

PART TWO

Lacrimosa for Ethiopia

By Tecola W. Hagos November 15, 2009

III. The *Mahel Sefaris* Back in Power

Introduction

I have read statements by some misguided individuals who tried to depict me either anti-Tigryan or anti-Amhara. Both are mutually exclusive claims. The fact that people are having difficulties to pigeonhole me is a good sign to me that I am doing something that is right and good for Ethiopia. It might be helpful to clear up some misconceptions that insidious and ignoramus individuals have tried to paint me with. I do not mind Hailu Shawel and Meles Zenawi shaking hands at all. They can shake and hold hands for all I care. It would be a far more agreeable scene to me than to see one of them in chains and the other totting an AK-47 over the other's head. My criticism is not aimed against all peaceful resolution of a crisis. I think what is wrong with that "handshake" is the fact that the two individuals depicted in the picture are the wrong men for such transformative mission, they are incapable of bringing about any democratic change in Ethiopia. They are both *Mahel Sefaris* from different political and ethnic spectrum.



2009, Women and children gather at a food distribution centre in Ethiopia's Oromiya region [Reuters]. Meles Zenawi and Azeb Mesfin luxuriating at the Taj Mahal while Ethiopians are dying of hunger and relentless oppression.

Already several Members of Hailu Shawel's Party had some confrontations with Meles Zenawi's brutal security forces guarding the headquarters of AEUP that was the target of spontaneous demonstration on the 6th of November 2009. The report coming out of that incident is not pretty at all, and several dozen people were hurt and bloodied. The dissention will not escalate that much, but would gain momentum now and then depending on the political fever of the moment. It will be obvious in time that Addis Ababbeans were not happy with the state of affairs created by the *Mahel Sefaris* throughout the last two decades. Their discontent of the last eighteen years was eclipsed by their hate of the EPRDF. The 2005 election shocking result showed the depth of contempt people have for the Leadership of TPLF/EPRDF. Once the *Mahel Sefaris* are the *Elifign Askelki*, woe is us all, the people of Ethiopia out in the country.

A. Mahel Sefaris and Meles Zenawi

There are several statements in Websites by individuals who are deliberately misstating and distorting my use of the terms *Mahel Sefari*. However, some other individuals simply do not know any better—thus, my effort to explain the term I use(d) to refer to a particularly nasty group of individuals that caused havoc in Ethiopia’s political and social life since the time of Menilik’s death. It should be clear to all that the term does not refer to the people of Shoa *in toto* or to Amhara people in general. The term is used by me in a very specialized and narrow sense to refer to courtiers and domestics (children of slaves) of the Palace mainly the individuals residing in Ankobar and their descendants since the time of Emperor MenilikII. Even within Shoa, it does not refer to individuals from such areas like Menz, Tegulete, Merhabete, et cetera. The way I use the term is in a multi-ethnic structure of those who started out mainly as domestics in the Palace ending up becoming kingmakers which often included also anyone that had been sufficiently absorbed into the culture of the Imperial palace intrigues and conspirators after the death of King Haile Melkot of Shoa.

One could be from Tigray, Gondar, Gojjam, Wollega, Gimira/Konso or from anywhere else and yet be considered as a *Mahel Sefari*. For example, I consider individuals, such as Dejazmach Gabre Selassie Bria Gabrer of Adwa, Fitawrari Habte Giogris of Gurage/Oromo, Dejazmatch Kebede Tesema of Konso/Gimira by way of Menz, Col. Mengistu Hailemariam of Konso/Gimira by way of Addis Ababa, Hailu Shawel of Shoa (?) et cetera as quintessential *Mahel Sefaris*. In fact, the term is derived from the name popularly given to the specialized unit of Menilik’s Palace Guards that conspired to drive out Empress Taitu out off power and succeeded in doing so. [See Bahiru Zewde, A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974, Addis Ababa University Press, 1991, 114-128] The main problem at Menilik’s Place was that the Emperor was incapacitated and on his death bed, and his Empress was dismantling the Shoan political power base of Emperor Menilik by her own power base of Gondar and Wello. They succeeded banning the Empress from power. Some ten years later, the *Mahel Sefaris* played again similar role by helping Emperor Haile Selassie I ascend the Ethiopian Throne throwing out the legitimate Heir, Iyassu Michael.

Thus, the noun *Mahel Sefari* is supposed to describe someone with very narrow interest focused on being close to state power, if possible being in control of the Emperor and his Court, benefiting himself and his tiny circle of fellow *Mahel Sefaris*. I have tried to limit its meaning to a set of people with similar characteristics, and none of the characteristics is race or nationality or ethnicity based, least of all Shoan. I understand the skepticism some individuals spread bent on attacking anyone speaking the truth. It may cause a number of open minded readers to doubt my sincerity. However, there are also individuals with sincere interest in the history of power hegemony in all the Palaces of Ethiopian Emperors through out history, which is a much more challenging undertaking. Nevertheless, in trying to delaminate character from identity in *Mahel Sefaris*, one could easily misread or misstate the ethnic dimension of such individuals. Thus, for example, the Shoan identity in the *Mahel Sefaris* is incidental or contingent, it is not necessary at all. It might be helpful to think of the *Mahel Sefaris* simply as power hegemonies without attaching ethnic identity to any of them.

Just to give you a couple of examples on the characteristic behavior or *modus operandi* of the *Mahel Sefaris*, I will take you back a couple of years before the fall of Mengistu and his regime. It is, in fact, quite remarkable that we have such characters in our Ethiopia. By the time the EPRDF was moving its guerrilla fighters into Addis Ababa in 1989 and 1990 before the final assault, the *Mahel Sefaris* have already joined the bandwagon and were supporting the EPRDF, the Ethiopian Ambassadors or representatives in Egypt, Germany, and Italy were actively acting as double agents leaking sensitive information to the EPRDF. Even the wild Mengistu Hailemariam owes his success in overthrowing Haile Selassie to the *Mahel Sefari* of the junior kind, for his intimate partners were all children of the *Mahel Sefaris*, and the so called initial military uprising led by Colonel Atnafu Abate, who was not a *Mahel Sefari*, was commandeered quickly by Mengistu Hailemariam, the quintessential *Mahel Sefari*, and his *Mahel Sefari* co-conspirators. Systematically they liquidated those they considered too independent or contenders for power, such as Major Sisay.



1977, Castro, Mengistu Hailemariam, the little *Mahel Sefari*, seated on the Emperor's Chair [Shimeles Desta]

With Major Daniel, the scion of a prominent *Mahel Sefari* family in Addis Ababa, commanding the security of the Derg itself, the mobilization and solidifying of the *Mahel Sefari* power was not that difficult. Thus, Mengistu and co-conspirators simply invigorated that institution in the guise of a revolutionary Marxist camouflage, in order to retain power from moving out of Shoa to Wollo, Wollega, and Tigray. In the 1970s power was slipping from the hands of the aging Emperor and his retainers of equally aging *Mahel Sefaris* into the hands of members of the Royal Family whose power base was **away** from the *Mahel Sefaris* home base, such as those of the crown prince Wollo, Tigray, and Wollega supporters. An earlier power dichotomy was obvious in the 1950s in the rivalry instigated between those who were on the side of the Crown Prince Asfawossen and those who were on the side of the younger brother Mekonnen the Duke of Harar. Even after the death of Mekonnen, the rivalry continued involving the supporters of their children even though the children themselves were not drawn into that

type of destructive competition. In a way, it was a repeat of past devolution or transition of power Ethiopian-style when Haile Selassie was created by the *Mahel Sefaris* consisting of mostly Shoan hegemones, in order to maintain *Mahel Sefaris's* dominant position.

I have separately posted a copy of the actual letter/order for the execution of fifty four high government officials of the former government of Emperor Haile Selassie, signed by the worst genocidal *Mahel Sefari* Mengistu Hailemariam as First Secretary of the Derg. It is a chilling document that will demonstrate the ruthlessness of the *Mahel Sefaris* in carrying out atrocities in pursuit of their narrow and selfish aspiration for power and personal wealth.

Some would say that the *Mahel Sefaris* were never pushed out of power after the takeover of Mengistu's Government by the EPRDF. They simply kept low profile and laid out the ground work for their eventual spectacular public comeback with a public hand shake and their leader being addressed as "*Kibur Engineer*" by Meles Zenawi. I have written repeatedly how ruthless and dangerous the *Mahel Sefaris* were; I have expressed my concern that any alliance with such group is the kiss of death to the long suffering Ethiopians outside of the enclave of the *Mahel Sefaris* stronghold of Addis Ababa and vicinity.

The last attempt to get rid of the *Mahel Sefaris* was in 1992, when the effort fizzled out miserably and the author of such effort was pushed aside unceremoniously and ultimately resigned from the Government and went into exile a second time. The main player in undermining that genuine effort was Meles Zenawi, for he knew the consequences had there been such new start beneficial to all Ethiopians his remaining in power was very doubtful. The *Mahel Sefaris* rescued Meles Zenawi from demotion and oblivion at least on two other critical moments in his political life. The first was in 1991 and the second ten years later in 2001 during and after the Ethiopia-Eritrea war. Ethiopia need be liberated from the vise like clutches of the *Mahel Sefaris* as much as from the brutal dictatorship of Meles Zenawi and his Mafia group.

Moreover, now that Hailu Shawel is on board the freight train of Meles Zenawi, suddenly it has become acceptable for a number of narrow Amhara ethnisists in Boston, Chicago et cetera well known Diaspora *Mahel Sefari* strongholds to support Meles Zenawi. This minor incident in the long life of Ethiopia is a good example of the predatory characteristics of several staunch opponents of Meles and the TPLF just a couple of weeks ago. Why is it acceptable for an opportunist like Hailu Shawel to join the bandwagon of Meles Zenawi, and yet people still condemn those members of the TPLF who have left that camp? Hailu Shawel's political game simply reeks of rotten political opportunism of the *Mahel Sefaris*. Whether it is Hailu Shawel or anybody else, who grew up in that type of narrow ethnicism mental-box, cannot think globally in an Ethiopia-wide context in an inclusive manner of all Ethiopians. It is absolutely necessary, in order for Ethiopia to advance its economy and control the cyclical hunger that hits us often over and over, that our leaders should not be *Mahel Sefaris* from those areas that have sucked so much of our life blood.

B. Addis Ababa – Ethiopia’s Purgatory

The main reason for my objection to the *Mahel Sefaris* or any of their members gaining state power is due to their record of the past one hundred years. They have systematically dehumanized, impoverished, and exploited mercilessly the entire Ethiopian population only benefiting one particular group of individuals who consider Addis Ababa as their stronghold for the last eighty years. While millions are starving and leading a life of the most primitive kind with no clean drinking water, with rudimentary health care, or meager availability of education, the wealth of the nation is sunk into destructive and highly partisan development of Addis Ababa into a world metropolis. The result is a disaster, for the overwhelming majority of Ethiopians are marginalized in the extreme. The disparity of treatment, since the establishment of Addis Ababa in 1886 by Menilik/Taitu of this one region compared to the rest of the country, is absolutely mindboggling and unacceptable. Haile Selassie poured money and man power worth billions, and Mengistu followed the same scheme. Meles Zenawi for most of his tenure used it as a money making tool for EFFORT controlled companies by using public fund installing projects in Addis Ababa and vicinity worth billions of dollars.

The creation of urban hells is a result of poor economic systems and oppressive governments where resources are pulled together to provide the needs of government and business personnel at the expense of the large rural population. Whatever opportunities the government establishes, such as schools, colleges, factories, government centralized offices are all concentrated in such urban centers. It is only natural that people want to move to such centers of opportunities. The new urbanites bring with them their rural behavior and the ghettoing process is accelerated. Moral decay, crime, hopeless subhuman existence is increased exponentially. The urban rich flaunt their exploitative wealth with their vulgar conspicuous consumption making such depravity even more unbearable. Fed by cheap labor and reckless behavior of few corrupt business and government officials, the exploitation of defenseless poor people further degrades the humanity of such victims.

[Tecola W. Hagos, “Paradigm of Poverty and Humanism: Undoing Ethiopia’s Modernity,” July 25, 2003.]

The national budget of Ethiopia for the last five years averages a little over forty five billion bir. The 2009 budget was over fifty four billion bir. with a large chunk of it going into the military and security setup of the nation. The rest is divided up among the eighty plus million Ethiopians, but the allocation is extremely lopsided. For example, Addis Ababa with less than three percent of the Ethiopian population has a budget allocation of five to six billion bir, with another billion in cost overruns and hidden allocations that adds up to almost twenty percent of the national budget. There is no other regional rural



The City of Addis Ababa: This city is built by sacrificing millions of Ethiopians in order to maintain such a city in the midst of a starving and oppressed Nation.

or urban area that has allocations of over twenty million bir, a miserly percentage of the total national expenditure. There are billions worth of hidden benefits as well for the residents of Addis Ababa while millions of Ethiopians are starving and dying in unspeakable human deprivation. To give you examples of Addis Ababa being the ravenous a black-hole where most of the wealth of a nation simply gets swallowed up, consider the rate of consumption by Addis Ababbeans that is close to eighty percent of the total electric energy available in the country and over ninety percent of the medical supplies, and essential goods and services and with one hundred percent of luxury high-end hotel services consumed from year to year for over fifty years. This certainly is unconscionable and intolerable situation that is criminal when measured against the tens of millions of Ethiopians starving at its door steps millions literally starved to death.

Addis Ababa is Ethiopia's millstone ever dragging this poor nation deeper into the abyss of starvation and repression. The human condition in Addis Ababa is not rosy to all residents either. More than a hundred thousand Ethiopians (rough estimate) are squatters living in ramshackle temporary shelter of paper and cardboard. Most live in congested unsanitary conditions under the threat of cholera and other epidemic due to the filth in the streets and poor sewage system. In addition to all that physical challenge, Addis Ababa represent profound moral challenge to all of us, for it is the home of the greatest concentration of prostitutes in Africa. All this in addition to the recurring famine has eroded all of our self-worth and dignity as a people. There is no need to support individuals like Hailu Shawel and his group the *Mahel Sefaris* whose involvement in Ethiopia's economy, politics, administration, and social life is the root cause of all that is wrong in Ethiopia.



The view of the neighborhood across the street from our 4 star international hotel window.
[Ethiopianreview, Susan]

Now look around the rest of Ethiopia, what you find would turn your inside out with pain for you could easily witness even at an earshot distance from Addis Ababa millions of Ethiopians starving, in rags, and in poor health, and living in filthy mud shoals. Progressively as you move away from Addis Ababa, the starving population increases exponentially into millions. To see all such modernity in Addis Ababa in buildings, utility, high fashion is a sickening contrast with the devastated rural population. Every Addis Ababean caught in that form of highlife style is a criminal by association with the real criminals the *Mahel Sefaris* that have been running the Government of Ethiopia since the time of Menilik. And my quest for equitable sharing of the resources of the nation does not make my criticism an ethnic bashing. My interest is always the improvement of the condition of life for all Ethiopians specially the rural poor.

In 1991 when I went back to Ethiopia, I asked family members to take me to my ancestral home village in Menz called Beré, which is the birth place of my Great Grandfather and Grandfather, the great Memher Akale Wold and Meleak Tsehai Tekleabib respectively. I traveled by car to Debre Berhane up to the outskirts and decided to see for myself how rural people in the area have survived the Derg. A long time ago, in my preschool years I had resided at Debre Berhan and remember visiting relations in the area where we traveled on foot up the escarpment that forms the Eastern mountain range of the Great Rift Valley to the East of Debre Berhane. What I saw this time shocked me to the core of my being, the area was wind-beaten and the most bleak landscape I ever seen in my life with dirt-poor farmers, victims of extreme deprivation and minimal development, with no electricity, no water system, no health clinics and no schools. People in the area were literally scraping a living from the bare stony earth with tiny plots and few sheep. I

aborted the rest of my journey. The contrast is unmistakable that Addis Ababa is not representative of Shoa either.

I will recite to you in large brush stroke how far even other modest urban centers that owe their modernist look to the Italian occupation were decimated and neglected and how far the citizens are put at great health risk. Dessie fifty years later is still using the modest spring fed water supply built to serve maximum ten thousand people, now serves over a hundred thousand people with very little development since the Italian master work where they increased greatly the original installations by Negus Michael. Gondar is on the brink of collapse for shortage of water, and that shortage remained unattended during the fifty years rule of Haile Selassie to date. What is tragic about this wonderful and beautiful ancient citadel its proximity to great water sources Lake Tana. No development ever was undertaken other than the work done by the Italians. Even more infuriating is the case of Bahr Dar right on Lake Tana, but with no safe drinkable water supply for no one invested in such development for the last sixty years. Debre Markos another beautiful place with disappearing clean water supply system, for lack of vital investment in utility by the Ethiopian Government in the last eighty years. What ever improvement we see there is from the Italian occupation. Jimma another urban center in a lush area of plenty suffers the same type of depression and lack of improvement to the water supply system that is over sixty years old started by the Italians during their occupation. All this purposeful forced underdevelopment is the work of the *Mahel Sefaris*, with their primitive treatment of Ethiopians who are not from their closed group or Addis Ababa.



1985, Famine in Korem, North Ethiopia

In other words, Addis Ababa, this one urban area, is sucking the life blood of our nation. The justification offered by the *Mahel Sefaris* is that Addis Ababa is the dynamo that moves the economy of the nation, and the fact that it is the seat of numerous international organizations and embassies. These are very weak explanations and justifications—excuses based on manufactured facts on the ground to justify the future actions of misconceived modernization projects by past and present Ethiopian Governments. It is unconscionable for any Ethiopian government to sink most of its fund in one place while the rest of the population is starving and living under primitive conditions. Recent United

Nations assessment of the food situation in Ethiopia asserted that close to twenty million Ethiopians are living under famine conditions, or near starvation, or feed only ones a day.



2009, Sheraton, Addis Ababa



Homes for hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians

IV. The Oromo of Ethiopia

My discussion of the Oromo people here as the intimate building block of Ethiopia is not meant to divert our attention from Meles Zenawi's recent political shenanigan of the introduction of an election Code of Conduct and the creation of new alliance between the EPRDF and Hailu Shawel, Lidetu Ayalew, and Ayalew Chamiso. In fact, the main reason why I find it necessary to restate in no uncertain terms the profound and foundational Ethiopiawinet of Oromos in Ethiopian political processes, just like the Amharas, the Tigrayans, the Afars, the Somalis et cetera, is because the marginalization of Oromos by Meles Zenawi and his administration is unacceptable to me and most Ethiopians who value our Ethiopian unity with diversity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. The Code of Conduct signing ceremony clearly showed us how far Meles Zenawi had undermined Oromos, who were in the Medrek Forum as genuine and legitimate opposition.

I have posted/linked in my Website www.tecolahagos.com the extremist views offered by Fayyisa Oromia in his latest article, "Ethiopia: The Zenawi-Shawel Handshake – the Anti-Thesis of Liberty & Democracy (Analysis)," [gadaa.com, November 5, 2009] which was posted in one of the most virulent and extremist anti-Ethiopia Websites. It ought to be understood that Fayyisa's vehement attach lumping all Tigrayans and Amharas as the source of all kinds of political and social problems is not that far fetched, but should have been more discrete, for such lumping of all is never correct. I share in principle with Fayyisa the signing of the Code of Conduct by Meles Zenawi on one side and Hailu Shawel, Lidetu Ayalew, and Ayalew Chemiso on the other is a betrayal. The best way to learn the point of view of an opposition group is to the source as far as possible and read what the members and supporters write or state in public forums. The best way to show how a stick is crocked is not by arguing about it, but by laying a straight one next to it.

I am using as my subsection title after my favorite book title The Oromo of Ethiopia (1994) by Professor Mohammad Hassen. Without sounding divisive, insincere, or patronizing, I cannot think of any other group of Ethiopians of my parents and my generations as dynamic in heroic deeds, and in academic and scientific research and

monumental discoveries as those Ethiopians with Oromo family background. Before I say anything else, I want to state the fact of the depth and scope of the contribution of the Oromo people to the political and social life of Ethiopia as being second to none in all aspects of the life of Ethiopia. Great patriots and heroes, such as Ras Gobena Datche, Dejazmatch Baltcha Safo, Fitawrai Deresu Duki, Dejazmatch Jagama Kello were great warriors among many that helped preserve Ethiopia, and they are Oromo personalities out of whose heroic lives legends are created.

What tribute would be enough for Abebe Bikila the Olympic title holder for winning twice, or Haile Gebreselassie, popularly enthroned as the “Emperor” of long distance running; or for Tirunesh Dibaba the “Baby face Destroyer” whose flawless running style is pure poetry written in the wind. How could any one not be



Jagama Kello in African patriots in WWII (Martin Plaut, BBC)

proud of the greatest long distance runner ever, Kenenisa Bekele, and score others all fellow Ethiopians born from proud Oromo families.

Just a few weeks back, an Ethiopian agronomist Dr. Gebisa Ejeta from an Oromo family won the great 2009 World Food Prize for his scientific work. He may well be on his way to winning the Nobel for his great scientific work. There are several scholars all over North America and Europe who are in the for front of Academic scholarly work. Of course, there are also several Oromo intellectuals who have screwed up sense of history that do more harm to Oromo culture and development with their destructive anti-Ethiopia stance and distortion of history. Rather than revealing and glorifying the intimate and single history of diverse people, they fabricated ideology based ‘Oromo history’ as if there is a separate history of Oromos that is not the history of Ethiopia too, forgetful of the many Ethiopian Emperors and great commanders of the Ethiopian Imperial Army, and the entire Ethiopian aristocracy is an intermingled population of Agew (Lasta), Oromos, Amharas, and Tigrayanes (includes Hamassein) and some Afar. Even Meles Zenawi on his father’s side is from Gojjam with Agew and Oromo decent his Mother side from Serie and Kunama. Emperor Haile Selassie has in equal parts Tigrayan, Gurage, Oromo ancestry, but his Empress was over seventy percent Oromo with Emperor Gelawdewos as her distant ancestor representing her Royal and Solomonic Dynastic Amhara connective tissue.



My tribute to all of the Oromos of Ethiopia is boundless, I thank these great Ethiopians in a very deeply personal way for enhancing my life and uplifting my spirit every time I see the greatest Ethiopian athletes the world has ever seen, and almost all of them from Oromo families, crowding and tearing ribbons after ribbons at the finishing lines, all over the Glob in competitions in the Marathons, in the Olympics, and numerous other international competitions. They helped me walk with my head held high in a life of exile in a foreign society often pushed

around by rough and uncouth locals. I am not in any way denying recognition of other Ethiopians from none Oromo families with some contributions to our Ethiopian pride. The fact is that the people who harmed me the most have always been non-Oromo Ethiopians often close family members. I was very eager to overlook all that and do something constructive in 1991 when I went back to Ethiopia from a long exile. I was hit in the shin by the Leaders of the TPLF.



Haile Gebre Selassie and Kenenisa Bekele,
the greatest athletes the World has ever seen.

It would be of no great service to anyone to gloss over aspects of our history that was violent and destructive. Whether it is Tigrayans, Oromos, Amharas, Afar or Issas (Somalis) they all have committed atrocities against one another and third party innocent small tribes at some point in their past. It is by taking all of our history as part of the universal tragic human condition that I seek positive dimension to our difficult journey from our ancient past to our modern days. When it comes to the Oromo of Ethiopia, it is just the sheer number of such heroes, scholars, and athletes from Oromo families, which

is a clear example of the Ethiopianness of Oromos. This is the reality of Ethiopia, facts that any honest observer ought to acknowledge.

I see these achievements as markers of bonds of unity, whereas some radicalized Oromo intellectuals see them as markers of differences and bases for disunity and Oromo nationalism leading to the creation of an independent Oromia. In recent couple of months there was a lively discourse with the mature and well known Ethiopian scholar and Professor of Philosophy, Messay Kebede on the side of measured intellect and on the other side a young graduate student, Jawar Mohammad Siraj, as yet throwing flam of “radical” often passé rhetoric of Oromo self-determination and Oromo nationalism. For the benefit of all, let us revisit that lively debate/discourse and examine what was the point of contention between Messay and Jawar.

The main thesis point of Messay is that one must accept Ethiopia as the nation-state before talking about self-determination or even before demanding the more reasonable administrative autonomy and the respect of individual human rights. Because of the OLF’s premature engagement in such corrupt ideology based assertion of Oromo independence, Messay holds that the OLF did not make much headway. He saw the fallacy in its ideology of Oromo nationalism that did not exist. On the other hand, Jawar is all over the place, some times arguing that separatist ideology that he blatantly claims to be embraced by all Oromos, and at other time using the rhetoric of the 1960s and 1970s, of origination claims of Oromo “land” being occupied by Amharas, and the colonialism of “Abyssinia” of Oromo people. Jawar by claiming the fact that there is such a movement justifies the movement itself, which is a circular argument.

Whether it is Jawar or the more senior intellectuals and scholars, such as Professors Assefa Jaleta, Ibsa Gutama et cetera, undermined the very history of the Oromo people they are trying to uphold, by their limited and selective processes of focusing on the more recent Oromo history of the Mecha and Tulema and the Gibe River area. They did not consider the vast and foundational movements of great Oromo clans/nations of Raya and Azebo, Wollo, Yeju, Warehimenu et cetera that settled and intermarried with the indigenous Agew and Amharas centuries earlier and formed the very backbone of the “Abyssinia” those revisionist historians and intellectuals of the OLF claim to have colonized the Oromos. The Oromos like the Agews, the Tigrayans, and the Amharas, are the very fabric of *Ethiopiawinet*. The Oromos just like the Agews, or the Amharas and the Tygreans had their share of dynastic Ethiopian Emperors and Empresses no different than the other Ethiopian dynasties.

The first and most successful Oromos in their bid for power in the old kingdom were the Yeju Oromos, for as early as the Sixteenth Century they had in place their dynastic rulers as courtiers and military commanders in the Ethiopian aristocracy. For example, Emperor Bekafa was more of an Oromo than an Amhara, Afan Oromo was spoken in his palace; Susenious came to power with the support of his Oromo warriors, in his case from the Mecha and Tulema faction by way of Wollega, who later settled the area of Selale and Debre Libanos and part of Gojjam driving out earlier settlers of Amhara and Agew people. The last Amhara Emperor of Ethiopia was Emperor Gelawdeos, the rest since

were admixtures of Oromo, Tigrayan, Agew even Afar. This is the Ethiopia “Abyssinia” and its demography that Jawar is claiming to have “colonized” Oromo land.

The reality of our past would show that even Bale was *terra nullius* until the time of Emperor Amdetsion (1314-44) who put the first military garrison and habitat in the area all the way to the present day Lake Turkana. Because of the dense forest no grazing nomadic life was possible in Bale, and that is why both the early Oromo demographic movement of Wollo, Yeju, Raya-Azebo took the Eastern low land corridor avoiding Bale into North Ethiopia and the later Metcha-Tulema movement also completely avoided the Bale dense forest area and moved in the North West direction through Kaffa and Arissi into present day Wollega and part of Gojjam as late as the the Seventeenth Century. The Blue Nile paused impassable obstacle and limited any vast Oromo movement.

The movement of the Metcha and Tulema Oromos from the South is a minor demographic movement relatively speaking, and in no way comparable to the great movement of the Wello, Yeju, Raya/Azebo et cetera a couple of centuries earlier. It is ironic that the children of these later-day demographic movements of the Mecha and Tulema settlements are trying to tell us the history of the Oromo as if it is limited to the least numerous or even least dynamic group. Here is a typical example of *kehuwala yemeta aine aweta*. What I see in the present OLF movement and ideology is ignorance and arrogance. It will benefit these revisionist thinkers to learn more about the richness and scope of the Oromo of Ethiopia before shooting at imaginary enemies and imaginary colonizers. For example, it would have puzzled greatly Ras Ali of Yeju to be told by individuals claiming to represent Oromos from the Metcha and Tulema group that he (Ras Ali) was a colonizer of Oromos and Oromo land since he is identified as *Abyssinian* by the champions of Oromo nationalism!.

What I have tried in this section is to bring to your attention that the Oromo people had suffered derision, denial of basic rights that undermined and eroded the cohesion that had helped us withstand the assaults of foreign aggressors, the destructive forces of nature, and our own skirmish for power and dominance for centuries.

Tecola W. Hagos
November 14, 2009

To be continued

PART THREE

V. Medrek and the “Code of Conduct”

VI. What is to be done?

Conclusion