

**Indigenous Knowledge, Colonialism and Epistemological Violence:  
The Experience of the Oromo people Under Abyssinian Colonial Rule**

**By**

**Begna Fufa Dugassa**

**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Theory and Policy Studies in education  
Ontario Institute for Studies in education of the University of Toronto**

**© Copyright by Begna Fufa Dugassa (2008)**



Library and  
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file    Votre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-39940-8*

*Our file    Notre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-39940-8*

#### NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

#### AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

**Indigenous Knowledge, Colonialism and Epistemological Violence:  
The Experience of the Oromo People Under Abyssinian Colonial Rule  
Doctor of Philosophy, 2008**

**Begna Fufa Dugassa**

**Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education  
University of Toronto**

**Abstract**

Theorists of higher education such as Friere, Asante and Dei have emphasized that colonizing Eurocentric knowledge admits of only one view of the world, judging all others as epistemologically invalid. These authors have proposed ways in which this dominant view of higher education can be ruptured through the centring of Indigenous knowledges (IK). This thesis takes up this project with respect to the Oromo people.

The Oromo are an Indigenous people, the majority population in present-day Ethiopia. Until recently, the history of this part of Africa has been written from a Euro-Abyssinian-Arab perspective, although accounts centring IK have appeared in the writings of Holcomb and Ibssa, Hassan, Bulcha, Jalata and the Oromo Studies Association. My research is based in this subjugated African-Oromo history which is being reclaimed. I am an Oromo born in the Horo-Guduro district knowledgeable about Oromo IK. Although I grew up under Abyssinian rule, obtaining a Eurocentric postsecondary education, my family and my circumstances have allowed me to resist their colonizing effects. This research has thus been borne in the suffering of my people and the documentation and analysis of their experiences of oppression and success in nurturing Oromo ways of life.

Based on interviews with 20 Oromos in the Diaspora as well as my own experiences, this thesis re-constructs the way in which Abyssinian-Oromo relations are understood. As I show in my analysis of historical documents produced by authors in various locations and times, Eurocentric thinking has been part of the representation of Abyssinia as a large, Christian empire that performed a 'civilizing' role in Africa, acting on behalf of European empire-builders. But my research and writing ruptures this image by detailing the life experiences of Oromo who fled their homeland because of torture, imprisonment, loss of economic livelihood and denial of their identity and ways of being through three Abyssinian regimes: Haile Selassie (1920-1940 and 1945-1974); the Marxist Derge (1974-1991); and the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF, since 1991).



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

As the African proverb states, “it takes a whole village to raise a child”; in this thesis the souls of several individuals have been involved. I would first like to thank the Oromo elders who nurtured and taught me the Oromo worldview, ethics and morality and at the same time cared for me in my childhood.

Second, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Linda Muzzin- for her generous time, wisdom and openness in supervising my thesis. Dr. Linda Muzzin, gave guidance, insight and constructive criticism and a full commitment to my intellectual development through my program of study that are impossible to measure. I have used Dr. Linda Muzzin’s priceless organizing, analyzing and editing skills to produce this thesis. I would like to simply say “THANK YOU.”

Also, I would like to extend my thanks to my advisory committee members Dr. Njoki Wane and Dr. Jamie Lynn-Magnusson for providing me constructive comments on the drafts of this thesis. Your comments were very valuable and helped me to refocus on the issues that I had missed.

Third, this study would not have been possible without Oromo men and women who shared with me their personal life experiences in the interviews. I was touched by my informants’ willingness to share their lived experiences, sorrows and pains.

This study could not have been done without the understanding and support of my family members. I would like to thank my wife Romee for her unconditional support and our children Hiree, Galaan and Ebbasa for their understandings. I also want to thank my wonderful mother Nagasse Dabala for her enduring love, care and for her valuable information.

## PROLOGUE:

### INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES AS HIGHER EDUCATION

David Orr, in his book *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment and the Human Prospect* (2004), tells us that,

If today is a typical day on the planet Earth, we will lose 116 square miles of rain forest, or about an acre a second. We will lose another 72 square miles to encroaching deserts, the result of human mismanagement and overpopulation. We will lose 40 to 250 species.... It is worth nothing that this is not the work of ignorant people. Rather, it is largely the results of work by people with BAs, LLBs, MBA.s and PhDs.

As Canadian Indigenous scholar Marie Battiste also points out, in “You can’t be the Global Doctor...If You Are the Global Disease,” it is thus unlikely that those educated in such a regime will successfully disrupt the colonial power relations that hold this knowledge and system in place (2005).

What these scholars are suggesting is that theories and practices in Higher Education are crucial in the perpetuation of dominant Euro-centric colonial power relations. This includes virtually all the literature on universities and colleges in Canada. As might be expected from a Euro-centric view, even higher education literature on *Africa* is written largely in European languages from a Euro-centric perspective. As such, Higher Education as a field does not recognize Indigenous, or local, knowledges of colonized countries as valid subjects for research in Higher Education.

The complicity of scholars of higher education influential in the construction of knowledge, in the project of subjugating Indigenous knowledges, I argue, is an act that invites resistance. Such research is undertaken at OISE/UT in Departments of Sociology and Equity Studies as well as in

Adult Education, but it is almost entirely absent in Higher Education. One reason that I have produced this research in Higher Education, then, should be obvious. It is an inclusive act, an act of bringing Indigenous Knowledge forward as a valid field of knowledge in Higher Education. Since the participants in this research and I myself are the proponents of, in this case, Oromo ontology and epistemology, it is fitting that we advocate for it here.

My second reason for producing this research as a Higher Education thesis is grounded in the desire to join with other scholars in extending the field of Higher Education in Canada. It was clear from a conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education held at OISE/UT in 2002 that large numbers of students and faculty in Canada see the field more broadly than earlier generations. That is, a few influential Canadians still believe that Higher Education is not a cognate field, but merely the applied study of postsecondary institutions; however, based on those who presented papers at that conference, I believe that this is not the case for the majority, nor is it the case elsewhere. Outside of Canadian higher education, higher education is often written about as the broader process of constructing knowledge as it is in this thesis. This practice includes a range of authors who deal with consciousness-raising about Eurocentrism (e.g. Friere, Asante, Dei) to those making post-structural and other critiques of Euro-centric knowledge (e.g. McLaren, Harding, Battiste).

What does this mean? The exclusion of research from an Indigenous perspective has many consequences. Research, which is arguably the production of knowledge, provides theoretical justification for historical events, including colonialism. Indeed, as anti-colonial scholars have been able to show, the dominance of Euro-centric knowledge is part of colonialism, slavery and

genocide against Indigenous people throughout the world. Instead of giving voice to perspectives that value Earth, diversity, spirituality and equity, higher education in this vein emphasizes ideas of efficiency and profitability. And efficiency and profitability, achieved either through technical or administrative innovation, often results in human and environmental exploitation.

Thus my third reason for situating this research in Higher Education is to address the project of unlearning these destructive practices, which include stereotyping people based on their culture, race and other differences. A responsible system of higher education, it could be argued, is one that makes efforts towards helping individuals unlearn such views. With respect to colonialism and Indigenous knowledges, my research is directed towards consciousness-raising about collective violence against Indigenous peoples.

	<b>Page</b>
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Prologue.....	v
Dedication.....	xiii
 <b>1. “THE FABRIC IN WHICH MY PEOPLE’S SUFFERING HAS BEEN BORNE”</b>	
1.0 My Early Life and Consciousness of Colonialism.....	1
1.1 My Scholarly Direction.....	7
1.2 Theoretical Concepts and Perspectives.....	11
1.2.1 Indigenous Knowledges .....	11
1.2.2 Colonialism vs. Self-Determination.....	13
1.2.3 Collective Rights and Violence.....	15
1.2.4 Epistemological Violence.....	16
1.3 The Research Problem.....	17
1.4 Organization of the Thesis.....	19
 <b>2. THE HISTORY OF EURO-ABYSSINIAN-OROMO RELATIONS</b>	
2.0 Introduction.....	21
2.1 Ethiopia and “Indirect Colonialism”.....	21
2.2 The Abyssinian People.....	23
2.3 The Oromo People and Oromo Indigenous Knowledges.....	24
2.3.1 Oromo Indigenous Governing Bodies.....	26
2.3.2 Indigenous Religious Institutions and Knowledges.....	27
2.4 The History of Oromo-Abyssinian Relations .....	30
2.4.1 Introduction.....	30
2.4.2 The Abyssinian Empire and The Myth of Prester John.....	32
2.4.3 An Anti-Colonial Critique of The Portuguese Map of Abyssinia.....	34
2.4.4 Cartography and the Dispute about Indigeneity and Sovereignty in Ethiopia.....	39
2.4.5 The Dispute about Indigeneity Between the Abyssinians and Oromos.....	42
2.4.6 Organized Campaigns of Killing and Mutilation During Colonization.....	45
2.4.7 Human Trafficking .....	54
2.4.8 Effects of Abyssinian Occupation of Oromo Land.....	57
2.4.8.1 Interfering with the Food Supply.....	58
2.4.8.2 Disease and Famine During and after Colonization.....	59
2.4.8.3 Forcing Oromo Farmers to Feed the Military.....	64
2.4.8.4 Rist, Serfdom and the Introduction of Private Landownership.....	66
2.5 Summary.....	67

### **3. METHODS AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES**

3.0	Introduction.....	70
3.1	Taking an Indigenous Perspective and Using Critical Methods.....	70
3.2	The Decision to Interview Members of the Oromo Diaspora .....	74
3.3	Research Design, Participants and Methods.....	75
3.3.1	Design.....	75
3.3.2	Participants.....	77
3.3.2.1	Recruitment, Privacy and Confidentiality and the Interview Process.....	78
3.4	Reflections on Interpretation and Analysis.....	80
3.4.1	The Importance of Preserving Cultural Identity.....	81
3.4.2	Developing an Appreciation for the Centrality of Self-Determination.....	82
3.4.3	The Connection Between Colonialism and Collective Violence.....	83
3.4.4	Making the Thesis Accessible to Western Scholars.....	84

### **4. AN INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPANTS AND THE OROMO EXPERIENCE UNDER THE HAILE SELASSIE REGIME**

4.0	The North American Diaspora Participants in this Research .....	86
4.1	Introduction: The Haile Selassie Regime.....	91
4.2	Loss of Land Ownership and Freedom and Its Implications.....	92
4.2.1	Dispersal of Land and People to the Neftegna.....	93
4.2.2	Post World War II and Rewarding Oromo Land for Services Rendered.....	96
4.2.3	The Coptic/Orthodox Church as a Landlord.....	99
4.2.4	Role of the Abyssinian Civil Services in the Assimilation of Oromia.....	103
4.3	Uprooting, Eviction, Taxation and Economic Hardship.....	104
4.3.1	Taxation Without Services .....	106
4.3.2	Modernization, the Capitalist Economy, Eviction and Colonization.....	110
4.3.3	The Impact of Being Dispossessed of Land.....	114
4.4	Killings and Imprisonments.....	116
4.4.1	The Case of the Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association.....	116
4.4.2	Attempts to Break the Oromo Spirit.....	117
4.5	Theorizing and Resisting Assimilation.....	119
4.5.1	Resistance as Survival.....	119
4.5.2	Resistance to Educational Assimilation.....	119
4.5.3	Resisting Religious Conversion.....	125
4.5.4	Resistance through Political Activism.....	127
4.5.5	Protesting through Oromo Poetry and Song.....	127
4.5.6	Pursuing the Struggle for Indigenous Knowledges and Legitimacy.....	129
4.6	Summary.....	130

## **5. THE DERGE'S ATTEMPT TO ASSIMILATE VIA PHYSICAL VIOLENCE**

5.1	Experiencing Assimilation Through Force.....	131
5.2	A Regime of Targetted and Mass Killing and Torture.....	132
5.2.1	Indiscriminate Mass Killings of Oromos.....	132
5.2.2	Targetting Oromo Activists.....	133
5.2.3	Killings Associated with the War with Somalia.....	135
5.3	Resettlement and its Impact.....	138
5.3.1	Sigsega and Sefera.....	138
5.3.2	The Impact of the Resettlement Program.....	139
5.4	Evictions and their Impact.....	142
5.5	Villagization.....	144
5.5.1	The Rationale for the Program.....	144
5.5.2	The Impact of Villagization.....	146
5.6	The Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC).....	149
5.7	Dismantling Waqefaata and Protestantism.....	151
5.8	Conscription and Forced Mobilization.....	153
5.8.1	Forced Recruitment of Oromos.....	153
5.8.2	The Experience of Oromo Women and Forced Mobilization.....	155
5.8.3	Detainment in Military Camps and Exposure to AIDs.....	156
5.8.4	A Double Victimization.....	159
5.9	Resisting Forceful Assimilation.....	160
5.9.1	Resistance to Mobilization.....	160
5.9.2	Keeping the Oromo Language Alive.....	161
5.9.3	Resistance to the Derge Resettlement Program.....	163
5.9.4	Resistance to the Derge Villagization Program.....	164
5.10	Advocating and Recreating Oromo Indigenous Lands and Knowledges.....	166
5.11	Summary.....	168

## **6. THE TPLF REGIME'S VIOLENT APPROACH TO ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTROL**

6.0	Strategies Born of Tigrayan Fear of the Oromo.....	169
6.1	TPLF Policies and their Impact.....	173
6.1.1	"Divide and Rule".....	173
6.1.1.1	The TPLF and Pseudo-Oromo Leadership.....	173
6.1.1.2	Promotion of Inter- and Intra-Ethnic Violence.....	176
6.1.2	TPLF Economic Policy.....	182
6.1.2.1	Marketing Fertilizer and Selected Seeds.....	182
6.1.2.2	Designed Neglect: Epidemics and Famine.....	185
6.2	Resistance to Repression and Denial of Leadership or "Weeding Out".....	186
6.2.1	Student/Social Activists .....	188
6.2.2	Political Activists.....	193
6.3	Breaking the Oromo Spirit? Violence, Eviction & Environmental Destruction...	196
6.3.1	The Effects of Widespread Killings, Imprisonment and Forced Migration.....	196
6.3.2	Abusing the Conscripted Militia.....	199

6.3.3	Drying the Ocean to Kill the Fish.....	201
6.4	Examples of Organizing for Resistance and Advocating and Recreating Oromo Indigenous Knowledges .....	206
6.5.	Summary.....	207
<b>7. CONCLUSION</b>		
7.0	Introduction.....	209
7.1	Summary of My Findings: Colonization from the View of the Colonized in Three Regimes.....	209
7.1.1	Haile Selassie's "Modernization" Policies.....	209
7.1.2	The Derge's Marxist-Oriented Policies of Violence.....	211
7.1.3	The TPLF's Divide-and-Rule Attempt to Control the Oromo.....	212
7.2	Commonalities across Abyssinian Regimes.....	214
7.2.1	Subjugation/Preservation of Indigenous Knowledges: Waqefaata and Gada.....	215
7.2.2	Denial of Self-Determination and Leadership .....	217
7.2.3	Killing and Dislocation Represented as 'Natural Disasters' .....	219
7.3	Contributions to Theory.....	220
7.3.1.	Relevance of this Research for Understanding Racism and Genocide.....	220
7.3.2	Expanding the Conception of Genocide.....	222
7.3.3	Emphasizing the Role of Epistemology in Colonization .....	225
7.4	Issues for Further Research and Action.....	230
7.5	Implications of this Research for Africa.....	232
7.6	Decolonizing Higher Education.....	233
7.7	Postscript.....	236
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>		<b>238</b>
 <b>Tables</b>		
Table 1. Estimates of Recorded Lootings and Killings.....		55
Table 2. Research Design.....		76
Table 3. Participant Backgrounds and Activities.....		87
 <b>Figures</b>		
Figure 1. The Abyssinian Colonial State.....		2
Figure 2. Precolonial Settlement of the Oromo People in Northeast Africa.....		3
Figure 3. Document Recorded by Asma-Giyorgis.....		6
Figure 4. Contemporary Map of Ethiopia and its Regional Boundaries.....		25
Figure 5. The William Berry Map of Africa.....		36
Figure 6. Ortelius Map of Abyssinia.....		37
Figure 7. The Contemporary Borders of Regional Administrations and Zones in Ethiopia.....		172



## Appendices

Appendix A.....	256
A1 Proposed Interview Questions – Phase II Informants.....	256
A2 Proposed Interview Questions – Phase III Informants.....	260
A3 Proposed Interview Questions – Phase IV Informants.....	262
Appendix B	
B1A Recruitment Advertisement – English Version (Phase II).....	263
B1B Xalaaya Dhadhesu – Afaan Oromo Version.....	264
B2A Recruitment Advertisement Professionals and Semi-Professionals (Phase III).....	265
B2B Xalaaya Dhadhesu – Afaan Oromo Version.....	266
B3 Recruitment Advertisement – for Academics (Phase IV).....	267
Appendix C	
Telephone Script for Informants.....	268
Appendix D	
D1A Information Sheet – English Version.....	269
D1B Waraaqa Imalaa - Afaan Oromo Version.....	270
Appendix E	
E1A Letter to Potential Informants (Phase II).....	271
E1B Xalaaya namoota qormaata kanaa irratt Qooda Fudhataaniif qophahee kutaa 2fa.....	272
E2A Letter to Professionals and Semi-Professionals (Phase III).....	273
E2B Xalaaya namoota qormaata kanaa irratt Qooda Fudhataaniif qophahee Kutaa 3fa.....	274
E3 Letter to Academics (Phase IV).....	275
Appendix F	
F1A Consent Form for Phase II Informants.....	276
F1B Waraaqa Hubanaa – kutaa 2fa - Afaan Oromo Version.....	277
F2A Consent Form for Phase III Informants.....	278
F2B Waraaqa Hubanaa – kutaa 3fa – Afaan Oromo Version.....	279
F3 Consent Forms for Phase IV Informants.....	280

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my elegant grandmother Ba'ise Biqilee and my father Fufa Dugassa for their teachings about Oromo worldviews and encouragements to resist Euro-Abyssinian monolithic views. It was these members of my family who first informed me that education could be a colonial tool. This thesis is also dedicated to the Oromo men and women who sacrificed their lives resisting Abyssinian colonial power and who brought in land reform in 1975, without which I could not even have finished my schooling.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **“THE FABRIC IN WHICH MY PEOPLE’S SUFFERING HAS BEEN BORNE”**

In my case, it was enough to know the fabric in which my suffering had been born in order to bury it. In the area of socioeconomic structures, a critical perception of the fabric, while indispensable, is not sufficient to change the data of the problem, any more than it is enough for the worker to have in mind the idea of the object to be produced.

-Paolo Freire (1994), p.31

#### **1.0 My Early Life and Consciousness of Colonialism**

In this research I am not claiming to be a neutral observer. I am an Oromo-Canadian, born and raised in an Indigenous community on a farm in the countryside in Oromia. (Fig. 1 shows the colonial boundaries of Abyssinia and Fig. 2 shows the pre-colonial settlement of the Oromo people). I reflect on my own experiences and observations and integrate them with data from document analyses and interviews with informants from my Diaspora, a widely-dispersed group who have left their homeland because of collective violence.

My childhood fireplace stories suggest that in the process of the colonization of Oromia, Abyssinians committed several mass killings. In the community where I grew up, the name “Amahara,” referring to Abyssinians, is synonymous with cruelty. If community members see someone who is harsh, they refer to the person as “an Amahara.” If they encounter a humble person who identifies himself as an Amahara, they refer to him not as an “Amahara” but as “Sidama” (the Sidama are part of the SNNP, Southern Nations and Nationalities and Peoples on Fig. 2). In my childhood, I witnessed my family members handing over their harvests to Abyssinian families. I also observed Abyssinian landlords demanding that the Oromo peasants wash and kiss their feet and refer to them as ‘masters’ and ‘madams.’



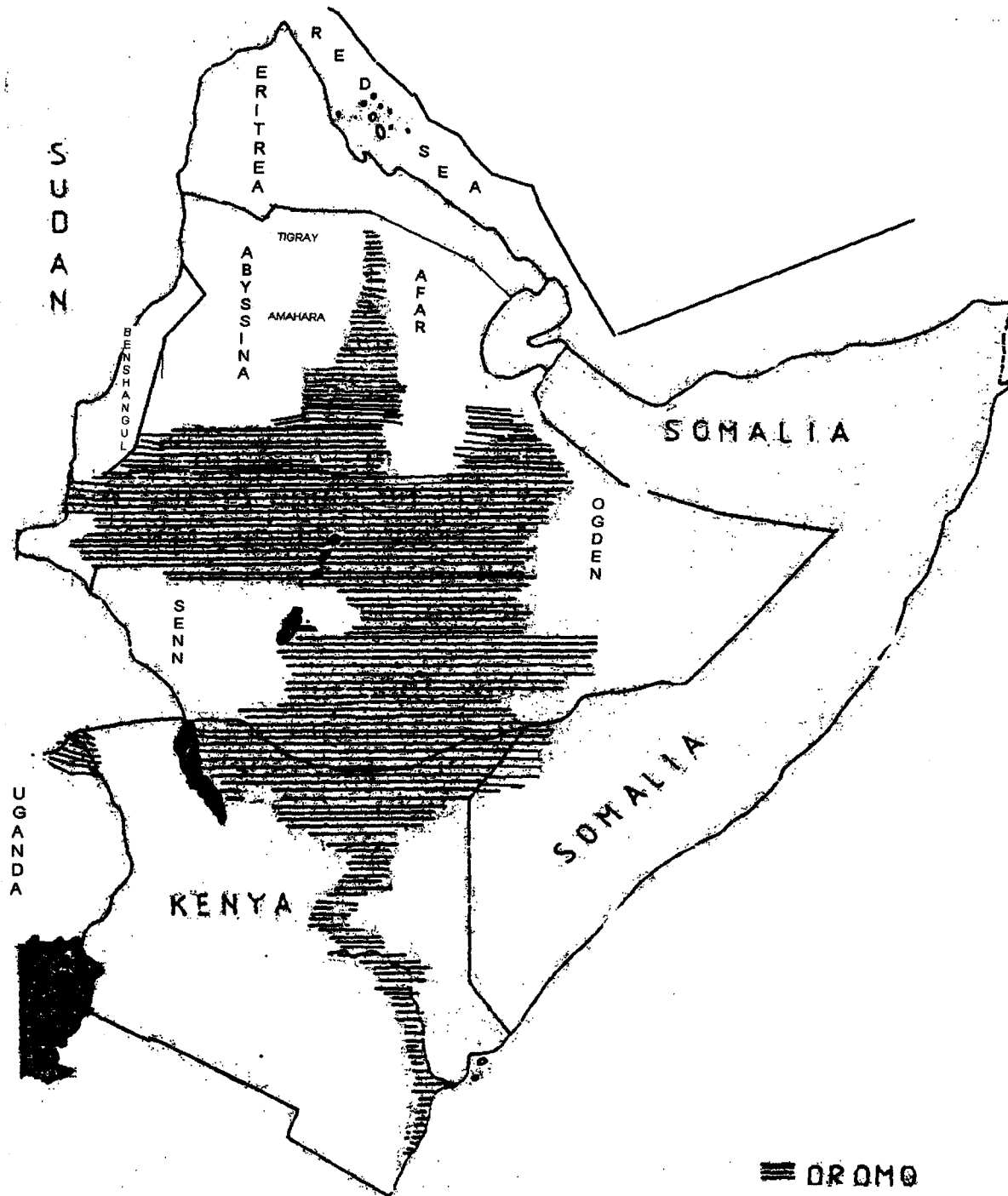


Figure 2. Pre-colonial Settlement of Oromo People

In resistance to the coming of Abyssinians to their village, community members assigned my father – a well-respected opinion maker, to represent them. My father acted as an intermediary between the community and the Abyssinian government. One of the duties assigned to my father was to collect taxes. Acting as an intermediary, my father would divided tax expenses among the able individuals in the village. My father does not read, speak or write Amharic, the language of the Abyssinians, which made his interactions with them very difficult. When the Abyssinian authorities wanted money, they would come to him and ask him to collect taxes. If he claimed the taxes were paid, they would demand a receipt. But if a receipt was produced, the authority might claim that particular receipt was not for this year. Or they might claim that it was the receipt for a health tax, not the education tax currently being demanded. Until the 1975 land reform in Ethiopia, whether or not it was a bad or a good harvest year, my family were forced to give a quarter of their harvest and provide free labour to Abyssinians. The needs of our family members were not taken into account and no community services were provided. This situation drastically limited my family in choosing the food they wanted to eat, the places they wanted to live and work and the lives they wanted to live. My community paid several taxes, some of them registered by the government, but many not. As a direct result of the Ethiopian government's formal and informal policies, the community lived in continuing poverty.

This exploitation of my people violates Oromo philosophy. As I have discussed elsewhere (Dugassa, 2006), the Oromo Elders' blessing "Namaat hindarbiin- namniis siit hindarbiin" states "never interfere or trespass against others and never let others interfere in your affairs." In Oromo teaching, nagaa (peace) and fayya (health) are held to be interwoven with the peace and health of neighbors and environments. Oromo teachings instruct us that everyone must constantly seek peace and health, for her or himself and also for others. However, Abyssinian attitudes are very different.

My awareness of my own history and the situation of my people has been the result of putting together the stories of my family that I grew up with together with the stories of other Oromos, my own experiences and documents that have been published about the Oromo and the Abyssinians. In one historical document, I discovered the place where I was born as a place of slaughter. Figure 3 is a copy of one of the Abyssinian documents recorded by the Abyssinian writer Asma Giyorgis ([1910]1987) in the early 1900s, edited by Tefla, that described my village and surrounding region. The document was written in Amaharic (the first script) then translated into English (the second script): in the document, Lagā Reqečča is the Riqicha River and Gere is the nearby village known as Jaree. Until 1977/78, the place where Menelik, leader of the original invading Abyssinian forces, camped, was known as Jaree Godoo Amara (=Jaree where the Amhara hut was located). While those who resisted Menelik's forces in the late 1800s lost their land, those who hosted him became landlords. My family belongs to those who lost their land, because they did not welcome him.

My childhood fireplace stories also link the coming of Abyssinians to several social and economic problems. For example, one of my grandmother's stories was about a "namaa nyata" (=human eater, in Oromo, believed to be animals that ate human beings while they were still alive). The story links the coming of the Abyssinians and the loss of cattle to previously unknown disease and famine, followed by the coming of the namaa nyata. Why was the coming of the Abyssinian colonial force followed by cattle disease, famine and then a human eater? Is this just a story told to a child or does the story have historical significance?

Thus, inspired by Freire's words quoted above, this thesis is a search to understand the epistemological reasons in which the suffering of my Oromo people has been borne; to examine the nature and the

ተገዛት፡ ወደ፡ ሌታ፡ ተጓዙ፡ ከዚያ፡ ወደ፡ ሆሮ፡ ዞሩ፡ ፫፻፲፱  
 ከአመቶ፡ ደርቶ፡ አስነ፡ ሆሮ፡ ደራገት፡ ድረስ፡ ባንድ፡  
 ቀን፡ አፈደት፡ ከዚህ፡ በኋላ፡ ወደ፡ ሸዋ፡ ተመለሱ፡  
 ከወለገ፡ አስከ፡ አዋሽ፡ ገላ፡ ሜጫ፡ የተባለ፡ ለንጉሥ፡  
 ረዳኝ፡ ገባረ፡ ሆነ፡ ከጸኑት፡ ከሰላም፡ ገራ፡  
 ወደ፡ ሸዋ፡ ሲመለሱ፡ ሆሮ፡ ጅረ፡ ለገ፡ ረቀቅ፡ ሠፍ  
 ረዉ፡ ሰሉ፡ ከንጉሥ፡ ተነሰ፡ ሃይማኖት፡ ዘንድ፡ ፪፡  
 መልክተኞች፡ መጡ፡ ከንጉሥ፡ በተገናኙ፡ ጊዜ፡ ደግሞ፡  
 አጡነ፡ ቢኃቸዉ፡ አልያዝነሙ፡ የተነሱ፡ በቃል፡ ነዉ፡

733

He [Menilek] travelled to Lēqā, and then turned to Horo. He slaughtered all in one day from the boundary of Amuru to Horo Darāgot. Then, he returned to Šawā. The whole Mēḳčā Gāllā - from Wallaggā to the Awāš - became tributary to Negus Menilek in peace and security. While returning to Šawā, he camped at Horo Ġerē, Lagā Reqeččā, and there came two messengers from Negus Takla Hāymānot. When they were presented to the audience of Negus Menilek, they were asked to submit a letter, but they replied, "We do not have any, our message is verbal". Then they were requested, "Give us the words of the message". They said, "We shall not speak

**Figure 3.** Document Recorded by Asma-Giyorgis ([1910]1987) which describe the invasion of my home village and district.



magnitude of the suffering; and to theorize the relationships among indigenous knowledges, colonialism, violence and epistemology with respect to Oromo and Abyssinians power relations. My research reveals the ugliness of the suffering of my people. However, for my people and myself, I hope that this research is a step forward in addressing that suffering.

### 1.1 My Scholarly Direction

I was born into a family of followers of Waqefaata, which is the traditional religion of the Oromo (See, Bartels, 1983). But to the Eurocentric world, Abyssinia (which I use here interchangeably with Ethiopia even though Ethiopia is the modern label) is Christian and thus, 'civilized'. The word Abyssinia is derived from the word Habasha-- which means a people with mixed blood of Arab and black Africans. They claim to have originated from southern Yemen, subjects of the Queen of Sheba. The Abyssinians people are constituted by two main groups: the Tigrayan and the Amhara. In the past Abyssinia was known as the land of Prester John.

The ruler at the time that I was born, Haile Selassie (1920-1940 and 1945-1974), is almost a household word globally. The reality of Oromia is more complex; suffice it to say that Waqefaata is an indigenous knowledge that has been subjugated since the arrival of the Abyssinians and Europeans. During my education, I was exposed to two antagonistic discourses: the colonial and the anti-colonial. I experienced formal schooling within colonial institutions, discourses and knowledges. Now I see that the purpose of such education was to brainwash Oromo students in order to disrupt family and other social relations, undermine ancestral heritage and knowledge and distort their identities. On the other hand, my informal Oromo teaching was founded upon discourses of de-colonization intended to

maintain and, if necessary, to reclaim Oromo identity and ways of knowing. These two antagonistic discourses made my ears, heart, mind and of all my soul a battlefield. In my elementary school years and for half of my junior secondary school up to the mid-1970s, colonial discourses somewhat absorbed and silenced me. With hindsight, it is evident to me from first-hand experience that education is one of the colonial tools that can be used to conquer, brainwash and silence indigenous peoples. Many of the few Oromo children who started school with me dropped out before they finished elementary school due to a lack of financial support and the discriminatory nature of the language of instruction—which was the government language of Amharic rather than their native Oromo. The school curricula are designed to absorb and assimilate Oromo students. For this reason, my grandmother strongly opposed my going to the Abyssinian-controlled school. In her view, the coming of Abyssinians made things that were ‘profane’ to be ‘holy’ and things that were ‘holy’ to be ‘profane.’ Thus, as a young Oromo student, I was caught in a struggle between the informal education of the Oromo people and the formal colonial education that was forced on us by Abyssinians. I regularly witnessed that Oromo children were powerless to change their social, economic and health conditions.

During the other half of junior high school and during high school, I was a different person—one who passed a threshold and became politically conscious and who was able to resist the colonial discourse. Thus it is equally evident to me that education could be a tool that could empower and liberate children and societies by dignifying and empowering them. Wanting to do something for myself and my people, being conscious of the economic problems of Oromia, and wishing to avoid the violence erupting on university campuses during the late 1970s and early 1980s, I left for the USSR. This made sense, since the Derge regime (1975-1991) had overthrown Haile Selassie, and seeking Marxist ideas was consistent with the ideology of the day. My first choice of subject areas was Animal Sciences. At

that time, my aspiration was to facilitate improvement in the productivity of animals to overcome what I saw as the 'protein deficiency problems' of the food supply. But in Russia, because of my interest in my ancestors' culture, language and values and my aspiration to improve the socio-economic status of my people, I was considered a 'bad boy' in Ethiopian government authority circles. They wanted me to be a 'good farmer who knows how to raise cattle' but who was not conscious of politics. The Abyssinian authorities did not like that I questioned the power relations between the Oromo people and Abyssinians. This situation forced me to leave the USSR secretly. Eventually, after a year and a half as a refugee, I immigrated to Canada.

In Canada, I resumed my studies for the MSc in nutritional sciences which emphasized the clinical aspect of food and nutrition. In my studies, I kept thinking of how my own people, who have an insecure food supply, should be the beneficiaries of this knowledge. But I found the strictly scientific stance of the program was out of touch with the reality of my people. Looking for a broader theoretical basis for my studies, I joined the faculty of education, where various courses introduced me to social theories about colonialism, knowledge production and indigenous knowledges. Using these theories in my course papers and MEd thesis, I was able to explore the links between human rights violations and educational under-achievement, HIV/AIDS and famine in Oromia. I have published my insights that in Oromia the root cause of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Dugassa, 2003, 2004, 2005) and famine (Dugassa, 2004) is widespread human rights violations.

Anti-colonial theories resonate with my experiences and have helped me to analyze and contextualize the experiences of my people. Most influential in my thinking have been the works of scholars such as Ngugi Wa Thiengo (1986) in *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in Africa Literature*;

Battiste (2000) in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2002) in *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*. In addition, Paulo Freire's (2002) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* influenced my thinking by pointing to the interconnections of knowledge and colonialism. These scholars awakened me to the possibilities of researching the link between collective violence against the Oromo people with regard to their Indigenous knowledges.

The more I read anti-colonial literature and books and articles that I have acquired on the experiences of the Oromo people, the more I have realized that the human rights framework that I had been using to explain the situation in Oromia does not fully explain the problem. The idea of individual human rights is part of Eurocentric discourse. I felt that "the master's tools" (Lorde, 1984) could be useful in exposing the situation of Oromia under Abyssinia rule. The general argument about human rights is that the state exists to protect its citizens and that the state is obligated to create conditions where individuals can develop their 'resilience' and 'capacity.' I thought that I could demonstrate that the Abyssinian state should fulfill its obligations to the Oromo. But given, as I will present evidence here, that the Oromo-Abyssinian relationship is colonial; that the Ethiopian government's social and economic policies are intended to collectively exploit the Oromo people; and that their military strategy is to incapacitate them, the idea of human rights does not work. The concept of collective violence gives a better fit, because it includes physical violence and the denial of collective rights of people. However, collective violence does not put the emphasis on the loss of Indigenous knowledges that comes with colonization. In my writing, therefore, I have begun to use the terms epistemological violence and epistemological genocide. These terms assume that knowledge is a social construct and go beyond the neoliberal concept of rights to emphasize how colonization involves the rewriting of history and the obliteration of Indigenous knowledges. My intention in conducting this research was to

establish through interviews with Oromos in the Diaspora how the Oromo people have experienced this process during the history of consolidation and maintenance of colonial power relations.

## 1.2 Theoretical Concepts and Perspectives

There are several bodies of literature that inform my work theoretically. Basic to my argument is that the Oromo are Indigenous and that the knowledge that they possess has been subjugated. Thus the writing of Indigenous scholars, particularly Oromo, have informed my work. Colonialism is the mechanism by which Abyssinians have exerted control over this formerly self-determining people. Thus the writings of critical scholars about the nature of colonialism are relevant and useful in my analysis. As I have noted, neoliberal concepts of human rights have some limitations in analyzing the case of Abyssinians and the Oromo, but the concept of collective rights has merit because it resonates with the collectivity of Indigenous peoples. Similarly, the concept of collective violence is useful, because it links colonialism with genocide. Finally, I believe that the concept of collective violence, particularly genocide, can be pushed to include the subjugation of indigenous knowledges. Thus, I have also found it useful to review historical European and Abyssinian writings to explore their systematic subjugation of Oromo thought. In this section, I outline briefly each of these theoretical concepts in order to introduce my research problem.

### 1.2.1 Indigenous Knowledges

There are no agreed upon definitions given to the term indigenous knowledge(s). Vandana Shiva (2002) argues that from the very beginning of colonialism, there was contestation over the mind and

intellect. In the words of Shiva, what counts as valid knowledge and who possesses that knowledge is central to the colonial discourse. Under colonial influence, Indigenous knowledges have been systematically appropriated, invalidated and colonized and Indigenous peoples have become separated from both their land and their knowledges which are tied to the land. Dei and his colleagues (2000) have defined Indigenous knowledge as:

a body of knowledge associated with the long-term occupancy of a certain place. This knowledge refers to traditional norms and social values, as well as to mental constructs that guide, organize and regulate the people's way of living and making sense of their world. It is the sum of the experience and knowledge of a given social group... (p.6.)

Indigenous knowledge is diverse and dynamic. According to Battiste and Henderson (2000),

Indigenous knowledge is not a uniform concept across all indigenous peoples; it is diverse body of knowledge that is spread throughout different people in many layers. Those who are possessors of this knowledge often cannot categorize it in Eurocentric thought, partly because the processes of categorization are not part of indigenous thought. (p.35)

In this research, Oromo Indigenous thought is recognized as a cumulative body of knowledge and beliefs that the Oromo people have developed and accumulated over time, which allowed them to enjoy internal *tasgabi* (social order), *nagaa* (peace) and *fayya* (health) within and with the neighboring people and the natural world (Ruda, 1993). Oromo Indigenous knowledge encompasses the knowledge that has developed through trial and error. It is the knowledge that gives the younger generation access to the experiences and the wisdom of earlier generations. Oromo Indigenous knowledge is not static but dynamic and it is informed by our epistemology and ontology that includes the philosophical belief in the interconnectedness of *tasgabi*, *nagaa* and *fayya* of the human and the natural environment.

### 1.2.2 Colonialism vs. Self-Determination

The Webster's Dictionary (1968) suggests that the word colony is derived from the Latin word for farmer, cultivator, planter, or settler in a new country. The word 'colonial' has the connotation of being a landed estate or settlement. The 1968 version of Webster also lists the word colony as denoting "to cultivate or become cultivated, civilize or become civilized, polish or become polished." Colonizers justified their actions as if they were good for the colonized (Dhuruvarajan, 2005). According to Chambliss (1996), colonialism is a political and economic system in which the people who are technologically powerful conquer, then rule and settle in the other country. But for Fanon (1965), colonialism is not just a simple invasion of physical space but also social and psychological. He noted that colonialism is the sum of all colonial subject positions created by colonial discourses. The notion of a 'civilizing mission' has theorized and legalized repression of Indigenous peoples worldwide. For Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001), colonialism is imposition.

For anti-colonial scholars Memmi ([1956]2003), Fanon (1965), Thiong'o (1986) and others, colonialism is not civilizing as it claims to be. The experience of Africans under colonial rule and subjected to exploitation and assimilation, portrays the colonizers as "disfigured," even "diseased" by their role in colonial society (Memmi, 2003; Fife, 2001; Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2003). For example, Thiong'o (1986) saw colonial language policy as denigrating the culture and the image of African peoples.

One of the first scholars to identify the pathogenicity of colonialism was Rudolph Virchow (Taylor and Rieger, 1985). In the winter of 1847-48, Virchow studied the causes of the typhus epidemic in Upper

Silesia (now Poland) and established a relationship between colonialism and public health. At that time, most of the inhabitants of Upper Silesia were Polish nationals ruled by Prussia. When a typhus epidemic occurred and conditions deteriorated rapidly, the Prussian government assigned Virchow to study the cause of the epidemic. In his studies, Virchow concluded that it was pathological political power relations that had created social conditions that produced the illness. He maintained that although the disease has a biological 'cause,' its geographic spread and the susceptibility of individuals to it was determined by the social conditions under which the people in Upper Silesia lived. In fact, he insisted that in a free and democratic society where a people's complete self-governance is achieved, such epidemics are impossible. Virchow proposed ultimate democracy, devolution of decision-making, universal education, and disestablishment of the church, taxation reform and agricultural and industrial development. He also emphasized the need for equality before the law, the need for regional and local self-government and self-determination (Taylor and Rieger, 1985). More recently, in *Pathology of Power*, Farmer (2003) links political power and the distribution of diseases, making clear that colonialism has social, economic, political, cultural and environmental consequences. Said (1994) has pointed out that for people who experience colonialism, the colonizers are represented as the enemy, disease and even evil.

Colonialism is driven by the idea of racial and epistemological superiority and economic interests (Said, 1994; Fanon, 1965; Curtin, 1978). Since colonizers intend to take control over the natural and human resources of colonized peoples, they dismantle their social, economic, political, cultural and environmental conventions and exposed them to unhealthy conditions (Madley, 2004; Wright, 1993; Brook, 2000; Karak, 2003; Carmichael, 2005). Colonization and disposition of natural resources is followed by the denial of the colonized people the right to self-determination (Turshen, 1977; Watts,



1997; Waldram et al., 2006). Colonially-inspired scholarship even moulded the idea that annihilation of Indigenous peoples was “natural,” inevitable and even desirable (Benjamin, 2002; Brantlinger, 2003; Fischer et. al., 1996). All of these ideas are important in the Oromo-Abyssinian case.

### 1.2.3 Collective Rights and Violence

Colonialism, which is violation of the sovereignty and liberty of people, is a form of collective violence. According to Dodson, “self-determination is the river in which all other rights swim” (Cited in Craig, 1996). WHO (2002) has defined collective violence as “the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group--whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity --against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives.” The WHO definition of collective violence includes social, political and economic violence. From the perspective of Indigenous scholars, collective violence includes cultural and environmental violence which is physical and psychological and involves deliberate deprivation and/or neglect. The WHO definition of collective violence includes conflict between nations and groups of people and includes genocide, repression, disappearances, torture and other abuses of human rights and other organized violent crimes.

Collective violence is now understood as involving not only physical killing but a prolonged and systematic plan where the colonial state denies the collective rights (social, economic, political, cultural and environmental) of the colonized people to incapacitate the targeted group. Given that colonial power relations are established by physical collective violence and the colonial social policies are intended to maintain such power relations, thus, they involve violations of collective rights. Staub

(2000) and WHO (2002) maintained that genocide is an extreme form of collective violence. As Sen (2003) has described it, violations of individual and collective rights are the manifestations of deeper pathologies of power, linked closely to assumptions about who should enjoy privileges and who should suffer harm. Genocide is not too strong a word to summarize the actions of Abyssinians against the Oromo, so that theorizing about genocide has also been helpful in this analysis.

#### 1.2.4 Epistemological Violence

Knowledge is a social construct and knowledge and power reinforce one another (Foucault, 1980). Knowledges are used not merely to understand, but to legitimize history and to maintain political power relations and social structures. Epistemological assumptions, or assumptions about the validity of particular knowledges, are associated with the identification with or exclusion of (including through violence) certain groups of people. Through knowledge construction, power is exercised. For example, in naming or refusing to name events and phenomena, epistemologies are implicated in recognizing or refuting an account (Goldberg, 1993). Thus it can be acknowledged or made invisible. Goldberg maintains that assumptions, values and goals about economy, culture and political social relations are the outcome of epistemological frameworks. In fact, according to Shiva (2002), indigenous knowledges have been systematically invalidated by colonial epistemology. Often, the knowledges and worldviews of different peoples are incomparable to one another. And, as is pointed out by Shiva and others, this incomparability of knowledge has allowed colonizing peoples to theorize about the inferiority of others and, based on such claims, to discriminate against them. In an all-encompassing way, colonial (Crichlow, 2002) and privileged (Brown, 1994) knowledge frames everything within the dominant perspective. This means that anything outside of the Eurocentric scope of knowledge is considered invalid and diseased or pathogenised, and it is relegated to be disposed of or incinerated. Knowledge that challenges the dominant paradigm and is outside of the social and political order is

often considered deviant (Habermas, 2003); sometimes such knowledge is even criminalized (Walter, 2003; Johnson, 1978).

As Said (1994) illustrates, colonialism and imperialism are interwoven with the practice, theory and attitude of dominating a distant territory; hence, the struggle against it is not only about soldiers and cannons but is also about ideas, forms, images and imaginings. In this thesis, epistemological violence is understood to involve knowledge that provides the theoretical reasoning to cause harms to others and that frees the person and group perpetrating the violence from taking legal and moral responsibility for harming others. It thus legitimizes violence and denies at all that harm was ever committed. I will argue here that this is the key aspect of the historical and contemporary relationship between Abyssinians and the Oromo.

### 1.3 The Research Problem

An assumption in this research is that the basis for colonial authority is the colonizer's epistemological view towards the colonized people. I investigate, in the case of my people, not only the physical and economic violence of the Abyssinians against the Oromo, but how the colonizing gaze attempts to mould, shape, and reshape their social, economic and cultural policies regarding the people they colonized.

Reflecting on the history and contemporary situation among my people I developed the following research questions: What is the relationship between Oromo Indigenous knowledges and collective violence against the Oromo people? what are the forms and the tools used to commit collective

violence? What are the justifications used by Abyssinians to deny the Oromo people collective rights? what are the epistemological and historical precedents leading to such crimes? what are the links between the local Abyssinian colonial policies and the European power builders? I asked my informants about their experiences and knowledge of killings, imprisonment and eviction by the Abyssinian regimes in which they had lived. We also explored educational issues, poverty, famine, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS and refugees, deterioration of environmental conditions, the breakdown of social structures and instability.

I began with the interviews of 20 Oromo individuals (male and female having formal education and not having formal education) and explored the literature of ideas produced by Oromo and non-Oromo scholars. I did this in order to examine the ways in which epistemological reasoning is inscribed in the discourses used to shape and legitimize colonial social relations and collective violence. Ultimately, my research has a historical component not only because the participants and myself lived through a series of Abyssinian regimes, but because a critical historical view is important in seeing the role of epistemology. By examining the epistemological reasoning behind Abyssinian policies and violence, I intend to show how things that had been formulated in the past are manifested today and continue to legitimize the inhuman conditions in which the Oromo people live. This research is thus directed towards uncovering the epistemological reasons of Ethiopian government in perpetuating collective violence against the Oromo people.

In addition to considering past events recorded in Oromo oral history and written documents, I look into how relatively recent events in Ethiopia have unfolded, which are not widely known outside Oromo listserves. For example, I asked my informants about the experiences of the Oromo people

during colonization and consolidation of colonial power with such strategies as the Abyssinian military have used, landownership, language and other cultural policies. I also raised questions about the ways the Ethiopian government conscripted young Oromo men to the warfront and the impact of such conscription on HIV/AIDS and other social problems. I invited my informants talk about the villagization and resettlement program in which the Ethiopian government brought the Oromo people into bigger villages, settled Abyssinians in Oromia and dispossessed the Oromo people of their lands. I also asked about and theorized the very controversial contemporary destruction of Oromo forests.

I grew up in a world where it was clear to me that the Ethiopian government always intended to eliminate or corrupt Oromo leadership and establish puppet agents at the village level. Perhaps my research can be seen as one person's contribution to resistance of my people against colonization. In the course of my studies in social justice and education in the past few years, I have considered how injustice is committed at a systemic level; how and why human rights violations are deliberately and/or haphazardly perpetrated; what forms of violence are internalized by colonized peoples and how they get internalized. I have also become convinced of the importance of education in averting and/or perpetuating collective violations including epistemological violence. It is thus fitting that my research was undertaken in a faculty of higher education committed to equity.

#### 1.4 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The introduction outlines the background of the study, my social location and the research problem. In chapter 1, I have outlined some of the theory guiding the study. Chapter 2 reviews the early history of Oromia, particularly the documented activities of Menelik,

preceded by an introduction to the geography and indigenous knowledges of the Oromo. Chapter 3 summarizes the research design and methodology of the study. In three data chapters I present my findings based on analysis of my informant accounts and recorded documents, separated by regime. Chapter 4 reviews the assimilationist and oppressive politics of the Haile Selassie regime. Chapter 5 focuses on the Derge regime and its violent approach to ruling. And Chapter 6 analyzes the contemporary TPLF regime in Ethiopia, characterized as a divide-and-rule strategy born of fear of the large population of Oromo. Chapter 7 discusses the findings in the context of the literature in the growing field of Indigenous knowledges, colonization, epistemology and collective violence.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE HISTORY OF EURO-ABYSSINIAN-OROMO RELATIONS**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, I briefly introduce Ethiopia, the Abyssinians and the Oromo people, including Oromo Indigenous knowledges. The remainder of the chapter reviews the literature on the relationship among the Abyssinians, Europeans and Oromo as documented by authors taking different viewpoints. Because this is a history of colonization, it is helpful to understand how Europeans have influenced Abyssinian-Oromo relations. Thus in this chapter, I review the Euro-Abyssinian myth of Prester John and the disputes about indigeneity made first by Abyssinian, and more recently, by Oromo scholars. I cite from historical documents to fill in some of the historical detail about collective violence against the Oromo which includes killing, mutilation, interference with the food supply, and the introduction of disease, as well as systemic subjugation of Oromo indigenous knowledges in Ethiopia from about the 1850s onwards.

#### **2.1 Ethiopia and “Indirect Colonialism”**

The word Ethiopia came from the Greek word meaning “the land of burnt-faced people” (Buttrick et al., 1962). That is, among the ancient Greeks, Nubians (who were Cushatic language speakers as the Oromo people are today) were called Ethiopian. In the Bible, the words Ethiopia and Cush are used interchangeably. It is important to emphasize that the Indigenous Nubian

residents did not call the land Ethiopia (Dugassa, 2006). As Holcomb and Ibssa (1990) make clear, the Abyssinians colonized independent peoples in northeast Africa in the mid-1800s using firearms provided by European powers and adopted the Biblical name 'Ethiopia' for their area of conquest.

The Abyssinians achieved their empire in several waves (Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990). There was a long history of border skirmishes between the Abyssinians and the Oromo, but the first successful influx into Oromo territory was made in the 1880s by the Amhara and Tigrayan peoples, two different groups of Abyssinians. The process of colonization was very brutal, led by Amhara-Tigray/Abyssinian Kings Sahle Selassie, Theodore, Yohanis IV and Menelik II. Haile Selassie consolidated the Empire, which Holcomb and Ibssa (1990) have called a "dependent colonial state." According to these authors, "indirect" colonialism is the situation where a smaller or weaker country such as Abyssinia is supported by more powerful empire builders who help them occupy contested regions. In the case of the Horn of Africa, they argue, this arrangement opened the occupied region to both the weak and stronger colonial powers. Today, Ethiopia is a multi-ethno/national empire (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990; Jalata, 2005), which Gellner (1983) has described as "a prison house of nations." There are about 78 different ethno/national groups (Ethiopian Embassy website, 2006). The Oromo people are the single largest group, constituting about half of the population (Kissi, 2006; Jalata, 2005).

Holcomb and Ibssa (1990) maintain that dependent colonial states are created if dominant empire builders (in this case, the British, Italian and French) are in competition to control a territory. In order to avoid a direct conflict with each other, they invest their capital in arming and providing



political support to adjoining weaker states to establish control in order to ensure that the region will be accessible to all. These authors have noted that while the British had sponsored the Portuguese occupation of Angola and Mozambique, France and Germany sponsored the Belgian occupation of Congo. In the same way, with the support of European power builders, the Ethiopian empire was formed, thus creating conditions for imperialism to penetrate the Horn of Africa (see also Jalata, 2005).

## **2.2 The Abyssinian People**

The name Abyssinia is derived from the Arabic word Habash(a), which means people with mixed blood (Irvine, 1965). There are two distinct groups, the Amhara who number about 21 million and whose leader Menelik II (ruling from 1855-1913), from the region of Shoa, or Shewa, invaded Oromia with firearms; and the Tigrayans, numbering about four million, from the Tigrayan region, whose king, Yohannis IV (ruling 1872-1889), also invaded northern Oromia (Wallo). Yohannis IV preceded Menelik II as King of Kings, or ruler of all Abyssinians, and he was succeeded by Menelik II. The Abyssinians are numerically a minority (and the smaller minority, the Tigrayans, are currently in power in Ethiopia).

Abyssinians are migrants from Yemen in Southern Arabia who crossed the Red Sea to settle on the African east coast. These Arab tribesmen gradually conquered Indigenous African peoples and imposed their culture and language on them in the northern parts of the present Eritrean, Tigrayan and Amahara regions (Monroe, 2003; Jalata, 2005b). Abyssinian rulers claim to be descended from King Solomon and Queen Sheba (Zewdie, 1991; Irvine, 1965). This is disputed

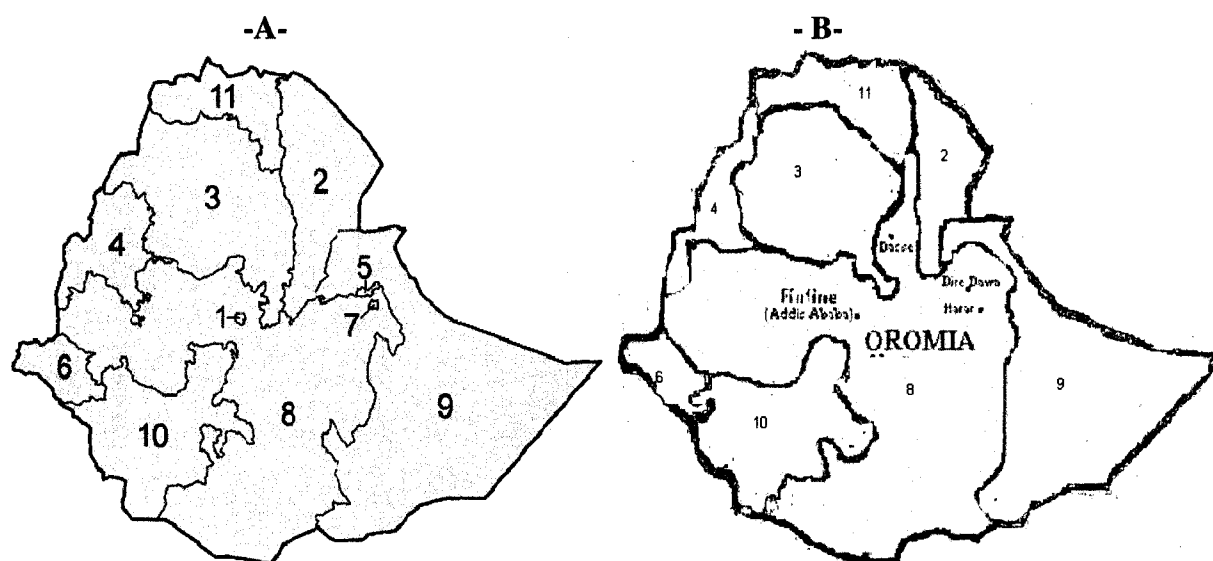
by historians who argue that the Biblical Queen of Sheba was not from the region that is now Ethiopia, but from Yemen (Coughlan, 1966). According to Silverberg (1996), Europeans found attractive the legend that the Abyssinian royal dynasty was descended from King Solomon.

The old Abyssinian language, Geez, from which the Amharic and Tigrayan languages are derived, is considered a southern Semitic language. The date of first arrival of the Christian Abyssinians (and most Abyssinians are Christians) is not known. They consider themselves to be a “Christian island” in a sea of Muslims and Indigenous believers. According to Leslau (1958), given that the Abyssinians were migrants from Arabia, that their language contains many Arabic words. It is also recorded that a few early Muslims migrated to Abyssinia (Ravan, 1988). Around 622 AD, the Prophet Mohammed apparently advised his followers to go to Abyssinia until peace prevailed in Mecca. These migrants settled in Axum (in Tigray- See Fig. 4, #11) and introduced Islam to Abyssinia, which made them the first Muslims in Africa. The Prophet also instructed his followers never to harm Abyssinia, and, according to Pankhurst (1992), this instruction guided Arab and Abyssinian relations for centuries.

### **2.3 The Oromo People and Oromo Indigenous Knowledges**

The Oromo people are Indigenous to northeast Africa, constituting about half of the 80 million people in Ethiopia. About a million Oromos live in Kenya; they are also found in Somalia and Uganda, and the Oromo language is the second most popular African language next to Hausa (Bulcha, 1994). The Oromo people have been organized into separate confederations or moieties since the twelfth century (Jalata, 2005). According to Ruda (1993), all Oromos trace their

Figure 4. The Contemporary Map of Ethiopia and its Regional Boundaries



**Keys:**

- A- The Ethiopian Government Version
- B- The Oromo people's Version

1. Finfine (Addis Ababa)
2. Afar region
3. Amahara region
4. Benshangul Region
5. DireDawa
6. Gambela
7. Harar
8. Oromia
9. Ogden
10. Southern Nations and Nationalities, Peoples Regional States (SNNPR)
11. Tigray

genealogies back to three Oromo clans: the Borana (settled in the west), the Barentuma (settled in the east) and the Gabra (indicating possibly living near water reservoirs or ponds or lakes). These divisions are not fixed, since in areas where Borana live, there are Barentus, Gabras and vice versa (Legesse, 2006). Neither are there strict divisions between institutions, although they will be dealt with separately here. Oromo oral tradition suggests that the Oromos descended from the sons of Horoo (haroo=water reserve or small lake). The name Oromo itself comes from the word haroo. The Oromos call their country Biyya Oromo (=the country of the Oromo=Oromia) and although the Ethiopian government version of Oromia denies the inclusion of several regions (see Fig. 4a), the Oromo version of Oromia covers about 600,000 square kilometers (Fig 4b). Currently in Oromia, there are three major religious belief systems: Waqefaata, Islam and Christianity.

Although the Indigenous governing bodies, religious institutions and other social organizations have no legal status in contemporary Ethiopia, they continue to exist from ancient times, and are worth describing briefly as a context for the review of Abyssinian-Oromo relations which constitutes the remainder of this chapter.

### **2.3.1 Oromo Indigenous Governing Bodies**

The earliest written record of the Oromo system of governance goes back to the sixteenth century (Bahre, 1593) but according to Ruda (1992), the Gada system, still functional in many areas, is over 3000 years old. It deals with the social, economic, political and military affairs of the Oromo people, assigning specific duties or responsibilities to all age groups. In the Gada

system, there are five parties into which each person is born; power is transferred from one party to the next every eight years (Leggese, 2006). Gada leadership is elected, and includes the Abba Gada or Abba Boku (president), two other Abba Gadas (vice presidents), Abba Sa'a (minister of finance), Abba Seera (minister of law-making), Abba Dubbi (parliamentary spokesperson), Abba Halanga (minister of justice) and Abba Duula (minister of defense). In parallel with Gada, which is dominated by men, Oromo women formed a social and political institution known as Siiqe (Kumsa, 1995). According to Banguu Qawee (interviewed Feb. 13, 2007 on VOA - Afaan Oromo Service), Siiqe has several functions: to protect women's rights; make peace in case of conflict between individuals and communities; revoke spirits that cause sickness; and pray for rain. Young girls take a stick symbolizing Siiqe from their mothers on their wedding, after which time, no men are allowed to touch the stick. When women are holding the stick, if a man should physically abuse or verbally assault the woman, he would face very serious consequences from the community. Attete is another Oromo women's institution. In an attete ceremony, which men are not allowed to attend, there are always prayers. Attete is symbolized by Choqorsa- an evergreen grass. In addition to attete, Oromo women also play a very active role in Qaalu, discussed below.

### **2.3.2 Indigenous Religious Institutions and Knowledges**

Before the introduction of Christianity and Islam, Oromos practiced their Indigenous belief system, Waqefaata. Islam and Protestantism were spread throughout Oromia in reaction to Abyssinian colonialism and the imposition of Orthodox Coptic Christianity (Hassan, 1994: Jalata, 2005). They are legally recognized by the Ethiopian state, while Waqefaata is not.

Oromos believe in a Supreme Being called Waaqa Guraacha (=Black God) or Waaqa Garaa Guraacha (= God of Black Belly). Black represents a complex entity hidden in a faraway place—a God that is in heaven as well as holiness and purity (Melba, 1988). According to Waqefaata oral traditional teachings, Waaqa created everything in the universe and monitors all the worldly activities through Ayyana (=spirit). Waaqa Guracha, also referred to as Abba Uuma (father creator) or Ayyo Uume (mother creator), created all living things in the lake; therefore, on Thanksgiving Day and for pilgrimages, followers of Waqefaata go to sacred sites at lakes and rivers. Abba Muda, who is entitled to anoint and inaugurate Gada leaders, is the head of the Oromo religious institution Qaalu and its main holy site is Madda Walabu, which is considered the political, cultural and spiritual centre. Madda Walabu is located in Arsi, in southern Oromia, a very important place in Oromo history. In the Gada system, power is transferred from one party to the other in this place and long after the several autonomous Oromo clans emerged, it was in this place where inauguration of the leaders took place.

According to the Oromo worldview, God communicates with people mainly through rain, which makes vegetation blossom, so that animals can consume it. To know what Waaqa says, the believer is required to sacrifice a lamb, open the belly to read and interpret the "Mora"- a fatty tissue that covers the kidneys. Since the lamb is considered the most peaceful animal; for forgiveness of sin, one has to sacrifice a lamb.

Peace is very important in the Oromo belief system. Waqefaata teaches never to trespass against others and never to let others trespass against you. Submissiveness is a violation of the principle of peaceful coexistence; thus, trespassing, submission, disrespect and humiliation are ethically and morally wrong. Oromos believe that Nagaa (peace) and Fayya (health) are interdependent

and interwoven. To be at peace with neighbors is considered essential for the health of individuals, community and the health of their environments. For this reason, the Oromo worldview prohibits cutting of growing plants and killing young animals for whatever purpose since they are respected. Qaalu leaders never eat the meat of young female or unweaned animals, only drink the milk of the cows that are well-kept and well fed, and do not kill mothers and young goats and lambs while they breast-feed. Killing unweaned animals creates suffering for the mother, because if the mothers' milk is not sucked, she is in pain. There is a belief that words have the power to predict human actions, so that certain negative terms are replaced by positive ones, anticipating positive actions. For example, the Oromos might use the word "saved" instead of killed (or "cooled" instead of burnt, "made peace" instead of fought, and "blessed" instead of cursed) to help bring about the desired event.

In the Oromo worldview, an individual's sin, blessing, success or failure is the communities' sin, blessing, success or failure. There is life after death, which occurs in one's community and its vicinity. Neighboring natural environments are assumed to provide shelter and nourishment. If the person is sinful in his or her older age, he or she would be miserable and poor. His or her sin can be passed to the person's children and grandchildren, leaving them in misery. If the person were considered humble, his or her life after death would be full of peace and plenty. At least two times a year, family members offer libation for the dead, which includes providing Oromo traditional foods and drink that reflect the taste of the person.

## 2.4 The History of Oromo-Abyssinian Relations

### 2.4.1 Introduction

Prior to the era of Menelik II (beginning in the mid to late 1500s, also spelled Minilik and Menilik), Europeans pursued an imaginary land ruled by a Christian priest, Prester John and Abyssinia was at one time known as the land of Prester John (Rey, 1929; Sanceau, 1944). This myth was an early form of what Edward Said (1979) has called orientalism, or the exotic Eurocentric construction of the East. As I will describe below, this involved the making of a map of the Abyssinian Empire which erroneously showed it to take up much of the continent of Africa, and supported Abyssinian claims that the Oromo had either accidentally migrated into their territory or had actively invaded their Empire. Euro-Abyssinian religious monks and missionaries repeated this exotic history (e.g. Abba Bahrey, 1954). Their accounts, in essence, denied that the Oromo were Indigenous to the region and justified aggression towards them as intruders.

Just prior to Menelik's invasion of Oromia, Plowden (1868) described his massacres of the Oromo. By this time, the Abyssinians would have had access to European guns. The events following Menelik's invasion of Oromia were documented by Abyssinian historians Gabre-Mariam ([1922]1987) and Asma-Giyorgis ([1910] 1987) and a British anthropologist Blundell (1900) soon after they occurred. These accounts, although racist, as I will discuss in this chapter, stood largely unchallenged for 100 years. Historically, only de Salviac's (1901) and Werner's (1914) accounts of the Oromo people wrote of them in somewhat sympathetic terms, though de Salviac held that they should be converted to Christianity. According to de Salviac (1901), the Abyssinians usually attacked at night. By early morning they had set fire to the village; by that



time three quarters of the people would have been killed or horribly mutilated and the women and children taken captive. The Abyssinian armies drove herds toward their camps and took away grain, loading it on the backs of the captives and then destroying the harvest. De Salviac expressed disapproval of the Abyssinian point of view that if the people were not crushed in the first attack they will rebel. According to him, the conduct of Abyssinian armies invading Oromia was barbaric.

The British Hodson (1927) and Darley (1935) were critical of the massacres and slave trade involving Indigenous peoples in the Ethiopian Empire, but they silently approved of the 'civilizing mission' of the Abyssinians. Even European scholars such as Pankhurst (1966, 1972, 1973), Ege (1996), as well as the Russian Bulatovic ([1900]1993), writing in the contemporary era, remained sympathetic to the domination of the Oromo by the Abyssinians, although also sometimes decrying the brutality of the regimes. Other scholars, such as the American Rosenfeld (1976), wrote a 'neutral' account of the events of Menelik's campaign, not challenging the Euro-Abyssinian construction of its legitimacy. (I use single quotes here to problematize neutrality.)

It was only with the publication of the neoMarxist history of Ethiopia by Holcomb and Ibssa (1990) that an account of the Oromo people recognizing their status as Indigenous peoples and critical of their colonization, appeared in the literature. In addition, western scholarship problematizing the Eurocentric vision of Abyssinia finally appeared (e.g. Beckingham & Hamilton, 1996). Accounts of the history of the Oromo written by *Oromo* scholars have only very recently begun to appear, including books by Hassan (1994), Bulcha (2002) and Jalata (2005), bringing to light the errors in the historical Euro-Abyssinian construction and

reconstructing the story of Menelik and the consolidation of the Ethiopian Empire under Haile Selassie from the perspective of the Oromo.

#### **2.4.2 The 'Abyssinia Empire' and The Myth of Prester John**

During the fifth and sixth centuries, the Roman Empire lost part of its territories in the Middle East and North Africa to the newly emerging religion of Islam, which expanded to southern Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Silverberg, 1996). Rumors and written documents started to circulate around Europe as the threat of invasion loomed. Silverberg (1996, p. 4) explains that the European attitude toward Abyssinia revolved around the myth of Prester John. The written documents and the rumors suggested that there was a strong Christian empire led by Prester John in the East that was ready to liberate the Holy Land and deliver the Christians from the expansionist threat of the Turks and Islam. The first official news about Prester John became widely known after the German Bishop Hugh gave an interview about it to the Pope. According to Phillips (1998), the letter that had circulated through European countries in the name of Prester John was skillfully composed with sufficient historical reality that it was considered plausible by its readers. However, the identity of the author and the place where the letter was composed remain a mystery.

According to Silverberg (1996), the letter was presented as if it was written by Prester John who claimed to be the king of India. He was assumed to control a big empire with magnificent wealth and a great military. In the document, there were testimonials from 72 kings who paid tribute to him. The letter also stated that he was a devout Christian and ready to wage war against the enemies of Christ and liberate the Holy Land. Many Europeans believed that Prester John would

defend them and the Holy Land (p. 8). The letter, one of the most widely-read among Europeans, first appeared in Latin, and then was translated into French, German, English, Russian, Serbian and many other languages (p. 41). Beyond that, the letter was plagiarized on a number of occasions by myth-spreaders. According to Phillips (1998), the story sparked the “geographical curiosity” of medieval Europe before the era of colonialism that commenced in the fifteenth century.

Europeans did not know the location of the empire of Prester John, and so they looked for it in Asia and then Africa. In the 1200s, when news about the war between the invading Mongolians and Turks was circulated in Europe, Europeans at first believed that Prester John was fighting the Turkish. By 1245, however, it was confirmed that the Mongols were neither Christian nor Muslim, which dashed European hope for the coming of Prester John and deliverance from the expansion of Islam (Beckingham & Hamilton, 1996; Phillips, 1998). This bad news accelerated the search for Prester John. In medieval times, the existence of Christians in India was well known among Europeans but the political, economic and military power of the group was unknown, so the search for Prester John was next aimed for the Indian subcontinent (Silverberg, 1996, 134-135). In the fourteenth century, when Portuguese sealers arrived in India, in addition to locating spices, they were looking for Prester John. But when the Portuguese located a pocket of Christians in a predominantly Hindu community, they were not convinced that the group was the one that they had expected to deliver them from Islam and Turkish occupation.

They then changed the direction of search for Prester John from Asia to Africa. In medieval literature, since the names India and Ethiopia were used interchangeably--it was not clear whether or not the words Ethiopia and India referred to different or the same geographical

location and people—Europeans looked for Prester John in Ethiopia (possibly at the same time as Asia). Europeans used the name Ethiopia to refer to dark-skinned people and distinguished Africans from Indians by their wooly and straight hair, respectively (Buttrick, 1962). According to Beckingham and Hamilton (1996), in the search for Prester John, the Portuguese captured Africans and took them to Portugal, made them Christians, taught them Portuguese and then returned them to the African coasts in the hope that through them, Prester John might become aware of their search for him. But when the Portuguese sailed to India and failed to locate Prester John there, they intensified their search in Africa. It was known that Abyssinia was a Christian country, and so in 1541, a Portuguese expedition left Bombay and arrived in Abyssinia (Myatt, 1970). Among the predominantly Indigenous African people in North East Africa, the Portuguese found a relatively strong Christian state known as Abyssinia.

#### **2.4.3 An Anti-Colonial Critique of The Portuguese Map of Abyssinia**

In the middle of the 1500s, soon after the Abyssinians and Portuguese made contact, they formed a military alliance to fight against the expansion of the Turkish Empire and to subdue Indigenous African peoples and establish Euro-Abyssinian racial and epistemological domination. According to Rey (1929), the Portuguese established trading ports and Abyssinia and the Portuguese became trade partners. Although Bulcha (2002) argues that the Arab world had traded in Oromo slaves for many centuries before European contact, the arrival of the Portuguese marked the beginning of the long road of enslavement, colonization, persecution and genocide by Europeans.

Both Mitchell (2002) and McClintock (1995) argue that map-making is a tool of colonial plunder, in that the knowledge constituted by the map legitimizes the conquest of territory while at the same time making the violence of its creation invisible. Indigenous scholars have critiqued how Columbus and other Europeans who arrived in North and South America declared their discovery of a New World, ignoring the fact that Indigenous peoples lived there before European explorers arrived (Wright, 1993). The same literature refers to Africa as a 'Dark' Continent, as if the intensity of light is less there than in Europe. In fact, the names 'New World' and 'Dark' Continent suggest that if Europeans did not know the landmass, it was not known. Similarly, lands are called Middle East and Far East as if the centre of the world was Europe (Said, 1979). In the thirteenth century, European cartographers believed that the world was flat, with the holy city of Jerusalem at its heart and they developed maps accordingly, rendering invisible the presence of civilizations in the rest of the world. I would identify the central problem as the fact that Europeans have been unwilling to see non-Europeans as *people* with their own legitimate interests, including social values and spirituality.

The Portuguese map of the 1500s excludes Indigenous peoples, and yet claims to capture the truth about the place and right to territorial control. Figure 5 shows a map published in 1680 as amended by William Berry from earlier maps. Figure 6 is the Ortelius Map of Abyssinia made in 1573 incorporating mythological constructions of Abyssinia as well as Portuguese observations. If these maps are compared to a contemporary map of Ethiopia, it can be seen that the imaginary maps embody the legend of Prester John by grossly exaggerating the size of the Abyssinian territories (Beckingham & Hamilton, 1996). A 1564 Gastold map (not shown) also exaggerates the size of Abyssinian territory (Beckingham & Hamilton (1996), showing the Abyssinian

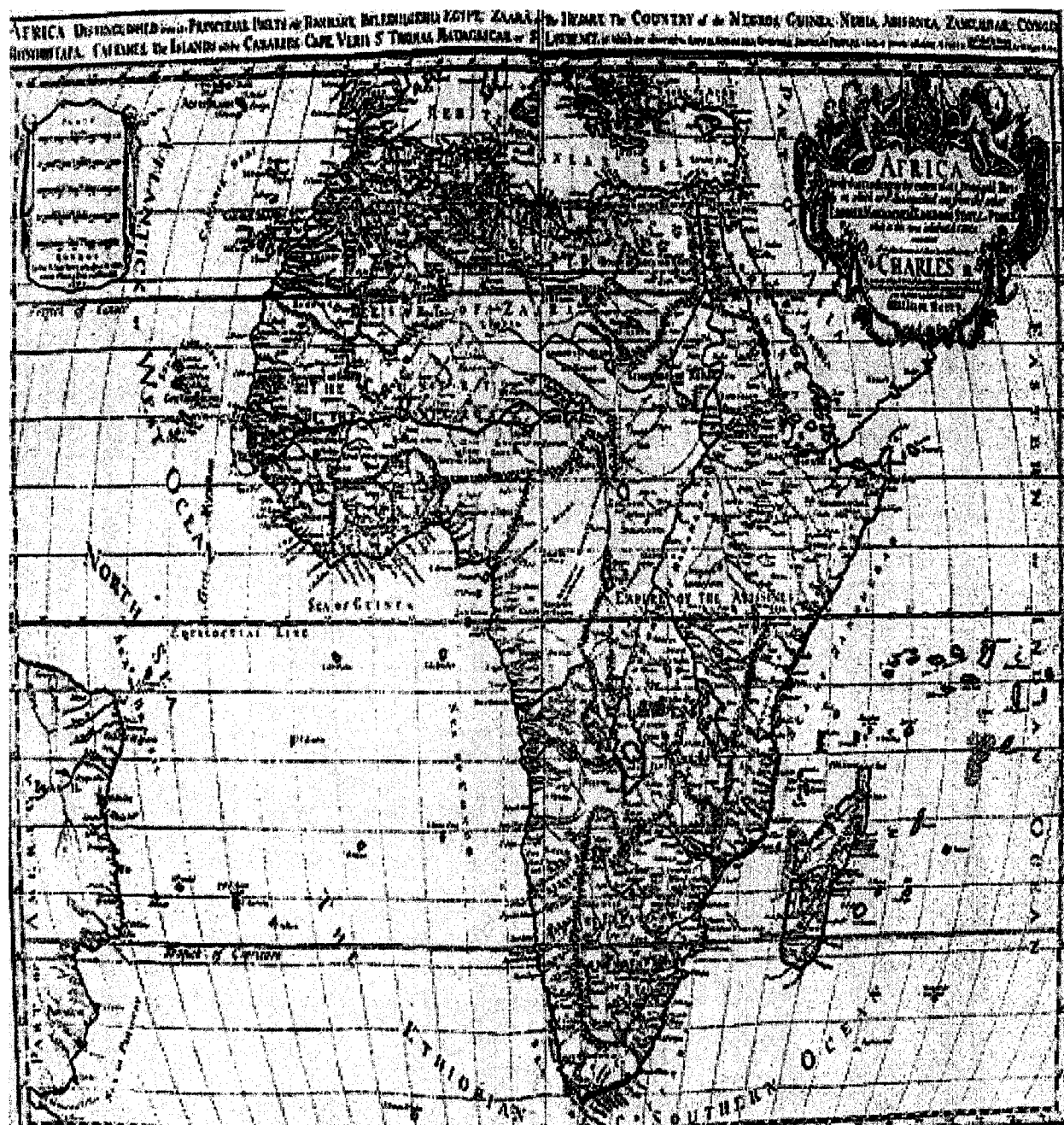


Figure 5. The William Berry Map of Africa – This map was published in 1680 as amended by William Berry from an earlier map. The representation of the Abyssinian Empire as taking up most of Africa is clearly visible, with the ocean south of the continent labeled as the Ethiopian Ocean



Figure 6. The 1573 Ortelius map of Abyssinia. Tigrei and Tigrai on this map refer to the Tigrayan people who have been in power in Ethiopia since 1991. Amara, Bagamidiri, Gojame refer to the Amhara people or their provinces.

provinces of Damot and Gojjam on the latitude of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the present Gonder on the latitude of the Congo and Tigray in Sudan. The map in Figure 6 suggests that the Abyssinian empire stretched north-south from south of Egypt to the current state of South Africa! As Mbodi (2002) has pointed out, the empire was drawn east-west as extending almost to the Atlantic and east to the Great Lakes of Africa. Even the most southerly tip of Africa – known as the Cape of Good Hope--was considered to be part of the Abyssinian Empire, and the map-makers labeled the ocean there the Ethiopian Southern Ocean.

The Portuguese assumed that peoples in these territories paid taxes to the emperor of Abyssinia and obeyed his injunctions (Beckingham & Hamilton, 1996). Even after they discovered that the territories that they had thought were part of the Abyssinian Empire were full of Indigenous peoples who had different customs, worldviews, languages and systems of governance independent of Abyssinia, they failed to modify their views about the legitimacy of the Abyssinian Empire. When the Portuguese observed conflicts between Abyssinians and Indigenous people, they concluded that the conflicts were rebellions against the king or invasions of the empire. For example, referring to the Agaw people, Rey (1929) stated that the ‘pagan’ and ‘uncivilized’ people were rebelling against Prester John. Bad European cartographers and historians conspired to make the Oromo people outsiders and invaders.

The Abyssinian king whom the Portuguese assumed to be Prester John was known as Lebne Dengil. He had learned the myth about the size of his empire and that the Europeans assumed his racial and cultural superiority over African Indigenous peoples (Silverberg, 1996). He saw the advantage of such theories and further supplied European clergy and academics with arguments to validate Abyssinian superiority over the Oromo and other Indigenous peoples.



#### 2.4.4 Cartography and the Dispute about Indigeneity and Sovereignty in Ethiopia

Early Euro-Abyssinian historians presented the Oromo people as if they were migrants, 'people from the sea,' and aggressive and brutal (Blundell, 1900; Asma-Giyorgis, [1910]1987; Gabre-Mariam, [1922]1987); Werner, 1914). But later authors such as Silverberg (1996) have insisted that the original inhabitants of the present Ethiopian empire belonged to pastoral racial groups Biblically known as Hamatic and Cushitic, thus challenging the early Euro-Abyssinian claims.

The Abyssinian Asma-Giyorgis ([1910]1987, p. 79), in writing the history of Oromo and the kingdom of Shewa (from which Menelik came), said that "by examining the reminiscences of the old, their traditions and heritage, we shall primarily explain how the Galla came *from the sea*." (emphasis is mine). Werner (1914) describes the Oromo as "the terror of East Africa" (p. 122), implying that they were invading rather than Indigenous. Gabre-Mariam ([1922] 1987, p. 61), speaking of the Oromo, similarly stated that

these Galla [Oromo] people migrated from Asia and crossed to Madagascar; they migrated from there too and settled at a harbor near Bobasa [=Mombassa in Kenya].... They say that from there, they came up to Ethiopia. (p. 61)

In contrast, Gabre-Mariam ([1922]1987) described the Amahara (Abyssinian) people as "the kings' soldier-subjects,...possessors of property or land" (p. 27). The Amhara, in Gabre-Mariam's words, can become "a lord over people whom he does not know" (p. 29). He described the Amaharas as not migrating "from anywhere: they are fine soldiers... aggressive, conspiratorial, instantly intelligent and ruthless" (p. 31). In Gabre-Mariam's assimilationist view, non-Amaharas could become Amaharas by subscribing to Christianity. ("Even some Galla are being...included among the lords established over the peasants.")

One of the European writers who could not decide about the indigeneity of Oromo people was the British author Blundell. In Blundell's (1900) words,

the [Oromo] were probably the aboriginal inhabitants of the country prior to the advent of the Abyssinians; they are said, however, also to be immigrants. They have been conquered, and are held in subjection by the help of firearms, which their conquerors take care they shall not obtain, and by this device they are kept in a position of distinct inferiority and abject servitude.... The Galla is said to be pagan, and to worship a god which is in some way connected with a tree or rock (p. 270)

At the same time, Blundell constructed the Abyssinians as the rightful rulers of the region. He wrote about the origin of the derogatory name "Galla" given to the Oromo people, writing that the name suggests that they are "emigrants." (p. 110) He insisted that "their natural traditions bring them from a great sea [about] the tenth century." (p. 110) This is based on the Oromo spiritual account of Creation, which was erroneously taken as historical fact. Although Blundell himself witnessed that the Oromo people called themselves, as he put it, "Ilmormo" (or Ilmaan Oromoo=sons and daughters of Oromo, or simply Oromo citizen), he reproduced the racism of Abyssinian and Arab writers by using the derogatory term Galla to describe the Oromo people, as well as taking their spiritual account literally.

How was it possible for these turn-of-the-century writers to suggest that it was actually the Oromo who were invaders and that *they* committed atrocities against the Abyssinians? Arguably, the myth about Prester John provided epistemological and racist justifications to these Euro-Abyssinian writers. The myth about Prester John and the assumed link with Abyssinia certainly informed European ideas, so that they could believe that Indigenous peoples were attacking a rightful empire even though they were, in actuality, trying to resist invasion. Given that the Oromo were mainly nomadic at this time, which is different from the Euro-Abyssinians, they could easily be categorized as invaders or immigrants.

Not all early writers disputed the indigeneity of the Oromo. Donaldson Smith (1895), for example, wrote that the Oromo were “not...warlike people,” that the valley he visited would “delight the heart of an English farmer” and that the Oromo assumed that the British had arrived “to rid them of their conquerors, the Abyssinians” (p. 124). Abyssinian claims about the size of their empire are also called into question by the Catholic cleric de Salviac ([1901] 2005), who wrote that although Sahle Selassie had already subjugated several Oromo clans, Menelik II did not actually know the extent and wealth of Oromo country. The spectre of the Prester John map was raised when de Salviac wrote that “national traditions advised him that, in the far distance of ages past, the empire of his Solomonic ancestors extended towards the south as far as indefinite limits.” (p. 348). The “national traditions” that de Salviac was probably referring to were the map that the European cartographers had drawn. Menelik II may have thought that Abyssinian territories stretched south of Egypt to the present South Africa as the map suggested.

Darley (1935) also observed and denounced the atrocities that the Abyssinians committed against the people they colonized. In Darley’s account, the Abyssinians looked at themselves as if they were unconquerable, and many of them held the belief that they were entitled to establish dominion over the greater portion of Africa. He quotes Abyssinian King Menelik as saying:

I shall endeavour if God grants me life and strength to re-establish the ancient frontiers of Ethiopia as far as Khartoum and up to the Nyanza Lake, with the country of the Gallas (p. xii).

Not only King Menelik II but many ordinary Abyssinians claim even to this day that in the past their territory stretched from the present state of Yemen to Madagascar. Since this was historically what appeared in the Ethiopian school curriculum, this idea was reinforced in childhood. And as Mitchell (2002) argues, once presented, the ‘neutral’ map *becomes* the reality.

The Prester John map and the “the real world” were assumed to be the same—providing a theoretical background for the formation of the Abyssinian empire.

#### **2.4.5 The Dispute about Indigeneity Between the Abyssinians and Oromos**

Euro-Abyssinian church historians have presented Oromo-Abyssinian first contact in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as invasion by the Oromos following Abyssinian wars with the Muslims. Thus by their account, first contact occurs at the same time as European-Abyssinian first contact. But Oromo scholars such as Jalata (2005) and Hassan (1994) portray the Oromo people as resisting both the Christian (Abyssinian) *and* the Muslim invaders with heavy casualties centuries before and after the Portuguese arrived. The Oromo account emphasizes that Abyssinian and Oromo contact, which entailed both competition for resources and worldviews, was occurring long before the Europeans came on the scene.

Asma-Giyorgis, an Abyssinian writing at the time of Menelik II, despite arguing that the Oromo were migrants, verified that Oromia existed as a self-determining people up to the nineteenth century. Asma Giyorgis wrote that

although the Amhara and the Galla [Oromo] fought for 400 years, none of the kings, except Aše Menelik, succeeded in subjugating the Galla. ...From Aše Galawdewos to Aše Menelik, no one ruled the Galla [Oromo] except Aše Menelik ([1910] 1987, pp. 601, 613).

Although the date of first conflict between the two peoples is unknown, according to Asma Giyorgis’ story, the first Abyssinian king who engaged in war with the Oromo people was Galladiwos. The name Galladiwos is derived from the two words: Galla and Adiwos. The word Galla is the derogatory name given the Oromo people. In the ancient form of the Abyssinian

language, Geez, the word Adwos meant annihilator or exterminator. Since Galawdewos ruled from 1540 to 1559, the statement suggests that the Oromo and Abyssinians, coming from very different worldviews, were in competition for centuries before the Oromos were colonized at the end of the nineteenth century. The two peoples were involved in border skirmishes, but had established clear locally-recognized borders.

How did the Abyssinians turn border skirmishes into colonization? As emphasized by several historians, European empire builders changed the balance of power by providing the Abyssinians with firearms and military advisors in the late 1800s. The involvement of European powers, as Holcomb and Ibssa's (1990) careful analysis of Oromo-Abyssinian relations shows, resulted in the indirect *colonization* of Oromia. This is an important use of the word colonization, since, as Holcomb and Ibssa emphasize, the word has mainly been used to refer to direct European occupation of Africa. The fact that Europeans were not present in large numbers at Oromo-Abyssinian battles from the 1880s onwards, does not mean that Oromia was not colonized. It was not colonized by Europeans, though it was colonized with European guns; thus Holcomb and Ibssa label the colonization of Ethiopia as "indirect." (It is perhaps a Eurocentrism that only Europeans have the power to colonize in mainstream literature.) In 1891, Menelik II, in his appeal for support to Queen Victoria, even declared his intention to colonize the Indigenous African people when he stated,

I have no intention at all of being an indifferent spectator, if the distant powers hold the idea of dividing up Africa, Ethiopia having been for the past fourteen centuries, an island of Christianity in a sea of pagans. (cited in Boahen, 1984, p.1)

Despite the fact that the Oromo did not have firearms, Abyssinia conquered Oromia in a brutal, prolonged war. As several histories document, Oromia was colonized in the course of violence

that lasted more than 50 years. Ege (1996) identifies the turning point in favour of the Abyssinians as their massacre of the Abichu Oromo in the highland areas of Baresa to Mount Tarma Bar in northwest Oromia during the reign of the Abyssinian ruler, Amaha-Iyesus, a predecessor of Menelik. Known as “Mad Thursday,” the massacre resulted in the clearing of a substantial area of land. This was followed by the settling of the Amahara in that area. In the process, the Amhara pushed the Abichu further south to the area occupied by the Galaan Oromo. According to Ege (1996), as the Oromo people were pushed southwards, the Abyssinian capital moved from Aya Bar to Ayne to Doqaqit and to Har Amba before it ended up at Ankober. Later, the Abyssinians moved their capital south to Debre-Berhan and then finally to Finfine, known in Amharic as Addis Ababa. The movement of Abyssinians was from north to south and southwest. That is, there is clear evidence that during and after the era of Menelik II, Abyssinians displaced several Oromo communities from their home villages and settled their own citizens. For example, on a video I acquired on Mecha and Tulama Self Help Association meetings (Anonymous, 2002). Oromo Elders talked about their experiences with colonization. One of them said that the town now called Ankober, which originally belonged to the Oromo, later became a Shewan capital known as Akko Boru (=Grandmother of Boru, in Oromo). The district now known as Merhabethe went by the former Oromo name of Marri Baate (=Batte’s circle in Oromo) and the district of Weromo (an Oromo district, in Amharic).

In 1875, Menelik’s army conquered Finfine (Addis Ababa) and the surrounding area (Rosenfeld, 1976, p. 79). As several authors make clear, Menelik’s approach was to capture Oromos and convert them to the Abyssinian faith, which was Coptic-Christianity. Oromos were captured in their childhood and later on, forced to serve the system that enslaved them. The point was to undermine Oromo indigenous spirituality and self-determination. The strategy of establishing of

a number of strongholds within the Oromo territory was typically followed by the propagation of Coptic-Christianity.

The assimilation process included intermarriage. The Abyssinians targeted Gada leaders for assimilation; as a consequence, individuals were attracted to adopt the Abyssinian system of governance and hold political power for a lifetime like the Abyssinians (Ege, 1996). As the Gada leaders were culturally assimilated into the Abyssinian culture, in conquered areas, their interests became identified with those of Abyssinian chiefs. Assimilated Oromos were encouraged to identify themselves as Amahara. Assimilation policy thus broke down Oromo collective identity, indigenous knowleges and self-determination and Abyssinians were able to absorb several Oromo areas and to some extent, subdue Oromo resistance. Further, when the Abichu Oromo were pushed south by the Abyssinians into other Oromo territory, competition and conflict between neighboring Oromos was triggered. The Abyssinians took advantage of this situation, adopting a policy of divide and rule; in this case, they 'sided' with the Abichu, ultimately conquering both Oromo clans (Ege, 1996). As the Abyssinians gradually assumed control over the social, economic, political and cultural affairs of these clans, they used the human and natural resources of the Oromos they had subjugated to conquer the rest of the Oromo people.

#### **2.4.6 Organized Campaigns of Killing and Mutilation During Colonization**

The killing, showing of trophies and enslavement of Oromos was generally held not to be a crime among Abyssinians and instead was lauded. In Plowden's words, "the slaughter of *armena*

(=heathens, in Amharic, italics in original) –that is, barbarians of all the nations known to them, is a thing rather leaning to virtue than the contrary” (1868, p. 53). Plowden also explained that this view “arises from the idea that being Christians, God has given them [the Abyssinians] this authority, as Canaan was handed over the Israelites.” (p. 53).

Another writer, Perham (1948), has recorded that the Abyssinians justified crimes against the Oromo people by citing Mosaic Law. Abyssinians believed that they were entitled to enslave the people whom they considered inferior to them. In Perham’s words,

From the earliest times, the [Abyssinians] have considered it their right to enslave other races, on the grounds that, according to Mosaic law, they were entitled to reduce to bondage the negro and Hamatic tribes which were said to be descended from Ham, upon whom Noah bestowed a curse (1948, p. 217).

Abyssinian writers also argued that Abyssinian actions against the Oromo people were justified in Biblical terms. For example, although Asma-Giyorgis acknowledged that Oromo ethics are superior to Christian ones, according to his argument, they are “a people who do not know God.” ([1910] 1987, p.125) Therefore, in Asma-Giyorgis’ view, since the God of the Oromos was not the God of the Abyssinians, of Moses’ Ten Commandments, the Oromos lacked the first one, which says, “I am the Lord thy God,.... Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Like other colonizers, then, the Abyssinians would justify their crimes as fulfilling a Biblical obligation to make the Oromo know God.

Myatt (1970) writes of Theodore, an Abyssinian who ruled until 1868, that he was neither patient nor modern in his drive to subdue the Oromos and convert the Moslem and Indigenous believers in the regions he conquered to Christianity by any means possible. According to Myatt (1970),



Theodore indiscriminately killed and also mutilated the hands and feet of hundreds of Oromo people and forced them to flee. Myatt states:

Theodore started military operations against the Gallas to the south of him.... The Gallas, not being Christians, were unworthy of mercy and he slaughtered them in horrifying numbers, until even those brave savages who were temporarily dismayed, withdrew to their various remote mountainous strongholds to be out of his reach.... He had always loved the excitement of battle but now he appeared to enjoy killing for its own sake and soon launched another campaign against the luckless Gallas with the evident object of exterminating them. Villages were burnt, often with the inhabitants inside them; fields laid waste, and women and children sold ruthlessly into slavery to his enemies, the Egyptians. The few warriors who survived were savagely mutilated so that they could neither fight nor reproduce (1970, pp.33-35).

The Abyssinian military who invaded Oromia at the end of the nineteenth century were unsalaried, surviving by looting from the people they conquered. They sent home their booty to their Abyssinian families and communities. Even before they invaded Oromia, the Abyssinians developed a policy of organized massacres and looting against the Oromo people. Not only individuals benefited from the looting but also the Abyssinian state and the church. The beneficiaries of the looting included both the Amaharas and the Tigrayans. For example, in 1878, a huge herd of cattle was gathered by Menelik II at Litche to give to another Abyssinian, the King of Tigray (Rosenfeld, 1976 p.78). The unsalaried armies were known as *wetader* (=soldier, in Amharic). The origin of the word implies one who makes a living by going out and grabbing or looting from somewhere. Asma-Giyorgis ([1910]1987) has categorized Abyssinian expeditions against the Oromo people as of two types. The first, known as "*fanno*," involved initiatives taken by individuals without state input. The second, known "*gendaba*," were organized by the Abyssinian state. The aim of these individuals and groups was the same--to acquire booty and rewards (Ege, 1996). The lands conquered by the *gendaba* forces (*jendereba* in Amhara)--where the Oromo people were exterminated or evicted--were known as *gendaba* land.

It was in this manner that the capital of Shewa Amhara, the original country of the Amhara Abyssinians, changed several times (Ege, 1996).

According to Asma Giyorgis (1987), Darkwah (1978) and Ege (1996), until Menelik II had colonized the whole of Oromia, the Abyssinians invaded the Oromo countryside at least three times a year. The first invasion came after the rainy season was over in September or October, the second in summer, January or February, and the third before the rainy season began in May.

Campaigns conducted after the rainy season coincided with the harvest, and so were more devastating. As Asma Giyorgis comments:

There was a compulsory expedition in October. In October every father had to chain (=the translation of an Amharic word meaning to force) his son. All the youths of fourteen, fifteen and above wished to participate in the expedition to kill a Galla, for he who did not put Seriti on his head and Samme on his neck (=a way of doing one's hair and dress), would not be counted among men. Further, one who was experienced in the campaign and killing would take away the children of his kinsmen in order to enable them to kill the Galla. When they captured the Galla, and taught the youth to exercise on them how to stab or hit with the blade, there would be great happiness and singing on their return. ([1910]1987, p. 533).

Such activities were widespread and accompanied by a specific song. As Ege (1996) explains, fanno looters were obligated to give a significant portion of their booty to the palace and church. Entitlement to the booty from military expeditions varied considerably. The sheep, households and prisoners of war belonged to their captors, but the king got the cattle, mules, and horses. Many cattle were consumed in the field and the rest were distributed among chiefs and soldiers who had proved their killing and looting skills. Palace workers and servants also got some of the cattle and Abyssinians settlers were granted land (Ege, 1996). There are historical records that document how the Abyssinians looted cattle and grain; burned down whole villages and the harvest; and mutilated, killed or sent residents into slavery (de Salviac, ([1901] 2005). Darkwah

(1978) has estimated that at least one quarter of the original population of the Oromo people was killed in the course of the conquest. As noted above, according to a European traveler (Plowden, 1868), Abyssinian warriors were bred to consider killing as the great purpose of existence, and the highest proof of courage. Plowden described a ceremony known as *dinfata*, those who killed, boasted of killing the Oromo. He observed that among the Tigray, the killing of the Oromo and the lion gave them the highest honor. When he described the magnitude of the killing, Plowden said

The greatest number of killed I ever heard counted by one man, independent of prisoners or other exploits, was 130; as to the prisoners, it is entirely a matter of fortune, as a man who has not even seen the battle, by coming up at the right moment, may capture hundreds at once; for when the victory has once fairly declared itself, all hasten to surrender themselves to the first comer that shouts the war-cry of the conquering party, and, with rare exceptions, all thoughts of resistance cease with the flight of the chief. (1868, p. 63).

According to Ege (1996), there was a merit system under which Abyssinians evaluated the killings. Killing an Afar person was counted as four Oromos. The transition from the state of boyhood to manhood required killing either strong animals or people considered as an enemy. The Afar people are in lowland regions and it is hard to find them; thus killing an Afar had a value of killing four Oromos. The killing of a lion counted as killing seven Oromos and killing an elephant as killing 40 Oromos. The system of merit did not differentiate whether the Oromo person was a man, woman, child, old or disabled. There was no difference between killing disabled Oromo and Oromo warriors. Until an Abyssinian man killed an Oromo person, he would keep his hair short. Successful killers put butter on their heads. King Sahle-Selassie, Menelik's grandfather, simply shot an Oromo in hiding if he had not been able to kill an Oromo in a war. Overall the system of merit simply promoted the annihilation of the Oromo people. Later, Asma Giyorgis ([1910]1987) recorded that when the young King Menelik returned from

exile in Wallo to Shewa (Menelik's homeland), he mounted an expedition to Salale in order to fulfill the long-standing tradition of killing Oromo people.

Plowden (1868) had visited Abyssinia and Oromia long before de Salviac ([1901] 2005) Hodson (1927) and Darley (1935) and he witnessed the eagerness of Abyssinians to indiscriminately kill Oromo persons. Explaining the motives of Abyssinian soldiers in the killing of the Oromos, Plowden (1868) put it this way:

The soldiers exercise this barbarous custom on the plea of necessity of showing evidence of their deeds, the chief on the strength of custom....The victorious soldiers count their prisoners, and calling their comrades to witness, then strip and turn them adrift, groups of women in every direction, those of the defeated partly naked and weeping, of the other, filling the air with gleeful cries of triumph and songs of victory; the captured negaretes (=drum, in Amharic), now beating on the side of their late opponents, are delivered to the chief, and at every tent the umbilta (musical instrument) pours forth its wild notes through the uproar of firing guns, the galloping of horses, and the songs and shouting. The next day all returns to its usual quiet, and the soldiers of the defeated have entered the service of different chiefs, and swell the army of the late foe, or depart, as they best can, naked and hungry. The women have found friends, relatives, or masters, and the hyenas and the vultures are alone left with the dead. ...

The Abyssinian warrior is bred to consider killing (geddai) as the greatest object of existence, under the highest proof of courage. ...For instance, one man boasts, or perhaps wagers, that his deeds surpass those of all others present; another accepts the challenge, and they commence the contest, calling witnesses to each fact. In this contest, each elephant slain passes for forty men, each lion for four, and each buffalo for five; though in some parts it varies, as in Teegray, where the elephant is despised, whereas the lion counts ten, and so on. Men all count alike, but a Galla is sufficient for a ballad, as is also an elephant, and in some districts a buffalo, but never a lion. With the Wallo Gallas, also, the death of a horse is equivalent to that of a man (Plowden, 1868, pages 53, 54, 62).

In the Oromo worldview, to win over death, one needs to have children. When fathers and mothers die, they live on in their children. Thus, from the Oromo perspective, genital mutilation and castration is the worst form of crime. And so mutilation/castration is one of the methods the Abyssinians used to subdue the Oromo people. Speaking of one victim, an American diplomat has stated:

His history is a sad one.... He was taken prisoner when a boy, by the Abyssinians who conquered [his] province... . [A]ccording to the prevailing custom, even up till today, Balcha was made a slave after having been horribly mutilated by his captors (Steffanson & Starrett, 1976, Vol. 1, p.7).

The above statement is in reference to Balcha AbaNefso, who was captured when Abyssinians raided Oromia to loot cattle and children for slavery. Records show that until 1883, when Menelik announced prohibition of castration of the Oromos, the Abyssinians mutilated thousands of Oromo men and women for no other reason than for being Oromo. From 1883 onward, Menelik prohibited such crimes and instructed his military that those who were already mutilated were not to give a piece of their harvest to their captors any more (Rosenfeld, 1976, p.78).

One of the most notorious mass mutilations, at Anolee, occurred three years after Menelik prohibited the practice. In 1886, Harma Muraa (the Oromo name of the place where breast mutilation occurred) and Harka Muraa (the place where hand mutilation occurred) of Anolee became notorious and the amputations of survivors served to frighten young Oromos. At Anolee, Abyssinians also killed thousands of Oromos. In May 2005, Junedin Sado, an Oromo who represented a Tigray-dominated political organization, in his election campaign, pointed to his Amahara opponents, charging that their ancestors had committed horrible crimes, which they had not acknowledged. He charged that the “breast and hand mutilation carried out in Arsi Anolee would never fade from the minds of Oromo people” (See Walta, 2005). I acquired a 1992 video recorded on the commemoration of the event (Anonymous, 1992). The video captured the testimony of three men who stood in front of thousands of people and recounted what they knew. The first person was an elderly man. He said,

This is the place known as Anolee in Jawi [the surrounding region] which our fathers whispered about to us around [the] fireplace.... I am telling you today in broad daylight things that I [only] whispered in the past. It was on this tree where our fathers were

hanged (showing the tree); it was here where Menelik's army gunned down and mutilated thousands of our mothers and fathers.

The second person who testified was younger than the first. He elaborated:

Ten years before the killing, on several occasions, Abyssinians attacked the region and the people fought them back bravely. After several unsuccessful attempts, Abyssinians introduced cattle disease, which wiped out cattle, which led to starvation. After that, Menelik introduced smallpox, which killed thousands of men, women and children. When the society was totally incapacitated, they came back with modern machine guns with which they were able to subdue the Oromo people. After that, Abyssinians only faced sporadic resistance. To bring about total submission, Menelik's army brought together all able men and women to this place. They hanged thousands of men and women on this tree [pointing to the tree] and gunned others and some of them were mutilated. They mutilated the men and women to make sure they would not reproduce. In the case of women, if they reproduced, the [mutilation] made sure they would not breast-feed [and their offspring would not survive].

The second person went on to state that after the killing and mutilation was over, the able men and women came back and collected the dead bodies and buried them in a mass grave. The video shows the site of a mass grave. The first two speakers were local farmers and they spoke without notes. The third person was Nadhi Gammada, a politician. Gammada was more specific about the episode; when he spoke, he referred to his notes and repeated the information given by the other two. At that time, Gammada was the executive committee member of OLF (Oromo Liberation Front).

As Sado has suggested (see Walta, 2005), the Abyssinian written record does not give detailed information about the events at Anolee. Rosenfeld (1976), who has collected Abyssinian records, writes about a document that reports that in May 1886, Menelik left his palace with his right hand man and uncle Dargie and two Europeans (Drs. Traversi and Antonelli) to travel to Arsi. The same document suggests that Menelik devastated Arsi up to the Wabe River (Rosenfeld, 1976, p. 119). The document does not give details about the nature of the devastation. In August

of 1886, Dargie forces apparently suffered repeated attacks in northern Arsi after which he requested reinforcements. In response to Dargies' request, in November, when Menelik and his army arrived, he found that the resistance of the Oromo people in that region was "broken." According to the cleric de Salviac ([1901] 2005), one of Menelik's military commanders, General Wolde-Gebriel, was furious about the resistance of the Oromo people and mutilated the right wrists of 400 Oromo in one day alone. This European missionary de Salviac actually saw some of those who were mutilated and recorded that after Dargie had lost 2000-armed Abyssinian men, in revenge he killed 1200 Oromo civilians. But the killing and mutilation did not stop at Anolee. After Menelik made sure that the resistance of Arsi had been controlled, he marched further east to Gelamso in the province of Harar to join the army led by his General Wolde-Gebriel. In January 1887, at the battle of Chalanko, more mass killings took place (Rosenfeld, 1976). I term these "mass killings" because the Abyssinians had European guns and the resident Oromo did not.

Hodson (1927), a British consulate in Ethiopia from 1914 to 1927, observed the experience of the Oromo and other peoples under Abyssinian rule. In his writing he gave testimony about the Oromo as "quiet and inoffensive people," noting that

[t]he Abyssinians came armed with rifles and shot down the hapless Boran [Oromo] like rabbits. Being by nature philosophical people, the Boran soon saw the uselessness of resisting the Abyssinian hordes. Nowadays a single Abyssinian can go to any big Boran village and get what he wants for the asking—not because the Boran are cowards, but simply because they lack the means of resistance. (p. 43).

The fact that the killing continued past the reigns of Theodore and Menelik II is documented by Darley (1935), who commented that the Abyssinian

policy of the practical extermination of all the subject races with whom they are in contact has depopulated the country, and must eventually cause their downfall. That policy, which they seem unable to alter, is like a dreadful cancer slowly eating the heart out of the nation. It is strange indeed that such government should be allowed to

continue, with its rule, consisting, in practice, of murder, robbery, and slavery open and unblushing (pp.116-117).

Table 1 shows various authors' estimates of the magnitude of the looting, killing and slave trading. (The destruction and looting of cattle will be dealt with in Section 2.4.9 below.)

#### 2.4.7 Human Trafficking

The Oromo and other people whom the Abyssinians conquered were also targeted for human trafficking. The Oromo historian Bulcha (2002) argues that in the Horn of Africa, the slave trade was a joint enterprise between Christian Abyssinia and the Moslem Arabian Peninsula. European and Arab human traffickers supplied Abyssinian rulers with firearms, which they paid for with revenue collected from the slave trade and which they used in the expansion of colonial boundaries. Although the number of Oromos who were sold into slavery in the Middle East has been large historically, one can find few Blacks in this region. Bulcha argues that the number of Blacks in the Middle East remains small for two reasons. First, in the Arab world, there was an assumption that any male and female contact would eventually lead to sexual relationships. Male and female contact was thus restricted and castrated men were preferred. However, second, as Bulcha argues, women were wanted for sex and the children born from slave mothers became free and belonged to the clans of their fathers. As a result, the first generation children of these slaves are half-caste, assimilated into the society. Since the men slaves were castrated, they were prevented from reproducing. For this reason the number of Blacks in the Arab world is very small. In fact, since the survival rate from castration is low, the prices for men slaves varied based on whether the person was castrated (Bulcha, 2002). Abyssinians also kept castrated slaves locally, including Black peoples who were not Oromo.



Places	Years	Cattle	People Killed	Slaves	Source
Karayu	1827	30,000			Ege (1996)
Sarte	1840	Rich booty	800		Ege (1996)
Mecha	1841	5,300			Ege (1996)
Serte	1841	37, 042	4,600		Ege (1996)
Finfine	1841	14,042	4,600		Darkwah (1978)
Yaka	1842	6000	600		Ege (1996)
Finfine	1843	43,000	4,500	1000	Ege (1996)
Soddo	1843	87,000			Darkwah (1978 Ege (1996))
Shewa	1876	17,000 – 18,000			Darkwah (1978)
Soddo	1878	6000-7000		3000-4000	Darkwah (1978)
Arsi	1886		6000		Darkwah (1978)
Harar	1892	10,000			Pankhurst (1966b)

Table 1. Estimates of Recorded Lootings and Killings – Since there is no systematic record of the numbers of people killed and enslaved and cattle destroyed or taken, I have summarized in this table the numbers cited about the few incidents that are written about in the historical literature. Although it is difficult to draw conclusions from these accounts, all agree that the numbers rose as the century progressed.

European interest in the events in Ethiopia was keen and was sometimes discussed in popular media as well as by authors who wrote their eyewitness accounts. On January 20, 1925, in its editorial, the *Westminster Gazette* explained that Abyssinia was the last great home of slavery in Africa and the world (see Steffanson & Starrett, 1977a, p. 45). A day before that, the same newspaper, referring to the area colonized by Abyssinia, described it this way:

Vast areas are going out of cultivation, partly owing to brigandage and partly to slave-trading. One of the writers recently passed through an outlying district, which he first visited ten years ago, which was a remarkably prosperous and populous country. The soil was so fertile that the hills were terraced for cultivation. Today it is possible to march through this district for days without meeting a single human being. The terraces are still there, but the people who should be sowing and reaping are either dead or slaves in the capital (1977a, p. 42).

The extent of the involvement of Abyssinia in human trafficking rivaled even their European counterparts. According to Prouty and colleagues (1981), between the years 1800 and 1850, Abyssinia supplied over 1,250,000 of its captives to the European slave market. These who were sold into slavery were those people who were conquered by Abyssinians during that 50 years. In 1935, when Italy invaded Ethiopia, they claimed to have abolished slavery and reported that 125,000 were freed and placed in the village of Liberty. On April 21, 1919, a US diplomat wrote:

Much of the present slave-raiding is said to occur among the Boran [Oromo] people in southern Abyssinia, in Kaffa province, and in the region of Lake Rudolph on both sides of the frontier. The large and rich province of Kaffa is said to have been converted in a few years from a land of industrious people producing great quantities of agricultural and pastoral products, into a land of wilderness with only a few people remaining, and these spending their time hidden in the jungle to escape the notice of raiding or marauding bands of so-called Abyssinian soldiers (Steffanson & Starrett, 1976, Vol. 1, p.183).

This document also suggests that in nine years Abyssinians conducted 87 slave raids in British East Africa. Most of the raids were reported to have been made by Tigrayan soldiers.

It is not possible to establish the exact number of Oromos sold into slavery; however, the magnitude can be assumed from what de Salviac describes. de Salviac ([1901] 2005) discusses how Abyssinians, in bloody raids on Oromia, harvested slaves which were bought in Turkey and rest of the Arab world. An Oromo child cost 150 to 200 francs in Abyssinia and 800 francs in Cairo and an Oromo girl was worth about two 2000 francs in Constantinople. Signifying the extent to which the Oromos were sold into slavery, the de Salviac record shows that the Oromo language was spoken in quarters of Cairo, Alexandria, Constantinople and other Turkish towns. Even in the islands of the Seychelles, small colonies of Oromo people are found.

The European Darley (1935) wrote about observing an old woman who ran after the Abyssinian raiders. With curiosity, Darley asked the woman where she was heading; she expressed horror about the devastating experiences of her people. The woman answered, "What do I care? They have killed my husband, and carried off all my children and grandchildren. I have no home left, so I follow them to wherever they go." (p.132)

#### 2.4.9 Effects of Abyssinian Occupation of Oromo Land

Killing, looting and enslavement have had immediate and direct effects on the Oromo, but there are also less documented, indirect effects of constant pillaging and exploitation by the Abyssinians, such as loss of food supply and ensuing famine, debilitation (and perhaps even deliberate introduction of biological agents) leading to disease and economic exploitation by Abyssinian armies in Oromia.

#### 2.4.9.1 Interfering with the Food Supply

As the record shows, cattle were sometimes seized outright, and at other times infected. Only scattered references to the famine and epidemics that followed the attacks of Theodore and Menelik II can be found, but they suggest that the toll of Oromo lives is higher than the half of the population cited above. For example, Hodson (1927), who was in Oromia from 1914 to 1927, has recorded three events that affected the Ginir region, where several clans were totally wiped out. The first event was smallpox, which he said ravaged the country. The second event was the war with Abyssinia in which he noted that the Oromo people suffered heavily. The last event was a famine. Darley (1935, p. 21) reported that the natives declared they had died from the same sickness which had killed their cattle—rinderpest—which was rife at that time (p. 21). Rinderpest does not infect humans, but clearly, people died as a result of the loss of their cattle.

The looting and destruction of Oromo cattle and other property such as grain by Abyssinians has a long history. For example, it is reported that in 1892 Ras Mekonen took 5000 cows and an equal number of steers from the Oromo region of Harar and sent them to the Amhara Shewa as famine relief (Rosenfeld, 1976, p. 156). According to Pankhurst (1966b), the number of animals was double of the figure report by Rosenfeld (1976), and Pankhurst pointed out that Menilik divided the animals among the nobility according to their status. From his interview with one of the sons of Ras Darge, Pankhurst established that the herd of cattle travelled from Bale to Addis Ababa and that it was divided among the Orthodox churches. In 1895, the British forces stationed in Somalia also accused Ras Mekonen of seizing thousands of cattle in Hargessa-Ogden (Rosenfeld, 1976).

Rosenfeld (1976) also noted that the Abyssinians exported the looted cattle and used them to get hard currency or machine guns. For example, the record shows that in 1895, Menelik ordered his military to close all the roads through Afar to Harar and collect as many mules as possible. The king used the mules for his army as well as selling them to French forces. The French needed mules for their army in their colony of Madagascar (p.170). Although de Salviac (1901) did not give specific places and times, he claimed that in one of Menelik's expeditions against the Oromo people, he took 10,000 oxen and several thousand slaves.

#### 2.4.9.2 Disease and Famine during and after Colonization

It is widely repeated in Oromo stories that I heard as child that during colonization, Abyssinians introduced cattle disease, smallpox and cholera epidemics in order to dismantle the means of survival and to incapacitate the Oromo people. Several Oromo narratives recount how, after Abyssinia invaded Oromia, both humans and the cattle did not thrive. Many cattle died and those that survived could not reproduce due to some type of disease or unknown conditions; and if they did, the offspring did not survive to adulthood. For many years, Oromos took it for granted that where there were Abyssinians, cattle could not survive. In the video described above made in commemoration of the mass killing and mutilation in Anolee, the speakers also charged that the Abyssinians deliberately introduced cattle disease at the time of colonization and afterwards.

Written records confirm that several epidemics occurred in Oromia soon after the Abyssinian conquest or in the course of that conquest. Asma Giyorgis ([1910]1987) and Pankhurst (1966a), writing in different eras, both document and analyze the emergence of these epidemics in several

parts of Oromia following the arrival of the Abyssinian army. In the detailed work of Pankhurst, who documented the diseases that Oromos and their cattle suffered during and after Abyssinian colonization, can be found estimates of the devastation due to cattle disease, cholera and ensuing famine. Cattle diseases killed about 80 to 95 percent of cattle and created conditions for famine. For the Oromo people, who were predominantly cattle-breeders, this was a disastrous situation. Pankhurst (1966a) and de Salviac ([1901] 2005), who also wrote about this devastation, did not say outright that the Abyssinians used biological agents such as cattle plague, cholera, smallpox and Spanish flu to subdue the Oromo people at the time of Menelik II (See Birri, 1995, and Pankhurst, 1977, on this topic). However, both noted the intense conflict between Abyssinians and Indigenous peoples, and raised suspicion that these were deliberate acts. Such suspicions have also been raised with respect to Indigenous peoples in North America (Wright, 1993), Australia (Lemkin, 2005) and New Zealand (The New Herald, 2002)

Both oral stories and the official record show that in 1877, Menelik conducted a military campaign against the Oromo and other Indigenous peoples, who were then plagued by disease and famine (Rosenfeld, 1976). The document does not make clear the type of disease, but in 1882, a cholera epidemic was recorded in Massawa (Rosenfeld, 1976). In 1890, the Ethiopian army that invaded the Ogden region retreated after they became infected with cholera (Rosenfeld, 1976). A year after, when Ras Mekonen's troops again raided Ogden and went as far as the Shebelle River, it is recorded that they also retreated due to a shortage of water in the area and the cholera epidemic (Rosenfeld, 1976). The record also reveals that in 1892, realizing the contagious nature of the cholera epidemic, the Abyssinians quarantined the cattle handlers and animals sent from Harar to Shewa for famine relief to prevent the spread of this disease before

the cattle reached Ankober (Rosenfeld, 1976). Interestingly, these cattle were not quarantined as they traveled hundreds of kilometers in Oromia. However, when they reached the Abyssinian heartland, they were quarantined. Obviously the Abyssinian knew about the contagiousness of cholera, and the means to contain it when they quarantined the cattle. However, there is no indication that they took the same care when they traveled in Oromia. Although it cannot be established whether or not this specific act contributed to the spread of the cholera epidemic in Oromia, it is known that in Eastern Oromia, through which they drove these cattle, the epidemic had devastated the Oromo people (Blundell, 1900).

The Abyssinian version is that the cattle disease that practically wiped out 'their' cattle was introduced by Italians (Asma Giyorgis, [1910]1987) in 1879 when Yohannis IV prohibited Italians from going to Metema and other places to purchase cattle to feed their army in Eritrea. The Italians apparently purchased infected cattle from Arabia or India (Pankhurst, 1966a) and took them to Eritrea. However, before these cattle could be consumed, Abyssinians raided the area and took the cattle to Asmara. As a result a plague broke out in first in Eritrea, then in Tigray, Gondor, Shewa and then Gojjam. According to Pankhurst (1966a), the cattle disease that the Italians had introduced to Ethiopia was a virus known as "rinderpest."

The rinderpest virus that was introduced in this region, which was unusually virulent and spread through the region in a short time, was probably a variety unknown to the area (Pankhurst, 1966a). The disease consumed both domestic and wild animals such as buffalo, which used to roam in the hundreds but almost became extinct. By 1889, many Abyssinian regions had lost most of their cattle to the disease. Pankhurst (1966a), noting that in areas 3000 meters above sea level, more cattle survived than in lowland regions, reasoned that the severity of the epidemic

varied with the altitude of the land. (I believe that there is another explanation, in that in highland regions. the risk of transmission of the virus via drinking water is less because the source is spring water; in the lowland regions, it is rivers, which can become contaminated.)

Rosenfeld (1976) recorded that, by 1889, the cattle disease had spread into Shewa. It was recorded that Menelik had lost around 250,000 head of cattle and that some richer Oromos lost from 10,000 to 12,000 (Pankhurst, 1966a). Two years after the rinderpest disease outbreak in 1882, famine struck Northern Abyssinia and this lasted for 10 years (Rosenfeld, 1976, p. 98). In 1890, famine conditions worsened: Menelik himself and his wife built shelters beside Maryam Entotto Church in Finfine to feed thousands of his starving people from the royal storehouse and soldiers were ordered to bury the dead (Rosenfeld, 1976, p. 144; Pankhurst, 1966b).

In 1891, Menelik decreed stricter observance of mass and greater obedience to church laws and liturgy during public prayers since he believed that famine was God's punishment for their laxity (Rosenfeld, 1976). In addition to Menelik, Abyssinian chiefs such as Dejach Germame, who controlled the Ada Barga (central Oromia region) and Ras Darge, who owned the whole land at Salale (northwestern Oromia) assisted with the famine. Empress Taitu helped the recovery of Abyssinians when she sent 300 cattle to Gondor along with Oromo and Gurage men and women who were designated to cultivate the lands and make Gurage pottery respectively (Pankhurst, 1966b). When Abyssinians came from Gondor to Finfine, Menelik received them courteously and gave them clothes, mules, cows and oxen and Oromo men and women to work for them on their land. That is why amongst many Abyssinians, Menelik II is still seen not merely as a ruler, but the father or even mother of his people (even though it is an insult to call a man a woman). He is referred to as "emmuye Menilik" (=mother Menelik in Amharic) because he provided them



food as would a good mother for her children. However, it is important to closely examine the nature of this 'charity.' Ada Barga, the place where Dejach Germame stored the food that he gave to charity, is located west of Finfine. Dejach Germame was not a farmer or a businessman-- whatever he had or gave was what he had looted from the Oromo people. This is also true of the emperor Menelik, Empress Taitu, and the Emperor's uncle Ras Darge. But it should be recalled that the English traveler Blundell (1900) visited Eastern and Western Oromia during Menelik's era and wrote that the countryside everywhere showed the signs of past warfare and looting expeditions. At the turn of the nineteenth century, he observed many houses were burnt or abandoned, and the jungle was reclaiming lands that has been settled and cultivated in the past. The country had been laid waste and the people were reduced to semi-starvation because of the two Abyssinian expeditions that occurred in two consecutive years. Pankhurst (1966b) cited the work of Wurz, writing in French at the same time as Blundell, in which the author described Ada Berga and beyond:

The Galla country which surrounds Shoa was completely depopulated and is so still. I have been ten days journey to the west of Addis Ababa [or Finfine] half way to the Abyssinian frontier, and have passed whole days without seeing a habitation. I was shown the sites of a considerable village where nothing remained but thickets and grass.

One European missionary reported that half of the Oromo people in the Harar area had died of the famine (Pankhurst, 1966b). A second was more specific: the country Itu Oromo (cattle-breeders of eastern Omomo) had lost about eight-tenths of its population. While the Oromo people died massively of the famine, the Abyssinians continued looting food and cattle.. The catastrophe was so enormous that the land was only half cultivated from previous years. Thus Menelik's expeditions had consumed the resources of the local people, meaning that the 'charity' was at the cost of Oromo people.

Pankhurst (1996a) and de Salviac ([1901] 2005) recorded that as famine weakened the people, thousands of dead bodies were left unburied and were consumed by hyenas and other wild beasts, who then started attacking healthy human beings in their homes. Among the Oromos in the Horo-Guduru region, this event was recorded as “baraa namaa nyataa” (=the year of human-eater, or big-headed beast in Oromo). Catholic missionaries stationed in Eastern Oromia apparently saved children from hyenas and raised them as Christians at this time (de Salviac, ([1901] 2005). In Oromo tradition, the dead human body has to have its resting place, not only in respect to the dead person but also for the safety and security of those who are alive from attacks by wild animals.

#### 2.4.9.3 Forcing Oromo Farmers to Feed the Military

As if the introduction of disease and famine was not enough, according to Darkwah (1978), the Abyssinian practice of leaving their military to fend for themselves, also resulted in the military exploitation of Oromo farmers to feed military forces and their families. For example, in the 1870s, the number of Abyssinian soldiers stationed in Warra-Illu in northern Oromia was about 40,000. In 1887, under the leadership of Dejach Makonen, there were also over 4,000 men in Harar. It was estimated that by the 1880s, at least 50,000 Abyssinian soldiers were scattered in several regions of the empire, with most being settled in Oromia. According to an American diplomatic report (Steffanson, & Starrett, 1977), by 1920, the total strength of Abyssinian forces had risen to about 571,000. When Abyssinians lost their cattle to rinderpest virus, many able men joined Meneliks’ army as a means of survival (Darkwah, 1978). The figure of over half a million represents the number of Abyssinians throughout the empire (not including family members, for whom these military personnel were responsible). To imagine the economic devastation that

supporting these Abyssinian dependents caused, it should be remembered that it was superimposed upon the devastation caused by Menelik as well as the loss of cattle that resulted in loss of the Oromo ability to farm. All this was followed by famine, disease and poverty.

The Menelik II government only gave money to their army located in and around the capital. In other regions, each soldier got only two shirts, two pairs of trousers and one blanket every year (Darley, 1935). Other needs were to be met by the newly colonized peoples who grew the food they needed, built their houses and did their housework. These forces were forced to pay taxes in kind to the central government in order to keep their posts. Darley reported that if the colonized people could not deliver what the Abyssinians needed, the soldiers would tie their hands behind their back and starve them until they would hand over one of their children to be a slave. For this reason, Darley (1935) described the Abyssinians as "hopeless, for they will not work; they can only be likened to a cloud of locusts" (p. 139). The mobility of the Abyssinians, ordered by Menelik from one area to another, deepened the problem (Darley, 1935). European travelers recorded that the number of individuals accompanying a mobile military district governor ran as high as 30,000 and even 100,000 people (Wolde-Michael, 1973). These unsalaried forces were legally entitled to take their expenses out of the district and to give part of the booty to the central government (Darley, 1935). When they left the place where they had been stationed for several years, they forced the locals to assist them in taking whatever they needed until they were settled in another place, including children for slavery; and cattle, horses and anything else they could move.

#### 2.4.9.4 Rist, Serfdom and the Introduction of Private Land Ownership

According to Asma Giyorgis ([1910]1987), when Menelik was crowned king, many of the soldiers under Ras Gobana, who attended the ceremony, were Oromo nationals. On the next day, when these Oromo nationals were ready to go home, they were prevented unless they accepted the Abyssinian religion. They were instructed that they would either convert to Christianity or suffer confiscation of their land and be killed.(p. 693). This was consistent with Fetha Negest teachings. According to the Fetha Negest (1968), the Coptic Orthodox Christian Abyssinian religious and legal system established in Old Testament Biblical terms, a slave could own no property. Thus, colonized peoples were prohibited from owning land. In the case of Ethiopia, when Abyssinians took over Oromo land, they largely prevented Oromos from owning the land by using Fetha Negest (with small exceptions for Oromos who denied their Indigenous beliefs and who were forced into onerous taxation such as my community). Until the 1975 land reform in the Abyssinian heartland, the land ownership system was known as *rist*. According to the *rist* system, everyone in the community who can trace his or her ancestry to the area is entitled to own at least a piece of land. This was true unless the person was Muslim, Ethiopian Jewish or Shumsheha (Kebede, 2002). In addition to this legal system that supported the colonization of Oromia, Menelik II introduced the concept of private landownership in which the Indigenous peoples were dispossessed of their land (Jalata, 2005).

In areas outside the Abyssinian heartland, the record shows that the introduction of private ownership was important in dispossessing residents of their land. For example, in 1855, the Oromos regained some of the lands that they had lost including Angolala (northwestern Oromia). Later, they lost it to the Abyssinian king Haile Melekot along with regions surrounding the

present city of Debre Berhan (Rosenfeld, 1976, p. 17). Recently, Kebede (2002) studied land ownership in Abyssinia and he found that in the Debre Berhan and Dinki districts (presently part of the Amahara region), land ownership was different from the other areas in Abyssinia, where rist prevails. He reported that before the 1975 land reforms, selling and buying of privately-owned land was widely known in these areas. In fact, he found that the percentage of serfs in Debre Berhan, Geblen and Dinki were respectively, 70, 75 and 80 percent. Given that these places are known to be where Abyssinians massacred the Oromo people and settled their citizens, these figures suggest that the serfs are Oromos who were assimilated into the Abyssinian culture; Abyssinians who killed or chased out the Oromos who originally owned the land; and/or and others who have settled in the areas and become tenants.

In the case of my people, the Wallo Oromos, due to their location between the Amahara and Tigray peoples, it was divided between them. Specifically, the Abyssinian king Theodore colonized parts of Wallo and the other Abyssinian king, Yohannis IV, took the rest (Rosenfeld, 1976).

## 2.5 Summary

In this review of Abyssinian-Oromo relationships, I have documented a political relationship in which the Abyssinians, with the assistance of Europeans, have effectively overrun the political, social, economic, cultural and epistemological sovereignty of the Oromo people. Despite the fact that the population of the Oromo people outnumbers the Abyssinians, Menelik II and previous regimes successfully maintained political power and colonial boundaries with extreme brutality—using European guns. Menelik inherited the European construction of the Abyssinian

empire as vast, Christian and wealthy, represented in the European map of Prester John, and this arguably fuelled the atrocities recorded both in Oromo oral stories and the written record of European travelers, missionaries and later, scientists attempting to explain the widespread epidemics, famine and poverty of Ethiopia.

It is self evident that it is more difficult to resist disease when suffering from starvation or malnutrition (Watts, 1997). As the oral and written historical record shows, the Oromo lost their sovereignty, their able men and women to the war, and their cattle to the Abyssinians. They also lost their cattle to disease believed to be introduced by Abyssinians. These conditions resulted in famines that until that time had been unknown to the Oromo people. Following the famine, when the people were already weakened, cholera, smallpox and Spanish flu epidemics devastated the people. Thus although scholars have tended to treat these events as isolated, a strong case can be made that they are intimately related to the process of colonization and colonial rule.

Some estimate of the combined impact of mass killing, slave trading and disease before, during and immediately after colonization of the Oromo (and other Indigenous peoples) by the Abyssinians can be made from consulting various sources. Between 1850 and 1870, de Salviac ([1901] 2005) estimated that the Oromo population was about 10 million. In 1900, he reported that only half had survived the Abyssinian war occupation and the social dislocation that had followed. This is consistent with the estimates of Bulatovic ([1900]1993) and Darkwah (1978). Bulatovic visited western Oromia in October 1896, 10 years after the region had been conquered, and made the following observation:

Ten to twelve years ago this countryside was completely settled and, of course, there wasn't a piece of good land left uncultivated. But a cattle disease led to famine, and destruction of the population during the subjugation of the region has [meant that it is now] half depopulated (Bulatovic, [1900] 1993, p. 12).

Bulatovic like many outsiders of the time, advanced the idea that Abyssinians were civilized, racially superior and entitled to have colonial land. However, he was critical of the magnitude of atrocities committed, implying that they were of genocidal proportions. In his words,

[t]he dreadful annihilation of more than half the population during conquest took away from the Galla all possibility of thinking about any sort of uprising. And the freedom-loving Galla who didn't recognize any authority other than the speed of his horse, the strength of his hand, and the accuracy of his spear, now goes through the hard school of obedience. (1993, p. 68)

In Chapter 1, I have argued that Abyssinian-Oromo relations are colonial. I also questioned the link between Indigenous knowledge and the fate of Oromo people which will be explored in this research. After a brief discussion of my methodology, I present and analyse the experiences of Oromo men and women in the North American Diaspora who have lived in regimes subsequent to Menelik.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODS AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter covers a description of the methods used in the collection of data, interpretation and analyses. The first two parts of the chapter emphasize the importance of taking an Indigenous as well as a critical perspective. The third part covers methods and procedures in interviewing participants, and the final section presents my reflections on the process of analysis and interpretation of the data.

#### **3.1 Taking an Indigenous Perspective and Using Critical Methods**

This research is motivated by my desire to contribute both substantive and theoretical knowledge that can work towards a society in which no people will be marginalized based on ethnoracial background, worldviews, and so on. However, 'motivation' is not enough—as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2002) argues, in research, the questions asked and methodologies used are framed by the worldview of the researchers. Thus, research could either emancipate or colonize. If I develop research questions based on colonial epistemologies with reference to the power relations between the Oromo people and Abyssinians, I could produce an analysis that justifies and promotes the colonial social order, thus contributing to neocolonialism. As Audre Lorde (1984) aptly stated, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."



For example, the empire of Ethiopia in general, and Oromia in particular, has been and is ravaged with war, famine (Clay and Holcomb, 1986), HIV/AIDS (The National Intelligence Council, 2002) and malaria (United Nations Country Team, 2003). Ethiopian regimes present these problems as 'natural disasters' that cannot be avoided. The Western world responds by providing millions of tonnes of grain and the like through their institutions. This creates the assumption that the so-called civilized world is generous to the poor and/or 'lazy' people of Africa. These institutions may even occasionally convince the consumers of the relief foods of the generosity and racial and cultural superiority of the donors.

However, from an Oromo perspective, the actions taken by the West actually cover up and preserve the power relations involved. In fact, I would argue, the Ethiopian government's stand towards the Oromo people resembles closely the policies of the European colonizers towards Indigenous peoples in different parts of Africa, Asia, North and South America, Australia and New Zealand. As Indigenous methodologists have argued, critical studies of the construction of knowledge are important in documenting these colonial ideologies and can work towards providing an understanding of genocide in general and specifically collective violence against Indigenous peoples.

Thus I began to address Euro-Abyssinian-Oromo relationships in Chapter 2 by critiquing the reasoning in Euro-Abyssinian historical documents describing Euro-Abyssinian and Oromo relations, introducing an Oromo Indigenous perspective where it is possible. I have been fortunate to have belonged to the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) for many years, which gave me access to the small number of books and articles produced by Oromo scholars. In my

analyses in Chapter 2, several sources are used. Many of the documents (books and journal articles) were found in the University of Toronto Library, but my informants also suggested some of the most important sources such as the work of Asma Giyorgis. I also acquired video-cassette recordings of the commemoration of the Anolee massacre of 1886. One of my informants also provided me with four video recordings made by the Metcha and Tulama Self-help Association in which Oromo elders who came from different corners of Oromia explained their experiences. This helped to keep my research true to coming from the perspective of Indigenous knowledges. In addition, I collected valuable information on current events from the Voice of America (VOA) - Afaan Oromo service. I listened for half an hour to the VOA-Afaan Oromo program for five days a week for over two years. I recorded on a digital voice recorder reports on events relevant to the topics raised by my informants. Finally, using electronic networks, I am daily informed on events and reports about human rights violations in Ethiopia and in Oromia in particular. Much of this information helped me to sort through both the historical record as well through the substantive material in my interviews.

Since historical documents about Abyssinian-Oromo relations are more numerous than contemporary analyses, my main source of information was from key informants who had first-hand experience with the Abyssinian regimes in Ethiopia. Thus my inquiry begins with their experiences and their Indigenous knowledges as well as my own. Through my informants, I investigated the process by which the Ethiopian empire was built and the means by which its boundaries and power relations are maintained, as well as the experiences of Oromos themselves with war, migration, eviction, poverty, famine, epidemics, military conscription and so on. To prepare for the interviewing, I took a research course on indigenous research methodologies

offered by the Indigenous Education Network at OISE/UT, which introduced me to anti-colonial research methodology.

Indigenous scholars are critical of the way in which history has been told from the perspective of the colonizers (Smith, 2002), and they are also critical of the way in which data are collected and interpreted. Bishop (1998) and Smith (2002) argue that Euro-centric research methods misrepresent the interests of Indigenous peoples and support the idea of domination and manipulation. The Euro-centric method instructs researchers to collect data and interpret their findings through their own lenses. In Bishop's (1998) words, Eurocentric researchers' perceptions and understandings of the 'Natives' are guided by their economic and ideological interest in controlling Indigenous peoples and their lands. According to Bishop, personal knowledge and experience is crucial in the production of new knowledge and working in new settings. The interpretations of research data are always filtered through the economic and ideological interests of researchers. Because of this, what I have come to think of as genocide committed against the Oromo people can easily be hidden, or provoke disbelief when interpreted through the dominant paradigm.

Edward Said (1994) illustrated that colonialism was interwoven with the practice, theory and attitudes of dominating a distant territory. Hence, the struggle against colonialism is not only about soldiers and cannons but is also about ideas, forms, images and imaginings. Linda Smith (2002) argues that decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. These arguments inform my research practices. Using my interviews and experiences, I have taken a critical look at the underlying assumptions, motivations and values

that have informed Euro-Abyssinian socio-economic policies towards Oromia, as well as the European policy makers toward Abyssinian colonial practice and I examine the implications of such practices.

### 3.2 The Decision to Interview Members of the Oromo Diaspora

When I envisaged undertaking this research, I compared different research methods to decide which was best suited to capture the Oromo experience under Abyssinian rule. Quantitative data can reveal the magnitude of famine, HIV/AIDS and malaria in Oromia, and show mortality across years. However, positivistic quantitative researchers collecting large-scale data have difficulty explaining reasons for unsafe sexual behaviour, famine and malaria epidemics. Even studies of genocide that might be relevant to my research tend to focus on a macro-sociological level, exploring the ways in which genocide is linked to historical, political, economic and structural factors (Hinton, 2002) rather than theorizing at a micro-sociological critical level. Also, there has been limited research on the link between Indigenous knowledges and genocide.

Interviewing Oromo members in the Diaspora was particularly well suited to the objectives of this project. Guzman and Verstappen (2001) suggest that human rights monitoring must be carried out over a long period of time and that to collect data about genocide, there is a need to go back and collect data in narrative form (Hudson, 1990). Starting with the experiences of the Oromo people themselves under Abyssinian colonial rule satisfies the requirement of beginning with an Indigenous perspective, and an anti-colonial framework is most appropriate to investigate and illustrate the ways in which colonialism is connected with collective violence.

Prior to the interviews, I spent several months developing draft research questions that covered issues related to Abyssinian-Oromo issues including landownership, taxation, cultural policies, resettlement, villagization, the mobilization of young Oromo men to the military and their subsequent demobilization. For example, I asked participants whether or not those recruited into the military went voluntarily or were forced. I also asked what would happen if the person refused to serve or escaped from military service (See Appendices A1 to A3 for draft questions in English). I added questions on famine, malaria and the spread of the HIV/AIDS in Oromia in order to explore these important topics, even though they are often left out of studies of genocide. This insight came when I discovered Helen Fein's (1997) article on "genocide by attrition," which opened me to the realization that genocide can be the result of deliberate negligence.

### 3.3 Research Design, Participants and Methods

#### 3.3.1 Design

This research was planned to take place in four phases (See Table. 2). **Phase I** involved a literature review and analysis of the situation in Oromia based on oral history and historical records. Although the period up to Haile Selassie was presented in Chapter 2, I also collected material on subsequent regimes, which was helpful in understanding some participant experiences. In **Phase II**, using semi-structured, in-depth interviews of key informants who personally experienced and/or observed human rights violations, collective in their lifetimes, I asked participants to share their experiences with me. As mentioned I identified whether

Table 2. Research Design

	PHASE I	PHASE II	PHASE III	PHASE IV
Activity	Literature Review	Interviewing 10 informants	Interviewing 5 professionals or semi-professionals	Interviewing 5 academics
Recruitment process	--	Recruitment of expatriate Oromos through advertisement (Appendices B1A, B1B)  Telephone follow-up (Appendix C)	Recruitment of Oromo professionals or semiprofessionals through advertisement (Appendices B2A or B2B)  Telephone follow-up (Appendix C)	Recruitment of experts in Oromo studies through Oromo Scholars List Serve (Appendix B3)  Communicate by email
Consent procedures	--	Mail out of information sheet (Appendix D1A or D1B), cover letter (Appendix E1A or E1B), consent forms (Appendix F1A or F1B) and draft questions (Appendix A1)  Arranging of date and place for interview and reviewing of the information sheet, cover letter and consent forms	Mail out of information sheet, (Appendix D1A or D1B) cover letter (Appendix E2A or E2B), consent forms (Appendix F2A or F2B) and draft questions (Appendix A2)  Arranging of date and place for interview and reviewing of information sheet, cover sheet and consent procedures.	Mail out of information sheet (Appendix D1A), cover letter (Appendix E3), consent forms (Appendix F3) and draft questions (Appendix A3)  Arrangement for future interview by email and reviewing of forms
Time of Research		April- 2005 Sept- 2006	June- July, 2006	August, 2006

or not these informants involuntarily participated in and/or observed family members participate in resettlement, villagization and/or in mobilization and then demobilization programs, and investigated the effects on their social, economic, environmental and cultural practices and attitudes. In **Phase III**, which was intermixed with Phase II interviews, I recruited five professionals or semi-professionals who had experienced imprisonment and/or torture by Ethiopian security forces. Based on their in-depth knowledge of the issues under investigation, I asked two informants to participate in a second interview. In **Phase IV**, I interviewed experts who have studied and made critical observations about the socio-economic conditions in Oromia. In this part of the study, in addition to personal experience, I asked informants to share their published research findings. Although I started with Phase I followed by the other phases in sequence, I tried to accommodate, for example, scholars attending the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) meeting held in August.

### 3.3.2 Participants

In the selection of informants, I made sure that they represented Western, Central, North-Western, Southern and Eastern Oromia. In addition to regional diversity, my informants represented the different religions practiced in Oromia such as Waqefaata, Islam and Christianity (See Table 3 in Chapter Four). Eighteen of my informants were men and two were women. They included Oromo-Canadians, landed immigrants in Canada and Oromo-Americans. By western standards, their educational backgrounds varied from individuals with no formal schooling to full professors. However, the least literate by western standards was knowledgeable and informative about Indigenous knowledges, and provided valuable information about the situation in Ethiopia.

As I expected, the experts provided insights into and literature dealing with issues that were not covered by other informants. They also clarified issues that were mentioned by informants in Phases II and III.

### 3.3.2.1 Recruitment, Privacy and Confidentiality and the Interview Process

Altogether, Phases II to IV involved recruiting and interviewing 20 individuals. To recruit expatriate Oromos and professionals and semi-professionals, I publicized my study plan in an Oromo community centre, an Oromo church and an Oromo mosque in the central urbanized area of Ontario, Canada. In the advertisement, I asked for volunteers to share what they experienced in Ethiopia (See Appendices B1 and B2 for the two different advertisements posted. The English versions appear in B1A and B2A and the Oromo versions in B2A and B2B). When potential participants contacted me by telephone or email or passed me their telephone number to contact them, I explained the study plan to them over the telephone and answered any questions they might have (Appendix C). Three of them passed their phone through a third person who asked me to call them. I talked to or wrote them back about their eligibility and described the project in more detail in order to determine if they could be a candidate for the interview.

To recruit Oromo and non-Oromo experts on Oromia (Phase IV), I publicized and posted my study plan on the global Oromo electronic network (See Appendix B3). When the academics respond to my ads, I communicated with them by email and identified those who had most closely studied or observed the situation in Oromia.



After I had conducted preliminary interviews and determined the most suitable candidates, I made sure that they received an information sheet (Appendix D), the cover letter (Appendix E) and consent form (Appendix F) along with the draft questions to be asked at least a week before the interview. I also handed them another copy of the consent letter at the interview. Details of the consent process are included in Table 2. The participants were given an opportunity to decide if they wished to be interviewed in Afaan Oromo or English. I conducted all the interviews, and I am fluent in both languages. The interview ranged from one to six hours and the place and time for the interviews were decided according to the convenience of my informants. Some of the interview took place at my informants' homes, and others at OISE/UT, in private study rooms. Phase IV interviews took place either in the scholar's hotel room or in rooms at the OSA conference. The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recording system and all were transcribed by me.

Among individuals who first volunteered to participate in the study, one eventually refused to participate due to the fear of consequences to his brothers and sisters back in Ethiopia. My conversation with this person helped me to understand how to be sensitive to the danger and trauma associated with my questions and to ask questions related to his experience with other informants. Other informants also entreated me to keep their identities anonymous for fear of the consequences their words might have on the fate of their family members and friends. At the other extreme, others insisted that there was no need to keep their identities anonymous.

To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of my informants, the digital audio recording and the transcribed interviews are numerically coded. No informants' true name is identified in the final

or draft reports or publications. All data – digital recordings, fieldnotes and transcriptions – are maintained and stored in my home in locked files accessible only to myself. To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the identity of the experts, their opinions are integrated into the study and not reported separately. As noted above, before the interview, the interviewees were informed about the procedures and the objectives of the study. When they agreed to participate, they were asked to sign the consent form (See Appendix F) before beginning the interview. With one exception—an interview conducted in English—all interviews were conducted in Afaan Oromo. After transcribing them in Oromo, I translated them into English so that I could share them with my supervisor.

In addition to those sources, I called on friends and family members to verify or get details to follow up information offered by my informants. For example, articles written Pankhurst (1966a,b; 1972; 1973) reminded me of stories that I heard in my childhood from my grandmother. I therefore called my mother to verify whether she considered the stories to reflect real events or legends. My mother occasionally reminded me of the details of the stories I thought I had vividly remembered. My mother also shared with me information that I did not hear from my informants, so that I could raise these issues in the second round of interviews with other experts on the subject.

### 3.4 Reflections on Interpretation and Analysis

In this research, the stories informants told about themselves and their communities were coded and organized around relevant themes for understanding significant aspects of Abyssinian-

Oromo relations and the fate of Oromo indigenous knowledge and people. In this research, I also noted new themes that emerged as significant to the topic under investigation. In this section, I highlight themes that will be evident in the data chapters and which will be discussed in the final chapter.

### 3.4.1 The Importance of Preserving Cultural Identity

Although my analysis of historical writings of Euro-Abyssinians revealed their cult of superiority with respect to the Oromo, it was not until an interviewee gave me an example that I realized that Indigenous knowledges were at stake. In the interviewee's example, agents of the Haile Selassie regime, without the consent of the family members, sprinkled Christian holy water on the heads of Oromo children whose parents were adherents of Waqefaata or Islam and shaved the hair of these children to symbolize that they were thus Christianized. The assumption underlying this denial of consent was clearly related in my mind to the cult of superiority that Abyssinians practiced with respect to Oromos. But the example also drove home to me its corollary--the importance of preserving Indigenous knowledge for Oromo people. Numerous examples of outrage and resistance to conversion to Christianity then emerged, including a successful resistance by a community in which Oromo school children ultimately left a school where attempts at conversion were being made. Since by taking the children out of the school meant that they ultimately had no education—not even an education that denied their Oromoness—demonstrated for me the importance of preserving Indigenous knowledges such as Waqefaata

I had in fact included no questions on activism or resistance on the original questionnaire, but a great deal of data emerged showing resistance to colonization at all levels by the Oromo, some successful and some not. Because this theme emerged so strongly in the narratives, I have highlighted it in the data chapters. Resistance is of course related to the main point, which is that colonialism strives to eradicate cultural identity, while resistance strives to maintain it.

### 3.4.2 Developing An Appreciation for the Centrality of Self-Determination

In Chapter 1, I quoted Memmi (1956) and Fanon (1965) who have discussed colonialism as a “disease” that operates at the equivalent of the cellular level in a body. I also cited Dodson (1995) as declaring that “self-determination is the river in which all other rights swim.” My appreciation of the micro-level at which colonial occupation operates to destroy such self-determination came from informants who recounted the policy of resettlement pursued by the neoMarxist Derge regime of 1974 to 1991. It was clear from informant accounts that the program was designed to control the activities of Oromo people. Before conducting the interviews, I knew this, and I knew that the program had two different strategies--sigsega (insertion of Abyssinians into Oromo communities) and sefera (settling of Abyssinians in unclaimed areas). What I had not known was that in the sigsega program, the Ethiopian government went about settling Abyssinians whom they considered active and knowledgeable and able to maintain Abyssinian identity and culture among the predominantly Oromo people where they were inserted. The state, I learned, also allowed the Abyssinians to take over most of the fertile lands in these areas and forced the Oromo people to work for them. As a result of hearing this story, I realized the centrality of self-determination and the intent of the government to economically empower the

Abyssinians so that they would not be assimilated into Oromo culture. Some of the settlers were infected with leprosy and they were not physically able to help themselves—which suggested to me that the Ethiopian government intended to improve the economic and social status of Abyssinians—but entirely at the cost of the Oromo people. This led to my realization that I needed to investigate the history of Oromo-Abyssinian relations to discover why human rights violations and deterioration of social conditions such as the ones cited above against the Oromo are not recognized as such by Euro-Abyssinians.

### 3.4.3 The Connection Between Colonialism and Collective Violence

My review of the literature provided numerous examples, some known to me previously, and some not, that the Abyssinian takeover of Oromo territory was brutal and prolonged. In essence, though, I learned that the extent of the violence has stretched through several generations and persists to this day. For example, I had suspected that the massive Ethiopian forest fires of the 1999-2000 season were connected in some way with violence against the Oromo. However, I learned from my participants that Oromo activists were hiding in the forests that the TPLF forces burned. Thus, I realized how far the TPLF could go in order maintain the colonial power relations, but also that what appeared to be an unavoidable or unfortunate ‘natural’ event could actually be an act of what can be called environmental genocide.

I have raised similar concerns about whether poverty, crop failure, epidemics and diseases are really the ‘natural’ plagues of Ethiopia or whether they are, in fact, deliberate, motivated by racist policies. I undertook an extensive review of the literature on genocide—producing an

almost 100-page document on the topic—but was disappointed by the failure of this literature in generally not linking cultural assimilation with genocide. When reading this literature, I was shocked to find out that the UN, which I had believed to be organized to fight racism, actually reproduced the culturally racist policy of making the official languages of the institution English, French, Russian, Chinese, Arabic and Spanish—all of whom have had significant colonial empires. I discovered important authors who were exceptions in seeing how collective political violence was linked to racism, including the classic work by Lemkin (1944,1945) on the Nazis and Jews. The crucial difference, in my view, between the Nazis and the Jews and the Abyssinians and the Oromos is that the Abyssinians continue to have the balance of power, not only in military might supported by the West, but also in their epistemological ‘edge’ that stretches back to the myth of Prester John. Currently in the media, snippets of news footage highlighting the role of the Abyssinian military in ‘fighting terrorism in Somalia’ seem to build on their historical reputation as Christians in a sea of Muslims and Indigenous people. I continuously find myself running up against an epistemological wall when trying to explain to westerners the plight of the Oromos. This does not mean that my review of the literature on genocide was not useful, but I saw a sharp contrast between the limited legal and institutional definitions of genocide and the excruciating details about torture, pursuit and cultural destruction and assimilation in the stories of my key informants.

#### 3.4.4 Making the Thesis Accessible to Western Scholars

With regards to contributing to consciousness about the situation of the Oromo, my original plan for this research had been to organize all themes raised by interviewees around topics that

reflected different types of genocide from the physical and economic to the epistemological. In fact, I wrote the first draft of the chapters according to this organization. However, the period reported on by the experiences of participants was about 70 years, spanning three distinct regimes. Since these regimes are not well-known beyond Abyssinia, I found it necessary to reorganize my discussion of Abyssinian-Oromo relations within each of the distinct political regimes of Haile Selassie (1920-1940 and 1945-1974), the Derge (1974-1991) and the TPLF (1991 to present), carefully explaining how they came to power, what characterized their style of rule, how they attempted to control the Oromos, how the Oromos have resisted, and the consequences of this struggle.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **AN INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPANTS AND THE OROMO EXPERIENCE UNDER THE HAILE SELASSIE REGIME**

After a brief introduction to the participants in the research, this chapter analyzes the Haile Selassie regime, beginning with my own experiences, the experience of the participants, and covering the land dispossession and assimilation policies pursued by his government.

#### **4.0 The North American Diaspora and Participants in this Research**

Oromos escaping the violence in Ethiopia can be found in all corners of the globe, as described in Bulcha's (2002) book on what he calls the "forced migration" of the Oromo people. Bulcha emphasizes that while the original 'migration' was due to the slave trade in both the Arab and North American worlds, more recent forced migration has occurred as the Oromo fled the violence in their country. He estimates that there are 300,000 to 400,000 Oromos in North America, though the number is probably much higher.

Originally, my plan in undertaking this research was to ask participants which Oromos were being specifically targeted for torture or killing by the Abyssinian authorities. However, I soon discovered that most of my participants themselves had experienced imprisonment and torture. Despite their different ages, religious backgrounds, schooling and regional origins, those who volunteered to be interviewed in this research had all experienced oppression to some degree while in Ethiopia, and left as a result.



<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Sex/ Age</b>	<b>Activist Activity</b>	<b>Year Left Ethiopia</b>	<b>Countries Lived in/ N.American Arrival</b>	<b>Occupation (Ethiopia/ Canada)</b>	<b>Religion/ Preferred Religion</b>	<b>Experience of Persecution</b>
Mottuma	Male 60s	Spokesman for Oromia	1982	England/ 1990	Teacher/ Teacher	Muslim/ Muslim/ Waqefaata	Experienced discrimination
Qawee	Male 40s	Refused Conscription	1982	Somalia, etc./1990	Businessman/ Taxi driver	Muslim/ positive about Waqefaata	Imprisoned under Derge Regime
Gurmessa	Male 60s	Refused Orders	1983	Yugoslavia/ 1986	Army/ Teacher	Christian/ Waqefaata	Forcefully Assimilated
Bulti	Male 60s	Spokesman for Oromia	1983	1983	Teacher/ Teacher	Christian/ Waqefaata	Experienced physical attack
Jobir	Male 50s	Spokesman for Oromia	1984	Eastern Europe/ 1990s	Teacher/ Teacher	Christian/ Waqefaata	Imprisoned under Derge regime
Oggesa	Male 50s	Policy-Maker	1986	Russia/ 1996	Teacher/ Researcher	Christian/ Waqefaata	Imprisoned under Derge regime
Taressa	Male 30s	Refused Conscription	1989	Kenya, etc./1997	Teenager/ Communications	Muslim/ Waqefaata	Imprisoned under Derge regime
Hinsarmu	Male 60s	OLF Member	1992	1992/ Unknown	Accountant/ Professional	Muslim/ positive about Waqefaata	Imprisoned under Derge regime
Diribissa	Male 60s	OLF Member	1992	Europe/1993	Labourer/ Activist	Christian/ Waqefaata	Imprisoned by Derge until 1991
Tolessa	Male 40s	Challenged government on language	1992	Kenya/ 1997	Teacher/ Student	Christian/ Waqefaata	Imprisoned under TPLF regime
Gadisse	Female 40s	Political Officer	1993	Kenya/ 2002	Teacher/ Labourer	Christian/ positive about Waqefaata	Imprisoned under TPLF regime
Firdissa	Male 60s	Challenged gov't policy	1994	North America/1994	Environment-alist	Christian/ Waqefaata	Imprisoned under Derge
Hirphasa	Male 40s	Resisted orders	1995	1995 North America	Conscripted/ Labourer	Christian/ Christian	Imprisoned under Derge & TPLF
Tokkuma	Male 30s	Challenged government on language	1996	Kenya/ 2000	Teacher/ Student	Christian/ Christian	Imprisoned under TPLF regime

Table 3 continued from previous page...

<b>Pseudo-nym</b>	<b>Sex/ Age</b>	<b>Activist Activity</b>	<b>Year Left Ethiopia</b>	<b>Countries Lived in/ North American Arrival</b>	<b>Occupation (Ethiopia/ Canada)</b>	<b>Religion/ Preferred Religion</b>	<b>Experience of Persecution</b>
Shantam	Male	Challenged human rights	1996	Europe/ 1997	Administrator /Professional	Christian/ positive about Waqefaata	Imprisoned under Derge & TPLF
Dandana	Male 50s	Policy-Maker	1997	Europe/ 1999	Professional/ Professional	Christian/ Christian	Imprisoned under Derge & TPLF
Dhaba	Male 30s	Policy-Maker	1998	USA/1998	Professional/ Student	Christian/ Christian	Experienced discrimin- ation
Kumee	Female 40s	Resisted a government order	1999	Kenya/ 2005	Business person/ Mother	Muslim/ Muslim	Imprisoned under TPLF regime
Soressa	Male 30s	Challenged government on forest burn in 1999	2002	Europe/ 2004	Teacher/ Student	Christian/ Positive about Waqefaata	Verbal threats
Gadissa	Male 50s	Challenged government on language	2005	2005	Administrator / Laborer	Christian/ Christian/ Waqefaata	Imprisoned under TPLF regime

**Table 3: Participant Backgrounds and Activities**

As shown in Table 3, before 1991, escape from Abyssinia to North America was through various other countries. Among my participants, escape happened through Europe, including Eastern Europe, which was sympathetic to the Derge regime. After 1991, when the Tigrayans took power, escape was more limited to other neighbouring countries, particularly Kenya.

Of the 20 participants in my research, only a few had lived their adulthood through deprivations of the Haile Selassie regime (1920-1940 and 1945-1974). As Table 3 shows, almost half had

been imprisoned by the Derge regime (1974-1991) and about the same number had been imprisoned by the TPLF regime (1991-present). A few had been tortured by both the Derge and the TPLF governments. Their consciousness of oppression varied, although all agreed that being Oromo was the primary reason for the violence directed against them. I asked each participant a series of questions, including: what do the Abyssinians want? Why do they torture and kill the Oromo? Do they want to eliminate the Oromo? Who are the targeted groups? How are the Abyssinians going about the killings? Why? Will they be successful in eliminating the Oromo people? And what has to be done in order to survive? I have organized participant responses beginning with this chapter by regime, but as will become evident, there was remarkable agreement on the answers to some of these questions by age, religious background, region of origin and level of resistance to the various regimes in which they lived. On other questions, subtle but important differences were evident. I will focus in each chapter on the extent to which participants protested by merely naming an oppressive act, by intervening in the framing of a policy and/or by living out their Oromo traditions both before migration and after.

This research is about the survival of Oromo people, which, I am arguing, is intimately tied up with the survival of their Indigenous knowledges. Therefore, in my interviewing, I tried to determine if and how participants had attempted to re-establish or validate Oromo indigenous traditions and beliefs in their resistance to the Abyssinian regimes. The specific activist activity that they engaged in gives some idea of their various attempts to reclaim what they had lost, as well as the myriad ways in which hope and resistance occurs, reproduced in the Diaspora.

Table 3 also shows the religion reported by participants, including any preference for Waqefaata, the indigenous Oromo tradition, which, as I have emphasized, is subjugated in Ethiopia. Among those reported that they were Muslims and Christians, consciousness of oppression about being Oromo was present. However, I would argue that those who expressed a preference for Waqefaata or an attempt to adapt Islam or Christianity were going beyond critique of colonialism and reclaiming their identity to the extent that this can be done in the Diaspora. At a basic level, participants were yearning, as Bulcha (2002) describes it, for a return not just to their geographical homeland, from which they are separated, but also to the Indigenous practices which have for so long been suppressed.

Participants came from all walks of life in Oromia as Table 3 shows. Since particular participants would be identifiable by their specific acts of defiance and their occupations, I have had to generalize, in some cases, about who they are and what they have done. Most were what might be termed 'the intelligentsia' of their people in Oromia, serving as professionals with access to policy and at least some influence. Here in North America, a few have managed to retain their professional status, while the majority have found work as labourers or service workers. A few are students, as am I. Their hope is to tell the story of oppression, not only to achieve social justice, but, as Ruda (1993) has described, to document Gada and Oromo knowledge, in order that the Oromo way of life will continue to flourish.

#### 4.1 Introduction: The Haile Selassie Regime

Haile Selassie inherited the empire that his great grandfather (Sahle Selassie) started and that was consolidated by his second cousin Menelik II. Geleta (2000) has suggested that if the dominant discourse of the Menelik era was its 'civilizing mission,' for Haile Selassie, it was 'modernization.' According to Hancock (1985), Emperor Haile Selassie stayed in power not merely as a result of political manipulation but also through policies of cultural assimilation. During most of his long period in power, he ruled from a position of complete control of the Empire and its resources. The language used in writing the constitution suggests his 'divine nature' and uncontested divine power and right.

Massacres of the Oromo people in Haile Selassie's regime were not as widespread and indiscriminate as they were during the era of Menelik and other former Abyssinian kings. The major objectives of sporadic killings were to eliminate Oromo nationalism, and those who were targeted tended to be social activists, community leaders and nationally-conscious individuals. According to Bulcha (2002), a massive exodus of Oromos started after 1960 as a result of the Bale Oromo uprising<sup>1</sup> and the arrest and banning of the Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association (to be discussed below). The Emperor's policies were directed at economic exploitation and cultural assimilation of the Oromo people.

Specifically, as will be shown in the following section, his policies worked towards dispossessing the Oromo of ownership of their land, which was the aspect of his reign that most

---

<sup>1</sup>The Bale Uprising was a major event in Oromo history that took place over a 10 year period in the 1960s. It is memorialized in song and poetry. This province of Oromia revolted mainly over issues of land, and Haile Selassie responded using his army supported by the US air force, which resulted in massive casualties.

informants commented about. The resulting economic deprivation can be theorized as a way to 'break' the Oromo spirit and build Abyssinian colonial power.

#### 4.2 Loss of Land Ownership and Freedom and Its Implications

Among my informants, Diribissa lived in an area of early colonization. He recounted how the earliest wave of settlement of Abyssinians in Oromia included missionary-minded individuals and refugees who left their home country due to famine. The major wave of Abyssinian settlement started soon after Oromia was colonized. The Abyssinians were armed settlers known as *neftegna* (=gun toter in Arabic and Amharic). These armed individuals mainly settled on hillsides in military garrisons which were later on turned into towns and cities. Hinsarmu pointed out that many Abyssinians who settled in the countryside were absorbed into Oromo society. However, those who settled in military garrisons refused to intermarry with the Oromos and became part of the Ethiopian government colonial structure. Mottuma described the relationship between the Oromos and Abyssinians as "master and servant." In his words,

When Oromia was conquered, most of the Abyssinians who came to Oromia were farmers. ...They came from famine-stricken regions of Gondor, Shewa and Tigray. Although they were displaced by famine, when they came to Oromia they emerged as a new class. Upon their arrival in Oromia, their social status changed. As the social status of these army members changed, many of them went back to their home country and brought their relatives and friends. Given that they had knowledge of the Amharic language and culture, many of them were either granted employment in government offices or as security guards, military or police officers. If not, they got land in the name of a brother, son or uncle of other *neftegna* and landlords.

Mottuma compared the Abyssinian settlement in Oromia to the settlement of Europeans in other colonized lands, pointing out that some time after their arrival in a region, Europeans settlers

developed a feeling of superiority towards Indigenous people. He and others emphasized that the attitude of Abyssinian armies toward Indigenous peoples was dangerous and genocidal.

#### 4.2.1 Dispersal of Land and People to the Neftegna

According to Rosenfeld (1976), by 1893, ownership of lands around Addis Ababa (=New Flower in Amharic, or the former Oromo village called Finfine) was finalized. That is, central Oromo (which includes Salale, the Debre-Berhan area, Woliso, Bishoftu and Ambo) was the region first and most affected by land dispossession. In a charter, Menelik granted some of the land to his wife, some to his grandson, and the rest to his retinue. My informant Diribissa talked about the relationship between land ownership and Abyssinian settlement around the city of Finfine: a large number of Abyssinians chose to settle in the capital. Only a few Oromo individuals who collaborated with the Abyssinians owned land in this region.

The Ethiopian government dispensed the land of Oromia to its soldiers based on their rank in the military. That is, senior military officers owned more lands than junior ones. The uncle of Menelik conquered the large and central regions of Metta, Gulele Kaha and Gimbich in 1849 (Rosenfeld, 1976) and his conquest was followed by land dispossession and mass eviction. His grandchildren owned the whole adjoining Salale district and Abyssinian ownership of this land continued until the 1975 land reforms (to be discussed in Chapter 5).

After the Oromo people were dispossessed their land, they were forced to farm and give a quarter to three-fourths of their harvest to the neftegna landlords. According to Wolde-Michael

(1973), Abyssinian soldiers or relatives of former military officers were assigned a number of gabbars (serfs). As with land, the number of serfs the Abyssinian got depended on his rank: a sergeant got 25, a lieutenant, 40, a captain, 70, and a major, 300 serfs. The duties of the serfs included cultivating the land and delivering a portion of the harvest to the neftegna. The serfs were also required to build and repair the houses of the landlords, with women cleaning the premises and working as domestic servants, grinding grain by hand, fetching water and firewood in the houses of Abyssinian military officers. According to Shantam, when the neftenya bragged about how rich they were, they would refer to the number of Gallas on their lands.

Oggesa, who actively participated in the 1975 land reform, was from a region where the Oromo people were totally dispossessed their land. He explained what transpired when the Abyssinians invaded a region:

The Abyssinian invaders were not salaried. They were compensated with land and the people whom they conquered. When the Abyssinians defeated and conquered an area, the leader and the lieutenants were given the land of the natives.... That is how we lost the land. Neftengas are the colonial settlers.... They were rewarded for killing and defeating native peoples and subjugating them. .... When they took the land, the Abyssinian settlers did not till the land and they did not work on the land.... Oromos turned into slave labourers.

The landlord and tenant relationship varied from one part of Oromia to another. In some areas, the landlords were very cruel. The cruelty of landlords depended on the strength of the Abyssinian colonial institutions and structures in the area. My mother, discussing this relationship, commented to me that in some regions, Abyssinians felt insecure; thus, they sold the land they had acquired back to the Oromos. Those who sold their land either went back to their homelands or settled in major cities. Mottuma also described the neftegna as cruel. In his words,



their relations with Oromo farmers were no better than a slave and master relationship. When the Abyssinian military wanted to have meat, they invaded a nearby village and took as many cattle as they wanted. Even if they killed someone, they would not be held accountable

Oggessa commented that the children of Ras Biru Wolde-Gebriel and Ras Darge, who were involved in Anolee mutilations discussed in Chapter 2, and the Chalanko massacre, were the single largest landowners. Together with the Emperor, the extended royal family possessed most of the lands in the empire during the Haile Selassie regime. This observation is supported by Hancock (1985), who says that Ras Biru owned most of Arsi (the location of Anolee) and a substantial slice of Hararge province (the location of Chalanko). By 1972, the Ethiopian government owned 57 million hectares of land and about 55 million of them were in Oromia (Jalata, 2005).

Before colonization, in most parts of Oromia, land was owned collectively and only in some areas individually (Jalata, 2005). When land was owned collectively, community members agreed to allocate grazing, farming, hunting and bee-hiving places among members of the community. My informant Tokkuma, like many of the other informants, described the pre-colonial Indigenous Oromo landownership system. In Tokkuma's words,

At that time, land ownership was not like a shirt or pants where you claim this is mine and that is yours. .... When the Amharas came, ...the entire Oromo community became landless. This meant that the land became the property of the Abyssinians and their institutions. When the Ethiopian government took land, they gave part of it to those who collaborated with them.... The other parts they appropriated to the Orthodox (=Christian) Church. The other part they gave to the Abyssinian higher officials.

As noted, the magnitude of land dispossession varied from place to place under Haile Selassie. When Oggesa, an educator, described land dispossession, he remembered the Abyssinian expression, "siso lenegashi, sio leqedash, siso lexorenya" (=one-third for the Royals, one-third

for the Church and one-third for the army). When three-thirds of the lands were given to Abyssinian institutions and individuals, nothing was left for the Oromo people. However, Gadissa, who came from an outlying region of Oromia, experienced a different distribution of land: in his area, instead of giving one-third to the army, one-third was negotiated for the people. This would be consistent with the interpretation that in some areas, one-third of the land was left to local Oromo individuals who collaborated with the Abyssinian government. (As noted above, some Oromo leaders co-operated with assimilation in order to avoid enslavement.) In a very few pockets, such as the Bale region mentioned above and described by Hinsarmu, the Oromo people resisted Abyssinian government plans and forced the Haile Selassie army back, at least for a short time. Overall, two-thirds of Oromo lands were appropriated to Abyssinians and their institutions under Haile Selassie. Generally, until 1975 in Oromia, from 70 to 80 percent of the land used specifically for farming was owned by Abyssinian institutions: the palace, Church and their military officers. (Jalata, 2005). In coffee-producing areas of Oromia, it has been estimated that over 60 percent of coffee producers were tenants (Jalata, 2005).

#### 4.2.2 Post World War II and Giving Away Oromō Land for Services Rendered

As described in Holcomb and Ibssa (1990), during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1935-1941), tenant- landlord relationships were banned; however, when Haile Selassie was reinstated, he not only reintroduced landlord-tenant relationships, but he also intensified the settling of Abyssinians in Oromia and granting them land. Some of those Abyssinians who were rewarded with Oromo lands were the “veterans” of World War II.

The second group who were rewarded were people from the present state of Eritrea. After the war, when the British took over the Italian colonies, the British became 'protectors' of Eritrea. When the Eritreans demanded their liberation, the UN recommended a referendum on whether or not they would like to join Ethiopia. The Haile Selassie regime bribed those from Hamasen in Eritrea to vote in favour of joining Ethiopia in return for Oromo lands. My informant Diribissa discussed how this was done: in a project known as "Sime Xiru Hamasen" (=those Hamasen with good reputations), the Emperor promised land to thousands of Eritreans and settled them in and around the city of Shashemene in the south of Oromia. Until the 1999/2000 Ethio-Eritrean war (when the Eritreans were evicted), these people lived in several parts of Oromia.

In detail, during the Italian occupation, for administrative purposes, Italy divided the Ethiopian empire along national/ethnic lines into four administrative regions: Amhara, Tigray, Oromo and Sidama (Mockler, 1984). Naming these after the dominant group in the region was a direct challenge to the assimilationist policy of Haile Selassie. As Oggessa pointed out, as a means of expanding Catholicism, the Italians also started a literacy program in the Oromo language. The Italians banned slavery, serfdom and Abyssinian access to Oromo free labour. Thus, as Diribissa observed, during this time, Oromos were able to be paid for offering their experience and wisdom. There is a saying; "tolaa faranji balesse" (=White Men, i.e. Italians, dismantled serfdom, in Oromo). This disruption of the Haile Selassie regime badly affected the neftengas who had settled in Oromia. In places where Abyssinian colonial settlers were threatened with angry Oromos, many of them decided to return to their home country, as my mother had observed. In 1941, the British reinstated Haile Selassie (Mockler, 1984). Trying to reverse what had happened during the Italian occupation, the Emperor came up with policies that would

intensify the settlement of Abyssinians in Oromia. Soon the Haile Selassie regime dismantled the Italian administrative regions based on national-ethnic lines and reinstated those neftenyas who had left Oromia. When Haile Selassie reinstated the landlord-and-tenant relationship, several bloody conflicts erupted (Clay and Holcomb, 1986). But the Haile Selassie regime pushed on, continuing to attract Abyssinians to settle in Oromia.

According to my informant, Diribissa, the regime brought thousands of Abyssinians who had been farmers in their home country and settled them in Arba-Gugu in the province of Arsi. In fact, because Diribissa was fluent in Amharic, and because his names were typical Abyssinian, he was mistakenly identified as Abyssinian and encouraged to claim land (which he avoided). Diribissa recounted how the settlers were armed in the name of protecting themselves from wild animals, although Holcomb and Ibssa (1990) emphasize that the arms were intended to keep the Oromo under control. According to Kloos (1990), from the 1940s to the 1970s, more than a million Abyssinians moved to Oromia and other regions.

The other relatively small group of people to whom Haile Selassie granted Oromo lands were Jamaican. According to Guutama (2003), the Emperor planned to give Oromo land to the veterans of the Korean War. When the King sent these veterans to Western Oromia to choose the land they wanted to acquire, the local people promptly reacted against the giveaway. The local influential Oromo Elders wrote a petition to Haile Selassie, suggesting that before any land would be given to aliens, the local landless people should get first pick. Most of the local chiefs who petitioned asked the King to give the lands appropriated to the palace and church to the poor.

Although the Haile Selassie regime facilitated the movement of several groups of Abyssinians and non-Abyssinians into Oromia, he prevented the relocation of the Oromos from one part of the country to the other. For example, in 1972/73 when Oromos from the famine-stricken region of Wallo tried to move south to Wollega and Ilu-AbabBora, the Ethiopian government hampered their movements (Sen, 1999) and ended up playing “clumsy cover-up games” (Admassie, 2000).

#### 4.2.3 The Coptic/Orthodox Church as a Landlord

The Abyssinian scholar Kebede (2002) has reported that before the 1975 land reform, the Orthodox Church occupied a great deal of land. According to Jalata (2005), from 1900 to the 1960s, 5,527 Orthodox Churches were built in Oromia. By the 1960s, in Oromia alone, the Orthodox Church owned 29,563 gashas (or about 1,182,520 hectares) of farmland. Although an exact figure does not exist, there is no doubt that from the 1960s to 1975, the number of churches increased and church land ownership expanded. The expansion of the Abyssinian church increased the flow of Abyssinians to Oromia and the dispossession of Oromo peoples from their collective and private ownership of land. The one-third of the land owned by the Abyssinian Coptic Orthodox church was known as “hudade” (as explained by Mottuma and Oggessa) and Ixaan Azur (=the frankincense zone in Amharic, referring to the use of the income from the land being used to ‘buy frankincense,’ as explained by Gadissa).

In Haile Selassie’s time, the Abyssinian or Coptic/Christian church was a supreme institution, practically equal in power to the crown. Jobir called it the “state cadre,” meaning that the Church

promoted state policies. de Salviac ([1901] 2005) recorded in his early account of Ethiopia that Abyssinian church leaders would always come to the war front with the ark of the covenant. The Church taught that their king was sent from God and instructed followers to be obedient to the church and the king. If anyone disobeyed the king, Diribissa pointed out, "the church threatened to curse him."

Mottuma called the Church the "security agent" of the state, referring to its spying activities on the Oromo people. Diribissa called it "the ideology-maker of the state," in that the Church promoted the ideology of colonialism:

In the Western world, experts are those who are trained in colleges and universities; in Abyssinia, church leaders were the experts. Church leaders were educated elites and opinion makers. For that reason, the Coptic Orthodox Church and the state were two sides of the same coin. The Orthodox Church was a maker of ideology, state advisor and policy-maker. Thus, the Abyssinian church was also responsible for promoting the colonial project against the Oromo and other peoples. The Church was involved not only in spying, but also in a war against the Oromo people. Wherever the Abyssinian military forces were stationed, there were churches. If any Abyssinian soldiers tried to retreat, Church leaders cursed them; if they fought well, they blessed them.

Church leaders were among the richest individuals in the Haile Selassie empire. According to Tadesse (1993), the Emperor appointed all the church officials from the head of individual churches to its patriarch. In turn, the Church taught that there was no limit to imperial power and that the Emperor was "a representative of God." The church also collected up to 75 percent of the harvest from the tenants. When I posed a question to my informants about why and how the Abyssinian church had become a landlord, Diribissa emphasized that the Church had visited Oromia to proselytize for Christianity and that in the process, "church leaders had first hand information about resources in Oromia. Thus, Menelik guaranteed one-third of the conquered land to the Church."

For centuries, the Coptic-Orthodox church did not recognize the usage of any other language than the old Abyssinian language, Geez. According to Asma Giyorgis, church leaders believed that to be a good Christian, one had to be born into a Coptic-Orthodox Christian family ([1910]1987). For this reason, church leadership was exclusively Abyssinian. The Ethiopian government was dependant on the church and promoted its propagation. As noted, the Church became a route for Abyssinians to settle in Oromia and dispossess the Oromo of their lands.

Gadissa described this process:

The Ethiopian government very often ordered the Oromo people to build churches where ever they thought it was necessary and gave land for this purpose to the Church. First, the state granted the land where the church was to be built and then the surrounding regions were given to Church. ...If more church workers were needed, the regime brought in more Abyssinians and gave more land to Church. Very often, the Oromo people who lived in that neighborhood were given to the Church.

When Gadissa compared two landlords--the Coptic/Orthodox Church and individual Abyssinians—he thought that “the Abyssinian landlords were somewhat reasonable because they were there in the community for bad or good and they needed the local people, whereas the Church people were more arrogant.” In his experience, the Coptic Church collected more of the harvest than the Abyssinian landlords. On Abyssinian religious holidays such as Easter and Christmas, Church leaders forced the Oromo farmers to bring them lambs, goats and chickens. Diribissa, added that “whenever Abyssinian churches were built,” the local people were forced to have a “Niseha Abat” (=the father of repentance in Amharic) or someone to whom they must confess their sins and who would pray for them after death. When a resident died, he or she would “be buried only in the Church-owned burial places” if they paid the required part of their harvest to the church. “If they did not, they would not have a Niseha-Abat and would be denied a burial place.” According to Diribissa, as well as my mother, traditional Oromo burial places were

banned and this resulted not only in economic exploitation but also in cultural assimilation of the Oromo.

Farmers were particularly disadvantaged under the Haile Selassie regime because, according to Gadissa, they were forced to observe Christian holidays, resulting in interference with their farming duties. In a month of 30 days in the Coptic Christian Church, 44 holidays occur, with some overlapping. As Gadissa put it, "in our area there [were] the Churches of [Sts.] George, Mary, Michael [and] five, six, seven or more [others]." These holidays all had to be observed, meaning that, on those days,

the farmers are not allowed to work. They would be forced not to work. Let me give you an example. St. Michael's holiday is always on the twelfth day of the month, Mary's is on the twenty-first, St. George's is [the] twenty-third. [The] twenty-seventh [is for] Medihane Alem (=Amharic for "saviour of the world") and the twenty-ninth is [for] Balaigzabiher (= 'god the father' in Amharic)... In some places where I went as [a] government employee, such as in Arjo, within a small [area], there are about 44 churches. Farmers are expected in various ways to [accommodate the observances of] all these churches.... [In] practical [terms], many farmers were forced to [participate in ceremonies at the] churches, leaving behind their duties. On these days, the farmers [were] asked to work for the church. If the farmers refused to work, the priests claim[ed] that they had the authority to curse the person and his family.... [For example, if the farmer] or some one in his family would die, he or she might not have a burial place. This all had a significant impact on the productivity of the farmers.

This strategy served two purposes: the farmers were economically disadvantaged, and at the same time, they were 'assimilated' into Christian observances counter to their Indigenous religious practices.



#### 4.2.4 Role of the Abyssinian Civil Services in the Assimilation of Oromia

Some time after the settlement of the Neftegna, Abyssinians arrived who would provide the support services to run the state. As Diribissa pointed out, as part of Haile Selassie's policy of assimilation of Oromia, the regime provided many opportunities for Abyssinians to settle and prosper in Oromia. For example, in and around Abyssinian military garrisons, civil servants and other services were needed. Small business owners who were Abyssinian arrived to provide such services and opened restaurants, bars and other recreational facilities. The garrisons were also in need of items that were not available in the local markets. The Neftegna owned more products than they could consume; hence, they needed to trade these products. To fill these gaps, Abyssinian shopkeepers emerged, which resulted in the settlement of even more Abyssinians. Since in the Haile Selassie regime, the official language was Amharic (as it is today federally), it was necessary to recruit Abyssinians to serve in the civil service. Thus the language policy supported the creation of job opportunities for the Abyssinians, which resulted in thousands of them settling in Oromia. These included civil servants such as judges, administrators, lawyers, translators and teachers, as well as tax collectors, church leaders, security and police officers.

My informants Firdissa and Shantam pointed out that Abyssinian civil servant attitudes of disdain towards the Oromo were the same as the Neftegna. My informants explained that wherever there were towns, the Ethiopian government appointed Abyssinian mayors and administrators, along with the rest of the necessary support services. Often the government salaries of the mayors and administrators were very small, so that the government gave them land to compensate them. Like the Neftegna, they were then able to collect a share of the crop from the tenants along with their free labour.

All of these arrangements conspired to strip the Oromo of their land over time. Mottuma described the ways the new settlers took the Oromo land when he said that

if a military or police officer who served a government for two or three months fancied a particular piece of fertile land, he would petition the government, suggesting that the [Oromo] person on the land did not deserve to own the land. Or he might suggest that the land that the [Oromo] owned was bigger than he needed. [Then, he might say], "since I served the state in Ogden [or other places], I need to take that land." [He might] present this case in court. In the court, the Oromo farmers would be forced to defend their land, [but] in an Abyssinian court, it is most unlikely that the Oromo farmer would win the dispute.

For example, said Mottuma: "my father fought in court for 12 years to retain the land that he had inherited from his father. Possibly he spent more money defending that land than the value of the land itself." Mottuma commented that

the attitude of the [civil service] toward the [Oromo] people is dangerous. Soon after they arrived in Oromia, they began to see themselves as the master race. If they came from Godjam, Gonder or Shewa where the Amharic language is spoken, they would [immediately] have job opportunities. They were hired as security guards, police officers or military personnel. In the name of a brother, uncle or other relation, they would get land. Just for coming from their home country to Oromia, their status would be transformed and their status and their socio-economic situation would dramatically change. This meant they would get things that they never had in their home country. They thus developed a culture of feeling superior, better, and more civilized than the Oromo people.

This Abyssinian attitude of superiority, my informants emphasized, permeated the entire society, from the Abyssinian military, church leaders and civil servants to even Abyssinian beggars.

#### 4.3 Uprooting, Eviction, Taxation and Economic Hardship

As described above, when armed Abyssinians arrived in Oromia, for security reasons, they chose to settle on hills, often situating their armies in the place of an already-existing settlement with a

marketplace and Galma (=Oromo house of worship/sanctuary, in Oromo). They evicted the local Oromo people and their spiritual institutions, killed community leaders and before other Abyssinians arrived, kept some individuals to provide services. If there was no marketplace in the chosen location, by decree the Abyssinians ordered the local people to abandon their former marketplace to attend the marketplace near the military garrison (Wolde-Michael, 1975). In the garrisons, the neftegna built churches, and, by decree, de-legitimized the Oromo religion and burial places. Dirribssa pointed out that this allowed the Abyssinians to control the market and create conditions to more easily collect revenues and incapacitate Oromo institutions and invalidate Oromo worldviews. These centres became places for Abyssinian kangaroo courts, policing and schools, and diverted the attention of the Oromo people towards the garrison. In these ways, garrisons gradually were transformed from simple military bases to urban functionally-diversified urban centres (Wolde-Michael, 1975).

Benti (2001) has recorded the early eviction of the Oromo people from the Finfine area (the Gulalle and Bole areas) and their relocation to south-central Oromia. Subsequent Abyssinian regimes, including that of Haile Selassie, worried that the Oromo people would strike back and threaten their power. Hence, they pursued a policy of further eviction. In Diribissa's view, this had two intermingled purposes. First, the Abyssinians wanted to politically incapacitate the Oromo administrative structure and remove the Oromo community away from the centre of Abyssinian power. Second, they wanted to rob the Oromo people of their economic power. Eviction of the Oromo people occurred not only in the Finfine area, but in garrison cities and towns all across the occupied areas. For many years, the Haile Selassie regime did not even allow Oromos to settle in towns and cities.

As the Abyssinians developed their governmental structures, garrisons became centres for colonial forces, supported by guns from Europe, much as in the Menelik era (Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990). According to my informant Mottuma, soon after military personnel were stationed in garrisons, they brought their families and friends from their home countries. This further increased the need for more land in suburban areas, which entailed further evictions and the acquisition of more arms to keep control.

#### 4.3.1. Taxation without Services

One of the ways the Abyssinians exploited the Oromo people economically was through taxation. Official taxation started in a proclamation made in October 1892 that suggested that a 10 percent tax would be levied on agricultural products. Soldiers were sent to all provinces to enforce the law (Rosenfeld, 1976). This taxation started when Menelik was pressed to pay for loans he took from the Italians to buy the firearms used to conquer the Oromo people. The taxation was claimed to be based on Biblical teaching, which obligates members to give a tenth of their income to church.

As reported in Chapter 2, by 1900, Blundell described the Oromo people as producers and cultivators who were an “industrious people.” He had observed that around Oromo villages and huts was a tract of cultivated land with flocks and herds grazing nearby fields. He also observed that colonial oppression and taxation prevented the Oromo from being more productive. In his words, “there is no doubt that if the [Oromo] were not so oppressed and [heavily] taxed, they

would produce more.”(p.271) An American diplomat who gave an account of the first American mission to Ethiopia described the Oromo people as “a conquered race of excellent intelligence”, and they are industrious farmers and safe citizens.” (Steffanson & Starrett, 1976, p. 16) In 1919, this American consul in Aden, in his letter to the State Department, reported that if the Oromo people were released from the status of serfdom, they would develop a tremendous capacity in agricultural production that would be beneficial to them and their neighboring peoples (Steffanson & Starrett, 1976).

In the Amharic language, the word taxation is “gibiri” (= paying tribute). The January 19, 1925 article in the *Westminister Gazette* titled “Who Live by Bribery” (mentioned in Chapter 2, p. 56) published what they considered an interesting insight into life under Abyssinian rule. The Abyssinian taxation system, according to their account, allowed the governor of each district to pass whatever amount of the 10 percent collected that he wished to the Emperor (Steffanson & Starrett, 1977a). According to Oggessa, before the introduction of paper currency, tax payments were in the form of honey, flour, cattle and horses. Hirphasa added that in some Oromo regions until the 1960s, payment was in cattle. In regions where the main source of livelihood was farming, farmers were taxed on the size of their farmland. In pastoralist areas, taxation was based on the number of cattle as well as the number of people. If tax was not paid, as Gurmesssa put it,

every month Abyssinians would come to the countryside for “dhisa.” Dhisa is when they tie your hands to tree and hit your back. They continue hitting until you pay the amount of money they expected you to pay.

In addition, when Abyssinians made these trips to the countryside, the Oromo people were forced not only to feed them but also wash their feet. If an angry person or a criminal physically attacked the Abyssinians, the community would be punished collectively.

Taxation was thus one of the strategies that the Ethiopian government used to dispossess the Oromo people of their land. For purposes of taxation, the land was divided into land under use, land semi-used and unused land. My informant Hinsarmu explained this system:

The government tried to [privatize] land ownership. [The Ethiopian state] divided the land into Lem, LemXefi and Xefi (=cultivated, semi-cultivated and uncultivated in Amharic). The division was theoretically for tax purposes. The places where coffee can grow and forested lands are categorized as Xefi, which is the richest part of the land. The people have no income from [Xefi] and they do not want to pay tax on it. ...To reduce their expenditures, farmers limit the ownership of the land. When the local people declare it is Xefi, the government is happy to take it and give to the Abyssinians. For example, the regime gave to Aleqa Ashegari 500 Gasha [=20,000 hectares] of land [suitable for growing coffee]. The property was so large that he used a helicopter to monitor his farm.

There were different forms of taxation. Although there were no schools or health care provided by Haile Selassie for the Oromo, Oromo people still paid education and health taxes. The tax burden varied from place to place. According to Hirphasa, pastoralist and semi-pastoralist regions are hot and prone to malaria, and Abyssinians were not interested in settling and owning land there. These regions were thus mainly exploited through taxation. As noted above, in pastoralist regions, taxation was based on the number of cattle and family members. When I posed a question about the ways tax money was allocated for services, Hinsarmu, a business professional, commented that

Haile Selassie had no system for allocation of tax money. ....If the King liked the governor of Bale, he gave him more money. [If he liked] the governor of Kaffa more, he gave him even more. ...Every area got [what it got] depending on who the governor was for that region and who was close to Haile Selassie. ... Development was based on

personal initiative. Some planning started around Finfine--that is why you see that most of the industries that were built during [the time of] Haile Selassie were concentrated in two places, one around Finfine and the other in Asmara [Eritrea]. ... This is also true for other developments such as schools. Many schools were built by SIDA [the Swedish International Development Agency]. At that time, there was no guiding principle to allocate resources.

Agreeing with Hinsarmu, Qawee made a very interesting point:

When I came to [North America], I was surprised when I learned that the government gives back [services] to the community [related to] the tax money that has been collected. Whatever my father, mother and grandfathers gave to the government, they never got anything back from them.

As if taxation without any benefits was not enough, soon after many Oromo were dispossessed their land, on the pretext of improving tax collection, the Abyssinians came up with another policy known as Qelad Xayi. Hinsarmu explained that under this policy, the size of landholdings of the few Oromos who still owned land were measured. An Oromo was entitled to own just enough land to sustain his or her family and on which he or she had to pay tax. The taxation was very high and when individuals could not pay the taxation, the government took the land. This further increased the number of Oromos who were landless.

Although their productivity is low, Oromos are cattle breeders and own a stock of different kinds of livestock--cattle, goats, sheep, horses, mules, donkeys and camels. They also have big families, which makes them liable for more tax. As many authors have noted, taxation was one of the heavy burdens that the Oromo people have faced historically (e.g. Tadesse, 1993). Tadesse discussed the example of Bale, reporting that the Ethiopian ministry of finance estimated that in Bale province alone, uncollected taxes from 1952 to 1957 were worth \$3 million. Two years later, the Ministry reported that there were 6000 people in one of the districts of Bale who could

be brought to court for tax evasion. Failure to pay taxes led to land confiscation--in the Wabe and Dolo areas, about 320,000 hectares and around Goba and Ganale, 16,000 hectares were confiscated.

Gurmessa recalled that "when someone in the community refused to pay tax, the Abyssinian military invaded his village." If Abyssinian tax collectors were killed,

[the Oromo were] automatically suspected and the state imprisoned the whole village: the women, Elders and able and disabled individuals. They did not ask for the person who had committed the crime, but instead imprisoned the whole community. As if they were in a war front region, the military just imprisoned everyone. In most cases, the people were imprisoned without even knowing the cause of their imprisonment.

#### 4.3.2 Modernization, the Capitalist Economy, Eviction and Colonization

As Holcomb and Ibssa (1990) emphasize, Ethiopian social policies toward the Oromo people have historical continuity, and reflect an "indirect colonization" of the Oromo by the Abyssinians, supported by the European colonial powers. In their detailed account of events during the Haile Selassie regime, until Italy invaded the region during the Second World War, there was no significant capitalist economy and order was kept by the gun. But as Mottuma pointed out, after the War and the reinstatement of Haile Selassie by British forces, commercial farming started. This may seem to be a discontinuity with the past, but it can easily be seen to be a continuing subjugation of the Oromo, this time using modern methods. Holcomb and Ibssa (1990) explain how mechanized farming and other exercises in modernization such as bridge-building were undertaken with the expertise of European advisors.



Until mechanized farming started, the Abyssinians had not been willing to farm in the traditional ways, as my informants Mottuma, Hinsarmu and Dandana all pointed out. Mottuma, for example, observed that

the Neftegna never farm or trade. Their duties were to fight and to rule the country... It [was] the Oromo farmers who worked the land... The Oromos farm and collect the harvest and deliver it to the [Abyssinian landlords]... Not only that, but...it is the Oromo men and women who would grind it for them manually. ... The Abyssinians took from the Oromo farmers anything they have produced: honey, milk, butter, goats, lambs... Literally, the neftegna [lived off] the people that were given to them.... In Amharic, they say "Yihin hizbi bila and yihin meret bila" (= "eat these people and eat this land").... Basically the Neftegna were a parasitic class.

Another informant, Hirphasa, whose family was evicted, described the event this way:

On one market day, while I played, the person who took our land came with a tractor and started to plough our back yard. When my family returned home from the market, [we] found [our] back yard was ploughed. Those [of us] who were out could not come home and those who were at home could not go out. The only option that was left for us was to leave the area.

The Abyssinian landlords who had owned Oromo land since the time of Menelik in the late 1800s, preferred to develop it in Haile Selassie's 'modern' era with mechanized farming rather than leasing it. Mechanization involved the eviction of many Oromos from their ancestral homes and pushed them into barren lands or lowland regions where there was not enough water and where they were prone to tropical diseases. For example, in the Chilalo district, 15 percent of tenants were displaced (Ottoway, 1978). Neither were the Oromos given the right to work on the land and share their harvests with Abyssinian landlords in this region. Mottuma pointed out that eviction

occurred in places such as Wanji, Arsi and Sidamo...in areas where cash crops [were] well-developed. Modern farming started...in the 1950s and 1960s. When the first tractors were introduced, the Amharic feudal [lords]...[realized] "Why [do I] have to keep 20 people on the land when just one tractor will do the job?"

As noted above, the Ethiopian language policy, which discriminated against the Oromo people, prevented them from communicating with the Amharic landlords and selling their labour. Even

for manual jobs, landlords preferred to hire individuals who had mastered the Amharic language and culture, for two reasons. First, the managers of the farms were Amharic speakers and they could better manage individuals who spoke that language. Second, when the Oromo people were forced to leave their homes, conflict in the form of local resistance erupted.

As my informants pointed out, several large-scale projects such as hydroelectric power stations and sugar factories, displaced Oromo farmers. These projects included the Qooqa and Finchaha dams, which were built for hydroelectric power production for sugar plantations. The Qooqa Dam and Wanji and Matahara sugar factories were built in the Karayu area, which formerly was a nomadic region. When these projects were built, the Karayu, Arsi, Ittu and Jille Oromo people lost about 150,000 hectares of grazing lands. The Karayu Oromos are pastoralists and they were pushed into the Afar and Arsi regions of Oromia, which resulted in ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts. Since the climate of the area to which the Karayu Oromo were pushed is hot and dry and not favorable for cattle breeding, they lost their cattle to several diseases. These projects were built in the 1950s; according to my informants, in the intervening half a century, the Karayu Oromos have been reduced to half their former numbers through starvation and exposure to diseases. In Shantam's words,

The Oromo Karayus are cattle breeders and they were settled in the Matahara area. When the sugar factor was built, Haile Selassie talked to them, [suggesting] that the area would be good for harvesting sugar and that they would benefit from it.... The King had the guns and the means to implement his will.... As a result, they were evicted from the places that were green, fertile and well-watered, and pushed to the areas that were dry.

Hinsarmu, a business professional during the both the Haile Selassie and Derge eras, explained that Wanji was the first large sugar plantation in the Awash valley, a heavily populated area. The plantation was started in 1951 according to Ottaway (1978). Hinsarmu pointed out that although

a Dutch company owned 49 percent and the Ethiopian government owned 51 percent, the Oromo people, who were the original inhabitants, were forced to relocate on barren lands. The original agreement was that the company would introduce productive grasses and irrigate the area so that the pastoralists would have enough grazing land. However, none of the agreements were implemented, as the company concentrated on profit-making. There was no legal system that would protect the Oromo people and force the company to fulfill its agreement. My informants Hinsarmu and Diribissa talked about local people taking the law into their own hands and burning the property of the company; the reaction of the Ethiopian security forces was to collectively punish the community. The company also refused to hire any local person as a daily laborer. Further, the Matahara and Wanji sugar factories polluted the Awash River on which the people who were evicted totally depended for their drinking water.

According to Tadesse (1993), by the 1960s, more than 40 percent of the people in the seven provinces of southern Oromia worked for landlords. The introduction of commercial farming displaced many of these tenants. That author also reported that in the Chilalo area in the province of Arsi, which was mentioned above as a prime area for Abyssinian settlement, from 1969 to 1970, 392 farmers were evicted. From 1968 to 1971, 750 farmers in the Shashemene area of Chilalo alone were evicted from their homes. According to Ottoway (1978), in the Chilalo district, 15 percent of tenants were displaced. Most of the commercial farming was undertaken by provincial administrators. Hinsarmu, referring to the region that Ottoway and Kifle mention above, stated that the "situation in Arsi was a disaster." In his words,

The Koffole and Kokkoksa and Shashemene areas (sections of Arsi) were good for farming kidney beans. In that area, when the [Abyssinians] started to farm kidney beans, they started evicting the serfs. At that time, kidney beans became one of the cash crops. .... All the Neftegna who owned lands in those areas then decided to farm kidney beans

[by machine] and evicted their former tenants. The people had nowhere to go and the neftegna bulldozed their houses. Those who were evicted from their homes went to Haile Selassie to complain about what had happened to them but the Emperor ordered his military to attack them, killing 50 of the people who had tried to explain to him what had happened to them.

#### 4.3.3 The Impact of Being Dispossessed of Land

Haile Selassie's land ownership policy deliberately denied the Oromo people the means of survival. Such denial did not lead to outright extermination of the Oromo people in the short term. Rather, it began a process of what Fein (1997) has called "genocide by attrition." The process is gradual over many decades. Dandana discussed the experience of his grandmother when he said:

My grandmother was a mother of several children. When the Abyssinians came and claimed her land, she was a single mother who took care of these children. At one point the Abyssinian landlord asked her to pay a certain amount of money that she could not afford to pay. When the Abyssinian landlord found that she could not pay, the [authorities arrested] her and tied her with chains to sell her into slavery. Her brothers raised the amount of money needed and saved her.

When I posed a question to Tokkuma about how the landless Oromos survive with no land, he indicated how problematic it was for an Indigenous people to be landless:

You know the lives of Oromo farmers are dependent on nature. The life of this people is dependent upon the water, the land and the grass. They cannot survive without it. Therefore, to keep it, they work as serfs and give a significant portion of their harvest to the landlords. ... As most of these farmers give away their harvest, they live in poverty.

In Oromia, as elsewhere, farming depends on nature. When the rains are delayed or diseases kill cattle and the farmers have no oxen to plough the land or insects destroy the crop, farmers simply lose their harvest. Under conditions where the farmers have to give one-quarter to three-quarters of their harvest to the landlords, things get even worse. One of the questions I asked my

informants was what would happen in years that a farmer did not have a good harvest. Diribissa described it this way:

The people live in poverty. You know .... (quoting from a book) "even though the country men have no food to eat, they have something to pay to the landlords".... That was why many Oromo from central Oromia were forced to leave their homes and settle in different parts of the country.

During the Haile Selassie regime, the landlords did not concern themselves about whether or not tenants had enough food to feed their children, buy clothes or pay taxes. Oromo families were obligated to give a given amount from whatever they had. Mottuma added that there were many cases where an Oromo family was imprisoned and evicted from their home because they could not afford to pay the landlords. Mottuma explained that one of the reasons that Khat farming expanded in Eastern Oromia was the poverty that resulted from Neftegna system. Khat was a crop that was shunned by Abyssinians, since chewing it was taboo for Christians. The Oromo who grew it were able to sell it to the Arab world to make a little cash.

Jobir used the metaphor of a parasitic tree to explain the effect of the Neftegna system on the Oromo:

Abyssinians are like the Dembi tree. The Dembi tree grows on other trees and step-by-step, it kills the host tree and then survives by itself. In the same way, the Abyssinians came from southern Arabia. When they came to the present Abyssinian heartland, there were different Indigenous African peoples in that area such as the Agaw and Bhege people. As a result of outright killing and cultural assimilation, most of them have been totally wiped out and the survival of the few left is tenuous.

In the Neftegna system, the tenants bear the total cost of running the farm, while supplying the landlord with an imposed proportion the harvest. Neither is there any guarantee that a tenant could stay on his land if it were sold to another Abyssinian. My informant Tokkuma explained

that the Abyssinian term “gabar” refers to people who are categorized with cattle who can be bought or sold. Mottuma argued that Abyssinians have never considered the Oromo people as human beings. In his words,

when Oromo farmers brought grain from their harvest to the landlords that they had manually milled, along with butter as well as lambs and goats, the [Abyssinians] never let them enter their premises. You know it was more than slavery.

#### 4.4 Killing and Imprisonment

Although I have argued that the emphasis in the Haile Selassie regime was put on assimilation, since Oromia was colonized, there has been no time during which the Ethiopian government has tolerated Oromo leadership. Haile Selassie also did his share of killing. For example, before he left the country for Europe after the Italian occupation, he killed several Oromo individuals (Guutama, 2003). These included Iyasu, his cousin and the grandson of Menelik, who was born of an Oromo father and deposed from power, accused by Haile Selassie as not being Christian enough. He was killed in a prison cell. The killings were intended to deny the Oromo people leadership (Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990). Abyssinian regimes target not only the leadership of Oromo political organizations but also self-help associations and relief organizations, as in the case of the Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association.

##### 4.4.1 The Case of Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association

Given that Oromo people are colonized, they are not permitted to organize themselves politically, socially, spiritually and culturally. The Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association was the first Oromo institution that was formed during the Imperial regime. The motto under which

the organization formed and functioned was “love your brothers as you love yourself; things that you would like others to do for you, do them for others” (Walda Maccaa fi Tuulamaa, 1992). As the motto of the organization suggests, its objective was to bring social transformation to Oromia. For this purpose the founders of the Association gave their own land to be used for construction of schools. The members contributed money to build schools and several small bridges (Walda Maccaa fi Tuulamaa, 1992). However, a few years after the organization was formed, it was banned and some of the leaders were hanged or sentenced to life or several years’ imprisonment. Among the leaders of the Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association, Col. Mamo Mezemir was hanged. Haile Mariam Gamada, Seifu Tesema and Brigadier General Dawit Abdi died in prison from torture and maltreatment. Famous men and visionaries, General Taddasa Birru and Colonel Alamu Qixessa, the former president of the Association, were sentenced to lifetime imprisonment (Walda Maccaa fi Tuulamaa, 1992).

#### 4.4.2 Attempts to Break the Oromo Spirit

The duplicity of the Haile Selassie regime has been particularly well-detailed in the critical account of Oromo history offered by Holcomb and Ibssa (1990). Participants in my research who lived under the Haile Selassie regime named several ways in which the Oromo had suffered through colonial and neo-colonial policies, but were particularly aware of how the Haile Selassie regime emphasized assimilation through land dispossession, economic deprivation, eviction and conversion of Oromo leadership to Christianity, rather than outright killing. This regime was characterized by participants as an attack on Oromo culture and resources rather than simple physical eradication.

For example, Gurmessa, who lived through Haile Selassie's forced assimilation policies, identified educated Oromos as those who were targeted by Abyssinians, and suggested that consciousness is the key to understanding successful assimilation or resistance. He theorized that "most of the Oromos" who are not part of the intelligentsia are not politically conscious, and thus can survive. At the same time, even participants who were too young to experience the Haile Selassie era identified how that regime was organized around policies of assimilating and depriving Oromos rather than outright killing. For example, Taressa pointed out that when policies of assimilation are pursued, regimes are able to co-opt Oromos to work against their own self-interest. As he remarked,

If the people are not educated, they will be possessed by some one [who can] make them forget their identity and [become] assimilated to the Abyssinian culture. In fact such individuals accept what the Abyssinians [have] theorized about them and accept what they have said about them as the reality. This is what Haile Selassie has tried.

In response to my question about who is most likely to comply under pressure to assimilate, Gurmessa theorized that

many of them have no job.... [T]hey married and have children, [and]...the challenges they face are how to provide basic necessities to their family members. They have no alternatives. If they do not want to work and get assimilated to those who are in power, they will not have job opportunities. To raise their children and avoid misery, they need to establish harmony with the Abyssinians. Therefore, they associate with the Abyssinians to survive or raise their children. It is not because they deny or hate their Oromoness.... If there were an alternative, they would [choose it]. [Interviewer: *Do you mean to say that as a result of necessity, individuals became robots?*] Yes. To survive they become robots. When the Abyssinians ask [them] to do something, they will do it.

According to this reasoning, the Oromo without any resources would be more open to having their spirits broken.



## 4.5 Theorizing and Resisting Assimilation

### 4.5.1 Resistance as Survival

As much as participants described capitulation to Haile Selassie's attempts at assimilation of the Oromo, they also emphasized the ways in which there was consistent resistance to assimilation during his regime. Those who lived through this period predicted that assimilation would never be possible. In fact, as Gurmessa commented,

You know they cannot eliminate the Oromo people. They cannot eliminate the people who are the majority.... They can do few things. They can assimilate them. They can take their land, incapacitate them and impoverish them. [But] in the long term this method would have several repercussions. After some time the Oromos [would] get organized and come back. The younger generations are more knowledgeable than the Oromo of our generation and if they could not bring changes at this time, they will make [them] in the future. The horn of Africa there cannot be in peace unless there [is a] solution to the Oromo question.... Violence cannot be the solution, but the Abyssinians do not understand peace. In the past they committed genocide against the Oromo people but in the future they cannot commit that.

### 4.5.2 Resistance to Educational Assimilation

In a regime determined to assimilate the Oromo, education was identified as a key element. Schools may have been built during the Haile Selassie era, but as noted previously, a longstanding suppression of the Oromo language, enacted in 1944 legislation (Bulcha, 1994), prevented students from learning in the Oromo language. Instead, they were educated in Amharic. One of my informants recalled at length how his father made efforts to educate 16 Oromo children, including himself. However, these efforts were turned by the Haile Selassie regime into an opportunity for assimilation. Ultimately, the assimilation attempt did not work, but his story is a good illustration of the attitude of this regime towards the Oromo. In his words,

At that time in the provinces of Bale and Arsi, there were only two religions: Waqefaata and Muslim. Bale was half Waqefaata and half Moslem. [This worried the Ethiopian government.] In 1955 or 1956, something interesting emerged. Haile Selassie wrote a letter to Abune Thewofilos suggesting that the only way they could assimilate the culture of the Oromo people in these two provinces and prevent the danger that Ethiopia might face, [wa]s to Christianize them.... The first action plan was to baptize all school children. Having this letter, the Abune (leader) of the Abyssinian Orthodox Church erected tents in a very wide space in Goba town and prepared to baptize the Waqefaata and the Moslems. The next day, all the students in the school were taken to the place where the Abuna erected his tents. Most of the students were Abyssinians who were Christians and the rest were either Moslems or Waqefaata. First, the Abuna sprinkled water on (baptized) all students. They told the students to separate into Christians and non-Christians. To symbolize that the non-Christians were Christianized, they shaved off part of our hair. When these students went home and family members heard what had happened, they were angry about it.

The Oromo parents acted swiftly to interrupt this attempt to assimilate their children. As my informant explained, "the next day the [relatives] came with horses and took the [children] home to the countryside." Further, "after the incident happened, the families prevented these children from even visiting the local towns and even the market places." Although this resistance to assimilation was successful, my informant pointed out that it resulted in most of the Oromo children not receiving an education at all. As he recalled,

Only after five or six years, I was able go back to school. Among the 16 students [with whom I] started schooling, only I went back to school. It was a disastrous event for education in that province.

According to Hinsarmu, it took 30 years for the public school to establish trust among the Oromo in this region so that this event kept the Oromo (but not the Amharic) populations in Bale and Arsi provinces educationally behind many other provinces. This educational difference is verified in the literature (Fassil, 1990) and may persist today. He added that after the 16 children were removed, other Oromo children attended the school, and that the indoctrination they received as part of the educational assimilation policy, made them compliant with other oppressive policies of the Haile Selassie government. As Hinsarmu commented,

The first Oromo students who graduated from eighth grade were hired by the Ethiopian government to work on a project known as Qeladi Tayi – which was practically designed to dispossess the Oromo people from their lands and increase the governmental taxation of the local people.

My personal experiences illustrate both the Abyssinian approach to assimilating Oromo youth as well as how individuals could resist these pressures. In order to overcome the mischief of the Abyssinian tax collectors and landlords, my father actually *encouraged* the youths of my community, including myself, to go to school. He was aware of the two major obstacles--that formal schooling was designed from the Abyssinian colonial perspective and that the schools were physically located far away from our villages. To solve the second problem in my case, when I was about seven years old, my parents asked our landlord if I could stay in his home and attend school. The Abyssinian landlord agreed, but as I found out, he allowed me stay in his home for different reasons than what my parents had intended.

My parents considered schooling as resistance or an opportunity to challenge the domination of the Abyssinians. But the Abyssinian landlord took having me in his home as the opportunity to raise a young servant. Thus, every morning I was assigned to fetch water from the nearby spring.<sup>2</sup> Like many other towns in Oromia, this one was located on a hill and the spring water was in the valley. Thus, I was required to travel several kilometers carrying 10 to 15 litres of water. In the hills between October to January, the night time temperature drops below the freezing point and I had no shoes or proper clothes. Further, Abyssinians expected me to talk and

---

<sup>2</sup>At that time this Abyssinian family had two slaves – mother and son. The name of the mother slave was Ganje and the son was Tola. The name Ganje is derived from an Amharic word, Genzebi, meaning money, suggesting that she was not human. The second name is typically Oromo, and means goodwill. Ganje was fluent in the Oromo language and only spoke broken Amharic and thus, was most likely an Oromo. Tola spoke both Oromo and Amharic. At that time, Ganje was old. Going for spring water and back took her long time, and because she arrived late at the spring, the water was disturbed and thus turgid. However, it is also likely that she was resisting her masters by deliberately bringing them low quality of water.

play with their children of my age as if they were superior to me, but I refused to fulfill their expectations. In June, Abyssinians have a holiday known as Sene Michael (June Michael), for which families usually kill a lamb. In the Abyssinian culture, if a man eats the heart, it is believed that he will become a fearful person. Thus, to make me a fearful person, they gave me the heart of the lamb to eat. This did not affect me, because I did not appreciate the significance of eating the heart of the lamb. But another experience I cannot forget. The landlord and his family tried to transmit the illness of one of their sons to me through what they called 'tingola,' or witchcraft. One afternoon, they invited several Abyssinian priests and killed a lamb and prayed. The next morning, the mother of the sick child made me step on and touch things that were wrapped with leaves. On that day, when I returned from school, the sick boy was happy. He whispered to me saying, "I am going to be healed and you will get my sickness." When I asked him how and why, he told me the whole story. But again, I was an observer of Waqefaata, and believe in Waaqa Guraacha—and so for me, the tingoola (witchcraft) was inapplicable to me.

Eventually staying with the landlord was untenable for me. I started schooling with one of his sons and in the first semester of the first grade, I was second among about 100 students in the class. My success in school angered the Abyssinians and on several occasions in my presence they challenged their son, saying, "you are supposed to be better than the 'Galla boy.'" In the second semester, they prevented me from writing one of the mid-term exams. The landlord insisted that, "the education you have had is good enough." Because I had been held back, at the end of the year, those who ranked higher than me skipped a class, and I lost this opportunity. Hoping to get help, I shared my concerns with my parents and refused to stay anymore with that Abyssinian family. But they were not in a position to help me and whispered that I should not say bad words about the Abyssinians. They also gave me the option of dropping out of school,

but I chose to stay with my aunts who live about three hours from the school. At the end of the second grade, I got a chance to skip a class; however, I elected to attend a new school built by the Swedish government about hour and half from my home.

Abyssinians treated Oromo students as troublemakers. I was the object of an attack one afternoon on the way to the marketplace to get food sent from my family, when two Abyssinian students hit me from behind. I tried to defend myself with whatever was available, but the father of these students was looking through the window when they were attacking me; when he saw I was defending myself, he came out and hurt my foot badly. It became infected but I had no money to buy antibiotics. My friends reported my case to police and then to court. The Abyssinian man who hurt me, in his letter to the court, said "Me, Mr. X, being an Amhara national with amazement saw a Galla boy hitting my sons, and I taught him a lesson." He was never charged and I stayed in bed for two months. But this is a story of resistance, since I took the opportunity to apply myself to my studies.

After completion of the eighth grade, one had to leave the area and travel for about 200 km. to the nearest high school in Ambo or Nakamte. This was unthinkable and so I decided to end my schooling at the eighth grade, but in the seventh grade, there was a massive uprising against the Haile Selassie regime that changed my life. I have described my ultimate pursuing of higher education in Chapter 1. In 1974, when I was in the sixth grade, realizing that change was coming, our landlord decided to sell the land. He asked my father if the community was interested in buying it. At that time, two other students and I understood the Amharic language, followed the news through radio and sensed land reform was imminent. We advised our community that they stall when asked by the landlord whether they would buy the land, asking

for enough time to raise the money needed. In 1975, land reform was proclaimed and most Oromos celebrated it saying “Habasha – abba lafaa dugdaa keenya ira bufaane” (=we have dropped the Abyssinian landlords from our backs, in Oromo). Deposing the Haile Selassie regime and the land reform brought several changes. For the first time, an Oromo person became administrators of my district. The newly appointed administrator brought several changes and one of them was opening a high school. When a high school was opened in the town, I decided to study further.

In other stories, even though the Haile Selassie regime removed Oromo children from their families in the 1950s, resistance occurred by the children themselves when their parents were unsuccessful in resisting. Resistance seems to be a natural human reaction to oppression. I interviewed one of those who experienced removal from his parents at the age of six years. He was brought up in the Abyssinian culture of a residential school. According to my informant, most of the children who were removed from their parents because the family could not pay taxes. They included Oromo, Somali and Afar people. In some cases the parents were killed in confrontations with the Haile Selassie security forces. As the informant recalled the reactions of the family and community members, he said, “they never thought that they were going to see us again. They took for granted that the Abyssinians ate us or sold us to monsters. They took removal as if we were dead.” My informant described how the regime justified their actions:

The Abyssinians told us that they were going to give us educational opportunities. They asked the people to give them their children in the form of taxes. However, the Oromo people refused to give their children, saying “we do not give our children to the enemy and monster. They could stand against the government.

When I asked my informant to explain the conditions in which he grown up, he became very emotional:

I came to Finfine when I was a little boy of age six or seven. They gave us food and they taught us the Amharic language. But it was a very emotional experience... You can imagine taking a child at age 6 and raising him or her with no father or mother in a boarding school. We did not know where our parents were or why they took us. We did not have mothers and fathers. Our fathers were the Abyssinian men who worked for the school.

Long-standing Abyssinian attitudes toward the Oromo people were manifested in the boarding school. The children were kept away from their families and community members for decades and raised totally in a strange culture. After they kept the children in the boarding school for several years, these children got baptized and collectively called “tefto yetegenyu” (= the lost and found children, in Amharic. For Abyssinians, if one is not born in their culture and worldview, the person is lost.) However, even at the age of six or seven years, when the Oromo children were taken away from their families, they resisted the Abyssinian cultural assimilation policy. Although these children were baptized in the Abyssinian church and were pressured to take Amharic names, most of these children refused to do so. For example, to my informant, they gave the name, Tekle Haimanot (=planting religion in Amharic, implying that he became a Christian). Although Abyssinians used different methods of enforcement (corporal punishment and deprivation of food), most of the children still refused to change their names. My informant justified his refusal by insisting, “my father is not dead. Until my father dies, I am not entitled to change my father’s and my name.”

#### 4.5.3 Resisting Religious Conversion

Hinsarmu described another attempt by the Haile Selassie regime to assimilate the Oromos by Christianizing their leaders. As he explained,

[T]he Ethiopian government invited the local chiefs, local Elders and government employees to a meeting and brought them in front of Haile Selassie. The Abuna told Haile Sellasie that these people [were] there to get baptized and told the king that he [wa]s going to be their Godfather.

Again, resistance was swift. In Hinsarmu's words,

One among the Elders was Galshu Toge [who practiced Waqefaata]. During the Italian invasion, Galshu had had good relations with Haile Selassie. Galshu stood and asked, "Haile Selassie, is that you who sentenced us to death?" He said, "abandoning our tradition is a death sentence for us. You are telling us to get Christianized; by that you are telling us to abandon our culture, if we abandon our culture, we are going to die." Galshu asked the King whether or not the death sentence [wa]s from him. The king did not expect such a reaction and he was shocked and decided to take back his [demand that they be baptized].

The resistance was not entirely satisfactory, since a former governor was able to convince three individuals to be baptized. These individuals had Oromo and Arabic names, which, consistent with an attempt at assimilation, were changed to Amharic names. The informant remembered that one of these Amharic names was Gebre Medihin. But even here, there was resistance, because even when this individual accepted being a Christian, he refused to be named Gebre because this name can be interpreted as 'slave' in Amharic. According to the informant's account, a chartered flight was organized to take them to the capital city to display how 'civilized' the new converts were in their new clothes with money they had been given. But when the Ethiopian government ordered the local people to meet them at the airport, there was further resistance. The elder wife of one of the newly-converted individuals shaved her hair and put ash on her body to wait for her husband at the airport. Women in Oromia shave their hair if their husbands die, and so this act implied that her husband had died. The informant exclaimed that "when he came out from the plane, he saw that his wife shaved her hair and put ash on herself, and he was shocked, and fainted." As the story goes, a few hours later he died of a heart attack and the others did not practice Christianity.



#### 4.5.4 Resistance through Political Activism

According to my informants Jobir, Hisarmu and Diribissa, the family of one of the founders of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the first chairman of the organization, Magarsa Barri, was among those who were evicted from Salale to the Bale region. Barri witnessed and experienced the colonial hardships that the Oromo people had experienced. He realized that the only way the Oromo could liberate themselves in coordinated struggle was by organizing politically. Thus right at the end of the Haile Selassie regime, he was instrumental in the formation of OLF. In 1979, when the Ethio-Somali war was over, the OLF leadership were caught by the dispersed Somali army who ordered them to be separated along religious lines (Waqefaata, Muslim and Christian). They refused to be divided and so were shot together. Although Barri and his nine colleagues did not live to realize their aspirations, their act stands as symbolic in the minds of the Oromo people. The motto they died for--unity--is the aspiration of millions of young Oromos.

#### 4.5.5 Protesting through Oromo Poetry and Song

Although the transfer of landownership from the Oromos to the Abyssinians has involved eviction, slavery and cultural assimilation, the Oromo have resisted by carefully preserving their culture in poetry and song. These verses protest the conditions under which they live in poems and songs that might be sung as they marched or worked, often expressing emotion at the same time. In the gerarsa form of poem below, for example, the endurance of poverty is sung about:

Akkam tanee akkas tanee?	How have we come to be the way we are now?
Moofa uffatu tanee	We have become the people who wear ripped clothes
Doofa uf gaatu tanee	We became miserable, foolish and ignorant.
Akkam tanee tanuree?	What do we have to do now?
Kaam goree jalaa bunuree?	How can we get away from these miseries?

One of the regions of Oromia affected by eviction by Abyssinian landlords was Salale, which is located in the northwestern part of Oromia, adjacent to Abyssinia. When these people were evicted, they moved south to the area believed to be an Oromo holy place. When they were traveling on their long journey, they sang the following song, the first part of which was recalled by my informant Soressa and the second part of which was added by Tokkuma:

Siif ba'e , biyya siif ba'e	(addressing Neftegna)
Yo-mujaan ol'a siff ta'e	I am leaving you my home country
Yo-quroon daboo siif bahee.	If you wish, the grass will be your neighbor, If you wish, the crow will be your coop-worker.

Mataan karaa baate hinwalaltu	We will not forget our origins (even though)
Haan Oromoo Madaa Walaabu	We are going to Madaa Walabu (a holy site)
Lagaa Wabeen nanceeha	Let me cross you, river Wabe
Nafudhadhu Ya'ayyana Balee	Please, take care of me, Spirit of Bale

As I discussed in Chapter 2, The Oromo people in Wollo were sandwiched between the Tigrayan and Amaharas, and experienced massacres and eviction by several Abyssinian regimes. In 1972/73, they experienced famine. The Ethiopian government kept news of the famine, which claimed the lives of over 200,000, secret from local and international media and even restricted the movement of these starving people. It was only made known to the world community by the British journalist Jonathan Dimbleby (Moussa, 1993). An Oromo poet Tilahun Gesese, who sings both in Amaharic and Afaan Oromo, blamed the Emperor Haile Selassie in his song, written in the 1970s:

Wallo teribo indeziya siyalqi	When the Wollo were starved and perished
Bedibiq nebere manim sayawuqi	It was kept secret; no one knew about it.

#### 4.5.6 Pursuing the Struggle for Indigenous Knowledges and Legitimacy

It is important to acknowledge that Haile Selassie has enjoyed a particularly positive image in the West and beyond (Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990). Knowledge about the Oromo has been non-existent in the West until the 1990s, as Bulcha has pointed out (2002). Therefore, participants in this research who had lived in Ethiopia during the Haile Selassie regime and who left were able to access information about their roots, but were less successful in drawing attention to the oppression that the Haile Selassie regime had promoted. For example, Bulti, one of my oldest participants, noticed very early that versions of Oromo history that he encountered in the literature on Ethiopia differed significantly from his memories of talking with Elders as he grew up and as an adult. He described how difficult it has been to draw attention to the Oromo situation:

When I started, there were not many people who knew about the Oromo people. The Ethiopian government does not want the issue of [the] Oromo people known and even chases [those who are trying to investigate the Oromo situation] out of the country. The Ethiopian government does not even tolerate Western researchers. If Western researchers take a picture, [the government] does not allow them to take it home.

A similar situation was encountered by another informant, Jobir, who has also been an advocate for Oromo indigenous knowledges. He described his involvement with the Oromo Studies Association (OSA), which was founded in the early 1990s. He said that originally, he

was interested to know about the Oromo people.... I wanted to know Oromo culture, Oromo ways of life and also...the socio-economic problems that they face. Not just politically but also intellectually. I was interested in having a deep understanding of Oromo realities. After I left Oromia, I decided that in the Diaspora, the only way I c[ould] contribute to the Oromo cause was by studying about the Oromo people and making [them] known to the Oromos and the world community.

Unfortunately, he added, scholars beyond the OSA have not been particularly open to learning about the Oromo. In response to my question about how Abyssinians and other scholars have reacted to the efforts of the OSA, he remarked,

They suffocated the Oromo voice. They denied the Oromo people the space. They want to tell us what Oromos are and what Oromos should be. This [suffocation] is what [Oromo scholars have] rejected.

In other words, he identified that resistance has taken place not only within Ethiopia. It also takes place in the Diaspora on the world stage. Specifically, Jobir spoke of the founding of the organization, the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) that takes as its mandate the mission to publicize the situation of the Oromo and to promote its indigenous knowledges. This, in his words, “is what OSA stands for.”

#### 4.6 Summary

In summary, then, informants characterized the Haile Selassie regime as one of assimilation. Assimilation was described by those who lived in Ethiopia during this era as being achieved through economic deprivation or attempts at conversion to Amharic identity and customs, rather than outright killing. This is not to say that killings did not take place during his regime. For example, during the armed Bale uprising in the 1960s, the Abyssinians used arms to deal with the Oromo. However, participant stories emphasized resistance to assimilation through moral suasion and insistence on continuing to practice Oromo customs in the face of government pressure. Participants also pointed to resistance in the Diaspora through the spreading of knowledge about Oromia, which has also faced significant challenges, but which is ongoing.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE DERGE'S ATTEMPT TO ASSIMILATE USING PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

#### 5.1 Experiencing Assimilation Through Force

Participants who lived under the military regime of the Derge also recognized many ways in which Oromos suffered. The coming to power and activities of the Derge have been analyzed in much more detail in the historical accounts of Holcomb and Ibssa (1990), Jalata (2005) and Bulcha (2000). The Derge regime was Marxist, and it was under the control of the Abyssinians. Here I analyze the regime from the perspective of participants in this research.

Participants emphasized how the Derge regime also attempted assimilation of the Oromo. But, in contrast to the rule of Haile Selassie, their period in power was characterized as violent, involving not only mass killing and torture, but also banning and removing Oromo indigenous sites, or Galma (as well as Protestant ones), and persecuting leaders of Waaqafata. The Derge mobilization program conscripted very large numbers of young Oromo men and kept them isolated in military camps when they were not fighting the Derge wars with Eritrea, the Tigrayans and the Oromos. The effect of these policies was widespread intimidation. As Tokkuma pointed out,

Ethiopia imprisoned me and tortured me. I was denied security in my life. I was always worried. I worried leaving my home and returning back.... All my life I always worried. What is life if someone comes to your home without your permission carrying his gun? Which does your life mean if it is unsecured? You have to understand that. Whenever they want, if someone calls you and says, "we want you for interview in our office," you have no life. A country that puts you in fear is not your country. [Even w]hen they send you to the army, you are not a citizen of that country. Your privacy is invaded and you have nothing.... There is no law so that you can present your concerns; there are no rights that you can claim. In Ethiopia, I did not have any rights, only obligations. Several times

I applied for two different types of jobs and successfully passed the [requirements. Three times]. I applied to study for a second degree. They denied me all of them.

Four examples of the Derge strategy towards the Oromo were their policies of resettlement, eviction, villagization and its urban counterpart. Resettlement had happened on a small scale during the Haile Selassie regime, as well as eviction, but the Derge expanded these to major proportions. For example, according to Hoben (1995), from 1985 to 1995, the Derge Ministry of Education evicted approximately 80,000 households for its school building programs. The Ministry of Coffee and Tea evicted over 15,000; water projects, 29,000; state farms, over 90,000 and the Ministry of Agriculture for other projects, over 38,000 people. Altogether, he estimated that collective farming projects and villagization evicted over two million households or 8 to 10 million people from their homes. The Derge's resettlement program forcefully relocated northern Tigrayan and Amhara peoples into southern Oromia and into Indigenous peoples' territories. Again according to Hoben (1995), the settlement program moved more than one half million households from the north to the west, allegedly because of the 1984-1985 famine. That is, the Derge justified the mass movement of individuals as 'saving' them from starvation, while at the same time, serving the purpose of assimilation. Later, their villagization program created bigger villages, in order to control the activities of Oromo people.

## 5.2 A Regime of Targetted and Mass Killing and Torture

### 5.2.1 Indiscriminate Mass Killing of Oromos

A hallmark of the Derge era was indiscriminate and mass killing of the Oromo. An eyewitness to one atrocity of this kind, Oawee, described what he experienced in this way:

Elders told us that those who were killed needed to be buried and they asked us to go and bury them. For example...an old man about 80 who could not run away from the Abyssinian army...was killed. After three days when we came back from the nearby

forest, we saw that a wild animal had consumed half of his face and so we collected his body and buried it. [A] mother of two children and eight months pregnant was killed when she was hit by heavy artillery...while running with the crowd.... I remember we buried 10 people in one place.

Oawee reflected that he was so used to violence that “after I came to [North America] I learned that the government takes responsibility to maintain peace. I was surprised when I saw the government makes an effort to serve the people!”

### 5.2.2 Targeting Oromo Activists

The Derge government did not tolerate any independent Oromo organizations and Oromo individuals involved in political activities were cruelly treated. As one former political prisoner and OLF member, Guttama (2003), who has described the torture suffered by Oromo activists, has stated, “one of the objectives of the Ethiopian government investigative team was to break the morale of the alleged members and then find out the secrets of the organization” (p. 14). If investigators did not discover anything, they nonetheless manifested to Oromo prisoners the deep-rooted Abyssinian hatred against the Oromo people. My informants agreed. For example, Firdissa, a political prisoner under the Derge, described the situation this way:

When I was first arrested, they took me directly to the prison. When I arrived, I saw many crying prisoners whose legs were bleeding.... To let me know what to expect, they made sure that I saw when they picked th[e next] person. After that they instructed me to go to the torture room and ordered me to kneel. They put a stick between my legs and hands and tied them together. When they held the stick and picked me up, my body was upside down. The person who was in charge of taking notes put his legs on my shoulder. The other person started beating me on my legs. To silence my screams, the person put a small ball in my mouth. They left me in [this] condition for two hours and went out for a lunch break. When they returned, they started torturing me again. After that, they returned me to the prison cell. They let me stay there for few days. As I had no pain killers or medical assistance, the pain got worse. After a few days, opening the wounds that were not yet healed, they tortured me again. I lost the feeling in my feet and my legs became numb.... After a few days, they took me again to the torture room. After some time, they could not torture me any more, because when they hit me, blood spilled on the

wall and on their faces. Then they started to...fill a big barrel with water and insert my head.

The prison itself, Firdissa said, was in a palace, and in his words, "we were kept on cold cement" eating leftovers "collected in a barrel" from those guarding the building, with no access to family and friends who might have provided food. He added, "[w]e had only old and dirty clothes that former prisoners used." There were washroom breaks only in the early morning and evening. In a second, and overcrowded prison, Maikelawi, he was put in a 3 by 4 metre cell with "59 people" in it. "With such overcrowding, 'these people c[ould}not sit, sleep or stand at the same time.'" The room was hot, with "water pouring like rain on the wall" from respiration. Sleeping was problematic in that each person slept facing "the person next to you" and only sideways, not on his back. When one group slept, the others stood. It was thus very hard to sleep, because most had been tortured, and thus "could not stand for long or lie in one side for long." Finally, during the night, individuals were taken out "to be killed."

When I posed a question about who were killed, Dandana mentioned three individuals whom I knew from the high school in my area, As he explained,

All of them are Oromo nationalists. At that time there were [only a] few Amahara nationals who were imprisoned with us. There were EPRP [Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party] members, who committed several crimes [known as the White Terror] who were released before us. They were released because they were not Oromo nationalists.

Both Diribssa and Dandana emphasized that the EPRP members defended themselves by saying that they had not done anything that did not benefit Ethiopia. Diribssa said that non-Oromos who were members of various political organizations were tortured during the day, but that Oromos faced persecution "24 hours a day." In his words,

When it came to the Tigrayan and Eritrean nationalists, the [Derge] coined the concept "Inante Hagerachihun yekedachihi" (=those who have betrayed their mother country").



This [suggests] they are telling them that Ethiopia is their mother country and that these prisoners were the sons and daughters of Ethiopia.... They were recognized as the citizen of Ethiopia.... When it came to the Oromo prisoners, the government charged us as if we were in conspiracy to dismantle Ethiopia and Abyssinian domination. They never referred us as the way they referred to the Tigrayans and Eritreans.

Diribssa concluded from these observations that he and his friends were being treated as if they were from an alien nation. Ironically, he pointed out, "the way they treated us gave me further political awareness. This helped me to realize what the Abyssinians thought about me, about the Oromo people and Oromo country."

Dundana also emphasized that those Abyssinians who had committed atrocities were released, while the Oromo men, who had not, were killed. Later on, those Abyssinians who were released worked with the Dergi. Dundana pointed out that this suggests that the Oromo political prisoners were treated more harshly. As he put it, "all the Ethiopian governments that have come to power are cruel and rough to the Oromo people. To be an Oromo costs your life." That is, the Abyssinians do not punish an Oromo man for a crime against his people, but only disobedience to their orders. He adds that that "is why many of the educated Oromo men and women have suffered killing and imprisonment." Hinsarmu agreed, describing his colleagues who were killed in prison as not having committed any crimes except that they "simply wanted to stay Oromo."

### 5.2.3 Killing Associated with the War with Somalia

The Derge came to power in 1974 and in 1977-78, Oromo areas of Ethiopia were targetted not only by the Derge but also by the government of Somalia. The combined atrocities of the Ethiopian and Somalian governments against the Oromo people helped to popularize the newly formed OLF organization and awaken the push for self-determination in thousands of young men

and women who joined the OLF. Taressa, who was forced to leave his home village as a child during the Ethiopian-Somali war, described the war this way:

[I]t totally destabilized our village. When the Somalis came, we ran away from them. The Somalis usually came in the nighttime...and shot all night. The Amharas came during the daytime and burned homes. One day, around 4 p.m., while we played around our home, we received massive heavy artillery bombardments [from one direction from] the Somali [and from the other direction from the Derge.] My mother took me and ran to the valley [between the two]. If we had made a simple mistake and fallen, [we would not have] survived. We spent a night there. When the shooting stopped, we looked at the direction of our village and it was burned and only few houses were left.... When we saw what had happened, we decided to run away from that area and went to the town of Dawe. Dawe town is between two rivers and on the second day of our arrival, the Somalis came via the valley. When they came,... they...instructed the [town] to line up. The Somali army accused many of these people of being Amharic collaborators and killed them. The next day the Ethiopian military came and they also accused people of being collaborators of the Somali and killed them. Many business owners lost their property. Hoping it would be safe there, we departed to Dire-Dewa. But after a week, the situation we had run away from came to Dire-Dewa.

In other words, most of those killed were Oromos. The charge was simple: "if you are not with us you must be with the enemy."

In addition to the killings, both the Somali and the Ethiopian armies conducted massive looting.

When the Somalis came across good houses, they insisted that they belonged to Abyssinians and burned them. Both the Somalis and the Abyssinians committed atrocities. Qawee, from eastern Oromia, recalled that when

we heard about the coming of Somalis and their attacks on towns and cities, we [also] heard that the Abyssinians ran to the city of Harari. After six months, the Abyssinians organized their military and started attacking the Somali position. In that campaign, the Abyssinians indiscriminantly burned Oromo villages and killed Oromo men, women and children, including those who [we]re mentally ill. Wherever they went, they burned houses; they shot and killed cattle. Some of these animals were used for food but mostly they just killed them in order to kill them. Finally the Oromo people were forced to run in different directions. When many Oromos left their homes, they did not take anything. For one year the Oromo people were driven in different directions.

Shantam also discussed the disastrous effects of the Ethiopian-Somali war. Both the Ethiopian and the Somali governments expected that the Oromo people would support them in the war.

When they did not get what they expected, Shantam pointed out that both the Abyssinians and the Somalis targeted the Oromo people. As he explained,

The Somali wear a cloth around their waists called a marxoo. When you cross [to the east of] the Awash River, you see the Oromos also wear the same thing. [Thus] there is no way that outsiders can differentiate Oromos from Somali. If the Somali attacked the Ethiopian military positions, the Ethiopian military attacked the nearby Oromo village. When the Ethiopian government attacked the position of the Somalis, the Somalis attacked the nearby Oromo village. In both cases it was the Oromo people who paid the price.

At that time, one of the Ethiopian government and army slogans was “shirix lebashun bemulu belewu” (=“attack all those who wear a cloth around the waist” in Amharic). I personally heard this slogan from my fellow villager who was involuntarily recruited to the war front, and who lost an arm in the war and returned. At that time, Ethiopian Radio presented the Somali people as wicked human beings; few of my villagers understood the Amharic broadcasts or followed the Ethiopian media. Instead, they were eager to talk to someone who had personally seen the Somalis. The first question we asked the war veteran was to describe the Somalis. When he said, “they look like us” and “they speak Afaan Oromo with an accent,” we wondered how he differentiated them from us. The answer we got was “all the young and the old wear a marxoo.” Now I understand that he was unknowingly killing other Oromo. In Eastern Oromia, although the Somalis and Oromos wear similar clothes, they speak different languages. The Ethiopian commanders had misinformed the involuntarily-recruited militia that the local Oromo people in eastern Oromia were Somalis. Thus the Derge used the Oromos to kill one another.

### 5.3 Resettlement and Its Impact

#### 5.3.1 Sigsega and Sefera

There were two types of so-called 'resettlement' programs under the Derge regime—the sigsega (= "insertion" in Amharic), which involved settling Abyssinians into Oromo communities; and the sefera, or settling of Abyssinians in lands that had never been cultivated, though they might have been used for hunting or other resources. There was limited resettlement in the Haile Selassie era to provide land for military garrisons. But when the Derge took power in 1974, they changed the Oromo administrative regions run by local balabats to what they renamed 'peasant associations,' consistent with Marxist thought about the revolutionary potential of the underclass.

The intention with sigsega was to establish Amharic intelligentsia who could 'take leadership of peasant associations and control the Oromo people. The intention of sefera was to ameliorate the famine conditions of the Abyssinians in poorer areas of the country at the expense of the Oromo. Among these settlers, 53 percent were transported to large settlement areas in the sefera program. The remainders of the settlers were taken to medium and small settlement areas among the existing communities as part of the sigsega program.

According to Kloos (1990), the numbers of displaced persons was very large. In 1984/85, about 600,000 and in 1986/87 about 10,000 Abyssinians resettled in different parts of the Ethiopian empire, mostly in Oromia. Nearly 50 percent settled in the predominantly Oromo provinces of Wollega; 25 percent in the Ilu-Ababora area; and 10 percent in the province of Kaffa. This was thus part of an assimilation agenda. The fact that the settlers from the dominant group were being

placed in order to 'dilute' the Oromo majority is evident in the locations where they settled. That is, only 13 percent resettled in Godjam province, which is predominantly Amaharic speaking, however, the settlement occurred in a predominantly non-Amharic region. Further, only one percent were resettled in Shewa and Amharic Gonder provinces. The settlers themselves came from the provinces of Wallo (63%) where Oromos do not speak Oromo and are arguably already assimilated, Shewa (18%), Tigray (15%) which is predominantly Abyssinian, Godjam (3%) and Amhara Gondor (1%).

As Gadissa explained,

For the sigsega program, the [Derge introduced] Abyssinians into the place where the [Oromo] people were already settled and farm[ed].... The government settled [for example] about 50 households in each peasant association. To 'settle' the 50 households, the houses [had to be] built and it was the Oromo farmers who [had to] build [them]. The [Oromo farmers] also provided for these households all furniture needed. It was in this manner that they settled the [Abyssinians in Oromia]. Interestingly, those who were settled in the sigsega program were a selected group. Those who were selected could write and read, and were [thus] able to promote state propaganda. [They also conducted] some services at nearby [Orthodox Christian] churches. In their selection [the Derge] considered all this.... [In contrast,] those who settled [via the] sefera [program] were picked at random. Whether or not they came voluntarily [was] is another issue... [T]he sigsega program...picked [individuals] based on their consciousness level [taking into account whether they we]re capable [of] presenting themselves [well] and convinc[ing] others. [For example, could] they preach or promote state propaganda? Could they be elected in the farmers' association? If they were elected, could they lead the peasant association?. The [Derge] looked all this before they settled the [Abyssinians] among the [Oromo] community members.

### 5.3.2 The Impact of the Resettlement Program

The social, economic, environmental and health impacts of the resettlement program were enormous. When the Abyssinian settlers from poorer areas arrived in Oromia, the majority were weak and sick and many died. They were dehydrated and malnourished and could not help themselves. The infectious diseases that the settlers suffered spread to the Oromo people. My informant Gadissa noticed that some of the settlers were infected with leprosy. According to

Gadissa, to contain the infectious diseases that resulted, local hospitals quarantined groups of settlers for a time and forced the infected individuals to finish their medications. However, government infrastructure in the Oromo provinces was not ready to handle these health problems. Speaking in public health jargon, Kloos (1990) suggests that the settlers impacted the health of the host Indigenous people in several ways. For example, when trees were cut to make way for the settlers, mosquitoes bred in the standing water. Increases in the population density in settlement areas facilitated the transmission of diseases including malaria, schistosomiasis, onchocerciasis, hookworm and ascaris (roundworm). The intrusion into uninhabited and sparsely inhabited areas also exposed settlers to other zoonotic diseases such as trypanosomiasis, leishmaniasis and yellow fever. Famine resulted when the people competed for limited resources. Tokkuma provided more detail about the sigsega program, claiming that the Oromos “helped the [newcomers] at least for one year.” This included farming for them, collecting their harvest and so on. The land they settled on was, in his words, “the most fertile and the local people were left on barren lands.” As he concluded, “the area became overcrowded and the local people lost their grazing land [and] bee hiving places.”

In response to my question about stories about many Abyssinians who were relocated being ill, Gadissa agreed, reporting some of what he saw:

First of all, when such huge populations are relocated within a short time, it leads to several problems. There are no properly prepared lavatories and thus, [defecation] was done everywhere... In the marketplaces, you could differentiate the settlers by their clothes.... In...several cases, contagious diseases erupted [and] there were complaints from the local people. Some of the health problems were clearly identified by the local people as the diseases of the Wallo, Gondor, [and] the Tigre. When the local people observed these diseases, they [refused] to live with them. ... It was not without reason that the local people refused to accommodate the new settlers. When you look at the case of those who came from northern Shewa, you found many who were infected with

leprosy. These people not only brought the disease to the area but also they could not support themselves. They could not work and they were sent there to be dependent on the area. Soon after they arrived, they organized themselves and started begging. Most of them had no nose, hand or legs and practically all had dysfunctional bodies. The local people were totally outraged about this. Later on, many of them were returned back to where they came. Contagious diseases were very common and...there were not enough health services and medications for the local people. On several occasions, the local hospital was assigned to work with new settlers and the local people to contain the outbreak of diseases. There were cases when they had to quarantine groups of people for a given time.

The decision to assimilate violently was explained by one of my informants. Dandana, speaking of resettlement, commented that "the major objective" of this policy was "Ethiopianization."

Gadissa, another informant, argued that this could be deduced from how it was carried out. In his words,

in Gondor [an Amahara region], there are several locations where there is no one settled. There are several lowland regions that have never been used.... If you ask me why the [Derge] did not settle Abyssinians within [these] Abyssinian lands, it is evident that the objective was not what the [government] officially [declared]. If they were [simply trying] to solve the problem [of land distribution,] they would have settled Abyssinians in the Abyssinian lands rather than transporting them several hundred kilometers and spending millions of dollars in transportation. Why they did not settle them in the[ir own] lands? Why did they bring the [Abyssinians] to the south, to Oromia and Gambella. ...[The fact that they did shows that] resettlement was not [pursued] just because the[re was a] shortage of land...but [because] they were promoting the Amaharinization program.

Dandana gave more details about the resettlement policy. In his words, there was "an intense war in Eritrea, Tigray and Oromia" as well as uprisings in "several parts of the country" which had been going on since Haile Selassie's regime. Dandana explained that the Derge rationale for resettlement was that the uprisings might be contained if "everyone endorsed Ethiopian-ness." He suggested that the Derge debated how Marxist-Leninist approaches could provide solutions. In Dandana's words, "there were radical Marxists who thought that national questions should be solved in a Marxist way such as by giving autonomy" to the various nationalities, even to the point of "letting them exercise the right of people to self-determination [including] secession."

Other members of the Derge regime, particularly those “who studied in Western countries,” subscribed to forceful assimilation, arguing that previous “assimilation by peaceful means by mixing different groups of people” had failed, because it was naïve to believe that “these people would forget their identity, language and culture and then develop common identity and culture which would be Ethiopian.”

In summary, resettlement resulted in economic deprivation and even starvation of the Oromo people, where the land had been relatively fertile and drought had been unknown. Environmental destruction also resulted from the expansion of farmlands and the Oromo people were forced to chop forests to build houses for settlers. Out of desperation, Oromo resistance against the Ethiopian erupted. This resulted in the deaths of many people. As Clay and Holcomb (1986) and Kaplan (2003) confirm, many Oromos fled from invading settlers or the ensuing conflict. They moved to arid zones or left the country as refugees. Those who were left behind were cut off and could not buy or sell products. They were exposed to diseases previously unknown in the Oromo highland regions.

#### 5.4 Evictions and their Impact

During the 1977-78 Ethiopian-Somali war, about one million Oromo and Ogden Somali were displaced from their homes (Jalata, 2005). As discussed above, in the resettlement program in which the Ethiopian government relocated Abyssinians and settled them in Oromia, more Oromos were displaced. In addition, the villagization program, discussed below, also displaced Oromos. Altogether, the number of Oromo refugees in neighbouring countries reached 1.2 million (Jalata, 2005).



As Diribissa commented, "there is no place [from which] the Oromo people have not been evicted." However, one example shows how the Derge used eviction to destroy the Oromo way of life. Specifically, the eviction of the Karayu Oromo that occurred during the Haile Selassie era, discussed above, was accelerated during the Derge regime. They forced the Karayu people to leave the area because they wanted to develop a national park. According to Diribissa, imprisoned during the Derge era for his activism, when the Awash National Park was established, the indigenous cattle breeders lost about 80 thousand hectares of grazing land. As Shantam explained, they were

settled in an area where there is not enough water [which is] hilly and hot. To get water, they had to travel for two days.... They could only give water to their cattle two days a week. This destroyed the Oromo-Karayu social fabric and dispersed them....into the desert or semi-desert area where they were exposed to diseases that they had not known in the past.... [T]he productivity of milk, butter and meat was significantly affected. Second, they were exposed to diseases [such as] malaria. These diseases killed many of them [as did local] snakes.... In addition, the Afar and Somali people lived in these areas and this put the three groups into competition for resources...[so that they ended up] spill[ing] each others' blood.

Until recently, the Qooqa and Finchaha dams, built during the Haile Selassie era, were the two major sources of electricity in Ethiopia. The dams covered thousands of hectares of land once used in crop cultivation, grazing and hunting. I grew up in the Finchaha area and saw the Finchaha dam being built on a large marshy landmass in the mid-1960s in Eastern Wollega. Before the dam was built, during the rainy season, indigenous farmers used to keep animals from grazing the area for three months of the year. When the rainy season was over, the land had been used for hunting and grazing. For a century, thousands of Oromo farmers depended on this grazing and hunting area, which essentially secured their food needs. When the Haile Selassie government built this dam, they paid little compensation to farmers displaced from crop

cultivation, including my aunt. The marshy land had been collectively owned and the Ethiopian government considered it to be owned by 'no one;' hence, the dam was built with no compensation to the people who had been using it for centuries. The local people have never received any benefit from the dam. Indeed, the standing water reservoir created favorable conditions for mosquitoes to reproduce which has contributed to the malaria epidemic in the area.

The Finchaha River itself is a tributary of the Nile and in the Finchaha valley, the Derge government developed a state farm and sugar factory. Before the state farm and sugar factory, this valley had been used for hiving bees and hunting, providing an important source of food for the people in adjacent territories. To develop the state farm and sugar factory, the Derge government cut and burned thousands of hectares of natural forests, and as a teenager, I was hired for this job. The destruction of natural forests in this area affected honey production, access to hunting grounds and further compromised food security in the area. The dam, state farm and sugar industry has, over the years, provided better job opportunities for Abyssinians than Oromos and has only allocated a few, mainly low-paying positions, to the Oromos.

## 5.5 Villagization

### 5.5.1 The Rationale for the Program

Apart from the more than half million Abyssinian settlers who moved and the more than one million displaced Oromos, discussed above, the Derge also pursued a massive villagization program that internally displaced an even larger number of Oromos. In 1986, an Ethiopian government official paper reported that 976,048 new houses had been built, and that 4,587,187

people had been relocated to new villages. By 1987, 1,300,000 new households were reported, with over eight million people relocated. In the Oromo provinces of Bale, Harar and Arsi, by the year 1987, the villagization process was virtually complete. If the military government had not collapsed in 1991, it was estimated that by 1995, 33 million people would have been settled in new villages (Jalata, 2005).

In the case of villagization, the program was intended to control the Oromo movement towards emancipation. This was done at first by the Derge surveilling selected villages near forest areas in Bale and Harar provinces where leaders in the Oromo movement were suspected to be hiding. Eventually this surveillance of villages spread to the rest of the country, but as with the settlement program, it was met with Oromo resistance. Concurring with Dandana on the objectives of the resettlement program, Gadissa observed that

the villagization program is very interesting. There had been uprisings everywhere.... going on since [the time of] Haile Selassie. [But] during the Derge [regime, uprisings] became more common... in all village[s]. These uprisings were based on [aspirations towards] national[ism]. The Derge...studied the means to contain these uprisings...[and] came up with solutions.

According to Gadissa, the Derge reasoned that what they called 'narrow nationalists' were difficult to detect in remote areas, but that their activities could be monitored better in more populated areas. Therefore, they forced people in remote areas to dismantle their houses and move to more densely populated areas. They encouraged villagization using the same discourse as Russians used in setting up collective farms: they encouraged movement into more populated areas with promises of roads, health care, schools, and even "milk by pipeline." Tokkuma explained:

If you ask about the objective of the [villagization program], I would say it was a means to control the activity of the people. It was the means to control what the people

produced, how they produced it, who your friends were, with whom you associated, and what your children did or did not do. It was to control the activity of the people. Second, if the government succeeded in disempowering the people, [it was assumed that] the power of people would become weaker and weaker and the power of the government would become stronger and stronger.

### 5.5.2 The Impact of Villagization

To understand the impact of villagization, it is important to appreciate the indigenous way of life. Before the implementation of Derge policies, in the backyards of Oromo farmers, there were edible plants such as mango and banana and vegetables such as onions, garlic, green peppers, cabbage, etc. Animals would be kept in the vicinity to provide a small amount of manure for farming. There were also some cash crops such as coffee trees and khat. These crops provided both food energy and essential vitamins and minerals. In the new Derge villages designed as residential places, there were no spaces to plant these vegetables or keep the animals, who excreted everywhere so that a whole village would be fouled with manure. As detailed below, grazing lands were far away and these arrangements resulted in economic collapse. When the cattle of the Indigenous people died, they lost the essential means of farming, since oxen were used. Within a short time, the farmers started to farm manually, which significantly decreased their productivity.

My informant Qawee experienced the first round of the villagization program. He explained that

[v]illagization and collective farming were going in parallel. ... In the past the people knew what to farm and how to farm. ... Those who destroyed their houses and started collective farming were ordered to farm only corn. In that year corn became the only food. The whole community ate corn for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for a year. Many capable people perished. In the past, on part of their farms, they had planted potatoes; in another [part] beans, other fruits, vegetables and other cereals. This provided them with whatever they needed. Even if they could not afford to eat meat, the food they ate sustained them.... After collectivization, many peoples' bodies were swollen, [indicating] stored water. They fell ill as a result [and] many of them died. Their cattle also perished.

Tokkuma gave an example to explain the impact of villagization on a community:

In one village, there might be 100 families. [Assume] these 100 families are assigned to settle in a specific area. Assume that a family has 20 cattle. Some have much more than that. The cattle need to come home in the evening. Cattle are not like humans and they eat any green plant they come across. They are not eating their food at the table. They eat when they go out and when they return. [Eventually it becomes difficult to find] the grazing land for these cattle. The space even becomes too overcrowded for the animals to stand. The people have difficulty finding a place to keep these cattle.... If it is not the right conditions for the cattle, these animals cannot reproduce...[and] many people sell their cattle. This creates a crisis in cattle breeding.... Disease also increases. If any contagious diseases erupt in one place, they [eventually] reach all the cattle and the people have no properly trained veterinary doctors. Both the people and the cattle depend on the same spring water.

Eventually, the water quality declines because such a large population cannot be supported.

Hirphasa, who experienced villagization in his village, recalled that at first, the Derge tried to cajole Oromos to comply with the policy, threatening force:

About the need for villagization, the government made three points.... First, they told us we were going to get clean water in all villages. In our area, there was shortage of water. In the place where I was born and raised, [in order] to get water you have to walk about eight hours. This is still true today. Our [Zebu] cattle drink water once every week [during the rainy season]. When the [Derge] told us that they were going to provide us water, we trusted them, because we needed it. Second, they told us they were going to provide us with a health center. We needed a basic health care center, so we trusted them. Third, they told us they were going to provide us with a school. We took it for granted that if we got this school, we could bring some changes to our lives. [Thus] I was one of those who participated in the villagization program. That is what I passed through. We destroyed the old villages and built the new ones.

Villagization also destroyed the ability of the original village to maintain dignity, cleanliness and well-being. As Hirphasa explained, in the case of his village,

I did not see any water. Many of our ancestors had cleansed themselves in the nearby forest and nature would take care of it. Now in a big village there is nowhere to go. Next to my house is someone else's house, and next to that is some one else's house and nowhere to urinate and clean yourself. It was a major problem. All the houses were open to each other. If a fire started in one home, the other[s would also catch fire]. There were no fire fighters. If a family was sick, the next family w[ould inevitably get sick].... There were no lavatories built. At one point the government instructed us to dig holes and put

two or three pieces of wood over them. It was not properly done and in several cases the wood broke and many fell in. Especially the children were affected. In fact [in many cases, holes were] not ...dug. You could not refer to [what was done] as a lavatory. There was no privacy in the new village. You turned your back to each other or closed your eyes and turned your face in a different direction. That is how they maintained their privacy.

Gadissa added that the villages were not built observing good hygiene, so that "in one village, hepatitis A infection erupted and about 25 people died." The place chosen for the village was a rocky area and the farmers could not dig lavatories.

Soressa, who was a teenager when the villagization program was implemented, observed that in his new village, many children died. When he reflected back on the situation, he said, "at that time I did not know the cause, but now I can say that it was a lack of hygiene, because there was no clean water." Traditionally, Oromo people lived in dispersed villages where every villager had at least a small source of water reserve or spring water. Given that the numbers of users are limited in any given area, nature easily took care of the neighborhood in the indigenous situation. Even though there was no modern epidemiology, people and animals were kept isolated if they were ill. The new villages did not accommodate this practice, nor provide any other way to control the spread of disease. As Soressa pointed out, in some places, thousands of cattle and people depended on a single spring. Water reserves or ponds formerly just large enough for a few families were now over-used by a large number of villagers and their cattle, which meant that the quality and quantity of water deteriorated. To make the problem even worse, during the rainy season, erosion washed the manure and human wastes into the rivers and spring waters, which further increased the risk of infectious diseases.

Ultimately, although resettlement, eviction and villagization were initiated by cajoling backed by force, they played out by bringing about crises that gradually destroyed the social fabric of the Oromo. In general, then, the Derge can be characterized as wielding a sledgehammer, in contrast with the TPLF regime that followed, where violence is much more focused on eradicating Oromo consciousness. As Gaddisa summarized it,

Like it or not, when farmers were villagized, they lost many things. Usually the farmers did not buy commercial fertilizers—they used manure. Now they did not have it. The farmers farmed with oxen..., [but] now they did not have them. Not only that, when the farmers lost their cattle, unwanted plants took over their farm. This is how the farmers were impoverished. You can see this clearly. Villagization not only killed the economy of the farmers but also their morality.

The Oromo people named the villagization program buqaasu (=uprooting). Most lost the land that they had inherited from their great-grandfathers. Destroying someone's house or forcing the person to destroy his or her own house was a traumatic experience. According to Hinsarmu, villagization was "one of the most destructive programs that the Ethiopian government ever carried out"—even more destructive than the killings.

## 5.6 The Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC)

Before and during villagization, large numbers of Abyssinians from small towns and villages voluntarily relocated to major cities. The 1975 Derge land reform had disrupted the Abyssinian *neftegna* in Oromia, who, under the Haile Selassie regime, had enjoyed the fruits of colonial power. As a result, the population of major cities dramatically increased. The largest number went to Finfine (Addis Ababa), the capital. In cities, there were no job opportunities and many of them became involved in anti-government activities, and conducted insurrection against the military government. This period is commonly known as the "White Terror."

In response, the Derge government established the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) to ostensibly make food more widely available, although the program also had covert objectives.

As Gadissa, a local administrator at the time, explained,

The AMC had two major objectives. First, the idea was to feed the growing military in the country. ... The AMC imposed on the farmers to sell [what was left of] the harvest at a fixed price after the[y had satisfied their] need for food and seeds for the next farm season. This meant that farmers were forced to sell [part of] their harvest to the government not at the market price but cheaper. Second, many people in the cities had no jobs and nothing to eat. Thus, the government wanted to provide them with food. In Wollega around Shambu and Arjo...where negro seed, flax seed, and sunflower seeds were harvested and usually exported by sea, the government bought cheaply and [made money by] export trade. The government traded coffee in the same way that they traded these oil seeds, acquiring not only foreign currency but also profit.

The government provided cheap food for people in Eritrea and Tigray as a military strategy in order to stem support to national movement forces. As Gadissa recalled,

The Ethiopian government justified the move as [the equivalent of] a cooperative farm and credit union where the farmers could sell their harvests and buy fertilizer at a fixed price, consistent with the Marxist ideology. But the true motive of the AMC was to feed the army and those people who were in cities.

But Hirphasa, who was personally forced to sell his own harvest to AMC, labelled the effect of AMC, "state robbery." According to my informants Tokkuma, Soressa and Gadissa, the AMC merely replaced the former neftegna, or Abyssinian landlords. After the land reform, although many Oromo farmers were freed from individual landlords, they in effect became serfs of the Ethiopian state. The government set quotas for each peasant association which then distributed the quota to each farmer. The farmers then were obligated to sell specific grain products at predetermined prices. The predetermined prices for the grain were at least two times cheaper than the market price.. Tokkuma described it this way:

The AMC predetermined the price and the type of grain one should make available to the government. The price for the product was predetermined and was very cheap compared to the market price. If you did not sell the given grain you could not buy basic things such



as salt, soap, etc.... Therefore, if you did not have enough of the grain assigned to you to harvest, you had to buy it at market price and sell it at the predetermined state prices.

Hirphasa, Soressa and others confirmed that there were cases where farmers were forced to sell their oxen, their only means of plowing land, in order to buy grain at market price and then sell the product to the government. Thus, the land reform did not necessarily lead to improvement in the economic status of Oromo peasants.

### 5.7 Dismantling Waqefaata and Protestantism

To this point, various violent policies that undermined Oromo sustainability, including mass killing, resettlement, villagization and exploitation of Oromo farmers, have been discussed. But Derge policies also did damage to Indigenous knowleges. For example, Ogessa, imprisoned by the Derge, reported how all evidence of an Oromo religious site had been removed and replaced by a military installation. Specifically, he reported that during the military mobilization of 1977, the original Galma, named Hadha Abbayi (in Oromo), located in central Oromia not far from Finfine, and perhaps the largest in Oromia, was dismantled and made into a military training camp, and renamed Tateki (=getting armed in Amharic). As Ogessa emphasized, the military centre is very large and was purposely located on this traditional site. "This is how they d[id] things," he pointed out, "when they buil[t] something, they build in such places." He recounted a second example of a powder factory built near Finfine on the site of another former Galma, Kalit.

Bulcha (2002), in his book on the Oromo Diaspora, points to particular Oromos who were instrumental historically in the protection of Oromo indigenous knowledges. He included a

chapter on Onesimos Nasib and his colleagues, who, in the early 1900s in Wollega province, produced a translation of the Bible in Oromo as well as the first book of Oromo indigenous stories. My study participant, Dandana, also from Wollega and imprisoned by the Derge, gave an explanation of how the socialist ideology of the Derge regime led them to dismantle Protestant churches. They were targeted as capitalist imperialist institutions, along with Waqefaata, which had survived to some extent as a result of Protestant activities. As Dandana commented:

When the [Derge dismantled] mexe (= "imported religions" in Amharic), it was the socialist ideology that was [being] propagated. Everything that came from the West was rejected. The Protestant church was considered Western; it was categorized [as] mexe.... If you belonged to either Orthodox [Christianity] or Islam, you d[id] not [pose a] threat or obstacle to Socialism.... You know, the [Abyssinians]...are linked to Islam. The Prophet Mohammed, when he started teaching and faced challenges in the Arab world, sent his disciples to Abyssinia. It is for that reason [that] the Abyssinians categorize Islam as their own. Even the prayer known as Allah Kuber, the first prayer was...started by an Abyssinian.... For that reason it is considered indigenous. The other [religions] came later and they are modern and capitalist-oriented. The [Derge] imprisoned those who were rooted in Western [thought]. They confiscated the property of such churches and changed [them] to business offices. ... For example, in Dembi-Dolo, the Protestant church cemetery was bulldozed...[and] they established [a] marketplace on the bone and flesh of the Protestant church members. The market place is still there.

Protestant churches were more open to Oromo indigenous knowledges than Coptic Christians, so that destroying Protestant churches also served to incapacitate Oromia. As Dundana explained,

In our area it was the Protestant church that came before the Orthodox. Not only [did] it come first, but also [it brought]....schools in the countryside [and] health care centres. The western missionaries related positively with the [Oromo] people. They learned the Oromo language and showed regard for the Oromo culture. The women missionaries organize[d] the local women. The children organize[d] the children and the Elders dealt with Elders. The Oromos found [in Protestantism a] religion that would have respect for them. They found a group who c[ould] talk to them with respect with dignity. The missionaries gave them some opportunities that no one [else had] provided them. They supplied the means of building roads, bridges and other developments.... The teaching of the Bible was not imposed and it was done peacefully and respectfully. The teaching consolidated the Oromo people....organiz[ing] the adults in the form of associations. The [Protestants] provided [the] means for the Oromos to come together and whisper about their social and economic problems. [And so] the Ethiopian government could not do what they ha[d] done in other parts of the country.... Before the Derge [regime], in

Dembi-Dolo, you [had] elementary schools everywhere that the missionaries had built. These missionaries went to all villages and provided health services. They also trained health professionals and sent them to the countryside. The missionaries provided medications and the [nurses] helped the community with necessary health services. They hired teachers...and provided them basic training and send them to the countryside. Doing that, they improved the living standards of the people and this was true until 1975.

That is, after the Oromo Indigenous institutions were dismantled, the Oromo people were forced to use imported institutions such as those of the Protestants and Muslims as places to get organized and address their concerns.

## 5.8 Conscription and Forced Mobilization

### 5.8.1 Forced Recruitment of Oromos

From 1977 to 1991, the Ethiopian military government involuntarily recruited young Oromo men to fight in the Eritrean and other wars in order to maintain Abyssinian domination. The first 300,000 young men were recruited during the Ethio-Somali war. Such 'military recruiting' is still going on today. According to Save the Children (2002), from 1975 to 1991, about 1.5 million people have died in these wars and 300,000 people have been injured and disabled and returned home. There they became burdens on their families and communities (Kloos, 1993). Dawit Wolde-Giyorgis (1989), with the highest estimates, claims that within the 10 years of the Derge regime, 2.6 million people had died of war and famine. He further claims that over three million people were made refugees; six million were internally displaced; and 400,000 people were disabled. In 1991, in a project funded by the Ethiopian government and other international donors, nearly 400,000 men were demobilized and sent home. Probably about the same number went home with no governmental supports (Shabbir and Larson, 1995). Most of those who were killed, disabled and demobilized were those who were involuntarily recruited to the military.

My informant Soressa, who personally escaped the recruitment since he was one of the youngest in his class, explained it this way:

The military recruitment was so wide. Students and young farmers who were in their productive years were recruited to the war.... Between 18 and 45 years of age,...most of them were already married and had several children and supported elderly parents. When the government took these men to the war front, the family was left with no one who could support them..... If a family had more than one [eligible son,] the government did not consider taking one and leaving the other. The government was not really concerned about the...the families.... The student was captured from school and the farmer was captured from the farm. They...simply disappeared even before they [got a chance to] say goodbye to their family members. I was young at that time and one day they came to school and told us to line up. Taller children who stood behind me were picked for the military. Most of them never returned. It was horrible and this is my observation. ...There was no home that did not give at least one of their sons. In one peasant association there were about 300 to 350 families or households. From these households, every one at least gave one of their sons. Sometimes what happened was that the father was taken to the militia and the son was recruited into national military service.... I did not take time to study who returned and who did not [but] for sure it was not half. It was less. Personally, among my family members, my brother in-law died there. My brother died there. This is a very common experience for many people. I cannot tell you the exact figure.

Tokkuma agreed, commenting, "they took my older brother to the war front and he died there."

My informant Hirphasa, imprisoned by the Derge in a military camp, was among those who were involuntarily conscripted to the Ethiopian military. He talked about how men, forcefully conscripted to fight in the Eritrean war which began in the 1970s, were used as the equivalent of human "minesweepers" by the regime. When I asked him who was forcefully conscripted, he said that

most of them were Oromo nationals. You could even say that [almost] all were Oromo nationals [since] you would find only a few poor Amaharas. ....Among the Amharas, those who were recruited to the military were those who had no father and mother [or] who were poor. After you arrived [in the camp], there was no difference [in how the men were treated] whether or not they were Oromo, Amhara, Sidama, Wolaita or [some other nationality]. Yet, if you want to look at ratios, most of them were Oromo nationals....

Among th[os]e [who came from [the] Amhara [region,] I remember most of [them were] Agaw. These [Agaw] people do not understand Amharic and you f[ou]nd many of [them] at the war front.

In other words, Hirphasa was pointing out that the Derge regime selectively conscripted based on ethnicity and economic class. Another informant, Tokkuma, who was in Eritrea on business in 1989, observed the challenges the involuntarily-recruited militia faced. In his words,

one of the problems they faced was a language barrier. Most of the militia spoke the Oromo language and they were farmers. In the military, they ranked at the lowest level, [given that] they did not master the [Amharic] language. And being farmers, they were looked down upon. For example, they were paid only 20 Birri (about \$3) per month [while even] low ranking military officers got at least about 180 Birri (\$27).

#### 5.8.2 The Experience of Oromo Women and Forced Mobilization

Recruitment of young men to the war front also destroyed the lives of Oromo women.

Traditionally, Oromo mothers and fathers raise their sons expecting that these children will care for them in old age. As their young men were recruited to the Derge war front, their families felt that they had raised their sons only to hand them over to the government. The young men had no say in their own lives and their parents witnessed the deaths of their sons one after the other. My informants Kumme and Gadisse suggested that, for the mothers involved, this felt like being a mother goat or sheep that gave birth but had no say in the life of her offspring. I observed this in my own village. My mother's first three children were girls. One day, several of my mother's friends who had lost their sons at the war front or who were worried about the future of their sons, talked about how lucky my mother was having girls rather than boys like them. These mothers were not in a position to decide about the fate of their children and called themselves the "mother goat generation."

Many Oromo women also lost their husbands or fiancés to Derge conscription, since many young men who were recruited to the war front were married and had children. When these young men left home, the productivity of the family was reduced, this created very difficult conditions for women trying to take care of children and elderly parents. In addition, when unmarried young men were recruited to the war front, the girls had no one to marry. As I will explain in detail in the next section, as the poverty level rose dramatically, the number of commercial sex workers increased, and polygamy soared. Finally, few husbands taken to the war front returned, and, as discussed below, returnees were exposed to commercial sex workers and became a major contributing factor to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

### 5.8.3 Detainment in Military Camps and Exposure to AIDs

Forced conscription of young Oromo men by the Derge was violent, and the men were kept under control in military camps through intimidation and outright killing. As Gadissa commented,

Those who refused to go and fight in many places [were] categorized as deserters and were shot and killed. I remember the [Derge] killed [many] people in Dembi-Dolo. In Nekemte, they killed several youngsters in Masqal Square. In Shambu, they also killed several people.

When I asked Hirphasa about the problems faced in these military camps, he pointed out that one could be killed either in war or by the Ethiopian military officers themselves. In his words, “there were different types of problems. Everyone was ready to die--we were just waiting for the day, the hour and the minute [since] killing by the government happened very often.” When I asked him if he had seen any killing perpetrated by the Ethiopian government against its own military, he said,

Yes, it was not just in one or two cases. They killed those who tried to run [or] who tried to surrender. They [also] shot them...if someone informed the commander that someone was planning to run away. They blindfolded the person and shot him.

In any areas where young Oromo men were recruited, it fell to the rest of the population, specifically the farmers, to feed the families deprived of their young men. Gadissa commented:

[Y]ou can understand [then, how] these farmers [and young men felt]. If the [young men] refused to fight or go home, this is what was waiting for them. If they went to the war front, the fire (=being shot) [wa]s waiting for them. Their families had no food to eat and [they did] not make any money to send their families. [Also], the farmers could not support so many people's families. It became more than what the farmers could support. It was a disaster. It was a disaster that should never be forgotten. [Since] the population of the Oromo people is bigger than any other groups, its quota was so big. Most of those who died and most of those who were affected by the campaign were the Oromo people, the Oromo young.

The young men being forcibly held in military camps also risked exposure to AIDs, as documented by Gizaw, (1992) and Shibbir and Larson (1995). In response to my question about whether these men were aware that they might be exposed to AIDs, Hirphasa commented,

What, are you joking? These young men knew that they [we]re going to die anytime. Therefore, they [we]re not concerned about it. They [would] do any thing that could give them temporary pleasure. They knew that they would die any time.... [They were}not worried about HIV/AIDS. First, of all there [wa]s no one [to] inform us about it and even if there [wa]s, no one would consider the information [reliable from the government sources]. We read [about it in] newspapers [but] no one took [it] seriously.

The fighting was intense and the chances of survival of the involuntarily recruited army members was very slim compared to the standing army. Conscripts focused their attention on daily events.

Hirphasa commented that since

the Ethiopian government did not expect us to survive the war, we did not also expect to survive it. Thus, they did not bother informing us about HIV/AIDS and we were not in a position to seek information about it.

Hirphasa also discussed what happened when the desperate young men were allowed to go on furloughs to nearby cities and towns. For these young men, a vacation meant being high on

alcohol and spending a night or two with a commercial sex worker. Thus, many of them were exposed to HIV/AIDs, unaware of the risk they were facing. As a result, in 1991, when the military were demobilized, many of them were believed to be HIV positive. Most of these men were married when they were recruited to the military, which meant that they brought the virus back to their wives and communities. Six years after the demobilization of 1991, Hirphasa said that he had found out that most of those who were demobilized from the military had died from AIDs.

This observation was confirmed by both Gadissa and Soressa. When I ask Soressa about his observations regarding the link between HIV/AIDS and the demobilization of the military, he said that, at the time,

no one was interested in looking closely look at this and scientifically establishing the link. However, soon after these militia returned many of them died and many of the commercial sex workers also died. No one established the cause of these deaths. We just made an educated guess that they were dying from HIV/AIDS.

Gadissa served as a member of a local committee composed of health professionals whose mission was to record the health effects of government-sponsored projects during the Derge era. This involved knowledge of infectious diseases. He also held the Derge responsible for the spread of AIDs among the Oromo. Specifically, he talked about how the Derge kept the young conscripts confined for years in isolated camps so that during any time off, they went on "rampages." In the case which he experienced,

in [the] Nakamte area in Dhidhesa valley, there was a military training camp. This I know, because I was there. When these forces were relieved for a break and came to the city of Nakamte, they practically swamped the city. When they were released, they [did not respect whether a] girl [wa]s young... [or] married. They raped...them. At that time, no one knew what disease the person had--whether it was HIV/AIDS or a venereal disease.... You hear from these returnees that they raped women who were in the war



front area. This is [also] what I saw with my own eyes in my area. You could not say "stop" to these [troops], because they were [more heavily] armed than the local police.... There is no question that the military contributed to the HIV/AIDS problem in the area. It was reality and fact.... I am telling you from what I have seen.

Like Hirphasa, Gadissa also observed that

In most cases, soon after the militia returned, their health deteriorated over time and then they died slowly. Their sexual partners also died with similar health conditions.

Although this was not recognized by the health committee before 1991, said Gaddisa, it was recorded that "the symptoms of the disease from which these militia died resembled the symptom of HIV/AIDS."

#### 5.8.4 A Double Victimization

After demobilization, then, conscriptees were doubly victimized through deteriorating health and/or displacement. For example, at the end of the Derge regime, when rebel groups controlled the country, some of the Derge military escaped to Sudan. Hirphasa, who ended up in Sudan when the Ethiopian army was dismantled in 1991, recalled that

when we arrived in Sudan, the situation was very bad. When I tell people about it, many [react] as if I am exaggerating, but let me tell you. We traveled 15 days to arrive in Sudan and we had no food and water. When we arrived, some humanitarian organizations provided us plain wheat and barley. After that, we ate unground and uncooked wheat and barley. Many got diarrhea and the others who had no food, collected the undigested wheat and barely from the diarrhea to eat. Later on, the Red Cross arrived. They gave us plain barley and wheat, but there was no means of cooking it. What we did was put the wheat on the fire and before it burnt. we tried to take it out. That is the way we survived. [In addition to] what had happened at the war front, many people died in refugee camps in Sudan. We ran away from the EPLF force to survive [but then] we faced a different form of death.

Thus the young Oromos were first victimized by being conscripted into the war, but second, they faced a miserable existence as well as death.

## 5.9 Resisting Forceful Assimilation

Although the Derge regime can be characterized by extreme violence, resistance by Oromos continued in many forms, as my informants explained. These included resistance to mobilization, secret internal communication and attempts to overthrow the Derge; the burying of books to keep the culture of Oromia alive; and uprisings against programs of villagization and resettlement.

### 5.9.1 Resistance to Mobilization

Despite the desperate conditions in the military camps, the Oromo found both small and large ways to resist. For example, Hirphasa explained how the men secretly informed Oromo families of a death. When I wondered whether they communicated by letter, he explained:

We wrote letters, but mostly they did not reach home. When we were at the war front, we did not get any mail. If we were in a peaceful place, we [might] get it. Our commanders told us that they would check our mail; therefore, we could not write much. We warned our families not to ask us sensitive questions. For example, if somebody I knew died, I wrote to his family saying that he went to visit [a particular place,] referring to other dead family members. If I knew that his father had already died, for example, I would say he went to visit his father on a particular date and time.

Resisting the mobilization was widespread. For example, in my case, two close family members were conscripted and taken to the military training camp in Hadama (Nazareth). Together with the father of these young men, I had the experience of going to the camp and successfully bribing the commander of the camp to release the two men. We also paid a local inn keeper to allow us to leave the clothes of these young men there. When the young men escaped, they were able to leave their uniforms at the hotel and escape the from the area with their civilian clothes.

There were also uprisings that were also moderately successful. For example, according Tokkuma, in 1989, when the few Oromo military generals such as Demissie Bulto and Merid Nigusse Mooru tried to overthrow the Derge, one of their aims was to end the involuntarily recruiting of farmers to the military. Tokkuma commented,

specifically the grievance was that the [Derge] forced farmers from their homes and brought them to the war front. And at the war front, those men who were young [were] becoming old. Their families at home were not looked [after] and the war [seemed] endless. This policy was one of the cruelest that the Oromo people experienced. When the military government killed these rebellious individuals [in order to] control the [uprising,] they had to send the farmers back to their homes. [Unfortunately,] they had spent [most of] their productive years at the war front.

#### 5.9.2 Keeping the Oromo Language Alive

Tolessa, a teacher during the Derge regime, gave a great deal of detail about how the Derge misrepresented the Oromo people in the school curriculum as well as suppressed Oromo language. As he pointed out,

[t]he social sciences courses from the third grade to the sixth grade illustrate the nature of the schooling. For example, the fourth grade social science book presents the Oromo people in a very strange way. First, there is no word, Oromo.... During the time of Haile Selassie, they used the [derogatory] word Galla. But during the Derge regime, they avoided the word.... The book divided the Oromo people into small clans as if they were different [ethnic groups].... The curriculum did not divide the Somali and Afar people among clans. At that time there were few of us who questioned the validity of the curriculum.

However, Tolessa saved the books “so that the next generation will know how the Ethiopian government [wa]s disenfranchising the Oromo identity.” He concluded, defiantly, “I hope one day these books will be public. This is what I saw, not what I heard.” In fact, according to the 1984 census, the Guji and the Boran Oromo were listed as if they were separate groups of people (Scherrer and Bulcha, 2003).

Occasionally there were opportunities to promote Oromo consciousness, such as I experienced in the tenth grade. In those days many of my teachers were Abyssinians, but, as a protest to the land reform policies, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party encouraged teachers to leave their teaching. Thus most Abyssinian teachers left my area and Oromo students in the university withdrew from their studies to help out with the shortage of teachers. When I went into the eleventh grade, many of those Oromo students who had helped to meet the shortage of teachers were imprisoned. They were accused of promoting Oromo nationalism.

Although the Derge regime officially supported literacy programs in Indigenous languages, this was not my experience. I was in Horo-Guduru during the early years of the Derge regime soon after what has been called the Red and White Terror. (These massacres took place between rival political organizations as orchestrated by the Derge and its opposition groups and young Oromos suffered the most losses.) I was sent on a literacy mission to a nearby village by the Ethiopian government. I chose to teach in Afaan Oromo, which I considered to be an act of defiance. In response, my supervisor, who was an Amahara, organized a protest against my teaching and ultimately, my actions, in teaching in my own language, were interpreted as contrary to Ethiopian language policy. I was imprisoned for two weeks for this misdemeanour. I was among those students who had also tried to keep the Oromo language alive, for example, by burying their foreign language dictionaries in protest against the language policy.

In those days less than five percent of twelfth grade graduates had the opportunity to study at university. When my fellow villagers learned that I was one of the few, they gave me whatever they could for my transportation and school materials. On my way to Finfine for university

studies, I bought shoes. For me the atmosphere in the university was frightening. As if it was the official slogan of the university, derogatory terms against the Oromo people were written in many classrooms and washrooms on the campus. Ethiopian government security agents were actively hunting Oromo student activists and there were occasions when I was awakened twice in one night to show my identity card.

I did not leave Ethiopia until two years later, after some further uncomfortable experiences in university in Finfine. For example, during the Christmas holidays with friends, I went to a bar and we were talking to each other in Afaan Oromo. While an Abyssinian cultural song was being sung, an elderly man arose and everybody went silent as he repeatedly said "Galla geday, qimaal beliita" (=killer of Galla--the lice eaters, in Amharic). This man was a former military officer in uniform and several rounds of ammunition who was proudly claiming to have killed many Oromos. In approval of what he had done or in recognition of his heroism, the people in the room clapped their hands and laughed. We decided to leave the place.

### 5.9.3 Resistance to the Derge Resettlement Program

Although the violence with which resettlement policy was carried out under the Derge was new, as Gadissa explained, resettlement itself had been carried on by the Abyssinians for decades. In his words,

the settlement program is not something new...[because after] the Ethiopian government took two-thirds of the Oromo land [from 1880 to 1974] and made the Oromo people their serfs, most of the lands were owned by the Abyssinians and their servants....When Abyssinian soldiers retired [from active service], the government gave them Oromo lands along with Oromo people. In fact, they assigned [such lands,] saying, "Go to [such-and-such a] place and the people in that area will provide you anything you and your family

need." It was not just giving land but also giving away the people who would serve the[ir new masters]. The numbers of people that the [retirees were given] was based on the service that the [soldiers had] provided to the government. Thus the [Derge] resettlement program is not very different from the previous ones.

Despite the intentions of the Derge to infiltrate Oromo communities, there was much resistance to the sigsega program both from the transplanted Abyssinians as well as the host Oromos. As Gadissa observed about the situation in Wollega province:

At one point, conflict erupted between the local people and the new settlers, which cost the lives of six people. This is what I know. The government disarmed the Oromo farmers and armed the newcomers.

In the case of the sefera program, which took place in the most westerly areas of Ethiopia, arms were also provided. As Holcomb and Ibssa (1990) emphasize, this repeated the historical pattern of colonial powers arming the Neftegna class during the Menelik and Haile Selassie periods.

Dandana, who lived in the west, observed that the sefera program was done "not voluntarily but by order and mandate." Again, there was resistance. As he recalled,

there were some who were armed when they arrived. The others were armed after they arrived.... The government provided them with guns. Not only that, [but] in the Dembo-Dolo area, the forty-ninth military division provided them the military training...[to] control all the activities of the local people. It was more than just controlling their activities—it was denying the local people any [geographical] movement.... Soon after these people came to the area, the killing started. They killed several people and they were also killed by the local people. That was the reality. They were well armed.

#### 5.9.4 Resistance to the Derge Villagization Program

In the case of villagization, the Derge planned that they would be able to act more quickly in the event of an uprising if they were able to be warned by telephone by their agents in a larger village. However, as Gadissa explained,

The [Oromo] people resisted, saying we cannot leave "our homes, our coffee plants, our mango trees and the place where we [have] buried our umbilical cords." ... At this time the national[ist] movement forces and other opposition to the Derge government were building momentum.... It [wa]s also pushed in the Amhara heartlands [that e]verybody should be brought into bigger villages. All peasant associations should be villagized, they should come together in a place that would be central. Therefore, the destabilization of the whole farmer [movement] was started. The farmers were forced to abandon their houses and build new houses.... The government gave [a] quota to all sub-districts to build [a certain number of] villages every year.... Soon the Derge started traveling around the country to implement the program.... [F]armers were evicted from their homes and forced to build new villages. Some of them refused to destroy their houses but to fulfill the obligation, started to build small huts. They spent their days in [their new home] and their nights in the [old home]. In some places they totally destroyed their houses and in some other cases they refused to do it.... It was not to find solutions to the problems of farmers; it was not to provide them schooling, electricity or social services.... It was a disaster. There is no way one can justify bringing people together in a bigger village where there is no clean water, where there are no prepared toilets. Those involved in [the] implementation of the program ordered people to build villages but they did not study the ways [to] reduce the burden on the people.

In response to my question about whether the Oromo relocated into larger villages missed their subsistence plots, Gadissa replied:

In the villages that I know, it was one of the major problems. The new homes were considered your residential place, not your workplace. [You were sandwiched between other] homes. There was no place to plant fruits and vegetables... [Also when your farm] is far away from you...and abandoned, [you can no longer protect it] from wild animals (e.g. apes and monkeys) and birds until the harvest is collected. Now [the farmers] ha[d to] travel hours to go to their farms and [back], which mean[t] the person had no time to look after his or her fields [and] no time to work. They spent their time traveling. Wild animals were legally protected and were reproducing very fast. That is why the uprisings further intensified. That was why the farmers chose to die with bullets rather than dying from starvation. The wild animals consumed all their harvests [and t]he Oromo farmers were left with nothing. They could not feed their children and many of them died. ... [Finally, many] abandoned the new villages and went back to the[ir] former villages. [So i]t was not just about eating variety of foods-- it was about survival. [It was n]ot only about contagious diseases but [about] not hav[ing] food to eat.... Soon the people started starving and refused to obey orders given by the government. It was very problematic.

Land is not only a source of subsistence, but is also considered sacred by Indigenous peoples.

Therefore, villagization was also resisted because epistemologically, the Oromo could not imagine themselves separating from the place of their birth. Soressa told a story of his father, a

Waqefaata leader, who refused to leave his land and the community's sacred sites. As Gadissa explained,

In our area, villagization was done by force. Practically no one wanted to move from their homes. When they dismantled our home, my father cried like a child... [H]e could not stop it [but h]e refused to tear down his home. The people were ordered to dismantle their homes, so it happened... [but m]y father is Abba Kalacha (=spiritual leader) and our home and vicinity were well cherished in my community. We had a place where we gave thanks to Waqaa. That place was never farmed and it was left for the grass to grow on it. My father refused to dismantle his home and the sacred site. He refused to cooperate.

In some areas, villagization was a complete fiasco. As Tolessa described, in his area, the attempt to villagize was just not viable. He commented that "the plan collapsed for several reasons. First, the people refused to be villagized. Second, due to the mobilization of young men to the war," they had no one to villagize. He emphasized that the region that he came from was poor, with no cash crops, necessitating day-to-day efforts at survival. As he explained:

The [Dhidhesa] military training camp was always busy training young men for the war front. Sometimes the camp could not recruit as many people as they were assigned to train. When they could not fulfill the quota, they targeted the local people. If the quota was not filled, the administrator of the military camp informed the provincial administrator and the provincial administrator passed the assignment to the local woreda of Gutu Gida. The Gutu-Gida woreda has 33 peasant associations. The administrator of the woreda [then] instructed each peasant association to bring the needed young men.... Within a few days, the peasant associations [might be] assigned to bring 300 to 400 young men. Sometimes they just picked up someone who was going to the city for his daily job or to sell something. As a result, they [eventually] took all the able men to the war front. Those who were left behind were those who were weak, old and helpless. The government realized that there was no capable person to build the so-called new village [and so] they stopped pushing them to get villagized. The people were so poor they had no means to build the new village. There was no human power to build the village.

#### 5.10 Advocating and Recreating Oromo Indigenous Lands and Knowledges

Those who lived through the Derge era became activists and challenged policies that were and are anti-Oromo. These included land reform and language policies that exclude Oromos. For



example, Dandana, who was an activist involved in land reform during the Derge era, recalled that he had become politically conscious at a very early age:

I was about 17 or 18 years old. My problem was...oppression based on language and national identity.... The school [labeled] me a violent person. This was the immediate reason for my expulsion. Before that, they put me on a black list. I was active in the student movement against the Haile Selassie regime. I was in the forefront in such demonstrations. Several times I was imprisoned for a few days.... The school kept all these events on the record.... They expelled me from school...[and] in Finfine, I joined the student demonstrators...[fighting against] the oppression that I experienced, that my family members experienced, [and] that I have heard my grandmother experienced.... My father fought for over 25 years for the land that he inherited from his parents.... At that time, my family faced poverty that I cannot describe in words.... There were times when we were really starved. I was the oldest in my family and I felt all these pains and pressures. I felt sorry when I saw my mother, sisters, brothers and myself were helpless.... Always the Oromo people were oppressed. The [Abyssinians] humiliated Oromo men and women. I heard about it. I also saw it.

This consciousness served him well when he participated in implementing land reform during the Derge regime, because, as he put it, "I was one of those who tried to benefit our people," and "I was not just doing what the higher officials ordered me to do, but what...benefited the Oromo people in a given area." For his efforts, he said, "I was arrested and imprisoned for several years." In going about his work, he took pains to consult the local elders, but in his words, "this was not what the government wanted me to do." When he was released, he spent much of his time trying to avoid the authorities, unsuccessfully, as it turned out, so that he ultimately was forced to flee his homeland.

Language policy was challenged by several informants who lived through the Derge era.

Dundana talked metaphorically about language as familiar clothing. He said that he preferred an old T-shirt which was his to a new one of someone else's because, in his words, "if I am not entitled to use my language, I am denied opportunities in life."

### 5.11 Summary

In summary, while the Haile Selassie era was characterized by attempts to assimilate the Oromo by conversion and persuasion, and the widespread modernization of Ethiopia with the help of the colonial capitalists, the Derge era was clearly Marxist. Military rule was enforced with an iron hand, and policies that suppressed and destroyed Indigenous languages, spiritual beliefs and education were supplemented with conscription and forcible confinement of young Oromo men, forcing of farmers to sell their produce for exploitative prices and widespread eviction and movement of people away from their homes. Outright killing was not uncommon, so that not only were Oromo leaders targeted, but anyone who expressed resistance to the regime. As Guutama (2003, p. 272, cited in Bulcha, 2005) has concluded, life under the Derge “was different and total.... [T]he whole of Oromiyaa became a prison house and killing field.” Despite this totalitarian regime, participants in my study protested their oppressions and worked to keep the Oromo language and customs alive.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE TPLF REGIME'S VIOLENT APPROACH TO ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTROL

#### 6.0 Strategies Born of Tigrayan Fear of the Oromo

As the reports of my informants made clear, strategies that have been pursued by the TPLF government have become increasingly violent. The regime began with deception, progressed to the killing or 'weeding out' of Oromo leaders, and has more recently resorted to widespread killing as well as what might be called, "drying the ocean to kill the fish." This has included forest burns and economic deprivation. Since the story of this genocide is not reported in the media, it is important to provide a history and framework for understanding what is happening with the current regime in Ethiopia.

Understanding the situation of the Tigrayans is essential for explaining the current regime. Although there were a few Oromos, Tigrayans and others, the Derge were dominated by Amharas. This meant that not only were the Oromo persecuted but also the Tigrayans. The Tigrayan region is a poor area for farming, and was decimated by environmental degradation. The 1985-86 famine in the Tigrayan area is described by Clay and Holcomb (1986) as being exacerbated by the actions of the Derge. Thus the Derge were overthrown in 1991 by a coalition of Tigrayans, Eritreans and Oromos. But as described by Gelata (2003), this coalition soon broke down and was dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

The population of the Tigrayans are heavily outnumbered by non-Tigrayans and the resources of the Tigrayans are small compared to the resources of the rest of the country. Thus, as many

participants imprisoned by the Tigrayan regime pointed out, the actions of the TPLF are characterized by fear as well as by attempts to access the resources of other groups. For example, in response to my question about why Abyssinians kill Oromos, Shantam explained that:

the minimum figure for the Oromo people is about 40 million. Other groups [comprise about] 30 million people in the country. The population of [these others is] so big, [that the TPLF cannot survive unless they] kill the wise and the intellectuals...or let disease, war and famine wipe the population out.

Those in this study who had been persecuted by the TPLF emphasized, as Shantam, that it would be possible for the majority to "take power without shooting a single gun." Theoretically, Oromos got the vote in 1991, but in practice, the candidates must be approved by the TPLF. If democracy were implemented, the Tigrayans would lose their control and their access to Oromo resources. Their policies can be characterized as creating both internal and external conflict among ethnic groups, as well as physical violence to reduce the Oromo population. As Shantam commented,

The [TPLF] knows that...they want reduce the size the size of Oromo population and make sure that they do not challenge the existing power relations.... The Abyssinians have [a] fear of Oromo people because of [their] population size and strength and they want to take the beautiful Oromo land. If the Oromo did not have such beautiful land, they would not kill...the Oromo people in such [numbers]. When the [Tigrayans] see the land of the Oromo people, they [realize] that they could not survive without the Oromo land. The Ethiopian empire is nothing with out the Oromo land. Coffee comes from Oromia. [The] source of cattle is Oromia.... Abyssinians...burned our forests and forced the animals to run away to neighboring countries....

In agreement with Shantam, Taressa added that the attempt to 'assimilate' Oromos was not new, and that the establishment of three 'charter' areas in which the official language is Amharic were attempts to deny the majority their language rights:

[t]he issue of majority and minority is not just about numbers but about access to natural resources. That is what the [Derge] resettlement program intended to achieve. The [Derge did] not move Oromo people to settle in Abyssinian areas. They brought Abyssinians to Oromia. [T]hey wanted to mix the Abyssinians with the Oromo people and then at one point say, "you are not alone who live here, there are others." Look at the case of Dire-

Dawa. Although Abyssinians are a minority, there are many of them in that city. That is why the city got special status and the Oromo people who constitute the majority could not teach their children in the Oromo language.

Tolessa, Diribissa, Soressa and others all referred to the Abyssinian fear of the size of the Oromo people and the fact that if there were free and fair elections, power would simply go to the Oromo people. Mottuma emphasized that it was “very clear that the size of Oromo people is really a headache for the Abyssinians.”

As noted above, the early strategies of the TPLF could be characterized as deception and economic deprivation, while their later strategies have more directly targeted Oromo leadership and Indigenous knowledges. As every informant in my study pointed out, part of the strategy of “divide and rule” has been to target Oromo leadership. With leaders out of the way, a more general strategy of demoralization of the population through strategic eviction, killing, deprivation and assimilation has kept the regime in power for 16 years. For example, to reduce Oromo voting power, the TPLF has made several attempts to divide the Oromo along clan and religious lines. Since the time of Haile Selassie, the government has owned the land. Some of the Oromo lands and people have been incorporated into the Amahara, Tigray, Afar, Ogaden, SNNP (Southern Nations and Nationalities People), Harari and Benshangul regional states. As noted, the Ethiopian government also formed two chartered cities (Finfine, and DireDawa) and a region and administered them under the federal government of Ethiopia (See Fig. 7). As the participants in my study emphasized repeatedly, the intent of Ethiopian government matches its long-standing social and political agenda, which is to destabilize and disempower the Oromo people.

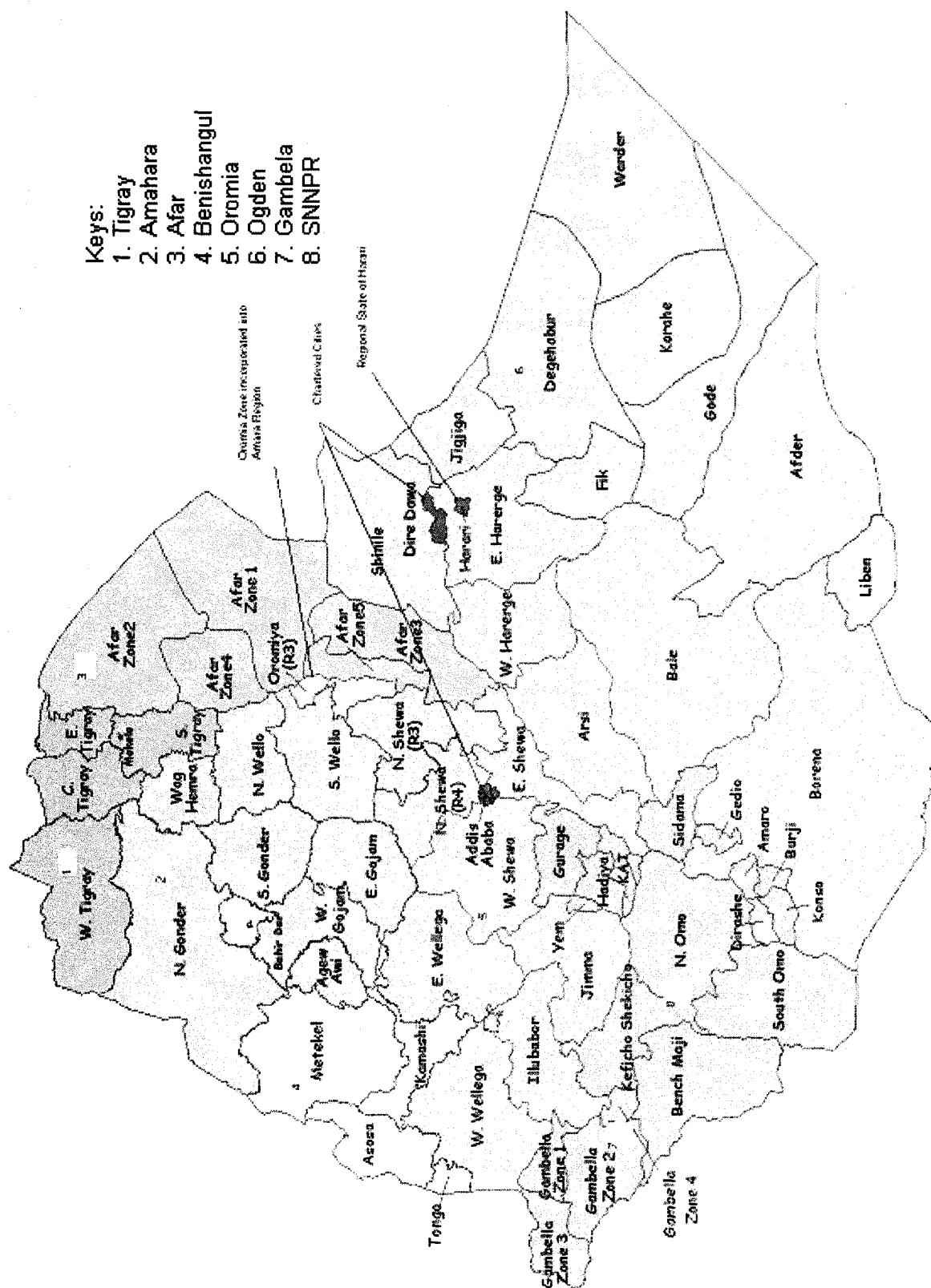


Figure 7. The Contemporary Borders of Regional Administrations and Zones of Ethiopia.

## 6.1 TPLF Policies and their Impact

### 6.1.1 "Divide and Rule"

#### 6.1.1.1 The TPLF and Pseudo-Oromo Leadership

In the late 1980s, the Derge was still in power. However, resistance was forming. There was a famine in Tigray, a war-stricken Abyssinian area closely associated with Eritrea. Some of the international donors who came to the aid of the Tigrayans delivered food through TPLF-controlled areas. The population of the Tigrayan people is small, but when the TPLF won the financial support of the Western world, they were encouraged to fight towards dismantling the military government of Ethiopia. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) was a parallel resisting force at this time.

As Jalata (2005) and Vestal (1999) explained, to reduce the challenges that the OLF would bring to TPLF control in Oromia and to suggest to the world community that the Oromo people are self-ruled, the TPLF formed a pseudo-Oromo political organization known as Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO). To form the organizational membership, they used Oromo farmers whom the Derge had involuntarily recruited into the military. These farmer-soldiers 'surrendered' at the war front to the TPLF and EPLF forces. The TPLF then recruited Amaharic and Tigrayan nationals who could speak the Oromo language to lead the OPDO, handing them a written political program declaring the formation of an Oromo political organization. To make this pseudo-organization appear to be an Oromo movement, the TPLF went so far as to change the names of Abyssinians to Oromo names. My informant Tokkuma suggested that this was a ploy to hide the TPLF agenda from the Oromo people. When I posed question about whether the OPDO leaders were Abyssinians, Tokkuma answered,

That is for sure. For example, Kuma Damaqsa [Oromo name] is the head of OPDO. Those who know him confirm that his original name was Taye Wolde-Semayat [Abyssinian name]. [His father] Wolde-Semayat is a Tigrayan national who went to Ilubabor province as a priest. He is not alone; there are others who had Abyssinian names who have now taken on Oromo names. In the OPDO, those who are in decision-making positions are non-Oromo nationals. The key decision makers are the Tigrayan nationals and next to them, the Amahara nationals. The low level members are, in practice, not involved in policymaking and they are Oromo nationals without any formal education.

Kuma Damaqsa was fluent in Oromo because he was born in an Oromo region. The current leader of the OPDO is Abba Dula Gamada (his Oromo name), but originally he had an Amharic name, Minase Wolde Giorgis.

Thus the formation of the OPDO was a deception, and also a crucial move in perpetuating Abyssinian power over the Oromo. The TPLF realized that in Oromia, the OLF enjoyed mass support and that if they did not do something about the OLF, their dream to control Oromia would be impossible. The TPLF's agenda was to liberate Tigray, and they would lose Tigrayan support at home if they tried to pursue a more inclusive agenda. The deception was necessary since Oromos would be unlikely to join an Abyssinian organization, and even if they did, the Tigrayans would be a minority in the organization--certainly an obstacle to their dream of coming to power.

My informants Tokkuma, Dandana and Gadissa all talked about how, when the Derge regime was toppled, the TPLF was unable to attract support from Oromos. However, as noted above, in resistance to the Derge regime, many young Oromo militia had surrendered to TPLF and EPLF. In essence, the TPLF took these military POWs and used them in fighting against the Derge and then against their own people. Tokkuma was one of those who was asked to join the OPDO and when he refused, he was imprisoned and tortured. As Tokkuma explained, the POWs were



formed into organizations headed by Abyssinians. As he summarized it, the "TPLF was organized to liberate and develop Tigray: "the POWs were told that there was an Oromo political organization that would fight with the TPLF to liberate Oromia and they were encouraged to join the group. In Tokkuma's words, "the POWs were told, that the Oromo organization" was one "that they c[ould] join and struggle for the liberation of Oromia." As he explained it,

[t]he organizations that the TPLF formed...are many and they are known as PDOs (People's Democratic Organizations). The [TPLF] formed these PDOs for all people in Ethiopia. For example, for the Somali people, they have the Somali People's Democratic Organization (SPDO). For the Oromo, they formed the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO). The TPLF [has] planned the political programs of these organizations.... These organizations carry out the plans of the TPLF with regard to [these various] peoples.... If you take the case of the OPDO, the ordinary members are Oromo nationals; however, the decision-makers are Abyssinians.... They present... Oromo social and economic problems as if [they were] 'natural' problems, not arising from the political realities in which they live. Not only that, but OPDO members need to consult the TPLF [before doing] anything...[and] what they do is not even close to what they have said in their program.

This deception is not widely recognized outside Ethiopia. However, according to Biyya (1996), Meles Zenawi, the prime Minister of Ethiopia and one of the designers of the OPDO, has publicly revealed the role of the TPLF in the formation of the OPDO. Biyya has contended that if the OPDO agenda was really driven by members, the members would have joined the organization voluntarily and would enjoy some liberty in the organization. However, the OPDO was formed by the TPLF and it is not independent. My informant Kume agrees. When I posed the question of whether the Oromo have any representation at regional and federal levels, Kume answered this way:

The Ethiopian government determines the election of the community, federal and regional leaders. Elected individuals cannot do what the community wants and function within [TPLF direction]. These elected individuals are instructed to act according to government plans and policies, and the elected individuals are made to serve the government.

The deception implicit in the organization of the OPDO did not fool the OLF. However, alliances with the TPLF did originally bring about the demise of the Derge. In 1991, the Derge military government collapsed when confronted by the allied forces of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). The agreement between these nationality-based organizations was that they were to arrange for the people of the empire to exercise their rights to self-determination. Until that would be realized, they agreed to rule the empire by a democratically elected government. As Diribissa and Hinsarmu pointed out, the TPLF and EPLF forces are predominately Tigrinya-speaking people; hence, they separately made a deal to create conditions for Eritreans to exercise such rights. The agreement includes the support of EPLF for the TPLF since the TPLF represented less than five percent of the Ethiopian people. Before the 1992 election, the joint TPLF, EPLF and Sudanese government forces began to kill, harass and imprison the OLF candidates and supporters. According to my participants, this resulted in the withdrawal of the OLF from the election. Soon after, the TPLF declared war against the Oromo people.

#### 6.1.1.2 Promotion of Inter- and Intra-Ethnic Violence

Vestal (1999), in *Ethiopia: A Post-Cold War African State*, suggests that the desire to monopolize political power drives the current ruling party in Ethiopia to routinely set one ethnic group against another, disrupting the coexistence of different ethnic groups. This is a common policy among colonizers, as illustrated by the cases of South African apartheid and South Sudan. From almost the beginning of their regime, the TPLF has promoted inter- and intra-ethnic violence. Describing the attitude of the current Ethiopian government, Mottuma said,

If they could, they would like to divide the Oromo people and rule. They would like to divide them as they have done in the past (in Hararge, Bale, Wollega, Shewa) and dissipate their power. If they could, they would impose their culture.

For example, according to a U.S. Department of State human rights report (2007) in June 2006, in southern Oromia, interethnic conflict between the Borana and Guji (both Oromo groups) within Oromia resulted about 150 deaths and 120,000 people were displaced. This conflict is still going on in 2007. The area of conflict is a nomadic zone and there is a shortage of water. Traditionally, if these clans had a shortage of water and grazing lands, they shared whatever they had in order to accommodate each other. But Oromo activists are strong in the area. To keep them under control, the Ethiopian government has arguably set up a situation in which the various groups have to fight each other for the limited water supply.

According to Diribissa the TPLF government bribes or forces Oromo individuals to divide the Oromo communities and force them to report about others to the government security agent. An example of the "divide and rule" TPLF policy has been identified by a Human Rights Watch (2005) report. What has been labeled the "gott and garee" system can be seen as a way in which the Ethiopian government has divided Oromo families and communities in order to control them. Human Rights Watch described the policy this way:

The Oromia regional government has created an entirely new set of quasi-governmental structures below the kebele level (=800 hectare administrative region) in rural communities throughout Oromia. Every rural kebele is now divided into groups of households called gott. The gott ...encompasses between sixty and ninety households. Each gott is divided into smaller groups of roughly thirty households called garee.... The gott supervise the activities of the garee and report to kebele authorities. The garee are the more active of the two structures and have the most day-to-day [contact] with the households they oversee. (p. 29)

According to the Report (2005), the gott and garee is used to a) force farmers to attend political meetings designed to indoctrinate them; b) organize the farmers to work in forced labor;

c) monitor peasant opinion towards government policies and punish those who oppose them; and  
d) restrict their freedom of movement. The impact of organizing the Oromo people by gott and garee is very deep. As my informant Gadissa explained, in the political meetings, the farmers are required to expose themselves and their neighbors, giving their opinions about the government. If a farmer is quiet, someone who knows his or her opinion can report it at the meeting. This might allow the person reporting to take his neighbour's land. Alternatively, a dissenter fingered by a neighbour could be denied the opportunity to buy fertilizer or be imprisoned. The gott and garee system thus disrupts Oromo family and community relations and deprives dissenters of their land and livelihood through the actions of neighbours against one another. Gadissa added that the TPLF government has organized communities to monitor each other's activities and has bribed some and forced others to spy on the activities of their community members. Individuals thus report their fellow family members and neighbors in a desperate move to maintain their living conditions. The result is distrust among community and family members, and a breakdown of family and community solidarity.

As well as the promotion of inter-ethnic violence in Oromia, the TPLF government has provoked conflict among Oromos and neighbouring regions. Since the TPLF are a minority, they have attempted to divide Oromia by continuing the resettlement of external populations on Oromo land. It might be argued that they have merely continued the resettlement policies of the previous regime. However, what the TPLF chose to do was somewhat different from the previous regime, in that the TPLF has involved other nations to act on their behalf to displace and divide the Oromo people in any way possible. For example, my informants talked about how the TPLF has instigated conflict between Oromos and other groups that border on Oromia by inviting them to

claim the land on which the Oromo people had lived for over a century as their own. My informants emphasize that this strategy is designed to incapacitate the Oromo people. When conflict inevitably erupts, the TPLF arms the other people and encourages them to kill the Oromos. The TPLF might even intervene as 'peacemakers,' acting as if they were there to maintain the 'peace and order' of the empire. In the case of southern Oromo, as Gurmesssa said,

If the Ethiopian government wants to push the Oromo from one place to the other, they arm the Somali and provide them the means to fight the Oromo. When Boranas (Oromos) are evicted from one place, they come to each other and settle with each other. The area where I was born around Nagale, Borbori and Shakisa, where my father was born, died and was buried has now been given by the Ethiopian government to the Somali.

The 'divide and rule' strategy depends on the TPLF appearing as a 'neutral party' on the world stage. Gurmesssa referred to the subterfuge of TPLF government actions:

This is indirect action. It is only the local people who would understand the problem. International researchers would not comprehend it. If the international researchers tried to understand this issue, they would simply conclude that the Somali forces pushed out the Oromos. What makes this issue interesting is that the Ethiopian government does not [pursue this policy] because they like the Somali, but because they fear the Oromo people. For the Ethiopian government, anything that would incapacitate the Oromo people would be welcomed.

In the eastern part of Oromia, the Oromo and the Somali people are also settled in adjacent territories. That is, Somalis who are within the Ethiopian border live side-by-side with the Oromo. In the lowland regions, these people have historically competed with each other over natural resources such as water and grazing land. Historically, the elders of these groups would come together and settle their differences. This is the longstanding tradition in that area.

However, as reported by the Voice of America (VOA, 2006), in 2005, the TPLF government decided to redraw the Oromo-Somali border by referendum. In some places, the Ethiopian government declared that it was the Somalis who won and instructed the Oromo to leave the area. In other areas, the Oromo 'won' the referendum. Before the referendum was conducted, the

TPLF government armed the Somalis and disarmed the Oromos. When the referendum was over, the TPLF government instructed the Oromos to leave some areas as well as reportedly encouraging armed Somali youngsters to kill and loot their Oromo neighbours. As a result, about 30,000 people lost their cattle and homes. More recently, Biqila (2006) of the VOA interviewed the elders of the two communities and gave information about the conflict between the two neighboring peoples. In the interviews, the Somali elders said, "if we made efforts to bring peace with our Oromo neighbors, the Ethiopian government would charge us with being OLF supporters." Biqila subsequently lost her journalistic privileges.

One of my activist informants drew my attention to the fact that the establishment of federal administrative regions by the TPLF has also given Oromo land to Abyssinians as well as non-Abyssinians. These administrative regions are supposed to be based on the language spoken in the area, but in Oromo-speaking regions, this is not always the case. For example, in some parts of Wallo and in the Wambara region, while most of the people are Oromo and have aspirations to be part of Oromia, the regions have been declared Amahara. The majority of the people in Azebo and Raya districts are also Oromo nationals but they have been declared a Tigray region without their consent. In general, if the Oromo regions that border on the Abyssinian heartland have a significant Abyssinian population, the TPLF has incorporated them into Abyssinian regions. In two areas where there was no geographical link with Abyssinia but the Abyssinians constituted visible minority, charter cities were created by the TPLF. As shown in Fig. 7, the two chartered cities of the Dire-Dawa and Addis Ababa (Finfine) and the administrative region of Harari are surrounded by Oromo territory. Furthermore, in the city of Dire-Dawa, the official language is Amharic, even though 48 percent of the residents of the city are Oromo, 27.7 percent

are Amahara, 13.9 percent are Somali and the rest belong to other groups. The ethnic composition of the Harari regional state is similarly 52.3 percent Oromo, 32.6 percent Amahara, 7.1 percent Harari and 3.2 percent Gurage (FDRE Information, 2007). In the city of Finfine, the Abyssinians now dominate, even though the city is in the middle of Oromo territory and the Oromo claim Finfine as their capital. The TPLF ordered that the capital of Oromia, which was in Finfine from 1991 to 2003, be moved to Hadama in the southeast.

There are also many Oromos who are incorporated into neighboring regions that are non-Abyssinian and non-Oromo for political purposes, despite their size. For example, many Guji-Oromos still live in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR). In the area where the pastoralist (=nomadic farmers) Guji Oromos have lived historically, the TPLF government evicted the Oromo and developed a national park to attract tourists. Pastoralists go back and forth to this place seasonally. Therefore, to implement the park plan in November 2004, the Ethiopian government security forces burned 463 houses of the Guji Oromo in the Nechasar park area (Thompson, 2005a). Although the Ethiopian government paid some compensation and food aid to the Kore people who were also evicted, they evicted the Oromos with no compensation. The project affected 980 Kore farmers and 1,025 Guji-Oromo pastoralist families, for a total of 10,000 people (Thompson, 2005b). Refugee International has reported this situation and appealed to the Ethiopian government to immediately halt the forced expulsion in the name of park development and compensate those who were expelled (Thompson, 2005a).

Two informants, Gadissa and Soressa, drew my attention to the 1995 Ethiopian constitution that states that land is the property of the Ethiopian people (Article, Ethiopian Constitution, 1994).

The situation in Nechasar is ironic, in that the Constitution states that all rural people, including pastoralists, have a right to land for purposes of cultivation and grazing as well as the right not to be displaced from their own lands (Article 40). However, the Constitution also suggests that the *state acts as an agent, with authority to decide how the land is used*. That is, as Gadissa and Soressa suggested to me, on the justification that the state is the agent and authority for deciding where private investors can locate their businesses, the TPLF government has ordered Oromo farmers to leave their homes and farms with or little compensation.

### 6.1.2 TPLF Economic Policy

#### 6.1.2.1 Marketing Fertilizers and Selected Seeds

Before 1987, when they were guerrillas, the TPLF promoted an Albanian (more centralized) style of communism. However, the TPLF sought Western support, specifically from a UK Open University professor and they subsequently have invoked Western democratic discourse and presented Ethiopia as a market-oriented and democratic state (Mercer, 2007). This has involved changing the TPLF political program from the liberation of Tigray to the ‘democratization’ of Ethiopia. In fact, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, during the Derge regime, the TPLF leadership manipulated the 1985/86 famine in Tigray. They used food donated from the world community to recruit displaced and starving people to their military in order to overrun the Derge military.

As my informants pointed out, ideas about capitalism and centralized government were applied to Oromia once the TPLF was in power. For example, they decided to control the distribution of fertilizer and selected seeds to farmers, most of whom are Oromo. The executive decision-



makers of the TPLF or their family members became the owners of the company that trades in fertilizer and selected seeds and they have not permitted any competing company to emerge. Although the company is owned by individuals privately, it is the Ethiopian government who employs those who run the daily activities of the company. Soressa, who worked in the countryside, insisted that

[t]he farmer's rights to buy and refuse to buy fertilizer should be respected. ... [T]he farmers are always worried that the government is going to take their farmland. They are not sure if they will be using their land 10 years from now. The land belongs to the government and the farmers have no right to it. ... Farmers are always worried that the government is going to take their land.

The fertilizer suppliers predetermine the types of fertilizers the farmers need. These companies sell selected seeds and fertilizers in a package at a high price and interest rate. The suppliers have a general idea about which part of the country requires what types of fertilizers; however, they do not necessarily adjust their sales to local conditions. This means that farmers are forced to take fertilizers and selected seeds in the name of 'increasing productivity' at a price that they cannot afford to pay and in amounts that may be too much or too little for local conditions. If the farmers refuse to take the package, they are labeled "economic saboteurs" and they lose their land. In the regions where people resist this and other government projects, the government denies any access to fertilizers and other products needed by farmers. My informant Soressa, who is knowledgeable about the system, said,

The farmers take fertilizer because it is imposed upon them. In reality, they do not know how to use [these products] and how much to use. Sometimes they put more fertilizer than needed and they burn their crops. ... Often the fertilizers given to them are not the ones they need for their lands. The government gives fertilizer without considering the chemistry of the soil. It forces farmers to take fertilizer without considering whether or not they need it. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it does not. No one has conducted research and identified which soil needs what type of fertilizer. The need of soil for fertilizer changes each year, but the government imposes [their use] without considering that.

Trading in fertilizer and selected seeds are part of global capitalist economy. Norwegian fertilizer giant Yara International awarded the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, what they called the "African Green revolutionary prize" (Lackey, 2005). Lackey, who writes about human rights violations in Oromia, described the TPLF government fertilizer policy this way:

Control over fertilizer and agricultural inputs in general have given Meles [Zenawi's] government a remarkably effective tool for quashing dissent in rural Ethiopia. ...Meles' government...uses its own control over fertilizer to discourage and punish dissent in rural communities.

Soressa, who experienced this system, pointed to its colonial nature when he remarked that

selective seeds come from foreign countries. The most popular one is wheat.... There are three or four types of selective seeds.... Nowadays many farmers are already using them. However, the farmers still prefer the Indigenous seeds. Again, the selected seeds are imposed upon them. The sizes of these seed are smaller than the traditional ones and the harvests they give are no better than traditional ones. This is true in the area where I saw them. No matter what, the farmers are forced to buy these selected seeds.

While farmers do not find this system advantageous, the TPLF imposes it because they profit from the sales of seeds and fertilizer. Soressa added that "farmers are not convinced to use the package and it does not look like the government [gives] them a proper education:"

[t]he advantage that the government gets is political, too, because, they are identified as doing so much...to prevent famine. It could be so [but] it is also the means to make a few people rich. The government agents reach Oromo farmers through this project and it can also be seen a tool to control and manipulate the people.

In indigenous Oromo ways of life, water is taken from nearby rivers or springs for personal consumption. In response to my question about the safety of chemical fertilizer, Soressa commented that there is a danger if it is misused and overused. He predicted that "in the future, this is one of the major problems that [is on the horizon].... Most of the Oromo people still drink water from the river, the cattle drink from the river and the rivers are increasingly getting contaminated."

### 6.1.2.2 Designed Neglect: Epidemics and Famine

Critical histories of public health repeatedly demonstrate that turmoil or social and economic instability provide conditions for the propagation of epidemics (Doyal, 1981; Farmer, 1999; Mann et al., 1999). It has been documented that historically, colonial rule purposefully exploited the emergence of unhealthy social conditions, pursuing what might be called “designed neglect” by allowing epidemics and famine to run their course. When I posed a question about whether famine could be used as a tool to kill or incapacitate the Oromo people, Jobir said,

In Ethiopia, famine has two purposes. It is used as the means to control the population and to get money from the international community. The Ethiopian government appeals to the international community and they provide food and money mostly through state agencies. After the donors have delivered food and money, typically they are not interested in following up on how that food and money is allocated. The government provides food to the community that they think needs to be ‘saved’ and leaves the others to die of starvation. Neither is the international community interested in questioning the cause of the famine and how the food is distributed. If the government was [operating in the interests of all of its citizens,] they could do [a great deal] to prevent famine and use the food donated from the international community to genuinely save the lives of those who are starving. However, a criminal government that is ready to kill or to incapacitate people can use famine as an opportunity. They can use famine to kill the enemy, to control, resettle or evict him or for any other purposes.

When I compared Ethiopia to North America, where white settlers have been identified as using smallpox to wipe out the native people, Jobir saw the comparison as valid. In the case of Ethiopia, he said, the Abyssinians had used disease with the intention of wiping out the Oromo both during the era of Menelik as well as during the current regime:

Where[ever] there was strong Oromo resistance, the [Abyssinians] have used epidemics. There is always a possibility that they will use disease as a tool. Recently, I heard that in the town of Mendi (in Western Oromia), the [TPLF] poisoned the water reservoir for the town; several people died and many people were hospitalized. If the resistance of the Oromo people really threatens [TPLF] power, we can expect that.

Shantam agreed that designed neglect was an 'economic policy' of the TPLF clearly rooted in historical genocidal processes. He commented that

[i]f an epidemic emerges in Oromia, the Ethiopian government closes their eyes and acts as if they have not seen it or know it. Let me give you an example. When HIV/AIDS was reported to be a major public health problem, a test that could be used to detect the HIV virus was donated from European countries. The donors suggested that all regional states should get these instruments. After two years, the donors arrived in Ethiopia to study how the hospitals and health agencies were using the instrument. When they came to Ethiopia, the donors found that the instrument was in use in [the] Tigray and Amahara regions. In central Oromia, they found that the instrument was in use. But when they went to Western Oromia to see whether or not it was in use, they found out that it had not arrived, even after two years.... They went back to Finfine and asked the Ethiopian Ministry of Health why the hospital in Western Oromia did not have the instruments. The answer they got was that "the road that goes to that area is not well maintained and if we send the instrument on such road, it might be broken before it arrives."

Expressing astonishment about the justification given by the TPLF, Shantam objected that "the instrument was taken from Finfine to Tigray on a similar road and it was not broken." He pointed out that "if the [TPLF] were really concerned about the sensitivity of the instrument, they would have used helicopters or airplanes to deliver it." He concluded that the issue is not about the sensitivity of the instrument but "about the willingness to deliver the instrument." This revealed to the European donors the oppression that the Oromo people have been experiencing for a century. In Shantam's words, "the Abyssinians have no good agenda for the Oromo people. They have never had a good agenda in the past and they will not have it in the future."

## 6.2 Resistance to Repression and Denial of Leadership or 'Weeding Out'

All my informants agreed that the major strategy in which the TPLF regime is currently engaged is elimination of Oromo elites as part of a push to denying the Oromo leadership. If the TPLF were able to do this, they would be in a position to silence the uneducated masses and then

assimilate them into the Abyssinian culture. But my informants agreed that the TPLF government has not been able to divide the Oromo people the way it would like. The Oromo elites and leaders have not only remained on the scene, but have also challenged divisive policies.

My informants agreed that most of the killings that are going on in Oromia are intended to eliminate elites. There are various types of leaders, such as Elders, elites or intellectuals and business people. Most of these are social activists who, for example, coordinate resources for the building of hospitals and schools. Political activists, such as those associated with the OLF, work more directly for a stronger voice for the Oromo. The latter group has been persecuted, as might be expected in a repressive state. However, the former have also been targeted, suggesting that Indigenous identity itself is what the TPLF is trying to eradicate. Dandana used the metaphor of the Oromo leader as a 'weed' and the TPLF as a farmer:

If you are a farmer and need to grow a good harvest, you...need to cut the unwanted trees or pick the weeds. If the Oromo become obstacles to [what] the Abyssinians are hoping to have, they have to clear these obstacles. Among the Oromo people, there are activists who can be obstacles for them. Those individuals who are not obstacles to them, they provide with opportunities and use them. Abyssinians want to own the land, the power and other resources with no rivals...and they want to make sure that their children will meet with no rival.

Activists who leave Ethiopia are not always safe. My informants believe that the underground organization known as "Galla Geday" (=Oromo killer, in Amharic) is functional both in the Ethiopian empire and the Diaspora, and has existed since the time of Menelik. In the Diaspora, the organization is known as "Ager Fiqiri" (=love of country in Amharic) has targeted Oromo refugees who are potential leaders.

In this section, the massive resistance to the TPLF on many fronts will be documented as well as the TPLF strategies to repress these initiatives.

#### 6.2.1 Student /Social Activists

More than their predecessors, the TPLF have focused on those Oromo activists whom they fear as leaders of Oromo nationalism. A Human Rights Watch report (2003) prepared an exhaustive look at the ways the Ethiopian government target Oromo students, making it clear that the Ethiopian government singles out the academic community. As the Human Rights Watch report commented,

[b]eing educated can be a risky business in Ethiopia. Students and teachers, often among the most politically active elements of society, are frequent victims of human rights violations including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest, and denial of freedom of association and expression. (2003, p. 4)

Even the Amahara-led human rights organization, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, has protested TPLF treatment of Oromo students. For example, they have reported on human rights violations committed against Oromo students at Addis Ababa University (EHRCO, 2004). According to the 2004 report, at that time, TPLF security forces arrested over 357 Oromo students with no formal investigation with simple presumption of guilt and with the cooperation of the University. Later on, although most of the students were released, the rest were thrown into jail and about 23 students were expelled.

In order to remove student leadership, the TPLF have made examples of many high school students. For example, the VOA has broadcasted the story of Amaleworqi Bulli, who was a ninth grade student in the city of Nakamte. She was killed when Ethiopian security forces shot at peaceful student demonstrators in 2004. When the incident occurred, the VOA interviewed her

classmates and other student demonstrators. Her parents denied that the TPLF security force killed her. The school director and the regional administrator also made statements claiming that Ameleworqi Bulli died from natural causes (VOA, March 15, 2006, reported by Namoo Dandi and Jalane Gamada). Two years later, in March 2006, the US State Department, in its yearly report, confirmed that Ameleworqi Bulli indeed was killed by the Ethiopian security force (U.S. Department of State Report, 2007). The US report made clear that this distortion of the truth occurred because the TPLF government is determined to control the Oromo people and to keep such information from reaching the world community. The extent of the repression can be seen by how the girl's parents and the school director knew that the government killed the daughter (and that she died of gunshot wounds), but chose to report to the media that she died 'a natural death.'

A second case reported by the VOA involved Jagama Badhane, an eleventh grade student in Ambo. His mother reported that Ethiopian security forces arrested him in 2004, tortured and kept this young student in an unknown location for months. They finally released him after a year with a guarantor, and at first prevented his return to school. At this point, he told his mother that he was fearful of returning, but went reluctantly, in his words "out of love and respect" for her. In September 2005, the TPLF shot him in front of his school. A friend who tried to help was also shot and killed, underlining the point, "do not help each other." In one of Jagama's books, it was reported that his family found a note in which he described his fear of the Ethiopian security forces. From Jagama's case, it can be seen that the school became a killing ground. In a region where illiteracy is very high, an event such as this, and Jagama's mother publicly expressing regrets about pressuring her son to go to school, can have a significant impact on the aspirations of students and family members (VOA, January 26, 2006, reported by Gamada).

Dandana, who was considered an Oromo social activist, commented that

if you are an Oromo person who questions Abyssinian social policy, even if they do not kill you on the spot, they have already sentenced you to death. From that time onward you are a dead person for them. This [epitomizes] the relationship between the Oromo people and the Abyssinians. This is not a case of one person or two...[so t]hat is why we left our home country.

As other social activists in my study pointed out, the TPLF, like previous Abyssinian regimes, takes aim at essential Oromo social institutions as well. For example, during the TPLF regime, several new independent newspapers emerged, but all of them are now banned, with the editors and managers either imprisoned or forced to leave the country. Leaders of the Oromo Relief Association (ORA), with over 30 years experience in relief work, as well as the founders of the Oromo Human Rights League, also shared this fate. The result has been that these organizations no longer function inside Ethiopia: at this time there are no official independent newspapers, relief associations or Oromo human rights organizations.

Another example of a social organization under attack was the Mecha and Tulama (=two Oromo clans, although the membership was inclusive) Association. Members were involved in supporting the expelled students referred to above. Shantam provided details of the history of this self-help association and its demise under the TPLF. It was formed during Haile Selassie's time and banned by that regime until 1991 when the Derge fell. As noted above, the TPLF decided to move the Oromo regional administration centre from Finfine to Hadama as a means of reducing the number of Oromos in the city of Finfine. The Mecha and Tulama association opposed the move on the grounds that the Oromos should arrange their own affairs. When the self-help group organized a peaceful demonstration, Oromo students joined the protest. To silence such demands, the TPLF government took extreme measures and expelled the 23 Oromo



students from their University studies as mentioned above (Human Rights Watch Report, 2005). When these Oromo students were massively expelled, the Mecha and Tulama association raised funds to provide them with shelter and food. In retaliation, the TPLF security forces arrested 30 of the association's members and leaders and several were killed in prison. One was Gaddisa Hirphasa, a fourth year university student at Finfine University when he was arrested in 2004, with other Mecha and Tulema association leaders and members. He was one of the 357 Oromo students who were imprisoned and suspended. He died in April 2006 of torture. A month before this student activist died, he told the Supreme Court of Ethiopia that he was accused of having a mobile phone in his bag. The court ordered that the torture be stopped and that those who had committed the torture be charged. Afterwards, the student was kept in solitary confinement and at first, denied the visitation of family members and friends, as well as access to medical attention (verified by VOA Radio, 2006). The family pursued a court order, but at the point that they took him to hospital, he was unable to eat and drink and so he died. Another Mecha and Tulama member who was killed in prison was Alamayehu Garba Huruba, a physically disabled third year university student who could barely walk. He was shot in prison, accused of trying to break out! He was denied medical service and died in November 2005.

Mottuma was one informant who pointed out that "the Oromo business, cultural, intellectual and political elites are [also] targeted." Why? In his words, "if this group is liquidated, 95 percent of the Oromos are peasants and therefore, without leadership, [the TPLF] are hoping to control them." He concluded that "the plan to eliminate the Oromo elites as a means of controlling Oromo nationalism is there. I have absolutely no doubt about that." Taressa agreed, pointing out

that "educated groups" are a threat because they can take "leadership of the community."

Specifically, as Taressa explained,

[t]he educated groups have an understanding of international politics and could articulately present Oromo causes to the international community. Educated groups can effectively develop organizational structures. The Abyssinians want to deny that. They want to deny the leadership. That is why they target the educated groups and intellectuals. They target them to eliminate individuals who are knowledgeable and who can articulate the problems of the society. The Abyssinians do not tolerate the Oromo educated individuals and the intellectuals...or potentially anyone who can be a successful business person. If they think the person has some potential, then they target him.

Both Indigenous Oromo intellectuals as well as those Oromo elites who had formal schooling are pursued. Particularly feared are those who speak their minds in spite of intimidation. In response to my question about this, Gadissa emphasized that

[m]ostly they target intellectuals. This includes not only intellectuals through formal schooling, but also the Elders. One of the groups that are targeted is the traditional intellectual. The traditional intellectuals face many pressures--even more than the modern intellectual. You can see that in several places. For example, from around Nakamte, the person whom they imprisoned several times...knows a great deal about Oromo history and can speak frankly and openly...Obbo Olana Bati. There are also teachers such as Workneh who was imprisoned several times.

Shantam said that he had observed the demise of "many of such kind," referring to the traditional intellectuals and opinion makers. He characterized the TPLF as basing its rule on eradicating Oromo consciousness of their identity and "taking the Abyssinian government view as their own" and being "obedient to them." He concluded that "questions that are articulated by conscious Oromo nationals in the long term destabilize [TPLF] power." Thus the TPLF are compelled to discredit and criminalize anyone who questions government policy. In his analysis, once an Oromo activist is imprisoned, "they castrate the idea of the person." The activist might be released if he or she expresses regret about raising an issue, though the TPLF would still monitor his or her activities. Shantam believed that if "the [TPLF] think that [the leader] would raise the question that he had raised in the past, they eliminate him." Such a strategy is intended

to ensure that "the whole Oromo society is obedient to the [TPLF]." Shantam concluded that this is "the reason for imprisonment and killings."

### 6.2.2 Political Activists

As I have argued, the TPLF has become more violent as Oromo political dissent has deepened. It is completely intolerant of political activists, such as those in the Oromo Liberation Front. The OLF has grown to represent the cause of an independent Oromia, so that activists associated with this organization, in particular, face persecution. When I asked Kume, a business woman who was imprisoned by the TPLF, why the Ethiopian government does not like OLF activists, she explained it this way:

The OLF stands for defending the interests of the Oromo people. The OLF is concerned about the situation of the Oromo people and disapproves of what the Ethiopian government does to them. Many OLF activists [originally] joined the OLF out of the frustration they experienced with the Ethiopian government. They are struggling to end a century-old injustice. The OLF stands for ending the injustice that has been carried on from one generation to the next.

Kume explained that due to intense persecution, many OLF members are in hiding in the wilderness. In her words,

The OLF teaches about the rights of people, the hidden history, the Oromo identity and the Oromo country--Oromia. They teach how historically the Oromo people were conquered, how they lost their sovereignty. They teach about the Gada system of governance, or the ways the Oromo people governed themselves before they were colonized. The Ethiopian government does not like that the Oromo people know their history and understand how their reality is created. The Ethiopian government wants the Oromo people to remain in slavery.... The OLF is targeted because they try to raise the awareness of the Oromo people and stand with the mass and demand for justice. The Ethiopian government fears that OLF activities will raise awareness and that awareness will destabilize the existing power relations. That is why they hate the OLF activists.

Oromo political activism in any form is not tolerated by the TPLF and my informants gave many examples of persecution. For example, Shantam told a story that illustrated the way a woman activist was treated:

In short, the girl was with the Oromo national movement. I think she was doing some secret things. At one point she was captured. When she was captured, seven of the TPLF military raped her. Seven is the number of men she counted when she was conscious.... In the final stage what they did was horrible. These forces inserted in her body broken glass and pushed [it in] as much as they could. Since she lost consciousness, they left her to die... Thanks to Waqaayo [=God in Oromo], she lived longer and someone found her and took her to a nearby village [where t]he people took her to their home and tried to pick the glass out that...could [be] see[n].... [F]inally they brought her to Finfine...to the Tikur Anbessa hospital and she got treatment there. They looked at her body with X-rays and picked out more broken glass.... This young girl was so angry and determined that she decided to fight for her rights. She went back to the hillside and forest.

Peasant activists do not fare much better. In 2007, the US Department of State, in their annual report, covered a wide range of human right violations in Ethiopia (2007). They reported that on January 23, 2006, the TPLF military forces killed 15 peacefully-demonstrating Oromo farmers and injured 19 others in the district of Guduru in Eastern Wollega. Guduru is one of the districts that has been affected by the Finchaha Hydro electric power, state farm and sugar factory project described in the previous chapter. After a dam was built there, the water reservoir flooded over the farms and grazing lands and many people were displaced from their homes. Although the project supplies electric power to the state, it does not give any service to the local people. As explained earlier, these projects have been designed to benefit Abyssinians. But when the Indigenous peoples, angry about the situation, demanded to elect a local administrator, the TPLF reacted by hunting down and killing peasant men and women who were part of the protest for five weeks. During this period, all involved were either killed, imprisoned, penned in by the army, or escaped into the wildness. No one was left to look after the cattle, and many cattle were attacked by wild vultures.

These killings preceded a speech by Prime Minister Zenawi in December 2006 in which he called for the imprisonment of anyone supporting the OLF. Zenawi acknowledged that the TPLF policy is to “bring to justice” the protesters. Twenty more killings occurred after the speech, this time in eastern Oromia, in the Suufii and Daalacha mountains. On February, 21, 2007, the VOA interviewed the families of those killed by the TPLF, who reported that the victims included a 14 year old girl and a 70 year old man. The security forces left their bodies to be eaten by wild beasts. The girl’s mother, who saw the TPLF security forces taking her daughter, explained:

[A security force officer] arrived at 9:00 a.m. He woke [my daughter] up from where she was sleeping and ordered her to get on [his] motor-bike.... She had a wound on her behind which she told him about. He said to her, “forget your wound. You are to be devoured by wild predatory beasts,” and ordered her to follow him. She followed him with only her skirt on her back. ... Because he [worked for] the government, we assumed he was taking her to a prison. I assumed she was detained and searched for her in detention camps for two weeks. After we heard the rumor about the old man [obbo Ahmed Mohammed Kuree], I followed his family to Gaara suufi [Suufi hill]. There we found her skirt, sweater, underwear and hair, braided and red [dyed in henna] as it was when she was taken away.

The mother further explained that,

[the government] continues to take individuals to this mountain and murder them. Besides my daughter’s, we have found many human remains. One example [we found was] a henna-dyed human hand. There are many people missing whose loved ones are hoping that they are in detention. They continue to murder people. (The document is translated and posted on <http://oromoaffairs.blogspot.com>, Retrieved September 1, 2007)

Participants agreed that the strategy of eliminating Oromo elites and political activists is a direct attack on Oromo leaders, epistemology and culture. Jobir summarized it this way:

Elimination of the elite represents the destruction of the cultural bank of the Oromo people. The Oromo people have no formal schools of their own. The Abyssinians have destroyed or incapacitated many of the original Oromo institutions. These intellectuals are thus the living body, the carriers of information, the carriers of knowledge and wisdom. Through elimination of [Oromo] intellectuals, you are destroying the intellectual resources of the Oromo people. They have knowledge of medicine, of religion and of history and of all aspects of life. Elimination of this group is destruction of such information. If you want to make a comparison in the USA, it would be like burning the

banking system, the library and the government infrastructure. As one person has put it, “when the old people die, the library is lost.” It is like losing the Oromo library.

### 6.3 Breaking the Oromo Spirit? Violence, Eviction and Environmental Destruction

#### 6.3.1 The Effects of Widespread Killings, Imprisonment, and Forced Migration

As has been documented, TPLF deception and persecution of Oromo leaders have met with massive resistance. The TPLF, like previous regimes, has engaged in genocide against the Oromo, arguably as a response to Oromo resistance. The TPLF have also resorted to more desperate measures in recent years, including burning of forests, bombing and burning people alive. They also cut the throats of individuals, not necessarily activists, shooting and throwing them from cliffs. This has the effect of intimidating the local population.

Jalata (2005), citing Hassen, has estimated that between 1992 to 2001, about 50,000 people have been killed and 16,000 have disappeared. Jalata recorded that as early as 1991, in the provinces of Bale and Arsi, the TPLF forces killed 266 Oromos, wounded 38, displaced 39,000 people and burned 8700 houses. Recently, the former judge, Abera, who served under the TPLF as president of the Oromia Supreme Court, in an interview with the *Guardian International* (2006), estimated that since the TPLF took power in 1991, 15,000 to 20,000 people have been killed in Oromia. (This figure probably does not include the massacre of the OLF forces in 1992.) The judge revealed that there are systemic massacres. In 2005 alone, about 80,000 people were arrested. Abera compared the Derge regime, widely condemned for human rights violations, with the TPLF by remarking that “the Mengistu government killed and boasted about it. The Meles government kills and asks “who killed him? And then sets up an inquiry commission.”

Abera left the country to seek political asylum so as not to serve in the institution that imprisons people without court orders, keeps prisoners in jail when the courts let them free and releases criminal individuals whom the court orders to be imprisoned. Abera is not the only judge who has made these charges (Rice, 2006). Another judge, Wolde-Michael Meshesha, who was assigned to investigate the killing of protesters against election fraud in 2005, discovered the killing of 193 peaceful protesters. Before his team could present their findings to parliament, the TPLF ordered them to alter their report. To avoid the risks that would follow by a refusal to comply, he left the country (Michel, 2006).

In addition, as mentioned above and as will be detailed below, one of the methods that successive Ethiopian governments have used to deny the Oromo people leadership is forced migration. Thousands of Oromo elites, educated and businessmen and women have been forced to leave the country, including many of the informants in my study. For example, in the 1992 election alone, the TPLF forces killed, harassed and imprisoned OLF candidates and supporters and made the OLF withdraw from the election. When the OLF withdrew from the election, the TPLF government instructed the OLF leadership to leave the country. In fact, the TPLF government bought them plane tickets and flew them to Europe.

These policies, in Jobir's estimation, have been calculated to 'break' the Oromo spirit. Widespread violence and denial of Oromo self-determination is pursued to compromise Oromo confidence and feelings of security and safety. Diribissa, an Oromo activist, agreed, pointing out that there is no concept of insurance in Oromo Indigenous culture. For the Indigenous Oromo people, he argued, community members act as sickness, old age and accident plans. Thus, the

violence against community activists is intended to destabilize the social-safety networks of Oromo people.

In addition to outright killings, torture is widespread. For example, Jaranson and colleagues (2004) conducted a cross-sectional community-based epidemiological study among the Oromo and Somali refugees in Minnesota and surrounding areas to determine how many had experienced torture in Ethiopia. These authors estimated that the prevalence of torture ranged from 25 percent among the Somali to 69 percent among the Oromos. Another report based on an interview with Caltu, an Oromo refugee woman, points out that one means of torture is rape. She estimated that, of the 450 women imprisoned in Chiro and Hurso military camps, at least 50 percent had been raped (Oromo Support Group, 2000).

According to Amnesty International (1994), by the end of 1992, there were over 30,000 Oromo political prisoners. Overall, Bulcha (2002) has estimated that since the TPLF took power in 1991 and up to 2002, over 100,000 Oromo refugees have been forced to leave their homes and are scattered all over the world. Before 1991, most Oromo refugees were Oromo farmers. After 1991, this changed and most Oromo refugees are intellectuals.

Internal displacement has also characterized TPLF regime strategy. For example, according to an Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2006), in the conflict between the Oromos and the Somalis discussed above, about 50,000 to 80,000 people have been displaced. In the Borana region alone, as a result of inter-ethnic conflict (among Borana, Guji, and Gabra), there has been an estimated displacement of 43,000 Oromos.



The effect of this situation is demoralization. My informant Tolessa described the constant violence of the TPLF towards the Oromo, denying them "the opportunity to think about themselves." Gurmesssa added that,

If they do not do what the Ethiopian government has told them to do, either they have to leave the country or go to the jungle and fight. The [TPLF] do not know how to find a peaceful solution. Their solution is always war. If you are in that country you cannot have a choice. You cannot say that you disagree with what they say or do. If you show disagreement, then they categorize you as the enemy and soon you will be killed. You cannot be neutral in that country.

When I asked my informants what one has to do to secure him or herself, Soressa said, "I stick to my job and hide myself in it. I do not speak out my views and participate in any discussion."

When I asked if submissiveness worked, Tokkuma said,

To be submissive does not guarantee your safety. You are not allowed to be submissive. They demand from you to be an advocate. If you say, "I am submissive and I do not want to say anything, I do not want to do anything, I am not aware of anything," this does not guarantee me safety. To have safety and security, you have to stand on their side and clap your hands for all the crimes they commit. That is it. They also closely monitor your life. If you are a person who is making efforts to change your life and the lives of your family members, they just knock on your door and ask to use you [in their projects].

As Dandana described it, "Ethiopia is one of the most racist countries in the world, where national and cultural identity either provides you opportunity or withholds it from you."

### 6.3.2 Abusing the Conscripted Militia

In the previous chapter, the ways the Derge regime involuntarily recruited millions of young men to the war front was discussed. In 1991, when the Derge lost the war, the TPLF government categorized those young men as the enemy and treated them inhumanly. After the war was over,

thousands of the involuntarily recruited young men were run to Sudan, as noted in the previous chapter. My informant Hirphasa stayed in a refugee camp there for some time. As he recounted:

We stayed in Sudan....in a desert area for six months. After that, the Red Cross gave us three options: to stay there in the camp, to go to another country or to return back to Ethiopia. We hesitated to return to Ethiopia because [the TPLF] was the group who we were forced to fight against and who was in power. [But those who had nowhere to go] decided to return back to Ethiopia. When we decided to return, the Red Cross told us that they were going to give us \$10,000 each for rehabilitation. ... When the time came, they took us to the city of Kassala and...gave us a blanket each. The [TPLF] told us that they were going to give us the money at the airport in Ethiopia. But when we arrived in Finfine, they gave us 50 Birri (\$6). When we asked them for the money that the Red Cross had promised, they told us that we would get it in the area from where we were recruited. From Finfine, they took us to our regions. When I arrived in my home town, they gave me eight litres of oil and wheat flour that could be enough to make bread for three days. When we asked about the \$10,000 promised, they told us that letting us come home safely was worth that money. Later on they gave us...about 10 kilograms of wheat powder. When we asked the government for the \$10,000 that Red Cross had promised us, they threatened to imprison us.

Finally, those soldiers who had been part of the standing army and had served the Derge government for several years in their productive years, all the while paying into pension plans, were demobilized. In the process, they were left empty-handed. In the media, they were presented as the people's enemies and stigmatized.

As if that was not enough, soon the TPLF reinstated the system that the Derge government had used to involuntarily recruit young Oromo men to their military. In 1999/2000, Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a conventional war in which over 130,000 people died. Most of those who died in this war were believed to be involuntarily recruited young men whom the government recruited by promising job opportunities. The population of Eritrea is far smaller than Ethiopia and so Eritrea fortified their border with landmines. The TPLF regime military, knowing what the Eritreans had put in the border area, sent these involuntarily-recruited Oromos to the front lines first to run over mines so that their tanks and heavy artillery could safely pass. On May 18, 1999,

*The Guardian* newspaper in the UK reported that the TPLF force used Oromo peasants as

“minesweepers.” Hirst, the author of the article, put the case in this way:

If conduct of war is a measure of government's fitness and ability to rule, then Tsorana (one part of the front line) is a terrible indictment of the TPLF. Oromo peasants [were] selected as human minesweepers and Tigrayan officers shot them from the rear.

### 6.3.3 “Drying the Ocean to Kill the Fish”

The forests of Ethiopia have been very important to the Oromo people for sustaining life and as well as a central aspect of spirituality. They have also provided sanctuary for activists in the face of TPLF occupation of Oromia and widespread killings and imprisonment. Thus the 1999/2000 burning of 600,000 hectares of natural forests in Oromia for over three months was a disaster at several levels for the Oromo people. The fires started simultaneously on January 30 in several parts of the country. According to Trueman (2003), the burn, which the Oromo people condemned, started in over 200 sites in Oromia, Benshangul, the SNNPR and Somali regions, in areas where opposition groups were very active. Lamessa and Perault (2002) have pointed out that the 2000 forest burn not only covered a wide area of Oromia, but that it was very different from previous forest fires. These fires constituted serious disasters because of their scale and the fact that greenbelts were affected. Lamessa and Perault (2002), based on historical analyses and interviews, asked whether the fires were due to carelessness, unknown causes or deliberate political activity.

My informant Gadissa noted that the 2000 fire was suspicious because it started simultaneously in different parts of the country, and because it started in some places and naturally expired because the forest was too damp. He pointed out that so many simultaneous fires in different

places can only be accomplished by human design. When the 2000 forest fire was burning, Soressa was in Western Oromia. In his words,

At that time I was a teacher and I observed the opinions of students, teachers and the public. Many [Oromo] students volunteered to fight the fire. The government forces killed several students who accused the government of the forest burn and who had protested. The Ethiopian government's actions against the Oromo students made the public further question their motives. The Ethiopian government also did everything possible to prevent volunteers from going to fight the fires. The government prevented both students and adults from visiting the area. A responsible government would have done everything to fight the fire, and encourage the people to participate. Instead, the Ethiopian government killed students who were willing to fight the fire. This makes me suspect the government.

Gadissa added that the "government accused [Oromo] farmers of being responsible for putting fire to the forest" accidentally while they were collecting natural honey or honey from the hives that they had put in the forest. He also pointed out that there were places such as Awash Valley in south central Oromia where the government prevented people from going in to fight the fires. He suggested that "in some places after they made sure no one was hiding in the forest, they set fire to it on the pretext that ammunition was hidden in the forest." Although he acknowledged that forests do burn naturally in Oromia, Gadissa emphasized that the 2000 burn was unique. At that time, even the national parks and reserves burned down.

In explaining the cause of the 2000 forest burn, Shantam referred to Oromo Indigenous knowledges of the environment:

In Oromo culture, when they see a big and durable tree, they believe that the tree is lucky and has some type of spirit; therefore, they give respect to it. When they want to build houses, they do not confront the spirit of the tree, they make peace with it. After they cut the tree down, they replace it with two or three trees around that area. They replace the old tree with the young ones. That is the way they do things. That is the way they relate to nature and that is the way they preserve it. The Oromos do not burn forests. For the

Oromo people, forests are their wealth, beauty and life; however, for Abyssinians, forests are a threat.

Soressa, a trained environmentalist, agreed with Shantam when he said:

The Oromo people have a great respect for their environment. They see forest as [representing] the beauty of their land and country. They are knowledgeable that if there were no forests, erosion would wash away the topsoil which is the fertile part of the earth. The knowledge of the Oromo people about the environment does not come from science but from their culture. Oromo people see cutting a tree as killing a life. I know this from my father and he does not let small trees be cut unnecessarily. I can say that the Oromo people have respect toward the forest--they never burn forests.

When I asked my informants to reflect on the 2000 forest fire, I found only three who were in the region at the time, although many others had a great deal to say about it based on their former experiences and what they had heard. My informant Gurmessa described it this way:

When the fire started, I was not there physically, but I heard stories about it. Many believed that it was the TPLF security forces who set the fire to the forest. When I was in the military in the air force, I knew that the [Ethiopian military forces] used planes to burn forests. They [know] the forest is the hiding place for rebel groups. If the area is green and full of forests, the ground and air force cannot target the enemy; therefore, they order airplanes to bomb and burn forests.... Th[at is,] I believe the government burned the forests.

Gurmessa suggested that similar tactics were used in the 1960s by Haile Selassie to suppress the Bale uprising. The intent of burning the forests in that instance was to kill those who were hiding in the forest and kill the cattle and camels. The TPLF has also been identified by the Oromo Support Group (OSG) and by Lamessa and Perault (2002) as engaging in forest burns to kill Oromo activists. One informant, Gadissa, who arrived in North America recently, said that he had observed a massive forest burn in the Oromia region in 2000. In response to my question about what this was about, he commented

[t]he truth is that by that time most of the Oromo people were conscious about their identity and their social conditions. [By that] time, those who stood with the TPLF government and those who stood with the Oromo people were clearly separated. This was a turning point.... The TPLF was engaged in the elimination of Oromo nationals who

refused to accept and recognize them as a legitimate government. Some of th[em] escaped to the nearby jungles and lived with the people in the countryside. It was the time when Oromo political activists were engaged in organizing people. For these reasons, many of the TPLF forces were [successfully] attacked in several places. You cannot say here or there--it was everywhere. At that time, the OLF forces were organized and functional in several places and engaged in battle with the TPLF forces. In some places, the OLF forces [chose] major forests for specific missions. It was coordinating its activities from the nearby forests. When these all activities were happening, [Oromos who were] former military officers were in terrible condition and [might] join any resistance forces. This all created tension for the TPLF government. Therefore, the places where the fires started and the places where government security forces rounded up [activists] are the same. There were even cases when government forces were pushed back...where the government tried to go into the forest the forces fought them back. This happened in Bale, Arsi, Awash valley and in many other places.

Gadissa also linked the killing of activists with the burning of the Garja forest in Gimbi and the Chatto forest in Horro in western Oromia, explaining that it was not a natural event:

In areas where there was conflict, there were shootings and then forest burns.... [and t]he forest burn was followed with shootings. In areas the government forces thought the opposition might try to leave, the military [pursued] them. In areas where they thought that they had escaped, they followed them and put fire to adjoining forests. This happened in several places. Those who live in those areas have...observed this. The government claimed that they would investigate, but they have not. When the fires started, the government surrounded the forest and shooting was heard.

Tolessa, who had observed a forest burn in 1992 which covered a small area in Western Oromia, said,

There is no doubt in my mind that the Ethiopian government deliberately burns forests. During [1991/1992], when conflict erupted between the OLF and TPLF forces around Inango and Gimbi, and a few TPLF cars were burned, the next day they started fires in the forest. People saw them start fires in daylight. At that time they did not know the area very well.... After the forests were burned, the area was easily visible and they could use helicopters and heavy artillery to attack the OLA [the Oromo Liberation Army, the military wing of the OLF].

Tokkuma, who, like Tolessa, was a teacher in Oromia, confirmed Tolessa's observations about the 1992 forest fire. Tolessa was in the western part of the Dhidhesa valley and Tokkuma was in the eastern part. In their view, although the 2000 forest burn garnered a great deal of public

attention, this was not the first time that the TPLF had burned forests. In 1992 the TPLF forces started fires in the Dhidhesa valley, which burned for two or three weeks.

My informants Shantam, Diribissa and others had other reflections on these forest burns. One said, "if you compare the environmental conditions of Oromia with those of the Tigray region, it is like comparing the two extremely different imaginary places, Hell and Heaven." He believed that "when the TPLF forces see the natural resources of Oromia, they are filled with jealousy." Thus he felt that their actions could partly be explained by jealousy. Second, the forests represent great natural wealth for the Oromos, and burning them would impoverish the Oromo. Mottuma also suggested that in 2000, the TPLF was preparing for war against Eritrea and wanted to make sure that guerilla activities would not disrupt them. After they had flushed out Oromo rebels from the forest, they immediately started their war with Eritrea.

As I have emphasized, for the Oromo people, wealth comes from the land and when the Abyssinians took the Oromo land, poverty became a major problem. Forest burns thus wound the unhealed body. The 2000 forest burn affected wide areas and its short term effects have been more severe in pastoralist areas of Borana and Bale. My informant Shantam described the consequences of the forest burn eloquently:

For the Oromo people, forest burns mean a disturbance in the balance of nature. For the Oromo people, forest burns destabilize their lives. If nature is disturbed, this leads to the destabilization of human life. Look, when the rain rains, it drops on the trees and the leaves of the trees slow down the speed with which it falls on the earth. The roots of the tree take the water into the soil and keep the moisture for a longer time. When these forests are burned and trees are eliminated, rain hits the soil unimpeded. This means the rain washes off the topsoil and takes it to rivers and in the long-term, erosion takes away the fertility of the soil and leaves sand. [In addition], burning the forest denies the Oromo people shelter. It also drives wild animals from their homes. The TPLF government, [by

burning the forest also] has denied the Oromo people the opportunity to use their natural resources such building materials for houses.

Thus the forest burns were not just about the trees and wild animals that were burned but also about the ecosystem and balance of nature. They were economic and ecological disasters and exposed the Oromo people to famine, which hit the region within two years. Gurmesssa summarized the ways that forest burns are linked to famine:

Poverty was there even before the forest burned. Even though the people in severely affected regions have many cattle, due to the heavy taxation, they were very poor. They do not farm and their resources are cattle; they survive on milk and meat. When the forests were burned, the grazing lands were also burned. If there is no grass, there is no milk, and you cannot keep your cattle. As a result, the [Oromos] lost their cattle and many people died from famine after the fire was over.

#### 6.4 Examples of Organizing for Resistance and Advocating and Recreating Oromo Indigenous Knowledges

For their part, my informants who lived through the TPLF era (and in some cases, before) were often involved as part of organizations that advocated for Oromia and actively participated to overcome Abyssinian strategies of divide-and-rule. For example, Hinsarmu, a former business professional in Ethiopia, was involved in educating Oromos not to allow themselves to be divided along religious lines. He credited the OLF with this consciousness-raising.

Diribissa, another social activist, has been involved in the reclaiming of the Oromo language, so important for Oromo identity. He talked about how, since 1991, the Oromo people have become highly politicized about their identity and culture and how important was the movement to translate the principles of the oral Waqefaata tradition into a book. Traditionally, Oromos would listen to Elder teachings, but now a written sacred book is in production. It is written in Qubee, a Latin-based alphabet. Abyssinians have traditionally categorized such literature with evil and



devil worship. Thus this project both preserves Oromo indigenous knowledge as well as contributes to the Oromoness movement. The significance of this contribution cannot be underestimated, because Oromos will have the opportunity to hear their own religion in their own words as well as their own voices. This could be instrumental to the revival of Waqefaata religion.

Language policy was challenged by several informants who lived through the TPLF era. Tokkuma, a teacher, had asked for permission to research the educational system during the Derge regime. In his words, "I was interested in looking into the possibility of translating from [Amharic] to [Oromo]." Therefore, he was proactive enough to prepare a proposal. Tokkuma was willing to even contribute some of his salary to cover the funding. In his words,

the importance of the issue was obvious to many, but it was irrelevant for [the Derge] decision makers. They did not provide me a means to conduct such research... The government had no plan to improve [things despite the hope of Oromo] teachers who [we]re so determined to teach and be effective in what they do. In the college where I taught, I was one of the first who took the first blow. Step by step, they dismantled [the work of] most of those who were in that college. Half of those who were in that college now left the country as a refugee to neighboring countries or to the western world.

## 6.5 Summary

TPLF strategies, I have argued here, are driven by the minority status of Tigrayans, who constitute only about five percent of the Ethiopian population. The TPLF fear of the Oromo majority can be seen in their divide-and-rule policies and their promotion of inter- and intra-ethnic violence. I have argued that while early political strategies of the TPLF involved creating a pseudo-organization to deceive Oromos and the world community into believing that Oromos would finally be recognized as a people, later strategy has become more violent. In this chapter, I

presented informant and other information on coercive control of farming, relentless pursuit of student and other activists and most recently, outright environmental destruction and killing. All this has been calculated to break the Oromo spirit and social organization, but it has been met with massive resistance and consciousness-raising about Oromoness. Theoretically the TPLF policies are different from the former Ethiopian government policies, but in action they are the same, as I will argue in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **7.0 Introduction**

In this final chapter I summarize my findings by regime and across regimes and then assess their contribution to knowledge and speculate about further research.

#### **7.1 Summary of My Findings: Colonization from the View of the Colonized in Three Regimes**

##### **7.1.1 Haile Selassie's "Modernization" Policies**

In my critical review of the literature in Chapter 2, I highlighted how European empire builders historically provided Abyssinian colonizers with epistemological justification for their attacks on Indigenous peoples as they taught them that they were (and are) culturally and racially superior. This was done through the story of Prester John that located a mythical Christian kingdom in Abyssinia, which was represented on a map in the 1500s as stretching over much of Africa. The Europeans also supplied Abyssinians with firearms to build an empire and maintain it.

In addition, my research provided an in-depth view of the various stages of colonization from the perspective of those, including myself and my family, who were the object of the colonization process. In Chapter 4, I argued, based on the literature and my informant stories, that the Haile Selassie regime worked to dispossess the Oromo of land that was originally grabbed by Menelik

II. Characterized as a 'modernizer,' Haile Selassie dispersed Oromo land to armed Neftegnas, civil servants, Eritreans and even Jamaican Ras Tafarians (who worshipped him). He also imposed heavy taxation on the Oromo, who were obliged to support his army without compensation. Modernization involved converting what was once land held in common by Indigenous peoples to private property and large commercial farming and other capitalist enterprises. This involved evicting the Oromo who were dispossessed of their land through direct conquest or taxation. Nomadic peoples were brushed aside as dams were built and pushed into desert and semi-desert; in many cases, they were forced to compete within their own group and with other groups of people for scarce resources. My informant accounts show that one process was locked together with another—for example, even if there was a crop failure, farmers were still obligated to give their harvest to the Abyssinians, and then they became susceptible to diseases and famine.

Although Haile Selassie's regime was not as violent as subsequent or prior regimes, participants recounted how he was involved in killing and imprisonment of Oromo leaders, including those involved in the Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association. Participants saw all of these policies as attempts to break the Oromo spirit, but they emphasized that resistance was strong and often effective during this regime. Many examples of resisting the epistemological 'colonization of mind' that results when children are schooled only in the dominant language and culture were given by informants. They also gave examples of resistance to conversion to Abyssinian Christianity. Attempts to assimilate the Oromo through conversion to Christianity and the outlawing of Waqefaata and other Indigenous practices were identified as a key aspect of Abyssinian-Oromo relations.

### 7.1.2 The Derge's Marxist-Oriented Policies of Violence

Chapter 5 was organized around the experiences of informants with the military regime that came to power in 1974 overthrowing the Haile Selassie regime. This era can be characterized by the indiscriminate mass killing of Oromos by the regime, as well as the targeting of Oromo activists. To maintain the colonial borders established by prior regimes, the Derge used Oromo men in its wars with Somalia, Eritrea, Tigray and other Oromo. An entire generation of young Oromo men were conscripted forcibly, leaving communities of women, children and the elderly to fend on their own. Participants recounted how these young men were housed in Derge military camps and exposed to HIV/AIDs, later being forcibly demobilized. This demobilization brought the disease back to their home villages.

At the same time, the Derge villagization policy moved large numbers of Oromos from one place to the other and dismantled the traditional villages. The Agricultural Marketing Corporation was set up to feed the Abyssinian military and civilians in towns and cities provided revenues for the regime. Three different strategies were: sigsega, or the insertion of Abyssinians into Oromo communities to assume leadership roles; sefera, or the settlement of Abyssinians in uninhabited areas; and villagization, or the relocation of Oromos to larger villages where they could be surveilled. By all accounts, these arrangements were intended to remove the remaining self-determining aspects of Oromo culture, and proved disastrous for their health as well.

The Derge also worked to subjugate Indigenous knowledges by dismantling Waqefaata, consistent with their Marxist orientation. Oromo spiritual sites became military camps and the

outlawing of Oromo spirituality continued. At the same time, there was considerable resistance, as reported by informants. For example, many resisted military mobilization, resettlement and villagization programs. Among the participants in my study, many had challenged Derge social and cultural policies and were imprisoned as a result. But like survivors of the Haile Selassie regime, they have worked, in the Diaspora, towards documentation of the atrocities faced by the Oromo and the preservation of Oromo Indigenous knowledges.

### 7.1.3 The TPLF's Divide-and-Rule Attempt to Control the Oromo

As explained in Chapter 2, the Tigrayan people are a minority Abyssinian group, but they managed to come to power in 1991 through deception and the promotion of inter- and intra-ethnic violence. I argued in Chapter 6, based on the observations of participants, that the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front lives in fear of the Oromo majority, which is the crucial consideration behind some of their policies. They 'organized' groups such as the Oromo People's Democratic Organization, which gives a semblance of representing the Oromo, while in reality being controlled by Abyssinians. They have also reorganized governance according to a gott and garee system: to force farmers to attend political organizations intended to indoctrinate them; to organize the farmers to work in forced labour; and to restrict Oromo movements and deliver punishment to activists. Leaders are 'weeded out,' whether they take political (e.g. OLF) or merely social action to better the plight of the Oromo. Students are at particular risk. The Oromo young men who were conscripted by the Derge military are abused and treated as the enemy. Together, these policies can be seen as a concerted attempt to destroy the Indigenous knowledges or "cultural bank" of the Oromo.

TPLF agricultural policy continues to exploit the Oromo by forcing farmers to buy fertilizer and selected seeds in a dependent relationship with the government and global corporations. There are many problems with this system, which contaminates the rivers, ponds, lakes and the environment, reduces productivity (since it is not adapted to local conditions), and reproduces a colonial system (since the seeds and the fertilizers come from elsewhere). As with other Abyssinian regimes, the TPLF time in power has been characterized by epidemics and famine in a policy of what can be called "designed neglect." These events are seen as 'natural disasters' by the world, but participants made clear that they are anything but natural. Perhaps the most horrifying event was the simultaneous burning of large tracts of Oromo forest in 1999-2000. Evidence suggests that this act of environmental violence was engineered to burn out Oromo activists who were hiding there, as well as to assault the forest that is sacred to Oromo Indigenous knowledges.

The TPLF regime is similar to prior regimes in this respect with a subtle difference. As Diribissa said,

all [Abyssinians] are interested in controlling the Oromo people and exploiting their human and natural resources. The difference between them is that for the Amahara (Haile-Selassie and Derge) regimes, Oromos are people who live in Ethiopia [but are not Ethiopians] and Oromia belongs to the Amaharas.... In contrast, the TPLF regime officially claims that their home country is Tigray.

Has the Oromo spirit been broken? Both participants and current publications suggest that the killings and 'disappearances' perpetrated by the current Abyssinian regime have been stepped up in recent years, but that, partly due to the efforts of the Diaspora and the remaining Oromo elite, it remains strong. The Internet has become an important ally. The Diaspora, composed of Oromo who ran away to escape the violence, is composed of activists who publish widely. Although

participants feel that the world still largely neglects the Oromo, they are confident that it is only a matter of time before the truth will be put in front of the world.

## 7.2 Commonalities Across Abyssinian Regimes

After a brief accounting of the policies these regimes held in common, supported by comments of participants and Oromo literature, I will suggest how these observations make a potential contribution to the literatures on anti-colonialism and genocide.

Although this thesis has been organized to point to the distinctive differences among the Abyssinian regimes of Menelik II, Haile Selassie, the Derge and the TPLF, participants in this research insisted that Abyssinian colonization by the Abyssinians has been experienced as a single continuous process. Informants who lived through the three consecutive Abyssinian regimes were in a good position to compare the differences and similarities between them. Kumee said, "I cannot [distinguish] one from the other. When one regime changes, they simply change the ways they suppress the Oromos; in essence they all are the same."

Bulcha (2005) has also drawn attention to these similarities among Abyssinian regimes. He points out that Menelik II and Haile Selassie used theological discourses to justify killing and suppressing the Oromo people. While Haile Selassie categorized the Oromo people as "pagans or heretics or simply tsere (anti) Mariam – the enemy of St. Mary" (p.8), the Derge substituted Stalinist ideas in the place of St. Mary to suppress the Oromo people. As Oromo national



liberation movements emerged in several parts of the empire, the Derge's primary objective, like that of its predecessor, became to maintain its colonial border by all means possible.

### 7.2.1 The Subjugation/Preservation of Indigenous Knowledges: Waqefaata and Gada

As can be seen from participant accounts, one policy that all Abyssinian regimes have held in common has been the targeting of Oromo Indigenous institutions, in particular, Waqefaata. Each regime justified this subjugation of Oromo spirituality differently: Haile Selassie pursued it for purposes of assimilation of the Oromo into Coptic/Orthodox Christianity; the Derge pursued it as part of the eradication of non-Marxist beliefs; and the TPLF pursued it as a method of preventing Oromos from gathering together in an organized group. But however different the reasons for subjugating Waqefaata, participants pointed out that the consequences of the various policies have been the same.

As a recent U.S. Department of State (2007) human rights report has made clear, consistent with the previous Haile Selassie and Derge regimes, Waqefaata continues to be banned by the TPLF government. According to the report, the TPLF government has justified the banning by claiming that those who practice the traditional Oromo religion have a close link with the OLF and the Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association. This makes sense, because from its inception in 1973, the OLF has united the Oromo people by focusing diverse groups on Oromo Indigenous knowledges, particularly the Oromo Indigenous democratic system of governance, Gada. In my informants' words, Oromo Indigenous knowledge and ways of life can be characterized as Oromuuma (=Oromoness, in Oromo) and they all agree that the intent of all Ethiopian regimes

has been to eliminate Oromoness. For example, when I asked my informants who the Abyssinians specifically target to kill and imprison, Jobir said,

They target Oromoness. If they succeed in eliminating Oromoness, they can eliminate the Oromo. If they eliminate Oromoness, the Oromo will not be human beings and will become things. If the [Abyssinians] take away [Oromo] culture, language and everything they have, then they can be programmed to be somebody else. Later on, they can be programmed to be eliminated. If [particular Oromos] are needed, they use them; if not, they eliminate them. If you have Oromoness, you can defend yourself. You can say no to injustice committed against you, no matter where the injustice originates. That is why the [Abyssinians] intend to eliminate Oromoness.... Today the Oromos are still needed, because they are laborers, soldiers and servants. [But] if the [Abyssinians] decide that they do not have enough land or the Oromo challenge them, they will destroy them at will.... Eliminating...groups [promoting Oromuuma] means destruction of the cultural bank of the Oromo people. The Oromo people have no school of their own. The Ethiopian government destroyed or incapacitated many of the Oromo institutions. These intellectuals are the living body, the carriers of information, knowledge and wisdom. Elimination of these intellectuals means destroying the intellectual resources. They have knowledge in religion and history and in all aspects of life. Elimination of these groups is destruction of such knowledge. If you want to make an American analogy, it would be like burning the banking system, the libraries and the government infrastructure. As one person put it, "when the old people die, the library is lost." It is [the equivalent of] losing the Oromo library.

The fact that Waqefaata is a key institution to be eradicated was clear in the responses of informants in this study. When I asked him to compare Abyssinian disdain for the Oromo followers of Waqefaata, Islam and Christianity, Hirphasa said,

the Abyssinians prefer the Christians. They do not like the Moslems, but when it comes to [followers of] Waqefaata, they do not consider them human beings. They refer to them as pagans who are not worth anything.

Tolessa's view was that "Abyssinians do not like the Moslems, the Protestant church groups and the Waqefaatas. Especially they do not want to hear any thing about the Waqefaata!" Tokkuma answered my question about Oromo spirituality with a historical account:

You know, ...at one point, King Theodore stated that his objectives were to wipe out the Gallas and the Muslims. Which means the first target is the Galla and the second one is the Muslims. Abyssinian kings always campaigned against the Oromos and the Muslims. If you claim Waqefaata, they will undermine you ...and hate you the most.

When I posed the same question to Diribissa, he pointed to the centrality of Oromoness:

They even treat the Christians differently. If I am an orthodox Christian, I cannot be equal to the Abyssinians. ...For the Abyssinians, if you are not an Abyssinian, you cannot be a true Orthodox Christian. They have a saying: "for the Gallas, deacons are good enough to be a repentance father" [meaning that while Abyssinians need a priest, a lesser official will do for the Oromo].... But they prefer the one on whom they 'sprinkled water (baptized in Coptic Christianity).'

Gadissa even felt that the Abyssinians "have fear of Waqefaata" and construct it as a religion that "does not accept God" and "believes in trees." Hinsarmu agreed, adding that most of "the pressure is on Waqefaata," whose practitioners have only survived "in isolated areas in mountainous regions."

In summary, as my participants made clear, Indigenous knowledges, particularly spiritual beliefs, have been consistently subjugated by the Abyssinians. The colonizer's religion (whether Coptic Christianity, Stalinism or revolutionary 'democracy') and legal system is used to destroy the possibility of constructing and preserving Oromo identity as a people. Resistance then works actively to maintain this identity.

### 7.2.2 Denial of Self-Determination and Leadership

As my informant Tolessa stated, across all regimes, the goal has been to make sure that "the Oromo people are denied [the opportunity] to think for themselves and plan actions to solve their own problems." This disdain for self-determination and leadership is also described by Guutama (2003, p. 209), who recalled how, as a political prisoner, he was slandered by an Abyssinian security force member. The Abyssinian said to him, "you bastard, you should have been satisfied with your whey drink." The implication is that the Oromo are cattle farmers and should not

involve themselves at all in politics. My informant Diribissa noted this disdain of Abyssinians across all regimes for Oromo self determination when he said,

in Ethiopia, if the Abyssinians are involved in anti-government politics, they will be charged and become political prisoners, however, when it comes to the Oromos, "the charge is not just involving in anti-government activities but just being involved in politics.

The fact that Oromo self-determination is being attacked has been recognized by groups both inside and outside Oromia. For example, The Society for Threatened Peoples International, in its letter to the 56<sup>th</sup> session and 61<sup>st</sup> sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights (2000, 2006), made clear that the Oromo people are particularly targeted. The Society charged the Ethiopian government authorities with racism. Their letter suggests that the Oromo people are being collectively charged with being supporters of the OLF, the organization which demands the right to Oromo self-determination. As my arguments here make clear, the consistent wish of the Oromo people across all regimes has been to end the illegal Abyssinian occupation and establish the type of government that will restore their culture, dignity and needs.

The fact that self determination is strong, even after a century or more of oppression, is clear in my research. The Oromo people are not immune to natural calamities, internal and external human turbulences, but, they have survived, my data suggests, as a result of their collective efforts. Oromo social relations and knowledges have been preserved, at least in part. As I have documented in previous chapters, Abyssinians over all regimes have consistently killed, imprisoned and harassed Oromo traditional intellectuals and educated groups. When I posed a question about why educated groups are targeted, Qawee summarized it succinctly when he said,

Educated groups have the understanding of international politics and they can articulately present the Oromo cause to international forums. They can also provide leadership to the community, and they effectively develop organizational structures. The Ethiopian

government intends to eliminate educated groups and intellectuals to prevent the articulation of the Oromo cause and coordination of their efforts.

It should be noted that the concept of the right of people to self determination goes beyond neo-liberal discourse and relates to the collective control of Indigenous peoples over their destiny. A look at post-colonial politics suggests that those people who exercise self-determination are able to make significant changes in their social conditions for the better. For example, the Irish and Indian under British rule had suffered from famine, but after they pursued self-determination, they became empowered on their affairs and developed their own leadership; thus, for these groups, famine became a thing of the past (Sen, 1999).

### 7.2.3 Killing and Dislocation Represented as 'Natural Disasters'

This leads to a third point of similarity among the policies of all Abyssinian regimes—that all have represented their genocidal actions and neglect as 'natural.' As I discussed in Chapter 2, during the colonization of Oromia and consolidation of Abyssinian colonial power, the Oromo people suffered from repeated famine and epidemics. As a result, half to three quarters of the Oromo people died. In 1972/73, during the Haile Selassie regime, about 200,000 people died of famine in Wallo alone. In 1984/85, five million people starved throughout the Ethiopian empire. In 1999/2000, 10 million people were affected by famine. If international communities had not delivered relief, these people would have simply died.

Since the history of Oromo people, until recently, has been written from the perspective of Euro-Abyssinians, the causes for these deaths and sufferings have been simply explained as resulting

from epidemics and famine. This 'explanation' is the same one traditionally given for the demise of other Indigenous people in the world. For example, European colonizers have historically explained the massive deaths of Indigenous people in different parts of the world as the result of unavoidable biological agents. It was also assumed that they were racially and culturally inferior until Indigenous scholars began to challenge the theory and show how it this argument justifies genocidal colonial social policies (e.g. Smith, 1999). From a growing body of literature starting with Doyal (1981) and including the work of Farmer (1999), Watts (1997), Chapman and Leonard (1998) and Sen (2003, 1999), it has now become clear that famine and epidemics more often occur and become severe under colonial rule, My work suggests that the Oromo case is a good example of this phenomenon.

### 7.3 Contributions to Theory

#### 7.3.1 Relevance of this Research for Understanding Racism and Genocide

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the links between Indigenous knowledges, colonialism and collective violence. To address this problem for the case of Oromia, I documented Abyssinian theoretical justifications in colonizing Oromia. As noted above, successive Abyssinian regimes have denied the Oromo people their land, institutions and self-determination while they actively or through neglect, committed genocide against them.

European map-making which exaggerated the Abyssinian territories in its turn helped to deny the Oromo people their Indigeneity to the Horn of Africa. I also demonstrated the ways Europeans provided Abyssinians with racial, theological and cartographic justifications for conquering Oromia.

Thus unlike political or positivistic explanations of genocide which dwell on the physical, I have emphasized that the process is *epistemologically driven*. This epistemological genocide, I would argue, is perpetuated in the experiences of participants. For example, their educational experiences and my analysis of texts show that the Euro-Abyssinian school curricula are aimed at reproducing Abyssinian worldviews and suppressing the Indigenous. All of this suggests that it is time for Oromia to be seen for what it is—not an unfortunate part of the world marked by natural disasters, but a site of struggle to maintain Indigenous knowledges and institutions as well as to survive

Where does this case study fit into the literature on anti-racism and anti-colonialism? I would argue that it is an example of what Scheurich and Young (1997) call civilizational racism. That is, while racism is often viewed as a psychological process, they argue, it should be conceived of in broader terms as epistemological and even civilizational in scope. Abyssinia, as I have presented it here, is a case in point. This concept is often missing in anti-colonial, genocidal and indigenous health studies, as well in Eurocentric political rhetoric and media.

Based on my research and other bodies of literature that I consulted on epistemological violence (Scheurich and Young, 1997; Banks, 2002, 1994; and Dennis, 1995), I was able to identify various ways in which epistemological violence operates in the Oromo case. Since other groups in Africa have experienced colonialism as a common history, I would argue that my observations on Oromia are applicable in these other cases.

First, epistemological violence provided the theoretical reasoning for colonizers to act against Indigenous peoples in each case. These theoretical reasons include theological and scientific discourses that promote biological and cultural racism. Second, in all dominant cultural institutions, including the media and schools, it indoctrinates Indigenous peoples to believe that the crimes committed against them are just. As Friere pointed out, this brainwashing, or “housing the oppressor” prepares them to be the agents for colonizers to act against their own people or other Indigenous peoples. This process can be seen in other cases such as the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda (Mamdani, 2001; Stanton, 2004) and warring groups in Sudan (Jalata, 2005). When oppression is cast as a series of ‘natural disasters,’ the social problems of Indigenous peoples are redefined not as oppression but as the outcome of some deficiency of the colonized people. The colonizers, in essence, avoid naming the real instigator of the social problems that Indigenous people face and instead victimize the victim.

### 7.3.2 Expanding the Conception of Genocide

The various bodies of literatures written from the experience of Indigenous peoples, of which my work is an example, reveal that under colonial rule, collective violence occurs when the colonial power deliberately attacks the social, economic, political, cultural and environmental well-being of the colonized people (Walter, 2003; and Zimmerer, 2003). Given that these conditions are essential for survival, such an attack slowly breaks down the social fabric and may annihilate the Indigenous people. In these cases, mass killing is epistemologically justified, but as the Oromo case has made clear, there is also an attack on Indigenous knowledge. By unmasking the colonial epistemological violence in such cases, it can be revealed that the colonialists who are absorbed



in their worldview are knowingly and unknowingly underreporting genocide committed by their communities against the Indigenous people. While colonial knowledge can be used in masking colonial power relations, then, using an anti-colonial approach, this 'knowledge' can also be exposed for what it is.

When states inflict massive casualties on a group of people in whole or in part because they belong to certain national, ethnic or religious groups, we call it genocide and the world community may act to stop it. But when a state that is exclusionary by its nature chooses to control, exploit and assimilate in whole or in part, a national, ethnic or racial group resulting in massive death, as in the case of Oromia, contemporary definitions are too narrow to recognize the situation as genocide. The deaths and the sufferings of Indigenous people under such conditions are considered 'normal' or 'inevitable' (Peece, 2003; Brantlinger, 2003). As the fish cannot sense that they are surrounded with water until the fishery catches them, members of colonial institutions and ideologues are not in a position to see their wrongdoings until they step away from their location (Scheurich & Young 1997; Phillimore, 1998). These arguments have been made by scholars who have argued that Euro-centric theories and racial policies were tantamount to official policy until they were challenged at the end of the Second World War by the American civil rights movements and anti-colonial movements (Wright, 1993; Brantlinger, 2003, Pena, 2005). Although it was recognized that racial prejudice had existed for centuries, criminalization of hate literature is a relatively recent development. In fact, the word "racism" only became part of our daily vocabulary after these historical events. However, the word racism has mainly biological connotations, and thus, cultural and epistemological racism remain a largely unproblematized part of the fabric of neocolonial societies (Scheurich and Young, 1997).

This is not to say that there are not useful ideas in the literature on genocide. While many analyses of genocide and collective violence focus on physical violence (killing, burning and counting mass graves), not all do. For example, Fein (1997) introduced the term *genocide by attrition* to emphasize that genocide is a coordinated plan of actions intended to destroy the social fabric of a group of people to annihilate them. She gave explicit details about the ways states slowly and systematically kill the targeted group. Fein brought the study of genocide back to the vision of Raphael Lemkin (1945), generally regarded as the founder of genocide studies. According to Fein, about 700,000 Jews died from hunger, disease and poor living conditions imposed upon them in ghettos, though outright killing is what is often emphasized. The Jews were kept in ghettos where they could not support themselves.

Fein (1997) went on to discuss the case of Sudan (1983-1993) to make the point that states deliberately deny life-sustaining conditions in order to destroy or permanently cripple the targeted group. The Sudanese imposed Islam on all non-Muslims. In addition, they took their land and cattle, conducting selective killings of village leaders and intellectuals. Fein's analysis showed that as the Nuba people lost their resources and their leadership, famine loomed. According to Fein (1997), the 'vulnerability' of people to genocide by what she terms 'attrition,' began not with malnutrition but denial of political, civil rights and socio-economic rights. The point that scholars of genocide should take from my case study of the Oromo and Fein's study of the Nuba is that denial of such rights purposefully and recklessly neglects the needs of Indigenous peoples.

### 7.3.3 Emphasizing the Role of Epistemology in Colonization

My research is in the tradition of studies of colonization, but it emphasizes the subtle ways in which knowledge is constructed to justify the colonial agenda. In the Oromo case, the Oromo (and arguably all Indigenous peoples) are assumed by various theories to be at some lower level of development than the colonizer. This can be accomplished through theories of cultural superiority, theological superiority and/or scientifically. I will discuss each of these in turn.

As anti-colonial literature makes clear, the Europeans justified their colonial presence as a civilizing mission. Civilizing meant improving the moral, intellectual and industrial conditions of the colonized people (Curtin, 1978; Smith, 1999), which can be redefined, from an anti-colonial perspective, as epistemological violence. In fact, nineteenth century Euro-centric discourse included a taxonomy of cultures, which was described as a manifestation of the degree of civilization of a culture (Spencer, [1896]1968); Finzsch, 2005). Economies based on hunting and gathering were placed at the lowest stage of an evolutionary pyramid, with herding considered more advanced. The third stage was identified as the use of cultivation, defined as farmers on the land who have a fixed residence. The highest stage was the establishment of industry and commerce as achieved by Europeans. In addition, from a Euro-centric view, civilization and governance were closely connected. Thus, when the Europeans colonizers noticed that Indigenous peoples did not possess 'leadership' and governors in the form of hereditary chiefs, they took this as sign of backwardness (e.g. Spencer, [1896]1968). Clearly, the Oromo people did not fare well in this classification. Given that the Oromos did not use land in the ways the Euro-Abyssinians used it and did not establish permanent cities or towns, they were categorized

as invaders and migrants. Arguably, Indigenous peoples in all parts of the world would be classified this way (Finzsch, 2005). In the case of the Oromo, as my participants and the growing literature would emphasize, these classifications need to be challenged.

Historical theories of theological superiority such as that of Plowden (1868, p. 53) also need to be challenged by scholars and others because of their continuing embeddedness in everyday life in states such as Abyssinia. Theological intolerance has been identified as one of the leading justifications for colonialism and genocide (Comaroff, 1986; Mazrui, 1978). For example, according to Botwinick (2001), for centuries, the Jews were outcasts because of their rejection of Christian teaching and their devotion to the beliefs of their ancestors. In fact, as Botwinick (2001) and Brustein and Ronnkvist (2002) argue, although national and racial theories inform modern anti-Semitism, theological reasoning provides the strongest and deepest epistemological justification. Such epistemological reasoning clearly influenced the Nazi policy to annihilate the Jews and the very miseries plotted against the Jews were seen as a sign of God's punishment for their rejection of Christian faith.

Some Judeo/Christian/Islamic literatures make genocide a moral obligation and others make it morally wrong (Lackey, 2005). On one hand, God's commandment is not to kill; on the other, believers are commanded to kill those identified as infidels. Indeed, in Deuteronomy and first Samuel in the Bible, God is quoted as authorizing genocide, instructing his people to wipe out whole races, including the old, young, infants, men and women (I Samuel 15:3). Thus those who so deeply believed that killing is morally wrong were also involved in killing, albeit of those who they considered to be less than human (Smith, 1999). As Lackey (2005) explained, if you belong

to the so-called chosen people, you can expect mercy; if not, the consequences are dire. Lackey argues that this subtle qualification explains why the “chosen people” ruthlessly killed, robbed and exposed Indigenous peoples historically to starvation and diseases without believing that they were violating God’s commandments.

As shown here, the Oromo people were killed in part for not being Christians. Euro-Abyssinian historians such as Asma-Giyorgis ([1910]1987) added an epistemological dimension by acknowledging that Oromo ethics are superior to the Christians but he denigrated the Oromo as “a people who do not know God” (p.125). He also suggested that the Oromo “worship the devil” and learned their language from “devil.” Until recently, it was forbidden to use the Oromo language in the Orthodox Church preaching, in schools and in courts. These antiquated beliefs still influence Abyssinian thinking towards the Oromo people. For example, a young Oromo woman raised as an Orthodox Christian, was recently denied burial ground by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church because of her involvement in the teaching of the Oromo language. (Deressa, 2003).

An emphasis on epistemology in colonization suggests that one can be anti-racist from one’s own perspective but racist in profound ways as part of Euro-centric civilization. While theological and sociological justifications for racial superiority may seem antiquated to many, Europeans have not so long ago scientifically theorized about their superiority over Indigenous people (Brantlinger, 2003). Their claims gave moral authority to their colonial agenda and justified the elimination of the Indigenous people. Scientific racism, which the colonizers used to justify their actions, was designed to reinforce colonial power relations and inequality as natural

and inevitable (Fisher, 1996). According to Garcia (2004), what makes individuals racist is their disregard for or hostility to members of other races. At a basic level, scientific racism motivated and justified the policies that divided humankind into superior beings, destined to reign, and lower races, fated to be subjugated. The lowest in this hierarchy were those destined for extinction by means of deliberate murder. European racial theory justified colonization, exploitation and assimilation (Prouix, 2003; Waldram et.al., 2006), and also the annihilation of Indigenous peoples (Barta, 2005).

As noted above, Euro-centric racial theories can be implicated in the genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda (Mironko, 2004; Mamdani, 2002). Europeans had theorized pre-colonial Rwanda as part of Europe stuck in pre-Christian time. The Europeans theorized the superiority of the Tutsi over the Hutu and Twa and categorized the Tutsi as having Hamitic origins, which was mentioned in the Bible. The Tutsi elites, who were themselves the victims of European epistemological violence, did not reject the Euro-centric interpretation of their origins. In fact, like the Abyssinians, the Tutsi nobility welcomed theories about their supposed racial and cultural superiority. In effect, they fell into the role of an intermediary between the European colonizers and Indigenous African peoples. That is, historically, the German and Belgian colonizers used the Tutsi as their local agents to control and exploit the Hutu and Twa (Kellow and Steeves, 1998; Mamdani, 2001). The same racial hierarchy theory was applied when the Europeans supported the Abyssinians, who, in their racial classification, belonged to the Semitic group (classified above the Hamitic), while the Oromos were categorized as Hamitic (Steffanson & Starrett, 1976, p. 213). In the Euro-centric racial classification, while the Aryan race (northern

Europeans) are categorized at the apex, Semitic language speakers are in the next category and other groups are at lower levels (McClintock, 1995).

Schooled in Euro-centric racial theory, the Tutsis reproduced the idea of the superiority of the Tutsi. The Tutsi used the Hamitic theory to enhance the value of their origins and presented themselves as ancient and civilized and able to challenge European colonial domination. Making use of Euro-centric discourse, the Tutsi claimed that they were civilized, and as such, not subject to domination. But although the Hamitic theory might have been beneficial to some Tutsis, it also denied them Indigenous status. It categorized the Tutsi as outsiders along with European colonial settlers. Ultimately this made the Tutsi appear to the Hutu and Twa as outsiders and colonizers, which was important in the 1994 genocide (Mamdani, 2001). As my research suggests, the Abyssinians also used Euro-centric racial theory to enhance their status among the colonial powers and the colonized people.

As has been noted many times, colonizing discourse can have an effect on the colonized as well as the colonizer. That is, controlling the mind is even more important than controlling the social, political and economic spheres. Colonizers fund schools that promote their epistemology and silence the voices of Indigenous peoples. Such schooling indoctrinates students of Indigenous peoples and makes colonialism normal phenomena (Memmi, 2003). Indigenous students are evaluated based on such schooling and those who do not adhere are considered failures or lazy, while those who are absorbed in colonial thinking are silenced when genocide against their people is committed. However, as my study shows, resistance can be much underestimated in the

accounts of colonizers, and scholars who wish to be responsible must seek out the experiences and accounts of those who have been subjugated in order to represent their resistance.

#### 7.4 Issues for Further Research and Action

Although we know that colonial policies have been catastrophic to Indigenous peoples, the *specific* ways in which these power relations have been exercised to date have been under-examined. I have argued that this is true not only in the literature on genocide but also the literature on anti-racism and anti-colonialism. That is, I believe that only through careful examination of the day-to-day experiences of the oppressed can the power relations of the colonizing apparatus be understood.

The Oromo relationship with the Abyssinians is a case in point—characterized by Asma Giyorigis ([1910]1987, p. 141) as “sheep and wolf.” On the surface it may appear that most Abyssinians do not gain much benefit from colonization of the Oromo people. However, structurally, by not providing the social services needed in Ethiopia, the Abyssinians are able to finance their military and security forces. Thus the Oromo people are collectively paying an enormous price and the Abyssinians are keeping themselves in power. On the one hand, the Oromo are forced to subsidize Ethiopian colonial institutions such as the military and security forces and on the other, they are sacrificing their human and natural resources in fighting those same institutions.



How can this situation be addressed? To bring peace and social transformation in this region, one suggestion might be that all the people in the region come together and resolve the conflict in round-table discussions. The idea of self-determination in principle could empower everyone in their affairs, and is particularly relevant to the case of collective Indigenous knowledge and practice. Granting self-determination has been seen to play a major role in settling conflicts in several parts of the world—and one could hope that it could be helpful here.

As I wrote this thesis, I followed events in Rwanda, South Sudan and Darfur in Sudan. I have a fear that if conditions in the Ethiopian empire are not addressed as soon as possible, the conflict could get out of hand. Global powers and the international organizations need to go beyond from their narrow version of truth focused on national and economic interests and approach the issue of these regions inclusively—that is to say, with understanding of the complexities involved and from the perspectives of those who are oppressed.

The Oromia Support Group (OSG, 2005-6), a non-political organisation organized to raise awareness of human rights abuses, has now reported 3,874 extra-judicial killings and 925 disappearances in Ethiopia from 1992 onwards. The number includes civilians suspected of supporting Oromo political and social groups. The report made it clear that most of those who were killed or who disappeared are Oromos. Thousands of civilians have been imprisoned both in official and non-official institutions such as in the military. In prison, torture and rape are widespread. According to the OSG report (2005-6), in Ethiopia, a lack of democracy and accountability is the single most important cause of poverty and a substandard quality of life. All

of these facts are understandable in the light of the history of Abyssinian-Oromo relations recounted here. The question we are left with is where do we go from here?

### 7.5 Implications of this Research for Africa

For anyone tuned to coverage of Ethiopian affairs in the dominant media, the image of Abyssinia as a continuation of the Prester John myth is not too difficult to discern. The context so painfully presented by Oromo participants in this research is completely missing in dominant accounts of famines, burns and other misfortunes. This must change. The role of Abyssinia as central to contemporary American interests needs to be challenged in the media and in literature. An immediate goal would involve consciousness-raising about the meaning of events from an Oromo perspective, but ultimately justice must be done. Exposure is necessary, since there is a need for Oromia to recruit allies in the long process of decolonizing Africa. Those who have been complicit in collective violence, including sanitizing the record of Abyssinia, must be held accountable. All those interested in equity, including other Indigenous peoples, activists and their allies must be brought into this project. In equity studies itself, the accounts of England colonizing the Irish and the Russians colonizing the Ukrainian must be expanded to include the case of how the Abyssinians have colonized Oromia.

For so many years, Africans have been used to viewing themselves through European eyes. Thus the glory of Abyssinia has been taken for granted. The violence they have committed against the Oromo people has escaped world notice. But as Asante suggests, African people need to know themselves by placing themselves in the centre of their account of history. Only when they do so

will the injustices documented here begin to be addressed. Arguably, the key to this Afrocentricity lies within higher education itself. As Jalata (2007) has stated, "people who were colonized and forced to move from their cultural centre cannot liberate themselves without returning to their cultural roots." (p.33)

Under apartheid rule, the South African Black majority suffered enormously. After several decades of struggle by local and international activists, unexpectedly the regime decided to negotiate the transfer of power to the Black majority. It is inevitable that the Abyssinian government will be similarly forced to give up their power and let the Oromo people enjoy the self-determination that they have pursued for so many decades. Many African people who have experienced colonial rule under the European empire builders are in a position to realize and sympathize with the situation of the Oromo people under Abyssinian colonial. Their support will be crucial in this process, just as it was in the case of South Africa.

## 7.6 Decolonizing Higher Education

In many African countries, higher education is a direct copy of the education systems of former European colonizers and the language of instruction is either in English or French (Mazrui, 1978). This has supported the assumptions that Europeans are knowledge producers and Africans are knowledge consumers. Historically, Europeans came to colonize, exploit and control the African people. Thus, a higher education system in the image of the colonizers is unlikely to produce a knowledge that disrupts power relations. Nor will it address the situation of Indigenous peoples. For example, as I experienced it as a student in Africa, data and knowledge

produced by African students is recorded in colonial languages. Thus it is not available to Indigenous communities, but only to the elites who have mastered the colonial language. For the majority of the people who have not mastered the language, knowledge produced in higher education would not be accessible.

Eurocentric knowledge has represented African countries as dependent on the Western world for economic and technical knowledges. The West, in this system, is seen as a generous benefactor rather than leading a system of exploitation. At a subtle level, charity-givers congratulate themselves as knowledgeable experts, and rescuers of racially inferior and ignorant people. This ridiculous state of affairs has been the subject of anti-colonial scholarship ranging from books by Fanon (1963), through Gandhi (2002), to Asante (2003). It cannot be expected that those who hold this system in place will suddenly come to their senses and stop oppressing. Therefore, the Indigenous peoples themselves, including in the Diaspora, need to continue to raise consciousness about the situation and agitate for transformation. Ultimately, African universities need to function in Indigenous African epistemology.

Some idea of the difficulty in achieving this goal can be grasped by considering a recent event at Mekele University (MU) in the Tigray region. A history professor published a textbook in 2005 for use in introductory history; in the book, longstanding Abyssinian hatred against the Oromo people was expressed. For example, as documented in the *OSA Newsletter*, the following sentence appeared on p. 145:

Considered uncivilized and inferior, even compared to the plateau's Muslims ... inevitably, the pagan Galla heroes ...when they began their great migration to the

plateau, seemed even more inferior in the eyes of semetized Christian elites than the Somalis and Danakils.

On page 169, reference was made to the “uncouth galla” and on pages 166-7, another unproblematized reference to the ‘Galla’ was made:

Writing his monograph about 1593, the monk Bahrey already found it difficult to comprehend how the numerically and culturally inferior Galla were able to overcome the numerous Ethiopians (paragraph 4, line 4).

The book provoked a reaction from the Oromo. For example, the Oromo students at the MU protested against the publication of this textbook and the OSA also wrote a protest letter to the University critiquing such racist teaching and publishing. However, the university did not respond, and there appears to be no accountability in the system.

The fact that racist attitudes against Oromos are longstanding in Abyssinian higher education is evident in another incident the same year. According to an Oromo Support Group report (2005-6), a Tigrayan student Arefayne at Hadama University (in the Oromia region) committed suicide. Following this, and without any evidence that Oromos had anything to do with the suicide, Oromo students at MU were badly beaten and subjected to racist attacks. During and after the funeral services for Arefayne, residents and students in Mekele took to the streets chanting for revenge against Oromo students, whom they blamed for his death. The next day Oromo students were rounded up and taken to prison while Tigrayan students chanted against the Oromo people and students. The fact that such racist practices are tolerated needs to be challenged by those inside and outside Ethiopia.

## 7.7 Postscript

In Oromo traditional song, or *geraarsa*, the Oromos suggest that the Abyssinians have nothing to be proud of in relying on the Europeans to support the Ethiopian regime. One song identifies how the Oromo became Abyssinian subjects--because the Abyssinians had acquired European firearms and because they relied on European technology. As Guutama (2003, p. 32) has translated it (with my amendments in square brackets), one such song says,

Ani Faranjii qotee	Cultivating imported white man's corn
kanaan dilbii koo hin jedhu	I will not claim [to] having a [food] reserve
Gamana ijaajjee gamatt ibiddan gubee	Standing on one side of the valley and burning on
	[shooting from] the other with fire
Kanaa mirga koo hin jedhu	I will [would] not brag of the result [as bravery].

The idea of self-determination goes hand in hand with Freire's ([1970] 2000) idea of empowerment. The denial of the right to self-determination prevents Indigenous peoples from taking control of their daily lives and their future. Therefore, in another traditional song, the Oromo express a wish for self-determination:

Otto akka garaakooti	If things would be the way I wish,
Abbayaan noora goona	we will build bridge on Nile River,
Jalaa isa horaa goona	make the beneath (water) salty.
Otto akka garaakooti	If things would be the way I wish,
Amara dawee goona	we would make the Amaharas with no guns,
Oromoo abba qawee goona	and make the Oromo gun owners.
Taraa taraa waal moona	In doing that, we could rule each other by turns.

As is well-documented in this research, the Oromo have resisted colonialism under every Abyssinian regime, and are hopeful that they will overcome the long history of Abyssinian

colonial atrocities and their divide-and-rule approach. Let me conclude with one of the songs,  
which was probably composed in resistance and yearns for peace:

Taliil robeeee nugiduuti  
– taliil robeee

Gammadi saba ko  
Haan diin yadee nugiduuti  
Hundumtu niolee

The grace of peace rained among us  
--the grace of peace rained

My people be happy  
Everything that the enemy has planned has failed  
We have prevailed

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Admassie, Yeraswork (2000) *Twenty Years to Nowhere. Property Rights, Land Management and Conservation in Ethiopia*, Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press.
- African Charter on Human and People's Rights, adopted 27 June 1981, entered into force 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1986, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3 Rev.5.
- Amnesty International (1993) *Yearly Report. Ethiopia*, London, UK.
- Anonymous (1992) *Video Recorded in the Commemoration of the Annolee Massacre of 1896*.
- Anonymous (2002) *Video Recorded on the Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association Meeting*.
- Asante, Molefi (2003) *Afrocentricity. The Theory of Social Change*. Revised and Expanded. Chicago, Illinois: African American Images.
- Asma-Giyorgis ([1910]1987) *Asma Giyorgis and His Work. History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Sawa*. Translated by Tefla Bairu. Stuttgart, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH.
- Bahrey (1954) *History of the Galla*, in C.F. Beckingham and C.W. B. Huntingford (Eds) *Some Records of Ethiopia, 1593-1646*. London: Hakluyt Society.
- Banks, James (2002) Race, Knowledge Construction, and Education in the USA: Lessons From History, in Race and Ethnicity and Education. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 5 (1): 7-27.
- Banks, James (1994) The Historical Construction of Knowledge About Race: Implication for Transformative Teaching, *Educational Researcher*, 24 (2): 15-25.
- Barta, Tony (2005) *Mr. Darwin's Shooters: On Natural Selection and the Naturalizing of Genocide*. *Patterns of Prejudice* 39 (2): 116-37.
- Bartels, L (1983) *Oromo Religion: Myths and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia. An Attempt to Understand*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- Battiste, Marie (2005) You Can't be the Global Doctor if You're the Colonial Disease. In Tripp, Peggy & Muzzin, Linda (Eds.) *Teaching as Activism, Equity Meets Environmentalism*. Montreal ; McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Battiste, Marie (2000) *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Vancouver: UBC Press.



- Battiste, Marie and Youngblood Henderson (2000) *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: a Global Challenge*. Saskatoon: Purich.
- Beckingham F. Charles and Hamilton, Bernard (1996) *Prester John, the Mongols and the Ten Lost Tribes*, Aldershot Great Britain, Variorum.
- Benjamin, Jesse (2002) *East Africa and the World: Racialized Knowledge and Power in The Construction of History and Identity*. PhD Dissertation, Department of Sociology, State University of New York.
- Benti, Getahun (2001) An Overview of some Factors Limiting the Migration of the Oromo to Addis Ababa, *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, 8 (1/ 2): 155-172.
- Berger, Peter and Luckmann, Thomas (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of knowledge*, New York: Anchor Books.
- Birri, Debela (1995) *History of the Evangelical Church Bethel 1919 to 1947-Presbyterian, Ethiopia*, Ph.D. Thesis, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.
- Biyya, Mooti (1996) *Oromiyaan Befereqa. Abissiniyocracy Weyisi Dimokrasy*, Finfinnee: Jiituu, Finearts Publishing.
- Biyya, Qeerransoo (2006) Who is to Blame for Inciting Religious, Ethnic and Land Conflicts in South Western Oromia, Ethiopia?. *Sudan Tribune*, Friday, 20 October.
- Bishop, Russell (1998) Freeing Ourselves from Neo-colonial Domination in Research: a Maori Approach to Creating Knowledge, *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(2): 199-219.
- Blaut, Jim (2005) The Theory of Cultural Racism. *Antipode*, 24 (4): 289-299.
- Blundell, Herbert (1900) A Journey Through Abyssinia to The Nile, *The Geographical Journal*, XV(2): 97-121.
- Boahen, Albert (1984) *The Colonial Challenge; Africa Under Foreign Domination, 1880-1935*. UNESCO Courier, May.
- Botwinick S. Rita (2001) *A History of the Holocaust. From Ideology to Annihilation. Second Edition*. Florida, Atlantic University. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River.
- Brantlinger, Patrick (2003) *Dark Vanishings. Discourse on the Exhibition of Primitive Races, 1800-1930*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Brook, Daniel (2000) Environmental Genocide: Native Americans and Toxic Waste. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 57, (1): 105-113.

- Brown, Reva (1994) Knowledge and Knowing. A Feminist Perspective, *Science Communication*, 16 (2): 152-165.
- Brown, Richard and Schubert, Daniel (2000) *Knowledge and Power in Higher Education. A Reader*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Browning, Christopher (2004) *The Origins of the Final Solution*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Browning, Christopher (1986) Nazi Resettlement Policy and the Search for a Solution to the Jewish Question, 1939-1941. *German Studies Review*, IX (3): 497-519.
- Brustein, William and Ronnkvist, Amy (2002) The Roots of Anti-Semitism: Romania Before the Holocaust. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 4 (2): 211-235.
- Bulatovic, Aleksandr ([1900] 1993) *Ethiopia Through Russian Eyes: Country in Transition, 1896-1898*. Trenton, New Jersey, Red Sea Press.
- Bulcha, Mekuria (2005) Genocidal Violence in the Making of Nation and State in Ethiopia. *African Sociological Review*, 9 (2): 1-54.
- Bulcha, Mekuria (2002) *The Making of the Oromo Diaspora. A Historical Sociology of Forced Migration*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Kirk House Publishers.
- Bulcha, Mekuria (1994) The Language Policies of Ethiopian Regimes and the History of Written Afaan Oromoo: 1844-1994. *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, 1 (2): 91-115.
- Buttrick, George (Ed. - 1962) *The Interpreters of the Dictionary of the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Canadian Institute for Health Information (2003) *Broadening the Lens, Proceedings of a Roundtable on Aboriginal Peoples' Health*, January 21.
- Carmichael, Cathie (2005) The Violent Destruction of Community During the Century of Genocide. *European History Quarterly*. 35 (3): 395-403.
- Chambliss, J.(1996) *Philosophy of Education. An Encyclopedia*, New York: Garland.
- Chapman, Audrey and Rubenstein, Leonard (Eds.- 1998) *Human Rights and Health: The Legacy of Apartheid*, New York,: AAAS Science Human Rights Program.
- Clay and Holcomb (1986) *Politics and the Ethiopian Famine 1984-1985*. Cambridge, Mass: Cultural Survival.
- Comaroff, Jean and Comaroff, John (1986) Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa. *American Ethnologist*, 13 (1): 1-22.

- Coughlan, Robert (1966) *Life World Liberty, Tropical Africa*. New York.
- Craig, Scott (1996) Indigenous Self-Determination and Decolonization of the International Imagination: A Plea. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 18 (4): 814-820.
- Crey, Ernie (1997) The Perpetual Stranger. Four Generations in My Sto:lo Family. In Fournier, Suzanne and Crey, Ernie (Eds.) *Stolen From Our Embrace. The Abduction of First Nations Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.
- Crichlow, Wesley (2002) Western Colonization as Disease: Native Adoption & Cultural Genocide. *Critical Social Work*, 2 (2): 104-126.
- Curtin, Philip (1978) *African History*, London: Longman.
- Darley, Major (1935) *Slave and Ivory in Abyssinia. A Record of Adventure and Exploration Among the Ethiopian Slave -Raiders*, New York: Robert M. McBride & Co.
- Darkwah, Kofi (1978) *Shewa, Menilek and the Ethiopian Empire 1813-1889*. New York: Holmes & Meier.
- Dei, George and Asgharzadeh, Alizic (2001) The Power of Social Theory: The Anti-Colonial Discursive Framework. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 35 (3): 297-323.
- Dei, George; Hall, Budd and GoldinRosenberg, Dorothy (2002) *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts. Multiple Readings of Our World*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Deressa, Beletech (2003) *Oromtitti: The Forgotten Women in Ethiopian History*, Raleigh, NC: Ivy House Publishing Group.
- Doyal, Lesley with Imogen Pennel (1981) *The Political Economy of Health*. Pluto Press, London.
- Dhruvarajan, Vanaja, & Vickers, Jill. Eds. (2002). *Gender, Race and Nation: A Global Approach*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Dugassa, Begna (2006) Ethiopian Language Policy and Health Promotion in Oromia. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 33 (4), 68-86.
- Dugassa, Begna (2006) Knowledge, Identity and Power: The Case of Ethiopia and Ethiopianess. *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, 13 (1/2): 57-81.
- Dugassa, Begna (2005) Women's Rights and Health: The Case of Oromo Women in Ethiopia. *Health Care for Women International*, 26 (2), 149-169.

- Dugassa, Begna (2004) Human Rights Violations and Famine in Ethiopia. *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, 11 (1/2), 47-68.
- Dugassa, Begna (2003) Powerlessness and the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the Ethiopian Empire. *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, 10 (1/2), 31-66.
- Ege, Svein (1996) *Class, State, and Power in Africa. A Case Study of the Kingdom of Shawa (Ethiopia) about 1840*. Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden.
- Ethiopian Embassy in Washington DC, (2006/2007) *Facts about Ethiopia*.  
<http://www.ethiopianembassy.org.information.htm> (Retrieved, June 2007)  
[http://www.mfa.gov.et/facts\\_About\\_Ethiopia/Regional\\_States.php](http://www.mfa.gov.et/facts_About_Ethiopia/Regional_States.php) (Retrieved on October, 18, 2007)
- Ethiopian Constitution (1994) *Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*  
<http://www.ethiobar.net/English/cnstiotn/consttn.htm> (Retrieved on July 30, 2007)
- Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) (2004) *A Human Rights Violation Committed Against Oromo Students of Addis Ababa University. 74<sup>th</sup> Special Report*, Reg. No. 376, February, 10. <http://www.ehrco.org/Reports/Special74.pdf> (Retrieved on April 10, 2007)
- Fanon, Frantz (1965) *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press.
- Farmer, Paul (2003) *Pathologies of Power. Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. With a Foreword by Amartya Sen. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Farmer, Paul (1999) *Infections and Inequalities. The Modern Plagues. Updated Edition with A New Preface*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Fassil, Kiros (1990) *Implementing Educational Policies in Ethiopia, World Bank Discussion Papers Africa Technical Department Series*, Washington, D.C: The World Bank.
- FDRE Basic Information (2007) *The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Basic Information* <http://www.ethiobar.net/English/basinfo/reginfo.htm> (Retrieved July 30, 2007).
- Fein, Helen (1997) Genocide by Attrition 1939-1993. The Warsaw Ghetto, Cambodia, and Sudan: Links between Human Rights Health, and Mass Death. *Health and Human Rights* 2 (2): 10-45.
- Fetha Nagast (1968) *The Fetha Nagast; The Law of the Kings*. Translated from the Ge'ez by Abba Paulos Tzadua, edited by Peter L. Strauss. Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University, Faculty of Law.
- Fife, Wayne (2001) Creating the Moral Body: Missionaries and the Technology of Power in Early Papua New Guinea. *Ethnology*, 40 (3): 251-69.

- Finzsch, Norbert (2005) It is Scarcely Possible to Conceive that Human Beings Could be so Hideous and Loathsome: Discourses of Genocide in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century American and Australia. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 39 (2) 97-115.
- Fischer, Claude, Hout, Michael, Jankowski, Martin, Lucas, Samuel, Swidler, Ann and Voss, Kim (1996) *Inequality by Design. Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Foucault, Michel (1977) *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, New York, Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*. (Ed. Colin Gordon) New York: Pantheon Books.
- Frank, Arthur (1979) Reality Construction in Interaction. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 5: 167-191.
- Freire, Paulo (2003) From Pedagogy of the Oppressed. In Darder, Antonia; Baltodano, Marta; and Torres, Rodolfo (Ed.). *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*. New York RoutledgeFalmer.
- Freire, Paulo (2002) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed. 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* with an Introduction by Donaldo Macedo. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, Paulo (1994) *Pedagogy of Hope. Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. With Notes by Ana Maria Araujo Freire. Translated by Robert R. Barr, New York: Continuum.
- Fuller, Theodore (1987) Resettlement as a Desertification Control Measure: A Case Study in Darfur Region, Sudan-Part II: Recommendations. *Agric. Admin & Extension*, 26: 39-55.
- Galtung, Johan (1967) Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3): 167-191.
- Gabra-Mariyam Alaqa Tayya (1987) *History of the People of Ethiopia*. Translated by Grover Hudson and Tekle Negash. Uppsala: Centre for Multiethnic Research.
- Gandhi, Mahatma (2002) *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of His Writings on His Life, Work, and Ideas*, Vintage.
- Garcia Jorge (2004) Three Sites for Racism. Social Structures, Valuing, and Vice. In Levin, Michael and Pataki, Tamas (Eds.) *Racism in Mind*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Geleta, Abiyu (2003) Challenges Facing the Oromo People's Right of Self-Determination – An Overview, *Proceedings of Oromo Studies Association, the Seventeenth Annual Conference*, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
- Gellner, Ernest (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- Gellner, Ernest (1994) *Encounters with Nationalism*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Gizaw, Getachew (1992) Health Aspects of Repatriation of Ex-soldiers, *Ethiopian Journal of Health Development*, 6: 53-61.
- Goldberg, David (1993) *Racist Culture. Philosophy and Politics of Meaning*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell.
- Guutama, Ibsa (2003) *Prison of Conscience. Upper Compound Maa'ikalawii. Ethiopian Terror Prson and Tradition*. New York, Gumbirmans Publishing.
- Guzman, Manuel and Verstappen, Bert (2001) Human Rights Monitoring and Documentation Series, Vol. 1 What is Monitoring, HURIDOCS.
- Habermas, Jurgen (2003) *Truth and Justification*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Hacking, Ian (2001) *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press.
- Hancock, Graham (1985) *Ethiopia. The Challenges of Hunger*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.
- Harding, Sandra (1998) *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies*, Indiana State University Press.
- Hassen, Mohammed (2006) The History of Oromo Nationalism: 1960s-1990s. In (Ed.) Hameso, Seyoum and Hassan Mohammed, *Arrested Development in Ethiopia. Essays on Underdevelopment, Democracy and Self-determination*. Trenton, New Jersey, The Red Sea Press Inc.
- Hassen, Mohammed (2005) Pilgrimage to the Abba Muudaa, *Journal of Oromo Studies*, 12 (1 and 2) 142-157.
- Hassan, Mohammed (2003) Shaykh Bakrii Saphalp (1895-1980): A Prolific Scholar and a Great Oromo Nationalist. *The Journal of Oromo Studies*. 10 (1 and 2) 135-178.
- Hassan, Mohammed (1994) *The History of Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860*. Trenton, NJ. The Red Sea Press.
- Hinton, Alexander (2002) Introduction: Genocide and Anthropology. In Hinton, Alexander (Ed.) *Genocide an Anthropological Reader*, Malden, Mass. Blackwell.
- Hirst, David (1999) "Tsorana on the Eritrea-Ethiopian Border," *Guardian*, Tuesday May 18.
- Hoben, Allan (1995) Paradigms and Politics: The Cultural Construction of Environmental Policy in Ethiopia. *World Development*, .23 (6) 1007-1021.

- Hodson, Arnold (1927) *Seven Years in Southern Abyssinia*, Fisher, Unwin, Ltd. Bouverie House, Great Britain.
- Holcomb, Bonnie and Ibssa, Sisay (1990) *The Invention of Ethiopia, The Making of a Dependent Colonial State in North Africa*. Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press.
- Human Rights Watch (2005) *Suppressing Dissent Human Rights Abuses and Political Repression in Ethiopia's Oromia Region*. May, 2005 Vol. 17, No. 7 (A)  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/ethiopia0505/ethiopia0505.pdf>
- Human Rights Watch (2003) *Ethiopia. Lessons in Repression: Violations of Academic Freedom in Ethiopia*. 15 (2) (A)– January 2003. New York, N.Y.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/ethiopia0103/ethiopia0101.pdf>
- IDMC Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (2006) Ethiopia: Government Recognition of Conflict IDPs Crucial to Addressing their Plight. [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).
- Intelligent Crises Group (ICG) Report (2001) HIV/AIDS As a Security Issue, Washington/Brussels. June
- Irvine, K. (1965) On the Identity of Habashat in the South Arabian Inscriptions. *Journal of Semitic Studies* (Manchester), X: 178-196.
- Jalata, Asafa (2007) *Oromummaa. Oromo Culture, Identity and Nationalism*. Atlanta: Oromia Publishing Company.
- Jalata, Asafa (2005) *Oromia and Ethiopia. State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict 1868-2004*. Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, Inc.
- Jalata, Asafa (2005) State Terrorism and Globalization. The Cases of Ethiopia and Sudan. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. 46 (1-2): 79-102.
- Jaranson, James; Butcher, James; Halcon, Linda, Johnson David; Robertson, Cheryl; Savik, Kay; Spring, Marine; Westermeyer, Joseph (2004) Somali and Oromo Refugees: Correlates of Torture and Trauma History. *Am. Journal of Public Health*, 94:591-598.
- Johnson, Elmer (1978) *Crime, Correction and Society. Introduction to Criminology*. Fourth Edition. Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press.
- Jones, Peter (1999) Human Rights, Group Rights, and Peoples Rights, *Human Rights Quarterly* 21.(1):80-107.
- Kaplan, Robert (2003) *Surrender or Starve. Travels in Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea*. NY: Vintage Books.

- Karak, Sidney (2003) The Social Pathology of Syphilis in Africans. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 32:181-186.
- Kebede, Bereket (2002) Land Tenure and Common Pool Resources in Rural Ethiopia: A Study Based on Fifteen Sites. *African Development Review*, 14 (1) 113-149.
- Kellow, Chrisine and Steeves, Leslie (1998) The Role of Radio in the Rwandan Genocide. *Journal of Communication*. Summer. 48, (3):107-128.
- Kickingbird, Kirke (1984) Indian Sovereignty: The American Experience. In Bear, Leroy; Boldt, Menno; Long, J. Anthony (Eds.) *Pathways to Self-determination. Canadian Indians and the Canadian State*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Kissi, Edward (2006) *Revolution and Genocide in Ethiopia and Cambodia*. Lexington Books
- Kloos, Helmut (1990) Health Aspects of Resettlement in Ethiopia. *Soc. Sci. Med.*, 30(6): 643-656.
- Kumsa, Kuwee (1995) Siiqe Institution. *Journal of Oromo Studies*, 4 (1&2): 115-152.
- Lackey, Michael (2005) The Moral Conditions for Genocide in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. *College Literature* 32 (1), 20-41.
- Lackey, Michael (2002) Franz Fanon on the Theology of Colonization. *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 3 (2) 1-17.
- Lata, Leenco (1999) *Ethiopian State at The Crossroads: Decolonization and Democratization or Disintegration?* Trenton, New Jersey: Red Sea Press.
- Legesse, Asmarom (2006) *Oromo Democracy. An Indigenous African Political System*. Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press.
- Legesse, Asmarom (1973) Gada. *Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*. New York: The Free Press.
- Lemessa, Dechasa and Perault, Matthew (2002) Forest Fires in Ethiopia: Reflections on Socio-Economic and Environmental Effects of the Fires in 2000 – An Assessment Study, June-September 2001. *Journal of Oromo Studies* 9 (1 & 2) 95-130.
- Lemkin, Raphael edited by Curthoys Ann (2005) Tasmania. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 39 (2) 170-196.
- Lemkin, Raphael (1944) *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe. Laws of Occupation. Analysis of Government Proposals for Redress*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Division of International Law Washington.



- Lemmu, Baisa (1994) Gada Values: The Building Blocks of a Democratic Policy. *Journal of Oromo Studies*, 1, (1 and 2), 47-52.
- Leslau, Wolf (1958) *Ethiopic and South Arabic Contributions to the Hebrew Lexicon*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Lorde, Audre (1984) *Sister Outsider. Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.
- Lugard, Frederick (1958) *The Rise of Our Empire. Early Report in Nyasaland and Uganda*, Volume 1. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.
- MacAskill, Ewen (2006) Ethiopian Judge Tells of Regime's Massacres. *The Guardian International*, Thursday, November 9, 2006.
- Madley, Benjamin (2004) Patterns of Frontier Genocide, 1803-1910: the Aboriginal Tasmanians, the Yuki of California, and the Herero of Namibia. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6 (2): 167-192.
- Mann, Jonathan; Gostin, Lawrence; Gruskin, Sofia; Brennan, Troyen; Lazzarini, Zita and Fineberg, Harvey (1999) Health and Human Rights. In Mann M. Jonathan; Gruskin, Sofia; Grodin, Michael; Annas, George (Ed.) Health and human rights, Routledge, New York.
- McLaren, Peter (1997) Liberatory Politics and Higher Education: A Freirian Perspective. In McLaren Peter (Eds.) *Revolutionary Multiculturalism: Pedagogies of Dissent for the New Millennium*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Mamdani, Mahmood (2001) *When Victims Become Killers. Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
- Marule, Marie (1984) Traditional Indian Government: Of the People, by the People, for the People. In Bear, Leroy; Boldt, Menno; Long, J. Anthony (Eds.) *Pathways to Self-determination. Canadian Indians and the Canadian State*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Mazrui, Ali. (1978) *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McClintock, Anne (1995) *Imperial Leather, Race, Gender and Sexuality in The Colonial Context*, Routledge, New York.
- Melbaa, Gadaa (1988) *Oromia. An Introduction to the History of the Oromo People*, Khartoum.
- Memmi, Albert (2003) *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Earthscan.

- Mercer, David (Retrieved, August 2007) *Ethiopia & President Advisor* <http://futureobservatory.dyndns.org/2017.htm> (Retrieved on August, 2007)
- Miles, William (2000) Hamites and Hebrews: Problems in "Judaizing" the Rwandan Genocide. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2 (1), 107-115.
- Mindlin, Betty (2003) Self-Determination, Cultural and Educational Rights, and the Role of the State in Policies Concerning Indigenous Rights in Brazil. In (eds.) Champagne Duane, *The Future of Indigenous Peoples Strategies for Survival and Development*. Amer Indian Studies Center
- Mironko, Charles (2004) *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder: An Analysis of Perpetrators in the Rwandan Genocide*. A Dissertation Presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of Yale University, In Candidacy of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, USA.
- Mitchell, Anthony (2006) Inquiry Triples Toll in Ethiopia Protests. *Associated Press*, Thursday, October 19, page A25.
- Mitchell, Timothy (2002) *Rule of Experts. Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Mockler, Anthony (1984) *Haile Selassie's War*, Oxford University Press.
- Monroe, Elizabeth (2003) *A History of Abyssinia*. NY: Kessinger Publishing.
- Mooko N.P; Aina, O; Phillimore, Peter (1998) Uncertainty, Reassurance and Pollution: the Politics of Epidemiology in Teesside. *Journal of Health and Place* 4 (3) 203-212.
- Morsink, Johannes (1999) Cultural Genocide, the Universal Declaration, and Minority Rights. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 21 (4), 1009-1060.
- Moussa, Helene (1993) Storm & Sanctuary. *The Journey of Ethiopian and Eritrean Women Refugees*. Artemis Publication, Canada.
- Myatt, Frederick (1970) The March to Magdala. *The Abyssinian War of 1868*, Leo Cooper, London.
- Opatow, Susan (1990) Moral Exclusion and Injustice: An Introduction. *Journal of Social Issues*, 46 (1) 1-20.
- Oromo Studies Association (OSA) (2006) Newsletter. Discrimination and Religious Intolerance Allowed at Mekelle University. <http://www.oromostudies.org/Newsletter.2006.05%20-%20May.pdf> (Retrieved on May, 2007).
- Orr, David (1994) *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment and the Human Prospect*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

- Oromo Support Group (OSG) (2000) Summery Press Release, No. 32.  
<http://oromo.org/osg/pr321100.htm>
- Oromo Support Group OSG (2007) Press Release No. 42 July 2005-2006,  
<http://oromo.org/osg/pr42.htm>
- Ottoway, Marina (1978) *Ethiopian Empire in Revolution*, New York: Africana Publishing Company, A division of Holmes & Meier.
- Palmer, Alison (1998) Colonial and Modern Genocide: Explanations and Categories. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21 (1) 89-115.
- Parker, Karen (2000) *Understanding Self-Determination: The Basics. Presentation to First International Conference on the Right to Self-Determination*. United Nations, Geneva, August.
- Pankhurst, Alula (1992) *Resettlement and Famine in Ethiopia. The Villagers Experience*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Pankhurst, Richard (1992) *A Social History of Ethiopia: the Northern and Central Highlands from Early Medieval Times to the Rise of Emperor II*/Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press,:
- Pankhurst, Richard (1977) A History Note on Influenza in Ethiopia. *Medical History*, 21: 195-200.
- Pankhurst, Richard (1973) 'The Earliest History of Famine and Pestilence in Ethiopia, and a Note on the "Egyptian Deaths" of 17th and 18th Century Ethiopia', *Ethiopian Medical Journal* 11, 233-6.
- Pankhurst, Richard (1972) 'The History of Famine and Pestilence in Ethiopia Prior to the Founding of Gondar', *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 10(2), 37-64.
- Pankhurst, Richard (1966) 'The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888-92: A New Assessment', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 21(2), 95-124; (3), 271-94.
- Perham, Margery (1948) *The Government of Ethiopia*. London, Faber and Faber Limited.
- Pena, Guillermo (2005) Social and Cultural Policies Toward Indigenous Peoples: Perspective from Latin America. *Annu. Rev. Anthropology*, 34:717-39, October.
- Phillips, J.R.S (1998) *The Medieval Expansion of Europe*, Second Edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Preece, Rod (2003) Darwinism, Christianity, and the Great Vivisection Debate. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64 (3) 399-419.

- Proulx, Craig (2003) *Reclaiming Aboriginal Justice, Identity, and Community*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing.
- Prouty, Chris and Rosenfeld, Eugene (1981), *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia*, London, The Scarecrow Press.
- Raven, Wim (1988) Some Early Islamic Texts on the Negus of Abyssinia. *J. Semitic Studies*, 33, 197-218.
- Rey, Charles (1929) *The Romance of the Portuguese in Abyssinia*, Witherby, London.
- Rey, Charles (1924) The Arussi and other Galla of Abyssinia, *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 23 (90) 85-95.
- Reynolds, Henry (2004) The Nullius Ideal. John Dawson. *Quadrant Magazine History*. Vol. XLVIII No. 7-8.
- Rice, Xan (2006) Top Ethiopian Judge to seek Asylum in Britain. *The Guardian, International*, Tuesday, November 7, 2006.
- Rosenfeld, Chris (1976) *A Chronology of Menilik II of Ethiopia. Monograph No. 4. Occasional Papers Series Committee on Ethiopian Studies*. Published by the African Studies Center in Cooperation with the Department of History, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan
- Routledge, Dennis (1995) Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 64 (3): 243-252.
- Ruda, Gemechu (1993) *Knowledge, Identity and the Colonizing Structure. The Case of the Oromo in East and Northeast Africa*. PhD Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Ryser, Rudolph (1984) Nation-States, Indigenous Nations, and the Great Lie. In Bear, Leroy; Boldt, Menno; Long, J. Anthony (Eds.) *Pathways to Self-determination*. Canadian Indians and the Canadian State. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Said, Edward (1979) *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books
- Said, Edward (1994) *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Salviac, Martial de ([1901] 2005) *An Ancient People Great African Nation. The Oromo as Recounted by, Martial de Salviac*. Translated from the Original French Edition by Kanno Ayalew.
- Sanceau, Elaine (1944). *The Land of Prester John*. New York, Alfred Knopf.

- Sanceau Elaine (1944) *The Land of Preston John. A Chronicle of Portuguese Exploration*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf.
- Save the Children (2002) *HIV and Conflict: A Double Emergency*, London, Printflow 86 Ltd.
- Scherrer, Christian and Bulcha, Mekuria (2003) *War Against the Oromo and the Mass Exodus from Ethiopia. Voices of Oromo Refugees in Kenya and Sudan*. Analysis and Report ECOR 29. Institute for Research on Ethnicity and Conflict Resolution. Tegelen.
- Scheurich, Joseph and Young, Michelle (1997) Coloring Epistemologies: Are Our Research Epistemology Racially Biased? *Educational Researcher*, 26.(4): 4-16.
- Seidman, Steven (1998) *Contested Knowledge. Social Theory in the Postmodern era*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Blackwell, Publisher, Oxford, UK.
- Sen, Amartya (2003) Forward. In Farmer, Paul (Eds) *Pathologies of Power. Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sen, Amartya (1999) *Development as Freedom*. New York, Anchor Books, A Division of Random House Inc.
- Shabbir, I and Larson, C (1995) Urban to Rural Routes of HIV infection spread in Ethiopia, *Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 98(5), 338-342.
- Shiva, Vandana (2002) Forward: Cultural Diversity and the Politics of Knowledge. In Dei, George; Hall, Budd and Rosenberg Dorothy (Eds.), *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts. Multiple Readings of Our World*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Shiva, Vandana (2000) *Monocultures of Mind. Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*. London: Zed Books and Third World Network.
- Silverberg, Robert (1996) *The Realm of Prester John*. Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- Skinner, Robert (1969) *Abyssinia of To-Day, An Account of the First Mission sent by the American Government to the Court of the King of Kings (1903-1904)*. Negro Universities Press, New York.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (2002) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London, Zed Books.
- Smith, Donald (1895) Dr. Donlandson Smith's Expedition to Somaliland. *The Geographic Journal*, 5 (2), 124-127
- Spencer, Herbert (1972) *Herbert Spencer on Social Evolution. Selected Writings*. Edited and with an Introduction by J.D.Y. Peel. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago USA.

- Society for Threatened People International (2005) *Written Statement 61st Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights*, 14 March to 22 April 2004, Item 11 a of the Provisional Agenda.
- Society for Threatened People International (2000) *Violations of Human Rights in Ethiopia. A Letter Sent to 56<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights*, Geneva 2000, Item 6.
- Stanton, Gregory (2004) Could the Rwandan Genocide have been Prevented? *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6 (2) 211-228.
- Starrett, Steffansn & Starrett, Ronald, (1976) *Documents on Ethiopian Politics, Vol-I, The Decline of Menilik II to the Emergence of Ras Tafari, late known as Haile Selassie 1910-1919*, Salisbury, N.C, Documentary Publications p.
- Starrett, Steffansn & Starrett, Ronald, (1977) *Documents on Ethiopian Politics, Vol-II, The Consolidation of Power of Haile Selassie, 1920-1929*, Salisbury, N.C, Documentary Publications p. 180.
- Starrett, Steffansn & Starrett, Ronald, (1977) *Documents on Ethiopian Politics, Vol-III, Foreign Powers in Ethiopia. The Role of England, France, Italy, Germany, and the United States in Internal Ethiopian Affairs, 1920-1929*, Salisbury, N.C, Documentary Publications.
- Staub, Ervin (2000) Genocide and Mass Killing: Origin, Prevention, Healing and Reconciliation. *Political Psychology*, 21 (2): 367-382.
- Ta'a, Tesema (1986) *The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: - From the Mid-16<sup>th</sup> to the Early-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. PhD Thesis at Michigan State University. Dept of History. .
- Tadesse, Kiflu (1993) *The Generation: the History of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party*, Vol. I. Distributed by K&S Distributors
- Taylor, Rex and Rieger, Annelie (1985) Medicine as Social Science: Rudolph Virchow on the Typhus Epidemic in Upper Silesia, *International Journal of Health Services*, 15 (4): 547-559.
- The Ethiopian Government National AIDS Council Criticized. <http://cnn.worldnews-Ethiopian> AIDS program criticized- December 4, 2001 (Retrieved in February, 2002). Ethiopian opposition Parties Criticize Government's HIV/AIDS program. [http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily\\_reports/rep\\_hiv\\_recent\\_rep.cfm?dr\\_cat=1&show=yes&dr-DateTime=12-05-01#8376](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_hiv_recent_rep.cfm?dr_cat=1&show=yes&dr-DateTime=12-05-01#8376)
- The National Intelligent Council (2002) The Next Wave of HIV/AIDS: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, India, and China. September.

The New Zealand Herald (2002) "Clark Says Sorry for New Zealand's Inept Administration of Samoa" 4<sup>th</sup> June (Retrieved in July 2002)  
<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?thesection=news&thesubsection=&storyID=2044845>.

The Webster's Dictionary (1968) *The Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*. Springfield, Massachusetts: G & C Merriam Company.

Thiong'o, Ngugi wa (1986) *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: James Currey.

Thompson, Larry (2005a) Ethiopia: Local People Burned out of homes to make way for national Park. *Refugees International, RI Bulletin, A Powerful Voice for Humanitarian Action*. April 19, 2005.

Thompson, Larry (2005b) Ethiopia: The Human Cost of Tourist Dollars. *Refugees International, RI Bulletin, A Powerful Voice for Humanitarian Action*. December 21, 2004.

Trueman, Trevor (2005) Presentation at Oromo Studies Association, at University of Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA Also see (OSG Press Release 31, July 2000, pp 2-11. Oromia Support Group, Malvern, UK.

Turshen, Meredith (1977) The Impact of Colonialism on Health and Health Services in Tanzania. *International Journal of Health Services*, 7 (1): 7-35.

Turshen, Meredith (1989) *The Politics of Public Health*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.

U.S. Department of State Country Report (2007) *Ethiopia. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2006, Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor*, March 6, 2007. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78734.htm>

United Nations Country Team (2003) Malaria Situation Update, 18 November 2003

UNAIDS (2002) Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemics. Table of Country-specific HIV/AIDS Estimates and Data, end 2001.

Vestal, Theodore (1999) *Ethiopia: A Post-Cold War African State*. Praeger/Greenwood.

Voice of America (VOA) Afaan Oromo Service

Dandii, Namoo (2006) Program on Democracy, Voice of America (VOA), Afaan Oromo Service, Wednesday, October 8.

Dandii, Namoo and Gammada, Jalaane (2006) Subsequent Report on the Death of Alemeworki Buli, March 15.

- Biqila, Nahamini (2006) Report from Mieso area Interviewing Oromo and Somali Elders Displaced by the Conflict Between the two Groups.
- Gammada, Jalaane (2006) Interviewing Kebebush Dheresa-a Mother of Jagama Badhane, January, 26.
- Gammada, Jalaane (2006) Interviewing Tayye Hirphasa a brother of Gadissa Hirphasa, 29, 2006 (March)
- Gammada, Jalaane (2007) February, 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, Interviewing Qawee, Banguu on Siique
- Waldaa Maccaa fi Tuulamaa (1992) *Ayyaana Yaadannoo Waggaa 30ffaa*, Finfine, Nigdi Mahtemia Bett.
- Waldram, James, Herring, Ann, and Young, Kue (2006) *Aboriginal Health in Canada: Historical, Cultural, and Epidemiological Perspectives*. Second Edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Waller, James (2003) *Becoming Evil. How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*. Oxford University Press.
- Walter, John and Schofield Roger (1991) *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Walter, Reece (2003) *Deviant Knowledge. Criminology, Politics and Policy*, Portland, Willan Publishing.
- Walta Information Center (2005) *Judeidin says Oromo People will Never Fall Again Under the Rule of Chauvinists*, May  
<http://www.waltainfo.com/EnNews/2005/May/08May05/May08e5.htm> Retrieved on June, 2005
- Washington Post Staff Writer (Tuesday, October 1, 2002) *Washington Post, Intelligence Study Raises Estimate of AIDS Spread*, A07.
- Watts, Sheldon (1997) *Epidemics and History. Disease, Power and Imperialism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- West, Cornel (1993) *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America*. New York, Routledge.
- Wildner Manfred; Fischer Richela and Brunner Ann (2002) Developing A Questionnaire for Quantitative Assessment in the Field of Health and Human Rights. *Social Science & Medicine* 55 (10) 1725-1744.
- Werner, A (1914) The Galla of the East Africa Protectorate. Part I. *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 13 (50), 121-142.



- Wilmer, Franke (1993) *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics, Since Time Immemorial*, Newbury Park, SAGE Publication.
- Wolde-Giorgis, Dawit (1989) *Red Tears: War Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia*. Trenton, NJ The Red Sea Press.
- Wolde-Michael Akalou (1973) Urban Development in Ethiopia (1889-1925) Early Phase, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 11 (1) 1-16.
- World Health Organization (WHO) (2002) *World Report on Violence and Health*. Edited by: Krug, Etienne, Dahlberg, Linda, Mercy, James, Zwi, Anthony and Lozano, Rafael. Geneva: WHO.
- Wright, Ronald (1993) *Stolen Continents: The "New World" Through Indian Eyes*. Toronto: Penguin books.
- Zewudie, Bahru (1991) *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1974*. London: James Currey.
- Zimmerer, Jürger (2005) The Birth of the Ostland out of the Sprit of Colonialism: a Postcolonial Perspective on the Nazi Policy of Conquest and Extermination. *Patters of Prejudice*, 39, (2) 197-219.

## **Appendix A. Proposed interview questions**

### **Appendix A1**

#### **Phase II Informants**

What is your name? How did you get your name? When were you born? Where did you go to school? What was the language of instruction in your elementary, secondary and high school? What is your religion? What about your parents? Was there any one in your village who practices the Oromo religion? Do you know any Galma<sup>1</sup> in the nearby town or city? If not, why is there no Galma in the cities and towns? Do you know any churches and mosques in cities and towns? What were the religious holidays in your place of residence in Ethiopia? Were there any official Oromo religious holidays? Why not? Tell me about your life in Ethiopia. When did you come to Canada? Why do you think that the world community is not listening to the cry of the Oromo people?

#### **Land Ownership and Serfdom**

Did your family have their own land prior to the 1975 land reform? If your parents owned their own land, do you know others in your village who were landless? Who owned their land? How did those landless become landless?

#### **Resettlement Program**

Do you know about the resettlement program in Ethiopia? If so, what is your knowledge of it? Who is settled where? What are the objectives of resettlement programs? What are the social, economic cultural and environmental impacts of the resettlement program in Oromia? Do you

---

<sup>1</sup> Galma is the place where the Waqefaatas worship and it is equivalent to Church or Mosque.

think that the resettlement program is linked to genocide? Is the resettlement program voluntary?

### **Villagization Program**

Do you know about the villagization program? What is villagization and who gets villagized? In what ways is villagization different from life in former villages? What are the objectives of the villagization program? What are the social, economical, cultural and environmental impacts of the villagization program in Oromia? Is the villagization program voluntarily?

### **Mobilization Program**

What do you know about the mobilization of militia? Is there any one from among your relatives who has been recruited to the militia? Is he married and/or does he have children? What has happened to his children, wife and elderly parents? Did he come back? What do you understand to be the objective of the mobilization program? Who is mobilized? What are the social, economic, cultural impacts of mobilization of farmers to their family and community members? Has this mobilization affected the vulnerability and risk of people to famine, malaria and HIV/AIDS epidemic and the communities' resiliency conditions? If so, how?

### **Demobilization Program**

What do you know about the demobilization program? Why do you think there is a policy of demobilization? Who is being demobilized? Have those demobilized compensated for their service? Are you aware of any socio-economic-environmental impacts of demobilization?

### **Eviction of People from their homes**

What do you know about evictions of people from their homes in Oromia? Who is evicted from where? What do you think are the objectives of evictions? What are the impacts of eviction?

### **Killings and Imprisonments**

Do you know any one who was killed by the government? What was the reason given for the killing? Have you been arrested for no cause in Ethiopia? Do you know any one arrested by the government? What do you know of an organization known as “Galla geday” (Galla killers)? Do you have any idea who finances the organizations such as Galla geday? Do you know the history of this organization? What can you tell me about Chalanqo? What do you know about Anolee?

### **Political imprisonment and Torture**

Do you know what methods are used for interrogation? If imprisoned, do you think that you were treated differently than other Abyssinian political prisoners? How? Why?

### **Forced migration**

What is your citizenship? How did you become a citizen of this country rather than Ethiopia?

### **Forest burn**

What have you heard about the forest burn in Oromia in 1999? Do you think it was a natural disaster or manmade? What have you heard about students peacefully demonstrating about the forest burn?

**Epistemological Genocide**

How do the Abyssinians describe the Oromo people? What stories have you heard about the origin of the Oromos? What was the religion of your parents and grand parents? If your religion is different from your father/mother grandfathers/grandmothers, what is the significance of this? (If the person claims to be Christian check whether or not the person is orthodox or protestant.)

Please comment on Oromo customs practiced in Ethiopia or banned there.

## Appendix A2

**Phase III Professionals and Semi-professionals****Interview Questions**

What is your name? Where were you born? Did your parents have their own land? Where did you attend your elementary, secondary and high school? How far is that from your home village? What was the number of students in your class? What was the racial-ethnic composition of the students? Did you experience discrimination in schooling? If so, by whom? On what basis? Why and how?

What can you tell me about Chalanqo? What do you know about Anolee? How would you explain recurrent famine, HIV/AIDS and malaria epidemics in Oromia? How do you think that the Western world views Oromos and Abyssinians? How do they view the Ethiopian famine, HIV/AIDS and malaria epidemics? How do the Abyssinians describe the Oromo people?

What stories have you heard about the origin of the Oromos? (If an Oromo national) What was the religion of your parents and grandparents? If your religion is different from your father/mother grandfathers/grandmothers, what is the significance of this?. How did the Oromo people govern themselves before they were conquered? What do you know about Gada<sup>2</sup> system? What do you know about Siiqe?<sup>3</sup> What do you know about Ateete<sup>4</sup> and Qaalu?<sup>5</sup> What is Libation?<sup>6</sup> How the Oromo people celebrate thanksgiving?

---

<sup>2</sup> Gada is the Oromo democratic system of government.

<sup>3</sup> Siiqe is the Oromo womens' political institution.

<sup>4</sup> Ateete is the Oromo womens' spiritual institution.

<sup>5</sup> Qaalu is Oromo religious institution.

<sup>6</sup> Libation is offering food and drink to wildlife in remembrance of the Oromo ancestors.

Tell me about your training/education for your occupation. Are Oromo knowledges parts of your practice? Is there government regulation of your practice? Who do Oromos consult for traditional advice?

### **Political Imprisonment, Forced Migration and Torture**

Do you know any Oromo national who is politically imprisoned? Have you been arrested for no cause in Ethiopia? Do you know what methods are used for interrogation? (If imprisoned) Do you think that you were treated differently than other Abyssinian political prisoners? How? Why?

Do you know any one who was killed by the government? What was the reason given for the killing? What do you know of an organization known as "Galla geday" (Galla killers)? Do you have any idea who finances the organizations such as Galla geday? Do you know the history of this organization?

What is your citizenship? How did you become a citizen of this country rather than Ethiopia?

**Appendix A3****Phase IV Informants: Academic Experts****Interview Questions**

What is your name? (If relevant), How did you get that name? Where were you born? Did your parents have their own land? Where did you attend your elementary, secondary and high school? How far is that from your home village? (If Oromo) What was the number of students in your elementary and secondary classes? What was the racial-ethnic composition of the students? Did you experience discrimination in schooling? By whom? On what basis? Why and how? Where did you go to study for your undergraduate program? What was your major? What was your masters' degree in? What about your PhD? What is your current research area?

Do you conduct any research that is relevant to the Oromo people? If so, what have you concluded from your research? If you are interested in Oromo studies why? What can you tell me about Chalanqo? What do you know about Anolee? How would you explain recurrent famine, HIV/AIDS and malaria epidemics in Oromia? How do you think that the Western world views Oromos and Abyssinians? How do they view the Ethiopian famine, HIV/AIDS and malaria epidemics? Do you think that Abyssinian and European researchers have reacted to Oromo studies? How do the Abyssinians describe the Oromo people? What stories have you heard about the origin of the Oromos? (If an Oromo national) What was the religion of your parents and grandparents? If your religion is different from your father/mother grandfathers/grandmothers, what is the significance of this? Please comment on Oromo indigenous knowledges. Do you see any connection between the treatment of Oromos in Ethiopia and the practice of their religion, healing practices, etc.?



**Appendix B**

Appendix B1A

**For Phase II****Draft Advertisement**

Subject: Volunteers are Needed

To fulfill the thesis requirements of my PhD degree at OISE/UT I am proposing to conduct research on the topic of **Indigenous Knowledge and Genocide by Attrition: The Case of Oromo People in Ethiopia**.

In Phase II of the proposed research, I am interested in interviewing Oromos in the Diaspora about the experiences of the Oromo people under Abyssinian rule. I am specifically interested in those who can speak about Oromo indigenous knowledge and the fate of Oromo people. Therefore, I am looking for volunteers among Oromo-Canadians or landed immigrants who are willing to share their experiences in Ethiopia. The interview will be either in Afaan Oromo or in English and participation is voluntary. Later in the research, I would like to interview five Oromo professionals or semi-professionals and five academics (Oromo or non-Oromo). The participants will be asked to share their experiences. To protect the informants, all identifying information will be kept confidential and no name will be reported in any publication.

If you are interested, you can contact me, Begna Dugassa, at the telephone number or email address below.

**Investigator:** Begna Fufa Dugassa, MSc., MSc., M.Ed. and Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education.

**Telephone:**                      E-mail:

**Faculty Supervisor:** Linda Muzzin, PhD, Associate Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Higher Education Group, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Telephone:                      E-mail:

Kuusa Dubbi (Appendix) B1B  
Kutaa 2fa

Xalaaya Dhadhesu

Ijaa Dubbi: Fedhii Qabeyyon Nibarbaadamu

Baruumsa ko isa sadarkaa dhumma (PhD) haan barbachisu rawachuuf qormaata tokko gochuuf qophahaan jiraa. Mata dureen qormaata kanaa: Beekkumsa Dhudha fi Saanyi duguuga suutaa: Wayye ummata Oromoo biyya Xophiyaati.

Kutaa lamaafa qormaata kanaa irraat, namoota Oromoo muxanoo adda-adda qabaan- biyya amba keesa jirataan ira jireenyi motuuma Abashaa jalaa jirachuun maal akka fakkatu baruuf. Ani kesumaayu haan baruu barbaadee wayye bekkumsa dhudha Oromoo fi saanyi duguuga isaan iraa gahaa jiruu dha. Kanaafu, naamooni Oromoo nanoo magaala Toronto jiraataan fi fedhii qaabdaan akka muxanoo kesaan naaf hirtaan issiin afeera. Kanaat dabalee, oggesoota Oromoo shan akkasumas hayyota Oromoo shan qormaata kanaa irrat qooda fudhatu. Qormaan kuuni gafiif deebi irrat haan hunda'e ta'a. Gaafiif deebiin kuunis Afaan Oromoon yokkan Engliziin ta'a, innis to'ana Dr. Linda Muzzin jalaati gaggefaama.

Waari qooda fudhataan muxanoo kesaan nawajiin hirmaatu. Eenyuma ke hisaxiilaamu.

Yo fedhi qabaate bilbiila yokkanis email ko isa kanaan gaadi jiruun naqunaami.

Qormaata kaan gageesu: Beenya Fuufa Dhugassa, MSc., MSc., MEd., Kadhimama PhD, email  
Bilbiili

Gorsituun qormaata kanaa Dr. Linda Muzzin, email \_\_\_\_\_  
Bilbiili

**This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead**

**Appendix B2A  
For Phase III**

**Draft for Advertisement**

**Subject: Volunteers are Needed**

To fulfill the thesis requirements of my PhD degree at OISE/UT, I am proposing to conduct research on the topic of **Indigenous Knowledge and Genocide by Attrition: The Case of Oromo People in Ethiopia**.

In Phase III of the proposed research, I am interested in interviewing five professionals or semi-professionals who are knowledgeable about the topic under investigation. In other parts of the research I will be interviewing 10 Oromo Canadians and five academics (Oromo or non-Oromo). I am specifically interested in those who can speak about the practice of Oromo indigenous knowledge in Ethiopia and the fate of the Oromo people.

Participants will be asked to share their experiences at work places and their observations about the Ethiopian government social policies. To protect the participants, all identifying information will be kept confidential and no name will be reported in any publication.

If you are interested you can contact me, Begna Dugassa, at the telephone number or email address below.

**Investigator:** Begna Fufa Dugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., M.Ed. and Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education.

**Telephone:**

**E-mail:**

**Faculty Supervisor:** Linda Muzzin, PhD, Associate Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Higher Education Group, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Telephone: E-mail:

**This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead**

**Kuusa Dubbi (Appendix) B2B**

**Kutaa 3fa**

**Xalaaya Dhadhesu**

**Ijaa Dubbi: Fedhii Qabeeyyon Nibarbaadamu**

Baruumsa ko isa sadarkaa dhumma (PhD) rawachuuf qormaata gochuuf qophahaan jiraa. Mataa dureen Qormaata kanaa: Beekkumsa Dhudha fi Saanyi duguuga suutaa: Wayye ummata Oromoo biyya Xophiyaati.

Kutaa 3fa Qormaata kanaa irratt, namoota Oromoo oggumadhaan sadarka adda-addara hojeeta turaan, yeroo amma biyya amba keesa jirataan, jireenyi motuuma Abashaa jalaa, akkasumas hojachuun/dalaguun maal akka fakkatu baruun nagargaara. Kesumaayu haan ani baruu barbaadee wayye bekkumsa dhudha Oromoo fi saanyi duguuga isaan iraa gahaa jiruu dha. Kanaafu naamooni fedhii qaabdaan akka muxanoo kesaan naaf hirtaan issiin afeera. Qormaan kuuni gafiif deebi irratt haan hunda'e ta'a. Gaafiif deebiin kuuni Afaan Oromoon yokkan Engliziin ta'a, innis to'ana Dr. Linda Muzzin jalaati gagefaama.

Waari qooda fudhataan muxanoo isaan nawajiin hirmaatu. Eenyuma ke hisaxiilaamu. Yo fedhi qabaate bilbiila yokkanis email ko kanaan gaadi jiruun naqunaami.

Qormaata kaan gageesu: Beenya Fuufa Dhugassa, MSc., MSc., MEd., Kadhimama PhD, email \_\_\_\_\_, Bilbiili

Gorsituun qormaata kanaa Dr. Linda Muzzin, email \_\_\_\_\_  
Bilbiili

Appendix B3  
For Phase IV- Academics

**Draft Advertisement**

Subject: Volunteers are Needed

To fulfill the thesis requirements of my PhD degree at OISE/UT, I am proposing to conduct research on the topic of **Indigenous Knowledge and Genocide by Attrition: The Case of Oromo People in Ethiopia**.

In Phase IV of the proposed research, I am interested in interviewing five academics in Oromo studies who will attend the 2005 annual conference of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) in Washington DC. I am specifically interested in those who can speak about the practice of Oromo indigenous knowledge in Ethiopia; the fate of Oromo people; and the socio-economic-environmental and health conditions of Oromia.

The participants will be asked to share their published and unpublished research findings with me. To protect the participants, all identities will be kept confidential and no name will be reported in any publication. As part of the study the study, I will also be interviewing 10 Oromos in the Diaspora and five professionals or semi-professionals.

If you are interested you can contact me, Begna Dugassa, at the email address below.

**Investigator:** Begna Fufa Dugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., M.Ed. and Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education.

**Telephone:**                      **E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ !

**Faculty Supervisor:** Linda Muzzin, Ph.D. Associate Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Higher Education Group, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

## Telephone Script for Informants (Phases II and III)

Hello, this is Begna Fufa Dugassa. Would you like me to converse in Afaan Oromo or English?<sup>7</sup> Thank you for contacting me. As explained in my advertisement, I am approaching Oromo individuals who are knowledgeable about the situation in Oromia to participate in a research study that I am conducting in order to fulfill the thesis requirements of my PhD degree at OISE/ University of Toronto. I would like to know if you are appropriate for my study. Please, tell me where you were born, and where you attended school. Have you participated in state projects such as literacy programs, mobilization for the military or demobilization or settlement, resettlement or villagization programs?

My research project seeks to learn about your experiences in Ethiopia. I am interested in understanding the experiences of the Oromo people under Abyssinian rule and the realities with which the Oromo people cope. As you know, over the last three decades, the socio-economic, environmental and health situation in Oromia has been deteriorating. I am interested in hearing about your experiences in your childhood and/or adulthood in Ethiopia and the fate of Oromo knowledge as well as the fate of the Oromo people themselves.

At your convenience, I would like to conduct an interview with you for about one to two hours. Although there are no direct benefits to you, sharing your experiences may help me better understand the problems and address the issues. Your participation is, of course, voluntarily and you can refuse to participate any time. [If still interested in participating] That is wonderful. Thank you. I will forward to you by mail a covering letter, information sheet, consent form and a set of questions. These forms review the purpose of the study and outline the research design and procedures and provide you with more information for your consideration before you make your final decision about whether to participate or not. I have prepared the cover letter, consent form and information sheet in Afaan Oromo and English. Which one you prefer? Which language I should use in the interview?

If you have any questions, now or once you have received this mail, I would be happy to answer them. [When questions are answered and the person agrees to participate, set a mutually agreeable time and place for the interview].

---

<sup>7</sup> Based on the answer I will converse either in Afaan Oromo or English. The content of the conversation will be the same.

## Appendix D Appendix D1A

### Information Sheet

**Topic:** Indigenous Knowledge and Genocide by Attrition: The Case of Oromo People in Ethiopia

**Study Objective:** To learn about the lived experience of the Oromo people under Abyssinian rule, specifically, the connection between the fate of Oromo knowledges and Oromo people.

**Study Design:** Semi-structured Interviews.

#### Participant

**Requirements:** Willingness to be interviewed once or twice one to two hours scheduled at a mutually convenient time and place.

#### Ethical

**Considerations:** Participants may refuse to be taped for all or parts of interviews and may terminate the interview at any time. They may withdraw from the study with no negative consequences. Participation is confidential--all data is secured and accessible only to investigator and the investigator's faculty advisor. Participants remain anonymous. All data in future publications and presentations will be reported in aggregate form. All original data is destroyed once the project is published.

**Investigator:** Begna Fufa Dugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., M.Ed. and PhD Candidate, Higher Education.

**Telephone:**                      **E-mail:**

**Faculty Supervisor:** Linda Muzzin, PhD, Associate Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Higher Education Group. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Telephone:                      E-mail:                      1

**Kuusa Dubbi D1B****Waraaqa Imalaa (Information sheet)**

**Ija Dubbii:** Beekkumsa Dhudha fi Saanyi Duguuga Suuta: Wayye Ummata Oromoo Biyya Xophiya

**Immamata Qormaata kanaa:**

Qormaan kuuni jirrenyaa ummatni Oromoo motumaa habaashaa jalaa, maal akka fakkatu biraa gahuuf, kesumaayu akkata beekkumsi dhudha Oromoo fi hirreen ummata kana waal qabaate xinxaluuf.

**Akkata Qormaani kuuni Gagefaamu**

Qormaatni kuuni kutta afuuriit hiraama. Kutaan ini duraa haan hunda'u seena bareffame jiruu irratt dha. Inni 2fa, 3fa fi 4fan gaafi fi deebi irratt haan hunda'a.

**Namoota Qormaata kanaa irratt qooda fudhataan:**

Qormaan kuuni gafiif deebi irratt haan hunda'e ta'a. Gaafiif fi deebiin kuuni haan ta'us al tokko yookan al lamaa hagaa sa'a lamaa haan dheraatu ta'a. Bakke fi yeroon issa akka mijaut filataama.

**Saafu Qormaata Ilalchisee:**

Namoon gaafiif debi'an muxanoo isaan hiruuf ka'an, yeroo barbadaan qormaata kanaa dhisuu nidanda'u. Fedhi qabaate jalqabdee, kanaafu xumuruun siit jiraa haan jedhee dirqisiisu hinjiruu. Gafiif deebiin kuuni teepi irratt warabaama. Isa warabaame anaaf gorsiitu qormaata kanaa Dr. Linda Muzzin qofaatu dhagaha- dubbisa. Yeroo barefamaan ba'us maqaan enyumaan namoota qormaata kanaa irratt qooda fudhataan icitiin qabaama. Gaafa qormaani kunii dhume teepiin irratt sagaleen warabaame, waraaqan sagaleen teepi irra barefaame, akkasumas disc irratt kufaame hundi akka lamma fa hindubisamnee nita'a.

**Qormaata kaan gageesu:**

Beenya Fuufa Dhugassa, MSc, MEd, Kadhimama PhD, email  
Bilbiili

**Gorsituun qormaata kanaa**

Dr. Linda Muzzin, email \_\_\_\_\_, Bilbiili \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix E****This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead****Appendix E1A****Letter to Potential Informants in Phase II**

Dear X,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research project. Based on our telephone conversation, I feel that your experiences are of interest to include in my thesis research. With this letter, I am officially inviting you to participate as one of the ten individuals who will be part of Phase II of the research study that I am conducting in order to fulfill the thesis requirements for my PhD degree at OISE/ University of Toronto under supervision of Dr. Linda Muzzin. As you know, my research project seeks to learn about the experiences of the Oromo people under Abyssinian rule. I am interested in hearing your experiences and am particularly interested in how the Oromo worldview is linked to the fate of the Oromo people.

My proposed research study is based on reading historical accounts as well as doing interviews. I am planning to conduct interviews of about an hour to two hours in length with those who participate in the study. I am hoping that reflecting on your experiences and observations will provide insights about the conditions in which the Oromo people live. This will provide students like myself and other researchers a better understanding of the root causes of the socio-economic, environmental and health problems in Oromia. I am also interviewing professionals and experts in Oromia.

Please let me know if this study is one in which you would be interested in participating. An information sheet, list of possible questions and a consent form is attached for your consideration before you make a decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, now or later, you can contact me at the telephone number and email below and I would be happy to answer them.

Participation is completely voluntary. Soon after I have typed up the recording of our interview, you will have the opportunity to review it, since I will send you a copy by mail. If you would like to have a copy of a summary of the results of the study, please, check the box at the bottom of the consent form.

Thank you,

Begna Dugassa

**Investigator:** Begna Fufa Dugassa, MSc., MSc., M.Ed. and Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education.**Telephone:****E-mail:**

**Faculty Supervisor:** Linda Muzzin, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Higher Education Group, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Telephone:

E-mail:

**This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead**

**Kuusa Dubbi (Appendix) E1B**

**Xalaaya namoota qormaata kanaa irratt qooda fudhachuu malaniif qophahee – Kutta 2fa**

**Obbo/Addee:**

Galatoomi qormaata ani gaggesaa jiruu irratt qooda fudhachuf fedhi agarsiisukeef. Akka bilbilaan hasofnee, muxanoon ke qormaata ko keesaat galshuun barbachisaa naat fakkata. Qormaani kuuni toana Dr. Linda Muzzin jalaat yogu ta'u innis dirqaama barumsaa ko isa dhumaa (PhD) rawachuuf, kanaafu, waraaqa kanaan, kutta qormaata kanaa isa 2fa irratt akka qooda fudhatuu si afeera. Akkuma kanaan duraa beekte qormaatni kuuni muxanoo jireenyi Oromoo motuuma Abashaa jalaa maal akka fakkatu biraa gahuuf. Anis qormaata kanaa irratt wayye jireenya fi muxanoo ke, kesumaayu bekkumsa dhudha Oromoo fi sanyi duguuga ilmaan Oromoo ira gahee fi gahaa jiruu biraa gahuuf. Kesumaayu haan ani baruu barbaadee akkata bekkumsa dhudha Oromoo fi saanyi duguuga isaan iraa gahaa jiruu dha.

Qormaatni kuuni gaafiif deebi, akkasumas xinxala seenaa bareefame jiruu irratt haan hunda'e ta'a. Gafiif deebin kunii haggaa sa'a tokko hamaa lamaa fudhata. Gaafiif deebiin kuuniis jireenya ke motuuma Abasha jalaa maal akka fakkatu hubachuuf. Qormataa kanaa fakkatu gochuun barattootni waari akka ko rakkolee biyya Oromoo (Oromiyya) kaan akka dinagdee, eggumsa fayya akkasumaas ummama baruu barbaadaniif hundeen rakkina kanaa maal akka ta'e birra gahuuf nigargaara.

Yo qormaata kanaa irratt qooda fudhachu barbaade naat himmi. Akka murti ke irratt sigargaruuf xalaaya kanaa wajiin waraaqa imalaa (information), gafiilee qophahaan, akkasumaas waraaqa waal hubanaa irratt malatesiitu siif ergeera. Akka waraqoole kanaa argateeni dubbisi, gaafi yoqabaate bilbiilan yookan email kanaan gadiiti jiruun naqunaamu dandeesa.

Qormaata kanaa irratt qooda fudhachuun, dhiba-dhibaat fedhi irratt haan hunda'e dha. Akka sagaleen teepi irratt warabaame waraaqa irratt darbeen, irra debbite haan jeete xinxalu nidandeesa. Yo waraabi gabaasa kanaa argachu barbaade waraaqa waal hubanaa irratt akka barbaadu filaanaan agarsiis.

**Galatoomi,**

**Beenya Dhugassa**

**Qormaata kaan gageesu: Beenya Fuufa Dhugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., MEd., Kadhimama – Ph.D., email \_\_\_\_\_ Bilbiili**

**Gorsituun qormaata kanaa Linda Muzzin Ph.D, email \_\_\_\_\_ Bilbiili**

**This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead**

**Appendix E2A**

**Letter to Professionals and Semi-Professionals in Phase III**

Dear X,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research project that I am conducting in order to fulfill the thesis requirements of my PhD degree at OISE/ University of Toronto under supervision of Dr. Linda Muzzin. Based on our telephone conversation, I feel that your experiences and knowledge are of interest to include in my thesis research. With this letter, I am officially inviting you to participate as one of the five professionals or semi-professionals in the research study. As you know, my proposed research project seeks to learn about the experiences of the Oromo people under Abyssinian rule. I am interested in hearing your experiences and am particularly interested in how the fate of Oromo worldview is linked to the fate of the Oromo people. Your work as a professional has likely given you the opportunity to witness some of the problems that I am interested in. Sharing them with me would be very beneficial for my research.

My proposed research study is a qualitative one, based on reading historical accounts as well as conducting interviews. I am planning to conduct interviews of about an hour to two hours in length with those who participate in the study. I am hoping that reflecting on your experiences and observations will provide insights about the conditions in which the Oromo people live. This will provide students like myself and other researchers a better understanding of the root causes of the socio-economic, environmental and health problems in Oromia. I am also interviewing Oromo-Canadians and experts on Oromia.

Please let me know if this study is one in which you would be interested in participating. An information sheet, a list of possible questions and a consent form is attached for your consideration before you make a decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions upon receiving this letter, you can contact me. My telephone number and email address are below and I would be happy to answer your questions.

Participation is completely voluntary. Soon after the interview is transcribed, you will have the opportunity to review a copy, which I will send by mail. If you would like to have a copy of a summary of the study results, please, check the box at the bottom of the consent form.

Thank you,

Begna Dugassa

**Investigator:** Begna Fufa Dugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., M.Ed. and Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education.

**Telephone:**

**E-mail:**

**Faculty Supervisor:** Linda Muzzin, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Higher Education Group, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_, E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

This letter will be printed on OISE/UT letterhead

This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead

Kuusa Dubbi (Appendix) E2B

Xalaaya Oggeyoota qormaata kanaa irratt qooda fudhachuu malaniif qophahee – Kutta 3fa

Obbo/Addee:

Galatoomi qormaata ani gaggesaa jiruu irratt qooda fudhachuf fedhi agarsiisukeef. Akka bilbilaan hasofnee, muxanoon ke qormaata ko keesaat galshuun barbachisaa naat fakkata. Qormaani kuuni to'ana Dr. Linda Muzzin jalaati yoggu ta'u innis dirqaama barumsaa ko isa dhumaa (PhD) rawachuuf, waraaqa kanaan, kutta qormaata kanaa isa 3fa irratt akka qooda fudhatuu si afeera. Akkuma kanaan duraa beekte qormaatni kuuni muxanoo jireenyi Oromoo motuuma Abashaa jalaa maal akka fakkatu qoraachuuf. Anis qormaata kanaa irratt wayye jireenya fi muxanoo ke, iddo hooji/dalaaga ke maal akka fakkata turee baruun barbaada. Kesumaayu haan ani baruun barbaadee akkata bekkumsa dhudha Oromoo fi saanyi duguuga isaan irraa gaheef gahaa jiruu waal qabaatu baruuf dha.

Qormaatni kuuni gaafiif deebi, akkasumas xinxala seenaa bareefame jiruu irratt haan hunda'e ta'a. Akka yadameet gafiif deebin kunii haggaa sa'a tokko fi lamaa iddu ta'a. Gaafiif deebiin kuniis muxanoo wayye jireenya ke motuuma Abasha jalaa calaaqisa jedheen abdadha. Qormataa kanaa fakkatu gochuun barattootni waari akka ko rakkolee biyya Oromoo (Oromiyya) kaan akka dinagdee, eggumsa fayya akkasumaas ummama baruun barbaadaniif hundeen rakkina kanaa maal akka ta'e birra gahuuf nigargaara.

Yo qormaata kanaa irratt qooda fudhachu barbaade naat himmi. Akka murti ke irratt sigargaruuf xalaaya kanaa wajjin waraaqa imalaa (information), gafiilee qophahaan, akkasumaas waraaqa waal hubanaa irratt malatesiitu siif ergeera. Akka waraqqole kanaa argateeni dubbisi, gaafi yooqabaate bilbiilan yookan email kanaan gadiiti jiruun naqunaamu dandeesa.

Qormaata kanaa irratt qooda fudhachuun, dhiba-dhibaat fedhi irratt haan hunda'e dha. Akka sagaleen teepi irratt warabaame waraaqa irratt darbeen, irra deebite haan jeete xinxalu nidandeesa. Yo waraabi gabaasa kanaa argachu barbaade waraaqa waal hubanaa irratt akka barbaadu filaanaan agarsiis.

Galatoomi,

Beenya Dhugassa

Qormaata kaan gageesu: Beenya Fuufa Dhugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., MEd., Kadhimama Ph.D., email  
Bilbiili

Gorsituun qormaata kanaa Linda Muzzin, Ph.D., email  
Bilbiili

**This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead**

**Appendix E3**

**Letter to Academics - Phase IV**

Dear X,

You are one of the few scholars who have studied (**Oromo history, sociology or socio-economic conditions**), publishing articles, chapters or books on the topic. Hence, I am writing to invite you to participate as one of the five academics in the final phase in a research study that I am conducting in order to fulfill the thesis requirements or my Ph.D. degree at OISE/ University of Toronto under supervision of Dr. Linda Muzzin. My proposed research project is a qualitative study that seeks to understand the lived experience of the Oromo people under Abyssinian rule and to capture the realities under which they have lived for over a century.

Over the last three decades, the socio-economic, environmental and health situation in Oromia has been deteriorating. I am interested in hearing your opinions regarding the reasons for these problems. I am particularly interested in how the Oromo worldview is linked to the fate of the Oromo people. I am also interviewing Oromo-Canadians and professionals or semi-professionals with experience in Oromia.

My proposed research study is a qualitative one using a semi-structured interview design. I am planning to conduct interviews of about an hour to two hours in length with those who participate in the study. Whether you are an Oromo or not, I would appreciate hearing your experiences as well as scholarly observations and opinions. I am hoping that reflecting on your experiences and observations will provide insights about the conditions in which the Oromo people live. This will provide students like myself and other researchers with a better understanding of the root causes of the socio-economic, environmental and health problems in Oromia. Sharing your experiences and thoughts may help us better understand the problems and address the issues at the root level.

Please let me know if this study is one in which you would be interested in participating. An information sheet, set of possible questions and a consent form are attached for your consideration while you make a decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, now or later, I would be happy to answer them.

Participation is completely voluntary. Soon after our interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy by mail that you can review. If you would like to have a copy of a summary of results, please, check the box at the bottom of the consent form.

Thank you,

Begna Dugassa

**Investigator:** Begna Fufa Dugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., M.Ed. and Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education.

**Telephone:**                      **E-mail:**

**Faculty Supervisor:** Linda Muzzin, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Higher Education Group, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Telephone:                      E-mail:

**Appendix F**

This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead

**Appendix F1A****Consent Forms for Phase II Informants**

**Title of study:** Indigenous Knowledge and Genocide by Attrition: The Case of Oromo People in Ethiopia

In my interview with you, I hope to learn about your experiences as an Oromo national under Abyssinian rule. The research study that I am conducting is to fulfill the thesis requirements or my PhD degree at OISE/ University of Toronto and is under supervision of Dr. Linda Muzzin. Participation is completely voluntary. Your participation in this study would consist a recorded interview of one to two hours and field notes that I will take during the interview of any pertinent information that you may offer. The interview will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to you. You may refuse to be taped or request that parts of the interview not be recorded or notes not be taken. You may choose not to answer specific questions during the interview or withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences. If interested, you will have an opportunity to review the interview and a summary of the final report.

In written reports, your identity and organizational affiliations that you have or may have had in the past will be kept confidential. They will be known only to my academic advisor and myself. All information obtained during the interview and analysis will be maintained securely, accessible only by myself, in my home office. Identifying information will be shared with my faculty advisor after it has been replaced by numerical code, so that I may receive supervision in data analysis. In order to maintain your anonymity, study results will be reported in the final thesis by pseudonym. The findings will be published after the completion of the study. I will present the results at conferences as the opportunity arises. In both these instances, your anonymity will be maintained. Upon completion of the study and the successful defense of my thesis, all information that could identify you in any way, including the audiotapes themselves, will be destroyed.

I have read and understood the information sheet, cover letter and agree to be interviewed as a participant in this study.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

I have received a copy of this form for my own file ☐ Yes ☐ No

I prefer to be interviewed in: ☐ Afaan Oromo ☐ English

I agree to have the interview audiotaped ☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like a copy of a summary and the results of the study ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Investigator:** Begna Fufa Dugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., M.Ed. and Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education.

**Telephone:**

**E-mail:**

**Faculty Supervisor:** Linda Muzzin, Ph.D., Associate Professor - Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Higher Education Group, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Telephone:

E-mail:

This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead

Kuusa Dubbi (Appendix) F1B

Waraaqa Waal Hubanaa – Kuta 2fa

Ija Dubbi Qormaata: Beekkumsa Dhudha fi Saanyi Duguuga Suuta: Wayye Ummata Oromoo Biyya Xophiya

Qormaani kunni muxanoo ummatni Oromoo motuuma Abasha jalaat dabarseef, jiruu xinxaluuf. Qormaata kanaa irratt yohirmaata ta'e qoodni ke gafiif deebi teepi irratt waraabamu akkasumas qabxilee barefaaman ani fudhadhu ta'a. Gaafi fi deebiin kunii haggaa sa'a tokko yokkan lamma nideema, iddon isaa fi yeroon isa akka mija'ut murta'a. Otto gafiif deebi kanaa gocha jirtuu, yeroo barbaade dhabuu dandeesa, maliif dhabdee jedhee haan sidirqisiisu hinjiru. Gafii fi deebiin kunii teepi irratt ni warabaama. Yobarbadee inni gaafii fi deebiin waraabame waraqa irratt gaafa darbee, akka debitee ilaltuuf waraqaan isa siif nikenama.

Gaafa qormaatan kuuni dhume bareefamaan ba'e hunda maqaan ke hawaasnatti keesa jiraatu, akkasumas dhabaa, ati keesa qabduu hundi dhoksaan dheggama, annaf gorsiitu ko qormaata kanaa qophaatu dubbisa. Qabxilee qormaata kanaa irra argaamu, xinxali isa hundi akka namni birra hinarganee ta'e manakoo ta'a. Qabxileen barbaachisa ta'a gorsiitu qormaata kanaa Dr. Linda Muzzin qofaan wajiin hirmadha. Eenyumma ke dhoksuuf jechaa, gabasaa yerron kenuun gahee, maqaa ke himmura maqaa mogasaatin ta'a. Qormaatan kuuni akka rawateen, qormaata kanaa irra haan baramee barefamaan niba'a, waalgahi adda-adda irrattis nigabasaama. Yeroo hunda enyumankee hinhimamu. Gaafa qormaatan kunni rawaate barumsa ko rawaadhe qabxilee eenyuma ke himmu danda'u teepi irratt sagaleen ke irratt warabaame dabalaate akka hindubisamnee fi hinaggefatannee tasiisa.

Waraqa imalaa (Information sheet), xalaaya ittinn akka qooda fudhu gafataamee akkasumaas waraqa waal hubanaa dubbisee hubadheera. Fedhikotiin qormaata kanaa irratt qooda fudhachuf malaatokotiin agarsiisa.

Maqaa:

Malattoo:

Guyya:

**Waraabi xalaaya kanaa akkan kewadhuuf argadheera** [ ] Eyye [ ] Lakki

Gafiif deebiin kuun akka teepiin waraabamu hayamaa keneera. [ ] Eyye [ ] Lakki

Gafiif deebiin kuun haan ta'u: [ ] Afaan Oromoo [ ] Afaan Englizi

Gaafa qormaatan kuuni rawaate gabaasa gababaat barefaame argachu barbaada [ ] Eyye [ ] Lakki

Qormaata kaan gageesu: Beenya Fuufa Dhugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., M.Ed., Kadhimama Ph.D.,  
email Bilbiili

Gorsituun qormaata kanaa Linda Muzzin Ph.D., email  
Bilbiili

**This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead**

**Appendix F2A**

**Consent Forms for Professionals and Semi-professionals**

**Title of study:** Indigenous Knowledge and Genocide by Attrition: The Case of Oromo People in Ethiopia

In my interview with you, I hope to learn about your experiences as a professional and semi-professional worker in Ethiopia and your observations regarding life under Abyssinian rule. The research study that I am conducting is to fulfill the thesis requirements for my PhD degree at OISE/ University of Toronto and is under supervision of Dr. Linda Muzzin. The proposed research seeks to record the experiences of the Oromo people as well as to look for a link between the fate of Oromo worldviews and the Oromo people.

Your participation in this study would consist of a recorded interview for one to two hours and field notes that I will take during the interview of any pertinent information that you may offer. The interview will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to you. Participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to be taped or request that parts of the interview not be recorded or notes not be taken. You may choose not to answer specific questions during the interview or withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences. If interested, you will have an opportunity to review the transcribed data and a summary of the final report.

In written reports, your identity and organizational affiliations that you have or may have had in the past will be kept confidential and will be known only to my academic advisor and myself. All information obtained during the interview and analysis will be maintained securely, accessible only to myself, in my home office. Identifying information will be shared with my faculty advisor after it has been replaced by numerical code, so that I may receive supervision in data analysis. In order to maintain your anonymity, study results will be reported in the final thesis by pseudonym. The findings will be published after the completion of the study. I will also present the results at conferences as the opportunity arises. In both these instances, your anonymity will be maintained. Upon completion of the study and the successful publication of my thesis, all information that could identify you in any way, including the audiotapes themselves, will be destroyed.

I have read and understood the above, and agree to be interviewed.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

I have received a copy of this form for my own file ☐ Yes ☐ No

I prefer to be interviewed in: ☐ Afaan Oromo ☐ English

I agree to have the interview audiotaped ☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like a copy of a summary and the results of the study ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Investigator:** Begna Fufa Dugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., M.Ed. and Ph.D., Candidate, Higher Education.

**Telephone:**

**E-mail:**

**Faculty Supervisor:** Linda Muzzin, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Higher Education Group, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_



This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead

Kuusa Dubbi (Appendix) F2B

Waraaqa Waal Hubanaa – Kuta 3fa

**Ija Dubbi Qormaata:** Beekkumsa Dhudha fi Saanyi Duguuga: Wayye Ummata Oromoo Biyya Xophiya

Qormaani kunni muxanoo ummatni Oromoo motuuma Abasha jalaat dabarseef jiruu xinxaluuf. Qormaata kanaa irratt yohirmaata ta'e qoodni ke gafiif deebi teepi irratt waraabamu akkasumas qabxilee barefaaman ani fudhadhun ta'a. Gaafi fi deebiin kunii haggaa sa'a tokko yokkan lamma deema, iddon fi yeroon isa akka mija'ut ta'a. Otto gafiif deebi kanaa gocha jirtuu yeroo barbaade dhabuu dandeesa, maliif dhabdee jedhee haan sidirqisiisu hinjiru. Gafii fi deebiin kunii teepi irratt ni warabaama. Yobarbadee inni gaafii fi deebihaan waraabame waraqa irratt gaafa darbee, akka debitee dubbistu waraqaan isa siif nikenama.

Gaafa qormaatanii kuuni rawaate bareefama ba'u hunda irratt maqaan ke fi hawaasa attii keesa jiraatu akkasumas dhabaa ati keesa qabduu hundi dhoksaan dhegaama, annaf gorsiitu qormaata kanaa qophaatu dubbisa. Qabxilee qormaata kanaa irra argaamu xinxali isa hundi akka namni birra hinarganee ta'e manakoo ta'a. Qabxileen barbaachisa ta'a gorsiitu qormaata kanaa Dr. Linda Muzzin qofaan wajiin hirmadha. Eenyuma ke dhoksuuf jechaa, gabasaa yerron kenuun gahee maqaa ke otto hinta'in mogasaatin ta'a. Qormaatanii kuuni akka rawateen, qormaata kanaa irraa haan baramee barefamaan niba'a, waalgahi adda-adda irrattis nigabasaama. Yeroo hunda enyumankee hinhimmamu. Gaafa qormaatanii kunni rawaate barumsa ko rawaadhe qabxilee eenyuma ke himmu danda'u teepi irratt sagaleen ke irratt warabaame dabalaate akka hindubisamnee fi hinagefatamnee tasiisa.

Waraaqa imalaa (Information sheet), xalaaya ittiin akka qooda fudhu gafataamee akkasumaas waraqa waal hubanaa dubbisee hubadheera. Fedhikotiin qormaata kanaa irratt qooda fudhachuf malaatokotiin agarsiisa.

Maqaa:  
Guyya:

Malatoo:

**Waraabi xalaaya kanaa akkan kewadhuuf argadheera** [ ] Eyye [ ] Lakki  
Gafiif deebiin kuun akka teepiin waraabamu hayamaa keneera. [ ] Eyye [ ] Lakki  
Gafiif deebiin kuun akka ta'u haan ani barbaada: [ ] Afaan Oromoon [ ] Afaan Englizinin  
Gaafa qormaatanii kuuni rawaate gabaasa gababaat barefaame argachu barbaada [ ] Eyye [ ] Lakki

Qormaata kaan gageesu: Beenya Fuufa Dhugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., MEd., Kadhimama Ph.D, email

Gorsituun qormaata kanaa Dr. Linda Muzzin, Ph.D., email \_\_\_\_\_  
Bilbiili

This letter was printed on OISE/UT letterhead

### Appendix F3

#### Consent Form for Experts – Phase IV

**Title of study:** Indigenous Knowledge and Genocide by Attrition: The Case of the Oromo People in Ethiopia

In my interview with you, I hope to learn about your experiences as an Oromo national (if you are) scholar in Oromo studies and your observations regarding life under Abyssinian rule. The research study that I am conducting is to fulfill the thesis requirements for my PhD degree at OISE/ University of Toronto under supervision of Dr. Linda Muzzin. The research seeks to record the lived experience of the Oromo people as well as to look for a link between the fate of Oromo worldviews and the Oromo people.

Your participation in this study would consist of a one to two hour recorded interview and field notes that I will take during the interview of any pertinent information that you may offer. The interview will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to you at the OSA conference this year. Participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to be taped or request that parts of the interview not be recorded or notes not be taken. You may choose not to answer specific questions during the interview or withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences. If interested, you will have an opportunity to review the transcribed data and a summary of the final report. In order to protect your identity, I will incorporate the information you provided me with other data. If I am intending to publish I will ask your approval.

In written reports, your identity and organizational affiliations that you have or may have had in the past will be kept confidential and will be known only to my academic advisor and myself. All information obtained during the interview and analysis will be maintained securely, accessible only to myself, in my home office. Identifying information will be shared with my faculty advisor after it has been replaced by numerical code, so that I may receive supervision in data analysis. In order to maintain your anonymity, study results will be reported in the final thesis by pseudonym. The findings will be published after the completion of the study and I will present the results at conferences as the opportunity arises. In both these instances, your anonymity will be maintained. Upon completion of the study and the successful publication of my thesis, all information that could identify you in any way, including the audiotapes themselves, will be destroyed.

I have read and understood the above and agree to be interviewed.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

I have received a copy of this form for my own file ☐ Yes ☐ No

I prefer to be interviewed in: ☐ Afaan Oromo ☐ English

I agree to have the interview audiotaped ☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like a copy of a summary and the results of the study ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Investigator:** Begna Fufa Dugassa, M.Sc., M.Sc., M.Ed. and Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education.

**Telephone:**

**E-mail:**

**Faculty Supervisor:** Linda Muzzin, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Higher Education Group, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Telephone: , E-mail: