

**Proceedings of the 2008 Oromo Studies Association  
Annual Conference**

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Coffman Memorial Union  
Great Hall**

**on**

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**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

**Edited by Haile Hirpa, Ph.D  
OSA, President—Elect**

**June, 2009**

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## **Editor's Note**

This publication contains the 22nd Annual Conference Proceedings of the Oromo Studies Association, held at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minnesota on August 2-3, 2008.

As has been OSA's tradition for the last twenty one years, I am honoured to follow in footsteps of many before me to present to you, as the President-Elect of OSA, a collection of papers and essays discussed during the two-day conference in 2008 and the Proceedings of 2009 mid year Conference for one day.

The theme of 2008 Annual Conference was "Oromo and the Horn of Africa: The Search for Peace, Freedom and Democracy". Thirty two OSA members submitted abstracts for the 2008 OSA Conference. Sixteen professionals were able to present their papers at the OSA 2008 annual Conference. Only eight presenters were able to submit their papers for this Proceedings. Although all the abstracts were not presented at the Osa Conference, they are documented at the end of this Proceedings for future references. This year we are also privileged to include the 2009 mid year Conference Proceedings in this Proceedings. The following topics were covered in the 2008 OSA Conference: Oromo Political Movement, Oromo Demographics, Oromo Last Names, Oromo Migrations, Iodine Deficiency Disorder, Political Economy of Diseases in Oromia, Oromo Arts as a Political Resistance, Agricultural Economy Policy in Oromo -led Government, Oromo Identity, Oromo Diaspora, and Afaan Oromo. The 2009 OSA Mid-Year Conference covered the US Policy towards the horn of African: Opportunity and prospects for change under the Obama administration held in Washington D. C. on April 4, 2009.

To reduce cost, this Proceedings has been published on CD-RAM. I hope this will make it easier for our members to file and store this useful data, research results, and analysis contained in this Proceedings. This year OSA is privileged to use the services of Oromo Publishing Company to publish the Proceedings on CD-RAM.

Finally, I would like to challenge the readers of this Proceedings to take their time and read these documents with a closer attention. There are a lot of vital information included in this Proceedings. There are also many areas that need more research and understandings. Therefore, please revisit this Proceedings and make the best use of it.

Haile Hirpa, Ph.D.  
President-Elect, 2009

## **Opening Remarks**

*By Dr. Melaku Mekonnen, OSA President*

Dear OSA members and attendees,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the 22nd annual Oromo Studies Association Conference. This year's conference is unique in some ways from previous ones. First and foremost, our keynote address will be delivered by Professor Ali Mazrui – the most sought-after speaker in the field of African studies. Second, we are expecting to host as a distinguished speaker Macha and Tulama Association President Mr. Diribi Demessie Boku. In addition, a businesswoman from Finfine, Sorasay Ragassa, will have a kaleidoscope display of Oromo artifacts. Thirdly, we also have prominent Horn scholars Mrs. Fowsia Abdulkadir of the Ogaden Human Rights Committee and Dr. Mohamed Hussein of the International Somali Ogaden Studies Institute presenting papers. In recognition of the dire need for a unified Oromo political platform in the quest for democracy and freedom, OSA has invited prominent political figures and scholars to assess challenges and share views on the future of Oromo political movements. In addition, over thirty papers will be presented at this conference. Most of these presenters have traveled long distances to join us and I thank them for their willingness to share their research findings. It is important to acknowledge those who have dedicated time, energy and material support to conduct such a major gathering. The Minneapolis area Oromo community and members of the Local Conference Planning Team, among them Mr. Bula Atomsa, Mr. Ragassa Olijirra, and Ms. Lense Solomon, deserve special thanks. OSA is indebted to Oliqaa Foundation and Georgia State University for the generous financial support received this year to help defray the publication cost of tgrateful in particular to Mr. Mike Abebe – President of Oliqaa Foundation, and Professor Lauren Adamson – Dean College of Arts and Sciences at Georgia State University. In both situations, Professor Mohammed Hassen facilitated the acquisition of the funds and I thank him for taking the lead. I also would like to note the outstanding accomplishments of Dr. Mesfin Abdi who made superb contribution to the transformation of OSA to the digital age. In this regard, Dr. Abdi spearheaded and singlehandedly converted to CD-ROM all back issues of JOS. Because of Dr. Mesfin, OSA now has the technical capacity to store, retrieve, and distribute JOS online and on CD. Thanks to Mesfin, this summer OSA was able to distribute digital copies of JOS back issues to most institutions of higher learning in Oromia. The conversation of the 2007 OSA conference proceedings on a CD-Rom is also the fruits of Mesfin's hard work. I am grateful to Mesfin for his creativity and contribution. I am grateful to the members of the OSA Executive Officers – Dr. Abebe Adugna, Vice-PresidAhmed, Secretary; Ms. Dune Silga, Treasurer; and Dr. Mossiga Aga, Public Relations Officer – for their commitment and outstanding work throughout the past year and in organizing the conference. I also would like to mention the special assistance and collaboration OSA received from Dr. Seifuidein Adem, who was instrumental in facilitating Dr. Mazrui's presence at OSA. Though space prohibits me from listing all that have contributed to the success of the conference, I feel that it would be an injustice if I fail to mention the extraordinary support I received from the

Board of Directors. This brochure was designed to provide you with overviews of the programs and presentations and I hope you would find it helpful in selecting topics of interest to you. I also encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to network with colleagues and friends during the conference. I wish you a pleasant stay in Minneapolis.

I wish you a pleasant stay in Minneapolis.

Best regards,

Melaku Mekonnen, Ph. D.

OSA President

## **Keynote Speaker, Ali A. Mazrui**

### A Brief Biography

ALI A. MAZRUI was born in Mombasa, Kenya, on February 24, 1933. He is now Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities and Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University, State University of New York. He is also Albert Luthuli Professor-at-Large at the University of Jos in Nigeria. He is Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large Emeritus and Senior Scholar in Africana Studies at Cornell University. Dr. Mazrui has also been appointed Chancellor of the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya – an appointment made by Kenya’s Head of State. Mazrui was Ibn Khaldun Professor-at-Large, Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences, Leesburg, Virginia (1997-2000). He was also Walter Rodney Professor at the University of Guyana, Georgetown, Guyana (1997-1998). Mazrui obtained his B.A. with Distinction from Manchester University in England, his M.A. from Columbia University in New York, and his doctorate from Oxford University in England. For ten years he was at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, where he served as head of the Department of Political Science, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences as well as Dean of the Faculty of Law. He once served as Vice-President of the International Political Science Association and has lectured in five continents. Professor Mazrui also served as professor of political science (1974-1991) and as Director of the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies (1978-1981) at The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. He has also been Visiting Scholar at Stanford, Chicago, Colgate, Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, Oxford, Harvard, Bridgewater, Cairo, Leeds, Nairobi, Teheran, Denver, London, Ohio State, Baghdad, McGill, Sussex, Pennsylvania, etc. Dr. Mazrui has also served as Special Advisor to the World Bank. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the American Muslim Council, Washington, D.C., and served as chair of the Board of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, Washington, D.C. He is also on the Board of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., and is a Fellow of the Institute of Governance and Social Research, Jos, Nigeria. In 2005 the American journal, FOREIGN POLICY (Washington, DC), and the British Journal, PROSPECT (London), nominated Ali Mazrui among the top 100 public intellectuals alive in the world as a whole. FOREIGN POLICY is published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, New York. Mazrui was earlier elected an Icon of the Twentieth Century by Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, U.S.A. In 2007 he was nominated for the Living Legends Award by the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS] and the African Communications Association. His more than thirty books include *Towards a Pax Africana* (1967), and *The Political Sociology of the English Language* (1975). He has also published a novel entitled *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo* (1971). His research interests include African politics, international political culture, political Islam, and North-South relations. His most comprehensive books include *A World Federation of Cultures: An African Perspective* (published by the Free Press in New York in 1976) and *Cultural Forces in World Politics* (James Currey and Heinemann, 1990). Among his books on language in society is *The Power of Babel: Language and Governance in Africa's Experience* (co-author Alamin M. Mazrui) (James Currey and University of Chicago Press, 1998), which was launched in the House of Lords, London, at a historic ceremony saluting Mazrui's works. He and Alamin M. Mazrui have also been working on a project on Black

Reparations in the Era of Globalization. His most recent books include *Islam Between Globalization and Counterterrorism* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press and Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 2006), *A Tale of Two Africas: Nigeria and South Africa as Contrasting Visions* (London: Adonis-Abbey, 2006) and *The Politics of War and the Culture of Violence* (Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press, 2008). Dr. Mazrui has also written for magazines and newspapers. He has been published in *The Times* (London), *The New York Times*, *The Sunday Nation* (Nairobi), *Transition* (Kampala and Cambridge, Mass., USA), *Al-Ahram* (Cairo), *The Guardian* (London) and (Lagos), *The Economist* (London) and *The Cumhuriyet* (Istanbul and Ankara), *Yomiuri Shimbun* (Tokyo and Osaka), *The Standard* (Nairobi), *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), *Elsevier* (Amsterdam), *Los Angeles Times Syndicate* (USA) and *Afrique 2000* (Brussels and Paris), *City Press* (Johannesburg), and *The Monitor* (Kampala). Dr. Mazrui's most influential articles of the last forty years have been republished by Africa World Press in three volumes under the overall editorship of Dr. Toyin Falola of the University of Texas. Mazrui's Millennium Harvard lectures have been published under the title, *The African Predicament and the American Experience: A Tale of Two Edens* (Westport and London: Praeger, 2004).

Dr. Mazrui has been awarded honorary doctorates by several universities in disciplines which have ranged from Divinity to Sciences of Human Development, from Humane Letters to Political Economy. He is also a former research fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, and the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford, California. The President of Kenya has awarded him the National Honour of Commander of the Order of the Burning Spear [C.B.S.], First Class, and the President of South Africa has made him Grand Companion of Oliver Tambo (2007). Professor Mazrui is married and has five sons (Jamal, Al'Amin, Kim Abubakar, Farid Chinedu and Harith Ekenechukwu). Dr. Mazrui is a Kenyan. One of his sons is also Kenyan and four are U.S. citizens. Dr. Mazrui was President of the African Studies Association of the United States (1978 to 1979) and Vice-President of the International Congress of African Studies (1979-1991). He is also Vice-President of the Royal Africa Society in London. Dr. Mazrui has been elected an Honorary Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, and member of the College of Fellows of the International Association of Middle Eastern Studies. In 1979 Dr. Mazrui delivered the prestigious annual Reith Lectures of the British Broadcasting Corporation (named about the founder Director-General of the BBC, Lord Reith). The lectures (entitled *The African Condition*) have since been repeatedly reprinted by Cambridge University Press. Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland, has extended to him the DuBois-Garvey Award for Pan-African Unity. In 1999 he gave the Eric Williams Memorial lecture sponsored by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago. In 2007 Mazrui was elected President of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists, Washington, D.C.. Dr. Mazrui has been received by Heads of State in Africa and elsewhere. In 1998 Professor Mazrui was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, England, and to the Board of Directors of the National Summit on Africa, Washington, D.C.. The year 1998 also marked the publication of the first comprehensive annotated bibliography of all Mazrui's works (printed and electronic) from 1962 to 1997 \*The Mazruiana Collection, compiled by Abdul S. Bemath, and published by Sterling in New Delhi and Africa World Press in New Jersey+. An enlarged edition of Bemath's book has been published under the title of *The Mazruiana Collection Revisited* (New Dawn Press and Africa Institute of South Africa, 2005). Another book entitled *The Global*



African: A Portrait of Ali A. Mazrui, edited by Omari H. Kokole, had also been published by Africa World Press in 1998.

Dr. Mazrui's television work includes the widely discussed 1986 series *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, (BBC and PBS). A book by the same title has been jointly published by BBC Publications and Little, Brown and Company. In 1986 the book was a best seller in Britain and was adopted or recommended by various Book Clubs in the U.S.A., including the Book of the Month Club. Dr. Mazrui has also published hundreds of articles in five continents. The wide range of journals in which Dr. Mazrui has been published since 1990 alone include *International Affairs* (London), *Internationle Politik* (Bonn), *East African Journal of Peace and Human Rights* (Kampala), *Kajian Malaysia* (Penang), *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (Berlin), *Islamic Studies* (Islamabad), *Foreign Affairs* (New York), *Revue Africaine de Developpement* (Abidjan), *International Journal of Refugee Law* (New York), and *International Political Science Journal* (Oxford). Ali Mazrui is widely consulted on many issues including constitutional change and educational reform. Dr. Mazrui has been involved in a number of UN projects on matters which have ranged from human rights to nuclear proliferation. He is also internationally consulted on Islamic culture and Muslim history. He is editor of Volume VIII (Africa since 1935) of the UNESCO *General History of Africa* (1993). He has also served as Expert Advisor to the United Nations Commission on Transnational Corporations. Professor Mazrui has served on the editorial boards of more than twenty international scholarly journals. He won the Distinguished Faculty Achievement Award of The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the Distinguished Africanist Award of the African Studies Association of the USA. He is a member of the Royal Commonwealth Trust and the Atheneum Club (London) and the United Kenya Club (Nairobi). Dr. Mazrui's services to the Organization of African Unity and the African Union include membership of the Group of Eminent Persons appointed in 1992 by the O.A.U. Presidential Summit to explore the issues of African Reparations for Enslavement and Colonization. He was also among the Eminent Personalities who advised on the transition from the OAU to the African Union (2002).

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER I

Towards Socio-Political Reform in the Greater Horn of Africa: Ethnicity, Religion, Language, Gender and Cultural Convergence

***Ali A. Mazrui***

### **What is Unique about the Horn?**

For the purposes of this article we define the Greater Horn of Africa as consisting of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia (including the separatist Somaliland), Sudan and Uganda. A number of characteristics have made this sub-region of Africa unique. We are going to consider how sub-regional exceptionalism has related to the conflict-proneness of the area. We shall also explore how the diverse forms of exceptional experiences may provide lessons for the present and possible solutions for the future.

Of course, every country in Africa is distinctive and unique in its own way. For example, the small Republic of Djibouti (known as French Somaliland before independence) is the only one in this sub-region which has been significantly influenced by the French language and French culture. Djibouti is widely regarded as an island of stability in a sub-region of turmoil. Yet paradoxically it appears an oasis of peace in the shadow of the military might of the United States and France. Both those Western powers have established significant military facilities in Djibouti out of all proportion to the size of this former French colony.

Ethnically there is the exceptionalism of the Oromo, the largest ethnic nation in Eastern Africa and one of the most ancient. We shall return to the Oromo later

The collective exceptionalism of the Greater Horn includes the sub-region's coup-proneness. Indeed, the Greater Horn of Africa has replaced Southern Africa as the most conflict-ridden sub-region of the continent. And yet there are important differences between the conflicts which used to tear Southern Africa asunder and the nature of the blood-letting in the Greater Horn of Africa. A crucial element in the tensions of Southern Africa until the collapse of political apartheid was white minority rule in several countries, and the long term consequences of white-versus-black racial tensions. This kind of skin-colour trigger is almost totally absent from the conflicts of the Greater Horn of Africa. Ironically, the conflicts are sometimes

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Ali A. Mazrui is Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities and Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University, State University of New York. He is the author of over 30 books and numerous publications on African politics, international political culture, political Islam, and North-South relations. In 2007, he was nominated among the top 100 public intellectuals alive in the world as a whole. This paper is a revised version of the keynote address at the annual meeting of the Oromo Studies Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 1, 2008.

Muslim against Muslim, as in Darfur; sometimes Christian against Christian as in Kenya after the 2007 general election; sometimes Semites versus Semites, like the Amhara versus Tigreans, and sometimes Somali against Somali in Mogadishu.

There is a sense in which every country in Africa is distinctive and unique in its own way. But in this presentation we are focusing especially on the multiple ways in which the Horn of Africa has had unique experiences. We are going to demonstrate the multiple exceptionalism of this particular sub-region of Africa.

A persistent theme in the politics of the Horn is religious tension, either overt or implicit. It is true that some Christian forces have Muslim allies, while some Muslim militias have Christian allies. It is therefore true that there is no neat, crusade-like confrontation in the Horn between Christians on one side and Muslims on the other. But there is no doubt that the Horn of Africa has a level of religious tension which was almost totally absent in the politics of Southern Africa. While the politics of the Southern sub-region of the continent were truly spared the explosive tensions of religious differences, the tensions of the Horn have been spared the catastrophes of skin colour racism.

One irony is that Southern Africa was settled by Europeans at least two centuries before any other part of the continent witnessed white settlement on any significant scale. Similarly the Horn of Africa witnessed the arrival of both Christianity and Islam long before any other part of sub-Saharan Africa.

Islam's first arrival in Africa was as a refugee in Christianized Ethiopia. The Prophet Muhammad was still alive, and he encouraged some of his persecuted followers to cross the Red Sea into the Horn of Africa for asylum. The Islamized refugees discovered the Oromo, as well as the Amhara. This was before Islam's arrival in what is now Arab Africa – the Muslim conquest of Egypt after the Prophet Muhammad's death. We might therefore say that just as the first colonial European settlers established themselves in Southern Africa centuries before white people colonized any other part of Africa, the first Muslims arrived in the Horn of Africa long before the Arabs Islamized Egypt.

Similarly, Christianity came to the Horn of Africa earlier than to other parts of Black Africa – but not before Egyptians were Christianized as part of the Byzantine Empire. Egyptians embraced the Gospel of Jesus at least three centuries before Ethiopians did – but most Egyptians later withdrew from Christianity, while half the population of Ethiopia continued to walk with Jesus. The earliest Black Christians were the Abyssinian ancestors of the current Amhara and Tigrean people. Ironically these were Semitic people long before Egyptians became Semitic through subsequent Arabization. Egyptians were Semiticized. There are also exceptional contrasts in the history of the Horn. Ethiopia has the longest tradition of a relatively centralized government in sub-Saharan Africa. Semitic Ethiopians believe their monarchy lasted at least three thousand years. We know for certain that relatively centralized monarchical government in Ethiopia and relatively centralized republican government among the Oromo lasted for centuries.

In contrast, the Somali people were for centuries a people with rules but not rulers, principles but not princes. Anthropologists described the pre-colonial Somali nation as a case of ordered anarchy. Side by side the Horn of Africa accommodated an elaborate monarchical and aristocratic Ethiopian feudal order, on the one hand, and a totally decentralized system of consensus and compromise among Somali clans on the other. Governance among the Oromo was intermediate between the monarchical centrism of the Abyssinians and the statelessness of the Somali.

Another exceptional contrast within the Horn of Africa is between ancient statehood and new nationhood. Once again ancient statehood is best illustrated by Ethiopia – while newer forms of nationhood include Eritrea, and the Oromo nation bereft of statehood.

Also exceptional in the Horn of Africa is the historic cultural symbiosis and tension between the Oromo and the Amhara across the centuries. If the Amhara are like the English in the United Kingdom, are the Oromo as historically abused by the Amhara as the Irish were by the English, or are the Oromo as historically respected by the Amhara as the Scots were by the English?

Another great contrast in the Horn is between a country which was not colonized by a single European power – Ethiopia<sup>1</sup> – and in contrast to the Somali people who were colonized by three European powers and semi-colonized by two African neighbours. Ethiopia was of course the country which escaped modern European colonialism, though it was briefly formally occupied by Italy. The Somali people, on the other hand, were colonized by more foreigners than any other African people. There was British, Italian and French Somaliland – and the Somali of the Ogaden and of North East Kenya have been denied self-determination by the rulers of Ethiopia and Kenya. In Kenya the rulers were once colonial and are now postcolonial. In Ethiopia the rulers were once Ethio-imperial and are now post-Ethio-imperial. There is no other African people that has been split five ways by the colonial experience and its aftermath as have the Somali.

On the other hand, a reunited former Italian and British Somaliland did not last even on their own after colonization. The Somali people once miraculously combined anarchy with order. In the postcolonial period, on the other hand, the majority of the Somali have experienced more anarchy than order.

This brings us to another area of the exceptionalism of the Horn. This is the only sub-region of Africa where territorial separatism has been accomplished and new distinct states were created. Ethiopia and Eritrea experienced a forced marriage in the early 1960s, but achieved an “amicable divorce” in 1992, after a thirty-year war. Former Italian and British Somaliland had a euphoric and amicable wedding in 1960 – only to suffer a violent divorce thirty years later. Unfortunately the Ethiopic-Eritrea divorce had a fragile foundation, and has now collapsed into violence both within each country and between them. On the other hand, there seems to be a de facto truce between Somalia (Mogadishu) and Somaliland (Hargeisa) – with Somaliland much more stable and peaceful than Somalia (Mogadishu).

If we include the Sudan into the Greater Horn of Africa, there is a possibility that the South would secede from the North by the end of this decade or soon after, depending upon a referendum. What used to be regarded as a war between a Muslim North and Christian-led South has – at least for the time being – come to an end.

On the other hand, the latest Sudanese civil war in Darfur is between Muslim and Muslim. Whatever Israel and the Bush Administration may say, Darfur in Western Sudan is not a case of genocide. But it is a case of ethnic cleansing – which is the next worst inter-group atrocity after genocide. Genocide seeks to destroy a people; ethnic cleansing seeks to displace a people. But both are crimes against humanity, and both unleash much violence.

### **The Scenario of Learning from Asia's Experience**

In a society like both Somalia and Somaliland there continues the struggle to make political institutions compatible with cultural traditions and historical continuities. Among the Somali people, the clan is often preeminent. Somali politics seem to be subject not to ethnicity (in the sense of “tribe”), but to sub-ethnicity (in the sense of clan).

Constitution-making must, therefore, take those clan forces into account. It is fortunate that the Somali people in Hargeisa have been experimenting with a second chamber of Parliament consisting of a House of Elders sensitive to cultural continuities in Somaliland.

The Somali more generally may be debating whether having two chambers is too expensive for such a small country. I would suggest that they consider keeping a second chamber or find other ways of accommodating clan loyalties effectively.

Like individuals, societies can get married and divorced. In the case of societies, we sometimes call them mergers and dissolution of mergers. Different factions of the Oromo have sometimes merged, and sometimes separated even territorially, sometimes by force, sometimes voluntarily.

Perhaps the most enduring societal merger in post-colonial Africa was between Tanganyika and Zanzibar to create the United Republic of Tanzania. It was an arranged marriage involving the two Presidents (Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Abeid Karume of Zanzibar) in 1964. An arranged marriage is often a forced marriage. But the mahr or bride-wealth for little Zanzibar was truly generous. The representation of Zanzibar was out of proportion to the comparative sizes of the two countries.

On the other hand, the more a disadvantaged spouse in a societal marriage is abused by the senior partner, the less and less can the marriage be sustained. In the post-colonial history of the Muslim world the two worst cases of such spousal abuse concerned the marriage between former British and former Italian Somaliland, and the marriage between the old East Pakistan (of Bengalis) and the old West Pakistan (partly led by Urdu and Punjabi speakers).

Citizens of the Greater Pakistan created by the 1947 partition of British India believed that Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhs, Baluchis could all be united under the banner of a shared religion – Islam.

Citizens of former Italian and former British Somaliland believed that the different clans of the greater Somali nation could all be united under the banner of the shared Somali language, identity and culture.

But in time there was rising discrimination against the Bengalis of East Pakistan. And in post-colonial unified Somalia there was rising discrimination against the former British Somaliland. Both in the old Greater Pakistan and in the Greater Somalia, discrimination escalated into abuse of the weaker partners and finally exploded into violence and brutality.

Near the old Pakistan there was a big neighbor called India. India could not resist the opportunity to fish in troubled waters. India intervened on the side of the brutalized Bengali people – and before long Bangladesh was born as a separate country.

Near the old greater Somalia there was also a big neighbor – but this one was called Ethiopia. Unlike India in 1971-72, Ethiopia in the early 1990s avoided overt military backing of Somaliland. Ethiopia extended sympathy, rather than attempting military intervention on the side of Somaliland. Today's Somaliland should study how Bangladesh got international recognition faster than Somaliland seems to be getting.

Islamabad in West Pakistan (like Mogadishu today) was strongly opposed to international recognition of the separatist region as an independent sovereign country. And when Great Britain recognized Bangladesh and proposed its admission into the Commonwealth, the new Pakistan withdrew from the Commonwealth altogether. It took some time before Pakistan recognized the reality of Bangladesh and rejoined the Commonwealth.

It may be worth the effort of Somaliland scholars to research what strategies were used by Bangladesh and its allies. If it would be hard for Somaliland to be admitted to the African Union, why not lobby and struggle for admission into the Commonwealth of Nations? If full membership of the Commonwealth is not initially possible, why not lobby for admission as an Associate Member?

Two Muslim countries – the old Greater Pakistan and the old Greater Somalia – experimented with historical political marriages, which finally resulted in total collapse. Bangladesh rose from the ashes as a total separate country from Pakistan. Can Somaliland rise from marginality as a totally separate country from Somalia? Can membership in the Commonwealth help the process?

### **The Scenario of Friendship After Divorce**

What about the longer term relationship between Somalia and Somaliland? Can “the twain” meet again?

In Africa's ethical code, tolerance is partly captured in Africa's short memory of hate. While Islam recommends compensation and forgiveness as a better response than retaliation, Africanity recommends a return to normality without hate after each conflict.<sup>i</sup> The Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 ended without reprisals and without an African equivalent of the Nuremberg trials.<sup>ii</sup> Ian Smith unleashed a racial war on Zimbabwe and lived to sit in Zimbabwe's parliament and criticize the successor Black regime.<sup>iii</sup> Nelson Mandela lost twenty-seven of the best years of his life under a white racist regime, and emerged ready to have afternoon tea with the unrepentant widow of the architect of apartheid, Mrs. Verwoerd.<sup>iv</sup> Jomo Kenyatta was imprisoned by the British and denounced by a British Governor as a "leader unto darkness and death." He emerged from detention and turned Kenya towards a pro-Western orientation in which it has obstinately persisted. Kenyatta even published a book entitled *Suffering Without Bitterness*.<sup>v</sup> Africans fight deeply and passionately, sometimes ruthlessly, in defense of either their identities or their values. But when the fighting is over, African cultures have a low level of hate-retention. Potentially this could be part of Africa's contribution to the principle of tolerance in the Global Ethic. It is remarkable that modern nationalism among the Oromo took so long to develop. In spite of many abuses to which the Oromo were subjected by the Abyssinians, militant protest waited until the second half of the 20th century to be truly articulated.

What about Somalia and Somaliland? How short will the memory of hate be? If we can forgive imperial powers like Britain, Italy and France, should we not learn to forgive each other?

Perhaps the most successful marriage and divorce in post-colonial history was the union and later divorce between Malaya and Singapore in the 1960s. For a brief period after self-rule, Malaya united with Singapore to form Malaysia. Before long, the Singapore leaders decided to pull out of the union in a flood of public fears and tears.

Today both Singapore and Malaysia are among the economic tigers of Asia – perhaps greater success stories in divorce than they might have been in a tense marriage of periodic recrimination.

Perhaps one day Somaliland will become the prosperous Singapore of the Horn of Africa – and let Somalia evolve separately into a future Malaysia of Africa.

If Sudan miraculously survives intact as one country, and is counted as part of the Greater Horn, it will retain its exceptionalism as the largest African country in territory and the only one which shares borders with almost ten other countries.

In the cultural field, the Horn boasts an African country which has had its own indigenous alphabet for hundreds of years – Ethiopia. The Horn also boasts an African country which invented a modern alphabet of its own and never adopted it in Somalia. Ethiopia has had a national alphabet for a millennium. Somalia adopted the Latin alphabet for the Somali language only after a decade of independence from European rule.

On the other hand, the Somali language is widely credited with the most brilliant tradition of oral poetry in the whole of Africa, and not merely in the Horn, as the the Oromo also have developed a remarkable astronomical calendar.

Sudan's cultural credentials include being a fragile but very important bridge between Arab Africa and Black Africa, between Anglophone and Arabophone Africa, between Christian and Muslim Africa, between the Blue Nile and the White Nile, and now between agro-Africa and petro-Africa.

Southern Sudan may also be the only part of Africa where the Arabic language is spreading faster than the Islamic religion. Everywhere else in sub-Saharan Africa where both Arabic and Islam have a presence, it is the religion which is expanding faster than the language. In Southern Sudan the reverse is the case.

If the Arabic language is eventually consolidated in Southern Sudan, it may help establish a future friendship between North and South Sudanese even when they are territorially divorced. The Arabic language may even transcend the religious divide between Northern Muslims and Christian-led Southerners.

### **The Future Scenario of the Ecumenical State**

On the politicization of religion, the Horn of Africa has its contradictions. Ethiopia had a theocratic tradition for more than a thousand years – with the Orthodox Church as an established church, and the Emperor as both allied to the church and revered as the anointed of God.

Yet today the Ethiopian authorities do not want the Somali people to experiment with a theocratic solution to their problem of anarchy even for a single decade, let alone for a thousand years. Ethiopian troops intervened in Mogadishu to snuff out the stabilizing experiment of the Union of Islamic Courts.

The theocratic Sharia experiment in General Bashir's Sudan has also experienced less tolerance from the international community than what was enjoyed by Ethiopia's Christian theocracy from the romance of Prester John to the years of Haile Selassie I. In reality the democratic credentials of both General Bashir and Haile Selassie were much poorer than those of the Union of Islamic Courts in Somalia, who had more popular support and were trying to neutralize more corrupt and more ruthless warlords. But on religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue the Horn of Africa has less to teach the rest of Africa than the rest of Africa may have to teach the Horn. Most of Africa is still obsessed with the limited choice between having a secular-state (like the United States) and having a state with an established religion (like the Islamic Republic of Iran). In reality there is a third scenario – a state with ecumenical institutions. The most thoroughgoing ecumenical state in the world is probably Lebanon, with its elaborate constitutional sharing of political positions in government and the legislature among rival Christian and Muslim denominations. Should the Horn of Africa examine the scenario of an ecumenical state among its options of reform?



## **Indigenous Ecumenicalism and Abrahamic Competitiveness**

Of the three principal religious legacies of Africa (indigenous, Islamic and Christian) perhaps the most inherently ecumenical is the indigenous tradition. This is true of Oromo traditional beliefs. It is even arguable that Africa did not have religious wars before Christianity and Islam arrived. Precisely because these two latter faiths were universalist in aspiration (seeking to convert the whole of human kind), they were inherently competitive. In Africa Christianity and Islam have often been in competition for the soul of the continent. Rivalry has resulted in conflict.

Indigenous African religions, on the other hand, are basically communal rather than universalist. Again, this also applies to Oromo religion. Like Hinduism and modern Judaism – and unlike Christianity and Islam – indigenous African traditions have not sought to convert the whole of human kind. By not being universalist in that sense, the African traditions have not been in competition with each other for the souls of other people. The Yoruba do not seek to convert the Ibo to Yoruba religion – or vice versa. Nor do either the Yoruba or the Ibo compete with each other for the souls of a third group like the Hausa. The Oromo ancestors did not send missionaries to their neighbours. By not being proselytizing religions, indigenous African creeds have not fought with each other. Over the centuries Africans have waged many kinds of wars with each other – but hardly ever religious ones before the universalist creeds arrived. But what has this to do with contemporary Africa? The indigenous toleration today has often mitigated the competitiveness of the imported Semitic religions (Christianity and Islam). Let us illustrate with Senegal which is over ninety per cent Muslim.<sup>vi</sup> The founder president of this predominantly Islamic society was a Roman Catholic, Leopold Sedar Senghor. He presided over the fortunes of post-colonial Senegal for two decades - in basic political partnership with the Muslim leaders of the country, the Marabouts.<sup>vii</sup> His successor as President (partly sponsored by him) was Abdou Diouf, a Muslim ruler of a Muslim society at last. But the tradition of ecumenical tolerance continued in Senegal. The first lady of the country – Madame Elizabeth Diouf – was Roman Catholic. And several of the Ministers of the new President were Christian.

Senegalese religious tolerance has continued in other spheres since then. What in other Islamic countries elsewhere in the world might be regarded as provocative, in Senegal it has been tolerated. There have been occasions when a Christian festival like the First Communion – with a lot of feasting, merry-making and singing – has been publicly held in Dakar right in the middle of the Islamic fast of Ramadhan. And the Christian merry-makers have been left relatively undisturbed.<sup>viii</sup>

To summarize the argument so far, predominantly Muslim countries south of the Sahara and outside the Horn of Africa have been above average in religious toleration. The capacity to accommodate other faiths may to some extent be part of the historical Islamic tradition in multi-religious empires. But far more religiously tolerant than either Islam or Christianity have been indigenous African traditions, including those of the Oromo – especially since these do not aspire to universalism and are not inherently competitive. In West Africa this indigenous tolerance has often moderated the competitive propensities of Christianity and Islam.

As President of Uganda in his first administration Milton Obote (a Protestant) used to boast that his extended family in Lango consisted of Muslims, Catholics and Protestants “at peace with each other”. Obote’s successor – Idi Amin Dada (a Muslim) – also had a similarly multi-religious extended family, and once declared that he planned to have at least one of his sons trained for the Christian priesthood. Amin may have reconsidered the matter when – upon losing office – he found political refuge in Saudi Arabia as a guest of the custodians of the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

In Cotê d’Ivoire there is a similar North-South divide which coincides with religious differences. Under the Presidency of Felix Houphouët-Boigny the North-South divide was softened by a wise policy of power-sharing. Cotê d’Ivoire has more Muslims than Christians – but Christians dominated both the economy and the political system. From 1990 to 1993 Felix Houphouët-Boigny made Allassane Dramane Quattara, a Northern Muslim, Prime Minister. Quattara had a break in his political career to serve at the International Monetary Fund as Deputy Managing Director from 1994 to 1999. He returned to the Cotê d’Ivoire to bid for Presidency. Liberalization, however, did not translate into real democratization. The Muslim plurality in the Cotê d’Ivoire is at last reasserting its claim to its fair share of power within the context of a peaceful Ivory Coast.ix

Within the proximity of the Greater Horn of Africa there is the case of Tanzania. The number of Muslims and Christians in Tanzania is almost equal. Without changing their Constitution, Tanzanians have de facto adopted a religiously rotating presidency. As we mentioned elsewhere, the first President, Julius K. Nyerere, was a Christian, followed by Ali Hassan Mwinyi, a Muslim, who was in turn followed by Benjamin Mkapa, another Christian. And now Tanzania has once again a Muslim Head of State, Jakaya Kikwete. Again, where else but in Africa can one find the ecumenical spirit so high on the pinnacle of power? Should Ethiopia follow the example of Tanzania and have a religiously rotating Head of State (Christian-Muslim-Christian etc.)? Or should Eritrea regularize a rotation at the Vice-Presidential level – as Sudan has been doing? Or should Kenya experiment with a Christian Foreign Minister, as Egypt did with Christian Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Saddam Hussein did with Christian Tareq Aziz? On the issue of sharing power between religions, the Horn is not exceptional. It needs to learn from other parts of Africa and from elsewhere in the world. The same may be said about ethnic and regional rotation of political power in the Horn of Africa. Of course, one also has to draw a distinction between “symbolic” power and “real” power.

### **The Scenario of Political Androgyny**

What about sharing power between men and women? The Nile Valley can go back to Hatshepsut, the great female Pharaoh of ancient Egypt. Although Egypt is not part of the Horn of Africa, Hatshepsut is partly famous for attempting to strengthen links between Egypt and the Horn of Africa, including Somalia.

Ethiopia’s legends have bequeathed to African and Black culture the mythology of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Ethiopians themselves associated their entire Solomonic Dynasties to the greatness of what they regard as their founding First Lady, Sheba.

Much more recently Kenya has had a woman candidate for the Presidency. She lost in the contest, but she established a precedent of an inter-gender contest in a presidential election in Kenya.

Indigenous cultures in Africa gave more roles to women than Islam did, while Islam gave more rights to women than indigenous culture had. This paradox applies to the Horn of Africa, as well as elsewhere on the continent. Until the year 2005 Muslim countries outside Africa have had women as heads of state or heads of government. Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in population, has had a woman as President – Megawati Sukarnoputri. In Bangladesh both the Head of Government and the leader of the Opposition have been women – Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Begum Khaleda Zia have alternated in political power for more than a decade. Two other Muslim countries outside Africa have had a woman chief executive at the top of the political process. Benazir Bhutto was Prime Minister of Pakistan twice. She was killed as she campaigned for a third term. And Ms. Tansu Ciller was Prime Minister of Turkey, a far cry from the political culture of the Ottoman Empire.

All these cases of Muslim women at the top had occurred long before the United States has had a woman president, or Germany a woman Chancellor before 2005, or France a woman President at all or Italy a woman Prime Minister, or Russia a woman President. But Asian Muslims have also been ahead of Africans in this political empowerment. While serving as heads of government such Muslim women in those countries have been de facto Commanders-in-Chief. Were they continuing in the tradition of the Prophet's widow Ayesha in the middle of the Battle of the Camel way back in the first century of the Hijrah calendar, the seventh century of the Christian era? Have any of these Muslim women in power had to contend with terrorism by fellow Muslims? Bangladesh has had conflicts, coups and assassinations over the years, but neither Sheikh Hasina Wajed in power nor Begum Khaleda Zia had to fight terrorism. On the other hand, Megawati Sukarnoputri in Indonesia had been under enormous pressure to act against Islamic militants, especially since the devastating terrorist bombs in the resort town of Bali.x

Now Liberia has produced Africa's first woman President – Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf – effective from 2005-2006. She was elected by both Muslims and non-Muslims in Liberia. Is Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf a reincarnation of Hatshepsut or a reincarnation of the Queen of Sheba? Is Uganda part of the Greater Horn of Africa? In Eastern Africa Uganda has led the way in the political empowerment of women. It was a controversial President of Uganda, Field Marshall Idi Amin, who appointed the first woman Foreign Minister in Eastern Africa. This was two decades before Bill Clinton appointed Madeleine K. Albright, the first woman Secretary of State in American history..

But although appointed by a Muslim Head of State, Foreign Minister Elizabeth Bagaya of Uganda was not herself a Muslim. President Yoweri Museveni has since carried female empowerment in Uganda even further. Uganda under Museveni has known a woman Vice-President long before the United States has had one. In Africa as a whole the political empowerment of women still has a long way to go, though military regimes have sometimes opened more doors to women than have civilian governments.xi

In the experience of both Muslim and non-Muslim Africans the gender question is still problematic. This includes gender problems among the Oromo. But there are pluses as well as minuses in what these different civilizations can demonstrate to a human race still struggling to achieve gender equity.

In the Horn of Africa have the Somali people been leading the way in female empowerment? Somali women serving in the armed forces goes back several decades. And Her Excellency Edna Adan Ismail of the Republic of Somaliland had been blazing a trail as one of the most active Foreign Ministers on the African continent. She had been the voice of the separated Republic of Somaliland in many international capitals.

In future African parliaments we need to reserve gender seats for women – just as we once reserved seats for racial minorities in colonial Kenya and independent Zimbabwe. For example, one could have a three-stage gender reform in the constitution. Under stage I the candidates for parliamentary seats would be women and the voters for them would also be women.

Under stage II the candidates would still be women, but in their campaigns they would now be expected to address the concerns of men, as well as of fellow women. The voters would be both male and female, though the legislative candidates would still be women. Stage III would arrive when it is no longer necessary to reserve gender seats in order to get adequate female representation in Parliament.

Let us say the legislature consisted of one hundred seats. Under Stage I, ten seats would be reserved for women, but the remaining ninety seats would be open for competition by both men and women. Under Stage II ten seats would still be for women but subject to a common electoral roll consisting of both men and women. The remaining ninety seats would also be open for competition by both genders.

When Stage III is finally reached all the one hundred seats would be subject to a common electoral roll, and the candidates could be of either gender. Such ideas of quotas for women in politics have influenced policy in countries like Uganda under Yoweri Museveni and post-apartheid South Africa. Sometimes the reservation of positions for women has had to begin at the level of political-party roles and offices, rather than actual parliamentary seats. One way or another, the scenario of politically empowering women needs to be more systematically institutionalized.

### **The Scenario of Cultural Convergence: Oromo-Amhara Symbiosis**

Two processes have fluctuated in relations between the Oromo and the Amhara across the centuries. The two processes are homogenization (trend towards becoming homogeneous) and hegemonization (trend towards becoming dominant or hegemonic). This has created the special exceptionalism of the Oromo people. In terms of numerical ascendancy, the Oromo have led the way in hegemonization. If the whole of Ethiopia had been governed in terms of so-called “one man, one vote”, the Oromo would have had an edge in at least some of the elections. Most independent estimates place the Oromo at about 40% of the population, while the Amhara may be just about 30% of the national number of people.<sup>xii</sup>

With regard to cultural homogenization between the Oromo and the Amhara, earlier centuries left the rivalry unsettled. From the seventeenth century sedentary Oromo started integrating with their Amharic-speaking neighbors. Some Oromo chiefs acquired some political power in the wider monarchy. Emperor Iyasu II (1730-55) was half Oromo and promoted a network of Oromo allies. Indeed, this was the period when the Oromo language became the language of the court at Gondar. Homogenization in this era favoured the spread of Oromo culture.

In late eighteenth century the central government of Ethiopia weakened considerably. Local princes and governors carved out greater power and asserted autonomy for themselves. This period was known as the Zemene Mesafint, and was characterized by dis-homogenization, in the sense of decentralization of power. The Oromo dynasty of Yejju chiefs produced a string of war lords who exercised disproportionate influence on the weakened titular emperors of Ethiopia. Some Oromo chieftains became virtual Regents of the Empire. Power transfer through marriage was another method of hegemonization. Ras Ali of Yejju ascended to pre-eminence in 1779. As the Emperor of Ethiopia lost hegemony during Zemene Mesafint, the Yejju Oromo became de facto custodians of the Empire.

In 1855 Ras Ali II of Yejju was defeated by Kassa Hailu. Almost out of the blue Kassa Hailu became Emperor Tewoderos II. From then on the Oromo not only declined politically; they also became gradually marginalized culturally. The Oromo language was even banned from official institutions very much like the Kurdish language was later discouraged in the Republic of Turkey under the legacy of Mustapha Kemal Ataturk. The Amharaization of the urban Oromo elites accelerated the process of cultural homogenization from the nineteenth century onwards. The treatment of the Oromo by the Amhara was almost a dress rehearsal of the treatment of the Kurds by the Turks a century later.

The major subprocesses of the Amharaization of the Oromo were linguistic (the spread of Amharic among the Oromo), religious (the Christianization of the Oromo, especially via Orthodox Christianity), bureaucratization (the cooptation of the Oromo into the civil service and the armed forces of the Empire), and intermarriage (cross-ethnic matrimony and raising children of mixed ethnicity).

Lady Menen of Wollo became Empress in the nineteenth century; Muhammad Ali of Wollo became Ras Mikael and subsequently Negus of Siyon. He fathered Emperor Iyasu II. In the twentieth century Lady Menen of Ambassel became Empress Consort of Haile Selassie I. These were forms of homogenization in more than one sense. They were the mixing of biological genes, as well as the erosion of cultural differences (heterogeneity) among the elite. Was there counterpenetration of Amhara culture by the Oromo? In reality Oromo counterpenetration into Amhara society did not include language. The Amharic language was bound to absorb some words and phrases from the Oromo linguistic heritage, but very few Ethiopians of Amhara descent embraced the Oromo language instead of Amharic. A lot more Oromo adopted Amharic instead of the Oromo tongue [Oromiffa or Afaan Oromoo]. In the transmission of religion there was some exchange. Millions of Oromo were Christianized as a result of conquest by and contact with the Amhara. Emperor Yohannes IV even forced Christianity upon large numbers of the Oromo in the late 1800s on pain of the Oromo losing their properties. These were trends towards religious homogenization.

A major issue to be resolved is whether the Oromo played a role to Islamize thousands of Amhara. One method of Islamization was bound to be through intermarriage, especially when Oromo men married and converted Amhara women, and if the children who followed were in turn regarded as Muslims. But, in fact, the reverse happened. Conversion to Islam also often resulted in dis-Amharisation, just as conversion to Orthodox Christianity led to Amharization. Islam among the Oromo is the oldest in Black Africa. Oromo Islam has often been traced as far back as the arrival of the first persecuted Arab Muslims on the run from pre-Islamic Arabia during the Prophet Muhammad's own lifetime. There is little doubt that the first Oromo Muslims were converted by the immigrant Arabs. But is it not also likely that the first non-Oromo Muslims in Ethiopia, including Amhara Muslims, were Islamized by the Oromo? There is room for further historical investigation. In Buganda, Islamization resulted in loss of Ganda ethnic recognition. Similarly in Ethiopia, Islamization generally if not always resulted in loss of Amhara ethnic recognition.

If intermarriage and Islamization have been two methods by which the Oromo counterpenetrated the Amhara, the third method was political counterpenetration. While the indigenous Gadaa system of governance did not influence the imperial monarchical system, the indigenous warrior tradition of the Oromo did result in a disproportionate military role for the Oromo within the Empire. Menelik II allied with Ras Gobena's militia to expand his empire eastward and southward. Haile Selassie's father, governor of Harar, was a top-general in the Battle of Adwa when Melelik's forces defeated the Italians. Emperor Haile Selassie I was in part of Oromo descent, as well as of Amhara ancestry. Haile Selassie symbolized Oromo counterpenetration of the Amhara at the highest political level. But he was in denial about his Oromo genes. Haile Selassie was the *de jure* Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974. Iyasu II, another Oromo-Amhara, had been the *de facto* but uncrowned ruler of the Empire from 1913 to 1916.

The exceptionalism of the role of the Oromo in Ethiopia has continued to be this symbiotic interplay between hegemonization (as the Oromo have ascended to ultimate power-sharing) and homogenization (as the Oromo have shared culture and mixed blood with the Amhara). Have the Oromo been an internalized colony of the Amhara? Yes, but there are degrees of colonial status. A closer look at another imperial power would clarify these degrees of subordination. Before Great Britain became a global empire, it consisted of internal colonization. The English people were the equivalent of the Amhara. Linguistically the whole of the United Kingdom was homogenized and became English-speaking. But the status of the component parts varied. The most deeply colonized and dominated was Ireland. Indeed, for centuries, the Irish were treated by the English as an inferior "race" right into the earlier years of the twentieth century.

Next in status within the United Kingdom was Wales, which was also treated as an inferior partner to the English for centuries, but was not as humiliated as the Irish. The most respected partner in the United Kingdom to the English was Scotland. Its union with England under the Scottish Stuart kings in the seventeenth century (James I and Charles I and their post-Cromwellian successors) was voluntary. The union put a Scottish king on the throne of England. Scotland developed its own Church of Scotland (partially distinct from the Church of England) and retained its own parallel currency into the twenty-first century. In spite of the

rise of the Scottish nationalist movement in the second half of the twentieth century, the Scots were essentially almost the equals of the English for most of the time since the formal union of England and Scotland under the Stuarts in the 1600s.

The big comparative question is whether the Oromo in the history of Ethiopia were more like the Irish in the history of the United Kingdom – totally dominated and despised by the English for centuries? Or were the Oromo more like the Scots – not quite the equals of the English, but often sharing power, and at times even occupying the English throne?

There were times in Ethiopian history when the Oromo elite and the Amhara elite were more like the English aristocracy alongside the Scottish aristocracy – not quite equal, but retaining substantial mutual respect. There have been other periods of Ethiopian history when the Amhara treated the Oromo in the way the English once treated the Irish – as a lower breed of people, and an internalized colony.

But what about the Oromia of the future? Will it be more like Scotland – autonomous and dignified but not totally equal to England politically? Or will it be more like Ireland before the first half of the twentieth century – a de facto colony in subjection to the English? Or is there a chance that Oromia would one day become the equivalent of the Irish Republic – sovereign, free and increasingly prosperous? The answer may lie in the final outcome of the symbiotic relationship between the forces of hegemonization (a power-play) and the forces of homogenization (a process of integration). The struggle continues.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has addressed the general issue of what is unique and exceptional about the Greater Horn of Africa. The sub-region has replaced Southern Africa as the most conflict-ridden part of the African continent. The sharpest conflicts are now Black against Black and no longer involve the politics of skin-colour, but there are the border-line issues of Arab against non-Arab, Semite against non-Semite, and clan versus clan. Ethiopia witnessed centuries ago the first landing of both Christianity and Islam on the soil of Black Africa. But the Horn of Africa as a whole has witnessed the more recent radicalization of both Christianity and Islam, including large-scale civil conflict and religiously inspired terrorism.

Systems of governance in this sub-region have included monarchies which endured for centuries, and pastoralist traditions among the Somali and among the rural Oromo which have amounted to stateless societies in certain epochs of history. The Oromo transitional principle established eight years as the prescribed term of service for a generational unit (gadaa) of allegiance and of operation. This eight-year span has been increasingly adopted as a term limit for two terms of presidential incumbency in the United States. More and more countries in the world, influenced by the American example, have opted for two maximum terms of presidential incumbency, adding up to eight years (or an outer limit of ten years).

The reasons which made the Oromo choose the unit of eight years as a guiding ancestral principle of democracy were entirely distinct from what made the United States after World War II opt for a maximum of eight years for all future presidents after Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. Nevertheless, the term limit of eight years for presidential power is

gaining ascendancy in modern democracies centuries after the ancient Oromo founding fathers were guided by the mystique of eight years as a temporal unit for service by the generational grades.

The Greater Horn of Africa has experimented with language policy as an instrument of national integration (homogenization) and language as an instrument of political control (hegemonization). One fascinating area of fluctuation has been the cultural symbiosis between the Oromo and the Amhara across the centuries. The sub-region has also witnessed democratic experiments like the fragile one in Kenya which worked for a while, and then encountered a violent setback following the general election of December 2007.

Uganda has also experimented with the political empowerment of women partly through a quota system of party offices and government ministries. Ethiopia had earlier experiences of powerful Empresses. More controversial has been the occasional rise of Warrior Priestesses like Alice Lakwena in Uganda who tried to mobilize the Acholi against the government of Yoweri Museveni.

The Greater Horn of Africa can be regarded as Africa's grand laboratory of social continuities, constitutional experiments, cultural innovations, and dangerous political gambles pregnant with risks of conflict. The rest of Africa needs to pay attention to the sub region – learn from its errors, benefit from its achievements, and help the march of social progress in the continent as a whole.

## **ENDNOTES**

I am indebted to Thomas Uthup, Seifudein Adem, and Muhammad Yusuf Tamim for research and bibliographical assistance.

1 There is also a view that the arrangement between Ethiopia and European powers created what amounted to internal, indirect, dependent or domestic colonialism. Consult, for instance, Bonnie K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia: The Making of Dependent Colonial State in Northeast Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1990).

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1Reported in the *New York Times* (March 23, 1999), 6.



1 Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness* (Nairobi and Chicago: East African Publishing House and Northwestern University Press, 1968).

1The population of Senegal is 94% Muslim, and about 5 % Christian, according to *The World Guide 1999/2000* (Oxford: New Internationalist Publications Ltd., 2000), 497.

1Relatedly, see Leonardo A. Villalón, *Islamic Society and State Power in Senegal: Disciples and Citizens in Fatick* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

1Consult Susan MacDonald, "Senegal: Islam on the March", *West Africa*, (London), No. 3494 (August 6, 1984), 1570.

1For an early report on the violence, consult Norimitsu Onishi, "Dictator Gone: Ivory Coast Splits into Ethnic and Political Violence," *The New York Times* (Oct 27, 2000). Peace today is fragile; see Michael Deibert, "In Ivory Coast, a Fragile Peace Is Framed by Promises Unfulfilled," *The Washington Post* (November 16, 2007).

1 Consult Anthony L. Smith, "Reluctant Partner: Indonesia," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* (Summer 2003), Volume 30, Issue 2, 142-150.

1Even in Iraq, for all of Saddam Hussein's abuses, his regime was relatively progressive on legislation relating to women. Women were not allowed to marry prior to the age of 18, and there was no favoritism toward men in inheritance, divorce and child custody. See "Iraqi Women Are in Danger Of Losing Rights, Democrats Say," *The Washington Post* (February 3, 2004), 2.

1 According to most recent official census the Oromos are 25.5 million or 33.5 %, the Amhara about 19.8 million or 26%, Somali 4.5 million or 6.2%, Tigre 4.4 million or 6 % of Ethiopia's population. <http://www.jimmatimes.com/article.cfm?articleId=31559> (accessed March 16,)

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER II

### ***Dirribi Demissie Bokku, Matcha-Tullama President***

#### **Congratulation!!!**

I would like to join fellow speakers in congratulating OSA, for organizing its 22<sup>nd</sup> conference. Above all I wish to congratulate those who dedicated and worked to promote the goals of OSA in general. 1<sup>st</sup> I am grateful for OSA's 2004 president ,Abraham Mosisa and all of his executive committee members who invited me to attend OSA conference ,even though I was un able to attend since I was detained.

Second I am grateful for OSA'S 2007 President, Dr. Gobana Huluqa and all executive committee members, who invited me for the second time and again I was unable to attend since I was on bail and could not get USA entry visa at that time.

Third I am grateful in-depth for the current OSA president, Dr. Melaku Mekonnen and all executive committee members for their concern and timely invitation as a keynote speaker.

Now I have got so incredible chance and come to attend this historical OSA conference. And I remain grateful for all OSA members' understanding of the work of Metcha-Tulama's current leadership executive committee. The current committee has tried its level best to carry on the struggle initiated by time Oromo heroes like the late H/ Mariam Gammada who was a gifted organizer of the Oromo people. I am honored to make a keynote speech on 22 annual conference of OSA about the history of Metcha-Tulama self help Association and the role of NGOs in Ethiopia and else where in the world. Before the history of Metcha -Tulama and its future plan. I would like to state the historical conditions that led to the creation of Metcha -Tulama. Oromo's eldest self-help Association.

The Oromo nation Constitute a majority in the Ethiopian empire state in numerical terms. Though they are not always contiguous, their territory extend from the highlands of Ethiopia in the North to the Ogaden and Somalia in the east ,to the Sudan border in the west and to Kenya in the south. Before their forcefully incorporation into the Ethiopian empire state ,the Oromo people had always been members of a sovereign and free nation within the horn of Africa. They lived under the famous *Gada* system which was a well developed and egalitarian political and social system that governed the life of every individual in the society. As George F.Carte(1967: 158-9)wrote..."of greater interest ,perhaps is the *Gada* republic, a unique political invention found in Negro Africa .The Negro[Oromo] invented an age graded political structure not found else where in the world.

For centuries the Oromo lived under a democratic and egalitarian socio-political system of *Gada* until they were conquered and incorporated into the modern Ethiopian empire state at the end of the nineteenth century. Their *Gada* was abolished as a political system. But illiterate *Gada* leaders of traditional Institutions were unable to form modern national state in which literacy is a necessity(*The question of scale:Asmarom2000:257*).

Then Oromo nationalists such as H/ Mariam Gammada, a lawyer,Alemu Qixxeessa a colonel merged their self-help association and formed the Mecha-Tulama Self Help Association in Finfinne. The Association was established on the guide principles which says" Love your brother as yourself and be kind to others in order to get sympathy from others." The three self-help associations that initially merged to form this Association were Meta-Robi, Jibat-Macha and Tulama-Shawa self-help associations. It was only during

this period that the Oromo began to produce a centralized leadership that marked the public rise of Oromo nationalism (Asefa, 1989:333). The designer of the association refrained from using the Oromo for their organization due to in fear of the Ethiopian imperial regime.

Although the Mecha-Tulama Association was formed on January 24, 1963, it was only after 15 months later that the Association was formally permitted to function. It was resisted starting from its establishment. Article 5 of the Association's statute (1963:2) officially stated the establishment of schools, health-centers, clinics and construction of roads in the Oromo regions as its objectives. The others were building Churches and Mosques for Christian and Muslim believers who did not have them, and the provision of financial and legal assistance for disabled and unemployed persons. In religious case the founders of the statute had in mind that religion, often, is the easiest way both to divide and also to unify people." They also wanted to override the government policy of divide and rule on the base of region and religion." (Milkessa Midhagaa 2008:10)--That is why the M.T.A gives top priority for education of Oromo people. Unfortunately the enemy of Oromo people also realized the role that education can play to emancipate the Oromo people from the oppressors rule.

That was why the Ethiopian Prime Minister of the time, Akelilu Habte Wolde, who assumed that *General Taddasa* was a full-fledged Amhara, confided to him the educational policy of Haile Selassie's government in these words: "Taddase! After you have started leading the literacy campaign, you talk a lot about learning. It is good to say learn. However, you must know whom we have to teach. We are leading the country by leaving Oromos behind by at least a century. If you educate them, they are an ocean whose wave can engulf you." (Olanaa 1985:24-25)

Organizing and educating the Oromo from the Mecha-Tulama Self-help Association side and restricting educational facility in Oromiya from the Ethiopian imperial regime side become the struggle of the day. Since it was impossible to be organized by the name of all Oromos', the founding fathers' of Mecha-Tulama self-help Association started their organizing projects safely under the guise of reconciling and pacifying two "opponent" Oromo clans. (Metcha and Tulama) Under this reconciling guise they got permission to gather people at one place and teach Oromo history for a short while. They also advised other Oromo clans to be organized or to join Mecha-Tulama Association with the main aim of raising Oromos' self-awareness. The organizers of MTA refrained from the use of Oromo name due to in 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 roads. M.T.A built many schools and clinics in various places in Oromia. Mecha-Tulama self help association, taken as the pioneer of **modern Oromo** nationalism, has contributed immensely to rise self awareness among the Oromo people.

The seeds of modern Oromo nationalism germinated among the Oromo elite who were increasingly aware of their secondary status in the imperial regime's military and civilian bureaucracy in the first years of 1960s. (Alana 1995. Merera. 2006...) By mid-1960s, the Mecha-Tulama self-help Association had began to attract, the Oromo elite of the day and signaled the possibility and coming of Oromo nationalism. Then Mecha-Tulama, self help association was quickly banned by Ethiopian imperial regime and its leaders were killed, either 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 the right to self-determination.

During the military regime Mecha-Tulama self-help Association 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, and continued its work of educating and

organizing the Oromo people in different parts of Oromia. Meanwhile 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 all Oromos. The EPRDF decided to change the capital city of Oromia from Finfinnee to Adama ( about 100 k.m east of Finfinne)

M.T.A opposed this illegal attempt, which evict Oromo's from their ancestral land ,by constitutionally writing letters to the concerned authorities. That is to the House of People Representative, Prime Minister and Oromia 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 Oromiyas ownership over Finfinne . In response to M.T.A call about 100.000 people gathered on 4 January 2004 at Finfinne square early in the morning. Unexpectedly police Force with armored vehicles dispersed the gathering by brutally beating of people. On that incident M.T.A leaders, including the president were detained for a day. Oromo elders such as Gutu Marga (82) and Mengistu Jalata (73) were brutally beaten by police and *were* dragged on the ground .

This brutality offended Oromo youth. Thus university students requested to demonstrate against, the expropriation of Finfinne from Oromiya National state and Police brutal action against Oromo elders. Their legal request was answered by detaining about 500 Oromo students in kolfe police training comp for 24 hours. After very harsh corporal punishment. Police confiscated university ID cards and were refused entry into the campus. Since most of them were from peasant family who joined the university from remote region of Oromia. Out of the expelled 500 students 25 of them were imprisoned while 347 students became homeless and were thrown on Finfinne roads with out food and shelter, then as of its objective responsibility 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, mean while it also strongly opposed the in human, illegal and immoral did of expelling 347 Oromo students of whom more than 60 were female' and also delegated Oromo elders to negotiate with University authority about the immediate readmission of Oromo students.

This good will of M.T.A's sheltering the students and pacify the condition was also considered crime by Ethiopian authorities. After repetitive intimidation and harassments on 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2004 police arrested M.T.A leaders, by alleging them that they were found of 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 letter dated July 2, 2004 (sane 25 qan) to have confiscated M.T ,A's property and its permission taken away. At the sometime police imprisoned the guard on duty and left the office gate open irresponsibly. Thus what ever M.T.A have had all looted such as the historical archive, financial documents, register books, magazines, book and booklets ,historical canvas paintings of MTA' emblem, the portrait of the martyr general Taddasa Birru and Abba Gada, office materials and all office furniture were looted and lost due to the irresponsible did of police action.

Oromo elders and M.T.A's members of the board of directors accused ministry of justice for the illegal confiscation of property and eviction of the license. After long court process, the court decided in favor of M.T.A. Then its license renewed for the next three years by the Ministry of justice and its office inaugurated for the third time on January 27,2008 with its 45<sup>th</sup> years anniversary by Oromo elders. M.T.A is not the ideal type of N.G.O or political party. It is a sort of mass and national organization. As indicated clearly 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 his back ground, his language, culture and history;

c) To organize and urge the Oromo people, to develop its 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 M.T.A's concern, M.T.A never compromise on the question of Oromo's national integrity, that is why we paid dearly including life of many Oromo youth such as (Gadisa Hirpasa, Alaamayoo 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 un decided .

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..%) . and Gurage (3.2%) Dire Dawa, the second largest city in Ethiopia next to Finfinnee is also multiethnic in its character in which the Oromo constitutes (46%) ,amhara (27-7%) Somali (13.9%) and Gurage (4-5%) ( Asnake & Hussien 2006-77). Without taking in to consideration historical evidences and the population living around these two Oromo cities, Oromo population in both cities are a clear majority. So there is no natural or cultural reasons that justify the alienation of these two cities form Oromia national territory.

MTA'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 Nam-durr , and Dirree- Muuda etc. and to build museum, theater , conference halls, and cultural centers in the above mentioned and should be reserved historical places and propagate Oromo culture and Oromumma among the young Oromo generation.

Currently there are rumors that spread there is some functional division in Oromo Organization. Which shocked some of us .On my part I am not shocked so much because this is what is usual in almost all developing organizations. For example after many centuries division created in Christianity, as Catholics and monophysites these types of division are also usual in social organization .So one should not be desperate about the division, in present historical condition .At present historical juncture Oromo society is in transition from clanism/regionalism( to National State Formation). It is historical era for Oromo society. Nationhood formation is a difficult task everywhere in the world history. For instance take the history of Otto Von Bismarck of German unification or American Civil War. Nationhood can not be formed at ease. So one should not be desperate and lose hope. Thanks to Oromo's *Gada* democratic culture. I hope that it can be easy transition in Oromo national state formation.

So we have to realize that nationhood formation is a very large project with so many predicted and unpredicted obstacles. And also we have to realize that the possible obstacles come from two camps: the 1<sup>st</sup> camp from potential enemy of Oromo people , the colonizing Ethiopian regimes and Abyssinians elites. The 2<sup>nd</sup> camp is from confused evil-minded Oromo minorities who always prefer complaining and black mailing others to forwarding any constructive ideas. Then Oromo has to be psychologically prepared and consciously organized at large to overcome this large scale, nation formation project.

Let us pray, let Waaqaa, give Oromo a national hero, who can organize and lead Oromo to liberation and enable our leaders develop inner stamina and commitment.

I stress about the role of organization. Unorganized people is like an archive hit by hurricane wind. (mana galmee Obonboleettiin diige jechuudha).It is in un orderly condition and can not pass viable message. Similarly unorganized people may have individual war hero or brilliant intellectual, but unless otherwise the people is organized as a nation, the contribution of such outstanding personnel is insignificant to their nation.

- So please tolerate each other and be organized!
- Try to forward constructive ideas!!
- Have determination for the emancipation of Oromo and Oromumma!

Thank you very much!

Dirribi Demissie Bokku

M.T.A President

Minneapolis, Minnesota  
August 3,2008.

# **The Oromo National Movement at a Crossroads: Towards Total defeat or Total Victory?**

***Asafa Jalata,***  
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At the turn of the twenty-first century the Oromo national movement is at a crossroads just at the moment when capitalist globalization is facing its deepest crises. Despite the fact that *Oromummaa* and Oromo nationalism have been developing and that the Oromo national struggle has achieved an ideological and moral victory over Ethiopian colonialism and the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government, the Oromo national movement faces serious political crises coming from two main sources. One of these sources is external and structural, and the other one is internal and behavioral. The varied responses of global powers, neighboring countries, and dominated peoples in the Ethiopian Empire to the Oromo national struggle indicate some of the challenges and obstacles coming from external and structural forces. The lack of ideological clarity and organizational coherence in the Oromo national movement are the major internal problems that hinder the movement from emerging as one of strong political forces in the Horn of Africa. As demonstrated below, these external structural forces and internal and behavioral problems dynamically interact in producing crises and weaknesses in the Oromo national movement.

## **External and Structural problems**

The Oromo national movement faces monumental external and structural problems. The only governmental support the Oromo national struggle receives at this historical moment is from Eritrea, a newly liberated small country, which fought its own war of liberation from Ethiopia. More than seventeen years after achieving liberation, the Meles regime and its global supporters continue to confront Eritrea. Even neighboring peoples within the Ethiopian Empire and neighboring countries are not supportive of Oromo nationalism. Both Tigrayans and Amharas aspire to perpetuate Ethiopian colonialism, the domination of the Oromo people, and the exploitation of Oromian natural, economic and human resources. There are several reasons why global powers show little support for the Oromo national struggle. One of the main reasons is that the Oromo movement has yet to become a real force able to dictate change within the Ethiopian Empire in a way that the global powers and neighboring countries cannot ignore. In the global capitalist system, might is right and the Oromo national movement has failed to exhibit its political power.

In the capitalist world system, those who have strong organizations, formidable military forces, and better policy formulations can be effective in capturing state power and advancing their political and economic agendas. The main reason why the Meles regime is able to control Oromo society through violence and intimidation is that the Tigrayan elites have relatively a strong political organization and military force. However, since the Tigrayan state elites have failed to develop meaningful policies that are acceptable to the Oromos and other oppressed peoples, they are unable to influence public opinion. As a result, they are only able to maintain state power at gunpoint.

Since the Oromo national movement, led by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), has mobilized the Oromos to challenge the political views and colonial policies of the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government, the regime has mobilized its political, economic, and military resources in order to annihilate this organization and destroy the Oromo national struggle. It has also mobilized the internal enemies of the Oromo people to target the OLF for destruction. Unfortunately, some elements of the Oromo nationalist movement have become victims of the Tigrayan political ploy, knowing or unknowingly, and attack the OLF. Such elements should have avoided attacking the OLF and only engaged in constructive criticism. Such trends in the Oromo national movement demonstrate the behavioral and leadership problems of the Oromo elites. The OLF itself faces a monumental crisis in ideological and leadership arenas.

### **The Oromo Elites: Behavioral and leadership Problems**

The numerous divisions among the OLF leadership have opened a wide door for infiltrators, anarchists, and naïve Oromo “nationalists” who cannot see beyond colonial regions and religions. As I explained in my book, *Oromummaa: Oromo Culture, Identity and Nationalism* (2007), and in the article I wrote with Rev. Harwood Schaffer (2007) titled “Oromo National Political Leadership: Assessing the Past and Mapping the Future,” the Oromo national movement is suffering from: (1) the lack of coherent and organic leadership; (2) the absence of open and honest dialogue; (3) the low level of and uneven development of *Oromummaa* and Oromo nationalism; (4) the lack of accountability of some leaders and followers; (5) the blind attachment to borrowed political culture and ideologies without adapting them to *gadaa* political culture and traditions; (6) the lack of clarity on how to build *Oromummaa* from diverse Oromo experiences; (7) the lack of unifying and mobilizing formal (political) and informal (social) leadership; and (8) the lack of the total mobilization of Oromo human and material resources. Because these problems are explained in the book and the article, I am not going to discuss them today.

The Oromo elites in general and the Oromo political leadership in particular have yet to fulfill their national obligation to liberate the suffering Oromo people from all forms oppression, degradation and abject poverty. Without building a coordinated and consolidated national movement, which has strong a political as well as military organization, we cannot empower our nation. What will happen if we continue to fail to fulfill our historical and national obligations? After paying a heavy price in human lives and resources and after undermining the political and ideological hegemony Ethiopian colonialism, our political crisis is becoming a political nightmare for the Oromo people. I argue that if the Oromo national movement cannot solve its ideological and leadership problems by coordinating and consolidating the movement and by mobilizing all Oromo intellectual, cultural, financial, and human resources as soon as possible our total defeat is going to be inevitable.

Looking closely at the politics of the Ethiopian Empire, I identify four emerging political possibilities. The persistent failure of the Oromo movement to overcome its organizational and behavioral problems will allow the strengthening of the internal enemies of the Oromo people which in turn will consolidate the power of the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian state. This is the first political possibility. The second possibility is the re-emergency of Amhara political power. The consolidation of Tigrayan power or the reemergence of Amhara political power, I predict, will



facilitate the total defeat of the Oromo national struggle and the gradual demise of the Oromo people through systematic genocide as has happened to other indigenous peoples in the world.

The Tigrayan-led minority Ethiopian government is attempting to create a final solution for the political problem that has existed for several centuries—the relationship between the Oromos and their Amhara-Tigrayan colonizers. In the process, it is trying to establish a Tigrayan hegemonic minority state both in Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa. The Tigrayan elites know that without the destruction of the Oromos, the largest ethno-nation in the empire, their dreams cannot become reality. The policy of targeting and exterminating indigenous peoples has occurred elsewhere in the world and has been an integral element of the racialized capitalist world system since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. European colonialists exterminated indigenous peoples in the Americas, Australia, and Africa over a period of several centuries in order to transfer their resources to the European colonial settlers and their descendants while claiming to promote Christian civilization, modernity, democracy, and commerce. Specifically, the Meles government has a grand plan for the Oromos similar to what King Leopold of Belgium had for the Congo or Andrew Jackson of the United States had for the Cherokees or colonial Germany had for the Herero people in South West Africa (Namibia). These peoples were virtually destroyed through state terrorism and genocidal massacres.

The Meles regime is completing the forced removal of the Oromos from the areas surrounding Finfinnee (Addis Ababa). It has settled millions of armed Amhara and Tigrayan settlers in Oromia by removing the Oromos from their ancestral homelands. Furthermore, it has already leased several million hectares of Oromo lands to foreign investors, such as the Chinese government as well as Arab, Indian, Malaysian, and European business people and local capitalists by evicting Oromo farmers from their land without adequate compensation. To achieve its political and economic objectives, the Meles regime engages in political repression, state terrorism, genocidal massacres, and gross human rights violations in Oromia. Furthermore, it has mobilized other ethnonations against the Oromos. The Meles regime terrorizes the Oromos in order to establish Tigrayan hegemony and dominate and exploit Oromian resources. The Tigrayan state elites believe that Oromo intellectuals, businessmen and women, conscious Oromo farmers, students, and community and religious leaders are the enemy of Tigrayan interests and must be eliminated.

The regime has engaged in genocidal massacres with little or no opposition from Western powers, particularly the United States. All these crimes against humanity are committed in the names of democracy and development. The systematic destruction of Oromo nationalists and leadership are characterized as genocide. Article II of the United Nations Convention defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” Kurt Jonassohn explains genocide as the planned destruction of any economic, political or a social group. According to Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, “GENOCIDE is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator.”

The third possibility is that of total chaos and genocidal conflict among competing ethnonational groups. The Ethiopian state has failed and is on the verge of collapse. Although the Meles regime survives primarily by depending on world powers while practicing

authoritarianism, terrorism, and hidden genocide, the Oromo, Sidama, and Ogaden-Somali national liberation movements and other political forces are challenging it. The Amharas are also struggling on multiple fronts to recapture Ethiopian state power. If the Tigrayan state elites are allowed to continue their racist and colonial policies, their empire may violently disintegrate like that of Yugoslavia or face genocidal destruction like in Rwanda. This possibility may have devastating consequences for both “the true Ethiopians” and the colonized population groups.

The fourth possibility is the collapse of the Meles regime—because of internal and external political pressures—like that of Mengistu resulting in the possibility of forming a transitional multinational state. The Oromo national movement must be ready to play a central role in this process because it represents half of the population in the Ethiopian Empire. It must avoid a repetition of the political mistakes of 1974 and 1991.

What should Oromo nationalists and organizations do to direct the liberation struggle away from the three dangerous political possibilities and towards the positive possibility while marching towards total national victory? Without clearly articulating the ideology of *Oromummaa* based on diverse Oromo experiences and solving the incoherence of the Oromo national leadership through concrete policies and actions, we cannot solve the external and structural problems of the Oromo national struggle.

### **The Road to Total Victory**

My observation over the last seventeen years has convinced me that the Oromo national movement has been paralyzed by both external structural problems and by the ideological and leadership crises of the Oromo national movement. The survival of the Oromo national movement without strong organizational and military power is questionable. Accepting these realities will help Oromo nationalists and their political organizations as they seek a paradigm shift in the Oromo national movement rather than waiting for a miracle to happen. Since the Oromo national movement is facing a danger from all directions, all Oromo nationalists and leaders must swallow their personal prides and dreams and take pragmatic collective action to save themselves and their nation from total humiliation, defeat, and destruction.

I suggest three practical steps for building ideological and organizational coherence and leadership effectiveness and for coordinating and consolidating the Oromo national movement. My first suggestion is refining and adapting some *gadaa* principles and forming an Oromia national assembly that may be called *Gumii Oromiyaa*, modeling itself after *Gumii Gayyo*, in order to revitalize, coordinate, and consolidate the Oromo national movement. At this national *Gumii*, representatives of all serious and independent Oromo liberation fronts and organizations, representatives of all Oromo civil and religious organizations, and representatives of all Oromo sectors must be included.

If Oromo nationalists and organizations are truly concerned about their people and if they want to achieve liberation, they should show respect for their democratic traditions and practice civility in their political and ideological deliberations. Such responsible and courageous actions

require taking accountability seriously and using a single standard for evaluating behavior and measuring performance in relation to the Oromo national struggle.

My second suggestion is the convening of a national emergency conference of reconciliation that will bring together the representative of former OLF members and leaders and current members and leaders to establish consensus on the processes of reinventing the OLF and building the organizational capacity of the Oromo national movement. Creating unsubstantiated pretexts and engaging in destructive behavior work against the interests of our movement and our people, perpetuate divisions and weakens the Oromo national struggle. The only beneficiaries from the weakness of the Oromo national struggle are both internal and external enemies of the Oromo people. My third suggestion is the rebuilding of ULFO. In politics, nothing is impossible. I request all Oromo nationalists to be open to these suggestions in order to coordinate and consolidate the Oromo national movement and march the Oromo national struggle towards total victory. We must determine our national destiny through conscious political decisions and wise deliberations. Accepting these three concrete suggestions and implementing them simultaneously can change the essence, characteristics, behavior and performance of the Oromo national movement. Thank you for listening.

## **“Majority” within Majority: The Demographics of Major Urban Areas in Oromia and Oromo-Minority Relations**

***Benti Getahun***

The Oromo constitute the largest ethnic population in Ethiopia. But non-Oromo ethnic groups form the “majority” (many minorities making a majority”) population in some important towns of Oromia. Consequently, Oromos living in such urban areas are submerged into a minority constituting less than 50 per cent. This means that several ethnic minorities collectively constitute a majority population. In many cases, such ethnic minorities, who migrated to Oromo towns from neighboring ethnic groups, became impediments to Oromo interests notwithstanding the majority status of the Oromo in the state of Oromia.

The objective of this paper is three-fold. First, it is to reflect on conditions of a people that is reduced to a minority status in its own towns. Second, it is to suggest that it is possible for urban Oromos to forge alliances with other ethnic groups to form a majority (50 per cent plus one) and thus protect their interests. The formation of such alliances is assumed under natural circumstances whereby all concerned parties are free of political manipulations perpetrated by third parties. The half of the paper makes a brief historical assessment of relations between the Oromo and neighboring ethnic groups; supported data by data from Office of Population and Housing Census Commission,<sup>xiii</sup> the second half focuses on the demographic distribution of selected towns and sets equations for alliance-making.

Historically, neighboring groups create relations in three major interrelated processes. The first one is encounter between groups that sets the stage for peaceful or hostile interactions depending on circumstances under which it happened. Continuous encounters gradually lead to the second stage, the creation of frontiers which are often fluid buffer zones that neither group controls effectively. Frontiers have both positive and negative impacts. As buffer zones, they are always contested thus becoming battle fields. As points of contacts, they serve as areas where both groups begin cultural and economic interactions that may eventually lead to long-lasting processes of assimilation and mutual influence. Frontiers may eventually turn into permanent boundaries ending, in most cases, the hostilities that characterized early contacts. Boundaries are created where hostilities subside in a friendly manner (often cultural assimilations) or where one of the groups controls the frontier by force. The latter case would lead to permanent hostilities between neighbors<sup>xiv</sup> and remains a time bomb to explode any time.

The Oromo have experienced both historical processes; they have created friendly relations with some neighbors while a state of hostilities has continued with others. Their expansion beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century led them to major encounters with several nations and nationalities in today's southern Ethiopia. The encounters initially involved intense confrontations that determined the nature of relations that followed. Long and continuous conflicts and wars resulting from the encounters led to the formation of frontiers that were characterized by fierce struggles. In the frontier zones the Oromo and their current neighbors were introduced to each other's cultures and ways of life, and began economic relations,

exchange of resources, conditions that gradually paved the way for interdependence (even under adverse conditions) that set the stage to create boundaries between them. As developments in different parts of the world have shown,<sup>xv</sup> these boundaries became permanent with the emergence of nation states. In Europe, a major process that started with the Barbarian invasion ended gradually with the formation of permanent boundaries and nation states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century after long wars and shift of boundaries. Their relations were changed accordingly.<sup>xvi</sup>

The making of relations between the Oromo and their neighbors can be seen from two broader perspectives: chronological and spatial. The chronological approach is further divided into two. The first one ranges from the time of Oromo expansion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>xvii</sup> to the Abyssinian conquest of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The second stage extends from the conquest to the present. The spatial relationship is also divided into two. The first one is between the Oromo and their neighbors both acting as independent entities and the second is between the Oromo people and immigrants from their neighbors living in Oromo towns. The latter complicated the freedom of the Oromo in their own country.

The nature of current Oromo relations with their neighbors began to take shape following their expansion of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. During this period the history of the Oromo followed a natural process of human expansion and characterized by encounters and frontier conflicts. As mentioned above this process ended in many countries with the formation of states that resulted eventually in the creation of permanent boundaries. In the case of the Oromo, the process was aborted by continuous Abyssinian incursions and final conquest thus halting the effort of the Oromo to create their own state. Consequently, the Oromo were pushed back into perpetual frontier conflicts that have defined relations with most of their neighbors to date. Only in few instances did the Oromo succeed in reaching “acceptable” levels of mutual understanding and amicable relationships based on common political and economic interests, while the same factors have led to mortal conflicts with others.<sup>xviii</sup>

During the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Oromo came under the control of the Abyssinians.<sup>xix</sup> They have strenuously resisted the occupation but the absence of a central authority and lack of unity and coordination among Oromo of various regions weakened their struggle. Consequently, they failed to exploit historical moments to regain their freedom. To make things worse for them, the Abyssinians succeeded in dividing the Oromo and turning them against one another. Equally damaging was that the Abyssinians turned neighboring ethnic groups against the Oromo. Generally, the Abyssinians employed a policy of divide and rule, provoked old scores and turned their new subjects against one another. Before the conquest, the pattern of conflicts between the Oromo and their neighbors was similar to the natural process of conflicts between peoples in similar historical situations. The current mortal conflicts between the Oromo and the Somali,<sup>xx</sup> Gedeo,<sup>xxi</sup> and very recently the Gumuz<sup>xxii</sup> are all reminiscent of Abyssinian plots of aggravating old wounds and provoking hostilities between them.

More than any time after their colonization, the Oromo need unity at this moment and need to cultivate viable relationships, and mutual understandings based on common interests with their neighbors. To achieve this, they need to enter into serious negotiations at both micro and macro

levels involving Oromo elders, political leaders and intellectuals. The current political arrangement in Ethiopia barely benefitted the Oromo in accordance with the size of their population and resources. The government is using pseudo democracy that reduced the Oromo into minority in the country they constitute the largest national group. The Oromo have to take the initiative of protecting their interests through alliances with non-Oromos both who are their neighbors and also who live in their own towns as migrants. These migrants were used historically against the Oromo by successive Ethiopian regimes and thus shifted the balance of power against the Oromo. The Oromo have to overcome two serious impediments. First, they have to achieve ultimate unity among themselves. Indeed, they have not learned enough lessons from their disunity and the price they paid for it, and now is the time to redress that. Second, they should not antagonize their neighbors or their members in Oromian towns; they have to build trust and treat them with a strong sense of respect, equality and brotherhood. The Oromo have to clear any suspicion or fear of the Oromo (Oromophobia) in the minds of their neighbors that the Abyssinians espoused for quite a long time. The Oromo have to demonstrate to their neighbors unequivocally that they have more in common and benefit more by cooperating than continuing to live in a state of mutual suspicion. Non-Oromos living in Oromia towns have also to reciprocate in kind. They have to stop acting as agents of a power or powers that equally oppressed both of them.

### **Why are good relations necessary between the Oromo and their neighbors?**

Both the Oromo and their neighbors have to be cognizant of the fact that centuries-old hostilities have proved counter-productive (and even more so in today's world) and have not taken them anywhere. Moreover, despite regime changes in Ethiopia, the social and political configuration in the Ethiopian empire remained all the same vis-à-vis the Oromos and their neighbors. Because they are fundamentally at the center of southern Ethiopia, the Oromo have to take the initiative of forging good relations at this time. First, geographically, they are natural neighbors and share common boundaries. Second, as natural neighbors, they share vital resources, mainly water and grazing lands. These crucial resources have been the main causes for "longstanding competition and conflict"<sup>xxiii</sup> between the Oromo and their neighbors. Third, they have to maintain and strengthen economic interdependence that they had forged over centuries. There is urgency at this time, more than ever, to promote exchanges of their respective products and trade among one another. Although they were economically interdependent for a long period of time, there were always problems associated to them. They need to realize that hostile environments cannot promote development. Fourth, as neighbors, they attend common markets that require friendly relations and peace with guaranteed security for all groups involved. Fifth, the need to use common social institutions and infrastructures - such as shared pilgrimage centers, schools, health centers and roads located mostly in urban areas and on common borders. Finally, common historical experience, political domination and economic exploitation under Ethiopian rule requires genuine alliance to throw off a system that victimized them for so long.

### **The need to forge relations in urban Oromia**

Foremost, the Abyssinian conquest has three long-lasting consequences on Oromo political fabric. First it brought an end to the independence of the Oromo and disrupted the natural

course of Oromo history by aborting their struggle to create their own state. They were then forced into another protracted historical process centered on resistance to occupation. Second, the conquerors turned the Oromo and their neighbors against one another and their age-old effort to eventually forge sustainable relations was aborted, once again leading to continuous conflicts between the two. Finally, the conquerors opened opportunities for members of neighboring ethnic groups to migrate to towns in Oromia. They migrated in large numbers particularly to major towns and, together with Amhara migrants, who followed their officials as fortune-seekers upset the demographic balance of a number of important towns at the expense of the Oromo. These groups believed that their chances of economic survival could be met through serving the political interests of the Abyssinian rulers. To maintain their political control of the Oromo, Abyssinian rulers also sought the support of these minority groups. Indeed, the Abyssinians had the power to protect the economic interest of these groups against the Oromo. On both the political and economic fronts the Oromo became losers in their own towns. Because they did not control power and the economy, the Oromo had nothing to offer to woo these groups to their side. Consequently, they were virtually weakened economically and politically in their own towns. Quite evidently, circumstances did not allow them to forge relations or alliances that would have turned conditions in their favor. In short, they became minority in their own cities in a region where they constitute over 90% of the population. The ongoing attempts by the Ethiopian government to federalize major Oromo towns originated from this state of Oromo disempowerment. If this policy succeeds, again the Oromos have more to lose compared to migrants from neighboring ethnic groups. Rulers of the empire are the ultimate winners. But if the Oromo succeed, based on common strategic interests, in creating alliances with ethnic migrants to avert the policy, they will have more to gain while the interests of ethnic migrants will remain the same or even better.

As indicated elsewhere, many non-Oromo minorities formed a collective ‘majority’ in Oromo towns. These minority-majority, were effectively used against the Oromo in those towns and even in the parliament at national level. To elucidate this point, I divide towns in Oromia into four major categories. In each category are shown the population distribution of the towns. The figure for each ethnic group is provided to determine the ethnic groups with which the Oromo had to forge relations.<sup>xxiv</sup> In **Category I**, the Oromo constitute the largest population group but not large enough to become the majority or what is accepted as 50% plus one (**Jimma, Arsi Negelle, Agaro, Kibre Mengist, Shakiso, Dodola**). In **Category II (Adama, Bishoftu, Shashamanne, Asalla, Mojo, Zway, Chiro)** are towns where the Amhara constitute the largest ethnic population and collectively with other non-Oromo ethnic groups formed the “majority” – the central argument of this paper. In **Category III (Goba, Fitcha, Abomsa, Walinchiti)** are towns where an individual non-Oromo ethnic group, namely the Amhara, formed a single majority. In **Category IV** are towns where the Oromo constitute absolute majority and do not need to form coalitions with others. This category is not covered in the figures below.

In the first three categories, it is absolutely essential for the Oromo to enter into relations with one, two or even three other ethnic groups depending on their size – or until they add up to 50% plus one. The author assumes that such alliances are necessary against members of the ruling group who have historically dominated the Oromo and the “minority-majority” groups in Oromia or against any group that constitutes majority in Oromo town or that suppresses Oromo interests in their own town.

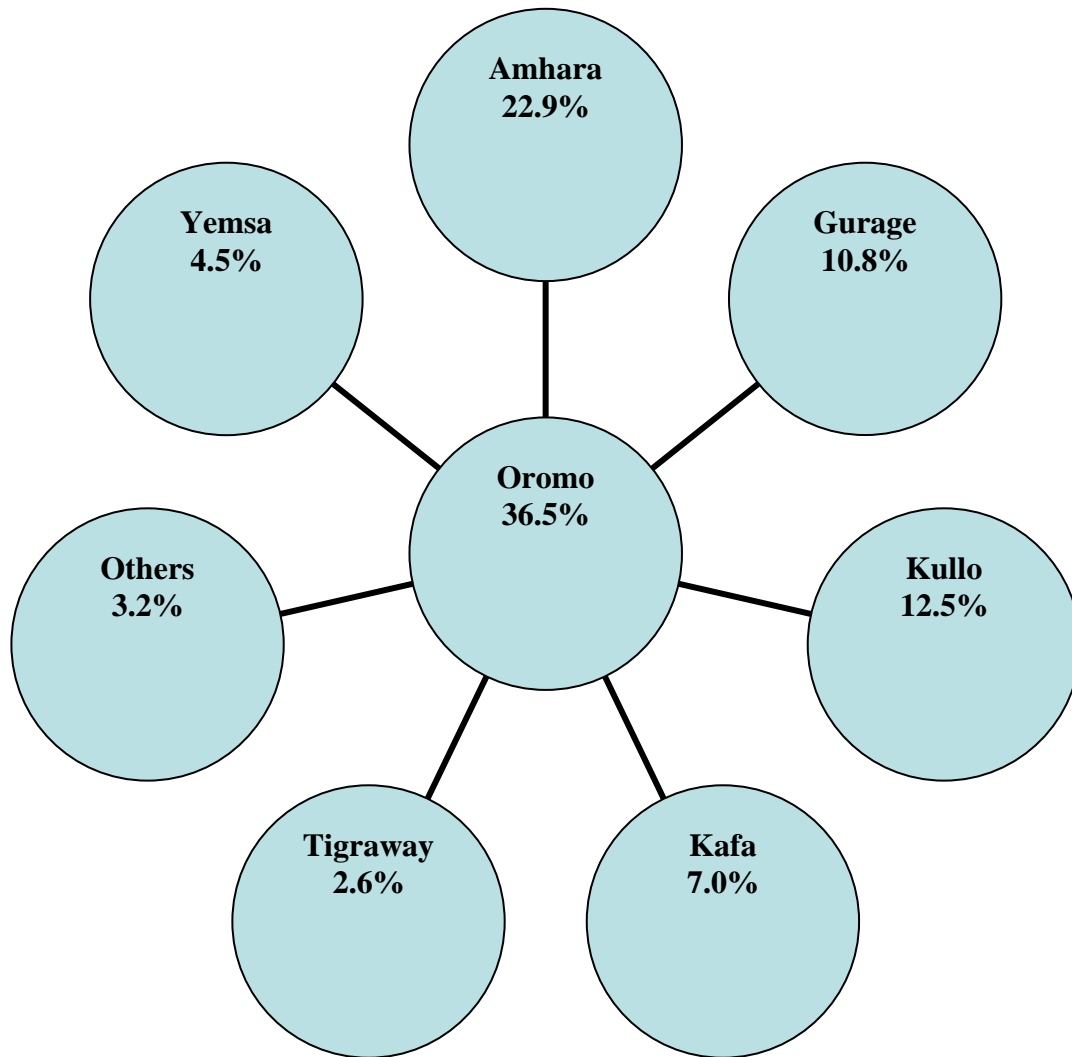
**Category I: Oromo is the largest population but non-Oromo minorities constitute a collective majority in these towns**

	Oromo	Amhara	Kullo	Gurage	Kafa	Tigraway	Yemsa	Others	Total
Jimma	32,424	20,335	11,117	9,582	6,242	2,302	4,020	2,845	88,867
Arsi Negelle	9,062	8,769		2,291				3,390	23,512
Agaro	9,622	4,304		5,506				2,488	23,246
Kibre mengist	8,892	6,753		2,271				2,220	20,136
Shakiso	6,858	5,232		1,558				2,109	15,757
Dodola	6,570	5,492		1,201				584	13,847

In Jimma, the Oromo constitute 36% of the population and they are way below the majority mark. The next group is the Amhara which constitutes 29.9%, followed by the Gurage accounting for 10.8%. Under the circumstances, the Oromo have to forge alliances with multiple groups. Assuming that the Amhara, the second largest group is the opposition, the Oromo need the alliance of the Kullo (12.5%), and the Gurage (10.8%) or with either of these two groups and the Kaffa (7%) or with all other groups except the Amhara, the Kullo and the Gurage. But these small groups are insignificant minority and cannot be viable and reliable allies. Special attention should be made to the Yemsa who constitute only 4.5 of the town's population. But they account for 7% of the total population of the warada; for the Oromo allying with the Yemsa offers a strategic advantage.<sup>xxv</sup>



**Category I: Jimma**

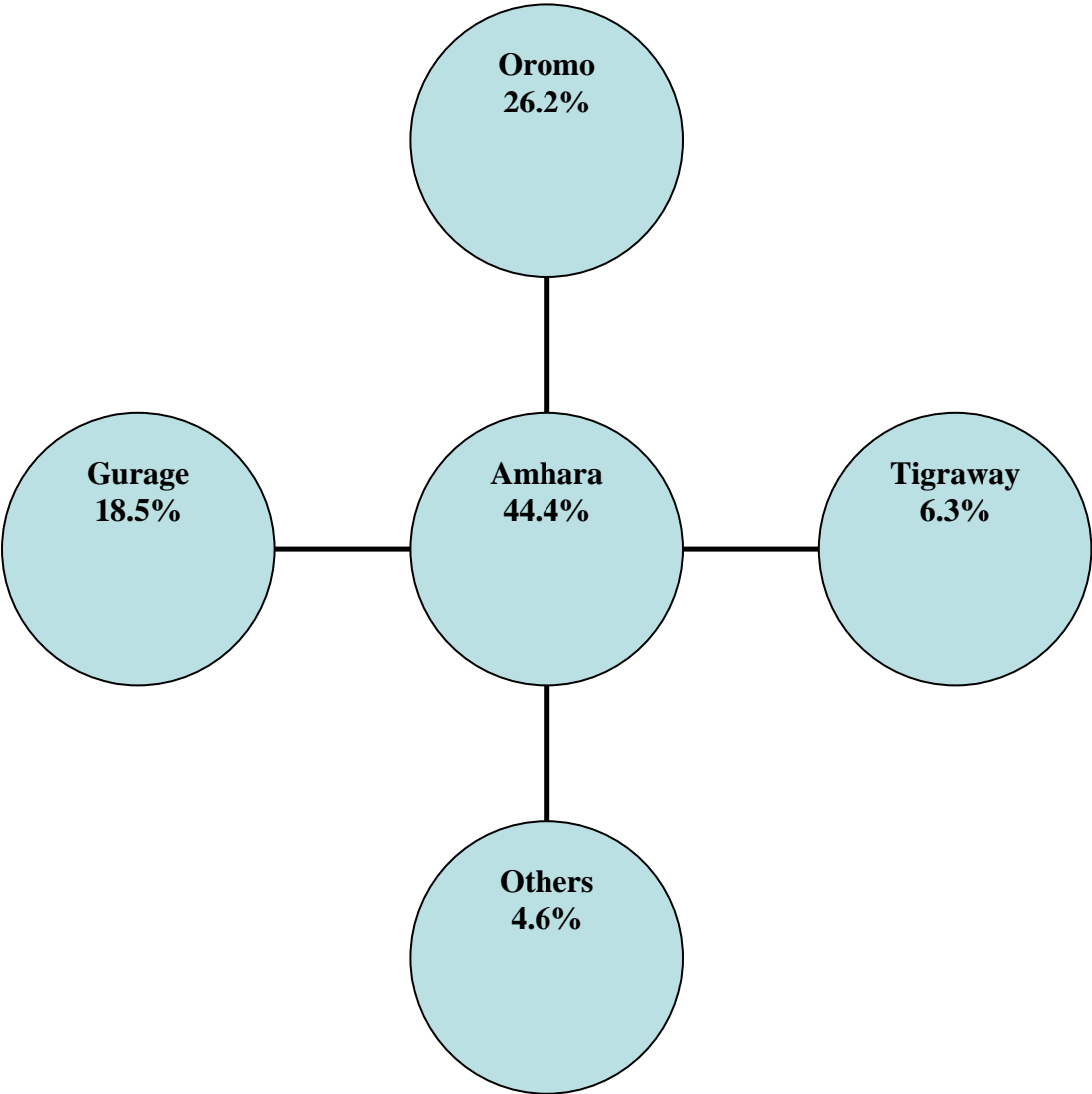


**Category II:** Amhara is the largest population. Here the Oromo need alliance with several minorities.

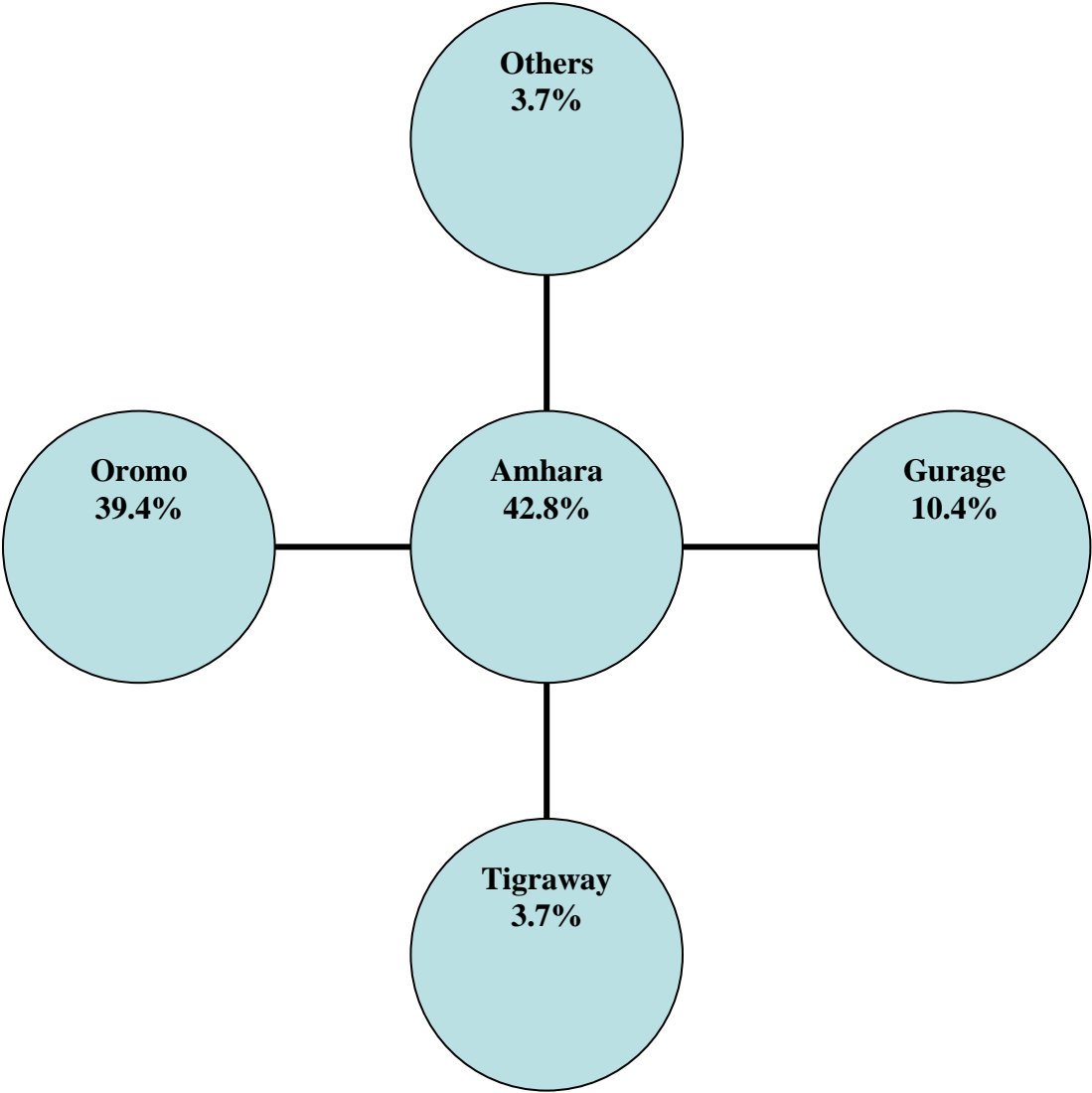
	Amhara	Oromo	Gurage	Kambata	Tigraway	Walayita	Others	Total
Adama	56,788	33,535	23,604		8,019		5,896	127,842
Bishoftu	31,446	28,909	7,594		2,735		2,688	73,372
Shashamanne	15,614	10,952	9,829	2,714	2,603	8,101	2,267	52,080
Asala	22,758	16,863	5,589		1,178		1,003	47,391
Mojo	10,513	8,526			1,788		1,170	21,997
Ziway	7,316	6,573	3,473				2,694	20,056
Chiro	8,909	7,557	1,476				736	18,678

In Adama, Shashamanne, Assala and Bishoftu (see figures) the ethnic distribution favors the Amhara who constitute 44.4% of the population of the town. In this case, the Oromo have to seek the alliance of virtually (especially in the first three cases) all other ethnic groups – a very difficult task, indeed. They can, however, use the overwhelmingly Oromo population in the rural areas as a power to negotiate alliance in order to safeguard their interests in the city. But the power in Addis Ababa is very decisive and it would be an uphill journey and politically a risky gamble should they try to enter into such negotiations. Under normal circumstances, Oromos in these towns can use the negotiating power of local officials. The situation is similar for other towns in this category.

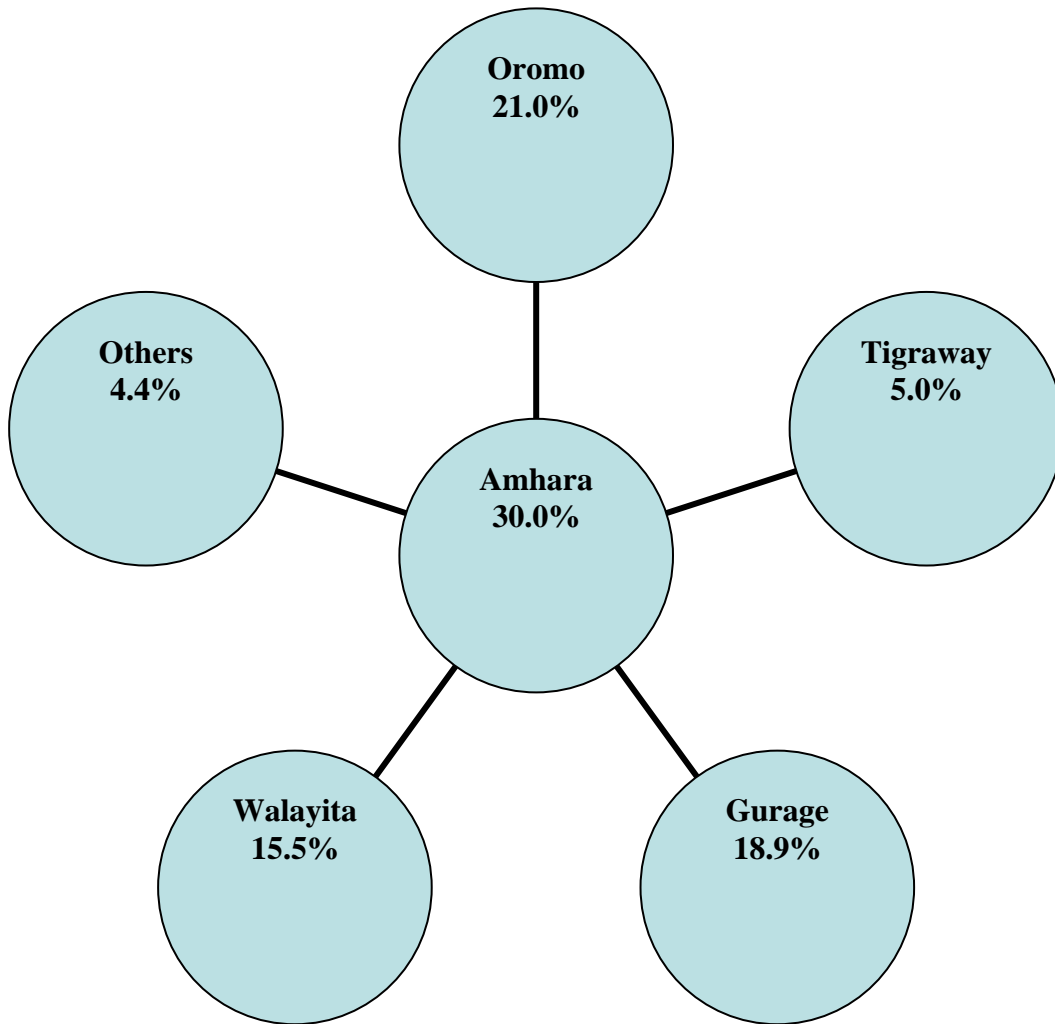
**Category II: Adama**



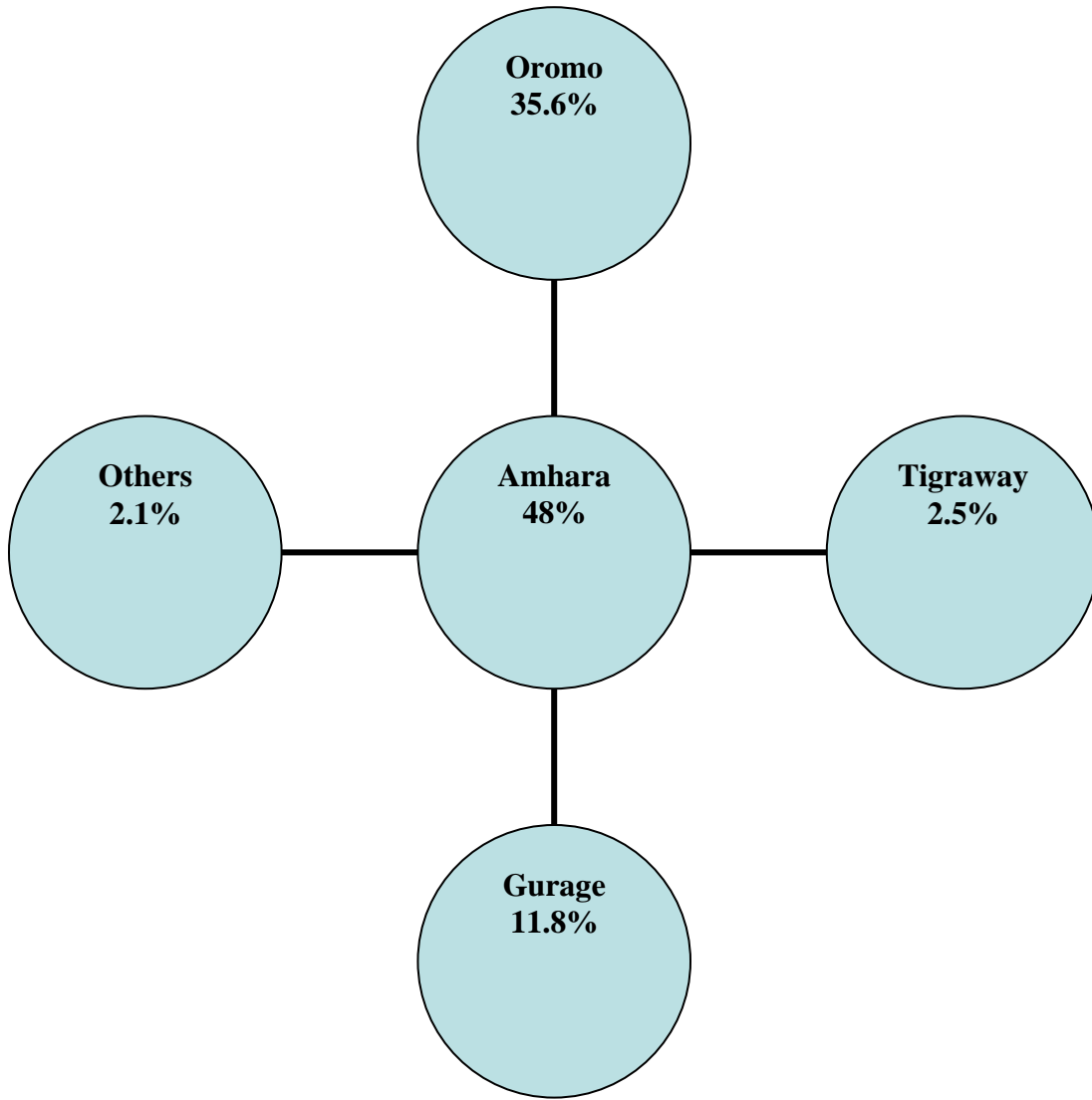
**Category II: Bishoftu**



**Category II: Shashamanne**



**Category II: Asalla**

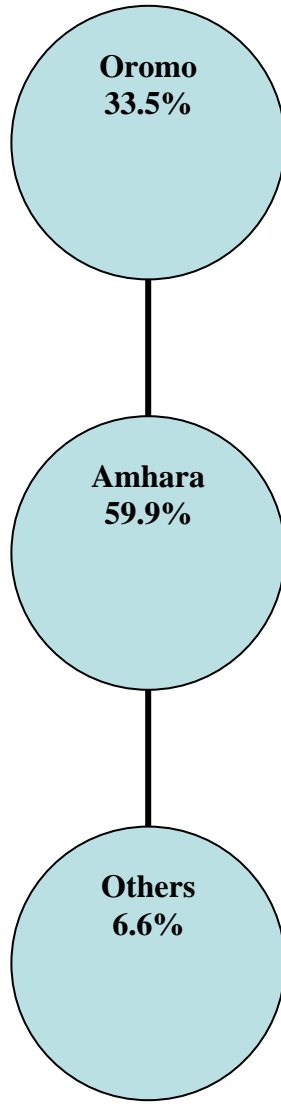


**Category III<sup>xxvi</sup>**: Oromos are minority and any alliance cannot help

	<b>Amhara</b>	<b>Oromo</b>	<b>Gurage</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Goba</b>	<b>16,984</b>	<b>9,504</b>		<b>1,870</b>	<b>28,358</b>
<b>Fitche</b>	<b>11,628</b>	<b>9,042</b>		<b>517</b>	<b>21,187</b>
<b>Abomsa</b>	<b>5,492</b>	<b>6,570</b>	<b>1,201</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>13,847</b>
<b>Walinchiti</b>	<b>6,949</b>	<b>3,745</b>		<b>1,038</b>	<b>11,732</b>

In all Category III towns, Oromos constitute a virtual minority any alliance cannot help. In other words, a combination of the Oromo and all other ethnic groups is always less than the largest group, in this case the Amhara. The alternative in this case is to use the power of Oromia regional government to create a fair atmosphere for “minority” Oromos.

**Category III: Goba**





## Concluding Remarks

Put in a historical perspective, the Oromo and their neighbors had common interests to stand together simply because both were under the occupation of the same adversary whose objective was to perpetually control them politically and maximize its economic exploitation. In other words, both are more naturally bound together whereby their successes and failures are very closely connected. A friend of mine told me in 1996 that "because of our failure to liberate ourselves, we subjected our neighbors to perpetual servitude." Indeed, the Oromo served as a bridge to many of their neighbors in the south. In most towns of Oromia, however, it is people coming from neighboring nations and nationalities that served as bridges for the domination of the Oromo by the Abyssinians thus subjecting the Oromo into a minority position in their own towns.

In urban Oromia relations between migrants from neighboring nations and nationalities are complicated by the behavior of Abyssinian rulers who portrayed the Oromo as enemies of those minority groups. Focusing on major urban centers of Oromia, this paper has highlighted the possible ways of forging relations/alliances/coalitions with minorities living in Oromian cities. Continued skirmishes and outside influence has arrested relations between the two. The burden is on the Oromo to take the lead and change the situation. Moreover, these same minority ethnic migrants can also serve as bridges between the Oromo and their co-ethnics to build a South-South coalition.

1. Data for the figures are consolidated from Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Office of Population and Housing Census Commission, Central Statistical Authority, *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia for Oromiya Region, Volume I: Part I, Statistical Report on Population Size and Characteristics* (Addis Ababa: April 1996).
2. For a detailed discussion on encounters, frontiers and boundaries, see Candice L. Goucher et al, *In the Balance: Themes in Global History*, Vol. 2 (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1998) 578-617.
3. Ibid.
4. Thomas J. Craughwell, *How the Barbarian Invasion Shaped the Modern World: The Vikings, the Vandals, Huns, Mongols, Goths, and Tartars who Razed the Old World and Formed the New* (Beverly Fair Winds Press, 2008).
5. For a concise work on the expansion of the Oromo and the processes of their settlement, see Mohaamed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: a history, 1570-1860* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
6. Case in point is the Sidama where political considerations led to close ties in the resistance against successive Ethiopian regimes while relations with Somali and recently with the Gumuz have turned into more hostilities partly fomented by the divide and rule policy of Ethiopian rulers and partly over vital resources.

7. For details of the conquest and experiences of the Oromo under successive Abyssinian regimes, see Mohammed Hassen, "A Short History of the Oromo Colonial Experience 1870's-1990's: Part One 1870s to 1935", *Journal of Oromo Studies*, vol. 6, numbers 1-2 (July 1999), 109-158 and "A Short History of the Oromo Colonial Experience 1870's-1990's: Part Two, Colonial Consolidation and Resistance 1935-2000", *Journal of Oromo Studies*, vol. 7, numbers 1&2 (July 2000), 109-198.
8. Fekadu Adugna, "Oromo-Somali Relations", <http://www.eth.mpg.de/people/Adugna/project.html> (accessed, 07/17/08).
9. Asebe Regassa, "Ethnicity and Inter-Ethnic Relations: The 'Ethiopian Experiment' and the Case of the Guji and Gedeo" (MA thesis, Univeristy of Tromsø, 2007).
10. See among others, Sudan Tribunes "Hundreds killed during clashes between Gumuz and Oromos in Ethiopia", <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article27265> (accessed 04/13/2009).
11. See for instance, Fekadu Adugna.
12. Data for the figures are consolidated from Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Office of Population and Housing Census Commission, Central Statistical Authority, *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia for Oromiya Region, Volume I: Part I, Statistical Report on Population Size and Characteristics* (Addis Ababa: April 1996).
13. Based on the example of Jimma, readers can set equation of alliances in the other towns.
14. Other towns in this category are Gundo Meskel, Mandida, Sodare, Mojo, Maki, Adami Tullu, Arsi Negelle, Zway, Kuyera, Shakiso, Dodola and may other smaller towns.

# **All Oromos Must Have Permanent Last Names**

***Haile Hirpa, Ph.D***

## **Introduction**

In Europe, the use of last names commonly known as surnames started in the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. At that time, the most common names were John, William, David, Tom ...etc. As population grew, identifying people by these common names caused some confusion. Therefore, people decided to have family names, last names or surnames. As a result, last names such as Johnson, Williams, Thompson ...etc. , emerged. People with last names or surnames utilized their last names for tracking their roots and genealogy. This method of using last names spread to the entire world except Ethiopia.

Historically, Oromos used to have last names. For example, in rural areas of Oromia, people identify themselves as Warraa Illuu, Warraa Babboo, Warraa Jibaati, Warraa Giddaa, Warraa Ammummaa, Warraa Solan...etc. These names started as family names and ended up being clan names. To develop and nourish the basic understanding of Orommumma, and implant self pride and consciousness, Oromos must adopt the global method of using permanent family last names.

Every thing is in the name. In the western society, respect for the family names helped them to carry their way of life with them for generations. Today, European settlers in USA truck back their roots because of their family last names.

Before the introduction of Christianity and Islam, Oromos used to have Oromo names only. Religions have played a big role in changing Oromo names to foreign names. Colonization has also played a great role in diminishing Oromo names. Colonizers change the names and cultures of colonized peoples to destroy the identity of the colonized people. People without identity do not have self respect and self pride. This leads to the destruction of nationalism.

When two Oromos, who do not know each other meet, it takes few minutes to know each other and create trust relationships, if they both have Oromo names. Today, Oromo nationalism is developing and young people are giving their children Oromo names regardless of their religious backgrounds and political affiliations. Today, the current Oromo generation has started naming young children by Oromo names with specific meanings and interpretation. Both in Oromia and in Diaspora, names such as Kulani, Iddoshe, Siddisee, Bekkaa, Siifan, Ana'ol, Keebekii, Gemechis, Waaqaaraa, etc. are becoming very popular. This trend has to go beyond restoring first names and extend to the level of adopting permanent Oromo family last names.

Prior to the Ethiopian colonization, common Oromo names such as Ayyaanaa, Gammaddaa, Solan, Abbaa Magaal, Faayisaa, Daachasaa, Dambal, Qaanno, Jillo, Dagaagaa, Waaqumaa, Waaqoo, Waaqtolee, waaqgaarii, Toleeraa, Kennasaa, Dhaabasaa, Magarsaa, Araarsaa...etc were very popular family names in the Oromo society. Successive Ethiopian governments first

made the Oromo language an illegal language and step by step changed most of Oromo names to the colonizers' names.

## **Historical Backgrounds**

Names are important. They help define an individual's identity, both within the family unit and within the community. Sometimes a person's name has its origin in the family. Sometimes the name has religious significance. The name may also have an ethnic origin or connotation. And in still other cases, a child's name sometimes commemorates someone outside the family, even a public figure. Let's explore each of these instances.

Perhaps the most prevalent name conventions are with regard to a family. In some families, in some cultures, and/or in some locales, tradition dictates that children be named for members of past generations. Surnames in some Scandinavian countries are thus indicative of a child's parentage. The Swedish name Carl Johansson, for example, would indicate that Carl is the "son of Johann," while the name Ingrid Hendricksdotter would indicate that Ingrid is the daughter (dotter) of Hendricks. Differences in surname spellings in Scandinavia can indicate country of origin. The -son ending is typically Swedish, while -sen is usually Norwegian or Danish. Hence, the difference between the surnames Jenson and Jensen can be seen.

A surname, also known as a last name or family name, is a fixed name shared in common with the members of a family and is passed down from generation to generation.

The use of a surname is relatively new in history and was adopted in order to legally distinguish two individuals with the same first name. At first, these last names were not passed down to the next generation. Today it passes from one generation to the next generation.

The Chinese were among the very first cultures to adopt the use of hereditary surnames about 5000 years ago. In Europe, surnames weren't used until the 10th or 11th centuries AD in Venice. Gradually throughout Europe, all nobility and gentry adopted surnames until eventually surnames were used by all Europeans of all classes.

What does last name mean? For people who have last names it could tell them about the meaning of their last name, where their family lived, what they did, or how they looked. Surnames may answer some of these questions about their ancestors from many hundreds of years ago.

Surnames were generally derived from one of four sources:

1) From the first name of a father

Examples:

Peters - son of Peter (English, German)

Peterson - son of Peter (Swedish)

Petersen - son of Peter (Danish)

2) From nearby locality or place.

Examples:

KirkPatrick - Church (kirk) of St. Patrick

Cliff - steep hill

Fairholm - the fair island

Ashley - field surrounded by ash trees

3) From occupation or social status.

Examples:

Cooper - barrel maker

Wagner or Waggoner - wagon maker

Knight - knighthood conferred by the king

Smith - blacksmith

4) From nicknames describing person or personality.

Examples:

Reid - red, ruddy complexion or red hair

Small - Body size

Armstrong - strong arms

Sharpe - sharp, smart

Primitive personal names originated soon after the invention of spoken language, in the unrecorded ages proceeding modern history. For thousands of years, first or given names, were the only designations that men and women bore; and at the dawn of recorded historic times, when the world was less crowded than it is today and every man knew his neighbors, one title of address was sufficient. Gradually, with the passing centuries and the increasing complexity of civilized society, a need arose for more specific designations. While the roots of our system of family names may be traced back to early civilized times, actually the hereditary surnames, as we know them today, dates scarcely more than nine hundred years ago. True surnames, in the sense of hereditary appellations, date in England from about the year 1000.

By the end of the 12th century hereditary names had become common in England. But even as late as 1465 they were not universal. During the reign of Edward V a law was passed to compel certain Irish to adopt surnames as a method to track and control them more.

When Napoleon conquered the Dutch people, he ordered them to adopt the family names system and put numbers on their homes. They numbered their homes and took funny last names, thinking that when they get liberated they will go back to their old ways of life. The French left Holland, but the funny last names remained with them for ever. Most of them took the name of their villages as their last names. They called themselves I am from this village, I am from that village. For example, from Amsterdam was "VAN Amsterdam". If you see a person with a last name starting with "VAN" you should know that the person is originally from Holland, and the name is a Dutch name.

In the United States a greater variety of family names exists than anywhere else in the world. Surnames of every religion, race and nation are represented. While a substantial number are of English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, and western European origin, brought to this country by scions of families that had borne these names for generations prior to emigration, many others have come from central and southern Europe and the Slavic countries, where the use of surnames is generally a more recently established practice. Some families had no fixed surname until after arrival in America; and in other cases emigrants from continental Europe or their descendants have translated or otherwise modified their names.

Those Americans who possess old and honored names - who trace their surnames back to sturdy immigrant ancestors, or beyond, across the seas and into the mists of antiquity - may be rightfully proud of their heritage. While the name, in its origin, may seem ingenious, humble, surprising, or as a matter-of-fact, its significance today lies not in a literal interpretation of its initial meaning but in many things that have happened to it since it first came into use. In the beginning it was a label to distinguish one John from his neighbor, John who lived across the field. But soon it established itself as part of the bearer's individuality; and as it passed to his children, his children's children, and their children, it became the symbol not of one man but of a family and all that family stood for. Handed down from generation to generation, a surname grew inseparably associated with the achievement, the tradition, and the prestige of the family. Like the coat of arms - that vivid symbolization of the name which warrior ancestors bore in battle - the name itself has become a badge of family honor. It has become the "good name" to be proud of and to protect as one's most treasured possession.

#### The Need for Having a Permanent Oromo Family Name

Except in a very limited part of the world like in Ethiopia and Oromia, the rest of the world has adopted the use of a family name. Therefore, adopting the family name is a necessity for the Oromo nation. Some of the benefits of having a family last names are:

1. To maintain Oromo family chronology
2. To develop Orommummaa
3. To maintain Oromo self identity
4. To track Oromo population
5. To develop Oromo culture, language and economy.

# Understanding Iodine Deficiency and its Public Health Implications in Oromia

***Begna Dugassa***

## **Abstract**

Oromia and surrounding areas are located in an iodine deficient region. Iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) is an easily preventable nutritional problem. In Oromia, IDD results from complex social and environmental conditions in which the Oromo people live. First, environmental degradation and soil erosion leach iodine from the topsoil. Second, colonial power relations have impoverished the Oromo people and as a result the ability to consume iodine rich foods has been gradually eroded. Because of impoverishment, the Oromo people are dependent on foods that are known to be goitrogenic- affects iodine metabolism/ synthesis of thyroid hormones. Third, Oromia is intensively farmed and fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides are massively used; this has resulted in the pollution of rivers and lakes with organic chemicals known to be goitrogenic. Those organic chemical pollutants have created favorable conditions for the growth of biological agents known to be goitrogenic. Fourth, in some parts of Oromia, soil is naturally high in fluorine, which is known to be goiterogenic. Fifth, several micronutrient deficiencies coexist in the poor diets thus iodine deficiency is further aggravated by malnutrition. Finally, the Ethiopian government's denial of the Oromo people's right to determine their social, economic, political and cultural affairs prevented the Oromo people from solving this and other public health problems.

## **Introduction**

It is well known that if the food we eat is nutritionally unbalanced and either has an excess or a deficit in one or more of the nutrients, it lead to less than optimal health. The health disorders that occur when the dietary iodine intake is below physiologically required levels are known as Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDDs) (Boyages, 1993). Globally, IDD is the most known of the nutritional deficiency disorders. Only after 1922, as a prophylactic measure many countries started to iodize their salts. Such prophylactic action is used to reduce or totally prevent the prevalence of IDD in Western countries (Andersson et. al, 2003 and Allen et. al, 2006). However, after the links between cardiovascular diseases and consumption of salt had been established and the public health education started to encourage the reduction of the consumption of salt, IDDs began to manifest among Western vegetarians<sup>2</sup>.

Iodine is an element that belongs to the Halogen<sup>3</sup> Family of elements, a group of highly reactive nonmetals: fluorine, chlorine, bromine, and astatine. Iodine is abundantly found in some parts of the world, and is critically insufficient in other parts. The iodine composition of soil decreases with the increase in the distance from the sea. Iodine is soluble in water; thus, the

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<sup>2</sup> Second to seafoods, the most important sources of iodine are meat, egg, and milk. Vegetarians are vulnerable to iodine deficiency and some vegetables contain goiterogenic substances.

<sup>3</sup> The word Halogen comes from two Greece words – halo - sea salt and gen- birth or generate.

inadequate amount of iodine present in the crust of the earth can be gradually leached away by soil erosion and carried out to the sea (Dunn and et. al, 1986). At the same time, the topsoil can gradually be enriched with iodine from the rain and snow. However, if the land is deforested, the erosion may wash off iodine and further deplete its presence in the soil.

Iodine is an essential micronutrient to all mammals. The best sources of dietary iodine are seafoods. Dietary iodine is absorbed throughout our gastrointestinal tract. The human body contains about 15-20 mg of iodine of which about 70-80% is in the thyroid gland (DAA, 2006). The known physiological functions of iodine are exclusively linked to thyroid hormones. Inadequate iodine intake is closely related to lowered thyroid function, which results in IDD (Dunn and et. al, 1986). If dietary iodine intake is below physiologically required levels the thyroid hormone cannot be synthesized to a sufficient level. As thyroid hormone is involved in the regulation of various enzymes and metabolic processes, iodine deficiency impairs several physiological functions.

Since the 1974 world Food Conference, held in Rome, iodine deficiency disorder has been seen as a global health issue. Health planners in global health have recognized that the elimination of iodine deficiency is an attainable goal. Indeed, iodine deficiency is an easily preventable nutritional problem (de Benoist, et al, 2004; Allen et. al, 2006). However, in Oromia it remains one of the major public health problems. For example, the UNICEF's Nutrition and Food Security section in Ethiopia, estimated that only 4 percent of the people in Ethiopia consume iodized salt – which is among the lowest in the world. Describing the magnitude of the IDD in Oromia the head of UNICEF in Ethiopia said, “I have never seen any other country like this” (Powell, 2008

Are the IDDs a new problem or a long-standing public health issue in Oromia? What was the magnitude of IDDs in the past? Why has magnitude of the IDD escalated? What are the pathological social conditions that are contributing to the problem? Answering these and other questions requires an understanding of the social and environmental conditions that have contributed to IDDs in Oromia. In the first part of the paper, I briefly introduce the social conditions in which the Oromo people live. The second part examines the social processes that have contributed to increase the prevalence of IDD. The third part examines the ways that political decision-making impacted to IDD. In the last part I give a discussion and offer conclusions.

### **The Learning Objectives**

Research is a critical part of all efforts aimed at improving social wellbeing and preventing nutritional deficiencies. Advancement in public health depends on the systematic critical review and study of current practices with a view to doing things better in the future. The major objective of this paper is to take a close look at the social conditions that have contributed to Iodine Deficiency in Oromia. The second objective is facilitating the culture of nutrition promotion; raising awareness in iodine deficiency and its public health implications.



## Methods and Theoretical Frameworks

In this paper, using ecological theoretical model (social and natural environment) I take a close look at what has contributed to the increase of IDD levels in Oromia. In this paper, I use both primary and secondary data..

### **The Social and political Conditions under which the Oromo people live**

If disease is an expression of individual life under unfavorable circumstances, then epidemics must be indicative of mass disturbances. Virchow (cited in Rachlis, 2004).

**As Virchow, the father of social medicine stated above, diseases are the manifestation of the social conditions in which the people live. According to Virchow epidemics are the indicator of the social conditions in which the people live and demonstrate whether or not there are social turbulences or injustices. Virchow's words go beyond the biological and biochemical indicators of IDD and trace the pathological social conditions that have exacerbated the problem. If we successfully identify the social ills that have contributed to the problem we can effectively prevent the problem. If we succeed in bringing social changes not only can we prevent the clinical symptoms but also attain the highest attainable social wellbeing.**

**Despite promising beginnings with the work of Virchow and others most of literatures in contemporary public give emphasis to clinical aspect of health rather than the social ills that predisposed the people to the diseases. In Oromia, IDD cannot be fully analyzed without discussing the colonial power relations under which the Oromo people live. To understand iodine deficiency in Oromia it is important to critically look at the colonial social structure and connect all of the dots and look at the patterns. Connecting these dots can inform researchers and policy makers of the ways that the colonial power relations limits the ability of Oromo people to choose in life diminishes their ability to solve their problems and increases the risk for iodine deficiency.**

The historical analyses suggest that as it was the case for many African people, the 1884/85 conferences held in Berlin, in which Europeans divided Africa, changed the status of the Oromo people (Holcom & Ibsa, 1990). Following this crucial event, European colonizers endorsed the Abyssinia colonial agenda. This phenomenon changed the fate of Oromo people from being an independent state to being colonial subjects. During the process of colonization, and consolidation of power the Oromo population was reduced from ten to five million (Salviac/Kanno 1901/2005). The colonial army killed many Oromos; others died of famine as the entire society was destabilized, and others died as a result of epidemics such as smallpox<sup>4</sup>, cholera (Blundell, 1900)) and Spanish Flu (Birri, 1995). The rest were sold into slavery (Bulcha, 2002) and those who remained on the land were reduced to the status of serfs (Leta, 1999).

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<sup>4</sup> Smallpox has been deliberately introduced to incapacitate the Oromo resistance forces (see also, Dugassa, 2003).

The colonial power relations between Abyssinian and Oromia created a condition in which the Abyssinians exploited the human and natural resources of the Oromo people and made the Oromo people live in poverty (Dugassa, 2008). As with many other European colonizers, the Abyssinians described their colonial agenda as a Maqnaat ('civilizing') mission. Given that the colonial power affected the socio-economic status, health status for the Oromo people colonialism is more like a 'disease'.

Most of the Oromo people are agro-pastoralists; a majority of them are settled in highland and semi-highland regions of the Horn of Africa. The Oromo oral history suggests that in the past, salt was one of the highly valuable commodities. Oromia and surrounding regions are naturally deficient in iodine; thus, IDD is a longstanding public health problem. Indeed currently in Oromia 95 percent of the people have no access to iodized salt and more than 75 percent of them have no access to clean water (UNICEF, 2005). Researchers in the sociology of language suggest that people name events based on their long-term observations. If they named the phenomena or event then they had experienced it. In the Oromo language goiter is known as Kulkuula Morma (bump of neck) or Quufa Morma (satiated neck). Naming the problem suggests that the Oromos have long known this health issue.

For this paper I interviewed eight Oromo individuals from different regions of Oromia. When I asked each of them separately if they had noticed anyone in their community with goiter, six of them said "yes". One of my informants said "I noticed it in my adulthood among the young". The other person said he did not observe it at all in his community. When I asked them how the Oromo people explain what causes goiter, some of the mentioned reasons were drinking bad water, eating corn, poverty and curses. One of my informants quoted the Oromo oral story that says "Kulkuuli morma fi kulkuula garaa faana dhufnaan deega" which can be translated as the bump at the neck (goiter) is followed by the bump of belly (pregnancy), it is a sign of poverty. This oral story suggests that although the Oromo people did not specifically link goiter with iodine deficiency, they noticed that the prevalence of goiter is higher among poor pregnant women.

Although the data are not complete, a few published documents suggest that the prevalence of goiter varies from one part of Oromia to the other. For example, in 1987-88 the prevalence of goiter in Salale region was as little as 4 to 7 percent. In the same year in Arsi-Huruta and Bale-Adaba and surrounding areas the prevalence of goiter was recorded to be 36 and 39 percent respectively (WHO, 2006). The high prevalence of IDD is also recorded in Rift Valley areas. However, in Eastern Oromia it was 19 percent. The high prevalence IDD in Rift Valley areas can be explained by high concentrations of fluorine in the soil. Several studies conducted in China (Hong et. Al, 2008) suggest that in areas where the iodine deficiency is endemic, if the concentration of fluorine in water is higher than the recommended level the IDD is further aggravated.

Twelve years after the data was collected in northern, central and eastern parts of Oromia, a similar survey was conducted in Western Oromia. The 2000/02 surveys found that the prevalence of goiter was as high as 84 % for women, 64 % for men and 78 % for school children (Ney-Bruin, Mommers and Mommers; 2000 & 2002). These data clearly indicate that in Oromia the prevalence of IDD is unacceptably high. Differences in the prevalence of IDD might be explained in two possible ways. The first explanation is simply that the prevalence of IDD has increased in the given time interval. Indeed, in 1986 80 % of salt was iodized (MOH &

UNICEF, 1993). However, from 1999 on only 5 percent of the salts available in Ethiopia were iodized. If a similar survey were conducted today, the prevalence of IDD would have increased in all these regions. The second possible explanation is that the iodine content of soil changes as the distance from the sea increases. Given that Western Oromia is located far from the sea, it is not surprising to find a high prevalence of IDD in Western Oromia as compared to the Eastern and central regions.

As it is demonstrated in figure 1, as it is elsewhere in Oromia the prevalence of IDD is more common in women and young girls than it is in men and young boys. As the boys' age increases, the IDD level slightly decreases; however, when it comes to young girls as they get to puberty and motherhood the prevalence of IDD increases.

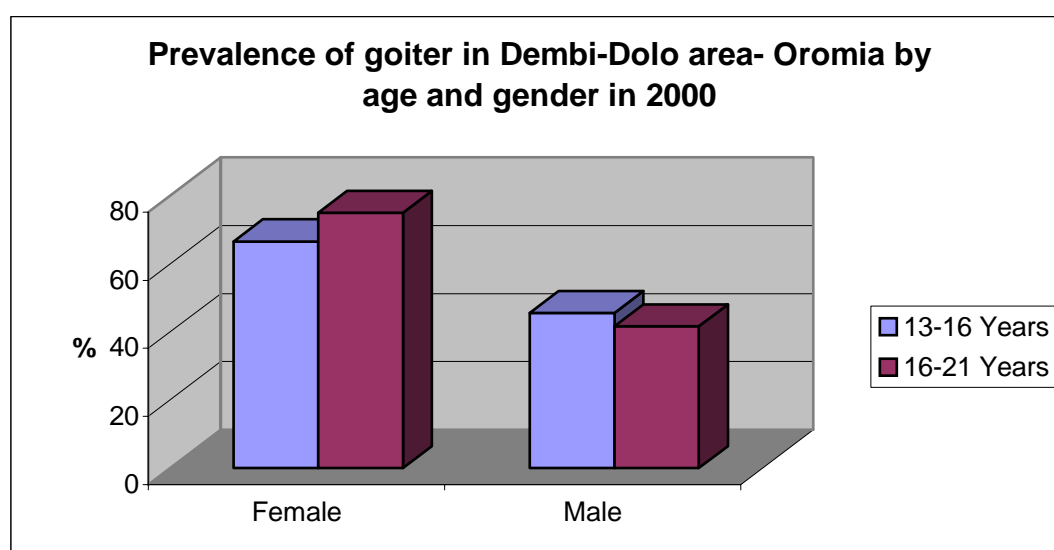


Figure 1. The prevalence of goiter in Dembi-Dolo area- by age and gender in 2000<sup>5</sup>.

World Health Organization (2006)

### Iodine Deficiency Disorders

As mentioned above when iodine intake is below the recommended levels, the thyroid may no longer be able to synthesize adequate amounts of thyroid hormones. The low level of thyroid hormones in the blood is known as hypothyroidism. Hypothyroidism is responsible for damages to the development of brain, other organs and tissues as well as disturbances to several metabolic functions. The disorder resulted from insufficient dietary iodine intake is generally known as IDD. IDD consist of a wide spectrum of health problems, which include: mental retardation, impaired physical development, increased prenatal and infant mortality, cretinism, goiter, and deaf mutism (Semba and Delange, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> The graph is based on the data produced by the World Health Organization (2006)

IDD is one of the well known, widespread and easily preventable nutritional deficiency disorders. As far as the historical record goes, iodine deficiency has been recognized in China since 2700 BC. The ancient Chinese used seaweed to treat goiter, however, the mechanism by which seaweed helped to relieve goiter was unknown. Although in the 1820s iodine was identified in seaweed, until 1846 the links between iodine deficiency and goiter were not recognized. Later on, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century iodine was identified in the thyroid gland and this finding hinted at the link between iodine deficiency and thyroid. For the first time, in 1848, the Italian king Carlo Alberto commissioned a goiter survey and found 370,403 people with goiter and 120,000 cretins or idiots.

In 1831- Iodization of salt as a means of prophylaxis against goiter was suggested. The first experiment in goiter prophylaxis was carried out in France with salt of potassium iodide =100 mg potassium iodide daily but it failed due to its toxic symptoms (Stanbury and Hetzel, 1980). As the concentration of iodine used was higher than the quantity that humans can metabolize, the initial efforts to iodize salt failed. The first successful large scale experimental trial with iodine supplement was carried out in 1922 in the USA (Maberly, 1994; Anderson, 2003). Two years later for the first time iodized salt was used in large-scale goiter prevention efforts in Michigan and in Switzerland (Anderson, 2003). Following the state of Michigan, many US states and other countries iodized their table salt and eliminated the IDD's (Maberly, 1994).

Dietary iodine is one of the nutrients that do not accumulate in body tissues. This necessitates a steady lifetime supplement of iodine (Ingenbleek et al. 1999). To apply the available knowledge and establish a system that fortifies table salt and delivers it to the entire population requires the will of the state. Health planners in global health recognize that the elimination of iodine deficiency is an attainable goal.

The global health effort to prevent iodine deficiency officially began in 1974. For the first time in 1974 in which Ethiopia participated, the World Food Conference held in Rome, recommended worldwide eradication of endemic goiter. In 1985, the World Food Council at its meeting in Mexico City passed a resolution urging all states to eliminate endemic goiter (Dunn et. al 1986). In 1990 the world submit for children urged for virtual elimination of iodine deficiency. It is in 1991, WHO and UNICEF recommended the need to end micronutrient malnutrition. Furthermore, in 1994 WHO and UNICEF recommended universal salt iodization. Although Ethiopia participated in those conferences the Ethiopian government did not take proper actions. Indeed the prevalence of goiter has increased from time to time. For example, in 1981 the prevalence of goiter was 26 percent and by 1986, 80 percent of salts were iodized. In 2005, the prevalence of goiter had jumped to 40 percent. In 2007 only 5 percent of salt were iodized. The deficiency of iodine accounted for 50,000 pre-natal deaths in Ethiopia ( ).

Recommended dietary intake<sup>6</sup> of iodine varies based on gender, age and physiological conditions. Lactating and pregnant women need slightly more iodine than men. This explains why the prevalence of iodine deficiency is higher among pregnant and lactating women than men. One teaspoon of iodized salt provides 150 micrograms of iodine. Iodized salt costs 2- 3 cents more per person per year.

**Table 1. Recommended Dietary Intake of Iodine**

Men	150 micrograms
Women	120 micrograms
During pregnancy	150 microgram
Lactating	170 microgram
Children	70-150 micrograms
Infants	50-60 micrograms

### **Social Conditions that have contributed to IDD in Oromia**

To discuss the social and environmental conditions that have played a role in the current iodine deficiency in Oromia it is important to bring into the light the sources of dietary iodine, conditions that affect the bioavailability of iodine and the factors that interfere with thyroid hormone production and utilization known as goitrogens<sup>7</sup>. If we clearly understand these conditions we can take a close look their presence and absence in Oromia.

### **Sources of Dietary Iodine**

The major sources of iodine are sea foods (fish, shellfish, sea weed and sea meal custard). Although it is inadequate, the second major sources of iodine are meat, eggs, milk and milk products. Fruits, vegetables, nuts and cereals grown in iodine-rich soils contain little or no iodine. Drinking water and atmospheric air contain trace amounts of iodine. Salts harvested from the sea contain very little iodine. In general, foods of animal origin, especially fish, contain more iodine than foods from plant sources. The iodine content of food is significantly lost with cooking. For example boiling meat reduces the iodine content by 58% (Koutras, 1986). It is clear that if sufficient amounts of iodine do not come from foods the salt needs to be iodized.

### **The Role of Environmental Factors in Iodine Deficiency Iodine Cycle**

Iodine is present in rocks and topsoil in the form of iodine salts. Iodine is soluble in water and it can be taken up by plants and enters the food chains or/and leached out of soil to the sea. By nature and in the salt extraction process when the seawater is heated, it lose, parts of the iodine,

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<sup>6</sup> Recommended Dietary Intake refers to the amount of specific nutrients required in one day for good health.

<sup>7</sup> Goitrogens are foods or food components that interfere with thyroid hormone production or utilization. It also known that under normal conditions some foods or food components affect the bioavailability of iodine in food.

thus, salt harvested from the sea can only provide a small portion of the iodine needed. The seawater is rich in iodine. According to Koutras (1986) ocean water contains an average 5µg iodine/L. Oceanic evaporation permits iodine into the atmosphere. Atmospheric air contains 0.7µg iodine/L. Iodine evaporates from ocean water, is concentrated in rain/snow, and fall back to the earth, and replenishes the soil. It is estimated that about 400,000 tones of iodine escapes from the ocean's surface every year (Dunn and et. al, 1986). Through such mechanism, iodine deficient regions are supplied with iodine. However, flooding and erosion washes off iodine from the surface of the earth to the river and then to the sea. In deforested regions erosion further impoverishes the iodine content of the soil and further aggravates iodine deficiency.

Although through rain and snow iodine from the atmosphere fall back to the earth, where it replenishes the soil (Dunn, 1986) such a mechanism cannot fully balance the iodine deficiency. The iodine contents of fruits, vegetables, nuts and cereals are dependent on the iodine content of the soil. The concentration of iodine is higher in young than in old vegetables of the same species. Unlike many nutrients a sufficient amount of iodine can be found naturally in terrestrial foods. This makes clear that the people who are at risk of iodine deficiency are those who live in mountainous area, have little access to marine products, and have no access-iodized salt and those who do not consume eggs, meat and milk.

The colonial power relations under which the Oromo people live has implications for deforestation. After the Oromo people lost their sovereignty, they also lost their way of life, such as their 'nagaa' peace and 'fayya' health. They also lost their land and other resources that are essential for sustenance of their nagaa and fayya. The social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental as well as health affairs of the Oromo people are determined by the Abyssinians. Abyssinian interests are driven by the need to control and exploit the Oromo people and they are not interested to improve the social wellbeing of Oromo people.

The Oromo worldview advocates caring for the environment. For example, according to the teachings of the Oromo traditional religion Waqefaata, Waaqa Guracha (Black God), that can also referred as Abba Uuma (father creator) or Ayyo Uume (mother creator) created all living things in lakes. Therefore, for Thanksgiving Day and for the pilgrimage, the followers of this religion go to lakes and rivers. Hence, for the Oromo people lakes and rivers are sacred sites. In addition, as Waqefaata teaching states "Waaqni nama eega, namnimmoo naannoo eega"(Daniya, 2007) which can be translated, as God would care for human beings and human beings need to care for the environment. If the Oromo people were empowered to handle their affair they would not allow the pollution of rivers, lakes and the deforestation of their lands.

For the Abyssinians and the Europeans, the Oromo view about the environment is seen as paganism and thus, condemned. For example, the Haile Selassie government's policies of 1920 - 1974 were driven by two major motives: taking the Oromo land and the assimilation of the Oromo people. In the given time period the Oromo people lost 70 percent of their farmlands to the Abyssinians. To prove that the Oromo traditional religion was wrong, the Ethiopian government deliberately burned the Oromo sacred sites and built their churches there (Dugassa, 2008).

During the Derge regime (1974 to 1991), in order to feed its half a million army, the Ethiopian government expanded state farms, cut and burned thousands of hectares of natural forests. In addition, in the name of fighting famine, the regime brought thousands of Abyssinians from the north and settled them in Oromia. For the settlement project thousands of hectares of natural forests of Oromia were cut and burned. Furthermore, in the villagization program, when the Ethiopian government forced the Oromo people to abandon their former scattered villages and settled them in town-like villages unwittingly let the destruction of natural forests. This all contributed to deforestation in Oromia (Dugassa, 2008).

The problem does not end there. Under the TPLF regime, 1991 to the present the natural forests of Oromia are seen as a threat to the Ethiopian government. Under the TPLF government, human rights violations further escalated. Escaping from torture and killings many Oromo activists escaped to the forests. The forests provided them with shelter and nourishment. To deny these activists shelter and food TPLF deliberately burned natural forests (Dugassa, 2008). Furthermore, the Ethiopian regimes kept the Oromo people in poverty. In its turn, poverty conditioned the Oromo people to cut trees and forests to expand their farmlands. These all have contributed to the deforestation of Oromia and grossly contributed to the IDD.

### **Goiterogens**

Although the relation of iodine deficiency to endemic goiter is well established, other factors known as goiterogens are also involved. The word goiterogens is derived from the word goiter –enlargement of the thyroid glands and gen (birth or generate). Goiterogens could be social, biological, geo-chemical compounds that contribute to iodine deficiencies. Some goiterogens are found in food and drink and they are known to either suppress the synthesis of the thyroid hormones (glucosinolates) or interfere the uptake of iodine (thiocyanates). It is also known that there are socio-economic conditions that interfere with thyroid hormone production or utilization of iodine, and cause the enlargement of the thyroid.

Literatures on public health nutrition suggest that under normal conditions some foods or food components affect the bioavailability of iodine. For example, some foods contain chemicals that are known to inhibit the uptake of iodine into thyroid- thiocyanates and isothiocyanates (Boyages, 2008). Other food groups that have the potent goitrogens are those that contain chemicals known as cyanogenic or glucosides. These food groups include: Cassava, maize, sweet potatoes, lima beans and pearl millet (Boyages, 2008). Soya flour has been known to inhibit iodine absorption (Food Nutrition Board & Institute of Medicine, 2000). At risk groups are those who are dependent on such foods. However, those who consume these foods in moderation might not be at risk.

### **Geological, Environmental and Chemical Goitrogens**

Chemical goitrogens are certain chemicals found in nature or come from chemical pollutants, which have the capability to alter how the human body absorbs and metabolize iodine. The synthesis of the thyroid hormones are inhibited by goitrogenic chemical compounds, which reduce the output of thyroid hormones, thereby causing, through negative feedback, an increased output of thyrotropin and hence an enlargement of the thyroid gland (Gaitan, 2000).

Chemical pollutants in water supplies such as bromine, chlorine, fluoride as well as nitrogen compounds such as ammonium are known to be chemical goitrogens (Meletis and Zabriskie, 2007). Water from shallow and polluted streams and wells may contain humic substances that block thyroidal iodination (Food Nutrition Board & Institute of Medicine, 2000). The soil composition of rift valley region of Oromia is known to be high in fluorine and the Oromo people in that area might be at greater risk to IDD

Table. 2. List of Goiterogenic Foods adopted from Gaitan, 2000; Boyages, 2008; (Food Nutrition Board & Institute of Medicine, 2000).

Goiterogenic Foods	Goiterogenic Vegetables	Goiterogenic Vegetables
Soybeans	Horseradish	Horseradish
Pine nuts	Bok choy	Kai-lan (Chinese broccoli)
Peanuts	Broccoli	Kale
Millet	Brussels sprouts	Kohlrabi
Maize	Cabbage	Mizuna
Strawberries	Canola	Mustard green
Pears	Cassava	Rapeseed
Peaches	Cauliflower	Rapini
Spinach	Chinese cabbage	Rutabagas
Bamboo shoots	Choy sum	Tatsoi
Radishes	Collard green	Turnips

### Biological Goiterogens

Biological goiterogens are biological agents in water that can get into food chains or water supplies. These biological agents and their byproducts are known to alter the ways the human body absorbs and metabolizes iodine (Gaitan, 2000). For example, it is known that nitrogen fertilizers can leached into nearby rivers and lakes and act as nutrients for these biological agents and create favorable conditions for the growth and development of these biological goitrogens. In countries like Oromia, where the availability of clean water is limited, biological goitrogens contribute a major role to IDD. It is well known that certain infections and the health status of individuals and groups are known altering iodine metabolism and to iodine deficiency.

### Social Goitrogens

The social and economic conditions such as poverty expose people to depend on goitrogenic foods and further aggravate the iodine deficiency problem. The modern, efficient and reliable ways to alter or eliminating iodine deficiency is through fortifying table salt (Mannar et.al. 1995). The inability of the Oromo people to decide on their socio-economic and political affairs contributed a major role to the growth of IDDs. For example, poverty in general, energy-protein malnutrition, iron and vitamin A and zinc deficiency and substantial increases in the consumption of goitrogenic foods, drinking polluted water and decreased consumption of meat,



eggs, milk and milk products are known to be goiterogenic. People who do not established food security or the ability to diversify their diets with adequate amounts of fruits, vegetables and foods of animal-sources that contain large amounts of micronutrients, nutritional deficiencies are likely victim of iodine deficiency. In addition, some foods and food components are known to increase the bioavailability of iodine and the utilization of thyroid hormones. For example, the foods that play such functions are avocados, coconut and saturated fats. However, these foods are expensive for most of the Oromo people.

### **Border Dispute and Trade War**

The Ethiopian state was formed by the forceful incorporation of different groups of people. After 30 years of war, in 1991 Eritrea gained its independence and this made Ethiopia a landlocked country. A few years later, the border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia started and this led to the 1998/2000 bloody war. Until the border dispute began, Ethiopia got all of its salt from Eritrea. Indeed, when Eritrea was still part of Ethiopia, in order to prevent iodine deficiency the Ethiopian government started to iodize salt. For a few years, the people in Ethiopia consumed iodized salt. However, when the war started the iodized salt supply totally stopped.

When the war started the Ethiopian government started importing salt from Djibouti and Saudi Arabia. Salt from Saudi-Arabia was expensive compared to Djibouti. As a result the Ethiopian government supported the Djibouti's company increase of its salt production. Simultaneously, in order to be self-sufficient the Ethiopian government started to exploit salt deposits from the Afar region. This conditioned most of the people in Ethiopia to change their consumption of iodized salt several times within a decade. The first shift was from un-iodized salt to iodized. The second was from iodized to the un-iodine salt. The experience of Guatemala, where at one point the salt was iodized and then discontinued, suggests that once people began to consume iodized salt they quickly gained health benefits (Michael et. Al. 2004). However, when they lost iodized salt, they severely suffered from the deficiency. It seems that discontinuing consumption of iodine might escalate the severity of the iodine deficiency. Here, the physiology of adaptation to iodine deficiency comes into play.

Iodizing salt requires no more than the will of the state to implement it. For example, the International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD) freely provided to the Ethiopian government the technology needed and trained technicians who can do the job (Personal communication). However, the Ethiopian government, who are an illegitimate power in Oromia, is not accountable to the people and neglected the health needs of the Oromo people. Currently, Ethiopia is harvesting salt from the Afar region and the local Afar people predominantly own those companies involved in production. If the Ethiopian government passed on the technology that they got from the ICCIDD to these companies, the TPLF would lose control over a multimillion-dollar business. To create conditions where TPLF -sponsored companies would take over them the need to iodize salt has been delayed.

### **Public Health Impacts of Iodine Deficiency**

Before it manifested clinically, micronutrient deficiencies alter physiological functions. Given that IDD affects the poor and the marginalized, very often the true consequences of diets

deficient in multiple micronutrients are underestimated. The public health impacts of iodine deficiency can be measured by the magnitude of the problem and its health consequences. To make an appropriate impact analysis, one needs to understand the physiological role of iodine. As mentioned above iodine is an essential micronutrient for all mammals and vital for the synthesis of thyroid hormones. Thyroid hormone is involved in the metabolism of protein, carbohydrate, fat, minerals and vitamins and, thus, iodine deficiency affects differentiation organs and systems (Stewart and et. al (2003).

The physiologic functions of thyroid hormones can be categorized into growth development and control of the metabolic process. An inadequate amount of thyroid hormones affects the development of the brain and nervous system of the fetus from the 15<sup>th</sup> week of gestation to the age of three years. Thyroid hormones are involved in the regulation of various enzymatic activities and metabolic processes (Food and Nutrition Board and Institute of Medicine, 2000). These activities include carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamins and mineral metabolism (FAO, retrieved, 2008). Thyroid hormone is particularly important in the regulation and differentiation of cells, tissues and organs during early fetus development (Martin et.al, 1983). These hormones also play a central role in regulation of metabolic rates in the body; thus, the deficiency of this hormone affects the growth and physical development of several organs, systems, tissues and cells.

Hormone thyroxin regulates the rate of oxygen consumption, body temperature, irritability, energy production, mental and physical vigor and body weight (Martin et.al, 1983). If there is deficiency in dietary iodine, the rate of energy production would be sluggish and this results in unnecessary body weight gain. For example, in the former USSR,  $Mg(ClO_4)_2$  which is known to metabolically compete with iodine was fed to beef cattle and broilers<sup>8</sup> to improve the growth rate (Belov, 1984).

Given that iodine is an essential component of the thyroid hormones insufficient iodine affects different parts of our body such as muscle, heart, liver, kidney, and most importantly the developing brain and nervous system. Inadequate iodine and thyroid hormones production adversely affects these tissues, resulting in several diseases (Mannar et.al., 1995). For example, Mannar and colleagues (1995) listed the consequences of iodine deficiency as a) mental retardation, b) impaired development of the nervous system, c) goiter, d) physical sluggishness, e) growth retardation, f) reproductive failure, g) increased childhood mortality; and h) economic stagnation.

Low amounts of hormone thyroxin ( $T_4$ , one of the two thyroid hormones) in the blood, resulting from the lack of dietary iodine, gives rise to high levels of thyroid stimulating hormone, which stimulates the thyroid gland to increase several biochemical processes. This results in cellular growth and proliferation in the characteristic swelling or hyperplasia of the

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<sup>8</sup>For my M.Sc. Thesis research experiment, I randomly sorted 500 male five-day old chicks into five separate groups and fed them experimental ration for 60 days. Group I (the controlled group) were fed the standard ration. Group II and IV the ration mixed with  $Mg(ClO_4)_2$ . Group III and IV were fed high-energy rations. At the age of 40 days group II and IV gained about 10 percent more weight than the control group, but they did not maintain the weight gain to the end. We also observed the delay in their sexual maturity in-group II and IV.

thyroid gland, or goiter. Goiter is said to be endemic when the prevalence in a population is > 5%, and in most cases goiter can be treated with iodine supplementation. If goiter is untreated for around five years, however, iodine supplementation or thyroxin treatment may not reduce the size of the thyroid gland because the thyroid is permanently damaged.

*Iodine deficiency is one of the leading causes of preventable mental retardation. Typically iodine deficiency causes reductions in Intelligence quotient (IQ) of 10 to 15 points. Indeed, it has been speculated that deficiency of iodine may be a possible factor in observed differences in IQ between ethnic and racial groups. In addition, iodine deficiency causes cretinism. Reduction in IQ affects the educability and the productivity of the person. In the social conditions in which the Oromo people live, reduction in educability and productivity is like salt in a wound. .*

Cretinism is associated with iodine deficiency and goiter, commonly characterized by mental deficiency, deaf-mutism, squint, disorders of stance and gait, stunted growth. There are two types of cretinism. The first one is Myxedematous cretinism and it is a disorder of skeletal growth, neurological development, hypothyroidism and thyroid atrophy and this occurs in regions where iodine deficiency overlaps with selenium. For example, in 1990 in Congo 65-85% of the population had goiter and 2-6% myxedematous cretinism (Coppinger and Alan (2001). The second one is Neurological cretinism, which is characterized by severe mental retardation, abnormalities in speech and hearing and neuromuscular disorder. Neurological cretinism occurs in many areas with very severe iodine deficiency with adequate or deficient selenium. Neurological cretinism affects less than 10% of those who were exposed to iodine deficiency (Ingenbleek et al. 1999).

## **Immunity**

The interaction between immunity and malnutrition is well documented. Better nutrition means stronger immune systems. Being an essential element in thyroid hormone, iodine deficiency is known to impair immunity. Indeed, among the signs of sub-clinical iodine deficiency is suppression of the immune system. According to Miller (2006) and Gershwin et.al (2004) the function of iodine includes enhancement of the immune system and the reduction of breast cancer. For example, Cobra and colleagues (1997) reported that in a double-blind study, infant survival significantly increased following oral iodine supplementation in Indonesia. The authors conclude that in populations at risk of iodine deficiency oral iodized oil supplementation reduces infant mortality (Carl et al, 2004). It also recorded that the benefits of physiologically required levels of iodine include enhancement of immune function and reducing the incidence of breast cancer (Miller, 2006). In countries like Oromia where the availability of clean water is practically very limited, health care is not sufficient, if iodine deficiency suppress immunity, it represents a significant public health threat.

## **Maternal Iodine Deficiency on The Fetus and Neonate**

Iodine deficiency is linked to reproductive failure (Dillon and Milliez, 2000) and an increase in neonatal mortality. Iodine deficiency during pregnancy results in abortion or stillbirth. In the

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<sup>9</sup> Intelligence quotient measures individual's intelligence as indicated by an intelligence test; the ratio of a person's mental age to analytical skills.

mother's womb, if a baby is not getting a steady supply of iodine the normal growth and development of the child would be affected. This underdevelopment of the organs, tissues and cells of the fetus has implication for the child and maternal death. Infertility and fetal wastage may compromise the women's quality of life and her role in the family and the community. If she produces a defective child, she will most likely be responsible for its long-term care, diverting her time and resources from other needs (Dunn and Delange, 2001). For example, Abuye and Berhane (2007) found that women with goitre experience more pregnancy failure than women without goitre and the reproductive failure is significantly higher in high goiter endemic areas. Ethiopia is one of the countries in the world where the child and maternal mortality is very high. Iodine deficiency is one of the conditions that contribute to child and maternal mortality. Prevention of iodine deficiency would help to reduce maternal and child mortality rates.

**Spectrum of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) adopted from (Allen, Lindsay; et. al, 2006; Mannar and Dunn, 1995; Stewart et.al. 2002, Anderson et. Al, 2003) and WHO,(1999)**

Fetus	Abortion Stillbirths Congenital anomaly Increased prenatal mortality Endemic Cretinism
Neonate	Neonatal goiter Impaired immunity Neonatal hypothyroidism Endemic mental retardation Increased susceptibility of the thyroid gland to nuclear radiation
Child and adolescent	Goiter Impaired mental function Impaired immunity Delayed sexual maturity Retarded physical development Spastic weakness Paralysis Increased susceptibility of the thyroid gland to nuclear radiation
Adult	Goiter with its complications Hypothyroidism Spastic weakness Dwarfism Paralysis Impaired immunity Impaired mental function Spontaneous hyperthyroidism Increased susceptibility of the thyroid gland to nuclear radiation
Societal	Decreased educatability and productivity Economic and social stagnation

## **Iodine Deficiency Farming and Malnutrition**

Iodine Deficiency Disorder affects all mammals. Farm animals such as swine, cattle, horses, sheep, goats, and poultry can suffer from iodine deficiency. In many cases iodine deficiency impairs the fertility of these animals, the survival of the newborns, their physical strength and even the enlargement of goiter can be observed. In animals, the major effects of iodine deficiency led to an increase in neonatal mortality and impairment in reproduction (Dunn and Delange, 2001). Oromo people are dependent on farm animals. Oxen are used to plough land. In the ongoing iodine deficiency if the Oromos lost their cattle they lose their source of food, income and the means to plough land. Therefore, iodine deficiency is further aggravating the poverty level and threatening the very survival of the Oromo people.

## **Discussions and Conclusions**

IDD is durable but an easily preventable nutritional deficiency problem in Oromia. Primarily IDD results from iodine deficiency in the soil. However, the social conditions in which the Oromo people live have further aggravated the problem. To free Oromia from poverty and malnutrition the colonial power relation need to uproot. As the Oromo saying goes “boofa mataa ajeesu” which can be literally translated as ‘you kill snakes by hitting hard to the head’, the negligence and being indifferent of the Ethiopian government to iodine deficiency in Oromia is like hitting hard to the head of Oromo people to silence and subjugate them.

Let me take you back to where I started. Since the 1880s, the Oromo people have been Abyssinian colonial subjects. Colonialism is violation of collective rights<sup>10</sup> of people. Colonial power relation has created unjust social structure and those structures overtly and covertly put the Oromo people in disadvantage position. Thus, in Oromia social and public health problems are intertwined with the colonial power relations. The effort to prevent iodine deficiency cannot achieve its desired goal if it is separated from other public health and nutrition programs such as food security, food production and the prevention of energy-protein deficiency as well as environmental health and colonial power relations. Success in the effort to iodine prevention come through combined efforts which include the technical experts who have the scientific knowledge in food production and the policy makers who possess the power and need the willingness to act in the interests of the public regarding public health interventions. This can be done if the Oromo people are empowered.

Public health is defined as “the science and art of promoting health and preventing disease” (WHO, 1998). Indeed public health functions on the understanding that health is a process that incorporates the engagement of social, economic, political and cultural affairs. Given that colonialism is the violation of social, economic, political and cultural rights it is an obstacle to the development of public health. Therefore, success in the elimination of IDD can only come through combined efforts of de-colonialism, social reform, social justice, regard for human

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<sup>10</sup> In the UN Charters, the principles of collective rights include the right to self-determination of people to their social, economic, political and cultural affairs and the prevention of genocide.

rights and scientific knowledge in food production, storage, food fortification and marketing. It is very important to realize that if the Oromo people are empowered to setup their own social, economic and public health policies without external pressures they can more efficiently address their needs.

If the Oromo people are empowered to change the social conditions in which the Oromo people live e.g., iodizing salt can eliminate the geologically conditioned iodine deficiency. For example, providing clean water, reducing consumption of goitrogenic foods and enhancing the consumption of diets rich in iodine or foods that facilitate the absorption of iodine- contributes significant role in the effort prevent IDD. For example, for centuries Switzerland have suffered from iodine deficiency, however, in early 1900 as they improved food production, guaranteed food security, clean water and generally improvement in the social status of the people the prevalence of IDD started to decline. After Switzerland started to iodize salt they fully prevented IDD. On the other hand Iran that has been iodizing salt for over two decades did not succeed to totally prevent IDD (Dabbaghmanesh et.al, 2008). The persistence of goiter in Iran was explained that the people, who are suffering from Iron and vitamin A, couldn't properly utilize iodine.

Knowledge is power and social policymaking is part of an exercise in knowledge and political power. Knowledge can be used to silence and take advantage of a specific group of people. Also knowledge can be used to advance the interests of people. In public health knowledge is used in raising awareness about the causes, and introducing preventive measures against IDD is empowering the members to take appropriate measures in prevention. It is well known that the environment has an impact on the cause and geographical distribution of human diseases. However, the impacts of ill environmental conditions can be mediated by improving social conditions in which the people live. The Oromo people need to realize that in Oromia, iodine deficiency is caused by the social and environmental conditions in which the Oromo people live. If the Oromo people are empowered to handle their affairs and are aware of the social conditions that put them at risk, they can make use of these understandings in setting up social policies to transform society and make efforts to bring social justice, stability, equity and prevent iodine deficiency.

The main strategy to prevent iodine deficiency is universal salt iodization, but sustainable elimination cannot be achieved if the Oromo people are not empowered on their affairs. Public health nutrition interventions aimed at preventing or correcting iodine deficiency can be expected to reduce mortality, memory loss and disability and substantively improve educability and productivity, especially in children. To achieve the maximum benefits, such interventions need to be done in conjunction with promotion of social justice and human rights.

There is no doubt that the genetic potential of individuals is impaired by iodine deficiency. Mental retardation affects the educability of the students and in its turn their productivity in their adulthood. Although one can provide in physiological dose of iodine with no side effects or toxicity or deficiency at the cost of 2-3 cents per person per year. Therefore, in Oromia iodine deficiency is simply the negligence or deliberate inaction of the Ethiopian state. The Ethiopian government should be accountable for its inaction. and the negligence.

The public health impacts of iodine deficiency vary from mental retardation, reproductive failure, impaired immunity with implications' for infant mortality, under development of skeletal muscles and several other organs and tissues. Iodine deficiency is also implicated in several metabolic disorders. In countries like Oromia where access to clean water and sanitary conditions are very limited, impaired immunity resulting from iodine deficiency further aggravates public health problems.

Iodine deficiency also affects all mammals. If farm animals are not supplied with the physiologically adequate amounts of iodine they will suffer from health problems similar to human beings. If the cattle are not supplied with the adequate amount iodine they will suffer from reproductive failure and impaired immunity. This has created condition where the Oromo farmers who are dependent on oxen to plough their land, milk and meat as the source of foods and income from the sale, to lose these means. Iodine deficiency clearly further contributes to poverty in Oromia.

Iodine deficiency is part of the greater public health problem, which can be solved by the collective actions taken by society to protect and promote the health of entire populations. Iodine deficiency is one of the conditions that should not be allowed in Oromia or elsewhere. Imagine that the millions of dead children and mothers and those who are dying because of iodine deficiency could have been prevented with 2-3 cents per person per year. Imagine them rising up from death and staring at each one of us in our eyes, asking us how we could let them suffer from such an easily preventable problem. Even more, imagine the millions of children and mothers who are lined up to die from iodine deficiency and sitting in their homes or lying in their beds and looking into our eyes passionately saying, "how would you let me die from easily preventable problem?" The issue of iodine deficiency is very critical and the local and international organizations need to work together and tackle the problem.

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## **Causes and Effects of Oromo Migration since 1900.**

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### **Abstract**

Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa. There are nine regional states in the country. Oromo people live in Oromia that is the largest regional state of the federal government. They are the largest ethno-nation in the Horn of Africa. They constitute 40% of the Ethiopia's total population. They have their own language, culture, economy, and socio-political system. They have been under the subjugation of different systems of Ethiopian rulers since they were conquered as a result of brutal military conquest which was facilitated by the collusion of interests between European imperialism and internal colonialism during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They have been marginalized, oppressed, and have become second class citizens in their own country. Their voices for freedom have been silenced, their culture and language suppressed and their resources exploited to sustain the oppressing systems. They have been trying to free themselves from Ethiopian oppression that resulted in political migration from their country. Many of them who left their country due to political problems live in North America, Europe and Middle-east. Separation from their social and geographical environment causes severe emotional distress and crisis of discontinuity.

**Keywords:** Oromo, migration.

## Introduction

The Oromo are the largest ethno-nation 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 the 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 *Afan 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, upon which most other peoples in the eastern part of Africa have been grafted (*Bates, 1979*). The Oromo movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards (*Hussein, 2006*).

One thing that makes the Oromo the most important people in the African continent is their possession of the Gada system, the egalitarian cultural, political, economic and military organization that the Oromo have largely lost partially as a result of their adaptation of the monarchical system of governance since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and notably due to their fall under the conquest of Menelik II at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Oromo Gada system is the most sophisticated socio-cultural organization ever known in traditional Africa (*Legesse, 1973*). *Legesse (2000)* stated that the Gada-based "Oromo democracy is one of those remarkable creations of the human mind that evolved into a full-fledged system of government, as a result of five centuries of evolution and deliberate, rational, legislative transformation." The Gada system was a complex institutional organization that embraced the Oromo peoples' political, social, economic and religious life in entirety. The Oromo had and still have many indigenous systems of teaching and learning, peace making, religious systems and worldviews. They have indigenous systems of co-operations, integrations and regulations (*Hussein, 2005*). The Oromo used their indigenous institutions and peacefully incorporated the non-Oromo into their social, cultural, military and political lives. One of these institutions is the *moggasa* (adoption) institution, which provided governmental protections for the many tribes that were cut loose from the protections of any political leader following the ruinous warfare between Christians and Muslims (*Curtin et al., 1995*).

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 Shoan colonialism during the second half of the last century. The Oromo conquest and incorporation was accomplished by the Abyssinian state under Menelik during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*Haji, 1995*). These dictators have some common characteristic. They all had/have ascended to power by force and rule by force from Menelik II to Melese Zenawi. Since each systems have ethnic

vanguard and beneficiaries, Oromo have been marginalized, oppressed, and have become second class citizens in their own country for more than a century. Oromo's voices have been silenced, their culture and language suppressed and their resources exploited to sustain the oppressing systems.

### **Causes of Oromo Migration**

One of the regions in which the consolidation of imperial rule caused involuntary migration was the small kingdom of Guma in southwest Oromoland. Guma was conquered by the Abyssinians in 1886, and its king *Abba Foggi* was executed by *Ras Tessema Nadew*, commander of Abyssinians forces. *Abba Foggi's* son and heir, *Firrisaa*, fled to Massawa on the Red Sea Coast, where he remained for more than a decade (*Ceruli, 1922*). In 1899, he left the Italian colony of Eritrea for the Sudan. He organized a liberation army from among refugees living along the Ethio-Sudan frontier, and crossed the border into the Ethiopian Empire at Anfillo and fought with Abyssinian conquerors. Finally, he was taken to prison and executed by *Ras Tessema Nadew*.

Consolidation of Abyssinian rule in the region of Leeqa Qellem not only caused misery and involuntary migration, but also had dire economic effects. *Jote Tullu*, the *mooti* ("king") of Leeqa Qellem, was among the Oromo leaders who submitted to Menelik II without armed resistance in 1886. He was given the title of *Dejazmach* and allowed to continue to rule his territory, but the accord between Menelik II and him did not last long. In 1908, he was removed from his post and imprisoned "on charges ranging from establishing surreptitious links with British to the bloody suppression of an uprising in Anfillo (*Zewde, 1976*). His imprisonment provoked rebellion led by his son called *Mardaasa* (*Triulzi, 1980*). To suppress the rebellion and re-establish Abyssinian control, *Dejazmach Birru* was sent from Addis Ababa and descended upon Qellem with some 8000 soldiers. As a result, the Oromo of Qellem were displaced. *Mardaasa* escaped with some of his followers to Sudan, where he stayed for three years. He then traveled to England and met with King George, who apparently sent *Mardaasa* back to Ethiopia with a letter addressed to Menelik II. On his arrival, he was thrown into jail by *Ras Tessema Nadew*, then acting as regent. Both *Jote* and *Mardaasa* were released by Prince *Iyasu* upon the death of *Tessema* in 1911. They were imprisoned again-*Jote* in 1916 and *Mardaasa* in 1918 (*Woldetsadik, 1966*). Both of them died in prison.

The consolidation of imperial rule also resulted in forced migration across the southern borders of the Ethiopian Empire. 4000 Boran Oromo fled to the British East African Colony in 1910 to escape the rule of the Abyssinian administration.

### ***Outcomes of Prince Iyasu's Nation Building Aspirations***

Prince *Iyasu Mikael* (r.1913-1916) is one of the most reviled names in the annals of Christian Ethiopia. Ethiopian history books call him the worst threat ever faced by the Ethiopian state even if he was bright prince with radical ideas for building a nation out of the ramshackle empire he inherited. He had neutral ideas on religion issues, but the Christian nobility was not happy with that. In Aug. 1916, while he was on a tour in Harar, a coup was staged against him. He was accused of apostasy for visiting mosques and eating with Muslims. The overthrow of

Prince Iyasu's government led to a civil war that cost thousands of lives. The conflict also caused the internal displacement of thousands of people, mainly Muslims. He was unable to seek asylum in the neighboring territories. He became refugee in his own country with many of his followers. He stayed in Afar for five years, but captured in 1921 and imprisoned. He was killed in 1935. Some of his Oromo followers fled to East African Colony, where their descendants remain today. The new rulers showed their distaste for Iyasu's policies by re-arresting, imprisoning and killing leaders of the peoples Prince Iyasu had set free (*Bulcha, 2002*).

### ***Political Developments in the 1960s***

Oromo called for equal rights and citizenship in Ethiopia. These demands were channeled through two social movements: The Mecha-Tulama Self-Help Association and the Bale Peasant uprising. In 1965, the Mecha-Tulama Self Help Association was founded and it formed the basis of later more developed nationalist aspirations. The Oromo Diaspora increased significantly in the 1960s, when Oromo refugees fled persecution in large numbers. First, the suppression of Mecha-Tulama association produced a flow of refugees to the Sudan and Somalia. But the largest stream of refugees was caused by the repression of peasant uprisings in the Bale and Sidamo regions between 1963 and 1970. The reason for the 1964 uprising of Bale Oromo, led by Waqo Gutuu and Waqo Lugo, was the forced confiscation of the rich lands of Arena-Buluq and the Dello Menna Jungle, famous for its wild coffee, timber, etc., and its distribution to ministers, senior army officers, the royal family, etc. The suppression of the Bale movement provoked a larger migration, including young men who sought asylum in the Middle East. Many of those who migrated to the Middle East rejoined the Oromo struggle in early 1970s, while the rest migrated to Europe and North America.

### ***The Ethiopian Revolution***

Oromo and other oppressed groups supported the revolution in 1974 since they hoped it would lead to greater equality in the nation, contrary to the emperor's desired goal of homogenized and centralized Ethiopia by making it mono culture, language and religion. As the Emperor had done, Mengistu, the chairman of the Dergue, continued the pattern of extreme centralization and denial of individual or collective rights of nations and nationalities. He replaced monarchical absolutism ideology by militaristic Marxism - Leninism to build the Ethiopian nation state. Centralization and homogenization under the culture of one ethnic group severely suppressed the Oromo culturally, economically and politically and only perpetuated the systematic domination. However, the Dergue's authoritarian, centralizing policies and use of force only served to intensify the conflict between the military regime and opposition groups. The grievance of oppressed nationalities resulted in ethnic based liberation movements such as Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) that finally toppled the Military junta in 1991. OLF embarked on a struggle for Oromo independence from Ethiopian rule. The OLF was born to address the brutal oppression, and socio-politico-economic exploitation and subjugation of the Oromo people by the Ethiopian political system. This necessity delivered a centralized and secular OLF in 1973/1974. The Dergue declared "Red Terror" in 1977, which led to the loss of thousands of lives and caused the mass exodus of young and educated people from Ethiopia. Dergue forcibly

conscripted Oromo people into the militia, which made up 70% half-million militia. Political and religious persecution, war, forced conscription and labour, and economic policies pursued by the Ethiopian military regime created the largest number of refugees in the country's history.

In 1979, the UNHCR office in Mogadishu estimated that two-thirds of the 350,000 Ethiopian refugees in camps in Somalia were Oromo. In 1981, the UNCHR estimated the number of refugees in Somalia at 700,000, "roughly one third of whom may be Oromo." In the mid-1980s, there were at least half million Oromo refugees in the Horn of Africa; until 1990 over 90% lived in Somalia, while the rest stayed in the Sudan and Djibouti, and other African countries such as Kenya and Egypt. A small fraction of the Oromo refugees went to the Middle East, Europe, North America, and Australia.

### ***Forced Migration in the 1990s***

In cooperation with other anti-government forces, OLF helped Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to topple the Dergue regime in 1991. Following the fall of the military regime, a transitional government comprising a coalition of various liberation fronts and political organizations was formed in July 1991. The government adopted a transitional charter guaranteeing all ethnic groups full participation and representation. Many observers considered this an opportunity to rectify past mistakes by allowing the masses to freely participate in the affairs of the country. Hope for a new era of equality and democracy in Ethiopia was short-lived because of the flaws in the 1992 district and regional elections which led to the withdrawal of the OLF from the transitional government. EPRDF has used various methods to manipulate the elections. The main methods have been closure of opposition offices, harassment, killings, arrest of candidates, refusal of endorsement of registrations of opposition organizations, last-minute shift in the election regulations regarding the number of candidates to be field, suspension of candidates by alleged cases of being "under police investigations" were a just a few of tactics the regime routinely uses. The Oromo concluded that the new government merely replaced Amhara domination with that of another people, the Tigrayans.

Oromo organizations and civilians have been the primary targets of EPRDF. Since 1992, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other international and local human rights organizations have reported extra-judicial political killings, disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and torture and rape of detainees. The number of Oromo currently in detention is not known. When OLF withdrew from the transitional government in 1992, the EPRDF put between 20,000-45,000 Oromo in official and secret concentration camps. Thousands of people died due to malnutrition and diseases, mostly women and children. The extra-judicial killing, arbitrary arrest, and imprisonment of the Oromo suspected of "sympathizing with or being involved with OLF" have been confirmed by Human Rights Organizations, U.S. Department Bureau of Democracy etc. Increasing numbers of Oromo have fled this climate of intimidation since 1992.

The conflict between the EPRDF and Oromo political organizations affected leaders of Oromo civic associations, journalists, writers, artists, and civic servants, teachers, and businessmen. As

far as free press is concerned, five Oromo magazines (Urji, Biftu, Gada, Madda Walaabuu and Odaa) were closed down when the government imprisoned their editors and publishers. Since 1992, virtually all Oromo journalists have spent time in jail. The most blow came in December 1997, when five journalists of the leading newspaper Urji were arrested and imprisoned until July 2001. They fled the country immediately after their release. Since 1997, the publication of Oromo newspapers has been banned. Many Oromo prominent writers and artists have also been persecuted, jailed, or forced to exile. The Gada Oromo Club, a union of Oromo artists, was disbanded in 1998; human rights organizations have reported that members of the club were imprisoned and tortured for being “anti-regime.” Some were killed by security forces, others kidnapped and kept incommunicado for many months. Not surprising, most of these artists live in exile around the world. EPRDF repression has also targeted Oromo students. Many university students have been harassed, beaten, imprisoned, fired from different universities in the country, killed and fled the country.

### **Effects of Oromo Migration**

#### ***The Status of Oromo Refugees in Northeast Africa***

Over 100,000 Oromo migrants live scattered in the Middle East, Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The majority of the refugees in these countries left in the late 1990s.

The Sudan, which had a generous refugee policy for most of the 1970s and 1980s, accepted thousands of Oromo refugees. There are between 10,000-15,000 Oromo refugees in Sudan. However, since the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) offices were closed in 1998, the Sudan has become less hospitable to Oromo refugees. According to a 1996 survey, these refugees live under very difficult conditions.

Thousands of Oromo have sought refuge in Djibouti since 1974; however, there has been lack of political protection (*Aitchison, 1983*). From 1983 onwards, the government has been forcibly deporting refugees to Ethiopia (*Greenfield, 1983*). For many refugees, life in Djibouti has been a nightmare of raffles, detentions, and rapes by the border guards and security police. In these raffles, which occur several times a month, refugees are snatched from the streets of the Djibouti city, thrown into jail, and either forced into labour on local construction projects or deported to Ethiopia. The UNCHR’s frequent protests go unheeded by the Djibouti authorities (*Fossati et al., 1996*).

Somalia accepted the largest number of Oromo refugees in the 1970s and 1980s, but it refused to recognize their Oromo identity. The government, in its quest to create greater Somalia out of the territories inhabited by Somalis in the Northeast Africa and a large part of Oromoland, registered the Oromo as Somalis and banned the Oromo language in the refugee camps. Many Oromo refugees were also forcibly conscripted into president Barre’s militia to fight against Ethiopia. Due to the disintegration of his state in 1990, the turmoil forced Oromo refugees to disperse in all directions even if many stayed in Somalia despite the chaos and lack of protection by the international community (*Challa, 1992*). It is estimated that there are at least 40,000-50,000 Oromo in Somalia, most of who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s.



The number of Oromo asylum-seekers in Kenya has increased with the intensification of their repression in Ethiopia even if Kenya is reluctant. Kenya's reluctance to welcome Oromo refugees is partly due to pressure from its militarily superior neighbor. The Kenyan government has even imprisoned and threatened them with deportation to Ethiopia. Recognizing the danger that Oromo refugees face in Kenya, some European countries, particularly Norway, have resettled several hundred of them since 1997. The US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have received larger groups in recent years.

### ***Cross-Border Raids against Refugees***

Various factors combine to give Oromo refugees in the Horn of Africa a sense of vulnerability. Forced repatriation, hostile treatment by the host government, and attacks by Ethiopian security forces, who often cross borders in search of dissidents are some of the most immediate causes of insecurity. Generally, refugees receive very limited international legal protection in the countries of the Horn. Since the rise of EPRDF to power, security for Ethiopian refugees in general and Oromo in particular has worsened dramatically. Under the previous regime, there were few cross border raids on refugee camps, but since the early 1990s, they have become more frequent killing of hundreds of refugees.

Of all the countries hosting Oromo refugees in the Horn, Kenya has been most affected by cross-border raids. Ethiopian security forces conducted raids often deep in Kenyan territory, and killed hundreds of Oromo, many of them Kenyan citizens. Although the raids have led to strong protests from Kenyan citizens including Kenyan parliament, the government has been unable to prevent the raids or mount a successful international-level protest. Attacks by Ethiopian forces resulted in over 160 deaths of civilians and Kenyan policemen between 2000 and 2001 only. A raid conducted by Ethiopian forces at Moyale in January 2001 displaced 600 Kenyan citizens and resulted in the death of ten people, four civilians, and six members of Kenyan police.

### ***Expressions of Loss***

Uprooting is more than a physical absence from home. It is a predicament affecting a person's emotional health. Often, the individual's separation from his/her social and geographical environment causes severe emotional distress. In some cases it may also make it difficult to adjust to the new situation. Refugees may perceive their situation in different ways: while some see it as a work of God, or as a "curse," others experience it as bereavement. Although psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists who have studied refugee communities have described these problems, the inner crises and bereavement that refugees feel are often concealed from them.

In general, forced migration creates a "crisis of discontinuity," in which life goals are disrupted and individuals feel a strong sense of loss. One such disruption is that of refugees' family life. Among Oromo refugees in the West, the proportion of single men has been large. The unsettled characteristic nature of life in exile and the demographic profile of the Oromo refugee population are contributory factors to this situation. For example, in Scandinavian countries the

proportion of male to female refugees was about five to one in the 1980s, which meant that many men found it impossible to find a marriage partner. The demographic profile of Oromo refugees in Sudan in the early 1980s was very similar (*Bulcha, 1983*). These findings were confirmed by Virginia Luling's study of Oromo refugees in the same region in 1986 (*Luling, 1983*). Although more and more Oromo women are becoming refugees today, the proportion of single men above the age of 30 is still very large.

The majority of Oromo refugees, particularly those who live in the Horn of Africa, have origins in traditional rural communities where social relations are closely knit and life is based on a strong sense of solidarity and interdependence. This is reflected in the three concepts of family, community, and affinity, considered crucial for the well-being of both the individual and the society. As in most societies, the Oromo individual is part of a mutual support system. Flight therefore disrupts the individual's sense of belonging to the family and community. The refugee must cope with a new, strange environment, in which she/he must forge a new identity. Physical security is obtained at the cost of a social security the individual had enjoyed as a member of a family and a community. Conditions forcing them out of their home countries may not change for decades, and repatriation may only be a dream. Often asylum is not granted until several years after application, and it takes many years before a refugee gets settled to build a family. Furthermore, in many countries rules on family reunion are often stringent; making it very difficult to bring spouses and children to the country even after asylum is obtained.

Flight also leads to the disruption of careers and education. In countries where it takes several years for a refugee to get a residence permit, refugees' lives are held in limbo. Language training and employment are typically cited as the most pressing needs. Educated professionals have complained about the difficulty of obtaining employment in their own fields of medicine, engineering, architecture, teaching, and management, while those who do not have professional training or technical skills are even more limited in their choices. Stress caused by forced migration and problems of adjustment have exacerbated this tendency.

Flight also leads to feelings of guilt. Men and women who leave their children, wives, and husbands behind, and young people who leave their aging parents are particularly susceptible to guilt. One of the most important obligations of a son/daughter is to provide a funeral for his or her parents. This obligation is also central to Oromo thinking; their prayers and blessings are concerned with it. Not to do so is a great personal failure; but it is also unavoidable consequence of uprooting and flight and a cause of profound grief.

Refugees who live and work in Western countries and the oil-producing states of the Middle East send money to their relatives and keep in touch by telephone. However, family relations cannot be fully maintained with occasional telephone calls across continents and oceans, or sums of money. And of course, money cannot compensate for the social, emotional, and psychological security that children provide to their parents. Furthermore, since most refugees in Africa come from places without post offices and telephones or live in remote refugee camps and rural settlements, they are unable to make contact with their relatives.

## Conclusions

- Oromo are the largest ethno-nation in the Horn of Africa. They constitute 40% of the Ethiopia's total population.
- Oromo have been under the subjugation of different systems of Ethiopian rulers since they were conquered as a result of brutal military conquest which was facilitated by the collusion of interests between European imperialism and internal colonialism during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Oromo have been trying to free themselves from Ethiopian oppression that resulted in political migration from their country.
- Many of the Oromo who left their country due to political problems live in North America, Europe and Middle-east.
- Separation from their social and geographical environment causes severe emotional distress and crisis of discontinuity.

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## **Oromo Art as a Political Resistance**

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### **Abstract**

Music has been used across the world to express political discourse, social segregation, basic human rights, and conventional rules. Music's role in conveying the will to freedom and justice is widespread in the world in general and in Africa in particular. For instance, South Africa's freedom song *Nkosi Sikele'l Africa* (God bless Africa) played an important role in the struggle against apartheid. Similarly, music has played a pivotal role in the Oromo political resistance against successive Habasha tyrant governments. Music in the Oromo political struggle can be seen as a liberating force, which uplifts, inspires, and shows the way for people to take part in the struggle against injustice and inequality. Oromo musicians and songwriters used their lyrical messages to serve social causes, to make political statements, and to voice the plight of oppressed peoples. Oromo artists have been basing their messages on their unique style of music, with fiery sounds and traditional Oromo sounds to call for an end to violence and inequality in their own country, Oromia, where the Oromo have been brutalized and denied their basic human rights. Through music, Oromo artists have revealed and developed their social, political and moral identities. In this paper, I situate Oromo music within broader themes in the world music. I also explain how Oromo artists, through their influential lyrics, have helped the Oromo deal with their sufferings, loss, frustration, and continued quest for social and political freedom. Oromo music has been used as a key element of political resistance by motivating the Oromo people to act against the injustice imposed on them. This paper focuses on three points. First, the paper explores the process and consequences of the expropriation of Oromo lands. Next, it covers the suffering of the Oromo people under the colonial regime, i.e. prosecutions, acts of genocides, imprisonments, and mass killings over the course of more than 100 years. Finally, the paper discusses the current Oromo situation and the acts of fierce high school and college students' rebellions against the current ethnically ruled Ethiopian government.

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### **Introduction**

Art is portrayed as a meaningful discourse that expresses sacred values in many parts of the world. It is displayed in various ways. It shows a craftsmanship in hand made artifact, such as drawing, writing, cooking, and performing art and other means of expression. Art helps us examine our current situation and also provides a window into the past. It is a tool for visualizing the future, and a great tool of expression that reveals the value and heritage of cultural identity.

Music as an art in Eastern Africa is extremely important in understanding popular culture and its role in shaping the society. Music in the Oromo political struggle can be seen as a liberating force which uplifts, inspires, and generates pathways to freedom; it motivates the people to take part in the struggle against the inequality and injustice that have been imposed on them by the Habasha rulers. For years, Oromo musicians and song writers have been delivering lyrical

messages which have served as key element in the struggle of the Oromo people by raising their voices and telling stories of their continued struggle.

In addition to delivering political statements, Oromo musicians have been able to use their lyrics as a conduit for the development of the social, moral, and political identity of the Oromo people. Out of many influential Oromo artists that have contributed to the advancement of Oromo people's struggle, I have chosen to examine the works of five artists. Their contributions have strengthened the political quest of the Oromo people. These artists have served as genuine nationalists: they have revealed the crimes of the Ethiopian government against the Oromos and how the people must stand up, unite with great force to end the injustices imposed on them to reclaim their fundamental rights to freedom. Through lyrics they have been able to confirm that freedom requires a lot of sacrifices, yet it can be achieved with determination.

The five artists I have chosen to examine their valuable works here are, Ali Bira, Umar Suleyman, Usmayyo Mussa, Ilfenesh Qanno and Adnan Mohamed. These artists are only a few out of many talented Oromo musicians. I decided to include their performances in this paper because of the accessibility to their music and lyrics that are relevant to this paper.

The works of Oromo artists reflect the balance between the past, present and future. Memoirs of the past, exigencies of the present and anxiety over the future compromise the currents that propel identity articulation. Identities are actually bounded by questions regarding the resources of history, language, and culture. These questions concern the process of becoming as opposed to an actual state of being. For years, Oromo artists have been aggressively intervening in art world and the real world in order to put music in touch with society, to interpret art, to protest injustice, and to encourage political engagement.

#### Land Expropriation

As a country that fell under the Ethiopian occupation in the late 1800's, the Ethiopian ruling class and its state own Oromia's vast rich grasslands; Oromos lost their lands and forced to comply to the colonial settlers tasks of paying taxes and serve as semi-slaves. They were to comply with these obligations or they would be removed from their lands. Sometimes they were evicted without real reason. For over a century, Amhara-Tigrayan colonial settlers have occupied Oromia and exploited its economic and natural resources. The northern Ethiopians, due to years of exploitation, could not guard their resources and as a result suffered from soil erosion, which has left them with few fertile lands. Furthermore, the government of Ethiopia seized Oromo lands for nationalized farms (Jalata, 68). In this way, the successive Ethiopian governments have increased and controlled the flow of agricultural products.

The Ethiopian government put itself in charge of the cash-crops and natural resources, an act which enabled them to do business with international corporations, without profit-sharing with the lands original owners. The Oromia's rich land is the home of coffee; an abundance of gold, and natural gases and similar resources. These have been the spotlight of Ethiopia's economic success in the international markets.

Over time, many men and women revolted by organizing themselves in villages determined to reclaim ownership over their land and resources. Within their given space to maneuver,

movements of groups and individuals began to organize themselves secretly, to assess their situation as citizens denied of their rights to land ownership. As these political uprisings began to unfold, individuals sang songs of expression that coalesced into a message of awakening for Oromos, heightening their social consciousness level and instilling in them a desire to resist. To describe the situation, singer Umar Suleyman sang songs, which fueled mass protests against the Ethiopian regime. It also motivated people to bear arms to fight for freedom or join liberation army forces, creating controversy and stirring fear within the government. Opinion became a very important form of expression, among various sectors of society that face censorships of freedom of speech and expression.

Artist Umar Suleyman found inspiration in this idea in the early 1990's by singing, "Dinnee didaa ufitti hinfuunuu hinfuudhin idaa (2X), madaabaraa shame gurgurachuuf fidee, ittiin facaafnan ree lafti baasuu didee," which means, 'we refuse to use any kind of fertilizers to grow our crops because it is expensive, expired and can't be used to grow anything, thus it ruins our soil and can put us into debt.' This expressed the frustration of farmers who had been forced to grow their crops using goods that did not produce but destroyed their land, and mired them in poverty. Similarly, other nations have expressed social discontent in other ways, such as in "Rai" music. "Rai" means "opinion" in Arabic, and "Rai" music spoke out against the censorship of freedom of speech and expression by non-democratic Arab governments. Currently, "Rai represents an alternative mode of protest for liberation," (Al-Ta'ee, 2).

#### Imprisonment and Systematic Killings

To put Oromo music in world context, its revolutionary music has become creative model for other forms of political expression. Tibetans have been singing songs of protest against Chinese occupation for decades, resulting in the imprisonment and torture of many Tibetan people. In 1993, those who sang patriotic songs were arrested and detained. Similarly, in the Philippines, during the Spaniard occupation revolutionary songs mobilized the Indo uprisings, and in late 19th century Kundiman (love song) was a precursor to subversive and revolutionary lyrics. The Chimurenga resistance song in Zimbabwe, the Mau Mau song in Kenya was the key to creating solidarity among the people in coping with colonial abuse and slaughter. Similarly, music's aesthetic and linguistic appeal has been a vital tool in the Oromo people's political struggle to further their political quest. As Tibetans sang patriotic songs in the past to protest jailings and mass killings perpetrated on their people, Oromos have been singing similar songs to shed light on the brutal acts being committed on their group. Many artists were sentenced to prison for life or killed for singing songs that objected to the Ethiopian government's acts of cruelty.

As a victim of the jailing and torture by the current Ethiopian government, a remarkable singer named Usmayyo Mussa sang that the 'Wayanes' are manipulating tools of violence to dehumanize Oromos. The lyrics of late Usmayyo Mussa urged his people to keep faith alive and know that their use of jailing, torture and mass killing were used to eliminate any sense of hope amongst their people. They did this also by bribing released prisoners to turn backs on their own people just to be able to make a decent living for their families. He sang, "...hidhaa fi ajjechaan hamilee nu cabsee dubatti nu hin deebisuu, hamman bilisummaa kiyya galmaan gayuuf falmataa hinlakkisuu..." which means, "...the imprisoning and killings that shattered our hopes shall not hold us back until our struggle for freedom is achieved..." Similar lyrical

messages were shared by Ilfenesh Qanno who was also imprisoned on multiple occasions for singing songs that expressed the acts of torture Oromos faced, and she deeply wanted Oromos to rethink their situation to determine their own fate by singing, “Oromoo maal wayya? Lammi koo maal wayya? Bilisomuu wayya?” In these words, she asks, “what is better for the Oromo? What is better off my nation? Perhaps freedom?”

## Oromo Culture

The other role music has played in Oromo political resistance is restoring the near complete loss of identity and culture that resulted from the Abyssinian invasion. One of the most significant aspects of their cultural identity which Oromos nearly lost because of Ethiopian subjugation was the Gadaa System (the democratic governing system of Oromos). The legendary musician and singer Ali Bira, who introduced the Oromo art and language on various international community in the 1970’s through his popular lyrics sang, “karaan manni Abbaa Gadaa eessaa?” which asks, “where is the pathway that leads to the Gadaa hall?” He taught his people the responsibility they should carry to learn about the Gadaa system and write about it so that it could be handed over to the next generation. Ali’s work paved the way for the contemplation and the study of Gadaa system in particular, as well as Oromo culture in general.

Perhaps one of the fiercest and greatest uprisings out of the Oromo community that occurred and spread extraordinarily within short period of time was amongst the dedicated Oromo students. Early in 2000, a group of Oromo students in Finfinne (Addis Ababa) University began to organize demonstrations in protest of the current regime and its acts of genocide on the Oromos. Since then, there has been growing numbers of incidents in which many students stood up against the undeserving acts of dismissal of honor students from schools for discriminatory reasons and the disappearing of many students across Oromia. In some cases, students weren’t allowed to enter certain universities because they were expected to do better than non-Oromo students when they graduated from high school by taking the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE), a standardized test that measures students’ ability.

Classmates, teachers and others disguised as spiritual practitioners arrived on campus to spy on these students. Those Oromo students considered to be well-informed and educated were closely surveilled, as many of them were activists protesting the Ethiopian government and were considered a threat. Some students were put in prison or killed because they were accused of being affiliated with Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Many artists sang about the actions of these fierce students and teachers who sacrificed their lives by standing up and speaking out against the cruelty of the Ethiopian government. The songs Oromo artists sang expressed the actions of the courageous efforts of the Oromo students who shed their bloods for believing and promoting the Oromo national cause. Artist Adnan Mohamed sang, “Abaaboo wwan kaleessaa, barattoota falma irratti wareegaman, dhiigni isaani xinni qee, nan lallabaa gadoota, waamicha isaanii awwaadhaa!” “The flowers of yesterday, the students who sacrificed their lives, the blood they shed, I will speak out my sorrow, and answer to their call.”

## Conclusion



Through their music and inspiring lyrics, Oromo artists have played an important role in explaining the oppression and exploitation of the Oromo people. They have also motivated and mobilized different sectors of Oromo society by raising their political and cultural consciousness and by encouraging them to join the national struggle for self-determination, emancipation, and liberation. In order to overcome the oppression and exploitation of Ethiopian colonialism, Oromo musicians have been leading the way as dynamic and creative political activists.

Oromo music has proven useful as a means to further the oral recording of history, conquering ignorance, and educating and leading the way for the liberation of the Oromo people who have been torn apart by civil war and famine. Oromo activist musicians have played a positive role in restoring lost Oromo identity due to the years of oppression. We have to recognize that music in the Oromo political struggle can be seen as a liberating force which has been used to uplift, to inspire, and to light pathways for the people, driving them to take part in the struggle against the inequality and injustice that have been imposed on them by the Habasha rulers.

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Oromo Artists and Musicians: Ali Bira, Umar Suleyman, Usmayyo Mussa, Ilfenesh Qanno, and Adnan Mohamed

## **Boserup and Agricultural/Economic Policy in an Oromo-Led Government**

### ***Harwood D. Schaffer***

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In 1965 Ester Boserup challenged both the Malthusian paradigm of agricultural development as well as the neo-colonial/modernization development paradigms with the publication of her small book, “The Conditions of Agricultural Growth.” In that book she argued that agricultural development—the intensification of agricultural production—was brought about as the result of population growth, and not the other way around as the Malthusians (11) argued (the production of surplus food leads to a growth in population with production increasing linearly while population increases geometrically, leading to famine and crisis). She made this argument by looking at the transition of agriculture from the hunter/gatherer stage, through the long fallow slash and burn stage, and bush fallow, to increasingly intensified short fallow systems, showing that in each case, the shift was not the result of the discovery of a new technology—the technologies had often been known for centuries if not millennia before they were adopted—but of an increase in population which both provided the necessity for additional food production and the additional labor needed to implement the new agricultural technology (Boserup 15-16). This increased population density provided both the means and the necessity for the changes in the agricultural production systems she describes. In contrast with the post-WWII modernizationists who see native agricultural systems as primitive and static, Boserup argues that these systems are dynamic, responding to external and internal pressures.

An Oromo-led government will need to develop agricultural policies within a milieu in which 80 to 85 percent of a growing population is involved in agricultural production, most of which is in remote areas with limited infrastructure. Development specialists often see conditions like these as impediments to growth that need to be overcome by reducing the number of farmers and shifting the population to urban areas to work in industrial and service settings, often despite the lack of these opportunities in urban areas. Boserup on the other hand argues that “communities with sustained population growth have a better chance to get into a process of genuine economic development than...communities with stagnant or declining population, provided of course, that the necessary agricultural investments are undertaken” (Boserup, 118). Much of this investment is made in the form of direct human labor with a smaller portion coming from outside capital (essentialized human labor). The role of the government is to provide an atmosphere in which the population is willing to make that investment of human labor. Government, in close cooperation with the populace, must also make those capital investments in agricultural research and infrastructure improvement. As Boserup sees it, the intensification of agricultural production both provides for and requires the employment of the growing population. As an intensified agriculture produces surpluses, some labor will be released to other economic sectors providing goods and services needed by those remaining in agriculture.

### **Current Situation in Ethiopia and the Modernizationist Approach**

Ethiopia is an agriculturally dependent nation with an estimated July 2008 population of over 78 million (CIA, 2008). Of that number 80 percent, or 62 million are engaged in agriculture. The population growth rate of 2.231 percent per year puts increasing pressure on the 11 million hectares of arable land. The result is an ever decreasing average plot size for farm households. In 2003, the average amount of land per rural household was 0.9 hectare when the rural population was estimated to be 58 million, 4 million less than the current population. In combination with erratic rainfall, the constant population increase results in overgrazing by livestock, deforestation, the diversion of manure from use as a soil amendment to fuel, all leading to a reduction in the productivity of the land and increased risk of further erosion (World Bank 2003: 9). In November 2003, the World Bank in its Country Economic Memorandum on Ethiopia writes; “Ethiopia could be in a Malthusian trap where population growth exceeds the rate of capital accumulation leading to increasing levels of poverty and famine.” (World Bank 2003: 10). In a separate May 2004 Report, World Bank Authors write: “But vast increases in population over the past half-century, together with land-degradation, has made [the traditional system of rainfed mixed farming] increasingly less viable....Today using much the same production system methods, but with three times the population size and extensive land degradation, this is no longer viable.” (Seifluaziz and Ayanoui: 2). Their overall evaluation to the problems is that “the impediments [facing Ethiopia] include a subsistence level and oriented economy based on rainfed agriculture in the context of an erratic rainfall regime and extremely vulnerable to weather fluctuations” (Seifluaziz and Ayanoui: 1).

To avoid the Malthusian nightmare, the solutions offered by the World Bank reports typify many modernizationists approaches to economic development in Africa and other places in the developing world. They write: “The country[‘s] abundant labor, much of which is unemployed or underemployed and concentrated in the rural highlands, where due to shortages of land and water, it cannot be put to optimal use, the mobility of this key resource needs to be advanced through urbanization, as well as both temporary and permanent migration” (Seifluaziz and Ayanoui: 3). Further on they suggest giving attention to an export oriented agriculture when they write: “This draws attention to the need to both increase productivity and commercialize farming by linking today’s subsistence farmers to the national economy through trade” (3). Notice that nowhere is there any emphasis on the production of staple crops that will feed the Ethiopian population. The assumption is that the profits from the export crops will be use to import staples that will then be used to feed the population: a dubious assumption at best—why would flower growers in Finfinne use their profits to feed displaced subsistence farmers surrounding the capital?

To summarize the modernizationists approach: 1) consolidate land holdings into viable agricultural units, 2) reduce the human footprint on the land moving most of them to urban areas or fertile lowland areas where the tropical disease problems of malaria and trypanosomiasis have not been conquered, and 3) promote the growth of high-value export-oriented crops that can be used to improve the national balance of trade with the bulk of the population being fed with imported low-value bulk commodities (Seifluaziz and Ayanoui).

### **Boserup’s Identification of “The Conditions of Agricultural Growth”**

Boserup takes a long-term look at the secular trend of human societies examining the question of the relationship between population growth and food production and comes to a conclusion quite different from the Malthusian nightmare just described by the writers at the World Bank. She starts with the assumption “that the main line of causation is in the opposite direction [from that assumed by the Malthusians]: population growth here is regarded as the independent variable which is in turn a main factor in determine agricultural development. (Boserup: 11). For the Malthusians population growth is THE problem, for Boserup, population growth is an opportunity. Over the last half century in Africa, modernization has brought about increased urbanization, poverty, and land degradation as the remaining farmers are unable to afford the purchased inputs of industrial agriculture. Ethiopia’ population has been increasing, let us examine the ways that Boserup sees this growth as an opportunity.

In her study, Boserup looks at the history of development of agricultural history beginning with slash and burn agricultural at the beginning of the Neolithic period. Forest-fallow (slash and burn) required little labor as the trees were felled by fire, the land was fertilized by the resulting ash, and weeds had yet to adapt to the new environment. Seeds were dropped into holes poked into the ground (Boserup: 28-30). By fall a crop was ready to be harvested. Sometimes the land could be planted a second year and in other situations the process was repeated on an adjacent piece of land. In 20-25 years the farmer could return to the original plot and start the process all over. What we has was a system with one year of production and 20-25 years of fallow to restore the fertility of the land. The output per unit of labor was relatively high, while the output per unit of land was extremely low.

Over time, as the amount of unused available land to burn and fallow began to decline, this system of agriculture came under pressure from an increased population and changes had to be made. The period of fallow had to be decreased to allow more people to have access to the land. Over time agriculture shifted from forest-fallow cultivation with very primitive tools to a bush fallow-system (6-10 years), to a short-fallow system, to annual cropping with only a winter or dry season fallow, to multi-cropping with little or no fallow. Each of these transitions involved an increasing level of intensification of production, the development or use of new tools, and the increased use of animals. The hours of labor increased, the output per unit of labor decreased, and the output per unit of land increased, often dramatically. More people could be fed on less land that was used more intensively. In the process, agricultural soil was created from what was once forest and grassland soil. In many cases the great soils of the world are the transformative result of the interaction of humans and nature that allowed for the continues development of settled agriculture (Boserup, 13).

At each stage of this transition, something was required. The humans involved had to make an investment of time, labor, and ingenuity in the transformation of agriculture (95). They had to be willing to work longer hours, work harder, and use new tools and methods for the new system to work. The result was adequate food to meet the needs of an increasing population, the initial use of the additional labor in agricultural production—meaning no one was left unemployed—and the eventual release of some labor to provide for other societal needs. In each case the “investment” was not capital, but human labor and the willingness to work more effectively and more intensively. This is a necessarily shortened version of Boserup’s analysis to meet the needs of this session so let us move on to the challenges facing Ethiopia today.

## Ethiopia Today

It seems to me that we have two choices today. We can either see Ethiopia's increasing population as a problem or an opportunity. The choice is ours. Growing up I remember preachers complaining about two things—people who did not come to church and people who all sat in the back. It never made sense to me. Those who never came to church never heard the complaints so their behavior was unchanged, and those who sat in the back pews never moved up. When I was ordained I resolved never to talk about those two things from the pulpit. I had more important issues to talk about. We can complain all we want about population increase, but we are not going to directly change it, so it is better to join with Boserup and see it as an opportunity.

The solution is not the dismantling of peasant agriculture and making them urban habituates, but making peasant agriculture more productive, providing needed employment for the growing population, and thus creating demand for services from the urban sector. It involves farmers and government working together to solve problems. It involves farmers working together to identify problems that need to be solved like soil erosion, the lack of fuel, deforestation, and an abundant but unpredictable and intermittent rainfall. The farmers then identify the problems they can solve and begin to make the investment of human labor to mitigate those problems. They assign to agricultural researchers questions they need answers to so they can solve or mitigate additional problems. If the need is soil improvement, how much residue must be left on the land to retain it and improve it? If the need is for small catchment basins to retain the monsoonal water, what is the best way to construct them, where and how. Can they serve several farmers? How can they use animal agriculture effectively as a source of milk, fertilizer and food and still have room for people? What remediation programs are needed immediately so that the degradation can be stopped in the present and in the future turned around?

You might think that this is a fantasy, but there is a model and it isn't the United States and Western Europe with their dependence on fossil fuel-fed industrial agriculture. It's China. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution they have seen a 30% population increase, an increase in the daily food intake from 2050 kilocalories to 2,940 kilocalories, with peasant agriculture and minimal imports of staples (FAO). Degraded land has been restored, yields have increased, people have been fed, and the country is continue to develop, based on a strong, viable peasant agricultural sector. This change has taken place in a land where land is owned by the community, the nation has made a significant investment in agricultural research and the peasants have transformed their land into some of the most productive in the world. The investment at the farm level was the labor of farmers. The investment by the government was in basic research to meet the needs of peasants not large farm operations and agribusinesses (Ray and Schaffer: articles 411-417). The results are unbelievable. Can this happen in Ethiopia, and particularly in the highlands of Oromia? My answer is yes if we keep track of the following: 1) the continued investment in agriculture by both farmers and agricultural researchers, 2) keeping the focus on increasing the production of staple crops—entrepreneurial individuals will find their own ways to produce cut flowers for European markets, 3) regulating the flow of labor from rural to urban areas, making sure there is not an underinvestment of human labor in agricultural areas, 4) monitoring food imports so they do not reduce the

investment in local agricultural production, and 5) ameliorating the rural-urban social tension as standards of living initially increase more rapidly in urban areas than they do in rural areas.

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# **Oromo Diaspora: Quest for Freedom, Democracy and New Media**

A paper presented at the 2008 OSA annual conference

***Habtamu Dugo***

## **Abstract**

This paper examines the phenomenon of how the wide-spread Oromo Diasporic communities make use of the new media—specifically the Internet and its applications such as the World Wide Web and online discussion forums for political activism, for establishing and maintaining communication with people in Oromia and with one another around the globe in a wider national quest for democracy and self-determination. There is little or no work done in examining how and why the Oromo diaspora deploys new media in political activism. This article is a humble contribution towards this aspect of knowledge. This problem is worth examining because of the increasing trends of Oromo diasporic formations as a result of being exiled because of political repressions and marginalization in their country of origin. It is also important to discuss the role of new media as viable alternatives in the face of state restrictions/denials of press freedom and Oromo media ownership rights. This problem is also important as it is happening at a historical juncture where the public (audience) is criminalized and targeted for accessing information through opposition radio broadcasts from overseas. It is important to look at how, to some extent, new media is trying to bridge this gap by linking the Diaspora population with the mainstream population in the Horn of Africa. The paper found that not only are new media important as channels linking the globally spread Oromo population with the ones that have access to the Internet at home, but also the nature of the content produced in Diasporas and sent back home for causing democratic change is of immense importance. The content produced in diasporic new media forms are indicative of the relative freedom of expression and the existence of plural ideologies and views as opposed to the mainstream media run by the government of Ethiopia. The paper assumed that Oromo Diasporic communities use the mentioned new media for establishing and maintaining communications with people in their places of origin and settlement, and for political activism in a wider national quest for democracy and self-determination from an East African perspective. Based on the literature reviewed and data analyzed, the conclusions arrived at are consistent with the hypothesis although the conclusions seem to mainly hold true for an insignificant portion of the Oromo population who have basic computer skills and have access to technology and the Internet through offices and schools.

## **Oromo Diaspora: Quest for Freedom, Democracy and New Media**

### **Introduction**

This paper examines how the Oromo Diasporic communities make use of the new media for political activism, for establishing and maintaining communication with people in Oromia and with one another around the globe in a wider national quest for democracy and self-determination.

## **The Meaning of Diaspora**

Writing about Indian Diaspora, Bhatt and Shoos (N.D) link the historical origin of the concept of Diaspora to the Jewish context of diasporic formation, that later acquired significance as an approach applied to the study of all immigrants and settlers outside the countries of their origin. Today the term is used to describe any population that is ‘deterritorialized’ or ‘transnational’<sup>11</sup> (Vertovec (1997:277). Karim(1998:12) in his paper aimed at examining the communication links among members of Diaspora communities stretching over several continents, argues that Diaspora groups make extensive use of on-line services like the Internet, Usenet, Listserv, and the World Wide Web.

Embracing the optimistic views of the role of the digital media in contributing to democracy from the side of the dissenting voices, Pippa Norris says:

Dissident organisations traditionally have fewer political assets, fewer traditional advantages, but also fewer inhibitions about adapting flexibly to the opportunities of information and communication via the internet.

If this account is essentially correct, digital politics can be expected to have most impact in levelling the playing field...for the diverse range of insurgent movements and challengers such as transnational advocacy networks, alternative social movements, protest organisations...(2004:281).

Two of the most prominent Oromo websites, [oromoliberationfront.org](http://oromoliberationfront.org) and [gadaa.com](http://gadaa.com) , which I have observed over years, are consistent with Norris’ digital technology purposes of ‘transnational advocacy’ and ‘alternative social movements’ be it in their news, entertainments (music web casts), or information sections.

Having written the above on the purposes of this paper and the significance of the topic, I will move on to the social, cultural, political and economic contextualization of the problem.

## **General Context of the Oromo People and Oromo Diasporic Formations**

“The Oromo make up over 30 million out of the present 55 million of the Ethiopian Empire” Gadaa Melbaa (1988 quoted in Oromia Online). Oromiffa (also Oromo or Afaan Oromoo) is considered one of the five most widely spoken languages from among approximately 100 languages of Africa, making it the third major language spoken in Africa after Arabic and Hausa (Gragg 1982). Presently the population is situated in Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia. And it is from there that a great number of this population is immigrating to the Diasporas across the globe. I will shortly turn to the causes of the immigration in this section. Oromo have the most diversified culture fostered by a large population, large land area and diversified climactic conditions (Melba 1988 quoted in Oromia). According to Melbaa the most conspicuous aspect of Oromo Culture is the Gada System, the traditional democratic system, which organises the Oromo Society into 7-11 groups or sets that take leadership responsibilities

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<sup>11</sup> ‘deterritorialized’ and ‘transnational’ refer to people who originated in land other than in which it currently resides and whose social, economic, and political networks beyond the borders of nation-states or spanning the globe.



for an eight year term of office. In his own words Melba says, “The Gada System has guided, the religious, social, political and economic life of the Oromo for many years, and also their philosophy, art, history and methods of time-keeping.”

Within this context, the economy of 90 % of the people is mainly based on traditional agriculture. The Oromo Diasporas share a great deal of the social, cultural and political ways of life with the mainstream Oromo population although it is different in economic activities, as it is not based on agriculture. But the most relevant point to this article is the reasons that contributed to the formation of Oromo Diaspora across the globe. And these same reasons seem to be causes for the development of online alternative media. The history of the formation of Oromo Diaspora goes as far back as the 1880s when some European colonial powers such as Italy, France, Belgium and Britain were scrambling for Africa, and parallel with that Abyssinians, Semitic groups that constitute Northern Ethiopia today, conquered Oromia with the assistance of weapons from the former [European colonial powers especially France] (Baxter 1994:169). He explains the nature of the conquest as,

The incorporation of the different [sic] Oromo peoples [sic] took a series of bloody and brutal conquest, which could not have taken place if Menelik had not been able to get arms from other competing colonial powers ...and if the area of conquest had not been ravaged by severe pestilence and famine (ibid).

Political scholars on the Horn of Africa, Holcombe and Ibssa (1990 quoted in Baxter 1994:169) further explain the colonial issue and its consequences as, “The Oromo were colonized: many were sold into slavery, others were reduced to near serfdom, and much of their land was expropriated.” Thus, the act of being sold into slavery indicates the earliest formation of Oromo Diaspora in different parts of the world. For clarity’s sake it is important to note that the colonisers of Oromian State of the Horn of Africa were not Europeans; it was rather a colonisation of one black people by another black power assisted by European arms; thus, perhaps, Oromia is the only state under black colonial rule to date.

In connection with this, one might expect the necessity of translational communication between Oromo Diaspora and mainstream Oromo population and among diasporas within a country, among diasporas in different countries and among diasporas on different continents. In fact it is true that because of work opportunities related to globalisation different peoples from different parts of the world are leaving their birth places and are forming some kind of diasporic communities overseas at their own choices. However, what mainly drives the formation of Oromo Diaspora and partly makes it typical is its being the product of exodus of political elites to exile to escape persecution because of political dissent at home. Zitelmann (1990 quoted in ibid) indicates the wider distribution of the Oromo Diaspora:

It has been reliably estimated that at least half a million Oromo, especially the best educated and most politically aware, have become émigrés. Almost all have the sorts of skills that are so needed in Ethiopia. They live scattered

in cities of Africa, the Middle East, the United States and Canada and in London, Melbourne, Stockholm, Amsterdam, Berlin, Hamburg and Rome

That existence of ‘almost half a million’ Oromo in Diaspora is a figure one year before an important event took place in Ethiopia in 1991. In effect, 18 years after the estimate now 2008 it is reasonable to expect at least the tripling of the number of Oromo population in Diaspora.

The year 1991 was a year when different rebel groups overthrew the Marxist Mengistu regime. In the same year Oromo Liberation Front leaders, supporters and members were declared illegal and forcefully driven out of the country by the transitional government of Ethiopia led by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, (Human Rights Watch Report). That year is a turning point as formation of new waves of Oromo Diaspora began on a larger scale. Thus, it is worth illuminating what has been happening following the new wave of Oromo Diaspora.

Furthermore, in describing the political rivalry in Oromia after the overthrow of the Mengistu military junta in 1991, the 2005 Human Rights Watch report gives us a brief account of how Oromo Liberation Front and its leaders and supporters were forced into exile and a viable opposition representing the Oromo people is lacking as a consequence for the May 2005 “Elections”:

National Elections were scheduled for June 1992...OLF candidates were intimidated and prevented from campaigning effectively in most of Oromia...after the OLF became convinced that it would not be allowed to compete fairly in the election, it withdrew from the race (Human Rights Watch, May 2005).

The ruling Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) has been squashing dissent before and after the May 2005 “Elections” in the same way it did in 1991-92; as a result, the number of people fleeing from persecution to join Oromo Diaspora has been increasing at an alarming rate. It is impossible for me to give an exact figure of the people joining Diaspora because there are no official statistics on that. Most of the migrants do not go through the Ethiopian government immigration department. They rather cross borders to the neighbouring countries and live in refugee camps operated by UNHCR and from there gradually go to different continents and seek political asylum.

The digital media used by the Oromo Diaspora then is of the kind that has close connections with the political disruptions. New media are used as voices of dissent in order to counteract the ideologies and information manufactured by the government-controlled press in Ethiopia. Indicating the state monopoly over technologies and resources such as media, Marx and Engels (nd: quoted in Durham and Kellner 2001) maintain, “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., *the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force*” (italics mine).

## **Quest for Freedom and Democracy**

To refresh your memory, I have argued in the opening part of this paper that I am interested in examining how the Oromo Diaspora communities use the new media for communication and political activism that aims at promoting democratisation in their home country. In connection, this section focuses on some of the literature on media and democracy regardless of the various types of democracies and shortcomings inherent in them. Writing on the application of democracy to online communities, Schuler argues that the term 'democracy' is difficult to define and that there is no consensus among scholars (2001:283). In spite of that, he identifies five elements of democracy: the first attribute is 'inclusivity' which means equal opportunity for participation for everybody. Second, it is a way that enables the citizens to place their issues on the public agenda; this view rejects the monopoly over media by power wielders and media owners. Third, democracy depends on a deliberative process; that is, it allows discussion on a wide range of views in order to reach some decision or consensus. The fourth attribute is concerned with 'equality at the decision stage' where every one is allowed to vote to influence the course of events. Fifth, 'representation' as an attribute of democracy solves the impracticality of involving all citizens in decision-making.

In essence, Schuler's five elements relate to democracy that is practiced in cyberspace. The important point Shuler makes is that he envisages the extraordinary opportunities that the Internet offers as a platform or infrastructure for modern democracy. This opportunity also characterises the Internet use by the Oromo Diaspora.

Human rights are inextricably linked to the bandwagon of democracy. In practising the later there is a need to make sure that information and communication in the media are bound to operate within the framework of the principles that are provided by People's Communication Charter formulated and ratified worldwide in the early 1990s. The principles are namely (1) media should respect human rights, (2) resources needed for communication such as frequencies of airwave and electricity have to be common, (3) information and communication in any society can not be monopolised, (4) the public should be empowered to participate in the communication process, and (5) communicators are obliged to be accountable for their shareholders and the public (Hamelink 2001:23-24).

## **Overview of new media theories**

Carefully exploring the concept of 'bitsphere' and the 'public sphere' is indispensable to examine the role of media in democracy in general and the role of digital media used by the Oromo Diaspora for political activism in search for solutions to longstanding injustices in the Ethiopian State of the Horn of Africa.

Because the concept of ‘public sphere comes’ prior in time to ‘bitsphere’ and that could mean an evolution in the human communication, it is good to start off with the idea of public sphere.

The work of Habermas(1989) is perhaps seminal in areas of examining the democratic role of media. His basic argument is that the development in early modern capitalism created independent flora of public debate. Among the elements of this arena are “ Economic independence provided by private property, critical reflection fostered by letters and novels, the flowering of discussions in coffee houses and salon, and ...emergence of independent market based press”(1989 in Curran 1991:83). These have been settings for the public to engage in critical political discussions. These Habermasian concept still holds true with a great majority of people living in town and cities of Oromia where people gather in coffee houses, cafes, ‘daadhii’ houses (name for local beer houses) engage in critical political discussions as they have their drinks-forced to get informal and non-fearful.

Nonetheless, Oromo Diaspora’s public sphere cannot work in the same way as the participant émigrés are found scattered over different parts of the globe. Then what can be the substitute or complement to the public sphere in terms of diasporas? To answer this question I had to take the Internet, the World Wide Web, online discussion forums, listservs and so on in a parallel with Habermas’ lists of arena for public debate above. Thus they are the arenas for public debate. I would adopt and adapt a word form Michell (1995:167 in Werry & Mowbray 2001:xviii) to refer to these arenas of digital media as ‘bitsphere’:

For designers and planners the task of twenty-first century will be to build the bitsphere-a worldwide electronically mediated environment in which networks are everywhere.... This unprecedented, hyperextend habitat will transcend national boundaries; the increasingly dense and widespread connectivity that it supplies will quickly create opportunities...for planning and designing truly worldwide communities

This quote shows the inevitability of a far-reaching impact of digital media. Still the word ‘bitsphere’ defined by Michell needs unpacking to further illustrate how the combinations of 0s and 1s have significance on our communications today. The technical definition by Webopedia of ‘bit’, the first word in the blend, runs, “Short for binary digit, the smallest unit of information on a machine...a single bit can hold only one of two values: 0 or 1. More meaningful information is obtained by combining consecutive bits into larger units” (Retrieved 30 Mar. 06).

How this digital media transcends all boundaries and gets into the next continent, the next country, the next province and the next room can be simply tested with end of your fingers and at click of a mouse.

The role of media as bitsphere is further provided by MIT (1995-97):

Just as the ancient polis provided an agora, markets, and theatres for those living in its walls, the twenty-first century bitsphere will require a growing number of virtual gathering places, exchanges and entertainment spots for its plugged-in populace

So far, in this section we have seen the ‘public sphere’ and the ‘bitsphere’ and the differences between them and their role within the ambit of contemporary democracy. And it is indicated above that the ‘bitsphere’ is more relevant to the present paper than ‘public sphere’ notwithstanding the latter’s use by the mainstream population.

### **Restricting press freedom by law**

Before analysing the emergence of Oromo Diaspora’s adoption of the new media as an alternative media, it is important to assess restrictive laws and government actions arising from them that led to the extinction of all forms of Oromo media in Ethiopia.

World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) (2006: 151) reports that Ethiopia’s press law criminalizes defamation, publishing ‘false news’ and insulting the Ethiopian government or security forces. The 1992 draft press law was inspired by more than half a century old and unrevised Ethiopia’s penal code, not the constitution. Article 480 of the penal code states this:

Spreading false rumours, suspicion, or false charges against the government or public authorities or their activities, thereby distributing or inflaming public opinion or creating dangers is punishable (WPFC, 2006:152).

In 1992, one year after the Tigrian Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) ascended to power by the barrel of the gun, the regime further modified the provisions in the penal code by expanding on them and writing them into the 1992 draft press law. The procedures and methods by which these laws were drafted were never clear and never involved all stakeholders. It was immediately done after the regime observed the necessity of banning the emerging Oromo press inside the country, which was followed by the banning/outlawing of the major opposition representing the Oromo people, Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).

This was the first turning point in discussing the gradual deterioration Oromo press freedom in Ethiopia. Most reports from media watchdog groups tend to ignore this and take only the second turning point, the 2005 post election crackdown of the government on press freedom and journalist as a reference point. This was virtually the point at which the Oromo press reached a total standstill but the rest of Ethiopian press abuses most reported about was/is the Amhara press that represent/ed the interests of the opposing Amhara elites under the umbrella of Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), before it was infiltrated and destroyed.

While in terms of criminalizing journalists and media the content of the 1992 draft press law was essentially similar to the penal code’s article 480, it included

further restrictive clauses on capital physical and financial punishments. 1992 law's article 10 states the following:

Publication of a) any criminal offence against the safety of the state or of the administration...or the national defence force; b) any defamation or false accusation against any individual, nation/nationality, people or organization; c) any criminal instigation of one nationality against another or incitement of conflict between peoples; d) any agitation for war" is punishable by three years of imprisonment and/or a fine of up to the equivalent of \$ 7,700 (WPFC, 2006:152)<sup>12</sup>.

It is important to indicate that this law, which was drafted in 1992 and which came to significantly influence subsequent draft press laws of 2003 and 2004, was ratified and passed as the media and information law in July 2008, despite serious criticism and disapprovals from media watchdog groups, opposition parties, journalists, critics and academics. Many of critics, however, fail to see the missing link between the current press law and the provisions of press freedom in the Federal Constitution of the country. The missing link is that this law was not inspired by the constitution which was adopted in 1994 and enforced in August 1995, three years later. Therefore, it is possible to argue that this law is not constitutional and that it is a brainchild of the prime minister and his former minister of information and current high advisor.

Ethiopia's constitution's article 29 and its sub articles provide the rights to hold opinions, thoughts, and free expressions. This article has hardly been implemented as much as article 39 of the constitution which provides for self-determination has not. Article 29 (3, 4) of the constitution for press freedom state this:

3) Freedom of the press and mass media as well as freedom of artistic creation is guaranteed. Press freedom shall, in particular, include the rights enumerated hereunder: a) that censorship in any form is prohibited. b) the opportunity to have access to information of interest to the public. 4) The press shall be granted institutional independence and legal protection to enable it to accommodate different opinions and ensure the free flow of information, ideas and opinions that are necessary in a democratic society.

Does the current law reflect provisions in article 29? No. Were any of the sub-articles ever implemented since 1995? NO! Important to note here is although the sub- article 4 states the need for institutional independence of media and communications, the methods by which this can be determined and who would grant them have not been clearly stated.

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<sup>12</sup> Major restrictive provisions of other articles of the 1992 draft press law include further justifications for capital physical and financial punishments of media/media workers, which include attack against the state and national and other emblems (art 244), insults of foreign states (art 264), insult of official emblems of foreign states (art 265), insults to inter-state institutions (art 266), contempt of court (art 449), and special cases aggravating the crime (art 618).

With the presence of one-party politics, it is hard to find solutions to Ethiopia's restrictive press laws for the non-existing independent press. Finding solution to that must involve first finding answers to the long-standing political domination by a minority regime. One cannot imagine the setting up of "an Independent Media and Communications/ Regulator of Ethiopia", free from the Ethiopian Ministry of Information, which is a government arm. The realization for the institutional independence of media and communications will obviously be impossible with the current EPRDF/TPLF domination of the Ethiopian political scene in the narrow and selfish interest of barely one ethnic group.

Although most reports have not argued the point I have, they have begun a through appraisal of the bountifully serious deficiencies in the current media and information laws. For instance, Article 19, the London-based Global Campaign for Free Expression, carried out rigorous reviews and criticisms of the 2003 and the 2004 Ethiopia's press laws. In the laws' draft as well as final versions, the organisation found the following notable problems: its excessively broad scope; restrictions on who may practice journalism; government-controlled registration and certification systems; excessively broad exceptions to the right to access information held by public authorities; the granting of a right to reply remedy that undermines the principle of editorial independence; the establishment of a government-controlled Press Council with powers to prepare and enforce a Code of Ethics; powers vested in the courts to engage in prior-censorship; powers vested in the prosecutor to suspend media outlets; and excessively harsh regime of sanctions for offences that have no defence (Article 19, 2004).

Certain provisions of the current law, especially the ones on government-controlled licensing, the establishment of the Press Council that oversees media activities, and the lack of independent regulatory authorities or intuitions make this law no more useful than being justifications for intensifying the already banned Oromo press freedom and media ownership rights.

Thus, the current Ethiopian press law does unequivocally fail to meet international press freedom and freedom of expression standards. The law defies and shuns Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which is binding on all States in the world. The article states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers (UN General Assembly, 1948).

Furthermore, the law disregards provisions of press freedom given in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which Ethiopia ratified in 1993, and 1998 respectively (Article 19, 2004).

The denials of these fundamental rights is disproportionately so for the Oromo people and for all the repressed peoples in Ethiopia, compared to some rights granted to ethnic Tigre and Amhara media and journalists. This is not just a

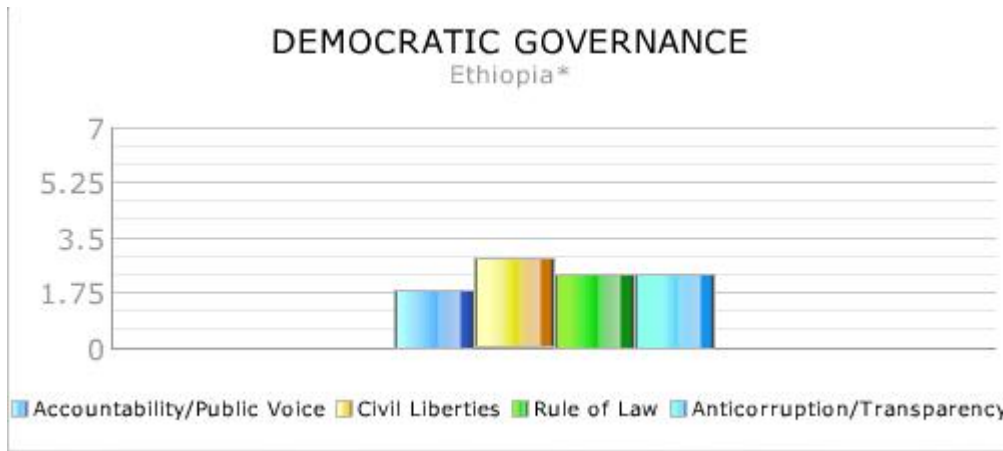
contention as there is staggering amount evidence from various international reports to corroborate it. For instance, regarding widespread discrimination of the Oromo under the EPRDF government, Freedom House (2008: 4) reports this:

The government has tended to favour the Tigrayan ethnic interest in economic and political matters. Politics within the EPRDF have been dominated by the Tigrayan People Democratic (sic) Front. Discrimination against and repression of other groups, especially the Oromo, have been widespread.

**Linking press freedom to governance indicators**

From 1973 to 2008 Ethiopia has maintained its ‘Not Free’ and ‘Partly Free’ Statures’ in overall freedom, including economic freedom, political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2008). This extended lack of freedom indicates the EPRDF government’s un-commitment and its substantial similarities with preceding: the imperial and socialist regimes. While the facts indicate that this government has shown little betterment in leadership, the EPRDF still purports to have demonstrated good and democratic leadership in the country.

In 2007, in a survey rating world countries on a scale of 0-7 in the variables of accountability/public voice, civil liberties, rule of law, anti-corruption/transparency, the Freedom House finds Ethiopia to be amongst the set of thirty countries that are at a critical crossroads to determine their political future. Ethiopia is at the bottom on all the variables, making it a country that is known for bad governance for too long. In turn, this makes it a necessity for the international community to be seriously concerned in seeking an all-inclusive solution.



**Graphic: © Freedom House, Inc 2007.**

If there are no political rights and civil liberties, then it is not hard to imagine the ensuing lack of press freedom in Ethiopia particularly for the segregated majority like the Oromos in the country

**Indicators of physical threats against media and journalists**



The Freedom House (2006) report clearly indicates Ethiopia has no press freedom.

The criteria Freedom House employed to determine absence of press freedom in Ethiopia include: the legal environment in which the media operate; the degree of independence of the news media from governmental ownership and influence; economic pressures on news content; and diverse violations of press freedom from the murder of journalists to other extra-legal abuse and harassment. This government like its successive governments has systematically denied the existence of Oromo press. In Oromia, the largest and the most populous state in Ethiopia, the EPRDF government has totally shattered the existence of independent Oromo media. There is not an agreed upon criteria to measure press freedom violations around the world for various media watchdogs to follow. It is often idiosyncratic to each organization. However, there are some similarities of approach.

The purpose of press freedom indicators/index is to measure the state of press freedom in the world. The measurement is assumed to reflect the degree of freedom journalists and news organizations enjoy in 169 countries and the efforts made by authorities to ensure the respect for this freedom ( Reporters Without Borders, 2005, 2006 & 2007).

The Reporters Without Borders (RWB) compiles its annual press freedom index, using 50 criteria that are distributed in the form of questionnaires. The criteria include violations directly affecting journalists (for instance, murder, imprisonment and physical threats) and the news media in areas of censorship, confiscation of newspaper issues, searches and harassments. At times, the criteria include legislative issues affecting the news media such as whether there is an independent media and communications regulatory body, and types of charges pressed against journalists (2007).

Discussing these criteria is crucial as it explicates what we mean when we say there is or there is no press freedom in one country. I observed documents, reports, and broadcasts often overlook defining the criteria of evaluating press freedom and go into recounting cases. This is tantamount to making a misleading assumption that the populace knows. Without considering the existing criteria and many more emerging variables, the term 'press freedom' will simply be an empty word that it is not concretized for an ordinary person to understand.

So, based on the 50 criteria, RWB (2007) ranks Ethiopia 150<sup>th</sup> with scores of 63 on all counts of violations of out of 167 countries included in the study. The higher the score the worse the countries are. Ethiopia is amongst the 20 countries of the world that are at the bottom of the index. It in the pack of five Sub-Saharan African countries (Equatorial Guinea, Libyan, Somalia and Eritrea) notorious for their press freedom records over a long period of time.

The position of Ethiopia on press freedom indices has a dangerous implication for recreating the non-existing Oromo press. Because the historical circumstances of the Oromos as targets of oppression by the successive

Ethiopian regimes, the current state of the country even makes it harder for the Oromo press to emerge from its cemetery. It also means a few Oromo journalists who manage to be employed by the state broadcaster and the non-Oromo independent press in the country will continue to be targeted as evidences show.

We know that independent Oromo media do not exist in Ethiopia. For instance, Freedom House (2006:2) shows Amharic independent newspaper account for 80 % of the newspaper circulation. All newspapers and the state-owned broadcast media are concentrated in few urban areas, particularly Finfinnee (also Addis Ababa). In the context section of this article I indicated about 90% the Oromos live in rural areas and speak only Afaan Oromo. They are the ones who have been cut off vital information. State Radios and television have assigned disproportionately few hours (<15 hrs combined) Afaan Oromo government propaganda broadcast a week. Whenever there is a general election, student demonstrations, political contestation between Oromo oppositions and the government, and external conflicts with Eritrea and Somalia, the state clamps down even on journalists who work in government media. These journalists are often attacked under the pretext of belonging to or passing over information to the Oromo Liberation Front (CPJ, 2004, 2005; RWB 2007:1)

After 2006, going beyond traditional media, the government propelled itself into censoring and blocking opposition websites from the Diaspora as well as home (ONI, 2008). OpenNet Initiative (ONI) explains this is because opponents of the current government have increasingly used online media to criticize the current government. The state retains all the power to do this because it monopolizes the telecommunications sector and Internet Service Providers (ISPS). Ethiopia performs very low on the test results of Internet freedom as well. Especially, it substantially filters political content. The following graph indicates the current result:

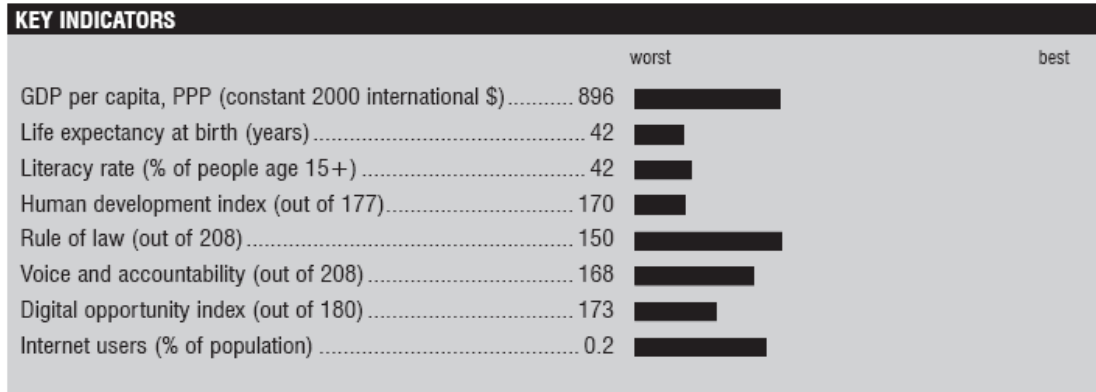
<b>RESULTS AT A GLANCE</b>					
<b>Filtering</b>	No evidence of filtering	Suspected filtering	Selective filtering	Substantial filtering	Pervasive filtering
Political				●	
Social			●		
Conflict/security			●		
Internet tools			●		
<b>Other factors</b>	Low	Medium	High	Not applicable	
Transparency	●				
Consistency			●		

Table: © ONI 2008.

A further Internet indicator for Ethiopia shows that currently only 0.2 % of the country’s population has access to the Internet, which is far behind the rest of

Africa. This percentage is found in a few urban centres. The degree of Oromo exclusion at online new media level clearly exceeds that of radio and television.

The following table corroborates on the country’s low level performance on major indicators according to World Bank et al. (quoted in ONI 2008:2):



Source (by indicator): World Bank 2005, 2006a, 2006b; UNDP 2006; World Bank 2006c, 2006c; ITU 2006, 2005

© ONI

### The current state of Oromo Diaspora and new media

In the above sections, I have indicated how in their homeland the Ethiopian government has deprived the Oromo of its freedom of expression and the rights to own media. The issues of banning freedom of expression and press freedom in Oromia are directly linked to the Abyssinian history of conquest and domination of the Oromo and Oromo land. This history is an impetus for the opening up of new frontier of Diaspora communications, via news websites and general-public-rated discussion forums. This section and its subsections will focus on analysing this phenomenon of resort to the new media out of the lack of other options by giving examples from Oromo websites that have been well maintained for at least a decade. These websites are [www.omoliberationfront.org](http://www.omoliberationfront.org) and [www.gadaa.com](http://www.gadaa.com) I will look at both one after the other.

The new copyright information of [www.omoliberationfront.org](http://www.omoliberationfront.org) reads 2005. I remember accessing this website for the very first time back in 2001 out of curiosity of what it is doing although it although this act was violently punishable if seen in Ethiopia. The content and the format has not changed much ever since. This website is a website of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a veteran political organization founded in 1973 with the missions of leading the Oromo national struggle from a century-old Abyssinian colonial rule (OLF, 2005). The significance of this mission is that it shapes the content produced and distributed on the website and stretches to inform the underpinning goals of several other Oromo websites and blogs. The website specialises in political news and information in its bi-lingual sections-English and Afaan Oromo. Readers of this website contribute postings to the website that focus on the current political situation at home and in Diaspora. The cons are that all

postings are centrally moderated and the website does not allow for comments/feedbacks on postings from readers as many other websites run by Ethiopian political organizations.

The English section of the news caters for the international community and Oromos who understand English, while the Afaan Oromo section is meant for Oromos at home and in Diaspora.

Headline News	
<p><b>NEW! Oromo Students of Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) University Commemorated July 13 With Sorrow</b></p> <p>(OLF News, July 17, 2008) Our sources from Finfinnee reported that Oromo students organized under the Association of Oromo Students of Finfinnee University commemorated July 13, the day the kangaroo parliament of the so called Oromia Regional State, taking direct orders from Meles Zenawi, decided to move the capital city of Oromia from Finfinnee to Adama (Nazareth). Full Report</p> <p><b>NEW! Extreme food insecurity in SNNPR, Oromia</b></p>	<p>Gaaddisa Dhugaa Daawwachuuf as Tuqi To View Oromiffa programs aired on Eri TV <a href="#">Click here</a></p> <p style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">Oromiffa programs aired on Eri TV</p> <p style="background-color: blue; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">Mata Duree Oduu</p> <p><b>NEW! Adoolessa 13-Guyyaa Fiinfinnee! (Finfinneen Handhuura Oromiyaa ti!)</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Finfinnee! Finfinnee! ; Handhuura Oromiya ; Biyya abbaa kiyyaa ; Si utubaan biyyaa; Finfinneen keenyumma kan Oromooti</p> </div> </div>

The recent posting on its both English and Afaan Oromoo sections focuses on the historical event of how university students at home commemorate July 13 as a national morning day for Oromos because of forced expulsion from the city by the EPDF regime. The news section of the OLF website discusses a wide range of political, economic, cultural developments issues in the home country, which are important in the Oromo national struggle for freedom and democracy.

The website also reports on gross human rights abuses. For instance, it covered the March 2007 Gaara Suufii massacre in Eastern Oromia, where 17 people including a 14 year old girl were abducted from home, taken out of prison in to the mountainous area of Gaara Suufii at night and found killed and their bodies fed to beasts. In the same vein, the website reported the May 2008 ethnic cleansing against the Oromo in the Western Oromia, which lead to deaths of several hundred people. Generally, it reports on human rights abuses and harms that are perpetrated against Oromos.

The [oromoliberationfront.org](http://oromoliberationfront.org) is one the earliest Oromo websites, trying to provide alternative political information for the Oromo people. Trends of new media use like this are common to another nations' experience of new media usage as an alternative media in the Horn of Africa. In a study that focused on Eritrean Diaspora's usage of online media, Bernal (2006:161) found that Eritrean abroad use the Internet as a translational public sphere, where narratives of history, culture, democracy and identity are discussed. The starting of Oromo new media as an alternative public sphere themselves relates to the formation of globally-spread refugees and immigrants because of politically motivated violence and instability at home (Bernal, 2006:163).

he further characteristic of the [www.romoliberationfront.org](http://www.romoliberationfront.org) is its convergence with the SBO/Voice of Oromo Liberation (VOL) radio<sup>13</sup>. VOL broadcasts for one hour a day for seven days from Berlin, Germany in Afaan Oromo and Amharic. The two languages have been assigned half an hour everyday except for an exclusively Afaan Oromo service on Saturdays and Sundays. The equal sharing of programme time between the two languages shows how open and democratic the Oromo world view is to ensure diversity and pluralism as opposed to other Ethiopian mono-linguistic fanatic media.

The SBO is at least a decade older than the website as it had celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The target audience of the SBO is 40 million Oromos in Ethiopia and a few other millions in countries in North East Africa. The objectives of the SBO are: a) to popularize principles of democracy and human rights; b) promote public awareness about the importance of environment and ways to safeguard it; c) promotion of Afaan Oromo, culture and history; c) provide basic education on Women in Oromo society and their health (SBO, 2005).

The various aspects of SBO deserve a separate media research in their own rights. It is not the purpose of this paper to do so.

The reason of mentioning SBO radio broadcasts here is simply to indicate the existence of a content- sharing between the two platforms: the radio and the Oromo section of the website. This is technically termed as content convergence. Often, the repurposed radio transcripts can be found published on the Internet. Radio programs are also converted into real media files and stored on the website for global access on the Internet. The impact of this is tremendous in terms of giving people opportunities to access information in the format, technology and time most suited to them. Nevertheless, sometimes the streaming audio embedding is delayed and deprived of the freshness of their content.

The following screenshot shows the convergence of between SBO and [romoliberationfront.org](http://romoliberationfront.org):

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<sup>13</sup> Sagalee Bilisummaa Oromoo (SBO) broadcasts its programs for one hour a day for seven days a week in Afaan Oromoo and Amharic. It transmits on 9,485 KHz SW on the 31 meter band and focuses on Northeast Africa with special focus on the Horn of Africa. However, listeners in other parts of Africa, Middle East and southern Europe also do tune in. It is also listened to by speakers of Afaan Oromo and Amharic through Internet all over the world.

# SBO/VOL RADIO

*Afaan Oromoo*

*Amharic Program*

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07/18/2008  
07/16/2008  
07/15/2008  
07/13/2008  
07/11/2008  
07/09/2008  
07/08/2008

07/18/2008  
07/16/2008  
07/15/2008  
07/11/2008  
07/09/2008  
07/08/2008

© 2005. oromoliberationfront.org

Assessed altogether, the oromoliberationfront.org offers diverse political information and news on the Horn of Africa region, shaped by the organization's vision. The Internet aspect of it is only accessed by a population of < 0.02 % in urban areas and who have the money to buy technology, connectivity and skills. The large majority of the Oromo people are clearly technologically unfortunate to access information on the Internet. In a case study focusing an Eritrean Diaspora website Dehai, Bernal (2005: 665) discusses that interesting ideas and controversies that surface in cyberspace are spread by telephone, word of mouth, and are discussed in face to face meetings off-line. These methods make it possible for the ordinary people at home to get second-hand information. This is very much true for the Oromo people who inhabit the same region as Eritrean.

Gadaa.Com came into the scene of Oromo cyberspace much later in 2004. Gadaa.com is English-language Oromo web portal, encompassing Oromo news, sports, music, politics, human rights, culture and business. It does a good job with regard to automatic news feeds from other news sources world-wide. It usually produces its own content. At least in Diaspora, Gadaa.com's significance is to provide an alternative voice to Oromo people in the continuous search for freedom and democracy in Ethiopia. Gadaa's exclusive use of the English language might be intimidating and inaccessible to the non-English speaking populace at home.

**Oromo Hall of Struggle for Freedom: PaltalkScene**

Oromo Diaspora's use of the basic service of Pal talk known as 'Black Nick'<sup>14</sup> may represent one of the most vibrant, translational public sphere in which discussions and heated debates, and advocacy for human rights, freedom and democracy are carried out daily.

Pal talk is an Internet-based instant messaging service with text, voice and video for subscribers all over the world. The basic software is freely downloadable. In this program, the subscribers responsible for starting the chat room have administrative status, which means they can allow users in, suspend user for period of time, and ban users permanently, and control the microphone. The owner of the room can delegate or grant administrative power to other users to ease the workload (Pal talk, 1999-2007).

That was a brief description of how the program works. I will now analyse a very fascinating topic of ways in which the Oromo Diaspora has been using this technology effectively to advocate for political change in its distant home. I will focus one of a few Oromo chat rooms, named 'Galma Qabsoo Bilisummaa Oromo', translated literally as "Oromo Hall of Struggle for Freedom". This room is always full of activities and with the highest number of users compared to other Oromo rooms. The room disclaims that it is a G-rated public room intended for a general audience including minors. Galma Qabsoo Bilisummaa Oromo does not allow for offensive languages. It also disclaims the room is pro OLF, ULFO, and AFD, the three biggest opposition groups in the Ethiopia. It welcomes discussions pertinent to the struggle of these political organizations and rejects hatred amongst any Ethnic group, nationalities and nations.

Topics of politics, human rights, Oromo struggle etc. are discussed in details everyday by people, but Saturday afternoons are characterized by very informed discussions, where experts, politicians or other able guests are invited to educate or brief the users worldwide on the current sate of Oromo struggle.

Political education by invited speakers in the 'Oromo Hall of Freedom' a common practice every Saturday afternoon. The time zone is carefully chosen by administrators for maximum user participation from different world time zones. Experts in sociology, political and international studies, and history volunteer on the pal talk show to educate participants. Experts passionately lecture on topics such as Oromo unity, regional political developments in the Horn of Africa and their influences the Oromo struggle, Oromo history etc.. The lectures last for at least two hours at least two hours, after which users raise their digital hands to get mics to ask questions for an extended number of hours. This is a two-way interactive experience. The Q&A sessions are characterized by impassioned questions based on issues for the day. Generally, people ask substantive questions except for some users who sit in and try to polarize and

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<sup>14</sup> Black Nick-It is a free service of paltalk , called PaltalkScene Basic. People with this service use the program for audio chat, publishing videos and transferring files and adding up to 199 pals.

shift the direction the discussions. Sometimes very few of participants' comments unexpectedly target the character of the presenter with the intent of hurting their feelings and to ultimately discourage them from doing the education they are doing. Very often acrimony between participants happens which calmed down by the amini or by cyber-mediator. Presentations and discussions are generally in Afaan Oromo to meet the language needs of the audience.

To further indicate the immense amount of activism taking place in the Oromo bitsphere, I will analyse how the room handled a crucial topic-ethnic cleansing. This will serve as an outstanding example of political activism for Oromo rights in the cyberspace.

The following topic was posted and nearly discussed for a week in the room:

*GUBAAY: Baha Wallaggaa keessatti lola mootummaan wayyaanee ummata Oromoo fi Gumuz gidduutti qabsiise gaaga'ama guddaa dhaqqabsiisaa jira*

**Translation:**

GUBAAY: The Woyane- instigated conflict between the Oromo people and Gumuz in East Wallega caused a huge amount of instability and deaths.

This was a voice discussion topic augmented by simultaneous Instant Messaging. It was one of the discussion topics on current events, taking place thousands of miles from where the participants are located globally. In relation of the above topic posted in the room, many ideas were discussed, including and not limited to, sending home money for humanitarian aid for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS). There were also suggestions for holding rallies across cities of hosting nations. I did not know about the money but I have later confirmed that demonstrations happened in Brussels, Oslo, London, Sydney, and Washington D.C and so on opposing ethnic cleansing in Oromia. It is certain that the main alternative communication venues available to the Oromo Diaspora are the websites discussed and powerful multimedia tools such as Pal talk. By means of these technologies, the Oromo Diaspora has mobilized the mentioned demonstration protesting ethnic-cleansing in Oromia and asking for international interventions. This is similar to how Bernal (2006) finds the Eritrean Diaspora uses the cyberspace.

A unique phenomenon that I observed on discussions of such topics is that individual users corroborate whether the incident happened. They update others in the room with current information and news. As the text discussion goes on, users play streaming audio news from major Oromo radio services such as the Voice of America Afaan Oromoo Service and the SBO for all in the room. A user surely gets unimaginable amount of information from the integration of all



media resources replayed in PaltalkScene. The rebroadcast is then paused or stopped and further robust discussions rage until a topic is fully analysed from all possible angles.

Except for when users are banned suspended for violating the rules of the room, the pal talk platform is highly interactive and free. The anonymity of users in Oromo discussion forums does not only keep them safe from Ethiopian spies who pause and eavesdrop, but also seem to encourage them to talk freely. Despite the advantages, there are clear individual differences in participants: some are more knowledgeable than others; some are wise and patient; some are angry and emotional; some are abusive. If used wisely these fora will really be real alternative media.

## **Conclusion**

The Oromo Diaspora communities worldwide have been incrementally using the Internet for pulling together ideas, expertise and resources for political activism; for establishing and maintain communications amongst Oromo communities in disapora and with people in Oromia.

It is particularly striking how the Oromo Diaspora effectively utilizes free online multimedia interactive programs such as PataalkScene Basic for purposes of political debates, education on human rights, history and identity. It is undoubtedly impossible to form this kind of cyber-association to engage in topics of deep political nature that challenges the EPRDF government in the homeland.

The information and communications mediated by this sort of media are rooted in discourses of Oromo nationalism, identity, the history of conquest and colonization of the Oromo by successive Ethiopian regimes. It is not an overstatement to say that what the Oromo Diaspora is doing in the cyberspace is a fight in the cyberspace in the quest for freedom, democracy and justice. This is a constitutional right conducted commensurate with the Article 39 of the Ethiopian Constitution, which allows for the rights to self determination and secession of peoples/states if they so wish to. The issues and topics are serious political discussions about the fate of Oromos and other repressed nationalities in Ethiopia.

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# PROCEEDINGS OF THE 2009 OSA MID-YEAR CONFERENCE

US Policy Towards the Horn of Africa: Opportunities and  
Prospects for Change under the Obama Administration

*Held at*

Howard University

*Founders Library, Browsing Room*

On

**April 4, 2009**

**Edited by**

Zakia Posey, OSA Secretary

Abebe Adugna, OSA President

## **Editors' Note**

***Zakia Posey, OSA Secretary***

***Abebe Adugna, OSA President***

This year's OSA midyear conference aimed at generating discussions on a timely topic of interest: "US Policy Towards the Horn of Africa: Opportunities and Prospects for Change under the Obama Administration." With the incoming Obama Administration in the US, many including the Oromo, hope there is an opportunity for the US to changes it policy towards the Horn of Africa in general and toward the Oromo in particular. The OSA mid-year conference was intended to promote exchange of ideas on the opportunities and prospects for such change, and what might be Oromo's role in it.

It is fair to say that the conference lived up to its promise. It generated a rich and interesting set of presentations and discussions. The panelists included Terrence Lyons, Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution at George Mason University; David Shinn, Adjunct Professor at George Washington University and former US Ambassador to Ethiopia; Ezekiel Gebissa, Associate Professor of History at Kettering University; Asafa Jalata, Professor of Global Studies at Tennessee University-Knoxville; and, Leonardo Arriola, Assistant Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. The discussions were organized into two panels— one panel in the morning and another in the afternoon. The panel presentations were followed by interesting questions and answers.

In light of the rich discussions, and for the benefit of those who could not attend the conference, we thought it would be useful to provide a summary. A key challenge for us however was how to portray a fair account of what was discussed, given that most of the speakers did not deliver a formal paper to OSA (with the exception of Professor Asafa Jalata).

Some caveats about the summary are therefore in order. First, the opening and concluding remarks are based on written notes as delivered. Second, the panel presentations, with the exception of Professor Asafa's, are reported based on notes taken at the conference, supplemented by our audio recording of the conference. They are therefore not full transcripts. Third, the summary of Professor Asafa's presentation is extracted from his full paper prepared for the conference. Finally, for the Q&A sessions, we have made an attempt to maintain the original spirit of the conversations through first person reporting, although these too are not full transcripts.

Despite its imperfections, however, we hope you will find this summary useful.

## **OPENING REMARKS**

**Abebe Adugna**, OSA President

Good morning.

Hello everyone, my name is Abebe Adugna, and I am President of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA). It is my great honor to welcome you to today's event-- the 2009 mid-year conference of OSA.

First, let me thank all of you for coming—and especially those of you who have taken the trouble to travel from other states.

I would like to also thank our distinguished speakers who have taken the time out of their busy schedules to share with us today their research work and analysis of the US policy in the Horn of Africa. I am hopeful that their insights on the topic would lay the foundations for further discussions.

Howard University has, for many years now, kindly hosted OSA conferences. As in the past, today's conference hall is provided to OSA free of charge and we are grateful for that. I am also grateful to the members of the Executive Committee and to Mimi Geleta, Bonnie Holcomb, and DJ Tufa for their crucial support in organizing this conference.

Since its establishment twenty-three years ago (1986), OSA has actively engaged in fostering knowledge and understanding about the Oromo people and issues of interest to them and the wider Horn of Africa region. This conference continues that legacy.

- It has organized 23 annual conferences, covering topics such as history, politics, human rights, economy, culture, language, and social development in Oromia and the Horn of Africa.
- It has continued to publish its signature scientific journal, *The Journal of Oromo Studies* – now published twice a year. It is gaining wider circulation among libraries and universities around the world.

Today's event is entitled: "US Policy in the Horn of Africa: Opportunities and Prospects for Change under the Obama Administration." The conference seeks to address whether and how the US foreign policy in the Horn can play a more supportive and constructive role in creating peace and stability in the region. It also discusses what might be the role and place of the Oromo in that effort.

The Horn of Africa region includes the internationally-recognized countries of Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Sometimes the net is thrown more widely to include Sudan and occasionally, Kenya. The region connects Africa to Europe (through the Red Sea and Suez Canal), and Africa to Asia (through the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea).

Ethiopia occupies a predominant position in the Horn because of its demographic importance: about 85% of the population in the Horn of Africa lives in Ethiopia.

Within the boundaries of Ethiopia, the Oromo are central. Numbering about 35 million people, the Oromo constitute the largest national group. Oromia not only lies at the center of Ethiopia geographically, but also shares physical boundaries as well as religious and cultural heritage with all the major populations in the region – Orthodox Christianity with the Northern Ethiopians; Protestant Christianity with the Southern peoples in Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya; and Islam with Northeastern and Southeastern peoples.

The Oromo are thus key stakeholders in the region's peace, stability and economic development. As the region continues to be embroiled in conflicts, the Oromo cannot afford to stand by idly.

Today there are ongoing conflicts between the countries of Eritrea and Ethiopia; Ethiopia and Somalia; and Eritrea and Djibouti, not to mention internal conflicts within each state. While the specific circumstances of each country are different, it is clear that governments in the region are repressive, and continue to inflict significant human rights violations against the civilian populations. This in turn feeds domestic and regional tensions and instability.

The United States has been a leader both on the diplomatic front and in humanitarian and economic assistance to the region. Nairobi hosts the largest U.S. diplomatic mission in Sub-Saharan Africa. Over the last three years alone, data from the USAID indicates that US aid to the Horn of Africa averaged about \$1 billion per year. Of this, Kenya received about 50%, Ethiopia about 40%, and Somalia and Sudan together about 10%.

Clearly, Ethiopia is an important strategic partner for the United States. Yet, many feel that the US policy in Ethiopia has been predominantly focused on counter-terrorism, often turning a blind eye to the lack of respect for human rights and domestic accountability. Despite the autocratic politics, narrow representation, and massive human rights violations in Ethiopia, the government has continued to enjoy considerable external support from the US government in the name of alliance against terrorism.

Many, including the Oromo, feel that if the US were to play a more effective role in stabilizing the region, its policy in the Horn would have to change. With the new Obama Administration, there is a great deal of hope that this change might happen. But this is by no means certain.

We're here today to start the discussion and to begin to think about how we — as individuals, as members of Oromo Studies Association, some of us as citizens of the United States, and all of us as members of an interconnected world — can be involved in ensuring that the United States plays a more supportive role in creating peace and stability in the region.

I am delighted that our conference features several distinguished speakers and authorities on the US policy in the Horn of Africa who can help us understand the key challenges and opportunities for change. We have two panels:

- The first panel will focus on the regional dimensions of the conflicts, and opportunities and prospects for change under the Obama Administration. Our speakers are Terrence Lyons, Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution at George Mason University; David Shinn, Adjunct Professor at George Washington University and former US Ambassador to Ethiopia; Ezekiel Gebissa, Associate Professor of History at Kettering University, in that order.
- The second panel in the afternoon will focus on the US policy toward Ethiopia. Our speakers for this panel are Asafa Jalata, Professor of Global Studies at Tennessee University-Knoxville; and, Leonardo Arriola, Assistant Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. The discussion will be moderated by Lahra Smith, Assistant Professor of African Studies at Georgetown University.

Following the panel presentations, we will have ample time for questions and answers. I hope this will prove to be a very useful workshop to all of us.

Thank you again for coming. I will now hand over to Bonnie Holcomb, Chairperson of the OSA Board of Directors, who will chair our morning panel.

Bonnie Holcomb's introduction of the first panel followed.



## **SESSION 1: US POLICY TOWARD THE HORN: OPPORTUNITIES AND PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE**

### **Ethiopia: Domestic and Regional Challenges**

**Terrence Lyons**, Associate Professor, George Mason University

Lyons discussed the history of democratic elections in Ethiopia and the prospects for change.

The 2005 elections were a missed opportunity for the Zenawi government. The 2005 elections held promise because there was more popular participation than was the case in past elections. The expected outcome of political changes many had hoped would come, however, did not occur. The challenges to the election and the post-election violence lead to the closing of political space in the country. Many people think that the EPRDF stole the elections and that they were discouraged about participating in the future.

If the Ethiopian government wants to achieve stability in the country they must resolve two issues:

- First, the government needs to be able to bring the Oromo constituency into the government in a real way. The OPDO has failed to bring in the Oromo. They are not seen at the legitimate voice of the Oromo people. The OPDO is only in power due to intimidation and surveillance.
- Second, to achieve stability, the government needs to get the support of urban areas that won opposition support during the 2005 elections. Though Ethiopia is still predominantly rural, the country is rapidly urbanizing. Further, the growing engines of economic growth are in the urban areas. The government will not be able to gain stability if it has not incorporated the urban areas.

Because the EPRDF has not been able to bring these constituencies into the government it remains fragile and has to rely on intimidation and violence.

There is growing cynicism and disengagement from the political process here and in Ethiopia. The multiparty and democratic prospects that held promise in 2008 did not occur. In the aftermath of the 2005 elections, many in Ethiopia and in the Diaspora say we fell for the promise of change in 2005 and were disappointed; as a result, they do not want to participate again. When he talked to people about the prospects for the 2008 elections and the upcoming elections in 2010 people saw them as dead ends. This is a very discouraging and worrisome trend because the only other options for political change are violent and destabilizing.

An Africa wide Gallop poll on citizen election confidence stated that only 13 percent of the Ethiopians polled felt confidence in the fairness of the elections and this is low even by African standards. People feel the election process is hopeless.

The 2008 elections, too, were a missed opportunity. We can get a glimpse into how the government interpreted the 2005 elections and their aftermath by how they handled the 2008 elections. In response to the 2005 elections, the government enacted a number of measures to increase the measure of political control and to restrict political and civil liberties.

In the 2008 local elections (at the kebele level) there were millions of seats up for election. There were only 16000 non- EPRDF candidates out of about 4 millions local seats. So you can see the opposition could not get on the ballot in any real way. Many wanted to engage, but the level of violence and intimidation was too much to compete.

The 2008 elections served to deepen EPRDF control even down to the kebele level. 1 in 20 Ethiopians is involved in an EPRDF controlled council. It has worked itself down to the neighborhood level. There are many stories in local Ethiopian news about the expansion. Clearly after 2005 the EPRDF started to recruit and expand. It is a party that is ubiquitous, deeply present, and entrenched and that has implications for what to expect next in Ethiopia. So if it's not you, then your brother or neighbor is linked to the government in some way. This is an extreme amount of control and surveillance.

Further, the charities and civil societies proclamation recently enacted has been designed to further stifle independent voices. This legislation makes it harder for human rights, democratization, and civil society organizations to operate in the country.

Until recently I thought the upcoming election of 2010 would be like 2000 or 1995 (i.e. the opposition may not participate). Now, I have changed my mind. I have talked to members of successor parties to the CUD and they say they are likely to compete in the urban areas rather than boycott. Now I would guess that the opposition will compete in the urban areas in a minor circumscribed way at least so that they do not lose their seats.

While 2010 is a foregone conclusion, 2015 or 2020 may bring opportunity. They don't want to lose registration or give someone else the opportunity to seize the field.

Though this resilient regime is still afloat, in addition to domestic challenges, it has regional challenges. If all the challenges would arise at the same time it would be difficult for the regime to remain in power.

- The Eritrea and Ethiopian dispute is not resolved, but there are more attractive ways to escalate the conflict under the radar. Instead of sending troops to Badame, the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments have displaced their border conflict to wars by proxy by supporting one another's enemies in neighboring conflicts.
- Somalia is a constant source of worry. There is encouraging news about Somali. It is good that the ENDF (Ethiopian National Defense Forces) troops have withdrawn and that will help stabilize the region in the short run. While there is some good news compared to six months ago, I would not bet that the Ethiopian-Somali conflict would stay at a low level. Ethiopia remains concerned about its

security from the Islamic Courts, but also how others use Somalia. The government will not sit by while these threats escalate.

- The other challenge is that it is hard to track and get information about, is the Ogaden region insurgency (region 5). There is very little information about the region and what is going on concerning Ethiopia's harsh counterinsurgency campaign. The international organizations that are allowed in the region are restricted from speaking out if they want to remain in the area.

To the Obama administration one can see Ethiopia in two ways as a strategic ally versus Ethiopia as a country that raises issues about Washington's dedication to human rights and democracy. We should also look at Ethiopia's role in creating instability in the region.

- It is my view that Washington has very limited leverage over Addis Ababa and the EPRDF. If you notice, anytime Washington says something critical about/to Ethiopia, soon after a high level Chinese delegation will come to Ethiopia or they reach out to Iran. Washington is not the only game in town. To imagine that Meles sits around and waits for calls from the state department is an inaccurate assumption. Ethiopia has all kinds of other options rather than keeping Washington happy.
- U.S. development assistant is tied to projects: 50% went to HIV/AIDS, 15% to emergency food assistance etc. It is very difficult to say to Meles release Burtukan or we are going to throw AIDS orphans into the streets. This is an idle threat. Ethiopia knows that we are not going to cut off HIV/AIDS funds etc.

While I think Ethiopia faces several challenges, I feel that the United States plays a small role in shaping how things will play out in the medium term not only because of the counter-terrorism. The sources of leverage are fairly narrow and weak.

## **Transitioning U.S. Policy in the Horn from the Bush to the Obama Administration**

**David Shinn**, Adjunct Professor at George Washington University, and Former US

Ambassador to Ethiopia

Some see me as part of the Washington establishment and to some degree I am; and this will influence my perspective.

We need to look at the Horn as a region. We need to cooperate with other players in the region. We are at the point that the role of the United States is such that the U.S. cannot do it alone. It will get into deep trouble if it tries to do it alone. American allies like the European Union, Australia, and Japan play an important role in Ethiopia. China is also a player, Russia is starting to take a renewed interest in the region and it is not always positive. Arab countries are taking a role in the Horn through the financial support. India is also a player. India funds Ethiopia more than any other country on the continent and they have made it their concentration country. Turkey has expressed interest in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Iran is not an ally and it is playing a role in the Horn. These are all players the U.S. has to deal with for better or for worse.

### **Ethiopia**

I have a divided view on Ethiopia. Ethiopia has done a lot for America.

- One of the most important collaborations has been in the form of providing troops for peace keeping in Africa (Darfur and Burundi).
- Concerning Ethiopian involvement in Somalia, from the standpoint of the Bush administration, their cooperation was seen as good. This is the part of the U.S. linkage.
- Another positive aspect has been that the EPRDF has had a fairly coherent economic policy. If you look at the GDFP growth rate they have done a good job at the macro-economic level in improving the country. This is the positive side of the ledger.

On the other hand, Ethiopia has major problems in two areas: democratization and human rights.

- The 2005 elections did not turn out well. They were a terrible setback for the country. I hoped they would have learned a lesson from the 2005 about 2008. I had a conversation in December of 2005 with the Sabat Nega where I told Sabat that you guys made a mess of 2005, you should do something to have good honest and viable elections at the local level. I left the conversation feeling as if nothing

would change concerning the local elections. Quite frankly, they were a huge missed opportunity.

- I am more pessimistic about 2010; and maybe in 2015 we will see serious change in the electoral situation in Ethiopia. I take rather lightly the claim that Meles might step down and not contest in 2010 (unless he is pressed by his party to do so, which his party will do). He is likely to run.

## **Eritrea**

Eritrea poses a serious challenge for U.S. relations. U.S.- Eritrea relations is at its lowest point since the country became independent in 1993. The new US Administration may take a new look at the country and try to improve the relationships, but there are so many challenges to overcome. First, Eritreas are still involved in Somalia not because they care, but they want to “stick it to Ethiopia directly”. There are other problems with Eritrea. There are human rights issues in Eritrea. Elections? They do not even know what the word elections mean in Eritrea. What does the word elections mean in Eritrea? The Obama administration should try to grapple with and take a renewed look at the Isayas government even if it does not go anywhere.

## **Djibouti**

Djibouti is an amazingly important country for Ethiopia and the United States. Ethiopia is landlocked and needs her economic stability. The U.S. has its only base in Africa in Djibouti. I am not privy to what is accomplished there and unsure of its utility. One recommendation I would give the Obama administration is that they should do an independent assessment of the base to see if we are getting our money’s worth out of that base. Whenever you have thousands of people assigned to a base and you have to pay rent things get very costly. Djibouti’s embassy is growing to be one of the largest in Africa when it used to be the smallest. This is scary and in 10 years it will be small again. I am not sure if we are getting anything for our money. As I mentioned earlier Djibouti is cozying up to Iran and we need to be mindful. Is the U.S. closing one eye when dealing with Djibouti?

## **Somalia**

The U.S. policy there has been botched since 1994 when we left the country. We pretty much abandoned the country. Only when there was a terrorist threat stemming from the area did we return, but we gave it excessive attention and ended up making a lot of wrong policy decisions. We supported warlords in Mogadishu, we tried to neutralize the Islamic courts and they lost to the courts, and finally Ethiopia and U.S. went into Somalia. I believe we need to stay out and let the Somali sort things out on their own and give development assistance to the combination government in place. We also need to avoid the air strikes in Somalia.

## **Sudan**

The U.S. has 4 goals in the Sudan:

1. To make sure there is peace in between the North and the South
2. End the chaos of Darfur
3. Improve the human rights situation of Sudan
4. Continue the counter-terrorism support of Sudan though this is controversial

Though the Sudanese government has problems, it is the government that is there that we have to work with and we are not into regime change.

The U.S. continues to refer to what is going on Darfur is as genocide and I do not see it as such and we should not center our policy on this issue of ongoing genocide.

The other issue I have with our policy on Sudan is that the U.S. still lists Sudan on the list of state sponsored terrorism and has done so since 1993. Things have changed and now Sudan is cooperating and it should no longer be on the list. So on the one hand, the state department says on its own list that Sudan is cooperating and at the same time, it has not taken it off the list.

The last point I will mention is a recommendation by the Obama team to establish a no-fly zone in Darfur. Why would you want to establish a no-fly zone? Who is going to do it (we do not have the capacity and we expect NATO to do it). Why is it necessary and who will do it? As far as I am concerned, I think this came out of the campaign but it should be forgotten.

## **The Challenges of Change: Obama Opportunities, Oromo Options**

**Ezekiel Gebissa**, Associate Professor, Kettering University

The Bush administration dismissed the utility of soft power; Rumsfeld and others felt the U.S. could do what it wanted around the world and that other nations had to accept what the US wanted. The administration not only saw soft power was oxymoronic, they used hard power in its most extreme form when they invaded Iraq. It was a demonstrative measure to other would-be enemies. The aftermath of these kinds of policies led to a global increase in anti-Americanism.

This hard power perspective has yielded negative consequences for many citizens around the world including Ethiopia. Ethiopia latched onto the war on terrorism arguments. Soon after the Bush administration waged a war on terrorism, the Ethiopian government utilized similar arguments to hide its human rights abuses under the name of anti-terrorism. It unleashed wanton attacks on presumed OLF and OFDM sympathizers and pursued scorched-earth policies in the Ogaden (ONLF).

The Ethiopian government was also encouraged by the bad example of US in Iraq. Ethiopia used similar excuses in Somalia as Washington had done in Iraq. In 2007, it was reported that the Ethiopian government allowed the U.S. to question prisoners held in secret detention in Addis Ababa. The fact that the Ethiopian government cooperated with the United States in Somalia is no secret.

The Ethiopian government and other governments used the opportunity created by the Bush Administration to deal with their own political oppositions with impunity.

This is the past, now to the change.

The Obama administration has repudiated many of the doctrines of the Bush administration and has taken a number of steps to distance itself: the closing of Guantanamo and the closing of CIA prisons were instituted as attempts to project a clean break with the Bush administration.

Obama has learned lessons from the Iraq war. We can infer from comments Obama made as a state senator, during the campaign, and after his administration took power that he would no longer support “stupid wars”. The Obama administration will hopefully wage smart wars. Let us hope that Obama will not support anymore stupid wars like the

Ethiopian war in the Ogaden and in Somalia. He remembers Somali scholars saying that invading Somalia would be bad for Somalia and bad for the United States. The perspective that comes from the Horn of Africa is not antithetical to those of the United States.

Another difference is that the Obama administration is utilizing a soft power. It is taking an alternative perspective of listening to others, even enemies. It will talk to its enemies. Hard power created new and more terrorist, rather than less, by its policies. This change by Obama may have “denied states like Ethiopia the opportunity to brand political opponents as terrorists” in order to imprison them or kill them and make them disappear. This is evident in Obama’s inaugural speech: “to those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict or blame their society’s ills on the West, know that your people will judge you by what you build not by what you destroy”. For all the change Obama stated he would pursue, however, he is not going to knock down states and governments. He feels governments are the key to keeping stability in the world. We will not know the extent to which he will go to implement his visions.

The fact that Obama knows Africa, and has been to Ethiopia is important. The fact that he has lived outside of America gives him an expanded perspective. The fact that he has assembled a team of people with international experience is very promising. Obama mentions in his speeches in 2007 that he has a better sense of how *they* are thinking and what *they* are like and this is unprecedented.

Obama’s personality is important. He has all the qualities of a leader that can use soft power: charisma, communication, persuasion and exemplary behavior. The Obama administration seeks to listen to leaders of other countries. When people listen rather than lecture, this is definitely a change.

We can expect Ethiopian leaders to respond to this in two ways. First, from now on they may not expect the U.S. to support the confrontational way they deal with politics in general and with political opponents in particular. Another way is that the Meles regime may ingratiate itself with the new US administration by showing a willingness to dialogue with opponents. This is not just wishful thinking. The Ethiopian government, probably spurred by local factors, seems to have recently initiated contacts with the OLF. Those who were mediators were talking about it. The atmosphere of politics has changed if not the substance of politics.

### **Challenges**

The president stated he had a commitment to assisting with the emergence of a stronger and fairer society in the developing world. He made a point of this in his inaugural address and when he addressed the poor nations of the world and stated that we pledge to make your farms flourish and to provide clean water. This is a promising vision.

Obama’s promise and what he can deliver may, however, be undermined by the global economic crisis. The recession could be used by repressive governments around the



world as an excuse to increase their power and suppress opposition, probably in the same way that the 1930's great depression led to a questioning of liberal democracy. Many at that time discredited democratic capitalism as a viable political system. We have seen some of this kind of reaction against democratic capitalism in Latin America with leaders like Chavez and others in Nicaragua and Belize. Even in Europe, some question the magic of the market and talk about the end of the Washington consensus. There is a slight move away from neoliberal democracies.

How is this relevant to Ethiopia? I think that European countries and America will ride out the recession; and their political systems tend to be self-correcting. Obama's election shows that the country can change course. In Ethiopia, the recession may have different results.

- Even before the recession began, Ethiopia was not doing well. Ethiopian leaders embraced a capitalist model suddenly in 1991 and capitalism was ushered in without developing the rudimentary institutions needed to sustain it. Without the capitalist ethos of fair competition, commitment, and the belief in personal achievement and in hard work, the system cannot work as it does in the West. The results have been growth benefits that don't percolate down to the masses; a rampant corruption where nothing in the economic sector works without patronage or kickbacks; an oligarchy of economic and political elites rule everyday life. In short, a crony capitalism unregulated by personal ethics or government supervision that has spawned tremendous inequality. You have people who take vacations on the Tunisian Riviera while school children go to schools without benches. The Ethiopian government always touts its economic growth and state that political stability flows from economic growth, but the lack of fair distribution of this growth beyond the elite class may get even worse with the current recession.
- With regards to the elections, the problems are deep. The government is reacting to the recession by instituting fiscal austerity measures. For example, recently the government has centralized tax collection from chat. Regional governments were able to levy taxes on chat and Oromia state used to get 150 million Birr from chat. The nationalization of coffee exports has also occurred. Further, there is limited lending from the central bank and private banks. This will impact business. As the recession deepens and the effects widen the Ethiopian government may try to institute authoritarian measures to cope with economic disruptions.

Because of these factors, if we look to recent history, Ethiopia, unlike Western nations, does not have the capacity to self-correct. In Ethiopia, governments tend to hold onto power until they collapse rather than reform or step aside. With these kinds of profound social disruptions and deep economic problems the political system cannot respond appropriately. But what will happen? The same thing that happened in Ethiopia for the last 100 years: the only time a new government emerges is because the existing one collapses. The potential for this to occur is there.

There was a glimmer of hope for peaceful democratic transition in Ethiopia in 1991. However, with the failure of that transition, the Ethiopian prime minister dismissed the neoliberal paradigm and prescribed first a revolutionary democracy and recently a democratic developmental state. Today Ethiopia's democratization seems to be to pursue the dominant party democracy, where in essence political competition takes place only to confirm the government in place. According to this democratic developmental state model, the EPRDF remains in power until the country has achieved economic growth and gets out of poverty. As the recession deepens, it makes a case for strengthening the government. The Recession will only help the EPRDF justify further interventions in the economy and more control in politics.

### **Oromo Options**

There are two options for the Oromo. The U.S. has its own national interest to pursue in the region and they will continue to do so. Either Oromo political organizations can keep expecting Obama to embrace their agenda, or the Oromo can embrace Obama's vision.

I do not think Obama will embrace the Oromo vision. Obama has a predilection toward dialogue rather than confrontation.

- If the Ethiopian government aligns itself with the Obama administration's agenda and opens up for dialogue, then the Oromo can press the Obama administration that this process not be a charade, but to really resolve issues and conflicts.
- The Obama administration has promised to double U.S. annual investment and foreign aid. I think that this initiative can be important for Oromos in many ways. The Oromo could take this promise seriously and can press the Obama administration to make it conditional that if aid is delivered that it should be delivered in a proportional way. Obama stated that he would expand prosperity and we can argue that the Oromo deserve these opportunity. We can push for the aid to distributed equitably by embracing his agenda rather than him embracing ours.

We can respond by realizing that Obama is unlikely to embrace our agenda; he is, after all, an America president. But we could benefit from embracing his agenda.

### **Q&A Session**

#### **Audience Questions: Round 1**

How do we bring a majority government to power in Ethiopia?

You said that the OLF missed an opportunity in 2005, do you still believe this after what happened to Kinijit? What different opportunity would they have had if they participated? What do you suggest for the 2010 election?

How can the Oromo influence the Obama Administration? What advice would you give the Oromo?

What does the panel have to say about U.S. support of dictatorial regimes like the Meles regime?

Why does the US want to keep the Meles regime in power?

### **Panel Responses to Audience Questions**

**T. Lyons:** As I have mentioned in other texts, Ethiopian is becoming increasingly totalitarian. I do not call it a democracy and that is relatively easy to respond to. About the coming transition, transitions are always coming. At some point a regime will change. Regimes in time get tired and this fact lies ahead of us in Ethiopia. How is this going to happen in Ethiopia? Is it going to be slow, will they have a managed electoral transition where the regime would become broad and less military etc.. I feel 2005 was an opportunity for this form and the opportunity was lost. Is there an opportunity for a military transition? It is out there, but the costs are too much and we need to avoid this. What I found intriguing was Ezekiel's comments. They could develop a compromise and this would be a way to manage the transition. A transition is coming, is it going to look like 1991 or 1974 which would be extremely violent and full of suffering or are there different options and that do not lead to country and regional instability?

On this question of U.S. support, I have a different perspective. I do not think that Meles sits around waiting for Hilary Clinton to give him a call saying yes, give such and such support to the OLF now, yes thanks for giving me that direction. Ethiopia has its own sources of power and resources and in fact U.S. support is not a major source of EPRDF power. This may be an area you all disagree with me on, but this is my view.

**E. Gebissa:** With regard to democratization, I do not know of any place in the world where this process progresses from autocracy to democracy, it is not evolutionary. There is a tendency to lump all Western nations together. The European nations provide direct budget support to the Ethiopians; the U.S. does not. One should look at the support of the regime during its early days as a three-legged stool. 1) Eritrea provided security services to Ethiopia after the Derg period. Eritrean commanders were there. The military apparatus was supported by Eritrea initially. 2) After the Derg, there was nothing in the coffers, whatever sustained Ethiopia was foreign. The change we see in Ethiopia is not internally generated. Either foreign aid or Al Amoudi. 3) During the early days the EPDRF/TPLF government rested on Tigray. The bureaucracy was manned by those loyal to the TPLF. Loyalty was not based on talent or merit, but on ethnicity.

When Ethiopia fought with Eritrea the first leg was broken. After the war, foreign governments warned that aid would stop coming, but they did not keep their promise and aid kept coming.

After the war, there was a split within the TPLF and this leg of support was also broken. At that time, the government could have collapsed. There is an ebb and flow in terms of its strength and this is a crucial moment in Ethiopia. Their sources of power are precarious.

In terms of the Oromo and how they can be united: the Oromos need to find a way to unify; the Americans cannot do this for the Oromo. If the Oromo can provide the stability the U.S. is looking for, they would get a second look. I don't think the U.S. is particularly wedded to Meles.

**D. Shinn:** Let me try to address a number of questions. The opening issue about the U.S. dealing too frequently with the symptoms of problems rather than the real cause is accurate to a degree. This does happen and this has increasingly happened since the war on terror. I have been critical of the U.S. counter-terrorist policies. In the Horn of Africa our policy has been based on a military response and catching bad guys instead of dealing with those elements that spawn terrorism that are internal and also those that come from the outside. I hope that the Obama administration will try to deal with root causes and not the symptoms.

On the good news side, I think we will see an increased attention and push from the Obama administration to focus on issues that deal with democratization and human rights that will go beyond rhetoric. In the Bush administration, this was part of the rhetoric and sometimes there was also some follow-up, but oftentimes these issues fell by the wayside and the political issues realities on the ground trumped human rights. How this will play out in Ethiopia Today is difficult to say. Whether it will go as far as you would like it to go is not likely; however, it is likely to go beyond where the Bush administration went.

In terms of the OLF, this gets back to my running arguments with Asafa. I have tried over the years to stay in touch with them occasionally and I have had my arguments with them as well. I have a sympathy for them. I have urged them to participate in the political process and many members said that they tried this back in 1991 and look where that got them. I felt that they should have participated in 2005 and even though we all know how badly it all went. Even if they did well and it might have been for naught all over again. But, it may have advanced that process a step further than it did by staying out of the election and it would have created a certain dynamic that would have made it that much more difficult for the EPRDF to carry on business as usual. By simply boycotting the election this may have gotten them nowhere. Instead, they are carrying out their armed movement in Eritrea, which is a pretty discredited place to be carrying out their business. I understand why they are located in Eritrea, there is no other place to operate. But the military success of the OLF, in my view, has been pretty minimal. And I do not see this changing. This is not the future of how the Oromo improve their status in the country. I am taken by Ezekiel's comments and Ezekiel may know something that I am not aware of and if discussions are going on now, I hope that this is right and that they are serious. I have raised the issue of the government talking to the opposition on a number of occasions and in my last visit in 2005 there was no interest from the EPRDF

side. They stated that if OLF wants to talk to us that is fine, but we are not seeking them out; if something has seriously changed that is great.

As for the dictators that collaborated with the U.S. that were ticked off by questioner, I had nothing to do with all those dictators. The only one I have had anything to do with was Meles. It is a fact that the U.S. has dealt with its share of dictators and will continue to do so in the future. When it comes to political interest, if a country provides you a significant share of your oil you will probably have a good relationship with that dictator. This is just the way life is.

When it comes to GDP growth rate in Ethiopia, if the EPRDF is saying they have achieved a 14% growth rate this is a very anomalous figure. On average, the GDP growth rate has been 5 or 6 percent. There are some offsetting issues here that deserve mentioning. If you make it a per capita growth rate then the rate is low due to the high birthrate. If you figure in the issue of corruption, that changes things. Ethiopia comes out pretty low in the ranking of transparency international corruption perception index. Further, inflation is also an issue. In terms of inequality in Ethiopia, if it is as serious as you say it is, that is very worrisome. He stated he was not sure if there is a lot of inequality there because he does not study this and he is not sure how much of an issue this is.

There was a question of how can the Oromo make an impact on the Obama administration. The only way to do it is the way every other interest group does it in this country and that is through the American political process; by working through your congressional representative in your home districts where you have a significant number of Oromos living and you bring pressure to bear on them. You will be surprised at how many African governments have had impacts in a handful of congressional districts in getting their attention, to get them to focus on problems.

You have an added problem in a way because American politicians do not think of ethnic groups as much as they think of countries. They will think of Ethiopians rather than Oromos. It will be hard for the average American politicians to dissect the fact that there are 85 different ethnic groups and yours by far is the largest. But American politicians do not understand this element, they may say "so yeah you are 1 of 85 and why should we bust our backsides for you?" You have to make that case and it is up to you and no one is going to do it for you. You can try the media, but this approach is scattershot and does not get you very far. The only way to do it through the political process.

To answer the last question concerning the idea that the U.S. wants to keep Meles in power and not allow the Oromos to achieve power. This is not phrased right; it is not that the United States wants to keep Meles in power, but the United States does not want to remove him from power. There is a difference. If we wanted to keep Meles we would provide him with lots of military aid and training and there are things that the U.S. can do to keep him in power. The U.S. takes the position that he is there and we will work with him. We made the decision not get into regime change in Ethiopia. He agrees with Terrance that U.S. assistance does not keep Meles in power. He hears this from all sorts

of groups. He has been in conversations with him and Meles has almost said take your aid and get out of here because we are not his sole source of power.

## **Audience Questions: Round 2**

How do you strengthen democracy in Ethiopia?

How does the U.S. make long term and short-term policy decisions?

What does the ICC arrest warrant of Bashir mean for human rights in Africa?

Hillary Clinton went to China and declared human rights issues were not on the table. What does this mean for Obama Administration's focus on human rights?

What is the policy analysis of aid to Ethiopia?

What is going on in the mind of Meles?

You said Sudan is not genocide. How many people have to die? How do you define genocide?

Why haven't the Oromo and other oppositions succeeded in Ethiopia?

What advice would you give the new Obama administration?

## **Panel Responses to Audience Questions**

**D. Shinn:** A questioner raised an important point that deserved mention directly. His comment is on the issue of American financial support to Ethiopia. As an Oromo when we say that America is funding Ethiopia, we are not saying that the United States is funding Ethiopia directly through military aid; however as we all know, the United State plays a majority role in the decision making practices and policies of major international organizations that gave funds to Ethiopia for example the World Bank and the IMF. They can use our funds for humanitarian issues and then save their funds they get from Russia and China to buy arms. We are saying America is the majority leader among international organizations and Ethiopia will not have funds to sponsor developments and improvements without our assistance. America has an indirect influence in that sense.

Let me say something I should have said at the outset, I do not speak for the U.S. government. I only speak for myself. About this power I supposedly have, I am an adjunct professor working on an adjunct salary from my house. Sometimes people do listen to me, but only occasionally.

How do you strengthen democracy? I think the best way to do this is to strengthen civil societies across the board. Those Ethiopians that have an independent voice i.e. women's lawyers and HUNDAE was supported by the U.S. in the past. You do not get instant

democracy, it is a long term effort. This is a country that has had two millennium of highly concentrated power, you are not going to get instant democracy anyway, you have to work with what you've got and you won't get instant democracy anyway.

There was a question on how does the U.S. make long term and short term policy decisions? What are the precepts? This is a good question and it varied from administration to administration and even within an administration depending on the situation. The Carter administration put greater influence on human rights and democratization. These issues did not dictate policy, but they played a larger role than they did in any subsequent administration. Under the Bush administration after 9/11, the major precept has been anti-terrorism. If your major precept is counter-terrorism, then human rights issues get pushed to the side at best and pushed off the table at worst. This does happen from time to time. He also alluded to the issue earlier that any major supplier of oil or any other critical raw materials will get a break that other countries do not get. Ethiopia does not fall in this category and it does not provide any critical resource, but where Ethiopia fits in relates to their collaboration on counter-terrorism.

On the question of the ICC arrest of Bashir and what this means for human rights in Africa. I feel that the ICC botched things here and with Kony in Uganda. I agree with Reverend Franklin Graham and he said it was a bad idea to issue an arrest warrant he warned them not to do it. It is better to push for reconciliation between the parties in both Darfur and Southern Sudan. I am more concerned about ending the crisis in Darfur and insuring the success of the CPA.

There was a paraphrasing of Secretary of State Clinton's comments in China concerning human rights. This is not totally accurate there was a statement to that effect, then there was another statement clarifying the issue afterward which stated we did talk about the issue, but it was not on the public agenda. They appeared not to be on the agenda in China. There was a downplaying of the human rights issues in China, it was not a dismissal or a total rejection of a discussion on the topic, though the impact may not be significantly different. The world may react and think that the U.S. may not be interested in this issue in China.

What is the policy analysis of aid to Ethiopia? This is a good question. We have all talked about what the aid is going to in Ethiopia. Much of it goes to HIV/AIDS. When I was working there much more of the aid went to education, but this has decreased. Another piece that has decreased, though it was not that large in the first place, were funds to democratization projects. There was not a lot of cooperation from the Ethiopian government and so they drew back. Obama may bring some of this funding back if they can convince the Ethiopian government to go along with it.

What is going on in the mind of Meles? Oh, boy! Meles is a very smart guy and some of you may not want to hear that. He reads voraciously especially in economics. He likes to talk about things he has read. From his view what is going on in his mind while talking to you is the following: He is sizing up the other side. He is trying to say things that are not untrue, things that will not totally piss off the American ambassador, but he can still

get his point across. By and large he was pretty successful. He can play them like a Stradivarius and he can play all these countries.

Genocide? What is genocide? Not a very good question. It is not just numbers that determine genocide? Everyone would agree that Rwanda was a genocide. What about the Congo, 5-6 million have been killed over years. He does not see this in Darfur, yet the world is not calling the Congo a genocide. No other country in the world has called Darfur genocide beyond us. We have to deal with the situation on the ground and not get caught up in the emotion of the word genocide if you cannot justify it any longer.

On the suggestion that asylum seekers and refugees are being discriminated against because of affiliation with the OLF. The state department does not have the OLF on their list as a terrorist, though some people have tried to get it on the list.

Why haven't the Oromo and other oppositions succeeded in Ethiopia? The environment is terribly difficult in Ethiopia. If opposition groups cannot compete in any even way this will be difficult. Another criticism that he would level is that some of the opposition groups are terribly disorganized; there is a lot of factionalism. It is not all the fault of the EPRDF simply not letting them participate. If you take the CUD for example, who was being funded by and large by the Diaspora. How did the average Ethiopian see this organization?

What advice would he give the new administration? More support should be given to democratization and we pay less attention to the counter-terrorism. This would weaken the link between the EDRDF. Annual food aid is not the answer. You do not always have a famine, but there is a food deficit. Ethiopians have to figure out how to do this. Obama talked about a new green revolution for Africa. If we gave more agricultural aid and development assistance/funding we could help Ethiopia wean itself from food aid and this would be important.



## **SESSION 2: THE CASE OF OROMIA AND ETHIOPIA: HOW CAN THE US BALANCE SUPPORT FOR COUNTER-TERRORISM WITH DOMESTIC ACCOUNTABILITY?**

### **SESSION 2: SHORTCOMINGS IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS OROMIA AND ETHIOPIA: WILL THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION INTRODUCE CHANGE?**

***Asafa Jalata***, Professor of Global Studies, Tennessee University-Knoxville

Global strategic interests and geopolitics rather than the mutual benefits of the American and African peoples have mainly shaped U.S. foreign policy objectives and priorities on the African continent. As the U.S. emerged as the global hegemonic power by replacing Great Britain after the World War II, it used Africa as “a strategic stepping stone” to the Middle East, and during the Cold War as “a pawn in East-West struggles” (Carter, 2009: 1). Since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the U.S. has been using Africa for its objective of the so-called war on global terrorism by allying with some dictatorial and terrorist African regimes, such as that of Ethiopia, that engage in state terrorism and gross human rights violations while giving lip service to the issues of democracy, human rights, and economic and social development. Consequently, the U.S. government has been building relations with the parasitic African ruling classes and their repressive and exploitative governments at the cost of the ordinary African peoples.

Paul Henze (1985: 74), one of the architects of the American-Tigrayan alliance, argued in the mid-1980s that the Tigrayans “as much as the Amhara, are an imperial people who, despite their loyalty to tradition, think of themselves as having a right—and perhaps even a duty—to play a role in the larger political entity of which they are a part.” While promoting the Tigrayan ethnonational interest, the same American ideologue dismissed the political significance of the Oromo people, the largest ethnonational group, by arguing that Oromo grievance “is both territorially and politically diffuse and unlikely to coalesce into a coherent ethnic resistance movement” (Henze, 1985: 65). In a multinational empire like Ethiopia, to identify and support one ethnonation to dominate and exploit other ethnonations claiming that it has the right to rule or it is culturally superior is racist (Jalata, 2001: 89-132). In justifying this racist action, Henze (1985: 74) asserted that the Tigrayans recognize “the need to reconstitute Ethiopia and establish a just government recognizing regional rights and ethnic distinctions” as “a natural outgrowth of . . . [their] view of Ethiopian history.”

Just as the Tigrayans are justified to rule and dominate other peoples by their sense of “fairness,” they are also seen as pro-West because “they do not try to claim they are Arabs and they do not seek the support of Arab governments,” according to Henze (1985: 74). Implicit in these arguments is that other peoples in the Ethiopian Empire, such as the Oromo, are pro-Arab and anti-West and lack a sense of fairness to deal with other peoples. Henze (1985: 65) dismisses the Oromo struggle for national self-determination as the following: “The claims of the Oromo Liberation Front of widespread organization

and effectiveness inside Ethiopia cannot be substantiated by firm evidence. *Oromia* as a territorial entity has no meaning inside Ethiopia. It is an exile construct.” Based on such false assumptions, U.S. foreign policy experts like Henze advised the American government to invest in the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and dismissed the relevance of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and other liberation fronts in the Ethiopian Empire.

Because of its perceived strategic national interest and the wrong advice it received from experts and racist assumptions about the Oromo (Jalata, 2001), the U.S. government has allied with the Tigrayan minority elites to form a colonial government and to suppress the Oromo national movement. As Douglas Hellinger (1992: 80) notes, “What is missing from U.S. policy toward Africa is a basic respect for the people, their knowledge and their right to collectively determine their own future.” Will the Obama administration respect the rights of African peoples in general and that of the Oromo in particular? Will President Obama (2009) respect his inaugural promise and make African dictators in general and Meles Zenawi in particular accountable because they silence dissent and “cling to power through corruption and deceit?” For sake of clarity and critical understanding of the essence of the U.S. foreign policy in Oromia and Ethiopia, let us historically explore the relationship between the U.S. and the Ethiopian state.

### **The U.S. and the Meles Government**

Currently the main rationale of U.S. policy makers’ involvement in Ethiopia is to maintain political order and to fight against global “terrorism.” The major reason why the U.S. government cannot effectively deal with global terrorism is that it practices double standards, and ignores the terrorism of friendly states such as that of Ethiopia whilst complaining about other forms of terrorism (Jalata, 2005). Eqbal Ahmad (1998: 7) comments that as a global power the U.S. “cannot promote terrorism in one place and reasonably expect to discourage terrorism in another place.” Supporting the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian regime that engages in terrorism and massive human rights violations on various population groups in general and the Oromo in particular demonstrates that the U.S. is not committed to promote democracy, human rights, and social justice.

### **Will the Obama Administration Introduce Change in U.S. Foreign Policy?**

Considering his political slogan of change and his African heritage, some political observers, experts, and African activists expect that the Obama administration will introduce some reforms in U. S. African policy. Suggesting that his “administration has an opportunity to fundamentally remake U.S. relations with Africa during its tenure,” John Prendergast and John Norris (2009: 1) state the following: “As the first president of the United States with immediate African roots, President Obama not only has an important reservoir of goodwill on the continent, he also has the ability to move beyond the tendentious ‘North-South’ debate between developed and less developed countries that has made more transformational policies difficult to attain. Efforts by the dying generation of Africa’s strong men who believe they should rule for life . . . to portray President Obama as a former colonial master will have little resonance in Africa or

elsewhere.” Nikki Duncan (2009: 1) also notes that “President Obama’s African heritage naturally invokes the expectation that an Obama Administration will bring a certain cultural sensitivity and understanding of the challenges that face the African continent, and thus will be likely to address challenges in a more pro-active manner.” Or will the Obama administration do more of the same when it comes to U.S. policy in Oromia and Ethiopia?

As a legislator, Senator Barack Obama expressed his concerns on the issues of ending the genocide in Darfur, promoted conflict resolution and peaceful elections agendas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supported the idea of bringing Liberian war criminals to international justice, proposed the policy of formulating a coherent strategy for stabilizing Somalia, and advanced the agenda of fighting HIV/AIDS in Africa (Duncan, 2009: 1). As a presidential candidate, he outlined three main objectives, namely, intensifying the integration of Africa into the global economy, enhancing peace and security of African states, and consolidating relationships with governments, institutions, and civil society organizations by increasing commitment to promoting and deepening democracy, accountability, and reducing poverty (Duncan, 2009: 2). After Obama became the president of the U.S., Phil Carter, Acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, revealed four U.S. foreign policy priorities: 1) Financing security assistance programs for Africa on continental, regional and country levels; 2) promoting democratic systems and practices in the continent; 3) facilitating economic development; and 4) financing African health and social development.

The priority of providing security assistance programs at the level of the African Union (AU), at the sub-regional level, and at the level of an individual state is a serious problem at this time because most of the citizens of Africa are denied their democratic and human rights and social justice. Under these circumstances, the main beneficiaries of such programs are the African heads of state and their henchmen. Therefore, promoting security assistance programs for the AU and most African governments is tantamount to supporting dictatorship and human rights violations. For instance, the headquarter of AU is located in Finfinne, the center of Oromia, and this continental organization does not oppose the political repression, state terrorism, and gross human right violations of the Oromo and others by the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government. According to Associated Press (2009: 1), Meles Zenawi and his followers are possible targets of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as many leaders of African countries. The president of Genocide Watch, Gregory Stanton, wrote on March 23, 2009, an open letter to the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights to admire the action that the ICC took in issuing a warrant for the arrest of President Omar al-Bashir of the Sudan and to investigate the crimes Meles and his government committed against humanity in the Horn of Africa:

The action that the International Criminal Court has taken in this situation has restored hope to peace and justice loving people, affirming that international human rights law not only exists on paper, but in reality. It also sends an important message to perpetrators throughout the world that impunity for their crimes is not assured forever; which may be a primary reason that one of the first leaders to defend Omar al-Bashir and condemn the warrant was Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, whose government has also been

implicated in a pattern of widespread perpetration of serious human rights atrocities in Ethiopia and in Somalia. He and those within his government may be keenly aware of their own vulnerability to similar actions by the ICC in the future that could upend a deeply entrenched system of government-supported impunity that has protected perpetrators from any accountability.

Gregory Stanton demonstrated how the Meles government has committed heinous crimes through involving “in the inciting, the empowerment or the perpetration of crimes against humanity, war crimes and even genocide, often justified by them as ‘counter-insurgency.’”

The AU and most African heads of state oppose the indictment of the Sudanese President al-Bashir by the ICC for allowing the committing of crimes against humanity in Darfur; these leaders fear that they may face the same fate because of their engagement in similar practices (Associated Press, 2009: 1). Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa on March 2, 2009 in a *New York Times* editorial chastised the AU and African leaders for rallying behind al-Bashir who allowed genocide to take place in Darfur. So if one of the Obama priorities is to maintain these reactionary and oppressive African continental and state institutions without introducing reform, U.S. foreign policy on Africa is going to be more of the same. As the East African analysts (2009: 1) states, “Africa will not rank high on Obama’s global agenda.” If the Obama administration wants to introduce some changes in U.S. the two requirements that Prendergast and Norris (2009: 3) advance are helpful:

1. African regional institutions need to become increasingly responsive to the needs of African citizens and not just the prerogative of African heads of state.
2. The broader international community must recognize that war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide are not ‘African problems.’ They are international problems that demand international solutions.

All the objectives and priorities of Barrack Obama as a senator, presidential candidate and the president reflect the general policy objective of the U.S. toward Africa; these objectives and priorities focus on the perceived national interests of the U.S. and its African governmental partners regardless of their positions and practices on democracy and human rights. When he was a senator, he selectively focused on the genocide in Darfur, the problem of democracy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the political crises in Somalia by ignoring the political tragedies in the Ethiopian Empire. His priorities of facilitating the further integration of Africa into the capitalist world system and promoting the security of African states without the prerequisites of implementing the principles and practices of democracy and human rights protection are tantamount to endorsing the previous U.S. policy on Africa.

There is no clear indication from the Obama Administration that the U.S. foreign policy on Africa in general and Oromia and Ethiopia in particular will be reformed. As Nikki Duncan (2009: 3) asserts, “while the elements of Obama’s Africa policy look familiar,

the mechanisms and manner of implementation will determine the actual impact.” At this time, the priorities of President Obama do not have mechanisms of reforming U.S. policy on Africa. Furthermore, the appointments of the former foreign policy operatives and experts of the previous U.S. administrations who lack the critical understanding of Africa in general and Oromia and Ethiopia in particular indicate the continuation of the previous U.S. foreign policy that did not take the African peoples seriously. Susan Rice, Michelle Gavin, Tony Lake, Aaron Williams, Johnnie Carson, and others “are just a few among several distinguished actors that have been brought on to Obama’s team to help carve out the administration’s policies and stances on Africa and related issues” (Duncan, 2009: 3). These individuals lack concern and commitment for promoting democracy and human rights in Africa.

### **Conclusion**

If President Obama wants to stick to his slogan of change, he should not leave his administration’s foreign policy on Oromia and Ethiopia to the bureaucrats in the U.S. Department of State and at the African Desk. Such bureaucrats, experts, and operatives lack deep knowledge and commitment for the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights. President Obama needs to provide genuine leadership from the top by giving priority to the promotion of democracy and protection of human rights in Oromia and Ethiopia if he wants to fulfill his promises of making accountable corrupt, criminal, and deceitful leaders who cling to power through violence. Rather than continuing the U.S. relation with the authoritarian-terrorist regime of Meles Zenawi, the Obama administration should establish strong relationship with liberation fronts and opposition political parties and civil society organizations to promote genuine democracy and accountability to protect human rights and to reduce poverty.

We hope that President Obama will not listen to forces and voices within the American foreign policy establishment that try to maintain status quo in the Ethiopian Empire by supporting the ethnocratic and terrorist government of Meles Zenawi. The president “has a historic opportunity to fundamentally reshape relations between the United States and the African continent [in general and Oromia and Ethiopia in particular] in a way that will be truly transformational” (Prendergast and Norris, 2009: 7).

Of course, the Oromo people and others who oppose the Meles Zenawi’s government should intensify their various forms of struggle and combine with diplomatic efforts to convince the Obama administration by demonstrating the horrific crimes that have been committed against humanity by this regime with the support it has received from the West in general and the U.S. in particular. On his part, Obama as a transformational president has a serious moral responsibility to promote the principles of democracy, human rights, and social justice by stopping financing African criminal regimes such as that of Meles Zenawi.

As he has denounced genocide and human rights violations in Darfur, President Obama as the reformist president needs to denounce state terrorism, hidden genocide, and massive human rights violations in Oromia and Ethiopia, and to assist the efforts to make

Meles Zenawi and his henchmen accountable for the horrendous crimes they have committed against humanity. Any credible U.S. foreign policy should reverse the previous policy that only focused on the U.S. national interest and the interest of the Ethiopian government at the cost of the colonized and oppressed peoples. The U.S. will benefit in security and economic arenas by genuinely promoting democracy and social justice and protecting human rights in Oromia and Ethiopia rather than protecting the interests of the corrupt and repressive Tigrayan ruling class and its state.

## **Opposition and Repression in Oromiya: Assessing Patterns in the Post-Election Crackdown**

**Leonardo R. Arriola**, Assistant Professor, University of California, Berkeley

I spent a year in Ethiopia during the 2005 elections. I was interested in how the government responded to popular unrest in the country in general and in Oromia in particular. My paper is an analysis of an investigative report on the post election violence conducted by officials of the Oromia state. In the paper, I analyze the report's data on policing and also make recommendations.

After the 2005 elections protests broke out across Oromia, not just in the capital city. We heard very little about the post election violence in Oromia in the mainstream media. The unrest in Oromia happened over a period of months. The protesters were not just targeting anything and anyone. The protests were highly targeted. In fact, 90% of the protesters targeted the government and/or its property. When local organizations tried to bring attention to the violence and publish it, they were thwarted in many ways. The Ethiopian government responded at various levels (i.e. depending on the region they sent in local, state, or federal police forces).

The data I am using is problematic, but still useful. In 2006, the Oromia state government did an inquiry into the post-election violence. It was a government inquiry and of course it was biased but some of the data was still very useful. The investigators went out to protest areas and gathered information from people about the protests. Outsiders would not have been able to get this information. They collected all kinds of information. The report was of course whitewashed and blamed some of the policing problems on lack of training, but by and large, the report found the result that the police did a good job.

I took a sample of all the events (protests) that occurred when I did this analysis. I do not have the exact number of incidents that occurred, but the shape and distribution of the killings and incidents is relevant and fairly reliable in providing information about the violence in Oromia. What I found in my analysis of the data from the aftermath of the violence is troubling.

- The most disturbances occurred in districts where the opposition won. One exception, however, is that there was little violence in areas won by CUD in Oromia. However, when Oromo opposition won, the situation was different. People in opposition areas were being detained more than in other areas. In terms of the number of protest events across the districts, some districts appear to have experienced more violence than others and this in part has to do with who was doing the policing.
- Whenever the government sent in the federal police to quell the protests, the federal police were not being sent in on the basis of the initial level or severity of

civilian unrest, or because they do a better job at policing. The local and state police are just as good at policing and do a better job of pacifying the unrest.

- However, whenever the government sent in the federal police to quell the protests, their response was excessively violent. In Oromo districts that had protests and the federal police came in, there were **ten times as many wounded** and **two times as many people killed**. Further, in addition to the federal police force wounding and killing more protesters, the protests lasted on average two weeks longer than was the case when local police were sent into quell the protests. The data shows that the federal response created a whole other dynamic and it seemed to exacerbate the situation. This had something to do with the identity of the protesters as opposed to the local population.
- On the other hand, when local police were sent into Oromia, the Oromo police were able to better contain the situation. In-group police are usually more restrained and the people understand them. They understand the local population and language more than out-group police. The protesters comply more when given commands. Out-group police use more violence and the people listen to them less because the local populace sees them as a form of external subjugation.

In terms of who was being detained and why, the data states that the federal, state, and local police were focused on detaining students.

The federal police beat people more when they did the detaining. The federal police operate and behave the way they did because they were not Oromo or local at least Oromos. There is no mutual respect. If I am an Oromo and I see outside people coming in I will see these people as invaders in a sense. The army detained very few, but when they did detain people, they were excessively harsh.

The data also show that the difference in violence relates to whether or not the federal police were sent in to do policing. In my view, this is clearly a policy choice that the Ethiopian government had the option to change. I would argue then that the policy choices of the Ethiopian government in this area fueled unrest rather than extinguishing it.

If we set aside our outrage about the situation and simply looked at the issue from the standpoint of efficacy, the government's response did not work at all in limiting protests or violence in the aftermath of the 2005 elections. The policing was politicized and the choices of the Ethiopian government to send federal police made the situation worse even from a selfish, self-interested government perspective. The argument by the government that the police needed more training (which is what Worku Gebeyehu stated) was a misplaced argument not supported by the data. When it comes to the issue of federalism, the Oromo police should have been used in the first place and it would have been a win-win situation both for the government and the Oromo protesters. I would recommend that Oromo be able to do their own policing.



## Q&A Session

### Audience Questions and Panel Responses

**Question 1:** An audience member stated that Jalata's presentation was in a sense counter to what was discussed during the morning session (external factors that helped explain change in the region). Jalata seemed to be asserting that we look inside concerning creating change ourselves instead of expecting change from the outside. What can Oromo organizations do better? The question is *how* do we improve our organizations?

**A. Jalata:** We have not established foreign relations and collations with other people to gain support. For example, between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the Abyssinians were unorganized and were on the defensive against the Oromo; however, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, because of foreign intervention, they became organized and the balance of power shifted. You have to consolidate your forces in your own nation. When it comes to the Oromo struggle, it is very complex, many people misunderstand it and many Oromos misunderstand it... Despite the fact the Oromo struggle has been trying to change the conditions of the Oromos for the last 30 years or more, there is no struggle in the world that sustains itself without foreign assistance or without getting support from its neighbor....Enemies try to dismantle the OLF through a number of different angles. The Abyssinians target the liberation front, other Oromos target the liberation front, and minorities target the liberation front. Despite all these challenges it has survived....We Oromos rather than focusing on the enemy, we sometimes miss our target and we mix-up the contradictions between the primary and the secondary enemy.

I think it is time for Oromos, no matter what political affiliation, to find out where we have been, where are we now, and what we want to achieve? Particularly, if an opportunity comes at this time, we will miss it again while we are fighting each other. Can we postpone fights, over secondary contradictions within the community, and look at the main contradiction we face so that we can consolidate our forces as an alternative to the regime...It is a time to ask ourselves serious questions, it's time to forgive each other for what we have done to one another and to stand up as one people and one nation that has a common destiny. Despite past mistakes (what we have done to each other), if we try to present ourselves as serious nation who can take care of itself and go beyond itself by bringing stability to the region, people will listen to us.

**Question 2:** To Dr. Ariolla, you mentioned there is a win-win kind of policy if the government uses local/in-group to settle/quell local resistance. From the Oromo viewpoint, this is not always a good thing. However, you can think of a situation where widespread conflict could emerge at a scale sufficiently large that the government could not control it anymore. Using the local police may not be a great idea when people are interested in more radical change. Local policing then is a good idea in a situation where the state wants to maintain its equilibrium. On the issue of the violence of the federal police, the government makes a judgment depending on the kind of strength and political

resistance that is happening in the localities and if they feel that there is strong resistance in a local area, then they send the federal police to that area.

**L. Ariolla:** As was mentioned, there are limitations to in-group policing. However, if you follow the government's logic that only the federal police can take care of problems, then you will get a self fulfilling prophecy and whatever additional resources there are will go to federal police. As a result, then the government will funnel their resources to the federal police and starve the local and state police. Let us look at Laalu. Laalu is where you saw the worst property damage. When local and state police took care of a situation, there was less violence. There is a peak and then it declined; however, when the federal police came in things got out of control.

A lot of the districts that got a federal response were in opposition areas, in particular, in areas that supported Merera. It is clear why the government would choose to try to destabilize areas that voted for the opposition, but what does not seem clear is why the government would try to destabilize areas of a supporter. The Ethiopian government wants national legitimacy and they want the international community to see the opposition in the parliament, so why punish the one guy willing to play by the rules. Further, the logic of destabilization does not make sense in the larger context if we look at Kinijit as well. Kinijit areas that won did not have a lot of violence and the reason why is unclear. You may want to destabilize the OLF, but why send the police to his area when he is the only guy who is working with you?

He feels that just talking about democracy and human rights will not get anyone far in a discussion with the Ethiopian government. He has a very narrow and limited agenda. In killing and maiming people the government is doing a disservice to its citizens and its own agenda. He can play his role in addressing the problems there. The only way to get their attention is to show that the way they handled the post-election situation is against human rights and also counter to their interest if it is true that they want stability.

**Question 3:** Who should be in charge of uniting the Oromo community?

**A. Jalata:** The Oromo community should unite itself in the Diaspora. All the institutions should work for the Oromo community at large. We should make Oromos accountable. It should be a new environment where people can talk and debate. We should strengthen and work through the Oromo community that is the platform we must use. We should make people accountable for what they claim and what they do. There is always a gap. People should be dazzled by what people in the community do, not just what they say. We need to have a balance sheet. We should work together. Those who do not want to work with others do not have to.

In fact, he suggested before, we should address the Obama administration on moral grounds. For the United States government, it is wrong to support a terrorist government who violates human rights law and engages in genocide. This is against the rule of law, against morality, against American democracy. If they refuse it, we have to still continue

to push our message forward. No one should make a choice for the Oromo concerning how their relationships with others should look.

Someone said TPLF was selected because it was strong. This is not true; they were selected when they were very small. Through famine support, Western countries intervened in the Tigray region. The United States is the only super-power and there is no poor nation that can stay in power without the support of the United States and we have to understand that reality.

**Question 4:** What are we asking the Obama administration? What is it that we want? What is our script? It seems that we have not defined our problem adequately. We need to define our plan. The reason Meles continues to send the federal police is because he does not trust the local police. If the foreign policy of America does not agree with our agenda, we should work on a Plan B. We should continue with our struggle. If he (Obama) helps us that is great, if not, we should not be discouraged, we should move on. The Amhara have been very active here, yet they still have not been terribly successful.

**Question 5:** Americans care about American interest and Americans public figures are concerned with American people's views. If you talk to pastors and get the issues into the church we can make headway. The average American on the street does not know who the Oromo are. We focus on the government and not the people! What do you think we can do to come to the people, the American people? Can we explain our problem to the average American? How many people know about the Oromo problem? Let us try that rather than just trying to get to Obama.

**A. Jalata:** Feels we wasted our time creating conflict among ourselves. Practically, we are ambassadors of the Oromos. Rather than this, our roles have been distorted by arguing, creating conflict among ourselves. I hope we learned from our past mistakes. We need to bring friends to the Oromo. Can we liberate Oromos by creating liberation fronts outside the country? No, those who want to fight, let them go to Oromia.

On changing things in Oromia by those living outside? We are wasting our time fighting amongst ourselves. One thing we can do is bring people to the Oromo. Those who are here need to understand we play a *supporting role*. We need to bring 5 or 7 friends to the Oromo. We have to be the friends of politicians, their wives, and their daughters. We need to also work through churches and mosques. Particularly, pastors have very big roles. Rather than doing this, some pastors take Oromos from the struggle to make them keep quiet. We are spending our times on unproductive things. We want to be leaders here. There is no power here, where are we going to be leaders if we do not have a country? Let us influence through American foreign policy. In front of our eyes, the Amhara are doing that and when the Tigreans go, the Amharas will take over.

**Audience Comment:** Together we can do a lot. We now have an Oromo community and Oromo restaurants in this area. Can we change the neighborhoods where we live in to make ourselves more visible? Can we make an Oromo day? To get our message out, we

could ask for a day in a church or a mosque, ask for a day in a university to spread the word about who we are and our interest.

**L. Ariolla:** There are very effective models of Diaspora communities that impact the foreign policies of their respective communities. In particular, look at the Cubans and the Vietnamese. What is interesting is how they made it work. They organized and pooled their money and made strategic donations to certain congressmen who made it clear that their issues are important issues that we need to follow up on. This is how the diaspora can shape State Department and White House policy. It is hard to get the average American to care and to learn about another area. They think Canada is a foreign place; imagine trying to explain Oromia and the complexity of the place. Look at what the Amhara opposition is doing. They met with Al Gore in 2000 and with senators. Unfortunately, we do not like to think of democracy working that way, but that is the way it is.

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## Oromo Studies Association

### Mission

The Oromo Studies Association (OSA) is a scholarly, multi-disciplinary, nonprofit organization, established by Oromo and non-Oromo scholars to promote studies on and relevant to the Oromo people. OSA is an international academic organization committed to the study and documentation of Oromo history and culture. It was established by scholars who were concerned about the lack of adequate knowledge about the Oromo people. The Oromo Studies Association has the following objectives:

Develop and promote serious scholarship on the history, economy, culture, health, education, politics, law, and social welfare of the Oromo people.

Promote critical thinking and well-rounded intellectual life among scholars of the Oromo studies.

Provide a forum for Oromo scholars to cooperate and support each other.

Provide the opportunity and mechanisms for non-Oromo scholars to actively participate in the development of scholarship about the Oromo people.

Identify and solicit resources and research funds for scholarly works for Oromo Studies.

To achieve these goals, OSA organizes annual conferences and publishes proceedings and journals. The annual OSA conferences are usually preceded and accompanied by a burst of new energy, vitality, and a new hope for increased scholarship on Oromo Studies. The regular publications of the annual conference proceedings and the Journal of Oromo Studies have been critical instruments in the production and dissemination of knowledge about the Oromo. Scholars have been aiming at exposing the crude nature, inner workings, and consequences of the Abyssinian colonialism, its ideological underpinnings, and the mechanisms with which the Abyssinian elite and their foreign supporters have distorted Oromo history and undermined Oromo civilization. In the short period of time since its creation, OSA has created a solid foundation for the development of Oromo scholarship and dissemination of a more accurate and reliable knowledge base about the Oromo people. OSA provides its members with up to date information on conferences, publications, and community issues relating to the Oromo people.

OSA is profoundly grateful for the generous support of:

- Oliqaa Foundation
- Georgia State University

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## **Oromo Studies Association 2008 Conference Presenters and Submitted Abstracts.**

1. Getahun Benti  
Southern Illinois University - Carbondale

“Majority” within Majority: The Demographics of Major Urban Areas in Oromia and Oromo-Minority Relations.

Abstract:

*The Oromo constitute the largest ethnic population in Ethiopia. But non-Oromo ethnic groups form the “majority” population in major urban areas of Oromia. Using archival and government documents, oral interviews and various primary and secondary sources, I propose to investigate the various dimensions of being a “majority” and the social, economic, and cultural interactions between the non-Oromo (“majority”) population and the Oromos living in the same urban areas. The paper also assesses how political factors weighed heavily in their relations and concludes with recommendations on how both groups can forge mechanisms for amicable relationships. References will be made, among others, to Jimma, Shashamanne and Adama - towns with a significant “majority” population. Key words: “Majority” – refers to non-Oromo groups who constitute the largest ethnic population in some major towns in Oromia Majority –refers to the vast Oromo population in the state of Oromia Minority – refers to “Majority” as compared to Majority*

\* \* \*

2. Haile Hirpa  
Department of Labor

All Oromos Must Have Permanent Last Names.

Abstract:

*Historically, Oromos used to have last names. For example, in rural areas of Oromia, people identify themselves as Warra Illuu, Warra Babboo, Warra Jibaati, Warra Giddaa, Warra Ammummaa Warra Solan... etc. These names started as family names and ended up being clan names. To develop and nourish the basic understanding of Orommumma, and implant self pride and consciousness, Oromos have to adopt the global pattern of using permanent family last names. Every thing is in the name. In the western society, respect for the family names helped them to carry their way of life with them for generations. Today, European settlers in USA truck back their roots because of their last names. Before the introduction of Christianity and Islam, Oromos used to have Oromo names only. Religions have played a big role in changing Oromo names. Colonization has also played a great role in destroying Oromo names. Colonizers changed the names*



*of colonized peoples to destroy their identity. People without Identity do not have self respect and self pride. This leads to the destruction of nationalism. In Oromia, when two oromos from different part of the country meet, it takes few minutes to know each other and create trust relationships, if they have Oromo names. Today, Oromo nationalism is developing and young people are giving their children Oromo names regardless of their religious backgrounds and political affiliations. That is why we are seeing names such as Kulani, Iddoshe, Siddisee, Bekkaa, Siifan, Ana'ol, Keebekii, ...etc. This trend has to go beyond this situation and establish a permanent Oromo family last name.*

\* \* \*

### 3. Daba Gedafa Kansas State University

#### Causes and Effects of Oromo Migration Since 1900.

##### Abstract:

*Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa. There are nine regional states in the country. Oromo people live in Oromia that is the largest regional state of the federal government. They are the largest ethnonation in the Horn of Africa. They constitute 40% of the Ethiopia's total population. They have their language, culture, economy, and socio-political system. They have been under the subjugation of different systems of Ethiopian rulers since they were conquered as a result of brutal military conquest which was facilitated by the collusion of interests between European imperialism and internal colonialism during the second half of the 19th century. They have been marginalized, oppressed, and have become second class citizens in their own country. Their voices for freedom have been silenced, their culture and language suppressed and their resources exploited to sustain the oppressing systems. They have been trying to free themselves from Ethiopian oppression that resulted in political migration from their country. Many of them who left their country due to political problems live in North America, Europe and Middle-east. Separation from their social and geographical environment causes severe emotional distress and crisis of discontinuity.*

\* \* \*

### 4. B. Dugassa, Ph.D, T. Taye, MD A. Negassa, PhD IDD

#### Iodine Deficiency Disorder: A Major Public Health Problem in Western Oromia

##### Abstract:

*Although Iodine deficiency disorder (IDD) is a well-known nutritional problem, its consequences might not be fully appreciated by all major players. This lack of appreciation is exacerbated by the victim's low propensity to seek help. This presentation*

*provides an overview of IDD in Western Oromia and aims to raise awareness. Iodine is an essential micronutrient required for the synthesis of thyroxine, a hormone responsible for the regulation of physical growth and neural development. Insufficient thyroxine level in the blood affects development and functioning of the brain and other critical organs and results in IDD. The most visible effect of IDD is goiter and its deformities but the vast invisible effects are even more dramatic. Among these, irreversible brain damage, mental retardation and immune suppression are the most important complications. Neonates, infants, young children and pregnant women are at high risk for the effects of iodine deficiency. Thus, IDD is a major non-infectious disease with devastating human and economic costs. Our literature review revealed a goiter prevalence of 90% in women, 72% in men and about 70% among schoolchildren in Western Oromia. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), goiter prevalence above 5% constitutes a public health problem. All these can be prevented by sufficient iodine in the diet and iodized salt is the best means for providing iodine to iodine-deficient populations. We attempt to outline practical measures and recommendations to remedy the IDD crisis in Western Oromia. Key words: IDD, invisible effects, human and economic cost, public health.*

\* \* \*

5. Kulani Jalata  
Princeton University

#### The Political Economy of Diseases in Oromia

Abstract:

*Measles, malaria, cholera, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and water-borne diseases are the primary infectious diseases that are devastating and killing the Oromo people today. And yet, they are all preventable. In addition, other preventable medical disorders, such as IDD (Iodine Deficiency Disorder) of which 3 million people in only western Oromia suffer from, are rampant. For years, various global organizations ranging from UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund) to WHO (World Health Organization) have been reporting on unbelievable medical conditions and statistics in Oromia without addressing the fundamental causes of these conditions. This paper will demonstrate that the root cause of infectious diseases in Oromia is located in the political economy of Ethiopian colonialism which has denied the Oromo people political power and consequently has impoverished and exposed them to infectious, yet preventable, diseases. It will also argue that without achieving their politico-economic independence, the Oromo people cannot overcome these devastating diseases.*

\* \* \*

6. Daga Abdulle Said & Damitu Mamma Argo  
University of Washington

## Oromo Art as a Political Resistance

### Abstract:

*Music has been used across the world to express political discourse, social segregation, basic human rights, and conventional rules. Music's role in conveying the will to freedom and justice is widespread in the world and in particular in Africa. For instance, South African's freedom song called Nikosi Sikele'l Africa (God bless Africa) played an important role in the struggle against apartheid. Similarly, music has played a pivotal role in Oromo's political resistance against successive Habasha tyrants. Music in Oromo political struggle can be seen as a liberating force which uplifts, inspires, and shows the way for people to take part in the struggle against injustice and inequality. Oromo musicians and song writers used their lyrical message to serve social causes, to express political statements, and to voice the plight of oppressed people. Oromo artists have been passing their messages by injecting their unique style of music, fiery sounds and traditional Oromo sounds to call for an end to violence and inequality in their own country where Oromo have been brutalized and denied of their basic human rights. Through music, Oromo artists have been able to reveal and develop their social, political and moral identities. We will attempt in this presentation to situate Oromo music within broader themes in world music. We will also explain how Oromo artists, through influential lyrics, have helped Oromos cope with their pain, sufferings, loss, frustration, and continued quest for social and political freedom. Oromo music has been a key element of political resistance and a call for Oromo people to be motivated through music to act against the injustice imposed on them. Our presentation follows in three parts. First, we will explore the lives of Oromo farmers and provide examples of their rights being denied. Next, we treat with the suffering of Oromo people under the colonial regime, i.e. persecution, acts of genocide, jailing, and mass killings over the course of 100 years. Finally we will discuss the current Oromo situation, and the acts of fierce high school*

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### 7. Zakia Posey

Michigan State University

#### A Look at Ethnicity in America: the Challenges and Prospects of it use in Oromo Diaspora Social Mobilizations

### Abstract:

*Today, ethnicity plays an important role in the lives of immigrants living in this country; in many cases, it is through ethnic affiliations/ties that immigrants build institutions. Though this is the case, discussions of ethnicity are often times silenced and dismissed as divisive by those who see nationalism, race, or class as more salient and appropriate forms of social identification. The challenges Oromo ethnic-based institutions face, in part, relate to the ways in which ethnicity is understood in America. This paper seeks to*

*explore the theoretical ideas, debates, and arguments that underpin or inform Oromo encounters with American academics, community activists, and politicians. The paper will explore the ways that anthropologists, sociologists, and to a lesser degree political scientists have come to understand ethnicity, especially as it pertains to its use and expression by immigrant populations in America. Next, it will address the ways in which ethnicity, nation, and race intersect and diverge in this country. The paper will also discuss the way(s) ethnicity in Africa has been framed in the American media and the implications of these portrayals for Oromo diaspora social mobilizations. In the second part of the paper, successful instances of social mobilization by immigrant populations and the lessons to be learned from these movements will be discussed. Finally, different segments of the American population (academics, human rights and community activists, religious representatives, and lay people,) understand the Oromo and Oromo related issues at different orders of specificity and scale; as a result, the paper will explore an idea called scales of support and discuss the various ways the Oromo can frame their issues to garner the widest possible support.*

\* \* \*

8. Steven W. Thomas  
College of St. Benedict and St. John's University

The Oromo Renaissance within the Marketplace of World Literature

Abstract:

*This presentation will analyze the current state of what several Oromo artists and scholars have called the "Oromo Renaissance," with a focus on Oromo literature written in diaspora and intended for consumption by a non-Oromo, world-wide audience. It will illustrate challenges of publishing in a world market with special attention to the unique challenges faced by Oromo writers. For instance, one of those challenges is the long history of "Ethiopia" as a symbol (not as a reality) in the European and American imaginations and in world literature. What I hope to contribute to the conversation among Oromo artists and scholars is my expertise as a professor of English and American literary history. The exigency for my argument is the necessity for the Oromo to gain a global audience and international allies to support their civil and human rights.*

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9. David Schaffer  
The University of Tennessee

Boserup and Agricultural/Economic Policy in an Oromo-Led Government

Abstract:

*In 1965 Ester Boserup challenged both the Malthusian paradigm of agricultural development as well as the neo-colonial/modernization development paradigms with the publication of her small book, “The Conditions of Agricultural Growth.” In that book she argued that agricultural development—the intensification of agricultural production—was brought about as the result of population growth, and not the other way around as the Malthusians argued. She made this argument by looking at the transition of agriculture from the hunter/gatherer stage, through the long fallow slash and burn stage, and bush fallow, to increasingly intensified short fallow systems, showing that in each case, the shift was not the result of technological change—the technologies had often been known for centuries if not millennia, before they were adopted—but of an increase in population which both provided the necessity for the additional food production and the additional labor needed to implement the new technology. An increased population density provided both the means and the necessity for the changes we have seen in agricultural production systems. In contrast with the post-WWII modernizationists who saw native agricultural systems as primitive and static, Boserup argues that these systems were dynamic, responding to external and internal pressures. An Oromo-led government will need to develop agricultural policies within a milieu in which 80 to 85 percent of a growing population is involved in agricultural production, most in remote areas with limited infrastructure. Development specialists often see conditions like these as impediments to growth that need to be overcome by reducing the number of farmers and shifting the population to urban areas to work in industrial and service settings, often despite the lack of these opportunities in urban areas. Boserup on the other hand argues that “communities with sustained population growth have a better chance to get into a process of genuine economic development than...communities with stagnant or declining population, provided of course, that the necessary agricultural investments are undertaken.” Much of this investment is made in the form of direct human labor with a smaller portion coming from outside capital (essentialized human labor). The role of the government is to provide an atmosphere in which the population is willing to make that investment of human labor. Government, in close cooperation with the populace, must also make those capital investments in agricultural research and infrastructure improvement. As Boserup sees it, the intensification of agricultural production provides/requires employment of the growing population. As agricultural surpluses are produced, some of this labor will be released to other economic sectors providing goods and services needed by those remaining in agriculture. Key issues to keep track of in this development process include: 1) continued investment in agriculture, 2) keeping the focus on increasing the production of staple crops, 3) regulating the flow of labor from rural to urban areas, making sure there is not an underinvestment of human labor in agricultural areas, 4) monitoring food imports so they do not reduce the investment in local agricultural production, and 5) ameliorating the rural-urban social tension as standards of living initially increase more rapidly in urban areas than they do in rural areas.*

\* \* \*

10. Musa Guro Hawasi  
Oromiya, Karrayyu District

## The Impact of Land Privatization on the Pastoral Life of the Karrayyu Oromo

### Abstract:

*Karrayyus are Oromo pastoralists who live in the upper awash valley of the Fantaallee district. Their life is solely based on animal husbandry. Rare among the Oromo, they are the living embodiment of the rich cultural legacy of the Oromo where the indigenous Gada democratic system is still practiced. Even though the Karrayyus share much in common with the rest of the Oromo culture, they have some peculiarities, including the marriage of twins, and the ritual of Dhibayyuu for men and the ritual of Siiqqee for women. Since the time of Abyssinian colonization, almost every aspect of the traditional and cultural life of the Karrayyu Oromos has faced drastic alteration. Climate change has combined with man-made factors to significantly reduce pastoral land availability and pose a serious threat to their survival as a community. Among man-made, policy factors that have had serious consequences for the life of the Karrayyus are land eviction for sugar plantation, and land privatization for agricultural purposes. The scarcity of grazing land and water resources has in turn fueled conflicts with the neighboring Afar and Argoba communities. This paper examines the impact of land privatization and plantation on the cultural and social life of the Karrayyus. It examines the evolution of land policies in historical perspective, and how the latter have impacted pastoral land availability—and hence the core of community survival. It also highlights remedial policies that may help alleviate the impending social and cultural crisis, and the very survival of this community.*

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### 11. Bichaka Fayissa

Middle Tennessee State University

## The Contributions of Social Movements to the Oromo National Struggle for Political and Economic Power in Ethiopia

### Abstract:

*For well over a century, the Ethiopian state has been in recurrent crises due primarily to the perpetuation of conquest and colonization of sovereign Oromo and other nations. The colonial legacy ushered in the plundering of subjects of their property and the confiscation of their land, the banning of their language (symbol of their national identity), and the replacement of their democratic system of government and political culture (Gada system) by the Abyssinian (Amhara-Tigre elites) monarchical/autocratic and authoritarian system of government. It is, therefore, not surprising that such a totalitarian domination of the Oromo and other nationalities for over a century without any sort of resolution would precipitate political and economic crises (Abbink, 2005). Invariably, the exclusion of the Oromo and other nations in Ethiopia from the political process and economic opportunities has elicited various forms resistance for improving their welfare. This paper explores the role played by some Oromo social movements*

(OSM) such as the Mecha-Tulama Self-Help Association (MTA), the Oromo Student Movement, and the Arsi-Bale Oromo Resistance Movement serving as tributaries to the formation of a vanguard national organization, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) for resisting against injustice and restoring the political and economic power of the Oromo people. Section 2 provides a brief description of the history of social movements. The theoretical underpinnings the paper are discussed in section 3. The anatomy of some Oromo social movements is discussed in section 4. Section 5 draws some conclusions based on the preceding discussions.

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12. Kebede Feda  
World Bank

Challenges and Significance of Education in Oromia: Evidence from Family Size, Birth Order, and Income diversification.

Abstract:

*The study comprises three essays; Challenges and significance of education in Oromia; Evidence from History, Economy and Social Development Indicators; the Effect of Family Size and Birth Order on Children's Educational Achievements and Delayed Enrollment in Oromia; and Impact of Educational on Livelihoods of Rural Oromia: Evidence from Farm and Non-Farm Activities. The first essay investigates education discrimination against Oromia by the consecutive rulers of the Ethiopian empire. For robust descriptive analysis, we compared overall education level and share of education in the total public expenditure of Ethiopia to the rest of the world in which Ethiopia appears among the least. The assessment suggests that although Oromia is a backbone for the Ethiopian economy, all the social development indicators ranked Oromia low compared to the rest of the administrative regions, in particular Amhara and Tigray. The comparison is based on health and educational facilities, school enrollment, gender disparity and literacy and fertility rates during Imperial, Derg and current regimes. The second essay investigates the effect of family size and birth order on child academic achievement and duration of delayed entry in Oromia. The former is estimated by OLS and logistic regression and the later is by survival analysis. The result suggests that family size has positive effect and birth order has the opposite. Previous studies suggested that control for birth order eliminate the family size effect but this is not the case in Oromia. Among other things, wealth and heads education have positive effects on children academic achievement and negative effect on duration of delayed enrollment. The last essay investigates returns to education in farm and non-farm activities in rural Oromia. The results suggest that only 4-6 years of schooling has positive effect in farm but not in non-farm activities. The breakdown of output measures by crop types shows education has a significant effect on cereal but not on cash crop production mainly though use of fertilizers and improved seeds. The finding also suggests that female productivity is higher in farm activities than male and the reverse in non-farm activities, although their participation in such activities is the reverse.*

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### 13. Debissa Arero Godana

Addis Ababa University

Oromo Culture and Language

Abstract:

*Do the Oromo possess a representative sample culture today? Culture and religion are the two faces of the same coin, with religion occupying the sovereign's side, and thereby influencing and molding culture. Therefore, change in one's religion results in changes in one's cultural aspects like name, procedures and practices of marriage, funerals, inheritance, divorce, etc. Boorana have preserved their ancient Religion and Culture so far. Culture also includes games, sports, lyrics, calendar, language, etc. My current estimation of Oromo People's religious divisions- 65% Muslims, 30% Christian, 5% Waaqefatu. Language is one of the indicators of the existence of an ethnic entity. Therefore, we are talking about the existence of a particular entity known as the "Oromo", when we talk about the Oromo Language. Languages are the living monuments and roving ambassadors for such ethnic entities. Languages are born, then grow, mature and die, Afan Oromo is matured and rich, having five dialects but without a writing dialect or modern grammatical guides which it requires to become a competitive language.*

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### 14. Rundassa Eshete

Business owner

The Oromo Identity, the Story of Spin, Scandal and the Selling Oromo Cause

Abstract:

*The Oromo Identity, the story of spin, scandal and the selling of Oromo cause Delves into the snarled causes and devastating consequences resulted by the constant stand shifting done by Oromo political leadership. Furthermore, this paper will explore Oromians seemingly chronic weakness and their inability to bring "the enemy" and their "major challenges" into focus by analyzing how the ideological, cultural and emotional connections they have with borrowed identities that have warped their understanding of, and respond to the Abyssinian's dived and conquer tactics. This paper also will analyze how a shift of attention from real task to scandal rooted in Oromians lack of respect of their own identity by being caught up in the middle of supper power nation's global domination and influence that mislead the theoretical prospective and meaning of globalization and self determination. To understand the cascading misconception and*



*mistakes that many Oromians make regarding the concept of nation building or globalization, it is very important to look into those reasons that casted doubts in the minds of the Oromians and approach them from different angles. Although they obviously played an important role in motivating many Oromians, localist identities and religious sentiments were not the only forces that put the Oromians into the an extreme web of complex, instability and contradictory political impulses. One theme that constantly resurfaces, nevertheless, is an imagined power craving that inflicted injuries among the Oromians. Emphasizing Oromians lack of consciousness and the issue of globalization, what ever it reveals, also terminates inquiry prematurely by encouraging us to ignore our lack of appreciation to our belief system and Oromo ideology which is founded in the idea of pursuit of Walabummaa and Nagaa. According to Oromo belief and the Gadaa system, the principle of being an Oromo is to remove oppression and totalitarianism by establishing a de-centralized government system that has the capacity to eliminate barriers that may hinder the unity of the Oromo nation. These Oromo theory includes not only the idea of fighting for independence but it includes loving creator and his creation, resisting the pressure of other powerful societies, staying on the straight path steadfastly and having the courage to stand for what is right by understanding the real meaning of “what is right not who is right”. The Oromo outlook also teaches the importance of winning the freedom by preemptive strike not by submitting to powerful nation’s political pressure. To free the nation from tyranny, the Gadaa principle teaches that offensive and defensive actions to be a compulsion duty of the Oromo liberation movement that requires educating the Oromo nation via an open and free environment provided by the Gada parliamentary system. In general, this paper will explore how the current political tradition is seeking to remake the world while imposing an attitude of dual commitment in the minds of those who claim the leadership role in the Oromo politics and yet who are causing unfolding division followed by increasing confusion and weakness.*

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15. Fowsia Abdulkadir  
Ogaden Human Rights Committee (OHRC) – Canada

The Role of Mothers in the Struggle for Self-Determination: The Case of Somali Mothers in the Ogaden

Abstract:

*The Ogaden, also known as the Somali region of Ethiopia, homeland to ethnic Somalis, has a longstanding history of being a contested territory. The continuous quest for self-determination and the long standing struggle for basic civil, economic and political rights is something that the Somali Region in Ethiopia shares with other regions in Ethiopia such as Oromia. The Ogaden, or the Somali region in Ethiopia, is heavily militarized even by the standards of the Horn of Africa. This paper aims to reveal the human/gender face of the suffering of the people who inhabit the Ogaden, who are continuously dislocated and displaced. And in the process highlight the role of women, (mothers, and daughters) in the struggle for lasting peace in this region. The over*

*arching objective of this paper is two-fold; to advocate for basic human rights of the women of Ogaden; and, to contribute critical gender perspectives into the discourse on human rights debate as it pertains to this region. To elaborate on the nightmare of mothering amidst the most militarized zones of the Horn, this research paper will highlight the numerous times that Somalis in the Ogaden have been internally and externally displaced over the years. In addition, this paper will underline the importance of identifying the critical role women (mothers) need to assume in the struggle for substantive equity in Ethiopia. Women would have to be central to any approach that would lead to the transformation of Ethiopia into a place where minorities and those who are currently marginalized, i.e., the people of Ogaden, Oromia and others, are no longer subjected to unlawful jailing, harassment, rape, and torture.*

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16. Garoma B. Wakessa and Tesfaye Deressa  
Human Rights League of the Horn and York University (Toronto)  
Human Rights and Development in Oromia

Abstract:

*Two mysteriously twinned occurrences – human rights violations and socio-economic crises are abundantly evidenced in most developing countries like Ethiopia. The two usually co-exist or go hand in hand. But, why? There has been a classic belief that underdevelopment or poverty persists due to local causes. Those who hold such beliefs claim that these local causes include factors such as poor climate, weak social and cultural institutions, diligence and performance differences among the peoples of developing countries in particular, and others. But, only very few notice and mention that human rights violations are the major cause of persistent underdevelopment; despite a close cause-effect interconnection that exists between the two. This paper will attempt to explore how human rights violations impact on human virtues and visions. It will also explore the direct and indirect influences of human rights violations on human potentials and prospects to produce and grow. It will attempt to bring to light how millions of people in Ethiopia have been trapped in poverty simply because of the never-ending human rights violations inflicted upon them by irresponsible rulers. It will also attempt to shed light on how human rights violations are systematically perpetrated against innocent people; and make some remedial recommendations.*

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17. Habtamu Dugo  
Addis Ababa University

Oromo Diaspora, Quest for Freedom and Democracy, and the New Media.

Abstract:

*This paper examines the phenomenon of how the wide-spread Oromo Diasporic communities make use of the new media-specifically the Internet and its applications such as the World Wide Web and online discussion forums for political activism, for establishing and maintaining communication with people in Oromia and with one another around the globe in a wider national quest for democracy and self-determination. This problem is worth examining because of the increasing trends of Oromo diasporic formations as a result of being exiled because of political repressions and marginalization in their country of origin. It is also important to discuss the role of new media as viable alternatives in the face of state restrictions/denials of press freedom and Oromo media ownership rights. This problem is also important as it is happening at a historical juncture where the public (audience) is criminalized and targeted for accessing information through opposition radio broadcasts from overseas. It is important to look at how, to some extent, new media is trying to bridge this gap by linking the Diaspora population with the mainstream population in the Horn of Africa. The paper found that not only are new media important as channels linking the globally spread Oromo population with the ones that have access to the Internet at home, but also the nature of the content produced in Diasporas and sent back home for causing democratic change is of immense importance. The content produced in diasporic new media forms are indicative of the relative freedom of expression and the existence of plural ideologies and views as opposed to the mainstream media run by the government of Ethiopia. The paper assumed that Oromo Diasporic communities use the mentioned new media for establishing and maintaining communications with people in their places of origin and settlement, and for political activism in a wider national quest for democracy and self-determination from an east African perspective. Based on the literature reviewed and data analyzed, the conclusions arrived at are consistent with the hypothesis although the conclusions seem to mainly hold true for an insignificant portion of the Oromo population who have basic computer skills and have access to technology and the Internet through offices and schools.*

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18. Mekuria Bulcha

School of Sustainable Development of Society and Technology Mälardalen University,  
Västrås, Sweden

Notes from Unacknowledged History: Resistance and Complicity in the Abyssinian  
Conquest of Central and Western Oromia in the 19th & 20th Century

Abstract:

*The stiff resistance put up by the Arsi against the armies of the King of Shawa, Menelik II, in the 1880s is recorded in its outlines. The history of the battle of Callanqoo of 1887 and the subsequent resistance waged by the Ittu, Nole and the other eastern Oromo groups against the same enemy is also told. The history of the long resistance waged by the Wallo and Raya Oromo in the north against the Abyssinian emperors, beginning with*

*Tewodros and up to Haile Selassie I, is also documented, albeit in fragments. In contrast the resistance of the Tulama and Macha is barely known. In fact, it is argued that these two big branches of the Oromo nation had by and large submitted to the Shawan king voluntarily. It is also suggested that many of their leaders were accomplices in the subjugation of the entire nation by the enemy. While the collaboration of some of their leaders is undeniable, the story about the “voluntary” submission of the Tulama and Macha Oromo to Menelik is not supported by evidence. This paper attempts to correct the distortion focusing particularly on the popular resistance of the Nonnoo and Leeqaa Federation of the early 1880s, the uprising of the people of kingdom of Gumaa in the late 1890s as well as the heroic struggle of Leeqaa Qellem at beginning of the twentieth century. Led by the leaders of the Nonnoo and Leeqaa Federation, Firrisaa Abbaa Foggi of the kingdom of Gumaa, Mardaasaa Joote of Leeqaa Kellem, the Oromo resistance was initially crowned with astounding success in all the mentioned territories and the conquerors were forced to flee. However, the victories were not sustained and the Amhara colonists were able to come back with full force after some years. The paper will try to explain how and why that had happened. In addition, it will interrogate whether there are lessons we can learn from the setbacks and victories of that historical juncture.*

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19. Mohammed Hassen  
Georgia State University

#### A Forgotten Oromo Nationalist: The Case of Asefa Dula

Abstract:

*A sefa Dula was a self-made man of humble background, who became a famous lawyer and well known Oromo nationalist during the 1950 and 1960s, who is forgotten today. He was a reform minded lawyer, who was involved in the 1960 attempted coup against Emperor Haile Selassie. He was detained and tortured by the imperial regime. Asefa Dula was an active member of the Macha and Tulama Association. He earned fame for winning court cases against the rich, the powerful and the well connected individuals. His life was cut short by the son of Ras Mesfin Silashi, who lost a court case because of Asefa's legal skill and formidable intellectual power. This paper attempts to present a brief history of Asefa Dula and his interest in Oromo issues. The paper is based both on primary and secondary sources.*

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20. Seifudein Adem  
State University of New York at Binghamton

Ali A.Mazrui and the Oromos.

Abstract:

*“We have a more glorious past than other peoples”, so goes the Abyssinian narrative, which is sometimes employed in order to justify the political and economic subjugation of the majority of non-Abyssinians. These “other” peoples notably include the Oromos. In their condescending attitude to the identity and history of the peoples of Africa, the Europeans, too, had used a similar approach in their colonialist narratives, aspects of which had been quite effectively challenged by the famed historian, Dr Ali A. Mazrui. The paper examines the relevance of Dr. Mazrui’s analytical framework for similarly unmasking, challenging and blocking the above forms of Abyssinian narrative particularly that which was directed at the Oromos of the Horn of Africa.*

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21. Charles C. Verharen  
Howard University

Comparing Oromo and Ancient Egyptian Philosophy.

Abstract:

*Scholarship on Oromo thought has reached the critical mass necessary to encourage extensive comparisons of Oromo thought with that of other cultures. This paper compares basic Oromo ontological and ethical principles with those of ancient Egypt. Its primary purpose is to encourage the development of comparative research programs on ancient Egyptian and Oromo philosophies. The term philosophy here means the most general and foundational guiding principles of life, expressed in oral or written form, together with critical reflection upon them. The paper’s primary theoretical objective is to contribute to mapping the flow of philosophy in Africa. If research shows that the analogues between ancient Egyptian and Oromo philosophy are the likely result of diffusion rather than coincidence, then this research program would make a strong case for further comparative work in East and West Africa. The practical objective of this research program is to discover a philosophy that can help rescue Africa and the world from imminent catastrophe. We now confront the “bankruptcy” of world philosophies that can no longer serve as inspirations for how we should live as a global community, intent on passing life on to our children’s children. The global threats to life we now face result in part from the failures of world-historical philosophies. The paper proposes countervailing philosophies from ancient Egypt and Oromia. The philosophical principles of maat from ancient Egypt and nagaa from Oromia have demonstrated their practical force over millennia. Together they promise an African model for passing life on to future generations in these perilous times.*

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22. Lubee Birru  
University of Maryland, Baltimore

## Culture of Reconciliation among the Oromo Nation

Abstract:

*The Oromo culture can not be discussed in twenty minutes. But we can discuss some aspects of cultural reconciliation when disagreement occurred between to Oromo individuals or between Oromo groups or between Oromos and others. We have a unique culture when we compare to many African cultures. Unfortunately we do not have enough written information by Oromo intellectuals or by Faranjes. As a result the Oromo system of conflict resolution is not well known by scholars. If we contribute what we know today it will be written source tomorrow. I am willing to share my knowledge with fellow Oromos and I believe some one may benefit from my presentation. My presentation will be in Oromo language. This cultural of reconciliation has its own different categories, some of these are 1. Reconciliation between Oromos 2. Reconciliation between non-Oromos 3. The role of Jarssa in resolving conflicts occurred between Oromos 4. What are criteria's that makes one jarssa 5. The role of women in conflict resolving.*

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23. Jimma D. Tuffa

DC Department of Human Services (DHS)

A Roman Summer: The Role of Geography, Culture and Social Environment in the Development of Oromo Athlete and athletics in The Ethiopian Empire.

Abstract:

*Athletics in the Ethiopia Empire has become one of the major venues where the individual athlete as well as the country benefited fame and glory. Within a short span of international competition that started at the Melbourne Olympics, Ethiopia has become a power house of athletics, especially in mid and long distance running. I will explore the role and history of Oromo Athlete from the earliest period of their participation in the Empire's sport and athletics tradition. Emphasis will be on the role individual Oromo athlete and his/her achievement*

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24. Sorasay Ragassa

Business Owner Addis Ababa: Ethiopia

Oromo Cultural Revival: Opportunities and Obstacles

Abstract:

*Over the last thirty years, Ethiopia has seen two regimes that have caused enormous economic and social destruction, restricted freedom of expression, and denied development and the pursuit of happiness, particularly to the Oromo. These successive Ethiopian regimes have been able to maintain their hegemony over the Oromo people and other nationalities, primarily through destroying our culture-- the glue that holds Oromo nation together. Culture is what gives us meaning, our point of reference and worldview. As long as our culture thrives so can our country, Oromia. Conversely, when a nation is stripped of its culture, looting, occupying, subjecting the majority by minority becomes an easy task. Hence, the imperative for us to reclaim our culture as a means to continued existence. As a cultural activist and a successful business owner operating in four major cities and working to revive Oromo culture, my presentation will focus on the link between Oromo culture, identity, and freedom. It will highlight the considerable cultural revival that has recently taken place throughout Oromia—rural and urban—and the implication of this revival for our identity and freedom. I will talk about my business experiences, as acquired through running Oromo cultural stores that have been covered on national TV and other national fora, and featuring Oromo cultural dresses and other items. It will also highlight the obstacles being faced at the moment in terms of full Oromo cultural renaissance in Ethiopia.*

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25. Kadiro Amae Elemo  
St. Thomas University, Miami, FL

Afaan Oromoo for the Federal Working Language

Abstract:

*Despite ancient Ethiopia, properly called Abyssinia, has a long history of nationhood, the present day Ethiopia was the product of unparalleled expansionist bid ushered in the second half of 19th century and the first half of the first decade of 20th century. The involuntary conglomeration of various ethno linguistic groups under the hegemony of the Empire of Ethiopia made the country “a museum of peoples” as the Italian Anthropologist Conti Rossini precisely described. Sooner, the preponderance of unification derive culminated in the suppression of the indigenous cultures and languages to avoid competing nationalism with Ethiopian nationalism—also known as Amharization—anchored on the culture, values and religion of the dominant Amhara, which was the pillar and powerhouse of traditional Ethiopian polity. Donald Levine, the author of the Greater Ethiopia, dubbed the vigorous cultural homogenization programs to see to it the ultimate disappearance of cultures perceived as a rival to and threat for national identity as Ethiopia’s own version of ‘cultural imperialism’. Thus, the newly involuntarily integrated indigenous peoples to the Ethiopian polity were misinterpreted, misunderstood, portrayed as primitive, backward, and, pagan; they were neglected; they were made to shy of their identity that eventually forced them to abandon their culture in favor of the culture of Amhara, which was equated with, hailed, and cherished as, a national culture. An integral part and parcel of the culture, the first values the indigenous*

peoples denied and deprived was the use of their vernacular; which was officially banned from all public spheres of life; also, they were condemned to learn totally alien language of dominant group imposed on them out of the scratch. Amharic enjoyed extra ordinary advantage in the field of education in the most linguistically diverse ecology of Ethiopia to the consternation of other ethnic and linguistic groups. This was precisely because the imposition of Amharic, which was spoken by less than a quarter of Ethiopia populations, necessitated and accompanied by the banning of all other languages not only in the official circles but also from media and churches. The introduction of Amharic as official language and the concomitant oppression of other languages had serious repercussion on the youths of marginalized peoples as they found themselves in the psychological limbo since they neither learned the alien language nor maintained their ancestors' ones and the effect of this assimilative language policy was much felt in Oromoland. The Herculeanness and ruthlessness of assimilations and parallel marginalization of Oromo is explained by the following reasons. First and foremost, Oromo were considered as a direct threat because of their numerical majority and imperative of majoritizing/universalizing Amharic implicated the minoritizing of Oromo (spoken by the population double of Amharic speakers); and the Amharization package implicated the de-Oromization. Secondly, the geographic and economic centrality of Oromoland to the Ethiopia directly exposed their culture and language easily to the budding institutions and bureaucracies; and an avant-garde of Western replicated policies. To bring about rapid change of linguistic composition, they used every sort of robust assimilative bulldozer and psychological assaults so that Oromo would be dehumanized by his/her being and militated to adopt the new language. Being a human being was equated with Amhara and the very personality of Oromo was questioned. The classical Amharic aphorism goes, "Saw naw Galla?" —meaning, is it human or Galla?" The linguistic human rights deprivation had a serious and series of consequences from incapability of actualization of latent knowledge to the exclusion from the educational system or undermined their academic performance, achievement, and competitiveness vis-à-vis the Amhara; directly contributed for their disfranchisement from the process of value production, consumption, and distributions. Upon the fall of the Communist regime in 1991, the representatives of Ethiopian peoples from various corners meet in Addis Ababa to hammer out the Provisional Administration Charter, which introduced a new political concoction based on ethno-linguistic configuration. The Charter recognized the rights of self-determination including secession and this was a precursor to Article 39 of the Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia that was promulgated in 1994/95 which recognizes both internal and external aspects of self-determination. Article 1§ B of the Transitional Charter recognized the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples to "preserve its identity and have it respected, promote its culture and history, and use and develop its language" as part of the rights of self-determination. Regional administrative units were established based on their ethno-linguistic compositions that were guaranteed the rights to choose their administrative language and medium of instruction. Despite the FDRE Constitution recognizes linguistic diversity as a new political platform, it still carries the traditional assimilative concept by solely endorsing Amharic as the federal working language to the dismay of the Oromo language which is the largest language, at least in terms of mother tongue speakers vis-à-vis other Ethiopian language including the predatory Amharic.



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26. Debela Goshu Amante  
University of Oslo

The sociolinguistic Profile of Afan Oromo

Abstract:

*This paper addresses briefly the sociolinguistic profile of Oromo during the three periods: the imperial regime, Derg regime and the current regime. The Oromo language has enjoyed good times and also experienced some bad situations in the last one hundred years. The one language policy of the Imperial and the Derg regimes has hindered the functional and internal development of the language. During the Imperial period Oromo was banned from school and any kind of official function. The Derg also failed to raise Oromo and other languages to education and official purposes despite the use of the language with 14 other languages for literacy campaign. After the fall of the Derg, Oromo was raised to the official and education purposes. The policy change has contributed a lot to the codification and modernization of the language. The paper addresses the achievements made so far and the future prospects of the language.*

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27. Mohamed Hussein  
International Somali Ogaden Studies Institute

Ethiopian Nation-State: Theory and Practice

Abstract:

*This presentation will address the gap between the theory and practice of Ethiopia as a nation-state. Specifically, I will talk about the federal structure as coded in the Ethiopian constitution, how the current regime practices government operations within these structures and what impact do these practices have on issues related to stability, volatility, democracy, and development.*

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28. Michael Mamo  
Westminster College Electoral Competition

Checks and Balances, and Economic Development: Growth Prospects in an Independent Oromia

Abstract:

*Many studies have indicated that the economic performance of developing economies around the world is contingent on the presence of appropriate institutional factors that are compatible with economic growth. Institutional and governance structures affect the economic performance of countries in several ways. One such mechanism by which the institutional environment could hinder the growth of economies is referred to as the 'natural resource trap'. The idea of a natural resource trap suggests that a country could be lacking the requisite institutional and political structures that would enable it to propel its economic growth by using its natural resource wealth. Natural resource wealth could bring about poor economic performance primarily due to its influence on the way political institutions operate. Empirical findings suggest that there is a general worsening of governance in countries with abundant resource revenues. This effect is particularly strong in countries with limited or no democratic institutions. What is more significant is the finding that the decline in governance quality occurs even in countries that have already introduced democratic institutions into their electoral systems. In other words, the management of a country's resource wealth could potentially cause an otherwise healthy democracy to breakdown and thereby inhibit the growth prospects of a resource-rich economy. This paper argues that the structure of Oromo democracy creates a unique environment that would weaken the virulence of the natural resource trap inherent in other forms of governance. Turning resource abundance to economic progress requires democratic institutions that strongly emphasize political restraints as well as electoral competition. Without the necessary restraints in place, countries that have introduced democratic governance primarily through electoral competition have failed to capitalize on their resource abundance. By contrast, this paper stresses that, fundamental elements of Oromo democracy are characterized by a coherent balance between electoral competition on the one hand and an embedded system of checks and balances on the other. When resource abundance is likely to produce autocracies in other forms of democracies, the institutional restraints imposed on office holders in Oromo democracy and their accountability to the public serve as crucial forces of stability that ensure positive growth outcomes and prevent the emergence of autocracies in an independent Oromia.*

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29. Debissa Arero Godana  
College of Social Sciences Addis Ababa University

Oromo Political Movements: Challenges and Opportunities for Unity

Abstract:

*Oromo Rases ruled from Gonder, is, 1784-1853. At the time, the oromo people were living freely in the huge area stretching from the Tana River valley in the present day Kenya to South up to the Red Sea coast to the North, and from the Indian Ocean to the East up to the Sudan Boarder to the West. Those Rases could have easily amalgamated them in to the one United strong Nation then. But they failed to do so and the opportunity*

*was last. After the death of Emperor Menelik II in 1913 Empress Tayitu Lij Eyassu, Ras H/Giyorgis, King Mikhael ,etc... could have controlled the empire. when Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed in 1974 the Oromo failed to unite behind MEESON. OLF should have succeeded in 1994. During the last Ethio-Eritrean war the OPD failed to exploit the situation. Were there popular based and supposed movements before 1991?*

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30. Bonnie Holcomb  
The George Washington University

### The Role of Women in Peacemaking among the Oromo

Abstract:

*This paper locates the position of women and the feminine principle in four dimensions of peacemaking in Oromo society. First it highlights women's role in transmitting and interpreting the central conceptual paradigms that define Oromo peace. Second it addresses the key roles that women hold in society-wide rituals of reconciliation, including those held annually and very publicly. Third it draws attention to the symbolic association of women with creative processes that require peace to flourish. And it also underscores that women have an interest in assuring that Oromo social mechanisms function properly. Women are central to the identifying and maintaining culturally-acknowledged and socially-valued peaceful relations among the Oromo.*

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31. Ezekiel Gebissa  
Kettering University

### Comparative Interpretations of Oromo Peace: a Review of the Current Discourse

Abstract:

*This presentation provides an overview of the unfolding discourse on Oromo Peace by summarizing and highlighting the papers and the follow up exchange from the OSA Mid-Year Conference held on this subject March 22, 2008 in Washington, DC. That wide-ranging discussion featured the conceptual and theoretical framework for understanding peace according to the Oromo. It focuses on strengths and weaknesses of the traditional peacekeeping mechanisms for achieving reconciliation or successfully implementing peace. It briefly raises the role of Gada, of the law and of religion in maintaining peace. It also addresses the problematic of settling on a definition of peace from a cultural and linguistic standpoint. The implications of Oromo peace for the field of peace studies and the extent to which Oromo peacemaking mechanisms apply beyond the bounds of Oromo society are touched on here as they were addressed in the conference.*

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32. Dararaa Maati  
Oromo Publishing House

The Book Daaniyaa and Waaqeffanaa

Abstract:

Panelists: Ibsa Ahimed – How does Waaqeffanaa reflect Oromo culture? Haile Hirpa – How does this religion influence Oromo identity? Lammu Shunna - What is the role of Waaqeffanaa in Oromo history? Every society has its own cultural background that marks it differently from another society. This cultural background reflects the life and particularity of that society. Like any society, Oromo society has its own cultural background and expression. One of these cultural manifestations is original Oromo religion known as Waaqeffanaa. What is the role of this religion in Oromo history, culture, and identity? What does the book Daaniyaa say about all these issues? This round table discussion addresses all these important issues.

## Oromo Studies Association 2008 Annual Conference Schedule of Programs and Events

### Saturday, August 2

TIME	EVENT/PROGRAM	PRESENTER	LOCATION
9:00 – 10:00 AM	Registration	Local Organizing Committee	Lobby
10:00 – 12:00 Noon	Welcome & Opening Remarks Opening Prayer	Melaku Mekonnen – OSA President Bonnie Holcomb – Chair – OSA Board of Directors Ricky Hall – University of Minnesota Dabasa Guyo	Great Hall
12:00 – 2:00 PM	Business Meeting	OSA Members	Great Hall
2:00 – 3:00 PM	Lunch Break	Local Organizing Committee	Lobby
3:00 – 4:30 PM	Keynote Address	Professor Ali Mazrui	Great Hall
4:30 – 6:30 PM	<i>Oromo Political Movements: The way Forward</i> Professor Ezekiel Gebissa Moderator	Panelists: Professor Mohammed Hassen Professor Assafa Jalatta Mr. Lubee Birru Mr. Lencoo Latta Mr. Dimma Noggo Dr. Fido Ebba	Great Hall
6:30 – 6:45 PM	Break	Refreshments – Local Committee	Lobby
6:45 – 7:45 PM	<b>Session I</b> Demographic Patterns and Trends Gobena Huluka Chair	Getahun Benti <i>“Majority” within Majority: The Demographics of Major Urban Areas in Oromia and Oromo-Minority Relations</i> Haile Hirpa <i>All Oromos Must Have Permanent Last Names</i> Daba Gedafa <i>Causes and Effects of Oromo Migration Since 1900</i>	Great Hall
	<b>Session II</b> Health	B. Dugassa, PhD; T.	Mississippi Hall

	Asfaw Beyene Chair	Taye, MD; A. Negassa, PhD <i>Iodine Deficiency Disorder: A Major Public Health Problem in Western Oromia</i>	
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**Sunday, August 3**

TIME	EVENT/PROGRAM	PRESENTER	LOCATION
9:00 – 10:00 AM	Registration	Local Organizing Committee	Lobby
10:00 – 11:00 AM	Youth Panel	Lense Solomon – Convener Habptamu Abdissa and Messay Tamrat – Panelists Kulani Jalata The Political Economy of Diseases in Oromia	Great Hall
11:00 -11:10	Commemoration	Dr. Asfaw Beyene – Reflecting on the life of Obbo Taye Taffarra	Great Hall
11:10 – 12:00 Noon	Keynote Address II	Obbo Diribi Demissie Boku - President Macha-Tulama Association	Great Hall
12:00 – 1:00 PM	<b>Session III</b> Art and Culture Mesfin Abdi Chair	Daga Abdulle Said & Damitu Mamma Argo <i>Oromo Art as a Political Resistance</i> Zakia Posey <i>A Look at Ethnicity in America: the Challenges and Prospects of its use in Oromo Diaspora</i> Social Mobilization Steven W. Thomas <i>The Oromo Renaissance within the Marketplace of World Literature</i>	Great Hall
	<b>Session IV</b> Agriculture & Economics Assafa Jalata Chair	Harwood David Schaffer <i>Boserup and Ag/Econ Policy in Oromo-led Government</i> Musa Guro Hawasi <i>The Impact of Land Privatization on the Pastoral Life of the</i>	Mississippi Hall

		<i>Karrayyu Oromo Bichaka Fayissa The Contributions of Social Movements to the Oromo National Struggle for Political and Economic Power in Ethiopia</i>	
1:00 – 2:00 PM	Lunch Break	Local Committee	Lobby
2:00 – 3:00 PM	<b>Session V</b> Education /Social Issues Abebe Adugna Chair	Kebede Feda <i>Challenges and Significance of Education in Oromia: Evidence from Family Size, Birth Order and income</i> Diversifications Debissa Arero Godana Oromo <i>Culture and Language</i> Rundassa Eshete <i>The Oromo Identity, the Story of Spin, Scandal and the Selling of Oromo Cause</i>	Mississippi Hall
	<b>Session VI</b> Human Rights Dunee Silga Chair	Fowsia Abdulkadir <i>The Role of Mothers in the Struggle for Self Determination: The Case of the Somali Mothers in the Ogaden</i> Garoma Wakessa and Tesfaye Deressa <i>Human Rights and Development in Oromia</i> Habtamu Dugo Oromo <i>Diaspora, Quest for Freedom and Democracy, and New Media</i>	Great Hall

3:00 – 4:00 PM	<b>Session VII</b> Historical Perspectives Bichaka Fayissa Chair	Mekuria Bulcha <i>Some Notes from Unacknowledged History: Episodes of Oromo Resistance against and Complicity in the Abyssinian Conquest of Western Oromia in the late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century</i> Mohammed Hassen <i>A forgotten Oromo Nationalist</i> Seifudein Adem Ali A. Mazrui <i>and the Oromos</i>	Great Hall
	<b>Session VIII</b> Philosophy Mosisa Aga Chair	Charles C. Verharen <i>Comparing Oromo and Ancient Egyptian Philosophy</i> Lubee Birru <i>Culture of Reconciliation Among Oromo Nation</i> Jimma D. Tuffa <i>A Roman Summer: The Role of Geography, Culture and Social Environment in the Development of Oromo Athlete and athletics in the Ethiopian Empire</i>	Mississippi Hall
4:00 – 4:15 PM	Break		
4:15 – 5:15 PM	<b>Session IX</b> Culture & Language Mekuria Bulcha Chair	Sorasay Ragassa <i>Oromo Cultural Revival</i> Kadiro Amae Elemo <i>Afaan Oromo for the Federal Working Language</i> Debela Goshu Amante <i>The Sociolinguistic Profile of Afan Oromo for the Federal Working Language</i>	Mississippi Hall



	<b>Session X</b> Government Guluma Gamada Chair	Mohammed Hussein <i>Ethiopian nation State: Theory and Practice</i> Michael Mamo <i>Electoral Competition, Checks and Balances, and Economic Development: Growth prospects in an independent Oromia</i> Debissa Arero Godana <i>Oromo Political Movements: Challenges and opportunities for Unity</i>	Great Hall
5:15 – 6:15 PM	<b>Session XI</b> Peace and Conflict Resolution Bonnie Holcomb and Ezekiel Gebissa Co- Chairs	<i>Panel Discussion: Toward Understanding and Interpreting the Oromo Concept of Peace Philosophical and Practical Dimensions</i> Panelists: Charles Verharen Bonnie Holcomb Lubbee Birru Ezekiel Gebissa	Great Hall
	<b>Session XII</b> Faith Dararaa Maati Chair	<i>Round Table Discussion: The Book Daaniyaa and Waqeffannaa</i> Participants: Ibsa Ahmed Haile Hirpa Lammu Shunna	Mississippi Hall
6:15 – 8:00 PM	2nd Business Meeting & Closing Remarks	OSA members	Great Hall

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