



1-1-2008

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Recommended Citation

Jalata, Asafa, "Oromummaa as the Master Ideology of the Oromo National Movement" (2008). *Sociology Publications and Other Works*. http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_socopubs/7

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OROMUMMAA AS THE MASTER IDEOLOGY OF THE OROMO NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Oromummaa, as an element of culture, nationalism, and vision, has the power to serve as a manifestation of the collective identity of the Oromo national movement. The foundation of *Oromummaa* must be built on overarching principles that are embedded within Oromo traditions and culture and, at the same time, have universal relevance for all oppressed peoples. The main foundations of *Oromummaa* are individual and collective freedom, justice, popular democracy, and human liberation all of which are built on the concept of *saffu* (moral and ethical order) and are enshrined in *gada* principles. Although, in recent years, many Oromos have become adherents of Christianity and Islam, the concept of *Waqaa* (God) lies at the heart of Oromo tradition and culture. In Oromo tradition, *Waqaa* is the creator of the universe and the source of all life. The universe created by *Waqaa* contains within itself a sense of order and balance that is to be made manifest in human society. Although *Oromummaa* emerges from the Oromo cultural and historical foundations, it goes beyond culture and history in providing a liberative narrative for the future of the Oromo nation as well as the future of other oppressed peoples, particularly those who suffer under the Ethiopian Empire.

Oromummaa builds on the best elements of Oromo culture and traditions and endorses an indigenous Oromo democracy known as the *gada* system. As an Afrocentric worldview that sees an African culture as the center of African life, *Oromummaa* bases its vision on Oromo popular democracy, an institution that existed before American democracy. Before their colonization, Oromos used the *gada* system of government to organize and order their society around political, economic, social, cultural, and religious institutions. The *gada* system was well developed in the 16th century. *Gada* democracy included the principles of checks and balances (through periodic succession of every eight years), division of power (among executive, legislative, and judicial branches), balanced opposition (among five parties), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots. Other

principles of the system included balanced representation of all Oromo branches, lineages, regions and confederacies, accountability of leaders, the settlement of disputes through reconciliation, and the respect for basic rights and liberties.

Currently, the Oromo movement, led by the Oromo Liberation Front, attempts to retrieve popular Oromo democracy. Those who endorse and glorify Ethiopianism are undermining *Oromummaa* in order to enjoy power and material benefits at the cost of Oromos and other peoples. Hence all progressive forces must recognize the negative consequences of Ethiopianism and support the struggle for self-determination, multinational democracy, and development in Oromia, Ethiopia, and beyond. Without recognizing the centrality of *Oromummaa* for our national struggle, we cannot develop “a victorious consciousness” that equips us with the knowledge of liberation. This knowledge of liberation must be a critical one that places the Oromo person at the center of analysis by making the Oromo person subject, and not object, of study. *Oromummaa* as an intellectual and ideological vision places the Oromo man and woman at the center of analysis and at the same time goes beyond Oromo society and aspires to develop global *Oromummaa* by contributing to the solidarity of all oppressed peoples and promoting the struggle for self-determination and multinational democracy.

Oromummaa is a complex and dynamic national and global project. As a national project and the master ideology of the Oromo national movement, *Oromummaa* enables Oromos to retrieve cultural-centric political strategies and tactics that can mobilize the nation for collective action empowering the people for liberation. As a global project, *Oromummaa* requires that the Oromo national movement be inclusive of all persons, operating in a democratic fashion. This global *Oromummaa* enables the Oromo people to form alliances with all political forces and social movements that accept the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy in the promotion of a global humanity that is free of all forms oppression and exploitation. In other words, Global *Oromummaa* is based on the principles of mutual solidarity, social justice, and popular democracy. As a critical element of ideology, *Oromummaa*

challenges the idea of glorifying African monarchies or chiefs or warlords who collaborated with European slavers and colonizers and destroyed Africa by participating in the slave trade and the project of colonization. *Oromummaa* also challenges those scholars who degrade African democratic traditions just as their Euro-American counterparts devalue the Oromo democratic system and consider indigenous Africans such as Oromos primitive and “stateless” before and after their colonization.

Recognizing the existence of various forms of democracy before Africa was partitioned and colonized and challenging Euro-American-centric and Ethiopianist scholarship that rationalizes and justifies racial/ethnonational inequality can help to develop a human-centric and original scholarship. Learning about Oromo society—with its complex democratic laws, an elaborate legislative tradition, and well-developed methods of dispute settlement—and the Oromo national struggle can present a new perspective for Africana studies and politics. Oromos and other Africans and other oppressed peoples can ally with one another on global level by exchanging political and cultural experiences and re-creating the ideology of pan-Africanism from “below” and global mutual solidarity based on the principles of popular democracy and egalitarian world order. *Oromummaa* cannot be the victories ideology of the Oromo national struggle without defeating its twin ideological enemies: Ethiopianism and clanism/regionalism. Both Ethiopianism and clanism/regionalism make Oromos raw materials from which other peoples make their own nation at the cost of the Oromo nation.

The racist ideology of Ethiopianism claims to promote black freedom theoretically while racializing the Ethiopian state practically through external dependency and domestic terrorism. Successive Ethiopian political structures that have been dominated

by persons claiming “Semitic” descent have emerged as the result of a deliberate strategy of massive destruction of the social and cultural life of indigenous Africans, such as Oromos, Sidamas, Afars, and Ogaden Somalis. Through the processes of Abyssinianization and Christianization, successive Ethiopian/Abyssinian state elites have racialized their own identity and those of the indigenous Africans they have colonized. Using a racialized discourse, they have dominated the indigenous African population and prevented the construction of a multinational democratic state that could have promoted peace, stability, and development.

The duality inherent in the concept of Ethiopianism shifts back and forth between claims of a Semitic identity when appealing to the white, Christian, ethnocentric, occidental hegemonic power center and claims of an African identity when cultivating the support of sub-Saharan Africans and the African diaspora while, at the same time, ruthlessly suppressing the history and culture of non-Semitic Africans of the various conquered ethno-nations within the Ethiopian Empire. By using the discourse of duality of Ethiopianism, these successive state elites have used their blackness to mobilize other Africans and the African Diaspora for their political projects by confusing original Africa (the black world) with contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) and at the same time have allied with Euro-American powers and practiced racism, state terrorism, and continued subjugation on the indigenous Africans who are, today, struggling for self-determination and multinational democracy. Challenging and exposing the racist discourse of Ethiopianism and liberating the mentality of all Africans, the African Diaspora, and others from this “social cancer” must be one of the tasks of a critical

paradigm of *Oromummaa*. By developing *Oromummaa*, the Oromo national struggle for self-determination and multinational democracy engages in such liberation project.

The colonization and destruction of various indigenous population groups, such as Qemant, Agao and Gafat, in their homeland (later called Abyssinia) along with expropriation of their lands and other economic resources, the establishment of military colonies, the evangelization of the remnants of the colonized population groups, and their cultural assimilation were central to the continuous process of marginalization and Abyssinization. The modern Ethiopian state that emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century through the alliance of Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism has continued similar policies of colonization, genocide, and continued subjugation. The practice of creating and supporting a neocolonial state in accordance with the interests of the West started with the emergence of the modern Ethiopian state in Africa. The creation of the modern racialized Ethiopian state and the emergence of the Ethiopian Empire occurred within the expansion of the European-dominated capitalist world economy. Because of their Christian ideology and willingness to collaborate with European imperialist powers, such as Great Britain, France, and Italy, successive *Habasha* rulers received access to European technology, weapons, administrative and military expertise, and other skills needed for the construction of a modern state.

Obtaining commodities such as gold, ivory, coffee, musk, hides and skins, slaves and land was the primary reason behind the Abyssinian/Ethiopian colonial expansion. At one time, Menelik and his wife owned 70,000 enslaved Africans. To obtain slaves and economic resources, the emerging Ethiopian state committed genocide on peoples like the Oromos. The Oromo population was reduced from ten to five million through war, slavery, massive killings, disease, and war-induced famine during the second half of the nineteenth century. The modern Ethiopian state was the continuation of the previous Abyssinian racialized state, which

committed genocide on indigenous peoples such as Qemant, Gafat and Agao and asserted control over the remaining colonized peoples. Contemporary Ethiopia emerged as an empire by claiming the name of ancient and historic Ethiopia with the help of the West during the partition of Africa by European powers, and justified its genocide, enslavement, colonization, and the continued subjugation of Oromos and others through the discourse of race and religion and later with the ideology of Ethiopianism.

Denying the reality that contemporary Abyssinia/Ethiopia was the product of neocolonialism, invented by the alliance of Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism, the West praised Abyssinia (later Ethiopia) as the country that was never colonized in Africa. The idea that Ethiopia was not colonized laid the cornerstone for the ideology of "Greater Ethiopia." Thus Ethiopia was seen as "A civilized nation of an immense intelligence, the only one that is civilized without wearing trousers and shoes." Since then, *Habashas* and their Euro-American supporters have contributed to the "Ethiopian mythology [which] consists in part of the erroneous notions that [Abyssinian] society had reached a superior evolutionary stage at the time of conquest, making them able to move in and take over Oromia and others ... The illusion plays a critically important role in holding the entire complex together, the ideology of Greater Ethiopia." The ideology of Greater Ethiopia claims that Ethiopia was not colonized like other parts of Africa because of *Habasha* bravery and patriotism that made this empire unique in Africa. The Ethiopian historical discourse claims that Ethiopian boundaries are sacred since they were established 3000 years ago. Furthermore, it is asserted that Abyssinian "society represented an advanced level of social and economic organization" that enabled it to defend itself from European colonialism by eliminating slavery and protecting "all the peoples of greater Ethiopia from falling prey to European imperialism" and that Ethiopia played a significant civilizing mission by colonizing and dominating Oromos and other nations who were backward, pagan, destructive, and inferior. These racist mythologies of Greater Ethiopia helped the Haile Selassie government gain admission to the League of Nations in 1924. As a result, Ethiopia

began to enjoy more recognition in Europe and North America, and “there was extended public discussion of Ethiopia’s place in the world community and a great elaboration of the Ethiopian mythology initiated by European writers for a European public.”

By joining the League of Nations, the Ethiopian Empire “had been recognized as a single state whose integrity was the concern of the world. Tafari’s own new dynasty had been accepted by the busy democracies as the government of this area; his enemies were their enemies; there would be money lent him to arm against rebels, experts to advise him; when trouble was brewing he would swoop down from the sky and take his opponents unaware; the fabulous glories of Prester John were to be reincarnated.” The ideology of Greater Ethiopia that has been accepted and developed by European and American policy elites and their successive governments has been the bedrock of racism on which Ethiopia was built and still maintained. When the French and British could not decide which of them would get this key region of the Horn of Africa, and were not willing to go to war with each other over it, each backed a different proxy leader; the British chose Warlord Yohannis of Tigray, and the French chose Warlord Menelik of Amhara. But when Yohannis died in 1889, the British and the Italians devised a different solution for sharing access to the region. The British and Italians struggled at Menelik’s court to advise and control him and seek his favor. Because of Menelik’s failing health in 1906, France, Great Britain, and Italy devised the policy behind the Tripartite Treaty without Menelik’s even knowing about it. This treaty states that “We the Great powers of Europe, France, Great Britain, and Italy, shall cooperate in maintaining the political and territorial status quo in Ethiopia as determined by the state of affairs at present existing and the previous [boundary] agreements.”

The Western foreign policy experts not only provided technology and expertise in different fields, they played a critical role in formulating and promoting racist mythologies to justify the colonization and continued subjugation of the colonized subjects. For instance, the notion of claiming Abyssinia/Ethiopia as an ancient kingdom was originally suggested by an

Italian expert in 1891. Francisco Crispi instructed an Italian agent in Addis Ababa “to inform Menelik that the European powers were establishing their boundaries in Africa and that the emperor should, with Italian assistance, circulate a letter defining his borders in order to guarantee the integrity of his empire. Crispi suggested that in the letter, Menelik ought to point out that Ethiopia was an ancient Kingdom which had been recognized as independent by the Christian states of Europe.”

The racist idea that *Habashas* were different from other Africans lay at the core of the European justification for empowering them to colonize and rule the Oromos and other nations. These conquered peoples were seen like other colonized Africans. In the 1930s when Haile Selassie went to Europe and became the darling of the Western media, the ideology of Greater Ethiopia was refined and celebrated in Europe, America, and Ethiopia. He was praised for his “extraordinary handsome face, next door to black, with high standing curly hair, a crisp black beard, a fine hawkish nose, and large gleaming eyes”; he was also glorified for his “devotion to modernization.” The Ethiopian Empire that was created with the alliance of European imperialist powers and *Habasha* warlords has maintained itself through an alliance with successive imperial superpowers, namely, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States, that have provided protection to successive Ethiopian state elites and their governments.

After colonizing the Oromo and other nations with the help of European technology and expertise, Abyssinian colonial settlers in Oromia and other regions justified their colonial domination with racist discourse. With the establishment of their colonial authority in the colonized regions, *Habasha* settlers “assumed that their own innate superiority over the local residents accounted for this accomplishment.” The essential components of racist discourse of Greater Ethiopia have remained intact. “Socialist” and then “democratic” discourse has been introduced by successive *Habasha* state elites and accepted by their Euro-American supporters without changing the colonizing and racist structure of Ethiopian society. Ethiopian racism and White racism have conveniently intermarried in the U.S. policy formulation and implementation

in Ethiopia. When policy issues are discussed on Ethiopia Semitic civility, Christianity, antiquity, bravery, and patriotism of Amharas and Tigrayans are retrieved to valorize and to legitimize *Habasha* dominance and power. Moreover the barbarism, backwardness, and the destructiveness of Oromos and others are reinvented to keep Oromos and others from access to state power.

The U.S. policy toward Ethiopia builds upon the European policy established before the United States became involved. The combined racist views about Oromos and others and the racist assumptions of U.S. foreign policy elites effectively mobilize the U.S. State Department against the indigenous Africans. The U.S. government supports the Ethiopian authoritarian-terrorist regime that is characterized by extreme militarization and repression; tight control of information and resources in the form of foreign aid, domestic financial resources, and political appointments; and direct ownership and control of all aspects of state power, including security and military institutions, judiciary and other political bodies, and financial institutions. Because of its racist policies, the Ethiopian state has different policies within Abyssinia proper, the homeland of Amhara-Tigray, and the colonized regions such as Oromia. The Ethiopian state has acted in an authoritarian manner toward Amhara and Tigray ethnations from which it emerged and in a terrorist fashion toward racialized peoples, such as Oromos, Afars, Sidamas, Ogaden-Somalis, and others, that it suppresses and exploits. Therefore, I have characterized this state as an authoritarian-terrorist regime.

The Ethiopia state is owned by Tigray-Amhara elites who control all aspects of state power and use state terrorism to maintain their power and privilege. The Ethiopian state has been Abyssianized or racialized and Christianized to exclude non-Habashas from decision-making power. Ethiopianism has been effectively used to hide such crimes against humanity in Ethiopia. The Ethiopia that participated in the slave trade and the Scramble for Africa and currently engages in state terrorism has not been an

island of black freedom but a “prison house” in which colonized and enslaved peoples were and still are brutalized. Ethiopian elites boast that their country, Ethiopia, was not colonized like that of other Africans. Yet, these same Ethiopianists are unable to recognize the fact that the Ethiopian Empire has been an indirect colony of Euro-America since its inception. Despite the fact that *Habasha* elites claim that Ethiopia has been the defender of African freedom in public, they never hesitate to express their disdain for formerly enslaved or directly colonized Africans in private among themselves.

Habasha elites have claimed that they have a superior religion and civilization, and even sometimes have expressed that they were not Black and saw formerly enslaved or colonized Africans as “baryas” (slaves). Further, they have degraded the humanity and culture of the indigenous Africans they have colonized and dominated. Alberto Sbacchi notes that the *Habashas* “have traditionally looked upon the dark skinned people as inferiors and given them the name of ‘*Shankalla*’ [sic].... The Black Americans were known as Negro [sic], which in Ethiopia was associated with slavery. Hence to the Ethiopians the Afro-Americans were *Shankalla*.” William R. Scott, an African American, who participated in a student work-camp in Ethiopia in 1963, expresses his painful encounter with *Habasha* racism as the following: “I was called *barya* (slave) by young, bigoted Ethiopian aristocrats, who associated African-Americans with slavery and identified them with the country’s traditional servant class.”

Habashas see themselves as a Semitic people who are racially and culturally superior to other Africans and the African diaspora. P.T.W.Baxter explains that they “used to stress their Middle Eastern rather than African cultural roots, as is so obvious in the reiteration of the Solomonic legend, taught in schools as history and justification of imperial rule. Just as the expansion of the European empire in Africa coincided with that of Abyssinian, so the latter took on some of the same sanctimonious assumptions of bringing civilization to the savages. Menelik and his courtiers became honorary, if second-class, bearers of the ‘white man’s burden in

Africa” Imitating their white masters, Menelik and his followers saw themselves white gods who were sent to “civilize” Oromos and other indigenous Africans via slavery and colonialism. According to William Easterly, “The White Man’s Burden emerged from the West’s self-pleasing fantasy that ‘we’ were the chosen ones to save the Rest. The White Man offered himself the starring role in an ancien regime version of Harry Potter.”

Just as Eurocentric scholars have intellectually separated the original Black civilization of Kemet (Egypt) and Kush or Nubia and then linked them to the Middle East to prove the racist notion of superiority of non-Blacks to Blacks, Ethiopian elites and some Ethiopianists have tried to prove the racial and civilization superiority of Amharas and Tigrayans by Semitizing and linking them to the Middle East and Europe. Baxter notes that “evolutionists and racist assumptions, mostly unvoiced, have contributed to the belief that a Christian, Semitic culture with Middle Eastern leanings had to be superior to a black Africa.” Recognizing the political and diplomatic significance of the name Ethiopia (the old name for the Black world), the Abyssinian state elites replaced the name Abyssinia with that of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian ideological history claims “the modern Ethiopian state as the direct heir to the Ethiopia mentioned in biblical and classical sources. Ethiopian and Western scholars presented Ethiopia as an entity that had existed continuously as an integrated and independent state for three thousand years.”

Successive Ethiopian state elites use the African and Semitic discourses both regionally and globally. Globally, they use the Semitic discourse and the discourse of Christianity to mobilize assistance from Europe, North America, and the Middle East. Skillfully, they use their blackness to mobilize other Africans, the African Diaspora, and Black U.S. policy elites against Oromos and other colonized peoples. Several times, Ethiopian state elites have attempted and used the influence of the African Diaspora for their political and economic interests, particularly in the US, by capitalizing on the emotion they have for the name Ethiopia. By confusing original Ethiopia (the Black world) with contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) *Habasha* elites have misled some historically naive people in Africa, Europe, North America, and the world.

Most people do not understand the difference between ancient Ethiopia and contemporary Ethiopia. Because of this historical misinformation, Africans who were colonized or enslaved by Europeans, except those who were enslaved and colonized by contemporary Ethiopians, wrongly considered contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) as an island of Black freedom since it was able to maintain formal political power, albeit with the help of Euro-American powers. However, Ethiopia was only directly colonized by fascist Italy between 1935 and 1941. Most Blacks “knew very little about the social and political conditions of Ethiopia. What they wrote or said about Ethiopia was at best a manifestation of their emotional state.” Other Africans are unaware that Ethiopia’s political power came from allying with the colonizing European powers. In reality, the Ethiopia that participated in the slave trade and the “Scramble for Africa” was not an island of Black freedom.

Instead, it has been a “prison house” in which Oromos and other colonized and enslaved population groups were and still are brutalized. By using the discredited racist categorization of human groups, such as Semitic, Hamitic, Negroid, and Cushitic, *Habashas* have a stratified hierarchy in which they place Oromos between themselves and the people that they wrongly call *Shankillas*—people they consider Negroid. Despite the fact that *Habashas* are black, they consider themselves Semitic to associate themselves with the Middle East and dissociate from Africa whose peoples they consider both racially and culturally inferior. For instance, when the Nigerian Daily Times interviewed Haile Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia, in the 1930s, about Ethiopian racial identity, he said “that Ethiopians were not, and did not regard themselves as negroes [sic], as they were a Hamito-Semitic people.” John Sorenson expresses this racist attitude as “a multiplicity of Ethiopians, blacks who are whites, the quintessential Africans who reject African identity.”

Since the concept of race is a socio-political construct, it is essential to critically understand the historical context in which Ethiopian racism is produced and reproduced so as to denigrate the colonized peoples in order to deny them access to Ethiopian state power and

economic resources. In Ethiopian discourse, racial distinctions have been invented and manipulated to perpetuate the political objective of *Habasha* domination of the colonized population groups. “The fact that racial distinctions are easily manipulated and reversed indicates,” Sorenson notes, “the absurdity of any claims that they have an objective basis and locates these distinctions where they actually occur, in political power.” *Habasha* elites recognize the importance of racial distinctions in linking themselves to the Middle East, Europe, and North America in order to mobilize support for their political projects.

Jews, Arabs, Europeans, and Americans see *Habashas* closer to themselves than the peoples whom they consider “real black.” Also the West, particularly the U.S., places *Habashas* on “an intermediate position between whites and blacks” and considers them closer to “the European race” or members of “the great Caucasian family.” There were Europeans who considered *Habashas* as a very intelligent people because of their racial affinity with the “Caucasian race.” There were also those who saw *Habashas* as “dark-skinned white people” and “racial and cultural middleman” between Black Africa on one side and Europe and the Middle East on the other side. One German scholar admired the intelligence of *Habashas* and noted that he never saw such mental capability among Negroes, Arabs, Egyptians, and Nubians. These racist discourses go unchallenged in academic and popular discourse because they help reproduce Ethiopian ethnocentric and colonial state power.

U.S. foreign policy elites, diplomats, and other officials recognize and defend such “racial pretension of Ethiopia’s ruling class.” Racist Euro-American scholars use these kinds of racist discourses to show the significance of whiteness and denigrate the value of blackness in human civilization. Despite the fact that their skin color is Black, Ethiopian state elites joined their racist white counterparts to devalue the humanity of black people. One would expect that African American policy elites in the U.S. State Department, including George Moose, Irvin Hicks, Susan Rice, Collin Powell, and Condoleezza Rice would think differently from their White counterparts and genuinely promote social justice and democracy in Africa. But African

American policy elites, because of their distorted historical knowledge, and/or because of their class interests, have accepted the ideological discourse on Ethiopia that presented this empire as the home of Black freedom when all Blacks were under Euro-American colonialism and slavery and endorsed the racist U.S. policy toward Ethiopia and Oromia.

In the same way that some African kings and chiefs participated in the slave trade with European slave merchants in order to merchandize some Africans and ship them to North America and other parts of the world, these African American elites have collaborated with racist structures that dehumanize African peoples. It is an irony of history that the lack of critical historical knowledge or class interest or the ideological confusion built into this racist policy has brought about an alliance between the biological or ideological descendants of slavers and the descendants of slaves to victimize people like Oromos who have been victimized by colonialism and slavery. Current *Habasha* elites are the ideological or actual descendants of Warlords Yohannis and Menelik who participated in the massacre and enslavement of millions of Oromos and others. While glorifying the culture and civilization of *Habashas*, racist scholars, such as Edward Ullendorff, advanced the notion that Oromos, as a barbaric people, did not possess “significant material or intellectual culture” that would allow them to “contribute to the Semitized civilization of Ethiopia.”

To demonstrate the superiority of the civilization and culture of Amharas and Tigrayans, racist scholars downplayed “the African-ness of ancient Ethiopia [Abyssinia]...to emphasize its similarities to European societies.” John Sorenson expounds that “along with the emphasis on a Great Tradition in Ethiopian history, came a specific configuration of racial identity. As in other discourses of race, this configuration merged power with phenotypic features in order to devalue the Oromo and other groups as both ‘more African’ and ‘more primitive’ than the Amhara [and Tigray]. The Oromo were presented as warlike, essentially ‘people without history’ and without any relationship to the land.” In Ethiopian studies, Oromos were depicted as “crueller scourges” and “barbarian hordes who brought darkness and ignorance in the train” to Ethiopia; they were

also depicted as evil, ignorant, order-less, destructive, infiltrators, and invasive. In addition Oromos were seen as “a decadent race” which was “less advanced” because of their racial and cultural inferiority. Therefore, their colonization and enslavement by the alliance of Ethiopians and Europeans were seen as a civilizing mission. Since in racist and modernist thinking, historical development is linear and society develops from a primitive or backward to a civilized or advanced stage, Oromos, who have been seen as primitive people, are also considered as part of a collection of tribes or a single tribe or a ‘cluster’ of diverse groups that cannot develop any nationalist political consciousness except tribalism.

Racist and modernist scholars have also denied the existence of a unified Oromo identity and argued that Oromos cannot achieve statehood because they are geographically scattered and lack cultural substance. Generally speaking, both Ethiopian elites and their Euro-American counterparts have built Ethiopianism as a racial project, at the cost of indigenous Africans, such as Oromos. The participation of *Habashas* in the scramble for Africa and in the slave trade and the commodification of millions of Oromos and others encouraged them to associate themselves with European and the Middle Eastern peoples rather than Black Africans. “Western discourse...duplicated many of the assumptions and ideologies that had been put in place by the ruling elites of Ethiopia,” Sorenson writes, “constructing the latter as the carriers of a Great Tradition which was engaged in its own Civilizing Mission with respect to what it regarded as other uncivilized Groups in Ethiopia.”

Currently Ethiopianism hides the true nature of the Tigrayan-led minority regime in Ethiopia. Supported by the West, mainly the U.S., and using political violence, this regime has dominated and controlled the Oromo people and others, denying them freedom of expression, association or organization, as well as access to the media and related forms of communication and information networks. The Meles regime has used various techniques of violence to terrorize Oromos who are engaged in the struggle for liberation and democracy. Just as successive Amhara-dominated regimes engaged in terrorism and genocide and exploited the

resources of Oromos, Afars, Ogaden Somalis, Sidamas and others, the Tigrayan-dominated regime is engaged in similar practices to suppress the national movements of these indigenous peoples in order to maintain a racial/ethnonational hierarchy and continued subjugation.

With the intensification of the national movements of these subjugated nations, the regime has been engaged in massive human rights violations, terrorism, and hidden genocide. While engaging in state terrorism in the form of war, torture, rape, and hidden genocide to control the Oromo people and others and loot their economic resources, the Tigrayan state elites claim that they are promoting democracy, federalism, and national self-determination. This regime also committed genocide on the Annuak people of Gambella in 2003 and 2004. These elites use Ethiopianism to claim the unity of the colonizer and the colonized population groups in the Ethiopia Empire while committing such serious crimes against humanity. There is no wonder that all the colonized population groups in Ethiopia reject the ideology of Ethiopianism. In particular, Oromos have developed *Oromummaa* to oppose Ethiopianism and to dismantle the racial/ethnonational hierarchy and Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions.