repeated intimidation and harassments on 18th of May 2004, police arrested M.T.A. leaders, alleging that they were found agitating people against the government. Police searched the office and their homes and took many valuable documents. While the association leaders were under investigation in police custody, Ministry of Justice issued a letter dated July 2, 2004 to confiscate M.T.A. property and its permission was revoked. At the same time, the police imprisoned the guard on duty and left the office gate open irresponsibly. Thus, whatever M.T.A. had was looted including the historical archive, financial documents, registration books, magazines, books and historical canvas paintings of M.T.A. emblem, the portrait of the martyr general Taddasa Birru and Abba Gada, office materials and all office furniture.

Oromo elders and M.T.A. members of the board of directors accused Ministry of Justice for the illegal confiscation and revocation of the license. The First Instant Court decided in favor of M.T.A. on October 2, 2006. Due to the disobedience of Ministry of Justice to the court decision, M.T.A. was unable to resume its operation. Until now, negotiation is under way between Ministry of Justice and Oromo elders to renew M.T.A. license and enable it to be operational. After three years of imprisonment, some M.T.A. leaders were released on bail on March 6, 2007 with a high probability to be detained again. A secretary and four members of board of directors of M.T.A. are still

in jail. Personally, I prefer to stay in Oromia at any risk to continue my obligation as President of M.T.A.

M.T.A is not the ideal type of NGO or political party. It is a sort of mass and national organization. As clearly indicated in its amended action program, its main objectives are:

- a) To create conducive conditions for the Oromo people to come together, know each other, and exchange ideas on the problems of Oromo People
- b) To encourage Oromo Nationalism, enable the young generation to know about their back ground, language, culture and history.
- c) To organize and urge the Oromo people, to develop their economic and cultural wealth.

Of course as the Oromo saying goes “Yoo milaan dhaabatan, mormaan sirbuu” (one has to get where to stand before dancing), the territorial integrity of Oromia is our concern and M.T.A. never compromise on the question of Oromia’s national integrity. That is what we paid dearly including lives of many Oromo youth (Gadissa Hirpasa, Alemayoo Garba and many others). That is why we defended the cause of Finfinne at a high cost, while the fate of Harar and Dire Dawa integrity are still undecided. According to Asnake Kefale and Hussien Jemmas’ research report of 2006 on population size of these cities, ” The Harari region is multiethnic which include: Oromo (52.3%) Amhara (32.6%) Harari (7.1%) and Gurage (3.2%). Dire Dawa, the second largest city in Ethiopia next to Finffine and multiethnic in its character in which the Oromo constitutes (48%), Amhara (27.2%), Somali (13.9%) and Gurage (4.3%) (Asnake and Hussein 2006-77). Without taking into consideration historical evidences and the population living around these two Oromo cities, Oromo population in both cities is a clear majority. So there is no natural or cultural reasons that justify the alienation of these two cities form Oromia national territory.

M.T.A.’s immediate plans are to open its offices in various districts of Oromia, and to preserve historical and religious centers such as Odaa Nabe, Madda walaabuu. Tulluu Mormor Tullu Nam Dur, Dirree Muuda, etc. and to build museum, theater, conference halls, and cultural centers in the above mentioned reserved historical places and propagate Oromo culture and Oromumma among the young generation of Ororno. Concerning other NGOs, M.T.A. welcomes their existence. There are various types of NGOs in Ethiopia with different objectives. Some are religious oriented others are humanitarians or those in tendency for rural development and poverty alleviation. There are different expatriate and indigenous NGOs such as CARE Ethiopia, Oxfam, World Vision, Christian Children’s Fund and Gudina Tumssa Foundation (G.T.F). As Dr. Kassahun wrote “in a situation where political regimes did not address the needs of the marginalized and the needy, NGOs interventions are considered as crucial in the mobilization and effective deployment of underutilized local resources. NGOs arc therefore considered as promoters of self-help initiatives and they are viewed as promoters of local mobilization of communities and group” (Kassihun Berhanu, 2006,84). Among various NGOs operating in Ethiopia the G.T.F. is an indigenous NGO founded in 1992 with a broad objective of serving people in a holistic manner. This is in line with the vision of the late reverend Gudina Tumssa, after whose name

the organization was established. Reverend Gudina Tumssa and his brother Barro Tumssa, martyrs for the Oromo cause, were founding members of M.T.A. Accordingly, G.T.F. vision revolves around and contributing towards realization of an integrated human development, the fulfillment of the spiritual and physical needs of target groups (Kassahun, 2006, 87). G.T.F. first encountered with the Karrayu pastoralist who are inhabiting the Fantale Woreda of Oromia Region in November 1994. When consultation was made with Karrayu elders on pressing local needs by way of problem identification, the Karrayu attributed the root cause of their impoverishment to lack of education and thus put the need to initiate a school at the top of their top priorities (Kassahun, 2006:88).

As cited above and mentioned repeatedly by many Oromo's, the major shortcoming of Oromo people is lack of education and national self-awareness and that is why M.T.A. planned to organize a committee of culture and history that will evaluate and reward individuals and groups who worked hard for the sake of Oromo. In comparison with our land mass and population size of Oromo, Oromo are unorganized nation. This has to be realized and we should work hard to reverse this condition. In the past, our ancestors were prime example of organized human cultural development and a pride for black people. Because of our unique organization of the Gada system, George F. Carter wrote "... of greater interest, perhaps is the Gada Republic a unique political invention found in Negro Africa. In addition to primitive family band democracy common to mankind and the despotic states simulated by contact with the near East and Egypt. The Oromos invented an age-graded political structure not found elsewhere in the world. In this structure, duties fell upon age groups and men progressed through various groups (warriors, councilors, governors) and were retired as elders and they were respected and listened to but they have no official duties. Few people in the world can claim such great invention. It is at the same level of originality as the Chinese invention of civil service examinations.

This review, then should remove the picture of African as a vast tropical forest occupied from time immemorial and backward people. Instead, a picture emerges of considerable accomplishments by the Oromo (Man and Land, A Cultural Geography by George F. Carter 1967:158- 59). What has to be stressed and appreciated is that what George Carter expressed remarkably by saying that "The Oromo invented an age-Graded political structure not found elsewhere in the world". This is a great historical reward to our ancestor's organizational capacity. Our previous Hayyus and Ayyaantus had the determination and patience to organize and lead their contemporary society, but why not us? They were at head of organizational skill. But we are at the tail of current world nations. This has to be reversed by our determined effort, and we shall not remain at the back indefinitely. Our elites have to sacrifice their intellect and material wealth for the sake of Oromos' self-awareness. Of course I realize that there are some enemy agents or evil thinking personalities in every society who make the organizational works harder than it should be. Even though there are no other ways to emancipate the Oromo people from backwardness, we have to work hard to overcome it.

Why is the Semitics religion and culture propagated in the Middle East and around the world? I do not think it is due to the quality of thought that is in their religious books,

but it is the quality and determination of their organizational network that enabled them to expand their religious and culture. Their religion and culture expanded at the expense of destroying Oromos' religion and cultural values. Some scholars wrote about political and economic inflicted on colonized people, but knowingly or unknowingly they evade the damage done to our people morale values and psychological make-up due to cultural subjugation. Oromo elite's organizations such as OSA have to pay attention to this side of our problem. It was not only George F. Carter who were amazed at former Oromos' organizational efficiency, Abba Bahire and Professor Getachew Haile had also written the following, "It was not Oromos becoming majority in number neither being blessed to be as many as grass that enabled them to expand easily to ward the north, but it was their organizational efficiency that enabled them to win the contemporary king and occupy the country" (Getachew Haile, 1997, 106). Here we have to pay attention and learn from the roles our ancestors played by being organized. If we are unable to learn from our past parents organizational history, at least we have to learn from Jewish people who are still the most organized nation in the world.

One may strive for personal success, intellectually or for material wealth. Of course attaining that by itself is a great success in life. But it is an incomplete success unless one gets self-rule as a nation. Until we achieve self-rule, our intelligence remain underestimated by others.

So Oromos' have to strive to achieve personal as well as national success. We have to double our duty to the historical backlogs. If we are determined and organized, we can overcome it easily. That is what is expected from every Oromo. We should not expect miracles from others, we have to participate and do it ourselves. No other man or nation is duty bound to solve our problems, it is we who have to handle it on timely fashion. Thus, Oromos should get organized. Wherever we are, we should get organized locally, nationally and international with the common goal Orommuuma. We shall be organized in profession, in art, in gender and intra-gender and in business. OSA is a typical example of the types of organizations Oromos are looking for. OSA's contribution in exposing and disseminating current Oromo people's problem, with possible solutions by issuing timely magazines and books such as the Journals of Oromo Studies are remarkable. In Oromo Studies Journal, Volume 4 number I, Professor Asafa Jalata and Harwood Schaffer have written almost what has to be said about Oromos. What remains is to disseminate it and work for its application. Hence, OSA deserves appreciation from all Oromos. I wish to express my respect and appreciation to OSA in the name of Oromo, the Great Nation of Africa.

As the Oromo saying goes "Akcaakayyuun obboleessaa". OSA is an eldest grandson of M.T.A. According to Oromos tradition of Oboo-Coora, Obbo in Matcha society, and Qudaadduu-walannaa, Qudaadduu in southern Oromia. Grand father and grand sons are allies, while father and sons are rivalry, in Oromo Gada system. So M.T.A. and OSA are allies.

The present day young generation of Oromia is in need of materials to be read. Since there are no books in Afaan Oromo except school text books. At least some books such as:

1. GADA three approaches to the study of African society

2. Oromo Democracy
3. Oromo religion
4. The Oromo of Ethiopia
5. Oromia and Ethiopia, State Formation and Ethnic National Conflict (1868-1992)
6. Prison of Conscience and etc., may contribute a lot if translated to Afaan Oromo. In accordance with the permission of the Authors Oromo elites shall follow the path of Dr. Ayelew Kanno who translated the works of Antonie D'Abbadie and De salviac from French to English and enabled many to read the valuable history of Oromia in the 19 and 20th centuries. I am grateful to him in the name of the Oromo Nation for his great determination and effort to accomplishing these tedious works of translation.

Finally, I wish a good luck and success for OSA as well as the Oromo people, the Great Nation of Africa. Thank you.

Keynote Speech II

By Zegeye Asfaw Abdi

Dr Gobena Huluka, President of OSA
OSA Board Members
Distinguished Guests and Participants
Brothers and Sisters,

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to be invited to this Annual Conference of Oromo Study Association and to make few opening remarks. I take the invitation not only as a personal recognition, but more importantly as an extension of honor and recognition to millions back at home who are struggling to claim their rights and demand accountability from those who are in power through civic engagement.

My remarks will focus on the evolution of civil society organizations, their aspirations, and the place they occupy in the deepening of the democratic process and a culture for the respect of human rights. While doing so, I want also to bring to the attention of the Conference and to the general membership of the Association historical role it could play in accompanying civil society organizations in the long journey of being and becoming credible and reliable local institutions with the required capabilities to effectively engage in policy dialogue and becoming a watch dog to ensure that the interests and rights of the Oromo people are well protected. This may sound a tall order, but as the saying goes a journey of thousand miles begins with the first stride one is prepared to take.

We members of Oromo civil society organizations give credence and legitimacy to your Association because of the unique position it enjoys as a knowledge center for the practitioners on the ground. The various subjects to be covered and dialogued over in various panels you have organized will be source of inspiration and will provide theoretical and scholarly underpinnings to field practitioners who may not afford the time and resource in light of their demanding tasks of mobilizing communities to claim their rights and demand accountabilities, and also in light of responding to numerous accountabilities incumbent upon themselves as well.

As all of you might well know, the Oromo people have had rich associational life where access to social capital of every member of the polity was guaranteed through web of interconnectedness. Ruthless military onslaught declared over the Oromo people and other nations and nationalities in the late 18th century not only targeted their land but also their institutions of governance and their rich associational life. Millions gave their lives defending their land, institutions and the richness of their associations. Successive Ethiopian rulers and their agents had one singular mission in terms of Oromo associational life—their uncompromising stance of plucking at its bud the blossoming or revival of Oromo institutions and associations. Despite meticulously designed mission to totally annihilate Oromo institutions and associations, remnants of these institutions still exist waiting for a resourceful mind to reconstruct viable institutions and associations out of what sometimes appear to be in ruins. No other Oromo civil society organization is well positioned than your Association to reconstitute robust institutions and people's organization from remnants currently

nesting in Oromo traditional poems and parables. Being nostalgic about these institutions may serve some purpose, but reconstituting them into viable and robust institutions must be taken as a calling for the present generation.

Several pathways could be adopted, but reorienting them within the framework of human rights and human development is critical. This is a challenge that requires Oromo scholars to provide deliverables in terms of techniques, tools and methodologies that will breathe life to dormant and fragmented Oromo institutions and associations. This is not “OSA alone” enterprise, but one that may have to mobilize the knowledge of Oromo scholars, politicians, practitioners, Oromo elders, the youth etc. who are willing and ready to align personal ambitions to the revival of genuine institutions and associations.

A few dozens of Oromo civil society organizations with or without such accompaniment are making immense contributions to the awakening of the people and their organizations to make rightful claims and demand accountability from those in power. This is mainly due to narrow ‘political space’ accorded to civil society organizations through adoption of human rights instruments as rules of engagement. Notwithstanding the opening of the ‘political space’, however restrictive it might be, considerable number of civil society organizations have opted to play safe and defined themselves as service providers rather than embracing ‘good governance’ and ‘empowerment’ agenda and preparing communities to exact accountabilities from decentralized official structures as citizens and tax payers.

The Breton Wood Institutions and other multi-lateral agencies that championed ‘horizontal’ accountability focusing only on reforming state institutions, started talking about after May 2005 elections of ‘vertical’ accountability that put the state and its service providers under the scrutiny of the people. The issue has now gone beyond the talking and conceptualizing stage, and very recently social accountability piloting has been launched. Making social accountability piloting a success and making it permanent rules of engagement requires massive mobilization work and educating the people on their rights and responsibilities in their struggle to exact accountabilities. The task of mobilization and educating the people on their rights and responsibilities has been given to civil society organizations. Whether we can shoulder this responsibility remains to be seen, and we are looking upon South African and Ugandan civil society organizations for inspiration and different social accountability frameworks. OSA as a knowledge center may have to start grappling with this issue of social accountability and demonstrate its support to civil society organizations in discharging their responsibilities, if not at least during the piloting phase, but in the years to come. This does not by any means suggesting an abdication of our responsibilities of positioning ourselves at the cutting edge and performing what is expected of us. Current fitness landscape is ever shifting, and for that matter very fast. “If we want to stay where we are, we have to run as fast as we can” (Alice in the Wonderland).

The number of Oromo-led NGO’s and intermediary financial institutions is on the rise. These not-for-profit associations engage in different social and economic activities. They link with and learn from each other. They are independent institutions in their own right in terms of developing their own agenda, and are also interdependent in what

they aspire to achieve globally. Many not-for-profit organizations are in the business of service delivery, while a good number of them have started picking up issues of democracy, good governance and human rights. Competing with each other over resources is being played down and more focused attention is being given to issues that enhance our collective strength. It has become clear to many not-for-profit organizations that being only service providers do not contribute much (taking the mere size of Oromia) to fast economic development and social transformation of people. A new set of awakening is creeping in, which put the people at the center in terms of claiming rights and demanding accountabilities for the different services they require both as taxpayers and as political constituency that brought the government into power.

There is a need to make a paradigm shift from honestly positioning oneself as simple gap fillers to empowering the people to struggle for its own rights and entitlements. The transition, however, is fraught with many problems arising from political orientation of not-for-profit organizations themselves, and from what the government prescribes as the proper role of not-for-profit organizations. Roles that the government wants NGO's to play does not go beyond service delivery and charity work. The international trend, however, is in favor of a new paradigm shift. Many multi-and bi-lateral institutions have adopted or adopting Rights-Based Approach to Development where development service is redefined as duty/obligation to be fulfilled. State's performance will be evaluated from the point of view of fulfilling rights and not from demonstrating tons of political will. The Breton Woods institutions without having to use the exact terminology of a rights-based approach have started to realize the efficacy of human rights framework as a reliable pathway to fast economic and social transformation. The only option we have is to adopt the human rights framework and bear the discomfort our decisions entail rather than being judged as irrelevant quantities in the eyes of our people.

Few likeminded Oromo-led NGO's have established an *ad hoc* committee that coordinates Oromia-wide research to map out Oromo civil society organizations (in the broadest sense of the word) and subsequently establish an umbrella organization for an effective engagement with local and regional structures. The language of the day is cooperation and not fragmentation. Many steps are being taken towards having a network; and pending its finalization small, but interesting efforts are being made. We have a young consortium of NGO's working on women's empowerment and child rights, and our coming together has enabled us to open the doors of resource agencies, which are often unreachable for small local NGO's. In a similar vein, the consortium of local Oromo NGO's to assist farmers to become active actors in value promotion, an agenda that is ever becoming popular among civil society organizations. A private limited company has been established to accompany and to build their capacities in becoming active in value promotion exercises.

What may be of significant interest to OSA is the establishment of an NGO for the sole purpose of advancing Oromo studies. It is a young organization, but enjoys the support of many other NGO's, and is currently working with many of us working on women empowerment after having obtained adequate financing from Civil Society Fund of the European Union. I am bringing the establishment of WAQO to the attention of OSA so that the two organizations could start thinking of a fruitful partnership in the years to

come. As a member of this association what WAQO basically needs is the framing of its research agenda, and for this it should not be looking to any other organization outside your organization.

Brothers and Sisters,

I have gone to this length to share with you some promising examples of civic engagement of claiming rights and exacting accountabilities from those in power. What this means is that we will strive to hold the government by the promises it makes, and in this the best strategy is the formation of broad-based coalitions both inside and outside the country. All of us take pride of what we do, and each of us is at a peak of fitness landscape, but this fitness landscape is ever shifting, and to stay where we are, we have to run as fast as we can.

Finally I would like to thank OSA, and Dr. Gobena Huluka in person for having me amidst you as participant in the deliberations. I wish you all success in your efforts of bringing Oromo mind and soul together to dialogue and find meaning in whatever we do rather than engaging in a debate of identifying winners and losers.

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

By Frehiwot Samuel

1. Background of the case

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 towns. 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 to Ethiopia 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 (hereafter referred to as “the 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 478/2005¹. 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.

The Commission members² were proposed by Legal and Administrative Affairs Committee and later appointed by the Parliament on November 29, 2005. Out of the 11

¹ *This Proclamation is known as "An Inquiry Commission to Investigate the disorder occurred in Addis Ababa and in some parts of the country proclamation No. 478/1998"*

² ***The following persons were named to be the members of the Commission***

1. *Frehiwot Samuel (President of the SNNPR Supreme Court) fled*
2. *Shiferaw Jamo (private consultant), resigned*
3. *Abuna Elsa (Bishop, Ethiopian Orthodox Church), declined*
4. *Abel Musse (Catholic Church), declined*
5. *Hikmet Abedlla (Business woman), declined*
6. *Beluy Haddis (Business Man), Resigned*
7. *Mitiku Teshome (Catholic Church) fled*
8. *Tamrat Kebede (formerly African Development Bank Employee),declined*
9. *Wolde Michael Meshesa (Deputy President of the Federal First Instance Court), fled*
10. *Sheik Elias Redman (Deputy Chairman of the Ethiopian Islamic Council),appeared before the parliament*
11. *Dereje Jenberu (Deputy President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Eyesus Church), didn't appear before the parliament*
12. *Gemechu Megerssa (former official of Ministry of Education and AAU), appeared before the parliament*

members of the Commission, 4 of them declined to participate from the very beginning. As soon as we resumed the job, the vice-Chairperson resigned from the Commission, and we reported to the Parliament that we are left with only six members including myself. The Parliament replaced the missing five members, although one of the newly appointed members right away resigned from the Commission.

2. Brief Introduction to the Establishing Proclamation

The objective of the proclamation³ was stated as follows: “... *the on going system of the country is self corrective and governed by the rule of law, it is important to establish an independent inquiry commission, which investigate the disorder and report to the House so that to take the necessary measure and to further promote the peace and democratic process of the country.*” The letter and spirit of the proclamation, as it is put down in its objective, is misleading. Later on we understood that it was all about “rule by men” not “rule of law”; not “promotion of peace and democracy” rather it has been proved to be “promotion of dictatorship” to sustain in power.” Not a concern for “Human Rights.” What I can say now is the objective as mentioned here was simply a “paper tiger”. Misleading bunch of words, their existence were forgotten as usual by the very “authors” themselves - the Parliament.

Anyhow the powers and duties of the Commission⁴ were to investigate whether the force used by the security forces to control the disorder was excessive or not, whether the handling of human rights in matters related to the problem was conducted in accordance with the constitution and the rule of law, and the damage caused to life and property as a result of the incident. Actually, the commission freely⁵ and exhaustively exercised these powers and duties. Had it not been, we wouldn't have come to the conclusion that government had used excessive force.

3. How was the investigation conducted?

From the very beginning the commission had spent about 75% its time to develop the methodology and procedure of investigation. We assessed every possible setback and expected challenges as well as their solutions. As you can understand soon, every piece of the methodology was intended to produce unchallengeable result. At this point, I would like to quote the famous juridical saying, “THE MEANS JUSTIFIES THE END.” Given the following methodology as a means, any reasonable and well informed mind

13. Abdu Seid (works for Pastoralist Concern Association of Ethiopia), didn't appear before the parliament

14. Dr. Mekonen Dissasa (Vice President of continuing education AAU), appeared before the parliament

15. Haregewoyen Tassaw (Ministry of Finance), appeared before the parliament

16. Abba Ewostatewos G.Kristos (Bishop, Ethiopian Orthodox Church), appeared before the parliament

³ See the preamble of the proclamation; “An Inquiry Commission to Investigate the disorder occurred in Addis Ababa and in some parts of the country proclamation No. 478/1998”

⁴ An Inquiry Commission to investigate the disorder occurred in Addis Ababa and in some parts of the country proclamation No. 478/1998 Art. 5 Sub Art.1

⁵ Government didn't interfere to our job until we gave the decision. We did our investigation without any influence.

can't turn its back to such self evident truth of excessive use of force. Thus, "the end," the conclusion of the commission, was justified by its well thought of "means."

Methodology and procedures of investigation

- To avoid any sort of forgery, copies of registries of all patients who went to every health institutions at the time concerned, were collected at the very beginning. We had data of patients who visited any Hospital or any Clinic with the commission's archive.
- Areas of the demonstrations were plotted on the official map of Addis Ababa.
- We visited all areas claimed to have bomb explosions , and we held detail discussion with those at the frontline and had firsthand information
- We discussed with more than 1000 chairmen of "edders" (traditional association for funerals) who gave us list of their members who were killed
- We visited and discussed with officials of all banks which were reported to have been robbed.
- We checked daily police report registry and files
- We listed and visited police remand and concentration (Dadesa, Kalitte, Shewa Robett, Karchelle, Zeway, Federal crime and forensic investigation Department (Maeklawee)
- We collected photographs and finger prints and result of autopsy of civilians who were killed .
- Photographs of every heavily injured civilian and security forces members were taken.
- We had discussion with leaders of opposition parties, government officials and ruling party officials, including Prime Minister Meles Zenaw
- We had detailed discussions with officials of ministry of defense and police commission.
- We distributed questioners to get preliminary information
- We distributed questionnaires and invitation letters to all members of the parliament to get relevant information. More than 120 MP sent written conformation that they didn't have any information about the case. Whereas very few of them testified before the commission.
- We invited local and international journalists and mass media agents to give us information, if they have any
- 122 Radio and TV announcements were made to the public
- We held discussion with prisoners who were in prison in relation to the incident
- Unless by the motion of the witness himself for his/her safety, every testimony was given publicly. Also every witness was told about his or her rights and duties while testifying
- Due care was taken to value the property damage and the cost of maintenance, to avoid exaggeration or underestimation of property value,
- Evidences were collected from non-governmental organizations.
- Documents were collected from the Ethiopian Human Right Council.
- To avoid any technical mistakes, the Commission was supported by prominent police investigative experts.

- We examined 16,990 documents, and we received testimonies from more than 1300 persons. Overall we did our investigation thoroughly for about seven months, the details of which would take long time to go through it.

4. Findings of the Commission

The Inquiry Commission and its findings have undoubtedly exposed to the citizens and to the international community the facts of the actions by the Government.

- The Government stated that measures were taken against those who tried to commit bank robbery, not against civilian demonstrators, but the Commission proved that was false, i.e., there was no robbery and the Government only tried to justify its actions by stating there was robbery.
- The Government claimed that civilian demonstrators used firearms, but the Commission found that no civilian used firearms.
- The Government officially said that six prisoners at Kaliti federal prison were killed during an attempt to break away, but the Commission discovered that it was a politically motivated killing of prisoners inside closed rooms, with 17 dead and 53 wounded [this is only what admitted by officials. However, not more than two prisoners tried to use the incident as means to escape.
- There were areas where polices were overwhelmed, however, reaction of almost every security force everywhere to demonstrators was by firearms.
- Government officially reported the casualties as: **64 civilians died, 156 injured; and 338 security members injured, 7 died.** But the Commission found that only **71** police got injured, **6** died; while **193** civilians killed, and **763** injured. These were the number of causalities caused within 14 days.⁶

Summary of Major findings

1. Weapons used

Demonstrators used:	Police used:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stones • Very few were observed to use natural fire and stick • No one used fire arms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firearms • Police sticks • tear gas

2. Bodily Injury

Civilians	Police	Military
• Light 313	• Light 63	• No injury

⁶ The Commission's Jurisdiction was to be: June 8, 2005 (in Addis Ababa) Nov.1-10, 2005 as well as between 14-16, 2005 (in Addis Ababa and in some parts of the country- Oromia, SNNPR, Amhara regional States), i.e., it didn't include incidents occurred in different parts of the country in other days than those specified 14 days.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy 450 • Death 193 • Total 956 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy 8 • Death 6 • Total 77 • Military-no injury 	
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3. Cause of Injury

Civilians	Police
Bullet 634	1. Bullet 8
Police Stick and Other 322	2. Stones and other 62
	3. Explosives (including Bomb) 7

4. Summary of Casualties

Civilians	Police
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bodily injury 763 • Death 193 • Total 956 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bodily injury 71 • Death 6 • Total 77

We found that the police report was deliberately falsified to justify their actions. The Commission found out that 193 civilians were killed and 763 were wounded mainly by live bullets. Also property valued about at about 4.5 million birr was destroyed. However, in the police report it was said that **64** civilians died and **156** wounded, where as, **7** police died **338** wounded, 2 billion birr worth property lost.

After a thorough discussion about the case on July 3, 2006 eight of the Commission members, including me, decided⁷ that the Government had used “excessive force,” whereas two members of the commission decided in favor of the Government saying the action “was not excessive”. However, we all agreed that the human rights handling of the Ethiopian Government was not in conformity with the constitution and rule of law, thus we proved that Government was not respecting accepted human right standards.

5. **Human rights handling of the Ethiopian Government in relation to the Crisis**

Ethiopia ratified international Human Rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁸, UN Covenant

⁷ After we gave decision by voting, the electricity to my office was cut off and the emergency electricity generator was disabled from its function deliberately to put a stop to our report from being typed. In the meantime I was again told by the Speaker of the Federal Parliament that I should ask for extension of time for adjournment. And we went to Addis Ababa to meet PM. Melse Zenawi on July 6, 2006. Incredibly, while we were on a meeting with the PM, the Parliament in the next building to his office was already dismissed. Finally after I and my other two colleagues fled the country due to the pressure, our original conclusion was completely reversed and the measure taken by security force was justified. Regrettably, even the part of our report that details the methodology of our investigation was altered to tone down the intensity of our work, and to conform it to the altered conclusion

⁸ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights New York, 16 December 1966

on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁹ and, not the least; she also ratified Convention on Child Rights. The Federal Constitution of Ethiopia states that: “All international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land.”¹⁰ Moreover, it states;

*“The fundamental rights and freedoms specified in this Chapter [The Chapter which is devoted to Fundamental Rights and Freedoms] shall be interpreted in a manner conforming to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenants on Human Rights and international instruments adopted by Ethiopia.”*¹¹

(The sentence in Parenthesis is added by the writer.)

From this constitutional provision one can understand that courts or any other legal bodies are prohibited from contextually interpreting these international Human Rights instruments. Every interpretation and application of these rights and freedoms should confirm to the principles enshrined in international human rights instruments the country has ratified. I wonder how any sort of language, such as “infant democracy”, “context of Ethiopia”, or “socio-political profile of our government organs” or even “absence of proper institution” would justify such gross violation of fundamental rights and freedoms by the Ethiopian government.

Most categories of rights which were gravely abused by government authorities, especially by security forces were those which are called “negative rights” or “First Generation Rights.” Such rights do need only abstention, not action. Restraining oneself, not budgeting for it. Let me humbly ask the audience a silly question: how much does it cost us not to shoot at someone in front of us? How many million dollars do we need not to search private residence without court order? Is there any budget needed not to bit someone? Does abstention from torturing need IMF loan or EU budget support or fund raising? It is all about doing nothing, not something. That is why both the independent inquiry commission and the international community are clearly stating that the Ethiopian Government’s handling of the crisis after the election was below standard. The point is that security forces should have abstained from taking the last action, shooting. It is below the standard set by the constitution, below the standard accepted by the international community, below the standard which we all have in our conscience as reasonable and rational human beings.

7. The most violated human rights

30,000 civilians who were arrested remained in police custody for a long time without any charge.¹² The commission investigated the situation of some of them as a sample to check the human right handling of the authorities. Thus we come to the conclusion that most of the arrestees were beaten by police; some of them had already got bodily

⁹ *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights New York, 16 December 1966*

¹⁰ The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 1/1995, Art 9, Sub Art 4.

¹¹ *The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 1/199,5 Art.13, Sub Art 2.*

¹² At the time when we visited those places almost all of them were released, except few detainees who finally were charged.

injury (e.g. Parliamentarian Bedru Adem lost his one of his front teeth when bitterly beaten by security forces). There were ample of complaints about:

- Search and arrest with out a warrant
- Undue delay to take them to court
- Prohibition from family visit

On Nov. 3, 2005 there was disorder at “Kalite” prison that lasted for about 15 minutes, when and where security forces fired more than 1500 bullets that left 17 dead and 53 wounded (this is only what was admitted by the Prison Administration). The main shooter (security guard) accompanied us at the time of our visit to the prison with all his pride of what he did. No one was held accountable. On that occasion one of the security chopped the pointing finger of prisoner Dawit Abebe (he was initially arrested from A.A. Olympia) after he was shot twice and heavily wounded.) We had more than enough reason to blame government for this massacre. At the time of aforementioned incidence most prisoners run to one of the biggest prison hall known as “Amestigna Bete” and they shut the door. Then the security guard who chased them shot 42 bullets at the closed door and wounded many of the prisoners. Some of the prisoners died while they were in their beds. For instance, a university student¹³ who can’t move unless with the assistance of a wheelchair or other artificial support was killed in the incident. Could the prison administration still be justified to kill handicapped on a wheelchair in the pretext of preventing escape? We saw bullet holes in the beds, walls and food plates of the prisoners. Prisoner Muluneh Eyoel (secretary of the opposition party CUD) was separately imprisoned in a dark cell for weeks. At the time when we visited his separate cell he was being medicated due to his mental condition caused by this illegal action.¹⁴

Another incidence worthy mentioning is the case of “Wro Etenesh Yeman” who was shot dead when she pursued her arrested husband. The chief of the command post of the security at that location was mocking to the commission by saying, “she might have heart failure.” In fact, she was killed in front of the public and we had certificate of autopsy from hospital, and we proved that she was killed by intentional shot. Let me mention one more striking tragedy in one family. W/ro Elefenash Tekle, Husen Hassen, and Hassen Dula shot dead in Arba Minch town while they were in their home, no one was held accountable. Probably no one will be held responsible if the existing status qua is intact. Even local authorities, at the time of our investigation, were afraid to report this cold-blooded murder.

Out of the hundreds who died in the hands of the killers “Jegam Bedane” was murdered by police at Ambo while he was going out of high school, at the main gate of the school. In this case the killer police officer was controversially brought to justice. Only one out of hundreds of killers to be held accountable!

I wonder if any of or some of us really know the place known, at the time of the “Derge”, by its nick name “Maekelaw Meremera”. Bad news; it is still there. Its name

¹³ “Alemayehu Gerba” was student of Addis Ababa University when he was arrested and sent to prison.

¹⁴ According to “WWW.qalitiqalidikan.org, “ Brief note on the June 11/2007 Hearing and its legality “ by Prof. Mesfin Wolde-mariam in June 2007, his health condition was so deteriorated and even he couldn’t appear before the court on the day of the verdict.

is changed but the whole set up including dark rooms are giving their evil service, which they were meant to give at the time of their initial “Satanic Design.” Now it is officially named as “Federal crime and forensic investigation Department” When we visited this center we found hundreds of detainees , mostly young “Oromos,” who were arrested from all over the country. They told us that many of them were there for about six months without a charge . Also some of them told us and shown their bodies that they were tortured for their alleged OLF membership.

Sense of unaccountability of security forces didn’t bind to civilians only. According to our report, seven police officers were killed in relation to the incident. Police reported that they were killed by demonstrators but their body were not taken to autopsy, even there is no any evidence of either photograph or death certificate showing the reason of their death as opposed to those of the civilians¹⁵. On the other hand, police hospital, administered under Federal Police Commission, gave us forged documents about civilians. For civilians wounded by bullet, they produced certificate of headache whereas, for security force members they produced documents of heavily bodily injury, even in cases where the alleged member(s) had never gone to the hospital.

8. Decision of the Commission

The decision of the commission was made after long deliberations¹⁶ from June 23-July 3, 2006. Final voting was made on Monday, July 3, 2006, eight against two; Eight of us including the chairperson concluded that the measure taken by the Government was excessive, two of them concluded that the measure of the government was not excessive. In its decision, the commission stated that those violent riots which caused destruction of properties and casualties were unlawful where as the overall measure taken to quell the disorder was also found to be in excess of what should have been. In short it said that unlawful acts shouldn’t be controlled by unlawful measures. Finally we all agreed that the human rights handling of the government was below constitutional standards.

¹⁵ In the case of every civilians, police has a file of investigation that contain finger print, photograph and other circumstantial evidences related to every particular death.

¹⁶ *Not only deliberation but also got training on Ethiopian constitution and international human right instruments which Ethiopia ratified, UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and also we discussed in detail theoretical documents about excessive force specially those standards in our national laws.*

Applying *Gada* Principles in Constructing the State in the 21st Century Oromia

By Asafa Jalata, The University of Tennessee – Knoxville

The main goal of the Oromo national movement is to decolonize Oromia and to construct the state that can protect the security and interest of the Oromo and others. The Oromo national struggle has played the leading role in developing *Oromummaa*,¹⁷ revitalizing Oromo culture, history, and language. The process of institutionalizing these achievements requires to start recognizing and addressing the prospects and challenges of state formation and building it in Oromia and beyond. To empower the Oromo people and to be at peace with other peoples in the Horn of Africa, Oromo organizations in general and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in particular need to engage in a truly democratic process by challenging exclusivist and anarchist political tendencies in the Oromo national movement.¹⁸

First the paper provides background narratives on the Oromo nation, and explores the process of state formation in historic Oromia.¹⁹ In this section, it also identifies the essence and characteristics of *Gada* (Oromo democracy) and *Moti* (kingdom) systems. Second, the paper focuses on explaining the impacts of Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism on the process of state formation in Oromia. Third, the paper deals with the issues of the Oromo national struggle and the efforts of the Oromo people in forming their own state and the state in which they will be represented both democratically and proportionally. Fourth, it demonstrates why the reinvention and application of certain *Gada* principles to the processes of state formation and building in Oromia and beyond is necessary for the construction of a democratic government. Here, it specifically illustrates that the Oromo cannot achieve national sovereignty, security, and sustainable socio-economic development without establishing a democratic state that will reflect the Oromo democratic culture, tradition, and history. Finally, the paper focuses on the challenges and prospects of the Oromo national movement, and explores different political scenarios under which the Oromo nation can achieve statehood, sovereignty, and democracy.

¹⁷*Oromummaa* is a complex and dynamic national and global project. As a national project and the master ideology of the Oromo national movement, *Oromummaa* enables Oromos to retrieve their cultural memories, assess the consequences of Ethiopian colonialism, give voice to their collective grievances, mobilize diverse cultural resources, interlink Oromo personal, interpersonal and collective (national) relationships, and assists in the development of Oromo-centric political strategies and tactics that can mobilize the nation for collective action empowering the people for liberation. As a global project, *Oromummaa* requires that the Oromo national movement be inclusive of all persons operating in a democratic fashion. This global *Oromummaa* enables the Oromo people to form alliances with all political forces and social movements that accept the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy in promotion of a global humanity that is free of all forms oppression and exploitation. *Oromummaa* as an element of culture, nationalism, and vision has the power to serve as a manifestation of the collective identity of the Oromo national movement. The basis of *Oromummaa* must be built on overarching principles that are embedded within Oromo traditions and culture and, at the same time, have universal relevance for all oppressed peoples. The main foundations of *Oromummaa* are individual and collective freedom, justice, popular democracy, and human liberation, which are built on the concept of *saffu* (moral and ethical order) and are enshrined in *Gada* principles.

¹⁸When the exclusivist tendency empowers certain individuals who claim that they can lead the Oromo movement without seeking ideas from their supporters and the populace, the anarchist tendency encourages the proliferation of nominal organizations in Oromo society rather than strengthening the Oromo Liberation Front. These two tendencies have hampered the development of the Oromo national movement. In order to achieve its goals, the Oromo movement needs to overcome these two negative political tendencies.

¹⁹The Oromia that was ruled under one *Gada* Republic was historic Oromia. See Lemmu Baissa (2004).

Background

The Oromo are the largest colonized people that have been controlled by the alliance of the Ethiopian colonial state, an Oromo collaborative class, and global imperialism that sustains this colonial state through financial and military assistance and global diplomacy (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990; Jalata, 2001, 2005a). Consequently, they live under political slavery, exposed to state terrorism and massive human rights violations (Jalata, 2005a, 2005b), and are tormented by the darkness of ignorance and abject poverty. The Oromo are denied the freedom of expression, the media, organization, and the freedom of self-development and forced to provide their economic and labor resources to the Ethiopian colonizers and their supporters while living under deplorable conditions in the 21st century (Jalata, 2005a). Because the magnitude of the Oromo problem, it is impossible to provide a numerical face to the devastating effects of stated terrorism and other forms of violence, poverty, hunger malnutrition, suffering, disease, ignorance, alienation, and hopelessness.

The Oromo who have a democratic tradition and rich resources are facing genocidal repression from the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian regime (Hassen, 2001). This terrorist regime is characterized by militarization and repression tight control of foreign aid and domestic financial resources, and direct ownership and control of all aspects of colonial state including the security and military institutions, judiciary and other public bodies, and financial institutions. Using the monopoly of Ethiopian state power, the regime is systematically committing genocide on the Oromo people and transferring their economic resources to Tigrayans and their supporters (Jalata, 2005a). Within eighteen years, some Tigrayans who depended on international relief aid in the 1980s are rich and powerful today while the Oromo are facing absolute poverty and famine under the government of Meles Zenawi. Furthermore, the Meles regime focuses on developing Tigray and its human potential mainly at the cost Oromia and its population (Adunga, 2006). Because of all these reasons, the only choice the Oromo people have is to intensify their national struggle in order to reinvent Oromo statehood and sovereignty that they enjoyed under the *Gada* Republic.

The *Gada* Republic of Historic Oromia

Although we do not know when and how the Oromo political and social system Known as *Gada* emerged, we are sure that it existed as a full-fledged system at the beginning of the 16th Century. Between the sixteenth and the mid-seventieth century, Oromos were under one *Gada* administration (Jalata, 2005a: 20; Baissa, 2004: 101). Under the *Gada* republic, the Oromo people were organized around political, economic, social, cultural, and religious institutions. According to Lemmu Baissa (2004: 101),

Gada government comprised a hierarchy of triple levels of government: the national, the regional and the local. At the pan-Oromo level, the national government was led by an elected *luba* council [*gada* class] formed from representatives of the major Oromo moieties, clan families and clans, under the presidency of the *abba gada* and his two deputies, collectively known as the *warana sadden*. The national leadership was responsible for such important matters as legislation and enforcement of general laws, handling issues of war

and peace and coordinating the nation's defense, management of intra-Oromo clan conflicts and dealing with non-Oromo people.

The concept *Gada* has three related meanings: it is the grade during which a class of people is in power by having politico-ritual leadership; it is period of eight years during which elected officials take power from the previous ones; and it is the institution of Oromo society (Legesse, 1973; 2000). Between 1522-1618, with their increased population and territories, different Oromo groups started to have autonomous *Gada* governments (Baissa, 2004; Jalata, 2005a).

The *Gada* system has the principles of checks and balances (such as periodic transference of power every eight years and division of power among executive, legislative, and judiciary branches), balanced opposition (among five parties²⁰), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots. Other principles of the system have included balanced representation of all clans, lineages, regions and confederacies; accountability of leaders; the settlement of disputes through reconciliation; and the respect for basic rights and liberties. There are five *miseensas* (parties) in *Gada*; these parties have different names in different parts of Oromia as the result of the expansion of Oromos and their establishment of different autonomous administrative systems. The rule of law is the key element of the *Gada* system; those leaders who have violated the law of the land or whose families could not maintain the required standard of the system were recalled before the end of their tenure in the office. *Gada* leaders implemented the laws that were made by the representative of the people; Oromo democracy allowed the Oromo people to make, change or amend laws and rules every eight years.

The *Gada* system accepted Oromos as the ultimate source of authority and nobody was above the rule of law. All *Gada* officials were elected for eight years by universal adult male suffrage; the main criteria for election to office included bravery, knowledge, honesty, demonstrated ability, etc. *Gada* as an integrative social system combined political and civil culture in Oromo society. *Gada* as an integrative social and political system organized male Oromos according to *hirya* (age-sets) and *luba* (generation-sets) for social, political, and economic purposes. Therefore, it was difficult to draw a clear boundary between civil and political culture during the *Gada* era. The *Gada* and *siiqqee*²¹ institutions had influenced the Oromo value system in pre-colonial Oromo society. During this period, Oromo women had the *siiqqee* institution, a parallel institution to the *Gada* system that “functioned hand in hand with *Gadaa* [sic] system as one of its built-in mechanisms of checks and balances” (Kumsa, 1997: 119).

These two institutions helped maintain *saffu* (Oromo moral codes) in Oromo society by enabling Oromo women to have control over resources and private spaces, social status and respect, and sisterhood and solidarity by deterring men from infringing upon their individual and collective rights. If the balance between men and women was broken, a *siiqqee* rebellion was initiated to restore the law of God and the moral and ethical order of society. When there were violations of their rights, women would leave their homes,

²⁰For example, these five parties are called *itimako*, *daballe*, *folle*, *doroma/qondala*, and *luba* in central Oromia.

²¹*Siiqqee* was a woman institution, which functioned parallel to the *Gada* system to protect the rights of Oromo women in pre-colonial Oromia.

children, and resources and travel to place where was a big tree called *qilxxu* and assembled there until the problems would be solved through negotiation by elders of men and women (Kumsa, 1997). Some aspects of *Gada* still survive in some Oromo regions. For example, in the Borana Oromo community where some elements of the *Gada* system still exist the assembly known as *Gumii Gayoo* (the assembly of multitudes) brings together almost every important leaders, such as living *Abba Gaddas*, the *qaallus* (spiritual leaders), age-set councilors, clan leaders and *gada* councilors, and other concerned individuals to make or amend or change laws and rules of every eight years. The 37th *Gumi Gayo* Assembly was held in the August of 1996 to make or amend or change three kinds of laws that the Borana Oromo classifies as cardinal, customary and supplementary laws (Huqqa, 1998). The *Gumii Gayoo* assembly has a higher degree of ritual and political authority than the *Gada* and other assemblies because it “assembled representative of the entire society in conjunction with any individual who has the initiative to the ceremonial grounds,” and “what *Gumi* decides cannot be reversed by any other assembly” (Legesse, 1973, 93). Since the Borana Oromo are under Ethiopian colonialism like other Oromos most of these laws cannot be implemented today. With the colonization of the Oromo people by Ethiopians and the destruction of *Gada* and *siiqqee* institutions Oromo society has been subjected to three levels of oppression: racial/ ethnonational, class and gender oppression.

The development of class and external factors, such as Turko-Egyptian colonialism in eastern Oromia between 1885, European and Ethiopian colonialism, the emergence of an Oromo collaborative class, and the spread of Islam and Christianity undermined the political and military roles of the *Gada system* in some parts of Oromia. These changes did not totally uproot Oromo values and traditions. Some elements of Oromo democratic values still exist in areas where the *Gada* system was suppressed. In its modified form, the system is still in practice in some of Oromia, such as in Boran, *Guji*, and Jibat regions. *Gada* still helps in maintaining peace, exchanging knowledge and practicing rituals among some moieties and groups. With the development class in Northern and Western Oromia, this egalitarian democratic system was challenged and replaced by the *Moti* system (kingdom) (Jalata, 2005: 36-38).

Class Formation and the Emergence of the *Moti* System

Both internal and external factors brought about the disintegration of the *Gada* social organization and the emergence of the Oromo kingdoms in northern, central and Western Oromia (Hassen, 1990; Lewis, 1965). The social transformation and the disintegration of the *Gada* system did not occur throughout Oromia during the same historical era. In the first half of the 19th century, the development of agriculture and trade, class and state formations undermined the foundation of the *Gada* system in northern and western Oromia. The egalitarian and democratic *Gada* system was incompatible with the new *Moti* system due to the fundamental changes in the landholding system (Ta’a, 1984). In other words, the emergence of class differentiation and the rise of the Oromo kingdoms suppressed the *Gada* system in these parts of Oromia.

The *Moti* system emerged through war, confiscation of land, collection of booty, tribute and market dues, and through the establishment of hereditary rights to ownership of property and political office (Luling, 1965:166-168). Furthermore, the emergence of autocratic powerful leaders and their private armies led to the control of marketplaces, trade routes and land, and the development of agricultural economy that led to class differentiation and state formation (Lewis, 1964:142; Triulzi, 1975; Bartles, 1970). In the Gibe region, the differentiation of wealth went beyond the wealth of cattle in the seventeenth century when the *sorressa* (the wealthy merchant and landlord class) emerged (Hassen, 1990: 89-187). With the emergence of this wealthy class, the principle of adopting the conquered populations as 'equal' through the *mogassa* process ended; the institutions of slavery and *qubisisa* (tenancy) emerged (Hassen 1990: 121-124). The foundations of the five Oromo Gibe states--Limmu- Ennarya, Guma, Jimma, Gera and Goma--were laid by the development of agriculture, local industry and the expansion of local and long distance trade between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (Lewis, 1965:47-121).

In the first half of the 19th century, the emergence of the *Abba lafa* (a hereditary landlord), the *moti* (king), *Abba qorro* (governor), trade chiefs and market administrators reduced the egalitarian aspects of the *Gada* to religious rituals. The *Moti* (king) continuously accumulated wealth in his treasuries with incomes he extracted from tribute on the land and its products, his estates and commerce (Abir, 1965). This produce extraction enabled the *Moti* to create and maintain regulatory institutions like military, bodyguards, and courts (Lewis, 1965:93). Generally speaking, in the Gibe region, through the process of social class differentiation, the autocratic and hereditary office of the *Moti* system replaced the egalitarian and democratic *Gada* office. The hierarchy of the social pyramid can be depicted as follows (Abir, 1965: 175-177). The *Moti* was at the top, followed by his council. Next to the council of the state, there were *Abba qorros*, followed by *Abba gandas* (district administrators). *Abba gandas* were district officials who collected tribute, recruited soldiers, guarded the borders of the kingdom, and administered justice. Below *Abba gandas*, there were *abba fuunyos* who imposed tribute on the population, arrested offenders, directed corvee labor, collected taxes, and served as messengers between higher officials and the *Moti*.

All officials were directly or indirectly appointed by the *Moti* from the landowning warriors. Finally, there were, at the bottom, free farmers, *qubsissa* (tenants), *ogeesa* (artisans), and slaves. In this region, there was also the newly emerging Oromo merchant class known as *Afkala* (Hassen, 1990: 89-164). One member of the council of the state known as *Abba mizan* (the father of balance) was selected from this merchant class. Herbert Lewis (1965: 68-121) specifically studied the Jimma *Moti* system and explained how its powerful organization with its monopoly of power and economic forces destroyed the *Gada* system. The Jimma monarchy had direct power over the political economy of Jimma. The *Moti* recruited his officers from among members of his family, the *sorressa* (wealthy men), those slaves who proved loyal, intelligent, and effective, and from foreign mercenaries. He directly controlled the armed forces and extracted produce. Jimma was the center of trade for extensive local and long distance trade. Merchants came to this region from Arabia, the Sudan, Europe and Ethiopia/Abyssinia (Lewis, 1965:57). Jimma and other gibe regions evolved as one of the richest regions in Africa (Landor, 1907:120).

In the eighteenth century, the Wallo Oromo had replaced the *Gada* administration with that of dynasty (Prouty and Rosenfeld, 1981:181). In the first half of 19th century, the democratic *Gada* system was also disintegrated in the *Afre* confederation of the Macha Oromo (Wallaga) because of social class differentiation. During the earliest expansion, particularly in Wallaga, all members of the lineage had equal usufructuary rights to the land and there was no scarcity; therefore, every male Oromo had his own *dhogqe* or (tract of land) on which he could raise animals and cultivate crops (Ta'a, 1984; Zewde, 1970: 1-11). With the emergence of a relative scarcity of land in the community, pioneers' descendants began to monopolize land rights and impose a special settling permission called *qubisissa* (tenancy) on newcomers who were forcibly subordinated and who annually performed labor service for a specific number of days (Ta'a, 1984; Zewde, 1970).

The emergence of Leqa-Naqamte and Leqa-Qellem *Moti* systems was actually based on the initiation of warfare and appropriation of rights to land and labor, control of trade and market places (Bartles, 1970: 15). The rights to land, coupled with the development of agriculture and trade, facilitated the emergence and consolidation of the *Moti* system in Wallaga. The most successful pioneers' descendants, such as the leaders of Leqa-Qellem and Leqa-Naqamte, gradually transformed the *Gada* fighting forces, *qondala*, into their own personal army (Ta'a, 1980: 44). These leaders also created effective administration and better military organizations to control trade routes and marketplaces in order to collect tribute; they also accumulated wealth by collecting regular tributes in heads of cattle, ivory, gold, cotton and other commodities (Ta'a, 1980: 53).

The *Gada* system was attacked and weakened in eastern Oromia by the Turko-Egyptian and Adare alliance. The interethnic alliance and interdependence between the Adare and the eastern Oromo were shattered when the faction of the former invited the Turko-Egyptian power to colonize the Hararghe region in 1875 (Hassen, 1973: 6-18). Under the Turko-Egyptian rule, between 1875 and 1885, the Adare consolidated their power and accumulated wealth at the cost of the majority Oromo. However, the Adare Amirs (kings) had certain influence on a few Oromo groups before this period and bestowed the ranks of *malaq*, *garad* and *damin*²² on their elected officials. The *Amir* dealt with these officials through the Adare *dogign*²³ (Hassen, 1973:23-24). The leaders of the Oromo who settled around the city of Harar were gradually forced to accept the administration of the *Amirs*, abandoned the Oromo political system, received these titles and became hereditary chiefs. The remaining eastern Oromo had the *Gada* government until it was destroyed by the alliance between the Turko-Egyptians and the Adares. Similarly, in the regions presently called Sidamo, Arssi, Bale, Illubabor, and Gamu Gofa and in some parts of Shawa, the *Gada* system was destroyed or suppressed by the Ethiopian colonial system.

Three Major Road Blocks to Oromo Statehood and Sovereignty: Colonialism, Imperialism and clienteles

²²The *malaq* was the lowest official, the *garad* was the governor of the district and the *damin* was the governor of the confederation of clans.

²³The *dogign* was from the Adare and the highest official.

As we explained above, before they were colonized, the Oromo were independent people who administered themselves by the *Gada* and *Moti* political systems. The development of capitalism in Europe and its expansion to Africa, and the alliance between Ethiopian warlords and European imperialists, and the colonization of Oromia had stifled the development of state in Oromia. Both the Arabs and the Ottoman Empire dominated the commercial activities of the Horn of Africa until European imperialism expanded to the region in the second half of the 19th century (Jalata, 1995). The capitalist penetration of the last decades of 19th century laid the foundation of the modern Horn states. Britain occupied Aden between 1839 and 1840 on the Arabian side of the Red Sea for “the strategic necessity of assuring imperial communication to India” (Thompson and Adloff, 1968: 5).

France was interested in the Horn and sent two scientific expeditions to the Amhara Kingdom of Manz in 1839 and 1842-43; in 1857 it started trade with this kingdom and colonized Obocki in 1862, an important commercial center on the Red Sea and the Tajura Gulf. France began the colonization of the Horn through establishing businesses and creating an intermediated class that would collaborate in colonizing practices. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 directly linked the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea and further intensified commercial and political activities and colonization in the region. When Britain needed to secure a dominant position on both sides of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, France continued its commerce and colonization in the Horn. Another European power, Italy, also began to play an important role after 1879 both on the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean coasts of Africa. During this period, the Turko-Egyptian position was weakened in the region mainly because of the Mahdist revolt in Sudan. Consequently, the Turko-Egyptian forces abandoned their Harrison towns of the Somali coast, Harar, and eastern Oromia.

When Oromia was partitioned between Britain and Abyssinia, Somaliland was divided among Britain, France, Italy, and Abyssinia. The Afar country was partitioned between France, Italy, and Abyssinia. The French occupied the Ambado and Djibouti areas between 1885 and 1892. Djibouti became the capital of French Somaliland in 1896. On March 20, 1897, the French commandant, Lagarde, signed treaties with Menelik (Abyssinian warlord) and defined the boundary between the French and the Abyssinian colony of Somaliland. France allowed Abyssinia to use Djibouti as its official port for commerce; and later a railway was constructed between Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) and Djibouti. When Britain, Germany, and Italy blocked the arms trade in East Africa in the late nineteenth century, Djibouti became a most active center of the underground arms trade. When other Africans were denied to buy firearms in suspicion that they would use against Europeans, because of their collaboration with the European imperialists, the Habasha rulers were allowed to buy firearms and participate in the scramble for Africa. Italy occupied the Red Sea coast in 1869 and gradually carved Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.

Britain’s occupation of the part of Somaliland was not limited to the coast but extended to the hinterland that later called British Somaliland. Britain also occupied the area that presently called Kenya. After colonizing Egypt in 1882, it also occupied Sudan in 1899. Ethiopia, former Abyssinia, also colonized various independent peoples including the Oromo with the assistance of the European imperialist powers. The

Ethiopian colonial government with the help of the weapons, mercenaries, and advisors from Great Britain, France, and Italy liquidated half the Oromo population (i.e. five million out of ten million) and their leadership during the last decades of the nineteenth century. According to Alexander Bulatovich (2000: 68-69), “The dreadful annihilation of more than half of the population during the conquest took away from the Gallas [Oromos] all possibilities of thinking about any sort of uprising . . . Without a doubt, the Galla, with their . . . five million population, occupying the best land, all speaking one language, could represent a tremendous force if united.” The creation of the modern racialized Ethiopian state and the emergence of the Ethiopian Empire occurred within the expansion of the European-dominated capitalist world economy. The main reason for this colonial expansion was to obtain commodities such as gold, ivory, coffee, musk, hides and skins, slaves, and other agricultural products that were valued in international markets. Since the creation of the Ethiopian Empire, the Ethiopian state has been the domain of the Amhara- Tigrayan ruling classes.

The racialized Ethiopian state controlled the colonized peoples through establishing the local colonial administration in garrison towns that were built in various strategic places. It also created local intermediaries that served between the colonialists and the local population. The stationed settlers and the collaborative class protected Abyssinian power and played an important role in transferring the resources of the colonized peoples to the colonizers. The garrisons gradually developed into urban areas where *Habashas* used Oromo, Sidama, Afar, Somali and others labor and other resources to build offices, prisons, churches, and later schools. These regulatory and service institutions were established to assure the continuation of Ethiopian colonial dominance and the extraction of produce. The colonialists created the *nafxanya-gabbar* system (semi-slavery), the collaborative class, the colonial landholding system, and intensified slavery (Jalata, 2005a: 103-124).

The colonized farmers who lost control on their lives, children and resources were forced to work for their colonial masters, intermediaries, and the state for a certain number of days each week. The colonialists enslaved some Africans; for instance, Menelik and his wife had 70,000 slaves at one time. The Ethiopian state claimed absolute rights over three-fourths of the lands of the colonized populations and provided portions for its officials, collaborators and mercenaries in lieu of salary. Until colonial capitalism emerged in the 1930s, the *naftanya-gabbar* system and slavery existed as two main coercive labor recruitment systems. The intermarriage of Ethiopian colonialism and global hegemonism²⁴ later facilitated the development of agricultural capitalism, sharecropping, and tenancy that gradually replaced slavery and the *nafxanya-gabbar* system. Oromos were colonized directly by the Ethiopian (Amhara-Tigray) minority settlers that attempted to destroy Oromo peoplehood through genocide, ethnocide and selective assimilation. After resisting Ethiopian colonialism for several decades, the Oromo people started a liberation movement to restore Oromo sovereignty.

²⁴The Ethiopian state has obtained its political legitimacy through global connections. Just as Britain supported Ethiopia during the first half of the 20th century, the United States provided financial assistance to the Haile Selassie government from the mid-29th century to the mid-1970s. From the mid-1970s to 1991, the Soviet Union supported the Ethiopian military regime headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam. Currently, the United States and other Western countries support the authoritarian-Terrorist regime of the Tigrayan-dominated Ethiopian government.

The Oromo Struggle for State Power and Social Emancipation

The interplay of multiple social structural and historical factors and conjunctures in the racialized global capitalist world system facilitated the development of Oromo nationalism. The inability of the colonizers to crush the Oromo human spirit, individual and collective resistance to colonial or racial/ethno-national domination, the immortality of certain cultural memory, changes in social structures because of economic and political changes, urbanization and community formation, the development of institutions, the emergence of an educated class, politicized collective grievances, and the dissemination of social scientific and political knowledge through global and local networks have interplayed and helped the development of this nationalism (Jalata, 2001). The development of Oromo nationalism cannot be understood without linking it to the processes of ideological formation and cultural revitalization, institutional and organizational manifestations, and alternative knowledge production and dissemination. The development of Oromo nationalism was slower than that of other Africans who were colonized directly by the European powers.

Oromo nationalists emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and started the Oromo national struggle to enable the Oromo people to have their own state power, to determine their destiny as a people, and to map the process of their own ideological and political movement in opposition to Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions that denied Oromos autonomous cultural, political and economic development through state terrorism and massive human rights violations. The main objectives of the Oromo national struggle are the restoration of Oromo state (by itself or within a multinational context) and central aspects of the Oromo democratic heritage and the fundamental transformation of Oromo society. The development of *Oromummaa* (ideology, culture, nationalism) for the last forty years demonstrates that Oromo society is marching toward achieving its objectives slowly but surely.

The Oromo national movement emerged from unusual circumstances; a few determined and farsighted Oromo nationalists who used the colonial educational opportunities to challenge the existing system of domination created it. The Ethiopian political system was designed to produce a small number of Ethiopianized Oromo leaders through its educational institutions who would function as intermediaries between the Ethiopian ruling class and the Oromo people. It intentionally limited the number of Oromo collaborative leaders by denying education to the overwhelming majority of Oromos. Further, through various political and cultural mechanisms, including assimilation, political marriage, religion, and divide and conquer policies, the Ethiopian government disconnected most of the few educated Oromo vassals from their cultural and historical roots, continuously forcing them to show fealty to their suzerain.

Only a few nationalist circles clearly understood these complex problems by familiarizing themselves with Oromo history, culture, values, and various forms of the Oromo resistance to Ethiopian colonialism. These circles initiated the Oromo national movement. Some of those who became Oromo nationalist leaders were collaborators who were initially neutral or opposed to the nationalist movement because of political

opportunism and /or their lack of political consciousness. Generally speaking, Oromo collaborative leaders have ensconced themselves in Oromo cities that are overwhelmingly populated by Ethiopian colonial settlers; Ethiopian education, political, religious, and media institutions have had powerful influence on most of this educated Oromo collaborative leadership. Consequently, some educated Oromos have joined Ethiopian political organizations and institutions.

The few Oromo nationalist intellectuals who emerged from this system were targeted for destruction by the Ethiopian and Somali governments opposed to the Oromo emancipation, and by opportunist and reactionary Oromo vassals who collaborated with the enemy. Consequently, the founding leadership of the Macha Tulama Self-Association (MTSA) and the OLF was decimated along with the membership of these groups. Further, within the Oromo nationalist camp complex political problems and confusion emerged in the 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s because of the low level and uneven development of *Oromummaa*, the lack of political experience, and political opportunism. A few individuals, using religious or regional identities, corrupted the movement by introducing conflict, suspicion, and other factors. Such problems undermined the development of the Oromo national struggle. Oromo nationalists were subsequently divided into a few camps that started to fight one another while fighting against the Ethiopian and Somali forces. Consequently, the Oromo national movement lost outstanding Oromo nationalist heroes and heroines. Individuals who know the inside story of the Oromo national movement see the survival of the OLF as a political miracle.

Despite political fragmentation, ideological confusion, and a multiplicity of enemies, the few Oromo nationalists who survived the political onslaught from all directions managed to maintain the integrity of the OLF, continuing the Oromo liberation struggle. The political integrity and determination of its leaders and members allowed the OLF to spread the concept of Oromo nationalism among the Oromo people. In 1991 the OLF hesitantly agreed to join in the formation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and in less than a year it taught its political objectives to the Oromo people. When the Oromo people accepted the OLF, the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government and several semi-fascist groups attempted to totally destroy the Oromo national movement and Oromo nationalists. The leadership of the Oromo national movement wasn't prepared to face this political challenge. Why? To answer this Question critically and comprehensively without being biased is central to an understanding of Oromo politics. While some Oromos believed that an individual or a few individuals within the leadership sabotaged the Oromo struggle for personal reasons, their analysis fails to address the central problems of Oromo politics.

This kind of myopic politics has prevented Oromo nationalists from identifying and solving the real political problems of Oromo society. If the real problems of the Oromo national movement were the behavior of an individual or a few individuals, removing such people from the leadership could have solved these problems. The Oromo national movement lacks coherent and organic and organic leadership as the result of the untimely death of some of its founding leaders such as Halie Mariam Gamada, Mamo Mazamir, Taddasa Biru, Baro Tumsa, Elemo Qilixu, Magarasa Bari, Ahmed Buna, Demisie Techane, Aboma Mitiku, and Muhee Abdo. Despite the fact that there is

Oromo political leaders who are well educated, to date have not developed the Organizational norms and culture of teamwork needed to conceptualize the theoretical, ideological and organizational concepts necessary to address the problems of Oromo leadership.²⁵ It must be kept in mind that human society is dynamic and all visions and strategies must be reevaluated and reinvented from time to time to enable the Oromo leadership to be able to effectively respond to emerging conditions and opportunities.

This lack of coherent political leadership, both in the Diaspora and in Oromia, has denied the Oromo national movement the possibilities of developing the formal and informal, political and social networks that can effectively help in further developing *Oromummaa* and in taking collective political actions at the individual, relational and collective levels. Since the formal and informal networks have not been integrated, members of the formal and informal Oromo political leadership have been unable to develop the organizational capacity to engage in political dialogue and activities both in formal and informal settings. It is impossible to build an effective institutional order or organization without integrating formal and informal rules of the society. Since Oromo traditions lack bureaucratic codes and procedures, Oromo political leaders and the Oromo community at-large have not had culturally ingrained systems to fall back upon. As a result, they have reacted in a number of different and contradictory ways.

This lack of coherence among the leadership of broad range of Oromo organizations in turn has created suspicious conditions that have prevented open and honest dialogue among leaders and between leaders and followers. In absence of a coherent organizational milieu, rumor, gossip, and impression management have replaced critical and open dialogue within the movement. Like any movement, the Oromo national movement must develop a collective identity that results in collective action. Oromo nationalists cannot develop an *Oromummaa* that facilitates collective action without critical discussion and open dialogue. As Colin Barker, Alan Johnson and Michael Lavalette (2000: 4-5) assert, “movements are arenas of discussion and argument, out of which there can emerge, at best, unstable and provisional forms of collective understanding, identity and action.”

The role of the leader is very important in building a leadership core through persuasion, analytical capacity, capacity to communicate, and capacity to listen and learn. The leader is responsible for the creation of formal and informal networks that allow for the development of an effective leading political team by bringing together layers of people who share strategic ideas to win over others. Seriously solving the political leadership problem and strengthening an Oromo organizational capacity require reinventing and adopting some relevant *Gada* Principles that can blend with current organizational principles and management.

²⁵The major problems of the Oromo movement are (1) the lack of coherent and uneven development *Oromummaa*; (2) the lack of political, cultural, and ideological strategies; (3) the absence of accountability of some leaders and followers; (4) the blind attachment to borrowed political culture and ideologies without adapting them to Oromo culture and traditions; and (5) the lack of the effective mobilization of Oromo human and material resources.

Reinventing Some Elements of *Gada* for Establishing a Democratic State

The historical legacy of Oromo political leadership is double-edged: One edge is positive and the other is negative. The positive legacy of Oromo political leadership is the sovereignty of the Oromo people experienced under *Gada*, a popular form of representative government, and an egalitarian social system. For many centuries, the Oromo people organized themselves both politically and culturally using the social institution of *Gada* to maintain their independence. Under *Gada*, they established the rule of law, promoting equality, social justice, and democracy. Specifically, the design of *Gada* as a social and political institution worked to prevent exploitation and political domination.

On the negative side, since *Gada* was an egalitarian system, it couldn't compete with other social systems that engaged in the extraction of economic surplus through exploitation and oppression by building a permanent professional bureaucracy, expanding formal education, and developing technological capabilities. The intervention of the Ottoman Empire and the Ethiopian and European powers in Oromo society through military, mercantilism, colonialism and neo-colonialism demonstrated the challenge the Oromo political leadership was facing because of an externally imposed exploitative and oppressive social system. Consequently, Oromo society and its political leadership started to face serious internal and external dangers. Because of the external influence and the internal weakness of the *Gada* system after its decentralization, autocratic and hereditary chiefs emerged by overthrowing democratically elected leadership in some parts of Oromia.

Internally, the *Moti* political system with its rudimentary bureaucracy emerged. This political system was based on class differentiation. Because of several factors this political system later facilitated the development of an Oromo collaborative class that willingly or by force joined the Ethiopian political system. Evidently the negative legacy associated with a collaborative and subservient leadership emerged in Oromo society because of some external and internal factors. The Abyssinians allied themselves with European colonial powers and an Oromo vassal class in colonizing the entire Oromo nation during the second half of the 19th century. Consequently, Oromo human agency was violently suppressed by the Ethiopian political structure. The existing Oromo political leadership was annihilated and the ongoing development of autonomous leadership was curtailed. Under these difficult circumstances, an independent Oromo political leadership emerged in the form of a self-help association in the early 1960s and as a liberation front in the early 1970s.

The formation of the MTSA and the emergence of the OLF marked the beginning of a new Oromo political leadership whose goal was Oromo self-determination and national sovereignty. In the intervening years since the early 1970s, the OLF has played a central role in raising Oromo political consciousness and in the development of *Oromummaa*. The brutal nature of the Ethiopian political system, the legacy of the *Moti* political culture, the lack of experience with bureaucratic institutions, the forced substitution of alien cultures and ideologies for Oromo traditions and values, and the absence of a democratic conversation and platform created an ideological and identity

crisis among Oromo elites, that left them without the crucial resources they need to be able to develop a strong Oromo national political leadership that can reinvent itself.

The question now is how to build this independent leadership on the principles of the positive elements of the *Gada* system and by overcoming its negative elements and by defeating both the Ethiopian colonial system and its Oromo collaborative class. The Oromo national political leadership must be challenged to move from an initial reliance on a narrow political circle, borrowed political ideologies and practices, and encouraged to embrace some Oromo-centric democratic values and organize different forms of leadership in Oromo society and establish dynamic connections with them. The leadership should be pressured to speak with the Oromo people and listen as well, allowing the Oromo community at-large to engage in the process of self-emancipation by participating in and owning their national movement.

Discussion and Conclusion

To build a democratic state in Oromia and beyond, the Oromo national movement needs to address six major issues: The first issue is to develop *Oromummaa* to its full capacity by overcoming its unevenness and deficiencies in order to strengthen the Oromo national organizational capacity. Without critically retrieving and restoring Oromo cultural and historical resources and using them in developing Oromo nationalism, it is difficult to build a national political agenda. Oromos who did not yet develop national political consciousness may confuse clan or regional or religious politics with the Oromo national politics because of the lack of the comprehension of the consequences of their political behavior and actions. As we can learn from history, the Oromo political weakness mainly emerged as Oromos moved away from one *Gada* Republic and started to form autonomous *Gada* governments in different parts of Oromia. Hence, the building of the Oromo national organizational capacity is only possible when *Oromummaa* is fully developed and can be packaged into a generally accepted vision that energizes the entire Oromo nation into well-organized and coordinated collective action at the personal, interpersonal and national levels.

The second issue is the total mobilization of the nation for the Oromo national struggle. The full development of *Oromummaa* facilitates the mobilization of Oromo individuals and diverse groups²⁶ enabling them to overcome political confusion and take the necessary concrete cultural and political actions essential to liberate themselves from psychological dehumanization and colonial oppression. According to Alan Johnson (2001: 96), “Self-emancipation is a political process in which the oppressed [groups] author their own liberation through popular struggles, which are educational, producing a cognitive liberation ... [facilitating] the defeat of their oppressors.” The process of

²⁶After Oromos were colonized and until Oromo nationalism emerged, Oromoness primarily remained on the personal and the interpersonal levels since Oromos were denied the opportunities to form national institutions. Oromoness was targeted for destruction and colonial administrative regions that were established to suppress the Oromo people and exploit their resources were glorified and institutionalized. As a result Oromo relational identities have been localized, and not strongly connected to the collective identity of *Oromummaa*. Oromos have been separated from one another and prevented from exchanging goods and information for more than a century. They were exposed to different cultures (i.e., languages, customs, values, etc.) and religions and adopted some elements of these cultures and religions. Consequently, today there are Oromo elites who have internalized these externally imposed regional or religious identities because of their low level of political consciousness or political opportunism, and the lack of clear understanding of Oromo nationalism. Oromo relational identities include extended families and clan families.

self-emancipation is only possible by building *Oromummaa* as a means of mobilizing all Oromos to establish self-confidence, consciousness, self-organization, and self-emancipation.

The third issue deals with the necessity of a centralized strong national liberation front. The restoration of Oromian state and sovereignty requires to build the OLF as the strongest national organization. On its part, the OLF must develop commitment to reinvent and apply some elements of *Gada* principles and to rebuild a new national *Gumii Gayoo*. The starting point to initiate the formation of the new national *Gumii Gayoo* can be the rebuilding of the United Liberation Forces of Oromia (ULFO). Oromos do not need to wait to form a national *Gumii Gayoo* until liberation. ULFO as a political and cultural platform can provide a mechanism for establishing a common understanding and consensus among the fragmented Oromo political forces provided that it will be wisely and carefully handled. This political fragmentation demonstrates the low level of the development of *Oromummaa* and Oromo nationalism. Oromo nationalists should be clear that the Oromo national movement is not struggling to reinvent the *Moti* system or Oromo chiefdoms based on clans or regions.

In some parts of Oromo society, the emergence of the *Moti* system undermined the *Gada* system and later facilitated the formation of those Oromo forces that collaborated with the Ethiopian colonial system. As other nationalisms, Oromo nationalism has two edges. One edge looks backward, and the other looks forward. The Oromo national movement should reconsider Oromo culture and history, and recognize the negative ones and avoid them. As the formation of different autonomous *Gada* governments and the *Moti* system contributed to the defeat of the Oromo people in the second half of the 19th century, the political fragmentation of Oromo society will perpetuate the defeat of the Oromo nation in the 21st century. Therefore, the consolidation of the OLF is a must for liberation of Oromia. Without the centralization and the consolidation of the OLF, Oromos cannot effectively confront and defeat the Ethiopian colonial government.

Furthermore, the OLF has a great historical responsibility to cooperate with responsible and accountable Oromo political organizations and help them in effectively participating in the Oromo national movement because it has more audiences, resources, experiences, and political legitimacy. On their parts, these organizations should stop their negative political propaganda against the OLF. However, every Oromo organization should be scrutinized and evaluated in relations to their objectives, ideologies and performance. Oromo organizations that serve the interest of the enemy and those nominal organizations that exist to seek rent from the Oromo Diaspora should be challenged and exposed. Such organizations do not defend the Oromo national interest and they confuse their own group or individual interest with that of the Oromo nation. To defend such organizations is tantamount to fight against the liberation of the Oromo nation.

The reinvention of the best elements of the *Gada* system is the fourth point. The Oromo national movement needs to start to retrieve and practice the principles of *Gada*. The idea of building a broader national *Gumii Gayoo* must be priority as already mentioned. All Oromos, except those traitors, should be invited to participate and own their national movement. There should be ways of enabling most Oromos in participating in

their movement by providing ideas, resources, expertise, and their labor. Although the fire of Oromo nationalism was lit by a few, determined revolutionary elements, now the Oromo national struggle has reached on the level where it requires mass mobilization and participation. In this mobilization, the Oromo national movement should use the ideology of *Gada* democracy which is enshrined in *Oromummaa* to mobilize the entire nation spiritually, financially, militarily, and organizationally to take a coordinated political and military action.

While consolidating the Oromo national movement, it is necessary to build political alliances with peoples who are interested in the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy. This is the fifth issue. Although the priority of the Oromo national movement is to liberate Oromia and its people, the movement has moral and political obligations to promote social justice and democracy for the peoples who have been suffering under the successive authoritarian-terrorist governments of the Ethiopia Empire. Since the capital city of this empire is located in the heart of Oromia, as the Oromo movement gains momentum and the Ethiopian state starts to collapse, an Oromo-led government will be obligated to provide security and administration both in Oromia and beyond. This emerging government should be guided by the principles of individual and group freedom that will be articulated in a new constitution that will be framed by the representatives of various peoples both proportionally and democratically. Therefore, the Oromo movement led by the OLF needs to build a political alliance with national groups that endorse the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy.

A democratic Oromia should play a central role in a multinational democratic state because of its democratic tradition, the size of its population, geopolitics, and abundant economic resources. Oromos must have their own state that can protect Oromo sovereignty while implementing the principles of self-determination and multinational democracy. How can they accomplish these objectives? This brings us to the final issue: This is the obligation of every Oromo for restoring Oromian sovereignty and statehood within a multinational context. The Oromo national struggle manifests the aspiration of all Oromos. Therefore, every Oromo has moral, political and national obligations to actively participate in the Oromo national struggle to enable the Oromo nation to achieve its political, social, and economic objectives.

Particularly, Oromo intellectuals have great responsibility to mobilize Oromos and others on the principles of self-determination, social justice, and democracy, and to expand the leadership capacity of the Oromo movement. Expanding the leadership capacity of this movement requires the active participation of most Oromo women and youth that can be more than the two-third of the Oromo population. The responsibilities of the Oromo intellectuals also include developing pragmatic policies that will lay the foundation of both an Oromian democratic state and a multinational state, establishing special relationship with the colonized nations in the Ethiopian Empire, expanding public diplomacy by consolidating the support of the Oromo Diaspora, and influencing world powers by using the principles of global *Oromummaa* to support the just cause of the Oromo for social justice, liberation, and democracy.

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Can Democracy Deliver A Comprehensive Solution to A Multi-Nation Ethiopia?

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Though historically modern democracy is as old as the French Revolution, it is after the end of the Cold War that it became world wide popular. With the collapse of the communist system, it seems that democracy became triumphant as the only viable and credible system of rule. Today, all traditionally conflicting social entities such as rich and poor, the capitalist and the worker, man and woman, the East and the West, the developed and the developing, the globalist and the nationalist etc., appeal to democracy as a magical form of ideology in addressing their respective cause.

Ethiopia made no exception to this global ramification and tendency. In fact, as the end of Mengistu's regime perfectly coincided with the end of the Cold War, Ethiopia was the first among other African countries to declare itself liberal, democratic and pluralist as it did otherwise during the popularity of socialism. Almost all political forces in Ethiopia claim nowadays to be committed to democracy and free-market economic system. This is even true to the various liberation fronts including the TPLF and the OLF, who forged alliance in the early 90s in formulating and coining the famous charter that heralded democracy and federal pluralism as its core goals. Though that democratic engagement and commitment has proved itself to be ephemeral, as both fronts divorced as soon as less than in a year, the OLF seems to have been continuing committed to democracy and the over all spirit of globalism as it has always been open for a dialogue even with its adversaries. The recent alliance forged with the CUD (Coalition for Unity and Democracy), normally considered to be the classical enemy to the national aspiration of the Oromo people in general, is but one case in point. In today's Ethiopia there is no virtually a political organization that has not declared it self to be pluralist, globalist and democratic though some of them are often with deadly conflicting political agendas.

The main aim of this presentation is precisely to assess and examine whether this collective commitment of the various political forces is genuine and enduring.

Generally considered, there are mainly two reasons for such collective self allegiance to global democracy: The first could be just political prudence and expediency, i.e., to win sympathy from the powerful countries for promoting ones own political agenda. The second reason could be a genuine belief and trust in democratic principles and new global opportunities in really enhancing a comprehensive solution to the problems of all peoples of the empire in instituting justice, equality, freedom and peace.

My concern in this presentation is the second, namely to assess and evaluate whether democracy could really deliver a comprehensive solution to the complex problems of the country. Certainly, a fair assessment and evaluation of this formulation of the problematic would depend on what we understand by democracy. Defining and explaining this concept is, therefore, inescapable.

Democracy

Democracy as a system of government is as old as the ancient history of Greece. Modern democracy is however as recent as the Enlightenment era, kindled by the French Revolution and overspread through British Industrial Revolution and later by the American Revolution. This era is known by social scientists as *Modern* vis-a-vis the medieval age or as the *Age of Reason* vis-a-vis the Dark Age. One central to such radical contrast concerns a shift in the very conception of society and politics.

We know that the monarchic system largely draws its legitimacy and principles of social organization from religious dogmatism that believes in the hierarchically preordained organic nature of societies. The social is considered to precede the individual both ontologically and in practical politics. It was precisely against this fundamental conception of society and politics that the Enlightenment movement directed, of which the French Revolution was the practical consummation. In the Enlightenment era, society came to be conceptualised neither as a divinely ordained organic unit nor as a sentimentally sealed community, rather, as a contractual venture between *free* and *rational* individuals. But as identity and interests of individuals are often conflicting and incommensurable, the free association is designed in such a way that it excludes from the outset any presupposition of a unified conception of good or racial and ethnic identity. The contracting individuals are therefore expected to perceive one another as a disembodied one, i.e. by bracketing out their cultural, religious or ethnic identity. In the contractual venture, what is binding is only the political agreement not a common moral value, culture or religion. The *rationality* of the modern man precisely lies in that he is supposed to be capable to distinguish between his political and non-political identity. The political is universal in the sense that it only pertains to the common interest of instituting and regulating justice and freedom for all citizens without evoking any particular conception of good or communal identity. By contrast, the non-political is particularistic in the sense that religious, cultural or ethnic membership occupies a central importance. In the political association, the individual is considered as a disembodied or *autonomous* citizen with no social identity, but in the latter as a fully encumbered with thicker conception of the good. The inability to separate or reconcile these two identities of the individual has been the cause of devastating and continuous religious and ethnic wars in the old Europe. The ingenuity of the enlightenment lies therefore in having found a way out of this inability. The credo of this ingenuity is what we call today liberal democracy.

As I already indicated, liberal democracy found the way out by conceptualising the individual as a locus of social organization on the premise of two but intertwined concepts. These are *autonomy* and *rationality* of the individual. Because individuals are assumed to be *rational*, they are taken to be *autonomous* in choosing, revising or even forming their own conceptions of good. Inversely, as *autonomy* would necessarily lead to subscribing to diverse conceptions of good, modern individuals are assumed to be *rational* enough, despite their difference in their conception of the good, in being capable to cooperate with the aim of instituting a political society that facilitates a procedural fairness to all contracting parties without favouring or disfavouring one social end against the other. The concept *autonomy* is employed for fostering the idea of individual freedom vis-a-vis society at large, with its various conceptions of the good as articulated in religion, art and culture. As this concept is an emancipator of the

individual in view of the oppressive nature of cultural institutions such as the church in the 18th century of Europe, this idea of the Enlightenment has been not only welcomed but also zealously supported to end sectarianism and war. Congruently, the concept of *rationality* is employed for fostering a new perception of modern individual as the real agent of a political society which led, in its own turn, to popular concepts such as nation-state, citizenship, universal suffrage, people's sovereignty etc, despite the persistence of difference. In a nutshell, liberal democracy found the way out by prioritizing the primacy of individual right to the social good. Individual liberty is uncompromising "that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override it" (Rawls, 1971, p. 3).

This means the need for society and its basic institutions to adopt what is known as a *difference-blind* principle of neutrality in respect to the various conceptions of good. The model becomes difference-blind, because it excludes conceptions of good and identity from a collective deliberation on public policies. In other words, cultural, moral and religious values would be limited to the private sphere or to what Hegel calls *Civil Society*, while the principle of individual liberty exclusively belong to the public or political domain.

The political ethos of the French Revolution such as Equality, Liberty and Fraternity were therefore claimed on the basis of such conceptual interplay. Liberty is the freedom to choose a conception of good that the individual happen to find worthy of a life plan. In the same token, equality stands for a procedural equality whereby the individual is entitled to an equal opportunity as the result of the difference-blind model adopted to resolve the conflict between the political and the social, the thinner and the thicker identity, the disembodied and the communally constituted individual. Consequently, fraternity and *eternal peace* is postulated as a possible outcome of this new Enlightenment settlement as this has been prophesised by great thinkers such as Immanuel Kant.

To the disappointment of Kant, however, the crisis of liberal humanism and universalism started to manifest itself before the French Revolution became over as soon as it produced the Jacobean terrorism. The crisis got even wider and deeper as the scramble for colonies commenced and, consequently, led the globally admired and envied *modern* Europe into a barbarous 1st and 2nd World Wars. From then on wards there are thinkers who are engaged in searching out what went wrong with the so much universalized Enlightenment movement that even its victims couldn't still do away with it in the post modern world. The need to the search is further strengthened by the rapid technological revolution the war has engendered and its aftermath in the relationship between man and nature, on the one hand, and the traditional and modern man, on the other. This has produced two streams of critique, from within and from without, both of which draw the strength of their critic from a political philosophy known as communitarianism.

Two Critiques of Liberal Democracy

The first critic of liberal democracy comes from the conservative or often known as Republican democrats. Given the fact that liberal individualism pays little attention to

the common good and cohesive national identities of modern states, the worries of this stream of critique concerns the potential danger of moral pluralism and anarchy. The critique of this group may be classified in to two major points:

It criticizes liberalism for its negative conception of freedom, because it tells us very little about the positive role of the individual in the public sphere than it tells us about the social and political constraints from which the individual should be free. It accuses liberal conception of individual right as more of *right-protective* than *right-proactive* one. It consequently maintains that liberal democracy is a political system that depoliticizes the individual citizen by limiting him in his space of negative liberty.

The second major critique concerns the very liberal premise of *individual autonomy*. According to the communitarians, if the moral ideal of autonomy is equivalent to the freedom of choice, choice simply as a matter of preference without “the horizon of significance”, it just ends in triviality and incoherence. For the moral worth of the freedom to choose lies not simply in the act of choosing but in the value of our choice. And this value is precisely what the disembodied individual has no without presupposing his social context. The moral weight of choice as individual freedom is significant provided that the choosing subject has already some system of value judgement in enabling to critically evaluate the value of the choice itself (Biru, 1998, p. 119). Republicans conclude that the liberal individual is too unencumbered, to begin with, to be a rational agent of society at all. Consequently, they further accuse liberalism for having transformed the modern man, by renouncing any communal particularism in which the individual lives in society in a collectively approved way, in to a morally and emotionally disembodied one, who must languish modern social pathologies such as narcissism (Lasch, 1979), proteanism (Lifton, 1971), homelessness (Berger, 1974), remissiveness (Carroll, 1977); Lipovetsky, 1992) and irrationalism (Barret, 1959). As this group of critique take identity of the individual as an embodiment of once own socio-cultural identity, it accuses liberalism for its excessive social atomism with all its evil attendants.

The second stream of liberal critique comes from the hitherto voiceless race, ethnic, cultural and gender based identities who have been victims of slavery, colonialism, patriarchal and authoritative systems of the historical White Man dominance. Its critique is with wide and far reaching practical consequences as it is manifest in the contemporarily heightened globalization. The critic is backed by the revolt often led by enslaved and colonised races, marginalised ethnic or cultural groups, feminists, gays, environmentalists etc. whose political activity have been gathering its momentum since the end of the 2nd World War. It is precisely this stream of critique that came to be termed as *post modernism*, which opened up, in its turn, the way to what later came to be known as *Globalism*. Just for a matter of simplicity and convenience, let me call this stream of critique as communitarian pluralism.

The critic of communal pluralism is so radical that it is in a way an attempt at an all out exposure of the entire enlightenment philosophy as a mere ideology of domination. Central to it is that the enlightenment political philosophy is not as neutral and universal humanist as it claims to be. It maintains that key liberal concepts such as modernity, individual autonomy, rationality and difference-blind principle are simply

conceptual representations of the dominant white man in contradistinction to the rest of humankind whom the enlightened Europe used to consider almost congenial to the status of nature: inert, devoid of dynamics, backward, irrational, sectarian and communally suffocating. It maintains that those key liberal concepts are in fact traceable to European epistemological mind-matter dualism, constructed to express mutual exclusivity not only between the scientific man and nature but also between man and woman, the superior white race and the subordinated other races etc. Keith expresses this idea for example in the following words: “The mind-matter dualism is the final arbiter of what qualities are appropriate in the relations between the A and the not –A, in the Self and the Other, respectively. In fact, this generic dualism actively functions as two related types –the mind-body dualism and the mind-Nature dualism. The burden of the first is to create “negated doubles of women, Third-World peoples, and so on, while the mind-Nature dualism targets mainly nature” (Nelso W. Keith, 137).

This dualism of the Enlightenment is based on the reason of natural science, which is instrumental by its nature. As subduing and exploiting nature was the primary goal of natural science, the Enlightenment mission of civilizing the uncivilized was instrumental in the relationship between the First and Third World countries. Civilizing the uncivilized is necessarily conjoined with moulding and shaping the uncivilized in the way the latter matches the need of the former, i.e., the civilized. It is precisely this instrumentalist conception of rationality that later dragged the civilized world to the most barbarous wars humankind has ever seen. It is equally this instrumental conception of reason that destroyed also nature to turn it against the whole humanity as we are witnessing today in a globalized ecological imbalance on a global scale.

In the face of such philosophical scrutiny, the liberal difference-blind principle is aimed at evading difference from the public sphere of social life by assuming alike the unlike. Since the relegation of traditional value system is based on sceptical premise of scientific rationality, difference-blind principle is susceptible of a false impartiality between fundamental moral conflicts. Its falsity lies not in its articulation of freedom for each to determine his/her conception of good, rather in its denial to recognise the fact of difference a public significance. In so doing it rules out the possibility of discourse on moral differences so that, at least, mutual recognition and respect prevail. It must be clear by now that difference-blind principle is intended for no less than dismantling communities into disembodied individuals with the main goal of creating the semblance of pure legal Nation-state at the cost of marginalised communities. After all, we know that nation-states cannot be built on the foundations of neutral science, with no one’s language, value system, history, symbol and social identity. The liberal difference-blind principle is precisely to obscure this fact. Treating alike the unlike is either to conceal inequality so that it may perpetuate unnoticed or, it is to suppress difference so that Otherness would become assimilated into the dominant identity under the disguise of universal humanism (Biru, 1998, p. 162). This is best expressed by the famous words of Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre, a French revolutionary: “the Jews must be allowed nothing as a nation and everything as individuals” (referred in Dieckhoff, 2004, p. 184).

Globalism and the Politics of Difference

Though not yet a fully fledged doctrine, political philosophers consider globalism as a doctrine in the making, both as an outgrowth and reaction to the crisis of the Enlightenment tradition or liberal democracy (see Nelson W. Keith, 1997). They consider it as an outgrowth, because the basic principles of the Enlightenment philosophy are taken to be a necessary stepping blocks in constructing a new vision and outlook for a better world. And they consider it as a reaction, because it is basically a critique of the Enlightenment tradition in respect to the still prevailing inequalities, injustices and hierarchies both within nation-states and internationally. As a matter of fact, globalism is evoked by the need to improve the principles of the Enlightenment in the way it corresponds to that ever narrowing space between the centre (the Self) and the periphery (the Other) in the face of a rapidly growing technological and economic progress and interdependence that turned the world into a “global village”. The ever growing depleted resources, explosive ecological degradation and higher rate demographic increment are the other dimension of the problem that turned our globe into a real global village. The phrase “global village” is not only bearing a spatial connotation but also a social one. It signifies not only that the world is getting physically close and dense as a result of new innovations in communication technology but also in respect to sharing a common social fate in the face of an ever degradation of natural environment and resources. The more the globe became a village, the more diverse, dense and suffocating it becomes unless the necessary rectification is made.

The common admission in the post modern world is that the universal organizing principles that modernity has used to control nature and the social world, whether as a civilizing responsibility or as a naked domination, are loosing their enabling power. It is overdue since Nature and the Other social world revolted against the logo centric exclusivist philosophy of the modern age. This is even truer as far as international relations are concerned. Not to mention the globalization of militarism we witnessed during the Cold War through what we call today proxy wars in the Third-World (Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan, just to name but few), conflicts of identities are expanding and mounting up in different forms and at different levels ranging from within the state through regional and continental to the global scale. As Keith summarises “all these and more give a certain prophetic poignancy to W. H. Auden’s immortal line: If we do not love each other, we die!” (Nelson W. Keith, 40).

Loving each other proceeds, first and for most, from mutual recognition, which presupposes an acknowledgement of the fact of *difference* in the place of the dualistic Enlightenment epistemology of explaining Nature and the Other as negative to the Self. “Recognition is commanded by the requirements of identity” (Keith, 254). This implies that post modern theories, unlike individual-based universalism of the Enlightenment, proceed from the communitarian premise that collective identities are real and significant to the freedom of the individual himself. As domination, marginalisation and oppression are structural, so are empowerment, liberation and freedom by their very nature. If choice is the essence of freedom as liberalism argues, for example, not only the ability for a critical choice but the very options of choice are rooted in the structure of cultural community in which the individual happens to find himself. Language, history and cultural narratives are some of those objective elements of social structure, constitutive of the very personality of the individual. In opposition to the individualist ontology of liberalism, therefore, post modernism takes collective

identities as real and objective as forms of social relations, if not as substances. Based on such ontological shift, it argues for politics of difference (or better termed politics of mutual recognition) and ethics of discourse between group identities.

Put together, globalism bears a qualitative and paradigmatic shift:

“...in the social existential counterpoints that come with the ontologies radiating from the conceptual statement, “*it is different,*” as against “*it is not*”” (Keith, 24)
 “... in philosophical perspectives, from a gradually accepted obsolescence of a philosophy of consciousness to its replacement of by a philosophy of language” (Keith, 213).

In anthropological perspectives, from elitist conception of culture to a romantic conception of cultures as praxis and hence the contribution of each culture to humanism as unique in its own way.

Away from economic rational-choice theory “to a sociological-philosophical point – that we, as human beings, derive our self-understandings and conceptions of the good from broadly communitarian sensibilities” (Keith, p. 39).

Away from production oriented definition of political economy to those related to consumption, which at once emphasize aesthetic, intellectual, as well as belonging, esteem, values (Keith, p.44).

Away from political economic concepts such as social classes to gender, culture, ethnic and religion related concepts as the central organizing principles of international relationships (Keith, 50).

In sum the core principle of globalism is a “multinucleated humanism” that “has the conceptual and practical possibilities of accommodating the multiple islets of often zealously guarded particularities -race, gender, ethnicity, class, global egalitarianism – now striving to fit themselves in an agreeable position in the emerging global order” (Keith, 95).

Back Home

To drive my point back home, after overdue delay, I think the Oromo National Liberation movement is but one among those particularities. I don't see therefore why such *Zeitgeist* (the spirit of the Age) of the era should be uniquely inimical to the aspiration of the Oromo as some significant opinion makers within the liberation movement want us to believe. I suspect the propensity for such a misguided picture may emanate from the confusion of exchanging the doctrine of globalism with the foreign policies of the so called major global players. We have to mind however that the so called major global players are not major players as such though admittedly have significant influences as far as international relations between states are concerned. As I have tried to make clear that globalism is a post-modern intellectual movement that draws its basic percept from new developments in the world's social and natural environment as a whole, the so called major players are in fact the targets of the movement, as long as they are the very social representation of the Enlightenment tradition and project. Neither should globalization be identified as intensified

unification and homogenization, as some often mention the European unification or the fall of Berlin-wall as a living testimony for their vision of globalization. To their disappointment, I should say this is to miss the conundrum for the problem. Both the European Union and the fall of Berlin-Wall, as a symbolic expressions of the heightened globalization, suggests, on the contrary, particularism, not unification as it appears on the surface. Germans are reunified because of their linguistic, historical and cultural identities, despite their ideological opposition. By contrast, the republics and peoples of the X-Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia were divorced by having followed the particularity of their identities, despite their ideological unity. Similarly, the European Union is achieved by searching for a secure source of broader identity in the face of emerging new competing identities on the global stage. Conclusively, though globalization designates “an intensification of levels of interaction and interconnectedness among the states and societies which make up international society” (Held, 1991, p.206), this is not meant for unification or homogenization. Interconnectedness already implies the recognition of the fact of difference as its premise.

In short, the *Zeitgeist* of globalism is based on the acknowledgment of collective autonomy as an inescapable feature of contemporary politics. Austin and O’neill give us a clear picture when they state: the liberal Nation-state “has paradoxically both narrowed its appeal and lost its hold on events within its own borders. Whether the world is in transition from the familiar pattern of states to an indiscernible map no one can say: what is certain is that societies are restless and governments are troubled by the unrest” (M. O’Neill and D. Austin, 2000, p.2). Today even countries like Switzerland, Belgium and Canada, otherwise recognised as paradigm of pluralism, are facing a growing tension between ethnic and linguistic groups for a greater autonomy and empowerment. This is not to mention the ever mounting communal confrontations in even long established unitary democracies like France and Great Britain, where governments are getting forced to move in the direction of acknowledging and adopting different models of autonomy as in formidable (for detailed analysis see O’Neill and D. Austin, 2000).

This over all political development and trend on the global scale support rather than frustrate the Oromo case. The uniqueness of the Oromo case is that, as the Oromo constitutes the majority of the Ethiopian population, its nationalist aspiration cannot be properly or sufficiently addressed with models of autonomy intended to accommodate minority rights in the mentioned countries. Let’s take, for example, two of those models, which are cultural and ethnic related ones for a territorially defined people like the Oromo.

The first is what is known as Consociational democracy, often proposed by open minded liberal democrats. It basically aims at establishing political arrangements that make possible coextensivity between cultural and political membership. It does so by offering power share at the level of central government with the political elites of the group at stake, while it pays little or no attention to cultural and territorial autonomy of the concerned community. Consociation democracy is more elitist in its approach and more integrative in its precepts than it is autonomising. It owes its origin to what one may call imperial federalism which appoints local born vassals as efficient means of

administration without a real autonomy to the community the vassal is supposed to represent. This model is precisely what Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and other moderate Amharan parties recommend for solving the question of nationality in Ethiopia in general and that of the Oromo in particular.

The second model of autonomy is what we commonly call federacy. In federacy, a larger power and smaller polity are linked asymmetrically in a federal relationship whereby the latter has greater autonomy in its own affairs, especially concerning culture and territory, but smaller role in the governance of the larger or central power. This model is more autonomising but without the real means and power to exercise and protect the granted autonomy. This is exactly the model that the present Ethiopian regime, TPLF/EPRDF, is applying to the Oromo case. Because it self has an ethnic cause for cultural/territorial autonomy, it appraises federacy. But because it wants to maintain its political power as a guarantee for that autonomy and even hegemony, it should deny empowerment to the Oromo people, which constitute the majority of the Ethiopian polity.

It is not difficult to see at once that none of these models of autonomy would separately do justice to the Oromo cause. Cultural autonomy in separation from the territorial one, as it is suggested in consociation democracy, might be appropriate for immigrant cultural groups who live dispersedly in and within the dominant nation. But it can't even address, let alone solve, the issue of territorially defined peoples like the Oromo. For their issue also pertains to economic exploitation based on established regional division of labour and long term territorial dispossession by the politically dominant group(s). Like wise, territorial autonomy without the corresponding empowerment may be trimmed by highly weakened and disabled groups such as aboriginal societies in Canada, the US or Australia, in order to avoid further disability, but unthinkable by nations like the Oromo, who constitute the essence of Ethiopia in many respects. As the only largest and most resourceful nation in Ethiopia, Oromo's aspiration can only be addressed by a combination of the two models if at all it should be satisfied within the Ethiopian polity. Empowerment for the Oromo should meet the democratic requirement that its language, tradition, history and culture not only be protected but be promoted in representing the national identity of Ethiopia itself. Empowerment should also imply for the Oromo people appropriate share of power in the central government that corresponds to its demographic size, if the universal meaning of democracy is to be saved from Ethiopian prefixes such as *Revolutionary* or *Ethiopian-* Democracy.

In contradistinction to these two seemingly contradictory Abyssinian conceptions of democracy, Oromo's conception is based on the classical principle of self-determination. What the liberal concept of autonomy is to the individual, the principle of self-determination is to a nation. It stands for a nation's right to decide its own fate, as much as autonomy designates individual freedom in choosing, revising or even forming her/his conception of good. In this sense therefore the right of self-determination cannot be multi-dimensional as Lata seems to argue in his recent book (see Lata, 2004). For it is a political ideal-end in itself irrespective of the possible various outcomes and historical contexts. Overlooking this important distinction between *means* and *ends*, I presume, is the main cause as to why the principle of self-determination is getting more and more overshadowed by the empowerment/liberation

dichotomy-debate within the Oromo liberation movement. Very unfortunate as this development may be, the dichotomy seems to have been extended to an “*either or*” perspective of thinking in respect to the method of struggle, namely, peaceful/armed struggle as a necessary corollary. To say the least, this is a self cornering move into a deadlock in the face of the bigger vision of the Oromo liberation movement. As much as the mind is nothing without the body and the body but only blind without the mind, I am of the opinion that this new air is a polluting one to the cohesive and comprehensive character of the liberation movement. The crossroad that Lata aptly described in his previous book (Lata, 1999) should be a source of dilemma for the Abyssinian ruling class not for the oppressed nationalities. The Abyssinians should decide either to relinquish their dominance in favour of genuine democratic pluralism or to rather let Ethiopia disintegrate and perish as a state. The liberation/empowerment dilemma entertained by the oppressed nations with its corollary means of struggle should be a divisive burden to the ruling Abyssinian elites, not to that of the oppressed nations. For freedom, justice and democracy are their only true and ever persisting cause.

Conclusion

I believe it is clear by now that conceptions of democracy of the major political forces in Ethiopia are at logger heads, despite their unanimous claim to uphold democracy as a political ideal. This is mainly because, as I have tried to show, each group conceptualise democracy not as a procedural context of arbitration but as the interest or specific political agenda to be arbitrated. One way or another, all the interests and political agendas are revolving around ethnic strive either to dominate or to liberate. In the name of liberal democracy, the Amharan political organization want continue the Amahran legacy to rule and keep the Ethiopian nation-state intact at the cost of the many oppressed and marginalised nations. And the TPLF, in the name of its dubious conception of revolutionary democracy, want to promote the Tigrean irredentist nationalism. Those oppressed peoples like the Oromo, Ogaden and Sidama seek, by contrast, to end the Abyssinian dominance either by claiming independence or by means of demanding democratic empowerment to collective identities. Under such incommensurable conceptions of democracy, it is difficult therefore to see how democracy can deliver a comprehensive solution if not impossible to achieve it.

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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

By Sisay Asefa, Professor, Western Michigan University

Greetings to you all. Let me start first by thanking the organizers of the 21st Annual Oromo Annual Conference for inviting to share my views. In particular, I want to thank Obbo Gobena for inviting me to this conference. In spite of my serious attempt to appear in person, I have been unable to do so due various reasons including family obligations, and summer heavy teaching and conference organizing responsibilities, related to my absence to my travels through Ethiopia for five weeks in late May and June 2007. I apologize for my inability to appear in person in spite of my earlier promise or commitment to the OSA President, Dr. Gobena Huluka to appear. I hope these short remarks will be shared to the OSA audience in some form by either reading or being part of the record of contributions.

When Obbo Gobena first invited me I recall he said like “we are inviting you with the belief that I may have a fresh view on the Oromo”, which I appreciated. I hope the views expressed here meet that standard and also make a constructive contribution in how to enhance economic welfare and peace and development of the Oromo people and other people of Ethiopia in the 21st century or the coming Ethiopian Millennium.

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 also produced some of the best athletes of Ethiopia. Individuals such as Abebe Bikila, Derartu Tulu, Tirunesh Dibaba, Kenenisa Bekele, and Teshome Galana made Ethiopia famous at the world stage in recent years. I am pleased to report most of these Athletes come from my home province of Arsi! When I visited recently, I noticed these Athletes have recently invested in their home province of Arsi. For example, I stayed in the newly built impressive Derartu Hotel during my last visit in June 2007. There is also a huge hotel under construction by athlete Kenenisa, and athlete Haile Gebresselassie has a building in Asella. The Oromo are among most physically attractive of the people of Ethiopia. Their men and women are generally tall and attractive or beautiful. An example is Ms Dina Dinku who was a recent candidate for Miss Universe.

The Oromo have one of the most open and democratic culture among Ethiopians. Their system of African Democracy known as *Geda* 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.

The key political and economic problem of Ethiopia for the coming Millennium is how to achieve this desirable outcome is by democratizing Ethiopian state under multi-ethnic democratic unity that empowers its citizens and various communities across ethnicity from the bottom up, i.e. through a real process of power-sharing and political and economic empowerment. Further more, there is implicit assumption in made in this paper that the Oromo or any other ethnic group in Ethiopia cannot achieve freedom or progress by breaking away or by seceding from Ethiopia as claimed by few Oromo political elites. While such elites have their right to express their personal views, the paper assumes it is not the desire of the overwhelming vast and diverse Oromo people to break away from Ethiopia from which they have legitimate and major stake in constituting the historic formation of a modern Ethiopian nation state. These view is consistent with my observation during my recent travels in parts of the current regional state of Oromia.

In my view, it is not in the enlightened interest of the Oromo people and their political elites or Oromo intellectuals to follow the disastrous road of Eritrea which broke away from Ethiopia in 1993, and which is currently languishing under vicious dictatorship of one man rule. Eritrea is today a prison state under its current ruler. It has also become a major destabilizing force in the Horn of Africa that is in constant conflict with every state of the Horn of Africa including Ethiopia and beyond.

Given, the above premises and assumptions, the objective of my remarks is to discuss the challenges and opportunities of establishing multi-ethnic and civic based democratic governance in Ethiopia and other Horn of Africa states in which Oromo will be democratically and proportionally empowered, and their natural resource, including land, and their cultural assets and resource ownership rights can be secured along the other peoples of Ethiopia including minorities and individuals.

It is assumed that such process can be achieved through a peaceful process for democratic evolution following an honest, informed and inclusive dialogue at the OSA and other forums may provide, and that the outcome of this process is likely to lead to the revival of a democratic and strong united multi-Ethnic Ethiopian state within ethnic diversity in the long-run where the Oromo is politically and economically empowered proportionally which will also be the best way of protecting the rights of minority groups and individuals. Ethiopia can learn from her own history and that of successful multi-Ethnic democracies such as India, Malaysia, and South Africa.

The United States itself is a successful multi-ethnic democratic country and I understand Minneapolis constitutes the major concentration of the Oromos as well as the Somali communities. This is made possible by the democratic structure of the American society that protects individual as well as ethnic and community rights.

Studies on the relationship of ethnic diversity and democracy in developing world show that ethnic diversity can coexist under democracy. Ethnic diversity leads to conflict only when it is politicized by ethnic power elites under a structure of some form of ethnic dominance. The best way of managing potential ethnic conflict in diverse societies is through a multi-ethnic democratic or by establishing a civic based representative form governance that empowers local communities.

For the Oromo and other ethnic groups of Ethiopia to benefit, Ethiopia must move to a truly multi-ethnic democratic form of governance that empowers the majority and protects minority and individual rights as well as human rights. The current structure of rigid ethnic federalism imposed on the Oromo and other people of Ethiopia since 1991 and enshrined in Article 39 of the country's constitution by ethnic political elites has no cultural, historical, geographic and economic basis or roots.

For example, Ethiopia is better federalized under the traditional provinces which are multi-ethnic which has historic, cultural, geographic and economic basis and promote free mobility of people, labor and capital among the provinces. Multi-ethnic or civic based federalism is consistent with democracy. Ethnic federalism has the potential to lead to ethnic conflicts among and within ethnic groups. The former provinces such as Wellega, Arsi, Bale, Harar, Illubabur, and parts of Showa are settled by Oromo majority representation for which Oromos have real cultural and historic attachments. One of the failures of Haile Selassie Regime is its inability to federalize along provincial lines.

The elite imposed formation of an Oromia state since 1991 isolates Oromos from the rest of the Ethiopian peoples by imposing an artificial state that may impede communication, mobility of Oromos with their other fellow Ethiopians for mutual

socio-economic benefit. A close look at the Oromia state has made it landlocked with no access to other states of the Horn such as Kenya and Sudan.

Current and future generation of Oromo and other ethnic groups must have access to learn and speak their mother tongue and other major languages such as the current federal language such as Amharic, as well as English to be able to compete in the national and global economy. It is damaging and cruel for local ethnic elites to impose alien structures on school children with without their consent and that of their parents. My ancestors who leave in rural Arsi to day speak Oromiffa and Amharic with equal fluency has chosen to teach their children both languages including English for greater opportunities for their children.

Since the Oromo occupy the major agricultural regions of the country, they must be empowered through secured land ownership that allows them to freely engage in private land market transactions. Security and ownership of farm land is necessary to transform the Ethiopia's subsistence economy by increasing agricultural productivity and reducing soil erosion, deforestation and land degradation.

Today, there is a dual land tenure pattern in Ethiopia where urban land can be leased or sold among individuals with expensive priced due to monopoly ownership by the States. The Oromo that leave that predominantly reside in rural area have no security of land and cannot sell or buy land or use it for collateral. So, Oromo farmers are stuck in an increasingly fragmented land of one hectare and declining with no hope to increase agricultural productivity and their income or escape out of poverty. Land reform is necessary to attract capital and technology to agriculture to enable the transformation of the current low productivity and subsistence agriculture aimed at achieving food security and promoting industrialization.

Land ownership is also crucial to promote rural democracy that empowers communities must form free cooperatives and civil society groups that can check against possible abuse of power of central government. So, the most important development policy for the Oromo is the land reform that secures the ownership of farm land aimed at promoting equity, productivity and protecting soil erosion and deforestation.

The empowerment of the Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia depend on a credible political and economic reform toward forming a democratic multi-ethnic representative government where political power and wealth is proportionally shared and the rights of individuals and communities are protected under the rule of law. The self-determination of Oromo and other people's of Ethiopia is only possible under a truly democratic and united multi-ethnic Ethiopia which vests property rights including land on individuals and communities. Ethnic Elites that try to balkanize Ethiopia by emulating the road taken by the EPLF or Shabia will bring about a disaster to Oromo and other people of Ethiopia. Ethiopian politicians of the opposition and the ruling must address these crucial issues instead of fighting over trivial personality matters and practicing what appears to be a dysfunctional politics. There is a critical need to improve country political culture toward democratic dialogue, trust, addressing key policy issues to avoid violence and conflict that will continue to trap the country in mass poverty and food insecurity.

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

By Daba S. Gedafa, Ph.D. Candidate, Kansas State University

ABSTRACT

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, minority led-TPLF/EPRDF regime in Ethiopian empire which include all the stakeholders. Some of the external challenges include: neighboring countries of Oromia; western society; 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; increase awareness of Oromo society; increase awareness and convince 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 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.

Key words: Oromo, Self-determination, challenges, solutions, political forces.

Introduction

The Oromo are the largest ethnonation in the Horn of Africa. In Ethiopia, they constitute 40% of the country's total population. The Oromo live largely in the Regional State of Oromia, the largest and most populous of the nine regional states formed following the downfall of the Dergue regime in May 1991. A considerable number of Oromo clans are also found in northern Kenya. The regional State of Oromia

is located between 3 and 15 degrees north latitude, and 33 and 40 degrees east latitude (*Hussein, 2006*).

The Oromo speak *Afaan Oromo* (the language of Oromo), an Afro-Asiatic language and the most widely spoken language of the Eastern Cushitic linguistic sub-phylum. The Oromo practice three religions: Islam, Christianity and *Waaqeffannaa* (belief in *Waaq* or sky God) (*Hussein 2004, 2005*). The physical, cultural, socio-political and religious identities of the Oromo clearly indicate that they are indigenous to the region. The Oromo were an ancient race, the indigenous stock up on which most other peoples in the eastern part of Africa have been grafted (*Bates, 1979*). The Oromo movement of the 16th century played a major role in the internal dynamics of the Horn of Africa (*Hassen, 1990*). The Oromo's current numerical preponderance in Ethiopia is partially the result of their social and demographic impact in the Horn from the 16th century onwards (*Hussein, 2006*).

Oromo have been under the subjugation of different systems of Ethiopian rulers or dictators since they were conquered as a result of brutal military conquest which was facilitated by the collusion of interests between European imperialism and internal Shoa colonialism, Abyssinian state under Menelik, during the second half of the 19th century. Since then the Oromo people as a nation have suffered political subjugation, economic exploitation, and cultural domination under the brutal Ethiopian colonial rulers of various strands. These dictators have some common characteristic. They all had/have ascended to power by force and rule by force from Menelik to Melese Zenawi (*Web Source 1*).

Like any nation stripped of freedom, the Oromo people have had to wage a liberation struggle to free themselves from the yoke of colonialism. The long and bloody uprising of the Oromo of the Bale region in the 1960s led by the legendary Waqo Guto. The Bale rebellion is described as following: "Eight years of guerilla struggle in Bale needed the aid of Israeli explosive experts, British Army bridge and road builders, and American Air Force advisers on precision bombing to withstand the insurgents". The OLF, which originated in the academic community, was part of this privileged position at the top of Crummey's pyramid. On an organizational level, the OLF was a continuation of the short-lived Ethiopian National Liberation Front (ENLF), which was founded in 1971 and had made some attempts at guerilla warfare in the Chercher Mountains near Harer (*Bulcha 1997*). In the OLF Political Program, the Bale rebellion is re-scaled in order to make it part of a larger struggle against feudalism and imperialism.

The Oromo Baro Tumsa led another group, the Revolutionary Struggle of the Ethiopian Oppressed (ICH'AT), which had originally split from MEISON, but continued to affiliate itself with the military regime until it was also persecuted and annihilated by the Dergue. This later led to the accusation that the Mekane Yesus Church was actually a source of Oromo nationalism, after which Gudina Tumsa was kidnapped and murdered. Thus, the cause of the Oromo national liberation struggle is to de-colonize Oromia by all means necessary and bestow freedom on the Oromo nation so that it joins the free community of nations that enjoy piece and prosperity.

Oromummaa is a sense of common consciousness among Oromos that is driven from common language, culture, the tradition of Gada democratic heritage, history, and experience of external socio-political and economic domination (*Web Source 2*). Oromos of all walks of life have come to the realization that they have one aspiration and goal: exercising their right to national self-determination and live in democracy, peace and harmony with all peoples in Ethiopia. Academic discourses on the content of the right to self-determination identify two applications of the right as used beyond the decolonization process; namely, “external” and “internal” self-determination. External self-determination, according to such scholarly writings, was applied most frequently to colonial situations as it concerns directly the territory of a state-its divisions, enlargement or change-and the state consequent international relation with other states. Internal self-determination, on the other hand, concerns the right of peoples within a state to choose their political status, the extent of their political participation and the form of their government (*Web Source 3*). It is to be noted that self-determination can be internal or external in this paper. The challenges and solutions are discussed from independence or self-determination point of view.

SOME OF THE CHALLENGES

In its pursuit for freedom and independence from the Ethiopian colonial bondage, the Oromo nation faces a wide array of challenges. It is apparent that without identifying and devising strategies to cope with such challenges, struggle for self-determination cannot make any headway. It is necessary to point out internal and external challenges for Oromo’s self-determination in terms of political, military, diplomatic, and socio-economic challenges facing the Oromo national struggle.

Internal Challenges

Internal challenges include the challenges within Oromo political forces, Oromo Society and other forces in the Ethiopian empire.

Challenges from Oromo Political Forces

There are at least five Oromo liberation forces that claim to operate in the theatre of the Oromo liberation struggle: namely, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromo (IFLO), United Oromo Peoples Liberation Front (UOPLF), Oromo peoples Liberation Front (OPLF), and Oromiyaa Liberation Council (OLC). There are other political forces within Ethiopian empire which struggle for Oromo’s internal self-determination: Oromo National Congress (ONC), Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM) etc. Some of the differences/challenges for Oromo’s political forces are:

Perceived/Real Ideological Difference: There are differences in these political forces. Leaders, members and supporters of these political forces are not ready to compromise their differences and work together for the sake of Oromo’s self-determination.

Organizational Challenges: Most of Oromo political forces lack one or more of the following important elements which are required for accomplishing intended goals: the

drive to achieve results, organizational discipline, effective communication, building organizational capital, performance evaluation, democratic practices, organizational value or culture that draws members, and learning best organizational practices.

Leadership Challenges: Leaders of different political forces do not have sufficient leadership skills to lead the members and supporters to achieve their goals within short period of time. At the same time, they are not ready to learn from each other and other effective leaders. Personal characters and behaviors are also some of the attributes for effective leadership.

Regionalism and Differences in Religion: Even if regionalism and differences are not main challenges, they pose some obstacles to Oromo's self-determination. These factors are mostly exaggerated by external forces and inject in Oromo Society.

Challenges from Oromo Opportunists

There has been some opportunist Oromo who were involved in the colonization and oppression of Oromo. Ras Gobana played a significant role for Abyssinians to colonize Oromia under Menelik. Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (OPDO) is the modern Gobana in TPLF-led EPRDF. OPDO has been involved in harassing, detaining, and killing Oromo who struggle for Oromia's self-determination since 1991.

Challenges from within the Oromo Society

Vast majority of Oromo society live in rural areas whose life depends on farming and herding and illiteracy rate is high. Successive repressive regimes made some of these rural Oromo societies to accept the dominance of Abyssinians. It takes some time and dedication to educate and change the psychology of rural, elderly and less educated Oromo.

Challenges from Ethiopian forces

Oromo's struggle for self-determination faces challenges from various political forces and ethnic groups within Ethiopian empire. Some of the challengers are described in the following sections.

TPLF-EPRDF Minority Government of Ethiopia: minority-led government has been posing significant challenge in cooperation with opportunist Oromo. EPRDF challenges self-determination in terms of politics, economics, military, social and diplomacy.

Amhara-led Abyssinian Political Forces: most of Amhara-led political forces oppose Oromo's self-determination and try to regain their political power, which they have lost to TPLF-EPRDF since 1991. Some of the Amhara-led political forces may want to unite with Oromo political forces. This should be considered with extreme care since they try to use the option for their advantage and at the end of the day, nothing comes out for Oromo.

Other Colonized Nations within Ethiopian Empire: Abyssinians also colonized other nations. Some of these colonized nations also struggle for freedom. The cooperation between Oromo and other colonized nations, which struggle for self-determination is less than expectation. Lack of unity and cooperation among political forces of nations, which have been oppressed in Ethiopian empire for centuries, has given repressive regimes to continue their oppression without much resistance.

Minorities within Oromia: Many nations and nationalities live in Oromia. Most of these minorities feel insecure in self-determined Oromia and as a result, they prefer to cooperate with repressive regimes.

Some of the Reasons for the Intense Challenges

Natural Resources of Oromia: Most of the main staple foods of Ethiopia such as wheat, barely, corn, oats, teff, sorghum, pulses and oil seeds are produced in Oromia, and Oromia is the largest producer of cattle, poultry, horse, mule, donkey, sheep, goat, and others. Oromia is the bread basket of Ethiopia. Coffee, which generates about 80% of foreign currency, is mostly from Oromia. Blue Nile, the longest river in the world, and other rivers that benefit the Sudan, Egypt, Somalia and Kenya get most of their tributaries from rivers that originate and flow in Oromia (*Web Source 1*). Most of non-Oromo think that Oromo's independence means the end of their life.

Geographical Location of Oromia: Oromia is surrounded by Amhara, Afar, Tigray, Ogadenia, Southern Nation, nationalities and people, and Benishalgul Gumuz regional states. People in these regional states think that Oromo's self-determination results in isolation of all regional states, especially Gurage people in the Southern are Semitic group like the Amhara and Tigray people. They resist Oromo's self-determination since it results in isolating them from the other Semitic groups.

External Challenges

The external challenges include forces which pose obstacles to Oromo's self-determination in 21st century. These include western countries, neighboring states, international institutions etc.

United States of America and its Foreign Policies

The United States of America is the super-power and its foreign policy has direct effect on political, social and economic activities of nation which struggles for self-determination. US policy toward Ethiopian Empire does not favor Oromo's self-determination struggle. It is apparent that the US influence is framed on the some relationship that the US and successive Ethiopian regimes forged over the years. With the exception of the military regime that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 –1991 with the support of the USSR, the Ethiopian rulers maintained a cozy relationship with the US. Owing to this Ethio-American relationship, the US has given Ethiopia a political and economic leverage without which Ethiopia would have no instrument of suppression of the aspiration of Oromo's self-determination.

US had significant role in overthrowing the Dergue regime and crowning Meles Zenawi. America's continuous economic, political and military support to TPLF-led EPRDF despite its public pledge coined with a phrase 'no democracy no aid', poses significant challenge to Oromo's self-determination in 21st century.

European Countries and Their Policies

Most of the west European countries continue to give economic support to repressive regime in Ethiopia, which helps the regime to continue its mission to oppress nations and nationalities. At the same time, this economic support to regime poses an enormous challenge for Oromo's self-determination.

Neighboring Countries and their Policies

Neighboring countries such as Sudan, Somalia and Kenya were supporting Oromo's self-determination. These countries changed their policies and are against Oromo's self-determination, partly due to Ethiopia's military power in the region. Eritrea is the only country which supports Oromo's self-determination, partly due to tense relation with the Ethiopian Empire.

International Organizations

Ethiopia is a member of many international organizations and has been getting economic and political support. Continuous support to Ethiopia remains major challenge to Oromo's self-determination. Some of these international organizations and their challenges are discussed in this section.

United Nations (UN): UN was established to protect the rights of individuals and help oppressed nations for self-determination. UN has not made repressive regimes like Ethiopia to hold accountable when it violates human rights of nations and nationalities despite UN Charter. Lack of response from UN for the repeated calls from Oromo political forces and society remains a big challenge for Oromo's self-determination.

African Union (AU): AU remains big supporter for the repressive regime in Ethiopia, partly due to the influence of Ethiopia on AU since its inception and many African leaders in AU are dictators themselves and as a result, they do not want to expose each other. This remains to be the challenge for Oromo's self-determination in the 21st century.

International Financial Institutions: Financial support by international financial institutions like World Bank and International Monetary Fund to Ethiopian dictator Meles Zenawi to stay in power and oppress nations and nationalities and poses challenge for self-determination.

SOME OF THE SOLUTIONS

Some of the solutions for Oromo's self-determination are discussed in this section.

Unity of Oromo Political Forces

The most important step for Oromo's self-determination is to form united Oromo political forces with the same vision: Oromo's self-determination. This requires sacrifices, but can be achieved if all stakeholders give priority to Oromo's self-determination instead of individual fame and compromise on differences in ideology, region, religion and taking responsibilities. The united force can lead to self-determination with farsightedness, political maturity, patience, understanding, dedication, and seriousness of purpose that would captivate the Oromo people to actively involve in realizing the goal. Once Oromo political forces are united with the same goal, the next step is to build organizational capacity. These include: self-assessment, correcting mistakes, developing good relationship, promoting democracy at various levels in the organization and developing master plan.

Strategies for United Oromo Political Forces

The united Oromo political forces should build their organizations and have clear policies in various fronts.

On Political Front: United Oromo political forces should have the same ultimate goal: Oromo's self-determination and struggle to achieve the goal.

On Economic Front: United political forces should have clear economic policies in self-determined Oromia. They should be in a position to mobilize the human and natural resources of Oromia.

On Defense Front: United Oromo political forces must convince the international community that Oromo people are peaceful nation. It must be stated that it is the Abyssinian colonial rulers who perpetrate violence on the Oromo nation. The nation is in the pursuit of defending its inalienable rights in all it can. In this defense posture, the world need to and ought to support the victim and not the colonizer – the TPLF-led Ethiopian regime.

On Diplomatic Front: United Oromo political forces should knock at every door of the stakeholders to explain the cause of Oromo and the ultimate goal.

On Academic Front: The united Oromo political forces should encourage Oromo experts to re-write distorted Oromo history, culture, language and democratic heritage.

Organize and Educate Oromo Society

The opportunity of organizing and mobilizing the humungous Oromo populace at home and abroad is tremendously greater when and if Oromo political forces are approaching the Oromo people with one objective: Oromo's self-determination. The Oromo political forces would grow and develop organizationally under this grand objective of the nation. The emergence of such a developed and modern organization would in turn appeal to a cross section of our society and encourage much more participation of Oromo women, youth, workers, peasants, entrepreneurs, professionals, and intellectuals in the political process of self-determination.

Form Alliance with Other Forces

A political force that the Oromo people fully rally behind would earn recognition and respect of neighboring nations which have the same aspirations with Oromo: self-determination. This in turn would give it some edge to work with and seek political cooperation of nations sharing similar experience of oppression with the Oromo. Alliance could easily be formed and concrete action could be taken against the TPLF to end its oppression once and for all.

Other Colonized Nations within Ethiopian Empire

United Oromo political forces have to state the kind of political and economic relationship that the self-determined Oromo nation would like to have with all neighboring nations surrounding Oromia. Politically, they need to know and be assured of what alternative arrangement the emergence of self-determined Oromia could bring for them. Economically, a clear economic policy that unequivocally assures all these nationalities that Oromia would not practice protectionism, but rather make fair economic interactions with its neighbors that benefit all involved.

National Minorities within Oromia

United Oromo political forces must issue policy statements that clearly address social, political and economic issues respecting national minorities in self-determined Oromia i.e. they must guarantee that national minorities like anyone who calls Oromia home, irrespective of ethnicity, would be given equal citizenship rights and everything else that goes with it. They must practically demonstrate to national minorities that the Oromo struggle is about individual freedom and democracy and that not only during post-liberation era but also during the liberation struggle they would enjoy fair treatment as long as Oromia is their choice.

Convince Western Countries

United Oromo political forces should convince the West that self-determined Oromia will not stand against their interest. Instead, Oromo's self-determination will bring stability, peace, development, and prosperity in the region. More specifically, the giant Oromo population with shared democratic heritage, the Oromo nation endowed with rich natural resource and the high potential for economic growth, and the Oromo as the most peaceful and civil nation can set a foundation for harmonization of political and socio-economic relations with the peoples of the region. The evolution of such a condition in the region would appeal to and intersect with the national interest of the western powers. Therefore, provided that Oromo's cause presented to the world clearly and effectively and work at it diligently using all methods of struggle deemed necessary, no factor would make the effort of the nation to liberate itself a futile undertaking (*Web Source 4*).

Convince Neighboring Countries

The neighboring Horn of African states must not be swayed by the propaganda of Ethiopian state that Oromo's self-determination would bring chaos to the region. They must be assured that self-determined would have a policy of good neighborliness that promotes the atmosphere of peaceful coexistence and economic prosperity.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on this study, some of the conclusions as follow:

- The Oromo are the largest ethnation in the Horn of Africa.
- Oromo have been under the subjugation of different systems of Ethiopian rulers or dictators since they were conquered as a result of brutal military conquest which was facilitated by the collusion of interests between European imperialism and internal Shoa colonialism, Abyssinian state under Menelik, during the second half of the 19th century.
- Like any nation stripped of freedom, the Oromo people have had to wage a liberation struggle to free themselves from the yoke of colonialism.
- Some of the internal challengers for Oromo's self-determination are from: Oromo political forces, Oromo opportunists, within the Oromo societies and Ethiopian forces.
- The external challenges include: western countries, neighboring states, international institutions etc.
- Some of the solutions for Oromo's self-determination are: Unity of Oromo political forces, organize and educate Oromo society, form alliance with other forces, convince colonized nations within Ethiopian empire that Oromo's self-determination is important for them, convince western and neighboring countries that Oromo's self-determination is important for regional stability, peace, development and prosperity.
- The question of self-determination costs a lot, but if 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.

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Deforestation is Putting Fresh Water Resources at Risk in Oromia

By Tolessa Deksissa, University of the District of Columbia, and Bula Atomssa, Metropolitan State University

Introduction

Fresh water resources are limited, which account for only 1% of the global available water resources. It was indicated that by the year 2025, humans will tap 100% of this global fresh water resources, and most countries especially Africans are predicted to face water scarcity [1, 2]. This is due to the fact that, in addition to increasing water demand along with alarming increase of population pressure most parts of annual precipitation in Africa are lost via evaporation (about 80%) and the resulted runoff is only 20% [3]. Consequently, improvement of water quantity as well as quality for various uses remains a serious challenge for all the African countries.

Ethiopia, which was said to be “the water tower of Africa”, will face the water scarcity sooner than 2025 unless the authority takes the preventive measures. The country has excess annual rainfall. However, about 70% of the total runoff takes place during the months of June, July and August. The other time, base flow of the rivers and streams, which provide small-scale irrigation as well as drinking water supply for human being and animal, depend on springs. About five decades ago, springs at the mountain foots and hills provided a continuous flow of water to streams, and many of the streams in the highlands of Oromia were perennial or flowed year round. To date, however, many of these springs and streams are dry during dry seasons; ponds and lakes are filled up with sediments and also infested with hyacinth. Most part of wetlands is also converted to cultivated lands, which reduce the available grazing lands for livestock production especially during cropping season.

In Oromia, deforestation, over grazing and intensive agriculture have resulted in sever soil erosion that have caused deterioration of fresh water resources. Furthermore, removal of endogenous trees that are beneficiary for soil and water conservation, and replacing them with exotic tree species such as eucalyptus will continue putting the region’s fresh water resource sustainability at stake. In order to prevent further soil erosion, land degradation and fresh water deterioration, appropriate legislation pertaining to natural resources conservation or soil and water conservation is required. These legislation and policy should encourage the local community to take responsibility of protecting soil and water in their lands.

Conserving once natural resources is mainly the responsibility of the government. In Oromia, the government is reluctant in setting an effective soil and water conservation program, and consequently soil erosion and land degradation continue to erode and degrade slowly the nation’s self sufficiency in food. Indigenous soil and water conservation practices such as shift cultivation and fallow system are no longer applicable because there is no enough land for cultivation, which results in deforestation, intensive agriculture and over grazing. This affects not only crop production but also livestock production, which accounts for nearly 15% of the total

GDP and about 40 % of the agricultural GDP of the whole country [4]. The largest part of livestock production comes from the highlands of Oromia where there is increasing environmental and human health concern. It is therefore, the citizens right to feel as the owner of natural resources and thus should act accordingly to conserve soil and protect their fresh water resources.

The objective of this study is, therefore, to examine the current status of environmental problems that are putting the fresh water resource at risk in Oromia, and to highlight the most important factors that affect the sustainability of fresh water resources. The preventive measures including the role of government and citizen action in conserving soil and water are also discussed. Furthermore, the recommended multidisciplinary approaches that address a complex environmental problem including fresh water resources degradation in Oromia in particular as well as Ethiopia Empire at large are presented.

Factors affecting fresh water resources

Many believe that poverty and environmental degradation go hand in hand. This applies not only in developing countries, but also in the industrialized countries. The only difference is that the former problem is related to quantity (food security), where as the latter problem is related to quality (food safety). In both cases the population most affected by environmental problems is the poor. During poverty, an immediate concern is about daily survival rather than environmental sustainability. For example, in Oromia, most available lands including forested as well as grazing land is converted to cultivated lands that are vulnerable to soil erosion. The forested headwater, which is the source of streams or rivers, is also degraded. This puts the fresh water resources of the region at risk.

The cause for degradation of fresh water resources in Oromia is primarily related to the effect of over population. The overall population pressure is tripled in the last 50 years in Ethiopia in general, and central highlands of Oromia in particular are one of the densely populated area. The population number in Ethiopia is expected to reach 130 million by 2030 [5]. Such high population pressure together with slow economic growth and fast environmental degradation is putting the fresh water resource at risk in Oromia. Although natural phenomenon (global climate change) may contribute some, local man-made activities are the main reason for the freshwater resource degradation in Oromia such as deforestation, resettlement, overgrazing, intensive agriculture and replacement of endogenous trees with exotic trees like eucalyptus trees. The main effects of such man-made activities include soil erosion and land degradation, which in turn affects the availability and quality of fresh water resources.

Climate change

Recent estimates suggest that climate change will account for about 20 percent of the increase in global water scarcity [6]. This indicates that about 80% of freshwater degradation in Oromia might be the result of man made activities. Irregularity of rainfall, frequent extreme conditions such flood and drought in Oromia is the indicator of climate change. Effect of global warming together with high population growth in

the poorest country in the world like Ethiopia empire make the situation even worst in the perspective of alleviating poverty unless the authority moves forward in implementing appropriate soil and water conservation practices.

Deforestation

Forests are crucial to a country's health and development, as they are important in soil and water conservation, production of wood and wood products, carbon sequestration, conservation of biodiversity and social benefits [7]. Almost a century ago the forested area in Ethiopia was about 40%, which further shrunk to 16% in 1984 within approximately 40 years. By 2003, it was further depleted to less than 3% after 20 years. Out of this, 75% of all the high forest of the country is found in Oromia. Such alarming deforestation rate (200,000 hectares/year) in Ethiopia together with slow economic growth puts the sustainability of fresh water in Oromia at stake. In addition to removing trees for fire woods, timber production and cultivated land, forest fire has damaged about 95,000 ha of fragile forest in the year 2000 alone in Ethiopia [8]. Before two decades, most cultivated land in Oromia was partly covered with multipurpose trees (Acacia trees), which improve soil fertility, reduce runoff, controls soil erosion as well as land degradation and provides forage for grazing animals.

Resettlement

Natural resource of Oromia including forestlands and fresh water resources are fragile. A minimum disturbance due to resettlement may cause irreversible damage to such natural resources. Resettlement policy in Ethiopia is based on moving people from North or South East of Ethiopia where there is famine and resettling them in such a fragile forested region of Oromia and other regions. The 1984/5-resettlement program had already made the Ethiopian forest to shrink from 16% to 3% over two decades [9]. Furthermore, the 2003/4-resettlement program was to resettle 2.2 million people over three years [10]. In 2003, a total of 170,000 were moved, part of this population moved to Bale Zones, Illubabor and E. Wellega, Oromia. It was also indicated that some families had to move to the malaria-infested region; such resettlement program had raised not only environmental concern but also human health concern [11].

In order to protect our fragile environment or fresh water resources, re-evaluation of the resettlement program must be taken into consideration. Previous studies showed that resettlement policy does not solve the problem of famine in Ethiopia; rather it expands the famine-affected regions through desertification [11]. Other factors that contribute to famine problem such as heavy tax, punitive loan repayment, inability of markets to efficiently and adequately perform the distribution of food from surplus areas to deficit areas, lack of storage and processing technologies, political instability, poor governance, and war must be taken into consideration [12]. A uniform/standard agricultural policy in Ethiopia Empire does not take into account the variation in water availability, quality of soil, and the need for fertilizer or particular seed, and accessibility to reasonable market. In reality, like other business, income taxation of farmers needs to be based on not on the quantity of grain produced, but on the actual income that the farmer may make during that particular year. Frequent unexpected low

price of grain is often the cause for the shortage of food in the next year, and further researches are required in this perspective.

Resettlement causes the fresh water resource at risk through deforestation, cultivation of grazing and wetlands. As both the local community and resettled one have to compete on the limited land and water resources, the resettlement program exacerbate the problem related to expansion of cultivated land, deforestation and over grazing. The settlement is mainly on the high lands of the region, and cultivation of fragile previously forested water head of such high land region results in soil erosion and land degradation. This degrades the fresh water resources such as springs, streams and rivers.

Overgrazing

Having too many animals on the limited pastureland causes overgrazing. Overgrazing reduces plant leaf area that reduces interception of sunlight and plant growth. The edible plants become weakened and die during drought condition. This exposes soil to wind and water erosion, which affects the fresh water resources too.

For example, long time ago finding grazing lands for all animals during cropping season is a common problem in West Shewa. Consequently, farmers have to take their cattle to the lowland area leaving behind only lactating cows. Large woody lands in the lowland regions of West Shewa was the only place where the farmers from densely populated highlands of the area send their cattle for at least two months which is called traditionally 'daraba'. Today, such opportunity is also lost except at few places where there is probably severe animal disease and malaria infestation. In the absence of 'daraba', all animals in the region should graze on small common grazing land during rainy season when most lands are cultivated. Overgrazing is one of the major problems in the central highlands of Oromia, which has already caused poor livestock production as well as diminishing of dairy products. Apart from soil erosion and degradation of freshwater resources, the current trend puts the dairy products at risk. This is a great challenge to the farmers especial in the central highlands of Oromia to overcome poverty. Furthermore overgrazing also favours the growth of toxic plants or weeds, which also pose risk to the grazing animals.

Intensive agriculture

Over cultivation of the land causes destruction of soil structure, and consequently increases the susceptibility of soil to water or wind erosion. Due to high population pressure, every family head has a limited arable land that need to be cultivated every year to feed their family. Indigenous conservation tillage such as fallow system (leaving the land uncultivated for a year or more), shifting cultivation, crop rotation etc is not applicable any more due to lack of arable land in the densely populated region of Oromia. Consequently, farmers are forced to use mineral fertilizer together with the same or similar crop every year. Most times fertilizers used by the farmers were not tested at experimental plot for the soil type of that area, and specific type of mineral fertilizer was recommended for whole country without taking into consideration the difference in soil types. This way or another, an intensive use of the limited arable land

by subsistence farmers has led to serious instances of soil erosion, land degradation as well as loss of fresh water resources in Oromia. The current agricultural policy of Ethiopia is also supporting intensive agriculture without appropriate regulation of soil and water conservation practices. Among some, the flower farming blooms in Oromia is a good example. As the current floriculture industry in Oromia operates not under a controlled environment (green house), the long-term impact of such activity on the water resources (in both quantity and quality) as well as human health is predictable.

A Grassroots Oromo Organization: Activities of the Saphalo Foundation in Kenya

By Berdri Kabira Mohammed

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.

Background

Oromo Refugees in Kenya: The number of Oromo refugees in Kenya has dramatically increased in recent years mainly for relative peace and stability compared to other neighboring countries. Currently, more than 20,000 Oromo refugees are estimated 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. Whereas 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 a notorious slum called Mathare. The area is so rampant and lawless that robbery and thefts are daylight business. The 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.

Refugee education: The needs for modern Oromo education and teaching them under any available opportunities have long been felt as a serious matter of concern to many Oromo intellectuals both at home and in exile.

In exile, individuals or groups had tried to teach their compatriots in different foreign countries such as Djibouti, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kenya etc in the last two and half decades. However their efforts could not live longer to bear fruit for several reasons. One of those reasons was the lack of organizationally approaching the problem and rather considering the issue as temporary one. That trend should be reconsidered.

The Establishment of Saphalo Foundation

In 2000, the situation in Nairobi was so appalling that police harassment and Ethiopian government sponsored security agents were so threatening for refugee day to day life. On top of that the UNHCR and other humanitarian organization supposed to provide refugees with basic assistance were no in position to fulfill their responsibilities.

That became big moral and emotional challenge for educated Oromo to sit down and observe the situation. We knew we could do very little in terms of providing with security or/and food. But we felt we could teach them how to tackle the challenge to the best of their capacity. To do so we were convinced we could be able to discharge our responsibility effectively and efficiently if and only if we organized ourselves and approach the matter institutionally. That is Saphalo Foundation came to being in February 2001.

- **Objective:** The general objectives of the foundation can be stated in a broader terms that the totality of the purposes for which the foundation is being formed. As Saphalo Foundation is to concern itself with refugees well being; its general objective may be stated thus; to provide refugees with education, health, food, clothing's and other related services.
- **Vision:** To keep hope alive among the desperate human being and make them informed, health and productive citizens who live in safety and dignity.
- **Our Motto:** The Saphalo Foundation's mottoes are "Baqachaas haa Barachuu" "let us learn while we are on the run" and "Hojiin keenya haa dubbatu" let our works speak". When the former has rekindle refugee's moral stamina for education; the later has enabled us to win over friends and well-wisher with our hard working and trustworthiness.
- **Manpower:** The founding members of Saphalo foundation were immersed from among the Oromo community in Nairobi, Kenya. Then volunteer Kenyans joined and participated in teaching and administration of the Foundation. The third groups were employed none Oromo who have been teaching foreign languages. The unstable nature of refugee's life in Kenya made Saphalo use more than 80 workers (at different times), in teaching and other administration activities in the last six years. Currently Saphalo has more than 20 staff members in Kenya and 15 others in Diaspora.
- **Sources of Income:** Limited donation, occasional local and international fund raisings, school fees and other meager incomes from photocopy, typing and library member's ship are there. None of them, however, are reliable or sufficient to sustain the function of Foundation.
- **Administration:** The supreme body of Saphalo Foundation is the Management Committee of nine persons. The chairman, secretary, treasurer, accountant, project directors and other heads of different departments are operating under this Committee. Currently we have two project directors for school and communication projects respectively. The head of three functioning departments (public relation, finance and health departments) also there.
- **Current Services:** Literacy and language programs, computer training, library services, communication services and HIV/AIDS awareness training, are our current major services. At the moment Saphalo has more than 300 students for language and 50 for computer training. We also provide services like typing,

printing, scanning, photocopy, telephone and play stations which are mainly to financially strengthen the Foundation however so meager the incomes are.

- **Current Facilities:** More or less we have succeeded in establishing required facilities for the Foundation. Today, we are operating with twenty two computers, though some of them are old. Two rooms for office, the other two rooms for classrooms, one room for library, and two rooms for computer class and telecommunication. We also have more than two thousand books and magazines in the library. Besides their normal function, our library and classrooms are used as sleeping rooms for homeless refugee members in the night and meeting places for community organizations during the day time.

Achievements

- With meager resources and barely sufficient facilities Saphalo has taught more 5,000(male 62% and female 38%) refugees at different times in the last six years. Most of them were illiterate adult and children who were able to read and write. More than 1000 (male77% and female 23%) of them were trained in basic computer courses and Internet communications. As a result many hundred of Saphalo students in Nairobi and elsewhere are communicating their family and relatives in writing whereas many other use computer the same purposes.
- Started with 4000 KSH (USD \$57.00) Kenyan Shilling, Saphalo was able to generate 1200,000 KSH (USD \$17,143.00) cash many for the best interest of refugees' well being. That does not include the cost of all the infrastructures and labor mentioned above.
- Publicity wise, Saphalo is known among many Oromo and none-Oromo both locally and internationally. Almost half of the many was the result of the publicity.
- As a result Saphalo has been able to extend its branch to Canada in 2004 and established Saphalo Support Group. Today many Oromo and none Oromo individuals are working for the support of its project in Kenya.

Impact of the project

- Many Oromo refugee organizations were registered there in Kenya following Saphalo experience.
- It is also believed that this project has changed the attitude of many Kenyans, who used to think that refugees or migrants were/are wicked, criminal, unproductive, and useless human beings etc.
- Saphalo project has at least convinced many Kenyan teachers, who work with the Foundation that an organization established by the refugees can immensely contribute towards socio economic well being of the hosting nation.

- In short, the establishment of Saphalo Foundation in East Leigh has changed the attitude of many Kenyans towards the refugee in general and of Oromo in particular whereas it dramatically reduced the degree of idleness, crime rate, and bad practices among the refugee youth in the area.

Feedbacks

- According to the oral and written feedbacks we gathered from refugees in the camps and in Nairobi as well as their emotional and psychological attitudes towards our activities; we realized that many Oromo individuals, particularly those who spent most of their lives in exile appreciated Saphalo activities and consider it as one of the few achievements that the Oromo refugees have done in exile so far.
- Our motto of “Baqachaa Barachu” (lets learn while we are on the run) gave tremendous courage and determination to our youngsters to learn in exile.

Perceived Setbacks

- Irrespective of the successes story we mentioned above, there are untold socio economic and security setbacks.
- Saphalo, which is trying to tackle these problems could not financial secure its existence, as a viable organization, let alone providing them with minimum assistances.
- Many refugees came to Kenya with traumatic experiences in horrible EPRDF detentions and they need physical and psychological treatments along side teaching. Nonetheless, only few Oromo in seem to realize this truth and bother to share the burden.
- Majority of Saphalo volunteer staff members are refugees themselves, they have similar economic and security problems. Some of them are so destitute that they wander around to get their daily meal after class. I hope one can understand how it is challenging task.

Future Directions

Institutionalizing Saphalo Foundation: until recently Saphalo relied on volunteer refugee individuals. We like to change this trend by making Saphalo financial self sufficient and be able to employ its permanent fulltime workers.

- One way of making Saphalo financially capable is by recruiting subscribed membership who can contribute annual membership fee. We are working along this line and in fact one the purpose of presenting this paper here is to enlighten you on this matter as a potential members and welcome any interested individuals to such a wonderful cause.

- Another way is to create its own income generation. We have already started a computer based communication (telephone, internet etc) and recreation (play station) centre project for this purpose.
- Establishing Communication Medias for Saphalo is also considered as other way of promoting Saphalo cause. Besides creating smooth and speedy communication for Saphalo member's all over the world, developing web site, group e mail, and pal talks etc are vital instruments for giving out information to wider stakeholders and soliciting donors and volunteers to our support.
- Linking Saphalo with other Oromo and none Oromo education Organizations and institutions; creating communication link with education institutions in Oromia; seeking Scholarship and sponsorship for staffs and students
- Establishing Saphalo branches in different countries can also be another of strengthening foundations members organizationally and attracting others to our activities
- Registering Saphalo as international organization. By doing so we think we can be able to legally operate everywhere.

Comparison Of Oromo's Gada System With Maasai's Age-Set System

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ABSTRACT

Oromo people live in East Africa, mainly in 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 figure out 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 in which 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.

Keywords: Oromo, gada system, Maasai, age-set system.

Introduction

Oromo

Ethiopia is a country located in the [Horn of Africa](#), which is the eastern-most part of the African landmass. It is divided into 9 ethnically-based administrative [regions](#) (Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambela, Harari, Oromia, Somali, SNNPR, and Tigray) and two chartered cities (Addis Ababa and Diredawa). Oromia is the largest administrative region and Oromos are the largest ethnic group in Eastern Africa (*Bassi, 2003; Appiah & Gates, 1999; Hassen, 1990, 1996; Legesse, 1973*), constituting at least 40% of the Ethiopian population (*Baxter, 1994; Burckhardt, 2000; Tareke, 1991*). The Oromo belongs to the indigenous north and Northeast African group of people known

as the Cushites. The Cushitic people are related to the historic Nubians and ancient Egyptians who are known for their contributions to civilization as manifested by the artifacts and the pyramids.

Oromo people have their own language, culture and socio-economic activities. They speak *Afan Oromo* (the language of Oromo), which belongs to the Eastern Cushitic family of Afro-Asiatic phylum. *Afan Oromo* is one of the most widely spoken languages in Africa, surpassed only by Arabic and Housa Fulani (*Hordofa, 2001; Muudee, 1995; Hussein, 2004*). One of the most prominent socio-cultural activities in Oromia is *gada*. *Gada* is recognized by all Oromo as a key to the unique heritage of Oromo political, social, and cultural life (*web source 1*).

Maasai

The Maasai are a pastoral tribes-group native to southern Kenya and north-central Tanzania, along the Great Rift Valley plains. They are arguably the best-known pastoralist population in the world (*Web Source 2*). They form a distinctive social unit sharing a culture, language and social structure (*Web Source 3*). Their tribal folk are among the most handsome and distinctive in the world: born with noble features, tall in stature, and colourful in dress. Their tribal costume is rich in hues of red cloth and they adorn themselves in colourful beads and jewellery (*Web Source 4*). They are divided into 16 sub-tribes. Each sub-tribe has traditionally occupied a specific area or section of land considered to be a self-sufficient unit in that it contained both wet-season and dry-season grazing areas and permanent water supplies. Each sub-tribe was governed by a council of elders led by the senior member of the sub-tribe (*Web Source 5*). They were the dominant party in these external relations by virtue of their highly developed military complex based on age-set organization and rituals (*Goldsmith, 1972*).

Basics of Gada and Age-set Systems

Gada System

The *gada* government developed by the Oromo organizes and orders society around political, economic, social, cultural, and religious institutions (*Legesse, 1973*). How and when *gada* was started is not known exactly, but written accounts of *gada* prove that it has changed very little in its ideal form from the 15th century to the present (*Bahrey, 1954*). It existed as full-fledged system since the beginning of the sixteenth century (*Jalata, 1996*).

Gada holds a central place in the thinking of many Oromo both because it represents the epitome of Oromo-ness, a distinctive set of institutions uniquely theirs, and because it stands as a statement of the values they want to stress: egalitarianism and democracy. They are very interested in the potential uses for this political tradition. Whatever the historical accuracy of their picture of *gada* in the past or the practical possibilities for *gada* in the future, the claims of these Oromo nationalists are important as a statement of their values and hopes (*Lewis, 1994*).

A group of men pass through a series of grades, and when their time comes, they take over the governing of their people for an eight year period. They elect officers among themselves, and administer the people, but they must also satisfy and convince the assembly of the whole people to whom they are ultimately responsible.

Gada system has the principles of checks and balances (through periodic succession of every eight years), and division of power (among executive, legislative, and judicial branches), balanced opposition (among five parties), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots (*Legesse, 1973*). Other principles of the system included balanced representation of all clans, lineages, regions and confederacies, accountability of leaders, the settlement of disputes through reconciliation, and the respect for basic rights and liberties (*Baissa, 1993*). Scientists like Dr. Marco Bassi of Bologna University in Italy have agreed that the *gada* system is one of the most structured and democratic institutions in the world (*Web Source 6*).

Age-set System

Any consideration of social roles among the Maasai must place the age-set system at its core. An age-set is composed of a group of male contemporaries, united by their communal circumcision. It provides a man with a further network of social and political allies, supplementary to that provided by his immediate family. Because the formation of the newest age-set relies upon the relinquishing of power by the age-set immediately preceding it, there is an in-built lifelong tension and opposition between the two adjacent sets (*Coast, 2003*). It is essential to both cultural preservation and physical survival of the Maasai. Age-grades and all of the ceremonies associated with them are the crucial markers of the Maasai life-cycle. The movement of a person from one age-grade to the next marks the most important transitions in the life of an individual and in the wider life of the community.

Definitions of *Gada* System

Many scholars defined *gada* system more or less in the same way. Some of the definitions are:

- It is the system that organized the Oromo people in an all encompassing democratic republic even before the few European pilgrims arrived from England on the shores of North America and only later built a democracy (*Holcomb, 1993*).
- It is the system of classes that succeed each other every eight years in assuming military, economic, political, and ritual responsibilities. Each *gada* class remains in power during a specific term that begins and ends with a formal transfer ceremony (*Legesse, 1973*).
- It is a system as a whole that provided the machinery for democratic rule and enjoyment of maximum liberty for the people (*Baissa, 1993*).
- It is segmentation that promotes specialization of function along effective lines and harnesses the energies of the youth to the ends of the society and gives to each age group a strong awareness of its own status (*Hoelbel, 1958*).

- It is a generation system in which every eight years, a new set of men become responsible for maintaining the peace through prayer and sacrifice by the appointed officials for eight years, who act as respected case settlers, law makers and ritual leaders (*Hogg, 1990*).
- It is an arrangement of social categories called grades, men into groups called parties, tasks to be performed, and ideas, principles, and rules (*Web Source 7*).
- It is a uniquely democratic, political and social institution that governed the life of every individual in the society from birth to death (*Web Source 8*).
- It is constitutional government, universal male suffrage, protection of women's rights, and checks and balances including the mandatory replacement of the entire governing body every eight years (*Web Source 9*).
- It is the system that refers to those groups of persons (invariably males) of the same generation (rather than age) into sets in which the sets are ordered hierarchically and assigned a range of social, military, political, and ritual rights and responsibilities (*Web Source 10*).
- It is a system that organizes the Oromo society into groups or sets that assume different responsibilities in the society every eight years and guided the religious, social, political and economic life of Oromo for many years, and also their philosophy, art, history and method of time-keeping (*Web Source 11*).

Political and Legal Role of *Gada* System

The political and legal component of the *gada* provided leadership and rules and procedures which served Oromo society well, safeguarding their liberty against authoritarian rules (*Holcomb, 1993*). The *gada* system provided for the Oromo (*Baissa, 1994*):

- the institutions for self-rule at central/regional and local levels,
- the right to participate in democratic self-rule at all levels,
- the respect for basic rights and liberties,
- the procedures for selection and peaceful change of leaders every eight years,
- the accountability of leaders and the right to recall,
- the concept of rule of law,
- a balanced representation of clans and lineages in *gada* offices,
- the right to make laws and regulations through their own elected officials,
- the settlement of disputes according to the law through neutral and impartial bodies, and
- the concept of pluralism in participating in public affairs through five parties.

Grades and Parties in *Gada* and Age-set Systems

***Gada* System**

Gada grades are the stages or periods whereas *gada* parties (*misensas*) are groups of men who move through a series of stages (*Baissa, 1971*). There are five grades and parties even if there are some variations from region to region in Oromia. The most commonly used terms will be discussed in this paper.

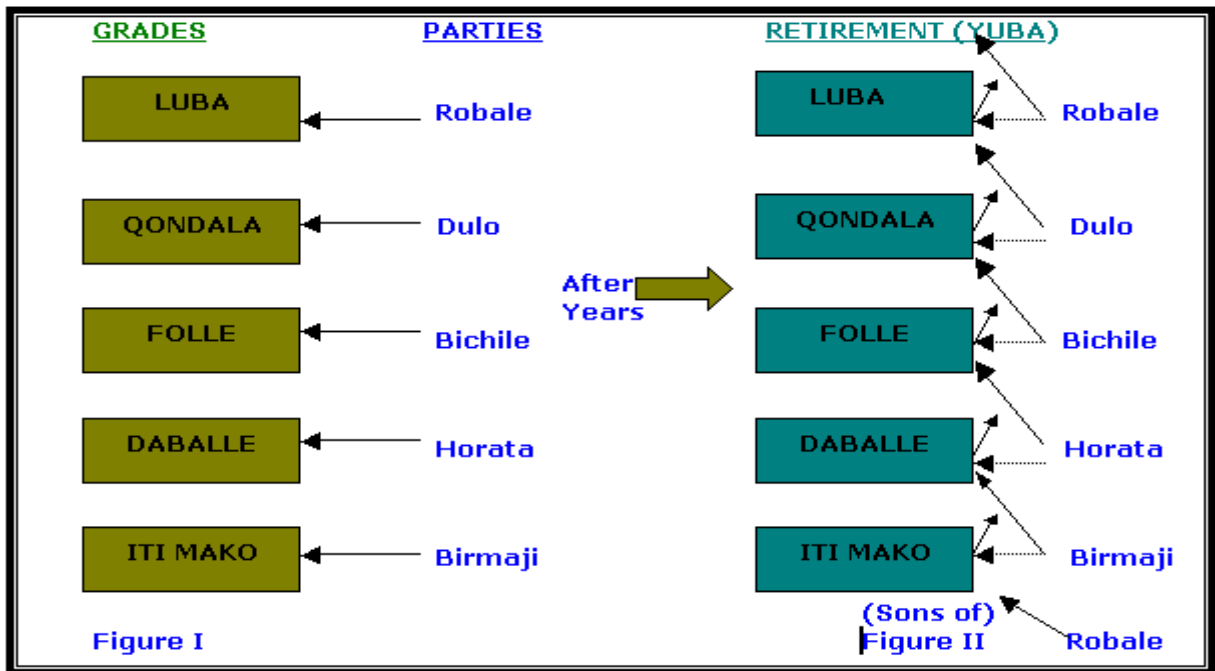
Each *gada* grades lasts for 8 years in a cycle of 40 years. The *gada* system organized male Oromo based on their genealogical generation into five *gada* grades for social, political and economic purposes (Legesse, 1973). Initiation into and promotion from one *gada* grade to the next is done after 8 years. The structural elevation follows an established procedure. For example, a son is initiated into the first *gada* only after his father has completed a cycle of 40 years and passed through all other grades. This means, membership in the *gada* is not according to the age of a person (Abir, 1968; Legesse, 1973). Members of an age set are initiated into the next higher set with elaborated ceremony (Hussein, 2004). Commonly used terms for *gada* grades are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Gada* Grades and Number of Years in the *Gada* System (Web Source 7)

No	Gada Grade	Number of Years in the Gada System	Expected Age of Individuals
1	<i>Iti Mako</i>	0 - 8	8 - 16
2	<i>Daballe</i>	8 - 16	16 - 24
3	<i>Folle</i>	18 - 24	24 - 32
4	<i>Qondala</i>	24 - 32	32 - 40
5	<i>Luba</i>	32 - 40	40 - 48

Similarly there are five parties (*gadas*) in a cycle of 40 years. If a man enters office (becomes *luba*) now, his sons will become *luba* 40 years from now. Commonly used terms for the five parties (*gadas*) are: *Birmaji*, *Horata*, *Bichile*, *Dulo* and *Robale*. In some regions, the names of the parties (*gadas*) for the fathers and sons are different. A man and all of his brothers are in the same party regardless of the differences in their ages. Together they move through the hierarchy of grades. For example, if a man is *Birmaji*, his sons are initiated into the first grade when he finishes the fifth grade. This means that the father and sons are 40 years apart (Hinnant, 1978; Legesse, 1973). If a man continues to have children until he is very old, those sons will enter *gada* and move through with their older brothers, even if they enter at the middle of the cycle as infants. Older men mentor young males in teaching rules and rituals even if there is no status difference in the same *gada* grades. The status does not depend on the age of the person.

The relationship between grades and parties (*gadas*) are illustrated in Figure 1 for clarification of the *gada* system. If *Robale* party is *luba* as in the figure, *Dulo* party is *Qondala*, *Bichile* is in *Folle*, *Horata* is in *Daballe*, and the *Birmaji* has just started in *gada* as *Iti Mako*. It is the nature of this system to force the parties into new grades every eight years when the party acting as *luba* retires. When *Robale* retires, therefore, the *Birmaji* party becomes *Daballe*, *Horata* becomes *Folle*, *Bichile* moves into *Qondala* and the *Dulos* take formal power as *luba*. The sons of the *Robale* party enter *Iti Mako* thus pushing the others forward as shown in Figure 2. After *luba*, people retire as *yuba*. Figure 3 shows the full cycle in operation of the *gada* system.



Figures 1 and 2: Relationships between *Gada* Grades and Parties (Web Source 7).

Age-set System

The Maasai age-set system gives their society its structure (Web Source 12). Each Maasai man passes through three main life stages; childhood, warriorhood and elderhood. A new age-division is opened every seven years, a successive pair of divisions forming an age-set on a fourteen year cycle. Alternative age-sets form streams which link older and younger men in relations of authority and political affinity (Web Source 13).

Children are considered a wonderful asset. At the age of three or four, a young Maasai boy might be seen holding a stick that symbolizes his future as a herder. They are also encouraged to behave respectfully in the presence of elders (Web Source 14). Their great day arrives when the chief priest (*laibon*) of the *Kekonyeke* tribe, one of the sixteen Maasai tribes and the one to which these *moran* belong, decides that there are a sufficient number of adolescent boys clamouring to become young men. The *laibon* declares the circumcision period to be open. Circumcision is the most significant ceremony in the early years of a Maasai's life, as it marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. The night before the main ceremony, the boys sing and play their childhood away. Those who undergo circumcision at the same time henceforth belong to the same age-set.

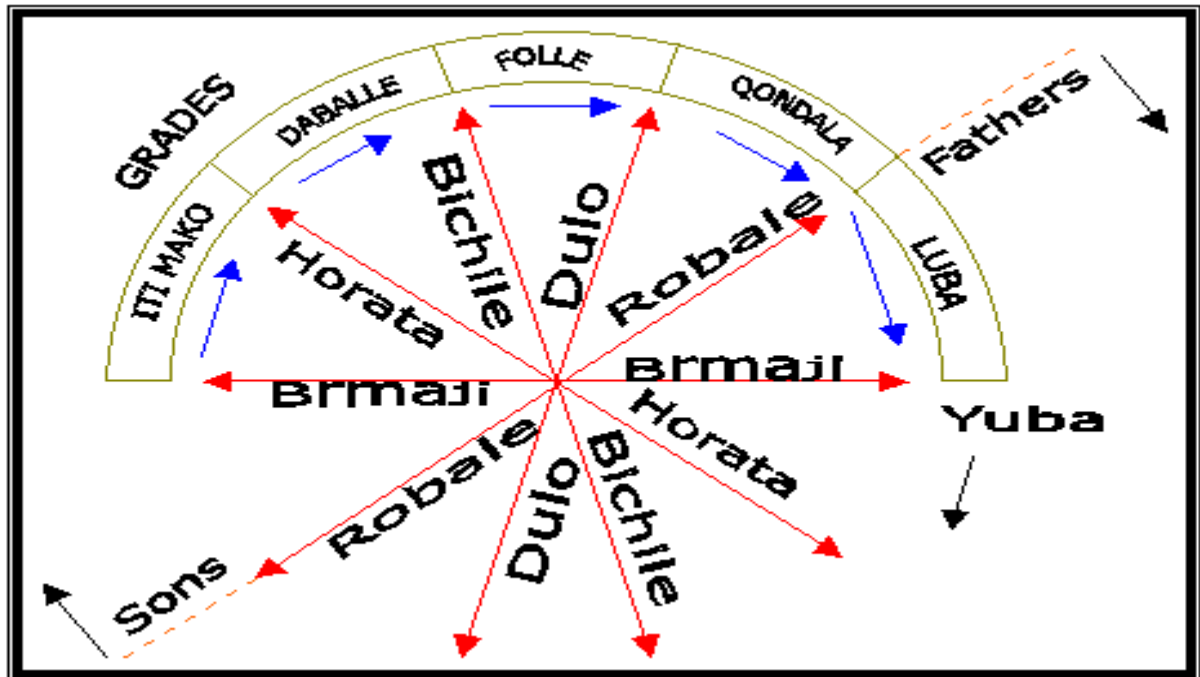


Figure 3. Full Operation of Gada System (Web Source 7).

After the boys heal, initiation into junior warriorhood follows in a colourful ceremony known as *emurano*. The boys move from home and set up warriors' camps called *emanyatta*, away from family where they live wild and begin to grow their hair. The age-set chums are now taught and prepared to be true warriors- *moran* (Web Source 15). As a new circumcision period is declared, the entire age-grade system moves up a notch; the young boys become junior warriors, the junior warriors become senior warriors, the senior warriors become junior elders, the junior elders become senior elders, and the senior elders retire. Passage from one age-set from the *moran* to young adult is marked by slaughtering of a cow as an offering to the Gods (Web Source 16).

The most important of all the Maasai ceremonies is the *eunoto*, at which the *moran* leave the *manyatta* to become full elder, to marry wives, and to establish themselves as household heads and fathers. He and his cohorts passed through the stages of warrior (*moran*), junior elder, senior elder and retired elder, each stage lasting about 15 years.

Junior warriors must be ready to fight fearlessly at any time. If they prove themselves, they are promoted to senior warrior. They are allowed to accumulate wealth, marry and start families. At the transition ceremony, they are handed new spears with ebony handles to signify their seniority. They can now eat outside the camp but still not in the company of women. Here, they identify and choose their age-set leader (Web Source 15).

Roles and Responsibilities of People in the Gada and Age-set Grades

Gada Grades

Each person has roles and responsibilities based on his *gada* grades. By the end of his life, every man in *gada* had held every major position in the system. The requirements of each grade increased in importance and public responsibility up through the final active period, *luba* which obliged the party to govern the nation for eight years. The roles and responsibilities of people in each *gada* grades are discussed below separately.

1. *Iti Mako*: It is the beginning of socializing into the *gada* culture. The members in this grade serve as messengers, looking after calves, and doing errands close to home.

2. *Daballe*: At this grade, members are allowed to go further away from their villages. Their major responsibilities are: performing light work, herding, locating new trading opportunities, making significant decisions on their own about where to move and how to safeguard one of the society's major resources, the livestock.

3. *Folle*: Members become adolescent and initiated into taking serious social responsibilities. They are allowed to go long distances from home. The ruling group has responsibility to assign senior leaders and experts to instruct and council these young men about the importance of leadership, organization, and warfare. Their major responsibilities are: to get training in some practical skills of warfare, military, and fighting so that they become junior warriors; to perform heavy work; to learn songs, parables, proverbs, cultural and historical maps, and social skills (*Baxter, 1979*). They nominate leaders based on their wisdom, bravery, health and physical fitness. The nominee has power only for the people in the *Folle* grade.

4. *Qondala*: is a transition grade. Members have dual tasks: military service and preparation for leadership to take over power from the exiting *luba* or *gada* leaders (*Baissa, 1994*). They act as a reserve army, senior warriors, and ready to assist the *Folle* militarily when the national boundaries are threatened. Their main responsibilities are: to prove themselves with acts of skills and bravery; to settle, intensify their learning of the laws and principles of administration, marry and elect their officials. At the end of this period, the class members enter *luba*, the most important class of the whole system, attain full status, and take up their position as the ruling party.

5. *Luba*: This is the last and ruling grade in *gada* system. They reach the highest point of obligation and recognition. They are the diplomats, the arbitrators, and the councilors since they have already acquired all the necessary knowledge to handle the responsibility of administering the country and the celebration of rituals. They are responsible to: hold political authority; maintain peace by settling disputes among groups and individuals; apply the laws dealing with the distribution of goods; criminal fines and punishment, protection of property, theft, etc and perform public service wherever they are throughout the eight years in power.

Age-set Grades

The roles and responsibilities for members in each age-set grades are described in the following section.

1. Childhood: Given minor chores and taught to play games which represent what their responsibilities will be as adults; begin to herd little animals that require less water before the age of five; and as they grow older, they herd calves and eventually cattle in solitude and with unquestioning obedience (*Web Source 17*).

2. Warriorhood: learn their tribal traditions, songs, dances, oral history, basic rules of self-government, social, political, and military skills in preparation for cattle raising (*Web Source 18*), to function as adult male Maasai (*Web Source 19*); organize lion hunts; defend the tribal lands, livestock and people (*Web Source 16*); bring about solidarity amongst the age group; spend good time braiding their hair, then apply red ochre, which they also use to embellish their skin (*Web Source 15*); serve as a communication system on the reserve; perform difficult tasks for the elders; escort women over long distances between *kraal* camps; search for lost cattle; herd cattle especially in cases of many days walk away from the settlements in search of pasture and water (*Web Source 12, Web Source 19*).

3. Elderhood: changes from that of society's protectors to that of producers, both as pastoralists and as husbands (*Web Source 5*). As junior elders, marry and start families; carry out the instructions of the senior elders (*Web Source 3*). As senior elders, share local authority and help to determine who will be grouped in the next age-set (*Web Source 12, Web Source 20*), their decisions are final (*Web Source 15*); bring resolutions to local disputes and play a great role in the development of the village (*Web Source 21*).

Leaders in the *Gada* and Age-set Systems

Gada System

Leaders in the *gada* system are elected from *luba* (the ruling grade). All leaders are elected for non-renewable eight years by universal adult male suffrage based on personal qualities, achievements, mystical attributes, public service, bravery, knowledge, honesty, demonstrated ability, and courage. The *gada* system for the most part is similar to the modern democratic republican form of government practiced in the Western World. The system is based on the rule of law and opposed to despotic rule. The law also provides for removal of unfit or corrupt officials even before the actual assumption of power. The *gada* government works on local, regional, and central levels.

Nine *gada* officials, all from the ruling party (*luba*), and their duties according to the Tulema *gada* practice are:

- 1. President/Chairman/Head of State (*Aba Boku/Aba Gada*):** *Aba Boku* and his two colleagues are chosen from the oldest or most distinguished families, which are known as families of *Hayu* (*Huntingford, 1955*). The principal functions of the *Aba Boku* are to: preside over the parliament, proclaim the laws, and act when necessary as ritual expert in the *gada* ceremonies. Besides this, however, the *Aba Boku* deals with inter-clan and inter-ethnic conflicts, settles disputes,

and hears appeals (*Gebre et al., 1996*). He is assisted by two elected deputies (*Lepisa, 1975; Legesse, 1973*).

2. **First Vice-President (*Aba Boku*)**: The first assistant for *Aba Boku*.
3. **Second Vice-President (*Aba Boku*)**: The second assistant for *Aba Boku*.
4. **Chairman of the Assembly/Father of legislative assembly (*Aba Chafe*)**.
5. **Speaker/Herald (*Aba Dubi*)**: who presents the decision of the presidium to the assembly.
6. **Parliamentarian (*Aba Seera*)**: Memorizer of the laws and the results of the assembly's deliberations. Judicial authority is entrusted to officials known for their integrity and knowledge of laws.
7. **Attorney General (*Aba Alanga*)**: Judge who executes the decision.
8. **Defense Minister/Chief of the Army/War leader (*Aba Dula*)**: In charge of the army to conduct military campaigns and provide defense for the nation.
9. **Minister of Economy (*Aba Sa'a*)**: is responsible for public property.

Age-set System

Before the introduction of a unified national leadership system hinged on the organizational structure of western societies, Maasai, like other societies in Africa, had its own system of organization and leadership. There were no rulers but there were leaders. For every sub-tribe each age group had a leader, 'elected' by the largest possible assembly of the members of the group. There was also a deputy leader. Such leaders were 'elected' and functioned only in and through the youth age of the group, *muran*. Besides youth leaders, there were also sub-tribal leaders. The leadership functions of these spokesmen transcended the age group segmentation. It was the weight of public opinion which compelled the individuals to act as required.

Leaders are those who can mediate and maintain harmony within the group and are the social healers. They exist within a stratified age-set system, and have multiple leadership roles. It is a team leadership model that we just do not see in the West, with the possible exception of family firms (*Web Source 22*).

Assembly in Gada System

The assembly known as *Gumi Gayo* (the assembly of multitudes) brings together every type of important living leader, such as living- *Aba Boku*, the *qalus*, age-set councilors, clan leaders and *luba* councilors, and other concerned individuals to make or amend or change laws and rules every eight years (*Jalata, 2005*). The *Gumi Gayo* assembly has the highest degree of authority than the *luba* and other assemblies, and what *Gumi* decides cannot be reversed by any other assembly (*Legesse, 1973*). *Gada* laws are passed by the *chafe* (assembly) and implemented by *gada* officials.

It is the assembly at which representatives of the entire population come together at predetermined times to evaluate among other things, the work of those in power. If those in power have failed to accomplish what is expected of them, the assembly has the power to replace them by another group elected from among the same *luba*. This is one of the methods of checking and balancing political power in the Oromo society.

Challenges to Gada and Age-set System

Gada System

Gada system is or until recently was still operating, as among the Borana, Gabra, and Guji Oromo, others in which *gada* rituals are performed even though their political and military power of the leaders is largely symbolic since 19th century due to various reasons. Apparently there have also been recent attempts to revive some *gada* rituals in certain Oromia districts and more is certainly expected to follow (*Jalata, 1996*). Some of the reasons for the weakening of *gada* system are:

- The coming of new beliefs and religions. The politico-religious aggression that took place in the expansion of Islam and Christianity has affected the culture of the Oromo people very much.
- The changes in the mode of living of several Oromo communities. As Oromo society developed, there was a gradual change in the social, economic and political life of the people.
- The onset of colonization had tremendously reduced the political and usefulness of *gada* system as the administrative affairs and management of the national economy were taken over by the colonizers except in remote regions.

Age-set System

From around the 1830's, Maasai had fallen to squabbling amongst themselves over cattle, pastures and water. It was the struggles between Maasai sections for control of environmental resources that provoked much of the warfare in the region that the Europeans heard about (*Web Source 12*). This internal weakness led to gradual loss of territory to long-suffering neighbors. With the arrival of the British in the late 19th century, the Maasai suffered a series of severe setbacks from which they have never fully recovered. Around the decade 1880-1890, their cattle were ravaged by diseases such as rinderpest that saw herds diminish by about 80%. The human population was not spared either; an unholy combination of smallpox, cholera and famine brought down the population from about 500,000 to 40,000. Thoroughly weakened, the Maasai succumbed -after some attempts to resist, to the British plan to settle over the best of their lands. The 1904 Maasai Agreement saw to the loss of two thirds of Maasai territories. This was followed by forced relocations to the mostly marginal lands they occupy today. Throughout British rule, various devices such as a levy on Maasai cattle during World War II were employed to limit their demands for land.

The departure of the British from Kenya in 1963 did not result in any significant restoration of their land rights, but indeed brought about further losses, such as that which came with the establishment of the Maasai Mara game reserve. The Maasai of the Mara plains have lost many of their traditional grazing grounds and access to water to wheat farming and the setting up of the Masai Mara Game Reserve. Local Maasai communities have sometimes found themselves in conflict with the desires of conservationists and the protection of wildlife. Attempts to redirect income to the Maasai from the parks and from tourism have been made but with limited success (*Web Source 12*). These local institutions have systematically been destroyed by successive

governments since colonial times, thus minimizing their roles and impact on their communities over time (*Web Source 23*). In recent decades, Maasai have been influenced, amongst other factors, by national governments, formal education provision, occupation diversification and integration within the monetized economy (*Web Source 2*). In 1988, warriorhood customs were banned in Kenya; a few other practices have also been prohibited but are still practiced in secret (*Web Source 15*).

Similarities between Gada and Age-set System

Some of the similarities in these systems are:

- Practiced by men;
- Societies are well organized in these systems to lead their people, defend their land, and property; and
- Systems have lost their political role due to colonizers and successive repressive regimes.

Differences between Gada and Age-set System

Some of the differences are:

- Oromo's gada system has five stages whereas Maasai's age-set system has three main 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 in which time between different stages may change depending on various conditions.

Conclusions

- Oromo and Maasai people have their own language, culture and socio-economic activities.
- *Gada* is recognized by all Oromo as a key to the unique heritage of Oromo's political, social, and cultural life.
- *Gada* system is the system of classes that succeed each other every eight years in assuming military, economic, political, and ritual responsibilities. Each *gada* grades remains in power during a specific term that begins and ends with a formal transfer ceremony.
- There are five *gada* grades and parties whereas there are three main stages in Maasai's age-set system, each with different roles and responsibilities.
- Leaders in the *gada* system are elected from *luba* (the ruling grade). All leaders are elected for non-renewable eight years by universal adult male suffrage based on personal qualities, achievements, mystical attributes, public service, bravery, knowledge, honesty, demonstrated ability, and courage.
- Leaders in age-set systems are elected by the largest possible assembly of the members of the group.
- Both *gada* and age-set systems have lost their political role due to colonizers and successive repressive regimes.
- Efforts are made to regain the social, political, cultural, and economic roles of *gada* and age-set systems.

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Hugo Chavez: The Bolivarian Revolution

By Beka Jalata, University of Tennessee

This paper will attempt to summarize and analyze the Bolivarian Revolution: a populist movement created to establish a more equitable political-economic system. The Bolivarian Revolution is a mass social political movement to establish a socialist democracy in Venezuela. Its populist roots are derived from Simon Bolivar, a 19th century revolutionary leader. The Bolivarian Revolution is a mass social political movement to establish popular democracy in Venezuela. It is a populist movement attempting to establish a more equitable political-economic system. In Venezuela, Hugo Chavez plays the central role as a revolutionary figure who stands for the politically and economically oppressed majority of Venezuelan people. He 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, the chief priorities are the distribution of wealth to the masses, providing adequate social and health services the public, reducing governmental corruption, and promoting grassroots popular democracy. This paper will examine interesting aspects of the Bolivarian Revolution on a political-economic level and look at the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie's response against the populist movement.

Politics of Oil

Oil has been the principal backbone of the Venezuelan economy and the primary source of Hugo Chavez's social programs. Venezuela is the fifth largest oil exporter in the world. It has over 78 billion barrels of proven petroleum revenues and 1.2 trillion barrels of speculated or unproven barrels of oil. Chavez's strategy on capitalizing on the vast oil reserves is to cooperate with OPEC. In accordance with stabilizing and heightening oil prices, Hugo Chavez has developed economic regulation in Venezuela to boost international oil prices, such as cutting back production costs of European and American oil companies operating in Venezuela. Since March of 1999, production has been cut down 4% in Venezuela causing the value of oil to increase. As a result, Robert Corzine of the Financial Times stated that, "the previous few months had proven to be 'one of the more successful periods in the history of OPEC's attempts to control the oil price'" (Gott, 171). Hugo Chavez even gained a senior position within OPEC becoming secretary-general and creating stronger partnerships with heads of Middle-Eastern states, such as Iran.

A contradiction in of itself, Venezuela is a nation state with huge amount of oil wealth and mass poverty. As Chavez first was elected through popular vote, he initially used religious Christian rhetoric to urge patience to the poor and admonish the rich and affluent for their overt selfishness. Hugo Chavez, a self proclaimed Christian, believes in Jesus as social revolutionary savior, similar to liberation theology which is popular in many parts of South America. Chavez asserts that Jesus was a savior, activist, and liberator who was engaged in social justice, human rights, and class struggle.

Those who have historically benefited from the oil rich revenues of Venezuela have always been a small minority of the Venezuelan elite. The vast majority of

Venezuelans have traditionally been poor, improvised, disenfranchised, and hungry. Prior to Hugo Chavez's presidency, the top 10 percent (approximately 3 million people out of 33 million) Venezuelans received half the national income. According to 1995 estimates, over 80% of Venezuelans live above or at the minimum wage.

“For the first time, the government was able, to seize the nation's oil pipelines and to point them directly into the shanty towns and the rural areas. In 2003, significant amounts of oil revenue was redirected in creative social programs, called missions,” (Gott, 256). These missions or social programs were created to assist people on education, health, and economic assistance. The missions were all a result of the Bolivarian Revolution. Mission Robinson, is a program that was instituted to provide immediate educational results for Venezuelan people. It was designed to teach 1 million people to read, write, and attain basic arithmetic skills. Mission Ribas provides secondary education to young adults who have had to drop out of school. In 2004, around 600,000 people were enrolled in night school and they were provided a small incentive stipend from the government. Mission Sucre's aim was for students who had graduated high school with a diploma, but needed additional preparation before entering a university.” Approximately over 70,000 students have gained from Mission Sucre. Mission Vuelvan Caras, was designed to assist the disenfranchised and unemployed. This program's aim was to reduce unemployment by 5% in Venezuela. Mission Identidad was a voter registration drive to enhance citizen participation during elections. Some other social programs and proposals including Mission Zamora, which focuses on providing for the general welfare of peasants, Mission Pier focuses on alleviating problems of mining communities, Mission Mercal program builds and operates supermarkets to provide food products for the urban population.

Chavez is highly motivated to encourage and promote democratic exercise by the people. He has urged all Venezuelans to read, comprehend, and even own a copy of the constitution or the little blue book. These kinds of populist promote democracy. Chavez provides healthy incentives such as free medical care for people in neighborhoods who organize themselves under barrios and become active participants in the democratic process.

Despite Hugo Chavez's scathing remarks of the exploitative and oppressive nature of neo-liberalism, in reality Venezuela has historically followed western economic theory. As Boudin states, “Thus in the 1980's and 1990's the (Venezuelan) government followed the structural adjustment guidelines of international financial institutions based on improving macroeconomic indicators, reducing public services, increasing direct foreign investment, and privatizing the economy. Under this economic model, by 1997, the wealthiest 5 percent of the country had incomes that were 53.1 times greater than the poorest 5 percent ..., 85% of the country lived in poverty, and 67% lived in extreme poverty, earning less than \$2 per day,” (Boudin, 123).

Hugo Chavez was elected on the premise that he would solve this problem through the Bolivarian Revolution. He claimed that this approach would bring an alternative humanist model of capitalism while serving the people's needs at the same time (Boudin, 123). Later his position shifted in his proclamation of creating a Venezuelan democratic socialist state to provide equality of condition, but he hasn't specifically

defined exactly how it will be achieved. In reality, despite what claims Chavez makes about creating a socialist state, the Venezuelan economy is still capitalist and a transformation to socialism does not seem likely or even viable (Boudin, 124). According to Trotsky the creation of a socialist state is impossible within a capitalist world system, for those who claim to be socialist are truly state capitalist who have combined the role of the private businessman and administrator. Both theoretically and practically Venezuela remains a capitalist state, as expressed in the Venezuelan constitution article 112 and 115, which grants individual economic rights and private property, and the vast majority of the means of production being privately owned. However, the Venezuelan government does control the most lucrative industry, oil which it can provide funding for any public program and the constitution also refers to cooperatives in many instances.

As Gott states, “He has sought to steer a difficult and almost impossible course, telling his country what it wants to here (which is rhetoric of revolutionary change in which they will economically benefit) and making the right kinds of reassuring noises that would not frighten foreign investors.” This analysis was made by Gott prior to the recent state expropriation of key telecommunications and electric companies. Despite these state takeovers in the private sector, Chavez has reassured other foreign investors that their wealth is safe and secure.

Opposition against Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution

The coup took place in just 40 hours. It was highly coordinated with the mobilization of a general strike, TV networks, and military leaders defecting. An extensive media propaganda campaign was used to deliberately fabricate and present false information to ensure the coup’s legitimacy and cooperation from the masses. On April 11 an opposition rally was held in an exclusive neighborhood in Caracas. As the opposition rally moved to Miraflores where the Presidential Palace. As rumors quickly spread around the poor barrios, counterprotestors in support of Chavez formed and also marched through Caracas. Tension was high and people were becoming restless. All of a sudden, sharp shooters from tops of skyscrapers began aiming and shooting lethally at the people’s heads. The counterprotestors ran behind tall buildings for protection and a few of the fired back at the direction of the snipers. The entire scene was captured on video and shows how exactly event happened. However, what the rest of Venezuela show on that night was news reporters claiming that pro Chavez protestors had murdered the opposition rally members and they showed a brief clip of the Chavez supporters firing in the direction of the skyscrapers. The image was deliberately misleading to demonstrate turmoil and crisis as a result of Hugo Chavez. The military captured the Presidential Palace and took Hugo Chavez captive and flew him to a nearby island, his fate totally in their hands. As the leadership emerged to show, a man of the name of Carmona claimed that there was a “vacuum of power” and installing himself as president. On nationally television cabinet ministers, parliamentary officials, and other politician were being rounded up and arrested. On live national television the new Attorney abolished all branches of government, while claiming personal power for Carmona.

The coup developed as the former political elites, who previously were running Venezuela and profiting immensely, found no way to regain power in democratic fashion. According to Boudin, “To fully understand why the coup occurred, one must also consider the Chavez government’s entire political program, including the Land Law, the Hydrocarbons Law, the Microfinance Law, and other radical reforms that impacted the nation’s elite and their economic interests,” (Boudin, pg. 82-83). Political, military, economic, social, and international groups were linked and involved with the coup attempt.

There are groups within Venezuela who are opposed to Hugo Chavez’s Bolivarian Revolution. These groups comprise mostly of the relatively rich and well to do such as middle to upper classes and segments within the catholic church. Such groups have mounted vocalized opposition against Hugo Chavez’s policies and programs.

Coup Attempt

There are numerous factors that played a role in the violent coup attempt of April 11, 2002. Prior to the coup attempt, Chavez had instituted 49 laws, which was granted to him by the National Assembly (Congress). Chavez’s granted executive power to implement social policies and regulations, naturally led to opposition by groups whose interests weren’t being served. At the precise time, oil prices dropped leading Venezuela’s top exporting item to falling funds, which also had a negative impact on poor since programs had to be restricted.

At the same time, the price of oil, Venezuela’s principal export and the main source of government funds, fell, forcing the government to sharply curtail spending, which led to a decline in support for the government amongst Venezuela’s poor, who make up the majority of voters. The resulting political tension that ensued led to an increasingly tense political situation in the country that culminated in the violent attempted coup of 11 April 2002.

In conclusion Hugo Chavez’s Bolivarian Revolution is a populist movement directed at alleviating the burdens of the vast majority of Venezuelans who are living in improvised economic conditions. He is not as social policy mainly left liberalist, rather than revolutionary leftist political-economic orientation of Kabral’s revolutionary agrarian economic model, Che Guevara’s Marxist-Leninist orientation in Cuba’s economy, or even Malcolm X’s political economic theory of Black Nationalism in America.

Venezuela has gained primary successes and failures in its political economic model approach. “The government has presented the implementation of its economic model—one that puts the economy at the service of the majority instead of the minority- a success,” (Boudin, 133). For an example, the growth of cooperatives can be seen as a successful operation. There has been an increase in sustainable small-scale agricultural and fishing collectives, and long-term investment “in education and health care for the poorest sectors of society,” (Boudin, 133). In 2004, Venezuela’s economy grew by 17.3%, proving to be highest growth rate in the history of the region. Venezuela’s economy is also the highest growth rate in the sixty-four-year history of

Venezuela's central bank. Venezuela has also implemented minimum wage increases on four separate occasions, keeping inflation in check. There has been a deliberately strategic implementation of reduction costs on basic items such as oil to provide for a cost efficient economy. Venezuelan's have more purchasing power to buy other items. The future prospects of the Bolivarian Revolution are unknown and undeterminable at this time, yet the people are still hopeful for a better future.

Oromo Heroes and Heroines

By Kulani Jalata

Today, I am going to specifically identify and explore key elements and characteristics that Oromo heroines and heroes have possessed and used to defend the Oromo people. I am also going to identify several Oromo heroines and heroes and examine the roles they have played in building Oromo consciousness and Oromummaa. In addition, I will examine the role the Ethiopian government has played and still is trying to play in silencing Oromo identity and peoplehood by targeting Oromo nationalist heroes and heroines and killing them. In conclusion, I will focus on their impacts on today's struggle for national liberation and democracy and what we can gain from their efforts and experiences.

If you look up the word heroine or hero in any dictionary, you would find varying definitions ranging from a man distinguished by exceptional audacity, nobility, and strength to a being of great strength and courage celebrated for bold exploits and to a champion. But personally, I prefer a more precise, effective description of a hero: someone who fights for a cause.

To be more specific, someone who fights despite risks, despite setbacks, and despite physical or emotional pain. Someone who views his/her cause as a means to defend justice. Someone who is courageous, who is fearless, and who leads selflessly. Someone who stands up to their enemies; enemies who have mistreated them unjustly. Someone who refuses to bow down to his or her enemy regardless of torture or death. Someone who can envision victory and therefore will deny any other result.

Although my own definition may be quite extensive, all of these meanings can entirely be found in our Oromo heroines and heroes. In addition though, they also contain one other essential quality: a *passion* to defend the Oromo people, to liberate them from an Ethiopian colonial oppression dating back to the late nineteenth century. This Ethiopian colonialism has not only politically and economically suppressed and devastated the Oromo people, but has also attempted to strip them of their identity, culture, language, history, and human dignity.

Oromo heroines and heroes have realized the importance of their self-sacrifice and full effort to battle against this oppression. Historically speaking, they fought against colonial invaders and formed organizations such as the Macha Tulama Self Help Association, the Bale Oromo Movement, and the Oromo Liberation Front in attempt to struggle for national Oromo self-determination and liberation while developing and enhancing *Oromummaa*. In the early 1960s, the Macha Tulama Association was formed as , “. . . a civic organization . . . to promote socio-economic development in Oromia and to further the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Oromo people.” In 1963, the Bale Oromo Movement began with the armed uprising against the Ethiopian colonial regime. In addition, in 1973, the Oromo Liberation Front was established with its main objectives being, “. . . to exercise the Oromo people’s inalienable right to national self-determination, to terminate a century of oppression and exploitation, and

to form, where possible, a political union with other nations on the basis of equality, respect for mutual interests and the principle of voluntary associations.” These three organizations greatly improved the growth of Oromummaa by mobilizing awareness, endeavoring to recover Oromo history, culture, and language, providing national leadership, and re-establishing the Oromo hope for freedom.

Today, I view Oromo heroes and heroines as trying to achieve 5 E’s:

Establish a basis or foundation for struggle
Expose the Ethiopian dictatorship
Enhance Oromummaa
Educate by raising political consciousness
Enrich hope for independence for the Oromo people

Oromo heroines and heroes also reestablished the names Oromo and Oromia and facilitated the writing and reading of Afaan Oromoo in Quube. However, the process for these achievements was not simple. Oromo heroes and heroines underwent difficult and extreme conditions of living including living in jungles, suffering from diseases, suffering in prisons, facing death, torture, rape, hunger and starvation, and poverty. They left their jobs, families, children, and altogether their lives to fight for the Oromo cause. And keep in mind, that they could have easily collaborated with the current regime and today be living luxuriously.

I have here a brief list of some names of Oromo heroes and heroines that I wanted for a moment to mention:

Haile Mariam Gamada, Elemo Qilxu, Ramadan Hussein Kalil, Mamo Mazamir, Tadasa Biru, Ahmed Buna, Magarsa Bari, Baro Tumsa, Demise Techane, Aboma Mitiku, Mohee Abdo, Nadhi Gamada, Sanbato Lubo, Gamachis/Zakkaariyaas Mulata, Gutama Hawas, Saartu Yusouf, Ibsitu Marga, Aradoola Abdalla, Juukii Bareento, Mohamed Aman, Dr. Temesgen, Lama Warqee, Dagaga Baissa, Ebissa Adunya, Kasahun Habte, Yoseph A. Batii, Hunduma Kaba, Balcha Tola, Musxafa Idris, Waqo Tola, Terefe Qumbi, Gudisa Anissa, Shamsi Shambo, Zara Shek Bakiri, Sofiya Mohammed, Jaraa Uddessa, Roba Hanale, Bulti Gurmessa, Alamu Kiisii, Mammee Qasim, Kadir Adam, Hassan Rashid, Surur Ismael, Zahari Ali, Chalala Bekele, Tesfaye Nega, Yegezu Edea, Yegezu Benti, Kumala Mirkana, Tesfaye Hundessa, Habib Kadir Gobana, Lamessa Boru, Jireenya Ayana, Badhasa Dilgassa

In addition to this, I also have another list of fallen Oromo heroes and heroines: 400 of them. And, although that list is a very long, extensive list, there are tens of thousands more fallen Oromo heroes and heroines that are not included in that list. These heroines and heroes sacrificed their precious lives for the security and survival of their people. They shed their blood to protect Oromo human dignity, culture, history, language, and peoplehood. With pride, they rose the flag of Oromia in Oromia and all over the world.

It is the responsibility of the present youth generation of Oromos to study the philosophies, the contributions, and the ideologies of all of these Oromo heroines and heroes. This is their challenge. The next challenge is to fully participate in the Oromo national struggle to fulfill its cherished goals.

The surviving Oromo heroes and heroines have maintained the continuity of the Oromo struggle and we must celebrate them and also continue the struggle with them hand in hand.

The Pen is Mightier than the Sword: The Role of *Waldhaansso* and *Ejerssa* Journals in Promoting and Propagating Oromo Struggle in North America

By Jimma D. Tufa

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INTRODUCTION

It was about 30 plus years ago that some of us arrived in United States to pursue higher education. As young and somewhat ambitious, we joined the student movements in our prospective universities. For those of us from the Ethiopian empire, the Ethiopian Student Union in North America (ESUNA), was our initial organization. During the ensuing years though, the contradictions among the students from subject peoples of the Empire and those of the Abyssinian heritage could not transcend their revolutionary rhetoric and those of us from Oromo nation disengaged ourselves from participating in the Ethiopian Student Union, and in a considerable risk and challenge, in a country and environment we hardly knew, much less understand the culture and other limitations that we might encounter, we organized our own student union.

We called our organization TOKUUMAA OROMO or United Oromo, but during the ensuing years the name has been changed several times as we passed through several phases of our development. We were Oromo Student Union in North America and when most of us were no longer students, we just called our organization Oromo Union in North America (OUNA)

As is the case, that the task of any organization is to communicate its views or illustrate the objectives of its raison d'être through some sort of mass media dissemination. The Oromo Union in North America started its first publication with a booklet called "Sagaalee Oromo" in 1975 and the entire issue was devoted to General Tadesse Birru's selfless struggle for the rights of Oromo people. The second issue dealt with Obbo Mokonnin Wossanu's life and times in the Oromo movements during the golden years of Machaa and Tullama Civic Associations.

In August 1976, the first edition of the Journal *Waldhaansso* or (struggle in English) was launched, and it became the primary organ of the Oromo Student Union in North America for a long time. It became very popular among Oromos in the US and Canada and often sold out its first issues within weeks. Many people contributed articles both in Afan Oromo and in English dealing with the social and political legacies of Abyssinian colonialism and its oppressive nature as well as the long history of Oromo resistance and valiant sacrifice.

THE PRINCIPAL THESIS/THEME:

As the continuing suffering of our nation intensified by the whole apparatus of the tyrannical Abyssinian state machinery, there were a need for more literature. We

started new journals to augment the ever-popular Waldhasso. These new journals were called Oddaa and Hamttuu Burrussa. They primarily had both political and polemical positions with a Marxist bent as our Union was constantly evolving. After some years, they were finally discontinued and Waldhaasso remained as the sole organ of our Union.

Waldhaansso became our collective and authoritative means of mass communication, an anthology of our stories and it transformed our discourse of the events of our youth with a sense of mission, purpose and power. The continuing struggle and suffering of the Oromo nation underlined our assessments by sifting through the past lies of ghost history of the Ethiopian empire. It exposed the complex, often violent struggle of the Oromo society against the Abyssinian colonialism as well as defined ourselves in the face of political, cultural and economic intrusion from the Abyssinian colonizers. It explained and enunciated our political lines and shaped our doctrine.

We were mindful of the oppressive realities of Abyssinian colonizers, the profound and dreadful social and material bases of Oromo society and the abysmal political and individual rights of the subject peoples in the Empire, and Waldhaansso was the vehicle to articulate our understanding of the issues and views of those years. It was noteworthy not only for exposing the defect of the Abyssinian system of governance; but it did also publish general political and ideological commentaries on the crucial issues with global themes. Waldhansso was in many ways, our Pravda and the Federalist Paper combined. The authors of articles and commentaries used pen names for their safety and they documented the grossly cruel atrocities committed against the Oromo society by successive Abyssinian rulers. The historical and sociological contexts of Abyssinian conquest were forceful and rigorously researched and argued as well as the dysfunctional political culture of the Empire. It exposed the craven canards written by the Empire's elite about Oromo society, history and culture.

After nearly three decades of unchallenged and unrestrained advocacy of issues and predicaments about Oromo nation, the publication of Waldhaansso was suspended by mutual agreement of the concerned parties in 1991.

Ejerssa, was another publication that the Oromo Union in North America founded in 1995 to promote Oromo struggle against the new and more insidious Abyssinian rulers, namely the Tigrean Liberation Front (TPLF). It was the dismal defeat of the Oromo forces by the Woyanee army that precipitated a growing anger among Oromos at home and in the Diaspora and the Journal Ejerssa was instrumental in demonstrating and manifesting our anger and resistance against the new colonial state that was superimposing its treacherous machinery on Oromo society. We used Ejerssa to illustrate the essential characteristics of the new rulers of the Empire and their diabolical schemes to restructure the country to fit their nefarious objectives of plundering of Oromia resources to the benefit of their homeland and brutality they subjected Oromo citizens who resisted their evil agenda.

Ejerssa emerged as free for all medium of politics, culture, arts, news and views. It was very instrumental in reaching-out to wider audiences without the ideological and polemical convictions that Waldhansso maintained. It was widely distributed and read

by friends and foes for its contents, perspectives and analysis of the politics of the Empire and the Horn of Africa. Occasional editorial and essay segments were provocative, informative and often infuriated some Oromo Organizations and individuals who found the tone and contents were not to their likings. The disapproval of some individuals and organization notwithstanding, it continued to echo the voice of Oromo struggle until it was discontinued in 1999 due to organizational transformation of the Oromo Union in North America.

To this end, both publications were uncompromising, consistent and played a momentous role to promote and propagate Oromo Struggle to our true friends as well as our detractors.

There were also some difficulties of editorial and managerial concerns that hobbled as during these years. Just like any publications, both journals had ups and downs with editorial directions and organization objectives. But these issues were resolved within the framework of our established guidelines and contentious disputes were amicably ironed-out. Several members of our organization served as editors as well as editorial writers. It was an arduous job for some while others did it effortlessly. It was necessary and politically expedient to produce both journals quarterly and with a considerable challenge and venture, we did it diligently for some thirty odd years.

In the perspective of our long struggle, we formed the most durable bonds that transcended regions, religion and variants of cultural differences in the pages of this two and other publication about our battle with forces opposed to our desire for freedom and dignity. It is the memories forged by years of friendship these generation of Oromos, mindful of the oppressive realities of Abyssinian colonizers, the immeasurably dreadful social and material bases of Oromo nation and as well as the abysmal political and individual rights in the Empire that sustained us to continue the task of exposing lies, and to use Obbo Sissai Ibisaa's and Qabbanee's aptly coined term the invention of Ethiopia.

It was a glorious journey of struggle, we rose above limitation to fit to what is universal among us, **Oromumma**, We had confidence, we had a mission to realize free Oromia and the total essence of the past decades endowed us with reach experiences and we were convinced of the righteousness of our cause. We believed and continue to believe that these virtues were instilled in us by the essays and political analysis of these two journals.

We take great pride in the role of both journals for exposing the falsehood of Abyssinian colonizers and hopefully in the future a new generation of Oromos will pick up the torch and publish their own Waldhanssos and Ejerssas to confront the next challenge.

Finally, as the quest for freedom and willingness to pay any price must continue to shape the political environment of the Empire. It is with historical inevitability that the struggle of our people will succeed. The courage, the vigilance and commitment of our people will determine the distance. For sure, we need to go to any length to free our

nation from the Abyssinia colonizing structure. So, as an old English adage saying affirms: **THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD!!**

They say memory is a selection of images. Some looser, others printed indelibly on the brain. Each image is like a thread, each thread woven together to make a tapestry of intricate texture and the tapestry tells the story –the tapestry of one’s past,

WALDHANSSO and EJERSSA Journals told our past story aptly.

Thank you for listening.