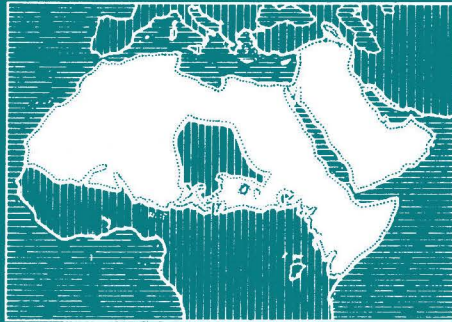


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# THE POLICE AND POLITICS IN ETHIOPIA UNDER THE DERG REGIME (1974-1991)

Dereje Workayehu

## ABSTRACT

*The place of politics in police and policing is one of the most controversial issues in the area/ profession. The paper investigated the degree of political involvement and meddling in the Ethiopian police force under the Derg regime. In order to reach at a reasonable conclusion, a qualitative methodology was employed and attempts have been made to make extensive use of both primary and secondary sources.<sup>1</sup> The primary sources the researcher consulted include, Annual Police Reports, documents/minutes resulted from the annual police conferences and other archival sources were among others. The issues of the official police gazette and individuals and*

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- 1 In the process of writing this paper both published and unpublished primary and secondary materials were consulted, systematically analyzed and interpreted. The unpublished primary materials include Annual police crime reports, which were compiled and presented by the Department of Crime Prevention and Investigation Main Division. Documents/minutes resulted from the annual police conferences of provincial commissioners, their deputies and later heads of the political department and other primary documents in the Federal police head quarter and institute of Ethiopian studies were consulted. The issues of the official police gazette have also been very useful source material. The writer also consulted published and unpublished secondary sources. Lastly, since the study period falls within living memory, many informants were also interviewed.

groups involved as well as related secondary sources were effectively used for objectivity.

This paper argued that the police force together with the army, the security and the revolutionary squads had served as the institutional arm of the Derg regime. This is to say police officers were arguably considered as political agents. Though not to the level of the security and the revolutionary guards/ *Kabale*<sup>2</sup> defense squads, the police force was also used as part of an open, total strategy against the so called “reactionaries” or “anti-revolutionaries”. In the provinces, the administrators directly intervened in police duties, gave arbitrary orders to the extent of whom to arrest and release and reshuffling police officers. One of the most visible changes in the police structure following the revolution was the political department. Its role was not only ideological indoctrination but also recruiting officers for party membership. Although we don’t have the exact statistics, party membership was high in the police force. This was partly because of the fact that priority was given for party members for education opportunities, promotion and transfer applications and partly because of the relative safety one can enjoy from arbitrary actions of the government (accusations of counter revolutionary activities). The rampant political interference and political insecurity (especially among senior police officers) also affected the force negatively by sapping its discipline and performance. The proposal of the senior officers to sensitive post was usually ignored and the so-called committed officers were placed, sometimes even without senior officers’ knowledge. Ignoring the police commissioner went to the extent that, under the direction given by the Derg leaders to the Ministry of Interior, a study was underway to restructure the force in line with the demands of the revolution without the commissioner’s knowledge in the late 1970s.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Despite its professional duties of maintaining public safety and law and order, the origin and institutionalization of the Ethiopian police force received minimal attention in critical academic study. The

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2 *Kabale*: the lowest administration division in the country.

existing few diachronic researches on the police force have been conducted by scholars and writers outside of the discipline of history. These research works were undertaken mainly by Political Scientists, Sociologists, Lawyers and members of the police force.<sup>3</sup> Some of these have little acquaintance with the research methodology of the discipline of history. For instance, Āiemro who was a member of the Imperial Ethiopian Police force attempted to write the history of the Ethiopian police from its origin up to the 20th century. He traced the origins of the force to pre-Christian times. However, he failed to substantiate his claim with credible and tangible historical sources.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of their keen interest for major political developments and state society relationships, many historians were not able to give due emphasis for police and policing related issues, as if these issues were not part of. Historians who have engaged in police and policing so far were very few and what has been done is mostly very brief and limited to few paragraphs.<sup>5</sup> Of course, one should also carefully note that in countries like Ethiopia, policing has never been the role of the police alone. Many institutions and organizations had involved in policing and policing related issues, for instance during the Derg regime the security, the military, urban and rural mass associations; the revolutionary/

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3 See, for instance, Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1987: A Transformation from an Aristocratic to a Totalitarian Autocracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1993; E. J. Keller, *Revolutionary Ethiopia: from Empire to People's Republic*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), 1988; R. Lefort, *Ethiopia: An Heretical Revolution?* (London: Zed Press, 1983); Āiemro Niguse. *Ya Salām Zab* (Addis Ababa: Birhanina Salam Printing Press), 1956 E.C; Workneh Gebeyehu. "An Analysis of the Influence of Politics on Policing in Ethiopia", (PhD Dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of South Africa), 2016.

4 Āiemro Niguse. *Ya Salām Zab*, pp. 77-78.

5 See, for instance, Bahiru Zewude, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1974*, (London: James Currey), 1991; John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*, (London: Spokesman), 1978.

Kabale defense squads were among others.<sup>6</sup> In this paper I tried to investigate only the political role and politicization of the regular police force in Ethiopia between 1974 and 1991.

Political meddling in the police force and police use of violence against political opponents and torture to get confessions have always been a tradition both in pre and post 1974 Ethiopia. What made the revolutionary period important for this investigation is the opportunity it has given to understand the change and continuity of pre-revolutionary imperial policing traditions and the nature and impact of the socialist policing introduced following the revolution. This paper mainly dealt about the history of political interference and meddling in the Ethiopian police force and its administration under the Derg regime based on official sources and interview. It didn't claim to see the perception and image of the public (from below) towards the police and its relationship with politician.

The Ethiopian police force from its origin in the late 19th century had changed a lot both in acquiring structural maturity and professionalism. Especially following the end of the Fascist occupation and the subsequent establishment of the Imperial Ethiopian Police Force under proclamation 6 in 1942, the pace of strengthening the force continued until the 1974 revolution.<sup>7</sup> As the student movement started to influence Ethiopian politics and the Imperial regime began to collapse, the police was at times driven into a political conflict and protest policing, a task which was difficult to undertake. This seriously affected public image of the force and the police was strongly criticized for its action both by those who advocated change and who wished to maintain the status

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6 Andargachew Tiruneh, pp. 208-210; R. Lefort, p.203.

7 Andargachew Tesfaye, p.16; Earnest W. Lefever, *Spear and Scepter: Army, Police and Politics in Tropical Africa*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution), 1970, p. 167. Lefever reduced the overall development and progress of the Ethiopian police force from 1942 to the early 1970s just to number of police men, ignoring the gradual institutional progress.

quo as indicated in the forces own annual reports and official gazette.<sup>8</sup>

The police have usually been perceived as anti-revolutionary and supporter of the old regime in times of radical changes in many parts of the world. This was also the case in Ethiopia following the 1974 revolution. Despite its importance, the police force was not given the attention it deserved by the provisional military government. The Derg had halfhearted kind of approach towards the police force. In the one hand, the provisional military government believed in the forces experience and professionalism and what they can contribute to the realization and advancement of the goals of the revolution. In the other hand, its proximity to the old regime made the force a liability in the face of the Derg leaders. With this dilemma, the force's role was undermined and taken by associations and organizations (like Revolutionary guards) established following the revolution. Its staff was also meant to decline and many of its members were assigned to other institutions and had given other responsibilities.<sup>9</sup> For instance, Major General Worku Zawdu when he assumed general commissioner of the police force in 24/11/1975 E.C. said that “እሱካሁን በሁሉም መስክ ሰርተናል እስኪ. አሁን ደግሞ ወደ ሙያችን ወደ ፖሊስ ስራችን እንመለስ.”<sup>10</sup> This showed the various responsibilities the police had following the revolution, which created a challenge for the force to carry out its normal duties of maintaining law and order. Of course, during the revolutionary period, the regular police had involved in a number of activities like in maintaining law and order, military operations in the war front,

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8 See the Police Gazette *Polis Enā Erimijāw*, 14th year, number 12, Miyāziyā 15, 1966 E.C.; informants, Brigadier Gen. Yādate Gurmu, Colonel Gabra Tanisāya Malase.

9 Colonel Nigussie Wolda Michial (Police Commissioner), “Ya 1971 E.C Kiflāt Hāgar Yamamriyāwoch Līyu Līyu Ya Polis Kifloch Gubñit Riport”, FPHQA, Section 2, File No. 62 (1972 E.C) pp. 205- 208, 266-218.

10 Ya Ābiyotāwi Polis Sarāwit Ṭaqlāy Mamriyā, “Ya 1978 E.C. Ya Abiyotāwi Polis Sarawit Azāžochinā Ya Polatikā Hālāfiwoch Ṭaqlālā Āmatāwi Sibsabā Kālagubāyā” Kamaḡābit 7-20 1978 E.C., p. 210.

suppressing political opponents, training and organizing revolutionary guards and mass organizations, working as provincial administrators and in other ministries among others.<sup>11</sup>

This lack of interest on the police by the government continued at least until the early 1980s, despite the proposals and recommendations of some of the police commissioners. May be partly because of the behavior and actions (lack of professionalism) of Kabale squads and the rampant criticisms associated with it or may be partly because of the proposal of senior police officers and the ambition to realize a professional law enforcement agency by the Derg leaders. The government started to strengthen the police force by recruiting new members and introducing new organizational structure in early 1980s.<sup>12</sup> However, as Andargachew Tesfaye clearly and rightly noted, the military government was ousted from power in 1991 before the force attained at least its pre1974 status.<sup>13</sup>

The revolutionary government (besides mass organizations and Kabale squads), relied heavily on the personnel and structures inherited from the Imperial government on the execution of its revolutionary measures. Of these institutions, the Imperial Ethiopian police force which later changed its name in to the revolutionary Ethiopian police force was the one. Thus, the influence of politics in the police force and its policing duties and administration under the Derg regime cannot meaningfully be understood without reference to the Imperial period.

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11 Polis Sarawit, “Ya Hizbāwi Polis Sarawit Yaṭināt Yizāt Aṭaqālāy Āstawaṭio”, pp. 53-60; Informant: Major Balata Mollā, *Yamato Alaqā* Mulāt Āmbarber, Colonel Siyum Kabade, Major Jagnāw Mānāzawāl

12 See the Police Gazette, *Polis Enā Ermijaw* from the early 1968 E.C.; Informants: Colonel Gabra Tanisāya, Brigadier Gen. Yādate, Brigadier Gen. Bakala Nadi, *Yamato Alaqā* Bazābeh Eniyaw; Andargachew, p.26.

13 Andargachew, p. 26

## 2. Police and politics in Pre 1974 Ethiopia: An Overview

The place of politics in police and policing is the most debatable and disputing issue in the profession and academia. For years the relationship between police and politicians has also been a subject of analysis among scholars of the profession. In this regard, there are two different perspectives on the place of politics in police and policing. Scholars, mainly from the liberal policing camp have argued to avoid politics in police and policing matters. Since political meddling in police duties and administration undermines discipline and chain of command and ended up using the force as an instrument of oppression and cracking down political opponents.<sup>14</sup>

There are also scholars who argue that maintaining politics out of the police and policing is impractical because the law they enforce may not be free from political and partial values and interests in the first place. Even in democratic states, political meddling in the police duties and administration is hard to avoid completely. However, it has to be watched carefully and diligently not to adversely affect the legal and professional duties and ethics of the force significantly.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Marxist scholars also view the police as the institutional arm of the rulers to control the working class and sustain their dominant position.<sup>16</sup>

Generally, many scholars and the writer of this paper believe that within the law police must be immune from political interference in their policing duties that can adversely affect the

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14 See, for instance, Andargachew Tesfaye , P. 32; B. P. Saha, *The Police in Free India: Its Facts and Drawbacks*, (Delhi: Konark Publishers), 1989, p. 118.

15 Among others Hassen Shuffa, "Managing Police: Challenges Facing the Ethiopian Federal Police". (Thesis for BMA, Amsterdam School of Business, 2001), p. 78.

16 On Communist Policing, see Louise I. Shelley, *Policing Soviet Society: The Evolution of State Control* (London: Routledge) 1996, p. 193.

forces discipline, chain of command and professional ethics.<sup>17</sup> Thus, with this back drop, I analyzed the degree of political interference and meddling in the police force and the political function of the force in the period under consideration

From its establishment as a modern police force in 1942, the Imperial Ethiopian police force had been the institutional arm of the emperor. The emperor had all the power to decide on the institutional development and duties of the force, including promotion and transfer of senior police officers. In this regard, the most serious problems raised by line and high-ranking officers were the issues of transfer and promotion in the police force. Many cases of promotion and transfer were reported that didn't take the principles and rules of the force in to consideration.<sup>18</sup>

For instance, as to the annual police report there were many complains on the transfer of officers. Although transfer was conducted centrally, many officers were not happy by the way/process transfer had been done. According to the regulations of the force, an officer should be transferred after serving two years in a particular area. However, there were line officers who were not able to get transfer for over 10 years and there were also officers who were transferred without complying to the 2 years requirement. Most of the complaints were from officers who were transferred to and from Eritrea and Hārrege provinces partly because of the rampant conflicts in these areas.<sup>19</sup> The number of complaints in this regard may explain partly by the involvement of politicians in the police forces administration as indicated in the forces annual report. Lefever, also observed the unguided interference of the emperor and

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17 *Ibid*

18 Earnest W. Lefever, p.162; R. Lefort, p.204; Informant: Brigadier Gen Bakala Nadi

19 Ya Ābiyotāwi Polis Sarāwit Ṭaqlāy Mamriyā, "Ya 1978 E.C. Ya Abiyotāwi Polis Sarawit Azāžochinā Ya Polatikā Hālāfiwoch Ṭaqlālā Āmatāwi Sibsabā Kālagubāyā" pp. 42-43.

his appointees in selection, promotion and transfer of senior officers and its negative impact on the morale and discipline of the force.<sup>20</sup>

Appointing officers for higher posts without the knowledge of provincial police officers and other concerned bodies were also common. These actions brought inefficient individuals to higher positions who were more committed to the provincial administrators than legal and professional duties. This in turn had an adverse effect on the morale, discipline and efficiency of the force. This was even worse under the military socialist government, Derg.<sup>21</sup>

The emperor employed different strategies and tactics to strengthen his control and prevent the development of different political views and discourage disloyalty in the force. Of the methods used include controlling the force directly by him or by his loyal appointees and placing those suspected of disloyalty to distant posts. As to Kaplan, political loyalty to the emperor was given due credit when officers were assigned to higher positions.<sup>22</sup>

Provincial administrators in the provinces were also usually tried to act beyond their legal authority and meddling in police affairs. The politicians ambition and interest to use the police for their own selfish ends compromised discipline and chain of command in the force. The relations of the police with the administrators/politicians at large were not simple technical matter of structure and organization; but had serious political significance and repercussion. In principle, there was a system and structure in

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20 Lefever, p.162.

21 Ya Polis Sarāwit Taqlāy Mamriya, “Ya Wānā Azāzhoch, Yaradāt Taqlāy Azāzhoch Enā ya Makalāwi Mamiryā Makoninoch ya 1964 E.C. Amatāwi Taqlālā Sibsabā Qāla Gubāya”, FPHQA, Section 2, File No. 44, (Addis Ababa, Yakātit 1964 E.C.), p. 18, 106-108; Ya Ābiyotāwi Polis Sarāwit Taqlāy Mamriyā, “Ya 1978 E.C. Ya Abiyotāwi Polis Sarawit Azāzochinā Ya Polatikā Hālāfiwoch Taqlālā Āmatāwi Sibsabā Kālagubāyā” p. 119; Hassen, p. 78; Lefever, p. 167; Andargachew, pp. 20-21.

22 Kaplan, p. 468

which the police were accountable and received orders downwards from the Ministry of Interior. The proclamation that dictated governance and administration of the provinces stated that, the provincial administrators were responsible to the security of their respective provinces. It also gave them the authority to control and order the police force in their respective provinces in accordance with the stated principles and proclamations through the provincial police commissioners. However, there were many incidents where politicians and administrators were interfering in the police duties and governance purely for personal reasons and beyond their legal jurisdiction.<sup>23</sup> As to Lefever, this issue was much more visible when a provincial governor was operating at a political cross purpose with the emperor, which left the police on a serious question of dual loyalty.<sup>24</sup>

The force also complained on the arbitrary orders and interferences of the provincial administrators in police duties (“እደፈለግን ፖሊሱን እንዘዝ”<sup>25</sup> literally let’s dictate the police as we wish) and the serious problems they were creating in police duties and administration. They even dared to control every move of the police and gave arbitrary orders without due consideration of the law and disregarding the provincial police commissioners. This also led to politically motivated measures by the police because of pressures from these provincial governors against the so called “criminals”.

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23 Ya Polis Sarāwit Taqlāy Mamriya, “Ya Wānā Azāzhoch, Yaradāt Taqlāy Azāzhoch Enā ya Makalāwi Mamiryā Makoninoch ya 1964 E.C. Amatāwi Taqlālā Sibsabā Qāla Gubāya”, FPHQA, Section 2, File No. 44, (Addis Ababa, Yakātīt 1964 E.C.), pp. 18, 106-108; Ya Ābiyotāwi Polis Sarāwit Taqlāy Mamriyā, “Ya 1978 E.C. Ya Abiyotāwi Polis Sarawit Azāzochinā Ya Polatikā Hālāfiwoch Taqlālā Amatāwi Sibsabā Kālagubāyā” p. 119.

24 Lefever, p.167.

25 Ya Polis Sarāwit Taqlāy Mamriya, “Ya Wānā Azāzhoch, Yaradāt Taqlāy Azāzhoch Enā ya Makalāwi Mamiryā Makoninoch ya 1964 E.C. Amatāwi Taqlālā Sibsabā Qāla Gubāya”, FPHQA, Section 2, File No. 44, (Addis Ababa, Yakātīt 1964 E.C.), p 108.

Their interference went to the extent of reshuffling police officers and deciding whom to arrest and release.<sup>26</sup>

The police officials were also aware of the intentions of the provincial administrations in framing the police in their own interests against the forces legal and professional ethics. The police officers condemned these actions and intentions of provincial administrators in its early 1970s annual police conference report. The participants also advised and declared officers not to follow simply the orders of provincial administrators instead they should stick to the law and should have discussions with the administrators as well. The commissioner also warned Police officers not to engage in unnecessary benefit relationships with the administrators.<sup>27</sup>

There were also reports of police use of extreme investigation techniques (torture) on those individuals suspected of committing crimes. This was partly because of lack of investigation skills on the part of the police and partly caused by pressures from politicians. Politicians very often by giving false information compelled the police to apply harsh investigative methods. Although this was not acceptable to officers, as to the police report, the politicians usually gave them no choice but to follow their order.<sup>28</sup>

The relationship between the police and judges in the last years of Haile Sellassie's rule was also well described in the annual police conference minute report. As to the report, there were many cases that judges were acting purely on personal motives and out of their legal jurisdictions. For instance, they compelled police officers to accuse arrest and bring individuals to court on personal grounds and without due process of law.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the Derg regime inherited the personnel and structure of the Imperial Ethiopian police force and politicized it further in its totalitarianism cemented well by the ideology of socialism.

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26 *Ibid*, pp. 18, 106-108; informants: *Yamato alakā* Alaminah Satārgāw, Brigadier Gen Yādate Gurmu, Brigadier Gen Bakala Nadi.

27 *Ibid*, p.18.

28 *Ibid*, p.107.

29 *Ibid*, p. 53.

### 3. Police and Politics in Ethiopia under the Derg Regime

In addition to the legacies of the Imperial regime, politician's intervention in the duties and administration of the police force under the Derg was further strengthened by its ideology of socialism. The communist model of policing entails, citizens' conformity to the demands of the state, by intruding in to the daily lives of citizens, mainly carried out by the law enforcement apparatus under the pretext of law and order.<sup>30</sup> Under the Derg regime in Ethiopia, the regular police was politicized to undertake such a mission with the Revolutionary Squads and the Security. However, the participation of the regular police to crackdown political opponents so called "anti-revolutionaries" and to citizens comply with the needs of the state had been minimal as compared to revolutionary Squads and the security.<sup>31</sup>

One of the most noticeable changes in the police organizational structure following the revolution was the Political Department.<sup>32</sup> This special department was organized parallel with the police commissioner's office; showed the power and mandate given for the political department in the revolutionary police force.<sup>33</sup> The political department is responsible for ideological indoctrination of members of the police. It also engaged in recruiting 'politically and ideologically conscious' police personnel for party membership.<sup>34</sup> Although no statistics is available that shows the numbers of party

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30 See among others Louise I. Shelley, pp. 14-16.

31 See for instance CPIMD, "Annual Police Report for the year, 1977 E.C.", p. 2; Lefort, p. 203.

32 Andargachew, pp. 41-42; Hassen, p. 79.

33 Ya Hāgar Astadādar Enā Hizbāwi Polis Ministar, "Bahizibāwit Dimocrāsīyāwit Ripoblic Ethiopia ya hāgar Astadādar Enā Hizbāwi Polic Ministar Ya akom Mawākir Yatināt Rakik", Addis Ababa, 1977E.C., p.16

34 Ibid, p.16; Andargachew, p.50; Informants: Major Siyume Kabada, Major Jagenāw Māneyāzawāl, *Yamato Alaqā* Mulāt Ambarber, Colonel Alamāyahu, Colonel Gabre Tanisāya, Brig. General Bakala, Brig. General Yādate

members in the force, as to documents and informants, officers who joined the party and those who wanted to join (interested) was high. This was partly because of the privileges and paybacks of party membership with regard to education opportunity, promotion and transfer besides the ideological conviction. There were also officers who joined the party for safety reasons or fear of the consequences of staying away from the party; they may be labeled as anti-revolutionary or supporter of the opposing camp. Party members were also influential in determining the direction and activities of the police.<sup>35</sup>

The political department was also responsible for organizing and following up discussion clubs. The roles of these clubs were political indoctrination of members of the force with Marxist Leninist ideology and enhance the forces' transformation processes into revolutionary police force and later to people's police. However, the absence of enough political cadres in the force contributed for the limited number of discussion clubs.<sup>36</sup>

There were suspicions, divisions and conflicts within the police force itself following the revolution as presented by the commissioner's report. This was partly emanated from the political conditions of the state and partly because of the politicization of the force especially following the introduction of the political department and the frustrations and suspicions emanated on the senior police officers and their leaders associated with it.<sup>37</sup>

There were reports that higher police officials were not happy with the discussion clubs. Lack of mutual trust and understanding was also rampant between senior police officers and heads of the political department and chair persons of discussion clubs. Intimidation and transferring of officers who lead the discussion clubs to other areas were also used as a strategy to discourage them

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35 Ibid

36 Ibid;

37 Colonel Nigussie Wolda Michial (Police Commissioner), "Ya 1971 E.C Kiflāt H gar Yamamriyāwoch Līyu Līyu Ya Polis Kifloch Gubñit Riport", FPHQA, Section 2, File No. 62 (1972 E.C) pp, 85-215.

by higher police officials as discussed in the annual police conference.<sup>38</sup>

Shelley's thesis "criminal insecurity does not impel police into politics, only political insecurity does"<sup>39</sup> is the case demonstrated by the police force under the Derg regime. Although Police had contributed a lot in maintaining peace in the revolutionary period, there were officers alienated from the force based on their class and alleged anti-revolutionary acts. Attempts were made to exclude individuals from law enforcement careers if they had "inappropriate" class origin. There were also officers who were dismembered and purged from the police.<sup>40</sup>

This arbitrary actions and political meddling in the police duties and administration adversely affected discipline and chain of command. Although senior police officers repeatedly advised the Derg leaders to follow merit-based appointments for at least sensitive posts, their recommendations were not accepted. Instead, many critical missions and assignments were led by the so called committed officers or political cadres against the recommendations or without the knowledge of senior officers (as discussed in the 1978 E.C police annual conference).<sup>41</sup> The police commissioner also complained about the increased number of orders (which were usually urgent and sudden) from above which they didn't have any prior plane or at least information. Selection of candidates for

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38 Ibid; Informants: *Yamato Alaqā* Mulāt Ambarber, Major Balata Mollā, *Yamato alakā* Fisihā Nigāto, *Yamato alakā* Alaminah Satārgāw, Brig. General Yādate.

39 Shelley, p. 27

40 See, The Police Gazette, *Abiyotāwi Polis*, Hidār 15, 1976 E.C., 5th year, Number 6.

41 Ya Abiyotāwi Polis Sarāwit Taqilāy Mamiriy, "Ya 1978 E.C Ya Abiyotawī Polis Sarāwit Ya Azazhoch Enā Ya Politikā Halāfiwoch Taqlālā Sibisaba Qāla Gubāya", pp. 43.

further education/training abroad was also conducted without the commissioner's knowledge.<sup>42</sup>

Niguse Wolde Micheal, the commissioner of the force also complained about the spread of different rumors on him and other senior police officers which affected the forces discipline and chain of command negatively. As to him, the rumors were mainly about himself like "the commissioner is no longer in charge of the issue of transfer of officers, he is going to be removed from office in the name of retirement and many more baseless accusations". He also noted that the main force behind all these rumors and false accusations were those officers removed from their position and from the force because of their poor performance. The commissioner also expressed his dissatisfaction on the rumors spread on him and the attention given to these rumors by the ministry of interior and other political leaders.<sup>43</sup>

Police commissioners and officers ever felt safe from false accusations, rumors and harassments at the hands of politicians and party functionaries. The interference of politicians in the police duties and administration was so rampant that decisions and actions that can significantly impact the force were carried out without the knowledge of the commissioner. For instance, under the direction given by the Derg leaders to the Ministry of Interior, a study was underway to restructure the force in line with the demands of the revolution without the commissioner's knowledge in the late 1970s.<sup>44</sup>

One can also see the degree of division and conflict with in the police force itself following the revolution by looking at the commissioner's report. Overwhelming fear and frustration of provincial police commissioners together with serious lack of discipline and chain of command were challenges of the force for

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42 Colonel Nigussie Wolda Michial (Police Commissioner), "Ya 1971 E.C Kiflāt Hāgar Yamamriyāwoch Līyu Līyu Ya Polis Kifloch Gubñit Riport", FPHQA, Section 2, File No. 62 (1972 E.C) p. 212.

43 Ibid, pp. 212- 215

44 Ibid, p. 212

many of the revolutionary period. As to the report of the commissioner, serious problems were observed in the police forces of Sidāmo, Wollagā, Shawā, Gojjām, Tigrāy and Wollo provinces and in the Finance Police Department. The commissioner also stressed that seven out of nine provincial police commissioners with the exception of Tigrāy and Shawā should leave office and replaced by capable commissioners. As to the commissioner, provincial commissioners' inability of maintaining discipline and fear was emanated from the fact that they may be exposed and accused by officers in discussion clubs or strike against them and force them leave office or even arrest them. As to the report, relatively better discipline was observed in Gondār, Hārarge and Eritrea provincial police commissioners and Fatino Darāsh (Emergency police force) police department.<sup>45</sup>

From the available documents and informants, it is possible to say that the Marxist analysis of policing had an effect on the thinking of Derg leaders.<sup>46</sup> One can also see numerous reports and articles in the forces official gazette on the police and policing history and experience of Soviet Union and its satellite East European states.<sup>47</sup> Marxist scholars have argued against the thinking that the police as nonpartisan institution that maintains law and order and view instead it as an institutional arm of the ruling class to maintain its dominance at the expense of the interest of the workers.<sup>48</sup> Like in many socialist countries and against the principle of Marxist policing, where the police was meant to protect the interest of the workers, in Ethiopia after 1974, the police was acted as an

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45 Ibid, pp. 86-91.

46 See among others Hassen, pp. 79-80; Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Trenton, New Jersey: The Red Sea Press), 1989, p. 59; Lefort, p. 241; Informants: *Yamato alakā* Alaminah Satārgāw, Colonel Alamāyahu, Colonel Gabre Tanisāya, Brig. General Bakala, Brig. General Yādate.

47 See many of the issues in the official police gazette, *Abiyotāwi Polis*, in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

48 See among others Louise I. Shelley, pp. 14-16.

instrument of the leaders of the Derg.<sup>49</sup> Regardless of the speeches and reports of some of the senior police officers and Derg leaders, the police was there to protect the interest of leaders than the working class. For instance, Colonel Falake Tabor, head of the Ethiopian Police College, in his speech for the 17<sup>th</sup> round graduates strongly opposed the idea that the police should be politically neutral. Instead argued that policemen should be political agents and they need to act in a way that favors the interest of the working class and peasants.<sup>50</sup> The police was supposed to be an agent of the government to spread the dominant ideology of the time into the population. Its political role had given due emphasis together with its law enforcement duties. In time conflict, police men instead of enforcing the ordinary laws, they should see things from a revolutionary perspective that can favor the interest of the workers and peasants.<sup>51</sup>

At least in principle, there was an ideological commitment to recruit police personnel from workers and peasants and to use them to shape the society in line with this dominant ideology. Despite the attempts to ignore people who had “inappropriate” class origin from the force, the class bias of law enforcement did become less visible in practice.<sup>52</sup>

It is true that the communist police model, in which the Revolutionary police force was looking up to, expects the police to play a significant political function and role at the time of political conflict.<sup>53</sup> There are scholars who argued that the police force under the Derg regime played a significant and diverse political role. For instance, Workineh Gebeyehu, though his position to the Derg regime has been questionable to say the least, he strongly argued the

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49 See among others Hassen, p. 79.

50 See the Police Gazette, *Abiyotāwi Polis*, Yakātīt 15, 1975 E.C., 4th year, Number 12.

51 *Ibid.*

52 See, The Police Gazette, *Abiyotāwi Polis*, Hidār 15, 1976 E.C., 5th year, Number 6; Informants: Brig. Gen. Yādāte, Colonel Gabre Tanisaya

53 *Ibid*; Louise I. Shelley, pp. 14-16.

politicization of the police and policing during the Derg regime. He also discussed a lot on police brutality and lack of accountability when it came to politically motivated cases and such cases were not very uncommon, especially during the Red Terror. He continued to say that the police was also engaged widely in crushing any politically motivated resistances and oppositions and no police accountability was ensured for such actions.<sup>54</sup> Although other scholars did not deny the political role of the police under the Derg, they argued that it should not be exaggerated that much by considering the trust level the government had to the force. As to informants and written sources, the revolutionary defense squads and the security had played a significant political role in cracking down political opponents to the regime as compared to the regulars police. Although the police was not immune from this kind of political functions, it had usually a supportive/axillary role in dismantling politically motivated oppositions and maintaining citizens' conformity to the needs of the state.<sup>55</sup>

By virtue of its number, the police handled political cases especially in areas where the security was not available. This was however mainly because of limited institutional and personnel capability of the security. This relationship between the police and the security usually reached its peak during periods of political conflict.<sup>56</sup> As to sources, the definition and range of political violence was broadly conceptualized in Ethiopia under the Derg and many of the conflicts and violence which had not been political in the preceding pre-revolutionary era became political after 1974. This also partly contributed for the overstated analysis of the involvement of the regular police force in political policing among

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54 Workineh Gebeyehu, pp. 8-10.

55 See for instance CPIMD, "Annual Police Report for the year, 1977 E.C.", p. 2; Lefort, p. 203; Informants: Brig. Gen. Yādate, Colonel Gabre Tanisaya, Major Bafiḡādu, Colonel Alamāyahu.

56 Informants: Colonel Gabra Tanisāya, Colonel Alamāyahu. Brig. Gen. Yādate.

some scholars.<sup>57</sup> In line with this, the role of the police in what is commonly called the ‘White and Red Terror’ is worth investigation.

The experience and trend of the Ethiopian state in handling and responding to political conflicts and violence has not been a subject of critical and detailed academic research. It has been very much limited to brief expert comments and unsubstantiated reflections in public literatures and mass medias by amateurs and political groups.<sup>58</sup> In this regard, the political violence and state orchestrated mass killing of individuals for their political views, commonly referred as the red terror has not been an exception.

Many people especially the young and educated ones were brutally massacred simply because of their political views during the Red Terror. Although his position to the Derg regime was questionable at large (member of EPRP), the most shocking and brutal tortures and killings of the Red Terror were captured and articulated by Babile Tolla.<sup>59</sup> However, sources on the specific contributions and roles of the regular police in carrying out the Red Terror have been fragmentary and contradictory to say the least.

There are scholars who argued that the role of the regular police in the Red Terror had been minimal. For instance, as to Babile Tolla the police did not play a significant role in liquidating the anti-revolutionaries during the Red Terror since it was labeled as supporter of the old regime to begin with and infiltrated by the EPRP members later on.<sup>60</sup> This is also supported by Rene Lefort that “The police had never shown much enthusiasm for hunting down reactionaries”.<sup>61</sup> Many retired officers whom I interviewed also

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57 See for instance Workineh Gebeyehu ; Andargachew, p. 63

58 Numerous interviews and programs in mass medias and biographies and Autobiographies have started to come out since recently by those who involved on both side of the conflict in the Red terror.

59 Babile Tola, *To Kill a Generation: The Red Terror in Ethiopia* (Washington D.C.: Free Ethiopia Press), 1989

60 *Ibid*, pp. 150-159

61 Rene Lefort, p. 203

substantiated this view.<sup>62</sup> However, in the official police gazette regarding this issue is not only lack consistency but at times contradictory to each other. There are many reports in the police gazette that show the active role the police had played in chasing and hunting EPRP members, who were commonly referred as anti-revolutionaries or anti-peace elements or reactionaries.<sup>63</sup> Since the official police gazette was prepared by the political department of the force, it is understandable that many of the issues were aimed at political indoctrination and building the image of the force and its active role in the revolutionary period including liquidating opponents of the regime than reflecting what was true on the ground.

The role the police played in carrying out the Red Terror was debatable to say the least. However, most of my sources (written and informants) lead me to conclude that as compared to the security and the revolutionary/Kabale defense squads, the regular police had an important axillary role in executing the red terror.<sup>64</sup> One should not also deny that regardless of the reservations the revolutionary government had on the police, the force was used as part of the overall plan and strategy to liquidate “reactionaries” or “anti-revolutionaries” mainly EPRP members.<sup>65</sup> This was evidenced by

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62 Informants: Colonel Alamāyahu, Colonel Gabre Tanisāya, Brig. General Bakala, Brig. General Yādate

63 See many of the police gazette from 1974 up to the early 1980s. For instance, see *The Police Gazette, Abiyotāwi Polis*, Maskarām1, 1973 E.C., 2nd year, Number 1; *Abiyotāwi Polis*, Maskarām3, 1972 E.C., 1st year, Number 1.

64 See, for instance, Lefort, p. 203, Informants: Brig. Gen. Yādate, Colonel Gabre Tanisaya, Major Bafiqādu, Colonel Alamāyahu.

65 *Ibid.*; Andargachew Tesfaye, pp. 1-42; See also CPIMD, “Police Annual Report for the year 1968 E.C.”, pp. 1-2; The Police Annual Reports for other years; informants: Brig. Gen. Yādate, Colonel Gabra Tanisāya, Brig. Gen. Bakala, Colonel Alamayehu. My informants maintained that there were individual policemen who played an active role in the terror campaign but police as an institution had played a limited role in the

the number of police men died in the line of duty fighting political opponents. Although no figure is available that shows the number of casualty at the high time of the Terror in 1977- 78, as to the annual police report in 1975/76 231 officers were killed and 174 were wounded by so called anti-revolutionaries.<sup>66</sup> Thus, one can fairly argue that not to the level of the security and the revolutionary guards, the regular police had also a role in mass repression in the revolutionary period that ensured conformity of the population to the demands of the state.

Moreover, some scholars argued that, the training and role of police should be free from political influence. However, during the Derg period socialist indoctrination was made the governing principle and the Ethiopian police college itself took the shape of a Para-military nature. In some cases, the political and ideological training covered up to 20% of the total training content.<sup>67</sup>

The regular police had also played a role in regulating and controlling public demonstrations, protests and orchestrated political expressions of the state. The police together with the revolutionary squads had the role of organizing mass gatherings and demonstrations on state holidays like September 12 and May Day. There were also mass gatherings and demonstrations organized by the regular police together with the revolutionary guards and mass associations in support of government policies or against apartheid South Africa and American Imperialism. In the meantime, they had to watch carefully and make sure that no political messages and actions that embarrass the government can occur in the demonstrations.<sup>68</sup>

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campaign to liquidate the EPRP and other opposition groups in the period of the Red Terror.

66 See CPIMD, "Police Annual Report for the year 1968 E.C.", pp. 1-2.

67 Hassen Shuffa, p. 10.

68 C. Clapham, *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1988, p. 131; CPIMD, "Police Annual Report for the year 1972 E.C.", p. 21; *Abiyotāwi Polis*, Maskaram 15, 1976 E.C., 5th year, Number 2.

One of the least researched areas in the historiography of police and policing in Ethiopia has been police-public relationship, especially on citizens attitude towards the police. In this regard we do not have ample data or no survey had been conducted that shows the attitude of the public to the revolutionary police force. Many scholars have argued that amicable police-public relationship heavily depends on the forces efficiency in crime prevention and investigation. A society that receives and enjoys police service is more likely to cooperate with the force in maintaining law and order and crime prevention.<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately, investigation skill and efficiency of the Ethiopian police force under the Derg was questionable to say the least and kept declining as compared to the pre-revolutionary period. The Revolutionary police force was also unpopular in its unethical and inhuman investigative methods such as the third degree to get confessions. Many innocent citizens were victims of such police brutality and inhuman actions, which made the force unpopular and a subject of criticism not only by the public but also by other government institutions as discussed in the 1978 E.C. Police Annual Conference.<sup>70</sup> The involvement of the police in different areas (especially areas traditionally do not designated for the police force) and the decline in the officers number greatly increased the work load of individual police officers following the revolution. This forced few officers to handle many cases; which increased not only police inefficiency in crime investigation but also increased the time needed to close cases.<sup>71</sup>

Generally, the public was not supportive and cooperative with the police in its professional duties like crime control and

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69 Clive Emsley, *The English Police: Political and Social History*, (London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited), 1996, p.82; B.P. Saha, p. 74.

70 Ya Abiyotāwi Polis Sarāwit Taqilāy Mamiriy, “Ya 1978 E.C Ya Abiyotawi Polis Sarāwit Ya Azazhoch Enā Ya Politikā Halāfiwoch Taqlālā Sibisaba Qāla Gubāya”, pp. 113; Informants: Brig. Gen. Yādate, Colonel Gabre Tanisaya.

71 See CPIMD, “Police Annual Police Report for the year 1977 E.C.”, p. 57.

investigation in contrary to what was usually reported in the official police gazette. However, this attitude of the public towards the law enforcement agency was not totally irrational and without logical explanations. For instance, according to sources, the forces inefficiency in crime investigation, it was also very common and irritating for a witness to be frequently called to the police station to give their words about a crime committed. This frequent calling of witnesses to courts without considering their personal and private engagements made many citizens avoid the difficult mission of being the prosecution witness. Thus, the time and money wasted because of being a witness discouraged citizens to actively assist the police in its duties, not to mention the lack of protection for witness especially for sensitive and life threatening cases.<sup>72</sup> The politicization of the law enforcement agency and the use of the force by politicians for their own political ends had also contributed for the low level of police public relations.<sup>73</sup>

With regard to the official police gazette, prepared under the police force's political department, the paper in many of its issues claimed that it had served and played a role to the force's professional development and transformation.<sup>74</sup> However, this claim of the force was hard to substantiate by an independent source and questionable. Nonetheless, it needs further scholarly investigation. Moreover, especially for the revolutionary period, many of the issues covered were not in line with the force's efficiency and investigative skills rather its ideological role, i.e., spreading the Marxist-Leninist ideology to the public and organizing and training of urban and rural associations and its military operations in the field among others.<sup>75</sup>

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72 Informants: Colonel Gabra Tansāya, General Bakala.

73 *Ibid.*

74 See, The Police Gazette *Abiyotāwi Polis* from early months of 1973 E.C.

75 *Ibid*; see many of the police gazette in up to the early 1980s.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Literatures on socialist policing model underline the duties and activities of the police in political development than fighting nonpolitical crimes. It was true for the revolutionary police force which was expected to engage more on the class struggle and enforcing citizens obedience with communist ideology than controlling crimes. Although undermined both in staff and institutional capacity, the Imperial Ethiopian police force was not completely abolished following the revolution. Thus, the politicization and political role of the revolutionary police force can be understood partly by engaging in critical study of the Imperial Ethiopian police force where the Revolutionary Police force inherited the personnel and authoritarian social control of the force. This legacy of the political role of the police was further strengthened by the socialist ideology and its policing perspective Ethiopia adopted following the 1974 revolution. The police was viewed not only as an institution that maintains law and order but also ensures social and political control. Moreover, the 1974 revolution also increased the range of police functions beyond maintaining law and order. Besides the measures to indoctrinate the force with the new ideology, there were also attempts to compel the population by using the law enforcement agents to conform to Marxist teachings, though many individuals continued to adhere to their traditions and religion.

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## II. Informants

No	Name and title	Age	Place and date of interview	Remarks
1	Alamāyahu Tilāhun (Colonel)	58	Addis Ababa 01/04/2001 E.C.	He has an excellent knowledge of the police force under the Derg. He served in different positions and departments of the Revolutionary Police Force from 1976 up to the end of the Derg period.
2	Alaminah Satārgaw ( <i>Ya mato Alakā</i> )	65	Gondar 05/04/2010 E.C.	He has been a member of the force and participated in different military engagements with the so-called anti revolutionaries in the Ethio- Sudanese border.
3	Jagnāw Mānāzawāl Major	62	Gondar 03/05/2010 E.C.	He had been a member of the police force and trained many revolutionary squads in Gondar and other areas
4	Bafiqadu Tolerā (Major)	56	Addis Ababa 20/2/2001 E.C.	He has been serving as advisor of the police commissioner. He was part of the 18th round graduates of the Ethiopian police college. He also served as a teacher in the police college. He has an excellent knowledge of the police force under the Derg
5	Bakala Nadi (Brig. Gen.)	68	Addis Ababa 26/4/2001 E.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He worked at various high positions in the Revolutionary Police Force.</li> <li>- 1972-74, Head of training and chief Law instructor in the Ethiopian police college.</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1975-79, special prosecutor, Special court Martial.</li> <li>- 1980-83, Deputy commandant and commandant Ethiopian police college.</li> <li>- 1984-88, Head of Ethiopian police force planning and programming main department.</li> <li>- 1988-89, Head of Ethiopian police force, Crime Prevention and Investigation Main Division.</li> <li>- 1990-91, Head of Ethiopian police force Administration main division.</li> <li>- He has ample knowledge on the issue under investigation</li> </ul>
6	Balata Mollā (Major)	60	Bāhrdār 10/08/2010 E.C.	He had been a member of the force and served in different positions during the revolutionary period, including leading discussion clubs.
7	Bazābih Eniyaw <i>Yamoto Alaqā</i>	61	Addis Ababa 15/12/2003 E.C.	He has an excellent knowledge in police patrol and investigation. A graduate of Ethiopian Police College
8	Fisihā Nigāto ( <i>YaMato Alaqā</i> )	66	Addis Ababa 7/11/2001 E.C.	He has a good knowledge of the operation styles of the police force under the Derg. He received training in the Police College
9	Gabra Tanisāya Malase (Colonel)	52	Addis Ababa 5/4/2001 E.C.	He has an excellent knowledge of the Addis Ababa police force and its operational styles. He served as head of the 6th police station. And following the reorganization of the city into 18 Awrājā police stations, he became head of one of the Awrājā police stations. He also

				served as head of the Police Station's Investigation Division
10	Mulāt Ambarbar ( <i>Yamato Alaqā</i> )	62	Dabre Markos 11/10/2011 E.C.	He had been a member of the revolutionary police force and a graduate of the Ethiopian police college and served the force in different departments. He was also a party member
11	Siyum Kabade (Major)	67	Addis Ababa 10/05/2011 E.C.	He had been a member of the revolutionary police force and served in different departments
12	Yādate Gurmu (Brig. Gen.)	88	Addis Ababa 18/4/2001 E.C.	His knowledge on the Addis Ababa police force since the imperial period is very impressive. He served at different posts since 1939 E.C.  1939-1961 – In the Traffic Police Main Division  1961-69 - Head of the 4th police station  1969 – 1977 = Deputy commissioner of the Addis Ababa Police Force  1977 – 1983 = Police commissioner of Addis Ababa

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# **PATRIARCHICAL HEGEMONY: RELIGION AS AN INSTRUMENT OF HYDRO-HEGEMONY**

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## **Abstract**

*The Nile row is loaded with the capricious, untidy and occasionally stormy Ethio-Egyptian relation which has attained a new momentum following the inauguration of the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam. However, most of the discussions ignored the fact that the potent interstate relation was embarked on ever since the pharaonic times. It has elapsed for centuries conditioned by the ebbs and tides of the exchange of water with religion, interstate conflict and European imperialism. Besides the primal role of the river in engineering the interstate relation has been given marginal attention. However, the relation was substantially the 'gift of the Nile' which was the artery that fuses the cultures and the civilizations of the peoples within its course and without. On the other hand, to the extent that the Nile serves as cultural melting pot, it has also been an object of discontent in the nitty-gritty of inter-state relation which is usually depicted as 'fraternal affinity.' However, Egypt has used religion for mastering the Nile. Ethiopia was either deprived or was dependent on Egypt in assigning the head of the Church. Guising as if its decision of the Nicaea Fathers, Ethiopia was kept in a spiritual captivity designed for ensuring the continued flow of the water. Therefore, this paper examined how the quest for maximal appropriation of the Nile water has fundamentally shaped interstate religious intercourses in the Easter Nile Basin.*

## 1. Introduction

. . . water is not only a physical substance, biological necessity or scarce resource but it is also an intrinsic part of peoples' identities, cultures, worldviews, and religious perceptions of themselves and the otherworld or the life thereafter (Oestigaard, 2010: 18)

This article attempted to show the link between patriarchal hegemony and hydro hegemony in the Eastern Nile Basin focusing on Ethio-Egyptian connect. It attempts to examine how the quest for equitable appropriation of the Nile water has fundamentally shaped by the religious intercourses in the Easter Nile Basin by gathering primary data from archives, informants and published documents. However, the narratives are constrained by overreliance on secondary sources due to inaccessibility of some data. Nevertheless, the critical inference made out of it has served to offset this limitation.

As it is stated by Yohannes (2010:13) Egypt and Ethiopia are tied by eternal bond invincible to any water infrastructure and which neither of them could underestimate even during the times of crisis. This natural bondage, which dwarfs all other situations could not be broken by any human force. The long but dynamic relation held between Egypt and Ethiopia was primarily engineered by the natural connection crafted by the Nile River. This interstate connection is 'the gift of the Nile' because the cultural fabrics and other human achievements witnessed in the Nile Valley Civilization were rested on this natural connector and they might flow and sink from and to its source.

The role played by the Nile river in the Basin can be extracted from the general character of water system at the global scale. Water plays social, cultural, ideological and religious roles which ranges from personal self-identification to the perception of cosmological realms and religious beliefs (Oestigaard, 2010).

According to Oestigaard, water symbolism serves for the understanding of religious divinities and for the idealization of

cosmological realms. In many of the religions practiced in the Nile Basin ranging from the ancient Egyptians' cosmology to the idea of the rivers of Eden narrated in both Christianity and Islam, water is taken to be a source of cosmos or uniting agent of the divine realm to this world (ibid). The ancient ideas and practices attached to Nile water are still part of peoples' identity, the core of the value system and religion in the Basin.

Nile has an important place in the development of Egyptian culture be it religion, visual art, technology or economics (Shavit, 2000:80-81). Its role in the creation of Kemetic philosophy, agriculture, and religion is significant (Shavit, 2000:95). Moreover, penetrating its geography in the South, the Nile had paved the way for its interaction with the African proper unlike the defensive wall in the North, but, the role of Nile as uniting agent of Egypt with its African neighbors has been a subject of contention (Shavit, 2000:79).

According to Shavit (2000:81), barely any of the classical and ancient sources of Egypt and Greco-Roman world mentioned the Nile as a water gate way or a pipe line of cultural transmission and diffusion from Egypt to inner Africa. In fact, Egyptian traders were conducting commerce with the lands South of Nubia which they usually referred it as Punt extant from the beginning of Ancient Egypt, yet virtually all surviving ancient Egyptian texts indicated that Punt and Aksum were reached by travelling South along the Red Sea crossing the Eastern desert than navigating through the Nile River (Phillips, 1997:425).

We can imagine that the indifference of using the river for navigation could be due to technological insufficiencies and inability of traveling upstream against the gravitational pressure of the water. However, the absence of navigations over the river is hardly suffice for nullifying its contribution for the beginning of the interstate relation because the inspirational role of the river for undertaking adventures to its origin should not be underestimated.

Thus, Nile was the highway of cultural diplomacy and conquest held through hard and soft power. But in most cases down to history,

conquers were either conquered by the river or by its people as its elucidated here under:

. . . no one crosses this border with impunity. When the Arab invades Ethiopia, his camels die in the mountains and he himself loses heart in the fearful cold. When the Ethiopian comes down into the desert his mules collapse in the appalling heat, and he is soon driven back to the hills for the lack of water. It is the conflict between two absolutely different forms of life, and even religion seems unable to make a bridge since Christianity falters as soon as it reaches the desert and Islam has never really been powerful in the mountains. Only the river binds these two conflicting worlds together (Morhead, 2009:11).

Moorhead's account highlights the failure of conquests and cultural diffusions from both sides of the divide before the advancement of nautical technology for voyage. But, the barriers that produced the graveyards of the camels of the Arabs and Abyssinian mule were not in a position to halt the power of the might river. The failure of communication between the high and low Landers through human effort by traversing the natural barrier of the freezing mountains and flaming desert with Camel and Mule gave the river superhuman image. The invincibility of the river was luring the imagination of outsiders and thereby exposed the basin for external aggression and even as inspiration for the colonization of the continent.

As it is indicated in the above account, the power of the river as natural connector has perpetuated even after its earliest de Africanization in the course of Romanization, Hellenization, Westernization and Arabization. Thus, what so ever was the external dynamics, water has served as the most important means of interaction in the Basin.

## **2. The beginning of the Religious Connect**

The Nile water is not the only issue that binds, if not divides, Egypt and Ethiopia. Religion has also served for figuring out the Ethio-Egyptian relations at least since the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D which is usually cited as the date for the Christianization of Ethiopia (Bahru,

2002:8, Munro-Hay, 1991:69). In many historical documents, this century is marked as a landmark in the country's foreign relation which tied both the Ethiopian Church and state with the Alexandrian Patriarchate, the sole authority in consecrating the head of the Ethiopian Church (Bahru, 2002:8). Accordingly, the Christianization of Ethiopia made it dependent on Egypt for about 1600 years till Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church attained its autonomy from the Coptic Church in 1950s.

Barely anyone has examined the reason why Ethiopia accepted the dictation of the Alexandrian Bishops for about sixteen centuries due to the acceptance of the normative explanations about the date of the Christianization of the country.

However, the established understanding is bereft of empirical evidence and most often refuted by the contemporary local scholars. In fact, there is strong debate among religious scholars in reference to the exact date of the Christianization of Ethiopia. Some scholars refer back to the first century arguing either on the basis of the conversion of Bacos, the treasurer of Queen Candace (Eusabius, 1887) and the two paintings in St. Mathew Church of Italy. Some went back to the first century arguing either on the basis of the conversion of Bacos, the treasurer of Queen/ Candace, who reassumed a ministry or on the basis of the paintings of Francesco Trevisan and Marco Benefiale found in St. Mathew Church in Italy which indicates the appearance of St Mathew in Ethiopia.

In fact, the historical dating which centered on the fourth century thesis has hardly any empirical sources. Historians usually cite the trilingual Inscription of Ezana, which itself is vague. Disregarding the debate on the issue of its credibility, the narratives produced out of it couldn't address the fallacy of generalization if we ask the question 'how could it be possible to talk about the Christianization of the entire state/people/ merely because of the conversion of its leader?

In this regard, the date of the total conversion of the broad mass can't be perfectly the same as the date of the conversion of the imperial man.

The description of Rufinius, the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Church historian, is the second source of historical relevance but it is also dominated with self-contradicting narratives. Rufinius's description about the wrecked ship and the appointment of a Greek captive at Red Sea as head of the Ethiopian Church by Egyptian Father contradicts with Ezana's inscription and as well with his own account which narrates about the coming of St. Mathew to Ethiopia in the first century following the drawing of apostolic lots.

Relegating the above narratives for scholarly debates, denying the then 'Ethiopia' an access to Christianity for about 300 years while its neighbor Nubia embrace it in the first century looks anomalous. This limit of historical reasoning in the investigation of the religious history of Ethiopia is probably linked with the earliest ideational hegemony projected from South for securing a bargaining power in the Nile politics. In fact, the preoccupation of the chapter is not to prove the date of Christianization of Ethiopia but it is to show how this contestation has served for legitimizing the hegemonic position in the utilization of the Nile.

The question who embraced Christianity first has also an implication in terms of the initiation of the Nile valley civilization and water-cross bartering. The Episcopal primacy tends to be a deliberate invention for securing a bargaining power for the source of the life-giving river was out of their rich. The Nile River and the Coptic Church were the protagonists that silhouetted the key aspect of the relation between Ethiopia and Egypt. Ethiopia's natural position in the supply zone (Tvedt, 1992:79) and Egyptian possession of the Alexandrian See resulted in an exchange of water for cross. While Egypt depended on Ethiopia for its water supply, Ethiopia depended on the Coptic Church for its patriarchal authority. Never the less, the geographical location of Ethiopia at the head waters of the Nile marked a relation packed of mistrust.



*Figure:1:Picture for indicating the historic mutual religious relation between Ethiopia and Egypt: The late EOTC Patriarch, Abune Paulos receiving a gift from the recently deceased Abune Shenouda of Egypt (accessed at [http://www.eotc-patriarch.org/news\\_Nov\\_24.html](http://www.eotc-patriarch.org/news_Nov_24.html))*

### 3. Patriarchal Hegemony

Mandated by the Fetha Nagast and the apocryphal canon of the Nicaean Creed, every head Bishop of the Ethiopian Church was appointed by the Egyptian Patriarch in Alexandria until 1959. This privilege is vividly indicated in Fetha Nagast as follows:

ወሰብእ ኢትዮጵያ አይሂሙ ላዕሌሆሙ ሊቀጳጳሳት እምራኒሆሙ ወኢበሰምረተ ርዕሰሙ አሰመ ጳጳሰሙ ወዲበ ሰምረተ ርአሰሙ አሰመ ጳጳሰሙ ይኸውን እምታሕተ እድሁ ለበአለ እስከንድርያ ወወአቱ ዘይደልዋ ይሂም ላዕሌሆሙ ሊቀ እምሀቤሁ ዘወአቱ መትሕተ ሊቀጳጳሳት (Fetha Nagast, 1990:30)

(Lit. Trans.)

Ethiopians are not allowed to be assigned as patriarchs from their own for they are under the suzerainty of the Alexandrian See and therefore, it's only the Coptic Fathers that can hold the position with exception of ranks below arch Bishop.

In its earliest form, the Fetha Nagast predates the Nicaean apocryphal canon. This fact indicates that the prohibition of the assignment of Ethiopian citizens as heads of its Church is rooted in the original version of the Fetha Nagast than the Nicaean Creed (Mahoney 1994:77). This indicates that the prohibition was rather a deliberate action instead of religious sanction rooted in the decisions of the Nicaean council.

Again, though the main concern of the council of Nicaea was dealing on the teachings of Arius, which focuses on the subordinationism, it also came up with the nucleus of the first universal code of ecclesiastical law (Mahoney, 1994:74). The council issued 20 canons and 84 apocryphal canons. The apocryphal canon which dealt about Episcopal jurisdiction and Ethiopian dependence on Alexandria was canon number 42 (Mahoney, 1994:79). This canon sates similar idea as its indicated in the Fetha Nagast. It reads as follows:

ትእዛዝ 42:- በእንተ ኢትዮጵያ ለበአለ እስክነድርያ ወይሲሙ ኢትዮጵያ ጳጳስ እምጠቢባኒሆሙ በፈቃድ ርእሶሙ አስሙ ጳጳሶሙ ይከፈን እምታህተ እደ በአለ እስክነድርያ . . . (ibid)

Whenever the quest for a new Abune coincided with a nadir in Ethio-Egyptian political relations, Egypt used to delay and sometimes deny appointments of Bishops (Fasil, 2011). Worst, in the long historic tie, the Alexandrian Bishops heavily invested their labor to infuse mythologies and cosmogony that produced water fearing into cultural core of Ethiopian society (Bahru, 2002:8, Beshir, 1984). The survey made in the last decade from MA students class room interaction in hydro politics course which the researcher taught at least in three Universities in Ethiopia indicates that many people everywhere in the country believe about the existence of demonic power in minor streams flowing in their vicinity and even name them after Satan as ‘Enda Ganin’ (Tigary) or ‘Areh shaytan’ (Selti area), meant the abode of devil. Right today, there are people in Gojjam and Wollega who slaughter oxen, throw coins, pay tribute and provide sacrifice to Blue Nile. The people living in Debre Ziet and its vicinity believe in the existence of devil in Hora and Besheftu lakes. There are

lots of lakes and streams which are either reverend or feared in Tigray such as ‘Enda Bererom’ in Shire.

Therefore, they were serving as emissary for the enculturation of Ethiopian society with the veneration and fear of streams whose imprints still felt everywhere in the country.<sup>1</sup> But, this doesn’t mean that the entire history of water-bishopric exchange was full of trickery.

#### 4. Contesting Patriarchal Hegemony: Religious Nationalism and the Quest for Autocephaly

The development of religious nationalism was crippled and the quest for autocephaly silenced through the infusion of frightening myths and in few cases with the application of coercion. Meresae Hazan documented the cost paid in the long history of struggle for assuming an autocephalous status by culminating the domination of the Alexandrian Church, which was instrumentalizing the Nicæan Creed for maintaining the statuesque.

For most traditional societies, the identification of their faith is almost identical with their nation. It is unimaginable for them to visualize the independent existence of these two social phenomena (Eyasu, 1990:3). However, the Ethiopian society was hardly experiencing the convergence of these two elements till the rise of religious nationalism in 1950s. Of course, the Caesaro-papist kings of Ethiopian who were acting in defiance of the autonomy of the Church were requesting the Coptic Church for autocephalous status. But he was Hareb who raised the question first as its clearly stated by Mersea Hazan (1964:6). Mersea’s narrative reads as follows:

ጵጵስና ለኢትዮጵያውያን ጳጳሳት እንዲፈቀድ ለመጀመሪያ ጊዜ የተጠየቀውና ከርከር የተነሳው በ፲፩ኛው መቶ ክፍለ ዘመን ላይ ነበር። የኢትዮጵያ ንጉስ ቅዱስ ሀርቤ የመንግስቱንና የህዝቡን ስፋት ተመልክቶ በ፩ ግብጻዊ ሊቀጳጳስ ብቻ የወንጌልን ስብከት በያገሩ ለማዳረስ የማይቻል ስለሆነ በተጨማሪ ኢትዮጵያውያን ኤጳስቆጳሳት ይሾሙልኝ ሲል ጠየቀ (Mersea Hazan 1964:6)።

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1 In fact, the foundations of this issue demand an in-depth critical ethnographic research in the future.

(Lit. trans.)

Observing the expansion of his kingdom and the increment of its population, and the difficulty of addressing the Gospel under single Egyptian Bishop, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century St. King Hareb of Ethiopia has requested the Egyptian Pope for the assignment of Ethiopian Bishops.

As it is indicated in the description of Erlich (2000:23) about the politicization of religion and water in the Nile Basin, the former was pivotal for shaping popular imaginations of one another. Nonetheless, following the Arabization of Egypt religious differences continue to animate mutual suspicion in Ethio-Egyptian tussles over the Nile. In short, the whole course of the interstate relation of Ethiopia and Egypt that has elapsed till the birth of Ethiopian religious nationalism for establishing an autocephalous church in 1950s (Wodu, 2006:28-78) can be named as 'physico-spiritual symbiosis'. In the words of Tesfay (2001:59) thought this mutuality faced an early crisis during the period of the Zagwe dynasty. This crisis-oriented mind set is still intact as it is reflected in the Egyptian wave of thoughts in reference to the inauguration of the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam.

## 5. Politicization of Religious Authority

In a dispassionate study of the religious history of the country, we find that every single Bishop from the See of Alexandria was serving as political pope. To control the secular affairs of the state and as well the religious beliefs of the peoples, these religious figures associated themselves with the palace men.

Besides, the Alexandrian Bishops were entitled with the ultimate power to decide on the legitimacy of the political figureheads that can rule the country. Ethiopian Monarchs were anointed by Coptic Bishops who were even held sway in courts. They were serving both as political and spiritual representatives (Paulos, 2005:243). They were also serving as an important bargaining chip for Egypt in times of misunderstanding.

As they do the blessing for the coronation of kings, the popes were also active in unmaking them. They instigated protests against rulers of the country such as Tewodros II and Leji Iyassu using the Church as epicenter of the protest. Thus, disguise themselves in the question of the Church, the Egyptians were intervening in the internal political affairs of Ethiopia.

For instance, after the defeat of Dejjach Wube at the battle of Deresege, the captive Abune, Abune Selama, was affiliated with Tewodros II and blessed him in his coronation in return for enforcing the Tewahido doctrine. But eventually this mutuality weakened and ultimately Tewodros II found himself beset in an opposition spearheaded by priests under the tutorship of the Abune. This can be inferred from the 'imprisonment of Abune Selama at Meqedela' (Paulos, 2005:46).

Though in most cases the Church opposition against Tewodros II narrated as internal contradiction between the modernization project of the state and the Church resistance against the program, the opposition was initially an outside driven and initiated by Abune Selama, the agent of the Egyptian policy, in response to Tewodros's obsession against them and suspicion about the diversion or damming of the Nile as part of his economic modernization program.

According to Girma et'al (1979), Tewdros's primary aim was to expel the Egyptian from the shores of the red sea to ensure Ethiopian access to the sea. Throughout his dealings with European powers there runs the undercurrent of Tewdros's vision of himself as a champion of Christendom and liberator of the holy city of Jerusalem. To this end he regarded the Christian powers of Europe as his natural allies in his struggle against Egypt in particular. In his conversation with Plowden during the first few months after his accession to the throne, it seemed he planned to bring Britain in to conflict with Egypt.

Bahru (2002:35), underestimating the deep-seated Egyptian motive of controlling every aspect of the people of Ethiopia under the Church and thereby dictating the state affairs, he attributed the root of the contradiction to turban controversy and of course the issue of land right. In fact, it is very difficult to disentangle the place of

Egyptians in the history of Ethiopia. For the majority of the peoples undertaking the case were Ethiopians, the discontent might sound to have only an internal dimension. However, it has to be noticed that they were misdirected in spirit by the head of the church, who was at odd with Tewdros II.

Though Tewdros II come up with a strong belief of defeating the ‘undefeatable’ and attain the state power by crushing the squabbling noble of the era of princes by dint of his power, yet he couldn’t escape the established trap for securing political legitimacy through the blessing of the Egyptian Abune. This engrained mentality of the reigning kings that valued this blessing for the attainment of political legitimacy than the will and the aspiration of the people has cost the country high due to internal strife to capture the throne and the Abune.

The horrific atrocities witnessed in such wrangling could inspire anyone to ask the question ‘how spiritual father that works for the celestial kingdom legitimize political power secured by bloodshed? It is also perplexing why the Ethiopian rulers who were fighting Egyptians at the coast, allowed the Bishops to do whatever they want in the hinterland.

## **6. Mastering the Nile**

Egyptians were anxious about the blockade of the river by Ethiopian leaders as it is indicated in the exchanges of the long multifaceted interaction. This fear emanates from Ethiopian emperors’ claim as defenders of Coptic Christian Minorities and their usual reliance on the river as source of bargaining gizmo.

As early as the Middle Ages, Ethiopian emperors came to support the Coptic brethren from Islamization and Arabization. They were threatening to divert the Nile whenever they received reports of such plight (Silverberg, 1990:178-79). The analysis of this claim from realist perspective could highlight about the incapability of Ethiopian rulers to divert the river though Ethiopia controlled the headwater. This argument is bereft of the Ethiopian excelled experience in construction technology as it is witnessed in the building of the world

wonders such as the obelisk of Aksum and Lalibela. The generation that had carved the obelisk of Aksum could do the same thing in damming the Nile but historically Nile was in the outreach of the mind horizon for it is believed to be sacred river. For this reason, though the threat of blocking Abay proved very effective for centuries in safeguarding the appointment of Egyptian Bishops, it was merely verbal than practices (Pankhurst, 2000:25, 34).

Generally, the long annals of Blue Nile revolved mainly around the idea that by controlling the river, Ethiopia could deprive Egypt of its life-blood neglecting its reliance on the Coptic Church as the source of Patriarchal authority. The Egyptians were suspicious of progressive leaders such as Atse Lalibäla (Bairu, 2000:160). In fact, they were protesting against the legitimacy of the Zagwe dynasty since its inception. The water-cross exchange mutuality has faced decisive blow during the Zagwe dynasty as they challenged the foundations of the Solomonic legend. The fear about diverting the river and the eventually increment of his glory is rooted in this antipathy. However, the Blue Nile was out of the reaches of the Zagwe Kingdom.

It is believed that the upper Blue Nile basin was incorporated and Christianized during the reign of Atse Amdätsion (Paul, 2000:41, Bairu, 2000: 160). The emperors of the Solomonic dynasty, especially Dawit II, Yéshaq and Zärýa Yaéqob went on asserting Ethiopia's control of the river as a tool in their intercontinental relations. They also worked to cement this concept of mastering the Nile in religious terms, identifying the Abbay with the Biblical Gion. Following the end of the Zagwe rule and the accession of Yukuno Amlak to power in 1270, Egypt has refused to send Bishop backing Sultanate of Yifat. This shows the inception of the undeclared shift from Christian solidarity to Islamic Alliance and the complete divorce of the cross from the water.

## 7. Faith and Sword: Civilizing Mission and Military Invasion

In order to perpetuate its hegemonic control, Egypt had secured structural power by capturing resources through military means as it's manifested in Muhammad Ali's systematic use of modernization or Civilizing mission discourse to legitimize territorial aggrandizements towards the source of the Nile in first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century and Khedive Ismail's invasion of Ethiopia (Turton, 2000).

The founder of modern Egypt, Muhammad Ali, involved Egypt in a series of wars. He was expansionist unlike his son who was inward looking but similar with khedive Ismail who was more like his grandfather. With the intension of liberating Egypt from its vulnerability to the geo-political changes in upstream, Khedive Ismail designed a military strategy which could turn the entire Nile in to an Egyptian Lake (Tvedt, 1992:87).

Thus, Egypt's conquest of the Sudan in 1821 (Bahru, 2002:24) was largely motivated by its desire of controlling the entire Nile system and for using it as springboard for the annexation of Ethiopia from the West. Accordingly, in the early period Egypt succeeded annexing Kassala (1834), Metema (1838), Kunama (1869) and Bogos (1872). These peripheral lands under the siege of Egyptians served them as spring board for the grand military operations which was launched in 1870s.

In this period, Egypt's foreign policy towards Ethiopia has been spearheaded by zero sum hydro political game (Girma, 2000: 4) whereby Egypt was prepared to win always. Following the successful military expedition of Napier, the Egypt who allowed him a gate way through Massawa begin to underestimate the power of Ethiopia in defending itself and they assigned Munzinger for designing the expansion strategy. In response to this call, Munzinger advised them that 'Ethiopia with a disciplined army and a friend of the European powers is a danger for Egypt and proposed either to take over and Islamize it or retain it in anarchy and misery' (Rubenson, 1976:169).

The hasty aspiration to put this plan in to effect has led to the battles of Gundet and Gura which were concluded with the humiliating defeat of Egypt along with its European and American mercenaries (Bahru, 2002: 50-54) by the Ethiopian counter offense. In spite of the mammoth debacle, Egyptian raids against Ethiopia have continued guided by the principles of Munzinger with temporary halt following the British occupation.

Some scholars attribute the drivers of the early Egyptian imperial aggrandizement with the desire to raise revenue through the conquest of the sources of the lucrative trade of slaves and gold (Shinn, 2010). In contrast to the aforementioned argument Kinfe noted down about the central role of the Nile factor in advancing the imperial ambition of Egypt. He expounded that Muhammad Ali's plan of effectuating Egyptian prosperity by controlling the Lake Tana first by conquering Sudan as a stepping stone in 1820 is one of the very indicators of such facts.

Besides, to civilizing mission guised invasion, religion and hydro-politics continued being intertwined in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as exemplified by Egyptian designs for the unity of the Nile Valley as it was proposed by Nasser aiming at bringing Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somaliland, Somalia, Uganda and Kenya under Egyptian control. However, the annihilation of the Egyptians encountered at Gura and Gundet ended the dream of creating greater Egypt by incorporating headwater regions using political Islam as galvanizing ideology.

## 8. Conclusion

Historically water has always been the most important catalyst of the interstate relation between Ethiopia and Egypt. While Egypt depended on Ethiopia for its water, Ethiopia was dependent on the Coptic Church for its patriarchal authority. It is safe to argue that the cross and the water politics were intimately intertwined in the millennial of Nile dispute. The Nile River and the Coptic Church were the protagonists that silhouetted the key aspect of the relation between Ethiopia and Egypt than other features. However, Ethiopia's natural position in the supply zone of the Nile marked a relation

packed of mistrust. The strong wish for controlling the source of the water along with the fear for the continuity of instrumentalizing the source of religious authority for the sustained flow of the former might have been changing the rules in the exchange of cross with water.

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# THE ROCK CUT TOMBS OF SAESI TSAEDA EMBA AND GANTA AFESHUM WOREDAS, EASTERN TIGRAY: A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Getachew Alemeneh Chane

## **Abstract**

*Saesi Tsaeda Emba and Ganta Afeshum woredas are the noticeable archaeological sites of Eastern zone of Tigray Region. These woredas hold different pre-Aksumite, Aksumite and Medieval sites. These were well known and organized settlement districts during the Aksumite and medieval periods. Different stone pillars, settlement sites, rock-cut tombs, rock hewn churches and ecclesiastical heritages are housed in these woredas.*

*This paper attempted to assess the rock cut tombs of those woredas. The researcher identified five rock cut tomb sites in different locations of Saesi Saeda Emba and Ganta Afeshum woredas through pedestrian survey, personal interview and document analysis. Most of the identified burial tombs are cut into the underlying bedrock with dual burial chambers, beads and bone fragments with considerable architectural pretension most probably dated during Aksumite period. In addition to this, few of the sepultures are dug from flat rocky ground with rudimentary architecture.*

## **1. Introduction**

The investigation of human sepulture sites has been the perceptible concerns of archaeologists. Burial sites during the Aksumite period are one of the archaeological evidences which helped to understand the social complexity and the then culture. The presence of complex

burial structure and varied *stelae* in many archaeological sites indicate the social status and burial practice of the past. Grave goods can also show the social rank of the deceased and the custom of the community. The early Proto-Aksumite tombs were simple pit graves, around 2 meters deep, covered with small platforms associated with rough *stelae* around 2-3m high (Fatovich 2010: 158).

Shaft tomb (human sepulture) is defined as a vertical passage with rectangular shape accompanied with one or two burial chambers in the bottom started earlier than fifth century BC. This type of archaeological feature is found in different areas of Eastern Tigray and in some areas of Central Zone around Aksum and Yeha though very little is known about the distribution and the associated meanings of this type of rock cut tomb (Phillipson 1998:110, 2012:153-154).

Archaeological investigations ascertained that different sepulture sites are discovered in Western and Eastern Aksumite province dated between the Pre-Aksumite and Aksumite periods. Burial sites located in different sites varying in size and hold diversified archaeological remains (Fatovich 1997). Researchers mostly gave due emphasis for pre-Aksumite and Aksumite sites on the burials of the elites mainly in Aksum and its surroundings (Ayele 1996 and Kathryan *et al* 1997). There were varied types of burial structure during the Aksumite civilization. Wealth and status of the deceased determined the complexity of burial structure. Before the advent of Christianity and being the state official religion of Aksumite kingdom, royal graves had a tradition of marking stele on the grave sites. But after Christianity became official religion of the state, the tradition of marking stele on royal graves was no longer survived; however, some of the architectures are still continued (Phillipson 2003). There were also other grave structures which belonged to the small family groups. The architecture of such types of graves were dominantly executed from rock-hewn, built or a combination of both with an underground chamber leading into different directions (Phillipson 2003; 2004).

Eastern Tigray (formarely named 'Agame') had been the center of

Aksumite eastern cultural province (D'Andrea *et al.*, 2008; Tsegaye, 2003). According to Phillipson (2003), Adigrat and its surrounding was one of the core centers of Aksumite kingdom. For a century, archaeologists engrossed on the royal cemeteries mainly in Aksum and Yeha like the burial tomb of Kaleb and his son Gebre Meskel and on the burial chambers of Aksum which are situated in the *stelae* park of Aksum (Munro-Hay 1989 and 1991, Phillipson 2003; 2004; Fattovich *et al.* 2000 and Michel 2005). In spite of their immense notes of the period, detail investigation had not been carried out on the rock cut graves of Saesi Tsaeda Emba and Ganta Afeshum *woredas*.

Francis Anfray (1967, 1974), who did an archaeological survey from 1960's to 1970's in Eastern Tigray, documented some archaeological sites. In Gulo-Makeda, Wakarida (Saesi Tsaeda Emba) (Dugast and Gajda, 2012, D'Andrea *et al.*, 2008), Dinbisha, Yohannis Zahen, Maryam Ta'kot, Maryam Anza, Workeare, Kutur and other similar sites, there are different settlement, ritual and royal centers. Though Saesi Tsaeda Emba and Ganta Afeshum are known with different archaeological sites, little emphasis has been given for burial sites. Based on the fragmented findings, this archaeological survey ascertained that the chambers of many rock-cut graves in Saesi Tsaeda Emba and Ganta Afeshum *woredas* were served for grave goods. The researcher assessed the following rock-cut tombs from different parts of the aforementioned *woredas* through pedestrian survey. These sepultures are situated in different directions of those *woredas*; measure with 3 to 4 meters accompanied with burial chambers which lead into two different directions.

## 2. Meqabir Angesum Rock Cut Graves

Around 150 BC, the cemetery of the elites was characterized by underground tombs with a mark of *stelae* accompanied with burial goods. These types of burial sites are in the hill of Bete Giyorgis near to Aksum (Michel 2005). Eastern Tigray encompasses both pre-Aksumite and Aksumite sites. These leftovers are situated in different parts of the zone (Littmann 1913 and D'Andrea *et al.* 2008). Meqabir Angesum is situated in Saesi Saeda Emba *woreda*; Saesi *tabiya* of

Mehido *Kushet* with a geographical location of 1577013N and 0562322E at elevation of 2712m above sea level (ASL). Etymologically, the name of the site states the presence of grave site for a given family called Angesum (the grave of Angesum). Residents discovered lots of artifactual remains while they built residential houses. One of the rock cut graves of this site measures 1,5 meters and 55 centimeter length and width respectively. There are numbers of rock cut graves but only few of them are visible since the rest are covered with cactus tree.



*Figure 1: One of the rock cut graves of Meqabir Angesum*

Burial sites have immense sources for our knowledge of the pre-Aksumite and Aksumite periods concerning the material culture and religion of the ancient Ethiopia (Phillipson 2012). Besides the rock cut graves, the site encompasses many archaeological features like fragments of reddish potsherds, obsidians, bone fragments, charcoal, beads, jar, fragmented decanter, mortar, and, mano (the upper part

of grinding stone).



Figure 2: Mortar and Mano (the upper part of grinding stone) from Meqabir Angesum

### 3. The Cluster of Hadish Hiwot Rock Cut Graves

This cluster is situated near to Maryam *Ta'qot* around one kilometer southeast of Edaga Hamus located between *Nihual Emni* and Maryam Ta'qot church. There are dozens of shaft tombs which are executed from the bedrock. Some of these shaft tombs are dug by treasure hunters for several times. Near to the cluster of Hadish Hiwot rock cut graves, there are a rock cut shelter, iron slag site, different Aksumite potsherds and foundation of Aksumite architecture inside the yard of Maryam Ta'qot. These bunches of archaeological sites indicate that probably there was a settlement site near to this rock cut grave cluster. The shaft tombs of Hadish Hiwot measure between 70cm with 1.60m and 90cm with 1.90m height and width respectively. Parallel to this, the depth of these sepultures ranged from 3.8m to 4m. Similar rock cut graves are visible in Kerseber Mikael about 5 kilometers north of Adigrat town, Arbaetu Ensisa in Aksum, Hawuzen Tekle Haymanot and Digum Silasse. These rock cut graves somewhat differ from the cluster of Hadish Hiwot sepultures. Most of them have an incised cross on the wall of the shaft tombs (Henze 2005) unlike the cluster of Hadish Hiwot.



*Figure 3: One of the cluster of the rock cut graves of Hadush Hiwot with bulging stone*

#### **4. Worke'aere rock cut graves**

This archaeological site is situated in Merewa *tabya* in the *qushet* of Freweyni. Geographically, it is positioned 0560573N and 1582502E with an elevation of 2664m ASL. The length and width of this shaft tomb measures 1.80 meter and 60 centimeter respectively with the depth of 2.30 meters. The residents believed that, there is a buried gold in and around this site and they named the site worke'aere that means a place which holds gold (the house of gold). Before and after the introduction of Christianity, the deceased body was buried based on their rank and wealth either in a built tomb or rock-cut (shaft) tomb accompanied with their personal equipment (Munro-Hay, 1991). The burial chambers of this sepulture and findings make sure that the site was served as a burial spot.



*Figure 4: The rock cut tomb of Worke'aere with precise chambers*

Even though the site is disturbed by heritage hunters, the researcher discovered different archaeological remains like potsherds, bone fragments, different beads with different color and size which are made of metal, human teeth, charcoal and similar findings. There is no Christian associated symbol on the shaft of this tomb and from the disturbed artifacts.



*Figure 5: disturbed archaeological findings from Worke'aere rock cut grave*

## **5. The rock cut tomb of Enda Maryam/ Bete Marya**

This rock cut tomb is situated near to Addis pharmaceutical factory, in the way to Yohannis church in Adigrat town situated at 1577970N and 0552091E. In both sides of this shaft tomb the symbol of cross is incised. The shapes of these graven crosses are more resembled with the effigy of Aksumite coins which dates back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Based on the architecture and the associated findings, this shaft tomb was served as a burial site in the time.



*Figure 6: The Shaft tomb of Bete Maryam and its incised cross*

This rock cut tomb has two chambers leading in to different directions and each of them is well decorated and curved with varied size. According to Tekle Hagos (2007), fragmented ceramics and unidentified bones were discovered by the local residents. Currently this shaft tomb is opened and the associated traces of the past are looted. Informants ascertained that debris of ceramics and other associated artifacts were found inside the underground chambers. Architecturally speaking, the chambers of this shaft tomb have the features of Aksumite Architecture in end of horizontal beams with circular bosses which are known as monkey head.



*Figure 7: One of the chambers of the shaft tomb of Bete Maryam with monkey head architecture*

## **6. The rock cut tomb of Guahagot**

The archaeological site of Guahagot is situated in the geographical coordination of 1565905N and 0550772E with an elevation of 2431 in the *kushet* of Bete Eyesus in a specific site of Tsegena. Numbers of shaft tombs are concentrated in this specific site. Twenty five shaft

tombs are discovered and few of them are covered with cactus tree. Bone and fragmented ceramics are visible on the top of these rock-cut graves. Each rock cut tomb has different size and most probably some of the shaft tombs might not have been served for burial purpose. Comparatively speaking, the rock cut graves of Edaga Hamus, Workare and Bete Maryam are quite advanced with bulging stones for steeping up and down to the tomb. But in this site, there is no visible bulging stone and some of the shaft tombs are very small in size.



Figure 8: one of the shaft tombs of Guahagot

## 7. Conclusion

Saesi Tsaeda Emba and Ganta Afeshum *woredas* hold various archaeological sites dated from Aksumite to medieval periods. The architecture of the burial sites during the Pre-Aksumite and Aksumite period depended on the wealth and status of the deceased. Non elite burial sites differ from the elite burial centers. Absence of

detail adornment of the rock-cut tomb and presence of simple pits accompanied with very few grave goods often located in the periphery from the center (Phillipson 2012). The presence of so many rock cut burial sites in the countryside without vivid ruined structure might be the burial sites of non-elites. Most of the tombs are cut from the soft rock of lime stone with two burial chambers. This type of archaeological survey helps to investigate the religion and burial practice of the then community. In these *woredas* a number of rock cut tombs are recorded from Edaga-Hamus, Worke'are, Mekaber Angesum, Enda Maryam and Guahagot. All the rock cut tombs of the focused study area are excavated and plundered. The rock cut tombs of Hadish Hiwot and Guahagot has many simple pit graves with few grave goods. Most of the targeted shaft tombs consist of two passages and chambers cut out of the rock with no advanced architecture unlike the burial sites of Kaleb and Gebre meskel and the *stelae* park in Aksum. Based on their architecture and associated findings like ceramics, beads and bones, most of these rock cut tombs were mainly used for burial purpose. Some of the rock-cut tombs like Enda Maryam and Workea'ere are very clear and simple to determine their functions and ages because of their associated symbol and findings. Some funerary graves have circular and rectangular shapes with a diameter of 1x2 meter. Such types of rock cut graves are found near to Edaga Hamus (Hadish Hiwot cluster), Adi-Kelebes (Workea'ere), Guhagot and Mekabir Angesum. Therefore, the tradition of cutting shaft chamber of tombs from the rock during the Aksumite period geographically stretched from the center of the kingdom (Aksum) to its eastern part of the kingdom (the former Agame).

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# REFLECTIVE APPRAISAL ON THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF INDIGENOUS ETHIOPIAN THERAPEUTICS

Assefa Balcha

## **Abstract**

*Ethiopia's indigenous therapeutics—local knowledge capital concerning health and illnesses plus the available treatment modalities and the socio-cultural setting in which they operate—has been a domain of scarce historical studies. Being a potentially productive area of research for historians of indigenous medicine, however, the scholarly attention so far given to historicize the conceptual frameworks on which indigenous healing systems and practitioners' lives and experiences founded along with the divergent outlooks held towards the healing profession and the official policies state administrations adopted have been negligible. Historically-informed research methodology is a valuable key to identifying and bridging the existing lacuna on nonconventional health-related issues. More importantly, it is a preferred approach to comprehend and appreciate the diversity and collective wisdom of Ethiopia's medical past. Through critical examination of the available written and oral sources, this article attempts to analyze and reconstruct the historiography of Ethiopian indigenous medicine in the past century up to the present.*

## **African Therapeutics: An Overview**

The history of pre-colonial Africa in large part is a history of indigenous medicine, and the medical ideas and practices during this period are an integral part of "politics, kinship relations, religion,

trade, farming, and sexual life."<sup>1</sup> In other words, therapeutics is embedded in and reflected the 'concepts, values, institutions, and power relations around it.'<sup>2</sup> In order to understand this, in-depth historical studies should be carried out on indigenous healing and coping methods with particular emphasis on when, and how, they first emerged, modified or changed over time. They should be examined from the vantage point of the changing nature of therapeutic traditions that have been utilized at a particular place and time. Understanding peoples' views regarding the cosmology, nosology or classification of disease-causing entities and their practical day to day adaptive strategies and healing traditions preceding the advent of the stethoscope,<sup>3</sup> are pivotal issues to learn "about the medical knowledge that was handed down, or how it was shaped at crucial periods,"<sup>4</sup> Feierman asserted.

Studying a single disease over a long period of time is a helpful alternative to have an in-depth understanding of the ravages it has caused and the amount of effort being made to alleviate the scourge. Dawson (1979), for instance, has attempted to reconstruct the epidemiology of smallpox in early colonial Kenya,<sup>5</sup> while Janzen (1982) has studied a disease called Lubanzi or "stitch-in-the-inside"

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1 Steven Feierman and John Janzen (eds.), *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.14

2 John Janzen, "Ideologies and Institutions in Precolonial History of Equatorial African Therapeutic Systems," *Social Science and Medicine*, V.13B (4), 317-326, 1979, p. 321.

3 Godfrey B.S. Iyalomhe and Sarah I. Iyalomhe, "Health-Seeking Behavior of Rural Dwellers in Southern Nigeria: Implications for Healthcare Professionals," *International Journal of Tropical Disease & Health* 2(2): 62-71, 2012, p.64.

4 Steven Feierman, "The Social Origins of Health and Healing in Africa," Paper Presented at *the 27th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association*, 25–28 October 1984, Los Angeles, CA., p.42.

5 Marc Dawson, "Smallpox in Kenya 1880-1920," *Social Science and Medicine* V.13B, 1979, pp. 245-250. His discussion on the rituals to drive away smallpox epidemic in Kenya including isolation of patients and the use of variolation are strikingly similar to neighboring Ethiopia.

in the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>6</sup> Both reveal the changes that these diseases underwent through time, and the social context in which they occurred. Prins' study (1979) on the Lozi of Zambia has demonstrated that a study of medical cosmology can serve as a reliable medium to perceive the centrally important principles or core concepts of culture. He also argued that the study of therapeutic theories and practices, which are subject to change and continuity, are reliable guides to writing the intellectual history of non-Western societies. According to Prins, the continuity of core conceptions of health and disease are organic parts of the historical process; however, extrication of 'superficial change' from 'underlying continuity' or vice versa<sup>7</sup> has to be taken care of. This means, the question of continuity or discontinuity gives a meaningful account if health, medicine and illness are treated as interrelated occurrences, not as separate entities. Flint (2008), while recording the intricate relationship between 1820-1948 of the traditional and biomedical systems in South Africa, incessantly observed that "When seeking to contextualize their work in time,' medical anthropologists, 'tended to paint in rather broad ahistorical strokes...the appearance of information in isolated chronological pockets rather than examinations of change over time, however, [these issues] necessitate studies that will determine the mechanisms and engines that drive transformation."<sup>8</sup>

Approaching indigenous coping strategies and therapeutic methods from the point of view of their application, spatial distribution, and their purported contribution in combating either

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6 John Janzen, "Lubanzi: History of A Kongo Disease," Stanley Yoder (ed.), *African Health and Healing Systems* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1982), pp.107-119.

7 G. Prins, "Disease at the Crossroads: Towards a History of Therapeutics in Bulozhi Since 1876," *Social Science and Medicine*, V.13B, 1979, pp.285-316.

8 Karen Flint, *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange and Competition in South Africa, 1820-1948*. (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008), P.21.

epidemic or endemic diseases and other health challenges, seems to be a viable way of recording the history of indigenous medical ideas and practices. Dessalegn's study (1991) on local peoples' perception and their collective efforts to withstand disasters using indigenous coping strategies in Wallo (Ambassel) is an exemplary, informative assessment.<sup>9</sup> He states:

Like many other people who live in a pre-scientific age, Ethiopian peasants also wish to unravel the mysteries of the universe, [which] is partly predictive and partly defensive in content, and involves the interventions of the rural seer, and the collective involvement of peasant communities in religious, or religious-inspired ritual.<sup>10</sup>

This shows that spiritual healers with proven medico-magical and magico-religious wisdom often involved in tackling problems affecting their communities. As part of their societal responsibility local spiritual experts of various titles played a pivotal role in protecting and maintaining the wellbeing of the population. They provided health-related services within the recognized cosmological ideas and belief system/s that governed the everyday life of the people. This assertion has universal validity. Twamasi's (1979) methodological paradigm of 'social causation' appears important to see why magico-religious healing techniques besides physical cures or treatments have been utilized to fight against the causative agents allegedly responsible for triggering social misfortunes.<sup>11</sup>

Although very limited in scope, this approach has been utilized by Richard Pankhurst to record the history of some epidemic and parasitic diseases in Ethiopia in tandem with some aspects of Ethiopia's indigenous therapy. While trying to reconstruct the history of these ubiquitous communicable diseases, Pankhurst has made an

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9 See Dessalegn Rahmato, *Famine and Survival Strategies: A Case Study from Northeast Ethiopia*, (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1991).

10 Ibid, p.126.

11 Patrick Twamasi, "A Social History of Ghanaian Pluralistic Medical System," *Social Science and Medicine*, V.13B, 1979, pp.349-356.

excellent effort to describe the most popular, socially-sanctioned indigenous notions of illness causations. Oftentimes, he neither consulted local medical texts; nor did he examine the nature of the medical system/s in which indigenous healers operated. Apart from providing a holistic and chronologically-informed narrative of a few diseases in a wide geographical area, Pankhurst's works are exceptionally valuable for citing a great deal of written sources of non-Ethiopian authors.<sup>12</sup> His works, being deficient of historical interpretation and analysis for the most part, have therefore limited importance to serve as a parameter of change in Ethiopia's indigenous medical history.<sup>13</sup> He did not give due attention to examine the internal dynamics of the healing traditions that characterizes Ethiopia's indigenous therapeutics critically and meticulously. His scholarly works may have been methodically and thematically relevant had he consulted and examined local medical treatises together with the multifaceted role indigenous healers played.

By contrast, Tekle Tsadik Mekuria (1950/51), an author of several books on various aspects of Ethiopian history, rejecting entirely the value of indigenous wisdom, advised people to keep an eye on and adopt the scientifically proven medical and socio-psychological ideas and achievements of the Western world.<sup>14</sup> By attributing the lack of well-crafted modern education, foreign scholars in the 1960s also wrote about the pervasiveness of superstitious, unscientific traditional beliefs on illness causations even among the educated class. Levine (1967) wrote: "One area in which this 'revivalism' [i.e.

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12 For a collection of his essays, see Richard Pankhurst, *Introduction to the Medical History of Ethiopia* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1990). *The History of Famine and Epidemics in Ethiopia Prior To the Twentieth Century*, (Addis Ababa: Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, 1985).

13 For a similar view see, Adane Kassie Bezabih, "A Historiography of Traditional medicine in East Africa," *Innovare Journal of Social Sciences*, V. 2, Issue 4, 11-15; 2014.

14 Tekle Tsadik Mekuria. *Human Behavior and Techniques on Social Life* (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1943 EC).

resistance to modernity or change] can be observed in Ethiopia is that of medicine.”<sup>15</sup> Levine also argued: “Defense of indigenous therapies has in fact become a significant channel for the expression of traditional sentiments...[and] resistance to change in the field of health is supported by the interests of traditional practitioners, *dabtara* and *tanquay*, who are in danger of losing clientele if modern-trained health workers come to win their allegiance.”<sup>16</sup>

A similar outlook has been espoused at a higher level following the replacement, in 1974, of the Imperial regime by the military junta that ruled the country up to 1991. Embracing the Marxist worldview of dialectical materialism as a standard matrix of cultural advancement and material welfare, the military government openly undermined the age-old Ethiopia’s healing tradition as deceitful and archaic. Since indigenous health practices are inseparably intertwined with socio-cultural and ‘religious beliefs and sentiments’ and where the great majority of the Ethiopian public is still dependent on indigenous medical services, the aforementioned scholarly assertions and government positions should be seriously probed and analyzed. This would help us grasp the social dynamics why modern western medicine was unable to displace the traditional health beliefs and practices or why it could not fully permeate the medical marketplace and become the dominant healthcare service provider.

It has been argued elsewhere that the prospect of investing in the highly-sophisticated, modern western medical care is yet an extremely expensive and challenging scheme; hence, creating a working space for nonconventional healthcare practitioners to provide alternative medical services in a pluralistic medical setting may well be a viable option to most less developed countries. The inability to create a spirit of collaboration, if not integration, between the two medical systems might be referred to as one of the many existential ‘new age dilemmas’ facing contemporary world. When the

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15 See Donald Levine, *Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967) pp.130-132.

16 *Ibid*, p.89.

right moment comes, however, the ideas so far promoted for inclusiveness and flexibility may create an opportunity to evaluate the 'diversity of healing logics' in indigenous health-related practices and tap some aspects of them. Conversely, viewing the indigenous and allopathic medical services as being fully independent healthcare institutions that did not have anything in common<sup>17</sup>; or taking modern western medicine as an offshoot of folk medicine, which would in due course wither away or remain unaffected, should be carefully probed.

Looking at the manner of co-existence between indigenous healing and Western medicine is an important perspective in the writing up of medical history. A cursory look at this pluralistic medical ecology will throw light on how long indigenous medicine has maintained its dominance before, if not after, the arrival of allopathic or "modern" western medicine. The change in the status of indigenous medicine mostly depends on differing sets of internal and external variables. Apart from the issue of accessibility and affordability, understanding these variables provides an interesting picture of why indigenous medical ideas and practices persist, and why people still continue to make choices among varieties of local healing techniques<sup>18</sup> for treating the sick. Therapeutic "institutions" and their attendant explanatory concepts are the natural outgrowth

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17 See Sjaak van der Geest, 'Is There a Role for Traditional Medicine in Basic Health Service in Africa? A Plea for a Community Perspective,' *Tropical Medicine and International Health* 2(9) (1997), 903-911: Also Boris Velimirovi, 'Is Integration of Traditional and Western Medicine Really Possible?' in *Anthropology and Primary Health Care*, edited by J. Coreil and J. D. Mull (Boulder, CO: West View Press, 1990), pp. 51-78.

18 According to Patwardhan, the "terms alternative, complementary or traditional medicine all referred to a genre of health care practices or services that got bound together as a class through the logic of reduction-ad-absurdum, defined by a criteria of absence from the mainframe of' what has come to be known as modern medicine." Quoted in Unnikrishnan Payyappallimana, "Role of Traditional Medicine in Primary Health Care: An Overview of Perspectives and Challenges," *Yokohama Journal of Social Sciences*, 14 (6); 2009, p.58.

of the continuous interaction, co-existence, and cultural exchange among diverse medical traditions. One of the major philosophical underpinning that requires serious examination as regards indigenous healing methods is the belief in the mystical connection between the universe (the macrocosm) and the living being (the microcosm).

Based on this theoretical tenet, indigenous therapeutics, unlike biomedicine, considers the physical, mental, social, emotional, spiritual, ecological dimensions and/or the “physical” and “non-physical” elements in its approach to health and healing. As Eliana Pili (2009) incessantly observed, reducing traditional medicine only to the ‘empirical-herbalistic domain’<sup>19</sup> has been a lop-sided, erroneous notion. Indigenous healing should thus be seen as a culture-bound holistic knowledge handed down from one generation of healers to the next either in oral or written forms or both; and healers using this holistic knowledge diagnose illnesses and provide cures for the sick. Unlike the modern Western medical tradition, African traditional medical history cannot be fully grasped without looking at the all-inclusive concepts of health and illness emerging out of complex interaction of diverse kinds of treatment modalities ranging from self-medication to the deployment of socio-cultural and spiritual elements in the prevention and treatment of ill-health.<sup>20</sup> Although his study does not focus on practitioners' healing techniques, Janzen (1978) eloquently shows how the native and western medical service providers co-exist at every level of Congolese (DRC) society. In dealing with misfortune, for instance, the 'therapy managing group', which consists of relatives and family members, takes every opportunity to make therapeutic choices among herbalists, magicians, prophet-diviners, and practitioners of

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19 Eliana Pili, "Aynä tēla: The Shadow of the Eye. Healers and Traditional Medical Knowledge in Addis Ababa," *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele, (Trondheim, 2009), p.346.

20 Unnikrishnan Payyappallimana, "Role of Traditional Medicine in Primary Health Care," p.58.

biomedicine. Thus, "for effective delivery of medical care", consensus must be reached between practitioners, patients and the therapy-managing group,<sup>21</sup> asserted Janzen. It appears similar in many other African countries. Indeed, the co-existence of multitherapeutic institutions greatly differs during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Though few historians have written about healers and very little attention was given to the different forms of indigenous healing methods, the colonial era was dominated by blind admiration of medicinal plants. Adane (2014), who wrote on the historiographic changes and continuities of indigenous medicine in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial East Africa, commented that the indigenous therapeutic wisdom has not been utilized for healthcare and development ends.<sup>22</sup>

Apart from the momentary cultural collision during the troublesome Italian occupation period (1935-1941), the historiographic approach along the lines of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods does not quite fit for historians of medicine to study indigenous Ethiopian therapeutics. Despite the political disruptions during the Italian interlude, indigenous healers provided uninterrupted service in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of physical and mental illnesses<sup>23</sup> to the great majority of the Ethiopian people before, during and after the occupation. To further their politico-military objectives, Italian colonial officials made a concerted effort to implement their divisive policy based on regional, ethnolinguistic and religious lines.<sup>24</sup> The intense anti-colonial resistance of the Ethiopian patriots greatly affected the Italians' *divide et impera*

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21 Janzen, John. *The Quest for Therapy in Lower Zaire* (Berkeley: University of California, 1978) p.225.

22 Adane Kassie Bezabih, "A Historiography of Traditional medicine in East Africa."

23 X, Zhang, *General Guidelines for Methodologies on Research and Evaluation of Traditional Medicine*. (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2000).

24 The considerable political, financial and material support the Italians accorded to the Ethiopian Muslims in return for their acceptance of *Il Duce* as their protector was in large part ineffective.

policy in particular, and the occupation, overall.<sup>25</sup> As a result, we cannot surely tell as to how biomedicine shaped relations between the colonizer and the colonized or how colonial medicine served as a tool of Italian imperialism. Likewise, the Italian endeavor in the medical field was largely ineffectual in bringing about substantial change in the health of the Ethiopian public; and they could not even protect 'a great percentage of' their own army from getting infected with malaria and tuberculosis.<sup>26</sup> However, as the Italians made immense efforts to introducing modern western biomedical services during their brief occupation of the country, medical historians should investigate the impact of the Italian medical activities as a whole and, in particular, they should seriously tackle whether these medical provisions really benefited, as often claimed, a segment of the urban residents who began to appreciate the efficacy of biomedicine; and to what degree this medical intrusion assisted the imperial project to thrive and sustain.

### **Historical Ecology of Ethiopian Therapeutics**

In order to understand the changing nature of Ethiopia's medical landscape, it is imperative to closely scrutinize the legal frameworks within which medical practitioners operated in the three successive regimes, that is, the Imperial rule, which goes to as far back as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; the military government or the Darg (1974-1991); and the EPRDF administration (1991-todate). The *Medical Registration Proclamations* of 1942 (Proc. No. 27) and 1948 (Proc. No. 100) as well as a couple of articles in the Ethiopian Penal Code (512/1957) and the Civil Code (8/1967) during the Imperial era; the Darg's disease prevention and health service development in rural areas and the Primary Healthcare policies of the 1970s

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25 Alberto Sbacchi, *Ethiopia Under Mussolini: Fascism and the Colonial Experience* (London: Zed Books, 1985), pp.157-165.

26 Ibid, p.211

and '80s; and the *National Policy of Traditional Medicine* as stipulated in the 1993 *Health, Drug, and Science and Technology Policy* and also the 1999 *Proclamation of Drug Administration and Control* (N<sup>o</sup> 176/1999) of the EPRDF regime<sup>27</sup> should be thoroughly reviewed. This would greatly assist researchers to document chronologically as well as thematically of the challenges indigenous medical service providers faced and the opportunities they relished. Giving proper attention to the modes of utilization of a range of therapeutic resources may have been a crucial step to facilitate 'the improvement of healthcare delivery in Africa'.<sup>28</sup>

Studies on indigenous medicine have been hampered by both theoretical and methodological problems. There are no clear-cut boundaries across disciplines. Researchers have tended to apply their own disciplinary methods, however, many of the studies have been carried out from multiple and competing points of view. Working with, and adopting, a viable and historically informed methodology is highly desirable. A few anthropologists since the late 1950s<sup>29</sup> have in fact conducted some important studies on the social and cultural aspect of Ethiopian indigenous medicine, while most historians, being interested in political and economic issues, were adamant to studying Ethiopia's medical history, including indigenous medicine.<sup>30</sup> In order to unravel the mystery and

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27 Kebede Deribe Kassaye et al, "A Historical Overview of Traditional Medicine Practices and Policy in Ethiopia," *Ethiopian Journal of Health Development*, 20 (2), 127-134, 2006, P.130.

28 Stanley Yoder (ed.), *African Health and Healing Systems* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1982), p. 12.

29 Simon Messing, 'The Highland Plateau Amhara of Ethiopia', Unpublished PhD dissertation (University of Pennsylvania, 1957)

30 Adane Kassie Bezabih, "A Historiography of Traditional medicine in East Africa," p.12.

pragmatic import of indigenous medicine, however, application of a single methodology may not suffice, while a combination of research methodologies or a multi-disciplinary approach may well be productive. In a situation where healthcare delivery systems are as diverse as illness etiologies, putting them into a chronologically oriented narrative is not a simple task. Unlike the most common ethnographic research at local level,<sup>31</sup> on possession cults like the *zar*, relations between art and medicine or specific category of indigenous healers,<sup>32</sup> therapeutic institutions and healing cults in Ethiopia have been portrayed in the literature as being static, isolated and local phenomenon.<sup>33</sup> Attempts so far made to show common

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31 The works of S. Messing and Allan Young are typical examples of ethnographic studies in Ethiopia. See Simon Messing, 'The Highland Plateau Amhara of Ethiopia'; Allan Young, 'Medical Beliefs and Practices of Begemder Amhara,' Unpublished PhD Dissertation, (University of Pennsylvania, 1970).

32 Allan Young 'Why Amhara Get kureynya: sickness and possession in an Ethiopian Zar Cult.' *American Ethnologist*, 2(3), 1975a, pp. 567-584; Allan Young 'Magic as a Quasi-Profession: The Organization of Magic and Healing among the Amhara.' *Ethnology*, 14(2), 1975b, pp. 245-265; Allan Young 'The Amhara Medical System', in Yoder, P. (ed.), *African Health and Healing Systems, Proceedings of a Symposium*. (Los Angeles: Crossroads Press, 1982), pp. 21-41; Norbert L. Vecchiato, 'Illness, Therapy and Change in Ethiopian Possession Cults' *Africa*, 63(2), 1993a, pp. 176-196; Harald Aspen, *Amhara Traditions of Knowledge: Spirit Mediums and their Clients*. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001); Jacques Mercier, *Les rouleaux magiques éthiopiens* (Paris: Seuil, 1979a); Jacques Mercier, *Art that heals: The Image as Medicine in Ethiopia*. (Munich: Prestel, 1997); Jacques Mercier, 'Approche de la médecine des debteras' *Abbay Cahier*, V.10, 1979b, pp. 111-127; Jacques Mercier, *Asrès, le magicien éthiopien* (Paris: Lattès, 1988).

33 Steven Feierman and John Janzen, *Social Science and Medicine* V.13B, 1979, p.240.

features of therapeutic traditions transcending ethnic, linguistic and/or regional boundaries have been negligible.

The study on the *ngoma* or "drums of affliction" is a good example of regional healing institution where Janzen, without focusing on isolated ethno-medical systems, utilizes the centrally important cultural values to document and interpret therapeutic practices in central and southern Africa. Janzen examines the linguistic similarity of cognate terms on causations of sickness and misfortune, the place of ancestors in sickness and healing, as well as concepts of diagnosis and healers' role. He brings pieces of contemporary therapeutic information together and analyzes how they are managed over time and space.<sup>34</sup> Janzen stresses that by considering the different socioeconomic formations, the health profiles of historical and contemporary African societies can be reconstructed. In order to analyze and evaluate therapeutics, Janzen believes, common sets of health concepts or health paradigms have to be identified, because a particular therapy can be evaluated against one, or a combination of health criteria.<sup>35</sup> Janzen rejects the idea of making an unnecessary distinction between "traditional" and "non-traditional" medicine. The term "traditional" should not stand for the archaic, unchanging sociocultural relics from the past, to borrow a phrase from McCormack.<sup>36</sup> In the same way, based on the available archaeological, linguistic-historic and archival

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34 John Janzen, *Ngoma: Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

35 John Janzen, "Changing Concepts of African Therapeutics: An Historical Perspective," *African Healing Strategies*, ed. B.M. du Toit and I.H. Abdalla. (London: Trado-Medic Books, 1985), pp.66-81.

36 Carol MacCormack, "Health Care and the Concepts of Legitimacy in Sierra Leone," in *The Social Basis of Health and Medicine in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, p.430.

evidences, Peter Gran (1979) covers a history of Arab and Egyptian medical pluralism of roughly two millennia.<sup>37</sup> Gloria Waite (1992) also tries to recap millennia of the pre-colonial public health history of east-Central Africa;<sup>38</sup> Janzen's study on Lemba's therapeutic system roughly covers three centuries.<sup>39</sup>

Most ethnographic studies often start their discussions on indigenous therapeutics and therapeutic endeavors from an un-delineated past. In most cases, the multi-faceted role of indigenous therapeutics has been treated as having unlimited time depth or no historical beginnings. In fact, some elements of the "past" are included as points of departure to be followed by an extensive description of contemporary medical beliefs and practices. It is worthy of note that scholars have already commented on the value of social history in Ethiopian historiography. The need for integration of Ethiopian history with mainstream African history including the discourses on ethnicity and subjectivity and the search for alternative themes and perspectives of research, have been noticed.<sup>40</sup> At the turn of the twenty first century, Bahru Zewde (2000) has made a positive assessment on the change in emphasis of Ethiopian

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37 Peter Gran, "Medical Pluralism in Arab and Egyptian History: An Overview of Class Structures and Philosophies," *Social Science and Medicine*, V.13B, 1979. Gran, viewing medicine as ideology, argued that medical history should be integrated into social history.

38 Gloria Waite, "Public Health in Pre-Colonial East-Central Africa," In *The Social Basis of Health and Healing*, pp.212-231. By making use of oral tradition, linguistic and ethnographic data, and by examining rainmaking rituals and sorcery, Waite makes clear the existence of a shared public health tradition in the region.

39 John Janzen, "Ideologies and Institutions in Precolonial History of Equatorial African Therapeutic Systems," *Social Science and Medicine*, V.13B, 1979, pp.317-326.

40 Giulia Bonacci, "« Ethiopia and Africa »: Another Perspective in Modern Ethiopian Studies," *ITYOPIS* V.1 (2011), p.1.

historiography from the conventional political history to economic and social history.<sup>41</sup> This means, dwelling on social history with its multi-sided approach has been understood as having immense importance in generating scholarly historiographic debates and historical interpretations in the study of contemporary Ethiopian societies.<sup>42</sup> However, given the diversity of issues that can be entertained under the rubric of social history, such as indigenous therapeutics, there is still much to be sought from historians working in this strand of historical study.

As part and parcel of social history, documenting indigenous medical wisdom, no matter how complex and painstaking, may help preserve and/or retrieve a body of potentially useful therapeutic knowledge and skill.

Today, the cultural survival of many indigenous communities is threatened, and some traditional systems of disseminating knowledge may already be lost. Modern lifestyles and the disruption of traditional ways of life may cause younger generations to lose interest in learning [and in understanding the language/s used to pass down to them] about traditional medicine...<sup>43</sup>

It is thus only through systematic documentation that the indigenous medical lore can be methodically recorded, technically verified and passed on to future generations. Despite the challenges of creating rapport and building trust

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41 Bahru Zewde (2000), "A Century of Ethiopian Historiography," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 33 (2), pp. 1-26.

42 Giulia Bonacci, "« Ethiopia and Africa », " p.2.

43 Ryan Abbott, "Documenting Traditional Medical Knowledge" (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2014) p.32; the study provides useful insights on the benefits and risks as well as on the strategies of documenting indigenous medical knowledge.

with practitioners, documentation is a vital step to conduct research on the healing properties and protection of medicinal plants. This will possibly attract investments and innovative efforts in the area of indigenous medicine, which would eventually lead to the commercialization of therapeutically useful products and services.

Understanding the goals of documentation is critical to ensuring a successful outcome. This will determine how knowledge should be documented, including whether knowledge should be kept confidential [and eventually wither away].<sup>44</sup>

In connection with this it is vital to suggest the importance of doing inventory of botanical remedies that have been, and are being, used for similar therapeutic purposes in various parts of the country.<sup>45</sup> It is true that each linguistic and cultural unit "has its own set of written and/or oral pharmacopoeias with the medicinal use of some species being restricted to that given culture."<sup>46</sup>

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44 Ibid, p.34

45 For an earlier recommendation on this issue, see Fekadu Fullas, *Ethiopia and Traditional Medicine: Common Medical Plants in Perspective* (New Jersey: Grandview Boulevard, Sioux City Press, 1970).

46 Endashaw Bekele, "Study on Actual Situation of Medicinal Plants in Ethiopia," Prepared for *Japan Association for International Collaboration of Agriculture and Forestry*, 2007. p.21.

*About 300 of these species, out of a total of 1000<sup>47</sup> identified medicinal plant species, are frequently mentioned in many sources.<sup>48</sup>*

To ascertain the validity of such claim, which in fact requires well-equipped, sufficiently-staffed research institute/s armed with meticulous implementation strategies,<sup>49</sup> evaluation of phytochemical or pharmacological studies may be carried out on endemic or other therapeutically promising plant species. Zemedede Asfaw observed that despite the presence of studies on various aspects of medicinal plants, 'well focused studies targeted to both research and developments are still missing'.<sup>50</sup>

It is worth quoting a segment of the speech Abebe Retta, the Vice-Minister of Public Health, delivered on 17 May 1948 at a ceremony held to launch the Ethiopian Medical Association and at a time when there were no more than a hundred Ethiopian and expatriate medical doctors in the country. At this occasion Abebe said: '[The Association will have] ample opportunity of advancing the research on various ailments of man and animals, as well as bringing into proper medical uses, the age-old practiced Ethiopian herbs. ... there are several medical herbs in this country now achieving satisfactory results... [And] these ancient remedies should be... [tested and] scientifically proven to be efficacious, such herbs be produced on a scale that will

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47 Messing, recording an Ethiopian mythology, wrote: "God gave 1000 special medicines to Jesus on Christmas (a sort of birthday gift) and that Jesus and the angels taught these medicines to the *memhir* [a cleric-healer]." Simon Messing, "The Highland Plateau Amhara of Ethiopia", p.672.

48 Endashaw Bekele, "Study on Actual Situation of Medicinal Plants in Ethiopia," p.21. See the same for some of the ethnobotanical studies that had been carried out up to 2006.

49 Ibid, p.23

50 Zemedede Asfaw, "Conservation and Production of Traditional Medicinal Plants in Home Gardens: The Case of Ethiopia," [www.glinus.com/2013/12/conservation-and-production-of.html](http://www.glinus.com/2013/12/conservation-and-production-of.html) p.8. He commented that the recently published multi-volume flora of Ethiopia does not provide 'sufficient ethno botanical information' on medicinal plants. Ibid.

not only benefit Ethiopians, but the whole world'.<sup>51</sup> The disregard for decades of this farsighted speech by the state authorities has been acutely disappointing.<sup>52</sup> Since then only a few scientific studies have been conducted on Ethiopia's medicinal plants. Until recently, screening and preliminary phytochemical and pharmacological investigations as well as some documentations, have been carried out on a limited number of medicinal and nutritional plants such as *endod* (*Phytolacca dodecandra*), *kosso* (*Hagenia abyssinica*), *mettere* (*Glinus lotoides*), *dingetegna* (*Taverniera abyssinica*), *chat* (*Catha edulis*), *shiferaw* (*Moringa stenopatala*); *yejib shenkurt* (*Crinum Moonei*) and *chewchawit* (*Stepania abyssinicum*), *feto* (*Lepidium sativum*), *gwaya* (*Lathyrus sativus*), *gibto* (*Lupinus termis*), *gorteb* (*Plantago lanceolata*).<sup>53</sup>

The majority of researches so far done have mostly focused on anti-infective or anti-microbial medicinal plants to be followed by "ethno-medicinal study (Human & Veterinary), phytochemistry and Isolation/ Standardizations, analgesics, antipyretics and anti-inflammatory activity, antimalarial activity, toxicity (chronic/sub chronic, dermal) study, antioxidant and hepatoprotective,

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51 Quoted in David Talbot, *Contemporary Ethiopia*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), pp.89-90.

52 In July 1965 the same official who then became Minister of Public health talked about the challenges presented by indigenous beliefs and methods of curing diseases. He exalted the importance of modern health education at all levels to create awareness so as to implement the public health programs and prevent communicable diseases. See Abbebe Retta, "An Introduction to Health In Ethiopia," In *An Introduction to Health and Health Education in Ethiopia*, Compiled and edited by E Fuller Torrey, (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printers LTD., 1967), p.2.

53 Endashaw Bekele, "Study on Actual Situation of Medicinal Plants in Ethiopia," pp.25-26. These limited studies were made separately and in different institutions such as Addis Ababa University and the Ethiopian Nutrition Institute. For the study on *Moringa* (or *Shiferaw*), see Yalemtehay Mekonnen, "The multi-purpose *Moringa* tree: Ethiopia," *Examples of the development of Pharmaceutical Products from Medicinal Plants*, (Addis Ababa University Institute of Pathobiology), V.10, 1996, pp.11-118.

antiprotozoal, formulation study (solid, liquid, semi solid), anti-diabetic and anthelmintic activity.”<sup>54</sup> How much of these efforts have been fruitfully used for the country’s healthcare development needs or for the industrial exploitation of medicinal plant-based products are open to question.

Given the availability of a huge corpus of written records and variety of healing traditions in the country, no one institution or individual has ever attempted to write a comprehensive history of indigenous medicine at a regional or national level. Even if we do not know exactly when we Ethiopians began to record our medical wisdom in writing, the presence of several local medical texts written either in Amharic or in *Geez* or both under various titles seemed to demonstrate the shared wisdom of authorship in content, the manner of preparation and treatment modalities of herbal and other medicaments. It is not yet possible to tell how the many cleric-and lay-healers would be able to obtain and utilize medical manuscripts under their custody. Existing medical texts are of immense value because they embody a pile of information on the collection, preparation, and administration of medicinal items for various illness conditions from the three major gifts of nature (herbal, animal and mineral kingdoms). Some Western scholars translated, mostly to French and English, and published a number of medico-magical and magico-religious texts. These translated and annotated texts, containing the botanical names of medicinal plants that have been used for several centuries, are important sources to conduct any serious research on Ethiopian indigenous therapeutics.<sup>55</sup> The

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54 Ashenif Tadele, “The Trends of Traditional Medicine Research in Ethiopia: Challenge and the Way Forward” *Proceeding of the Workshop on Ethiopian Traditional Medicine: Past, Current and Future* Adama, Ethiopia, December 14 -16th, 2015, (78-81) p.78.

55 Marcel Griaule, *Le Livre de Recettes d’un Dabbara Abyssin*. (Paris: Institut d’Ethnologie, 1930); Deborah Lifchitz, *Textes ethiopiens magico-religieux* (Paris: Institut d’Ethnologie, 1940); Stefan Strelcyn, ‘Les Ecrits Medicaux Ethiopiens,’ *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 3(1), 1965:88-97; ‘Les Medecines du Begamder et du Tchelga (Ethiopie) D’ Abbaba Garred,’ *Africana*

information recorded in local medical texts can to some extent be supplemented by the writings of a number of foreign travelers and residents. Such records date back to the writings of the early 16th century Portuguese traveler Francisco Alvarez<sup>56</sup> and other similar accounts of foreign observers in subsequent centuries.

Documenting Ethiopia's centuries-old medical heritage actually requires extensive and in-depth historical investigation. Study of the indigenous therapeutic systems in their socio-cultural settings together with practitioners' perceptions of illnesses and diseases, will shed light on peoples' wellbeing and life style through the ages. Examining indigenous medical beliefs and practices in their socio-cultural, political, demographic, and ecological milieu, still remains an indispensable methodological approach. Considering the popular adage "All history is at first oral," it would be wise to interview and document the personal recollection and experiential knowledge of medical practitioners who were known to have served their communities honestly and diligently. Similar method may be used to record indigenous coping strategies that have been maintained in the face of the increasing acceptance of scientifically-verified explanations regarding natural catastrophes and disease causations. Sociocultural reasons are the most likely reasons for the continued use of indigenous coping methods and serious investigations have to be made in order to understand how the engrained notions about misfortunes and local survival schemes have managed to persist over the centuries. Such an inquiry should incorporate when, how and why these culture-bound strategies came into use, were modified, and changed. Oral and written knowledge on coping or healing

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*Bulletin 5, 1966:53-78; Mediciens et Plantes D'Ethiopie: Les Traités Médicaux Ethiopiens. V.1. (Warazawa: Panstwowe, 1968); Médecine et Plantes D'Ethiopie. V.2 (Naples: Institute Universario Orientale, 1973); Rodinson, Maxim, Magie, Médecine Possession en Ethiopie (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1967).*

56 Francisco Alvarez, *The Prester John of the Indies*, 2 vols. Revised and edited by C. F. Beckingham and G. W. B. Huntingford. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1961).

technique “should be treated as something that is created and recreated by the local people, and is a valuable resource in aiding our understanding”<sup>57</sup> about Ethiopia's social/medical history.

Recording and analyzing local oral tradition is particularly helpful to reconstruct and understand the interactive relationship between practitioners' lives, their perceptions and work experiences, and the historical and social contexts in which they operated. This critical appraisal method, though onerous and painstaking, provides some valuable insights as to how healers' practical therapeutic skill enabled them to define their role and to create and make sense of the rules that acknowledged and/or governed their expert service in the communities to which they belonged.<sup>58</sup> For instance, working on the contentious issue of healers' alleged capability in diagnosing and treating what may be referred to as "culture-bound" illnesses is an important theme of inquiry.

Recording local oral histories will certainly assist to detect the degree of change and adaptability indigenous medical practices underwent over several epochs and to make intergenerational comparisons among practitioners of different periods and fields of expertise. It appears that:

*The exclusion of traditional medicine systems and their practitioners means the denial of recognition to the majority of health workers... [who]...constitute one of the largest untapped resources available for ...providing a rational health service for the majority of the.... population, but our ability to harness this*

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57 Minako Ishihara, "Beyond Authenticity: Diverse Images of Muslim *Awliya* in Ethiopia," *African Study Monographs, Suppl.* 41: 81-89, 2010, p.82.

58 For a collection of articles on the role of such issues in indigenous therapeutics, see Erika Brady, (ed.), *Healing Logics: Culture and Medicine in Modern Health Belief Systems*. (Logan, Utah: Utah University Press, 2001).

*enormous force is limited by badly formulated policies and a lack of vision.*<sup>59</sup>

Additionally, for reasons not yet clear, the history of Islamic medicine is almost untouched. Islamic medical tradition offers a potentially productive area of future research. So far, almost all available researches have focused on the medical tradition of the Orthodox Christian church and the activities associated with its practitioners.<sup>60</sup>

As in Orthodox Christianity, Islamic medicine comprises a cornucopia of medico-religious and medico-magical practices, such as divination, astrology, numerology, as well as herbal and other therapies. Numerous medical texts and treatises are written in Arabic. Lexical examination of sixteenth-century written sources enabled Strelcyn (1968) to identify about 175 Ethiopian plants bearing Arabic names.<sup>61</sup> Strelcyn's findings could also have inspired researchers to start questioning to what degree Ethiopian medicine had been influenced by the works of Arab and Muslim physicians, whose medical ideas dominated the ancient and the medieval world.<sup>62</sup>

The lacunae in the history of Ethiopian indigenous medicine cannot be meaningfully bridged without the exploration and critical study of useful medicinal plants or minerals that have

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59 Olayiwola Akerele, "Towards the Utilization of Traditional Medicine in National Health Services," *American Journal of Chinese Medicine*, 14(1-2), 1986, p.4.

60 The Ethiopian Ministry of Health had registered over 6000 traditional healers in 1986. See *Serto Ader*, Yekatit 13:1978 EC (20 February 1986). It appears that the actual number of indigenous healthcare providers of both Christian and Moslem background must have been much higher than this.

61 Stefan Strelcyn, "Les chapitres concernant les plantes d'un lexique Arabe-Ethiopien du XVI<sup>e</sup>", *Roczn. Orient*, XXXI (1968).

62 Bashar Saad and Omar Said, *Greco-Arab and Islamic Herbal Medicine: Traditional System, Ethics, Safety, Efficacy, and Regulatory Issues*, (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.2011), p.8.

been mentioned in Islamic/Arabic written sources.<sup>63</sup> Ismail Abdalla (1985) affirmed that the mastery of Arabic language enabled the *Ulama* of Sokoto to exploit Islamic medical texts and to assume a privileged position throughout Hausaland.<sup>64</sup> As indigenous healing is a product of multiple traditions,<sup>65</sup> studies on Islamic medicine would have helped reveal the degree of interpenetration of the two major faith-based healing systems in Ethiopia. It is believed that several Ethiopian medico-magical prayers and prescriptions were directly copied from Arabic medical/magical manuscripts.<sup>66</sup> The shared cosmological ideas (or how the natural world impacts health and wellbeing) that had been cultivated and cherished for centuries, clearly demonstrated the closer affiliation between the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian and Islamic medical-magical-astrological lore. In other words, the symbiosis and syncretism of medical/magical beliefs, exhibit the complex interaction of the two main religious philosophies and the production and reproduction of a whole bunch of protective/therapeutic amulets and talismans as well as medico-magical prayers written either in *Geez*, Amharic and Arabic singly or in a mixed mode. The divinatory treatises, which were often used by cleric-diviners, also called 'Book Openers', for diagnosing a patient's illness, based on his/her *kokeb* or sign of the Zodiac under which he/she was born with, and proposing

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63 Investigations should also include the Holy Quran, the Hadith and other Islamic literature that have been mostly cited as sources of medicinal and dietary prescriptions.

64 Ismail Abdalla, 'The Ulama of Sokoto in the Nineteenth Century: A Medical View' In *African Healing Strategies*, Ed. Brian du Toit and Ismail Abdalla (New York: Trado Medic Books, 1985), pp.8-19.

65 Steve Feierman and John Janzen, *The Social Basis of Health and Healing*, p.5.

66 A comprehensive and detailed study should be carried out in order to understand the full impact of Islamic medicine, herbal or otherwise, on Ethiopian indigenous therapeutics.

'appropriate' remedies, "reiterate the astrological lore of Islamic savants,"<sup>67</sup> asserted Young.

It is therefore plausible to affirm that Ethiopia's therapeutics was originally rooted in African indigenous healing system upon which religious-based medico-magical and medico-religious ideas and practices have been subsequently grafted. In other words, "there is potential for leakage—the diffusion, adoption, and appropriation of other cultural ideas, practices, and artifacts. The result is a polycultural amalgam that blends together various strands of influence, creating new and sometimes unexpected patterns in the cultural fabric."<sup>68</sup> This explains, at least partially, why Ethiopia's indigenous medicine could not have developed a fully empirical approach to healing. Hence, the country's indigenous therapeutic system has been customarily referred to as "magico-medical" and "magico-religious". It would be helpful to document how the Ethiopian people, irrespective of their ethnic, religious and socio-economic differences, made choices and exploited the therapeutic resources available to them.<sup>69</sup> In areas where the craft of medicine have been instructed in a quasi-organized or institutionally-affiliated manner, studying the history of indigenous medicine appears to be a relatively less challenging enterprise. This prospect will immensely assist those who want to work on the instructional methods of Ethiopian therapeutics in and around mosques, churches or monasteries.

It is widely believed that the utilization in church education of *Geez*, an ancient language that traces its origins long before the Christian era and the only written African language south of the Sahara, has been one of the most important vehicles for the retention and transmission of religious-affiliated therapeutics in Ethiopia. *Geez* is the key to unraveling the secrets of church-based

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67 Allan Young, "Medical Beliefs and Practices," p.XIX.

68 Karen Flint, *Healing Traditions*, pp. 16-17.

69 For instance, the use of written amulets or charms, which goes as far back as the reign of Zara Yaqob in the fifteenth century, clearly indicates this age-old medico-magical lore.

healing methods, the mastery of which is an indispensable tool for a person endeavoring to become an erudite well-trained healer.<sup>70</sup> The same is true to Arabic to learn Islamic medicine. With the expansion of modern Western education, however, reading and writing could no longer be the monopoly of few religious-educated elites. Copying and translating medical texts into Amharic facilitated the dissemination of medical ideas. This practice appears to have encouraged the flow of information and cross-fertilization of medical knowledge between religious-based and secular healers. For most cleric-healers, however, an attempt to utilize medical texts without the guidance of experienced teachers was a source of confusion, rather than a source of genuine medical knowledge.<sup>71</sup> To prevent the 'dissipation of the healing power of botanicals during gathering, processing, and administration'<sup>72</sup>, cleric-healers oftentimes employed magical prayers or *asmat* together with medicinal herbs. Cleric-healers also warned the random use of botanical remedies and magical prayers that have been mentioned in the medical texts.<sup>73</sup>

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70 Apart from some Ethiopists working on the translation and analysis of Ethiopian medico-magical prayers and medical texts, we have very few Ethiopian authors who have written about their own personal experiences of learning church-based medico-magical lore, see Temesgen Gebre, *Autobiography* (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: Alpha Printers, 2001 E.C.); Leykun Berhanu, *Remorse* (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: Neged Printing Press, 1999 E.C.); Dawit Kefyalew, "Spirit and Spirits: Inspiration of the Holies", B.Th. Thesis (Addis Ababa: Holy Trinity Theological College, 1999); Yitbarek Giday, *My Life and the Qene School Tradition* (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, n.d.).

71 Healers argued that Geez has been utilized for concealing the true identity of medicinal herbs and for keeping the monopoly of church-based medical education and training.

72 Allan Young, 'Magic as a Quasi-Profession', p.246.

73 Aman Belay, *Book of Remedy* (Amharic) 3rd ed. (Addis Ababa: Eleni Printing Press, 2007 EC), pp.6-8.

'[T]hese two techniques [magical and herbal] go together like honey and butter, the first acting upon the spiritual cause of the disease, and the second upon its symptoms.'<sup>74</sup>

The blend in Ethiopian therapeutics of magico-religious and magico-medical healing, which has been customarily dubbed unintelligible, or enigmatic, begs thorough investigation.<sup>75</sup>

A cleric-healer would prepare medicinal recipes using his botanical and pharmacological knowledge; his privileged access to spiritual beings; and his familiarity with magic. Preparations and administrations of herbal cures sometimes required a very technical know-how as regards the application of magical prayers and 'astrological-numerological'<sup>76</sup> instructions. Possession of this privileged wisdom enabled cleric-healers to educate medico-religious and magico-medical subjects to their religious students. It has been argued that church-based medicine was never taught as a separate subject, nor was it sponsored by the church as a profession worthy of teaching. So how could training of students in *abinet* or medical education in and around religious institutions be possible without the consent and support of church officials? Was it simply carried out in secret as naively believed? Even if church officials at times claimed the church's role in the production and preservation of written medical texts, they did not openly accept the provision of church-based medical education to religious students. Withstanding this assertion, however, medical subjects must have been taught to a very limited number of religious students under the guise of ecclesiastical education and without the official support or recognition of the church. If not, medico-religious and medico-magical subjects could not have been transmitted to successive

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74 Jacques Mercier, *Ethiopian Magic Scrolls* (New York: George Braziller Inc., 1979), p.14.

75 This may help prevent from committing the most common fallacy of anachronism as well as for correcting stereotypical and preconceived notions in the reconstruction effort of our medical history.

76 Allan Young, 'Magic as a Quasi-Profession,' pp.246-247.

generations of church-affiliated healers. This question of renunciation begs us to exert a concerted effort so that the secrecy that shrouded our indigenous medical system/s will be fully grasped. Anderson argued:

While the church recognizes the existence of traditional medical texts among the priest community, it is not currently taking any measures to promote and transfer its knowledge of ... [therapeutically useful medicinal] plants...<sup>77</sup>

One may also add the magico-medical, magico-religious and other therapeutic traditions to the above assertion. Instead of doing something about this disparaging issue, a number of language experts have been fervently arguing about the reduction of some of the Ethiopian alphabets having similar sounds.<sup>78</sup> This may not serve any purpose than causing irreparable damage to the indigenous therapeutic lore that has been accumulated in writing over the centuries. Who is going to decipher, understand and make use of the body of knowledge scribed in the set of *Geez* alphabets and numerals for future generations?<sup>79</sup> It is worth remembering that several *Geez* and Arabic medico-magical and magico-religious manuscripts were

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77 Lauren Anderson, "Faith as a Means of Healing: Traditional Medicine and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in and around Lalibela," Villanova University, SIT Study, 2007. p.22.

78 On the importance of conserving the Ethiopian alphabets having similar sounds and the disadvantages of trimming them down, see, among others, Ermias Kebede (*Nebura Ed*), *Ethiopia: For the World to Judge* (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1993 E.C.), pp. 410-420; Leykun Berhanu, *Remorse*, p. 23; Million Belete, *Teacher's Memoir: Alphabet and Its Order* (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: Banawi Printing Press, 2007 EC).

79 On the value of teaching *Geez* in modern schools and the importance of exploiting the vast religious and non-religious *Geez* written materials, See Mersha Alehegn, "Geez: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," (Amharic). In *Proceedings of the Workshop on the Ethiopian Church Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Addis Ababa, 18–19 April 2002, pp.115-132.

destroyed during the military or the Darg period. Besides the criminalization of the medical activities of indigenous healers, the scale of destruction of Ethiopian medico-magical manuscripts during the Darg (r.1974-1991) was no less devastating than the looting and destruction that had taken place during the 16th century internal Muslim-Christian conflict and the British military expedition against Emperor Tewodros II in 1868.<sup>80</sup> Other than laying blame on internal and external agents or mere sentimentality towards the countless medico-magical and medico-religious manuscripts that had been destroyed or that were taken out of the country through various ways and means and deposited in different European libraries, the problem requires a persistent effort in getting access to and studying the available manuscripts that are kept under the custody of local individuals and libraries in a systematic and meticulous way.<sup>81</sup>

Even if some manuscripts may require high-tech laboratories and chemical agents for their long-term preservation, they can still provide useful therapeutic information on herbal and other medicinal substances; and this would certainly assist to carry out a limited amount of applied research. Such an approach will eventually attract the necessary attention and financial support from various sources for conducting extensive research and training of researchers capable of applying “rigorous manufacturing standards” and producing “phytomedicines” at an industrial level. This being so, the limited researches that have been produced thus far are mostly

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80 The personal amulet of Emperor Tewodros II, which was returned to Ethiopia after 135 years of custody in Britain, demonstrates how protective amulet had been utilized even by a sovereign. See Hailu Habtu, "The Amulet of Emperor Theodore," *Annales d'Ethiopie*, vol. XIX; 257-263, 2003.

81 Haddis Gabre Maskel working on the British Library collection of Ethiopian Medical Texts has published a book titled: *Book of Medicine: Traditional Ethiopian Medicine* (Amharic) (London: Haddis Publications, 1980 EC.).

of an academic nature,<sup>82</sup> and many of them did not even include the views of the end users at the local level. Likewise, the flawed perception of state officials about indigenous therapeutic lore seemed to have prevented the transfer or promotion of indigenous healing techniques and therapeutic knowledge. Though major pharmaceutical industries had shifted their scientific research and commercial focus to medicinal species residing in their natural habitats, the number of tropical plant species so far screened for potential pharmaceutical applications since the mid-1990s is still less than 1 percent. And yet, in the United States alone out of the top 150 prescription drugs, about 79% of them have been derived from natural sources.<sup>83</sup>

As regards the preservation of written sources that are not kept on parchments, there has to be a responsible body that should take responsibility for arresting the physical deterioration of acidic papers that contain a great deal of medico-magical, herbal and other indigenous therapeutic information. Paper was first introduced in the late 19th century, and widely used throughout the 20th century. Depending on the amount of acidity in the papers and the condition under which they are kept (temperature and humidity), they will stay undamaged from thirty to sixty years. A lasting solution for this problem is micro-production of medical manuscripts (such as microfilming) or the use of acid-free paper onto which these records may be copied.

## Recapping Some Crucial Points

With the exception of a few research studies in foreign languages, there has been no in-depth historical study on indigenous knowledge

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82 Rukangira Ernest, "Medicinal Plants and Traditional Medicine in Africa: Constraints and Challenges." *Sustainable Development International*, (Nairobi) [www.infohouse.p2ric.org](http://www.infohouse.p2ric.org), p.179.

83 Emily Roberson, "Nature's Pharmacy, Our Treasure Chest: Why We Must Conserve Our Natural Heritage. A Native Plant Conservation Campaign Report," *Center for Biological Diversity*, (Tucson, Arizona, 2008) p.1.

at a national, regional, or sub regional (zonal), levels.<sup>84</sup> Indigenous knowledge, which constitutes indigenous healing or therapeutics, known alternatively as “community knowledge”, “rural peoples’ knowledge”, “traditional knowledge”, “indigenous science”, is defined as a “systematic body of knowledge acquired by local people through the accumulation of experiences, informal experiments, and intimate understanding of the environment in a given culture”.<sup>85</sup>

Feierman (1984) fittingly argued that “healers within particular therapeutic traditions can at times establish their own internal standards of training and practice, even in the absence of government backing”.<sup>86</sup> The lack of official support partly arises from the incomprehensibility and alleged secrecy surrounding indigenous medicine. Despite the insurmountable legal challenges facing indigenous therapeutics, however, no historical study has been conducted to look into the underlying causes and recommend possible remedial measures. With the exception of the author of this study<sup>87</sup> and a few ethnographic and anthropological researches indicated above<sup>88</sup> on Ethiopia's church-based healing, plus a number of disparate studies on the indigenous herbal lore, there are no inclusive, and in-depth, studies on the country's therapeutic history. Researchers from different disciplines (predominantly of scholars from the natural, social and humanities fields) have so far done several ethnobotanical studies on herbal remedies in various parts of

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84 "History of the Amhara People from the Earliest to the Present," Mimeograph, n.d. pp.110ff.

85 Quoted in Zufan Abera Dامتew, "Harnessing community knowledge for health: Case studies from community health service and information systems in Ethiopia," Unpublished PhD Dissertation, (Norway: University of Oslo, 2013), p.30.

86 Steven Feierman, "The Social Origins of Health and Healing in Africa," *Annual Meeting of the 27th African Studies Association*, October 25-28, 1984, Los Angeles, California.p.30.

87 Assefa Balcha, *A Century of Magico-Religious Healing: The African, Ethiopian Case, 1900-1980s*. (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 2015).

88 It is worth mentioning Allan Young's 'Magic as a Quasi-Profession', pp. 245-265.

the country. In spite of the inevitable changes taking place in the country in the field of Western allopathic medicine and education in the post-Italian period, church schools have continued to play an active part in providing medical education throughout the twentieth century. Absence of in-depth multi-disciplinary study on indigenous therapeutics has created a serious lacuna in the history of indigenous medicine in Ethiopia. We do not even know exactly how long the age-old magico-medical therapeutics within the church circle has been taught and passed on from one generation of practitioner to the next. However, both cleric-and non-cleric-healers continued to avail themselves to their health-seeking clients, some of whom would want to use the indigenous and allopathic therapies concurrently or one after the other.<sup>89</sup> In such mixed medical landscape, biomedicine had to go a long way to become the only preferred mode of treatment to the majority of people with varied therapeutic needs.

This is particularly true to what may be dubbed “popular medicine”—a whole set of healing methods and medical experts working outside the faith-based or religious circles. Without a history of “popular medicine”<sup>90</sup>, we cannot comprehend how indigenous healers of various titles and specialties have been recruited, trained and practiced medicine within the existing belief system, and how the predominantly secular medicine influenced and was influenced, by religiously-affiliated or spiritually-oriented healing methods. Despite the obvious disparity in their recruitment and training schemes, the famous principle “see one, do one, teach one”, to borrow a phrase from clinical medicine, has been conspicuous in both medical systems. However, this commonality did not bring about or facilitate cooperation; rather, the decline in the spiritual aspects of

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89 Allan Young, "The Practical Logic of Amhara Traditional Medicine", in *African Therapeutic Systems*, (Los Angeles, Cross Roads Press, 1979), p.79.

90 While my usage is much narrower in scope, the term 'popular medicine' is taken from Steven Feierman, who employed it to designate all healthcare providers working outside of biomedicine. See "The Social Origins of Health and Healing in Africa".

indigenous medicine has been overshadowed by the purportedly concrete worth or 'acceptance' of herbal and other similar therapies.

In order to understand these incongruous assumptions, the health-seeking behavior of people living in different geographic areas and their conception of wellbeing and illness must be ascertained. Identifying the commonalities and differences are also important inputs to carve out policy guidelines at a regional or national level. To date no one has endeavored to work on and provide concrete proof on the professed association of the material and non-material (or the 'natural' and 'mystical') components<sup>91</sup> of religious-affiliated or other indigenous therapies.

Rituals, words, movements, gestures, and actions that accompany the administration of herbal cures have been divested and discarded as not being part of the crux of the efficacy of herbal medicaments.<sup>92</sup> There is strong resistance to such an approach mainly because of the enormous success of biomedicine in the twentieth century and the power, wealth and prestige that Western medical institutions wield.<sup>93</sup>

Even if many indigenous health practitioners utilized curative natural remedies without any supernatural assistance, almost all religiously-affiliated cleric-healers claimed to have garnered the assistance of supernatural being/s in the preparation and administration of nature-based medications to their patients.<sup>94</sup>

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91 Solomon A. Getahun and Assefa Balcha, "Indigenous Healing Practices in Ethiopia," In *The Manual of Ethiopian Medical History*. Compiled by Enawgaw Mehari, Kinfu Gebeyehu and Zergabachew Asfaw, (USA: A Publication of People to People, September 2012), p.17.

92 Arun Agrawal, "Indigenous Knowledge and the Politics of Classification," (UNESCO: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), p.291.

93 Jon Kirby, "The Islamic Dialogue with African Traditional Religion: Divination and Health Care," *Social Science and Medicine*, 36 (3), 1993, p.237.

94 Lauren Anderson, "Faith as a Means of Healing," p.13.

Most secular healers and herbalists claim that they have learned the craft from their parents who showed them medicinal herbs, their recipes and applications, together with their “blessings.” It was believed that without these “blessings”, also known as *tufta* (spittle) or *Baraka* (benediction or divine favor) by Moslem practitioners, medicinal preparations would not bring the desired effect. It is not actually very hard to comprehend the practical role of the 'blessing' paraphernalia being used in the recruitment and/or training of individuals who have been chosen to serve as prospective trusted healers.

Besides ascertaining the reliability of the aforesaid assertions, the other vital issue that requires thoughtful investigation is on how Ethiopian indigenous healers continued to provide their service in the face of the social stigma that bedeviled them for so long. Healers argued that it was to discourage the majority of the underprivileged public from getting access to their economically affordable services that indigenous medicine was portrayed in a negative light. They believed that members of the ruling class and the educated elites deliberately promoted a prejudiced and stereotypical view of indigenous healers as *sorcerers*, *occultists*, *ill-wishers*, and as *murderers*, *possessors of harmful medicines* and as ‘*diggers*’, ‘*cutters*’, ‘*collectors*’ or ‘*pickers*’ of roots and leaves, uncomplimentary adjectives, often colloquial, that were employed to designate healers as charlatans and criminals. These derogatory designations for lay and cleric–healers were similar to the pejorative names directed against socially ‘segregated’ occupational castes: gold and iron smiths, weavers, tanners and potters. An oral informant commented: ‘It was unfortunate that every hard-working person in the country did not escape from being insulted, despised or mistreated; and the social stigma that sprang out of this unconstructive attitude had an enormous negative impact on the lives and career of indigenous health practitioners and members of the artisan class.’ Despite these biased outlooks, which would indisputably affect the stature of indigenous medicine and local technology, researchers have to

examine why people did not refrain from exploiting and benefiting the most from the multifaceted services of artisans and healers.

To reinforce the above argument, one may also take the case of the skillful *waggasha* or 'surgeon-herbologist-empiricist[s]'<sup>95</sup> as an illustrative example. The *waggasha* have been trained to effecting cure through physical manipulation of the human body.<sup>96</sup> The majority of the *waggasha*, serving mostly as orthopedists or bone-setters, and mastering an essentially pragmatic and heuristic wisdom, often performed minor surgical operations on both human and domestic animals. They also possessed a limited amount of herbal knowledge as well. They were the ones who provided emergency medical care during military campaigns and other armed conflicts; and their history is not properly recorded and told in full.<sup>97</sup> It is again regrettable that the *waggeshas'* age-old experiential skill, though dwindling over time, has been downplayed.<sup>98</sup> No one has ever suggested palpable methodological solutions for preserving and utilizing some aspects of this rapidly disappearing healing tradition. Is it not possible to train bone-setters in the area of orthopedics and traumatology and provide them basic appliances to obtain better results? Would it be implausible to institute a referral system of complicated cases to hospitals<sup>99</sup> to enable a new generation of *waggasha* healers to provide better orthopedic services either independently, or within the conventional healthcare system? What

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95 Simon Messing, "The Highland Plateau Amhara of Ethiopia", p.580

96 For the etymology and meaning of the term, see Fikre Tolossa, *The True Origin of the Oromo and Amhara [people]* (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: Nebadan PLC, 2008 EC) p.18.

97 For a fascinating personal observation of healers' indispensable medical service in the northern front during the 1935/6 Italo-Ethiopian war, see Alessandro Del Baye, *Red Lion*, Translated into Amharic by Tesfaye Mekonnen (Addis Ababa: Alpha Printers, 2003) pp.159ff.

98 For portraying the *waggasha* only as first aid or emergency care providers, see *Nagadras*, 14 Genbot 2001 EC.

99 A. M. Udosen, O. O. Otei and O. Onuba, "Role of Traditional Bone Setters in Africa: Experience in Calabar, Nigeria," *Annals of African Medicine*, 5(4), 2006, pp.170, 172.

really has hampered this? Is the population really comfortable with the quality and spatial distribution of biomedical services? Does the general public really view the marginalization of all non-biomedically-grounded health practitioners as a viable option? Is it difficult to create a favorable working environment for the *waggasha* healers to offer their expert services side by side, or in collaboration with, the “modern” orthopedic departments? Even today where officially acknowledged education is not given on indigenous or complementary/alternative medicine,<sup>100</sup> such a collaborative endeavor still remains an essential move to address the country's healthcare needs.

A number of disparate studies have recommended the importance of providing training for indigenous bone setters on the basics of orthopedic care as a prerequisite to their envisaged integration with the biomedical healthcare delivery system.<sup>101</sup> Despite the public's skepticism about modern health professionals' orthopedic skill, the *waggasha* expressed their interest in receiving some practical training on how to refer open wounded or complex bone injuries to orthopedic care centers, how to arrest bleeding, sterilize surgical instruments<sup>102</sup> or take other hygienic measures, as well as how to read and make use of radiography.<sup>103</sup> This suggests that collaboration of trained specialists and indigenous *waggasha*

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100 WHO, "Legal Status of Traditional Medicine and Complementary/Alternative Medicine: A Worldwide Review," (Geneva, 2001), p.15.

101 For a local anthropological study on the issue of integration, see Mekonnen Bishaw, 'Integrating Indigenous and Cosmopolitan Medicine in Ethiopia'. Unpublished PhD. dissertation (Southern Illinois University, 1988).

102 The *waggasha* used various simple surgical instruments to perform cupping, pulling out carious tooth, incising of swellings, letting out blood or abscesses, and removing bullets or foreign objects.

103 Wondimagegn P. Kumma, Bereket Y. Kabalo & Eskinder W. Woticha, "Complications of Fracture Treatment by Traditional Bone Setters in Wolaita Sodo, Southern Ethiopia," *Journal of Biology, Agriculture and Healthcare*, 3(12), 2013, p.100.

healers is not an unlikely option; and this partnership would certainly help improve the quality of orthopedic service.

## CONCLUSION

Indigenous therapeutic endeavors should not be viewed from the point of view of “beneficial” or “non-beneficial”; “harmful” or “harmless”, but as part and parcel of the socio-economic and political systems that governed peoples’ real-life situations in the past. Diseases, illnesses, and other personal or social misfortunes, which often entail serious crises, or as the saying goes: “Misfortune never comes singly”, should be understood as an integral part of historical reality. Almost every society has experienced several destructive, bloody internal conflicts and wars; and such unpleasant experiences need to be recorded not because they are believed to be beneficial, but because they are part and parcel of the history. Like other facets of peoples’ historical past, the history of indigenous therapeutics should be thoroughly investigated within the operating belief system/s as well as the wider socio-economic and political frameworks. In short, without exerting all-encompassing and meticulous effort in understanding and documenting their actual and potential importance, any blanket condemnation or negative opinion on indigenous health-related beliefs and associated practices will greatly erode their already unwarranted position. At present, the political ideology of revolutionary democracy and the ethno-linguistic division of the country deprives the nation a *centralized coordinating body* at the federal level as if health and diseases are ethnic conscious or ethnically rooted; and this implies that healers are left to organize and provide their services in their respective regions only. This and several related other issues leave many questions unanswered; and not to address them will certainly dispossess the country and its people their age-old therapeutic resources and heritages. This existential problem may be mitigated if higher learning institutions and other stakeholders diligently work towards establishing an *autonomous institute for indigenous medicine* that is fully engaged in scrutinizing and methodically investigating Ethiopia’s

indigenous medicine and healing. This can be realized if they take up new attitudes, approaches and incentives, and have the conviction and the courage to do so. Finally, it is worth noting that the future of indigenous medicine depends on such a conscious and wise collective choice, a decisive step that will not only help us *inter alia* to single out, properly examine and exploit usable therapeutic practices, but also enables the country to expedite its therapeutic resources into a higher purpose.

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## COMMENTARIES



## **THE AFROASIATIC PEOPLE AND ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS**

(A Commentary)<sup>1</sup>

Girma A. Demeke

A former colleague of mine told me the following story: While he was a professor at Harvard University, he taught a course titled “African Civilization.” During the planning stages, one of his colleagues said to him: “I heard that you are planning to give a course called ‘African Civilization.’ I know what ‘Africa’ means and I also know what ‘civilization’ means. What I do not know is how you coined these two words together.” This is not an isolated incidence of misconception. It has been widely believed and perpetuated by a significant body of scholars past and present. Ironically, this distorted notion is knowingly or unknowingly being echoed by a good number of Africans themselves.

Egypt, among the most advanced of ancient civilizations, is nowhere other than in Africa. The Axumite Empire, which was considered one of the four world super powers (along with Persia, China, and Rome), at its peak in antiquity was in Africa as the Persian historian Mani (216–276) puts it. The ancient Nubian/Kushite

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1 The phrase Afroasiatic people refers here to the speakers of Afroasiatic languages. I thank Daniel Kassahun, Kassahun Checole, Kassahun Seboka, Ephraim Isaac and Abebe Zegeye for their comments on the earlier version of this article. I am very grateful for Diana Coetzee for editing the manuscript.

kingdom, (with its seat at Karma, Napata, and later at Meroe) (ca. 2000 BCE – 400 CE) was in Africa.

So, why did the above question percolate in minds to begin with? For those who interpret everything through the prism of “race,” the immediate justification goes as follows: “The Egyptian civilization was a Caucasian one not of the black Africans;<sup>2</sup> the Nubian copied their civilization from the Egyptians; and the Axumite Civilization is made possible by an immigrant Semitic speaking people from South Arabia.”<sup>3</sup> In line with this racial line of thinking, some Afrocentric scholars go to the opposite extreme, counterattacking the Eurocentric view. They claim that the Egyptian civilization is a black man’s civilization and the present population of Egypt does not show the true picture of the ancient Egyptian. See, for instance, Diop (1981) who tried hard to make the ancient Egyptians as black as possible in line with the West African physical type and their language to be genetically related to Wolof, his mother tongue.<sup>4</sup>

Without diving into a racial controversy, we know that the ancient Egyptians spoke a language that is closely related to Semitic which, in turn, belongs to a bigger language family called ‘Afroasiatic,’ formerly known as ‘Hamito-Semitic’ — a term that has a racial connotation with no scientific value as the groups designated Hamitic do not show a distinct unity that stands in contrast to Semitic. Almost in a similar period to ancient Egypt, a parallel civilization developed in the region of Mesopotamia. This civilization was clearly of Semitic speakers. The language they spoke, Akkadian, is recognized as the first written Semitic language. While the closeness between Semitic and Egyptian is indisputable, Eurocentric scholars believe the original home of Egyptians was Asia. It is from

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2 The issue of whether the ancient Egyptians were white or black has been a subject of discussion since the nineteenth century (Mokhatr 1981:14; Fluehr-Lobban and Rhodes 2004:xxiii).

3 See, for instance, Taddese (1972) and the references cited there.

4 Wolof is a Niger–Congo language spoken in Senegal, Gambia, and Mauritania.

Asia that they moved to Egypt and created the ancient Egyptian civilization and, hence, by extension they are Caucasians.

The Afroasiatic language group does not only embody Semitic and Egyptian. Berber, Omotic, Chadic and the various Cushitic groups also belong to it. The skin color of the people of these language groups varies mainly based on the climate where they live. For Eurocentric scholars the reason for this can be summarized as follows:

The original homeland of the proto-Afroasiatic language speaking people in general was Asia, particularly the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> It is from there that they moved to Africa, leaving the Semitic language speaking group behind (with some of the Semitic group also migrating to Africa later which we know today as Ethio-Semitic). The darkness of the skin color of those who moved to Africa is not only due to weather but also due to intermarriage with the local Africans.<sup>6</sup>

This kind of racial explanation is also attributed to the Ethiopian Semitic people who are wrongfully thought to have migrated around the middle of the first millennium BCE (see Hetzron 1972; Taddese 1972; and Ullendorf 1960, among many others). For these scholars, the current Ethio-Semitic speakers are Cushitic stock who adopted the language of the Semitic immigrants. However, the Cushitic people are also Afroasiatic. Moreover, when it comes to Ethiopia,

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- 5 One of the arguments for this is promoted by scholars such as Militarve (2005). According to him, the existance of the Natufian culture was assumed to be that of the Afroasiatic people. However, similar grass collection culture was found on the Nile basin which, according to Ehret (1979) predates the Natufian culture by 300 years. In fact, grass-collecting culture existed for milenia in the highlands of Ethiopia as, among other things, evidenced by the existance of teff and other indiginous grains found only in Ethiopia.
- 6 See, for instance, the following from Trimmingham (1955/1965:6): “Hamites came in waves and through intermarriage with the aborigines gave rise to groups of hamitized Negroes.”

except for a few Nilo-Saharan groups in the western, southern and northern parts of the country, around ninety-eight percent of the population belongs to the Afroasiatic phylum. The migration theory (from Asia to Africa) that suggests early migration of Cushitic and Omotic speakers and later migration of the Semitic speakers and mixture with an African tribe or tribes does not answer linguistic, cultural and biological facts. What is really the physical difference between the Semitic group in Asia, who are considered Caucasian but the Cushitic, Omotic, and so on, including the Ethiopian Semitic black, is only a slight color difference, but not any other major physical structure, as also noticed throughout history by even European travelers:

While the tint of the pure Ethiopian varies between light olive-green and intense black, he [...] possesses none of the striking negroid characteristics save that of colour. In thickness of skull, facial formation, shape of the foot, and notably of the heel, the Ethiopian is quite unlike the negro (Skinner 1906: 130).

See also the following from Ullendorff:

Generally speaking, the predominant Ethiopian type reveals fairly close anthropometric affinities to that commonly found among the Arabs of South Arabia, i.e. medium stature, long face, and a fairly straight and thin nose—all characteristics not encountered among the neighbouring African peoples. The hair is curly or frizzy, lips are thinner and very much less protruding than is otherwise the case in Africa. The colour of the skin varies a good deal, but is generally rather light, somewhere between olive and light brown (Ullendorff 1960:33 – 34).

In fact, for some, Ethiopians are black caucasians. See Marcus (1979) for discussion and relevant references.

If we continue to draw a distinction between races in terms of physical characteristics, we will most likely end up having a continuum. For those who see everything in two colors Barak Obama and Bob Marley are black although the mother of the former and the

father of the latter are whites respectively. Such labeling, in fact, has a double face:

While, in American society, the notorious one drop (of 'Negro' blood) rule renders a person 'Black', one drop of white blood does not make a person 'White'. However, in the Eurocentric and racist view of Nile Valley history, a little Asiatic blood is enough to render them 'White', while many drops of 'Negor' (or sub-Saharan) blood is simply not sufficiently 'Black' (Fluehr-Lobban and Rhodes 2004: xxiii).

The distinction of people in terms of two-color-based races has no scientific explanation whatsoever. The unfortunate fate is its entrance in academics and even religion which does not spare the Bible where, for instance, what has been "I am black and beautiful" becomes "I am black but beautiful" in later versions (Song of Solomon 1:5). See Ephraim Isaac (1980).

The prejudice towards downgrading any achievement in Africa is at play even today. In his recent work, *The Throne of Adulis: Red Sea Wars on the Eve of Islam*, G. W. Bowersock (2013) addresses one of the greatest Axumite expansions at its historical peak by Emperor Kaleb in the sixth century of the common era. It is a well-researched book. Although almost no evidence is presented in the main body of the book, in the first paragraph of the summary, we find: "[T]his [the conflict between the Ethiopians and the Jewish Arabs] was an international war that involved both the Byzantine Empire, which had established Christian churches in Ethiopia, and the Sasanian Empire in Persia, which supported the Jews in what become a proxy war against its longtime foe Byzantium." On the back cover of the book, the famous historian Peter Brown labeled the Ethiopian rulers as "militant Christian warlords." We know that the Byzantine Empire did not establish a church in Ethiopia. Christianity became the official state religion in Ethiopia around 324 CE long before it received

similar status in Byzantium.<sup>7</sup> Neither is there any slight evidence that the war was a proxy war.

Rather, the evidence indicates that there was no competition between the Romans and Sāsānids for influence in South Arabia either before or during the period 518-525. In place of a “Great Game” theory that explains Red Sea history in terms of the Romano-Sāsānid conflict, ... Kālēb simply sought to establish Axumite supremacy on both sides of the sea, and that he used both religious and irredentist rhetoric to justify what was nothing more than a war of Aksumite expansion into South Arabia (Hatke 2011:iii).

As Hatke rightly states, the war was merely Axumite expansion. Ethiopia had demonstrated over a millennium an old central government by the time Kaleb had risen to power. Bowersock’s book is well written, and it is not fair to blame the author for what is written on the cover. We should rather thank the author for writing this wonderful work. However, why did such statements that go against the findings of the book appear on its cover?

Murtonen (1967), Hudson (1977), and (Demeke 2001), among many others, challenged the long-established idea that Ethio-Semitic languages were newcomers to Africa.<sup>8</sup> They argued, instead, in favor of the African origin not only of the Ethio-Semitic languages, but also Proto-Semitic and Proto-Afroasiatic languages in general.

The great Axumite civilization was attributed to Semitic immigrants from South Arabia who started settling in the northern part of Ethiopia around 500 BCE. Although this assumption is only speculation, which seems to stem mainly from a racial bias that Africans were incapable of creating such civilization, some great

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7 Emperor Constantine, although he made a significant contribution to Christianity by organizing a convention, the First Council of Nice of world Christians, and building churches, and so on did not make Christianity the official religion of his government (Dudley 1880). It is during Theodosius I, who reigned from 379 to 395, that Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman Empire.

8 See Girma (2009) for more information and further references.

African historians themselves, including Cheikh Anta Diop and Ethiopian historians such as Tadesse Tamrat (1972), were trapped in it. Among these African scholars some continued to follow the old established argument and others either denied the Semitic status of Ge'ez, the language of the Axumites, and its sister languages in Ethiopia (cf. Ayele Beker) <sup>9</sup> or the greatness of the Axumite civilization as in Diop:

To modern minds, the term 'Ethiopia' conjures up Addis Ababa. Here again, we must insist on the fact that in this region, except for one obelisk and two pedestals of statues, nothing is found. The civilization of Axum former capital of Ethiopia is more a word than a reality attested by historical monuments (Diop 1974:156).

Although the African origin of Afroasiatic and Semitic languages is now almost the accepted norm among linguists, there is much to be done to correct the age-old misconception of this in other fields.

Agreeing with Fleming, the world is hybrid. We are all hybrid as the PBS program, *First Peoples*, beautifully narrates. We are intermingled not only within ourselves/humanity, but with extinct human-like creatures (such as Neanderthals and Denisovans).<sup>10</sup> If we go by the current speakers of Afroasiatic languages, their physical type may range from European-like feature to the West African type, and the color of their skin from dark/black to white as in Europeans. The intermediate of this continuum may be found among the Ethiopians, both in terms of physical characteristics and skin color. As we are all hybrid, the civilization that humanity created is also hybrid. The Akkadian civilization is built on top of the Sumerian, the Egyptian based on, or in close contact with, the people in the south what we know as Kushite or Nubian in pre-historic period.<sup>11</sup> As Mokhtar suggests: "[I]t is highly doubtful whether the inhabitants that introduced civilization into the Nile valley ever belonged to one

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9 Interview on Ethiopian media.

10 See Zegura (2015) for further discussion and review of current literature.

11 See Bruce Williams (1980).

single, pure race. The very history of the peopling of the valley refutes such a possibility” (Mokhtar 1981:14).

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# REVIEWS



## **የመጽሐፍ ዳሰሳ**

በአገናኝ ከበደ

**ጥሩኑህ ገማታ ወዮሳ፣ የፓርቲ ፖለቲካ በኢትዮጵያ (ከፊውዳል አሪስቶክራሲ እስከ አብዮታዊ ዲሞክራሲ)፣ ኡዲስ አበባ፣ 2008፣ ገፅ ብዛት 262።**

### **መግቢያ**

ጥሩኑህ ገማታ ወዮሳ በ1947 ዓ.ም በኢሉ አባቡራ ዞን ሱጴ ሰዶ ወረዳ አባሎ በሚባል ቀበሌ ተወለዱ። እድሜአቸው ለትምህርት እንደደረሰም አንደኛ ደረጃ ትምህርታቸውን አልጌ አንደኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤት ሲማሩ ሁለተኛ ደረጃ ትምህርታቸውን ደግሞ ጎሬ ቀዳማዊ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ ትምህርት ቤት ተምረዋል። ከዚያም ወደ ኡዲስ አበባ መጥተው በተለያዩ የትምህርት ተቋማት የተለያዩ ትምህርቶችን ቢከታተሉም በፖለቲካ አቋማቸው ምክንያት በሚደርስባቸው እስር እና እንግልት አንዱንም በቅጡ እንዳልጩረሱ ይገልጻሉ። ጥሩኑህ ገማታ በ1983 ዓ.ም አካባቢ በኡዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ በፖለቲካ ሳይንስ እና አለም-አቀፍ ግንኙነት ትምህርት ክፍል ውስጥ በፖለቲካው ተሳትፎ ታዋቂ ከነበሩ ተማሪዎች መካከል አንዱ ናቸው። ጥሩኑህ ገማታ ከቀዳማዊ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ እስከ ኢህአዴግ (የኢትዮጵያ ህዝቦች አብዮታዊ ዲሞክራሲ ግንባር) ድረስ ያለውን የኢትዮጵያ ፖለቲካ በቅርብ ከሚያውቁ ሰዎች መካከል ይካተታሉ። በአሮሞ ፖለቲካም ትልቅ ተፅዕኖ መፍጠር ከሚችሉ ሰዎች መካከልም ይመደባሉ። በአሁኑ ሰዓት የአሮሞ ዲሞክራሲ ፓርቲ (አዴፓ) ተብሎ በሚጠራውና ቀድሞ የአሮሞ ህዝብ ዲሞክራሲ ድርጅት(አህዴድ) ተብሎ በሚታወቀው የአሮሞ የፖለቲካ ድርጅት ውስጥ ንቁ ተሳትፎ ነበራቸው።

ጥሩኑህ ገማታ የኖሩበትን የኢትዮጵያ ፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች ታሪክ ጥሩ አድረገው ተንትነዋል። ሁኖም ግን እንደ ዘመኑ የአሮሞ ፖለቲከኞች የሰሜን ፖለቲካ ጠይ መሆናቸውን ከፅሁፋቸው መረዳት ይቻላል። በአሁኑ ሰዓት አንዳንድ የአሮሞ ሊሂቃን ታሪክን እያዳቀሉ እና እየፈጠሩ በውስጣቸው እሾህ የሞላው ፅሁፋቸውን በጥሩ የቃል አጠቃቀም ለአንባቢያን እያቀረቡ ይገኛሉ። ከዚህ ጋር በተገናኘ ፀሀፊው አቶ ጥሩኑህ ገማታ የፓርቲ ፖለቲካ በኢትዮጵያ በሚለው መፅሀፋቸው የፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎችን ታሪክ ባልተዘባ መንገድ ለማቅረብ ያደረጉት ጥረት ቢያስመሰግንም የአጭዎችን ታሪክ እና የሰሜን ፖለቲካን የተመለከቱበት የታሪክ እይታ የተንሸዋረረ ነው።

የፓርቲ ፖለቲካ በኢትዮጵያ(ከፊውዳል አርስቶክረሲ እስከ ኦብዮታዊ ዲሞክራሲ) በሚል መፅሀፋቸው ፀሀፊው ፅሁፋቸውን በአምስት ምዕራፍ ከፍለውታል። የመጀመሪያው ምዕራፍ ስለ ማዕከላዊ ንጉሳዊ አገዛዝ ጅምርና ፍፃሜው ያትታል። ሁለተኛው ምዕራፍ ደግሞ ስለ ደርግና የፓርቲ ፖለቲካዎች ያትታል። ሶስተኛው ምዕራፍ ደግሞ ከህዋሓት/ኢሕአዴግ እስከ ኢ.ፌ.ዲ.ሪ ያለውን የፖለቲካ ሁኔታ ያትታል። ምዕራፍ አራት ደግሞ በኢትዮጵያ ፓርቲ ፖለቲካ የውጭ ኃይሎችን ሚና ይመለከታል። ከዚህ በተጨማሪ ምዕራፍ አምስት ደግሞ ስለ ፀሀፊው የህይወት ታሪክ ያትታል።

**ዋና ክፍል**

ፀሀፊው ጥሩነህ ገማታ ወዮሳ በምዕራፍ አንድ ማዕከላዊ ንጉሳዊ አገዛዝ ጅምርና ፍፃሜው በሚለው ርዕሳቸው የኢትዮጵያን የንጉሳዊ ፖለቲካ ከየጁ ሥረወ-መንግስት እስከ አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ ለመዳሰስ ሞክርዋል። እንደ ፀሀፊው ገለፃ ከሆነ ትንሽ የዲሞክራሲ ዘውግ የታየበት ከህዝብ ይሉኝታ ያገኘ የየጁ የንጉሳዊ ስርዓት ከ 1761-1845 ዓ.ም በሰሜኑ ክፍል ታይቶ ነበረ። የአሮሞ ዘር ያላቸው ትልቁ እና ትንሹ አሊ በእንደራሴነት በህዝብ ፍላጎት ለህዝብ ጥቅም ቅድሚያ በመስጠት ከየጁ እስከ በጌምድር የዘረጉት ዲሞክራሲያዊ የአስተዳደር ስርዓታቸው ያለማቋረጥ ቢቀጥል ለአሁኗ ኢትዮጵያ ጥሩ የፖለቲካ አንድምታ ይኖረው እንደነበረ ፀሀፊው ግምታቸውን አስቀምጠዋል (ገፅ: 2-30)።

ፀሀፊው እንደ ኢትዮጵያዊን አቆጣጠር በ1847 ዓ.ም የነገሱትን ዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስ (ከ1847-1860 ዓ.ም) ከየጁ ስረወ-መንግስት የቀጠለውን የነ እራስ አሊ (የወረሼህ ቤተሰቦች) ዲሞክራሲ የሚታይበትን ዘውዳዊ አገዛዝ እና የእንደ እራሴነት አመራርን ያኮላሹ ንጉስ ያደርጓቸዋል (ገፅ:2-4)። ከዚህም በተጨማሪ እንደ ፀሀፊው የታሪክ አረዳድ ከዘመነ መሳፍንት የበለጠ የከፋ ስርዓት የአፄ ዳግማዊ ቴዎድሮስ ነበር። አፄ ዳግማዊ ቴዎድሮስ ወደ ስልጣን ከመምጣታቸው በፊት በመሳፍንቶች ተቆራርጠው የሚገዙ ግዛቶች ምንም እንኳን እንከን ባይጠፋቸውም ለየክልሉ ነዋሪዎች ሰላምን እና ነፃነትን የለገሱ እንደነበሩ ፀሀፊው ይናገራሉ<sup>1</sup>(ገፅ:1-11)። ፀሀፊው ስለ ዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስ ይህንም ነግረውናል፤ ካህ ያይሉ የቋራ አከባቢ ገዥ የነበሩ አጎታቸውን ደጃች ከንፈን በማገዝ በሱዳን ደንበር በኩል ስርጉ ገብ የግብፅ ወራሪዎችን ለመከላከል በውትድረና ባገለገሉበት ወቅት በሰሩት ጀብድ ተቀባይነት በማግኘታቸው የመንገስ ፍላጎት አደረባቸውና እራሳቸውን ከሰላምን የዘር ግንድ ጋር በማያያዝ ሌሎች እንዲከተሏቸው አደረጉ (ገፅ:2-9)። ቀን ከቀንም ብዙ ተከታይ እና ወታደር አፈሩ። ይህም የሰሜን መሳፍንቶችን አንድ በአንድ በማሸነፍ እንዲነግሱ አደረጋቸው።

ፀሀፊው አቶ ጥሩነህ ንጉሱ ዘማናዊነትን ለማምጣት ሳይሆን ግዛታቸውን ለማስፋት እንዲሁም በኢኮኖሚ በፖለቲካ እና በውትድርና እራሳቸውን ለማጠንከር ብረት በማስቀለጥ መድፍ ያሰሩ የቤተክርስቲያንን አስራት የቀነሱ የአሊዎች ደጋፊ የነበሩ አሮሞችን

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1 ከዚህ ጋር በተያያዘ ፀሀፊው አፄ ቴዎድሮስ የወሎ አሮሞ ላይ ከፍተኛ ብትር አሳርፈዋል ይላሉ(ገፅ:2)።

አይቀጡ ቅጣት የቀጡ በተጨማሪም በኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ስልጣንን በሃይል የመያዝ ባህሪን ለቀጣይ መሪዎች ያስተማሩ ነበሩ። በማለት ዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስን ይወቅሷቸዋል (ገፅ:5-9)።

ፀሀፊው ስለ አፄ ዮሐንስ አራተኛም ይህን ይላሉ፤ አፄ ዮሐንስ አራተኛ (ከ1864-1881 ዓ.ም) በዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስ ላይ ናፒየር የተሳካ ዘመቻ ያደርግ ዘንድ እገዛ በማድረጋቸው ከእንግሊዝ ባገኙት ዘመናዊ የመሳሪያ ድጋፍ በመጠቀም ሀምሌ 5፣ 1863ዓ.ም የላስታውን ተክለ ጊዎርጊስን ድል አደረጉ። በእድሜ ከጎሩት እና ከእነ ዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስ ጋር ከተዋጉት መስታውት እና ወርቂት በኩል ብዙ የመቀናቀን አቅም ሳይገጥማቸውም ወደ ፖለቲካ ስልጣን መጡ (ገፅ:10)። ጥር 13 1864 አፄ ዮሐንስ ስልጣን ጨበጡ (ገፅ:10)። ስልጣን ከመያዛቸው ማግስት ጀምሮ ንጉሱ የወራሂማኖ መሐመዶችንም ስረው-መንግስት አጠፉ ለትግራይ ህዝብ ብቻ ስሩ የተገንጣይ አስገንጣይ ሀሳብ አነገቡ እንዲሁም የወሎ አሮሞችን ጨፈጩ (ገፅ:11)።

ሌላው ፀሀፊው ስለ ዳግማዊ አፄ ምኒልክ የተናገሩት ነው። ፀሀፊው ዳግማዊ አፄ ምኒልክ (ከ1881-1909 ዓ.ም) ኢኮኖሚውን እና የወታደር አቅማቸውን ለማሳደግ ደቡብን ወረሩ ይላሉ (12)። ከዚህ በተጨማሪም ዳግማዊ አፄ ምኒልክ ጨቋኝ በዝባዥ እና ወራሪ እንደነበሩ እንዲሁም ከነኞጮች ባልተናነሰ መንገድ በቅኝ ግዛት ተሳትፎ ጉልህ ሚና የነበራቸው ንጉስ እንደነበሩ (ገፅ:12-15) ፀሀፊው ይናገራሉ። ፀሀፊው ዳግማዊ አፄ ምኒልክ በኢኮኖሚው በፖለቲካው እና በስልጣኔው ያበረከቱትን አስተዋዎ ወደ ጎን በመተው የአሮሞን ህዝብ የጨፈጩ ጭራቅ አድርገው ይስሏቸዋል (ገፅ:15)።

እንደ ፀሀፊው ገላፃ፣ዳግማዊ አፄ ምኒልክ ረዥም ጊዜ ከዝጉ በኋላ እና ከዚህ አለም በሞት ከተለዩ በኋላ ለአልጋ ወራሽነት የታጩት ራስ መኮንን ድንገተኛ ሞት ፖለቲካው ለዘብተኛ ወደ ሚባለው ታዳጊ ህፃን እጅ እንዲገባ አደረገው። የራስ መኮንን መሞት ከንጉስ መሀመድ አሊ(ራስ ሚካኤል) እና ከሽዋ ረገድ ምኒልክ የተዋለደውን አቤቶ ኢያሱን ወደ ስልጣን አመጣው። አቤቶ ኢያሱ ህዝብን ከህዝብ ለማቀራረብ ሲል አስር ያህል ሚስት በማግባት የተጠቀመው የጋብቻ ዲፕሎማሲ የፖለቲካ ብልጠቱን እንደሚሰላይ ፀሀፊው ይናገራሉ (ገፅ 16)። አቤቶ ኢያሱ በስለልጣን ዘመኑ ከውርስ ግብር እና ሌሎች ጋር በተገናኘ የአስተዳደር ማሻሻያዎችን አደረገ። የእስልምና እምነት ተከታይ ከሆኑ የአረብ ሀገራት ጋርም ጥሩ ግንኙነት አደረገ ሁኖም የአሮሞን ደም ከስልጣን ማግለል በሚል አካሄድ አቤቱ ኢያሱ ከስልጣን ተወገደ። በሽፍጥ ፖለቲካ ወረደ። በቤተ-መንግስት መፈንቅለ-መንግስት ወረደ ይላሉ ፀሀፊው (ገፅ 12-16)። ከአቤቶ ኢያሱ አጭር የስልጣን ዘመን በኋላ ንግስት ዘውዲቱ የስልጣን ዙፋኑን ቢይዙም ብዙም የሚያረካ የዲፕሎማሲ እና የፖለቲካ ስራ ሳይሰሩ በቀዳማዊ አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ እንደ ተተኩ ፀሀፊው ገልፀዋል።

ፀሀፊው ስለ ቀዳማዊ አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ ይህን ይላሉ፤ በጎንዮሽ ከአውሮፓ ሀገራት ጋር ግንኙነት አድርገው በ 1916ዓ.ም ኢትዮጵያን የተባበሩት መንግስታት ሊግ አባል በማድረግ እና ቤተ-መንግስት አከባቢ ባሉ ሰዎች ላይ የብልጠት ፖለቲካ በመጫዎት እውቅና እና

ተቀባይነት ያገኙት ቀዳማዊ አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ (ከ1923-1967 ዓ.ም) በ1921 ዓ.ም ንግስት ዘውዲቱን አቅም በማሳጣት ከስልጣን አስዎገደው በ1923 ዓ. ም ስልጣን ያዙ (ገፅ:20)። ቀዳማዊ አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ ቀድመው የነበሩትን የአፄዎች የታሪክ ዳራ ያስቀጠሉ ሲሆኑ ከቀድሞዎቹ ለየት የሚያደረጋቸው በኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ የመጀመሪያ የሆነውን ዘመናዊ ህገ-መንግስት ማስረቀቃቸው<sup>2</sup> እና በእርሳቸው የአገዛዝ ዘመን የፖለቲካ ፓርቲ ታሪክ መጀመሩ ነው በማለት ፀሀፊው ሀሳባቸውን ይገልጻሉ (ገፅ:20-25)።

የፀሀፊው ዋና ሀሳብ የፓርቲ ፖለቲካ በኢትዮጵያ የሚለው ነውና ከእዚህ ጋር የተገናኙ ጉዳዮችን እንመልከት፤ እንግዲህ እንደ ፀሀፊው ገለፃ በቀዳማዊ አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ ዘመነ መንግስት የፖለቲካ ፓርቲ ተጀመረ(ገጽ:18)። በቀዳማዊ አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ ዘመነ መንግስት የፖለቲካ ፓርቲ የሚመስሉ እንደ ሻቢያ ኦብነግ<sup>3</sup> አነግ<sup>4</sup> ማገብት<sup>5</sup> መኢሶን<sup>6</sup> እና ኢሕአፓ<sup>7</sup> አይነት የፖለቲካ ቡድኖች ማቆጣቆጥ ጀመሩ(ገፅ:21)። ለእነዚህ ፖለቲካ ፓርቲ መሰል ቡድኖች ማቆጣቆጥ ደግሞ በ1950ዎቹ ገዳማ የነበሩ ፀረ-ፊውዳል እንቅስቃሴዎች ጉልህ ሚና ነበራቸው<sup>8</sup> (ገፅ:23-24)።

ፀሀፊው ምዕራፍ ሁለት ላይ ደርግና የፓርቲ ፖለቲካ በሚል ርዕስ ስር ይህን ይላሉ፤ በ1960 ዓ.ም አጋማሾቹ ላይ የፊውዳል ስርዓት መውደቁ ለኢትዮጵያ ህዝብ ጥሩ አጋጣሚ የሆነ ቢሆንም በሀገሪቱ የአባገንን ስርዓት መፈጠሩ ሀገሪቱን የበለጠ የፖለቲካ አዘቅት ውስጥ የከተተ እና የትውልድ ክፍተት የፈጠረ ኩናቴ ነበር (ገፅ:47) ።

ፀሀፊው ከቀዳማዊ አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ ዘመነ መንግስት መገባደጃ ጀምሮ እስከ ደረግ ዘመነ መንግስት የነበረውን ቅድመ እና ድህረ ደርግ የፓርቲ ፖለቲካ ሁኔታ እንዲህ ይነግሩናል፤ በ1960ዎቹ የመጣውን ለውጥ ተከትሎ የፖለቲካ ስልጣንን ለመያዝ ሁለት በሕዝብ ተቀባይነት የሌላቸው እና ሕዝብን ለመምራት ዝግጁ ያልሆኑ ታዋቂ ፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች ተመሰረቱ። እነሱም መኢሶን እና ኢህአፓ ናቸው። መኢሶን በምዕራብ ጀርመን ሐምቡረግ ከተማ ሐምሌ 1960 ዓ.ም በእነ ዶክተር ኃይሌ ፊዳ ተመሰረቶ ወደ ስራ ገባ(ገፅ:

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2 በ1889 (እ.ኤ.አ) ከጆፓን የተወሰደ ህገ-መንግስት በ1923 ዓ.ም በጅሮንድ ተከለ-ሐዋሪያት ተረቀቀ ምንም እንኳን ህገ መንግስታዊ ትርጉም ቢያጣም ይላሉ ፀሀፊው (ገፅ:21)።  
3 ኦብነግ ማለት የአጋዴን ነፃነት ግንባር ማለት ነው።  
4 አነግ ማለት የኦሮሞ ነፃነት ግንባር ማለት ነው።  
5 ማገብት ማለት ማህበረ ገስግስቲ ብሄረ ትግራይ ማለት ነው።  
6 መኢሶን ማለት መላው የኢትዮጵያ ሶሻሊስት ንቅናቄ ማለት ነው።  
7 ኢሕአፓ ማለት የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝብ አቢዎታዊ ፓርቲ ማለት ነው።  
8 የወጣት ተማሪዎች ንቅናቄ የሰራተኞች ንቅናቄ የብሄር ተጨቅናል ጥያቄ እንዲሁም ከግብር ጋር በተያያዘ የራያ አሰቦ ህዝብ ትግል የባሌ ገበሬዎች ትግል እና የጎጃም ገበሬዎች ትግል ለፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች ማቆጣቆጥ ጉልህ ሚና የነበራቸው ፀረ-ፊውዳል እንቅስቃሴዎች ነበሩ(ገፅ:25-38)።  
9 ደርግ የሚለው ቃል ደረገ ከሚለው የግዕዝ ቃል የተወሰደ ሲሆን የስረው-ቃል ትርጉሙም ተደመረ ወይም አንድ ሆነ ማለት ነው።

56):: ሁኖም የመኢሶን አባላት አቋሙ-ቢስ እና አድር ባይ በመሆናቸው በደርግ ቢሮክራሲ ተሰግስገው የደርግ ቀይ ሹብር አስፈፃሚ ሁነው አረፉት(ገፅ:59)::

ኢሕአፓ ደግሞ በ 1964 ዓ.ም በበርሊን ከተማ በእነ ገብረ-መስቀል ረዳ አማካኝነት ተመሰረተ<sup>10</sup>:: ምንም እንኳን ኢሕአፓ የትጥቅ ትግልን እንደ ዋና አማራጭ በመውሰድ ወደ ፖለቲካ ቢገባም በጊዜው የነበረውን የፖለቲካ ሁኔታ ባለመረዳቱ በመረጃ ግኝት ድክመቱ በጥናት ላይ ያልተመረኮዘ የፖለቲካ አቋሙ እና ገበሬውን አጋር ያላደረገ የከተማ ላይ ውጊያ እና ግድያ<sup>11</sup> በመምረጡ በወታደራዊው መንግስት ተዳክሞ እና ዘመኑ በዋጁቸው የብሔርተኛ ፖለቲከኞች ተውጦ ከሰመ (ገፅ:60-67)::

ፀሀፊው ስለ መኢሶንም ይህን ብለዋል፤ መኢሶንም በጊዜው በደንብ ጠንክሮ ባልዎጣው ወታደራዊ መንግስት የፖለቲካ መዋቅር ውስጥ አባላቶችን ሰግስጎ ጥንቃቄ የተሞላበት የትጥቅ ስልት ለማድረግ ቢሞክርም ከአድርባዮች ያልፀዳ ድርጅት በመሆኑ ወታደራዊው መንግስት ጠምዞ የራሱ አጀንዳ አስፈፃሚ አደረገው (ገፅ:57):: ወታደራዊ መንግስቱም በመኢሶን በኩል ኢሕአፓን አሰመታ:: በመጨረሻም ወታደራዊ መንግስቱ እራሱ መኢሶንን ቅርጥፍ አድርጎ በላው:: የሆነው ሁኖ እንደ ፀሀፊው ገለፃ አንድ መረሳት የሌለበት ጉዳይ ቢኖር መኢሶን እና ኢሕአፓ የብሔርን እራስን በእራስ የማስተዳደር እስከ መገንጠል ጥያቄ የተቀበሉ የፖለቲካ ድርጅቶች<sup>12</sup> በመሆናቸው ባለዘርፈ ብዙ ተግዳሮቶች ስለገጠማቸው እና ወታደራዊው መንግስት ተቋማዊ በሆነ መልኩ ሀይሉን በማጠናከሩ የፖለቲካ ስልጣንን ሳይጨብጡ የቀሩ የፖለቲካ ድርጅቶች ሆኑ (ገፅ:57:60)::

እንደ ፀሀፊው ገለፃ፣ አለም አቀፍ እና ሀገር አቀፍ ሁኔታዎች ተደማምረው በ 1966 ዓ.ም መጨረሻ የፊውዳል ስርዓት መዎገዱን ተከትሎ (ገፅ:47) ጠንካራ የፖለቲካ ድርጅት ባለመኖሩ ደርግ ብቻውን ከጅምሩ 120 ሰዎችን ርዕሰ ብሔር ከዚያም ሲቀጥል 1 ሰው ርዕሰ ብሔር በማድረግ በአሠፓ አደረጃጀት የኢትዮጵያን ፖለቲካ ተቆጣጠረ (ገፅ:50):: የደርግ መንግስት ስልጣን ላይ ለመቆየት እና የህዝብን አመኔታ ለማግኘት አማላይ የሆኑ የህዝብ ጥያቄዎችን ሊመልስ የሚችል ቅዱስ ድርጅት መሆኑን አስነገረ:: የሶሻሊዝምንም ስርዓት ዘረጋ እንዲሁም የኢኮኖሚ ማሻሻያ አደረግ ግን ሁሉም ነገር ለዚህ የዋህ ሕዝብ ላም አለኝ በሰማይ እንደሆነበት እና ደርጉም ለ17 ዓመታት በስልጣን ላይ እንደቆየ በሻቢያ እና በሕዋላት መሰሎች የብሔር የፖለቲካ ድርጅት ትግል በነበረው ደካም የውጭ ፖሊሲ ከነረቤት ሀገራት ይደርስ በነበረበት ትንኮሳ እና የወዳጅ ሶቪየት ህብረት የኢኮኖሚ እና የፖለቲካ አቅም መድከም ምክንያት በ1983 ዓ.ም ደርግ ከስልጣን ተዎገደ ሲሉ ፀሀፊው

10 የኢሕአፓ የመመስረት ሀሳብ የመጣው በ1963 ዓ.ም Organization for the Liberation of Ethiopia/ ROLE ከተሰኘው ቡድን ነው(ገፅ:60)::  
11 ደርግስት እና ፊድሰት የሚባል የከተማ ላይ ገዳይ ቡድን በኢሕአፓ ተቋቁሞ ነጭ ሹብርተኛ የሚል ስያሜ በመያዝ የደርግ ባለስልጠናትን ከተማ ላይ ይገል ነበር(ገፅ:65)::  
12 ለምሳሌ የኢሕአፓ ሊቀመንበር የነበረው ብርሀነ-መስቀል ረዳ በ 1964 ዓ.ም በኤርትራ ተማሪዎች አጠቃላይ ማህበር በመገኘት የኤርትራን ህዝብ የነፃነት ጥያቄ ተቀብሏል(ገፅ:63)::

በጊዜው ኑረው የታዘቡትን ያስረዳሉ(ገፅ:84-102)። በመቀጠለም ፀሀፊው ይህን ሀሳብ ያጋሩናል፤ ለረጅም ጊዜ የፖለቲካ መስመሩን ያልገመገመው ደርግ ዘግይቶም ቢሆን ህገ-መንግስት አርቆ የብሔሮችን ጥያቄ ለመፍታት ቢፈልግም ነገሩ ከመሸ ሆነና ሳይችል ቀረ። የሀገርን ሰላም እና ደህንነት በአባገነናዊ የፖለቲካ ስርዓት ይዠፍ እቆያለው ማለቱ ደርግን ብዙ መሰዋት አስከፈለው (ገፅ:50-55)።

የደርግን መውደቅ ተከትሎ የዘመናት የነፃነት እና የማንነት ጥያቄ የነበራቸው ነፃ አውጭነን የሚሉ እንደ አነግ አብነግ እና ሌሎችም ፓርቲ መሰል የብሔር ፖለቲካ ድርጅቶች ወደ ስልጣን ቢአማትሩም ከፍተኛ የወታደር አቅም እና የውጭ ድጋፍ የነበረው ህዋሐት የሚሉት አባገነን ስርዓት ለይስሙላ ኢሕአዴግ<sup>13</sup> በሚባል የውህደት ስም በ1983 ዓ.ም ወደ ስልጣን እንደመጣ ፀሀፊው በመፅሃፋቸው አትተዋል (ገፅ: 105፣138)። እንደ ፀሀፊው እይታ ከሆነ ህዋሐት<sup>14</sup> በተፈጥሮው የአንድ ቤተሰብ ወይም የአንድ አካባቢ ሰዎች የተሰበሰቡበት ፓርቲ ወይም በፍፓርቲዝም ነው። ህዋሐት በኢሕአዴግ ስም አቢዮታዊ ዲሞክራሲ እና ልማታዊ መንግስት ነኝ በሚል ግራ በሚያጋባ እና የአለምን ህዝብ በሚያደናገር የፖለቲካ ርዕዮተኛ ታጥሮ አውራ ፓርቲ በመሆን ሌሎች ተቀናቃኝ ፓርቲዎችን ጠልፎ በመጣል በኢትዮጵያ ፖለቲካ ፓርቲ ታሪክ ለረጅም ጊዜ ገዥ ሁኖ የቆየ የፖለቲካ ድርጅት ነው (ገፅ:175)።

በምዕራፍ ሶስት ፀሀፊው ከህዋሐት እስከ ኢፌዴሪ መንግስት ምስረታ እና ተግደሮት በሚለው ርዕሳቸው ይህን ይላሉ፤ ገንጣይ አስገንጣይ እና የትግራይን አካል ከኢትዮጵያ የመገንጠል አጀንዳ የነበረው ህዋሐት የደርግን ፖለቲካ ይጠሉ ከነበሩ አውሮፓዎች ከፍተኛ የፋይናንስ የሎጅስቲክ እና የመሳሪያ ድጋፍ በማግኘቱ ኢትዮጵያን የማስተዳደር ፍላጎቱ ጨምሮ ጥሩ በሆነ የሴራ ፖለቲካ እንደ አሮሞ ነፃ አውጭ ያለን የብሔር የፖለቲካ ፓርቲ በማሸቀንጥር በመጀመሪያ በሽግግር መንግስት ስም ስልጣን ላይ ቆየ ሲቀጥል የፌደራል ስርዓት አቋቋመ። ሕዋሐት በኢሕአዴግ ውስጥ የፌደራል መንግስት እንዲቋቋም ከፍተኛ ሚና ቢጫዎትም ህገ-መንግስቱ የህዋሐትን አጀንዳ ብቻ የሚያንፀባርቅ በመሆኑ እንዲሁም የፌደራል የመንግስት መዋቅር ባለመተግበሩ ሀገሪቱ አሁንም ከመፅፎ ፖለቲካ አዙሪት አለመውጣትን ያሳያል (ገፅ1:41፣197)።

13 ከኢሕአፓ የፖለቲካ መዋቅር እራሳቸውን አግለው አብዮ አዴ ላይ በ1972 ዓ.ም ኢሕዴን ብለው አዲስ ፓርቲ በመሰረቱ ሰዎች እና በህወሐት ሰዎች መካከል በተደረገ ስምምነት ኢሕአዴግ በ 1979 ዓ.ም ተመሰረተ። ኢሕአዴግ ን የመሰረቱት ህዋሐት እና ኢሕዴን ብቻ ናቸው። ከዚህ በመቀጠልም ከ 37 የኢሕዴን አባላቶች ውስጥ በማንነት አሮሞ የሆኑ 7 ሰዎች ከኢሕዴን ተሰናብተው በ1981 ዓ.ም ተንቢን ግራውሪ የሚባል አካባቢ አሕዴድን መሰረቱ(ገፅ:66)።

14 ህዋሐት ቀድሞውኑ ማህበረ ገስግስቲ ብሄረ ትግራይ ከዚያም ተጋድሎ ሀርነት ትግራይ በመቀጠለም ማርኪሲስት ሌኒኒስት ሊግ ንቀናቄ በመቀጠለም የትግራይ ህዝብ ነፃ አውጭ ግንባር በሚል በተለያየ የፖለቲካ ቡድን ስም ለእረጅም ጊዜ የትጥቅ ትግል ሲያደርግ የነበረ ድርጅት ነው(ገፅ:127)።

ፀሀፊው በምዕራፍ አራት ሐተታቸው በኢትዮጵያ ፓርቲ ፖለቲካ የውጭ ኃይሎች ሚና እንዳላቸው ፅፏል። ከዚህ ጋር በተያያዘ ፀሀፊው ይህን ይላሉ፤ በኢትዮጵያ የፖለቲካ ታሪክ ኢትዮጵያ ውስጥ ያለ ፓርቲ ገዥ ይሁን ተፎካካሪ የአሜሪካን ብሄራዊ ጥቅም እና የአሜሪካን የፖለቲካ ህሳብ ካስቀደመ የአሜሪካ ወዳጅ መሆን ብቻ ሳይሆን ከአሜሪካም መንግስት ድጋፍ ያገኛል<sup>15</sup> (ገፅ:212፣213)። ሌላው የፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች ከጎረቤት ሀገራት እና ከአለም አቀፍ ድርጅቶች ጋር ያላቸው ግንኙነት በሰጠ መቀበል መርህ የተመሰረተ መሆኑን ወይም ጥቀመኝ እና ልጥቀምህ የሚለውን አካሄድ የተከተለ መሆኑን ፀሀፊው በአትኩሮት ይናገራሉ<sup>16</sup>(ገፅ:232፣235)።

**ማጠቃለያ**

ፀሀፊው የፓርቲ ፖለቲካ በኢትዮጵያ (ከፊውዳል አርስቶክራሲ እስከ ኦብዮታዊ ዲሞክራሲ) በሚለው መፅሃፋቸው ውስጥ ያነበቡትን የሰሙትን የመሰላቸውን እና የነበሩበትን የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ እና የፖለቲካ ታሪክ ከየጁ ሥረወ-መንግስት ተነስተው የአፄወቹን ፖለቲካ ዳሰው በቅደም ደርግ እና በድህረ ደረግ የነበሩ የፓርቲ ፖለቲካዎችን አስሰው ከሕዋሐት/ ኢሕአዲግ እስከ ኢፌዴሪ ያለውን ፖለቲካ ቃኝተው በመጨረሻም በኢትዮጵያ ፓርቲ ፖለቲካዎች ላይ የውጭ ኃይሎች ሚና ምን እንደሚመስል አስቀምጠዋል።

**ሂሳ**

ምንም እንኳን ፀሀፊው ጥሩነህ ገማታ በዚህ መፅሃፋቸው ብዙ ቁም ነገር ቢያስጨብጡንም በዚያው ልክ ደግሞ አንዳንድ ከታሪክ ያፈነገጡ የሀሰት የታሪክ ትርክትም ለአንባቢ አብቅተዋል። ይህ አይነት የሃሰት የታሪክ ትርክት ከአንዳንድ የአሮሞ ፀሀፊዎች ላይ መታየቱ የተለመደ ነገር በመሆኑ ለአንድነት እና ለአገር ግንባታ ቀጣይነት ሲባል መቀረፍ ይኖርበታል የሚል አስተያየት አለኝ። ፀሀፊው ጥሩነህ ገማታ ሐበሾች ኢትዮጵያዊነትን የማይቀበሉ ትውልዶች ናቸው በማለት ሃሳባቸውን ያስቀምጣሉ (ገፅ:146)። ከዚህ ላይ ፀሀፊው ምን ማለት እንደፈለጉ ግልፅ ባይሆንም በኢትዮጵያ ግንባታ ላይ የአንበሳውን ድርሻ የሚወስደውን ሐበሻ ኢትዮጵያዊነትን አይቀበለም ማለት ከዘቀጠ አስተሳሰብ የመነጨ ነው።

ሌላው ፀሀፊው የሐበሻ ንጉሶች በማለት የሚጠሯቸውን (አፄ ዮሐንስ አራተኛን ዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስን ዳግማዊ አፄ ምኒሊክን እና ቀዳማዊ አፄ ሓይለ-ሥላሴን) ነገሥታት በኢትዮጵያ የኢኮኖሚ እና የፖለቲካ እድገት ላይ ያሳረፉትን አይተኮ አሻራ ሙሉ በሙሉ በሚባል ሁኔታ ወደ ጎን በመተው ሌላ በፈጠራ ታሪክ ላይ የተመሰረተ ስም ይሰጧቸዋል። ፀሀፊው አፄዎቹ እራሳቸውን ከሰለሞን ዘር ጋር ያገናኙበትን ምክንያት ይነቅፋሉ። ማንም

15 ለምሳሌ ከ 1967 ዓ.ም እስከ 1980 ዓ.ም ደርግ የሶሻሊዝምን የፖለቲካ ህሳብ ትክተል ከነበረችው ሶቪየት ህብረት ጋር በነበረው ጠንካራ የፖለቲካ እና የኢኮኖሚ ግንኙነት ምዕራባዊያን እና አሜሪካ አኩራፊው ስለነበረ ከተቀናቃኝ የብሄር ፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች ጋር ግንኙነት ፈጥረው ነበር።  
16 ለምሳሌ ሶማሌ ኢትዮጵያ ላይ ያለውን የመሬት ይገባኛል ጥያቄዋን ለማሳካት ኢትዮ-ሶማሌ ውስጥ ይንቀሳቀሱ የነበረውን የአሮሞ ብሄራዊ ነፃነት ግንባር ትደገፍ ነበር በምትኩም የአሮሞ ብሄራዊ ነፃነት ግንባር ከሶማሌ መንግስት የፋይናንስ እና የቁሳቁስ ድጋፍ ያገኝ ነበር።

ንጉስ የሰለሞን ዘር አልነበረም ብለውም ይከራከራሉ (ገፅ:18-19)።ሁኖም ከዚህ ጋር በተያያዘ በፅሁፋቸው አንድም የታሪክ ማስረጃ አላቀረቡም። ይህም የሃላፊውን ድክምት ያሳያል።

ሌላው ፀሀፊው ስለ ዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስ የተናገሩት ነው፤ እንደ ፀሀፊው ገለጻ ከሆነ፤ አፄ ቴዎድሮስ የአንድ ሀገር መሪ ሳይሆኑ ወንበዴ ናቸው (ገፅ:6)። የዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስ ዘመን የጥፋት ዘመን መነሻ ነው (ገፅ:2)። ንጉሱ በየጁ ስርዓት ጊዜ ሊያቆጠቁጥ የነበረውን የዲሞክራሲያዊ ፌዴራላዊ አስተዳደር ያኮላሹ መሪ ናቸው (ገፅ:5)። በኢትዮጵያ በሀይል የተመሰረተ የስልጣን ሽግግር የተወረሰው ከዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስ ነው (ገፅ:2)። ፀሀፊው እንደ ጳውሎስ (1985) ያሉ የታሪክ ፀሀፊዎች አስረግጠው የተናገሩትን የታሪክ እውነታ ማለትም ከአሮሞ ወረራ በኋላ ተፈረካክሳ የነበረችውን ሀገር ወደ አንድ ያመጡት ዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስ እንደነበሩ እና የኢትዮጵያም ትንሳኤ የጀመረው በዳግማዊ አፄ ቴዎድሮስ ዘመነ መንግስት መሆኑን ማንሳት አልፈለጉም። ሌላው ይቅርና ፀሀፊው የየጁ አሮሞች ዲሞክራሲያዊ እና ፌዴራላዊ አስተዳደር ጀምረው ነበር ብለው የከተቡትን ታሪክ የአሮሞ ሊህቃን ዲሞክራሲያዊ እያሉ ከሚያንቆለጵጵሱት የገዳ ስርዓት ጋር የየጁን ሥረወ-መንግስት ለማገናኘት ካልፈለጉ በስተቀር ያኔ ዲሞክራሲ እና ፌዴራላዊ አስተዳደር መጀመሩን የሚያሳይ የታሪክ ማስረጃ የላቸውም።

አፄ ዮሐንስ አራተኛ የኢትዮጵያን ህልውና ለማቆም ከፍተኛ መስዋት እንደከፈሉ እንደነ ተክለ-ጻድቅ (1982) ያሉ የታሪክ ፀሀፊዎች ያትታሉ። ሁኖም ከዚህ በተቃረኒ ሁኔታ ፀሀፊው አፄ ዮሐንስ አራተኛ ሀገርን ከውጭ ጠላት ለመከላከል የከፈሉትን መስዋት እንደምንም ባለመቁጠር አፄ ዮሐንስን እርባና ቢስ መሪ ያደርጓቸዋል (ገፅ:5-9)። ከዚህም በተጨማሪ ፀሀፊው አፄ ዮሐንስ አራተኛ የወሎ ሙስሊሞች ላይ አደረጉት የሚባለውን ጭፍጨፋ በትክክል የተደረገው የወሎ አሮሞች ላይ ነው በማለት ሌላ አደገኛ የሀሰት ታሪክ ፈጥረዋል።

ፀሀፊው ዳግማዊ አፄ ሚኒሊክን ነፍጠኛ ወራሪ እና አረመኔ ናቸው ይሏቸዋል (ገፅ12-13)። ከዚህ ላይ ፀሀፊው የካዱት ሀቅ ቢኖር የአሮሞ ሕዝብ ገዳ እና እሬንቻ እያለ የሚያከብረው ቱባ እሴቱ እንደነበረ መቆየት የቻለው አፄ ዳግማዊ ሚኒሊክ ከቅኝ ግዛት ነፃ ያደረጓት ሀገር በመኖሯ ነው። ሲቀጥል ንጉሱ በነፍጠኝነታቸው እና በነፍጣቸው ላቆዩልን ሀገር ምስጋና ይገባቸዋል እንጅ ነፍጠኝነታቸው ትክክል ሰዋዊ ባህሪ ላለው ሰው የሰድብ ቃል ሁኖ አያገለግልም። ሌላው ንጉሱ አረመኔ ሁነው በአሮሞ ህዝብ ላይ ጭፍጨፋ ማድረጋቸውን የሚገልፅ አንድም ትክክለኛ የታሪክ ማስረጃ እንደሌለ እንደነ ተክለ-ጻድቅ (1983) እና የመሳሰሉት በኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ላይ ጥልቅ እውቀት ያላቸው ፀሀፊያን ምስክርቻችን ናቸው።

በኢኮኖሚ እና በፖለቲካው የኢትዮጵያ እድገት ልግመት ሐ ብሎ የጀመረው በ አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ ጊዜ ነበር ምክንያቱም የለውጥ ፍላጎት በገዥው መሳፍንቶች አልነበረም ይላሉ ፀሀፊው (24)። እንደ እውነታው ከሆነ ግን ሃሮልድ(1994 እ.ኤ.አ) እና አባ ባሃሪን የመሰሉ የታሪክ ሰዎች በታሪክ መዝገብ ከትበው እንዳስቀመጡት በኢትዮጵያ የፖለቲካ የስልጣን

እና የኢኮኖሚ ዝግመት የጀመረው በ16ተኛው ክፍለ ዘመን የአሮሞች ወረራ ማግስት ነው። አሮሞች በወረራ ወቅት የሀገሪቱን ስልጣን ኢኮኖሚ እና የፖለቲካ እድገት አውድመዋል። ከዚህ ላይ ፀሀፊው ቀድሞ ሲጓዝ አድሮ ሲጓዝ ያረፈደውን የኢትዮጵያ ችግር አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴ ላይ መደፍደፋቸው አገባብ አይደለም። ቀዳማዊ አፄ ሐይለ-ሥላሴም ቢሆኑ በኢኮኖሚው እና በፖለቲካው ዘርፍ ያመጡት ለውጥ ቀላል አለመሆኑን እንደነ ላጵሶ(1982) ያሉ የታሪክ ሙህራን ይመስክራሉ።

ሌላው እንደ ፀሀፊው ገለጻ ከሆነ፣ ከአፄወቹ እስከ ህዋሐት/ኢህአዲግ ድረስ ያለው የኢትዮጵያ ፖለቲካ የኢትዮጵያን ህዝብ የማይወክል የሰሜን ወይም የሐበሻ ፖለቲካ ነው(ገፅ:18-20)። ይህ የሰሜናዊ ፖለቲካ በበላይነት ልክፍት ምቀኝነት እና ግድያ የተሞላ እንዲሁም በቤተ-ክህነት የተተበተበ ሁኖ ሐበሻ ደቡብን የኢትዮጵያ ክፍል ቅኝ እንዲገዛ አስችሎቷል ይላሉ ፃሃፊው(ገፅ:16፣18፣107)። ከዚህ ላይ ፀሀፊው ለረጅም ጊዜ በሀገር ግንባታ ታሪክ ላይ ትልቅ ሚና የነበረውን የሰሜን ፖለቲካ ማጣጣላቸው ታሪክን አውቆ ከማንሻፈፍ ውጭ ሌላ ምንም ሊሆን አይችልም። በሰሜን ፖለቲካ ኢትዮጵያን የመገንባት ሂደት ውስጥ ሁሉም የኢትዮጵያ ህዝቦች ጉልህ ሚና እንደነበራቸው ሊታወቅ ይገባል። አንዱ ተወቅሶ አንዱ የሚሞገስበት የታሪክ ስሌት አብርካታችንን እንደሚገመድል መታወቅም አለበት። ፀሀፊው ከቅኝ ግዛት ጋር በተያያዘ ያነሱት ሃሰብ በሀገር ግንባታ ሂደት ውስጥ አንዱ አንዱን በሰላማዊ መንገድ ወይም በሃይል አስገብሮ ግዛት የሚይዝበትን የአለም የፖለቲካ ሂደት ባለመረዳት የመጣ ነው ብዬ አስባለው።

በመጨረሻም ፀሀፊው በደንብ አድርገው የፖርቲ ፖለቲካ ታሪክን ቢያትቱም የፓርቲዎች አላማ እና ግብን ከመተንተን አኳያ ድክመት ይታይባቸዋል። ከብሔር ፖለቲካ ድርጅቶች ጋርም በተያያዘ ትህነግን አነግን እና ሌሎችን ወደ ትግል ሊከታቸው የቻለው ኢጣሊ በአምሐራ ህዝብ ላይ የፈጠረችው የሃሰት ትርክት መሆኑን ፀሀፊው ማንሳት አልፏትም። ከአድዋ ጦርነት ሽንፈት በኋላ የኢጣሊ ፈጠራ እንደሆነ የሚነገርለት የአምሐራ ጨቋኝነት እና የሌላው ተጨቋኝነት የሃሰት የታሪክ ትርክትን ተከትሎ የብሔር የፖለቲካ ድርጅቶች በተለያየ ቦታ ተፈልፍለው ወደ ትግል የገቡ እንደ ነበረ ይታወቃል (ይሁኔ:2010)።

**ዋቢ መረጃዎች**

- ላጵሶ ጌ ድሌቦ። 1982። የኢትዮጵያ ረጅም የህዝብና የመንግስት ታሪክ። አዲስ አበባ፤ ንግድ ማተሚያ ቤት።
- ተክለ-ጻድቅ መኩሪያ። 1982። ዐፄ ዮሐንስ እና የኢትዮጵያ አንድነት። አዲስ አበባ፤ ኩራዝ አሳታሚ ድርጅት።
- ተክለ-ጻድቅ መኩሪያ። 1983። ዐፄ ሚንልክ እና የኢትዮጵያ አንድነት። አዲስ አበባ፤ ኩራዝ አሳታሚ ድርጅት።
- ይሁኔ አወቀ። 2010። አምሐራነት። አዲስ አበባ።
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Marcus, Harold. 1994. *A History of Ethiopia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

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