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EDITORIAL OVERVIEW

The Journal of Oromo Studies, a scholarly voice of Oromos and the Oromo Studies Association, has established Oromo scholarship on a strong scientific ground of an international level. The essays in this volume attest to this reality. The volume explores how Oromos related to the global community; the impact of a racist U.S. foreign policy on Oromo nationalism; the negative impact of Western foreign policy on human rights in the Ethiopian Empire; the consequences of Ethiopian settler colonialism on the Oromo people; the environmental impacts of colonial gold mining in Oromia and its consequences on the indigenous Oromo people and their animals; and, structural and word stress patterns in the Oromo language.

In her essay, "Oromo in the World Community," Bonnie K. Holcomb discusses how wide-ranging large-scale changes in the capitalist world system during the current era have affected the Oromo people and their national struggle. She examines the consequence of the Oromo national movement, and the impact of specific global changes on Oromo society, particularly by facilitating the flight of a sizable group of Oromo refugees originating from different parts of Oromia, by creating conditions favorable for the few Oromo diaspora groups to articulate Oromo nationalism in the West, and by introducing the U.S. as a sponsor for the new Ethiopian government. She notes that this latter development places the Ethiopian government in the league with a host of U.S. and multinational corporations intent upon deepening the exploitation of Oromo resources; also it has intensified the repression of Oromo through the creation of an Oromo wing (Oromo People's Democratic Organization, OPDO) within the government aimed at silencing and replacing independent expression of Oromo nationalism.

Holcomb asserts that the Oromo individually and collectively face both new dilemmas and new opportunities: the challenges are that the Oromo liberation movement and its organizations have not yet marshaled effectively the intellectual and cultural resources of Oromos and have not yet convinced a concerned world community that the U.S. foreign policy facilitates the repression of Oromos by supporting a government that violates Oromo human rights under the guise of "democracy." The opportunities are that the Oromo

national movement initiated by a tiny group of intellectuals can now be in communication with most of the Oromo diaspora and Oromos in Oromia who have been exposed to global information. She notes that this condition opens a new chapter in Oromo modes of communication and self-assertion. Holcomb suggests that these global developments promise to remove many obstacles that the Oromo previously faced in trying to realize their potential. At least part of the Oromo population is now physically free to pursue objectives that they have been prevented from pursuing since their colonization and still cannot be pursued inside the Ethiopian Empire, despite claims of "democracy" and "self-determination."

Holcomb points out that Oromo future activities on behalf of Oromo nationalism will reveal whether the internalized social and psychological legacies of colonization prove to be more powerful than the physical and political bonds to which part of the nation is no longer subject. The implications of her piece are that in order to realize the potential the Oromo national movement and its organizations must harness and legitimize the Oromo intellectual and cultural resources and lines of communication that expand and advance the Oromo demands for democracy and self-determination, recreate indigenous Oromo institutional forms that advance the Oromo liberation movement, develop a mechanism that allows the maturation of Oromo nationalist ideology through the active participation of Oromos from diaspora and Oromia, and launch public relations campaigns that make friends and allies for the Oromo cause both on regional and global levels.

Asafa Jalata in his essay, "The Impact of a Racist U.S. Foreign Policy on the Oromo National Struggle," explores how the U.S.-led global and *Habasha* elites have constructed a racist discourse to naturalize and justify the colonization of the Oromo and their repression and exploitation by the alliance of Ethiopian and global capital accumulators. He demonstrates how the U.S. foreign policy toward the Ethiopian Empire consolidated a racial/ethnic hierarchy that was established by the alliance of Ethiopian settler colonialism and European imperialism. Jalata argues that the U.S. government has allied with the Tigrayan racist/ethnocratic elite to form a government and to suppress the Oromo national movement because of its imperialist economic and strategic interests and its racist assumptions about the Oromo people. Using the case of the Oromo, Jalata illustrates that race and racism have little to do

with biology since they have been socially, culturally, and “scientifically” constructed to maintain the identities of the colonizing population groups, and their power and privileges, through policy formulation and implementation.

He explains that as successive Ethiopian elites and their governments, with the support of the West and the East, dominated and exploited Oromos who comprise more than half of the population in the Ethiopian Empires, justifying by a racist ideological discourse the application of racist values to the Oromo issue by Tigrayan and U.S. foreign policy elites has made possible the current political repression and economic exploitation of Oromos by legitimating colonialism and imperialism, and by suppressing the Oromo demands for national self-determination and democracy. Jalata shows that combined racist Ethiopian and U.S. policies have undermined the possibility of the emergence of a democratic leadership that could have solved the contradictions in this empire by ending the suffering of various population groups by uprooting Ethiopian settler colonialism, and by implementing national self-determination and democracy.

Jalata demonstrates that racism and global capitalism emerged in combination. To demonstrate his points, he uses a comparative-historical approach to explain how Oromos have been suffering under racist policies of the United States as Native Americans and African Americans have suffered under racist domestic policies of the same country. Showing the devastating consequences of global capitalism and racism on the indigenous peoples like Native Americans, African Americans, and Oromos, Jalata suggests the need for the Oromo national movement to broaden its alliance with antiracist, anticolonial, and democratic forces on regional and global levels to challenge its twin enemies, Ethiopian settler colonialism and global imperialism.

Human Rights Activist Trevor Trueman’s article, “Western Foreign Policy, Profits and Human Rights: The Case of Ethiopia,” reveals how Western governments give lip service to concerns of human rights and democracy in their stated foreign policy objectives while in practice violate human rights and principles of democracy by supporting dictatorship in Ethiopia. Exploring the human rights and democratization record of the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government, Trueman demonstrates how with the tacit knowledge of the West, particularly the United States, this regime massively violates human rights and prevents the emergence of democracy in Ethiopia.

Trueman argues that the European Union, Great Britain, the United States, and other Western countries are mainly concerned with their economic and strategic interests in the empire like Ethiopia, and their concern for human rights and democracy is minimal and rhetorical. He notes that these countries pursue predatory foreign policies which are morally bankrupt, and lack social responsibility.

Trueman also argues that since the foreign policy elites of these Western countries are isolated from the effects of their policies, they are not interested in the consequences of their actions. The alliance of these elites with regional elites such as *Habasha* elites increases repression, exploitation, and impoverishment of the Peripheral world. He comments that disregard for human rights and democracy is not good business since it promotes social, political and economic instability. Trueman suggests that the promotion of human rights and democracy is essential for global interdependence, stability, and world peace. He indicates that conscious and responsible groups, organizations, and individuals can challenge transnational corporations and Western governments to support and implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He also warns us that if we do not take preemptive action soon, disorder that emerged in Somalia and genocide that occurred in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia may repeat themselves in Ethiopia.

In his article entitled, "A Short History of Oromo Colonial Experience 1870s -1990s: Part One 1870s-1935," Historian Mohammed Hassen provides an overview of Oromo colonial experiences by reviewing the previous works of several scholars. The main reason why he wrote this article is to propose how to decolonize Oromia and achieve Oromian self-determination by democratizing Ethiopia through dismantling the Ethiopian colonizing structures. He argues that the Oromo question can be solved successfully within the Ethiopian nation-state. In this part, he covers briefly Oromo colonial experiences from the 1870s to 1935, and promises to provide a comprehensive argument that will explain how the Oromo, other colonized peoples, and the colonizing groups (Amhara and Tigrayans) eliminate the problem of Ethiopian colonialism and form "a truly democratic republic of Ethiopia."

Historian Mohammed Hassen indirectly attempts to challenge "several scholars who argue forcefully that the decolonization of Oromia and

self-determination of the Oromo are incompatible within the framework of a united Ethiopia.” He is bringing out openly for a debate the two competing positions in the Oromo national movement. However, in this part, he does not explore why his scenario is better than that of those who argue for the independence of Oromia. Although he admits that the Ethiopian elites even oppose “the realization of self-determination of Oromia within a democratic republic of Ethiopia,” Hassen believes that Oromos would prefer to have self-determination within Ethiopia rather than establishing an independent republic of Oromia. But, he does not provide data for his latter assertion.

Except suggesting that “the Oromo and other colonized and oppressed peoples of Ethiopia must stand together to end the Abyssinian elites’ monopolization of power in Ethiopia,” Hassen does not explain why the Oromo and other colonized peoples struggle to reestablish Ethiopia rather than forming a new entity that will reflect their unique respective experiences. We hope that, in his second part, Hassen will explain thoroughly how the Ethiopian Empire will be transformed into a truly federal democratic republic of Ethiopia through reconciling the contradictions between the Ethiopian colonizing structures and the aspirations of the colonized peoples.

The Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government not only violated Oromo human rights, but also destroyed the Oromian environment by deforesting Oromo lands, gold mining, and pollution. Gobena Huluka’s article, “Environmental Impacts of Gold Mining in Oromia,” explains how the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government has been selling, renting or leasing Oromo lands to multinational corporations that degrade the environment. Demonstrating how modern gold mining activities pollute soil, plant, vegetation, water and air, and contribute to ecological destruction, Huluka hints at dangers to Oromo society and the environment from the gold mining processes of these multinational corporations. Using the pretexts of economic liberalization and “free market,” the regime allows multinational corporations to have unlimited and uncontrolled access to Oromo gold mines in order to enrich itself, Tigrayan elites and their supporters.

Huluka argues that the Oromo gold mines, once public property, were privatized to satisfy the economic needs of Tigrayan and multinational capital accumulators. In return, Oromos received environmental degradation, underdevelopment, and pollution. The Tigrayan colonial dictatorship does not

permit Oromos to organize themselves and fight for environmental justice and sustainable development. Huluka warns that if such irresponsible gold mining continues, a disastrous ecological imbalance will emerge and lead to the breakdown of an ecosystem and have serious consequences for the Horn of Africa and the world.

Linguist Tilahun Gamta describes the patterns in which Oromo word structures are organized and expressed in communication by identifying and analyzing 998 structures in *Afaan Oromo*. He also explains how Oromo words are stressed during communication, and suggests some rules for syllabication of various syllable word structures and patterns. Gamta's pioneering work attempts to demonstrate the complexity of the Oromo language by examining different linguistic aspects of this language. There is no doubt that his work will be a foundation for the study of the Oromo language. He challenges Oromo intellectuals and others who are interested in *Afaan Oromo* to learn rules and logics that guide the principles of written and spoken communication in this language.

Finally, I thank Shirley Hollis and Dr. Bill Silverman who helped in finishing and publishing this volume.

Asafa Jalata
Editor
July 1999

OROMO IN THE WORLD COMMUNITY

Bonnie K. Holcomb

Introduction

The world outside the boundaries of Ethiopia is not yet acquainted with the Oromo people of Northeast Africa. However, with the tumultuous revolutions currently underway in communications, technology and finance introduced by an aggressive globalization, Oromo isolation cannot last much longer. Hidden from view and cut off from contact with the world community for most of the twentieth century, the Oromo have remained the unknown majority population inside the Ethiopian empire where they have had no voice and no economic or political power. Now, on the brink of the 21st century, the walls of the Cold War era are crumbling, and the Oromo have begun to glimpse life in the world beyond the barricades that have sealed them off from the world community. The wide-ranging political, economic and technological changes in the world system in the past decade have dramatically altered the environment in which all peoples strive to organize themselves for survival and self-expression. Especially since the time that the Berlin Wall fell, an accelerated globalization has provided new opportunities and has posed new obstacles to Oromo self-definition as a people, as a nation and even as a developing polity. A consequence of the process of globalization is that the Oromo now constitute a significant population in diaspora, an expanding new sector in the global community.

To explore fully the impact of globalization on the Oromo would be a productive direction for Oromo studies. The limited objective of this paper is to offer a tentative exploratory overview of the impact of specific global changes on Oromo society, a population of an estimated 30 million, including a half million abroad. After reviewing the conditions which have

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served to isolate the Oromo from the world community for most of this century, the paper identifies several specific features of globalization that promise to bring an end to that isolation, including those that have generated the flight of this sizable group of Oromo refugees and facilitated their emergence as a significant diaspora population. The paper then explores how globalization has introduced specific opportunities and several newfound obstacles to Oromo self-expression. Finally I draw on this discussion to make a few observations regarding the prospects for Oromo acting collectively to generate a new type of social formation viable in the twenty-first century global context. This appears to be the objective of members and proponents within an Oromo national liberation movement who have openly devoted themselves to changing the Oromo position in the global village.

Focusing on the Oromo encounter with today's rapidly-changing world system promises at the same time to shed light on particular political and economic dimensions of globalization. This kind of inquiry is in keeping with a new direction in anthropology that is sometimes referred to as the anthropology of globalization (see Kearney 1995; Clifford 1997; Hall 1991). From this perspective I raise the question, can a uniquely Oromo outlook or culture shape distinctive responses of Oromo to the new global circumstances in which they find themselves both in Oromia and abroad? Can members of a nation discover or consciously generate a uniquely-patterned social formation when they have not had access to political life in their own right for a century? How might this occur in the midst of the massive technological changes taking place globally? Exploring these questions is not only of interest in the field of social science, but also in policy making, business and political philosophy. This subject is one that has not yet been the focus of in-depth research among the Oromo, but my tentative comments are intended to stimulate interest and discussion in this direction.

Factors Affecting Oromo Isolation from the World

There are a few individuals still living who can remember when the curtain was pulled to conceal the vast Oromo nation from the rest of the

world. The event took place recently enough that even now, in the late 1990s, there are elderly people who were born before their part of Oromia was incorporated into Ethiopia and who can describe the process. The incorporation occurred rather quickly (considering the size of the Oromo population, the land mass that they inhabited and the depth and influence of their culture and political organization in the region.) Over a period of nearly thirty years at the turn of this century the Oromo were conquered in battle by their Abyssinian neighbors who had been armed with modern firepower from Europe. Then it took an additional ten years before the Oromo were enveloped as a subject people into a political construct to be known as "Ethiopia," a unit devised by European superpowers of the day and cooperating Abyssinian monarchs.¹ Of interest to us in this discussion is that at the critical juncture of their incorporation into Ethiopia, the Oromo were removed from the world map and denied status as a nation among the community of nations. How did this happen?

At the time in the late 1800s when European powers took a serious interest in Africa and began to draw up plans for its division among colonizing states, the Oromo nation was a fully-recognized and active participant in the regional affairs of Northeast Africa. J. Lewis Krapf, a German missionary who was well traveled in the Horn of Africa region in the mid-1800s before the European division of Africa predicted that European attentions would be directed toward the Oromo, enabling them to play a central role in the region and beyond. He anticipated that Oromo would naturally take a large and strategic place on the new map of Africa. When he drew such a map, he labeled the vast, centrally-located Oromo country as "Ormania" (Krapf 1968; see his map reprinted in Hassen's article in this volume.) Krapf went on to predict that the Oromo could well be considered the "Germans of Africa," if they were converted to Christianity. His observations give us an interesting perspective not only on the Oromo standing in relation to the other forces in the region but of the caliber and capacity of this nation in the eyes of the rare Western observer who had learned the Oromo language and had access to the area prior to conquest. This glimpse reveals a different Oromia than the one painted later by the victors after the fact of conquest and suggests that the Oromo fate was far from inevitable. It is known that Oromo cultural tradition bears within it a philosophical heritage and a sophisticated astronomical

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calendar which indicate strong mutual influences with religious and secular centers of learning as far north as Egypt and as far south as central Africa (see Legesse 1973 particularly regarding the Oromo calendar). The reasons that the estimable Oromo way of life was plunged into sudden obscurity are historical and political,² directly related to the manner in which European institutions, which were rapidly becoming global, reached and connected with Africa.

The supply of firepower to Abyssinian kings by European states was part of the expansion of global capital from Europe during an earlier phase of globalization. The Ethiopian empire was created during the Scramble for Africa as an instrument whose purpose was to extend the influence of capital into that part of Africa and bring it into the global economic system (see Holcomb and Ibssa 1990 and Asafa Jalata 1993).

The Oromo, who were indigenous to the fertile agricultural central plains, were defeated in battle precisely because the Europeans chose to strike their alliance with and to arm Abyssinian monarchs. A major reason for this selection was most likely that Britain and France each pinned the hopes of their success in controlling Africa to Abyssinia's Christian feudal authoritarianism which was recognizable and familiar to Europeans at the brink of the 20th century. One would think that European powers intent upon dividing the continent would seek direct alliance with the very people who possessed and lived in the most productive regions. That is not what happened. Europe opted for indirect control of the major population and the resources, probably because the authoritarian Christian monarchy they found was a form of vertically integrated political organization. The Oromos' republican political system was decentralized and horizontally integrated, making it a poor candidate for this arrangement.

Abyssinians who lived in the less fertile highlands north and west of Oromia had attempted to take over Oromia before the arrival of Europeans. Abyssinian kings had repeatedly gone to war with the Oromo for this purpose, but the Oromo place within the region had been securely established, and the boundaries had been maintained. Abyssinia had been repulsed, incapable of defeating the larger Oromo force or of establishing control over Oromia. The European alliance and the factor of modern weaponry in the hands of the Abyssinian side tipped this balance. Subsequent histories written by the

Abyssinians have explained the defeat of the Oromo as the victory of a superior, more advanced political organization over an inferior, less advanced one. This interpretation, which served to justify the conquest after the event, has become a component of Ethiopian ruling ideology (see below).

At the time of conquest, the Oromo had not made an alliance with any European force. When the Oromo lost these turn-of-the-century confrontations, there was no action taken, no attention drawn, virtually no documentation of the process, nor any outspoken protests made in Europe or in America regarding the conquest or the incorporation of Oromo or other peoples in the Horn of Africa region. This conquest, which was invisible to the outside world, marked a turning point in Oromo history. It brought about the overthrow of an independent Oromo form of government, and the transfer of Oromo resources and identity to the control of the newly-minted and internationally recognized entity officially known as "Ethiopia."

The institutional arrangements that were designed to secure the place of the new Ethiopian empire in the global system restructured the internal dynamics of the region. The incorporation of the Oromo and other conquered peoples into the empire constituted a colonization that was thoroughgoing; it has been described and documented elsewhere (Holcomb and Ibssa 1990). The process took place in such a way that the identity of the incorporated peoples was erased from public life and from the formal and historical record. Abyssinia became the intermediary representative in the outside world for all the peoples contained within the empire. In addition, the Oromo, an expansive and mobile people, were not only isolated from the outside world, they were isolated from one another inside the empire. Most of the sectors of Oromo society whose communications cut across geographical, religious, economic and trade categories were denied access to one another through their own channels and prevented from transferring people, information or goods along routes that had significance for their development and self-expression. When the Oromo political system with its overarching integrative republican mechanism of public assemblies was officially dismantled and replaced by centralized Ethiopian administrative policies in Oromia, the isolation of the Oromo was complete.

Oromo obscurity has several dimensions. Economically, Oromo land, key mineral and water resources, forests, and animals were declared to belong to

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the Ethiopian state, were taken over by the state and were redirected to enrich and sustain the Ethiopian production and distribution system. In other words, the Oromo were colonized.

Politically, when the traditional Oromo administrative system, *Gada*, was replaced, Oromo public gatherings at regional and subregional assemblies were stopped. A few local assemblies continued to meet, but deliberations were stripped of their economic content; Oromo were no longer making decisions over key, life-giving resources. The assemblies that remained were reduced to ritual. Throughout the century of silence, however, Oromo did continue to carry out these rituals, which played a role in keeping alive a political memory and in maintaining social norms and values. They also recollected the calendar according to which these assemblies were held. The experts could recount at any given time how the Oromo polity was supposed to have operated, what events should have taken place, how they should have been carried out, and in what year. There was a constant reminder and discussion of the fact that the imposed Ethiopian government was the reason that the Oromo system could not function.

Indigenous Oromo communication was further restricted when Oromo farm families were assigned to particular Abyssinian settlers and their Oromo collaborators. The Oromo tillers who were forced to make the land productive for the benefit of the Abyssinian settlers were required to remain on whatever land they had been inhabiting at the time of conquest. This policy ended even informal communication by outlawing the natural movement of Oromo over their own land.

Ethiopian language policy was "Amharization," a powerful tool of state control which intensified Oromo seclusion. Amharic was adopted as the official state language, to be utilized exclusively for the conduct of public affairs. Even Oromos dealing with Oromos in the Ethiopian state system had to use Amharic through an interpreter. In an article in *African Affairs* published in 1978 Paul Baxter reported a scene, a familiar part of everyday life for every Oromo residing in Ethiopia, in which an entirely Oromo congregation listening to a sermon preached by an Oromo pastor had to have the entire speech translated into Amharic and back into the Oromo language to satisfy government requirements (Baxter 1978). The same restrictions applied in the courts, the schools, the military, at all public gatherings, official

functions and places of business. All written literature produced in Ethiopia was to be produced in Amharic. Written materials could not be published in the Oromo language in Ethiopia. The Amhara language was made the official medium of instruction in all schools. High grades on stringent Amharic exams were required for educational and employment advancement, even in the university, where most advanced instruction took place in English. Through the era of early 1970s every individual in the empire who obtained higher education, not only did so in the Amharic language but was also subject to the intense socialization of Ethiopian boarding school where non-Abyssinian culture was pitilessly denounced as savage, worthy not of recognition or development but of replacement. The Oromo language was denied the opportunity to grow and change in the public realm. The Oromo were prevented from expressing themselves or their values through public institutions or extending their language to encompass or express developments in public experience. Despite these limitations, which were in place for most of this century, the Oromo language remained the first language, the mother tongue of perhaps thirty million speakers.

Ultimately, however, Oromo obscurity both inside and outside the empire was virtually guaranteed by the construction and promotion of an elaborate conqueror's mythology. The Oromo were kept invisible by a specific ideology that introduced an artificial distinction between Abyssinians and other peoples. The Abyssinians were identified as superior, fine-featured monarchical Christians of Semitic stock who had a historical link with Europe while the Oromo and others were depicted as inferior, black African pagans of Cushitic stock who had no king nor court, only "anarchic," "primitive," "tribal" and "warlike" forms of government. With these prejudices, Ethiopian colonial rule was justified and perpetuated. This distinction between conqueror and conquered is the generative idea behind the invention of Ethiopia, and the cornerstone of Ethiopian mythology. It was promoted within the empire, and was internalized by the conquering group as well as by most Oromo socialized in Ethiopian institutions. This concept guided foreign policy and was accepted wholesale by foreign visitors and even some scholars to the empire. Throughout the 20th century this discriminatory notion, that the Oromo and others deserved to be conquered and they deserve to be subjugated has been kept alive and refined. It was taken up unquestioningly by successive sponsors

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of Ethiopia. (In a paper in this volume, Asafa Jalata discusses this ideology and persuasively argues that it is racist in essence.)

The Ethiopian mythology introduced the claim that all the peoples in Ethiopia, even those recently conquered, had been part of the empire for three thousand years of continuous history. This history denied that the Oromo had existed as a separate polity and distorted beyond recognition the Oromo version of their own experience, but it was accepted in Ethiopia and abroad without much inspection and became the basis upon which policy was made concerning this region. The ideology of "Greater Ethiopia" was promoted abroad and became part of official instruction in schools in the West, thus further obscuring the Oromo and separating them from any potential friends or allies inside or outside the empire.

I was a witness to the effect of this ideology. By the 1970s a large number of foreigners had traveled right into Oromo country as members of the Peace Corps or as missionaries, as mappers, as tourists, or as business people. Their prior exposure to the ideology of Ethiopia prevented them from perceiving the Oromo as a people. Oromo were regarded as targets of the government-approved programs that foreign visitors were in country to implement. If foreigners learned a language, they learned Amharic and if they learned anything about the history of the area, even a thumbnail sketch, it was an official version that erased the history even the name of the Oromo people (who were still universally called "Galla" at that time.) The physical presence of these visitors did nothing to dispel the prevailing myths about the region and its peoples. By the time I arrived in Oromia in the early 1970s, the contacts between Oromo and foreigners who visited Oromia were closely and subtly controlled by the Haile Selassie government. The long-term visitors that I met in the country, the geographers, scholars, missionaries, Peace Corps volunteers who had been sent to work among the Oromo informed me that as a condition of their visas they had been required to learn and utilize Amharic for the conduct of their business in Ethiopia.³ Some were amused by my choice to learn the Oromo language, since they had been told that it would soon be replaced by Amharic. In 1966, when Ethiopia received approval for the largest contingent of Peace Corps volunteers to anywhere on the globe, Peace Corps personnel, including those on their way to Oromo regions in Ethiopia, started learning Amharic in Los Angeles at UCLA prior to departing for their tour of

duty. Similar arrangements were made for persons involved in long-term business and diplomatic endeavors. These government policies had a powerful insulating effect.

Just as easily as the foreign visitors acquiesced to learning Amharic for conducting affairs among the Oromo throughout the empire, they also unquestioningly embraced the powerful image of Ethiopia as a symbol for independent Africa. Many visitors to Ethiopia accepted this myth without inspection and became instant advocates of the glorification of Ethiopia. At a time when Oromos were still alive who had been born in a pre-conquest Oromia, foreigners were accepting and promoting the Abyssinian assertion that Ethiopia had a 3,000 year history as a unified state, the view which denies the very existence of the Oromo as a nation. This version of Ethiopian history profoundly affected the relation between the Oromo and the wider world. Even foreigners who personally visited Oromia arrived already armed with a fixed attitude toward Oromo and their "appropriate" place in Ethiopia, ready to brand the natural expression of Oromo pride and nationalism as coming from "troublemakers" and "tribalists." I observed the readiness with which such visitors to Oromia cooperated with government officials by offering "debriefings," usually conveyed in casual conversation, about noticeable expressions of Oromo nationalism. This mindset in which visitors were encouraged to serve as advocates of Ethiopia had serious impact on the nature of the communication and understanding between the Oromo and the outside world. Even when persons from the West finally stood face-to-face with Oromo in the Oromos' own land, no real communication took place; understanding was already blocked. My own observation was that the ideology of Greater Ethiopia, combined with linguistic and logistical obstacles, blinded even eyewitnesses and powerfully and effectively served to continue the obscurity of the Oromo vis-a-vis the First World through the mid-1970s.

Also when I returned from two years in Oromia I encountered another dimension of the power of this mythology as I attempted to locate other Americans who might have developed a facility in the Oromo language. Finding American speakers of the Oromo language was not an unreasonable expectation since Oromo is the mother tongue of over half the population in Ethiopia and US had fully supported the government of Haile Selassie I from the 1940s onward, sending a virtual army of American personnel to live in

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Ethiopia to conduct the work of US agencies. In the United States I met scores of people who rhapsodized about the beauty of Ethiopia, when they were actually talking about Oromia, who had taught school in Oromo areas to Oromo children, but had conducted classes in the Amharic language, accepting without reflection their role as agents in the sustained policy which kept the Oromo hidden. After a persistent effort on my part -- contacting universities, business offices, missionary headquarters, and both Ethiopians and Oromo living in the US -- I collected reports of a handful of individual Americans who had acquired the ability to converse in the Oromo language. Three had been children of missionaries in Oromia but whose parents had learned Amharic for their work. There may have been a few more, but if so, they did not use their skill to contact Oromo in the United States. The effectiveness of Ethiopian policies in concealing the Oromo people was remarkable considering the extraordinarily large number of native Oromo speakers (third in Africa), their strategic location, and the prominent position that the Oromo had held in the region less than a century earlier. That quest of mine for Oromo-speaking foreigners alerted me to the fact that the barriers which kept the Oromo virtually unknown and unseen in the world community were firmly in place.

Apparently not much had changed by 1991. In a newly-published chapter, Leenco Lata, the man who served as Deputy Secretary representing the Oromo Liberation Front in Addis Ababa in 1991-1992, has written,

Many American and European government officials whom I met after the 1991 change in regime in Ethiopia, repeatedly told me of their unawareness of the existence of the Oromo people and of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) prior to the London Conference of May 1991. This was particularly true of American diplomats and officials. In fact, most of the members of the American team that was delegated to mediate the London talks of May 1991 frankly admitted their ignorance about Oromo until that time.... The present US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Mr. Hicks, happens to be one of them. Mr. Hicks actually spent some years in the Ethiopian Empire during the late 1950's and was posted as a diplomat to a number of African countries in the 1980's. Despite such

a prior exposure to Ethiopia and the rest of Africa, even he was unaware of the existence of the Oromo people and the struggle that they were conducting until the event referred to above (1998: 176).

The policies described above, particularly the ruling ideology, effectively combined to keep an ambassador of the United States -- one who had previous experience in the empire -- unaware of the existence of the largest nation in the region. This is particularly noteworthy considering that he arrived to begin the process of constructing, in the name of democracy, the region's connection to the global village at the opening of the 21st century. The ambassador's lapse gives us the strongest indication yet that the barriers erected between the Oromo and the world at large had had not only remained in place but had been rigorously protected and reinforced to ensure that the Oromo position in the world community continued be one of isolation.

Ironically, the obscurity of the Oromo was perpetuated by the very persons who might be expected to challenge it -- the few Oromo themselves who had crossed the geographical boundaries of Ethiopia to reach the outside world. But in fact, the Oromo who had managed to travel abroad rarely revealed to others that they were Oromo. Their socialization in Ethiopia proved to be a critical force in maintaining their silence. In order to reach the world beyond Ethiopian borders, Oromo individuals had to pass through government channels where they faced tight restrictions. Opportunities for travel were doled out to only a few Amharic-speaking Oromo who had proven themselves to be good and loyal Ethiopians. An additional handful of Oromo obtained assistance for travel abroad and for the necessary visas primarily for education from foreign Christian missionaries working in assigned regions of Oromia. Most Oromo who were selected for government- or missionary-sponsored higher education overseas tended to be young Orthodox or missionary Christian males from agricultural Central and Western Oromia who had been identified by the government as Ethiopian. These factors of selection delivered Oromos into the outside world who saw themselves as Ethiopian or were conflicted about their identity. Some of these Oromo did not share the feelings of Oromo nationalism that were evident in the rest of the population. Others knew that their continued employment in Ethiopia

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depended upon their silence concerning Oromo nationalism. Indeed, these Oromo travelers upheld existing notions about Ethiopia. By determining what type of Oromo individuals would be allowed to travel, the state controlled which Oromo would be exposed to the world beyond the Horn of Africa and what kind of Oromo individuals would that people in other countries would encounter abroad.

Oromummaa: Oromo Efforts at Self-Expression

It is quite interesting to note that most Oromo themselves living in Oromia have never accepted the authority held over them by the Ethiopian government to be legitimate. I encountered this widespread attitude when I conducted traditional style anthropological fieldwork in the early 1970s among Oromo. I have since discovered that virtually every other anthropologist who has worked among the Oromo in Oromia closely enough to gain access to their political views has found the same. Paul Baxter, who lived among the Arsi Oromo, wrote:

But though Arsi have, perforce, bent before the buffets of central government officials they have never acknowledged that that government or they had any legitimate or enduring authority. Since, at least, their blood battles with Ras Darge Arsi have maintained an intense sense of cultural identity and few, if any at all, can ever have felt themselves to be citizens of Ethiopia but only oppressed subjects of it (1980: 55).

Jan Hultin states outright that this conclusion applied also to his observations in Wallaga (1993: 68). Informal conversations with virtually all social scientists who worked among the Oromo reveal that Oromo have never regarded themselves as Ethiopians, have maintained their identity despite limitations imposed by the state. Several social scientists who have observed these attitudes among Oromo have not written about the phenomenon either because it was not their field of inquiry or because they were acutely aware of their need to obtain visas through the good graces of Ethiopian regimes openly

hostile to expressions of Oromo nationalism as a matter of policy. No open study of the phenomenon of Oromo nationalism has been approved by any Ethiopian government in the past century. This kind of silence kept the Oromo invisible.

The largely unreported attitudes and aspirations for self-assertion that I and others found to be so widespread among the ordinary Oromo in Oromia were indications of a broad discontent that eventually began to shake the empire. Oromo of every background were extremely dissatisfied with their situation and had continued to assert themselves and express this disquiet through various forms of resistance. Open expressions of Oromo national identity (*Oromummaa*) were regarded by the Ethiopian state as expressions of political defiance and were officially treated as a threat to the political system. Successive Abyssinian-dominated governments have developed a programmatic effort to silence Oromo nationalists. Several notable large-scale efforts at resistance to Ethiopian control represented the culmination of the kind of dissatisfaction that resulted when self-assertion was suppressed by the state at the local level throughout Oromia.⁴ The most visible examples of this were the Raya and Azebo uprising in 1928-1930 which took not a national force but an international force to put down; the attempts at forming a Western Oromo federation in 1936 and another similar petition from Oromo in Harargue in 1947, and a rebellion in Bale in the early 1960s which also required air power to suppress (Asafa Jalata 1998 provides a nice summary of these incidents). Systematic attempts to silence the Oromo voice in separate isolated incidents occurred throughout the 20th century inside Ethiopia.⁵

By the early to mid-1960s, a small core of Oromo professionals, business people, intellectuals, military personnel, students and employed workers successfully overcame the internal obstacles to communication amongst themselves inside Ethiopia -- primarily through migration to urban areas -- and organized themselves as a self-help association, Macha-Tulama⁶ and cultural associations Afran Qallo and Biftu Ganamo. The details of these resistance efforts are available in several written works, although the general literature does not yet begin to convey the breadth and width of the Oromo resentment and dissatisfaction with their place within Ethiopia. The task of uncovering the history of this dimension of Oromo experience has hardly begun. Whenever such research is carried out, it will put into context the

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expressions of *Oromummaa* (Oromoness) that, for those who accepted accounts of Ethiopian unity, seemed to erupt out of nowhere. The government response to the popular Macha-Tulama group demonstrates the official response to the public embrace of Oromo identity. After falsely implicating the leaders in a plot to overthrow the government and as agents who masterminded the explosion of a bomb in the Empire Cinema in downtown Addis Ababa, several leaders were arrested. Some went to jail for life, Mammo Mazamir was publicly hanged as an example and the organization was officially banned throughout the empire (see Singer 1978, Hassen 1997, 1998 and Dhugumaa 1998 for histories of the Macha-Tulama association). The organization was forced underground.

The suppression of the kind of Oromo nationalism represented by the Macha-Tulama association and others gave rise to several new social and political organizations that later emerged worldwide, as Oromo began to find their way abroad (see below), all sharing the nationalist objective of self-determination. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) was the most visible of these groups, among whom were TOONA (which later became UOSNA then UONA), TBOA (*Union of Oromo Students in Europe*), etc.. Each of these in their turn generated or encouraged other organized efforts to express and promote Oromo nationalism: Oromo Relief Association (ORA), IBSO, IFLO, UOPLF, OPLF, Oromo Studies Association (OSA), Oromo community organizations, Oromo support groups in several First World countries and Oromo religious communities, both Christian and Muslim, in host countries around the world. All of these openly advocated Oromo self-expression, and played a role in revitalizing Oromo culture, language and national identity among Oromo. Ultimately these groups have asserted that Oromo *self-determination was the only avenue which would allow self-realization*. Their efforts intellectually and politically challenged the legitimacy of Ethiopia as the appropriate representative of Oromo interests. Oromo organizations, particularly the political fronts, stated their nationalist objectives in their respective programs but gained few friends and minimal support abroad. The forces that actively maintained Oromo silence throughout the Cold War remained strong.

The Walls Begin to Crumble: the Oromo Migration

The global oil crisis of the 1970s, combined with increased expressions of national resistance of the Oromo and others in Ethiopia eventually brought about the fall of the Haile Selassie government in 1974. Detailed analyses of the advent of the Dergue's government in Ethiopia are made elsewhere (see Ottaway and Ottaway, 1978, Holiday and Molyneux 1981, Keller 1988, and Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990, Asafa Jalata 1993). For our purposes here it is enough to note that the shift from United States' sponsorship of an Ethiopian government to a Soviet sponsorship of an Ethiopian government increased state repression against all forms of nationalism. After a brief period of openness, during which Abyssinians expressed alarm at the extent of Oromo nationalist sentiment, internal controls and surveillance against Oromos were tightened even further under the *Dergue* government. Any display of *Oromummaa* or any kind of nationalist expression was labeled a "narrow nationalist" crime against the state and treated severely with harassment, imprisonment, torture, and public execution.

Looking back on the decades of the late 1970s and of the 1980s in Ethiopia, it is clear that the crushing, heavy-handed repression that the Oromo and other peoples of the empire experienced at the hands of the *Dergue* government was a result of the shifts under way at that time in the system of global capitalism. The *Dergue* was affected by the death throes of a Soviet system that was desperately trying to fend off eventual collapse. In the case of the *Dergue*, the inability of the Soviets to continue their support to Ethiopia caused the regime to tighten policies of forced labor, outright confiscation of foodstuffs and property and of massive forced conscription of young people for the armed forces required to drive a massive war machine. These policies created the Ethiopian famine of 1984-1985. Attempts to quell widespread resistance and to increase food supplies to the urban areas led to rapacious economic policies designed in large part to contain the resistance of discontented nationalities, policies such as "resettlement," a forcible relocation of large sectors of the population (Clay and Holcomb 1986), and "villagization," the confinement of rural populations in government-controlled enclave villages (Clay, et al. 1988). The use of this kind of state terrorism against national resistance, drove millions of people to abandon their homes

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to escape conscription, starvation and certain death by seeking refuge beyond the borders of the empire. A record number of Oromo refugees left Ethiopia, walking out in every direction, fleeing for their lives and ignoring the narrow channels by which the government had previously restricted movement beyond its borders (see vivid refugees' accounts of the causes of flight in Clay and Holcomb 1986 and Mekuria Bulcha 1988).

It was thus that the Oromo finally broke through the barriers of Ethiopia and found their way into the world at large. It has been through the increasingly harsh measures taken against the Oromo and other peoples hidden away inside the old empire of Ethiopia, that the twentieth century governments of Ethiopia have dispersed an enormous population of Oromo throughout the world, broadcasting them across the globe. In fleeing for their lives, most Oromo who crossed the boundary lines drawn around Ethiopia left their homes to follow any path that was open to them to escape. The paths taken and the experiences acquired were numerous and differed sharply. This process of internal displacement and external dispersion of Oromo reached its peak in the 1980s under the Dergue's government and continues today.

This massive refugee flight that began during the Dergue's era set in motion social processes that changed the profile of Oromo represented in the wider world. Refugees in the new time period fled from every corner of Oromia. This resulted not only in an expansion in the sheer numbers of Oromo outside the borders of Ethiopia but also in the creation of a much more diverse Oromo population abroad. Also, emigrants found themselves widely dispersed throughout the Middle East, Asia, Europe, the United States, Australia and elsewhere. These internationally displaced did not resemble the earlier Oromo immigrants who had come out with Ethiopian government approval, but, as it turned out, many of the new generation of exiles were contacted, received and assisted into the world community by Oromo nationalist organizations established in the First World by those earlier arrivals who differed from them in so many ways. The communication and assistance was based not on family ties, religious affiliation or institutional links. It was based upon their *Oromummaa* (Oromo identity). The newcomers were helped with immigration papers, advice, transitional housing and logistical support. Their arrival overseas dramatically expanded the base of the Oromo represented abroad and changed the description of

Oromo abroad from a tiny handful of mission- and government-educated Christian males selected from Western and Central Oromia to a more broadly representative sample of the population in Oromia. It also brought women and children, farmers, traders, Muslim and traditional religionists, and persons of a less urbanized, relatively less privileged and consequently less “Ethiopianized” background and experience.

Since these new refugees had escaped from a Soviet-sponsored Dergue government, they prompted a sympathetic and generous reception in the host countries still participating in the East-West rivalry of a dying Cold War era. As these refugees have begun to settle, a significant Oromo diaspora community is emerging (see below). Both the previous generation of Oromo and these relative newcomers who had not known each other previously have been able to make contact and become acquainted by utilizing the new tools for communication and movement that were becoming available in the world at large. After a century of separation from one another, Oromo have come together in the world beyond Oromia where communication was unrestricted.

This movement of Oromo around the globe occurred simultaneously with a stunning series of revolutionary global advances in communications, technology and finance which is often referred to as “globalization.” These developments have changed the environment in which all individuals, countries, organizations and corporations worldwide relate to each other.

The Features of Globalization

There is a large literature tracing the massive and wide-ranging global changes that have transformed social, political and economic patterns worldwide in the preceding decade (see for example Greider 1996, Kuttner 1997, Drucker 1992, 1993, Friedman 1999, Barnett and Cavanaugh 1994, Korten 1996, Yergin and Stanislaw 1998, Soros 1998). These new patterns have irreversibly altered the movement of people, ideas and goods around the globe. The impact of these phenomena has been neatly summed up by Peter Drucker, a management specialist who has made the task of tracking and writing about global trends his special area of expertise. Drucker claims that we are living through a major social transformation, of which there have been only a few in world history. He calls it a “divide,” saying, “within a few short

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decades society rearranges itself -- its worldview; its basic values, its social and political structure; its arts; its key institutions" (1993:1). He says that our current transformation is creating a new "post-capitalist society." Tom Friedman, addressing the same global events six years later, has expressed dissatisfaction with the references to our current status as "post capitalist" or "post Cold War." He writes,

For several years, I, like everyone else, just referred to the "post Cold War world." We knew some new system was aborning that constituted a different framework for international relations, but we couldn't define what it was, so we defined it by what it wasn't. It wasn't the Cold War. So we called it the post-Cold War world.

The more I traveled, though, the more it became apparent to me that this system had its own logic and deserved its own name: "globalization." Globalization is not a phenomenon. It is not just some passing trend. Today it is the overarching international system shaping the domestic politics and foreign relations of virtually every country, and we need to understand it as such (Friedman 1999:6-7).

Yergin and Stanislaw (1998:14) have reached much the same conclusion: "A new reality is emerging. This is not a process, but a condition -- a globality, a world economy in which the traditional and familiar boundaries are being surmounted or made irrelevant." All agree that global forces are integrating capital, technology and information across national borders, creating a single global market.

It seems clear that the "new global order" is really the global capitalist system that began operating worldwide a century ago and has been intensifying ever since. The rapidity and intensification of the changes taking place today caused by staggering new technological innovations have created a major social and political shift that is best seen as a new phase of capitalism. Each phase of the expansion of capital, particularly since it became a global system in the 1800s -- monopoly capital, finance capital, and now unfettered

investment capital -- has had its own dominant ideas, management styles, market relations, technologies and forms of protection and, consequently, each has had a particular impact on the peoples around the globe.

The innovations in this global order have been largely introduced through the technologies of digitization. These are:

- 1) the rapid expansion of communications, such as the satellite telephone, the fax machine and the Internet, through which spoken messages, written information and video and digital images can be transmitted instantaneously worldwide; these are made accessible to people and companies wherever they are around the globe, and connect them with one another, often bypassing the physical infrastructures that have traditionally been under the control of the state;
- 2) advances in technology that have made the very means of production moveable and have introduced efficiencies that vastly reduce the labor required for production; by miniaturizing systems, instruments are put into the hands of organizations and individuals that only governments and corporations could afford, control and handle previously, and
- 3) elimination of barriers to investment to such an extent that, rather than big banks and firms managing investment, many individuals through pension funds and mutual funds invest their own monies for their own futures, sometimes directly over their home computers. This has created an environment where everything seems to be related to the global market, everything is a possible investment opportunity and, since risk is no longer controlled solely by elite institutions, access to

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capital is easy for any reasonably persuasive business plan.

All of these changes have expanded the growth of the market economy to such an extent that the world is reeling from the impact on both their countries and their corporations (although the distinction between the two is rapidly diminishing).

These changes have put everything in flux. The old order is collapsing in front of our eyes and a new one is being built. This time, all nations, including the Oromo, are in a very different position in relation to the world community than they were the last time a global shift of this magnitude took place in the 1890s when the *modus operandi* was to divide the globe geographically and create boundaries for control. The new conditions and the new global order introduce a violent process of "turbo-evolution" of capitalism which presents both opportunities and obstacles for any nation that aspires to establish or hold a place in the world community. We have seen that the Oromo position in the previous phase of world order was one of extreme isolation. Now let us turn to see the impact on the Oromo of the new conditions.

Impact of Globalization on the Oromo: Opportunities and Obstacles

Opportunities

The technologies of high-access communication have created the opportunity for Oromo who were dispersed at the end of the Cold War to come into contact with other Oromo wherever they were located on the globe including Oromo who had already arrived abroad. This contact has been extensive. For the first time, Oromo in Europe and America have experienced the freedom of openly forming Oromo organizations and expressing themselves. As the new immigrants continued to make contact and to join the organizations, the Oromo started getting to know one another and working together in the outside world in ways that had never been allowed in Ethiopia. These organizations, through different mechanisms and media available to

them, enabled the old and new arrivals to express their *Oromummaa* and, in concert with others from all over Oromia, they raised the voice of the Oromo in the First World.

The acquisition and transfer of useful knowledge now takes place among Oromo with an intensity of interaction that allows those in contact to share and construct their lives together in significant ways. Members of this nation spatially separated but who share an outlook continue to influence one another and to build similar responses to events that affect them. As Rouse has observed in another context, they

[F]ind that their most important kin and friends are as likely to be living hundreds or thousands of miles away as immediately around them. More significantly, they are often able to maintain these spatially extended relationships as actively and effectively as the ties that link them to their neighbors. In this regard, growing access to the telephone has been particularly significant, allowing people not just to keep in touch periodically but to contribute to decision-making and participate in familial events from a considerable distance. (Rouse 1991:13, cited in Clifford 1997: 246.)

This closeness and coordination of activities and response to life choices is constantly enhanced by new and better means of communication made available at the global level not only to Oromo who are now living in the First World, but to those who remained in Africa. For example, one type of telephone that is offered through private entrepreneurs and used by this dispersed population to communicate with each other can operate directly by satellite transmission, with access available directly through the international telephone provider. With this system, neither the caller nor the recipient is restricted by the physical or political infrastructures of the country in which the caller is located. In Somalia, for example, a country devastated by war and the breakdown of the state infrastructure, satellite telephones connect refugees with their compatriots all over the globe. In a country where letters rarely find their destination, the fax machine is used heavily and reliably. The readily

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available technologies inexpensively increase the diaspora's opportunities to connect to multiple communities in the First, Second and Third Worlds. Since the technologies of this era enable the users to transcend the hardwiring and expensive physical infrastructures of communication that have traditionally been controlled by the state, accessibility to these communications tools may directly change the nature of the relationship of the Oromo with an Ethiopian state that has tightened on-the-ground control. Such developments promise to change the hold that Ethiopia has on the Oromo, as the physical controls that Ethiopia has utilized to suppress the Oromo and others in the empire lose their effectiveness.

Globalization has not only increased the ability of those who would receive information and knowledge to gain access to it, but it has expanded the capacity of those who generate knowledge to make it available, to package it and to transmit it. Education in every field, including business, health, agriculture, engineering, energy development, urban planning, etc., is accessible to whoever gains access to the information highway. The barriers to education and technical know-how are crumbling. Language, access to the World Wide Web and computer facility are the new tickets to education and skills acquisition. Although most Oromo in Oromia do not now have access to these skills and technologies, gaining access is not controlled by the Ethiopian state.

The advent of instantaneous global communication brought on by the new world order has created in the First World active concerns for humanity's shared environment on this planet and for global health and resources issues.

This growing awareness has generated interest groups in the First World with great potential for alliance with indigenous peoples who inhabit zones currently targeted for super-exploitation. The concern of these groups for saving the environment naturally intersect with the interest of the Oromo and other isolated and exploited national groups who try to control and salvage the resources that are their natural heritage. First World interest groups are positioned to apply considerable pressure on governments and corporations through their membership organizations and through public positions they take that affect general public awareness. As Oromo abroad join these groups and obtain citizenship in host countries, their ability to influence policy increases.

Easy access to finance under this current phase of globalization also creates an opportunity or at least a positive condition for nations like the Oromo, long isolated and exploited, to overcome the impoverishment that has been their legacy. The prospects are good for the Oromo, connected as a nation, to find a formula for managing their own reclaimed commodities and relating to the global market on their own terms. The Oromo acting together have fewer concerns about generating finance for development and change than they would have had in a previous era. The challenge of development is the challenge that faces every group worldwide since the massive global changes of the last decade. Oromo can anticipate that satisfying the big controllers of both political power and money is not the hurdle it was a generation or a decade ago. Since this is now a world where a country can find shareholders from any other country to invest in its infrastructure, the challenge is to devise and build a creative, viable, and sound method of entering the market and attracting finance. As countries begin to operate like corporations, the door is open for nations to do the same.

Obstacles

Some of the conditions introduced by globalization pose obstacles and new and even more troublesome dilemmas for national self-expression for the Oromo at this time. First among these is the way in which the Oromo have been targeted to fit into the new American hegemony under the domination of Ethiopia. As part of the increasing momentum of globalization, the United States had reshaped its foreign policy worldwide, seeking a formula for integrating weak states into the American sphere of influence (Robinson 1996). Here is how it happened in the Horn of Africa:

During the 1980s, the time period when Oromo refugees from the Dergue were getting their bearings, learning the languages and life skills necessary to survive in their new world, the United States' policy makers were in the midst of implementing their new foreign policy worldwide. Upon the collapse of the Dergue's government, and in the face of turmoil in the empire, the US chose to keep Ethiopia

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together, selecting to ally with another Abyssinian group to apply the new US formula for control of the population and resources of the empire: "democracy promotion." This time the rulers were the Tigray, who also aspired to lay claim to and to use Oromo resources directly to build Tigray. Tigray, Oromo and Eritrean forces had fought to bring down the regime of the Dergue under whom all peoples suffered. When their combined rebel forces had surrounded the Dergue's army, it succumbed.

This is the point at which the United States rushed to the scene to introduce the new foreign policy mentioned above, a version of "democracy," designed to recruit elites from all competing groups in a former authoritarian state to participate in a new administration. First, national movements were called upon to put forward their agendas. Ethiopia was a perfect test case for this formula, because many of its elites, trained in both the US and the Eastern bloc, had moved to support their respective national movements in the struggles to bring down the Dergue and to institute popular democracy. They responded to the call for "democracy," not aware that for many of the colonized peoples, US democracy had been fashioned specifically to defuse these very movements for popular democracy by subsuming them under its own program and absorbing their elites. This is what happened in the case of the Oromo and Ethiopia. Eritrea was recognized as distinct and took a recognized place in the world community.

Through the EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front), the US supported a process by which another Ethiopian regime was put in place to dominate the Oromo. After less than one year's attempt to function as partners in a coalition government, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) responded to pressure from the Oromo population who were protesting the emptiness of the so-called "democracy" put forward by the EPRDF. The OLF quit the coalition over the refusal of the EPRDF supported by the United States to allow the Oromo voice to be heard in local or regional elections. Formal guarantees for the institution of democratic procedures had been given during the acceptance of a "national Charter." The Oromo demonstrated their cultural value of adherence to the rule of law in honoring the Charter as the

Oromo honor a pact The disregard by the US and EPRDF of this mutually-agreed Charter and their violation of another encampment agreement was the final indication that their public commitment to "democracy" was an image-building device. International media had been instructed that a democracy was implemented in Ethiopia; the fact that the social formation could not and did not support a democracy was of no interest to the image makers.

It had become clear to Oromo both inside and outside Ethiopia within a few short months that this US-backed plan was no democracy and that this particular route of obtaining some measure of control over what had been lost to the Oromo led to a dead end. Despite talk of "democracy" in Ethiopia, the arrival of the EPRDF in power in Ethiopia constituted the replacement of a heavy-handed Soviet-backed Ethiopian administration over the Oromo with a high-tech US-backed Ethiopian administration over the Oromo. In other words, the Abyssinian-dominated state that had for so long silenced the Oromo in the ways described above had not changed. It had found new managers and a different sponsor who updated its image. The EPRDF applied the new US formula for achieving hegemony by introducing an innovation in the mechanism for suppressing Oromo nationalism, the OPDO (the Oromo People's Democratic Organization). This creation was designed to incorporate into the government Oromo individuals who were willing to take direct orders from EPRDF. This Tigray creation substituted for an independent Oromo voice, while giving the impression of Oromo participation. Before the withdrawal of the OLF and other Oromo forces from the coalition, the EPRDF had already started to silence independent expression of Oromo nationalism. Soon after the OLF withdrawal, all non-OPDO Oromo groups were labeled "terrorists" and "advocates of violence." The ability of the government to penetrate Oromo communities and identify outspoken nationalists has been enhanced by the presence of the OPDO as a state instrument, introducing a basis for Oromo-on-Oromo violence that had not existed previously.

When the United States embraced Ethiopia, the increased power of the United States in the new global order was extended to dominate the Oromo and other nations enveloped by Ethiopia. This shift took place according to the US policy of "promotion of democracy." In Ethiopia it took the form of "ethnic federalism," touted as a creative new system. With this approach,

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national groups were no longer ignored and suppressed as nationalities. Instead, the national groups were identified, named, and made to take a place in the government by placing hand-picked representatives into an administration designed and controlled by the ruling group. This design acknowledges and divides the national groups in order to control.

The introduction of this type of "democracy" supported by the United States falsely signaled to a concerned world community that Ethiopia and those peoples within its borders were finally relieved of the repression that they had admittedly experienced under the Soviet-sponsored Dergue. The Western media announced that some form of democracy had been created in Ethiopia, effectively isolating the Oromo from potential international allies whose alarm at the Oromo condition under the Dergue dissipated with the impression that all was well in Ethiopia. Yet, the very rituals of elections and constitution-writing that were overseen, stage-managed and controlled by the EPRDF, supported by the United States, had the objective of undermining Oromo popular democracy. The creation of the OPDO actually increased the penetration into Oromia of a hostile government bureaucracy by using Oromo (OPDO) in addition to Abyssinian agents in carrying out human rights violations against those who objected to this system. The United States, formally interested and engaged in promoting "Democracy and Governance" programs through USAID, has turned a blind eye to the human rights abuses that take place, attempts to silence those who advocate a genuine popular participation in the political process and who would expose the shortcomings of the Ethiopian government in that regard (see *Sagalee Haara*, the publication of Oromia Support Group for documentation of these cases). In fact surveillance is now high tech. In this regard, the barriers around the Oromo inside the country have been selectively reinforced. The power and the capacity of the United States have been unleashed to enhance and to update the image of Greater Ethiopia. US public relations firms are now available to assist in explaining away the violations that occur. Propaganda which further isolates Oromo as "violent" is being updated and is now even mouthed directly by a representative of the US State Department in Congressional hearings.

Globalization was responsible for transferring sophisticated military technology from the USA to a coalition of African states to form an

Africa-based rapid response deployment initiative, i.e., the African Crisis Response Initiative, including to the EPRDF, in the name of decentralizing global "peacekeeping." This placed Ethiopia at the disposal of the US for utilizing heavy weaponry for international "crises" in the region. The placement of heavy armaments into the hands of a government which treats the Oromo people as dangerous enemies has happened before when the US supplied weapons to Haile Selassie's regime. The arms serve to intimidate internal dissidents rather than external foes. This act raised the level of internal threat to any Oromo who were willing to raise an independent voice.

This Ethiopian government had already labeled as "terrorist" any independent Oromo nationalist group or individual. It is already apparent in the wake of the Ethiopian-Eritrean war of 1998-99 that it was a misguided policy on the part of the US to arm a government which has a history of violent and abusive practices against political dissidents. It has introduced enormous instability.

The upgraded technologies of surveillance and sophisticated propaganda available to the EPRDF government by way of US support are used against the independent nationalists in the same way that they were used by predecessor administrations. The weight of the United States also becomes a factor in regional politics as Ethiopia moves to mobilize neighboring countries, Sudan, Kenya, and Djibouti, against the Oromo within their borders, urging repatriation to Ethiopia, where they are unprotected.

One of the purposes of calling the new administration in Ethiopia a "democracy" is the public relations benefits for the EPRDF government in attracting foreign investment to the empire. The EPRDF has taken many steps to create the impression of stability and democracy. With the Oromo and other nationalists in prison or their families threatened and harassed to keep them silent, the government has issued the following appeals in the Special Advertising Section of *World Focus: Ethiopia*:

Private Enterprise Welcome. Stability has created ideal conditions for investor. Foreign investment has been flowing into Ethiopia at a rate of \$200 million a year since 1994 and accounts amount to about 20 per cent of the total approved projects...to Assefa believes that the government has created excellent conditions for foreign investors to come

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to Ethiopia. *Foreign investors want stability and we already have it in our country, both on the political and the economic front* (emphasis added).

Privatization: A Means for a Quick and High Return on Investment in Ethiopia was another headline. The text read, "Under the privatization scheme, opportunities for investment in Ethiopia abound in the food industry, in plantations (coffee and tea), in breweries, in textiles, in the leather industry, in mining, in metals and engineering, in construction and in tourism... And with the growing stabilization of the economy, Ethiopia provides an extremely favorable climate for investment, promising and short pay-back period and a high rate of return on invested capital."

Through the recognition of Ethiopia and its ruling mythology, the US has again endorsed Ethiopia's claim to Oromo resources. Oromo resources continue to be presented as Ethiopia's resources to the investors and potential investors. The US sponsorship of the EPRDF lends the impression of stability that attracts foreign investment and multinational corporations to Oromia. These companies are urged by the government, as we have seen above, to initiate financial activities with a promised high return. This eagerness for exceptional profit margin is often matched by lack of environmental protections in Oromia. Under Ethiopian "democracy" the indigenous people have no voice in the utilization of their traditional lands. Environmentally destructive practices outlawed in the First World have been reintroduced for the exploitation of Oromia's resources, particularly gold and other minerals (see Guluma Gamada 1998 and Gobana Huluqaa 1999, this volume).

Oromo Entry to the World Community

With the global shift of the last decade the walls symbolized by the Cold War have come down, as free market capitalism has triumphed. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 served as the symbol of the communications and

technological revolution that had already begun and has continued apace in the decade since. There is every reason to think that in the decade ahead events will accelerate even faster. Governments, corporations, and all types of organizations have had to rethink how to survive and change their operating styles to accommodate the new system of globalization. They have to redefine the center, redefine where responsibilities lie, and identify and utilize the tools that are available to them in order to sustain themselves.

It is appropriate to ask in the midst of these far-reaching changes how might the Oromo utilize their old and new resources and their old and new skills of survival and interaction in creating their means of existence as a nation in the 21st century? The immediate future will reveal whether the Oromo will act collectively to the new conditions that have literally altered the ground on which any organizational activity can occur or succeed. Those who analyze the phenomenon as an economic system and who describe the emerging pattern of globalization acknowledge its limits, the instability that is at its core. Each of them refers to it in a different way. Friedman writes, for example, "My concern is that without the environment there is no sustainable culture, and without sustainable culture there is no sustainable community and without sustainable community there is no sustainable globalization" (1999: 243). Soros writes, "There is no global political system to correspond to the global capitalist system; moreover, there is no consensus that a global political system is either feasible or desirable" (Soros 1998: 217). He argues that the political dimension of globalization is weak because there is no basis, no infrastructure, for integration of the participants.

The "promotion of democracy" is what the West proposes for solving this problem of integration. It is an effort to construct a political base, but it is unsuccessful because there is not an adequate groundwork or infrastructure to which the peoples who are to be integrated can relate. It does not withstand the test for political needs, it does not correspond to the level of economic integration that the system has achieved. In other words, this newest phase of globalization has not developed as a stable or fully-articulated economic system, because it is incomplete as a social or political system. The promotion of democracy program is part of a policy designed to integrate the weak links (the weak nation states) into the global market in the absence of a fully developed infrastructure for their integration. It has failed because the center

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cannot generate a paradigm adequate to accommodate the capacities of those on the periphery. In order for the global economy to be sustained, an inclusive political system must eventually be fashioned. Nations on the periphery have begun to participate in generating aspects of such a design.

What does this mean for the Oromo? It means that the failure of the global system to furnish an adequate infrastructure provides an opening for those in the periphery, like the Oromo, to put forward their own design for integration into, or relation to, the market. Any group that will participate in the global system must take into account the basic characteristics of this system and must address the problem of instability and disjuncture that lies at its core. The system ultimately has to resolve its problem of instability.

What tools do the Oromo have which would equip them to change their condition? First they have a large *population*, the bulk of which is situated in a strategic global location (near Middle East shipping lanes which link West to East and where stability is crucial for the well-being of a system grounded in the use of oil and natural gas). Also the Oromo now have a large *diaspora group* dispersed to the four corners of the globe who have acquired new forms of knowledge and resources in the course of their sojourn but who share with those in Oromia a language, outlook and sensibility that is unique to this people. The people educated and experienced inside and outside Oromia also possess untapped technical skills and know-how regarding operation of the instruments of the new world order. In addition, Oromia, the homeland of the people, is a repository of many of the *material resources* that are attractive to investment -- fertile land, minerals, including gold and rare minerals necessary for the preparation of metal alloys, coffee, water, timber, and livestock, to name those considered of primary value by today's standards.

Of foremost significance to the Oromo at this time is *Oromo organizational knowledge*, an instrument that they have only recently begun to acknowledge. By this I am referring to the systematic, purposeful organized patterning of thought and judgment that provides the basis for social and political orientation and innovation. A significant tool now available to the Oromo intent upon developing organizational knowledge and changing their condition is the emergence of an independent Oromo scholarship in diaspora.

Population

The Oromo population of about thirty million people shares a mutually intelligible language and a common culture, which is the primary carrier of a democratic political heritage. This population is a labor force that is potentially a great resource of the nation, but it has not yet been organized for reasons that have been stated above. Since the advent of the EPRDF government in Ethiopia, the Oromo population has become more aware of its own democratic heritage and more articulate about it. This comes as a consequence of Oromo dissatisfaction with EPRDF's ethnic federalism, their disillusionment when the "democracy" promoted by the US and the EPRDF proved to be alien to Oromo notions of democracy, and their greater knowledge about what goes on in the outside world. When the EPRDF introduced "democracy" in 1991-92, the Oromo encountered an Ethiopian "democracy" so authoritarian that the word of a single armed Tigray government agent could overturn the collective decision of a community group. Their outrage at this betrayal galvanized the Oromo population and led to their insistence that Oromo nationalist organizations not be associated with the EPRDF coalition (see Holcomb 1997). Oromo continue to use their own cultural values to criticize the Tigray/Ethiopian approach to democracy, style of public discourse, methods of conducting elections, accountability of elected officials, or other features. In this process of criticism, they have been prompted to articulate the basis for their critique. Oromo are now more keenly aware of the distinctiveness of Oromo notions of democracy and public life, including the basic organizing concepts of justice and public responsibility. As result of the clash with the EPRDF, the Oromo population may be more prepared to embrace a unified Oromo nationalist vision. That hypothesis remains to be tested.

Since discontent is currently widespread, the Oromo population in Oromia could go either toward massive response to a unified nationalist agenda or toward an explosion of frustration. Change is imminent, however, and the direction that their discontent will take is unknown. While a splintering of the Oromo population is quite possible -- along lines of Tigray-backed, Sudan-backed, Somalia-backed, Eritrean-backed Oromo groups -- the potential for unification of the Oromo population is strong. A

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unified Oromo power may well appeal to the Oromo in Ethiopia more persuasively than the appeal of splinter groups. Oromo political philosophy values oneness, peace and the development of common resources. These values exist in the tradition as a potentially responsive chord among the people. One way of interpreting the massive rejection of the EPRDF's attempt to impose US-backed democracy is that when rising expectations of self-expression were dashed, Oromo across the empire were angered. Part of that anger may have resulted in a consciousness that Oromo values were being violated. At that point Oromo political awareness and appreciation of Oromo values was heightened. If this turns out to be the case, a shared nationalist agenda will have a broad appeal. This would improve the chances of Oromia developing internally on its own terms. As a result, unified Oromo power may appeal more persuasively to potential investors in future development of area resources as well. Oromo power, developed and harnessed to the instruments of Oromo notions of balance and measured development, could introduce a basis for peace and grounded stability to the region that could not be imported or imposed.

Oromo in Diaspora

Oromo refugees who fled from Ethiopia during the *Dergue's* regime are now poised strategically out in the world. They are poised strategically in terms of geography, in terms of experiences, in terms of connections, in terms of skills, and in terms of knowledge. Geographically their presence in the world beyond Ethiopia ends the Oromo confinement within Ethiopia and terminates Ethiopia's hold on the exclusive representation and interpretation of the Oromo people and Oromo issues to the world community and of the world to the Oromo. These refugees tended to be younger at the time of departure, however, and were often strongly influenced by the societies through which they moved to escape. They acquired language, religious, familial, fraternal, institutional, commercial and citizenship connections with their host societies as they made their way. Besides picking up influences, they also left influences and made friends for the Oromo in the course of their sojourn. Both as they ran and as they settled, the Oromo who are now dispersed throughout the globe, accumulated experiences, new life skills and

eventually material resources in the very act of surviving in the new environments where they found themselves. Many of them earned salaries for the first time in their lives. Also, at the historical juncture when these refugees were finding their way into the world at large, the world itself was changing dramatically. Oromo refugees in the 1980s and 1990s moved into a highly interconnected and high tech world. They naturally reached to use computers as part of their jobs and personal lives and they came to understand the institutions and instruments of productivity that were available to them as part of the total setting to which they adjusted. The knowledge that they obtained also positions this group strategically between the global institutions that design, manage and export the products that are transforming the world on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the population of Oromo who have been so isolated that they have had virtually no access to that world

In terms of communication, the dispersal of Oromo from every corner of Oromia into the First World has provided the opportunity for Oromo who were previously sheltered and confined inside Ethiopia to become familiar with the patterning of power and interest that affect global decision-making regarding the Oromo. The fact that these former refugees, now residents and citizens in powerful European and North American countries, hail from all parts of Oromia broadens considerably the information flow concerning international affairs into all parts of Oromia, East, South, West and Center.

The position of these in diaspora opens the door to a richer, deeper form of interaction within Oromia's population and between Oromia's population and global issues. But this interaction so far is limited.

Their escape from the restrictions imposed upon the Oromo in the empire have exposed them to the opportunity for free expression. Oromos in Europe and America for the first time have achieved the right of organizing and expressing themselves. For example, there has emerged an independent Oromo scholarship in diaspora. This scholarship has begun to make Oromos visible in the world even though Oromo scholars in Oromia still have no freedom to produce or to disseminate knowledge that would reveal or assess the Oromo condition in the empire.

The proportion of Oromo in diaspora, although much more representative, is still minuscule in relation to the population in Oromia. Numbers or the size of this diaspora are extremely difficult to reach. No

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sustained research has been conducted on this issue. Attempts have been made to estimate. Mekuria Bulcha, who has written substantively on the topic of Oromo refugees and migrants, offers half a million as the number of Oromo who have left Ethiopia and continue to live outside the boundaries of the empire. Two years ago he wrote,

...so far, the most significant Oromo exodus from Ethiopia was sparked by events that followed the outbreak of the [1974] Ethiopian Revolution. Since I have discussed these events elsewhere (1988), here it suffices to mention that the political and religious persecution, was forced conscription into the military, forced labor, and economic policies pursued by the Ethiopian military regime (1974-1991) created the largest number of refugees to cross international borders in the history of the country. Oromos constituted a large proportion of these refugees... All in all, there were, during the 1980s, between 1.5 and 2 million Ethiopian refugees in the neighboring countries, particularly Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti. At least 360,000 of them were Oromo. Over 90 percent of the Oromo refugees were, up to 1990, in Somalia while the rest sought asylum mainly in Sudan and Djibouti, but also in other African countries such as Kenya and Egypt. A small fraction of the Oromo refugees who went to the Middle East, Europe, North America, and Australia [author's footnote: Many Oromos who went to Europe and North America to study before or after the revolution became refugees as persecution was intensified.] (1997:20-21).

With regard to conditions under the present EPRDF-led government, Mekuria observes, "The exodus of refugees from Ethiopia in general, and of Oromo refugees in particular, did not cease with the fall of the Mengistu regime in 1991. The present regime's failure to respect basic human rights is still creating Oromo refugees and internally displaced persons. Many of the Oromo who now flee Ethiopia are businessmen, intellectuals and public servants" (1997: 21). It is important to consider, he points out, that since the

violation of human rights is on the increase under the current government, those independent Oromo who found themselves outside Ethiopia (even as members of the government), during the period that the EPRDF had declared its commitment to democracy are not able to return.

At this historical moment, Oromo who occupy this strategic position and who have developed national connections to all continents of the globe, are still bound to the Oromo who reside in Oromia by a single language and cultural orientation. The Oromo in diaspora are just recovering from the trauma of flight and the fundamental adjustments necessary to function on a personal and family level beyond a daily, weekly and monthly basis. They have effectively established contact with their families, friends, associates in the Ethiopian empire through various means made possible by advances in international communication. They have just begun to articulate their interest to find ways to solve the problems introduced by Oromia's long-standing and continuing isolation from the world community. They now face the challenge of recognizing and coordinating these skills and resources to serve the interests of Oromia.

Oromo collectively face an organizational challenge to coordinate the interests and the activities of those who are now situated at home in Oromia and in every corner of the globe. It is clear that the vast range of skills, languages, connections, experiences and knowledge that these refugees acquired as they fled and tried to make a life for themselves have transformed them into carriers of technical skills and know-how regarding the operation of the global system and its technologies and have positioned them to play a critical role in transforming the nation's position in the world community. *This diaspora group does not yet realize the value to their nation of the skills and resources that they have acquired.* Oromo nationalists have just begun to grapple with the task of integrating these who are situated globally into an organizational structure that would constructively engage this sector of the population. As these new arrivals are welcomed into the Oromo movement, even actively pursued and engaged, their input into the discussions abroad and their ability to communicate new developments back inside the country is key. Their acquisition of skills and global knowledge provides an opening for information to all parts of Oromia about the world and provides

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for a wider range of Oromo experience to be brought to the discussion and to the articulation of Oromo nationalist ideology.

Knowledge

Right now while there is a rearrangement of values, beliefs, social and economic structures taking place worldwide, and a fundamental rethinking of political concepts and worldview, the Oromo acting together have the basis to provide a new kind of knowledge into the world scene. Oromo have a source which lies dormant in the very patterning of their language and their culture.

In general, the Oromo are aware that they possess something distinctive and have identified it as "Gada," their traditional system which created a distinctive form of political organization in a past era. The question now arises which has political and anthropological significance: Does *Gada* (or the basic moral grid with which the Oromo built the *Gada* in the first place) offer a source for a new way of putting things together into a new pattern in the current global conditions? This remains to be determined. It will be revealed in how the Oromo handle their communication with each other, in how they begin to define the parameters of their collective work, and in how they respond to the opportunities available in the openings created by the emergence of this new order. In short, it will be revealed in how they organize themselves. As the Oromo prepare to solve problems, they will be faced with the prospect of hammering out ways of working together and with allies in the world community. What knowledge will serve them well?

The task at hand for Oromo nationalists, fashioning a way to enter the world community as a nation, requires finding and using distinctively Oromo knowledge to prioritize objectives and programs as well as to organize the resources in demand in the global village. In other words, it requires constructing an Oromo nationalist ideology, one capable of supporting the infrastructural basis for future development. This process has begun in a limited way. When Oromo nationalists initially organized themselves, they used a Marxist-Leninist approach. It has become clear since the end of the Cold War that the approach of the Left is not suited to countering current hegemonic forces. Therefore, the current Oromo nationalist debate has been transformed into a discourse over *Gada*. Some argue the feasibility of

purposefully reviving *Gada*'s traditional nationwide administrative system for the construction of a modern state. Some have argued that as long as the Oromo have utilized their own language, the principles that gave rise to *Gada* in previous centuries are kept alive and are capable of recreating an equivalent system in the modern era. The emergence of an independent Oromo scholarship and writings of many anthropologists and historians are directly or indirectly addressed to shed light on this debate (Aguilar 1996, Bassi 1996, Baxter 1994, contributors to Baxter, et. al., 1996, Gemetchu Megerssa 1993, Holcomb 1997, contributors to Asafa Jalata, (ed.) 1998, Asmarom Legesse 1973, Baissa Lemmu 1994, Lewis 1998, Mekuria Bulcha 1997a, Sorenson 1996, 1998, Zeitelman 1994 and others, see Baxter 1998). There is uncontested agreement among Oromo and students of Oromo that the legacy of the *Gada* system is very much present in the Oromo language, religion, lore, oratory, art, poetry, song and custom. It is often brought into discussion to explain many dynamics of the culture, particularly relationships among sections of the population. Meanwhile, some Oromo in Oromia continue to meet according to the *Gada* in a Gummi Gayo assembly, and in 1998 issued a published report about the participants, the deliberations, the pattern of assembly and the resolutions (Golloo Huqqa 1998).

Material Resources

The increased commoditization that was created through globalization has produced a condition favorable to national groups whose legacy of material resources has been diverted through the power of a repressive state. The restrictive power of such states is weakening as the barriers for access to finance, communication and advanced technologies. The political focus of Oromo nationalists to reclaim coffee, minerals, power sources, livestock, lands, etc., can best be understood in this light. Globalization has created a condition in which commodities constitute a ticket to the marketplace. Once the Oromo have constructed a national design for the development, marketing, utilization and conservation of resources in Oromia, Ethiopia's current claim will be eclipsed and perceived by the outside world as less advantageous and even illegitimate. The legitimacy of the current hold that Ethiopia has established over Oromia, the "democratic" incorporation of the nation into the

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“Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,” would not hold up to inspection. Any event that might require a reconsideration of these arrangements, could open the entire debate and secure recognition and legitimacy for an Oromo national plan for development.

The expansion of the global marketplace has introduced changes in commoditization, marketing and finance all of which have a great potential impact for the Oromo. This new order has been utilized to their advantage by several countries of Asia and Latin America and by organizations and individuals worldwide. Now that all forms of communication are accessible, the Oromo can be in communication with one another wherever they are, organize themselves according to a pattern that they themselves devise, create a plan for pursuing their interests according to the opportunities and conditions that exist in the world community. If the Oromo have a product to sell or trade, they can create a demand for the product through the same means that all new enterprises advertise, they can attract investors, build allies and partners who share their interest, and then they can sell to the highest bidder. Their national paradigm would provide the basis on which to come together to accomplish this.

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, it is clear that “the new global order” is really the old global capitalist system characterized in this era by stunning technological innovations that introduce the need for new managerial skills and new forms of organization. This order has changed how nations, states, companies, and even individuals relate to each other. It is also clear that this new global order is exploitable; its tools are available to be used by any nation to end the conditions -- in the Oromo case, poverty amidst plenty and extreme isolation -- that prevailed during the previous century. The implication is that the world’s tools can be the Oromo’s tools. These tools can be utilized by the Oromo to bring them together to achieve unity and prosperity. We have observed that in this era, not only are new forms of transport and digital communication available to transmit ideas, people and goods around the globe, but even the means of production itself is movable.

There is good reason to think that the Oromo can take advantage of the opportunities available in this new era for their own collective benefit and overcome the obstacles. Observing current global dynamics, Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter has commented,

[a] nation's wealth is [now] principally of its own collective choosing. Location, natural resources and even military might are no longer decisive. Instead, how a nation and its citizens choose to organize and manage the economy, the institutions they put in place and the types of investments they individually and collectively choose to make will determine national prosperity" (quoted in Friedman 1999:167).

What the Oromo have and share is a culturally-coded basis for organization and management which is part of their cultural heritage. Such a heritage contains within it the basis for institution-building, but the Oromo have scarcely begun to utilize or tap into in their political life. In my view this heritage constitutes a resource to this nation and to a wider world seeking designs for a social formation that might ensure stability and peace in the periphery.

I argued earlier that when the first phase of global capitalism reached Northeast Africa, the Oromo form of sociopolitical organization was passed over by European capital powers in favor of Abyssinian top-down (vertically-organized) authoritarian monarchies. As a consequence, the Oromo were sidelined for a century of silence. I suggest that now, however, the Oromo form of supralocal, horizontally-patterned organization may provide a basis for putting viable new institutions in place that are suitable to this phase of capitalism. A reciprocal decision-making mechanism that connects the periphery of the society with the center and crosscuts social structures that regulate the flow of information, people and resources through the system may prove to be useful to the Oromo and prove to operate more efficiently in this era than any pattern they might import. It is my observation that Oromo who speak the language and practice the culture wherever they reside share a sensibility which will enable them to organize themselves in a distinctive

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design which will reflect that heritage. How will this happen? It is up to the Oromo, a people who have continuously over the course of a century of isolation attempted to break out of their isolation, express themselves and solve their own problems in their own way.

Conditions are right for the Oromo to experience success in overcoming the restrictions that have so far prevented them from achieving self-determination. The cultural struggle that all parts of the Oromo nation is involved in at this historical juncture, both globally and locally, is also a political struggle to establish a place in the world community. As the Oromo, in communication with each other through the channels made available by the development of global technologies, continue to get to know each other. While quarreling among themselves concerning how to proceed, they are sorting out fundamental issues, issues for which representatives of the global system cannot provide them answers. They are establishing priorities and constructing, from the fundamental beliefs that were conveyed to them as part of their being Oromo, a nationalist ideology suited to today's world. The cultural solutions they find will have political import. If the Oromo uncover or establish a basis for Oromo unity, they will be creating something that the world cannot provide them. They will be building a counter-hegemonic force, and as a result, providing a basis, their own infrastructure, for a social formation capable of integrating a sizable population and providing stability and peace in a strategic region of the world.

NOTES

¹ Elsewhere, Sisai Ibssa and I have argued that this process constituted a test case for neocolonialism in Africa in which a European-designed state was established with African administrators. We call it an example of "dependent colonialism" See Holcomb and Ibssa (1990) for the full presentation of this argument.

² See Gadaa Melbaa (1980), Asafa Jalata (1993), etc., to mention a few who address this issue in detail.

³ My own resident scholar's visa was issued as an exception by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, since I had already begun learning *Afaan Oromo* when I applied for it. I was told by personnel at the Institute that this was an exception.

⁴ The insurrections of the Oromos were put down by the Menelik and Haile Selassie governments by force of arms (see Gilkes 1975; Holcomb and Ibssa 1990; Gebru Tareke 1991; Jalata 1993; and Hassen 1998).

⁵ See Anga'a Dugama (1998) and Mohammed Hassen (1996) for accounts of Macha Tulama.

⁶ For a thoroughgoing discussion of these issues, see Robinson (1996 and 1997) and Holcomb (1997).

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THE IMPACT OF A RACIST U.S. FOREIGN POLICY ON THE OROMO NATIONAL STRUGGLE¹

Asafa Jalata

Introduction

This essay critically examines the impact of the U.S. foreign policy on the Oromo national movement through focusing on its practices which are revealed to be racist. It is essential to provide a pragmatic definition of racism at the outset to explore this issue in U.S. foreign policy. As the meaning of 'race' is complex so that of racism.² Racism is a discourse and a practice in which a racial/ethnic project is politically, culturally and "scientifically" constructed by global and regional elites in the capitalist world system to naturalize and justify racial/ethnic inequality in which those at the top of the hierarchy oppress and exploit those below them by claiming biological and/or cultural superiority. "*A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation or explanation of racial dynamics,*" Winant notes, "*and an effort to organize and distribute resources along particular racial lines*"[author's emphasis].³ Simply put, racism is an expression of institutionalized patterns of colonizing structural power and social control. It is manifested in individual and cultural practices. Race and racism are socially and culturally constructed to maintain the identities of the dominant population groups and their power and privileges through policy formulation and implementation.⁴

By inventing nonexistent "races,"⁵ the racist ideology institutionalizes "the hierarchies involved in the worldwide division of labour."⁶ Race and racism are socio-political constructs since all human groups are biologically

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and genetically more alike than different.⁷ Staples asserts that “it is useful to view race as a political and cultural identity rather than to apply any genetic definitions. Race is a political identity because it defines the way in which an individual or [a group] is to be treated by the political state and the conditions of one’s oppression.”⁸ Race and racism as politico-cultural constructs define the relationship between the dominant and subordinated racial/ethnic groups and legitimate the imposition of dominant values on dominated values through legitimating the values of the dominant.⁹ The application of racist values to the Oromo issue by Ethiopian and U.S. foreign policy elites make possible the economic exploitation and political oppression of Oromos and facilitates judgements and policy based upon stereotypes and unexamined, preconceived ideas about Oromos. Just as other Western and Eastern bloc countries discriminated against Oromos and other colonized nations in their dealings with Ethiopia, U.S. foreign policy elites and the U.S. government have approached the Oromo issue with a racist mindset which served its imperialist interest.

This racist mindset fosters institutional and individual discrimination by treating Oromos unfairly and undemocratically. It avoids critical investigation by introducing and accepting false information, by closing off options for either democratic policy making or finding solutions to the contradictions between Oromos and *Habashas*. Specifically this essay questions why the West, particularly the United States, sees *Habashas* (Amharas and Tigrayans) as “Semitic,” Christian, and “advanced” peoples, and Oromos as “savage,” “Muslim fundamentalists,” “pagan,” “backward,” and most recently “terrorist.”¹⁰ This false dichotomy leads the United States and other Western countries to provide successive *Habasha* state elites with political, financial, technological, diplomatic, and military assistance and to ignore the voice of Oromos. Noting how European colonial scholars misused political power and social scientific knowledge by characterizing Africans as savages, Mudimbe argues that “The novelty [of explorer’s text] resides in the fact that the discourse on ‘savages’ is . . . a discourse in which an explicit political power presumes the authority of a scientific knowledge and vice-versa.”¹¹ A racist ideological discourse has enabled successive Ethiopian elites and their governments to dominate and exploit Oromos who comprise more than half of the population of the Ethiopian empire.

Several scholars have studied the impact of U.S. foreign policy on the

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Oromo national movement, but have not addressed the racist ideological base of this policy¹² which prevents policy experts from objectively examining the Oromo question. By siding with the Tigrayan ethnocentric minority regime, the U.S. government still enables the massive violation of the human rights of the colonized Oromo ethnonational majority.¹³ Because of its imperialist economic and strategic interests and clearly racist assumptions about Oromos, the U.S. government and its foreign policy elites allied with the Tigrayan ethnocentric elite to form a government and to oppress the Oromo national movement. Hellinger comments that "What is missing from U.S. policy toward Africa is a basic respect for the people, their knowledge and their right to collectively determine their own future."¹⁴ This essay draws on the works of several critical scholars in the fields of African American and Native American studies and other areas. Since these scholars have brought several significant insights into their fields of studies, their observations and conclusions are particularly useful in analyzing the condition of Oromos. Since Native Americans and African Americans have suffered under the racist domestic policies of the United States,¹⁵ and since Oromos have been suffering under the racist foreign policies of the same country, it is helpful to use the insights of these scholars who critically study the experiences of these two groups under the racial oppression and the capitalist exploitation of the United States.

Background

Between the early 1950s and the 1970s, the U.S. introduced its "modernization" programs to the Ethiopian empire and supported the Haile Selassie government.¹⁶ Several scholars demonstrated that the U.S. foreign policy toward Ethiopia consolidated racial/ethnic hierarchy that was formed by the alliance of Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism.¹⁷ When the Haile Selassie regime was overthrown by the popular revolt of 1974, a military leadership emerged to protect and extend the interests of *Habasha* settlers in Oromia and other colonized regions. This leadership allied with the Soviet Union¹⁸ who also adopted *Habasha* views toward Oromos as part of their colonizing role in Ethiopia. At the end of the 1980s, a structural crisis that manifested itself in national movements, famine crisis, poverty, and

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internal contradictions within the ruling elite factions eventually weakened the Amhara-dominated military regime and led to its demise in 1991.¹⁹ The U. S. government, as the global dominant power, reestablished its relations with the Ethiopian empire by allying with the emerging Tigrayan elites. Recognizing that this Amhara-based state power had lost credibility, the United States supported the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the 1980s and prepared it financially, ideologically, and militarily to replace the Amhara-led military regime by creating the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).²⁰ With the use of Western relief aid and financial support, the TPLF and its leaders converted the hunger-stricken Tigrayan peasants into guerrilla fighters in the 1980s.²¹

The major reason why the U.S. government chose the TPLF was that the Tigrayan elites were perceived as a legitimate successor of an Amhara-led regime because of the racist assumptions of the West. Paul Henze, one of the architects of American-Tigrayan alliance, argued in the mid-1980s that the Tigrayans "as much as the Amhara, are an imperial people who, despite their loyalty to tradition, think of themselves as having a right-and perhaps even a duty-to play a role in the larger political entity of which they are a part."²² While promoting the Tigrayan interest, the same scholar dismissed the political significance of Oromos by arguing that Oromo grievance "is both territorially and politically diffuse and unlikely to coalesce into a coherent ethnic resistance movement."²³ In a multicultural empire like Ethiopia to identify one ethnonation and support it to dominate and exploit other ethnonations is racist. In justifying his position, Henze asserted that the Tigrayans recognize "the need to reconstitute Ethiopia and establish a just government recognizing regional rights and ethnic distinctions" as "a natural outgrowth of ... [their] view of Ethiopian history."²⁴ Just as they are justified to rule and dominate other peoples by their sense of "fairness," Tigrayans are also seen as pro-West because "they do not try to claim they are Arabs and they do not seek the support of Arab governments," according to Henze.²⁵ Implicit in these arguments are that other peoples like Oromos are pro-Arabs and anti-West and they lack sense of fairness to deal with other peoples. Based on these false assumptions, U.S. Foreign policy experts like Henze advised the American government to invest in the TPLF and dismissed the relevance of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). In Henze words, "The claims of the Oromo Liberation Front of widespread organization and effectiveness

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inside Ethiopia cannot be substantiated by firm evidence. *Oromia* as a territorial entity has no meaning inside Ethiopia. It is an exile construct.²⁶ Based on false information about Oromos and the OLF or because of his support for the Tigrayans and the TPLF, Henze made these erroneous conclusions. American efforts to overthrow the government of Mengistu Haile Mariam and support of the TPLF between 1976 and 1991 was influenced by such biased assumptions.

With the assistance of several forces, such as the United States, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, Libya, and the Sudan, the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front overthrew the weakened military regime in 1991 and formed a transitional government by signing a Transitional Charter with other political organizations of which the OLF was the largest and most prominent. But, within less than a year, the Tigrayan-led regime violated the Charter and established a Tigrayan ethnocentric minority government, justifying its action through the discourse of "democracy"²⁷ and ethnic federalism. Since 1991, the United States has cemented its relationship with Tigrayan state elites at the cost of the colonized Oromo ethnonational majority and other groups who have been systematically denied meaningful access to Ethiopian state power. Consequently, the U.S. foreign policy toward Ethiopia has had a serious negative impact on the Oromo struggle for self-determination and democracy.

By signing the Transitional Charter in 1991 with the Tigrayan-led regime, the Oromo political leadership tacitly -or-effectively accepted the U.S. policy of polyarchy or elite democracy.²⁸ However, by ignoring the Oromo leadership, the U.S. government endorsed the violation of this Charter in 1992 by the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. Ignoring the human rights violations of Oromos and other nations, George E. Moose, former Assistant Secretary of State, argued in 1994 that the Meles regime "for the first time in decades, has brought general peace and stability to Ethiopia. Though not sufficient, these conditions are essential for progress in many areas, including human rights."²⁹ Despite the fact that the Oromo national movement does not have any support from Arab and African countries, U.S. foreign policy elites have tried to link the Oromo national struggle to Muslim forces that they consider "terrorist" to discredit the Oromo struggle for self-determination and democracy.³⁰ Despite the fact that the

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offices of the OLF and the Oromo Relief Association were closed since 1992 in the Sudan by the collaboration between the Ethiopian government and the Sudanese government, Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State of African Affairs, argues that the Oromo movement is supported by the Sudanese National Islamic Front regime and destabilizes Ethiopia. This regime has been against the Oromo national struggle since the Oromo leadership does not accept any religious ideology. When the Sudan supported the TPLF and EPLF full-heartedly, its support for the OLF was minimal. Susan Rice has attempted to include the OLF in the terrorist camp thus denying legitimacy for the Oromo national struggle for self-determination and democracy and by endorsing the Tigrayan ethnocratic regime. Ignoring the national struggle of Oromos and the massive violations of their human rights, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright claimed in 1997 that under the leadership of Prime Minister Meles, "Ethiopia is again earning the world's admiration, this time for its strides in reforming, rebuilding, and re-uniting at home and its leadership for peace and unity across Africa."³¹

Sealy notes that "Africa's many dictatorships despite their characteristic gross economic mismanagement and severe abuses of human rights have been able to endure for so long because they have been actively supported by external agents, the most notable and hypocritical of which is the United States of America."³² Ethiopia is an example of such a dictatorial regime. Despite the West's acceptance of the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian regime as democratic, convincing arguments have been made that the regime is ethnocratic, colonial, and terrorist.³³ The discourses of democracy and ethnic federalism are designed and propagated by the Meles government to hide the true nature of the regime from the international community. The Meles regime has more ethnicized the Ethiopian colonial state than successive Amhara-led governments by placing Tigrayan ethnicity at the core of a repressive regime.

Two layers of colonial administration in Oromia run this ethnocratic state. The first layer is filled by Tigrayan colonial officials, military commanders and cadres who have absolute power over Oromos.³⁴ Operating above the rule of law, these officials, commanders, cadres, policemen, and soldiers have the power to imprison, torture, murder, mutilate, rape, and confiscate property in an attempt to suppress or destroy Oromo nationalism.³⁵ Marginalized Oromo intermediaries are also used by the Tigrayan-led regime to violently suppress Oromo nationalists.³⁶

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The second layer of colonial administration is occupied by members of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO). This organization was created by the TPLF from Oromo prisoners of war, Oromo-speaking colonial settlers in Oromia, and marginalized Oromo intermediaries who abandoned the collective interests of the Oromo people.³⁷ The officials of the OPDO appear to be Oromo representatives who have power to plan and implement policies on development and political affairs. In reality, the actual power is in the hands of a core of Tigrayan officials and cadres from local to central administration.³⁸ As Vestal asserts, "The tightly organized and firmly disciplined EPRDF cadres infiltrated and eventually manipulated many of the institutions and mass organizations of public and collective life, such as trade unions, peasant commissions, professional bodies, grassroots action committees, workers' grievance committees, and local government."³⁹ Members of the OPDO are the foot soldiers of the TPLF/EPRDF in Oromia; they facilitate the transfer of resources from Oromos to Tigrayan elites and from Oromia to Tigray through suppressing Oromo nationalism and killing or imprisoning Oromo nationalists.⁴⁰ If any member of the OPDO raises any question in relations to Oromos, he or she is suspected as sympathetic to Oromo nationalism. Suspicion may lead to removal from position, demotion, imprisonment and torture, or death.⁴¹

Those Oromo individuals who continue to serve the interests of Tigrayans are engaged in the Ethiopian colonial project of suppressing or destroying Oromos because they have been shifted from their Oromo identity and become marginalized. The marginality that has been imposed on these Oromos by Ethiopian colonialism reflects the quality of psychic acculturation that ties the self-image and self-worth of these individuals to the dehumanizing world view imposed on Oromos by Ethiopian racist culture.⁴² Because of their psychic enslavement, such Oromos support the Ethiopian colonial project rather than assisting the Oromo struggle for freedom and democracy. According to Luana Ross,

One of the main motives of colonialism is economic exploitation, and cultural suppression almost invariably accompanies colonialism Cultural suppression is a legal process that involves deculturation-eradication of the

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indigenous people's original traditions-followed by indoctrination in the ideas of the dominators so the colonized may themselves assist the colonial project. The process, in which the colonized are removed from their cultural context through enslavement or transplantation, involves the abandonment of culture and the adoption of new ways of speaking, behaving, and reasoning.⁴³

Since these de-cultured and marginalized Oromos accept jobs that work against the Oromo national interest and their interests coincide with that of the Ethiopian colonizing structure, the majority of Oromos have rejected the OPDO and called them "maxanne,"⁴⁴ "Gobana," or traitors. These Oromo OPDO members play the classic intermediary role described so well by Fanon when discussing the dynamics of colonialism: "The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace, yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native."⁴⁵ Ethiopian colonialism not only facilitated the transference of resources from Oromos to *Habashas* through the physical domination of Oromia and destruction of indigenous Oromo culture, but it has also domesticated the minds of a few elements of Oromo society. Such Oromo intermediaries serve their own class interest and the interest of the Ethiopian colonizing structure at the cost of Oromo society.

With the help of the West, particularly the United States, the Meles regime has attempted to destroy the OLF and other independent Oromo organizations so that it can freely control and exploit Oromia through the OPDO, its puppet organization. Oromos have been targeted because of their economic resources and their political opposition. Since the majority of Oromos have supported the Oromo national movement, the Meles regime has been targeting Oromo nationalists and the Oromo people. "Because the Oromo occupy Ethiopia's richest areas and comprise half of the population of Ethiopia, they are seen as the greatest threat to the present Tigrayan-led government. Subsequently, any indigenous Oromo organization, including the Oromo Relief Association (ORA), has been closed and suppressed by the government. The standard reason given for detaining Oromo people is that they are suspected of supporting the OLF."⁴⁶ The Oromo movement is the

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only national movement in the Horn of Africa that has been denied assistance from the West, the Middle East, and Africa. Yet Oromo nationalists have never endorsed any dogmatic ideology, and their stated objective is to restore their indigenous Oromo democratic tradition which they believe provides the foundation for a future form of Oromo self-determination and democracy.⁴⁷ Following this background information, we briefly explore how the United States was founded as a country in the capitalist world system in order to account for the evolution of its racist ideology in its domestic and foreign policy, and its wholesale adoption of a racist Ethiopian colonial ideology in its dealings with Ethiopia and Oromia.

Global Capitalism, Racism and the Formation of the USA

A better understanding of racism in U.S. domestic and foreign policy requires an examination of the global capitalist system and its impact on the formation of the United States, and as well as the historical relationships among racial/ethnic groups in the United States. The United States emerged in the process of the colonial expansion of the European-dominated capitalist world system. This system developed in Western Europe, and then expanded to America and Africa by incorporating the peoples of these continents through trade, slavery, and colonialism from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.⁴⁸ Explaining this process and its impact on African peoples, Semmes notes that "The resulting triangular relationship between Europe, Africa, and the Americas gave a tremendous stimulus to Western capitalism and Europe's industrial revolution, while dooming African peoples to underdevelopment and dependency."⁴⁹ This system hierarchically organized world peoples through the processes of slavery and colonialism and led to the racialization/ethnicization of a global division of labor. This hierarchical organization of peoples served to transfer resources from subjugated population groups to dominant groups in the West and to their intermediary groups in the Third World.

The Western European colonial empires created multiracial/multi-cultural societies in which they practiced racial dictatorship known as "Herrenvolk" democracy⁵⁰ in countries such as the United States, South Africa, Brazil, and Australia. The hierarchical racial/ethnic relationship has

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been legitimated by the ideologies of racism, universalism,⁵¹ and progress. Wallerstein states that "capitalism developed an ideological framework of oppressive humiliation which had never previously existed, and which today we call sexism and racism."⁵² Mainstream Euro-American academic elites theorized the issue of race as a natural phenomenon; as a result, race was seen as a natural biological phenomenon that would determine a rigid, immutable societal hierarchy.⁵³ Robert Young even concludes that "modern racism was an academic creation."⁵⁴ Later, scientific elites also used the concept of "culture" to naturalize and essentialize the differences among human groups. Euro-American scientific and political elites created the "savagery" of the subjugated peoples and the "civility" of whites by defining human cultural history according to the cultural-racial categories of backwardness, barbarism, and civilization.

The concept of "race" itself entered into European languages in the fifteenth century to identify a people or a segment of population, and it gained its "scientific" and popular meanings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁵⁵ With the European domination of the world since the sixteenth century, whiteness was seen as a marker of civilization. Racist scholars never explained why Western Europeans did not dominate the world prior to the sixteenth century, if their whiteness was a marker of civilization. Winant asserts that "The five-hundred year of domination of the globe by Europe and its inheritors is the historical context in which racial concepts of difference have attained their present status as fundamental components of human identity and inequality. To imagine the end of race is thus to contemplate the liquidation of western civilization."⁵⁶ Hence, racism grew out of large-scale and long-term social changes that were associated with the development of capitalism and its expansion from Western Europe. Using geography and phenotype, Euro-American biologists, anthropologists, and others divided human groups arbitrarily into black/Africa, white/Europe, yellow/Asia, red/America without studying their genotypes. Young, Said, and McCarthy argue that through large-scale global social changes and colonial expansion the identities of European-ness, Asian-ness, African-ness, Englishness, Frenchness, American-ness, and other larger identities were invented and racialized.⁵⁷

Despite the fact that all human groups evolved from the same source that enabled them to have similar mental capabilities as groups and to

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interbreed freely, mainstream Euro-American scholars facilitated the emergence of racism to justify the subjugation of the world peoples by the European and American colonial expansion, war, ethnocide, enslavement, and continued oppression.⁵⁸ Marshall expounds that "scientific and lay concepts of race have served to support the economic and political privileges of ruling groups who regarded themselves as superior by virtue of phylogenetic heritage rather than because of the accidents of culture history."⁵⁹ Global capitalism, slavery, colonialism, and migration of peoples caused the disruption of cultures both in the center and the colonized areas of the modern world system; a racist cultural movement emerged in the West to counter this cultural disruption that could undermine the cultural stability of the core countries through the amalgamation of various peoples.⁶⁰

In founding the United States, European colonial settlers rationalized the colonization and destruction of Native Americans through racist discourse.

They described Europeans as hard workers and more disciplined than Native Americans.⁶¹ In contrast, Native Americans were seen as "lazy," "savage," and unproductive; consequently, their colonization and dispossession were justified. The discourse of racism, work, discipline, and whiteness were combined to rationalize the destruction of Native Americans.⁶² While all European settlers were considered hardworking whites, all Native Americans were considered lazy. European settlers invented "Indian savagery" through the ideology of whiteness.⁶³ Based on these racist assumptions, schools were introduced to assimilate some Native American children through Christianizing and "civilizing" them and teaching the superiority of Europeans and the inferiority of Native Americans.

This educational policy was intended to create an educated intermediate class in Native American society that European settlers could use to implement their colonial policies. According to Wright and Tierney, "The earliest colonial efforts to provide Indians with higher education were designed to Christianize and 'civilize' the Indians, thus saving them from the folly of their 'heathenish' and 'savage' ways. The hope was that educated Indians, as schoolmasters and preachers, would become missionary agents among their own brethren."⁶⁴ Later the ideology of whiteness was used to commit ethnocide and/or to create reservations for the remnants of Native Americans and to transfer the resources of the indigenous people to European settlers.

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One U.S. general wrote in 1868 that "the more I see these Indians the more convinced I am that all have to be killed or be maintained as a species of pauper. Their attempts at civilization are simply ridiculous."⁶⁵ Today Native Americans are the most oppressed, exploited, and underdeveloped part of American society because of such a racist political and economic attack that historically targeted them and currently continues to do so. Ross explains that historical evidence "reveals the process of how the 'savage' was invented. Racial oppression, then as now, is not a discrete phenomenon, independent of larger political and economic tendencies. Twentieth-century laws and their enforcement can readily be seen as instruments for creating and maintaining social and economic stratification created centuries before. Indeed, past deeds illuminate present treacheries."⁶⁶

The United States emerged through establishing settler colonialism, practicing ethnocide, and intensifying two types of labor recruitment systems: wage labor for whites and coerced labor for enslaved Africans. The White Anglo-Saxon Protestant group that founded the U.S. developed two major stratification systems: class and racial caste systems.⁶⁷ While the class system and gender hierarchy were maintained to protect the power of rich white males in an emerging white society, the racial caste system was invented to keep African Americans at the bottom of white society so that they would provide their labor and other resources freely or cheaply. Racial slavery made African Americans commodities, robbed their humanity, and denied them all forms of freedom. Fishman states that African Americans "were denied [freedom] by a rapacious colonial system of mercantile capitalism, which relied on the brutalities of the primitive accumulation of wealth backed up by ruthless armed action. This wealth played a strategic role in the amassing of capital for the rise of industrial capitalism."⁶⁸ As the ideology of whiteness was used to exterminate Native Americans and to transfer their resources to white society, it also justified slavery for about two and a half centuries and segregation for about one more century. With their emancipation during and after the American Civil War, African Americans were denied access to cultural, economic and political gains by segregation that was enforced by the government, the criminal justice system and mob lynching. Through the racial caste system, white Americans imposed on African Americans slavery, segregation, cultural hegemony and colonial domination to keep them at the bottom of a society in which whites were on the top.

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“The conception of race,” Hunt writes “defined by the poles of black and white, carried over into American foreign policy.”⁶⁹ White racism was invented and refashioned with the changing times to prove the mental inferiority of blacks and other colonized peoples and to rationalize their mistreatment by whites.⁷⁰ Recently an infamous book called *The Bell Curve* revived “scientific racism” and rehashed nineteenth century arguments of Social Darwinism. We can conclude from the popular acceptance of this publication that the black struggle of the mid-twentieth century did not uproot white racism; instead it forced racism to go underground. Despite national liberation movements in general and the African American struggle in particular that “made untenable a hierarchy cast in explicitly racial terms,”⁷¹ since the mid-twentieth century indirect institutional racism and discrimination remained strong in the United States.

A racist ideology that hierarchically organizes various peoples based on skin color and/or cultural attributes to justify colonialism, slavery, ethnocide, imperialism and dictatorship corrupts U.S. institutions. According to Hunt, “The idea of a racial hierarchy proved particularly attractive because it offered a ready and useful conceptual handle on the world Rather than having to spend long hours trying-perhaps inclusively-to puzzle out the subtle patterns of other cultures, the elite interested in policy had at hand in the hierarchy of race a key to reducing other peoples and nations to ready comprehensible and familiar terms Races were different and unequal. Some were civilized or progressive, others were more barbaric or backward.”⁷² Challenge to this racist ideology mounted by a few white intellectuals and progressives, black scholars, and national liberation movements, could not overthrow this ideology; therefore, racism in different forms continues to influence U.S. policy elites who deal with the issues of the oppressed racial/ethnic groups in the United States and the Third World. The mistreatment of Oromos by U.S. policy elites and the U.S. government by siding with Tigrayans clearly shows this reality. As we will see below, the racist views of U.S. foreign policy elites toward the Oromo people are being solidified by the racist discourse in Ethiopian studies, and U.S. support for racism in Ethiopian society.

Racist Views in Ethiopian Studies and Ethiopian Society

As the names of different African peoples who were enslaved and brought to America were changed to *Negro*,⁷³ and as the names of various peoples in America were changed to *Indian*⁷⁴ with their colonization and destruction, Oromos were given the name *Galla*. The names *Negro*, *Indian* and *Galla* were the products of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and they were externally imposed by slavers and colonizers. These names were invented in the process of removing these peoples from their respective cultural and historical centers and making them the target of destruction, enslavement, colonialism, and continued subjugation. The appellation *Galla* was given to Oromos as a name of contempt and derogation; it characterized them as slave, pagan, uncivilized or barbaric, inferior, and ignorant.⁷⁵ The name *Galla* was invented to destroy Oromoness and to devalue Oromo culture, history, and tradition. Sorenson asserts that "the Oromo were known as the Galla, a term they do not apply to themselves and one that carries 'overtones of race and slavery' as well as the imputation of a lack of civilization; according to myth, the Oromo were descendants of 'a high-born Amhara lady and a slave.'"⁷⁶ *Galla* is the name of racist ridicule in academic and popular discourse.

In Ethiopian discourse, Oromos have been depicted as "somewhat darker" than Amharas and Tigrayans⁷⁷ although it is difficult to differentiate the former from the latter by just looking at their skin color or physical appearance. By using the discredited racist categorization of human groups, such as Semitic, Hamitic, Negroid, and Cushitic, *Habashas* place Oromos between themselves and the people that they wrongly call *Shankillas* that they consider Negroid.⁷⁸ Despite the fact that *Habashas* are black, they consider themselves Semitic to associate themselves with the Middle East and dissociate themselves from Africa whose peoples they consider both racially and culturally inferior. For instance, when Haile Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia, was interviewed by the *Nigerian Daily Times* about Ethiopian racial identity in the 1930s, he said "that Ethiopians were not, and did not regard themselves as negroes [sic], as they were a Hamito-Semitic people."⁷⁹ Sorenson expresses this racist attitude as "a multiplicity of Ethiopians, blacks who are whites, the quintessential Africans who reject African identity."⁸⁰ Since the concept of race is a socio-political construct, it is essential to

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critically understand a historical context in which Ethiopian racism is produced and reproduced to denigrate colonized peoples to deny them access to Ethiopian state power. In Ethiopian discourse, racial distinctions have been invented and manipulated to perpetuate the political objective of *Habasha* domination of the colonized population groups. "The fact that racial distinctions are easily manipulated and reversed indicates," Sorenson notes, "the absurdity of any claims that they have an objective basis and locates these distinctions where they actually occur, in political power."⁸¹

Habasha elites recognize the importance of racial distinctions in linking themselves to the Middle East, Europe, and North America to mobilize support for their political projects. Jews, Arabs, Europeans, and Americans see *Habashas* closer to themselves than the peoples whom they consider "real black." Also the West, particularly the United States, places *Habashas* on "an intermediate position between whites and blacks" and consider them closer to "the European race" or members of "the great Caucasian family."⁸² There were Europeans who considered *Habashas* as a very intelligent people because of their racial affinity with the "Caucasian race."⁸³ There were also who saw *Habashas* as "dark-skinned white people" and "racial and cultural middleman" between black Africa on one side and Europe and the Middle East on the other side.⁸⁴ One German scholar admired the intelligence of *Habashas* and noted that he never saw such mental capability among Negroes, Arabs, Egyptians, and Nubians.⁸⁵ These racist discourses are unchallenged in academic and popular discourse because they help reproduce Ethiopian ethnocentric and colonial state power. U.S. foreign policy elites, diplomats, and other officials recognize and defend such "racial pretensions of Ethiopia's ruling class."⁸⁶

Habasha racism prevents the peaceful coexistence of different cultures as shown by the destruction of the Gafat and other peoples. *Habashas* see themselves as a Semitic people who are racially and culturally superior to others in the Horn of Africa; Baxter explains that they "used to stress their Middle Eastern rather than African cultural roots, as is so obvious in the reiteration of the Solomonic legend, taught in schools as history and justification of imperial rule. Just as the expansion of the European empire in Africa coincided with that of Abyssinian, so the latter took on some of the same sanctimonious assumptions of bringing civilization to the savages.

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Menelik and his courtiers became honorary, if second-class, bearers of the 'white man's burden in Africa.'"⁸⁷ *Habashas* have effectively used cultural racism⁸⁸ in destroying or suppressing other peoples. Cultural racism and its contradictions may result in the extermination or/and continued subjugation of the dominated population group. Racism does not necessarily manifest itself by the discourse of biological difference; usually it combines the discourses of biological and cultural differences to justify unequal treatment of different population groups. The extermination of Jews by Germans, the continued subjugation of Palestinians by the Jews, the ethnic cleansing of Bosnians by Serbians, the destruction of Tutsis by Hutus, and suppression of Hutus by Tutsis are examples of extreme forms of cultural racism.

As Eurocentric scholars have intellectually separated the original black civilization of Kemet (Egypt) and Kush or Nubia and linked to the Middle East to prove the racist notion of superiority of non-blacks to blacks,⁸⁹ some Ethiopianists tried to prove the racial and civilizational superiority of Amharas and Tigrayans by Semitizing and linking them to the Middle East and Europe. Baxter notes that "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 Africa."⁹⁰ Recognizing the political and diplomatic significance of the name Ethiopia (the old name for the black world), the Abyssinian state elites replaced the name Abyssinia with that of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian ideological history claims "the modern Ethiopian state as the direct heir to the Ethiopia mentioned in biblical and classical sources. Ethiopian and Western scholars presented Ethiopia as an entity that had existed continuously as an integrated and independent state for three thousand years."⁹¹ Successive Ethiopian state elites use the African and Semitic discourses both regionally and globally. Globally, they use the Semitic discourse and the discourse of Christianity to mobilize assistance from Europe, North America, and the Middle East.

Skillfully, they have used their blackness to mobilize other Africans and the African diaspora⁹² and black U.S. policy elites against Oromos and other colonized peoples. By confusing original Ethiopia (the black world) with contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) *Habasha* elites misled some historically naive people in Africa, Europe, North America, and the world. Most people do not know the difference between ancient Ethiopia and contemporary Ethiopia. Because of this historical misinformation, Africans

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who were colonized and enslaved by Europeans, except those who were enslaved and colonized by contemporary Ethiopians, wrongly considered contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) as an island of black freedom since they maintained formal political power. Most blacks “knew very little about the social and political conditions of Ethiopia. What they wrote or said about Ethiopia was at best a manifestation of their emotional state.”⁹³ Other Africans were unaware that Ethiopia’s political power came from allying with the colonizing European powers. In reality, the Ethiopia that participated in the slave trade and the “Scramble for Africa” was not an island of freedom. Instead, it has been a “prison house” in which Oromos and other colonized and enslaved populations, were and are still brutalized.

One would expect that African American policy elites in the U.S. State Department, including George Moose, Irvin Hicks, and Susan Rice, would think differently from their white counterparts and genuinely promote social justice and democracy in Africa. But African American policy elites, because of the distorted historical knowledge, and/or because of their class interests, have accepted the ideological discourse on Ethiopia that presented this empire as the home of black freedom when all blacks were under Euro-American colonialism and slavery and endorsed the racist U.S. policy toward Ethiopia and Oromia. As some African kings and chiefs participated in the slave trade with European slave merchants to commodify some Africans and ship them to North America and other parts of the world, these African American elites collaborate with racist structures that dehumanize African peoples. It is an iron of history that the lack of critical historical knowledge or class interest or the ideological confusion built into this racist policy has brought an alliance between the biological or ideological descendants of slavers and the descendants of slaves to victimize people like Oromos who have been victimized by colonialism and slavery. Current *Habasha* elites are the ideological or actual descendants of Emperors Yohannis and Menelik who participated in the massacre and enslavement of millions of Oromos and others.

While glorifying the culture and civilization of *Habashas*, racist scholars, such as Edward Ullendorff, advanced the notion that Oromos as a barbaric people did not possess “significant material or intellectual culture” that could allow them to “contribute to the Semitized civilization of

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Ethiopia.⁹⁴ To demonstrate the civilizational and cultural superiority of Amharas and Tigrayans, racist scholars downplayed “the African-ness of ancient Ethiopia [Abyssinia] . . . to emphasize its similarities to European societies.”⁹⁵ Sorenson expounds that “along with the emphasis on a Great Tradition in Ethiopian history, came a specific configuration of racial identity. As in other discourses of race, this configuration merged power with phenotypical features in order to devalue the Oromo and other groups as both ‘more African’ and ‘more primitive’ than the Amhara [and Tigray]. The Oromo were presented as warlike, essentially ‘people without history’ and without any relationship to the land.”⁹⁶ In Ethiopian studies, Oromos were depicted as “crueller scourges” and “barbarian hordes who brought darkness and ignorance in the train” to Ethiopia;⁹⁷ they were also depicted as evil, ignorant, order-less, destructive, infiltrators, and invasive.⁹⁸

Oromos also were seen as “a decadent race” who were “less advanced” because of their racial and cultural inferiority; therefore, their colonization and enslavement by the alliance of Ethiopians and Europeans were seen as a civilizing mission.⁹⁹ Since in the racist and modernist thinking historical development is linear, and society develops from primitive or backward to civilized or an advanced stage, Oromos who have been seen as a primitive people are also considered as a collection of tribes or a single tribe or a ‘cluster’ of diverse groups that cannot develop any nationalist political consciousness except tribalism.¹⁰⁰ Racist and modernist scholars have also denied the existence of a unified Oromo identity and argued that Oromos cannot achieve statehood because they are geographically scattered and lack cultural substance.¹⁰¹ Since the creation of the Ethiopian empire in the second half of the nineteenth century, *Habasha* elites claimed that they have a superior religion and civilization, and even sometimes expressed that they were not black and saw other Africans as “baryas” (slaves); in Abyssinia proper, *Galla* and “barya” have been used interchangeably.¹⁰² Sbacchi asserts that the *Habashas* “have traditionally looked upon the dark skinned people as inferiors and given them the name of ‘*Shankalla*’ [sic] The Black Americans were known as negro[sic], which in Ethiopia was associated with slavery. Hence to the Ethiopians [*Habashas*] the Afro-Americans were *Shankalla*.”¹⁰³ William R. Scott, an African American, who participated in a student work-camp in Ethiopia in 1963, expresses his painful encounter with *Habasha* racism as the following: “I was called *barya* (slave) by young, bigoted Ethiopian aristocrats,

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who associated African-Americans with slavery and identified them with the country's traditional servant class."¹⁰⁴ The participation of *Habashas* in the scramble for Africa and in the slave trade and the commodification of millions of Oromos and others encouraged them to associate themselves with Europe and the Middle East rather than black Africans. "Western discourse . . . duplicated many of the assumptions and ideologies that had been put in place by the ruling elites of Ethiopia," Sorenson writes, "constructing the latter as the carriers of a Great Tradition which was engaged in its own Civilizing Mission with respect to what it regarded as other uncivilized Groups in Ethiopia."¹⁰⁵

The popular discourse on Oromos is full of racist prejudices and stereotypes. When *Habashas* want to show the inferiority of Oromos on a racial/ethnic hierarchy, or to deny the humanity of Oromos, they debase an Oromo and his nationality by asking "sawu nawu Galla?" (Is he a human being or a *Galla*?); this query shows that *Habashas* consider Oromos as inferior human beings. Because of such racist views the Ethiopian Orthodox Church publication denounced sexual relations between *Habashas* and Oromos by saying that Jesus would punish those who had sexual intercourse with "the cursed, the dumb, the Moslems, the Galla, the Shankilla, the Falasha, the horse, the donkey, the camel and all those who committed sodomy."¹⁰⁶ This religious tract was written in *Geez* (an old Abyssinian language) and was translated into Amharic in 1968, but its original date of writing and its author were not known. But the piece was popular and widely recited by literate *Habashas*. Oromos, Ethiopian Jews, Muslims, and various peoples were categorized with beasts, such as horses, donkeys and camels. Of course, the implicit intention of the Orthodox Church was to draw a racial/ethnic boundary between *Habashas* and non-*Habashas* to maintain the racial/ethnic purity of the former.

Habasha stereotypes depict Oromos as a dirty people; the expression "Galla na sagara eyadare yigamal" compares Oromos to feces and claims that Oromos continue to stink like feces with passing days. This expression warns that the closer you get to Oromos, the more you find how they are bad and dirty. This racial insult is used to create suspicion between Oromos and *Habashas*. Another expression depicts Oromos as a rotten people ("timbi or bisbis *Galla*.") Yet another expression explains that Oromos cannot be clean

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even if they wash themselves again and again; it says that “*Galla na Shinfila ayitaram*,” which literally means “Even if you wash them, stomach lining and a Galla will never come clean.” Oromos have been depicted as barbarians and backward people in popular discourse, too. A *Habasha* expression claims that Oromos’ attempt to be civilized cannot be successful since Oromos are predestined to fail in civilizational projects. The saying “*Galla sisaltin bacharaqa jantila yizo yizoral*” attempts to show that even if he is civilized an Oromo does not know the true essence of civility. Literally this saying means “when an Oromo is civilized he stretches his umbrella in moon light and walks around so that he can be seen by others”; simply put, since Oromos are stupid, they do not know how to behave in a civilized way. The expression “*Ye Galla chawa, ye gomen choma yelewum*” depicts Oromos as a society that does not have respected and notable individuals. Literally this expression means that “as there is no fat in vegetables or greens, there is no a gentleman in the *Galla* community” Oromos have been seen as a useless people who do not deserve respect.

Oromos have been insulted for even trying to assimilate to Ethiopian culture by speaking in an Ethiopian language. *Habasha* racists have expressed their anger toward Oromos who have mispronounced Amharic words by saying that “*Afun yalfata Galla; tabitaba Galla*” (an Oromo who cannot express himself clearly). To psychologically demoralize Oromos, the *Habasha* discourse also depicts Oromos as a cowardly people who cannot resist subordination; the saying “and Amhara matto *Galla* yinadal” clearly shows the essence of this discourse. Literally it means “one Amhara can force one hundred Oromos to submission or subordination.” However, historical evidence indicates that until they allied with Europeans and obtained modern weapons, *Habashas* saw Oromo fighters as their nightmare. Even a poor *Habasha* or a leper claims that he is better than a *Galla*; the expressions “Even if I am poor, I am not a *Galla*,” and “Even if I am a leper, I am not a *Galla*” clearly show how most *Habashas*, including the sick and the poor, claim racial/ethnic superiority. Generally speaking, *Habashas* have “looked upon and treated the indigenous people as backward, heathen, filthy, deceitful, lazy, and even stupid - stereotypes that European colonialists commonly ascribed their African subjects.”¹⁰⁷

Habasha social institutions, such as family, school, media, government, religion, reproduce and perpetuate these racist prejudices and

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stereotypes among Ethiopian society.¹⁰⁸ Explaining how racial insults wound the colonized people, Delgado says, "The racial insult remains one of the most pervasive channels through which discriminatory attitudes are imparted. Such language injures the dignity and self-regard of the person to whom it is addressed, communicating the message that distinctions of race are distinctions of merit, dignity, status, and personhood. Not only does the listener learn and internalize the messages contained in racial insults, these messages color our society's institutions and are transmitted to succeeding generations."¹⁰⁹ These prejudices and stereotypes consciously or unconsciously influenced Ethiopian and Ethiopian studies. Ethiopians, and particularly those Ethiopian scholars and Ethiopianists who have been influenced by these racist assumptions, never respected Oromo culture and also opposed the Oromo struggle for social justice and human rights under different pretexts.

Some assert that since Oromos are dispersed among other peoples, the question of national self-determination is not applicable to their cause; others argue that the assimilation of Oromos to *Habashas* both biologically and culturally prevent them from having a cultural identity that enables them to have national self-determination.¹¹⁰ Further, since Oromos are considered "invaders" of Ethiopia, some Ethiopian elites contest that they do not deserve self-determination because the region that they call Oromia does not belong to them.¹¹¹ This assertion implicitly assumes that Oromos must accept their subjugation and second class citizenship, or they must leave Ethiopia before they will be totally annihilated for continuing to demand self-determination and democracy. The political agenda of the destruction of Oromo society is not a new phenomenon; this political agenda has been supported by the West. The massive killings of Oromos during Abyssinian colonialism was never condemned as ethnocide. Leenco Lata notes that "despite its unparalleled brutality, Menelik's conquest escaped condemnation as the only positive historical development in the Africa of the late 1800s. To achieve this, the Oromo were made to appear deserving to be conquered."¹¹² Just as ethnocide committed by Menelik and his followers escaped world condemnation, so is the ethnic cleansing that is systematically committed by the Meles regime.¹¹³ According to Lata, "massacres of Oromos by any one of the Ethiopian forces rarely gets mentioned in Ethiopian or Euro-American writings. The slightest

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threat to the Abyssinian by the Oromo, however, can throw up a storm of protest and condemnation."¹¹⁴

Denying the reality that contemporary Abyssinia/Ethiopia was the product of neocolonialism that was invented by the alliance of Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism, the West praises Abyssinia (later Ethiopia) as the country that was never colonized in Africa. The idea that Ethiopia was not colonized laid the cornerstone for the ideology of "Greater Ethiopia." This Ethiopia was seen as "[a] civilized nation of an immense intelligence, the only one that is civilized without wearing trousers and shoes."¹¹⁵ Since the U.S. policy toward Ethiopia builds upon the European policy established before the United States became involved, it is necessary to briefly consider the essence of European policy toward Ethiopia. The ideology of Greater Ethiopia that has been accepted and developed by European and American policy elites and their governments has been the bedrock of racism on which Ethiopia was built and still maintained.¹¹⁶ When the French and British could not decide which of them would get this key region, and were not willing to go to war with each other over it, each backed a different proxy leader; the British chose Yohannis of Tigray, and the French chose Menelik of Amhara. But when Yohannis died in 1889, the British and the Italians devised a different solution for sharing access to the region.

The British and Italians struggled at Menelik's court to advise and control him and seek his favor; because of Menelik's failing health in 1906, France, Great Britain and Italy devised the policy behind the Tripartite treaty without Menelik's even knowing about it. This treaty states that "We the Great powers of Europe, France, Great Britain, and Italy, shall cooperate in maintaining the political and territorial status quo in Ethiopia as determined by the state of affairs at present existing and the previous [boundary] agreements."¹¹⁷ The foreign policy experts of Western countries not only provided technology and expertise in different fields, but they have been playing a critical role in formulating and promoting racist mythologies to justify the colonization and continued subjugation of the colonized subjects.

For instance, the notion of claiming Abyssinia/Ethiopia as an ancient kingdom was originally suggested by an Italian expert in 1891: Francisco Crispi instructed an Italian agent in Addis Ababa "to inform Menelik that the European powers were establishing their boundaries in Africa and that the emperor should, with Italian assistance, circulate a letter defining his borders

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in order to guarantee the integrity of his empire. Crispi suggested that in the letter, Menelik ought to point out that Ethiopia was an ancient Kingdom which had been recognized as independent by the Christian states of Europe."¹¹⁸

The racist idea that *Habashas* were different from the rest of Africa lay at the core of European justification for empowering them to colonize and rule Oromos and other nations who were seen like other colonized Africans. In the 1930s, when Haile Selassie went to Europe and became the darling of the Western media, the ideology of Greater Ethiopia was refined and celebrated in Europe, America, and Ethiopia.¹¹⁹ He was praised for his "extraordinary handsome face, next door to black, with high standing curly hair, a crisp black beard, a fine hawkish nose, and large gleaming eyes"; he was also glorified for his "devotion to modernization."¹²⁰ The Ethiopian empire that was created with the alliance of European imperialist powers and *Habasha* warlords has maintained itself through an alliance with successive imperial superpowers, namely, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States, that have provided protection to successive Ethiopian state elites and their governments.¹²¹ After colonizing Oromos and other nations with the help of European technology and expertise, Abyssinian colonial settlers in Oromia and other regions justified their colonial domination with racist discourse. With the establishment of their colonial authority in the colonized regions, *Habasha* settlers "assumed that their own innate superiority over the local residents accounted for this accomplishment."¹²² Since then *Habashas* and their Euro-American supporters have contributed to "Ethiopian mythology [which] consists in part of the erroneous notions that [Abyssinian] society had reached a superior evolutionary stage at the time of conquest, making them able to move in and take over Oromia and others The illusion plays a critically important role in holding the entire complex together, the ideology of Greater Ethiopia."¹²³

The ideology of Greater Ethiopia¹²⁴ claims that Ethiopia was not colonized like other parts of Africa because of *Habasha* bravery and patriotism that made this empire unique in Africa; Ethiopia was seen as a symbol of black freedom although it had built itself on racial/ethnic inequality by colonizing Oromos and others; Ethiopian historical discourse claims that Ethiopian boundaries are sacred since they were established for 3000 years; Abyssinian "society represented an advanced level of social and economic

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organization” that enabled it to defend itself from European colonialism by eliminating slavery and protecting “all the peoples of greater Ethiopia from falling prey to European imperialism”;¹²⁵ and Ethiopia played a significant civilizing mission by colonizing and dominating Oromos and other nations who were backward, pagan, destructive, and inferior. These racist mythologies of Greater Ethiopia helped the Haile Selassie government gain admission to the League of Nations in 1924. As a result, Ethiopia began to enjoy more recognition in Europe and North America, and “there was extended public discussion of Ethiopia’s place in the world community and a great elaboration of the Ethiopian mythology initiated by European writers for a European public.”¹²⁶ By joining the League of Nations, the Ethiopian empire, according to Evelyn Waugh, “had been recognized as a single state whose integrity was the concern of the world. Tafari’s own new dynasty had been accepted by the busy democracies as the government of this area; his enemies were their enemies; there would be money lent him to arm against rebels, experts to advise him; when trouble was brewing he would swoop down from the sky and take his opponents unaware; the fabulous glories of Prester John were to be reincarnated.....”¹²⁷

These essential components of racist discourse of Greater Ethiopia have remained intact. “Socialist” and then “democratic” discourse have been introduced by successive *Habasha* state elites and accepted by their Euro-American supporters without changing the colonizing and racist structure of Ethiopian society. As we will see shortly, Ethiopian racism and white racism have conveniently intermarried in the U.S. policy formulation and implementation in Ethiopia. When policy issues are discussed on Ethiopia Semitic civility, Christianity, antiquity, bravery, and patriotism of Amharas and Tigrayans are retrieved to valorize and to legitimize *Habasha* dominance and power; moreover the barbarism, backwardness, and the destructiveness of Oromos are reinvented to keep Oromos from access to state power. The combined racist views about Oromos and the racist assumptions of U.S. foreign policy elites effectively mobilize the U.S. State Department against the Oromo people.

U.S. Foreign Policy Elites and the Oromo

The U.S. Department of State believes that the Meles government

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protects human rights and promotes democracy. Rarely admitted weaknesses of this government are attributed to the local government officials.¹²⁸ Stevens Trucker, democracy and governance advisor to the US AID Mission to Ethiopia, claims that the Meles regime is committed to the establishment of “a functioning multiparty democracy within a federal structure”¹²⁹ despite the fact that the Ethiopian transition period that, as Terrence Lyons concluded, “began with a broadly inclusive national conference ended . . . with a single-party-dominant political system.”¹³⁰ Despite the rhetoric of democracy, the United States and other Western countries openly endorsed the emergence of Tigrayan ethnic dictatorship under one party rule.¹³¹ At the same time Prime Minister Meles engineers the killings of thousands of Oromos and creating of several concentration camps in Oromia,¹³² Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright believes that he promotes human rights in Ethiopia and Africa. Albright says that “The United States strongly supports the Prime Minister’s initiative at the OAU to create an eminent persons group to study the recent genocide in the Great Lakes, examines the international community’s response, and propose ways we can all do better in the future.”¹³³

Her remark that the Meles regime has “a good human rights record,”¹³⁴ refuses to recognize reports of human rights organizations regarding Ethiopia’s violations of human rights.¹³⁵ In 1997 Meles Zenawi was “regarded as one of Africa’s ‘new leaders’: he recently won an award in the United States for good government . . . Their [Western] governments tend to give priority to the Prime Minister’s economic reforms rather than his record on human rights.”¹³⁶ Susan E. Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, announced the end of wars in the Horn of Africa and the emergence of a democratic form of government in Ethiopia¹³⁷ despite the fact that almost all ethnonational groups in the Ethiopian empire charge that they suffer under the Tigrayan ethnocratic and terrorist regime.¹³⁸ She claimed that the United States facilitates “Africa’s full integration into the global economy” through the promotion of “democracy and respect for human rights” and resolving conflict and promoting peace.¹³⁹ There is no question that the globalization of Africa is being intensified; but, as the conflict between Oromos and the Tigrayan regime indicates, the United States has failed to promote even its policy of “democracy promotion.” The gap exists between what U.S. policy elites claim as their policies and what they practice.

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Albright has emphasized the importance of democracy for development saying that “[i]t is essential to sow the seeds of prosperity if Africa is to become a full participant in the world economy. It is necessary to build democracy. In this decade, people everywhere have learned that democracy is a parent to development. For people who are free to choose their leaders, publish their thoughts, organize their labor and invest their capital will build richer and more stable societies than those shackled by repression.”¹⁴⁰

One of President Clinton’s four goals for his trip to Africa was to promote democracy in Africa,¹⁴¹ but the U.S. government policy does not promote democracy in Ethiopia and Oromia. Oromia has been integrated into the global economy without its own political leadership and democracy; consequently Oromos have been brutalized and peripheralized. Unfortunately, the U.S. government contributes to the peripheralization and misery of Oromos by supporting a regime that violates human rights through state terrorism. Most Americans have no sympathy for the enslaved and subjugated peoples since they see them as inferior or uncivilized peoples who do not have the capability to be like them. Since this mindset flourished with the ideologies of whiteness and cultural superiority that caused the destruction of Native Americans and enslaved Africans, and since these ideologies have been also “recycled” by American institutions, they do not realize how U.S. foreign policy can have detrimental effects on peoples like Oromos. American President Theodore Roosevelt openly justified colonial violence and expansion in a racist discourse. Considering Native Americans as an inferior race, Roosevelt argued that the elimination Native Americans was necessary “for the benefit of civilisation and in the interest of mankind.”¹⁴² Further, since the ideologies of whiteness and cultural superiority devalued the humanity of Native Americans, the treaties that were signed with them were not respected. In 1830, one U.S. politician said that “treaties were expedient by which ignorant, intractable, and savage people were induced without bloodshed to yield up what civilized peoples had a right to possess.”¹⁴³ Probably the reason that the U.S. government ignored the violation of the Transitional Chapter of Ethiopia and supported the emergence of the Tigrayan ethnocentric minority regime was that it made the same sort of assumption, i.e. that Oromos were negotiating their defeat and destruction “to yield up what civilized peoples had a right to possess.”

Marc Baas, U.S. Charge d’Affaires, on November 14, 1991 said that

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"Oromos have been 'niggers' of this society."¹⁴⁴ Subsequent policy reveals that U.S. foreign policy elites and the U.S. government do not believe that these "niggers" of Ethiopia can play a decisive role in determining the essence of the Ethiopian state despite the fact that the people they call "niggers" are a numerical majority and possess the major resources on which Ethiopia depends for existence. This racist mindset allows the U.S. government to ignore the Oromo people. Accordingly, Oromos who are considered as real black and "less advanced" deserve less than *Habashas* who are considered as less black in the thinking of U.S. foreign policy elites. These foreign policy elites do not even bother to reconcile the contradiction that there is no skin color differences between *Habashas* and Oromos, only cultural differences. In the thinking of most white Americans, blackness denies rights and power. Since racism is a means of phenotypically and culturally categorizing peoples to justify their unequal treatment, Oromos are seen as darker and less advanced than *Habashas*.

Because of imperialist economic and strategic interests and these racist assumptions, the U.S. government does not recognize the struggle of Oromos for self-determination and democracy despite the fact that the Oromo political leadership endorsed its policy of "democracy promotion." Since the biological concept of race can be easily challenged, U.S. policy elites mainly apply "development theory" rather than racist biological notions when they deal with countries like Ethiopia. They do this without changing the long-established American views on race. According to Hunt, "Policy makers, whose impulse to see the world in terms of hierarchy was even more at odds with the need for political direction, found their way out of their bind by recasting the old racial hierarchy into cultural terms supplied by development theorists. No longer did leaders dare broadcast their views on barbarous or backward people, race traits, or skin color. It was instead now the attributes of modernity and tradition that fixed a people's or nation's place on the hierarchy."¹⁴⁵ The concepts of tradition, modernity and development are used by U.S. foreign elites to support Ethiopian state elites despite the fact that *Habasha* and Oromo societies are on similar level of economic and technological development. Oromos are assigned to serve the interests of Ethiopian and global elites at their own cost. Hence, through the process of racialization/ethnicization of the division of labor, Oromos must be poor

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farmers, servants and soldiers and not state elites, intellectuals, policy makers, and traders.

Only a few Oromos who have subordinated their interests and the interests of the Oromo people to that of *Habashas* are allowed to become intermediaries between *Habasha* elites and Oromo society. The Tigrayan-led regime with the tacit agreement of the West, particularly the United States, has targeted for destruction Oromo intellectuals and business elites who attempt to play a decisive role in regional and global politics through promoting the Oromo struggle for self-determination and democracy.¹⁴⁶ The current refusal of Oromos to accept the racialization/ ethnicization of division of labor and their attempt to achieve freedom and democracy have annoyed *Habasha* and U.S. policy elites. Therefore, it is tacitly accepted by the West, particularly by the U.S., that the Tigrayan government suppress the Oromo national movement by destroying its leadership and Oromo activists. Despite the fact that the OLF agreed to form a federal democratic Ethiopia, during the transition period, the West, Particularly the United States, and the Meles regime rationalized their actions by labeling the organization as separatist or terrorist. Neighboring countries like the Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti, Yemen, and some factions in Somalia could not resist financial incentives and/or political pressures from the West, particularly the United States, to deny sanctuary to the OLF and to deport many Oromo nationalists to Ethiopia even if it meant breaking international laws. Further, Oromo refugees have been threatened with *refoulement* from Yemen, Germany, Israel, Djibouti, Sudan, and Kenya since the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is "staffed by apologists for the Ethiopian government" that do not protect Oromo human rights.¹⁴⁷ The *refoulement* of hundred of Oromo refugees has taken place from Djibouti since the early 1990s with the "protection" of the UNHCR that ignores the violation of Oromo human rights.¹⁴⁸

The United States ignores the violation of human rights of Oromos and other colonized nations. According to *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*: "With about \$30 million in development aid and \$66 million in food aid, bringing the total to about \$97 million, Ethiopia remained the second largest recipient of U.S. aid in Sub-Saharan Africa, after South Africa. The U.S. failed to use its privileged relations with Ethiopia as a leverage for human right improvements The only public statement involving human rights came on August 6, [1998] when the U.S. government expressed deep concern at the

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detention and expulsion of Eritreans in and from Ethiopia.”¹⁴⁹ The U.S. government is only concerned about the human rights violations of Eritreans while ignoring the ethnic cleansing that the Tigrayan-led regime commits against Oromos and other colonized nations. When Oromos presented their cause to the U.S. government indicating that it should support the struggle of Oromos for self-determination and democracy rather than supporting Tigrayan ethnocracy, they did not get a positive response. They were ignored. U.S. foreign policy elites seek advice from scholars who have accepted without inspection the racist assumptions implicit in the construction of Ethiopia when they formulate a policy toward Ethiopia. They never have taken into consideration Oromo scholarship and Oromo studies that have successfully exposed the deficiency in Ethiopian Studies.¹⁵⁰ The State Department and its elites who deal with Ethiopian issues ignore the voices of Oromo scholars and politicians and other students of Oromo society. Racism has taken away human decency from U.S. foreign policy.

Conclusions

Racism in U.S. foreign policy has discouraged the success of an alternative leadership that can solve the problems of Oromos and other population groups who suffer under Ethiopian colonialism and global imperialism. Both generous support the successive *Habasha* elites headed by Menelik, Haile Selassie, Mengistu, and Meles have received from the West, particularly from the United States, and the East, and the institutionalized distinctions in the Ethiopian empire have mobilized Amharas and Tigrayans against Oromos and other colonized peoples and eliminated the possibility of forming a common political platform against the Ethiopian colonizing structure. The distinction between *Habashas* and Oromos is the outward expression of the fundamental subjugation of Oromos and other nations upon which Ethiopia is built; to challenge it is to shake the very foundation of Ethiopian colonialism.

Combined Ethiopian policies and U.S. policies have frustrated Oromos from democratically getting access to Ethiopian state power or from creating their own independent state by keeping them in the position of second-class citizens. Because of this, the Oromo national movement must

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broaden its political base both regionally and globally by forming an alliance with antiracist, anticolonial, and democratic forces to expose and remove all impediments to self-expression through educational mechanisms and organized struggle. As Oromos consolidate their national movement in Oromia, Oromos in the diaspora and the friends of Oromos in the world must build a global network through which they can expose ideologies that have had a serious negative impact on the Oromo struggle. Since the Oromo national movement is gradually maturing in Oromia, the building of an international bridge for the Oromo struggle will shorten the path to victory by removing one of the greatest obstacles to this movement.

NOTES

1 This paper was presented at the Forty-first Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, October 29 - November 1, 1998, Chicago, Illinois. I would like to thank Bonnie K. Holcomb, Chip Hastings, Wanda Rushing, Bill Robinson, and Lemmu Baissa for providing comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

2. See Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race*, (New York: New York University Press, 1996). Malik (1996:265) asserts that "the meaning of 'race' cannot be confined to a simple definition or reduced to a single property or relationship. Rather, race rises out of complex contradictions within capitalist society and articulates those contradictions in complex ways."

3. Howard Winant, *Racial Conditions*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 24.

4. For detailed discussion of these issues, see Benjamin P. Bowser and Raymond G. Hunt, eds. *Impacts of Racism on White Americans*, 2nd edition, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), pp 1-23.

5. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* *ibid.*, (New York: Verso, 1991).

6. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *ibid.*, p. 6.

7. Explaining why it is difficult to define 'race,' Malik mentions the following points: "Geneticists have shown that 85 per cent of all genetic variation is between individuals within the same local population. A further 8 per cent is between local populations or groups within what is considered to be a major race. Just 7 per cent of genetic variation is between major races." Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race*, *ibid.*, p. 4.

8. Robert Staples, "White Racism, Black Crime, and American Justice: An

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Application of the Colonial Model to Explain Crime and Race," *Sources: Notable Selections in Race and Ethnicity*, (Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 1998), pp. 280-281

9. *Ibid.*

10. See Leenco Lata, "Peculiar Challenges to Oromo Nationalism," in *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: The Search for Freedom and Democracy*, edited by Asafa Jalata, (Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press, 1998), pp. 125-152; A. Jalata, "The Struggle for Knowledge: The Case of Emergent Oromo Studies," *The African Studies Review*, vol. 39, No. 2, (September, 1996), pp. 95-123; John Sorenson, "Ethiopian Discourse and Oromo Nationalism," *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse*, pp. 223-252; *The Economist*, "Ethiopia: Federal Sham," August 16, 1997, p. 36.

11. V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 16.

12. See, for example, William I. Robinson, "Global Capitalism and the Oromo Liberation Struggle: Theoretical Notes on U.S. Policy Towards the Ethiopian Empire," *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol. 4, Nos. 1 & 2, July 1997, pp. 1-46; Bonnie K. Holcomb, "The Tale of Two Democracies: The Encounter Between US-Sponsored Ethiopian 'Democracy' and Indigenous Oromo Democratic Forms," *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol. 4, Nos. 1 & 2, July 1997, pp. 47-82; Sisai Ibssa, "The Ideological Foundations of Current US Foreign Policy: the 'Promotion of Democracy' and its Impact on the Oromo National Movement," *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1 & 2, July 1998, pp. 1-34.

13. See Asafa Jalata, "US-Sponsored Ethiopian 'Democracy' and State Terrorism," *Autopsy of Terror: Human Rights and Democracy in the Horn of Africa*, edited by Pat Lauderdale, Abebe Zegeye, et al, (Dartmouth Publishing: Forthcoming).

14. Douglas Hellinger, "U.S. Assistance to Africa: No Room for Democracy," *TransAfrica Forum*, vo. 9, no. 2, Summer 1992, p. 80.

15. For the connection between racism in U.S. domestic and foreign policies, see Gerald Horne, "Race for the Globe: U.S. Foreign Policy and racial Interests," *Impacts of Racism on White Americans*, pp. 88-112.

16. See Asafa Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-1992*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), pp. 88-99. This book argues that the Haile Selassie regime was corrupt and oppressive.

17. See Asafa Jalata, *ibid.*; Bonnie K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa, *The Invention of*

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Ethiopia, (Trenton: NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1990).

18. The policy of the Soviet Union was also racist toward the Oromo people; it supported the Ethiopian colonizing structure and suppressed the Oromo struggle for self-determination and democracy almost for two decades.

19. See Asafa Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia*, pp. 178-181.

20. Agency France Press notes that the United States “backed the Tigre People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) for several years in their struggle against Lieutenant-Colonel Mengistu’s regime and it was on American advice that the TPLF became the EPRDF, though former Tigrean guerrillas are still dominant in the government” AFP (Agency France Press), “Ethiopia-Politics”, Nairobi, June 24, 1992.

21. As the leader of TPLF/EPRDF “Meles had strong CIA support even when he was known for his Marxist belief (s) He dropped it in exchange for US support and military power”, *The Oromia Support Group*, September 1994, p. 6.

22. Paul Henze, *Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia: Regional Resistance to a Marxist Regime*, (Prepared for the office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy), (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1985), P. 74.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

27. For details, see Leenco Lata, “The Making and Unmaking of Ethiopia’s Transitional Charter,” in *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse*, Asafa Jalata (ed.), pp. 51-77.

28. See William I. Robinson, *ibid.*; Bonnie K. Holcomb, *ibid.*

29. Gorge E. Moose, “Testimony of Assistant Secretary of State Before the House Subcommittee on Ethiopia,” July 27, 1994.

30. For example, see Susan Rice, “Statement before the Subcommittees on Africa and on International Operations and Human Rights of the House International Relations Committee,” Washington, DC, July 29, 1998.

31. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, “Departure Remarks,” Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, December 10, 1997, as released by the Office of the Spokesman U.S. Department of State, <http://secretary.state.gov/www/statements/971210.html>, p. 1

32. Michael Sealy, “Creating a Partnership: The United States and the Black World,” *TransAfrica Forum*, vol. 9, no. 4, Special Issue, 1993, p. 38.

33. See Asafa Jalata, “US-Sponsored Ethiopian ‘Democracy’ and State Terrorism,”

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ibid; William Robinson, *ibid*; Bonnie K. Holcomb, *ibid*.

34. Interview with Muhammed Abbas in Knoxville, TN, on May 25 and 27, 1998; see also A. Jalata, "US-Sponsored Ethiopian 'Democracy' and State Terrorism," *ibid*; see also Ibssa Gutama, "Ethiopia: The Transition to Ethnic Dictatorship under the Guise of Democracy," Paper delivered at 40th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Columbus, Ohio, Nov. 12-15, 1997.

35. Interview with Muhammed Abbas, *Ibid*; A. Jalata, "US-Sponsored Ethiopian 'Democracy,'" *ibid*.

36. According to Fanon, "In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official instituted go-betweens, the spokesman of the settler and his rule of oppression . . . By their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action, they maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle-butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force." Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1966), p 31

37. See A. Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia*, *ibid*, pp. 178-186.

38. See Ibssa Gutama, "The Transition to Ethnic Dictatorship," *ibid*.

39. Theodore M. Vestal, "Deficit of Democracy in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia since 1991, Oklahoma State University, 1994, p. 19.

40. Interview with Muhammed Abbas, *ibid*.

41. Interview with Gadisa Bula in Knoxville, IN, on May 22, 1998.

42. History shows that in all colonized populations, there have been marginalized individuals who participated in the projects of their colonizers. For further discussion, see Clovis E. Semmes, *Cultural Hegemony and African American Development*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1992), p. 6; Luana Ross, *Inventing the Savage: The Social Construction of Native American Criminality*, (Austin: University Press of Texas Press, 1998).

43. Luana Ross, *ibid*, pp. 11-12.

44. *Maxanne* is an Oromo concept that explains the attachment of something to something else since it cannot exist by itself; here this concept indicates that the OPDO is an organization that is attached to the Tigrayan-led EPRDF. Hence, it does not have an independent life and it serves mainly the interests of the enemies of Oromos.

45. Frantz Fanon, *ibid*.

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46. *Oromia Support Group*, "Urgent Action-November 1997," p. 1
47. For example, see Bonnie K. Holcomb. *Ibid.*; Asafa Jalata, "The Cultural Roots of Oromo Nationalism," *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse, ibid.*, pp. 27-49.
48. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1972); Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Black Odyssey*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968).
49. Clovis E. Semmes, *ibid.*, p. 11.
50. These countries were created by European colonial settlers who established a "democracy" in which only whites would participate by excluding the indigenous populations that they considered nonwhite and inferior. It is only recently that these conditions began to change because of the national struggles of the respective indigenous populations of these countries.
51. According to Etienne Balibar, 'The *universalism* of the dominant ideology is ... rooted at a much deeper level than the world expansion of capital and even than the need to procure common rules of action for all those who manage that expansion. It is rooted in the need to construct, in spite of the antagonism between them, an ideological 'world' shared by exploiters and exploited alike.' Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, (London: Verso, 1991), p. 4.
52. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, (London: Verso, 1983), p. 102.
53. See Howard Winant, *ibid.*
54. Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 64.
55. David T. Goldberg, "The Social Formation of Racist Discourse," in *Anatomy of Racism*, edited by David Theo Goldberg, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1990), p. 295.
56. Howard Winant, *ibid.*, p. xiii.
57. See Robert J. C. Young, *ibid.*; Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); Edward Said, "The Politics of Knowledge," *Race Identity: Representation in Education*, edited by Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, (New York: Routledge, 1993)
58. Robert A. Huttenback, *Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Colored*

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Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies 1830-1910, (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1976).

59. Gloria Marshall, "Racial Classifications: Popular and Scientific," *The "Racial" Economy of Science: Toward A Democratic Future*, edited by Sandra Harding, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 125.

60. See Robert J. C. Young, *ibid.*, 64.

61. See David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, (London: Verso, 1991).

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

64. Bobby Wright and William G. Tierney, "American Indians in Higher Education: A History of Cultural Conflict," *Sources: Notable Selections in Race and Ethnicity*, (Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill), p. 199.

65. Quoted in Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 55.

66. Lauana Ross, *ibid.*, p. 266.

67. See Asafa Jalata, "African American Nationalism, Development, and Afrocentricity: Implications for the Twenty-First Century," in *Molefi Kete Asante and Afrocentricity: In Praise and in Criticism*, edited by Dhyana Ziegler, (Nashville, TN: Winston-Derek Publishers Group, Inc.)

68. George Fishman, *The African American Struggle for Freedom and Equality*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), p. 3.

69. Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, *ibid.*, pp. 52-52.

70. Robert Staples, *ibid.*

71. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

73. The African American peoplehood was mainly formed from the melting pot of various African ethnonational groups, such as Yorubas, Akans, Ibos, Angolas and others who experienced a common horror of slavery in the United States. The name *Negro* was used by the Portugese slavers in the fifteenth century. Monges asserts that Gomes Eaannes Azurara, in the *Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*, (1453), initially used this the name. Azurara mentions how one Portugese "passed the land of the Moors and arrived in the land of blacks, that is called Guinea. But

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when the *negroes* saw that those in the ship were men, they made haste flee... but because our men had a better opportunity than before, they captured them, and these were the first to be taken by Christians in their own land" (Monges, 1997: 34). Explaining the negative image attached to this name by those who invented and used the name, Asante (1990: 132) argues that "There is no ethnic group in Africa that calls itself negro or its language negro. The term is preeminently a creation of the European mind to refer to any African group or people who correspond to a certain negative image of culture. The term is meaningless in reality but has become a useful word for those who would serve a political purpose by the term." Mariam Ma'at-Ka-Re Monges, *Kush: The Jewel of Nubia*, (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, Inc., 1997, p. 34; Molefi K. Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1990).

74. Berkhofler contends that "Native Americans were and are real, but the *Indian* was a White invention." Robert F. Berkhofler, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*, (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 3.

75. See Asafa Jalata, "The Struggle for Knowledge," *ibid.*; Leenco Lata, "Peculiar Challenge to Oromo Nationalism," *ibid.*

76. John Sorenson, *Imagining Ethiopia*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993), p. 60.

77. See for example, Edward Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 4

78. See Donald Donham, "Old Abyssinia and the New Ethiopian Empire: Themes in Social History," *The Southern Marches of Ethiopia*, edited by Donald Donham and Wendy James, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 13; John H. Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay*, (Algonac: Mich.: Reference Publications, 1984), pp. 123-124.

79. Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935-1941*, (Lawrenceville, NJ.: The Red Sea Press, 1997), p. 25

80. John Sorenson, *ibid.*, p. 29.

81. *Ibid.*

82. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 29; quoted in Harold G. Marcus, "Racist Discourse about Ethiopia and Ethiopians before and after the Battle of Adwa," *Adwa Conference*, AAU, March 1996, p. 5.

83. See Harold G. Marcus, *ibid.*

84. Racist Euro-American scholars who believe in racial distinctions use these kinds

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of racist phrases to show the significance of whiten-ness and denigrate blackness in human civilizations. For further discussion, see Mariam Ma'at-Ka-Re-Monges, *Kush: The Jewel of Nubia - Reconnecting the Root System of African Civilization*, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1997). pp. 23-29; see Harold G. Marcus, "Racist Discourse," *ibid.*, p. 7.

85. Cited in Harold G. Marcus, "Racist Discourse," *ibid.*, p. 6.

86. Cedric J. Robinson, "The African Diaspora and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis," *Race and Class* 2, 1985, p. 53.

87. P.T.W. Baxter, "The Creation & Constitution of Oromo Nationality," *Ethnicity & Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, Katsuyoshi Fukui and John Markakis, (eds.), (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), p. 172.

88. Cultural racism can be defined as the conscious or subconscious conviction of the politically dominant population group that imposes its cultural patterns and practices through its social institutions in an attempt to destroy or suppress the cultural patterns and practices of the colonized and dominated population. For detailed discussion, see Benjamin P. Bowser and Raymond G. Hunt, eds., *Impacts of Racism on White Americans*.

89. For example see, Mariam Ma'at-Ka-Re-Monges, *ibid.*; Molefi K. Asante, *ibid.*; Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. I. *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785-1985*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

90. P. I. W. Baxter, *ibid.*, p. 172.

91. John Sorenson, "Ethiopian Discourse and Oromo Nationalism," in *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse*, Asafa Jalata, (ed.), pp. 233-234.

92. *Habasha* elites several times attempted to use the African diaspora for their economic and political interests by capitalizing on the emotion they had for the name Ethiopia. See for example, William R. Scott, *The Sons of Sheba's Race: African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Joseph Harris, "Race and Misperceptions in the Origins of United States-Ethiopian Relations," *TransAfrica Forum*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Winter 1986), 9-23.

93. William R. Scott, *ibid.*, p. 26.

94. Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 76 and 73 respectively.

95. See for example, John Sorenson, *ibid.*; Jordan Gebre-Medhin, *Peasants and*

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Nationalism in Eritrea, (Trenton, N.J.: The Red Sea Press, 1989).

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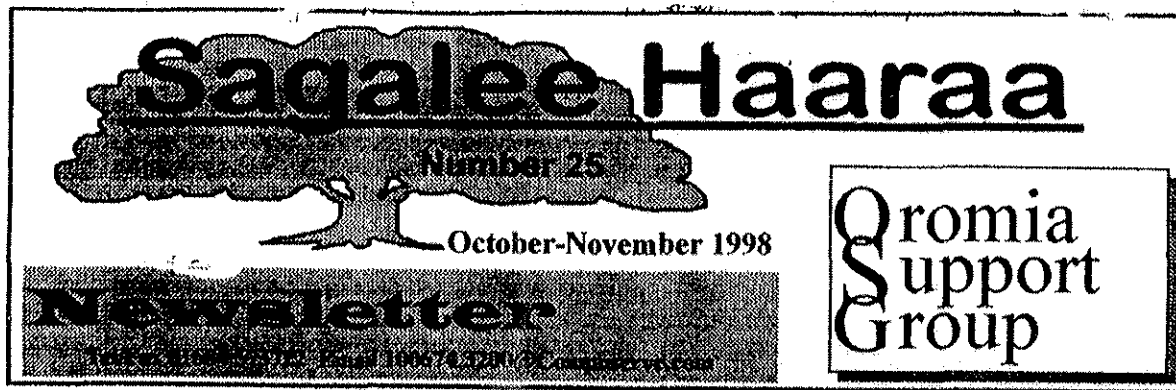
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Oromia Support Group

Sagaalee Haaraa is the Newsletter of the Oromia Support Group. OSG aims to publicise the plight of oppressed peoples in Ethiopia, particularly the forgotten Oromo. OSG campaigns for democracy, freedom from human rights abuses, and self-determination for all peoples in Ethiopia. It also aims to disseminate information about the rich Oromo history and culture.

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WESTERN FOREIGN POLICY, PROFITS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIA

Trevor Trueman

The Clinton administration has been sweeping aside constant criticism that while the U.S. is genuinely committed to Africa's economic development, Washington has been glossing over the abusive practices of its newly found allies such as Rwanda, Uganda and Ethiopia . . .

The U.S. training gives the armed forces of developing nations significant new skills that have been used to repress dissent . . . The U.S. defended its continued involvement with some African dictators as 'constructive engagement', ironically the same policy used to justify contact with apartheid South Africa in the 1980s . . .

[T]he American-trained Africa Crisis Response Initiative [includes] only one nation [which] can qualify as a democracy - Mali . . . For Americans to achieve genuine economic partnership with Africans, the U.S. government should listen to pleas by grassroots organizations that the military get out of politics, dictators be held accountable for their abuses, press freedom exist, women be given increased access to politics, and economic opportunity be increased in urban and rural areas to make 1998 Africa's year.

Rich Mkhondo, *The Star*, Johannesburg, 8 1 98

Stated western foreign policy objectives include respect for human rights and democracy. Critics claim that these concerns are not genuine but mere lip service. Despite the fact that Ethiopia massively violates human rights, it receives more aid from western powers than any other country in the world. This paper examines in detail the human rights and democratization record of the present Ethiopian government. It argues that it remains for western foreign policy to develop a real rather than rhetorical interest in human rights. The economic health of a country depends on good governance, democracy and respect for human rights.

Because of the interdependence of all countries in the global economy,

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especially since the liberalization of financial flows in the 1970s, it is in the best long-term interest of western powers to promote respect for human rights and democracy in all countries. Further, possible reasons for the failure of western foreign policy to realize this are briefly discussed. Future prospects for the developing world in general and for Ethiopia in particular are grim unless western powers convert their rhetoric on human rights into practice. Long term beneficiaries of respect for human rights include western powers.

Human Rights Abuses and Western Foreign Policy

The U.S. State Department,¹ European Union² and the British Department for International Development³ have publicly stated their commitment to linking aid and investment to human rights and democracy. Public and stated political interest in human rights is greater than ever before. A plethora of human rights bodies exists within foreign ministries, the European Commission and Parliament, United States Congress, Senate and Department of State, the United Nations and among national and international, governmental and non-governmental, organizations. The U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act and the administration's Partnership for Growth and Opportunity in Africa initiative "constitute a collective American effort to help fulfil the promise of a stable, prosperous and democratic Africa . . . [O]nly nations carrying out serious reforms will reap the benefits, according to President Clinton."⁴ The United Nations and the U.S. Department of State are perceived to be the two most reliable international arbiters of human rights. The human rights mechanisms of the UN are bound by signatory states to be politically independent and the State Department country reports on human rights practices are used as reference material by asylum and immigration departments throughout the western world.

Despite the abundance of human rights bodies, the commitments to human rights made by the West and the availability of reliable information about human rights abuses, non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups question whether western powers are putting their stated policies into practice. The independence of the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations is threatened by the political maneuvering of member states which abuse human rights, according to the international organization Human Rights Internet.⁵

The mechanisms are also threatened by politically motivated voting tactics of other states whose economic and strategic interests are served by abusive regimes. The Geneva-based International Service for Human Rights states that because of "dominance of commercial relations over human rights concerns," the UN Commission on Human Rights has "almost become irrelevant in protecting victims"⁶

The reports on country human rights practices prepared by the U.S. Department of State are biased and misleading according to the New York-based Lawyers Committee on Human Rights. Selective reporting and carefully crafted phraseology create very different impressions of the regime in question, depending on the strength of U.S. economic and strategic ties. "The Country Reports remain unwilling at times to hold 'friendly' governments overtly responsible for human rights violations . . ." declining to "offer opinions about official culpability . . . even where the factual evidence is inescapable;" responsibility is ascribed to individuals in the security forces "as if these entities were not accountable to the government;" the degree of "governmental complicity and culpability is obscured;" ". . . international human rights norms can be compromised when larger political goals are at stake. . .;" "Governments and non-governmental entities are not held to a single universal standard of conduct;" U.N. treaty bodies are not used as primary reference points, but are seen as optional, and information from U.N. Special Rapporteur is ignored.⁷

The relevance of human rights to western foreign policy is thus brought into question. Ethiopia, since the change of government in 1991, has been the subject of more aid from the European Union than any other country in the world.⁸ It is the second largest recipient of U.S. aid in sub-Saharan Africa.⁹ In determining the role of human rights in western foreign policy, it is therefore worthwhile analyzing the human rights record of Ethiopia and the country's relationship with the West.

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Human Rights violations in Ethiopia

In 1991, at the invitation of the, then, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Herman Cohen, the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) set up a transitional administration including representatives of liberation fronts which had toppled the communist military regime. Herman Cohen stated that U.S. assistance was conditional on democratic reform, saying, "No democracy; no co-operation."¹⁰ All subsequent elections have been strongly criticized by observers¹¹⁻¹⁵ but since 1992, all have been given western approval¹⁶

Regarding the Regional and Federal Elections in 1995, the U.S. State Department wrote: "most opposition groups chose to boycott the elections, despite a widespread finding that opposition participation was possible. . . . observers organized by Western donor governments, the Organization of African Unity, and a coalition of domestic NGO's judged the elections to be generally free and fair . . ." ¹⁷ However, the Norwegian Institute of Human Rights wrote that their observer group "dismisses these elections as neither free, fair nor impartial, for several reasons," and the 1995 elections could not "be considered competitive" and excluded "many legal political actors . . . [I]n all areas of observations violations of the electoral law were noted."¹⁸

All parties except the EPRDF have been expelled or have withdrawn from government. The 1995 election put 90% of parliamentary seats under control of EPRDF candidates, the remainder going to independent candidates. The administration, security and armed forces are totally under the control of the EPRDF, which is dominated by the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF)¹⁹ The Norwegian Institute of Human Rights reported in 1997: "although Ethiopia . . . has . . . constitutional features of electoral democracy, the current regime shows many authoritarian characteristics, and cannot be considered as a 'democracy' in the liberal sense of the word."²⁰ Since 1992, human rights organizations have been increasingly critical of the Ethiopian government Extra-judicial political killings, disappearances, arbitrary detention and torture and rape of detainees have been reported by Amnesty International²¹ and Human Rights Watch/Africa.²²

Even an Ethiopian cabinet minister, the legal affairs director in the Council of Representatives, Abdulaziz Mohammed, has admitted to human

rights violations in the country and stated in an interview with a Voice of America reporter that citizens are being victimized by the state²³

Ethiopia has imprisoned more journalists in the last three years than any other country in Africa and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi ranks among the top enemies of the press in the world according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.²⁴ The State Department reports that "Nevertheless, the private press is active and flourishing."²⁵ "The socio-economic substructure has been transformed into a web of ideologically 'correct' organizations subservient to the [EPRDF] party," according to Professor Vestal's statement before a congressional hearing on Ethiopia.²⁶ Central committee members of the ruling party and their friends are the dominant share-holders in newly privatized companies.²⁷

In *Hizbaawi Adera* (The People's Custodian), an internal journal prepared and issued by the EPRDF for its political cadres, there was a call in early 1997 to "defeat narrow nationalism . . . particularly in areas such as Oromia . . . Here, they not only promote narrow nationalism but also strive to be rulers of their own peoples . . . In order to have a lasting solution to our problem . . . we have to break narrow nationalist tendencies in Oromia . . . we need to smash it in a very decisive manner . . . fighting the higher intellectual and bourgeoisie extensively and resolutely . . ." ²⁸

The EPRDF/TPLF regime openly practices this declared policy. Three unarmed Oromo were killed by uniformed Ethiopian security forces on the streets of Addis Ababa in October 1997. These killings and the subsequent detention of 65 prominent Oromo in the capital were claimed by the government to be part of a crackdown on 'terrorism'. The wave of arrests includes members of the Human Rights League (an organisation committed to human rights education), members of the Macha-Tulama Association (an Oromo self-help organisation), journalists of the independent *Urjii* newspaper and Oromo professionals and businessmen. These 'higher intellectuals and bourgeoisie' include prisoners of conscience, according to Amnesty International. If found guilty, as charged, of conspiracy, the detainees could face the death penalty.²⁹

Oromo refugees are pursued by Ethiopian government forces in Djibouti and Kenya³⁰⁻³² "Never before, even under the Derg communist military dictatorship, have Oromo been targeted for abuse to this degree,

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merely for being prominent Oromo. Never before, have Oromo refugees been hunted to the present extent in neighboring countries. Even the Derg did not attempt wholesale destruction of the brightest and best of a single ethnic group," according to a respected Oromo historian and intellectual in exile in the USA.³³

Ethiopia's Relations with the West

Ethiopia enjoys a warm relationship with the West. Apart from a few months after a street killing by policemen, in which a British-donated Land Rover was used, the British Department for International Development has continued its police training program in Ethiopia³⁴ Although the European Parliament has passed resolutions criticizing the government for human rights abuses,³⁵ Ethiopia receives more aid from the European Union than any other country in the world.³⁶

Dr Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, has stated that Ethiopia is the second largest recipient of U.S. aid in sub-Saharan Africa and is to be applauded for its progress in human rights and democratization.³⁷ Public statements by the U.S. administration about Ethiopia are invariably positive and misleadingly so. The State Department report on human rights practices in Ethiopia claims that abuses are few, that political killings were "unconfirmed or could not be substantiated" and that "[t]here were no confirmed reports . . . of alleged disappearances. . . . There were no reports of political prisoners."³⁸ However, extra-judicial killings, disappearances, torture and arbitrary detention were reported by working groups and special rapporteur at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights,³⁹ as well as by internationally recognized organizations such as Amnesty International⁴⁰ and Human Rights Watch/Africa.⁴¹

The warm relationship with the USA extends to co-operation in military and security matters. Ethiopia is part of the U.S.-sponsored Africa Crisis Response Initiative, whereby pro-U.S. states in Africa are provided with military training and equipment for 'peace keeping' purposes. The delivery of military aircraft from the USA began in April 1998.⁴² Forty six Ethiopian police and security personnel received training in surveillance, intelligence and counter-espionage activities in the USA in 1998.⁴³ In November 1997, Dr Rice stated that one of the most important U.S. foreign policies is to provide anti-

terrorist intelligence and training.⁴⁴ A month earlier, the Ethiopian government announced its crackdown on 'terrorists', openly killing and detaining Oromo in the capital.⁴⁵

The European Commission delegate in Ethiopia has expressed a wish for a closer development partnership with the country. On 20 May, Karl Habro, head of the European Commission delegation in Addis Ababa, said that Ethiopia would be a key development partner for Europe in the 21st century. He emphasized the importance of Ethiopia's mineral and agricultural resources and its hydro-electric potential to the European Economic Community.⁴⁶ The US ambassador to Ethiopia at the 1998 annual conference on U.S. Trade and Investment in Africa, in April, exhorted American businessmen to work in Ethiopia, stressing the investment potential and the potential market for their products. He said "[W]e do a fairly good business in selling to Ethiopians, but we would like to see more investors coming into the country. . . . Ethiopia is worth looking at for investors, on the one hand, or people trying to sell their products . . . Ethiopia is a market of almost 60 million people. . . ."

Last year, the United States purchased 17 per cent of its coffee crop; we were number two after Germany."

Three years ago, there were only 40 U.S. firms represented in Ethiopia. His Excellency Mr Shinn continued "We now have 180 American companies that have agents in Ethiopia, and the number is growing literally by five and ten every several months. Clearly, there are some business people who think that there is something going on in Ethiopia and that it is worth looking at, and I would argue that is correct. . . . [S]o come out and take a look and we will be happy to help you at the American Embassy."⁴⁷ Neither Mr Habro nor Mr Shinn mentioned Ethiopia's human rights problems.

The Lomé Convention, governing trade/aid relations of the European Union with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, states that respect for human rights and democracy are prerequisite to development partnership.⁴⁸ The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act in the USA, similarly emphasizes that aid and investment are conditional on human rights observance.⁴⁹

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Constructive Engagement

A policy of 'constructive engagement' is pursued by the European Union and the governments of Britain, the USA and other countries. Responses of these governments to critics of Ethiopia's human rights record all claim that the partnership approach will benefit human rights and democracy in Ethiopia better than any other approach. In May 1997, when an unarmed human rights defender and trades unionist was killed by police in Addis Ababa, a British-donated police Land Rover was used in a support role. The Department for International Development threatened to withhold support from major non-governmental organization projects and to stop its police training program unless there was an enquiry into the killing.

In defending the continuation of British training for Ethiopian police despite the absence of an enquiry, a spokesman for the Department for International Development wrote; "The Ethiopian Government felt unable to meet our desire for a full enquiry. . . . Since then, we had a productive exchange of views with the Ethiopian Government. . . . We want to help the Ethiopian Government improve its human rights record. We believe we can best achieve this, together with promoting democracy and good government, by remaining engaged."⁵⁰ Similarly, an African reporter wrote in January 1998: "The US defended its continued involvement with some African dictators as 'constructive engagement', ironically the same policy used to justify contact with apartheid South Africa in the 1980s."⁵¹

Conclusion and Discussion

Taking their relationship with Ethiopia as an example, it is clear that western powers have yet to assimilate promotion of human rights into their foreign policies. Despite systematic and gross violations of human rights in Ethiopia, its government enjoys disproportionate moral and financial support from the European Union and USA. It is clear that western institutions and politicians, although paying lip service to human rights, continue to allow short term economic and strategic interests to dominate their thinking. It remains for western foreign policy to develop a real rather than rhetorical interest in human rights.

U.S. foreign policy objectives

In 1948, George Kennan, one of the most important architects of post-World War II United States foreign policy, asserted: "We have 50 percent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population. . . In this situation we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will allow us to maintain this position of disparity."⁵² The records of the 1948 Department of State Policy Planning Study also include a remark by the Director of Policy Planning: "We should cease to talk about the raising of living standards, human rights and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better."⁵³

Robinson⁵⁴ and Chomsky⁵⁵ express the minority view that U.S. foreign policy is indeed designed to maintain control over the global economy, using 'straight power concepts'. 'Straight power concepts' may explain why "71% of 3,408 African officers trained by the Pentagon between 1991-5 served regimes that were not freely elected. 23 of 33 African armies to participate in joint military exercises in 1998 have substantial political power," according to a research fellow in the Washington-based Demilitarization for Democracy.⁵⁶ A comment from the director of the Washington-based Africa Research Project concerning the African Growth and Opportunity Bill summarizes the apparent aims of the USA:

This bill reduces obstacles to African trade with the U.S., but only if African countries open their economies to being taken over by American firms and if they eliminate virtually all social programs. . .

. . . Africans are therefore justified in believing that the new attention that the United States is devoting to their continent arises chiefly out of an interest in getting control over a larger share of its abundant natural resources, cheap labor and growing markets, rather than any real desire to help promote economic development that will lift them out of poverty and meet their basic needs.⁵⁷

In other words, lives of people in the majority world, the developing countries,

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are being sacrificed on the altar of western affluence.

Possible reasons for predatory foreign policy

The moral bankruptcy of predatory foreign policy is kept away from public debate and presumably escapes the attention of at least some of those people who help promote the idea that western foreign policy is benign toward the developing world. Reasons for the continuation of malign foreign policy include its own momentum and the moral isolation of its chief designers and supporters. The momentum of large political institutions precludes rapid shifts of policy. Donor commitment to regimes with substantial western support, such as Ethiopia, also has its own momentum. Decision makers are isolated from the effects of their policies on the developing world. They exist in a supportive and cushioned milieu.

Information on the effects of predatory policies only reaches decision makers by passing through functionaries who act as screens and filters. Decision makers and functionaries alike are trained to justify present policies, rather than be open to arguments for change. Apart from the intellectual and moral isolation of decision makers from the effects of their policies on ordinary people, their belief systems are cushioned and strengthened by people and institutions with whom they work and socialize. Over half of the world's largest one hundred economic units are trans-national corporations.⁵⁸ Media moguls and corporate businessmen and women are a major part of the milieu in which senior politicians exist. Their aims are necessarily acquisitive and oriented to short term financial gain. Western foreign policy is subject to the influences of this milieu. It is as removed from moral reality as it was in the days of the slave trade.

Long Term Effects

Support from the West for kleptocrats and dictators and western domination of the rules of international trade are major factors in the increasing impoverishment of the 'developing' world. In sub-Saharan Africa, while debt has increased from the 1960s, average GNP per capita growth rate fell from 2.9% between 1965 and 1973 to minus 2.8% between 1980 and 1987.⁵⁹ In the wake of increasing poverty, increased infant and maternal

mortality rates and decreased life expectancy will automatically follow. Two of the 'world's richest colonial prizes', Bengal and Haiti, are now among the poorest areas in the world. Professor Chomsky argues convincingly that Haiti may soon be 'scarcely habitable' because of U.S. predation.⁶⁰

In the long term, disregard for human rights is bad for business. It provokes political and social instability, with associated poor returns for investment, reduced markets for western goods and restricted access to third world raw materials. Systematic human rights abuses are not committed by stable, freely elected governments. Human rights violations are necessary to impose authority against people's wishes. Only where there is public dissatisfaction and resentment of those in power are human rights abuses prevalent. Abuse provokes further dissatisfaction and resentment until the regime is replaced, as happened last year in Indonesia.

Human rights violations are therefore an indication of instability. They signal the unreliability of returns from investment and of access to markets and resources. In the Ethiopian context, according to the U.S. ambassador there, Ethiopia will succeed as a country only if there is sustained economic development and democracy. . . . Any kind of instability - political, economic, social or religious - has a devastating effect on foreign, including American, investment. . . . Instability is a killer in every sense of the word; it leads to human death, it soaks up precious resources for military expenditures, it stops foreign investment and tourism dead in their tracks, and it consumes the intellectual energy of a country's leadership. . . . [A]ll of the countries in the Horn of Africa need to demonstrate that they are politically stable and free of conflict if they expect to obtain additional foreign investment.⁶¹

Inequity of wealth distribution, an inevitable accompaniment of prevalent human rights violations, reduces the size of markets for western manufacturers. In many countries, Ethiopia included, systematic government violations of human rights are preparing the ground for major conflict. Once the abuses precipitate conflict, with associated further impoverishment, returns are again reduced and access to valuable resources is further impeded.

The refugee crisis is another consequence of human rights violations, according to Amnesty International's research. The crisis incurs significant cost in human and material resources. It interrupts and ultimately reduces returns for western investors, whether or not the developed world has a

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significant host function for the refugees. Amnesty International studied the refugee crisis in Africa during 1997 and concluded that nearly all refugees are fleeing from human rights violations.⁶²

Economic Miracles: Global interdependence

It is instructive to consider two examples of short term economic success in the 'developing' world; the so-called Asian Tiger economies and Mexico. As well as illustrating the importance of human rights and democracy in long term economic growth, they show how instability anywhere in the global economic system can threaten western economies. Massive western investment enabled rapid economic growth in Southeast Asia but this could not be maintained without a foundation of democracy and respect for human rights. Media comment on the collapse of Asian economies in late 1997 was that lack of political development was one of the principal causes of the crisis.⁶³ Lack of transparency and accountability of government, rule of law and respect for human rights are all characteristics of those economies worst hit by the crisis.

Political pluralism is necessary for sustained economic growth, according to a research director for the British, Economic and Social Research Council. Dr George Segal stated that most of the 19 studies of the Asian Tiger economies he carried out over several years had identified the problems leading to the collapse of the Tiger economies:

Much of the region's investment had been unproductive and politically motivated. . . . It was crony capitalism. . . . But poor management of resources was by no means the only reason. . . . Sustained economic growth requires fundamental political reform. . . . There is a lack of transparency and pluralism at home. . . . What our studies show is that you can only go so far with an authoritarian system, and this is now clear in what is happening. Take Taiwan: it has a lot more political pluralism than most other East Asian countries, and it is riding out the storm a lot better.⁶⁴

Dr Segal expressed surprise that the effect on western economies was as little as it was. The Asian economic crisis is no precedent. The International

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Monetary Fund and World Bank praised the economic policies of Mexico, just prior to its financial collapse in 1994, as they did those of the Tiger economies, including Indonesia, prior to the removal of President Suharto because of popular pressure and unrest⁶⁵

The Mexican crisis destabilized American markets for several weeks because of "the risk that several big Wall Street houses would be seriously hit when they failed to collect on their Mexican bonds. But the markets calmed down as soon as the Clinton administration and the International Monetary Fund guaranteed loans big enough to cover Wall Street's exposure."⁶⁶ The serious effects of the Asian economic crisis on stock markets and employment across the world are a clear warning to those who ignore the interdependence of western and other economies

Future U.S. Security

A consequence of the 'constructive engagement' with abusive regimes is the increasing unpopularity of western powers, especially the United States, among the abused populations. By delaying development in human rights and democracy, and associated economic benefits for the peoples of Ethiopia, western policy may drive the oppressed and disaffected youth toward Militant Islam, and lay the foundation for the souring of future 'economic partnership'.

A major factor in the development of militant Islamic groups such as Hamas, was the lack of response by western powers to the, less extreme, Palestine Liberation Organization. The bombing of the U.S. embassies in Dar Es Salaam and Nairobi in 1998 and, in response, the missile attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan are part of a cycle of international violence which cannot but continue unless there is a change of course in western foreign policy.

Transnational Corporations to show the way?

At the UK Royal African Society conference, *Partnership in Africa's Development*, in Cambridge, UK, 28-30 September 1997, the importance of the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights was stressed; not by human rights defenders, but by managing directors and officials of large

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business corporations.⁶⁷ Following discussions with Amnesty International, three large multinational companies - Shell, BP and Rio Tinto Zinc - have added responsibility for human rights to their statements of corporate principle and have publicly supported the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁶⁸ Under pressure from Christian Aid campaigners, three British supermarket chains have signed an Ethical Trading Initiative, protecting the rights of workers in third world countries.⁶⁹

It would be perversely ironic if trans-national companies, the very fabric of the global economic system which is partly responsible for Africa's plight, were the organs of real development and democracy in Africa. But, as the power of individual national interests fades and if it is not replaced by domination of the weapons industry over the global economic engine, it is feasible that the benefits of international co-operation and respect for the democratic process and human rights, will be first realized by trans-national corporations. However, altering the course of thinking in western foreign policy institutions may take longer. It may be compared, in more ways than one, with steering the Titanic through a ninety degree turn. Unless such a change of course is forthcoming, however, disastrous consequences are inevitable. It is no exaggeration to state that scenarios reminiscent of Somalia, Yugoslavia or Rwanda are feasible futures for Ethiopia, if the present moral and financial support from the West is unconditionally maintained.

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The Oromo Commentary

OROMIA OUTLOOK

A Magazine of National Affairs

Editor: DABALA OLANA



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and
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of the Masses
in Oromia

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A SHORT HISTORY OF OROMO COLONIAL EXPERIENCE 1870'S-1990'S: PART ONE 1870'S TO 1935

Mohammed Hassen

Four remarks are required before I embark on the main subject. First, it is not easy to present the Oromo colonial experience from the 1870s to 1990s in an article of appropriate length for a single journal volume. To avoid that problem I have divided this article into two parts. The first part deals with the Oromo colonial experience from the 1870s to 1935. The two dates that are covered within the pages of this article are important because the 1870s witnessed the beginning of systematic conquest of the Oromo by King Menelik of Shawa, while 1935 saw the replacement of the first phase of Ethiopian colonialism in Ethiopia with Italian fascism. During the six decades covered in part one of this article, the Oromo had two different types of colonial experience under Egyptian and Ethiopian Amhara administrations. Egyptian colonialism affected only a small segment of the Oromo population in Hararghe, while the Ethiopian Amhara colonialism affected all Oromo who are now in Ethiopia. Part two of the article, which will be covered in the next issue of *The Journal of Oromo Studies* will deal with the Oromo colonial experience from 1935 to the 1990s.

My aim in writing this article is simple and my purpose is clear. It is to consolidate some of my own writings and the writing of others in order to present briefly the Oromo colonial experience and to suggest how to deal with it. The detail of my argument as to how to deal with the experience will be presented in part two of the article. Here it should be adequate to say that if historical knowledge is to be useful as a guide for creating a truly democratic federal republic of Ethiopia, the issue of decolonizing Oromia cannot be dodged, but must be met head on. Without a sound grasp of the Oromo colonial experience, which lies behind their long struggle for freedom and human dignity, it is very difficult to grasp the intensity and depth of the Oromo quest for self-determination.

Second, my discussion of the Oromo colonial experience does not pretend

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to be comprehensive. Anyone who is interested in the subject can consult among others, Bonnie K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa's *The Invention of Ethiopia: The Making of a Dependent Colonial State in Northeast Africa*, and Asafa Jalata's *Oromia and Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict 1868-1992*. These two splendid books and several other articles and book chapters, including the many works of Drs. Mekuria Bulcha¹, Abbas Haji, Paul Baxter, Alessandro Triulzi, Tesema Ta'aa and Getahun Delibo adequately document the Oromo colonial experience. Hopefully, my article makes not only a small contribution to the growing literature on the Oromo colonial experience, but also suggests one possible scenario for finding a lasting political solution to the Oromo quest for self-determination.

Third, I maintain that the decolonization of Oromia and the self-determination of the Oromo are compatible within a democratic federal republic of Ethiopia. There are several scholars who argue forcefully that the decolonization of Oromia and the self-determination of the Oromo are incompatible within the framework of a united Ethiopia. Basing their reasoning on their analysis of the Ethiopian colonization of Oromia, they argue that the Oromo self-determination 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 colonial experience.

However, I believe that the self-determination of the Oromo is possible within a democratic federal republic of Ethiopia. I maintain this position for the following broad reasons. I am an idealist who believes in the unity of free people in a free country. Today the Oromo are not free people and Oromia is still a colony. That is why I argue that the decolonization of Oromia is absolutely necessary for peace, economic development, and democratization in Ethiopia. However, in my mind, the decolonization of Oromia has to be linked organically with current reality in Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular. To me, there is no better prospect for the future of the peoples of Ethiopia than the establishment of a working federal system based on freedom with justice, peace and equality in that country. What is needed, in effect, is a new social contract with freedom as its essence. I believe that only a federal system unites separate nations, nationalities, peoples and groups, without sacrificing the rights and vital interests of its members. I will discuss the benefits of a federal system in part two of this article; here it should be enough

to say that a federal arrangement cannot work if it is designed and imposed by the leadership of a single party as the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) government did in Ethiopia.² As it will be demonstrated in part two of this article, a federal arrangement works when it is designed by people and their representatives who are free and equal, and is "implemented with their freely expressed consent for its purpose and framework."³ In short, what is needed is a universally designed agreement to establish a new state that is not dominated by one ethnic group but collectively owned by all its citizens "in such a way that all reaffirm their fundamental equality and retain their basic rights."⁴

What is more, it is now becoming painfully clear to anyone who follows the sad realities in Africa that only those African societies that are able to pull together their human, intellectual, spiritual, and material resources will be able to survive in the twenty-first century. The trees of a number of African states, rotten by corruption, ethnic conflicts and political tyrannies, have withered away. The shadows of the Rwandan tragedy of 1994 hover over several countries in Africa, including Ethiopia. The shadows of collapsed African states, from Somalia to Liberia hover over many African countries, including Ethiopia. A Rwandan-type tragedy with the collapse of the state has to be avoided while there is time to avoid it. Once a tragedy happens it is impossible to undo it. We know that there are competing nationalisms in Ethiopia. They include, Oromo, Afar, Amhara, Sidama, Somali and Tigrayan nationalisms. The dangers 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. Such disintegration is not in the interest of any nation or nationality in Ethiopia, including the Oromo. In one way or another, the peoples of Ethiopia will have to figure out how competing nationalisms can live together or side by side without destroying the material basis and moral foundations of our societies. Only a genuine federal arrangement appears to me capable of doing that.

It has been, said and rightly, that idea move nations. Ideas also enable people to see beyond the poisonous hatred planted by those who flourish by dividing and turning the oppressed peoples against each other. The TPLF leaders, who are rightly blamed for lack of vision⁵ are using the name of federalism as a tool for their monopoly of state power. However, there is no

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a better system than genuine federalism for devolution of power. To me, only a genuine federal arrangement offers a better prospect for all the peoples of Ethiopia. "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 the partners, based on a mutual recognition of the integrity of each partner and the attempt to foster a special unity among them."⁶ What is really at issue in Ethiopia is the question of finding a political structure (a federal arrangement) that guarantees the survival of national identities, which nurtures the flowering of languages and the renaissance of cultures, and above all, which allows diverse groups of people to exercise their democratic rights without infringing upon the rights of others.⁷

Since the 1950s, African political leaders opted for flag independence, which has so far failed to deliver the promise of democracy and economic prosperity in the past forty years. On the eve of twenty-first century, is it not time to venture outside the prevailing intellectual climate of flag independence and to explore issues and articulate ideas that may deliver the promise of democracy and economic prosperity? At least the ideas of genuine federalism enable us to see beyond the bitterness of what the successive Ethiopian governments did to the Oromo and open our vision about a future, in which the Oromo will never allow any Ethiopian government to oppress them, control their resources, divide and turn them against each other. How this could be done will be addressed in part two of this article.

However, I must admit that the realization of self-determination of Oromia within a democratic republic of Ethiopia will be fraught with difficulties. Ethiopia lacks a tradition of tolerant political culture and the Ethiopian ruling elites, those who are now oppressing the Oromo and those who are so eager to regain their lost power, will do everything in their power to monopolize political power and control the resources of Oromia. However, the Oromo and other colonized and oppressed peoples of Ethiopia must stand together to end the Abyssinian elites' monopolization of state power in Ethiopia. As an optimist, I have an undying dream that one day the Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia will create a genuine federal arrangement in Ethiopia. It is this hope and optimism which inspired me to write this article. I believe the article will serve a useful purpose if it generates dispassionate and lively scholarly discussion of the two scenarios for findings solution to the

Oromo colonial experience -- namely, independent Oromia separate from Ethiopia or self-determination for Oromia within a democratic federal republic of Ethiopia.

At this juncture, it is important to note that after the 1880s, the Medieval Christian kingdom known as Abyssinia was transformed into Ethiopia, and the historic Abyssinians, that is, the Amhara and Tigray people, were transformed into Ethiopians. It was only in the Constitution of 1931, that conquered peoples of southern Ethiopia were defined as Ethiopians. In this article, for the time period covered, I use "Ethiopian" and "Shawan Amhara" colonialism interchangeably. After all, it was Menelik, the Amhara king of Shawa (1865-1889) and later the Emperor of Ethiopia (1889-1913) who conquered all Oromo who are now in Ethiopia and colonized their land. The Egyptian colonial occupation of Hararghie was a short-lived phenomenon, while the first phase of Shawan Amhara colonialism was brought to an end in 1935 by the Italian occupation, of Ethiopia which will be discussed in part two of this article.

Fourth, Ethiopian elites and their supporters acknowledge Egyptian colonization of part of eastern Hararghie,⁸ but deny the Ethiopian Amhara colonization of the Oromo.⁹ However, I will demonstrate with evidence that the social force behind Shawan Amhara colonialism was as economic, as it was with Egyptian colonialism and Italian fascism. What is colonialism? "At its most powerful, colonialism is a process of radical dispossession"¹⁰ For the Oromo, colonialism meant more than political, economic, and cultural dispossession. It meant loss of sovereignty and independence, loss of land and human dignity. Once the Oromo lost their sovereignty, their culture was exposed to attack; they were no longer in control of their own destiny; they were reduced to objects of history rather than makers of their own history, and their language was transformed from being a language of business and government into language of backwardness and darkness.

Interestingly, for most of Ethiopian intellectuals the Oromo experience is not a colonial one. It is the experience of national and cultural domination. Ethiopian intellectuals arrive at this conclusion because they define a colony from a narrow perspective that limits its application only to those African countries that were colonized by European powers. For instance:

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1. some have confined the definition of colonialism to the phenomenon of *industrial capitalism*;
2. some claim it is a white man's phenomenon;
3. others tie it exclusively to the 19th century European search for raw materials and the philosophy that supported that search; and
4. some have become so specific that they restrict the definition of colony formation to the crossing of salt water.¹¹

However, For the purpose of this article, I adopt Bonnie Holcomb's and Sisai Ibssa's very broad definition of the phenomenon known as colonialism

Colonialism is best viewed as one of several modes of interaction among nations of people. It does not occur between individuals or groups. Rather, it involves a change in the entire social and productive life of people. Each nation of people, through the process of living together, develops a distinctive pattern of production and a distinctive set of rules or what could be called a code of conduct for safeguarding that particular pattern and for managing its affairs within given boundaries. Colonialism occurs when those boundaries are penetrated by outsiders who are products and carriers of a *different system intent* upon forcefully changing the pattern of production and imposing a different set of rules. Put another way, colonialism takes place when invaders use force to take possession of elements vital to the economy of the invaded society of people and to reorganize those components according to a new forcefully imposed system of production. What occurs is that a colonizing society violently seizes the economic substructure of colonized society and *rearranges it by replacing its organizing superstructure*.¹²

In the above long quotation, three elements are rightly stressed. These are, first, conquest by force; second, expropriation of the economic resources of the conquered society by the conquerors; and third, the imposition of alien rule on the conquered society. All these and much more happened to the Oromo. After *his conquest and occupation* of Oromo land, Menelik gave both the Oromo people and their land to his armed-settlers known as *neftanya* and established the *gabar* system (serfdom). Under this system, the armed-settlers, the state

functionaries, the Orthodox Church establishment and the crown were supported by the work and taxes of the Oromo *gabars* (serfs). In the conquered Oromo territory, fortified garrison towns were set up as centers for colonial administration. The fortified towns known as *katammas* were separated socially from their surroundings in that their inhabitants were mainly Christian settlers, who thought of themselves as superior to and despised and looked down upon the Oromo, whom they kept under their control with merciless use of firearms.¹³ It has been said, and rightly so that "the colonial world is essentially a compartmentalized one, a world divided into two mutually exclusive zones. There is a zone for the colonizers, and a zone for the colonized. This zoning--in both its geographical and social manifestations -- is maintained by a system of coercion and brute force."¹⁴

In Oromia there was also a zone for the colonizers and a zone for the colonized. The contrast between the zone of the colonizers and that of the colonized was striking. "There were power, glory, pride, wealth, deeply seated feelings of superiority, pomp, arrogance and luxury on the side of the [colonizers], while powerlessness, landlessness, rightlessness, suffering, injustice, poverty, all manners of abuse and dehumanization were the lot of the Oromo *gabars*, who were physically victimized, socially and psychologically humiliated and devalued as human beings. The political, economic, military, social and cultural privileges of the [colonizers] were the kernel of colonial relationship in the conquered Oromo territory."¹⁵

For Gebru Tareke, a prominent historian and a leading Ethiopian intellectual, the superior-inferior complex that characterizes the relation between the Abyssinian conquerors and the conquered peoples of southern Ethiopia "had a cultural connotation only."¹⁶ "Paternalistic and arrogant, Abyssinians looked upon and treated the indigenous people as backward, heathen, filthy, deceitful, lazy, and even stupid -- stereotypes that European colonialists commonly ascribed to their African subjects. Both literally and symbolically, southerners became the object of scorn and ridicule."¹⁷

Interestingly, the stereotype which the Abyssinians constructed for the conquered people of southern Ethiopia, including the Oromo, was turned against them by Europeans. For instance, Gerald Portal characterizes the Abyssinians as "brutal savages."¹⁸ For Henry Dufton, the Abyssinians are "deceitful, lying, insincere; their breasts are seldom stirred by generosity

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towards others, or ingratitude for benefits received."¹⁹ Two Englishmen, who saw the Abyssinian settlers in southern Ethiopia in their natural habitat "surrounded by slavery, corruption, intrigue and petty rascality,"²⁰ characterized them as "dirty, idle, and domineering [and] enslaving the people."²¹ It is interesting to note in passing that for both the conquered peoples of southern Ethiopia and for the Abyssinians the characterization as "backward" was an alien image constructed for them. It was European observers who ascribed the above-mentioned stereotype to the Abyssinians, while it was the Abyssinians who ascribed it to the conquered peoples of southern Ethiopia.

Teshale Tibabu, another prominent Ethiopian historian, stresses two interesting points that have relevance to this discussion. First, he argues, and rightly, that "[t]he rise of modern Ethiopia heralded the demise of Oromo power."²² The following discussion demonstrates beyond doubt that Menelik's colonial empire was built not only upon the demise of Oromo power, but also the destruction of Oromo lives and plunder of Oromo property. Secondly, Teshale Tibabu succinctly expresses the essence of colonialism by saying that "*Colonialism is based on an unequal relationship of power between the colonizer and the colonized*."²³ This is a most elegant one-sentence description of the relationship that developed in Oromia between the Abyssinian conquerors and the conquered Oromo. And yet for this scholar, the Oromo question is not a colonial one. It is rather a question of cultural and class domination.²⁴ As far as I know (and I do not claim to have consulted the works of every Ethiopian intellectual) only Addis Hiwet writes clearly and without any obfuscation that Menelik built his empire through "*military-feudal-colonialism*"²⁵ in southern Ethiopia. According to Addis Hiwet, Menelik's expansion into Oromia "was not simple conquest for its own sake, or the simple lure of empire-building The motives were primarily economic: the green and lush Oromo lands and their boundless commodities (gold, civet, ivory, coffee) and the prosperous markets."²⁶

While Ethiopian intellectuals go to great length to characterize Menelik's conquest as feudal expansion, Menelik saw himself as a conscious participant in the scramble for colonies. In his famous circular letter of 1891 to the heads of state of Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Russia, Menelik wrote, "I do not intend to remain silent when governments from distant countries come to divide Africa among themselves."²⁷ In the same circular letter, Menelik laid

claim to all territories up to Khartoum and as far as Lake Victoria, with all the Oromo. In his own words, "[i]f God grants me life and power, I would like to colonize the former Ethiopian territories as far as Khartoum, Lake Nyasa [Lake Victoria] and all the Galla".²⁸ This leaves no doubt that Menelik saw himself as a colonial empire-builder in his own right, and indeed he was.

Discussion of colonialism has become politically charged both for Oromo and Ethiopian nationalists. While revolutionary Oromo nationalists argue for an independent Oromia, Ethiopian nationalists deny the Oromo colonial experience. For the Ethiopian nationalists, the very mention of the phrase Ethiopian colonialism, more appropriately Shawan Amhara colonialism, frightens and haunts them with the specter of the disintegration of Ethiopia. This is generated by the Ethiopian nationalists' fear that the Oromo will declare an independent Oromia and break away from Ethiopia. As a colonized nation, the Oromo have a legitimate right to self-determination. "Like the people of Tigray and Eritrea, the Oromo have a legitimate right to decide their own destiny. It is their own business to decide about their future and no one will decide it for them."²⁹

The challenge for the Oromo is to make a clear choice: whether they want to establish an independent Oromia, separate from Ethiopia, or an autonomous Oromia within Ethiopia.³⁰ The challenge for the TPLF regime is to allow the Oromo to make their choice through a referendum. I believe if a referendum was to be held today, the majority of the Oromo would vote for an autonomous Oromia within Ethiopia. I will discuss in part two of this article why I believe that the Oromo would vote for an autonomous Oromia within Ethiopia rather than for an independent Oromia. Here it should suffice to say that the key to that end will be the peaceful self-determination of the Oromo. In the past few years, the TPLF regime has claimed that the Oromo have already achieved their self-determination. Of course, this is a cruel and a nasty joke upon the Oromo. Today such a self-determination in Oromia conjures up images of imprisonment, torture, disappearance, extrajudicial executions, confiscation of property and forced exile for thousands of the Oromo and plunder of Oromo resources for the development of Tigray.

To me, righting the wrongs inflicted on the Oromo by the TPLF regime will be the first challenge facing an autonomous Oromia. The basis of that autonomy will be the withdrawal of TPLF militia and security forces from

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Oromia and Oromos' right to be their own masters in their own state. In other words, Oromia must be as autonomous as Tigray itself. That is the prerequisite for the realization of the ideal of self-determination in Oromia. As is crystal-clear, such self-determination of the Oromo would not mean the break up of Ethiopia. It would mean creating a genuinely working federal system unlike the current federalism that exists mainly on paper as will be shown in part two of this article. To me, only a working federal system that combines a self-rule (which satisfies the aspirations of the Oromo and other oppressed peoples) and shared rule (which takes into consideration the unity and economic interdependence of the peoples of Ethiopia) offers a better prospect for the future of all the peoples of that troubled country. As I stated in 1966,

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 of 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.³¹

It is with this goal in mind that I present the following short history of Oromo colonial experience from the 1870s to 1990s. For that experience is not what was, but also what is. As already indicated, my presentation does not pretend to be comprehensive. However, whatever shortcomings it may have, it is based on facts that can be verified from the sources that were consulted

Interestingly, the available Ethiopianist literature describes the process of the colonization from the viewpoint of the colonizers; the Oromo are seen merely as the object of historical process. While this literature mentions the massive slaughter that accompanied the conquest, it maintains silence about the situation after Ethiopian colonialism was imposed on the Oromo. However, I will demonstrate further in the presentation that the colonialism that was imposed on the Oromo by force was maintained by violence.

The Ethiopian elites, too often and too easily hypnotized by the sheer myths and legends of 3,000 years of Ethiopian history, and strongly assert that Ethiopia has existed as one united country in its present form for several centuries. This is historically incorrect to say the least. Addis Hiwet observes that "[t]he deep-seated myth that has for so long enshrined Ethiopia -- both the name and the country -- still blurs genuine historical understanding. Ethiopia's existence as a 'modern state' does not -- as the ideologists of the *ancien regime* claim -- extend beyond the 1900s and into the limitless and ever-remote millennia. The same historical forces that created the 'Gold Coast', the 'Ivory Coast', the Sudan and Kenya, were the very ones that created modern Ethiopia too. And a recognition of this fact makes modern Ethiopia no older than these African states."³²

This means what existed before the 1880s for several centuries was historical Abyssinia, which has had a long and rich history, but formed only a small part of what is today Ethiopia. Most Oromo were not a part of historical Abyssinia. The Oromo have had their own long and rich history, which was separate from that of Abyssinia in more ways than one. The Oromo, the Abyssinians and other peoples of Ethiopia were brought under a single administration with the creation of the present Ethiopia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and only after the conquest and colonization of peoples who now comprise southern Ethiopia.³³

Finally, the rest of this article deals with (1) the condition of the Oromo in the precolonial period; (2) the beginning of the conquest of the Oromo; (3) the Egyptian colonization; and (4) the Shewan Amhara conquest and the colonization of the Oromo from the 1880s to 1935. I have stressed the latter two points partly because they demonstrate the Oromo colonial experience so clearly and partly because they are the main focus of the article itself.

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The Condition of the Oromo in the Precolonial Period

The Oromo constitute more than forty percent of the current population of Ethiopia. They are the single largest national group in the Horn of Africa. They are also the second largest indigenous people of Africa. The Oromo played an important role in shaping the history of the region and will undoubtedly play an even more crucial role in the future of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Ethiopian intellectuals and Ethiopianist scholars, especially Ullendorff has chosen to consign Oromo history to the margins of Abyssinian history.³⁴ As if Ullendorff's distortion of Oromo history was not enough, the Ethiopian ruling class "systematically depicted the Oromo as people without history, and belittled their way of life, and their religious and political institutions."³⁵ And yet the Oromo have a long history, a rich culture and fascinating political and religious institutions. As one of the most ancient peoples of Ethiopia,³⁶ the Oromo have always been part of the history of the peoples of the Horn of Africa. The implication that they are people without history is a case of distorting and twisting facts to justify military conquest, political domination and economic exploitation of the Oromo.

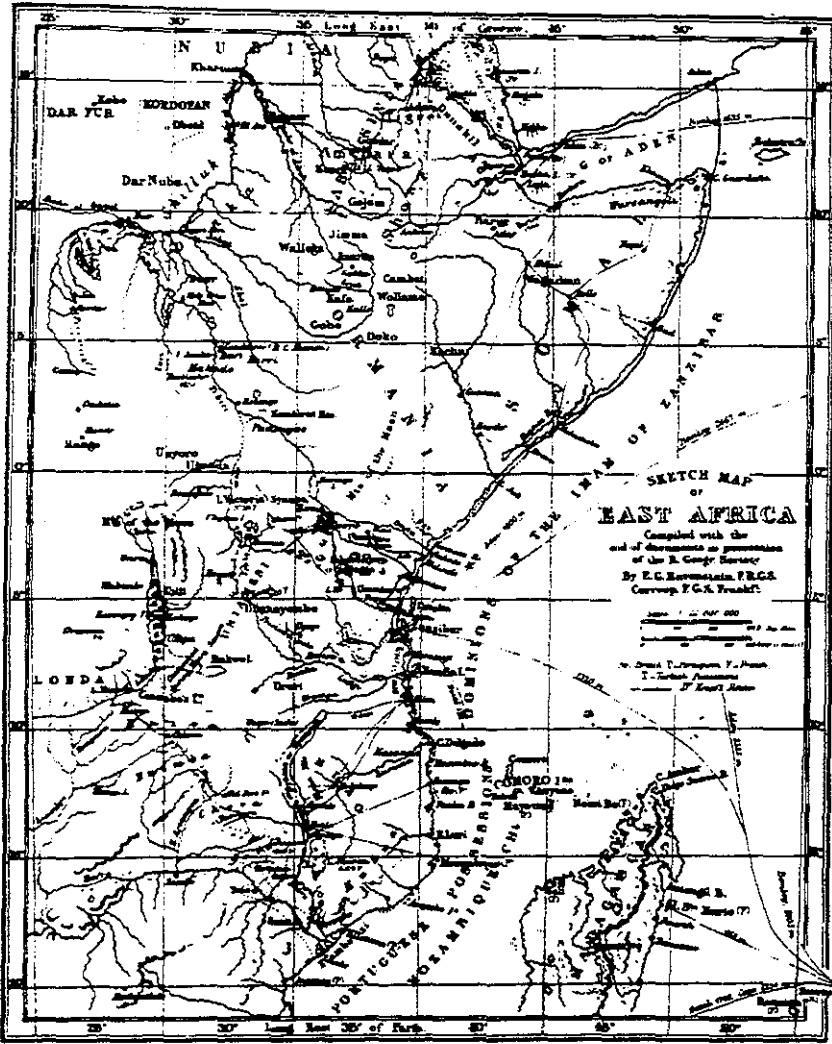
Afaan Oromo, the Oromo language, is one of the forty or so Cushitic languages spoken in and beyond the Horn of Africa. It must be stated clearly that the Cushitic language-speaking family of peoples lived for thousands of years in what is today Ethiopia, predating by a millennium the immigration of Semitic-speaking groups of people from what is today Yemen to Ethiopia after 500 B.C. This means that Cushitic language speakers are indigenous to the region now called Ethiopia and to the Horn of Africa.³⁷ It has been rightly said that more than half of the speakers of the Cushitic languages are Oromo or speak *Afaan* Oromo, the Oromo language,³⁸ which is also the third largest Afro-Asiatic language in the world, after Arabic and Hausa.³⁹ The significance of *Afaan* Oromo is not limited to the fact that it is the second or third most widely spoken indigenous language in Africa,⁴⁰ but it has also a rich oral literature deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of a uniquely democratic Oromo civilization. *Afaan* Oromo embodies the spirit of the nation. It has been said that "[i]t is the fountain of all the springs that give dynamism and vitality to the Oromo nation. It is the most vital, the richest and the finest bond that unites the Oromo into a single historical whole."⁴¹

The Oromo now call their country Oromia, but this is not a totally new name. The earliest reference to this term in some form goes back to 1840 (almost half a century before the conquest of the Oromo in the 1880s). It was the German missionary, Krapf who lived among the Oromo in Shawa between 1839 and 1842, who first mentioned the term Ormania (see his map on the next page) as the name of the country of the Oromo. Krapf mentioned Ormania on the basis of the information he gathered from the Oromo themselves. Interestingly, Krapf projected the Oromo nation's historical role in Africa to be that of the German nation in Europe. In his own words, "I consider them destined by providence after their conversion to Christianity to attain the importance and fulfill the mission heaven has pointed out to the Germans in Europe."⁴² However, the Oromo not only failed to perform this mission but also became victims of colonialism to be discussed below. Here it should suffice to say that the term Ormania was already in the literature around 1840. Ormania was changed into Oromia in 1974, by the men and women who formed the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The change of Ormania to Oromia was a major landmark in the expression of Oromo nationalism and articulation of Oromo nationalists' aspiration to create a self-governing Oromia. In this sense, "... the name Oromia thus serves the same purpose and is as justified as 'Ghana,' 'Benin,' 'Mali,' and 'Zimbabwe.'"⁴³ Since the end of 1991, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia has recognized Oromia as the official name of the Oromo region of Ethiopia. A brief glance at the flowering literature on the Oromo establishes conclusively that Oromia has been embraced universally. Consequently, in this article, Oromia is used interchangeably with the Oromo nation and its geographical location within Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.⁴⁴ It is precisely for this reason that Asafa Jalata titled his famous book, *Oromia and Ethiopia*⁴⁵ not only to emphasize the root causes of conflict between Oromia and Ethiopia, but also to stress the strategic and economic importance of Oromia in the Horn of Africa.

All the European travelers and missionaries who visited Oromia before its conquest in general and Antoine d'Abbadie⁴⁶ in particular were greatly impressed by the Oromo culture and its underlying unity. D'Abbadie wrote of "Les Oromo Grande Nation Africaine."⁴⁷ European travelers and missionaries were equally impressed with the fertility of Oromia. There were few regions in Africa which were so rich as Oromia. Its climate was ideal, water plentiful

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Sketch Map of East Africa in the Mid-1850s



Source: J. Lewis Krapf. *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours in East Africa* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. 1968). Reprinted with permission.

and soil so fertile that it produced anything with minimal labour.⁴⁸ In Oromia, like the rest of Africa in the precolonial era, production technologies were simple. The peasants' capital consisted of traditional implements. Power was limited to that provided by draught animals. And yet the fertility of the land combined with the intelligent activity of its inhabitants made Oromia an area of great agricultural wealth in the Horn of Africa.

In the precolonial period, the Oromo had their own rich history, culture, religious and political institutions which flowered in patterns of their own making and nourished the spiritual and material well-being of the Oromo.⁴⁹ For instance, by the 1840s, forty years before their conquest, the Oromo society in the Gibe region was producing or capable of producing more material goods than Menelik's Shawa. According to Beke, who was in the neighborhood of the Gibe Region in 1842 "[t]he inhabitants of the [Gibe region] enjoyed the reputation of being the most civilized . . . and manufacturing flourished here in a higher degree than anywhere else in this quarter of Africa."⁵⁰ In fact, more than Shawa (and probably more than any place in the Horn of Africa) the Gibe region was the most famous center of trade by 1840s. This was for three basic reasons. First, all the major commercial routes which connected the northern and southern, the eastern and western parts of the Ethiopian region led to the Gibe region, where most of export commodities were produced and traded. Second, more than anywhere in the Ethiopian region, it was perhaps among the Oromo states in the Gibe region, that trading was a highly organized business in which government played a key role. Third, the prosperity of Shawa and that of the rest of Abyssinia to a large extent depended on the products and lucrative trade of the Gibe region, which entirely financed the imports of Abyssinia itself. This was the conclusion of Beke, who had first knowledge about the trade of the Gibe region. "In fact the sole source of the foreign trade of Abyssinia, . . . gold, ivory, coffee, spices, and civet which independent of the slaves, may be said to form the only articles given in return for manufactures of Europe, [came from the Gibe region]".⁵¹

In some parts of Oromo land such as Wallo, the Gibe region, and Wallaga, the Oromo developed a monarchial form of government. For instance, they established six monarchies in Wallo, namely, the Arreloch, the Warra Himano, the Yajju, the Qallu, the House of Gattiroch, and the Borana.⁵² Of these

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dynasties two were the most dominant. They were the Yajju, which formed a relatively strong dynasty and the Wallo group that gave its name to the region and formed the longest-lasting Oromo dynasty of Warra Himano (ca. 1700-1916). While the Muslim members of the Yajju dynasty were assimilated into the Amhara Christian power structure at Gondar and dominated the political landscape of Abyssinia from 1756 to 1853, the Warro Himano dynasty championed the cause of Islam in the region. This was because "[f]or the Oromo in Wallo, Abyssinian domination and Christianity were synonymous. As Christianity was one of the pillars of Abyssinian unity, Islam became a major unifying factor for the Oromo in Wallo. From the beginning, Islam for the Oromo in Wallo was part of their cultural life and a mark of their independence. It was a powerful symbol of their identity as a people and a reliable fortress against Abyssinian nationalism."⁵³ It was only after the defeat of the Oromo and the destruction of their Islamic establishments that the region of Wallo was incorporated into the rapidly expanding Ethiopian state as will be shown shortly.

In the Gibe region, the Oromo formed five kingdoms, namely, Limmu-Ennarya, Guma, Gomma, Jimma and Gera.⁵⁴ Of these, the kingdoms of Limmu-Ennarya and that of Jimma, were the two most important. Until 1860, the former was the economic center and political powerhouse of the Gibe region, while after 1860 the latter eclipsed Limmu-Ennarya commercially, politically, culturally and militarily earning the reputation for possessing "sufficient culture to have its capital and its land and example of prosperity for all Africa to admire and imitate."⁵⁵ In short, the Oromo society of 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 Oromo areas of Ethiopia."⁵⁶ In Wallaga, there were two Oromo kingdoms, namely, Leqa Naqamte and Leqa Qellam, both of which were rich in trade, ivory and gold. The wealth of the Oromo kingdoms both in the Gibe region and Wallaga attracted the envy of their Amhara neighbors from both Gojjam and Shawa, as will be shown shortly.

Monarchic institutions developed among the Oromo in the regions mentioned above. Outside these areas the vast majority of the Oromo lived under a republican form of government known as the *Gada* system. Here I provide brief information about the *Gada* system not for the purpose of aggrandizing Oromo democratic heritage, but only to emphasize that *Gada*

still constitutes a shared political idiom that has relevance to the future of Oromo society. The *Gada* system was a participatory form of democracy which enabled the Oromo to develop a fascinating system of checks and balances that prevented the emergence of despotism. "One of the features of all democratic governments is that not only the polity is differentiated into many components which are granted some measure of autonomous existence, but also power is shared. In Western democracies, this pattern of power-sharing rests primarily on a territorial basis and on the vast complex of voluntary organizations that form the foundation of political participation. In Oromo democracy power sharing rests on territorial kinship and generational entities that forms the basis of political participation."⁵⁷

Among the Oromo, the remarkable system of power-sharing was developed by design and it was an integral part of the *Gada* system, the hallmark of Oromo democracy. *Gada* is a complex concept that encompasses the political, religious, military, economic, social and cultural aspects of Oromo society. According to Asmarom Legesse, a noted authority, "*Gada* is the term employed throughout the Oromo nation in the Horn of Africa to refer to the organization of the Society into generation sets who succeed each other every eight years in assuming political power. It is one of the universals that bonds the entire nation into a coherent system and gives people common political basis for understanding each other. It constitutes a shared political idiom."⁵⁸ Even among the Oromo who developed monarchic institution, *Gada* remained a shared political idiom.⁵⁹ The *Gada* system enabled the Oromo to mobilize effectively their human, material and spiritual resources for maintaining law and order, resolving conflicts peacefully, and engaging in productive activities. This was done through the *Gada* political process.

Training for participation in the *Gada* political process was an essential aspect of Oromo democracy. Training started early in life and it took thirty-two years before an individual assumed highest political office. Sixteen years out of the thirty-two were spent on the difficult military training, while the remaining sixteen years were spent on legal, political, administrative and ritual training. Extensive election campaigns and election to political offices completed the many years of training.⁶⁰ Election for leadership was held every eight years. The criteria for election to the political offices, among others, included oratory, knowledge of Oromo history, law, custom and tradition,

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bravery, past military achievement, and wisdom for settling disputes.⁶¹ The elected officials included *Abba Gada* ("the father of the *Gada* in power") who was the president of the *Chafe* assembly, famous Oromo Parliament. The *Abba Gada* was a single political leader of the nation. His residence was the seat of the government and the capital of the nation for eight years. The other elected officials were *Abba Dula* ("the minister of war"), *Abba Sera* ("the minister of law and justice"), *Abba Sa'aa* ("the minister of economic resources"), *Lemmi* (messengers and ambassadors), who dealt with foreign affairs and traveled throughout the territory to settle disputes among various groups.⁶² It has been rightly said that "[i]n the *Gada* system can be observed a genuine traditional African form of democratic government where the executive, the legislative and the judiciary functioned separately, but formed part of a 'united bureaucracy'."⁶³ After the election, there was a ceremony of transfer of power, from the outgoing leaders to the incoming ones during which time the losers conceded defeat and blessed the winners. The winners in turn praised their former rivals in an unambiguous manner. "The election and the 'transfer of power' took place at the time of *Jarra ceremony*. *Jarra* was the event that ended the *Gada* of the previous eight years and started the new one. It was the beginning of the new period, the building of the new future, which European travelers and missionaries of the last century compared with the Greek Olympiad."⁶⁴ The transfer of power was a smooth and peaceful event that expressed the democratic values of the *Gada* system. Compare this with the history of modern Ethiopia that has not seen a single transfer of power which was not drowned with the blood of thousands of victims. Smooth transfer of power was the strength of Oromo democracy, as the absence of peaceful transfer of power is the hallmark of Ethiopian political culture.

As I have written elsewhere, "[t]he transfer of power took place at the beginning of the Oromo New Year at which the winners and losers jointly reinstated the moral order of the nation, and resolved internal disputes peacefully. The transfer of power ceremony was the time when the achievement and fairness of the past eight years mapped. It was the time when the well-spring of Oromo yearning for spiritual satisfaction, for peace and reconciliation were overflowed with prayers for peace, prosperity and harmony."⁶⁵ After the transfer of power ceremony, the *Chafe Assembly* (Oromo parliament) made laws that lasted for the next eight years. The law was issued out of and evolved with *Gada* democracy. The one blended and

harmonized with the other so much that the history of the law is as well the history of Oromo democracy.⁶⁶ The *Chafe Assembly* had the prerogative of making laws, declaring war, and concluding peace. The laws passed by the assembly embodied the spirit of unity, peace, sense of identity, code of conduct and the moral standard of the society

The authority of the elected leaders was based on the democratic will of the people. Under the *Gada* system, government was an embodiment of popular democratic will, and those who wielded power were accountable to the people. "The society delegates power to a *luba* for a period of eight years, but that power is always subject to the higher authority of the assembled multitudes. Power emanates from the people and if those to whom it was entrusted fail in their responsibilities, they can be removed. The language they use to describe this removal of incompetent or unjust officers is instructive. They refer to it as 'buqqisu' which means 'to uproot'⁶⁷ Under Oromo democracy power and authority were relinquished after every eight years and power was shared, not as a result of weakness on the part of the leaders, but because power sharing was the ideal most manifested. In short, the *Gada* system was a participatory form of democracy, in which the unusual mechanism for power sharing was developed by design and it was the premier symbol of Oromo political institutions which articulated the rich principles of democracy of which the Oromo are proud.⁶⁸

Is the *Gada* system relevant to the current situation in Oromia and Ethiopia? The answer is yes and no. Yes, because the *Gada* system can be the indigenous basis for building a working democratic system both in Oromia and Ethiopia. No, because some aspects of the *Gada* system (which cannot be discussed in this article) that took shape more than five hundred years ago cannot meet the needs of a very complex and rapidly changing society.

Nevertheless, the Oromo democratic principles of the accountability of leaders which also limits their tenure of office to a defined period, the principles of checks and balances, the separation of power and authority, extensive political discussion, the spirit of compromise, concession and consensus, which were the hallmark of Oromo democracy are the treasures that have to be exploited if democracy were to flourish in Ethiopia. The democratization of Ethiopia in every sense of the term is the essential precondition for the voluntary unity of the people[s] and the country in which

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political oppression, cultural domination, physical destruction, perpetual warfare, government-imposed famine and the misery of millions will be things of the past ⁶⁹

The Beginning of the Conquest of the Oromo

For the greater part of their history, the Oromo led an independent existence as masters of their own destiny and makers of their own history. Even since the 16th century, most Oromo lived as neighbors with, but beyond the boundaries of, the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia, which constituted only a small part of what is today Ethiopia. Some of the Oromo who settled in Abyssinia during and after the 16th century were assimilated into the power structure of and played an important role in the history of the Christian kingdom, an aspect that was extensively discussed by Mordechai Abir in his *Ethiopia: The Era of The Princes*.⁷⁰ Here it should be enough to say that for more than three hundred years (from around the 1540s to the 1860s) the Oromo remained powerful in the region that is now Ethiopia. Their power was based on their formidable cavalry, effective war strategy⁷¹ and firm determination to remain free. According to a seventeenth century Portuguese eyewitness historian, "[w]hat makes the Galla [Oromo] much feared is that they go to war and into battle determined firmly resolved to conquer or to die. The Emperor [Susenyos] recognized this quality in them and in the most of the Abyssinians the exact opposite. To this he used to ascribe the victories of the Galla and defeats and routes of the Abyssinians."⁷² The advent of European weapons of destruction (guns and cannons) in the Ethiopian region in the 19th century undermined the traditional Oromo war strategy and accelerated the defeat of the once-mighty Oromo cavalry.

In this, it was the Amhara princes of Shawa who first turned the tide against their Oromo neighbors. This occurred during the reign of Sahle Sellassie (1814-1848) who used the title of *Negus* (King) and also acquired a relatively large number of European guns and cannons for the purpose of defeating the Oromo.⁷³ Sahle Sellassie acquired weapons by writing letters to European powers and receiving gifts from them, through missionary assistance and most of all by expanding into Oromo territory, which generated for him ivory, gold and coffee, with which he paid "for the quantities of armaments he required."⁷⁴ For instance, on January 20, 1840 he wrote a letter to the British

Government requesting " . . . may it please you to assist me particularly in sending guns, cannons and other things which I have not in my country." ⁷⁵ Sahle Sellassie was not disappointed, as European missionaries and diplomats who had visited him impressed upon their governments the need to supply him with adequate weapons; "so that he could spread the seeds of civilization among the Gallas" ⁷⁶ and "in order for him to be absolutely superior to the Galla cavalry, we need to provide him with guns and cannons." ⁷⁷ When the British diplomat, Major Harris, visited Sahle Sellassie in 1840, he gave the king a gift of 300 muskets, two cannons and a thousand pistols, ⁷⁸ while the French diplomatic mission led by Rochet d'Hericourt brought him 140 muskets. "Before the end of 1840, Sahle Sellassie had more than a thousand muskets in good working order and several pieces of cannon, which were carefully looked after by the king's armorers, gun makers and smiths. The king's firepower was directed against the Oromo, who were virtually without firepower, and the consequences were dramatic." ⁷⁹ Sahle Sellassie led three annual campaigns against his Oromo neighbors, which were characterized by burning, looting and extensive destruction. According to an English eye witness report, "the order was given . . . to destroy and plunder. Instantly ensued a rush from all quarters at full gallop. Flourishing fields of wheat, barley and beans, the produce of the toils of the . . . tribe, were savaged, and overrun by the locust hordes, and in the course of half an hour, the soil being stripped of every acre of cultivation. There commenced a general scramble for the rafters and ribs of houses, whereof the skeletons were presently consigned to the flames." ⁸⁰

For more than three decades Sahle Sellassie led annual raids against his Oromo neighbors for cattle and slaves. During the raids, "Women and girls were torn from their hiding places . . . old men and young were indiscriminately slain and mutilated among the fields and groves, flocks and herds were driven off in triumph and house after house was sacked and consigned to the flames" ⁸¹ The destructive capacity of the king was enhanced by the fact that he was regarded as a more promising "trade partner, than any of the other Ethiopian rulers with whom the Europeans were involved in the 1830s and 1840s." ⁸² In short, Sahle Sellassie initiated a policy of expansion into Oromo territory for the purpose of acquiring commodities (which his kingdom lacked) but with which he imported more European guns and cannons

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for conquering the Oromo. This policy of defeating the Oromo with their own resources was perfected at the end of the century by Menelik, the grandson of Sable Sellassie.

In 1840 Sahle Sellassie boasted to the visiting British diplomat, Major Harris, that he had already conducted 84 raids against the Oromo. According to Harris, in one of these regular expeditions in 1840, in which the British diplomat himself was present, the king raided Meta Oromo and killed 4,500 persons of all ages and took some 43,000 heads of cattle and more than one thousand captives, chiefly women and girls.⁸³ This practice set the pattern for future Amhara-Tigray leaders, who slaughtered the Oromo indiscriminately, plundered their wealth and attempted to destroy their political, cultural, social and religious institutions. Sahle Sellassie, who was able to field 30,000 to 50,000 peasant soldiers for his annual raids against the Oromo, was neither able to establish direct Amhara political authority over the Oromo in Shawa,⁸⁴ nor able to break the backbone of the Oromo cavalry. Both tasks were left to his grandson Menelik, the king of Shawa (1865-1889) who was able to transform his campaigns from cattle and slave raids into conquest and the colonization of Oromia. However, before I discuss Menelik's conquest, and the colonization of Oromia, it is important to briefly mention; (1) the attempt of Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868) to conquer the Oromo, and (2) the Egyptian colonization of the Oromo in Hararghe (eastern Oromia).

Tewodro's Campaign Against the Oromo

Tewodros, who was able to destroy the Yajju Oromo power in Gondar in 1853, defeated his Amhara-Tigray rivals, crowned himself Emperor in 1855 and fleetingly united historical Abyssinia on anti-Oromo and anti-Islamic policies. Hussein Ahmed writes that these efforts were "supported by the contemporary Protestant missionaries for three reasons: firstly, because they hoped that the subjugation of Wallo would inaugurate a period of tranquility; secondly, because they saw the struggle in terms of a confrontation between Christianity and Islam; and thirdly, because they believed that Wallo was the spearhead of Muslim drive to take over Ethiopia."⁸⁵

For the Emperor who called himself "the slave of Christ"⁸⁶ the Muslim Oromo in the region of Wallo posed danger to his kingdom. For Tewodros, according to Trimmingham, "Christianity and Abyssinia were synonymous."⁸⁷

Consequently, he considered it his religious and political duty to destroy the power of the Oromo in Wallo by appealing to his Christian subjects to eliminate the "Oromo specter" and the "Islamic menace"⁸⁸ in keeping with the attitude of Amhara ruling elites of his day. Baxter has observed that "since the 16th century, fears of Islam and of the Oromo have dominated the political consciousness of the Amhara ruling elite, and the thought of the two in combination has been their recurring nightmare."⁸⁹ What was new in Tewodro's anti-Oromo policy was his desire to either "impose Christianity on the Muslim Oromo in Wallo"⁹⁰ or expel them from the region. However, "as far as his stated aim of forcing Muslim Oromos in Wollo [sic] to either accept Christianity or leave his kingdom is concerned, he utterly failed. He, not they, gave in. It is not an exaggeration to say that Tewodros committed suicide in 1868, not only because he hated to fall into British hands as a captive king but also because he was virtually an Oromo prisoner in the mountain fortress of Magdela. Escape was well nigh impossible."⁹¹

Nevertheless, Tewodros' anti-Oromo stance,⁹² affected the future resistance of the Oromo in Wallo in five ways. First, "the extent of physical and material destruction and pillaging of the Wallo countryside affected the demographic, economic and political vitality of the region, for the remaining part of the century."⁹³ Second, it deprived the Oromo in Wallo of their leadership, as most of their leaders were killed during the ten years of Tewodros' campaign in Wallo.⁹⁴ Third, Tewodros' anti-Oromo stance became the working model for Emperors Yohannes (1872-1889) and Menelik (1889-1913), "based as it was upon the elimination of Oromo leadership, the destruction of Oromo culture and the complete subjugation of the Oromo masses to [Abyssinian] colonial domination."⁹⁵ Fourth, it encouraged the surviving Oromo leaders both in Wallo and Shawa to ally themselves with Menelik, the king of Shawa, and the future conqueror of all Oromo in Ethiopia. And finally, Tewodros' violence forced thousands of Amhara war victims and famine-stricken people to seek refuge in Shawa fueling Menelik's policy of plunder of Oromo property and occupation of Oromo territory.⁹⁶

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The Egyptian Colonization of Eastern Oromia 1875-1885

On the history of the City of Harar and its people, we have a good deal of information that cannot be discussed in this article. Here it should suffice to say that the works of Sidney Waldron,⁹⁷ Ewald Wagner⁹⁸ and Dr. Camilla Gibb⁹⁹ have added a great deal to our knowledge of the history of Harar, its dynamic people and their brilliant urban civilization. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the City-State of Harar had its own Harari or (Adare) administration which had supreme authority within and about 20 kilometers beyond the city-wall.¹⁰⁰ Outside this limit, the Oromo led an independent existence under the *Gada* system. Amir Muhammad (1856-1875), a man of Oromo origin, established Oromo political supremacy within the city of Harar itself.¹⁰¹ Muhammad, a highly educated man and a distinguished military leader, rebelled against the reigning amir, whom he overthrew with his Oromo support. After he seized power, Amir Muhammad followed a pro-Oromo policy, which was hated by the Hararis or the Adare people.

However, Oromo political supremacy was cut short by the Egyptian colonization of the city and the surrounding areas. It was in October 1875 that Colonel Rauf Pasha, commander of the 5,000-man Egyptian army, invaded Oromo territory, defeated an Oromo army at the Battle of Egu, captured the city of Harar, executed Amir Muhammad,¹⁰² and established Egyptian colonial administration. In 1876 the Egyptian force defeated the Oromo army at the battles of Dire Gofile, Mount Qundudo, and at Chircha, where Oromo leadership was decimated.¹⁰³ An Egyptian army officer discussed Oromo military tactics and bravery in these words: "They always advance in a great line often on a dozen ranks deep so that the first who fall are immediately replaced by other fighters who continue to advance without being in the least demoralized by the fall of their comrades . . . They are hardy and brave, taking death with greatest boldness [;] their attack is terrible . . . It is necessary for troops to have presence of mind and coolness in order not to be frightened at the first approach and to resist afterwards."¹⁰⁴ In courage, the Oromo might well have been the equals of the Egyptians, in number they were superior to the Egyptians, and in knowledge and skillful use of the terrain they surpassed the Egyptians. However, the Oromo lacked firearms. The Egyptian monopoly of modern destructive weaponry gave them decisive advantage at every battlefield. The Egyptians not only conquered the Oromo but also crippled the

operation of their *Gada* system in that region,¹⁰⁵ imposed Islam on the Oromo,¹⁰⁶ expropriated their land,¹⁰⁷ and replaced elected Oromo leaders by Egyptian-created hereditary chiefs.¹⁰⁸ And yet, because of Oromo resistance, the Egyptians were never able to extend their authority more than 60 kilometers beyond the walls of the city of Harar. Even within the area under their administration, the Egyptians were not able to stop Oromo resistance.

This was so much the case that by 1884, the Egyptian force that exceeded 8,000 men was besieged within the walls of the city of Harar itself. By then the Egyptian colonial administration was even unable to collect taxes from the Oromo. As a result, the maintenance of Egyptian force in Harar was draining the treasury in Cairo by 33,000 English pounds annually.¹⁰⁹ The fear of Oromo attack on the city, and the expense of maintaining a besieged force in Harar, together with Egypt's problems in the Sudan,¹¹⁰ led to the withdrawal of Egyptian forces from the city in 1885. That ended the short period of Egyptian exercise in the colonization¹¹¹ of the Oromo. With the termination of Egyptian administration, the Oromo regained their independence. This was cut short with King Menelik's conquest of Harar and the surrounding Oromo in 1887.

Menelik and the Colonization of Oromia

Menelik, who was a prisoner in Tewodros' mountain fortress in Magdella for a decade, escaped from it in 1865 with the support of the Oromo of Wallo. With their backing, he became the King of Shawa (1865-1889). When Yohannes, a self-made Tigrayan¹¹² became the Emperor of Abyssinia (1872-1889), Menelik became his arch-rival. After Yohannes defeated Menelik in 1878, the two Abyssinian princes were reconciled and decided to destroy Oromo power and to impose Christianity upon the Oromo in Wallo. In 1878, the two claimants to the throne of Warra Himano Dynasty (ca 1700-1916), *Imam Muhammad Ali* and *Imam Abba Wataw* were converted to Christianity. "The former took the baptismal name, Mekael and his godfather was Yohannes, while the latter became Hayla Maryam and his godfather was Menilek."¹¹³ Then Wallo was divided into two parts, the northern part came under the control of Yohannes, while the southern part came under the control of Menelik.

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It was the irony of history that Menilek who escaped from Tewodros's prison in 1865, gaining the throne of Shawa with the support of Wallo Oromo, now joined with Yohannes for their destruction! The two principal Christian princes were quick to take cruel revenge on the Muslims who refused to convert, and that revenge reached its climax in the 1880s, at the time when European-supplied weapons of destruction enabled Yohannes and Menilek to create the most formidable military machine in Africa. As in the days of Tewodros, massacre, plunder, burning, looting and wanton destruction of property became the lot of Muslims in Wallo.¹¹⁴

Although the Oromo in Wallo were conquered by Yohannes' attack from the north, and Menelik's attack from the south, the Oromo in Shawa, the Gibe region, Wallaga, Arsi, Hararghie and Sidamo were defeated by Menelik one after the other. In this huge undertaking, Menelik had European arsenals at his disposal, especially from France. As early as 1875, Menelik was already saying that "the French are my friends; it is upon them that I shall base the hope of my reign."¹¹⁵ The French provided Menelik not only with weapons of destruction but also trained his soldiers in more ways than one. "Menelik . . . operated with French technicians, French map makers, French advice on the management of a standing army, and more French advice as to holding captured provinces with permanent garrisons of conscripted colonial troops. The French also armed his troops with firearms and did much else to organize his campaigns. The Galla [Oromo] were thus conquered by the Abyssinians. Without massive European help the Galla [Oromo] would not have been conquered at all."¹¹⁶

Later on Menelik bought huge quantities of weapons from the Italians, the Russians and other European nations. It was with the resources plundered from Oromia, "including gold, ivory, coffee, musk, hides and skins and slaves"¹¹⁷ that Menelik paid for this modern European weaponry. "These commodities were initially obtained through raiding, property confiscation, enslavement, control of trade routes and marketplaces, and tribute collection and exported to European markets."¹¹⁸ Although the Oromo put up heroic resistance, they lacked firearms and were defeated by Menelik one after the other. By 1878 Gobana Daache, Menelik's greatest Oromo general and empire builder, had already conquered the Oromo of Liban, Gulale, Yaka, Metta¹¹⁹ and other groups for Menelik. By 1882, Gobana by the policy of threat and reward,

persuaded all the leaders of the five Oromo states in the Gibe region to submit to Menelik without resistance. The Oromo leaders of the Gibe:

[F]ound justification for their submission without resistance in Gobana's promise of local autonomy and on their belief that, whatever they did, ultimately the well-armed and ruthless Gobana would force them into submission. They saw their own salvation in their submission without resistance. . . . With his own secret plan, Gobana deceived and pulled the kings into his trap, without himself understanding what the future had in store for him. . . . These short-sighted leaders realized only when it was too late that they had sold not only the independence of their people but also their own independent power."¹²⁰

In 1882, Gobana won for Menelik the famous Battle of Embabo¹²¹ over the control of Oromo resources in what is today Wallaga. The Oromo leaders of Leqa Naqamte and Leqa Qellam in Wallaga submitted to Menelik without resistance because of Gobana's promise of autonomy, which was more apparent than real. By threat and persuasion, Gobana brought under Menelik's colonial administration the Oromo of Shawa, the Gibe region and Wallaga, and with the wealth obtained from these regions, Menelik imported huge armaments, which accelerated the conquest of the rest of Oromia. Gobana, the formidable warlord, brought the Oromo of the regions mentioned-above "under Amhara in five years—a mission that Amhara kings and warlords tried and failed in four hundred years."¹²²

For his spectacular services, Menelik entrusted Gobana with the administration of the Oromo Gibe states, and also appointed him as the *Negus* (king) of Kaffa,¹²³ the province which was not yet conquered.¹²⁴ But Gobana's appointment backfired¹²⁵ and eclipsed his illustrious political career. Menelik not only withdrew the title of *Negus* of Kaffa from Gobana but also ingloriously removed him from his administration of the Gibe states.

"Gobana lost both his power base and his title. . . . He expected to be the king of the Oromo confederacy he had created. He was even denied the title of *Negus* of Kaffa. In reality, he managed to destroy, disarm and diffuse the

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Oromo forces, upon which his claim to kingly title would have been established."¹²⁶

Like all Oromo leaders who followed his example in betraying the interest and the causes of their people, for their personal ambition, Gobana realized what had happened when it was already too late. "It was too late to rebel: Menelik was powerful and Gobana was old [to rebel]."¹²⁷ Like all short-sighted Oromo leaders of the past and present, Gobana was disgraced, only after he had accomplished the major task of subjugating his own people.¹²⁸ After his removal from the administration of the Oromo region, the confederation he created in the Gibe region was aflame with rebellion, for which the Oromo kings and common people alike "were put to the sword."¹²⁹ This was the price of treachery, and even today Gobana is regarded by the Oromo as an arch-traitor.¹³⁰ In the following moving poem, "Gobana, the Son of Dacche," is referred to as strange dog, who betrayed and worked against the interest of his own people.

It is strange, it is strange, it is strange.
women do not raid houses,
she who gives birth to a dog is strange.
Relatives do not hurt each other,
the haft of an axe is strange
people of one stock do not sell each other
that of the son of Dacche is strange.¹³¹

As in the Gibe region, so in Wallaga, Gobana deceived Moroda Bakare (1868-1889), the king of Leqa Naqamte, and Jote Tullu, the king of Leqa Qellam, with the promise of local autonomy which turned out to be deceptive as "Menelik's overseers, judges and especially customs inspectors" controlled Leqa Naqamte's finances,¹³² not to mention the heavy burden of imperial tribute.¹³³ In one of his letters, Moroda's son and successor *Dajazmach* Gebre Igziabiher declared that the heavy burden of tribute was ruining his territory; "the country is uncultivated this being the result of too much tribute, not because of any wrongdoing on my part. And now, if I order the people to give the ... overdue tribute, the country will be completely abandoned."¹³⁴

In Leqa Qellam (in southern Wallaga), "indigenous institutions were largely demolished or gradually transformed. The indigenous leadership was

. . . deprived from taking independent action on any crucial matters."¹³⁵ The hollow promise of local autonomy, under which Menelik's soldiers went on plundering Oromo peasants, gave way to direct Amhara rule in 1908 when Jote Tullu was imprisoned on a minor pretext. The region was then [November 1908] entrusted to *Fitawrari* Sahle Giyorgis, brother of Ras Tasama, the overall ruler of the country. People reacted sharply to the Amhara take-over and first rebellion took place in Gidami in February 1909, apparently led by Jote's own son Mardassa, who managed to scare the Amhara out of town . . . It appears that on this occasion 2000 guns were issued . . . to the Oromo peasants who went to the forest and started harassing the Amhara who could not control or tax the country for three years."¹³⁶

Ironically, it was with the heavy burden of imperial tribute¹³⁷ that the Oromo rulers of Jimma, Leqa Naqamte and Leqa Qellam bought illusory autonomy. These Oromo states were fairly commercialized and located near gold bearing areas. Menelik, who "personally controlled most of the trade of his state [and] was literally a merchant king,"¹³⁸ received the largest and the richest tributes from these regions, consisting of gold, ivory, slaves,¹³⁹ honey, cattle and Maria Theresa Thalers [currency]. The Oromo rulers of the above-mentioned states were nothing but agents of indirect rule, who maintained colonial law and order and collected colonial taxes from their people.

Unlike the Oromo of the Gibe region and Wallaga who were deceived by Gobana, the Oromo of southern and southeastern parts of Ethiopia resisted Menelik's conquest. The longest and most bloody Oromo resistance (1879-1886) was registered by the Arsi,¹⁴⁰ who were systematically slaughtered or sold into slavery. In the final decisive battle, it is estimated that Menelik conquered the Arsi Oromo only after killing tens of thousands, not to mention that the hands of thousands of men that were "cut off and the breasts of thousands of Oromo women which were mutilated by the order of Menelik at Annole in 1886."¹⁴¹ An English traveler who passed through the land of Arsi Oromo four years after its devastation had this to say about it.

Now was the time for the terrible Gallas [Oromo] to appear. Where was the country teeming with lusty warlike people? Certainly not here! What we found as we progressed was only a few poor villages of a hundred huts each and the native presenting the most abject appearance imaginable. Only four years ago they must have been a fine race of men. They loved to tell us of their

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former glory; their eyes would light up, and they would forget for the instant their present condition. Now the Abyssinians are the masters and these poor people are only a remnant of a great tribe . . . The Arussa [Arsi] Galla [Oromo] here as elsewhere, were regarded as slaves and were even sold in the market as such. The troops were thoroughly drilled and armed with Remingtons or French rifles.¹⁴²

Menelik captured a large number of Oromo prisoners of war during his Arsi campaign. His merciless attack on the Ittu Oromo in Charchar, Western Hararghie "which preceded the occupation of Harar, left tracts of their territory depopulated and lands uncultivated."¹⁴³ On January 7, 1887 at the Battle of Challenqo, Menelik routed the Muslim force, which included Oromo, Adare and Somali. A few days later he captured the city of Harar and became the master of a rich, vast region, which brought him closer to the sea from where he was able to import large amount of European weaponry which enabled him to create the largest armed force in Black Africa.¹⁴⁴ Oromo captives of the Battle of Challenqo were mutilated by cutting off their hands or legs by the order of Menelik who made every resisting Oromo food for wild animals.¹⁴⁵ "Atrocities occurred as . . . troops slayed [slain] adult men and women and despatched their children into slavery . . . herded in groups by their captors, enchained survivors marched with other prisoners toward Harar. The soldiers sold their surplus to slavers in markets in and around the city."¹⁴⁶

The fate of other conquered people in eastern and southern Ethiopia was not different from that of the Oromo. Menelik's force plundered their property, burned their houses, slaughtered them indiscriminately and sold into slavery tens of thousands of war captives. Let me mention just two examples to substantiate this statement. First, when Emperor Menelik conquered the Kingdom of Walayta in 1894, it was reported that almost 119,000 men, women and children were killed or wounded.¹⁴⁷ Menelik's army captured 18,000 slaves and 180,000 head of cattle.¹⁴⁸ The victorious emperor returned to his new capital, Addis Ababa (Finfinne) with 18,000 head of cattle and 1,800 war captives, his share of the booty.¹⁴⁹ Secondly, when Menelik's soldiers conquered the Kingdom of Kaficho in 1897, it was estimated that the population of that land was reduced almost by two-thirds.¹⁵⁰ It has been rightly said that "Menelik's object was the permanent occupation of the conquered territories . . . When they opposed him, his policy was one of ruthless extermination, as many districts which have been amongst the most fertile and

flourishing in all Ethiopia bear witness. The population of Kaffa, for instance, 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 gebbar [serfs]."¹⁵¹

After the conquest and occupation of Oromia, Menelik gave both the people and their land to his armed-settlers known as *neftanya*. The *neftanya* who played a pivotal role in the politics and dominated the political landscape of Oromia, owned Oromo people as they owned cattle and slaves.¹⁵² Since the *neftanya* were neither paid salary nor engaged in productive activities, they were given Oromo *gabars* in lieu of salary. The *gabars* worked for and sustained the luxurious existence of the *neftanya*. Burdensome and exhausting obligations were put on the Oromo *gabar*.

He had to surrender a portion of the produce of the land to the landlord as tribute. The amount varied between a quarter and a third but it was usually more, as the legal ceiling was that it should not be more than three quarters! Besides, he paid a tenth of his total produce for the tithe. He was also expected to provide his landlord with honey, meat and firewood, dried grass and sundry other items. Labor service was an added burden, he had to grind the landlord's share of the grain, transport it to his residence . . . build his house, maintain his fences, care for his animals, and act as a porter, an escort or a messenger. There was an obligation to present gifts on religious holidays and other social occasions. The multiple exactions imposed on the Oromo *gabars* meant the loss of a considerable portion of the [*gabar*'] production, onerous labor service and manifold other impositions.¹⁵³

It must be stated clearly that Menelik gave two-thirds of the conquered Oromo land to his colonial state, his armed settlers 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."¹⁵⁴ In the land of their birth the Oromo lost their rights, human dignity, and their lands and became landless *gabars* (serfs) who had no protection against the excesses of brutal and arrogant *neftanya* (armed settlers). The higher officials among the *neftanya* had their prisons and they were governments unto themselves. They were governors, judges and jury at the same time. They imprisoned, fined and tortured¹⁵⁵ Oromo *gabars* as they saw fit. In the words of Getahun Delibo, "*Gabars* did

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not have legal protection. It must be clear because Emperor Menelik, while protecting the conquered lands as the property of the crown, gave gabars to his unsalaried officers and soldiers as material property to be owned and used as personal property."¹⁵⁶

Their position mad the Abyssinian conquerors to abuse arrogantly and dehumanize their Oromo *gabars* "who were physically victimized, socially and psychologically humiliated and devalued as human beings."¹⁵⁷ Productive labor was considered beneath the dignity of persons of social standing in the Abyssinian homeland of the settlers. To the Abyssinian conquerors "the fruit of victory is leisure. They fought their wars against the neighboring tribes, won them . . . through superior arms and organization, and from then onwards settle back to a life of ease. The idea of conquering a country in order to work there, of treating an empire as a place to which things must be brought, to be fertilized and cultivated and embellished instead of as a place from which things could be taken, to be denuded and depopulated . . . was something wholly outside their range of thought."¹⁵⁸

Brutal conquest of Oromia, the alienation of Oromo land and the total subjection of the Oromo to the whims of the new masters, and the destruction of Oromo cultural heritage were the price to be paid for being under Menelik's colonial empire. Thus, contrary to the popular misconception which claims that Menelik united Ethiopia, he created a colonial empire "of which all the members were subjects rather than citizens, but in which almost all the Oromo were colonial subjects."¹⁵⁹ Once created, Menelik's empire became a prison of nations and nationalities, with the minority who formed the Ethiopian ruling class oppressing and exploiting all, including the Amhara peasants and workers who did not come to Oromia as settlers.

As with all forms of colonialism, the driving social force behind Menelik's colonialism was economic.¹⁶⁰ The search for gold, ivory, coffee, slaves, new sources of food for Menelik's soldiers, the plunder of Oromo property, forced Oromo labor and the alienation of Oromo land was the economic motive. Some aspects of Menelik's colonialism have similarities with European colonialism in other parts of Africa. As European colonists dominated the economic resources and controlled the military, judiciary and the politics of their colonies, the *neftanya* (armed settlers) dominated the economic resources of Oromia and controlled absolutely the military, judiciary and political power, institutionalizing the monopoly of their advantages. The political and

economic privileges of the *neftanya* were indicators, symbols of the colonial relationship in Oromia

The writer was born and brought up in the countryside in the Hararghie region where the *neftanya* settlers enjoyed unique privileges and excluded totally the Oromo from participation in the government even at the lowest level up to the 1970s. In Hararghie, the Christian settlers despised and looked down upon the Oromo as their inferiors. The settlers thought highly of themselves and acted as conquerors who were destined to rule with an iron hand. The ideological aggression with which the settler-colonists dehumanized the Oromo was supported with the arsenal weaponry at their disposal. Up to the 1970s, the poorest settler, even a leper, thought himself or herself to be "superior" to the colonized Oromo. In short, in Hararghie, the Amhara settlers believed and acted as colonizers while the Oromo knew the nature of the colonial relationship with their masters¹⁶¹

Four defining characteristics of Shawa Amhara colonialism were in the field of culture, language, control of land and the monopolization of political power. First, Amhara-Tigray culture was maintained to be superior to the Oromo culture, and it was imposed on the Oromo people. The Ethiopian ruling class demonstrated its deep-seated hatred for the Oromo, their cultural institutions and their way of life. This ruling class continuously depicted the Oromo as people without culture and dismissed their cultural achievements and democratic political institution as "primitive" relics.

In a frontal assault on Oromo culture and national identity, no stone was left unturned. Oromo cultural and religious shrines and places of worship were replaced by those of the colonizers. The Amhara ruling class introduced the policy not only of baptizing and Amharizing Oromo chiefs but also of baptizing and Amharizing even the land. Oromo village and town names were replaced by Amhara ones. For example, Finfinne became Addis Ababa, Ambo was changed to Hagere Hiwat, Haramaya to Alem Maya, Hadema to Nazereth, Bishofteu to Debre Zeit, Walliso to Ghion.¹⁶²

Second, as Amharic was the language of Amhara rule, it was also the language of education at the lower level in the school system. Everything that was taught in the schools in the name of Ethiopian history, culture or way of life either denigrated the Oromo or totally denied their having created anything of value. This was to destroy the Oromo youths' pride in the achievements of

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their forefathers and foremothers and keep them chained, with no faith in themselves or in their cultural achievements. Since the entire governmental bureaucracy, the court system, the industry and the modern economic sector used the Amharic language alone, only Amharic-speaking Oromo were employed in Oromia and Ethiopia, even as guards, up to 1991. Third, in terms of the control of land, the Amhara settlers and landlords, the church and the state dispossessed the Oromo of their lands and made them landless, rightless *gabars* (serfs) who were abused and brutally exploited. Fourth, in terms of political power, the Amhara elite monopolized the state power in its own interest and benefit for perpetuating the subjugation of the Oromo up to 1991.

Systematic efforts were made to destroy the Oromo democratic institution -- the *Gada* system. Menelik abolished the *chafe* assembly.¹⁶³ The *chafe* assembly was the Oromo parliament which dealt with matters of highest importance, the making of laws, the declaration of war and the conclusion of peace. Once election to Oromo political offices and the gathering of the *chafe* assembly were abolished, the *Gada* system appeared to the Ethiopian ruling class to have lost the *raison d'être* (reason for existence). This is addressed in the following short moving poem by a contemporary oral poet who depicts what happened to the Oromo in Gullallee after they were defeated by one of Menelik's generals.

Inxooxxoo daabatani
caffee gadlaaluun hafe
Finfinnee loon geessani
hora obaasuun hafe
Tulluu Daalattirratti
yaa'iin Gullallee hafe
Gafarsatti dabrani
qoraan cabsuumis hafe
Hurufa Bombirratti
jabbilee yaasuun hafe
bara jarri dufani
loon teennas indumani
idda Masasaan dufe
birmadummaan is hafe.

No more standing on Intoto,
to look down at the pasture below,
No more taking cattle to Finfinnee,
to water at the mineral spring.
No more gathering on Tulluu Daalatti,
where the Gullallee assembly used to meet,
No more going beyond Gafarsa,
to chop firewood.
No more taking calves
to the meadow of Hurufa Bombi.
The year the enemy came,
our cattle were consumed.
Since Masasaa¹⁶⁴ came,
freedom has vanished.¹⁶⁵

This means after their conquest the Gullallee Oromo lost their freedom of movement, their *chafe* assembly was abolished, and their cattle were looted. Menelik's attack did not stop with the *Gada* system, which the Ethiopian ruling class perceived as an important Oromo political institution. It was extended even to traditional Oromo religion.

By 1900 Menelik had even banned the famous Oromo pilgrimage to the land of *Abba Muda*.¹⁶⁶ By banning the pilgrimage, Menelik was attempting to destroy the unity and oneness of the Oromo nation¹⁶⁷. *Abba Muda* ("the father to whom pilgrimage is due") was the Oromo spiritual leader who lived in the region of Bale and Sidamo provinces. Before Menelik officially banned the pilgrimage, Oromo pilgrims known as *Jila* went to the land of *Abba Mudda* from all corners of Oromia. Through the pilgrimage to *Abba Muda*, Oromo in the Horn of Africa, from the Somali border in the East to the Sudan border in the West, from Wallo and Tigray in the North to Kenya in the South, maintained contact with their spiritual father and with one another. Their regular pilgrimages to the land of *Abba Muda* served as the focal point for their spirit of unity and oneness.

Menelik and his successors justified their crimes against the Oromo nation, its cultural institutions, on what they called the mission to civilize the barbarian Gallas.¹⁶⁸ The destruction of the Oromo cultural heritage, the looting and burning of Oromo property were undertaken in the name of a "civilizing mission". The *gabar* system (serfdom) and slavery were maintained in the name of a "civilizing mission". The Ethiopian colonial ruling class not only invented the myth of civilizing the Gallas, but also elevated it to the plane of state ideology which was uncritically repeated in the name of scholarship. "The Galla had nothing to contribute to the civilization of Ethiopia; they possessed no material or intellectual culture and their social organization was at a far lower stage of development than of the population among whom they settled"¹⁶⁹ These words written in 1960 by a well-known scholar, demonstrate that some foreign scholars who studied Ethiopia used the Ethiopian ruling elites' prejudice against the Oromo as a cover for their own and took on the perceptions of the Ethiopian rulers, and those perceptions were profoundly anti-Oromo.¹⁷⁰

For Menelik and the ruling class he headed, Oromo achievements in the field of agriculture, industry, commerce¹⁷¹ and, above all, in the field of

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democratic political institutions, were all categorized under the label of "barbarism." However, in reality, the charge of Oromo barbarism was a perverted colonial invention which was intended not only to denigrate Oromo cultural achievements but also to hide the crimes the Ethiopian rulers committed against the Oromo people. The fact that, on the eve of Menelik's conquest and colonization, the Oromo and Abyssinian societies were at a similar stage of material culture was brushed aside or denied. The fact that the products of Oromo society met some of the needs of Abyssinian society and entirely furnished its foreign trade¹⁷² was brushed aside or ignored. Notwithstanding the achievements of Oromo society, on the eve of conquest and colonization, the myth of "Oromo barbarism" had to be fabricated if the crimes of the Ethiopian ruling class were to be hidden. Thus, the "mission to civilize the barbarian Galla" was a euphemism for the Ethiopian rulers' plunder of Oromo property, and their wanton destruction. Menelik's colonialism brought nothing but destruction to Oromia. It had nothing to offer in the way of social progress. As Evelyn Waugh, a British writer who visited Ethiopia as a journalist, observed in the 1930s, "[t]he Abyssinians had nothing to give their subject people, and nothing to teach them. They brought no crafts or knowledge, no new system of agriculture, 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 and domineering, burning timber, devouring crops, taxing the meager stream of commerce that seeped in from outside, enslaving the people."¹⁷³

In Oromia, Ethiopian colonialism was built on twin pillars: the *gabar* system (serfdom) and slavery. The wealth created by the labor of Oromo *gabars* constituted the backbone of Ethiopia's economy. The overwhelming majority of Ethiopia's export items were produced in Oromia. Most of the expenses of the Ethiopian government were met by products and taxation raised from Oromo territory. And yet the Oromo *gabars* did not have any recourse against the excesses of arrogant masters.¹⁷⁴ What is more, observers have reported that when governors and their followers were transferred from one region to another, they carried away with them their private *gabars* in chains.¹⁷⁵ In this sense, it is difficult to distinguish *gabars* as any different from slaves.

This brings me to the question of slavery as the second pillar of Shewan Amhara colonialism. It must be said that slavery existed in the region long

before Menelik created his colonial empire. However, during his long reign, slavery and the slave trade increased exponentially. This was for several reasons. First and foremost, Menelik's war of conquest and continued raids in southern Ethiopia "yielded thousands of captives for the emperor and his generals"¹⁷⁶ Second, and equally important, Menelik was Ethiopia's greatest slave entrepreneur and received the bulk of the proceeds.¹⁷⁷ Third, Menelik, the Christian King of Shawa (1865-1889) was the great sponsor of the slave trade, who collected a tax of two or 3 Maria Theresa Thalers per head for slaves sold in the market of Rogge.¹⁷⁸ Fourth, some of his own generals and soldiers were slavers who depopulated a number of areas.¹⁷⁹ Fifth, while passing a number of proclamations abolishing the slave trade, Menelik together with his wife, were the richest slave owners in the empire possessing some 70,000 domestic slaves at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁰ Finally, it has been said that "Menelik maintained slavery in colonies as a means of making the conquered subjects pay by their labour all the expenses of his wars of aggression against them. Second, Menelik used slavery as a method of evangelism to teach his captive *aremouyan* (pagans) Christian virtue and divine love. Third, Menelik issued a series of proclamations against the slave trade, while he maintained slavery as a means of war reparations and evangelism."¹⁸¹

The Ethiopian colonial ruling class headed by Emperor Menelik developed a unique skill at deceiving and flattering foreigners with proclamations, promising to abolish the slave trade without the intention of stopping it. Such gestures were intended to mislead foreign critics. "Tricking the European was a national craft, evading issues, promising without the intention of fulfillment, tricking the paid foreign advisors, tricking the legations, tricking the visiting international committees. These were the ways by which Abyssinians had survived and prospered."¹⁸² Menelik died in 1913, leaving behind an empire built upon the *gabar* system and slavery. In the early 1920s when the League of Nations bombarded Ethiopia with a barrage of criticism for the widespread practice of slavery and the slave trade (the joint successors who deposed *Lej Iyasu* in 1916) Empress Zewditu and Regent Teferi (the future Emperor Haile Sellassie) issued the following proclamation which justified the enslavement of the conquered people, saying, that "let none sell or buy a man as a slave, and since then many other suchlike proclamations have been made. The cause

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of these proclamations and the reason why some men were declared slaves was that certain nations were at war with us, and this had caused money to [be spent] which these nations had to repay with their labour.¹⁸³

This quotation makes it clear that ten years after the death of Menelik, the colonized peoples of southern Ethiopia were still paying with their labor for their own defeat and subjugation. As colonial subjects, the Oromo were subjected to total domination in every aspect of life -- economic, political, social, cultural and religious. In a fertile land, they were doomed to live in abject poverty, under a crude system, inherently corrupt and incapable of improving their lot. In 1935 a British diplomat had the following to say about Ethiopian officials who still practiced slavery: "As their . . . appearance and manners, their useless grandiloquent promises of future reforms and their inability to tell the simplest truth, will completely deceive any European who has not seen these same officials in their natural habitat . . . surrounded by slavery, corruption, intrigue and petty rascality such as only these same officials can practice, while professing virtue from the Emperor downward."¹⁸⁴

Finally, the twin pillars of Shewan Amhara colonial administration were abolished during the short-lived period of Italian occupation of Ethiopia. Part two of this article will cover the Oromo colonial experience from 1935 to the 1990s. Here it is adequate to mention that since the 1930s governments have changed several times in Ethiopia. Leaders have changed. Colonial policies have changed. The ideologies of the ruling elites have changed. However, the Oromo colonial experience has continued to this day. In fact starting in the early 1990s Oromo have again experienced the replacement of one form of colonial policy by another. Leenco Lata observes that "[t]he 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 . . . 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."¹⁸⁵

Endnotes

- 1 Among others see Mekuria Bulcha's "The Language Policies of Ethiopian

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2. See for instance, Tecola W. Hagos, *Democratization: Ethiopia (1991-1994)? A Personal View* (Cambridge, MA: Khepera, 1995): 27.
3. Mohammed Hassen, "Ethiopia: Missed Opportunities for Peaceful Democratic Process," *State Building and Democratization in Africa Faith, Hope, and Realities*, edited by Kidane Mengisteab and Cyril Daddieh (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999): 234.
4. *Ibid.*, 4.
5. Professor Asmarom Kidane, see "Visit Ethiopia on the Web at URL; [http p:11/www Ethiopians Com](http://p:11/www.Ethiopians.Com). 9-30-1998, p. 7.
6. Daniel J. Elazar, *Exploring Federalism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987): 5.
7. Mohammed Hassen, "The Militarization of the Ethiopian State and the Oromo" *Proceedings of 5th International Conference on the Horn of Africa*, May 26-28, 1990, (New York, New York, 1991), p. 100.
8. See for instance, Zewade Gebra Sellassie, *Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A Political Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 288.
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10. Ali A. & Alamin M. Mazrui, *The Power of Babel Language & Governance in the Africa Experience*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 34, citing Semus Deane, in *Nationalism and Colonialism and Literature*, Eds. Terry Eagleton et al (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990): 10.
11. See for instance, Abiyu Geleta, "The Oromo People's Right to Self-determination and the International Law," *Proceedings of Eleventh Annual Conference of Oromo Studies Association* (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, August 9-10, 1997): 23.
12. Bonnie K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia The Making of a Dependent Colonial State in Northeast Africa*, (Irenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1990): 11-12
13. Mohammed Hassen, "Menelik's Conquest of Harar, 1887, and its Effect on the

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Political Organization of the Surrounding Oromo up to 1900," *Working Papers on Society and History in Imperial Ethiopia: The Southern Periphery from the 1880s to 1974*, ed. D.L. Donham and Wendy James (Cambridge: African Studies Centre, 1980): 237.

14. Mazrui, *The Power of Babel*, p. 58, *Working Papers on Society and History in Imperial Ethiopia: The Southern Periphery from the 1880s to 1974*, edited by D.L. Donham and Wendy James (Cambridge: African Studies centre, 1980): 237.

15. Mohammed Hassen, "The Militarization of the Ethiopian State and the Oromo," p. 94.

16. Gebru Iareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 72.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

18. Gerald Portal, *My Mission to Abyssinia* (London:Edward Arnold, 1892): 240. Quoted in Ieshale Iibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974*, (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1995): xix.

19. Henry Dufton, *Narrative of A Journey Through Abyssinia in 1862-3*, (West Port, Conn., Negro University Press, 1970 reprint from 1867 publication): 92. Quoted in Tibebe, *ibid.*, xix-xx.

20. The British diplomat E.N. Erskine, in a letter to the Foreign Office in 1935/36 FO371/50506 HNO9582.

21. E. Waugh, *Waugh in Abyssinia*, (London: Methuen, 1984, reprint): 25-26.

22. Ieshale Iibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974*, (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1995): 39.

23. *Ibid.*, 40

24. Tibebe, *ibid.*, 45

25. Addis Hiwet, *Ethiopia from Autocracy to Revolution* (London: *Review of African Political Economy*, 1975): 3.

26. *Ibid.*, 4.

27. For the copy of the original Amharic letter, see British Public Record, FO95/751. The quoted translation is by Abdul Mejid Hussein, "The Ethiopian-Sudanese Boundary: A Study in Historical and Political Geography," Ph.D. University of London, 1981, Vol. I, Appendix I(a): 454. For a copy of the Amharic original, see Appendix I(b): 456-457.

28. *Ibid.*, It is important to note here that in the 1880s and 1890s Menelik and his

top European advisors believed that Oromo territory was much larger than it actually was.

29. Mohammed Hassen, "Eritrean Independence and Democracy in the Horn of Africa," in *Eritrea And Ethiopia From Conflict To Cooperation*, ed Amare Tekle, (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1994): 106

30. Mohammed Hassen, "Ethiopia: Missed Opportunities for Peaceful Democratic Process," in *State Building and Democratization in Africa...*, 255.

31. Mohammed Hassen, "The Development of Oromo Nationalism," *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Inquiries*, ed by P. I. W. Baxter, Jan Hultin and Alessandro Iriulzi, (Uppsala: Nordiska: Africa Institute, 1996): 80.

32. Hiwet, *Ibid.*, 1

33. See for instance, Bonnie Holcomb and Siasi Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia The Making of a Dependent Colonial State in Northeast Africa*, chapter 3.

34. See for instance, Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960): 73.

35. Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1-2

36. Darrel Bates, *The Abyssinian Difficulty: The Emperor Theodorus and the Magdala Campaign*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 7.

37. Feyissa Demie, "The Origin of the Oromo: A Reconstruction of the theory of the Cushitic Roots," *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1 & 2 (July 1998): 155.

38. Muria Bulcha, "Checkered Contributions of Oromo Literacy: The Writings of Onesimos Nasib and the Advent of Modern Education in Oromoland," *Proceedings of the Conference on the Oromo Nation* held at York University in Toronto, Canada, August 4-5, 1990, edited by Bichaka Fayissa. Murfreesboro: Middle Tennessee State University, 1991, 51

39. Gene Gragg, *Oromo Dictionary*, (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1982), "Introduction," xvi.

40. Mekuria Bulcha, "Language, Ethnic Identity and Nationalism in Ethiopia," *The Oromo Commentary*, vol III, no 1 (1993): 8.

41. Tokkumma Oromoo, "The Growth of Oromo Nationalism," *Waldhans-so: Journal of the Union of Oromo in North America*, (Washington, DC) vol. XII, no.

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42. J. L. Krapf, *Travels and Research in East Africa*, (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1860), 72

43. Paul Baxter, "The Problem of the Oromo or the Problem for the Oromo?" *Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa*, edited by I. M. Lewis, (London: Ithaca Press, 1983), 129-130

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45. Asafa Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-1992*

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47. Antoine d'Abbadie, "Sur la Oromo Grande Nation Africaine," *Annales de la Societe Scientifique de Bruxelles*, vol IV (1880): 167-192.

48. H. S. Landor, *Across Widest Africa: An Account of the Country and the People of Eastern Central and Western Africa, as Seen During a Twelve Months' Journey from Djibouti to Cape Verde*, (London, 1907), 120-121.

49. Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia A History 1570-1860*, p. 2.

50. C. I. Beke, "On the Countries South of Abyssinia," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 13 (1843): 258-59.

51. C. I. Beke, *Letters on the Commerce of Abyssinia and Other Parts of Eastern Africa Addressed to the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade*, (London: 1852): 15.

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53. Mohammed Hassen, "Islam as a Resistance Ideology Among the Oromo of Ethiopia: The Wallo Case, 1700-1900," *In the Shadow of Conquest: Islam in Colonial Northeast Africa*, ed. by Said S. Samatar (Trenton, New Jersey: The Red Sea Press, 1992): 84.

54. On the Gibe states see, Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia A History 1570-1860* Chapter 3, pp. 93-113.

55. Max Gruehl, *The Citadel of Ethiopia the Empire of the Divine Emperor*, translated by I. F. D. Marron and I. M. Sieveking, (London, 1932), 166

56. Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, 196.
57. Asmarom Legesse, "Oromo Democracy" a paper presented at the Oromo studies Association Annual Conference, Toronto, Canada, August 12-13, 1989, p 7. I am indebted to the author for giving me a copy of this paper.
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59. See for instance, Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia A History 1570-1860* pp. 94-96, 152-53.
60. For literature on the Gada system among others, see 1) Asmarom Legesse , *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study African Society*. 2) E. Haberland, *Galla Sud-Athiopiens* (Stuttgart: 1963). 3) K.E. Knutsson, *Authority and Change: A Study of the Kallu Institution among the Matcha Galla of Ethiopia*, (Gothenburg: 1967). 4) E. Cerulli, *Folk Literature of the Galla of Southern Abyssinia* (Harvard African Studies 3, 1922), 5. G.W.B. Huntingford, *The Galla of Ethiopia : The Kingdoms of Kaffa and Janjero*, (London: 1955) 6. Paul Baxter, "Boran Age-Set and Generation-Sets: Gada, a Puzzle or a Maze?" in *Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organisations*, edited by P. I. W. Baxter and Uri Almagor, (London: C Hurst & Company, 1978): 151-182.
61. Martial de Salviac, *Un peuple antique au pays de Menelik: Les Galla, Grande Nation Africaine*, (Paris: H. Oudin, 1901): 190-191.
62. Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History*, pp. 14-15.
63. Richard Greenfield and Mohammed Hassen, "Interpretation of Oromo Nationality," *Horn of Africa*, vol 3, no. 3 (1981): 5.
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66. Virginia Luling, "Government and Social Control Among Some Peoples of the Horn of Africa," M.A. Thesis, University of London, 1966, 87.
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72. M. De Almeida, "The History of High Ethiopia or Abassia," in *Some Records of Ethiopia 1593-1646*, trans & ed by C. F. Beckingham and G. W. B. Huntingford. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1954), 136-137.

73. *Afrique Memoires et Documents Abyssinie 1838a, 1850*. Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Folio 231. See also A. I. A. Gern 16A. India Office Records, Krapf's Letter of 3 July 1840 from Ankober, Folio 127-133.

74. Bonnie Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia*, p. 83.

75. See for example, *The Journals of C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf*, (London: 1968): 197.

76. *Ibid.*, 251.

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79. Mohammed Hassen and Richard Greenfield, "The Oromo And Its Resistance To Amhara Colonial Administration" in *Proceedings of The First International Congress of Somali Studies*, eds. Hussein M. Adam and Charles L. Gesheker (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992): 550.

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81. *Ibid.*

82. S. Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopia's Independence*, (London: Heineman, 1976): 145

83. Cited in Getahun Delibo, "Emperor Menelik's Ethiopia, 1865-1916: National Unification or Amhara Communal Domination?" Ph.D. dissertation, Howard University, 1974, 32.

84. Ed Simone, "The Amhara Military Expeditions against the Shawa Galla (1800-1850): A Reappraisal," *Proceedings of the First United States Conference on*
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85. Hussein Ahmed, *Ibid.*, 331. See also Donald Crummey, "Tewodros as Reformer and Modernizer," *Journal of African History* vol. 10, no. 3 (1969): 466-467.

86. Hussein Ahmed, *Ibid.*, 329.

87. J. S. Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 118.

88. M. Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes, The Challenge of Islam and the Reunification of the Christian Empire 1769-1855*, (London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), see Chapter VII.

89. Paul Baxter, *Ibid.*, 288.

90. Mohammed Hassen, "Islam as a Resistance Ideology among the Oromo of Ethiopia..." *Ibid.*, 89.

91. Richard Greenfield and Mohammed Hassen, "Interpretation of Oromo Nationality," *Ibid.*, 8.

92. It has been correctly said that Tewodros' anti-Oromo stance survived to his last breath of life. "At the last minute of his life Tewodros released all the prisoners in Magdela except the Wallo and Shawa Oromo numbering about 1,000. He killed all the Oromo prisoners, not even a single person escaped his massacre." *Waldhansso: Journal of the Union of Oromo Students in North America*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1979): 19-20.

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96. Getahun Delibo, *Ibid.*, 35.

97. Sidney Waldron, "Social Organization and Social Control in the Walled City of Harar, Ethiopia" Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1975. See also his article on "The Political Economy of Harari-Oromo Relations, 1559-1874" *Northeast African Studies*, vol. 6, nos. 1, 7, 2 (1984): 23-39.

98. Ewald Wagner, among his many works, see his "Three Arabic Documents on the History of Harar." *Journal of Ethiopian studies*, Vol. XII, No. 1(1974): 213-

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102. *Ibid* See also Richard Caulk, "Harar and Its Neighbors in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of African History*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1977): 381.
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104. Muhammed Moktar, "Notes Sur Le Pays de Harar," *Bulletin de La Societe Khediviale de Geographie*, (Cairo, 1877): 386-387.
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106. Mohammed Hassen, *Ibid*, 28.
107. London Public Record Office, F0403/82, Folio 126.
108. Major F. M. Hunter, *Reports on Somali Land and the Harar Province*, Simla, 1885, 69.
109. S. Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopia's Independence*, (London: Heinemann, 1976), 348.
110. As a result of Muhammad Ahmed's Mahdist uprising, the Egyptian army in the Sudan was defeated in January 1885 and an independent Mahdist state was formed in the Sudan.
111. Zewade Gebra Sellassie, *Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A Political Biography*, 208.
112. Since the fall of the Axumite Kingdom in the middle of the 11th century, Yohannes was the first Tigrayan to become the Emperor of historical Abyssinia.
113. Hussein Ahmed, *Ibid*, 344. See also Harold G. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia 1844-1913*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 58.
114. Mohammed Hassen, "Islam as a Resistance Ideology," *Ibid*, 93.
115. Harold Marcus, *Ibid*, 44.

- 116 Lord Lytton, *The Stolen Desert*, (London: McDonald, 1966), 160.
- 117 Asafa Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 52.
118. *Ibid*
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121. Addis Hiwet, *Ethiopia from Autocracy to Revolution*, 4.
122. Getahun Delibo, *Ibid.*, 81.
- 123 Bairu Tafla, "Three Portraits: Ato Asma Giyorgis, Ras Gobana Daci and Sahafi Iezaz Gabra Selassie," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1967): 148. See also Alessandro Triulzi, "The Back-ground to Ras Gobana's Expedition to Western Wallaga in 1886-1888: A Review of Evidence," *Proceedings of the First United States Conference on Ethiopian Studies*, *Ibid.*, 143-156
124. Max Gruehl, *Ibid.*, 182.
125. Bairu Tafla, *Ibid*.
- 126 Hassen & Greenfield, *Ibid.*, 565.
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128. Getahun Delibo, *Ibid.*, 82.
129. Hassen & Greenfield, *Ibid.*, 566
130. Asafa Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 53
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- 133 *Ibid* , 59.
134. *Ibid*.
135. Tesema Ta'aa, "The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From the Mid-16th to the Early 20th Centuries," Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1986, 156.

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- 157 Hassen, *Ibid* , 94.
158. E. Waugh, *Waugh in Abyssinia*, (London: Methuen, 1984, [reprint]), 248-249.
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161. See for instance, Albert Memme, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, translated from the French by Howard Greenfield. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967, 106-107.
- 162 Hassen & Greenfield, *Ibid.*, 576.
163. See for instance, *Asma Giyorgis and His Work History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Sawa*, edited by Bairu Tafia. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag; Wiesbaden GMBH, 1987, 134-135.
164. Masasaa was one of the generals of Menelik who conquered the Oromo in Gullallee
165. Iamene Bitima, "On Some Oromo Historical Poems," *Paideuma Mitteilungen Zur Kulturkunde*, 2a (1983): 318-319
166. K. Knutsson, *Authority and Change: A Study of the Kallu Institution among the Macha Galla of Ethiopia*, (Goteborg, Etnografiska Museet, 1967), 147-155.
- 167 Mohammed Hassen, " The Militarization of the Ethiopian State," *ibid.*, 95.
168. Please note that Galla was the name by which the Oromo were known to the non-Oromo until recently. Galla is a term of insult and abuse which was used by the Ethiopian ruling elites to belittle the Oromo and denigrate their achievements. The Oromo do not call themselves Galla and they resist being so called.
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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF GOLD MINING IN OROMIA

Gobena Huluka

Introduction

The future of any nation is dependent on its natural resources. Gold is one of the most important natural resources of Oromia, a regional state in Ethiopia. The current Ethiopian government has been selling, renting and/or leasing the land that belongs to the indigenous Oromo and other peoples to multinational gold mining corporations in the name of economic liberalization. Modern gold mining processes involve use of toxic chemicals that are hazardous for human and animal health. Gold mining activities can pollute plant, soil, water and air that threaten the habitats and the ecological stability of the region. The profit driven gold mining activities will do more damage socially and environmentally to the indigenous peoples than the overall economic benefit that can be generated. The complex web of development, environmental quality and economic sustainability of the region should be carefully considered before irreversible damages are done as the result of scramble for Oromia's gold reserves. A chemical time bomb will start ticking as soon as the first chemical treatment takes place to produce gold. The objective of this paper is to provide some background information on the status of gold mining in Oromia in particular, and to highlight the potential environmental pollution that could be produced from modern gold mining activities.

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Background

According to modern anthropology, Africa is the birthplace of mankind. Africa is also the birthplace of mining activity. The oldest known mine is located in Swaziland, southern Africa, that was operated as long ago as 4500 years.¹ Africa ranks first in the world in bauxite, chromate, cobalt, diamond, germanium, ferrochromium, fluorspar, gold, flake graphite, manganese, phosphate, platinum, uranium, vanadium, and others.² It is also the dominant source of strategic metals such as chromium, cobalt, manganese and platinum, and the leading supplier of diamonds, gold, and uranium.³ These natural reserves are found in different regions of the continent. As the result of these reserves, Africa is and for a long time will remain one of the great mining areas of the world.

Ethiopia's mineral resources include gold, platinum, gypsum, nickel, copper, feldspar, iron, manganese, mica, phosphate, potash, sulfur, and other ores.⁴ Ethiopia was ranked sixth in gold production in Africa after South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Zaire and Zambia for the period of 1976-1985.⁵ During this period, Africa produced more than 7.6 million kg gold and Ethiopia's contribution was 3820 kg. From 1955-1974, Ethiopia produced 5230 kg of gold.⁶ The current official production figure for gold is about two tons, and it is expected to increase many folds in the coming years.⁷ Most of the gold has been mined by traditional means by crushing and grinding the core in mills/mortar followed by gravitational separation involving simple panning or washing to produce a gold-rich concentrate.

As many indigenous people around the world, the Oromos believe that they are physically connected to their natural environment.⁸ They believe in the interdependence of people and their environment for harmonious symbiotic unity. The Oromo tradition also supports the wise use of the land, water, and forest for a sustainable existence. The Oromo people practiced a traditional democratic system called *gada* that addressed their judicial, legislative and security needs, and assured participation of individuals and communities at the grassroots level before their invasion by Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia.⁹ Oromia's relatively "green" landscape can be attributed to this traditional culture that values the physical environment for sustainable coexistence.

The Scramble for Oromia's Gold

The coalition of guerrilla fighters that included the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), the Eritrea People Liberation Front (EPLF), and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) toppled the socialist-oriented military government of Ethiopia in 1991. The TPLF eventually ended up ruling Ethiopia after Eritrea, one of the provinces of Ethiopia, proclaimed independence in 1993.¹⁰ The TPLF, which had professed communism as its guiding ideology, was confronted with the global decline of communism at the eve of its victory. The only logical choice for TPLF was to abandon its long held beliefs and pretend to embrace free market economy principles to maximize its own benefit. Not surprisingly, the government adopted what it proclaims a "free market economy" in order to privatize the common property of the Ethiopian people nationalized during the preceding regime. The privatization actually personalized the common goods for exclusive use of mainly ethnic Tigrean aristocrats since the government controls the state power apparatus and the economic sectors. In addition, the TPLF government put all resources of the Ethiopian Empire up for sale to the highest bidder in the name of a "free market economy."

The TPLF government opened Ethiopia's mining sector to private investors in 1993, allowing duty-free imports of equipment and repatriation of profits. It also cut mining income tax to 35 percent from 45 percent, and reduced its free equity stake to 2 percent from a ceiling of 10 percent.¹¹ Ethiopia has identified potential gold reserves of more than 500 tonnes and views prospects for further discoveries as strong.¹² Ethiopia's government is pinning its hopes on mining as a future source of hard currency earnings, now dominated by coffee

Free market economy or economic liberalization of the TPLF government has attracted many international corporations mainly from developed countries. More than a dozen international gold mining corporations operate in Ethiopia today.¹³ Most of these companies have mining activities in Oromia. For example, the International Roraima won a bid for a 70 km² land in the Adola Gold Belt, which is to the southeast of Laga Dembi gold mine that produces 100,000 ounces (3779 kg) per year.¹⁴ Also, the South African-based Johannesburg Consolidated Investment (JCI) Ltd gained exclusive rights to explore in Werseti-Gudba and Chambi in the Borana region of southern Oromia, and in Wallaga, the western Oromia, to explore for

precious metals.¹⁵ The National Mining Corporation, owned by Saudi Arabian Sheikh Mohamed Hussein Al Amoudi, paid \$175 million to lease the Laga Dembi gold mine for 20 years.¹⁶ The company has the right to produce and sell gold from deposits within an area of 85 square km (52.7 square miles) of the plant, and is expected to increase output five fold from the current three tonnes per year to 15 tonnes

Gold is a non-essential metal; the few industrial purposes for which gold's characteristics are essential could be met through the recycling of gold coins and bars from what is already available in the world market. At least 80% of all gold that is dug out of the ground ends up as jewelry.¹⁷ Oromia's gold is used for domestic consumption and export purposes.

The gold minefields of Oromia belong to the indigenous Oromo people who constitute half of the Ethiopian population of 60 million people.

The TPLF government claims to own all land of the empire by default since the preceding socialist government nationalized all land by decree. This leaves the government as the only partner of mining companies for all agreements, including land appropriation and profit sharing. The Tigrean-dominated government is willing to exploit the mining lands that traditionally belonged to other ethnic groups by selling the land to the highest bidder. Also, the government makes mining very attractive for companies who face strong environmental quality standards in developed countries. Most mining agreements are negotiated under great concessions amounting to gunboat diplomacy.

Mining resource colonization is accepted in today's society where developed countries are the sole source of capital and technology and underdeveloped governments are simple landlords and guards for peaceful transfer of wealth.¹⁸ This is sometimes termed as neo-colonialism, practices of granting a sort of independence with the covert intent of making a liberated country into a client state through economic means. At times, international mining companies even raise a mercenary standing army to protect "their mining fields" and keep their compradors and puppet regimes in power. This is only an indication of complex problems most developing countries deal with on questions of national sovereignty and mining field entitlements. Since 1994, more than 70 countries, including 31 in Africa, have changed their laws to attract foreign investment in gold mining.¹⁹

The profit-driven nature of modern mining, accompanied with a government eager to scramble for Oromia's gold at any dollar value, will result in increased mining activities. The pandemic spread of gold mining in Oromia

will significantly affect the environment of the region. A majority of Oromos are farmers and depend on productive land. Taking land from these peasants for mining purposes will decimate indigenous communities with disease and pollution. These local impacts are often excused as the price of economic development. Many countries bow to the inertia of this conventional wisdom, despite growing evidence that exploitation of mineral wealth does not necessarily convert to regional or national economic progress. All that glitters is not necessarily gold. In the ethnically polarized Ethiopian Empire, many oppressed nationalities, including the Oromos, do not benefit from state income. They are in fact waging guerrilla war with the government for national self-determination. It is easy to imagine who will get the lion's share of the gold mining revenue, and who will be left with the pollution.

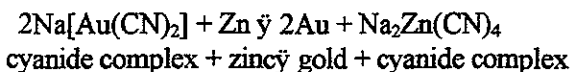
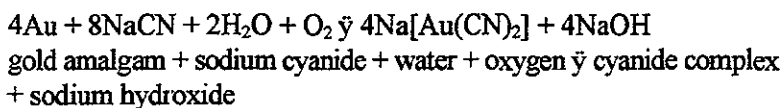
Gold Mining and Pollution

You who have priced us, you who have removed us: at what cost?
What price the pits where our bones share a single bit of memory,
how one century turns our dead into specimens, our history into dust,
our survivors into clowns?, Miwok/Hopi, Native American Tribal
Elder.²⁰

Gold mining generates wastes. Most ores are mined for as little as 2% of the real "metal" producing wastes from exploration, extraction, concentrating and refining of precious metal.²¹ For every ton of gold the U.S. industry produces, it also generates three million tons of waste rock.²² On personal scale, an average pair of wedding bands could make a 6-foot wide, 6-foot deep, 10-foot long pile of tailings in the happy couple's backyard. Equally important is not only amount of waste generated, but also degree of toxicity of the waste. The waste contains heavy metals such as lead, arsenic, nickel, and others that are very toxic for humans and animals. Modern science has also introduced the use of cyanide for extraction and mercury for the amalgamation of gold. These chemicals are lethally toxic. They can also travel through air, water and sediments, and contaminate areas many kilometers away from their sources of origin unhindered by national boundaries and artificial barriers.

Cyanide Pollution The U.S. Bureau of Mines perfected cyanide heap-leaching three decades ago²³ By spraying a solution of cyanide

(cyanidation) over crushed ore 'heaped' into open piles, miners can profitably extract gold from ores bearing as little as half-a-gram per ton of rock. A cyanide solution of 1-4 lb per ton of ore is usually used. The gold is mostly leached from the ore using a cyanide solution, and recovered by filtration and zinc precipitation. The waste of cyanide solution is approximated at three g per ton of ore.²⁴ A simplified chemical equation of gold extraction by cyanide is:



Gold is dissolved in sodium cyanide, and gold will precipitate when zinc is added to the solution. Hydrogen cyanide can be used in combination and/or instead of sodium cyanide, depending on availability and cost. Since cyanide is a powerful but non-selective solvent, it also dissolves many toxic heavy elements that are present in the local geology. Cyanide is also a toxic chemical that causes neurological disorders, thyroid disease, and other health problems. In Nevada (USA), 10,000 animals died between 1986-1991, due to cyanide solution ingestion.²⁵ Deaths of birds, animals and fish are reported around the Adola Gold Exploration Enterprise due to chemical poisoning of the local water in Oromia.²⁶ Cyanide is one of the main toxic residuals of gold mining.

Cyanide can migrate great distances through groundwater as demonstrated in some Canadian gold mines reported in a study conducted in 1989.²⁷ The half-life of sodium cyanide under anaerobic condition is estimated to be 1-2 years while that of the hydrogen cyanide is about 267 days in the air.²⁸ Soil and sediments adsorb insoluble cyanide compounds such as copper and silver salts with the potential to bio-concentrate. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) maximum contaminate level for cyanide in drinking water is 0.2 parts per million.²⁹

Mercury Pollution. Mercury is an effective and very inexpensive reagent to extract gold. About one kg of mercury will be used for every kg of gold produced, and one kg of mercury costs as much as one g of gold.³⁰ Gold forms amalgam (admixture of metals) upon contact with mercury. The

amalgam is then volatilized to liberate gold. About 10% of the mercury used is evaporated into the atmosphere. Tests in several mining communities in Brazil found that more than 30% of miners examined had mercury levels above the World Health Organization's (WHO) tolerable limit.³¹ Water samples analyzed at gold mining areas in Tanzania contained mercury concentrations above the WHO maximum concentration limit.³² Similar results were found in gold mining fields of China.³³ Mudroch and Clair analyzed drainage from an old gold mine, which had been operated between 1860-1930 in Canada, and found that significant amounts of arsenic, mercury, lead, and zinc were contaminating lakes and rivers nearby.³⁴ A comprehensive analysis of mercury contamination of ecological systems from gold and silver mining sources is described by de Lacerda and Salomons.³⁵

Acute exposure of mercury can cause kidney damage from short-term exposures at levels above the maximum contaminant level. Acidification of a body of water might also increase mercury residues in fish even if no new input of mercury occurs, possibly because of lower pH. Lower pH reduces growth and reproduction of fish, increases ventilation rate and membrane permeability, and accelerates the rates of methylation and uptake. It also affects partitioning between sediment and water. The maximum contaminant level for mercury in drinking water is two parts per billion.³⁶

Acid Mine Drainage Extreme acid rock drainage is the dominant long-term environmental concern at gold mining fields. Extensive remedial efforts will be required to minimize weathering and dissolution of unweathered sulfides and soluble metal salts. Acid mine drainage is produced when sulfide reacts with air and water to form sulfuric acid which then dissolves other solids. Due to leakage from natural discharge points and the wide distribution of acid-generating material throughout gold mining sites, it is likely that natural contamination adversely affects water quality and habitats. Lead, nickel and arsenic are only few of the toxic heavy metals discharged to the environment in acidic drainage.

Acid mine drainage has significant effect on soil biota. Soil contains extensive populations of microorganisms, such as, bacteria, fungi, algae, protozoa, nematodes, earthworms, insects and burrowing animals. Many of these organisms participate in one of the various nutrient cycles, which are responsible for decomposition of organic matter and fixation of atmospheric nitrogen. These are all essential for the maintenance of soil fertility. Mining drainage usually contains toxic levels of lead, arsenic, nickel, mercury, and

other metals that will adversely affect the soil biota population resulting in decreased soil quality and productivity.

Plant tissue composition can be affected by acid mine drainage. Plants are not completely indiscriminate absorbers of soil mineral ions. Most of the time metal ions that are concentrated at a root zone are taken up more readily. Toxic levels of some of the heavy metals mentioned above could accumulate in plants, which then transfer to humans and animals through the food web since both humans and animals directly or indirectly depend on green plants. Also toxic level of these metals can hinder normal plant growth that will make mining fields unfit for agricultural activities unless properly restored.

Health Effects of Lead. Acute lead exposure can cause a variety of adverse health effects in humans.³⁷ At relatively low levels of exposure, these effects may include interference with red blood cell chemistry, delays in normal physical and mental development in babies and young children, slight deficits in the attention span, hearing, and learning abilities of children, and slight increases in the blood pressure of some adults. It appears that some of these effects, particularly changes in the levels of certain blood enzymes and in aspects of children's neurobehavioral development, may occur at blood lead levels so low as to be essentially without a threshold. Chronic lead exposure to lead has been linked to cerebrovascular and kidney disease in humans. Lead has the potential to cause cancer from a lifetime exposure at levels above the maximum contaminant level, which is 20 parts per billion in drinking water according to USEPA.⁸

Health Effects of Nickel. Acute exposure of nickel has a potential to cause health effects at levels above the maximum contaminant level. Long-term acute exposures of nickel may result in decreased body weight; heart and liver damage; dermatitis, and abnormalities.³⁹ The maximum contaminant level of nickel in drinking water is 50 parts per billion.⁴⁰

Health Effects of Arsenic. Chronic ingestion of inorganic arsenic typically results in skin lesions, peripheral neuropathy and anemia. Inorganic arsenic is suspected of causing cancers of the lung, liver, bladder, kidney and colon by ingestion.⁴¹ The level of arsenic in drinking water according USEPA is 50 parts per billion.⁴²

Gold Mining and Water. Hydraulic mining of gold, performed by directing a high velocity jet of water at an unconsolidated deposit is a recent technique that can deplete water resources. Water reaches the mining plant by interception or diversion of all or part of the water resources that are available

for use. In the US, gold mining used 4260 liters per tonne of ore or 10^9 liters/annum⁴³ Use and diversion of large quantities of water may result in scarcity of water. New hydraulic technologies can dump billions of tons of sediment waste into local rivers. Water is also used for cooling of equipment, mineral beneficiation, transportation, and others. Lakes, streams, sea and groundwater are geologically connected and pollutants can easily transfer from one to the other. The well-being of a given community in underdeveloped countries like Ethiopia is directly dependent on the quality of water available in their environment. Gold mining can pollute water by introduction of pollutants. This can result in total or partial unsuitability of water and ecological damage of the environment. Acid mine drainage, heavy metal, eutrophication and deoxygenation are among the major water pollution problems caused by mining.

A Stake in the Future

The existence and the quality of life for the people of Oromia is inseparable from the water they drink, the air they breathe and land they farm. Pollution from gold mining can significantly affect these natural resources. Since prevention of a problem is much better than correcting it, all interested parties should be concerned about the scramble for Oromia's gold. In most underdeveloped countries like Ethiopia, governments are the partners as well as the regulators of mining companies. This creates a conflict of interest. The government's wish to share larger profits results in very little or no regulation of mining companies. It is also clear that what attracts the mining companies to underdeveloped and developing counties is not only the quantity and/or quality of the mineral ores, but their margin of profit. Money which should have been used for cleaning up toxic mining pollutants is very likely to be pocketed by a government that is ready to do anything for hard currency, and by mining companies whose only interest is to increase profit for the stockholders.

The gold greed and genocide are spreading in many underdeveloped and developing countries. Due to the quest for a higher margin of profit from a cheap local labor market and the expropriation of local property rights without compensation, Oromia's people health and environmental quality are being made dispensable. The indigenous people should not be made expendable or a dollar value used to decide on their fate. It is morally

indefensible to knowingly expose humans to lethal chemicals in order to make more profit.

Evidence from around the globe shows that the indigenous people who own and live on the land, have kept the waste while government representatives and mining companies have taken the profit. The profit should be computed only after the polluted air, waters, and soils are restored to their pre-mining conditions. Since restoration, rehabilitation, and reclamation of mining fields are expensive, the scramble for mining in underdeveloped countries like Ethiopia will continue until the indigenous people of each locality press for their right to live and work in unpolluted environment, which is a basic human right.

Grassroots challenges of mining companies by environmental movements are flourishing around the globe. For example, the Nigerian Ogoni people and other indigenous communities in the Niger Delta led by activist Ken Saro Wiwa, did manage to get the attention of the international community when they protested Shell Oil Company's environmental genocide activities.⁴⁴ Unfortunately the Nigerian junta arrested the protesters, and executed Ken Saro Wiwa and eight others against international pleas. When dictators rule, the voiceless can only speak through death to protest environment abuses. One of the greatest problems of Ethiopia today is national oppression, not necessarily mining, technology and industry which when properly managed are indispensable for better quality of life all people in Ethiopia.

A great deal is at stake for the future. Oromia's tropical ecosystem is fragile. Disturbances from mining activities can result in a disastrous ecological imbalance and land fragmentation. Therefore, sustainable development should be given priority as opposed to mining dependency on a resource that would be depleted within a short period of time. The future belongs to those people who care for their environment, wisely utilize their natural resources, and value the well-being of all habitats in the ecosystem. It is not too late in Oromia to address some of the basic problems that could be induced by mining activities. This concern has forced the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) to write a protest letter to the Ethiopian Ministry of Mines, with copies to many government representatives and environmental movements (see Endnote) in order to avert the catastrophic environmental crisis that would necessarily follow reckless mining activities.⁴⁵ The OSA highlighted the major environmental concerns in Oromia, and suggested alternatives that can be mutually beneficial to all interested parties.

Concluding Remarks

Underdeveloped and developing countries with very little or no environmental laws have become a Mecca for gold mining companies. Today's Ethiopia is ethnically polarized and for practical purposes run by the TPLF who benefits from state revenues for the exclusive development of Tigray. Therefore, is not difficult to imagine who will get hard currency for development and who will be left with mining pollution for long suffering and slow death since pollution from Oromia's gold mining fields can kill humans, animals and plants, and poison rivers and soils. Environmental genocide and/or terrorism can be replaced by environment justice if the government which assumed full responsibility in managing mining activities, devises internationally acceptable and enforceable mining and environmental protection laws that protect the habitats and ecology of the region.

The indigenous people and their political organizations cannot reasonably expect such an important issue to be addressed by the same government who benefits from the exploitation of their resources. Therefore, the environmental issues facing the Oromo people should be part of the overall struggle for self-determination. There are many balanced sustainable development mechanisms that are morally, socially and economically sound if the people who are directly affected are given the chance to decide freely on their political and economic future including mining activities, development and natural resource management.

Endnote

The ten points raised by the Oromo Study Association were: (1) Initiate proper scrutiny of mining companies operating in Ethiopia, and demand that they provide their codes of conducts, environmental and bio-diversity protection guidelines, insurance backups, and independent reviews of environmental performance; (2) Affirm a plan for reclamation, rehabilitation, and decommissioning of mined lands, (3) Create the means of providing free information on health impacts of mining waste, and educate the people about consequences of exposure to hazardous waste including the impact of mining on the local geography; (4) Require mining companies to abide by environmental regulations for waste disposal, victim compensation, and

corporate responsibility; (5) Establish an independent environmental monitoring agency that will evaluate conformance with adopted handling and disposal regulations. The agency would also assess problems associated with hazardous waste disposal in Ethiopia to account for accurate quantities of disposed mercury, cyanide, etc., and their impacts on regional/local environment and population; (6) Update environmental regulatory control procedures, establish effective environmental quality control policies, adopt international laws and guidelines on mining and its unsafe by-products; (7) Replace all acutely hazardous chemicals immediately with less hazardous and more environmentally friendly chemicals for mining; (8) Provide free access to hazardous waste management information (right to know) to all interested citizens and agencies; (9) Allocate a reasonable bond deposited in an independently owned bank for rehabilitation of the land, and to cover potential re-remediation, compensate for human exposure, air, water and sediment contamination; and, (10) Promote public understanding and involvement in planning and implementing programs and proposed actions.

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STRUCTURAL AND WORD STRESS PATTERNS IN AFAAN OROMO

Tilahun Gamta/ Xilaahun Gamtaa

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Oromia is the largest (600,000 sq. meters) of the so-called fourteen autonomous regions in Ethiopia. Oromia's indigenous inhabitants, the Oromo people, are also the largest ethnic group, comprising half of about 60 million population of Ethiopia. Their language, Afaan Oromo, is one of the Cushitic group of languages (e.g. Afar -Saho, Beja, Sidama, Somali), a branch of the Afro-Asiatic or Hamito-Semitic language family.

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

The major purposes of this paper are (a) to show the patterns in which Oromo words or structures are organized, (b) to propose rules for syllabication; and (c) to present the observation of the writer regarding word stress.

1.3 The Importance of the Study

Regarding purpose (a) above, it is believed that after being conclusively established, each category of a structural pattern could serve as a template on the basis of which all the untapped Oromo words can be compiled, used, and taught.

By focusing attention on one template at a time, it is possible for a

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lexicographer to produce the words subsumed under that template. For instance, on the basis of a CVC/CVVC, one of the structural patterns of monosyllabic words, one who knows Afaan Oromo can generate meaningful words such as **dur** (before) and **foon** (meat). Of course, a computer, too, can list an array of both meaningful and nonsense words on the basis of the template CVC/CVVC. For example, when both the C's in the CVC/CVVC template are "b", it will list **bab, baab, beb, beeb, bib, büib, bob, boob, bub, buub**. If the "C" that follows "V/VV" is "g", however, it will list **bag, baag, beg, beeg, big, biig, bog, boog, bug, and buug** all of which are nonsense words in Afaan Oromo. Thus, for each of the 23 consonants and 10 vowels, a computer will list a total of 5290 (23x10x23) both meaningful and nonsense words based on the CVC/CVVC template alone. Obviously, a lexicographer can easily discard the nonsense words and save the meaningful ones. This way, taking a pattern at a time, it is possible to produce almost all the words in the language.

Concerning purpose (b), it is useful, especially for teachers of pronunciation, to know the syllabication/syllabification patterns of the language. In this paper, the dot (.) shows where a word is divided into its separate syllables. For instance, the dot between **ka** and **rra** (**ka.rra CV.CCV**) indicates that the correct pronunciation of this word is to arrest the syllable **ka** first before releasing **rra**.

With regards to the question of word stress, i.e. purpose (c), should the primary stress, written in upper case letters through out this paper, fall on the first syllable **KA** or on the second, i.e. **RRA**? In other words, should the word be pronounced as **KARra** or **kaRRA**? To answer this and similar questions, an attempt will be made to provide some rules for word stress. However, the rules that will be presented should not be considered conclusive and definitive until further research, which is enhanced by constructive feedback, is done.

1.4 Qubee, i.e. the Oromo Alphabet

There are ten vowel sounds and twenty- three consonant sounds in Afaan Oromo. These 33 phonemes are always repeatedly presented in all linguistic related papers written by this researcher. This is deliberately done to popularize qubee and at the same time teach those who are determined to

Structural and Word Stress Patterns in Afaan Oromo

learn, develop, and ultimately perfect our writing system. It is hoped that those Oromos who once upon a time inured themselves to writing in broken Amharic and have now shifted to writing in botched up English, would begin to realize the importance and the joy of expressing themselves clearly and almost effortlessly in their own native tongue.

The Oromo Alphabet

Phonemes	As in Oromo	Approximate English Equivalent	Comments
A. Vowels			
a	dafu (to be soon)	such	When “a” occurs word finally, it is pronounced schwa.
aa	daafuu (panic)	farm	
e	xebbe (plate)	tent	
ee	beela (hunger)	ache	
i	bifa (form)	sit	
ii	biifuu (spray)	seat	
o	bona (summer)	Dot BBC English	
oo	boontuu (proud)	Road VOA English	
u	butii (abduction)	foot	
uu	buutii (snake)	fool	
B. Consonants			
b	bakkee (field)	bat	

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c	cufuu (shut)	-	Glottalized, palatal
ch	gaalcha (trend)	chain	
Not common word initially	dabaluu (to increase)	dumb	
dh	dhuguu (to drink)	-	Glottal stop
f	fago (far)	face	
g	gaagura (bee hive)	gun	
(h)V	(h)obsa (patience)	hot	Depending on th dialect spoken, "h" ma or may not b pronounced. e.g (h)ordofuu (to follow may be pronounce either as "ordofuu" o as "hordofuu". In thi paper "(h)V" is used t indicate the two options
j	jajuu (to praise)	jog	
k	kutuu(to cut)	kill	
l	lama (two)	luck	
m	madaa (wound)	mad	
n	nafa (body)	nuts	
ny	nyaara (eye brow)	-	As the "n" in th Spanish word "senōr"
ph	tapha (play or game)	-	Glottalized, labial stop
q	qaru (to sharpen)	-	Glottalized, velar stop
r	reeffa (corpse)	rain	
s	soba (a lie)	son	
sh	shifii (tiny or small)	shake	
t	tufuu (to spit)	tuft	
w	waamuu (to call)	wake	
x	xuuxuu (to smoke)		Glottalized, dental stop

y yabbuu (thick) yet

2. Structural or Word Patterns

2.1 Definition

A structure or a word is a unit of language comprising one or more sounds that can stand independently and make sense. For example, as a verb suffix, “-e” makes sense; it indicates “simple past tense,” as in *Kaleessa dhufe* (He came yesterday.) But since “-e” cannot stand independent of a verb, it is not considered as a structure in this paper

2.2 Abbreviations

C = a single Consonant, as in *bilisummaa CVCVCVCCVV* (freedom)

CC = Consonant Clusters, as in *lb/mm* in the words *jilba CVCCV* (knee) and *bilisummaa*

V = single vowel, as in *(h)ana (h)VCV* (me)

VV = long vowel, as the *aa* and the *uu* *(h)aamtuu (h)VVCCV* (sickle).

2.3 The Structural Patterns of Monosyllabic Words

In monosyllables, Afaan Oromo permits four meaningful, independent structural patterns indicated below:

2.3.1 (h)VVB as in *(h)oo* (yes, i.e. showing that one has heard a call). In such single-vowel expressions the vowels are usually long. Single-vowel expressions are very rare in the language.

2.3.2 (h)VC/ (h)VVC - as in *(h)ol* (up) or *(h)oosh* (take it easy, an expression used with horses, mules, etc.) This is a structure in which a single consonant is preceded by a short or a long vowel

2.3.3 CV/CVV B as in *ko* (mine) or *dhaa* (for, from)

2.3.4 CVC/CVVC B as in *kam* (which) or *foon* (meat)

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There are only few monosyllabic structures in the language. Of the words tallied from every 10th page in *Oromo-English Dictionary* (1989) by Tilahun Gamta (Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Printing Press), only 5 have been recorded. The five are: af, al, oosh, reef, and foon.

Polysyllabic Structures

Polysyllabic structures are by far the most numerous in the language, accounting for 973(97%) of the total 998 words tallied. In the tally, only structures made up of syllables ranging from two to five appeared. In the language, however, it is possible to come across six- and even seven-syllable structures such as CVCCVCVCCVCCVVCV qabbaneffachchiisu (cause to rest) and CVCCVCVCCVCCVVCVVCV qabbaneffachchisiisu (cause somebody to relieve someone else of work). The following two sentences are given by way of illustration:

Situ na qabbaneffachchiise (You are the one who relieved me of work so I could rest)

Situ na qabbaneffachchisiisee? (Are you the one who made somebody relieve me?)

Of the total 998 structures tallied, 20 are compound words such as CVC CVCCV cal jechchu (to be quiet) and abbaa manaa (husband). The 998 structures have been analyzed and classified. For each category of structures, one word is given as an example. For instance, the word al illustrates a VC pattern that has appeared three times in the tally. This way, all the structures tallied are listed in an ascending order without implying that the list represents an all-inclusive classification. The breakdown of the structures by syllable composition is given below. It is hoped that this raw data would be of some interest at least to those who are linguistically oriented.

**Number of Total and
Components of percentage
and Patterns Tallied**

One-syllable words

5 (0.50%)

Two-syllable words

CVCCV dhanna (body)	51
CVCCVV bowwaa(cliff)	47
CVVCV diina (enemy)	43
CVCVV bitaa (left)	41
CVCV nama (person)	37
CVVCCV buusii (contribution)	30
CVVCCV baanne (if not)	21
(h)VCCV (h)anga (until)	17
(h)VVCVV (h)aaduu (to groan)	12
(h)VCCVV (h)wwii (wish)	12
(h)VCV (h)ala (out)	9
CVVCCV miilla (foot)	9
CVVCCVV booyee (pig)	8
(h)VCVV (h)adii (white)	5
(h)VCCVC (h)akkas (this way)	5
(h)VVCCVV (h)eengee (weed)	5
CVCVVC bishaan (water)	4
CVVCCVVC millaan (on foot)	2
(h)VCVC (h)isin (you, plural)	2
CVVCCVC miillas (at that time)	1
CVCCVC kurkur (expression for calling donkey)	1
CVCCVVC tokkoon (at one)	1
CVCVC bushush (expression of contempt)	1
(h)VCVVC isaan (they)	1

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365(36.5%)

Three-syllable Words

CVCCVCVV dhimmisuu (to leak)	62
CVCVCV galata (gratitude)	47
CVCCVVCV (h)andhuura (navel)	30
CVCVCVV gatamaa (a kind of tree)	25
CVCVCCVV banachchuu (to open for self)	24
CVVCVCVV buosisuu (cuse to pour)	22
CVCCVCCV dabballe (cadre)	22
CVCCVCCVV dondhummaa (miserliness)	21
CVCVVCV galaana (sea)	20
CVVCCVCVV dheekkamuu (to scold)	16
(h)VCCVCV (h)angafa (elder child)	16
CVCCVCVV shumburaa (chickpea)	12
CVCVVCVV gabaabaa (short)	11
(h)VCCVVCV (h)andhuura (navel)	11
(h)VCCVCVV (h)andaqii	9
CVVCVCCVV dhaabachchuu (to stand)	9
CVCVVCCV bitaachcha (left)	9
CVVCCVCCV dheekkamsa (scolding)	9
CVCVCCVV misingaa (sorghum)	8
CVVCVCCVV daagujjaa (millet)	7
(h)VCVCV (h)alana (this time)	7
CVCCVCCVV wawwaachchuu (to scream)	7
(h)VCVVCVV (h)adooduu (to go to sleep)	6
(h)VCCVCCVV (h)addunynyaa (world)	6
(h)VCCVCCV (h)anfarro (mustache)	5
(h)VCVCCVV (h)inaaftuu (jealous)	5
CVCCVVCVV dimbiitii (robin)	5
(h)VCVCCVV (h)amachchuu (to backbite)	4
(h)VCVCCVV (h)adurree (cat)	4
(h)VCVCVV (h)isini (Is it you?)	3
CVCVCCVV bitaattii (left-handed)	3

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CVCCVCCVV cancaanfuu (twilight)	3
(h)VCCVCCVV (h)akkeessuu (mimic)	2
(h)VCCVCCVV (h)akkaataa (situation)	2
(h)VCCVCCVV (h)akkanaan (in this way)	2
CVCCVCCVV taasisuu (cause to fit)	1
CVCCVCCVV beedarii (threshold or doorway)	1
CVCVCVC banadir (dress)	1
(h)VCCVCCVV (h)iita'u (to swell)	1
(h)VCCVCCVV (h)akuurii (peanut)	1
(h)VCCVCCVV (h)urgeessaa (a kind of tree)	1
(h)VCCVCCVV (h)oollachchuu (shiver)	1
(h)VCCVCCVV (h)iixachchuu (to stretch)	1
CVCCVCCVV gordoman (beehive structure)	1
CVCCVCCVV qaallummaa (hallucination)	1

464 (46.5%)

Four-syllable words

CVCVCCVCCVV bececceruu (shred)	9
CVCCVCCVCCVV qaqqabsiisuu (make reach)	8
CVCCVCCVCCVV bayyanachchuu (improve)	7
CVCVCCVCCVV dabalamuu (to be added)	6
CVCVCCVCCVV dabaaqula (pumpkin)	6
CVCVCCVCCVV faranqaaquu (be unruly)	6
CVCVCCVCCVV garagalchuu (turn upside down)	5
CVCCVCCVCCVV dorbobbessuu (cause weals)	5
(h)VCCVCCVCCVV (h)akkanatti (in this way)	5
CVCVCCVCCVV foraanfoxe (poor quality)	5
CVCCVCCVCCVV sirbisiisuu (cause to dance)	4
(h)VCCVCCVCCVV (h)iddisiisuu (cause to sting)	4
CVCCVCCVCCVV bowwaafachchuu (to ache)	4
CVCCVCCVCCVV wal'aalchisaa (baffling)	3
(h)VCCVCCVCCVV (h)akkanuma (as it is)	3

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(h)VCVVCCVCVV (h)ijaarsisuu (cause to build)	3
CVCVCVVCVV mujujaawuu (bother)	3
CVCVCVVCVV fosoliyaa (kind of beans)	2
CVCCVVCVVCVV qaxxaamuruu (take a short-cut)	2
CVCCVVCVVCVV konkolaataa (vehicle)	2
CVVCVCCVCCVV diimeffachchuu (make be red)	2
(h)VCCVVCVVCVV (h)awwaalamuu (be burried)	2
(h)VCCVVCVVCVV (h)ergaramaa (wretched)	2
(h)VCCVVCVCCVV (h)akkifachchuu (clear throat)	2
(h)VCVCCVCVV (h)amaccaraa (dry twigs)	2
(h)VCCVCCVCVV (h)akkessituu (impersonator)	2
(h)VCCVVCVVCVV (h)awwaalsisuu (make bury)	2
CVCVVCVCCVV galaafachchuu (provision self)	2
(h)VCVVCVVCV (h)amaamota) (women)	2
CVCVCCVVCVV sarandiidaa (wealthy)	2
CVVCVCCVVCVV dhaabachchiisuu (make stand)	1
CVCCVCCVVCVV dheekkamsiisuu(make scold)	1
CVCCVVCVVCVV gurguramuu (to be sold)	1
CVCCVVCVVCVV tattaafataa (one who strives)	1
CVCCVVCVVCVV biskiletii (bicycle)	1
CVVCCVCCVCCVV naanneffachchuu(think over)	1
CVCCVCCVVCVV sinsinnooftuu (faddy)	1
CVCVCCVCCVV safeffachchuu (to be polite)	1
(h)VCVVCVVCVV (h)adeemsisaa (diarrhea)	1
(h)VCVCCVVCVV (h)akorbaashii (whip)	1
(h)VCVVCVCCV (h)adoolessa (July)	1
(h)VCCVVCVVCV (h)akkasumaan (for nothing)	1
CVCVCVCCVV garagalchaa (bread)	1
CVCVVCVCCVV dunuunfannaa (closing eyes)	1
CVCCVVCVVCVV qaxxaamura (short-cut)	1
(h)VVCVVCVVCVV (h)aamaraawuu (be tangled)	1
(h)VCCVVCVVCVV hammawayii (giraffe)	1
(h)VCCVCCVVCVV (h)ambabbeessa(kind of tree)	1
(h)VCCVCCVVCVV (h)orsossaawuu (be rotten)	1
(h)VCVCCVVCVV (h)jibbaachchuu(fail to find)	1

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(h)VCVCVVCV (h)isilaama (Muslim)	1
(h)VCVCVVCV (h)isiniina (Monday)	1
(h)VCCVCVVCV (h)issilaalee (anise or dill)	1
(h)VCCVCCVCCV (h)urgeeffachchuu(to sniff)	1
(h)VVCVCCVVCV (h)iixachchiisuu(make stretch)	1
CVCVCVCCV mujujeessuu (to stunt)	1
(h)VVCCVCCVVCV(h)oollachchiisu(make shiver)	1

139 (14%)

Five-syllable Words

CVCCVCVCCVVCV konkolaachchisuu (to drive)	1
CVCVCCVVCVVCV bitintiraawuu (stagger)	1
CVCCVVCVCCVVCV bowwaafachchiisuu (cause headache)	1
CVCVCVCCVVCV garagalchituu (pedlar)	1
CVCVCCVCCVVCV galateeffachchuu (to thank)	1

5 (0.50%)

Compound Words

CVC CVCV qub lamee (liquor)	4
CVC CVCCV cal jechchuu (be quiet)	2
CVCVC CVCCV dabaq gochchuu (devour)	2
CVCVC CVCCV gidir sambata (Saturday)	2
CVCCV CVCV dakku butee(association)	1
CVCCV CVCCV danqar fullaas (snake)	1
CVCCV CVVCV goorro duuba (living room)	1
(h)VVCV CVVCV (h)aluu baasuu(make perform ritual)	1
(h)VVCV CVCV (h)aluu bawuu (perform ritual)	1
(h)VCCV CVCCV (h)idda reeffaa (vine)	1
CVCV CVVCVVCV jela buufachchuu (to snack)	1

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CVCV (h)VCCVV muka (h)arbaa (kind of tree)	1
CVVCVC CVCV (h)VCVVCVV nyaaphaan nama (h)ilaaluu (frown at)	1
CVC CVCVCCV CVCCVV shir namatti jechchuu (make feel tipsy)	1

20 (2 %)

3. Syllabication and Stress Patterns in Afaan Oromo

Definition of Syllable: In the *American Heritage Dictionary*, a syllable is defined as “a unit of spoken language consisting of a single uninterrupted sound forming a whole word, such as **now**, or part of a word, such as **per-** and **son** in **person**.” In other words, it is a word or part of a word in which a vowel is heard.

In Afaan Oromo, there is no silent, superfluous symbol such as, for instance, the “e” in the English word “make” and the “b” in “dumb.” Every symbol seen is pronounced because there is one- to- one correspondence between sound and symbol. For example, none of the two vowels in the two-syllable word “qabee” CVCVV (gourd) and the seven vowels in the seven-syllable structure “qabbaneffachchisiisuu” CVCCVCVCCVCCVCVVCVV is silent.

3.1 Syllabication or Syllabification

Syllabication means formation of or division into syllables. Knowledge of syllabication could enhance the pronunciation of learners of Afaan Oromo.

Where does a pause normally occur when, for example, **bara** CVCV (year) is pronounced? Should one pause after uttering **ba**. (CV.) or after uttering **bar**. (CVC.)? In other words, is the correct pronunciation **ba.ra** (CV. CV) or is it **bar.a** (CVC.V)? The following rules of thumb are recommended as possible answers to such questions.

Rule 1 In polysyllabic words that are made up of a single consonant (C) as opposed to the consonant clusters (CC), the basic syllable division rule is CV.CV/V.CV or CV.CVC/V.CVC. Obviously, the V in this rule can also

be the long (VV) depending on the pronunciation of a structure involved. Also, it is useful to note that the pattern CV.CVC/V.CVC is more common at a grammatical level than it is at a lexical level.

Example: wa.raa.nan/u.taa.lan CV.CVV.CVC/V.CVV.CVC (they stabbed/they jumped). More examples follow.

Two-syllable Words:

- ma.la CV.CV (tact)
- ma.laan CV.CVVC (by tact)
- a.la V.CV (outside)
- aa.laan VV.CVVC (through gesture)

Three-syllable Structures

- ba.ra.na CV.CV.CV (this year)
- ta.pha.tan CV.CV.CVC (they played)
- a.la.na V.CV.CV (this time)
- a.ba.dan V.CV.CVC (never)

Four-syllable Structures

- ba.ree.di.na CV. CVV.CV.CV (beauty)
- boo.ji.sii.san CVV. CV.CVV.CVC (they caused somebody/them to rob)
- a.maa.mo.ta V.CVV.CV.CV (women)
- a.raa.ra.man V.CVV.CV.CVC (they are reconciled)

There are no five-, six-, and seven-syllable words without at least one set of consonant clusters (CC's) in them. Therefore, rule 1 applies only to two-, three-, and four-syllable structures.

Rule 2. In polysyllabic words with geminates or doubled consonant sounds, CV.CCV/V.CCV or CV.CCVC/V.CCVC syllable division pattern is suggested.

Examples follow.

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Two-syllable Words

- ga.nna CV.CCV (winter)
- mii.laan CVV.CCVVC (on foot)
- a.mma V.CCV (now)
- i.yyan V.CCVC (they hollered)

Three-syllable Words

- ga.bba.taa CV.CCV.CVV (chubby)
- da.lla.nan CV.CCV.CVC (they were offended)
- a.bbuu.quu V.CCVV.CVV (to sip)
- aa.mma.tan VV.CCV.CVC (they hugged)

Four-syllable Structures

- dha.ggee.ffa.chchuu CV.CCVV.CCV.CCVV (to listen)
- u.ggum.sii.suu V.CCVC.CVV.CVV (cause to bow)
- u.ggum.sii.san V.CCVC.CVV.CVC (they caused to bow)

Five-syllable structures

- dhu.kkub.sa.chchii.suu CV.CCVC.CV.CCVV.CVV (to nurse)
- qa.bba.nee.ffa.tan CV.CCV.CVV.CCV.CVC (they rested)
- a.yyaa.ne.ffa.chchuu V.CCVV.CV.CCV.CCVV (to celebrate)
- i.rraan.fa.chchii.san V.CCVVC.CV.CCVV.CVC (cause to forget)

Rule 3. In polysyllabic words the consonant cluster of which is made up of different components as in farso (beer), CVC.CV /VC.CV division pattern is suggested.

Here are some words that illustrate two- to five-syllable words

Two-syllable Words

- bul.guu CVC.CVV (bogeyman/boogeyman)
- tol.chan CVC.CVC (they made)
- ul.fa VC.CV (pregnant)
- ar.kaan VC.CVVC (by hand)

Three-syllable Words

bar.sii.suu CVC.CVV.CVV (to teach)
dan.fi.san CVC.CV.CVC (they boiled)
ur.gu.fuu VC.CV.CVV (to shake)
el.ma.tan VC.CV.CVC (they milked for self)

Four-syllable Words

bar.ba.dee.ssuu CVC.CV.CVV.CCVV (to annihilate)
du.nuun.fa.tan CV.CVVC.CV.CVC (they closed their eyes)
ar.gan.sii.suu VC.CVC.CVV.CVV (to cause to pant)
a.lan.fa.tan V.CVC.CV.CVC (they chewed)

Five-syllable Words

tar.kaan.fa.chchii.suu CVC.CVVC.CV.CCVV.CVV (to cause to stride)
qul.qu.llee.ssi.san CVC.CV.CCVV.CCV.CVC (cause to clean)
on.ko.loo.le.ssa VC.CV.CVV.CV.CCV (October)
e.len.fa.chchii.san V.CVC.CV.CCVV.CVC (cause to milk)

When speaking rapidly, however, people do not pause after uttering every syllable. To maintain normal speed, they usually utter at least two syllables in succession before they pause. Instead of pausing before each of the first three syllables in **tar.kaan.fa.chchuu CVC.CVVC.CV.CCVV**, for instance, they prefer to say **tarkaan.fachchuu CVCCVVC.CVCCVV**, thus reducing the four chunks to just two. Sometimes, they pause after uttering two or three syllables as in **aara.galfa.chchiisuu VVCV.CVCCV.CCVVCVV** or **aaragal.fachchiisuu VVCVCVC.CVCCVVCVV**.

3.2 Word Stress Patterns

In the case of Afaan Oromo, stress should be understood to mean a relative syllable strength that depends on the quality and quantity of the vowel. One of the major shortcomings of this aspect of the study is that the writer has not surveyed the individual variation in the way speakers in all parts of Oromiyaa indicate this relative degree of syllable prominence in a word. Therefore, this section of the study is only a proposal intended to generate

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discussions that would lead to a more comprehensive analysis than what has been attempted here.

It is in spite of this drawback that the following word stress rules, based on the writer's idiolect, are presented.

Rule 1. In a CV.CV/V.CV/VV.CV pattern, where the final V is Ba, the stress usually falls on the first syllable.

Examples:

Two-syllable Structures

MA.na CV.CV mana house

A.la V.CV ala out

AA.ra VV.CV aara smoke

Rule 2 In a CV.CCV/V.CCV/VV.CCV pattern, where the components of CC are doubled consonants and where the final V is -a, the stress falls on the first syllable in a word.

Examples:

GA.nna CV.CCV ganna winter

A.dda V.CCV adda forehead

EE.bba VV.CCV eebba blessing

Rule 3. Likewise, in a CVC.CV/VC.CV/VVC.CV pattern, where the components of the CC are different consonants and where the final V is -a, the stress falls on the first syllable in a word.

Examples:

GAL.ma CVC.CV galma hall

UL.fa VC.CV ulfa pregnant

AAL.cha VVC.CV aalcha prospect

Rule 4. In a CV.CV/V.CV/VV.CV pattern, where the final V is other than the single vowel -a, the second syllable is stressed.

Examples:

bi.TAA CV.CV**V** bitaa left
qu.BEE CV.CV**V** qubee alphabet
buu.TII CVV.CV**V** buutii python
bo.ROO CV.CV**V** boroo backyard
la.GUU CV.CV**V** laguu abstinence
o.RAA V.CV**V** oraa lake
u.LEE V.CV**V** ulee stick

Rule 5. In a CV.CCV/V.CCV/VV.CCV pattern where the CC components are doubled consonants and where the final V stands for any of the other vowels other than the single vowel -a, the stress usually falls on the second syllable.

Examples:

bo.KKAA CV.CC**VV** bokkaa rain
bu.QQEE CV.CC**VV** buqqee pumpkin
da.MMEE CV.CC**VV** dammee sweet potato
gaa.FFII CVV.CC**VV** gaaffii question
ra.KKOO CV.CC**VV** rakkoo problem
u.DDUU V.CC**VV** udduu buttocks

Rule 6. In a CVC.CV/VC.CV/VVC.CV pattern where the CC components are different consonants and where the final V is not the single vowel -a, the stress usually falls on the second syllable.

Examples:

bul.CHAA CVC.CV**V** bulchaa administrator
ar.GAA CV.CV**V** argaa gift
som.BEE CVC.CV**V** sombee lung disease of cattle
bul.TII CVC.CV**V** bultii marriage
tam.BOO CVC.CV**V** tamboo tobacco
aar.TUU VVC.CV**V** aartuu irritable person

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Three-syllable Structures

Rule 7. When a three-syllable structure ends in -a, the stress usually occurs on the penult.

Examples:

ba.RA.na CV.CV.CV barana this year
an.DHUU.ra VC.CVV.CV andhuura navel
dhee.KKAM.sa CVV.CCVC.CV dheekkamsa scolding

Rule 8. When a word ends in vowels other than Ba, the last syllable in a word is usually stressed.

Examples:

ga.baa.BAA CV.CVV.CVV gabaabaa short
a.du.RREE V.CV.CCVV adurree cat
an.da.QII VC.CV.CVV andaqqii mat
an.fa.RROO VC.CV.CCVV anfarro mustache
taa.si.SUU CVV.CV.CVV taasisuu cause to fit

Four- and Five-Syllable Words

Rule 9 In a structure that ends in a single vowel -a, the stress usually falls on the penult.

Examples:

a.waa.NNI.sa V.CVV.CCV.CV awaannisa locust
an.da.RAA.fa VC.CV.CVV.CV andaraafa breast beef
di.mi.MMI.sa CV.CV.CCV.CV dimimmisa dusk
kon.ko.laa.CHCHI.sa CVC.CV.CVV.CCV.CV In
konkolaachchisa He makes it roll.

Rule 10. When a structure ends in vowels other than the single Ba, the stress usually falls on the final syllable.

Examples:

an.ga.fu.MMAA VC.CV.CV.CCVVangafummaa primogeniture
fo.raan.fo.XEE CV.CVVC.CV.CVVforaanfoxee ugly
qu.mu.xxu.LII CV.CV.CCV.CVVqumuxxulii stick
wi.xxi.fa.CHCHUU CV.CCV.CV.CCUUwixxifachchuu wriggle
ga.la.te.ffa.CHCHU CV.CV.CV.CCV.CCVVgalateffachuu to thank

There is an exception to rules 4, 5, and 6 above. There are few two-syllable words the meanings of which seem to be distinguished on the basis of stress. For example, the word **daakuu** can mean either to grind or flour depending on which syllable is stressed. Of course, to avoid ambiguity, it is always better to put such words in a context. Listening to the way a native speaker pronounces such words and distinguishes their meanings is also important. The meanings of the following pairs of words seem to be distinguished by stressing the first or the second syllable and by arresting and releasing the first syllable either in place **VV.CVV /VVC.VV**, **CV.CVV/ CVC.VV**, **CVVC.CVV/CVVC.CVV**, **CVV.CVV/CVVC.VV**, or **VC.CVV /VCC.VV**.

aa.DAA VV.CVV aadaa culture
AAD.aa VVC.VV aadaa Groan/Shave (you, plural/honorific).
aa.DUU VV.CVV aaduu to shave/to groan
AAD.uu VVC.VV aaduu knife

ba.DAA CV.CVV badaa many
BAD.aa CVC.VV badaa hot ash

ba.NAA CV.CVV banaa open (adj)
BAN.AA CVC.VV banaa Open (you, plu/hon).

bi.TAA CV.CVV bitaa left
BIT.aa CVC.VV bitaa Buy (you, plu/hon).

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caam.SAA CVVC.CVV caamsaa dry season
CAAM.saa CVVC.CVV caamsaa Stop the rain (you, pl/hon).

cu.FAA CV.CVV cufaa door
CUF.aa CVC.VV cufaa Close (you, pl/hon)

cuun.FAA CVVC.CVV cuunfaa beer blended with honey
CUUN.faa CVVC.CVV cuunfaa Wring out liquid from (you, pl/hon)

daa.KUU CVV.CVV daakuu flour
DAAK.uu CVVC.VV daakuu to grind

dhu.GAA CV.CVV dhugaa truth
DHUG.aa CVC.VV dhugaa Drink (you, pl/hon).

er.GAA VC.CVV ergaa message
ERG.aa VCC.VV ergaa Send (you, pl/hon).

ga.LAA CV.CVV galaa provision
GAL.aa CVC.VV galaa Enter (you, pl/hon).

go.RAA CV.CVV goraa raspberry
GOR.aa CVC.VV goraa Stop off/over (you, pl/hon).

lo.LAA CV.CVV lolaa flood
LOL.aa CVC.VV lolaa Fight (you, pl/hon).

ma.LAA CV.CVV malaa pus
MAL.aa CVC.VV malaa Devise a strategy (you, pl/hon).

oo.LUU VV.CVV ooluu to be absent
OOL.uu VVC.VV ooluu (of plant) barren

tu.MAA CV.CVV tumaa law
TUM.aa CVC.VV tumaa Hit (you, pl/hon).

waa.DAA CVV.CVV waadaa Fry (you, pl/hon).
WAAD.aa CVVC.VV waadaa a solemn promise

4. Conclusions

This pioneering work in structural, syllabication, and word stress patterns in Afaan Oromo would make it easier for those who wish to inquire further into the area. The four categories of structural patterns for monosyllables are all-inclusive and mutually exclusive, and they are easy to remember. By contrast, it has not been possible to reduce the too many, varied categories of the polysyllable word patterns to a manageable, easy to remember formula. In fact, so many of them had to be listed randomly because, without them, it would not have been possible to indicate where syllable division and stress occur.

The existence of stress as a feature of Afaan Oromo was recognized about twenty-five years ago. The anonymous authors of *Hirmaata Dubbii Afaan Oromo* (1973) mentioned, in passing, the words **qooqa gadii** (unstressed syllable) and **qooqa olii** (stressed syllable) on page 7 of this excellent Oromo grammar book. They were baffled, as this writer is, by the word **biraa** in the sentence "Macaafa isa biraa fidi." In this sentence, the word **biraa** has three different meanings: (a) from (b) other, and (c) the one which is with. This ambiguous sentence could mean (a) "Get the book from him and bring it," or "Bring the other book," or "Bring the book which is with him." The authors suggested stress, pause, and context as a solution to this ambiguity. According to them, to convey meaning (a), **biraa** is written without any stress, for meaning (b) it is written as **bi.RAA**, and for meaning (c) it is written as **bi - pause - raa**. They concluded that in a case like this, the best solution, of course, is to provide a context that makes the meaning of the sentence clear.

The author's ambiguous sentence inspired this writer to attempt to study word stress. It is hoped that this paper, though by no means definitive, has at least elaborated on the meaning of **qooqa gadii** and **qooqa olii**. The native speaker has little difficulty in applying the rules without being able to explain them, and sometimes without even being aware of the existence of such rules. This study has examined the structural, syllabication, and word stress patterns

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of Afaan Oromo with a view of making the native speaker rediscover the existing rules implicit in the usage of the language. More detailed studies of this type that examine the different linguistic aspects of Afaan Oromo part by part would greatly enhance our understanding of how the language functions as a whole.

BOOK REVIEWS

An Africanist DeTocqueville at Jootee's Court

W. James G. Bauman, & D. Johnson, (eds.), *Juan Maria Schuver's Travels in North East Africa 1880-1883*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Hackluyt Society. 1996. Pp. cvii, 392, cloth. £35.

Juan Maria Schuver was a late nineteenth century travel writer. After traveling in Europe and working as a war-correspondent in the Balkans and Spain, he visited Turco-Egyptian Sudan. He crossed Oromo land on his way to the East African Coast, and spent one month, August 1881, at the court of the then independent Oromo king, Jootee Tulluu. Jootee, then known as king Bulaa, ruled the Leeqaa kingdom, one of the many Oromo states of small-scale territorial units. Schuver documented his observations of the Leeqaa and the adjacent Oromo. His descriptions of the political, cultural, social, economic, and technological aspects are representative of most contemporary Oromo groups.

Among the many European travel-writers in the 1880s on the Oromo-Sudan borderland, no one has captured the political dilemma of the period, including the looming colonization itself, as remarkably as Schuver. Schuver's writings were and are central to the peoples of this region. Schuver was one of the first travel-writers to reject physical features and choose languages as a basis for classifying peoples. Yet a combination of factors obscured Schuver's work for more than a century. Schuver's travels occurred after heroic days when explorers located *terra incognita* on world maps. Most of his early publications were written in German, but German interest in North East Africa was minimal in contrast to British, French, or Italian. Following the European partition of Africa, the region Schuver explored lost historical recognition "due to the definition of politically significant past"

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(p lx). The colonizations of the 1880s and the 1890s divided the Oromo-Sudan borderlands between Great Britain and Ethiopia, and by 1902/3 an international boundary cut through these regions. Sudan's colonial officials and scholars considered the peoples of the borderland unimportant for administrative policy formulations, and Schuwer's published ethnographic data were ignored. On the Ethiopian side of the boundary, the Oromo, the Koma, the Sinicho (Shinasha), Amam (Mao) and Berta were considered peripheral peoples of political insignificance. Scholars continued to reproduce the victor's version of history, with few exceptions. Above all, Schuwer's papers following his untimely death in 1883, at the age of 31, in the Upper Nile. More than a century later, scholars fortuitously discovered his papers and published them in English as a three-book set. Books one and two document Schuwer's travels from the Sudan to Jootee's court in Qumbaabee, northwest of Dambidollo, and thence among the Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha and the Oromo north of the Blue Nile. The following paragraphs summarize Schuwer's major observations and review books one and two.

Schuwer's 1880s travels in the Oromo-Sudan borderlands coincided with the unfolding of great regional upheavals. Schuwer documented the evolution of forces that regionally supplanted Egyptian imperialism with that of Great Britain. Egyptian conquest of the Sudan and misrule since the 1820s, generated resistance in the form of religious nationalism. The search for legendary gold mines inspired Egypt's Mohammed Ali to conquer the Sudanese region, adjacent to western Oromo. Europeans serving Mohammed Ali explored the region for decades searching for the precious metal until the fantasy of gold mining ended in the 1850s. Throughout this time the underpaid Turco-Egyptian soldiers enslaved the inhabitants of the region and sold them to supplement their income, and their European commanders condoned the atrocities. During Schuwer's travels, Mahadist religious nationalism gathered momentum in the Sudan and its borderland adjoining the Oromo and the other peoples. Schuwer observed the workings of grassroots militant Muslims facilitating Mahdi's call for rebellion. A network of Muslim preachers conducted politico-religious agitations against the Egyptians. The observation of these forces made Schuwer's work invaluable, but it also placed him in a difficult position. As a white man, Schuwer was suspected by the local people of being a "Turk," or working for the "Turks." Ironically, the European-born

Turco-Egyptian governor of the Oromo-Sudan borderlands falsely accused Schuver of working for the Mahadists. Agents of the Mahadi disliked Schuver on politico-religious grounds and as a source of unwanted influence. Schuver's book traced and documented the source of all these misunderstandings, which were due to the unsettled condition of the late 19th century Oromo-Sudan borderlands caused by the Turco-Egyptian depredations. These created a regional insecurity among the inhabitants including the Oromo, who identified all whites with "Turks" and their depredations.

For most of the nineteenth century, European employees of the Turco-Egyptian government and their soldiers closed the Oromo-Sudan borders to the outside world, and limited the chances of acquiring firearms by the inhabitants of the region. The Austrian Ernst Marno was the governor during the 1870s and 1880s and was based at Gogora, in Fadasi. Many Europeans had attempted to enter the western Oromo land from the Sudan, but could not proceed beyond the Amam (Mao) land south of Fadasi. On his way to this region, at Sennar, Schuver met the Italian, Carlo Piaggia, who earlier had been forced to return. Schuver attributed Piaggia's failure to the limited Italian logistical support, in addition to Marno's refusal. Schuver also listed the failure of the other two Italians, Pellegrino Matteucci and Romolo Gessi, to travel to the Gibe Oromo due to Marno's refusal to grant permission. Although some of these Europeans had reached as far as Beni Shangul, Marno's obstructions dealt the final blow to the hopes of reaching the Oromo land. Marno did not want Schuver to succeed in entering the Oromo land since he failed in this endeavor. Marno's writings about the region had failed to make a good impression among his European contemporaries. In addition, Marno condoned the Egyptian slave raids, and did not want Europeans to observe and report the atrocities. Any firearms that filtered through this tightly controlled borderlands were used to raid slaves. Schuver disapproved of the slave raids, and had a low opinion of Marno as an explorer. Schuver also had the latest brand of firearms, outclassing Egyptian armaments. Consequently, Marno saw a multiple threat in Schuver, confiscated his armaments, and advised him against traveling into Oromo land due to the Amam. Marno and others painted the Amam as ferociously blood-thirsty people who killed anyone traveling to the Oromo land. However, the only sin the Amam committed to earn this undeserved notoriety was defeating the Turco-Egyptian army in defense of their own independence. Thus, areas under the Egyptian rule were subjected

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to slave raids. For the Turco-Egyptian soldiers, denying firearms to the Amam and the surrounding peoples was a means of ensuring their continued slave raiding. The independent Amam denied any white man entry to or through their land. The Amam's perception of all whites as "Turks" and their strong self-defense against the Turco-Egyptian depredations sealed the road to the Oromo land. Ironically, this closed Oromo-Sudan borderland also delayed access to firearms which had a detrimental effect on the regional inhabitants, including the Oromo.

However, Jootee's belated desire to acquire firearms prompted the Amam to allow Schuver to proceed to the Oromo southwards through their land. To arrange for the visit, Jootee's half-brother secretly visited Fadasi, avoided Turco-Egyptian soldiers, and brought a horse for Schuver's travels. Unbeknownst to Mamo, Schuver proceeded to the Oromo country, and briefly gained access to the Oromo. For this trip Schuver employed, Abdu, an Oromo victim of the slave trade, as a translator. Schuver described the geographical location of the western Oromo settlement on the watershed of the Blue and White Nile Rivers. The Oromo were reluctant to discuss directions, distances, and roads with strangers. The long distance trade route to Leeqaa Oromo passed through three nearly impassable "studiously traced ridges of thickly wooded mountains" with steep ascent and descent (p.51).

Schuver rejected physical features for classification, but he admittedly employed phenotypical descriptions for the Oromo. He described the Oromo as "mass of yellow people" (p.81) with Caucasian features, and a "race of incontestable purity" (p.76). The Oromo, according to him were "one of the happiest races living... in one of the most fertile of countries." Schuver described the Oromo land as a country to which the "Spanish ideal of a happy land, 'plenty of sun and plenty of water can be applied,' a rare thing in this part of Africa" (p.76). Yet Schuver wrote of detecting "a melancholy" on the Leeqaa Oromo population. Based on incorrect information he obtained from an Arab *faki*, Schuver impugned the morality of Oromo girls. He wrote that Oromo girls were engaged in prostitution to acquire payments for dowry. However, only the bridegroom, not the bride, paid dowry; and the Oromo culturally valued pre-marital chastity. This Arab *faki* was connected to slave trading and Schuver also suspected him of being a Mahadist agent. On gender relations, we learn from Schuver that Oromo women exercised certain rights

to govern domestic affairs. He also indicated the existence of domestic slavery.

Schuver also reported on members of the royal family. Jootee's court in Qumbaabee was built between two hills. Jootee's father, who had abdicated in favor of his son, was well-versed about new technologies and asked Schuver about cameras, x-rays, and watches. Jootee wore a graceful copper diadem. Royal family members wore copper ornaments and a unique hairstyle to distinguish them from commoners. Physically, members of the royal family were described as having the fairest complexion, straight noses, long necks, and sharply cut faces. Jootee's four "good-natured wives" accepted some of Schuver's gifts, and rejected other trifles. Schuver admitted that the royal women's visit caused him lovesickness all night. Later, when he was offered the hand of one of the court girls for eventual marriage, Schuver declined the offer, claiming a lifelong celibacy.

Schuver described the Qumbaabee settlement as a "widespread village" and compared the surrounding farms with those of Europe. Around Qumbaabee one or two houses stood at intervals, surrounded by a half-dozen granaries, and defended by dogs. These were then interspersed with grazing land. Each house used wax candles for night light. The landscape, settlement patterns, and farms reminded Schuver of being in "the most cultivated parts of Europe." The "verdant hills ... divided into pasture grounds, differently colored farm fields," the grazing herds, the homes and granaries dotting the farm fields, which were in turn studded with forest trees, bounded by the picturesque twin-peaked over 11,000 foot high Wallal mountain, resembled the European region of Bohemia (p 54). He also contrasted the rich Oromo land with the desolate Sudan. The extensive farms and the grazing cattle were evidence of a prevailing prosperity. Farming was done with an iron point plow. Crops included twenty-six varieties of durrah, maize, barley, corn, cotton, sweet-durrah, yams, several kinds of beans, garlic, fiery tobacco, sweet potatoes, cabbage and limited coffee plants. Since farm labor was not degrading, the wealthiest Oromo were seen working along their dependents on their farms. Epiculture was common and beehives were seen hanging from many trees. Game hunting, especially buffalo, was common, and the successful hunter suspended buffalo head and tail on a gallows near his home. Schuver also visited wild coffee trees around Qumbaabee. Referring to the Oromo *bunna qalaa* ceremony, he reported the chewing of coffee beans "stewed with

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melted butter and salt" and flavored with coriander. The author remarked that the stewed coffee beans made a very good dessert. He also boiled and drank coffee, apparently in Turkish style.

Jootee's reception for Schuver, the first European at his court, exhibited symbols of an independent African kingdom with court etiquette. Jootee sat on a massive wooden stool with a locally made umbrella beside him. About five hundred royal guards sat behind him in a half circle in somber silence. The majestic aura overwhelmed Abdu and distracted him from translating for Schuver. Jootee's physical features reminded Schuver of a Pharaonic Egyptian statue, which he described as "a striking instance of nature's repeating itself" (p. 55). After preliminary greeting exchanges, the court provided Schuver with bulls. He was told to select two, which were slaughtered in his honor, and an official public reception was arranged for a market day. At the public reception an official speaker, the king's uncle, led the ceremony. This official speaker, who cracked a whip at intervals of his speech, outlined Jootee's greatness and the historical significance of the day due to the white man's arrival. A virtuoso myth-maker, the official speaker told the public that Schuver's arrival was predicted generations ago, during the reign of the king's grandfather, to happen during Jootee's reign. He then introduced Schuver to the public and suggested building a house for this guest who will be "the protector and savior of our country" (pp.64-65). Meal and entertainment followed the public speech. Schuver described the culinary status and specifics as "a beefsteak such as [he] had only known in dreams" since he left Europe. He wrote of the honey wine as "sparkling and exhilarating as champagne," and noted that it put him in a good mood (p.57).

Schuver left interesting observations on the region's religious practices. He noted how Turco-Egyptian firearms, Islam, and slave raids and trade were intertwined with and accounted for the depressed economic and social status of the peoples living in Oromo-Sudan borderlands. Schuver judged that the traditional religion of the Oromo was more relevant than the "Semitic religions" (p. 60). He reported an annual religious ceremony held at the end of October. The Oromo worshiped a Supreme Being believed to reside in the sky. Attempting to visit a building used for traditional Oromo religious rituals, Schuver was denied entry "unless he stayed for a whole year abstaining from beer, tobacco, and goat meat" (p. 91). He also reported on the practice of

divination, "reading the praetorium," first recorded among the Sumerians in Mesopotamia. Tullu Sonka, a mountain near Qumbaabee was believed to be the "abode of evil spirits and ferocious beasts," and out of human reach for fear of death. One traditional religious ritual was held to honor Schuver. Schuver could observe the procedures, but he could not understand the details since Abdu, the translator, disdained the Oromo religion and refused to translate the words. Abdu converted to Islam in Khartoum where he was taken as a slave.

Concerning markets and trade, Schuver reported the presence of a network of five weekly markets in Leeqaa. Qumbaabee's market, attended by over eight thousand individuals, was held every Saturday. The descriptions of the trade items indicate a large volume of production, specialized economic activities, and local technological products. The market place was "neatly arranged, [set] at a right angle; a living street." Every merchant spread samples of the products before him/herself leaving the bulk of it behind. Schuver described the market site divisions as "salt street," "iron street," "copper street," "cotton lane," etc. On iron street gold, lance heads, iron bars to forge into hoes and hatchets, razors and tweezers were sold. The level of iron forging technology was advanced as attested by tiny soft iron chain necklace products. On copper street were sold brightly polished copper products. Tobacco square sold loaves of baked tobacco smoked in water pipes. "Women ornamented by fanciful designs" sold butter and snow white buttermilk (p.66). Garlic and beans were hawked in all quarters. The greatest of all was cotton square where considerable quantities of cloths were sold. Schuver described the texture of the locally produced cotton cloth as refined in contrast to the "miserable weavings of the Sudan" (p.66). Schuver described the local hide processing expertise as an "art that might be equaled but could never be surpassed in Europe" (p.66).

Schuver also documented an unknown phase of the northeast African slave trade, and the independent Oromo offering asylum for refugees. The Dinka of the Upper Nile were displaced by the Turco-Egyptian slave raiding during the nineteenth century. According to Schuver, about two thousand Dinka took refuge among the Leeqaa Oromo, to escape enslavement or death by starvation. The flat terrain of their country deprived them of protection, and their Anuak neighbors rebuffed them. The refugee Dinka offered various services and lived among the Oromo. Some of them enlisted as Jootee's infantry. Schuver also left us with an intriguing condition of slavery among

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the Leeqaa Oromo. The slaves were virtually free and lived in a condition of liberty. They did not pay taxes and had more land than they could cultivate.

The Dinka presence in Leeqaa, and the uncharted geography of the Baro-White Nile Rivers inspired Schuver to check the navigability of the Baro River to its White Nile confluence. His plan was to open Baro-Khartoum trade between the Oromo and Europeans. Schuver easily figured out the potentially high profit from importing salt over the Baro River in exchange for Oromo cotton cloth, wax, hides, coffee, iron, and ivory. Jootee was enthused with the project and believed in its feasibility. Jootee was enthusiastic about Europeans coming to his kingdom, but he remained non-committal in promising land grants. The Arab *faki* at Jootee's court subverted the project lest a new southern trade route be opened and divert the already existing northern trade beneficial to the Arabs. Incidentally, Menelik opened this trade route, known as the Gambella trade, with the British, in 1902/3, soon after the Ethio-Sudan colonial boundary was delimited. The Baro-Khartoum trade became so lucrative under the Ethiopian empire that only palace-related officials from Addis Ababa were appointed as customs officers.

Schuver also documented the decision-making process under Jootee's monarchical rule and the system of taxation. The decision-making process retained its form of *gada* participatory democracy. An assembly of the Oromo under Jootee was held to discuss court-sponsored legislation to build additional stables for the royal cattle. The royal cattle were to be distributed all over the kingdom and were to be raised by the people. After a heated debate, the assembly decided that the ordinary Oromo assume responsibility for building additional stables, and raising royal cattle, by integrating them into their own herds. The process reminded Schuver of a contemporary Dutch Parliamentary debate on a new stable for royal horses. Schuver's description of the limits of Jootee's tax base is informative. Jootee did not collect direct tax from the Oromo under his rule. He was entitled to labor obligations to cultivate, plant, and harvest the royal fields. Criminal offenses also carried fines, presumably as state revenue. Jootee also collected taxes on slaves sold in his kingdom. According to Schuver, Arab slave traders commuting between Jootee's kingdom and the Sudan-Berta lowlands were the source of such income. Yet the Arab slave raids into the lowlands surrounding Jootee's kingdom were a source of regional insecurity.

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Schuver witnessed regional insecurity and fear of invasion. In August 1881, Schuver was walking alone far from Qumbaabee. The Leeqaa Oromo, who considered him a "Turk" leading an invasion into their country, sent signals in all directions. In less than one hour, over four thousand horse men and infantry surrounded the area. Only the timely arrival of Jootee's officials saved Schuver. Additional horsemen were sent in all directions to stop further deployment of over 9000 fighters. The incident showed the superb readiness for mobilization. In times of war, Jootee could mobilize up to 20,000 fighters. In Schuver's assessment, the Leeqaa Oromo were "much too industrious ... agricultural [and] possessed of the good things..." for a sustained military confrontation, and their cavalry or infantry did not practice their art of war (p.83). They were civilians, engaged in their occupational pursuits, mobilized only in times of war. However, Jootee's enlisted Dinka practiced the techniques of fighting, attesting to the importance of a standing army.

Schuver wrote about inter-Oromo relations, in today's Qellam. The Oromo, like many contemporary African communities, were then organized into small-scale territorial units, and were preoccupied with defending the freedom of these units or expanding these units at the expense of their neighbors. While Schuver was in Qumbaabee, Jootee planned a military campaign against the Sayyoo Oromo from 18 to 23 August, 1881, to expand his kingdom. But the campaign was postponed until after the rains, and Schuver was blamed for refusing to participate in the campaign or lending his firearms. Schuver palpably diagnosed the inter-Oromo politics of the region as "suicidally discordant, too independent" and divided (p.73). This was "...at the time when ... Abyssinians were advancing to engulf them" (p.xxix). Schuver was the only one to document Jootee's desperation to raise an army both to expand his kingdom and to defend it against the Abyssinians. Jootee told Schuver about the Abyssinians annually annexing Oromo land, and asked him whether he would fight the Abyssinians for him. Schuver confirmed his willingness to fight the Abyssinians, but affirmed his refusal to involve himself in inter-Oromo conflicts. Schuver identified the immediate enemies of Jootee as the adjacent Oromo, who were resisting his expansion. This absence of steady peace among the different Oromo states made Schuver abandon his original travel plan of crossing to the East African coast through Oromo land.

From the time of his arrival, Schuver disagreed with Jootee over the exchange of gifts. Schuver realized Jootee's interest in his firearms as a gift

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or sale. Jootee showed his displeasure with trifling gifts. But Schuver believed firearms would only cause civil wars and depredations, citing the Turco-Egyptian slave raiding atrocities. Schuver wrote, "I had made it a principle never to furnish the natives with a means of destroying each other" (p.59). He also admitted the uselessness of his textile gifts due to the climate and said that only guns and European woolen fabrics and blankets constituted an impressive gift. But he remained committed to his principle of not giving firearms.

Schuver left Jootee on a sour note on August 31, 1881 and traveled north. On his way north, Schuver made a detour and visited the Koma, whom he praised as the ideal happy society, enjoying "republican liberty," and living in harmony with nature. He documented Koma domestication of pigs and guinea fowls and their extensive durrah farms. Schuver also observed Oromo traders venturing into Koma land to buy cotton and honey. Schuver then proceeded to the adjacent Berta region. His description depicts the villages deserted due to Arab slave hunts, the Berta abandoning gold washing so as not to arouse Egyptian greed for plunder, the inter-Berta wars, the unsuitability of the Berta lowlands for cattle raising due to venomous flies, and the Berta suspecting him of being a Turkish spy. Schuver also noted that venereal disease introduced by Egyptian soldiers, ravaged the Berta, but had not reached the Oromo. He also met Sheik Khojale al-Hassan, a person who later dominated the region. According to Schuver, Sheik Khojale was crafty and the most intelligent person in the area, a fact borne out by his survival in the subsequent Ethio-Sudan border turmoils and the regional change of powers which he survived until the 1930s. Schuver's subsequent plan to visit the Sibuu Oromo was frustrated by the confiscation of arms destined for him at Suakim by the Egyptian governor.

North of the Blue Nile Schuver documented the victimization of the Guba through double taxation, and a first hand account of Gojjam-centered Abyssinian expansion. The Guba paid a high tribute to the Egyptians without receiving protection from them. Due to Guba proximity to the Abyssinians they were exposed to military expeditions. Until the time of Schuver's visit, the resisiting Wombara Oromo north of the Blue Nile halted Abyssinian expansion. This Oromo resistance compelled the governor of Belaya, from Gojjam, to collect a light tribute from the Guba, according to the report, and

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temporarily eased the Guba tax burden. Schuver's observation encapsulated the relationship between the Oromo and their non-Abyssinian neighbors. Once the Oromo were defeated, the peoples living in today's central and southern Ethiopian empire lost their independence. Schuver then reported on the process of Gojjam-centered Abyssinian colonialism. Gojjame peasants were sent in advance to settle unoccupied lands in Wombara as strangers, followed by soldiers to support them. The pre-conquest settler villages then evolved into administrative centers. Schuver reported, in September 1882, on the westward advance of a large Gojjame force against Wombara Oromo, plundering, conquering and throwing a network of "military colonists" over the conquered regions.

The editors of the book accurately characterize Schuver as an Africanist DeTocqueville. Today, Alexis DeTocqueville's eighteenth century work on the French Revolution, US democracy, and race relations retains resonance among historians and political analysts. In much the same way Schuver's work on Oromo-Sudan pre-and post-colonial borderlands reveals his "contemporary insights ... [to be] read not just as historical source but for the relevance and resonance of his observations to the modern region and period" with its "striking continuities" (p xxxvi). Schuver's writings evoke a northeast African past that is strikingly related to the present. Moreover, Schuver carefully analyzed events as they unfolded and predicted their outcomes. In Leeqaa Schuver detected the danger the Arab *faki* and his gunmen posed to Jootee's authority and warned him not to rely on them. Jootee discounted the warnings. With Mahadist victory came a jihad state in the Sudan, and the Oromo-Sudan borderland was closed. Schuver's prediction turned out with clinical precision, as the Arab gunmen overthrew Jootee. This event compelled Jootee to seek Gobana's assistance to expell these Mahadist agents, an event that hastened the process of Ethiopian conquest. And a century later, there is much of the same pattern to be observed on Oromo-Sudan borderlands.

This is a very important book on Oromo history and culture with accounts of lost Oromo technologies, the political history, the 1880s mindset, and preoccupations with local freedom. This reviewer is struck by the level of iron smelting and leather processing technologies with their products of chain necklaces, razors, tweezers and soft leather coats. Tracing how such technologies were lost after the Ethiopian conquest will challenge Oromo researchers. The volume of local Oromo products is also intriguing in the

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absence of long distance inter-Oromo trade at the time, especially with the Gibe region with which scholars are familiar. Schuver's observations about the suicidal discordance among Oromo political units is revealing. (P.73). Small scale territorial units of Oromo monarchs or *gada* republicans defended their local freedom, leading to frequent local wars. In general, peace correlated with large scale territorial units, with their military strength. The issue of one Oromo group incorporating the other Oromo and eventually defending a pan-Oromo freedom was interrelated. Jootee, like any other Oromo king, could muster a large army only from a large scale Oromo territorial unit. Only a large state with a broad source of revenue could support such an army. Schuver's documentation of the limits of Jootee's tax base and its implications for his inability to withstand an external threat are revealing. These limitations could apply to all monarchical Oromo states. The Oromo monarchs that subverted *gada* republicanism had to consider the democratic Oromo tradition and restrained themselves from imposing heavy taxations or tributes on the public. Thus, while attempting not to encroach on public freedom, these Oromo monarchs ended up in having weak defenses. Schuver's book places Oromo history within the context of precolonial Africa. His account is exceptional in writing about the Oromo without an Abyssinian prism, and in reporting about the Wombera Oromo resistance. The editors have made Schuver's prose accessible for the general reader and the specialist. The book is an invaluable source of knowledge on the Oromo

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Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: The Search for Freedom and Democracy, edited by Asafa Jalata, Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, Inc. 1998, 301 page, \$ 21.95 paper.

Until recently, Oromo nationalism was a taboo subject among Ethiopian intellectuals and Ethiopianist scholars. While Ethiopian intellectuals feared Oromo nationalism as a formidable threat to the survival of what is left of the Ethiopian empire after the recent independence of Eritrea, a number of foreign scholars denied the existence of Oromo nationalism, owing to their prejudice against the Oromo society coupled with their ideological alliance with the dominant Abyssinian ruling elites. The latter have always depicted the Oromo as scattered "tribal" groups who have very little in common except their language, and foreign scholars have embellished and repeated the same erroneous idea in the name of scientific scholarship. Fortunately, for Oromo studies as well as Ethiopian studies, the days when the notion of Oromo nationalism was dismissed without investigation, and distorted and ignored with contempt, are gone for good. Today the existence of Oromo nationalism is a fact beyond dispute both in Oromia and among the Oromo in the diaspora.

There is a limited but growing literature on the subject of Oromo nationalism.

Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: The Search for Freedom and Democracy is the latest addition to the rapidly increasing literature on the subject in several languages including *Afaan Oromoo*, Amharic, English, Arabic, French, Italian, and German languages. *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse* was edited by Asafa Jalata. Jalata is the author of *Oromia and Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict 1868-1992*, as well as several other articles and book chapters. Through his scholarship, Jalata not only has enriched our understanding of Oromo society, but also put the subject of Oromo nationalism on the intellectual map of the world.

Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse examines the historical, political, cultural, economic, social, legal, and intellectual factors that contributed to the development and consolidation of Oromo nationalism.

In the first two chapters of the book, Jalata provides "an overview of the social and cultural foundations of Oromo nationalism, its essence, nature, and

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the prospects for the Oromo national movement" (xi). He traces how Oromo nationalism developed in reaction to Ethiopian settler colonialism, which denied the Oromo cultural space, attacked their national identity, denigrated, humiliated, exploited and abused their human dignity. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that the scattered and localized Oromo resistance was transformed into an organized revolutionary movement that "challenged Ethiopian colonial domination intellectually, culturally, politically and militarily" (p. 10). Jalata stresses that the formation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in 1974 was a major landmark in the consolidation of Oromo nationalism, which propelled the Oromo to create their cultural space, develop their language, revitalize their self-respect and pride in their heritage, and channel their collective anger against the Ethiopian colonial system. From this perspective, it is not surprising if the Oromo learned that the so-called Ethiopian Socialism of "the Amhara military regime and Ethiopian democracy under the Tigrayan regime have been variants of Ethiopian colonial ideologies" (p. 20).

Chapter Three, "The Making and Unmaking of Ethiopia's Transitional Charter," by Leenco Lata, is one of the most informative chapters of the book. Lata, the former Deputy General Secretary of the OLF, is one of the best and most farsighted politicians that emerged out of the long Oromo struggle for self-determination. He was one of the drafters of the Transitional Charter of Ethiopia and a leading figure within the leadership of the OLF. According to Lata, "The Charter envisaged four elements that fundamentally departed from the autocratic and imperial tradition of Ethiopia to transform the relationships between the colonizer 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" (p.56).

None of the above mentioned four components were allowed to develop and flower in Ethiopia either before 1991, or since then. The Charter was not a perfect document, but its implementation would have created an intellectual and political environment that was conducive for the democratization process in Ethiopia. That golden opportunity was lost, however, when the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) used its military muscle for the purpose of consolidating its monopolization of political, military and economic power in Ethiopia. According Lata, it was the

promise of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the assurance of the Government of the United States that persuaded "the OLF to agree to some very risky arrangements" (p. 66) in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). These risky arrangements, political blunders of high proportions, included the OLF leadership "agreeing to the adoption of the TPLF army as the defense force for the Transitional period" (p. 66), which quickly transformed the TPLF guerrilla army into legitimate national defense force, which was well armed and ready to liquidate the OLF guerrilla army. While the OLF leadership naively trusted the US Government assurance and Eritrean promise and focused on electoral politics, the TPLF completed its military preparation for the destruction of the OLF guerrilla army. What is most surprising is that "..... 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" (p.69), which demonstrates beyond doubt that the OLF leadership was committed to the democratization process. However, tragically, the encampment of the OLF guerrilla troops made the task of their destruction faster and much easier than it would have been otherwise.

The TPLF not only destroyed the OLF fighters, but also aborted the democratization process in Ethiopia. And yet, according to Leenco Lata, the US Government and its allies rewarded the TPLF/EPRDF regime "..... by concluding a massive economic cooperation agreement" (p. 65). The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), on whose promise the OLF leadership pinned their hope for support, shifted "the blame to the OLF for the failure of the cooperation that it reluctantly entered into mainly as a result of EPRDF assurances and encouragements" (p. 67).

Ironically the EPLF, which in 1992 supported the TPLF/EPRDF against the OLF, is now targeted for destruction. According to reliable information, the TPLF leaders regard the EPLF as a strategic enemy to be destroyed. This means even if the current border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia is settled peacefully, as a strategic enemy the EPLF cannot live in peace with the TPLF-dominated Ethiopia. Be that as it may, Lata ends his fascinating chapter by stating that the TPLF colonial policy resembles the British colonial policy of indirect rule. "The manners in which resources are siphoned off from the colonized southern regions for the speedy development

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of Tigray makes the new relation even more glaringly colonial than what used to prevail" (p. 74).

In Chapter Four, Baissa Lemmu discusses the existence of competing nationalisms in Ethiopia. They include Oromo, Amhara, Tigray, Afar, Sidama, Somali, Wallyitta and other nationalisms. Lemmu states that in Ethiopia an overarching national identity did not develop (p. 80). Since the Amhara elites controlled the Ethiopian state, their nationalism was projected as Ethiopian nationalism. "The distinction between Amhara and Ethiopian nationalism was blurred and everybody was compelled to learn the Amhara national characteristics as if they were pan-Ethiopian traits" (p. 81). Lemmu carefully analyzes the intolerant political culture of the Amhara and Tigrayan elites, and depicts the inhuman conditions to which the Oromo have been subjected for more than a century, succinctly discusses the Oromo struggle for self-determination, and suggests five alternative scopes of self-determination (pp. 97-103). He concludes by stating that the Oromo issue could be resolved through genuine democratization that empowers the Oromo to control their resources, develop their language and material culture. "If this option fails, the Oromos may not be satisfied with less than full independence and sovereignty to protect their rights and resources" (p. 104).

In Chapter Five, Edmond Keller discusses "Regime change and Ethno-Regionalism in Ethiopia; the case of the Oromo." What brought about regime changes in Ethiopia both in 1974 and 1991 was mainly the national question that was never properly solved. According to Keller, Oromo nationalism poses the TPLF/EPRDF regime "... with its most serious challenge to national political integration" (p. 110). Without solving the Oromo issue, the fate of the current regime will not be different from its two predecessors. According to Keller, "... the EPRDF's conception of the right to self-determination for constituent states is much closer to that of Stalin than anything else. The regime seems to hold that ethnic states have the right to self-determination but not the right to exercise that right" (p. 114). He goes on to say that the TPLF/EPRDF regime has "... skillfully structured politics so as to present the illusion of democracy while at the same time maintaining tight statist control over society" (p. 122). This explains why in the so-called Democratic Federal Republic of Ethiopia, the Government of Oromia does not have any power to decide on all-important issues that affect the Oromo people.

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In Chapter Six, Leenco Lata discusses "Peculiar challenges to Oromo Nationalism." Although the Oromo occupy a strategic position in the Horn of Africa, and Oromia is the richest, and the most densely populated part of the region, the Oromo are the least known of the peoples of the Horn of Africa. Lata discusses the Abyssinian prejudice towards the Oromo, reinforced by foreign scholarship, that accounts for why the Oromo were not known until recently, and explains how negative images were created and perpetuated. The long political, cultural, intellectual and military struggles have melted away the negative images of the Oromo. What remains is the deeply seated Oromo yearning for self-determination. "It may yet require much more blood, sweat and tears to realize it, but its realization is the only hope for the survival of the Oromo people and for other similarly oppressed nations to overcome their internal and/or external oppressors" (p. 149).

Kuwee Kumsa's "Oromo Women and the Oromo National Movement: Dilemmas, Problems and Prospects for True Liberation" addresses gender, the issue that is virtually absent from Oromo studies. Kuwee Kumsa, a highly gifted and articulate revolutionary Oromo nationalist, has been part of the Oromo national struggle for more than two decades. Between 1981 and 1989, she managed to write and smuggle out of prison ten manuscripts, which are an eloquent testament to her courage and commitment to the Oromo national struggle. "Unfortunately these very manuscripts that survived Mengistu's prison cells have not been published by the OLF. Perhaps this is a reflection of the failure to recognize women's voice" (p. 158).

No other intellectual has realized, as Kuwee Kumsa does, that gender liberation could not come out of Oromo national liberation unless efforts are directed toward such an outcome. It is this realization that makes her observation particularly relevant to the ongoing national liberation struggle in Oromia. According to Kuwee Kumsa:

Oromo women share the burden of gender oppression with women of all society. They also share the pain of multiple oppression with all oppressed classes, races and ethnations of the modern world But Oromo women are not helpless and fragile objects ready to be crushed under the weight of three forms of oppression. They are resisting all forms of

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oppression, and just as they are being changed by it, they are also engaged in an active struggle challenging and changing it (p. 154).

Oromo organizations, especially the OLF, should develop strong policies on women's emancipation. Women constitute at least half of the Oromo population and the nation will not be free if half will be "... left in chains" (p. 176). This is a voice that should be listened to and acted upon. The OLF must organize a women's department to look after the interests of women members, and to create a foundation for gender equality within Oromo society. With their increased political consciousness, Oromo women themselves will begin demanding that their multiple oppression be integrated into the national agenda of self-determination of Oromia. In short, Kuwee Tumsa convincingly argues that the multiple oppression of Oromo women should not be put on hold until the liberation of Oromia. The struggle for the self-determination of Oromia is inextricable linked to the issue of gender equality and the two should be addressed concurrently.

Chapter Eight, "The Macha-Tulama Association 1963-1967 and the Development of Oromo Nationalism," by Mohammed Hassen, discusses the formation of the first Pan Oromo movement, its role in the creation of Oromo political awareness, the association's successes and failures, why and how it was destroyed by the government of Emperor Haile Selassie.

This chapter makes it clear that Oromo nationalism developed only during and after the 1960's. "Why did it take so long for Oromo nationalism to develop"? (p. 186). Mohammed Hassen gives four reasons. First, that Oromo nationalism developed as a response to settler colonialism centered in Oromia, and the colonizers, who lacked modern technological and industrial skills, did not create the crucial environment for the development of nationalism. Second, the Oromo lacked modern education, mass media, transportation, communication, intensive interaction among themselves and above all, they "... lacked an intellectual class that aspired to create cultural and political space for itself" (p. 187). Third, Ethiopian rulers not only did everything in their power to divide the Oromo along religious and regional lines and deprived them of any leadership, but also undermined the development of Oromo language and literature all of which combined to delay

the development of Oromo nationalism. Finally, both the Ethiopian and Somali ruling elites hampered the development of Oromo nationalism (p. 189).

The chapter adequately discusses why Oromo nationalism developed so slowly, how the formation of the Macha-Tulama Association changed it, the key leaders who played crucial roles in articulating the spirit of Oromo nationalism, the association's link with the Bale Oromo armed resistance, and the growth of the Oromo Liberation Front out of the same association. The chapter ends with the following observation. As the government of Emperor Haile Selassie destroyed the Macha and Tulama movement in 1967, the OLF, which grew out of that movement, "is being systematically destroyed by the Tigrayan ruling elite. What remains for the Oromo is the bitter realization that since the 1960s, although governments have changed twice in Ethiopia, leaders have changed, and power has shifted from the Amhara ruling elite to the Tigrayan ruling elite, the urge to destroy Oromo organizations and their leaders has remained constant" (pp. 215-216).

In Chapter Nine, "Ethiopian Discourse and Oromo Nationalism," John Sorenson discusses the deliberate and systematic distortion of Oromo history in Ethiopian historiography. Since the Oromo were not literate until recently, what was written about them was written mainly by the Abyssinian (Amhara and Tigray) monks, court chroniclers and modern historians, who knew very little about the Oromo people, their culture and way of life. In most cases, these writers never bothered to know the Oromo language, their religious and political institutions and they depicted the Oromo as people without history. "These narratives of history and identity has constructed the Oromo as Ethiopia's other: uncivilized barbarians, lacking any original or creative cultural tradition" (p. 229). John Sorenson mentions an interesting concept of Abyssinian fundamentalism, which is strong among those who are trying to restore the old order in Ethiopia. "One aspect of this Abyssinian fundamentalism is the valorization of Amhara ethnic identity and the denigration of other groups such as the Oromo, who have been assigned to a subordinate status" (p. 230). Finally, John Sorenson makes two interesting observations. First, Western scholars who studied Ethiopia took on the perceptions of the Amhara elites and those perceptions were arrogantly anti-Oromo. "One important aspect of this Western discourse was the idealization of and support for local allies, the ruling elite of the Amhara.

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Along with reproducing this particular version of regional history, Western discourse on Ethiopia also accepted the dominant minority's characterization of the Oromo as inferior" (p. 231). Second, he encourages Oromo scholars and the friends of the Oromo not to duplicate what has characterized Ethiopian discourse "... in reversed form" (p. 243). This reviewer believes that this is a valid point that has to be taken seriously by those who write about the Oromo.

The final chapter, by Asafa Jalata, deals with "The Struggle for Knowledge: The Case of Emergent Oromo Studies." The chapter not only identifies some deficiencies in Ethiopian studies, but also indicates the progress Oromo studies has made within relatively short time. There is no doubt that Oromo studies as a discipline has a long way to go to establish itself on solid scientific foundation; however, an encouraging beginning has been made. This is because Oromo studies has already demolished unsubstantiated myths and untruths that were created for the purpose of depicting the Oromo as people "without history" who needed the "civilizing mission" of their Abyssinian neighbors. It is now clear that the Oromo have a long and rich history as complex as other peoples of the Horn of Africa. The Oromo never needed the civilizing mission of their Abyssinian neighbours. Oromo studies has created a new paradigm that has given respect to the Oromo people and their cultural heritage. "This new paradigm has already transformed the colonized Oromo from objects to subjects of history by breaking the Ethiopian studies monopoly of knowledge production and dissemination" (p. 275).

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Tadesse, Kiflu *The Generation, Part II*. Lanham: MD: University Press of America, 1998, 518 pp, paper back, price \$46.00.

Kiflu Tadesse, one of the chief exponents of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), wrote *The Generation, Part II* to explain the history of the EPRP from 1975 to the 1990s. Tadesse tells the story from his own perspective.

The leadership of the party consisted of nine Amharas, six Tigrigna speakers, two *Afaan* Oromo speakers, one Gurage, and one woman. A number of political questions come to mind. Why did the party under-represent the Oromo, the largest ethnonational group in the Ethiopian empire? Why did it deny representation to the Southern people that comprise the third largest regional group? Why did it include only one woman? Do they all have the status of a "protected majority"? Why were Somalis and Afars excluded? Does the EPRP, as constructed, have a mandate to speak for all? The author of this book ignores all of these important issues.

The author writes that the EPRP leadership was free from ethno-religious lines. This simply is not true. The leaders of this organization, Zeru Kishen, Tedeletch Kidane Mariam, Tariku Deberetsion, Melaku Tegene, Genet Kebede, have manifested Amhara-Tigrayan ethno-religious interests.

The author does not explain that the EPRP began the war of annihilation by assassinating Fikire Marid. He mistakenly blames the war of annihilation on the *Derg*, the military regime. EPRP waged an ongoing war of words against all political parties, and then started killing prominent opponents. The instances are too numerous, the evidence is too overwhelming to be denied. It was EPRP that initiated a culture of violence against those who did not accept its policies. The violence often emerged from the grave unwillingness on the part of EPRP to engage in a meaningful dialogue regarding the future leadership of the country. In fact, Getachew Maru and Berhane Meskel Reda, repelled by the bloody violence of EPRP methods, tried to stop the hysterical attempt to assassinate *Derg* members.

Getachew Maru was killed by roaming death squads. Not satisfied

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with his death, the squads poured acid on his dead body, making it unidentifiable. Further, the fate of Germatchew Abebe clearly shows the cruelty of this party.

Germatchew Abebe, a graduate of Alemaya University, put his career on line to organize EPRP. He was paralyzed while on duty in Ras Dashen, where the climate is severely cold. The Central Committee could have sent him to the Sudan or Eastern European countries for medical treatment, but they left this disabled man with a monk where he got worse. Germatchew, with a characteristic indomitable spirit, stiffly opposed the excess of his comrades in his unrelenting writings. He was killed under gruesome circumstances, in the same manner as his brother, Yosef Abebe, a graduate of Haile Selassie I University, who was murdered by the *Derg*. Could there be more monstrosities than these?

Some rank-and-file members also were killed for criticizing the EPRP, but Kiflu's account strays far from the truth. The record of *Ganta's* 44 (platoon) brutality in Assimba is still remembered and should be remembered for some time to come. The murders of a teenage girl because a prisoner escaped while she was on guard duty and of those alleged to be *anjas* (faction), are quite shocking. In fact, Berhanu Ejague, while under torture by the *Derg*, betrayed many of his comrades and caused their eventual deaths. Yet he retained his position until his own death. Those who were responsible for the unrestrained killings are safeguarded by an unwritten code of silence to this day.

The writer also ignores information that deserve consideration that could shed light on the subject of the Ethio-Somalia conflict. From 1960 until the down fall of Said Barre in 1991, power in Somalia was firmly entrenched in the hands of a minority Darrod clan, whose largest group is Ogaden. In order to assert hegemony over all Somalia, Darrod often pitted the wrangling groups against one another. Darrod maintained power by controlling Ogaden, the source of Shebbele River, the birth place of Said Mohammed Abdella Hassen (Mad Mullah). The nightmare came for the Darrod clan in 1991 when other clans obtained their own freedom by dismantling the Said Barre regime. That is why, in the past, the Somalia republic consistently pressured Ogaden and desperately tried to annex this land.

With this in the background, Said Barre, like his predecessors, wanted

to use Oromos in Bale, Arssi, Sidamo and Hararghe as expendable forces against the *Derg* and the Oromo Liberation Front. To do so he appealed to the historic ethnic and religious ties. Most importantly, Radio-Mogadishu, in *Afaan Oromo*, played a prominent role as a propaganda dissemination center to influencer Oromos in Ethiopia and the Northern frontier district of Kenya before similar programs were initiated in Radio-Addis Ababa in 1975. In light of this, what influence could EPRP have had where anti-Amharan sentiment was prevalent to recruit the religious ascetic, Haji Kuta? The writer does not provide facts on these matters.

It is merely of academic that the independence of Djibouti in 1977 triggered paranoia in Said Barre. When there was a demand for an independent Ogaden state to be headed by the son of Mektel Tahir and some youths from Kebri Dahir, Said Barre put them in jail indefinitely. Similarly, two Oromo nationalists, Tari Jarso, a former instructor at Haile Sellasie I University, and Captain Salissa Jallo, a former instructor at Harrar Military academy, disappeared under mysterious circumstances after both defied the Somalian plan to colonize the Oromos. In these scenarios, Mektel Tahir did not want to be part of a Greater Somalia, nor did Jarso and Jallo want to be an appendage to a Greater Somalia Said Barre envisaged during his war with Mengistu Haile Mariam. The author should have explained how Oromo nationalism as a factor challenged both Somali and Ethiopian nationalism and undermined the EPRP influence in Oromo society.

Kifle Tadesse discusses the failure of the party without thoroughly exposing it. There are multiple versions of what went wrong with EPRP. One of the distinguished members of the Central Committee, Yosef Mersha, made a near groveling apology to the nation for the first time (see, Tobia 9, 1998). One can never tell whether or not it was a scheme to marshal and mobilize support. Eric Fromm once said "destruction is the outcome of un-lived life." Perhaps he had in mind the activists in Ethiopia. A whole generation is lost - their deaths have left a yawning gap that will be impossible to fill for at least a century.

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But that juncture in history is past now. The central committee of EPRP, whose members varied in ages from "twenty-six to thirty-four years old", were not qualified to make decisions on grave and complicated issues that affect the empire. These leaders were limited in understanding and experience. Does this explain why EPRP would not tolerate any political, social or cultural configuration not dominated by its central committee? As some proponents say, class analysis that excluded the national question, and the adaptation of urban guerrilla warfare brought the down downfall of the party. The author is defensive when he says that "it is not up to this book to respond." This statement shows that the author is not ready to explain the central problems of EPRP. The author is at his best when he describes how the central committee outwitted him by conducting mock sessions on bogus issues without letting him know that he was dismissed from the party.

The book was written for EPRP members and sympathizers. Most readers will find it too detailed and unfocused, while others will consider it an interesting chronicle of events. Its bibliography is pitifully short, relying instead on interviews and conversations with other party members who have their own agendas. Using the archaic language of the 60's, Kiflu Tadesse argues persuasively in pleading tones for a Socialistic vision of Ethiopia. The book has the potential to rekindle the spirit of those jaded EPRP activists still left to narrate a concise and comprehensive account of this party.

Paulos Assefa

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Aneesa Kassam *Gabra* New York, The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 1995, 64 pp.

Gemetchu Megerssa *Booran*. New York, The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 1995, 64 pp.

These two brief introductory books are part of The Heritage Library of African Peoples series published by the Rosen Publishing Group, Inc. Based on the same style and structural framework, they are very much alike. In *Gabra* and *Booran*, Aneesa Kassam and Gemetchu Megerssa discuss the cultural legacy and experiences of these two Oromo groups of Kenya. Though the British colonial administration mistakenly treated the Booran and Gabra as two separate and distinct peoples, the authors explain convincingly that the two are closely related and are part of the larger Oromo nation cut off by artificial boundaries, created by colonial powers, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Booran and Gabra inhabit northern Kenya, southern Oromia (Ethiopia) and are partly found in Somalia.

Booran and Gabra are said to be elder and younger brothers. They speak *Afaan Oromo*, share similar social, religious and political institutions such as time reckoning, *gada* and *qaalluu* institutions, and democratic and egalitarian decision-making styles under their leaders. Both people have experienced the intrusion of the forces of modernization/ social change since the beginning of colonial rule, and more aggressively since the 1960's, which are threatening their traditional cultural heritage and way of life.

Aneesa and Gemetchu also effectively illustrate some of the differences between these two Kenya Oromo groups. While Booran usually live on higher and "cooler" land, Gabra live in the drier and hotter lowlands. Adapting to their ecology, the Booran are pastoralists raising more herds of cattle, and fewer camels, goats and sheep. The Gabra raise more herds of camels, goats and sheep but fewer cattle. Booran have more permanent settlements and are also engaged in production of crops such as maize, sorghum, millet and beans.

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According to Aneesa and Gemetchu, the Booran and Gabra Oromo of Kenya, like their counterparts in southern Oromia, have developed a highly sophisticated mechanism to skillfully manage their scarce resources - water, land and vegetation - for the use of their animals and humans and maintain their delicate environment while coping with periodic crises such as drought, famine and wars.

Both books are supported by several pictures, some maps, a glossary of Oromo terms, excellent selective references for further readings, and indices for easy use.

Aneesa's book is informative, simple and enjoyable to read and provides a good understanding of the culture of Gabra. Gemetchu's *Booran* draws more on oral history and myths, sometimes going back to a remote and unverifiable past to identify the ancient origins of this people. Gemetchu also delves sometimes into the deeper and more profound philosophical and religious world view of the Booran people. His brief treatment of the complex Booran reckoning of time and concept of history, raises the urgency of further research and clarification before such knowledge disappears under the onslaught of the forces of modernization and social change which threaten the traditional way of life.

In conclusion, Aneesa Kassam and Gemetchu Megerssa have superbly introduced not only the cultural legacies and experiences of Gabra and Booran of Kenya but, also by inference and extension, that of the rest of the larger Oromo nation in the Horn of Africa. The two books are excellent introductory reading material not only for young people, but also for adults interested to know more about African peoples' cultures.

Lemmu Baissa, PhD

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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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Articles are welcome for consideration and should not be more than 2500 words or about 10 pages typed double space. Manuscripts and diskettes using Word5, Word for Windows or WordPerfect should and be sent to: Mekuria Bulcha, Ringstedsgatan 36, 164 48 Kista Sweden. Tel. 46-8-751 76 79. Only manuscripts written in English are accepted for consideration.



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