

THE JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

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VOLUME 7, NUMBERS 1 &2, JULY 2000

Editorial Overview	i-iv
The Politicization of My Oromo-English Dictionary: The Writer's Reflections <i>Tilahun Gamta</i>	1-17
Discourses on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights in the Oromo Quest for National Liberation <i>Kuwee Kumsa</i>	19-56
Intermediate Technology for Underdeveloped Nations <i>Asfaw Beyene</i>	57-85
"Where the Bulls Fight, it is the Grass that Suffers:" Impact of Border Administration on Drought Coping Strategies of the Obbu Booran During the 20 th century <i>Gufu Oba</i>	87-108
A Short History of Oromo Colonial Experience: Part Two, Colonial Consolidation and Resistance 1935-2000 <i>Mohammed Hassen</i>	109-198
Call for Papers	199-202
Book Reviews	203-218

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

TILAHUN GAMTA was an Associate Professor of Education and Language at Addis Ababa University, before he retired in June 1996. He has published, in addition to many articles, two major works, namely *The Oromo English Dictionary* (Addis Ababa University Printing Press, 1989), and *Seera Afaan Oromo* (Berhanina Selam Printing Press, 1995).

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MOHAMMED HASSEN is an Associate Professor of History at Georgia State University, Atlanta. He is the author of *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990), and has also published more than a dozen articles, numerous book chapters and book reviews. He was the president of the Oromo Studies Association, and the editor of *The Journal of Oromo Studies*

EDITORIAL OVERVIEW

This volume of *The Journal of Oromo Studies* deals with the issue of lack of intellectual freedom and the challenge Oromo scholars face when they try to write something relevant for Oromo society in the Ethiopian Empire, the dialectical relationship between human rights and peoples' rights, the relevance of appropriate technology for the development of Oromia, the impact of the colonization and partition of Boorana Oromos by colonial forces, and the possibility of decolonizing Oromia and democratizing Ethiopia.

Linguist Tilahun Gamta exposes the political slavery under which the Oromo people live in the Ethiopian empire by using his own experience of writing and publishing *The Oromo-English Dictionary*. He explains how the Ethiopian military regime known as *Derg* and its bureaucrats systematically tried to kill *Afaan* Oromo by forcing Oromos to abandon their own language and learn the Amhara language. Despite the fact that writing and publishing this book was risky, Professor Gamta wrote this book for three major reasons: First, he wanted to save the Oromo language from destruction by recording some Oromo words. The second reason was to show Oromo students that *Afaan* Oromo, in its written forms, can enrich their English vocabulary. The third reason was to demonstrate how the Latin alphabet was suitable to write in the Oromo language.

Professor Gamta demonstrates why the Latin alphabet is more suitable to write in *Afaan* Oromo than the Amhara syllabary and the International phonetic alphabets. Furthermore, he provides the detailed descriptions of what happened to him by Ethiopian bureaucrats when he was trying to publish this dictionary. Professor Gamta's work reveals that a conscious and committed Oromo scholar can contribute to the development of Oromo scholarship even in a very difficult and dangerous situation.

Kuwee Kumsa critically examines the dynamic relationship between human rights and peoples' rights as pertaining to the Oromo national struggle. By exposing the fallacy of those discourses that artificially isolate human rights from peoples' rights, she explains how the West has abused and misused the discourse of democracy, and endorsed and supported the emergence and consolidation of an ethnocratic minority state in Ethiopia.

Further, by using a single standard for humanity on the issue of human rights, Kuwee Kumsa notes that many Oromo nationalists do not

recognize the human rights violations that occur in Oromo society while they are fighting against Ethiopian colonialism and global imperialism. She suggests that while Oromos struggle for their human rights and people's rights they should deal with the contradictions in Oromo society by recognizing diversity and developing unity based on diversity. She challenges the approach that dichotomizes human rights and peoples' rights and demonstrates the need for integrating both types of rights into the Oromo struggle for liberation.

Kuwee Kumsa argues that to maintain its revolutionary origin, the Oromo Liberation Front must recognize Oromo diversity to mobilize all sectors of Oromo society by combining Oromo human rights and people's rights and fight against all forms of oppression, such as national, class, and gender oppression. *This alternative approach, she comments, will make the Oromo liberation struggle participatory and powerful.* Kuwee Kumsa notes that this is the only way to facilitate a fundamental social transformation in Oromo society.

Through documenting the historical evolution and development of technology in the West, Engineer Asfaw Beyene assesses how intermediate technology can help in promoting the development of peripheral countries in general and Oromia in particular. He argues that nations like Oromia while struggling to liberate themselves politically also need to think about the adoption of appropriate technology that can promote sustainable development. He recommends that Oromos who are interested in development issues should not wait until the Oromo political problem is solved, and they should start to search for ways of technologically and economically developing Oromia. He implicitly suggests that political freedom without sound economic and technological policies cannot solve the problem of dependency and underdevelopment for nations like Oromia.

Gufu Oba explores how the colonization and partition of Boorana Oromos by the British and Ethiopian colonial states violated the rights of the transfrontier communities by denying them access to valued resources, such as grazing land and water, and by destroying their pre-colonial drought coping mechanisms. Since their colonization and partition, he argues, Boorana Oromos in Kenya and Ethiopia have lost their political freedom and economic resources and confronted by perpetual drought, famine, conflict, and war. Illustrating all these problems, Oba also shows how the

diminishing of indigenous mechanisms of resolving contradictions and conflicts and negotiating access rights to resources have affected various Oromo communities in Kenya and Ethiopia. Oba demonstrates how colonial policies have increased livestock mortality, famine, and hunger, and these tragic problems will continue until these policies are changed.

Continuing his discussion of the decolonization of Oromia and democratization of the Ethiopian empire, Historian Mohammed Hassen, describes the Oromo colonial experience and resistance to Ethiopian settler colonialism from 1935 to the present. He documents how successive Ethiopian regimes have been attacking Oromo peoplehood, explaining how the Tigrayan-led regime practices state terrorism to destroy Oromo nationalism and independent Oromo organizations, particularly the Oromo Liberation Front. Although he demonstrates that the Ethiopian elites are mainly concerned with maintaining their dominance at any cost rather than promoting democracy, Mohammed Hassen still believes that the transformation of the Ethiopian empire into a truly federal democratic Ethiopia can solve the Oromo political problem.

However, if all Ethiopian elites oppose the democratization of Ethiopia that includes the decolonization of Oromia, as he explains, it is not clear how a truly federal democratic Ethiopia can emerge. Although Mohammed Hassen recognizes that most Oromo nationalists have been struggling to create an independent republic of Oromia and to uproot Ethiopian settler colonialism, he prefers the aspects of Oromo nationalism that attempt to form a truly federal democratic Ethiopia. Those Oromo nationalists who take similar positions must convince the mainstream Oromo nationalists why the federation approach is better than the independence approach, and how it can be achieved.

Finally, on behalf of the Oromo Studies Association and myself I would like to recognize the outstanding contributions that Bonnie Holcomb and Wanda Rushing have made for the last four years. Our team work has increased the quality and visibility of *The Journal of Oromo Studies*. As an anonymous reviewer, Bonnie Holcomb has made an excellent job of providing detailed comments and editing manuscripts. Wanda Rushing, as an associated editor, has made a meticulous editorial job. The care, commitment, competence, and skill with which these two scholars helped this journal show their professional excellence and commitment for justice and equality. I am very lucky to work with these two scholars and others who

combine professional excellence and commitment to the development of liberation knowledge. Whenever I needed immediate assistance it was Shirley Hollis who generously provided her time and skill to finalize the activities that were needed to publish this journal. Hence, she deserves many thanks for her extraordinary contribution. I also appreciate Sam Zahran for contributing his skill and knowledge. Sherry Cable also deserves appreciation for her moral and other necessary supports. Further, Shirley Walker and Pam Morgan provided valuable secretarial assistance, and, therefore, deserve many thanks. I also would like to thank other external anonymous reviewers, such as Lemmu Baissa, Mohammed Hassen, Bill Robinson, Sisai Ibssa, Guluma Gameda, Asfaw Beyene, Gobena Huluka, Bichaka Fayissa, Robert Jones, and Richard Hayward. I also thank those who contributed articles and took the pain of going through the process of revising and finalizing their intellectual work. I also thank the Dean of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Sociology, and the African and African American Studies Program for providing financial assistance for publishing the journal for the last four years. Furthermore, the Department of Sociology at the University of Tennessee deserves special appreciation for providing clerical and financial support this year, too. Kelli Blair deserves many thanks for preparing the manuscript for printing this year. *The Journal of Oromo Studies* is produced with the efforts of all these individuals and institutions. I am very glad to work with all of them.

Asafa Jalata,
Editor, July 2000

THE POLITICIZATION OF MY OROMO-ENGLISH DICTIONARY: THE WRITER'S REFLECTIONS

Tilahun Gamta/Xilaahun Gamtaa

Background

Many Oromos wonder how I was able to write and publish *The Oromo-English Dictionary* (OED) in Ethiopia under Mengistu's regime, a regime that had been openly hostile to the Oromo nation. Here, I offer my reflections on the writing of the work and some of the difficulties encountered in publishing it.

Before I began writing the OED on May 1, 1980, I had leaked out news that I was in the process of writing an Amharic-Oromo-English trilingual dictionary. Some of my Abyssinian colleagues at Addis Ababa University (AAU) were more excited about the idea than I was. The appearance of "Amharic," though ostensible, at the beginning of the trilingual dictionary probably explains why they showered good wishes upon me. Very soon, my name and the title of the elusive project appeared in one of Addis Ababa University's research news bulletins. To complete this 'ingenious' project without any difficulty, I was advised to submit a research proposal so that I could be entitled to a grant and a reduced teaching load. I thanked my enthusiastic Abyssinian friends and tacitly ignored the suggestion because I did not want to commit myself, in writing, to undertake the so-called ingenious project.

I believe that the regime's ubiquitous security members took my story on trust because, after the news release, I could move about freely and mingle with Oromos with whom I had parted company at my village (Bure) when I was about thirteen years old. Thus, I was able to refresh my memory of how our people in the rural areas still speak *Afaan Oromo*, the Oromo language, in spite of one hundred years of the flagrant policy of suppression by the Abyssinian colonizers of Oromiyaa.

I visited Arsi, Baale, Gamu Goofaa, Goojjam, Harar, Kafaa, Shaggar, Sidaamo, Wallaggaa, and Wallo. I did not have to visit Ilu Abbaa Booraa, my birthplace. Due to my own reasons, I could not go to Tigray to interview Raayyaa, Azabo, and Waajiraat Oromos, either. However, I stayed

in Waldiyaa, Wallo, overnight, where I had an opportunity to chat with an elderly Raayyaa Oromo. Despite a minor difference in our pronunciation, *kaleesha/kaleessa* (yesterday), for instance, we could understand each other very easily. After he told me, with a clear expression of concern on his handsome face, that the younger generation must be taught *Afaan* Oromo and be urged to use it, he said *nagaatti* (good bye) and left. In addition, when I was attending a conference in Nairobi in 1972, I had the opportunity to gauge the situation in Kenya where about half a million Oromos live. After these visits, I concluded that the pronunciation used by Oromos in both Oromiyaa and Kenya is almost identical at the lexical level. The then-rampant and alarming rumor that there were wide regional variations in *Afaan* Oromo, I became convinced, was baseless.

As already stated, I began writing the OED on May 1, 1980, three years after I had witnessed the Red Terror which wreaked havoc on those suspected of having any affiliation with a party whose views were out of favor. I saw corpses lying about in the streets of Finfinne (the city renamed "Addis Ababa" after the colonization of Oromo country). I saw corpses being shoveled out of dump trucks and strewn on the sidewalks for all to see and presumably with the message that they should behave themselves! I saw boys, girls, young/old men and women thrown out of speeding military jeeps and shot dead.

There were two primary reasons for attempting to write this one-man, bilingual dictionary. First, confident that almost everybody in the Empire had cowered in the aftermath of the brutal Red Terror, Mengistu's dictatorial regime sped up its literacy campaign in the name of socialism and communism. The tacit policy of the campaign was not only to discourage the spread of English but also to thrust the Amharic language down the throats of every nation/nationality in the Ethiopian Empire. The unsuspecting victims of this tacit policy were beguiled into believing that fifteen languages (of the total 80 or so languages in the Empire) were selected and were being used to promote literacy. In my view as a linguist, this position amounted to propaganda. To give credence to its propaganda, the regime allowed the distribution of literature written in the Amharic script in areas where the fifteen languages (representing over 90% of the population) are spoken. The Amharic syllabary, which cannot be adapted to writing the Kushitic

languages, was a fiasco. Kushitic people could not crack what appeared as a strange-looking code in which their respective languages were written. In other words, they simply could not understand the reading matter the regime sent to their respective regions. Neither could they cope with learning about 280 Amharic characters as compared to about 35 Latin symbols required to write, if adapted carefully, most Kushitic languages.

The opposition voiced by Kushitic people against the use of the Amharic script was made to appear by the regime's cadre as a resistance against learning their own respective ethnic languages! The regime's cadre started to report that all the nationalities, including about 30 million Oromos, prefer to learn the Amharic language instead of their own respective languages for practical reasons since Amharic is the official language of the Empire. The implication of this argument was in effect to urge the regime to abandon altogether the policy which I considered specious all along of allowing the use of nationality languages and then declaring openly an "Amharic only" policy. To my mind, this was clearly an attempt to assimilate the non-Amhara groups into Amhara culture.

It is to be remembered also that prior to the eruption of the Ethiopian "revolution" in February 1974, a grade of C in Amharic had been one of the minimum requirements for candidates who wished to join institutions of higher education. Because of this requirement alone, many non-Amhara students had been barred from joining AAU. Obviously, the native Amharic-speaking students had an advantage over the non-Amhara students for whom Amharic was a second language. Even after joining the freshman program of AAU, the non-Amhara students had to overcome another hurdle: they had to pass the required Amharic 101 and 102 courses to remain in the university. More difficult still, some of those who succeeded were forced to join the Education Faculty, major in Amharic (then offered by the Amharic Department), and teach it after graduation. In the heyday of the revolution, the non-Amhara students put up a strong resistance and had this arbitrary requirement rescinded. They also managed to have the Amharic Department closed altogether.

However, after the non-Amhara students' anger had subsided, the regime reinstated the same Amharic Department in a very subtle way. One approach the regime came up with was changing the name "Amharic

Department" to "Ethiopian Languages and Literature Department". The change, the department declared, was necessary to accommodate the nationality languages. In fact, what it did was to offer, in addition to Amharic, an archaic language called Ge'ez -- a language used only in the liturgy of the Coptic Church. Once again, using the misnomer "Ethiopian languages and Literature" as a façade, the department continued to resist the very idea of introducing and teaching any of the nationality languages in the university.

To realize the ambitious plan to eliminate or to cast the other languages into oblivion, the regime made a substantial effort. To further promote Amharic, it decided to discontinue even the use of English as a medium of instruction in the high schools, colleges, and in AAU. The regime's "revolutionary" cadres started their campaign against English, denouncing it as a "capitalist" language. In Addis Ababa University, a generously funded committee was established to translate science and technology terminology into Amharic. A cadre who overheard me say, "things are going a bit far", said to me, perchance in jest, "you Englishman, you are not a good Ethiopian!"

All these stratagems were clearly designed to promote Amharic at the expense of the languages of the other nations/nationalities. I could easily see through the regime's tactics. I was bitter. I thought *Afaan* Oromo would not be able to endure and that Wallo's fate was looming up for all Oromiyaa. So, though I had no money for the project I did have interest and determination, and thus I made up my mind to try to save my language from sinking into oblivion by recording at least a part of its vocabulary on paper.

The second reason for my writing the bilingual dictionary was to enrich the English vocabulary of Oromo students through a bilingual dictionary and at the same time enable them see their language in its written form. As stated in the OED itself, I believe that in an environment where contact with the native speakers of English and exposure to their culture is almost nil, the OED is extremely useful. Although some foreign language teachers may frown upon the idea of using bilingual dictionaries to teach a foreign language, it does no harm to tell an Oromo speaker that, for instance, qoru, qooru, qorru, respectively mean to investigate, to dry, and to feel cold (See OED, pages 396 to 397).

Regarding the question of what symbols to use to write *Afaan Oromo*, I had two options. One option was inventing 33 symbols that could represent the 33 Oromo phonemes. After dallying with this idea for a while, I abandoned it because it proved to be impractical. The second option was to adapt any suitable script. Here again, after trying the Amharic syllabary, the Latin, and the International Phonetic alphabets, I concluded that the Latin alphabet is the best of the three for writing *Afaan Oromo*.

Also, a similar conclusion had been arrived at in the early 1970's. A group of Oromo scholars in Europe anonymously wrote in 1973 an excellent grammar book titled, *Hirmaatadubbii Afaan Oromo: Beekumsi durii jireenya har'aatiif akka tolu*. As can be seen from this 139-page book, the authors almost perfected the adaptation process for us. They show short/long vowel sounds by single/double vowel letters, respectively, as in busaa/buusaa (malaria/fringe), and to indicate gemination, which is phonemic in *Afaan Oromo*, they use double consonants as in badaa/baddaa (many/highland). So do we today. Perhaps, the only difference is that whereas they use diacritical marks to represent five sounds, we now employ the digraphs ch, dh, ny, ph, sh for the same sounds. Because of this added refinement, it is now possible to use any typewriter or computer that has keys for all the letters of the Latin alphabet and the Arabic numerals. The *qubee*, the Oromo alphabet in its present form, has now firmly established itself in Oromo culture in spite of the Abyssinian opposition.

The Oromo-English Dictionary (OED): the Writing Process

The work was done in three stages: planning/decision-making, writing, and publication.

Planning/Decision-making Phase

I decided to proceed as follows: to make all the necessary decisions carefully, write them down, and place a reminder, i.e. paper or card on which the decisions are written in a convenient place for easy reference. I was aware that to ensure consistency, lexicographers must stick to their decisions throughout. Changing his/her mind after typing on a manual typewriter, say,

400 pages, can be costly and time-consuming drudge. Here is an example from my own experience: I discovered that I had made two minor mistakes. One was using three consonant clusters as in /Kur`CCi:/ instead of just two as in /Kur`Ci:/. The second mistake was that I had assumed that there was a shade of difference in length between /a:/ and /a/. However, after typing, using the conventional typewriter since I had no computer then, 307 pages I realized that, in the phonemic transcription part, either /a:/ or /a/, not both, could have been appropriate to represent the long vowel sound. In other words, I should have transcribed, for instance, the present / ka:'su: / and / kaw'u: /, either as / ka'su: / and / ka'wu: / or as / ka:'su: / and / ka:'wu: /consistently. Obviously, it is not difficult to imagine the formidable task of going over 307 pages had I attempted to make the changes!

The first decision I had made before I began writing the OED was to compile a bilingual dictionary that educated Oromos could use. All Oromos educated in Ethiopian schools know at least two other languages besides their own. They can read and write the other two or more languages except, for the most part, their own first language.

The Oromos are not illiterates in their own first language by choice. For over one hundred years, the Abyssinians spared no expense to prevent Afaan Oromo from becoming a written language and from being used in schools, in courts, and anywhere near the bureaucracies that have always existed as exclusive clubs to serve the interests of members! They banned both the production and the introduction of any Oromo literature in/into the Empire. They even burned the Bible for being written in *Afaan Oromo*. Ironically, the fact that the translator of the Bible, Abbaa Gammachiis, used the Amharic syllabary, which Abyssinians consider sacred, did not save him from cruel harassment and witch-hunts! They hunted down Shaykh Bakri Saplo, who died mysteriously in exile, because he tried to invent an alphabet for writing *Afaan Oromo*. It is my view that if such harsh measures had not been applied, no Oromo would have chosen to remain illiterate in his/her own mother tongue.

My second major decision before starting writing the OED had to do with the number of entries and the dialect to be included. I decided to include all the words and morphemes in the language. Dictionary writing can be a very difficult undertaking for one person. Dealing with, say, ten

thousand entries is like working on ten thousand projects, not just one project. I tackled it without the benefit of the computer and financial assistance. So, if once in a while, one cannot find in OED what one considers a household word, it is understandable and, in due course, rectifiable.

The words came from my own store of vocabulary, from the scanty literature available at the time, from radio broadcasts, and from conversations. After coming across an unfamiliar word, I made it a point to meet or telephone at least five persons to clarify its meaning before entering it in the dictionary. Obviously, I did not always expect an accurate definition; it was enough if they uttered the word and its collocation. For instance, I remember asking a man if he knew the meaning of (h)imimsu (to snort). Somewhat surprised at my ignorance, he answered my question with a question: "Maal, (h)imimsu jechuun maal akka ta'e himbeektanuu? Imimsu jechuun imimsu dhuma kaa! Farda malee ammo maaltu himimsa?" (How come you don't know what himimsu means? Himimsu means himimsu, it's that simple! Besides, what else snorts except a horse?).

What about foreign words that have firmly established themselves in the language after being adopted, adapted, or translated? Certainly, words like *kootii* (adoption of the English word 'coat'), *rophilaanii* (adaptation of 'airplane'), *abbaa buddeena* (probably translation of 'ye injeraa abbaat' which in Amharic literally means 'father of bread', step-father) cannot be ignored by a lexicographer whose responsibility is to record words as objectively as possible.

In fact, I would like to propose that we Oromos encourage judicious adoption and adaptation of technical and scientific terms. New commodities and concepts are introduced along with the jargon/terms by which they are identified in the country of their origin. The word 'sputnik', the name for the machine the then Soviet Union made to orbit the earth in 1957, is adopted and used in the English language today. Regarding dialect, I made it a point not to mention. In an environment where antagonists were looking for every opportunity to divide the Oromo people, I did not want to give them a weapon, a wedge to be put between us. There is no need for using labels such as "Tuulamaa" or "Maccaa" dialect. I adopted the position that an Oromo word used anywhere is a property of all Oromos everywhere. It is a

treasury that we Oromos all fall back on when we talk or write on topics such as administration, arts and sciences, business, diplomacy, judiciary, politics, science and technology, etc.

Pertaining to standardization, some Oromos have started talking about the need for resolving this important issue as soon as possible. I believe that the issue can wait until at least two prime requirements are met. First, we have to collect all the linguistic data from all over Oromiyaa and understand what the differences actually are. Some minor differences that could exist, for example, in terms of what words mean and how they are pronounced in different parts of the nation, must be identified and analyzed scientifically. Doing the job well requires time, patience, dedication, money, and material resources.

The second important prerequisite for standardization is autonomy/self-determination. When the Oromos themselves begin to administer the affairs of Oromiyaa, they will develop *Afaan* Oromo as they see it fit, not on the basis of the directives that are sent down to them from "ye belaay akaal" (the higher echelon), the invisible decision maker from the corridors of power. As a language at work *Afaan* Oromo will of necessity standardize itself. Standardization is already in motion. For instance, when I was writing the OED, not only were there different names of the months, but also there were contradictory versions of the order in which they were cited. The present edition of the OED reflects that confusion. The OLF calendar has now standardized the names of the months for us, and we are able to say, off the top of our head: Amajjii, Guraandhala, Bitootessa, Caamsaa, Ebla, Waxabajjii, Adoolessa, Hagayya, Birraa, Onkoloolessa, Saddaasa, and Arfaasaa (January to December), in that order.

Finally, the most politically sensitive decision I made was to use the Latin alphabet instead of the Amharic syllabary. Because of this and the decision to abandon (for being cumbersome and expensive) the projected "Amharic-Oromo-English Dictionary", the first typed draft of the OED was caught up in Abyssinian politics. Even though I deliberately avoided using the standard Oromo spelling we now use because it is identified with the OLF, the decision got me into all sorts of problems. I was harangued almost everywhere: in my office, in the corridors, and in the staff lounge. The bureaucracy got tougher with me and used any pretext to at least delay the

publication of the work. After the bureaucrats got copies of the first draft, my occupation became thinking of the most effective, diplomatic way of answering their frequently asked questions, " Why the Latin alphabet? Why not the Amharic alphabet? Why the OED? Why not OAD or AOD, i.e. Oromo-Amharic Dictionary or Amharic-Oromo Dictionary? Why a bilingual dictionary? Why not just an Amharic or Oromo dictionary?" As it will be clearer later on in this paper, the tactics of asking irrelevant questions and of setting up a committee of inquiry worked to delay publication. It took five more years for the work to be published, i.e. between the completion of the first draft in 1984 and its publication in 1989!

Writing Phase

A brief discussion of the irony of an event that actually facilitated the writing of the OED is in order here. I was the Dean of the Education Faculty, AAU, when the president of the university (an economist), the vice president (a lawyer), and the Dean of the Social Sciences Faculty (a geographer), met secretly (probably in 1977) and wrote a controversial proposal which in effect dismantled the Education Faculty. Without consulting any member from the Education Faculty, the trio of University bureaucrats, agents of the regime themselves, proposed that most of the major departments under the Education Faculty should be transferred to the Natural Sciences and Social Sciences Faculties. As might be expected, all the members of the Education Faculty, except one whom I considered a renegade, were diametrically opposed to the proposal. I was accused of inciting the members against the university administration, a dangerous precedent in a "communist" Ethiopia, I was warned.

That was the time (sometime in 1977) when the regime was labeling Oromos with phrases such as "Right Roaders" and "Narrow Nationalists".

When I arrived at my office one morning, I saw three large posters hanging on the walls close to the door of my office and a woman standing in front of it. On one of the posters was written, in large letters and in red ink, the sentence, "Xabbaab bihertanyochi innaa qanyi mangadanyoch yi wadimaallu!" (Narrow Nationalists and Right Roaders shall be annihilated!)

Whether her presence was by design or by coincidence I am not sure, the

woman said in Amharic and with an affected voice choked with emotion, "Oh! How glad I am to see you! My husband, who was one of your students, and I were crying all night because we heard that you died!" I thanked her for her concern and said, "As you can see for yourself, I am still alive."

The same day, the man I referred to above as a "renegade," whom I helped to join the Education Faculty after he had been dismissed from the Ministry of Education, came to my office and gave me a great deal of advice on how to work with the bureaucrats smoothly. Of the many things he emphasized I always remember the saying with which he concluded his diatribe. It goes like this: "Sittaaazzi inda geetaa; sittittaazzaz inda baariyaa" siibbaal alsammaahim? (Haven't you heard the Amharic saying, "When you order, pose like a master; when you are given orders by your superior, you must cringe and obey like a slave?") To my mind, this misguided philosophy is one of the core problems of Abyssinian bureaucracy, which functions as an exclusive club. The person stationed at every level of the bureaucratic hierarchy takes the hint that he/she is entitled to be approached with servile obedience and adulation by those who are in the lower echelon. The existence of a law, no matter how nominal, does not matter to the bureaucrat who is usually a law unto himself/herself. Because of this mentality, there is not much that one can claim as right unless the bureaucrat's *malkaam faqaad* (graciousness) is secured. Nor is there a pleasant atmosphere conducive to genuine, democratic discussions between the bureaucrats above and below.

Frankly, that morning, I was distraught with worry because of the posters, the woman's mention of my "death," and the renegade's diatribe. In the afternoon of the same day, the Vice President asked me to arrange a staff meeting of the Faculty for the next day. At the meeting, a heated argument ensued. All the members but the renegade insisted that the courses (Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Amharic, English, History, Geography) that had been so meticulously designed, and over the years, had proved to be very effective for would-be high school teachers and should remain under the Education Faculty. The vice president, the regime's loyal cadre, did not agree. To make matters worse, he added Educational Psychology to the list of courses that should be removed from the Education Faculty. He also shut

down Prince Beide Mariam School, the Faculty's laboratory where students had done their practice teaching. After the meeting, he told me that he had no problem with my ability as a whole and said that, all the same, it would be better if I stayed away from any administrative activities at least for as long as he, the leader of the moment, wielded the power. He was true to his word: he relieved me of all my administrative duties and transferred me to the Institute of Language Studies (ILS).

That transfer was a blessing in disguise for me because writing the OED as a member of the ILS was more justifiable than writing it as a member of the Education Faculty. Besides, since I had been barred from administrative responsibilities at the ILS, I was able to concentrate, after teaching the required maximum of 12 hours a week, on my project during my free hours at night and on weekends. As a result, I completed writing the work in the summer of 1984.

The Publication Phase

Some time in 1984 I gave the completed draft to the AAU Research and Publications Office (RPO) for assessment. According to AAU rules and regulations, any work submitted for publication must be assessed by two anonymous, external reviewers who must also be at least one academic rank higher than the author of a work to be published. The two reviewers lauded the work and strongly recommended that it be published. However, one of them asked, genuinely and out of curiosity, why the Latin alphabet was used instead of the Amharic script. Gradually, this question gathered momentum and became a cause into which almost every Abyssinian staff of AAU threw himself/herself heart and soul. Surprisingly, while conducting my father-in-law's funeral service, even the priest, suddenly, out of the blue said, "ahunimmaa woromo dikshinariii tatsifowaal yibbaalaal!" (It is said that even an Oromo dictionary has already been written nowadays!). The comment about an Oromo dictionary was so unrelated and inappropriate to the occasion that even the most anti-Oromo Abyssinians present were embarrassed.

Since the OED was not Amharic but was *Afaan Oromo*, a language that is condemned to death, it must be assessed again. I can imagine what

a bureaucrat might have said to the RPO people, "More reviewers, not just two, must be involved in scrutinizing this controversial work." I believe that due to the pressure coming from higher up, the Office went against its own rules and had the OED reviewed again by three more persons. Apparently, this time the work was sent to reviewers who must have been handpicked because all of them literally called me names for using the Latin alphabet. Among other things, they labeled me a chauvinist intellectual, a narrow nationalist, an enemy of Ethiopian unity and of the Amharic script. One detected a single misspelled word in the "Introduction" to the OED and concluded that I was not fit to be an English teacher! Amazingly though, they, too, still recommended that the work should be published.

Using diplomatic language, I tried to prove my innocence. I assured *all concerned that the OED was only a scientific endeavor and that I was not out to destroy the Amharic script.* To prove the point that I do not hate the Amharic syllabary and to allay their fears, I wrote an article titled "Ye Beet Siraa" (Homework) in Amharic and had it published in a party-sponsored education journal. Incidentally, for this article I was sent a check for 150 *Birr* (US\$30). In addition, in a paper I presented in Finfinne at the International Conference on Ethiopian Studies, I tried to convince all concerned that the Latin alphabet was selected specifically for the purpose of writing the OED and that it was not an endorsement of its use in general.

After the conference, some participants, mostly Kushitic scholars from Europe, U.S.A., the then USSR, and Asia, expressed their support for and interest in the work. Very shortly, a publishing company in Germany wrote me a letter in which it promised that it was ready to publish the OED at no cost to me.

At every opportunity, I capitalized upon this letter. I started to appeal to the ego, prejudices, and fears of AAU bureaucrats. I argued that instead of giving away its work to a German publishing company, an autonomous university, whose purpose is to enhance teaching and research, should welcome works such as an OED and publish it itself. If published in Finfinne, the relatively low cost of publication would make the work affordable in Ethiopia. Besides, not only can the university earn money by producing and selling the work in bulk, but also the Amharic-speaking governors deployed all over Oromiyaa, could use the work for checking their

interpreters. More importantly, it is good politics for the Ethiopian government whose very public policy at the time was its commitment to "developing" the nationality languages!

These proffered reasons started to produce positive results. I was even advised to submit the letter from Germany together with the OED draft and request the university Senate to promote me from the rank of Assistant Professor to that of the Associate Professor. I got my promotion, although some thought that I should have saved the OED for a promotion to the rank of Professor. One able member of the Senate, a professor, first congratulated me and then jokingly said, "When playing rummy, people never throw away their jokers! Few short articles would have been enough for the promotion to the rank of Associate Professor." I laughed, but I did not tell him that my greatest ambition was not to get the rank or money but to see the OED published. Another positive result was, except for the staunch conservatives, many stopped opposing the publication of the work.

Actually, in my opinion, the main reason for the ebbing away of opposition was the involvement of the Dean of the ILS at the time. Practically every member of AAU was in awe of the Dean, not only because he was the representative of the Party and a man often seen on TV sitting beside Mengistu, but also because he was in charge of all AAU political affairs. After going over the draft, he said that the OED must be published and that any opposition to this worthwhile work should be silenced. Definitely, there was a temporary respite after the Dean's position became clear. To my great surprise, even "Reasons for Choosing the Latin Alphabet for Writing Afaan Oromo", a paper prepared for the Conference on Ethiopian Studies to be held in Moscow, was accepted.

Unfortunately, that relatively calm, opposition-free period was short-lived. At the Conference in Moscow, there was an attempt to sabotage my presentation. In the program, one that had been prepared in Finfinne and distributed in Moscow, the words in the title of my paper were so jumbled that the title did not make any sense whatsoever. I suspected that was deliberately done to embarrass me and discourage attendance. But a large audience turned out in spite of the misprinted announcement that had appeared in the Conference program. Before I started my presentation, I requested that the participants correct the title of my paper. Although I was

told I was free to use the whole afternoon, I wound up my presentation in one hour and opened the forum for discussion. A group of about four conservative Abyssinians who were occupying the front seats started to warm up to the familiar theme that writing *Afaan* Oromo in Latin alphabet cannot be justified. They took it in turn to repeat the same timeworn question, "Why the Latin alphabet, why not the Amharic syllabary?" One of them said with an air of authority something like, "In making the decision to use the Latin alphabet you have taken only linguistic considerations into account, but what is more important to us is the political decision!" After this verdict, some questions flashed through my mind: "As a researcher, don't I have the right to choose and use any symbol for writing my language? Why do the Abyssinian bureaucrats have to make that choice for me?" In that moment I realized that their decision to block the publication of the OED was nothing but a mere playful pinch in comparison to the heavy blows targeted against Oromos who struggle to throw off conditions of oppression: imprisonment, torture, expropriation, and death. When my mind flashed back to the plight of Oromos in general, I lost my composure and even burst into tears. One of the participants, a Russian, grabbed the microphone, singled out the director of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), and confronted him with a rhetorical question, "Being the Director of the IES, how come you don't appreciate this work?" The chairman of the session suggested that we should take a break.

When we returned, I found the hecklers' seats empty. I was glad that the group had absented itself because it became possible for the other participants to objectively discuss both the content and the form of the OED. Some wanted to know if the sounds represented by the international phonetic symbols /ç,ʃ,ʒ/ do in fact exist in *Afaan* Oromo. One who had not seen the draft asked if *warraaqsa* (revolution) was entered or not. I enjoyed answering such questions to the same extent that I had hated hammering the reasons for choosing the Latin alphabet into the heads of people who appeared impervious to reason. It is my experience that Abyssinian bureaucrats never acknowledge the justice of an Oromo cause. Even when a daring disputant corners them with indisputable facts, the bureaucrats frequently respond by merely snapping, "biihoonim, biihoonim, biihoonim..." (even then, even then, even then...).

At the Plenary Session, the spokesman for the Linguistics Section, a highly respected American scholar, turned the table on the opponents of the OED. After giving the summary of each paper on linguistics, he finally announced that the committee had voted the OED to be cited as the magnum opus at the Plenary Session. I was completely vindicated, and naturally I was also exhilarated. Henceforth, I thought, the enemies of the OED would be forced to capitulate.

On arriving in Finfinne, however, I observed some signs indicating clearly that my opponents had not relented. First, they omitted my name and the title of my presentation from the AAU News and Events Bulletin which appeared with the list of "Ethiopian scholars" who came back safely after presenting scholarly papers at the Conference on Ethiopian Studies held in Moscow. The omission could not have been an oversight because the media would usually blare out any news of success. Second, even colleagues at the University who had been giving me at least a stiff smile started to give me the cold shoulder and to ignore me altogether. Third, one student of mine who had been a party cadre before joining AAU, told me that the OED was mentioned at a Politburo meeting and labeled as a work written in disguised OLF script. The situation I was in was very tense indeed. Under the circumstances, though, all I could do was to follow the Oromo maxim "karaa cabe haa yaa'u" (let it run its course) and wait calmly for all eventualities.

The eventualities I had expected were (1) the banning of the OED, (2) loss of my job, (3) imprisonment, or even (4) death. Luckily, none of these happened. Instead, the RPO people asked me to defend the work in the presence of its Research and Publications Subcommittee established by the university Senate to assess the work. I pointed out tremulously (for by then I was almost on the verge of being broken) that I had already convinced six reviewers and defended the work at two international conferences on Ethiopian Studies. The curt reply was "No, you must convince the subcommittee members; their decision is crucial because they are experts in matters of linguistics." Actually, only one of them was a linguist.

The Subcommittee reminded me, from my reading, of the Inquisition or the Holy Office! Most of the members had been the very persons who had been openly condemning the work. Three of them had

already heckled me in Moscow. What could I expect from them? Whatever the outcome, I thought, it would be better to answer every question they might ask as politely as possible without reasoning with them. As I had anticipated, each of them started to raise primarily questions of political nature. In addition to the oft-repeated question, "Why Latin, why not Amharic syllabary", one of them also asked me why I had not included a bibliography! To avoid embarrassing him, I refrained from saying that I have never seen a bibliography at the end of a dictionary. My plan to compose myself worked. Everybody, including the university's guru in matters of linguistics, was positively impressed by my obsequious behavior.

Sometime after the interrogation, I was instructed to omit, among other things, the statement "The present estimate of Oromo population in Ethiopia is 19 million". I complied and after all the changes and the omissions were made, the work was accepted for publication. Henceforth, a part of my job became shuttling between my office and the office of the general services that provides AAU printing house with stationery. That shuttling alone lasted about two years because, I was told, the ship that was supposed to bring the stationery from abroad arrived much later than usual.

To my mind it was worth going through the ordeal of the red tape because the work was published at last. When about 1000 copies were brought to AAU Bookstore in October 1990, mostly Oromo students in the university and other Oromos queued up for copies at 30-birr each. The book eventually sold for about 300 Birr (US\$60) a copy outside Finfinne. I learned that the demand was so great that the bookstore had to ration customers to one copy a person. The university received 90% of the book price for printing the work whereas my share was 10%, an arrangement I agreed to because making money was not my goal in writing the OED.

The intense love the Oromo people have for their language surprised even me. Persons who had been hiding their Oromo identities came out of their shells – shells that had never fully protected them from Amharas who appear to me as exceptionally gifted at scrutinizing and identifying a non-Amhara no matter how hard one tries to pass as an Amhara. Some users of the OED expressed their appreciation through gifts, letters, and positive comments. For instance, although I did not send him a copy, Professor Baxter sent me a hand written note in which he said, "Thank

you for putting this pearl in my hand". One enthusiast made me laugh when he said to me, "You know, after going over the OED I realized that *Afaan* Oromo, too, has eight parts of speech just like Amharic and English." A medical professor at the Black Lion Hospital, an Englishman, also made me laugh when he said, " I didn't thank you as soon as I got a copy of the OED because first I wanted to check the accuracy of the entries I had sampled. Selected Oromos who live in the outskirts of Finfinne helped me with my project. You are okay."

My own observation and experience has led me to conclude that it is this kind of burning interest that the Abyssinian bureaucrats have striven to extinguish from the hearts of Oromos. It does not seem to matter to them if *Afaan* Oromo, the language of 50% of about 60 million people living in Ethiopia is obliterated, as long as Amharic, the traditional palace language, reigns. Their futile attempt to undermine 80 or so languages in the country has always been under the pretext of saving "Ethiopian unity," a euphemism for forced assimilation of other nationalities into Amhara culture. The custodians of "Ethiopian unity," however, have fashioned governments that operated as exclusive clubs. Each successive form, whether it was absolute monarchy or socialism/communism/democracy has targeted the Oromos. The "club" mentality produced members who would even stoop to condemn an apolitical writer of a dictionary, as "anti-Ethiopian unity". One colleague of mine, an Englishman, bluntly told a vociferous group in the AAU staff-lounge at the Sidist Kilo campus, that if one dictionary could divide Ethiopia so easily, the country had never been united!

I offer my account of the difficulty I faced in having my *Oromo-English Dictionary* written and published in Ethiopia between 1980 and 1990 because it sheds some light on the kind of processes of control and intimidation that were in operation against the Oromos in that country. My experience reveals that Abyssinian bureaucrats went to great lengths to keep Oromos under close scrutiny and provides an example of the effort to undermine our legacies—language, culture, and history. The OED, in the words of one reviewer "a singular contribution to Oromo Studies," did not escape such scrutiny.

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DISCOURSES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS IN THE OROMO QUEST FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

Kuwee Kumsa

This paper examines the various discourses on human rights and peoples' rights in the Oromo quest for national liberation. It is a critical analysis and innovative weaving together of data from traditional and non-traditional sources. I draw on both written and oral literature, songs, children's games, personal correspondences, Internet resources, and dialogues from Oromo discussion groups. As an Oromo who speaks from a marginal location in the Oromo national liberation struggle, I also interlace my personal experiences and insights to enrich the analysis. By exploring Oromo experiences of both victimization and agency, I seek to re-conceptualize and re-articulate human rights and people's rights in the context of Oromo liberation. As a way out of the current dichotomizing of human rights and peoples' rights, I propose a human rights approach to Oromo national liberation struggle in which both human rights and peoples' rights coexist and reinforce each other. I start here by providing the historical backdrop of human rights and peoples' rights against which I frame my analysis.

Background

Human rights and peoples' rights are socio-cultural constructs that need to be placed in their specific historical and political contexts. The origin of human rights concept can be traced to the era of Enlightenment in the West. Its contemporary articulation, however, is based on the dominant liberal ideology of individual rights to life and liberty (Foucault, 1980; Baxi, 1991; Wallerstein, 1997). In the crisp definition of the United Nations (1994: 4), "human rights could be generally defined as those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings." The underpinning philosophical values of these rights are the intrinsic values of life, freedom, equality and justice. All human beings are believed to be born free and to have the right to liberty, equality, dignity, and justice (Agyemang, 1985; Milne, 1986; Wronka, 1992; UN, 1994).

Beneath the rhetorical surface-equality of all human beings, however, closer historical examination reveals exclusionary holes revolving around who is considered human and who is not (Baxi, 1991; Wallerstein, 1997). Baxi notes that, "We the American people" in the *Declaration of Independence* did not include slaves, women, lower class people, and "backward" nations. Nor did the French "inalienable rights of man" (*droits de l'homme*) embrace these social groups according to Wallerstein. Although the 1948 United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) attempted to embrace the fundamental rights of *all* human beings, it remained oblivious to peoples' rights. The concept of peoples' rights as human rights was not integrated into the document until after colonized nations seriously challenged colonialism and began to win their independence. It was only in the 1960 declaration to bring a "smooth end" to colonialism that United Nations affirmed its "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small" (Wallerstein, 1997: 182).

The contemporary liberal concept of human rights has been challenged on many fronts in its application to persons and peoples worldwide. Defining human rights as "those rights which are inherent in our nature" is claiming the universality of human nature (UN, 1994; Machan, 1994). However, the existence of a human nature on any stable basis and the cross-cultural applicability of any concept of human rights have been called to question. Thus, polarized theoretical debate raged between cultural, moral and ethical relativists on the one hand and universalists on the other (Renteln, 1990). African challenge to the liberal concept of human rights is manifest in the rejection of the UDHR in favor of a distinctly-African understanding of human rights. The two dominant and most polarized discourses are those of individualists and communalists. While the individualists envision human rights norms based on cross-culturally applicable precolonial African individualist values,¹ the communalists envision human rights based on strongly communal African values (Howard, 1990; Fernyhough, 1993; Ilesanmi, 1995). A proponent of the communalist view, Legesse (1980) refers to the UDHR document as an instrument of cultural imperialism that does not represent African perspectives but imposes Western supremacy on non-Western nations. Although it includes the

Discourses on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights

individualist views, the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*² was primarily inspired by the communalist perspective (Okoth-Ogendo, 1993; Hollenbach, 1998). However, both extreme views have been criticized on the basis that there is no monolithic Western or African perspective. An alternative view envisions a human rights concept that protects both the individual and the collective without dichotomizing them (Howard, 1990; Fernyhough, 1993; Ilesanmi, 1995; Hollenbach, 1998).

The liberal model of human rights is also challenged for its tendency to dichotomize human rights and human needs. Baxi (1991) contends that by dichotomizing human needs and human rights as bread and freedom, the liberal model runs the risk of reducing human rights to non-material needs like freedom of expression and ignoring material needs like bread. In the African context, Hollenbach (1998) takes this a step further and questions the liberal insistence on multi-party politics and free market as a precondition for the respect of human rights in Africa. He contends that divorced from the respect of other fundamental human rights and economic justice, free market and democracy alone will not free Africans from oppression, poverty, violence, and the tyranny of hunger.

The discourse of non-violence, as one of the corner stones in the philosophical values of the UDHR, was also challenged for its assumption that human rights and violence are mutually exclusive. Baxi (1991) asserts that human rights and violence are intimately interrelated. He argues that the liberal model does not consider state violence problematic in so far as it has trappings of the due process of law. Thus, he contends that the liberal discourse of rights is the discourse of justified violence. Violence against the poor is perceived as justified whereas the struggle of the impoverished to remain human is condemned as unacceptable violence. In a closely argued work, Gutto (1993) also expands on this definition of violence. He asserts that slavery, colonialism, exploitation, poverty, and violence against women and children all constitute violations of human and peoples' rights that have been passed over with impunity for far too long.

It is in keeping with these challenges and against the backdrop of this shifting historical and political context that I examine the Oromo struggle for national liberation. Although the Oromo struggle was conceived in the context of worldwide anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle, it

respects the provisions of UDHR and supports the *African Charter* (Oromo Liberation Front, 1976). Therefore, it is engaged both in the struggle of challenging and changing the oppressive aspects as well as embracing and supporting the progressive aspects of these international provisions on human rights and peoples' rights.

The Oromo Experience

Neither the UN *Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples* (Wallerstien, 1997) nor the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*, (Ilesanmi, 1995) clearly defines peoples' rights. This has adversely affected both the local anti-Abyssinian colonialism and the global anti-imperialist aspects of the Oromo struggle. In the global terrain, both the Western and the Eastern sides of the Cold War fault line were lukewarm about the Oromo liberation struggle. Both blocs separated the deserving peoples from the non-deserving ones and rank-ordered them. Thus, if at all they had categorized Oromos as deserving of peoples' rights to self-determination, they seemed to have put them on the bottom rungs of their hierarchies of peoples.³

In the local landscape, as the *African Charter* insisted on maintaining colonial boundaries, peoples' rights were reduced to the rights of peoples to nominal independence within a colonial boundary. It was designed to protect the rights of the nominally independent African countries against non-African old and new colonizers. But it did not have provisions for the rights of peoples confined within specific colonial boundaries. The OAU's recognition of an "independent" or "never colonized" status of Ethiopia helped more in confounding the Oromo question than in clarifying it.

Historically, Oromo people's experience with liberal discourse of human rights and peoples' rights has been one of violence and continued violations. Their political oppression, economic exploitation and cultural genocide that started in the colonial era in the late 19th century has continued unabated through the Cold War period right into the present era of re-colonization named "New World Order." Oromos who have witnessed impunity for slavery, impunity for colonial plunder, and impunity for

genocide, are still continuing to witness impunity for the tyrannies of their new oppressors. What happened to oppressed peoples elsewhere in the world has repeated itself in the case of oppressed peoples in Ethiopia, including Oromos. As they did elsewhere, Western powers promoted democracy and free market capitalism as preconditions for the respect of human rights. "Free and fair elections", they promised; "no democracy, no cooperation," they insisted (Holcomb, 1997; Jalata, 1997; Robinson, 1997; Trueman, 1998).

But elections went awry. Reports of International Observer Groups expressing concern about the unfairness of elections went unnoticed.⁴ Dissident voices were silenced, as opposition groups were thrown out of the Ethiopian parliament one after another. Democracy became a sham as the ruling party wrenched 539 out of 546 seats in the parliament. The peoples of Ethiopia came under the harsh grip of a minority ethnic group that comprised only 7% of the total population (The *Economist*, 1997). Western powers looked the other way as a single-ethnic-group-single-party dictatorship consolidated itself. Indeed, they continued to support the derailment of democracy despite their own promises. "No Democracy, no cooperation" went down the drain as the process of democratization stood on its head and authoritarian tyranny swept over the land.

Notwithstanding, even as they witnessed impunity reign high and justice become a casualty, Oromos continued to resist oppression. They used every venue possible to assert their human rights and peoples' rights. The consequence? Peaceful demonstrators were gunned down. Thousands were thrown in jail and tortured. One by one, the fledgling free press and other venues of free expression were closed down. Oromo human rights groups who documented these atrocities were repeatedly denied legal status. Human rights activists, journalists, publishers, folk singers, musical groups, students, teachers and farmers were jailed, tortured and killed in cold blood. Amnesty International and other local and international human rights groups exposed the atrocities and called for justice. But report after report of disappearances, imprisonment, torture, extra-judicial killings and summary executions fell on the deaf ears of Western powers.⁵

It was only after the oppressed people's resistance intensified and state violence became too glaring to ignore that Western powers responded to the persistent reports. This response however, was more a face-saving

exercise than a genuine concern for human rights. The West engineered the establishment of government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGO) that the Ethiopian government used to disseminate misinformation and discredit critical human rights reports (Tronvoll, 1997). While the US government poured money into Ethiopia under the cover of "Democracy and Governance Support" (Robinson, 1997), the British government sent an aid mission to Ethiopia for a "human rights training" of the Ethiopian police (BBC, 1997). Oromos received this as an exercise to obscure the systemic nature of the violations and make it appear individual ignorance. The face-saving effort of Western powers and their race for justified violence became even more blatant when they scrambled to establish the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Institution of Ombudsman.⁶ Oromos received this as another attempt to silence their call for the respect of human rights. But Western "aid" is still pouring into Ethiopia aiding the regime in escalating violence and violations of human rights (Buckley, 1998; Scott, 1998).

While this happened in Ethiopia, the efforts of Oromos in the Diaspora to promote human rights in the homeland were quickly and conveniently dismissed as *émigré politics*.⁷ To add insult to injury, the US government honored Ethiopia's Prime Minister as one of Africa's "New Leaders" and granted him an award for "good government" (The *Economist*, 1997). Far beyond impunity, human rights violators were even rewarded for their atrocities. Oromos interpreted this as an award not for the acclaimed "good government," but for inviting the World Bank's SAP to sap Oromo resources.⁸

With such a grim response of double standard from Western liberals, Oromos resorted to armed resistance in order to confront violence with violence and restore their human rights. While it is arguable that a cycle of violence can be broken only by violence, Oromos justify their resistance by claiming that they picked up arms in order to disarm oppressors.⁹ Justified or not, however, by being forced to seek justice through violence and create their human rights through violence, Oromos have walked into that same trap that brought the Western bourgeoisie to power. As the donkey said in an Oromo saying, "*Ani duunaan araddaan hin margin* [Let there be no grass after I die]" the bourgeoisie has also renounced the violence of revolution

after securing power for itself through revolution and defining its human rights through revolution. Obviously its worst nightmare is to be removed from power through the violence of revolution.

Thus the fluid liberal definition of violence has changed its colors like a chameleon according to what suited liberal interests. Western powers looked away from the violence of the Ethiopian State and charged Oromo resistance with violence. They demanded that Oromos renounce violence, lay down their arms, and come to the dialogue table. Oromos fighting for legitimate peoples' rights and resisting state violence and repression were represented as "terrorists" and "against peace and stability." When the Ethiopian State scooped up countless children of the oppressed peoples and used them as cannon fodder in the recent Ethio-Eritrean war, except for crocodile tears from some quarters, Western powers have continued with their approach of impunity. Whose peace and stability is a concern and whose is not, remains a taboo question. On the one hand, state violence is sanctioned and people's resistance is condemned. Yet, on the other hand, by the same definition, radical violence is sanctioned (e.g. Nicaragua and Afghanistan). Zenawi's regime is praised for the same violations that Mengistu's regime was condemned. In the endless fluidity of the liberal definition, we have also witnessed 'terrorists' of yesterday become allies of today (e.g. Yaser Arafat) and allies of yesterday become 'terrorists' of today (e.g. Osama Bin Laden). Whose violence gets defined as violence and who gets named a terrorist depends on the contextual void that the fluid liberal definition fills.

In his analysis of the liberal concept of human rights and peoples' rights, Wallerstein (1997) argues that liberalism ardently asserts the legitimacy of human rights, but ardently works to avoid their implementation. This, he contends, is also the fundamental contradiction at the heart of capitalism. With its built-in structures of inequality, capitalism will not be capitalism if it does not make one people or one social group superior to others. He asserts that, "any 'rights of peoples' were reserved to a few specific peoples and were by no means the rights of all the other peoples. Indeed granting 'barbarians' their rights as people was thought to result in the effective denial of 'human rights' to their peoples (Wallerstein, 1997: 189). "This experience with liberal human rights clearly shows that,

in the liberal dictionary, Oromos are defined as the must-be-controlled 'barbarians' and 'dangerous' people. Given the fluidity of their position, liberals have easily and subtly slid towards the conservative right on the Oromo quest for human rights. How can they let "barbarians" abuse human rights? Thus when the liberal surface is scratched, the conservative interior calls for an intervention to save Oromos from themselves.

Western powers have clearly pursued the policy of *all are human but some are more human than others*, one of the "otherized" humans being Oromos. In line with the liberal definition of inherent human nature, if Oromo rights are violated, it is because of some defect in the nature of Oromos. So, Oromos are to blame. Liberal promise of democracy first and human rights ultimately, has proven incompatible with Oromo aspirations of liberation from oppression and violence. It is rather the respect of human rights that leads to popular and participatory democracy, not the other way around. Democracy is absurd without freedom of expression. Oromos cannot live some aspects of their humanity at one time and save other aspects for other times. Even in the liberal definition that remains lip-served, human rights flourish when people live all aspects of their humanity to the fullest. What characterizes Oromo reality is multiplicity, complexity and simultaneity. Thus, liberal promise that sought to apportion, rank-order, and prioritize its human rights and peoples' rights handouts has become empty rhetoric. Worse still, it has been used as a smoke screen behind which atrocities happened against Oromos.

Oromos now are at a crossroads in this era of globalized aggression. Should they reject human rights and peoples' rights discourses as utterly Western mechanisms of oppression and exploitation? Or should they give up all forms of resistance and embrace them? Should they insist only on peoples' rights and give up human rights? Fortunately for Oromos, their reality is not locked into this either/or situation. There are myriad creative and productive alternatives. Oromo struggle for human rights and peoples' rights has come this far, not because of Western support and acclamation, but despite their subversion and condemnation. At least two phenomena work to Oromo advantage vis-à-vis Western discourses of human rights and peoples' rights.

First, the West is far from being a monolithic entity. As in other parts of the world, the West is also constituted from a diverse polity. People in the West are multiply located in various social positions with relative degrees of privilege and marginality. Thus, there are many individuals and groups with various degrees of commitment who work to close the gap between the rhetoric and reality of human rights, for their communities as well as in solidarity with world-wide movements. So Oromos, and indeed all oppressed peoples, do have allies in the West.

Second, the concepts of peoples' rights and human rights are neither static nor unalterable. As dynamic cultural constructs, they have evolved through the years and will continue to evolve and change further as oppressed peoples continually challenge them. Oromos can reinvent and recreate human rights and peoples' rights that are in harmony with their own reality. They can make it serve the purpose of radical transformation and liberation. Obviously, this calls for a re-conceptualization of these rights in the context of a liberation struggle in this era of recolonization. This also calls for an assessment of the hitherto operating concepts of human and peoples' rights within the context of Oromo national liberation struggle. This is the subject of the next section.

Some Polarities in Oromo Movements¹⁰

The assertion that all forms of oppression constitute human rights violations seems to be a far-fetched concept to many Oromos in their struggle for national liberation. Although they denounce the violation of Oromo peoples' rights in articulating Oromo national self-determination, Oromo nationalists turn blind eye to the violation of human rights within the Oromo society. They view people's rights and human rights as binaries. Even among Oromos who seem to be in the process of a conceptual shift in recent years, attitudinal and behavioral changes still lag far behind the faltering cognitive tread. One pitfall on this conceptual path is the view that Oromos are a monolithic group vis-à-vis human rights. In this view, all Oromos are victims of human rights violations. However, this obscures the diversity among Oromos, the possibility that Oromos can both promote and violate human rights, and that they simultaneously resist and embrace various forms

of oppression in their everyday experiences. In this section, I discuss some of the polarities that fetter the Oromo struggle for liberation.

Liberating the nation versus liberating the national

One of the manifest dichotomies in the Oromo national liberation struggle is between liberating the nation and liberating the individual Oromo national. In many ways, this is a reflection of the dichotomy between peoples' rights and human rights in the West and between individualism and communalism in Africa. In the West, the dichotomy between human rights and peoples' rights heightened at the height of oppressed peoples' struggle against colonialism/imperialism. On the one hand, liberals saw the inevitability of peoples' revolution and became global champions of peoples' rights by articulating the "self-determination of nations". On the other hand, conservatives objected to peoples' rights insisting only on human rights. They argued that colonized populations were not true "peoples" but a collection of individuals whose human rights should be recognized only *when the individual is educated and adequately civilized* (Wallerstein, 1997). On the African scene, individualists focused on universal human rights while communalists insisted on peoples' rights to the extent of denying diversity within African peoples and ignoring human rights of the individual (Howard, 1990; Ilesanmi, 1995; Fernyhough, 1993; Hollenbach, 1998).

In the Oromo case, the national liberation struggle started from a revolutionary premise of liberating both the Oromo people and the Oromo individual.¹¹ However, the false dichotomy and increasing polarity between the split goals of liberating the individual Oromo national and liberating the nation have increasingly fettered human rights and peoples' rights. Paradoxically, both the nation and the national have to be invented by Oromo nationalism before they can be liberated. But the invention of the nation, the nation-state, the citizen and the national was originally a bourgeois project (Foucault, 1980; Wallerstein, 1997). Oromo nationalism is caught in that no-man's land between the old model of nation-state from which it has to liberate itself, and a new radical goal for which a model has not yet been envisioned and parameters defined. Caught in this damned-if-you-do-damned-if-you-don't situation, Oromo nationalism becomes second-

hand nationalism repeating the same oppressive patterns if it copies the bourgeois model, or it fails to create a nation if it does not.¹²

As the Oromo national liberation struggle is a response to Abyssinian colonial aggression, Oromo nationalism is also a response to the exclusionary discourse of Ethiopian nationalism. Constituting competing identities, the two nationalisms are in oppositional dichotomy to each other. While liberators of the national work within the Ethiopian framework, the logical conclusion of liberators of the nation is to create an independent Oromo nation.¹³ The irony of it is that, in the era of globalization, the nation-state itself is being besieged both by global homogenizing forces and by local fragmenting ones (Hall, 1996; Cvetkovich and Kellner, 1997). In this era, when even the most consolidated nation-states are allegedly running for cover, it may be wrong timing to attempt to create a new nation-state based on the old model. As well, the conceived nation runs the risk of being stillborn into a strange global world. The challenge of Oromo national liberation is to envision a new model of constructing the nation and its nationals.

However, by emphasizing commonality and suppressing difference, Oromo national movements have de facto adopted the model of the nation-state in which a nation is created through erasure of differences and exclusionary practices. The authentic national is constructed as the norm against which all deviants are measured and privilege is dished out according to the degree of deviance (Foucault, 1980). In the Oromo case, the normative national is constructed against the competing identity of the normative Ethiopian in a kind of mutually exclusive dichotomy. Whatever is Ethiopian is not Oromo, and whatever is Oromo has nothing to do with Ethiopia. The normative Oromo national is thus an inverse of the Ethiopian depending on the formula that defines the national (e.g. territory, ancestry, religion, region, class, and gender). If the normative Ethiopian is the upper class Shoan Amhara male, the normative Oromo has to be defined in the reverse also. The farther away from the Ethiopian, the more "authentic" the normative Oromo national becomes. But the nightmare of Oromo nationalism lies in this definition of authentic normative Oromo national. Is s/he a wo/man, young/old, rich/poor, educated/uneducated? Is s/he from rural/urban Oromia? Is s/he Moslem, Christian, Waaqeffattuu, Waaqeffataa? Is s/he

from Arsii? Harargee? Shawaa? Wallaggaa? Who is the normative Oromo? Who is the prototype in the hierarchy of Oromos, the top human being in the hierarchy of humans? Who defines who is human, and who defines human rights on whose terms? Who determines who deserves human rights and who does not?

For the same reasons that the expression of diversity was the nightmare of Ethiopian nationalism, it is also the nightmare of Oromo nationalism. The Oromo fear of expressing diversity comes in at least two forms. Pragmatists point to the fragile nature of Oromo nationalism. They argue that Abyssinians have used divisive tactics for centuries and have constructed such a divisive difference and enmity that any mention of diversity will end up in fragmenting the Oromo movement. Oromo diversity will open a Pandora's box that will be used by their enemies to dissolve the nation into an ocean of individuals. The less honest ones, on the other hand, vow that they genuinely believe in addressing Oromo diversity. But they insist on prioritizing national oppression giving the pretext that resources are too scarce to fight against all forms of oppression.

However, both assertions fly in the face of reality. With respect to fear of fragmentation, genuinely addressing difference rather than suppressing it enhances trust and mutuality and cements a movement. It does not fragment it. Nor does the resource argument hold because one need not fight against all forms of oppression at all times. The fight is contextual and the only psychological resource it requires is will and attitudinal change. This may be a much more difficult fight, not because of lack of material resources, but because it deals with a deeply ingrained version of oppression and we have no model to combat it at that level. For example, a man does not require material resources to take up some of a woman's social roles. He does not need to put a gun to his head to liberate himself from the entrapments of oppressive culture that prevents him from crossing the taboo line and cooking for his wife, mother, daughter, or sister.

Reform versus Revolution

Another dichotomous characteristic of contemporary Oromo movements is the polarity between evolutionary reform and revolutionary

change, peaceful negotiation and armed resistance. Liberators of the nation seek to restore human rights through democratizing Ethiopia and perfecting the system through reform. This perspective fits in well with the liberal discourse of the *vital center* where they ride the safe terrain between extreme conservatism on the right and radical socialism on the left (Wallerstein, 1997). Liberals begrudgingly acknowledge that change is inevitable but insist on rational process and controllable pace. Liberators of the nation and fighters for peoples' rights, on the other hand, seek to wage armed resistance and rid the Oromo nation of the yoke of Abyssinian colonialism. They tend to eschew any mention of reform in the fear that it would strengthen the Ethiopian State. Thus, they put off the fight against other forms of oppression for after the revolution when liberation is supposed to solve all problems overnight and all Oromos live happily ever after.

The Oromo people have lived the painfully slow paces of some insignificant reform. They have also experienced radical revolutionary change in 1974 and 1991 only to find themselves in the same repeating patterns of oppression both times (Lata, in 1999). Poor peasants, for example, have seen how their peasant association leaders took up the role and turned into landlords before their eyes. They have seen former oppressed groups turn into new oppressors. This shows that, without the accompanying attitudinal change at the micro level, wider structural changes at the macro level alone will not lead to transformation. Regimes have changed only to recycle tyranny. Persons in positions of leadership have changed, but the relationships of power have remained oppressive. Experience proves liberals right that a cycle of violence cannot be broken by violence. However, turning the right cheek for a slap on the left has also led to more violence for the opposite reason of taking the oppressed for granted. In a violent world subtly and blatantly perpetuated by liberal discourses, reform alone cannot restore human rights and peoples' rights. Both the two extremes of reform and revolution as well as the various possibilities that lie between them are crucial for transformative change. However, the attempt to integrate the two extreme positions and utilize all venues and all paces of resistance and change remains a minority effort in the Oromo struggle for liberation.

This false dichotomy between reform and revolution is reflective of liberal polarization of human rights and violence. Pointing to revolution and

armed resistance as violations of and antitheses to human rights (Baxi, 1991), liberals effectively mask the multiple faces of violence. The violence of poverty and deprivation, the violence of cultural genocide and political domination, the violence of racial and gender oppression, the violence of neo-colonial exploitation, and the violence of global militarism get effectively washed away by liberal discourse of non-violence. By justifying state violence and restricting the very definition of violence to armed resistance of the oppressed, liberals carefully hide their own violations of human rights and peoples' rights. Nor do the polarities in the Oromo struggle unmask this range of violence. This limits the possibility of redefining and re-conceptualizing violence in terms of its coexistence and intimate relationship with human rights.

Agency versus Victimization

Oromos are viewed by their friends and by themselves as victims of both human rights and peoples' rights violations. Abyssinian colonialists and Western imperialists are viewed as subjects who violate Oromo rights and victimize them. In this polarizing view, Oromos are objects with no agency and being not once in the subject position as social or political actors. In the Oromo nationalist discourse, Oromos are oppressed, Abyssinians are oppressors; Oromos are good, Abyssinians are bad; Oromos are innocent victims, Abyssinians are vicious agents of human rights violations. This victimization discourse is deeply ingrained and is especially accentuated in war situations where women and children are rendered victims. I will elaborate this point through an analysis of a popular song used by both Ethiopian and Oromo nationalist discourses for contrasting purposes.

Oromo Song

English translation

Diina kee sirraa deebisuufii
Bilisummaa sitti uwwisuufii
Ilmi kee garaa kutateeraa
Jajjabaaddhu egaa yaa haadha
dhiiraa

To ward off your enemy
to adorn you with liberation
Your son is determined
be strong oh mother of [a] male

Imimmaan kee faffacaaftee
hin booyin of jajjabeessii
Haati dhiiraa daftee hin naatuu
Eebbisii nagaan geggeessi
Yaa haadha dhiiraa, yaa
dhiphattuu,
Jabeeffaddhu sabbataa kee
Allattii tu bishaan obaasaa,
Malee hin argitu ati ilma kee

Don't shed your tears
and cry, pull yourself together
Mother of [a] male is not upset so easily
Bless him and send him off
Oh mother of [a] male, oh you miserable
one
Tighten your girdle [belt]
Birds will give him water
but you will not see your son

Haati dhiiraa, dhiira isheenuu
hin na'uu dafee garaan ishee
Ammas duris, har'as boris,
Ulfina qabaa maqaan ishee

Mother of [a] male, is [a] male herself
her heart is not softened easily
Now and before, today and tomorrow her
name is dignified

Three subtle but strong interrelated messages jump out from this song. One is that women are objects and people do things for them. They just tighten their belts and passively wait for whatever men, the subjects, decide to do with them. The second message is the loud gendered nationalism. In a nation that acclaims and praises only the courageous and the strong national, the woman is a national only through the strength and courage of her son. In this song the word male is synonymous with hero. A hero is only a male, a son, not a woman, or a daughter. The mother of a male [a hero] is considered a hero [male] herself by tightening her girdle and waiting. The epitome of women is the one whose son is the hero who goes out and dies for her liberation. The third message suggests that salvation comes from without. Liberation is something that males [heroes] go out and

bring home. It is a trophy that others bring home after a triumphant engagement out there (in the guerrilla wars in the case of Oromo nationalism, and at the war fronts in the case of Ethiopian nationalism). But in each case it comes from without, not from within. It is something others bring to one, not what one creates or does for oneself. Nor is it what people create through interaction.

The damage of this is manifold. First, it objectifies and dehumanizes the Oromo people by denying them the opportunity to own the struggle. Freire (1997:50) argues, however, that "They [the oppressed] cannot enter the struggle in order to later become human beings." The Oromo people must struggle as subjects and agents of their own liberation. But rather than exploring the multiple possibilities of resistance and liberation, this discourse keeps them passively waiting for the liberator out there. Hence, Oromos in the homeland look towards Diaspora Oromos, and Diaspora Oromos look towards Oromos in the homeland for salvation, for liberation. This forecloses creative possibilities where liberators look inside to liberate themselves from the entrapments of their own oppressive culture.

Second, such portrayal of women as victims obscures their agency. It obscures, for example, the fact that women both violate and respect human rights. It simplifies the complex fact that it was women who sang these songs to mobilize women, and that it was women peasant association and community leaders who participated in scooping youth from their homes to send them off to the wars. It denies women's agency and their subject positions as political and social actors. For example, women heroines of Oromo liberation struggle who threw themselves into the armed resistance and fought are rendered invisible. Heroic deeds of such women disappear into the objectified role of the mother of the male [hero].

Thirdly, homogenizing women's experiences obscures the diversity among women. There are, for example, Oromo women with feudal upbringing and those with peasant upbringing; there are elite Oromo women and those who are denied the opportunity of literacy. They all experience national oppression differently, think differently and behave differently owing to their different and multiple social locations. Their different locations exacerbate or attenuate national oppression differently. Denying or

obscuring these differences leads to erroneous interpretations of their experiences with human rights and peoples' rights.

Although this song dealt with women, gender is only one dimension of the myriad differences among Oromos. In a similar analysis, homogenizing Oromo experiences masks their diversity, and their categorical victimization renders Oromo agents invisible. It tells Oromos to passively wait for some liberator/salvation from without. The victim position is a comfortable position in the sense that Oromos as categorically victimized can gain sympathy. From that position, they can also condemn Abyssinians for their predicament and shrug off their own responsibility. But such dichotomizing of agency and victimization renders Oromos blind and deaf to the many levels and possibilities of rights and responsibilities, the many levels of organizing power and resistance. It denies Oromos the many possibilities of creating and inventing nation and nationalism as well as human and peoples' rights pertinent to the Oromo reality.

Problems of Oppositional Dichotomies

Polarities and oppositional dichotomies are not unique to Oromo movements. Examples abound of movements that started in opposition to some oppression and hegemony but ended up establishing counter-hegemonies of their own. Hence, the feminist movement started in opposition to male dominance; but an extreme version of it tries to create its own hegemony by replacing andro-centrism by gyno-centrism. The negritude movement started in opposition to the hegemony of white supremacist ideology; but an extreme version of it tries to establish its own hegemony by replacing Euro-centrism by an extreme version of Afro-centrism. In the case of Oromo movements, an Oromo-centred view replaced an Amhara-centred one. Instead of saying "I don't want to do what you do!" to the oppressor, these movements ended up saying, "Whatever you do, I can do better!" In lieu of dismantling the "centric" world and levelling out its hierarchical structures of dominance/subordination, they ended up maintaining and sustaining the superior/inferior dichotomy. Oppositional dichotomy may be a necessary starting point of political consciousness, but it misses the mark of affirming human rights and peoples' rights if the counter-hegemonic move

is not driven home to its goal.¹⁴

Oppositional dichotomies are so pervasive that they seem to be natural phenomena. According to social identity theory, people tend to categorize people into *us* and *them* and associate whatever they define as good with themselves and whatever they define as bad with the other (Tajfel, 1982). Foucault (1980; 1982) and Deschamps (1982) take this up within the context of power relationships and analyze the "dividing practices" by which the Western society defines the norm. Anything that differs from the norm is named deviant. When the speaking subject names and defines the Other, then different is not just different but it also means deviant, abnormal, inferior, pathologic, bad, etc. Thus people are divided into mutually exclusive categories of normal/abnormal, superior/inferior, good/bad.

These polarities are inscribed into our selves starting from the tender age of early childhood. We absorb them unconsciously through pervasive ways of socialization (in Foucault's words, through the technologies of self). Foucault expounds on how we are discursively constructed into subject positions. Here discourse is not just conscious narratives and practices, but it includes the unconscious and deeply hidden ones as well (Mama, 1995). Some technologies of self consist of minute details of schedules and practices. Thus, when one says I am an Oromo, I am an Amhara, or I am a woman, the speaking subject speaks from the subject position constructed through discourse. But this does not mean that the subject is a total victim of social structures. The subject is also an agent in resistance. I will ground this point by analyzing a specific technology of self, which is one of the children's games I used to play at school when I was a child.

In this game, girls were grouped into two, *Buda* (evil-eyed) and Amhara (the dominant ethnic group in Ethiopia). One girl was named the sorter to do the categorizing. The criterion for assigning a girl to either group was the cracking of the knees. The sorter girl would listen carefully for the knee crack as each girl squatted before her and stood up turn by turn. If the knees cracked, the girl was named *Buda*. If they didn't, she was named Amhara. Within the context of that system of meanings, everything good was associated with Amhara and everything bad with *Buda*. There was nothing in between. A girl was either an Amhara or a *Buda*. Lining up in

Discourses on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights

double file and facing each other, the two groups sang a song to kick off the fight of the mutually exclusive opposites. The song itself involved questions and answers that the two groups asked and answered turn by turn:

Budaas asking Amharas:

Amaarooch! Amaarooch!
Min tibelaallachihu?
Min tixexxaallachihu?

Oh Amharas! Oh Amharas!
What do you eat? What do
you eat?
What do you drink? What
do you drink?

Amharas Asking Budaas:

Budooch! Budooch!
Min tibelaallaachihu?
Min tixexxaallachihu?

What do you eat? What do
you eat?
What do you drink? What
do you drink?

***Amharas responding to
Budaas:***

Abeet! Abeet!
Ye Beree Sigaa!
Xeji! Xeji!

Yes! Yes!
Beef! Beef!
Mead! Mead!

***Budaas Responding to
Amharas:***

Abeet! Abeet!
Ye feres sigaa!
Shint! Shint!

Yes! Yes!
Horse meat! Horse meat!
Urine! Urine!

This game was so popular and so symbolic of oppositional dichotomies facing each other with nothing but enmity between them. Eating beef and drinking mead was considered good and indicated the highest Amhara social status. But eating horsemeat and drinking urine was so despised that it was relegated to the lowest of the low, the Buda. I remember how I cried and denied that my knees ever cracked. Just to be named an Amhara, to be saved from the humiliation of being named a Buda. I found

the very thought of eating horsemeat and drinking urine revolting. But my knees usually cracked and I usually was sorted as *Buda*.

In the meaning system of that culture at that time, a *Buda* was one who "ate" people. So the next stage of the game was for *Budas* to chase and "eat up" whichever Amhara girl they could catch. My anger and frustration at not being Amhara was released only when I embraced my *Budaness* and chased and "ate up" Amharas. I ran after those girls lest any of them escape me. I chased them howling, with my eyes flashing and my fingers stretched out like claws. From that tender age, it was clear in a child's mind who was respectable and who was despicable. Equally clear was that there were only two possibilities. One was either respectable or despicable. Nothing in-between, no overlap. Those technologies erased all the different possibilities between the two extremes and riddled the relationship between them with suspicion, strife and enmity.

Oppositional dichotomies restrict human possibilities by obscuring the way power is organized. They deny the existence of multiple spaces of resistance, thus foreclosing the myriad possibilities of negotiation and transformation. How can the Oromo national liberation struggle break out of these dichotomies and create a dynamic multidimensional interaction between human rights and peoples' rights? How can it express the multiplicity, complexity and simultaneity of Oromo identities through such an interaction? This is the subject of the following section.

A Human Rights Approach

What we glean from the preceding sections is the need to envision and act upon an Oromo human rights approach to Oromo national liberation in this era of global recolonization dubbed New World Order. In this era, all forms of oppressive forces are increasingly intertwined and interdependent. They support and sustain each other. Thus, in a world of interlocking oppressions it is increasingly difficult to isolate just one form of oppression (e.g. national oppression) and struggle for justice.¹⁵ Old models that dichotomized and rank-ordered differences have served Oromos only in more violations of their rights as individuals and as a people. Moreover, the second-hand Oromo nationalism based on the old bourgeois model has not

moved Oromos an inch closer to their aspirations of human dignity and liberation. Indeed, there is a need for a dynamic model that integrates human rights and peoples' rights into a harmonious combination and leads to liberation. In this section, I will highlight some of the elements that those with a vision of such a human rights approach might need to incorporate.

Addressing Identity/Difference

Identity and difference, Connolly (1991) argues, are a paradoxical juxtaposition. When one defines self/identity and draws a boundary around it, one also defines the other/difference beyond the boundary automatically. Thus, one cannot talk about difference without talking about identity. Whether we define identity as essentially bound self or as socially constructed entity, difference remains juxtaposed to it. Thus, whether or not we subscribe to the liberal assumption of a stable human nature, what characterizes human beings and contemporary human societies is dynamic multiplicity, complexity and simultaneity of identities/differences. Polarizing and prioritizing these, even by the lip-served liberal definition, restricts human possibilities, and therefore constrains human rights. Thus, any form of oppression and discrimination that suppress any dimension of human identities/differences violates human rights. By contrast, expressing identities/differences opens up space for exploring human possibilities and thus promotes human rights.

While the expression of similarities is essential to create a movement, it becomes self-defeating the moment it denies the expression of difference. As Lorde (1984) argues, the need for unity is often mistaken for a need for homogeneity. Oromo national liberation movements express Oromo similarities and suppress differences for fear that expression of differences might lead to division and fragmentation. However, division and fragmentation are the results of suppressing identities/differences, not of expressing them. And, as Lorde contends, this fear belongs to the oppressor, not to the oppressed. The primary tactic of the oppressor, she asserts, is to occupy the minds of the oppressed with the fears and concerns of the oppressor. It is to meet the divide-and-conquer need of the oppressor that oppressed people are taught to view difference with suspicion, fear and

loathing. In tracing this fear back to the oppressor, Lorde (1984: 113) challenges her feminist colleagues to "reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears."

Lorde (1984) also contends that these tactics are the master's tools and will never dismantle the master's house. If Oromo liberation is to dismantle the oppressive structures of the Abyssinian master's house, it needs to fashion its own tools. In cases where Oromos are stuck with only the master's tools, they can creatively reinvent those tools and make them dismantle the master's house. Fear of expressing differences belongs to Abyssinian colonizers, not to Oromo liberators. And their masters' fears and concerns have occupied Oromos for far too long. Some Christian Oromos might want to ask themselves why they fear Moslem Oromos. Some Oromos from Harargee might want to ask themselves why they fear and distrust some Oromos from Wallaggaa. In Friere's (1997) words, they need to find out the oppressor they house within themselves. In Lorde's words, they need to reach deep down within themselves and touch that loathing and see whose face it wears. An Oromo human rights approach then promotes the expression of the multiple human dimensions without fear or loathing. As Lorde insists, we must relearn differences as sources of strength and as forces of change and liberation. For the oppressed, she asserts, divide and conquer must become define and empower.

Multiplicity, Simultaneity, Complexity

Dichotomizing human rights and peoples' rights is denying the multiplicity, simultaneity and complexity of Oromo identity. Oromos are not a collection of individuals as conservatives would argue. Nor are they a homogeneous collective as communalists would have it. Sticking to the communalist end of the spectrum leads to embracing Abyssinian landlords and Oromo tenants in the same anti-West category.¹⁶ Embracing the individualist end leads to the dreaded Oromo fragmentation. But the Oromo saying, "*kootiin kan ofii ti keenyaan kan warraa ti* [mine is for the individual self; ours is for the collective self]" weaves and integrates both the individual and the collective aspects of Oromo identity. In its broadest meaning, *warra*

indicates any level of collective from the family to the nation. Between the individual Oromo and the collective, there are innumerable forms and levels of interrelationship, kinship solidarity, and identity.

However, the individual and the collective selves are not in a position of exteriority to each other. The individual self is also a collective self. For example, an individual person can be an Oromo, a woman, a wife, a mother, a Moslem, poor, from the Liiban clan, from Wallaggaa, and so on, all at the same time. She is indeed an intersection of multiple collective identities. She cannot, for example, be dissected to live her Oromoness at one time, her womanhood at another time, and her poverty at still another time. She lives all of her multiple identities at the same time. Thus, her identities are characterized not only by multiplicity, but also by simultaneity. But this does not mean they all compete for expression simultaneously. The most important dimension at one particular moment is determined by the specific context. For example, when she deals with a person from the Samaroo clan, her Liban identity might be the most important. When she deals with an Amhara friend, her Oromoness might be the most important. And when she deals with her Oromo husband her womanhood might be the most important dimension of her identity. If her husband is an Amhara, her Oromoness, her womanhood, and her being Moslem may or may not be equally important depending on the issues raised.

The experiences of the ways in which each dimension of her identity intersects with the Ethiopian identity is unique to the individual woman. Scott (1992) argues that experience is both individual and social, subjective and objective, unconscious and conscious. Much as her experience creates the Oromo woman, she also creates her experience as an acting subject. Owing to her agency, therefore, her identity is neither static nor linear. Her alliances and allegiances shift dynamically. For example the woman can embrace Oromo religion and become a *Waqeffattuu*. She can also educate herself out of poverty and join the ranks of the elite. The intersection of these new identities with the Ethiopian identity spins her into yet another experiential space. Some dimensions of her identity mediate while others constrain her human possibilities.

Given this analysis then, all Oromos do not experience national oppression in the same way. For example, Oromos in the diaspora do not

experience the same degree of national oppression as Oromos in the homeland. Educated Oromos do not experience Abyssinian oppression in the same way as uneducated Oromos do. Oromo women of feudal upbringing do not experience oppression in the same way as Oromo women of peasant upbringing. Homogenizing these experiences is making a serious error that masks Oromo diversity and complexity.

An Oromo human rights approach to national liberation cannot afford an oversight of this dynamism, complexity, multiplicity and simultaneity of human identities. If it is to break the dichotomy of human rights and peoples' rights, this approach needs to challenge the view that puts the individual and the collective outside of each other. The individual and the collective are in a relation of interiority to each other, not of exteriority. One way to transcend the individual/social duality, as Mama (1995: 89) argues, is to start "viewing individuality as socially produced, while at the same time viewing sociality as produced within individual subjects." Indeed the dynamics of social forces get played out within the individual. We can then assert that both peoples' rights and human rights are achieved in the context of interpersonal relationships, thus validating a human rights approach. An individual Oromo agent is indeed an interweaving of multiple collective identities. To achieve a dynamic multidimensional and multileveled interaction between human rights and peoples' rights, then, we need to place the acting subject at the center of the national liberation struggle. An Oromo human rights approach necessitates that the Oromo people enter the struggle as social and political actors, as subjects and human beings who own their national liberation struggle. Ultimately, the liberation of the most oppressed of the oppressed as an acting human agent will be the litmus test for the success of the struggle and for the respect of both human rights and peoples' rights.

Linking Rights to Responsibility

If all we are concerned about is recognition of complexities and expression of differences, are we not dissolving in our individualities? If the rights of an individual begin where those of another end, where are we to draw the line of individual spaces? McNee (1997) observes how precolonial Africans resolved this dilemma by linking individual's rights to others' responsibilities. She argues that such blending of individual and collective rights recognizes the individual subject only within a social framework and the individual agent only with respect to other agents. If this agent acts from his/her own vantage point with others' vantage points in mind, then collective and individual rights and responsibilities meet here in this action.

This assertion begs the question: responsibility for what? But the answer may be inadequate without an understanding of how power is organized in a social setting. Foucault (1982) observes that social ties are embedded in complex relationships of power, and that people are multiply located in this web. As this web is riddled with inequality, we inhabit various positions of relative privilege and marginality. But these positions are more dynamic than static. Although the position of privilege is a comfortable place, in an unjust world this comfort comes at the expense of others. The same historical and political forces that structure our privilege also structure others' marginality and vice versa. For example, in many contexts, male is privileged over female, white over black, rich over poor, and educated over uneducated. These are structured by oppressive forces of sexism, racism, classism and elitism respectively.

If equality and justice are central to human rights, then the privileged must take responsibility for others' marginality. If we are wealthy, we are implicated in the poverty of others, if we are educated we are implicated in others' lack of opportunity to get education. Oromos of my generation were educated when over 95% of the Oromo people were denied the opportunity of literacy. We must take responsibility for our conscious or unconscious participation in oppressive systems of inequality. But what does it mean to take responsibility? Privilege is carefully hidden, normalized, and made invisible. Taking responsibility means to make our privileges visible in order to be able to combat it. It means to recognize that there are

oppressive dimensions in the multiplicity of our identities. Taking responsibility is standing in solidarity with the marginalized and fighting oppression. It means *liberating ourselves from these oppressive relationships* in terms of both our privilege and our marginality. And liberation means to rid ourselves of not only external oppressive structures, but also of the oppressive dimensions of our own identities. Standing in solidarity with the oppressed is not to save poor *them* or to liberate *them*. It is to liberate *us* too by *taking responsibility for participating in the marginality of others* as well as holding oppressors responsible for our marginality.

What characterizes the contemporary world is the globalization of capitalism and liberal ideology. But global capitalism is not as interested in democracy or Oromo liberation as it is in opening up the Oromo society to global markets (Robinson, 1997). Nor is the elusive liberal ideology really interested in human rights or peoples' rights (Wallerstein, 1997). A point of reassurance, however, is that local fragmenting processes are as equally at work in the contemporary world as global homogenizing ones (Hall, 1996; Cvetkovich and Kellner, 1997). This opens up space for resistance as well as the transformation of the concept and practice of human rights and peoples' rights. Indeed the intensification of globalization comes with both opportunities and limitations (Holcomb, 1999). As the Oromo society is an integral part of these global and local processes (Jalata, 1997), how might Oromo national liberation structure its struggle against internal, local, and global oppressive hierarchies? How might it avoid the pitfalls of other African nations whose nationalism ends up reproducing oppression (Davidson, 1992) and bring about radical transformation of the Oromo society in the context of such fluidity? If the various forms of oppression are interwoven, then the goal of Oromo national liberation, and the litmus test of its success, has to be the liberation of the most oppressed of the oppressed Oromo. How might an Oromo human rights approach strategize and organize resistance that interweaves both human rights and peoples' rights?

Organizing Resistance

So far I have argued against dichotomizing human rights and peoples' rights. I have deconstructed the oppressive elements of oppositional

binaries. But deconstruction is not an end in itself. It is a means to the goal of creative reconstruction. It is a tool not only for tearing down, but also for innovative rebuilding, for inventing a uniquely Oromo national liberation. This needs a creative taking account of both global and local contexts. Hitherto Oromo liberation organizations have been envisioned and structured in a binary world with monolithic mutually exclusive entities like West/East capitalism/socialism, oppressor/oppressed, imperialist/anti-imperialist, and colonizer/colonized placed at each pole. Power in such a world is perceived to be concentrated in central state structures. Thus, at least in theory, Oromo nationalists aspired for monolithic, centrally-controlled organizations to counter what they perceived as centrally-controlled state repression. Although such organizations have managed to keep the struggle going so far, I contend that they will not lead to transformation and liberation at least for three reasons.

First, any dichotomy is defined by its relationship to the oppositional Other, rather than by its own uniqueness and internal constructs. Therefore, it is bound to remain locked to and dependent on its Other (Collins, 1997). Defined from the very outset against Ethiopian nationalism and its oppressive state structures, Oromo nationalism and Oromo liberation organizations are bound to remain dependent on and tied to the Ethiopian Other. Unless they also define themselves by their own internal uniqueness, antagonistic external relationships alone will not lead to Oromo liberation. Simple reversal strategies do not transform oppressive relationships. Second, hierarchically organized and centrally-controlled monolithic structures may replace Abyssinians by Oromos, but they do not lead to liberation as they continue to reproduce oppression. This may open state bureaucracies to the Oromo elite as Robinson (1997) argues, but it does not achieve the respect of human rights or peoples' rights. Third, monolithic organizations that attempt to erase differences are bound to explode by the very forces of the differences they suppress. By denying a space for difference, they end up defeating the purpose of liberation. As the historical and political conditions that produced rigid monolithic organizations have shifted in the contemporary world, we need to explore more flexible and dynamic organizational structures that counter the current fluidity.

How, then, can resistance be organized without depending on the

Ethiopian Other, and without dichotomizing or hierarchizing human rights and peoples' rights? Although a cookbook solution is impossible, it seems worthwhile to suggest an alternative approach to organizing, however partial and provisional it might be. For this, I will critically appropriate and weave together Foucault's (1980a, 1980b, 1982, 1990) insights into how power and resistance are organized; Collins' (1990, 1997) insights into multiple and interlocking forms of oppression; Scott's (1992) theorizing of experience; Mama's (1995) insights into the multiplicity of identities and the role of the unconscious; and Freire's (1997) concept of conscientization.

Although Foucault (1980a, 1980b, 1990) refrains from offering concrete strategies, his insights into power and resistance might provide a *helpful starting point*. According to him, power is not only repressive; it is also creative. Power is not monolithic; it is exercised in multiple forms at multiple points. Power is not concentrated in state structures; it is diffuse and found everywhere unevenly. And wherever there is power there is resistance. But power and resistance are not mutually exclusive antagonistic entities. They are interwoven and coextensive. Just like power, resistance also has multiple points of application. Foucault asserts that it is the strategic codification of these myriad points of resistance that makes a revolution possible.

These insights provide the basis for an alternative strategy of mobilizing and organizing resistance. If oppressive power is applied in many forms at many levels and if there is resistance wherever there is power, then the Oromo people are *de facto* engaged in resistance against many forms of oppression at many levels. Thus a liberation organization does not impose its own formula of resistance on the people. Rather, it effectively taps into the people's extant resistance by engaging them as active human subjects and agents in their own liberation. In the process, they change repressive power to creative power. To achieve this, instead of a centrally-controlled hierarchical organization, leaders facilitate a liberation organization in multiple forms with multiple centers and multiple leaders. For example, they bring together Oromo youth, women's, elders', beggars', blacksmiths', faith, regional, lawyers', and teachers' groups with a single goal of Oromo liberation. An individual can be a member of so many groups simultaneously as these are not rigid, essential monolithic identity structures. They are

internally diverse overlapping and shifting categories that create new forms from the neighborhood to the global levels. They are flexible structures that fit both the structures of the Oromo society and the fluid context of the contemporary world.

Validating and tapping into the everyday resistance of ordinary Oromo people renders the organization accessible and makes it easier for the people to own the struggle. Thus people struggle as they live their daily lives and live their lives as they struggle. Such organization does not separate people's lives from peoples' struggle. It only facilitates the pooling of resistance; it does not control. It does not impose unity. Instead, it allows space for unity as a natural development of interaction among acting human agents.

While such structures address the multiplicity and complexity of identities (Collins, 1990, 1997; Mama, 1995), they do not tend to the unconscious experience (Scott, 1992). They engage people in challenging and changing external structures. But the organization also needs to put in place flexible structures for micro processes to challenge and change unconscious structures at the interpersonal and intra-personal levels (Mama, 1995). This is a difficult area that fetters the liberation struggle because people's stated beliefs and values often differ from their actual practices. When the conscious efforts push the struggle forward, the unconscious pulls it back. To avoid such paralysis and to enhance liberation both from external structures and their invisible internalized versions, the organization needs to start the slow process of narrowing the gap between the conscious and the unconscious practices. It needs to provide space for reflexivity, circles not only for individuals and groups but also for the organization to critically reflect upon itself. This process brings to light the invisible oppressive dimensions of the multiple identities in the individual, the group, and the organization. Naming the unconscious experience and making it visible opens up space for taking responsibility. With the awareness that one's privilege is structured by other's marginality, people take responsibility to challenge and change their own participation in such systems of oppression.

Just as it needs to embrace multiplicity and incorporate the unconscious, the organization also needs to be perpetually dynamic. Although Freire's (1997) oppressed and oppressors are monolithic categories

of identity, his concept of conscientization is extremely important in addressing the dynamism and fluidity of the organization even in the context of multiple identities. Conscientization is revolutionary praxis by which people actively engage in a constant cycle of action-reflection-action. The organization provides space for critical reflection that informs action and action that necessitates further critical reflection. While dialogue as a human phenomenon provides the vehicle for such transformation, the fluid structures of the organization enable it to shift with the shifting consciousness and action. Such an arrangement leaves enough room for uneven shifts and unequal paces for humans engaged in the process of liberation. It will also allow room for multiple coalitions at multiple levels among Oromos and with other peoples.

There are many reasons why such an Oromo organization will lead to the liberation of the most oppressed of the oppressed. This strategy of organizing invents a uniquely Oromo nationalism, nation, and national, thus abandoning the second-hand bourgeois models. It does not define itself solely against its *Ethiopian Other* as it taps into its own unique human identities and material resources. It targets internal, local and global hierarchies of oppression, thus opening up spaces that facilitate multiple coalitions at multiple levels. This dissipates the fear that Oromos cannot be democratic with other oppressed peoples if they are not democratic among themselves. It breaks the fettering dichotomies I discussed in this paper, including that of human rights and peoples' rights. It takes equality and justice right into the heart of the struggle by linking rights to responsibilities. It recognizes that there is no quick-fix to age-old problems and that there is no zero-sum all-or-none solution. Thus, in the sense that it is strictly processual, it is a vindication of Freire's (1997) claim that liberation is neither gift nor self-achievement but a mutual process. It is a process of liberation by which Oromos reinvent themselves as free human beings both as individuals and as a people.

Endnotes

1. For more in-depth reading of this view, see Marasinghe, Laksham (1984). *Traditional Conceptions of Human Rights in Africa*, in

Human Rights and Development in Africa. Edited by Claude E. Welch Jr. and Ronald I. Meltzer, pp. 32-45. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press. Also see Mudimbe, V. Y. (1988). *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

2. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights was adopted by the Organization of African Unity in 1981 and ratified in 1986.
3. My assertion here is based on my correspondence with officials of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in the context of comparing the support the various liberation fronts in the Ethiopian Empire and relief agencies received. The rank-ordering of peoples and peoples' struggles was clear.
4. For details on the unfairness of elections see NDI, 1992; NIHR, 1992; Tronvil and Øyvind, 1995; Tronvil, 1997.
5. My source here is my personal correspondence files based on which I wrote reports to human rights groups and a government lobby group in Canada. Also see Trueman, 1998; Amnesty International's annual reports 1992-present; International Freedom of Expression (IFEX) Clearing House on Ethiopia; Oromia Support Group, all issues of Sagalee Haaraa; Oromo Ex-Prisoners Committee, all issues of Gadadoo; Lammii Guddaa, 1997.
6. See Government of Ethiopia's Conference Proceedings on the establishment of Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Institution of Ombudsman. Addis Ababa May 18-22, 1998.
7. My assertion here is based on my experience as a member of a Diaspora Oromo human rights lobby group.
8. For this assertion I draw on the dialogue in an Oromo Internet discussion group, 1998.
9. This is a persistent theme in my experience with the Oromo study circles of the 1970s and the present Oromo Internet discussion groups.

10. Most of the arguments in this section are distilled from my observations, my personal correspondence files, and my dialogues with Oromo individuals and groups.
11. Here, I am referring to the OLF political program which clearly states that it fights against all forms of oppression and discrimination.
12. For details on the shrouded nature of nations see Amin (1997); on the genocide and ethnocide of the nation-state see Berghe, 1992.
13. Here, I am contrasting the Democratic Republic of Oromia stated in the political program of the OLF and other Oromo organizations, to the Oromo organizations whose goal is liberating the Oromo national within a democratized state of Ethiopia (e.g. Merera Gudina's Oromo National Congress).
14. For critiques of Afrocentrism and andro/gynocentrism, see Akinyela (1995) and Eichler (1987) respectively.
15. For more details on interlocking oppressions and multiplicity of identity, see Collins, (1990) and Mama (1995).
16. For more details see Howard, 1990.

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INTERMEDIATE TECHNOLOGY FOR UNDERDEVELOPED NATIONS

Asfaw Beyene

Introduction

Intermediate technology can be viewed as a customized extension of sustainable development which global political and philosophical advocates claim is a progressive and responsible human interaction with the environment. The most commonly used definition of the term *Sustainable Development* is suggested by the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Commission, formulated in a 1987 report on *Our Common Future*. The report states that *sustainable development* is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The popularity of the term stems from synthesizing environmental protection and economic growth. This fitting global definition ignores important aspect of sustainability in its *third world* dimension. The import of high tech goods without protracted ability to manage and maintain such commodities is less useful than a traditional tool that can be effectively employed and operated by the end-users. For a technology to be sustainable, in addition to responding to environmental demands, complexity of the equipment must also match the users' expertise. Such *intermediate technology* [1] best guarantees continued development of a society. *Intermediate technology* is therefore, a means of development that addresses collective needs of the society, mindful of environmental concerns and conforming to the skill level of the society. The definition of *appropriate technology* offered by the Office of Technology Assessment of the United States comes the closest to definition of intermediate technology. It defines appropriate technology as small scale, energy efficient, environmentally sound, labor intensive, and controlled by the local community[35]. Emphasizing the need for

matching skills and societies, Gamser, Appleton, and Carter argue that even technology aid shipped by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to needy areas fails when it fails to work with local innovation [17].

Perhaps, the defining hallmark of countries known as *third world* is that they import much more technology outputs than they produce. Effective use of any technology however, greatly depends on systematic maintenance of parts and systems according to specifications. Such manufacturer supplied maintenance guidelines can be complex with extensive instrumentation and trained personnel requirements. This paper discusses the significance of intermediate technology as a development tool, and also reflects upon implications of high tech imports to nations such as Oromia. In addressing these issues, only factors related to engineering feasibility are discussed briefly. Political consequences such as foreign capital flow or fair resource distribution are beyond the scope of this paper.

Marketing and Policy

By reason of political realities, Oromia's industrialization policy is a component of the Ethiopian policy. A standalone policy recommendation as a bureaucratic statement, within the current political configuration, is therefore nonsense. But, it is commonly known that political decisions and policies drive development. Thus, a legitimate question comes to mind: what is the purpose of such a scholarly paper, and what is the role of the intellectual, in a situation where a nation cannot and does not define its own socio-political or economic program? For instance, addressing a similar situation, Redclift [42] notes the difficulties of building a sustainable development while most of the best land in Kenya was reserved for the colonizers, and the indigenous population forced to marginal land. This was written over a decade ago to address colonial structure, and the topic will continue to be of profound interest into the 21st century, to articulate the legacy of colonial rules in defining *intermediate technology*. This political challenge should not discourage analysis of future options and research topics. The alternative, waiting for political breakthroughs to conduct research and scholarly appraisal of vital development issues, would be more

damaging. Besides, the author is optimistic that a bulk of the research conclusions may still diffuse through the unfavorable bureaucracy or at least shelved for later use. Thus, a knowledge base for intermediate technology must be gathered, and a progressive agenda formulated to facilitate a quick adoption and transition to full scale development and growth once self determination is achieved in political terms, even if an immediate use and application of the results of such analyses may not be apparent.

The West has developed complex policies and regulations to address and cultivate growth. A market-driven economy is a recipe propagated by the West for developing countries, which, in some cases has proven to offer less than a desired outcome. Consequently, the internal markets of the same Western countries have implemented policies that betray free competition in favor of sustainability through decrees and regulations. For example, the California Energy Institute provides financial incentives to consumers who purchase energy-efficient appliances such as refrigerators and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests tax benefits for products and technologies that reduce material or hazardous waste. Even in some European countries there is a limit on the maximum power of imported automobiles. The system is not entirely a market-driven free economy, because the most affordable and profit making tools can also be the most polluting and unsustainable. In other words, its long term cost to society could outweigh its temporary personal benefit to the individual. Valuing the welfare of the society over the individual is deeply rooted in Oromo and other African cultures. Guidelines and regulations that enforce environmental protection will be well received in Oromia once promoted and organized quasi-administratively.

Discussing the impact of political and economic policies on *appropriate technology*, Stewart [47] presents case studies from his African experience. He makes it apparent that *third world* countries have historically undermined policies on technology imports or development. When such policies existed, they tended to be too simplistic or too ambitious. This is primarily because short term market profitability, and not long-term sustainable growth drives the economic agenda. Well-packaged cargo deliveries with imported goods ranging from expensive

automobiles for dusty roads to stereo equipment for a noisy street, reach African ports every day to be distributed to a highly organized internal market. Commodities are distributed with precision and calculation that outshine the level of technology. In the 1960s, India's government ambitiously carved a policy to invest in large-scale steel production at the cost of small-scale industry involved in agricultural production. Products of India's heavy industry competed with Europe, Japan, and America with meager and limited access to the highly competitive US and European markets. According to Hazeltine and Bull, the Indian semiconductor industry spent \$45 million to produce devices worth \$15 million [20]. Deeply affected by this failing program, India changed its policy in the 1970s in favor of developing small-scale manufacturing targeted at rural areas. India's industrial strength also depends on the need to export sustainable technology that can be understood and adopted by importers. This requires offering simpler and affordable alternatives to the high-tech Western industry. In the 1960s, China on the other hand, focused on developing heavy industry alongside small-scale manufacturing that also supported its agricultural technology. As a result, China exhibited industrial growth in all sectors requiring no costly policy changes.

Another aspect of *intermediate technology and sustainable development* policies is waste minimization. Waste reduction enhances *manufacturing performance* in a competing global market and also promotes a clean environment. Recyclers in the USA get tax breaks and other incentives to compete with suppliers of raw materials which are often available at lower cost than the recyclable goods. The US EPA policy also includes preferences on waste reduction and recycling methods. As such, source reduction of hazardous waste is more preferred to end-of-the-pipe type treatment. Yet, the US disposes 4.4 lb./person per day of solid waste, the largest amount of waste disposed per person in the world. This large amount consists of such general trash materials as 247 million tires, 2 billion razor blades, and 1.6 billion pens every year [24]. For this reason, recycling has come to the forefront of environmental issues in the US and other industrialized countries. Unfortunately, in most or all developing countries, including nations such as Oromia, recycling is still driven by needs, not policies, and

remains peripheral to a sustainable development agenda. The future progress of Oromia also depends how it deals with the environmental problems associated with waste.

As one of the few countries, Ghana has a successful *intermediate technology* policy, targeting small-scale industry and emphasizing on technology transfer. John Powell [37] discusses the establishment of intermediate technology transfer cells throughout Ghana, a potentially attainable policy in Oromia. The reader may also consult several case studies of technology transfers discussed by Buatsi [12], although few are results of comprehensive policy implementation. Oromia and others can duplicate such technologies and their mechanisms of transfer.

Once the political realities are favorable, development policies of the future nation of Oromia must target light scale, small and mid-size industry [2]. Small and mid-sized plants are well defined in the industrialized world, initially by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) established on December 14, 1960 in Paris to promote sustainable economic growth. Members of OECD included Australia, Japan, USA, Turkey, Canada, Greece, Iceland, New Zealand, and countries of Western Europe [13]. The group formally associated sustainable growth with small and mid-sized plants probably for the first time, and addressed the issue charting an industrial policy. The OECD committee addressed diffusion of technology, the creation of new firms, supportive networks, financial incentives, and regulatory frameworks for target industries. As explained by King and McGrath, small and medium firms were recognized and encouraged as components of sustainable growth [28]. Such strategic approaches are exactly how *intermediate technology* policies should be fashioned in Oromia and elsewhere in Africa.

Historical Background of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development was seriously embraced as a pan-African agenda only recently. The Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment (CAMSDE) convened its first session in Finfinne (Addis Ababa) in March 1996 [25]. Several regional meetings have taken place in the

years leading to this ministerial conference. The very idea of Managing growth was received suspiciously, particularly when propagated by Europe and America. The August 1990 issue of the ECA Environment newsletter [26] commenting on World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) initiatives that promoted sustainable development in Africa through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) wrote that SAP had debilitating consequences on African development because institutions “dictating them are governed by market forces in their operations.” The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) came up with an African Alternative to Structural Adjustment Programs and Transformation. Thus, the ideas forwarded by the WB and the IMF have at least coerced the ECA into commencing an in-house growth agenda and development strategy. The concept of sustainable growth in Africa was further promoted by international events such as the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The twenty years between the 1972 Stockholm meeting and the Rio summit produced little change in African understanding of *intermediate technology*, other than the limited agenda setting by numerous scholars and policy-makers. The Rio summit formulated the now-famous *Agenda 21* for environmentally sustainable development [3]. It is within such global recognition that the concept of sustainability must be refined and pragmatically adopted for use by nations in Africa.

Several governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work towards a type of sustainable development that favors the environment more than they work for intermediate technology. Most of these organizations are based in Europe and America. The Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE) was founded in 1989 to enhance international cooperation between parliamentarians on global environmental issues. It has branch offices in Brussels, Tokyo, Moscow, and Washington, DC [4]. The list of NGOs established to promote a clean environment and related other missions are too numerous to list.

A few grassroots organizations have contributed to the rising consciousness of *sustainable and intermediate technology* in developing countries. Redclift introduces one such case as the Chipko movement of India [40] started in 1974 to integrate conservation of natural resources

with maintenance of livelihood and preservation of culture and tradition. It stems from traditional values that allowed management of forests as common resources with unwritten but strict codes. In a similar style, Oromos traditionally know when to label trees or hunted animals as endangered, thereby imposing moratoriums on cutting or killing. Another African grassroots effort is The Green Belt movement [41] of Kenya, started by Kenyan women in 1977. The movement emphasized dependence on local expertise and capabilities. The women identified forest losses as a serious cause of soil erosion and land degradation. Despite of these positive developments, there are still socio-political challenges of building a sustainable society.

While Africa, with the exception of few countries, still suffers from a serious lack of adequate organizational skills and technical leadership to cultivate *intermediate technology*, Asia and South America continue to produce organized institutions to address or implement renewable technology. For example, the Pacific Island countries united to contest negative impacts of Western technology including the export of toxic and hazardous waste [29]. Among African countries, Ghana has made considerable progress establishing *intermediate technology* as a relevant vehicle for development. Ian Smillie [46] discusses Ghana's profound efforts in advancing new small-scale technologies as a model for others to follow.

Unique Features of Intermediate Technology

Technology growth has an evolutionary trend that has to follow a sequence of innovative steps. Industrial revolution involves the rapid impact of a series of breakthrough principles. Just as coal heated water to steam, which in turn drove pistons, and pistons later turned wheels, so the transition from industrial revolution to electronic complexity for high-tech nations is characterized by continuous hierarchical growth of knowledge through invention, application, and maintenance. In other words, quite literally, knowledge gave birth to knowledge of higher form and complexity. The history of development itself lends credibility to engineering landmarks that benefitted from the advances and failures of millions of unknown thinkers that contributed to the genius of inventors

such as Newton or Euler. Authors of new ideas have always relied on the preceding experiences of others. The history of energy conversion is a very good example of development as a continuous thought process. Giovanni Branca proposed the first steam turbine in 1629. It took about 70 years for Thomas Newcomen to build the first steam engine in 1700 [10], another 91 years for John Barber to patent the idea of gas turbine engine. This patent was built to run in 1930 by Frank Whittle, almost 140 years after the idea was patented. The jet engine flew 9 years after the successful design. Nuclear fusion was discovered by Otto Hahn in 1938 and Enrico Fermi came up with his own invention of nuclear fission. So, Western technology grew from the horse wheel, through the early diesel and steam propulsion, the next two strokes Otto cycle, to the advanced multi-cylinder reciprocating engines, and to today's high temperature rocket engines. The 1969 visit of man to the moon and France's Superphenix reactor of the 1986 are recent chapters of the endless pyramid of technology growth, standing in a queue of knowledge marching to the unknown future. A concise illustration of industrial revolution is presented by Grosser [19].

Today, *third world* countries face a huge challenge, lagging behind in this exponential growth of Western-dominated technology, particularly during the last century. The lag in industrial technology and the associated heavy consumption of imported goods has impacted *third world* countries and disrupted the chain of creativity. There can be computer programmers in Oromia or Nigeria with excellent skills, tapping centuries of Euro-American erudition, but lacking knowledge of waffles and etching of computer chips and boards manufactured through decades of accumulated know-how. At the center of such random growth lies an African industrial dilemma of which Oromia a part. Generating a creative idea requires an enriched environment forged by needs and necessities.

Imports subvert this environment by preempting needs and necessities. Planning and promoting industrial growth as a strategic component of development, in a global market, is a serious challenge. The possession of a high-tech commodity in Africa is a shortcut to Euro-American comfort, a refuge from African hardship and discomfort. Meanwhile, the need to attract middle class intellectuals who may

otherwise prefer to live in the West, the demand to import high-tech appropriate technologies, and other political factors such as the right of the individual to city comfort, will force the import doors wide open. On the other hand, community rights to cultivate growth and nurture local creativity, combined with cultural and traditional barriers to technological changes in the rural areas, must be properly balanced with forces of the import market. This apparent dichotomy makes the topic of *intermediate technology* urgent in nations such as Oromia.

It has been documented consistently that indigenous techniques have been used successfully to convert and harvest soil and water, coping with existing difficult conditions and adapting to changing circumstances for generations [43]. Strictly speaking, in light of such natural human tendencies to overcome difficulties, import itself is a necessary evil, an inappropriate decision for self support as it interferes with small-scale technology growth which must be inspired and supported at the individual and community level. An import-dominated market may stimulate some service-based technology areas, but innovators are less motivated to solve engineering or scientific social problems. As social problems are temporarily solved by imports, the moral and financial incentives to pursue creative ideas diminish. The result is stagnated internal growth. The import market creates a wealthy middle class whose interest lies in importing and profiting. Compared to an import strategy, invention is unreliable, costly, and has a long pay back period to investment. With an unproven track record for reliability and with less capital disposition, the internal technical growth sector faces an uphill battle competing with wealthy businessmen of the lucrative import/export market.

African education also tends to be unbalanced with social science dominating academia. The highly accomplished educators of Africa are trained in a high tech Euro-American educational system that is developed to serve Euro-American industrialized society. African home countries do not have the supporting network or even the capacity to use complex mathematical modeling of the human heart or for an aerodynamic test of a spacecraft wing. Yet it is only human to take any challenge as an individual, be the challenge in line with ones nationalist needs or not, solely as proof of ones determination. The problem of

adopting the high end of technology research to the needs of Africa or Oromia is an issue rarely raised in African academic curriculum. The few schools offering majors in sustainable technology are outside Africa [5].

In recent years, the Oromo and African peasants have faced human-made crises. The difficult conditions and demoralizing prospects for the future have undermined rural welfare and stability by migration of farmers to the cities. Bryceson, Kay, and Mooij illustrate the pressures that have befallen African peasants[11]. In such "even worse to come" scenarios, *intermediate technology* can be a timely alternative to help farmers cope with these challenges.

It is essential though, not to dismiss high-tech imports for developing countries totally. *Intermediate technology* should be promoted selectively, without negating imports of complex but sustainable and necessary technologies. For example, it may be more technically and economically sound to develop a wireless telephone system in Oromia than wiring the remote villages with old and expensive technology. It has also been difficult to retain telephone wires in many developing countries because copper lines can easily be dismantled and stolen. Thus, the primary emphasis should focus on excluding inappropriate technologies at the cost of promoting appropriate ones, a few examples of which are listed and discussed below.

Energy

Economic growth is closely linked to a progressive increase in energy consumption. Ethiopia has a per capita energy consumption of 20 kg of coal equivalent whereas Sweden has a per capita energy consumption of 6,000 kg of coal equivalent [21]. The amount of energy a house needs is determined by climatic and social conditions. A typical Oromo family's energy needs are for cooking, lighting, and space heating in the rainy season. Let us assess a hypothetical home with basic energy needs as shown in table 1. The enormous benefits of electrification both to the household and the environment can be illustrated as follows. The calculated daily electric

Table 1. Hypothetical energy need of a household.

Application	Wattage	Hours per day	Watt.hr/day
Light bulbs	4x50	5	1000
Stove	1400W	2	2800
Pumps, drills, etc.	250W	1	250
radio stereo	100	3	300
Total	1950 W	11	4350

use of 4.35-kilowatt hours (kWh) at an estimated cost of 15 Ethiopian Cents (EC) would amount to about 65 EC a day, just under 20 Birr a month. At about 10 US cents, this same energy would cost about \$13/month in the USA (but of course a typical US household consumes ten times this total). A 300-watt (W) refrigerator running for 5 hrs per day would add 1500-watt hour per day (Wh/day) or 6.75 *Birr* per month. Since 1 kWh = 3,600 kilo joules (kJ), the 1950 W or 1.95 kW translates to 7020 kJ of energy per day. Assuming 10,000 kJ/kg of Heating Value for wood with 10% transfer efficiency, over 7 kg of wood must be burnt in each home to deliver an equivalent amount of energy.

For a 10 million family society, which can be considered reflective of the Oromo population, this could mean 70,000 tons of wood burnt each day, a heavy and unsustainable load on a society and the environment. For a countryside home in Oromia, fire burning lasts about 2 hours for cooking, and five hours for heating and lighting each day. The fire, however, must be maintained over 24 hours period for re-initiation in the evening. Since cooking is the main load, more wood energy is probably required than the figures assumed above, and the addition of a pump and other miscellaneous equipment, unlikely to exist in a typical wood burning home, should not drastically impact the above estimate. This requires a comprehensive energy and electrification policy. A comforting side of these depressing numbers is that dried wood

is collected for fire where possible. But, it is also common to cut and leave the tree until it dries for fire. Thus, an attempt to evaluate the net impact of fuel wood on a society faces complex issues that cannot be itemized. For example, the human energy required to transport the fuel by piling of dry wood on the back of a woman, is another depressing picture in the African panorama. This example and other social factors add intricacy to the complexity of the energy problem.

Oromia is endowed with energy resources such as coal, biomass, solar energy and natural gas. The need for petroleum fuels is limited. Current natural gas reserves are estimated to be 24 million cubic meters. Consumption of liquid fuel products for Ethiopia is approximately 700,000 tons per annum or 14,000 barrels per day. This amounts to about 14 kg/person per year of liquid fuel consumption - very low by all international standards.

The electricity industry is regulated by the Ministry of Mines and Energy. Recently, the Ethiopian National Energy Committee (ENEC) was established to deal with issues related to the energy sector including petroleum exploration. Petroleum refining and supply facilities are regulated by the Ethiopian Petroleum Corporation (EPC). The Ethiopian Electric Light & Power Authority (EELPA) is responsible for electricity generation and supply in Ethiopia. The EELPA operates an interconnected transmission grid centered in Finfinne (Addis Ababa).

The main transportation fuel source is imported oil which accounts for 45% of export earnings. The transport sector consumes more than 70% of imported oil while the agriculture sector uses only 3%. Ethiopia has one refinery, shared with Eritrea until the recent war. The 870,000 tons per annum Asab refinery, operating based on simple hydro-skimming principles, was operated by the EPC. The World Bank (WB) has suggested privatizing the refinery to allow distributors such as Shell, Mobil, Total and Agip to operate in a competitive market and also to encourage investment in storage facilities. As a result, the government has drafted a law on the privatization of electricity supply recently and submitted to the Council of Ministers. The draft law facilitates the generation of electricity from water, petroleum products, wind, geothermal power and sunlight with a limit of up to 25 megawatts (MW). Currently, distribution and marketing of fuel is carried out by Shell

(35.8%), Agip (22%), Total (18.8%) and Mobil (26.2%). The Ethiopian Oil & Gas Exploration & Development Corporation, Ethiopian Petroleum Corp., Kalub Gas Company, Total Mer Rouge SA are new additions to the energy market. Annual petroleum tax revenue is approximately \$53 million and represents 84% of government indirect taxes. Note that diesel, kerosene, and LPG are priced below their import values, apparently to conform to the standard of living. The 1990 Finfinne (Addis Ababa) pricing is shown in the table below in Ethiopian cents per liter (table 2).

Table 2. Import and retail prices of petroleum products in Ethiopia for 1990 [30]

Product	Import Price	Retail Price
Petrol	80.3	150.0
Diesel	82.7	78.0
Kerosene	83.1	65.4
LPG	88.2	68.0
Fuel Oil	55.8	59.9

Oromia has significant hydropower potential. The current government claims that it has electrified 146 towns, increasing electric customers from 400,000 in 1991 to 550,000 [31]. There are several projects currently underway including a 34 MW hydroelectric power plant on the Fincha River in western Oromia. The second, Qoqa dam on Awash River, is to be upgraded. A 230 kilovolt (kV) power distribution station is to be constructed to enhance the northern grid and supply power services to Alamaxa, and Mekele. A 132 kV distribution has been completed to supply power from Gedo to Gimbi through Naqamte. Two new hydroelectric power stations are being built in the Nile river basin. The construction is being carried out by Chinese and Yugoslav firms. Another hydroelectric power station on Gilgel-Gibe is also under construction with a \$200 million loan from the WB.

Ethiopia's power supply, and hence Oromia's, is almost totally dependent on hydroelectric energy. Future energy supplies might then fluctuate with droughts and river levels. In fear of similar total weather dependency, the Kenyan government plans to diversify power generation with now operating wind, thermal, geothermal, and even photovoltaic energies. As a result, about 3/4 of its 527 megawatts that will be connected to the national grid by the year 2003 will be generated from non-hydro power sources [32]. This is a significant move from Kenya's current 80% hydropower supply. Oromia's future dependency on hydroelectric power can be of a serious concern since energy supplies would depend on unpredictable weather and climate changes. Another neighboring country, the Sudan has a fairly diversified energy supply with 45% of the installed capacity of 500 MW from hydroelectric power. In a future energy market, neighboring countries excess energy such as that of Sudan can be a vital source of peak energy supply during hours of high demand, as is the case in Europe and America, where countries and States share electric and natural gas through interconnected networks of distribution.

It is well known that electrification of villages is one of the driving tools of development. It is safe and appropriate whenever the demanding maintenance and operation are conducted by trained and qualified personnel. However, uncontrolled multiple grid power generation can be both hazardous and costly. In the US, the permits required for power generation have discouraged even Co-generation plants for years, despite their superior overall efficiency.

Inappropriate Technology

Inappropriate technology decisions are common across the *third world*. As a result of the 1954 US atomic tests, the people residing in Utrek nearby Bikini were exposed to heavy doses of radioactivity. Drinking water was polluted and animals were declared inedible. With NASA's support, the Hughes Corporation offered to install its surplus space photovoltaic equipment to produce electricity [8]. The US government funded the project as compensation to the Bikini victims. One year later, an expert was sent to the field to evaluate the

performance of the system and witnessed near total failure. The inability of the locals to maintain the photovoltaic equipment was not to blame. Conditions on the hot and humid island were drastically different from the dry and cold spaces for which the batteries were designed. This led to the failure of the system. The habitats of the island made little use of the resource. If the concept of *intermediate* technology had been understood by the engineers who built the system, the technology could have made a difference.

In the Ethiopian case, the government imported several tractors to the Didhessa valley for large-scale farming in the 1980s. This was at a time when corporate farming was highly unpopular in the country and large-scale farming was a state monopoly. Morale and dedication to communal farming were low. In the background of such political realities, large numbers of tractors were imported from East Germany. After a single season, parts needed to be replaced or serviced. This was not an easy thing to do in the middle of the Didhessa valley, far from the tractor plants of East Germany. Sustained arrangements for service had not been made. The fleet of tractors was soon decommissioned, one after another. Part of the fault lay with East Germany. The times were tough even for East German farmers because the tractor company did not produce enough parts for its own internal market. In fact a close look at East European command economies shows that maintenance was chronically neglected.

An additional burden to the Didhessa tractors was that the equipment was designed to cut the wet soils of East Germany. They were not designed to run in a dusty and bushy environment like that of western Oromia. Hence, the expensive venture was a total failure leaving shells of tractors in remote parts of the valley, standing witness to random technology decisions, which the author calls inappropriate technology. Several inappropriate technology decisions of tremendous waste can be cited in Ethiopia or Africa, ranging from purchase of expensive farm combines to building high-cost industries.

A case of failed power generation in the small town of Sibu Sire in western Oromia is typical of administrative misjudgement. A local entrepreneur installed a diesel motor to run a milling plant during the day and to produce electricity for the town in the evening [6]. The poles

were planted, the wires networked, and the town electrified early in the 1960s. But it was only months into the bill collection process that the astute businessman encountered serious problems. There had been no metering devices installed to measure the usage of power because metering would have increased the cost of implementation. Instead, flat fees were charged on a per bulb wattage basis. This made sense because the central power was turned off at a specified time, and most bulbs were on during the four or five daily hours of evening operation. However, the owner spent most of his day negotiating due days for the monthly bills of his generator, and many just did not take the modern alternative serious enough, and to many others the few dollars of monthly expense came too suddenly in place of the five cents of daily kerosene expense. Without collecting the monthly bills, the owner could not maintain the plant to run more hours requiring more fuel. As a result, the electric generation was turned off, and the town went back to burning lamps of kerosene. Maintenance and the administrative needs of the generator had been totally underestimated in the initial phase of this innovative process, and consequently the entire idea was defeated, despite the heavy financial up-front cost of the infrastructure. We can learn from these mistakes.

Examples of Intermediate Technology

This section is an attempt to draw the readers attention to the topic by providing simple examples of possible changes in the Oromian scenario. A more complete list of such transferable technologies is available in the literature, for instance in VITA [48].

Stove: In a traditional Oromo stove (Figure 1) the fire is located between three stones supporting a pot. Combustion is controlled via the loading of fuel, the wood in this case. The open fire creates a draft drawing more air from the surroundings. The fresh air increases the speed at which the wood burns, and can also be used for controlling the rate of burning. Since the fire is typically close to the ground, the fuel near the floor is exposed to less air, creating a poor air to fuel ratio. The combustion is incomplete with lots of smoke. Only 10 to 15% of the heat produced in

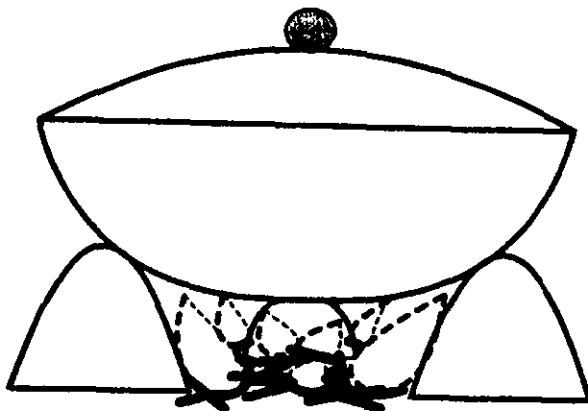


Fig. 1. Open fire place

the open fire stove in this manner reaches the desired target of heating the pot. The open fire stove is easy and affordable to build. There are other stove designs with simple modifications to the open fire stove. One such case is the Damru Chulha designed by Agricultural Tools Research Center [7] in Bardoli, India with 30% efficiency. It can be built simply by a local potter at a cost of about US \$4. More refined open-air wood stove designs of up to 40% efficiency are possible. An example of such a high efficiency stove is the rim oven of Botswana, which has received wide acceptance by small-scale commercial bakeries in rural areas of that country [44].

These design examples illustrate that several improvements can be made to the highly inefficient open fire stove. A chimney system, which has been utilized in Europe and elsewhere, could wipe out the smoke, thus improving the indoor air quality. A simple rock that serves as a thermal energy storage, and a portable insulation for the cooking hours could also save the hard-earned dry firewood. Raising the fire off the ground, preferably on a grate, is another simple measure. Raising the combustion floor is a relatively easy measure in most parts of Oromia since fireplaces are located centrally in the house requiring no mobility.

The incoming air and the smoke flow can be controlled by the grate. A box with a damper under the fireplace can also be used to control the airflow and regulate the rate of combustion. These measures do not require large resources, and can be mastered locally. Such a simple, creatively organized combustion location can make a big difference in the health of the family and also reduce the number of trees cut for firewood. They can be more optimized by additional research, as was done in Guatemala after the strong 1976 earthquake. The high demand for rebuilding homes following the earthquake caused a severe shortage of firewood. A program was initiated to improve stove efficiency and reduce wood burning. An appropriate stove was designed by Provecho Institute in Eugene, Oregon, USA [14]. It was built from a solid block of sand and clay with a firebox and holes for pots. A chimney was added for better smoke circulation. The stove was widely and positively received by the affected population in Guatemala. Reiterating, the firebox, the damper, and the chimney are key components that could be added to all stoves across Oromia.

Virtually every home requires some form of energy. Heat is used for cooking and space heating. Wood has a very low Heating Value, also known as Enthalpy of Combustion, which is a measure of energy extractable from a given fuel. The term is called Higher Heating Value (HHV) if water vapor is found in the combustion product, or Lower Heating Value if otherwise [23]. The most frequently cited value is the HHV since vapor is a common unavoidable byproduct of the combustion process. The HHV of wood at room temperature varies from 8000 to 15500 kJ/kg. The HHV of benzene is 41825 kJ/kg, typically lower than for most other hydrocarbon fuels. It is in the 25000-kJ/kg range for coal, but can be as low as that of wood for low grade coal [27].

Thus, the poor quality of wood burning and the resulting environmental damage or forest destruction that ensues is apparent. Consequently, the electrification of villages discussed below is considered paramount in most developing countries. The Oromo fireplace is in the living room, which also serves as an all-purpose room - a family room, a dining room, and meeting/reception place. In some parts of Oromia, firewood is collected during the summer, and piled behind the walls under the house for rainy season, reducing the total

available useful space of the house. The fireplace is also the primary source of space heating. Smoke and vapor from the incomplete combustion from the wet firewood, especially in the rainy months, can cause suffocation in this most frequently occupied room of the family. Residents are exposed to the possibly toxic smoke of some trees. In addition to reducing smoke inhalation and improving health conditions, a new stove design with better efficiency could also reduce deforestation.

Agriculture and Water Supply

Modern agriculture is a very energy intensive. Estimates of agricultural productivity with automated farming often do not include the cost of energy into the cost of production. Redclift provides the ratio of energy produced per hectare to the total energy input from all energy sources to compare energy efficiency of mechanized and pastoral farming for various crops [18]. The result is 9.6 for traditional farming in Africa compared to 2.8 for maize or 0.61 for tomatoes in the US. The results show that pastoral agriculture is a relatively efficient user of energy. However, pastoral agriculture has limited capacity to produce energy per unit of land. These parameters are revealing and critical for designing future growth strategies. Deploying such an intensive consumption of energy relying on imported fuel and machinery, with the prevailing unemployment ratio, can be a serious burden on development. Large-scale agricultural mechanization cannot be imposed on a society unless it can be run by centrally planned or corporate forces. When the background is well developed, the growing infrastructure will pull farming productivity by merging industry with agriculture as was witnessed in the case of Spain. Spanish agriculture employed over half of the population in the early 1950s with traction largely human and animal. Cattle dung was the major fertilizer. In the 1970s, the number of tractors grew from 10,000 to over 400,000 [39].

The use of tractors requires a wholly deployed infrastructure support, trained personnel, roads, phones, import export capability, storage, credible service, and profit/cost planning. Due to lack of resources and due to the absence of an independent political voice of Oromos as mentioned in the introductory part of this paper, these support

structures remain out of reach for most individual Oromo farmers. However, appropriately designed ploughing equipment could be propagated via, for example private media, etc, without government policy support. Such outreach programs must be conducted creatively to promote intermediate technology in a political environment where anyone can be incriminated for anything. Appropriate design would require lighter yokes and ploughs perhaps with fiberglass reinforcement, correct and optimized angles of braking and the tilt (Fig. 2A) the soil for various soil hardness (dry, wet, light, heavy, etc.), stainless share, and strong waterproof rope to tie the share to the beam. A solid connection

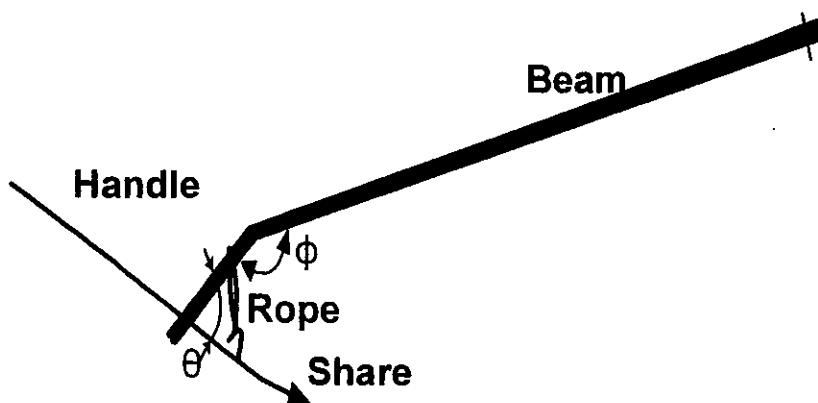


Fig. 2A. A typical Oromo plough

can replace the rope, and adjustable angles can also be designed to make the plough flexible. Various share geometries, including double or triple blades for soft soil, can be made commercially available with a wider blade, twisted at the top to turn the soil (Fig. 2B.) More input to the farmer can be thought of with better research. The farmer who spends hours or days looking for the right-angled natural tree to be used as a

plough and spends many more hours repairing them would appreciate such simple technical support.

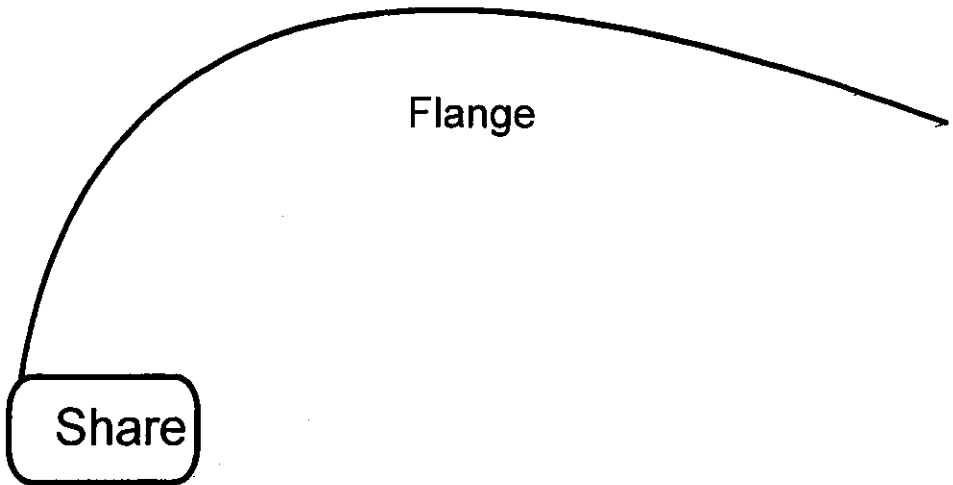


Fig. 2B. Suggested share geometry with a flange to turn

Tool selection is vital for agricultural productivity. Even the ergonomic design of scrapers, shovels and hoes can improve productivity. Agricultural productivity can also benefit from a sufficient water supply. This can be assured by pumping water from lakes, rivers, and reservoirs. This would make agriculture less dependent on climatic changes. Irrigation allows the use of land during the dry season in locations where it is typically left unused until the wet season, thus doubling the production rate per hectare. A useful pump design, one that can be owned and operated by the farmer, is the treadle pump [8]. The treadle pump technology is being popularized in Tanzania, and several Asian countries including China. It is operated manually, and has a moderately large output. Animals can be used to pump larger amounts of water. Pumps also enhance the ability of the farmer to supply drinking water for livestock.

In traditional societies such as Oromia, water is often carried by heavy buckets made of clay, known as *okkote* or *hoobo*. The weight of the *okkote* amounts a good percentage of the total back-load. This is a tremendous labor job performed by women and children. Ideally, a piping system that brings water to each home is desirable and can impact the hygiene of the family and the society. To avoid manual water transportation, wells are dug in many parts of Oromia if the water level is not too deep for access. Such deep wells are hazardous for children, and require pulling of the water bucket. A pumping system would allow sealing the top of the well, and storing the water safely above in a tank for continuous use.

In a rural setting, locally grown and available alternatives such as bamboo pipes could be very useful and more effective than PVC pipes. They can have wide applications for water distribution, low voltage insulation, or even photovoltaic distribution. Seed selection including access to DNA-assisted seed sources is another potentially fruitful venture not discussed in this paper. Also not discussed are soil erosion and watershed management.

Power Generation

One serious future challenge, as noted above, is that Oromia's power supply will mostly depend on hydroelectric energy, making it susceptible to drought and weather conditions. The technology of diesel generators for small-scale supply is fairly simple. The technical know-how required for simple maintenance and repair work of such motors is fairly high. Automobile motor shops have existed throughout medium-sized towns, and the design analogy of traction diesel motors has helped the fast growth of *milling machines*. With little investment, these machines can be switched from milling to electric generators that run city lighting or irrigation pumps in remote parts of Oromia, alternating between milling and power generating. A few kW power generators can be transported even on horseback, and turned on in just minutes to light the entire village, say for a wedding ceremony or to fill a large water storage tank. Such portable electric generators are commonly used in the US to supply power for artists and musicians in parks where power is not

accessible. They can be purchased by villagers as community property. They require little maintenance, and if rented for each occasion, can return their investment in a short time. Such projects have been successful in the rural areas of Kenya to supply water [38].

Generally, solar and wind energy extraction devices are not considered intermediate technology because they are too expensive. However, the biogas generator, also known as methane (CH_4) digester (Fig. 3), is a simple technology that can produce methane fuel. Despite the large number of cattle in Oromia (the highest concentration per person in Africa), this simple technology is almost unknown to Oromo farmers. For these reasons, a rudimentary process of the methane digester is given below.

Methane is produced by bacteria, known as thermophylic and mesophylic that are found naturally in raw materials such as livestock manure and sewage, which are in free supply. Thermophylic bacteria thrive at temperatures between 47 and 55^o C, and mesophylic bacteria yield between 27 and 38^oC. Mesophylic bacteria produce about 1.25m³ of methane per m³ of digester volume at optimum temperature while thermophylic bacteria produce about twice as much. Cattle manure starts producing methane in about four weeks, and it is completely digested in 50 days at 24^oC, after which the waste remains a formidable fertilizer, no nutritional value lost.

The bacteria use carbon as fuel and nitrogen to build their cell structure in the weight ratio of about 27 carbon to 1 nitrogen. This means the raw material has to allow sufficient air circulation in order to harvest nitrogen from the air. This largely depends on the type of the raw material. The carbon to nitrogen ratio of cattle, sheep, and horse manure is in the 25 range, requiring no further C:N balancing operation. The raw material must also be diluted with water using a 1:1 ratio to convert it to a liquid form. The methane gas can be used for cooking, lighting, space heating, or even to run a generator. A typical system is shown in figure 1, with more detailed designs and operating parameters explained by Palmer [36]. Case histories of early operating models are also available in a National Academy of Science report [34]. Despite its simplicity, biogas is vaguely known in Oromia or other parts of Africa. Legislative and other valuable experiences can be drawn, among many,

from Internet sources, and institutions such as the Biomass Energy Alliance of Washington and the National Bioenergy Industries Association [22].

There are other factors to be considered for the system to operate properly, such as pH balancing/increasing of the fermentation by adding burnt ashes, particularly at the early stages of the mixture when the reaction tends to have higher acidity. Methane producing bacteria die if the pH drops below 7 or rises above 8. Leaks and the presence of fermentation inhibitors such as magnesium, calcium, sodium, or potassium cations must be closely guarded. Too much urine in the raw material could increase the acid level making it unfavorable for the bacteria to flourish. The most serious concern however, would be explosion and the necessity to isolate the gas from air and heat sources.

Transportation

Transportation is a market phenomenon. There is no reason to build roads and bridges where there is no traffic. Expensive ventures such as building a bridge across the Nile connecting two provincial regions that have little commercial or cultural interactions is not an example of appropriate development. This took place during the previous military regime. The financial and energy expenses could have instead been invested in many other more relevant areas. More emphasis should again be made on simple means of transportation such as bicycles that run with reduced friction. Bicycles are a very crucial mode of transportation in China and even some countries of Western Europe. They weigh as low as 20 lbs., and can be carried across rough roads if needed. At about 12-mph typical speed, they are much faster and less tiring than walking. *Bicycles with special tires and frames can attain speeds of as high as 65 mph.* At an average rated power of 75 W, bicycles have an average efficiency of 98.5%. The bicycle can carry loads of up to 400 lbs. Notwithstanding its known drawbacks such as difficulty to ride steep hills, it can play an important transitional role in a developing nation such as Oromia when the weather and the landscape permit. They can be designed to operate as taxis, as stationary power

generators [49] to run water pumps and machining tools, and as village ambulances [33].

Conclusion

The *intermediate technologies* discussed in this paper were used in the development of technologically advanced countries. For centuries, creative technologies, now considered obsolete, then considered revolutionary, were used to design labor saving tools [45]. Modern science in non-industrialized nations must embrace appropriate technology as a necessary bridge to cross to sustainable development. Such a measure does not negate direct adoption of modern tools and technology if and when the tools are sustainable. *The Appropriate Technology Source-book* by Darrow and Saxenian covers varieties of suitable agricultural tools, water supply systems, small enterprise developments, training, and renewable energy sources applicable to current conditions in Oromia and Africa [16]. The primary purpose of technological change is to improve the living standards of people. This would mean technology is desirable if it has few or no negative consequences for the environment, and impacts the health and wealth of the society positively. *Intermediate technology* puts the consumers in control, and can be adapted to local conditions without requiring a sudden shift in established cultural and traditional methods. The Oromo people have to overcome political, material, organizational, and traditional obstacles to employ *intermediate technology*. Several other relevant areas have not been discussed in this paper. These include renewable energy sources such as wind energy, and non-technology issues such as aqua-culture and health care. In the ongoing highly politicized nationalist conflict in the Horn of Africa, participants must recognize that, technological development is a critical element of nation building.

NOTES

1. This concept of intermediate technology is promoted by the Intermediate Technology Development Group, 9 King St., London, and WCZE 8HN. The group works with rural

communities in nine developing countries: Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Peru, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. The founder, Dr. Fritz Schemata, is author of a best selling book: *Small is Beautiful*.

2. Over the years, each country modified the definition of Small and Mid-sized Plant, depending on its own scale and growth. In the US, such a plant has less than 500 employees.
3. Agenda 21 is now coordinated by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and implemented through national and local authorities.
4. Globes web page can be visited at <http://globeint.org>.
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Intermediate Technology for Underdeveloped Nations

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Aims:

The OC attempts to provide a forum for the expression and dissemination of various views regarding the political and economic crises affecting the Horn of Africa. It publishes critical comments and analytical papers on current issues, book reviews, etc. pertinent to the Horn in general and Ethiopia in particular. It aims to serve as a means of communication not only among the Oromo themselves, but also between the Oromo, other Horn Africans and the international public. It, therefore, provides a platform for debate and dialogue concerning the important issues of democracy, justice, human rights and peaceful resolution of conflicts, and social and economic development in the Horn of Africa.

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"WHERE THE BULLS FIGHT, IT IS THE GRASS THAT SUFFERS:" IMPACT OF BORDER ADMINISTRATION ON DROUGHT-COPING STRATEGIES OF THE OBBU BOORAN DURING THE 20TH CENTURY

Gufu Oba

Introduction

Treaties may resolve political conflicts between colonial states over common borders. However, more often than not the most insidious conflicts are those which occur as result of denying the transfrontier communities access rights to resources. Each colonial state by trying to exert its influence ignores conventions that previously guaranteed the communities to maintain access rights to grazing and water resources along traditional grazing and watering routes. In the Horn of Africa, a *conflict of this nature profoundly influenced drought coping strategies of the transfrontier pastoral communities during the 20th Century* (Markakis, 1996). I shall suggest that the evolution of colonial and post-colonial state boundaries that split the peoples of Africa and their resources left legacies of conflict on resource use. I shall also contend that the colonial and post-colonial states, by establishing jurisdictions and controlling resource access rights of the transfrontier communities, violated traditional coping strategies. The colonial states scrambled over resources carving out territories between themselves without due regard to the inhabitants. By partitioning the resources between themselves and by redefining ethnic relationships vis-à-vis access rights to resources, they created more conflicts.

Within the created borders, state administrative apparatuses replaced ethnic powers and influences. Hence, indigenous means of resolving conflicts and negotiating access rights to resources were weakened. In place, rigid state borders were fixed; leading to the emergence of ethnicities that violated the traditional *quid pro quo* arrangements. In some cases, ethnic conflicts over resources assumed political dimensions. The problem occurred on the common borders of most African countries, where colonial boundaries and the present state borders split the same communities. In the Horn of Africa where

Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya share borders, many pastoral communities have been affected.

In this paper, I discuss consequences of the conflicts over transfrontier grazing and watering rights of the Obbu Booran of northern Kenya-Ethiopian borderlands during the 20th century. Resource borders of the Obbu Booran, straddle the Kenya-Ethiopian borderlands, while in northern Kenya, their grazing lands comprise the vast arid scrubland of Golbo. The Obbu Booran through their closer contact with their brethren in southern Oromia, Ethiopia, served a natural link between the Oromo in Kenya and Ethiopia. Their resource use and social economic systems are also closely intertwined with those of the Booran in the Districts of Marsabit and Isiolo in Kenya.

The region of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya borderlands has been in turmoil even before colonial annexation. The characteristic migrations and expansion of various pastoral groups brought them in direct conflict with the resident groups. The Booran Oromo or their ancestors known by the name *Heero Abba Biyya* were resident in the present territory earlier than 13th century.¹ about a century ago, the Somali expansion followed (Dalleo, 1975; Schlee, 1984). External conflicts were initiated by new waves of migrants from Somalia following later by the scramble for regional resources by the colonial powers of Ethiopia, Italy and Britain. The partitioning placed the Booran under the jurisdictions of Ethiopia and the British administrations.

Before the army of the Ethiopian Warlord, Menelik, arrived in the south in 1889, the Booran had strong influence on the cultural entities of ethnic groups of the region for two main reasons. First, through the *gada* system, they built strong political institutions that provided internal peace (*naga Booran*). Second, clientship was established with smaller pastoral groups in a process of integration and assimilation (Baxter, 1954; Oba, 1996). The clientship was disrupted in the latter part of the 19th century following invasion by the Somali clans (Schlee, 1989). The client alliance threatened the peace of their former host, challenging the Booran rights to grazing lands and water resources (Oba, 1996). This did not cease following the creation of international borders in 1902-1905 (Maud, 1905). The British colonial administration in a bid to maintain law and order, delimited each pastoral group within the confines of the

official grazing zones, where each group was expected to run its affairs without transgressing ethnic borders (Kennaway, 1955: 29). But it was the water and grazing resources in Ethiopia that were vital for survival of the Obbu Booran pastoral economy.

The Treaty on Grazing Rights between Ethiopia and Kenya

Before the Kenya-Ethiopian boundary was fixed, the Booran used their own arrangements to gain access to grazing and water in different parts of their territory. That ended with the establishment of the international border. For the Obbu Booran pastoralists of northern Kenya-Ethiopian borderlands, use of wells in Ethiopia was an essential aspect of their land use (Pinney, 1946). Access becomes crucial during periodic droughts, when water and pasture are scarce on the Kenyan side of the border. The international treaty signed by Britain and Ethiopia in December 1907 allowed the Booran on both sides of the border to gain access to water and pasture resources, as dictated by climatic conditions.² The Treaty was again renegotiated by the two powers in 1947. A clause in the 1947 agreement assured preservation of transfrontier grazing and water rights by the Kenyan Booran (Mckenzie-Smith, 1948).

Drought Coping Strategies during the 20th Century

Droughts were common occurrences in northern Kenya during the 20th century. For example, the years of 1911 and 1913 were periods of severe drought (Kittermaster, 1917, 1918, 1919). In 1914, partial rainfall failure coupled with the rinderpest epidemic resulted in high livestock mortality. By 1917, heavy rains filled the depression of Malalba in the Golbo lowlands of Northern Kenya, resulting in plentiful grazing. The short rain (October-November) of 1918 was a failure. The drought created very severe water scarcity. The long (March-July) and the short rains of 1919 were failures and grazing was scarce (Kittermaster, 1919). The drought of 1921 was severe for the livestock economy, affecting the whole of the Northern Frontier District (NFD) (Muirhead, 1939, 1940, 1941, and 1942). There were series of severe droughts in the 1930s, while shortage of rainfall and pestilence of locusts caused the famine of 1943.

In 1945, the long rains failed but the short rains were favorable. Rainfall was, however, poorly distributed resulting in poor distribution of pasture (Symes-Thomson, 1945). Rains in 1946 did little to improve the critical water and pasture conditions. The result was a famine. The situation was made worse because there was shortage of food throughout Kenya (Pinney, 1946). The long rains of 1948 were below average although the short rains were heavy. Conditions were even worse in 1949 because both the long and the short rains were low and poorly distributed. Drought became severe, pasture and water were scarce resulting in a great deal of livestock loss. The famine condition forced majority of the Obbu Booran to cross into Ethiopia. By contrast, rainfall in 1950 was well distributed but below average. Because of the failure of the short *hagaya* rains (October-November) in 1950, the 1951 season started with a dry spell. By February 1951, the situation slowly deteriorated. Water and pasture were lacking everywhere and the stocks were dying in hundreds because of the total failure of the *ganna* rains (March-July). The situation was saved by access to water on the Ethiopian side of the border (Turnbull, 1949). The necessity of making arrangements for accessing wells on the Ethiopian side was stressed in the letter by the Moyale DC to the Northern Frontier District (NFD) Provincial Commissioner: "Had it not been for our watering rights in Ethiopia the position would have become extremely serious, and it has served to show how completely helpless our tribesmen would be should the Frontier ever be closed..."³

As opposed to the *ganna* rains that failed, the *hagaya* rains of 1951 were heavy. The heavy rains filled all the pans and the springs were running again and "There was far more grass than could possibly be utilized..." (Turnbull, 1951: 2). The following years showed a similar pattern of wet and dry cycles, emphasizing the need to gain access to the wells across the frontier. Like other years, 1952 was a period of water shortage. Although the rainfall of 1953 was moderate, it was patchy. The Obbu Booran was luckier because the rains in the plains of Golbo improved grazing and water. The March-May-June rains of 1954 were moderately good but distribution of the short rains was late and extremely patchy. However, in 1955, conditions were reversed when there was rainfall failure in Obbu. The years 1958-1960 received above

average rainfall (i.e., greater than 350 mm). Although there was little rain in the southern portion of Golbo, the floods that came from Ethiopia in the *laga* filled the depression of Bododa attracting the population from Isiolo and the whole of Moyale Districts (Kelly, 1958). The year 1960 was a good year with plentiful grazing and water (Walters, 1960), while 1961 was a famine year because of rainfall failure, followed in 1962 by the heaviest rainfall ever recorded (the period called *hagaaya gaabo*). Similar to the earlier decades, drought coping strategies of the Obbu Booran included transfrontier migration. However, these movements were persistently disrupted by the Ethiopian and Italian administrations.⁴

Effects of Border Conflicts on Drought Coping Strategies

The response of the Obbu Booran to drought stress was to cross into southern Ethiopia to water cattle at the traditional wells. The treaty of 1907 recognized these movements (Dick, 1914, 1918), but crossing of the international frontier created political friction between the colonial administration in Kenya on one hand and the imperial Ethiopia on the other. Whereas the Treaty of 1907 allowed movements of the Booran across international frontiers, interpretation of that treaty was a source of contention. Thus administrative disagreements further affected the coping strategies of the Booran. When droughts forced the Kenyan Booran to water at the wells on the Ethiopian side of the border, they were forced to pay taxes (Kittermaster, 1918). In addition, between 1915 and 1929, border banditry by the so-called "Tigre"⁵ destabilized the coping strategies of the Booran. For example, in 1918, the Booran living near Moyale escaped the "Tigre" attack by paying a blackmail fee of 3,000 Ethiopian *birr* (Kittermaster, 1918). Banditry forced movements of the Booran from Ethiopia into Kenya. Ethiopian officials subjected the Booran who ran away to harassment. A well-documented case occurred in January 1919 when *Garazmatch*⁶ Gashi and *Garazmatch* Woyessa with an aid of 800 men came to attack the bandits. Since they were out numbered by the bandits, they turned towards the runaway Booran and "demanded them back from the British colonial administration with threats. Mr. Bamber (the DC. Moyale) being unable to keep these Boran owing to lack of water, agreed to send them back but the Boran choosing the lesser of two evils, fled...and made [pact] with Tigre for protection" (Kittermaster, 1919: 2).

The problem arose because the Ethiopian officials and the soldiery received no payments from the central government but were allowed to compensate themselves from the inhabitants.⁷

For this latter purpose, [the Booran]Y are allocated to officials and soldiers according to rank. This means that not only do the natives have to pay tribute to the Ethiopian Government but also they have to pay tribute to the official[s] to whom they have been allotted. On top of this, outlaws seize their women and hold them to ransom for large sums (Kittermaster, 1919).

By comparison, the Kenyan colonial administration considered tribal movements across international borders as having political repercussions. First, reliance on resources on both sides of the border made their control nearly impossible. Second, although the Kenya colonial administration was sympathetic to the maltreatment of the Obbu Booran at the hands of the Ethiopians, it was also concerned that their movements were inclined to play one government against the other (Butler, 1928). The political confrontation across the frontier was particularly sensitive following the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. The Italians not being signatory to the Treaty of 1907 between Menelik and the British did not take lightly the Kenyan administrations demand of the full right of the British subjects to water at the Ethiopian wells. Like the earlier "Tigre" bandits that terrorized the Booran population along the border, the Italian irregulars looted Booran cattle (Butler, 1928). The Obbu Booran in particular was persistently persecuted. The Italian authorities

Threatened to abrogate the trans-frontier water and grazing rights which [the Kenyan pastoralists] had enjoyed under the Anglo-Abyssinian treaty of 1907. The Italian authorities stated that they would refuse all water unless the actual [Booran] villages crossed into [the Italian] territory. The result was that nearly all Boran [in Obbu] crossed the border (Reece, 1942: 2).

The Italians had no obligation to recognize the treaty. Moreover, Italian policy encouraged westward migration of Somalis, who made up

the bulk of their irregular soldiers (the *Banda*⁸), forcing the Kenyan colonial administration to adjust the tribal boundaries on their side. The result was a continued encroachment of the Somalis on the Booran grazing lands. The Italian occupation of Ethiopia thus aggravated the political conflicts by arming the Somali tribes with firearms under the pretext of fighting Ethiopian resistance but actually directed against the Booran. In March of 1936 the Italians "armed the Gurre under Hassan Gababa and incited them to attack the Ethiopians and the Boran who had remained loyal to the Ethiopians. The Gurre at once fell upon the Gabbra and raided many hundred head of stock and camels from them ... The Boran-Gurre feud broke out on the Ethiopian side and there were constant raids and counter raids".⁹

Following Italy's occupation of Ethiopia, the Kenyan colonial administration was unable to give assurance to the Booran and other pastoral groups who relied on resources distributed on the Italian side of the border. For example, on February 15, 1938, the Italian major, Signorini, who was the *commissario* of the Booran Province (in Ethiopia) visited Obbu and instructed that all the British Booran who wished to water in Italian territory should be in possession of a pass signed by the *residente*. "He instructed the "*Banda*" that the tribesmen had three days in which to obtain such passes, at the end of which they were to be refused water." This policy was enforced in July 1938 when the wells along the border were closed and [the Booran] compelled to move into the Italian territory. In the words of the District Commissioner of Moyale:

The closing of these wells to the British Boran was partly a matter of policy and partly owing to the fact that the *Banda* stationed along the frontier [were]... allowed to make [farms]... and to amass large herds of stock, all requiring considerable quantities [of grazing and water resources]. The Italians having allowed the Degodia to penetrate [into Obbu] further complicated the situation in considerable numbers.¹⁰

The issue of access to water and pasture on the Italian side was a perennial one. Access was essential for the Booran to survive during the dry season as mentioned earlier, and this could only be accomplished

through arrangements with the Italian officials. However, the Italians always took advantage of this convenient weapon to harass the Obbu Booran.¹¹ Initially, the Italians exempted the population from paying taxes for three years following establishment of their government in Ethiopia. Exemption from taxes was one other reason that attracted the British Booran to cross to the Italian side. However, after 1939 this policy was changed and all the pastoralists who crossed the border were required to pay taxes. The Kenyan colonial administration objected to this policy on grounds that the terms of the Treaty of 1907 was to honor free access to the nearest wells by the border community. The Italians argued that they interpreted the policy to mean that during "Emigrating the tribes people should be subject to the territorial jurisdiction and that the Italian government was ...empowered to tax them should they wish to do so".¹² One outcome of this administrative conflict was the incident that occurred on 9 December 1939, when about 250 heads of cattle belonging to the Obbu Booran watering at the wells across the frontier were seized. A fine of 3% was charged as trespass tax on the stock taken to the wells.

Despite this event, Galgallo Muudhale, the Chief of the Obbu Booran was convinced that given the choices, his people would rather cross to the Italian territory to benefit from its better resources than paying double taxes, first to the British and then to the Italians. Furthermore, the connection of taxes and resource access was constraining their coping strategies when water and pasture conditions on the Kenyan side became scarce. The administrative arrangements were counter to the climatic conditions, which forced the Booran to use water on the Italian side of the border. However, following the outbreak of the Anglo-Italian war in 1940, the British administration vacated the border areas and the people whose lives were controlled by the colonial administration for approximately 40 years were suddenly left on their own to fend for themselves. This change of events did not bother the Booran despite increasing conflicts between them and the Somali clans and the devastation of the war on the livestock economy. The District officer of Moyale summed up the indifference of the pastoralists to the conflicts between Britain and Italy: "The matter had an inevitable effect on [our] prestige.... The tribes people are... so entirely engrossed in their

own struggle for existence...that events, to us sufficiently important and dramatic concern them only as a momentary topic of ephemeral interest..."¹³

Even after the departure of the administration, the Obbu Booran were so persecuted by the Italian *Banda* and the Degodia that they escaped to Marsabit (Saaku). After the defeat of the Italians, lawlessness broke out between the Booran (the former victims) and the Somali tribes whose population was the source of recruits for the Italian irregulars. The retreating *Banda* and the Marehan and the Garre massacred the Booran living in the Diire and Liiban regions of Ethiopia.¹⁴ Even with resumption of the Ethiopian administration, conflicts intensified. The return to power by the Ethiopian administration did not improve conditions for the Booran across the frontier. The situation was such that the Ethiopians on any pretext would close their wells to the Kenyan Booran "which would mean loss of stock in dry weather" (McKenzie-Smith, 1949: 1). Therefore, the poor rains, famine conditions, border banditry and the rigidity of the Ethiopian authorities against the Kenyan Booran use of the water and the grazing across the border, combined with the near economic collapse of the pastoral economy during the Anglo-Italian war, made the pastoralists very vulnerable to droughts. Due to perennial conflicts, the Kenyan colonial administration was convinced that a lasting solution was to establish self-reliance in water and grazing on the Kenyan side of the international boundary.

Effects of Grazing Control on Coping Strategies

The administrative policy of the British also constrained drought coping strategies. It restricted ethnic groups within their delimited grazing zones. The establishment of the Somali/Galla line (the term Galla was applied to the Oromo speakers)¹⁵ was aimed at stopping the westward movement of the Somalis, while forcing the Booran to abandon their traditional grazing lands in Wajir, Buna and Batallu regions. But as observed by Glenday (1934) and Butler:

The policy of enforcing tribal borders had contradictions. Whereas, concessions were allowed for the worst hit groups the guiding principal was...to keep the various sections within

certain areas and then, however, hard the dry season may be, they [are] not ... allowed any extension whatsoever, and any trespass should be punished vigorously.... The fulfilment of this policy is [however] handicapped by the climate [because], all areas are subject to frequent droughts which cause the inhabitants to scatter in all directions (Butler, 1928: 2).

This longstanding policy of grazing control was vigorously enforced until changed in the 1940s. The objective of the administration was to continue to enforce grazing control, while developing water in the rangelands. The Obbu Booran showed much enthusiasm in the water projects and initiated their own (Mackenzie-Smith, 1949). In 1948, they dug the Garbi wells (near Sololo-Ramata town) that fell into disuse earlier in the century and began to clean up traditional water pans (Turnbull, 1948).

Unlike water development that was received with considerable enthusiasm, grazing control needed much discussion. To enforce the grazing control, the administration engaged "grazing guards". Later the services of the tribal police (*duubas*)¹⁶ were used to enforce grazing control. Water development in Obbu began with digging of the Sololo Ramata dam in 1949 and the Yaa-Share dam and the water pans at Arria in 1952 (Turnbull, 1951). The pan at Damballa Fachana was deepened in 1953 (Kennaway, 1952). Yet even with the grazing control and digging of the Sololo Ramata bore hole in 1955, the water situation in Obbu was far from being adequate.

The Booran continued to practice their indigenous mode of land use and reliance on Ethiopia for water during the dry years. Therefore, it took the administration a long time to appreciate the indigenous model of land use. In his 1957 report for the Northern Frontier Province, M. Kelly (1957: 35) was apologetic about the past actions of the administration, for not understanding the pastoralist's model of land use. "I now realize that it would have been of infinitely greater value for me to have spent more of my time in learning about the grazing and water, the things that affects so much more vitally; and more intimately, the movement of these tribesmen than do the pronouncements of activities of any government." In Obbu, the functions of the pans and dams were,

therefore, to postpone the movement from the wet season in the Golbo lowlands of Kenya to the dry season watering in Ethiopia.¹⁷

Effects of Ethnic Conflicts on Coping Strategies

Despite the confinement of the tribes within fixed borders, conflicts over shared grazing and water resources persisted. Notwithstanding the harshest punishments periodically handed out by the administration to the trespassing groups, the conflict between the Booran and the Somali clans intensified, assuming political proportions. The cause of the hostilities between the Booran and the Somali clans was elaborated by the Chief Political Officer who was responsible for administration of the Booran after the Italian defeat.

...Somali tribes [SIC] have been moving southwards and westwards, but until the invasion of Ethiopia by the Italians they had not made much progress westwards into Borana. With the coming of the Italians the situation changed because the Italians liked to have Somalis for their irregular *Banda* and they regarded settlements of them in Ethiopia as potentially useful in case of Amahara rising (McKenzie-Smith, 1949:1).

Before this period "The Boran tribe [SIC] used to occupy nearly all the NFD, southern Ethiopia and parts of Somalia, but had been steadily pushed westwards by the Somalis" (McKenzie-Smith, 1949). The Provincial Commissioner of NFD, R.G. Turnbull (Turnbull, 1949: 2) did not put lightly the implications of the conflict: "The...south-west [movement] follows an unchanging pattern-migration, alliances...[and] treachery. It is by this method that all the Somali tribes now in the NFD have reached their present ranges. [But] [t]he policy of the province is to ensure that the tribes are kept apart and that each has its fair share of grazing and water; infiltration, migration, and trespass constitute therefore a set of problems of great importance. On the other hand the stronger tribes tend to encroach into the grazing preserves of the weaker and to consume their grass and browse under threats of force... "

Thus, by 1947, following the formation of the Somali Youth League (SYL)¹⁸ - the semi-political party agitating the unification of all the Somalis, the westward movement of the Somali groups was already

beginning to have a wider political ramifications (Farson, 1950; Lewis, 1963). The Somali political agitation that started in the British and the Italian Somalilands had spread into the Northern Frontier District (NFD) (Lewis, 1963). The SYL's "professed aim was to unite all Somalis living in the Horn of Africa. They set up branches in Wajir, Mandera, Isiolo, Garissa and Moyale" in Kenya (Sagar, 1947). The creation of political movement among Somali groups throughout NFD was seen as legitimization of the territorial claims, which resulted in fighting in northern Kenya 20 years later (Aguilar, 1996).

Following the independence of the Somali Republic in 1961 and arrangements in the Northern Province for registration of voters for 1961 general elections, political activities intensified (Walters, 1960). It is to be remembered that NFD represents one of the five points on the star, which is the Somali Republic's emblem (Lewis, 1963, 1965). The Somali population, the majority of whom lived in northeastern Province of Kenya, wished to secede (Baxter, 1966). Political temperatures were rising following the Lancaster House Constitutional Conference (Kenya Colony, Commonwealth Commission Report, 1962). With increased political fever, the desire of the Somalis for unification with the Somali Republic, and their rejection of an "African" government of Kenya became the main political slogan. These dynamic political transformation found the Booran in political limbo.¹⁹ The Waso Booran in particular were divided between those who supported the Somali view and those who opposed it (Baxter, 1966). In the Marsabit and Moyale Districts, the Booran were opposed to secession and opted to remain in independent Kenya. At a meeting held by all the Booran chiefs in Garba Tulla in August 1960, they made "a unanimous decision against the proposal to link up with the Somalis" (Walters, 1960).

After Kenya was granted independence and the secession rejected, unofficial war was fought between Somali bandits locally called *shifita* and the Kenyan army (Aguilar, 1996). Northern Kenya was placed under an emergency and movements of the population were restricted. The conflict introduced firearms into traditional warfare (Goto, 1972; Diffield, 1994), devastating the pastoral economy. Livestock losses to *shifita* attacks coupled with losses during periodic droughts, diminished livestock holdings of the pastoralists families (Hogg, 1985). Raids on the

livestock economy resulted in transfer of assets from the victims to the armed groups, thereby forcing the impoverished population to rely on the states emergency assistance (Diffield, 1994). In the Obbu area alone, an estimated cattle loss to *shifita* attacks was greater than 30,000 during the 1970s (Oba, 1990). The attacks on the pastoral economy caused changes in settlement patterns, resulting in dislocation of the Booran from greater than 80% of the grazing lands in Kenya. All the former grazing areas of Obbu and the vast grazing lands of Golbo were abandoned. Fear of cattle rustling restricted livestock grazing to a 5-10 km radius of the Sololo Ramata town. Concentration of livestock near security settlements caused severe overgrazing, while scarcity of pasture during periodic droughts resulted in high livestock mortality, impoverishing a majority of the population. Nonetheless, the periods of 1980s and 1990s were recovery years as conflicts between groups ended. During the 1990s, the Obbu Booran began to experience the old border administrative conflicts. Insecurity along the border caused by ethnic conflicts and unofficial closings of the border and restrictions of the Obbu Booran followed insurgency by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) from crossing into Ethiopia with their livestock.

Internal Response to Insecurity along Resource Borders

In Obbu, dependency on famine relief came to symbolise the subsistence economy. In addition to the *shifita* banditry, the droughts of 1970-1973, 1975, 1979-1981, 1983-1984 and 1991-1992 severely affected the pastoral economy. However, as peace returned to the area after cessation of hostilities, new coping strategies were introduced. A far reaching was in land tenure. The region of Obbu was communally used, but with sedentarization and creation of farms, the communal grazing lands along the Kenya-Ethiopian borderlands were converted into private farmlands, while range enclosures replaced communal grazing lands. However, the change in resource tenure was not a substitution for access to grazing and water across the border in Ethiopia during droughts.

Despite this, political developments both in Kenya and Ethiopia during the previous 90 years had succeeded in gradually reducing contacts between the two Booran communities. First, internal political developments in both countries are keeping the two peoples apart.

Kenya's policy was to establish self-reliance within Kenya. Second, attempts to separate the communities on both sides of the border were reinforced by giving them the Ethiopian and the Kenyan identity cards, respectively. On either side of the border the Booran who did not carry the right identification were harassed. This has worsened following the coming to power by the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government in 1990.

Two major events followed the coming to power by the EPRDF. The fall of the government of Mengistu-Haile Mariam created a power vacuum that led to ethnic clashes between the Booran and the Garre in early 1990s. The conflict internally displaced many pastoral communities in the region (Bassi, 1997; Schlee and Shongollo, 1995). Furthermore, after 1991, the EPRDF army was clashing with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) along the Ethiopian-Kenyan border. The EPRDF suspecting that the local Booran communities in Kenya were aiding the OLF conducted cross border raids and were blamed for the deaths of some Kenyan local chiefs (Kotile, 1997; KHRC, 1996). Consequently, during the 1991/1992 drought, mobility of people and livestock was limited, resulting in high livestock loss in Obbu (Oba, forthcoming).

Conclusion

The Horn of Africa comprises many transfrontier communities split during the period of scramble between the European powers and Ethiopia. Partitioning of the same communities between different colonial political entities affected drought coping strategies. The colonial administration limited movements by delimiting each ethnic group into fixed areas. These administrative policies were ignorant of the indigenous resource use and the periodic needs to cross both ethnic and international borders. This study sketches a 90-year history of resource alienation and its impact on the coping strategies of the Obbu Booran. The Booran became vulnerable to state politics that undermined their access to traditional resources across international frontiers. Failure of gaining access to the water sources and grazing land in Ethiopia during years of drought aggravated livestock mortality. Thus, during the future drought, survival of the pastoral economy will be improved if the

governments of Kenya and Ethiopia reaffirmed the trans-border treaty that was rectified in 1947 and allowed the border communities to continue sharing resources.

End Notes

1. The Booran Oromo population of the 15th Century were divided into two groups: The historical clans who lived in the present day Booran region of Southern Ethiopia are Heero Abba Biyya and Sodom Booro. The clans of the Heero Abba Biyya are referred to as *Choqorsa*. The word figuratively translated means roots (Oba, 1996). The word *Choqorsa* is also the name of a grass that the Booran use in ceremonies during the *gada* cycle. (See also A. Legesse, *Gada : Three approaches to study African society*, The Free Press, New York, 1973). The *Choqorsa* were the resident of the region earlier than five centuries ago. They were owners of wells, ritual lands, ponds and the grazing lands. According to the oral source, ownership rights to water sources and grazing lands by the *Choqorsa* clans are inviolable. The second group who joined up with *Heero Abba Biyya* was *Sodom Booro*. They were the clans that assimilated *Heero Abba Biyya* in the 15th Century. Oral sources suggest that most biological genealogy of *Sodom Booro* have died out, while the adopted *Heero Abba Biyya* families have taken on the former identity.
2. The transfrontier agreement between His British Majesty's government and Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia on 6 December 1907 had several essential points. According to the Article of 1907 transfrontier agreement the tribes occupying either side of the line shall have the right to use the grazing grounds on the other side as in the past, *but during their migrations it is understood that they shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the territorial authority*. Free access to the nearest wells is equally accorded to the tribes occupying either side of the line (Fowler, 1924). The highlighted part of the Article was the major source of contention between the Ethiopian and the Kenyan administration and the Italian and the Kenyan administration.

This may be illustrated by the communications between Fitaurari Walde the Ethiopian administrator and Captain Barret who was in-charge of Northern Frontier District administration in Kenya. The letter by *Fitaurari* Walde on July 1913 in part says "I have heard that our Boran we counted has run away and entered the British territory. I ask you to return them. The reply by Captain Barret was soundful and authoritative. It is with regret that I have to inform you that I am unable to comply with your request to hand back to you the Boran who have run away from Abyssinian territory. I have already informed *Garazmatch* Gashi that throughout the British Empire it is not customary to hand back people who enter British Territory and do not wish to return to the country they have left." The basis of the argument by Captain Barret was Article 1 of the transfrontier agreement. According to Article 1 of the treaty made between Great Britain and Ethiopia signed by the Emperor Menelik II and by Her Majesties Envoy at Addis Abbaba on 14 May 1897 and ratified by H. M. the Queen, July 18th 1897 States: The subjects of or persons protected by each of the contracting parties shall have full liberty to come and go and engage in commerce in the territories of the other, enjoying the protection of the government within whose jurisdiction they are.

3. In the letter, Mr. H. W. Wallee, the District Commissioner of Moyale addressing himself to the Provincial Commissioner of NFD underscored the need to maintain access to the grazing and watering resources in the Frontier area by the Booran. Letter Ref. No. AGR/11/3, 12 April 1951.
4. The Italian administration lasted for five years, but being the most heinous for which the Booran have few comparisons. The irregular Italian *Banda* who were mainly Somalis created havoc, looted stock and killed without discrimination. The authors own father, the late Oba Sarite Kura remembered this vividly as the following discussions demonstrate "*G.O. Did the Italian regime and their Banda commit serious crimes? O.S. Yes they did. The Booran suffered more under their short-lived administration*

than that of Ethiopia. The terror they unleashed is remembered in the following cattle song. Galgallu gaara diidha kuute, baqaate Banda uufira kuute" - they traversed the plains of Diid Galgallu and by escaping saved themselves from the Banda.

5. The origin of the name "Tigre" representing the outlaws that terrorized the Booran between 1916-1923 is not certain. They represented the Ethiopian-farmer soldiers who failed to get the spoils of the occupation and rebelled against their leaders. Among the most notorious of these rebels were Lie Balai and his brother the *ex-Barambras* Gabre Hiden (Kittermaster, 1918). According to a Booran source, the "Tigre" outlaws were disgruntled elements that after failing to get the shares of the Booran *gabbari* or *Gebar* took into the bush. The outlaws called themselves after their leaders. Whereas, majority of the Tigre bandits were dominated by the Ethiopian highlanders from Tigrai (and hence the name), others were Oromos. For example, according to Oba Sarite Kura who had personal experience of the period, the leaders included Allamu Wayesa, Wold "Maganyo" Gashe, whose leader gave himself the name "Abba Bokaa"- the father of rain. See also, Hickey, D., "Frontier banditry and legitimate trade: the Moyale cattle market, 1913-1923". *Northeast African Studies*, 8:169-173, 1986.
6. *Garazmatch*-an Ethiopian title for A commander of the left, a title of nobility, see Harold Marcus, *Hailes Sellassie I: The formative Years (1892-1936)*, Red sea, Press, 1995.
7. *Gabbar* system (see end note 5). The Ethiopian settler soldiers divided up the Booran and other communities among themselves. The Booran sub-clans were allocated to individuals. For example, members of the sub-clan of *Dambe-Nonno* were divided among the soldier/settler families of Angasu and Birasu, while the *Waar Jida* and their associated *Gabra* families were allocated to the families of Baqalla Iddo, Gutuma Urgeesa and Gutuma Abba Bisso. The soldiery of Menelik were paid in terms of *gabbar* from whom they extracted labour, the produce and forced payments of miscellaneous taxes.

8. *Banda-see* end note # 4.
9. PC/NFD 1/1/1/6, 1936.
10. PC/NFD 1/1/6, 1938:6.
11. PC/NFD 1/1/6, 1939: 6.
12. PC/NFD 1/1/6, 1939:11.
13. PC/NFD 1/1/6, 1940:1.
14. See End note # 27.
15. The major ethnic border established by the Kenyan administration was the so-called the Somali/Galla line (the word Galla was used in reference to the Oromo speakers). The purpose of the line was to separate the Oromo speaking groups from the Somalis who had succeeded in pushing them westwards. Kennaway (1955:29) in his report noted "The greatest infiltration menace was, as always, due to the Southerly and south-westerly migration urge of Somali tribes."
16. *Duubas*-were the tribal police recruited from among the pastoralists by the British. Their characteristic uniform comprised red turbans by which they were called *duuba gaar*.
17. PC/NFD 1/1/11, 1955: 35.
18. SYL -Somali Youth League. In the Northern Frontier district (NFD), the Somali political movement was nicknamed "the sewing needle" by the Kenya administration (Officially called Somali Youth League or *qulub*). See also, Lewis, I. M., *A pastoral democracy*. Oxford, University of Oxford, Press, 1961.
19. The Booran and other Oromo groups in Kenya formed their own Party called Northern Peoples United Association (NPUA). See also, P. Goto, *The Boran of northern Kenya: Origin, migrations and settlements in the 19th century*. BA Thesis, the University of Nairobi, 1972. Incidentally, the government of Ethiopia gave initial funding for NPUA. The representative of NPUA met with Haile Sellassie in 1962 and were given funds to set up offices

and buy a vehicle, which they called *Korma NFD*-the male of NFD (Abba Jillo Araru and Haji Wario Guracha Personal communication with Gufu Oba, Moyale in 1995). The support the Booran received from the government of Emperor Haile Sellasai was for two reasons. The Somali political movements of the pre-independence was also posing problems in the region of Ogadenia. Hence, the Ethiopian support was to counter the agitation by the Somali political movements. This was important for two other reasons: (a) the Booran made up a large population in the southern part of the empire, and (b) by supporting the Booran, in essence, the government of Ethiopia was emphasizing the common security concern it had with Kenya. Interestingly enough, Haile Sellasie, who met the Booran delegates, informed them of his goal of defending his people, the Oromos in Kenya. This author was informed by Abba Jillo Araru, who himself had ancestry from Jima-in Ethiopia to claim that they discussed with the king in *afaan* Oromo.

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A SHORT HISTORY OF OROMO COLONIAL EXPERIENCE: PART TWO, COLONIAL CONSOLIDATION AND RESISTANCE 1935-2000

Mohammed Hassen

In the previous issue of *The Journal of Oromo Studies*¹ I traced the Oromo colonial experience from 1870 to 1935. Four major arguments were made in part one. First, until the 1830s and 1840s, the Amhara peasant-soldiers of the kingdom of Shawa did not successfully penetrate Oromia. This situation began to change during the second half of the nineteenth century as the result of the steady flow of European guns, and artillery and ammunition into Abyssinia, particularly into Shaw. The virtual absence of European weapons from Oromia altered fundamentally the balance of power between Abyssinia and Oromia. The power of European weapons not only destroyed the once-mighty Oromo cavalry, but also heightened the Abyssinian princes' ambition of conquest and permanent occupation of Oromia. Thus began the battle for colonization of Oromia. Never in the history of the Horn of Africa did so many changes occur and with such speed as they did between 1875 and 1896. The pace of this drama was truly astonishing for it was in 1875 that Menilek, the Amhara king of Shawa (1865-1889) and later the Emperor of Ethiopia (1889-1913), started creating a new army trained by Europeans and provided with European weapons of destruction (Lytton 1966: 160). Although the Oromo put up heroic resistance, Menilek one after the other defeated them because they utterly lacked firearms. Menilek was even able to defeat the Italians at the battle of Adwa in 1896.

Second, it was with the resources plundered from Oromia, including gold, ivory, coffee, hide and skins and slaves, that Menilek paid for the European weapons with which he defeated both the Oromo and the Italians. "These commodities were initially obtained through raiding, property confiscation, enslavement, control of trade routes and market places, and tribute collection and exported to European market" (Jalata 1993: 52). Third, untold cruelty and brutality accompanied Menilek's conquest, plunder of property, burning of houses, indiscriminate killings and selling into slavery tens of thousands of war captives (Trimingham 1952: 128). As the result of Menilek's conquest and the calamities that accompanied it, the population of

Oromia is estimated have been reduced by half, while that of Kaffa "is estimated to have been reduced by two thirds. Those who succeeded in escaping the slaughter were sold into slavery or reduced to the status of gabars" (Trimingham 1952: 128-129).

Fourth, with the conquest and colonization of Oromia, the Oromo lost their sovereignty and independence. This meant that the Oromo were no longer in control of their destiny. " Under the Ethiopian colonial system, the Oromo have lost their autonomous historical and cultural development, and they have been denied institutional power"(Jalata 1998: 2). What is more, the Oromo lost the right to control their own affairs, to protect their political and religious institutions, to plan their own development, and to manage their relations with their neighbors. With the loss of power the Oromo were removed from history. "The power to act independently is the guarantee to participate actively and *consciously* in history. To be colonized is to be removed from history, except in the most passive sense"(Rodney 1982: 225).

After the conquest and occupation of Oromia, Menilek gave two-thirds of the Oromo land to his colonial state, his armed settlers known as *naftanya*, and the Orthodox church, "while he allowed one third of the land to be used by the indigenous people on condition they supplied forced labor for the settlers and various taxes, dues and tithes for his court and the church" (Delibo 1974: 198-199). In other words, in the sacred land of their birth, the Oromo became landless *gabars* (serfs) who were exploited economically, oppressed and alienated politically, dehumanized psychologically and subjugated culturally. Since Menilek's armed settlers were neither salaried nor engaged in productive economic activities, they were given Oromo gabars in lieu of salary. This means the *naftanya* owned the Oromo people as they owned cattle and slaves. In fact, Menilek's empire was built upon twin pillars: the *gabar* system (serfdom) and slavery, both of which were abolished during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia to which we now turn.

Oromo Colonial Experience 1935-1941

Benuto Mussolini, the fascist dictator of Italy (1922-1945) decided to invade Ethiopia in 1935 mainly for two reasons: First, for revenge of the Italian defeat at the battle of Adwa, in 1896 and second, to turn Ethiopia into a source of raw materials for Italy, a haven for surplus Italian population and a market for Italian products (Larebo 1994:1, Sbacchi 1997: 105-106). Italy invaded Ethiopia with "200,000 white soldiers and 100,000 black African colonial troops from Eritrea, Somalia and Libya" (Ta'a 1997: 265). With superiority in weapons, troops, tanks, airplanes, and with the extensive use of poisonous gas, the Italians defeated the poorly- armed and badly- led Ethiopian forces. Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974) lost the war, not only because of Italian military superiority, but also because Ethiopia lacked internal unity. According to Marcus Garvey, the brilliant pan- Africanist leader of the 1920s and 1930, Haile Selassie lost the war because he kept his subjects "under the bondage of slavery." Garvey argued that "Ethiopia was the last African country where slavery was practiced and that people were kept in bondage without the most basic human rights" (Sbacchi 1997: 11-12). Garvey is right in stressing the lack of basic human rights in the Ethiopia of the 1920s and 1930s. By then slavery was widely practiced. The estimate for the slave population in the 1920s ranged from ten percent to twenty-five percent of the population of Ethiopia. "According to some newspaper reports of 1932 '[i]t is estimated that 2, 000,000 people were still living in slavery in Abyssinia(the name Ethiopia was still more commonly known by [at] the time) during the past year'. Seen against the estimated total population of 8 millions, that the slave population in the 1920s could have been as high as 25% appears credible" (Lata 1999: 157).

Even though the Ethiopian government issued a number of proclamations (1923, 1924, and 1931) that were never enforced (Sbacchi 1997: 11). Let alone enforcing proclamations, Haile Selassie is reported to have "suggested that American capitalists invest in the exploitation of Ethiopia's natural resources by engaging slave labor" (Sbacchi 1997: 12). The Emperor, who is praised as radical and a reformer early in his reign, "estimated that perhaps slavery would be eradicated by the 1950s" (Sbacchi 1997: 11). The Italians abolished slavery in 1936 and "liberated about 500,000" (Sbacchi 1997: 13) men, women, and children.

Besides slavery, there were deep-seated contradictions between masters and slaves, conquerors and the conquered, rulers and subjects, Muslims and Christians, which account for lack of unity on the eve of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. The Oromo, like other peoples of Ethiopia, either collaborated or resisted Italian invasion. Since Italians followed a pro-Oromo and pro-Muslim policy, more than thirty thousand Muslim Oromos fought for and contributed to the Italian victory in 1936 (Sbacchi 1985: 162). Muslim Oromo collaborated with the Italians not because they wanted to change Ethiopian colonialism for Italian fascism, but because of their hatred for Ethiopian colonialism. The Italians abolished both slavery and the *gabar* system, which gave many Oromo the right to own their own land.

Even non-Muslim Oromo submitted to Italians "in order to avenge Amhara domination and to attack the Amhara" (Sbacchi 1997: 176). Like Amharas, Tigreans, Eritreans, Somalis and Libyans, some Oromo fought for the Italians "not because they felt an attachment for the Italian cause, but because they needed the good wage they received to buy food and clothing" (Sbacchi 1997: 177).

After his defeat in 1936, Haile Selassie fled to England where he refused to meet with Marcus Garvey, who preached that Africans should have confidence in themselves and pride in their noble past. In those days Haile Selassie and the ruling class he headed did not consider themselves Africans. They regarded themselves as Caucasians rather than blacks, which infuriated Garvey who accused Haile Selassie of keeping " . . . the majority of his countrymen in bondage" (Sbacchi, 1997, 12). "Infuriated, Garvey called Haile Selassie a coward . . . Haile Selassie made it known that he wanted nothing to do with Negroes. The astonished Marcus Garvey accused Haile Selassie of being the ruler of a country where black men were chained and flogged and that he was a great coward who had fled his country" (Sbacchi 1997: 25). It was not only Haile Selassie who betrayed his people, but also the Abyssinian ruling class that put its interest "before national interest" (Sbacchi, 1997, 10). For instance, while *Ras Hailu*, the traditional ruler of Gojjam and the most powerful Amhara chief and *Ras Seyoum*, the powerful Tigrean chief submitted to and facilitated the establishment of Italian Fascism in Ethiopia, *Dajamach Habte Mariam*, the Oromo governor of Leka Nakamte was resisting fascist occupation (Ta'a 1997: 268). While

resisting Italian occupation thirty-three Oromo chiefs initiated a policy of forming Western Oromo Confederation. To that effect they made an agreement stating that: "We the hereditary chiefs declared here that our population is under control by our chiefs, our definite decision is that we wish to be placed under British Mandate and we appoint Dejamach Habte Mariam as our head chief, and we agree to accept the agreement which he would make and sign with the British government; that the Mandate remain until we achieve self government" (Gilkes 1975; 211).

Oromo chiefs succeeded in forming Western Oromo Confederacy under the leadership of *Dajamach* Habte Mariam in June 1936. From the 1880s, when the Oromo were conquered, to 1936, when Italians occupied Ethiopia, it was assumed that the Amhara ruling class's policy of divide and rule hopelessly divided the Oromo. However, the Oromo showed unity among themselves and solidarity with others by standing together for the common goal of freedom. What brought about this condition was the emergence of a leadership, which sought to liberate the Oromo both from the defeated Ethiopian colonialism and the victorious Italian fascism. The leadership of the Western Oromo government included traditional leaders (i.e., chiefs) as well as young educated leaders. The reasons for the formation of Western Oromo government and the course of action set in motion by that government were expressed succinctly in a letter written to Sir Anthony Eden, then British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

At this critical moment of its existence the people of Western [Oromo] are faced with a problem of pulling itself out of the unfortunate circumstance in which it finds itself and for which it is in no way responsible. With this object in view they have formed confederation under the leadership of His Excellency *Dejazmach* Habte Mariam to bring their cause before the bar of world public opinion and they are confident to obtain justice with the help of your government. *Dejazmach* Habte Mariam is now busy in organizing civil administration, financial and commercial departments, political and foreign relation departments, army and police departments, and a communication department. To run these departments, he has in his service

a good number of young men educated in Europe and elsewhere. By establishing a model army under the direction of young and trained officers and by taking a firm action, he has already saved the provinces of Western [Oromo] from chaos, which has infested the rest of Ethiopia, as the result of Italian invasion. His Excellency has already started the work of facilitating communications for commerce by constructing roads and bridges under the direction of young engineers educated in England. He has also policed the commercial roads from Kurmuk to Nakamte. Merchants travel along this route unmolested by shiftas (brigands), FO371/20207/20208)

The western Oromo government not only launched an impressive program for economic growth and development, but also requested "the British government to act as a mandatory power over the Western Oromo Confederation under the umbrella of the League of Nations" (Ta'a 1997: 267). The life of the Western Oromo government was cut short with Italian occupation of the region and the mysterious death of *Dejazamach Habte Mariam*, who was apparently poisoned by the Italians (Ta'a 1997: 277). Before the end of 1936 all of Oromo became part of the Italian East African Empire, which was divided into six governments or autonomous regions: These were: "Somalia, Eritrea, Oromo, Sidama, Amhara, and Harar" (Sbacchi 1997: 137). Of the six regions, Oromia was targeted as an ideal area for agricultural colonization and Italian resettlement, the process that would have altered the demographic and economic landscape of Oromia had it continued much longer than five years.

To weaken Oromo resistance, Italians followed pro-Oromo policy. "Oromo oppression under Amhara domination became the central theme of Italian propaganda and de-Ahmarization campaigns. Amharic was replaced as the legal language" (Sbacchi 1985: 160). The Italians introduced an Oromo language radio program and that language was also used in the school and in the court system all over Oromo territory. However, these measures did not weaken resistance. Although there were many Oromo collaborators as there were Amhara and Tigrean collaborators, there were

also Oromos who registered a period of heritage of resistance against Italian fascism. For instance, while *Ras Hailu* and *Ras Seyoum*, the two most powerful Amhara and Tigrean chiefs, were favored guests at fascist banquets, Oromo resistance leaders "were bone in the throat of Mussolini's army" (Nega & Tibebu 1989: 127). Two of the most celebrated patriotic resistance leaders, namely *Ras Abebe Aregay*, the grandson of *Ras Gobana*, and *Dejazmach Geresu Dukki* were Oromo. In 1941, while Emperor Haile Selassie was returning from exile through Gojjam, *Ras Hailu*, on whom the "Italians conferred extensive honors," who was decorated with the stars of Italy, whose family members received titles and decorations from the Italians and who "finally was awarded the title of *negus* [king] of Gojjam (Sbacchi 1997: 144-147)," had the nerve to welcome the [Emperor] wearing a full Italian military uniform" (Nega & Tibebu 1989: 127).

In 1941, British forces together with patriotic resistance forces defeated and destroyed Italian fascism ejecting it from Ethiopia. Although the Oromo, especially those of Hararghe, petitioned the British military administration not to place them under Ethiopian government, Amhara administration was once again imposed on the Oromo. Within five short years, the Italians had built an extensive communication infrastructure, especially roads, in Ethiopia. They introduced a cash economy, abolished slavery, the Gabar system, took measures that "resulted in a social revolution reducing the dominant class overnight, taking away their authority and concomitant financial resources" (Sbacchi 1997: 127). It has been said that "the Italians introduced modern agricultural techniques and offered technical advice to stimulate indigenous agricultural production" (Larebo 1994: 291). Compare this with the previous fifty years of Ethiopian administration in Oromia (i.e., from 1880s to 1930s) that contributed nothing to Oromo welfare. As Evelyn Waugh observed in the early 1930s:

The Abyssinians had nothing to give their subject people, and nothing to teach them. They brought no crafts or knowledge, no new system of agricultural, drainage, or road making, no medicine, or hygiene, no higher political organization, no superiority except in their magazine rifles and belts of cartridges. They built nothing . . . dirty, idle, domineering, burning timber, devouring crops, taxing the

meager stream of commerce that seeped in from outside, enslaving the people (Waugh 1984: 25-26).

It is no surprise that many Oromo opposed the restoration of Amhara administration, while others" expressed their appreciation to the Italians in songs" in comparison with the previous Amhara administration as follows:

Ha addaatu Shashi gaabii wayyaa
Even if it is white, to wear cotton
cloth is better,
Ha Hammaatu Xaaliyaanii wayya
Even if it is harsh, Italian rule was
better (Ta'a , 1997, 278).

Once Emperor Haile Selassie was returned to power, he immediately restored Shewan Amhara colonial administrators including the ones who had shamelessly served the Italian colonial government. It was opportunism and not patriotism that was the deciding forces behind Emperor Haile Selassie's long reign. It is by glorifying Amhara resistance against Italian fascism, taking personal credit for the resistance and undermining Oromo role in that struggle that Haile Selassie sought to legitimize his return to power after he had abandoned his people and fled to exile. Undermining Oromo patriotism was a necessary condition for the re-establishment of the Ethiopian colonial order in Oromia.

Emperor Haile Selassie and the Oromo: 1941-1974

Against the expressed will of many Oromo, Emperor Haile Selassie imposed his tyrannical rule on the Oromo. Instead of at least recognizing their role in the resistance movement, the Emperor punished the Oromo in three ways: First, he stopped the Oromo language program of the Italian period and banned the use of that language in the court system. He went further and forbade production of even religious literature in the Oromo language. As Paul Baxter, the leading authority on Oromo studies observed

in 1967 while he was conducting field research among the Oromo in Arsi province:

Oromo was denied any official status and it was not permissible to publish, preach, teach or broadcast in Oromo. In court or before an official an Oromo had to speak Amharic or use an interpreter. Even a case between two Oromos, before an Oromo-speaking magistrate, had to be heard in Amharic. I sat through a mission service at which the preacher and all the congregation were Oromo but at which the sermon as well as the service was given first in Amharic, which few members of the congregation understood at all, and then translated into Oromo. The farce had to be played out in case a judas informed the district officer... fined or imprisoned the preacher" (Baxter 1978: 288).

Second, although Emperor Haile Selassie could not restore slavery and the *gabar* system after 1941 since both were irreparably destroyed during the short-lived period of Italian occupation, he devised a new system to further dispossess the Oromo of their land and the product of their labor. This was the tenancy system, which flourished between 1941 and 1975. "During Haile Selassie's rule the physical labor services of the gabbar system were transferred to equally exorbitant monetary rent payments and exploitation, where peasants were required to give up to 75 percent of their produce to the landowners until the land reform of 1975 abolished it" (Baissa 1998:86). Even Haile Selassie's limited development policies contributed to the destruction of some Oromo communities. In many places, thousands of Oromo peasants and pastoralists were driven away from their ancestral lands by the introduction of commercial farming. For instance, the land concession given to a Dutch company (HVA) led to very disastrous consequences for two groups of Oromo communities. The HVA sugar plantations at Wanji and Matahara in the Upper Awash River Valley displaced the Jile and Karrayyu Oromo communities. While the Jile community, after losing its traditional grazing land, disintegrated and virtually disappeared, the Karrayyu were reduced from more than 200,000

to less than 10,000 today (Markakis & Ayella 1989: 55-60). What happened to the remaining 190,000? After they lost their traditional grazing grounds the Karrayyu were forced to malaria infested areas where the deadly disease, combined with attacks by Ethiopian government forces and plundering of their cattle by other nomadic groups, hastened their destruction.

Third, Haile Selassie's government embarked on an extensive program of centralization, Christianization and Amharanization. For the purpose of centralization, the Emperor created the modern standing army, police force and modern civilian bureaucracy, all of which consolidated his absolute power. The Emperor encouraged the Ethiopian Orthodox Church clergy to intensify the spread of Christianity among the conquered people of southern Ethiopia in general and Oromia in particular. However, the clergy failed to carry out this ambitious spiritual undertaking for several simple reasons. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church clergy had cultural prejudice towards the Oromo. The clergy hated the Oromo, who in turn hated the Amhara clergy. According to Asma Giyorgis, a Liberal Amhara Catholic missionary: "The [Oromo] prefer to be Muslim rather than Christian because they hate the Amara [Amhara]. The Amhara priests, the bishops and the clergy do not like the [Oromo]. They believe that those cannot understand Christianity whose ancestors were not Christians. Therefore, they do not teach them" (Tafla 1987: 134-135). Even when they did teach, the Amhara clergy taught the Oromo in the Geez language, which is a totally unknown language and a heavy joke to the Oromo (Krapf 1968: 100). In other words, the Amhara clergy failed to capture the hearts and minds of the Oromo by their total failure to use the Oromo language for their missionary work. In fact, up to 1993," the Oromo language was considered too profane to be used by the church" (Djote 1993: 21). According to Mekuria Bulcha, the Abyssinian clergy: "Shared with the Emperor [Menilek], his Generals, and soldiers, booties plundered from the Oromo. The clergy were given land that was confiscated from Oromo peasants and became landlords. They never worked among the Oromo as missionaries to spread word of God. They used military force to baptize them en mass" (Bulcha 1994b: 11).

The Amhara clergy were not sensitive to Oromo food habits in which milk, butter and meat were central. The Oromo (Krapf 1968: 100) saw prohibition on milk, butter and meat, which was imposed during fasting

seasons, as a joke. "The clergy were . . . surprised to learn that all the converts had abandoned their new-found Christian faith soon after the mass baptism" (Haji 1995: 11; Tolessa 1999: 135). The humiliating mass baptism was followed by equally degrading collective names that were imposed on the Oromo converts. " From here and beyond your name shall be Wolde-Mariam; to the right, Gebre-Mariam; and to the left, Wolde-Gabriel" (Tolessa 1999: 148).

In addition, the Amhara clergy not only failed to convert the Oromo of Hararghe, Bale, Arsi and Sidamo, but also used the power of the state to prevent or restrict the activities of other non-Orthodox missionaries. By so doing, the Orthodox Church clergy inadvertently left the vast region for the spread of Islam unhindered. Emperor Haile Selassie's government worked with energy and determination to implement its policy of Amharization. Its goal was to consolidate the power of the Amhara elite "...through the establishment of the hegemony of the Amhara culture masked as 'Ethiopian' culture" (Keller 1998: 121). "Amhara culture, language and religion were imposed on the conquered peoples as well as Eritrea after its federation in 1952. The distinction between Amhara and Ethiopian nationalism was blurred and everybody was compelled to learn the Amhara national characteristic as if they were pan-Ethiopian traits" (Baissa 1998:81). To hasten the pace of Amharization, Amharic was declared as the official language of government, and it was planned to make it the *lingua franca* of the empire.

From 1942 onwards, Amaharic was promoted as the sole national language of the Empire and all other national languages were suppressed. The regime prohibited the use of Oromo literature for educational or religious purposes. The prohibition was further strengthened by the empowerment of an Imperial Decree No. 3 of 1944, which regulated the work of foreign missionaries and made Amharic the medium of instruction throughout the Empire (Bulcha 1993: 5, 11).

The Oromo were not only denied the basic right of using their language for educating their children, but also their children had very limited

access to education even in Amharic. The reason for this was very obvious and the purpose very clear. It was to deny "the majority of the Oromo any educational opportunity in order to keep them illiterate and submissive so that [the colonizers] would exploit their human and economic resources" (Jalata 1998: 3). In short, the ruling Amhara elites created one obstacle after another which deprived Oromo children from being taught in any language. "These obstacles had a negative impact on integrating the various ethnic groups and on the national unity of the country" (Sbacchi 1997: 11).

According to Emmanuel Abraham, who served as a Director General in the Ministry of Education from 1944 to 1947, he was accused of educating "Only the Gallas"² [Oromo] (Abraham 1995: 64). Emmanuel Abraham was one of the most Amharized Oromo, the most loyal servant of the Emperor Haile Selassie, who was committed to and tirelessly worked for the success of Amharization. He educated five times more Amhara than Oromo. And yet, he was accused of teaching more Oromo than Amhara.

The Emperor realized this and was vexed. He therefore went one day, without my knowledge, to a school which had the largest number of students and directed the headmaster to make a list of the pupils in ethnic groups and present it to him. He did that and out of a total of 991 pupils, 701 said they were Amharas. The rest came from the various ethnic groups. The Emperor showed me this and, after telling me why he had asked for it, commanded me to get him in ethnic groups a list of all the pupils in the Addis Ababa schools. I presented a complete list in a few days. In April 1947, 4, 795 students attended the Addis Ababa schools. Of those, 3, 055 said they were Amharas and the remaining 1, 740 were from the other ethnic groups. Of these, 583 said they [Oromo]. On the basis of this, it was obvious that the great majority of students of the period were not [Oromo] but Amharas (Abraham 1995: 64).

From the above it is clear that the Amhara ruling elite were not interested in creating an educational system in which all children had equal access to the benefit of modern education. On the contrary, they wanted an educational system that advanced mainly the educational interests of Amhara children. Such a policy might have worked before 1935, when the Amhara elite's hegemonic power was supreme and at the same time when Oromo national consciousness was either rudimentary or nonexistent. However, it could not work effectively after the dramatic changes which the short period of Italian occupation ushered in. On the contrary, the policy of teaching mainly the Amhara children was a self-defeating policy which failed to produce an Ethiopian nation. Instead, it produced few Amharized non-Amhara individuals, who were despised, ridiculed and looked down upon with contempt by the members of the Amhara ruling class.

The period from 1942 to 1990 was time when the program of Amharization and de-Oromization was intensified, through the limited educational system, cultural institutions and governmental bureaucracy. In the school nothing positive was taught about the Oromo, their history, culture, and way of life.³ On the contrary, Oromo children were made to feel that "their mother tongue was inferior and too 'uncultivated' to be used in a civilized environment such as the school" (Bulcha 1993: 9).

In the school, the Oromo child was not only mobbed, but was 'fed' negative biases against everything that was Oromo. Mixed in with the Amhara language and Abyssinian history, he/she was taught many of the Amhara prejudices against the Oromo. The Oromo people were depicted as subjects and dependent in relation to the Empire's rulers whereas the Amhara and Tigreans were presented as citizens. The Oromo were (are) described as a people without culture, history and heroes The Oromo were characterized not only as uncivilized, but as uncivilizable. The Oromo language and culture were reduced to marks of illiteracy, shame and backwardness as the school pressed Oromo children to conform to Amhara culture . . . Those who were completely overwhelmed by the unmitigated assault on Oromo culture and history,

dropped (or tried to drop) their Oromo identity. Among these, were some who tried to get rid of every sign of what the Oromo themselves call Oromummaa ('Oromoness'). In a desperate move to assimilate they 'forgot' the Oromo language (Bulcha 1993: 9-10).

In short, the Ethiopian educational system fostered Amharization, which stripped Oromo children of their language, culture and identity. This was meant to destroy Oromo youth's pride in their cultural heritage and to keep them chained with no faith in themselves, their history, and their national identity (Hassen 1990:3). It remains the belief of the Amhara ruling class and elites that to be an Ethiopian, one has to cease to be an Oromo. The two things were/are seen as incompatible" (Bulcha 1991: 101). In other words:

Haile Selassie's regime followed a policy of assimilation as the mode of integration into the Ethiopian System. Those who were assimilated or Amharized ceased to be themselves. It did not dawn on Emperor Haile Selassie and his ruling elite that one could be an Oromo, Somali or Walayeta but still remain a loyal Ethiopian. I write all these not to exaggerate the failure of Haile Selassie's regime but just to show that during his long reign, Ethiopia lost a good opportunity of creating an Ethiopian nation, Ethiopian culture, Ethiopian languages and Ethiopian history that generates a common feeling and reflects both the past achievements and future aspirations. What is projected as the identity of the Ethiopian nation-- National culture, National language, National religion, National dress, National symbols (the monarchy, the church, the flag, national anthem)- is simply that of the Amhara-Tigray nations (Hassen 1999A: 236).

As I indicated in Part One of this article the modern Ethiopian State was not brought about by the natural growth of unity of peoples but on the

contrary, through brutal conquest (Hassen 1999: 128-146). The relation between the Amhara-Tigrean and the Oromo and other oppressed peoples of southern Ethiopia has been that of conqueror and conquered, colonizer and colonized. Neither common values, nor history, nor the will to live together bind the colonizers and the colonized. The annexed and colonized peoples were "treated as second class subjects" (Baissa 1998: 81). The Oromo have always struggled to free themselves from colonial subjugation and continue to do so. Though this long struggle has not yet resulted in Oromo self-determination, it has changed Oromo perception of themselves and how others receive them. The following discussion attempts to show that the Oromo will never accept colonial status quo based on violence and lack of human dignity. It concludes that the sooner the ruling Tigrean elite realizes this simple fact and accepts the inevitability of Oromo self-determination, the better it will be for the future of all the peoples of Ethiopia.

Between 1941, when Emperor Haile Selassie was restored to power, and 1974 when he was overthrown, there had never been a decade which was not characterized by Oromo resistance and revolt somewhere in Oromia. There can be no doubt about the reasons behind the spontaneous and uncoordinated uprisings. It was economic exploitation, political subjugation, cultural domination, psychological dehumanization, lack of rule of law and the absence of justice that impelled each section of the Oromo society to lead an isolated uprising against Haile Sellassie's regime. Owing to the lack of educated central leadership, absence of communication, the distance involved and the lack of Oromo political consciousness, even neighboring groups failed to coordinate their resistance. And yet, each group neither could nor would continue to live under such conditions. Many were prepared to die resisting with arms in their hands although they did not have any realistic chance of success. By resisting, they left an invaluable legacy for the future generation. Let me give three examples.

First, in 1943, the Oromo in some parts of Hararghe rose up in arms against Haile Selassie's regime. Second, in 1948, the Oromo of Hararghe joined an uprising that was led by Mohammed Jilo,⁴ a man of peasant origin. Mohammed Jilo, whose land was expropriated by an Amhara landlord, did everything to regain his land through recourse in the legal system. However, he lost not only his land, but everything that he had to the unjust and corrupt

legal system. He rebelled and his movement attracted many followers, who scored a number of victories, and for a short while in 1948, Mohammed Jilo established his own administration in one sub-district in the Chercher area of Hararghe, though his movement was crushed and Mohammed Jilo himself was hanged. However his movement not only left the Oromo in Chercher a wealth of experience in resisting domination, but it also created a revolutionary tradition in Chercher. The roots of this tradition were planted deep in the soil of Chercher, giving birth to the first guerrilla army of the Oromo Liberation Front in 1974. That guerrilla army, the first to be formed in the name of liberating the Oromo nation, was started and led by Ellemo Qilixxu, a wealthy merchant, who sacrificed his family, his property and his life, for the Oromo cause. The unrivaled heroism of the small guerrilla army and the martyrdom of the gallant Ellemo Qilixxu, aroused the enthusiasm of the Oromo to struggle for their freedom and human dignity (see below). Today Ellemo Qilixxu is a national hero, whose name symbolizes continuation of Oromo resistance. A beautiful Oromo song, which glorifies his name and the names of fallen heroes moves Oromo youth to tears of joy.

Third, in 1958, a major rebellion broke out in Dawe, Wallo region. Dawe has been the center of Islamic learning, famous throughout Oromia. The leader of this revolt was Hassen Amme, a young man of peasant background. His successful resistance was only broken by Haile Selassie's bodyguards, who were famous for their combat experience in the Korean War of the early 1950s. In modern Oromo history, two interconnected resistance movements dominated the 1960s: the Macha and Tulama Association, and the Bale Oromo-armed struggle. Both movements marked the beginning of a coordinated Oromo resistance against Haile Selassie's regime. It was out of this resistance that Oromo Nationalism developed during and after the 1960s.

The Macha - Tulama Association (1963- 1967)⁵

The Macha and Tulama Association (hereafter the Association) was formed in Addis Ababa (Finfinne) on January 24, 1963. However, it received legal recognition from the government only in May 1964, a year and four months after it was formed. It was grudging recognition which Haile Selassie's officials later regretted (Zoga 1993: 21). Who formed the Association and why? What did it achieve? The following discussion attempts to answer these and similar questions.

It was Colonel Alemu Qitessa and Haile Mariam Gamada together with high- ranking Oromo officers in the Ethiopian military and Oromo lawyers who formed the association. Colonel Alemu Qitessa was a distinguished military officer who endured pain and sorrow for the Oromo cause (Zoga 1993: 387-392). Haile Mariam Gamada was a man with an encyclopedic knowledge of Oromo history, a lawyer and greatly respected leader. Colonel Alemu Qitessa was the president of the Association and the Chairman of its Board of Directors. Baqala Nadhi was Vice President, Colonel Qadida Gurmessa, the second Vice President, and Haile Mariam Gamada was the Association's General Secretary. It was he who chaired the committee that drafted the bylaws of the Association, coined the name of the Association and produced its logo: the *Odaa* (Sycamore tree), the symbol of freedom and self-determination (Hassen 1997: 207, Zoga 1993: 19). The name of the association symbolized the unity of two major Oromo groups, that of Macha - Tulama, while its logo, the *Odaa* symbolized the unity of all Oromo and their return to *Gada* democracy. This was because the Oromo assembly (parliament) held its meeting under the life-giving shade of the *odaa* ("the holy sycamore tree") which traditionally was believed to be the most "respected" and the most "sacred" of trees, the shade of which was the source of peace, the center of religion and the office of the government and the meeting place for the democratically elected Gada leaders (Hassen 1990: 14).

The Macha -Tulama Association was formed by the most privileged and the best educated elements of the Oromo society, who felt a humiliating sense of exclusion from important "decision-making processes" within the Ethiopian political establishment. The founders wanted the Association to

be the agent of social change and the Oromo voice for exercising influence within the larger arena of Ethiopian politics.

[T]he desire to be recognized as responsible agents whose wishes, acts, hopes, and opinions matter and the desire to build an efficient dynamic modern state. The one aim is to be noticed. It is a search for identity, and a demand that identity be politically acknowledged as having import, a social association of the self as 'being some body in the world.' The other aim is political: it is a demand for progress for a rising standard of living, more effective political order, great social justice, and beyond that of 'playing a part in the larger arena of world politics,' of exercising influence among the nations (Geertz 1996: 30).

The founders the Macha-Tulama Association articulated Oromo cultural rather than political nationalism and their goal was the search for and recognition of Oromo identity within the larger Ethiopian identity itself. Consequently, they did not reject Ethiopian identity, the state and its institutions while the Oromo nationalists of the 1970s and after, who articulated Oromo political nationalism, did reject Ethiopian identity and its institutions (Hassen 1998: 190). The leaders of the Macha and Tulama Association promoted Oromo national renaissance and cultivated an Oromo national consciousness that challenged the legitimacy of the Ethiopian political establishment claiming that it ignored or excluded Oromo national identity. The Association was formed in accordance with Article 45 of his Imperial Majesty's 1955 Revised Constitution and Article 14, Number 505 of the Civil Code of the Ethiopian Empire as a civilian self- help association. According to Article 5 of the Association's statute, its aims and objectives, among others, were to build schools, clinics, road, churches, mosques, to help the weak and disabled, to organize Ethiopian civilian and national rights, and to spread literacy and basic knowledge about health care. The framers of the statute were highly educated, well-informed, politically-conscious individuals, who knew how to organize the people and mobilize their resources for solving their own problems. Article 20 of the statute

provided that all Ethiopians would be accepted as members without regard to ethnic, tribal, regional, religious affiliation or sex of the applicant, in accordance with the internal regulations of the Association (Hassen 1998: 195, Zoga 1993: 5-36).

The leaders of the Association challenged and defied the established Ethiopian political order in two major ways. First, they created a country-wide pan-Oromo movement that launched multifaceted activities, nourishing Oromo self-respect and self-confidence, inspiring them with a renewed vigor and determination to be united and become the agents of their own freedom and equality. Before the Ethiopian government officials realized, the leaders of the Association had done something-unthinkable even in 1963. They brought the Oromo together from east and West, North and South, Muslims and Christians and believers of traditional Oromo religion and demolished the myth of Oromo disunity. The leaders of the association exploded the myth of Oromo disunity and embarked on coordinated and united activities, which alarmed the government. They even went beyond religious taboo when Muslims ate meat slaughtered by Christians and the Christians ate Muslim meat.

This was an unheard-of-event in Ethiopia, and outraged the Amhara ruling elites (Hassen 1998: 206). The leaders of the Association went beyond religious taboo in order to demonstrate the depth of Oromo unity. At every mass gathering, the leaders of the Association stressed that, despite regional and religious differences, the Oromo are one people who share a common language, culture, manners, common political idioms underpinned by the *Gada* system, common pride in their democratic heritage and common historical experience under an oppressive Ethiopian system which robbed them of their land, their rights, and their human dignity. The leaders of the Association made the Oromo conscious of their unity as a people and also conscious of their deprivation and their treatment as second class subjects and urged them to be agents of their own freedom and equality.

Secondly, the leaders of the Association not only united the Oromo themselves but also sought to unite them with other oppressed peoples of Ethiopia. Thus the Association:

Provided an organizational framework, not only to unite the oppressed nationalities, but also to end national oppression

in Ethiopia. Consequently, membership within the Association was open to all. This was both a strength and a weakness of the Association. It was a strength because the Association became the first organization to unite the oppressed nationalities of Ethiopia who like the Oromo, were subjected to economic exploitation, political oppression and cultural domination. It was a weakness because open membership provided a [good opportunity] for the security agents of Haile Selassie's regime to infiltrate the Association and to expose it to destruction (Hassen 1997: 217).

The Association, with its main office in Addis Ababa, had branch offices all over the Oromo region of Ethiopia. Within two short years its membership expanded from a few thousand to over a million. Its members included people from all walks of life, all social and economic classes, Christians, Muslims, and believers in original Oromo religion, and from every corner of Oromia. They included farmers, students, teachers, men and women, civil servants, lawyers, soldiers from the rank of private to general, community and religious leaders, and top government officials. Let me use the Wallaga branch as an example to show how the Association attracted the most privileged elements of the Oromo society.

Astede Habte Mariam, the only woman in the highest policy making Board of the Association, formed the Wallaga branch office in 1966. She was a member of the Oromo royal family of Nakamtee and the sister of Oromo governor of Wallaga province. On the day when the Wallaga branch office was opened, high ranking government officials and key members of the Association were present. Present were Colonel Alemu Qitessa, the President of the Association, General Tadesse Birru, the most influential member of the Association, General Jagama Kello, General Dawit Abdi, Dajazmach Kebede Buzunesh, Dajazmach Fiqere Selassie Habte Mariam (the Governor of Wallaga), his sister, princess Mahestena Habte Mariam (the wife of the deceased son of Emperor Haile Selassie), Haile Mariam Gamada, and many other government officials. This means that the Wallaga branch, chaired by Mrs. Astede Habte Mariam, included even a member of Emperor

Haile Selassie's royal family. There was not a single general of Oromo origin in Haile Selassie's military or police force who was not a member of the Association. There were many high-ranking civilian officials of Haile Selassie's regime who joined the Macha - Tulama Association.

Through these high-ranking government officials the Association penetrated Emperor Haile Selassie's bureaucracy. After all they were the most privileged members of the Oromo elite. Likely, they had much more in common with the Amhara ruling class, into which they were assimilated, than with the ordinary Oromo. In fact, some of the individuals spoke only Amharic and did not know the Oromo language. And yet they joined an Oromo organization and spoke to the Oromo audience through interpreters. The question is why did they join the Association? "They joined it for various reasons, but by joining it, they elevated the status and transformed the image of the Association. Most of all they provided the Association with their skills, knowledge, organizational capacities and leadership qualities [important connections and information] and in the process they transformed what started as self help organization into a pan-Oromo movement with huge membership and branch offices all over Oromia (Hassen 1996: 75).

It is my assessment that the Oromo elite turned to their roots mainly as a result of their disillusionment with the Ethiopian political establishment. They had all the necessary criteria to be integrated into the heart and the soul of the Ethiopian system (Giorgis 1989: 117). They were mainly Christians, culturally Amharized and spoke Amharic. They were ardent Ethiopian nationalists and loyal to the Emperor. And yet they were "never treated with respect or accorded equality of status" (Baissa 1998: 81). "The life of assimilated Oromos was often peripheral. In spite of their total submission to 'preserve for their cultural suicide' and to the dominance of the Amhara over non-Amhara people in all aspects of life, the Amhara seldom treated them as equals. The Amharization of the Oromo and other groups was attempted without integrating them as equals" (Bulcha 1994: 104).

From what has transpired thus far, it is clear that it was the conflict between the ruling Amhara elites and Amharized educated Oromo that turned the latter towards the Oromo issue. It has been said and rightly that:

When the educated professionals find themselves unable to gain admission to posts commensurate with their degree

and talents; they tend to turn away also from the metropolitan culture of the dominant ethnic group and return to their own culture, the culture of the once despised subject ethnic group. Exclusion breeds failed assimilation, and reawakens an ethnic consciousness among the professional elites, at exactly the moment when the intellectuals are beginning to explore the historic roots of the community (Smith 1982: 31).

After the 1960-failed coup, Emperor Haile Selassie's regime followed a secret policy of limiting the number of high- ranking military officers of Oromo origin and controlling their promotion. Ironically, not a single high-ranking officer of Oromo origin supported the 1960-failed coup; on the contrary, they opposed it. Colonels (later Brigadier generals) Tadesse Birru, Jagama Kello, Waqjira Serda, Dawit Abdi, and Major Qadida Gurmeysa supported the Emperor and they were instrumental in aborting the 1960 coup (Zoga 1993: 349, 352). And yet, they were suspected of disloyalty and subjected to discrimination. This policy not only angered Oromo officers but also encouraged them to be involved in political activities (Zoga 1993: 12).

Colonel Alemu Qitessa was among the high- ranking officers who were angered by the discriminatory policy of Emperor Haile Selassie and formed the Macha and Tulama Association to oppose that policy. Among the first of these officers that Colonel Alemu Qitessa invited to join the Association was General Tadesse Birru, the most influential officer of the Oromo origin, and a rising star within the Ethiopian political establishment. General Tadesse Birru was a deeply religious man who was Amharized, spoke Amharic and married an Amhara woman. He passed as an Amhara. It was he who established the Rapid Force, the elite riot battalion. He was famous for his mastery of military science and trained many of the best Ethiopian officers. Tadesse Biru was loyal to the Emperor, who entrusted to him the training of a number of leaders of liberation movements in Africa, including Nelson Mandela of South Africa. In his 1994 famous book, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, Mandela acknowledges Tadessee Birru as the man under whose guidance he received his first military training in 1962. In President Nelson Mandela's

own words, "I was lectured on military science by Colonel Tadessee who was also Assistant Commissioner of Police.... In my study sessions, Colonel Tadessee discussed matters such as how to create a guerilla force, how to command an army, and how to enforce discipline" (Mandela 1994: 265).

It was probably in 1963 when Tadesse Birru was promoted to Brigadier General and entrusted with many responsibilities. In addition to being the Commander of the Rapid Force, he was Deputy Commissioner of the National Police Force, Commander of the Territorial Army and the Chairman of the National Literacy Campaign. In his latter capacity he enthusiastically conducted the literacy program which was conducted only in Amharic, thus facilitating the Amharization policy of the Emperor. When Colonel Alemu Qitessa invited General Tadesse Birru to join the Macha and Tulama Association in 1963, his answer was "I cannot participate in tribal politics" (Zoga 1993: 24). For him the Association was involved in tribal politics and as an ardent Ethiopian Nationalist, he felt he was above tribal politics. However, General Tadesse Birru's energetic support for the spread of literacy among the Oromo alarmed the Ethiopian Prime Minister Aklilu Habte Wold. The prime Minister assumed General Tadesse Birru to be an Amhara and confided in him the educational policy of Haile Selassie's regime in the following words: "Tadesse! After you have started leading the literacy campaign, you talk a lot about learning. It is good to say learn. However, you must know whom we have to teach. We are leading the country by leaving behind the Oromo at least by a century. If you think you can educate them, they are an ocean [whose wave] can engulf you" (Zoga 1993: 25)

General Tadesse Birru, who wanted to create an Ethiopian nation based on the equality of all Ethiopians, could not believe what he heard from the mouth of the Ethiopian Prime Minister. He was shocked and awakened by the policy designed to keep the Oromo beyond the reach of modern education. It was the realization of this policy which inspired him to return to his roots. He joined the Macha-Tulama Association on June 23, 1964. When the Ethiopian Prime Minister heard the news about Tadesse Birru joining the Association, he realized that Tadesse was not an Amhara and had mistakenly confided in him about the government's policy. To ensure damage control, the Ethiopian Prime Minister targeted General Tadesse Birru for destruction (Zoga 1993: 26-27).

Ironically, the leaders of the Association wanted to use general Tadesse Birru's fame, his charismatic personality and his loyalty for and closeness to the Emperor for the purpose of protecting and expanding the activities of the Association. The leaders of the Association did not realize that they inadvertently traded the calm activities of their organization for high stake publicity, which intensified the fear of the Amhara ruling elites who were eager and ready to destroy both the Association and its leaders (Hassen 1997: 211). That, for the moment, lay in the future. After General Tadesse Birru joined the Association, he became the leading personality and one of its dynamic and energetic leaders who radicalized the Association.

The radicalized Association attracted Oromo students from Addis Ababa University, including Baro Tumsa (the Chairman of the University Students' Union), Lieutenant Mamo Mazamir, Ibssa Gutama, Yohannes Lata, Mekonnen Gallan, Taha Ali Abdi, and many others. With the exception of Mamo Mazamir, who was martyred in 1969 (see below) the rest were founding members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in 1974. This establishes a direct link between the transition from the Macha and Tulama Association to the OLF (Hassen 1996: 75). The university students not only energized the movement but also raised the famous slogan of "Land to the Tiller" which became the binding revolutionary slogan for the Ethiopian student movements both at home and abroad. In his recently published book, Leenco Lata, the former Deputy General Secretary of the OLF, mentions a very interesting point in connection with how the slogan of "Land to the Tiller" was first raised. According to Leenco, it was two Oromo personalities who first organized public demonstration at which the famous slogan was raised. What Leenco did not mention is that the two Oromo personalities who were instrumental in popularizing the slogan were members of the Macha and Tulama Association.

Hence, the first public demonstration at which the slogan "Land to the Tiller" was hoisted took place in February 1965 mainly as a result of a secret coordination between two Oromo personalities. The Emperor's rubber stamp parliament, whose President was Tesema Negeri, was at the time debating a land reform bill that was tabled mostly under pressure from Western governments and financial institutions, like the World Bank.

Effecting the kind of changes suggested by these pressure groups and desired by the tenant farmers was opposed by most of the deputies who were mostly absentee landlords themselves. It was to circumvent this opposition that the President of the Parliament and his fellow Oromo Chairman of the University Students' Union, Baro Tumsa, secretly arranged for the staging of the first ever "Land to the Tiller" demonstration. From that day until the unseating of the imperial government, this slogan was never missing from the almost annual event of student anti-government demonstrations (Lata 1999: 191-192).

Besides Baro Tumsa, Lieutenant Mamo Mazamir was among the university students who contributed to the radicalization of the Association. He was a graduate of, and instructor, at the prestigious Harar Military Academy. Later, he joined Addis Ababa University Law School, where he completed his legal education.

He was a very intelligent, hardworking and highly motivated and immensely dedicated to the cause of the Oromo. He widely read socialist literature and knew a great deal about the Third World revolutions. He was angered with the grotesque distortion of Oromo history in the Ethiopian historiography and outraged with the Ethiopian government's policy of banning the writing of the Oromo language. He made writing Oromo history and production of literature in the Oromo language the ideological battleground for the movement (Hassen 1998: 203).

It did not take long before the radicalization of the Association excited the ambition of militant Oromo nationals and aroused the anxieties of Amhara ruling elites. General Tadesse Birru and other leaders of the Association organized huge mass meetings at which through fierce oratory, dramas, poems and prayers in the Oromo language, which was proscribed in public (Markakis 1987: 260), moved the Oromo into tears of anger against the Ethiopian oppressive system. This was a landmark in the history of the Oromo people since colonization, leading as it did to a country-wide political awakening. For the first time, peaceful Oromo resistance was co-

ordinated under single leadership. This came as a severe blow to the Amhara ruling class who had never lost the feeling of sitting on top of a volcano (Hassen & Greenfield 1992: 580)

The developing Oromo political consciousness posed a long- term challenge to the Amhara elites' domination of the Ethiopian political landscape. The link that the leadership of the Association established with the leaders of the Oromo armed struggle in the region of Bale posed an immediate danger to the stability of the Ethiopian Empire State, to which we now turn.

The Bale Oromo Armed Struggle 1963-1970

Land alienation, heavy taxation, maladministration and Oromo hostility to Amhara political, economic and cultural domination caused the armed struggle in the province of Bale. To get support from neighboring Somalia, the leaders of the Bale Oromo rebellion used Islam as a resistance ideology. Hence, it was in the name of Islam that the leaders of the Bale Oromo Movement mobilized their people and united the Oromo with the Somalis to fight against their common oppressors. In the following statement, General Waqo Gutu, the leader of the Bale Oromo Movement, connects Oromo historical grievances with religious discrimination, economic exploitation and psychological dehumanization.

Notice that when the Amhara occupied our country with the help of European imperialists in 1885-1891, many of our people were massacred. Then the survivors were allotted like slaves to the settlers, who also partitioned our lands amongst themselves.... Remember that they plundered and distorted our historical legacy that is widely known, that they have violated our dignity, calling us the filthy Galla.

Do you realize how many times you have been denied justice in their court of law? You Muslims, your religion has been denigrated and you do not share equality with Christians (Tareke 1991: 131).

According to Tareke, who has written extensively on peasant protest in Ethiopia, the Bale rebellion is the longest peasant struggle in contemporary Ethiopian history, and its longevity was as much due to the resolve and competence of the insurgent [as to Islam] that served as the ideological matrix of organization and mobilization" (Tareke 1991: 149). Besides using Islam as a resistance ideology, the leaders of the armed struggle in Bale established secret links with the leadership of the Macha and Tulama Association. Both movements influenced each other and contributed to the cultivation of Oromo political consciousness.

By 1966, the armed struggle in Bale not only pinned down one highly trained division backed by air power, but also repeatedly defeated units of the Ethiopian army. By 1967, the armed struggle in Bale had already liberated about seventy five percent of the vast region of Bale and encircled Goba, the capital. Oromo fighters cut the road between Addis Ababa and Goba and forced Ethiopian soldiers to abandon a number of garrison towns. The armed struggle in Bale spread to Sidamo, Western Hararghe and Arsi regions and served as a rallying for Oromo nationalist elements (Hassen 1998: 208).

Some members of the Macha and Tulama Association participated in the armed struggle in Bale itself. The best example for this was Abdulkarim Haji Ibrahim (popularly known as Sheikk Jarra) who fought in Bale in 1967. Together with Mulis Abba Gada, (who was assassinated in Mogadishu in February 2000, by agents of the TPLF/EPRDF regime) Abdulkarim created from scratch the Oromo Liberation Front guerrilla army in 1976 in Hararghe. His contribution to the Oromo national struggle deserves in depth study by itself. Here it should suffice to say that Sheikk Jarra, who started fighting against Ethiopian colonialism in 1967 is still struggling against the same system thirty-three years later! General Waqo Gutu and Adam Warriyo, who started the Bale armed struggle almost forty years ago are still in the struggle. Be that as it may, what particularly worried the Ethiopian regime in 1967 was not only the military setback it suffered in the province of Bale, but also the link that developed between armed resistance in Bale and the leadership of the Macha - Tulama Association. The man who established that link was Ahmed Buna, a schoolteacher and a member of the Association itself. He was one of the founders of the Oromo Liberation Front in 1974. Ahmed Buna⁶ devoted twenty- six years of his life

to the Oromo liberation struggle. It was he who in 1965 smuggled the leaders of the armed resistance to Addis Ababa, where they conducted extensive discussions with the top leaders of the Macha and Tulama Association as to how best coordinate their activities (Hassen 1998: 208). A letter that was written by Lieutenant Mamo Mazamir, one of the most militant leaders of the Association, conclusively establishes the link that developed between the two movements.

The history of mankind shows that a people who rise in the struggle for freedom and independence, in defiance of death, are always victorious. The life and death struggle of the oppressed masses in the Ethiopian Empire against the hegemony of the Amhara and their allies headed by American imperialism is a sacred liberation struggle of millions of oppressed and humiliated people. That struggle will surely intensify in the course of time, as the oppressed people's organizational means and consciousness become deeply rooted. As learnt in discussions, the Macha and Tulama democratic movement, which was created to raise the consciousness of the Oromo people is in the present situation working day and night to put in hand coordination activities that are within our reach. In fact, the militant members are working now on the means of organizing a nationwide people's movement which is based on realizing the aspirations of Oromo people. "Please, keep up your heroic armed struggle, defending every inch of the Oromo nation to the last drop of your blood. The decisive war of resistance you are conducting in Bale will, despite the maneuvers of imperialism, Zionism and local reaction, be victorious. We shall continue doing everything we can to keep in touch with you" (Quoted in Tullu, 1980, 25-26).

This letter is interesting for four reasons. First, it was written on September 10, 1965, and it expresses the thinking of the militant leaders of the Association at that point in time. Second, it shows clearly the meeting of minds between the leaders of the two organizations. Third, it shows that while the Association struggled peacefully for recognition of Oromo identity and their equality with the rest of the Ethiopian population, the militant leaders of the Association did not exclude the possibility of conducting armed struggle if peaceful resistance failed to produce the desired results (Hassen, 1998, 209). Finally, the language of the letter demonstrates Mamo

Mazamir's revolutionary orientation, which is also supported by another source (Zoga, 167, 241).

The leaders of the Macha and Tulama Association not only established secret contact with the armed resistance in Bale, but also they tried to unite the Oromo and other oppressed peoples of Ethiopia. Their goal was to create a democratic country in which all the peoples of Ethiopia could live together on the basis of equality. What the leaders of the Association were opposed to was the identity of Ethiopia that excluded the Oromo. What they hated was the political and cultural hegemony of the Amhara ruling elite. What they wanted was a creation of a democratic Ethiopia that would be beneficial to all the peoples of Ethiopia. At huge mass meetings in many places from 1964 to 1966, the leaders of the Macha and Tulama Association, through fierce oratory, dramas, poems and prayers in the Oromo language, channeled Oromo anger against the oppressive regime of Emperor Haile Selassie. The Oromo became conscious of their deprivation and their treatment as second class subjects, and expressed their determination to be free and equal with other peoples of Ethiopia. In other words, the leaders of the Association fired the imagination of the Oromo, created political consciousness, and penetrated Emperor Haile Selassie's bureaucracy. It was this success which probably raised false expectations in the minds of militant leaders that the moment was ripe for capturing state power. This was the major weakness of the leadership. A weakness because the leaders failed to realize that in Ethiopian State power is always captured through victory on the battlefield. The leaders of the Association did not make sufficient military preparation to confront the regime of Haile Sellassie, which was ready to destroy both the leadership and the Association itself. The new Oromo political consciousness and the armed struggle in Bale dominated the Amhara ruling elites' policy towards the Oromo and the thought of the two in combination became their nightmare. The destruction of the Macha - Tulama Association was part of the strategy for dealing with that nightmare.

The Destruction of Macha -Tulama Association 1967

It was Prime Minister Aklilu Habte Wold who spearheaded and coordinated the destruction of General Tadesse Birru and the Macha and Tulama Association. Up until 1966, the leaders of the Association, including

General Tadesse Birru, remained loyal to Emperor Haile Selassie. For them, the Emperor was not part of the conspiracy to destroy the Association and its leaders. However, when the Emperor refused to heed their plea for justice, the leaders of the Association, under the influence and guidance of General Tadesse Birru, decided to assassinate the Emperor and capture state power. For that purpose, a hastily called meeting was held at General Tadesse's residence on the evening of November 2, 1966. The objective of the meeting was to plan the physical elimination of the Emperor on November 3, 1966. Never was a plot to assassinate the Emperor so poorly and hastily planned as this one.

This, more than anything else, demonstrates the major weakness of Tadesse Birru who was a brave soldier but a poor strategist. He was impatient, lacked foresight and preparation and rushed into action without considering its consequences. To complete the tragedy, General Tadesse wanted to assassinate the Emperor, who knew all about it through his planted agents within the movement itself. Worse still, the general had no contingency plan, if the planned assassination failed to materialize as it did. Those who planned the destruction of General Tadesse Birru and the Association were delighted with the speed with which he fell into their trap (Hassen, 1998, 210).

While Haile Selassie knew all about the plot, General Tadesse Birru did not know what the Emperor had in store for him and those who participated in the hastily-called meeting to assassinate the Emperor, among others including Ketema Yifru, the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, who was not even a member of the Macha and Tulama Association. It is impossible to understand why General Tadesse Birru included Ketema Yifru, the godson of the Emperor, in that plot. Either the general was too trusting, or naive, or both. Ketema Yifru, a leading member of the Amhara elites was probably a planted agent at the highest level of the Association. Ketema Yifru, had nothing to gain by participating in the plot to assassinate the Emperor. He had everything to gain by betraying the trust which Tadesse Birru placed in him (Hassen, 1997, 220).

That fateful meeting at the house of General Tadesse Birru lasted only for a few hours. Weapons were distributed and the meeting ended. The government security men who knew about this sad episode detained those

who were returning home with weapons in their hands. According to Olana Zoga, the author of the *History of Macha and Tulama Association*, it was the key planted agent within the top leadership of the Association that enabled the government to foil the plot (Zoga 1993: 122-123). Who was this high level planted agent within the movement? Olana Zoga does not directly mention that agent by name but he drops many hints, all of which point to Ketema Yifru. Of more than ten individuals who participated in the plot to assassinate the Emperor, only Ketema Yifru escaped any punishment and remained the most popular Ethiopian Foreign Minister until 1974!

For the purpose of imprisoning all the key leaders and dissolving the Macha and Tulama Association, the government used an explosion at the Cinema Hall in Addis Ababa. The government planted the explosive devices security men, one of whom lost a hand while planting the device. Mamo Mazamir, the most radical member of the Association was blamed for causing the explosion (Zoga 1993: 138-148). The government imprisoned the prominent members of the Association, all of whom were severely tortured, brutalized, and dehumanized. For instance, Haile Mariam Gamada, the Secretary of the Association was brought to court on a stretcher because of the brutal beating from which he died shortly afterward (Hassen 1998: 211). Before his death, Haile Mariam Gamada spoke these words: "Neither the imprisonment and killing of the leaders nor banning of the Association will deter the [Oromo] nation's struggle. What we did is like a snake that entered a stomach. Whether it is pulled out or left there, the result is one and the same. It has spread its poison" (quoted in Zoga, 297).

Haile Mariam Gamada stated that through the activities of the Association the leaders of the Association have spread poison in the body politic of the Ethiopian State. The said poison was a metaphor for Oromo nationalism, which was challenging Ethiopian political establishment. He went on to say that "whether we die or not, our ideas [about the freedom of the Oromo] will be realized by our children or grandchildren"(Zoga 1993: 402). In his defense, General Taddesse Birru argued that:

What makes the freedom of a people complete are many, the most fundamental of which is their equality before the law. I am denied equality before the law because of my nationality. Officers, who were imprisoned before me were

paid their salary until their case was decided in court. Because of my nationality, I am treated differently. What is more, other officers were neither disgraced, nor tortured, while in police custody. Why am I disgraced and severely tortured? Spreading literacy among the Oromo, who are left behind in terms of education became my crime. I have been the victim of national oppression. I have been wrongly accused of things I did not do (quoted in Zoga 1993: 257-258).

The court, which demonstrated the Ethiopian justice system as a mockery, never considered General Tadesse Birru's argument in its deliberation. The court sentenced General Tadesse and Lieutenant Mamo Mazamir to death (Zoga 1993: 261). Although Emperor Haile Selassie changed General Tadesse's death sentence into life imprisonment, Mamo Mazamir was hung in Addis Ababa prison in 1969, thus becoming a great martyr for the Oromo cause. His final words still resonate with the new generation of nationalist Oromo: "I do not die in vain. My blood will water the freedom struggle of the Oromo people. I am certain that those who sentenced me to death for things I did not do, including the Emperor and his officials, will receive their due punishment from the Ethiopian people. It may be delayed, but the inalienable rights of the Oromo people will be restored by the blood of their children" (quoted in Zoga 1993: 278).

Mamo Mazamir was hung for three reasons all of which make him one of the most radical members of the Macha and Tulama Association. First, he produced a draft of the "History of the Oromo" which was confiscated and destroyed by the government security officers. In addition, Mamo drafted a blue print for a new constitution that would abolish tenancy (Zoga 1993: 249). Secondly, Mamo wrote short plays in the Oromo language which were shown during the Association's gatherings, and also produced poems that brought tears of joy to the audience. As an exceptionally gifted individual who had tremendous organizational skills and boundless energy, he was a moving spirit of Oromo consciousness that challenged Ethiopian political establishment. Third, as probably the only communist member of the Association (Zoga 1993: 428) he was feared as

a radical who posed real danger to the Ethiopian establishment. His hanging represents the attempt by Haile Selassie's regime to suppress the Oromo political awakening and to stop the spread of communist ideology among young military officers, though without success.

In 1967, by imprisoning its leaders and dissolving the Association, the government of Emperor Haile Selassie won a pyrrhic, short-term victory. However, within seven short years, by 1974, its policy unwittingly transformed Oromo politics beyond recognition. The Association's demand for equality within Ethiopia was transformed into the OLF's commitment to self-determination in Oromia. The Association's efforts to spread literacy in the Amharic language and [Geez] script were transformed into literacy in Afaan Oromoo [the Oromo language] using the Latin alphabet. What was unthinkable in 1967 became feasible by 1974. In short, the Ethiopian government's unwarranted cruelty and brutality produced the Oromo elite's rejection of Ethiopian identity itself. As a consequence, after 1974 Oromo politics was never the same again. What the Ethiopian government wanted in 1967 by destroying the Association was the destruction of Oromo political consciousness. What it got in 1974 was a mature form of Oromo nationalism which challenged Ethiopian nationalism itself (Hassen 1998: 212).

The leaders of the Macha and Tulama Association, who accepted sacrifice for the cause of their people, set a pattern for the new generation of Oromo, who were reared and brought up on stories of their lives. They were heroes, the symbols of courage that have propelled millions of Oromo into organized resistance. Through their struggle and sacrifices, they won a lasting place in the hearts of the Oromo nation. "They died physically, but the cause for which they died, will never die and they will remain in our hearts through the history of the Oromo struggle which is written with their blood. Their names will live forever, lighting the torch of freedom for the Oromo nation" (Bulletin of UOSE 1985: 8-9).

The Formation of the OLF

After the Association was banned in 1967, the movement was forced to go underground. Some members of the Macha and Tulama Association went to Bale and joined the armed struggle there. Other members went to Somalia to the Middle East and formed two separate organizations; one based in Beirut and the other in Aden. Others went to the Sudan, where they formed a branch of the Macha and Tulama Association (Zoga 1993: 298-99). Those who remained behind in Addis Ababa transformed the banned Association into an underground movement that organized members into study groups and cultural committees. For political agitation, the leaders of the underground movement produced literature in the Oromo language, Amharic and English. Among the agitation underground papers, *The Oromo: Voice Against Tyranny* and *Kana Beekta* (in the Oromo language), played a crucial role in raising political awareness of the Oromo youth and in exposing the cruelty and brutality of Haile Selassie's regime. *Voice* in particular, was a publication with a strong political message. It called on the Oromo and other oppressed people of Ethiopia to form a united front against their common oppressors. In its May 1971 issue, *Voice* had the following message on the question of a united front.

For an Oromo worthy of the name, there is one and only one way to dignity, security, liberty and freedom. That single and sure way is to hold a common front against his oppressors and their instruments of subjugation. In this, he is ready and willing to join hands in the spirit of brotherhood, equality and mutual respect, with oppressed nationalities and all persons and institutions of good will, he is equally ready and prepared to pay any sacrifice and oppose any person or groups that in any way hinder his mission for liberation from all forms of oppression and subjugation. An Oromo has no empire to build but a mission to break an imperial yoke, that makes this mission sacred and his sacrifices never too dear (*Voice* 1980: 23).

Among the Addis Ababa based underground movement, the brothers Rev. Gudina Tumsa and Baro Tumsa played a very crucial role in keeping alive the spirit of resistance (Zoga 1993: 300-301). They both gave their lives for the Oromo cause. In fact, Baro Tumsa was instrumental in the formation of the Oromo Liberation Front. It was he who organized a secret conference in Addis Ababa in December 1973. Among the participants, Hussein Sura (Sheik Hussen), the leader of Beruit based organization, Elemo Qilixxu, the leader of Aden based Oromo National Liberation, and Baker Yusuf, came from the Middle East. Several individuals from different regions of Oromia also participated in that conference, out of which the OLF was formed in early 1974. According to Olana Zoga, the author of *History of Macha and Tulama Association*, under the leadership of Baro Tumsa, underground members of the Association which gave rise to the OLF took advantage of the February 1974 Revolution and contributed to the overthrow of Haile Sellassie's regime in four ways: First, its members effectively used the limited freedom of the press, which flourished in Ethiopia from March to June 1974 for the purpose of exposing Oromo colonial experience. Second, its parliamentary members regularly challenged many of the regime's policies. Third, its members conducted agitation among the university and high school students. Fourth and most important, the underground members of the military police forces were instrumental in organizing the committee of the men in uniform (*Derg* or *Dergue* in Amharic) that overthrew the Emperor in September 1974 (Zoga 1993: 301-302). From this aspect it is very clear that the OLF grew out of the underground Macha and Tulama Association, and it is firmly rooted in Oromo national consciousness and it bases its ideological fire on Oromo nationalism. "Consequently, it can be said that the emergence of a national movement indicates that a population or social group has reached a new stage on the road to nationhood: the transition to political action. The nation, or the sections of a population that consider themselves to be a nation, attempt to create their own state" (Alter 1989: 22-23).

The 1974 OLF political program, which was amended in 1976, traces the historical background of the Oromo national liberation struggle; it briefly mentions the supporters and opponents of that struggle and states the ultimate goal of that struggle in the following words: "The fundamental objective of the struggle is the realization of national self-determination for

the Oromo people and their liberation from oppression and exploitation in all their forms. This can only be realized through the successful consummation of the new democratic revolution ... and by the establishment of the people's democratic republic of Oromia" (OLF Program 1976: 15-16).

The OLF Political Program stresses not only the establishment of a democratic republic of Oromia but also the importance of voluntary unity of the peoples of Ethiopia. This reflects political maturity of the Oromo national movement (Hassen 1996: 77). In Ethiopia, 1974 saw not only the formation of the OLF but also the end of Haile Selassie's regime. In February 1974 Ethiopia heard the death-knell of Emperor Haile Selassie's regime. The Emperor, who dominated the Ethiopian political landscape since 1916, was too old to grasp the magnitude of the 1973 catastrophic famine which resulted in the death of over two hundred thousand people-the majority of whom were either Oromos from Wallo, or Afars and Tigreans. Following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the closure of the Suez Canal, and the dramatic increase in the price of oil, spiraling inflation in the urban centers of Ethiopia galvanized the people, and particularly taxi drivers, industrial workers, teachers and students, into taking spontaneous action. Strikes and demonstrations in Addis Ababa reverberated throughout the country and the military which has always been the pillar of tyranny, turned against Haile Selassie's regime.

The Prime Minister and his entire cabinet resigned, and a new government, with an educated aristocrat at its head, tried to salvage something of the wreckage. For the next few months, a limited freedom of the press, which Ethiopia had never known before, created a lively atmosphere in which a barrage of criticism about the inequalities of Ethiopian peoples was written and openly discussed (Hassen & Greenfield 1992: 584).

The Oromo Under the Military Regime, 1974-1991

The 1974 revolution offered Ethiopia an opportunity not only to democratize itself, to heal the old wounds, to redress old injustice, to right

the old wrongs, but also to decentralize power in the country. In 1974, the Oromo wanted to regain their land, political rights, human dignity and the right to administer themselves. The formation of the OLF and the 1974 revolution stirred Oromo aspirations for freedom and equality. It aroused their pride in their national culture. This Oromo consciousness was a shock to the military officers, who replaced the Emperor. Thus, the military officers who managed to oust a tyrant from power left colonial tyranny intact. They were not only poorly equipped to transform Ethiopia, but also they had vested interests in maintaining the colonial status quo in Oromia. For that purpose they adopted a philosophy of "Ethiopia First," which was based on the primacy of Ethiopian nationalism and the idea of one indivisible Ethiopia. This was a new aggressive ideology which was aimed at all national liberation movements. By adopting this philosophy they hoped to guarantee that Ethiopia was to remain an Amhara-dominated state.

After all, the Derg, composed of N.C.O.'s and junior officers below the rank of major, included only about twenty-five men of Tigrayan, Eritrean, Oromo, and other non-Amhara nationalities, the rest-about one hundred being of Amhara origin. Within the Derg, the Amhara not only constituted the overwhelming majority but also held all the key and sensitive posts where hardcore Amhara officers dictated every policy (Hassen & Greenfield 1992: 586).

It was these hardcore officers who suddenly declared "Ethiopian Socialism" to solve the economic, political and social problems of Ethiopia in general and national questions in particular. In the event, it failed to solve anything. In many areas, Oromo peasants started taking independent action by chasing away Amhara landlords.⁷ After 1974, land reform of some kind was a foregone conclusion. "Without it, it would have been impossible to take impetus out of the flood of spontaneous Oromo peasant uprisings which were threatening the very survival of the empire state" (Hassen & Greenfield 1992: 590; Lata 1999:192-193). According to Rene Lefort, it was the fear of Oromo uprising and the desire to prevent it from happening that forced the Dergue to take radical measures including the land reform of 1975(Lefort 1981: 110). Asafa Jalata also states that the *Dergue* regime took some radical measures not only to address Oromo grievances, but also to get their

support and consolidate itself. "Most Oromos had assumed that the revolution of 1974 would lead to decolonization and equality of all peoples in Ethiopia" (Jalata 1998: 10-11, Lefort 1981: 110). Thus, the *Dergue's* nationalization of all rural lands in March 1975 was a legal recognition of a *fait accompli*, especially in Oromia, designed to arrest the tempo of peasant uprisings. Instead of devolving power to the peasantry, the land reform of 1975 centralized the power of the state in Ethiopia (Clapham, 1988, 6).

What was achieved in effect was not ending landlordism but transferring the right previously enjoyed by individual landlords to the state. The state became a vehicle that centrally appropriated the labor and produce of peasants to the descendants of the original landlords, as primarily people of such a background manned the new regime's state structures. The poverty of peasant farmers in the process rose to new heights while that of the descendants of the conquerors did not suffer a similar fate (Lata 1999: 195-196).

In April 1976, the Dergue declared the National Democratic Revolution Program (NDRP). This program, which became the blueprint for the transformation "Ethiopian socialism" into "scientific socialism" was "... the first official policy that recognized Ethiopia's national diversity" (Lata 1999: 200). The NDRP stated: "The right to self-determination of all nationalities will be recognized and fully respected. No nationality will dominate another one since the history, culture, language and religion of each nationality will have equal recognition in accordance with the spirit of socialism" (Clapham 1988: 199).

However, the NDRP was never implemented and it remained on paper, an empty gesture. In fact, the *Dergue* used the NDRP not only as a showpiece of its radicalism to impress the Soviet Union, but also for waging war against "narrow nationalism" a new euphemism for Oromo nationalism. The *Dergue* used the NDRP as an ideological cover for destroying Oromo nationalism. Narrow nationalism was proclaimed as the main enemy of the unity of the country and the Dergue began a policy of physically destroying

the best elements of the Oromo society, especially the intelligentsia. As a result, under the pretext of liquidating "narrow nationalists" or "anti-unity elements," anyone concerned with the self-determination of the Oromo and the development of their language, culture and history and anyone who showed pride in the Oromo democratic heritage or possessed a strong sense of Oromo national identity and dignity became subject to "revolutionary measures," a euphemism for instant extrajudicial executions. The Amhara military officers, who dominated the Dergue, abandoned their pretensions about self-determination, having reached the peaks of hypocrisy and cynicism with their declaration of the National Democratic Revolution Program in April 1976, embarked on the massacre of peasants and the killings and detentions of educated Oromos. The purpose was to deprive the Oromo of educated leadership.

For years the military regime was engaged in the systematic destruction of the Oromo. This could be a topic for another article by itself. Here it should suffice to say that the destruction of the Oromo and their resources was carried out on three levels. First and most obvious was the destruction and displacement of the Oromo. Through the regime's warfare, especially through the campaign of "search and destroy," thousands of Oromo people were killed and several hundred thousand driven into refugee camps in the neighboring countries of Somalia, Djoubti, the Sudan and Kenya. Internally, the *Dergue* regime massively displaced the Oromo. Following the Ethio-Somali War of 1977-78, the regime claimed that there were six million internally displaced people in the southern and eastern parts of Ethiopia, of which over half were Oromo. To control their movements and prevent them from supporting the OLF, the Oromo in the regions of Bale, Arsi and Sidamo were herded like cattle into 506 "protected hamlets."

Second, while herding the Oromo into protected hamlets, the regime started a program of resettling three million northerners in the south, mainly in Oromia. This was done behind the facade of rehabilitating drought and famine victims from northern Ethiopia. The political motive behind such massive transfer of population was to alter the demography of Oromia. Third, the regime embarked on massive villagization and collectivization programs that were different from the resettlement program mentioned above. The goal of the resettlement program was to deprive support for guerrilla movements in northern Ethiopia by moving the people to the south,

thus altering the demography of Oromia, while the goal of villagization and collectivization was to totally control the labor, produce, and resources of Oromo peasants. The massive villagization and collectivization programs impoverished millions of Oromo peasants adding to their misery and suffering (Clay and Holcomb 1985: 70-189; Clay & et al., 1988: 103-228, 247-295; Kaplan 1988: 1-8). Within a few years, the *Dergue* "uprooted and regrouped over 8 million Oromo peasants into the so-called 'new villages'- a euphemism for [*Dergue's*] version of concentration camps where Oromo labor and resources[were] totally controlled and dominated by the military regime"(Hassen 1990: 98, Clay et al., 1988: 115-224).

For seventeen years the peoples of Ethiopia suffered under brutal military dictatorship, whose historic mission was nothing but destruction. It is believed that no less than two million peasants lost their lives between 1974 and 1991, not to mention millions of Oromo who were internally displaced and thousands who were scattered as refugees to many parts of the world. When the authors of sorrow and destruction were overthrown in May 1991, it was a sigh of relief, a time of joy and a moment of hope for the peoples of Ethiopia in general and the Oromo in particular.

The Oromo under the TPLF Regime 1991-2000

The OLF, which was formed in early 1974, articulated Oromo nationalism and also became its primary organizational expression (Jalata 1998: 11). For seventeen years the OLF struggled against the Ethiopian military regime and made a significant contribution to the combined effort which defeated the regime in May 1991. It was in recognition of this fact that the OLF was invited to participate in the London Conference of May 1991 and Addis Ababa Conference of July 1991. Thirty-one parties, including five Oromo organizations, also participated in the Addis Ababa Conference, where the parties met to discuss the future of Ethiopia and agreed upon a Transitional Charter that laid down the principles as well as the program of transition towards a new democratic order. The OLF co-authored, with the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Forces (EPRDF), the Transitional Charter and then joined the Transitional Government of

Ethiopia (1991-1992). The Transitional Government was "billed as a coalition government representing three main interests: the Oromo interest, the Amhara interest and the Tigrean interest, with others ... being considered important but secondary"(Hagos 1995: 97). According to Leenco Lata, the former Deputy General Secretary of the OLF: "The Charter envisaged four elements that fundamentally departed from the autocratic and imperial tradition of Ethiopia to transform the relationships between the colonizers and the colonized nations. These four components were, the supremacy of the law, power sharing, the construction of a multinational democratic state and the establishment of a just peace" (Lata 1998: 56).

While OLF leadership naively placed its trust in the implementation of the Charter, in the promises of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and in the assurance of the government of the United States, the TPLF leaders adopted four interrelated policies with which they have managed to maintain colonial status-quo in Oromia. These are the creation of the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (OPDO), the TPLF leaders abortion of democratization process, the destruction of all independent Oromo organizations, especially OLF army, and the TPLF's establishment of a sham federal arrangement. First, the TPLF formed the OPDO in 1990, only after it tried and failed to bring the OLF under its control from 1984 to 1990. The TPLF formed the OPDO from "former *Dergue* soldiers captured by the TPLF and were subsequently given a rudimentary political education in order to turn them into its messengers to the Oromos living in their home areas"(Lata 1999: 59). The TPLF leaders planned to replace the OLF with their Oromo prisoners-of-war. By creating the OPDO, the TPLF leadership capitalized on the fundamental weakness of the Oromo elite which is discussed below. Secondly, while all independent Oromo organizations, especially the OLF, placed the hope of their people in the promise of democratic election, the TPLF leaders systematically sabotaged the democratization process in Ethiopia. In any free and fair election the TPLF leaders knew and still know that they would lose. They would lose because, the TPLF, which established Tigrean hegemony in Ethiopia, represents only seven percent of the population of Ethiopia, while the Oromo represent around half the population of Ethiopia (Keller 1998: 110, 114). In 1992, while all independent Oromo organizations and the Oromo people were prepared to play by the democratic rules of politics in any free and fair

elections, the TPLF- dominated government closed more than 200 OLF campaign offices, imprisoned hundreds and killed several OLF cadres and supporters, in an effort to politically weaken or destroy all independent Oromo organizations and frighten the Oromo people before any elections were held (OLF *Bulletin* 1992: 1-10). For its grand design of imposing and perpetuating one-party domination of the Ethiopian political landscape, the TPLF-dominated regime made free and fair election impossible in 1992. In fact, the TPLF- dominated regime was interested in election for one and only purpose." Through election of its card-carrying members and supporters to positions of leadership, it hoped to legitimize its illegitimate, vicious, undemocratic and brutal misrule" (OLF *Bulletin* 1992: 3-4). Consequently, through the TPLF- controlled National Election Commission, the regime hijacked the democratic process and embarked on massive electoral fraud and deception for the sole purpose of putting" all legislative, executive and judicial powers under its total control" (OLF *Bulletin* 1992: 4-10). It was the well- documented widespread irregularities in the electoral processes, the harassment, imprisonment, and even killings of supporters of independent organizations, which forced the OLF and several other independent organizations to pull out of the June 21, 1992 election. The election according to many independent international observers was neither free nor fair (McDonald 1992: 2-9). On June 24, 1992 the OLF was forced to withdraw from the transitional government of Ethiopia. Consequently:

Ethiopia's leaders blow a golden opportunity to set their country on a new course . . . The promise of a chance to choose their leaders and manage their own affairs had aroused great popular excitement for this thing called democracy. Millions of Ethiopians registered to vote, often despite huge obstacles because they believed that this time it was going to be different. What they got was more of the same, broken promises, betrayed hopes and yet another permutation of age-old imperial intrigue (Kulick 1992: 41-45).

No words can aptly describe the bitterness of the Oromo whose hope for peaceful devolution of power was shattered by the TPLF, which wanted and still wants total elimination of all independent Oromo organizations and to control the resources of Oromia. Thus, what was promised to be the dawn of a democratic beginning turned out to be a new chapter for the rise of Tigrean hegemony in Ethiopia. In short, what was billed to be the first multi-party elections in June 1992 "were turned into a single party exercise" (Ottaway 1995: 238-239). The TPLF leaders learned an important lesson from the election that they openly and deliberately rigged. That lesson is that they can manipulate any election as they did in 1994, 1995 (Hassen 1999: 252) and May 2000, without provoking an outrage and condemnation from the Western powers that support them politically, financially and morally. The TPLF leaders also learned another lesson from the unfolding drama of 1992, which is that they can use their formidable military muscle for abusing power, dominating the Oromo, destroying all independent Oromo organizations, and waging war in Oromia, all in the name of democracy.

The TPLF quickly assimilated itself into the embodiment of the Ethiopian state, transformed its army into the national army, created its police force and huge security apparatus. "Worst of all, it has rehired the assassin squad used by the dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam for the purpose of eliminating those suspected of opposing the regime" (Hassen 1999: 245).

The Ethiopian government is being transformed into a fascist type administration picking up the pieces where the government of Mengistu left . . . From his actions it is clear that Meles is not a democrat, he is a despot and the ultimate nightmare of all democratic minded Ethiopians everywhere. He has decimated opposition political organizations, and non-political as well as non-profit organizations that are not affiliated with EPRDF. The capital outlay and expenditure for the security of the current Ethiopian government and the leadership is almost double that of the previous government. He had created a security force, even larger and pervasive than the one that was protecting Mengistu (Hagos 1999: 50).

From what has transpired thus far, it is clear that the Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia have never been given an opportunity to enjoy the blessing of a truly democratic government in more than a century. The TPLF leaders are not interested in democracy as a form of government (Sorenson 1993: 3) or as a political system (Sorenson 1993: 12). They are interested in democracy only as an instrument for perpetuating their monopoly of state power in Ethiopia.

What is very important to consider is the significance of the fact that the people who control TPLF and the Government are very parochial minded and appallingly arrogant charlatans. They are extremely violent, insanely suspicious . . . with twin character flaws of excessive love of consumer goods and obsession with status and hierarchy . . . Fear, blackmail, intrigue, deception, suspicion, and brutality are its defining characteristics. It is absolutely insane for anyone to expect democracy from a secretive and tyrannical organization such as the TPLF and its spawn (Hagos 1999: 56).

The TPLF leaders, who quickly learned the importance of playing the politics of human rights for public relations exercises, not only ignored the human rights⁸ and democratic rights enshrined in the National Charter but illegally expelled members of the Transitional Government. According to Tecola Hagos, a former supporter of the TPLF leadership and now its bitter critic, "what remained in power since 1991 is an illegitimate power structure, a reestablishment of feudalism and autocracy dressed in new symbols with the descendants of yesterday's feudal warlords as the main actors in this sickening Ethiopian political tragedy" (Hagos 1995: 5).

Tecola Hagos is indignant about the transformation of the TPLF army from being "fighters for freedom" to an instrument of state terrorism. It was through the weapon of state terrorism that the TPLF leaders aborted the democratization process in Ethiopia. The TPLF leaders who have been presiding over the destruction of our people and their resources were the

products of feudal culture. "Ethiopia's feudal structure represents one of the worst structures of oppression in the world, and it was/is a system that gave birth to some of the most degenerate leaders who obstructed very much needed social, economic and political changes" (Hagos 1995: 5). It is these leaders, turned fascistic, who have so far managed to maintain the colonial status quo in Oromia

What is tragic in all of this is the fact that Ethiopians have lost some of their greatest heroes to the gargantuan appetite of Leviathan-the monster of power. It is particularly painful for me to witness people like Meles Zenawi, who I once admired and wished a great future and creative leadership, someone who could have been a great statesman, becoming a despot and sellout, leader of degenerate liberation movement and collaborating with some of the worst opportunists and turncoats from the brutal government of Mengistu (Hagos 1995: 234).

Third, the OLF leadership trusting EPLF's promise and the U.S. Government's assurance about democratic election, made two major political blunders, whose combined outcome hastened the destruction of the OLF organizational and military capacity. First, the OLF leadership agreed to:

[T]he adoption of the TPLF army as the defense force for the transitional period-[which] was entered into after the EPLF leaders clearly promised that they would go to the extent of fighting on the OLF side if this arrangement was abused. Unfortunately, the EPLF failed to stem rising TPLF/EPRDF aggression against the OLF and the feeling that EPLF troops were a party on the other side in the fighting that broke out after June 1992 emerged among the Oromo (Lata 1998: 66).

In 1992 the OLF leadership, trusting an empty EPLF promise, agreed to the transformation of the TPLF army into a legitimate national defense force with which the TPLF established its dominant position on the Ethiopian political landscape. Though the TPLF have a formidable military

machinery, which enjoys monopoly over the arsenal of destruction, the OLF leaders inadvertently provided the TPLF leadership with legal cover for destroying any organization including the OLF that challenged its authority. It is one of the ironies in the history of the Horn of Africa, that the EPLF, which directly collaborated with the TPLF against the OLF in 1992, is itself the victim of TPLF aggression at this very moment, casting a dark shadow over the future of the EPLF and independent Eritrea.

Second and most surprising of all, it was the OLF leadership that facilitated rapid destruction of the OLF army itself. How did it happen? Leenco Lata explains the background to that tragedy in the following terms.

The OLF demonstrated its willingness to abide by the decision of the people at a fair and free election. Consequently, the OLF came up with the policy decisions considered necessary to create a conducive legal and political atmosphere for the people to express their choice freely. The Electoral Law for the June 1992 district and regional elections was drafted by the OLF. In addition, the OLF recommended in good faith the encampment of all former guerrilla troops with the simple hope of removing armies and the use of force from the political process (Lata 1998: 69).

The OLF encamped its guerrilla troops, while the TPLF leaders, who had at their disposal the resources of the Ethiopian state, enjoyed overwhelming military superiority and controlled huge security apparatus and police force, refused to encamp their guerrilla troops. The encampment of the OLF soldiers made the task of their destruction faster and much easier than it would have been otherwise. Militarily, the Oromo struggle has never recovered from the debacle of 1992.

In defeating the OLF and destroying all independent Oromo organizations, the TPLF capitalized on the fundamental weakness of the Oromo elite. Did the Oromo learn any lesson from their tragic history? I doubt it. Unless the Oromo learn from their tragic past, successive Ethiopian ruling elites will always abuse them. We should always remember what the

famous Russian historian, Vassily Kluchevsky once said. "History . . . punishes us severely for not learning its lessons." Since the conquest and occupation of Oromia, the Oromo have been punished severely for not learning the lessons of their history. These lessons could be summarized in the following four ways.

First, Oromo enemies have always easily manipulated and turned the Oromo not only against each other, but also penetrated their organizations and exposed them to destruction. The classic examples for enemy penetration and destruction of Oromo organizations are that of the Macha and Tulama Association and the OLF. Unless the Oromo overcome this tendency, they will always be their own worst enemies. People who are easily manipulated and allow themselves to be abused and turned against each other have no one to blame but themselves. Second, the ball set rolling in Oromo history by Gobana - the policy of working against the interest of his people - is still alive and well. During the 1870s and 1880s *Ras Gobana* worked tirelessly against the interest of his people in exchange for the title of *negus* (king), power and material resources - title and power which were taken away from him as soon as he fulfilled his mission--the conquest and colonization of the Oromo of Shawa, the Gibe Region and Wallaga. *Ras Gobana* was the great Trojan horse that was planted at the heart of Oromia and destroyed the unity of the nation from within. Without the crucial role that Gobana played, the conquest of the richest parts of Oromia would not have been as swift and as complete as it was in the 1880s.

Third, during the 1970s, the regime of General Siad Barre (1969-1991) of Somalia appealed to Oromo Islamic sentiment and created the movement known as the Somali Abo Liberation Front, the instrument with which the Somali regime planned to create Greater Somalia. This would have included all Oromo of Hararghe, Bale, Arsi and Sidamo. Tens of thousands of Muslim Oromo fought and died unconsciously for the realization of the dream of Greater Somalia. The realization of that dream would have been a great tragedy for the Oromos among others for two reasons: First, thousands of Muslim Oromo unconsciously fought to change one form of tyranny for another. This was because the regime of Siad Baree, for which so many Oromo fought and died, was as harsh, cruel, and crude as the Ethiopian military regime from which the Oromo wanted to liberate themselves. Second and even worse, that liberation would have transformed

millions of Oromo into Somalis. This was because the regime of Siad Barre" hoped to Somalize the Oromo of Hararghe, Arsi, Bale and Sidamo through a crash program" (Hassen 1996: 67). This means the failure of the realization of the dream of Greater Somalia saved millions of Oromos from becoming "a pre-ethnic raw material waiting to be turned into Somalis" (Gellner 1983: 84). For petty material rewards, the leaders of the Somali Abo Liberation Front wanted to separate millions of the Oromo from the nation. Through their ill-conceived and misguided policies the leaders of the Somali Abo Liberation Front would have seriously damaged Oromo unity.

Fourth, the TPLF regime has been using the OPDO for the purpose of destroying all independent Oromo organizations and for controlling the resources of Oromia. Instead of collaborating with independent Oromo organizations, the TPLF created its own subsidiary, and told the Oromo that the OPDO represent them in the ruling party. It was in the name of the OPDO that the TPLF destroyed all independent Oromo organizations. Without the collaboration of the OPDO, the TPLF would not have been able to create an indirect colonial rule in Oromia. It must be stated clearly that the creation of an OPDO administration did not end colonial status quo in Oromia. It masked and transformed it from direct rule into indirect colonial rule. The emerging Tigrayan colonial policy resembles the British policy of [indirect] rule to the same extent that the one pursued by its predecessors used to approximate to the French [direct rule based on] policy of assimilation. The manners in which resources are siphoned off from the colonial southern regions for the speedy development of Tigray makes the new relation even more glaringly colonial than what used to prevail (Lata 1998: 74).

After he sought political asylum in the United States in 1998, Hassen Ali, the first President of Oromia (1992-1995), Central Committee Member of the ruling party and the Vice President of OPDO, succinctly expressed the mechanism through which the TPLF leaders siphon off resources from Oromia for speedy development of Tigray. Nothing demonstrates this more blatantly than the extremely disproportionate imbalance in the annual budget allocation for Tigray and Oromia. Tigray has a population one sixth

that of Oromia and yet, for the past eight years, the annual budget allocation for Tigray is twice that of Oromia Tigray development companies have invested 1.5 billion *birr* in Tigray, while the Oromia development companies were limited to investing only 125 million *birr*, through government control over the amount of bank credit available (quoted in *Sagalee Haaraa* 1999: 1-2).

Just like the Dergue was dominated by the Amhara elites, the EPRDF is dominated by the Tigrean ones. "For example, 43 of the 53 members of the supreme Council of the EPRDF belong to the predominantly Tigrayan TPLF"(Keller 1998: 114). In reality the change that took place in Ethiopia in 1991 was the transfer of power from the Amhara ruling elite to the Tigrean one. Both elites want to rule united Ethiopia. "Both oppose Oromo and other national groups wanting complete democratic rights and genuine power-sharing" (Baissa 1998: 82).

According to John Young, a well-known supporter of the TPLF, the 1994 Ethiopian constitution "grants extensive rights to the regions. In practice, the EPRDF appears to be generally true to its stated commitment to national self-determination, and gives local decision-makers a free hand in *most* spheres and in *most* regions" (Young 1999: 342). However, the reality in Oromia totally contradicts John Young's conclusion. Though the constitution recognizes Oromia as an autonomous federal state, the Oromo national self-determination is far from being realized. In the words of the first President of Oromia:

The TPLF soldiers and its members are a law unto themselves. Only what they say and what they want is implemented in Oromia to the general exclusion of Oromo interests or wishes Although Oromia is autonomous in name, the government soldiers and secret service agents have total power to do whatever they want in Oromia. They imprison, torture or kill anyone, including OPDO members and our government employees without any due process of law. They have established several secret detention centers, where thousands of innocent people are kept for years without trial or charge Most of the

detainees are Oromo peasants accused of supporting or feeding the OLF soldiers.... Federal Government soldiers, more appropriately the TPLF soldiers, are in practice above the law in Oromia (quoted in *Sagalee Haaraa* 1999: 1-2).

From the short history of the past nine years, it is clear that the OPDO leaders are playing a shameful role in the history of their people. They are performing for the TPLF regime exactly the function that *Ras Gobana* performed for Emperor Menilek. Oromo scholars have expended considerable effort analyzing the history of the "Gobanist"⁹ phenomenon and the many false promises that constitute its psychological foundation. This body of research reveals that the strategy worked well for Menilek in the 1870s and 1880s, when people were first exposed to its seductive message and were not aware of its far-reaching consequences. Today, the strategy is fully exposed and it cannot be expected to be as effective as it once was.

It is interesting to note in passing that while he was an active member of the Union of Oromo Students in Europe, Nagaso Gidada, the current powerless President of Ethiopia, was a strong opponent of the "Gobanist" phenomenon. Ironically, the role Nagaso is currently playing is not different from that of *Ras Gobana*. According to Kuwee Kumsa:

Nagaso Gidada and Kuma Damakisa are currently the presidents of Ethiopia and Oromia respectively. However, they do not have power since the Tigrayan-dominated government that attempts to use these two individuals and their followers who speak the Oromo language to create the illusion that the Oromo people have political power put them there. Since Gidada and Damakisa are there to serve the interests of the Tigrayan regime and not the interests of the Oromo people, the Oromo sees them as the enemy of the Oromo nation.

What the learned Nagaso Gidada and the former prisoner of war, Kumsa Damakisa, probably failed to realize is that today the Oromo people

are more politically conscious than they were in the 1880s, when they lacked an educated class and political awareness. According to Paul Baxter:

For most Oromo their nationality had become 'a powerful source of personal identity'. The Oromo demonstrated all the components that are considered to be essential for a nationality: an active and developing 'common public culture', articulate intellectuals, a common language, a history, a set of myths & symbols which denote their cultural distinctiveness, martyrs, heroes, lively political and cultural organizations and the maturity to recognize existence and importance of localized cultural variations (Baxter 1998: 53).

Today, the old strategy of dividing and turning the Oromo against each other is fully exposed and cannot be expected to be as effective as it once was, for the simple reason that the Oromo have become aware of the instruments by which they were subjugated and have the presence of mind and commitment of spirit to confront these strategies when they are employed by the TPLF regime. Those who think that they can perpetuate the hoax again and again and that the victims of the hoax are incapable of learning from their history are very much mistaken. The failure of the OPDO to win the hearts and minds of the Oromo should disarm the TPLF leaders of any such illusion they might entertain.

The TPLF leaders are not the first ruling elite to establish an autocracy in Ethiopia. Since the creation of the modern Ethiopian Empire during and after the 1880s, successive Ethiopian ruling elites have failed to produce a single government that treated its subjects with respect as citizens (Hagos 1995:vii). In over a century, Ethiopian ruling elites distinguished themselves by impoverishing their country and oppressing their subjects. "The Ethiopian elite is one of the least democratically-minded interest groups inside or outside of Ethiopia; it does not respect nor have faith in the abilities of ordinary Ethiopians to make wise political decisions" (Hagos 1995: 48). The elites proved incapable of devising a system that would better the lot of Ethiopian peoples. "I know of no society in Africa where the dignity and humanity of individuals have been so thoroughly squashed or

obliterated to the same extent as is the case with Ethiopian peasants and poor, uneducated men, women and children" (Hagos 1995: 4).

Of all the Ethiopian ruling elites, it is the TPLF leaders who staked their claim to legitimacy on their ability to facilitate the transition to democracy and commitment to the establishment of a democratic federal system in Ethiopia. So the early period of the TPLF rule started with a fine promise of democracy. However, within a year it quickly lost its way through the arrogance of power (Hassen 1999A: 249). What went wrong? Several answers could be given, but four are crucial. First, it is the TPLF leaders' failure to realize that the measure of a democratic government is the extent to which it allows opposition groups to organize and contend for power. Instead the TPLF regime prevented independent organizations from freely organizing and contending for power since 1992. By so doing, the regime deliberately marginalized and effectively suppressed independent organizations, preventing them from emerging as political forces, which was "an affront to the development of democracy in Ethiopia" (Hagos 1995: 85). Second, the TPLF leaders' failed to realize that democracy cannot be established by destroying independent organizations. In fact, democracy "cannot be imposed by force. Rather, it is based on largely voluntary compliance with a set of rules of the political game" (Ottaway 1995: 235). Third, it is the TPLF leaders' failure to realize that democracy as a form of government, is responsive to the preferences of its citizens, which are dependent on the following institutional guarantees:

1. Freedom to form and join organizations
2. freedom of expression
3. right to vote
4. eligibility for public office
5. right of political leaders to compete for support [and]...for votes
6. alternative sources of information
7. free and fair elections
8. institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference (Sorenson 1993: 12).

These conditions "cover three main dimensions of political democracy, namely competition, participation, and civil and political liberties" (Sorenson 1993:12) none of which exist in the TPLF-dominated Ethiopia. Fourth, it is the TPLF leaders' failure to realize that their version of federalism is a new form of tyranny. The federal structures that have been introduced by the TPLF do not function; they are essentially window dressing. The efforts to introduce federal solutions have failed miserably. This is because federalism cannot work if it is designed and imposed by the leadership of a single party. The TPLF leaders not only lack legitimacy to design and implement federalism in Ethiopia but also risk misapplication of the concept of federalism itself (Hagos 1995: 27). In the name of establishing a democratic federal republic of Ethiopia, the TPLF leadership appointed the Constitution Drafting Commission, which was "simply the alter ego of the ruling Power" (Hagos 1995: 34). The constitution that was ratified in December 1994 was "solely designed to keep in power the current leaders through an indirect voting system of a primitive parliamentary election process" (Hagos 1995: 39).

The drafting of the TPLF constitution and its ratification was "boycotted by all opposition political groups rendering the entire... exercise meaningless" (Hagos 1995:38). It was a Constitution single-handedly produced by the TPLF and the organizations it created and controls. All Oromo and non-Oromo independent organizations, which represent the overwhelming majority of the population of Ethiopia, were not party to the drafting of this Constitution, which lost legitimacy before it was even ratified. According to Ottaway: "a constitution drafted only by the parties allied with the government, while opposition movements remain outside the process, cannot lead to democracy.... Unless the great majority of organizations participate in the process and accept the results, adopting a constitution and holding elections will remain a useless exercise" (Ottaway 1993: 4).

The constitutional drafting exercise was meant to perpetuate the TPLF power structure permanently. Like all the previous Ethiopian constitutions the TPLF one will last only as long as the TPLF leadership is in power. "The most striking feature of the Constitution is... the absence of separation of power and minimal checks and balances between the

legislative, the executive and the judiciary" (Hagos 1995: 47). The whole exercise of Constitution drafting, election, and ratification was designed: "For the sole purpose of legitimizing the predetermined ascendance of Meles Zenawi as Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the head of government, Chairman of the Council of Ministers and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.... This means a single political organization could stay in power for twenty-thirty years or even until the Second Coming" (Hagos 1995:49).

This means the TPLF leadership inadvertently proved that a constitutional drafting exercise by itself cannot create a democratic government or end authoritarian rule. This is because "a government that cannot be voted out of office is not accountable, thus not democratic" (Ottaway 1995: 248). The federal structures that were supposed to have been established in Ethiopia in 1995, "are not federal in practice - the structures mask a centralized concentration of power that stands in direct contradiction to the federal principle" (Elazar 1987: 21). It has been said and rightly that "the central interest of true federalism...is liberty" a genuine federal government "must be grounded in a framework of maximum human liberty" (Elazar 1987: 91). However, under the TPLF- dominated regime in Ethiopia the only sort of liberty that exists is the liberty of the TPLF forces to destroy the liberty of others.

Although the TPLF leaders talk loudly about their sham federalism, they have failed to understand the core principles of federalism itself. "Federal principles grow out of the idea that free people can freely enter into lasting yet limited political associations to achieve common ends and protect certain rights while preserving their respective integrities" (Elazar 1987: 33). Today, the Oromo people are not free, and therefore cannot freely enter into political associations to establish a democratic Federal Republic of Ethiopia. To do that Oromia, must be decolonized and the Oromo people must achieve their self-determination. Below I will address how this might be done. Only a profound democratization will stop the process of the disintegration of Ethiopia.

Democratization has become all the more indispensable for state building and institutional sources of its legitimacy in Africa and the rest of the world during the twenty-first century. Democratization means "a highly

complex process involving successive stages of transition, endurance and consolidation. This process ultimately leads to both institutionalization and consolidation of structures and conditions conducive to structural transformation" (Monshipouri 1995: 16) and could change the Ethiopian state from being dominated by the TPLF into the state of all its citizens. Only such a profound transformation will reconstitute the Ethiopian state into a legitimate sovereign authority, "[t]he accepted source of identity and the arena of politics,...the decision-making center of government," (Zartman 1995: 5) and the institution that maintains law and order and enhances societal cohesion.

How could such a process take place in Ethiopia in light of the preceding accounts of TPLF hostility to it? It is difficult to answer this question. In the TPLF-dominated Ethiopia, where the promotion of the common good is lacking, it is naive to expect that such profound transformation will take place in Ethiopia in the short-term. In the long-term, a possibility may be created for such transformation. I say this for two simple reasons. First, it is in the long-term interest of the Tigrean population to realize the danger ahead. "All Tigreans are now considered as agents and beneficiaries of the present power structure than even the Amharas did in their day. And the TPLF appears bent on implicating Tigrean society in its conflicts within Ethiopian and with the peoples of neighboring states. A similar situation to the one existing in Rwanda and Burundi seems to be in the making" (Lata 1999: 216).

Second, the Tigrean society must realize that all governments have limited life spans. This is the logic of history from which there is no escape for the TPLF-dominated regime. However, the relation between the Tigreans and the rest of the population of Ethiopia is for all time. This means it is in the long-term interest of the Tigrean society to put pressure on the TPLF leadership to change course. Third, I believe that if the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia are united and determined they will be able to force the TPLF leadership to change course. Be that as it may, what is certain for Oromo nationalists is that until profound transformation takes place in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian state will remain an alien imposition in Oromia, and the new generation of Oromo nationalists will never feel loyalty to its institutions. The sooner the TPLF leaders face this reality, the better it will be for the future of all the peoples of Ethiopia including the Tigreans. Now

let me return to the discussion of the TPLF attack on the OLF from which I digressed to show what went wrong with the democratization process in Ethiopia since 1992.

With its abandonment of the encampment agreement, the TPLF defeated the OLF army in 1992. Though the OLF was defeated militarily, dismantled organizationally and disabled politically, the TPLF leaders have tried and failed to eliminate the OLF. This is for two obvious reasons. First, for the overwhelming majority of Oromos, the OLF is much more than an organization, it is an idea that has captured the imagination of the Oromo people. After a quarter century of struggle, the OLF has earned the leadership of the Oromo nation. The OLF is an idea and an organization that stands for freedom, and human dignity for the Oromo nation. To me, all independent Oromo organizations that are not controlled by the TPLF (such as the OLF, the Islamic Front for Liberation of Oromia, IFLO, United Oromo People's Liberation Front, UOPLF, the Oromo Abo Liberation Front, OALF and others) are part of the great idea that unites the nation of Oromia in the name and for the noble cause of freedom. Even if the TPLF leaders manage to destroy the OLF as an organization, they will never be able to destroy Oromo nationalism as an idea that is deeply planted in the hearts of the freedom-loving Oromo nation. Secondly, the TPLF leaders have failed to destroy the OLF simply because that organization grew out of Oromo nationalism and has become its organizational expression (Jalata 1998:11).

Today, the OLF and Oromo nationalism are inseparable. Oromo nationalism grew out of shared common heritage and is also a response Ethiopian colonialism.

As I have attempted to show in this article, as well as the previous one, Ethiopian colonialism has proved itself to be efficient at two things -- destruction of life and property and the impoverishment of its victims. The destruction which started during the second half of the nineteenth century still continues. Ethiopian colonialism combines brutality with unique lack of any redeeming social features. "The oppressive Ethiopian system robbed the Oromo of their land, their history, their human dignity and in short, of their past, present and future. It was the struggle against this colonialism which gave birth to ... Oromo nationalism. As a collective sentiment of the people who have been oppressed for [over] a century, Oromo nationalism

constitutes one of the progressive, revolutionary and democratic forces in Ethiopia” (Hassen 1998: 215).

Since 1992 the TPLF/EPRDF forces have been busy destroying the military, organizational and political capacity of the OLF and other independent Oromo organizations. Starting in 1997 the ruling TPLF has declared war on Oromo nationalism itself. This was clearly expressed in *Hizbaawi Adera* (Vol. 4, No 7, December 1996 - February 1997). This publication, "The People's Trust" is the official quarterly of the ruling party. It is used to disseminate its policies to its party members for implementation at the local levels of government. In this publication, the TPLF dominated-regime has articulated its fear of "narrow nationalism," which it says is stronger in Oromia than anywhere else in Ethiopia. The publication is written in rather dated Marxist-Leninist terms which closely match the style of the internal dialogue between the TPLF and the organizations it created and still controls. References to intellectuals and businessmen in Oromia as part of the problem permeate the document.

Higher echelon intellectuals and big business people (narrow nationalists) have endangered the process of peace, democracy, development, and the interests of the masses in Oromia. Unfortunately, these individuals have not been isolated and exposed as much as required.... *So it is necessary to crush narrow nationalism before it has a chance to gather momentum at a country level* (emphasis added, not in the original, *Hizbaawi Adera*, 9). Narrow nationalism is a code name for Oromo nationalism. In order to destroy Oromo nationalism, TPLF's position is that it is necessary to isolate, expose and crush Oromo intellectuals and wealth merchants, who are accused of nurturing it. In short, *Hizbaawi Adera*: “[A]rgues that only by eliminating the Oromo educated elite and capitalist class will the Oromo people be freed from narrow nationalism. Recent murders and disappearances of Oromo and the detention of members of the Matcha/Tulama Association and the Human Rights League are part of the implementation of policies put forward in this document” (Truman 1998: 6).

Just as the former brutal Dergue regime singled out for destruction Oromo nationalist elements, the TPLF-dominated regime is doing its level best to eliminate the brightest and the best elements of Oromo society. Such a policy is not only abdicating proper governmental responsibility for its citizens but also will have an incalculable impact on the human rights

situation in Ethiopia. If the TPLF leaders have any concern for the future relationship between the Oromo and the Tigreans, they have to abandon the policy put forward in *Hizbaawi Adera*.

In his four-part criticism of *Hizbaawi Adera*, which appeared in the *Urji* newspaper, Moti Biyya,¹⁰ powerfully argued against the attack on Oromo nationalism.

Who are narrow nationalists? Those who rule by force of arms? Those who plunder others property? Those who imprison, torture and kill for the purpose of consolidating their ethnic hegemony? The real narrow nationalists are the TPLF leaders, who believe that they deserve to rule, they are entitled to rule, they have the right to rule and others have obligation to be ruled. Those who combine capitalist greed with Stalinist cruelty, Machiavellian intrigue with Marx's sharp tongue, American diplomacy with Emperor Yohannes's desire for revenge are appearing in their true color. In the past they hid their true plan behind the facade of democracy. They no longer need to hide their plan for the future of Ethiopia and especially for the Oromo. They are speaking loud and clear about their plan for destroying Oromo intellectuals and rich merchants. The planned destruction will be undertaken in the name of building capitalism. Such an experiment has never been tried before. Capitalism cannot be built by destroying those who have skills, knowledge and capital, unless it is Albanian style capitalism, which is another name for backward, crude and anachronistic communism. Those whose ideological development was shaped by Albanian communism have not yet abandoned it (Biyya, in *Urji*, 7/16, 7/22, 7/29, 8/5, 1997).

In some ways the TPLF regime is becoming like the previous military regime. As the military regime did, the TPLF regime is using communist tactics of destroying rival organizations. The military established

Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE), in whose name it legalized its dictatorship. For Tecola Hagos, The TPLF "... is not much different from WPE" as its "goal is neither democratic nor inclusive" (Hagos 1999:29). While the leaders of the military regime claimed to have been avowed communists, TPLF leaders have claimed to have dissolved the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray and abandoned their Albanian style communism in favor of "democracy". However, according to Tecola Hagos, they are not only an "opportunistic predatory group," but also "...authoritarian and closet communists" who have "recreated past nightmares of the Mengistu era by making all rural land to be state owned, where farmers and others have only user rights" (Hagos 1995: 197 and 219). The TPLF version of boardroom democracy is nothing but autocracy. This is because the TPLF leaders"... have no democratic tradition, since each of them grew up and matured in despotic and often oppressive social circumstance, even worse some grew up in feudal households" (Hagos 1995: 234). It is these leaders, who in the name of "democracy" have been systematically destroying all independent Oromo organizations.

From this perspective the attack on an independent Oromo organization that does not receive its marching orders from the TPLF/EPRDF is not only an attack on Oromo nationalism but also a clear assault on the right of the Oromo people to have their own independent organizations. The attempt to destroy the OLF is a cruel revenge of history. The TPLF, which attempted and failed to bring the OLF under its wing from 1984 to 1990, is now using the cover of the EPRDF and the governmental resources at its disposal to militarily destroy the organization that has the support of the overwhelming majority of the Oromo. The attempt to destroy the OLF angers not only the Oromo but all who have concern for the future of democracy in that country. The attack on an independent organization is the greatest setback to the hopes and ideals of peaceful democratic change in Ethiopia since the overthrow of the military dictatorship in May 1991. Democracy cannot be built by militarily destroying an organization that expresses the profound aspirations of a given national group. Trust cannot be built between the rulers and the people, whose leadership is destroyed, whose property is confiscated, and who are treated as if they were under foreign military occupation (Hassen 1999A: 251).

In many ways the TPLF policy towards independent Oromo organizations is no different from the policy of the previous military regime. As the military regime destroyed all independent Oromo leadership, the TPLF, which claims to be the single leadership of the people of Tigray, has been systematically destroying all independent Oromo leadership. This is because an independent Oromo leadership is an obstacle for the control of the resources of Oromia. The objectives of the TPLF leaders in Oromia could be summed up in two phases: the first is the control of the resources of Oromia in the name of democracy which recognizes only one relationship, that of domination and exploitation, and only one argument, that of force. The second is the attempt to eliminate militarily all independent Oromo leadership and organizations and to place the remnants under the cover of OPDO.

Like the previous military regime, the TPLF is not only plundering the resources of Oromia, but through the use of terror it has forced tens of thousands of Oromo into refugee camps in the neighboring countries. Sadly, TPLF agents assassinate Oromo refugees in Djibouti (Fossati et al., 1997: 4-52), Somalia, Kenya (OSG May-June 1997: 14), the Sudan and even South Africa (OSG February, 2000: 1-3). With its victory over Eritrea, it will not be a great surprise if the TPLF launches its own version of a resettlement program behind the facade of rehabilitating famine victims from the north. According to all available information, the TPLF is developing Tigray at the expense of the rest of Ethiopia in general and Oromia in particular. "The economy is being fused with the ruling party in a much more partisan and obvious manner. TPLF-owned corporations are increasingly taking control of the commanding heights of the country's economy. The speedy development of Tigray region and the wealth of individual Tigreans is perceived to be achieved at the expense of other regions and members of other communities (Lata 1999: 224-25).

The TPLF leaders and its key members have transformed themselves into a wealthy capitalist class. It is through corruption, bribes and "embezzlement of public funds as an act of 'liberating' enemy assets: the spoils of war" that the TPLF leaders made themselves over-night millionaires. It was with embezzled public money that *Woizero Lemlem*, the wife of Meles Zenawi, the Ethiopian Prime Minister, was able to build an

apartment complex in Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) at an estimated cost of 200 million birr (*Ethiopian Register* February 2000: 2 -3).

It is now public knowledge that the TPLF leaders have been systematically stealing the collective assets of the Ethiopian people, accumulating personal wealth, hiding money in foreign bank accounts, and creating companies.

All of the TPLF-owned companies have been created with physical and financial resources plundered from the state-owned enterprises and the various ministries. The TPLF seized vehicles, machinery, and heavy equipment from the Highway authority and the now defunct agency for the construction of public housing to launch its construction companies, Mesfin Industrial Engineering, Sur Construction, and Messob Building and Construction. It confiscated buses from Abnessa Bus Company, trucks and other vehicles from the Ethiopian Distribution Corporation and the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Commission to establish its transport Company, Trans-Ethiopia. It expropriated a building and broadcasting equipment belonging to the Ministry of Information to start Radio Fana. It looted the tractors and combines of the state farms to set up Hiwot Agricultural Mechanization. It transferred the financial assets of The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia to establish its own bank, Wegagen. The list is long. Through these and other 'exemplary' acts of expropriation, or rather theft, the regime has sanctioned theft of public assets as morally unobjectionable (*Ethiopian Register* February 2000: 2).

The TPLF leaders believe that if they control the security machinery, the military establishment and the commanding height of the Ethiopian economy, they will be able to remain in power indefinitely. It was for this reason that the TPLF leaders transformed their organization "into a business syndicate corrupting the economic life of a nation. Dressed in a

governmental mantel, it is carrying out both economic and political havoc in Ethiopia” (Hagos 1999: 149-150). As the examples of the Macha and Tulama Association, the OLF and other independent Oromo organizations indicate that too often the Oromo develop their own independent leadership not to harm and dominate others but to run their own affairs and administer themselves, only to see their aspirations shattered and their independent leadership destroyed by those who have unquenchable thirst to dominate the Oromo and control their resources(Hassen 1994: 105). The Oromo want, and it is their right, to be their own masters and assume for themselves as they have the right to do, the responsibility of their own existence and the exercise of their power, without harming the rights and interests of others. The TPLF assault on all independent organizations and its tight control of Oromia brought to the Oromo the painful realization that the archaic Ethiopian political culture has not changed at all. It is an oppressive political culture in which the minority dictates the fate of the majority. Such brutal politics and naked domination took place in South in the past as it has continued up to now in Ethiopia. While South Africa transformed itself into a democratic state, the TPLF has consolidated its domination of the Ethiopian political landscape.

One Possible scenario for Decolonization of Oromia and Self-determination of the Oromo

According to Hammed Tusso, in the past three decades, governments, leaders, and their ideologies have changed three times in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian Empire has gone through earth-shaking political changes three times in a span of about three decades. During these decades three radically different regimes have occupied the pinnacles of power, each one of them dominated by a particular ethnic group, each proclaiming radically variant ideologies all three promising unity, social justice and economic development and progress for all campaigning relentlessly for legitimacy

amongst the populace inside Ethiopia, as well a posturing and soliciting for recognition and support from the outside world (Tuso 1997: 343).

Despite change of regimes, the Oromo lack of power, their exploitation, domination and subjugation remain constant. For the Oromo the "Democratic Federal Republic of Ethiopia" is as oppressive as the military regime's of "Socialist Ethiopia" and Haile Selassie's Imperial Ethiopia. This means Ethiopia has failed to produce a single government that did not destroy Oromo organizations, a single government that respected the human and democratic rights of the Oromo, a single government that did not divide and turn the Oromo against each other, a single government that did not make the Oromo cannon fodder, while plundering their resources and, above all, a single government that did not perpetuate the colonial status quo in Oromia (Hassen 1997: 236).

As I tried to document in this article and the previous one, the Oromo question is essentially a colonial one. One may quibble about the distinguishing features of Ethiopian colonialism, but its victims know it for what it is. It is an oppressive, crude, brutal and inherently corrupt system that has condemned the Oromo to live in abject poverty. It is a system based on violence and lack of human dignity. It is a system that is thoroughly incapable of bettering the lot of the Oromo. No amount of brutality and naked aggression by successive Ethiopian regimes will keep the Oromo under this system permanently. Through their long resistance the Oromo have demonstrated that they have decided to break out of long imprisonment in colonial darkness and no force will keep them under this darkness without hope. For more than a century, the Oromo have been and still are subjected to powerlessness, tyranny, oppression and denial of all forms of political expression. The Oromo have as much right to self-determination and independence as other Africans who were colonized by European powers.

To end their colonial experience, the Oromo have several options, two of which are very crucial. The first is the establishment of an independent republic of Oromia, separate from Ethiopia, while the second is self-determination for Oromia within a democratic federal republic of Ethiopia. Basing their argument on long and bitter Oromo colonial

experience, several scholars argue forcefully, that self-determination of the Oromo requires the construction of a self-organized Oromia, independent from Ethiopia, as a necessary part of decolonization. This is one possible scenario for finding a lasting political solution to the Oromo quest for self-determination. After all, it is for the cause of independent Oromia that tens of thousands of Oromo nationals, men and women, young and old have already lost their lives. It is for the same cause that tens of thousands of Oromo nationals have been forced into refugee camps in neighboring countries or scattered around the world. It is for the same cause that between thirty to sixty thousand Oromo political prisoners suffer physical torture and psychological abuses in the secret detention centers all over Oromia. "Oromia shall be free" is a powerful slogan that has captured the imagination of the Oromo. It is in the name of an independent Oromia that a number of political organizations have mobilized the Oromo. From my readings of current Oromo literature, participation in numerous Oromo conferences held in North America, Europe and Africa and extensive discussion with Oromo intellectuals and professionals, it appears to me that the option of independent Oromia, separate from Ethiopia, resonates more with the new generation of Oromo youth than the option of self-determination for Oromia within Ethiopia. The option of independent Oromia, separate from Ethiopia, will be realized only through military victory on the battlefield.

I believe that the conflict in Oromia should end not on the battlefield but on the negotiating table. To me battlefield victory deepens the wound of defeat and shame, thus fueling future conflict, while resolution of conflict at a negotiating table heals the old wounds and redresses the old injustices ... It is precisely for this reason that I maintain that the decolonization of Oromia and self-determination of the Oromo are compatible within a democratic federal republic of Ethiopia. This is my personal position. I do not represent the position of any organization. I know many of my Oromo friends are opposed to my stand. I respect their opinion. However, I have to express my position clearly, openly, frankly and honestly on this crucial issue. I believe

only a genuine federal arrangement will save the peoples of Ethiopia including the Oromo from vicious cycle of misery and destruction. To me it is only a genuine federal arrangement that will enable the Oromo, the Amhara, the Sidama, the Somali, the Tigreans and other peoples of Ethiopia to live in peace with each other instead of destroying their future. The nations and nationalities that constitute the peoples of Ethiopia are all conscious of their identities and they are struggling to preserve their identities and cultures. Of all the political systems that have been invented by human ingenuity only "federalism has proved useful in accommodating diversity" (Elazar 1987: 248).

Federalism is politically sound because of its compound features, that is, because it establishes polities that are compounded from entities, which maintain their respective integrities and thus work to preserve the liberties of their citizens. More over, by providing for a constitutional diffusion of power, federalism enables, 'ambition to counteract ambition'.... In short, federalism is designed to prevent tyranny without preventing governance. In this sense it seeks to provide a political remedy for political diseases (Elazar 1987: 29). In the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious country, the ideology of Ethiopian ruling elites, which opposes diversity and embraces a single nation state has proved failure. The accepted theory of the Ethiopian state, which holds "sovereignty to be indivisible" and the state power to be monopolized either by the Amhara or Tigrean elites has proved a failure. In other situations such as the United States, Canada, Germany, India and Nigeria (Everett 1997: 28- 148) Federalism has proved useful not only in accommodating diversity, but also in providing for power- sharing, creating joint or cutting around the issue of sovereignty and strengthening "prior organic ties where they exist" (Elazar 1987: 12).

Federalism in its most limited form is usually defined as having to do with the distribution and sharing of power, but even in that limited form there is an implicit commitment to a conception of justice that holds, among other things, that a distribution of power is necessary and desirable. On

the other hand, federalism in its broadest sense is presented as a form of justice-emphasizing liberty and citizen participation in governance, but one which is inevitably linked to political reality because it must be concerned with the distribution of powers. One of the primary attributes of federalism is that it cannot, by its very nature, abandon the concern for either power or justice but must consider both in relationship to each other, thus forcing people to consider the hard realities of political life while at the same time maintaining their aspirations for the best policy (Elazar 1987: 84).

How could this ideal be implemented in the TPLF-dominated Ethiopia? I cannot give an adequate answer to this important question. Let me suggest four unsatisfactory points. First, if such a system is to be established in Ethiopia, the TPLF leaders must change their attitude towards federalism. "The second important change that the TPLF " leaders have "to institute, to pave the way for peaceful political work" (Lata 1999: 230) is to practice democracy within the organizations that they control. Third, Western powers, especially the government of the United States, that has supported the TPLF regime financially and politically, must realize that the power structure in Ethiopia is unstable.

At present, this unstable power edifice is being propped up by TPLF security and military machinery as well as by the support and endorsement of foreign powers. These factor are clearly inadequate to sustain the stability of the present power structure. Thus, its sudden collapse appears very likely. This should worry all those who are interested in averting another round of tumultuous change in Ethiopia (Lata 1999: 227).

Finally if the peoples of Ethiopia, including the Oromo, are to avoid the tragedies of Somalia, Rwanda, the "Democratic Republic of Congo", Liberia, Sierra Leone, and several African states that have already collapsed

or collapsing, they have to establish a federal system grounded in maximum human liberty. Such a system facilitates citizens participation in governance and above all enables them "(1) to institute workable political arrangements, (2) to create a workable polity, (3) to establish a just polity, and (4) to achieve a just moral order" (Elazar 1987: 104). Only a workable federal arrangement allows people to achieve all these and much more (Everett 1997: 4-9).

In essence, a federal arrangement is one of partnership, established and regulated by a covenant [consent], whose internal relationships reflect the special kind of sharing that must prevail among partners, based on a mutual recognition of the integrity of each partner and the attempt to foster a special unity among them. Federal principles are concerned with the combination of self-rule and shared rule. In the broadest sense, federalism involves the linking of individuals, groups, and polities in lasting but limited union in such a way as to provide for the energetic pursuit of common ends while maintaining the respective integrities of all parties. As a political principle, federalism has to do with constitutional diffusion of power so that the constituting elements in a federal arrangement share in the processes of common policy making and administration by right, while the activities of the common government are conducted in such a way as to maintain their respective integrities. Federal systems do this by constitutionally distributing power among general and constituent governing bodies in a manner designed to protect the existence and authority of all. In a federal system, basic policies are made and implemented through negotiation in some form so that all can share in the system's decision-making and executing processes (Elazar 1987: 5-6).

The strength of federal arrangement is that it combines self-rule, which satisfies the aspiration of the Oromo and other oppressed peoples of Ethiopia, and shared rule, which takes into consideration the geography, demography, culture, history, and above all, economic interdependence of

the peoples of Ethiopia. As the experience of the last five years demonstrates, the TPLF federal arrangement does not work. This is what the TPLF claims now exists in Ethiopia and says that the system works fine. However, in reality the TPLF federalism does not work simply because it was designed by the leadership of a single party and its partners, and above all, the TPLF lacks legitimacy and support of the overwhelming majority of the peoples of Ethiopia. The failure of the TPLF imposed federal arrangement in Ethiopia does not reflect on federalism itself. It reflects only on the TPLF leadership that aborted the democratization process in Ethiopia and abused federal principles as discussed below. What is needed is to eliminate TPLF abuses and create necessary conditions (to be mentioned shortly) for implementation of federal principles. This could be done in two ways. First, the realization that a federal arrangement works when it designed by all the peoples of Ethiopia and their representatives and implemented with their freely and democratically expressed consent for its purpose and framework. The new federal arrangement will, in effect, be a universally designed agreement for power sharing and to maintain a just order "in such a way that all reaffirm their fundamental equality and retain their basic rights" (Elazar 1987: 4).

Federalism involves a commitment to partnership and to active cooperation on the part of individuals and institutions that also take pride in preserving their own respective integrities. Successful federal systems are characterized not only by their constitutional arrangements in the narrow sense of the word but by their permeation with the spirit of federalism as manifested in sharing through negotiation, mutual forbearance and self-restraint in the pursuit of goals, and a consideration of the system as well as the substantive consequences of one's acts (Elazar 1987: 154).

When and where will these conditions emerge? It is only after decolonization of Oromia and democratization of Ethiopia that these conditions will emerge. Spirit of federalism is absent from the Ethiopian

political culture, genuine power-sharing through negotiation is unknown and, above all, forbearance and self-restraint on the part of the leadership in the pursuit of goals is utterly lacking. It is only a decolonized Oromia, with its democratically elected government and its own national guard and police force that can enter into federal partnership with other states in Ethiopia. The second is the realization that federal relationships are established only through a written constitution endowed with legitimacy and based on consent of the people. So far, Ethiopia has not produced a constitution endowed with legitimacy based on the consent of the people. Like "every political and economic idea that was tried by the Ethiopian governments over the last fifty years did not solve Ethiopia's political and economic problems" (Hagos 1995: 4) the four Ethiopian constitutions that were produced since 1931 have failed to solve the question of power-sharing in Ethiopia simply because none of the constitution was a genuine federal constitution.

First, the federal relationship must be established or confirmed through a perpetual compact of union, ... embodied in a written constitution that outlines, among other things, the terms by which power is divided or shared in the political system which can be altered only by extraordinary procedures.... Juridically, federal constitutions are distinctive in that they are not simply compacts between the rulers and the ruled but involve the people, the general government, and the polities constituting the federal union. Moreover, the constituent polities often retain constitution-making rights of their own (Elazar 1987: 157).

In 1994 the TPLF drafted and ratified its constitution at the cost of more than 50 million Ethiopian *birr*. That constitution failed to bring about a democratic form of government and social change in Ethiopia because of the absence of popular support for its drafting (Hassen, 1999, 153) and because the TPLF itself disregards its own constitution with reckless abandon.

The Constitution crafted for and by the TPLF has many short-comings, but one can live with many of these if one condition is made possible: that the authorities which granted this constitution to the Ethiopian peoples be the first ones to start treating it with respect. Freedom of assembly and of expression are guaranteed -on paper. International humanitarian and human right conventions are declared as part of the law of the land on paper. Hence, torture, extra-judicial killing, disappearance, and unlawful detention are proscribed on paper. But the regime, according to local and foreign observers, has routinely violated these same principles that it has written into its constitution. It is extremely hypocritical for the regime to insist that others accept its constitution as a precondition for dialogue when it is the first to treat its own constitution with total contempt (Lata 1999: 232).

Like Emperor Haile Selassie's constitutions of 1931 and 1955 and the military regime's constitution of 1987, the TPLF constitution of 1994 will remain on paper. To have their own constitution is good politics and useful propaganda for the TPLF leaders, but their failure to abide by it, is the worst form of deception and hypocrisy. The TPLF leaders artfully drafted their constitution. However, they conveniently forgot to realize the basic principle of federal constitutions.

It is an even greater art to bring the constituency to endow the constitution with legitimacy. Constitutional legitimacy involves consent. It is certainly not a commitment that can be coerced-however much people can be coerced into obedience to a particular regime. Consensual legitimacy is utterly necessary for a constitution to have real meaning and to last. The very fact that, although rule can be imposed by force, constitutions can exist as meaningful instruments only by consent, means that constitutional documents cannot be treated in the abstract, divorced from

the power systems of which they are a part and the political cultures from which they grow and to which they must respond (Elazar 1987: 164).

I know there is nothing in the Ethiopian political culture that supports the establishment of a democratic federal system. Then how will it be born? It is very difficult to give a simple and precise answer to this question. Some of the points mentioned above, in combination with other points to be mentioned below, may answer the question. Here, let me continue with the rest of what I want to stress in this section. Ethiopia not only lacks tolerant political culture, but has been cursed by a tradition of misuse and abuse of power. If there is one thing that is constant in the Ethiopian political culture, it is the abuse of power. The former military regime not only abused power but also bequeathed to the TPLF leadership the authoritarian inheritance of Ethiopian politics. Thus, the TPLF rule grew out of tyranny and was grafted on to it. The authoritarian aspect of the TPLF leaders was initially hidden from view, because they displayed considerable capacity for producing promising rhetoric about democracy. Ironically, it was in the name of democracy that the TPLF consolidated its tyranny. "Tyranny is tyranny in whatever guise: Irrespective of the fact whether it speaks the language of liberal democracy as long as its actions demonstrate callous disregard of individual human rights, tyranny remains the worst government structure" (Hagos 1999:36).

Since the creation of the modern Ethiopian empire, power was never based on the will of the people; it was obtained through, and maintained by force. Thus, the culture of the Ethiopian ruling elites, which grew out of the conquest of the Oromo and other peoples of southern Ethiopia, emphasizes hierarchy, authority, and centralization of power. " Since federal arrangements rest upon the constitutional dispersion of power, they must necessarily conflict" (Elazar 1987: 241) with the culture of the Ethiopian ruling elites' that lacks a federalist orientation. To open Ethiopian ruling elite culture "to the absorption of federal principles" and to establish a workable federal arrangement in Ethiopia, Oromia must be decolonized and the Oromo people granted self-determination.

My position on self-determination of the Oromo within a democratic federal republic of Ethiopia will please neither Ethiopian elites,

who deny the Oromo colonial experience, nor Oromo nationalists, who will not accept anything short of an independent Oromia, separate from Ethiopia. From what has transpired thus far, there is nothing that gives hope that the decolonization of Oromia and the self-determination of the Oromo will be realized within a democratic federal republic of Ethiopia. Still as an optimist who believes in the unity of free people in a free country, I have an undying dream that one day the Oromo, the Amhara, the Sidama, the Somali, the Tigreans and other peoples, will be able to establish a democratic federal system(Hassen 1999A: 233). It is such a dream that encourages me to hope that decolonization will free Oromia from colonial heritage and democratization will transform Ethiopia into a free country owned by all its citizens.

Can such a dream be realized? It is not possible to predict future developments in Ethiopia, but what is certain is that a discussion of history in progress is by nature, a risky undertaking. This is because the present is the emotionally charged psychological moment both for the Ethiopian elites and Oromo nationalists. No matter how hard one tries to examine dispassionately and with an open-mind the Oromo colonial experience and how to end it, one tends to displease both the Ethiopian elites and Oromo nationalists. On the one hand, Ethiopian nationalists deny the Oromo colonial experience and they reduce it to the experience of national and cultural domination. This is generated by the Ethiopian nationalists' fear that if the Oromo colonial experience is acknowledged, it will lead to the breakaway of Oromia from Ethiopia. Such prospects frighten and haunt Ethiopian nationalists with the specter and nightmare of the disintegration of Ethiopia. On the other hand, Oromo nationalists do not appear to have seriously considered the consequences of the breakaway of Oromia from Ethiopia for the future of the Oromo as well as other peoples of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. I believe, what is needed is the decolonization of Oromia through the devolution of real power to the Oromo. What will bring this to happen? The withdrawal of the TPLF security, military and police forces from, and the establishment of a democratically elected government within Oromia. Monopolization of power by the TPLF leadership has prevented genuine devolution of power in Oromia. At one level, what is happening today in Oromia, is the shocking manifestation of the TPLF

leaders inability to abandon the anachronistic goal of maintaining the colonial status quo in Oromia. Either the TPLF leaders implement their federal structures, which are on paper, or face the collective anger and determination of the Oromo people.

For this to happen, first and foremost, all independent Oromo organizations must form a united front to mobilize the human, material and spiritual resources of Oromia and challenge the TPLF-dominated regime by all means necessary. If all Oromo organizations are united for the purpose of decolonizing Oromia within democratic Ethiopia, they will win support for their cause and gain moral and material support from the international community. More importantly, they will be able to make Oromia ungovernable for the TPLF. Secondly, if the Western powers, especially the government of the United States, are serious to bring about democratic change in Ethiopia, they must stop their financial and diplomatic support for the TPLF- dominated regime in Ethiopia. Without such support, the TPLF leaders will not be able to remain in power for a long time. Third, Oromo organizations must be able to cooperate with other forces that are struggling for the establishment of a genuine federal system in Ethiopia.

At this juncture let me state the reasons why I favor a democratic federal system that guarantees a better future for all the peoples of Ethiopia. First, I believe that the establishment of a truly federated Ethiopia can only help to improve the position of the Oromo. The fact that they are the largest nation in the country is likely to give them a much bigger role in the government both at the local and federal level than was the case under the TPLF- engineered sham federal system. Secondly, I sincerely believe in the freedom, liberty, fraternity, and unity of free people in a free country. Today, the Oromo are not free people as their country is under the TPLF occupation. That is why I argue for the decolonization of Oromia. However, in my mind the decolonization of Oromia is linked organically with the freedom of other oppressed peoples of Ethiopia. This means the Oromo and other oppressed peoples of Ethiopia must stand together against their common oppressors. To me, without unity the future of the peoples of Ethiopia will be bleak. It does not require a leap of imagination to state the obvious. Before our own eyes the situation in many African countries, including Ethiopia, is becoming "more precarious and the prospects for the future bleaker by the minute" (Keller 1996: 17). Only those societies that

are able to pull together their human, intellectual, spiritual, scientific knowledge and technical skills and material resources will be able to survive in the twenty-first century. Several African countries that have been unable to pull together their resources control and regulate societal conflicts, will collapse within the next few years as five have already collapsed into anarchy and chaos.

Thirdly, there are competing nationalisms in Ethiopia. "The danger from competing nationalisms are real-endless war and its consequences, disintegration into anarchy and chaos, collapse of the state and the death of civil society" (Hassen 1999B: 111). Such disintegration is not in the interest of any nation or nationality in Ethiopia or Oromia. The Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia must figure out a system (as the people in South Africa, India and other parts of the world did) that will enable them not only to tame and overcome the danger of competing nationalisms, but also that will establish mechanisms and institutions with which to manage and regulate societal conflict. Such a system is federalism, which

[H]as emerged as a major means of accommodating the spreading desire of people to preserve or revive the advantages of small societies with the growing necessity of larger combinations to employ common resources or to maintain or strengthen their cultural distinctiveness within more extensive polities. Consequently, federal arrangements have been widely applied, on one hand, to integrate new polities while preserving legitimate internal diversities and, on the other, to link established polities for economic advantage and greater security (Elazar 1987:6).

Today the TPLF tyranny is the most formidable obstacle to the decolonization of Oromia and self-determination of the Oromo. This is because the history of the past nine years clearly demonstrates that the TPLF does not allow the existence of even moderately independent Oromo organizations. In fact, the TPLF leaders do not trust even the OPDO, their own instrument for the control of Oromia. Whenever the OPDO begins to

take on a life of its own as an autonomous Oromo organization, the TPLF terrorizes even top OPDO officials. In the words of Hassen Ali, the first president of Oromia:

We were all in grave danger of being killed on account of our political views and actions as members of the Oromo people As a result many prominent Oromo intellectuals left our organization. The TPLF leaders feared that the OPDO was attracting Oromo intellectuals, which the TPLF saw as a threat to their domination and control over the Oromos, their land, and their political agendas. Consequently TPLF, through their control over the EPRDF, expelled hundreds of OPDO cadres and 20, 000 ordinary members from our organization in November 1997....The pretext...that they were 'reactionary Oromo nationalists'. Two hundred fifty of the prominent members of the OPDO who were expelled...are still in detention (quoted in *Sagale Haaraa* 1999 : 3).

The TPLF purges undermine OPDO's viability as an organization and destroys its appeal to the Oromo. That is why the OPDO which has a huge bureaucracy and governmental resources at its disposal has failed in ten years to win the cooperation, much less the trust and confidence of the Oromo whose interest they are supposed to serve within the ruling EPRDF party. Winning the minds and the hearts of the people is very difficult for the OPDO, simply because the Oromo know that it is a puppet organization. It lacks autonomous existence, as it is tightly controlled by the TPLF. It is said that the OPDO members have power to imprison Oromo nationals, but they do not have the power to have them released or brought to justice.

Of all the components of the EPRDF it is the members of the OPDO who are subjected to most humiliating kind of ridicule. They are routinely held up as inept, corrupt and responsible for human rights violations. This is a case of blaming the axe of the chain saw for deforestation, and not

the hand that operates them. Members of TPLF surrogate organizations were designed and unleashed to suppress their own people. It is in discharging this duty that they commit human rights violations and not necessarily for some pathological reasons (Lata 1999: 213).

The TPLF even succeeded in elevating its anti-OLF and anti-Oromo prejudice and propaganda to the plane of state ideology, which is uncritically or dutifully repeated in the name of scholarship. For instance, John Young, a well known supporter of the TPLF, claims that the Gambella People's Democratic Movement (GPDM), which was formed in 1979 "appealed to the OLF which operated in the region for support, but the Front made assistance dependent upon the GPDM acknowledging their followers to be 'black Oromos', something the movement was not prepared to do" (Young 1999: 326). This is nothing but the TPLF's anti-OLF propaganda of 1993 projected back to the late 1970s. In the first place the notion of a People's Democratic Movement was invented by the TPLF only in 1989. Secondly, I visited the OLF operational zone in western Wallaga in 1984. While in the field, and since then, I never heard the notion of "black Oromos," which was invented only in the 1990s to create the impression that the OLF is a racist organization. John Young also claims that when Benishangul People Liberation Movement appealed to the OLF "but again its demand that the people of Benishangul declare themselves 'black Oromos' was not acceptable" (Young 1999: 327). John Young goes on to claim that local respondents in Gumuz "told me that Oromos were taking slaves until 1993 and that students had to carry weapons to school to defend themselves" (Young 1999: 336). However, John Young never mentioned by name a single local respondent who told him this outrageous story. As if his anti-OLF propaganda is not enough, John Young characterizes the OPDO as "arguably the weakest government in the highlands" (Young 1999: 345) of Ethiopia. John Young never bothered to ask himself, why Oromia, which has the largest territory and population and the richest resources in Ethiopia, has the weakest government.

By now the TPLF leaders must realize the following simple facts: First, by tightly controlling the OPDO, they have discredited their own

creation in the eyes of the Oromo. Second, OPDO will not be able to replace the OLF. Third, the TPLF leaders must realize that the Oromo question is a political one. It cannot be solved through military victory. With their formidable military power, the TPLF leaders can temporarily delay the decolonization of Oromia and the self-determination of the Oromo. However, only those with considerable capacity for self-deception assume that through battlefield victory they will permanently perpetuate the colonial status quo in Oromia. Those who think so are incapable of learning from the history of other colonized peoples in the world. If Oromia is not decolonized peacefully, "the disintegration of the last empire on the African continent" (Tuso, 1997, 364) is inevitable. Eight years of futile attempts to crush Oromo yearning for self-determination should disabuse the TPLF leaders of any such illusion that they might entertain. The Oromo question will be solved only when the Oromo right to self-determination is respected.

Fourth, the TPLF regime suppressed independent Oromo organizations including the Oromo Relief Association, a humanitarian organization, which was closed down and its property confiscated without due process of law. There are two disturbing developments in Oromia. The first is the attack on all-private Oromo newspapers and magazines. These papers fostered the development of tolerant political culture which Ethiopia desperately needs. Their disappearance was a fatal blow to the democratization process in Ethiopia. The goal of the suppression of independent Oromo organizations and the death of small private Oromo newspapers is to deprive the Oromo of any leadership and any voice in the affairs of their own country. Thus, the TPLF claims that Oromia has already achieved self-determination is a cruel and nasty joke upon the Oromo. What is self-determination, if the twenty-eight million Oromo are not allowed to support an organization of their own choice and have newspapers that express their legitimate voice? Today in Oromia, as in Sidama and other areas in southern Ethiopia, the people " ...are not only oppressed but also handcuffed to move and mindcuffed to think and speak by a system that best thrives in darkness and misinformation" (Hameso 1997: 39).

Secondly, the TPLF government has been terrorizing the Oromo. In fact, I do not remember any time even during the seventeen years of the previous military regime when Oromo refugees are hunted down in neighboring countries with so much zeal as they are today.

On February 5, 1998, 105 Oromo nationals, who were accused of supporting the OLF were detained in Addis Ababa and taken to Adma [Nazareth] where they were interrogated and intimidated. They had their photographs and fingerprints taken and were forced to sign forms issued by the special investigation Center at Mackelawi in Addis Ababa. They were warned to be loyal to the government parties, not to attend meetings of the Matcha-Tulama Association and were even warned against singing Oromo songs. They were told that they would be legitimate targets for extrajudicial killing if they supported the OLF in the future (OSG, Press Release, No. 23, 1998: 2).

When the Oromo are told not to sing their own songs, when they are told not to participate even in the meetings of the peaceful Macha and Tulama Association, when they are warned that they would be killed if they support the organization that they regard as their true voice, the abuses that the TPLF have inflicted on the Oromo are truly reaching neurotic proportions. Under this circumstance, to claim that Oromia has already achieved self-determination is the worst form of cynicism and the ultimate insult to the Oromo. Fifth, today Ethiopia is a long way from the situation of 1991 when the TPLF leadership promised the democratization of Ethiopia. Once again Ethiopia lost a golden opportunity to peacefully democratize itself through the ballot box. History of the past nine years confirms that the TPLF leaders trust their military might rather than the verdict of the ballot box about which they talk so loudly. It is sad to conclude that the elections of 1992, 1994, 1995 and 2000 have not been the dawn of a democratic beginning but only one more chapter in the consolidation of a new form of tyranny.

Sixth, part of the reason why the TPLF leaders have little inclination to allow the decolonization of Oromia and the self-determination of the Oromo is because Oromo territories are among the richest in the Horn of Africa. Oromia is the principal source of key commodities such as coffee, hides and skins oil seeds, cereals, fruits, vegetable as well as mineral resources such as gold. Nearly seventy percent of the revenues of the Ethiopian government comes from Oromia. This means Oromia is the economic backbone of Ethiopia and has the potential of becoming the breadbasket of the Horn of Africa. Hence, controlling Oromia becomes useful for developing Tigray and prolonging the TPLF hegemony over Ethiopia. Seventh, the history and ideological background of the TPLF leaders does not prepare them well for their new role as leaders in the democratization process. Until 1991, the TPLF leadership, the core of the EPRDF, was openly (and then secretly) a Marxist-Leninist group that relied (still relies) heavily on the party's central decision-making structure. Because of their deep commitment to totalitarian state power, the party leaders cannot tolerate truly adversarial politics. Nevertheless, the TPLF leadership is not so unwise as to think that they alone can plan and shape the destiny of over sixty million people. Only by collaborating with Oromo and non-Oromo political organizations can they restore confidence in the democratization process in Ethiopia.

Eighth, after it completed its transition from a guerrilla force to a "civilian" government, the TPLF faced the problem of its entrenched military background. Old habits die hard. When complex political problems arose, the tendency of the TPLF leadership was to resort to military solutions. When the Oromo, the Sidama, Somalis and other peoples of Ethiopia rose to their feet and claimed what was legitimately theirs, political friction surfaced for which there was no simple and efficient solution, the TPLF tendency has been to find a military quick fix. Ninth, the TPLF leadership must be forced to change direction from dependence on bullets for governance to the use of the ballot box for self government in Oromia, at the very minimum, instituting a new internationally supervised free and fair election and establishing an administration based on that electoral process. Only determined joint action of all Oromo organizations and the unity of the Oromo and other oppressed peoples of Ethiopia will force the TPLF leadership to change course. Non-interference in the internal affairs of

Oromia, respect for the capacity of the Oromo to run their administration, negotiation with democratically elected leaders and respect for the rule of law will be the necessary steps for the decolonization of Oromia and the self-determination of the Oromo.

Tenth, righting the wrongs inflicted on the Oromo by the TPLF dominated regime will be the first challenge facing the government of autonomous Oromia. The basis of that autonomy should be the withdrawal of TPLF security forces from Oromia. For the Oromo to be their own masters in their own state, Oromia must have its own freely elected assembly, autonomous government, independent judiciary, police force and national guard. In short, Oromia must be as autonomous as Tigray itself. That is the prerequisite for decolonization of Oromia, the self-determination of the Oromo and the realization of the ideal of equality among the states that constitute the Democratic Federal Republic of Ethiopia.

The prospect for a democratic Ethiopia will be greatly enhanced if the Oromo and other oppressed peoples of Ethiopia are united in their opposition to the TPLF-dominated regime. At the same time if the Western powers, especially the Government of the United States, want to give a chance for a new democratization process in Ethiopia, they must stop financing tyranny in Ethiopia. Instead, they must support those who are struggling to end that tyranny. Such support will enhance the process of democratization in Ethiopia and create an environment of free expression, tolerance of a diversity of cultures and opinions, respect for the dignity of the human person, and, above all, the supremacy of the rule of law. Finally, let me end this long article on an optimistic point that I stated in 1996. I sincerely believe that in a truly democratic federated Ethiopia, the Oromo will lose nothing but they will have a great deal to gain. What is needed is to decolonize Oromia and democratize Ethiopia. I consider that the decolonization of Oromia is fundamental to the self-determination of the Oromo and one cannot be achieved without the other. In short, the decolonization of Oromia will ensure self-determination for the Oromo, while democratization will create a necessary political climate in the country in which conflict will be resolved through dialogue, genuine searches for mutual benefit characterized by the spirit of tolerance, consensus and compromise. The creation of a self-governing Oromo state is a necessary

condition for the establishment of a federated democratic Ethiopia. Because of their numbers, geographical position, and rich natural resources in Oromia, the Oromo are destined to play an important role in the future of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Consequently, Ethiopians should make an earnest effort to understand the reasons for, and come to terms with, the Oromo quest for self-determination.

Endnotes

1. Mohammed Hassen, "A Short History of Oromo Colonial Experience 1870s-1990s: Part One, 1870s to 1935" *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Volume 6, Numbers 1 & 2, (July 1999): 109-158.
2. Galla was an Amhara name for the Oromo. It is a term of insult and abuse. The Oromo do not call themselves Galla and they resist being so called.
3. In this section I have drawn heavily on Dr. Mekuria Bulcha, whose scholarly work has expanded and enriched our knowledge of the Oromo society.
4. I am indebted to my friend Taha Ali Abdi for providing me with information about Mohammed Jilo's rebellion.
5. In this section I have drawn heavily on my "The Macha-Tulama Association and the Development of Oromo Nationalism" *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse The Search for Freedom & Democracy*, ed. by Asafa Jalata, (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1998): 183- 221, and my "Review Essay: *Gezetenä Gezot, Matcha And Tulama Self-Help Association by Olana Zoga*," *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, Volume 4, Numbers 1 & 2, (July 1997): 203-238.
6. I am indebted to the late Ahmad Buna, who provided me with a lot of information about the Macha-Tulama Association and the OLF. I conducted an interview with him on March 6-7, 1984 in Khartoum, Sudan.

7. Until 1974, more than eighty percent of extensive land owners in Oromia were Amhara landlords.
8. Respected human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch/Africa, The Committee to Protect Journalists, The International Commission of Jurors, Oromia Support Group, The Human Rights League, and The Ethiopian Human Rights Council, and The European Parliament, all stress that human rights violations are increasing in Ethiopia.
9. I am indebted to Professor Asmarom Legesse for his comments and suggestions, which I have included in this section of the paper.
10. Moti Biyya was detained in September 1997 and kept illegally in detention until April 2000. According to the latest information Moti Biyya has managed to escape from another attempt to detain him. He now lives safely outside Ethiopia, the prison house of the Oromo nation.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

THE OROMO NATIONAL FORUM: MEETING OF THE MINDS

Narrative and Purpose. It is time for Oromo intellectuals, religious and community leaders, businessmen, artists, and activists to come together to critically look at the causes of our society's continued suffering, to assess the impact on our own behavior and performance, and honestly evaluate ourselves so that we can correctly identify problems that hinder our progress toward finding and generating a clear articulation of Oromo nationalism. If we honestly and courageously recognize our strengths and weaknesses -- as individuals, groups, organizations, and society -- and build on our strengths while reducing or eliminating our weaknesses, we can emerge victorious from the cultural, ideological, and political nightmares we are facing as a nation at the beginning of the twenty-first century; without correctly identifying our real problems, we cannot find correct solutions.

In Oromia, our people have been living under darkness and political slavery since the last decades of the nineteenth century, and they continue to be denied the freedom of assembly, association, organization, the press, and expression. The only avenue Oromos have in their own homeland is an underground movement that has been frustrated because of Ethiopian state terrorism and political repression and the lack of support from neighboring countries and international powers.

In the diaspora Oromo community, we are free to communicate and to act together, but several obstacles prevent us from doing so. The obstacles, which stem from the legacy of Ethiopian political slavery and culture, include a lack of political and diplomatic experience, lack of clear understanding of the complexity of the modern world system and the intensity of danger that is facing the Oromo nation, and lack of experience with the international community. More important, however, the absence of a national forum for a constructive national dialogue to establish a common denominator through consensus and democracy has made most Oromo political and civic groups less effective.

Therefore, the main objective of this forum is to bring together from the Oromo diaspora as a diverse group as possible to address

central issues facing Oromos who seek national liberation and democracy, to activate and mobilize them and to challenge them to come forward in an independent setting to put their intellectual resources at the service of the nation in a systematic fashion. This dialogue is intended to initiate the first step that sets a stage to gradually bring together all Oromo nationalists, democrats, and activists to design and implement activities and policies that reflect mutual understanding. Of course, these activities and policies also define how to live with Oromo neighbors and others who would like to cooperate and live with Oromos based on commonly agreed principles. These steps can help to move beyond nationalism and formulate a political framework that can assist in establishing a genuine multicultural democracy in Oromia and the region.

Central Points. How can Oromos and their formal and informal leaders establish a common denominator that brings them together, and enables them to mobilize Oromo cultural, intellectual, and material resources to consolidate Oromo nationalism into a united movement, and decisively confront their enemies on multiple levels? To answer this question, Oromo intellectuals, activists, opinion makers, and various formal and informal leaders need to critically assess their own behavior and performance and the internal conditions of Oromo society both in the diaspora and Oromia.

We propose the following central questions that should be addressed: 1) How do the strengths and weaknesses of **every Oromo, group, civic and political organizations**, and **society** affect the Oromo national struggle? 2) What are the global opportunities and obstacles for the struggle of the Oromo for democracy and liberation? 3) What sort of infrastructure would the Oromo movement need to develop in order to achieve Oromian liberation and democracy? 4) What would be the role of the Oromo diaspora in this?

Requirements and Procedures. The meeting is conceived as a three-day seminar for which participants will prepare about **a ten page (double-spaced) paper** each to directly address several posted questions central to the current Oromo national dilemma. This paper can be written in *Afaan Oromoo* or in English. Any Oromo who is willing to submit a complete paper that answers the challenging questions put

forward will be welcome to do so. Those who are willing to take the challenge must be quite thorough and critical, answering all questions; they also need to spell out the process they envision for the Oromo movement by directly tackling the following additional questions: 1) What do you propose should be done to achieve Oromian liberation? 2) What would Oromos need to do to accomplish your proposal? 3) How could they organize themselves to effectively implement it? 4) How would the new global conditions affect the Oromo ability to achieve what you propose? 5) What has prevented the Oromo in the past from carrying out what you propose? 6) Why have the Oromo and their organizations not acted in a unified fashion in their own behalf to achieve national liberation and democracy?

Those individuals responding to the invitation to this national dialogue would be required to send in their manuscripts before **October 30, 2000**, in order to be considered since only 20 of the papers will be selected. The criteria for selection of the papers are quality, originality, and representativeness of ideas to ensure excellence and diversity by incorporating the papers of persons from as many of the religious, regional, gender, age, and political sectors of Oromo society as possible. An ad hoc committee of five members will decide which papers qualify. This ad hoc committee will also facilitate the first meeting of this national forum until the participants develop a new mechanism that will guide the process in the forum.

At the meeting, those individuals whose papers are selected would be given 20 minutes to present their ideas. The presentations of the papers will take an entire day (nearly eight hours). As the papers are presented, a consensus and debate will undoubtedly start to emerge. The remaining time will be spent addressing points of consensus, disagreement, and framing proposals that will be issued in a document that may be called a *kayyo* paper, depending upon the results. Two reporters will be needed to follow closely and record the points presented, note similarities and differences among the ideas, and formulate the proposals and the draft of the final document. The ad hoc committee will select these persons before the meeting since it is

important that this task begin at the opening session and continue throughout the seminar.

Expected Result. We expect that the intellectual work done at this meeting will result in producing a publicly-distributed paper, a manifesto, that is, a statement of commonly-agreed positions, points of difference and suggestions or recommendations for what should be the next specific steps taken through a mechanism that will be established by the participants and that will move events toward Oromian freedom and democracy. This paper would be issued publicly through channels that would be decided upon by the participants. All Oromo individuals and organizations would be then invited to continue the national dialogue to amend or improve, endorse and sign this *kayyo* paper. The proceedings of the meeting may be published and distributed.

Place and Time. The meeting will be held in the University Center at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, from **December 15 to 17, 2000**. The meeting starts at 9:00 a.m.

To be inclusive and diverse we would like to invite prominent Oromo individuals from Europe, Africa, and North America who may not be able to pay their expenses. Due to financial constraints, however, we may be forced to limit participation to persons in North America. The publication of the *kayyo* and the proceedings of the meeting will require some money. Therefore, we are seeking funding from individuals and institutions to cover costs of travel, hotel, food and publication. Acknowledgment will be made in the final report. Anyone willing to participate in the forum, contribute, sponsor or support this effort financially should contact **Dr. Asafa Jalata** by the following address: Department of Sociology, 901 McClung Tower, Knoxville, TN 37996-7027; (865) 974 7027; (865) 974 7013 (Fax); e-mail: ajalata@utkux.utcc.utk.edu.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Ethiopian State at the Cross Roads: Decolonization and Democratization or Disintegration? by Leenco Lata (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1999), 270 pp. \$21.95.

In the past several years, I have read a number of books and numerous articles on what happened in Ethiopia during the transitional period from 1991 to 1995. None captured the expectation that was raised in 1991 for the democratization of Ethiopia and catalogued how that hope was shattered within a year as *The Ethiopian State at the Cross Roads: Decolonization and Democratization or Disintegration?*, by Leenco Lata. This is a timely historical account of a very dramatic period in the modern history of the Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia, the period ushered in by the sudden collapse of the Ethiopian state,¹ followed by a brief period of flowering of Oromo nationalism, and that culminated in the consolidation of TPLF tyranny² in Ethiopia and unmitigated attacks on all independent Oromo organizations and Oromo nationalism itself. It is timely because the book systematically documents what went wrong with the democratization process in Ethiopia between 1991 and 1995, and graphically depicts how with the full knowledge, financial and political support of the United States government and Western powers, the TPLF-dominated regime aborted the democratization process, and embarked on massive violations of human rights, and established sham Federalism in Ethiopia.

Leenco Lata, the author of the book under review, is a chemical engineer by training and a politician by circumstance, whose commitment to the cause of Oromo self determination and that of all the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia is forcefully expressed in this book. He is one of the most articulate Oromo politicians, who has excellent command of both oral and written Oromo, English and Amharic languages. He is a very perceptive man, a quick thinker and a fast learner. Most of all, he is an intellectual and a productive politician (a rare quality of OLF leadership). Of all the OLF leaders that I have known for over two decades, it is only Leenco Lata, Dr. Tadesse Eba, Taha Ali Abdi and Dima Nago, who have done some writings in the 1970s and 1980s. It is hoped that other OLF

leaders will follow Leenco's example and write about their experience in the Oromo National Liberation struggle.

Leenco Lata was one of the founders of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in 1974 and spent at least half of his life in the Oromo National liberation struggle. As the former Deputy General Secretary of the OLF, I know of no other Oromo politician who played such a pivotal role in the dramatic developments of 1991 and 1992 in Oromia and Ethiopia. He was involved in the drafting of the Charter that was supposed to be the supreme law of Ethiopia during the transitional period. During the run up to the 1992 regional and district elections, trusting American assurance and EPLF promise (under Leenco Lata's leadership), the OLF entered into risky undertakings with the TPLF, whose combined result was the rapid destruction of OLF military and political capacity. "That exercise permanently damaged the image of the leading personalities who were involved in its implementation".³ I know no other OLF leaders, whose image was damaged for the events of 1992 as Leenco Lata's. Many Oromo for the OLF debacle of 1992 condemned him. Anyone who reads carefully, *The Ethiopian State at the Cross Roads: Decolonization and Democratization or Disintegration?* clearly understands that it is not fair to condemn Leenco Lata as an individual and even the OLF as an organization for what went wrong in 1992. This is because in 1992, the OLF was operating under two powerful and growing pressures to dismantle its military capacity. In the first place, the US government saw the TPLF as a stabilizing force in Ethiopia. This means the TPLF enjoyed the political and financial support of the US-led Western governments. The TPLF had also military support from Eritrea. Secondly, the OLF lacked weapons and foreign support, the two nemesis of the Oromo Liberation struggle. Without weapons and powerful international friends, the forces of destruction were too powerful for the OLF in 1992. However, one may fault the OLF leadership for its blunders of 1991 and 1992, two of which were very serious indeed.

First, the OLF leaders inadvertently fell into a legal trap when they accepted the TPLF troops as Ethiopia's interim defense force. The TPLF used that legal cover to disarm 'other groups' "while arrogating to itself the exclusive right to employ armed means to impose its will" (p. 75) on others. Secondly, "the OLF came up with the idea of garrisoning troops and of

creating quasi-neutral administration in the run up to the district and regional elections [T]his initiative was effectively foiled by the TPLF, with the tacit 'understanding of the U.S. government that brokered that agreement to implement it The TPLF used the opportunity afforded by the garrisoning agreement to turn a proposal to bring about a mutual demilitarization of the political process into a unilateral one" (p. 75).

According to Leenco Lata, the U.S. government not only brokered an agreement between the TPLF and the OLF for garrisoning of troops, but also sent observers to witness the June 1992 regional and district elections. "The OLF hoped that the U.S. mediation would have repercussions on any party that would renege on the bilateral agreement. And all participants in the elections expected some form of international reaction if the observers found the election not sufficiently fair and free. In the event, the TPLF reneged on the U.S. mediated agreement with the OLF without any public disapproval by the mediator" (p. 135).

Through calculated harassment, the TPLF forced the OLF to withdraw from the 1992 election that was neither free nor fair. Instead of pressuring the TPLF to put the democratization process on course, the U.S.-led Western governments rewarded the TPLF regime by giving it "the largest amount of economic assistance ever provided to an Ethiopian government This went beyond tolerating TPLF reneging on its democratization promise and bilateral agreements and served as a clear signal of outright approval. One more nail was driven in the coffin of the democratization pact"(p. 136). With such support and approval, the TPLF aborted the democratization process, rapidly destroyed the military and political capacity of the OLF and consolidated its occupation of Oromia. In this the TPLF was helped by the EPLF in 1992. It is one of the ironies of history of the Horn of Africa that the EPLF, that supported the TPLF against the OLF in 1992, was itself defeated and humiliated by the TPLF in May/June of 2000. It was Karl Marx who once wrote something like, when history repeats itself the first time, it is a tragedy, and when it repeats itself a second time, it is a farce. The conflict between the TPLF and EPLF, which is briefly mentioned here and there in the book under review is both a tragedy and a farce at the same time. A tragedy, because many EPLF members participated in the formation of the TPLF in 1975. For over

a decade the EPLF had considerable influence on the growth of the TPLF. "It trained thousands of TPLF troops. It continued to give technical and military support even at a time when relations between the two fronts were strained In addition, the TPLF was able to, and actually did, copy all the knowledge and experience accumulated by the EPLF" (pp. 82-83). It was with the EPLF military and technical support that the TPLF was able to destroy OLF's military and political capacity in 1992. The episode was a farce because it was the control of Oromo resources that enabled the TPLF to administer the most humiliating and devastating defeat the EPLF has suffered since 1978. The TPLF victory destroyed the invincibility of the EPLF military machine and established the myth of TPLF invincibility. "Has the TPLF not defeated the superior forces of EDU an EPRP while it was still in its infancy? Did it not go on to cow Black Africa's largest and best-equipped armed force? Has it not succeeded in subduing the larger and apparently more sophisticated Amhara elite? Has it not contained resistance by the country's largest ethnic group, the Oromo?" (pp.225-226)

Leenco wrote the above words, more than a year and a half before the recent TPLF victory over the EPLF in order to show the arrogance with which the TPLF leaders started regarding their society as the bravest in the region. Recent victory over the EPLF may heighten the TPLF leaders' ambition to extend their hegemony within and beyond the Horn of Africa.

The Ethiopian State at the Cross Roads: Decolonization and Democratization or Disintegration? is a catalogue of hopes that were raised and dashed, promise of democratization that was aborted, expectation of the end of Amhara domination that was replaced by the Tigrean one, the dream of a better future that ended with the nightmare of uncertainty, promise of respect for human dignity, that ended in massive violations of human rights, expectation of self-determination for the Oromo, that ended in Tigrayan hegemony. As one of the participants in the drafting of the Charter of 1991, Leenco Lata, saw "the following four concepts as the cornerstones of the belief that was to guide the effort to implement a genuine democratic transition in Ethiopia" (XVII). These were (1) The supremacy of the law, that never existed in Ethiopia; (2) The formation of a joint government, that was unknown in Ethiopia; (3) Democratically restructuring of the Ethiopian state for the purpose of ending the era of subjugation and oppression and

replacing it by a period of "freedom, of all peoples" and (4) the reign of the just peace that was unknown in Ethiopia, (XVIII-XX). "Perhaps the one area where a radical departure from Ethiopia's past was greatly needed was in the area of respect for human rights. It appears that Ethiopian rulers considered violation of human rights as their natural prerogative, signifying the right to exercise unquestionable political authority" (p. 7).

The TPLF leaders, who condemned rightly the human rights violations of the military regime, declared their commitment to basic human rights (p. 9) in words, but never implemented it in reality. What is surprising is not only "the speed with which the TPLF has come to sound just like the regime that it unseated with heavy sacrifices" (p. 21) but also the speed with which the TPLF surpassed the previous military regime by taking human rights violations of Oromo refugees to Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, the Sudan and even South Africa, an aspect that is not discussed in the book under review. Within a year an historic opportunity of righting the wrongs of the *Dergue* regime was lost and a golden opportunity "to forge a new and inclusive Ethiopian State" was abandoned by "the derailment of the democratization undertaking" (p. 77). "TPLF members were acquainted only with the Leninist variety of democracy. The leaders drummed that it is scientific and foolproof into their minds. Thus, practicing any other form of democracy was considered not only a regression but also engaging in something that is both harmful and useless" (pp. 99-100).

It is precisely for this reason that Telecola Hagos, a former supporter of the TPLF leadership, now its bitterest critic, concludes that the TPLF leaders used democracy only as an instrument for perpetuating their tyrannical rule.

What is very, very important to consider is the significance of the fact that the people who control TPLF and the government are very parochial-minded and appallingly arrogant charlatans. They are extremely violent, insanely suspicious, . . . with twin character flaws of excessive love of consumer goods and obsession with status and hierarchy Fear, blackmail, intrigue, deception,

suspicion, and brutality are its defining characteristics. It is absolutely insane for anyone to expect democracy from a secretive and tyrannical organization such as the TPLF and its spawn (Hagos 1999: 56).

According to Leenco Lata, it is the silence by the international community, especially the government of the United States that has encouraged the "TPLF government that it can act with impunity in matters concerning Oromo" (p. 129). The independence of the OLF and that of "almost all its members necessitated not only its liquidation but also that of its followers" (p. 103).

Since 1992, the TPLF has tried and failed to replace the OLF by the OPDO, its surrogate organization. The reason for this is quite obvious. OPDO is an instrument of TPLF tyranny in Oromia.

Of all the components of the EPRDF, it is the members of the OPDO who are subjected to the most humiliating kind of ridicule. They are routinely held up as inept, corrupt and responsible for human rights violations. This is the case of blaming the axe or the chain saw for deforestation, and not the hand that operates them. Members of TPLF surrogate organizations were designed and unleashed to suppress their own people. It is in discharging this duty that they commit human rights violations and not necessarily for some pathological reasons (p. 213).

The Ethiopian State at the Crossroads: Decolonization and Democratization or Disintegration? is a very interesting book that deals with the most dramatic period in modern Oromo as well as Ethiopian history. It neither pleases the Amhara elites, nor the Tigrayan governing class nor Oromo Nationalists. It is a book written not to please but to inform and inform it does exceptionally well. The book establishes the intellectual maturity of its author, his depth of understanding of the complex nature of the Oromo struggle for liberation and his yearning for the realization of Oromo self-determination within the context of the situation in the Horn of Africa. "The resolution of the Oromo question, in

one manner or another, will also play a pivotal role in affecting the future of not only Ethiopia but all the other Horn states. For Oromia is to Ethiopia what Ethiopia is to the Horn" (p. 244).

Finally, *The Ethiopian State at the Crossroads: Decolonization and Democratization or Disintegration?* is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the Oromo national liberation struggle that has created a separate Oromo identity with its own space. "Oromo political voice is distinctly being heard both at home and abroad. What their leaders plan to do with this autonomous energy is what determines what constitutes the mission's maximum and minimum goals" (pp. 242-243). Anyone who is interested in understanding the extent to which the TPLF derailed the democratization process in Ethiopia during the transitional period will find rich food for thought in this thought-provoking book. Chapters ten and eleven are must read for those who are interested in averting a great tragedy for the Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia in the future. The book is well-written in a language that is easy to follow, and it is a joy to read and captivating to the end. This is an exciting book that will be discussed and debated about for years to come.

Endnotes

1. Edmond Keller, 1995. "Remaking the Ethiopian State" in *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, ed. by I. William Zartman, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner: 125-139.
2. Tecola Hagos, 1999. *Demystifying Political Thought, Power and Economic Development*, Washington D.C.: Khepera Publishers.
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Geerarsa Folksongs as the Oromo National Literature: A Study of Ethnography, Folklore, and Folklife in the Context of the Ethiopian Colonization of Oromia, by Addisu Tolesa, (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), pp. 208, \$80.00.

The Oromo have a very rich oral literature, as documented by the great Italian scholar in 1922.¹ However, unfortunately the Ethiopian colonial establishment did everything possible to discourage Oromo oral literature from being written down and published. As a result from 1922 to the early 1990s, there were not many published books on Oromo oral literature. In fact, "since Ethiopia was forged crudely as a nation,"² it was only in 1991 when Oromo intellectuals, embarked aggressively not only on the production of literature in their language, but also on the collection and publication of Oromo oral literature, without fear of retribution from Ethiopian government authorities. That condition was created by the collapse of the Ethiopian state in 1991,³ which galvanized Oromo intellectuals to adopt the Latin alphabet for their language. The new Oromo alphabet known as *Qubee*, not only became a testament to empowering the production of literature in the Oromo language but also, for the preservation of Oromo oral literature. Literature in both oral and written forms is the ultimate beauty of the Oromo language, a measure of its richness and depth, the mark of its development to meet the spiritual as well as the day-to-day needs of its speakers. Oromo oral literature reflects the Oromo view of the universe and their place in that universe. It is also the treasure house of Oromo history that has been consigned to the margins by Ethiopians.

According to Professor Sumner, "the universe of Oromo songs" is extensive and it covers "the totality of the physical world of man, animals, plants, trees, material in organic things plus the world of artificial objects; artifacts, food and beverage, clothing."⁴ Love songs that express joy and sadness and "the infinitely varied shades of emotions from desire and hope to frustration and despair"⁵ hold pride of place in the universe of Oromo songs. Their beauty and elegance only match the variety of expressions of love songs. Oromo songs express how love inflames and intoxicates the human mind, glows and breaks the human heart. "Through its sincerity, its

moving personal tone, its occasional hyperbolic character, it appeals strongly to the human heart. Lovers cannot sleep at night, they admit their utter failure, they cry, they even hiccup for pain. Love reduces a girl to thinness; it is a sickness without medicine, an agony. It is compared to wood burning in fire, to pangs of childbirth.... love is all leaves and no root. Tears fill five or nine cups!"⁵

Besides love songs, *Geerarsa*, the traditional boasting songs of heroes, has pride of place in the universe of Oromo songs. This aspect is well documented in Addisu Tolesa's *Geerarsa* Folksongs as the Oromo National Literature: A Study of Ethnography, Folklore, and Folklife in the Context of the Ethiopian Colonization of Oromia. Throughout the book Addisu Tolesa shows how the Oromo use *Geerarsa* as a medium of artistic expression in times of joy and happiness, sorrow and sadness, moments of glory and times of defeat, humiliation and suffering. According to Addisu Tolesa:

Oromo use *Geerarsa* to express their social, political, economic conditions under Ethiopian settler colonialism to recall their past glory under the *Gada* System (Oromo democracy) prior to their colonization) and to venerate those heroes and heroines who have sacrificed their lives to defend or liberate their people from subjugation. *Geerarsa* is also performed during the celebration of extraordinary activities (such as patriotic events and brave deeds) cooperative work, feasts, holidays, marriage ceremonies, and other activities .⁶

During the long night of colonial darkness, when the Oromo were denied written artistic expression in their language, they used *Geerarsa* as a medium of resistance not only to oppose colonial domination but also to express their aspirations for freedom and independence. *Geerarsa*, as boasting songs of individuals "consists of life experience stories about the social positions of individuals [and] . . . their achievements. It is sung or recited usually by men, often in a call-and-response manner." (p.2) Addisu Tolesa groups *Geerarsa* songs into three types: the first type includes songs that express the "heroic world view" of the Oromo. These songs deal with

the pre-colonial period, celebrating the bravery of an individual that killed dangerous animals or enemies and earned trophies. The second category includes songs:

In which the imagery - the animal trophies - are symbolically transformed into academic degrees. This symbolism will depict a period in Oromo history in which great value is attached to obtaining an education and earning a degree the new 'trophies'. The third type of *Geerarsa* expresses the colonial exploitation and cultural domination from which the Oromo have been suffering. It also expresses their aspiration for freedom as a highly valued contemporary trophy (p. 14).

With the slow change of Oromo society, the *Geerarsa*, as a medium of artistic expression, was transformed in two major ways. First, until recently, *Geerarsa* was practiced mainly in rural Oromia where the overwhelming majority of the Oromo lived. However, with the movement of a significant number of Oromos from rural areas into urban centers, *Geerarsa* emerged in urban centers as staged performances which "shows its ability to adapt to the changing situation, the urbanization and the increasing demand for official recognition of Oromo cultural identity" (p. 137). "Staged *Geerarsa*, recited during social gatherings, is not only the medium through which the Oromo struggle for freedom from Ethiopian colonial oppression is expressed, it is also an art form that manifests the change and continuity in Oromo cultural traditions under difficult political conditions" (p. 164).

In the struggle against Ethiopian colonialism, the call to unity became the central focus of staged *Geerarsa*. "[I]n the traditional call-and-response" manner the singer emphasizes the importance of Oromo unity in the following *Geerarsa*.

Ornummaan	Being identified as Oromo people is good
Hinjigu	Oromo progress will not be held back
Hindhangala 'u	And never again will they be divided!
Inlalisa	But they will prosper
Cogorssa Tae lafa Hadhoksu	May the Oromo be like cogorssa [a kind of

grass used for ritual purposes]

Duumessa Ta'e Waaga Hadhoksu	May they cover Oromia like clouds
Aadaan Saba Balla'a Inguddata	The Oromo cultural traditions will grow
Aadaafi Addunyaa Argata	And it will be known
Dubbiin Guutuudhaa	Our cause is just and for peace
Guutuu Ganamaati	And it is the natural peace
Inhirra'tu	It shall remain constant
Injigu	It shall not be disturbed
Indhangal'u	It shall not be tampered with
Tokkummaaft Walqixumman	And let Oromo unity and equality be
Halalisu	strong

(p. 141).

The second area in which *Geerarsa* has been transformed within the urban context is in the area of gender inequality. Traditional *Geerarsa* songs were sung only by men and (not women) to praise themselves, their fathers and mothers.

Accordingly, the mother is praised for the pains of childbirth that she endured for the sake of the son, not the daughter, and for accepting responsibility of raising the son. The son praises the mother for the provisions that she prepared for him when he went on the hunting expedition, and for her blessings . . . the son who expresses gratitude for his mother also praises and expresses gratitude for his father. When praising his father's name, however, he describes him as having special qualities, such as the 'man of truth and justice.' These special features are not used in the *Geerarsa* to praise the mother woman (p. 148).

Oromo women in urban areas not only started singing *Geerarsa* songs, but also asserted that women have special qualities just like men, establishing equality between men and women. In this, it was Elfinesh Qanno, the famous Oromo singer, who first challenged both men and women to free themselves from traditional norms in order to end gender

inequality (p. 153). In short, what emerges from the last chapter of the book under review is the fact that *Geerarsa* has been able to transform itself with changing times as a medium of artistic expression that keeps alive the Oromo yearning for freedom (p. 188).

Geerarsa Folksongs as the Oromo National Literature: A Study of Ethnography, Folklore, and folk Life in the Context of the Ethiopian Colonization of Oromia is the product of many years of labor by the author. It is constructed from *Geerarsa* songs gathered partly from the diaspora Oromo in North America. Facts long overlooked in Oromo studies are used to show the importance of *Geerarsa* among the Oromo diaspora. What those facts say are amazing in two respects. First, they demonstrate that *Geerarsa* songs, performed in social gatherings, carry the diaspora Oromo on the wings of joy back to Oromia. It maintains strong emotional bonds between Oromia and the diaspora Oromo. Second, it keeps burning the fire of Oromo nationalism among the Oromo in the diaspora. Addisu Tolesa, the author of the book under review is one of the founders of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA). His book reveals the coming of age of Oromo studies. It is a very interesting book, which makes a very significant contribution to the development of Oromo literature in the English language. Addisu Tolesa has excellent command of both Oromo and English languages. I am impressed with his ability to express profound Oromo concepts that are difficult to articulate much less to translate into English. However, the book under review is a very expensive one and it is not easily accessible. It is hoped that the publishers will produce a paperback edition of this book. If and when that occurs, I hope Addisu Tolesa will consult Sumner's Oromo Wisdom literature volumes, to further enrich and expand the horizon of his fascinating book.

Endnotes

1. F. Cerulli 1922. *Folk Literature of the Galla of Southern Abyssinia*, Boston: Harvard African Studies, p. 146.
2. Yacob Wolde-Mariam, 1998: "A Memorable Day," *The Ethiopian Herald*, Thursday, May 28: 3-4.
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States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority, ed. by I. William Zartman, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner: 125-139.

4. Claude Sumner, 1995: *Oromo Wisdom Literature Volume I Proverbs, Collections and Analysis*, Addis Ababa: Gudina Tumsa Foundation.

5. Claude Sumner, 1997. *Oromo Wisdom Literature Volume II Songs, Collection and Analysis*, Addis Ababa: Gudina Tumsa Foundation.

6. Addisu Tolesa, 1999. *Geersarsa Folksongs as the Oromo National Literature: A Study of Ethnography, Folklore and Folklife in the Context of the Ethiopian Colonization of Oromia*, Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, p. vii.

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Secret, by Farah Nuruddin, New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998, pp. 298, price \$25.95.

You see, sooner or later, secrets sabotage the very purpose for which they are being withheld, they give away the very thing one wishes to protect, Nonno, the thoughtful and influential grandfather, warns his grandson in Nuruddin Farah's latest novel (Farah, 114). The words of the family patriarch echo throughout Farah's book as Kalamán works to uncover the complicated myths and hidden events that have shaped his life. *Secrets*, Farah's eighth major work, chronicles Kalamán's painful journey against the backdrop of the violent and chaotic collapse of the Somali state in the early 1990s.

Farah, one of Africa's most popular contemporary novelists, has packed *Secrets* full of textured themes like magic, sexuality, political collapse, and class. The book focuses on the lives of four characters:

Sholoongo, the magical temptress whose sudden return to Mogadishu sets the story in motion; Kalamam, the computer executive desperately searching for answers to the mysteries that surround his life; Damac, Kalamam's mother, who knows the shocking answer to her son's search; and Nonno, the dignified grandfather whose life serves as a metaphor for the decline of Somalia. These characters provide a canvass on which Farah paints a story of mesmerizing prose. Farah allows each of these characters a turn as the narrator in *Secrets*, and the literary technique allows readers to view the motivations that drive them. While *Secrets* concerns itself with people's lives, Farah never leads us too far from the clan-inspired chaos and bloodshed that serves as the novel's context.

The story begins when Sholoongo returns to Mogadishu to bury her father. While in Somalia, she hopes to convince Kalamam to father her child. The request is actually a debt that Kalamam must honor because Sholoongo, a shaman, bewitched him as a child.

Farah uses Sholoongo's character to probe the issues of sexuality and magic in Somali society. Sholoongo's sexual prowess has enticed several generations of Kalamam's family. Sholoongo influences others by making them believe she has the ability to cast spells, assume other forms, and enter people's dreams. At one point, Kalamam and others suspect that Sholoongo transformed herself into an elephant and murdered an acquaintance that illegally procured ivory for the international market. The combination of magic and sexuality makes Sholoongo a powerful woman. Farah creates another strong woman in the character of Damac. Damac is a successful business woman, but fears that Sholoongo will ruin her by exposing her past and taking her son away.

Sholoongo discovered the tragic truth about Damac years before. In Damac's youth, a rejected suitor obtained a forged marriage certificate and attempted to claim her as his wife. When that failed, he and several friends gang-raped Damac. Kalamam was the product of this brutal assault. Yaqut, believed by Kalamam to be his father, took Damac in and provided for the woman and her son. The two never actually married -- their relationship is considered a sin in Somali society. They are forced to keep it secret. Later, one of the rapists used the forged marriage certificate to blackmail Damac.

Years earlier, Damac realized that Sholoongo knew of the forged marriage document and subsequently, Damac had Sholoongo -- still a young girl -- fingerprinted by authorities on trumped up theft charges. As a result of this legal action, Damac fears that Sholoongo has stolen Kalamans soul.

Kalaman, symbolizes the new Somalia that clan warfare threatens to destroy. He lives in a nice apartment in Mogadiscio, complete with a maid. An executive at the high-tech company he started from scratch, Kalaman has an office in a modern building in downtown Mogadiscio. His life revolves around work for international embassies, aid agencies, and Italian bank accounts. The collapse of Somalia has increased his business, while making it more fragile at the same time. If we are moving into dollar-making ventures it is because this country is becoming a land of ruin, Kamala says of his business (Farah, 48).

Sholoongos arrival forces Kalaman to begin a search to discover the mysterious origins of his life. Along the way, he takes us through the sites and sounds of Somalia's final days. Kalaman passes through armed checkpoints with ease and silently drives past lifeless bodies in the street. At night, the sound of gunfire causes little alarm. You get used to hearing the sound of automatic weapons, Kamalan explains, And you sleep right through it (Farah, 43).

Kalaman braves these dangers to find the origin of his name. Kamalan convinces an old family friend to provide some of the information. Nonno adds other facts. Eventually, Kalaman's father, Yaqut, confirms the story. "We had no faith in anyone, your mother and I," he explains to his son. We're truly sorry if we locked you out, but then we had no choice but to exclude everybody from knowing our secrets. Can you imagine a man and a woman living in sin, as they say, in a traditionally Muslim society such as ours? We would have been stoned to death, and the perpetrators of the gang rape would have been allowed to go free (Farah, 260).

Trained as a Muslim scholar, he fled his hometown in the northern Somalia and concealed his identity. Italian officials in Mogadiscio provided him with new papers that listed his clan as a British for the colonial power that earlier controlled northern regions. Nonno

becomes a successful patriarch who earns respect for his willingness to help others. He finances Yaqut's engraving and repair business. He also assists a neighbor in his efforts to start a horse training operation.

By the time Kamala begins his journey, Nonno is an old man in failing health - a metaphor for the collapse of Somalia. As the novel closes, Nonno slowly dies as his country becomes consumed by clan warfare. Like me -- and I am on my deathbed -- she (Somalia) is as good as gone, Nonno declares as he slowly expires. It is a tragedy that the country, which many generations have strived to shape, is being destroyed piece meal right in front of our unseeing eyes. . . . Our country is as good as gone (Farah 296).

In the end, Sholoongo proves unable to convince Kalaman to father her child. Instead, she coaxes the frail Nonno into bed with her. With this relationship consummated, Nonno, like Somalia, passes into history.

Farah tells Kalaman's story in the sparse but rich style that has earned him critical acclaim. Farah's prose, with its roots in the sophisticated Somali poetry, blends both tradition and modernity. His style reflects both his origins and his membership in a transnational, cosmopolitan world. The author focuses *Secrets* on the characters' personal lives, but never lets readers forget the decline of Somalia.

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