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The Struggle For Knowledge: The Case of Emergent Oromo Studies

Asafa Jalata

Taking the Oromo as historical actors, the emergent Oromo studies identify some deficiencies of "Ethiopian studies" that primarily focus on the Amhara and Tigray ethnic groups and their rulers, and ignore the history of the Oromo people. Many Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars do not recognize the positive cultural achievements of this people.¹ As Shack (1994, 642) notes, "The lack of critical scholarship has inadvertently distorted the human achievements of conquered peoples like the Oromo, including transformations of their social, cultural, and political institutions." Although the Oromo have no political power, they are the largest ethnonation in the Ethiopian Empire, comprising about half of the 52 million Ethiopian population. Ethiopia (former Abyssinia), with the help of the European colonial powers, colonized and annexed the Oromo people during the last decades of the 19th century, when Africa was partitioned among the European colonial powers (Jalata 1995a). Since then they have been treated as colonial subjects and second-class citizens. With their colonization and incorporation into Ethiopia (Jalata 1991, 1993a; Holcomb and Ibssa 1990), the Oromo could not develop independent institutions that would allow them to produce and disseminate their historical knowledge freely. Currently, they are fighting for national self-determination: to regain their political freedom and rebuild independent institutions.

The Ethiopian knowledge elites² have treated the Oromo as historical objects or have ignored them because of their subordination and powerlessness. Current publications on Oromo cultural and social history challenge a top-down paradigm to historiography and make the Oromo subjects rather than objects of history. Studying people as subjects or agents helps scholars avoid producing false knowledge. As Haraway (1991, 198) expounds, "Situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and authorship of 'objective' knowledge." The emergent Oromo studies attempt to replace colonial history by a history of liberation, and to refute historical myths that have been produced to justify Ethiopian colonialism. This essay

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explores how the emergent Oromo studies have identified some deficiencies of Ethiopian studies, and how many Ethiopian and Ethiopianist knowledge elites have reacted to these fields of study.

The Knowledge Elites and Ethiopian Studies

Ethiopian educational policies limited the access of Oromos and other colonized peoples to education and positions of authority and knowledge-making in universities, business and government (Tuso 1982; Markakis 1974; Abir 1970). Until the 1960s, in the colonized regions like Oromia,³ the schools were attended mostly by children of the colonial settlers (Baxter 1983). In the late 1960s, the colonized peoples including the Oromo, Sidama, Walayita, Somali and Hadiya, were less than 10 percent of the student population in the Haile Selassie I University while Habasha students were more than 80 percent (Markakis 1974, 182-83). Lack of educational opportunity for a long time delayed the emergence of an Oromo educated class until recently. The Ethiopian colonial state denied education to Oromos; it also suppressed their language, culture, history and literature. According to Bulcha (1994, 91), "The underdeveloped status of Oromo literacy is mainly attributable to the Amharization policy of consecutive Ethiopian governments over the last one hundred years. These governments have not only neglected, but have also actively suppressed the development of Oromo literature."

As we shall see shortly, the Ethiopian knowledge elites with the support of the Ethiopian state produced "official" history that completely denied a historical space for the Oromo and other colonized peoples. The Oromo name was erased from history and replaced by the 'Galla' which connoted savage, slave, barbaric, inferior, uncultured and ignorant (Melbaa 1988; Rey 1969; Farago 1935). Explaining similar conditions, Rahman (1993, 14) asserts that "domination of masses by elites is rooted not only in the polarization of control over the means of material production but also over the means of knowledge production, including control over social power to determine what is useful knowledge." Some early and contemporary Ethiopian scholars and their international supporters have also distorted Oromo history and depicted them as barbaric, cruel, evil, ignorant, orderless, destructive, and invasive (Abba Bahrey 1954; Harris 1844, 72-75; Markham 1869, 39-40). For example, an Habasha scholar, Abba Bahrey (1954, 111) in the 16th century rationalized that he wrote the history of this bad people to express "their readiness to kill people, and brutality of their manners." Telles (1710, 110-25) saw Oromos as "the scourge that God had made use against Abyssinians." Similarly, Bruce (1973, 86) saw the Oromo as the most cruel and destructive people who "contributed more to the weakening and reducing the Abyssinian Empire than all their

civil wars and all the foreign enemies put together." Generally speaking, the Oromo were depicted as "the enemies of the Amhara" (Tafla 1987). Expressing how the previous views about the Oromo affected some contemporary scholars, Ta'a (1994, 989) argues that, "old written records on the Oromo reflect some elements of racist ideology and have tremendous influence on some of the scholars of modern Ethiopian history who have, for one reason or another, not been able to detach themselves from the archaic and wrong views about the Oromo."

Such negative views about the Oromo have prevented some Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars from understanding Oromo history and culture. "The power of the knowledge industry is derived not simply from what knowledge is produced and for whom," Gaventa (1993a, 27) comments, "but also from the growth of new elites who people the knowledge production process." Some of those who have studied Ethiopia promoted the interests of the Ethiopian colonial ruling class at the cost of the Oromo and other colonized peoples. According to Heaney (1993, 41-42), "With the writing of history, knowledge became power, or rather an expression of power and a tool of maintaining it. History, and later, science, were frequently used not merely to understand, but to legitimize historically shaped political relationships and institutions." Some African historiography has been dominated by scholars who have an ideology of cultural universalism and a top-down approach that completely ignored or distorted the social and cultural history of the colonized and subjugated peoples (Vansina 1986; Wallerstein 1983a). Cultural universalism is an ideology that the dominant groups in the modern world economy use to look at the world mainly from their own cultural perspective and to control economic and cultural resources of the dominated people; it also assists in creating and socializing a global intermediate class by subordinating or destroying multicultures in the name of science and technology (Wallerstein 1983b, 83).

Discussing how some Ethiopianists devalued Oromo culture and glorified that of Ethiopians, Baxter (1994a, 172) argues that "most European travellers, scholars and diplomats have accepted the view from the center....Old-fashioned evolutionists and racist assumptions, mostly unvoiced, have contributed to the belief that a Christian, Semitic culture with Middle Eastern leanings had to be superior to a black African culture." The Ethiopian knowledge elites and many Ethiopianist and Africanist scholars have been guided by the ideology of cultural universalism and distorted or ignored the histories and cultures of the subordinated and powerless peoples. Wa Thiong' o (1993, 9) asserts that "there could never be only one centre from which to view the world but that different people in the world had their culture and environment as the centre." Therefore, critical studies require the

recognition of a pluralism of cultural and historical centers to understand historical and social relations within a region and the world. As Haraway (1991, 187) points out, we must develop “an earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different—and power-differentiated—communities.”

A few early European scholars such as C. Beke, L. Krapf, Antoine D’Abbadie and W.C. Plowden realized such approaches and made a positive contribution to Oromo studies. Between 1840 and 1843, Beke traveled among the Oromo and witnessed how they were law-abiding citizens; he stated that “it is not to be imagined that they are in a state of anarchy” (Ta’a 1994, 990). D’Abbadie (1880) considered the Oromo a large African nation with rich history and culture. When Plowden (1868, 307-8) visited the Guduru region of western Oromia, he commented about the *Gada* (an egalitarian Oromo constitutional government) system and said that this region “is, perhaps, a specimen of nearly as pure a republic as can exist.” Krapf (1868) sketched the map of Oromoland and called it ‘Ormania’; he used the Latin alphabet to translate the New Testament into the Oromo language. The contributions of contemporary Oromia scholars to Oromo studies will be explored below. Reflecting on the major problems that face Oromo studies today, Jalata (1993a, xi) asserts, “To write about the Oromo people is an uphill struggle because Oromo history, culture and civilization have been victimized by Ethiopian colonialism...for more than a century; until recently the world did not even recognize the existence of Oromia and its people. Because of the lack of political power, the history of this largest ethnonation in the Horn of Africa was not known.”

Because some Ethiopianists, like some Africanists, have never rejected the 19th century epistemology of cultural universalism (Jewsiewicki 1989), they built models that failed to explain social relations in the Ethiopian political economy. Some Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars distorted Oromo history; they called the Oromo “Galla,” a term which has negative connotations. In Ethiopian popular and intellectual discourse, “Galla” carried overtones of race and slavery, it connoted barbarism, and necessitated Amharization to civilize them” (Donham 1986, 130). Unfortunately, scholars sympathetic to the Oromo also used this name until recently. The practice continued until the Oromo began to intensify their national liberation struggle in the early 1970s and started to have an impact on shaping their own history and destiny.⁴

Sorenson (1993, 12) eloquently argues that “racism and racial classifications are not uniquely Western preoccupations; in Ethiopia, the Amhara ruling elite sometimes have classified themselves as white but always as superior to the darker-skinned people of the south.

Just as Europeans felt themselves pre-ordained to bring civilization to savages, so did the Amhara feel themselves possessed of a civilizing mission as they expanded their empire into areas occupied by other ethnic groups such as the Oromo." The Tigrayans have similar racial attitudes toward the colonized peoples (Donham 1986). The preceding discourse has influenced the paradigm of Ethiopian and some Ethiopianist intellectuals and has prevented them from understanding the Oromo. Without looking at linguistic, anthropological and historical data, some Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars have claimed that the Oromo are "invaders" of Ethiopia and foreigners to the Horn of Africa. For instance, G/Mariam (1948 E.C.) said that the Oromo came to Ethiopia from Asia without providing any evidence. Scholars such as Haberland (1963), Lewis (1966), Bates (1979) and Greenfield and Hassen (1980) refuted such claims and established that the Oromo have been one of the so-called Cushitic speaking peoples who lived for their known history in the Horn of Africa. According to Bates (1979, 7), "The Oromo were a very ancient race, the indigenous stock, perhaps, on which most of other peoples in this part of eastern Africa had been grafted."

Some Ethiopianists also argued that the Oromo are a people without history and civilization. For instance, Ullendorf (1960, 76) argues that, "The Galla had nothing to contribute to the civilization of Ethiopia, they possessed no material culture, and their social organization was at a far lower stage of development than the population among whom they settled." Some Ethiopianists have blindly accepted the Ethiopian colonial project and have supported it with their scholarship. Hassen (1993, 25) notes that the Ethiopian colonial ruling class, "which especially perceived the danger of the larger Oromo population to its empire, sought not only to destroy the Oromo people's pride in their achievements, but also needed to keep them chained with no faith in themselves, their history, and national identity." Some Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars have expanded Ethiopian historical mythologies and have distorted or ignored Oromo history, culture and civilization. Oromos have been seen as a people without history, civilization, meaningful culture; hence Ethiopian colonial domination has been justified (Ullendorf 1960; Rey 1969; Levine 1974; Abbay 1992). According to Shack (1994, 642), "Ethiopian scholars are as much at fault as their European [and American] counterparts for having written Ethiopian history from the perspective of the Christian Amhara and Tigrinya peoples." The Ethiopians claimed that they recreated their medieval empire that the Muslims and the Oromo disintegrated; and their kings claimed that Ethiopians imposed their God-given responsibility to rule and disseminate their "Christian civilization" to the so-called pagans (McClelland 1978). Some Ethiopianists have agreed with these and other claims and never

mentioned that the Ethiopians with the assistance of European powers colonized the Oromo and other peoples to exploit their economic resources and labor; Ethiopians saw the colonization of the Oromo as the reunification of Ethiopia.

Yet Oromia was not part of Ethiopia before its colonization during the last decades of the 19th century; and the Oromo have always been historically, linguistically and culturally different from the Abyssinians or Ethiopians. The attempt to justify Ethiopian colonial domination has led some Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars to create and propagate more mythologies in the name of scholarship. Such scholars have argued that Ethiopia was a feudal empire and its subjugation of other peoples like the Oromo was a precapitalist conquest, not colonialism; European imperialists could not defeat the Ethiopians because of their bravery and patriotism while colonizing other Africans (Eshete 1982, 14); the Ethiopians solved serious intertribal wars by establishing Ethiopian rule over the conquered peoples, making Ethiopian colonialism actually beneficial for the colonized peoples (Levine 1974, 26); and the primitiveness of the Oromo kept Ethiopia underdeveloped (Ullendorff 1960, 76). Ullendorf and others like him blame the powerless Oromo for the failure of the Ethiopian social system. Levine (1992, 16) even recently claimed that Ethiopian colonialism eliminated slavery and "protected all the peoples of greater Ethiopia from falling prey to European imperialism." Such arguments represent the typical Ethiopianist approach to Oromo history.

Obviously, these scholars have been unwilling to learn how the modern Ethiopian colonial state was created in the process of the expansion of the European-dominated capitalist world economy. Therefore, the notions of feudalism and precapitalist expansion; Ethiopian bravery and its challenge to European imperialism; the elimination of war and slavery by Ethiopian expansion; the benefits of Ethiopian colonialism to the colonized peoples; the stagnation of Ethiopia by the colonized population; and the Ethiopian protection of colonized peoples from imperialism do not correspond to reality. Jewsiewicki (1986, 12) notes that such interpretation "results neither from myopia nor from the deafness of the intellectuals but from the unwillingness to see and analyze the social conditions of the production of knowledge and the political conditions of its consumption." Current research demonstrates that the Ethiopian colonial class and its state enjoyed an intermediate status in the capitalist world economy and colonized the Oromo and other peoples without having the technical knowledge to produce firearms and without developing the administrative and technical skills required to create a modern state (Jalata 1991, 1993a; Holcomb and Ibssa 1990).

The Ethiopian colonial state controlled the process of forced recruitment of labor via slavery and the *nafxanya-gabbar* system. This system was established only in the colonized territories, such as Oromia; the *nafxanyas* or colonial settlers divided the colonized farmers among themselves to produce commodities needed for local consumption and the international market. This system was also created to force the colonized population to provide forced free labor for the state and its functionaries (McClellan 1978; Holcomb and Ibssa 1990). Millions of Oromos were reduced to status of slaves and semi-slaves (Jalata 1993a). "The gun (from Europe) and the guncarrier (from Abyssinia) arrived in the colonies as one unit," Holcomb and Ibssa (1990, 135) write, "and this unit basically expresses political alliance that created the *neftegna-gabbar* relationship, the relation that lay at the heart of the emerging Ethiopian colonialism."

There has been change and continuity in Ethiopian studies. The recent explosion of class contradictions, the intensification of ethnonational movements and the attempt to reorganize Ethiopian colonial order by the Amhara-Tigrayan elites have unleashed political and intellectual battles that have seriously affected Ethiopian studies. While many scholars continue to support the Ethiopian version of history, others have realized the necessity of a plurality of centers in knowledge production and dissemination. As we shall see below, a few innovative scholars have realized the importance of looking at a society from different cultural centers and developed a new trend in Ethiopian studies.

The Current Trend in Ethiopian Studies

Let us briefly consider the works of a few innovative scholars who have somewhat recognized the importance of looking at a society from different cultural centers. For example, Crummey (1975, 1981, 1983, 1990) has innovatively studied the issues of class, gender, ethnicity and state in Ethiopian historiography, although his work is mainly limited to Abyssinia/Ethiopia proper. Crummey's work looks at Abyssinian historiography from the bottom up, exposing some deficiencies of the works of some Ethiopianists, such as those of Richard Pankhurst (1961, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1985) and Sylvia Pankhurst (1959). Pankhurst and Pankhurst were mainly interested in the roles of the Ethiopian ruling class and ignored the roles of the colonized peoples, oppressed classes and groups in Ethiopian historiography. Similarly, understanding the significance of social history, McCann (1985, 1986, 1987) has made an interesting exploration on the subjects of the rural political economy of Lasta, class differentiation, poverty and famine within the framework of the development of the modern Ethiopian state. However, he attempts to subordinate the Oromo issue

to that of the Ethiopians (McCann 1995). The work of Gamst (1969, 1970) on the Qemant, Habasha peasants and elites has broadened our knowledge of ethnicity and class in Ethiopia proper. Although he looked at ethnonational stratification from the perspective of "Ethiopian nationalism," Tamrat (1988a, 1988b) has provided important insights on the Agaw and Gafat peoples who were negatively affected by the Habashas. Nevertheless, his position on the Oromo and other colonized peoples is not different from that of other Ethiopian scholars.

Taking Ethiopia as a Christian empire, many Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars, except Trimmingham (1965) and few others, have ignored the importance of Islam. Recently, Hassen (1992a) and Ahmad (1992) have broken the silence. While Hassen explains how the Wallo Oromo accepted Islam and used it as a resistance ideology against Christianity and Ethiopian colonialism, Ahmad provides the survey of the social history of the historic Islamic community of Gondar. Shack (1966, 1967, 1974) studied the Gurage, Amhara, Tigray, Falasha, Adare and Argobba peoples and demonstrates the relevance of ethnonational cultural and social histories. Shelemay (1989), Kaplan (1992), and Quirin (1992, 1993) have rescued the social and cultural history of the Falasha or "Ethiopian Jews." Koehn and Waldron (1978) have enriched our understanding of an Adare voluntary association, *Afocha*, and showed the importance of this ethnic social organization. Further, Waldron (n.d.) has provided an insightful analysis on the relationship of Adares and Oromos under Ethiopian colonial rule. Moreover, Harbeson (1978), Lange (1976), Stauder (1971, 1972), Almagor (1978, 1986), Hallpike (1972), Donham (1985, 1986), James (1986), Turton (1986), Garretson (1986) and Johnson (1986) have provided rich ethnographic studies on the Afar, Kafa, Mazanjir, Dassanetch, Konso, Maale, Gumuz, Kwegu and Mursi, Maji, Anuak and Nuer respectively. The work of Triulzi (1981, 1986) on the social and cultural histories of the Oromo and Bela Shangul has been pathbreaking and original. Of course, scholars such as Keller (1988), Markakis and Ayele (1978), Hiwet (1975), Bondestam (1974, 1975) and Stahl (1974) have also broadened our perspectives on Ethiopian studies.

Donham and James (1986) attempt to go beyond ethnographic description and explain the relationship between the colonized peoples and the modern Ethiopian state. However, they do not explain the nature of Ethiopian colonial expansion within the context of the capitalist world economy. The works of most Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars treat the Ethiopian Empire in isolation and fail to provide a complete explanation for the nature of this empire. Even McClellan (1978, 1980, 1984, 1988) who has made an original contribution to Ethiopian studies and enriched our understanding of class-ethnic stratification by focusing on the case of the Gedeo did not

overcome such deficiencies. Like some other Ethiopianists he has confused colonialism with national integration. Some Ethiopian scholars and their supporters see Ethiopian colonialism as unification and do not recognize the role of European imperialism in building the modern centralized Ethiopian state. Even moderate scholars such as Zewde (1991) consider Ethiopian kings like Yohannes and Menelik as unifiers, not colonizers. It is appreciable that Zewde attempts to include the histories of different ethnations in Ethiopian historiography, although his focus is on elites rather than the peoples. He lacks a critical perspective that helps study cultural and social histories of different ethnations in the Ethiopian Empire.

Zewde's failure to locate the creation of the empire in the process of the European-dominated capitalist world economy prevented him from exploring the interconnection between class and ethnic hierarchies that have clearly manifested themselves since the 1960s and have led to both political and intellectual battles. The question of looking at a society from different centers rather than only from the perspective of the 'nation-state' is becoming the central issue today in world politics and scholarship. As Young (1993, 3) notes, "Both 'nation' and 'state' were now subject to relentless interrogation: the former by deepening cultural cleavages in many lands, the later by currents of economic and political liberalization now girdling the globe. The potent force of politicized and mobilized cultural pluralism is now universally conceded." Since Ethiopia cannot stop these global changes, Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars need to accelerate the process of transforming Ethiopian studies. But those scholars who refuse to accept the new trend in Ethiopian studies have continued to marginalize the history of the colonized peoples and attacked their scholarship. For example, attacking Oromo scholarship, Harold Marcus (1992, 20) argues that:

Passionately engaged in the Oromo quest for political sovereignty, various authors seek to create a historical nation called Oromia and fabricate a glorious history for the non-existent country....Unable to concede that the Ethiopians could colonize the fictitious Oromia on their own and for their own reasons, the pro-Oromo authors 'show how imperialism penetrated the Horn of Africa and created coalitions with the successive Ethiopian colonial ruling classes. This was achieved through the formation and maintenance of the Ethiopian state as a European informal colony, bringing various peoples, including the Oromo, under the logic of capitalism.'

For Marcus, Oromia is a "fictitious" nation and "non-existent country." He should have recalled that some countries or states that are members of the United Nations today are recent historical inventions. Fifty years ago there was no Jewish state; five years ago many nations that have become sovereign nations in Eastern Europe were under the Soviet Empire. In the Horn of Africa, Eritrea recently liberated itself from

Ethiopian colonialism. But one cannot deny the contribution of Marcus (1969) to the study of Ethiopian colonialism.

Some Ethiopianists, such as Perham (1969, 377) and Clapham (1969, 81) confidently declared that there was no Oromo consciousness that would unite the Oromo for political action against Ethiopian domination. Clapham (1994) still defends the "central Ethiopian nationalism" and claims that the Oromo cannot achieve statehood because they are geographically scattered, and they do not have an Oromo national identity. Levine (1974) also denies the existence of a unified Oromo identity. Similarly, many Ethiopian scholars argue that the Oromo lack cultural elements that are necessary to develop nationalism (Tareke 1990; Abbay 1992). Abbay (1992, 35) comments that "the Oromo do not have an Axumite history to glorify: they do not have 'heroes' like Yohannes and Alula to look up to; nor do they have a major insurrectionary history like the Weyane in their memory pool." In other words, Abbay argues that since Oromos do not have heroes and a civilization similar to that of Ethiopians, particularly to that of Tigrayans, they cannot develop a nationalist identity.

History demonstrates that the Oromo fought bravely against the Ethiopians and put them on the defensive between the 16th and the last decades of the 19th centuries until European powers sided with the latter and changed the balance of power (Jalata 1993a). Explaining why the Oromo were militarily successful, Almeida (1954, 137) wrote that "What makes the Gallas much feared is that they go to war and into battle determined and firmly resolved to conquer or die." The Oromo have resisted Ethiopian colonial domination militarily and culturally (Greenfield and Hassen 1980; Marcus 1969; Jalata 1993a). Discussing the nature and essence of Oromo cultural revival and nationalism, Barber (1994, 1) explains that:

the government in Addis Ababa [Finfinne] has allowed the Oromos to restore use of their native language in schools, government, and business. The move came in an effort to defuse a growing separatist [liberation] movement headed by the OLF. As long as the renaissance remains cultural, Oromos are likely to remain a silent majority in their homeland, but the possibility of conflict is now making the world aware of these people. Indeed, a visit to the south indicates that the reforms liberalizing the use of Oromo language and culture may well be too little and too late.

History shows that "An oppressed class, or nation, that believes in itself, in its history, in its destiny, in its capacity to change the scheme of things, will obviously be the stronger in its class and national struggles for political and economic survival" (Wa Thiong' o 1993, 54). The emergent Oromo studies indicate that the Oromo are transforming their one hundred years of historical defeat to victory through intellectual, political and armed struggle because of the emergence of

an Oromo educated class, urbanization and development of peripheral capitalism in Oromia (Jalata 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1993d, 1994, 1995b).

Because of the existence of colonial settlers in garrison towns in Oromia and the partition of Oromo territories into different colonial administrative regions, some scholars have assumed that Oromo nationalism could not develop. But Oromo nationalism has been slowly growing since the 1960s. According to Baxter (1994b, 249), "Oromo nationalism, the political expression of an Oromo identity, was a late starter...Oromo nationalism, like other African nationalism, emerged and developed in response to colonial rule." Since the early 1990s, the Oromo national movement has been transformed from an elite to mass movement; most Oromos have rejected religious, regional based and enemy-affiliated organizations⁵ by recognizing the political significance of an independent national political movement⁶ and celebrated Oromoness and their cultural identity (Jalata, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1994, 1995b). According to Barber (1994, 3), "Ordinary Oromo people are savoring the return of cultural freedom." Exploring further the revival of Oromo culture, language and the *gada* system, Barber (1994, 3) emphasizes the challenge Ethiopia faces from the Oromo national movement: "The challenge faced by Ethiopia today is whether allowing an Oromo language and cultural revival will go deep enough to convince nearly half of its people to remain part of the nation. The allure of self-determination could well lead to conflict such as has convulsed Hutus and Tutsis in nearby Rwanda." However, some scholars still refuse to recognize the existence of the Oromo national movement. Scholars such as Clapham (1994) confuse the existence of a few Oromo organizations in Oromo society with the division of Oromo society. While Oromo nationalism is blossoming and Oromo liberation forces are intensifying their national liberation struggle,⁷ some scholars still deny the existence of liberation struggles in the empire. For example, Mengisteab (1992, 12) states that the Tigrayan-led regime created a peaceful "political system in which the rights of all individuals and nations are respected."

Ethiopian studies of the ruling class and its state are incomplete since they are not accompanied by historical studies that deal with political economy, social structures and relations. Since there have been multiple histories and cultures in a given region or the world, intellectuals need multiple approaches to study them. Socially responsible scholars need to study and understand "all the voices coming from what is essentially a plurality of centers all over the world" (Wa Thiong' o 1993, 11), rather than universalizing and eternalizing the voice of domination and exploitation. Defending the Ethiopian historiography and attacking the emergent Oromo studies, Marcus (1992, 20) debates that "the inventive historical views about Oromos and Oromia [are] now being presented as Gospel truth."

Similarly, McCann (1995) argues that some Oromo scholars use uncritical and misleading secondary sources to promote Oromo nationalism and to prove the existence of "the historical country of Oromia." However, Marcus and McCann do not explain why their version of Ethiopian history is authentic and scientific truth while Oromo history is invented or unsubstantiated. We know that some Ethiopianist and Africanist discourse manifests the Western and African obsession with the image of mythical Ethiopia, and such ideological discourse has been accepted as an authentic and scientific truth by scholars like Marcus and McCann. Sorenson (1993, 19) asserts that "The image of Ethiopia contained within this discourse is one of African grandeur, liberty, modernization, and stability. It was the version of Ethiopian history accepted by the United Nations, other African states, and both superpowers. External powers, including both the United States and the Soviet Union, used this discourse to extend their own influence over the region." The emergent Oromo studies challenge such discourse.

Although Oromo scholars and others who have interest in Oromo studies have been discouraged or prohibited by the Ethiopian state from studying Oromo culture and history, Oromo studies are gradually emerging in Europe and North America. Nevertheless, Baxter (1986, 55) argues that "If Oromo studies are to develop they must depend on research carried out in Oromo lands among Oromo people and, increasingly by Oromo scholars. As long as scholars find it difficult, or impossible, to work in Ethiopia, except on very specialized and non-controversial topics such as the minutiae of grammar, then the future must be lean however fat the present may seem." Baxter (1986, 69) provides an excellent resume of Oromo studies in which he states that "Oromo studies are flourishing moderately in Kenya and scattered university departments across Europe and America, but they are, in effect, nonexistent in Ethiopia."

As we shall see below, a few books and articles have been published on Oromo cultural and social history recently. Most of the writers of these books and articles have listened to the Oromo voice and wrote their stories. Discussing the importance of involving the masses in the system of knowledge production and the relevance of knowledge democracy, Gaventa (1993b, 131) argues that, "The believer in popular participation must hope that the vision and view of the world that is produced by the many will be more humane, rational and liberating than the dominating knowledge of today that is generated by the few." The emergent Oromo studies struggle to transform Ethiopian studies; and to accomplish this mission adequately, Oromo studies must be critically re-examined. Discussing the significance and problem of such subjugated knowledges, Haraway (1991, 191) notes that "The positioning of the subjugated are not exempt from critical re-

examination, decoding, deconstruction, and interpretation...The standpoints of the subjugated are not 'innocent' positions. On the contrary, they are preferred because in principle they are least likely to allow denial of the critical and interpretative core of all knowledge." One hopes Oromo studies will comprehend different scholarly paradigms and find solutions for the fundamental problems in the empire.

The Emergent Oromo Studies

Some Oromia scholars committed themselves to serious scholarship;⁸ their works are becoming a stepping stone in writing the social and cultural history of the Oromo people. Currently, Oromo scholars are using the works of these scholars to enrich and develop Oromo studies. Historical and cultural studies that explain large-scale and long-term social changes in the Oromo society began only in the 1980s. Prior to this period, those scholars who were interested in the Oromo society, because of political reasons or narrow specialization in their intellectual professions, spent their energies mainly on small geographical areas or specific aspects of this society without looking at larger Oromo issues (Tolesa 1990). With the emergence of the Oromo national movement, a few scholars began to publish books and articles on larger issues. One such book was published under the pseudonym Gada Melbaa in 1980; the name has a cultural and political connotation since it was taken from the *Gada* name.

Gada Melbaa's book, *Oromia: An Introduction*, was published secretly in Finfinne. A revised, expanded edition was printed in 1988. Melbaa (1988, 3) states that he does not intend "to write a definitive Oromo history"; and his main objective "is to introduce readers very briefly to the Oromo people, their land, their experiences under Ethiopian colonial rule as well as their struggle for freedom, democracy, and economic and social justice." Melbaa briefly introduces the Oromo's view of themselves without delving into theoretical issues and social science jargon. Based on available literature and linguistic data, the author establishes that the Oromo have been one of the original peoples of the Horn of Africa.

Mohammed Hassen, in *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860*, further elaborates on Melbaa's position. Hassen focuses on precolonial Oromo cultural and social history. Criticizing Ethiopian historiography for distorting Oromo culture and history, Hassen (1990, 2) comments that "the Oromo were never credited as creators of an original culture, or as having religious and democratic political institutions which flowered in patterns of their own making and nourished their spiritual and material well-being." In his book as well as several articles, Hassen expounds how the Oromo independently

developed their culture and history prior to their colonization by Ethiopia. Both Melbaa and Hassen briefly discuss the main functions and structures of the Gada system and factors that led to its disintegration in the first half of the 19th century in some Oromo communities.

Melbaa briefly mentions how Ethiopian colonialism led to the destruction of the *Gada* system in some Oromo communities in the last decades of the 19th century; but he does not thoroughly explain how class differentiation and state formation in some Oromo communities destroyed the system. Although Hassen's discussion on the *Gada* system and Oromo religion is instructive, it is not exhaustive. He explains the gradual disintegration of the egalitarian *Gada* system and the processes of class differentiation and state formation in the Gibe region between the 17th and first half of 19th centuries, and how class differentiation emerged in the 17th century and facilitated the emergence of the wealthy merchant and landlord class. Hassen also analyzes the significance of the trade routes that linked the Gibe region to the surrounding regions. Furthermore, he discusses how the development of agriculture, local industry and the expansion of local and long distance trade laid the foundations of the five Oromo Gibe states: Gumma, Gera, Jimma, Gomma and Limmu-Ennaray.

The emergence of hereditary landlords, the king, the governor, trade chiefs and market administrators reduced the egalitarian aspects of the Gada system to religious rituals. The *moti* (king) accumulated wealth with income he extracted from tribute on the land and its products, his estates, and commerce (Abir 1965). This produce extraction enabled the *moti* to create and maintain regulatory institutions like the military, bodyguards and courts (Lewis 1965, 93). As a result, the egalitarian and democratic Gada office was replaced by the autocratic and hereditary office of the *moti*. Hassen (1990, 196) explains that the Gibe region "witnessed a flourishing of trade, the spread of Islam, the flowering of culture, and the achievement of social and economic progress unsurpassed in any of other Oromo areas."

Although it was published in 1965, Herbert Lewis's book, *A Galla Monarchy: Jimma Abba Jifar, Ethiopia, 1830-1932*, is still a very important book. Lewis explains how the Jimma *moti* system and its powerful organization with its monopoly of power and economic forces destroyed the *Gada* system. He asserts that the Jimma monarchy had direct power over the political economy of Jimma; the *moti* recruited his officers from among members of his family, the wealthy class, those slaves who proved loyal, intelligent and effective, and from foreign mercenaries. The *moti* directly controlled the armed forces and extracted produce from the Oromo peasantry. Melbaa, Hassen and Lewis do not explain thoroughly how the historical transition from the Gada system to the *moti* system took place.

Although Melbaa explains how the alliance between Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism facilitated the annexation of Oromia into Ethiopia, he does not discuss thoroughly how and why the European and Ethiopian powers allied in creating the Ethiopian Empire. This gap is filled by the publication of two important books: *The Invention of Ethiopia: The Making of a Dependent Colonial State in Northeast Africa*, was published in 1990. The authors of this book, Holcomb and Ibssa (1990, 389), assert that "Neither Abyssinians nor any combination of indigenous Africans created Ethiopia. It was cooperation between Abyssinia and Europe that fashioned the Ethiopian state; the state embodied the needs and interests of both parties." In 1993, explaining how the capitalist world system facilitated the colonization of Oromia and the creation of the Ethiopian Empire, Jalata published his book, *Oromia and Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-1992*. Jalata, Holcomb and Ibssa have made a solid contribution theoretically and historically by exploring the nature of the Ethiopian state and factors that have led to its recurrent crises.

Taking the modern world system as their unit of analysis in explaining the evolution of the Ethiopian colonial state, Jalata, Holcomb and Ibssa explain successfully how European imperialism and Ethiopian colonialism incorporated Oromia into Ethiopia; these scholars also challenge the Ethiopianists' approach that takes the Ethiopian Empire as a unit of analysis and fails to demonstrate the connection between Ethiopian colonialism and world imperialism. Combining both history and theory, Holcomb and Ibssa discuss the historical meanings of colonialism and imperialism, the nature of the Ethiopian colonial state and its recurrent crises, the contradictions between the colonizers and the colonized in the empire and how these contradictions have led to bloody confrontation. Holcomb and Ibssa (1990, 407) argue that "The colonial relations that exist among the parts of the empire lie at the heart of the conflict and crisis in the Ethiopian Empire. Until these relations that hold the empire together are dismantled and replaced with those of the peoples' choosing, there will be no peace in this region."

However, Holcomb and Ibssa do not examine thoroughly the roles of social classes in Ethiopia proper and the colonized areas. Although they correctly analyze how Ethiopian colonialism destroyed the *Gada* system in some Oromo communities, Holcomb and Ibssa do not explain how internal class and state formation in some Oromo communities destroyed the *Gada* system and prepared the way for the emergence of a collaborative class that later allied with the Ethiopian colonial state. They have an excellent discussion on the *nafxaya-gabbar* system; however, Holcomb and Ibssa do not demonstrate the change and continuity that have taken place in the Ethiopian political economy

for almost one century. Ta'a (1980, 1984, 1986) has done historical studies on some parts of western Oromia that can help us understand some of these changes. Jalata's work also deals with some of these issues. In Oromia, Jalata argues, during the initial conquest, the Ethiopian colonialists plundered and raided Oromo resources. After they established their settler colonialism, the Ethiopians practiced the *nafxanya-gabbar* system and slavery and created or consolidated an Oromo intermediate class. With the gradual development of peripheral capitalism, the settlers introduced tenancy and wage labor to intensify capital and wealth accumulation. When these relations failed to work, the colonial state confiscated all lands and properties and forced the Oromo farmers into government-controlled associations, villages and cooperatives in order to have control on their labor, lives and properties. Jason Clay and Bonnie K. Holcomb (1985) provide very solid information on these programs.

Clay and Holcomb expose the crimes that the Ethiopian military regime committed on the innocent and powerless farmers in the name of development programs. The work of Clay and Holcomb shocked most humanitarian organizations that were providing finance and other materials to the regime. Melbaa, Jalata, Holcomb and Ibssa trace the sociocultural origins, the emergence and development of Oromo nationalism in the 1960s and the birth of the Oromo Liberation Front in the early 1970s. Melbaa's descriptive historical approach lacks theoretical models that can help explain the change and continuity in the Ethiopian Empire that contributed to the development of peripheral capitalism and the emergence of Oromo nationalism. Jalata theoretically and historically explains how Oromia was incorporated into Abyssinia/Ethiopia and the world capitalist system, the nature of Ethiopian settler colonialism and the emergence of colonial capitalism in Oromia and the sociocultural origins of the Oromo national movement.⁹

Mekuria Bulcha in his book, *Flight and Integration: Causes of Mass Exodus from Ethiopia and Problems of Integration in the Sudan*, discusses how Ethiopian colonialism triggered the dislocation of the colonized and subjugated peoples. Bulcha (1988, 32) asserts that, "the problems of the refugees from Ethiopia cannot be adequately understood without examining the objective historical roots, that is, the formation of the Ethiopian Empire state and the economic, social and political relations which have characterized the pluralistic Ethiopian society since the turn of the century." Although Bulcha documents and analyzes how the crises of the Ethiopian colonial state and the confrontation between this state and different national movements led to the exodus of refugees from the empire in general and from Oromia in particular, he does not adequately locate this problem within the capitalist world system. He also does not explain the role of the Ethiopian colonial

state within the imperial interstate system. All these new publications show weaknesses in one important area: they do not provide a full account of Oromo cultural and social history.

Cultural Perspectives in Oromo Studies

Recently a few scholars have begun to study patterns of Oromo world views and cultural development. Bartels (1989) and Megerssa (1993a, 1993b) use three Oromo concepts to explain the organization and interconnection of human, spiritual and physical worlds: *Ayaana* (spiritual connection), *uuma* (nature) and *saffu* (ethical and moral code). Through *ayaana*, *Waaqa* (God) created human and physical worlds; and through *ayaana* these worlds are also interconnected to their Creator. Further, through each person's *ayaana*, *Waaqa* creatively acts in the person's life. *Uuma* includes everything created by *Waaqa*, including *ayaana*. The moral and ethical code that Oromos use to differentiate bad from good and wrong from right is called *saffu* (Megerssa 1993a, 255). The Ethiopian colonizing structure has destroyed, repressed and distorted the Oromo system of thought and world view for the last century by eliminating Oromo cultural experts such as the *raagas* (Oromo prophets), the *ayaantus* (time reckoners), oral historians. The Ethiopian colonial administration also built churches on Oromo cultural centers, replaced the *Gada* system and other system of government by the colonial administration, and attacked and weakened the *qaallu* institutions (Megerssa 1993a, 275-77).

The Oromo had political and spiritual leaders who played different roles in the Oromo society. Hassen (1990, 9) notes that "the possession of Qallu [Oromo spiritual leader] and the common gada government seem to have been the 'special mark' of the Oromo nation." The *qaallu* institution was the center of an Oromo religious view; "the *qaallu* and the beliefs and values of which he was the living embodiment were constantly eroded, such that some Oromo themselves came to doubt their own belief system and their own idea of their own Creator" (Megerssa 1993a, 277). After the Ethiopian colonizing structure was implanted in Oromia, the nature and essence of the *qaallu* institution was changed to adjust to a new political environment (Knutsson 1967; Hinnant 1970; Bauer and Hinnant 1980; Lewis 1990). But the colonialists were not fully successful in destroying the Oromo culture and system of knowledge. Oromo oral tradition is an intellectual storehouse of Oromo knowledge, and it is absolutely necessary to reconstruct Oromo history (Jalata 1993; Ta'a 1994).

Lambert Bartels' work demonstrates this necessity. Bartels, in *Oromo Religion: Myths and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia—An Attempt to Understand* (1989), makes a significant contribution to Oromo cultural and religious studies based on Oromo oral discourse.

Bartels's work is unique in its depth, sensitivity and clarity; he does not see Oromo religion as inferior to Christianity or Islam as most ethnocentrist and culturally universalist scholars and religious leaders do. Bartels (1989, 14) notes that:

to the Oromo, the traditional divinity is both one and, at the same time, also many. The supreme being whom they call 'Waqqa' (sky/God), is the creator of all things and the source of all life. ...Waqqa has appointed to every being its own place in a cosmic order of which he is also the guardian. Sin is simply a breaking of this cosmic order. Waqqa's creative and ordering activity manifests itself in all things. It manifests itself in the specific characteristics of every species of animals. It is manifested also in the individual characteristics of every man, of each plant and each animal taken singly. In this particularized form Waqqa's creative activity is called 'ayana'.

Bartels (1989, 15) argues that "whether they became Christians or Muslims, the Oromo's traditional modes of experiencing the divine have continued almost unaffected, in spite of the fact that several rituals and social institutions in which it was expressed have been very diminished or apparently submerged in new ritual cloaks." He lets the Oromo people to speak for themselves, and concludes that "Their own account is more valuable than any number of learned speculations on a western's part" (Bartels 1989, 361). His work becomes an example for future field work.

Further, Kassam and Megerssa have studied the Oromo system of knowledge and world views. The Oromo have a very complex theory that explained phases and features of development in the Oromo society; the Oromo concept of development is called *finna* in southern Oromia (Kassam, forthcoming; Megerssa, 1993a). *Finna* embodies the cumulative historical and contemporary social changes that take place to produce a new social order. According to Kassam (forthcoming), *finna* "represents the legacy of the past which each generation inherits from its forefathers and which it transforms; it is the fertile patrimony held in trust by the present generation which it will enrich and bequeath to future generations...it describes a movement emanating from the inside, a developing of the inner potential of society based on the cultural roots it has already laid down." Recorded history and Oromo oral tradition demonstrate that the Oromo had practiced *Gada* or Oromo democracy for more than five centuries.

During the 16th century, when different peoples were competing for land, water and power in the Horn of Africa, all Oromos were under one *Gada* government (Legesse 1973; Lemmu 1971, 1993); the Oromo used this institution to defend themselves from the Christian and Muslim empire-builders (Bates 1979, 7) and expand their territories. According to Holcomb (1991, 4), "Gada organized the Oromo people in all-

encompassing democratic republic even before the few European pilgrims arrived from England on the shores of North America and only later built a democracy." *Gada* was an economic, social and religious institution; hence it was the pillar of Oromo culture and civilization.¹⁰ Close observation shows that the Oromo people still practice some *Gada* values in their daily lives (Lewis 1990, 1993). Lemmu (1993, 11) argues that "The *Gada* system as a whole provided...the machinery for democratic rule and enjoyment of maximum liberty for the people. It was the suppression of the system...that dehumanized the Oromo for the past hundred years. Oromo liberation, therefore, necessarily, has to draw on its rich cultural heritage to be successful."

Gada has been an emblem of Oromo cultural totality; it has also become an ideological expression of the Oromo national movement. Holcomb (1993, 4) comments that:

Gada represented an ideological basis for the expression of Oromo nationalism. This expression empowered the Oromo to resist oppression, become self conscious as a nation in the twentieth century in the face of intense subjugation...*Gada* represents a repository, a storehouse of concepts, values, beliefs and practices that are accessible to all Oromo. The challenge the Oromo face now is the serious one of fashioning elements of the heritage into an ideology which empowers the nation to achieve the self-determination that the people aspire to.

Legesse's book, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society* (1973), remains a significant book on the *Gada* system. Legesse (1973, 81) asserts that the word *Gada* "cannot be given an univocal interpretation. It stands for several related ideas. It is, first of all, the concept standing for the whole way of life....More specifically, however, it refers to any period of eight years during which a class [*gada* grade] stays in power...it refers to a specific grade...through which every class passes." Explaining the philosophy of Oromo democracy, Legesse (1987, 2) argues, "What is astonishing about this cultural tradition is how far Oromo have gone to ensure that power does not fall in the hands of war chiefs and despots. They achieve this goal by creating a system of checks and balances that is at least as complex as the systems we find in western democracies."

The *Gada* government had three principles of checks and balances to avoid subordination and exploitation. These three principles were periodic succession, balanced opposition and power sharing (Legesse 1987). No one knows when and how *Gada* emerged; however, it existed as a full-fledged system at the beginning of the 16th century.¹¹ Without understanding the Oromo *Gada* system which provided a political and cultural base for the formation of Oromo national identity and nationalism, the current Oromo question cannot be thoroughly discussed. Emphasizing the importance of such information

one scholar expounds that “practical, vital, and empowering knowledge which has allowed them [the masses] to survive, interpret, create, produce, and work over centuries has its own rationality and causality structure” (Gaventa 1993b, 127). Without further historical and cultural research, our knowledge of the *Gada* system is incomplete. As Wondji (1986, 269) expounds, “For the peoples and nations in struggle for their effective liberation, history provides a valuable understanding of earlier patterns of development in these societies; it thus clarifies the problems of development in the present as well as analyzing those of the past.” Since some Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars have seen the Oromo as a people without history and civilization, scholars such as Haberland (1963, 777) have attempted to deny that the Oromo invented the *Gada* system and their calendar. However, Haberland also made a positive contribution to Oromo cultural studies.

The study of Oromo language is also an aspect of Oromo cultural studies.¹² Until 1974, when the Haile Selassie government was overthrown, writing in the Oromo language was prohibited in Ethiopia. Sheik Bakri Saphaloo invented an Oromo alphabet in the mid-twentieth century; but it was suppressed by the Haile Selassie government (Hayward and Hassen, 1983). Haile Fida and the Oromo students study group in Europe (1973), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Gene B. Gragg (1982) and Tilhun Gamta (1989) played significant roles in bringing the Latin alphabet to the Oromo language, writing Oromo dictionaries and writing in the latinized Oromo language. The OLF adopted and improved the Latin alphabet and used it for more than two decades; as a result, today the Oromo have transformed their language from an oral to a written language. The OLF has published several books in the Oromo language.¹³ Gamta (1993, 38) comments that “The struggle the Oromo have made for self-determination has started to pay off. They have adapted the Latin alphabet to their language without fear of incrimination. It is now high time they began writing and producing useful reading materials for their schools and the public.” With the intensification of the Oromo national struggle, Oromo studies began to grow and blossom.

However, the emergence of the OLF did not directly facilitate the development of Oromo studies in the empire because, except between 1991 and 1992, it has been an underground political movement. Even its organs, *Bakkalcha Oromoo* and *Oromia Speaks*, are not widely circulated among the Oromo because of political repression. OLF-affiliated movements in Europe and North America have played important roles in the emergence of Oromo scholarship in the diaspora; these movements have been producing two periodicals, *Sagalee Oromoo: Journal of the Union of Oromo Students in Europe*, and *Waldhaansso: Journal of the Union of the Oromo in North America*. In

the late 1980s, with the help of these movements, Oromo scholars who live in exile and other international scholars created the Oromo Studies Association to promote Oromo studies. Explaining the importance of knowledge democracy and having such an alternative organization, Gaventa (1993b, 131) mentions that “fundamental questions must be raised about what knowledge is produced, by whom, for whose interests and toward what end. Such arguments begin to demand the creation of an alternative organization science—one that is not only for the people but is created with them and by them as well.”

The Oromo Studies Association produces very important articles on Oromo studies in its proceedings and *The Journal of Oromo Studies*. Furthermore, in the early 1990s, Mekuria Bulcha created a magazine called *The Oromo Commentary* that provides an important perspective in Oromo studies. Although the Oromo language and Oromo literature are flowering in Oromia today, Oromo scholars and others who are interested in Oromo studies still cannot do field research in Oromia because of the lack of political power and the continuation of Ethiopian colonialism under the Tigrayan regime.

Conclusion

The emergent Oromo historical and cultural studies can have a serious impact on the future of Oromo and Ethiopian studies. Scholars who are interested in Oromo studies have identified some of the deficiencies in Ethiopian studies; Oromia scholars have demonstrated their commitment to serious scholarship and respect for the Oromo people, even if the Oromo do not have yet political power. They have courageously challenged the mainstream Ethiopianist paradigm and supported young Oromo scholars to build the new paradigm of Oromo social and cultural history. Oromo intellectuals and others who study the Oromo will continue to build this new approach. This new paradigm has already transformed the colonized Oromo from objects to subjects of history through breaking the monopoly of knowledge production and dissemination by Ethiopian studies.

Because political changes in the 1970s and the early 1990s failed to address the Oromo question, the Oromo are continuing their national liberation struggle militarily, politically and intellectually. The possible resolution of the conflict between the Ethiopians and the Oromo requires critical and comprehensive understanding of the contradictions between them. By continuing to expand Oromo studies and to challenge those scholars who downplay the Oromo struggle, culture and civilization, Oromo and Oromia scholars will enhance the growing awareness of the Oromo problem. Oromo studies also promote a better understanding of the Oromo people, their history and their aspirations. The Oromo struggle for self-determination is a

fundamental human rights issue. Therefore, intellectuals who are involved in Oromo and Ethiopian studies need to debate openly and honestly to transform their scholarship, and to suggest ways through which conflicts can be democratically and fairly resolved. The building of democracy of knowledge is the first step toward this goal.

Notes

1. For example, see E. Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians* (1960); A. Abbay, "Ethiopia: Yearning for Peace," *Africa Events* (1992). According to L. Farago (1935, 45) Oromos are "a decadent race, which is possibly the reason for their defeat at the hands of the comparatively small race of Amhara." To C.F. Rey (1969, 48), Oromos are "primitive...filthy."
2. The Ethiopian knowledge elites are those educated Amharas and Tigrayans who have been the integral part of the Ethiopian colonial state.
3. Oromia is a region in the Ethiopian Empire that Oromos see as their country.
4. See for example, *The Oromos: Voice Against Tranny*, 1971.
5. Four organizations fight for Oromo national rights: the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia (IFLO), the United Oromo People's Liberation Front (UOPL) and the Oromo "Abbo" Liberation Front (OALF). There is another organization called the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO). Since this organization was created by the Tigrayans from Oromo and Oromo-speaking Amhara prisoners of war to advance the Tigrayan national interest, Oromos see it as the enemy of the Oromo nation.
6. Despite the existence of different Oromo organizations, the OLF is the only organization that emerged as a national liberation movement.
7. For example, see *Bakkalcha Oromoo*, an OLF newspaper, 1994 (series); and *Urjii*, an Oromo weekly newspaper, 1994, 1995, and 1996 (series).
8. The contemporary Oromia scholars include Enrico Cerulli, Von Eike Haberland, Paul Baxter, B.S. Andrzejewski, Herbert Lewis, Asmarom Legesse, Lambert Bartels, Alessandro Triulzi, Gunnar Hasselblatt, Hector Blackhurst, Karl Eric Knutsson, Ulrich Braukamper, Mordechai Abir, Gudrun Dahl, Joseph Van de Loo, Jean Ensminger, Gene B. Gragg, Richard Hayward, John Hinnant, Jan Hultin, Bonnie K. Holcomb, Aneesa Kassam, Hilarie Kelly, Jonathan Owens, Domenico Pecci, Gunther Schlee, Paolo Tablino, W.I. Torry, M.M. Moreno, and Bartolomeo Venturino. These scholars have studied about the Oromo political economy, culture, language, social structure, religion, nationalism, etc.
9. Although a few attempts were made by Baxter (1978, 1983, 1985, 1993, 1994a, 1994b), Greenfield and Hassen (1980), Hasselblatt (1992), Lemmu (1992), Lewis, (1993), Bulcha (1993, 1994), and Tolesa (1994) the development of Oromo nationalism is not yet comprehensively studied and analyzed. However, Jalata (1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1995b) has tried to explore different aspects of Oromo nationalism.
10. Scholars, such as Legesse (1973, 1987), Holcomb (1991, 1993), Lemmu (1971, 1991, 1993), Ibssa (1992, 1993), Jalata (1994, 1995), and others have studied Oromo democracy and tried to identify its major features and its relevance to Oromo nationalism.
11. Scholars such as Bahrey (1954), D'Abbadie (1880), Pecci (1941), Haberland (1963), Blackhurst (1978), Knutsson (1967), Tablino (1978, 1980, 1981), Schlee (1984, 1985), Hinnant (1977, 1980), Hultin (1975, 1979), Van de Loo (1991), Legesse (1973, 1987), Holcomb (1991, 1993) and Kassam (1987) have enriched our understanding of Oromo political culture.

12. Linguists such as Tutschek (1845), Moreno (1935), Venturino (1973, 1976), Owens (1982), Andrzejewski (1957, 1960, 1964, 1970, 1976, 1980) and Stroomer (1984) have made a very important contribution to the study of the Oromo language.
13. For example, *Seensa Barnoota Oromiffa Barnoota Duraa* (1979), *Barreefama Quboota-Jecha* (1980), *Barnoota Afaan Oromoo, Kan Nama Gurgudda: Kutaa Tokkoffa* (1986), and *Barnoota Afaan Oromo Sadarkaa Sadaffa* (1986).

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