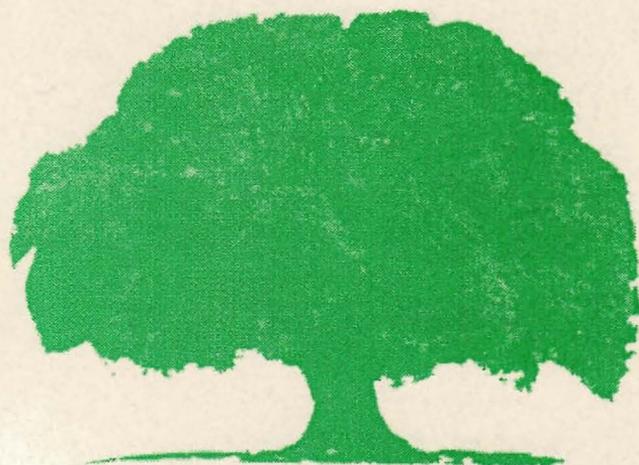


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THE JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

VOLUME 9, NUMBERS 1 AND 2, JULY 2002

Editorial Overview i-iv

Human Rights Conditions

Victims of the Ethiopian Government
Raids on the Kenya (Moyale)/Ethiopia Border
Dido G. Kotile 1

Causes and Consequences of Forced
Oromo Migration An Overview
Mekuria Bulcha 27

Domestic and regional Implications of
State-Sponsored Violence: The Case the
Ethiopian State Terrorism Against the Oromo
Bichaka Fayissa 55

Intrusions into Oromuma (Oromoness) and
the Oromo People's Struggle for Freedom
Benti Getahun 73

Environmental Issues

Forest Fires in Ethiopia: Reflections on
Socio-Economic and Environmental Effects
of the Fires in 2000-An Assessment Study
June-September 2001
Dechassa Lemessa and Matthew Perault 95

A Comparison of Methods for Calculating
Rainfall Erosion from Daily Rainfall
Amounts in Hararghe Highlands
Shibru Daba 131

Agricultural Issues

- What Should Be Done to Enhance Maize
Technology Adoption in Oromia? Strategy Options
Bedassa Tadesse 155
- The Livestock of Oromia: An Industry
in Negative Growth
Assefa Regassa Geleta 175

Essays and Book Reviews

- On United States Altruism, Intervention,
and Aggression in Somalia: A Review
Essay of *Black Hawk Down*
(**Steven R. Blankenship**) 191
- Review Essay: *Demystifying Political Thought,
Power and Economic Development* by Tecola Hagos
Washington, D.C. Khepera Publishers,
1999, 192 pages, \$15.00 (**Mohammed Hassen**) 213
- Greg Gow. The Oromo in Exile from the
Horn of Africa to the Suburbs of
Australia, Melbourne: Melbourne University
Press, 170 pages (**Mohammed Hassen**) 235
- Ayele Bekerie. Ethiopic: An African Writing
System: Its History and Principles,
N.J.: The Red Sea Press, 1997, 176 pages,
\$18.00, (**Mohammed Hassen**) 241
- Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson.
Ghosts and Shadows Construction of
Identity and Community in African Diaspora,
Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
261 pages, \$21.95, (**Mohamed Hassen**) 247

EDITORIAL OVERVIEW

This volume of *The Journal of Oromo Studies* comprises of eight articles broadly grouped under human rights violations in Ethiopia, environmental degradation, and the state of the agro-industry in Oromia. In addition, it includes two review essays and three book reviews. A brief synopsis the articles is given below.

In his article, **Dr. Dido G. Kotile** assesses accounts of the Ethiopian government's aggressions and massacres in the town of Moyale along the Kenya/Ethiopia border. The paper shows that the incidents of political kidnappings and assassinations were a calculated policy of the Ethiopian regime with its widespread socio-economic implications for the Oromos who reside in the Kenya/Ethiopia border. Based on several evidences of the Ethiopian regime-sponsored border raids and the pervasive victimization of the Oromo, he draws the conclusion that the intervention of the international community is paramount in order to avert gross human rights violations of the Oromo and to maintain regional peace and stability.

Dr. Mekuria Bulcha's article provides an overview of the causes and consequences of forced Oromo migration. He argues that human rights issues have played a central role in the political conflicts and wars throughout much of Ethiopia's history. The sources of these conflicts which have resulted in the waves of massive labor migration and are indicative of the country's socio-political malaise include the denial of oppressed nationalities' rights to self-determination, freedom of expression, and land reform are just a few of such issues. In spite of the Ethiopian government's effort to control the freedom of expression and free flow of information, modern technology is bringing the diaspora communities into constant contact with Oromo society, its institutions, and intellectuals at home. He contends that this will play a vital role in the way politics in Ethiopia will evolve in the future.

In his article, **Professor Bichaka Fayissa** argues that the Oromo and other oppressed nations have been subjected to all forms of repression by successive regimes in Ethiopia, partly because of the colonial master-slave relationship which has been protected by the confluence of interests of the Ethiopian ruling elites and that of the

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western governments. On the one hand, the interest of the Ethiopian ruling elites has been to maintain control of Oromo economic resources at the expense of the legitimate owners. On the other hand, the policy of the western governments for much of the past century has been to support the Ethiopian regime at any cost in order to maintain “regional stability” and to control “Islamic fundamentalism.” He maintains that the international community has both the moral responsibility to avert the looming danger of the genocidal practices of the current regime in Ethiopia if it is genuinely interested in the preservation of the rule of law and true democracy which guarantee the protection of the rights of the people and bring about domestic and regional stability in the Horn of Africa. Peace and regional stability can only be achieved by addressing the demands of the Oromo and other oppressed nationalities in this part of the world.

Dr. Benti Getahun’s article deals with the issue of how the infringement upon Oromo political (*gada*), social, economic, and religious institutions which are anchored in Orumuma by the successive regimes in Ethiopia undermined the Oromo Struggle for freedom. He argues that the century long efforts of the Ethiopian regime in maintaining political and economic domination is only met with the rising Oromo resistance. In spite of the fact that Oromos have faced insurmountable difficulties in the past and continue to face at the present time, he maintains that such setbacks can not put out the flames of the Oromo struggle for freedom.

In their assessment study of the 2000 Forest Fires in Ethiopia, **Mr. Dechassa Lemessa** and **Mr. Matthew Perault** provide reflections on the socio-economic and environmental effects of the fires in 2000 which consumed thousands of hectares of forest and grazing land resulting in the endangerment of rare plant animal species. Among others, the authors have estimated the economic, environmental, and social damages of the “wild fires” in the neighborhood of more than 330 million Ethiopian Birr (331,179,405 dollar). In addition to documenting the need for technical, material, institutional preparedness to deal with the forest fire cases in the future, they also discuss both the short-term and long-term strategies for coping with the “wild forest fires”

Mr. Shibru Daba's article offers a comparison of the methods for calculating rainfall erosion from daily rainfall records from Hararghe highlands in the eastern part of Oromia. He finds the amount of soil loss (erosion) to be directly related to the amount of monthly rainfall whether the functional relationship between erosion and the daily rainfall amount is exponential or logarithmic. Furthermore, he finds that the power type equation and the amount-intensity methods are important for detecting the seasonality aspect of rainfall and the temporal occurrence of the early erosive rains. The predictability of erosion indices as a function of average monthly rainfall, average daily maximum rainfall, and the number of days with at least 0.1 cm are also used to compare the three methods of estimating erosion. It is found that the amount-intensity and the kinetic energy methods are strongly related to the rainfall erosion variables. Based on the findings of this study, the use of the amount-intensity method of estimating rainfall erosion from daily rainfall is recommended.

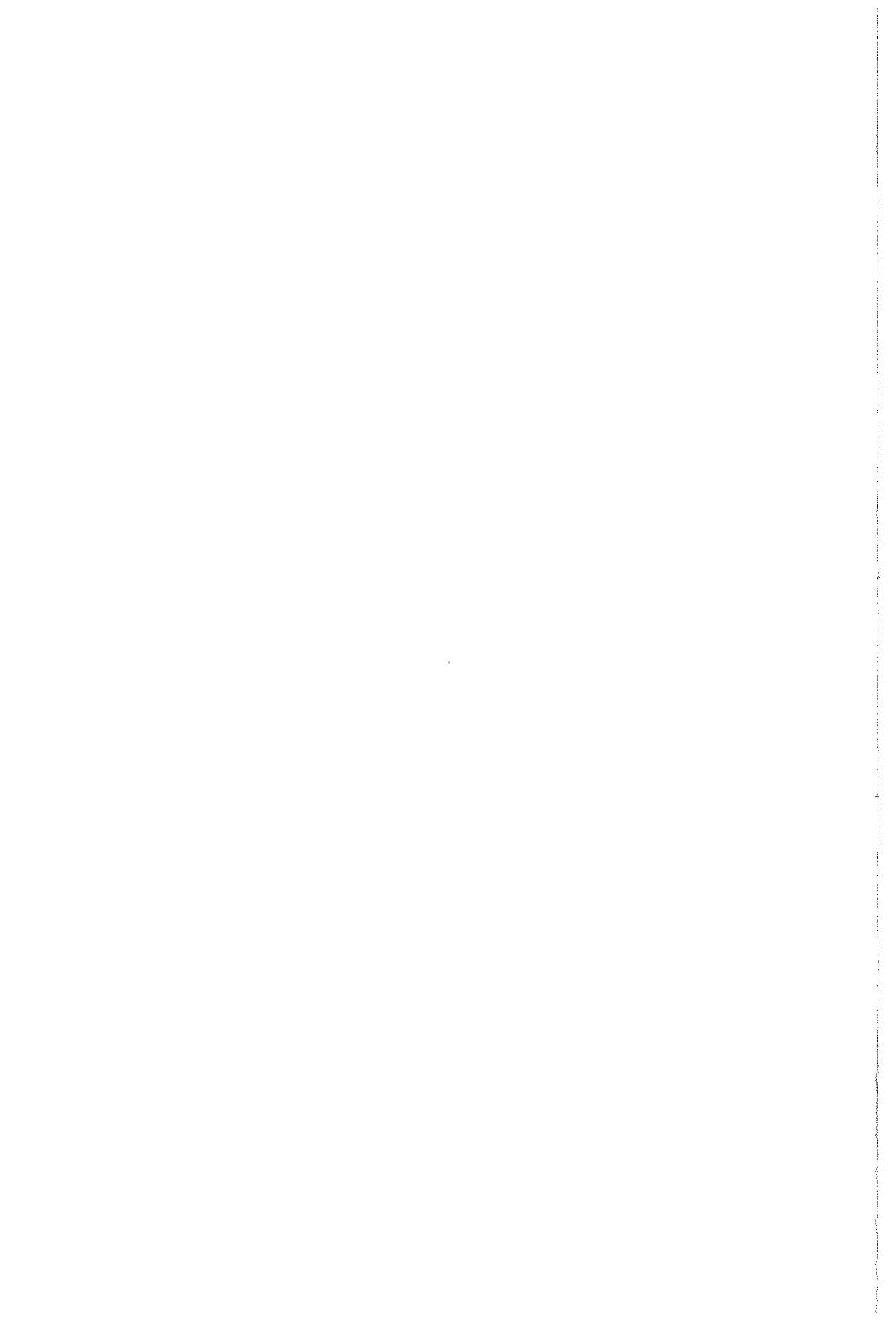
In his article, **Mr. Bedassa Tadesse** presents an empirical evaluation of some key institutional and household determinants of small-scale farmer's decision to adopt a high yielding maize variety package in Oromia. A comparative effectiveness of several strategy options that can be used to enhance the adoption of the package among currently non-adopting farmers is also provided. The results of the study indicate that institutional services such as the intensity of agricultural extension contacts, the diversity of information channels, and the physical accessibility of service centers to farmers are important determinants of farmers' decisions of adoption of high yielding technology.

Dr. Assefa R. Geleta's article takes a critical look at the livestock industry in Oromia. He observes that that the economic benefits obtained by the Oromo people from this potentially immense industry is not commensurate to its size. In the study, he tries to demonstrate that the reasons why the industry is experiencing a negative growth are located in the lack of livestock disease control and prevention and the disorganization of livestock marketing system on the part of the Ethiopian government. Even though the government extracts

substantial revenues from this industry, it has done very little to improve the livestock productivity in a way that benefits the producer. He recommends that appropriate holistic measures be taken to reverse deplorable decline of the industry.

Finally, I want to extend my thanks to the contributors of the articles and book reviews without which *The Journal of Oromo Studies* could not have succeeded in its mission of expanding the frontiers of knowledge about the forgotten Oromo people. I would also like to thank the anonymous referees for their valuable contributions by reading and making constructive suggestions for the authors. The need for quality articles which address issues related to the Oromo and the Horn of Africa at large continues to exist. I would hope that you would accept the challenge by making JOS as one of the main outlets for your scholarly contributions. With your cooperation and contributions, we can certainly produce and disseminate a first rate journal to individuals, institutions of higher learning, governments, and nongovernmental agencies such that there is no excuse for ignorance about the Oromo people. Each of you has a key role to play in the collective mission of Oromo studies which is to broaden our understandings of the Oromo people.

Bichaka Fayissa, Editor
Professor of Economics
July 2002



VICTIMS OF THE MOYALE-KENYA/ETHIOPIA BORDER: CALCULATED POLITICAL STRATEGIES?

Dido G. Kotile (Ph.D)

Introduction

This paper assesses accounts of Ethiopian government's aggressions and massacres along the border town of Moyale (Kenya). The paper documents recent incidences of border insecurity and its consequences on the security of the local populations. The paper shows that the incidents of political kidnappings and assassinations were a calculated policy by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government of Ethiopia and shows the wide socio-economic implications it has for the peoples of the Kenya-Ethiopia border in the Moyale District of Kenya. The sources used are the news media, interviews, and documented evidence.

The victims of the Ethiopian aggression are mainly the Booran pastoralists who occupy both sides of the border. The evidences used in the present paper are mostly from the Kenyan side. However, there are some emerging views from the local people that the government of Ethiopia denies the Booran of Ethiopia their natural resources by using the inter-ethnic conflicts in the proxy wars. These instigated conflicts are designed to undermine the integrity and the economy of the community perceived to be sympathetic to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) that has been operating in southern Ethiopia. While those events that occurred on the Kenyan side of the border have been covered, much of the incidents that have happened on the Ethiopian side of the border have not been reported. The present paper will largely draw on the information available from Kenya. However, the type of insecurity and human rights abuses that are highlighted in this paper need to be put in the bigger picture because of the implications it has for the regional peace and tranquility.

In Rwanda in 1994, the whole world was shocked and horrified when Hutu authorities¹ massacred an estimated one million Tutsis.

The genocide which was government instigated initially started as limited abuses to human rights, but ended in colossal losses of human lives. Indeed, most African regions that were associated with political and military dictatorships are experiencing the problems, albeit at varying degrees. A recent human rights report underscores the problem:

“There are an estimated 16 million people displaced from their homes in sub-Saharan Africa who have not crossed an international border and are therefore not recognized as refugees. The vast majorities are women, children and the elderly. They fled the same violence and human rights abuses as refugees seeking sanctuary in neighboring countries. Many have been displaced as a direct result of military action against civilians, as government forces and armed opposition groups seek to destabilize areas controlled by their opponents or to establish control over populations.”²

One of the regions, in East Africa, where human right abuses are on the increase is Ethiopia³. Across the Kenya border in Moyale District, the cross-border communities have been the targets of such abuses. Just to cite a few of the recent incidences, in January 2001, armed Ethiopian soldiers ambushed Kenyans patrolling the border between the two countries and killed 10 people⁴. During the previous years, several incidents of border raids by Ethiopian soldiers have been reported^{5 6 7 8,9 10}. The main victims of the human right abuses were and continue to be the Booran (Oromo)^{11 5 12}. The Booran people have been directly affected by the reprisals, torture and kidnapping and killings along the border with Kenya. The terror had escalated after the TPLF/EPRDF took over from the communist government in 1991.

For the local pastoral communities along the border, the insecurity has dire consequences for access rights to local grazing resources. Resource insecurity might indeed have a far greater impact than the political insecurity. This is demonstrated by historical assessments of resource alienation and its implications for the coping strategies of the local communities¹³. These events have also severely affected the Booran in southern Ethiopia. There are two dimensions to this: First, the government's policy of sidelining the community blaming them for supporting insurgence. The government found an effective weapon of

excluding the Booran majority from local administration. This fact had not gone down well with the community. According to the Booran elders, the government has denied them their ancestral rights, marginalizing them politically and allowing occupation of their land by opposing ethnic groups. This in effect was tantamount to committing human rights abuse as well as negating on its duties. The Booran traditional leadership found the best opportunity to petition the government during the Pan Booran Assembly of Gumi Gayo of 1996, which was attended by the government Officials among them the Ethiopian President, Dr. Negasu Gedada. The government representatives had influenced the Assembly to denounce the OLF but instead the Booran made a dramatic accusation of the government

“..... We do appreciate your points, especially about peace and stability. We are people who love peace. We have been governed by different Ethiopian regimes; the Emperors Menelik, Haile Selassie and the Italians, the British and the Dergue. Truly it was the Booran who have maintained peace all these years with the Ethiopian government. We know that we need peace and education, business and farming more than you know. The current EPRDF regime talks about peace, and orally says that it gives us power to decide our own destiny. Peace, in reality has been jeopardized by this government in the Booran area. You have concluded that all of us are OLF fighters. You have been taking serious measures against us during the last five years. We have been jailed without reasons. We have been tortured, harassed, our children were dismissed from jobs, and our name [is] most hated in the Government. The business is nearly at a standstill. We are most humiliated and the educated have fled the country to rescue their lives. Our land was given away to other rival communities. The government must first of all examine its own background carefully.”¹⁴

The issue of land, security of the Booran pastoralism and, in particular, loss of traditional wells to the governments policy of “taking from one and giving to another” is felt bitter by the Booran. This is an issue that they used every opportunity to mention¹⁵. For example, Boku Dida (1996) was informed by the retired Abba gada Gobba Bulee that the Booran had lost more land after the new government took power

than even during the periods of the Italian administration in 1930s. The lost grazing lands in Moyale and Liiban have been transferred to Region 5 dominated by Ethnic Somalis. The Booran see a political scheme in the loss of their land as the following interview shows.

According to the source¹⁶ the change of government after the fall of Mengistu's regime marked the start of a terror for which they have few comparisons to make. The systematic displacement from their grazing lands and replacing them with other conflicting ethnic groups has undermined their economy and forcing them to perpetually rely on food aid by international relief agencies. Thus, it may be argued that the Ethiopian government has done worse damage than taking human lives by using its policy and administrative machinery to dispossess the people of their grazing lands. A year after the EPRDF took power (1992) the interview with an informant accurately made the predictions of the current human rights abuses in Booran. As the interview shows the policy of the EPRDF goes beyond human right abuses, but a calculated scheme that is intended to punish the Booran by removing their natural resources and giving it to their enemies, as shown by their soaring relations with the Garre. The historical causes of the conflicts between the Booran and the Garre during the 19th Century are discussed by Oba¹⁷. Yet, it is this historical conflict, which the government used conveniently for its current political schemes. As will be shown later, the links with the human rights abuses are clear. As portrayed by the following interview, state terrorism might be in the making.

Q: "There have been lots of things happening currently in Ethiopia (1992) which is affecting Booran.... Can you kindly explain the root cause?"

WA: "*...With the fall of the Mengistu's government..... and assuming power by the EPRDF dominated by the TPLF fighters.... [the Garre] found another opportunity to dislodge the Booran and claim their resources (for historical evolution of the conflict see Oba 1996-In Being and Becoming Oromo)..... Unlike the Garre, the Booran remained opposed to the regime, instead allying itself with OLF (Remember the flag of OLF was hosted by the Abba Gada-Boru Guyo whom the Tigres later killed). Consequently all the Booran in the civil service were removed. Since, EPRDF and the*

Oromos are now at war (undeclared in 1992), the Garre have taken up opposition to the Booran and would probably be the major political factor the government wish to employ in the conflict (This prediction was confirmed by Marco, Bassi, 1997) ...The plan is to isolate the Booran before the conflict assumes the country-wide nature, and by so doing, hope to eliminate Booran opposition”.....

Q: This is definitely a strong proposition. Was this, therefore, part of the elaborate plans, which led to the assassination of Shallaqa Jattani Ali Tandu?¹⁸

WA: *We think this was so. Infact the process of eliminating the Booran leaders is at an advanced stage. Even influential people who live in urban areas and doing business will not be spared. The arrests and threats have already sent many underground.*

Q: Are the Booran aware of these broad plans?

WA: *Yes. They have so far successfully defended themselves (against the Garre). Several fights have taken place, which is fought through their proxy-the Garre. The Booran including children are aware of the politics of the War.Jattani was killed because he was the undisputed Booran leader. Second, because he had foresight and had seen the coming problem and was preparing the people. Thirdly, because he has contacts outside of the region and is capable of informing the world of the atrocities committed by EPRDF. Most importantly his leadership unites the Booran and this frustrates the EPRDF.. The scheme has military dimensions....One of the plans unfolding is to move the Somali refugees¹⁶ (see Bassi, 1997) and settle them between Nagelle and Moyale. The refugees are a double weapon. First, numerically, the idea is to dilute the Booran numerical strength and use this in politically schemed programs and remove them from power. Second, the refugees occupy a strategic region that would not be available for the future Oromo guerrillas to fight from.*

These notes underscore two important facts. First, the divide and rule and the wider political schemes of things of weakening the Booran. Second, their tactical plan through the use of proxy wars to increase ethnic conflicts, and by playing one community against the other, coherent opposition to the government will be reduced. Third, by undermining the Booran pastoral economy it was wrongly perceived

that the community will be “blackmailed” into submission. But as long as the government policy is to use proxy-conflicts and force the community out of their resources, this is unlikely to have the desired effects.

This background is necessary to understand the human right abuses and killings conducted by the Ethiopian security forces on the Kenyan side of the border. The rest of the paper will highlight some evidences of human right abuses.

News of Atrocities: Aggressors

The Booran (Oromo) have always considered Southern part of Ethiopia and Northern Kenya as their homes. These are the areas they knew very well and when calamities like drought occurred, people knew what to do. They shifted their camps and always came back home. Some of those areas are sacred and only visited during special occasions¹⁹. When families in Qiltiphe/Uran villages were raided and displaced by Ethiopian soldiers, there was nowhere else the people could turn to. Some people on the Ethiopian side of the border also moved across to Kenya side of the border, to join with other members of their ethnic groups in search of sanctuary. After few weeks an estimated 14,000 people were told to return to their villages²⁰. These people were forced to return to their original villages, and yet they had to face the same repressive soldiers who continuously oppress them. The Kenya government was quick to get rid of them without creating a mechanism to make sure that this influx from one location to another or across the border would never happen again. It is clear that the root cause of the problem is being ignored. The symptom is already out there for everybody to see. The Ethiopian government is looking for scapegoat in the form of OLF; therefore they focused on the whole community as target⁶. The Booran appear to be guilty only by association. A mere excuse that the people in the area sympathized with Oromo cause is not enough to warrant the destruction of the whole community.

The killings of Kenyans by Ethiopian soldiers have sparked some discussions⁹, and it is clear that the Ethiopian embassy, as they have done numerous times in the past, put blame on the Oromo Liberation

Front (OLF) and shamelessly categorized OLF as terrorists. In reviewing past conducts of the Ethiopian regime and the activities they instigated along the border, one would not have second thoughts to conclude that the actions they committed could only be done by terrorists. It is a well-known fact to many Boorans that the TPLF regime conducts well-orchestrated acts of genocide against Boorans, under the pretext that Boorans are supporters of OLF⁶. The situations have been so serious that many Boorans from Kenya fear the Ethiopian militia for repercussions as well as they fear the Kenya police brutality⁶. When the Ethiopian government accused Kenya of harboring Oromo rebels, a Northeastern Provincial Commissioner, Mr. Maurice Makhanu has to say. "...I would like to take this opportunity which we also took when we were in Awasa to advise the Ethiopian government to begin to learn to trust our word as friends and that we do not have OLF bases in this country. We made it clear that OLF is an internal matter for Ethiopia and it is not good for a friendly country to pass a buck to a neighboring country for a matter which is essentially internal."²¹

The Common Article Three of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 clearly indicates and condemns an attack on non-combatants. The local people have never doubts in their minds who the aggressors were. Ask the families of the victims of border aggressions, or relatives of those who were massacred at Balesa Demoghe in March 1996 when 12 people were killed and 10 wounded by Ethiopian soldiers. The local people had no reason to implicate Ethiopian soldiers. They knew and they have complained to Ethiopian government officials about the frequent participation of their soldiers in the killings, but the response from the Ethiopian government was always the same. "The attackers were OLF bandits,"⁶ (p. 85).

The following statements summarizes the feelings of the people in the area:

*"In Booran, they have done things which only the Italians were reported to have done. Arrest all the Raba of Goba, with all the future adulas (councillors) about 60 and put them in military detention and stop them from performing the aada ceremonies (in 2000). May be that is why the TPLF itself broke up"*²²

Additionally, the government resettled refugees, which it termed as “Ethiopia returnees” in the Booran territory, changing demography in favor of the Somalis.

It is a common knowledge that Ethiopian soldiers have continuously tortured and ill-treated many of the people they held hostages. Political prisoners were no exception. Torture took place in the police stations and some unofficial detention camps or centers where prisoners were kept for a long time and finally disappeared. Some of these prisoners were never brought to court and even the few cases brought to the court, the judges rarely investigate complaints of torture.²³ Prison conditions were despicable and extreme form of cruelty is being exercised on the prisoners. There was no medical attention for political prisoners; therefore, people have died in custody before they were tried.^{23 24} As a matter of fact, the human rights abuses in Ethiopia have been documented^{25 10 26}. According to one report,²⁶ the Ethiopian government is responsible for about 2,592 extra-judicial killings and 832 disappearances of Oromo. The report also confirms atrocities committed against civilians and the presence of the notorious military camp locally called “147” as being the place where civilians and political detainees were tortured.²⁷

Cross Border Raids

The people who live in the villages along the Kenya-Ethiopia border have crossed this international border numerous times⁶ just to flee from massacre. By all means they would have met refugee status just by crossing the border. However, a vast majority of them were internally displaced within either Kenya or Ethiopia border. The Ethiopian soldiers often follow the innocent victims across the border and kill them⁶. This should not have happened. Ethiopian government should be brought to international justice for such heinous crimes against humanities.

A Nation paper²⁸ reported a kidnap of a teenage girl by Ethiopian soldiers. The Ethiopian Embassy denied her presence in Ethiopia, but despite the ultimatum given by North-Eastern Provincial Commissioner

Maurice Makhanu to secure the girl's release, no action was taken. Mr. Makhanu raised other issues that Kenyans faced in Ethiopia including hardship and unfair treatment. The Ethiopian embassy representative while admitting that the Kenya government has not supported or sympathized with Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) complained that the rebels had been involved in attacks in Kenya and across the common border²⁸. However, all the evidences from the local people suggests that these acts of terror have been perpetrated by Ethiopian militia against the innocent civilians on both sides of the border^{22 6}. Several incidents of kidnapping and torturing of innocent Kenyans at the hands of Ethiopian militia (tabaka) have been reported⁶. A horrifying ordeal experienced by a 52-year-old retired Corporal Guracha Bisiko, who was a chairman of Butiye location of the Kenya's ruling party (KANU) epitomized the Human Rights abuses in the region. Guracha Bisiko was abducted by Ethiopian soldiers and tortured for seven months. On being interviewed by team of Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), he narrated the following:

Three TPLF soldiers in plain clothes stopped me and told me I was under arrest. I resisted and they drew their pistols, ordering me to follow them. I was taken to an army base in Moyale-Ethiopia. Throughout my stay at the army base, I was repeatedly beaten with sharp sticks and whipped. I remember the worst day of my life. It was 27 October 1995. The soldiers hit every part of my body and pressed my testicles with an object I could not identify. I was accused of 'feeding and harboring OLF forces' and 'using my military experience to train them in Butiye.

That day I was transferred to Bukulu Boma {a known torture center of captured OLF soldiers and their sympathizers}. They tied my hands behind my back and whipped me with a sharpened whip that dug small holes in my body. They then poked my buttocks with a sharp Somali sword. The beating went on for over eight hours. I was then thrown into a waterlogged cell for several hours. The same exercise was repeated over several days. Soldiers would push pistol into my ears and demand to know where OLF soldiers were harbored in Kenya. When I insisted I did not know, they would beat me more vigorously. They repeatedly

pressed my testicles hard and tied a rope in a tight knot around them. My penis shrank in size and my testicles got so swollen that I had to have an operation upon my release.

Because of my problem with asthma, I could not cope with the spicy Ethiopian food, so they fed me on biscuits and water at Bukulu Boma. There were no toilets in the cells. We urinated and defecated in buckets that we had to empty every morning. I shared a cell with 28 other prisoners, four of whom were Kenyan⁶ (Pg. 81).

The Ethiopian government officials always denied that they held Kenyans captives, and yet Guracha Bisiko's case was even known to Kenyan authorities at the border, but they failed to take the matter with Ethiopian government. It is clear from the detailed reports by KHRC⁶, that the Ethiopian soldiers seemed to regard all Boorans in the region as OLF supporters, regardless of whether they are old or young. An interview with a 70-year old traditional medicine man and his 11-year old boy captured by Ethiopian soldiers reveals:

"... My son and I and all my animals (36 cattle, 2 donkeys & 17 goats) were captured by Tigray up between Damicha and Meti. I first thought I could bribe them to let us go. But they wouldn't let us go, they tried to make me admit supporting the OLF. I was beaten for four days. They beat me with a plastic cable. When I still said I didn't know anything about the OLF, they picked me up, held me horizontal and threw me on the ground, several times. On the second day I couldn't urinate, couldn't defecate, so they thought I was finished. They threw me outside and took all my clothes off me, and my money. But when they realized I was alive, they put me back inside. They beat me some more. I was kept in custody in a place called Arda Loni, where they have cells for Kenyans. In the house there is a hole, an underground cell where they keep prisoners... After 27 days in prison, I managed to escape during the attack on Waye Goda..... I was two days and two nights in the bush, without any food or water at all. But my lucky chance I met a good Samaritan, a woman who recognized me..... As I was going down towards to Waye Goda, I realized there were people there, since

*we had been told that all the Weye Goda people had been killed, I thought they were Tigre, so I kept hidden in the bush... As I got a bit near the village I collapsed, unconscious... My younger son, Qumbi is still missing, I have had no news of him at all. I have reported this to the police, to the Chief, to the Do's office. But still he has not returned. He is still held by the Tigre, and so are all my animals*⁶ (Pg. 93)

The above tales of horror and other numerous incidents have been documented^{5, 6}.

There was some attempt to resolve the conflict at the border. Several joint meetings between Administrators and Commissioners from both sides have been trying to resolve this issue. The Ethiopian embassy responded to the allegations of border problem by emphasizing that the committee that looked at the border issue was structured under the Joint Border Commission. The purpose was to exchange information and use traditional and official structures to identify the causes of problems between the two countries and seek solutions²⁸. The solution to this border problem may indeed be a non-issue if the indigenous people who have lived along the border for generations were consulted. There is enough evidence as shown by numerous studies that pastoral societies in Kenya have wide range of institutions, rituals, practices, oral and material culture items connected to conflict management within and between ethnic groups²⁹. Historical incidences of cross-border raids have also been reported. A quote in Abiyu Gelata's article,³⁰ from Borg G. Steffenson and Ronald K. Starvett, (1919 vol.1, page 184) states:

"In the British Legation at Addis Ababa I saw a report from British Commandant at the Moyale district, British East Africa, in which were listed 87 different raids in the past nine years... Most of the raids were reported to have been made by Tigrean soldiers from northern Abyssinia who have come... [and] become little more than brigands and slave raiders."

Is history repeating itself in different forms?

It is estimated that in Africa more than 20 million people are forcibly displaced from their homes, with five million seeking refugee

status in neighboring countries and about 16 million internally displaced within their own country¹. The exact record of the number of people who have crossed Moyale border maybe difficult to know, but the available data indicates that the number of people crossing the border in search of safety in recent years have increased²². For the residence on the border, their lives will never be the same. They are constantly on the move, season after season. In the past, people crossed the border and flee from the drought, but they have always survived when there was pasture and rain on either side of the border, Now, the situation is different, they also flee because they are afraid of arbitrary arrest and torture, or their close family have disappeared and they would be the next target.

The Kenya Human Rights Commission's⁶ ("The forgotten people") and other similar reports from other parts of Africa¹ confirmed that contrary to what one would expect from a government, attacks on civilians have been carried out by both government forces and political factions. It has been observed that some African governments and political factions exploit ethnic differences to mobilize support and to define enemies, which results to the identification of the whole communities and population as targets¹. The human rights report on Africa further questions, "*How long will International communities keep focusing on the humanitarian needs of the displaced people?* It is rather worthwhile to dig deeper into the root cause of their plight. The report further states: *The responsible governments must be made accountable and forced to resolve the fundamental human rights issues and political nemeses that lead to forcible displacement of people from their homes*² (Pg. 19)

The Booran along the border of Kenya and Ethiopia and in Northern Kenya are indeed the forgotten people with no access to International protections. Amnesty international on Africa understood the situation very well "*Most of African governments are frequently reluctant to accept international supervision of their treatment of refugees... they are often overtly hostile to international involvement in providing assistance and protection to the internally displaced who are their own citizens. Many internally displaced populations are therefore beyond the reach of international organizations*² (Pg. 6)".

Displaced Families at Kenya/Ethiopia Border

It is difficult to keep records of the actual people displaced. In January 2001, when Ethiopian soldiers raided the border village of Qiltiphe (Moyale-Kenya), about 6000 families were displaced. An estimate of the number of the people displaced was based on the number of people (14,600) camped at Walda²². Terrified families waited for calm to return, but in the meantime they had to live with what they got at the camp. A week later, a friend sent the following information regarding their conditions:

*"...Their (Moyale displaced families) situations are still pathetic as they are living in Walda refugee camp. There is no much help from the government so far, save for the family relief they are getting even before they are displaced from their homes. Internal displacement does not receive international help as international community sees the issue as internal"*²²

So what was the fate of the Moyale displaced families? The people wanted to go back to their homes, but they also knew that as long as there is no peace in the region, their homes would never be the same. They knew some homes have already been destroyed²², and yet they were determined to trek back to where they came from. Even the fear of further intimidation and persecution would not deter them. In any case, events like the above have become a normal way of life for the people in the region. A Daily Nation reporter⁴ recounted an attack by Ethiopian soldiers on the local civilians in December 2000, where more than 200 militiamen in distinctive olive green military uniform entered through Danaba border point from Qadaduma in Ethiopia. The reports indicated that over 40 homes and granaries were burnt to ashes and 15 people killed in the attack. At that time, more than 3,330 people were left homeless and displaced. The report further confirmed that within a year about 26 attacks took place and more than 40 people were killed. The numbers of livestock stolen were estimated to be over 15,000 head of cattle which were moved across to Ethiopia⁴.

Unlike in the past when events like that which happened at the border was wrapped under the rag without any attention, this time the news media covered the event of border massacre. There were some casualties that involved Kenya administrative police and thus the reaction of Kenya government. Earlier on, a Kenyan policeman abducted during the raid by suspected armed militiamen from Ethiopia narrated his ordeal at the hands of his captors.

The situation soon attracted attention from provincial commissioner who together with his security team visited the area and promised to set up police post at Walda and Mado Adhi location. The Daily Nation ³¹ reported that the PC had announced that about 50-100 civilians would be recruited as home guards and asked the local areas to submit the names. While the idea of homeguard is acceptable, the local people do not have any confidence in the police^{5, 6 22}

When 80 people³² were massacred across the border, the first reaction was to blame an old ethnic rivalry that culminated to stock thefts across the border. However, from the start there was something fishy about the so-called cross border raids. Questions that kept coming to several people is how much do the government officials on each side of the border know about these activities. North Horr M.P. Dr Bonaya Godana accused the Officer Commanding Police Division and Provincial Criminal Investigation Officer for not doing anything to prevent the raid. He believed that they knew the impending attack and did nothing to stop it^{32 33}. The Bishop of Marsabit reported numerous atrocities committed against Oromo in North Horr. Bishop Ravasi was interviewed by BBC office in Nairobi where he expressed his concern about the beatings and torture that the Oromos in North Horr received at the hands of Kenya army officials. In another incident, about 75 Kenyan army and police ambushed the villagers and harassed them. They questioned the residents about OLF hideouts. They arrested three people for possessing firearms. Two people (Diba Dida Godana, Adhi Guro) received serious injury from the beating, and four (Guyo Adhi, Dokata Mamo, Garse Elema, Adano Bodicha) were seriously wounded. About 38 people in all were injured as a result of that attack. The residents lost about 15 livestock left unattended during the ordeal. The

raiders also stole some properties and money³⁴ Acts of terror and atrocities against Kenya Oromos was not confined to the border town of Moyale alone. In all the Districts in Kenya where Boorans are majority (Moyale, Marsabit & Isiolo) people have been living in fear of being haunted by Ethiopian agents. A demonstration by Booran³⁵ attested to that fact as confirmed by Mr. Abdullahi Galgalo, Ford-Kenya's Youth secretary when he protested "*...We invite human rights organizations to see how they are killing us. Four of a 15-member delegation to the District Commissioner and the Security Committee had their homes bombed.*

It is the nature of Booran to ask about the welfare and peace of Booran in general¹⁷. News from the whole region since the accession of the TPLF regime to power in Ethiopia has not been favorable to the local community along the border. A letter from the area confirms: "*...People are demoralized and devastated. They live under constant fear. Nobody trusts each other anymore. Already part of the Booran land is given out and the communities that used to live together are suspicious of each other. Woyanne secret agents have penetrated each and every household. It is amazing how within a short time they are changing history. I wonder whether they consider part of Northern Kenya as their colonial province. But the people really have known them and do not support them as such*"²² "

The above statement clearly expressed the sentiments and disappointment people had over the last ten years. People in northern Kenya have been frustrated and angry at the Government's inability to restore peace in the area. Indeed, their own government despite their support during all these years has neglected them. The Daily Nation³⁶ reported that leaders from Wajir were outraged that Kenya government had failed to protect them from the attack by Ethiopian militia. The angry residents further demanded that the government cut off all diplomatic relationships with Ethiopia. The people described the attack of Ethiopian militia as brutal, inhuman and unfortunate. About 12 people were killed during that incident and five injured and a girl was abducted and several number of livestock stolen. The resulting commotion led to over thousand people leaving their homes for fear of future attacks.

The Ethiopian government continued to assert the presence of OLF bases in Kenya in spite of the consistent denial of the existence

of the bases by Kenya government. During tripartite security meeting of the three provincial commissioners (Eastern, Coast & North Eastern), on June 24, 2000, Mr. Makhanu again reiterated his earlier assertion and accused Ethiopia of capitalizing on the OLF claims to spread propaganda aimed at diverting the international community's attention from the war facing the war ravaged nation³⁷. The tension between Kenya and Ethiopia on the border issue seemed to revolve around the presence or absence of OLF bases in Kenya.

Reaction to the border problems with Ethiopia is still varied and this may have been complicated somewhat by some of the utterances made by Kenyan officials who failed to condemn Ethiopian stand and defend Kenyan citizens. A protest letter by Kenyans (Booran) living in the US expressed these frustrations:

... "We are stunned by reaction of the Kenyan government on the Ethiopian raids that consumed lives of 10 Kenyans, including seven police officers in Moyale (Kenya). The statement issued by Minister of State in charge of security Maj (Retd) Marsden Madoka accuses the Kenyan victims, and he further stated that the problem could only be resolved if the residents stopped hosting OLF activists. That embarrassing statement sounds familiar. The Ethiopian version of the story. The people of Northern Kenya should not live in fear all the time. They should be given time to develop and contribute to their well being and the overall economy of the country. They must have a security guarantee under the constitution of the country. The allegation of "harboring Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)" is absurd and does not make sense. The Ethiopian government used as pretext to mislead Kenyans. The minister simply echoed what Ethiopian government was saying to cover up its misdeeds. The Hon. Minister's motive is obvious, and it was a desperate attempt to cover-up total failure of justice system in the country, and inefficiency of his office to discharge its responsibilities. ... Instead of protecting its own citizens, the government of Kenya seems to support the killers (Ethiopian soldiers). Why would anyone believe what Mr. Madoka says. In 1998, the same minister told Kenyans to forget about the widespread acts of torture committed

*by the country's security forces. The Kenya Boorans deserve better. The government of Kenya must guarantee them the protection against foreign or domestic aggression. Over the years, the Ethiopian soldiers have continuously perpetuated atrocities and reign of terror along the border. The wounds of decade of suffering have left indelible imprint on the minds of many people in the region. It is unfortunate that the Kenya Boorans could not get protection from the only government they have so desperately supported. It is time to think seriously and Moi government should equally be accountable for the crimes against humanities. By keeping silent over this injustice committed against its people by foreign government, the Government of Kenya is admitting its guilt."*³⁸

The Northeastern Provincial Commissioner Mr. Makhano recounted several incidences where the Ethiopian government officials ignored the protocols required for a sovereign country. For instance, he confirmed that Ethiopia refused to endorse a joint Defense Pact between the two states. The PC was amazed and expressed dissatisfaction at humiliating activities conducted by Ethiopian officials. Several Kenyan truck drivers have complained about the treatment they received. The Kenyans complained that they were barred from using the roads in Ethiopia and forced to unload goods into Ethiopian trucks. In some cases, the Ethiopian military converted the trucks they confiscated for their personal uses.

The local people's grievances covered the entire spectrum of activities of their lives. It was as if their mere existence depended on the whims of Ethiopian TPLF rulers.

The OLF military communiqué has this to add about the TPLF activities: "...*The Wayane force was on search and destroy mission but as usual was harassing innocent villagers and looting their property*"³⁹. The OLF believes that TPLF planned military incursions into Kenya and Somalia in order to destabilize these governments. This kind of act convinced them that TPLF is indeed a terrorist regime, and they feared that as long as TPLF is in power in Ethiopia there won't be peace and stability in the region³⁹.

Victims

In assessing the victims of Ethiopian aggression, we used the available information from Kenya papers, human rights organizations, Oromia support group, and individuals from the affected areas. Some of the atrocities committed against innocent people of northern Kenya will obviously have not been reported or documented but the few statistics of victims recorded shows clearly that the TPLF regime has committed heinous crimes against Booran. The specific atrocities included rape, murder, kidnap, torture, stealing, and destroying properties, however, we have shown only few of these activities (table 1).

Table 1: Summary of atrocities committed by TPLF regime of Ethiopia against Kenya citizens of Oromo origin (1992-2001)

INCIDENTS	1992-1994	1995-1997	1998-2001
Killings/Murder, Massacre	27	108	431
Injures	26	66	85
Abduction/kidnap	6	38	13
Properties damaged/ livestock stolen	Houses destroyed, undisclosed number of cattle stolen	4000 camels & several head of cattle, houses destroyed	More than 1785 head of cattle & 2,075 camels have been stolen and houses and properties destroyed
Families displaced	Data not available but believed many families were affected	Data not available but believed many families were affected	About 14,600 families reported displaced

SOURCES: (Information was compiled from reports given by KHRC 1997, OSG annual reports (1992-2001), Daily Nation News paper (1992-2001), and personal communication with the residents of the area)

Northern Kenya is a remote territory and has not been fully exposed to the outside world, so the activities that happened in the area are rarely given full attention. The figures indicated in Table 1 are therefore a mere glimpse of what has been taking place in the area. The actual records are more likely to be higher than what is reported in this table. For instance, the case of rape is not included. As it normally happens, the victims of this degrading act do not come forward because of cultural stigma and the facts that they would not get the help they deserve, makes it difficult for them to seek any help. Some information included in the table like for instance the ethnic clashes that brought about some deaths was indirectly connected to TPLF regime, because, according to the local people,¹² the TPLF regime has instigated or supported some ethnic groups against each other. From March to December 18, 2000, about 300 people were killed (Gare and Ajuran tribes in Wajir). However, Kenyan internal security minister Major (retired) Marsdem Madoka was quick to abdicate Ethiopians' role in the killings of those 300 people along the border.

Reports of refugee torture in the neighboring countries (Kenya & Djibouti) where the Ethiopian soldiers pursued innocent people and killed and tortured have been documented³⁴

Oromo refugees in the neighboring countries frequently experience torture and harassment and even persecutions. Take the case of the incidents in Djibouti reported by OLF press release⁴⁰. OLF reports confirmed that Djibouti government denied Oromos the refugee status and harassed and terrorized the innocent people. For instance, in January 1998 Djibouti government forcefully repatriated six Oromo refugees. In 1999 the same government expelled 11 Oromos after detaining them one year and sent them to Ethiopia against their will. The actions of Djibouti government were contrary to the United Nations Human Rights charter binding all countries to prevent and protect human rights abuses. Djibouti government conducted a wide scale operation and rounded about 10,000 Oromos and deported 5,000 to Ethiopia under harsh and cruel conditions⁴⁰. More than 15 refugees died before they reached Ethiopia, there were reports of deaths of pregnant women and children and suffocation, and 30 women were also raped by Djibouti

soldiers taking turns. Djibouti soldiers would normally hand over the refugees like a cargo to waiting butchers on the border side with Ethiopia. The evidence is overwhelming that the neighboring governments in collaboration with TPLF regime disregard their duties as stipulated in UN charter recognizing the rights of refugees, and it was clear that Djibouti did not abide by the rules it signed to uphold. Even those refugees who got the status have to live with tremor and devastating experience of their ordeal, for Mr. Wariyo who managed to reach Nairobi, it was just like the other day He recalled:

“... My memory is scrambled as a result of what happened ... They arrested me on the 5th of November 1992. They took me to a place they call 4th Brigade Headquarters. There, they tied my legs and beat me up, using sticks and other weapons. I have no words to explain what they did to me. I became ill and was not taken to the hospital. When the Red Cross Society came to visit us, the soldiers took us away in the middle of the night. They hid us in a place called Arba Minch. We were about 70 casualties hidden there and the Red Cross could not find us”⁴¹.

Once refugees leave their home countries, one would think they would be safe and free from further persecution by their governments. However, several shocking incidents of refugees being tortured and killed by agents of the same government they run away from have been frequently reported. A case in point was an account summarized by OSG press release⁴² Having suffered inexplicable torture and detention in Central Oromia and witnessing a death of his close friend, a refugee (Y.G.) who arrived in Kenya in 1999 had to relive another horror He was supposed to be in a different country so he thought, but an informant of TPLF and two people who knew his whereabouts threatened him The post-torture counseling he received turned out to be another nightmare The report confirmed that four days later, an informant pushed him into the heavy traffic with intent to kill. The refugee was followed throughout the day. A terrified refugee narrates. *“I had to stand at the nearest bus stop to keep the company of people for my security, hoping for help should it go beyond just pushing me to the street. But they too stood for two hours on the same bus stop. After two hours, I boarded a bus hoping they had given up and gone... [but] they alighted at the same stage as myself. I ran into compound and told the watchman not to let any man of Ethiopian origin come in”²⁶.*

Refugees, like most other people had to socialize and relieve their nostalgic moments with their friends. In most cases they were with people of the same culture and origin. The cultural bonding and affinity in a strange country is what made most of them survive and live. Five Oromo refugees were rudely interrupted by Kenya police and arrested when they were just rehearsing Oromo music. Their only crime was based on suspicious belief that they might be supporters of OLF. Why would Kenya be concerned with what association refugees should affiliate with or support?

Refugees in Kenya are at higher risks and are likely to be killed by TPLF agents. The most feared place is Kakuma and Nairobi²⁷. Kakuma refugee camp is synonymous with all that is evil and inhuman. The camp is located close to Sudan border, in hostile environmental conditions with extreme heat and infested with all kinds of diseases. OSG report²⁷ affirms:

“...Kakuma is on a route frequented by Ethiopian government troops. The Oromo community there complain of frequent attacks by armed men at night, beatings, assassination attempts and burning of property, instigated by the Ethiopian government and its Hagere Fikir group.”

The Oromo refugees in Kakuma have been easy targets. OSG report²⁷ further highlighted a network of conspiracy scheme to eliminate Oromo refugees and professionals in Nairobi. Ethiopian embassy officials financed and masterminded the plot with the support of Kenya's corrupt security and police system. The renegade organization Hagere Fikir group was revived by Embassy to do its dirty work for them. The culprits have infiltrated the UNHCR official documents and poised greater threat to the overall well being of all Oromos in Kenya.

The Oromo refugees in Kenya live miserably live, they are constantly mistreated, beaten, abducted, murdered and women are raped. A report to the Kenya police is another extension of their further humiliation. The victims were often questioned about their involvement in OLF activities. Reports of intimidation by agents and threats from the corrupt Kenya police who demanded bribes or otherwise if the victims failed to pay they would be subjected to repatriation¹².

The living conditions of refugees in the neighboring countries continue to deteriorate. Refugees complain about the delays in the processing of their papers. They are often harassed and even detained by Kenya police. Some have reported receiving verbal and telephone threats from Ethiopian embassy staff ³⁴

Conclusions

- ◆ The Boorans on both sides of the border are victims of international and internal aggressions. The current Ethiopian government in particular is responsible for the problems along the border.
- ◆ The TPLF government used discriminatory statements generalizing that all Boorans are supporters of OLF, thereby isolating & targeting Boorans in Kenya, simply because of ethnic affiliation or a mere sympathy with Oromo cause.
- ◆ The TPLF government's use of divisive tactics has jeopardized the peace in the region, hence, displacing Boorans from their natural grazing lands. The strategy of TPLF is to diminish the Boorans traditional power and role in the region.
- ◆ Oromos living in the countries neighboring Ethiopia are in fear of being persecuted by Ethiopian government agents.
- ◆ Refugees of Oromo origin living in Kenya are more likely to be killed, tortured, harassed or repatriated. The agents of Ethiopian government are believed to be responsible for all those problems.

Recommendations

- ◆ International community should intervene and stop the continuous persecutions of Boorans along the border by Ethiopian agents.
- ◆ Human Rights Organizations should be allowed to investigate all allegations of border police abuse and improper treatment of local citizens by both governments of Kenya and Ethiopia.

- ◆ The TPLF government should recognize and respect the original traditional Booran boundaries, and return the lands confiscated from Boorans to their rightful owners
- ◆ Indigenous traditional and knowledgeable leaders should be consulted and called upon to mediate ethnic conflicts in the region.
- ◆ Kenya government must protect its citizens against foreign invasion.
- ◆ Kenya government should establish an accountable police force, and conduct training of its personnel on human rights issues, standards, protections, law and respect for the rights of individuals.
- ◆ Ethiopian government must compensate the Oromos in Northern Kenya for a decade of genocide, loss and destruction of properties.

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CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF FORCED OROMO MIGRATION: AN OVERVIEW*

By *Mekuria Bulcha*

ABSTRACT: Human rights issues have played a central role in political conflicts and wars throughout much of Ethiopia's history. Oppressed nationalities' rights to self-determination, freedom of expression, and land reform are just a few of such issues that have ignited conflict, and consequently, resulted in the waves of refugees fleeing from the country. One hundred years after its creation, Ethiopia still shows minimal progress in terms of political development or respect for human rights. The exodus of Oromo refugees has been particularly exacerbated by the present government's human rights violations. In essence, such an exodus is indicative of a country's socio-political malaise. The malaise, characteristic of Ethiopia, is rooted in the creation of the Ethiopian state at the end of the nineteenth century. One can thus assume that the country's current political crisis cannot be disentangled from its past.

Introduction

The relations between the Oromo and their Abyssinian (Amhara-Tigre) neighbors can be summarised as follows: before the 1880s, the Oromo and the Abyssinians were independent neighbors; between the 1880s and 1900s, the Oromo were conquered by the Abyssinian state and the Ethiopian Empire was created. From 1900 to the 1960s, the Oromo were subjects of Abyssinian-cum Ethiopian rulers, most of them with serf-like status called *gabbar* in the Amharic language. From the 1960s onwards, the Oromo have been waging consistent political and armed struggle to regain the right to political self-determination.

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The conflicts emanating from the relations between the Ethiopian state and the Oromo people have led to different waves of refugee flows from the country since 1900.

The fact that refugees are the “product” of conflicts between the Oromos and the Abyssinian/Ethiopian state should not be construed to mean that internal factors alone have accounted for the refugee problem. Economic and strategic interests of western countries, international arms trade, and super-power alliances with authoritarian Ethiopian regimes have also served as contributing factors in generating refugees.

The largest uprooting and displacement in the history of the Oromo people, however, was assumingly caused during the Abyssinian conquest which took approximately 30 years to accomplish. In Oromoland and the neighboring territories conquered by the Abyssinians, large scale looting of property exacerbated the uprooting as well as other negative consequences of the conquest. Because the Abyssinian economy was not based upon monetary exchange, Emperor Menilek, the architect of the Ethiopian Empire, did not pay his soldiers in cash. The only immediate reward he could offer the soldiers was that of plundering.¹ Menilik's armies confiscated all transportable property and burnt homes, food stores, crop-fields, and other properties they could not carry away. They took men, women, and children captive as slaves. From the time of the conquest until the mid-1930s, the predatory habit of the Abyssinian rulers and soldiers became the most destructive aspect of their occupation of Oromoland.

What followed this indiscriminate destruction was mass death and displacement in various parts of the Oromo country. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reports by European travellers on the southern half of the Ethiopian Empire present a unanimous impression of the results of the conquest. The travellers witnessed abandoned villages and other signs of a vanished population. They were struck by the destitution of the people they met. It is estimated that the Oromo population was reduced to almost one-half of its pre-conquest size.²

During the last one hundred years, a series of events—directly or indirectly related to the conquest—have spurred both internal

displacement and external migration of large numbers of Oromos. As explicated in the sections that follow, many of the Oromo were forced to flee from their places of residence to become refugees in their own country or abroad, while thousands of them were forcibly taken and sold as slaves

Conquest, Colonialism, and Forced Oromo Migration

During the conquest, slavery and the slave trade were important causes of both internal and international displacement of the population. Thousands of Oromo captives and others were taken north to serve the Emperor and members of the royal family. Others were taken to serve landlords' households or estates, or were sold as slaves in the markets. Captives were not only taken during the wars of conquest. The Abyssinians carried out continuous raids to capture slaves in the conquered territories of the south. In Abyssinia, a person's wealth or status was judged by the number of slaves owned. Indeed, Emperor Menelik owned the largest number of slaves in the country; he had 20,000 slaves at the palace in Addis Ababa and an additional 50,000 elsewhere.³ While a large number of the southern slaves captured in war and slave-raiding expeditions were retained for domestic use, the rest were exported to other countries in North Africa and the Middle East which were the main markets for slaves from the Horn of Africa.

In the nineteenth century, the most important merchandise in the Ethiopian foreign trade were slaves. Menelik—who needed the revenue from the slave trade not only to build his military arsenals and expand his domain southwards, but also to out-bid his rivals to the Imperial throne—contributed much to the growth of export of slaves. Thus, even if it did not initiate the slave trade, the conquest carried out by Menelik in the second half of the nineteenth century exacerbated the problem and increased the number of Oromos captured and dispersed in Northeast Africa and the Middle East. Indeed, export of human merchandise from ports the Red Sea increased between the 1860s and 1880s in tandem with Menelik's conquest of Oromoland.⁴

Scholars' estimates of the total number of captives exported from Ethiopia during the nineteenth century vary greatly. Pankhurst has

suggested that over 25,000 slaves per year were exported, or 2.5 million in total from 1800 to 1900. According to another source, about half a million captives were exported from Ethiopia during this one hundred year period.⁵ In any case, it is plausible to suggest that over 200,000 Oromos were externally displaced by the slave trade during the latter part of the nineteenth century, creating a large Oromo diaspora in the Middle East and the Ottoman Empire. Because of the great demand for concubines and domestic servants in the Islamic countries, the majority of captives exported from the Red Sea ports in the nineteenth century were Oromo girls between the ages of seven and fifteen.⁶

The Ethiopian slave trade continued until the 1930s, only to come to an end because of a progressively strengthened international restriction which rendered slave trade across the Red Sea extremely difficult after World War I. Furthermore, the Italian invasion of 1936 to 1941 also played a role here, as it greatly minimised slavery and the slave trade in Ethiopia.

Internal as well as external displacement of the Oromo took various forms in most of the regions affected by the Abyssinian conquest. Both oral traditions and written records confirm that even regions whose rulers submitted to the invaders with little resistance did not escape the destruction, exploitation and displacement caused by the conquest. The punitive measures taken by the Abyssinians against pockets of resistance caused large scale displacement of the Oromo population. Thus in Qellem, west Oromoland, the "prosperous and seemingly contented condition of the country" witnessed by European travellers before the conquest had changed. By 1918, many Oromos had left their homes and gone to the forest on an individual basis, or started to flee *en masse*.⁷ Many fled to neighboring territories under European colonial rule, for example to the Sudan or Kenya, which were then under British rule.

One of the earliest records of the Oromo exodus concerns the fate of about 4,000 Oromos who fled across the newly created borders Abyssinia and the British East Africa Colony in 1910. This occurred about a decade after the conquest of the Borana region, and was induced

by the harsh rule imposed by the Abyssinian *naftanya* administration. Describing the reaction of the Borana Oromo, Margery Perham has noted that

The population [in Borana] was not large and the soldiers pressed so hardly upon the *gabbars* allotted to them that many of these fled to the bush or into the British territory. The governor [of Borana], urged on by his soldiers, pressed the British authorities to round them up and send them back.⁸

The Ethiopian government made many attempts to re-acquire the refugees, but British colonial officials both in Kenya and London argued that forced repatriation of refugees "could not be condoned on either moral or diplomatic grounds and would cause enormous damage to British prestige in East Africa"⁹ The British Colonial Secretary maintained that "it would be objectionable to approve of the Borana (Oromo) and other tribes being returned to the Abyssinian government, and their being submitted again to extortion which "is the fate of most subject" peoples under the Abyssinian rule. In fact, the British officials saw the *gabbar* system as "a far worse evil than slavery"¹⁰ Thus, the Oromo and other refugees were allowed to stay in the British colony.

Although the Oromo refugee issue continued to cause diplomatic problems for their colonial administration, the British Foreign Office refused to hand them over to the Ethiopian administration. In fact, for these refugees, the flight into the British colony was just a matter of internal displacement. The Oromo territory straddled the border between the Ethiopian Empire and the British colony of Kenya; and for the Oromos, both the British and the Amhara-Tigre colonizers were alien intruders. As the burden under Abyssinian rule became unbearable, an increasing number of Oromo families took their stocks and moved south of the new border into the Kenya colony. Although it would be illogical to construe that any sort of colonialism is a promoter and guarantor of peace and security, the displaced Oromo were forced to stay in the territory occupied by the less oppressive colonial power—the British.¹¹

Forced Oromo Migration in the 1960s: Consequences of Economic and Political Development.

Forced internal and external migration of Oromos was even exacerbated in the post World War II period. The size of the Oromo diaspora began to increase significantly in the 1960s when Oromo refugees crossed international borders in large numbers. First, the suppression of the Macha-Tulama Association, a pan-Oromo social movement established in the late 1950s, produced some refugees who went to the Sudan and Somalia. But the largest flow of refugees was caused by the repressive measures used by the Imperial government to crush peasant uprisings in the Bale and Sidamo regions (from 1963 to 1970). Extensively bombarded by Ethiopian air and ground forces, thousands of Oromo peasants and herdsmen from Bale and Sidamo crossed the border into Somalia in fear and awe of what they called "the huge silver birds that dropped fire on their huts and harvests."¹²

Both the Macha Tulama and Bale movements became a milestone in the development of Oromo nationalism and its mobilization against the Ethiopian state. The Bale movement led to the migration of young men who sought asylum in other parts of the world, particularly the Middle East in the late 1960s. Many of them went back to join the Oromo freedom struggle in the early 1970s, while the rest of them migrated farther to Europe and North America to wage political struggle against the military regime which took power during the Ethiopian revolution of 1974.

The 1960s was also the decade when commercial farming was introduced on large scale in Ethiopia, with disastrous effects for the Oromo people. Numerous Oromo communities became victims of evictions and internal displacement. Although they did not involve immediate cross-border movements, the evictions became a cause for armed and political conflicts which subsequently led to an external Oromo migration.

Before the 1960s, land without serfs or tenants was considered as *taf meret* (wasteland), and irrespective of whether it is arable or not, such land was considered as lacking in value. Therefore, when land grants were made by the Imperial government, what was 'given' was

not just any piece of land, but *lam meret* (cultivated/fertile land). *Lam meret* means in this case land with *gabbar* cultivators. In the rural areas, a land grant was measured not in square metres or hectares, but by the number of *gabbars* cultivating it. In other words, the Ethiopian state distributed serfs rather land itself to those it rewarded. The *gabbars* were not only forced to hand over more than 50 percent of their produce, but to also provide personal service to the landlords. The introduction of mechanized farming changed the relations between the landlords and their tenants in some parts of the Oromo country in the 1960s. As the tractor made farming a profitable activity, the landlords became interested in agriculture or rented their lands to others who went into commercial farming. This new trend in Ethiopian economic history, which the French writer Rene Lefort called "mechanized feudalism," made the *gabbar* dispensable.¹³ The result was that thousands of the Oromo households were forcibly evicted from their homes. The development activities affected even poor peasants who owned their plots of land.

Herdsman also became victims of eviction and involuntary migration as their pasturelands were turned into commercial farms and their farming and herding systems disrupted. Large scale eviction started in the late 1950s in the Upper Awash Valley. Here, land used by Oromo herdsman and farmers for centuries was leased by the Ethiopian government to the Dutch HVA Company and converted into extensive cane sugar estates. Since the Imperial government considered all land in the lowlands Crown or state property, the Oromo whose farm- and grazing-lands were leased to commercial farmers were not given any compensation. Instead, they were simply pushed into drier and less hospitable zones where their stocks diminished rapidly and their way of life was destroyed.¹⁴

Until 1973, the state increasingly continued to grant or lease large tracts of land to large and small commercial firms in the Awash River Valley. The number of Oromo herdsman displaced by the commercial ventures is estimated to be about 20,000.¹⁵ Similar activities in the Koka Dam and the Awash Game Park, which are located in the upper reaches of the same valley, also uprooted thousands of Oromo herdsman and

their families in the 1960s. Since humans and livestock displaced in this manner were denied access to drinking water, thousands of Oromo perished in the drought and famine which hit northern Ethiopia in the 1973-74 period.

The problem of population dislocation caused by mechanized farming was not limited to the Awash River basin, but spread also to other regions. The American scholar Edmond Keller has indicated that imperial land grants averaged between 60,000 hectares per year between 1941 and 1960, but rose to an annual average of 175,000 hectares between 1960 and 1974¹⁶. A case study of the social backgrounds of the grantees showed that the vast majority were members of the aristocracy and armed forces; the rest were civil servants and foreigners or firms owned by them. The Imperial Land Grant Orders disfavoured landless peasants and other poor citizens. The lands distributed by the state were either occupied by peasants or were grazing lands used by herdsmen. Those who were affected most by forced migration accompanying these land grants were the Arsi Oromo. To drive away the peasants from their plots and pasturelands in order to turn them into commercial farms, the landlords destroyed the crops and "bulldozed" the homes of their former serfs or tenants. Generally evictions followed the following procedure:

... when the landlord has made up his mind for commercial agriculture, the tenancy relationships in the area to be affected by mechanization are terminated. Later on the tractors arrived. They ploughed up the land. The home of the tenant family is generally situated in the immediate proximity of the fields. The tractors plough up the soil around the house and the tenant family is told that it is prohibited for people and cattle to walk in the farrows which extend right up to the house. The family has no choice, but to abandon their home.¹⁷

As the number of commercial estates in the Arsi region increased rapidly, five years after the introduction of commercial farming in the highlands of Chilaalo, between twenty and twenty-five percent of the

indigenous inhabitants were evicted. In some districts such as Itaya, the eviction rate was over thirty percent.¹⁸ The majority of the peasants and herdsmen evicted by the "green revolution" moved to the Hararge and Bale regions, and the area around the Rift Valley Lakes.

The rate of eviction seems to have been even greater in the Rift Valley districts than in the highlands, and the Oromo herdsmen inhabiting the region between Maki town in the north and Lake Awasa in the south were severely affected. Although the Oromo herdsmen paid land tax, the state and members of the royal family owned all land in the area. Assets including fertile soil, a highway bisecting the area from north to south, and proximity to Addis Ababa made these lowlands attractive to those who wished to make quick profits from commercial farming. Many of the farms were owned by "weekend farmers" who were engaged in other occupations and were settled in Addis Ababa and other urban centres. Weekend farmers were often high-ranking state officials who ran their farms with hired labor and bank loans, and visited the farms during the weekends for inspection. The Ethiopian state did not consider the fact that leasing land to these part-time farmers meant the destruction of the livelihood of the Oromos who were entirely dependent on farming and raising livestock.

The number of people evicted by commercial farming in the Rift Valley Lakes area is unknown, but it is considered to have been greater than anywhere else in the empire. By 1973, the number of the indigenous households living in the area was greatly reduced. The rate of evictions was about 100-200 families per year in the Shashemene district.¹⁹ The evicted Oromo families generally left their home areas to seek land in other provinces. Parents carrying small children and driving their livestock south were a common sight along the Addis-Awasa highway²⁰ in the early 1970s, indicating that for many of the displaced households the destination was either Bale or the Oromo areas of the Sidamo region. The Imperial system of land tenure and the expansion of private commercial agriculture in Oromoland were brought to an end with the outbreak of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974.

In all its ramifications, forced Oromo migration reflected the relations between the Oromo and their conquerors. It indicates that

gross violation of human rights have been perpetrated against the Oromo people by consecutive Ethiopian administrations for more than a century. Unfortunately, the 1974 revolution for which the popular resistance in Oromoland was one of the causes did not much change the characteristics of these relations. The eviction and the internal as well as external displacement of Oromos continued on mass scale as the violation of human rights was intensified under the Mengistu regime that came to power upon Haile Selassie's demise

Forced Migration in the Aftermath of the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution

One of the largest forced Oromo migrations was sparked by events that followed the outbreak of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974. During the 1970s and 1980s, political and religious persecution, war, conscription into the military, forced labour, and economic policies pursued by the Ethiopian military regime (1974-1991) resulted in the largest number of refugees to cross international borders in the history of the country. Oromos constituted a large proportion of these refugees.

The revolution was hailed by the Oromo and the other oppressed peoples in Ethiopia who hoped for a new era of freedom from cultural and economic domination. However, the results became more or less the opposite. The *gabbar* system was abolished, but this did not improve the standard of living in the rural areas. The poor economic situation of the Oromo was not remedied by the new regime. Following nationalization of rural and urban lands, the state became the sole owner of land; dues and taxes paid by the Oromo peasants increased and even became more onerous than they were under the previous feudal regime. The Dergue also introduced a marketing policy that became a major constraint on food production and led to increased rural poverty.

For the Oromo and other oppressed ethnic groups, the abolition of inequality was the primary force driving their participation in the revolution. However, their hopes for equality were frustrated by the authoritarian and centralizing policies of the military rulers. Instead of encouraging voluntary integration of nationalities or ethnic groups into the country's socio-political structure, the Dergue demanded unity by

force. Thus promises of political and cultural rights to the non-Amhara peoples were contradicted. The result was intensification of conflict in Oromoland and the other regions. The Dergue attempted to control opposition with violence. In 1977, it declared the “Red Terror” which led to the loss of thousands lives and caused a mass exodus of young and educated people from Ethiopia. Opposition groups including the Oromo took up arms against the regime and formed liberation fronts in different parts of the country. One of these was the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).

The social and economic conditions in Ethiopia deteriorated with the militarization of its economy. As the new regime chose to solve political problems using military means, the country’s resources were diverted to warfare. Ethiopia’s resources were, and still remain, primarily centred in Oromoland. Consisting of the products of the Oromo farmers and herdsman—including coffee, hides and skins—they together constitute more than 80 percent of Ethiopia’s export. On top of the increased taxes and dues, the peasants were forced to make recurrent contributions, which the regime used to cover its military expenses. Oromo peasants were literally made to feed the regime’s war machinery. In addition, tens of thousands of peasants in their prime productive ages were forcibly conscripted into the militia to become cannon-fodder. The conscription targeted Oromos. Consequently Oromos constituted more than 70 percent of the Dergue’s half a million militia force.²¹ Thousands of Oromos fled to the neighboring countries because of the poverty caused by the Dergue’s economic policy and to avoid conscription and forced labor.

However, political persecution was the main cause of flight from Ethiopia. During the 1970s and 1980s, Ethiopia was under a state of emergency declared by the Dergue. Emergency regulations typically invest significant powers in the hands of authorities, often to the detriment of human rights. The Dergue labelled its political adversaries “counter-revolutionary,” “narrow nationalists” or just “anarchists,” and declared the so-called “Red Terror” against them. As death became the penalty for all opposition to the regime’s rule, tens of thousands of young people, including school children, were killed. Thousands of Oromos fled to escape death or imprisonment in Ethiopia.

In addition to the Red Terror, forced relocation also became part of the Dergue's emergency programme, leading to large-scale migration.²² Between 1978 and 1986, over 800,000 people—mainly Amharic speaking and Tigreans from the north—were relocated in Oromoland and in regions in the southwestern peripheries of Ethiopia. Thousands of Oromos were displaced as their farms and pasturelands were converted to settlement sites for those the regime relocated from the north. Many fled to the Sudan. Ironically, many of the Amhara and Tigrean peasants relocated in Oromoland also followed the displaced Oromos seeking refuge in neighboring countries.

Another relocation programme, known as villagization, affected millions of Oromos and others in the mid-1980s. The Mengistu regime forcibly moved peasant households from their traditional habitat into hastily set-up strategic villages. From the beginning, the target of the programme was Oromos. Regrouping them into "villages" began in 1978 in the southeastern Oromoland in order to isolate the OLF and reduce secessionist tendencies among the Oromo population. When large-scale villagization was implemented in 1984-85 it was Oromoland which was affected most. In 1985-86, about 140,000 Oromos fled villagization from the Hararge region to Somalia.²³ More than two thousand of these "villagization" refugees perished from starvation and a cholera epidemic that broke out in the over-crowded camp near the border town of Tug Wajale in northwest Somalia.²⁴ Many also fled to the Sudan.

In 1979, the UNHCR office in Mogadisho estimated that of the 350,000 Ethiopian refugees sheltered in camps in Somalia, as many as two-thirds were Oromos.²⁵ Ulrich Braukämper, who conducted a study in the Horn of Africa in 1981, wrote that the UNHCR estimates the number of refugees in Somalia to be about 700,000, "roughly one third of whom may be Oromo, i.e., approximately 200-250,000."²⁶ During the 1980s, there were over 1.5 million Ethiopian refugees from Ethiopia in the neighboring countries of Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti.²⁷ In the mid-1980s, there were at least half a million Oromo refugees in the Horn of Africa. Until 1990, over 90 percent of them were in Somalia while the rest stayed in the Sudan and Djibouti, but also in other African

countries such as Kenya and Egypt. A small fraction of the Oromo refugees went to the Middle East, Europe, North America, and Australia.

Humanitarian and Development Activities in Exile

One of the organizations created by Oromos in exile in the late 1970s was the Oromo Relief Association (ORA). The ORA was formally established in 1979 with its head office in Khartoum, Sudan. Before its formation as the ORA, it had a different name—"Fund Raising Committee"—but it has been attempting to fulfil its humanitarian objectives in Ethiopia since 1976, if not before. The Committee first dedicated itself to secretly collecting contributions from trusted Oromo nationals in Ethiopia, in order to help Oromo families whose breadwinners were either imprisoned, killed or missing.²⁸

The ORA's 1979 constitution lays out four main objectives: (a) relief and rehabilitation of the displaced; (b) care of orphans; (c) campaigns for healthcare and literacy; and (d) collection and dissemination of information on displaced Oromos inside and outside Oromia.

The ORA's activities were significant and widely beneficial, despite of minimal support from governmental and non-governmental organizations (such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] and others). From the beginning, the Oromo Relief Association, and *chaya ummattaa*, "have been able to put up an efficient network to meet the material and psychological needs of the exiled Oromo - and to some extent also of other refugee groups such as the Koma and Berta who were not able to establish their own associations"²⁹

The ORA's achievements in the field of literacy were also quite important. Through the ORA and other organizations' literacy classes, thousands of Oromo refugees learned to read and write their own language, an opportunity denied to them in Ethiopia. In the Sudan, regular schools were even established by the ORA to provide education for refugee children. Discussing a refugee settlement she visited in the mid 1980s at Yabus in the Sudan, Roberta Aitchison has noted that considering "that there are over 20 million speakers of this tongue, it is

remarkable that the only schools that taught in the Oromo language were in the liberated areas of Oromia or in exile.”³⁰

More significantly, it was the experience gained and the work accomplished by these refugee organizations and the OLF, particularly in the areas of Oromo language and literacy, that became the foundation for the revival of the Oromo language at home following the fall of the Mengistu regime in 1991. It is interesting to note that this was not the first time that exile had become a platform for the development of literacy in the Oromo language. It was the work of the Oromo diaspora created by the slave trade that provided the first step towards the creation of Oromo literature in the 1880s. A ban enforced by Haile Selassie in 1942 on the use of the language in teaching, preaching and administration obliterated Oromo literacy achieved before the 1940s. As a result, the present Oromo diaspora had to completely re-start literacy in the 1980s, using *Qubee* or the Oromo characters based on the Latin alphabet. Within just one year of the demise of the Dergue, the OLF managed to establish a successful education programme in *afaan Oromoo* throughout the vast Oromo country. This would have been virtually inconceivable without the preparation of the basic educational materials in the diaspora, and the testing done by the ORA in its schools for refugee children, particularly at Yabus and Demazin in the Sudan

Forced Oromo Migration under the Present Tigrean Regime

Following the fall of the military regime, a transitional government was formed in July 1991, comprised of a coalition various liberation fronts and political organizations including the Oromo Liberation Front. A transitional charter was signed, which promised that each ethno-national group will participate in the government on the basis of fair and proper representation. Thus, it was expected that the overthrow of the Dergue would usher in a new era of hope, equality, and democracy in Ethiopia. However, flaws in the 1992 regional elections led to the withdrawal of the OLF from the transitional government. The realisation of the lofty goals promised by the charter was blocked as the Tigrean leaders of the EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic

Front) started suppression of opposition, doing away with all the principles enshrined in it.

From the beginning, the transitional government was dominated by the EPRDF, which not only had the largest guerrilla army, but also the blessing of the West, particularly the United States. The U.S. has viewed the Ethiopian government as a potential ally against Muslim fundamentalism in Northeast Africa and has continued to give it full support irrespective of its violation of human rights widely reported by internal and external observers.³¹ However, Meles Zenawi has targeted the OLF as his main adversary. OLF members, supporters, and sympathizers—Christians, Muslims, and believers in the traditional Oromo religion—have been persecuted in large numbers by his regime. It is widely acknowledged among political commentators that the major factor behind the development of militant Islamic groups is Western support of dictatorial regimes. The danger is that the West's support for Meles Zenawi's authoritarian regime would promote political extremism in Ethiopia rather than curb the spread of Muslim fundamentalism.

Since 1992, extra-judicial political killings, disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and torture and rape of detainees have been reported by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other international and local human rights organizations.³² The number of Oromo currently in detention is not known. When the OLF withdrew from the transitional government in 1992, the EPRDF put between 20,000 and 45,000 Oromos in official and secret concentration camps scattered throughout Oromoland.³³ Many of these Oromos died from contagious diseases and torture. Some of the official camps were visited by the Red Cross and other human rights organizations who described the conditions as deplorable. Most of the detainees were not men in fighting age but old men, women, and children. While most of the original prisoners have been released, many more have been arrested and detained.

The EPRDF is conducting a war not only against the OLF, but also Oromo civic associations, businessmen, and businesswomen. In *Hizbaani Adera* (The People's Custodian)—an internal newsletter prepared and issued by the EPRDF for its political cadres—there was a call in

1997 to defeat “narrow nationalism” particularly among Oromos. In order to have a lasting solution to this problem, the newsletter recommended that Oromo intellectuals and bourgeoisie be mercilessly fought and eliminated. This was also put into routine practice by the security forces. According to the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), Ethiopia is one of the world’s most frequent and “Africa’s leading jailer of journalists”³⁴ Almost all Oromo journalists have been put in jail for some period of time by the present government. Five of the journalists of the *Urji* newspaper were imprisoned in 1997 and remained in jail until July 2001. Since then publication of the paper has been stopped.

All the prominent Oromo writers were persecuted, jailed or forced to flee and live in exile.³⁵ This was also the fate of Oromo artists. The Gadaa Oromo Club, a consortium of Oromo artists, was disbanded in 1998 as its members were routinely imprisoned and tortured—accused of being “anti-regime and anti-peace.” Some were killed in the street of Addis Ababa by the security forces. Almost all the members of this club, most of them prominent artists in the country, have lived in exile since 1998—they are spread throughout the world. Many of the victims of the EPRDF’s terror in 2000 were Oromo students. Because of the continued repression, over fifty Oromo university and college students fled to Kenya in 2001.

The victims of the Melese Zenewi’s reign of terror included Oromo humanitarian organizations such as the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) and Oromo Human Rights League (HRL). In 1991, the ORA established itself as a non-governmental, non-political charity organization with headquarters in Addis Ababa. As an organization with two decades of experience in relief and development activities, particularly among Oromo refugees abroad as well in territories controlled by the OLF at home, ORA has been acknowledged and licensed by the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC). However, in 1996, its offices were closed, many of its staff in the provinces and in Addis Ababa were arrested and put in jail. ORA’s relief and development work was declared illegal and its property confiscated by Meles Zenawi’s government. In one of its many *Urgent Action* appeals

concerning Oromo human rights activists imprisoned by the present Ethiopian government, Amnesty International stated that

These people have been arrested simply for taking a public stand against human rights violations against members of the Oromo ethnic group or for their peaceful Oromo community activities. They are prisoners of conscience and should never have been arrested in the first place.³⁶

The Oromo economy has also been negatively impacted by the current regime both by the flight of Oromo businessmen from the country, and the plunder of Oromo resources by the Tigrean regime and its supporters. As the Associate Director of Africa Watch, Alex de Waal indicated, “controlling the state is an economic imperative because Tigray and the adjoining areas are so impoverished and environmentally degraded that there is no alternative source of sustenance.” He added that “in Tigray, which represents ten percent of the population, even staple foods are provided by international aid channelled through the state,” while “for the Oromo and other southern peoples, the role of the state has been to extract wealth from them.”³⁷ As noted before, traditionally the Ethiopian state extracted wealth not only through legal taxation, but also by looting the property of its Oromo subjects. By and large, the same method is being used by the Meles government. Interviews given by Oromo refugees and reported in the second part of this report, and statements made by other observers confirm that the looting of Oromo property by Tigrean forces has been common since the beginning of the 1990s.

It is not only private Oromo property which is being plundered, but also public property at large. Under the Dergue, the Ethiopian state owned various sorts of property including land, banks and other financial institutions, urban houses and buildings, factories, agricultural enterprises, etc.—all worth billions of dollars. The privatization of these extensive state owned properties since 1991 has not benefited the public, but has instead enriched elites of the EPRDF and their supporters, mainly Tigrean businessmen. The people of Tigray also generally are beneficiaries. About 32 billion *birr* (US\$4 billion) was invested in the

development of the province during the last 10 years, while the resources of the other regions were being looted and their populations impoverished. Multi-million dollar international airports at Mekele and Axum, as well as a university, water projects for several cities, and a number of large industrial plants are just some of the many structures that have been constructed in Tigray.

Because of continued violations of human rights, many of the Oromo refugees who returned in 1991-92 hoping that a democratic government is in place and a period of peace was in the making have fled once again. Many more have joined them in exile.

Status of Oromo Refugees in Northeast Africa

The Sudan, which had a generous refugee policy for most of the 1970s and 1980s, accepted thousands of Oromo refugees. Today, refugees are still crossing into the Sudan from the western regions of Oromia. It is estimated that there are between ten and fifteen thousand Oromo refugees in the Sudan today. Since the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) offices were closed in 1998, the Sudan has become less hospitable to Oromo refugees. Many live under dire conditions waiting for a favorable political change before they return to their homeland.

As mentioned before, several thousand Oromos have sought refuge in Djibouti since 1974. What the poverty refugees face in this inhospitable desert place is stark indeed. However, more distressing is the utter vulnerability of refugees due to the lack of political protection.³⁸ From 1983 onwards, the Djibouti government has followed a policy of forcible deportation of refugees to Ethiopia.³⁹ For many refugees, life in Djibouti has been a nightmare because of the violent *rafles*, detentions, and rapes by border guards and city police. *Raffles* have been described as routine sweeps whereby refugees are seized from the streets of Djibouti city, detained by local police, held overnight, and brought by force in the morning to work on local construction projects, or alternatively, deported to Ethiopia. According to Bruna Fossati, Lydia Namarra and Peter Niggli, the *rafles* are so frequent that they "experienced three occasions in a fortnight when the police rounded

up refugees and other suspects” in 1996. The UNCHR is aware of this problem and is said to make frequent protests.⁴⁰

In Djibouti, refugee women are the most vulnerable. They can be picked up from the street, or even from their homes, for any reason and raped at any time by police. Sexual abuse in working environments is a large problem, not to mention the fate of many female house servants. According to one report, “If the woman says no, she is automatically fired; and the chance of finding a new employment without this requirement is minimal.”⁴¹

For many female refugees, the ordeal starts the moment they cross into Djibouti territory where border guards often separate girls and women from male asylum seekers, keep them isolated for days and sexually abuse them. Roberta Aitchison has reported the account of an 18-year-old female refugee who agreed to talk about her Djibouti experience after two years of silence. The girl said she arrived from the two-week trek through the Danakil desert physically exhausted, badly dehydrated, and with blistering sores on her feet and body. But the most terrible part of her ordeal was the three days she was held at the border jail and raped repeatedly.

Today, large groups of Oromos continue flee to Djibouti in order to escape political persecution in Ethiopia. Many of them go to Djibouti with the aim of using it as a gate to other countries of asylum. However, the majority do not have the possibility of seeking asylum elsewhere and linger in Djibouti with the hope that political changes will take place back home so that they can return.

As mentioned above, Somalia took the largest number of Oromo refugees in the 1870s and 1980s. The problems that Oromo refugees face in Somalia have been rather different from that in Djibouti. Though the Somali government welcomed them, their Oromo identity was not recognized. The Somali authorities registered them as Somalis from Ogaden. It seems that the UNHCR did not bother to find out the ethnic identity of the refugees. Since the Siyad Barré regime claimed much of the eastern part of Oromoland as part of what it called “Greater Somalia,” it tried to make Somalis out of the Oromo. Oromo youth were forcibly conscripted into the Somali armed forces to fight

against Ethiopia. The use of Oromo language among the refugees was suppressed.

The turmoil that followed the fall of President Siyad Barré's regime and the disintegration of the Somali state in 1990 had forced most of the Oromo refugees who lived in Somalia in the 1980s to disperse in all directions. Many of them stayed in Somalia, however, and are still there in spite of the chaos and lack of protection by the international community.⁴² There are no accurate figures to account for the number of Oromos in Somali today, but it is estimated that there are at least 30,000 to 40,000 scattered throughout Somali.

There were refugees in Kenya in the 1970s and 1980s. Generally, the country has never been open to refugees as were its neighbors and other African states. According to recent estimates, there are 50,000 to 60,000 Oromo refugees in Kenya today. The number, however, is increasing rapidly in tandem with an increasing repression against the Oromo in Ethiopia. When the former Oromo refugees in Somalia fled to Kenya in mass in 1990-91, they were pushed into Ethiopia with military violence. Since then, Kenya has continued to threaten Oromo political refugees with deportation to Ethiopia. Recognizing the danger that refugees in Kenya face, some of the European countries, particularly Norway, have accepted and resettled over 200 Oromos since 1997. The United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have received larger groups in recent years. Finding resettlement opportunities in third countries of asylum for Oromo refugees stranded in the Horn of Africa is part of a short-term solution to the pressing protection problem. Many of the refugees live in constant fear of what may happen to them any moment.

Cross-Border Raids: Cause for Insecurity Among Refugees in the Horn of Africa

Insecurity among refugees is caused by a range of factors including forced repatriation to Ethiopia, hostile treatment by the host government, and attack by Ethiopian security who often cross borders in search of dissidents and opponents to the regime at home. Generally, refugees get little or no international legal protection in the countries

of the Horn. Since the EPDRF came to power, the main cause of fear has been the Ethiopian security forces. These forces have almost routinely crossed borders and killed Oromo refugees in Somalia, Djibouti, and Kenya.

Since the early 1980s, the government of Djibouti has been under constant pressure from consecutive Ethiopian governments who want a return of the refugees who came to the small republic seeking asylum. Threatened by its great neighbor, previous and current rulers of Djibouti have forcibly repatriated thousands of refugees to Ethiopia. The latest forced repatriation to Ethiopia was conducted in December 2000 and involved over 1000 refugees.⁴³ The security forces of the present Ethiopian regime have also occasionally entered Djibouti and murdered refugees. Raids into the Somali territory have been quite frequent during the last three years and Oromo refugees were killed

Of all the countries hosting Oromo refugees in the Horn, Kenya has been most affected by cross-border raids from Ethiopia. On July 2, 1992, agents of the Ethiopian government assassinated a well-known Oromo refugee, Jatani Ali, in Nairobi. Between that date and September 1999, the Ethiopian security forces conducted over 60 raids, often deep into the Kenyan territory, and have killed hundreds of Oromos, many of them citizens of Kenya (see Appendix). Although the raids have led to strong protests and demonstrations from Kenyan citizens in the streets of Nairobi, Mayale, Marsabit, and other cities, as well as in the Kenyan Parliament, the Kenyan government has not been able to prevent the raids, or even make a strong international protest to stop the violation of its country's territorial sovereignty.⁴⁴ During the years 2000 and 2001, the raids were intensified, resulting in the death of many Oromo refugees, Kenyan citizens, and security men. In order to spread terror and prevent Kenyan Oromos from assisting Oromo refugees across the border, the Ethiopian forces have killed both Kenyan citizens and refugees and looted property belonging to Kenyans. According to Kenya's largest newspaper, the *Daily Nation*, attacks by Ethiopian forces have resulted in over 160 deaths of civilians and Kenyan policemen. The paper disclosed that a raid conducted by Ethiopian forces at Moyale during the second week of January 2001 displaced 600 Kenyan citizens

and resulted in the death of 10 people, four civilians and six members of the Kenya police.⁴⁵

Hoping for a Bright Future While Coping With the Predicaments of Exile

Roughly estimated, there are over 200,000 Oromo refugees outside their homeland today. About half them are in Africa and the rest in the Middle East, Europe, North America and other parts of the world. Australia and New Zealand have resettled several hundred Oromo refugees since the mid 1980s. A large proportion of the Oromo migrants in Europe and North America have a formal education, while the majority of those who live in the Horn of Africa are peasants with little or no formal education.

In countries like Kenya and Djibouti where it is very difficult to obtain employment and assistance, many refugees live in limbo, and a sense of worthlessness and hopelessness can easily affect them. However, experience shows that when they are allowed to live in peace, many refugees discover their own individual potential and succeed in the art of survival even when faced by great challenges of unemployment and poverty. Since many live with the hope of returning home, their present situation, although difficult, is seen only as temporary. A German scholar conversant with Ethiopian affairs, argued that the Oromo refugees seem to see the future in terms of a kind of unconscious dialectic, the former life in their country of origin being the thesis, their existence as a refugee the anti-thesis, and the new society which is to be created after the time of exile the synthesis.⁴⁶ This hope has also led to the creation of diasporic Oromo organizations that have been a source of solidarity for many refugees. Even if these organizations are not functional in the Horn of Africa today, they are expanding in Oromo refugee communities in other parts of the world.

In fact, Oromo refugees have turned an exile into school. As mentioned above, thousands of Oromo refugees learned to read and write their own language through the literacy classes conducted by ORA and other diasporic Oromo organizations in the 1980s. This was an opportunity they were denied in Ethiopia. Over the last 20 years, many

Oromos have used exile as an opportunity to appraise their own history and identity. The Oromo historian, Mohammed Hassen argued that the ruling Abyssinian elites have perceived the danger of the large Oromo population to their empire and have systematically depicted them as a people without history, and belittled their way of life, and their religious and political institutions. He maintained that it "is no exaggeration to say that no people have had their history as distorted and human qualities undervalued as the Oromo have been in Ethiopian historiography."⁴⁷ Naturally, Oromo intellectuals have been contesting the policies which denigrated their culture, language and history. However, in Ethiopia, they did not have the opportunity to openly express or publish their oppositions. It is only in exile that this became possible. Here, the revival of the Oromo culture and research into Oromo history are some of the main objectives of the diasporic Oromo organizations. International conferences and workshops are being conducted in Europe and North America every year. Among the more significant and concrete results include the creation of an international Oromo Studies Association (OSA), and its organ—the *Journal Oromo Studies*—in 1993. A number of works are published on Oromo history, language, politics, and culture by Oromo scholars in the diaspora. Some of the outcomes of these endeavours have far reaching implications not only in terms of knowledge, but also regional politics.

Although the raids conducted by the EPRDF into the territories of Ethiopia's neighboring states seeks to disrupt the activities of Oromo organizations, the number of such organizations is increasing and their activities expanding, at least outside the Horn of Africa. Some of the organizations that the Oromos created in the 1990s were religious. Both Muslim and Christian Oromos have been very active in organizing their religious lives in their host countries. In particular, the Oromo church, an offshoot of the Evangelical Mekaneyesus Church, was started in western Oromoland a century ago by returnees from the Oromo diaspora. The church has become one of the fastest growing institutions in the diaspora. Although a diasporic branch of this evangelical church was created in order to meet the spiritual needs of its exiled members, it is also interesting to recollect here that the persecution of the early

JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

Oromo evangelists continued under the previous regimes and became one of the factors leading to its emergence. Many of the pastors and members of the Oromo diasporic church today are either those who fled Ethiopia to escape imprisonment in the 1980s, or those who were imprisoned and persecuted by the Dergue and left their country out of fear under the present regime.

Notwithstanding obstacles laid by the EPRDF government wishing to control freedom of expression and free flow of information, modern technology is bringing the diaspora communities into constant contact with the Oromo society, its institutions, and intellectuals at home. Without a doubt this will play an important role in the way politics in Ethiopia is going to evolve in the years to come.

NOTES

1. See for example Alexander Bulatovich, *Ethiopia through Russian Eyes: Country in Transition 1896-1898*, Translated from Russian to English by R. Seltzer, The Red Sea Press, 2000. Lt. Bulatovich participated in the war of conquest and was advisor to one of Menelik's generals.
2. Ibid, pp. 1113-14.
3. Pankhurst, R. *Economic History of Ethiopia: 1800-1935*, Addis Ababa, 1968, p. 120.
4. See Bulcha, M. *The Making of the Oromo Diaspora: Consequences of the Red Sea Slave Trade and Colonialism in Northeast Africa*, Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers (forthcoming, spring 2002).
5. Pankhurst, R. *Economic History of Ethiopia: 1800-1935*, Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1968, p. 44; Austen, R. "The Islamic Red Sea Slave Trade: An Effort at Quantification," *The Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies*, University of Chicago, 1978, p. 449.
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10. See for example, *The Times*, London, April 18, 1931.
11. See Hickey, D. C. "Ethiopia and Great Britain: Political Conflicts in the Southern Borderlands, 1916-1935," Doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1984.
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18. See CADU (Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit), *Generela Agricultural Survey 1972*, CADU, 1972
19. Gilkes, P. *The Dying Lion* London, 1975, p. 126; see also Stahl, M. *Ibid*, p. 134
20. Personal observation I spent the summer months of 1971, 1972 and 1973 in the area.
21. PMAC (Provisional Military Administrative Council), *Basic Documents of the Ethiopia Revolution*, Addis Ababa, 1977.
22. See Bulcha, M. "Famine as an Instrument for Nation-Building and State Consolidation: Ethiopia's Resettlement and Villagization Programs in Retrospect," *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol. 8, Nos 1and 2, 2001, pp. 111-154

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24. See Peter Godwin, "Thousands flee Ethiopian Regime," *The Sunday Times*, 18 May 1986. Tala Skari (UNHCR, *Refugees*, no 21, September 1985) reported that in the spring season of 1986 alone, cholera claimed 1,100 lives in the camps for the "villagization" refugees alone.
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26. Braukämper, U. "Ethnic Identity and Social Change Among Oromo Refugees in the Horn of Africa", *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1982-83, p. 4.
27. These included also the Eritrean refugees in the Sudan. Eritrea was part of Ethiopia until 1992
28. Personal communication with Fekadu Wakjira, ORA chairperson 1979-1992.
29. See Braukämper, U op. cit., p. 11.
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31. Kjetil Tronvoll, *Contextualising Human Rights and Democratisation Support. External Aid to the NGO Sector in Ethiopia*, Oslo, Norwegian Institute of Human Rights, Working Paper 1997:6, p. 21.
32. According to the Oromia Support Group, 2,607 extra-judicial killings and 840 disappearances of Oromo men and women have been registered since 1992. See *Sagalee Haaraa Newsletter*, Number 33, May 2001, p. 4
33. The continuation of extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, imprisonment of Oromos suspected of "sympathising with or being involved with the OLF" is confirmed by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, and other international organizations. U.S. State Department, *Ethiopia: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2000*, Washington, January, 2001.
34. CPJ/IFEX, CPJ Executive Director Ann K. Cooper's letter to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia dated October 31, 2001.

35. Among these are Dhabaa Wayessa, a prominent playwright who now lives in the US and Mooti Biyya a novelist and a renowned political commentator, who after several years in prison has recently gone into exile in Canada.
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44. See for example *The Weekly Review*, Nairobi, May 23, 1997, p.7
45. See *The Sunday Nation*, January 28, 2001.
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JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF STATE SPONSORED VIOLENCE: THE CASE OF THE ETHIOPIAN STATE TERRORISM AGAINST THE OROMO

Bichaka Fayissa

Introduction

Since their conquest and incorporation into the Ethiopian empire in the 1880s, the Oromo people have been subjected to the worst kind of abuses of their political, economic, social, and environmental rights. They have been denied the right of self-government and have been directly and/or systematically marginalized from the political process of the empire state. Their land and other properties have been confiscated by Menelik II and given to armed settlers.

Their democratic system of government, the gada- one of ancient African civilizations which resembles the Greek Athenian democracy, has been banned by the state. Even though the Oromo people constitute the majority of the empire state, they have been denied the right to develop and use their own language for instruction and administration. The Oromo people have been treated as second-class citizens on their own land of birth. All efforts on the part of the Oromo to settle the conflicts between them and the successive hostile and repressive Abyssinian regimes have only met with further political and economic repression. Their appeals to the international community to put pressure on the previous and current regimes in Ethiopia have not so far produced adequate response to avert the course of the regime's wanton political and economic domination. In fact, one could safely speculate genocide in the making against the Oromo people if the current trend of oppression continues as discussed by Trevor Trueman (2001) and others.

In this paper, I argue that the Oromo and other oppressed nations have been subjected to all forms of repression by successive regimes in Ethiopia, partly because of the colonial master-slave relationship which has been protected by the confluence of interests of the Ethiopian ruling elites and that of the western governments. On the one hand,

the interest of the Ethiopian ruling elites is to maintain control of Oromo economic resources at the expense of the legitimate owners. On the other hand, the policy of the western governments for much of the past century has been to support the Ethiopian regime at any cost in order to maintain "regional stability" by controlling "Islamic fundamentalism." How justifiable are western concerns and what are the facts about religion in Oromo society to serve as a justification for the blind support of the Ethiopian state by western governments?

While the role that religion plays in Oromo society is not the focus of this paper, those who studied have shown that Oromos are pluralistic in their views toward religion which are rooted in peace and social justice (Bartel, 1983). Most importantly, Oromos are not monolithic in their religious affiliations as they are wrongly portrayed. There are Christian Oromos, Moslem Oromos, and those who practice traditional religion. It is, therefore, wrong for the western governments to support successive repressive regimes in Ethiopia based on such misconceptions.

This paper examines the widespread state-sponsored violence against the Oromo people in Ethiopia. While efforts will be made to document some of the cases of state supported aggressions against the Oromo by the successive Abyssinian regimes in the past century, the paper mainly focuses on the current situation of Oromo human rights abuses by the Tigrean-led minority dictatorship in Ethiopia. The paper is divided into five sections. The introduction section delineates the issues to be addressed and the objective of the paper. Section two adopts a working definition of state sponsored violence. Section three lists and discusses some cases of state sponsored violence against the Oromo people from the Menelik II era (1880s) to the current repressive regime in Ethiopia. The fourth section explores some of the factors that have contributed to the continuation and intensification of heinous crimes and human rights abuses against the Oromo people by the current regime in Ethiopia. The last section is devoted to some concluding remarks as to what can be done to end state sponsored violence against the Oromo people.

A Working Definition of State-Sponsored Violence

In his book, Jonathan White (1991) gives various definitions of government orchestrated violence against the people. In its simplest form, it refers to the actions of the state to threaten or intimidate an individual or group to produce fear or change. Its legal content relates to the violation by a state its own legal code in order to unlawfully punish an individual or a group through threats, intimidation, harassment, torture, and imprisonment. In its most serious form, state sponsored violence refers to the use of government power for the explicit purpose of terrorizing citizens into submission.

Some examples include Cambodia where more than one million of eight million people were killed by Pol Pot during 1969-1975 (Herman, 1998). In Indonesia, Suharto came to power in 1965 accompanied by a slaughter of over 700, 000 people (Herman, 1998). The military dictators in Argentina and Idi Amin in Uganda misused their power for terrorizing their people in the 1970s. During the so called "Red Terror" of 1978, the military junta in Ethiopia, under Mengistu Hailemariam, killed more than 34,000 civilians from December 1977 to April 1978 under the banner of "narrow nationalism" and for allegedly being anti-socialist revolution.

In the last eleven years, the current TPLF dominated regime in Ethiopia has committed untold crimes against the Oromo and other oppressed nationalities by sponsoring all forms of repression including kidnapping, disappearances, underground solitary confinement, imprisonment, torture, disarming Oromos and arming rival groups (Gedo and Gare against Oromo) and extra judicial killings. Moreover, the current regime is also responsible for the death and destruction of the more than 100,000 innocent Oromo youth by its ruthless policy of forced conscription to fight its senseless war against Eritrea. Thus there is no question about the existence of state sponsored violence in Ethiopia against the Oromo as we shall explore some of the cases in the next section.

Some Cases of State Sponsored Violence in Ethiopia

The Menelik II Era

During the Menelik era of occupation and incorporation, Oromos experienced gross human rights violations of genocidal proportions. According to de Salviac (1901) and Bulatovich (1896-1898), the demographic consequences of the conditions imposed by the Abyssinian imperial conquests on the Oromo, Kaficho, Gimira, and Maji peoples during 1876-1900 were enormous. The Oromo population was decimated by more than fifty percent from 10 million during independence to about 5 million following their colonization. The fate of smaller nations such as the Kaficho, Gimira, and Maji was even worse (see Table 1 and Table 2).

Contrary to the Ethiopianist historiography which paints the reign of Menelik as a period of “modernization and reunification,” Oromos remember it as a period during which their land and other resources were confiscated, their system of government (Gada) and language banned, and about half of their population decimated while resisting his brutal conquest and colonization (see Table 1). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the colonial experience of the Oromo under Menelik’s rule in great detail, it is essential to highlight some of his ruthless treatment of the Oromo (Salviac, 1901).

His army destroyed human and material resources in Oromia. For instance, Ras Darghe, Menelik’s militia chief, engaged in the mutilation of the right hand of Oromo men and the right breast of Oromo women during the Azule war to speed up the process of submission of the weakened Arsi Oromo. As Abbas Hajii (1995) argues, at the conclusion of that war, Ras Darghe called to his garrison Arsi men and women under the pretext of making peace with them at Anole, and he cut off the right hand of Oromo men and right breast of Oromo women.

Not surprisingly, he was regarded as a heartless butcher among the Oromos while being hailed as a war hero by the Abyssinians (Amhara-Tigre elites) in whose name schools were built and monuments were erected. Some Oromos who suffered at the hand of Menelik lived until 1950s and even early 1960s and were able to tell their story.

The Haile Selassie Era

During his years of reign in Ethiopia, Haile Selassie built a highly centralized system of government (absolute monarchy) with the support of western governments including the US, Britain, and others, thus making sure the perpetuation of the Amhara domination with the Tigrés as junior partners. Following in the footsteps of Menelik, he continued the oppression, exploitation, and mistreatment of the Oromo and other nationalities. He vigorously encouraged the settlement of Amharas on Oromo land. In fact, he apportioned Oromo land and peasants to the settlers and the Coptic Orthodox Church as private property which resulted in the establishment of an exploitive system known as *gebbar* (a form of slavery) by which Oromos were required to pay hefty tribute in terms of their material and manpower resources to the armed settlers and absentee landlords (Gada Melba, 1988).

In 1933, Haile Selassie passed a decree that "...once a person was given to a *naftegna*, an armed settler, he/she was not allowed to leave the land against the landlord's will." This condition was investigated and confirmed by the report of the League of Nations in 1935 (League of Nations Report C 240.171, VII, p. 41, 1935). Despite his autocratic rule and suppression of any form of political dissent, western governments hailed his rule because of their free access to cheap Oromo resources in return for the financial reliance of a dependant colonial state. Haile Selassie also imposed his policy of cultural assimilation and economic domination under the banner of "Ethiopian unity" through an extensive system of divide and rule among the armed forces and through an intermarriage with some Oromo nobility in spite of the continuous resistance of the Oromo and other oppressed nations.

The Derg, or Military Junta Era (1974-1991)

The 17 years of misrule of the military junta, under the leadership of Mengistu Haile Mariam, was simply a change in form from a feudal and autocratic rule to the continuation of tyranny under a bankrupt military dictatorship. Not only did the Oromo suffer, other colonized people were also subjected to the worst kind of human rights abuses

and suffering. During the 1977-78 "Red Terror" campaign, the streets of Addis Ababa and other cities and towns were littered with the dead bodies of youths, workers, and intellectuals who were massacred in cold blood by the junta security personnel at their homes, places of work, on the streets, and in the numerous detention centers (Melba, 1988).

According to Amnesty International (AI), close to 30,000 people were murdered between December 1977 and February 1978 in the capital city alone. Dead bodies were displayed in the morning to the public including school children on the streets and were picked and buried in mass graves by the municipal garbage collectors. Thousands of youths and intellectuals were slain ruthlessly. The emissaries of western countries including the U.S., Canada, Britain, Germany, and others who saw these tragedies unfolding in front of their eyes were silent had it not been for an independent Dutch observer (Eerik, 1978). The intimidation, harassment, arrests, imprisonment, torture, and extrajudicial killings of Oromos by Mengistu and his death squads continued until he fled Ethiopia in May 1991 into exile in Zimbabwe. Mengistu justifies his atrocities based on his misguided goals of eradicating "narrow nationalists" and maintaining "Ethiopian Unity" under the banner of his so called "Scientific Socialism." One can only hope that he will be brought to justice, not by the bloodthirsty followers of his misrule, but by the international court of justice.

The Meles Zenawi Regime (May 1991- Present)

The end of the reign of terror under the repressive military regime in Ethiopia by May 1991 was a sigh of relief for the majority of the people. Nevertheless, Oromos had no illusion that the endorsement of Meles Zenawi, the TPLF guerrilla leader, as the Prime Minister of Ethiopia by the United States, Great Britain, and others was simply an exchange of one repressive dictator by another.

Western governments which legitimized and financially supported Meles as one of the new breed of African leaders knew full well that a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship cannot turn into a democratic leader overnight, despite the unfulfilled promise of Mr. Herman Cohen (then

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State) who brokered the formation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, who said, “no democracy, no aid.” At least two possible explanations can be offered for the western governments’ position of endorsing the administration of Ethiopia by Meles Zenawi. One has to do with the fact that the TPLF was militarily more organized to ensure the continuation of Ethiopia as they knew it. Another consideration may be the lobbying efforts of western businesses to have free access to resources as during the Haile Selassie era. According to Tronroll (1997), the most fundamental reason may be for the expressed purpose of containing the spread of “Islamic fundamentalism.”

What is interesting is that Meles Zenawi, or his Marxist-Leninist organization, the TPLF, is given an assignment to fight a war which does not exist, at least among the Oromo who comprise the single largest ethnic group in East Africa. The main problem of the empire state is **not** religion, but the lack of good governance that offers all members of society equal opportunity to realize their human potential. Unfortunately, western governments continue to ignore the will of the people in favor of a rogue state that abuses the people under the pretext of stopping “Islamic Fundamentalism.” In the last ten years since it seized power, the TPLF/EPRDF regime has done more than its share of non-reversible damages to the colonized people in Ethiopia, particularly to the Oromo people in terms of the violation of their basic human rights (political, social, economic, environmental rights). A summary of state sponsored violence against the Oromo by the current regime in Ethiopia can be given as follows.

Political Repression

Upon the disarmament of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) militia in 1992, The EPRDF/TPLF detained thousands of OLF soldiers while they were in their barracks. This event took place while the OLF which represented and continues to represent the popular aspirations of the Oromo people was participating in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia. The OLF was eventually forced to leave the transitional government and resume armed struggle in defense of its members and

JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

the Oromo people (Qunnamtii Oromia, 1992). The EPRDF/TPLF continued to wage war against innocent citizens in all regions of Oromia on the pretext of suspecting them as supporters of the OLF. Hundreds of thousands of Oromos were jailed, tortured, disappeared, and summarily executed (Sue Pollack, 1996). Almost all prison facilities across Ethiopia are full of Oromos who are targeted by the TPLF because of their ethnic identity (Packer, 1996)

The government-sponsored war in Oromia has resulted in the massive dislocation of women, children, and the elderly people without food, health services, and shelter within the borders of the empire. The government even expelled humanitarian workers who attempted to help Oromo refugees within Ethiopia. In the drought affected areas, the government has used access to food and water as a disciplining tool. The security forces have also raided the places of worship, killing innocent civilians

The above stated violations of the basic rights of Oromos have resulted in the exodus of thousands of Oromo refugees to the neighboring states such as the Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya. According to Amnesty International (Feb. 18, 1998), some of the refugees were repatriated to Ethiopia by a neighboring state (Djibouti) without any legal protection granted by the UNHCR.

In the Sudan alone, the lives of an estimated 15,000 Oromo refugees are being threatened by the government which seized the office of the Oromo Relief Association (ORA). ORA looks after Oromo refugees who are displaced by the war waged against them by the minority regime in Ethiopia. Elsewhere in Europe, South Africa, and in the Middle East, Oromo nationals have become targets for repatriation as well

Despite protests by Oromo organizations, the United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Amnesty International, and African Human Rights Watch against the suffering of Oromos and other oppressed groups, the regime continues to intensify its atrocities and violations of Oromo and other peoples' human rights. When one considers the sheer numbers of peoples affected by state sponsored terrorism, it is no exaggeration to assert that the Oromo are

the most threatened national groups in Africa and, perhaps, in the world.

The regime has also pitted against one another the Oromo and other nationals who have coexisted peacefully for centuries. As a case in point, the regime is responsible for planting tension between the Gedo and the Oromo people resulting in a clash that left more than a thousand people dead in 1998-99.

After consolidating its power and containing its oppositions, ironically with the support of Eritrea, the TPLF began its military adventurism by engaging in border dispute with Eritrea itself. In a full scale war which began in May 1998 and continued until May 2000, the regime used Oromo youths as cannon-fodder resulting in the death of more than 123,000 soldiers (an estimated 100,000 forced youth conscripts from Oromia). The Oromo parents who lost their sons for the senseless war, which accomplished very little will never forget their being targeted. According to BBC (April 10, 2001), the families were given only 3000 Bir (\$375) for their lost ones. The UN peacekeeping force on the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea reports that the bodies of those innocent youths are littering the trenches, still unburied. The government neither cared about documenting those who lost their lives, nor informing the families of the victims. History will one day remember these innocent youths who were neglected by the repressive state and the international community.

The regime massacred 43 University students by its security agents in April 2001. This has resulted in the fleeing of hundreds of Oromo university students to Kenya in May 2001 because they were threatened and denied the rights of assembly and freedom of expression, and their lives became insecure.

Economic Repression

The regime is intensifying war in Oromia and other regions from which it is extracting valuable resources while diverting them to the development of the Tigray region (building colleges, international pharmaceutical plants, investments in information technology, technical schools, fancy roads, airport, a massive hydro-electric dam, and other major infrastructure while the rest of the empire, particularly Oromia,

is totally neglected. This is a classic case of uneven development in which Tigray is greening while Oromia is economically rapidly deteriorating

The regime is also confiscating land from Oromos and settling non-Oromo people on Oromo land. This devious decision has resulted in the major clashes between the Oromo and other nationals leaving hundreds dead.

The regime is selling Oromia to foreign investors by giving them a blank check for the free exploitation of Oromia's natural resources in return for its legitimization by the governments of the respective investors. There is credible information that the TPLF-led government likely set forest fires simultaneously across Oromia, endangering rare species of animals and plants. The US State Department Human Rights Report that was released March 4, 2002, suggests there continues to exist a breakdown in the rule of law. Extra judicial killings continue to take place in Oromia and other regions and no actions are taken to bring the criminals to justice.

Why do Oromos continue to suffer from State-Sponsored Violence and what can they do to mitigate it?

Some Reasons

- ◆ **Weakness on the part of Oromo Political Leadership**-The Oromo political leadership has not been successful in its advocacy to convince the international community to be its ally in an effort to protect the fundamental human rights of the Oromo people. It goes without saying that the Oromo political leadership has to be able to articulate to the international community why it would be in their long term best interest to protect the fundamental rights of the Oromo people. This interest is located in the regional stability in the Horn, which can realistically occur only if the Oromo issue is resolved.
- ◆ **Oromo Scholars have not done enough to make the liberation movement a reality.**

- ◆ There is very little dispute that Oromo scholars and professionals are one of the most important resources of the people. The lack of synergy among the various Oromo organizations (political, religious, community, social, business, and academic institutions) has contributed to the worsening of human rights violations against the Oromo.
- ◆ **The regime has used the financial resources of the people to hire a very strong Lobbying firm in Washington that has successfully covered up its atrocities, at least in the short run.** In the long run, however, we hope that wrong deeds will be exposed and justice will prevail.

What can be done to stop the gross violations of Oromo human rights (political, economic, social, and environmental rights)?

Here, I would only offer some suggestions which I think are important. The bottom-line for ending the plight of the Oromo and other oppressed nations is in their ability to defend themselves. Naked aggression, such as the one Oromos are experiencing today can only be stopped by the ability of Oromos to defend themselves. In what ways, can Oromos defend themselves?

Intensification of organized mass movement

Currently, Oromos are being kicked around by alien forces without consequences. When their sons and daughters are abused, raped, murdered in front of their family, dragged out of their houses to be used as mine sweepers, every Oromo has to stand up against it and say no to such abuses.

When their resources are looted, Oromos have to make it difficult for the resources not to leave Oromia. Here, we have to underscore the absolute need for our people to come together putting aside their petty differences for the higher Oromo cause. At the formative stage of the African National Conference (ANC) in South Africa, an elder said, “We

are one people, therefore, we have to come together putting aside our divisions and jealousies which are the cause of our woes." The Oromo people back home are more united in purpose by being able to see beyond region and religion unlike what one sometimes witnesses in the diaspora. All they need is a visionary and accountable leadership.

I believe that Oromo scholars and the youth have an important role in this effort of mass mobilization to defend themselves as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo did in their struggle. The youth League aimed to involve the masses of the people in the struggle for freedom in the 1940s and through their involvement, the ANC gained new life. Can Oromos draw a lesson from them?

Cultivation of Solidarity (Coalition) with other oppressed nationalities.

To be sure, the seed of cooperation has been sown at the political and intellectual levels. We must nurture and strengthen the relation so that the coalition is a force to be reckoned with. By and large, the unifying theme of the oppressed people is justice and equal treatment under the law—the proper functioning of the rule of law.

The Creation of Effective Linkages among Oromo Organizations

One of the serious challenges that the Oromo face today is the lack of strong interconnectedness, or synergy among organizations. While the functions of various organizations are different, it is absolutely essential that the Oromo organizations speak with one voice when it comes to the national goal of political and economic freedom.

Working with the International Community

Oromos must be ever vigilant in clearly articulating their vision and what they want. This is particularly important because we can only benefit from the international community based on our ability to engage them to see our side of the story. It is obvious that every state will first look after its own interest. Given that, we have to establish a relation that results in a positive sum game.

The Establishment of Oromo Human Rights League

Here, the interest is not to form just another Oromo organization. It is to create an organization with a vision and mission to resist current violations and prevent future genocide perpetrated against the Oromo people.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to provide an overview of the pervasive state-sponsored violence by the previous and current regimes in Ethiopia. The state of political, economic, social, and environmental repression in Ethiopia today has resulted in hundreds and thousands of deaths, subjected millions of Oromos and other oppressed nationalities to torture, rape, solitary confinement, disappearances, and persecution within and beyond Ethiopia. The absence of the rule of law has resulted in the significant rise of the Oromo refugee population in the neighboring states. These refugees are kept in sub-standard camps without adequate shelter, food, and health facilities as documented by humanitarian organizations as Amnesty International, UNHCR, Human Rights Watch, the US State Department, the European Humanitarian organizations, and others.

In spite of its horrendous records of documented human rights violations, however, the current regime in Ethiopia continues to enjoy financial and moral support from the international monetary institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the European Community, and governments based on the premise that it will maintain domestic and regional "stability." The international community has the moral responsibility to avert the looming danger of the genocidal practices of the current regime in Ethiopia if it is genuinely interested in the preservation of the rule of law and true democracy that guarantee the protection of the rights of the people and bring about domestic and regional stability in the Horn of Africa. Peace and regional stability can only be achieved by addressing the demands of the Oromo and other oppressed nationalities in this part of the world.

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Table 1: Demographic Consequences of the Conditions of Imposed by the Abyssinian Imperial Conquests on the Oromo, Kaficho, Gimira, and Maji Peoples (1876-1900)

People	Reduced From ___% to ___ %	Source	Cause
Oromo: More than half the people—from 10,000,000 to 5,000,000	50+% to 50%	Bulatovich, de Savisc	War, famine, slave raiding
Kaficho: 250, 000 to cir 10, 000 to a third of original population	91% to 67%	Hodson Bieber, Athill	War, slave raiding
Gimira: From 100, 000 to < 20, 000; from about 9000 to 3000	80% to 67%	Montandon Hodson	War, slave raiding
Maji: From 45, 000 to 3000	94%	Hodson	War, slave raiding

Source: Mekuria Bulcha, "State Sponsored Mass-Killings: Ethiopia 1880s-2000," paper presented at the 14th Annual conference of Oromo Studies Association, July 29, 2000, Toronto, Canada

Table 2. Estimated Number of Deaths in Ethiopia and Oromia in 2000 because of Conditions Imposed by the TPLF/EPRDF Regime

Cause	Estimate for Ethiopia	Estimate for Oromia
Due to famine	100, 000 (1% of 10 million)	40,000
Different diseases	365, 000 (1000 people a day)	146,000
War with Eritrea	60, 000 (for year 2000)	24,000
Repression	50, 000 (affects mostly Oromos)	20,000
Total	575, 000	226,000

Source: Mekuria Bulcha, State Sponsored Mass-Killings: Ethiopia 1880s-2000, paper presented at the 14th Annual Conference of Oromo Studies Association, July 29, 2000, Toronto, Canada

INTRUSIONS INTO OROMUMA (OROMONESS) AND THE OROMO PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

Benti Getahun

Introduction

The Oromo are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, accounting for over forty to forty-five percent of the country's population.¹ Their country, Oromiya, extends from Djibouti and Somalia in the east, to the Sudan in the west, and from Ethiopia's northernmost province of Tigray in the north to the Republic of Kenya in the south

The Ethiopian empire led by Menilek II (1889-1913), conquered the Oromo people in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Following conquest, Ethiopia imposed a new order that undermined the political, social, and cultural values of the Oromo. Moreover, the Amharas tirelessly worked to weaken the unity and identity of the Oromo.

At the heart of this identity, lies Oromuma—"Oromoness" or being Oromo. Oromuma is the totality of Oromo personality. It is an amalgam of Oromo culture, society, religion, language, history, territory, and social and psychological attributes that make the people different from others.² Oromuma is an identity that guaranteed the survival of the Oromo as people, and the concept itself survived intrusions of successive Ethiopian regimes.

The Amhara-Tigre rulers aimed at destroying Oromuma because its destruction would guarantee the permanent submission and governability of the Oromo. They treated the Oromo as people without history, culture, religion, socio-political organization, and without their own worldviews and collective memories. They forced the Oromo to abandon the Gada system, the fundamentals of their democratic culture.³ By allowing the rule of democratically elected officials who would stay in office only for a one eight-year term, Gada democracy remained an important institution of Oromuma. For Amharas-Tigre rulers, Gada was incompatible with their highly hierarchical power

structure and tendencies toward autocratic rule. Consequently, they decided to destroy the Gada system, meaning that Oromo children were denied the right to learn the existence of this vital institution of democratic governance in the history of their people.

Oromo scholars have recently focused on their people's colonial experiences and their plights in the last one hundred years. In his recent works, Mohammed Hassen has detailed the imposition of colonial rule on the Oromo, the resistance of the people, and the growth of Oromo nationalism from the 1870s to the present.⁴ Asafa Jalata treated the colonization of the Oromo within the context of global hegemony. He argued that European powers provided firearms to the Amhara rulers in their drive to conquer the Oromo.⁵ Bonnie Holcomb and Sisay Ibssa who argued that Ethiopia was invented by European powers as a dependent colonial state.⁶ It was this dependent colonial state which imposed brutal rule on its victims, and it was rule worse than that imposed by Europeans on their African colonies. In his two important pieces, one focusing on Oromo language and the other on the survival of Oromo identity, Mekuria Bulcha demonstrated how the Amhara, despite all the brutalities, failed to destroy the basic tenets of Oromo identity.⁷ By challenging the traditional version of Ethiopian history which was forced upon the Oromos, these scholars established that the Amhara-Oromo relationship of the last one hundred years was a colonial relationship in which the former tried its best to destroy the identity of the latter as a people. In so doing, they initiated a new direction to the study of Amhara-Oromo relations and developed important analytical models to researchers interested in Oromo studies. By adopting the models provided by these Oromo scholars, I will make a brief survey of Amhara intrusion into Oromo history and symbols of identity.

Intrusion Into Safu

Safu is a concept that embodies the Oromo culture of respectfulness and self-restraint. It regulates Oromo social life and behavior pertaining to, among other things, marriage, vertical and horizontal relationships between people, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, parents and children, the young and the old, in-laws,

generations and between Oromos and non-Oromos (the *Orma*). *Safu* also regulates the relationship of the Oromos with their Creator, Waqa Uuma.⁸ It guides Oromo leaders in discharging their social, spiritual and political responsibilities without infringing upon the rights of the people and without offending Waqa. All Oromos have fear (*soda*) of *safu* and abide by its fundamental principles because it guides them in both their spiritual and earthly lives. In short, it is a long-established norm that all Oromos uphold. Hence, it became one of the most important pillars of Oromumma.

The Amhara-Tigre rulers made every effort to undermine and destroy this important attribute of Oromumma. They humiliated Oromo leaders in front of their people; the old generation in front of the young; the women in front of the men; the fathers in front of their sons and the mothers in front of their daughters, the parents in front of their children; the religious leaders in front of the believers. Despite their century-long assault on *safu*, however, the conquerors were unable to destroy it totally. Despite external pressures and influences, *safu* remained intrinsic to the life of the Oromos.

Attack on Qallu: A Vital Oromo Institution

The Qallu institution has formed a central part of Oromumma and Oromo belief systems. It was the center of wisdom from where the Oromo sought guidance and advice for their spiritual as well as daily lives. The Qallus were the source of knowledge and guardians of *safu*. They oversaw the implementation of Gada rules and regulations and protected the people against injustices. They blessed and advised Gada officials and acted as intermediaries between the Waqa, the people, and the leaders, as well as between the people and nature. They were crucial in resolving conflicts between individuals and communities. As such, the Qallu institution was an important rallying point for all Oromos. Soon after their conquest, the Amharas attacked the very core of this vital institution.

The Amhara ridiculed Oromo religious leaders in front of their people as magicians and superstitious. The objective was to force the Oromo to adopt Coptic Christianity, the religion of the Amharas, so

that they would reject that part of Oromuma attributable to the Qallu institution

The most painful aspect of Ethiopian religious policy began in Wallo⁹ (northern Oromiya) by Emperor Yohannis IV (1871-1889), who controlled part of the province and forced conversion to Christianity on his Oromo victims. A great majority of them resisted to the last and paid huge sacrifices and proudly retained their Oromuma although some of their leaders embraced Christianity to save their lives as well as their social and political statuses¹⁰

Yohannis' successor, Menilek II, followed a similar policy of converting his Oromo subjects to Christianity. Menilek was responsible for the conquest of most of Oromiya and the suffering of its people. Ethiopian churches were built on the places of local worship centers or amidst Muslim Oromos. A more excruciating experience was that in some regions, Muslim Oromos were forced to build churches for Christian Amharas.¹¹ This experience was a disgrace to their honor as Muslims, and disrespect for their religion on the part of the Amharas. But this policy backfired in most parts of Oromiya. In spite of such humiliations, Muslim Oromos kept their religion and refused to embrace Christianity. Even those who did not embrace Islam by the time of the conquest turned down Menilek's order to be Christians and unanimously decided to embrace Islam.¹² Also, those who embraced Christianity eventually became more conscious of the machinations into which they were trapped, causing some of them to become staunch advocates of Oromo nationalist movement and Oromuma. Admittedly, however, through both political and religious pressures, the Amharas did succeed in weakening the Qallu institution.

Shredding Oromo Territory and Dividing the People

An identity based on a common territory is another important component of Oromuma. Territorially, all Oromos identify their country as *Biya Oromo*, (or *Biya Abba Ofi* - Fatherland). They call it Oromiya just as the Tigres, the Germans, the French, the Italians and the English respectively call their countries Tigray, Germany, France, Italy and England. Following their conquest of the Oromo, the Amhara-Tigre

rulers made every effort to obscure the boundaries of Oromiya. They carved it out time and again into several pieces and added to the lands of neighboring ethnic groups to create animosity between them and to reduce the size of the Oromo into several minorities in order to deny them a national home base.¹³ The logic was to make them too weak to challenge Amhara rule. It was also to "... obliterate the Oromo ethnic identity."¹⁴ The shredding of Oromo territory by successive Ethiopian regimes led to the submergence of "about three-quarters... [of it] under new non-Oromo place names."¹⁵

Under the military junta (1974-1991), areas of economic, demographic, and political importance were dispensed and given to neighboring ethnic groups. For instance, in the province of Wallagga, the coffee-rich districts of Mandi and Begi were added to Benishangul, and Anfilo to Gambella regions. The exclusively Oromo population of these regions were forced to communicate with the officials of these administrative regions through interpreters.

The current Tigrayan-dominated government of Ethiopia followed similar policies with its predecessors. Despite its profession to respect the culture and territorial integrity of the various ethnic groups, the government cut off the Oromo of Wallo against their will from Oromiya, and added them to the Amhara state. It carved out several parts of Oromiya and added them to neighboring non-Oromo territories. Interestingly enough, in the Harari state, which is reserved for the Adare ethnic group, a sizeable part of Oromoland comprising a population of more than 150,000 Oromos was dispensed to the Harari state whose constituent ethnic population is just 16,000.¹⁶ This turned the already fragile "democracy" of the current Ethiopian government on its head—a democracy in which an overwhelming majority is ruled by a tiny minority.

Denying the Oromo the Right to Rule Themselves

Another intrusion into Oromuma was denying the people the right to rule themselves. Menilek's conquest and occupation was followed by the appointment of Amhara rulers over Oromo provinces. Under Haile Sillassie, the situation got worse and almost all Oromo provinces had

Amhara governors Even the Sultanate of Jimma, which was granted autonomy by Menilek by special arrangement, was stripped of its autonomous status by Haile Sellassie in 1932 and was given to his son-in-law, Ras Dasta Damtew.¹⁷ The other Oromo province with a similar status was Wallagga, but the power of the local dynasty was broken with appointment of Amhara rulers for most of the time after the Italian invasion of 1936-1941.

Oromos were rarely allowed to rule themselves in their own country, or even under the auspices of the Amharas who controlled the government at the center. At national level too, they were seldom appointed governors of Amhara provinces. It was in very few instances that educated Oromos were appointed to subordinate positions in Amhara regions. On the contrary, the Amharas-most of whom had only church education-occupied all of the higher administrative, judicial and other vital posts in Oromo provinces. According to Fantahun H. Michael, "By the end of [the] Haile Sellassie regime [in 1974], ... more than 60 per cent of the government, 75 per cent of the officer corps, and 70 percent of the district (woreda) governors in the southern non-Amhara regions [of which Oromiya comprises over two-thirds] ... were Amhara."¹⁸

In spite of some initial gestures to appoint Oromo governors in some Oromo provinces, the military government that came to power in 1974 immediately reverted to the policy of its predecessors, and the Amharas continued to govern the Oromo. There was a great optimism among many Oromos with the ascension to power of the present government in 1991. But those Oromos who were given positions became mere puppets of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which controls power from the center. In the hands of these puppets, the Oromo people suffered most in their long history of alien rule. The change of government control from the Amharas to the Tigre in 1991 did not improve the condition of the Oromo vis-à-vis the central government.

The Suppression of Afan Oromo

The language of the Oromo, Afan Oromo, is the most crucial

part of Oromuma. Although the Amhara partially succeeded in imposing their language on some Oromo groups, they failed to kill their Oromoness in spite of this language change. For instance, some Oromo groups in Wallo who lost their language because of the difficult circumstances that they were forced into, never abandoned their Oromuma. Against all odds, Afan Oromo is a working language in the Oromiya region of Wallo.

The Amharas correctly understood that "...language [Afan Oromo] remains the most important factor for the maintenance of their unity and identity."¹⁹ From the position of the Ethiopian government, therefore, suppressing Afan Oromo was an utmost priority and the process began simultaneously with the conquest. Subsequent to the conquest, Amharas were appointed at all levels of the judiciary and administrative posts in Oromiya. The officials neither spoke Afan Oromo, nor did they understand it. Even those who spoke it did not want to use it. Nor did the Oromo understand or speak Amharic. This situation necessitated the introduction of the infamous *sima balo* system, in which Amhara officials communicated with the Oromo through interpreters. By forcing this system on the Oromo, the Amharas created a more solid ground for a total imposition of the Amharic language. Making Amharic the language of instruction in all Ethiopian schools completed the official suppression of Afan Oromo. Consequently, schools became the frontlines for the destruction of the language. Even Oromo students who spoke Amharic fluently were demoralized and ridiculed because of their accents—of being “gamad aaf”—stammering.²⁰ Oromo students were not allowed to speak Afan Oromo in school compounds even to one another and were harshly punished if found speaking it. Moreover, they were pressured to change their Oromo names into Amharic. When competing for jobs, in many instances, Oromos had to change their names to be hired. Many would, indeed, change their names at schools in anticipation of what they would encounter at job interviews later.²¹

The Amharas imposed their language on the Oromo, claiming it be the language of the king, *yenigus quwanquwa*.²² Thus, "...the Oromo were never given any opportunity to express themselves in their own

language.”²³ By not allowing Oromos to learn in their language in schools, the Amharas deliberately hindered the growth of Afan Oromo as a literary language.²⁴ “The underdeveloped status of Oromo literacy is mainly attributable to the *Amharization* policy of consecutive Ethiopian governments ... [who] actively suppressed the development of Oromo literature.”²⁵ Consequently, the Amharas “... transformed [Afan Oromo] from being a language of business and government into language of backwardness and darkness.”²⁶ Even Ethiopianist scholars could not deny Amhara intrusion on Afan Oromo Mordechai Abit noted that the Amhara followed a deliberate policy of excluding the Oromo and other conquered people from the establishment unless they spoke the Amharic language and unless Muslims became Christians. He added that:

... the Amhara... do not favor a true partnership of the major population groups of Ethiopia. They would prefer that the predominant position of the Amhara be preserved and would continue the slow amharisation of the non-Amharic elements through administrative pressures, relying on the military power.²⁷

Besides their pressure on the Oromo to change their personal names, the Amharas changed the names of several Oromo place names, and twisted yet several others to sound Amharic. Where they did not change or could not twist, they corrupted them into meaningless words and forced the Oromo to adopt those corrupted names. For instance, the province of Ilu Abba Bora is corrupted into a meaningless “Ilubabor,” Haro Maya into “Alamaya,” River Hawas into “Awash.”²⁸

In their suppressing of Afan Oromo, Amhara rulers were joined by the Orthodox clergy. The clergy propagated that Afan Oromo is devil’s language which God does not understand. In so teaching, they discouraged the use of Oromo language from being used for prayers and performance of church services. The intrusion of the Ethiopian Church into Afan Oromo is still continuing in a more aggressive manner. In their attempt to reverse the current language policy that allowed Afan Oromo to be the language of instruction in Oromiya, conservative Amhara-Tigre rulers are actively using the church influence. In one

instance, in Chancho (Central Oromiya), the priests denied a burial place to a young Oromo girl who taught Afan Oromo in the Latin alphabet. After unsuccessful negotiations, friends took the body to Finfinne where she was buried. In another instance, during a religious procession in Ambo (also in Central Oromiya), the priests claimed that the Tabot (ark) refused to move unless the teaching of Afan Oromo is halted²⁹ Ironically, it was not the ark that refused to move, but the priest who carried it, filled by irreligious anti-Oromo spirit

Destroying Oromo Heroes and Historical Memories

Intrusion into Oromoness also took the form of denying Oromos the right to commemorate their national heroes. This is part of the grandeur plan to destroy the pre-colonial history of the Oromo, their existence as independent people, and their collective historical memories. The conquerors excluded the history of the Oromo from textbooks taught at all levels of Ethiopian schools, let alone mentioning the names of their heroes. In turn, Oromo students were forced to learn a court history in which the Amharas connected the line of their kings to the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon to justify their rule over the Oromos.³⁰

Moreover, the Oromo were forced to honor their conquerors and killers. One of them was *Ras Darge* who, in his savage campaigns in Arsi, amputated the right breasts of women and the right hands of men. As the Arsi put fierce resistance to repeated Amhara military incursions:

...Ras Darghé decided to conclude this horrible war in a blood bath. He gathered the Arsi under the pretext of peace; otherwise no one would have come to Anole, a very strategic place deliberately chosen for this odious crime. The unarmed Arsi were asked to pass the entrance one by one; those who entered were not allowed to return and were kept in the kraal prepared for the occasion. Most Arsi men and women who came had their right hand and right breast cut off, respectively. The Arsi always considered Ras Darghé as a heartless general, but probably did not imagine that he was capable of

mutilating people who peacefully accepted his invitation. Even more abominable, he tied the mutilated hands around the necks of the victims and sent them back home. Other mutilated hands were hung up on a tree which is still standing under which the Shoan soldiers sang and danced ³¹

The other was *Ras* Makonin, Menilek's cousin and the father of the late Emperor Haile Selassie, who massacred the Oromo of Hararge at the Battle of Chalanqo in 1887. At this battle, which was commanded by Emperor Menilek himself, "Oromo captives... were mutilated by cutting off their hands or legs by the order of Menelik who made every resisting Oromo food for wild animals."³² Makonin was then appointed governor of the province to continue with the job of killing and dehumanizing the Oromo, which he started with his boss at Chalanqo. In the Horo Guduru region of Wallagga, the Amharas buried alive the local Oromo leader, Abishe Garba ³³ *Ras* Damis and his followers, who were descendants of the perpetrators of this brutal act, were made heroes.

The pattern was similar for other conquered ethnic groups. The people of Kafa were forced to honor *Ras* (later *Nigus*-king) Walde Giorgis who nearly exterminated them simply because of their fierce resistance to defend their freedom. Their king, Gaki Serecho, was captured and sent to Addis Ababa in chains to end the rest of his life there. Walde Giorgis was then appointed governor of Kafa, which he ruled savagely and sold a large number of his victims into slavery. The people of Kafa were forced to honor this brutal man and enslaver as their hero. A similar barbaric action was taken against the people of Walayita following the collapse of their resistance in 1894 and the imprisonment of their king, Tona, in Addis Ababa ³⁴ The people of Wallayita are also forced to honor killers of their forefathers.

Place names, schools, hospitals and other important landmarks were dedicated to such brutal conquerors and governors. What has become a historical anomaly is that there are several schools and places named after Amhara kings who had never made any contact with the Oromos directly or indirectly. For instance, an elementary school in Dambi Dollo (Wallagga, Western Oromiya) was dedicated to Emperor

Saifa Ared (1344-1371) and a high school to Emperor Zara Yaqob (1434-1468).³⁵ In Central Oromiya, two high schools in the towns of Bishoftu and Adama³⁶ were named after Emperors Libne Dingil and Galawdewos, father and son, who reigned, respectively from 1508-1540 and 1540-1559.³⁷

The Amhara policy of forcing the Oromo to honor their killers as their heroes is also continuing under the current government which is dominated by the Tigrayan ethnic minority. In their competition over history with their Amhara predecessors, the Tigres changed the name of a technical school located in Holata Military Academy (Central Oromiya), which was named after Major General Mulugeta Buli, who was killed in the 1960 attempted coup d'état. Indeed, it was named in memory of Mulugeta not because he was an Oromo, but because he was a loyal servant of the Amharas in their venture to rule his own people. The current government could not tolerate it and renamed the school after one of its generals, Hayalom Araya, whom his Eritrean friend murdered in a bar in 1996. When he was TPLF's army commander stationed in Southern Oromiya, Hayalom was said to have brutally sent hundreds of innocent Oromos to their death. The reward, a landmark in his name in Oromiya!

The Oromo Struggle for Freedom

Despite inhabiting a vast geographical area, all Oromos share Oromuma, which served as a solid ground for the resurgence of pan-Oromo national awakening, *sabbonumma*. According to Asafa Jalata,

Oromoness has been manifested as a collective national identity and interest for the purpose of liberation and development, it is above individual, regional, and religious interests and opposes divisions based on religions and regions. . . . [It] is the foundation of Oromo survival, and hence without it, Oromos cannot practice their culture and religions freely or promote their interests as a nation and individuals. Oromoness, commonality of oppression, and humiliation facilitated the emergence of Oromo nationalism³⁸

JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

This “commonality of oppression” gave the Oromos an inspiration to their struggle for freedom from alien rule. The first form of their struggle was outright military resistance against the conquering enemy.³⁹ Modern arms which the Amharas acquired from European powers⁴⁰ and the barbarity of the conquerors decided the outcomes of the confrontations. With their subsequent occupation, the Amharas imposed their rule and began their multi-pronged onslaught on everything Oromo. The Oromos had no choice but to struggle for their cultural, political, economic, social, territorial and national survival.

The struggle eventually assumed different forms and went through qualitative transformations to meet the challenges of the worsening conditions of the Oromo under Amhara rule. Asafa Jalata divided the course of the struggle into three phases, each characterized by major historical events. The first phase, 1860s-1960s, covers the processes of Amhara conquest, the resistance of the Oromo, and the reduction of the people into landless serfs, commonly known as *gabbars*. The second phase, 1960s-1970, was characterized by the galvanization of the struggle with the emergence of the Macca-Tulama Self-Help Association and the beginning of armed uprising in Bale. Moreover, this phase saw what Asafa calls the “Oromo Cultural Renaissance,” in which educated Oromos began to voice their opposition to alien rule in different ways. The last phase was characterized by the consolidation of the struggle into a more organized movement with the birth of the Oromo Liberation Front.⁴¹

In the second and the third phases, the artificial divisions between Oromos on regional, religious and clan lines were crumbled. The superior/inferior-Oromo syndrome and the barriers that the Amharas created to destroy Oromuma were successfully challenged. Despite a century of relentless enemy efforts to divide them, the Oromos proved that they are one people. They expressed their oneness with the 1965 inauguration of the Macca-Tulama Self-Help Association, the first pan-Oromo organization of its kind, which rallied Oromos from all regions of Oromiya around a common cause.

The association started as a mass movement to improve the declining material and social life of the Oromo.⁴² The leaders saw the widening gap created between the Oromo and the Amharas in terms

of the expansion of educational and health services, road constructions and other basic infrastructure. Indeed, the leaders wanted to develop Oromiya through the mobilization of human and material resources. Given the feasibility of their objectives, the government feared that the association would in a very short period of time put the Oromos ahead of the Amharas. Prime Minister Aklilu Habte Wold, summoned General Taddasa Biru who was Chief of Police and president of the National Literacy Campaign, and warned him to refrain from advocating education for the Oromo. He specifically told Taddasa that the plan of the government is to keep the Oromo at least by one century behind the Amharas. Ironically, the Prime Minister did not know that Taddasa himself was an Oromo.⁴³ Indeed, Taddasa never exposed himself as an Oromo until then.

The Amhara opposition to the education of the Oromo began much earlier than the incident that Taddasa confronted. In 1947, the Amharas accused Emanuel Abraham, an Oromo from Wallagga, who was a Director in the Ministry of Education, of favoring the Oromos. The Emperor then ordered Emanuel to report to him the ethnic composition of the school population in Addis Ababa. The findings indicated that out of 4,795 students surveyed, 3,055 (63.71 percent) were Amharas. In one school alone 70.31 percent (701 out of 997) of the students reported that they were Amharas.⁴⁴ In his memoir, Emmanuel concluded that:

On hearing this [the outcome of the survey], my accusers were alarmed and, realizing that it could be dangerous if it were widely known that it was the Amharas rather than the Gallas [Oromos] who were being educated in large numbers, prostrated themselves before the Emperor and implored him not to allow the list to be published. The Emperor reprimanded them severely and reversed the order. The list was never published.⁴⁵

It was the accumulation of such injustices, the dehumanization, and unbearable discrimination against the Oromo that led to the politicization of the Macca-Tulama Self-Help Association. According

to Asafa Jalata, "the colonial [Ethiopian] government's opposition to this group transformed it into a political movement"⁴⁶ Mohammed Hassen, too, summarized the process of the association's politicization as follows:

There were three stages in the development of the politicization of the Association (1964-67) First, the failure to integrate the assimilated Christian Oromo into the Ethiopian political processes, second the realization of the assimilated Oromo that they were badly treated and discriminated against by the Amhara elites and third, the events of 1966 which suddenly politicized the movement. The new ideology became an instrument for mobilizing the Oromo of various regions in their name and interest.⁴⁷

The emperor reportedly summoned and insulted the general for not even speaking a good Afan Oromo⁴⁸ let alone advocating the cause of the people. A humiliated Taddasa found a place of operation in the Macca-Tulama movement. The leaders of the association also wanted to use him as a rallying point because of his public image. But the main ideologues who played vital role in the politicization of the movement were Lieutenant Mamo Mazamir and Haile Mariam Gamada. The former was hanged, and the latter died as a result of severe torture.⁴⁹

Despite harsh measures against the Oromo, what is evident from all these is the fact that the conquerors could not kill Oromuma. Assimilated or not, all Oromos were indiscriminately targeted by their common enemies. Even Oromos who collaborated with the Amharas were only accommodated until their importance expired. This disgraceful act, indeed, happened to the very collaborator, Ras Gobana Gobana committed crimes of immeasurable proportion to his people by conquering them for Menilek. Once Menilek completed his occupation of Oromiya, Gobana's tenure as a collaborator ended. He was accused of plotting against Menilek and was sentenced to death by the Emperor's officials who acted as judges. The emperor reportedly commuted the death penalty into exile.⁵⁰ The fate of all Oromo collaborators has remained the similar regardless of their contribution.

The pan-Oromo movement that began in the form of Macca-Tulama, represents a major part of the history of modern Oromo national movement. Beneath the Macca-Tulama were the flames of Oromo nationalism, *subbonumma*. The leaders realized that the problems of the Oromo could not be solved simply with the establishment of a number of schools and hospitals, or with the construction of roads connecting one town to another. They found themselves in a historical moment where they had to address the fundamental problems of their people. They saw the need to change the structural relationship between the Oromo as conquered people, and the Amhara as conquerors. But given the nature of the Ethiopian state, such structural changes could only be brought by armed struggle. The Oromo Liberation Front which had been in action since the mid 1970s is undertaking that task. The OLF qualitatively changed the struggle of the Oromo people for freedom.⁵¹

Conclusion

The Amhara occupation of Oromiya was followed by an assault on Oromuma and by continuous efforts to destroy it. They knew that Oromuma was an anchor that all Oromos rallied around and is an expression of their identity as a people. The century-long effort to impose Amhara culture on the Oromo has faced rising Oromo resistance. This was so because the Amhara system was highly hierarchical and authoritarian as opposed to Oromo egalitarian democracy. Thus from the outset, there were contradictions and tensions between the social and political cultures of the two groups. These tensions and contradictions, and the persistent Amhara intrusion into Oromo way of life, have been largely responsible in generating militant Oromo nationalism.⁵² Because the Oromo strongly resisted intrusions into Oromuma, successive Ethiopian regimes used force to silence them. The difficulties that the Oromo had to encounter, the Amharas in the past, and the Tigrayans in the present, however, will not be able to quell the flames of Oromo people's just struggle for freedom.

NOTES

1. Alain Gascon, "Fair Borders' For Oromiyaa," in Katsuyoshi Fukui, et.al. (eds.), *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective: Papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Kyoto: 12-17 December 1997), p. 363.
2. For an interesting definition of the concept of Oromuma see, Gemetchu Megerssa, "Oromuma: Tradition, Consciousness and Identity," in P.T.W. Baxter, et.al. (eds.), *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996), p. 92.
3. For a condensed and informative piece on Gada values, see Lammu Baissa, "Gada Values: The Building Blocks of a Democratic Polity," in *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol. 1, Number 2 (Winter 1994), pp. 47-52. For a detailed study of the Gada system, see Asmarom Legesse, *Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous African Political System* (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, Inc., 2000).
4. Mohammed Hassen, "The Development of Oromo Nationalism," in P.T.W.Baxter, et.al. (eds.), *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996), pp. 67-80; "A Short History of Oromo Colonial Experience 1870's-1900's: Part One 1870's to 1935," in *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Volume 6, Numbers 1 & 2 (July 1999), pp. 109-158; "A Short History of Oromo Colonial Experience: Part Two, Colonial Consolidation and resistance 1935-2000," in *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Volume 7, Numbers 1 & 2 (July 2000), pp. 109-198.
5. Asafa Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-1992* (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993).
6. Bonnie K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia: The Creation of a Dependent Colonial State in Northeast Africa* (Trenton, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 1990)
7. Mekuria Bulcha, "The Survival and Reconstruction of Oromo National Identity," in P.T.W.Baxter, et.al, *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996), pp. 48-66.

8. For details on the concept of *Safu*, See Lambert Bartels, *Oromo Religion: Myths and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia – An Attempt to Understand* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1990), pp. 330-341.
9. For an excellent work on the conversion of the Oromo into Islam as a form of resistance, see Mohammed Hassen, "Islam as a Resistance Ideology Among the Oromo of Ethiopia: The Wallo Case, 1700-1900," in Said S. Samatar (ed.), *In the Shadow of Conquest: Islam in Colonial Northeast Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1992), pp. 75-101; Abbas Haji, "a History of the Arsi, (1800-1935) (B.A. Essay, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 1982). During my research of the town of Shashamanne, located amidst the Arsi Oromo, Muslim Oromos told me that the Arsi held a large gathering and unanimously decided to embrace Islam.
10. One important victim of this religious intrusion into the Oromo was Imam Mohammad Ali, father of Iyasu (r.1913-6) who himself fell victim to a major Amhara political sabotage on the Oromo. Mohammad was forced to embrace Christianity to save his position and became **Ras** (later **Nigus**) Mika'el.
11. During my one-year stay in Bale, in 1991, when Asmara University was moved to Agarfa due to EPLF's siege of Asmara, I was able to interview elders in Robe and in many other places. They told me that the experience of the Oromo under Amhara rule was horrible. One who was jailed for two years by the Derg because he was suspected of being member of the OLF, told me that he was sent to jail for another seven years because he gave an Oromo name to his newly-born son. Informants (Robe, 1991). The current government exiled him to a neighboring country and his 89 years old father was in jail in 1997. (information obtained from one of his sons in Addis Ababa, 1997.)
12. Informants (Shashamanne, 1987)
13. For an informative discussion on the problems of Oromiya's borders, see Gascon, pp. 362-378
14. Mekuria Bulcha, "The Language Policies of Ethiopian Regimes and the History of Written Afaan Oromoo: 1844-1994," in *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Volume I, Number 2 (Winter 1994), p. 102.

- 15 *Ibid.*
16. See the population distributions in Transitional Government of Ethiopia, Office of the Population and Housing Census Commission, Central Statistical Authority, *The 1994 Population Census of Ethiopia, Results for Harari Region* (Addis Ababa, August 1995).
17. Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1974* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991), pp. 144-5
18. Fantahun H Michael, *The Roots of Nationality Problems and the Challenge to Nation-Building in Ethiopia* (Bergen, Norway: Derap Publications, 1989), p. 71. For more information on this issue, see Moti Biya, p. 15.
19. Mekuria, "The Language Policy...", p. 91. For more discussion on this issue, see Mekuria Bulcha, "The Politics of Linguistic Homogenization in Ethiopia and the Conflict over the Status of *Afaan Oromoo*," in *African Affairs*, Vol. 96, Number 384 (July 1997), pp 342-345.
20. See Mekuria, "The Politics of Linguistic Homogenization...", pp.337-338.
21. Informants (Addis Ababa, 1996 & 1997).
22. Robert L. Cooper, "The Spread of Amharic," in M.L. Bender, et.al. (eds), *Language in Ethiopia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 289.
23. Muhammed Hassen (1996), p. 70.
24. For an interesting piece on this issue, see Mekuria, "The Politics of Linguistic Homogenization..." Because writing in Afan Oromo was not allowed, the only way the Oromo retained their history was through oral literature. Recently, some scholars have been able to excavate this amazing source of Oromo history. See George Cotter, *Ethiopian wisdom : proverbs and sayings of the Oromo people* (Ibadan : Daystar : Sefer, 1996), and *Proverbs and Sayings of the Oromo People of Ethiopia and Kenya with English Translations* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, c1992.); Addisu Tolesa, *Geerarsa Folksong as the Oromo National Literature: a Study of Ethnography, Folklore, and Folklife in the Context of the Ethiopian Colonization of Oromia* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, c1999); Claude Sumner, *Oromo Wisdom Literature:*

- Proverb Collection and Analysis**, Vol. I (Addis Ababa: Gudina Tumsa Foundation, 1995), and **Oromo Wisdom Literature: Songs, Collection and Analysis**, Vol. II (Addis Ababa: Gudina Tumsa Foundation, 1997)
25. Mekuria, "The Language Policy....," p. 91.
 26. Mohammed Hassen (1999), p. 113.
 27. Mordechai Abir, "Education and National Integration in Ethiopia," **African Affairs**, Vol. 69, No. 274 (January 1970), p. 46
 28. For a long list of such changes and corruptions of Oromo place names, see Moti Biya, pp. 98-100.
 29. For more insights on this issue, see Mekuria Bulcha, "Priests, Religion and Language in Ethiopia", in **The Oromo Commentary**, Vol. IV, no. 1 (1994), pp. 8-11.
 30. For an interesting discussion on this issue, see Gemetchu Megeressa, "The Oromo and the Ethiopian State Ideology in a Historical Perspective," in **Ethiopia in Broader Perspective: Papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies**, Vol. II (Kyoto, 12-17 December 1997), pp. 479-485.
 31. Abbas, **JOS**, p. 15
 32. Mohammed Hassen, (1999), p. 138.
 33. See Addis Hiwet, **Ethiopia, From Autocracy to Revolution** (London: Review of African political economy, 1975), p. 5
 34. **Ibid.**, p. 35 See also Bahru Zewde, pp. 64-67.
 35. For information on the reigning of these emperors in the period before the "Oromo migration," see Tadesse Tamrat, **Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270-1527** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972)
 36. The names of the two towns themselves were changed respectively into Debre Zeyit and Nazareth
 37. In a deliberate attempt to demoralize the Muslims of Harar, the Amharas dedicated the high school in the city to one of the angels of Coptic Christianity and called it "Madhane Alem", the "Savior of the World"
 38. Asafa Jalata, "The Cultural Roots of Oromo Nationalism," in Asafa Jalata (ed.), **Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse:**

- The Search for Freedom & Democracy* (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sear Press, Inc., 1998), p. 40
39. For details of Ethiopian encroachments on Oromiya since the days of Tewodros (1855-1868) up to Menilek's conquest and the imposition of colonial rule, see Mohammed Hassen, (1999), pp. 128-146
40. *Ibid.*, p. 134. There are two different perspectives on European involvement in the conquest of Oromiya. From an Ethiopian perspective, see Harold G. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia 1844-1913* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). From an Oromo perspective, see, among others, Holcomb and Sisai (299); and Asafa (1993).
41. For an insightful discussion on these three phases, see Asafa (1993), pp. 151-175. Recent research findings indicate that resistance was strong even in areas, which were assumed to have submitted to Menilek peacefully. For an interesting discussion on the resistance of the Oromo in the Gibe region, see Guluma Gemedo, "Conquest and Resistance in the Gibe Region, 1881-1900," in *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vo. III, Numbers 1 & 2 (Winter/Summer 1996), pp. 56-59.
42. For the objectives of the association, see Olana Zoga, *Gizitina Gizot: History of the Macca Tulama Self-Help Association*, in Amharic (Addis Ababa: Bole Printing Press, 1985 E.C.), p. 16
43. For the whole history of the association and the role of General Taddasa Birru, see the excellently documented book of Olana Zoga. See also Asafa Jalata (1993), p. 156; and Anga'a Dhugumaa, *Oromo Democracy and the Formation of Macca-Tuulama Association* (Elmhurst, New York, May 2000)
44. Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscences of My Life* (Oslo, Norway: Lunde Forlag, 1995), p. 64.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Asafa (1993), p. 151
47. Mohammed Hassen (1996), p. 74. During my fieldwork in Addis Ababa between August 1995 and July 1997, I have had opportunities to interview both Muslim and Christian Oromos at the monthly meetings of the Macca-Tulama Self-Help Association. They all

- affirmed that religion has never been a barrier to the unity of the Oromo people. Some of these informants are now in jail and for the security of those who are not in prison, I will maintain anonymity.
48. One informant told me that the conversation between the two was made in Afan Oromo.
 49. Knowing that he was dying, a proud Haile Mariam is reported to have said, “Anillee du’uu kootii, garuu bofa hudduu lixxe itti taane” – translated as, “I know that I am dying. But what we did [to oppressors of the Oromo] amounts to a [venomous] snake entering into them through their anus.” Anonymous informant (Addis Ababa: 1997).
 50. Anonymous informants (Addis Ababa: 1996). For an interesting story on the final days of Gobana, see the weekly private Amharic newspaper, *Fiyameta* (Addis Ababa: February 12, 1989 E.C.).
 51. For details on the role being played by the OLF in the struggle to liberate Oromiya, see Asafa, pp. 164-170.
 52. For more discussion on this point, see Admasu Shunkuri, “The Influence of Abyssinian (Ethiopian) Political Culture on Oromo Nationalism and Rebellion,” in *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol. II, Number 1&2 (Winter, 1995 and Summer 1995), pp

FOREST FIRES IN ETHIOPIA: REFLECTIONS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE FIRES IN 2000*

Assessment Study: June - September 2001¹

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1. Introduction and background

Ethiopia has a total population of over 65 million with 3% annual growth rate and a density of more than 90 persons per km² (CSA, 2001). Most people (88%) live in the highlands (above 1500 m) that constitute 43% area of the country. The country's ecological setting is quite diversified in altitude, climatic and ecological features. Ethiopia had 40% forest coverage before the last three to four decades. Unfortunately, to date forest areas have dropped to 2.7% (2.7 million hectares), of which only about half of this is natural forest, and the decrease is at an alarming and furious rate (Tedla and Lemma, 1998).

Natural forests are mainly found in southwestern Ethiopia. Human interference, mainly for subsistence and economic reasons, is the most important reason for fast depletion and serious degradation of natural resources in Ethiopia. The conventional, futile and unsuccessful protection and guarding of state forests by employed guards rather than empowering and shifting the responsibility to the community has failed to contribute much in this case. The annual loss of natural forest resources, by biotic and abiotic agents, in Oromia Regional State (the region with the biggest forest coverage in the country) reaches up to 100,000 ha (RCS, 1996). In its neighbouring Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), it is estimated that about the same area of forest is lost annually for the same reason.

Ethiopian farmers have been using fire as a means of production or as a farming tool for a long time. Every year, just before the short rainy season, when farmers start preparing their land, it is common to see deliberately set fires. Most of the fires are attended, managed and

controlled by the community members who set it. There are also fires set recklessly or accidentally, mostly in lowland savannah grass- and bushlands.

Despite inherent potential risks with fires, farmers consider it as the cheapest and most common tool used for a variety of production activities. However, there have been times when fires have broken out on a large scale and brought about serious economic, political, social and environmental shocks and devastation in Ethiopia. Historical evidence indicates that high forests of Ethiopia remain victims of war, conflict and forest fires. Yodit/Gudit (849-897 A.C.) ordered her army and the local people to set fire to forests stretching from Tigray to Gonder and Wello in suspected hiding grounds for the soldiers of Emperor Dinaad. Similarly, Gagn Mohamed (1527-1542 A.C.) ordered his troops to clear and burn all the forests stretching from the eastern lowlands to the central highlands to make access to battlefields easier and to destroy strategic hiding grounds of the soldiers of Emperor Libne Dingil and clergies (Wolde Selassie, 1998). Whatever the causes may be, fires in different parts of Ethiopia damage every year large areas of forests. Despite the country's long time experience in using fires, there are no available statistics on the causes, risks and extent of damage caused by forest fires.

Prior to the forest fires in 2000, the last major outbreak was in 1984 when the fires damaged approximately 308,200 ha of forests (George and Mutch, 2001). After almost three months of large scale wildfires that consumed over 300,000 ha natural forests, Ethiopia is still not prepared and does not give adequate attention to efficiently protect its last natural forest resources

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of this study was to assess the effects and impacts of the forest fires in Ethiopia, to gain a better understanding of the causes, to examine the effectiveness of the response and to gauge the preparedness of the government and communities in responding to similar fires in the future. The study also aims to move the discourse surrounding forest fires in Ethiopia away from a focus on training and

tools and towards a greater emphasis on fire as a reflection of the social and political processes of the country. The tendency of past analysis to isolate human impact and action must be shifted towards an examination of the entire national context that imposes boundaries and 'rules of the game' on the way humans live and the values they hold (Rahmato, 2001).

Talking to farmers and government officials and visiting fire sites, the study aimed to understand perceptions and concerns at grass root levels of forest fire experience and to gain the necessary knowledge to prevent and efficiently fight future forest fire disasters. Informal guideline interviews with key informants such as government officials, farmers and NGO representatives, transect walks and direct observation constituted the primary information sources. Although the absence of any formal statistics or survey data may leave readers feeling that the study is unfounded, vague or ambiguous, the intention was to create a report that is not just numbers, figures and percentages, but one that weaves a story of an Ethiopian society in the midst of an intense conflict within itself over the future of its forests. The critical data for this study were the attitudes and experiences of those most impacted by the fires, particularly local farmers and communities. The initial fire reports predominantly documented the ideas of experts at federal and international levels, but were relatively silent on the feelings of farmers, those who fought the fires and those who now must be forced to deal with burned forests and scarred communities.

2. Study results: The 2000 forest fires in Ethiopia

The fires started at the end of January and raged for about three months. They were a synthesis of human interference and were exacerbated by a prolonged dry spell and severe drought. Ethiopian fire cycles centre primarily on lowland or midland areas. Perhaps more importantly is that, unlike in the past, the 2000 fires were concentrated in the highlands and high forests. Among the places where forest fires broke out in 2000 were (1) Bale, Borana, Jimma, Ilubabor, East Wellega, East and West Hararghe and Arsi Zones of Oromia Region, (2) Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella Region and (3) SNNPR zones. It is

estimated that over 100,000 ha was affected in Bale and Borana zones alone (George and Mutch, 2001). The forest fires that broke out in 2000 are certainly different from previous fires and constituted a serious disaster due to both the scale and type of land they affected.

The fires also affected many of the National Priority Forest Areas (NFPAs), designated by the Ethiopian government as especially important to Ethiopia's national economy and environment. The Ethiopian Forestry Action Program of 1994 prioritised the conservation of these areas as critical forest resources for a country that currently has only 2.7% forest coverage left. Fires in these areas represent a serious threat to the country's most vital natural resources. The elimination of indigenous species or trees that take hundreds of years to grow does irreparable ecological harm. During visits to many of these fire areas, secondary succession has begun, but this succession is primarily composed of tree species with less commercial value and bushy species different from the original ones. What a fire may destroy in a matter of minutes may be impossible – or take hundreds of years – to replace

2.1 Causes of wild fires in Ethiopia

Government and local officials all agree that traditional use of fires for agricultural production caused the forest fires in the year 2000. The prolonged drought compounded with wind and the rugged nature of the topography contributed to the spread of the fires. Nevertheless, controversy over the origins of the fires still continues. Many scholars and politicians trace the historical scars and evidence that fires in high forests were used in political struggles and locally to dismiss antigovernment bodies. During this study some of the key informants, including farmers, gave the impression of not wanting to openly comment on the causes of the 2000 forest fires. Using history and interviews as a basis, the possible causes of the fires could be grouped into three categories of activities: (1) various careless and deliberate activities, (2) social and politically affiliated activities and (3) those cited as unknown causes

2.1.1 Careless and deliberate activities

At the end of the dry season, farmers and pastoralists usually use fires for different agricultural activities. Accordingly, sources of fires within the first category are:

- ◆ **To clearing farmlands** including state forests in search of fertile and additional farmlands for better agricultural production and productivity;
- ◆ **To get rid of wild animals'** harbouring sites;
- ◆ **To induce new re-growth of grasses for pasture** and controlling disease vectors, both for humans and animals;
- ◆ In lowland areas where weeds and savannah grasses are abundant (such as in Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz) and flourishing, fast fire is used as a tool **to control heavy weed infestation** and to get access (foot paths) and good sights (views). Fires are not put out unless residential areas are endangered;
- ◆ Due to the economic value of charcoal and the relative ease with which it can be produced, it is an extremely attractive source of income for poor community members in rural areas with road networks ensuring marketing. Yet, because it depends upon fire for its production and because large amounts of wood must be burned to generate a relatively small amount of charcoal, a serious fire hazard accompanies this activity. However, evidence of fires related to **charcoal production** is difficult to obtain and hence in most cases it is cited only as a possibility;
- ◆ Traditionally **honey** is collected from grooved trunks of trees or from local bee hives that are long, cylindrical objects hung high in trees. Fire in hand, the harvester climbs the tree using a rope, smokes out the bees and then drops the fire down to the ground which, if not put out immediately, could cause fire;
- ◆ **Cigarette-caused fires** mostly occur in areas where there is a large amount of traffic, on roadsides, particularly along main trucking routes or in forest areas that must be crossed on the way to major

town markets. Cigarette fires are a potential threat in Awash National Park that is transected by the major import road from Djibouti port to Addis Ababa. Herders in Nechisar National Park contend that cigarettes started the fires there, as farmers travelling from the eastern edge of the park to the markets in Arba Minch town carelessly disposed of their cigarettes in the dry, fire-prone grasslands along the roadside².

- ◆ **Fires caused by cooking** sometimes occur in areas where herders, hunters and farmers cook in the open during the dry season. If not properly extinguished, fires may break out and burn valuable grass and bushland³.

2.1.2 Politically affiliated activities

Social and political factors are possible causes of wild fires. In nearly every discussion on wild fires and overall forest management, the intertwined and complex relationships between government, land and people in Ethiopia were mentioned. The most important social and political factors influencing forest management and fire prevention are the current land tenure system and land ownership, ethnic and politically based conflicts, illegal settlement, legal and illegal commercial exploitations.

a) *Lack of forestry policy and ownership*

Land tenure is perhaps the most influential aspect of current forest management in Ethiopia and one with an immense effect on the way people relate to the land. The *Derg* government nationalized land in 1975, taking land ownership and management responsibility away from individuals and communities and transferring it to the government. Once land was nationalized, forest-based income went directly to the government without any sharing with the people actually living in or around the forest. They also had no input in land policy decisions, even if those decisions that directly affected the land on which they lived (Rahmato, 2001). Because there is little economic incentive for efficient forest management and conservation, farmers and communities have

no interest or reason to conserve forests and protect their environment. Because Ethiopia lacks a formal national forest policy, there is no policy structure under which to operate, manage and conserve forest resources. Without a plan of action, enforcement is nearly rendered impossible and forest resources are continually reduced and depleted. Even if an individual cuts a tree in a forest, that individual cannot be arrested or prevented from engaging in future degradation because there are no laws with which he can be held accountable. Though no official forest policy exists, the government is attempting to move forward on establishing formal forest procedures. The Ethiopian Forestry Action Plan (EFAP), approved in 1994, provides a broad framework for forest management ideology, as well as for establishing 58 National Forest Priority Areas (NFPAs). But it does not clearly establish guidelines for government forest management or for the particular regulations governing these high-priority areas. A draft of a forest policy is currently circulating within the Ethiopian government awaiting approval (Ministry of Agriculture, 1998). But, the policy has been pending for the past five years.

Under the *Derg*, the government played an active role in forest management, using harsh enforcement practices to ensure that the forests were preserved (SOS Sahel, 1999). Knowing that arrest, a prison sentence or even death could result from cutting down a tree or illegally settling in a forest or national park, people refrained from environment-damaging activities. Under strict government control, the forests were preserved. But, this strict *Derg* forest policy had a devastating effect on natural resources in Ethiopia thereafter. During the post-*Derg* years individuals destroyed many forests instead of conserving them because the new EPDRF (Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Front) government took a far more lenient approach to forest management. Settling in a national forest, while still illegal, no longer brought the surety of serious punishment or imprisonment. Illegal harvesting of trees to expand farmland and to produce charcoal and timber was no longer a risky venture. In Ethiopia the government created a situation in which it owns forests and all other land but lacks control over the use or rather misuse of the natural resources that are on the land. If the

government owns the land but cannot fulfil its management duties, the land is essentially ownerless, a property rights scheme that cannot result in effective conservation. Massive investment in forest management and policy enforcement will be required. Without the means or mandate for self-enforcement, the community depends upon the government to protect the forests and to promote responsible fire use. Though current decentralization and lenient enforcement policy is an alternative to the policies of the *Derg*, the results of this approach are neither much different nor very encouraging

While awaiting a national forest conservation and management policy, alternate means of forest management should be promoted, such as developing informal conservation procedures so that forest conservation can begin before forest resources are completely depleted. Even with a government policy, there is no guarantee that nominal policy will become grassroots reality (Rahmato, 2001).

b) *Ethnic and politically based conflicts and wild fires*

Wild fires can be started as a means to chase away armed opposition groups hiding in impenetrable forests. This tactic is commonly employed in a number of countries at war, but for Ethiopia no evidence so far has been established to support this argument of negative forest management. The study team could not collect any valuable information on this obviously politically very sensitive issue. For obvious reasons, government officials and farmers alike were reluctant to provide any politically sensitive information concerning forest fires

c) *Illegal settlements*

People in rural areas – and illegal migrants in particular – consider forests to be free, unoccupied areas and settle there to grow crops. It is likely that the number of illegal and unofficial settlements has been rapidly increasing, particularly since 1995. Apparently, government officials at all levels are aware of the illegal settlement problem but are unable to act and to stop the process. Migrants usually negotiate with local government officials and then build small huts as a holding and to mark land utilization. Migrant and local populations usually disagree

on land and tree management in the sense that the local population utilizes natural resources in a more sustainable way than their migrant neighbours.

d) Legal and illegal commercial exploitations

In different parts of Ethiopia, legal and illegal commercial exploitation of natural forest resources is taking place. Normally, federal and regional government officials in consultation with the relevant government departments and the respective experts decide on land contraction to private investors for commercial use. Nevertheless, there are cases where the provision of forested areas for commercial exploitation was effected without consulting the responsible official experts. Especially when experts are suspected of resisting such projects, they can be by-passed and the land contracted without their consent. In Oromia and SNNP Regions, forest land was provided to investors without adequate feasibility studies in the name of free market and agricultural investment. The vast natural resources of Oromia and SNNP Regions make them areas of enormous economic potential. From coffee to timber to gold, the land offers immense opportunity for income and wealth. Therefore, different types of commercial investors are interested in using and exploiting the available resources. This can be exemplified in the case of MIDROC Ethiopia in Shakiso Woreda of Borana Zone in Oromia Region where the enterprise is operating a gold mine. MIDROC Ethiopia is also operating new coffee plantations in Anderacha Woreda, and the East African Agricultural Industry has commercial agricultural plantations in Masha Woreda of Sheka Zone in SNNPR. These areas used to be densely covered with high forests, but were cleared for commercial exploitation. Shakiso Woreda in Borana Zone was a major fire site in 2000. The area attracts private investors mainly for gold mining such as the MIDROC company that operates a gold mine. Illegal miners use fire regularly, either as a light to see in the darkness of a deep hole or for cigarettes. Because the area is heavily forested, the chance of starting an uncontrollable fire is high.

2.1.3 Unknown causes of wild fires

Some causes of fires remain unknown and a puzzle. In 2001, wild fires broke out and ravaged Awash National Park (East of Addis Ababa) on two occasions in June and November (Addis Tribune, 2001). About 5 ha and 6 ha of forest and grassland burned, respectively. The causes of the fires remain unknown.

2.2 Inappropriate institutional structure and communication channels

The decentralized federalist system intends to give more control to local authorities to implement policies, hence, to better address needs at the grassroots level. The region coordinates with the zone, woreda and, at the lowest level, the peasant association. The problem is that the federal government is separate and independent from regional, zonal and woreda governments and that within this institutional structure a clear delineation of responsibilities is missing. The latter inevitably causes constraints for efficient communication that in the end creates a system that is slow, often ambiguous and uncertain in terms of communication, implementation and monitoring of activities. When disasters such as forest fires strike, the reaction is slow because relaying information to higher governmental levels with greater capacity for mass mobilization of resources and manpower takes time. In the case of the forest fires in 2000, the structure and communication system in place slowed the fire fighting and suppression effort as long periods elapsed between the start of the fires and the time it took for reports from the local level to reach the national level.

Since 1995, Natural Resources Development and Protection has only achieved “Unit” status in the Ministry of Agriculture in nearly all regions and even at the federal level. As the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) concentrated on agricultural extension packages to increase farm production, forests throughout the country were rapidly deteriorating with seemingly inappropriate attention paid to the imminent environmental disaster that lies ahead.

Possibly in response to the 2000 forest fires, on July 1, 2001, the Oromia Region split its Regional Bureau of Agriculture into three

divisions: the Bureau of Agriculture (BOA), the Agricultural Research Institute and the Natural Resources Development and Environmental Protection Authority (NRDEPA). By giving natural resources “authority” status, the issue gains much more prominence and power within the regional system. Regional government officials are optimistic that more resources and attention will be devoted to natural resources. But even with the split, the budget for each of the three divisions remains the same. A stagnant budget will significantly limit the amount of increased attention that may be afforded to natural resources. In general, the level of attention given to natural resources is minimal at all government levels.

2.3 The 2000 forest fire response

2.3.1 International response

The international response to Ethiopia’s forest fires in 2000 can be defined as informal and inconsistent. There are no legal obligations or formal processes through which disaster assistance is provided. Hence, international disaster response is still undetermined and unpredictable. One of the goals of this study is to expose the paradox between the arbitrariness of international aid and the need for it to be dependable, timely and consistent.

A German project coordinator for the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit – GTZ), who works within the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, heard reports of forest fires on 18 February 2000. Uncertain of how to advise the Ethiopian government on fire response, he conducted an internet search for information related to forest fires and stumbled upon a site for the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), an international fire research organization based in Freiburg, Germany. GFMC then quickly became the leading coordinator of the response. The organization’s efficiency, knowledge and established contacts with response organizations throughout the world resulted in the most successful international efforts in containing and suppressing the fires.

Seeing that the fires were becoming more and more beyond their control, the Ministry of Agriculture appealed for international assistance at a press conference on 26 February (*Ethiopian Herald*, 26 February 2000). Nevertheless, international assistance was virtually none-existent until the GFMC director's arrival in Ethiopia on 1 March. Under his guidance, an Ethio-German surveillance team was dispatched to the fire sites on 3 to 5 March⁴. South Africa was the best pick for external assistance due to their resources and dispatch capacity. South Africa rejected GFMC's initial call for assistance (27 February 2000) because it was still involved in assisting flood victims in Mozambique. On 4 March, however, a South African team was able to join the Ethiopian-German unit.

An International Fire Emergency Advisory Group was established and on 6 March it issued "Recommendations for Wildfire Response," an overview of the suggested procedure for the suppression of the fires. It also set up an Incident Command System for coordinating fire response. The group was composed of experts from Germany, South Africa and the United States. South Africa played an extremely important role in fire fighting efforts, sending fire fighters, trainers, technicians and crew leaders. South African specialists trained ground crew leaders in the Goba (Bale Zone) area and oversaw the aerial fire fighting operation. The helicopters used in the aerial operation were Ethiopian, but nearly 50% of the crew were South Africans. South African assistance to this operation was particularly important due to the extremely dangerous nature of the work.

On 15 March, Ethiopia broadcast its official request for international assistance in a fax from FAO to the joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit. This appeal resulted in a UNEP cash donation of US\$ 20,000 on 21 March. Other nations such as Canada and the United States also assisted the fire fighting efforts, though their contributions were minimal. Canada supplied fire-fighting tools including water tanks, fire axes, hoes and shovels. Though these tools obviously possess immense potential benefit for Ethiopia's suppression efforts, they arrived when most of the fires had already been suppressed. Heavy rains suppressed the fires in Bale and Borana on 23 and 24 March 2000. The United States provided satellite images of fire conditions. The images

helped federal authorities identify problem areas so that suppression efforts could be directed where they were needed most.

Analysis of the international response efforts must first acknowledge that the response was almost entirely coincidental, dependent upon an NGO employee who used his free time during the weekend to see if the internet contained any relevant information on forest fire suppression. Depending on luck will be problematic for future disaster management. The timeline of events from the initial reporting of the fires to their eventual suppression in late March and early April 2000 offer a valuable resource for evaluating the problems and successes of international disaster assistance.

2.3.2 National response

The national government played a relatively small role in the fire response. Compared to the local level at which there was opportunity for community mobilization and the international level with extensive resources and expertise, the national government was essentially impotent in coordinating an effective response. They had negligible resources, no experience in forest fire management and an extremely minimal capacity for action. In addition, there was no focal point institution in Ethiopia to address forest fire disasters. Slow lines of communication delayed the transmission of fire reports from the local level to the federal government. When the federal Ministry of Agriculture finally received fire reports on 18 February, the fires had already been raging in Odo Shakiso woreda for more than three weeks (Goldammer, 2000). The national government's most significant action in the fire response was its call for international assistance. The absence of a strong national presence in the 2000 response foreshadows devastating future disasters unless substantial preparedness measures improve the quality of the government's fire fighting capacity. Without such measures, similar occurrences will be beyond the government's control and the international community will once again be the principle actors in controlling and containing forest fires. The Ethiopian government provided helicopters and in addition an allocation of about 15 million Birr (~ 190,000 US\$) for fighting the fires.

2.3.3 Local response

Due to the delays in the government's response and the minimal resources available to it, the most effective fire fighting tools were the community members themselves. In nearly all areas that experienced serious fires in 2000, the communities either mobilized themselves or were mobilized by the local government to use whatever tools and resources were available to them. Because the fires potentially threatened the lives and economic well-being of the communities, they had a significant interest in suppressing the fires as quickly as possible.

Despite the lack of resources, the communities used whatever means were available: shovels, sticks and wet tree branches. The fire fighting efforts were innovative because they were unable to rely on a steady supply of tools and resources. Perhaps more importantly, local suppression strategy often depended upon indigenous local knowledge, not external input. While the "high-tech" method of aerial fire fighting was proving ineffective in Bale, communities on the ground were using such simple techniques as wet tree branches or cutting the leaves of trees at the periphery of the fire as containment tools.

Community knowledge proved to be relatively successful in controlling the fires, an indication that such knowledge should be afforded a greater degree of respect in the future. The forest management knowledge developed over thousands of years of living on the land should be respected as a valuable resource.

Arba Minch provides an excellent example of the successful community fire fighting effort. The local Administrative Council facilitated a mass mobilization effort to encourage people in the town to combat the fire in Nechisar National Park. Over 5,000 residents assisted in the effort (BBC Monitoring, 13 March 2000). Without waiting for assistance from the federal or regional governments, the community successfully organized itself to use many of the available vehicles in town to transport people to the fire site. Within four days, the fires were suppressed.

The effectiveness of local fire fighting response and the communities' willingness to devote time and effort despite endangering their own lives demonstrates the immense value the Ethiopian people

place on land. The strength of the local response is also an indication of the capability and desire of the local people to play a greater role in forest management. The fire response revealed that when given the responsibility, the communities who live on the land – those who know it, care for it and have an interest in its conservation – will fulfil the responsibility of ownership.

Students throughout the country participated in the fire fighting. Students from Addis Ababa University volunteered to assist in the Borana and Bale fires, and students from other local colleges, such as Wondo Genet College of Forestry, contributed the bulk of the human resources in combating local fires. At Addis Ababa University, over 240 students demanded mobilization to fight the forest fires. The government accepted the request for mobilization on 29 February and deployed the first students on 3 March (*WTC*, 1 March and 4 March 2000). The Addis Ababa University students inspired other students throughout the country to make similar demands. Students at Ambo senior secondary school, Alemaya University, Kotebe Teachers Training College, Awassa Agricultural College and Jimma Agricultural and Teachers Training colleges also requested mobilization (*Ethiopian Herald*, 12 March 2000 and *WTC*, 1 March and 4 March 2000).

2.4 Wild fire damages

2.4.1 Economic damage

For a country almost exclusively dependent on subsistence agriculture for economic sustenance, large fires and the destruction of many critical highland forests means a substantial loss of economic potential. Forest products represent 2.5% of Ethiopia's GDP (George and Mutch, 2001). Considering that this income is generated by forested area that covers less than 3% of the country's land area, even a relatively small reduction of the forested land has a serious impact on GDP. Considering that there are approximately 1,343,800 ha of natural forest area in Ethiopia, the 151,500 ha burned in 2000 represent over 11% of the total forest economic potential. In terms of GDP, this means that the single fire disaster of 2000 affected 0.28% of Ethiopia's GDP. Clearly,

these statistics emphasize the value of each hectare of forested land to the country's economic welfare

Except for the high forests burned in Bale and Borana Zones of Oromia Region, there was no study conducted on the economic dimension of Ethiopia's forest fires in 2000. The total economic damage caused by the forest fires in Bale and Borana zones of Oromia Region alone amounted to approximately US\$ 39 million (331,179,405 ETB; see Table 1 below).

Aside from highland forests, the fires also burned food and cash crops like coffee. Whereas the burning of the highland forests reduces the potential for future economic gain, the elimination of large sections of cultivated land has an immediate effect. Farmers who are economically dependent on their crops, as most are, suffer extraordinarily when their agricultural production is reduced.

Livestock killed or lost during the fires represent another type of economic damage. While the fires burned, some livestock fled the area in search of safer land, though some were not so lucky and were caught in the flames. Wild animals escaped or were killed as well, including in national parks such as in Nechisar and others.

This approximate summary to quantify damages is only a fraction of the damage inflicted on the country as a whole because it only includes information from Bale and Borana zones. The March 4 *Monitor*, for example, reports that 685 houses were destroyed and 5,000 people rendered homeless by a fire in Korahe Zone of Somali Region (*Monitor*, 4 March 2000). The BBC reported that more than 13,000 beehives were burnt in total by the fires (16 March 2000).

Another critical aspect of the economic impact of the 2000 fires is the opportunity costs that accompany the suppression efforts. Officials estimate that the fire fighting used more than 169,589 person days (George and Mutch, 2001). Diverting these people from their normal occupations, such as farming or the operation of a local business, disrupts the economy and slows production. If it is true that "time is money," then the enormous amounts of time and effort required for fire suppression exhausted resources that could have been used elsewhere.

Table 1: Magnitude of the forest fires damage in Bale and Borana Zones of Oromia Region

Property	Amount damaged	Economic value of damage (in Birr)
Forest area	100,000 ha	252,000,000
Wildlife	669 heads of animals	45,609,744
Domestic animals	353 heads of animals	46,460
Houses	112 farm house units burned	396,200
Agricultural/ food crops	167.20 Mt	2,508,000
Forest coffee	1226 ha	30,065,000*
Coffee berries	613000 in kg	
Beehives	300 units	240,870
Honey	24087 in kg	240,870
Wax	2400 in kg	72,261
TOTAL	N/A	331,179,405 Birr

*Economic value of damage to both forest coffee stands and coffee berries. Source: Wirtu D (2000) Forestry and Wildlife Protection Department, Oromia Region

2.4.2 Environmental damage

Fire always affects the environment in which it burns and may alter the ecosystem, which may have both negative and positive impacts on the land. The negative environmental impact of forest fires is caused by the release of carbon dioxide and the consumption of atmospheric oxygen, the disruption of energy flow and the cycling of nutrients upsetting the ecosystem functions and, the pollution of the atmosphere and water bodies contributing to the impaired health of organisms. Furthermore, forest fires affect soils physically, biologically and chemically. Because they have such a comprehensive impact on soils, fires may radically change the environment, which significantly affects

an ecosystem's biodiversity. In Michata woreda of West Hararghe Zone, for example, lowland areas were flooded and crops washed away after the watershed lost its vegetation cover due to the heavy fire-induced degradation of vegetation from Chaffe Anani watershed

In Adola woreda in Borana, secondary succession has already begun, but different species are replacing those destroyed by the flames. The high canopy and large, old trees of a mature forest have disappeared, filled in by giant "weeds," as they were called by local experts and farmers. The "weeds" have grown out of the ashes because they are well adapted to fire, more resistant to heat than the original species. They do not, however, adequately replace the ecological importance of the previous species. Adola is a prime example of an area in which the noticeable growth that has occurred in the short amount of time since the fire is environmentally insufficient. Despite the re-growth, the environmental degradation of the forest fires has resulted in the loss of many valuable indigenous trees

2.4.3 Social damage

Measuring the social damage caused by the fires is difficult if not impossible. Many people were arrested and imprisoned, and others still await the conclusions of their trials. Students protested throughout the country, with demonstrations turning violent in Dembi Dolo and Ambo. And perhaps above all, people in all regions of the country were appalled at the unrelenting destruction of precious forestland, fearful of the day when a once-heavily forested country will be completely denuded. Communities fear that the land on which they depend is degrading so quickly and that they have little control over this disaster. Unable to enforce conservation laws in a country in which forestry policy is absent, uncertain whether they have any control over the fate of land that they do not even own, they are frustrated about the future of Ethiopia's natural resources.

The arrests made by the government in the fallout from the fires also inflicted social damage. Besides those arrested in protests, many people were detained for suspicion of starting the fires. A March 17 press release reports that 186 people were arrested and scheduled to

appear in court, approximately three weeks after their arrest (*AFP-Mail*, 17 March 2000).

The damage incurred by the forest fires in 2000 exacerbated social tensions that lay dormant beneath the surface of daily activities of Ethiopian life. As students explained in Ambo and Dembi Dolo, the fires were an opportunity to voice protest. The fires burned the land, but they fractured the nation socially.

2.5 Fire disaster preparedness in Ethiopia

The country was caught completely unprepared in 2000, which is one of the main reasons the fires posed such a serious threat to natural resources. Had there been adequate fire awareness and basic fire fighting equipment, the fires could have been controlled much sooner, reducing the impact of the disaster. Because of being so unprepared, the country was unable to fight on its own, instead depending on external assistance to provide financial resources, manpower and expertise. When the fire was raging, many discussions at all levels in the country (mass media, government and the community) were about the forest fires. However, immediately after the fire was put out, the issue faded away completely, even at government level. Even though over a year and a half has elapsed since the forest fires were finally suppressed by rains in March and April 2000, Ethiopia's preparedness and fire fighting capacity is almost the same as it was before the 2000 fires. Project implementation always takes time and with the fragile political climate that reigned in the beginning of this year and all the other post-drought and -war related problems the government had to face, only a few fire-related projects were considered for implementation.

The highest profile project actually on a path towards implementation is a US\$ 252,000 project proposed by FAO (ICP/ETH/0065). The project is resource-focused, aiming to improve the tools and training available to Ethiopia's fire fighters. By improving Ethiopia's fire fighting expertise, the project seeks to strengthen future suppression efforts and thus limit the potential extent of future forest destruction. What this type of project fails to realize is that because Ethiopia's fires are almost exclusively anthropogenic, no amount of fire fighting tools

or training will provide a long-term solution to the size, frequency and impact of fires in Ethiopia. To decrease the risk and disaster potential of future fires, projects must tackle the political and social factors that precipitated the fire disasters of 2000.

2.5.1 Technical preparedness

The major initiative to come out of the 2000 fires, though it was not purely technical, was the Round Table Conference on Integrated Forest Fire Management in Ethiopia sponsored by MOA/GTZ and GFMC, held in Addis Ababa on 19 and 20 September 2000. The conference intended to provide a forum in which stakeholders could discuss issues that arose from the 2000 fires and hopefully move towards an integrated forest fire management system, incorporating lessons learned with a careful review of the needs and goals of the country. The conference also aimed to unite experts and policy makers from various regions and levels of the country, as well as several international participants. Though the diversity of views at the conference and the complexity of the issues made it nearly impossible to develop any single panacea for fire use and environmental degradation, the conference represented an important step forward in placing forest fires on the national agenda. However, sustainable forest management and fire use will not occur until attitudes are changed at the grassroots level. Because a top-down approach does not affect the way local people relate to land, fire, government policy and each other; it can only be a temporary solution.

2.5.2 Fire awareness creation

Nearly all government officials contacted during the fieldwork for this study cited "awareness creation" as one of the principle preparedness measures taken since the 2000 fires. Theoretically, awareness-based programs are informal interactions between experts and local farmers, providing these farmers with technical advice on how to better manage forests and fires. These programs assume that farmers do not understand the potentially disastrous consequences of

fire use and forest degradation, and that with the input of government officials and experts, the farmers will change their agricultural practices. Such programs are problematic for two reasons. First, farmers are often very well aware of the dangers of using fires and the economic and environmental damages of forest degradation, but “awareness” is not necessarily the primary determinant of land use practices. Ethiopia has been inhabited for thousands of years. Traditional land use practices have managed historically to conserve the land. Although given intense population pressure and the difficulty of making a sustainable income, environmental considerations are not the foremost consideration for most farmers. Often they engage in activities that destroy land due to economic necessity, choosing to feed their families rather than conserve trees. Historically, government conservation policy has focused on economic values over environmental ones: “Imperial policy makers paid little heed to resource degradation which they did not see as a major problem or a serious handicap to economic development (Rahmato, 2001) Because economic stability renders the environment a low priority, nothing prevents rapid land degradation.

Some experts contend that awareness creation is a necessity because rural communities lack the expertise to properly manage land. They recommend abandoning traditional agricultural practices in favour of those that are more technologically advanced. But many others argue that the deterioration of traditional practices—often due to government policy—is responsible for the present land degradation, pushing communities away from the practices that sustained the land in the past: “Successive agricultural and tenure reforms have undermined traditional farming practices, and this has weakened the conservation element of land husbandry” (Rahmato, 2001). Ensermu Kelbessa, an associate professor at Addis Ababa University, argues that “the community is well aware of the danger, but it is the government machinery which is actually unaware... The problem of forest fires resulted because of the interference of regional bureaus with the rights of the people” (Ministry of Agriculture with GTZ and GFMC, 2000). When government policy breaks down systems that have worked in the past, communities are left without their traditional systems of conservation.

The second problem with awareness creation programs is that they are rarely implemented. An effective awareness creation campaign would be a formal, concrete project with a definite plan of action and a set of desired objectives and outputs. Creating awareness could potentially have a positive impact on the way farmers use fire and manage land. Becoming more aware of the way action impacts environment and the long-term consequences of this action could result in a reduction in the rate of degradation. To be successful, these programs must be more structured and ambitious in reaching out to farmers and they must be respectful, not critical, of traditional agricultural techniques. Claiming "awareness creation" without backing it up with serious formal programming represents no step forward in the forest fire preparedness of the government and the people.

In the wake of repeated unsuccessful attempts at reducing environmental degradation and improving the relationship between environment and people in Ethiopia, several NGOs such as WWF, SOS-Sahel and GTZ, all of which are engaged in natural resources oriented projects in Bale and Borana zones, have begun pilot projects in Participatory Forest Management (PFM). These projects recognize that top-down, expert-level approaches frequently fail to change the actual land use practices of those at the grassroots level. Making new laws or strengthening government enforcement will not change the state of the environment without an accompanying change in the attitudes of the local people. PFM projects recognize that slowing the pace of environmental degradation requires more work at the local level. PFM projects aim to provide a mechanism through which communities can both benefit from natural resources and have an input in decisions regarding the way they interact with the land. In an evaluation phase that typically serves as the backbone for implementation, the projects typically use forums or workshops as a means of understanding community needs and desires. They use the community as the basis for the goals of the project, incorporating expert-level environmental concerns with community needs to obtain a synthesis that meets the objectives of both groups.

2.5.3 Material preparedness

Due to budget constraints, the government is unable to make significant material improvements independent of international aid. Although one of the principle shortcomings of the 2000 disaster was a lack of rudimentary fire fighting tools like shovels, the only major material advancement since 2000 is the FAO project. The FAO project provides for nearly US\$ 88,000 in equipment and supplies, ranging from fire fighting gloves and goggles to climbing ropes and axes. Few of the NFPA's even have roads. Hardly any forests have firebreaks regularly maintained or any other mechanism of slowing a rapidly spreading fire. Even fire towers, and radios for quick communication are rare in rural areas where fires pose the greatest potential danger.

2.5.4 Institutional preparedness

Several small institutional steps have been taken since the 2000 fires to improve preparedness, but the extent of their impact remains uncertain. The coming years are critical to evaluating whether national and international institutions are more capable of preventing fires and responding effectively when they do occur.

One of the principle institutional measures taken was the establishment of forest fire committees at all government levels. By establishing these committees, the government intends to give adequate attention to fire prevention and response by providing a formal body to deal with fire-related issues. The committees also represent an effort to coordinate many different sectors of government, from education and legal offices to natural resources and the police. By incorporating representatives from several different government offices, the committees recognize that fires are not simply the responsibility of the Bureau of Agriculture, but instead reflect the interrelatedness of all sectors of Ethiopian society in disaster relief and prevention. Although they provide the institutional structure to give more attention to forest fires, the committees have not produced a substantial improvement in attention given to the issue. The heads of the committees—with the exception of the federal and regional level—are the chairmen of the

international community about the potential devastation of precious land and endangered, indigenous species

Because Ethiopia's forest fires are primarily human in origin, the prevention of future fires is a difficult, daunting task. Fires will continue to burn the precious remaining forests unless there is a fundamental and dramatic alteration in the way people relate to the land, in the way the government manages and protects it and in the type of value the nation as a whole places on the environment

Understanding the problems associated with fires—and the problems that arose as a result of the 2000 fires—requires the incorporation of sensitivity to the discrepancy between expert and grassroots perspectives. Devising solutions or recommendations should consider the pluralism of interests that must be satisfied by action taken.

Sustainable recommendations must focus on improving the quality of life for those who interact most with the land, which means giving attention to the interests of farmers and rural communities. These stakeholders are not principally concerned with environmental conservation. They do not only perceive the principle problem of the 2000 fires as poor forest management and irresponsible fire use. Those at the local level are rather frustrated that they see few of the benefits from the land on which they work. The reduction of future fire emergencies depends upon sensitivity to community ideology and a strengthening of traditional practices that have succeeded in the past. To prevent fires similar to those of 2000 and to reduce the pace of environmental degradation, communities must benefit from the land on which they live. Unless the local people who are living around the Bale Mountains National Park are sharing for example benefits from income generated from an Ethiopian wolf (tourism), this wild game is by far less useful and less important to the farmer than his sheep, which also needs to graze in the park.

3.1 Short-term recommendations

Although the impact of workshops is limited and though the notion of “awareness” may be problematic, attempting to influence local practices and ideology offers many potential benefits. Providing

Administrative Councils These chairmen typically have a large amount of responsibility aside from their forest fire committee duties. They give priority to political activities and are therefore unable to direct adequate time and effort to fire issues.

Another institutional improvement in the wake of the fires is the split between the Natural Resource Development and Environmental Protection Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture in the Oromia Region. Although this is only one region and the budget for natural resources remains the same, the new division represents at least a symbolic step towards giving natural resources more government attention. The impact of the split is certainly limited by budget constraints that curtail finances and manpower, but by focusing more directly on land degradation issues, perhaps the government will respond to and suppress future fires more quickly and efficiently

The final institutional improvement is the improved lines of communication with the international community regarding fire disaster response. While this is not a formal action taken, it still represents a significant improvement since 2000. Because the country experienced the process of seeking international aid and now knows the relevant organizations, experts and individuals to contact should a similar disaster reoccur, the time between the initial fire reports and international assistance will be significantly reduced. The process for receiving international aid remains somewhat ambiguous, but at least the process will no longer rely on a coincidental success.

3. Conclusions and recommended actions

Due to the combination of Ethiopia's underdevelopment and dependence on subsistence agriculture, fire is an integral part of daily life. Fire is one of the most important tools used by people in rural communities to impact the land around them. The 2000 forest fires manifested the complex problems in Ethiopian development as they touched nearly all parts of Ethiopian society, from ethnic tensions to land tenure insecurity to socio-economic status. The ramifications of the fires even extended beyond Ethiopia's borders, alerting the

farmers with conservation techniques that also increase production, for example, would simultaneously benefit the farmer and conserve the environment. These measures are also important because many Ethiopians do not see the environment as valuable in itself, but instead identify it as resource to be exploited for economic benefit. Increasing awareness at the local level may slowly help to change this perception by increasing local understanding of the long-term benefit of environmental conservation.

With the focus in most Bureaus of Agriculture on agricultural extension projects and with most disaster agencies or government offices focused on famine, natural resource management and environmental conservation are overlooked. Workshops and awareness creation shift the focus towards human environmental impact and raise the level of attention given to the issue at the community level. Successful workshops and awareness creation programs must go beyond the informal or nominal programs currently in existence. "Awareness creation" should not be synonymous with inactivity.

Though some experts are arguing that roads are among the enemies of forests in that they facilitate poaching and illegal transporting of forest products, road construction is critical to improving forest management and emergency response capacity. Because many of the NFPAs are extremely remote and therefore difficult to access, monitoring of forest use and prevention of illegal harvesting is difficult. In terms of emergency response, roads provide access that is vital to quick suppression. Roads allow manpower and equipment to be transported rapidly to places that need it. Roads are also critical to insuring human safety because they provide routes to transport injured fire fighters or quick evacuation if a fire blows up beyond the control of the workers.

The construction of firebreaks and fire towers are additional material measures that offer the potential for substantial improvement in prevention and response capacity. Firebreaks are both desirable and problematic. Desirable because they contain a fire once it is out of control and limits the damage incurred, problematic because they are expensive and need extensive and regular maintenance besides disrupting

the environment in areas that are often environmentally sensitive. Fire towers help with early fire detection.

Despite GFMC's critical role and vast international fire fighting expertise, they became involved in Ethiopian fire suppression only through coincidence. By formalizing contact procedures and strengthening the relationship with GFMC, Ethiopia should be able to use international assistance more effectively.

The verdict on participatory forest management (PFM) projects is yet to be determined. Still in their nascent phases, there is not enough concrete data to evaluate their effectiveness. But despite the uncertainty, the theory of PFM seems the most promising in terms of developing sustainable land use practices and improving the relationship between government management and the local land user.

Ethiopia does not have the resources to invest in the most recent technological advances in fire fighting. Besides being extremely effective, such technology is often not well suited to the particular fire conditions of Ethiopia. In 2000, for example, the aerial fire fighting operation was controversial because dense forest cover often renders it ineffective and extremely costly in combating ground fires. To make material improvements, the country must focus on rudimentary tools that are successful in fire fighting operations despite their low cost. Though basic, shovels and radios could make a substantial difference in fire fighting capacity provided fires are detected early.

3.2 Long term recommendations

Land tenure is perhaps the single most important factor in natural resources management, environmental degradation and fire use. Because the state continues to own the land and because benefits from forest production rarely go to the communities, farmers abandon conservation in favour of maximum exploitation for immediate economic gain. Without changing ownership either literally or symbolically to give local communities a greater sense of investment in the land, environmental disasters will continue and the 2.7% of the country that is forested will rapidly diminish.

JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

Though transfer of land ownership is the most effective means of improving the current environmental situation, it is not the only option. The principle issue for most communities is that there is no incentive to conserve. They will not benefit from saving a tree, so why not cut it for firewood? Amending the benefit structure would not require the massive policy changes necessary in order to transfer ownership of the land from the state to the people.

While transferring ownership requires a constitutional change, regional governments, involving less bureaucracy and political struggle, could implement local benefit sharing. While this certainly is not a comprehensive or final solution to the problems of land ownership, giving communities a significant final portion of revenues generated from the land and natural resources on which they live, would give them an incentive to use sustainable agricultural practices that conserve the land.

To strengthen traditional systems of governance, land use and forest management as opposed to a top-down, expert approach is one of the options that should be followed in the future to increase popular participation in governance.

As many forest products such as charcoal are consumed largely in urban areas, looking for alternative energy sources, which are relatively more available in urban areas, is another potential solution to be considered. Urban dwellers could be encouraged for example by subsidizing prices for burning gases and electricity, to decrease charcoal consumption for various domestic activities and hence it would be possible to slow down deforestation.

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ANNEX

Abbreviations

AAU	Addis Ababa University
AFP	Agence France Press
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCFM	Borana Collaborative Forest Management
BOA	Bureau of Agriculture
CSA	Central Statistical Authority
DGIS	Directorate General for International Cooperation, The Royal Netherlands Government
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
EPDRF	Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Front
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFMC	Global Fire Monitoring Centre
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit)
MIDROC	Mohammed International Development Resource and Organisation Company
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
NFPA	National Forestry Priority Areas
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRDEPA	Natural Resources Development and Environmental Protection Authority
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ODPPB	Oromia Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau
OSSREA	Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa
PFM	Participatory Forest Management
RCS	Red Cross Society
SG2000	Sasakawa Global 2000
SNNPR	Southern Nations and Nationalities People's Region
SOS Sahel	Save Our Soils Sahel
ICP/ETH	Technical Cooperation Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN-EUE	United Nations – Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia
WIC	Walta Information Center
WMERDP	Water, Mineral and Energy Resources Development and Protection
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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NOTES

1. This study was carried out from 12 June to 9 September 2001 in Oromia (Borana, Bale, Arusi, East and West Hararghe, Jimma, Ilubabor, East and West Wellega and West Shoa Zones), SNNPR (Gamu Gofa, Sheka and Bench-Maji zones) Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz and Amhara (North Gonder and North Shoa zones) Regional Government States.

- 2 A report obtained from the SNNPR Bureau of Agriculture (BOA) indicates the possible causes of the fire in the park to be fish trappers who collect fish from Lake Abbaya and also fry up fish right at the edges of the lake. On the contrary, Ethiopian radio broadcasted on 13 March 2000 that the fire in Nechisar National Park was started by Guji and Koira tribes who inhabit the region while clearing bush lands for cultivation. It is difficult to tell which one is right.
- 3 A boy 19 years old was detained in Gara Mulata prison and sentenced to 7 years in suspect of setting a cooking-related fire in Kurfa Chale wereda of East Hararghe Zone.
- 4 Unless otherwise cited, all material from this section obtained from Goldammer, 2000.

A COMPARISON OF METHODS OF CALCULATING RAINFALL EROSION FROM DAILY RAINFALL AMOUNTS IN HARARGHE HIGHLANDS

Shibru Daba

Abstract

In several parts of Oromia in general and Hararghe Highlands in particular, several meteorological stations have been recording daily rainfall quantities. Data on rainfall intensity are very limited for calculating rainfall erosion. Investigation of alternative methods of calculating rainfall erosion from daily rainfall amounts would be invaluable. This paper reports a comparison of three methods of estimating rainfall erosion from daily rainfall amounts for Haramaya and Harar stations in Hararghe Highlands.

By relating the calculated rainfall intensity to recorded soil loss from soil erosion plots at Hunde Lafto, it was found that all three methods could be used to estimate rainfall erosion from daily rainfall. A valuable aspect of the rainfall erosion in the tropics, seasonality of rainfall erosion, was also used to compare the three methods. Calculated erosion was significantly related to monthly rainfall amount either exponentially or logarithmically in each case. It was observed that the power type equation and the amount-intensity methods were important for detecting the seasonality aspect of rainfall and the temporal occurrence of the early erosive rains. The predictability of erosion indices as a function of average monthly rainfall, average daily maximum rainfall and number of days with at least 0.1 cm were also used to compare the three methods of estimating erosion. The amount-intensity and the kinetic energy methods were more related to these rainfall erosion variables. Based on the findings of this investigation, the use of the amount-intensity method of estimating rainfall erosion from daily rainfall is recommended. It takes into account the seasonality aspect of rainfall erosion in the Hararghe Highlands.

Key Words: Amount-intensity methods, Hararghe Highlands, Kinetic energy method, Power type equation, Rainfall erosion.

Introduction

The rainfall characteristics under the Hararghe Highlands, eastern Oromia, climatic conditions is believed to have contributed significantly to the occurrence of severe soil erosion in the region. Krauer (1988) reported that Hararghe Highlands are characterized by a very high rainfall intensity (140 mm/h) that indicates the erosive potential of rainfall in the region. Rainfall erosivity refers to the potential capacity of the rain to cause erosion under a given environmental conditions (Krauer, 1988) and it is a measure of the combined effects of rainfall and its associated runoff. Rainfall and its associated runoff play a significant role in the detachment and transport of soil particles. Since the detachment and transport of soil particles involves an expenditure of energy, soil erosion is termed as a work process (Hudson, 1985). The energy expenditure in such a process is proportional to the rainfall amount and intensity.

Rose (1960) has found that the rate of detachment of soil particles depends more on drop mass than rainfall kinetic energy which leads to the development of the mechanical stress or momentum concept. Krauer (1988) investigated rainfall erosivity across selected locations in Ethiopia based on this concept. Krauer (1988) has made rainfall erosivity and isoerodent mapping of rainfall using data collected by the Soil Conservation Research Project (SCR) over four years. From comparisons of several erosivity indices based on selected meteorological stations and limited years of rainfall data recorded by SCR, Krauer (1988) concluded that the storm erosivity index developed by Wischmeier and Smith (1958) is the most accurate erosivity index for predicting soil loss from a wide range of field soil erosion plots in Ethiopia. Although the study was a pioneer one in deriving rainfall erosivity for Ethiopia, it did not evaluate the possibility of adopting rainfall erosivity based on daily rainfall amount, a readily available rainfall data in Oromia. Daily rainfall amount was used as a fairly good estimator of rainfall erosivity or soil loss (Ulsaker, 1984; Foster et al., 1981; Raghunath and Erasmus, 1971). A readily available index from commonly available rainfall data is one of the practical considerations that need to be made in evaluating and adopting rainfall erosivity indices under local conditions. A complete lack of rainfall intensity information

from Meteorological Services Agency stations is one of the prime factors that prohibits or limits the use of other indices of rainfall erosivity. Therefore, it is relevant to investigate alternative methods of deriving rainfall erosivity from readily available rainfall data such as daily rainfall amount. Hence the objective of this paper is to evaluate the adoptability of rainfall erosivity indices based on daily rainfall amount and estimation of the maximum 30 minutes intensity from daily rainfall for consequent use in estimating erosivity for the Hararghe Highlands

Materials and Methods

Meteorological stations

Haramaaya (Alemaya) and Harar meteorological stations have a relatively more complete rainfall record with better data archiving compared to several stations in the Hararghe highlands. Haramaaya is located at an average elevation of about 1990 m above sea level with an annual average rainfall of 880 mm. Harar is located at an average elevation of 1890 m above sea level with annual average rainfall of 676 mm. Complete daily rainfall data was obtained from the National Meteorological Services of Ethiopia for nine years (1985-1992 and 1997) for Haramaaya, and eight years (1985, 1986, 1987, 1990, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997) for Harar station. For the rest of the years between 1985 and 1997, complete rainfall data was not available and hence not considered for erosivity calculation.

Calculated rainfall erosivity at Alemaya and Harar were compared with previously calculated rainfall erosivity (SCRIP, 1996) at Hunde Lafto. Hunde Lafto has a recorded soil loss per unit area based on soil erosion plot studies. It is also located in the same region with similar agroecological characteristics with the stations considered in the current study.

The power type equation method, the amount-intensity method and the kinetic energy method were compared for their adaptability of estimating rainfall erosivity at Haramaaya and Harar where daily rainfall was the only readily available rainfall data for erosivity calculation.

1. The Power Type Equation

The power type equation is based on the works of Foster and Meyer (1975) and Richardson et al. (1982) who developed a method of estimating storm erosion index from daily rainfall amount. According to this method the general relationship between rainfall amount (P) and storm erosion index (EI) is given as:

$$EI = aP^b \quad (1)$$

where a and b are constants

It was suggested that such a relationship would be useful for estimating storm erosivity index when only daily rainfall data are available. For Hararghe Highland climatic conditions, the seasonality aspect of parameter 'a' was taken into account by considering temperatures from June to October to be cool season and from November to May warm season. In this study, an average 'a' value of 0.18 (since during the rainy seasons temperatures are very cool at Haramaya and Harar and a 'b' value of 0.15, the lowest value, were used for calculating storm erosion index. P is the daily rainfall in each case. It is to be noted that the power type equation is basically an approximation of EI_{30} when I_{30} is assumed to represent a uniform characteristic intensity for a storm (Foster and Meyer, 1975)

2. Amount-Intensity Index

Lal (1976) developed an erosion index based on the observation of the correlation between soil loss and the product of total rainfall amount and peak storm intensity, also called the maximum intensity. The maximum intensity is one of the most important factors in storm erosivity in the tropics (Krauer, 1988; Lal, 1976). Bergsma (1981) reviewed several indices of rainfall erosivity and recommended the use of this index for areas with high rainfall.

2.1 Estimation of the Maximum Intensity.

Lal (1976) used the maximum storm intensity during the 7.5 consecutive minutes. Richardson (1982) stated that the maximum storm

erosion index would result from an event with all the rainfall occurring in 30 minutes or less. Moreover, Pauwelyn et al. (1988) have indicated that in most cases it is almost impossible to read rainfall intensity for time periods shorter than 15 minutes. Therefore, the maximum storm intensity during the consecutive 7.5 minutes was approximated by the maximum 30 minutes intensity. Cooley (1980) has shown that the maximum 30 minutes intensity is related to the total storm rainfall as

$$I_{\max} = 2.54*(P)(aD^b) \text{ where} \quad (2)$$

I_{\max} = maximum 30 minute intensity (cm/h)

P = total storm rainfall (cm)

D = storm duration (h) and a and b are constants for a given storm types

Krauer (1988) have attempted to adopt different storm types under Ethiopian conditions. It was observed that type IIA was relatively a better representative of natural rainfall distribution patterns in the country. Moreover, Cooley (1980) has found that the type IIA distribution produced erosivity values close to values calculated from selected intense thunderstorms for the tropical climates of Hawaii. Hence, a and b values were adopted from Cooley (1980) for the storm type IIA. Then the amount-intensity Index was calculated as:

$$NPIP_{\text{Index}} = aN_p * I_p \text{ where} \quad (3)$$

N_p = total rainfall amount (cm)

I_p = maximum storm intensity (cm/h).

3. The Kinetic Energy

The use of kinetic energy as an index for rainfall erosivity is based on the rationale that the detachment of soil particles is related to dispersing power of raindrops. This index is believed to offer a rational explanation of erosion phenomena (Pauwelyn, 1988; Elwell, 1979; Elwell and stocking, 1973; Hudson, 1963). Based on the works of Hudson (1963), Kinnell (1981) have developed a method of calculating kinetic energy from rainfall intensity and amount which is mathematically expressed as:

$$E = 292.3 (1 - e^{-(0.477 * I_p + 0.112)}) * N_p \quad (4)$$

where :

E = kinetic energy (J/m^2)

I_p = rainfall intensity (cm/h)

N_p = rainfall amount (cm)

In this study, the maximum intensity estimated in equation 2 was incorporated while rainfall amount was used in the context of the daily rainfall amount

4. Estimation of Erosivity Indices

Lenvain et al. (1988) have compared multiple linear regression and exponential equations for predicting monthly erosivity in Zambia from average total monthly rainfall, average number of days with a rainfall of at least 0.1 cm and average maximum daily rainfall of the month. They found that the multiple linear regression equation was the best in predicting monthly erosivity for places like Zimbabwe. Based on this approach, a prediction of the respective erosivity indices from these variables was made with the view that the relationship between calculated and predicted erosivity indices would give an additional indication of the reliability and adoptability of an index under Haramaaya and Harar conditions. Moreover, the calculated average monthly erosivity values at Haramaaya and Harar were compared with calculated erosivity values at Hunde Lafto to further confirm the reliability of the indices used for Haramaaya and Harar conditions.

Results and Discussion

Calculated monthly erosivity values using the three different erosivity calculation methods for Haramaaya and Harar stations are given in Tables 1-6. The monthly values were derived from the daily rainfall amount with the assumption that daily rainfall amounts represent individual events (Richardson et al., 1982). There was significant correlation between calculated and estimated values of monthly erosivity when the power type of equation was used both at Alemaya and Harar (Tables 8 and 9). The relationships were either exponential or logarithmic as indicated. The mount-intensity method (Tables 10 and 11) also showed significant correlation between calculated and estimated values

of erosivity for both stations. However, the highest degree of correlation across years was observed for the kinetic energy method (Tables 12 and 13). The SCRIP (1996) have shown that there is significant correlation between calculated monthly erosivity values and monthly soil loss recorded on test plots with different slopes. Calculated average monthly erosivity values at Haramaaya (Figure 1) and Harar (Figure 2) were significantly correlated to monthly erosivity at Hunde Lafto. This may be used to indicate the reliability of the different erosion indices used in this study besides the degree of correlation between calculated and estimated values of monthly erosivity at both stations.

There was correlation relationship between soil loss and calculated erosivity using the power type equation at Haramaaya and Harar (Figures 1 and 4, respectively). Likewise the amount-intensity (Figures 2 and 5) at both stations was found significantly correlated to soil loss. The kinetic energy method of calculating rainfall erosivity was also correlated to soil loss (Figures 3 and 6). This indicates that they all can be used to estimate rainfall erosivity in cases where only daily rainfall amount is available (no gauged rainfall intensity). Moreover, predictability of each index from rainfall variables such as average monthly rainfall, average maximum daily rainfall and number of days with a daily rainfall of at least 0.1 cm indicated their relative degree of reliability to be used for estimating rainfall erosivity. In this regard, the amount-intensity method and the kinetic energy method were better correlated to these rainfall variables than the power type equation. However, the seasonal aspect of rainfall and hence rainfall erosivity was more consistently revealed by the power type equation and the amount-intensity method than the kinetic energy method. Therefore, use of the amount-intensity method under Haramaaya and Harar conditions has a dual purpose of accounting for the seasonality variability of rainfall erosivity (the most erosive early rains) and reasonably estimating rainfall erosivity from daily rainfall amount.

Daily and monthly erosivity values correlated with daily and monthly rain amount, respectively (Hof, 1975), and hence the estimation of storm erosivity from daily rainfall amount is conceptually rational. Rainfall amount is one of the basic variables correlated to major erosive

agents, raindrop impact and surface runoff (Foster et al., 1981). One of the practical significances of the power type equation in deriving rainfall erosivity from daily rainfall amount is that the seasonality aspect of rainfall across the year is taken in to account by splitting the temperature regime into cool and warm seasons. Richardson et al (1982) have found that warm season rains tended to be more intense and hence more erosive than cold season rains. In Hararghe Highlands (Haramaaya and Harar stations), the first rains during the warm season that occur in sufficient amount (April) are the most erosive ones (Tables 7 and 8). This aspect of rainfall erosivity in the region was reconfirmed by the other two methods employed in the current study (Tables 9-12). Although it was argued (Foster et al., 1981; Wischmeier and Smith, 1958) that rainfall amount alone is a poor erosivity factor, the current study revealed the possibility of using daily rainfall amount as a basis for estimating rainfall erosivity which is in line with the suggestion of Richardson et al. (1982)

Rainfall erosivity is a function of the integrated effects of the kinetic energy contained in the raindrops hitting the soil and the erosive power of the runoff that is generated (Pauwelyn et al, 1988). Like previous studies (Pauwelyn et al, 1988; Bols, 1979) the erosive power of runoff was not considered in the current study because in the tropics the kinetic energy of storms is high enough to detach sufficient soil to saturate runoff with sediments (Bols, 1979) That means runoff itself depends on the amount and intensity of rainfall (Pauwelyn et al., 1988) and the detachment of soil particles is primarily related to the kinetic energy of a storm.

Bergma (1981) suggested that for intensive tropical rainfall the amount-intensity index is better than other indices such as Wischmeier's rainfall erosion index and the $KE > 1$ in predicting soil loss. Lal (1977) showed that both $KE > 1$ and Wischmeier's rainfall erosion index are less effective than the amount-intensity index in predicting soil loss. According to this study, an erosivity index that takes into account rainfall amount and intensity is more applicable than others (Foster et al., 1981) In line with this, approximation of the 7.5 minutes intensity by the maximum 30 minutes intensity allows reasonable estimation of erosivity

where detailed rainfall data are lacking like those of the Hararghe Highlands

Total storm energy is believed to be almost directly proportional to rainfall amount (Foster et al., 1981). Pauwely et al. (1988) have suggested that the total kinetic energy method of calculating erosivity provides a satisfactory basis for development of physically based models. In terms of erosion mechanics, the splashing and detaching effects of raindrops on soil particles has its root cause in the kinetic energy of raindrops. Soil particle detachment on interrill areas is primarily caused by raindrop impact (Watung et al., 1996). Once the soil particles are detached, whether transported off the field or remained in situ, the detached soil particles are readily available for transport and this represents hazard of erosion (Krauer, 1988). Poesen (1981) have reconfirmed that there is a positive relationship between kinetic energy of raindrops and the splashed material. Using rainfall simulation studies Young and Wiersma (1973) have shown that splash detachment is exponentially related to rainfall kinetic energy in which decreasing the kinetic energy of the impacting raindrops has significantly reduced interrill erosion. The use of erosivity indices that are based on the kinetic energy of raindrops has the advantage of depicting the potential hazard of raindrops in detaching soil particles that is a prerequisite in the occurrence of soil erosion.

Krauer (1988) has reported annual average erosivity of 300.38 $\text{Jcmm}^{-2}\text{h}^{-1}$ for Haramaaya and 201.89 $\text{Jcmm}^{-2}\text{h}^{-1}$ for Harar, which were calculated according to Wischmeier and Smith (1958). The exponential method showed good seasonal indication of the erosivity in which the most erosive rains occur during the months of April and March (Tables 1 and 4) both at Haramaaya and Harar. This has implication for the timing and prioritization of conservation practices to offset or minimize erosion hazard. The amount-intensity method showed almost similar trend to the exponential method (Table 2 and 5). The kinetic energy method was relatively inconsistent in indicating the temporal aspect of erosivity though its predictability from variables like average monthly rainfall, number of days with at least 0.1 cm rainfall per month and average daily maximum rainfall in the months was better than the

exponential method. Generally, the amount-intensity method was the best predictive method with reasonable indication of the temporal danger of erosion that would be valuable in timing and tillage practice versus conservation practices in minimizing erosion hazard

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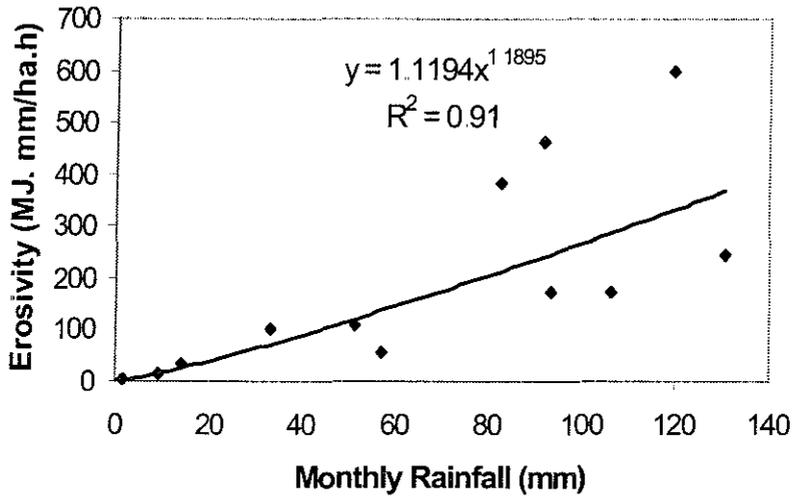


Figure 1. The relationship between average calculated erosivity and monthly rainfall using the power type equation for Haramaya (averaged over nine years).

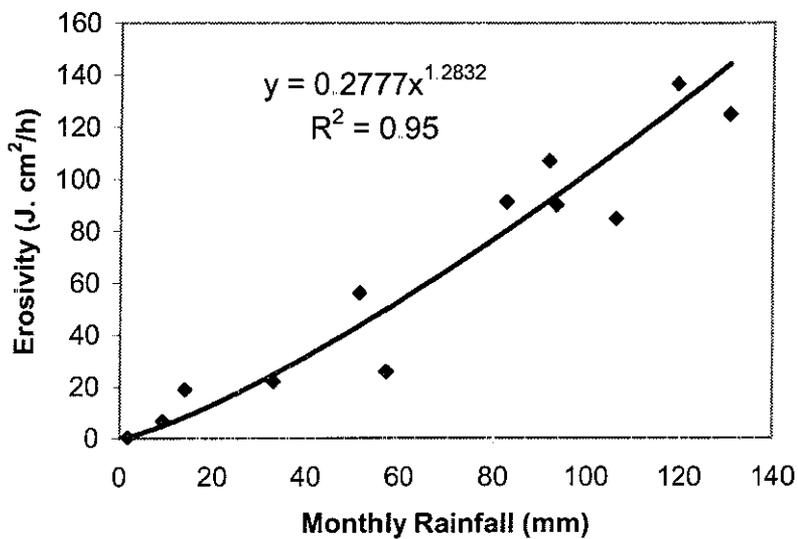


Figure 2. The relationship between average calculated erosivity and monthly rainfall using the amount-intensity method for Haramaaya (averaged over nine years).

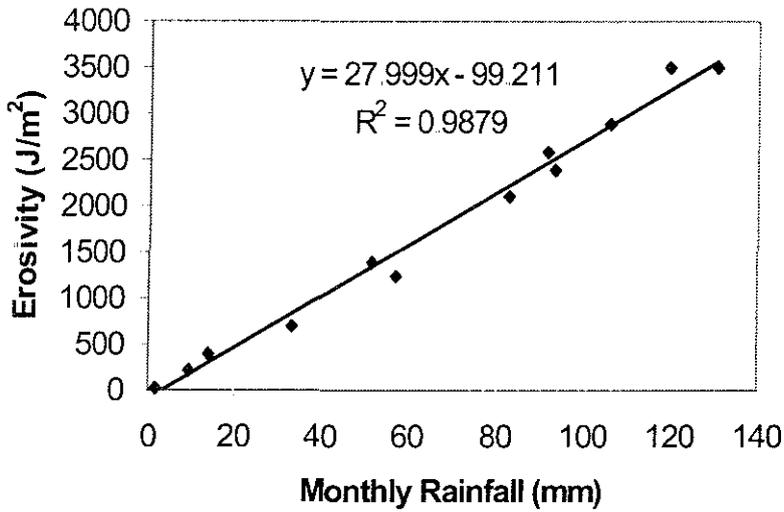


Figure 3. The relationship between average calculated erosivity and monthly rainfall using the kinetic energy method for Haramaaya (averaged over nine years).

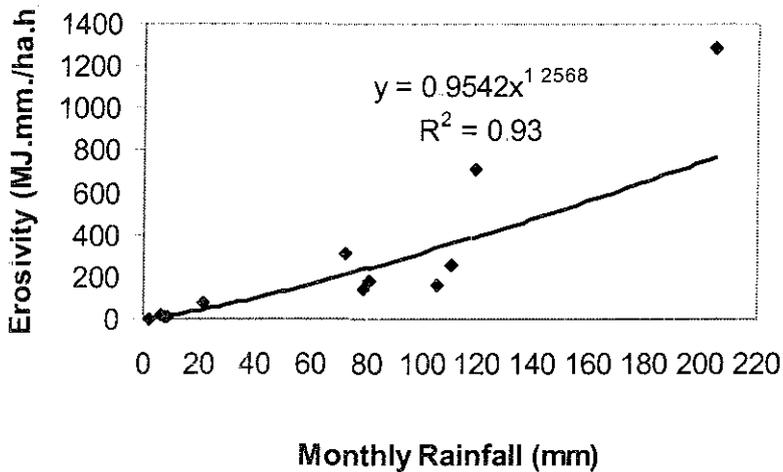


Figure 4. The relationship between average calculated erosivity and monthly rainfall using the power type equation for Harar (averaged over eight years).

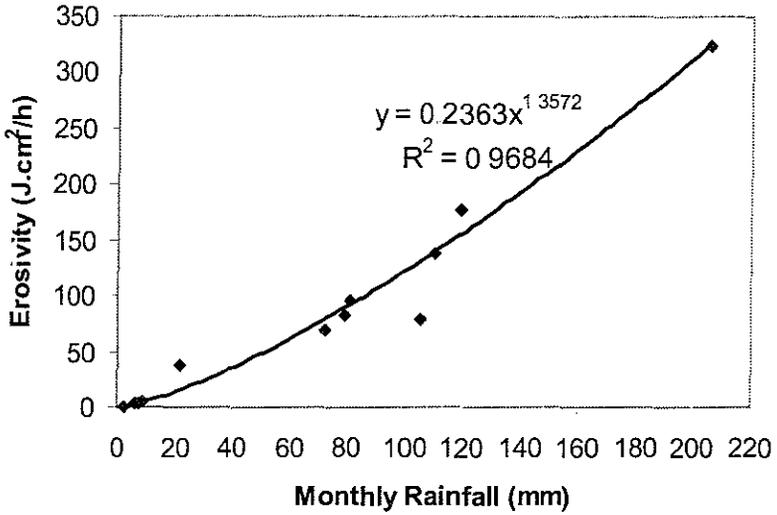


Figure 5. The relationship between average calculated erosivity and monthly rainfall using the amount intensity method for Harar (averaged over eight years).

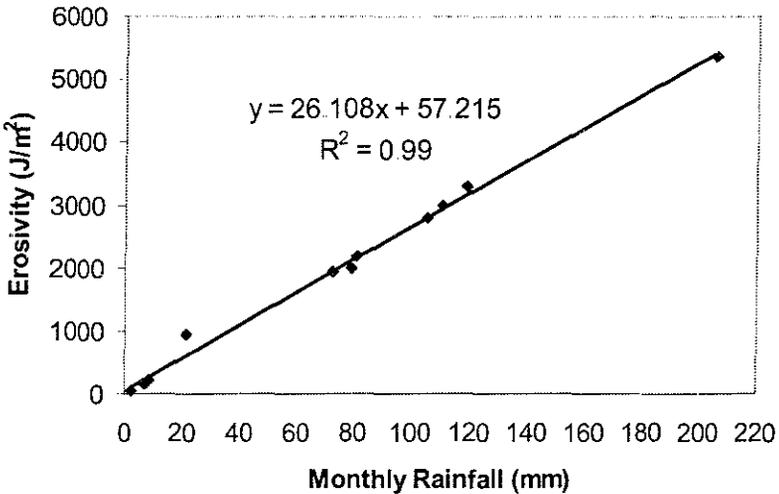


Figure 6. The relationship between average calculated erosivity and monthly rainfall using the kinetic energy method for Harar (averaged over eight years)

Table 1. Monthly erosivity (MJ.mm/ha.h) as calculated using the power type equation at Haramaaya

Months	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1997
J	0.00	0.00	0.00	14.63	0.00	1.07	0.00	2.43	0.00
F	0.00	227.72	8.41	126.63	24.96	198.96	304.91	16.16	0.00
M	130.42	32.46	1452.08	84.02	676.01	179.08	609.89	32.15	255.12
A	987.68	739.60	675.48	962.32	445.01	778.45	148.74	273.42	382.59
M	291.27	597.35	1308.09	101.44	338.27	272.59	109.40	180.23	969.55
J	29.75	91.87	32.12	51.10	62.15	67.65	29.87	93.48	59.73
J	107.07	146.93	146.27	112.49	168.22	99.71	300.12	80.44	396.23
A	103.05	337.49	146.92	610.94	208.47	281.11	142.63	164.20	194.86
S	89.31	112.68	152.68	217.07	118.55	226.36	348.70	237.63	61.18
O	4.15	71.26	60.04	88.33	58.26	92.59	28.26	49.89	513.56
N	4.76	2.69	1.09	0.00	0.85	0.00	0.00	4.52	107.30
D	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.34	128.54	6.09	147.54	0.00	27.52

Table 2. Monthly erosivity (J.cm²/h) as calculated using the Amount-Intensity Index at Haramaaya

Months	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1997
J	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.46	0.00	0.15	0.00	0.33	0.00
F	0.00	48.65	1.31	25.44	4.51	41.32	73.68	2.75	0.00
M	26.01	5.72	387.69	16.61	149.88	39.09	137.30	5.65	52.95
A	229.54	168.58	152.36	235.43	96.24	184.34	27.30	56.53	78.26
M	61.41	144.12	300.01	21.45	76.19	62.95	19.84	36.24	241.05
J	12.80	41.40	14.16	21.73	28.64	30.53	13.49	43.70	25.93
J	49.78	78.10	78.42	49.79	82.05	46.68	171.54	35.01	218.88
A	45.94	177.96	67.17	349.19	99.19	139.94	66.18	78.26	101.07
S	35.03	50.63	71.13	98.18	53.91	114.89	185.11	127.05	27.03
O	1.46	36.80	30.96	46.62	27.08	44.79	12.37	23.60	281.72
N	1.89	0.96	0.37	0.00	0.26	0.00	0.00	1.58	54.29
D	0	0.00	0.00	1.71	70.61	2.49	82.00	0.00	13.17

Table 3. Monthly erosivity (J/m^2) as calculated using the kinetic energy method at Haramaaya

Months	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1997
J	0.00	0.00	0.00	208.58	0.00	20.26	0.00	45.95	0.00
F	0.00	1680.5	135.4	1115.0	300.9	1546.3	1354.1	223.1	0.0
M	1180.32	416.3	4936.3	781.4	4275.7	1175.5	3722.8	416.7	2047.3
A	5125.40	4209.6	4045.7	4188.1	3081.2	3650.7	1725.0	2216.2	3216.9
M	2191.46	2914.6	6959.0	750.6	1922.8	1501.6	1306.6	1594.3	4169.6
J	722.74	1969.6	730.1	1285.0	1236.3	1419.3	628.5	1765.8	1415.4
J	2109.52	1730.5	1650.5	2529.8	2728.9	1930.9	2885.5	1894.2	4073.9
A	2267.60	4349.0	2963.4	5707.4	3724.5	4315.4	2740.0	2908.7	2547.7
S	1780.73	2418.5	2913.4	4515.8	2460.8	3362.7	4290.1	2823.7	1395.0
O	154.25	910.8	754.2	1045.7	1106.4	1497.2	652.0	909.1	5396.6
N	142.81	98.6	42.2	0.0	37.9	0.0	0.0	169.2	1509.0
D	0.00	0.0	0.0	132.4	1281.9	171.1	1429.8	0.0	462.1

Table 4. Monthly erosivity (MJ.mm/ha.h) as calculated using the power type equation at Harar

Months	1985	1986	1987	1990	1994	1995	1996	1997
J	6.49	0.00	7.55	0.21	0.00	0.00	11.03	0.00
F	0.00	53.44	0.00	6.70	0.00	86.75	2.00	0.00
M	255.33	2.46	332.93	709.26	69.17	621.97	290.05	216.46
A	1137.87	1521.80	675.48	1226.33	2280.70	2903.15	361.84	194.12
M	41.79	505.52	2719.52	31.89	888.90	109.19	1169.23	220.35
J	91.51	360.09	25.29	34.98	134.80	134.02	549.67	118.20
J	166.91	23.82	25.53	125.44	947.18	176.76	184.06	380.68
A	108.20	102.00	224.83	127.82	93.20	154.08	278.68	206.96
S	36.12	62.06	110.71	163.69	132.58	21.64	617.02	82.47
O	31.75	0.43	3.86	223.54	1.74	1.65	0.00	316.17
N	6.99	0.25	1.31	1.00	26.29	0.00	6.28	15.62
D	0.00	0.00	0.00	47.30	0.00	21.56	0.00	12.91

Table 5. Monthly erosivity ($J \cdot cm^2/h$) as calculated using the Amount-Intensity Index at Harar

Months	1985	1986	1987	1990	1994	1995	1996	1997
J	1.07	0.00	1.27	0.02	0.00	0.00	1.77	0.00
F	0.00	10.54	0.00	1.08	0.00	18.01	0.29	0.00
M	53.12	0.35	71.69	163.22	14.68	145.36	61.84	45.99
A	271.20	368.60	152.36	292.11	630.49	759.43	80.70	39.78
M	7.43	116.74	700.52	5.52	219.65	32.04	289.45	42.04
J	47.62	188.51	10.81	14.85	70.96	70.53	311.20	54.08
J	82.37	10.19	11.04	61.12	547.75	86.37	88.98	214.31
A	50.31	46.86	104.03	60.56	41.79	71.74	133.67	118.61
S	15.08	28.93	49.03	79.34	70.60	8.04	362.46	40.97
O	14.08	0.12	1.45	117.46	0.62	0.59	0.00	167.84
N	2.72	0.07	0.46	0.33	12.52	0.00	2.41	6.58
D	0.00	0.00	0.00	22.39	0.00	8.82	0.00	5.71

Table 6. Monthly erosivity (J/m^2) as calculated using the kinetic energy method at Harar

Months	1985	1986	1987	1990	1994	1995	1996	1997
J	95.02	0.00	107.28	5.46	0.00	0.00	169.43	0.00
F	0.00	498.98	0.00	103.34	0.00	679.47	35.09	0.00
M	2006.19	45.48	2422.98	3795.85	489.69	3134.74	2085.98	1591.49
A	5417.83	7099.54	4045.96	5951.18	6356.67	10032.2	2327.06	1600.44
M	524.74	2734.58	10262.1	424.59	3485.93	1636.66	4890.75	2284.52
J	1138.42	4309.94	628.43	885.84	1559.31	1553.34	5068.48	2394.02
J	2759.23	587.86	613.11	2076.77	8114.44	2926.30	3094.46	3680.09
A	2087.88	2028.77	4340.35	2315.81	2001.53	2905.69	4765.38	1834.40
S	955.16	1200.10	2508.96	2711.37	1599.97	739.02	5034.23	1287.62
O	709.56	20.39	130.04	2675.72	63.14	60.40	0.00	3797.35
N	218.58	11.65	49.83	40.47	449.77	0.00	203.27	403.45
D	0.00	0.00	0.00	842.60	0.00	601.15	0.00	288.60

Table 7. Regression parameters for calculated and estimated rainfall erosivity using the exponential index at Haramaya

Parameters	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1997
R ²	0.94	0.81	0.87	0.80	0.76	0.56	0.75	0.80	0.68
A	-34.71	-55.95	-156.73	-0.76	-58.43	-57.92	-32.55	-8.06	-51.39
B	233.59	4.24	195.79	288.70	-61.65	33.37	23.30	-11.33	104.19
C	-129.01	42.74	-35.56	-175.40	124.42	-4.70	28.47	36.84	22.25
D	0.98	7.71	4.60	-3.24	4.30	8.55	4.42	4.21	-13.87
SE	80.86	125.78	224.76	151.43	117.42	166.31	106.20	50.31	189.43

A = the intercept;

B = coefficient for the average total monthly rainfall;

C = coefficient for the number of days with rainfall at least 0.1 cm

D = coefficient for the maximum daily rainfall

Table 8. Regression parameters for calculated and estimated rainfall erosivity using the exponential method at Harar

Parameters	1985	1986	1987	1990	1994	1995	1996	1997
R ²	0.87	0.86	0.92	0.88	0.88	0.90	0.76	0.87
A	-83.00	-88.19	-294.69	-5.27	-109.07	-234.83	-30.77	-10.06
B	177.30	143.12	-101.20	305.11	22.22	256.35	5.18	60.62
C	24.98	-27.98	43.60	-54.28	-53.47	-24.96	-0.55	-2.38
D	-7.18	6.85	39.48	-15.62	23.74	0.99	12.54	2.00
SE	133.69	190.95	265.58	151.35	275.63	301.41	202.66	54.50

A = the intercept;

B = coefficient for the average total monthly rainfall;

C = coefficient for the number of days with rainfall at least 0.1 cm;

D = coefficient for the maximum daily rainfall.

Table 9. Regression parameters for calculated and estimated rainfall erosivity using the Lal index at Haramaaya

Parameters	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1997
R ²	0.97	0.93	0.93	0.99	0.94	0.88	0.94	0.94	0.86
A	-5.46	-18.23	-31.48	-21.84	-13.28	-10.89	-23.26	-14.82	-23.41
B	54.75	16.35	45.72	93.27	6.68	30.64	16.32	25.19	41.23
C	-20.90	1.79	-9.81	-53.68	9.71	-3.60	0.84	-10.46	9.91
D	-0.86	1.86	1.70	0.09	1.58	0.57	2.21	1.67	-7.47
SE	13.18	20.95	40.54	15.09	13.63	24.04	18.88	11.34	44.40

A = the intercept;

B = coefficient for the average total monthly rainfall;

C = coefficient for the number of days with rainfall at least 0.1 cm;

D = coefficient for the maximum daily rainfall.

Table 10. Regression parameters for calculated and estimated rainfall erosivity using the Lal method at Harar

Parameters	1985	1986	1987	1990	1994	1995	1996	1997
R ²	0.93	0.97	0.91	0.94	0.97	0.93	0.94	0.91
A	-19.17	-13.27	-65.73	-13.94	-19.92	-56.20	-27.05	-34.81
B	36.71	48.61	-4.31	46.79	61.85	64.14	6.80	7.39
C	4.64	0.056	8.35	-5.40	-15.27	-2.16	-0.01	5.46
D	-0.50	-0.85	7.41	-0.47	2.63	0.16	4.83	3.00
SE	23.10	24.25	69.08	24.35	48.11	66.06	38.57	24.39

A = the intercept;

B = coefficient for the average total monthly rainfall;

C = coefficient for the number of days with rainfall at least 0.1 cm;

D = coefficient for the maximum daily rainfall.

Table 11. regression parameters for calculated and estimated rainfall erosivity using the KE Rmethod at Haramaaya

Parameters	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1997
R ²	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99
A	-17.47	-95.60	-79.13	-83.35	-107.12	-46.73	-93.47	-68.33	-92.51
B	912.07	783.13	874.66	934.39	636.07	732.218	690.88	791.06	768.54
C	-53.62	1.07	-7.72	-104.31	137.83	72.48	84.24	-18.86	107.89
D	-8.63	4.91	-1.16	0.07	7.45	0.91	6.05	0.46	-33.26
SE	51.61	116.74	120.63	81.54	123.42	97.03	85.32	59.76	166.57

A = the intercept;

B = coefficient for the average total monthly rainfall;

C = coefficient for the number of days with rainfall at least 0.1 cm;

D = coefficient for the maximum daily rainfall

Table 12. Regression parameters for calculated and estimated rainfall erosivity using the KE method at Harar

Parameters	1985	1986	1987	1990	1994	1995	1996	1997
R ²	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	1.00	0.99	0.99	0.99
A	-45.72	-54.34	-179.20	-104.82	53.69	-124.56	-43.88	-117.45
B	788.65	885.00	739.93	794.43	969.29	818.24	859.29	790.96
C	68.80	0.48	44.92	-15.40	-35.66	20.39	-0.24	19.11
D	-6.22	-4.14	12.93	7.49	-5.36	3.00	-1.06	4.05
SE	168.65	80.81	176.61	105.00	60.42	136.03	104.41	132.73

A = the intercept;

B = coefficient for the average total monthly rainfall;

C = coefficient for the number of days with rainfall at least 0.1 cm;

D = coefficient for the maximum daily rainfall.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO ENHANCE IMPROVED MAIZE TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION IN OROMIA? SOME STRATEGY OPTIONS

Bedassa Tadesse

Abstract: This paper presents an empirical evaluation of some key institutional and household determinants of small-scale farmer's decision to adopt a high yielding maize variety package (High Yielding Variety-HYV¹ maize seeds, fertilizers, and planting methods) in Oromia. Comparative effectiveness of several strategy options that can be used to enhance the adoption of the package among currently non-adopter farmers are also provided. The results of the study indicate that institutional services such as the intensity of agricultural extension contacts, the diversity of information channels, and the physical accessibility of service centers to farmers are important determinants of farmers' decisions to adoption improved maize seeds. The implication of the study is that enhanced productivity gains through the accumulation of better human and physical capital among millions of farmers in Oromia that cultivate maize at large depends on the ability of the government to have a will and vision to use different strategies identified in this and related studies and the resources at hand in an integrated way.

I. Introduction

Oromia has abundant natural resources highly suitable for the cultivation of a wide variety of crops and livestock. However, for most farmers in the region, daily life is filled with poverty and unjust governance, educational opportunities are scanty, and economic activities are mostly for surviving just a day. An important feature of development in the region is that land and capital markets are underdeveloped. Means

of asset accumulation is limited. Labor markets are thin. Yet substantial part of Ethiopia's food grain production and foreign export earnings originate from Oromia- a region where more than 90 percent of cereals, pulses, and oilseeds is cultivated by resource poor, small-scale farmers.

Maize is one of the three main (Teff, Maize, and Wheat) staple food crops and the fourth most widely cultivated crop in Oromia. In 1998, Maize covered 577,450 hectares or 22.65 percent of the area under cereal crops (CSA, 1998). About 90 percent of this maize area is sown with a traditional variety seeds. The annual output is about 1.22 million metric tones, and average productivity is around 21.2 quintals per hectare. Currently, the production of maize accounts about 33 percent of the total cereal output in Oromia. Second to wheat, maize is the other most productive crop (CSA, 1998) in the region. Nevertheless, the productivity is largely sub-optimal.

Although the cultivation of Maize provides livelihood to a significant proportion of farmers, both as a source of employment and income, Maize farms in Oromia, as elsewhere in Ethiopia, are generally constrained by low yield and lack of productivity augmenting inputs such as high yielding variety seeds and fertilizers (Belete, et al; 1991). Poor extension services, shortage of traction power (Seyoum, et al; 1998), and declining fertility of farmlands (Omiti, et al; 1999) are also among the main problems of maize farmers. Changing the livelihood of these farmers for better would require a substantial productivity growth that involve giving farmers appropriate extension messages and complementary institutional arrangements (Howard, et al; 1999) by the regional government that taxes these farmers in the name the public at large.

Based on this premise the different regimes (including the current one) that ruled the country over the last three and half decades have devised several agricultural extension programs: the Minimum and Maximum Package Programs (MPP) in the 1970s, the Training and Visit (T and V) programs in the 1980s; the Sasakawa-Global (SG)-2000 program in the early 1990s and a more vigorously defined New Extension Package Program (NEPP) as of the 1995. Although the extent to which these programs served the interest of the farmers is least

known at best, in principle, all the programs involved the distribution of modern inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds and related technology packages.

A series of distortions in the design and the arrangement of the complementary financial, manpower, and institutional services have been noticed in the implementation of these programs, particularly in Oromia (Howard, et al; 1999). Despite this, there is a widely held belief that these program(s) have touched the life of a larger number of the small-scale, resource poor farmers in the region one way or the other. Yet, no well-defined and effective institutional strategies drawn from the achievements of these programs are available for the regional government to enhance the adoption of productivity augmenting packages among these farmers.

Some empirical studies that shed light on the technology adoption practices in Oromia are available. These include Croppenstedt and Demeke (1996), Yirga, et al (1996); Mekuria (1995); and Ayana (1985). Waktola (1980) in Chilaloo area has also studied some demand setting factors. Using the exploratory survey method, Beyene and Hussien (1986), also report some determinants of the adoption of agricultural technologies in Walmaraa area of Western Shoa. Nevertheless, comprehensive analysis of the adoption of modern maize farming technologies is almost non-existent. For example, none of the above studies provide specific strategies that could be used by the regional government to enhance the adoption of the technology package, particularly among the currently non-adopter farmers. A government committed to improving the livelihood of the farmers it taxes in general and the economy in particular, however, is bound to look for factors and strategy options that increase the adoption of modern farming technologies.

II. Research Goal and Methodology

The main trust of the paper is two fold. First, the paper identifies key factors that influence farmers' preferences to adopt or not to adopt the HYV maize technology package, and draws implications for policy

and further research. Second, by making use of the key factors identified, a series of strategy options that can be used to enhance the adoption of the package by farmers who are currently non-adopters are defined and evaluated. These strategy options may provide an important insight on the need to strengthen institutional services and market opportunities for serving the interest of the public at large.

The study utilizes field data collected² from a sample of 748 maize producing farms randomly selected from four zones, eight districts, and 15 peasant associations in the Western major maize-growing belts, namely Jimmaa, Iluu-Abbaa Boor, Eastern and Western Wallagaa zones of the Oromia administration.

The analysis is based on the following assumptions. As an integral part of their effort to maximize utility from their farming operation, farmers make choices between adopting (U_1) and not adopting (U_0) a technology package. Besides several institutional factors at play, this decision is assumed to depend on farmers' knowledge about the package and its performance under their farm management. Crop insurance is not available and farmers are highly resource poor. Trying or adopting a new technology package is, therefore, considered costly and risky. The high yielding variety maize seeds in study are not available in the free market. Therefore, not all farmers have equal access to the technology. Also, it is assumed that all farmers face uncertainty in the production environment and insecurity of land contracts that would act against their decisions to accept the package.

A farmer (Y_i) is considered an adopter³ of the technology, if he/she is cultivating the HYV maize seeds, on at least 0.5 hectares of land, in rows, and has applied fertilizer that comes as a package. The response, Y_i is recorded as 1, if the status of the farmer conforms to the definition above, and 0 otherwise. Not all farmers who want to adopt the technology will get the chance to do so because of the administrative rationing and the definition above. Therefore, some of the response data are left censored.

A vector of explanatory variables believed to influence farmers' adoption decision is defined to include a series of demographic factors

(X_{1i}), socio-economic variables (X_{2i}), labor arrangements (X_{3i}), institutional services and accessibility factors (X_{4i}) These factors influence a farmer's movement on the ladder of learning, and ultimately the critical decision to accept or to reject the technology. Following Amemiya (1981) and Nkmalu and Adesina (2000), a utility maximizing farmer i will adopt the package only if his/her net benefit from adopting (U_{1i}) the technology surpasses his/her benefit from not adopting (U_{0i}) the technology. Therefore, the probability (P) of a farmer i being an adopter is given as,

$$E(Y_i=1 | X_i) = P_i(Y_i=0) = F(\beta'X_i + \Phi\epsilon_i) \quad (1)$$

Where, X_i is a vector of supply and demand setting factors under which a farmer operates and makes the choice of the technology, β is an unknown parameter vector to be estimated, and Φ is the cumulative distribution function (CDF) for the vector of random error, ϵ_i . Once the unknown parameters are estimated, by using variables that have significant impact on the farmer's decision to adopt the package, several strategy options are defined. Each strategy is designed to alter specific characteristics of the currently non-adopter farmer. Let Δ be the strategy defined on one of the exogenous variable, X_{1i} . Then, keeping other (X_{ji}) characteristics of a non-adopter farmer and that of adopter farmers constant, the effect of using this specific option in enhancing the likelihood of adoption by the currently non-adopter farmer i is obtained as:

$$P_i = [\beta(X_{1i} + \Delta X_{1i})] (\beta Z_j) \quad (2)$$

Where, $Z_j = X_{ji}$ for all other J variables different from X_{1i} and Δ is the particular strategy under consideration targeting the farmer for whom $P_i \pm 0.05$ or $Y_i = 0$. The difference $P_{1i} - P_i$ shows the increment in the likelihood of the adoption of the technology by farmer i attributed to the strategy). Finally, the effects of each of the alternative strategies to enhance the adoption of the package among the target farmers are compared using a simple mean test.

III. Results

3.1) Descriptive Characteristics of Farmers in the Study Area

The variables included in the model and their descriptive characteristics computed from the field data are presented in Table 2. Perusals of the descriptive statistics on the demographic characteristics of farmers in the study indicate that on average, a typical maize farmer in the area is 44 years old; and the average household size is about 7 persons. Two adult males, two adult females, and three children (under 14 years of age) comprise such a household. When these features are compared by adoption status of farmers, users of HYV maize technologies are relatively younger; and less experienced, specifically in operating own farms. They have lower mean index of resistance to change (0.455) than non-adopters. Adopters have larger family sizes, more children, and more adult males and females. The dependency ratio, however, does not differ between the groups.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of the Variables by Adoption Category

Variables	Non- Adopters (N= 127)	Adopters (N=621)	Total Sample (N=748)
Demographics:			
Education of household head (school years)	1.58(2.80)	2.88(3.43)	2.66(3.37)
Age of the household head (in years)	44.70 (13.83)	43.48(14.11)	43.69(14.06)
Farming experience (in years)	29.43(14.78)	27.82(13.81)	28.09(13.98)
Farming experience on own farm (in years)	23.40(13.26)	21.58(13.19)	21.89(13.21)
Index of resistance to change	0.489(.184)	0.455(.176)	0.461(.178)
Family size (numbers)	6.33(2.68)	7.62(3.21)	7.40(3.16)
Children under 14 years of age	2.76(1.89)	3.41(2.16)	3.30(2.13)
Adult male (15-60 years)	1.67(1.02)	2.02(1.25)	1.96(1.22)
Adult female (15-60 years)	1.66(1.11)	1.99(1.21)	1.93(1.20)

What Should Be Done to Enhance Improved Maize Technology

Resources:

Livestock owned in tropical livestock units (tlu)	3.13(2.94)	5.18(4.20)	4.84(4.09)
Total farm size (hectares)	1.93(1.41)	2.58(1.71)	2.48(1.68)
Arable cultivated area owned (hectares)	1.66(1.09)	2.12(11.31)	1.96(1.32)
Enough draught animal power for farm operation	33.10	50.40	47.50

Markets and Experiences:

Hired seasonal labor	26.00	34.30	32.90
Hired permanent labor	3.10	8.10	7.20
Received credit from formal sources	25.20	96.30	84.20
Had problems in getting credit	37.80	30.90	32.10
Used improved farm implements	2.40	10.10	8.80
Farm fields require fertilizer	81.10	95.2	92.80
Applied chemical fertilizers on maize fields	48.0	96.50	88.20

Institutions:

Index of physical accessibility	55.91(498)	32.21(467)	36.23(481)
Observed demonstration plots	17.30	28.20	26.30
Had on farm training in HYV maize Production	9.40	22.50	20.30
Total number of extension contacts	1.51(3.71)	3.36(2.69)	2.97(3.352)
Have radio & listens agricultural education program	22.80	34.30	32.40

Source: Authors computation from the field data

Figures in brackets are standard deviations unless otherwise indicated;

Figures for discrete variables are in percentages

Adopters operate relatively larger farm sizes (2.58 ha), have more arable area (2.12 ha) of land, and maintain more livestock (5.2 units comprising at least a pair of oxen). Half of them (50.8 percent) expressed that their draught animal power is adequate for their farm operation. Thus adopters tend to be better resource endowed. In terms of the access to and the utilization of institutional services⁴, credit service was made available by almost all adopters. Only 25.2 percent of non-adopters received credit services for the purchase of farm inputs

About 38 percent of non-adopters and 31 percent of adopters indicated that they faced one or more problems in getting access to the service.

The mean index of information diversity among adopter farmers is 2.768. When the index is decomposed into its components, farmers who observed demonstration plots account 28.2 percent for adopters and 17.3 percent of non-adopters. Among adopters, about 23 percent of the farmers had a formal training on improved maize production; among the non-adopters, they are less than 10 percent. About 34.3 percent of adopters and 22.8 percent of the non-adopters followed agricultural extension programs over the national radio.

On the average, a farmer in the study area had three different on-farm contacts a year with agricultural extension agent(s). The intensity of extension contact is higher among adopters than non-adopters. That is, adopters received more extension contacts than the non-adopters.

Seasonal labor hiring experience for farm operation is relatively more common among adopters (34.3 percent) than non-adopters (26 percent). The use of permanent labor is not widely observed in either of the groups. Over all, larger proportion of adopters (38 percent) had the experience of hiring seasonal or permanent labor for their farm operation. Only 28 percent of the non-adopters have the same experience.

Educational attainment is generally low in the area. But there exist wide differences between the groups. Adopters attended about three years of schooling. Non-adopters on the other hand attended less than two years of schooling.

Variations in the use of complementary inputs such as fertilizers and improved farm implements also exist between the groups. Although about 93 percent of the farmers in the area expressed that their farm fields required fertilizers, only 48 percent of the non-adopters have used chemical fertilizers. About 97 percent of the adopters have used chemical fertilizers. The use of improved farm implements is generally uncommon. Less than nine percent of all farmers used any sort of improved farm implements.

3.2.) Determinants HYV-Maize Seeds Adoption: Results from the Empirical Model

Maximum likelihood estimates of the parameters and the respective marginal effects of each of the variables in the model on the adoption of the HYV maize technology package are provided in Table 2. With a highly significant ($p < 0.001$) χ^2 values of 164.05, the model achieved more than 78 percent correct prediction. The model indicates that intensity of agricultural extension contacts, diversity of information channels, and physical accessibility of farmers to service centers play significant roles in enhancing the adoption of maize technology package. A brief description of the results on each of the variables in the model is provided on page 164.

Table 2: Maximum Likelihood Estimates of the Coefficients of the Variables from a Probit Model with Sample Selection, Western Maize Growing Belts of Ormia.

Variables	Coefficients	Partial Effects
Age (in years)	-0.9945E-03(0.6926E-02)	-0.1675E-03(0.1165E-02)
Level of education (school years)	0.0467 (0.0266) *	0.0078 (0.0045) **
Resistance to change (Index)	-1.3194 (0.5475) ***	-0.2222 (0.0934) ***
Extension intensity (Number of contacts)	0.0720 (0.0229) ***	0.0112 (0.0039) ***
Information diversity (Index)	0.4109(0.0937) ***	0.0692 (0.0156) ***
Physical access (D)	-0.5054 (0.1383) ***	-0.0851(0.0233) ***
Total farm size (ha)	0.0990 (0.0525) **	0.0167 (0.0087) **
Livestock (TLU)	0.0704 (0.0251) ***	0.0118 (0.0041) ***
Labor force	0.0884 (0.0388) **	0.0148 (0.0066) **
Seasonal (SPHL) labor hiring (D)	0.4426 (0.1724) ***	0.0745 (0.0287) ***
Early adoption of fertilizers (D)	0.6018 (0.1823) ***	0.1014 (0.0284) ***
Dependency ratio	0.0046 (0.0791)	0.785E-03(0.0133)
Regional dummy	-0.8220 (0.1617) ***	-0.1384 (0.0273) ***
Maize farm land tenure (D)	-0.0929 (0.1687)	-0.0156 (0.0284)
Relative area share of maize (%)	0.0206 (0.0392)	0.0035 (0.0066)
Constant (α)	-0.6363 (0.4557)	-0.1071(0.0771)
-2 Log likelihood Ratio	229.04***	
Model χ^2	164.05***	
Degrees of freedom	15	
Percent correct prediction	78.6	
N	700	

Source: Authors computation; Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

***, **, * Denote significance at $P < 0.01$, $P < 0.05$, and $P < 0.10$, respectively. D = Dummy

Forty-eight observations were excluded due to missing observations on one or more of the exogenous variables

3.2.1) Institutional services: All institutional factors considered were significant. They also showed the a priori expected signs. Accordingly, an increase in the intensity of extension services and diversity of information (observation of demonstration plots, on or off-farm training, listening to agricultural education program broadcasts) sources were found to increase the likelihood of adoption of improved maize technology package. Strengthening the existing services at grass root levels is, therefore, important. To this end, the use of complementary and alternative approaches to disseminate information about the technology is imperative. Constraints related with physical inaccessibility to development centers and primary product markets, i.e., infrastructure related problem, pose significant negative impacts on farmers' adoption decision.

3.2.2) Socio-Economic Variables: The coefficients of the socio-economic factors, especially the farm size (hectares) and the livestock units maintained by the farm households, reveal that the probability of adopting HYV maize technology package is an increasing function of the resource endowment base of a household. The variable on denoting the index of resistance to change had a negative and significant coefficient. This would mean that farmer's interest to maintain an already established tradition of farming impede change. In line with the findings of the studies by Negassa et al (1997) and Mekuria (1995), results from the present study also show that the higher the level of education, the higher the likelihood of a farmer to adopt the maize technology package.

3.2.3) Market experiences and regional differences: Farmers that had the financial capacity to hire seasonal/permanent labor were more likely to adopt HYV maize than those that did not have the capacity to employ hired labor. Farmers who applied chemical fertilizers to other crop fields prior to their decision to use HVY maize seeds have a significantly higher likelihood of adopting HYV maize. Yet significant variations exist in the likelihood of adoption among farmers in different zones of the region itself.

3.3 Strategy Options

According to the 1998 central statistical authority annual report, there were 3, 363, 980 households in Oromia cultivating about 3, 149, 730 hectares of land under temporary crops. Maize accounts for 577,450 hectares or about 33 percent of the area cultivated by these households. Based on the results from the present study, about 104, 763 households (16.9 percent) of these maize cultivating small farms have not adopted the HYV maize package. To enable these non-adopter farmers to join their peers and move up the overall productivity frontier, different strategy options are indispensable. What strategy options should be pursued for furthering the adoption of the technology among those farmers that still use low-yielding varieties? And which of the above variables are important to use?

This section identifies some of the possible strategy options that could be pursued. Based on the significance of the variables in the model, the diversity of information, the ability of farmers to employ hired labor, their farm size, and the level of education, and the family labor force composition, total livestock units maintained, and the intensity of extension services lie in a descending order of positive roles. Physical in-accessibility to the development centers followed by the index of resistance to changes, however, had influential counter impacts.

Therefore, for enhancing the adoption of the package among the currently non-adopter farmers, some or all of these characteristics of the farm households may be targeted. However, the effects of these variables may vary widely and thus the potential success rate. Table 3 presents a list of possible strategy options that could be pursued to this end their respective simulated comparative effectiveness in terms of their ability to enhance the likelihood of adoption among the currently non-adopter farmers.

3.3.1) Sole Strategy (SS) Approaches:

By definition, a sole strategy is an approach that targets an improvement in one of the significant variables included in the model. This may include an agent, information, education, a livestock, land

market, accessibility or a labor market based approach. Four these approaches are discussed below.

(a) Agent Approach (SS-I): This strategy involves increasing the intensity of agricultural extension services among currently non-adopter farmers by one more additional on-farm contact from the extension agent. Simulation of the effects of making such a provision to the currently non-adopter farmers indicates an improvement in the likelihood of adoption by an average of five to six percent.

(b) Information Approach (SS-II): This approach would increase the diversity of information sources currently in use by one more unit. This could be made possible either by enabling a farmer to visit one more additional demonstration plot, or other farmer's maize field. Alternatively, increasing a farmer's access to radio-extension education program or on-farm training or a field day could do it. The results in Table 3 show that such an approach would increase the likelihood of adoption on average by 35 to 45 percent.

(c) Education Approach (SS-III): Education is a key to the adoption of the HYV seeds and related technologies or their further intensive use. Therefore, this approach is defined to improve the literacy levels of farmers through primary education. In the model the provision of three additional years of schooling for all farmers who have not completed primary schools and literacy campaign, or adult education program for illiterate farmers (whether currently adopter or non-adopter) is considered. Simulation of the effect of this approach indicates adoption would increase on average by three percent. Although this approach is comparatively least effective, it might be because the approach targets both the adopter and the non-adopter farmers. Moreover, educating farmers has other spill over effects that would contribute to the overall development of the rural sector.

(d) The Livestock Approach (SS-IV): This approach involves the provision of additional livestock unit to the target non-adopter farmer(s). For example, this could be enabling the farmer to buy a pair of oxen, a cow or other livestock units and/or a combination of them. Besides increasing the availability of the traction power, this approach supplements the food supply and income position of the household.

Credit service could be provided to extend this option. With a six percent mean likelihood of enhancing the adoption, this approach is as effective as the agent approach and has more immediate impact than the education approach.

Table 3: Alternative strategy scenarios and their effects on the mean likelihood of adoption of the currently non-adopter farmers.

Strategy Options	Changes in the mean likelihood of adoption
A) Sole(Single) Strategies (SS) options:	
SS-I: Agent approach	0.0577 (0.2354)
SS-II: Information approach	0.3462 (0.3004)
SS-III: Education Approach	0.0192 (0.1387)
SS-IV: Livestock approach	0.0577 (0.2354)
B) Mixed Strategies (MS) options:	
MS-V (I and II)	0.3654 (0.4862)
MS-VI (I and III)	0.0385 (0.1942)
MS-VII (I and IV)	0.1346 (0.3446)
MS-VIII (II and III)	0.3077 (0.4660)
MS- X (II and IV)	0.3654 (0.4862)
MS-XI (III and IV)	0.0577 (0.2354)
MS-XII (I, II and III)	0.3654 (0.4862)
MS-XIII (I, II and IV)	0.4231 (0.3969)
MS-XIV (II, III, IV)	0.3462 (0.4804)
MS-XV (I, III and IV)	0.1346 (0.3446)
MS-XVI (I, II and IV)	0.4423 (0.5015)

Source: Authors computation; Figures in parentheses are standard deviations

Figures are probability estimates only for currently non-adopter farmers. The value in the information approach row -in column II, for example, means ceteris paribus, this particular approach will increase the likelihood of adoption of the package by a currently non-adopter farmer on average by 35 percent.

Among the pure strategy options, the information approach has a significantly larger likelihood of enhancing the adoption of the package among currently non-adopter farmers. The livestock and the agent approach follow this. The education approach has the least impact. Providing farmers access to additional traction power or related complements and an additional contact with the extension agent are quantitatively equally effective.

3.3.2. Mixed Strategy (MS) Approaches:

Mixed strategies are approaches that involve the integration of two or more pure strategy alternatives defined earlier. For instance, by supplementing increased extension intensity with diversified information (MS-V) or with the livestock approach (MS-VII), it is possible to define two different mixed strategy scenarios. Alternatively, the education approach defined for expanding primary education, or literacy campaign could be integrated with the information approach (MS-VI). With a further intensified effort, a scenario that integrates three or more approaches could be defined. A typical example is one in which the agent, the information, and the education approaches (MS- XII) are integrated.

The importance of mixed strategies of this different nature lies with the fact that each of the elements of the strategies may vary from farmer to farmer. For instance, some farmers cite lack of adequate information as a reason for non-adoption. Others indicate shortage of draft animal for land preparation, problem of land tenure, and their inability to process application for getting access to a package. Thus, strategies in which several approaches are integrated may be necessary to deal with these problems. Table 3 also provides estimates of the changes in the mean likelihood of adoption resulting from such mixed strategy options.

Evident from the table, possible mixed strategy options MS-V, MS-X, MS-XII and MS-XIV enhance the likelihood of adoption among the currently non-adopter farmers by 48-50 percent. The first two of these four strategies integrate the agent approach with the information approach (MS-V) and with the livestock approach (MS-X). The last

two combine three different alternatives. Mixed strategy MS-VII in which the information and education approach are combined rank second to the best alternative among the class of these paired strategy options. In MS-XIII, the information, the agent, and the livestock approaches were combined. With a 54 percent likelihood of enhancing the probability of adoption, this strategy produced one of the highest impacts. Integration of all the four pure strategies in MS-XVI enhances the ratio by 57 percent. However, comparison of the effects with that of MS-XIII at $p < 0.05$ shows no significant differences between the two. Evaluation of the other outcomes in a similar fashion also depicts no significant differences between the effects of MS-VII and MS-XV; MS-XI and MS-XV; and SS-I and SS-III

Overall, options that integrate two or more of the other options with the information approach stand consistently more effective. To effectively enhance the adoption of the technology package among currently non-adopter farmers, therefore, it is necessary to use these options.

Apart from the differentials in the impacts, the alternatives, variations in cost effectiveness and regional (agro-ecological) suitability could exist between the options. For example, the impact of a strategy that enables a farmer to visit another farmer's field—using the information approach, may not be as attractive as it is in zones (areas) where there are only a few adopters. Already available infrastructure facilities could also lead to differences in the impact of each of the scenarios. Further research for evaluating the significance of such differences would be helpful in ranking the strategies.

IV. Conclusion and Implications

This study identified some socio-economic factors that determine the adoption of HYV maize technology package in the western maize growing belt of Oromia. The study finds that farmers who adopted the HYV maize and its associated package (row planting and fertilizers application) in Oromia are those that operate on average larger farms, have a larger area of arable land and maintain more livestock. Unlike the non-adopters, most of adopter farmers also feel that their draught

animal power is adequate for their farm operation. Factors especially related with institutional services played key roles in enhancing the HYV maize technology adoption. The physical inaccessibility of farmers to development centers and primary product markets constrained the likelihood of the adoption of the package. Educational achievement in the area is generally at a low level. Nevertheless, the study finds that relatively better educated farmers had higher propensity to grow HYV seeds than farmers with no education.

The study also identified several strategy options that could be pursued by the Oromia government in further enhancing the adoption of the high yielding maize seeds among currently non-adopter farmers that are cultivating low yielding maize seeds. The poor economic conditions of most farmers in the region that are being consistently taxed by the regional government necessitate the need for a wide variety of agricultural development strategies that improve their livelihoods. To this end, the government may commit itself to mobilizing adequate resources for maintaining institutional arrangements that complement the goal. This also means rational allocation of development budget for enhancing the productivity levels of farmers in the region is needed. A sound agricultural development strategy aimed at improving the livelihood of the public at large in the region requires wider dissemination and adoption such technologies. This would raise the productivity and income level of the small-scale farms. To this end, the following factors are important. (i) Better institutional approaches such as intensified extension contacts between the farmer and the agent; provision of information about the technology from diversified sources, (ii) easing resource constraints such as farm land, and traction power, (iii) expanding formal and informal training opportunities, (iii) enhancing education levels, (iv) establishing accessible development centers (v) the development of conducive labor market, and (vi) the integration of information with education and the agent approaches.

In summary, it should be noted that increased adoption of improved technologies, the achievement of enhanced productivity gains, the accumulation of higher human and physical capital; and improvements in the livelihood of millions of farmers in the region

depend on the ability of those concerned with the administration of the region to have a vision and will to use these strategies and the resources at hand in an integrated way.

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NOTES

1. A high yielding maize variety (HYV) is a hybrid maize seed developed at national or international research centers and released for cultivation by farmers along with improved management and protection technologies in different agro-ecologies. Different from other improved seeds, the hybrid variety is not amenable for open pollination. Unlike the traditional maize seeds, production of a hybrid variety seeds under farmers' practices for use as input in the next production cycle is, therefore, imponderable.

2. The data set is part of a nation wide extensive study initiated in 1998. Detailed description of the sampling procedure and data can be obtained from the author upon request.
3. For the purpose of this study, adoption is defined by taking into account the minimum economical area of land (0.5 ha) and the use of recommended agronomic practices (row planting and complementary input that comes as package with the seeds).
4. The importance of these services is centered on their role to create awareness by the farmer about the existence of the technology package, develop right perceptions, and set farmers' interest to try the technology for testing it under their own management practices. This also involves the willingness to change an established tradition of maize farming practices.

THE LIVESTOCK OF OROMIA: AN INDUSTRY IN A NEGATIVE GROWTH

Assefa Regassa Geleta¹

Abstract

Oromia has a huge livestock population and is the original home of four cattle and one sheep breeds. However, the economic benefit obtained by the Oromo people from this potentially immense industry is not commensurate to its size, mainly because of lack of response by the colonial government of Ethiopia to livestock production constraints. Diseases of the various livestock species are rampant all over Oromia and yet control efforts are far below required levels. No sign of improvement has been recorded in the areas of livestock productivity and management practices. At present, nutrition related problems are not only causing decreased productivity, but also claiming lives. Livestock marketing system has not been organised in a way that benefits the producer. The present Ethiopian regime is concentrating its efforts towards maximizing livestock related revenues rather than increasing livestock productivity. As a result, the Government is making considerable economic benefits from the dwindling livestock of Oromia in a form of taxation and exports. Animals and animal products are only second to coffee with regard to foreign exchange earnings. It is, therefore, recommended that an appropriate holistic measure be taken in a direction that benefits the producer and saves the industry from further collapse.

Key words: Oromia, livestock, livestock of Oromia, livestock industry

1. Introduction

Oromia has 22 million cattle, 6 million sheep, 5 million goats, 3 million equine, 1 million camels, and 13 million poultry. Oromia is the original home of the Borana, Horro, Arsi, and Karayu cattle breeds

(Alberto and Haile-mariam, 1982; Anon, 1995) and the Horro sheep breed (Malson, 1988) The Borana cattle breed originates from the Borana region of Oromia. It is widely distributed in the southern part of Oromia and other African countries, such as Kenya and Somalia. Borana is a well-known beef breed and a good milk producer. The Horro breeds of cattle and sheep originate from the Horro area of western Oromia. They occur all over the western part of Oromia The Arsi cattle breed comes from Arsi in central Oromia and it makes the greatest proportion of the cattle in the central part of Oromia The Karayu breed, some times called Raya-Azebo, Gala-Azabo, or Adal, originates from the northeastern part of Oromia and mainly kept by the Karayu and Raya clans of Oromo who live in that part of Oromia

The Oromo are livestock loving people and part of their culture is closely associated with it. This shows the magnitude of the importance of livestock in the lives of the Oromo people. Oromia contains more than 70% of the livestock population of the Ethiopian Empire. Any development plan that does not pay due attention to the livestock is regarded as not to have addressed the basic needs of the Oromo people.

The productivity of the livestock of Oromia is on the decrease as a result of lack of appropriate reaction to the various production constraints for more than a century. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to give a brief account of the existing situation of the livestock of Oromia and prime the attention of the Oromo people and responsible organizations to seek remedies before the condition deteriorates further.

2. The Role of Livestock in the Lives of the Oromo People

As is the case with the rest of the world, livestock is the predominant source of protein for the Oromo people. However, certain particularities of the Oromo people and their life style makes the livestock to be much more important in their lives.

People in much of the southern and northeastern lowland areas of Oromia are mainly nomadic and semi nomadic pastoralists, and their lives totally depend on livestock. Here, livestock is the only source of livelihood.

In the highlands and mid-highlands of Oromia, the people are sedentary, and practice mixed crop-livestock farming system. Crop production entirely depends on oxen originated draught power for land cultivation and to a lesser extent in crop threshing. In many instances, the crop production is not large enough to exceed the consumption of the family due to poor production technology, reduced soil fertility, and inability to afford agricultural inputs. Hence, in areas where cash crops are not grown, livestock is also the dominant source of cash income.

The economic benefits of livestock production in Oromia is not commensurate to its size as a result of the longstanding cumulative effects of livestock production constraints such as health, breeding, nutrition, and marketing. The situation is starkly evident from the widespread destitution and under-nutrition among the Oromo peasant farmers. To the Oromo people, livestock rearing has become a traditional means of earning livelihood, regardless of its economic benefits.

More than 98 % of the livestock in the Ethiopian Empire belong to indigenous breeds, known for their low productivity performances and food production per animal, one of the lowest in the world. The growth of domestic animal-origin food products has always been much slower than the human population growth rate and food has been critically short especially for the last three decades. During the period from 1974 - 1997, meat, milk, butter, and egg production has increased very little while the human population has doubled. As a result, the average annual per capita consumption of animal-origin food in the Ethiopian empire has become one of the lowest in the world. The average annual per capita consumption of milk from 1988 to 1997 was 18.2, 37.2, and 75.5 kg for Ethiopia, Africa, and the world, respectively (FAO STAT, 1999)

However, all succeeding Ethiopian Governments have not done enough to curb the livestock production constraints. Oromia is affected most, as compared to the rest of the empire, by the unsatisfactory response of the Ethiopian Government to livestock production constraints, as the lives of the greatest proportion of the Oromo people directly depend on livestock.

3. The Economic Benefits of the Ethiopian Government from the Livestock Sector

The overall economic output of the Ethiopian Empire is based on agriculture. Agriculture contributes to about 45% of gross domestic production, more than 90% of foreign exchange earnings and 85% of employment opportunities. The livestock sector plays a dominant role in agriculture. Crop production almost exclusively (95%) depends on livestock originated draft power. But still there is acute shortage of oxen. About 37.7% of the farmers have no ox, 32% have an ox, and only 30.3% of the peasant farmers in the empire have got two or more oxen. Livestock production shares about 40% of the total output, and when draft is considered up to 60%. Livestock is almost the only animal-origin domestic protein source and is the major source of cash income at farm level (Anon, 1993).

The Ethiopian Government obtains millions of Birr through various forms of livestock-related taxes. Taxes are collected from the producer in a form of land-use tax, from butchers, skins and hides dealers, and live animal traders. It is also collected at market places when animals are sold and finally abattoir service charges, when animals are destined for slaughter.

The most important part of animal related revenues is its function as a source of foreign exchange earnings. In this regard, animals and animal products stand only second to coffee. Skin, hides, live animals, meat, honey, and bee wax are the major export items. During the period from 1988 to 1997, the average annual income obtained from the export of animals and animal products was about USD 79 million (24% of the total export values obtained from the agricultural sector). The export values show a general trend of increase from USD 88.8 million in 1988 to USD 109.9 million in 1997, with a slight decrease between 1991 and 1993 (FAO, 1999).

As Oromia accounts for more than 70% of the livestock population of the Ethiopian Empire, the economic benefits the Ethiopian Government obtains from the livestock industry largely comes from Oromia.

4. Livestock Production Constraints

4.1 Health

Diseases are probably the most important livestock production constraints in Oromia. Viral, bacterial, parasitic, etc diseases are widespread among the various livestock species throughout the country. They are causing tremendous losses in both mortality and morbidity forms. In the Ethiopian Empire (also applicable to Oromia) the annual mortality losses in cattle, sheep, and goat populations is estimated to be about 15%, 15% and 12%, respectively. This is among the highest in the world. In economic values, productivity losses caused by reduced body weight, infertility, reduced milk, meat and egg production and reduced draught power as a result of morbidity, outweighs the mortality losses (Anon, 2000).

African Animal Trypanosomosis (*ganddii*, *loollii*) is the most important livestock health problem in Oromia. Animals, particularly cattle, could not be introduced and used for agricultural production into some 150 000 km² of very fertile valleys in western Oromia, due to this disease. The area is estimated to have supported about 3 million head of cattle, 3 million head of sheep and 6 million head of goats. Morbidity and mortality losses caused by African Animal Trypanosomosis in cattle alone in Oromia is estimated to be more than USD 150 million per annum (Anon, 1997).

However, attempts made to contain livestock health problems in Oromia are far below the required level. In Oromia, veterinary services are almost totally run by the public sector, as the private sector is at a rudimentary stage. At present, veterinary clinics and animal health posts are located in the capitals of districts. The ratio of veterinary clinics and health posts in the Ethiopian empire are 1:102,000 and 1:53,000, respectively. They lack basic equipment, water, and electricity. Drugs have always been in short supply both qualitatively and quantitatively (Bedane, 1999).

The number of animal health professionals in relation to total livestock units (TLU) is also very low in Ethiopia. In 1979, TLU per veterinarian in Ethiopia was 311,300 (Braend, 1979), the second highest

in the world. At the moment, the veterinarian TLU ratio and veterinary auxiliary staff TLU in Ethiopia are estimated to be about 1:173 000 and 1:19 000 respectively, probably one of the highest in the world. The same is believed to be true in Oromia.

The animal health services coverage in the Ethiopian empire is probably one of the lowest in the world. Only about 30% of the livestock population are covered with the existing veterinary services (Moorhouse and Ayalew, 1997). The animal health services of the Oromia regional state covers only 22% of the prophylactic and 8.1% of the required curative services (Muktar, 1999). As a result peasant farmers, especially in trypanosomosis affected areas are desperately attempting to treat their animals with “trypanocidal drugs” of unknown quality, only to further complicate the situation with the development of drug resistance.

Veterinary drugs are becoming unaffordable by the smallholder Oromo peasants who keep unproductive animals. The price of trypanocidal drugs has increased from less than a Birr in 1986 to, more than 7 Birr. All other important veterinary drugs have shown similar proportions of increment. In some instances, people are trying traditional medicines (Regassa, 2000). The steady nature of veterinary services cost increment in Oromia has a complex basis. The Government is now in a process of pulling out subsidies and animal health services are on a transitional period to cost recovery scheme. Taxation on drugs has also increased over the past few years. Further more, embezzlements in drug purchases are said to have played significant role in inflating drug prices in Oromia.

Livestock disease extension services are not available in Oromia. Hence farmers are not informed of the advantages of vaccination, early detection of disease out breaks, isolation of sick animals, and disease reporting. In some remote areas of Oromia farmers are not even aware of the existence of veterinary services.

4.2 Breeding

The indigenous (*Bos indicus*) breeds of cattle kept by the Oromo people are known for their low productivity, especially in milk production. The highly productive European breeds of cattle are highly

demanding, very susceptible to many of the tropical cattle diseases and have difficulties in adapting to the harsh tropical climate. They cannot thrive under the traditional management practices of the resource poor, smallholder peasant farmers of the tropical region, such as the Oromos. Under this condition, cattle productivity could be improved by careful breeding and selection of the existing local breeds, or by cross-breeding the local breeds with more productive exotic breeds and utilize crosses of certain exotic blood level that can best suit to the existing farming system, management practices, disease situation, and climate. This could eventually lead to the reduction of total cattle population and effective utilization of pastureland, as the procedure could encourage the culling of unproductive animals.

Crossbreeding, breeding, and selection have been routine livestock improvement procedures in the rest of the world. Through breeding and selection, the Borana cattle of Oromia bought from traders in Kenya in 1920s have undergone tremendous improvement and developed to Kenya-Borana breed, in 1951. It has now been exported from Kenya to many other countries such as Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda, Zaire, Brazil, Mexico, and Australia as a beef cattle breed under the Kenya-Borana breed name (Anon, 1995).

Results of crossbreeding works carried out in Oromia indicate the existence of a significant improvement in the reproductive performances of crossbred animals of 50% exotic blood level, as compared to pure indigenous *B. indicus* cattle. In studies conducted under resource-poor smallholder mixed crop-livestock farmers conditions in Oromia, it was shown that, milk production of crossbred cows of 50% Friesian has been about five times that of the pure local cows held under the same conditions and the increased milk production has eventually improved household incomes of the farmers (Alberto, 1983; Olsson *et al*, 1986; Shapiro *et al*, 2000). Not only in milk production, but the crossbred cows have also shown dramatic improvement in other reproductive parameters such as age at sexual maturity, age at first calving, services per conception, lactation length, calving interval and interval to first oestrus postpartum.

In another study conducted in Arsi, Oromia, Kiwuwa *et al* (1983) found that the production on smallholding and on farm at Assela was

similar and there was no significant difference between the reproductive performances of 75% and 50% exotic blood crosses.

In general, studies on comparative performances of pure local and 50% Friesian crosses, on some reproductive parameters in mixed farming system areas of Oromia showed milk yield per lactation per cow to be about 429 kg and 2 031 kg, lactation length around 143 days and 283 days (Alberto, 1983), age at first calving about 1 590 days and 873 days and calving intervals about 510 days and 371 days (Alberto, 1983; Mukasa Mugerwa, 1988), respectively. On the other hand, the milk offtake in pastoralist areas varied from 150 ml - 3 l per day, depending on rainfall rather than stage of lactation (Nicholson, 1984).

However, no effort has been made to use research outputs to improve the productivity of the local cattle of Oromia. Oromo peasant farmers are still using traditional livestock production and management methods acquired from their forefathers. Livestock production extension services are nonexistent. Very old and unproductive animals are not culled but rather compete with the relatively more productive animals for the very limited resources. Cows in heat are not detected and assisted to mate with bulls of preference and hence productivity is not being improved, calving intervals are very wide and above all, many herds are now suffering from the adverse effects of inbreeding. In general, it can be concluded that the root causes of livestock associated problems in the Ethiopian empire stem from lack of appropriate livestock development policy.

4.3 Nutrition

Nutrition has become a prominent livestock production constraint all over the Ethiopian empire (Mengistu, 1987). Livestock population is increasing parallel with human population in Oromia. Traditionally, only race horses, oxen, mules, and milking cows are supplemented with some amount of concentrate feeds, while calves are allowed to suckle. The rest of the animals are totally maintained on natural grazing. The natural pasture is more abundant during the rainy season and scarce in the dry season. Production, particularly milk, is dramatically reduced in the dry

season; due to under-nutrition and in extreme cases animals starve to death. No effort has been made to assist peasant farmers preserve pasture when it is more abundant to be able to use when critical shortages occur in the dry season. Improved pasture plants have not been made available for large-scale utilization by farmers.

In the mixed crop-livestock farming areas of Oromia, the condition is much more complicated with social problems. Many high school graduates and some college and university graduate Oromos are unemployed. They settle in their villages and try to earn livelihood on a small plot of land they share from their parents, further worsening the already fragile situation caused by high livestock population and crop encroachment on grazing land, as a result of increased human population.

In the nomadic areas of Oromia, moisture has been an important limiting factor (Upton, 1985). Rivers and lakes are not many and rainfall has always been small. Water is obtained from deep wells through a labor-intensive method and animals drink every three or four days. This has considerably been affecting livestock productivity; particularly, milk production (Nicholson, 1984). The area is draught vulnerable and has experienced cycles of extreme situations which claimed livestock lives in thousands and caused salvage sales at extremely low prices. However, sufficient effort has not been made to tackle the problem. Support has not been provided to the local community to get better means of access to the under-ground water and to acquire efficient water harvest and conservation techniques. There are no appropriate policy and strategy on disaster management and early preparedness, to be able to reduce the levels of losses in the face of severe draught. No activity is also going on in Oromia to curb the growing threat of desertification and environmental degradation in the long-run and to address draught-related problems from the root.

4.4 Marketing

In Oromia, there are only very few specialized livestock market places, located in major cities, hundreds of kilometres away from most of the producers. Means of transportation are either not available, or

unaffordable, for the majority of smallholder peasant farmers to access them. As a result, animals are usually sold to beef cattle traders or brokers at a very low price, at village or the nearest small general-purpose market place, without knowledge of current market prices.

Many other factors also contribute to reduced prices. In Oromia, livestock is usually sold by almost all peasants in a synchronized manner, to pay the annual land-use tax, to cover school related expenses, to pay extra military expenses at times of war (which is not rare), to buy agricultural inputs and as a salvage sales in the face of draught. Livestock are also sold in large numbers in conjunction with religious holidays, in an attempt to seek opportunity markets. This condition is known to have significant effect in reducing livestock prices as the accumulated supply some times exceeds the unorganised limited demands. As a result of these and other marketing related problems, producers are not getting their due shares from what they produce. On the other hand, no activity is currently underway to establish market-price based, uninterruptedly offtake-absorbing and easily accessible system of market that can benefit the producer and eventually encourage livestock production activities.

4.5 Others

4.5.1 Livestock development policy

Lack of appropriate livestock development policy and strategy is regarded to be as a major obstacle to livestock development activities in the Ethiopian empire (Bedane, 1999). There are no clear policy and strategy to be followed to tackle breeding, nutrition, health, marketing etc. associated problems.

However, policy goals indicated in some major livestock development projects in Ethiopia between 1975 and 1985 were food self-sufficiency, export promotion and Government revenue generation (Williams, 1993 cited in ILRI, 1995). Livestock development policies drafted by various Governmental institutions in Ethiopia in recent years have an economic efficiency objectives in common mainly directed towards the enhancement of Government revenues from the sector, unlike the livestock development policies of other African countries

such as Kenya, Nigeria, the Sudan, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe which emphasize improvement of human nutrition, job creation, poverty alleviation, etc. (Bedane, 1999).

To this effect, the present Ethiopian regime has established an institution known as Animal, Animal products and by-products Marketing Development Authority, with the main objective to maximizing Government revenues from animals and animal products, especially from exports. The increasing trends of foreign exchange earnings obtained from animals and animal products over recent years indicate this reality. This shows that the Government is attaching more emphasis to generating as high revenue as possible from the livestock especially through exports, rather than improving livestock productivity to increase domestic food production to feed the starving citizens. This was also clearly manifested in the decrease of budgetary allocations to livestock development activities in recent years (ILRI, 1995).

4.5.2 Leadership

In Oromia, many Government employees working in public development sectors such as agriculture do not seem to be effective on their jobs largely because of bad leadership. Preparation of development plans lack transparency and involvement of all concerned parties and individuals. Particularly, Oromo intellectuals are in limbo. Promotions and appointments to the various senior technical posts are usually done on the basis of political views, loyalty, and relationships to their superiors, rather than capability and qualifications. This situation has greatly contributed to the creation of rough and inconvenient working relationships between the superiors and the junior technical staff, who usually comprise most of the more qualified, experienced and capable segment of employees. In most instances, the superiors lack self-confidence and capability to propose and initiate appropriate development plans and to mobilize the staff to achieve certain goals, as the junior staff usually feels to have been marginalized and reluctant to accept and implement the plans of their superiors which in most cases they consider to be counter-productive and inappropriate. The end result of the situation has been a total paralysis and development crisis. Like

many other development sectors the livestock of Oromia is also suffering from this syndrome. The situation is playing a significant role in fuelling the cumulative effects of livestock production constraints mentioned above, and in bringing about the prevailing scenario of livestock development crisis in Oromia.

4.5.3 Taxation and agricultural subsidy

According to Anon's (1999) definition, resource-poor community is characterised by a lifestyle in which at least 60% of them live below the poverty line; poor access to facilities, information, infrastructure, finance, agricultural inputs, and support services (e.g. access to market); no security of land tenure; dependence on Government-provided services; low livestock production and reproduction etc. On the basis of the existing realities and this definition, Oromo peasant farmers are generally classified as resource poor, smallholder subsistence producers. The agricultural output of the majority of the peasant farmers is even not enough to meet family consumptions. Still, some is sold to meet emergency financial needs. Removal of agricultural subsidies, coupled with imposition of heavy (in light of their income) land-use taxation on peasant farmers by the present regime is causing unprecedented social crisis among the Oromo peasants. They are stripped off a considerable proportion of their hand-to-mouth outputs, without obtaining the services they require in return. There are instances when peasants sell their oxen to pay tax and agricultural input debts. For some peasants, agriculture has become a non-feasible undertaking. In the long run, this measure could have a potentially devastating effect on the livestock, and agricultural production as a whole in Oromia, as it is feared to run many farmers bankrupt and force them out of the rural areas to cities, in search of unavailable alternative jobs, resulting in an irreversible social crisis.

5. Conclusions

Since its colonization over a century ago, Oromia has been a victim of the Abyssinian system of bad governance which is traditionally characterized by dictatorship, corruption, nepotism, and irresponsibility,

JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

contrary to the Oromo system of administration in which democracy is the political culture. Hence, the legacy of colonialism has been the establishment of poverty, famine, disease, and social injustice in Oromia. The complexity and diversity of socio-economic problems in Oromia have been worsening with time, as a result denial of appropriate attention by all succeeding governments of the Ethiopian Empire.

The present regime has a clear objective of constructing its home country, Tigray, at the expense of Oromia, leave-alone addressing the cumulative socio-economic problems. As a result, the most tragic socio-economic crisis in Oromia has paralleled with the administration of this regime.

The experience acquired from colonialism has now convinced the Oromo people that, no part of the prevailing problems of the country could ever be resolved under the colonial government of Ethiopia. So are problems related to the livestock of Oromia

The existing scenario of livestock related problems in Oromia are much more complex than what has been briefly described in this article. The solution requires fundamental changes in a holistic approach, based on an in-depth study and analysis of the problems, followed by adoption of appropriate policy and strategy to tackle the problems from the root. From experience, this is not a kind of activity that could be undertaken without acquiring a responsible government of free Oromia, as it has never been attempted under colonialism for over a century ago and cannot be expected, hereafter. In fact, the socio-economic problems of colonized indigenous people cannot be addressed without attaining political freedom

Currently, the attention of the Oromo people is totally directed towards the liberation of Oromia, as it is the basis for everything. However, it is also appropriate at this stage to identify and prepare appropriate policies, strategies, and plans of action, for some most affected economic and development sectors that could cause a devastating social crisis if not addressed as a matter of emergency, right after independence

One among such priority areas should be food self-sufficiency, in which the livestock sector is the crucial component. The urgency of

addressing food self-sufficiency issues is unquestionable, as undernourished people are physically and mentally handicapped to actively participate in a nation building activities. It is, therefore, suggested that appropriate livestock development policy and strategy be prepared parallel with the struggle for freedom, to be able to increase livestock productivity and enhance the speed with which food security could be achieved in Oromia following independence.

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On United States Altruism, Intervention, and Aggression in Somalia: A Review Essay of *Black Hawk Down*

Steve Blankenship

The imperial western gaze rarely settles on Somalia. Located on the eastern edge of the Horn of Africa, astride the borderlands between Ethiopia and Arabia, Somalia is nearly invisible from the United States panoptical position at the center of world affairs. Somalia intrudes on the collective consciousness of the West always in the context of some European or American paradigm—colonialism, Cold War, famine, Hollywood, President Bush's war on terror—and never as nation that exist independent of its subjectivity. Parting glances are not exchanged between Somalia and the First World since only the later may look. Somalia stays stranded in the peripheral vision of the West as another indistinguishable African country whose alien culture and incomprehensible politics make it less a nation to be reckoned with than a spectacle to be consumed, then forgotten.

Somalia's strategic position adjacent to the sea-lanes to India at the narrow Gulf of Aden made it an attractive colonial possession for Great Britain. Its subsequent carving-up and occupation by English, French, Italian, and Ethiopian colonizers reflected the chaos attendant to the tumultuous international politics of the twentieth century. The modern Somali state is, of course, a creation of its European and Ethiopian colonizers; centralization was imposed and not indigenous. Yet Somali sovereignty remains a shifting concept for the West, illusive, ambiguous, and outside the pattern established by the West to make its policies of hegemony and intervention comprehensible. Europeans encouraged traditional Somali practices of funneling politics through the nation's ancient clans: a fortuitous compromise born of Somali intransigence and European practicality that bestowed agency to both the colonizer and colonized.

Somalia dropped from international sight after its independence in 1960. In 1977, Major General Mohamed Siad Barre refocused the

West's attention on Somalia momentarily by allying his country with the Soviet Union (and then the United States) in a bid to regain territories earlier lost to Ethiopia. The complexities of Cold War politics left Somalia without the national self-aggrandizement sought by General Barre as the Russians and Americans played their version of the Great Game in Africa with Somalia and other African states used as pawns.

Somalia sunk from sight again after this embarrassing Cold War imbroglio. When it reemerged in the West's consciousness, it was through the pitiful pictures of starvation and mass death on CNN and in the photographs of *National Geographic* in the fall of 1993. The ouster of Barre in 1991 unleashed civil war among Somalia's clans. This conflagration was accompanied by the looting and utter destruction of the country's only agricultural area southwest of Mogadishu between the Juba and Shebelle Rivers. The subsequent attempt by the United Nations and various relief agencies to supply Somalia with food climaxed with the Battle of the Black Sea, or as the Somalis call it, the Day of the Ranger. Mark Bowden's book, *Black Hawk Down*, reconstructed the firefight that erupted in Mogadishu as United States special forces attempted to decapitate the command of Somalia clan leader ("warlord" in the American press) Mohamed Farrah Aidid in October 1993. The success of Bowden's book is likely to be now accentuated as director Ridley Scott's new film of the same name has reintroduced this American foreign policy debacle to a vast movie-going audience. The interest in Scott's film is demonstrated by its box-office success. The hype generated by *Black Hawk Down*, both the printed and cinematic versions, has been increased by the buzz that the Bush administration may be contemplating military action against Somalia in its increasingly ubiquitous war on terror.

Ridley Scott's film, in particular, exemplifies long established patterns of American conventions, cinematic and otherwise: *Black Hawk Down* lies at this end of a long lineage of films extending back to John Ford's 1930s classic *Stagecoach* whereby narratives are constructed around the themes of American altruism and the justification of United States aggression against incomprehensible enemies. Three Somalis speak in Scott's film: one is a spy who mumbles in fear of his life; another is a

gun broker; the last, an officer in Aidid's clan. The latter two do not engage in dialogue so much as to pontificate: both are western representatives of a suspected African type; both utter platitudes as if statues were speaking; each is regarded by his American counterpart with a mixture of incredulity and incomprehension—the two qualities that comprise the American attitude in Mogadishu and go far in explaining the disaster that awaited their finest fighting men there.

On 3 October 1993, the United States' intervention in Somalia came to a shattering climax that was, for a few harrowing twilight hours, eerily reminiscent of General George Custer's Seventh Cavalry foray into the affairs of the Sioux Nation at the Little Bighorn River in the last century. Custer's command was wiped out. Indeed, it is the allure of annihilation that makes Mark Bowden's *Black Hawk Down: A Study of Modern War* compelling. The author accentuates the anxiety of encirclement with chapter titles "Overrun" and "Alamo." Bowden's account chronicles in detail the unanticipated firefight encountered by United States special forces (Rangers and Delta) in the heart of Mogadishu while attempting to kidnap "tier one" associates of Somali General Mohamed Farrah Aidid during the final phases of Operation Restore Hope, (p. 8).

On the book's back jacket one blurb has former U.S. ambassador to Somalia, Robert Oakley, describing its contents as "a riveting up-close account of the most intensive, hand-to-hand combat by U.S. soldiers since Vietnam." In the "Epilogue," Bowden says that he was "struck by the intensity of the fight, and by the notion of ninety-nine American soldiers surrounded and trapped in an ancient African city fighting for their lives," (p. 332). United States Rangers reduced Mogadishu to an indiscriminate killing zone where, by dusk of the battle's day, anything that moved became a target for American riflemen. Task Force Ranger—the mission's code name—suffered casualties exceeding fifty percent; a shocking statistic by Pentagon parameters, especially in a snatch and grab operation designed for surprise, speed, and sudden exit. The Rangers referred to the fight as the "Battle of the Black Sea," an alliterative and appropriate appellation for those soldiers increasingly squeezed by thousands of armed and angry Africans who arrived to

avenge the deaths and destruction inflicted upon them by space-age soldiers descending from hated helicopters, whirling machines strong enough to suck the tin roofs off of houses, and rip off the colorful robes worn by Somali women. Unsurprisingly, the Somalis call the battle "The Day of the Rangers," (p. 331). While the Pentagon took unacceptable casualties that day, the Somalis sustained fatalities approaching one thousand. History will probably record this bloodletting as the Battle of Mogadishu. The book's subtitle, *A Study of Modern War*, refers not only to the space-age sophistication of U.S. special-forces, but also to the fact that the entire battle was recorded and videotaped by circling aircraft. The conspicuous contrast between a space-age armada hemmed in and nearly overwhelmed by an itinerant army armed with the cast-offs of Cold War conflict is demonstrated by the elaborate communications set up between United States ground and air forces with that of Somali soldiers and their walkie-talkies and short-wave radios. In this context, of a time long past.

Bowden's book examines the botched attempt to decapitate the leadership of Aidid's army in the heart of the Hibr clan near the Bakara Market in downtown Mogadishu. Task Force Ranger was implemented by airpower supplied by U.S. helicopter Black Hawks. The mission stressed speed. Delta would descend from the helicopters to the target building, take control of the grounds, capture Aidid's associates, and march everyone outside to a waiting convoy for a quick trip back to the United States command post near the international airport. The Rangers would rope down from the Black Hawks to establish blocking positions around Delta's target to prevent anyone entering or exiting the perimeter. The plan was well executed until first one, then two, Black Hawks were shot down by Somalis armed with rocket-propelled grenades. In an attempt to reach the crashed copters and rescue their crews, the Delta and Ranger forces were surrounded and held under siege by thousands of irate Somalis armed with an array of Cold War weapons. The extraction of Task Force Ranger would cost one hundred American casualties, including eighteen dead.

The Battle of Mogadishu was merely the last frame of a year-long episode known as Operation Restore Hope. The first frame of this drama were pictures widely published in the summer of 1992 of Somali

skeletons weighed down by paltry flesh, of women's breasts as flat as punctured tires, of children whose most prominent features were bulging eyes (covered with flies) inside of shrinking faces, and extended bellies belying the hunger that emaciated their rickety frames. These pathetic representations were the first frames of a humanitarian tale that ended with more pictures of a dead US helicopter pilot being drug through the narrow lanes of Mogadishu following, what some US soldiers would later call, the Battle of the Black Sea. And while the opening and closing images of Operation Restore Hope remain vivid for CNN viewers, the causes of the conflict have been apparently discarded on history's cutting room floor.

Mark Bowden's *Black Hawk Down* restores some of the missing frames of this narrative and points to other agents, heretofore largely invisible, that make more clear the reasons why the United States intervened in Somalia under the guises of neutrality and relief only to kill a thousand Somalis in one day before abandoning its mission and averting its gaze

The purpose of this essay is to seek out the clues the author inadvertently sprinkles throughout *Black Hawk Down* to discover why a mission originally designed to feed the hungry ended up killing the satiated. Bowden's book is confined by the genre of military history, and while it executes its mission well, it is laden with off-hand asides that, upon exploration, foreshadow how the red-hot sun set upon a fiery Mogadishu on the 3 October 1993 during the "Day of the Ranger."

The U.S. special-forces stood atop the hierarchical pyramid of military machismo. Yet, despite their rigorous training and physical exertions, their unconventional cuisine ("snake eaters"), their competence at killing combined with unbounded confidence in themselves, none "knew enough to write a high school paper about Somalia," (p. 10). They knew that Mogadishu was "rat heaven" and that there "hadn't been a regular trash pick-up in recorded history," (p. 60). They were not surprised to find telephones that did not work. Delta discovered that piles of debris were juxtaposed with "outcroppings of cactus" (p. 40), paved roads were rare, and if the average Somali left his "house open and undefended it would be looted," (p. 82). Somali drivers would park their cars with their gas caps wedged against a tree to prevent

siphoning. Somali garbage was burned in the street; animal dung was burned for fuel. Smoke rose from smouldering tires. Task Force Ranger squinted inside their helicopters as Mogadishu (the "Mog" in Delta jargon) was unnaturally bright: its foreground of white sand reflecting its background of bright sun, illuminating the mosques, "the only tall structures still standing," (p. 7). Mogadishu looked to Delta like the "post-apocalyptic world" and the "capital of things-gone-completely to hell," (pp. 10, 7).

These things the Rangers could see. Less obvious was Somalia's history. Delta did not know of the African adventurer Ibn Battuta who visited Mogadishu in the fourteenth century and found many merchants there. Nor did Delta know of the Arab and Persian traders who mingled in Mogadishu's streets throughout its history; or that Mogadishu was the only Somali city to turn back the Portuguese explorers during the European age of discovery.¹ Delta only understood that Mogadishu was "a hardship post" where "streets were unsigned and driving was a free-for-all;" that western accommodations were absent and hotel gift shops were as scarce as health spas.² And, by late on the afternoon of 3 October, Delta comprehended that Mogadishu's citizens had declared it "kill-an-American Day" (p. 106).

Did Delta understand how Somalia's geography had once made it a pivot point for African and Asian traders? Or that Somali eyes were cast east toward the Red Sea and the Arabian peninsula, and not west into the interior of Africa? Could Task Force Ranger have placed in perspective the geographical fate of Somalia occupying the backwash and weaker streams of the Ethiopian highlands whose northern rivulets formed the mighty Nile while its southern drippings comprised the thin Shebelle and Juba rivers?³

However highly motivated, Delta did not understand why Somalia was called the "Land of Give-Me-Something" by the neighboring Arabs; that Somalis had incorporated numerous Arabic words into their language, and that many Somalis believed their bloodlines flowed from east of the Red Sea. Did Delta know that Somalia had been partitioned by the British, French, Italians, and Ethiopians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Did Delta comprehend that Somali society was

egalitarian and startlingly democratic? Delta was ignorant of the importance that genealogy plays within Somalia and how it assigns to each a place in society. Would Delta have known that injustice is avenged upon the perpetrator's clan and not on the individual? If all these things Delta did not know, the soldiers must have sensed soon after their arrival in Mogadishu that Somali society appeared the antithesis of the familiar.⁴

In order to simplify a situation too complex and, perhaps, to create understandable and opposing identities, Delta collectively called the Somalis "Skinnies" or "Sammies," (p. 9). The first moniker presumably refers to the svelte Somali physique derived from a desert diet; and the second may stem from the phonetic similarity between Somali and Sammy, or from the old American stereotype of "little black Sambo." The author ignores the alienation created by these two derisive and essentially racist appellations. Both terms reduced Somali citizens to western caricatures. Both epithets created the necessary cultural chasm for the killing to follow. Stereotypes did not, however, account for the peculiar Somali predilection to hasten towards gunfire instead of away from it. "Whenever there was a disturbance in Mog, people would throng to the spot," (p. 18). Though the Americans believed the Somalis were alien in nearly aspect, they were also suspicious that the "Skinnies" believed themselves superior to their rich, infidel invaders.⁵ The Americans observed that the Somalis were marked by "extreme independence and individualism," accompanied by an "extraordinary sense of superiority" given to a "firm conviction that he is the sole master of his actions and subject to no authority save that of God."⁶ A nineteenth century European adventurer wrote, "Somalis lie, cheat, and are quick to anger. They are proud, vain, and think highly of themselves. At the same time, they will act courageously, faithfully, and are capable of enduring great hardships as well as intolerable pain."⁷

All of this would become clear enough on 3 October. Yet the American tendency to see the Somalis as shiftless ostensibly explained their hosts' inability (or disinclination) "to maintain anything—roads, equipment, offices, projects, or essentially themselves"⁸ With nothing but urban ruin in front of them, how could these American specialists

understand that Somalis were animated by

unbridled opportunism (the flip side of which was nonproductive activity or laziness) and the attendant fatalistic attitude-cum-crutch that 'Allah will provide'...these were precisely the two things that caused Somalia to not work for most westerners—the very two things that made daily life possible for many Somalis.⁹

When Somalis paused to take tea they drank it while facing the street, knowing that an opportunity may present itself. "Their waiting thus amounts to tending a sort of trapline, and it is this act of lying in wait" that the Americans misunderstood as lethargy.¹⁰ Did Delta understand that in a land where nothing is certain except genealogical lineage the smart thing to do was to wait for a connection, a cause, a chance.¹¹

The absence of discipline was manifest in the decrepitude of the crumbling infrastructure. How were US. soldiers to know that the traditional Somali "pastoral nomadism does not produce government buildings or permanent edifices."¹² The Rangers could not have known the different shapes Somali discipline takes, and may have been surprised to learn that certain Somalis devoted to Islam chose death over food not properly prepared.¹³

Did Delta discern the Arab's "capacity for devotion and discipline, and latent powers of organization" beneath the Somali's African veneer?¹⁴ How could Delta—the cutting edge of America's futuristic war machine—understand the antagonism between the pastoralists, who dominated a country the size of Texas, and the farmers who were driven to the narrow wedge between the Shebelle and Juba rivers? How could Delta know that "nomadic herders take a dismissive view of sedentary agriculture, believing that farmers do not possess the noble fighting character of pastoralists"¹⁵

This internal Somali dichotomy went beyond Delta's training. Those westerners who were disgusted by the theft of food from under their eyes did not know that "looting is a practice common to time honored pastoral camel raiders."¹⁶ In a land scarce of water and grass it should not have been a revelation to Delta that the "nomadic Somali are a warlike people, driven by the poverty of their resources..." to take

what they need where they find it¹⁷ Yet, Somali behavior continually surprised Delta who understood their mission but not the context within which it had to take place

Only in relation to the unremitting struggle for survival in a hostile environment, where men are engaged in a seemingly unending cycle of alliance and counter alliance, is it possible to interpret both the past and present reaction of the Somali to local and external events.¹⁸

Thus, in a society dominated by the ethos of the nomad, it was the isolated farmer and urban bureaucrat who formed minorities regarded with disdain by the pastoralists. Cited Somalis believed the nomads “an embarrassment and a nuisance” whose peripatetic existence made it difficult “to build a master state.” Nomads could be neither counted, controlled, nor taxed.¹⁹ In their interminable search for sustenance, the pastoralist’s and the urban dweller’s interests diverged. The fierce individualism of the nomads could quickly coalesce into unified rage when their prerogatives were threatened. The “collective responsibility” of the pastoralists “in feud and war” would be illustrated on 3 October. Task Force Ranger learned first hand on that day the primary source of the so-called “failed state” lay with those innumerable nomads whose alienation to the centralizing principles of government demonstrated that the state, in their view, moved about on the camel’s back.²⁰

However hidden the subtleties of the pastoralists’ peregrinations may have appeared to western soldiers in Mogadishu, one thing was clear to the author of *Black Hawk Down*: “If you wanted the starving masses in Somalia to eat, then you had to out muscle men like Aidid, for whom starvation worked.”(33) This conundrum opens the gulf between altruism and policy; between single-minded simplicity and African complexity. Bowden follows the conventional western wisdom that food was inherently neutral—an ostensibly simple conception that did not conform to African ambiguities. For the author, and his American subjects, western policy in Somalia was altruistic and only those (like Aidid) motivated by evil would hinder its mission through the theft, smuggling, or hoarding of food intended for the famished. Neither

Bowden, nor any other voices in his book, recognized how politicized food became in a Mogadishu fractured by clans, each suspicious of outside aid that elevated the status of one Somali faction over others.

American ignorance on the issue of food as benevolent gift or political weapon comes through clearly in this book that crackles with dialogue. American special-forces speak on nearly every page; men's thoughts are italicized, and radio transcripts, recorded during the battle, are deftly spliced into this book filled with voices. The author has generalized the prevailing sentiments of the Rangers, encapsulated their thoughts, and distributed them throughout the text to maintain the narrative and provide tone and context. Bowden's focus, of course, is not on food, but Aidid whose depiction as the "bad guy" simplified matters for the Americans and made their choice of options easier to understand—for themselves, their government, and their countrymen. Yet by asking the question, "didn't we go to Somalia to feed starving people?" the author hints of the larger issues submerged beneath the crash and bang of battle. Why were Somalis starving? Why did starvation work for Aidid? And why was his removal required? These questions creep into areas unexplored in *Black Hawk Down*. Their answers lay outside the scope of America's military mission in the intricate and peculiar economy of relief run by non-governmental organizations.

Famine was the catalyst for western intervention in Somalia.²¹ Its origins "were (and still are) misunderstood by the international community and by the world media"²²

The famine was a combination of drought and a seven-month military occupation of the area by three divisions of Siad Barre's army...his soldiers plundered grain stores in this agricultural area...[and] left villages upon villages of destitute farming communities. It took three months for the impact of growing mass starvation to hit the world's television screens.²³

The civil war that precipitated this devastation did not end with Siad Barre's departure in January 1991. Clan warfare continued, not only for political power, but also to secure scarce food and water in the country's only agricultural region southwest of Mogadishu.²⁴ Relief

agencies fled to nearby Kenya, followed by the departure of the international diplomatic community. The former U.S. ambassador to Somalia, Frank Crigler, said the United States “turned out the lights, closed the door, and forgot about the place.”²⁵

One western relief worker noted that people were dying from disease, not starvation and that “more food than necessary was coming into the country,” and that it was “the reckless use of food that causes famine.” Its importation depressed prices and provided a “disincentive for farmers to grow food crops.”²⁶

In this way began the conundrum of a food economy too complex in its convolutions to be fully comprehended by Bowden's Rangers in Mogadishu, or in western governments generally. (This confusion existed on both sides. “Somalis joked bitterly that the United States had come to feed them just to fatten them up for slaughter,” p. 76). Food as currency became a simple surrogate for specie whose ephemeral existence was epitomized by the proverb, “money is spring's leaves.”²⁷ The absence of food drove its prices up; in its plentitude it remained a precious commodity because of hoarding; its pilferage required relief agencies—and the UN—to purchase Somali guards to deter Somali thieves. Stolen food led to another unorthodox economy, one built on the weapons procured with food exchanges.²⁸

As food disappeared, arms proliferated. United States special forces were shocked to find themselves in the midst of a fight that “had turned into something akin to a popular uprising. It seemed like everybody in the city wanted suddenly to help kill Americans,” (p. 230). Amidst the cacophony were “Aidid militiamen with megaphones shouting... ‘come out and defend your homes,’” (p. 31). Why so many Somalis, so angry, and so well armed? The young Rangers trapped in Mogadishu would require more than one sanguine afternoon to understand the obligations inherent in the Somali clans whose connections ran back like rivulets to a lake of lineage as large as the land itself.

The system lacks a concept of individual culpability. When a man commits a homicide...the guilt does not remain with him soles as an individual murderer...the crime is attributed to all the murderer's kin...by reason of their blood connection

with the perpetrator Members of the aggrieved group then seek revenge. on any member of his lineage they...chance upon.²⁹

Unbeknownst to the Rangers, the Somalis had lumped them and Delta together into one enemy clan called Gal, "a militia that was perceived as rich and powerful but dumb."³⁰ The Americans were also ignorant of the Somali proverb that encouraged their gathering, their rage, their vengefulness: "A man who does not take vengeance is a barbarous man."³¹

Bowden's Rangers may have ruefully remembered the old American political adage about "a chicken in every pot," and transposed it to "a weapon in every hand" to better explain their dire predicament. The food/gun economy³² only partially explained the surplus of firepower littered across Mogadishu. In the 1970s and 1980s Somalia found itself an unwitting participant in the international Cold War where every arid was scrutinized by the ever suspicious superpowers. The vicissitudes of global competition led the Soviet Union and the United States to become engaged in the Horn of Africa where they demonstrated a comedic perfidy precipitated by local conditions; switching back and forth between Somalia and Ethiopia: priming the hardware pump, then turning it off. The superpowers' capricious flirtation with Somalia left little in their wake except weapons.³³

When superpower interests in Somali slipped, the attentiveness of the international aid agencies sky-rocketed. Bowden's subjects in Mogadishu saw "not just thousands but tens of thousands of people, throngs who would mob the feeding stations, waiting for handouts. These were not people who looked like they were starving," (p. 51). One journalist wrote: "I saw military warehouses packed to the ceilings with refugee food and convoys of military trucks heading toward the Ethiopian border, also packed with food."³⁴ Why Ethiopia? The surplus of Soviet rifles and copter killing RPGs held by that ancient kingdom were easily traded for the trucks laden with bountiful relief shipments. The aid industry transformed benevolence into profits.³⁵ Only the entrepreneurial spirit of the west could establish an industry whose clients were without money, and were, in fact, famished. One participant

in the relief economy said:

Perhaps I would not be quite this cynical had the heads of two different NGO's (non-governmental organizations) not admitted to me that the only reasons their organizations were still in Somalia (despite impossible levels of corruption) in 1989 was because they expected there to be a major disaster or crisis in the near future; they needed to keep one foot in the door.³⁶

Certainly neither Aidid, nor his chief rival, Ali Mahdi, were eager to publicize their nation's plight. Aidid was especially wary of outside intervention for reasons that confounded the United Nations and the United States. Never had the west seen the smiling face of altruism kicked so repeatedly in the teeth. Bowden writes, "Somali employees of the United Nations were terrorized and executed," (p. 93). Aidid, of course, welcomed the importation of food as it helped him succor his militia and expand his political power at the expense of others. He did not, however, enjoy the prospect of outsiders taking sides within Somalia. It was this suspicion that unleashed Aidid's wrath. He questioned any foreign intrusion that did not get his prior approval. He thwarted multinational efforts to land relief at the port of Mogadishu.³⁷

Aidid believed the port facilities and adjoining airport lied within his domain. He shelled ships coming to call. He was exasperated that UN forces allowed one of his rivals to take the city of Kismaya down the coast from Mogadishu. Aidid believed the United Nation's peacekeepers were little more than "an occupation force" that tilted toward Ali Mahdi.³⁸ Aidid was certain that "the United Nations had invaded Somalia, had sought by innumerable actions to diminish his stature and power, and in June had declared war on him"³⁹ by prompting the Pakistani forces under the United Nations aegis to raid his radio station.

Black Hawk Down does not linger on the June 1993 confrontation between Pakistani peacekeepers and Aidid's militia. U.S. military intelligence might have given closer attention to this episode since it was the precursor to the 3 October battle. The trouble began when

Pakistani troops tried to inspect a suspected cache of weapons adjacent to Aidid's radio station. The station's broadcasts suggested "the United Nations and the Americans had come to colonize Somalia and wanted to burn the Koran" (p. 75). Rumors circulated that "Radio Mogadishu" would be shut down. When the Pakistanis did, indeed, emerge from Aidid's station they were greeted by a hostile crowd. Soon, they were encircled by Somali women and children while, behind them, militiamen approached with sticks and knives, and others began sniping from the surrounding rooftops. Bodies were desecrated in the ensuing slaughter. A second ambush occurred near the Pakistani's post where Aidid's gunmen "spread out on both sides of the road" and raked a Pakistani column "for two and a half hours, using heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and rocket launchers."⁴⁰ The remaining Pakistanis were rescued by international troops, including Italians and Americans. The United Nations put a bounty on Aidid's head the following day, and by this action sacrificed the pretext of neutrality with which the west had intervened in Somalia.⁴¹

President Bush announced the United States' intervention in Somalia in December 1992. In that statement he said "we do not plan to dictate political outcomes."⁴² A week later, following the murder of many Somali elders by a rival clan, the president insisted, "we are not an occupying power. We have no power of arrest."⁴³ Bowden expresses Somali sentiments by highlighting the contradiction between a mission that had been transformed from a humanitarian one, with eyes averted from local politics, to one of aggressive partisanship:

It was one thing for the world to intervene to feed the starving. But this business of sending U.S. Rangers swooping down into the city killing and kidnapping their leaders, this was too much. (p. 74)

The presence of 30,000 outsiders, armed and organized, within Somalia would seem in itself sufficient to undermine the West's protestations of neutrality. The intervening forces did not comprehend that in a Somalia sliced up into segments, each one jealously held by hostile factions, that discussions or negotiations with local leaders, like

Aidid, tended to elevate one clan over another. While this seemed innocuous enough to the west, it assumed great importance within the fractured politics of the host country. The west believed its relief aid to be untainted charity; yet, "what was delivered did indeed line certain pockets, accord select individuals power, create new inequities, and breed all sorts of suspicions."⁴⁴

The importance of this point was not recognized by the west before or after the debacle at the Bakara Market. Congressional criticism of the mission included the observation that "cardinal rules were violated... We chose sides, and we decided who the enemies were. Its baggage from the Cold War."⁴⁵ Cold War lessons may have influenced the West's preferences, though they did not have any bearing on Aidid's anxiety about an occupying power within his realm. The congressional criticism cited above accentuates the commonplace assumption made in the west that negated the agency that the Africans continually exercised. Clearly the United States took aim at Aidid only after *his* attack on the Pakistanis and *his* subsequent assaults on Americans. The aim of one aid participant's criticism was equally in error. "Military surprise is no virtue in humanitarian emergencies, where neutrality is essential."⁴⁶ Again, this criticism took for granted an underlying assumption on a nonexistent consensus about the nature of neutrality in a land where sovereignty was shared and food politicized. President Clinton, too, was unable to draw the correct conclusions about the inevitable intersection of intervention and interests with partisanship and neutrality. Clinton's point man in Somalia emphasized to Aidid that the president's "decision to depersonalize Somali policy... meant no more US manhunts, [but] Aidid should not think he could openly engage in political activity."⁴⁷ We may imagine the big Somali smile splitting Aidid's face as this misguided paternalism sunk in. Clinton's idea of depersonalization included unenforceable prohibitions on Aidid's participation in the politics of the country the west was rapidly vacating.

Black Hawk Down is unencumbered by these esoteric arguments about the nature of neutrality, intervention and relief aid. Bowden's book carries a burden of its own: how to depict a confusing and seemingly interminable firefight without losing the reader in the ancient

lanes of Mogadishu. It is difficult to convey a battle without fronts; a struggle amorphous without clearly delineated lines, the mental image of which resembles Rorschach's shifting shapes. The author accomplishes this by the judicious use of four well-produced maps that the reader will constantly refer to. Targets, routes, crash-sites, troop movements, and prominent characters are easily followed and understood within the larger context of the Battle of Mogadishu.

Bowden acquired the radio transcripts recorded in the Black Sea. These italicized insertions lend an immediacy to the horror that would be otherwise hidden. *Black Hawk Down* has within its pages an audible hum and crackle as orders are issued and the instinct of professionalism is kept just above the precipice of panic.

Bowden introduces Somali voices to support the soundtrack of the violent showdown during the "Day of the Ranger." The Ranger's creed of not allowing any comrades, dead or alive, to remain behind, produced interesting, if paradoxical, comments from Somalia's soldiers. First, they asserted that without the Black Hawks hovering above, the Americans would have been annihilated. Aidid's militia believed the Ranger's weakness was their unwillingness to die; yet this is coupled with the shrewd tactical awareness that the Rangers and Delta would do anything to protect each other, however foolhardy these acts may be.

Aidid and his lieutenants knew that if they could bring down a chopper, the Rangers would move to protect its crew. They would establish a perimeter and wait for help. (p. 110)

This was precisely what happened. The circumstances of being surrounded at the crashed copter site, and seemingly at the Somali's mercy, raise debatable questions about a militia attack that did not occur; an assault that might have delivered Task Force Ranger to a fate shared by Custer's Seventh Cavalry. The Somali commander decided not to rush the Ranger's position because of the immense firepower the pinned down units still possessed. He resolved the only way to obliterate Delta would be by a massive mortar barrage. Preparations for this coup de grace were underway when Somali citizens, whose kin were mixed in with the surrounded soldiers, pleaded that the bombardment not take

place as it would kill their relations along with the Rangers. This was sufficient to have the operation canceled. When presented with this scenario the U.S. officers agreed that such an attack was plausible, though they discounted its doomsday quality. They argued that U.S. gun-ships would have quickly silenced the Somali mortars after a round or two had been fired.⁴⁸ This rejoinder does not account, first, for the casualties that might have been inflicted by the first wave of Somali mortars; nor does it acknowledge the targets that U.S. gun-ships, silhouetted and relatively stationary, would have presented to Somali sharpshooters armed with RPGs and automatic weapons. Easy assumptions by the United States military command led to this debacle; it is not unreasonable to believe that retaliatory gunship fire might have been also suppressed by Somali ground fire.

Ridley Scott neglects to depict this sequence to the detriment of both his film and his audience's understanding of Somali character. A cinematic pause near the end of the film to demonstrate the preparations being made for this final annihilating attack against surrounded United States forces would have ratcheted up tension while presenting a side of Somali community at odds with the seemingly amorphous and bloodthirsty beast illustrated in Scott's urban apocalypse. Bowden's audience will include subscribers to *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, African specialists, action-junkies, and Pentagon strategists. Bowden's mainstream American readers will recognize the heroism of their boys abroad, while their edification about Somalia will remain shallow as Bowden's bibliography is short and concentrates on the battle. The context of the conflict will remain unknown to the interested reader with the exception of those who peruse Hirsh and Oakley's *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*. Somalis who read English know the story; all others have presumably learned of it from their poetic countrymen in epic narratives already repeated. The viewers of CNN who recall the gaunt faces of Somali citizens of 1992, and the desecrated body of an American helicopter pilot in Mogadishu in 1993, will not find in Bowden's book or Scott's film the missing frames of an incident too terrible to remember; they will discover instead reaffirmation of faith in American motives without having to contemplate the dreadful link

JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

between American intervention and aggression in a Somalia where altruism is never neutral.

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2. Anna Simmons, *Networks of Dissolution: Somalia Undone* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 11-12
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JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

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5. John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1995), 13.
6. Ibid., 4.
7. Simmons, 16.
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10. Ibid., 112.
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19. *Village Voice*, 19 January 1993, <http://www.users.interport.net/~mmaren/vvsomalia.html>, 2, 6.
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JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

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- 34 *Village Voice*, 2.
- 35 Hirsch, 18, 36; Simmons, 18; *Village Voice*, 2, 9; Natsios, "Force," 129; Ghalib, vii; Thakur, 402-03; also Kevin M. Kennedy, "The Relationship Between the Military and Humanitarian Organizations in Operation Restore Hope," in *Learning from Somalia*, eds., Clarke and Herbst, 101, 107.
- 36 Simmons, 205.
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- 38 Kennedy, 102; Prunier, 142; Thakur, 399.
- 39 Woods, 169; Clarke, 5.
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- 41 Bolton, 63-64; Thakur, 403; Natsios, "Force," 137; Drysdale, 132; Simmons, 205; Clarke, 11.
- 42 Lyons, 34.
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Review Essay: *Demystifying Political Thought, Power and Economic Development* by Tecola Hagos. Washington D.C.: Khepera Publishers, 1999. 192 pages, \$15.00.

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This book grew out of the lecture that Tecola Hagos gave on November 13, 1998, at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. The topic of that lecture was the same as the book under review. It is not easy to visualize how such vast material could be covered in a single lecture on a single day. Probably the lecture was presented in skeleton form with the ideas that are later developed in the book. The goal of the book is much too broad to be covered in a hastily written book. It is to demystify, political thought, power and economic development “in order to universalize, humanize and make reachable the myth of power and ‘the mystery’ of economic development; and above all, to point out the evil of ethnicism and its politic” (p. 7). In other words, the book is mainly an essay in protest against the unfolding political drama in Ethiopia. The author is blunt in his use of language in expressing his disgust and disappointment against corrupt political leaders, who inflict pain and misery on their own people. “To a number of people, my language at times might sound too extreme or vulgar, but . . . what is my misuse of language compared to the brutal and violent behavior of individuals I dealt with by name in this presentation” (p. 7). Misuse of language undermines the very message the author wants to convey to the readers. Before examining the strengths and weaknesses of this book, it is important to mention a few facts about the author.

Tecola Hagos was born in Dessie, Wollo to a Tigrayan Christian family. He was the 1971 graduate from the then Haile Selassie University and served the imperial regime until he was detained by the Dergue (1974-75). He was granted political asylum in the United States in 1976, where he received graduate legal training. He was a member of the

Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and served as a special legal advisor to Meles Zenawi from 1991-1992. As an important member of the TPLF and a special legal advisor to Meles Zenawi, Tecola Hagos knew the guiding ideology of the TPLF leaders and the inner workings of the Transitional government of Ethiopia dominated by the TPLF. As an independent-minded Liberal, he could not reduce himself to a "yes man" for Meles Zenawi. As a man of courage and conviction, he did not sell his soul for material comfort and a position of power, as many Ethiopian intellectuals did. In his own words, "I resigned from the Transitional government of Ethiopia because I believed the new Ethiopian leaders were attempting to change a popular movement into a manipulative self-serving political machine that was bound to end in disaster" (Hagos 1995: Preface V). These prophetic words were written in 1994. Since the TPLF leaders have brought disaster after disaster on the peoples of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and even Kenya. "This is a great tragedy and a setback to Ethiopia's progress. We are reliving the era of despotism and feudal culture all over again" (p. 52).

After resigning from his position of power, Tecola Hagos was a Visiting Fellow at Harvard University Law School (1993 and 1994) during which time he wrote his now famous book, *Democratization? Ethiopia 1991-1994 A Personal View*. He is a gifted artist and a productive scholar.

Tecola Hagos is a well-read intellectual, a human rights activist, who expresses his ideas with courage. He is a progressive scholar who believes that political problems can best be solved by political means (p. 89). Of the numerous Ethiopian intellectuals who are critical of the policies of the Ethiopian regime, Tecola Hagos is most consistent in exposing the TPLF leaders for what they are: An "... opportunistic predatory group ... authoritarian, and closet communists" and "... most degenerate leaders who obstructed very much needed social, economic and political changes" (Hagos 1995: pp. 5, FN 5, 219).

Demystifying Political Thought, Power and Economic Development is interesting and controversial at the same time—interesting because it depicts the misery the TPLF-dominated regime has inflicted on the unfortunate peoples of Ethiopia; controversial because Tecola Hagos forcefully argues for abandoning federal structures in Ethiopia and

restoring Emperor Haile Selassie's administrative division of the pre-1974 period (pp. 62, 93). This is a dagger aimed at eliminating all regional states, especially Oromia, which the author mentions in quotations marks only once (p. 73).

Tecola Hagos does not appear to realize that the "TPLF imposed a federal arrangement in Ethiopia that does not reflect on federalism. It reflects only on the TPLF leadership that aborted the democratization process in Ethiopia and abused federal principles" as Tecola Hagos's book itself demonstrates (pp. 66-69, 93). It is too late to return to the pre-1974 administrative division of Ethiopia. What is needed is to move forward with the decolonization of Oromia, democratization of Ethiopia and the implementation of a working federal arrangement. The working federal arrangement will, in effect, be a universally designed agreement for power sharing among free people in Ethiopia. Nothing short of that holds any promise for the future of Ethiopia. The book under review has 13 chapters divided into three parts: Part One deals with demystifying political thought and power; Part Two deals with demystifying economic development, while Part Three deals with development regime and human rights. Part One is interesting; Part Two is dry academic stuff, and Part Three reflects Tecola Hagos's interest in commitment to human rights issues.

For Tecola Hagos, "Africa is a lost cause. For nations around the world, Africa has become the tragic image or caricature of failed democratization, and a symbol of dictatorship and brutality" (p. 10). This is a generalization that applies not only to some countries in Africa, but also to other Third world countries. Africa is the second largest continent in the world with fifty-two countries. Failed African states fit Tecola Hagos's characterization. However, there are also successful African states, where democracy, economic development and respect for human rights are flourishing.

Although I do not see much hope for Africa in general, I make an exception in regard to Ethiopia. This is one nation in Africa that may indeed succeed in surviving the impending doom that the rest of Africa is going to face due to over population, the collapse of civil governments, disease and famine, and endless civil wars including cross-border wars (p. 119).

Ethiopia is at the top of the list of countries in Africa and the world that suffer from the evils mentioned in the above quotation. In fact, the policy Tecola Hagos advocates, abandoning federal structure and restoring the pre-1974 administrative divisions in Ethiopia (p. 9), may hasten the rapid and total disintegration of what is left of the pre-1991 Ethiopia. The restoration of the pre-1974 administrative division of Ethiopia is nothing but a return to the past, a dreadful past of political subjugation, economic exploitation, and cultural dehumanization of the Oromo. The pre-1974 administrative division of Ethiopia was based on the policy of dividing the Oromo among themselves, suppressing their national identity, denial of their human dignity and marginalization of their language. In the process, the Oromo lost their basic right of using their language even for the production of religious literature. As Paul Baxter observed in 1967 while conducting field research among the Oromo in the Arsi administrative region:

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

What Tecola Hagos does not realize is the fact that the Oromo who have been struggling since the 1970s, will not accept the restoration of the pre-1974 status-quo in Ethiopia. The long struggle has fundamentally altered the Oromo perception of their unity and how they were divided in the pre-1974 Ethiopia. Today, the Oromo are free in their mind, soul and spirit, and they are united more than ever before. United people who are free in their mind, soul, and spirit can never accept the return to the pre-1974 administrative division of Ethiopia.

Tecola Hagos is an idealist who argues that “... for Ethiopian leaders, this is not the time to live in palaces and mansions, or drive around in limousine, nor jet around the world” (p.10). In Ethiopia, leaders have always lived extravagantly, adding economic misery to their subjects. The current leaders who have an insatiable appetite for material goods follow in the footsteps of their predecessors. After all, the current leaders are “... the children of feudal overlords... our historic enemies consisting of a class of people who have caused Ethiopians incalculable pain and suffering throughout our recorded history” (pp. 10-11).

Tecola Hagos accuses Ethiopianist scholars for hurting Ethiopia's interests. He admonishes Ethiopian scholars not for challenging what he terms the “so-called experts.” “This is where almost every Ethiopian scholar failed us. I have found only very few Ethiopian scholars (Ayele Bekerie, Hailu Habitu, Ephraim Isaac) ever challenging Levine, Pankhurst or Ullendorff on their critically flawed books or ideas” (P. 34). However, he does not indicate the works in which Hailu Habitu and Ephraim Isaac challenged the scholars whose names are mentioned above. The scholarly works of Ayele Bekerie, Hailu Habitu, and Ephraim Isaac are not even included in his Selected Bibliography (pp. 181-186) which is not organized in proper alphabetical order. What is more, Tecola Hagos goes on to say that scholars such as Professors Donald Levine, Richard Pankhurst and Edward Ullendorff “... owe us an apology for their unscholarly behavior and for undermining and totally ignoring our doctors of the church and those steeped in oral history... ” (p. 34). Once again, he does not show the unscholarly behavior of these scholars and how they undermined and ignored the works of Ethiopian Orthodox Church clergy. One can ask scholars to apologize if they insult people, belittle their way of life and undermine their cultural achievements. None of these scholars did this to the Amhara and Tigray society. However, to a certain degree, Professors Levine and Pankhurst and, most definitely, Ullendorff did insult the Oromo and undermined their cultural achievements. If anyone is to apologize, it is Ullendorff who needs to do so for what he wrote in his infamous book of 1960 (Ullendorff, 1960:76).

Tecola Hagos is at his weakest when dealing with the past historical issues with which he deals intermittently. For instance, he holds

“Emperor Haile Selassie responsible for . . . downgrading of Ethiopia’s church educated first-rate scholars . . . In his fifty years of despotic reign, his impact on education and scholarship was destructive compared to his predecessors whose output in terms of religious texts is quite impressive” (p. 34). This is not true to say the least. Emperor Haile could be held responsible for many political and economic problems of Ethiopia from 1916 to 1974. However, he did not downgrade the Ethiopian Orthodox Church traditional scholarship. On the contrary, it was he who established the first modern college for the training of Orthodox Church clergy, not to mention his Amharization policy which was based on the spread of Orthodox Christianity, centralization of Amhara power, and above all, for making Amharic the official language of government and education. While condemning Emperor Haile Selassie as “. . . the quintessential despot out of the nightmarish life of medieval times” (p.35) Tecola Hagos characterizes Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868) as “one of Ethiopia’s illustrious emperors” (p. 42). In his earlier book, Tecola Hagos described Ethiopian emperors including Tewodros as “brutish and primitive dictators” (Hagos 1995: 14). Indeed Tewodros was a crude and primitive emperor who conducted a campaign of terror and destruction against the Oromo in Wollo from 1855-1865. It was Tewodros who broke the Oromo power and prepared the background for Menelik’s conquest of Oromia. For the Oromo, Tewodros was “the quintessential despot out of the nightmarish life of medieval times.” Like his successors, Yohannes, Menelik, Haile Selassie, Mengistu Haile Mariam, and now Meles Zenawi, Tewodros was a cruel tyrant who broke Oromo power and changed the course of their history

Tecola Hagos is at his best when dealing with the TPLF-dominated regime.

The Ethiopian government is being transformed into a fascist-type administration picking up the pieces where the government of Mengistu left Meles is not a democrat, he is a despot and ultimate nightmare of all democratic-minded Ethiopians everywhere. He has decimated opposition political organizations, and non-political as well as non-profit organizations that are not affiliated with the EPRDF. The

capital outlay and expenditure for the security of the current Ethiopian government and the leadership is almost double that of the previous government (pp. 50-51).

Tecola Hagos, who argues for scrapping the TPLF-imposed federal structure in Ethiopia (pp. 62, 93), proposes unity of the countries of the Horn of Africa “The only way to create peace and prosperity in the region is to create a large nation out of the many desperate people of the area that may include Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and at least Northern Somalia” (p. 58). Unity of nations and countries is good and noble. However, such unity works only if it comes about through voluntary and free will of people. Today, the Oromo are not free people and cannot enter into such an arrangement.

For Tecola Hagos, the Tigrayans “. . . in general have a much more pronounced narrow chauvinistic attitude than most Ethiopians; as individuals, they are the most materialistic, and narcissistic” (p. 62). According to Tecola Hagos, it was the EPRDF ambition of industrializing Eritrea and the TPLF ambition of developing Tigray that was one of the causes for the outbreak of the border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998. “It is entirely possible that the whole conflict was orchestrated to get rid of Eritreans from Ethiopia because they were posing a serious threat to the political and economic life of the TPLF and the stability of Ethiopia. Eritreans were choking TPLF economic ambitions and it became a question of survival” (p.63). Tecola Hagos is accurate when describing the privileged status of the state of Tigray, which is beyond the control of the federal government of Ethiopia.

“The TPLF leadership in Tygreai [Tigray] has its own military, its own government structure, its own development plan, and can also conduct its own international relations with foreign governments and international financial organizations. The leadership of TPLF in Tygreai is engaged in the creation of a monolithic authoritarian structure, and over the years has been transformed into a criminal organization rather than a political one” (p. 66).

In Chapter Four, Tecola Hagos deals with “Ethnic political programs of the OLF and Oromo Nationalism.” However, he neither discusses the OLF political program nor Oromo Nationalism. He claims that “the Oromo movements, the OLF, IFLO, and others lack leadership that could correctly reflect the needs and aspirations of the Oromo people” (p. 75). This is an accurate observation not for the reasons Tecola Hagos suggests, but for the failure of Oromo leadership to effectively challenge the TPLF tyranny and mobilize international support for the self-determination of Oromia.

Tecola Hagos, who probably may not have read anything about the *gada* system, dismisses it as an institution that has no relevance to the democratization process in Ethiopia and Africa. According to him, Oromo scholars and a handful of foreigners cite the *gada* system as

“... the so-called egalitarian and uniquely Oromo institutional structure. The fact of the matter is that the *gada* system is neither egalitarian nor unique. Africa sizzles with such age-generation oriented systems and hierarchical male-dominated structures. At any rate, the *gada* system is a primordial and obviously a pre-feudal structure not something in advance of such medieval structures. The *gada* system ... cannot fit with the modernity or even with the nascent democratization process in Ethiopia or other African nations” (p. 75).

This is an unscholarly statement which reflects Tecola Hagos’s bias towards and ignorance about the *gada* system, a classic example of an indigenous African democracy. The *gada* system has “... a rich source of ideas that can inspire and inform Constitutional thinkers in Africa” (Legesse 2000: xi). Contrary to what Tecola Hagos advocates, the *gada* system has special relevance to the democratization process in Africa. According to Professor Asmarom Legesse, a leading authority on the *gada* system:

Oromo democracy is one of those remarkable creations of the human mind that evolved into a full-fledged system of government as a result of five centuries of evolution and deliberate, rational, legislative transformation. It contains

genuinely African solutions for some of the problems that democracies everywhere have had to face (Ibid: 195).

For those who grew up on the steady diet of Abyssinian prejudice towards Oromo institutions, the *gada* system is a “pre-feudal structure” that has to be discarded. However, for the Oromo, there is no democratic future without the implementation of the principles of *gada* democracy. The *gada* democratic principles of accountability of elected leaders which limits their tenure of office to a defined eight year period, the principles of checks and balances, the separation of power and authority, the mechanism for sharing power, the extensive political discussion, the spirit of compromise, concession and consensus, which were the hallmark of traditional *gada* democracy (Hassen 1991: 21), are the treasures of ideas that have to be explored if democratic governance is to take root in the political culture of Oromia and other parts of Africa. Tecola Hagos goes on to state that Oromo scholars

“... spend their leisure time crafting and writing hateful, anti-democratic, and extremely narrow views on political and social interactions of people in Ethiopia. For example, they promoted the racist use of Latin alphabets as ‘the’ alphabet for Oromo languages or dialects foregoing the authentic African alphabet of Geez, which these ‘intellectuals’ identified with Amhara culture” (pp. 75-76).

Tecola Hagos did not give a single example of hateful, anti-democratic literature produced by Oromo intellectuals. He did not explain why the use of a Latin alphabet makes the Oromo racist. Does the use of a Latin alphabet for writing the book under review make him a racist? It is truly irrational to equate the use of a Latin alphabet with racism.

Tecola Hagos probably does not know the scientific reason behind adoption of the Latin alphabet for the Oromo language. This needs explanation and warrants long discussion.

Tecola Hagos presumably wants the Oromo to abandon the use of the Latin alphabet in favour of Ethiopic script. What he does not realize is that the Ethiopic script has three major shortcomings when

used for the Oromo language. First, the Ethiopic script “has only seven vowels as opposed to ten vowels” of the Oromo language. What is more, vowels of the Ethiopic script “ . . . do not have sound representation for (Demie, 1995: 25) the Oromo language. Second, there is a difference in consonants and glottal stops and thirdly, there is the problem of germination. In short, the Ethiopic script does not include some of the major phonological distinctions in the Oromo language; that is to say, it fails to express some particular sounds in the Oromo language. In the words of the late Professor Andrejeweski, a leading expert on the Cushitic languages including Oromo Ethiopic script:

... does not show the germination of consonants and it is ill-fitted to represent the vowel sound. In Oromo there are six basic vowel qualities and in five of them three degrees of length are distinguished, thus requiring either 16 vowel symbols or six vowel symbols together with special devices for indicating three degrees of length in five of them. Accordingly, either the present script has to be modified or an even more drastic change would be the change over to the Latin script (Andrejeweski: 1980,127).

It was the OLF that first started official use of the Latin alphabet for the Oromo language. The political program of the OLF which was amended in 1976 stated its objective: To develop the Oromo language and bring it out of [the] neglect that colonialism has imposed upon it” (OLF: 1976). For the first time since the colonization of Oromia, the revival of the Oromo language and the cultivation of its literature became part and parcel of the struggle for self-determination. From the very beginning, the OLF leadership appears to have realized that the Oromo language is not only the core of Oromo identity, but it is also “ . . . the fountain of all the springs that give dynamism and vitality to the Oromo nation. It is the most vital, the richest, and the finest bond that unites the Oromo into a single historic whole” (Oromo: 1988, 54). Hence, after the formation of the OLF, the question of adopting an alphabet for writing in the Oromo language assumed a new dimension. It was no longer a question of using either Ethiopic or Arabic or even the Oromo script of Shaykh Bakri for writing in the

Oromo language. It was a question of adopting the Latin alphabet so as to revolutionize the production of literature in that language. Using a Latin alphabet for the Oromo language has the following eight advantages over an Ethiopic alphabet. These are:

1. The number of letters is very small. Oromiffa [Afaan Oromoo] can be written using only 31 letters . . . compared to 182 letters of Geez [Ethiopic] script.
2. The use of Latin script would not put any additional burden on the children who have to learn English or want to learn other foreign languages which use the Latin alphabets . . .
3. The Latin script can be easily printed and typed with machines used for English, Italian, French or Slavic languages with only minor adjustments.
4. The Latin script is very economical, i.e. easy to learn, easy to print and has a quick result.
5. The Latin script has very simple letters. There is no unnecessary line and looping in the letters that are problematic with the Geez script.
6. The Latin script could be easily used for commercial and telegraphic communication purposes. In addition, its alphabetic writings can be easily adapted to computer technology which are very important in business and education.
7. Each letter in the alphabet stands for a single sound unit.
8. Last, but not least, the Latin script can accept further modification without changes in its foundation. It can also be used for science and mathematical work to be adapted to the language (Demie, 1995, 26)

It was these advantages that revolutionized the production of literature in the Oromo language. When I visited the liberated areas of western Oromia (Wallaga) in 1984, I witnessed for the first time in my life, Oromo men and women, young and old learning in their language. I was truly impressed by the amount of literary material I saw in the areas controlled by the OLF. Before my visit to the liberated areas of Wallaga, I never imagined that every subject from science to political economy, from philosophy to poetry, was written and taught in Afaan Oromo. This is a great achievement in itself. However, this achievement was limited only to small areas controlled by the OLF. The collapse of

the Ethiopian military regime in May 1991, and the OLF participation in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia created a wonderful opportunity for the explosion of Oromo literature. According to Dr. Tilahun Gamta:

... the OLF convened a meeting of Oromo scholars and intellectuals on November 3, 1991. The purpose of the meeting was to adopt the Latin script the OLF had been using or suggest an alternative. Over 1,000 men and women attended the historic meeting which met in the parliament building in Finfinnee. After hours of discussions and deliberations, it was unanimously decided that the Latin script be adopted (Gamta: 1993, 36).

The Latin alphabet which the OLF has been using since 1974 was transformed in 1991 into Qubee Afaan Oromoo, an Oromo alphabet, that gained popularity with remarkable speed. Oromo scholars and intellectuals decided to adopt the Latin alphabet on the basis of "scientific studies and sound arguments that considered the nature and the characteristics of the Oromo language" (Demie, 1995, 25) and after taking into account linguistic, pedagogic and practical factors. That decision was historic because the Latin alphabet is "the most highly developed and the most convenient system of writing ... readily adaptable to almost any language" (Gamta: 1993, 37). According to Dr. Demessie G. Yahii, computer engineer, who conducted a scientific study on "Distribution of Letters in oromiffa Text," the linguistic property of the Oromo language "... makes a perfect match with the Latin alphabet - the short vowel phonemes are represented with each of the five vowel letters while the long vowel phonemes are represented by doubling of the vowel letters" (Yahii, 1994, 66). Professor Yahii goes on to suggest that "... the Latin alphabet serves the Oromo language better than the English language" (71). This is an interesting observation that confirms the practicality of using the Latin alphabet for the Oromo and other Cushitic languages. It was this practicality that persuaded the Somali government to adopt the Latin alphabet as a national orthography in 1972. It was the same factor that encouraged a number of Cushitic

language-speaking ethnic groups in Ethiopia to adopt the Latin alphabet since 1991. Be that as it may, one thing is for certain about the Oromo language. "The choice of the Latin alphabet, not only facilitates the teaching-learning process and guarantees the steady growth of the language, but also contributes to the psychological liberation of the Oromo people" (Djote: 1993, 20).

The decision to adopt the Latin alphabet which has the support of Oromo intellectuals and all Oromo political organizations (Zitelmann, 1996, 292) was truly dramatic. From 1974 when the OLF started to develop the Oromo language and 1991 when Oromo intellectuals decided to adopt the Latin alphabet for the same purpose was only 17 years, but the changes these short years brought about in the Oromo determination to reassert their identity and develop their language are so profound with huge implication for the future of Oromo literature.

"Who would have imagined in 1974 that in less than twenty short years the Oromo language would have its Latin alphabet which is used in primary schools all over Oromia? Who would have imagined in 1974 that in less than twenty short years the ideological struggle over the fate of Oromia would be conducted in the Oromo language both in the print and broadcast media? Who would have imagined in 1974, when there was no reading material in the Oromo language that by 1994, it would be almost impossible to keep up with reading the literature produced in the same language?" "Who would have imagined in 1974 that in 1993 and 1994 alone more material would be produced in the Oromo language than from 1880 to 1992? In 1993 and 1994 alone eight million copies of fifty-eight textbooks were published in the Oromo language" (Barber, 1994). For those of us who lived through the years when writing, preaching, teaching, and broadcasting in the Oromo language were banned when the Oromo were denied the basic democratic right of using their own language for educating their children, and today when Oromo children learn their mother tongue and the Oromo society is engaged in intellectual reconstruction, using its own resources to create its own knowledge system; the speed with which the Oromo elite faced the challenge of revolutionizing production of literature in the Oromo language is truly remarkable! (Hassen 1996:)

There is no doubt the development took place in Ethiopia in 1991, created a favourable situation for the growth of the Oromo language.

... To the amazement of many, Oromo language has established itself, in a matter of only [a] few years, as a prestigious, fast-growing, expressive and refined working language. New vocabularies and expressions that fit the changing demands of modernity have been added; dialectical variations of the different Oromo communities are being standardized; basic grammatical rule[s] established; and requirements needed for transforming Oromo language into a language of the arts and literature are being met (Djote: 1993, 20).

After the Oromo intellectuals officially adopted the Latin alphabet for the Oromo language in 1991, it was quickly transformed into the “devil’s script’ This recalls the old image of the ‘devil’s tongue’ which the Oromo language had in a Christian tradition of the Ethiopian empire” (Zitelmann, 1996, 290). Linking the language, Latin alphabet and the devil is part of the demonization of the Oromo Equating the use of the Latin alphabet with racism is part of that process

Surprisingly, it was not only the Oromo who adopted a Latin based alphabet, but several Cushitic speaking people of Ethiopia including the Afars, the Somalis, the Sidama, and others. And yet, it is mainly the use of Qubee, which became the battle cry for settler clergy in Oromia and the supporters of the old order. In other words, the strong opposition against the use of Qubee is spearheaded by those who aspire to restore the pre-1991 order in Ethiopia I am not sure if Tecola Hagos is aware of the agenda of those who oppose the use of the Latin alphabet for the Oromo language. I am also not sure if Tecola Hagos realizes that the Latin alphabet is the most popular and the most practical writing system in the world, which is readily adaptable to almost all the four thousand languages spoken in the world (Fischer 2001: 315). The Latin alphabet “has become the world’s most important writing system” (Ibid., pp. 7, 292, which will outlive most of the writing systems in the world including Ethiopic.

If the future lies with computer-based societies and economies, then non-Latin alphabetic systems will have to adapt or suffer the economic and social consequences It alone is now meeting the unprecedented requirements of our modern world, leaving all other writing systems and scripts behind those who choose to use it and join the new technology will be those who profit (Ibid, pp. 314-315).

What must be understood clearly is the fact that the Oromo and other Cushitic-speaking people of Ethiopia have the basic right to choose any writing system that promotes the development of their languages based purely on the literary, practical, and scientific quality of that particular writing system. Interestingly, those who oppose the use of Qubee for the Oromo language, oppose it not because they hate the Latin alphabet per se, but for two interrelated reasons. First, they oppose it because they connect the use of the Latin alphabet for the Oromo language, with a threat to the future of Ethiopia. What will pose a real threat to the future of Ethiopia is not the use of the Latin alphabet for Cushitic languages, but the narrow vision of Ethiopian elites who do not allow the flowering of languages other than Semitic languages. There are many countries in the world where different writing systems are used, and their users live in peace with each other.

There is no reason why a similar situation will not develop in Ethiopia. Secondly, Ethiopian elites oppose the use of Qubee for the Oromo language because the use of the Latin alphabet establishes the Oromo language as a rich literary language in Ethiopia. Such a prospect haunts cultural chauvinists who equate the development of the Oromo language with the specter of the disintegration of what is left of the Ethiopian empire after the formal independence of Eritrea in 1993. The Oromo have no desire to build an empire, but they have a sacred mission to develop their language and cultivate its literature through the use of Qubee.

Tecola Hagos believes that Oromo intellectuals' promotion of the Latin alphabet is misguided and it reflects their low self-esteem.

The irrationality of such a position is beyond comprehension, they ended up choosing the alphabet of imperialist and

colonial alien powers who had destroyed, exterminated, enslaved, and oppressed Africans for four hundred years, to that of an indigenous African one. This is a clear example of low self-esteem, insecurity, and self-hate. Some intellectuals who come from relatively underdeveloped nations suffer as a result of their sojourn in highly developed western nations (p. 78).

Tecola Hagos's ignorance about the Latin alphabet leaves a lot to be desired. The Latin alphabet was not even a European invention. Europeans borrowed it from others because it was adaptable to their languages. "The earliest alphabet appears to have been elaborated in Egypt over four thousand years ago" (Fisher 2001: 8). The Phoenicians borrowed the ancient Egyptian alphabets. The Greeks, in turn, borrowed it from the Phoenicians and adopted it "to the immediate needs of the local language" (Fisher 2001: 124). The Romans borrowed it from the Greeks. Hence the birth of the Latin alphabet. The Latin alphabet was not responsible for European colonial domination of Africa, as the Ethiopic alphabet was not responsible for Menelik's conquest of Oromia, his enslavement, extermination of the Oromo and expropriation of their land. If some unnamed Oromo intellectuals 'suffer' from low self-esteem, insecurity and self-hate, it is not because of their sojourn in the developed western world, but it is because of Ethiopian colonialism that destroyed their pride in their civilization and kept them chained, "with no faith in themselves, their history, and national identity" (Hassen 1990: 3).

Tecola Hagos goes on accusing Oromo intellectuals of more serious crimes:

[T]he Oromo intellectuals wrote about solutions by extermination, murder, and eviction of equally oppressed people who might have settled in the area from other parts of Ethiopia at different times, people whose current presence in the so-called Oromo land have little to do with the political power game in Ethiopia. Some of these settlements go back over five hundred years predating the Oromo expansion and invasion (p. 76).

Tecola Hagos does not give a single example of an Oromo intellectual who wrote about killing and evicting non-Oromo from Oromia. Oromo cultural ethos and *gada* principles do not allow for extermination and eviction of non-Oromo from Oromia. The Oromo pride themselves by living peacefully with non-Oromo. Fear of extermination and expulsion from Oromia is projected on the Oromo by those who are opposed to the consolidation of the federal structure in Oromia and Ethiopia. Tecola Hagos also does not give a single example of people who settled in what is today Oromia, some five hundred years ago, from where presumably they were expelled since 1991.

“One should not overlook the fact that the Oromo people started out some five hundred years ago from a small area in the south, near the Kenyan border” (p. 76). This is not correct historically on two grounds. First the Oromo did not start migrating some five hundred years. Oromo population movement started much earlier than Tecola Hagos suspects. Secondly, the Oromo did not start their movement into the north from the Kenyan border. They started it from Bale, which is not near the Kenyan border. I agree with Tecola Hagos that “there can be no political justification to murder unarmed, peaceful, and poor farmers anywhere on the basis of ethnic differences” (p. 76). Tecola Hagos was among the few Ethiopian intellectuals who realized that the human rights violations directed against one national group is directed against all the peoples of Ethiopia. Other Ethiopian intellectuals selectively report the murder of one ethnic group while ignoring that of the Oromo. What is more, Ethiopian intellectuals and human rights activists did not raise their voices when between 1992 to 1994, from 45,000-50,000 Oromo Nationals were detained at four major concentration camps in Oromia—namely, Hurso in Hararghe, Agarfa in Bale, Belate in Sidamo and Didessa in Wallaga. “A total of 3,000 people died from malaria, malnutrition and diarrhea diseases between the four camps” from 1992-1994 (Pollock 1996: 12). Ethiopian intellectuals and human rights activists did not raise their voices about the mass killings of the Oromo in the town of Watar on March 25, 1992, and Awaday in Hararghe, Meta Robi in Shawa, the killings of several hundred Oromo

in Borana in October and November 1996, “... The TPLF soldiers never spared even pregnant women or youth; they killed several pregnant women and hundreds of Oromo children between the ages of 12 and 16” (Jalata 2000: 79-80). The killings still continue without an end in sight. There are more Oromo in prison today, than at any time during the seventeen years of military dictatorship. Tecola Hagos, the author of *Demystifying Political Thought, Power and Economic Development* is accurate and should be commended for stating succinctly that “... the record of the current Ethiopian government is as bad as, if not worse than the brutal regime of Mengistu” (p. 173). Tecola Hagos establishes conclusively that the TPLF-dominated regime has established state terrorism in Ethiopia. In Oromia, as in other states in Ethiopia, terrorism “... deals with disappearances and secret executions where bodies are left in street alleys, country roads, fields, and bushes” (p. 47)

Tecola Hagos claimed that “... a number of Meison leaders, who were mostly Oromo, adopted post-modern thinking in order to redefine Marxist-Lenist ideologies as a justification for processes of fragmentation and ethnic empowerment” (p. 77). This sounds like a former EPRDF member (which Hagos was) selectively condemning Meison for the current situation in Ethiopia. He is wrong to claim that most of the Meison leaders were Oromo. They were not. There were only a few prominent Oromo within the leadership of the Meison. The majority of Meison leaders were Amharas. Tecola Hagos is wide of the mark by making the following assertion. “The current Oromo ‘Nationalist’ organization such as the OLF are either a recreation of former Meison members or by sympathetic former supporters” (p. 77). This demonstrates Tecola Hagos’ ignorance about Oromo politics. The OLF was created by genuine Oromo Nationalist and not turncoat opportunists. For many years, Meison members regarded OLF members and supporters as “narrow nationalists.” In this, they were not different from EPRP members and the Dergue regime. Tecola Hagos is also wrong in characterizing that Negasso Gidada “... as one time Meison member” (p. 74). He was an OLF supporter, who joined the OPDO and became the archenemy of the OLF. Meles Zenawi appointed him as the nominal president of Ethiopia in the hope that Negasso would

win the minds and the hearts of the Oromo for the TPLF regime. However, Negasso failed miserably in his mission of winning the cooperation, much less the trust and confidence of the Oromo for his master. This may be why Negasso was disgracefully expelled from OPDO membership and his elder brother, Solomon Gidada, now lives as a miserable refugee in England. So far, it appears that the reward for serving Meles Zenawi has been disgraceful dismissal from positions of power, and exile, if one is lucky to escape from imprisonment and the TPLF secret assassination in Ethiopia. "Neither the TPLF nor its satellite organization can survive the lives of their current leaders because of seriously flawed organizational structure and programs. All these organizations run the risk of becoming crime syndicates because of the indistinct and blurred boundaries between the Ethiopian government and the IPLDF/EPRDF political organizations" (p. 69). This is an accurate observation as the history of the past years demonstrates. Tecola Hagos also articulates the following accurate observation:

Since the current government is run as a virtual Tigrean government, one must inquire as to the benefit of having Tygraei as part of Ethiopia. What is the economic contribution of Tygraei to the rest of Ethiopia? The single item from Tygraei of some economic value is the farming of oil-seeds, from recently acquired areas in Humera, but that produce is destined for export, and a source of hard currency for the TPLF: it has minimal impact on the economy of Ethiopia Tygraei seems to have a parasitic and exploitative relationship with the rest of Ethiopia A parasite that over feeds on its host will only shorten its own life and that of the host (pp. 154-155)

Such an accurate and insightful observation of the relationship between the privileged state of Tigray and the rest of Ethiopia demonstrates the consolidation of the hegemonic power of the TPLF. The sons of former Tigrayan feudal lords (Hagos 1995: 55) who suffer from " . . . alarming tendencies towards despotism, authoritarianism, narcissism and ferocious love of material and worldly comfort" (Ibid,

131) have a long term goal of dominating the Ethiopian political landscape In his own words, “. . . The TPLF . . . power structure . . . is going to be around for quite a long period before the general public recovers its autonomy and political rights. Ethiopians are going to experience the worst form of oppression and corruption for decades to come under TPLF” (p. 86).

Finally, despite Tecola Hagos’s probably unintended biases toward the *gada* system and his strong opposition to the use of the Latin alphabet for the Oromo language and other weaknesses that have not been mentioned, *Demystifying Political thought, Power, and Economic Development* is a very good book It not only shows Tecola Hagos’s intellectual maturity, but it also reveals his profound knowledge of TPLF dominated Ethiopian politics. His emphasis on respect for human rights and the need for the creation of a democratic political culture in Ethiopia is admirable His appeal to the opposition forces to cooperate in order to end TPLF tyranny is timely and desirable. His depiction of the brutish character of TPLF leaders with such honesty and integrity makes this an invaluable addition to the growing literature on TPLF tyranny in Ethiopia.

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Greg Gow. *The Oromo in Exile from the Horn of Africa to the Suburbs of Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002, 170 pages. Price \$16.00.

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This highly valuable book embodies the results of the author's research and extended experience among the Oromo in Melbourne, Australia, becoming their friend and "a de facto Oromo" (p. 25). Greg Gow's research was not limited to the Oromo in Melbourne. He participated in an Oromo Studies Association Conference in the United States and traveled among the Oromo diaspora in North America and the United Kingdom and also made an eight-week trip to Ethiopia, where he had "... stepped upon biyya Oromo (Oromo country) the bedrock of Orommumma [Oromoness] ... I too planted roots in the nourishing soil of Oromiya" (p. 30). Indeed, it was among the Oromo in the diaspora as well as in Oromiya itself that his love for our people, respect for our culture, admiration for their heroic resistance against brutal colonial domination and fascination with the beauty, depth, and richness of the Oromo language developed, all of which are reflected in and expressed through the pages of this beautifully written book.

Through conversation with his Oromo friends, Greg Gow realized that in the circle of hostilities between the Abyssinians and the Oromo "neutrality is a one-sided affair" (*Ibid*). As an activist scholar who experienced at close range the pain and suffering of many of his Oromo friends, he decided to become "a ... voice and source of hope for a desperate group of people forgotten, disempowered, and subjugated" (pp. 24-25). In fact, the book was inspired by and written for the purpose of articulating Oromo experience in exile in Australia. I am most delighted to state at the onset that Dr. Greg Gow's book will serve as a model for studying the large Oromo diaspora in North America, Europe, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. It is an excellent book which is original in its scholarship, a path-breaking work on its focus, among

others, on Oromo colonial experience, economic exploitation, political subjugation, cultural dehumanization and human rights abuses that forced the Oromo to go into exile in foreign lands. Although the author does not mention it, the book grew out of a Ph.D dissertation which was originally submitted under the title of "The Language of Culture and the Culture of Language: Oromo Identity in Melbourne, Australia" I was one of the external examiners of that dissertation. I am impressed with the speed with which Dr. Greg Gow changed his dissertation into a fascinating book, the first major work on the Oromo diaspora anywhere in the world. Above all, I am most impressed with the quality of his scholarship, original interpretation of Oromo experience in exile in Australia, depth in analysis, logic in reasoning, sophistication in argument, lucidity and clarity in presentation, and above all for emphasizing "a unity of identity common to all Oromo in exile" (p. 3) and for his objectivity as a translator of Oromo language and culture.

Greg Gow is a well-read scholar who expresses his ideas with charm and clarity. This is eloquently demonstrated through the pages of *The Oromo in Exile* which explores "... the dynamic role of language in the process of cultural formation." The book has nine chapters that "... deal with the various forms of language — written, spoken, and sung — and their ideological, linguistic, musical, literary, and religious expressions" (p. 2).

The Oromo in Exile beautifully depicts that the Oromo who constitute a good half of the population of Ethiopia (p.10), are united by language, culture, custom, similar world view undergrid by the democratic *gada* system and historical experience of cruel colonialism, which engendered the development of Oromo Nationalism which, in turn, gave birth to the Oromo Liberation front (OLF in 1974) and other Oromo organizations. The Ethiopian military regime (1974-1991) responded to the development of Oromo Nationalism by intensifying brutal suppression of the Oromo which resulted in the exodus of tens of thousands of Oromo from Oromiya. The earliest Oromo settlers in Melbourne in 1984 (p.) were the product of that exodus.

Greg Gow makes it clear that the change of government in Ethiopia in 1991, and the participation of the Oromo Liberation front

(OLF) in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) raised the Oromos' hope for democratic governance, self-determination, and respect for human rights in Oromiya. However, instead of democratic governance, the TPLF forced the OLF to withdraw from the TGE, and consolidated its hegemony in Oromiya; instead of self-determination, the TPLF has intensified powerfulness and subjugation of the Oromo; instead of respect for human rights, the TPLF has created a nightmare of fear and terror in Oromiya. Since 1992, "... masses of Oromo civilians from all walks of life, both men and women, were imprisoned without trial or charge, tortured or extrajudicially killed. Many were held in secret detention canthers . . . others simply disappeared" (p. 10). Greg Gow's concern about human rights violations in Oromiya is not limited to its documentation, but he was one among the individuals who established "the Oromia Support Group in Australia," (for which he has been serving as the secretary, p.25). Through his participation in the activities of Oromia Support Group, Greg Gow has made a significant contribution to the collective endeavor whose goal is bringing human rights violations in Oromiya to the attention of the international community. *The Oromia in Exile* will put the Oromo diaspora on the intellectual map of the world. It will encourage other studies on the Oromo diaspora. It adds to a growing literature in the field of Oromo studies.

Of the nine chapters of *The Oromo in Exile*, chapters five and six (pp 56-85) deal with the universal appeal of Oromo music, and the role great Oromo singers play in keeping the fire of Oromo struggle burning among the diaspora and in sustaining their commitment to that struggle and nourishing their yearning to return home to Oromiya. So far, there is only one minor published article that establishes the connection between Oromo music and the development of Oromo Nationalism. I believe Dr. Greg Gow is on to a much more fertile and rich area of scholarship by exploring the importance of music to the Oromo diaspora in Melbourne. "Music provides the means of transcending the limitations of our own place in the world, of 'constructing trajectories rather than boundaries across spaces'" (p. 60) Oromo music carries the diaspora on its wing of joy to the beautiful

land of Oromiya that is etched on to their mind, the land from which they were forced into exile. For the diasporan Oromo, Oromiya is the stuff of their dreams, their hopes, aspirations and their discussions at conferences and other public gatherings

Because so many people have paid such a high price for the struggle, they cannot imagine life without it. Music feeds their imagination by providing points of connection with [Oromiya] and the struggle of the past For many of Melbourne's Oromo, music does not merely evoke nostalgic memories of a place now gone but, rather serves as the primary means by which they are able to maintain connections with the land (biyya). Via a fusion of fantasy and real bodily practices, musical activities effectively define a space without boundaries, enabling Melbourne Oromo to materially relocate themselves from marginalized city-bound people to city-based Oromo with [strong] identities (p. 56).

Greg Gow has taken the first major step in exploring the rich universe of the Oromo music and its impact on the Oromo struggle. Though brief, he has also taken the lead in writing the history of Oromo cultural heroes such as Ali Birraa, a legend in his own lifetime, the famous singer who revolutionized and popularized Oromo music earning " . . . the utmost affection and respect among the worldwide Oromo community" (p. 58). Ali Birraa is "the voice of the Oromo yearning for freedom, independence, respect, human dignity, and happiness. He is an Oromo institution as well as their heritage." Ali Birraa is both the purveyor and conveyor of Oromo culture and identity. Through his person and music, he provides, supplies, transmits, and imparts Oromo culture" (p. 74). Other Oromo cultural heroes who are mentioned in *The Oromia in Exile* are Shantam Shubisa, Afandi Siyo, and Ture Lenco in Melbourne as well as Amartii Waarii, Kemer Youssef, Elmo Ali, the late Saalah Galmo, and Shamshi Quxoo in Canada. "Through their music," these Oromo cultural heroes "have made significant contributions over many years to the Oromo struggle" (p. 61). Among these Shantam Shubisa and Ture Lenco belong to the first

Oromo musical band that was established in 1960 in the City of Dire Dawa. Together with Ali Birraa and several others, they belong to the first generation of musicians who asserted an Oromo identity and facilitated the birth of ... “Oromo national consciousness” (p. 65). The first Oromo musical band was banned by the government of Emperor Haile Selassie in the 1960s. Since then, successive Ethiopian regimes have persecuted Oromo musicians. That persecution is at its worst today under the TPLF-dominated regime which has forced the majority of Oromo musicians into exile. That is why today, we find more Oromo musicians in the diaspora than in Oromiya itself. These musicians not only feed the imagination of the diaspora with beautiful Oromo songs, they also provide points of connection with home in the Horn of Africa and the struggle that goes on there to liberate Oromiya.

The Oromia in Exile is a fascinating book that expresses the profound desire of the Oromo in Melbourne to construct a home away from home. Such a desire is universal among the Oromo in the diaspora. It is this focus on the universal desire of the Oromo which makes this book timely and relevant.

... Throughout the journey of exploring the transformative role of language among Melbourne’s Oromo community, I have discovered that ‘home’ does not necessarily exist physically, but that the overriding desire to construct ‘home’ even away from ‘home’ is pervasive. The commitment of all Oromo people via the transformative role of language to creatively construct ‘home’ while away from ‘home’ is a process which this book both reflects and supports (p. 5).

Finally, despite minor weaknesses that are not mentioned in this review, *The Oromia in Exile* is an excellent book. It not only shows Greg Gow’s grounding in his discipline of anthropology, but it also reveals his knowledge of Oromo history, culture, and language. The author’s intellectual insights into complex issues of Oromo struggle and his analytical skills in explaining them in simple and clear language is remarkable. His love for the Oromo people and support for their human

JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES

and democratic rights is admirable. His clarity of thought, sense of purpose and good writing style is impressive. His knowledge of the condition of Oromo diaspora in Australia makes this an invaluable and much needed book on the study of larger Oromo diaspora in the world.

Ayele Bekerie. *Ethiopic: An African Writing System: Its History and Principles*, Lawrenceville, N.J.: The Red Sea press, 1997. 176 pages \$18.95.

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This book grew out of the author's 1994 Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Temple University, Philadelphia. At the beginning of the book, the author acknowledges by name, ninety-eight individuals and six institutions that contributed to this work directly or indirectly and to his intellectual development in the field of Afrocentric Studies. The author may be over generous with his acknowledgments as the following is an exaggeration: "The completion of this project marks the end of more than four decades of learning" (XI). However, he contradicts the statement with which he opened his book. "In the last ten years, I have conducted a systematic study of the Ethiopic writing system" (p. 142). Whether it was the result of the culmination of forty years of learning or ten years of research, the end result is one and the same. It is a book, written to refute Euro-centric theory of the origin of the Ethiopic writing system. The other name for the Ethiopic writing system is Geez writing system. Geez became the language of the Aksumite ruling elite. It was out of the Geez language that Tigrigna and Amharic developed later on. As Latin, today Geez is used mainly for church services.

Ayele Bekerie grounds his book in Afro-Centric theory. "... I contend that Africa ought to develop from its reservoir of knowledge systems a script or scripts reflective and inclusive of its own sensibilities and linguistic nuances" (p. 1). Unfortunately, however, the Ethiopic writing system which Ayele Bekerie wants to be adopted as a single writing system for all the languages in Ethiopia is neither a reservoir of knowledge nor is it suitable for non-Semitic languages of Ethiopia.

The author accuses several scholars for their biased views about the origin of the Ethiopic writing system and condemns them for "concoction disguised as truth." The author asserts that "Ethiopic

writing system is a writing system created and developed in Ethiopia and Eritrea” (p. 7). Indeed, that was the case. However, Ayele Bekerie denies that it was the Sabaeen writing system from South Arabia, that was used as a model for the development of the Ethiopic writing system. Such denial is turning truth on its head and ignoring the vast amount of research done on the Ethiopic writing system, by scholars who are more prolific, more knowledgeable, more objective, and more scientific in their works than Ayele Bekerie is. Developing African-centered knowledge is essential and necessary for reclaiming African heritage, reconstituting African identity based on African personality. However, such construction of knowledge should be based on scientific truth and historical evidence. Ayele Bekerie, who attacks many scholars for what he terms as “. . . mere ideological intent with no historical validity” (p. 45) falls into the same trap. For instance, he claims that the origin of the Ethiopic writing system “. . . may be traced back to a time period of at least 2000 B.C.” (Pp 73,142). This contradicts his earlier more accurate statement. “The exact date of its first creation is not yet known” (pp. 7, 61). What is more, as we shall see shortly, the Ethiopic writing system was developed during the first century of the Christian era, almost two thousand years after the time period claimed by Ayele Bekerie. “Emperor Ezana’s inscriptions are some of the most concrete historical evidence regarding the system and they are readily accessible” (p. 18). How could the inscriptions of Emperor Ezana (A.D. 303-360) be presented as evidence for the writing system whose supposed origin could be traced back to 2000 B.C.? There are three obvious purposes behind his claim. The first is to establish a long antiquity for the origin of the Ethiopic writing system. The second is to ground Ayele Bekerie’s research in the discipline of Afro-Centricity. “An African-centered perspective of history can not be sustained without its connection to the African culture of Ancient Egypt. This is important in grounding the history of the African people to a tangible center or time and space” (p. 15). The third is to attempt to establish, the Ethiopic writing system as “a tangible center of time and space” in the study of African histories and cultures” (Ibid). Ayele Bekerie correctly states that the “. . . creation, development, and advancement of Ethiopic writing systems primarily centers around

Aksum, Tigrai, in northern Ethiopia” (p. 65). However, he conveniently ignores a very important fact that demolishes the foundation of his untenable conclusion. That is, all written sources and other historical evidence clearly indicate that Aksum as a center of civilization developed during the first century of the Christian era. In order to connect the Ethiopic writing system with ancient Egyptian civilization, Ayele Bekerie ignores 2000 years of historical gap and establishes “organic link between” Egyptian and Ethiopic writing systems (p. 70). Such a cavalier attitude towards facts not only shows his lack of respect for historic truth, but it also shows the weakness of his Afro-Centric theory as a valid tool for historical reconstruction. It is on such bases that he links the Ethiopic writing system and that of Sinaitic script (pp. 70-73) that is ancient Egyptian writing system. The evidence the author presents in support of this untenable claim is the existence of the concept of B’al in the ancient Egyptian language. “B’al is a sacred term today in both the Geez and Amharic languages of Ethiopia. It is a collective term for holidays” (p. 71). Grasses were used for holidays in ancient Egypt. Grasses are still used as an “... integral part of the rituals during holidays in Ethiopia” (p. 72). Grasses are used in numerous Oromo rituals. Does this practice establish “an organic link” (p. 70) between ancient Egyptians and the Oromo and other people of Ethiopia? The question is not the use of grasses for ritual purposes which was common among many peoples in and beyond Africa. The question is how did the concept of B’al find its way into Geez and later into Amharic and other Semitic languages. It came through Christianity which was introduced to the Akumite Kingdom around A.D. 330 from Alexandria in Egypt. It was this event that was projected back to 2000 B.C. in the book under review!

The rise of Europe as a major power ... reaching its zenith in the 19th century—and its eventual conquest and occupation of over 85% of the world’s territory resulted in hegemonic ideology that is usually disguised as universalism (p. 12)

Ayele Bekerie holds the rise of European hegemony as the main factor for “fabricating” the south Arabian origin of the Ethiopic writing system “Archaeology colluded with the 19th century European ideological

and hegemonic design to negate the authenticity of the Ethiopic writing system.

The Ethiopic writing system and its associated cultural products, I contend are the work of an African people” (p. 9). The evidence he presents in support of his assertion is that “Geez is not a Semitic language. . . The classification of Geez as a Semitic language is a rather arbitrary and recent European one” (p. 49) The authority he cites in support of his untenable conclusion is Hailu Habitu’s unpublished “Preliminary notes on Ethiopian history.” Ayele Bekerie, who establishes a non-existent connection between the ancient Egyptian and Ethiopic writing systems, denies the irrefutable historic link between the Ethiopic writing system and South Arabian

The lack of evidence to support the South Arabian origin of [the Ethiopic writing system] in fact, places the proposition squarely into the realm of ideology and not history. It is our contention that the paradigm was an invention — an invention of 19th century imperial Europe. It was invented to facilitate the continued colonization and present neo-colonization of Africa by Europe or imperialism” (p. 34).

Ayele Bekerie is correct in emphasizing that ancient northeast Africa had trade and cultural contacts, not only with South Arabia, but also with the neighboring civilizations of Nubia and Egypt. However, he is wrong in denying the strong south Arabian influence on early civilization in northeast Africa

South Arabia was invented to minimize the testimony of the Aksum steale or the innumerable and priceless Ethiopian manuscripts and other valuable historical artifacts such as coinage, pottery, and dressed statues- the historical and cultural achievements of an African people. It is a testimony that would have undermined the ‘civilizing mission’ of the Europeans (p. 39)

Ayele Bekerie never bothered to define the African people who created the Aksumite civilization. They were the Cushitic language-speaking peoples, the original inhabitants of the land. There were also

Semitic immigrants who came from across the Red Sea and settled among the Cushitic-speaking peoples in northeast Africa. The immigrants brought with them their cultural heritage including their writing system. The table on page 41 of the book under review clearly demonstrates that it was the Sabaeen, or the South Arabian writing system that was used as a model for the development of the Geez or Ethiopic writing system. There is no doubt that the development of the Ethiopic writing system was one of the great achievements of the Aksumite civilization. Ayele Bekerie is correct in emphasizing this aspect in his book (pp. 7, 19, 65, 147-148). However, he failed to grasp the simple fact that “writing is not a criterion for civilization” (Fischer 2001: 35). There were many societies with highly sophisticated civilization without developing writing systems. “Communication of human thought, in general can be achieved in many different ways, speech being only one of them. And writing, among other uses, is only one form of conveying human speech” (Ibid 11). Hundreds of different writing systems or scripts were developed by different people on earth, most of which are now extinct. A writing system is useful when it reflects the sound properties of a given language. For instance, the Ethiopic writing system does not reflect the sound properties of the Oromo language. And yet Ayele Bekerie urges the Oromo to abandon the use of the Latin alphabet in favor of an Ethiopic one.

It is our contention that the Oromo language could find a sounder script in the Ethiopic system, The Latin script currently in use among some Oromo circles, in my opinion, limits or compromises the rich and varied polyrhythmic sounds of the Oromo language [the Oromo use of Ethiopic system] . . . would strengthen the pan-Ethiopian organic unity among the Ethiopian people (pp. 94-95).

Ayele Bekerie brushes aside the reason why the Oromo adopted the Latin alphabet instead of the Ethiopic writing system. He does not explain why the use of the Latin alphabet limits the Oromo language sound properties. It is not clear how the Oromo’s use of the Ethiopic system would strengthen organic unity among the Ethiopian people. The Irish and the English use the same writing system and the same

language. But they are divided much less than having organic unity. There are several writing systems that are currently in use in India. The different writing systems have not created disunity in India. What creates disunity in Ethiopia are Abyssinian hegemony about which Ayele Bekerie is totally silent.

Finally, *Ethiopic. An African Writing System Its History and Principles* is difficult to read and understand. The author jumps from one argument to another without establishing a clear transition. He attacks the works of scholars who do not fit in with his Afro-Centric perspective. His grounding in Afro-Centric studies is strong as his published articles demonstrate. His emphasis on the Africans as makers of their history and inventors of their own institutions is well intentioned. His use of Afro-centric theory to explain the impact of European hegemony on Africa is interesting. However, his silence about Abyssinian hegemony leaves a lot to be desired.

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Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson, 2001. *Ghosts and Shadows Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 261 pages, \$21.95.

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The authors of the book under review are Canadian scholars from similar and different backgrounds; Similar because of their professions Atsuko Matsuoka is an Associate Professor of Social work at York University, while John Sorenson is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Brock University. Different because, Atsuko Matsuoka is a Japanese immigrant to Canada, who is a strong feminist and progressive scholar. In fact, the book is dedicated to her feminist mother Matsuoka Yoriko. John Sorensen is a humanitarian scholar and staunch supporter of the Eritrean struggle under the leadership of EPLF. The authors provide more space for the Oromo and Eritrean voices who are marginalized in the discourse on Ethiopia by successive Ethiopian regimes and their supporters who tirelessly tried to exclude and discredit the Oromo and Eritrean voices. The authors present the Oromo and Eritrean voices in such ways that make sense to them and the book reflects their views (p 23). In other words, the book under review deals with the Diaspora groups from the Horn of Africa, namely, the Oromo, Eritreans, and Ethiopians who have settled in Canada and are also ignored in the “discussion of Canadian multi-culturalism.” By using the concept of “long distance Nationalism,” the authors explore how the Oromo, the Eritreans, and Ethiopians, negotiate a new identity in Canada while maintaining their nationalism with its attendant myths of homeland and return (p 7) *Ghosts and Shadows Construction of Identity and Community in an African Daspora*, deals with two interrelated phenomena; on the one hand, the book traces, how the Oromo, Eritrean, and Ethiopian diasporas are shaped by conflicting narratives of history and shows their commitments to the nationalist struggles in Oromia, Eritrea, and

Ethiopia. On the other hand, the “book examines the influence of the past. It looks at how the past continues to affect the present in the lives of the diasporas populations (p 3). “The past is not always the past,” as there is no complete break between the past and the present. The authors adopt the concepts of Ghosts and shadows through which they explore “the recreation of communities in exile and the invisible forces that haunt them through myths of ‘home land’ and return. The authors claim that “paying attention to ghosts and shadows allows us to understand aspects of social imagination, ways of knowledge and being that are neither purely subjective, or objective” (pp. 3, 5). The authors use the term diaspora to describe the communities from the Horn of Africa who have been displaced through military and political conflicts as well as immigration and labor migrations. They use the term exile to discuss “individual experiences of coerced displacement” (p.7). The Horn of Africa diaspora communities in Canada are guided by an activist leadership, which mobilized the human, material, and spiritual resources of their communities in the name and interest of “... the economy, culture, and politics of the homeland” (p.7). Matsuoka and Sorenson are accurate in linking the African diaspora in Canada with contested identities in the Horn of Africa.

Typically, nationalists seek to create a distinct homeland on the ‘the spot;’ however, for exiles, ideas of home are elaborated in ghostly spaces of memory and imagination. Unlike immigrants who are seeking new homes, diaspora populations maintain important links to their original homeland and are not easily assimilated (p.12)

The authors claim “Italian colonialism was instrumental in creation of Eritrean nationalism; and protestant missionaries promoted literacy and a sense of identity among Oromos, while Ethiopian identity derives symbolic strength from its anti-colonial resistance” (p. 9). It was not the literacy by Protestant missionaries that created modern Oromo nationalism. Though literacy by Protestants missionaries was important in itself, it was limited mainly to Wallaga, western Oromia. As Italian colonialism was instrumental in the creation of Eritrean

Nationalism, Ethiopian Colonialism was instrumental in the creation of Oromo nationalism. This means both Eritrean and Oromo nationalisms were created by colonialism. To reduce Ethiopian identity (that is Abyssinian identity) to resistance against foreign colonialism is to loose sight of and display ignorance about the Abyssinian identity that was based on Orthodox Christianity, the throne and Amhara and Tigray unity against their common enemies. However, the authors make an interesting observation about the Abyssinian domination of the Oromo “...Under Abyssinian domination, most of the Oromo population was enslaved and the cultural alienation they experienced was comparable to that of groups colonized by Europeans (p.31). In fact, Oromo cultural alienation, economic exploitation, psychological humiliation, and powerlessness were far worse than many colonized groups in Africa. As colonial subjects, the Oromo have legitimate right to self-determination. The change of regimes in Ethiopia in 1991 did not change the reality of Oromo powerlessness as the TPLF continued with Abyssinian domination of the Oromo and control of the resources of Oromia. The authors, who have so much praise for Eritrean nationalism, express their fear of and alarm about Oromo nationalism

“... While we criticize exploitation of and discrimination against Oromo and other groups, essentialist and xenophobic statements by some Oromo nationalists distrurb us. We are not convinced that an independent state based on Oromo ethnicity would be a just solution for the non-Oromo population, who automatically and necessarily would be assigned second-class status within such an entity”(p. 24).

The authors fully support independence as a just solution for all nine nationalities in Eritrea. However, they deny the application of similar principle for the Oromo, who are colonial subjects. This is a double standard that is manifested in one form or the other throughout all the nine chapters of the book under review. As far as I know, Oromo nationalists, especially OLF leaders, have never claimed that Oromia is only for the Oromo. The OLF Political Program clearly states that the rights of the minorities will be fully respected. To me, freely self-

governing Oromia belongs to all its people, who will accept and respect its future constitution, designed by the people for the people in order to firmly establish their liberty, justice for all, and the pursuit of happiness. There are many Eritreans who boast about the greatness of their nationalism and its uniqueness in the Horn of Africa. However, there is not a single reference in this book, to an essentialist and xenophobic statements by any Eritrean nationalists. And yet, the authors use every silly statement uttered by an Oromo to demonstrate the essentialist character of Oromo nationalism, thus, implying that independence is not a just solution in Oromia.

Nationalism is different from each other. This is because all nations are imagined communities, including Eritreans and the Oromo. Both Eritrea and Oromia are imagined in their own separate ways.

Eritrean nationalist discourse conceives of identity not as fixed, but as something that has evolved over time under particular conditions. Oromo nationalism sometimes reflects a similar view, but more typically, it is presented as the reanimation of a distinct cultural spirit that had been buried under Amhara oppression. Oromo nationalism conceives of identity as a reawakening; Eritrean nationalism emphasizes the historical production of identity. Thus, two different conceptualizations have been employed in the process of constructing identities (p.52).

Anyone with some knowledge of Oromo history and the gada system easily realizes that the Oromo identity is not fixed. Rather it is the production of Oromo history. Oromo nationalism does not conceive of identity as reawakening. It is the suppressed Oromo culture which is presented as reawakening in the discourse on Oromo nationalism. It is the flowering of literature in the Oromo language, which is presented as renaissance. It is the development of a universe of Oromo music and the Oromo perception of the richness of their cultural heritage and how others perceive it, which is presented as reanimation. The authors state and rightly that "Ethiopian nationalists refused to acknowledge that Eritreans generally had developed a profound sense

of grievance, as a result of the oppressive tactics of successive Ethiopian regimes.”(p 149). However, the authors failed to realize that the Oromo have also profound sense of grievance against the successive Ethiopian regimes, including the TPLF-based government that is currently terrorizing Oromo men and women, young and old. Interestingly, the TPLF regime’s crime against the Oromo, which is committed in the name of democracy and federalism, is not mentioned much less discussed in the book under review.

In chapter two, Matsuoka and Sorenson discuss “A Haunted House” that is Ethiopia, whose history and identity “...is shrouded with mystification”(p. 26) On the one hand, discourse on Ethiopian nationalism is based on the history of three thousand years, which “... melts into air”(ibid) when examined against the background of the creation of modern Ethiopian empire in the late nineteenth century. On the other hand, “local and foreign constructions of history and identity feed off each other legitimizing”(p.30) the colonization of Oromia and the annexation of Eritrea. From the perspective of the Oromo and other oppressed people:

The Ethiopian state is not a comfortable home that provides a welcome for various peoples and unites them as a family; instead it is a haunted house in which the raging ghosts of suppressed nations struggle to reassert their presence. Ethiopia is indeed a haunted house, a place of ghosts and shadows, full of secrets and reversals, obsessions with the ancient past and anxieties about the future. This haunted house is a mere shadow of the state conceived as a stable, sovereign entity. ... Inside the haunted house, Ethiopia’s recent political history is a series of lost opportunities that led to disaster (p. 32).

The author’s observation is accurate. Because in 1974 and 1991, Ethiopia lost golden opportunities to right the old wrongs, to heal the old wounds, to redress the old injustice and to empower the powerless. In 1974, power passed from an old autocratic emperor to a crude and brutal young military office. In 1991, power passed from the Amhara

elites to the Tigrayan ones. In 1991, Eritrean nationalism achieved its ultimate goal of Eritrean independence which was confirmed by the referendum of 1993. For the Oromo 1991 brought a glimmer of hope when the OLF co-authored with the TPLF/EPRDF the Transitional Charter and joined the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). The Oromo hope for a new beginning was dashed when the TPLF made a free and fair election impossible in Ethiopia in 1992 and the OLF was forced to withdraw from the TGE. The authors of the book under review are not correct when they claim that "...the OLF left the TGE" (p.42), implying that there was no military pressure that compelled the OLF to withdraw from the TGE. The authors claim that "Ethiopian and Oromo nationalists, no matter that their goals were directly opposed-dismissed the EPRDF as a screen for Tigrayan dominance and condemned the government for Ethnic extremism" (p. 151). Indeed, for the Oromo, the TPLF dominated regime is a different face of Abyssinian domination-based on plunder of Oromo resources and the killing, imprisoning and forcing into exile of Oromo political, cultural, business and intellectual elites.

Chapter Seven, *More real than a Shadow*, is devoted to the discussion of Oromo issues. The chapter is based entirely on an article, which John Sorenson published in 1996 in the *Journal of Social Identities*, under the title of "Learning to be Oromo: Nationalist Discourse in the Diaspora." The authors do not mention anywhere in the book that chapter seven is based on an earlier published article. The chapter is presented as an original material, which it is not. There are a number of factual errors in the chapter. For instance, the authors claim that Oromo Studies Association (OSA) "... was organized in 1991 by Oromo intellectuals in the diaspora with the help of non-Oromo academics, activists, and supporters from religious groups active in relief work in the Horn of Africa" (pp. 171-72). OSA was formed in 1987. However, it was in 1991 that its members officially approved OSA constitution. I do not remember a single member of religious groups who helped in the Organization of OSA. I do remember individuals from religious groups who participated in OSA conferences since 1989. The authors claim that "since 1991" OSA "meetings have been held annually" (p.

172). OSA meetings have been held annually since the inception of that organization. The authors make more balanced and more objective view of Oromo nationalism in chapter seven than the rest of the book.

When we describe Oromo nationalism as an imagined community with invented traditions, we are not singling out Oromo identity as false in contrast to other identities that are true ones; rather we are pointing out how all such identities are fictions and politically motivated apparitions. Oromo identity is 'more real than a shadow.'... As for the negative aspects of nationalism, these also are not unique to the Oromos. Essentialist thinking occurs in other groups whose identity is based on ethnicity... Our comments here should not be read as an attack on Oromo nationalism in particular; rather they should be seen in the context of competing claims about identity that convert the other into a hideous monster (pp 196-97).

Finally, despite several factual errors and weaknesses that are not mentioned in this review, *Ghosts and Shadows Construction of Identity in an African Diaspora* is a very good book. Ethiopianist scholars, among others, will subject this book to harsh attack for two main reasons. First, for giving more space to the Oromo and Eritreans voices in the discourse on contested identities in the Horn of Africa, which is the main strength of the book; second, for presenting Ethiopia as "A Haunted House" in the discussion in chapter two. In short, *Ghosts and Shadows* is an interesting book that will generate a passionate discussion on Oromo and Eritrean nationalism. The book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the study of diaspora communities from the Horn of Africa.