

THE JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

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the Early Twentieth Century*. Reviewer Ezekiel Gebissa

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The Journal of Oromo Studies (JOS), is a leading scholarly publication of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA). Issued twice a year, the journal publishes articles pertaining to all areas of Oromo Studies past, present and future, including topics related to the Oromo diaspora worldwide. Its interdisciplinary scope and revisionary approach offers readers a critical view of the socioeconomic, political and cultural achievements of the Oromo people in their interactions with the people of the Horn of Africa.

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EDITORIAL OVERVIEW

This issue of the *Journal of Oromo Studies* (JOS) brings to its readers articles dealing with two key issues that lie at the heart of the Oromo Studies Association's (OSA) mission. As the Association's main publication, JOS is committed to enlightening readers about the Oromo people's struggle for self-determination and disseminating new research findings on the Oromo. The articles in this issue directly contribute to these twin goals: three articles are designed to help Oromo nationalists take practical steps toward their political objective; the remaining three advance the goal of stimulating intellectually rigorous research and disseminating the results.

The first article, "Meroitic/Oromo Ethiopian Continuity: Call for a Research Project," deals with, among other things, the development of Meroitic studies, the destruction of Meroitic civilization, the collapse of the state, and the dispersal and migration of remnants of the Meroitic people in the direction of the Blue Nile. Muhammed Shamsaddin Megalommatis posits a remarkable hypothesis that these migrants might be the ancestors of the modern Cushitic language

speaking Oromo nation. This dramatic suggestion, running contrary to the accepted wisdom about the origins of the Oromo, does not contend that the issue of Meroitic ancestry of the Oromo nation is an established fact. It merely underscores that the issue has never been seriously considered and studied. The main objective of this article is thus to call on Meroitic and Oromo scholars to collaborate in investigating the possible Meroitic ancestry of the Oromo nation. This is a call that needs to be heeded not for the compelling evidence that has been unearthed, but because of the impeccable scholarly pedigree of the scholar making the call. Megalommat is fluent in Greek, Turkish, English, French, German, Russian and Spanish; competent in reading hieroglyphics, Assyrian, Cuneiform, Ancient and Medieval Greek and Latin; and versed in Phoenician, Ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac. He has what it takes to propose a new research agenda and lead the effort.

In "US Support for Democratization in Ethiopia," David Shinn assesses US support for democratization in Ethiopia. Fifteen years after Ethiopia embarked on a path of democratization, the process has not produced measurable progress in Ethiopia's journey toward becoming a functioning democratic society. Shinn notes that the ruling party's declared new political philosophy of *revolutionary democracy* appears to be a throwback to TPLF's old days when it espoused Albanian Marxism as the ideological foundation of its policies. In fact, the elections of 15 May 2005 and the government's behavior in the following weeks did more to confirm the skeptics' suspicion than allay fears about the government's commitment to democracy. Pointing to US assistance on diplomatic and development tracks, Shinn argues that the lack of progress is not because of the US's failure to pressure the government to move in a more democratic direction, but instead is largely due to the absence of democratic awareness and experience in a country that for two millennia knew only autocratic governments.

The US realizes that it takes quite a while for a Jeffersonian democracy to take root, much less function smoothly. For that reason, says Shinn, the US remains a critical supporter of the process of democratization in Ethiopia.

Focusing on internal dynamics, the third article, "The Oromo and the Coalition for Unity and Democracy," looks into the sputtering democratization process in Ethiopia. The author, Siegfried Pausewang, grapples with the irony of expecting democratization from political actors who are unlikely to benefit from democratic processes. The election of May 2005 revealed that neither the government nor the main opposition party represented the interest of the single most important majority group among Ethiopia's population, the rural farmers. The EPRDF was given the chance to try its hands at democratization. The evidence is in; it has failed in its mission. The main opposition, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), is essentially out of touch with the prevailing Ethiopian reality. It represents the interest of the urban Amhara elite and is utterly incapable of comprehending why the rural populace, the ethnic groups in the southern regions, and Muslim Ethiopians cannot be attracted to its political program.

Pausewang ponders whether the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the political 'elephant in the room' that every actor on the Ethiopian political scene wishes were not there, can help play a constructive role in helping move the process forward. Thus far, although it enjoys the support and good will of the Oromo people, the OLF has been a passive spectator of the political process in Ethiopia. Pausewang considers the OLF a political party that can bring in the missing element, the rural dimension, to the urban-dominated politics in Addis Ababa and makes a compelling case that it should no longer cede the field to the CUD to speak for all Ethiopians. As an organization claiming to represent the interests of the largest of the ethnic groups in the south and those of large segments of Muslims and Christians, the OLF can do more good for its

constituents by working within the Ethiopian political process than watching it from the sidelines.

If the OLF were ever to enter into the political process as Pausewang suggests, however, Oromo political organizations must first address the almost intractable problem of organizational disarray and ideological confusion within the Oromo community. This is the theme of the fourth article, "Oromo National Political Leadership: Assessing the Past and Mapping the Future." The authors, Asafa Jalata and Harwood Schaffer, begin by identifying the issues that have thus far militated against the development of an Oromo national political leadership that can be entrusted with the task of leading the Oromo people to the "promised land" of self determination. They argue that the Oromo liberation struggle has been weakened by political fragmentation within the Oromo community, an elite leadership that is unplugged from democratic feedback links to the broader community and the absence of opportunities for a new generation of leaders to develop and hone their leadership skills. In a skillfully constructed essay, grounded in leadership theories and informed by historical and contemporary Oromo leadership styles, the authors contend that, for Oromo nationalism to achieve its long-sought objectives, the Oromo people and Oromo political leaders need to fulfill three imperatives: first, enhance organizational capacity based on the concepts embedded in *Oromummaa* to unleash the power of Oromo individuals and develop a uniting force for liberation and justice; second, Oromo leadership must eliminate the vestiges of the destructive Abyssinian cultural, ideological, and political behaviors and replace them with strong organizations, visions, and strategies that will unleash the potential of an Oromo society based on *Oromummaa*; third, Oromo political leadership must develop in themselves and in their followers personal leadership skills such as self-discipline, ability to communicate, and a deep sense of social obligation or commitment to the Oromo cause. An interesting argument

that Jalata and Schaffer advance is their contention that the task of liberating the Oromo individual and building an effective and strong political leadership is a shared responsibility of both leaders and followers.

Returning to the theme of disseminating new research evident in the first article, this issue of JOS introduces a special feature that hopefully will continue to appear for some time. Oromo scholars have long known that there is no dearth of information to document that the Oromo were a self-governing people with a complex social organization and a rich history and culture. Numerous European traveler accounts have represented the Oromo in a positive light, describing the people as dignified and admiring their sophisticated political, economic, and religious institutions. The existence of such sources did not matter so long as Ethiopianists were bent on demeaning the Oromo in their writings and the sources remained inaccessible to young Oromo scholars. The problem of inaccessibility, either due to unavailability of the documents or lack of language facility, will not be as daunting as it once was, thanks to Ayalew Kanno's willingness to put his linguistic acumen to the service of future generations of Oromo scholars.

In this issue, we have featured the English rendition of Antoine d'Abbadie's "On the Oromo: A Great African Nation," a speech he delivered at the General Assembly of the Institute of France on 5 April 1880. This is a critical document for Oromo history. It was published at a time when the overwhelming majority of the Oromo were a sovereign people who lived in freedom and independence as masters of their own destiny and makers of their own history. Antoine d'Abbadie delivered his speech at the same time Menelik's forces were pouring into Oromia bringing to an end the Oromo people's sovereign existence. The Oromo lost their independence, in part, because they were divided as they faced Menelik's marauding forces. A few decades before, d'Abbadie had penned

that nothing would have stood in the way of the Oromo had they not been divided and fighting among themselves. It did not take too long before his prophetic words became a reality. The speech could not have been translated and published at a better time, for his words are as relevant today as they were a little over a century ago.

Translating the now antiquated expressions and quaint concepts of a speech delivered in French in 1880 into modern English is a tall order. Some vocabularies, such as "tribe," then did not carry the same pejorative connotations they do now. Kanno has chosen to translate literally out of loyalty to the intent and emotions of the original author. Despite such difficulties, he has presented an extremely readable English rendition. JOS readers and scholars of the Oromo will remain indebted to Ayalew Kanno for making available d'Abbadie's dispassionate observation of a critically important period in Oromo history.

In the last piece, Mohammed Hassen evaluates Antoine d'Abbadie's contribution to Oromo studies. He points out that d'Abbadie's article of 1880 constitutes a departure in correcting the many misconceptions in nineteenth century European representations of the Oromo. He compares the Oromo democratic institutions with European ones and, surprisingly, finds the latter to be deficient. The most far-reaching contribution of d'Abbadie to Oromo studies is his inspiring influence on a generation of European scholars. Mohammed Hassen makes it clear that scholars of the Oromo, including himself, have benefited from d'Abbadie works in reconstructing Oromo history. But d'Abbadie was such an avid collector of ethnographic data and a prolific writer that it will take future Oromo scholars many years to comb through his vast treasure of published and soon-to-be published source materials.

Ezekiel Gebissa, Editor
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MEROITIC/OROMO ETHIOPIAN CONTINUITY: CALL FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT

Muhammad Shamsaddin Megalommatis

Despite the plausibility of identifying the modern Oromo nation as descendants of the ancient Meroitic Ethiopians, the issue of Meroitic ancestry of the Oromo nation has not been studied at all, let alone published in an academic journal or scholarly books. The purpose of this article is to offer a general diagram of the historical reconstruction effort that has to be undertaken, to identify the basic arguments on which this reconstruction can rely, and to call on scholars in the field to undertake an interdisciplinary research project on the issue of historical continuity between modern Oromos and ancient Meroitic Ethiopians.

Corollary to establishing a direct Ethiopian continuity is the fundamental argument that Oromos are the genuine Ethio-

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pians rather than the modern Amhara-Tigrayan or Abyssinians of the present country of Abyssinia that is inaccurately named 'Ethiopia.' The article discusses the development of Meroitic studies, the Meroitic civilization, the destruction of the city of Meroe, the dispersal of the Meroitic people after the collapse of their state, the Christianization of the post Meroitic states, the migration of the remnants of the Meroitic people in the direction of the Blue Nile and their possible relation of ancestry with the modern Cushitic language speaking Oromo nation

**MEROITIC STUDIES, THE HISTORY OF KUSH AND MEROE,
AND DECIPHERING MEROITIC TEXTS**

Interest in what was Ethiopia for the Ancient Greeks and Romans, which is the Northern territory of present day Sudan from Khartoum to the Egyptian border,¹ led to the gradual development of the modern discipline of the Humanities that long stood in the shadow of Egyptology: Meroitic Studies.

Considerable advances have been made in academic research and knowledge as the result of the exploratory trips of the Prussian pioneering Egyptologist Richard Lepsius² (1842-1844) that bestowed upon modern scholarship the voluminous 'Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien' (Monuments from Egypt and Ethiopia), and the series of excavations by E. A. Wallis Budge³ and John Garstang⁴ at Meroe (modern Bagrawiyah) in the first years of the twentieth century; Francis Llewellyn Griffith⁵ at Kawa (ancient Gematon, near modern Dongola, 1929-1931); Fritz Hintze⁶ at Musawwarat es Sufra; Jean Leclant⁷ at Sulb (Soleb), Sadinga (Sedeinga), and Djebel Barkal (ancient Napata, modern Karima) in the 1950s and the 1960s; D. Wildung⁸ at Naqah; and Charles Bonnet at Kerma. The pertinent explorations and contributions of scholars like A. J. Arkell,⁹ P. L. Shinnie,¹⁰ and Laszlo Torok¹¹ that cover a

span of 80 years reconstituted a large part of the greatness and splendor of this four-millennium long African civilization.

Yet, due to the lack of direct access to original sources and genuine understanding of the ancient history of Sudan, the legendary Ethiopia of the Greeks and Romans, which also corresponds to what was 'Kush' of the Hebrews Bible and ultimately 'Kas' of the ancient Egyptians,¹² we face a serious problem of terminology. We are confined to such terms as Period (or Group) A (3100-2700 BCE),¹³ Period B¹⁴ (2700-2300 BCE that starts with Pharaoh Snefru's expedition,¹⁵ and the beginning of time-honored enmity between Egypt and Kush), Period C¹⁶ (2300-2100 BCE, when we have no idea to what specific ethnic or state structures the various Egyptian names Wawat, Irtet, Setjiu, Yam, Zetjau, and Medjay refer),¹⁷ Period Kerma¹⁸ (2100-1500 BCE, named after the modern city and archeological site, 500 km south of the present Sudanese-Egyptian border). What we know for sure is that, when the first Pharaohs of the New Empire (approx. 1550-1150 BCE) invaded and colonized the entire area down to Kurgus¹⁹ (more than 1000 km alongside the Nile to the south of the present Sudanese-Egyptian border), they established two top Egyptian administrative positions, namely 'Viceroy of Wawat' and 'Viceroy of Kush/Kas.' Wawat is the area between Aswan and Abu Simbel or properly speaking, the area between the first and the second cataracts whereas Kas is all the land that lies beyond. With the collapse of the Kerma culture comes the end of the first high-level culture and state in the area of Kush.

We employ the term 'Kushitic Period'²⁰ to refer to the subsequent period: a) the Egyptian annexation (1500-950 BCE) that was followed by a permanent effort to Egyptianize Kush and the ceaseless Kushitic revolutions against the Pharaohs; b) the Kushitic independence (950-800 BCE, when a site is formed around Napata,²¹ present day Karima, 750 km south of the Sudanese-Egyptian border); c) the Kushitic expansion

and involvement in Egypt (800-670 BCE, which corresponds mostly to the XXVth—'Ethiopian' according to Manetho²²—dynasty of Egypt, when the Theban clergy of Amun made an alliance with the Kushitic 'Qore'—Kings of Napata, who had two capitals, Napata and Thebes);²³ and d) the Kushitic expulsion from Egypt (following the three successive invasions of Egypt by Emperors Assarhaddon²⁴ in 671 BCE, and Assurbanipal²⁵ in 669 and 666 BCE, and of Assyria, who made an alliance with the Heliopolitan²⁶ priesthood and Libyan princes against the Theban clergy and the Kushitic kings), and gradual decline (following the invasions by Psamtik/Psammetichus II²⁷ in 591 BCE, and the Achaemedian²⁸ Persian Shah Kambudjijah/Cambyses²⁹ in 525 BCE) until the transfer of the capital far in the south at Meroe, at the area of present day Bagrawiyah (at the end of the reign of Qore Nstasen³⁰ between 335 and 315 BCE).

We call 'Meroitic' the entire period that covers almost 700 years beginning around 260 BCE with the reign of the successors of Nastasen (Arkamaniqo/Ergamenes,³¹ the most illustrious among the earliest ones and the first to be buried at Meroe/Bagrawiyah), down to the end of Meroe and the destruction of the Meroitic royal cities by the Axumite Abyssinian *Negus* Ezana³² (370 CE). It is easily understood that 'Kushitic' antedates 'Meroitic,' but the appellations are quite conventional.

The Ancient people of Kush (or Ethiopia) entered into a period of cultural and scriptural radiation and authenticity relatively late, around the third century BCE, which means that the development took place when Meroe replaced Napata as capital of the Kushites/Meroites. Before that moment, they used Egyptian hieroglyphic scripture for all purposes of writing, administrative, economic, religious and/or royal. The introduction of the Meroitic alphabetic hieroglyphic writing spearheaded the development of a Meroitic cursive alphabetic scripture that was used for less magnificent purposes than pa-

latial and sacred relief inscriptions. The first person to publish Meroitic inscriptions was the French architect Gau,³³ who visited Northern Sudan in 1819. Quite unfortunately, almost two centuries after this discovery, we risk being left in mysteries with regard to the contents of the epigraphic evidence collected in both scriptural systems.

The earliest dated Meroitic hieroglyphic inscriptions belong to the reign of the ruling queen Shanakdakheto³⁴ (about 177-155 BCE), but archaeologists believe that this scripture represents the later phase of a language spoken by Kushites/Meroites at least as far back as 750 BCE and possibly many centuries before that (hinting at a Kushitic continuity from the earliest Kerma days). The earliest examples of Meroitic cursive inscriptions, recently found by Charles Bonnet in Dukki Gel (REM 1377-78),³⁵ can be dated from the early second century BCE. The latest text is still probably the famous inscription from Kalabsha mentioning King Kharamadoye (REM 0094)³⁶ and dating from the beginning of the fifth century AD, although some funeral texts from Ballana³⁷ could be contemporary, if not later.

Despite the fact that F. L. Griffith had identified the 23 Meroitic alphabetic scripture's signs already in 1909, not much progress has been made towards an ultimate decipherment of the Meroitic.³⁸ Scarcity of epigraphic evidence plays a certain role in this regard, since as late as the year 2000 we were not able to accumulate more than 1278 texts. If we now add to that the lack of lengthy texts, the lack of any bilingual text (not necessarily Egyptian/Meroitic, it could be Ancient Greek/Meroitic if we take into consideration that Arkamaniqo/Ergamenes³⁹ was well versed in Greek), and a certain lack of academic vision, we understand why the state of our knowledge about the history of the Meroites is still so limited.

Linguistics and parallels from other languages have been repeatedly set in motion in order to help the academic research. Griffith and Haycock⁴⁰ tried to read Meroitic using (modern)

Nubian. K.H. Priese⁴¹ tried to read the Meroitic text using Eastern Sudanese (Beja⁴² or Hadendawa⁴³); and F. Hintze,⁴⁴ attempted to compare Meroitic with the Ural-Altaiic group. Recently Siegbert Hummel,⁴⁵ compared the “known” Meroitic words to words in the Altaic family which he believed was a substrate language of Meroitic. At times, scholars (like Clyde Winters⁴⁶) were driven to farfetched interpretations, attempting to equate Meroitic with Tokharian, after assuming a possible relationship between the name Kush and the name Kushan⁴⁷ of an Eastern Iranian state (of the late Arsacid,⁴⁸ 250 BCE-224 CE, and early Sassanid,⁴⁹ 224-651 CE, times). However, one must state that the bulk of the researchers working on the Meroitic language do not believe that it was a member of the Afro-Asiatic group.

So far, the only Meroitic words for which a solid translation has been given by Griffith and his successors are the following: man, woman, meat, bread, water, give, big, abundant, good, sister, brother, wife, mother, child, begotten, born, and feet. The eventual equivalence between Egyptian and Meroitic texts was a strong motivation for any interpretational approach, recent or not. More recent, but still dubious, suggestions are the following: arohe- «protect», hr- «eat», pwrite «life», yer «milk», ar «boy», are- or dm- «take, receive», dime «cow», hlbi «bull», ns(e) «sacrifice, sdk «journey», tke- «love, revere», we «dog». It is clear that vocalization remains a real problem.⁵⁰

Through the aforementioned we realize why collective works, like *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum*, textual sources for the History of the Middle Nile Region (vols. I-IV, edited by T. Eide, T. Hägg, R H Pierce, and L. Török, University of Bergen, Bergen 1994, 1996, 1998 and 2000), are still seminal for our—unfortunately indirect, as based on Ancient Egyptian, Greek, Latin and Coptic texts—knowledge of Meroe.

THE END OF MEROE

Amidst numerous unclear points of the Kushitic/Meroitic history, the end of Meroe, and the consequences of this event remain a most controversial point among scholars. Quite indicatively, we may mention here the main efforts of historical reconstitution.

- A. Arkell, Sayce and others asserted that Meroe was captured and destroyed, following one military expedition led by Ezana of Axum.
- B. Reisner insisted that, after Ezana's invasion and victory, Meroe remained a state with another dynasty tributary to Axum.
- C. Monneret de Villard and Hintze asserted that Meroe was totally destroyed before Ezana's invasion, due to an earlier Axumite Abyssinian raid.
- D. Torok, Shinnie, Kirwan, Haegg and others concluded that Meroe was defeated by a predecessor of Ezana, and continued existing as a vassal state.
- E. Bechhaus-Gerst specified that Meroe was invaded prior to Ezana's raid, and that the Axumite invasion did not reach lands further in the north of Meroe.⁵¹

With two fragmentary inscriptions from Meroe, one from Axum, two graffitos from Kawa and Meroe, and one coin being all the evidence we have so far, we have little with which to reconstruct the details that led to the collapse of Meroe. One relevant source, the Inscription of Ezana (DAE 11, the 'monotheistic' inscription in vocalized Geez),⁵² remains a somewhat controversial historical source and is thus less useful in this regard. The legendary Monumentum Adulitanum,⁵³ lost but copied in a confused way by Cosmas Indicopleustes,⁵⁴ may not shed light at all on this event. One point is sure, however: a generalized massacre of the Meroitic inhabitants of the lands conquered by Ezana did not take place. The aforementioned

DAE 11 inscription mentions just 758 Meroites killed by the Axumite forces

What is even more difficult to comprehend is the reason behind the paucity of population attested on Meroitic lands in the aftermath of Ezana's raid. The post-Meroitic and pre-Christian, transitional phase of Sudan's history is called X-Group⁵⁵ or period, or Ballana Period and this is again due to the lack to historical insight. Contrary to what happened for many centuries of Meroitic history, when the Meroitic South (the area between Shendi⁵⁶ and Atbara⁵⁷ in modern Sudan with the entire hinterland of Butana that was called *Insula Meroe/Nesos Meroe*, i.e. *Island Meroe* in the Antiquity) was overpopulated, compared to the Meroitic North (from Napata/Karima to the area between Aswan⁵⁸ and Abu Simbel,⁵⁹ which was called *Triakontaschoinos*⁶⁰ and was divided between Meroe and the Roman Empire), during the X-Group times, the previously under-populated area gives us the impression of a more densely peopled region, if compared to the previous center of Meroitic power and population density. The new situation contradicts earlier descriptions and narrations by Dio Cassius⁶¹ and Strabo.⁶²

Furthermore, the name 'Ballana period' is quite indicative in this regard, Ballana being on Egyptian soil, whereas not far in the south of the present Sudanese-Egyptian border lies Karanog with its famous tumuli that bear evidence of Nubian upper hand in terms of social anthropology. The southernmost counterpart of Karanog culture can be found in Tangassi (nearby Karima, which represented the 'North' for what was the center of earlier Meroitic power gravitation).

In addition, in terms of culture, X-Group heralds a total break with the Meroitic tradition, with the Nubians and the Blemmyes/Beja outnumbering the Meroitic remnants and imposing a completely different cultural and socio-anthropological milieu out of which would later emanate the first and single Nubian state in the world history: Nobatia.

Much confusion characterizes modern scholars when referring to Kush or Meroe by using the modern term 'Nubia'. By now it is clear that the Nubians lived, since times immemorial, in both Egypt and the Sudan, being part of the history of these two lands. But Nubians are a Nilo-Saharan ethnic/linguistic group different from the Khammitic Kushites/Meroites. At the time of X-Group and during the long centuries of Christian Sudan, we have the opportunity to attest the differences and divergence between the Nubians and the Meroitic remnants. The epicenter of Nubian culture, the area between the first (Aswan) and the third (Kerma) cataracts, rose to independence and prominence first, with capital at Faras, near the present day Sudanese–Egyptian border, around 450 CE. Nobatia institutionalized Coptic as the religious (Christian) and administrative language, and the Nubian language remained an oral-only vehicle of communication. The Nobatian control in the south of the third cataract was vague, nominal and precarious. Nobatia was linked with the Coptic–Monophysitic Patriarchate of Alexandria.

The Meroitic remnants underscored their difference from the Nubians/Nobatians, and the depopulated central part of the defunct state of Meroe rose to independence in the first decades of the sixth century. Its name, Makkuria, is in this regard a linguistic resemblance of the name 'Meroe' but we know nothing more. The Meroitic remnants inhabited the northern circumference of Makkuria more densely, and the gravitation center turned around Old Dongola (580 km south of Wadi Halfa), capital of this Christian Orthodox state that extended from Kerma to Shendi (the area of the sixth cataract), more than 1000 km alongside the Nile. But beyond the area of Karima (750 km in the south of Wadi Halfa) and the nearby famous Al Ghazali monastery we have very scarce evidence of Christian antiquities. The old African metropolis Meroe remained at the periphery of Makkuria, Alodia, and Axumite Abyssinia.

Makkurians highlighted their ideological-religious divergence from the Nubians by adopting Greek as their religious language. They even introduced a new scripture for their Makkurian language that seems to be a later phase of Meroitic Makkurian was written in alphabetic Greek signs, and the Makkurians preferred to attach themselves to Christian Orthodoxy, and more particularly to the Greek Patriarchate of Alexandria.

Alodia has long been called the 'third Christian state' in Sudan, but recent discoveries in Soba, its capital (15 km at the east of Khartoum), suggest that Alodia rose first to independence (around 500 CE) and later adhered to Christianity (around 580-600 CE) following evangelization efforts deployed by missionary Nubatian priests (possibly in a sort of anti-Makkurian religious diplomacy). We know nothing of Alodian scripture so far.

The later phases of the Christian history of Sudan encompass the Nubatian-Makkurian merger (around 1000 CE), the Islamization of Makkuria in 1317, and finally the late collapse of Christian Alodia in 1505. The question remains unanswered until today. What happened to the bulk of the Meroitic population, specifically the inhabitants of the Insula Meroe, the present day Butana? What happened to the Meroites living between the fourth and the sixth cataracts after the presumably brief raid of Ezana of Axum, and the subsequent destruction of Meroe, Mussawarat es Sufra, Naqah, Wad ben Naqah and Basa?

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE POST-MEROITIC HISTORY OF THE KUSHIIC OROMO NATION

Certainly, the motives of Ezana's raid have yet to be properly studied and assessed by modern scholarship. The reasons for the raid may vary from a simple nationalistic usurpation of the name of 'Ethiopia' (Kush), which would give Christian eschatological legitimacy to the Axumite Abyss-

sinian kingdom, to the needs of international politics (at the end of 4th century) and the eventuality of an Iranian–Meroitic alliance at the times of Shapur II (310–379), aimed at outweighing the Roman–Abyssinian bond. Yet, this alliance could have been the later phase of a time honored Meroitic diplomatic tradition (diffusion of Mithraism as attested on the Jebel Qeili reliefs of Shorakaror). What we can be sure of are the absence of a large-scale massacre, and the characteristic scarcity of population in the central Meroitic provinces during the period that follows Ezana's raid and the destruction of Meroe

The only plausible explanation is that the scarcity of population in Meroe mainland after Meroe's destruction was due to the fact that the bulk of the Meroites (at least for the inhabitants of Meroe's southern provinces) fled and migrated to areas where they would remain independent from the Semitic Christian kingdom of Axumite Abyssinia. This explanation may sound quite fresh in approach, but it actually is not, since it constitutes the best utilization of the already existing historical data.

From archeological evidence, it becomes clear that during the X-Group phase and throughout the Makkurian period the former heartland of Meroe remained mostly uninhabited. The end of Meroe is definitely abrupt, and it is obvious that Meroe's driving force had gone elsewhere. The correct question would be "where to?"

There is no evidence of Meroites sailing down the Nile to the area of the 4th (Karima) and the 3rd (Kerma) cataracts, which was earlier the northern border of Meroe and remained untouched by Ezana. There is no textual evidence in Greek, Latin and/or Coptic to testify to such a migratory movement or to hint at an even more incredible direction, i.e. Christian Roman Egypt. If we add to this the impossibility of marching to the heartland of the invading Axumites (an act that would mean a new war), we reduce the options to relatively few.

The migrating Meroites could go either to the vast areas of the Eastern and the Western deserts or enter the African forest region or ultimately search a possibly free land that, being arable and good for pasture, would keep them far from the sphere of the Christian Axumites. It would be very erroneous to expect settled people to move to the desert. Such an eventuality would be a unique oxymoron in the history of the mankind. Nomadic peoples move from the steppes, the savannas and the deserts to fertile lands, and they settle there, or cross long distances through steppes and deserts. However, settled people, if under pressure, move to other fertile lands that offer them the possibility of cultivation and pasture. When dispersed by the invading Sea Peoples, the Hittites moved from Anatolia to Northwestern Mesopotamia; they did not cross and stay in the small part of Anatolia that is desert. The few scholars who think that Meroitic continuity could be found among the present day Beja and Hadendawa are oblivious to the aforementioned reality of world history that has never been contravened. In addition, the Blemmyes were never friendly to the Meroites. Every now and then, they had attacked parts of the Nile valley and the Meroites had needed to repulse them. It would be rather inconceivable for the Meroitic population, after seeing Meroe sacked by Ezana, to move to a land where life would be difficult and enemies would await them.

Modern technologies help historians and archeologists reconstruct the ancient world; paleo-botanists, geologists, geochemists, paleoentomologists, and other specialized natural scientists are of great help in this regard. It is essential to stress here that the entire environmental milieu of Sudan was very different during the times of the Late Antiquity. Butana may look like a wasteland today, and the Pyramids of Bagrawiyah may be sunk in the sand, while Mussawarat es Sufra and Naqah demand a real effort in crossing the desert. But in the first centuries of Christian era, the entire landscape was dramatically different

The Butana was not a desert but a fertile cultivated land; we have actually found remains of reservoirs, aqueducts, various hydraulic installations, irrigation systems and canals in Meroe and elsewhere. Not far from Mussawarat es Sufra there must have been an enclosure where captive elephants were trained before being transported to Ptolemais Theron (present day Suakin, 50 km south of Port Sudan) and then further on to Alexandria. Desert was in the vicinity, certainly, but not that close.

We should not imagine that Ezana crossed desert areas, moving from the vicinities of Agordat, Tesseney and Kessala to Atbarah and Bagrawiyah, as we would do today. And we should not imagine the lands in the south of present day Khartoum, alongside the White Nile, were easy to cross in antiquity. In ancient times, impenetrable jungle started immediately in the south of Khartoum, and cities like Kosti and Jabalayn lie today on deforested soil. At the southernmost confines of the Meroitic state, pasturelands and arable land could be found alongside the Blue Nile Valley.

Since jungle signified death in the antiquity, and even armies feared to stay overnight in a forest or even more so in the thick African forest, we have good reason to believe that, following the Ezana's raid, the Meroites, rejecting the perspective of forced Christening, migrated southwestwards up to Khartoum. From there, they proceeded southeastwards alongside the Blue Nile in a direction that would keep them safe and far from the Axumite Abyssinians whose state did not expand as far south as Gondar and Lake Tana. Proceeding in this way and crossing successively areas of modern cities, such as Wad Madani, Sennar, Damazin, and Asosa, and from there on, they expanded in later times over the various parts of Biyya Oromo.

We do not mean to imply that the migration was completed in the span of one generation; quite to the contrary, we have reasons to believe that the establishment of Alodia (or

Alwa) is due to progressive waves of Meroitic migrants who settled first in the area of Khartoum that was out of the westernmost confines of the Meroitic state. Once Christianization became a matter of concern for the evangelizing Nobatians and the two Christian Sudanese states were already strong, the chances of preserving the pre-Christian Meroitic cultural heritage in the area around Soba (capital of Alodia) were truly poor. Subsequently, another wave of migrations took place, with early Alodian Meroites proceeding as far in the south as Damazin and Asosa, areas that remained always beyond the southern border of Alodia (presumably around Sennar). Like this, the second migratory Meroitic wave may have entered around 600 CE in the area where the Oromos, descendents of the migrated Meroites, still live today.

A great number of changes at the cultural-behavioral levels are to be expected, when a settled people migrates to far-away lands. The Phoenicians had kings in Tyre, Byblos, and their other city-states, but introduced a democratic system when they sailed faraway and colonized various parts of the Mediterranean. The collapse of the Meroitic royalty was a shock for the Nile valley; the Christian kingdoms of Nobatia, Makkuria and Alodia were ruled by kings whose power was to a large extent counterbalanced by that of the Christian clergy. With the Meroitic royal family decimated by Ezana, it is quite possible that high priests of Apedemak and Amani (Amun) took much of the administrative responsibility in their hands, inciting people to migrate and establishing a form of collective and representative authority among the Meroitic Elders. They may even have preserved the royal title of Qore within a completely different socio-anthropological context.

CALL FOR COMPARATIVE MEROITIC-OROMO STUDIES

How can this approach, interpretation, and conclusion be corroborated up to the point of becoming a generally accepted historical reconstitution at the academic level? On

what axes should one group of researchers work to collect detailed documentation in support of the Meroitic ancestry of the Oromos?

Quite strangely, I would not give priority to the linguistic approach. The continuity of a language can prove many things and can prove nothing. The Bulgarians are of Uralo-Altaiic Turco-Mongolian origin, but, after they settled in the Eastern Balkans, they were linguistically slavized. Most of the Greeks are Albanians, Slavs, and Vlachs, who were hellenized linguistically. Most of the Turks in Turkey are Greeks and Anatolians, who were turkicized linguistically. A people can preserve its own language in various degrees and forms. For the case of languages preserved throughout millennia, we notice tremendous changes and differences. If you had picked up Plato and 'transferred' him to the times of Linear B (that was written in Mycenae 800 years before the Greek philosopher lived), you could be sure that Plato would not have understood the language of his ancestors with the exception of some words. Egyptian hieroglyphics was a scripture that favored archaism and linguistic puritanism. But we can be sure that for later Pharaohs, like Taharqa the Kushite (the most illustrious ruler of the 'Ethiopian' dynasty), Psamtik, Nechao, Ptolemy II and Cleopatra VII, a Pyramid text (that antedated them by 1700 to 2300 years) would almost be incomprehensible.

- A. National diachronic continuity is better attested and more markedly noticed in terms of Culture, Religion, and a Philosophical-Behavioral system. The first circle of comparative research would encompass the world of the Kushitic-Meroitic and Oromo concepts, anything that relates to the *Weltanschauung* of the two cultural units/groups under study. A common view of basic themes of life and a common perception of the world would provide significant corroboration to the theory of Meroitic

ancestry of the Oromos. So, first it is a matter of history of religions, African philosophy, social anthropology, ethnography and culture history.

- B. Archeological research can help tremendously as well. At this point one has to stress the reality that the critical area for the reconstruction suggested has been totally ignored by Egyptologists, as well as Meroitic and Axumite archeologists so far. The Blue Nile valley in Sudan and Abyssinia was never the subject of an archeological survey, and the same concerns the Oromo highlands. Certainly modern archeologists prefer something concrete that would lead them to a great discovery, being therefore very different from the pioneering nineteenth century archeologists. An archeological study would need to be conducted in the Blue Nile valley and the Oromo highlands in the years to come.
- C. A linguistic-epigraphic approach may bring forth even more spectacular results. It could eventually end up with a complete decipherment of the Meroitic and the Makkurian. An effort must be made to read the Meroitic texts, hieroglyphic and cursive, with the help of Oromo language. Meroitic personal names and toponymics must be studied in the light of a potential Oromo interpretation. Comparative linguistics may unveil affinities that will lead to reconsideration of the work done so far in the Meroitic decipherment.
- D. Last but not least, another dimension would be added to the project with the initiation of comparative anthropological studies. Data extracted from findings in the Meroitic cemeteries must be compared with data provided by the anthropological study of present day Oromos. The research must encompass pictorial documentation from the various Meroitic temples' bas-reliefs. To all these I would add a better reassessment of the existing histori-

cal sources, but this is not a critical dimension of this research project.

I believe that if my call for Comparative Meroitic–Oromo Studies reached the correct audience (one that can truly evaluate the significance of the ultimate corroboration of the Meroitic ancestry of the Oromos, as well as the magnificent consequences thereto) such corroboration would have result in,

- A. the forthcoming Kushitic Palingenesia—Renaissance if you want—in Africa,
- B. the establishment of post-Colonial African Historiography, and, last but not least,
- C. the question of the most genuine and authoritative representation of Africa in the United Nations Security Council.

NOTES

1. To those having the slightest doubt, trying purely for political reasons and speculation to include territories of the modern state of Abyssinia into what they Ancient Greeks and Romans called “Aethiopia”, the entry Aethiopia in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realenzyklopadie der klassischen Altertumwissenschaft* consists in the best and irrevocable answer.
2. http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/information/biography/klmno/lepsiuss_karl.html; http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Richard_Lepsius; parts of the *Denkmaeler* are already available online: <http://edoc3.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/books/2003/lepsiuss/start.html> Also: http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/LEO_I/OB/LEPSIUS_KARL_RICHARD_18101884_.html The fact that the furthestmost point of ‘Ethiopia’ he reached was Khartoum is of course quite telling.
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._A._Wallis_Budge; he wrote among the rest a book on his Meroe excavations’ results, *The Egyptian Sudan: its History and Monuments* (London, 1907).
4. Mythical figure of the British Orientalism, Garstang excavated in England, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and the Sudan; Albright, William Foxwell: “John Garstang in Memoriam”, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 144 (Dec., 1956), pp. 7–8 Garstang’s major

articles on his Meroe excavations are the following: 'Preliminary Note on an Expedition to Meroë in Ethiopia', *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 3 (1911 – a), 'Second Interim Report on the Excavations at Meroë in Ethiopia, I Excavations', *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 4 (1911 – b), 'Third Interim Report on the Excavations at Meroë in Ethiopia', *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 5 (1912), 'Forth Interim Report on the Excavations at Meroë in Ethiopia', *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 6 (1913), and 'Fifth Interim Report on the Excavations at Meroë in Ethiopia', *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 7 (1914) His major contribution was published in the same year under the title *Meroë, the City of Ethiopians* (Oxford). A leading Meroitologist, Laszlo Torok wrote an entire volume on Garstang's excavations at Meroe: *Meroe City, an Ancient African Capital: John Garstang's Excavations in the Sudan*.

5. Griffith was the epigraphist of Grastand and had already published the epigraphic evidence unearthed at Meroe in the chapter entitled 'the Inscriptions from Meroë' in Garstang's *Meroë, the City of Ethiopians*. After many pioneering researches and excavations in various parts of Egypt and Northern Sudan, Faras, Karanog, Napata and Philae to name a few, he concentrated on Kerma: 'Excavations at Kawa', *Sudan Notes and Records* 14
6. Basically: www.sag-online.de/pdf/mittsag95.pdf; among other contributions: Die Inschriften des Löwentempels von Musawwarat es Sufra, Berlin (1962); Vorbericht über die Ausgrabungen des Instituts für Ägyptologie der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in Musawwarat es Sufra, 1960-1961 (1962); 'Musawwarat es Sufra. Preliminary Report on the Excavations of the Institute of Egyptology, Humboldt University, Berlin, 1961-1962(Third Season)', *Kush* 11 (1963); 'Preliminary Note on the Epigraphic Expedition to Sudanese Nubia, 1962', *Kush* 11 (1963); 'Preliminary note on the Epigraphic Expedition to Sudanese Nubia, 1963', *Kush* 13 (1965)
7. As regards my French professor's publications focused on his excavations at Sudan: Soleb and Sedeinga in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* 5, Wiesbaden 1984 (entries contributed by J Leclant himself); also J Leclant, Les reconnaissances archéologiques au Soudan, in: *Études nubiennes* I, 57-60.
8. His recent volume *Sudan: Ancient Kingdoms of the Nile* (Paris/New York 1997), contains earlier bibliography. Some of his most authoritative publications: 'A History of the Sudan from the Earliest Times to 1821', 1961 2nd Ed. (London); 'The Valley of the Nile', in: *The Dawn of African History*, R. Oliver (ed), London. Arkell is mostly renowned for his monumental 'The Royal Cemeteries of Kush' in many volumes.

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9. Some of his most authoritative publications: '*A History of the Sudan from the Earliest Times to 1821*', 1961 2nd Ed (London); 'The Valley of the Nile', in: *The Dawn of African History*, R. Oliver (ed.), London. Arkell is mostly renowned for his monumental 'The Royal Cemeteries of Kush' in many volumes.
10. Presentation of his 'Ancient Nubia' in: http://www.keganpaul.com/product_info.php?cPath=35&products_id=33; for a non exhaustive list of Shinnie's publications: http://www.arkamani.org/bibliography%20_files/christian_nubia2.htm#S; see also a presentation of a volume on Meroe, edited by Shinnie et Alii: http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/mcgi/shop/index.cgi?T=1163879905{haupt_harrassowitz=http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/acgi/a.cgi?alayout=489&ausgabe=detail&caref=353.
11. Many of his publications are listed here http://www.arkamani.org/bibliography%20_files/christian_nubia2.htm#S; also here: http://www.arkamani.org/bibliography%20_files/nubia_and_egypt4.htm#I. In the *Eighth International Conference for Meroitic Studies*, Torok spoke about 'The End of Meroe'; the speech will be included in the arkamani online project, here: <http://www.arkamani.org/arkamani-library/meroitic/end-of-meroe.htm>.
12. Useful reading: <http://www.culturekiosque.com/art/exhibiti/rhesouda.htm>; also: http://www.nubianet.org/about/about_history4.html; see also the entry 'Kush' in *Lexikon der Aegyptologie and the Encyclopedia Judaica*. More specifically about the Egyptian Hieroglyphic and the Hebrew writings of the name of Kush: http://www.specialtyinterests.net/journey_to_nubia.html. For more recent bibliography: <http://blackhistorypages.net/pages/kush.php>. Also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cush%2C_son_of_Ham.
13. Basic bibliography in: http://www.arkamani.org/bibliography%20_files/prehistory_a_b.htm; http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/PROJ/NUB/NUBX92/NUBX92_brochure.html. More particularly on Qustul, and the local Group A Cemetery that was discovered in the 60s by Dr. Keith Seele: <http://www.homestead.com/wysinger/qustul.html> (by Bruce Beyer Williams). Quite interesting approach by Clyde Winters as regards an eventual use of Egyptian Hieroglyphics in Group A Nubia, 200 years before the system was introduced in Egypt: <http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Bay/7051/anwrite.htm>.
14. Brief info: http://www.nubianet.org/about/about_history3_1.html; see also: http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IS/RITNER/Nubia_2005.html; more recently several scholars consider Group B as an extension of Group A (GRATIEN, Brigitte, *La Basse Nubie à l'Ancien Empire: Égyptiens et autochtones*, *JE* 81 (1995), 43-56).

15. Readings: <http://www.cartage.org.lb/en/themes/geoghist/histories/oldcivilization/Egyptology/Nubia/nubiad1.htm>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sneferu>; [http://os2.zemris.hr/algorithmi/hash/2002_radovan/snefru/Egypt%20Snefru%20\(Snofru,%20Snefrue\),%201st%20King%20of%20Egypt's%204th%20Dynasty.htm](http://os2.zemris.hr/algorithmi/hash/2002_radovan/snefru/Egypt%20Snefru%20(Snofru,%20Snefrue),%201st%20King%20of%20Egypt's%204th%20Dynasty.htm) (with bibliography); <http://www.narmer.pl/dyn/04en.htm>; for the Palermo stone inscription where we have the Nubia expedition narrative: <http://www.britannica.com/ebi/article-9332360>; <http://www.ancient-egypt.org/index.html> (click on the Palermo Stone); http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palermo_stone (with related bibliography)
16. Readings: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C-Group>; <http://www.numibia.net/nubia/c-group.htm>; <http://www.gustavianum.uu.se/sje/sjeexh.htm> and http://www.hp.uab.edu/image_archive/ta/tae.html (with designs and pictures); http://www.ancientsudan.org/03_burials_02_early.htm (with focus on Group C burials and burial architecture). See also: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~nlovell/nubia.htm>; <http://www.dignubia.org/maps/timeline/bce-2300a.htm>
17. References in the Lexikon der Aegyptologie. See also: http://www.nigli.net/akhenaten/wawat_1.html; one of the related sources: The Story of an Egyptian Politician, published by T. G. Allen, in: *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Vol 38, No. 1 (Oct., 1921), pp 55-62; Texts relating to Egyptian expeditions in Yam and Irtet: http://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/assouan/khoui_herkouf/e_khoui_herkouf.htm; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medjay>; more in 'Ancient Nubia: Egypt's Rival in Africa' (Paperback) by David O' Connor, http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0924171286/ref=cap_pdp_dp_0/104-7300067-0196731.
18. Brief description: <http://www.anth.ucsb.edu/faculty/stsmith/research/kerma.html>; <http://www.spicey.demon.co.uk/Nubianpage/SUDANARC.htm#French> (with several interesting links); http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Kerma (brief but with recent bibliography containing some of Bonnet's publications).
19. Vivian Davies, 'La frontière méridionale de l'Empire : Les Egyptiens à Kurgus,' *Bulletin de la Société française d'égyptologie*, 2003, no157, pp 23-37 (<http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsid=15281726>); about the ongoing British excavations: <http://www.sudarchrs.org.uk/page17.html>; about the inscription of Thutmosis I: <http://thutmosis.i-know-library.net>; also: http://www.meritneith.de/politik_neuesreich.htm, and <http://www.aegyptologie.com/forum/cgi-bin/YaBB/YaBB.pl?action=lexikond&id=030514112733>

- 20 In brief and with images: http://www.hp.uab.edu/image_archive/um/umj.html; also: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kush> (with selected recent bibliography) and http://www.mfa.org/collections/search_art.asp?coll_package=26155 (for art visualization) The period is also called Napatan, out of the Kushitic state capital's name: <http://www.homestead.com/wysinger/kingaspalta.html>
- 21 To start with: <http://www.bartleby.com/67/99.html>; <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9054804/Napata>; <http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/archaeology/sites/africa/napata.html> (including references); most authoritative presentation by Timothy Kendall 'Gebel Barkal and Ancient Napata' in: http://www.arkamani.org/arkamani-library/napatan/barkal_ancient_nubia.htm; also: 'the Rise of the Kushitic kingdom' by Brian Yare, in: <http://www.yare.org/essays/kushite%20kingdom%20of%20Napata.htm>. For Karima, notice the interesting itinerary: <http://lts3.algonquincollege.com/africa/main/mapsRoute/sudan.htm>, and <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karima>.
- 22 Introductory reading: <http://www.ancient-egypt.org/index.html> (click on Manetho); <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manetho> (with selected bibliography). Among the aforementioned, the entries Manethon (Realenzyklopaedie) and Manetho (Lexikon der Aegyptologie) are essential
23. For the Ethiopian dynasty, all the related entries in the Lexikon and the Realenzyklopaedie (Piankhi, Shabaka, Shabataka, Taharqa, Tanutamon) are the basic bibliography; see also: <http://www.ancientlibrary.com/smith-bio/3017.html>; the last edition (1996) of Kenneth Kitchen's *'The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 BC)'*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd, remains the best reassessment of the period and the related sources. Introductory information: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabaka>; <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabataka>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taharqa>; and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tantamani> Also: <http://www.homestead.com/wysinger/mentuemhat.html>; critical bibliography for understanding the perplex period is J. Leclant lectureship thesis (these d'Etat) 'Montouemhat, Quatrieme Prophete D'Amon, (1961).
24. Basics: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assarhaddon>; the edition of the Assyrian emperor's annals by R. Borger (*Die Inschriften Assarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien, AfO 9*, Graz, 1956) remain our basic reference to formal sources. More recently, F Reynolds shed light on private sources, publishing, 'The Babylonian correspondence of Esarhaddon, and letters to Assurbanipal and Sin-Sarru-Iskun from Northern and Central Babylonia' (SAA 18, 2004).

25. For the Greater Emperor of the Oriental Antiquity: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashurbanipal>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamash-shum-ukin>; <http://web.utk.edu/~djones39/Assurbanipal.html>; until today we have to rely mostly on the voluminous edition of Assurbanipal's *Annals* by Maximilian Streck (*Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergang Niniveh*, Leipzig, 1916); see also M. W. Waters' *Te'umman in the neo-Assyrian correspondence* (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1999, vol. 119, no3, pp 473-477).
26. Heliopolis (Iwnw in Egyptian Hieroglyphic – literally the place of the pillars –, On in Hebrew and in Septuaginta Greek) was the center of Egyptian monotheism, the holiest religious center throughout Ancient Egypt; it is from Heliopolis that emanated the Isiac ideology and the Atum Ennead. Basic readings: the entry Heliopolis in *Realenzyklopaedie* and in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*; more recently: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heliopolis_%28ancient%29
27. Basic readings: <http://www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/chronology/psametiki.html>; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psammethichus_I; <http://www.phouka.com/pharaoh/pharaoh/dynasties/dyn26/02psamtik1.html>; <http://www.specialtyinterests.net/psamtek.html> (with pictorial documentation). See also: http://www.nubianet.org/about/about_history6.html
28. Hakhmaneshian is the first Persian dynasty; it got momentum when Cyrus II invaded successively Media and Babylon. Readings: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_dynasty (with selected bibliography); the 2nd volume of the *Cambridge History of Iran* is dedicated to Achaemenid history (contents: <http://www.cambridge.org/uk/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=0521200911>
29. Readings: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambyses_II_of_Persia (with bibliography and sources) Cambyses invaded Kush and destroyed Napata at the times of Amani-natake-lebte, and his embattled army was decimated according to the famous narratives of Herodotus that still need to be corroborated. What seems more plausible is that, having reached in an unfriendly milieu of the Saharan desert where they had no earlier experience, the Persians soldiers, at a distance of no less than 4000 km from their capital, faced guerilla undertaken by the Kushitic army remnants and their nomadic allies.
30. Nastasen was the last to be buried in Nuri, in the whereabouts of Napata. Contemporary with Alexander the Great, Nastasen fought against an invader originating from Egypt whose name was recorded as Kambasawden. This led many to confuse the invader with Cambyses, who ruled 200 years earlier (!) The small inscription on the Letti stela

does not allow great speculation; was it an attempt of Alexander the Great to proceed to the south of which we never heard anything? Impossible to conclude For photographic documentation: http://www.dignubia.org/bookshelf/rulers.php?rul_id=00017&ord= Another interpretation: http://www.nubia2006.uw.edu.pl/nubia/abstract.php?abstract_nr=76&PHPSESSID=472ec4534c78263b6d4a0194e6349d8b.

31. Arkamaniqo was the first to have his pyramid built at Meroe, not at Napata See: http://www.dignubia.org/bookshelf/rulers.php?rul_id=00018&ord=; <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ergamenes>. He inaugurated the architectural works at Dakka, the famous ancient Egyptian Pa Serqet, known in Greek literature as Pselkhis (<http://www.touregypt.net/featuresstories/dakka.htm>), in veneration of God Thot, an endeavor that brought the Ptolemies and the Meroites in alliance.
32. For Abyssinia's conversion to Christianity: <http://www.spiritualite2000.com/page.php?idpage=555>, and <http://www.tjliban.com/Saint-Frumentius.doc>. The Wikipedia entry (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezana_of_Axum) is written by ignorant and chauvinist people, and is full of mistakes, ascribing provocatively and irrelevantly to Ezana the following territories (using modern names): "present-day Eritrea, northern Ethiopia, Yemen, southern Saudi Arabia, northern Somalia, Djibouti, northern Sudan, and southern Egypt". All this shows how misleading this encyclopedia can be. Neither southern Egypt, northern Sudan, northern Somalia and Djibouti nor Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia ever belonged to Ezana's small kingdom that extended from Adulis to Axum, and following the king's victory over Meroe, it included modern Sudan's territories between Kessala and Atbara. Nothing more!
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/www.arkamani.org/arkamani-library/meroitic_conference_paris/rilly_paleography.htm. The only inscription giving her name comes from Temple F in Naga (REM 0039A-B). The name appears in Meroitic hieroglyphics in the middle of an Egyptian text. See also: Laszlo Török, in: *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum*, Vol. II, Bergen 1996, 660-662. The first attempts to render full Meroitic phrases into hieroglyphs (not only personal names, as it was common earlier) can be dated from the turn of the 3rd / 2nd century BCE, but they reflect the earlier stage of the development.

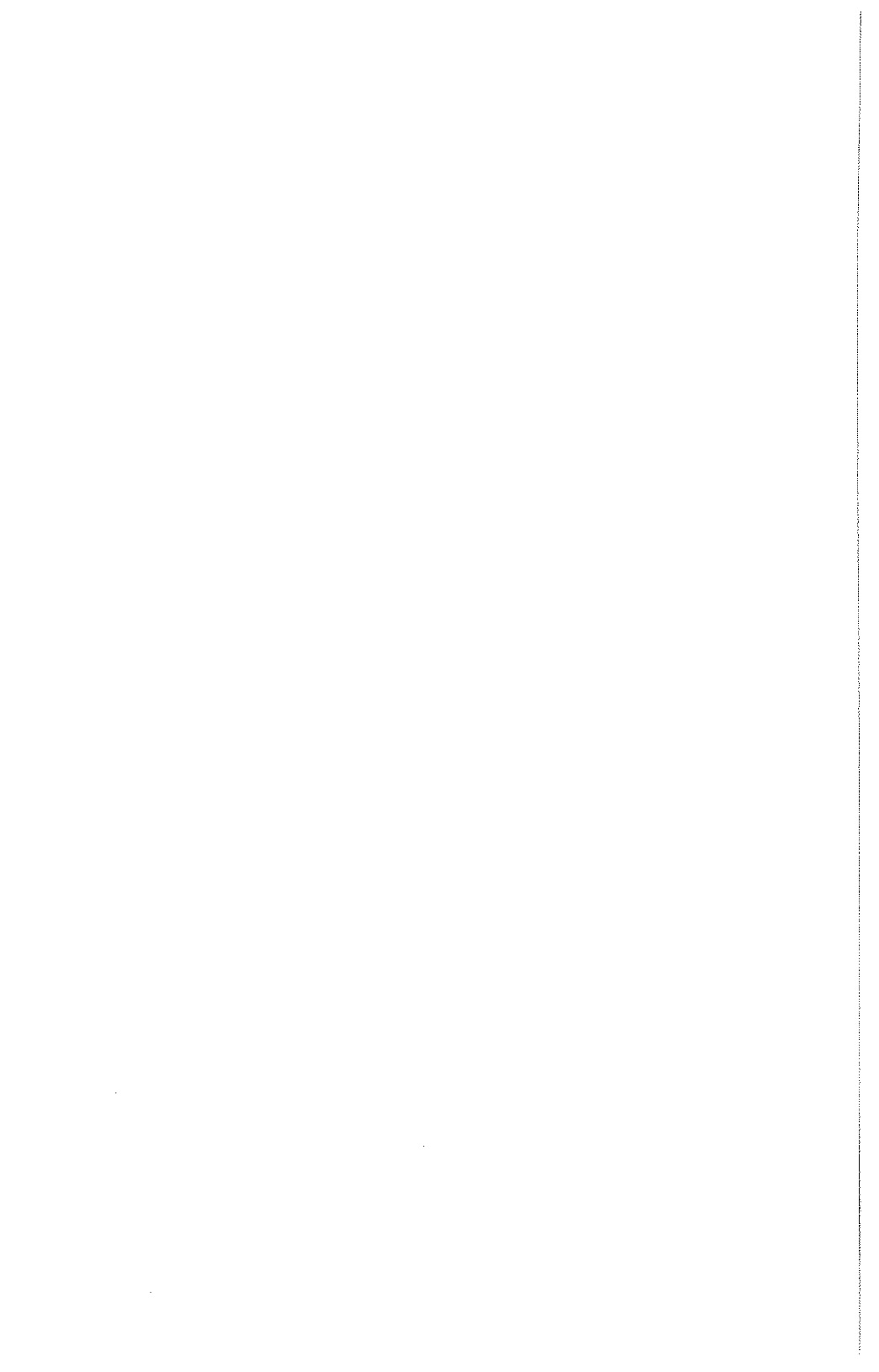
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36. Michael H. Zach, 'Aksum and the end of Meroe', in: http://www.arkamani.org/arkamani-library/meroitic_conference_paris/Zach.htm. See also: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/lingfiles/workingpapers/rowan2.pdf>. Also: Clyde A. Winters, 'Meroitic evidence for a Blemmye empire in the Dodekaschoinos' in: <http://www.arkamani.org/arkamani-library/meroitic/Kalabsha.htm>. Kharamadoye was a Blemmyan / Beja king who lived around the year 330 CE, and his inscription was curved on the Nubian/Blemmyan temple at Kalabsha (ancient Talmis) in the south of Aswan; more: M. S. Megalommatis, 'Sudan's Beja / Blemmyes, and their Right to Freedom and Statehood', in: <http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/8-16-2006-105657.asp>, and in: http://www.sudaneseonline.com/en/article_929.shtml. More general: <http://www.touregypt.net/kalabsha.htm>.
37. For Ballana: <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballana>; http://www.numibia.net/nubia/sites_salvage.asp?p_Num=13; <http://www.dignubia.org/maps/timeline/ce-0400.htm>; http://www.hp.uab.edu/image_archive/fneafrika/index.html; for the excavations carried out there: Farid Shafiq, 'Excavations at Ballana, 1958-1959', Cairo, 1963: <http://www.archaeologia.com/details.asp?id=647>.
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- online_print_books ssp/frank_m_snowden_jr /burstein_snowden_tei xml_1; <http://www.ancientworlds.net/aw/Article/813603>; an insightful view: Laszlo Torok, 'Amasis and Ergamenes', in: *The Intellectual Heritage of Egypt Studies Kákósy*, 555-561. An English translation of Diodorus' text on Ergamenes (III. 6) is here: <http://www.homestead.com/wysinger/diodorus.html>
40. B. G. Haycock, 'The Problem of the Meroitic Language', *Occasional Papers in Linguistics and Language Learning*, no.5 (1978), p. 50-81; see also: http://www.arkamani.org/arkamani-library/meroitic/meroitic_chronology.htm. Another significant contribution by B.G.Haycock, 'Towards a Data for King Ergamenes', *Kush* 13 (1965) 41. See: K.H.Priese, 'Die Statue des napatanischen Königs Aramatelqo (Amtelqa) Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum Inv.-Nr 2249' in: *Festschrift zum 150 jährigen Bestehen des Berliner Ägyptischen Museums*, Berlin; of the same author, 'Matrilineare Erbfolge im Reich von Napata', *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, 108 (1981).
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Meroitic/Oromo Ethiopian Continuity

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**US SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIZATION
IN ETHIOPIA
DIPLOMATIC AND DEVELOPMENT TRACKS**

David H. Shinn

WHAT DOES DEMOCRACY MEAN IN ETHIOPIA?

Ethiopia has experienced more than two millennia of autocracy. Its government is new to the concept of democracy and still coming to terms with its implications. The 1994 Ethiopian Constitution is straightforward on the subject and leaves the impression that democratic rights are clear and well understood. Article One establishes a “federal and democratic state structure” and states that the country shall be known as The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Articles Thirteen through Forty-Four identify the rights of citizens ranging from the right to liberty to the right to property. These rights include most of those exercised in Western liberal democracies.¹

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The meaning of democracy in Ethiopia is, however, far more complicated. The ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) issued in 2001 a lengthy document in Amharic called *Revolutionary Democracy*. Although the term is part of the EPRDF's title, it is not found in the 1994 Constitution. The stated goal of the 2001 document was to explain Ethiopian governance and the transition of the economy from Marxism to a market economy. It appeared at a time when there were serious internal differences about the direction of the ruling party's governing philosophy. Following the document's release, the EPRDF announced that it was designed to counter "dependency, mal-democratic practices and corruption."² The Minister of Economic Development and Cooperation, Girma Birru, emphasized that revolutionary democracy should not be confused with communism, adding that it is the only option to bring about meaningful economic transformation and social progress.³ The EPRDF continues to use the term as the hallmark of its governing policy. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi recently called, for example, on the nation's youth "to extricate the country from poverty along the path of revolutionary democracy."⁴

If the 2001 document was designed to clarify the nature of Ethiopian democracy, critics and opponents of the EPRDF pounced on it, arguing that it created even more confusion.⁵ Berhanu Nega, one of the jailed leaders of the main opposition party, Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), wrote that revolutionary democracy is just a more subtle version of Mengistu Haile Mariam's Marxist philosophy.⁶ Tekalign Gedamu, former chairman of the Bank of Abyssinia, traced revolutionary democracy to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and questioned its relevance in the modern era.⁷ The Oromo Liberation Front described revolutionary democracy as a "precursor of socialism not a market economy."⁸ It is, of course, in the interest of critics to sow as much confusion as possible about the political philosophy of the ruling party. Neverthe-

less, the EPRDF has left plenty of room for interpretation among both opponents and friends alike. Meles, in an ideological discussion piece, reportedly stated in 2001 that liberal democracy is not possible for Ethiopia.⁹

Jon Abbink, affiliated with the African Studies Centre in Leiden and Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, offered one explanation of revolutionary democracy, which he said aims at the collective mobilization of people by the EPRDF. It stems from a combination of Marxist and ethno-regional ideology and has no evolutionary basis in Ethiopia. Revolutionary democracy sees the party as a vanguard political force that is not inclined to compromise with opposition forces because it is convinced it has the solution for everything. Abbink concluded, as a result, that multiparty elections do not appear to fundamentally threaten the ruling power structure because the EPRDF-dominated executive branch retains strict control.¹⁰

TWO US TRACKS FOR ENCOURAGING DEMOCRATIZATION IN ETHIOPIA

The United States uses a diplomatic and a development track for encouraging democratization in Ethiopia and in most other countries around the world where the United States supports nascent democracies. The American embassy in Addis Ababa, often working in concert with other Western embassies, leads the diplomatic track but is backed up by the State Department press spokesperson, phone calls from officials in Washington, and occasional visits to Ethiopia by senior officials from Washington. When members of the Ethiopian government visit Washington, they may also receive remonstrations concerning the democratization process from their American interlocutors. Much of this dialogue is held in private and does not, therefore, come to the attention of the public. The State Department's annual report on the human rights situation in Ethiopia is an impor-

tant part of the effort to make the US government's views known on these issues.

USAID leads the development track by funding programs in Ethiopia that are designed to enhance democracy and good governance. These programs are part of the public record. USAID has an expansive view of the kinds of programs that it considers relevant to democratization. There are several programs in the portfolio that many Ethiopians probably do not associate with advancing democracy. At a minimum, however, they come under the rubric of improving governance. Several specialized programs in the State Department also contribute to the development effort.

THE DIPLOMATIC TRACK

The US policy on democratization in Ethiopia and elsewhere aims to promote democracy, as a means of achieving security, stability, and prosperity, by assisting newly formed democracies in the implementation of democratic principles and by aiding democracy advocates in the establishment of vibrant democracies. It also identifies and denounces regimes that deny their citizens the right to choose their leaders in free, fair, and transparent elections.¹¹

The period following the 15 May 2005 national elections in Ethiopia offers an interesting study of US diplomatic efforts to encourage democratization. The US ambassador to Ethiopia, Aurelia Brazeal, joined twenty other ambassadors on 22 May 2005 in urging all parties to engage in constructive dialogue and to pursue post-election complaints through legally established mechanisms.¹² Following the outbreak of violence in early June, the State Department press spokesperson encouraged all parties to end violence and resolve differences through political dialogue.¹³ Several days later the press spokesperson expressed deep concern over the election-related violence but added the United States is encouraged by the signing of the joint declaration aimed at ending the differences be-

tween the government and opposition. He called for calm and asked that security forces not exercise the excessive use of force.¹⁴ Western donor ambassadors, including Aurelia Brazeal, issued a statement on 29 June 2005 calling for the release of prisoners who were rounded up during and after the protests. It added that “the government has the primary responsibility for ensuring that the rule of law is upheld in Ethiopia” and that “all sides need to put the interests of Ethiopia first or the democratic progress this country has made in recent years could be lost.”¹⁵

The United States and the European Union jointly issued a statement on 13 July that called on all parties to renounce in the strongest terms the use of violence, ethnic hate messages, and any other action that is likely to further increase tension in Ethiopia. The statement said it expected all political parties to respect the political process of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) and continue working for the promotion of democracy. It urged “the government of Ethiopia to respect international principles of human rights by exercising due process and releasing detained party members and party supporters who are not going to be charged.”¹⁶ The US ambassador, together with twenty-two other ambassadors from donor countries, issued a statement in August that said the international observers’ report would be the basis for their relations with all parties to further strengthen the democratic process in the country.¹⁷

While members of the US Congress usually do not speak for the executive branch of government, their message can have the effect of reinforcing the US position. California Democratic Congressman Mike Honda, upon returning from a visit to Ethiopia, issued a statement that said the US Congress would do everything possible to ensure the building of a democratic system in Ethiopia.¹⁸ New Jersey Republican Congressman Chris Smith and Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations

visited Ethiopia in August. In response to questions about the election, he acknowledged there were flaws but urged Ethiopians “to hold back somewhat” until there was a full picture of the results. He expressed concern about the intimidation of voters and candidates and of retaliations that followed the elections. Smith said he had a frank conversation with Meles but also suggested that elected opposition members take their seats in parliament. Upon return to Washington, he promised to ask the administration to keep the pressure on the Ethiopian government.¹⁹

In late August, a government-controlled paper reported that during her farewell call on President Girma Wolde-Giorgis, Ambassador Brazeal said the May election made a significant contribution to the maintenance of peace and stability in the country.²⁰ The United States did not have a replacement in the pipeline when Ambassador Brazeal left Addis Ababa. The State Department asked retired Ambassador Vicki Huddleston to fill in as charge d'affaires until a new ambassador could be identified and confirmed by the Senate. On 16 September, the State Department, increasingly concerned about developments in the country, issued a statement that urged all of the political parties to participate in the political process. It added that the EPRDF has the responsibility to reach out to opposition parties to ensure their involvement in governance.²¹

On 2 November 2005, the State Department press spokesperson issued a strongly worded statement in response to the resurgence of violence in Ethiopia. It called on the Ethiopian government to establish an independent commission to investigate the most recent violence as well as that of 8 June in which dozens of demonstrators were killed. The United States deplored the use of violence and deliberate attempts to invoke violence in a misguided attempt to resolve political differences. It urged “the Ethiopian government to release all political detainees, including the many opposition supporters arrested in recent weeks. Senior opposition leaders

arrested today should be treated humanely and, if charged, assured of a just and timely trial before an impartial court of law." The statement also called on the opposition to refrain from inciting civil disobedience and encouraged elected members of parliament to take their seats and the opposition to assume the administration of Addis Ababa.²²

On 3 November, the Ambassadors' Donor Group in Addis Ababa deplored all violence whether by security forces or demonstrators and emphasized the urgent need for an independent investigation of the acts of violence. The group called for the release of all political detainees and the participation in parliament and municipal government by all political organizations.²³ The State Department press spokesperson issued a similar statement and noted that Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Nicholas Burns, had spoken by telephone with Prime Minister Meles. Burns reportedly told the Ethiopian leader that anyone who is accused of perpetrating any acts of violence in the demonstrations should be granted the full rights under the judicial system, have a speedy hearing of their cases, and that those cases should proceed in a transparent manner. When asked if the United States condemns the use of excessive force, the press spokesman replied: "We think that violent provocations and the use of violence is not the way to resolve what are political differences."²⁴

The United States and the European Union issued a statement on 6 November that called on the government to allow families and humanitarian workers access to persons detained during the demonstrations. It urged the government to lift restrictions on opposition leaders, free all political prisoners, release the names of people in detention, and reopen private media. The statement asked the government to immediately end the use of lethal force, random searches, and indiscriminate beatings and massive arrests. Failure to rein in the deadly violence would cause them to reconsider financial assistance to Ethiopia.²⁵ The State Department issued a statement on 16

November that said the violence must stop and “the government should take steps to either release or charge those in detention, and they should do so expeditiously. And, in the case where people are charged, that due process, transparency, and international standards be respected.”²⁶

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Don Yamamoto, visited Ethiopia in late November when he met separately with Meles and several opposition leaders. The Chairman of the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces, Dr. Beyene Petros, reported that Yamamoto told the opposition leaders that Meles had said it was too late to talk with the detained leaders of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy. Dr. Beyene said the opposition leaders had heard the same thing from Meles.²⁷ Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer, remarked during a 5 December news briefing:

“I must say also that it’s the responsibility of the opposition as well because when the opposition takes stones and pelts the police forces, they have to respect the rule of law when they’re demonstrating freely. And so I think that ...there is responsibility that has to be there for both the opposition and for the government. Whereas we hold the governments even more accountable because they are supposed to be the upholders of the rule of law, we still must say when the opposition goes out of bounds as such.”²⁸

During another visit to Ethiopia, Yamamoto said the United States would not interfere in the judicial process concerning Ethiopian political detainees but stressed that it would continue to provide support for the building of democracy. Yamamoto added that Ethiopia is playing a significant role in the fight against terrorism.²⁹ Some believe that Ethiopian cooperation in the war on terrorism inhibits US criticism of hu-

man rights abuses and setbacks in the democratization process.

Charge d'Affaires Huddleston commented to the press on 5 January 2006 that the United States was disappointed when several of the twenty Humvees that it had sold to Ethiopia had been misused to "disperse demonstrations." As a result, she announced the United States had cancelled future sales of Humvees to the Ethiopian army. She added that Washington asked the government to drop criminal charges in absentia against five Voice of America employees who were among a group of 131 opposition leaders and journalists accused of plotting a coup. Huddleston said Washington would like to see the evidence against opposition leaders and urged that they have free access to their lawyers and families, as well as a speedy trial. At the same time, she said the United States would not cut aid to Ethiopia, which remains a key ally on counterterrorism.³⁰

The State Department press spokesperson followed this with a strong statement that the United States "remains gravely concerned by actions of the Government of Ethiopia in the cases of opposition, civil society, and media leaders, including five staff members of the Voice of America, charged with capital offenses." He called on the government to ensure a fair, transparent, and speedy trial for those charged, and to charge or release promptly those who remain detained without charge. The United States looks to the government to provide the political space for a vibrant opposition, independent media, and robust civil society to operate in the country. The statement concluded by noting that Ethiopia is a valued partner for the US.³¹

Assistant Secretary Frazer visited Addis Ababa in January. According to Ethiopian government accounts, her meeting with Meles included an exchange of views on the prevailing situation in Ethiopia and particularly on ways to enhance democracy and ensure the supremacy of the rule of law in the

post-election period.³² Following issuance in March of the annual State Department *Human Rights Report on Ethiopia*, the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs described it as a product of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council and other organizations that have their own agendas. The Foreign Ministry said there was no effort to verify the charges and the report serves no purpose in advancing human rights and democracy in the country.³³

The US Congress requires the State Department to submit a report that summarizes the situation concerning human rights and democracy around the world. The most recent one, *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2005-2006*, appeared on 5 April 2006. The section on Ethiopia stated that “although there were some improvements, the Government’s human rights record remained poor and worsened in some cases.” It cited ethnic conflict, lack of capacity, unfamiliarity with democratic concepts, and unrest related to the national parliamentary elections as threatening Ethiopia’s nascent democracy. It noted that inadequately trained federal and local police employed excessive force, “resulting in unlawful killings, including alleged political killings. Police also beat and mistreated detainees and political opposition supporters.” The report concluded that Ethiopia permitted unprecedented democratic openness, allowing opposition groups campaign freedoms and access to state media in the pre-election period. The opposition parties increased their seats in parliament from 12 to 172, but the EPRDF subsequently rolled back elements of this democratic progress.³⁴

In testimony on 28 March before the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, Yamamoto praised the 15 May elections but emphasized that “hopes for progress have been chilled, as the government has clamped down on individuals’ rights to assemble and journalists’ ability to report events.” He noted that “the intolerance that followed in the wake of the results and the

opposition's response show that the country has more work to do in progressing toward true, mature democracy." He said the United States condemned the violence and cautioned that hate messages directed against other ethnic groups could further fracture the delicate ethnic balance in the country. Yamamoto added the Complaints Review Boards and Complaints Investigations Panels did not offer an adequate means for a fair resolution of all electoral disputes. There was credible evidence of intimidation and harassment, including beatings and bribes. He emphasized: "Of particular concern to the United States are the early-November arrests of much of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) leadership." Yamamoto explained that the United States wanted Ethiopia to ensure a fair, transparent, and speedy trial for those charged, release of those who have not been charged, and protection of the human rights, health, and safety of all detainees. The United States is also working to obtain the return of the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Foundation for Election Systems, which were expelled before the 15 May elections. He concluded that the United States remains hopeful that Ethiopia can achieve the democratic and development ideals that its people espouse.³⁵

Huddleston commented on 6 April that the United States would like to see better progress on human rights and professionalism of the security forces. At the same time, she praised the government's decision to accept the CUD as a legal party. She urged the government to speed up the trial of 111 opposition party leaders, members, and journalists who face charges of attempted genocide.³⁶ The Ambassadors' Donor Group issued a statement on 25 April that welcomed the steps taken towards opening the political space and encouraged further efforts. It supported the evolution of democratic institutions, including a wide range of registered political parties to allow greater opposition participation in formal parliamentary work.³⁷

Sounding a more negative note, the State Department issued a statement on 3 May that said the US

“is concerned by the increasing harassment and intimidation of opposition politicians and their supporters in Ethiopia. Opposition extremists as well as ruling party cadres and government officials have been responsible for these unacceptable actions ... We reiterate the need for the release of political detainees and the guarantee of due process for those against whom charges remain.”³⁸

The reader can decide if the public message from the US government was always consistent, but it should be clear that the United States engaged in a vigorous and sometimes critical dialogue with the government on the democratic process in Ethiopia. Since the United States has multiple interests in Ethiopia, it has never been possible to discuss the future of democracy in isolation. In addition to democratization, the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict and events in Sudan and Somalia were high on the agenda. Another important theme that appeared on several occasions in the public record was praise for Ethiopia's support in countering terrorism in the region.

USAID AND THE DEVELOPMENT TRACK

The primary objective worldwide of USAID's Office of Democracy and Governance, working principally with missions in the field, is to make democracy and governance programs more effective and strategic in scope. It works closely with the State Department and National Security Council to develop programs that contribute to the achievement of US foreign policy objectives. Programs focus on four categories: rule of law, elections and political processes, civil society, and governance.³⁹

US Support for Democratization in Ethiopia

USAID's stated priorities in the category of rule of law include help with the drafting of new constitutions, training of judges and prosecutors, improving inhumane prison conditions, updating commercial codes, publishing legal opinions, and giving women and the disadvantaged better access to justice. Under elections and political processes, programming focuses on assuring that elections are well administered and that citizens have an opportunity to participate in the electoral process. USAID helps political partners develop the organizational capacity to represent their concerns and function responsibly in or out of power. Support for civil society encourages its expansion by strengthening NGOs, free and independent labor unions, women's groups, business associations, civic efforts of religious entities, and an independent press. USAID programming in governance includes helping parliaments modernize, funding anti-corruption initiatives, and strengthening local and regional governments.⁴⁰

USAID's program in Ethiopia seeks to strengthen and support community-based reconciliation efforts, early conflict warning and response mechanisms, free and fair elections, civil society, local democratic government and decentralization, and women's participation. USAID's Decentralization Support Activity (DSA), its largest democracy and governance program, has focused on improving the efficiency of accounting and budgeting at the federal level and in the states. It includes training and technical assistance in improved budget planning and analysis, expenditure management, fiscal reporting, and better control of expenditures through more comprehensive and timely accounting procedures. The project has increased capacity in budgeting and accounting at all levels of government. New accounting systems are either operating or in the process of being reformed throughout Ethiopia. Administered by the Harvard Institute of International Development, many observers believe the program is beneficial even though most

Ethiopians probably do not see a direct link between it and the democratization process.⁴¹

At the national level, USAID works with civil society organizations to improve their legal and regulatory frameworks. Working with other donors, it helps civil society to advocate for new laws and to create a channel for dialogue between the government and civil society. USAID provided funding through UNDP for the Poverty Action Network of Ethiopia to conduct *Citizen Report Cards on the effectiveness of delivery of government services*. It also funded UNDP sub-grants to local civic organizations to carry out voter and civic education in advance of the 2005 national elections and arranged for the Carter Center to observe the elections.⁴²

The American nongovernmental organization, PACT Ethiopia, became the implementing partner in 2005 for a project to promote democratization and stability in post-election Ethiopia. Part of this activity includes a study of the best international practices in press regulation from Canada, Germany, India, UK, and US. It is designed to assist parliament in its evaluation of the draft Ethiopian press law. It is anticipated that the study will become part of the inter-party dialogue.⁴³

Through the UNDP election fund, the United States supported the development of codes of conduct to ensure balanced, non-inflammatory election reporting by both state and private media and balanced access by all political parties and candidates to state-run media. The program provided training for private and public journalists on fair and impartial reporting and established a media-monitoring program in Addis Ababa University's new graduate school of journalism and mass communication to provide analysis of media coverage during the election campaign.⁴⁴

As part of a multi-donor program, UNDP consultants completed an institutional assessment of the NEBE and a lessons learned exercise that focused on the administration of

the 2005 elections. The NEBE accepted the need for a fundamental reorganization of its secretariat and a comprehensive strategic plan that takes into account institutional development and election administration. UNDP consultants are undertaking an assessment of the longer-term needs of the parliament and the state councils. The assessment will form the basis of recommendations for a four-year program to support these institutions. Scheduled to begin in October 2006, the program will be funded by various donors and managed by the UNDP.⁴⁵

Working with the Ministry of Federal Affairs (MFA), USAID is helping the government develop its capacity for fostering a climate of long-term peace building and conflict mitigation. In 2003 it funded a conference on good governance, civil society reform, and conflict management for senior policy makers from Afar, Gambella, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Harari states. It held public conflict management conferences in Amhara and Afar to address cross-border conflict resolution and held a consensus building forum in Gambella to address the December 2003 conflict. USAID funded a sensitization workshop for journalists in Oromia to enable them to report on conflicts and on efforts to resolve them. USAID provided training and technical assistance for marginalized groups in Somali state in conflict management and early warning.⁴⁶

PACT Ethiopia received a USAID grant to help restore community stability in Gambella. Its primary focus is on incorporating new and traditional mechanisms to assist reconciliation in local communities through dialogue. The goal is to encourage positive cross border relationships and consolidate peace.⁴⁷ PACT is also implementing a program to lessen the impact of conflict among pastoralists in South Omo and Sheka zones of Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's (SNNP) state and Borena zone of Oromia. It builds on indigenous conflict mediation, management, and resolution techniques. This approach enables community members to conduct the peace

process with special attention to women, youth, elders, and tribal leaders.⁴⁸

Mercy Corps and its local partner, Agri-Service Ethiopia, is training a cross section of residents and government leaders in ten *woredas* in SNNP state on ways to identify, analyze, and resolve conflict. The USAID-supported project identifies community stakeholders, works with government bureaus, organizes workshops, and teaches part of the week long conflict resolution sessions. The goal is to build the capacity of institutions for resolving differences peacefully and to facilitate collaboration between the government and civil society.⁴⁹

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Ministry of Justice (MOJ) are the implementing partners for a new USAID-financed program to build institutional capacities to fight trafficking-in-persons (TIP). The program is training more than 300 personnel from the government and civil society in counter-trafficking strategies. It trains trainers in an effort to multiply the effect of the program.⁵⁰

USAID funds a small project known as City Links, which provides local government with technical assistance on a range of municipal issues through peer-to-peer learning. Implemented by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), it provides technical assistance to the municipalities of Adama, Addis Ababa, and Dire Dawa in the areas of local economic development, tourism, and revenue generation to strengthen their ability to respond to the challenges of urban poverty and food insecurity. It also arranges exchanges with US cities.⁵¹

Save the Children UK implemented a small USAID-financed program in FY 2003 known as the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP). It supported persons living in drought prone areas of Ethiopia in efforts to help them from selling their assets. Focus is another project implemented by Save the Children UK that has ended. Concentrated in the Somali Regional State, it established an early warning system, distance

education by radio in Somali for students in grades one and two, and an animal health, conflict resolution, water, and natural resource management programs in Fik district. It is not clear what several of these programs had to do with democratization and governance.⁵²

One of the larger USAID funded democratization programs, the Judiciary Training Project, ended in 2004. In its final year, the Federal Supreme Court trained 1,244 judges from all regions in criminal law, labor law, tax law, family and succession law, contracts and torts, criminal procedure, and execution of decrees. In Oromia alone, USAID supported the training of 476 judges, including 30 Supreme Court judges, 110 High Court judges, and 336 First Instance/*Woreda* Court judges. The objective of the program was to enhance the professional capacity of judges and other court officers through in-service training and increase the institutional capacity of courts by improving the availability of codes and legal materials. The project emphasized the need to enforce constitutionally guaranteed human rights and laid the foundation for the establishment of a permanent judicial training center. USAID also printed and distributed about 8,000 copies of legal codes, proclamations, and reference materials for use by the judges.⁵³

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT: A USAID-FINANCED CASE STUDY

A new, and by all accounts successful, USAID-financed project focuses on training women in the 547-member House of Peoples' Representatives; was expanded to include all members. Women's Campaign International (WCI), which was founded in 1998 and is affiliated with the Fels Institute of Government at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, implements the project. The WCI program began in January 2005. In March 2005, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), and International Foundation for Elec-

tion Systems (IFES) to leave Ethiopia allegedly because they were not registered. The WCI was not registered either, but it was allowed to remain. There are several possible explanations for WCI's ability to stay. Unlike the other American organizations, WCI did not yet have an office in Ethiopia. Perhaps more importantly, the EPRDF had put forward far more female candidates than the opposition and perceived that WCI's program could disproportionately benefit EPRDF candidates.⁵⁴

The original purpose of the WCI program in Ethiopia was to increase the capacity of women to influence political decision-making. WCI trained thirty-one women candidates prior to the May 2005 elections competing for seats on regional state councils and seventy-eight women candidates campaigning to represent their constituencies in parliament. WCI also awarded a sub-grant to the Ethiopian Women's Media Association (EWMA) to launch a media campaign highlighting the importance of voting for women candidates. Political parties selected fifty female candidates to participate in an intensive two-day training session that highlighted leadership skills, public speaking, campaign development, media strategies, fundraising, and resource mobilization. USAID also supported a media campaign by the EWMA that emphasized female candidates and the importance of voting for them. The percentage of women elected to parliament increased from 7.7 percent in 2000 to 21 percent in 2005. There are now 117 female members in the House of Peoples' Representatives; 108 from the EPRDF and nine from opposition parties.⁵⁵

WCI organized an orientation session for all 547 members of parliament in December 2005. About 90 percent of the members attended. Speakers from outside Ethiopia participated in panel discussions on the way parliaments work in other countries. Although the government did not allow those representatives who had not taken their seats to attend the training session, nearly all of the opposition members who

had taken their seats took part. The feedback from members was positive. WCI continues to offer workshops that focus on skill building such as advocacy and negotiation, review of bills, gender equity principles and so forth. Attendance continues to be high and includes both men and women. Many members said these training sessions were the first time they had met each other and were pleased to have the opportunity to engage in dialogue with members of other parties. There have been two sessions specifically for women. One took place in January 2006 and the other in June, which focused on training in negotiation, consensus-building, and communication.⁵⁶

The most significant success of this project has been the bringing together of the members of parliament and actively engaging them in working group exercises as well as plenary sessions. Many are familiar with listening to lectures but have had little experience in the actual business of parliament. The leadership of parliament closely oversees all the WCI training programs. It makes many last minute scheduling changes, which has complicated planning and logistics. Even after the leadership gives approval for a training session, WCI must follow-up regularly to ensure that the training can occur as scheduled. The leadership clears in advance the names of all trainers.⁵⁷

Some observers believe that WCI training sessions have helped to improve the quality of debate in parliament, including that of opposition members. Others suggest that the training has contributed to a willingness of the parliamentary leadership to make some positive changes that may encourage a stronger multi-party democracy in Ethiopia. There have been some recent changes in parliamentary procedures that at least move the process in the right direction even if they remain inadequate and follow some setbacks after the 2005 elections. The government initially increased to 51 percent the number of members needed to include an item on the parliamentary agenda. It subsequently reduced that number with certain caveats to one-third of the membership. As the opposition does

not constitute one-third of the members, however, it is still virtually impossible for it to place an issue on the agenda. All of the parliamentary committees now include at least one opposition member. Discussion is underway to give the chair of one committee to an opposition member.⁵⁸

The nearly 37 million dollars given in USAID democracy and governance funding since the inception of the program is fairly impressive (Table 1). On the other hand, almost half of the total has been devoted to improving the efficiency of accounting and budgeting at the federal, state and local level. Although this contributes to good governance, it is not normally considered a core democratization program. Several of the other projects also have a marginal connection with improving democracy and governance. On the positive side, USAID funding for these programs increased significantly in recent years since the low point in FY 2002 when it provided less than \$1 million for encouraging democratization.

Ethiopia has not benefited from the State Department's human rights and democracy funds due to Congressional earmarking that favors China and the Middle East.⁶⁰ To help rectify this situation, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) issued a request earlier this year for a statement of interest from implementing organizations for project proposals in Ethiopia that promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. DRL identified a number of countries outside the Middle East that have large Muslim populations. In the case of Ethiopia, the project should build the capacity of political parties and/or support inter-party dialogue; strengthen the efficiency and independence of the judicial system; and improve the capacity of civil society through projects that promote media liberalization and responsible journalism, effective monitoring of human rights, and promote increased citizenship in governance at the national, state, and local level.⁶¹

Table 1
Summary of USAID Democracy/Governance Funding (\$US Thousands)⁵⁹

US Support for Democratization in Ethiopia

Project Type	Implementing Partner	Prior to FY 2001	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	Total
DSA	Harvard	3935	1900	793	1690	4770	5137	18,225
Judiciary Training	Supreme Court	1473	500					1,973
Conflict	PACT					1121	750	1,871
Conflict	Mercy Corps				1000		500	1,500
Focus	SC/UK				3020			3,020
PSNP	SC/UK				400			400
Peace	MFA				400			400
Peace	REST				230			230
Election	Carter Center						1773	1,773
Election	DAI						87	87
Election	WCI						100	100
Election	UNDP				250		100	350
Election	IFES				1750			1,750
Civil Society	PACT		1196					1,196
Democracy	PACT					1295		1,295
TIP	IOM					474		474
TIP	MOJ					100		100
Economic Support Fund	Undecided						738	738
City Links	ICMA						75	75
Mission Mgt.	USAID		400	100	50		683	1,233
Total		5,408	3,996	893	6,790	7,891	11,812	36,790

ASSESSMENT, CHALLENGES, AND THE FUTURE

Democracy is a new concept in Ethiopia and the EPRDF's understanding of democracy is not the same as you find in Western liberal democracies. There has been a tendency during the last 2,000 plus years to maintain strong central control of national government. There is no history in Ethiopia whereby one government willingly turns over authority to an opposing regime. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that there are obstacles when a country like the United States tries to speed up the democratization process. If the government of Ethiopia were more enthusiastic about these programs, it is a virtual certainty that the United States and other donors would provide more funding.

Ethiopian government unhappiness with US efforts to encourage democratization came to a head in March 2005 when it expelled NDI, IRI, and IFES on the specious grounds that they were not registered. This decision probably reflected, however, a larger unhappiness with American policy at the time. The annual State Department *Human Rights Report on Ethiopia*, which was somewhat more critical than in recent years, had just come out. Ethiopia was also displeased that it had been included as an example in USAID's study on fragile states. Finally, it was dissatisfied with the US position on the Ethiopian-Eritrean border conflict. The totality of these perceived insults and perhaps others most probably resulted in the decision to expel the three American organizations.

Relative disinterest in donor-funded democratization programs by the government of Ethiopia does not completely excuse, however, any lack of effort by the donor community. The fact that USAID funding for democratization projects in FY 2002 fell to under \$1 million is not acceptable. There was also a period between July 2004 and September 2005 when the American democracy/governance position in the Addis Ababa USAID mission was vacant. Although this was a bu-

reaucratic and not a policy problem, the long absence suggests that there was no priority to fill the position. A foreign donor cannot force projects on Ethiopia that the government refuses to accept. However, donors can increase funding of projects that the government will go along with and they can spend more time explaining why democratization projects are important to the future of the country. They can also collectively put more pressure on the government to accept programs when they initially meet resistance. Like it or not, this will be a long process. The building of democracy in a historically autocratic country will take time.

The US House of Representatives has taken an increasing interest in the question of democratization in Ethiopia due primarily to the impact of the Ethiopian diaspora. Representative Chris Smith (Republican from New Jersey) and Representative Donald Payne (Democrat from New Jersey) have cosponsored the Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Advancement Act of 2006 (HR 5680), which aims to put considerable US pressure on the Ethiopian government. The bill includes an authorization of \$20 million over two years to assist political prisoners, indigenous Ethiopian human rights organizations, independent media, and civil society, and to promote legal training.⁶² Democratization in Ethiopia has not yet become an important issue in the US Senate and it is not clear whether the Smith/Payne bill even has the votes to pass in the House. The government of Ethiopia strongly opposes the bill.

Writing in 2002, Siegfried Pausewang, Kjetil Tronvoll, and Lovise Aalen commented on the US approach to democratization in Ethiopia. They said:

“The United States, especially, has persistently focused its policies towards Ethiopia on the process of democratization. It has given priority to nurturing Ethiopia as an ally to maintain stability in the region and act as a buffer

against Islamic influence, and in line with this objective has strengthened its trust in Ethiopia's efforts at democratization. Even against all odds and evidence in the elections of 1992, 1994 and 1995, the United States has persistently encouraged Ethiopia's steps on the way towards democracy, rather than criticizing that country's obvious and often severe infringements of democratic rights. For a long time the argument that the EPRDF government was at least a considerable improvement on its predecessors would justify such a view. But as time passed it became increasingly difficult to rest on such assurances while overlooking obvious breaches of human rights and democratic principles"⁶³

Two years later, Siegfried Pausewang added that Western embassies in Addis Ababa

“prefer to avoid outright criticism of elections as forged or manipulated. Instead, they talk about a step forward on a long road towards democracy, and pledge assistance for further democratization, irrespective of how grave the observed infringements are. The Ethiopian government plays along with this tune”⁶⁴

Leenco Lata, another scholar whose views I respect, added that the US-led international community has ignored Ethiopia's violation of human rights. He said that US emissaries respond that “Ethiopia must be given time!” As the political atmosphere grew increasingly intolerant, Leenco argued that “such an exercise became indisputably disingenuous. How can one agree with such advice when the autonomous political space was inexorably becoming increasingly constricted?”⁶⁵

Pausewang, Tronvoll, and Aalen are correct in pointing out that the United States has a variety of interests in Ethiopia beyond a desire to see the growth of democracy in the country. While the nature and intensity of these other inter-

ests change over time, there are always multiple issues in the bilateral dialogue. This inevitably influences the degree to which the United States is critical of the government in Addis Ababa. Pausewang and Leenco are also correct in pointing out that the United States tends to emphasize the long term nature of building democracy in a country like Ethiopia. I found myself making this argument when I served in Ethiopia from 1996 to 1999. One can properly criticize day to day US statements or actions concerning the democratization process in Ethiopia, but it is a fact that anything approaching Western style liberal democracy is going to take considerable time. I think both Pausewang and Leenco are incorrect when they say that the United States has not been critical of the Ethiopian government's actions on human rights and democratization. I refer them to, among other statements and documents, the annual human rights assessment for Ethiopia covering each of the last fifteen years. The criticisms may not be as harsh as what you find in reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, but they are critical and to the point.

NOTES

1. The text of the 1994 Constitution and additional explanatory material can be found in: Fasil Nahum. *Constitution for a Nation of Nations: The Ethiopian Prospect* Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1997. Siegfried Pausewang's 2004 monograph entitled *Local Democracy and Human Security in Ethiopia: Structural Reasons for the Failure of Democratization* offers a useful if pessimistic analysis of democracy in Ethiopia.
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3. Xinhua News Agency, 13 July 2001.
4. Ethiopian News Agency, 27 May 2006.
5. See, for example, the Kinijit website at www.kinijit.org/content.asp?contentid=1218
6. Berhanu Nega, "Ethiopia's Struggle for Democracy" found at www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/nega1
7. Statement by Tekalign Gedamu at the 15th annual meeting of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council in Addis Ababa on 14 May 2006.
8. "EPRDF Replaces Public Enterprises with Political Party Businesses" in *Oromia Speaks*, v. 10, Issue 1 (2005).

- 9 Meles Zenawi, "Basic Questions of Democracy in Ethiopia" in *The Reporter* (in Amharic), v. 4, no. 36 (May 2001)
10. J Abbink, "Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and Its Aftermath" in *African Affairs*, v. 105, no. 419 (April 2006), p. 195.
11. See: www.state.gov/g/drl/democ/
12. UPI, 22 May 2005
13. State Department press briefing, 8 June 2005; Reuters, 9 June 2005
14. AP, 14 June 2005; UN IRIN 14 June 2005; BBC 14 June 2005; and *The Daily Monitor*, 15 June 2005
15. UN IRIN, 30 June 2005
16. See: usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2005/Jul/13-283654.html?chanlid=af; States News Service, 13 July 2005; *Addis Tribune*, 15 July 2005.
17. *Addis Admas* (in Amharic), 13 August 2005; BBC, 17 August 2005.
18. *Addis Tribune*, 5 August 2005
19. UN IRIN, 17 August 2005.
20. *Ethiopian Herald*, 24 August 2005.
21. *Ethiopian Herald*, 18 September 2005
22. States News Service, 2 November 2005
23. *The Reporter*, 6 November 2005
24. See: usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Archive/2005/Nov/04-38047.html.
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28. Embassy of Ethiopia statement, Washington, D.C., 22 December 2005.
29. Walta Information Centre website (in English), 28 December 2005; BBC, 28 December 2005
30. AFP, 5 January 2006; *Ethiopian Herald*, 7 January 2006; Lyons, Terrence, "Ethiopia in 2005: The Beginning of a Transition?" in *CISIS Africa Notes*, no. 25 (January 2006), p. 8.
31. US Department of State statement, 6 January 2006
32. *Ethiopian Herald*, 22 January 2006.
33. Ethiopian News Agency website (in English), 13 March 2006; BBC, 14 March 2006.
34. Complete report found at: www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/shrd/2005/63944.htm
35. Washington File at usinfo.state.gov, 28 March 2006.
36. UN IRIN, 7 April 2006; BBC, 7 April 2006.
37. Walta Information Centre website (in English), 25 April 2006; BBC, 25 April 2006

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38. State Department press statement, 3 May 2006, at www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/65795.htm.
39. See: www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/technical_areas/dg_office/index.html.
40. See: www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/technical_areas/dg_office/areas.html
41. See: www.usaidethiopia.org.
42. See: www.usaidethiopia.org. A carefully balanced final statement dated 15 September 2005 by the Carter Center observation team can be found at www.cartercenter.org/documents/2199.pdf.
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45. Email from USAID Ethiopia on 3 May 2006
46. See: www.usaidethiopia.org.
47. See: www.pactworld.org/programs/country/ethiopia/ethiopia_gambella.htm; www.pactet.org/Conflict_Gambella.htm and www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/shrd/2005/63944.htm.
48. See: www.pactet.org/Conflict_Selam_C.htm
49. See: www.mercycorps.org/countries/ethiopia/950 and www.mercycorps.org/countries/ethiopia/594.
50. *The Daily Monitor*, 12 April 2006.
51. Email from USAID Ethiopia on 10 May 2006.
52. Email from USAID Ethiopia on 10 May 2006
53. Email from USAID Ethiopia on 3 May 2006 and undated USAID Ethiopia data sheet on democracy and governance.
54. Telephone conversation with WCI headquarters in Philadelphia on 12 July 2006 and www.womenscampaigninternational.org/about.htm.
55. See: www.usaidethiopia.org/print.asp?t=qInfo&tID=InfoID&ID=56; www.usaidethiopia.org/print.asp?t=qInfo&tID=InfoID&ID=60; and Email from WIC program manager in Addis Ababa dated 21 July 2006.
56. Telephone conversation with WCI headquarters in Philadelphia on 12 July 2006 and Email from WIC program manager in Addis Ababa dated 21 July 2006.
57. Telephone conversation with WCI headquarters in Philadelphia on 12 July 2006 and Email from WIC program manager in Addis Ababa dated 21 July 2006. While the EPRDF seems to like the WCI training programs, there is an inherent Ethiopian cultural tendency to maintain tight control.
58. Email from WIC program manager in Addis Ababa dated 21 July 2006

- 59 Email from USAID Ethiopia on 3 May 2006
- 60 See: www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/57669.htm.
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THE OROMO AND THE COALITION FOR UNITY AND DEMOCRACY

Siegfried Pausewang

THE GREAT ILLUSION

It is very likely that most of the leaders of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) as well as the majority of their members seriously believe that they represent the rationally understood interests of “all” Ethiopians. They believe their political view is logical and self-evident; and they cannot understand why people could oppose their logic, unless for purely selfish reasons of preserving the privileges the present regime offers them.

It is equally likely that most leaders of the CUD on the evening of 15 May 2005 were seriously convinced that they had won a majority in the House of Representatives. The huge demonstration of 8 May 2005 had created a veritable euphoria in Addis Ababa.¹ The CUD rallied more people than the

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government had managed a day before when it offered free bus rides and organized participation in government offices and companies. For the CUD leaders, the message seemed obvious and clear: "The masses are with us, they want a change, and they want the CUD."² When the first election results were announced, they were convinced of a resounding victory. The CUD had won all seats from Addis Ababa except one in the House of Representatives, and victories from other towns, from Amhara and Gurage areas were reported.

Even from Oromia reports of CUD victories came in. Later analyses showed that they came mostly from predominantly urban areas and from constituencies with a large component of non-Oromo immigrants.³ But there is no question that the CUD also received a substantial part of protest votes from Oromo peasants. It seems most likely that the peasants were so fed up with the administration of the *kebele* or peasant associations that they felt anything else could only be better than the OPDO, and voted for the CUD instead.

By boycotting the parliament, the CUD fell right into a trap and fractured into several factions that ended up fighting and discrediting one another. These different factions are all part of an urban political movement. As a matter of political identity, however, it is still possible to speak of the CUD as one camp.

THE REACTION OF THE EPRDF AND THE NARRATIVE ON THE ELECTION RESULT

The election results came as a shock for EPRDF as well. Prime Minister Meles had probably expected to lose in Addis Ababa and some other major towns. But Ethiopia's population is only fifteen percent urban, and he had expected to control the support of the rural people. The events are known. The government declared a state of emergency on election night, introducing a curfew and banning all demonstrations⁴. Vote counting in the more remote ar-

was delayed beyond all reasonable limits, leaving control of the process in disarray. At the same time, the EPRDF announced they had won a majority in the parliament while acknowledging they lost the regional election in Addis Ababa.⁵ The CUD declared they had won the election, but their victory was stolen.

Final results were not announced until after the delayed elections were held in Somali region. Re-voting was conducted in some 30 contested constituencies, and the results, strongly manipulated, gave back all the disputed seats to the EPRDF. The final tally awarded the ruling party a two thirds' majority in the House of Representatives.⁶ The general narrative in the international press run as follows: "EPRDF won the election, but the opposition does not accept the result"

PUBLIC DEBATE EXCLUDES THE RURAL MAJORITY

It is not surprising that the CUD appears as "the opposition" in Ethiopia, even though it is an appearance that hides a democratic deficiency. Since Ethiopia's first experiments with democracy, public debate has excluded substantial parts of the population. Observers unanimously agree that the public atmosphere before the 2005 election was much more open, inclusive, and democratic than any time before.⁷ Yet, we have to conclude that the public debate excluded the rural majority. People in rural areas, particularly the more remote parts far from towns and all weather roads, had been excluded and continue to have no access to and no part in the debate. The rural majority are illiterate, and have thus would not have access to the press. Even those who can read do not get newspapers regularly. Radio is the only medium they can access for information. But radio broadcasts continue to be in the hands of a government that sanitizes the content to its advantage. Peasants have no opportunity to make their views and interests represented or heard on the radio. They have even less access to the

political discourse in Addis Ababa.⁸ In the parliament, ostensibly the democratic arena where interests and arguments are supposed to meet and confront each other, peasants are not represented so long as they have no political organization that formulates their political views.

This fact notwithstanding, both the CUD and the EPRDF claim to represent their interests. But both do so against all logic. Even the election campaign, applauded for its opening of access to the press and broadcasting of live debates on radio and television, excluded the rural majority in practice. The debate was more or less dominated by a confrontation between the EPRDF and the CUD, with some other parties in a marginal position. It had practically no input of what rural people would recognize as their interests. Even so, the CUD was allowed to stand as "the opposition," the only group to effectively present an alternative to the EPRDF.

The CUD can best be characterized as an urban Amhara populist movement to the right of the political centre. It is important to note its urban characteristics for two reasons: 1) it represents and gives voice to the interests of urban intellectuals, bureaucrats and business people, and 2) it is attractive even to the urban poor who hope for a business boom that might offer them jobs and opportunities. More specifically, the CUD represents the urban Amhara to clear up the ambiguity in Amhara identity. The Amhara, today the second largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, was the politically dominant ethnicity in Ethiopia for many centuries. Since the fifteenth century, the Christian Amharic culture was the medium of assimilation in a multi-ethnic central state, as the late Sevir Chernetsov (1993, 1996) has observed. Whoever wanted to advance in the military or the administration would have to speak Amharic and adopt the essentials of Christian Amharic culture. Especially after the rapid expansion of the Ethiopian empire in the process of European colonization of Africa, Amharic culture was superimposed over other conquered peoples in the South. The

cultures of Southern ethnicities were suppressed, their languages forbidden in public context, and their peasants exploited and subjected to serfdom. In the twentieth century, Amharic increasingly became the language and culture of the educated elite and the bureaucracy (Chernetsov 1993, Pausewang 2005).

As an ethnicity, this urban Amhara elite group continues to be quite distinct from the rural Amhara, who remained peasants with a high level of illiteracy. In another context (Pausewang 2005), I have demonstrated why this group adopted pan-Ethiopian nationalism built on a vision of a strong central state with Amharic as integrating language and urban culture. The urban Amhara would emerge as its natural leaders. Among the non-Amhara ethnicities, this vision revives fear of a return to the defunct imperial order which would once again deprive them of their freedom to develop their languages and cultures, and would bring back their erstwhile landlords, with their hated *neftegna* (gun-men) rule.

The CUD as a political movement is the direct heir to the urban Amhara political protest which emerged in the wake of the fall of the military regime in 1991. The urban multi-ethnic Amharic-speaking intellectuals intended to overcome tribal differences by forming one integrated Ethiopia, creating a pan-Ethiopian identity. They were not permitted to be registered as a political organization of “Ethiopians”. Forced to identify their ethnicity, they ended up forming the “All Amhara People’s Organization”. With Amharic as the leading language and culture in the region for several centuries, it seemed natural to them that it should become the *lingua franca* and the dominant culture in a multiethnic Ethiopia, and the educated urban Amhara its “natural” leaders.

Politically, this All Amhara movement became organized for the first time in defense of the “Amhara” who were mistreated, evicted, and persecuted in Southern regions. Busloads of young Amhara volunteers traveled to Arsi to defend their Amhara brethren. They defended in some cases ethnic Oromos

who were locally identified as Amhara, not because of their ethnicity but their former status as political functionaries of the central government. Whether they knew this or not, it was consistent with the logic of All Amhara identity.

Utterly convinced of the inviolability of their vision of a united Ethiopian identity, the urban Amhara did not even see any reason why their program should be disliked by other ethnicities or groups. In practice, the CUD's program cannot be acceptable to the rural majority. Neither can it be suitable to the interests of the Southern ethnic groups who still bear the trauma of conquest, occupation, and economic and cultural suppression (Markakis 1987, Clapham 2004). It is hardly to be expected that Muslim Ethiopians would feel particularly attracted to the CUD. Indeed, they enjoy more freedoms under the present regime than any time before and are able to practice their religion and build mosques all over the country. Nevertheless, it is not likely that they would follow a program of unification under a Christian-Amhara dominated party. And there are other groups too who would hardly feel represented by the CUD. All of this limits the CUD's grounds for recruitment to a small fraction of the total Ethiopian population.

THE OROMO AND THE CUD

For the Oromo, the vision of a CUD-dominated government recalls memories of suppression and occupation. It revives the trauma of subjugation to extortionist landlords, cultural discrimination, and the prohibition of the use of their language in public arena. They have not forgotten the times under Emperor Haile Selassie, when they were forbidden to teach their children in their own language, and when General Tadesse Birru was persecuted for his plans to start schools in rural areas to give Oromo youths a better chance in life (Markakis 1987). Oromo peasants would fear that a centralizing government under the CUD would bring back the hated landlords. It would almost certainly

lead to an urban-biased policy, not the easing of but aggravating the already excessive burden of over-taxation pressing on the peasants

Why did nevertheless the CUD garner a considerable number of votes even in rural areas in Oromia? Apart from the abovementioned factors of urban and northern immigrants, three explanations appear likely. As noted, peasants may have been so frustrated that they felt anything else would only be better than the OPDO-controlled *kebele* officials. Second, the news of the unprecedented demonstration in Addis Ababa one week before the election had also reached the peasants, convinced many of them that the CUD would win, and may have nudged them to vote for the presumptive winner in the hope of reaping the rewards of victory. Third, the peasants' own preference was not represented at the polls. The OLF, the liberation front that still appears to enjoy the loyalty of most Oromo peasants, was not on the ballot. So they could only opt for the next best alternative to the ruling party.

Protest votes are democratically legitimate. Nobody has a right to question the motivation for individual voting. Protest votes are every bit as valid as votes out of political tradition or rationally developed preferences. The CUD has the full right to count every vote for itself regardless of why they were cast.

However, it has to be observed that the CUD could not be a realistic alternative in rural Ethiopia, as long as it is a movement built around a typically urban program. Had CUD actually won the election and formed a government, new political differences would have come to the fore. New conflicts would have arisen as soon as they intended to implement their program. In all likelihood, the CUD would have argued to have a democratic mandate for implementing their program, and used repressive force against any movement opposed to their implementation. Despite this distinct possibility, the CUD still

poses as “the opposition,” speaking for all democratic Ethiopians.

A WAY FORWARD?

If this situation is to be changed, it is of utmost importance that the Oromo bring their political views and interests into the debate. They cannot afford to leave the field open and allow the CUD to speak for all Ethiopians. As long as the OLF can maintain the support of an Oromo majority, it can bring a rural dimension, built on its majority of rural members and sympathizers, into the urban-dominated political discourse in Addis Ababa. Representing a people almost equally divided between Muslims and Christians, it can at least give voice to a large population of adherents to the Muslim faith and contribute to maintaining positive relationships between the two religious communities. As an organization claiming to represent the interests of the largest of the ethnic groups in the south, the OLF can open up space for better representation for other Southern Ethiopian nationalities, providing an outlet for their frustration and trauma of being marginalized and subjected to assimilation or oblivion.

For a long time, the OLF has been calling for an all-inclusive reconciliation conference in which all ethnic and political groups could participate. The main purpose of this conference would be to create a new and more democratic order in Ethiopia. By giving all groups and stakeholders a chance for representation, the participants hope to create a condition for a more democratic dialogue and an order that does not discriminate a minority (or even several minorities).

In a way, this is to ask for a return to where things went wrong in 1991, to take up again the promise of the Transitional Charter and the Transitional Government of Ethiopia. While it would be wonderful to be able to correct the mistakes and faults in post-1991 developments, it is not possible to

reverse history. The EPRDF and the government have consistently refused to undo their fifteen years of governance and return to the starting position. In reality, a new conference should not turn the clock back, but rather start a new chapter and begin over again from where democratization previously failed. Reviewing the promises of 1991, it should identify what went wrong in the intervening years, and introduce those positive aspects that were not put into practice. It is not too late to embark on a more democratic course. If there is a will, a new conference can open up the way for the participation of those who have hitherto been excluded.

But there is a danger in such a vision. Any restructuring of the Ethiopian state would change the power relations. The governing EPRDF will not agree to a conference that might reshape the power structure, unless it expects either to gain more control or to use it as a vehicle to avoid less attractive alternatives. Starting afresh would also bear the risk of changing power structures in a way that gives authority to groups that might be motivated to establish new discriminatory strictures against the present power holders, or even other groups. In concrete terms, if power simply shifted from the Tigray-dominated EPRDF to the Amhara of CUD, it is likely that a new structure of domination and discrimination against other nations and nationalities would soon emerge. If we imagine a new start in which the OLF establishes a new government, there is no guarantee that individual leaders would not be tempted to think "it is the time for the Oromo to eat" and to exclude others from the resources they have finally gotten access to and utilize it for themselves.

Democracy is not established by benevolent leaders, but by empowered populations. A new autocratic leadership can only be avoided if the conference manages to establish secure guarantees for the rights and the influence of all minorities. There must be established control mechanisms, checks and

balances, which make it impossible to marginalize certain groups, be they small or large minorities or even majorities.

It is no easy task to establish a democratic public discourse, nor are there guarantees that the public can control elected authorities who have access to security forces. It is a gigantic task to build control mechanisms against violations of minority rights and discrimination. Without such guarantees, a mere reshuffling of the existing power structure cannot be equated with establishing a democratic order.

DOES THE OLF HAVE THE KEY TO DEMOCRACY IN ETHIOPIA?

The OLF recently formed an "Alliance for Peace and Democracy" with many other opposition groups both in Ethiopia and in the diaspora, including the CUD. The objective of this alliance is to unite all groups in a coordinated effort to bring pressure to bear for the convening of a comprehensive and all-inclusive conference and a new democratic start. It is also envisaged that the EPRDF will be invited to join in, offering the government a chance out of the present "democratic" quagmire.

The vision is good, and the demand important. But does it have a chance to be realized? It is not likely that the EPRDF would agree to hold such a conference. In the wake of the new problems the government has encountered in Somalia, the chances have diminished even further.

A political cooperation between the OLF and the CUD appears, after all that is said above, to be an odd alliance. But as a very limited initiative, an alliance created for the single purpose of concentrating a maximum of political weight on the demand for the all-inclusive conference, it may have a justification. If indeed the alliance achieves its purpose and ends at the moment the envisaged conference begins, it may be a helpful way for the OLF to get back into the political dis-

course in Ethiopia. That, indeed, should be the major short-term political goal of the OLF.

To avoid another false start, the OLF and other political players in Ethiopia must realize that democracy is not achieved when the conference is convened. The struggle for democracy only begins there. This is to be strongly emphasized and kept in mind.

The Oromo may have a comparative advantage in establishing democracy. The Oromo have the historical legacy of their Gada system, which has been described as a fundamentally democratic social structure. It offers a division of powers as a check against misuse of power. It allows access for minorities and participation of all men in a consensus-oriented debate. However, it also has questionable practices, such as the exclusion of women and some occupational minorities,⁹ or the application of group pressure on individuals to give up their legitimate interests in favor of the priorities of the community. It has to be adapted to modern democratic rules if it was to succeed as a democratic model.

Democracy would not be achieved just because the OLF was given a chance to govern. To the contrary, that would be a test of the ability of the OLF to implement democracy and of its leaders' willingness to restrain political powers while they have the power to grab it. There is the possibility that they would rather use their new powers to preserve their privileges and their access to the state resources.

Democracy can be implemented only if the OLF succeeds in establishing an inclusive debate representing all interest groups, irrespective of their political and social conformity with the new "leading" group. Democracy presupposes tolerance for different opinions and goals, and it asks for the protection of the rights of minorities. The OLF would have to establish a democratic culture, by, among other things, establishing a positive right to food; hence access to land and a

right to work; and if it demands freedom of opinion, expression, culture, and religion for everyone

The OLF would further have the difficult task of establishing cooperation across ethnic, religious, and other divisions to attack some of the major long-term problems of the region. There is a desperate need for new initiatives to organize serious cooperative work on problems such as population growth and food security, tenure security and agricultural incentives, a right to work, ecological deterioration, health services, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, education, infrastructure, and others.

The OLF has a lot of work to do to be prepared for this gigantic task. At this moment, it does not seem that it is ready. There is a lot of planning work the OLF has to do in order to be prepared to establish the necessary checks and balances and the mechanisms needed to guard against the misuse of power and not least, to create a culture of democratic tolerance and readiness to discuss and compromise among the own members and functionaries. It is high time for OLF leaders to start this work and to be prepared in a serious way to rejoin the political game at the moment political openings offer them a chance.

Much can be achieved in Ethiopia if an open dialogue, including all groups, is made possible. Conferences building on consensus democracy have been held before without achieving peace and cooperation. There is no guarantee that an inclusive conference will be able to establish a democratic dialogue. The Oromo can offer their institution of consensus democracy. But the Oromo have also some negative record. After the fall of the Derg, Oromo peasants victimized the Amhara *neftegna* in Arsi and other locations in place of the imperial nobility. Having experienced repression and exploitation by the military dictatorship, they took revenge against innocent people just because they were considered Amhara.

In case the OLF should come into a position where its leaders could influence or control government structures, it

becomes an imperative to keep a critical eye on them. If OLF leaders should ever start to show tendencies to suppress and exploit other minorities, restrict political dialogue, curtail tolerance, limit the human rights of others, they must be reminded to keep their promises of democracy. Any attempt at limiting tolerance and the rights of others would be a road towards disaster, towards a new turn in the spiral of violence, revenge and despotism. It is the duty of friends to tell those who are in power when they are in the wrong and heading for a new disaster

NOTES

1. See reports in the private press, also reflected in international reports. The events are assumed to be generally known, and will not be documented in detail in the following.
2. Even the EUEOM, obliged to observe, not to predict the elections, at some point seemed to have fallen prey to that assumption. See its reports and press releases on www.et-eueom.org
3. Reports in the private press in Ethiopia were confirmed in a personal communication with a centrally placed foreign consultant
4. See press reports on May 16, 2005.
5. Reported in the *Ethiopian Herald* and in the International press.
6. See reports in the press and www.et-eueom.com
7. See the statement of the EUEOM on 15 May 2005, www.et-eueom.com
8. In a country with eighty percent or more of the population is engaged in agriculture, evidently the excluded are an overwhelming majority
9. Still it has to be noted that the Oromo society is known for its readiness to adopt and assimilate strangers and minorities.

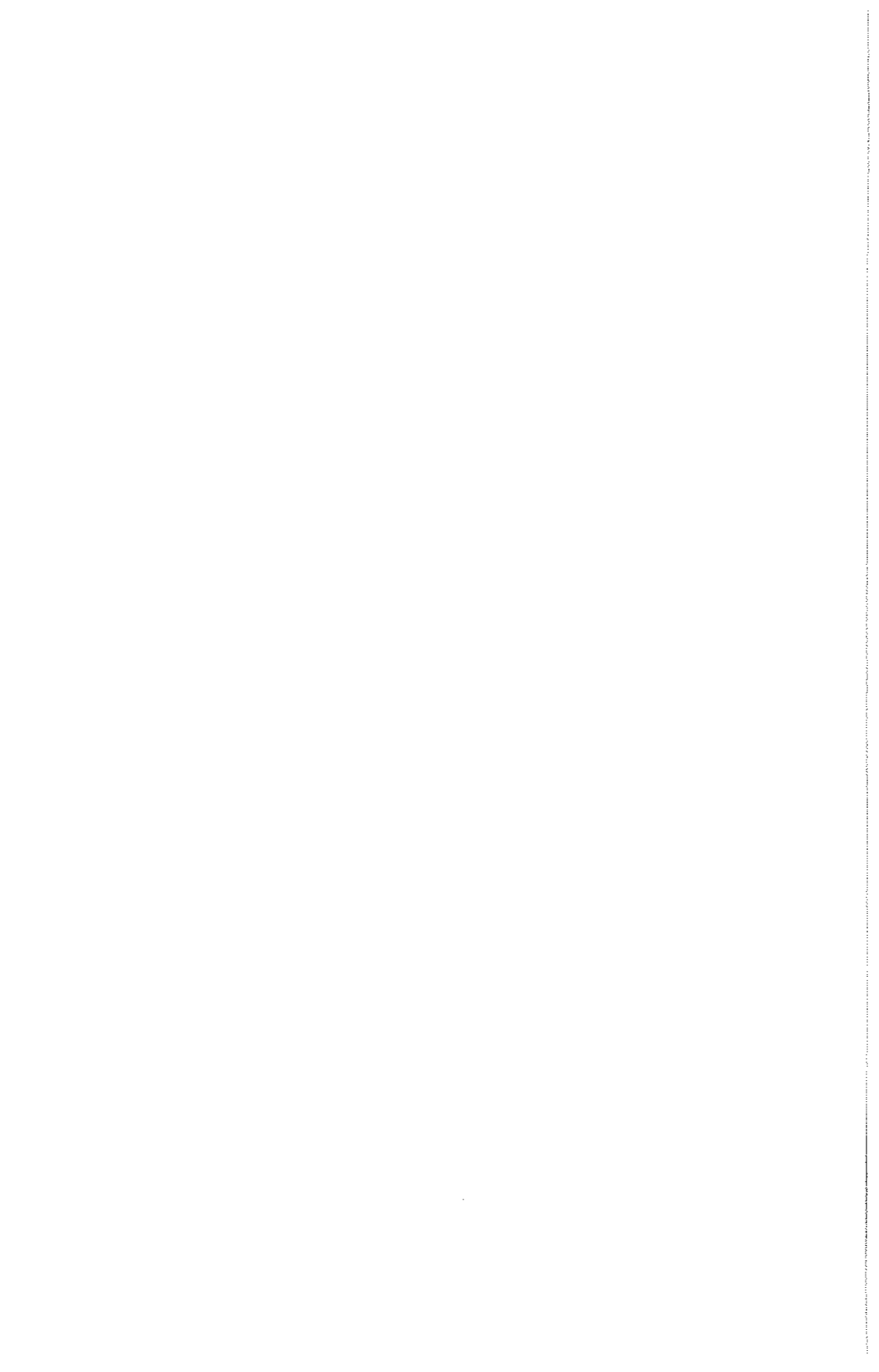
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OROMO NATIONAL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: ASSESSING THE PAST AND MAPPING THE FUTURE

Asafa Jalata and Harwood Schaffer

In the early years of the twenty-first century the Oromo liberation struggle has been hampered by what we want to call the problem of Oromo national political leadership, which manifests itself in several ways. First, the Oromo community is politically fragmented—we see all too often the triumph of the particular,¹ be it individual, local, regional, religious, or partisan, over a sense of Oromo peoplehood. Second, the community relies on a model of

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leadership that depends upon a restricted core of decision and policy makers with few democratic feedback links to the broader community and little tendency on the part of some leaders to use those links. Third, the present generation of active and emerging leaders has had few legitimate opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills. Given the current political situation and despite the claim of *Gada* principles and values, much of the leadership² cannot be openly exercised in Ethiopia, isolating it from the normal give and take of a vibrant, often contentious, open political discourse.

These issues have their roots in and are interwoven through the last four centuries of Oromo history. Prior to the mid-seventeenth century, internal developments within Oromo society made it increasingly difficult for people in far flung areas to fully participate in the central democratic *Gada* tradition that was celebrated and renewed in the octennial gathering of the Oromo people, the *Gumii Gayoo* (assembly of multitudes). Between the mid-seventeenth and the end of the eighteenth century, changes in Oromo society resulted in the decentralization of a single *Gada* republic into local and regional autonomous governments. These emerging states often lost connection to the centralized political authority that is symbolized by the *Gumii Gayoo*. Over time some local democratic *Gada* governments were replaced by the *moti* system (kingdoms), in areas like Wallo, Dambea, Gojjam, Wallaga, the Gibe region and some parts of central Oromia, allowing for the concentration of political power and decision making in the hands of a few (Lemmu, 2004). At the same time, some autonomous democratic regional governments continued to exist in some parts of Oromia until Ethiopian colonialism suppressed or abolished most of them during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The *Gada* principles and values have survived relatively intact among several groups such as Borana, Guji, and Jibat.

The internal political problems of Oromo society were further complicated by the development of the racialized capitalist world system³, which began in the sixteenth century, and its initial expansion into the Horn of Africa through mercantilism and the extraction of slaves and surplus goods from the area (Jalata 1995). During the second half of the nineteenth century, by allying itself with Abyssinian warlords, the capitalist world system—operating through England, France, and Italy—extended its control over the land and peoples of the central portions of the Horn of Africa, including Oromia and the Oromo. The resulting Abyssinian/Ethiopian colonialism fragmented and destroyed the Oromo political leadership as a part of its consolidation of power. To maintain power, the Ethiopians cultivated the development of a small collaborator class to serve an intermediary function, insulating the colonial powers from the masses.

The brutality of the Ethiopian state, the clandestine aspect of the Oromo liberation struggle, and the vanguard mentality of the leadership, have arrested the continued development of an open, democratic, and consultative leadership rooted in the *Gada* system. This condition has allowed for the exclusivist leadership approach on one side and the fragmentation and multiplication of the leadership on the other. These contradictory processes are demonstrated by the centralizing and decentralizing tendencies of the leadership in the Oromo national movement. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association (MTSA) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) emerged as the vanguard national leadership organizations. Later a few nationalist elements withdrew from the OLF and created other organizations, but failed to gain political traction in their effort to surpass the parent organization. In time, the centralizing and decentralizing leadership tendencies resulted in a fractured Oromo national political leadership. Over time, the lack of a coherent and unified leadership, even within the OLF, compounded the already serious politi-

cal and leadership challenges the Oromo national struggle had to confront. Despite the central role it plays in the Oromo national movement, the OLF has never shown marginal interest in addressing the apparent leadership crisis in the Oromo national political movement. Other Oromo liberation organizations have not done any better. Rather than resolving the problem of Oromo national leadership, they mainly focus on criticizing and attacking the OLF.

Several scholars have explained the details of how Oromos were colonized, exploited, dehumanized, and deprived of their political leadership by the joint forces of Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism (see Jalata, 2005; Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990). To date, however, issues of Oromo political leadership and human agency have not received serious scholarly attention. The major reasons for the current leadership crisis include the legacy of pre-colonial Oromo leadership and institutions, the impact of Ethiopian colonialism, and the ideological and identity crises of Oromo elites that continue to affect their organizational culture or norms. In order to examine the crisis in Oromo political leadership, this paper begins by developing the conceptual and theoretical perspectives that will guide the analysis. Second, it explores the development of the problem of Oromo political leadership, institutions and organizations in their historical context. Third, the paper examines the essence of *Oromummaa* (Oromo culture and nationalism)⁴ and Oromo human agency at the individual, relational and collective (national) levels to explain why Oromos are facing a crisis of political leadership. Finally, it suggests some steps that should be taken by Oromo nationalists and activists in order to build an effective national political leadership, increasing the organizational capacity of Oromos so they will be able to achieve their self-determination and human liberation.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Several scholars define leadership in terms of activities, relationships, and strategic choices that are packaged into policies to mobilize and organize a category of people to achieve defined objectives. Robert Gibb (2001: 70) sees leadership as conversational and interactional activities within and between leaders and followers; these interactional activities “include the negotiation of a collective identity and the development of a shared understanding among actors of the political and institutional environment...in which they are operating.” Leadership can also be seen as “simultaneously a purposive activity and dialogical relationship” between and among⁵ leaders and followers (Baker, Johnson and Lavalette, 2001:5). It can be also seen as “a series of strategic choices by members of the organization’s dominant coalition” (Hargrove, 1989: 61). Leadership as an activity involves intellectual directives and organizing activities. As intellectuals, political leaders develop theoretical, ideological and organizing visions to identify and solve political and social problems.

Leadership is an ongoing conversation involving all persons along the leadership-followership continuum. In this dialogical relationship, speakers become listeners, and listeners become speakers in a transformative way. In this process, effective leaders balance their “leading” and “led” selves through interactive and conversational relations. In this dialogue, some followers may emerge as leaders or take on some leadership roles. A constructive dialogue creates mutual understanding and agreement within and between leaders and followers within an organization or a movement. An effective conversation among and between leaders and followers can help in the process of developing strategic innovations from diverse perspectives and experiences and in finding new solutions for existing problems. Plans of actions that emerge from participants’ specific knowledge and experiences have more chances to be suc-

cessful than plans imposed by leaders (Amsalu and de Graaf, 2006: 99). The effectiveness of leadership depends on personal and structural resources (Jones, 1989: 4). Leadership effectiveness is influenced by the personal resources individuals bring to their leadership role as well as structural forces. Personal resources involve cognitive and emotional power, focused energy and attention, analytical capacity, commitment and determination, the capacity to communicate, and the capacity to blend the practices of leadership and followership by integrating "leading" and "led" selves. Structural resources include layers of cadres who share ideological and strategic ideas, formal and informal networks of people, political and economic systems, patterns of cultural expectations, political dynamism or passivism of followers, constraints of institutions, and the creativity of leadership.

The creativity of leadership/followership depends upon the openness and willingness of those in their relative leadership/followership roles to learn new skills to help them gain the expertise necessary for developing new political visions, policies, and strategies. This expertise can then be used to build and maintain political cohesion, to take actions contingent on time and place, and to continually renew political institutions or organizations. According to Baker, Johnson and Lavalette (2001: 15), "Effective leadership ... involves a capacity to reassess, to change tack, to explore unknown territory, to advance and to retreat, and to learn creatively. New possibilities disclose themselves; old patterns of action prove to be inefficient. Immediate and long-term goals alter; existing means need to be re-evaluated." In effective organizations and movements, leadership is practiced at all levels and locations by formally designated leaders and informal networks of leaders who are involved in backroom strategy political work; "Leadership teams with higher strategic capacity are more diversely networked, and conduct regular, open and authoritative deliberations with varied constituencies, in which they root their

accountability” (Baker, Johnson and Lavalette, 2001: 19). The major responsibilities of leaders are guiding the constituent community in the struggle for organizational survival, policy achievement, and the acquisition of power by building expertise, developing internal cohesion, and by securing aid from supporters, sympathizers, and others

Effective political leaders are social technicians who can develop activity-patterns to find practical solutions for identified problems through proposing appropriate forms of action in a specific time frame. Creative and influential leaders understand the importance of the division and the specialization of labor and the delegation of tasks to experts or specialists and how those activities increase efficiency and productivity within the organization (Fiorina and Shepsle, 1989: 18-19). Visionary, pragmatic and democratic political leaders create new possibilities in history by acting as agents of social change.

Leaders with cognitive and/or behavioral deficiencies cannot develop effective ideologies, build networks, develop intermediate leadership or “bridge leaders,” and are afraid to delegate authority to specialized bodies or individuals (Baker, Johnson and Lavalette, 2001: 5). Self-centered or autocratic leaders prevent the development of competent and confident teams of leadership that are interconnected through bridge leaders both vertically and horizontally. Instead, such leaders would like to surround themselves with sycophants and the avoidance of reliable or accurate feedback on their activities.

Hargrove discusses two general types of leadership: transformative and transactional (1989: 57). The former changes the paradigm, and the latter maintains status quo. It is necessary to have equilibrium between the two forms of leadership to allow for the introduction of change while maintaining stability. Just as the introduction of new ideas and innovations invigorates an organization, maintaining stability prevents the organization from facing chaos and disorder. The performance of leaders is determined by human agency as well as objective

factors. The characteristics of individual leaders and their followers, such as understanding complex reality, persuasive capacity, the ability to build effective team players, and the determination and courage to take well thought out actions are elements of human agency. Individual leaders and their teams cannot accomplish everything they want since objective factors may limit their actions. For instance, the lack of political opportunity structures, such as foreign assistance or economic resources, may negatively affect their actions. Leadership as a social process involves both leaders and followers, and deals with the issues of personal and social identities. According to Robert G. Lord and Douglas Brown (2004: 2),

Leadership is a process through which one individual, the leader, changes the way followers envision themselves. By shifting followers' conceptions of their identity, leaders often generate extraordinary outcomes for their nations, institutions, organizations, and work groups. Such leaders change our perceptions of how we are now and how we may be in the future or whether we see ourselves as autonomous individuals or as members of larger collectives. This has profound implications for how we think, feel, and behave. In psychological terms, such leaders work through changing the composition of followers' self concepts.

Political or movement leaders perform five major tasks (Gibb, 2001: 64-65). The first task is defining the objectives of the movement by establishing short- and long-term goals. Providing the means of action by identifying and channeling members' talents and energies effectively and by securing resources is the second task that leaders perform. Third, leaders must establish, and manage/maintain the structure and cohesion of the organization through regulating tensions within the organization, dealing with adversary situations that may destabilize the movement, and controlling the circulation of

information. The fourth task is expanding membership numbers and mobilizing members' support for the objectives of the movement by appealing to the interests and the collective identity of the movement. The final task is building the collective identity of members, supporters, and sympathizers through invoking their collective memory, in order to create a new understanding of current conditions and a new vision of future possibilities. Using these conceptual and theoretical perspectives of leadership outlined above, let us explore the essence and characteristics of the Oromo political leadership from past to present.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The historical legacy of Oromo political leadership has positive and negative sides. The positive legacy constitutes the sovereignty of the Oromo people experienced under *Gada*, an indigenous form of representative government based on an egalitarian social system. For many centuries, the Oromo people used the social institution of *Gada* to organize themselves politically and culturally and to maintain their independence. Under *Gada*, they established the rule of law, promoting equality, social justice, and democracy. Specifically, the design of *Gada* as a social and political institution obviated exploitation and political domination.

On the negative side, *Gada's* egalitarian disposition put it at a disadvantage in competing with other social systems that engaged in the extraction of economic surplus through exploitation and oppression by building a permanent professional bureaucracy, expanding formal education, and developing technological capabilities. The intervention of the Ottoman Empire and the Ethiopian and European powers in Oromo society through military, colonialism, and neocolonialism demonstrated the challenge the Oromo political leadership was facing because of an externally imposed exploitative and oppressive social system. Consequently, Oromo society and its po-

litical leadership started to face serious internal and external dangers. Because of the external influence and the internal weakness of the *Gada* system after its decentralization, autocratic and hereditary chiefs emerged by overthrowing democratically elected leadership in places like the Gibe states and Leeqaa country in Western Oromia. Internally, the *moti* political system with its rudimentary bureaucracy emerged. This political system was based on class differentiation. During and after the colonization of Oromia, this political system facilitated the development of an Oromo collaborative class that willingly or by force joined the Ethiopian political system. Evidently, the negative legacy associated with a collaborative and subservient leadership emerged in Oromo society because of some external and internal factors.

The Abyssinians allied themselves with European colonial powers and an Oromo vassal class in colonizing the entire Oromo nation during the second half of the nineteenth century. Consequently, Oromo human agency was violently suppressed by the Ethiopian political structure. The existing Oromo political leadership was annihilated and the ongoing development of autonomous leadership was curtailed. Under these difficult circumstances, an independent Oromo political leadership eventually emerged in the form of a self-help association in the early 1960s and as a liberation front in the early 1970s.

The formation of the MTSA and the emergence of the OLF marked the beginning of a new Oromo political leadership whose goal was Oromo self-determination and national sovereignty. Since the early 1970s, the OLF has played a central role in raising Oromo political consciousness and in the development of *Oromummaa*. The brutal nature of the Ethiopian political system, the legacy of the *moti* political culture, the lack of experience with bureaucratic institutions, the forced substitution of alien cultures and ideologies for Oromo traditions and values, and the absence of a democratic conversa-

tion and platform created an ideological and identity crisis among Oromo elites that left them without the crucial resources they needed to be able to develop a strong Oromo national political leadership that can reinvent itself.

THE CONTEMPORARY OROMO POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

The contemporary Oromo national political leadership emerged from unusual circumstances; it was created by a few determined and farsighted Oromo nationalists in the 1960s and 1970s who used the colonial educational opportunities to challenge the existing system of domination. The Ethiopian political system was designed to produce a small number of Ethiopianized Oromo leaders through its educational institutions who would function as intermediaries between the Ethiopian ruling class and the Oromo people. It intentionally limited the number of Oromo collaborative leaders by denying education to the overwhelming majority of Oromos. Further, through various political and cultural mechanisms, including assimilation, political marriage, religion, and divide and conquer policies, the Ethiopian government disconnected most of the few educated Oromo vassals from their cultural and historical roots, continuously forcing them to show fealty to their suzerain.

Only a few nationalist circles clearly understood these complex problems by familiarizing themselves with Oromo history, culture, values, and various forms of the Oromo resistance to Ethiopian colonialism. These circles initiated the Oromo national movement. Some of those who became Oromo nationalist leaders were collaborators who were initially neutral or opposed to the nationalist movement because of political opportunism and/or their lack of political consciousness. Generally speaking, Oromo collaborative leaders have ensconced themselves in Oromo cities that are overwhelmingly populated by Ethiopian colonial settlers. Ethiopian political, religious, and media institutions have had pow-

erful influence on most of this educated Oromo collaborative leadership. Consequently, some educated Oromos have joined Ethiopian political organizations and institutions.

The few Oromo nationalist intellectuals who emerged from this system were targeted for destruction by Ethiopian and Somali forces opposed to the Oromo emancipation and by opportunist and reactionary Oromo vassals who collaborated with these groups. Consequently, the founding leadership of the MTSA and the OLF was decimated along with the membership of these groups. Further, within the Oromo nationalist camp complex political problems and confusion emerged in the 1970s and 1980s because of the low level and uneven development of *Oromummaa*, the lack of political experience, and political opportunism. By creating conflict and suspicion around issues of religious or regional identity a few individuals diverted some of the energy of the movement away from its central liberative task. Such problems undermined the development of the Oromo national struggle. Oromo nationalists were subsequently divided into a few camps that started to fight one another while fighting against the Ethiopian and Somali forces. Consequently, the Oromo national movement lost outstanding Oromo nationalist heroes and heroines. Individuals who know the inside story of the Oromo national movement see the survival of the OLF as a political miracle.

Despite political fragmentation, ideological confusion, and a multiplicity of enemies, the few Oromo nationalists who survived the political onslaught from all directions managed to maintain the integrity of the OLF, continuing the Oromo liberation struggle. The political integrity and determination of its leaders and members allowed the OLF to spread the concept of Oromo nationalism among the Oromo people. In 1991 along with other Oromo liberation organizations, the OLF reluctantly agreed to join in the formation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and used this time to openly teach

the Oromo people about its political objectives. When the Oromo people accepted the OLF, the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government and several groups with fascist views attempted to obliterate the Oromo national movement and Oromo nationalists. The leadership of the Oromo national movement was not prepared to face this political challenge. Why? To answer this question critically and comprehensively without being biased is central to an understanding of Oromo politics. While some Oromos wrongly believe that an individual or a few individuals within the leadership sabotaged the Oromo struggle for personal reasons, their analysis fails to address the central problems of Oromo political leadership.

This kind of myopic political discourse has prevented Oromo nationalists from identifying and solving the real political problems of Oromo society. If the real problems of the Oromo national movement were the behavior of an individual or a few individuals, these problems could have been solved by removing such people from the leadership. The real problems of the Oromo national movement include: (1) the lack of coherent and organic leadership; (2) the absence of open and honest dialogue; (3) the low level of and uneven development of *Oromummaa* and the lack of political, cultural, and ideological strategies with which to build *Oromummaa*, (4) the absence of accountability of some leaders and followers; (5) the blind attachment to borrowed political culture and ideologies without adapting them to Oromo culture and traditions; and (6) the lack of the effective mobilization of Oromo human and material resources.

IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL COHERENCE AND LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

Human society is dynamic and all visions and strategies must be reevaluated and reinvented from time to time to enable the Oromo leadership to effectively respond to emerging conditions and opportunities. The Oromo national move-

ment lacks coherent and organic leadership as the result of the untimely death of some of its founding leaders such as Halie Mariam Gamada, Mamo Mazamir, Taddasa Biru, Baro Tumsa, Elemo Qilixu, Magarasa Bari, Ahmed Buna, Demisie Techane, Aboma Mitiku, and Muhee Abdo. Despite the fact that there are Oromo political leaders who are well educated, to date they have not developed the organizational norms and culture of teamwork needed to conceptualize the theoretical, ideological and organizational concepts necessary to address the problems of Oromo leadership.

The lack of a coherent political leadership, both in the diaspora and in Oromia, has denied the Oromo national movement the possibilities of developing the formal and informal, political and social networks that can effectively help in articulating *Oromummaa* and in taking collective political actions at the individual, relational and collective levels. Since the formal and informal networks have not been integrated, members of the formal and informal Oromo political leadership have been unable to develop the organizational capacity necessary to engage in political dialogue and activities both in formal and informal settings. It is impossible to build an effective institutional order or organization without integrating formal and informal rules of the society (Marcus, 1983:41). Since Oromo traditions lack bureaucratic codes and procedures, Oromo political leaders and the Oromo community at-large have not had culturally ingrained systems to fall back upon.

This lack of coherence among the leadership of a broad range of Oromo organizations in turn has created conditions of distrust that have prevented open and honest dialogue among leaders and between leaders and followers. In the absence of a coherent organizational milieu, rumor, gossip, and impression management have replaced critical and open dialogue within the movement. Like any movement, the Oromo national movement must develop a collective identity that results in collective action. Oromo nationalists cannot develop

an *Oromummaa* that facilitates collective action without critical discussion and open dialogue. As Colin Barker, Alan Johnson and Michael Lavalette (2001: 4-5) assert, “movements are arenas of discussion and argument, out of which there can emerge, at best, unstable and provisional forms of collective understanding, identity and action.” The role of the leader is very important in building a leadership core through persuasion, analytical capacity, capacity to communicate, and capacity to listen and learn. The leader is responsible for the creation of formal and informal networks that allow for the development of an effective leading political team by bringing together layers of people who share strategic ideas to win over others.

Historically liberation movements have been led by small groups of people in which charismatic individuals play a central role in the leadership process. In this kind of leadership, followers are “expected to accept core groups’ decisions and to play more passive support roles as providers of material resources and/or admiration. Such groups seek to lead by indirect method of heroic example rather than by the interactivity of persuasion” (Barker, Johnson and Lavalette, 2001: 21). Colin Barker (2001: 26) argues that these exclusivist leaders “regard their offices as private property, resisting removal or control. To maintain their positions, they develop various means of control The overall result is that the mechanism of organization becomes an end in itself.” The Oromo movement has tried to create this kind of centralized leadership, but it does not comport with Oromo-centric democratic values. While Oromos admire and respect their heroes and heroines, they expect open dialogue and interaction consistent with their democratic political tradition. Oromos also want to reject the leadership style of the Habasha which is authoritarian. Oromos dislike exclusivist leaders who equate their personal interests with the interests of the organization they lead and separate themselves from rank and file members. Practically speaking, the Oromo political leadership is neither co-

herent nor exclusivist, although there has been an attempt by a few leaders to borrow exclusivist leadership styles from the Habasha political culture. However, there is no question that the leadership of the Oromo national movement manifests some characteristics of the exclusivist leadership style.

Just as the Oromo political leadership lacks political coherence, some Oromos lack organizational discipline and engage in political anarchism or passivism. Without challenging anarchism and passivism among the Oromo populace and the exclusivist political tendency of the leadership, the Oromo nationalist movement cannot search “for combinations of forms of organization and leadership which are practically compatible with larger struggles for popular self-emancipation” (Barker, 2001: 43). Oromo nationalists need to speak up and struggle to develop leadership for self-emancipation through facilitating the integration of “leading” and “led” selves of the Oromo political leadership. While struggling to build a democratic and coherent political leadership, Oromo nationalists must fight against political anarchism, passivism, and anti-leadership sentiment that emerge in some Oromo sectors. Anarchist and anti-leadership Oromos complicate the emergence of strong leadership by focusing on trivial issues, such as superficial clan, religious, or regional politics, and by attacking prominent Oromo leaders and organizations. While demanding accountability from the leadership, Oromos must fight publicly against the anti-leadership ideology. Oromos need to acknowledge, value, encourage, and support an emerging democratic Oromo political leadership since strengthening the leadership of the Oromo movement is a necessary process to defeat dangerous enemies. Since amorphous and less structured leadership is ineffective, the Oromo national struggle must have more structured leadership that can provide organizational capacity to eventually take state power and establish a functioning democracy consistent with the principles of *Oromummaa*.

Oromo nationalists cannot build a more structured leadership without clearly understanding the processes of leadership and followership. According to Robert G. Lord and Douglas J. Brown (2004: 3), "Leaders may indeed be people who can be understood in terms of traits and behavioral styles, but leadership is a social process that involve both a leader and a follower..." Just as Oromo leaders do not adequately understand the essence and characteristics of their followers, the followers lack information about their leaders and leadership. While Oromo political leaders like to lecture their followers and sympathizers, they are less interested in establishing formal and informal relationships with their followers and sympathizers and engaging them in dialogical conversation. Since they care less about the opinions and experiences of their followers, they do not ask for input of their followers. Leaders cannot be effective without establishing "a stronger social bond among their direct and indirect followers, thus improving the direct and indirect followers' performance" (Lord and Brown, 2004:5). Leadership is a processing of influencing followers and others by changing their perceptions through closely relating and communicating with them. Similarly, some Oromos have not yet developed mechanisms by which they can influence political leaders, as a result they prefer to attack and discredit these leaders without considering the consequences of their actions. It is difficult to identify the weaknesses of the leadership without identifying those of the followership. "One cannot have leaders without followers," Fiorina and Shepsle (2001: 30) write, "but going further, one cannot understand leadership without understanding followership" as these roles interplay with each other along the continuum.

We recognize that the role played by the Oromo national political leadership is dangerous, complex, and difficult. The leadership has been politically, ideologically, and militarily attacked both internally and externally. It has survived thus far by developing shared meaning, purpose, language, and sym-

bols within the movement. But as the complexity of the Oromo movement increases and as the number of Oromo nationalists expands, the leadership cannot improve its organizational capacity without developing internal cohesion, expertise, support, and coalition. Without (1) changing the wholesale adoption of non-Oromo ideologies and approaches, (2) building internal cohesion by developing *Oromummaa* on the individual, relational and collective levels, and (3) fully mobilizing Oromo human and economic resources, the Oromo political leadership will continue to face more crises and may eventually become a political liability.

An Oromo national political leadership that moves from an initial reliance on a narrow political circle and borrowed political ideologies and practices and embraces Oromo-centric democratic values will be able to develop different forms of leadership in Oromo society that make the dynamic connection between the values of Oromo society and its organizational structure. The leadership should be pressured to speak with the Oromo people and listen as well, allowing the Oromo community at-large to engage in the process of self-emancipation by participating in and owning their national movement. According to Alan Johnson (2001: 96), "Self-emancipation is a political processes in which the oppressed author their own liberation through popular struggles which are educational, producing a cognitive liberation ... [facilitating] the defeat of their oppressors" The process of self-emancipation is only possible by building *Oromummaa* as a means of mobilizing all Oromos to establish self-confidence, consciousness, self-organization, and self-emancipation.

The Oromo national political leadership will be more effective when it specializes and professionalizes the Oromo national movement while practicing the principles of *Oromummaa* and *Gada* at the same time. The processes of specialization and professionalization can assist in reframing Oromo national issues in practical ways. To do this requires

the development of four activist group leaders within the Oromo national movement. The first activist group engages in *frame bridging* (Olesen, 2005) by identifying some Oromo sectors and organizations that share some political concerns and grievances and facilitates ways of forming the organizational base for the Oromo national solidarity network. This group creates a common platform for Oromo sectors and organizations to form a national solidarity network to take a collective or national action to advance the Oromo national struggle. The second activist group designs cultural and political policies that help in deepening and broadening *Oromummaa* as national and international projects. This group may be called the *frame amplification group* (Olesen, 2005). This group researches and develops various Oromo social and cultural experiences as the self-representation of the Oromo nation for developing public policies that will further flourish *Oromummaa*. This approach will help to mobilize potential constituents and supporters for the Oromo national project on national, regional and international levels. The third activist leadership develops new principles, ideas and values for the Oromo national movement. This group may be called *the frame extension group* (Olesen, 2005). This group may focus on domestic, regional and international policy formations. The fourth activist leadership may be called *the frame transformation group* (Olesen, 2005). This leadership studies the weaknesses and strengths of the Oromo movement, and suggests a fundamental transformation in the organizations of the movement. All these framing groups can help in improving the habits and behavior of leaders and followers and the organizational capacity of the Oromo national movement by suggesting how to increase their performance.

These four leadership groups should produce new ideas or information, principles, knowledge and policies frequently and release communiqués through high-tech apparatuses, such as the Internet and various media networks. The Oromo soli-

solidarity network must establish an information guerrilla movement to challenge and refute wrong and useless information about the Oromo people and their national struggle. Another role of this solidarity network is to increase Oromo interaction with numbers of actors engaged in transnational activities; Oromo activists need to go beyond physical, social and cultural distances to persuade civil society actors in every country to influence states and international organizations. This is only possible by creating the Oromo transnational solidarity network by using religions, cultures, politics and other activities. Both national and transnational solidarity networks must work hand in hand as a powerhouse of knowledge, information and policies to inform the Oromo national movement on national and global levels. There is no easy way to victory. The Oromo political leadership must work hard day and night and contribute what it can for the Oromo national struggle. All Oromo nationalists, sectors, and civic institutions must start today to pressure Oromo liberation organizations in general and the OLF in particular to adopt these approaches to advance the Oromo national movement.

OROMUMMAA: IDENTITY, NATIONALISM AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Oromummaa is a complex and dynamic national and global project. As a national project and the master ideology of the Oromo national movement, *Oromummaa* enables Oromos to retrieve their cultural memories, assess the consequences of Ethiopian colonialism, give voice to their collective grievances, mobilize diverse cultural resources, interlink Oromo personal, interpersonal⁶ and collective relationships⁷, and assists in the development of Oromo-centric political strategies and tactics that can mobilize the nation for collective action empowering the people for liberation. As a global project, *Oromummaa* requires that the Oromo national movement be inclusive of all persons operating in

a democratic fashion. This global *Oromummaa* enables the Oromo people to form alliances with all political forces and social movements that accept the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy in promotion of a global humanity that is free of all forms oppression and exploitation. In other words, global *Oromummaa* is based on the principles of mutual solidarity, social justice, and popular democracy.

Oromummaa as an element of culture, nationalism, and vision has the power to serve as a manifestation of the collective identity of the Oromo national movement. To date, the paltry, uneven development of *Oromummaa* is a reflection of the low level of political consciousness and the lack of political cohesiveness in contemporary Oromo society. Against this background, the basis of *Oromummaa* must be built on overarching principles that are embedded within Oromo traditions and culture and, at the same time, have universal relevance for all oppressed peoples. *Oromummaa* as an egalitarian, democratic vision must create mutual solidarity and cooperation among all people who accept the principles of self-determination and multinational democracy in order to remain congruent with its underlying values. In its global context, *Oromummaa* can serve as a project deeply rooted in the egalitarian and democratic *Gada* tradition and, as such, allows Oromos to form natural alliances with global democratic forces.

The main foundations of *Oromummaa* are individual and collective freedom, justice, popular democracy, and human liberation, which are built on the concept of *saffu* (moral and ethical order) and are enshrined in *Gada* principles. Although, in recent years, many Oromos have become adherents of Christianity and Islam, the concept of *Waqaa* [God] still lies at the heart of Oromo tradition and culture, which then shape the basis of *Oromummaa*. In Oromo tradition, *Waqaa* is the creator of the universe and the source of all life. The universe created

by *Waqaa* contains within itself a sense of order and balance that is to be made manifest in human society. Although *Oromummaa* emerges from Oromo cultural and historical foundations, it goes beyond culture and history in providing a liberative narrative for the future of the Oromo nation as well as the future of other oppressed peoples, particularly those who suffer under the Ethiopian Empire.

The building of the Oromo national organizational capacity is only possible when *Oromummaa* is fully developed and can be packaged into a generally accepted vision that energizes the entire Oromo nation into well-organized and coordinated collective action at the personal, interpersonal and national levels. The full development of *Oromummaa* facilitates the mobilization of Oromo individuals and diverse groups enabling them to overcome political confusion and take the necessary concrete cultural and political actions essential to liberate themselves from psychological dehumanization and colonial oppression. After Oromos were colonized and until *Oromummaa* emerged, the self-identity of individuals as being Oromo primarily remained on the personal and group levels since they were denied opportunities to form national institutions. Oromo identity was targeted for destruction and the colonial administrative regions that were established to suppress the Oromo people and exploit their resources were glorified and institutionalized. As a result Oromo relational identities have been localized, and not strongly connected to the collective identity of *Oromummaa*.

Oromos have been separated from one another and prevented from exchanging goods and information for more than a century. They were exposed to different cultures (i.e., languages, customs, values, etc.) and religions and adopted some elements of these cultures and religions. Consequently, today there are Oromo elites who have internalized these externally imposed regional or religious identities because of their low level of political consciousness or political opportunism, and

the lack of clear understanding of Oromo nationalism. Oromo relational identities include extended families and clan families. Historically and culturally speaking, Oromo clans and clan families never had clear geopolitical boundaries among themselves. Consequently, there are clans in Oromo society that have the same name in southern, central, northern, western and eastern Oromia. For example, there are Jarso, Gida, Karayu, Galan, Nole and Jiru clans all over Oromia. The Ethiopian colonial system and borrowed cultural and religious identities were imposed on Oromos creating regional and religious boundaries. Consequently, there were times when Christian Oromos were more identified with Habashas and Muslim Oromos were more identified with Arabs, Adares and Somalis than they were with other Oromos. Under these conditions, Oromo personal identities, such as religion replaced Oromoness, central Oromo values, and core Oromo self-schemas.

Colonial rulers saw Oromoness as a source of raw material that was ready to be transformed into other identities. In the colonial process, millions of Oromos lost their identities and became attached to other peoples. Consequently, the number of Amharas, Tigres, Adares, Gurages, and Somalis in Oromia has increased at the cost of the Oromo population. The Oromo self was attacked and distorted by Ethiopian colonial institutions. While fighting against these institutions, the restoration and development of the Oromo self through cognitive liberation and Oromo-centric values must be the order of the day. The attack on Oromo selves at personal, interpersonal and collective-levels has undermined the self confidence of some Oromo individuals by creating an inferiority complex within them. Without the emancipation of Oromo individuals from this inferiority complex and without overcoming the ignorance and the worldviews that their enemies imposed on them, they cannot have the self-confidence necessary to facilitate individual liberation and Oromo emancipation.

The development of the Oromo self and relational self are critical to developing a collective-level Oromo identity. The collective-level Oromo identity involves complex social dynamics that are based on the organizational culture or on collective norms. Because of internal cultural crises and external oppressive institutions, Oromo collective norms or organizational culture is at rudimentary level at this historical moment. Consequently, some comrades in an Oromo organization do not see themselves as members of a team, and they engage in undermining members in their team through gossip and rumors, promoting themselves and denigrating their comrades in his or her absence. Such individuals do not have strong organizational culture or norm. Such individual Oromo activists or leaders could not develop a core of Oromo leadership that is required in building a strong liberation organization.

The exploration of the concept of diversity is an essential element of *Oromummaa* since Oromos are a diverse and heterogeneous people. The concept of diversity applies to Oromo cultural, religious, political, professional, class, and gender divisions. Studying *Oromummaa* in relation to diversity requires integrating structural, cultural, psychological, and behavioral issues. Analysts who adopt the structural or political economy approach assume that "the most significant processes shaping human identities, interests, and interaction are such large-scale features of modernity as capitalist development, market rationality, state-building, secularization, political and scientific revolution, and the acceleration of instruments for the communication and diffusions of ideas" (Katznelson, 1997:83). The structural approach assists in explaining how *Oromummaa* as Oromo nationalism and political identity has emerged from multiple factors, such as collective grievances, sociocultural changes, the emergence of an explicit intellectual class, political consciousness, and the desire for Oromo liberation from exploitation and oppression.

The cultural analytic approach helps in understanding basic values, symbols and belief systems that provide “a system of meaning that people use to manage their daily worlds, large and small; ... culture is the basis and political identity that affect how people line up and how they act on wide range of matters” (Ross, 1997:42). Cultural analysis demonstrates how *Oromummaa* as a cultural tool and ideological vision mobilizes the Oromo national movement for a common political action. The behavioral and psychological approaches assist in the exploitation of the attitudes and actions of Oromos on individual, relational, and collective levels. In other words, this approach explains the dialectical connections among the collective identity of Oromoness, diversity, and individual identity.

According to S.M. Buechler (1993: 228), “one critical intervening process which must occur to get from oppression to resistance is the social construction of a collective identity which unites a significant segment of the movement’s potential constituency.” Collective identities are not automatically given, but they are “essential outcomes of the mobilization process and crucial prerequisite to movement success” (Buechler, 1993:228). Oromo nationalists can only reach a common understanding of Oromoness through open, critical, honest dialogue and debate. Fears, suspicions, misunderstandings and hopes or aspirations of Oromo individuals or groups should be discussed through invoking Oromo cultural memory and democratic principles. Through such discussion a single standard that respects the dignity and inalienable human rights of all persons with respect to political, social, and economic interaction should be established for all Oromos. Oromo personal and social identities can be fully released and mobilized for collective actions if reasonable Oromos recognize that they can freely start to shape their future aspirations or possibilities without discrimination. This is only possible through developing an Oromo identity on personal and collective levels that is

broader and more inclusive than gender, class, clan, family, region, and religion

While recognizing the unity of Oromo peoplehood, it is important to recognize the existence of diversity in Oromo society. The lack of open dialogue among Oromo nationalists, political leaders, activists, and ordinary citizens on the issue of religious differences and/or the problems of colonial regional identities provided opportunities for those who profit from the continued subjugation of the Oromo people to employ a divide and conquer strategy by exploiting religious and regional differences among the Oromo people. Since Turks, Arabs, Habashas and the Europeans imposed both Islam and Christianity on Oromos while at the same time suppressing indigenous Oromo religion in order to psychologically control and dominate them, Oromo nationalists must encourage an open dialogue among adherents of indigenous Oromo religion, Islam and Christianity and reach a common understanding of what it means to be an Oromo and the positive role religion and ethics can play in Oromo society. *Oromummaa* celebrates the positive elements of all religious beliefs among the Oromo.

Basing this understanding on *Oromummaa* eliminates differences that may emerge because of religious plurality. Similarly, because colonial administrative regions were invented by the Ethiopian colonial structure, they do not correspond to Oromo group or regional identities. As a result the political diversity of Oromo society can and should transcend regional identities based on the boundaries of colonial regions. Political diversity exists in Oromo society to the extent that individuals and national political organizations have serious ideological, political, and strategic differences. And, it is the acceptance of this diversity that provides the basis for the establishment of a truly democratic, egalitarian Oromo society. At present, the various Oromo liberation organizations are not separated by clear ideological, political and strategic differences. The (1) lack of political experience; (2) borrowed cul-

tures, religions, and political practices; (3) the abandonment of the Oromo democratic heritage of consensus building; (4) the low level of *Oromummaa*; (5) the existence of political opportunism; and (6) a lack of open dialogue and conversation have all contributed to political fragmentation in a context that does not value ideological, political and strategic differences, viewing alternative ideas as a threat to unity rather than a resource that reflects strength

Oromo political problems have emerged primarily from attitudes, behavior and perceptions that have been shaped by a culture that values domination and exploitation and sees diversity and equality as threats to the colonial institutions most Oromos passed through. These problems still play a significant role in undermining *Oromummaa* and the organizational capacity of the Oromo national movement. The behavior and political practices of Oromo elites and leaders of Oromo institutions in the diaspora—like churches and mosques, associations, and political and community organizations—demonstrate that the impact of the ideology of domination and control that was imparted by Ethiopian colonial and neo-colonial institutions and organizations is far-reaching. Despite the fact that Oromos are proud of their democratic tradition, their behavior and practices in politics, religion, and community affairs indicate that they have learned more from Habashas and Oromo chiefs than from the *Gada* system of democracy.

While the social and cultural construction of the Oromo collective identity is ongoing process, this process cannot be completed without the recognition that Oromo society is composed of a set of diverse and heterogeneous individuals and groups with a wide variety of cultural and economic experiences. Hence, Oromo nationalists need to recognize and value the diversity and unity of the Oromo people because “people who participate in collective action do so only when such action resonates with both an individual and a collective identity that makes such action meaningful” (Buechler, 1993:228).

In every society, personal and social identities are flexible. Similarly, Oromo self-identity exists at the personal, interpersonal, and collective levels with this confederation of identity being continuously shaped by Oromo historical and cultural memory, current conditions and hopes and aspirations for the future. According to Robert G. Lord and Douglas J. Brown (2004: 8), the self “is believed to be a system or a confederation of self-schemas that are derived from past experience ... In essence, the self is a collection of small, relatively independent processing units that are elicited in different contexts and each of which has specific cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral consequences.”

Every Oromo has an internally focused self and an externally focused social self. Lord and Brown (2004: 14) “define the self as an overarching knowledge structure that organizes memory and behavior. This structure includes many trait-like schemas that organize social and self-perceptions in specific relations. It also includes script-like structures that help translate contextual cues into self-consistent goals and behaviors.” The Oromo social self emerges from the interplay between intimate personal relations and less personal relations. The former comprise the interpersonal or relational identity and the latter are a collective identity. The relational-level identity is based on perceptions or views of others about an individual. Thus, individual Oromos have knowledge of themselves from their personal viewpoints as well as knowledge from the perspective of significant others and larger social groups. The concept of individual self emerges from complex conditions that reflect past and present experiences and future possibilities.

Some Oromos are more familiar with their personal and relational selves than they are with their Oromo collective self, because their level of *Oromummaa* is rudimentary. Oromo individuals have intimate relations with their family members, friends, and local communities. These interpersonal and close

relations foster helping, nurturing, and caring relationships. Without developing these micro-relationships into the macro-relationship of *Oromummaa*, the building of Oromo national organizational capacity is illusive. Organizing Oromos requires learning about the multiplicity and flexibility of Oromo identities and fashioning from them a collective identity that encompasses the vast majority of the Oromo populace. This process can be facilitated by an Oromo political leadership that is willing to develop an understanding of the breadth of the diversity of Oromo society looking for those personal and relational identities that can be used to construct an Oromo collective identity, expanding *Oromummaa*. Activist political leaders must be teachers and effective communicators imbued with an egalitarian spirit. In addition, they must be effective listeners and students. Only such a leadership can stimulate the development of Oromo identity at the personal, interpersonal and collective levels simultaneously.

Change starts with individuals who are both leaders and followers. Culture, collective grievances, and visions connect leaders and followers in oppressed society like the Oromo. Consequently, to be effective the Oromo political leadership must be guided by Oromo-centric cardinal values and principles that reflect honesty, fairness, single standard, equality and democracy in developing *Oromummaa*. Lord and Brown (2004: 24) assert that “a critical task for leaders may be to construct group identities for followers that are both appealing and consistent with a leader’s goals. Indeed, this is a critical aspect of political leadership. Effective political leaders do not simply take context and identity as given, but actively construct both in a way that reconfigures the social world.” The political leadership of Oromo society needs to understand the concept and essence of the changing selves of Oromos. These self-concepts include cognitive, psychological and behavioral activities of Oromo individuals.

Collective grievances, the Oromo language and history, the historical memory of the *Gada* system and other forms of Oromo culture, and the hope for liberation have helped in maintaining fragmented connections among various Oromo groups. The emergence of Oromo nationalism from underground to the public sphere in the 1990s allowed some Oromos to openly declare their *Oromummaa* without clearly realizing the connection between the personal and interpersonal selves and the Oromo collectivity. This articulation occurred without strong national institutions and organizational capacity that can cultivate and develop *Oromummaa* through transcending the political and religious barriers that undermine the collective identity of the Oromo. Oromo nationalists cannot build effective national institutions and organizations without taking Oromo personal, interpersonal and collective-level Oromo selves to a new level. The Oromo collective self develops through relations with one another. Good interpersonal relations and good treatment of one another create a sense of security, confidence, belonging, strong and effective bonds, willingness to admit and deal with mistakes and increase commitment to political objectives and organizations

The individuality of an Oromo can be observed and examined in relation to the concept of self which is linked to psychological processes and outcomes, such as motivation, affection, self-management, information processing, interpersonal relations, commitment, dignity and self-respect, self-preservation and so forth. The Oromo self-concept as an extensive knowledge structure contains all pieces of information on self that an individual Oromo internalizes in his or her value systems. Every Oromo has a self-schema or a cognitive schema that organizes both perceptual and behavioral information. An individual's self-schema can be easily captured by accessible knowledge that comes to mind quickly to evaluate information on any issue. The Oromo self is the central point at which personality, cognitive schema and social psychology

meet. The Oromo self consists both personal or individual and social identities. The former is based on an individual's comparison of oneself to other individuals and reveals one's own uniqueness and the latter are based on self-definition in relation to others or through group membership.

Without recognizing and confronting these problems at all levels, the Oromo movement cannot build its organizational capacity. The social experiment of exploring and understanding our internal selves at individual, relational and collective selves must start with Oromo elites who aspire to organize and lead the Oromo people. Since the ideological and organizational tools that Oromo elites have borrowed from other cultures have reached their maximum limit of capacities and cannot move the Oromo movement forward in the quest for achieving self-determination and human liberation, Oromo nationalists must reorganize their approaches based on *Oromummaa* and *Gada* democratic heritage. The Oromo elites passed through schools that were designed to domesticate or "civilize" them and to mold them into intermediaries between the Oromo people and those who dominated and exploited them. They have been disconnected from their history, culture, language, and worldviews, and have been trained by foreign educational and religious institutions that glorified the culture, history, language and religion of others. Consequently, most Oromo elites do not adequately understand Oromo history, culture and worldview.

When Oromo nationalists first emerged they rejected the worldviews and institutions of the colonizers turning instead to Marxism-Leninism in their fight against the Ethiopian colonial system. In conjunction with other Marxist-Leninist liberation forces they participated in the overthrow of the Haile Selassie regime only to be excluded from participation in the government by the military regime that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991. Under the military strongman Mengistu Hailemariam, the domination and suppression of the Oromos

continued. In the end, Marxism-Leninism did not provide a liberative base for the Oromo people. Although the Oromo movement achieved many important things in the past, the organizational and ideological tools that it has used did not provide an effective basis for organizing the Oromo people and enabling them to defend themselves from their enemies. At present the Oromo human and material resources remain scattered, used by their enemies who are committing hidden genocide on them. It is in this context that Oromo leaders turned to Oromo traditions and culture to seek the basis of a discourse that could bring full liberation for the Oromo people. *Oromummaa* is this liberative discourse.

The main goal of Oromo nationalism is to facilitate the creation of state that will defend the interests of Oromos on individual, group and national levels. Oromos can achieve sovereignty by themselves or with other peoples. Without establishing the Oromo political unity from within, Oromos cannot reestablish their sovereignty from without. When most Oromos internalize *Oromummaa*, they will be able to unite and speak with one voice and take collective action both in Oromia and worldwide. As a result, the global community will be forced to pay attention to their demands for self-determination and democracy. While establishing internal political unity among the Oromo people, it is also necessary to critically address the question of *Oromummaa* in relation to the global context. Global *Oromummaa* is not an exclusivist concept for Oromos only, but is based on the principles of fairness, justice, mutual benefit, and multi-national democracy for all people everywhere. According to Edward Said (1993:313) “to testify to a history of oppression is necessary, but it is not sufficient unless history is redirected into an intellectual process and universalized to include all sufferers.”

The failure of Oromo nationalists and political leaders to frame issues and formulate policies that promote actions based on *Oromummaa* has given ample opportunity for free-

riders, political opportunists, enemy agents, and confused individuals and groups to claim that they are nationalists and leaders who represent their clans, localities, religious groups, or nominal organizations. While using Oromo slogans, such individuals or groups attack and attempt to discredit those individuals and organizations that have accomplished many things for the Oromo cause. Oromo national institutions and organizational capacity will develop when true nationalists, intellectuals and political leaders start to fully embrace *Oromummaa* and work openly and courageously through formulating practical domestic and foreign policies that can be implemented by a broad-based Oromo movement. Although Oromos can learn a lot from other forms of leadership, without developing the style of leadership that is Oromo-centric, Oromo nationalists will be unable to build enduring national institutions and organizations.

CONCLUSION

Without critically and deeply understanding *Oromummaa*, Oromos cannot build strong Oromo social and political institutions and organizations that are needed to take the Oromo nation to a "promised land." It is only if the Oromo people and leaders adequately understand the concept of *Oromummaa* and engage in fully deploying Oromo cultural and political institutions both in the diaspora and at home through a centralized and organized channel, that the Oromo people will be able to challenge Ethiopian colonial institutions in Oromia and gain international recognition and support for the Oromo cause. The major problem facing Oromo society at this historical juncture is the lack of organizational capacity that has the ability to mobilize all Oromo human and material resources under one national leadership to confront both the internal and external enemies of the Oromo nation. The first step in dealing with this major challenge is to develop and unleash the power of Oromo

individuals on both the personal and collective levels by clearly understanding the concepts of *Oromummaa* and diversity. By openly and honestly addressing in the political arena the issues that Oromos already discuss in informal settings like the issues of citizenship, country, and nature of Oromia once it achieves national self-determination, Oromos will transform *Oromummaa* from an intellectual concept to a uniting force for liberation and justice. This discussion should be based on a single standard for all Oromos and all people, and should include the principles of *saffu* (ethical and moral order), human decency, and the rule of law.

If Oromos honestly and courageously recognize their strengths and weaknesses as individuals, groups, organizations, and society and build upon their strengths while reducing or eliminating their weaknesses, they can emerge victorious from the destructive alien cultural, ideological, and political nightmares they have faced in the past. Oromo leadership needs to recognize the inadequacies of existing organizations, visions, and strategies and start to plan and develop new strategies and approaches that will unleash the potential of an Oromo society based on *Oromummaa*. Oromos cannot liberate themselves without overcoming the organizational deficiencies and leadership problems that emerged prior to and after the colonization of their people. While recognizing the negative legacy of portions of historical Oromo political systems, the Oromo political leadership should practically incorporate the positive aspects of *Gada* into their organizational norms and culture.

Oromo organizational culture and norms cannot be changed without transforming Oromo self-concepts at the individual, interpersonal and collective levels. These changes must be adopted by the Oromo political leadership as well as the population as a whole. Members of the Oromo political leadership need to be effective political leaders who can engage in the processes of cognitive liberation and self-emanci-

pation; they must struggle to develop in themselves and their followers personal leadership skills, such as self-control, discipline, ability to communicate, and a deep sense of social obligation or commitment. Effective leaders have the capacity to understand that the oppressed are capable of self-change through educational and popular participation in struggle. They believe in a democratic conversation and they recognize that both leaders and followers possess both “leading” and “led” selves.

The combination of the processes of cognitive liberation and self-emancipation along with liberation knowledge or expertise, technological capability or skills, modern organizational rules and codes, and courage and determination are needed to build an effective and strong political leadership. Oromo leadership cannot find all these qualities in a few individuals. Therefore, the leadership needs to blend the experiences of political leadership and public intellectuals with the knowledge and commitment of the general populace to develop a liberative society based on *Oromummaa* principles. Leadership networks and chains should engage in a conversation with the Oromo people to develop a new organizational culture that facilitates the institutionalization of Oromo democratic experiences in ways that are compatible with contemporary technological and political conditions. Oromo nationalists, public intellectuals, and the Oromo people as a whole must challenge the tendency of exclusivist leadership and political anarchism and fragmentation and reinvent the Oromo national political leadership that is anchored in *Oromummaa* and *Gada*.

NOTES

1. Particular is used here to contrast the tendency to focus on details and less crucial differences with a sense of the whole. The concern is to highlight the contrast between the particular and the universal—between what makes people different individuals and what makes them a people.

2. In this paper, the term leadership includes Oromos in the diaspora as well as in the homeland and does not refer to any particular organization or movement. When a particular organization or movement is being discussed it will be identified by name or category.
3. The racist fashion by which the Habasha treat Oromos and other conquered peoples is part and parcel of the racialized capitalist world system that supports Habasha power as long as it does not challenge the military or economic hegemony of the core countries.
4. *Oromummaa* as an ideology of human liberation includes the vision of an Oromo democratic state and the principles of multinational democracy in order to be emancipatory, revolutionary, democratic and inclusive.
5. The concepts of leadership and followership do not indicate two distinct roles, but rather endpoints of a dynamic continuity. The term "between and among" is used to indicate that leaders talk to other leaders, followers talk to other followers and leaders and followers talk to one another. In addition, depending on the circumstances, individuals may experience a shift in their role relative to one another.
6. In this paper the interpersonal level includes the range of relationships from two persons to close communities and beyond.
7. In this paper the concept of collective level is used to refer to Oromo consciousness at the national or peoplehood level and is closely tied to the concept of *Oromummaa*.

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ON THE OROMO: GREAT AFRICAN NATION
OFTEN DESIGNATED UNDER THE NAME
“GALLA”

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Lecture given at the General Assembly¹

Translation from French by Ayalew Kanno

In the good old time, on college benches, I used to read for digression orations of warriors just at the moment of combat. They apparently possessed, I said to myself, the skill of the poet to lengthen the recital and to give pretext to the beautiful verses. Doesn’t it seem more natural and above all cleverer to reserve their strength for the great blows of saber (broadsword) or spear instead of wasting it on vain orations? The warriors of the North do not have dreams of boasting, nor do they make bragging

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speeches, when they prepare themselves for combat. Be that as it may, a long stay in Africa makes one understand that bombastic prose may have probably existed in the fields of Latium and under the walls of Troy. All the nations of highland Ethiopia prepare themselves for war by orations composed in advance: each brave has his own and rehearses it before he dashes out to strike his enemy.

A common characteristic of these war themes is that all the combatants of the same tribe or nation call themselves sons of a legendary being, a sort of godfather of bravery whose name has no resemblance to the common ancestor of these peoples. Let us limit ourselves to citing some examples: the Bilen, whom I believe to be the last representatives of the Blemmyes, those enemies of Romans, call themselves *Boas gor*, that is to say sons of Boas, only at the moment of combat. Their neighbors have drawn from that the more familiar appellation of Bogos. In the vicinity of the Bilen, even on the seashore, live the Saho who are divided into several tribes. Each one of them has a war name. Hence, the gallant warriors of the Bigida tribe call themselves sons of Aisa; and, on the battlefield, the Asaorta are none but the children of Gabarit.²

Even though they are descendants of the same race as the Saho and they resemble them by language and certain customs, the Oromo have a watchword not for each of their tribes, but for their entire nation. As soon as they hold the spear still, they call themselves sons of Galla³, and this name Galla, repeated in such bloody encounters, remained engrained in the memory of the vanquished as the designation of their conquerors. Even their neighbors, despite the big differences that exist among their languages, all agree in giving them this name. A strange thing: in spite of the general appellation among outsiders, the majority of the Oromo do not know this name of war. Those who know look upon it as not being able to be separated from the enthusiastic oration of which it is a part. Speaking the language of this people, I have asked several

peaceful Oromo or even warriors, if they were not Galla, and, to my great surprise, they have always shown so much astonishment as a Parisian, if one attributed to him the appellation of Montjoie-Saint-Denis, the ancient rallying cry of France.

When one wants to describe this little known nation, it is preferable to preserve its indigenous name Oromo, and it is about the Oromo, the entire tribe that is the awe of Eastern Africa, that I am going to speak to you.

Some geographers state that the great Oromo invasion came from the Southwest and from the depth of Central Africa. Barth, the celebrated traveler, attributed it to a volcano whose eruption would have driven back this hitherto peaceful and unknown nation. But nobody has again indicated, even from a distance, the existence of a recent volcano in the interior of Africa. At the least, it is presumptuous to issue such a flat assertion about a people whose history one does not know. Even today, despite the incessant research of our learned men, we do not know why our far distant ancestors came to occupy the regions where we live. What motives pushed the Belgians as far as their current habitat? Later on, during historic times, why have the Cimbres, the Goths, the Huns, the Vandals and so many other peoples found it advantageous to leave the countries where they had become great, in order to fall upon Europe for more than six centuries? Only China remains in her primitive power, whereas Egypt is no more than a shadow and Babylon a memory. The true causes of the rise and fall of nations, although closely tied to their moral state, are mysteries that have escaped the sagacity of historians. Perhaps God had wished, in His own time to bring forward His foresight from far, to throw a new blood into the anemic old nations in order to prepare them to receive the Christian faith by the infusion of this durable energy, which although wild at first, made up the strength of these barbaric peoples.

This is what appears to have happened in the great Oromo invasions. According to their traditions, a man named Sopera

came from the sea and settled near the Awash River. He had nine sons, the eldest of whom was called Raya. They were herdsmen who were very poor, rugged and dressed in hides. Five or six generations of descendants of this Sapera lived peacefully in the region where they had settled. According to Oromo legend, their ambition was suddenly awakened by a beautiful tissue of cotton that floated adrift on the Awash River. They wanted to know the place from where such sumptuousness came. After having crossed the river with no arms other than the horns of their cows, they produced a tuck (a fifteenth to sixteenth century small sword) from their primitive steel in order to invade the adjacent lands.

The Awash and Abbay Rivers flow in opposite directions: the first towards the east, the second towards the west. Together, these form the northern boundary of a large plateau with a medium elevation of 2000 meters, which they called Damot in former times. As far as we know, this plateau is bounded on the west by the River Didesa, a large tributary of Abbay, and on the east, by the powerful Omo River. In the south, the River Gojab serves as its frontier. It was to the Damot that the Oromo first rushed. The great wave of their invasion broke up at the center and went in all directions, killing or pursuing the remaining strong men and subduing the weak natives, today called the *Gabbaro*. In France, once upon a time, such people were called boorish or serfs. At that time Damot was occupied by a tribe whom the Oromo called Sidama, of whom it appears, only two representatives exist today: the Gongga people, said to be Sinicho who are relegated to the lowland on the left bank of Abbay; and the Kaffacho who still dominate in Kaffa. It was under the shelter of Gojab that they took refuge in Kaffa when the terrible sons of Galla chased them from Inarya, the once rich and powerful land of the Damot.

Let us come back to Oromo traditions. In the Ethiopian highland the non-Negro natives distinguish themselves by the

color of their skin as *tigur* or black, *tayyim* or dark, *dama* or having a tint of dark coffee with milk and *qay* or red. The word *white* does not apply to men unless as an insult, because it is the proper designation of a leper. *White* is no longer an expression Ethiopians use to identify their infants with fair complexion, but lightly coppered, with still less dark nuance than the Arab, not even of the roseate white of the Europeans. To them I was a red man. When tradition tells us that Sapera, who came from the coast was red, it does not indicate whether he was oriental or European. One manuscript from northern Ethiopia suggests that the Oromo descended from a Portuguese who was in the service of the emperor and who was unjustly banished into the province of Bali. Adopting the hypothesis that Sapera was of European origin, for lack of a better one, and approaching it from the perspective of the manuscript just mentioned, one wonders if *Sapera* was not the family name *Sa Feira* or *Safera* commonly found in Portugal. One may support this flimsy hypothesis by pointing out that the Oromo have preserved the word *Felise* (*Felicie?*) as a woman's name, although by their own admission this word has no sense at all in their language.

Without venturing further into the shadowy field of etymology, let us search for the meager accounts of history. Ludolf, writing in Latin at the end of the seventeenth century, informs us that the Galla (*Gallani*) first appeared, about the year 1537, by attacking the kingdom of Bali, which he places on his map on the two banks of the Awash River. At that time, Ethiopia was prey to the terrible invasion of *Grañ* (the left-handed). That Muslim conqueror, from the Afar tribe or perhaps Somali started out from the seacoast about the year 1526, and marching from victory to victory, destroyed the ancient splendor of a vast Christian land and scattered the ruins which are still visible today. *Grañ* was finally killed in 1543 by a soldier from the adventurous and valiant Portuguese troop called to Ethiopia by the Empress Helena and commanded by the brother of

the celebrated Vasco de Gama. By attacking the empire of Ethiopia, whose boundaries at that time were unclear, at the center, Grañ cut the empire in two and drove whatever little remaining power it had back toward the north. Exposed and no longer having a link to a central authority, the diverse provinces of Damot could not be united to combat the Oromo enemy, then much unknown and not despised.

Oromo traditions do not mention the kingdom of Bali. They call *Walal* their land of origin and recount that the crossing of the Awash River was their first act of hostility against their sovereign, the king of kings of Ethiopia. The red or noble Borana, sons of Sapera, chose the ford on the Awash. Their comrades from *Walal* went somewhere else (Eda) to burst the bank in order to accompany the dawning invasion. Their descendants still call themselves *Edensa* or riparian, hence the parliamentary saying (*Edensa Borana miti Gabbaro miti*), *the riparian is neither noble nor serf*.

It would be interesting to find out whether or not Borana traditions agree with the historical statement by Ludolf. To this end, I collected several of the genealogies that the Oromo have orally transmitted. Let us limit ourselves to citing four of them, of which the first and the second belong to the two friends who have provided me with the majority of this information on the origin of their nation (Table 1).

One wonders if these genealogies will bring us back to the first half of the sixteenth century. Using oral genealogies is a tenuous method of verifying a date, and one is first confronted by this question: What is the duration of a generation? Ordinarily, one says that there are three in a century, but it is important to verify this evaluation. To this end, Mr. de Semallé identified the princely descendants of Guillaume the Conqueror, born in 1027, whose descendants were married to all the royal houses of Europe. By subtracting fifteen results, each pulled from the twenty-six generations in the middle and without regard to sexes, and adding all the time spans together,

Table 1

A side-by-side comparison of four Oromo genealogies

1. Shumi	1. Dibar	1. Mowa*	1. Tufa**
2. Maèa	2. Namò	2. Yanfa*	2. Into
3. Tullo	3. Jarso	3. Gudata	3. Ñi-a
4. Gimbi	4. Gusso	4. Kalo	4. Waqo
5. Dirqi	5. Dadu	5. Mamme	5. Baroddo
6. Makka	6. Illamo	6. Jarso	6. Kura
7. Alelu	7. Karrayu	7. Darimu	7. Lammo
8. Horro	8. Lukku	8. Ali	8. Karrayu
9. Loya	9. Gudru	9. Muño	9. Lukku
10. Gudru	10. Sirba	10. Gurra	10. Gudru
11. Sirba	11. Maèa	11. Hammaya	11. Sirba
12. Maèa	12. Raya	12. Liban	12. Maèa
13. Raya	13. Sapera	13. Jidda	13. Raya
14. Sapera		14. Maèa	14. Sapera
		15. Raya	
		16. Sapera	

* In September 1846, Yanfa would have been 31 years and Mowa seemed to be 15.

** In 1846 Tufa was between 30 and 35 years old

one obtains 12,017 years, or 30.65 years as the average duration of 392 generations. By limiting oneself to counting them from male to male and by looking at the royal house of France, from Henry I, who was born in 1005, to H. R. H. the Count of Chambord, born in 1820, one obtains an average of 32.6 years over twenty-five generations. Because the princely houses could be exceptional with regard to early maturity, Mr. de Semallé has extended his research by considering the historic families of Lys d'Arc since 1380. The noble branch averages 34.14 per generation, the commoner 34.54, and the poor branch 33.92. Finally, a Basque family who settled in Normandy in 1568 provides 33.78 years per generation.

In the fifteen results above, the largest number, or 33.46, is found in the royal houses of Austria and Spain. The small-

est showed up among the kings of the Two-Sicilies, where it is only 26.97, as if a warmer climate would shorten the duration. The forty-one generations, from male to male only, which separate King David from Our Lord Jesus Christ, tend to confirm this conjecture, because on average each one of them is only 26.46 years.

We have allowed ourselves this digression in order to challenge the learned to extend their research to other regions, for example: to Persia, to China and above all to Arabia, land situated under conditions that are analogous to that of Ethiopia. However, as far as we are concerned, calculations of this type should only be used as a last resort. According to tradition, Alelu and Karrayu, who are descendents of Gudru and number 7 of our first two genealogies, migrated from *Walal*. Supposing they were just born, they would have, at 33 years per generation, the year 1585 for the legendary departure from *Walal*. If we admit that, the contemporaries Shumi and Dibar were born in 1783. To go up to the year 1537, this departure must be attributed to Loya, son of Gudru. According to this last hypothesis, Raya would have been born at the beginning of the fifteenth century, which would indicate an approximate date of arrival in Ethiopia by the mysterious Saperu. For the rest, Gudru tradition affirms that the immediate sons of Maèa, grandchild of Saperu, were contemporary to King of Kings Gabradingil, and without a doubt Libna Dingil, the unfortunate victim of Grañ, who died about the year 1540 after a reign of thirty-five years. Maèa had five sons who gave birth to so many tribes. All of the Oromo who settled in the west are their descendants, and, although today divided by profound rivalries, they are comprised under the common name of Shanana Maèa or the five (descendants of) Maèa. They are named as follows: Akako, father of Limmu; Sirba, father of Gudru; Duiso, father of Nanno; Jawi, father of Jimma; and Kura who had a son Leqa. Another tradition substitutes Libana son of Jidda for the last one.

Humboldt informs us that the Indians or natives of America have a very complicated type of government. In fact, it seems that the hordes, at first wandering, were composed of ill-formed elements and very jealous of their liberty. They believed they could resolve the problem of a common action only by employing several formalities to assure a good choice of their chiefs. It is the same with the Oromo. Their government is an oligarchy (a government in which a small group exercises control) resembling at a distance the former Venice. In that famous republic, we know that numerous processes must be set in motion in order to arrive at a nomination of a *doge*.⁴ In Eastern Africa, they have established rules at least as complex as these and, in spite of a long inquiry, I do not flatter myself of knowing them all, because the elder Oromo contradicted themselves from time to time in this regard.

According to tradition, Makko Bili, (who belonged to the fifth generation of Maèa), is the African Lycurgus⁵ who, about the year 1589, divided all the Oromo into ten classes of *Gada* which they further grouped into five pairs of two (Table 2).

Table 2
Oromo *Gada* classes

1	2	3	4	5
Birmaji Aldada	Malba Horata	Mudana Bifole	Robale Sabaqa	Dulo Kilole

The names of these five pairs, sanctioned by divine will according to the Oromo, are not derived from the five sons of Maèa; but from five natural governments: first that of men and reason; second that of flowing water or progress; third that of sheep or quietude; fourth that of lion which represents strength; and finally fifth the government of vulture which presides over pillage.

The descendants of Maèa believe that, when each class comes to power, each brings into action the quality that is appropriate to it. Thus, the bird of prey inclines the spirits towards war, hence the saying *Dulo dula*, which signifies: the government of Dulo makes military expeditions.

In that strange constitution, each of the ten classes must hold power for eight years. They must govern in rotation, and the son enters only into the class corresponding to his father, that is to say having the same inclination. It follows that a son replaces his father thirty-two years after the latter has left power [or forty years after he came to power]. For example, Shumi Maèa, surnamed Abba Biya, who just left power in 1843, was the class of *Malba*. Nigus, his son, was inevitably of the class of *Horata*. Either class represented the flowing water or progress. As each of the *Gada* will have to govern in its turn for eight years, Nigus will come to power only forty years after his father had come to power. I have gone to great pains in order to know how they cling to representing a class while the son is aspiring; it was impossible for me to gain an insight into this point. The coming to power of a class is accompanied by meticulous ceremonies and above all by a solemn sacrifice they call *Buta*. It is forbidden, under the threat of death, for all strangers to attend the sacrifice held in September 1846, only to be revived eight years later. Four years after their entry into power, all members of the government are circumcised.

With Romans, prior to the enactment of Lex Licinia, in the year 366 B.C.E., the consulship was only conferred on Patricians; but the societies, in the same way as the hills, tend to level themselves. As Sextius in Rome, Kuti Bose, brave plebeian Oromo, established for the Gabbaro a great precedent by entering into *Gada*. In spite of this incursion into their rights, the true descendants of Sapera, possessing a more beautiful body, less dark and cleverer, preserve quite an envied superiority. Thus, the plebeians often attribute the same origin to themselves. People who neither have titles of nobility

nor heraldic constituency find it easy to pretend as such, and the Borana can only protest in a low voice.

Jealousy is the nerve of all the republics, and in order not to give much importance to a single chief, the Oromo have established the separation of powers I know only of four:

Abba Sa'a, chief of public finance;
Irresa, great pontiff;
Abba Bokku, speaker of the assembly; and
Moti, king or chief of executive power.

The *Abba Sa'a* raises contributions in large cattle to meet the needs of the state.

Shumi Maèa was *Irresa* or great pontiff and conducted official prayers, above all to ask for the rains in times of drought. Each of the seven clans or sub-tribes of Gudru has its own pontiff, and, as acknowledged by all, their prayers are more effective than those of a non-pontiff. The *Irresa* collect dues for exercising the functions.

In times of peace, the *Abba Bokku* is the most important dignitary. This person presides over the court of justice of the tribe in which are vested legislative and judiciary powers. This court assembles near a highly respected large tree on a field consecrated by tradition. This reminds us of the custom of the natives of Biscay assembling under the oak tree of Guernica. Seated on a stool and covered with a toga, the Oromo chairman of the court holds the *bokku*, a kind of wooden club, concealed in his belt. Each of the paired five classes or *Gada* has its *bokku* and keeps it with care until the day when the tour of duty will permit making use of it. Pushing the logic well further than we do, the Oromo do not make a distinction between an elector and a member of an assembly; at their place, every elector participates in making the law. Laws can be proposed only by a descendant of Malole, the eldest of Gudru's children. As in old days with the nuncios of

Poland, it is enough for a single opponent to stop the most sensible of motions. The idea of a majority voice, which governs us so much in Europe, does not force its way through with the semi-savage of Africa when it is a matter of enacting a law. As soon as he hears the customary word *qabadbe*, "I stop (the discussion)," the chairman solemnly postpones the session to another day. They benefit from this respite to bribe the opponent with sweet talk and above all with a gift of one or several pieces of salt, current money of the land.

Not only the moralists, but moreover the true men of state will always condemn this corrupting custom to bargain and buy the law, thus sacrificing the future for the present, and the great interests of integrity and conscience for the interest of the moment. When one (i.e. the assembly) succeeds to enact a law only to gather threats around itself through purely mercenary promises and arguments, the government is nibbled at by all that mischief. Then the true extents of justice, the only durable ones, will weaken, and the government will lose little by little at first its energy and finally, even its reason for existence. The Borana had a sad experience in this regard. Conservatives, like all aristocracies, have long been able to maintain their republican institutions. But the custom of putting up the law to public auction, an abuse they (i.e. the assembly) did not have the wisdom to destroy, ended by bringing them sad results. Aided by the jealousy of the Borana, all of southern Damot escaped their domination. Six kingdoms were formed there and the Oromo have passed through there suddenly putting up with license of despotism. There they are (southern Damot), only the tyrants or their fanatical government and they do not have effective laws but their good pleasure. It would be interesting to recount how far the absurd arrogance had reached. In Inarya, a *Gabbaro* by birth had become their sovereign master all by allowing the former retinue of functionaries to exist, the solemn sacrifices of *Gada* and even the *Abba Bokku*. Despotism always begins by respecting

the past. Julius Cæsar too did this by maintaining the two Roman consuls, annual as in former times, but reduced to slavishly executing the wishes of their master. The human spirit is not as diverse as one could believe: tyranny, of whatever nature it might be, loves to disgrace an institution before it destroys it. And with the Oromo, history repeats itself, as is already written on the defamed liberty in Rome. Alas! Without going too far in the past, one could find, closer to us, analogies that I have not pointed out.

I had attended one of the sessions of the Oromo assembly, where Shumi who was my host and *Berryer* of Godru had to speak. He rose up before daybreak; he slaughtered a goat; had the peritoneum of the sacrifice spread out and put it on his neck to show that he had a good omen. Then he soaked in the blood a green branch that he placed at the back his head, in the middle of his bushy hair. His brow had already been widened with blood of the sacrifice. Thus prepared for the oratorical combat, he mounted a horse with his spear, his shield and his whip that must play a great role in his speech.

Ethiopian scribes have lost the usage of their comma, and are remarkable for the unconstraint with which they distribute their dot (punctuation) marks. In our country, on the contrary, we are strict as regards the written punctuation, but all like those thoughtless scribes, we could take some lessons from the Oromo as regards the emphatic punctuation of their speeches. A small beat indicates the comma; stronger beats mark the semicolon, the colon and some other nuances that we feel without having to think to write them. The period is clacked with a serious and decisive manner. The question mark is clearly enunciated not only by voice, but further by a strident and well-known sound. I let you imagine a point of exclamation clacked with many repeats by this warrior orator. Standing and his toga extended as far as his left hand that was supported by the spear, Shumi spoke for hours. Seated in front of him and half covered with his toga, the chief of the oppo-

sition listened in respectful silence but with a look that I believed was of a powerful rage. When the orator finished, the assembly kept quiet for a long while in order to allow him to continue his speech if he then recalled an omitted argument. In these oratorical contests of Africa, there is always a natural dignity and a decorum that we would like to see in the turbulent chambers of Europe where the wisest have sometimes regretted untimely vivacity.

Once the discussion is terminated, the *Abba Bokku* asks each clan, according to the order of birth, if they want to institute the proposition into law; they ended with the clan of Handarsa, the youngest son of Gudru. If all the clans approve, the session is adjourned. It is only on the next day that the chairman returns to the forum to slaughter a young bull, plunges his *bokku* in the blood of the animal and shows it to the assembly by telling them that the proposition has become law. The *bokku* can be compared to the *mace* of the English Parliament. At the expiration of his eight years of duty the outgoing chairman takes the *bokku* to his house. If he is rich, the ex-chairman keeps his sign of power for his son who will use it some thirty years later, but if he is poor, he sells it to a member of the *Gada* of his son. In Gudru the price of a *bokku* varies from 75 to 125 Francs. If a chairman of an Oromo assembly dies in the exercise of his duties, the *bokku* passes to his son; and if he has not left a son behind, the wife of the deceased then holds the *bokku* and proclaims the law. The person of the chairman is inviolable. While he is in office, national or family vengeance cannot touch him. In theory, he has the power to impose life or death.

The *moti* or king is the chief of the executive power and above all the commanding leader in times of war. He is forbidden from tilling the land, from working on enclosures or from uncovering his body. He has practically nothing to do during peacetime, and, like the king of chess, he cannot fight during war. But less fit than the latter, he must neither strike nor even

stop with his hand the blow of an enemy. His entire role is limited to commanding and he would be covered with shame if he returned from an expedition without having ordered the kill of at least one enemy. Shone, king of Gudru, had earlier gone on expedition against the Negroes and, seeing his army flee before coming to hand-to-hand fight he quickly turned around shouting: "Gudru! I give my children to Makka son of Halelu, and that he take my wife." Then covering himself with his toga, this hero of duty, preferring death to humiliation, faced the enemy that killed him Makka, who had stayed at home, accepted the inheritance and raised the children of the deceased king.

The highest offices of *Irresa*, of *Abba bokku* and of *Moti* are so respected that, even after the expiration of their powers, these personages still keep the privilege of having the first drink and have their animals drink before those of others. A refusal of duties is rare. Yet, about the year 1820, a rich Oromo, not wanting to accept his hereditary dignity of king, had it passed on to his younger brother, who died a short time after. There, said the Gudru, is clear proof that one must not interfere with the rules of an institution that came from the sky.

As there are more Borana than seats allotted to them, they have recourse to election. The form of scrutiny is that which is practiced by the Saho and the Gourage. On the day appointed by custom, the candidates remain standing, the more confident on a big stone, and each elector puts down a fistful of green grass on the head of the one they prefer. They proclaim the result at a guess. In spite of its inconveniences, the public vote gives more strength to the state by assuring the unity of views in each family, and above all by providing grounds for competition to the courage of its opinion which is the great foundation of civic virtues. With the Oromo, the happy elect puts on his head only the cone covered with grass that surrounds it. He keeps his electoral grass cone with care and when leaving his function at the end of the prescribed

eight years, he gives the grass to his cow. If she eats that grass, it is a happy omen that consoles him a bit for the bitter loss of sovereign power.

Although Shumi, my principal host in Oromoland, had been great pontiff of Gudru and though I often questioned him on his beliefs and the forms of his prayers, I have only learned a few things regarding the Oromo religion. It contains vestiges of the Christian faith, because not only do the Oromo believe in a unique and all-powerful God, they also address their prayers to Mary mother of the Son. When I asked Shumi who is this son, he responded to me: "I know nothing about him, but also we have never imagined a question so ridiculous." The Oromo venerate some more or less authentic saints; they have even observed holidays for the blessed deceased and address their prayers to Holy Sunday, to Holy Christmas and to Holy Easter. In spite of the parity of the rites, I do not know why Holy Pentecost has not found a place in the Oromo sky.

These Africans believe in angels and above all in *ayana*, a word that one is tempted to translate to *genie*. There are forty-four *ayana*. This number is almost sacramental in all of Ethiopia in the same way that twelve used to be with us. The Oromo sacrifice to the genies of mountains and of streams under the generic name of *qollo (qaallu)*,⁶ and to those big trees where they suspend their votive offering. They even do libations to the biggest of the three stones that support their pot. They never change its place and regard it as a sort of god, *Lares*,⁷ attached to the house. They share with other East African peoples the belief in charms, in dreams and in omens. As far as the practice of religion, they address at least the prayers of evening to God whom they call *Waaqa, Alla* and *Abba*, the last word signifying *father*. Instead of fasting as so much practiced by the Christians of Ethiopia, they have days of abstinence, but only from the milk diet that they love so much. This love of milk, persisting with warriors, who today have become farm-

ers, is a reminder of the pastoral origin that they attribute to themselves.

The religion of all these fierce tribes, although a bit vague in matters of dogma, inspires nonetheless a lot of zeal in their pilgrims named *jila*, who assemble in the month of June and return the following year after having visited the land of Walal. These *jila* could be compared to those of Mecca for the Muslims and of Jerusalem for the Christians. From the beginning of their pilgrimage until their death, they do not cut either their nail or any hair of their body. One sees, therefore, their hair touch the seat when they sit, which is an extreme case for the hair of non-Negro Ethiopians. During the absence of a *jila*, his wife does penance on her part by not putting butter on her head and by not eating bread other than that which she has cooked under the ash, according to the primitive custom. On their return, these pilgrims do not engage in any other occupation than that of tending cows. As such they believe they are honored by thus conforming to the primitive conditions of their ancestors. People give small gifts to the *jila* and believe devoutly that their presence in the tribe is for them a mysterious benefit.

In spite of their time-honored hatred for the Christians of the north, the Oromo observe the same holidays whose origins they do not know. The biggest is that of *Masqal* or the finding of the Holy Cross. In the night of this holiday, Christian Ethiopia covers itself with fire in open air. The Oromo also make fire in their houses, accompanied by libations of honey mead or beer. The father in the family carries wood from outside, piles them up around his *Lares*, and prays to the unique and great God who made the dome of the blue sky stand without a pillar. The family eats only after the father has thrown a bit of his food to the four corners of the world for the angels and genies that surround him. This saying of *grace* is very much in use in Oromo meals. All people who want to endure must humiliate themselves in front of God and draw

strength in the prayer. The Oromo, as ancient Rome, have faith in their future greatness.

Thinkers who have high regard for human institutions prefer their customs of time immemorial to be in written codes that find their principal authority even in their antiquity; and that the most powerful despot would not reverse them at his will. It is their unwritten law, their *common law* that constitutes the strength of England. It is the secular wisdom that has created the Basque *fueros*, so admirable and so little known. One would not have difficulty therefore understanding that the Oromo, who do not know how to write, also have had laws just as valuable as those of the English. Unfortunately, the foreigner who wants to know institutions of this type finds no one to explain them. He is obliged to wait for the occasion when they invoke the custom to verify it. The foreigner can then identify a generalized principle where the natives envisage only the particular facts. This research therefore requires a lot of time. Even though I stayed with the Oromo for two years, I am able to recollect only one very small part of their ways and customs.

Marriage between near relatives is more or less prohibited in all the land. In this regard, the Borana believe one should not be able to legally marry a woman born of their sixth ancestors, that is to say on the closer side of the sixth degree of relationship. The scrupulous Borana go still further and marry not only outside their clan, but also even outside their tribe. As Romans did in the abduction of the Sabinas, they accept the legitimacy of a marriage where the young girl has been abducted by force. Even when she has given her acknowledgment in secret, they ostensibly beat her before she gives her consent in public. Polygamy is in use by the rich Oromo. "God," they say, "commanded us only one wife: by taking several we were taught by the dogs." This strong expression proves at least that with these people, the conscience is still alive. The custom of divorce exists. A widow is free to marry again in a

new wedding only if her deceased husband's brother refuses to take her as a wife. They do not blame him if he refuses. However, it is rare that he gives up this right, because it beneficially increases the family of the surviving brother. This custom differs a bit from that of Moses.⁸

In all of Ethiopia, the relaxation of morals tends to disorganize the state by the fatal jealousies that it introduces into the family. This moral relaxation is compensated for in part by an innate habit of respect for all that is superior. The sentiment is pushed so far in Oromoland that a servant or even a spouse never pronounces the name of a master (or husband), but calls him by the name of his horse. If he does not have one, that is if he is poor, they use the name of his son or his cow always preceded by the title *Abba*, which signifies *father* or *owner*. Thus Shumi Maèa, Shumi son of Maèa, was known among his entourage under the name of *Abba Biya*, the latter word being the chosen appellation for his first horse of war. These naïve people did me the honor of splitting my patronymic name d'Abbadia and thus rendered me (*Abba Diya*), possessor of a charger *Diya* that never existed.

The institution of a single heir is in every nation a great element of strength. They thus preserve paternal manor house with the idea and influence of their ancestors. They urge the younger children to endeavor to elevate themselves in society, since they cannot count on the allowance, ordinarily meager, of an equal share. If the children of the deceased father are all brothers, the eldest is the sole universal heir. The younger sons get only that which the father has given them from hand to hand while alive or else by his testamentary bequest. As the *testamentum in procinctu*⁹ of Romans, the Oromo testament (will) is entirely oral.

If the sons are from different mothers, each inherits. The custom then prescribes to give to the eldest two-thirds of the inheritance and to his younger brother two-thirds of the rest. For example: if the deceased has left fifty-four cows and four

sons from different wives, the eldest would get thirty-six, the second twelve, the third four and the youngest two. If he has left only twenty-four cows and four sons, the shares would be respectively sixteen, five, two and one, because they would not think of selling these cows to bring the share closer to the law. The father is the uncontested sovereign of the family. As in Rome during the time of *Virginus*, he has the right of life and death over the children. The *Abba Bokku* in times of peace and even the *Moti* during war never embraces the thought of opposing the wish of the father as regards the children. The father raises them as he pleases. In Oromoland, one would never think of proposing an Article Seven.¹⁰

In every society where social cohesion is weak, custom attaches the greatest importance to the shedding of blood, and to avenging it by very severe punishment. In our country, we say, with some appearance of reason, that a political crime must be punished with less severity than a common law crime. In fact, a political crime often emanates from dissent which can be supported by good faith and which a change of opinion can later render popular. Be that as it may, we have gone too far by adding that an attempt against a chief of state is only a political crime deserving compassion. The Oromo have envisaged this serious question otherwise. The government, they say, is a divine institution destined to safeguard the peace for the major benefit of society. Consequently, the one who brings a hostile hand on one of the officers of *Gada* has offended the entire tribe. As a result, he must be put to death. It is further reasoned that he must have had a bad upbringing in his family, abetted by the barbarity of morals, thus all the other descendants of his great-grandfather would be drowned with him. At the present time, when political crimes are so numerous in Europe, a similar law would be the most effective means of depopulation.

The killing of a simple individual is punished with less severity. Conforming to the practices of societies still impreg-

nated with barbarity, Oromo law does not distinguish between murder and assassination; they look only at the fact. The one who kills an Oromo, even *gabbaro* or serf, must perish along with his closest four relatives. They make an exception only for the *tumtu*, that is blacksmiths, weavers or tanners, a caste scorned in all of Ethiopia and which one supposes to be composed of sorcerers. In the eyes of the nation, they are not worth the precious penalty of blood: gold is enough. Custom prescribes that the death of their members must be bought back by a bar of gold equal to a hundred of each of the articles that the deceased used to make, adding to those sixty-six cows. The death of a slave is avenged by a payment of thirty cows. In practice the richer the murderer, the greater the penalty. This idea of a payment that varies according to the fortune of the culpable exists also in the Basque tribunal. It stands to reason and one wonders why it has disappeared in the society that pretends to have a high civilization. In the case of a simple wound, the Oromo name two juries that determine the penalty according to the condition of the wound. If the murder is involuntary, they banish the culpable for a year or two. As soon as he returns, the exiled must make peace by sacrificing a sheep and by washing his hand with the blood. In the case of adultery, the outraged husband does not have the right to kill. However, he could mutilate and even cut off a hand or a leg provided that the culpable does not die from it. As formerly in England, the death of a horse entails that of his murderer.

While suicide is very rare in Christian Ethiopia, it is common among the Oromo tribe called Gudru. Women who are in conflict with their husbands go and hang themselves. They are sure that in the windy rain they hear their souls cry in pain. During my stay in this land, a very rich man committed suicide because his son was caught in adultery by a husband who, greedier than angry, paraded his rival from house to house to announce the crime. The penalty is considerable in such case and as the culpable owned nothing, since he was under the

control of the father, the latter had to pay for his son and preferred to die rather than lose his dear wealth

A tribunal must proceed with slowness in order not to yield to the counsel of passion and must gather precise and costly formulae in order to throw out frivolous suits. We must not be astonished, therefore, to find rules and procedures established even by nations little civilized. With the Oromo every agreement demands a sacrifice and, as a summons to justice is an agreement by which one undertakes to pursue a lawsuit, the process must begin by sending a young bull to the forum, on Tuesday, the day dedicated to lawsuits. The officers of *Gada* are on hand to respond to suits. The judge refuses the sacrifice and declares himself incompetent if he finds the complaint to be trivial or if one of the parties, on account of belonging to a tribe other than his own, escapes the judge's jurisdiction. When he authorizes the sacrifice, they appear in court with reason. If the defendant yields, he must pay the price of the bull that, in all cases, is eaten by the claimant.

The Christians of northern Ethiopia send a magistrate reporter to make the witnesses talk at their places. The Gudru, on the contrary, call each witness before the judge who could make use of constraints in case of refusal or else go collect the testimony himself, but then the recalcitrant Gudru must give the judge a meal where honey mead is indispensable, as well as a goat to cover the expense of justice.

We suppose that the legend of the nine sons of Sopera has motivated the predilection of the Oromo for the number nine. Their little military expeditions are organized by novenas¹¹ of warriors. It is the same for the juries who are indispensable when contest is engaged between litigants belonging to two different clans. Each party names a juror alternately. I could not refrain from admiring their process of allowing the defendant to begin naming jurors—this is in order to assure the liberty of the defense. The defendant thus has the choice of ten jurors out of eighteen, which they divide into two no-

venas who are seated apart. The litigants address sometimes the one, sometimes the other. In the formation of the juries, they allow two challenges without expressed motives. They challenge the selection consecutively or at intervals. A third challenge is regarded as an insult and entails a penalty of nine cows to the benefit of the wronged party unless the adversary has given a valid cause, for example if he proves that the rejected juror has personal enmity or else that he is a relative of the other litigant less than eight times removed.

The plaintiff stands to the right of the judge and litigates by holding the sole of one of his feet leaned against a tree. He does this in order that his indignation, often amplified by his eloquence, does not draw him into personal violence. The defendant gets stricter forewarning than the plaintiff against the danger of losing his case because he litigates crouched, to the left of the judge, his right leg outstretched and the left folded under his body. In seeing how much certain of our advocates abuse their position to hurt the opposite party, one begins to regret that they are not obliged to hold at least one leg so confined that they would be in a hurry to end the abuse. Punctuated by the (dramatic) clack of the whip, Oromo pleadings, always long, are listened to with religious silence.

As with the English and with the Basques, the use of a public prosecutor is unknown. In the cases of blood, the plaintiff must be the closest relative of the victim. If he does not have one less than eight times removed, he is represented by the spouse or even by a servant. If a widow becomes the plaintiff, she appears at the forum, makes the plea by clacking the indispensable whip and then withdraws, entrusting the pleading to her advocate. Women do not attend proceedings.

The trial having been heard, the two juries go to deliberate separately. When they are all in agreement, because the Oromo, like the English, allow only unanimity, the verdict is pronounced. If there is disagreement, the case is postponed to another day. Then they select new jurors.

The law of retaliation reigns from one end of Ethiopia to the other. As all logic is pushed to the extreme, this law often entails consequences that violate the simplest notion of equity. Makko, the Oromo legislator, softened it by instituting the price of blood. Legal fables formerly used in Rome, and today in England, allow distorting the law without directly running counter to it. It is just the same with the Oromo. The old make use of exacting blood as the price for blood. Makko prescribed that after having paid for his crime, the murderer shall appear at the forum with the lung of a calf around his neck. The suitable penalty shall then be set after the closest relative charged with avenging the blood has pierced this lung with spear. The murderer then pulls off the lung and can no longer be pursued. This is what they express by saying: (*somba baasee*) or he pulled off the lung.

Chatting with Shumi Maèa, my host and my friend, I curiously asked him one day with what sign does one recognize a Borana. 'With this mark,' he responded to me, showing me on his hand a line that goes from his wrist in the direction of the third finger and which they call line of the faith in palmistry. To my surprise, I verified, in fact, that this line ordinarily is missing in non-Borana Ethiopians. Would it still be a proof of European origin of the descendants of Sapera? What is certain is that in Oromoland I have more than once unmasked a would-be Borana to the applause of the crowd that attributed it to the extent of my remote skill, which was uniquely the lesson from the good Shumi Maèa. Upon my return to Europe, I recounted this story to Mr. Serres, member of the Institute. He was so astonished by it that he asked for my permission to see the hand of my Ethiopian servant. I called my former slave Adula, and ordered him to open his hand. To the surprise of the learned anthropologist, the line was not there.

The other signs by which one recognized a Borana are the absolute exclusion of two food nutriments: they do not eat the muscle called *biceps* any more than linseed. I share their

repugnance for the latter dish. As an isolated traveler not having any other protection than the respect that comes to inspire, I believed I must refuse from the moment of my first meal the meat of the *biceps*.

The precaution appeared to be crowned with success when I heard them say with low voice that I was a pure Borana. But it was not long before my trick received their chastisement. In fact, I learned later of the Oromo legend that the *gabbaro* or setfs are descendants of the thirty sons of Adam, while the Borana regard the origin of their ancestor Sapera as entirely supernatural and even call him son of Satan. I found myself, therefore, very much at a loss between these two fathers, not being able to conveniently accept the second, and Adam, the first, being considered by the Borana as ... an ill-bred person.

A peaceable Oromo does not let his hair grow. This embellishment is allowed only to the officers of the *Gada*, to pilgrims, and to those who just killed an enemy or a large beast like a buffalo or an elephant. Wealth without personal bravery has little right for consideration with the Oromo. Their most praised chiefs are those who, like Achilles, have the talent to instill panic terror in their enemies and quick dexterity to kill the last runaways. Nobody could aspire after any office in government or at the suffrage of electors if he has not killed a man or a large beast. Nobody believes in courage that does not have its proof. As a result, it has the effect of rendering peace treaties difficult, of perpetuating war with all the neighbors, and of separating not only the tribes but also often even the clans of the great Oromo nation into very small rival confederations. If they had understood the importance of remaining united, they would long ago have extended their empire as far as the effeminate races that inhabit the seacoast.

In departing for my voyages, I was imbued with the idea that the state of nature is the golden age of humanity and the barbarians, having few needs, have nothing to press them to-

ward moral disorder. The study of facts has convinced me that those whom we call barbarians are not in the state of nature but are well-degenerated races. Everyone tends to prove that it is so with the peoples of Ethiopia. They keep antiquated words in their language that are barely understood by some elders and which words, similar to the fossils of geologists, are witnesses to a life that is extinct. They are surrounded by scandalous vices that one finds uniquely in the vileness of our big European cities. Our countryside very rarely offers these examples of corruption of words so common with Ethiopians. The wisest among them is content to disapprove of them with laughter. Public opinion does not rise against these faults. It is very true that man is inclined towards mischief and loses himself in it when he does not have special chiefs to teach him morals and maintain the faith.

In crossing the River Abbay to enter Oromoland, the traveler is struck by not only the abundance of trees, the change in costume and language, but above all by the dispersion of houses. That is what we see in Europe in Norway, in Westphalia and with the Basques, without having yet found a plausible reason to explain why these people do not agglomerate into villages that are preferable in appearance as well for the agreeableness of the society as for the common defense.

With us, we place intelligence in the brain and the feeling in the heart. The Amhara, Ethiopian people, put the thought in the heart and tenderness in the intestines. The Oromo place all in the stomach. In his songs of bard, one of their gallants, having all his enemies flee or perish, recognizes that his only rival is another warrior, separated from him by a hostile tribe. He came to obtain permission from them to traverse their territory in order to proceed to a duel convened in advance, and received a blow of spear in the stomach. The content came out through the gaping wound and he said, "Ah! A scamp of a stomach, it is you who brought me here, and you are the first to abandon me."

Although thinking by the stomach, to which they suppose, the Oromo have their proverbs and their traits of spirit. They know how to raise themselves to general considerations that are the salient characteristics of thinkers. These African conservatives love to talk about the good old days when their ancestors, clothed in skin and consuming milk, lived in the wholesome peace of God. They deplore the present licentiousness of morals and the fatal divisions that separate the valiant tribes by maintaining hostilities that are continual, useless and fatal for the future of a nation that perceives itself to be strong. They acknowledge the insufficiency of their crude religion, prefer Islam, and think that the Christian faith is better if they could find *men of the book* to instruct them. Msgr. Massaia, by dedicating his life to them, has responded to this last wish. He has shown how much their souls are prolific, how many in his newly born church he encounters, not only people of solid virtues, but also with more traits of African heroism that Europe can only envy. However rough a nation may be, it is always possible to pull it away from that if it is energetic. Personal courage covers a depth of generosity and it is not without reason that in every land one is tempted to regard as nobler the one who is braver.

In a scientific society, one would ask what Oromo consciousness is. One of our chats at their house would be sufficient to give it a dimension. Dibar Namo, of the Luku clan, confirmed to us the traditions and the legends of his nation. One day being in humor of deep thoughts, he explained to me at great length how the sun goes out through a different door everyday of the week, because he added, "I learned it from a man who visited the land where this star rises." Then he asked me if I did not admire such a beautiful story. As I strove to show that there are no doors for the sun and that its disc appears to depict a spiral in the space, Dibar, a bit sad for having so spoken without convincing me, interrupted me saying: "Science, science, all that is only a vain name. I am old. I have

spent all my life asking questions and after so many inquiries I only learned two truths: the one, that all being that is born must die; the other, that when the sun rises it lights. The truth and the misreckoning, he added, are separated by a line that one cannot split into two. Midday is the limit of our days. The deliberation of the morning is good and true; that of the evening is full of errors. The dream at the beginning of the night comes from the devil; at the approach of the morning, the dream is a message from the sky. However, who will separate the epochs so different? Abba Diya, you are a man protected by the genies: go to your land and repeat these words of an old Borana."¹²

NOTES

- 1 Translator's note: Antoine D'Abbadie presented his lecture on the Oromo in French to the General Assembly of the Institute of France on April 5, 1880. The lecture was published as: "Sur les Oromo, grande nation Africaine a designe souvent sous le nom "Galla." *Annales de la societe Scientifique de de Bruxelles* 4 (1880), 162-188. The published text included long and complex sentences. In this translation, where appropriate, such sentences were broken up into simpler ones without in any way changing their meanings. This was necessary to maintain the structure of English grammar.
- 2 Author's note: After having spoken a foreign idiom, which contains some simple sounds unusual in French, a traveler cannot be satisfied with a vague spelling. Here is our method:

In the cited Oromo words, every letter must be pronounced. They do not change the sound according to the adjacent letters; hence it is always hard, *gi* is *gui* in French. *A* or *a* is a short *a*, having the sound of the *u* in English as in the word *but* or as with our collegians in the Latin word *Dominum*. *C* has the sound given by the Italians in front of *e*, *i*; *co* must therefore be pronounced *tcho*. *C* is *tt* of the Basques, or a *tch* pronounced with tip of the tongue. *D* is a sound called cerebral, holding *d*, *r* and *l* at the same time. *E* is a closed *e*; *g* is always hard; *h* is aspirated. *I*, *i* is the short *i* of the English as in *pin* or the second *i* in *vivit* according to the use of our collegians. *J* is pronounced *dj*, as in English. *Gn* is expressed by the Spanish *ñ*. *Q* is the Arabic *qof* and is said in the throat. *T* is the emphatic *t* of the Arabs. *U* is pronounced *ou*. *W* must be said

as in English X has a Spanish or Portuguese sound and is equivalent to the French *ch*. The hiatus, or *hamzah* of the Arabs, is indicated by (-)

We write “the Oromo” and not the “Oromos”, because the latter form might lead one to believe that one must say “Oromos” in singular. Besides, it is not right to add an *s*, a plural sign in French, to a word of a foreign language which a grammar very different from ours, and above all, as it is the case, with a word of an idiom where the names remain without change in plural.

3. Translator’s note: Once the fighting had ceased, it was customary for leaders on the battlefield to shout the command, “Sons *galaa*.” This meant that the fighting was over, sons go home – return to base. The word *galaa*, in the Oromo language means go home. Once the battle is won, Oromo tradition dictates that no further infliction on the vanquished is allowed. Martial de Salviac wrote in his book that was published in 1901 that, “The Oromo abhors such monstrosities. He never reduces the vanquished to servitude; furthermore, as soon as a slave falls into the hands of the Oromo, he is in fact freed and adopted into the domestic hearth, according to the family rite that is appropriate for the age and gender.” See A. Kanno, *An Ancient People Great African Nation The Oromo*. Trans. (East Lansing, MI) 337
4. Translator’s note: A *doge* is the chief magistrate in the republics of Venice and Genoa
5. Translator’s note: Lycurgus was a Spartan lawgiver in the 9th century B.C.
6. Translator’s note: The word *gollo* does not appear to be correct. The author may have meant the word *qaallu*
7. Translator’s note: *Lares*: In Roman religion, *Lares* is a class of benevolent spirits presiding over the house and family.
8. Author’s note: Deuteronomy Chapter 25, Verse 5 (Text from the Bible added by translator: “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead shall not marry outside the family to a stranger; her husband’s brother shall go into her, and take her as his wife, and perform the duties of a husband’s brother to her”).
9. Translator’s note: *Testamentum in procinctu* was the will of Roman soldiers before going into battle.
10. Translator’s note: This is a reference to French law pertaining to children.
11. Translator’s note: A novena is a Roman Catholic nine days’ devotion

- 12 Author's note: The Oromo almost touch the coast of the Indian Ocean near Mombasa, fight every day with the Somali, the Yamma, the Tufte and the Negroes who walk along the Didesa lowland. Farther away, the Oromo of Wallo and Wara Himano have established themselves in the shape of a nook between the Amhara of the north and those of the south. The Azabo Oromo made their incursions in Tigray as far as below the 13th degree latitude. Further west, to these conquerors have so well depopulated the northern bank of Lake Tana that the local king Yasu in a slow progression settled them there. Today we know this district under the name of Meca (Maëa?) and its inhabitants have adopted the language of the Amhara all in maintaining the hereditary pre-eminence of their bellicose values. It is thus that our king Charles the Simple gave Neustrie to the Normands who did not delay forgetting their Scandinavian idiom. In summary, the Oromo made felt the weight of their forces in East Africa over a space of 6 to 7 degrees longitude and 15 degrees in latitude, or more than double of the territory of France. They completely enveloped the Gurage and perhaps other nations about whom we do not know either the borders or even the name. It is therefore not possible to evaluate the space occupied by the sons of Galla; it is even less to hazard a conjecture on their actual population. Their traditions affirm that one of their armies established itself far to the west of Kaffa and add that the latter land inflicted on them a bloody defeat on the River Ginc near Bonga where the Sidama driven into a corner then defended themselves with energy and retrenched themselves still today behind the River Gojab. Other populations driven back by the Oromo have without a doubt stopped similarly the flight of their conquests. The internal discord then came to kill the spirit of invasion: today the Oromo fight above all among themselves.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ANTOINE D'ABBADIE IN OROMO STUDIES

Mohammed Hassen

Antoine d'Abbadie (1810-1897), one of the most objective, versatile and erudite French scholars, launched both Ethiopian and Oromo studies in France during the second half of the nineteenth century. His 1880 famous article entitled, "On the Oromo: Great African Nation Often Designated Under the Name of Galla," included in this issue, was the first detailed study of the *gada* system and the rich Oromo democratic heritage. In many ways, it was d'Abbadie's 1880 article that inspired French, German, Italian and British scholars to undertake the study of the *gada* system. Even Asmarom Legesse, whose impressive scholarship demonstrates the rich universe of Oromo democratic heritage, credits the fore-mentioned article for kindling his interest in the Oromo. In the manuscript written in 1905, Asma Giyorgis suggested that the French love the Oromo.¹ There is no doubt that d'Abaddie's scholarship, widely read by the French public, fired up their imagination about the Oromo. What is more,

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d'Abbadie displayed a wall painting of an Oromo *chafee* assembly (parliament) on the door of his castle, which is still visited by tourists daily, to popularize the Oromo and spur Oromo studies.

Antoine d'Abbadie's contribution to Oromo studies is not limited to a single article. He repeatedly refers to the Oromo in several published works and numerous unpublished material which spurred generations of European scholars to take up Oromo studies. One such scholar was Martial de Salviac, whose magnum opus, *An Ancient People Great African Nation: the Oromo*, details Oromo political, religious, philosophical and cultural vitality and dynamism. Antoine d'Abbadie's influence on de Salviac is indisputable. The very title of de Salviac's book was borrowed from d'Abbadie's article of 1880. What is more, Antoine d'Abbadie left behind an inexhaustible treasure of information on the Oromo in general and the Gibe region in particular. Generations of scholars on the Oromo, including myself, are beneficiaries of d'Abbadie's trove of unpublished material.²

Until recently, these important source materials on the Oromo were accessible only to those who knew the French language. Out of print for over a century, these works have not been readily accessible even for those who have a mastery of the French language. Luckily, readers of the *Journal of Oromo Studies* and the next generation of scholars of the Oromo are going to have access to these indispensable sources in English, thanks to the exemplary effort of Ayalew Kanno, a scholar, diplomat, and now translator, who took it upon himself to translate both d'Abbadie's article and de Salviac's book. We are indebted to Ayalew Kanno for his translation of the two rare works.

Antoine d'Abbadie was the first European scholar to categorically state that Galla is not the way Oromos refer to themselves. He said the people call themselves Oromo and insisted that others refer to them by their preferred appellation. This in

itself was a radical departure from the intellectual climate of the period when European travelers, missionaries, and diplomats referred to the Oromo by the derogatory name of Galla. D'Abbadie went further and presented the Oromo as a great African nation. Indeed they were a great African nation before they were conquered and colonized by Emperor Menelik in the late nineteenth century. Antoine d'Abbadie's article was published at the time when the overwhelming majority of the Oromo were sovereign people who lived in freedom and independence as masters of their own destiny and makers of their own history. Antoine d'Abbadie lived among the Oromo when they were a proud, independent nation and his article expresses his observation of Oromo institutions and their profound love for freedom and human dignity. In contrast to d'Abbadie's 1880 article, de Salviac's 1901 book covers the darkest period of Oromo history, when the once great African nation was conquered, its well developed political, religious and democratic institutions were systematically destroyed, the people's land confiscated, and their human dignity violated. They were reduced to *gabbars* (serfs), who were exploited economically, subjugated politically and abused in all manners big and small.

Before highlighting d'Abbadie's contribution to Oromo studies, I would like to provide a brief background as to how he came to live among the Oromo in the 1840s. Antoine d'Abbadie was born in 1810 in Dublin, Ireland. His father, Michel, was a descendant of French nobility from the Basque country in France. Michel was a wealthy trader, a monarchist and a deeply religious man who, apparently outraged by the radical course of the French Revolution (1789-1795), immigrated to Ireland, where he married an Irish woman named Elisabeth Thompson Park.³ Antoine was the eldest of Michel and Elisabeth's six children. His family returned to France in 1820, years after the end of the French Revolution and restoration of the monarchy. By all accounts a gifted student, Antoine studied liberal arts and law in college. He also took

courses in “astronomy, physics, zoology, mineralogy, topography and linguistics.”⁴ As a young man it was said that Antoine “moved by an insatiable intellectual appetite and by a vision steeped in romanticism, conceived of a project of exploration of Ethiopia at the end of his college years.”⁵ However, before his departure for the Horn of Africa, Antoine was sent to Brazil in 1836, where he observed “the variations of terrestrial magnetism.”⁶

It was in 1837 that Antoine and his younger brother, Arnauld, left for Abyssinia. Their goal was to discover the source of the White Nile, following in the foot step of Pedro Paez, who noted as early as 1607 that Lake Tana was the source of Blue Nile. “In 1838 Antoine returned for a year to Europe, to collect scientific instruments for his geographical and astronomical research”⁷ Antoine returned to Abyssinia in 1840 where he conducted research up to 1842 in Tigray, Gondar, Lake Tana and Gojjam areas.

ANTOINE D’ABBADIE AMONG THE OROMO (1843-1844 & 1846)

Antoine d’Abbadie did not limit his research to the core areas of Abyssinia alone. In 1843, d’Abbadie expanded his research across the River Abbay (Blue Nile) into Oromo country, where he conducted scientific research for three years. His earliest research was among the Gudru Oromo. Antoine d’Abbadie compares the beauty of Oromoland with Europe’s landscapes:

In crossing the River Abbay to enter Oromoland, the traveler is struck not only by the abundance of trees, the change in costume and language, but above all by the dispersion of houses. That is what we see in Europe in Norway, in Westphalia and with the Basques (p. 142).

Antoine’s brother, Arnauld d’Abbadie, who lived in Gojjam and participated in *Dajazmach* Goshu’s wars against the Oromo during the 1840s expressed the Oromo’s profound

love for trees, and the gracefulness of their country with these words.

No enemy... would come to break the branches or fell the trees which the Oromo love so much that they plant them near the dwellings, the greenery and the shade delight the eyes all over and give the landscape a richness and a variety which make it like a garden without boundary. Healthful climate, uniform and temperate, fertility of the soil, beauty of the inhabitants, the security in which their houses seem to be suited, makes one dream of remaining in such a beautiful country.⁸

Arnauld d'Abbadie adds the comments of a dying Amhara soldier who with a sense of regret said: "What a pity that this land is not Amhara."⁹ The beauty of Oromo territory and its bounty captured the imagination of Amhara leaders and their soldiers and the occupation of Oromoland became the ultimate objective of their endless raids against the Oromo. After the Amhara conquered and occupied Oromoland, it was not only the people who suffered, even also the trees which Antoine d'Abbadie admired were destroyed. This was reported in 1901 by Martial de Salviac, who witnessed the crude ravaging of trees in Oromo country.

The Amhara devastate the forests by pulling from it the laths for their houses and make camp fires or firewood for their dwellings. They do not have the foresight to reforest or to respect the roots of trees, which would grow new off shoots. [The Amharas were accused] ... of exercising their barbarity against the forests for the sole pleasure of ravaging.¹⁰

D'Abbadie's 1880 article "On the Oromo, Great African Nation" was based primarily on his research among the Gudru Oromo. He easily disposes of the claim that the Oromo came to Ethiopia from central Africa. Instead, he presented an

Oromo oral tradition which states that the ancestor of the Oromo known as Sopera settled near the River Awash, where “his descendants lived peacefully for five or six generations (198 years by d’Abbadie’s estimate) before the fifteen century” (p. 122) Antoine d’Abbadie, like his contemporaries and modern scholars did not grasp the full import of the tradition about Sopera. However, by giving a central role to this oral tradition, d’Abbadie establishes the presence of the Oromo around River Awash nearly one hundred ninety eight years before the beginning of the fifteenth century. This means, the standard wisdom in Ethiopian historiography that the Oromo arrived within the border of the historical province of Bali (the northern region of what is today Bale region) only in 1522 is erroneous Oromo oral tradition recorded by d’Abbadie nearly a century and half ago and substantiated by other written documents firmly establishes Oromo presence near River Awash around 1200.¹¹ Who is to say that they did not live in the same area much earlier than this period?

Antoine d’Abbadie lived among the Gudru Oromo, at the time when the *gada* system was disintegrating under the pressure of the transformation of Oromo economic basis from pastoralism to sedentary mixed agriculture, which brought in its train division of the society into classes. Antoine d’Abbadie mentions that some wealthy men owned as many as 7,000 head of cattle,¹² extensive land and slaves. Even though these wealthy men were dominant figures when d’Abbadie lived among the Gudru Oromo, the Gudru *chafee* assembly remained the Oromo political nerve center, where the people debated important issues of the day and made laws. Antoine d’Abbadie tells us the Oromo developed complex rules of government comparable to those of the great Roman Republic during its democratic period. He goes on to say that the Oromo had established a clear separation of powers, which is the basis of the modern democratic system in the Western world. Antoine d’Abbadie compares the Gudru *chafee* assembly which was held

under *oda* (sycamore tree) with the custom of his own people the Basque, who also held their assembly under an oak tree. When the *chafee* assembly was in session, the leader of the assembly held the *bokku*, which d'Abbadie compares "to the mace of the English parliament" (p. 130). This was a remarkable comparison in a sense that it was the first time an African institution was juxtaposed with the mother of parliamentary systems of government in the Western world. Antoine d'Abbadie goes on to state that when the leader of the Gudru assembly was engaged in oratory, the leader of the opposition listened with respectful silence, unlike the rancorous European chambers.

When the orator finished, the assembly kept quite for a long while in order to allow him to continue his speech if he then recalled an omitted argument. In these oratorical contests of Africa there is always a natural dignity and decorum that we would like to see in the turbulent chamber of Europe where the wisest have sometimes regretted untimely vivacity (p. 130).

Antoine d'Abbadie goes further and compares the Oromo law with that of the English and the Basque people.

It is their unwritten law, it is their common law that makes up the strength of England; it is the secular wisdom that has created the Basque *fueros* so admirable and so little known. One would not have difficulty therefore to understand that the Oromo, who do not know how to write, also have had laws so valuable as those of the English (p. 134).

Such a refreshing comparison of the unwritten Oromo law, with the English common law demonstrates not only d'Abbadie's objectivity, open-mindedness, and lack of prejudice, but also the richness of the Oromo law and the respect the people had for the rule of law. Concerning how the law

was administered among the Gudru Oromo, d'Abbadie relates, "A tribunal must proceed with slowness in order not to yield to the counsel of passion and must gather precise and costly formulas in order to throw out frivolous suits" (p. 142) Once a case was accepted the trial was conducted by jury, which was similar to the English jury system.

Each party names alternatively a juror and, that which I could not refrain from admiring This is in order to assure the liberty of the defense they allow the defendant to begin naming jurors He thus has the choice of ten jurors out eighteen, which they divide into two novenas who are seated apart. The litigants address themselves sometimes to the one sometimes to the other. In the formation of the juries; they allow two challenges without expressed motives; they challenge the selection consecutively or at intervals . . . The trial having been heard, the two juries go to deliberate separately When they are all in agreement, because the Oromo, just as the English allow unanimity, the verdict is pronounced (p. 141)

According to d'Abbadie, the Oromo believe "in a unique and all-powerful God." They draw strength in the praying to this all-powerful God. Their religion "inspires . . . a lot of zeal in their pilgrims" called *jila*, who, every eight years, visited the sacred land of *Abba Muundaa* in Walal. "These *jila* could be compared to those of Mecca for the Muslims and Jerusalem for the Christians" (p. 157)

Antoine d'Abbadie's research among the Oromo is not confined to the Gudru area. Between 1843 and 1844 and in 1846, he stayed among the Oromo in the Gibe region, especially in the kingdom of Limmu-Ennarya. Even though his stay in the region was short, the product delivered was truly immense.¹³ Antoine d'Abbadie gathered information on geography, history, economy, politics, religion and relations with neighboring peoples from a wide circle of merchants, elders,

and political leaders including Abba Bagibo, the famous king of Limmu-Ennarya (1825-1861), Abba Rebu, the grandfather of the king, and Abba Jobit, the king's uncle. The latter two, according to d'Abbadie, were the confidant of the King¹⁴ and members of the Council of State.

A keen observer, d'Abbadie kept dated records of everything he heard and so documented his own research.¹⁵ He left behind numerous and truly rich unpublished material on the political economy of the Gibe region and surrounding regions. It is the richest and finest collection of historical sources on the Oromo of southwestern Oromoland. All together, there are twenty-seven volumes, housed at the Biblioteque Nationale in Paris, most of which deal with Ethiopia, though some contain the private papers of the d'Abbadie's family.¹⁶

This unpublished material provides us with reliable information about every aspect of the Oromo society of southwestern Oromoland in the 1840s. When the unpublished papers of d'Abbadie are published within the next three to four years,¹⁷ they will provide an extensive source of information for future researchers. Their publication will be a great blessing for Oromo studies.

Antoine d'Abbadie also furnishes otherwise hard-to-find information on the inner workings of the government of Limmu-Ennarya, the richest and most powerful Oromo state during the 1840s. He describes Abba Bagibo, as very handsome, fair in complexion, tall and well built, eloquent and master of "cunning and crafty diplomacy."¹⁸ Abba Bagibo considered D'Abbadie a priest and offered to build him a church if he wanted to stay in his country.¹⁹ Because of the Oromo's amenable attitude towards European Christianity, d'Abbadie "contacted the Vatican in 1846 to promote the sending of Catholic missionaries"²⁰ to Oromoland. In response to d'Abbadie's suggestion Pope "...Gregory XVI sent missionaries to carry on the work."²¹ Cardinal Massaja was appointed as the first Catholic Bishop of Oromoland. Owing to the strong

friendship that d'Abbadie had established with him, the famous king Abba Bagibo facilitated the establishment of Catholic missions in the states of Limmu-Ennarya, Gera and Kaffa. Massaja describes Abba Bagibo as an extraordinary leader, endowed with a liberal and generous hand, a consummate and accomplished politician, a patient and exceedingly tolerant father-figure, a man of peace,²² "the new Solomon of [the Oromo]"²³

According to d'Abbadie, Abba Bagibo knew how to make excellent use of his immense wealth to spread his fame far and wide beyond the Gibe region. Interestingly, d'Abbadie tells us that Abba Bagibo practiced and protected traditional Oromo religion, while he was the Muslim king of Limmu-Ennarya. In 1843, d'Abbadie recorded the following under the title of "the Oromo sacrifice"

The great priest was Abba Bagibo, in person and the God was good old Mount Agamsa. The king himself walked towards the sacrificial animals pronouncing loudly; oh God . I give you a bull, so that you favor us, protect our country, guide our soldiers, prosper our countryside, and multiply our cows! I give you a bull, I give you a bull. This done the animal was knocked down and the king cut its throat with a saber, without stooping to do so. A small piece of meat was cut from above the eye and it was thrown into the fire together with myrrh and incense. Then all the courtiers returned to the palace. Someone told me that the slaves of the king would eat the flesh of the sacrificed animal.²⁴

The above quotation describes unadulterated Oromo religious practice. Abba Bagibo prayed to the traditional Oromo God on "behalf of his people, his country and his soldiers. In this sense, he was the symbol for the close bond which linked together the function of political leader and a spiritual father."²⁵ In fact, according to one source, Abba Bagibo considered him-

self as the Chief *Qaalluu* of his kingdom.”²⁶ Antoine d'Abbadie reported that Abba Bagibo believed that the presence of *jila*, the Oromo pilgrims to the land of *Abba Munda* was a blessing to his kingdom and its people. The king not only treated the *jila* graciously, but he also sent gifts to the *Abba Munda* himself.²⁷

Antoine d'Abbadie provides us with numerous examples of how Abba Bagibo dominated the politics and political landscape of the Gibe region through diplomacy and political marriages. Two examples should suffice for our purpose. The first deals with what d'Abbadie termed as “Abba Bagibo’s cunning and crafty diplomacy” and his skill in maneuvering out of difficult situations. This concerns Abba Jifar I (1830-1855), King of the Kingdom of Jimma and Abba Bagibo’s main rival in the Gibe region.

According to d'Abbadie, on 18 September 1843, a delegation from Abba Jifar I arrived in Saqqa, the capital of Limmu-Ennarya, seeking Abba Bagibo’s reassurance that his soldiers would not attack Jimma, while the latter was at war with the Janjero.²⁸ At the very moment, another delegation from the King Kullo was in Saqqa to conclude a secret mutual defense pact directed against Jimma.²⁹ Abba Babibo promised the first delegation that he will remain neutral in the conflict between Jimma and Janjero. Encouraged by Abba Bagibo’s promise of neutrality and perhaps excited by the hope of an easy victory, “Abba Jifar sent a strong force into Janjero through the gates by which they were never to return. In the trap, the men of Jimma, united by danger and animated by despair fought bravely before they were overwhelmed by numbers and destroyed.”³⁰ Antoine d'Abbadie left us a vivid description of the shattering disaster Jimma had suffered.

On September 27,[1843] a messenger from Jimma arrived at Saqqa to inform about the disaster that had come upon the troops of his country, who were going to at-

tack the Janjero ... The country was defended on the border by ditches and fortifications of palisades. There were six to eight gates of entrance. The Janjero opened them and said to the men of Jimma, that their own forces were in state of panic and had run away to a certain massera (a fortified house) Full of confidence, the [men of] Jimma advanced. A good number of their troops entered into the massera and then the Janjero closed all gates. Then they jumped on the men inside and started the carnage which went on for a long time. 307 cavalry with red shirts were cut down. The number of soldiers of lesser rank who were killed were so great that . . . they could not be counted. Jimma had lost all her brave warriors in this single encounter alone. The men of Jimma abandoned ten leagues of the countryside having lost (many warriors) At this time, Jimma was seeking an agreement with Limmu, Gomma, Gumma and Gera, for revenge and to drive the Janjero from the land. The [Oromo] estimated the loss of Jimma at ten thousand.³¹

According to d'Abbadie neither the disaster that befell Jimma nor Abba Jifar's appeal for help was sufficient to move Abba Bagibo into action. Antoine d'Abbadie relates that Abba Bagibo did not take any military action, even after he learned about the outrageous acts which the Janjero had committed against Jimma.³²

Antoine d'Abbadie provides us with many examples of how Abba Bagibo used political marriages as the kernel of his foreign policy, a powerful weapon in the arsenal of his diplomacy. While the king married into all the ruling families of the Gibe region, Abba Bagibo's marriage connection with Kaffa is interesting. In 1823 Limmu-Ennarya celebrated the marriage of Abba Bagibo to the daughter of the reigning king of Kaffa. In 1843, when Abba Bagibo proposed to marry a sister of the King of Kaffa, d'Abbadie was among the distinguished men who were sent to negotiate that marriage.³³ In 1846 when Abba

Bagibo married a daughter of the King of Kullo, it was Arnauld, Antoine's younger brother, who was selected to be among the distinguished elders who negotiated that marriage. Antoine d'Abbadie tells us that Abba Bagibo aspired to unite the Gibe region through political marriages.

Abba Bagibo who seemed to live only for women, to whose numerous concubines has already given 27 sons and 45 daughters claimed especially to extend his influence through marriages. He was a blue beard of rare kind, he had already 12 queens and approximately 300 concubines. . . His thirteenth queen, a daughter of the king of Kullo, was the most beautiful of many others, who had entered in the care of the eunuch of Limmu-Ennarya.³⁴

Antoine d'Abbadie tells us that, as the king held together his own country through political marriage,³⁵ Abba Bagibo also sought to hold together the surrounding countries through dynastic marriage.³⁶

No other king in the Horn of Africa impressed both d'Abbadie and Cardinal Massaja as Abba Bagibo did. Through his numerous unpublished materials, d'Abbadie repeatedly mentions Abba Bagibo's intelligence, wisdom, generosity, sense of humor, eloquence, patience, knowledge of the history of his people and the politics of the Gibe region. Above all, d'Abbadie was impressed with Abba Bagibo's "cunning and crafty diplomacy,"³⁷ which was comparable to the Machiavelian European politics of the nineteenth century. Abba Bagibo, the wealthiest man in the region, also had an insatiable appetite for refined things.³⁸ Cardinal Massaja summed up the huge impact Abba Bagibo made on him.

I found the king seated in the middle of [ca 50] great dignitaries of the kingdom and the top officials of his residence. I have seen many princes during my many years stay in Ethiopia, but none had made so much impression

upon my like Abba Bagibo. . . . He sat on the throne. . . and had such majesty in posture, to which at the first sight the imagination resorted to fly to what was used to be said of King Solomon. The fruits of the royal residence, the walls built with such magnificence and skills could not find a match in the whole of Ethiopia.³⁹

From their base in Limmu-Ennarya, d'Abbadie and his brother, Arnauld, explored the surrounding areas including Kaffa and discovered the source of Omo River in 1846. The brothers erroneously claimed to have discovered the source of the White Nile.⁴⁰ At the end of 1846, d'Abbadie returned to Abyssinia, where he continued with his "philological studies and collection of manuscripts in Gondar"⁴¹ When the Abaddie brothers returned to France in 1848, almost eleven years after their arrival in the Horn of Africa region, they had explored " . . . areas of what are now Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and northern Somalia."⁴² In recognition of their achievements, "both brothers were awarded the grand medal of the Paris Geographical Society in 1850."⁴³

Between 1850 and the 1890s d'Abbadie wrote prolifically based on the massive data he collected for over a decade. His major publications include but are not limited to:

1. Catalogue raisonné de manuscrits éthiopiens appartenant à Antoine d'Abbadie (Paris, 1859);
2. Résumé Géodésique des positions déterminées en Éthiopie;
3. Géodésie d'Éthiopie ou triangulation d'une patrie de la haute Éthiopie;
4. Observations relatives à la physique du globe, faites au Brésil et en Éthiopie;
5. Dictionnaire de la langue Amariñña.⁴⁴

Of the corpus of d'Abbadie's works, his article, "On the Oromo the Great African Nation" was his outstanding ethno-

graphic work. His *Géographie de l'Éthiopie*, which was published in 1890, contains useful information about Oromoland, its resources and the industry of its inhabitants.

Antoine d'Abbadie was an active member of several French scholarly institutions, including "Société de Géographie, Société de Linguistique, Bureau des Longitudes"⁴⁵ and the French Academy of Sciences (1852-1897). Antoine d'Abaddie was the greatest promoter of Basque cultural nationalism. He used the experience he gained while living among the Gudru Oromo for coining a powerful slogan for uniting his Basque people who were scattered in seven provinces in France and Spain. The Gudru Oromo always referred to themselves as *torban Gudru* (the Seven Gudru) who are one people. Using the Gudru Oromo model, d'Abbadie coined his famous slogan of "Ziz piak bat" (seven are one), intellectually demonstrating that the Basque who live in the seven Bascophone provinces of France and Spain are one people. He published several works in the Basque language,⁴⁶ creating an ideological foundation for a strong Basque cultural movement. His slogan of "ziz piak bat" provided "lasting rally for the mono-ethnic unity of the seven Bascophone provinces."⁴⁷ Inspired by the Gudru Oromo oratory and the poetic beauty of his Basque language d'Abbadie "organized poetry competition (floral games) and encouraged folkloric manifestations and sporting competitions."⁴⁸ The Basque cultural movement that d'Abbadie established remained active and widely popular from 1852 to 1899

The wall painting on Antoine d'Abbadie's castle (built between 1860 and 1870) is beautifully decorated with an Oromo *chafee* assembly, expressing his love for the Oromo and profound respect for their democratic heritage. As an objective observer, d'Abbadie did not limit himself only to mentioning all the good things about the Oromo. He also comments on the Oromo internal discord, which perpetuated war within themselves and with their neighbors. According to

d'Abbadie, internal discord created small rival confederations that made unity against a common enemy impossible. He ends his 1880 seminal article on the Oromo with these prophetic words: "Today the Oromo fight above all among themselves" (p. 146). What d'Abbadie observed was not lost on Emperor Menelik. He took advantage of the internecine fighting among the Oromo to launch his conquests in which prevailed.

Finally, Antoine d'Abbadie was an "explorer, geographer, linguist, and astronomer,"⁴⁹ patron of Basque cultural nationalism, and "a fervent Catholic."⁵⁰ He gave his property in southern France "to the Academy of Sciences, of which his castle that houses a foundation carries his name."⁵¹ Antoine d'Abbadie died in 1897. One hundred and ten years after his death, the marvelous wall painting of Oromo assembly that decorates the door of his castle is still enjoyed by thousands of tourists who annually visit his foundation. For all intent and purposes, it was Antoine d'Abbadie who initially inspired research about the *gada* system, established Oromo and Ethiopian studies in France and planted in the imagination of the French society love for the Oromo and respect for their democratic institution.

NOTES

1. Bairu Tafla, ed., *Asma Giyorgis and His Work History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Sawa* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1987).
2. Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); In chapters 3 through 6, I extensively used Antoine d'Abbadie's unpublished materials.
3. Eloi Ficquet, "Abbadie, Antoine d' (Dublin, 1810—Paris, 1897) et Arnauld d (Dublin, 1815-Giboure (Pyrenees Atlantique), 1893)" (2006): p. 1. See also Thomas Zitelmann, "Abbadie, Antoine d' and Arnauld, d'" *Encyclopedia Aethiopica* Vol. I A-C. Edited by Siegbert Uhlig (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003): p. 25. I thank Dr. Eloi Ficquet for sending me the paper he recently wrote about the d'Abbadie brothers for a dictionary of French Orientalists. I am indebted to my friend, Dr.

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- Ayalew Kanno for his translation of this article from French into English.
- 4 Ficquet, *Ibid* , p. 1
 - 5 *Ibid*
 - 6 *Ibid*
 - 7 Zitelmann, "Abbadie," p. 25
 - 8 Quoted in Martial De Salviac, *An Ancient people Great African Nation the Oromo* Translated by Ayalew Kanno (East Lansing, 2005): 21.
 - 9 *Ibid*
 - 10 *Ibid* , p. 20.
 - 11 For details, see Mohammed Hassen, "*The Oromo and the Christian Kingdom, 1300-1700*" forthcoming
 - 12 Antoine d'Abbadie, *Nouvelles Acquisitions Francaise*, Number 21300, folio 797 (Hereafter his unpublished materials will be presented in a short form as nouv Acq Fran. no).
 - 13 Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, pp 84
 - 14 Antoine d'Abbadie, *ibid* folios, 199-200. See also Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, pp 105, 173.
 - 15 Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, p. 84
 - 16 *Ibid*
 - 17 In his December 21, 2006, email message, Dr Eloi Ficquet included the following encouraging statement. "Antoine d'Abbadie's unpublished materials about the Oromo are ready for publication in its manuscript form. But editing work would be a time consuming task I hope to do it after 2 years."
 - 18 Abbadie, *ibid* folio 572.
 - 19 Antoine d'Abbadie, *Nouv. Acq. Fran. No. 23851*, folios 351-6.
 - 20 Zitelmann, "Abbadie," p. 25
 - 21 Catholic Encyclopedia: Antoine d'Abbadie: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/010006.htm> p 1
 - 22 G Massaja, *I miei trenta cinque anni di missione nell'alta Etiopia* vol VI. (Milan: 1885-1895): pp 16-17. See also Hassen, *ibid* p 195
 - 23 G Massaja, *Lettere e scritti minori 1836-66*, A cura di Antonia Rosso, Vol. II (Rome: 1978): 371.
 - 24 Antoine d'Abbadie, *Nouv. Acq. Fran. No. 21300*, folios 789-91.
 - 25 Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, p. 171
 - 26 The 1974 Jimma Oral Interview Project, organized by History Department, Addis Ababa University, folio 5
 - 27 Abbadie, *ibid* folios 718-19.
 - 28 *Ibid* folio 572
 - 29 Antoine d'Abbadie, *nouv Acq. Fran. No. 21303*, folio 289
 - 30 Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, p 182

31. Antoine d'Abbadie, Nouv. Acq. Fran. No 213000, folios 196-7.
32. Ibid. See also Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, p. 183.
33. Max Gruhl, *The Citadel of Ethiopia: The Empire of the Divine Emperor*. Trans. I.F. D. Marron and L.M. Sieveking (London: 1932): p. 173.
34. Antoine d'Abbadie, Nouv. Acq. Fran. No 21302, folio 420; Of all the contemporary kings of the Horn during the 1840s, only Sahale Selassie, the Amhara Christian king of Shawa is reported to have had "300 concubines of the royal harem". See W. C. Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia* Vol. III (London: 1844): p. 315 See also Hassen, *ibid.* p. 187.
35. Antoine d'Abbadie, Nouv. Acq. Fran. No 21300, folio 740
36. Ibid. folios 654-5.
37. Ibid.
38. Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, P. 168.
39. G. Massaja, *In Abyssinia* (Milan: 1890): p. 159.
40. Zitelmann, "Abbadie" p. 25
41. Ficquet, p. 1.
42. Zitelmann, "d'Abbadie" p. 25.
43. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia: (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoine_d'Abbadie): p. 1
44. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 1
45. Ficquet, p. 2"
46. Ibid.
47. Zitelmann, "d'Abbadie" p. 26
48. Ficquet, p. 2
49. Antoine d'Abbadie's foundation, (<http://www.Academie-sciences.fr/fondations/Abbadia-gb.htm>): p. 1
50. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 1.
51. Ficquet, *ibid.* p. 2

BOOK REVIEWS

Marco Bassi, *Decisions in the Shade: Political and Juridical Processes among the Oromo-Borana*. Translated by Cynthia Salvadori. Trenton, NJ and Asmara: The Red Sea Press Inc. (pb. \$34.95). xii + 394 pp. 2005.

This book is a translation of the author's *I Borana: Una societa assembleare del'Etiochia* which was published in Italy in 1996. Marco Bassi has "improved the spelling of the Oromo terms" by changing to *qubee* but, wisely I think, has not attempted to update the text by adding snippets of contemporary information: it would just have been diversionary to do so because the central data and arguments would not have been affected. This is the fullest, most accurate and sensitive account we have of Borana culture and society and is essential reading for all those who are interested in the richness and strength of Oromo culture. Fortunately Bassi continues to publish on Borana culture and on pastoral development. Cynthia Salvadori has deliberately made her translation "reader friendly" by, when-

ever possible, “using non-academic terms” and reducing “the number of academic references in the text”. Her translation unobtrusively demonstrates the understanding of Borana culture that she has acquired during the long periods she has spent among them as an observer, as translator and illustrator of Paul Tablino’s *The Gabra*, and during her work with Ton Leus on their forthcoming Borana Dictionary. She has also published reports on human rights in northern Kenya.

More must have been written on the Borana than on any other of the Oromo people. In part this is because Borana territory straddles the Kenyan and Ethiopian frontiers so that they are accessible: but, and more importantly, it is because of the fascination that their famous *gadaa* system has exerted, and still exerts, over so many travellers, missionaries and scholars. Much of the traditional Borana polity survives, despite droughts, famines, loss of grazing and water, oppressive interventions by colonising governments, proselytising by Christians and Muslims and the spread of arms and alcohol. The complex and still flourishing *gadaa* system “consists of a series of named grades ... through which pass a succession of generational classes called *luuba* ... in eight yearly intervals” (55). Traditional offices, such as those of the *bayyuu* and *qaalluu*, the hereditary high priests, continue to be respected and active. The exogamous moieties *Goonaa* and *Sabbo*, the clan and lineage systems, the age-set organisation *hariyaa*, the property and inheritance systems and the family and property organisations have all effectively adapted themselves to changing circumstances. Economically, “despite the growing role that agriculture has been assuming ... raising cattle remains by far the most important productive activity”(10), though it is increasingly under threat. Bassi starts by summarising, while also adding his own new data, the information we already have on Borana social, political, ritual and pastoral organisation. He then proceeds to examine and analyze how it is that the tradi-

tional institutions and offices continue to retain so much of their traditional strength, and how the all-embracing *Nagaa Boorana*, 'Peace or Welfare of the Borana,' is maintained so effectively. In passing it may be worth noting that the "Peace of the Borana" is a perfect example of Victor Turner's "egalitarian model" of a "normative communitas" which "generates imagery and philosophical ideas" and "is organised into a perduring social system." (*The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. 1969: 132). Bassi argues that the central elements of the *Nagaa Boorana* have survived the incorporation of the Borana into Ethiopia because they have been able to maintain a degree of separation between their own internal and independent form of self government and central government's invented form of delegated local government.

Until the fall of the Derg, though decreasingly since, the pastoral Borana maintained their own *aadaa Booranaa* which dealt with traditional affairs, laws, customs and disputes and with the regulation of the vital resources of grazing and water. These traditional and important matters of daily concern were kept quite distinct from those of the culture of government *aadaa mangiftii* or those of the town *aadaa katamaa*. Traditional leaders deliberately avoided towns and administrative posts. Questions of law and custom and of disputes between Borana were discussed in the Oromo language and heard before traditional office holders who lived in the pastoral areas. Meetings and assemblies were held, and cases heard, in the shade of large trees *gaaddisa* and were preceded, punctuated and concluded by the prayers and blessings which are essential components of the *Nagaa Boorana*. Both sides "recognized and accepted this clear division of competencies" and ensured that there was no overlap. Borana paid a financial price for this division. They had to maintain their own traditional office holders and provide the sacrificial animals, *buuna* and *itiitu* which a meeting requires, while also having to pay taxes to

maintain the administrative officials and courts on which government insisted.

This separation enabled the Borana "to maintain their decision making apparatus, which consists of a broad range of assemblies held away from the urban centers"(14), and in which religious expressions were always an integral part of the political and judicial processes. I cannot imagine a Borana assembly which is not permeated by blessings and prayers to *Waaqa* to maintain the Peace of the Borana. These active assemblies or meetings *kora* form a pyramidal series which range from the *Gumii Gaayoo*, the formal national assembly organised during the course of each eight year *gadaa* period, to local meetings which arrange the pastoral coordination which is essential to survival, such as *kora ella* for wells and *kora dbeedaa* for grazing, right on down to meetings of extended families *kora warraa*. A *kora*, if it is to work effectively, requires the respect of all its members and depends on their determination to work consistently towards the achievement of a consensus; which means that its discussions must be orderly, focused on specific problems and be responsive to changing circumstances. These conditions are invariably fulfilled: every observer that I can recall has commented on the Borana mastery of constructive debate which, while maintaining constitutional continuity, allows for the regular and "continual revision of norms" (104) in response to new problems.

Bassi's analyses of each type of *kora* demonstrates "how" the Borana polity and Borana communities "work", and how the institutions and offices, such as *gadaa*, *hariyaa*, *gosa*, *hayyuu* and *qaalluu* have adapted and endured. His analyses of the different *kora* are so succinct that a summary would misrepresent them so I just urge you to enjoy reading the book and increasing your understanding

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Bahru Zewde. *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century.* (Eastern African Studies.) London: James Currey; Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press; and Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press. 2002. Pp. xii, 228 \$49.95.*)

Bahru Zewde has written an important and compelling book, which chronicles the long and difficult struggle of early twentieth century Ethiopian intellectuals to effect reform in the country. As the subtitle indicates, the book surveys the quest of a few individuals who, owing to their exposure to modern education and experience abroad, realized the backwardness of their country and strove to persuade three successive Ethiopian monarchs to adopt and implement their reformist ideas. Given the scattered nature of previous historical writings on the subject, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia* provides a critical framework for understanding Ethiopia's recent political history and explains the roles of ideas and persons of ideas who have shaped it. This book is a densely packed volume in its evidentiary basis and a culmination of ideas previously presented by Zewde in several articles and presentations. The author engages trenchantly with the existing literature and historiography to create a work which sometimes synthesizes, and at other times departs from, conventional wisdom on the relationship between intellectuals and 'progress' in Ethiopia.

The book has three main parts. The first part provides "the global and continental framework" in which the story unfolds. The author then introduces the intellectuals he calls the pioneers—individuals who excelled in traditional church education, guided European travelers in the production of numerous travel accounts about Ethiopia, and served Ethiopian monarchs in their dealings with the outside world. An important chapter in this section is the story of the expansion of schools, which concludes with a curious but telling obser-

vation of one woman (made in 1926) that the schools of the early twentieth century, introduced as a vehicle for modernization, had not shown a measurable degree of progress.

The second section is a collective biography of Ethiopian intellectuals. The author categorizes them into the "first generation," a group that was educated at home and abroad during the reign of Emperor Menilek II (1889-1913), and the "second generation," educated abroad through state patronage in the 1920s and 1930s. Together, the two generations comprise the reformist intellectuals whose careers the section traces. The third and the most important part of the book analyzes the intellectuals' ideas, accomplishments, and impact on contemporary Ethiopian conditions and long-term developments.

Indeed these two generations of educated Ethiopians were reformist with a broad transformational agenda for their country. They sought to create a constitutional government to ensure Ethiopia's independence (including the Ethiopian Orthodox Church from Alexandria), modernize the national economy to improve the plight of the downtrodden, and implement legal reforms to guarantee equality. To implement their program, the intellectuals sought to enlighten the ruling monarchs concerning the necessity of reform. They believed they had a chance with Haile Sellassie and worked for him loyally. To their disappointment, the monarch proved to be more interested in using them against his political opponents than using their ideas to advance the cause of modernity. He began pushing them aside once he consolidated his power. The highpoint of his willingness to implement the intellectuals' reform program was the promulgation of a constitution in 1931. When Italy invaded the country in 1935, most of the educated were killed, the remnants disillusioned, and the possibility of reform in liberated Ethiopia markedly diminished. After 1941, Haile Sellassie had little use for them and their reformist ideas.

After reading the intellectuals' careers and ideas, one would naturally expect an analysis of the long-term impact of the reform effort. Zewde devotes a whole chapter to this task, but in an effort to lower expectations, he diminishes the importance of his analysis. He expresses frustration that he is unable to assess the impact of the reformists' social and political work, because he cannot establish a "clear and incontrovertible connection between the reformist ideas of the intellectuals and the legislative or administrative measures of Ethiopian rulers" (p. 163). Zewde's indefatigable search for evidence is commendable, but employing innovative approaches could be more revealing than the orthodoxy of 'sticking to the evidence.' One would think that the role of the historian is to make those missing connections and fill in the gaps where clear evidence did not exist. Zewde's assessment of social and political impact of the pioneer intellectuals shows that they were constrained by their choice to operate within a bureaucratic structure that was not fully committed to reform. In the end, the book does not offer thorough explanations as to why the intellectuals' efforts failed to put Ethiopia on a path toward meaningful reform.

Perhaps the explanations for the failure of reform lie not in the inadequacy of evidence but in Zewde's approach itself. One deficiency may be the fact that Zewde chose to look at the work of only those reformists who invested much time and energy in persuading the monarchs to embrace their program. Zewde does not assess the impact of intellectuals like Onesimos Nesib (profiled as one of the few foreign educated Ethiopians who returned to their country before Menelik's coronation) who chose a different route to modernization than relying on the good will of rulers. Onesimos met Menelik in 1904 and turned down an offer to work for the government in favor of returning to his birthplace so that he could engage in the education of his folk. He opened schools in Wollega and, against serious challenges from Orthodox Church officials, was

able to teach generations of Ethiopians. Many of the first Ethiopian student movement leaders during the imperial period, the radical revolutionaries of the 1960s, and the dissident guerilla leaders of the 1980s were products of the so-called mission schools that Onesimos pioneered. In that sense, the long-term impact of intellectuals who worked outside the system was arguably greater than those who sought to reform the system from within.

Even when looking at the intellectuals who favored the top-down reform approach, we should guard against comparing the promise of the intellectuals of the 1920s with the ostensibly limited intellectual prowess of later generations of educated Ethiopians. A better case for comparison would be contemporary reformers in Egypt, Turkey, or Iran. To be sure, with the exception of Gebre Hiywot Baykadagn, none of the intellectuals were original thinkers in the league of their Egyptian contemporaries such as the Azharite Mohammed Abdu or his cosmopolitan forerunner Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. These modernists advocated opening up their country to the West and the use of Western tools to achieve progress, but they favored modernism without abandoning the dynamism of their heritage. In contrast, the Ethiopians seemed interested in transplanting modernity as they saw it elsewhere, with little regard for the consequences of wholesale westernization or modernization. By comparison, one may tentatively posit that the Ethiopians may not qualify for the epithet of wise philosophers and their time cannot be described as an Ethiopian enlightenment. A more detailed comparison could have revealed a less romanticized, but a more realistic picture of the Ethiopian reformers.

However, one cannot deny that, as a group, the reformist intellectuals dreamed of a better society in which all citizens were treated with respect and afforded access to its resources. Given the fact that the unifying theme of the book is the reformists' aspiration for progress, it belies logic that characters

such as Tedla Haile, a person devoted to the goal of preserving the polity at any cost rather than the welfare of its citizens, had to be included in a book about intellectuals committed to social and political reform. Unlike the reformists who thought secular education was the most important vehicle of progress and modernization, Tedla Haile advocated education as an instrument of political control, cultural assimilation, and religious conformity. His obsession with Oromo assimilation into Amhara culture led to his proposition that the education of the former should be limited to religious indoctrination and Amharic language lessons in order to prevent nurturing Oromo nationalism. Contending that Tigrayans were “ungovernable ... in their own province,” he recommended a policy of encouraging them to settle in Oromo areas and appointing “Gojjame and Shewan governors over Tigray” (p. 133). Only a few locally educated elite expressed such blatantly reactionary views whose ultimate objective was to ensure Amhara political and cultural supremacy. As someone who had studied in Belgium and witnessed the impact of contemporary European racist ideas and their application in colonial Africa, Tedla Haile should have known better. He does not belong in the reformist camp and Zewde’s criteria of a reformist intellectual should be more nuanced than the overly general notion that any Ethiopian who had received some education abroad necessarily had to be a reformer.

Finally, I feel obliged to say only books as well researched and well documented as this one evoke strong criticisms. It is written in a lively, engaging, and readable manner. The author is extremely careful in making strong judgments and arguing his points forcefully, though rarely beyond the evidence. Zewde has promised us a sequel to this volume in which he will assess the legacy of the reformist intellectuals of the 1920s. We look forward with anticipation to his able guidance through the rough and tumble world of the Ethiopian student move-

ment of the 1960s and the genesis and course of the 1974 revolution.

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NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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