

The Journal of Oromo Studies

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The Journal of Oromo Studies (JOS) is an international scholarly publication of the Oromo Studies Association which serves as a vehicle of expression for its members and others. It is a peer reviewed journal that is published biannually. The JOS seeks to promote and facilitate rigorous analysis, synthesis, and policy recommendations of scholars on any interdisciplinary issues pertaining to the Oromo nation. As such, the journal welcomes scientific research findings of scholars on the Oromo history, culture, society, politics, economy, system of government, science and technology, law, medicine, agriculture, and regional political and economic cooperation. The JOS will also consider other topics not listed above. The major criterion for acceptance of articles is that they demonstrate high academic and practical quality research which broadens the knowledge base of its readers, primarily the Oromo people.

The Journal of Oromo Studies

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Editor's Note

The long awaited for Volume II, Numbers 1 & 2 of the Journal of Oromo Studies (JOS) is finally here. Since its first appearance in the Summer of 1993, JOS has been distributed to all the continents and certainly to Oromia. The responses from Oromia, universities, humanitarian and research institutions, independent policy analysts, and individual subscribers have been overwhelming. The guiding principle of the journal is to produce scientific research studies which make substantive contributions to an understanding of the various aspects of the Oromo Nation including its history, culture, literature, society, political institution, science and technology, economy, law and justice, and others. To meet the substantial demand for scholarly research on the Oromo, the supply of Oromo studies which can stand the test of time and space as well as give fresh perspectives and policy directions in its quest for self determination, human rights, and democracy in the Horn of Africa is of paramount importance. Thus, I urge all Oromo and non-Oromo scholars to take up the challenge in making your research contributions to the journal at this crucial juncture in the Oromo history and in the future. Following is a synopsis of each article included in this volume.

In "Arsi Oromo Political and Military Resistance Against the Shoan Colonial Conquest 1881-6," Dr. Abbas Haji reconstructs the history of the most stiff and protracted resistance sustained by the Arsi Oromo against Menelik who created a multinational empire under the hegemony of the Shoan kingdom during the last quarter of the 20th century. Menelik's effort was facilitated by internal political circumstances and international relations favorable to colonial conquest and particularly by his monopoly of modern firearms. In the face of the failure of their campaigns and severe military setbacks, the Shoan feudal rulers resorted to repression and carnage by combining massive mutilation and superior firepower. Dr. Abbas attributes the Arsi Oromo resistance against Menelik's uneven colonial power to such factors as their social organization and military tradition rooted in the gada system as well as their remarkable unity and leadership.

Dr. Feyisa Demie's paper entitled, "Special Features in Oromiffa and Reasons for Adopting Latin Script for Developing Oromo Orthography," examines the characteristics and criteria used by Oromo Students Study Group in Europe in 1972 to use the Latin alphabets as an Oromo National Orthography. He then lists a number of advantages of using the Latin alphabet over Geez script including: 1) Oromiffa can be written using only 31 letters in Latin (a, b, c, ch, d dh, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, m, n, ny, o, p, ph, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, and z), 2) the use of the Latin script would not put any additional burden on the children who have to learn English, or want to learn other foreign languages which use Latin, 3) The Latin script can easily be typed and printed with machines used for English, Italian, French, or Slovak languages with only minor adjustments, 4) the Latin script can easily be used for commercial and telegraphic communication purposes, and 5) each letter in an alphabet stands for a single sound unit.

In his article, "The Conquest and Environmental Degradation of Oromia," Dr. Assefa Kuru demonstrates that environmental degradation in Abyssinia appears to have triggered an ambition within the elite groups to advance a war of conquest against the neighboring people endowed with rich natural resources. Following conquest, all efforts and resources of the colonial force were invested on the suppression of their subjects, the Oromo. Consequently, the land use and holding system that emerged in the aftermath of subjugation seem to have brought severe deforestation and accelerating soil erosion to Oromia at an alarming rate.

Dr. Belletech Deressa examines the causes and consequences of the drastic deterioration in agricultural production and the resultant food crisis in Africa in general, and the Horn of Africa in particular. While rapid population growth is considered one of the causal factors, she finds

that much of the dismal agricultural production record and food insecurity can be attributed to the pervasive authoritarian rule resulting in political instability or civil unrest. Dr. Deressa then offers some policy recommendations to remedy the rapid decline in agricultural production and the looming food crisis in the Horn of Africa.

Based on Professor Legesse's and Dr. Marco Bassi's field studies of Oromo time reckoning technique, Dr. Asfaw Beyene illustrates how the Ayyanttuus developed a calendar which involved consistent analysis of intricate movements and positions of the moon, the earth, the sun, and about half a dozen stars and/or constellations using computer animation of the celestial bodies. He finds that the Oromo calendar is a highly complex and unique civilization still shielded by Oromo Ayyanttuus which modern astronomers failed to recognize. He further argues that the Oromo year can be defined as a time of variable length that repeats at a constant frequency equal to the lunar month, oscillating around the solar year with an amplitude of half lunar month.

Dr. Admasu Shunkuri analyzes how Abyssinian Social and Political Culture which has not received much attention is, in fact, an important factor in agitating Oromo nationalism rebellion. He concludes that, while political domination and economic exploitation have caused severe damage to Oromo life and well being, Ethiopia's culture of ethnic denigration has been just as injurious to the Oromo national self-concept and personal self-esteem.

Finally, I want to extend my appreciation to all the reviewers who anonymously read and made suggestions for improvements in content, methodology, and format of all contributions in this volume. Our commitment to continuous improvements implies that we welcome constructive suggestions which make positive contribution to the quality of *JOS* from our readers.

Bichaka Fayissa
Professor of Economics
June 1995

Arsi Oromo Political and Military Resistance Against the Shoan Colonial Conquest (1881-6)¹

by *Abbas Haji**

“ . . . They restored and enlarged the old kingdom of Shoa. But it was not the same kingdom. It was larger, and because the Galla were too numerous to be exterminated or expelled, they had to be incorporated.” (emphasis added).

M. Perham, 1969:296.

Introduction

Perham's (1969) statement above, which has become classic, reflects the prevailing conception of traditional historiography on which much of modern official imperial history is founded, deliberately or not, confuses restoration with colonial conquest, and colonization with internal (civil) war. This imperial ideology is based on the myth of three thousand years of history², that Ethiopia was always united, that the whole of Eastern Africa belonged to Abyssinia, and that the peoples who inhabited these regions were their subjects. In fact, it was the Oromo (or their country) who were most affected by this myth as Menelik claimed the “country all the way south to Mombassa”³ which seems to have corresponded to some Amhara legends of Oromo's country of origin.

It was on the basis of this false assumption that Menelik wrote the famous circular of 1891 to claim “historic territory” and colonial power status in the “Scramble for Africa” although no one, neither politicians nor scholars took this conjectural letter seriously at that time. It was for the same reason that some imperial ideologists considered other nations and nationalities in the country, the Oromo in particular, as “outsiders”⁴. The invention of “strangers”⁵ and “subjects” was nothing more than a continuation (prolongation) of ancient legends, myths and pseudo-historical traditions about Oromo origin, including the name “Galla” as they were fabricated and developed by the clergy for politico-ideological gains. This gave rise to a widely accepted notion and distorted image of the Oromo society, even among some academic circles who depended on (or were influenced by) these sources. On their part, some scholars belonging to such circles contributed to the development of ethnocentric conception of history and scholarship as the following terms of Professor E. Ullendorf indicate: “The Galla had nothing to contribute to the civilization of Ethiopia, they possessed no material culture or intellectual culture, and their social organization was at a far lower stage of development than of the population among whom they settled”⁶.

According to Perham, who uncritically took up the official myth, the destiny reserved for the Oromo was extermination or expulsion. This implied that the Oromo were émigrés, and it was in the face of the incapacity of the Abyssinian state to entirely exterminate or expel them that they had to be incorporated. In this context, it was a matter of cultural as well political and territorial incorporation. The conquered peoples were denied their identity, culture, and history. What Perham wrote was taken up by some of her followers who tried to develop the same point differently in order to advocate, in one way or another, assimilation. In so doing, they provided ideological support for the imperial regime and the modern politico-intellectual elites who always claimed that they were building a nation⁷.

Not only did they make superficial comparisons between the social organization of the peoples forming the empire which led them to establish a hierarchy of culture and psychology, but they also came up with a crude idea to justify the domination by one ethnic group over others, leading

to the subordination of different cultures to chosen imperial codes. The classification of cultures implies explicitly or implicitly the acceptance of assimilation. Furthermore, the philosophical root of assimilation, although the term may have various meanings depending upon the context, is closely related to the concept of hierarchy of cultures: there are "higher" and "lower" or "weak" and "strong" cultures⁸. Others consider imperial domination and the destruction of identities of nations and nationalities as a process of "nation- building", an euphemistic term for assimilation⁹. The paradox is, however, that they claim that Ethiopia is an empire in the formal sense of the term¹⁰, and at the same time justify or forecast the advent of coherent nation-state from a multinational empire based on the single "ethnic core," the Amhara identity.

If Abyssinia, with its Christian state on the northern plateau, has a long and continual history of many centuries, then modern Ethiopia which is three or four times bigger than traditional Abyssinia with its borders and its tens of nations, nationalities and peoples, came into being 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 century¹¹. Here our major thrust is not to discuss the themes we raised, but rather to examine the process of Shoan colonial expansion which started in the first half of the last century, with the conquest of a great majority of the Tulama. The Oromo conquest and incorporation was accomplished by the Abyssinian state under Menelik during the last quarter of the XIXth century.

This particular study is dedicated to the resistance of the Arsi Oromo against Shoan colonialism in the 1880s. This war of conquest and the local Arsi resistance were of vital historical importance for the following reasons. First, it represented one of the most bitter anti-colonial struggles in the Horn of Africa. The long years it took and the human and material losses it provoked largely exceeded that of Adwa which was fought between Ethiopia and Italy. It even led to atrocities and mutilations which none of the contemporary European colonial powers practiced in the Horn of Africa. Second, from Oromo historical point of view, the massive mobilization and fierce resistance clearly indicate higher organizational and military capacities of the traditional Oromo society under its socio-political system, namely the *Gadaa*. Third, the failure of Menelik's force to defeat the Arsi for more than five years reinforces the thesis that without the collusion of the Shoan and Italian colonial policies and without the encouragement or understanding of other colonial powers, Menelik would not have won the war nor would he have been in a position to dominate the south in general and the Oromo, in particular. Moreover, Arsi resistance has turned out to be instructive in the sense that when and where the Oromo groups avoided internal conflicts and remained united, they did not lose any war against their adversaries and they were a hard nut to crack. It is worth to compare the Arsi with the Tulama who became weak through internal wars and were used one against the other, and then against other peoples in the south by the Shoan kings.

Last, but not least, the sacrifice of tens of thousands of fighters and martyrs in defence of their dignity and freedom seems to have become a rallying point, a symbol of ancestral struggle against domination and a source of inspiration in the quest for the political identity of the Oromo nation. We will, therefore, see how and why the Arsi managed to resist for such a long period by taking into consideration the social organization and the conception of war in Oromo society. We will briefly analyse the quality of military and political leadership of the resistance through three important leaders. Finally, we will briefly examine the major war engagements, their effects on Oromo society and the carnage perpetrated by the Shoan state, as well as Arsi memorable victories.

Origins of Arsi Strength

One has to ask why and how the Arsi succeeded in mobilising such a large fighting force for many years and successfully resisted Menelik who easily defeated Italy in a single battle? A variety

of factors, in fact, were involved. The first had to do with their unquestionable demographic strength. The extension of Arsi territory and the number of the people who belonged to the Arsi social universe was more important than one could imagine. For the Amhara and foreign observers, the Arsi had been reduced to the smallest province between the Awash and the Shabale River in Ethiopia. But actually, the Arsi constituted the largest single branch of the Oromo nation which comprise a good half of the Ethiopian population, and above all the largest national group in east Africa covering practically the whole territory between the Tulama and the Somali, i.e., a large part of the Rift Valley up to the Guraghe country, around Shashemene and Awassa area, the Arsi-Bale regions, western Hararghe and eastern Sidamo¹². It is not surprising, therefore, that they managed to raise between 100,000 and 1,000,000 fighters against the colonising force according to some sources¹³.

The second important factor which enabled the Arsi to put up armed resistance to a degree unknown among the conquered societies of the south, was their remarkable internal peace and unity. Like their neighbours, the Borana, the Arsi did not wage internal war. They even claim that once upon a time, they were not supposed to kill another Oromo, the Guji or Karayyu, etc, since their ancestors took a *Kaka Oromoo* (Oromo oath) not to kill each other. This important fact, however, was forgotten with the test of time. So, in fact, periodic fighting with their neighbours had been frequent and some time bloody. Internal Arsi conflicts, however serious they may have been, never led to war and military confrontation, nor to retaliatory measures; they always settled their conflicts through arbitration and reconciliation even up to the present day¹⁴.

The Arsi were divided into two relatively localized sociological, but non matrimonial moieties which in turn were sub-divided into named and politically independent *Gossa*. All these *Gossa*, both of "pure" Oromo origin (Arsi) and the "Hadiya," the adopted pre-Oromo population during the Oromo migration and the subsequent centuries claim that they descended from the same mythical founding father (Arsi)¹⁵. Beyond this myth of common descent, all these *Gossa*, except the *Qaallu* and the clans called *Miisee* who observed strict matrimonial interdiction, are tied to each other by a complex web of marriage alliances. In brief, they saw each other as kinsmen or allied; the absence of internal armed hostility was a key factor in their confrontation with Menelik and his predecessors.

On the other hand, where the Oromo were divided, they were easily used one against the other, as in the case of the Tulama who became an instrument of Shoan expansionism by enrolling as soldiers and military commanders, the best known being Gobana. On this point, one could quote a Shoan source itself:

"The Galla of Galan and the Abichu fought for seven years and every time the Galan were the victors. The war began to be of a great interest to Sahle Selassie. He allied himself with the Abichu and gave them support. By siding with the Abichu he subjugated the Galan, Gidda, Wabari, Galan, Ilamu, Aga, Gerru, Wayyu, Salale ..." ¹⁶

The same author concluded, "The internal war of the Tulama weakened the Galla and strengthened the power of Amhara"¹⁷. One of unknown aspects of the Arsi struggle was their clear understanding of this policy of divide-and-rule as it was adopted by the Amhara at early stage and their quest for pan-solidarity beyond their social universe. Naturally, the most concerned by this pressing call were the Tulama clans who enrolled in Ras Darghe's army who ruthlessly suppressed the fierce resistance of the Salale before becoming the butcher of the South. So they called upon Salale soldiers to desert him and to fight together against their common enemy, the Amhara¹⁸. But it was unlikely that this desperate call for alliance and solidarity would be accepted, partly because most of the combatants in the Shoan army used to be recruited by force from the defeated Tulama clans. In effect, the Shoan authorities forced every defeated group (clan) to raise a contingent of fighters, in the form of tribute which were used against other Oromos¹⁹. Secondly, the booty from the south and the promised reward in land after the conquest might

have appeared more attractive than the claim of "common descent and common culture." Likewise, Ras Gobana's name was very popular among the Arsi who sang in his praise and asked him to stand by them instead of the Amhara by reminding him his origin. At one point they naively believed that he would arrive and rescue them²⁰. What they did not understand was that Gobana, whom they called Gobe, had already made his choice and embraced the Shoan cause. So, they were forced to count upon themselves, although some Guraghé, the Chaha under their leader known as Bachi Sabo, were said to have fought with the Arsi against Ras Darghé²¹

During the conquest of their country in the second quarter of the last century, the Arsi did not develop another form of political authority other than the *Gadaa* which functioned according to its own logic and ideals. The *Gadaa*, of course, was not a centralized system and there were many independent *Gadaa* areas²². However, in spite of this apparent fragmentation, the *Gadaa* provided a very important pole of interaction and cohesion for the Arsi society. In effect, there was an institutional mechanism bringing these *Gadaa* centres together according to a fixed calendar, ideally every eight years, at *Chaffe* (traditional parliament and a very important laboratory of Oromo Democracy) where important decisions concerning political and cultural life were taken (legislation, amendments of laws, administration of justice, etc.)

To the *Chaffe*, one has to add the institutional pilgrimage (*Muuda*) every eight years to a common religious head (priest) in Bale, Dallo, undertaken by the delegates of the outgoing *Gadaa* class and *Gossa* representatives (*Jila*). The *Qaallu* institution and its head as the guardian of tradition and values remained the symbol of their unity, identity, and peace in particular, whereas the *Gadaa-Chaffe* guaranteed the process of democratic representation-participation in political life and the harmonious functioning of Oromo society²³. Finally, the Arsi had another institutional mechanism called *qitte* (democratic assembly) where the members of the same *Gossa* or different *Gossa* gathered, discussed and decided by consensus on issues of common interest. For instance, during an emergency, in this case during a war, it was the *qitte* (assembly) which decided on the common stand of all Arsi *Gossa*. All this would suggest that Menelik and his predecessors faced in the Arsi a formidable and united fighting force.

Last but not least was the conception of war and the place it occupied in the social organization of Oromo society. The Oromo are said to have been warriors²⁴ par excellence and the Arsi cannot be an exception. In particular, the latter were reputed to be formidable combatants and, perhaps, that was why they used to be known under the name of *Waranticha* (the Warriors). Bahrey himself called them *Waranticha* in his genealogy of the Oromo and considered them as the fifth descendant of Barentu (Eastern Oromo). The warrior nature of their society won them, therefore, the respect of their immediate neighbours including other Oromo groups like the Borana, themselves distinguished fighters.

All observers of the Oromo²⁵ underlined the vigorous nature of the Oromo, and even after the dramatic transformation of their institution at the end of the last century, the warrior ideology persists until the present day. The following observation of P. Baxter could be applied every where in the Oromoland:

"Men are constantly compared to bulls and lions in praise. Conversely, to be called a bullock is the ultimate insult. To kill an enemy, lion or elephant is the aim of every young man and was formerly an essential and still is a frequent, preliminary to a respectable marriage which is the first step towards formal recognition as social adult"²⁶.

This was possible partly due to the *Gadaa* system and partly because of the prevailing competition of prestige between *Gossa* and individuals in the domain of war. Except for the *Qaallu* who do not belong to the *Gadaa* system, all Oromo were organized under the *Gadaa* where male children were initiated, and passed through different and successive stages every eight years and recruited for ritual, military and political responsibility according to their biological age and

generational model (*afurtama abbaa*—40 years that separate the father and his son in the *Gadaa* cycle)²⁷ In particular, before assuming politico-judicial responsibilities, the age-set between 16-24 and 24-32 were expected to distinguish themselves militarily as junior and superior warriors, respectively and transmit memorable victories to the future generations. The transition from 4th to 5th grade was marked by a grandiose ceremony in which war would become a ritual obligation for the *Gadaa* classes and successful warriors celebrated these rites of passage with special honors and continued to enjoy great prestige when they were in office, throughout their lives, and even after death.

The second factor which contributed to the preservation of warrior ideology was the custom of *Farsa* (praise) and *Geerarsa* (war songs). This was an institutional mechanism whereby a hero sang of his exploits and successes in public gatherings, particularly where different *Gossa* met. In the absence of the hero or for dead heroes (ancestors), it was the duty of their kinsmen or descendants to repeat hymns and praise in their glory:

“Through *Farsa* songs, eloquent heroes found their poetical expression, which set members of their tribes aflame with pride. Through these powerful songs the dead heroes of the nation were reincarnated and the living heroes were elevated to a higher plane; bravery was almost worshipped as a religion”²⁸.

For example, when a member of a given *Gossa* repeated his *Farsa* (praise), a member of another *Gossa* had to respond by praising the achievements of his kinsmen both living or dead. Otherwise he would feel inferior in status and prestige. It is not impossible to evoke heroes from the mother's side. The *Gossa* with prestigious past were more respected than others and their descendants tried to maintain this reputation. Like the men, women were imbued with the warrior ideology; they sang on the occasion of different ceremonies in praise of heroes or to ridicule men reputed to be cowards²⁹.

One can say, therefore, that the objective of war among the Oromo was above all, a search for glory and fame, and the transmission of their honorable name for future generations although material gains from the war cannot be excluded. The attempt of every generation was not only to keep up the distinguished names of their ancestors, but to do better and to add a chapter to the collective memory of the *Gossa*. Perhaps, it is in this perspective that one can appreciate the chronology and tempos of early population movements and particularly those the 16th century, according to successive *Gadaa* grades³⁰.

In brief, every male child was prepared for war and confrontation with enemies when and where necessary. Nevertheless, peace remained a pervasive concept which was repeated in all rituals, including those of *Gadaa* and *Muuda*. In some cases, war was imposed whenever there was no alternative except killing and dying to protect one's dignity, freedom, family, and property. The classical example of an imposed war was the Shoan war of colonization, which this article will analyse in more detail.

Arsi Political and Military Leadership of the Struggle

As we indicated earlier, the Arsi were internally divided into many *Gossa* who were at peace with each other, but presented themselves to others as one man. For instance, Shoan authorities did not talk of particular *Gossa*, but the Arsi at large, even when their expedition and raids were launched against a specific territory of a *Gossa*. Moreover, Arsi reaction to external aggression was always collective and united. The attack directed against one of the *Gossa* did not remain unpunished. So, demographically weak *Gossa* felt security during period of crises since others would arrive to their rescue. In consequence, the Arsi did not need to conclude special terms of alliance to help those who were attacked by enemies; collective responses to external aggression appeared to be an informal moral and social contract. This was what happened from the

rise of the Shoan kingdom and its colonial expansionism towards the south, beginning in the first half of the 19th century

After the complete or partial defeat of the Tulama, the next target of colonial expansion of the Amhara towards the south was the Arsi country. As opposed to their neighbours to the north, the raiding, let alone conquering of the Arsi was not an easy ideal. Hence, the first attempt of Haile Malakot was doomed to failure, as Asma Giyorgis notes: "In the fourth year of his reign, he (Haile Malakot) led an expedition to Arsi. They (the Arsi) fought him hard and repelled him. He could neither kill nor take booty but saved himself"³¹.

Other similar attempts failed and Shoan generals and kings, including Menelik, underwent humiliating and shattering defeats and were forced to retreat empty-handed. The important point to be underlined was that the Arsi did not recognize Abyssinian pretensions to rule, nor their myth of Solomonic dynasty. According to Qeransso Baade, one of my principal informants, Menelik and his predecessors were seen as vulgar cattle thieves whom the Arsi chased from their land. The way Menelik led campaigns against the Arsi until the middle of 1880s seemed to have been aimed at capturing booty and cattle rather than permanent occupation. Every time Menelik came to Arsi, he remained for some days or weeks, depending on the rapidity and the magnitude of Arsi mobilization. He lost every battle, although he managed to capture vast numbers of cattle at other times he was chased out without booty³².

At that time, and even up to now in some areas, the Arsi were predominantly pastoralists where cattle had a tremendous social, symbolic, and economic importance. For the Arsi, the cattle represented dignity, a source of pride and prestige. So massive mobilization against the cattle plunderers was understandable; no one including the women were ready to see the fruits of their labour, over decades and some times over generations, stolen from them.

After many skirmishes on the Arsi border, the Shoan war of colonization was launched in the first month of 1882, under the leadership of Menelik. He made surprise attacks, killed many people and captured a considerable amount of booty³³. On that occasion, isolated *Gossa* resistance did not prove to be effective and Menelik tried to advance further south by sending to Shoa the booty already captured. After a couple of weeks Menelik saw the massive mobilization of the Arsi and promptly interrupted the campaign; he was pursued until he completely left the Arsi territory. From this confrontation, the Arsi realized that the force of their enemy was more important than what they imagined—*hattuu loonii* "cattle looters"—and were forced to form a strong coalition to better organize and co-ordinate the struggle³⁴.

Apparently Menelik went to war against the Arsi without giving the famous "terms of peace" which were supposed to be given to the subject people in accordance with the principle of *Feteha Nagast*³⁵, partly because he might have underestimated the capacity of the Arsi to defend themselves and partly because the war would bring more booty than a fixed tribute imposed on an autonomous king or chief. Perhaps that was why Sahle Selassie, his grandfather and who largely initiated the conquest and harsh policies against the Oromo, plundered at least three times a year before accepting the submission of the Tulama clans³⁶.

Nevertheless, Menelik did not take time to change this policy after he saw the Arsi fighters in action during his campaign of 1882, which was a partial failure. He invited Arsi representatives to Finfine to give the "terms of peace," and local autonomy in exchange of submission³⁷. The Arsi, not having a king nor a paramount chief, democratically elected two of their prominent leaders known for their intelligence and eloquence. Suffa Kuso and Damo Uso represented all the Arsi before Menelik, but they were not given a mandate to negotiate on the question of independence. Menelik proposed peace and autonomy if they agreed to submit, recognized him as their king and paid a fixed tribute. Naturally this condition was unacceptable, but they were not in a position to refuse categorically for they were at the palace of their host, Menelik. So they informed the latter that they needed time to consult the people on the issue; they argued "according to the custom the chief(s) cannot decide alone on such important issues such as

submission, war and peace." Menelik agreed and the delegates went back home. They convened a general assembly (*qitte* as it is called in Arsi) attended by thousands of elders and delegates, who came from every corner of the Arsi country, to convey the message and what they saw. After a long and acrimonious debate, the participants unanimously decided to fight against the invaders together as one man. At the same time, peripheral *Gossa* susceptible to be attacked and plundered were given assurances that the whole Arsi would stand by them.

Moreover, the Arsi discussed the possibility of coordinating the three coalitions which were to play a very important role during a series of battles although they did not form a strong centralized command structure which would have rendered this immense coalition more effective and above all durable. The Arsi might have believed that they would win the war and they were prepared for the struggle. The readiness of every man and *Gossa* for the combat raises another question about leadership: how did the Arsi principal leaders react to the new situation? Needless to say the quality of leadership becomes central and even crucial in such a war, although the merit of victory—or making history in general—goes to the people (actors). In the case of the Arsi, to choose a handful leaders appears to have been a risky business since there was no a single commander or a chief in this bitter struggle. Secondly, to concentrate on one war leader would appear to prejudice the role and contribution of tens of *Abba Duula* who fell or were mutilated fighting the enemy in every corner of their country. For comparative reasons, we will briefly analyse three names, the best known during and just after the war.

1. Suufaa Kuso

All Arsi leaders, like all their men, were undoubtedly committed to the war of resistance. Their concrete contribution to the struggle, however, varied. This implied that they did not leave the same impact or enjoy the same prestige among Arsi society. Perhaps, of all the Arsi eminent personalities, the greatest loser was Suufaa Kuso. On the eve of the war, Suufaa was the best known and most brilliant (political) orator in most parts of the present Arsi administrative region. His knowledge of laws and rhetoric, his extraordinary capacity to convince his interlocutor and his experience as an unparalleled negotiator made him a very serious candidate to represent the Arsi before Menelik. According to local tradition, he even easily outsmarted Menelik. In fact, Suufaa Kuso, with his colleague, Dammu Usu, apparently more radical than Suufaa in opposition against Menelik, did not compromise over their independence and formally decided to resist against Shoan colonialism.

As a charismatic person, Suufaa's leadership was expected by his people. However, no sooner had the war began than Suufaa disappeared from the political scene for reasons that remain unexplained. Was he more inclined to surrender than resistance? Was he attracted partly by Menelik's promised autonomy and partly because the Arsi were poorly armed to defend themselves against their enemy? Whatever the motives for his reluctance to resist, he was not in a position to persuade the Arsi not to go to war. Perhaps, no argument would have prevented them from doing so, when they felt strong and were ready to fight against the invaders. Suufaa was unable to prepare and co-ordinate them for the struggle either. In brief, his political and military role during this crucial period of history appears to be insignificant if one compares it to his popularity and audience in Chilalo. He seems to have lacked the courage to adopt a clear stand, although he formally pledged himself to resist.

Nevertheless, Suufaa never betrayed the cause of his people, nor collaborated with the enemy in any way. At the height of the 1886 war when the Shoan army massacred the Arsi massively and indiscriminately, he submitted to Menelik³⁸. He expected that he would be followed by the Arsi *Gossa*, who had not yet renounced the struggle. He launched his campaign of explanations in favour of submission. His lack of motivation during the war and premature surrender when Arsi warriors were falling in every corner of the country was still considered by many people

as an unpardonable crime. In the end, on the occasion of one of his tours in Dide'a to convince the fighters to stop hostilities, he was simply killed by members of the Kasheda clan hostile to the idea of submission. His assassination was resented, however, by many of the Arsi, and particularly by his admirers in Chilalo who lost in the same year (1886) the war, their independence and one of their prominent leaders.

2. Leenjiso Diiga

The second and the most important leader of the Arsi struggle was Leenjiso Diiga. As we said earlier, Arsi resistance cannot be reduced to the actions and role of one man or a few men; it was rather a collective and popular anti-colonial war. But if any individual personified the struggle, it was Leenjiso Diiga, a quasi mythical figure among the Arsi. Leenjiso belonged to the Koloba clan who formed a confederation of *Gossa* known under the name of Jidda. He was from a humble family; he was said to have experienced a hard life when he was young; he lost his father in his early childhood and his uncle who was responsible for the family of his deceased brother by custom, did not take care of him as he should have done. So, having a strong personality and character Leenjiso moved to his maternal *Gossa* (Abeeta,)—i.e., he abandoned his patrilocal residence—a practice rare among the Arsi, as men are born, grow up, get married, live and die among their fathers' *Gossa*, given the partilineal descent rules.

Then Leenjiso had to prove to his *Gossa* in general and to his uncle in particular, that he was a man who merited better treatment and consideration. He killed a lion as very young man, but refused to pronounce a *Geerarsa* glorifying his exploit until the Koloba would come. When the members of the Koloba arrived, Leenjiso uttered the following famous words in his *Geerarsa*:

*“Koloobni gadii gatee
Abeetni guddifatee
Waan boru biyyaa tayuu
Waan boru Arsii tayuu
Leenjoon ar'dhumaa mul'dhifatee.”*

Which means:

“The Koloba did not care of him
The Abeeta reared him up
What he will do tomorrow for the country
What he will do for the Arsi
Leenjiso showed it today.”

By so doing, Leenjiso attained two objectives. First, he won the sympathy and admiration of all *Gossa* of the region and proved that he was a man of challenge (*nama morkaa*), one of the essential traits of his personality. Second, he prophetically confirmed that he was a potential leader who would serve the Arsi and the country in general. With the declaration of Shoan war of colonization in early 1880s, the time had come, therefore, for Leenjiso to prove, once again, that he was a man of challenge who can fulfil his promise to defend the Arsi against the invaders, a mission to which he dedicated his life. Of course, it was a time when tens of Arsi *Gossa* needed a true hero who by his name and action would unite them more than ever before. Thanks to his determination and military genius, Leenjiso was the right man to fill the void, (the absence of centralized political authority) and incarnate the struggle. One has to add that Leenjiso was not reputed to be a distinguished orator nor negotiator, but a warrior in the strict sense of the term; this, in fact, corresponded better to the rebellious attitude of the Arsi combatants of the time.

Leenjiso spontaneously initiated the resistance in the early 1882 against Menelik's highly organized campaign and forced him to retreat before arriving at the Chilalo mountain. This campaign had important consequences both for Menelik and the Arsi in the sense that the former realized

that it was difficult to defeat the Arsi militarily and made the offer of peace, whereas the Arsi recognized the vulnerability of isolated *Gossa* resistance in the face of the enemy and formed three big coalitions or fronts including all *Gossa* claiming to be Arsi. It was from that coalition that the Front of Tchancho commanded by Leenjiso emerged. Tchancho is the collective name of Arsi *Gossa* inhabiting northern and eastern Arsi.

As *Abba Duula* of the Tchancho, Leenjiso confronted with the Shoan forces during the second campaign when he encircled them at Doddota, south of Awash, and annihilated Menelik's soldiers after a fierce fighting and captured the *Negarit*, the royal drum³⁹. A fraction of his force pursued Menelik as far as Modojo who narrowly escaped death. The *Negarit* was taken to Burkunte around present day Dheera. The Arsi celebrated this remarkable victory, took an oath to continue the struggle up to the end, and Leenjiso became an undisputed leader (father) of Arsi resistance. From this time onwards, he dedicated his life to the struggle and at the head of determined fighters, he fought the enemy in most parts of the present Arsi region although his principal base was Doddota, where his usual strategic retreat. That was why the Amhara called it Doddota ya wond bota (Doddota place of men or heroes).

The second, but least known, strategy of Leenjiso and the Arsi was to get back their looted cattle and to force the conquering army to return home empty handed. The Shoans captured cattle by tens of thousands in every campaign, usually by surprise. Whenever they came back from southern and central Arsi with a huge booty, Leenjiso sent determined fighters who entered the camp during the night and created a terrifying noise using undressed skins tied on the back of untrained horses, which completely dispersed the cattle. Whenever they failed to prevent the capture of their animals, the Arsi got them back by these methods and forced the conquerors to leave their country empty handed. The 1884 campaign was confirmed by two contemporary accounts, although they did not give the details. For example, Asma Giyorgis wrote: "The Negus, however, led an expedition at the head of a small army against Arusi on 30 Tahsas. They retrieved the cattle he drove and forced him to leave in humiliation. He escaped the Arusi attacks with difficulties and came to Entoto"⁴⁰. On his part, H. Audon, who followed some of Menelik's campaign against the Arsi from Menelik's palace, underlined the failure of the 1884 expedition, the return of Menelik for the third time in humiliation without any booty and how his three generals lost half of their soldiers as well as their camping materials⁴¹.

With the passage of time, Leenjiso became extremely popular throughout Arsiland and as such symbolized the struggle for dignity and sovereignty. Conscious of this, Menelik and Ras Darghé deployed all means to find Leenjiso, to deprive the Arsi of his crucial leadership, but without success. "While he was there (in the Arsi country), news came that Leenjiso was at Dide'a and that he was looting and storing grain at Gelle. When an expedition was launched against him, he could not be found. This Leenjiso was the major head of the Arsi"⁴². Paradoxically, according to one of my best informants, to kill or capture Menelik was also the obsession of Leenjiso and his force represented a real physical danger to Menelik who escaped with great difficulty, by miracle, on three occasions. If the capturing or killing of Menelik turned out to be an impossible ideal after 1886 when the Arsi lost the war, Leenjiso found consolation by personally killing Menelik's representative, Fitawrari Wosane at Bollo, Dide'a. This happened after the end of the war when Leenjiso himself submitted to Menelik, partly because he did not have the means to continue the struggle after years of intense fighting and partly because the continuation of the war implied the continuation of an abominable crime of mutilation of women and children, introduced by Menelik's forces as a method of pacification.

The submission of Leenjiso seemed to have heralded a complete Shoan victory and Menelik was said to have pardoned him for the only crime of which he was accused: to resist Menelik. There was an attempt to use his name to maintain the Arsi under the yoke of colonial order⁴³. But this proud man who was fully dedicated to the cause of the Arsi was incorruptible and was not susceptible to making shady deals with the conquerors; he did not want to see the injustice,

the arrogance and cruelty of the Shoan soldiers to continue, and hence decided to organize what was to become the last co-ordinated revolt of the Arsi in the 1880s. He disarmed the *Naftagna* tactically at the *Katama* of Bollo, which the Arsi cavalry attacked by surprise and during the battle, Leenjiso personally killed Wosane, the governor, when he was in *Chilot* and the strategic camp (*Katama*) was completely devastated.

This achievement added tremendously to his popularity and reputation for bravery. Leenjiso, a man of humble origin, became not only an incomparable national hero, but also a mythical figure, a sort of reference to many fighters. For instance, what was considered as strong and extraordinary in human qualities were compared to Leenjiso. For instance, *Ijaa Leenjiso* (Leenjiso's eyes), *Harka Leenjiso* (Leenjiso's hand,) *Qoonqa Leenjiso* (Leenjiso's voice), etc. All this mystification signified bravery and strength. After the death of Leenjiso, the Arsi lost the symbol of their pride, the father of their struggle and their hope to dislodge their colonizers. After and without him, the Arsi became "food eaters"—a term which sounds "ordinary men"—whose principal preoccupation became simply to assure their survival as one of the chiefs declared on the occasion of Leenjiso's funerals:

*"Waan akka Leenjiso homuu qabnee
Ka akka midhaan nyaatuu nuhuu hafnee"*

Which means:

"No one is comparable to Leenjiso
As ordinary men we continue to live."

This clearly shows the absence of charismatic leadership as most of the brilliant Arsi military leaders were killed during the war or systematically eliminated after the Shoan victory. To mention one example, Waqo Bororo, the famous leader of Raitu, who completely harassed Dejazmach W/ Gabriel's battalion in Eastern Arsi, was hanged in Ghinir⁴⁴. This does not mean, however, their struggle was over with Leenjiso's death. They continued to resist against injustice and domination by every means and whenever they could, although they had to wait for many decades to see their organized and durable uprisings, the most important one being that of Bale (1963-70). Leenjiso's name and actions were not forgotten, either by the Arsi or the *Naftagna* descendants, as a symbol of their proud and public enemy number one of their ancestors, respectively. I was surprised when one of my Amhara informants recited some war songs in praise of Leenjiso Diiga⁴⁵.

3. Roba Butta

Another style of leadership during and after the war was represented by Roba Butta whose territory was located in the southern and south-eastern part of the Arsi country, far from Shoa as compared to Leenjiso's territory. Roba was said to have enjoyed a tremendous influence up to the present day Gobba⁴⁶. He was not a warrior nor a military commander as was Leenjiso. His true name was Goro Bubbe, but adopted the name Roba Butta, a mythical Arsi hero. Roba Butta was a shrewd politician who impressed his European visitors by his intelligence and his generosity. He met, among others, with Baron Erlanger and particularly Du Bourg de Bozas, a French traveller, who recorded most of his widely cited declarations. Roba was one of the rare Arsi leaders who understood, from these contacts, international politics and particularly the collusion of European interests and Shoan colonialism i.e., European sympathy for the Ethiopian empire. In other words, Roba realized that the Amhara dominated the Oromo because of their guns which they did not manufacture themselves. This, in fact, was the opinion of all European contemporary observers, "It is certain were the Ar(u)si armed with rifles they would be a hard nut for Menelik to crack" wrote Wellby⁴⁷. So, he attempted to have friends across the sea who would give or sell him rifles, without which the Oromo would not be in position to reconquer their dignity.

Naturally, when Menelik began to conquer the Arsi country, Roba refused to recognize Menelik's

authority and attempted some resistance. But he quickly realized that the Arsi force would be no match for the well-armed colonising forces and decided to submit to save his country and people from devastation, without giving up, however, his hope to restart the fight whenever it was possible. But at that time, this political position was seen as treachery and he was considered as a dupe of Menelik by the Arsi, who were determined not to compromise with the enemy⁴⁸. What appeared paradoxical was that from that time, Roba was not officially at war against Menelik, but his men, the Arsi living in the country over which he claimed authority or influence never hesitated to come to the rescue of their compatriots in Dide'a, northern Arsi. Thus, one can argue that the direct involvement of Roba would not have modified the balance of force in favour of the Arsi.

By submitting, Roba aimed to exempt his country from pillage. For this autonomy, he annually paid to the *Negus* 100 beef cattle (*sanga*), 1000 goats, 1000 elephant muscs, 900 talers and an immense contribution in kind, honey, butter, flour, etc. This policy was, in fact, to buy time and better organize his men, whom he called "my warriors of tomorrow" to fight against the occupying force⁴⁹. He critically analysed the factors contributing to the defeat of the Arsi: lack of firearms and foreign aid (even though these were not the only ones) from which the Amhara had profited. It was for this reason that he attempted to obtain foreign support. He received nothing, however, except a collection of certificates of friendship, from his "European friends" who, nevertheless, did not hide their sympathy with his cause. He confided to Du Bourg de Bozas:

"I would like to attempt an adventure to have friends among the *Frendjis* (whites). I proposed an alliance with the one who came here before you (Baron Erlanger). But he did not agree . . . Even if the *Frendjis* wanted to help me, the time of revenge has not yet arrived. Because the *Frendjis* are far, they have interest elsewhere: they may forget Roba Butta. We have to count upon ourselves . . . The hour has not come, but it will come; perhaps, our children will see the departure of the oppressor"⁵⁰.
(The translation is mine).

Roba Butta always hoped to rise again and become more resolute when the promised autonomy and fair treatment due to him as a peacefully submitted chief were not respected. He bitterly recounted: "I am the vassal of the *Negus*. I accepted this status freely. But, Menelik is not willing to consider me as a *shum* (official). Sometimes, however, I admit that my submission is inadmissible"⁵¹. The frustration of Roba was that at the turn of this century he was getting older, (about 55 years), and the Arsi after their shattering defeats, massive extermination and mutilation in the 1880s and early 1890s were not prepared—in spite of their hostility and rebellious sentiment vis-à-vis their colonizers—to take arms. Finally, his endeavour to get rifles and foreign diplomatic support failed. In the end, Roba Butta's autonomy was purely and simply abolished. The *Naftagna* successfully controlled the country and did not need his service or influence and he became a simple colonial subject, like millions of Oromo in Arsiland and elsewhere in the country.

In brief, Roba and Leenjiso struggled each in his own way against colonization, injustice, and oppression in the interest of their people. The strategy of Leenjiso was above all not to let the enemy enter the Arsi country and he did all he could to resist. On the other hand, Roba Butta adopted a longer term strategy of liberation in order to better organize himself although he was the first to regret his gesture, his premature surrender, when he failed to attain his objective. What is remembered, however, is not so much Roba Butta's diplomacy, but rather the popular Arsi resistance sustained by Leenjiso and other Arsi leaders against the conquerors and the tens of thousands of unknown soldiers and martyrs who died or were mutilated in defense of their dignity and liberty.

Resistance, Victories and Painful Memories

In this article, we deliberately dispensed with the details of the war of conquest between 1850s-1890s and the strategic, political, and economic motives of the Shoan colonization which we developed elsewhere in our work⁵². The point that has to be underlined is, however, that right from the start the Arsi were forced to engage in an unequal war since they were poorly armed (they did not have a single rifle). Under these conditions, confronting the colonising force equipped with thousands of rifles, pistols and some canons, and advised by European instructors, was suicidal. Thanks to the massive mobilization, solidarity, and determination they not only successfully resisted but also inflicted heavy casualties on the Shoan soldiers who fell by thousands during many campaigns. Nowhere in the conquered regions of the period Menelik's force underwent such humiliating and disastrous defeats although the chronicler tended to minimize or at times completely omitted Shoan losses. Concerning this period, one can quote Darkwah, one of the historians of Menelik's period.

"Of all the campaigns which Menelik conducted before he became emperor in 1889, perhaps, the most sustained and bloody wars were those against the Arsi. It took six different campaigns conducted between January 1882 and January 1887 to conquer this vast region"⁵³.

Moreover, in the face of such military set-backs and the death of many soldiers, the Shoan generals and officers decided not to alarm their civil population at home. For example, Ras Darghé was said to have given a strict orders to his soldiers returning from campaigns not to discuss the results of the war. They were authorized to inform a dead soldier's family, but without discussing details of the battle. Likewise, the family of a deceased soldier was forbidden to commemorate the Tezkar (the commemoration of the defunct). In such cases, it was said that "it was a door which spoke" which meant that the death of a soldier was known by the absence of joy and happiness in the family. Those who violated this order were severely punished⁵⁴.

In brief, one can learn from the chronology of the campaign and the Arsi oral tradition, that Menelik and his generals came once or twice a year at the head of a large army:

1. January 1882 (3 weeks)
2. December 1883-January 1884
3. March-April 1884
4. November 1885
5. May-June 1886
6. December 1886

Every time they lost the battles they engaged in every region of the Arsi country, they were chased mercilessly. But it was the Arsi who suffered a lot and paid a heavy tribute. Every victory was obtained at the expense of considerable sacrifice in human life and property. In this decisive struggle, there was no one in Arsi who did not lose his friend, cousin, brother, father in-law, etc. which shows the extent of the mobilization and massacre. In addition, houses and crops were burnt, cattle (the only movable Arsi property) were looted and taken to Shoa. The remainder were at the mercy of the *Naftagna* after their defeat. The intensity of cattle looting can be understood from the figure obtained on two of the campaigns. In one expedition which brought Menelik to the heart of Arsi country, he captured 150,435 head of cattle as well as unlimited number of horses, goats, mules, etc⁵⁵. In the other campaign, 65,000 cows were plundered and sent to Shoa⁵⁶.

In addition, the northern part of the Arsi country which is the immediate neighbour of Shoa suffered from the expeditions of *Zamacha* and *Ghesghessa*=‡. The enemy constantly changed tactics, the itinerary of its campaign, and so successfully avoided Arsi surprise attacks by camping at strategic locations. With the passage of time, the Shoan army was reinforced in arms and men, particularly after 1886 when Menelik officially annexed Wallaga. On the other hand, the

Arsi not having a centralized authority, or an effective centralized command structure, usually dispersed after a week or two weeks of war even when they were on the verge of victory as in the case of Albasso⁵⁸. In spite of their extraordinary capacity of mobilization for resistance, they were unable to transform this immense coalition into a durable and permanent force. They did not have the means, in this case firearms, to undertake an offensive war out of their territory either; all battles took place on their territory which was plundered, burnt by the army, and the *Fanno* (freelancers within the army).

Throughout the war until 1886, the Arsi always chased the enemy from their soil and then celebrated their success which became a sort of ritual. To mention only few significant examples, the victory of Doddota under the command of Leenjiso, where they captured the *Negarit* (royal drum); the battle of Qalata where Arsi fighters under the leadership of Gossa Dilamo killed more than 1000 soldiers including three of Menelik's body guards (*Gasha jagre*)⁵⁹; the victory of Albasso where they killed 2000 enemy soldiers in 1886⁶⁰. Finally, one has to add the bloody night attacks against Menelik on his way back to Shoa in June 1886, led by Leenjiso, where the camp was completely burnt and many soldiers died. Here again, the Arsi were very close to killing or capturing the king. In spite of all these setbacks and humiliating defeats, Menelik never gave up as he was conscious that the scramble for Africa in the region and internal political circumstances would eventually give him victory.

Until 1885 then, Menelik failed to defeat the Arsi who in spite of their lack of modern arms and their organizational problems to co-ordinate the efforts of such a large coalition managed to resist. In 1886, however, the war attained its climax; Menelik and his generals decided to concentrate on the South-East, Harar, and exterminate the Arsi country⁶¹. At the time he annexed Wollega, Ras Darghé was given the responsibility of conquering the Arsi, and an urgent and strong call was made to mobilize Shoa soldiers and subjects for the Arsi campaign. Those who were not ready to heed to his words were threatened with the confiscation of their property⁶². Above all, it seems to have been deliberately decided to introduce massive mutilation: "Otherwise, the Arsi would not submit." In other words, they were not sure of winning through conventional war. This campaign (*Zamacha*) led by Menelik and Ras Darghé (his uncle) in May-June 1886 became a punitive expedition.

As soon as the Shoa army entered their country, the Arsi resisted and even forced Menelik to cross and recross the Katara river. To quote Atsme on this point:

"... Then he went to Arusi along the lake via Gelle and Dambal Maqi. Thereafter, killing and plundering started. They attacked to the right, the front, and the left, and extirpated them. They (the Arsi) too did as much as they could. In fact, they strongly resisted, but they failed. The following places were struck and they were used as camps. There is a mighty river named Katara. He (Menelik) crossed it several times. To the right and left, it was full of caves, grottoes and Qatia (sic) of the Galla. He destroyed them (the Galla). Then he camped at Albasso"⁶³.

The Shoa soldiers started to cut off the right hand of men and the right breast of the women to frighten and induce them to submit quickly. But, the Arsi continued to put up stiff resistance and it was during this campaign that they killed about 2000 soldiers at Albasso in one night alone. Menelik succeeded, however, in gaining the upperhand by combining his military superiority with massive and indiscriminate mutilation. He practically suppressed isolated *Gossa* resistance and marched over most parts of the present Arsi region, north of the Shabale River where he captured a huge quantity of booty in cattle, horses and mules. The Arsi had not yet lost the war, but were shocked and struck by fear of the indiscriminate policy of mutilation, some important chiefs in Chilalo started to surrender⁶⁴. Others hesitated between resistance and the pursuit of the struggle, and using this opportunity, Menelik intensified his killing and terrorising practices.

Nevertheless, with the arrival of the rainy season, Menelik went to Shoa, leaving Ras Darghé

at Azulé, a fortified camp defended by thousands of guns, with the necessary ammunitions and provisions. On his way back to Shoa at Dibbe, Menelik fought one of perilous wars against Leenjiso and the Arsi forces coming from every corner of their country, in particular, Albaso, Gadab, Sirka, Dide'a including the Arsi of Bale where he lost many of his soldiers, pack animals, the booty, and escaped with great difficulty⁶⁵. He remained concerned throughout the whole rainy season of 1886 about his uncle Ras Dargé left in the heart of hostile land. The latter was entrenched in the camp for two months, during which time he managed to create some relations with some Arsi individuals.

One of these persons was to be Halko, a poor widow, a merchant of *Heeto* (*Kosso* in Amharic) and tobacco. Apparently, she found clients among the Shoan soldiers who were great consumers of tobacco. Her frequent trips to the camp led to intimate relations with one officer called Ali Mare. She became an agent of the colonising force and as such she informed them of Arsi war preparations and strategy. At the same time, she provided the Arsi with false information, advising them that they would "win against the band of cowards" and with the collaboration of another notable called Robale Kulla who was in service of Ras Darghé, she told the Arsi that it was the right time to annihilate the soldiers at their base of Azule.

One can say that in the history of Arsi resistance against Shoa, the only two Arsi natives who betrayed their cause were Halko and Robale Kulla⁶⁶. The latter himself was said to have been manipulated by Halko whom the Arsi call pejoratively Halko Darghé i.e., Ras Darghé's henchman and to deprive her of her Arsi identity. Shoan authorities being conscious of the precious service she had rendered which accelerated the defeat of the Arsi, rewarded her the land of *Maderiya*, the title usually given to Abyssinian dignitaries in the service of the state; she was also invited by Menelik to Addis Ababa⁶⁷.

This does not mean that the Arsi would not attack Ras Darghé at Azule without the role played by Halko. On the contrary, they were even nervous and felt humiliated by the presence of their public enemy on their soil for weeks. So, the confrontation of Azule was inevitable. But without the treachery of Halko and the generous information on the day and strategy of the attacks she provided to the enemy, the Arsi would not have miscalculated and would not have been mowed down. Assessing the balance of power, that the Arsi would not have emerged victorious in this colonial war which the Shoan state declared against them, but without the shattering defeat of Azule and its consequences, they would have continued to fight and maintain their independence for at least one more decade.

Needless to say the Arsi were mobilized massively, three or four times greater than the preceding engagements according to Atsme⁶⁸ to crush their enemy definitively at Azule. As we said, Ras Darghé was well-informed about the Arsi plan and made the necessary preparations. He dug trenches around the camp and stationed thousands of gunmen on every corner of the fortress. The soldiers were given strict orders not to fire until all the Arsi had entered the camp and until he had given the order⁶⁹. However, seeing a huge army approaching, his son, Dejazmach Asfaw, ordered the soldiers to fire. The Arsi did not retreat and advanced massively. Almost all the horsemen fell into the trenches and others who managed to enter the fortress were mowed down by Shoan bullets. According to de Salviac, "*Aucun Arsi ne survécut sauf ceux qui n'étaient pas rentrés dans la forteresse*"⁷⁰. Ras Darghé, confident of his victory, pursued the foot soldiers and cavalry who escaped. For days, with unbelievable fury, he slayed and mutilated any one he found on his way⁷¹.

Ras Darghé, the butcher of Azule, as the Arsi generally called him, was not satisfied however; he asked to count the number of the Arsi massacred at Azule. His soldiers counted 12,000 corpses⁷². For him this number was not sufficient since many Arsi were still alive; he cried "Oh! brother Haile Malakot, Oh! brother Seifu I am betrayed. Oh! brother Menelik, I am abandoned"⁷³. So, he punished his two sons and soldiers for not respecting his initial plan of engagement in which there would have been no Arsi left alive. After the carnage and massacre of this battle, Ras Darghé probably understood that it was impossible to exterminate all the Arsi even if he used all his

ammunition. He seems to have been persuaded that the only way to speed up the process of submission of the weakened Arsi was by the mutilation of right hand of men and the right breast of women.

For the Arsi, the defeat at Azule represented a veritable genocide, where they lost not only a battle, but also the war and their independence for which tens of thousands of fighters had died. It is said that, at Azule and during the subsequent persecution, there was no Arsi who did not lose his friend or member of his family without taking into account the number of fighters wounded. Those who survived the massacre had no other alternative than to surrender, though many Arsi took refuge in Bale which was not hitherto conquered. So, the submissions multiplied in order to save whatever could be saved in life and property. Those who wanted to have recourse to guerrilla warfare hesitated to do so because their hostility would provoke the mutilation of innocent people.

In the end, Ras Darghé decided to conclude this horrible war in a blood bath. He gathered the Arsi under the pretext of making peace; otherwise no one would have come to Anole, a very strategic place deliberately chosen for this odious crime. The unarmed Arsi were asked to pass through the entrance one by one; those who entered were not allowed to return and were kept in the kraal prepared for the occasion. Most Arsi men and women who came had their right hand and right breast cut off, respectively. The Arsi always considered Ras Darghé as a heartless general, but probably did not imagine that he was capable of mutilating people who peacefully accepted his invitation⁷⁴. Even more abominable, he tied the mutilated hands around the necks of the victims and sent them back home. Other mutilated hands were hung up on a tree which is still standing under which the Shoan soldiers sang and danced. Naturally such activities aimed not only at avenging Shoan early losses (thousands of soldiers), but also to annihilate the Arsi militarily and to damage them psychologically and morally for generations in order to make them totally submissive and subservient to Shoan colonialism.

Of course, the Anole mutilation, *Harkaaf harmaa muraa Anole*, as it is widely known, profoundly touched Arsi dignity of human being and marked (to this day) their collective memories more than all the other Arsi-Amhara wars taken together, for the following reasons. Firstly, as we indicated earlier, war was not a new phenomenon in Oromo society: they fought against their enemies, sometimes against each other, by using the same or similar technology. Although the war against an enemy armed with European weapons was by no means equal, dying or killing in war, however grievous it may have been, was something that was highly integrated in their social psychology. Secondly, beyond those who died from injury, the mutilation of Anole—and other lesser known battles, deprived thousands of survivors the use of their body—right hand for men and right breast for women. A few of them lived until the 1950s and even the early 1960s, and served to sustain Arsi memories for generations. The fact that the society lived with such victims increased their hostility and hatred against the colonizers. In fact, the exact number of people mutilated at Anole is unknown. But according to my informants, their number largely exceeded several thousand. One has to bear in mind that at that time, i.e., at the height of the war since 1886, mutilating hundreds of men a day was a common phenomenon. For example, de Salviac, one of the contemporary observers says that Dejazmatch W/ Gabriel, another conqueror of some part of the Arsi country mutilated the right hand of 400 men in one day alone⁷⁵.

The political and psychological repercussions of Anole were profound and lasting; since then, the Arsi entered a new phase of their history which marked the transition from a republican, democratic and sovereign society into colonial subjects at the mercy of an occupying force and a colonising state. In the end, Ras Darghé succeeded where Menelik himself failed i.e., crushing the formidable and stiff Arsi resistance through terror and massive mutilation. Ras Darghé was a great mutilation expert of which he largely tested (applied) on the Salale before coming to Arsi⁷⁶. The latter always qualified him as “heartless,” “coward who always came behind the army” and used a mobilising slogan “May we die if we fear Darghé”⁷⁷. Finally, they cracked under

massive mutilation of Anole and decided to suspend the struggle without renouncing in their hearts to the struggle to avoid further disaster

Some three years later (1888-1892), Ras Darghé conquered the Arsi of Bale region in close collaboration with Dejazmach W/Gabriel, the conqueror of the Ittu. Darghé was said to have introduced small pox to weaken the Arsi south of the Shabale who had largely fought with their kinsmen in the north⁷⁸. But it is questionable whether he deliberately introduced it or not, as this period corresponded to the Great Famine in Ethiopia although the north was said to have been the most affected⁷⁹. However, the disease weakened the Arsi and some of *Gossa* hardly survived the epidemic and the war of resistance became secondary compared to the very existence of the society at a stake. So, after breaking isolated pockets of resistance, he emerged, once again, victorious although the war was not over until the second half of 1890s. Ras Darghé became one of the leading *aqqni* (empire builder or colonizer) and was made Governor General of the vast region, from where he retired in the late 1890s⁸⁰.

Later on, for the *Naftagna* the Arsi-Bale regions, Ras Darghé became a hero and model who crushed stiff Arsi resistance and made them landlords, officers, officials, judges, and briefly the incontestable masters of the south. It was not surprising when they named hotels, elementary schools and the only high school in Asalla after him. Undoubtedly for the Arsi, giving Darghé's name to the only high school in their region until 1974, even though they were not its beneficiary, was an insult to their ancestors who had been mowed down at Azule and mutilated at Anole and to their collective memories in general. One of Arsi's pressing demands after the Revolution of 1974 was understandably the disappearance of Ras Darghé's name as well as other foreign names from public buildings, schools, places, and towns in their territory. This demand was accepted willy-nilly by the authorities in 1976.

To add insult to injury, the Amhara commemorated their victory of Azule on different occasions. The most spectacular event occurred, however, in the 1950s, when Ras Asrate Kassa was made Governor General of Arsi. As the grandson of Ras Darghé, Ras Kassa visited Azule, a fortress which was immediately abandoned after the war, followed by 6000 cavalry to celebrate the victory of his grand-father⁸¹. This event was generally considered by the Arsi as "their second death" since they felt that the enemy was mocking at their martyrs and heroes. Although they underwent humiliation, alienation, and oppression under the system imposed upon them by their colonizers, the Arsi, both the past and the present generation, are proud of their braves who died or were mutilated defending their dignity, land, and freedom. A huge crowd from all over the region gathered at Anole two years ago, 1992, to render homage to Menelik's victims witness and demonstrated the admiration and the respect they enjoy throughout Oromia.

Conclusion

The last quarter of the XIXth century was a period of dramatic political and historical importance for the peoples of the Horn as elsewhere in Africa, because of the international imperialism and Shoan feudal colonialism. The Shoan kingdom under Menelik was armed and directly or indirectly encouraged by European colonial powers in their own interests, and in its efforts of colonial partition, at the expense of southern populations.

The southern societies, "nations" or "nationalities" with different levels of their socio-economic development, uncentralized or less centralized (less organized), particularly unarmed and unprepared, were not in a position to resist the Shoan colonising forces armed by western powers. Those who dared to go to war were massively massacred and mutilated by the Shoan army who combined traditional barbarous practices of castration and mutilation of their enemy and superior firepower. For this reason, the physical, moral, and psychological damage done by Menelik to his colonial subjects seem to have been worse than that of other colonial powers in the Horn of Africa. One could simply compare human and material losses, to mention only a few, in the

war against the Woliata in 1894⁸² and bloody campaigns against the Arsi (1881-1886)⁸³ with other contemporary colonial wars and battles in the region.

In this brief study, we emphasized the popular Arsi resistance against the Shoan kingdom, who without a centralized authority, professional army or modern firearms blocked Shoan expansionism for years and inflicted heavy losses on Menelik's soldiers. The retaliation by the latter was brutal and barbarous; extensive mutilation of the right hands of men and the right breasts of women and the massacre of tens of thousands of people, Arsi land was plundered, the cattle were looted and afterwards the remainder were confiscated. The state expropriated almost all the Arsiland which it distributed to soldiers, to the Church, officials and the nobility. In other words, the Arsi lost a considerable number of their population, their property (cattle), and following their defeat in 1886, their independence, dignity and land, their representative institutions were destroyed and their culture marginalized.

A discussion of the political and economic consequences of the Shoan colonial system is beyond the scope of this article⁸⁴, but we hope that this brief article clearly demonstrates the salient features of the Shoan conquest and the human and material sacrifices paid by the Arsi to maintain their sovereignty. This protracted struggle against the Shoan conquest occupies an important place in the annals of the anti-colonial resistance of the region. Finally, the present political and armed conflict, contradiction, and crises can be traced to this period, the last quarter of the XIXth Century.

End Notes

1. The data on which this study was based was gathered from the Arsi area in the early 1980s (1981-2) and from extensive fieldwork undertaken in Arsi-Bale Regions in 1987. Aspects of this article were presented in my BA thesis *A History of the Arsi, (1880-1935)*, AAU, 1982 and elaborated and analysed in my doctoral dissertation: *Les Oromo-Arsi: continuité et évolution des institutions d'une société éthiopienne*, University of Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne), 1990, Chapter V. I also treated some points raised in the first section of my contribution to a forthcoming book.

2. For a scholarly analysis of imperial ideology, see among others, Professor Crummey's article, "Imperial Legitimacy and the Creation of Neo-Salomonic Ideology in the 19th Century Ethiopia" *Cahiers d'études africaines* XXX III (1)1989: 13-45. See, also P.L. Strauss, *The Feteha Nagast, the Law of kings* translated from Ge'ez by Abba Paulos Tsadua, Addis Ababa, H.S.I.U, Faculty of Law, Central Printing Press, 1966.

3. Smith A. Donaldson, *Through Unknown African Countries (the First Expedition From Somaliland to Lake Rudolf)*, London & New York, Edward Arnold, 1897, pp. 370-2.

4. This traditional rhetoric and imperial conception of history as widely spread among the ruling elite was presented by Getachew Haile in the article entitled "The Unity and Territorial Integrity of Ethiopia" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 24 (3): 465-487.

5. Merid W/Aregay contests the theory of "Galla flood" during the XVIth century "... The general impression of a sudden and overwhelming irruption by a totally unknown people which they created is unrealistic and legendary" Merid W/ Aregay, *Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom, 1508-1708, With Special Reference to the Galla Migrations and Their Consequences*. Ph.D. thesis, SOAS, University of London, 1972, pp. 151-2. For a detailed discussion of the subject and different views, hypotheses and theories on the Oromo's country of origin see Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia, A History 1570-1860*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 20-47. See also Mohammed Hassen's contribution on the Oromo Cradle land to a forthcoming book.

6. E. Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People*. London, 1960, p.76. See also Mohammed Hassen for analyses of Abyssian historiography on the Oromo: "Some Aspects of Oromo History That Have Been Misunderstood" in *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Volume 1, Number 2, Winter 1994, pp. 78-81.

7. For example, C. Jésmán not only applauded the process of assimilation by the imperial state, which he considered as a test case of racial integration but also maintained, against historical fact (truth), that the Oromo renounced their culture to become Amhara Jésmán, "Ethiopia: a Test Case of Racial Integration" *Africa* (Roma) 23 (4), 1968: 471-498.

8. For this mechanical sociological-psychological theory see Donald Levine, *Greater Ethiopia*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1974. To those who advocate this notion or who support the assimilationist model "lower cultures" have to be sacrificed in favour of "developed cultures" and expect the dissolution of the "weak culture" into the dominant culture. In doing so, they ignored the important "fact of conquest" factor and the "colonial situations" created by the balance of power, largely in favour of the Amhara who succeeded in conquering vast regions and imposing their colonial feudalism over other peoples because of their superiority in arms not because of their psychological superiority. Of course, in the interaction between the colonized and the colonizers consciousness or self-image may develop corresponding to their socio-economic positions. For instance, an Amhara who saw the Amhara ruling for a century may legitimately say (believe) that the Amhara are born to rule, not to be ruled as if being ruler and ruled is as something innate. (The recent changes in Ethiopia showed that the balance of power is not something static, but dynamic, which means every one can be ruled if he loses the power that he maintained by force). We do not see here the role of psychology. See also a brief analysis of Alemayehu Birru for the contradictions and shortcomings of D. Levine's thesis, "The Bankruptcy of Donald Levine's Greater Ethiopia" *Oromo Commentary*, Bulletin for Critical Analysis of Current Affairs in the Horn of Africa, Vol III, Number 1, 1993, 25-28.

9. C. Clapham, *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia*, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

10. *Ibid*, p. 23. A nation-State is completely different from an empire state and empire cannot transform itself into a nation. In effect, the nations, nationalities and peoples are conquered and brought together and maintained by force of arms under the domination of one of the constituting elements. The domination and oppression engender contradictions, resistance and revolts which contribute to the decay of all empires. See, M. Duverger (ed), *Le concept d'empire*, Paris, PUF, 1980.

11. There are a considerable literature on the rise of Shoa, R.H. Kofi Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and the Ethiopian Empire, 1813-1889*, London, Bulter and Tanner Limited, 1975; Harold Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik, Ethiopia, 1844-1913*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975, See also Marcus, "Imperialism and Expansionism in Ethiopia" in L.H. Gann and P. Duigan, Eds, *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969. 42-461 and Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorigis and His Work, History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Shewa*, Steiner, Stuttgart, 1987 and Richard Caulk, "Yohannes IV, the Mahdists and the Colonial Partition of Northeast Africa," *Transafrican Journal of African History*, I, 2 (1971).

12. G.W.B. Huntingford, *The Galla of Ethiopia, the Kingdom of Kafa and Janjero*, London, International African Institute, 1969, pp. 12-5.

13. Paulitsceke estimated the number of the Arsi involved in the war at 1,000,000 cited in Gabre Sellassie, *La Chronique de Ménèlik II, Rois des Rois d'Ethiopie* translated by Tasfa Sellassie, published et annotated by De Copet, Paris, Librairie orientale et américaine, 1930, 1932), 2 vols, p. 173. He seemed to mean that the whole Arsi were mobilized for the war. P. Antonelli confirms that even the women took part in the battle: "Rapporti sullo Scioa al Ministero degli Affari Esteri (de 22 Maggio 1883 al Guigno 1888)" *Miscellanea, Etiopia ed Eritrea*, Roma, 1889, p. 63. For his part, de Salviac maintained on the occasion of battles the Arsi easily raised more than 100,000 fighters. "Un peuple antique au pays de Ménèlik: Les Galla, Paris, H. Oudin, 1901, p. 278.

14. See, Mama Bedhane Bariso, *Settlement of Disputes in Rural Ethiopia Outside the Codified Legal System, the case of Arsi-Bale Massifs*. LL.B. thesis, Addis Ababa University, 1986 and Abbas Haji, Les Oromo-Arsi, Second chapter.

- 15 U. Braukämper, "Islamic Principalities in South-East Ethiopia between thirteenth Century and sixteenth Centuries" *Ethiopianist Notes* Vol. I (1) 1977: 17-56. Abbas Haji, *Les Oromo-Arsi*, the first chapter. and Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, pp. 18-47.
16. Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 535.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 537.
18. E. Cerulli, The Folk Literature of the Southern Galla, *Harvard African Studies*, Vol. III, 1-225, Cambridge & Mass, 1922, pp. 88-92.
- 19 R. d'Héricourt, *Second Voyage dans le pays des Adels et royaume du Choa*. Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1846 p. 178.
20. Cerulli, *The Folk Literature*, p. 88-92.
21. *Ibid.*
22. E. Haberland, *Galla Süd Äthiopiens*, Stuttgart, 1963. On the different *Gada* areas see E. Cerulli," Il popolazioni del bacino superiore dello Wabi in L A DE SAVOIA-AOSTA (ed), *L'esplorazione dello Uebi Scebelli*, Milano, 1932, 135-181.
23. Abbas Haji, *Les Oromo-Arsi*, Second Chapter
24. Bahery, "History of the Galla" in *Some Records of Ethiopia, 1593-1646*, translated and edited by C F Beckingham and Huntingford, London, the Haklut Society, 1954, pp. 113-129
25. M. De Salviac, *Op.cit.*, p. 268 and Rochet d'Héricourt, *Second Voyage* p. 175.
26. P.T.W Baxter, "Repetition in Certain Boran Ceremonies" in *African Systems of Thought* edited by M. Fortes and G. Dieterlin, London, 1965: 64-78, p. 64.
27. For the analysis of the *Gadaa* system see Asmarom Legesse, *Gadaa: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*, New York, The Free Press, and P.T.W. Baxter and U. Almagor, (Eds), *Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East African Age organizations*, London, Hurst Company, 1978. and E. Cerulli, *The Folk Literature of the Southern Galla*.
28. Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia* (Introduction), p. 13.
29. Azais et Chambard, *Cinq années de recherches archéologiques en Ethiopie*, Paris, Librairie orientaliste Paul Guethner 1931, p. 209
30. Bahrey, *Op.cit.*, p. 113-129 ; Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, pp. 22-27.
31. Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 543.
32. For a description of Menelik's campaign, Atsme, *Ya Galla Tarik, (History of the Galla,)* manuscript in 2. Vol. 1913 Amharic calendar, IES or its translation by Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorigis and His Work*, Gabre Sellassie, *La Chronique*, and many secondary sources, Darkwah, *Op.cit.*, Marcus, *The Life and Times*, Abbas Haji, *A History of the Arsi*, 2nd chapter.
33. Abbas Haji, *A History of the Arsi*, pp. 17-40.
34. The Arsi created three Fronts: Tchancho (northern and north-eastern Arsi), Dide'a, (central Arsi) and Gadab-Sirka, (southern and south-western Arsi).
35. P.L. Strauss, *The Feteha Nagast, the Law of Kings*, p. 274.
36. Ed. Simone, "The Amhara Expedition against the Shawa Galla (1800-1850), A reappraisal" in Harold G. Marcus (Ed) *Proceedings of the First United States Conference on Ethiopian Studies, Michigan State University, 2-5 May, 1973*, East Lansing, African Studies Center, 1975: 135-141.
37. Information on Arsi leaders and warriors as well as internal transformation come from our extensive interviews analysed in our earlier works, (Abbas, 1982, 1990) and the list of our principal informants was given at the end of these texts.
38. Atmse called him Suufala instead of Suufaa and confirms that he was one the principal Arsi leaders who submitted to Menelik during Menelik's May-June 1886 expedition, Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 765.
39. Among the Arsi the most memorable victory was Dodota where Menelik lost his Negarit and narrowly escaped death and was pursued as far as Modjo and the grandiose ceremony following it.
40. Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorigis and His Work*, pp. 725-7.

41. H. Audon, "Voyage au Choa (Abyssinie Méridionale) 1884-1888" Extrait du *Tour du monde*, Numéro 1494, 1889: 113-60, p. 150.
42. Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and his Work*, *Op.cit.*, p. 765
43. After his submission Leenjiso was said to have been appointed a sort of advisor to Fitawrari Wosane to appease the Arsi and to give an impression that they were sharing power. What is surprising is that after the death of Wosane, Menelik did not punish Leenjiso, perhaps because he was more concerned for the security and stability of his empire than Wosane's death.
44. Informants Balambaras Bogashaw Alemayehu, Ghinir, Bale. He was one of the most informed informants on the campaigns of Dejazmach Wolde Gabriel in Eastern Bale.
45. Debtara Mesfin Q/ Selssaie, Guranda, Bale.
46. Bu Bourg de Bozas, *Mission scientifique de Bourg de Bozas de la mer rouge à l'Atlantique à travers l'Afrique tropicale, October 1900-1903*. Paris, Edité par F.R. de Rudeval, 1906, p. 122.
47. M. S. Wellby, *Twixt Sirdar and Menelik*, London, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1901, p. 121.
48. Those who left a lasting impact on the Arsi society were those who went to war although the intelligence of Roba was largely recognized.
49. Du Bourg de Bozas, *Op.cit.*, p. 122. Apparently other leaders hoped to get foreign aids against the Amhara. For instance, Smith A. Donaldson (*Op.cit.*, p. 46) claimed to have been told by one of the most important leaders that "they must have dropped from the clouds, to rid the country of the Abyssinians."
50. Bourg de Bozas, *Op.cit.*, p. 125.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Abbas Haji, *Les Oromo-Arsi*, pp. 154-160. For a general discussion see among others, Darkwah, *Op.cit.*; H.G. Marcus, "Motives, Methods and Some Results of Unification of Ethiopia during the reign of Menelik II" in *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University 1966*, Addis Ababa, 1969: 269-80. Addis Hiwet, Ethiopia from Autocracy to Revolution, *Review of African Political Economy*, occasional paper Number 1, London, 1975. (Introduction).
53. Darkwah, *Op.cit.*, p. 103
54. E.Cerulli, *The Folk Literature of the Galla*, p. 91.
55. Hussein Ahmed, *Some Problems of the Gabre Sellassie Chronicle*. B.A thesis, Addis Ababa University, 1977, pp. 26-7.
56. Gabre Selassie, *La Chronique*, p. 173.
57. The *Zamacha* was a highly organized campaign which lasted between two and four months whereas the *Ghesghessa*, was a short surprise attacks lasting from two to five days against the neighbouring society to be conquered See Antonnelli, *Op.cit.*, p. 74.
58. According to de Salviac (*Op.cit.*, p. 278) one of the weaknesses of the Arsi from military point of view was that the fighters did not remain together for more than two weeks. This was a great handicap in the face of their enemy, who maintained its army in the battlefield for weeks and even months.
59. Informants Qerenso Bade, and Haji Aliyie Tolola, See also Gabre Selassie, *La Chronique*, pp. 171-2. The later gives an important account of this battle fight and the names of three Shoan dignitaries who died in the war.
60. My informant Galato Kawo claimed that there was more than 5000 Shoan soldiers killed. On his part de Salviac, *Op.cit.*, p. 306 says more than 2000 soldiers, and the chronicler who usually tended to minimize Shoan loses, admitted the death of 700 Shoan soldiers, Gabre Selassie, *La chronique*, p. 234.
61. Bairu Tafla, "Ras Darghe Sahle Selassie," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. XIII, Number 1-2, pp. 17-37.

62. P. Antonelli, *Op.cit* , p. 96. See also L. Traversi, "Sul viago negli Arusi, Guraghi" *Bulletino della societa Geographia Italiana*, XXIV, 1887, pp. 267-290.
63. Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 763.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Abbas Haji, *A History of the Arsi*, pp. 35-7. Gabre Sellassie, *La chronique and Traversi, op.cit.*
66. Informants: Hussein Kadiro, (Amiigna) and Kabir Kassim Woliyie (Adelle), Dide'a.
67. Informants: Galato Kawo and Dejazmatch Degafa Balcha.
68. Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 769.
69. *Ibid.*
70. De Salviac, *Op.cit* , pp. 306 underlined, "No one survived except those who did not enter the camp".
71. Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 769.
72. De Salviac, *Op.cit.* , p. 307.
73. Abbas Haji, *A History of the Arsi*, p. 41-2. Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 769.
74. Most of my Arsi informants remember one of these victims, belonging to the *Gossa* of Jawi, who not only survived the mutilation, but also became an important orator, highly appreciated for his wisdom. It is said that he used to show his mutilated hand to the public to remind them that he lost it in fighting for dignity, Informant Haji Abbe Awseno, (Etheya) personally knew him.
75. De Salviac, *Op.cit* , p. 278.
76. Wakene Frew, *The Family of Ras Darghe and the Church in Salale*, B.A. Paper in History, A.A.U., 1973, p. 18.
77. Ceulli, *The Folk Literature*, pp. 88-92.
78. Informants: Bekele W/ Yes.s, (Dodola), Mesfin Qibe'a Selassie, Yitbarek Goshu (Gurnada), Alemayehu Bagashaw (Ghinir).
79. Gabre Sellassie, *La chronique* and R. Pankhrust, "The Great Ethiopian Famine, 1888-1892: a New Assesment" *Journal of Medicine and Allied Sciences* XXI, 1,2,3, pp. 95-124 & 271-294.
80. Bairu Tafla, *Ras Darghe Sahle Selassie*.
81. Fitawrari Degafa Balcha, personally witnessed the grandiose ceremony organized by Ras Asrate Kassa on the commemoration of his grandfather's massacre of the Arsi at Azule on September 6, 1886.
82. For the description of the Wolaita expedition see an account of eye witness J.G. Vanderheym, *Une expédition avec le Négus Ménélik, Vingt mois en Abyssinie*, Paris, Librairie Hachette, 1896, pp. 174-5.
83. See Abbas Haji, *Les Oromo-Arsi*, pp. 154-191.
84. Abbas Haji, "L'Ethiopie va-t-elle éclater?: conflits politiques, économie et société en Arsi", *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines*, 1992, 126: 239-283.

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Special Features in Oromiffa and Reasons for Adopting Latin Scripts for Developing Oromo Orthography

by Feyisa Demie*

Introduction

This paper discusses some matters of considerable importance to Oromo studies, namely, the use of the Latin scripts for writing the Oromo language, Oromiffa. The objective is to examine the characteristics of the Oromo language and discuss some of the criteria used by the Oromo Students Study Group in Europe in 1972 to adopt the Latin alphabets as an Oromo National Orthography. The following questions are often raised by a number of Ethiopian scholars. Which of the writing systems should the Oromo adopt for written Oromiffa? Is it better to use the Geez alphabet, or adopt Latin alphabet? These issues were widely debated within the Ethiopian and Oromo Student movements abroad between 1970-1972 (ESUE-Tatek, 1972; Oromo Students Study Group 1973; UOSE, 1977 and 1979).

Special Features in Oromiffa

The major characteristics and special features of Oromiffa are the two degrees of reading vowel length (short and long) and the consonants mode of articulation (hardening and softening known in Oromiffa as jabeenaaf and Laffina. See, Krabf, 1842; Cerulli, 1922; Andrzejewski, 1957; UOSE, 1972; Oromo Students Study Group, 1972 and 1973; Gragg, 1982; Borru, 1976; OLF, 1979, Gammta, 1989; Rikitu, 1992 and 1993).

Vowels:

In the Oromo language, there are five distinct vowel qualities. These are:

- a. close front, unrounded
- b. half-open front, unrounded
- c. open, medium, unrounded
- d. half-open, back, rounded
- e. close, back, rounded

In the two degrees of length, i.e., short and long, the short sound vowel is represented by a single vowel letter while the long vowels by double vowel letters:

(i). *Short i e a o u*

(ii). *Long ii ee aa oo uu*

The short and long degree of vowels and the hardening and softening degrees of the consonant mode of articulation differentiates the meanings of the synonymous words which are common in the Oromo language. The two degrees of length in the vowel reading and two degrees of mode of articulation in consonants have a very important place in the Oromo language. Compared to Geez and other Semitic languages, the fundamental structure of Oromiffa is different and the vowels and the consonants are inseparable. If you want to write a word in Oromiffa, you have to show the vowel sounds as well as the consonants.

Consonants:

The Oromo consonants are: *b, c, ch, d, dh, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, ny, p, ph, q, r, s, sh, t, v, w, x, y, z*. Within the Oromo alphabet *ch, ph, dh, ny, sh* are digraphs and ' ' is a mark or symbol that stands for the glottal stop which is found in certain Oromo words. This symbol is called in Oromiffa "Qoqsa."

In general, as indicated above, knowing the appropriate sounds of the letters and the vowels is essential to read and write in Oromiffa. The Oromo language, excluding those represented by *p, v, z* has 34 basic sounds. Oromiffa has 10 vowels (5 short vowels and 5 long vowels) and 24 consonants of which 5 are digraphs. The vowels are written and pronounced as follows:

	written in Oromiffa	English Meaning	Sounds
a	gara	to	Short 'a' sound in the middle and the end
aa	gaara	mountain	long 'a' sound in the middle and short at the end
e	ergaa	message	short 'e' sound at the beginning
ee	eebba	blessing	long 'e' sound at the beginning
i	dhjsuu	stretch	short 'i' sound in the middle
ii	dhjjsuu	leave	long 'ii' sound in the middle
o	oduu	news	short 'o' sound at the beginning
oo	ooduu	not communicating	long 'o' sound at the beginning
u	urgaa	smell	short 'u' sound at the beginning
uu	uumaa	nature	long 'uu' sound at the beginning

Additional examples that demonstrate the short and long sound in Oromiffa are shown below:

Short sound (Gabaabbaa)	English Meaning	Long sound (Dheera)	English Meaning
Lafa	earth	laafaa	weak, soft
laga	river	laagaa	throat
gala	enter	gaala	Camel
dhagaa	stone	Dhaaga'	ahear
roobi	be rain	roobii	hippopotamus
rafu	to sleep	raafuu	cabbage

As with Oromo vowels, Oromo consonants are also shortened or lengthened. The changes in the consonants are termed in Oromiffa *Laffisuu* (unstressed) and *Jabeessuu* (stressed) and depend on the degrees of the mode of articulation. In general, the consonants are unstressed when they are single and stressed when they are double. For example, in the Oromo word "gubaa" which means "hot" in English, the 'b' letter is unstressed whereas in the word *gubbaa* which means "above" in English, the letters 'bb' are stressed. Further examples with hardening and softening mode of articulation are shown below:

Jabaa (stressed)	Laafaa (unstressed)
but <u>tu</u>	bu <u>tu</u>
qar <u>re</u>	qa <u>re</u>
ham <u>ma</u>	ha <u>ma</u>
sod <u>da</u>	so <u>da</u>
hat <u>tu</u>	ha <u>tu</u>
ma <u>ll</u> aa	ma <u>l</u> aa

Reading matrix system in Oromiffa**

The core of the reading matrix system in Oromiffa, based on the above discussion, is set out in the following table. The table has 10 short and long sound columns, numbered I-X. Each column corresponds to a different vocalization or other phonologically relevant modification of the consonants.

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
short	long	short	long	short	long	short	long	short	long
a	aa	e	ee	i	ii	o	oo	u	uu
ba	baa	be	bee	bi	bii	bo	boo	bu	buu
ca	caa	ce	cee	ci	cii	co	coo	cu	cuu
cha	chaa	che	chee	chi	chii	cho	choo	chu	chuu
da	daa	de	dee	di	dii	do	doo	du	duu
dha	dhaa	dhe	dhee	dhi	dhii	dho	dhoo	dhu	dhuu
fa	faa	fe	fee	fi	fii	fo	foo	fu	fuu
ga	gaa	ge	gee	gi	gii	go	goo	gu	guu
ha	haa	he	hee	hi	hii	ho	hoo	hu	huu
ja	jaa	je	jee	ji	jii	jo	joo	ju	juu
ka	kaa	ke	kee	ki	kii	ko	koo	ku	kuu
la	laa	le	lee	li	lii	lo	loo	lu	luu
ma	maa	me	mee	mi	mii	mo	moo	mu	muu
na	naa	ne	nee	ni	nii	no	noo	nu	nuu
nya	nyaa	nye	nyee	nyi	nyii	nyo	nyoo	nyu	nyuu
pa	paa	pe	pee	pi	pii	po	poo	pu	puu
pha	phaa	phe	phee	phi	phii	pho	phoo	phu	phuu
qa	qaa	qe	qee	qi	qii	qo	qoo	qu	quu
ra	raa	re	ree	ri	rii	ro	roo	ru	ruu
sa	saa	se	see	si	sii	so	soo	su	suu
ta	taa	te	tee	ti	tii	to	too	tu	tuu
wa	waa	we	wee	wi	wii	wo	woo	wu	wuu
xa	xaa	xe	xee	xi	xii	xo	xoo	xu	xuu
ya	yaa	ye	yee	yi	yii	yo	yoo	yu	yuu

Reasons for Choosing Latin Scripts for Developing an Oromo Orthography

An ideal writing system should be in agreement with the actual system of sounds. It needs to be recognized that some languages make distinction of sounds that may be unnoticed in other languages. A writing system, to be easily learned and used, must provide a clear means of distinguishing the phonemes of the language. The ideal situation is to have one sign for each phoneme.

For example, within the European countries that use Latin alphabet, the difference of the Italian usage from French, German, English etc. are easily noticeable. To adopt and use one country's language alphabets for an other language without understanding the characteristics of a particular language will bring to the learners and speakers of the language serious reading and writing problems. This was particularly true in the case of the adopting Geez alphabet. A number of writers and scholars were forced by the Ethiopian government to use Geez alphabet to write in Oromiffa without considering the special characteristics of the Oromo language. The best example was "*Bariisa*," the first Oromo Newspaper which initiated written Oromiffa in Latin script. The Ethiopian Government banned the use of the Latin alphabets and forced the editors to use Geez

scripts despite major differences in the characteristics of the two languages. The government and a number of Ethiopians have continued making malicious slanders about the Oromo language and the use of Latin as an Oromo orthography. In fact up to now, the use of Latin alphabet by the Oromo (Qubee Afaan Oromoo) has become the most intensely discussed topic among the Ethiopian official circles and Semitic ethnic groups in Ethiopia.

It is important to recognize that adoption of another alphabet to the Oromo language is based on scientific studies and sound arguments that considered the nature and the characteristics of the Oromo language. As noted by Hayward and Hassan (1981), Oromiffa is a fairly typical East Cushitic language and the following three features require recognition in an ideal orthography:

1. *There are systematic consonant contrasts involving glottalized stops as well as a glottal stop itself;*
2. *There are five distinct vowel phonemes, the main allophones of which are i, e, a, o, u;*
3. *Length is phonologically significant for all vowels and for most consonants."*

This quotation reflects the weakness of the Geez script for the writing of the Oromo language. The first major weakness has to do with the vowels of the Geez alphabets that do not have sound representation for Oromiffa. As indicated above, Geez alphabet has only seven vowels as opposed to ten vowels of Oromiffa. For example, in the Geez alphabet, if you want to write in Oromiffa the words ካጋጋጅ and ካጋጋጅ you do not know the difference. Both words are written the same in Geez alphabet as follows:

Oromiffa	Amharic
ቁ ላ	ካጋጋጅ
ቁ ላ	ካጋጋጅ

The readers would not be able to know whether you mean ካጋጋጅ or ካጋጋጅ because they are the same when written in Oromiffa using the Geez alphabet. There is no way to know the difference. But for the person who knows the two languages, Oromiffa and Amharic, both words with their Amharic meaning do not have the same mode of articulation i.e., hardening and softening in Oromiffa. The difference is on "ቁ". From the beginning, the first "ቁ" should be read with long sound. The long Oromo vowel "uu" should be used. If these words were written in Latin, they would be as follows:

Oromiffa	Amharic meaning
Quufaa	ካጋጋጅ
Qufaa	ካጋጋጅ

Perhaps, it may be argued that on Geez scripts one kind of sign can be put to show the short and the long degree of vowel length. If we do this, it will be the creation of different alphabet from the Geez alphabet, and we think it will be like playing a game by drawing diagrams on a white paper.

The second major weakness relates to the difference between the two languages in consonants and glottal stops. Consonants mode of articulation—"hardening and softening" can be seen from the following examples:

Oromiffa written in Latin	Amharic meaning	Oromiffa written in Geez	English meaning
Sodaa	ቆሳላ	ሀሳ	fear
Soddaa	ከሳላ	ሀሳ	in-law

The difference is on the Geez word “ ሳ ” consonants hardening and softening mode of articulation. To differentiate such words, different signs must be created and put on the Geez scripts. But when we write with the Latin alphabet, it will be written easily as follows:

“*Sodaa*” which mean in English “fear” can be written with the “*d*” in the letter unstressed whereas “*soddaa*” meaning “in-law” with the “*dd*” in the letter stressed

In addition to the above problems, there has been a major problem for writing “*dh*” using geez alphabet. Those who attempted to write it used different marks so as to represent the sound, like “*d*,” “*p*,” and “*dz*” unsuccessfully.

The third major weakness is related to gemination. The Oromo language is filled with syllabic stress and strains and is notorious in its double sounds in words which the users of the Geez alphabets neglect when writing in Oromiffa. The problems of gemination are numerous in the Oromo language. Most of the words are so identical that the use of double long vowels and consonants showing the stress attached to their meanings is very necessary. Because of these characteristics of the Oromo language, the pattern of pronunciation of the phonemes and morphemes (words) must be exactly the way they are written. We believe the problems of the degree of length in vowels, i.e., lengthening and shortening and the degree of the mode of articulation in consonants, i.e., hardening and softening can be solved only if written in the adopted Latin alphabet and not in Geez alphabet.

Furthermore, the use of the Latin alphabet have the following advantages over Geez script:

1. The number of letters is very small. Oromiffa can be written using only 31 letters (i.e., *a, b, c, ch, d, dh, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, ny, o, p, ph, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z*) compared to 182 letters of Geez script.
2. The use of the Latin script would not put any additional burden on the children who have to learn English or want to learn other foreign languages which use the Latin alphabets. The Latin alphabet was adapted to many languages including English, German, Swedish, Danish, French, Croatian, Czech, Italian, Romanian, Portuguese, Polish, Slovene, Hungarian, Finnish, Lithuanian, Vietnamese, Somali, Swahili, Turkish and others and it would be easier for an Oromo child to learn any of these languages.
3. The Latin script can be easily printed and typed with machines used for English, Italian, French or Slavic languages with only minor adjustments.
4. The Latin script is very economical, i.e., easy to learn, easy to print and has a quick result.
5. The Latin script has very simple letters. There is no unnecessary line and looping in the letters that are problematic with the Geez script.
6. The Latin script could be easily used for commercial and telegraphic communication purposes. In addition, its alphabetic writing's can be easily adapted to computer technology which are very important in business and education.
7. Each letter in the alphabet stands for a single sound unit.
8. Last, but not the least, the Latin script can accept further modification without changes in its foundation. It can also be used for science and mathematical words to be adapted to the language.

Criteria Used by the Oromo Students Study Group in Europe for Adopting Oromo National Orthography

The Oromo students Study Group in Europe made a major contribution both to our knowledge of the Oromo grammar and to the discussion on how the Oromo language should be written. They were pioneers in developing and using the Latin alphabet. In this section, therefore, we shall look at some of the criteria used by the Oromo students Study Group for adopting Latin alphabet as Oromo orthography.

A close review of the work of the Group indicates that they did an intensive research to find a solution for Oromo alphabet between 1968 and 1972. The work published in *Tatek* (Ethiopian students Journal, February 1972) and the publication of *Hirmataadubbi Afaan Oromoo* in 1973 clearly confirms that they did not attempt to create a new Oromo script. Because their main objective was to evaluate the performance of the scripts used in the past for writing in the Oromo language, they tried to adopt existing scripts which were in use by comparing the advantages and disadvantages of particular scripts.

However, before evaluating each script, they carried out a survey of different scripts which were used to write in Oromiffa. A number of scripts were suggested and studied during the initial phase of the research period including the Arabic alphabet, Geez alphabet, different types of Latin scripts used to write in English, French, German, Italian, and Shaykh Bakri Saphalo's Oromo orthography. There were also other Oromo scripts developed in Wallega and Bali, the existence of which was reported to the Group at the time of the research on the Oromo national orthography; but we never had the opportunity to see and examine. A register of file was opened for each of the above mentioned scripts to study their suitability for writing Oromiffa (Demie, 1993). Furthermore, from the existing Latin alphabets, the Group designed and developed an adapted Latin alphabet as an Oromo orthography. After due consideration of the merits and demerits of each script, two scripts, i.e., the Latin alphabet adopted by the Oromo Students Study Group and the Geez script used by Onesimos Nasib were passed for further detailed study and considerations by selection committee. The selection committee agreed to maintain strict impartiality in the consideration of the two scripts and adopted a set of rules as guiding principles for evaluation and analysis. As guiding principles, considerations were given to the major characteristics of Oromiffa and the advantages and disadvantages of the use of Latin alphabet and Geez alphabet. The major criteria used in the selection were summarized above and the advantages and disadvantages of using the two scripts were also published in *Tatek* (1972). It is interesting also to note that the committee members further organized an intensive group study on elementary phonetics and the basic structures of the Oromo language to broaden their knowledge and qualify for making a sound decision. In the final selection exercise, the Latin script designed and developed by the Oromo Students Study Group scored the highest point and was recommended for use as an Oromo orthography. Furthermore, realising the importance of standardising the Oromo language the Group recommended that:

1. the language committee is formed to carry out scientific research on Oromo grammar in collaborations with Oromo individuals and linguistic Institutions.
2. the language committee presents written materials to carry out intensive campaign among Oromos in Europe and abroad to use the Oromo language in their communications and write intensively in their language.
3. Until further research findings, we use as an Oromo national orthography the adopted Latin alphabet for the writing of Oromiffa, publications, and correspondence.

The adoption and development of Oromo orthography is the greatest milestone in the history

of the Oromo language. Until the Oromo students brought a debate on the writing of the Oromo language and designed the Latin alphabet in the early 1970s, the Oromo Language was only a well developed oral language. With the publication of the adapted alphabet and the Oromo grammar book, a number of Oromo organizations including the Union of Oromo Students in Europe, the Union of Oromo Students in North America, Middle East, and the Oromo Liberation Front quickly started using Oromiffa as an official language of communications. Additionally, these organizations adopted the Latin script as Oromo orthography for the writing of the Oromo language and started using combined Latin letters ch, dh, ny, ph and sh instead of diacritic signs. This replaced č, ň, đ, ɽ and š which were in the early adopted Latin alphabet and used by Oromos until 1979.

Another milestone in the history of the writing in Oromiffa and the development of its orthography was the acceptance of the adopted Latin alphabet by all Oromo organizations, Oromo scholars, and politicians on November 1991. Over a thousand men and women from all over Oromia attended the historic convention which met in the parliament building in Finfinnee to discuss the adoption of the Latin script as an Oromo national orthography. After hours of discussions and deliberations, it was unanimously decided that Latin script be adopted, thus opening another chapter in development of the Oromo orthography. Subsequently, after the Finfinnee declaration on the adoption of the Latin on November 1991, Oromiffa was made officially the medium of instruction and administration all over Oromia and a number of texts were produced for use in Oromian schools. Furthermore, the teaching of Oromiffa in Oromian schools was legally launched in September 1993 for the first time since Oromia was occupied by Abyssinia over 100 years ago.

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*Feyisa Demie, Ph.D. and Chairman of Oromo Community, U.K. This paper contains the substance of a lecture given by the author to the members of the Union of Oromo Students in Europe (UOSE) in August 1976 and 1978 on the history of written Oromiffa and the Oromo National Orthography. A summary of the research report by the language committee, chaired by the author was published in Berlin on *Sagallee Oromo*, Vol 4, No. 1, pp.31-35, August 1978. The author would like to thank Teferi Degneh, Workneh Dechassa, Asafa Jalata for their helpful comments and suggestions on the draft version of this paper. Responsibility for the contents of the paper, however, rests entirely with the author.

The Conquest and Environmental Degradation of Oromia

by Assefu Kuru*

Introduction

Oromo land or **Oromia** is located in the Horn of Africa stretching between 2°N and 12°N latitude and between 34°E and 44°E longitude. It covers about 600,000 Km² surface area and constitutes some 54 percent of the total area of the empire. In terms of total area involved, it is greater than the total surface of Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Ireland and Switzerland combined.

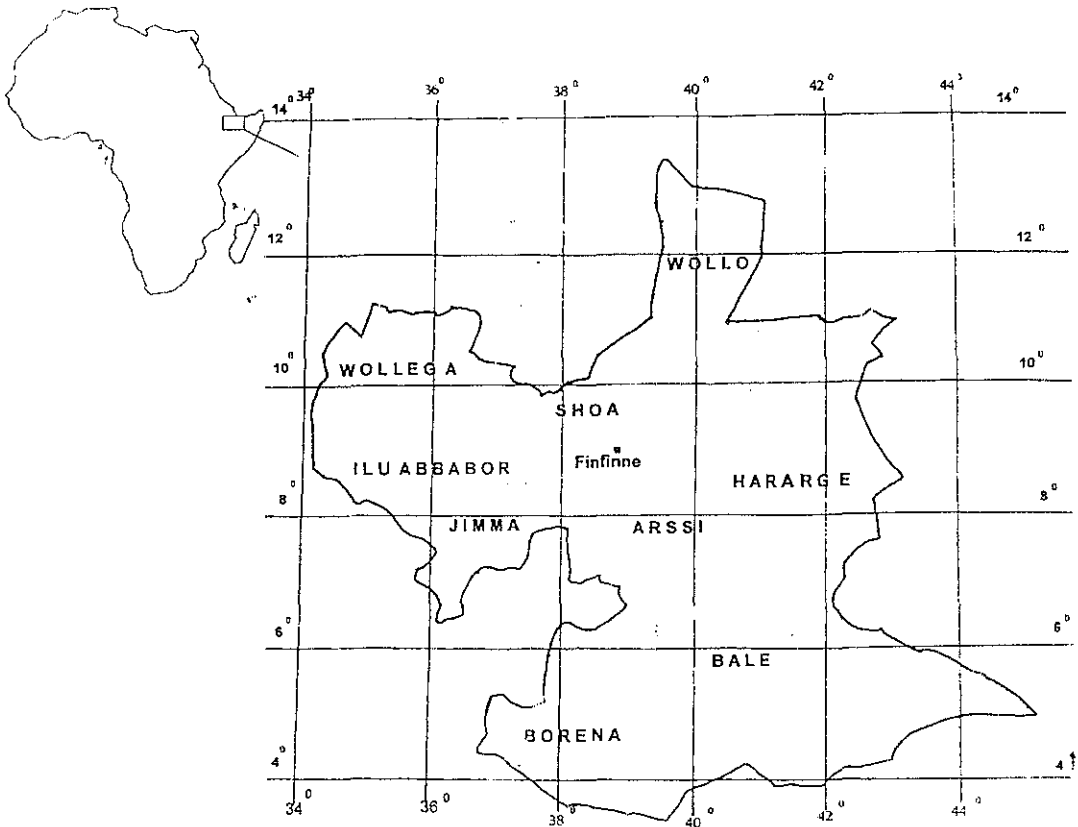


Figure 1. Location of Oromia in the Horn of Africa.

The whole **Oromia** is naturally endowed with fertile and rich land resources and is home to an exotic variety of fauna and flora. The prevailing wide range of altitude and climate support a wide array of ecosystems. Many regions in **Oromia** are known as the centre of origin or diversity for several economic plants such as coffee, inset (*Ensete edule*), wheat and barley.¹ Coffee is an indigenous cash crop to **Oromia** and still grows wild in the regions of **Bale, Ilu Abba Bor, Jimma and Kafa**. Etymologists interpret "Coffee" as a derivative of the local name, **Kafa**, from where it originated and spread to the rest of the world.

Many regions of Oromia, before its colonization, were covered with high forests, either coniferous or broad leaved. Vast tracts of high forests were found, and significant pockets still remain, in regions such as **Bale, Ilu Abba Bor, Jimma, Kafa, Sidamo and Wallagga**. Being impressed by its fertility and rich flora and fauna, some Europeans who paid visit to these rain-forest areas towards the beginning of the 20th century described the region as "the richest and most fertile."² Others reported the existence of vast expanses of rain forest through which it was only possible to penetrate by cutting one's way with a speed of 3 to 4 km a day.³

The mountainous regions of Oromia were also covered with luxuriant forests. For example, Professor Helmer Smedes of Geography Department at the University of Helsinki, who lead scientific exploration⁴ (October, 1957) to the Batu mountains in the Bale plateau, described the region as "... a mountain forest, composed of mainly of 'cedar' (*Juniperus procera*) with interspersed kosso (*Hagenia abyssinica*) and garamba (*Hypericum lanceolatum*)"⁵. While expressing his impression about the then existing⁶ forest, Professor Smedes concluded that: "... this forest on the northern slope of the Bale is one of the most luxuriant I have seen in Ethiopia; at the high levels, it holds true for the under growth with its multitude of flowering herbs, *Sweritia*, *Wahlenbergia*, *Stachys*, *Parohetus*, etc., as well as for the timber. Nowhere in Ethiopia, have I seen such giant *Juniperus* as above Doddola and Goba"⁷ Professor Smedes further remarked that "this dense and impenetrable forest has been described by Viscount du Bourg de Bozas in 1901,⁸ as 'a splendid vegetation and very fertile region suitable for all kinds of crops,' but as uninhabited and unused fifty years ago as it is today."⁹

What we tried to register above, albeit briefly, is the impression of European visitors regarding fertility of the land and extent of forest they encountered during their stay in Oromia towards the beginning of the 20th century and later. Then, the forest was luxuriant and the soil was rich and fertile. As we shall see later, however, the fate of all these forests, both the rain-forest areas and the mountain forests, have been exposure to severe intensive and extensive destruction processes. Forests have been cleared without replacement, and that has lasted for more than a hundred years. The subsequent soil erosion has turned large areas of **Oromia** from being fertile and productive to a barren and waste land. Why?

1. CONTROL AND DISPOSSESSION

"War is a judgement that overtakes societies when they have been living upon ideas that conflict too violently with the laws governing the universe. Never think that wars are irrational catastrophes: they happen when wrong ways of thinking and living bring about intolerable situations." (Dorothy L. Sayers)

1.1 Wars of Conquest

More than hundred years ago, many foreign observers had clearly described that the devastating effects of deforestation and subsequent soil erosion has made most parts of Abyssinia a barren land.¹⁰ Parkyns (1868) who resided in Abyssinia for three years and travelled around Northern Abyssinia extensively in the 1860s had observed the following:

"The country through which we passed during the early part of the day is rough, wild, and in some parts, rocky, and mountainous. Large trees are rarely met with; nothing, in fact, but shrubs and some of the different species of the minosa tribe, the tallest of which seldom exceed twenty feet."¹¹

The northern highlands of Abyssinia are denuded areas having lost, not only their topsoil, but all their montane forests, much of their wildlife, and the greater part of their perennial stream flow. In the northern part of the Ethiopian empire, vegetation persists only in an inaccessible and remote areas¹²

Thus the environmental conditions that prevailed in Abyssinia already towards the 1840s seem to have motivated the Abyssinian elites to wage a war of conquest against their neighbours endowed with rich natural resources. Oromia happened to be one of those and, as Baxter noted, during the Scramble for Africa, the Amhara conquered the Oromos, or acquired by the default of the other colonial powers and the territory became the Ethiopian Empire of Menilik and of Haile Selassie.¹⁴ Oromia was conquered by Abyssinia and incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire in a war which lasted from 1872 to 1900.¹⁵

It was during the closing decades of the nineteenth Century that the rival powers of the time (Britain, France, and Italy), were vying with each other for control of the Nile. The contestants poured arms and military advisers into the service of one or the other of the Abyssinian chiefs to acquire a local leverage to secure a protectorate over the area. One of the Abyssinian Kings of the *Amhara* in *Shewa*, King Menilik, obtained material and technical assistance from the various European powers (Britain, France, Italy, Russia) and got an upper hand to create large military between 1870 and 1889 and waged many wars against neighbouring peoples and conquered lands belonging to the **Oromo, Sidama, and other people** south of Abyssinia. As a result, Abyssinia grew from a tiny surface area of about 300,000 square kilometers to 1,110,000 square kilometers within a period of about thirty years (see Table 1).

Table 1. Process of expansion from Abyssinia to Ethiopia. The actual expansion process started in 1840s by one of Abyssinian kings—Sahle Selassie—of Menz (northern Shoa),¹⁷ but was not realized until 30 years later by his grandson Menilik.

Source: Author's compilation. Dates of conquest are compiled from different historical sources. Area and location estimates are made from several map sheets of 1:250,000 scale of the Ethiopian Mapping Agency produced in the 1980s.

Dates	Name of Territory	Area, 1000 Km ²	TOTAL 1000 Km ²	Location Latitude	Location Longitude
1871	Abyssinian kingdoms: Amhara territory (northern Shoa Menilik's kingdom) Other Abyssinia (Begemdir, Gojjam, Lasta, Tigray)	44 248	44 292	10° & 12°N 10° & 15°N	39° & 41°E 35° & 42°E
	Conquered territories:				
1872	Conquest of Wollo (northern Oromia)	79	371	11° & 13°N	39° & 41°E
1875	Conquest of Cabo, Sululta, Gullalle (central Oromia)	24	395	8° & 12°N	35° & 42°E
1882	Battle of Embabo, conquest of Limu, Horro, Gera, Ilu Abba-Boora (western Oromia)	67	462	7° & 11°N	39° & 41°E
1886	Conquest Wollega and Arsi (western & central Oromia)	47	509	7° & 11°N	34° & 37°E
1887	Battle of Chalanqo, conquest of Harar (eastern Oromia)	195	704	4° & 11°N	39° & 45°E
1889	Final conquest of Gurage (after 12 years of resistance)	9	713	7° & 9°N	37° & 38°E
1891	Conquest of Ogaden	123	836	5° & 10°N	42° & 48°E
1891	Conquest of Bale and Sidamo (southern Oromia)	128	964	5° & 10°N	37° & 45°E
1894	Conquest of Wollayta (after 18 years of resistance)	5	969	6° & 7°N	37° & 38°E
1893	Final pacification of Kambata (after 10 years of resistance)	6	975	7° & 9°N	37° & 39°E
1897	Definite conquest of Kafa (after 15 years of resistance)	37	1012	5° & 7°N	35° & 38°E
1898	Conquest of Bella-Shengul	16	1028	7° & 9°N	33° & 37°E
1899	Conquest of Borena (southern Oromia): 25 years. resistance	60	1088	3° & 7°N	37° & 42°E
1903	Final conquest of the peoples of the Lower Ormo (Dasanetch, Inyangatom, Kerre, Murle, Arbore, Hamar. . .)	5	1093	5° & 6°N	35° & 38°E
1933	Full incorporation of Jimma (south western Oromia): after 60 yrs. of pacification	17	1110	13° & 18°N	37° & 42°E
1952	Eritrea's Federation with Ethiopia (UN decision)	118	1228		
1962	Eritrea became one of the provinces of Ethiopia				
	Total area of Ethiopia from 1961 up to May 24, 1993 (date of Eritrea's formal independence)	1228	1228		
1993	TOTAL AREA AS OF 1993	1110	1110		

This colonization process was defined as *military-feudal colonialism*.¹⁸ Having conquered all the above (see, Table 1) rich and resourceful territories and when the Abyssinian monarch Yohannis IV of the Tigray died in 1889, Menilik proclaimed himself Emperor of the Abyssinian Empire which included the newly acquired territories. Thus the present Ethiopian empire, which resulted from conquest and incorporation is of a recent origin.

1.2 Seizing the Land

Wherever the Abyssinian Emperor prevailed over his enemies, the land in conquered territories was regarded as the spoils of war and became the possession of the ruler who divided part of it among the officers and soldiers of his army known as the *naftanyas*.¹⁹ In the *military-feudal* colonial system, the king's power dispensation over the conquered territories was unlimited. As the conquered territories were doomed to be *controlled with an essentially colonialist policy*, whole groups from outside could be placed as *aqigni naftayna* (armed colonizing settlers) on the lands of conquered people. To ensure legality of the *control over forcibly acquired territories*, all land under the *military-feudal* colonial rule was declared as property²⁰ of the emperor. The Oromo people were alienated from their kinship rights and the entire territory was ruled by force subjecting the people to a settler-military rule.²¹ Land in the newly-conquered regions was redistributed and placed at the disposal of military, ecclesiastical and political representatives of the *Abyssinian* power system.²² More than two-thirds of the land in the area were given over to representatives of the *Amhara* power system. The remainder (usually about one-third = *siiso*) was placed at the disposal of the local leaders (*balabbats*) for their service to the system.²³

Obligations imposed on the *gebbar* required him to pay in-kind (share cropping) plus personal and family services to the landlord. The crop-sharing systems entitled the landlord to either one of the share systems (depending on regional differences) which were: *irbbo* = (1/4-share), *siiso* = (1/3-share), *ikkul* = (1/2-share). In addition to the crop-sharing and free personal and family services, the *gebbar* had to pay *asrat* (tithe). Out of his total production possibilities, the *gebbar* was obliged to pay in kind and personal service from 72% to 89% (Table 2).

Table 2. Estimate in percent of a *gebbar's* payment obligations out of his total production possibilities.

Payment obligations ²⁴	Tenancy relationship		
	<i>Irbo</i> (¼)	<i>Siiso</i> (⅓)	<i>Ikkul</i> (½)
Actual rent	25%	33%	50%
Asrat (tithe)	10%	10%	10%
Personal service	43%	29%	29%
Total payment obligations	78%	72%	89%

Source: Estimates are made by the author based on: (1) the interpretation of the meanings of *irbbo* = 25 percent; *siiso* = 33 percent; and *ikkul* = 50 percent; *tithe* = 10 percent and (2) percentage of personal services are accounted that a *Gebbar* renders personal (or family) services to the landlord if a) *irbbo*-tenant for 3 days a week; and b) if *siiso*- or *ikkul*-tenant for 2 days per week and that converted into percentage on the basis of seven working days.

Once the Oromo people were dispossessed their land by the colonizer force, a *gebbar*²⁵ *naf-tanya* relationship, or a land holding system not dissimilar to the medieval *fief* system in Europe, was imposed on clan-owned²⁶ lands that prevailed in **Oromia** prior to the conquest. After the

conquest, in words of Triulzi, "the harsh reality of the *pax amharica* meant for most people in the newly conquered parts of the empire the alienation of their land and a brutal system of 'colonial violence' which was institutionalized in the *gebbar-naftanya* relationship"²⁷

The *military-feudal* colonial system's reliance on appointed colonial governors, whose power is based on land also continued during Haile Selassie's time. During the late emperor's time, in effect, the colonial governors became even more powerful by claiming large territories of land for their private use. "The best known example is that of Ras Mesfin Sileshi who, in his tours as governor of Illubabor (1942-46) and Kaffa (1946-55) succeeded in building-up holdings that are popularly supposed to be the largest in Ethiopia. If this is the case, then they certainly must be substantial since in Hararge province one individual has managed to acquire 900,000 hectares. . . . One estimate for the Ras' land is for his estates in Kaffa and Illubabor—5,000 gashas [2,000,000 hectares]"²⁸

Table 3. Number of Gashas (1 *Gasha* = 40 hectares) of measured land owned by the Ethiopian coptic church as was estimated in 1970s.

Province	Source	
	Central-Church Treasury	Ministry-of-Land Reform
Arsi	3 126 [125 040 ha.]	9 696 [387 840 ha.]
Gamu Goffa	1 051 [42 040 ha.]	777 [31 080 ha.]
Kaffa	1 460 [58 400 ha.]	1 992 [79 680 ha.]
Shoa	12 311 [482 440 ha.]	11 907 [476 280 ha.]
Wallagga	2 583 [103 320 ha.]	2 489 [99 560 ha.]
Wollo	1 430 [57 200 ha.]	1 074 [42 960 ha.]
Total	21 961 [878 440 ha.]	27 935 [1 117 400 ha.]

Source: Ministry of Finance and Central Church Treasury, and Ministry of Land Reform and Land Tenure Surveys. (cited by Gilkes p 55).

The other important owner of the land in the newly conquered territories was the Ethiopian Coptic church. The Abyssinian coptic religion was also introduced into the conquered territories together with the *naftanyas*, but theirs with the highest ideal aimed at "the assimilation of pagan subjects into the Christian community." To accomplish this task, "every Amhara governor would be accompanied by his father confessor (ye-niseha abbat) who saw to it that churches were founded and the people urged to become Christians."²⁹ For this service, the church acquired very substantial amounts of land from early times (shared a third of the booty), and the land ownership of the church in the conquered territories as measured (perhaps roughly estimated) towards the end of the 1970s is revealed in Table 3.³⁰

As can be seen from the above table, there is some discrepancy between the two sources; nevertheless, the policy has allowed a substantial amount of land to be owned by the church. Land allocated to the church has an important analytical relevance in our consideration of the environment because together with churches are brought a deforestation process, since right from its inception, cutting trees for church construction were required. Especially when the large number of churches are considered, each *Gasha* land (40 hectares) supports one church, based on the above information, that in effect means some 22,000 to 28,000 churches have to be constructed and their combined deforestation effect becomes so substantial.

1.3. Enslaving the Colonized People

The method of treating opponents was laid down by the *Feteha Negast*³¹ as follows:

“When you reach a city or land to fight against its inhabitants, offer them terms of peace. If they accept you and open their gates, the men who are there shall become subjects and shall give you tribute, but if they refuse the terms of peace and offer battle, go forward to assault and oppress them since the Lord your God will make you master of them.”³²

In Oromia, after the conquest, the rules of the Abyssinian *Feteha Negast* became the legal basis for all jurisdiction. The *gebbar-naftanya* relationship, as an institution, was meant to systematically exact tributes and tithes, *corvée* labour and war service from those living on the land because the people (the ‘*gebbar*’) were in effect given to the *naftanya* by the emperor. In this manner the colonized people were totally enslaved. In actual fact the *gebbar-naftanya* institution was created for a very important purpose. It enabled the emperor to pay his settler army, the *naftanyas*, from tributes and tithes in kind and the labour services acquired from the conquered people, because monetary economy was at a rudimentary stage at the time.³¹

In the absence of a monetary economy, the system utilized the *dispensation of land* to manipulate political and economic privileges through the *gebbar system*.³⁴ This system was the only way of rewarding the office holders for services rendered to the emperor. To sustain the colonial rule, the emperor relied on the strength and loyalty of appointed colonial governors and the settled army, the *naftanyas*. Thus Menilik distributed land to the colonial settlers according to their rank in the military and type of services individuals rendered in the colonial government.³⁵

In most instances, the *Amhara* elites were given land that was expropriated from the conquered people and, as Schwab noted, “this landed *Amhara* elites imposed upon an oppressed class of tenant farmers a colonial violence in which the latter had no legal, political, or economic rights.”³⁶

The territorial governors knew that their assignment that took effect at the will of the emperor, may end up any time. Because of the expectations of *shum-shir*³⁷, holders of the *governorship* rights at higher levels generally enjoyed their privileges for the terms they were in office. This enjoyment of privileges tended to *overburden the gebbar* (corvée workers) and the land. As we shall see below, the system has an inherent destructive characteristics that lead to the *exhaustion and deterioration of land* through long processes of *deforestation*, thereby enhancing the *acceleration of severe soil erosion and environmental degradation*.

2. COLONIAL RULE AND FOREST DEVASTATION

1. Complex Issues Related to Deforestation

The environmental system which constitutes a complex interaction of natural, social, economical, and technological domains is constantly exhibiting problematic behavior of various nature and extent. Deforestation is one of the environmental problems that, in our contemporary world, seem to be structured by four overlapping and intertwined fields of human interaction: (1) the *national* field i.e., the net of relationships between the centre and the peripheries; (2) the *international* field, i.e., the net of relationships among nation-states; (3) the *transnational* field, or interactions created by actors who are themselves international in character (e.g. multilateral institutions, transnational corporations) and (4) the *supranational* field, or interactions associated with processes that know no frontiers (e.g. desertification, the global warming).

The problems of deforestation and subsequent soil erosion in the Ethiopian empire could be attributed to all of the above four ‘fields.’ It is, therefore, necessary to examine the contribution of each of these fields in order to assess the reasons for the deforestation, subsequent soil erosion, and environmental deterioration in the Ethiopian empire. But before we do that, however, let us briefly review the extent of forest cover about the year 1889 and trends of deforestation from then onwards.

2.2. Ethiopian Forest History Since 1889

Though the figures given are guesses and reflect magnitudes and trends rather than absolute values, it was estimated that the Ethiopian high plateaus were in ancient times almost completely covered by more or less dense forests.³⁸ Based on estimates made by Von Breitenbach, about 37 percent of the Ethiopian empire consisted highland forests, Mountain forests, and low land forests about a century ago (see, Figure 2 and also Table 4).

Table 4. "Original forest cover of Ethiopia" as was estimated by von Breitenbach, 1962.³⁹

Type of forest	Area 000 (Ha.)	Area (%)
<u>Savanna, Steppe:</u> Deciduous woodland, Savanna, Open Woodland, Steppe, Semi-deserts, Alpine formations	72 200	63
<u>Forests:</u> Highland forests, Mountain forests, Lowland forests	41 200	37
TOTAL	113 400	

The forest lands which some hundred years ago covered about 40 percent of the Ethiopian empire are now far diminished. However, it should be pointed out that there was no serious research that has so far been conducted in order to find out the reasons or dating of the process of forest destruction in the empire. At best, most of the estimates were based on educated guesses.⁴⁰ Being so, it was reported that in 1950 about 16 percent of the area of the empire was under forest; in 1967 some 7 percent of the land area consisted of forest lands; but in 1979, there existed some 3 to 4 percent, until finally in 1990, the estimate dwindled down to about 2.7⁴¹ percent level.

As we saw above, historical evidence reveals that forests in the northern part of the Ethiopian empire, the Abyssinia proper, have been denuded long ago.⁴² That means most of the forest lands which some hundred years ago covered about 40 percent of the empire were located in the newly acquired territories. What makes the year 1889 an important land-mark for the history of the forest in the Ethiopian empire is the fact that Menilik proclaimed himself Emperor of the Abyssinian Empire which included the newly acquired territories in that year.

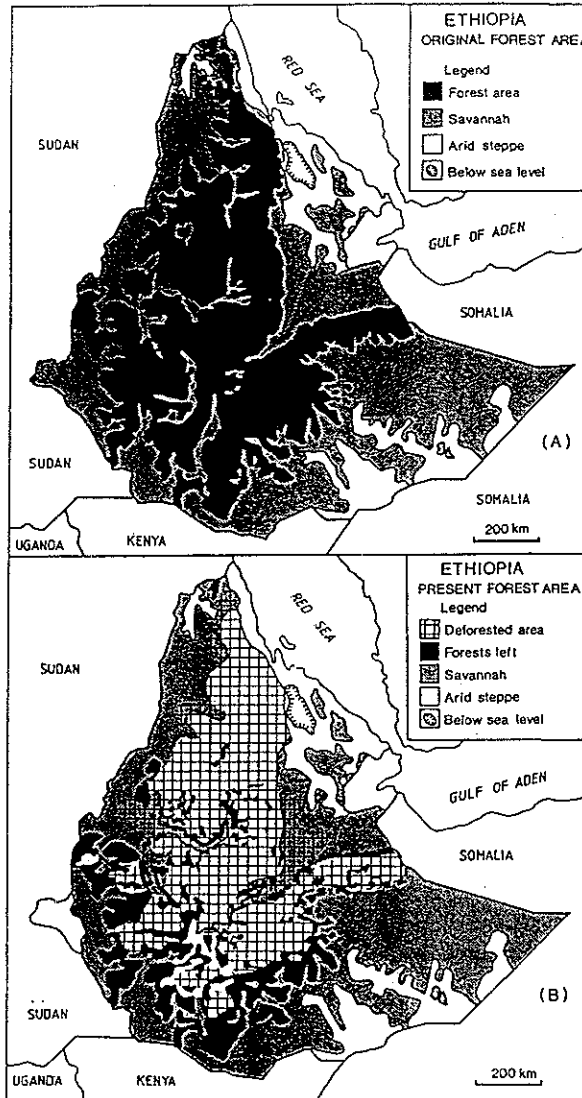


Figure 2. The deforestation process in Ethiopia. Source: (A) Breitenbach, 1961 and (B) Assefa Kuru 1986.

Forests in the newly acquired territories of the Ethiopian empire were exposed to a sudden exploitation by insurgent settlers in addition to the already existing population. The effects have not been properly registered. However, it is known that only since 1955, the total forest area destroyed is estimated to 13,000 000 hectares, which means an average annual destruction of some 325,000 hectares. What are the *land-use policy* and *settlement patterns* that transformed forest lands into, in some instances, completely distinct denuded landscapes? Our task from here onwards is, therefore, to examine the over-all *socio-political structure* that emanated from the facts of conquest which were *fatal* to the forest in the Ethiopian empire.

2.3 Causes of Forest Destruction

In his book aptly entitled, *Loosing Ground*, Ekholm gives an account of the consequences

of the Ethiopian forest loss, and specifically points out that:

"It is commonly known that the cultural achievements of the ancient Egyptians were contingent upon the annual deposition of fertile silt on the River Nile's flood plain, but few have ever stopped to wonder where this silt came from. In nature, few things are free, and for the bounty of the lower Nile, nature extracted a heavy price in the uplands of Ethiopia. Herodotus called Egypt the "gift of the Nile," but he might have as well called it the gift of Ethiopia. The mud carried out of Ethiopia by the legendary Blue Nile and two other tributaries of the Nile is a huge annual transfer of productive capacity"⁴³

It appears that "one's boom is another's boon." Nature has protected the soil when it covered it with vegetation. When the protective vegetative cover is denuded, naturally the underneath mud will be carried away. As Eckholm himself pointed out, "following the depletion of soils and forests to the north, the centre of Ethiopian civilization moved southward. . . ." ⁴⁴ This southward movement, whatever is meant by "civilization," has posed disastrous effects on the forests and soils as well as on the peoples of the south.

The destructive effects that this *southward movement* had brought on the people is discussed above. The same force seems to be accountable for the destruction of the forest. The main reasons for the forest destruction of the south, the newly acquired territories of the empire, tend to have an overall connection with the *socio-political structure* that emanated from the facts of conquest. As we saw above, the primary objective of Menilik was to have control over resources and people of the newly conquered areas. Following the conquest, patterns of land use in the conquered areas brought far-reaching changes implying a serious deterioration on the environment. Thus, when analyzing this, it is important to focus on the *policy of the military-feudal colonial rule* than individual *factors* and actions that caused the destruction.

The policies which are likely to have contributed to the destruction of forests in the newly acquired territories may be many, but we wish to focus on the following: (1) **the *naftanya settlement policy***, and (2) **uncontrolled forest utilization policy**. For this discussion, we preferred to limit ourselves only on these two, not on the ground that other factors (such as the demographic questions) are irrelevant, but because these policies have by far been instrumental for the vast devastation of forests in Ethiopia. Furthermore, both policies entail 'complex issues related to deforestation' mentioned above.

1. **The *naftanya settlement policy***. *The military-feudal colonial rule*, as discussed above, pursued a clear policy of the highest ideal whose principal strategy was aimed at the sequence of *territorial conquest and resource control through military colonial settlement, religious conversion, and eventual absorption of the population*. To accomplish these ideals, permanent settlement of the colonial force was necessitated. Thus, ***naftanya settlement centres*** (garrison towns) were created in all the conquered territories. The *naftanyas* were given large parcels of land for their private use.

Though large territories were colonized resulting in the expansion of the Ethiopian Empire, the agricultural production system remained mainly of a subsistence nature. Under such circumstances, it is imperative that *naftanyas* were able to use the surplus taken from dependent *gebbar* in any other way than for immediate consumption. In general, the transfer of land or rights to land to the settlers took place in lieu of salary or for reasons of power deployment. For the territorial governors, in order to enlarge their regular income clearing more forest land and putting it under farm seem, on rational grounds, to be ideal. Perhaps, because of this rational thinking, large areas were subjected to a sudden and abrupt land use shift from small horticultural sized plots (previously practiced by the local people) to a larger "*hudad*"⁴⁵ farm. On these farms, the most important agricultural input became the forest land itself which was burned down and thus *converted into fertilizer* and agricultural land. In this way, "the forest destruction is related to the political and socio-economic factors and Ethiopia today is a gigantic ecological manifestation of a political system which ruthlessly exploited both man and land."

The most serious danger associated to the *naftanya settlement policy*, settling and resettling people in the newly acquired territories, is that it did not limit itself only to the Menilik era, but continued at a different pace since 1889. During Haile Selassie's time, as the policy towards the conquered territories remained fundamentally unchanged from the Menilik time, a deliberate policy of resettlement schemes, a *policy aimed at replacing indigenous peoples by alien settlers from the North continued*. It was also during Haile Selassie's reign that the policy of land grants to members of the armed forces, the palace guard, the police and civil servants was adopted. Most of such land grantees settled on the land provided to them and accelerated the rate of deforestation in the rural areas.⁴⁷

Perhaps not surprisingly the same resettlement policy continued to be pursued during Mengistu Haile Mariam's 17 years military dictatorship period, but this time with a bigger magnitude and higher intensity. On top of the resettlement scheme, an intensive and extensive "villagization" campaign was also launched under Mengistu Haile Mariam's regime and this attained its peak in 1984.

During the period of Mengistu Haile Mariam's rule (1974-1991), the military regime, under the cover of "environmental refugee," moved people *enmass* from the North to the South, territories which were conquered and incorporated into the empire at the turn of the 19th century and still possess some fertile and forest land. This massive transfer of people was ordered by a state declaration of December, 1984.⁴⁸ The declaration's objectives was to settle some 2,500,000 inhabitants equipped with *fire-arms* to control the local people and *axes* to *clear the forest* in a shortest time possible. This scheme alone, when implemented as planned, and assuming five hectares per settler, would have destroyed 12,500,000 hectares of forest/woodland just at one time. Much of the scheme has been implemented, but there is a paucity of data as to the exact magnitude.

In addition to the *resettlement scheme*, the *villagization programme* was also launched during the military regime through a decree issued in October 1984. By July 1985, the scheme was extended to eight southern regions of the country and in 1986, 15 percent of the country's total rural population, about 5.5 million people, had been villagized. In the following years, villagization proceeded at a rapid rate, and another 7 million people were moved between 1986 and 1988.⁴⁹

Thus, 12 million Ethiopians were living in newly built villages between 1984 and 1988 and it is easy to see what this means in terms of deforestation and subsequent soil erosion. Even if we conservatively assume that quarters of a hectare of forest land is cleared to facilitate the plots, poles and construction needs of a new house, it means the villagization policy have caused a *deforestation of some 3,000,000 hectares of land between 1984 and 1988*. Thereafter, there is also the fuel energy need to be fulfilled by cutting more trees (as there is no other substitute for the domestic energy requirements than wood) and expanding plots to meet the growing demands of the family size.⁵⁰

Thus, during the Mengistu Haile Mariam's military rule alone, the two policies combined (*resettlement scheme* and *villagization programme*), it is reasonable to estimate that over 15,000,000 hectares of forest land was destroyed during the brief period of four years following the decrees. It is the *policy* of the state, not the individual actions (surely taken by the peasants) which is responsible here. Based on such information, it is safe to conclude that the *naftanya settlement policy* in the conquered areas of the Ethiopian empire have brought a far-reaching change in land use implying a serious deterioration on the environment.

2. Uncontrolled forest utilization policy: This policy (or lack of policy) of forest utilization is another important factor that has been playing a crucial role in the deforestation process in Ethiopia. Just from the beginning, the economic development during the Menilik period was to a large extent based on the grant by the Emperor of concessions and monopolies to foreigners of various nationalities who were deemed capable of exploiting the newly conquered territory's potentialities in one field or another.⁵¹ As a factor of destruction, the introduction of sawmills and its uncontrolled activities has been responsible for massive deforestation and destruction of

forests⁵² in the Ethiopian empire only since 1930s. During the five years period (1935-1941 under the Italian military occupation) and the following seven years (1941-1953 under British military "administration,") a lot of industrial logging has taken place in the forests of the south and south-western parts of the Ethiopian empire. Italian and other commercial concessionaires⁵³ remained in the country until the forest was practically almost exhausted.

For many years large areas of forest in **Arsi, Bale, Ilu Abba Bor, Kafa, Sidamo, Wallagga** and other parts of Oromia have been selectively exploited without any reforestation. The government policy allowed establishment of fixed and mobile sawmills for commercial exploits. Commercial exploits fell trees for lumber without any replacement and charcoal burners pursued their route to further destroy the remaining "useless" trees for lumber. In this manner, when the lumber expiates who established themselves along the all weather roads within the vicinity of rich forests (e.g., Shashemene and Dambi Dolo) mined trees (e.g., from the Arsi, Bale and Sidamo and Wallagga), *acacia* forests were cleared for charcoal-making only to be supplied to the urban centers. It was in this manner that dense *acacia* forests, some 120 km south of Addis Ababa which used to prevail in **Chilalo** and **Zuai** area have been cleared for charcoal-making.⁵⁴ Charcoal is hauled to Addis Ababa from far distances such as Jimma (330 km) and Gamo Gofa (400 km).

The **uncontrolled forest utilization policy** has devastated forests in the South and south-western part of the empire. But there still remain some, though quite diminished. What the previous two governments since Menilik have not been able to exhaust, the current "transitional Government of Ethiopia" (that came into power in July 1991) seem to be determined to demolish it all together. An "action program"⁵⁵ has been prepared for what is called "a national policy to use the high forests." To wipe out the last remaining forest, the action program tries to hide its real intentions behind what it calls "primarily for protection and conservation";⁵⁶ it did not even bother to declare that "Commercial utilization is a secondary objective."⁵⁷

The "Action program" points out that "the government has classified 58 of the most important high forest areas totalling an estimated 2.8 million hectares as National Forest Priority Areas (NFPAs)."⁵⁸ As this policy is the most crucial for the remaining forests in the empire, we reproduce details of this forest areas designated as "National Priority Areas" in the following table

Table 2. The "National Forest Priority Areas," in hectares, targeted for immediate "use" by the TGE

Source: Ethiopia: Forestry Action Program Draft Final Report Volume II—The Challenge for Development. April 22, 1993. Annex 2.3.

Name of forest	Region	High Forests		Plantations	Other Land	Total Area
		Slightly Disturbed	Heavily Disturbed			
1. Arba Gugu	Arsi		6 3000	1 600	13 500	21 400
2. Chilalo Galema	Arsi			1 400	20 000	22 000
3. Munessa-Shashemene	Shewa	7 000	10 200	6 800	74 200	98 200
4. Alosha-Batu Dodola-Adaba	Bale		10 000	1 700	28 300	40 000
5. Logo	Bale	5 000	16 400	900	36 700	59 000
6. Goro Bele	Bale	9 800	50 000	200	40 000	100 000
7. Harena-Kokosa	Bale	20 000	70 000		92 000	182 000
8. Kubayo	Bale	5 000	17 900	300	55 200	78 400
9. Mena Angetu	Bale	20 000	50 000	200	119 800	190 000
10. Bulki Malakoza	GamoGofa			500	10 500	11 000
11. Gidola-Gamba	GamoGofa	15 000	5 000		10 000	30 000
12. Gidole-Gamba	GamoGofa			1 200	14 800	16 000
13. Guangua-Kahta	GamoGofa		32 000	2 800	21 700	56 500
14. Sekela-Mariam	Gojam			2 000	8 000	10 000

Table 2. (continued)

Name of forest	Region	High Forests		Plantations	Other Land	Total Area
		Slightly Disturbed	Heavily Disturbed			
15 Butuji-Melka-Jebdu	Harerge			3 800	41 400	45 200
16 Din Din-Arbaguggu	Harerge		3 300	5 900	57 600	66 800
17 Gara-Muleta	Harerge		2 600	2 000	2 400	7 000
18 Jalo-Muktar-etakesha-Add	Harerge		2 500	4 100	14 700	21 300
19 Jarso_Gursum	Harerge		1 500	4 500	46 300	52 300
20 Abobo_Gog	Ilu-Abba-Bor	150 000	45 000	100	22 900	218 000
21 Gebre-Dima	Ilu-Abba-Bor	50 000	82 000		33 000	165 000
22 Godere	Ilu-Abba-Bor	40 000	100 000	500	19 500	160 000
23 Sele-Anderacha	Ilu-Abba-Bor	100 000	115 000	700	9 300	225 000
24 Sibo-Tale Kobo	Ilu-Abba-Bor	28 000	50 000	1 900	20 100	100 000
25 Sigmo Geba	Ilu-Abba-Bor	67 700	190 000	2 300	20 000	280 000
26 Yayu	Ilu-Abba-Bor	20 000	100 000	300	29 700	150 000
27 Yeki	Ilu-Abba-Bor	10 000	100 000	500	11 500	122 000
28 Wangus	Ilu-Abba-Bor	329 900			85 100	415 000
29 Mesengo	Ilu-Abba-Bor	292 350		650	32 000	325 000
30 Abelti-Gibe	Kafa		4 700	1 300	4 000	10 000
31 Babya-Fola	Kafa		45 000	900	28 400	74 300
32 Belete-Gera	Kafa	76 500	35 200	1 100	35 700	148 500
33 Bonga	Kafa	7 000	10 000	2 100	142 300	161 400
34 Gura Farda	Kafa	80 000	35 100	800	224 100	140 000
35 Tiro-Boter-Bacho	Kafa	16 000	23 300	2 300	44 200	85 800
36 Butagira	Shewa			1 600	13 400	15 000
37 Chilmo-Gaje	Shewa		2 000	800	23 200	26 000
38 Gedo	Shewa	2 000	3 000		5 000	10 000
39 Jibat-Mute-Jejenfo	Shewa		5 000		33 500	38 500
40 Menagesha_Suba	Shewa		3 600	1 300	4 900	9 800
41 Wof-Washa	Shewa		2 000	4 200	2 700	8 900
42. Yerer-Dire-Gerbicha-Zukual	Shewa	300	3 800	1 700	3 800	9 600
43 Anferara_Wadera	Sidamo		13 000	3 700	89 900	106 600
44 Bore-Anferara	Sidamo		33 000	1 400	182 900	217 300
45 Megada	Sidamo	5 000	10 000	1 300	4 500	20 800
46 Negele	Sidamo		1 200	300	16 300	17 800
47 Yavelo_Arero	Sidamo		8 000	150	41 750	49 900
48 Des-A	Tigraye				20 000	20 000
49 Chato-Sengi-Dengeb	Wallagga		5 000	60	39 800	44 860
50 Gergeda	Wallagga	20 000	20 000	1 000	96 400	137 400
51 Gidame	Wallagga		10 000		7 000	17 000
52 Jurgo_Wattu	Wallagga		15 000	200	4 700	19 900
53 Komto Waja Taege	Wallagga		1 000	1 200	6 900	9 100
54 Konchi	Wallagga	10 000	5 000		8 000	13 000
55 Linche-Dali_Gewe	Wallo		15 000		25 000	50 000
56 Denkoro	Wallo		2 300		3 000	5 300
57 Gumburda_Grakas	Wallo		11 500	2 200	12 300	26 000
58. Yegof-Erike	Wallo		2 800	8 400	6 800	18 000
Total		1 386 550	1 385 200	84 860	1 921 250	4 777 860

Virtually that is all that remains as a forest land in the Ethiopian empire. Once these "National Forest Priority Areas" are *put to use*, there is nothing to talk about forest.

One may wonder why forests in Abyssinia have perished long ago. The explanation, perhaps, lies in the way that the *policy* of the state is geared towards the forest. It is foolish, but one is tempted to ask: Why are the Abyssinians so anxious towards the forest?

To sum up this section, let us look at some fundamental policy issues raised here. In the introductory part of this section, where we discussed what we opted to call "complex issues related to deforestation," we suggested that deforestation in our contemporary world, seems to be structured by four overlapping and intertwined fields of human interactions: (1) the *national*, (2) the *international* (3) the *transnational* and (4) the *supranational*. In the deforestation process that prevailed in Oromia after its conquest by Abyssinia, all these factors were involved. All the above fields, except the last, are included in the two policies discussed above and we are convinced that these *policies* have been important causes of forest destruction in Oromia. Now we consider the fourth point "the *supranational*" aspect, but we propose to treat it under a different topic given below.

3. COLONIAL RULE AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAVOC IN OROMIA

3.1. A Sudden Land Use Change

In the recent report on global land-cover change by the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) and the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change programme (HDP) (1993), the driving forces of land use changes are categorized in the following groups: (1) variables that affect the demands that will be placed on the land—i.e., population and affluence, (2) variables that control the intensity of exploitation of the land—through technology, (3) variables that are related to access to or control over land resources—the political economy, and (4) variables that create the incentives that motivate individual decision makers—the political structure, attitudes and values.⁵⁹

From a view point of concern about the tropical deforestation, the causes of deforestation by many researchers⁶⁰ are generally thought to be driven by a combination of some of the following factors which they illuminate as: "population growth, land-hunger, inequitable social conditions, property-rights regimes, misguided government policies, collective action problems, inappropriate technology, international trade relations, economic pressures afflicting debt-burdened developing countries and corruption in the forestry sector."⁶¹ None of such researchers bother to mention about what we call *facts of conquest*.

To recapitulate what we already know about the realities in the Ethiopian empire, it is to be remembered that vegetations, in most of Oromia (prior to its conquest) were characterized by dense rain forests (especially the south-western highlands found between altitudes 1700 to 2600 meters above sea level). These were rain forests which, perhaps, consisted of thousands of plant and animal species, for most of which the details are unknown.⁶² But we do also know that large settlement schemes and state farms have flourished in this area since its conquest.

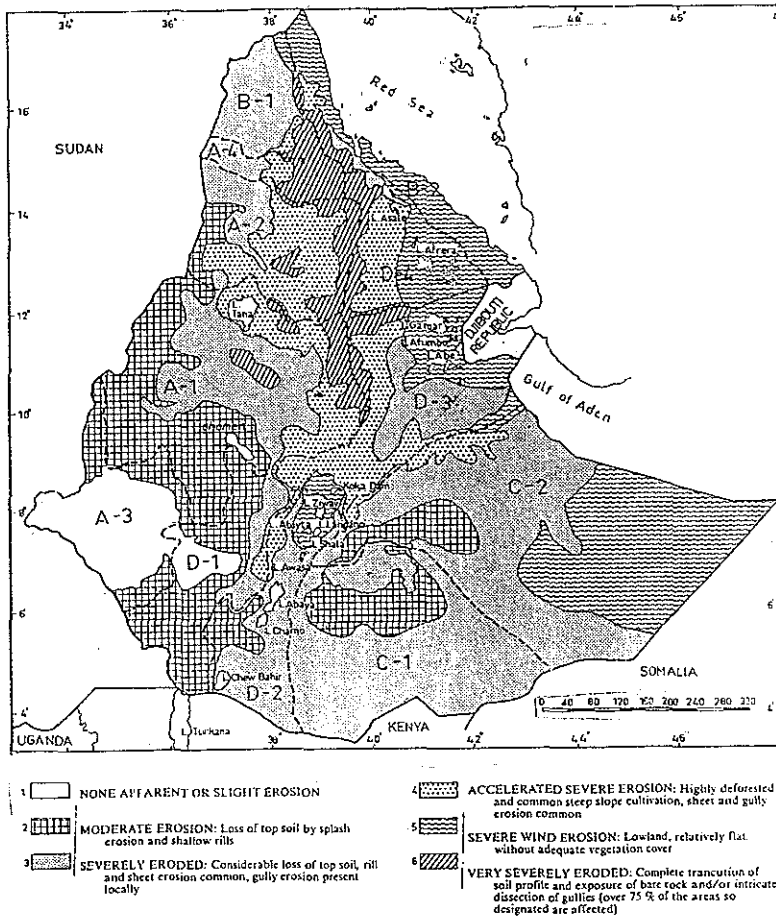
Because of the need to control the conquered peoples and their land, Menilik installed permanent settlers. Land was distributed among the armed forces. Soldiers garrisoned in towns constituted the means of coercion and the new order was personified by the Imperial governors who functioned as military commanders, tax collectors and judges.⁶³ This sudden change has brought about a new driving force for environmental degradation in Oromia. As the garrison centers gradually grew as towns and urban centers, the sudden population concentration inflicted a substantial amount of deforestation. Permanent urban centers were also created during this period and forests were devastated in the process of their creation.⁶⁴ As deforestation became severe accelerated soil erosion, as we shall see below, diminished the productivity of the soil. All what these evidences suggest is the simple fact that colonial ambitions and territorial expansion are the main driving force for the deforestation and subsequent environmental deterioration in Oromia.

3.2. Deforestation and Ensuing Soil Erosion

Both deforestation and soil erosion have been devastating the environment in Oromia during the last hundred years. Some thirty years ago Fournier (1962) estimated that the annual rate of soil erosion in the Ethiopian Highland areas ranged between 10 and 20 tonnes per hectare.⁶⁵ Hurni (1988) estimated that the current soil loss and the resulting water loss—taken together with biological degradation and land degradation effectively mean an annual 2 to 3 percent reduction in soil productivity.⁶⁶

The present author, based on a study from Landsat imagery (MSS data taken in 1974) has delineated the severity of soil erosion distribution throughout the empire as depicted in Figure 3. In the Ethiopian empire as a whole, the rates of soil loss, which are highest from cultivated land, amount to 1.5 billion tonnes a year.

The environmental disasters—*deforestation and accelerating soil erosion*—that have plagued Oromia now owe much to the *policy and inept rule* of the colonial government of the Ethiopian empire. There is a far-reaching consequence that the region as a whole is suffering from this destructive process which is leading to *desertification*.



NOTE: Unless specified the categories (1—6 above) refer to the particular area whose major part (over 60 % of total area) is characterized as denoted.

Figure 3 Extent and severity of soil erosion as of 1974. Source: Assefa Kuru, Soil erosion and strategic state policy: The case of Ethiopia. Department of Environmental Conservation, Helsinki, 1986: p. 31.

The term desertification refers essentially to the consequences of human activities on the environment. *Arid* and *semi-arid* regions are very susceptible to the *desertification* process which is transnational in scope and in effect. One important factor to consider is that **Oromia** as a whole is located within the tropics. Deforestation, degradation of various forms of vegetation, impoverishment of the ecosystem, deterioration of productive ecosystem by soil erosion, alteration and diminution of the biological potential all lead to the *intensification of desert conditions*

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The Ethiopian empire consists of traditional peoples with varied cultural backgrounds. Many of these people were incorporated into the empire by *force*—a force which has a devastating effect on *self-esteem* of the colonized people and destructive effect on their natural environment. Indeed the importance of *self-esteem* in the socio-psychological make up of traditional people should not be underestimated since it also has negative effect on an awareness for combating environmental degradation.

For traditional people, the concept of self-esteem focuses less on the person than on a complicated set of interlocking relationships which are linked with the land. According to traditional beliefs, all life (human, animal, bird, and fish) is part of one unchanging, interconnected system, one vast network of relationships which can be traced back to the great spirit of ancestors dwelling on the land.⁶⁷ These sources reveal that the traditional person never isolates himself. Each and every person in that society saw themselves as acting with others, and the bonds of kinship being extended outward, embracing the non human and non-empirical world attached to the great *sprit of ancestors who dwell on the land*. Recorded evidence thus suggests that traditional people's consciousness towards land is very important. Land is, in an important way, a uniting factor. Land, by tradition, has also been *unitary, communal and collective*. The identity of the individual is often merged into nature and subsumed by the group symbolized by a belief directly or indirectly attached to the land.

Cultural backgrounds of the Oromo people fit, to a large extent, consist definitions of traditional people. Though this varies from region to region, to a large extent land in Oromia used to be *communal*. Ever since the advent of *feudal-military* colonialism, the Oromos have lost their control over the land. The state authorities have attempted to establish property rights over land, mainly for the interest of the colonizers by *declaring public decrees or legislations*. Since Emperor Menilik II, successive governments, have all too often favoured *net extraction policy* of Oromo resources *and the reliance on force*. These policies have served the interests of Abyssinian elitist minority. The policies have not isolated those most directly concerned with the land, but it also devastated the self-esteem of the colonized people. Even if there was lip-service for "rural development" projects, it was destined to fail, not only because the plans so promoted were unrealistic, but they were also divorced from the survival needs of the people. The Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit (CADU) project in Arsi is a vivid example.⁶⁸ The CADU project, because it was meant *not only* to have full control over the area, *but also* to enrich the settler *naftanyas* as fast as possible by agricultural mechanization, environmental hazards such as deforestation and soil erosion became serious problems in a rather short time.⁶⁹

In effect, the colonial policy in Ethiopia has created a system whereby the *state* and *society* is to a large extent separated. The colonized people are condemned to a second class citizens.⁷⁰ The policy has put the colonized people in a position where they were forced to loose their self-esteem. This separation made the realization of social-political *changes* practically impossible. Even more, the activation of the population for the implementation of "development" projects have become problematic if not impossible. Under such circumstances, the state authorities sought and still seek to resolve "change" by *force*. Thus, for the state authorities of the Ethiopian empire it is "necessary" to maintain a permanent para-military organization to *maintain Abyssinian power system*.

For several decades in the past, the Ethiopian empire has been undergoing an increasing political instability, widening poverty (entailing mass misery, destitution and famine), economic decline, international debt, and an increasingly brutal political culture. People continue to lead an arbitrary life full of violent situations. The colonial policy that has prevailed in the Ethiopian empire for the last hundred years has almost totally neglected resolution of social, cultural, and political issues requiring complex multi-disciplinary solutions. Instead, all the ensuing policies since the reign of Menilik II solely depended on exigencies of force.

Land resources in Oromia, ever since the conquest, have been controlled *initially by direct colonial aggression* then by *legislation*. On account of the consolidation of Imperial power, it became successively more important for the colonial rulers as a *main policy* to establish a system whereby the sovereign had ultimate *control* over all land within his realm. The Emperor could grant revenue from the land by waiving his own rights of taxation in favour of local rulers, members of the royal family, the nobility or priesthood, as well as to religious establishments. Though, following the *coup d'état* in 1974, the Military Government issued proclamation which made "*rural lands the collective property of the Ethiopian people*," the overall policy remained the same. It was insisted that the state have full control over the land and all natural resources of the country. Under the Military rule, the policy became even more devastating on the environment. As a means of control, the *resettlement* and *villagization* programmes were promulgated. This time the policy of control by force became quite subtle. But, this subtle policy became instrumental for further augmentation of the ever accelerating environmental deterioration and human sufferings in the empire.

It is, however, important to note that the problem of environmental deterioration is complex and involves not only ecological factors, but also cultural processes, interaction of socio-economic activities, and demographic questions. Its solution also requires *not only* the understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the natural ecosystem, *but also* creating a social set-up which enables people to *join forces for the solution of their common problems*.

The main cause of land degradation in Ethiopia is the excessive removal of the natural vegetative cover. This removal exposed the underlying soil to the destructive effects of the natural elements. In Abyssinia proper millenia of continuous mismanagement of forest lands has resulted in excessive deforestation, land degradation and soil erosion. Land in Oromia which once possessed dense lush forest, rich natural resources and fertile soil have been threatened seriously during the last hundred years. The conquest of Oromia has led to its environmental degradation.

It becomes, therefore, evident that issues of conquest and environmental destruction in Oromia are very closely related. The delicate and multi-faceted political issues concerning colonial question and conflict over land arise as a result of *benefits and values* (both material and spiritual) that land provides. In effect, the colonial policy is responsible for the conflict that now prevail in the empire. As those who benefit from the existing rights and values (imposed by colonial policy) tend to support retention of existing relationships, those colonized subjects who lost control over their land tend to struggle to regain their land. This brings about *lack of consensus between peoples*. Second, it *creates a situation where mistrust* prevails and increasingly become difficult to join forces for the solution of their common problems—*the environmental havoc*. In fact as the conflict prolonged, the *environmental deterioration tended to exacerbate*. Being overwhelmed by the conflicts, environmental conservation and rehabilitation plans are overlooked.

As we tried to analyze at some length above, the ***naftanya settlement policy and uncontrolled forest utilization policy*** have subjected lands in Oromia to an accelerating rate of degradation. All efforts and resources of the colonial force were invested on suppressing colonized people's resistance against the unjust colonial rule and to have full *control over the land that was forcefully incorporated into the Empire*. In the mean time, during the last hundred years, severe deforestation and accelerating soil erosion prevailed in the whole empire. Environmental degradation, the kind that was once only known in Abyssinia proper, expanded from north towards the south.

The current transitional government, based on what has been revealed from its own "forestry action plan" seems determined to use up the last remaining forest in the empire. These targeted forest lands, prescribed as "National Forest Priority Areas," are mainly located in Oromia.

In this study, we have tried to identify the existence and cause of deforestation and subsequent soil erosion problems in Oromia. Naturally, more is needed to repair the situation than mere identification of its existence and cause. But, that identification is absolutely essential, as without it, one would merely be dealing with the *symptoms*, and *not* with the underlying problems. It now looks that, *not only* deforestation is going on in Oromia, but also the *desertification* process is being unfolded at an intensified pace. This desertification process must to be halted before it is too late.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the anonymous referees who made constructive valuation of the draft manuscript. All points they raised are taken into consideration, but I am solely responsible for all views expressed in this article.

End Notes

1. Though the Russian scientist Nicoli Vavilov has recognized this region as a center of origin of cultivated wheats and barely, other scholars (e.g. Elizabeth Schiemann) based on her work "New results on the history of the cultivation of cereals" that appeared on *Heredity*, V, 1951, 312-13, has argued that Ethiopia is a center of diversity, but not a center of origin of wheats and barley.

2. Darley, H. remarks in various sections of his book: "Slave and Ivory: A Record of Adventure and Exploration in the Unknown Sudan and Among Abyssinian Slave-raiders" written in 1926.

3. Such information was recorded by Neumann and Bieber, who paid visit to western Oromia around 1904 and produced a book in 1906. The various detailed articles of Bieber, the man who visited western Oromia thrice from 1904 to 1906 and lead the 1905 Austro-Hungarian "scientific" mission have provided an excellent description of the region. See for example his articles: Das Hochland von Sud Äthiopien, *Petermanns*, V. 54 (1908): 1-15 99-114; Das Familien leben der Kafitscho, *Globus*, V. 96 (1909): 69-73, 93-96; Die Österreichische Expedition Nach Kaffa, *Deutsche Runds. Geog. U Statics*, V. 28 (1906) 145-150.

4. Smedes, H. 1959. The Batu Mountains of the Bale Plateau, Ethiopia. *Alpine Journal* 65:217-227.

5. Ibid p:223-223

6. The qualification 'then existing' has to be made, because this forest that professor Smedes encountered in 1958 were remnants. After many years of intensive and extensive exploitation, since 1887 as we shall see later, the forest area was highly reduced.

7. Smedes, H. 1959: op cit., p. 223.

8. On this account Smedes cites: Mission Scientifique du Borg de Bozas, De La Mer Rouge a travers l'Afrique Tropical (Octobre 1900-Mai 1903), Paris (Dudeval), 1906. Vol. LXIV-No CCXCIX

9. Smedes, H. 1959: op cit., p. 226.

10. Butzer, K.W., 1981. Rise and Fall of Axum, Ethiopia: A geo-archaeological Interpretation. *American Antiquity*, Vol. 46, No. : 471-495; Pankurst, R., 1961. An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia from Early times to 1800. London; Wilson, R.T., 1977. The Vegetation of Central Tigre, Ethiopia, in Relation to its Land Use. *Webbia* 32:235-270.

11. See for e.g. Manfield Parkyns, 1868 Life in Abyssinia: Being Notes Collected during Three Years Residence and Travels in that Country. New Impression of the Second Edition. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. 1966. p:29.

12. Wilson, R.I., 1977. The vegetation of central Tigre, Ethiopia, in relation to its land use *Webbia* 32:235-270.

13. Amhara is the name of the tribal group from the northwestern corner of the modern Ethiopian empire and one of the kingdoms of Abyssinia.

14. Baxter, P.T.W., 1978. Ethiopia's Unacknowledged Problem: The Oromo. *African Affairs*. Vol. 77, 308 (1978): 283-296, p. 283.

15. Detailed motives of the Abyssinian conquest of Oromiya is documented in many scholarly studies few among which are (Kofil, Darkwah, R.H. 1975. *Shewa, Menilik and the Ethiopian Empire 1813-1889*. Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd, Frome and London.; Holomb, B. and Ibsa, S., 1990. *The Invention of Ethiopia: The Making of a Dependent Colonial State in Northeast Africa*. Trenton: NJ; The Red Sea Press, Inc.; Marcus, H.G., 1969. *Imperialism and Expansionism in Ethiopia from 1865 to 1900*. In L.H. Gannand P. Duignan (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1969*, 1.420-461; Markakis, J., 1975. *Ethiopia—Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*. Addis Ababa, Nairobi, New York; Stahl, M., 1974. *Ethiopia: Political Contradictions in Agricultural Development*. *Publications of the Political Science Association in Uppsala* 67.

16. For details see: Kofi, Darkwah, R.H. 1975. *Shewa, Menilik and the Ethiopian Empire 1813-1889*. Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd, Frome and London.

18. Addis Hiwet, in his work of 1975 entitled: "Ethiopia: from Autocracy to Revolution" that appeared *In Review of African Political Economy*: (Occasion Publication No:1. London) explains in detail what is meant by *military-feudal colonialism*.

19. *Naftanya* is an Amharic term which literally means carrier of a gun. These carriers of the gun were the colonizing army and those who remained as colonial settlers on regions they conquered. A *naftanya* is an individual ranking high in the status system of the settled colonizers and all the ranks and files of the military force.

20. In Abyssinia, the principle of monarch's control over land had already been explicitly formulated back in the 14th Century (see e.g., TADESSE, T., 1972. *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*. Oxford.) According to Tadesse Tamirat, the saying "God gave all the land to me," with all its implications, can be traced back as far as Emperor Seyfe Arad (1344-72).

21. The entire conquered territory was given by emperor Menilik to those *Naftanyas* (often his relatives) who participated in the war of conquest. For example the whole Hararge was given to *Ras Mekonen*, the whole Wallagga was put under the haughty and harsh rule of the Gondare troops of *Ras Damissaw*, the whole Arsi was put under the cruel rule of *Ras Darge* and the land was given to *Ras Wolde Gabriel*, the entire southern territory, Kafa, Gamo Gofa, . . . etc. was given to *Ras Welde Giorgis* (even the Russian mercenary col *Leontieff* was given an entire territory and was named governor-general of Ethiopia Equatorial provinces by Menilik II: see Leontieff, N. de, 1900. *Explorations des Provinces equatoriales d'abissinie*. *La Geographie*, V. 2: 105-118).

22. In 1893, Emperor Menilik issued a decree which appointed colonial governors, known as *Malkegna*. The same decree issued the obligation of the subject people (the *gebbar*s) in the colonized territories to give free and obligatory service to the newly appointed *Malkegnas*. From the onwards, the *gebbar-system* became a legal order to function. For details see Cohen, J.M. *Ethiopia After Haile Selassie: The Government Land Factor*. *African Affairs* Vol. 289 pp. 365-382.

23. Markakis, J., 1975. *Ethiopia—Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*. Addis Ababa, Nairobi, New York.

24. Legal stipulations regarding the restriction of work loads for *gebbar* peasants, issued in 11.9.1934, had later to be modified by the promise to compensate individual restrictions by additional monetary taxes (3.5.1935). The repeal of these additional taxes was only possible after the end of the Italian occupation (land Tax Proclamation 1944). Source: Göricke, F.V., 1979. *Social and Political Factors Influencing the Application of Land Reform Measures in Ethiopia*. *Publications of the Research Center for International Agrarian Development No:10*. D-6900 Heidelberg.

25. *Gebbar* is an Amharic term which is equivalent to *peons*. A *gebbar* is obliged to pay tributes and render personal services to the landlord (who is usually the settler colonizer or his representative (the *malkenya*), who rules on behalf of the emperor. A “*gebbar*,” according to Gilkes, “actually means one who pays tribute; and is strictly refers to free peasant cultivators. In practice, . . . their burdens were very onerous and abuse was common; so their position was only marginally better than that of serfs, although they did have more freedom of movement. In the south their position was much closer to that of serfs as their labour was given to officials for life and was almost impossible to break away from.” Gilkes P. *The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia*, Julian Friedmann Publishers LTD (1975), p. 277.

26. Jabessa Ejeta, 1992. *Ye Oromo Biher Bahlinna Acir Tarik (in Amharic)*. (Short History of Oromo). *Artistic press, Addis Ababa*. It is interesting to note that lands in Oromia, before the conquest, were allotted by kinship groups to their members for grazing purposes and for agricultural use. What was known as “communal land tenure” was once the only form of land tenure. Unrestricted property rights on land were, in theory, *vested in the kinship group which consisted of the elders of all the descendants of the ancestors who had first claimed and worked the land*. An individual member of such a group had rights of use on a fixed proportion of the joint “property” of the ancestors. This proportion could change according to the number of claimants and the member had no inalienable right to any particular tract of land. This principle, according to Jabessa Ejeta (1992) who gathered information from elders originating from different regions of Oromia, is a fundamental constitutional right of all Oromo. According to the same source leaders of the Gada assembly ratify this fundamental right as follows (see box below):

In coming Abba bokku states:	Assembly responds:
<i>Biyyi kan girri hata'uu</i> (Country belongs to all tribes)	<i>mirkana haata'uu</i> (yes, it belongs)
<i>Lafti kan gosa hunda haata'uu</i> (Land belongs to all clans)	<i>mirkana haata'uu</i> (yes, it belongs)

Principal rights declaration ritual on Gada assembly held every eight years Source: Jabessa Ejeta, 1992. page 67.

27. Alessandro Triulzi, 1983. Competing Views of National Identity in Ethiopia. In Lewis, I.M. (ed. *Nationalism & Self Determination in the Horn of Africa, 1983* (111-127): p. 121.

28. Gilkes P. *The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia*, Julian Friedmann Publishers LTD (1975): p. 51.

29. Aren, G. 1978. Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: *Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus*. *Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia* XXXII: p. 373.

30. Gilkes P. *The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia*, Julian Friedmann Publishers LTD (1975): p. 55.

31. *Feteha Negast* is an Abyssinian version of the 17th century edition of the collection of Coptic church laws of *Ibn Al Assal of Syria* of the 13th century.

32. This *Fetega Negat code* was cited by Göricke, 1979. Social and Political Factors Influencing the Application of Land Reform Measures in Ethiopia. *Publications of the Research Centre for International Agrarian Development no.10*. D-6900 Heidelberg.

33. Punkhurst, R. Ethiopian Monetary and Banking Innovations in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*. Vol. 1, No. 2 (1963): pp. 64-120.

34. The *gebbar* system in some detail below under the title: *Enslaving the colonized people*.

35. Gada Melba (1988), Oromia, An Introduction, Khartoum, Sudan, p. 63. Gada Melba summarizes the land allocation procedure as follows: “a governor received 1000 gashas or 40 000 hectares, a *fitawrari* (commander of the front) 300 gashas or 12 000 hectares, a *qanyazmach*

(commander of the right) 150 gashas or 6000 hectares and soldiers in accordance with their rank or seniority, 800, 600, 400, 200 or 80 hectares.”

36. Schwab, P., 1975. Haile Selassie: Leadership in Ethiopia, *Plural Societies*, 6, 2 (1975), p. 20.

37. The word “*shum-shir*,” an Amharic term literally means the absolute power of the emperor to hire or fire an appointee.

38. Von Breitenbach, National Forestry Development Planning, *Ethiopian Forestry Review*, 1962. pp. 41-68.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

40. Though there was no serious research that has so far been done in order to find out the reasons or dating of the process of forest destruction in the Ethiopian empire, many have agreed that the deforestation rate in the Ethiopian empire has been rampant. For more details see for example: Breitenbach, 1961 op. cit.; UNEP, 1983, *Ecology and Environment: What do we know about desertification?* Desertification Control 3:2-9.

41. IUCN. Ethiopia: National Conservation Strategy. Vol. 1. March 1990.

42. On top of what has been said already in this discussion, see Chojnacki, S. 1963. Forests and Forestry Problem as seen by some travellers in Ethiopia *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 1:32-39.

43. Eckholm, E P., *Loosing Ground, Environmental Stress and World Food Prospects*. Pergmon Press, 1976 Worldwatch Institute. p. 93.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

45. *Hudad* is a kind of *latifunda* (large estate farm practiced in Latin America), which was owned by the Abyssinian *malkanyas*. The farm land usually consisted some 120 to 160 hectares (3 to 4 *Gashas*) and the whole farm work was performed by the *gebbar* as an obligatory task. Pankhurst, R. 1968. *Economic History of Ethiopia 1800-1935: Land Tenure*: pp. 135-183.

46. Bo Ohlsson. *Forestry Strategies and the Peasant Association in Ethiopia*. Paper presented to the proceedings in the Social Science Seminar, Held in Nazareth, Oct. 27-29, 1978) pp. 222-244.

47. The land so granted also had an internal damaging mechanism. The person given the land must “develop” it as soon as possible. As a policy a land which was not cleared and put under cultivation was designated as *xef land* (which literally means waste land) and the grantee will be expropriated on the grounds of not *developing or* using the land. This urged the grantee to clear the land without consideration of its future environmental effects. For details about land grant see Cohem, J. & Weintraub, D. 1975. *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia—The Social Background to a Revolution*. Assen.

48. Alula Pankhurst. *Resettlement: Policy and practice*. In Siegfried Pausewang, Fantu Cheru, Stefan Brune, and Eshetu Chole (eds.) *Ethiopia: Rural Development Options*. Zed Books Ltd. London and New Jersey. pp. 121-135.

49. Alemayehu Lirenzo, 1990. *Villagization: Policies and Prospects*. In Siegfried Pausewang, Fantu Cheru, Stefan Brune, and Eshetu Chole (eds.) *Ethiopia: Rural Development Options*. Zed Books Ltd. London and New Jersey. pp. 135-144.

50. It is important to keep in mind that population in Ethiopia grows at the rate of 2.9 percent per annum.

51. Pankhurst, R. *Menilik and the Utilization of foreign skills in Ethiopia*. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* Vol. V: No. 1, 1967 pp. 29-86. Of the foreign concessionaires it is important to note people like Alfred Ilg, a Swiss, who for a long time was Menilik’s minister of state sole concessionaire of the Wollagga gold mine.

52. SIDA n.d. *Ethiopian Forest History* (manuscript) p. 5.

53. For example the Italian loggers situated in Dambi Dollo and loggers who supplied to Itege Menen’s sawmills in Shashemene are only a few examples

54. S. Stanley, 1971. *An Introduction to the Rural Economy of Ethiopia*. Haile Selassie I University, Addis Ababa: p. 22.

55. *Ethiopia: Forestry Action Program Draft Final Report Volume II—The Challenge for Development*, April 22, 1993. p. 21.

56. Ibid , p 21.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., p. 22.

59. Turner II, B.L., Moss, R.H. and Skole, D.L., (eds), 1993. Relating land Use and global land-cover change: A proposal for an IGBP-HDP core project. IGBP Report 24, HDP Report 5, Stockholm: International Geosphere-Biosphere programme. Cited by Lambin, Eric F., 1994. Modeling Deforestation Processes: A review Official Publications of the European Community, 1994 (Luxembourg). p. 3.

60. Just to cite a few among many see for example: Guppy, N. 1984. Tropical deforestation: a global view. *Foreign Affairs* 62(4): 928-965; Myers, N., 1989. Tropical deforestation: rates and causes. London: Friends of the Earth; Plumwood, V. and Routley, R. 1982. World rain-forest destruction: the social factors. *The Ecologist* 12:4-22.; Williams, M. 1989. Deforestation: past and present. *Progress in Human Geography* 13(2): 176-208.

61. Lambin, Eric F., 1994. p. 2.

62. Friis, I., et al., 1982. Studies in the flora and vegetation of Southwest Ethiopia. *Op Bot.*
63. In a rather recent expedition from Denmark, Friis and his co-workers, with the objective of registering forest and secondary vegetation replacing them, have enumerated some 2400 plants from this region. Friis et al. (1982). Until very recently most of this region as a whole has been among the least known in the literature. Most of such areas display similar physical characteristics of large natural forest cover underlying wild coffee (*Coffea arabica*).

63. Stahl, M., 1974. Ethiopia: Political Contradictions in Agricultural Development. *Publications of the Political Science Association in Uppsala* 67.

64. For example Finfinne, which was named Addis Ababa and became capital city of the empire in 1886, was a forest land. The large concentration of people in the capital city made heavy demands on the trees. In less than a decade lumber and wood for fuel were being hauled from areas over twenty kilometres. This situation became so serious that by 1902 there was a plan to abandon the city and move to 40 kilometres west (to Holota where there was a forest). Addis Ababa did not move because the wood shortage was somehow solved by the importation of the eucalyptus tree and the establishment of a forest of trees around the capital. Horvath, R.J., 1968. Addis Ababa's Eucalyptus Forest. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies, Vol. VI, No. 1*: 13-19.

65. Fournier, F. 1967. Research on Soil Erosion and soil conservation in Africa. *African Soils* 22: 53-96.

66. Hurni, H., 1988. Ecological Issues in the Creation of Famines in Ethiopia. *Paper Presented at the National Conference on a Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Strategy for Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa. Hurni's estimates were based on the assumption that degraded soil and vegetation lead to direct run-off rates of up to 80 percent of rainfall, while well-covered soils (long grasses, trees) will retain more than 90 percent. On the basis of 60 cm of crop-land soil depth, and assuming a loss of 4 mm per annum, it was concluded that Ethiopia's current crop-land soil will be eroded within 150 years.

67. See e.g.: Verhelst, Thierry G. (translated by Bob Cumming), 1987. *No Life Without Roots: Culture and Development*. Zed Books Ltd., London and New Jersey; Reaney, D., 1991. *The Death of Forever: A New Future for Human Consciousness*. Longman Cheshire.

68. For details See Stahl, M., 1974. Ethiopia: Political Contradictions in Agricultural Development. *Publications of the Political Science Association in Uppsala* 67.

69. See Henock Kifle, 1971. An analysis of the CADU credit Programme 1968/69—1970/71 and its impact on income distribution (CADU Publication No. 66, 1971). Henock Kifle, 1972. Investigations on mechanized farming and its effects on peasant agriculture. (CADU Publication No. 74, 1972.)

70. See Baxter, P.T.W., 1978. Ethiopia's Unacknowledged problem: The Oromo. *African Affairs. The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 77 No. 208. pp. 276-291.

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Agricultural Production and Food Crisis in the Horn of Africa

by *Belletech Deressa**

Introduction

The 1970s and the 1980s were times of growing recognition that we lived in a world of profound crisis, a world of dehumanizing poverty, collapsing ecological systems, hunger and famine, breakdown of family systems, lack of access to private farm land, decrease in agricultural production, failure of economy, unemployment, political crisis, and deeply stressed social structures. While these problems were worldwide, they extremely affected the already oppressed subsistence farmers such as in the Horn of Africa.

Each crisis was to some extent both a cause and consequence of the others. Each pointed to important institutional failure. Forces interlocking crisis brought into bold relief during the 1980s—poverty, political instability, environmental stress, neglect of agricultural economy, land issues, and communal violence—posed a threat to human civilization that is now more real and more important in its implications than the threat of nuclear war.

In Africa and more so in the Horn, the threat of famine has been worse than a threat of nuclear war. So many people have been dehumanized and have died of famine that the Horn of Africa, mainly Ethiopia, is seen as the center of hunger and famine. While the northern parts of Ethiopia (Tigray, Wollo, Eriteria) were known for many years of hunger, draught and famine, Oromia and southern regions were equally affected since they had to share their produce and accommodate displaced famine victims. In addition, the population pressure and mass migration to Oromia and southern regions created major environmental destruction.

Over the last two decades, Africa as a whole has undergone drastic deterioration in agricultural production, thereby, increasing its dependence on food imports. Population growth has outstripped increases in food production by nearly 2 to 1 in this period, with declines in an average food production per person. Food self-sufficiency ratios dropped from 98 percent to 86 percent; this implied that each African had approximately 12 percent less home grown food than 20 years earlier.¹

The general demographic situation in Africa, especially in the Horn, indicates that food production has not kept pace with the rapid increase in population resulting in the widespread famine in various parts of the continent. While some researchers consider the population growth as the main cause of the problem of food shortage, it is only one factor of the problem.

An important reason for the decline of food security in Africa has been political exclusion, resulting from single-party state dominated, authoritarian rule. This created civil war and civil unrest. War erodes people's entitlement to food in a number of different ways, it destroys crops, land and the environment, reorients resources from development to the military, disrupts trade and economic activity, blocks access to emergency aid, displaces populations and suppresses press freedom and civil rights. War is the most frequent reason for famine in Oromia, Ethiopia, and the Horn of Africa. As Timothy Shaw (1990) notes, "conflict in Africa has become synonymous with gross violation of human rights and deliberate attempts to destroy the assets and way of life of local groups. When food aid is available to assist affected populations, it too is used as a weapon of war."² This is very evident in Oromia and Ethiopia even in 1994.

The problems of food production in the Horn of Africa, especially in Oromia are many. Lack of peace, political instability and colonial pressure, lack of access to factors of production such as land, agricultural technology and labor, education and cultural factors. The lack of recognition for women as food producers, and lack of agricultural research appropriate for the nation and exclusion of women from better agricultural training have contributed to lesser production.

The Position of Women as Food Producers

Women have always played important roles in food production. Traditionally, the basic unit of production was the household. The household economy was usually based on male-headed units of the extended families. Before the introduction of the money economy, cash crops, men and women worked together to produce the household's consumption, with a clearly-defined division of labor based on age and sex. In addition to joint household production, women generally had a set aside piece of land of their own where they grew crops like vegetables to complement the family food supply. Women had considerable control over produce from their gardens and from the household fields. But when cash crops were introduced, coffee plantation replaced food production, men took control of cash crops, and land became scarce as government and colonial powers took land from farmers. As a result, women lost the small portion of land which they used for household food supply,³ less food crops were available in market, and the price of food increased. Land became unproductive due to deterioration of top soil. In spite of the hard labor, the yield from the land did not help families to be self-sufficient.

Rotation of crop land was limited and farmers continued to use the same piece of land over and over again to the extent that some land lost its top-soil and stopped providing yields. Trees, bushes, and forests were destroyed to plant cash crops as well as to expand production. Traditional values held for nurturing and planting trees and forest were lost. Money making crops took priority over food crops.

The Effect of Cash Crops on Food Production

The introduction of cash crops—coffee, tobacco, cocoa, palm, tea, sisal, cotton, groundnut, sugarcane—into Africa during the colonial period was a kind of anathema to food production. By taking up large chunks of land, space was not available for food crops, and by planting export crops in regions having the best weather conditions, the government was assured of controlling the farmers. Cash crops were a source of foreign exchange earnings which benefited a few elite and government officials. In Western, Southern and Eastern Oromia, coffee as cash crop brought foreign currency which was later used to buy weapons and used against the producers of the cash crops or traditional owners of the land on which the cash crops grow.

Agricultural research addressed itself mainly to the problems of large scale farms and cash crops. Extension services and training were directed mainly to men rather than women (the people who actually did the farming). The quality of extension was adversely affected by the scarcity of complementary resources (vehicle, petrol, visual aids, etc). Highly trained technical officers were performing administrative jobs instead of giving advice to farmers; the technical officers did not render the technical services that were so desperately needed and for which they were trained. This was a terrible waste of resources, especially when some of the technical officers were not always the best administrators. Thus poor quality of seeds, lack of research output and poor extension services played parts in contributing to the agricultural crisis in Oromia.

At every turn, there were regulatory inputs, supplies, and purchasing and marketing government agencies. Their proliferation made the farmers bewildered, to say the least. The red tape—more often lack of access to farm inputs in good time, produce not collected promptly at harvest period, and the payment for produce delayed—caused more frustration among the farmers.

The low price paid for farm produce in general was a deliberate move to subsidize urban workers. Within this set-up, the average farmer was overwhelmed by powerlessness and lack of control over his or her produce. This sense of powerlessness was manifested into less exertions and production. The low productivity and price in agriculture and inadequate rural service forced many men to migrate to the cities, leaving women to do the work of both sexes. Not only did this

transformation result in the division of labor by gender, it also made food production more and more, almost exclusively, the female responsibility and burden in many countries.

During the seventeen years of the Marxist Government of Ethiopia, the farm policy and agricultural production system discouraged private food production and proper management of land. Traditional private family owned farms, plants, trees, and cash crops were taken by cooperative. Farmers could not claim trees or forests that they previously owned. Trees were cut without any initiative to replant. No one felt ownership over the land or plants. This attitude led to deforestation, and crop lands turned to desert land. Hills and mountains that were once covered by forest looked like rocks in the middle of the ocean.

Traditional practices such as protection of certain ritual trees like the "ODDA" have drastically changed. The value systems held by farming communities was altered and replaced by state farm and cooperative farming systems. Villagization system uprooted farmers from their land and farmers lost incentive to farm since they did not feel ownership of their land, property, domestic animals or vegetation.

The government did not take much initiative to protect the land and the environment. There was no initiative to train farmers to adopt drought resistance crops, and very little attention was given to agricultural research to develop high yield variety of crops.

Rather than using natural fertilizers and natural herbicides, expensive chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides were imported. While the expenses for input increased the income from the sales of farm products reduced as government put restriction on prices. There was no incentive for farmers to produce. Of course, the government was forced to import food to gain the support of urban dwellers, but the imported food was not available to rural people even if they had money to purchase. The destruction of trees, forests, and the environment together with persistence drought destroyed the livelihood of the people. Villagization and resettlement programs created more problems for farming communities in Oromia and other parts of Ethiopia.

Food Aid Versus Agricultural Development

Food imports including food aid became a major factor in the management of the hunger crisis in Africa. Food imports have also been shown to have deterred the effects on rural women as well as on food and nutrition security. Food aid has the greatest danger of undermining local food production, by undercutting prices and enlarging exogenous tastes. The staple grains such as teff, barley, millet, sorghum, maize, yams, and seed potatoes are yielding to imported wheat and rice whose cultivation potential in sub-saharan Africa is relatively limited. As much as 90 percent of food imports goes to the socially powerful and vocal urban dwellers. This does not solve the chronic food and nutritional problems of the rural poor. Indeed, food aid is used to free recipient governments from their urgent responsibilities to develop the productive capacity of the poor. Above all, food aid encourages the dependency of the people in Africa, while it also provides donor countries with a means of disposing their food surplus without depressing their own domestic markets.

In 1994, a decade after the catastrophic crop failure and ensuing famine that attracted worldwide attention, Ethiopia faces another major food emergency. In April 1994, the United Nations World Food Program, Addis Ababa office, estimated that some four million people were at risk from famine and that the country needed a half a million tons of emergency food aid for four months. Total cereal imports are again likely to be close to one million tons in 1994. While the World Food program says the immediate causes are erratic rainfall, pest, and lack of fertilizers, it points out that food stocks have not recovered from the 1984 famine. The low level of structural food reserves means that the country remains vulnerable to unforeseen shortfalls. This raises key questions about government agrarian reform. Despite doubts about government economic reforms,

the World Bank pledged some USD one billion in new loans and grants. This brings total aid to over USD four billion since 1992.⁴

African countries must endeavor to view the question of food and nutritional security beyond survival. Human, financial, and technical resources for food and nutrition should be mobilized domestically in order to give credence to the long-term, self-reliant development strategy. More aid needs to go on primary education and primary health care, on improving the lot of women and on population programs.

Within poor countries such as Ethiopia, aid is rarely concentrated on the services that benefits the poorest. The World Bank reckons that of all the aid going to low-income countries in 1988, a mere 2 percent went on primary health care and 1 percent on population programmes. Even the aid that is spent on health and education tends to go to services that benefit disproportionately the better-off. Aid for health care goes disproportionately to hospitals. In sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s, only \$1 of Overseas Development Assistance went on each primary pupil; \$11 on each secondary pupil; and \$575 on each University student.

The above spending patterns often reflect the priorities of the recipient governments.

What Can Be Done?

Meeting future food needs depends almost entirely on raising the productivity of land and water resources. Yields of the major grains crops are significantly below their genetic potential, so it is possible that scientists will develop new crop varieties that will boost land productivity. Scientists are working on a new strain of rice that may offer yield gains within a decade, and they have developed a wheat variety that is resistant to leaf rust diseases, which could increase yields and allow wheat to be grown in more humid regions⁶

Gains from biotechnology may be forthcoming soon. According to Garillelle Persle of the World Bank, rice varieties bioengineered for virus resistance are likely to be in farm fields by 1995. Wheat varieties with built-in disease and insect resistance are underdevelopment. And scientists are genetically engineering maize varieties for insect resistance, although no commercial field applications are expected until sometime after the year 2000. It remains to be seen whether these and other potential gains materialize and whether they collectively increase yields at the rates needed. Unfortunately, very little progress is done on African traditional drought resistance crops.

Even traditional African domestic animals such as local breeds have been replaced by exotic animals breeds. Fruits and vegetables have been replaced by other European varieties of vegetables that require more water and better management. African corn (Maize) has been replaced by American corns, Borana cows have been replaced by Friesland cows, even oxen and Horse-ploughs have been replaced by modern Western tractors. While much research is done to improve crops and animals grown in Northern Hemisphere, very little is done to improve the traditional African crops and animals that are resistant to tropical diseases and climate.

Many African colleges and universities teach more of the Western agricultural system and technology. Africans who studied agriculture do their research on other crops not on crops needed for Africa from Africa. Unless the African scholars and institutions change their views, examine their own culture, and reflect on what is most important to Africans, the problems will not be solved. It is a challenge for African scholars and researchers to focus on what could be of value for their country and their homeland. African scholars who live in western countries have an opportunity to conduct research that will help to change the current agricultural problems.

What About Africa and Traditional African Crops?

The aim of the Institute of Natural Resources in Africa (INRA) is to strengthen national institutions, to mobilize African scientists in and outside Africa, and to provide them with organizational

structure, management capability, and resources necessary to apply high quality research. It is necessary for the African institutions to concentrate on a limited numbers of specific and urgent problems. The African governments must also be persuaded to do everything possible to address problems related to agricultural production.

The first priority of INRA is to examine culture for crop production. Research and training was undertaken in advanced proven biotechnology techniques designed to improve yields of selected crops. During the past two decades, the potential of plant tissue culture and other biotechnological techniques have demonstrated that it is possible to bring about major increases in crop production in a number of ways (by the mass propagation of plants, production of new hybrids and viral free plants).

The second priority of INRA is germplasm distribution and applied research (the assembly, storage, and distribution of selected tree and vegetable germplasm materials, especially for mixed cropping systems). In 1973, the important role played by germplasm distribution in combating desertification in Africa was recognized by experts convened by the US Academy of Science, at the request of USAID. The need to preserve species and varieties which are threatened because of desertification or other calamities is urgent.

The third priority is land use systems and policies and technical analyses aimed at developing specific options for sound production systems and land use planning. There is no doubt that existing land tenure systems, together with various traditional customs and the exploitation of land by governments and corporate groups, have proven to be an enormous obstacle to agricultural and other forms of development in Africa.

The Role of Culture in Agricultural Production

There are some cultures that enhance hunger for power and domination and modes of culture that breed out the colonial past which reiterates patterns of submission that lead to decisive opportunism and corruption among oppressed people.

There is evidence of corruption in the case of trained extension workers and some government officials in the ministry of agriculture. Many government employees are more interested in getting a big salary and are not very committed to helping farmers. Their attitude toward farmers and farming is impersonal and unprofessional.

The vast destruction of traditional knowledge, the knowledge of the elderly people—especially of women elders—in traditional medicine, botany, zoology, ecology, agronomy, etc. must be restored. Researchers and universities need to go out to the field and collect and analyze such knowledge and make it available. If local people are proud of their heritage, then we will not end this century as the millennium of the lost traditions.

The new technologies and the new cultural industries cannot be avoided as they are an intrinsic part of today's historical process, but it must be acknowledged that they will always have to be readapted and reinterpreted in different cultural settings. People must be given the confidence so that they can appropriate, discard, mix, remold, or create new adaptations of such technologies and farming systems.

There is no question that farmers and agricultural production need improvement if Oromia and the Horn of Africa is to be free from hunger and poverty. In order to accomplish this, the food habits must change if traditional food crops are not available. In the Horn of Africa, especially Oromia, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti and to some degree in Kenya, there are some foods that are considered "untouchable" or "inedible." For example, in Oromia, rabbits, wild birds, and pigs are not considered for consumption. Within Oromia, there are some people who do not consider vegetables as food. While some foods are considered a taboo because of religion, there are some that are considered as inferior foods. In some regions of Oromia, people would rather die of hunger than eat guinea pigs, while in South America guinea pigs are considered a luxury

food. Kale is considered a poor person's food in Oromia, while in North America and Europe, kale is an important part of the diet.

It is imperative to incorporate traditional food, values, and culture with modern scientific ideas. It is crucial to preserve culture and values that are essential for survival and adopt other cultures that promote progress. There is no one culture that is superior than another; there is no one answer to African agricultural crisis and development, but there has to be initiative to evaluate each aspects of technology, food production, and farming systems to overcome current world hunger problems.

In Search of Alternatives to the Problems

In the intermediate term, priority should be one of consolidation of gains by construction of proper storage facilities to house strategic stocks, replenishment of cattle herds and small-stocks, and proper pricing of agricultural produce and farm inputs so as to improve the term of trade for agriculture; this would act as incentives for the farmers to produce more. Reforestation programs should be undertaken during this period and the ecology managed in a sustainable fashion. Land should be given to farmers.

Planners need to think beyond survival and consolidation and put the farmer in the center-stage. It requires more investment in favor of rural areas and farmers (transport, communication, water, education, health, etc.). In the 1986, the Organization of Africa Unity in their submission, entitled *Africa's Priority Program for Economic Recovery*, to the United Nations Special Session on African Crisis, suggested that between 20-25 percent of public investments should go to agriculture.

Agricultural research needs to be re-oriented towards more emphasis on food crops vis-à-vis plantation of exportable cash crops. Extension services must address the problems of small scale farms and women farmers who need to be equipped, not only in basic literacy and numeric, but also with adoptive research and functional skills to upgrade indigenous skills in order to upgrade indigenous technology, particularly in food processing.

Attention should be given to the irrigation potential to ensure food security even in non-rainy seasons. Industrial development should be planned in such a manner as to enhance the linkage between industry and agriculture.

Infrastructure service including power, transport, telecommunications, provision of water and sanitation, and safe disposal of water are central to the activities of households and to economic production. This reality becomes painfully evident when natural disasters or civil disturbances destroy or disable power stations, roads and bridges, telephone lines, canals and water mains. It is also evident that government and authorities use destruction or underdevelopment of infrastructure against opposition groups. These major infrastructure failures quickly and radically reduce communities' quality of life and productivity. Conversely, improving infrastructure services enhances welfare and fosters economic growth. Recent evidence in many African countries indicates that infrastructure building and development takes place mainly in areas and regions where dominant political parties of the country live or visit. This is evidenced in Ethiopia during the Emperor Haile Selasse. Development activities, access to better education, and opportunity for higher education and training were mainly available to the ruling class family and ruling ethnic group while the majority of Ethiopian people especially the Oromo shared a small fraction and many were denied of such privileged.

This leaves large parts of the country underdeveloped in agriculture as well as in developing basic infrastructures such as schools, hospitals, and transport. There is also evidence that currently most of the development aid is targeted for northern provinces of Ethiopia such as Tigray with one-sixth of the country's population getting the largest proportion while southern, eastern, western and central regions receive insignificant proportion.⁷ Similar situations exist in many

countries, "Development take places" in areas where the ruling party comes from even in a democratic system where elections are held.

How can the majority of the people who are not recipients of the benefits challenge those who use basic necessities, development, and infrastructure as weapons and tools of oppression?

It does not matter how much the World Bank gives as loan or Aid without human development, justice, peace, and freedom it is difficult to implement sustainable development of any kind. Without peace and justice, development can not be sustainable

Recommendations:

1. One must challenge the international community to support peoples struggle for freedom, peace and equity. Without peace, security, equity, justice and freedom, there will be no sustainable development.
2. The cooperative management of resources at regional level through bi-lateral and regional programs needs to be promoted. This means that we all have tasks and responsibility to address the need that exist and ask for support.
3. Establishing monitoring and surveillance systems which could predict environmental stress or threats to meeting basic needs must be done.
4. The introduction of new crops such as cash crops should be evaluated for possible negative effects on local food security and family nutrition. Women's traditional views on food security and choice of crop should be assessed with consideration and reinforced if appropriate.
5. Agricultural methods which promote sustainable development such as agroforestry and off-season cropping be made available to women farmers. Excessive use of expensive chemical fertilizers and products which endanger the productive capacities of the land, should be discouraged.
6. Women's traditional knowledge of seeds, plants and animals species be collected and integrated in the task of conserving the plant's genetic resources.
7. Education on environmental concern be aimed at all sectors of society, adults as well as young children.
8. Non-formal policy education on environment /population/ and development be encouraged.
9. Most of all, Oromo researchers and scholars as well as other friends of Oromo people must focus on research that can improve the food production, development and plan for the development of Oromia.

End Notes

1. U.N. Economic and Social Council, *Mobel Milimo, Development: Seeds of Change* 1987, 2/3 pp 69.
2. Timothy Shaw, Public Broadcasting Service, interview, April, 1990.
3. Devaki, Jain, "Can we have a women's Agenda for Global Development," *Development, Journal of the Society for International Development*, Rome, 1991, p. 75.
4. *Ethiopia Backing the Birr*. Africa Confidential Vol. 35, No. 7, April 1994.
5. *The Economist*, May 7, 1994, p. 20.
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Oromo Calendar: The Significance of Bita Qara

by *Asfaw Beyene**

Introduction

In 1978, Lynch and Robbins [5] published their discovery of 19 basalt pillars in Namoratunga, a megalithic site in the Borana region of Kenya. The configuration of the basalts represented the alignment of the stars and constellations known as Urjii Dhaha to Oromos, used to compute accurate calendar. The Namoratunga findings were carbon dated to about 300 B.C., suggesting the invention and beginning of the use of the calendar to roughly the same time. In 1986, Doyle [3] analyzed the techniques of Oromo calendar as presented by Legesse [4], and noted that the system is "a valid timekeeping system." He supported the dating with a fact that around 300 B.C. the declination of the reference stars and constellations corresponded to lunar motion. Addressing Legesse's use and application of the term "conjunction," Doyle argued that the right ascension (RA) would not work since it would create a shift of 11° each month, but asserted that the system would work in the declination sense. This necessitated a field verification, which followed in 1988 by Bassi [2]. His study slightly differed from Legesse's in the sense that it involved eight, instead of seven stars and constellations. Bassi stated that "only the RA was taken into consideration, declination played no role." Although his field observation interpreted the application of "conjunction" as practiced (meaning side by side), it also contradicted Doyle's hypothesis that the system would not work in the RA sense. The RA is a measure of the "longitude" of a celestial body. The celestial equator is the point where the sun crosses declination zero from south to north on the first day of Spring (Vernal Equinox). Declination, on the other hand, is the measure of the "latitude," ranging from -90° over the south pole to $+90^\circ$ over the north pole. RA and declination change slightly over thousands of years, due to precession of the earth's axis of rotation.

The main objectives of this paper are to show the implications of the RA observation of the Urjii Dhaha and the moon by Ayyanttuus (Oromo time reckoning experts) and shed some light on some aspects of Oromo calendar interpreted by other previous authors [1,3]. For the non-astronomer to grasp this complex time reckoning mechanism, it is essential to simplify it and even omit detailed rules that govern the celestial sky so flawlessly understood by ancient Kushites. Computer software, mainly *Red Shift* [1, 6] is used to animate and analyze the movement and position of the earth and the moon to relate the position of the stars to the techniques that the Ayyanttuus applied to lay their fixed reference point.

The Oromos designated seven [4], or eight [2] of the myriad bodies of the sky, and used the static nature of the celestial sphere and the movement of the earth with the moon to define the length of the year and the months. The position of these stars and constellations forms a fairly straight line when observed (see fig. 1A), with Triangulum to the north west, and Sirius to the south east. The linear variation in the ascension and declination of the stars, coupled with rotations of the earth around the sun and the moon around the earth, play a key role in facilitating the reference system for Oromo time reckoning. It offers a sequence in the time of appearance of the stars which in turn is used as a unique coordinate of reference to identify a specific day of the year based on which the entire calendar is organized. The day is called Bita Qara, and it is one of the days of the ceremonial month.

The Time-Reckoning Technique

According to Legesse [4] "the Borana calendar is a permutation calendar based on lunar rather

than solar cycles," consisting of twelve months each 29.5 days long. Twenty seven named days (equal to the ceremonial month) are permuted through the twelve lunar months of the year losing 2.5 days per month. The lunar year starts with the appearance of Triangulum, one of the Urjii Dhaha, in conjunction with a new moon. Legesse also stated that the Ayyanttuus used the position of the Urjii Dhaha in conjunction with the appearance of a new or full moon to mark the beginning of every successive new month.

The entire line formation of the Urjii Dhaha can be seen during most of the year, at least briefly, except around June/July. A star is said to rise when the earth rotates to a position facing the star, which can be hampered by the presence of another body on the way, particularly the sun. The star may rise at a given time of the day which depends on the longitude and latitude of the observer's position (partly shown in table 2 for Finfinne). The star is not visible during the day time, even if it has risen.

According to Legesse, Triangulum continues to appear in the second half of the lunar months throughout the year, and is used to determine the day with 2 to 3 days of tolerance by observing its position with the phase of the moon when the other stars are out of sight. This is assumed to be supplementary to the critical day of Bita Qara. Mathematically speaking, fixing another day rigidly for astronomic corrections would over-dimensionalize the system, and the Ayyanttuus are well aware of this fact. The appearance of a new moon with Pleides may take place on the day of Sonsa, or Argajima. With Aldebaran it may take place on Arb, or Walla; and with Bellatrix it could be on Baasa Dura, or Baasa Ballo, or Carra, allowing up to three days of flexibility. This has been revised by Bassi.

Table 1. Visibility of the Urjii Dhaha at the beginning of each month over Oromia: Computer animation using RedShift [1, 6].

Month	1900 Oromo Time	2300 Oromo Time	0300 Oromo Time
Jan	Visible	Visible	Visible
Feb	Visible	Visible	Partly Visible
Mar	Visible	Visible	Not Visible
Apr	Visible	Partly Visible	Not Visible
May	Visible	Not Visible	Not Visible
Jun	Partly Visible	Not Visible	Not Visible
Jul	Not Visible	Not Visible	Not Visible
Aug	Not Visible	Not Visible	Partly Visible
Sep	Not Visible	Not Visible	Visible
Oct	Not Visible	Partly Visible	Visible
Nov	Not Visible	Visible	Visible
Dec	Partly Visible	Visible	Visible

The nightly visual observation depends on the position of the earth on its axis and around the sun (shown in Table 1). Bassi's field visit took place around the end of September when the Urjii Dhahas are visible partly after about 9 p.m. observation. For most of July, none of the Urjii Dhaha is visible at night. This is a time when the sun is between the reference stars and the earth. During the two months preceding and succeeding this period (June and August), part of the line formation is visible in the evenings. In June, the earth moves out of the linear formation, offering a unique opportunity for the rise of these stars early morning over the following few

months. Triangulum makes its first early morning (visible) appearance over Oromia in the month of Waxabajji (June), after a long day time rising (not visible) from Saddaasa (November) through Bufa (May). The conjunction of the new moon with Triangulum is aligned with the day of Bitu Qara. Due to its astral position, Triangulum appears and disappears first in the line of the reference stars. This has been presented by Legesse as if Triangulum remains visible for longer period than the other stars of Urjii Dhaha. As the position of the earth moves further from the line and shapes a triangular formation with the stars and the sun, appearance of the stars also shifts more and more to late night. By November, their appearance would be in the evening. This is another linear formation, with the earth between the stars and the sun. From January through May, the stars rise over the skies of Oromia during the day time. But, at least the head or the tail of the Urjii Dhaha can be seen in the evening just before they set, or in the morning just before the day light

Table 2 shows the rising and setting on the first day of the month for the two ends of the line of the reference stars, Triangulum at the northern end and Sirius at the southern end.

Table 2. The rising and setting time of Triangulum and Sirius (Oromo time) on the first day of each month: Computer animation[1, 6].

Month	Triangulum Rising Time	Triangulum Setting Time	Sirius' Rising Time	Sirius' Setting Time
Jan	1335	0226	1841	0618
Feb	1133	0024	1640	0416
Mar	0943	2234	1449	0226
Apr	0741	2032	1228	0024
May	0543	1834	1050	2226
Jun	0341	1632	0848	2024
Jul	0143	1434	0650	1826
Aug	2341	1232	0448	1624
Sep	2140	1030	0246	1422
Oct	1938	0828	0044	1220
Nov	1736	0627	2242	1018
Dec	1538	0429	2044	0820

The following table (Tab. 3) shows the time difference between the rising and setting of each star or star group in the line in mid- March. This difference is due to the RA of each successive set.

Table 3. The rising and setting time of the Urjii Dhaha in mid-March at Finfinne - Oromo time: Computer animation [1, 6].

	Triang	Pleid.	Aldeb.	Bella.	Orion	Saiph	Siriu
Rise	0836	1016	1108	1204	1215	1237	1343
Set	2127	2249	2332	0014	0017	0026	0119

A crucial point here is that the Oromos define the length of the year by coinciding Bitá Qara with the appearance of a new moon and visibility of Triangulum in a given month. This implies that the Oromo year so defined should be oscillating around 365 days, not 354 as suggested by Legesse, regardless of the techniques chosen to identify conjunction. It takes one rotation of the earth around the sun (one solar year) to see Triangulum at the same point and time. Bassi states that this is handled by defining an extra “intercalary” month. The slope of the oscillation depends on the delay of the moon following the appearance of Triangulum, thus, the length of the repeated month is flexible. This will be explained in more details.

Let us assume that Triangulum and the moon appeared at the same time at a given year. The next year appearance of Triangulum will be preceding the appearance of the new moon by eleven days due to the shift between sidereal and lunar years. This would mean that Triangulum’s appearance at the horizon on the new moon day will be delayed, say by about 45 minutes. If we allow this shift to continue, Ayyanttuus will have to wait few more hours to see the rise of Triangulum with the new moon in just about six years, and even wait a day till morning as the shift continues. This was noticed by Doyle [3]. The methodology of defining conjunction [2] is equivalent to fixing the time of observation. But since demarcating time is the ultimate objective of the calendar itself, fixing the time of observation is useful only for simulation purposes. The first challenge one runs into while simulating the field observation is how to define the conjunction, i.e., how to mark the real time of observation. Bassi’s paper suggests that this took place based on the shortest distance between the moon and the stars estimated over eleven successive days. Legesse (1973, p. 182) also discusses “side by side” appearance of a star with the new moon.

The observation time, however, is less important than the fixing of the time itself. The stars rise in the early mornings of June/July, but slowly glide to late night as the months pass, rising in the evening around October. Such transition without setting the boundaries of the time of observation also would rotate the reference point and time. Although, Urjii Dhahas are visible for most of the year, June offers the only time when they rise early morning. Legesse mentions reappearance of Triangulum after not appearing for six months, and this is closely possible only if he was referring to the morning observation. This is when Triangulum’s day time appearance (not visible) was followed by its early morning (visible) appearance. If this is the case, computer animation proves that the critical Bitá Qara should be in Waxabajj (June), not Bitotessa as suggested by Legesse. However, if an evening rising time is selected for observation, the critical Bitá Qara would be in Bitotessa (March), as indicated by Legesse and Bassi. This is the only difference between a morning and evening observations.

Let us consider some numerical examples starting with a hypothetical year when the new moon and Triangulum appear in conjunction. One year after this hypothetical year, the new moon of Bitotessa appears 11 days ahead of Triangulum. Bitá Qara has to wait for twenty more days to be observed at the same time, extending the days between successive Bitá Qaras to 384. The third year, the new moon appears 11 days shorter before the end of the cycle of the solar year while Triangulum has been visible for about ten days. Thus the third year has 354 days. But the next lunar cycle would be so short that Triangulum is not visible at the end of that lunar year. So, it has to wait for 17 more days, extending the year to 392 days. The length between the following consecutive annual Bitá Qaras can be calculated without attempting to describe the function mathematically (354, 354, 389, 354, 354, 386, 354, 394, 354, 354, 391, 354, 354, 388). It seems that the cycle of repetition is about thirty, meaning the sum of the length of thirty consecutive years should give the length of the solar year. Thus the cycle has a maximum of 394 and a minimum of 354 days. The variation of the year brings another astronomic challenge of how to divide the year to 12 months, involving the 27 days cycle at the same time. Having equated the length of each month to the lunar cycle, the only feasible solution is to have the last month, the month before Bitotessa, absorb the extra days of the sidereal year ranging from

one to 29 days. The numerical examples discussed above assume the length of the year to be 365 days. It should be mentioned here that even if the time of observation is changed and the techniques vary (as they may from region to region), the variability of the sidereal year remains valid, but the critical Bitu Qara may be in another month (in June if observation is in the morning).

We briefly noted how Triangulum makes its first morning (visible) appearance as the first in the line of the reference stars towards the end of May. On May 29, 1995, the new moon appears over Oromia with Triangulum already in sight in the morning (see figures 1A and 1B). This is aligned with Bitu Qara. Note that this is the astronomic new moon, the visible new moon follows in few days. About a month later, the Pleiades will appear with the new moon, joining Triangulum [4] which has been visible in the mornings of Waxabajj (June), and its appearance will mark the beginning of another month. Another less critical reference point is the appearance of a full moon with Triangulum on the day of Sonsa in the month of Birra - September 9, 1995 late evening, with captured dimensions of its RA precessed to current date at 23:40:24, 00°30'06" descent, 60 altitude from the horizon, and 105.53 azimuth from true north. This coincides with the appearance of Triangulum at 2104 of that day, setting at 0955 the next day.

Conclusion

Observing the Oromo time reckoning techniques, one has to admire the Ayyanttuus for their cognizance of the complex rules of the celestial space. The calendar involved consistent analysis of intricate movements and positions of the moon, the earth, the sun, and about half a dozen stars and/or constellations. It included calculation and registration of their relative positions, and permutating the flexible days of the lunar month over the fixed ceremonial days. It is a highly complex and unique civilization, still shielded by Oromo Ayyanttuus who are not given their scholarly credit for guarding the brilliance of prehistory.

As Legesse and Bassi indicated, the critical day of Bitu Qara defines a conjunction of Triangulum and new moon. It then follows that the Oromo year has a variable length, and the month of Guraandhala can be up to 59 days long. More accurately, the Oromo year can be defined as a time of variable length that repeats at a constant frequency equal to the lunar month, oscillating around the solar year with an amplitude of half lunar month.

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Fig. 1A. The line of Urjii Dhaha and the new moon on Bita Qara (see fig. 1B).

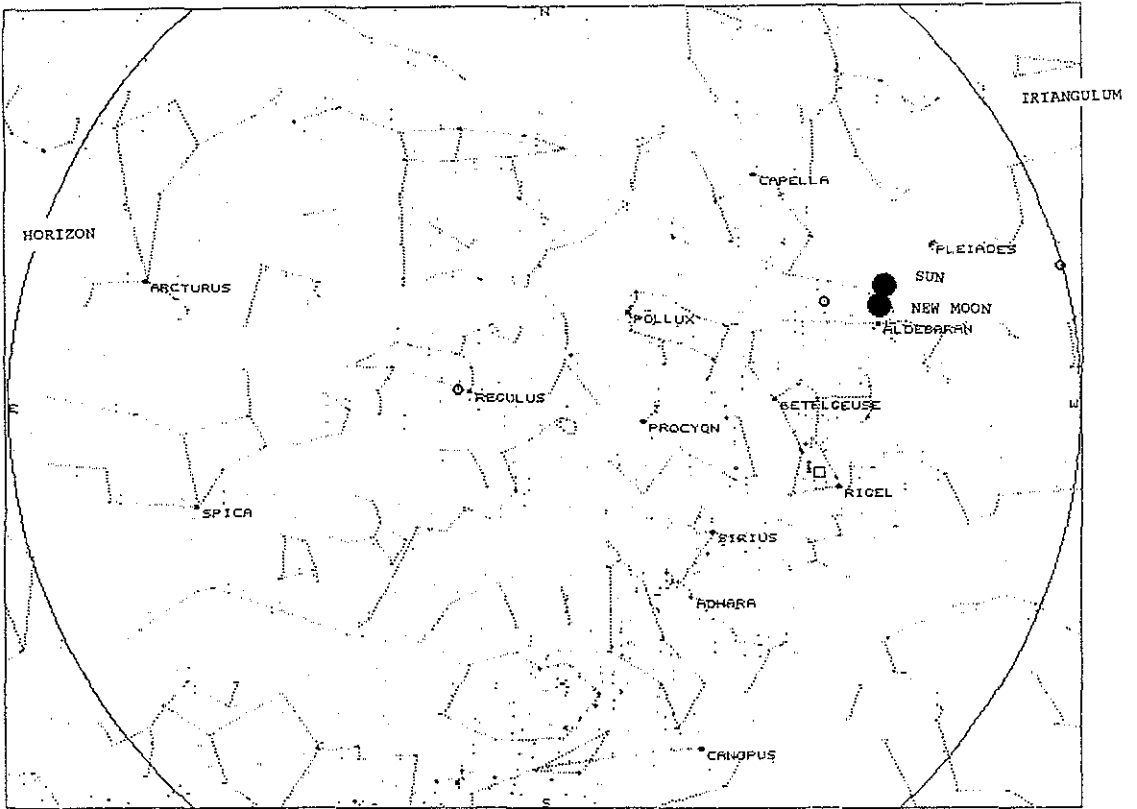
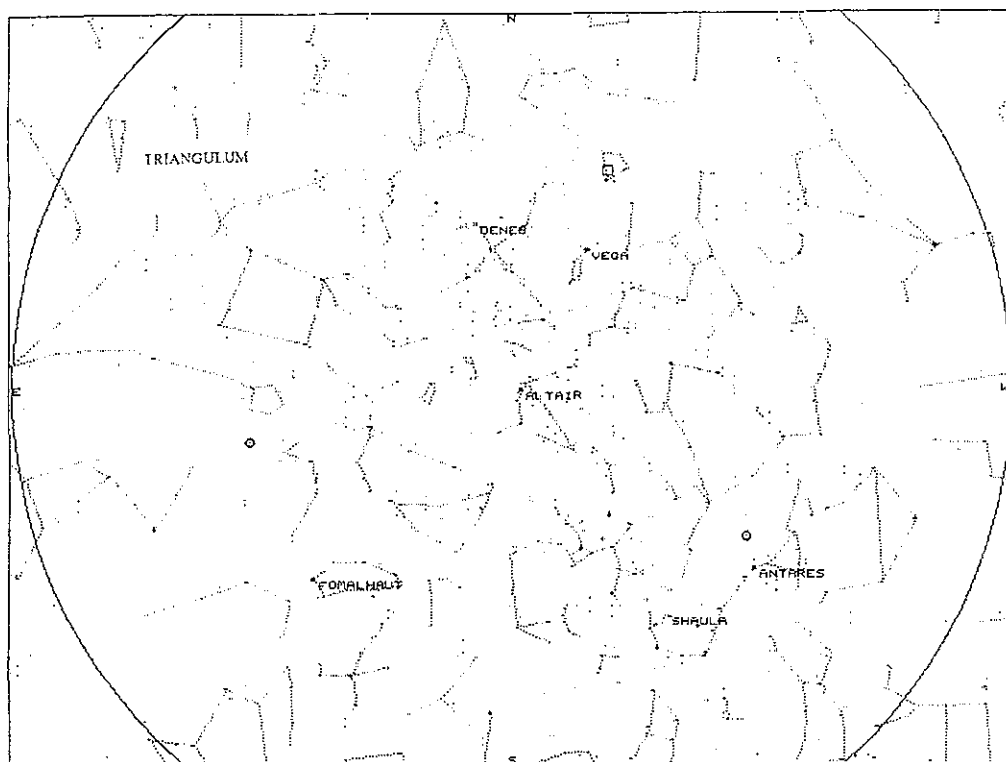


Fig. 1B Appearance of Triangulum at the defined time of observation on the same night as that of Fig. 1A.



The Influence of Abyssinian (Ethiopian) Political Culture on Oromo Nationalism and Rebellion

By *Admasu Shunkuri**

Introduction and Definitions

Except for those who have no vested interest in knowing, Abyssinian political culture is one of the causal factors in Oromo nationalism and rebellion. There are also those who are directly affected by it and still refuse reconciliation with the fact that Oromo nationalism is an aspiration for political self-determination as well as being a quest for cultural and economic liberation. Thus, the Oromo rebellion and resistance against an imposed political rule and a struggle against psychological oppression which, though less mentioned than the economic deprivation, has been no less injurious to Oromo national self-concept and personal self-esteem.

The history of Oromo and Abyssinian relations is replete with facts and information regarding Abyssinian confiscation of Oromo lands and exploitation of their natural resources and human labor, but much of the existing research efforts have not adequately analyzed the non-material consequences of the Oromo subordination to Abyssinian domination. This paper addresses the less discussed effects of Abyssinian domination of the Oromo nation. The differences between the Oromo and Abyssinian political cultures are highlighted, and the discussion infers that some of the reasons for Oromo nationalism and rebellion stem from experiences of victimization under Abyssinian authoritarian rule and undemocratic governance.

Some working definitions of the key terms associated with the topic of this discussion will be beneficial at this point. The concept of **political culture** refers to the main features of attitudes and behaviors acquired and sustained over time so as to become constant habits that guide the aims and purposes of actions and reactions to political matters, social and economic policies of government, and the political rules and patterns of governance. Political culture is enforced and reinforced by institutions like churches and schools, government laws and policies as well as by family idioms. By **nationalism** we infer the generally articulated view of a people defining themselves as a distinct nation, separate from, equal to, and independent of, any other cultural and social groups within a political boundary. Easily recognizable traits of nationalism include widely spoken and commonly intelligible language, broadly shared socio-cultural pattern and geo-political interchange. So defined, a nation could demand self-determination or aspire for independence either asserting a difference of superiority or as the result of oppression and victimization at the hand of another nation or nationality. The Oromo cause of nationalism is motivated by the latter. Oromo natural assets, landbase and population are evidence of economic potentials for self-sufficiency, and the Oromo language and social customs satisfy the conditions of nationalism.

The State of Oromo Nationalism

The persistence of Oromo liberation movement during the last two decades together with the gradual evolution of Oromo studies have established the awareness that the Abyssinian invasion of Oromos came primarily by way of military victories assisted by European cooperation.¹ As already mentioned above, the more familiar consequences of the conquest include the confiscation of Oromo land, exploitation of all forms of economic resources, and subsequent cultural and social subjugation of the Oromo to an authoritarian rule alien to their tradition of democracy.²

Those facts and results of conquest are being properly placed at the center of the explanation for Oromo nationalism and rebellion.

Another obvious and coterminous outcome of Abyssinian domination of the Oromo is the growing sentiment for Oromo nationalism and rebellion. For more than twenty years now, the Oromo Liberation Front has engaged the Ethiopian government in armed combats and in mediated negotiations. Names and words like Oromo, Gadaa, Oromia and Finfinne frequently appear in scholarly works and are spoken and heard in the official and non-official vernaculars in Ethiopia. It is, thus, quite clear that the hitherto suppressed Oromo national identity has found the necessary legitimacy of self-expression. The days when Oromos would lower their heads and be ashamed or complacent about affirming their identity are gone. Paul W. Baxter summed up this Oromo sentiment as follows:

In my conversations with Oromo, in their homelands and in exile, few have expressed loyalty to the state which would override their obligation as Oromo. I think it would be surprising if that were not so, given our knowledge of the historical experience the Oromo.³

On the home front, Oromo nationalism is manifestly asserted through the teaching and learning of the Qubee, weekly newspapers, journals, and other writings in Oromo language. In the psychic and spiritual realms, Oromo national consciousness is being realized in the revival of Oromo values with vigorous complements of dance and music. The resumption of the celebration of the Gadaa tradition fosters public appreciation for Oromo cultural, political, and social heritage. For the physical dimension of Oromo nationalism, Oromia has acquired a geographic definition which the people want to transform into a political identity with democratic self-rule. In Europe, America, Canada and elsewhere, hundreds of thousands of Oromo nationals give cultural programs that proclaim their identity and leave the marks of their presence in cities and communities of their residence in exile. They work and make economic contributions as well as participate in civic functions that prove their worth for cultural and social enrichment of their host countries.

The fact that the Oromo could have more rights of cultural self-affirmation in countries of their diaspora than in their homeland under Ethiopian rule is ironic; but the phenomenon also provides for a greater appreciation for Oromo nationalism and rebellion in the quest for self-determination. The more the avenue and the more the Oromo story is told, the better the understanding for the reasons of Oromo-Abyssinian conflict in the Horn of Africa.

OROMO AND ABYSSINIAN CULTURES

Contrasts and Differences

There are differences between Abyssinian and Oromo political and social cultures both in regards to points of origin as well as in conducts and contents of governance. The system of rule by monarchy and the hierarchical socio-political tradition in Abyssinia began in exogenous legends drawn from some Biblical epochs of the Judaic tradition such as the glories of kings Solomon and David of ancient Hebrews. The alphabets, morphologies and phonetics of Abyssinian languages (Geez, Tigrean, and modern Amharic), are of Sabian roots. The theological tenets and liturgical practices of Ethiopia's Orthodox church came from a mix of external origins through contacts with Arab merchants, missionaries from Greek Byzantine, Syrians Orthodox, and Egyptians Copts.⁴ Institutionalized as the official state religion since the 4th Century AD, the Church served as the arbiter of Abyssinian social morality and political belief systems. The very name, Abyssinia, is of an Arabic origin, "Habash," which means people of mixed race. Likewise, the name Ethiopia is of a Greek source which means people of burned face. It was only as recently as 1931

that Ethiopia replaced Abyssinia as the official state name of the country, but the people still refer to themselves as Habasha or Abasha. Thus the readers of this paper need not be told that Abyssinia and Ethiopia are synonymous. The former is a traditional name and the latter is an official designation, but both terms are of equal and interchangeable usage.

Unlike those exogenous roots of the Abyssinian identities, the Oromo cognitive referents of religion, ethno-linguistics, and the paradigms of socio-political relations such as the Gadaa system of republican politics, mostly emerged from the African lineage and nurtured in environments and experiences indigenous to the Oromo.⁵ According to the *History of Ethiopia* authored by a noted Ethiopian historian Aleka Taye, even the ancient Abyssinian mythologies held the view that the Oromos evolved from fish out of the waters of Africa.⁶ In fact, one of the most recent findings in archeological research traces human origins to an Oromo area of the present Ethiopian empire. "Lucy" is an anglicized name the archaeologists have called the remains of the skeleton of the female hominid, and the Amharic name for the same remain is "Dinqnesh," meaning the marvelous. But an Oromo name, "Duree," to imply antiquity and originality, would have been a more correct reference to culture and site.

Archeology and mythologies aside, Mohammed Hassen and others have shown that Oromos and Abyssinians have had trade routes between them, commercial links and cultural interactions with each other for a long time.⁷ The Oromo Gibe states had attained a high level of cultural sophistication and commercial affluence during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries.⁸ But the Oromo-Abyssinian encounters worked mainly in favor of the Abyssinians, who turned invaders, and against the Oromo who fell prey to military conquest, economic exploitation and socio-political subordination to the Abyssinians. Several examples illuminate the nature of the unequal interactions between the two cultural entities. Almost no Abyssinians have Oromo names, while far more numerous Oromos bear Abyssinian names; few Abyssinians could, or cared to, speak Oromo language, but a great many Oromos learned to read, speak and write Amharic. Almost no Oromo cultural heritages have had official status, while almost all Abyssinian religious and political events always have had designated holidays of mandatory observances. In more than one century of domination and imposing their language, hierarchical social culture, and authoritarian political rule, the Abyssinians have not adapted any of the egalitarian aspects and democratic values of the Oromo culture regarding content and conduct of governance.

The Gadaa Bases of Oromo Identity

As we are informed by definition, any nation or people claiming an identity of nationhood would have some kind uniqueness about their social and cultural systems. The identity referents may be based on some lived experiences or on certain myths attenuated with some reality.⁹ The basis of Oromo cultural nationalism is the claim on the once fully lived experience of the Gadaa society. Briefly speaking, the Oromo tradition of democracy, the Gadaa system, permitted the selection of leaders through popular participation.¹⁰ Merit of proven deeds and observed talents were the essential requirements of leadership in Gadaa society where leadership changed hands every eight years. The assemblies of rule making were held in a gathering and place known as "Chaafee." The deliberative process was equal, free, and open to all. Among the principal and prominent offices and officials of the Gadaa society were, the Abaa Gadaa (father of Gadaa), Abaa Seeraa (father of law) and Abaa Duulaa (father of war). In modern political states, the traditional functions of these Oromo officials would correspond with those of head of state, minister of law or justice, and minister of defense.¹¹

Individual rights and group interests were respected and the consent of the majority was promoted by the Gadaa principles. The people collectively decided the leaders for each succeeding Gadaa period. The outgoing leaders would fully comply with the rules of peaceful transfer of power which was observed in an inaugural celebration known as Butaa Gadaa. The ceremonies

marked simultaneously the promising ascension of new leadership and an honorable retirement of the old. As no official functions were seen as career position, all Gadaa officials would return to private life. Devolution of power being typical of the Gadaa custom, matters of local concerns were handled by those closest to the issues and most affected by conflicts and differences in question. The process of conflict resolution is called *Ararsaa*, mediation or conciliation, where elders and peers known to have vested interests in community well being would act as juries and adjudicate matters in dispute.

The Gadaa system of age grades provided for the rites of passage, role differentiation and functional specialization for the Oromo society. The older an individual was, the more he or she was expected to have the experience and knowledge of Gadaa values. The longer the chronological age, the higher one was esteemed to be wiser and expected to transmit the accumulated wisdom to the junior age grades. The wisdom of Gadaa age grades was particularly applied to purposes of conciliation and mediation. Thus one genre of Oromo song, *Gerarsa*, honors the role and insights which elders bring into conciliation and mediation of disputes.

**Akeekaatee Dubaachuun Ilmaa Naama Ilaala
Seera Daabee Qaajeelchuun Jaarsaa Buulee Ilaala
Ilaaf Iamee Beekaa, Laafaa Daabaasee Beekaa
Baaraa Dheraa Daabaarsee, Seena Dhallotaa Beekaa**

The *geraara* song above translates to mean that it is the role and function of an Oromo elder to be ponderous and contemplative. He sees where the rule is broken and who is wronged, communicates in judicious temperament and renders a reasoned judgement. He has lived long and many eras (of Gadaa) and knows the rules and history of generations.

In short, the Gadaa paradigm maximized the human instincts for peace and harmony and minimized the possibilities of conflict, and the core of Gadaa political values is the tradition of public service, not control, domination or self-promotion. It was one of the sad results of Oromo-Abyssinian encounters that the practice of Gadaa system was forcefully proscribed by Abyssinian authorities and involuntarily abandoned by the Oromos. In something paramount to cultural genocide, several generations of Oromos were forcibly deprived of knowing the core values of their nationhood.

The Abyssinian Authoritarian Model

A stark contrast to the precepts of Oromo Gadaa politics, the Abyssinian custom of governance has been one based on a tradition of monarchy often interspersed with autocratic personal rules and "revolutionary" dictatorship. Any successful prince would be crowned as "king" and later as "emperor" with titles often connoting a divine investiture. There would be little or no exercise of popular franchise; nor would merit be considered a central requirement for leadership. Political power and social prestige were simply acquired through victories in feudal rivalries, or as hereditary entitlement kept in family dynasties. Because conflicts and rivalries are ingrained in their tradition, Abyssinian kings relied on standing armies and career officialdom. The rulers assumed power and aspired to reign for the full term of their longevity, or until they could be forced out or deposed by violent rebellion. And the latter situation has been more often the rule than the exception. Ethiopia's historic era, 1769-1855, *Zemene Massafint*, was also known as Era of Princes when turmoil was the dominant trait of Ethiopian politics.

The period was typified by endless wars among Abyssinian feudal warlords who relished power and sought expansion by all means of aggressive warfare and "benign" tactics. Much of the history of modern Ethiopian narratives of feuds within the dynastic families and royalties such as those of Kings Tewodros, Yohannes, Menelik and Haile Sellassie, was particularly adept at the various arts of political gamesmanship to insure his own ascendancy and help Abyssinian expansion.

It was during the reign Menelik (1888-1913) that Abyssinian soldiers well armed with European supplied weapons overwhelmed the Oromo resistance and completed the task of Oromo conquest and annexation.¹² Once the military onslaught was over, benign tactics of conquest, annexation and expansion were implemented. The benign methods included such acts as the christening of Oromo chieftains and their children into the Orthodox Church and offering token titles and symbolic attires. They manipulated treaties with Oromo leaders and influenced certain families of Oromo elites through marital kinships. With some variations in specific cases, the families of Gobana Dacche in Shoa, the Moradas in Wallaga, and Aba Jiffar in Kaffa, were examples of Oromos who became accessories and conduits for the benign tactics of the Abyssinian expansionism.

In steps with the colonial type of conquest of the Oromo also came Abyssinian cultural imperialism. Under government sponsorship, Abyssinians came into Oromo country, dispossessed and dislocated the indigenous inhabitants. Taxation offices, police stations and courts were opened, and these agencies and institutions of Oromo exploitation and repression were manned by armed Abyssinian soldiers and "civil servants." The settler-ambassadors of the imperial Ethiopia saw to it that their settlements were secured and the imperial interest was served at the expense of the Oromo whom they reduced to life in servitude. The priesthood of the Orthodox church and the teachers of the Amharic language did much to accelerate the disarmament of the Oromo culture and identity.

Contrast of Contradictions: As has been introduced earlier, the Oromo Gadaa tradition was one where equality and self-respect of all is upheld in every respect of social and political life. Leadership roles were differentiated and group functions were specialized. To stress the point without being redundant, the territorial annexation of Oromo country and the subordination of the people were achieved by means of military invasion and cultural imperialism, both involving direct and indirect methods of coercion. Thus the Abyssinian expansion brought undemocratic system of rule as well as riddles of contradictions for the subject populations in general, and the Oromo in particular. The subject peoples lived in fears of war and worries of uncertainty rather than in peace and political stability. Thus one British explorer and frontier agent, Major Henry Darley, described this Abyssinian political life in fear and uncertainty as follows

No Abyssinian could possibly understand a peaceful passing of a monarch, of his own or of any other country. In his mind the death of a king must automatically bring in its train the dislocation of all authority, especially in the outlying regions, with spoliation and capture by the strong hand which for the moment at least is supreme.¹³

That climate of political anarchy and chaos followed by social and economic disruptions was more widespread and deeper than meets the eye. A satirical book, *Aleweledim*, written by an Ethiopian novelist Abbe Gubegna revealed the dilemma of Abyssinian political life. The book narrates a story of a child arguing to remain in the womb rather than come out to live in a state where anarchy and tyranny prevailed over peace and tranquility. Samuel Johnson's Eighteenth Century novel was another reflection on the same subject and phenomenon. Choosing Abyssinia as a site for *Rasselas*, his fictional classic on utopia, Johnson showed the fears that usually engulfed the political life of the Abyssinian kingdom. The intrigue and lure of power being so strong and inherent in the political culture, even the siblings of monarchs were to be raised away from the palaces and in secret sites. *Rasselas* may be a lesson about happiness being a relative and subjective matter and fear being natural to the human condition, but the reason for raising Abyssinian princes in hermitages was to keep them in check lest they should become rivals and competitors to overwhelm the reigning king or monarch.

As each succeeding ruler would have acquired more authority and exerted more power, the gulf of dissonance and separation between the rulers and the ruled grew ever wider. Thus, Ryszard Kapuscinski wrote about the absolute authority that Emperor Haile Sellassie had commanded

and the reverence reserved for him. Fittingly entitled *The Emperor*, Kapuscinski's book illustrated the overwhelming difference in power relations between the king and his subjects.¹⁴ *Harvest 3000 Years*, a film produced by an Ethiopian artist Haile Gerima, is another depiction of the gaps between the official assertions and the objective realities in Ethiopian politics. Gerima's film informs us that, in spite of several thousand years of history of existence the Abyssinian system of governance failed to create sufficient conditions for peace and tranquility to be realized, democratic transformation to take hold, and economic development to thrive. Instead, the country and the people have experienced more reoccurrence of anarchy, chaos and tyranny such as witnessed during the Dergue's military regime. Similarly, a book by Hama Tuma, *The Case of The Socialist Witchdoctors and Other Stories*, is a recent accounting of the inhumanity that the Dergue's government unleashed on the citizens.¹⁵ Nor is the contemporary political scene any more serene than those of the past. Ethiopia's transitional government since 1991 has yet to prove if it can change the old heritage of autocracy and dictatorship.¹⁶

Chauvinism, Nationalism and Rebellion

Chauvinism as used here means the same thing as elitism and ethnocentrism. It refers to directly manifested attitudes and indirectly observable behavior of one group or members of a group who believe that they are somehow culturally or materially superior to others and, therefore, demean or contempt the identities of those different from themselves or own kinships. It is not out of place here to mention that the thought for this article was prompted by a conversation between this author and one of his Ethiopian friends. During a casual talk, the Ethiopian friend blamed the Oromo liberation movement for the current political situation and ridiculed a leader of the Oromo Liberation Front. The man has never met or known the Oromo leader personally, but still derided him as "ignorant," "dirty" and "liar." The author reacted angrily telling the Ethiopian that the Oromo leader was an honest man, highly educated in school and years of experience in national liberation struggle. The author reminded the Ethiopian friend that his remarks showed his own chauvinism, elitist arrogance and ethnocentric ignorance which do not contribute solutions to the problems of nationality conflicts.

The above episode could have been dismissed as an innuendo except for its frequent occurrences and implications for Oromo nationalism and rebellion. When they conquered the Oromos, the Abyssinians called them "Gallas," pagans, uncivilized and primitive. A decree variably attributed to Emperors Menelik and Haile Sellassie was an example of the Abyssinian denigration of the Oromo people. The decree in this case was a proclamation issued against indiscriminate killing of game animals. As an afterthought and to emphasize the consequences of violations of the law, a provision was later added that the decree protected the "Gallas" as well. The sorts of thoughts and actions of deriding the Oromo as illustrated by these and other examples were proof of the cognitive frailty of the much acclaimed unity of the Ethiopian empire. Thus attitudes of chauvinism and concomitant actions of discrimination only ferment agitation for rebellion and do not comport with the official political claims for Ethiopia as a multi-national state.

Conclusion

As this discussion has sought to show, there are significant differences between the evolutions of Abyssinian and Oromo political cultures. Both cultures rose out of separate and independent beginnings and grew out of different philosophical outlooks on power relations among citizens. The Oromo socio-political relations are based on egalitarian values and principles of equality. The Abyssinian socio-political beliefs are guided by authoritarian and hierarchical traditions. We inferred that Oromo well being in economic, political and social life has been seriously hurt by Abyssinian conquest and domination, and the Abyssinian behavior of ethnic chauvinism and

cultural elitism has been unpleasant for Oromo self-esteem and self-concept. Liberation from social and psychological victimization is as significant a factor for Oromo cause of nationalism and rebellion as is the quest for freedom from political oppression and economic exploitation.

To close with a word of caution, this argument is not that the problems are insurmountable for the respective societies to accommodate or assimilate their cultural differences. The point instead is that domination and exploitation are the antithesis of accommodation and equality. Self-determination is a route to a level playing field whereupon cultures and societies assimilate voluntarily rather than by coercion and domination. It is one place to start, and at least on paper, Ethiopia's transitional government has stipulated the right of self-determination of nationalities in its recent constitution.

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Book Reviews

Making a Market: The Institutional Transformation of an African Society by Jean Ensminger, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1992. pp. 212. \$49.95 by Bichaka Fayissa.*

This condensed book is an excellent contribution to the literature on pastoral transformations in northeastern Africa. Drawing concepts from economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science, the book demonstrates the process of institutional change among the pastoralist Galole Orma of Kenya. More specifically, Ensminger examines the effects of market forces on local institutions, economic performance, and welfare of the Orma who are related to the large Oromo population in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya (p. 34).

The author refers to her methodological approach as espoused by Douglas North, the "New Institutional Economics, NIE." The advantage of this analytical framework rests on two key assumptions: 1) the transaction costs of change of any kind are not zero, and 2) economic exchanges are shaped by underlying normative dimensions that cannot be ignored on the premise that they cannot be measured. These assumptions essentially imply that institutions cannot control all dimensions of exchange or trade, and the same institution may elicit different results in different circumstances, and economic change might precipitate a greater costs than benefits. According this approach, economic growth comes from an institutional change which reduces transaction costs. The NIE has great interest in the evolution of contractual labor relations, property rights, and the rules governing the use of resources. It has also focused on a collective action which arises when people join together to work for the collective good.

In chapter 2, Ensminger focuses on the history of trade and transaction costs among the Orma in which she accounts the violence and oppression experienced by the poor majority of Oroma pastoralist throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods due to the destructive consequences of capitalist penetration of the Oroma people who came from Ethiopia as early as 1624 (p. 35), residing along the northern coast of Kenya. The indigenous Orma political institutions comprise of elected leaders (hayu) one from each of the three Orma districts: Chaffa, Wayama, and Galole retaining office for eight years. Above these leaders (chiefs) was a senior elder (haicha abadaga)—the father of the people. Below the chief elders are the councilors (luba). Each "chief" and the senior "chief" himself had four elders to help and eight soldiers to enforce the law (p. 38). The division "chiefs" handled disputes in their own areas without the senior chief's help. The four assistants were like judges, and they decided cases. Once they had come to a conclusion, they presented it to their district chief, who gave the final verdict (p. 38). The "chiefs" also had important responsibilities for defense.

During the late 1800s, the Orma social, economic, and political organizations were severely destroyed by the convergence of interests of their rival neighbors (Somali and the Massai) and the Omani Arabs who for some time had been attempting to break the Oroma-Witu alliance that challenged their control of trade on the mainland (p. 44-45). Other aspects of the Oroma social organization also suffered destruction. The Orma practiced the well known gada age-grade system (Legesse, 1973) as their Oromo counterparts. However, just as the practice of gada was hampered and officially disbanded upon the conquest of the Oromo by the Ethiopian empire state during the 19th century, so did the Oroma political culture become extinct by institutional changes which have transpired since the colonial period. As a result of this terrible experience, the Orma youth appear to have forgotten the political culture of their forefathers and in general their cultural identity. At the end of this chapter, the author also discusses a number of cases of how institutional changes during the colonial era reduced transaction costs which resulted in the overall economic welfare of the Orma people. These include: the conversion of the Orma "to Islam

between 1920 and 1940 which helped them to get access to credit and realize the gain from trade," the standardization of weights and measures in 1937 which also resulted in a significant gain from trade, the considerable improvements "in roads, transport, and tele-communications in the 1940s and 1950s which reduced the transportation costs and increased the benefits from trade." The above contending outcomes of institutional changes which the Oroma experienced, however, appear to be contradictory.

Chapter 3 is devoted to an analysis of the distribution of the gains from trade at the household level and the effect that recent increases in commercialization have had on the Orma households during the last century or so and the unequal distributions of those gains. Based on the longitudinal Orma data of the 1970s and 1980s, Ensminger argues that: 1) the relative gap in wealth has increased, and 2) it is likely that the absolute wealth derived from trade declined for the Orma poor and middle households, especially during the 1970s. In spite of these facts, the author contends that "the new economic opportunities from trade for the Orma poor and middle households have brought some positive changes in their economic well being." These include: "increasing real income and consumption, more favorable terms of trade, better education and health care, improvement in nutritional status for men, lower interest rates, and less discriminatory pricing policy against the poor" (p. 108).

The transformation of labor relations from patron-client to wage labor forms are explored in chapter 4. More specifically, the chapter presents a study of the contractual labor relations among the Oroma and the changes in property rights in common grazing that have resulted from increasing economic growth. The patron-client relationship relates to that between herd owners and their herders. "Among the Oroma, these relationships exist on a continuum from related individuals who are neighbors and who share herding duties to individuals of absolutely no relationship who herd for a household on more or less contractual terms."

Chapter 5 deals with the breakdown of the communal property rights among the Oroma as a result of economic growth which increased "the gains from dismantling the commons while making it harder to reach an agreement about how to distribute the gains. Sedentarization and the growing economic diversification have increased the costs of maintaining common grazing. The replacement of local government by Kenyan national government also resulted in the inability of the Orma from enforcing the communal property rights." The more sedentary producers have been aided by their ability to use the national government's policies in favor of sedentarization to enforce restrictive property rights against the more nomadic subsistence-oriented producers." While the increased privatization and concentration of property rights proved effective in limiting overgrazing, it also resulted in the crisis of state incorporation.

The changes experienced by Oroma with the decline in the role of elders' councils under the direct intervention of the Kenyan national state is traced in chapter 6. Ensminger argues that "in the aftermath of increasing economic growth and resultant economic diversification among the Orma, there was a breakdown in community and a failure of collective action" (p. 143). Those Oroma communities who settled and engaged in trade supported the intervention of the Kenyan government in enforcing the law against the expansion of common grazing system which was in the best interest of the pastoral Oroma. These changes were related to "the increase in authority of the government-appointed chief (a state civil servant) at the expense of the council of elders" to which the author refers to as the failure of the Oroma social order (p. 146), or a failure of collective action regarding a change in property rights over land (p. 164). In pursuit of their immediate interests, it appears that the majority of Orma appear to have embraced and legitimized the use of state power against the pastoralist without alternative provisions for their livelihood. This is tragic and proves to be in sharp contrast to the Oromo movement against cultural, political, and economic domination by the empire state of Ethiopia. While there are some opportunist Oromos who appear to legitimize the occupying central authority, the general consensus of the great majority of Oromos is after the liberation of their cultural identity, economic resources,

and political freedom to revive Oromo democracy, or gada. In the last chapter 7, Ensminger presents her conclusions in the context of ideology and economy. The author states that "economic growth invariably leads to a redistribution of wealth (p. 180-81). This statement tends to ignore the vast economic development literature which suggests that economic growth, though a necessary condition, is not sufficient for economic development. Overall, the book is an important contribution toward an understanding of the role of institutional changes on the Orma social, economic, and political organizations. Researchers interested in a comparative study of the impact of institutional changes on the economic and political status of the Oroma and the large Oromo population in Oromia will find this book to be very resourceful.

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A River of Blessings: Essays in Honor of Paul Baxter, edited by David Brokensha, 1994, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, pp. 318, Price \$29.00, by Zak Mamman Kano.*

The book, *A River of Blessings*, is a contribution by many students and friends of Dr. Paul Baxter who is enjoying his retirement after many years of teaching and research in anthropology at University of Manchester. The collection of articles makes significant contribution both in terms of ethnographic descriptions and theoretical analyses in the anthropological traditions of Meyer Fortes, and E. Evans-Pritchard of the British school of social anthropology which implicitly appears to have had an effect on Baxter's anthropological ways of thinking. The book heavily concentrates on: 1) the Oromo political organization (gada), kinship system, cultural resistance to state intervention, Boran Oromo environmental law and method of conservation, and religion; 2) west African essays including sanctions against abuse of authority in precolonial Africa, poetry and power, the domestic food economy of southern Ghana; and 3) special topics related mainly the anthropology pastoral societies.

Briefly, the articles in Part one provide us with a message that we must first understand the symbolic order of the Oromo rituals and religion in order to understand them better. Each contributor is influenced by Baxter's (1965; 1978; Baxter and Almagor 1978) works on the importance of Oromo political institution (gada) and how it connects to other cultural organizations of religion, economics, politics, law and so on. The general assumption is that the nature of Oromo culture and society is systematically arranged to reflect the institution of the gada.

Part I of this book provides its readers an extensive bibliographic literature for anyone with the desire to make contribution to the Oromo studies. Chapter one has indispensable discussions about the various aspects of Oromo culture that relates to the chapters that follow. Lambert Bartels (p. 1-13) emphasizes the significance of religious rituals through the Oromos performance of pilgrimages to the "holy places" which tie the Oromos culturally and to the environmental forces that have meaning to their history, identity and background. This author also presents the significance of the belief in the "symbols" and how it is necessary to perform rituals to validate the beliefs. Pilgrimage to the "Holy Tree" is one of the rituals that the Boran Oromo perform annually. The most important aspect of Boran society is the continual devotion to their culture and Bartels sees in their behavior a sense of devotion to "prayers and blessing" (p. 11). One criticism is the context of the term "tribe" rather than ethnic group. It is important to point out that there is a long history of cultural and ideological symmetry that binds the Oromos together whether they belong to Boran, Arsi, Matcha, and Shoa or other pastoral groups who reside in southern Oromia, northern Kenya, and east Africa, in general. The point to be made here is that we should not allow the separation dictated by the forces of environmental and ecological changes that took place in Africa to justify the continued usage of a pejorative term like "tribe."

In chapter 2, Marco Bassi looks at the cooperative assemblies, communities among the Oromos, and the roles they play in the political, economic, and other decision making processes. The

assemblies according to Bassi, constitute a "traditional heritage" which makes decisions for the group. This disagrees with the position taken by Baxter (1978, p. 158) who argues that age-sets have no "direct control of economic resources, nor political power and rule, or have power of a direct political kind" (Baxter, 1958 p. 152). Bassi strongly contends that gada, in fact, does have a political significance among the Boran, but its relative effect on the Oromo notion of participatory democracy imbedded in the institution of gada must be reckoned with (1994, p. 16). Bassi also examines the institutions of gada and of qaalluu that have significance in the Boran Oromo culture by providing a new "evaluation of the political significance of kinship." Nevertheless, he sees kinship organization and the organization of the Gada to have two distinct operational spheres instead of looking at one forming the structure (status such as the 'Warra Qaalluu; Warra Daayyoo, and gosa Karrayyuu, Saabbo), and others that provide the organizational sphere where roles and values are put to test. It is at this level (the level of individual action and organization), that we come to the understanding of the impact of gada as a normative system which constrains the individual behavior of an Oromo man/woman.

It is important to conceptually integrate the above propositions by Bassi to the work of Hector Blackhurst as presented in Chapter 3 (p. 32-41). Reading this article brought so many ethnographic imaginations to mind. He examined the role of household in the "Shoan Oromo" culture by focusing on those who reside outside their local environment. Blackhurst, showed how the "Shoan Oromo" maintain their economic self-sufficiency by using the formative lineage structure by overemphasizing the household structure. The household as the basic unit of production served as a market place where sets of rules are devised to deal not only with the blood related kinship network, but also how outsiders are incorporated into a cohesive network of extended lineage and household group. Central to the formation of internal and external networks of relationships is the household structure. An interesting implication which can be drawn from this article is how the young and "defenseless" children and alien peoples are incorporated into the household structure and economy. Another point which may be noted is that the viability of a household always depends on the intensity of efforts by the members to achieve economic success. This is a common goal among the "Shoan Oromo." Blackhurst further discusses the corresponding role played by kinship, fictive kinship, hierarchy, and community among the Shoan Oromo. The main issue in this chapter is how the group manipulates rules to work to their advantage. The chapter also attempts to point out the significance of the household as an economically viable system and how the Oromos underplay ethnic differences by "household adoption," and/or incorporation of alien ethnic groups by giving them a legitimate status as Oromo within the context of a household.

In chapter 4, Mohammed Hassen presents an interesting historical article of "the Pre-sixteenth-Century Oromo presence within the Medieval Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia." Hassen adopts Baxter's "methodological and ethnophilosophy" of the age-sets system. Furthermore, Hassen assumes that age-sets carry the "burden of social change," but the system has to react to both the external and internal stimuli as "contradictions" that function as the source for change. One sees a similarity between Mohammed Hassen's paper on the Oromo and that of many European and African scholars who are now engaged in new interpretations and reinterpretations of African history. Comparatively, the history of the Boran Oromo may be compared to that of the "Fulbe" and "Shuwa Arabs." The latter's history was linked to Western Sudan, and the "Shuwa" were linked to Nubia, and Eastern Sudan. Both of these groups are pastoralists and both live and practice transhumance in the countries of Mali, Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Northern Cameroons. By extension, some of the non-Bantu pastoralists of East and Central Africa may also be included in this historical development. The most important point is that the name of the population keeps on changing from one environment to another since migration played a major role in the dispersal of people. The point to be made here relates to the issue of economic and political control that always led to clashes between settlers of a given community and those who are considered intruders. Pastoral communities are always seen by the settlers as the intruders. Religious

ideologies are also used to build empires and introduce colonial rule. The Islamic conquests and incorporation of the Oromos appear to be exactly the similar to conquest of Fulbe of Niger and Northern Nigeria and the establishment of the Caliphate rule. There may be no difference between that and the European colonialism; both are exploitative and the main purpose is not religious, but economic and the control of the market situation. The Oromo were victims of three struggles as pointed out by Hassen including the conversion to Islam, Christianity, and internal colonialism by the Amhara/Tigrai.

The article by Jan Hultin, chapter 5 (p. 67-83), is an interesting ethnographic account from his informants. He attempts to show the role that land plays as a means and instrument of production for the Matcha Oromo and its function in providing them with their cultural identity. Land has been a subject of military and political control in Africa prior to the European incursion. A System of land tenure in the Oromo traditional culture does not match the land tenure policies of the military government in Addis Ababa between 1974- 1991 and recent holding system that the TPLF/EPRDF is trying to introduce. Hultin points out the major areas of conflict that may arise between the Oromos and the non-Oromo due to land utilization or attempt to change the traditional values about land and how it is utilized by the Oromo people.

In chapter 6 of this book, the article "Aloof Alollaa: The Inside and the Outside, Boran Oromo Environmental Law and Methods of Conservation" (p. 85-98) by Aneesa Kassam and Gemetchu Megeressa attempts to portray the significance of the culture of pastoralism with the present day technological and modern world. It also presents the biases that exist between traditionalism and cosmopolitanism in African societies today. Those who practice pastoralism are considered as parochial and have no knowledge of environmental conservation as evidenced by Aneesa Kassam and Gemetchu Megeressa's article which touches on the modern issue of generating hostile relationships between the sedentarized communities and the pastoral groups. The issue of environmental control is such a hot one that has no boundary. As the article indicates the settlers (whether Oromo agriculturalists or the European, Tanzanian or Kenyan farmers) accuse the pastoralists by calling them degraders of the environment. The claim is that overpopulation of cattle and overgrazing causes soil erosion and so forth. This is a good article which provides information regarding the modern market, production, and role of modern institutions in affecting the traditional way of life. One area of concern has to do with the use of term modernization and change. Those who are sedentarized make use of modern institutions as their instrument of power to subjugate the traditional structures.

The article by Michael O'Leary in chapter 7, (p. 99-112) relates to the "Patterns of Range Use, Nomadism, and Sedentarization: The Case of the Rendille and Gabra of Northern Kenya." This is another stimulating article that deals with some of Samir Amin's work on how capitalism begun in African traditional societies and the formation of centers of economic powers which in the early 15th and 16th centuries joined the World Capitalists system. The article reveals how common it is for the central political and economic power (either external power or internal power like the Amhara/Tigrai) could expropriate land and marginalize the citizens. This situation is still going on in the African continent and the need for the marginalized population to rise and reclaim their legitimate economic resources and human rights in a democratic fashion is an important political and economic achievement.

M. A. Mohamed Salih (p. 113-128), is another excellent analysis of how the Moro of Sudan used their age-set organizational system of rituals to cope and survive in a world that emphasizes change as something that is necessarily healthy.

Gunther Schlee (p. 129-142) looks at Ethnicity Emblems, Diacritical Features, Identity Markers: Some East African Examples "In his analysis of the Oromo symbolic world, he attempts to provide a methodological deviation from Levine's (1974) work. He deals with the issues termed as "identity markers," (markers that people under study used to demarcate themselves from others) and "features" (used by the outside observers). His argument relates to the issues between

emic and etic interpretation of cultural behavior

Part II of the book begins with a fascinating essay by Kwame Arhin (p. 147-158). He sees sanctions against abuse of authority in pre-colonial African cultures to be based in the patterns of cultural and normative standards imbedded in the traditional political system. The two political variables he operationalizes are the societal centralized or decentralized authority systems. For example, the Tiv or a segmentary society implore a diffused sanction "grounded in morality." On the other hand, the central authorities and dictatorships have a tendency to generate a coup d'etat. This is an interesting article and the assumptions and propositions generated by Arhin need to be developed further.

The article by David Brokensha (p. 159-169) is quite interesting. In his paper, Professor Brokensha reaches the conclusion that the continuity rather than change was the feature of the Larteh culture. He postulates that "the Larterians" make use of their self-conscious identity to set themselves apart from other citizens of Ghana as Baxter argues in the case of the Oromos. This is where a traditional political institution like the "Gada" among the Oromos can keep the Larterians from losing their culture.

R. M. Dilley, (p. 171-190) attempts to use the knowledge of the anthropology of music and arts to examine the social structure of the poets in Senegal, and West Africa, in general. He concludes that the poems expressed by the Dillere (weaver's songs) are part of his/her "social and individual identity" which gives him/her some "mystical powers."

Karen Legge (p. 191-206) is concerned with the role of change that "cash cropping" of food leads to the decline of production of other crops in Ghana. This phenomenon has a complementary occurrence throughout the continent of Africa, especially those countries that develop their economic productions and market systems to assume a peripheral position in the world economy. The position that modern African household finds itself today is not that of creating an economy of independence, but that of dependency towards the metropolises. Due to fluctuations in the world market for cash crops, we now see a distinct stratification in farming of cash crops and the abandonment of food production for self-sufficiency. Legge also makes additional remarks regarding the rise of "big farmers" with ties to the center of power.

Kevin Waldi's article in Chapter 14 looks at the consequences of the commercialization of cattle production among the Fula in Sierra Leone (p. 207-224). The main issue the author attempts to portray centres on the Fula abandoning their traditional pastoralism and nomadic lifestyle to that of sedentarized meat producers for the city folks. He also argues that a government policy of generating an integral market economy to satisfy the economic needs of the metropolis is in direct opposition to the traditional culture.

In chapter 15 of part III, the article by Tim Allen (p. 225-246) deals with the traditional beliefs in health and illness. The author points to the problems of westernized medicine in Africa and some of the problems it encounters by not taking into account or, incorporating the traditional healing system. This is a consciousness raising article in that it centers on the problem modernity faces in relation to traditional values of non-western methods of healing. Tim Allen proposes that the understanding of what constitute ill health and good health is a matter of cultural interpretation of reality as the culture sees it.

Uri Almagor (p. 247-272) looks at the "anthropology of death in a pastoral society" in chapter 16. The focus of this article is the belief by the Dassanatch, a pastoral society in southern Ethiopia, in transformation of self through the process of incorporating unto themselves the power of the dead person. Here again, it is not the spirit that is sought, but the skeletal remains of the dead become the focus of incorporation by individual who is looking for success.

In chapter 17, the article by David Brown "On Pastoralism and Poverty, looks at the effect of sedantirization on the traditional culture of the pastoral society in Africa. Some of the variables that denotes the behavior of the pastoral societies is now adapting to external forces that causes scarcity among them. Egalitarianism which is an important aspect of the pastoral social

organization now gives way to centralization and class hierarchy. The author, however, does not point out the relevant impact of environmental constraints (e.g., draught), and ecological degradations (soil erosion and dessertification) on the social system of the pastoral societies.

Shlomo Deshen and Hilda Deshen's article in Chapter 18 deals with issue of "The Cultural Use of the Senses: The Case of Blind People." It is an interesting article which attempts to regard blindness as a culturally determined phenomenon than just a lack of sight. Shlomo and Deshen's contribution to this text is more into the deconstruction of the traditional biases about those who are blind because of societal cultural beliefs that only visual senses are important.

In chapter 19, Gisli Palsson (p. 287-306) attempts to show that if we believe that something exists, it will. In her ethnographic examples, she emphasizes that active social interactions between people are what make the world real. "Rules and things" have the tendency to assume different meanings according to the perception and interpretation of those in interaction. Palsson finally shows how the concept of witchcraft changes with time.

The article by Moshe Shokeid in chapter 20 (p. 307-314) concludes by how as a foreign student at the University of Manchester he was socialized by Paul Baxter. This article shows how committed Paul Baxter is to humanity and to the studies of cultures. Overall, the book makes an excellent contribution to the anthropology and ethnography of the Oromo of Eastern Africa and other societies in Africa.

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1995 OROMO STUDIES CONFERENCE

Theme: The Quest for Self Determination and Democracy in the Horn of Africa: The Case of Oromia

Conference Place: One Judiciary Square, 441 4th St., NW, Washington, DC

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