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Modern Education and Social Movements in the Development of Political Consciousness: The Case of the Oromo

Abstract

This article examines the development of Oromo national identity in Ethiopia over the past several decades, and points to the transition from a politics of peaceful protest and accommodation to the current demands for political autonomy. It considers the role of intellectuals, as products of a modernising educational system, in providing leadership to the rise of social movements among the Oromo; and the negative role played by policies of the Amhara-Tigrean elites on the national question under the Empire and during and after the Ethiopian revolution.

Résumé

Cet article considere le développement de l`identité nationale des Oromo en Ethiopie pendant les dernières décennies. Il démontre la transition de la politique de protestation pacifique et d`accommodation à la demande d`autonomie politique. Il examine le rôle des intellectuels, des produits d`un système d`éducation moderne, comme dirigeants des mouvements sociaux montants entre les Oromo. Il analyse aussi le rôle néfaste de la politique de l`élite Amhara-Tigréanne sur la question nationale sous l`Empire, et pendant et après la révolution éthiopienne.

Introduction

The boundaries of Ethiopia as we know them today were created at the end of the 19th century by the Abyssinians (Amhara-Tigre people) who conquered the territories of neighbouring peoples. Among the conquered were the Oromo people. The Abyssinians, particularly their Amhara branch who in the previous centuries had lost numerous major and minor wars against the Oromo emerged victorious during the European scramble for Africa as the European powers of the time assisted them with weapons, military advisers and diplomatic recognition.[1]

Having built an Empire, they emerged as dominant over the other peoples in the region. The Oromo, irrespective of their numbers, became a `political minority'. However, still today the Oromo and Abyssinians constitute two major blocs in Ethiopia, both in demographic and cultural terms. The Abyssinians who are about 30% of the population in Ethiopia, speak Semitic languages, and are Orthodox Christians. The Oromo, who are the most populous ethnic group in the Horn of Africa, number more than 20 million, and constitute about 50% of Ethiopia's inhabitants. They speak a Cushitic language. A large percentage of Oromos practise Islam; the rest are Protestants, Orthodox Christians and Catholic, while a small percentage practise traditional Oromo religion.

With the formation of the Ethiopian Empire, Abyssinian institutions became the dominant ones in the country and what passes today for Ethiopian national culture, national language and national symbols (the church, flag and so on) are those of Amhara-Tigre society, and were more or less imposed on the other peoples. The Oromo and the other conquered groups have resisted the imposition of the Amharic language and Abyssinian culture and the suppression of their own

cultures, languages and identities by the Ethiopian state.
The purpose of this article is to examine the transformation of Oromo politics from one of appeals and pleading for recognition, equality and accommodation within the framework of the Ethiopian society and state to one of withdrawal, confrontation with, and rejection (delegitimation) of the Ethiopian state and all that it represents. Although the conquest and annexation of Oromia (Oromoland) is at the base of the conflict between the Oromo and the Ethiopian state, I argue that it is the intransigent policies of successive Ethiopian regimes which are the main cause of the escalation and the politicisation of Oromo ethnicity. A cursory review of the history of the last one hundred years reveals that Oromo demands for economic, political and cultural rights were and are either ignored and trivialised or force has been used to stifle them.
The essay explores the role of intellectuals in the articulation of Oromo demands and aspirations and in the organisation and leadership of social movements which culminated in the popular feeling of nationhood, witnessed in contemporary Oromia. Since the focus is on intellectuals who have gone through the Ethiopian school system, the article is also about the role of modern education in the development and crystallisation of Oromo ethno-national consciousness.
Intellectuals are not a homogeneous category, and a few words should be said here about some of their differentiating characteristics. In the case of the Oromo, intellectuals can be divided into two categories based on their training and orientation. Traditionally, the Oromo had their historians, philosophers (*raaji*), astronomers and time-reckoning experts (*ayyaantuu*)[2] and great law makers.[3] This category of intellectuals whom we can call `traditional' existed in the past and exists even today in Oromo society. Their ideas were (and to some extent still are) orally communicated. The difference between them and the second category of intellectuals, who are the focus of this essay and whom we can call `modern' is that these latter ones acquire their knowledge through formal education which uses schools, script and books. Since they are trained to use modern means of mass communication, modern intellectuals are capable of influencing a wider society than their traditional counterparts whose influence is often limited to their own localities and regions.
As it will be clear later on in this article, it was not every Oromo intellectual who supported the Oromo struggle for self-determination. During the I970s and early 1980s, it was only a minority of Oromo intellectuals who were Oromo nationalists; the majority were passive on-lookers while others were opposed. Today, it appears that the majority of the Oromo are in favour of self-determination or independence.

Assumptions about the Role of Elites in Identity Politics

Several writers have focused on the role of elites and intellectuals in the development of nationalism. For Max Weber it is the intellectuals who `are to a specific degree predestined to propagate the "national" idea'.[4] Benedict Anderson maintains that it was the energetic activities of professional intellectuals which were crucial to the shaping of nineteenth century European nationalisms.[5] In many African and Asian countries, the role of elites with modern education has been crucial in producing nationalist discourse or articulating popular grievances against occupying alien powers. But this does not mean that university education or for that matter functional literacy was a pre-requisite to say `no' to colonial rule or an oppressive political system or to say `yes' to the idea of freedom. I am not also saying that peasant populations and workers do not have any significant role in the development of nationalism. I am simply

emphasising the fact that situations where peasants and workers have successfully carried out fundamental political transformations without the collaboration of intellectuals are rare in the history of nations. World history is full of spontaneous uprisings that were initiated and led by peasants, but few them were sustained and successful. Led by traditional leaders and often located in the peripheries of the state, peasant revolts have not been sustainable as initial victories that they might have scored were reversed by central power holders who usually controlled more resources than those in the peripheries.

The Oromo have waged intermittent peasant struggles against the Ethiopian state since the occupation of their land in the 1880s. These struggles remained, for many decades, in their `primary' stage, and hence were sporadic and localised. Limited by circumstances, the traditional leaders of previous Oromo uprisings such as Waaqo Guutu of the Bale peasant movement in the 1960s lacked an overall perspective of the Oromo nation and were unable to articulate its aspirations as a collective. Consequently they had failed to mobilise a nationwide, i.e pan-Oromo, movement. Therefore, the role of articulating and promoting Oromo identity and national aspirations fell on the shoulders of an intelligentsia beginning in the mid-1960s.

With the involvement of intellectuals the Oromo struggle entered a new phase and its scope was expanded - both temporally and spatially - and on all fronts, i.e. political and armed struggle, cultural innovation and research into history. One of the reasons for putting emphasis on historical knowledge was to challenge a political system and historiography that not only distorted the collective identity of an entire people, but also created an inner discordance for an Oromo subject of the Ethiopian state at the individual level. The main purpose of this is not re-institute `a lost paradise' or not because of some nostalgic longing for a primordial ethnic community but to link present aspirations and positive self-assertion with the pre-conquest past. That is to say that historical studies are undertaken for an appraisal of the roots of an identity - both individual and collective - in order to get some satisfactory answers to two persistent questions: `Who am I?' `Who are we?', that seem to often consume intellectuals from subjugated nations and marginalised groups.

Regarding the importance of history and the sense of continuity in a people's struggle for identity Cheikh Anta Diop has argued

> The essential thing, for people, is to rediscover the thread that connects them to their most remote ancestral past. In the face of cultural aggression of all sorts, in the face of all disintegrating factors of the outside world, the most efficient cultural weapon with which a people can arm itself is this feeling of historical continuity.[6]

Diop's proposition has its detractors among social scientists. They consider the invocation of history in identity assertion as essentialist or even a `reactionary invention' of tradition and ethnicity. The word `invention' has become quite a popular concept in the social sciences during the last two decades, and is generously applied in African studies, particularly in connection with culture, ethnicity and identity. It is often argued that, since it enacts and accentuates boundaries where they did not previously exist or were only latent, the `invention' of ethnicity and culture is a dangerous intervention in a rather stable and `peaceful' social world.

The discourse about the `invention' of culture, ethnicity, and history often regards elites as the culprits; and gives economic interest as motives for their actions.[7] When generalised, the argument ignores the fact that individuals often take great risks for what they consider an ideal cause and which does not bring them personal benefits at all or only incidental non-material rewards. Therefore, when discussing the motives of intellectuals in organising and leading social

movements, one should, at least, recognise the fact that common interests (of members of an ethnic group) are as primordial as self-interests, and that these are inextricably interwoven in collective social action such as the assertion of identity, struggle for freedom or other forms of social movement.[8] Even if self-interest and collective interest are often inextricably fused, I would argue that the elements of altruism are often stronger than personal gains in stirring individuals to engage in collective goals such as the restoration of suppressed collective identity.

Oromo Identity Under Threat

As I have indicated elsewhere,[9] the conquest of Oromia at the end of the l9th century, which resulted in its incorporation into the Abyssinian Empire (later Ethiopia) greatly undermined Oromo identity by attacking the institutions and symbols by which it was supported. Oromo political and religious institutions were suppressed and the their offices ceased to exist. Political leadership in Oromo society was dismantled, and those leaders who survived the conquest were deprived of power and status whether they were *abba gada/bokku* (presidents) of the republican *gada* system, which existed in central, southern and southeastern Oromia, or *mooti* (kings) of the Gibe States of the western regions.

Having thus undermined some of the most important matrices of collective Oromo identity, the Ethiopian regimes had, for about a century, attempted to forcefully assimilate the Oromo into Abyssinian culture and religion. However, the rate of assimilation remained insignificant for two main reasons: the limited capacity of the imperial system for such a task, and resistance from the Oromo people.

The imperial system lacked the institutional capacity to disseminate its cultural and linguistic component widely among its new subjects. It also showed a lack of vision, and its attempt to assimilate the conquered subjects was limited to forced conversion to Orthodox Christianity, the effects of which have not been so significant on the colonised majority.

By and large, the Oromo response to conquest and forced assimilation was resistance, both passive and active. Even if the cultural boundaries between them and their neighbours remained fluid, the majority still used, albeit passively, culture, language and religion to mark boundaries between themselves and the conquering Abyssinians. As will be discussed further on, active political and armed struggle was provoked and enhanced by the persistent denial of rights and identity.

The Haile Selassie regime increased its efforts to forcefully assimilate the Oromo and other conquered peoples after the end of the Italian occupation which lasted from 1936 to l941. The Ethiopian state used its administrative apparatus and the school system to accelerate assimilation. The assumption was that the spread of Amharic, through its official use, and the educational system, would reinforce the process of assimilation and facilitate `nation-building' out of the Empire's disparate nationalities. Since linguistic assimilation was equated with `de-nationalisation', the use of the Oromo language in schools, church services and public administration was banned. Amharic was declared the official language and the medium of instruction throughout the Empire.

Reaction to the pressures of forced assimilation among Oromos who partook in the Ethiopian educational system varied between ethnic atrophy and `instrumental' assimilation. There was a widespread attempt among school children to reject the Oromo language in order to substitute it with Amharic as a means of obtaining the higher status identified with the Amharic. Hence, the policy of assimilation seemed to have been successful to some extent, particularly among the

first generation of secondary school and university graduates. In fact, many of the educated and some of the co-opted traditional elites went as far as severing themselves from their ethnic roots.[10] However, this process was gradually reversed after a couple of decades when Amharised Oromos started to look back to their ethnic roots for identity.
As I have discussed elsewhere,[11] the assimilation of educated Oromos in the above category was, to a large extent, a consequence of the inability to define oneself in relation to the image of *the* Ethiopian portrayed by the official propaganda permeating the educational system. The imperial system was not in favour of psychic mobility or self-identification as Oromo and Ethiopian at the same time. Therefore, many had to accept ethnic atrophy in order to become `respectable' citizens of Ethiopia. Assimilated Oromos spoke Amharic among themselves, taught their children only Amharic and behaved as if they were Amharas to satisfy the requirements for `full' citizenship.
That the Ethiopian system was incapable of producing mobile personalities was even more evident among most of the children from mixed marriages. For example, in most cases, except in some remote villages, children born to mixed marriages (for example, Oromo-Amhara parents) claimed only an Amhara ethnic identity. In spite of the fact that the Oromo society is patrilineal, the maternal side was often counted when the father was an Oromo and the mother an Amhara. This type of unidirectional assimilation is a clear indication of the failure of ethnic integration.
If there were educated and urbanised Oromos who believed, at least initially, that to `Amharise' was to `civilise' and chose ethnic atrophy to escape a devalued identity which they were ashamed of, there were also those who used assimilation as an instrument for advancement in the imperial bureaucracy without loss of self-respect or pride in their *ethnie* of origin. In other words, one can see this as `instrumental' assimilation, which is not a result of a belief that Amhara culture and life-styles are superior to those of the Oromo, but as a means to employment and position. This involved families who maintained their language and ethnic identity irrespective of the social pressure particularly in the larger urban areas. Towards the end of the 1960s, the number of such families was increasing faster than the first category of assimilees. Oromo consciousness rather than Ethiopian nationalism was also growing among Oromo intellectuals at an even greater pace. The 1960s and 1970s were decades of social and political awakening in Ethiopia, and it was in that process that many Oromos also became organised and began to act in the light of their awareness.

The Policies of Ethnic Homogenisation and the `Greater Ethiopia' Theory

It was not only the Ethiopian regime which entertained the illusion of a total Oromo assimilation into an Ethiopian socio-cultural identity based on the Amharic language, Orthodox Christianity and a monarchy which traced its genealogy to the biblical King Solomon of Israel. External observers, and particularly some scholars in the West, also advanced theories about the malleability of Oromo identity. ln the works of these scholars, who often called themselves Ethiopianists, `both the history and the nationalist aspirations of the Oromo people have been almost entirely ignored'.[13] Since they see them as ideological justifications of their oppression and the negation of their own identity, Oromo intellectuals have taken to challenging these Ethiopianist theories as part of their struggle for identity.
As an example of external intellectual intervention in the discourse on Ethiopian identity, Levine's work deserves some comment because it projects certain assumptions that scholars from the Oromo and other submerged nationalities view as providing academic justification for

the politics of ethnic homogenisation conducted by Amhara rulers of Ethiopia. Donald Levine conceptualises the Oromo as self-negating elements in his sociology of `Greater Ethiopia'.[14] Levine however never conducted any sociological study among the Oromo, although he was making seemingly profound assumptions about them based on superficial observation and secondary sources of information. While he was writing his Greater Ethiopia which, to paraphrase Blackhurst and Baxter, attempts to create a `mystical unity, impose cultural identities where they do not exist, and confuses similarity of appearance with coalescence',[15] most of what Levine assumed to be have been in process for centuries was being contradicted by events unfolding in Oromo society. The Bale Oromo peasant uprising, which held down a whole division of the Imperial Ethiopian armed forces from l964 to 1970, and even necessitated the help of British engineers and American counter-insurgency experts to contain;[16] and the pan-Oromo Macha Tulama movement described below, took place precisely during this period. Both occurrences had much to do with the rejection of Ethiopian identity. Since Levine believed that the Oromo `had nothing desirable to look upon in their past and therefore are willing and ready to assimilate', his theoretical abstractions did not take into account both the causes and implications of what actually was happening in Oromo society at that time.[17] He premised his `Greater Ethiopia' assumptions, to a great extent, on the apocryphal chronicles of the Abyssinian emperors and the mythology of the Kibre Negest (Glory of Kings), a document that dates from the early fourteenth century and which in itself was forged and translated into Ge'ez from earlier South Arabian sources by Abyssinian monks.

Levine's theory was flawed ab initio. Nevertheless, camouflaged in academic jargon his greater Ethiopia thesis was (and continues to be) an ideological justification for the multiple deprivations to which the non-Amhara peoples have been exposed. Since military and diplomatic intervention from the West helped in the creation of the Ethiopian Empire in the past and also its maintenance, the `Greater Ethiopia' theory advanced by Levine and his colleagues became the ideological corollary to justify the continued existence of the Empire in one form or another.[18] To cite John Sorenson, the Canadian critic of Western scholarship on Ethiopia once again, Levine portrays Amhara culture not only as `the ordering genius of Ethiopian civilisation and represents the Oromo as agents of chaotic, darker forces',[19] but he also argues that the conquest which killed millions, reduced the Oromo population to half of its former size and turned the rest into semi-slaves (gabbars),[20] was as beneficial to the Oromo as it was to the Abyssinians because

> it bolstered Ethiopia's position as an independent African power, [and] greatly reduced the intertribal warfare and brigandage that had prevailed in the conquered areas and paved the way for bringing an end to the slave trade in Ethiopia.[21]

Levine does not substantiate what he calls `intertribal warfare and brigandage' among the Oromo, although his work suggests that it was worthwhile to destroy half of the Oromo population, as the Abyssinians did, to stop the so-called tribal strife among them and extend the pax Abyssinica over Oromoland.[22] Levine's work, which is greatly influenced by the `cultural deficiency' notion in the sociological theory of modernisation, suggests a `melting pot' model for the assimilation of the (`culturally deficient') Oromos and others into the `culturally advanced' Abyssinian (Amhara-Tigre) society. What he envisages as emerging from such a `pot' however was a hybrid Ethiopian, overdosed with Abyssinian culture and civilisation, who would create a nation that was vigorous and progressive. In other words, a nation which had what Levine calls `a historical mission' which he posits as missing in the Oromo case. It is one thing to suggest that the subjugated peoples had to accept the formation of present day Ethiopia as a historical

accident, but it is a completely different thing to argue, as Levine's work implies, that the Oromo had to accept their subjugation as an inescapable fate ordained by history. In addition his comment about the effect of conquest on the slave trade can only be regarded as falsification of history.[23] No wonder then that challenging such a discourse also became part of the struggle conducted by Oromo intellectuals in defense of their culture and identity.

A Collective Search for Identity: The Role of Intellectuals and Social Movements

The continued belief, particularly after the mid-1960s, that the assimilation (Amharisation) of the Oromo would be enhanced through modern education also had its origins in a failure to recognise that an antithesis of homogenisation had already been set in motion by the very educational programme that was meant to socialise and assimilate non-Amhara school children. In fact, the attempt to suppress ethnic and linguistic differences through the school and other institutional means provoked the desire to be different among many literate Oromos. It was this resentment among educated Omoros which gradually developed into resistance and the search for identity.

The struggle was conducted by social movements which were organised and led by intellectuals and initially aimed at improving the social status and economic conditions of the Oromo within the framework of the Ethiopian state. However, this peaceful demand for equal rights did not yield results, and the idea of achieving independence through armed struggle started to gather more supporters among the Oromo.

Organised nationwide demands began with the creation of the Macha Tulama association in the l960s. The association was initiated by urbanised and educated Oromos but it recruited the majority of its members from other strata of Oromo society. Primarily, its aim was to promote socio-economic and cultural development in the Oromo areas and not to conduct the politics of ethnic identity. Although the major grievances expressed were about cultural oppression and discrimination, insecurity of land tenure caused by the increasing evictions of peasants and pastoralists due to the introduction and expansion of commercial farming was vitally important as well.[24] It was precisely the land issue which sparked off, in 1963, the Bale peasant armed uprising with which the Macha Tulama Association was in close contact.

Several factors interacted to transform Macha Tulama into a social movement par excellence. Among these, the composition of the membership of the association was most important. Geographically and socially, it was fairly representative and included office workers, traders, military and police officers (among them several generals), urban dwellers, peasants and pastoralists. Within a few years it was able to open branches in every Oromo region and province and increase its membership dramatically. Before it was banned in 1966, it had hundreds of thousands of registered members.

The quality of its leadership was one of several factors that accounted for the remarkable success achieved by Macha Tulama in gaining supporters. There were several senior government officials, generals and nationally respected traditional leaders on the several committees and subcommittees of the association. However, the core of leadership consisted of a handful of dynamic ideologues and organisers who turned Macha Tulama into a mass movement of unprecedented size in the history of Ethiopia. In the evolution of social movements, Max Weber has emphasised the role of charismatic leaders in generating a following. He has also suggested that

> Their movements are enthusiastic, and in such extraordinary enthusiasms class and status

barriers sometimes give way to fraternizations and exuberant community sentiments.[26]

Macha Tulama had a number of leaders with outstanding qualities one of whom can easily be characterised as charismatic in the Weberian sense. Although the acknowledged ideologue and initiator of the association was a lawyer and historian called Hailemariam Gamada, the key figure was a military general named Tadesse Birru. It was he who kindled mass enthusiasm for the Oromo cause. As a young boy, he had fought in the Ethiopian patriotic movement against the Italians in 1936 and was captured and imprisoned in Somalia until 1941, the date of the Italian defeat in Northeast Africa. His own father and other members of his family died fighting against the Italians.[27]

After the war he joined a military academy and served in several posts in the armed forces and the civilian bureaucracy. He was so loyal to Haile Selassie that as the commander of Fatno-Derash, a para-military emergency police force, he was one of the key actors in aborting a military coup staged against the Emperor by his own body guard in 1960. He was also a devoted Orthodox Christian and was married to an Amharic-speaker. Amharic was the language spoken by his family. In other words he was totally Amharised, and outside his family circle few people knew of his Oromo background until he joined Macha Talama.[28] He was not among the founders of the association, but joined it at a later stage, outraged by the policies of the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Aklilu Habtewold regarding the Oromo. According to several sources,[29] Aklilu Habtewold had confided his policies to Tadesse because he had taken him for an Amhara until that time. Consequently, when he joined the association, Tadesse was an extremely angry man; so hurt that he was ready to give up everything including his career to struggle for the cause he now espoused. The person who could have been a `model assimillee' came to personify Oromo rebellion against assimilation. The Ethiopian patriot had turned into an Oromo nationalist.

What made Tadesse a charismatic leader was not only his devotion to the Oromo cause but also his ability to speak and arouse the crowds. Due to his long experience in Ethiopian affairs and his international contacts he also knew what he was talking about. At the various meetings of Macha Tulama, he spoke on various issues: land tenure, education, poverty, culture, and so on. He constantly pointed out that although they were the majority in Ethiopia, the Oromo were a neglected people, economically exploited and politically dominated by an ethnic minority. He compared the situation of the Oromo to that of black South Africans. He knew about South Africa through his contact with Nelson Mandela who was in Ethiopia for a short time in 1962, when he also had instruction in military science to equip himself for the struggle against Apartheid. Tadesse was in charge of his security and training.[30]

Meetings organised by the association were attended by large crowds, often tens of thousands. Supporters of the association travelled hundreds of kilometres to attend meetings in the capital and in the provinces. It was at these gatherings that the contours of their national landscape became clearer for the first time to many Oromos. If the steps taken by Oromo elites such as General Tadesse Birru epitomised the beginning of the end of Oromo assimilation to Amhara culture the advent of Macha Tulama designated the dawn of pan-Oromo ethnic consciousness.

After a few years the Macha Tulama was no more a mere meredaja mahber (seIf-help association) as described in its constitution. Having set up branches all over the Oromo country, the organisation turned into a pan-Oromo social movement. In the process, the Oromo began to see themselves, after a long period of fission, conquest and disintegration as one people or nation.

The activities of the Macha Tulama led to `re-ethnicisation' among many of the educated,

assimilated and de-ethnicised Oromo proto-elites. It is interesting to note that it was at this juncture that educated elites as well as high ranking Oromo officers in the Imperial Ethiopian armed forces started for the first time to look back to their culture and history for vision, symbols and identity. Steps which indicate a radical change in the attitudes of educated and urbanised Oromos were taken. Traditional symbols and rituals that were previously considered `outdated' or were scarcely valued by many of the educated elites were now used at every meeting organised by Macha Tulama. For example, the association's meetings started with prayers and blessings led by elders drawing on traditional forms.

In order to stress that religious identity was subordinate to Oromo ethnic identity, the association abolished one of the religious lagu (taboos) which had divided Christians and Moslems in Ethiopia. This taboo concerned the avoidance of consuming meat from an animal slaughtered by a member of the other religion. For a Christian, `Muslim meat' was qoshaasha (impure) and could not be eaten, and for a Muslim, `Christian meat' was likewise forbidden. Meat avoidance, as was correctly indicated by Ulrich Braukamper,[31] was used in Ethiopia as a means of defining social identity: Christian versus Muslim, `we' versus `them'. But eating both meats means being neither Christian nor Muslim. It symbolised a neutral religious identity. Therefore, at one of its grand gatherings, at Itayya in the region of Arsi, the Macha Tulama decided to break this age-old taboo. Over 30 bullocks were slaughtered, some by Christians and some by Muslims, to feed supporters who had travelled to Itayya, a small town known as the site of one of the most atrocious crimes committed by Menelik's armies against the Oromo during the war of conquest. Meat from bullocks slaughtered by the Christians was served to Muslims and vice-versa. At Itayya, Oromo identity (`Oromoness') superseded religion.[32] Everywhere in Oromia, particularly in the urban areas, this taboo which had been strictly observed was gradually abandoned by most people in the 1970s. The Macha Tulama influence was quite clear.

Part of the fundamental contribution to the revival of Oromo ethnic consciousness by the Macha Tulama came through its conscious use of a symbol-complex which embodied common memories which united the Oromo historically. Most significantly the Odaa tree, a key symbol in the gada political culture since ancient times, was adopted as an official emblem of the association. Although it seems that little was said at the meetings about gada, some of the leaders of the association, particularly its secretary general, Haile Mariam Gamada, who proposed the Odaa as the emblem, were apparently aware of the emotional significance that these repositories of the valued old tradition had in the lives of Omoros everywhere.[33] Their anticipation was that the majority of the Oromo people would readily recognise and identify with these symbols. Sociologists have also pointed out the relevance of symbols for collective action and the role of beliefs and rites in the creation and maintenance of collective identity and solidarity in social groups and movements.[34] Anthony Cohen, for example, has argued that `The symbolic expression and affirmation of boundary heightens people's awareness of and sensitivity to their community'.[35]

The adoption of the name Macha Tulama was in itself also equally symbolic for several reasons. It emphasised Oromo affinity (mythical or real) and utilised the idea of shared identity in its appeal for unity. Oromo oral history, and written documents dating back to the 16th century indicate that the Oromo had one central gada assembly and government in which the two putative branches of the nation - Borana and Barentuma - were represented. For a long time, the Oromo have had segmented territorial groups that have moved away from each other and formed different gada governments. The Macha and Tulama, who together formed the Borana branch of the nation, had a common assembly for a very long time. They too, in turn, segmented into

several territorial groups which with time developed into gada republics with their chaffee (assemblies/`parliaments'), and mootummaa (kingdoms).[36] This segmentation was one of the causes of Oromo inability to resist the Abyssinian armies during the conquest of the 1880s. The adoption of Macha Tulama as the movement's name served not only as a mnemonic of the common past, but also suggested the end of centuries of fission and the beginning of a new era of fusion at a national level.

That what the Macha Tulama association had set in motion was a process of the reconstitution of Oromo nationality was quite apparent to Oromo elders who were schooled in oral history. For example, in a speech at the meeting held at Itayya, an elder from the Arsi region suggested that `small streams mingle to form a big river and big rivers mingle to create a sea. Human beings also follow the same structure to form nation and country'.[37] What the elderly sage was pointing out metaphorically was that the Itayya meeting was historic not only in bridging the religious gap that divided the Oromo but also for bringing together in one movement the two great historical branches of the Oromo nation (Borana and Barentuma) for the first time after 400 years of dispersal.

Since all the putative territorial branches of the Oromo nation had become members of the Macha Tulama association at that point, a change of name from Macha Tulama to a collective name that represented the entire Oromo people was suggested but was dropped to avoid further attention from the government and its security agents. De facto, Macha Tulama was accepted and functioned as an all-Oromo movement. Thus, with the meeting at Itayya, an internal dialogue of far-reaching significance was set in motion.

As branches of the Macha Tulama movement became established all over the Oromo country, the mood of its supporters, and the issues debated at its meetings, started to indicate that the roots of the submerged Oromo nation were now regenerating. Oromo collective identity was reconstructed and reasserted. This regeneration posed major challenges - both politically and symbolically - to the imperial ideology of the Ethiopian government. Macha Tulama's demand for cultural autonomy and linguistic rights was a challenge to the imperial politics of homogenisation and centralism. The invocation of symbols and rituals such as the odaa tree, and the eebba ritual (blessing) by intellectuals brought to the fore cognitive models which contradicted the dominant Abyssinian models regarding the relationship between society and authority, both secular and religious.

However, Macha Tulama had no intention of confronting the Ethiopian state. The movement articulated Oromo grievances and made moderate demands which included educational opportunities, cultural and linguistic rights, and civil liberties within the framework of a multi-ethnic Ethiopia. As Edmond Keller has argued the members of Macha Tulama only `wanted their group's fair share'[38].

People do not often politicise culture and identity, and when they do, it may not necessarily be in order to pursue a reactionary xenophobia.[39] The driving force behind Macha Tulama was also not some sort of malevolence towards the Amhara or other ethnic groups in the Ethiopian Empire. Article 21 of its by-laws stated clearly that the `aims of the association are not to question the unity of Ethiopia, but to assert and maintain the identity of the Oromo people and respect that of the other constituent peoples of the Empire'.[40] Since membership was open to individuals from other ethnic groups, several members of the Ethiopian parliament and traditional leaders representing various oppressed minorities from the southern part of the empire were registered and attended the general meetings of the Macha Tulama association.[41]

Thus, at least initially, the political aspiration of Macha Tulama was ethnic pluralism and not

ethnic particularism or an independent Oromo state. The government could have satisfied these aspirations with a policy of moderation based on cultural accommodation, recognition of identity, and equality of citizenship. However, Haile Selassie was not ready to consider ethnic and cultural pluralism. On the contrary, the manifestation of ethnic consciousness by the Macha Tulama movement was seen as treason against the Emperor and the unity and integrity of Ethiopia. The Oromo quest for fair treatment was met with intransigent policies and punitive actions from the government.

As official documents that came to light after the fall of Mengistu regime in 1991 confirm, the abortive plot, which was attempted by Macha Tulama members against Haile Selassie and his regime, was contemplated only after the regime had turned a deaf ear to their peaceful demands, and consistently tried to frustrate and suppress their legal activities.[42] In November 1966, the association was accused of subversive activities and was banned by the Imperial Ethiopian Government, and many of the intellectuals and military men who had played leading roles in its activities were jailed. Banned and harassed by the Ethiopian security forces, the rest of the leadership and members were forced to abandon their activities. Although the war in Bale continued unabated, for a while it seemed as if the incipient pan-Oromo ethnic consciousness had also completely dissipated.

The Macha Tulama movement was subdued quite easily by the government because it was essentially organised to achieve its goals through peaceful means. In a country without political parties, it assumed the role of a political party, and tried to improve the conditions of the Oromo. It attempted a coup d'etat without sufficient preparation in 1966. It was suppressed also because the members the Macha Tulama were not prepared for an armed uprising. Only a few of the Macha Tulama members joined the armed struggle which was being waged in Bale at that time. Some went into exile.

Ethnic identity is often perpetuated by the very effort to suppress it. Policies of forced assimilation often hinder voluntary assimilation in multi-ethnic settings. The more strident the attempt to remove ethnic identity is, the more salient it is liable to remain.[43] This was the case with Macha Tulama. The ban put on the association did not intimidate the nascent Oromo intelligentsia into silence.

The treatment that the association received from the government, as political developments in Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s indicated, substantially contributed to change Oromo demands in a direction more radical than those in the 1960s. The death of its leaders such as Haile Miriam Gamada, Mamo Mazamir, General Dawit Abdi and the imprisonment of General Tadesse Birre and many others created new heroes and martyrs, whose lives were adopted as models by an ever increasing number of young Oromos willing to sacrifice their lives for what they considered a just cause.[44]

The failure of the Haile Selassie regime to accommodate the peaceful demands of the Macha Tulama movement had apparently convinced many Oromo intellectuals to gradually abandon their initial idea of seeking equal rights within a united Ethiopia and contemplate a struggle for a free Oromo state. Weber suggested that genuine charismatic movements with their leaders and ideas, give way to incipient institutions, which emerge as the initial state of extraordinary fervour and devotion cool off.[45] Even if the `cooling off' of its activities was forced by the state, the ideas of Macha Tulama took expression in other forms of collective action carried out by new political and social movements such as the Oromo student movement, the Oromo Liberation Front, the Oromo Relief Association, the Oromo Studies Association, and other organisations which were offshoots of the Macha Tulama movement.

Assimilationist Educational Ideology as a Recipe for Ethnic Exclusion

The issues raised by the Macha Tulama movement were taken up by students. In the late 1960s the number of Oromo students was increasing and conditions for the formation of an underground Oromo student organisation were ripening. The experience from the Macha Tulama movement and the Bale peasant uprising had alerted the educated Oromo youth to new possibilities offered by organised methods of struggle. In addition they had their own experience in the Ethiopian educational system. The atmosphere on the university campuses in particular raised the consciousness of the Oromo students. Even if their number was still very small,[46] it was the first time that so many educated Oromos from the different corners of Oromia were able to meet and exchange experiences. It was a novel discovery for many of them to see that they shared a common language with little differences in dialect, had similar experiences under the Abyssinian rule whether they were from Borana in south, or from Harar in the east or Illubabor in the west.

However, what these students experienced in the classrooms and on the campuses of the Haile Selassie I University (now Addis Ababa University) was not always novel or positive. The general social and academic environment at the university was, in many ways, a replica of that in the provincial elementary and secondary schools. For at least some of the students this had a very profound effect in awakening their ethnic consciousness and gradually shaping a new attitude vis-a-vis the Ethiopian state. As in elementary and secondary schools in most parts of Oromia, the vast majority of the university students were from Amhara-Tigre family backgrounds,[47] who had settled in Oromia as officials of the Imperial Government, soldiers, landowners, clergymen and in some cases as traders. The same was true for most of the indigenous lecturers. The contents of some of the courses taught at the university either ignored or degraded the culture, history, and value systems of the ethnic minorities including that of the Oromo, as in the elementary and secondary schools.

Having observed at a close range and gone through the experience myself, I would argue that one of the most important factors which awakened political consciousness among Oromo students and undoubtedly stirred them to action in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly among those who were enroled in the social sciences and humanities departments of the Haile Selassie I University, was the negative treatment of the Oromo in Ethiopian history, sociology and linguistics. In the history department dozens of lectures were given by both Ethiopian and expatriate instructors on the genealogical mythology of Abyssinian kings or on the significance of a few rock inscriptions in Semitic languages excavated in northern Ethiopia. As Jan Hultin has pointed out, the Oromo was either a savage or an invisible man in Ethiopian history writing.[48] In fact an introductory course given on the history of Ethiopia at the university in the 1970s said almost nothing about the Oromo and their history.

It is a truism that history is often written by the victors and that therefore imperial histories are often biased in favour of empire builders. The history of Ethiopia is a good example. Even when occasionally mentioned, the Oromo were consistently depicted as `newcomers' and intruders into Ethiopian territory. The conquest and subordination of the Oromo and other peoples in the southern parts of Ethiopia was depicted as a `revival of Ethiopian history',[49] or portrayed as an act of `unification'. What the history of this act of `unification' clearly implied however, was a conquest of territories belonging to non-Abyssinian peoples. While Oromia was being claimed as an Ethiopian territory lost to enemies in the past, Ethiopian history disowned the Oromo. The Oromo were depicted as barbarous nomads who had over-run and almost swamped a civilised

Abyssinian nation [50] to whose cultural heritage they `had nothing to contribute', to quote Edward Ullendorff's patently prejudiced assumption about the Oromo.[51] Their history and culture were not considered issues worthy of even academic knowledge. The omissions and distortions did not escape the attention of critical Oromos. In an underground pamphlet in 1971, they bitterly commented:

> The attempt to pervert and distort Oromo history is one of the several schemes to disfigure an Oromo self-image, to destroy his identity and self-respect, and thus to facilitate his subjugation devoid of all forms of human dignity. The so-called Ethiopian History currently taught in all schools in Ethiopia contains nothing better than propaganda materials designed and used by the dominating group as an instrument for building its own image, while suppressing all historical facts that tend to reflect the good image of other oppressed groups like the Oromo people.[52]

In the department of Ethiopian languages, two-term courses were given on the `dead' and living Semitic languages of Ethiopia while Oromo and the other Cushitic languages, spoken by more than two-thirds of the population of the Empire, were totally excluded. Semitic languages were considered to constitute the Ethiopian heritage. The Cushitic, Omotic and Nilotic languages were backward.

To a large extent, a comment made by one Oromo writer summarises the ideology then underpinning the Ethiopian educational system, and demonstrates the psychological stress it exerted upon non-Abyssinian children in school in particular. He wrote:

> We were taught to hate ourselves. To reject our own. To imitate someone else. If we wouldn't stand it we were supposed to leave school. If some writers have suggested, the mission of the Abyssinians in Oromia was to tame the Gallas, the school and the Ethiopian church were the main instruments. That is why we all know more than we care to know about the Queen of Sheba, Menelik I, and the fitha negest. We even learned of Hamurabi and the Magna Carta. Yet most of us never heard of Mako Bili [a legendary Oromo leader and law maker]. And we are all denied the opportunity to appreciate the ingenuity of the Gada system.[53]

Thus a narrow political community gave identity to the Ethiopian state, while the non-Abyssinian people of the Empire were completely alienated. As it created an identity crisis for them, some of them started a search for roots, identity and belonging in the history and culture of their own people. The alienation that the students felt as the consequence of the educational ideology of the state was, as we shall see in the next section, deepened by their experience in the Ethiopian student movement.

Contributions of the Ethiopian Student Movement

First awakened by the abortive coup that was staged by the military against Haile Selassie in 1960, university and high school students had played important roles in Ethiopian politics until 1975. The coup had raised the political consciousness of the intelligentsia in general, but it was the student movement that became the most implacable opposition to the ancien regime.

A brief glance at the history of the Ethiopian student movement is relevant here for the following reasons. Firstly, the student movement contributed to the struggles that led to the present situation in Eritrea, Oromia, Tigray and in Ethiopia in general. The current leaders of EPDRF

and EPLF governments (previous guerilla leaders and movements) in Ethiopia and Eritrea respectively and the leaders of movements opposed to them began their political lives in the Ethiopian student movements of that period. In addition, the polarisation of politicised elites along ethnic lines which characterises the situation in Ethiopia today also had its genesis in the student movement.

The few Oromos who had the chance to study at university level at home or abroad were actively involved in the Ethiopian student movement. Despite their relatively small numbers, they took leading positions in student activities and were among the first in the history of the Ethiopian student movement to be reprimanded or banned from the campus by the Imperial Government.[54] The student movement gave its Oromo members an insight into Abyssinian political culture and awakened some of them to the need for an independent Oromo organisation.

Notwithstanding the active roles that the Oromos were playing in the Ethiopian student movement, the brand of `Ethiopian nationalism' being promoted by the movement at home and in the diaspora was clearly incompatible with the aspirations of most of them. Although they opposed the Haile Selassie government on several important points, the position adopted by the student majority on the crucial issue of ethnicity did not differ much from the imperial policy of linguistic and cultural assimilation. At home, student publications condemned what they called `tribal' sentiments and opposed the use of `tribal languages' on the campuses. Cultivation of Ethiopian patriotism was strongly recommended by student papers while recognition of ethnic identities was considered fraudulent or even an act of treason against Ethiopia.[55]

Although the issue of self-determination was raised theoretically, Oromo students and those from other nationalities were simply expected to deny their socio-cultural backgrounds and betray the ethnie of their birth and upbringing and accept a single (Ethiopian) identity. Since the Amhara elites in general viewed their ethnic group as the historic, institutional, and symbolic creator, and hence the appropriate hegemon of the Ethiopian state, they were not required to do the same.

Consequently, the contradiction inherent in `Ethiopian' identity became increasingly perplexing to many Oromos, and particularly to those who wanted to create a united democratic Ethiopia, leaving behind the history of conquest and subjugation. Bloom has argued that identification with a nation is evoked if actual experience has proved that making such an identification is psychologically beneficial.[56] For the Oromo, identifying with Ethiopia has never been a psychologically rewarding affair. Therefore, as indicated by a prize winning essay (Itiyopiawiwu mann naw? `Who is the Ethiopian?'), written in 1966 by a political science student, they demanded the re-definition of Ethiopian identity - its historical, cultural, linguistic, class and national (ethnic) character.[57]

There were also Oromo academics who saw the creation of a participatory political system that modified and synthesised the Oromo republican gada system with the Amhara-Tigre monarchical tradition as a solution to Ethiopia's impending political crisis. What was being proposed with such a synthesis was a unified multinational polity and state in Ethiopia.[58]

The plea made by Oromo academics for pluralism and universalisation of political, cultural and economic privileges enjoyed so far only by the Amhara was largely ignored. Amhara elites within and outside the student movement were neither prepared nor willing to address the issue of ethnicity or re-consider the identity of the Ethiopian polity. The inability to acknowledge ethnic identities and grievances intrinsically undermined the capacity of the student movement to conduct a rational-critical democratic discourse.

Ethnicity and the national question, however, proved their tenacity both at the level of discourse

on the university campuses, and in the marches of the Empire where liberation fronts for the various nationalities continued to engage the Imperial army: in Bale in the south, in Ogaden in the east and Eritrea in the north. First introduced in 1969, in an article written by Wallelign Makonnen, the national question took a central place in student debate at home and abroad. Wallelign's paper gave an unequivocal answer to the identity questions raised earlier in the student essay mentioned above.

Wallelign pointed out that

> To be a `genuine Ethiopian' one has to speak Amharic, listen to Amharic music, accept Amhara-Tigre religion...In some cases to be an Ethiopian you will have to change your name [to an Amhara-Tigre name]. In short to be an Ethiopian you will have to wear an Amhara mask.[59]

Wallelign's significant contribution was not that he declared that Ethiopian nationalism was Amhara nationalism writ large - as everybody knew that already, although no one was ready to articulate it the way he did - but the conceptual change he introduced into the ongoing political and academic discourse by raising the status of non-Amhara peoples in the Ethiopian Empire from `tribes' to nations and nationalities.[60] The debate his article ignited made it almost impossible to dismiss the national question as mere `tribal' or `primitive' trivia.

That did not mean, however, that the national question was accorded proper place in the political and academic debate. If not totally rejected, ethnic subordination and domination as the locus of social and political conflict in Ethiopia was de-emphasised and replaced by domination and exploitation based on social class. The thesis of the primacy of class over the national question (or the question of nationalities, as it is often called in Ethiopia), led to the belief that the cultivation of class consciousness was the revolutionary duty of the every Ethiopian. Students leaders of the late 1960s and early 1970s argued that the only remedy to the dangers posed by ethnicity to Ethiopian unity was to conduct a socialist revolution. It was argued that class, as collective identity, transcended ethnic identity and therefore Ethiopia's problem had to be seen primarily as a class issue. Classical Marxist theories of political economy and not the histories of the different peoples in question became the main sources cited to shore up this argument. Ethnic identity and solidarity were not recognised by the student movement as important matters, but as transient sentiments.

It is quite clear that the class argument did not address the sociological and historical realities of the societies confined within the empire. But, as Rene Lefort has argued, for member of the colonised peoples of the South, oppression had a definite face, i.e. that of an Amhara or Amharised bureaucrat and landlord.[61] For many Oromo students, who grew up with the over-lapping nature of national (ethnic) and class oppression in their home districts, the one-dimensional argument of the Amhara-Tigre Marxists was hardly plausible. The Oromos saw their own assertion of ethnic identity not only as rebellion against economic exploitation suffered as members of a given class in the Ethiopian society, but primarily as a revolt against the subjugation of the Oromo nation resulting from conquest by Abyssinians.

This does not mean there were no Marxists or internationalists among Oromo intellectuals, but that Marxism attracted Oromo and Abyssinian intellectuals for different reasons. The Oromo were attracted by Marxist theory for its critique of domination, whereas the Amhara-Tigre intellectuals seem to have been attracted by its centralising import. Both groups interpreted the Marxist literature they read according to the values they brought from their different cultural backgrounds and their aspirations about the future. The Janus-face qualities of Marxism-

Leninism also made it susceptible to these conflicting interpretations. Thus, even if the student movement was unanimous in its opposition to the regime, it divided along ethnic lines on some of the most basic issues, and ethnic conflict rather than class solidarity became the dominant trend in social and political development in Ethiopia.[62] As Patrick Gilkes, who was a lecturer in history at Addis Ababa University in the 1960s and early 1970s wrote:

> The failure of assimilation is clear in its most seriously attempted form - education. The growth of interest in Oromo writings among the student body also exemplifies this...Ten years ago, especially to a foreign enquiry, `I am an Ethiopian' was the response. Today it is more likely to be `I am an Eritrean' or `I am an Oromo'. This response is limited to politically-oriented students, and should not be overstated. It is however a significant trend in intellectual thinking. The most radical students have come to accept the postulate that there are a number of different nationalities in Ethiopia and to accept that these have the rights of self-determination.[63]

Although national self-determination was stressed as a right, what was then being demanded by Oromo intellectuals was equal treatment of their culture, language and religion rather than an independent Oromo state. The students opposed historical distortion and wanted the historical record to be set straight and past injustices against the Oromo and the other conquered peoples and minorities in Ethiopia to be admitted and redressed by the state. These demands, of course, implied public discourse on Ethiopian history, culture and politics. What was needed was not only a public discourse which allowed participation and exercise of free speech but one in which reasonable claims could be registered. This, however, was not possible then and even today. The Ethiopian regimes continued to demand the loyalty and active commitment of their Oromo subjects while at the same time denying them the most elementary political liberties. The Ethiopian student movement also demanded undivided commitment to the idea of a unitary state from Oromo students and other minorities while it remained suspicious of any manifestation of ethnic identity. The Oromo response was a denial of legitimacy to the regime and a refusal to cooperate with the Amhara students. For the Oromo both the Ethiopian state and the discourse about the unconditional acceptance of Ethiopian unity became progressively illegitimate and repulsive. This was also the case with the Eritreans as well as the Somalis in Ethiopia. And it is this illegitimacy which today gives momentum to Ethiopia's disintegration as a polity.

Failure of Assimilation and Integration

Notwithstanding the situation described above, some Western scholars such as Harold Marcus have credited Haile Selassie with `fostering unity through the development of national institutions, and pan-Ethiopian economy, modern communications and an official culture whose main feature was the use of Amharic language in government and education'.[64] A closer look at Haile Selassie's Ethiopia shows, however, a radically different picture. In a multi-ethnic setting, modern identities are formed in a dynamic interaction of different cultural elements and through a process which enhances the meanings of belonging to a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. Haile Selassie ruled an empire, which like most empires, was built on a hierarchy of distinct peoples and ethnic communities. Most of these peoples and communities had very little, if any, lateral communication. The limited economic relations which existed between some of the communities were typically matters of market exchange and not cooperation in production or interdependence. These were essentially the same with the exchange networks which existed

before the division of the Horn of Africa between the Abyssinians and European colonial powers at the turn of the century.
The institutions that were founded by Haile Selassie and his predecessor Menelik II did not lead to a `national' integration of any significant depth. Contrary to what is claimed by Marcus and other Western experts who dealt with Ethiopian history and society, the Ethiopian school system and the `official culture' also did not succeed in creating an Ethiopian identity which included and was accepted by all or most of the ethnic groups in the country. Instead, what they reproduced and perpetuated were existing ethnic prejudices and mistrust. This is not to say that Haile Selassie's modernising and homogenising efforts did not produce a stratum of educated elites who belonged to a common sub-culture which can be called `modern', but to emphasise that members of that stratum were politically divided along ethnic lines. Since the educated class did not develop a solid platform on which its common interests could be based, it was this conflictual ethnic division which, in the final analysis, became a crucial factor in the on-going political process in Ethiopia.
It is quite clear from the preceding discussion that the effort to suppress ethnicity in Ethiopia had only invigorated it. The identification of the Ethiopian state with one nation, i.e. the Amhara and its Abyssinian culture, provoked ethnic nationalisms and worked against the development of Ethiopian nationalism. Even if there were individuals who accepted ethnic atrophy, challenging the ideology and state that denigrated Oromo identity became a growing concern among Oromo intellectuals in general and university and high school students in particular. Clandestine publications in the Oromo language, and later also in English, started to appear on and off the university campuses.[65] Citing the failure of the peaceful attempt made by the Macha Tulama movement to restore the rights of the Oromo people, one of these publications stressed armed struggle as the only way `to dignity, security, liberty and freedom'.[66]
However, before the outbreak of the Ethiopian revolution in l974, the focus of all educated activists was on the restoration of Oromo identity and dignity as a people, and only a few radical elements entertained the idea of an independent Oromo state. Even the Ethiopian National Liberation Front (ENLF) which had both traditional and educated Oromo elites in the ranks of its leadership aimed only at the removal of injustice and the creation of an Ethiopia in which all nationalities would be equal.[67] Thus, in spite of strong historical factors supporting Oromo self-determination, the idea of an independent Oromo state was not yet on the political agenda of the majority among Oromo intellectuals.

Collective Identities Recognised but not Accommodated

The outbreak of the Ethiopian revolution was received with great jubilation and hope, not the least among the Oromo. Undoubtedly the revolution made a positive contribution towards ethno-national consciousness among the various ethnic groups in the Empire. As it wiped out the feudal, imperial order, the shock waves of the revolution penetrated to the furthest reaches of society in Ethiopia. Amongst the activists of oppressed nationalities and particularly among the Oromo, it raised hopes for political reform which would lead at least to equal treatment and autonomy in a federal set-up. Many Oromos took the opportunity to organise themselves. Different views were entertained concerning the future of their nation. These views basically suggested two options: struggle for partnership in a reformed Ethiopia or creation of an independent Oromo state. In the beginning, the first option attracted more adherents than the second. With some of the foremost Marxist intellectuals in Ethiopia such as Haile Fida and

Abdullahi Yousouf as their *de facto* leaders, the majority of Oromo elites sought a solution to the national question within the framework of the Ethiopian state and gave their support to the military regime. Using multi-ethnic political organisations such as the All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON) as a platform, their ambitions were to de-Amharise the Ethiopian state through working from within it and reviving it.

The MEISON project became a political fiasco. Working from within an Ethiopian organisation to improve the Oromo status within the framework of an Ethiopian state proved to be at least as dangerous as propagating the idea of a free Oromo state. Both Haile Fida and Abdullahi Yousouf and many of their followers were executed by the very same regime they advised and the military rulers they tutored. Notwithstanding the revolution, Ethiopia remained an Amhara state under the Dergue.

A group of Oromo intellectuals led by such figures as Baro Tumsa and several others, opted for an independent Oromo organisation which worked for Oromo autonomy. Many of the former Macha Tulama members and leaders, including General Tadesse Birru, joined this latter group which became the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). As John Markakis has reported,

> General Tadesse, who returned in mid-1974 [from Harar province where he had been imprisoned by Haile Selassie in 1968], had no great expectations. He claimed the military regime would pursue national integration through Amharisation with greater energy and skill than its imperial predecessor...He was convinced the Oromo should fight for complete emancipation while the Ethiopian state was in disarray, and in the beginning of 1975 took himself to the region of Ambo west of Addis Ababa to rally the Oromo populace. He and a companion, Colonel Hailu Regasa, were arrested not long afterwards and were executed in March 1975.[68]

The revolution contributed much to political awareness among the Oromo. The existence of nations and nationalities in Ethiopia was now officially admitted, and Oromo was substituted as a collective name for the pejorative term `Galla' and the several regional names by which the Ethiopian state had referred to the Oromo. The official recognition of the Oromo as a nation had a far reaching significance in its contribution towards strengthening Oromo ethnic consciousness. Regarding the powerful effects of collective names, Anthony Smith has noted,

> ... collective names are a sure sign and emblem of ethnic communities, by which they distinguish themselves and summarise their `essence' to themselves - as if in a name lay the magic of their existence and guarantee of their survival... A collective name `evokes' an atmosphere and drama that has power and meaning for those whom it includes, and none at all (or a quite different resonance) for outsiders... So the name summons up images of the distinctive traits and characteristics of a community in the minds and imaginations of its participants and outsiders - as well as posterity - though these images may differ widely.[69]

The `recovery' of their collective name (i.e. collective identity) brought about new dynamism in Oromo self-perceptions. This was supplemented by official recognition of the Oromo right to their language. The upsurge of activities that followed these events included cultural shows which brought the Oromo language and arts on to the stage for the first time not only in the capital city but also in provincial centres. For the intellectuals, who were behind these activities and the troops who performed them, the cultural shows constituted an unequivocal assertion of Oromo national identity and their readiness to develop and defend its cultural heritage. And it

was understood as such by many in the audience. Many Oromos began also to argue that recognition of identity was not enough and that it must be supplemented by political autonomy. That the recognition of their collective name would bring about not only perceptual change but also a psychological one was not anticipated by the Ethiopian military rulers in l974-75. Their reaction was repression and gradual withdrawal of promises made during the first two years of the revolution.

It is instructive to note that intransigence regarding the rights of nationalities was not confined to the circle of ruling elites. As Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux wrote of the earlier years of the revolution,

> In the Amhara heartlands of Shoa province it seems that the new regime is regarded as too conciliatory towards the previously oppressed peoples. The land reform was, because of its benefits for the peasantry of the south, regarded as a measure favouring Oromos... The mere acknowledgement of nationality rights in the NDR caused further resentments. The presence of Oromos in the PMAC strengthened this perception, despite the fact that all or nearly all of them are from the Christian minority historically linked to the Amhara state.[70]

In general, the attitude of the Amhara (and also to a great extent the Tigrean) elites towards the conquered nationalities, and particularly the numerically superior Oromo, has always dangled between contempt and fear. Most often, the Amhara elite tends to believe that the Oromo have nothing important to say concerning the political affairs of the country. Oromo protests were either simply ignored and trivialised or force was used to stifle them whenever they were deemed to pose a threat. Thus a survey of Ethiopian history since the 1880s would reveal the lack of a mid-way ground between contemptuous rejection and coercive use of force by Ethiopia's rulers (of both Amhara and Tigrean backgrounds) in response to the demands of their Oromo subjects. Commenting on the use of force by the Dergue to stifle Oromo aspirations, Halliday and Molyneaux noted that

> The successive leadership purges of the regime followed a constant pattern as one supposed representative of the Oromo after another was removed: Teferi Benti in February 1977, ME'ISON in August 1977, ECHA'T in summer of 1978, and two PMAC members who were tried in July 1980.[71]

The purge affected those Oromos who had placed their bureaucratic positions above their ethnic affiliations by siding with the central government.[72] As the purge extended into the 1980s, Amhara elites also continued to dominate Ethiopian politics, media, academia and other public institutions.[73] The purge resulted in a complete breakdown of trust not only between the Oromo people and Ethiopian state but also between Oromo and Amhara elites in general.

The Call for an Independent Oromo State

As the military regime shifted its policy stance on nationalities the optimism which had characterised the early phase of the revolution was over by the end of 1975. As soon as it consolidated its power, the regime in effect withdrew the reforms it had announced during the early days of the revolution. Instead of encouraging voluntary integration of the nationalities in the country's socio-political structure, unity and homogeneity were sought by military means while the use of force increased as opposition to the regime grew. The recognition of ethnic

identities was not accompanied by rights for their expression even within the framework of a united Ethiopia. Instead ethnic suppression continued. For the oppressed nationalities the abolition of the inequality inherent in the imperial order was the raison d'etre for the revolution. But the Ethiopian state was not ready to re-define its identity as a composite of the identities of the various groups within its polity. The existence of nationalities in Ethiopia was recognised but any experience of national oppression was not admitted. As mentioned above, most of the Oromo elites were, through multi-ethnic parties such MEISON and EPRP (the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party), engaged in an attempt to synthesise Oromo history and social grievances with the general class issues in the empire and internationally. However, the national feelings of the Oromo and other oppressed nationalities did not find expression through these multi-ethnic organisations which advocated Ethiopian (Amhara) nationalism. Although aspects of the Oromo relationship with the Ethiopian state are not at all similar to those of the Ibo with the Nigerian state, a comparison of the Oromo situation with the dilemma which faced the Ibo just before the Biafran war in the 1960s is instructive. Regarding the Ibo, Ulf Himmelstrand notes that

> In recent years, the dominant Ibo response pattern has been transformed from one of `assimilation' to one of `isolation'. This clearly is the meaning of the Ibo withdrawal into their own region and the subsequent declaration of the Biafran secession... one must acknowledge that the Ibo withdrawal essentially was a response to their rejection in other regions, a reflection of the complete breakdown of the trust in some Ibo circles as regards to the willingness of leading politicians in other groups to allow Ibo elements to participate on equal terms with them in Nigerian politics.[74]

An authoritarian state that adapts a mono-national formula in a multi-ethnic environment where the oppressed group is geographically concentrated is likely to experience movements which demand secession. Thus, by the end of 1976, the option left to political activists of the oppressed ethnic groups in Ethiopia was armed opposition. Consequently, many of the members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) left for the bushes and mountains to join an armed struggle which the Front had already started in Chercher districts of the Hararghe region; some went into exile.

The 1970s also saw the formation of exile Oromo organisations in the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, Europe and North America. Many people had fled Ethiopia by the end of the 1970s, and swelled Oromo refugee communities in near and far off countries. Peasants, pastoralists, workers, students, bureaucrats and intellectuals constituted the Oromo diaspora. The majority (pastoralist and peasants) stayed in the countries of the Horn of Africa, while other groups found their way to Europe, North America, and even to Australia. In exile, most of them started (some of them perhaps for the first time) to look seriously into their cultural and historical heritage. In the West, exile in democratic countries gave many of them the opportunity to organise and openly carry out cultural, linguistic and political activities. Links were quickly created not only between the various exile Oromo communities in different parts of the world but also between them and the OLF, and a common strategy of struggle was adopted. Thus, Oromo organisations in the diaspora became extensions of the struggles of the home front.[75]

To defend an Ethiopian nationalism seen by many as a camouflaged Amhara nationalism, Mengistu built an enormous army largely recruited from non-Amhara groups. By the late 1980s the nature of Ethiopian nationalism was quite clear to most people in Ethiopia. Many of the rank-and-file in the armed forces were reluctant to die defending something which did not represent

them. Part of the explanation for the defeat of the Ethiopian army by the peasant militias of the liberation fronts lies here. The Dergue was swept away by the popular fury of those groups whose identity it had tried to suppress. The OLF began operating throughout the entire Oromo territory in 1991. The Oromo nation became animated by an exhilarating feeling of hope and enthusiasm as promises of political self-determination were made.

By the end of the military dictatorship in 1991 the Oromo identity that successive Ethiopian regimes had attempted to destroy for over a century was blossoming and the Oromo were asserting themselves with a great vitality. The geographical demarcation of the Oromo territory and the official and popular recognition of Oromia as the name designating that specific territory also became a crucial factor in the revival of Oromo national identity in 1990s. Together with the adoption of the Oromo language as an official medium in 1992, it brought about the crystallisation of Oromo identity. The use of the Latin Alphabet in Oromo writing made the socio-linguistic boundary constituted by the Oromo language more distinct than before. Although the Sabean script, which is one of the pillars of the Abyssinian cultural legacy, was rejected for technical reasons[76], the adoption of the Latin script `also contributed to the psychological liberation of the Oromo people'.[77] Both the geographical boundary and the new alphabet have become symbols which defined the contours of the ethno-national community and identity, even for ordinary Oromos.

Eric Hobsbawn maintains that nations do not make states and nationalism but the other way round.[78] This model of nation formation, however, does not have universal applicability, and the Oromo does not fit. Ethnic consciousness and common aspirations account for the survival and reconstruction of Oromo national identity and evolution of nationalism. By common aspirations I mean the hope and struggle for a future free of oppression and alien domination, which is expressed by individual and collective actions and permeate Oromo discourse today. Gellner has written that some nations have certainly emerged without the blessings of their own state.[79] The Oromo nation, which today is a reality, has also survived and evolved without the protection and blessing of its own state. The Oromo have withstood the pressures of Amharisation for decades, and have developed their language and culture, even if on a limited scale, amid hostility from different sources, including from the Tigrean elites who have replaced the Dergue and are ruling Ethiopia today. Time will show whether this process will lead to the formation of an independent Oromo state or a negotiated federal settlement with the other ethnic groups in Ethiopia.

Notes

1. For a detailed discussion of the role Western colonialism in the creation of the Ethiopian Empire see, for example, Bonnie Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa, The Invention of Ethiopia, Trenton. The Red Sea Press. 1990.
2. See for example, Asmaron Legesse, Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society. New York. The Free Press. 1973. p. 179ff; Asfaw Beyene, `Oromo Calendar: Significance of Bita Qara', The Journal of Oromo Studies, Vol II Numbers 1&2, 1995, pp. 58-64.
3. One such great law maker was Mako Bili of the Macha Oromo who lived around the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century. His name is still today widely mentioned not only in literature but also in Macha oral tradition. See Mohammed Hassen, The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860, Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1990. pp.44-46.
4. Weber, M. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Translated, edited and with an Introduction by H.H.Gerth and C. Wright Mills. London. Kegan Paul.1947/48. p.176.

5. Anderson, B. Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London. Verso. 1983. p.69.
6. Cheik Anta Diop, Civilization or Barbarism. New York. Lawrence Hill Books. l991, p.212.
7. Regarding the role of ethnicity in current Ethiopian affairs, Hizkias Assefa wrote that `Elites sold the idea [of ethnic identity] to the people and now the people are carrying the banner'. `Crucible of Civilizations and Conflicts: Ethiopia', in P.Anyang Nyong'o (ed.), Arms and Daggers in the Heart of Africa. Nairobi. Academy Science Publishers. 1993. pp.15-32. Assefa posits that ethnic identity was an alien phenomenon in Ethiopia before the advent of elites on its political scene. This is a wrong assumption. It is based either on an insufficient historical knowledge about conquest and ethnic domination in Ethiopia or is a result of shallow understanding of social identity.
8. Cf. Smith,A.D., State and Nation in the Third World: The Western State and African Nationalism. 1983, p.48.
9. See Mekuria Bulcha, `The Survival and Reconstruction of Oromo National Identity', in Being and Becoming Oromo, P.T.W. Baxter, J. Hultin and A, Triulzi (eds.), Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.1996.pp.48-66.
10. John Markakis writes that `Oromo chiefs who collaborated with Abyssinian conquerors were treated generously ... Many of them were culturally assimilated and integrated into the Amhara aristocracy, the royal family included. They established a trend that became prevalent among urban and socially mobile Oromo, for whom a degree of assimilation (Amharisation) and effacement of ethnic origins was deemed essential'. See his National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1987. p.258.
11. Mekuria Bulcha, `The Survival and Reconstruction of Oromo National Identity', op. cit.
12. See for example, Perham, M. The Government of Ethiopia. London. Faber and Faber. 1969.
13. Sorenson, J. Imagining Ethiopia: Struggles for History and Identity in the Horn of Africa. New Brunswick. Rutgers University Press. 1993. p.3.
14. Levine, D. (Greater Ethiopia:The Evolution of Multi-Ethnic Society. Chicago. University of Chicago Press. 1974), conceived Ethiopia as one culture area. He sees the Amhara-Tigre culture not only as dominant but also as a unifying factor, since the Oromo and other conquered peoples of the Empire were more or less `eager' to assimilate.
15. See P.T.W.Baxter and Hector Blackhurst, `Vercingetorix in Ethiopia: Some Problems Arising from Levine's Inclusion of the Oromo in his Delineation of Ethiopia as a Culture Area'. Abbay Cahier 9, 1978.pp.159-66.
16. Gilkes,P. The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia. London. Friedmann. 1974. pp.217.
17. Ignoring the Macha Tulama pan-Oromo mass movement and its fate, Levine wrote, `in spite of their advantaged position the Galla never spawned a movement for Oromo nationalism. No one arose to unite the dispersed Galla peoples behind a single standard' (ibid. p.156). For a critique of Levine's conceptualisation of the Oromo as self-negating component of the Ethiopian nation, see also Alemayehu Birru, `The Bankruptcy of Donald Levine's Greater Ethiopia Thesis', The Oromo Commentary, Vol.III, no.1,1993.pp.25-28.
18. Criticising this view, Jordan Gebre-Medhin has, in his Peasants and Nationalism in Eritrea, (Red Sea Press, 1989, p.8) suggested that `Camouflaged as an academic problematic, the greater Ethiopia thesis is a brilliant intervention at the ideological level for justifying the continued existence of the Ethiopian Empire'.
19. Sorenson, J. op.cit., p.71.

20. Almost every writer who has commented on the treatment by Ethiopian rulers of their Oromo subjects has said something about the gabbar system. Whether they are Europeans, Americans or Africans their views about the status of the Oromo gabbar (serf) are unanimous. The following comment which was made by Wilfred Thesiger in 1913 about the situation of Borana Oromos in Southern Oromia sums up more or less what most writers have said about most Oromo regions. Thesiger wrote, `... the government divided all Borana as serfs or bondsmen among the soldiers [who participated in the war of conquest], giving each officer and man so many families to support him... The native is obliged to pay a definite amount yearly in cash, kind and labour to his master, he is forbidden to leave his village, and consequently... from being a freeman he has sank to be the slave of the Abyssinians.' Cited in D.C.Hickley, `Ethiopia and Great Britain: Political Conflict in the Southern Borderlands, 1916-1935', Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1984,p.140.
21. Levine, op. cit. p.26.
22. Levine, like many writers before him, has simply repeated here the Portuguese Jesuit, Almeida, who visited Abyssinia in the 1620s. The Abyssinians and the Oromo were at war during that period and Almeida who was understandably sympathetic with the Abyssinian cause, (who like him were also Christians), had a lot of negative things to say about the Oromo.
23. What is most surprising is that Levine makes such an assertion when every report (including numerous eye-witness accounts) from the turn of the century up to the Italian invasion of 1936, says the opposite. The slave trade in the Horn of Africa was exacerbated by the conquest, and Emperor Menelik himself was according to several sources the greatest entrepreneur of Ethiopia's slave trade (see McClellan. C. W. `Land, Labour and Coffee: The South's Role in Ethiopian Self-Reliance. 1889-l935' African Economic History, No.9, l980, pp.69-83). Regarding the depopulation of the South through the slave-trade, Siegfried Pausewang notes: `...[the] most severe loss of population occurred after conquest. Looting ceased to be profitable. Neither people who were not peasants, nor land without peasants on it produced a profit for the conquerors so they availed themselves without serious restrictions of the only profitable source of income they could derive from the provincer [Kaffa]: they sold the people as slaves'. See Pausewang S. Peasants and Local Society in Ethiopia: Land Tenure, Social Structure and Land Reform, DRAP Working Papers No.105, Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen, 1978, p. 91. It was the Italians who in the late 1930s succeeded in abolishing slavery in Ethiopia.
24. See for example, Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa, op. cit. pp. 293-95.
25. As different figures are given by different sources. The exact numbers of Macha Tulama are not available as the properties and documents were confiscated when the association was banned in 1966. Therefore, different sources give estimates which vary between a couple of hundred thousand and five hundred thousand.
26. Weber, M., op.cit., p.l6.
27. Olaanaa Zooga, Gizzit enna Gizoot (`Ban and Banishment'), Addis Ababa. 1985 (Eth. C.). p.42.
28. See Gilkes, op. cit., p.226.
29. Author's interview with Ahmed Buna, a former member of the Macha Tulama (Khartoum, 1981). Ahmed Buna (known also as Gota Bobbas within the OLF) told me that Prime Minister Aklilu Habte Wold had confided to General Tadesse his plans to limit Oromo recruitment to the armed forces and the promotion of those who were already members.
30. See Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom. London. Abacus. 1995.pp.362-63.
31. Braukamper, U. `On Food Avoidances in Southern Ethiopia: Religious Manifestations and

Socio-Economic Relevance', Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, edited by Sven Rubenson, Addis Ababa. Institute of Ethiopian Studies. 1984, pp.429-445.
32. Gemechu Taye, `The History of Macha Tulama Association', B.A. Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, 1993.p.16.
33. These individuals were among the first Oromos with degrees from Addis Ababa University College. Already as students they had shown great interest in Oromo history and culture and done some writing on the subject. Dinsa Laphisa was the first Oromo scholar who studied the Gada System in the 1960s. Also his LL. B. Thesis (Addis Ababa University 1975) `The Gada System of Government' dealt with this subject. Bekele Nadhi, who has a law degree has also written on Oromo history. Mamo Mazamir has degrees both in military science and law and is a historian. According to various sources his manuscript on Oromo history was confiscated when his home was searched by the security and he was imprisoned.
34. See for example, Udehn, L. The Limits of Public Choice: A sociological critique of the economic theory of politics. London. Routledge. 1996. p.315.
35. Cohen, A. The Symbolic Construction of Community. London. Routledge. 1989, p.50.
36. Regarding the segmentation of the Oromo people into different clan-like territorial groups see for example Mohammed Hassen, The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.1990. G.W.B. Huntingford, The Galla of Ethiopia. London. International African Institute. 1955.
37. Haaji Simbroo Hulufee quoted in Macha Tulama, Waldaa Maccaa fi Tuulumaa: Ayyaana Yaadannoo Waggaa 30ffaa, (Thirtieth Anniversary of the Macha Tulama Association) 1994.p.13.
38. Keller, E. `Ethiopia: Revolution, Class and the National Question', African Affairs, 198. 1981 p. 548.
39. John Lonsdale, `Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism' in Inventions and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism. P. Kaarsholm and J. Hultin, (eds), Roskilde. Roskilde University. 1994, p.132.
40. Macha Tulama: `Ye-Macha Tulama Meredaja Mahber Aquam enna Denb', (`The Macha Tulama Organisation and Constitution').n.d.
41. Gemechu Taye, op. cit.p.32.
42. Since 1991, such documents have been used by several writers to research the history of Macha Tulama. See for example, Olaana Zoogaa, Gizzit enna Gizoot (`Ban and Banishment'); Gemechu Taye, op. cit. Gemechu's thesis includes 10 appendices (circa 30 pages) of documents concerning the trial of Macha Tulama members at the Addis Ababa High Court in 1967-68.
43. Lying on a stretcher due to the severe torture inflicted on him by the police in prison and of which he died soon afterwards, Haile Mariam Gamada, the Secretary General of Macha Tulama told his friends: `This government believes that it can destroy our objectives by torturing us. Our objectives are indelible from the collective memory of our people'. His and his colleagues' deaths, in fact, contributed to the inscription of the aspirations of movement in Oromo memory. Cited in Waldaa Maccaa fi Tuulamaa, op. cit.p.13.
44. Fifteen of the Macha Tulama leaders were killed by the Ethiopian regimes between 1968 and 1976. Those who were imprisoned as a consequence of their leadership and membership in the association number more than a hundred.
45. Weber, M. op. cit.p.54.
46. The Oromo constituted less than ten per cent of about 4500 students enroled in 1970-71, see

Balsvik, R. Haille Sellassie's Students: The Intellectual and Social Background to Revolution, 1952-1977. East Lansing. Michigan State University Press. 1985.
47. Ibid.
48. Hultin, J. `Perceiving Oromo: <169>Galla<170> in the Great Narrative of Ethiopia', in P. Baxter, J. Hultin and A. Triulzi (eds.) Being and Becoming Oromo, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996, pp. 81-90.
49. Rubenson, S. The Survival of Ethiopian Independence, London. Heinemann. 1976.
50. Mesfin Wolde Mariam, An Introductory Geography of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, 1972.
51. Ullendorff, E. The Ethiopians. An Introduction to Country and People, Oxford, 1965, p.76.
52. `The Oromos: Voice Against Tyranny', Horn of Africa, Vol. 3,(3), 1980, p.15. This paper appeared in 1971 in a stencilled form.
53. Terefi Fufa, `Democracy and Education' in A. Beyene, B. Fayissa and M. Hassen (eds) Oromia: Cultural Reconstruction for Liberation and Development, The 1994 Proceedings of Oromo Studies Conference, University of Toronto, Toronto, 1994, p. 87.
54. Gabayhu Firrisaa, who was President of the Union of Students of the Addis Ababa University College in 1961/1962 (See Balsvik, 1985:p.318) was among the first students to be dismissed from the university for political reasons.
55. See for example, Hagos G, Yesus `Problems of Regionalism in Ethiopia', Challenge, XI (1), 1970; and Andreas Eshete `The Problem of regionalism in Ethiopia', Challenge, XI (1), 1970.
56. Bloom, W. Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations, London. Cambridge University Press, 1990.
57. See Ibsa Gutama's poem, Itiopiawiwu mann naw? (`Who is the Ethiopian?') which won the second prize at the 1966 Annual Ethiopian Student Poetry Contest. The annual poetry contests were started in the early 1960s and were in the beginning attended by the high officials of the Empire. In 1962 the poems that were read were radical and so offended the authorities that the poets were suspended and the officials of the student union were expelled. See for example Bahru Zawde, A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1974, London. James Currey, 1991, p. 223; Balsvik, R. op. cit.
58. Lemmu Baissa, `The Democratic Political System of the Galla of Ethiopia and the Possibility of Its Use in Nation-Building', M.A. Thesis, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, George Washington University, 1971, p.72.
59. Wallelign Makonnen, `On the Question of Nationalities in Ethiopia', Struggle, November 1969, p.4-7.
60. Wallelign Makonnen was killed together with five other university students by Ethiopian security men aboard an Ethiopian Air Lines flight which they attempted to hijack in December 1972.
61. Lefort, R. Ethiopia: An Heretical Revolution? Zed Press, 1983. p.59.
62. For a discussion of Abyssinian political culture and its contribution to conflict in Ethiopia, see Mekuria Bulcha, `History and Political Culture versus Ethiopia's Territorial Integrity', The Oromo Commentary, Vol.II., No.2,1992, pp.3-12.
63. Gilkes, P. op. cit. p. 259.
64. Marcus, H. `Does The Past have Any Authority in Ethiopia?' Ethiopian Review, April 1992, p.21.
65. Mekuria Bulcha. `The Language Policies of Ethiopian Regimes and the History of Written Afaan Oromoo', Journal of Oromo Studies, Vol. 1 (2), 1994, p.106.; Balsvik, R. op.cit, p.281.
66. `The Oromos: Voice Against Tyranny'. Horn of Africa, op. cit. p.23.

67. Asafa Jalata, `Sheik Hussein Suura and the Oromo Struggle', The Oromo Commentary, Vol.IV (2), 1994, p.6.
68. Markakis, J. 1987, op. cit. p. 262.
69. Smith, A.D. The Ethnic Origins of Nations. Oxford. Basil Blackwell. 1986, p.23.
70. Halliday, F. and Molyneux, M. The Ethiopian Revolution, London. Verso. 1981, p.165.
71. Ibid. pp.196-97. General Teferi Benti was Chairman of the PMAC between November 1974 and February 1977. Although it did not represent Oromo interest, since it had many Oromo members MEISON was considered an Oromo organisation by most Amharas and Tigreans. ECHA'T (Amharic acronym for Revolutionary Party of the Oppressed Peoples of Ethiopia) represented the interests of the conquered non-Abyssinian peoples of the southern half of Ethiopia and was organised and chaired by Baro Tumsa who was also a founding member and leader of the OLF.
72. Ibid. p. 196.
73. See Mekuria Bulcha, Flight and Integration: Causes of Mass Exodus from Ethiopia and Problems of Integration in the Sudan. Uppsala. SIAS. 1988. Chapter 3.
74. Himmelstrand, U. `Rank Equilibration, Tribalism and Nationalism in Nigeria', in Melson, R and H. Wolpe (eds.), Nigeria: Modernization and the Politics of Communalism, 1971.
75. In the West, these organisations were the Tribalism and Nationalism of Oromo Students in Europe (UOSE/TBOA) and the Union of Oromo Student in North America (UOSNA). UOSNA became later the Oromo Union in North America (OUNA).
76. Tilahun Gamta, `Reasons for Choosing the Latin Script for Developing an Oromo Alphabet', The Oromo Commentary, Vol.III, No.1, 1993 p. 17-21.
77. Kifle Djote, `A Glance at Oromo Arts and Literature', The Oromo Commentary, Vol. III, No. 2, 1993, p. 20.
78. Hobsbawm, E. Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1990.p.10.
79. Gellner, E. Nations and Nationalism. Oxford. Basil Blackwell. 1983.

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